

Buchanan Family Farm and Tyee Wine Cellars

By Richard Engeman

The Buchanan Family Century Farm is located in Benton County near the rural community of Greenberry, at the confluence of Beaver and Muddy Creeks. The bucolic landscape is the homeland of Kalapuya Indians, whose territory extended from today's Washington County through the Willamette Valley and south to the area around Eugene. Introduced diseases claimed the lives of many Kalapuyas early in the nineteenth century, and those who survived faced the influx in the 1840s of EuroAmerican agricultural immigrants who made claims on the land. The Kalapuya signed the Willamette Valley Treaty in 1855 and were removed to the Grand Ronde Reservation.

The family of W. O. Kendall and Margaret Kendall claimed property near Greenberry in the 1870s. They sold the farm in 1885 to John A. and Ruth Buchanan. John Buchanan (1838–1900) had been born in Scotland and immigrated to the United States, spending about nine years in Idaho Territory searching for and mining for gold. He married Illinois-born Ruth Gardner in 1873. When the couple bought the Kendall farm, they had three children; three more were born there. The principal crop, as was common in the Willamette Valley at the time, was wheat. John and Ruth had one son, Ernest (1879–1951), who planted wheat and other grains, raised livestock, and added racehorses to the enterprise.

Ernest's son Thomas Buchanan added a dairy operation to the farm; and the fourth Buchanan generation, Dave and Margy, began another agricultural transition in 1974, when they planted their first wine grapes. Their first wine was bottled in 1977, followed by a collaboration with Oregon State University enologist and winemaker Barney Watson and his wife Nola Mosier. The partnership culminated in the opening of Tyee Wine Cellars in 1987. The name derives from the regional Chinuk Wawa word for a leader or chief.

For a time, the Buchanans' farm raised another Willamette Valley specialty, sheep, and eventually another regional crop, hazelnuts or filberts, grown in a thirty-acre orchard. The former dairy's milking parlor has been repurposed as a sales and tasting room for Tyee's Pinot Noir, Gewürztraminer, Chardonnay, and other wines.

The farm was honored with a Century Farm & Ranch designation in 1990. As the fifth generation of the family continues its work, the farm represents the changes in the agricultural economy of the Willamette Valley since the 1840s.

Sources

Buchanan Family Farm. Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Application. Oregon Century Farm and Ranch Program, Oregon State University. "CFR0991" Oregon Digital.

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