



## YOUNGBERG HILL AND HOW IT GOT THAT WAY

### The Story of a Vineyard

The birds, on their flight path to and from the Pacific Ocean, apparently don't find the grapes on the 20 planted acres on **Youngberg Hill** until late in the growing season in the last days of October. But a young Swedish farmer by the name of Youngberg found it in the early 20<sup>th</sup> (mid 19<sup>th</sup>) century and farmed the land until 1987. That's when a financier from Boston, Norman Barnett, bought it and built an inn on the rolling hills, only 25 miles inland from the sea.

Two years later, in 1989, **Ken Wright**, who saw great potential in the soils of **Willamette Valley**, planted the vineyards (now known as the Jordan and Natasha blocks) on what was to become known as Youngberg Hill. Wright, considered to be one of the "gurus" of **Oregon** wine, exclusively used the fruit from Youngberg for his Panther Creek wines. In 1996, the first wine to be labeled **Youngberg Hill Vineyards** was produced.

By 2003, **Wayne Bailey** – the son of an Oakland, Iowa farmer, and with a mechanical engineering degree in tow – bought the property and launched what he describes as his "fifth career", that of a wine grower and producer. With the 2013 harvest, Wayne will mark his **10<sup>th</sup> anniversary** farming Youngberg.

"I've always been a farm boy," says Bailey, alluding to his dad's farm, where he helped grow corn and soy beans and raise hogs "and I gravitated toward that." In 1975 he tasted his first great wine, the '58 Haut-Brion. But it wasn't until 1997 that he became "immersed" in Burgundy where his "love affair" with wine began when he was consulting there in the food and wine business. "The vigneron there consider themselves farmers," he remembers, "and so do I. I gravitated toward that. I spent time in the vineyards there and my mind was imagining growing grapes and making wine."

Bailey insists that he did "check out California" for a place to stake his vineyard, "but my mind was made up about **Pinot Noir**. I knew enough about Oregon, that most of the growers were small **organic** farmers doing things they were doing in Burgundy. Oregon felt like home."

He decided on Youngberg Hill because "I didn't want to start with bare ground." So, he asked "the late, great" **Jimi Brooks**, the vineyard manager at Maysara Winery, "who would you like to purchase grapes from? But it had to be a vineyard that he was not purchasing from today, but would like to, from which to make wine?" Bailey says that Brooks told him, 'This hill has a good vein going through it.' Less than a year later Brooks died from a heart attack at age 38. "In his spirituality" Bailey says, "Jimi meant the vineyards at Youngberg had 'good vibrations' running through its soils. Jimi started me on the path toward **holistic farming** (see the "Seriously Organic" section following).

## 2015 Marks 25 Years for Youngberg Hill

### 50 Years for Willamette Valley

“The new era with the introduction of Pinot Noir had begun. It catapulted the Willamette Valley into the new-world Pinot Noir-growing capital.”

#### ■ Wayne Bailey, Youngberg Hill Vineyards

It began in 1965 when **David Lett and Charles Coury** planted Pommard clones of Pinot Noir in the Willamette Valley. That was 50 years ago. Which is why in 2015, we celebrate the first significant moment when those two prescient pioneers planted the grapevines which led to Oregon’s eventual emergence as a center of world-class wines.

A quarter century later – in 1989 – Willamette Valley progenitor **Ken Wright** planted the first Pinot Noir on Youngberg Hill in McMinnville, which the late vineyard manager **Jimi Brooks** simply called, “A good hill”. The property, which was purchased in 2003 by **Nicolette & Wayne Bailey**, has since become a 20-acre vineyard that is now farmed biodynamically; and whose wines are being produced in concert with **Robert Brittan**, under the **Youngberg Hill Vineyards** label.

When queried as to what he thinks he and his colleagues have learned in the last 50 years, Bailey responds: “The vineyards. We’ve seen the largest improvement in quality, due to what we learned in terms of growing the grapes, i.e. the right clone and, rootstock planted. ... and farming more organically and biodynamically.” (He estimates that 65% of Willamette Valley’s vineyards are farmed organically and 10% biodynamically.)

Or as Jimi Brooks so eloquently put it a long time ago, “I just don’t want a piece of land. It has to have a heart, a soul; and be a living entity.”

“He was high on this property before we came up,” says Bailey. “He told me, ‘This is a good hill’. He was all about sense of place.”

