

About Books

Spottswode – A Family Wine Estate

*Written for and published by
Spottswode Estate Vineyard & Winery
St. Helena, CA 2007*

The Napa Valley Wine Library has always had a special affection for Spottswode. There, 45 years ago, the Wine Library offered its first Annual Wine Tasting at an estate (its first, the year before, was at a lumber yard). This year, as the Wine Library marks its 45th Tasting, Spottswode turns 125; it was founded in 1882. Its present owner, Mary Weber Novak, together with her and her late husband Jack's children Beth, Lindy, Kelley, Mike and Matt have contributed recollections of the Novak family and its role at Spottswode for a commemorative book published in celebration of Mary's seventy-fifth birthday and the 125th anniversary of Spottswode.

Family narratives as well as vintage and contemporary photographs in both color and black and white document the gardens, vineyards, winery and the families at Spottswode over the years. There is also an excerpt from the St. Helena Star of 1901 and a letter written from Vallejo in 1913 glowingly describing this estate which the Novak family acquired in 1972. The book provides a thumbnail history of the property, from its inception as

"Esmeralda" with extensive gardens and 17 acres of wine grapes to today. Spottswode, so-named in 1910, has become an internationally known wine estate with 40 acres of vineyard, original Victorian-style main house, cellar, winery and many of the trees and shrubs still thriving that were planted 125 years ago. Just a few years ago an extensive restoration of the vineyard watershed was inaugurated. The banks of Spring Creek, along its southwest border, have been nearly fully returned to native vegetation.

In 1982, on the hundredth anniversary of the estate, the first Spottswode Cabernet Sauvignon was released. Today there are three Spottswode wines, two Cabernets and a Sauvignon Blanc (Mary's favorite). "Spottswode," both the book and the property, is a labor of love. Photographs of the Novak children as kids, Mary and her lab, and Victorian ladies at tea enliven the pages as well as images of vineyard workers, details of stonework, bottles of the well-known wines and the beauty of carefully tended vineyards that have been organically farmed since 1985.

The book was designed as a keepsake by Madeleine Corson and edited by Willow Banks. The recent photographs of the estate in all its aspects were taken by Thomas Heinser.