

LEN PENNACHETTI
Cave Spring Winery, Jordan, Ontario

I started as a teenager. My dad and my uncle were partners in a company first called Thorold Concrete Block, which was at Lock 7 on the east side of the Canal at Thorold. That became General Concrete, which had plants in Stoney Creek, Toronto and Ottawa. The Seaway expansion expropriated the Thorold site. The plan was to move that plant to West St. Catharines and the land was purchased, and then the decision was made not to locate there. So, we sort of ended up with this land that had been purchased for that purpose and then never used it. My grandfather saw an opportunity and decided to farm it. It was an abandoned vineyard.



There were six kids in my family, and of the four boys, I was not old enough to work at the plant, but old enough to become my grandfather's factotum and so that's what happened. And so that was the beginning of my viticulture.

I got interested because of that, and then learned about the microclimate of Niagara in high school at Denis Morris where we had this incredible geography teacher – I apologize, his name escapes me – that, believe it or not, had a graduate degree, I don't know where it was from, but he had done a lot of research on growing *Vitis Vinifera* in Niagara.

That was in the mid to late 60s. There was also research going on in Vineland Station at the time that this teacher was aware of because that was his interest. He was Hungarian, and so he came from the Old World perspective and recognized that there was potential here, that our climate was, if anything, warmer than most of Hungary.

I talked my dad into buying a good site where we could grow the new varieties. He was as delusional as I was. He thought that was a great idea. That's how we ended up on Cave Spring Road in Beamsville, which we researched thoroughly as an ideal site to grow viniferas. And then a piece next door came available, which is this place where I now live. And we've been grape growing ever since. That was the year '78 that we planted the first vinifera.