## Youngberg Hill's Quarter-Century Timeline

- 1989 10 acres of **Pinot Noir** planted on own-rooted clones
- 1996 **First wine** made under the Youngberg Hill label
- 2003 First vintage under ownership of **Nicolette & Wayne Bailey**. Begin farming **organically**
- 2006 Plants 5 acres of **Pinot Gris** (Aspen Block)
- 2008 Plants 3 additional acres of **Pinot Noir** (Bailey Block)
- 2011 Begins farming **biodynamically**
- 2012 Begins producing wine with **Robert Brittan**
- 2014 Grafts half the Aspen Block (2 ½ acres) to **Chardonnay**; grafting Dijon clones onto 8 year-old plants

## SERIOUSLY ORGANIC

### Wayne Bailey's Sincere & Pragmatic Grape Growing Philosophy

If one is fortunate enough to walk through the vineyards at Youngberg Hill with Wayne Bailey, one gets the sense that this is a man who is seriously dedicated. Every few minutes he excuses himself, wanders down a row of vines, and stoops to pick up some spent buckshot here (left behind in an attempt to scare off birds that swipe his grapes), or a golf ball there (that somehow a practicing amateur shot into the vineyard). Bailey is seriously serious about keeping his 20-acre parcel of Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris as pristine as humanely possible.

While he practices a sustainable and organic regimen, it doesn't seem to go far enough for him. "Organic (only) tells you what *not* to do," he says. "What can I do to enhance the soils and that's where **biodynamic** comes in." Thus, he calls his agricultural philosophy, "**seriously organic**" and "**holistic**".

"It's all about balance and being in concert with nature," he explains. "Anything that man does will inhibit nature. We try to do anything we can do to stay out of the way. As an example, plant life, insect life, animal life ... if we throw any of that off, we're going to throw the balance off. It's common sense."

In fact, Wayne's farming philosophy is beyond organic and even beyond biodynamic. But make no mistake; he's no crazed or delusional sorcerer. "I look at it pragmatically, not prescriptively" he insists. "I'm not pruning with the moon and the stars, but back in Iowa (where he grew up), we planted potatoes according to the *Farmer's Almanac*. And that's biodynamic farming."

**Does he manipulate his wines?** "I do not try to make the wine taste a certain way or have certain characteristics, only to aid it in being the best it can be. Like raising children; you can't make a rocket scientist out of a child with skills of a music teacher."

While Youngberg Hill works toward Demeter certification (the official mark of biodynamic confirmation), Bailey says in a practical manner, "My goal is to improve the soil and to produce better and healthier grapes and therefore make better wine. The more I take a holistic approach, the more distinctive my wines will be in regards to informing where the wines come from (describing the terroir of his vineyard)."

In the next breathe he invokes the names of his daughters - Natasha, 13 years old, Jordan, 10, and Aspen, 6. "And then I do it for my children," he says with a smile. "I want to leave this farm for them, and better than I found it. I walk the vines every day and as the French would say, 'The best fertilizer is your footprint.'"

**What's Wayne Bailey's biggest challenge as a winemaker?** "Keeping hands off, particularly when there is something going on. Experience tells you that the sooner you respond, the better chance of saving the wine. However, experience also tells you that in many, if not most cases, having patience for the wine to evolve usually is the best non-action."

**Finally, how does he define success?** "Make the best wine possible that reflects where the grapes were grown and the weather of that season they were grown in, and that the vineyard and vines are healthier 50 years from now for my family than today. That's sustainability."



# Youngberg Hill Vineyards Wines

## Overview

Three to four distinct **Pinot Noirs** are produced each year. A **Pinot Gris** is made from estate fruit, while periodically, there is a **Pinot Blanc** produced from sourced fruit. A **Chardonnay** from newly grafted estate fruit will be produced in 2015.

Youngberg Hill Vineyards consists of 20 acres, 15 of Pinot Noir (divided by the Natasha Block and the Jordan Block, named after Wayne & Nicolette's daughters, and the Bailey Block. Five acres of Pinot Gris are also planted on 50-acre estate. Of the Pinot Noir, 12 acres were planted in 1989 on two distinct blocks of southeast facing slopes. The vines are own-rooted, 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil clones. Pinot Gris was then planted, called the Aspen Block (Bailey's third daughter), in '06 with 148 and 152 clones on 3309 rootstock. In '08, four more acres of Pinot was planted, called the Camelot Block, on 777 on 10114 rootstock.

With the first 2 1/2 acres of Chardonnay grafted onto the Pinot Gris stocks of Dijon clones 75, 76, 95, and 548 in 2014, the winery will begin yielding the varietal fruit with the harvest of 2015; with the first Chardonnay bottling -- in 2016 -- producing 200 cases.

Natasha Block is the larger of the two original blocks, at an altitude of approximately 600 feet on Willakenzie soil. The Jordan Block is on a steeper slope at an altitude of approximately 800 feet on Steiwer soil. The Bailey Block is between the other two and therefore is a blend of Steiwer and Shale soils.

