

Locatelli -- Eagle Rock Vineyard

The original site of the Sunrise Winery was in the old production facilities of the Locatelli Winery, on Empire Grade, high above and west of Boulder Creek. The Locatelli Winery dates back to 1902. Frank Locatelli had arrived in Santa Cruz in the early 1890s. His nephews, Peter and Guiseppe, arrived in 1895. The three of them purchased the 360 acre Mc Laughlin homestead and winery on the extreme north end of Ben Lomond Mountain. Family memory dates the first winery operations under the Locatellis at 1902.

The Locatelli family also was involved in logging, livestock raising, fruit production, and they operated the hotel in Boulder Creek, the principal outlet for their wine in the early years. Prohibition had little effect on their operations in the 1920s. They were also well known for their brandy production in these years.

Dante Locatelli was born on the Eagle Rock Ranch in 1907 and learned to make wine from his uncle. He made wine on his own at the ranch from 1921. Later he managed the ranch for his father, Guiseppe and older brother Vincent, who ran the hotel. At its peak the ranch had 75 acres of vines and produced up to 20,000 gallons of wine per year. In 1962 he left the family operation, after the death of his father and a disagreement with Vincent. Vincent ran the operation for a while, but the vineyard was abandoned in the 1960s and the winery shut down until the Sunrise operation began.

Other Locatellis were involved in viticulture. G. M. Locatelli had 40 acres on the former Maitland ranch near Boulder Creek in Hopkins Gulch. Peter Locatelli had a small vineyard in Bonny Doon. Joseph Locatelli had a small vineyard off Jarvis Road, and sold grapes early to David Bruce. It is today the home of the Ken Burnap's Santa Cruz Mountain Winery.

In later years Dante Locatelli worked for the Congress Springs Winery and helped to tend the Novitiate vineyards in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

Most of this information was taken from Michael Holland's thesis written at the University of California (Santa Cruz) in 1982, "Wine History in Santa Cruz County, 1835 to the Present." I have been unable to interview members of the Locatelli family.

