

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



Final

1. Name

historic Paul Masson Mountain Winery

and/or common same

2. Location

street & number Pierce Road, (no officially designated #) n/a not for publication

city, town Saratoga vicinity of congressional district 12

state California code 06 county Santa Clara code 085

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Joseph E. Seagram & Sons, Inc.

street & number 375 Park Avenue

city, town New York n/a vicinity of state N.Y. 10022

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Santa Clara County Recorders Office

street & number 70 West Hedding Street

city, town San Jose state California

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Santa Clara County Heritage Resource Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date published 1979 by Santa Clara County federal state county local
Historical Heritage Commission

depository for survey records Office of Historic Preservation, P.O. Box 2390

city, town Sacramento state CA 95811

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	date <u>n/a</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Set into the crest of a hill in the Santa Cruz mountains, the Paul Masson Mountain Winery overlooks the Santa Clara Valley to the east. Surrounded by fifty acres of vineyards, the winery lies on foundations recessed into the hillside and over a natural spring to assure constant cool temperatures in the aging rooms. The rectangular, three-storied structure was constructed as a gravity flow winery, possibly on the site of an earlier winery. The present winery was gutted by fire in 1941, but photographs of that event show that the four exterior walls survived, though the roof was destroyed. During its reconstruction, the building was strengthened on the interior with steel and concrete work. The original wood floors were replaced by concrete ones.

The front section of the building is the oldest, being constructed most likely in 1907. All walls except for the east are constructed primarily of a gravel and cement mixture. Ivy has covered much of this rough surface on the sloping north wall, which is broken only by two doorways, midway and at the extreme rear, leading into the second and third stories. The winery's east (front) wall is flanked by two asymmetrical, square, sandstone-block towers, each highlighted by two semi-circular arched windows with arched molded trims just below flat roofs. In the center of the concrete east wall, around massive carved wooden double-doors and tympanum, is a compound round-arched ashlar portal with a triangular label mold ending at impost moldings. This feature was reputed to be a 12th century Spanish Romanesque portal taken from a Catholic church in San Jose after the 1906 earthquake.¹ Above this is a segmental ashlar quatrefoil ornamentation. Between these two associated features there is an arched panel with the metal name, "Paul Masson."

The lowest floor extends only half-way back the distance of the upper two floors. This lower level, lying behind the massive wood doors, is now used as a changing area for performers in the summer music and theater series staged on a platform in front of the winery. Wooden tiered benches have been placed on the slope to the northeast of the winery. The rest of the winery is still used to age sweet wines.

In 1946 a square-shaped one-story fermentation and shipping annex was added to the south side of the winery. The annex extends out from the hillside only half as far as the older section of the building, thus giving the floor plan of the total structure an "L" shape. A square concrete loading platform is at the east side of the annex. The annex's walls are constructed of concrete. Its low, gabled roof echoes and parallels the roof of the older building. Both roofs have recently been recovered with fiberglass composition shingles. (See continuation page 1)

1. Reliable evidence indicates that the portal came from St. Patrick's Church of San Jose, ruined in the earthquake. Yet it cannot be verified that this portal came to St. Patrick's from a 12th century Spanish structure. An attempt to trace the origins in parish records proved unsuccessful (Garrod, p. 129; Sullivan, p. 108).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates ca. 1907 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Paul Masson Mountain Winery is significant for its association with Paul Masson, prominent California winemaker. It was Masson who successfully established the production of fine wines and champagnes in Santa Clara County's "golden chain" -- a fertile micro-climate along the ridges of the Santa Cruz mountains. The winery is also significant architecturally, for its incorporation of a medieval Romanesque portal and other Romanesque elements is a visible manifestation of a California winemaker's efforts to provide a sense of tradition for a relatively new American industry. Masson's ancient-looking winery, although assembled and constructed in the twentieth-century, was evocative of a much earlier and pre-industrial era. Masson's success came as a result of his superior vines and wine-making techniques, and his astute exploitation of a fertile and productive region. Yet in addition, it lay in the energetic marketing skills of Masson, who emphasized a heritage of fine quality winemaking. The mountain winery, resembling a 12th century European church, was a symbol for the traditions he associated with his champagnes and wines.

