



## History

In 1968, when Italian immigrant and would-be grape grower Joe Busnardo was seeking a site to plant the grapevine cuttings he'd brought from Europe, there were only a few other vineyards in the Okanagan Valley. He could have planted anywhere, but he chose this spot — a sun-drenched, east-facing bench south of Oliver — for good reason: it's the perfect place to grow grapes.

Well-draining alluvial soil, sunny days and cool evenings encourage the development of complex and intense flavours; while the warmer temperatures and slope of the bench help the vines avoid the damaging frost that can settle on the valley floor in early spring and late fall. No wonder it became known as the Golden Mile Bench.

Busnardo was one of the first in the South Okanagan to plant European *Vitis Vinifera*; he'd brought dozens of varieties to try, including some from his native Italy, like the Trebbiano still used to make Hester Creek's popular single-varietal white wine released each spring. He built Divino Estate Winery on the site in the early '80s, which he later sold in 1996. Ever the entrepreneur, he relocated Divino to Vancouver Island under the same name, where it remains today.

New owners renamed the winery Hester Creek, after the creek that borders the south side of the property. The vineyards were improved and a wine shop built next to the old cellar building.

Charmed by the scenic location and convinced of its potential, Prince George businessman Curt Garland bought Hester Creek in 2004 — the dry grasslands, natural vegetation, orchards and vineyards of the Golden Mile reminded him of the Mediterranean. New to the industry, he assembled an accomplished team, which included veteran Niagara winemaker Rob Summers, who quickly set about developing the Hester Creek style, which places an emphasis on fresh fruit flavours and the gentle use of oak.

Significant investments made in the vineyards include new plantings and a drip irrigation system; a new 23,000-square-foot winery building with state-of-the-art equipment and a new hospitality centre; and excellent Italian cuisine at Terrafina restaurant and luxurious accommodations at the Hester Creek Villa. At last, Hester Creek is realizing the potential of its incredible site, and it ranks among the best in the Okanagan Valley.