

ALLA CORRENTE THE SEGHEGIO STORY

The Seghesio Story begins in 1886 when Edoardo Seghesio departed from his family's vineyards in Piedmonte, Italy. Like many immigrants, he was drawn to Northern Sonoma County and the Italian Swiss Colony to follow his passion for winemaking. The "Colony," as it was known then, hired immigrants for three-year stints, providing room and board, followed by a lump sum at the end of the three years enabling employees to buy land or set up a business in the area.

Edoardo had risen through the ranks to become winemaker. But, he really wanted to return home to Italy. The Colony's manager repeatedly encouraged him to stay, but ultimately it was his niece and the opportunity to purchase land that convinced Edoardo to remain. That young girl, Angela Vasconi, and Edoardo were married in 1893. In 1895, they purchased a modest home in northern Alexander Valley, less because of the home than for the surrounding 56 acres Edoardo recognized as ideal vineyard land. They planted the "Home Ranch" that year in what became the family's signature varietal – Zinfandel.

Edoardo remained at the Colony while building his own winery in the evenings after work. In 1902, the couple completed the building and began Seghesio Winery, while raising their five children. In 1910, they acquired additional acreage surrounding the bustling train station in what was then "Chianti, California." Edoardo planted the ten acres with the Chianti field-blend of Sangiovese, Canelao Nero, Trebbiano and Malvasia. That vineyard today is called Chianti Station, and is North America's oldest planting of Sangiovese. *(This wine will be one of the wines featured at the Opera Outing during the reception in the Grove).*

Six months prior to Prohibition, and convinced it would not last more than a year, Edoardo decided to purchase his former employer, Italian Swiss Colony. The "Colony" with a 4,000,000-gallon capacity winery and its 1100 acres of vineyards were quite a buy at \$127, 500. As Prohibition continued, however, the debt was too much for Edoardo to bear. In 1920, he brought on partners: his brother-in-law, Enrico Prati, and the Rossi Family who were previous owners and at whose request Edoardo had come to America. Edoardo sold his shares in 1933.

Upon repeal of Prohibition, the family once again opened the doors of the winery and started to make a comeback. Edoardo died in 1934 leaving the winery and all property to Angela. She and her sons, Arthur, Frank and Eugene continued making wines and shipping them by railroad. They continued to add vineyards when they could purchase them without debt, and

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finally in 1949, they purchased a second wine-making facility in Healdsburg to enable them to keep up with growing demand.

In January 1958, the family lost its matriarch when Angela died. Her sons formed a partnership based on the ideals of their parents: family, hard work and passion for the industry. From the time of Angela's death until the mid 1970s, the Seghesio family flourished in the bulk wine business, producing most of the red wine made in Sonoma County. At their largest, 1,700,000 gallons were produced between the original winery in Chianti and the Healdsburg winery. Finally in 1983, as the industry evolved, the first wines were bottled under the Seghesio label at the hands of Ted Seghesio, a fourth generation family winemaker. Ted was not only the winemaker but sold and delivered wine. In 1986, his cousin Peter Seghesio joined the business and began to set up a distribution network nationwide. By 1993, the Seghesio brand had grown to 130,000 cases of not only the family's trademark Zinfandel and Italian varietals, but also Chardonnay, Cabernet, Sauvignon Blanc and both red and white table wine. In 1993, the younger generation was given control of the winery, and they too shared a passion for the land and a desire to produce wines they were passionate about. The focus of Seghesio Wines turned to using its own vineyards, thereby eliminating all but its own vineyard production, and thus reducing output to 30,000 cases annually.

**- Dr. James J. Boitano
(Adapted from www.seghesio.com)**