Masson, a Burgundian born in 1859, came to California in 1878. There he met Charles Lefranc, owner of the New Almaden Vineyards in Los Gatos. Lefranc was one of a number of French immigrants who had expanded the viticulture introduced into the Santa Clara Valley by the Catholic mission fathers. While in California, Masson took a number of business courses at the College of the Pacific in San Jose, and in 1880 returned to France, returning also to work in the French winemaking industry. When the vine pest phylloxera depressed Burgundian viticulture, Masson returned to California where he went to work for Lefranc. In 1887 Lefranc died, and Masson married his daughter Louise. The two honeymooned in France, but Masson managed to mix business with pleasure -- the trip allowed him to investigate French champagne-making equipment. Returning to California he took over management of the Lefranc properties, then owned by Lefranc's son Henry, and Henry's two sisters. Masson marketed New Almaden products, and in addition operated his own liquor wholesaling business. While involved in the two businesses he also focused his energies on the production of champagnes. In 1892 he released the first of his champagnes, using New Almaden grapes. Shortly thereafter he sought property on which he could cultivate his grapes in a cooler climate.

By the late 1850s viticulture had reached the Santa Cruz mountains at the northwest side of the Santa Clara Valley. Yet the superior quality of highland wines did not prompt ambitious development until the 1880s. By this time Alexander Rodoni, a teamster, had acquired 160 acres in the hills above Saratoga, and in the latter part of the decade he had twelve acres producing grapes. But Rodoni was unable to make a go of it, and in 1892 he lost the land in a bank foreclosure. (See continuation sheet 2)

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 0.23 acre
Quadrangle name Cupertino, California

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>10</u>	<u>583040</u>	<u>4123940</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C			
E			
G			

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D			
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Property is located in the southeast quarter of Section 3, Township 8 south, Range 2 West, Mt. Diablo Base Line and Meridian. The winery stands at the end of the private access road from Pierce Road. Boundaries are a 92' x 110' rectangle which encompasses the limits of the historic resource, as shown on the accompanying map.

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth McKee, architectural historian

organization N/A date November 4, 1982

street & number P.O. Box 161821 telephone (916) 451-5837

city or town Sacramento state California 95816

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 4/18/83

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/9/83

Keeper of the National Register [Signature]

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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The west (rear) end of the combined building rises one-half story out of the hillside. The west end of the annex repeats the design of the west end of the old winery, with a centered semi-circular arched doorway. These arches, delineated by radiating brick work with center keystones, were closed-up with concrete, probably at the time of the 1940s reconstruction. The gabled parapets of the roof are also of brick.

Seventeen other structures lie to the north of the winery, separated by landscaping of trees, bushes and brick terraces added after 1950. The bushes and trees provide a pastoral atmosphere for the winery, even though this was not its historic setting. All but two of the seventeen structures are modern; the two additional structures are the foreman's house and the "Chateau". The foreman's house (ca 1920) is separated from the historic winery by modern buildings, is in a much deteriorated state, and is slated for replacement. Used in the past primarily for luncheons, the stone and wood "Chateau" was probably built in the 1920's or slightly earlier, but has been dramatically altered. In 1948 a second floor was added, in wood, over the original stone balconied first floor south wing. The seventeen structures have not been included in the nomination because of their recent dates of construction, severe alteration, or deterioration and isolation from the historic environment. The nomination has been limited to the only portion of the winery complex which retains its historic and architectural integrity, the original winery building.

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By 1896 Masson had acquired the property, intending to cultivate "a choice variety of wine grapes" (Saratoga Item, 11/27/96, p. 3). He imported several fine varieties of Burgundian grape stock about 1897 and began producing some rather fine wines.

