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Foley Family Wines Buys Oregon's The Four Graces

Pinot Noir specialist is Bill Foley's first acquisition in Willamette Valley for his growing wine company

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Foley Family Wines has acquired The Four Graces, an Oregon Pinot Noir specialist, expanding Bill Foley's growing portfolio of wineries into Oregon at a time when the state's vineyards are attracting a lot of outside attention. The sale includes the 54-acre Black Family Estate Vineyard in the Dundee Hills region, and the 41-acre Doe Ridge Estate Vineyard in Yamhill-Carlton, as well as a tasting room in Dundee. The purchase price was not disclosed.

"I've been looking [in Oregon] for a long time," Foley told *Wine Spectator*, adding that he looked at about 10 different operations in Oregon before purchasing The Four Graces. "I've never found a tasting room and vineyard that met the level of Four Graces. This is the first one that really had some gravitas."

Paula Marie Black and Steven Black founded The Four Graces, named in honor of their four daughters, in 2003, when they purchased an existing vineyard, which became the Black Family Estate, adding the Doe Ridge vineyard in 2005. The brand produces Pinot Gris and Pinot Blanc, in addition to Pinot Noir. In a statement, Paula said, "I raise my glass and toast Bill Foley and Foley Family Wines and may you continue to grace timeless and beautiful wines to us all."

Robert Nicholson, of the mergers-and-acquisitions advisory firm International Wine Associates, said that the Black family sold the winery for family reasons. "It was time for them to move on to other things," said Nicholson.

Foley is chairman of Jacksonville, Fla.-based Fidelity National Financial and Fidelity National Information Services, but since 1996, he's become one of the biggest names in wine acquisitions. The majority of the Foley Family Wines portfolio is based in California, including Lincourt, Kuleto, Chalk Hill, Sebastiani, Merus and Firestone. There is also Three Rivers Winery in Washington and a growing list of brands in New Zealand including Vavasour, Clifford Bay and the recently purchased Martinborough Vineyard Estates.

This is the latest of several notable acquisitions of Oregon vineyard land in the past year. International Wine Associates was also involved in a recent purchase by Burgundy-based négociant Maison Louis Jadot of a 32-acre vineyard in Oregon's Willamette Valley. "Oregon is attracting attention," noted Nicholson. Jackson Family Wines also bought several vineyards and Domaine Drouhin increased its holdings by 279 acres.

Foley said that Laurent Montalieu will stay on as The Four Graces winemaker, but Leslie Mead Renaud, who oversees winemaking for both Lincourt Vineyards and Foley Estate, will become a consultant.