



**Hungarian Americans Together Conference
HATOG VI
San Mateo, California
2-3 March 2013**

Sonoma-Tokaj Sister Cities
Sylvia Tóth and Cecily Keleti Wallis

As co-chairs of the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister Cities Committee, it is our pleasure to be with you today at the Hungarian-Americans Together conference. We have been asked to tell you a little bit about our organization, what we have accomplished and what we plan for the future.

The City of Sonoma has six Sister City relationships, many based on the commonality of wine that it shares with other cities. The idea for a sister cities relationship between Sonoma and Tokaj came about in November 2011 when a delegation of Hungarian trade and tourism officials, including the Hungarian minister of rural development, visited Buena Vista Winery in Sonoma in April 2012 both Sonoma and Tokaj voted to approve the relationship.

Buena Vista Winery, as many people know, was founded by Agoston Haraszthy, who is known as the Father of California Viticulture, and is a popular tourist destination for Hungarians and Hungarian-Americans. Recently purchased by Jean-Charles Boisset, of the Boisset wine estates family, Buena Vista Winery was undergoing a major renovation and Mr. Boisset decided to coincide the "re-birth" of the winery with what would have been Haraszthy's 200th birthday at the end of August 2012. It was at the 200th birthday celebrations that the formal agreement between the two cities was signed and made official. Over the course of 6 months and with the help of wonderful people such as our own Eva Voisin and Ildiko Zentai, the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister Cities Committee planned and hosted the visiting Sister City delegation from Tokaj for a week of events that culminated in the 200th Birthday celebrations, including an invitation-only VIP event at the winery with several notable Hungarian dignitaries and government officials in attendance as well as a public celebration in Sonoma Plaza that featured a live play, dancing, music, and speeches from notable Hungarian-Americans from all over California.

Our mission statement reads as follows:

“Recognizing the historical, viticultural ties between Sonoma and Tokaj dating back to the mid 19th century when Agoston Haraszthy settled in Sonoma and became the Father of California Viticulture, the mission of the Sonoma-Tokaj Sister City Committee is to create bonds for both Hungarian and American economic and cultural exchanges to benefit both cities. The goal of the Committee is to promote mutual respect and understanding between Tokaj and Sonoma through access to wine culture, education, business, trade and partnership building.

We recognize that our Sister City organization is unique in that all of this would not have been possible without the generous support of our sponsor Jean-Charles Boisset. Besides hosting the 200th birthday event, Mr. Boisset tasked his employee, George Webber, who plays Count Agoston Haraszthy at the Winery, to spearhead our committee and make it a vibrant, going concern. Additionally, Mr. Boisset donated \$1 from the sale of every bottle of the Winery’s “the Count” red wine sold in 2012 to the Sister City fund. We are truly grateful for his continued patronage.

As Cecily indicated we are a young organization, but I think have done much in this past year. Our focus last year was the visit of the Tokaj delegation coinciding with Haraszthy's 200th birthday celebration that Cecily already touched on.

We wanted to share with you some of the photos from that event.



Hungarian flag at City Hall



The Tokaj delegation being greeted at City Hall

The mayor was interested in our educational and our health care facilities



We were hosted by a hungarian owned winery - Tricycle Wine co. – Molnar

Part of the week's program was an art exhibit curated by Zsuzsa Dardai of Budapest. It was called Red and White - and included geometric and abstract paintings by American and Hungarian artists with the theme being red and white wine and in some cases, as the medium itself.



This was the opening night.

Buena Vista's VIP event for Haraszthy's 200th Birthday



Several dignitaries spoke as did VAI Haraszthy - the great, great grandson of



Agoston Haraszthy.

Sonoma Tokaj mayors signing the agreement between the two cities.



Then we had the public Celebration at our beautiful Sonoma Plaza.



Began with Maurusz Atya, the Huszars and other dignitaries speaking - including Ildikor Zentai, the Mayor of Tokaj,



Eva Voisin and past Congressman Konnyu.



This year it is the Sonoma delegation's turn to visit Tokaj and we are very excited to be invited to visit during Tokaj's wine festival in May. The Tokaj Committee already has a preliminary program set for us which will be a good opportunity for cultural exchange. The Sonoma Mayor pro tem will be attending as well four other members of our committee

In our discussions as to how we want to accomplish or further our mission statement we decided first to work on a Winemaker Exchange Program. The goal is to bring a Hungarian wine industry staff or intern to Sonoma in order to learn about California wine techniques and especially wine business practices and then to send winemakers or interns to Tokaj for exposure to and learning about Hungarian varietals and winemaking techniques. We are in the process now of developing the program together with our counterparts in Tokaj. Once we have this program under way we can look at other possible programs between the two cities.

If we want to have this exchange program we must do what all non-profits do - that is raise funds. To that end we plan on having several intimate local "house parties" with Hungarian food, wine and culture. Our first "house party" will be in April, so please look for a notice in an e-mail.

Our major event this year will be on June 2nd. Buena Vista Winery and the Sonoma Sister City Committee will be holding another fundraiser at the Winery: The 150th Anniversary of the Double Wedding that united the Haraszthy family with General Mariano Vallejo's family. This event will feature a historical re-enactment of the wedding, including ceremony, reception line, buffet lunch, dancing, live music and of course wine

.A portion of the profits will go to our Sister City Committee. As part of the event we are also working on some form of raffle so that those who cannot attend the event could also participate. It is still in the planning stages but we hope to be advertising the event soon. It promises to be an exciting event and we hope you will all join us because without the Hungarian Community we cannot reach our goals