

Spring Mountain District History

Brief History

The appellation was among the first locations in Napa Valley to receive recognition as a grape growing region. While grapes may have been grown in the area as early as the Civil War, the first documented planting is that of Charles Lemme, who cultivated the 25-acre La Perla Vineyard just south of York Creek in 1874. Steady growth followed. In the 1880s, Jacob and Frederick Beringer, who had already opened their historic winery near St. Helena, planted a vineyard on Spring Mountain.

Later in the decade, Fortune Chevalier, a Frenchman who had come to San Francisco during the Gold Rush, planted 25 acres and built a stone winery. Most notable among the early growers was wealthy San Francisco banker and financier Tiburcio Parrott, who established a vineyard that he named Miravalle and built a Victorian-style home that still stands on the property. In 1893, a local newspaper reported: "Old vineyardists asked him [Parrott] what he expected to do among those hills and rocks, and when told by Mr. Parrott that he expected to raise grapes and produce wine unsurpassed in the world, they laughed at him and told him his hopes would never be realized." Parrott's wines took first place at the San Francisco Midwinter Fair the following year and a gold medal at the World's Fair two years later.

Grape growing and winemaking declined in Spring Mountain from 1910 to 1940 due to the onset of phylloxera and Prohibition. The first reawakening of viticulture came in 1946, when Fred and Eleanor McCrea planted a small vineyard north of Mill Creek, and then in 1953 founded a legendary winery called Stony Hill. The resurgence began in earnest in the late 1960s and 1970s—with the founding of several wineries, including Ritchie Creek, Yverdon, Spring Mountain Winery, Smith-Madrone and Robert Keenan. The name Spring Mountain was first used as an origin on cabernet sauvignon wines produced by Ritchie Creek in the late 1970s.

