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## New winery will honor Roslyn's mining history

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ROSLYN — A plan to build a winery, Swiftwater Cellars, at the site of the old No. 9 coal mine overlooking the Rope Rider Golf Course at Suncadia got a vote of approval Friday from a man with a significant sentimental investment — Roslyn's John Ferro.

The project, expected to cost \$10 million by the time it opens in the fall of 2010, will include a winery, wine tasting bar, restaurant, pro shop and event space.

Ferro, now 90, was 16 when he began his career as a miner at the No. 9. He worked there until 1963 when the closure of the No. 9 marked the end of Roslyn's mining industry.

Seventy four years after he went into the mine for the first time, Ferro and his wife, Agnes, who have been married 68 years, were front and center at a groundbreaking ceremony marking the beginning of construction on the new winery.

"I am very pleased," said a smiling Ferro, one of eight people Swiftwater Cellars owners' Don and Lori Watts invited to don a hard hat and hoist a commemorative pick axe for the official groundbreaking. After the No. 9 closed, he said, he thought that was the end. Now, the site will have new life — and pay homage to the Roslyn area's proud coal mining history.

That also clearly pleased Nick Henderson who runs the Roslyn Museum. His family also has roots planted in coal mining. Henderson told an audience of about 100 people that his grandfather worked in the No. 9 until an injury forced him to quit. His father also planned to go to work there but after putting on his gear and watching the cars full of miners disappear over "the knuckle" into a steep drop down into the shaft, he thought better of it and walked back to the office to turn in his gear, Henderson told the crowd with a laugh.

Later, viewing blow-ups of the project, Henderson restated his delight at the plans.

The architect, Jeff Hoffman of BCRA out of Wenatchee, designed the building in a way that captures the site's history, he said. On Friday, orange mesh fencing marked off areas of historic significance. They'll be marked later to designate what they were during the time the mine was operating.

"The architect absolutely got it," Henderson said. "I think they've done a great job. They (the Watts) come to the museum quite often. Don's a small town guy. He understands the importance of small town history."

Swiftwater Cellars, established in 2007, is owned by Don and Lori Watts who own a home in Tumble Creek. The Watts, from the Tri Cities area, were first generation farmers who founded Watts Brothers, a frozen food company, in 1977. Over the years, they grew the business to manage over 20,000 acres and 500 employees. The Watts sold the business in 2001.

The Watts family has been growing grapes for 15 years and owns 300 acres at Zephyr Ridge in the Horse Heaven Hills area.

Swiftwater Cellars produces 2,500 cases a year and plans to increase that to 5,000 to 7,000 cases in the future. The company's wines, made from its own grapes and grapes sourced from a number of the Northwest's best vineyards, are currently made at Artifex in Walla Walla. They will be made at the winery site beginning with the 2010 harvest. The wines will be offered under two labels, Swiftwater Cellars and No. 9.

"Swiftwater Cellars will be the crème de la crème," said Dixie Huey, a consultant to the winery. "No. 9 will be our number two wine. We will only be selling here. It will be a 'house pour.'"

Tony Rynders, a well-known wine making and grape growing consultant for ultra-premium wineries who has more than 20 years of experience making wine in Oregon, Washington, California, Italy and Australia, is Swiftwater Cellars' winemaker.

The Watts' son and daughter-in-law, Donnie and Meghan Watts, are key players in the operational management of the company. Michael Hogue, founder and former owner of Hogue Cellars, is a partner in the enterprise.

"I came up here for the first time when I was 11 or 12 years old and stayed with a mining family. But I never thought I'd see this," Hogue said with a grin.

As for Watts, his delight was obvious in his opening remarks to the audience.

"I have a job now where I can go to work in a T-shirt, shorts and flip-flops," he said.

Why build his winery at Suncadia?

He and Lori have had the opportunity to travel a number of places and visit many wineries, he said.

"What I always remembered were the wineries that were a good experience," he said. "That's what we're going to give you — a good experience and a great glass of wine."

The experience will be free, he said, then joked, "we'll charge you for the wine."

Watts said after coming to the Roslyn-Cle Elum area, "I just fell in love with this place."

Lori was equally enthusiastic.

Missy, a slender mixed-breed dog rescued from a shelter in Yakima, was at her side.

"She's going to be the winery dog," Lori said. "She was abused but she's doing fine. Every winery needs a dog."

Michael Kosmin, executive vice president of sales for Suncadia, said, "We're looking forward to adding this great amenity to the resort. It's been a challenging year. We believe we've made good progress and this is one more step to fulfilling the vision."

Friday's event, played out in a setting accented by a car full of coal and tables displaying other mining artifacts from the Roslyn Museum, included a ceremonial toast.

The winery will be built on a 15-acre site. The building will be 41,000 square feet with the restaurant taking up 3,000 square feet of that space. Current plans call for the restaurant to offer flat bread pizza, paninis and salads with wine, beer and, eventually, a full bar. The Watts hope to work with local businesses such as Owens Meats. Suncadia will lease space from the Watts for the pro shop and golf cart storage. Swiftwater Cellars plans to partner with Suncadia for special events. The Watts also plan to build 26 "fractional ownership" cottages on the 15-acre site. The cottages will be sold to owners who will share ownership. For example, a group of friends or family members might buy a cottage and then share the use of it.

Bethlehem Construction is the contractor on the project. Construction starts this week.

For information, or to follow construction progress, go to [www.swiftwatercellars.com](http://www.swiftwatercellars.com).