The soils are complemented by distinct weather in these coast foothills only 25 miles from the ocean. It is thought the vineyard is one of the two western-most sites in Willamette Valley, therefore taking advantage of all that the Pacific Ocean has to offer. The weather is most heavily influenced by patterns coming up the Van Duzer Pass from the coast. There is more precipitation than most of the valley, more sunny days, cooler temperatures both day and night, and cool coastal winds in the late afternoon and early evening.

Youngberg started practicing organic farming in '03 and are LIVE certified, and they are now practicing **biodynamic farming. This is taking a holistic approach to farming that will sustain the health of the vines and the earth for centuries. It also includes the practice of dry farming.**

## **Pinot Noir**

### **Jordan Block**

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley  
Soil Type: Steiwer  
Clones: 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil  
Age of Vines: planted 1989  
Acreage Total: 4.5

### **Natasha Block**

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley  
Soil Type: Willakenzie  
Clones: 60% Pommard and 40% Wadenswil  
Age of Vines: planted 1989  
Acreage Total: 7.5

### **Bailey Block**

AVA: McMinnville AVA  
Soil Type: Steiwer with shale  
Clones: 777  
Age of Vines: planted in 2008

### **Cuvee of Pinot Noir**

AVA: Willamette Valley AVA blend from: McMinnville AVA, and Amity-Eola Hills AVA  
Soil Type: Varies  
Clones: Pommard, Wadenswil, 113 and 777  
Age of Vines: Varies

## **Pinot Gris**

### **Aspen Block**

AVA: McMinnville AVA, Willamette Valley  
Soil Type: Uplifted Marine Sedimentary (Willakenzie)  
Clones: 148 and 152 Clones on 3309 root stock  
Age of Vines: planted in 2006  
Acreage Total: 2.5

## **There Will Be Chardonnay**

With the first 2 1/2 acres of Chardonnay grafted on Youngberg Hill in 2014, the winery will begin yielding the varietal fruit with the harvest of 2015; with the first Chardonnay bottling -- in 2016 -- producing 200 cases. Grafted to Dijon clones 75, 76, 95, and 548, Youngberg Hill's owner and vineyard manager Wayne Bailey believes the time now is right for Chardonnay in McMinnville and Willamette Valley.

“It is the natural white grape for our growing region and the most interesting to make,” Bailey contends. “People are tired and/or have grown out of the overly oaked style and we now have clones in the valley that are more suited for our climate which will produce better quality grapes.”



## **The Estate Tasting Room**

*Youngberg Hill's estate tasting room is located within its 11-room inn and amidst its 20 acres of grapevines; with one of the best views in the Willamette Valley.*

Outside the doors is an expansive deck that looks out over the Cascade Mountains. To the northeast is Mt. Hood, the east is Mt. Jefferson, and further to the southeast is Sisters. The guest is encouraged to walk around the site, or find an easy chair. One tastes with the winemaker, grape grower, and owner, who will inform about the growing of the grapes, Youngberg's organic and biodynamic farming practices, and its non-intervention winemaking process. The winemaker has been known to pull out a library wine on occasion or take a guest down to the port barrel for a sip of Pinot Port. Youngberg offers vineyard tours and barrel tastings by appointment.

*The estate tasting room is open seven days a week from 10 am to 4 pm. Appointments for groups of 10 or more and tastings from December through March are by request.*

## **Youngberg Hill's Urban Tasting Room**

**@ Thirst Bistro in PDX**

In April 2015 Youngberg Hill opened a PDX tasting room at [Thirst Bistro](#) on Portland's waterfront. At the tasting room, 0315 SW Montgomery St #340, wine consumers will have the opportunity to taste Youngberg Hill's wines in an urban setting, as an alternative to tasting Youngberg Hill's wines in McMinnville, which is located about an hour away.

"Many people visiting PDX never get to the Willamette Valley. So we are bringing the Valley to them in an effort to make our wine more accessible to a larger number of people," explains Youngberg Hill's owner Wayne Bailey.

What can people expect to discover at Youngberg's urban tasting room at Thirst Bistro? All of YHV's current releases will be available to taste. In addition, a card to taste at [Youngberg Hill's estate tasting room](#) outside McMinnville will be free to anyone who tastes at YHV's Thirst Bistro tasting room.

YHV's wines at Thirst will be available from noon to 6 p.m. Tuesday-Sunday. Thirst Bistro opened in 2006 at the RiverPlace Esplanade on the Willamette River. The restaurant, wine bar and bottle shop features a full menu, several rooms to taste wine, and an outdoor patio that seats 100.