

# The Porter Family



*Seated: Tim Porter, Bev and Tom Porter, Heather and Steven Wolfe  
Making mischief: Alex, CharLee, Madison*

## **A story of science, love and sandpipers. Yes, sandpipers.**

We (Tom and Beverly Porter) wanted to grow a few grapes and perhaps start a winery one day. But no idea stays little for very long with the Porter Family. All of us are avid scientists, once our family purchased this wonderful property south of the Stag's Leap district in Napa Valley, we began to study it and discover its joys. During that process, we unearthed an intriguing piece of history which gave us clues to the history of life on Earth itself.

We discovered the fossilized footprints of a sandpiper dating back millions upon millions of years ago, only heightening our wonder and love of this property. Of course, we continue to study it, and discover more. And each day we find new reasons to love and treasure it.

"We love the wonders of nature and the rules that connect these wonders together in endless patterns," says Tom Porter.

**"Equipped with his five senses, man explores the universe around him  
and calls the adventure Science."**

~ **Edwin Powell Hubble, *The Nature of Science*, 1954**

This love affair with the land began with patience. Our family watched the hillsides, the terrain, and the seasons. We studied the vines, the soil, and put our faces up to the wind. As we followed the growth of the vines, we realized we absolutely had to share this land with others—to turn the fruit of this place into a wine to be shared by many. Not wanting to disturb the terrain we had come to know and love, we decided that the best thing to do was to create an underground cellar in which to craft our wines. So in a hillside in the middle of the vineyard, we created a winery. The only clue to its existence is two entrances on either end. Vines still stand up and around and over the hill.

“It was here, in creating our 17,000 square foot underground cellar, that we discovered the long ago history of this land in the form of our sandpiper’s fossilized footsteps. It was an electrifying find,” says Tom Porter.

“The hill actually began as a shoreline millions of years ago,” says Tom. “Over the millennia, it was uplifted into the hills above our vineyard, and then much later slumped downhill to its present location. The tracks of that tiny bird, once on the surface of a sandy beach that was catastrophically covered with volcanic ash, were only discovered when we dug into the hillside to create our winery. Buried many feet below the surface, it was a reminder that we are not the first to tread this ground, nor will we be the last. And it is our responsibility to steward this land in a way that protects and preserves it, not just for our children, but for the planet.”

The fossil has now become part of our family, and the sandpiper from long ago now leaves its tracks on every label of Porter Family Vineyards wine. “It’s part of us now,” says Tom. “In one way, we discovered it – but in another way, it has discovered us and led us to understand so much more about this place, and our role in it.”

**"Science does not know its debt to imagination." ~Ralph Waldo Emerson**