In 1905 he released his champagne masterpiece, the "Oeil de Pedrix" ("eye of the partridge"). According to wine historian Charles Sullivan, "this was probably the most successful single California wine produced before Prohibition. It made Masson's name and fortune" (Sullivan, p. 108). Masson's champagnes had won the Grand Prize Certificate at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904, and a gold and silver medal at the 1905 Lewis and Clark Centennial in Portland, Oregon. Masson's champagnes were described by a contemporary journalist as the "Pride of California" (Sullivan, p. 91).

The earthquake of 1906 destroyed over 62,000 bottles of Masson champagne that had been stored in the cellars of San Jose's Vendome Hotel. Yet the Masson business was large enough to survive the disaster, and profited by the sudden wine shortage caused by the tremor. Not long after the earthquake Masson had over 500,000 bottles ready for marketing.

Masson's success allowed him to expand his operations. In a short time he had more than fifty acres under cultivation at the hill-top winery he now called "La Cresta." There he built a great stone and concrete winery using stones from the abandoned Saratoga Winery, constructed in 1866 as a grist mill and tannery (Cunningham, p. 91). To adorn the front of the building he acquired a Romanesque portal that had come from St. Patrick's Church in San Jose, destroyed in the earthquake. Masson built a stone house for himself near the winery, and although he and his family continued to live in San Jose, the "La Cresta" house was used to entertain Masson's guests on a baronial scale.

Although located near the winery, the building has not been included in the nomination. It was so substantially altered in 1948 that it no longer bears any resemblance to the original structure.

By the 1920's Masson's champagnes had achieved worldwide recognition. The high quality of the wine was certainly a major factor in the acclaim, but Masson's skill in promoting his products lay also at the heart of his success. He was able to place his wines at fine hotels such as the Vendome, where, unlike other California wines,

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they were served alongside high quality European vintages. He also placed his wines aboard the passenger liners of the North German Steamship Company, and he personally travelled across the United States to promote his products. Charles Sullivan has described Masson as the "King of the Expositions" since the winemaker was always active in having his wines presented and judged at a wide variety of fairs and expositions. This most certainly helped to bring his wines to the attention of the widest possible audience.

In the promotion of his winery, Masson continually stressed the heritage of European winemaking that stood behind his product. He emphasized his "Frenchness" and the fact that he came from a family with a long history of winemaking. For many years French was the official language spoken at La Cresta, providing a venerable aura linking the California operation to its European roots. Because of this association, Masson wines were better able to compete with French wines and not simply with other California vintages. And even apart from his European heritage, Masson emphasized the longevity of his operations in California. It was he who used his connection with the Lefrancis, whose vineyards produced wine in the 1859's, to claim for himself the honor of having the longest continuously operated winery in the country.

Just as it had survived the disaster of 1906, the Masson winery managed to weather the threat posed by Prohibition in the 1920's. Masson sold grapes on the wholesale market, and even managed to sell his champagnes with a special dispensation which allowed them to claim "medicinal" status. They were the only American champagnes to be allowed to do so.

In 1936 Masson sold La Cresta to local stockbroker Martin Ray, who in turn sold it to its present owners in 1943. Masson retained a small holding at the east edge of the property where he built a beautiful "chateau." From there he could survey his former "domaine" until his death in 1940. (Although located not far from the winery, the house is not included in the nomination. It was not built until the late 1930's and it is not within the property boundaries of the winery as they lie today.)

Masson was both an innovator and a traditionalist. He popularized a wine growing area, and used superior vines and techniques to create wines of a standard previously unattained by California viticulture.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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And Masson was a French immigrant who exemplified the contribution made to California winemaking by other French-Americans as well. Because of Masson's link with the Lefranc family and the New Almaden vineyards, the Masson Winery has been called the oldest continuously operated winery in Santa Clara County. Age and tradition have always been important to the winery, and have been stressed in advertising and labelling. The building most intimately associated with the Paul Masson champagne and wine business, the mountain winery, was built of both old and new materials. It symbolizes the union of ancient and modern skills and techniques which brought the Paul Masson wines to prominence.

