# A Legacy Cast in Stone: The Story of Elliston Vineyards

Tucked away in the quiet, oak-studded hills of Sunol, California, stands a testament to old-world craftsmanship and enduring hospitality. Elliston Vineyards is far more than a premier venue; it is a meticulously preserved piece of California history. Anchored by an awe-inspiring Romanesque stone mansion, the estate has spent more than a century welcoming guests, celebrating milestones, and cultivating shared memories.

The story of Elliston begins with Henry Hiram Ellis, a seafarer and pioneer who arrived in California during the 1849 Gold Rush. Finding success in the West, Ellis became a prominent civic leader, eventually serving as the last elected Chief of Police in San Francisco. His family's legacy became deeply intertwined with the city's elite—a connection beautifully illustrated when his son, Harry, married Jennie Coit, a member of the famed family behind San Francisco's iconic Coit Tower. Looking for a tranquil retreat away from the city's coastal fog, Henry found the sun-drenched microclimate of the Sunol Valley. Preparing for retirement, he purchased the land that would become his lasting legacy.

Between 1885 and 1890, Ellis oversaw the construction of a spectacular 17-room mansion. Hewn from blue sandstone quarried in nearby Niles Canyon, the mansion's walls—an astonishing 32 inches thick at their base—were erected with an eye toward permanence. High near the roofline, Ellis carved his personal monogram of an anchor and rope into the stone, an enduring nod to his maritime past. When the home was finished in 1890, he planted the property's first three acres of vines. The mansion soon became a destination for distinguished guests; most notably, in 1898, Ellis hosted Prince Kuhio and Princess Elizabeth of Hawaii at the estate during their world tour to visit Queen Victoria. Today, the property's architectural and cultural significance is formally recognized at the federal level on the National Register of Historic Places.

In the 21st century, Elliston Vineyards continues to evolve while honoring its deep roots. Under the thoughtful stewardship of current owner Kenny Zhao, ongoing renovation and preservation efforts ensure that the estate's historic character remains untouched even as its amenities are elevated for the modern guest.

The heart of the Elliston experience is the mansion itself, where history feels tangibly alive. Featuring graceful stone arches, rich wood detailing, authentic 19th-century furniture, and original artworks dating to the 19th century and earlier, the home acts as a breathtaking backdrop for gathering. On wedding days, the mansion's historic rooms—including the library, billiard room, and family room—are transformed into elegant preparation suites for the bridal party and groomsmen, offering a quiet, luxurious space before the celebration begins.

For decades, Elliston has been a premier destination for hospitality, specializing in weddings and social gatherings since the early 1980s. The estate effortlessly accommodates everything from intimate private gatherings of 10 to grand celebrations of up to 275 guests.

Ceremonies take place outdoors on the expansive lawn, framed by a Victorian gazebo, native flora, and century-old shade trees. Following a garden ceremony or an al fresco cocktail hour on the Terrace Patio, guests are invited into the beautifully appointed Terrace Room. Set gracefully into the hillside with vaulted ceilings and floor-to-length windows, the banquet hall bridges the gap between indoor comfort and the natural beauty of the surrounding property. Whether hosting a sunny summer reception or a cozy, candlelit winter dinner, the space adapts beautifully to the season.

Beyond weddings, Elliston is a destination for the everyday celebration of life. The vineyard produces an impressive portfolio of wines, pouring carefully crafted flights, vibrant sparkling wines, and robust reds in the tasting room. Guests are invited to linger over afternoon tea, share small plates in the wine lounge, or reserve spaces for private dining and corporate retreats. For those seeking a truly immersive experience, the estate offers exclusive overnight getaway options, allowing guests to sleep within the mansion's historic walls and wake up surrounded by rolling vineyards. With in-house catering, comprehensive beverage packages, and dedicated planning services, the Elliston team brings every vision to life.

At Elliston Vineyards, history is not kept behind velvet ropes—it is meant to be experienced. It is a place where glasses are raised against the backdrop of 19th-century stone, where old traditions blend with new beginnings, and where every guest becomes a part of the estate’s ongoing story.

**Our Story (Short Version)**

Nestled in the rolling hills of Sunol, Elliston Vineyards is a historic estate where timeless architecture, fine wine, and exceptional hospitality meet. Recognized at the federal level on the National Register of Historic Places, our estate is anchored by a spectacular Romanesque stone mansion. Built between 1885 and 1890 by California pioneer and San Francisco Police Chief Henry Hiram Ellis, the home was constructed from blue sandstone quarried in nearby Niles Canyon and designed as a tranquil retreat—a purpose it still serves beautifully today.

Under the care of owner Kenny Zhao, Elliston remains a working vineyard and a cherished gathering place, balancing rigorous historical preservation with elevated modern amenities. The estate features elegant event spaces, from our lush Ceremony Lawn and Victorian gazebo to the vaulted ceilings of our Terrace Room and scenic outdoor patios.

For decades, Elliston has specialized in hosting unforgettable events, ranging from intimate gatherings of 10 to grand wedding celebrations of up to 275 guests. On wedding days, the historic mansion—appointed with authentic 19th-century furniture and original fine art dating back to the 1800s and earlier—serves as luxurious bridal and groom preparation suites. Beyond private events, we invite the public to enjoy our rich heritage through wine tastings, afternoon tea service, and leisure dining. For those seeking a deeper connection to the estate, we also offer exclusive overnight getaway options. At Elliston Vineyards, we believe that history is best celebrated together. We invite you to wander our gardens, taste our wines, and add your own chapter to our enduring story.