



Paso Robles' Historic Wine Region Wineries in California's San Luis Obispo County began with Mission San Miguel and York Mountain Winery

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These wineries may be known for their Zinfandel but the stories of the region's Spanish Chilean roots and a Polish PM/winemaker's 1920 Ascension have more to tell.

While Napa and Sonoma Valleys were the first California winegrowing regions to come to public attention, the wine industry actually had its origins in places like Los Angeles County and Paso Robles, in San Luis Obispo County. Robert M. Parker, Jr. remarked in the June 30, 2005 issue of the Wine Advocate, "there is no question that a decade from now, the top viticultural areas of Santa Barbara, Santa Rita Hills and the limestone hillsides west of Paso Robles will be as well-known as the glamorous vineyards of Napa Valley." This is the first article in a series on the exciting Paso Robles AVA.

Paso Robles' (Oak Pass) limestone soils west of US101 first attracted Andrew York in 1882, who planted vineyards on his 240 acre ranch in the Santa Lucia mountains. His Ascension Winery, now known as York Mountain Winery, was the first in California's Central Coast. But he was not the first viticulturist in the region. Father Junipero Serra planted more than a thousand grapevines at Mission San Miguel as early as 1797! These vines were very likely of the Mission variety, originally for Chile, and thought to be related to the old Spanish variety Monica or Criolla.

In 1890 the first record of Zinfandel appeared. Little did Adolf Siot know that this varietal would become Paso Robles' most successful red wine grape. His vineyard was planted near the present vineyards owned by Turley Wine Cellars, previously cultivated by the Pesenti Winery.

Paso Robles Zinfandels are among the richest and most flavorful in all of California, often approaching alcohol levels of over 16%. If you are ready to experience Zinfandels of overwhelming presence, visit

Paso Robles' long association with Zinfandel began to accelerate with the head pruned vines planted by the now celebrated families of Dusi and Martinelli. These vineyards are still under cultivation by third and fourth generation sons. Ridge, one of California's premier Zinfandel specialists, offers a Dusi Vineyard bottling and a number of San Luis Obispo's boutique wineries do so also.

A notable producer of Paso Robles Zinfandel in the 1920s was famed concert pianist and composer Ignaz Paderewski, who made his wine at the Ascension, now York Mountain, winery. He had recently retired from serving the people of Poland as their Prime Minister and had moved to Paso Robles for reasons of health. Every resident of Paso Robles knows that their western hills are a far healthier place to live than anywhere in Poland.