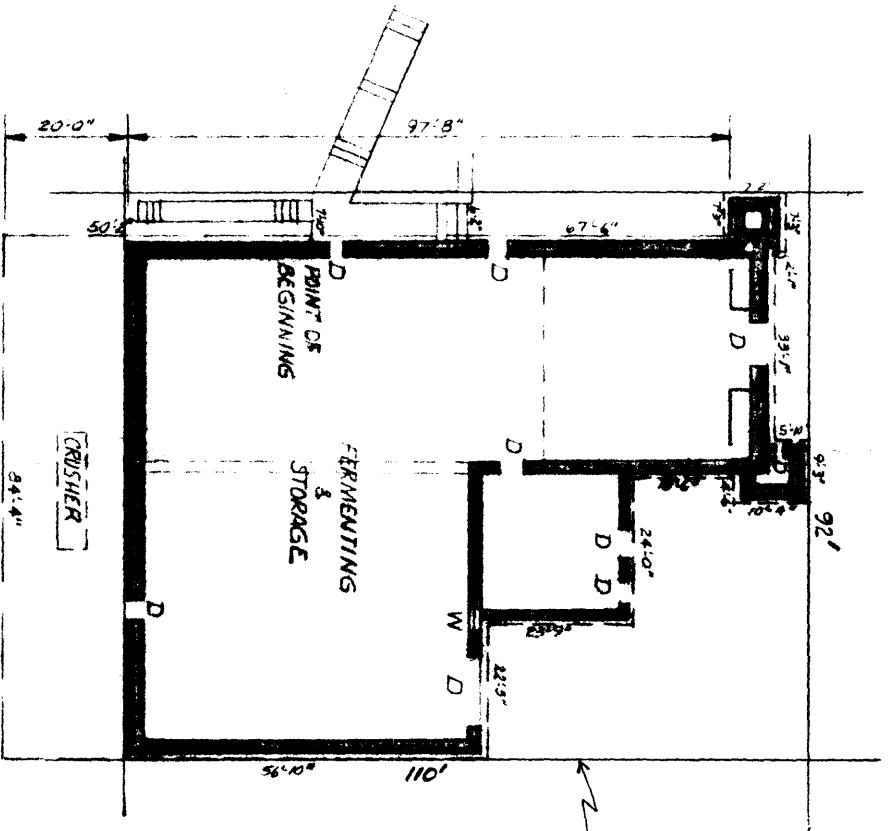
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- Santa Clara County map, ca. 1897 (in possession of Mrs. Melita Oden, Saratoga City Historian).
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- Saratoga Item. November 27, 1896, p. 3.
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- Sullivan, Charles L. Like Modern Edens, Winegrowing in Santa Clara Valley and Santa Cruz Mountains 1798-1981. Cupertino, California History Center, 1982.

(Great lengths have been taken in the compilation of this bibliography because of the lamentable destruction of Santa Clara County Assessment Books for the period studied)



NOMINATION BOUNDARY

PLAT

SCALE 1"=20'

PAUL MASSON INC dba

PAUL MASSON VINEYARDS

B.W. 144

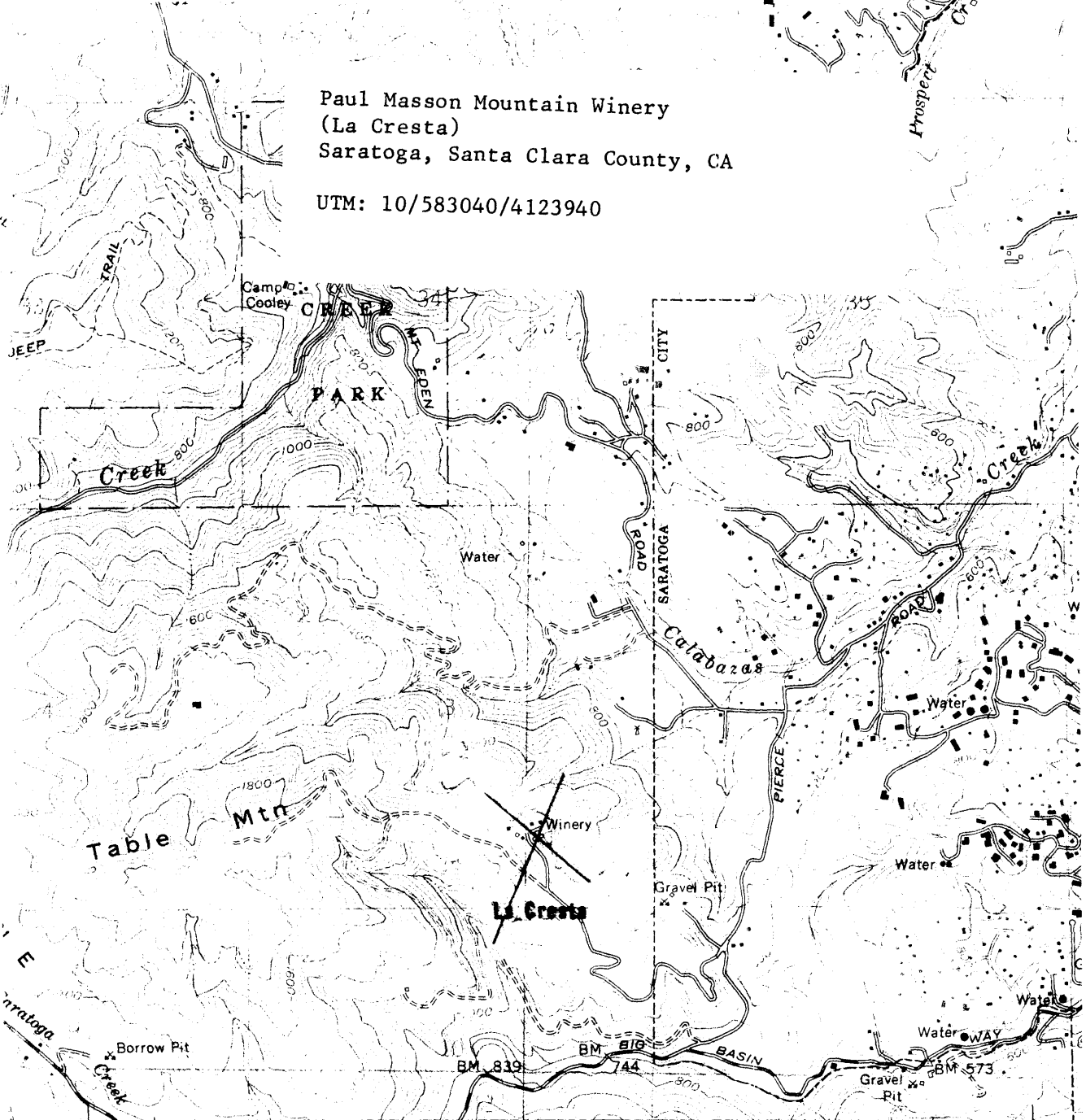
OFF PIERCE ROAD 3.3 ML N OF PO.
SARATOGA, CALIFORNIA

APPROVED: _____
DATE _____

ACCURACY CERTIFIED BY: _____

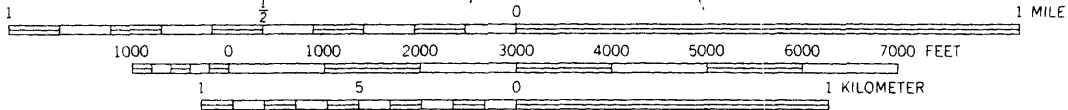
Paul Masson Mountain Winery
(La Cresta)
Saratoga, Santa Clara County, CA

UTM: 10/583040/4123940



(CASTLE ROCK RIDGE)
1558 11 NE

SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 10-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

NORTH
SHEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST