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# WAYWARD TENDRILS

## Newsletter

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A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S SOCIETY

October 2000

### The Southern California Wine & Wine Industry Collection at Cal Poly Pomona University Library

by

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Special Collections Librarian

*[In our October 1998 issue we noted this new collection focusing on an often-neglected area of California wine history. We are pleased to welcome the library to Tendril membership and learn more about this ambitious project from their exuberant librarian. — Ed.]*



he editor of this stimulating publication has invited me to share the background and description of our wine collection located at the University Library on the campus of California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. Before launching into

that, let me first say that it has been a complete delight to become acquainted with the erudite yet entertaining *Wayward Tendrils*. After browsing several issues, it was clear that a serious exploration of all back issues would be a necessary component of my literary wine education. So far, there have been tantalizing aspects to each newsletter issue — new titles discovered, wine mysteries investigated, and intriguing matters revealed. A thrill of anticipation precedes the arrival of the next new issue.



The University Library at Cal Poly Pomona has for many years cultivated a general circulating collection of wine related books and magazines which support the wine appreciation courses offered each quarter by our distinguished Collins School of Hospitality Management. At this time we have approximately 350 wine titles in the general circulating collection. However, the story I am about to tell you concerns another wine collection. One day, while I mused over a local mystery, the seed of an idea was planted that eventually grew into what is now a new special collection focused on the Southern California wine industry.

Several years ago my family moved to Rancho Cucamonga, a community located approximately 40 miles to the east of Los Angeles, at the base of the San Bernardino Mountains. Prior to moving there, I knew nothing of the area, other than noting that some people showed an irresistible inclination to laugh upon hearing the distinctive and rhythmic Native American word "Cucamonga." Rancho Cucamonga turned out to be a lovely and affordable surprise amid the crowded suburbs and inflated land values of Southern California. We enthusiastically embraced our new locality with its broad expanses, sandy terrain, surging winds, and panoramic mountain views.

Like many local residents, I found myself daily driving past winery buildings, some active and others ghostly silent. Looking out over the wide-open fields and vacant lots, I would see weeds and meadow grass intermingled with spreading mounds of grapevines, all of which were arranged in faintly defined rows. "What's going on here?" I wondered. "Why do grapevines spring up alongside the weeds?"



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Following a budding interest in local history, I delved into source after source, searching for answers to my puzzling observations. I discovered a story already familiar to some of you, one going back almost 100 years to when the Cucamonga area was home to what was called "the world's largest vineyard" — a vineyard with over 5,000 contiguous acres, centered at the village of Guasti. I also discovered the story of wine in California, a tale going back over two centuries to the founding of the missions.

In spring of 1997, several of us at the library began discussing the possibility of starting a new special collection. At the time we were not quite sure what the collection would comprise. Certainly it was important that the collection relate to distinctive aspects of our curricula at Cal Poly Pomona. But, in addition to that, we wanted the collection to relate outward to our community, to something distinctive in our region. Although not normally inclined to have "brainstorms," I felt a prescient prickling at the base of my neck as I inquired, "What about wine?" The idea took immediate flight and began igniting the interest, enthusiasm and imagination of my colleagues.

After contacting many libraries, museums and historical societies, we confirmed that no other institution was taking the comprehensive approach to capturing the story of wine and the wine industry for Southern California. Tendril Tom Pinney was an early advisor to us and wrote the historical essay *Wine in Southern California* issued at the inauguration of the collection. Our local growers and vintners, the City of Rancho Cucamonga, local wine writer Vick Knight, and wine historian William Heintz have all shown their support by donating materials to the collection. Sid Berger, then Special Collections Librarian at UC Riverside and now Director at the California Center for the Book at UCLA, offered strong support saying, "This is important. It needs to be done. Go for it!" (I might add that Sid is much attuned to the wine scene, having as his sibling wine critic and commentator Dan Berger.)

With many words of encouragement ringing in our ears, we excitedly stepped forward and launched the Southern California Wine and Wine Industry Collection in October 1998 with a "Wines and Vines of the Inland Valley" program, exhibit and wine tasting. The program included many vintners and members of local wine families who described the history of winemaking in the Cucamonga area. A videotape of the event is currently being edited into an educational program that will run on local cable television and eventually be offered for sale. In 1999 we focused on Temecula wine with a "Celebrating

Temecula Valley Wine Country" book talk, exhibit, wine tasting and silent auction.

The Southern California Wine and Wine Industry Collection has been built for two years now, and we have accrued over 200 volumes and 17 linear feet of archival materials. We have created a number of subject files on Southern California wine and wineries. Included in our collection are books, oral histories, photographs, videos, posters, wine, labels, bottles, glasses, medals, and T-shirts. We have all of the California Winemen Oral History Series from the Bancroft Library and a number of wine-related oral histories done by the City of Rancho Cucamonga. We have all issues of the lovely but short-lived *South Coast Wine* magazine, and have acquired microfilms from UC Davis of the Los Angeles *Wine Review*, *California Grape Grower*, *Wines & Vines*, and various Wine Institute reports and bulletins. There is a photo album, once owned by Garrett & Company, containing over 70 photographs of Guasti and the Italian Vineyard Company.

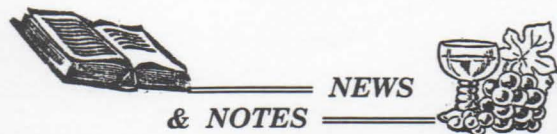
Our copy of the *First Annual Report of the [California] Board of State Viticultural Commissioners* is signed by Arpad Haraszthy. (We would appreciate someday having the subsequent reports). All books and periodicals in the collection are fully listed in the university library's online catalog at <http://opac.lib.csupomona.edu/>.

Enclosed with your copy of this newsletter, you should find a brochure that describes the collection we are building and the types of materials being collected. [Its content also appears at <http://www.csupomona.edu/~library/LibraryInfo/special/WineIndCol.html>.] On the back of the brochure is a section describing how you can help. We are excited and delighted to receive donations of books, periodicals, and other wine-related materials, both for our Southern California wine collection as well as for the library's general circulating collection. And, as you can imagine, we also happily welcome financial support! To all those interested persons with an enthusiasm for wine, its history and literature, and to those having a keen interest in California's wine industry, we issue the invitation to join with us as we build this new collection.

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E-mail: [dcadamson@csupomona.edu](mailto:dcadamson@csupomona.edu). — Ed.]

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**BOUNTEOUS 10th ANNIVERSARY ACCOLADES** for our Newsletter! Congratulations to our dedicated contributors — the following appreciative praises are for you! Carole Hicke (Regional Oral History Office, Bancroft Library) writes: "I received the copy of your newsletter — more like a magazine — and am most impressed. The articles are informative and the graphics wonderful." Danette C. Adamson, Special Collections Librarian at Cal-Poly University, Pomona, and a new subscriber: "*The Wayward Tendrils* is wonderful, captivating, scholarly, and practical. Will it be possible to get a complete run of it back to its beginning in 1990 for our wine collection?" [Ed.— Yes, back issues are available. \$15/year. Don't miss Danette's article this issue on the University Library collection.]

#### A TENDRIL THOUGHT

"The ecstatic heights of collecting can be reached only by sharing the fruits of pursuit with like-minded companions, not only through the collection itself but also through the spoken and printed word. Inevitably, the things man collects inspire their own literature...." [*American Bottles & Flasks and Their Ancestry* by Helen McKearin and Kenneth Wilson, New York: Crown, 1978.]

**WAYWARD TENDRILS NEWSLETTER**  
**5-YEAR INDEX**  
**Vol.6 (1996) — Vol.10 (2000)**  
**enclosed with this issue.**

**JUST A NOTE:** In our last five years — 20 issues — our Newsletter has reviewed, noted, or otherwise discussed more than 350 wine books!

#### ARTSY WINE BOOKS

If your coffee-table top has available space, here are a few appropriate titles that could decorate it very nicely. *Posters of the Belle Epoque: The Wine Spectator Collection* by Jack Rennert. Originally printed in 1990, a second printing was done in 1999; 13 x 10, illustrated with 212 posters, in full color. *Les Mémoires du Champagne* (1983); *Les Mémoires du Bordeaux* (1984); *Les Mémoires du Bourgogne* (1985) — three titles by Georges Renoy (Bruxelles), 12½ x 9, each over 300 pages, lavishly illustrated with original aquarelles by the author, wine labels, photographs, etc. *The Architecture of Wine: Bordeaux and Napa Valley* by Dirk Mey-

höfer and Olaf Gollnek (Corte Madera, CA, 2000, 235 pp.) features eight chateaux and twelve Napa wineries. Text in German, French, and English. Stunning photographs.

#### WINE & HEALTH: Myths & Facts

Tendril Erik Skovenborg, diligent researcher into wine & health matters and an avid collector of wine books and bookplates with wine motifs, has recently published (in Denmark, text in Danish) *Vin og Helbred : myter og facts*. "It took me almost two years of spare time to write, and I think it covers most of the wine & health subjects you could imagine." We hope the publisher realizes the need for an English translation in the near future.

#### DUFOUR Reprinted!

Editions la Valsainte, Vevey, Switzerland, has reprinted in facsimile John J. Dufour's quite rare *American Vine-Dresser's Guide* (originally published 1826, Cincinnati, Ohio). Gabler credits the work with being "the most accurate account of early 19th century grape-growing in the U.S.," while Pinney calls it the "first truly American book on grape culture." The price is a very reasonable 58 Swiss francs (includes taxes, shipping & handling), or approximately 25–30\$USA / 30–35\$Euro. Information on the book can be found on their website: [www.valsainte.ch](http://www.valsainte.ch). Or, contact Yves Bordet at Editions la Valsainte: ☎ 41.21.922.7439; FAX 41.21.922.2159; e-mail: [edition@valsainte.ch](mailto:edition@valsainte.ch).

#### NEW SOURCE FOR BOOKS

Received a mailing from Joanne Hendricks, Cookbooks "Antiquarian—Out of Print—Unusual," with some interesting "Wine, Alcohol and Beverage" titles. She is at 488 Greenwich St., New York, NY 10013; ☎ 212.226.5731.

#### ROOT STALK?

Writer Janene Liles, in her recently published *Wine Tasting in San Diego & Beyond* (San Diego: Popcorn Press & Media), informs the reader: "Do you know that most of the grapes planted in Mexico actually have a different root stalk than the variety that is grown for its wine grapes?" Is this a proper term? Just curious.

#### BOOK TRADE HISTORY ONLINE

Gleaned from the Spring 2000 ABAA Newsletter: Since 1991 British book dealer Sheila Markham has been publishing monthly profiles of prominent antiquarian book trade figures in Bookdealer. These profiles and the continuing series are now available on her website: [www.sheila-markham.com](http://www.sheila-markham.com). Great list of book people to read about!



## IN THE WINE LIBRARY by Bob Foster



***Port and the Douro*** by Richard Mayson. New York: Faber and Faber, 2000. 320 pages, softback, \$16.

Port lovers rejoice! Richard Mayson has written another book on port and it is superb. At a mere \$16 it is an absolute steal and belongs in every port lover's library!

Moreover, the publishers, Faber and Faber, have finally broken out of their mold of publishing serious wine books filled with pages and pages of text totally bereft of maps, photos, or any illustrations. That is not to say that this book could be called lavish or even colorful. But it does have twenty-two black and white drawings, three black and white maps and eight pages of color photographs. This hardly represents a jump into modern wine book format in that all the color photographs are lumped together in one folio in the middle of the book rather than near the appropriate text. Never-the-less, this is a vast improvement over the previous works from this publisher. Change is inevitable and this change adds much to the work. Now if only Faber and Faber could reach farther so as to have color photographs alongside the relevant text, color maps and color reproduction of labels, they would be at the level of most other top-notch wine books. The publisher has taken a first step, so wine lovers can only hope for more.

That the Faber & Faber change came in this work is only fitting, as it is the best book on port in years. Mayson clearly understands the region. The book begins with the early history of Portugal, England, and Spain so critical to the discovery of making port as a fortified wine. But while most works on port stop with these early days, Mayson traces the story into modern times and carefully chronicles the impact of modern-day events.

There are fascinating sections on the soil, the climate, and the vineyard classifications, as well as grafting, training and pruning of the vines. Each of the major *quintas* are covered, and Mayson gives valuable hints to would-be visitors about where to stay and where to dine.

There is a lengthy description of the various methods for the making of port that extend from the traditional foot-trodden cement *lagars* to the latest in autovinification devices. Most port lovers will be fascinated with the chapter on the various types and styles of port that includes the author's assessment of major vintages back to 1896. There is a substantial chapter on each of the shippers with Mayson's candid evaluations of their wines and style. Finally, there is a chapter on the other wines of the region, many of which are now being imported into the U.S. Very highly recommended.

***The River City Wine Primer*** by Joseph DeLissio. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2000. 288 pp. \$25.95.

Given that there are a plethora of beginning wine books on the market, and given that some of them are simply outstanding, an author sitting down to write yet another work in this area needs to have something new to say, some unique approach so as to stand out in a crowd. Sadly, this book does not achieve that level of quality. There's nothing seriously wrong with the book; it's just not special in a field already ably covered by the likes of Hugh Johnson, Oz Clarke, Kevin Zraly, and others. There is simply no need to purchase this work. Not recommended.

***Guide to Choosing, Serving & Enjoying Wine*** by Allen Balik and Virginia Morris. New York: Lightbulb Press, 2000. 144 pp, softback. \$14.95.

Lightbulb Press has published a number of guidebooks (all tall and narrow in format) on money topics such as *The Wall Street Journal Guide to Understanding Money & Investing* and *A Woman's Guide to Investing*. With this volume, the series turns to non-financial matters with an introductory book on wine. Recognizing that the world did not need another dreary introductory wine book, the authors have created a visually interesting, upbeat, breezy guide to wine that informs without being intimidating. The pages are alive with drawings, maps, and photographs. Many of the key points are made through the use of humor rather than the mere statement of fact.

The authors correctly note that the best way to learn about wine is to taste, taste, and taste again. But when it comes to what wines to actually taste, I think they stumble. The book recommends only two main courses of action: taking a wine class or going to a wine dinner at a restaurant. The authors make no mention of any of the excellent, currently available wine books and make only a passing reference to the existence of unnamed wine newsletters or web sites. Given the amazing impact on the market by some publications, surely the readers deserve more direction. There should have been a section on learning how to evaluate a wine newsletter or book—learning how to evaluate the extent to which the taster's palate agrees or disagrees with such a source. By that approach a beginner learns which to follow and which to ignore. Additionally, there is no mention of any books for further reading in any areas.

Even with its faults, this book has a wealth of information presented in a lively style. It is a solid reference work that is most readable. Recommended.

[Excerpted from Bob's regular *California Grapevine* wine-book-review column—with appreciation.]



## THE FOAMING RACKET: PUSHKIN ON WINE

by  
Robert W. Hutton

[Tendril Bob Hutton has a serious fancy for Russian history, the Russian language, and Russian wines. He treats us to a taste of Russian poetry (his translations) and Russian wine—originally published in the Fall 1988 issue of the *American Wine Society Journal*. — Ed.]



Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin (1799-1837) has been considered to be the foremost poet of Russia, and to those who can read Russian, one of the greatest poets in the world. Pushkin was a child of the Russian intelligentsia. Born in 1799, he was of the generation

which was exposed to the post-Napoleonic liberalization of Russian society and reflected many of its contradictions. His grandfather, as many think, was Hannibal, the Moor of Peter the Great, a court favorite who had been purchased from Africa to amuse the Czar.

As a Russian aristocrat, Pushkin was familiar with the various wines which were available and widely used in such circles. What is quite interesting from a wine appreciation standpoint is not only that he knew and wrote about the imported French wines which had great prestige in those circles, but also that he had a great knowledge of the domestically produced Russian and Georgian wines. At that time, no one outside Russia had any idea that any decent wine was made in Russia; it was hard enough to convince the vodka-drinking Russian populace that such a thing as wine made from grapes existed, and was worth drinking.

As a Russian aristocrat, Pushkin was expected to understand the various French vintages, since the first language of that particular group of Russian society was French, and they dealt with all things French. Indeed, one of the reasons given for Pushkin's mastery of the Russian language was the fact that since his parents turned him over almost completely to his Russian-speaking nursemaid to

raise, he was not given a concentrated dose of French which he would have been given if he had been raised directly by his parents.

Such an understanding of French wines was shown in a passage from his novel-in-verse, *Eugene Onegin*:

*From the Widow Cliquot or Moet  
A blessed wine  
In a bottle frozen for the poet  
Just then was taken to the table.  
It sparkled like Hippocrene;  
Its play and foam  
(Resembling something or other)  
Bubbled for me: For it  
My last lepta, it seems,  
I spent. Remember, friends?  
In its disturbing streams  
Are born a little stupidity,  
How many jokes, and verses,  
And arguments, and happy dreams!*

*But the foaming racket  
Betrayed my belly,  
And now glorious Bordeaux  
Is what I prefer.  
For Ay I'm no more enabled  
Ay, like a mistress  
Glittering, windy, living,  
Willful, and empty . . .  
But you, Bordeaux, like a friend  
Who in woe and sadness  
A comrade always, everywhere,  
Ready to render service  
Or quietly to share leisure.  
Long live Bordeaux, our friend!*

In this passage from Chapter 4, Onegin mentions his problems with Champagne, how his high living caught up with him, and how he had to settle for Bordeaux. It seems strange that a fairly strong red wine such as Bordeaux would settle his stomach when a fairly light and fizzy wine such as Champagne would cause problems. One wonders — was Champagne, particularly that for the Russian market, in those days so highly acidic and sweet that it could become distasteful, and was Bordeaux (or claret) so weak and mild that a reformed rake like Onegin would find it to be calming? I have found that some literary commentators feel that the allusion to Champagne refers to Onegin's youth and loves, and the allusion to Bordeaux refers to his sour old age. Perhaps. I always thought that Champagne was the favorite drink of old rakes — at least they could afford it! But, then it may simply be that



literary types know literature, but not wine.

As for Russian vintages, one Russian wine which was important at the time shows up in a later passage in Eugene Onegin. During the party celebrating Tatiana's name-day (the celebration of the saint's day for which one has been named, almost as important in Russian society as one's birthday), Pushkin names the famous (among Russians) Tsimlianskoe Red Sparkling wine from the lower Don River Valley.

*Of course, not only Eugene  
Could see Tanya's disarray  
But the target of glances  
Then was the fat meat pie  
(Alas, it was oversalted);  
And to the tarry bottles  
Between the hot dish and sweet  
the Tsimlianskoe was brought  
With glasses narrow and long  
Just like your fingers  
Zizi, crystal of my soul  
Object of my innocent verses  
A love of the enticing vial.  
You, of whom I have become drunk!*  
Onegin, 5-XXXIII

In his exhaustive four-volume annotated translation of Eugene Onegin, Vladimir Nabokov mentions the Tsimlianskoe wine in this passage as a famous Russian sparkling wine, without mentioning the fact that it is red, or that it was made by the Don Cossacks. One point he misses completely is the line on the "tarry bottles." That detail is a prime indication that while Pushkin knew exactly what he was describing, many later generations of Russians did not.

Tsimlianskoe Red Sparkling wine is a very unusual wine, originally grown and made in the Don River Valley by the Don Cossacks. It is one of the oldest wines to have originated on Russian territory, and like many things in modern Russia, owes its beginning to Peter the Great, the Czar who brought Russia into the modern world of the 1700s. One of the results of his Azov campaign, where he was attempting to free the southern areas of Russia from foreign domination, was the clearing of Turks and Tatars from the Don River Valley and the opening of the Sea of Azov to Russian influence. While the continuing Turkish domination of the rest of the Black Sea Coast made the sea connection unusable for the moment, the continuing presence of the Cossacks as a representation of Russian power was necessary to keep the Turks from trying to take the

area back. With the Cossack tradition of freedom and freebooting, Peter was presented with the problem of figuring out a way of getting the Cossacks to settle down and stay put without making it so obvious that they would resent such dictations and take off without permission.

Given Peter's taste for Hungarian and German wines, his choice was both practical and inspired; he ordered them to plant grapes, make wine, and send a certain amount of wine to him at St. Petersburg. The rest they could keep themselves. The Don River Valley below the Cossack station of Tsimlianskoe was the first bit of territory to come under Russian control with a climate which would allow a full ripening of wine grapes, and the possibility of a grape industry. Even today, it is the northernmost area in which a continuing wine industry exists in modern Russia.

Peter imported grapes from Hungary and Austria; he also imported vine dressers and wine-makers from those countries to teach the Cossacks. It worked. The Cossacks stayed put, grew their grapes, made their wine and developed their own techniques. They planted their vineyards on the steep slopes just under the north bank of the Don River. The vines were protected from winter winds blowing over the cold steppes from the north, and were provided with natural irrigation by springs coming out of those slopes. The river also provided a means of transportation which was lacking in many other agricultural regions.

The Cossacks developed a unique method for making their Tsimlianskoe Red Sparkling wine. The grapes, a mixture of the red varieties grown in the area, were picked as completely ripe as possible in the middle of October, and allowed to wither and dry under small sheds in the fields, to concentrate sugar in the course of the late autumn warmth. (Since this is a technique used in the Valpolicella region of Italy, one cannot help but wonder about the "Austrian" vine dressers brought in by Peter. Could they have come from the southern reaches of Austria, which could be considered to be a northern part of the present Italy?)

After about a month of drying and withering, the grapes were crushed and placed in open vats in the same sheds, and allowed to ferment. When the outside temperature dropped sufficiently to stop fermentation, the cap was ladled off carefully, in the expectation that the mold which had formed would not be dropped in the vat with the semi-fermented wine. The wine was placed in kegs, which again were put under the sheds out in the fields. During the cold part of the winter the wine would clear itself, and age



to a slight extent. Towards March, the wine in the kegs would be bottled, a heavy cork put in the bottle and tied down with string, and sealed with pine tar. The bottles would then be put in pits dug in the fields, covered with straw and earth, and allowed to warm up as spring approached and undergo a secondary fermentation. Digging up the caches of bottles in the late spring was always subject to surprises: sometimes the bottles had burst, sometimes they were completely flat, and sometimes, the times that made it all worthwhile, they were full of a delicious, sweet, sparkling wine.

There had to be a reason for going to so much trouble, using such an unpredictable method of wine making, for a wine of this type, and it must have developed from the fact that the Don River area was the only region in the Russia of that time which could make its own wine. Indeed, during recurring trade embargoes against imported goods, including wine, the Don River wines were the only wines available to the upper classes in the capital – so it is no wonder that Pushkin mentioned them so prominently. The Don River wines began to decline in relative importance after the terrible winter of 1847-48 which froze most of the vineyards just at a time when competing wines from the new winegrowing areas of Crimea, the Ukraine, and Bessarabia were coming into production.

Don River wines were also mentioned in another famous Pushkin poem:

*Sparkling among wide fields  
There he lies! Hello, Don!  
From your distant sons  
I bring you honors.  
As an honored brother  
The rivers know the quiet Don  
From the Araxes to the Euphrates  
I bring you honors.*

*Resting from the evil hunt,  
Of those disturbing you,  
Don horses drink from  
The Aprachian stream.*

*Prepare, then Noble Don  
For those searching for  
The foaming and flashing juice  
Of your vineyards.*

A.S. Pushkin, 1829

Pushkin visited the Don region in 1829 when he was sent on one of his recurrent "exiles" from St. Petersburg. The occasion in 1829 was to report on

the ongoing war against the Turks, following their expulsion from Georgia and Armenia. The road to the Caucasus and Georgia led past the Cossack capital of Novocherkassk, where he would have had ample opportunity to sample Cossack wines.

He reported on his further travels in a book, *Travels to Arzrum*, 1829. (The Arzrum to which he refers is the present Erzurum, in eastern Turkey.)

*On the way across the Caucasus Mountains, ... "He advised us to leave our carriages at Kobi, and we proceeded from there on horseback. With him we drank Kakhethian wine for the first time from stinking wineskins, recalling the feasting in the Iliad – 'and wine in goat skins, to our band!'"*

*... The Georgians do not drink like us – and [what they drink] is quite strong. Their wines do not travel well and soon spoil, but in their place, they are excellent. Kakhethian and Karabakh wines compare with quite a few Burgundy wines. The wine is kept in "Marans," huge vats buried in the earth. They are opened with great ceremonies. Recently a Russian dragoon, secretly opening such a vat, fell into it and drowned in Kakhethian wine, like the unfortunate Clarence in his butt of Malaga [sic]."*

Pushkin's notes on Georgian wine are very much to the point, and valuable even today. While wineskins are probably out of fashion in contemporary Georgia, many Georgian wines do not travel well. They are wines which are low in alcohol and sweet, requiring constant refrigeration or pasteurization or heat treatment for shipment, the kind of treatment which wreaks havoc on any wine. With a 3000-year history of winemaking, the Georgians are entitled to their unique methods. The buried vats or "marans" are still used today for winemaking in the old style. In the Kakhethian region of eastern Georgia, crushed grapes, skins and stems are fermented together, and allowed to steep for a period up to three months before the wine is separated from the other components, pressed and placed in casks for aging. The resulting wine is very extractive, even the white wines have the color of dark tea. (Poor Clarence, of course, met his untimely end in a butt of Malmsey, but to even such an erudite Russian as Pushkin, the difference must have been slight.)

Pushkin's other trips into exile from St. Petersburg came both before and after his trip to the Caucasus. They were to such presently well-known wine regions of Russia as the Crimean peninsula, the Odessa region of the Ukraine, and Kishinev in



Bessarabia, now known as Moldavia. He never mentioned local wines in his writings from those trips, and one has to wonder about that. However, a little research into the timing of his trips explains a great deal, in terms of wine.

The whole Black Sea Coast had been captured from the Turks in the late 1700s, and following repatriation of the Turkish and Tatar Moslem population, the area was practically unpopulated. The region was quite suitable for grape growing, and during the earlier period when Greek and Genoese colonies existed, Black Sea wines were famous. The problem which faced Catherine the Great was one of populating the area as rapidly as possible, and she took many different steps to do that. Russian and Ukrainian peasants were encouraged to move to the new areas; aristocrats were given large land grants in hopes they would work to develop and populate them; and immigrants were actively encouraged to settle here. As has been a recurring problem in Russian history, expectations frequently exceeded reality.

One of the German families encouraged to settle in the region to provide knowledge of viticulture, among other agricultural skills, produced a famous descendant, Konstantin Frank, who was so important to the Eastern American wine industry. He grew up in one of the German colonies in the Ukraine, attended the Tairov Institute of Viticulture in Odessa, and worked at the former Troubetskoy estate in Kazatskoe on the Dnepr River, later known as the Lenin State Farm.

But, why didn't Pushkin mention the local wines? The reason should be quite clear to anyone who has tried to pioneer a vineyard or a wine district. The short period of time from the first settling of the area until Pushkin's visits simply was not long enough to develop a viable wine industry. It was too short a time in which to find out what would grow properly in such conditions, let alone to find out how to make a decent wine from what could be grown. Many of the aristocrats neglected the properties, leaving the area undeveloped, but preventing anyone else who might be interested from touching it. Many of the immigrants were too busy trying to grow enough food for themselves to take serious interest in grape growing, even with strenuous efforts by the Governor, the former Duc du Richelieu, to encourage them to make wine. Pushkin simply arrived too early to be able to discover the wine regions of the Ukraine and Bessarabia.



## A WINE-BOOK COLLECTOR'S REFERENCE LIBRARY

by  
*Emanuel Berk*

*[Several new members have requested information on some bibliographic tools needed to assemble a fine wine library. The following essential information is excerpted from Mannie Berk's excellent article, "Wine Literature Reviewed: Old & Rare Wine Books," first printed in our October 1996 Newsletter. — Ed.]*

### The Emergence of Wine Book Collecting

Prior to the 1980s, few wine lovers or book collectors recognized wine books as something to collect seriously. Most booksellers and auctions lumped wine books in with "gastronomy" or "cooking," and the prices paid for even important rarities were often laughably low. Meanwhile, a few serious collectors around the world were quietly building up priceless collections.

Things are different today. The number of collectors worldwide is growing. There are also more dealers to meet their needs, as well as an organization of collectors [The Wayward Tendrils]. Auctions of wine books, too, have become far more frequent than in the past.

To date, the most important wine book auction has been the sale of the Kilian Fritsch collection in Paris on February 20, 1993. The Fritsch sale was a milestone not only for its size (617 lots); it also established a new benchmark for prices, with many lots far surpassing their pre-sale estimates. The results of the Fritsch sale offer the most conclusive evidence yet that wine book collecting has arrived.

While prices have risen dramatically from just a few years ago, old and rare wine books remain relative bargains. Even very rare and important books—of which only a few copies are known to be in private collections—can still be acquired for even a few hundred dollars. But as demand for classic books continues to grow, we can expect prices to rise well beyond these levels.

Due to the great rarity of some early editions, high-quality, limited-edition reprints are an attractive alternative and can be quite collectible in their own right.

### Intelligence for the Collector

When it comes to information on wine books, there is no ultimate authority. Several bibliographies deal with wine books either in part or in whole, but none of these covers the whole field. One may have to look through several bibliographies—and dig into well-annotated auction and bookseller's catalogues—to find a description of a particularly rare book. Even



today, it's possible to find a book by an important author not referred to in any of the major bibliographies or catalogues.

But while the spottiness of bibliographic information can be frustrating at times, it also adds to the excitement and satisfaction of collecting wine books.

#### James Gabler: *Wine into Words*

The indispensible bibliography for any English-speaking wine book collector is James Gabler's *Wine into Words: A History and Bibliography of Wine Books in the English Language*, published in 1985. It includes over 3,200 entries (books, pamphlets, articles, etc.), of which over 1000 are annotated. Nothing of this magnitude had ever been attempted for English-language books (and it is almost unique for wine books in any language).

#### André L. Simon

André Simon's three bibliographies (*Vinaria*, *Bacchica*, and *Gastronomica*) are another important source. Each has a different focus.

*Bibliotheca Vinaria* is of the greatest interest to wine book collectors, as it covers all languages, all periods, and is the most usefully organized (by language and by subject matter). Its drawbacks are its early date (1913), its lack of an author index, and its sparsity of annotations. It was republished in a limited edition of 600 copies in 1979.

*Bibliotheca Gastronomica*, first published in 1953, is generally about food and wine, with wine getting the least attention. But many of the important wine books are included, and its annotations are very good. It was reprinted in 1978.

*Bibliotheca Bacchica* is the most esoteric of Simon's three bibliographies. First published in 1927, it only includes books printed before 1600, and is reputed to be based exclusively on Simon's library. It is a beautiful book, with many early wood-cuts and engravings, and it is well annotated. However, it is written in French (Simon's first language). The two volumes of *Bacchica* were republished in 1972 in a single volume.

#### Guide to Simon's Bibliographies

Not surprisingly, there is a fair amount of overlap between the three books, and it is not always obvious where to look for a citation. Gail Unzelman solved this problem when, in 1990, she published *Wine & Gastronomy: A New Short-Title Bibliography Guide based on the André L. Simon Bibliothecas*. It lists books by author, short title and publication date, and tells you where to find them in Simon. Even without the Simon bibliographies (which are scarce), *Wine & Gastronomy* is useful for editions and publication dates, as given by Simon.

#### Vicaire

Georges Vicaire's *Bibliographie Gastronomique*, originally published in 1890, is an important reference for early titles. Like Simon's *Gastronomica*, Vicaire has a food orientation, but there is still much on wine. It was republished in 1954, 1978 and 1996.

#### Auction Catalogues

Over the past three decades, there have been several important sales of wine and gastronomy books, whose catalogues are a good source of bibliographic and price information. By far the most valuable is Gérard Oberlé's catalogue for the sale of the Kilian Fritsch collection (1993), entitled *Une Bibliothèque Bachique*. This is a massive work, with extensive annotations (in French).

Earlier, Oberlé had catalogued the *Les Fastes de Bacchus et de Comus* sale held in Paris in 1989. There were 1181 lots in this sale of books on food and wine, and Oberlé's catalogue of over 600 pages is a magnificent production. About 150 of the books offered were specifically about wine.

Two other important auctions of wine and food book collections and their catalogues are worth noting:

Marcus & Elizabeth Crahan (Sotheby's, New York, 1984) *The Marcus & Elizabeth Crahan Collection of Books on Food, Drink and Related Subjects* — For sale prices, the "modern era" began with this auction: prices far surpassed earlier levels and seemed shockingly high at the time. Today, of course, they'd seem very low.

André Simon (Sotheby's, London, 1981) *Catalogue of Printed Books and Manuscripts relating to Wine & Food from the Library of the Late André Simon* — After his death in 1970, many of the books in Simon's vast library were dispersed quietly through dealers, but a number of the more important titles were sold at a single auction in London.

#### Book Collecting Guide

Finally, an excellent guide to collecting old books is *Understanding Book-Collecting* by Grant Uden. First published in 1982, this book is the best introduction I've seen to the pleasures of collecting old books. (It is also Sotheby's Book Department's recommended primer.) The author was one of England's leading experts on antiquarian books, and has assembled a concise, clear and useful guide to the book collecting field. This book explains how to determine the condition, age and provenance of old books, as well as characteristics that separate good books from great books. This highly recommended book ends with an extremely useful 17-page glossary of terms used in describing books and their condition.

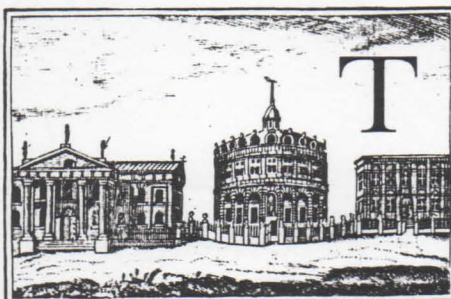




**BOOKS &  
BOTTLES**  
by  
Fred McMillin

## Barley Wine is Mighty Fine

**The Book:** *OINOS KRITHINOS. A Dissertation Concerning the Origin and Antiquity of Barley Wine* by [Samuel Rolleston]. Oxford: Printed at the Theatre for James Fletcher in the Turl and Sold by J. and J. Rivington in St. Paul's Church-Yard, London. 1750. 38 pp. + [2] Index of Authors Quoted.



[Title-page vignette: Sheldonian Theatre]

his scholarly essay by Rolleston draws on the ancient writings of over sixty authors—including Plinius, Galenus, Homer, Athenaeus, Columella, Plutarch, Sophocles and Virgil—as well as numerous biblical references, in tracing the earliest mentions and details of this "excellent liquor."

Let's enjoy some 18th century insights from "your humble servant," Archdeacon Rolleston.

■ It is a very common thing for an Author to endeavour by way of Preface to prejudice his readers in his favour. This is sometimes done by setting forth the difficulty of the subject treated of, his own impartiality in judging of it, or the pains he has been at in clearing it up. Other Authors show the usefulness of their subject, and how beneficial it would be for mankind to understand it: which is a gentle hint that no one should be without their book. But neither of these cases, I assure you, is mine. In the first place I don't get one farthing by writing, and in the next place I am sure every reader of understanding (and I desire no others) will see, as plainly as I do myself, how useful the treatise is and what service it is likely to do in the world.

■ The unfitness or incapacity of the soil for bringing grapes to perfection was undoubtedly the occasion for inventing beer or ale ["wine" from

barley], for had all countries been capable of producing good wine, perhaps malt liquor might never have been invented.

■ A very remarkable passage out of Aristotle mentions the different manner in which GRAPE and BARLEY WINE operate when they have made men drunk. Those who have taken the former to excess fall on their faces, but those, who have taken the latter, on their backs.

■ I cannot think that Noah was the inventor of WINE, but imagine that he was taught to make it by some of the Antediluvians, who were eating and drinking, enjoying themselves and their friends with mirth and jollity, when the flood came and swept them all away. I know I differ in this point from most learned men.

■ For the creation of barley wine, the world is indebted to an old Egyptian king; (for there was a time when Kings study'd arts and sciences, and were very useful to the nations they govern'd by consulting the good of their people, more than their own private interest.) His name was Osiris . . . whom learned men have confounded with the Grecian Bacchus or Dionysius.

■ I have now said enough concerning that excellent liquor which the Ancients made of Barley. If, in treating upon so many useful particulars, I have been too tedious, I have only to ask pardon, and to promise that I will never give myself any further trouble about ALE or BEER, unless for my own drinking.

**The Bottles:** With that connection between beer and wine—and for our own drinking pleasure—we honor California's Handley Cellars, whose wine-maker is the great-granddaughter of the famous brewer, Henry Weinhard. Appropriately, her flagship wines contain bubbles: they are award-winning sparklers. Her still wines rate well, too. A recent tasting panel ranking:

- 1st – Chardonnay, Anderson Valley
- 2nd – Gewürztraminer, Anderson Valley
- 3rd – Chardonnay Blanc de Blancs
- 4th – Chardonnay, Dry Creek Valley
- 5th – Rosé Brut Sparkler, Anderson Valley

RESEARCH ASSISTANT: Diane Bulzomi.

[Our heartfelt thanks to Fred McMillin, wine educator extraordinaire: During our first ten years, "Books & Bottles" has appeared in every issue of the Newsletter! Saluté! — Ed.]





***The Land Was Everything: Letters from an American Farmer*** by Victor Davis Hanson. New York: The Free Press, 2000. 259 pp. \$24.

REVIEWED BY *Allan Shields*



Victor Hanson's tenth book is not, strictly, a wine book, though his frequent discussions about William Thompson's engineered variety helps it to qualify as one. (See especially, p. 199 ff.) The Thompson Seedless grape sustained viticulturists up and down the Great Valley of California for one hundred

years, seasonally producing an over-abundance of "Thompson Worthless, that damned grape," from phenomenally fecund vines. The Grape was made into raisins (a lot of them!), the sweet juice used as a sweetener, canned with other fruits as cocktail or salad, and, "Crushed, their juice is the main though invisible ingredient in most generic white table wines." (p. 200)

Hanson writes from a long tradition of farmers in the Central Valley of the San Joaquin. He is a fifth generation man of the soil, whose family greatly values higher education. He views his position as a professor of classics in California State University, Fresno, as a kind of crop insurance, and a position from which he has written most of the other nine books, mainly on classic Greek themes; quite an achievement for one so young and with two demanding split professions. He appears to be at work for more than 32 hours a day, to judge from his productivity.

*The Land Was Everything* (N.B. the past tense of the verb) is composed of ten long "letters" directed to the general reader. One thinks of St. Paul's Epistles, or of Jeremiah's effusions, or of the tranquil, pastoral ruminations of Horace, who also was both of the Romans and the ruralia of Rome. Hanson's "letters" more closely resemble messages from an angelic host, or decretal decrees or edicts, so soberingly demanding of attention are they. If he began by conceiving them as friendly persuasions, he early fell into a strident, pessimistic mode. So negative are his warnings about the demise of the family farm in the Central Valley (and elsewhere), with the resultant degradation of the literal roots of the democratic ideology, one comes to wonder who would want to continue the struggle; who would want to enter a curriculum with the expectation of devoting his life to the soil? One even wonders why *he* continues.

As a long-retired professor of philosophy (San Diego State University, 1978), whose 30-plus-year career included the kind of dedication to "the land" Hanson admonishes us to value, I wondered how his colleagues in academe would respond to his wholesale castigation of their supposed divorcement from the soil. Even his colleagues in California State University, Fresno, in agriculture come in for some serious Hectoring, as well as, more pointedly, the new Department of Enology and Viticulture.

"Our colleagues [in farming] are taught to ruin agrarianism at the university only to endow a chair in 'agriculture,' and then to reward the local architects of that onslaught with a massive steel-and-glass 'research center.' Can we not at least make the nomenclature honest: 'The J. G. Gallo Wine Professorship of Corporate Viticulture,' given 'in appreciation for thousands of days of pro bono corporate consulting that has helped to transform the nature of American agrarianism'? Our good congressman who crafts water and crop subsidies is 'agriculture's friend in Washington,' a walking, breathing exemption for a few dozen magnates. 'Horrible policy,' he calls the 1996 farm bill that gives \$34 billion to corporate agriculturists like himself. They are the real benefactors of his campaign, he himself the recipient of the very largess he has legislated." (pp. 113-114)

Obviously, Hanson is only a very querulous friend of agribusiness; he grudgingly admits that the consolidation of farming acres has some efficiency benefits, at least.

What he neglects to mention and discuss more openly are some historical facts about the growth of large-scale farms: the way many families have developed over the decades into agribusinesses; how cooperatives have sometimes been formed to protect the small farmer (such as those based on the Rochdale principles); how the line is becoming blurred between agribusiness entrepreneurs and large-scale, independent family "farms." There are many other similar questions to be raised about his discussions; for example, the use of pesticides, which he seems bent on characterizing as essentially harmless; but a brief review is not the place to raise them.

As a good teacher does routinely, Hanson repeats himself frequently, in the hope of registering his strongly held beliefs, won out of perennial, spirit-breaking toil and optimistic tenacity. To repeat *myself*, once more notice the title. Does the verb in the past tense serve to answer his major questions about the possible disappearance of the small, family farm?





## ZINFANDEL: A HISTORY OF A GRAPE AND ITS WINE

by

Charles L. Sullivan

### INSTALLMENT VI

#### The Two Faces of Zin: 1934-1969



In 1934 there was a lot of old wine sitting around under bond in California wineries. Most of it was red and, on average, of low quality, often oxidized and / or loaded with volatile acidity (read vinegar). There had been a lot of table wine made in 1932 (after

FDR's nomination) and in 1933 (after his election and inauguration). But too much of it had been blended with the older stuff. The upshot was that California table wine rushed to the public in 1934 was very soon an embarrassment to the industry.

Another lesson learned by the time that the 1934 vintage got under way was that the only solid market out there was for fortified, mostly sweet, wines. And a third truth that shocked many California producers was the continued strong demand for fresh wine grapes in the east. Millions of people were now in the habit of making their own wine. In 1934 and 1935 Americans drank more California table wine of their own making than of that coming out of the state's wineries. Finally, it was clear that almost no one except home winemakers gave a hoot about the names of wine grapes. Varietal designation on California wines was almost unheard of. The dry table wines coming out of California wineries were almost all labeled Burgundy, Claret, Sauterne, and such. Most fine lots of Cabernet Sauvignon, what little there was, and Zinfandel, "went into the tank with the Alicantes." Thus spoke Louis Stralla, who owned the winemaking operation at the old Charles Krug place in the 1930s. "I wasn't in the wine business from the standpoint of romance."

Most such wine ended up in tank cars hauled east to bottlers there. That was the fate of most California table wine before World War II. Only an elite few wineries such as Beaulieu, Wente, Inglenook, Fountaingrove and Larkmead had established brands, and only a small part of their production carried a varietal label. Most of America never saw anything from California except cheap jug quality wine in those days, and an overwhelming percentage of that was port, sherry, and muscatel.

Bill Dieppe, later president of Almaden Vineyards, lived on the East Coast in the thirties and

drank table wine with his meals as a regular part of his life. He told me in 1982 that before World War II he drank French wine and knew nothing about the California product. I asked him if he had ever heard of Zinfandel in those days. "Never, not until I came to California after the war," was his answer. If he had tried a bottle of California burgundy or claret then he would probably have been drinking Zinfandel. But I am sure that he would have disliked it, as would I.

Nevertheless, in California some of the few who had tasted those great Zins that won gold medals at the 1915 Panama-Pacific Exposition were still alive. Horatio Stoll, publisher of *Wines & Vines*, a trade journal out of San Francisco, made a point to remind his readers how good Zinfandel had been and could be: When the State Fair wine competitions returned to Sacramento in 1935 he and others made sure that Zinfandel was allotted one of the nineteen wine categories. The only other two varietals thus named were "Cabernet" and "Riesling." The other sixteen went to generics like Moselle, Claret, Chianti, and Sauterne.

Most of the bottles labeled Zinfandel on the shelves in the years before the war was made in a light and fruity style, ready for immediate consumption. If one were to see the face of Zinfandel in those days, that was its usual physiognomy. Some of the medal winners whose names we might recognize today were Inglenook, Larkmead of Napa Valley, Simi, Italian Swiss Colony, the Solano Winery, and CalGrape of Mendocino. But this wine was almost all sold in California. The word "Zinfandel" was virtually unknown to America's few table wine drinkers east of the Rockies.

When the war came and European wine sources in France, Germany, and Italy dried up for Americans, the demand for fine California table wine shot up. And now several premium wineries were using varietal names on their labels. In 1943 New York's Waldorf Astoria Hotel listed thirty-one such California varietals on its wine list. Of course you could buy Cabs and Rieslings. And there was Petite Sirah, Semillon, Carignane, even Charbono and Folle Blanche. But there wasn't a bottle of Zinfandel. To whom would they sell it? So it had been on the East Coast in the 1880s when the Palace Hotel in San Francisco offered three Northern California Zinfandels on its wine list.

#### Wine Writers



I think that we can learn a lot about our wine



drinking habits by studying what wine writers are putting out at any particular time. We can often perceive the winds of change in the wine world from their books and columns. But of newspaper columns there were none, so far as California wine was concerned. (The first in California was by Los Amigos Winery's Robert Mayock in the 1940s for the *San Jose News*. But it was years before there was a second.) Occasionally a food writer would mention California wine in a magazine article. Such a person was Mary Frost Mabon of *Town & County*. In 1942 she wrote the first systematic guide to California wine to be published in this century, *The ABCs of American Wine*. She obviously liked Zinfandel at its best and gave special praise to those of Fountaingrove, Simi, Louis Martini, and Italian Swiss Colony.

But Zinfandel went all but unnoticed in Harold Grossman's supposedly authoritative *Guide to Wine, Spirits and Beer* (1940). Julian Street's *Wine* (1948) quipped that Zinfandel wines "do not tempt one to linger and sip," but that they could be "rugged, and friendly and invite proper drinking," whatever that means. On the other hand, John Melville's *Guide to California Wines* paid far more attention to Zinfandel than these two, and for good reason. Like Mabon he had gone into the field, moving through the state's wine districts, talking to the producers and drinking their wines. He asserted that Zinfandel could be "a wine of peculiar charm, fruity, zestful and aromatic with a raspberry like flavor. . . . If price conscious and still wanting a fine varietal red table wine, a good Zinfandel is the wine to look for." Sounds a lot like George Husmann more than half a century earlier — "Good enough for anyone."

### Frank Schoonmaker

Of all the wine writers in these early days one stands out as a sort of hero. For years he was hated by the leaders of the wine industry, that is, the people in charge of the wine factories making millions of gallons of cheap, nondescript plonk, mostly sweet. But he was beloved by many of the small and medium scale producers who were attempting to reestablish the small premium sector of the industry that had come close to flourishing before Prohibition.

Frank Schoonmaker had been assigned a series on wine by his editor at *The New Yorker* when it became clear the Prohibition's days were numbered. In 1934 he and Tom Marvel put them together in *The Complete Wine Book*, aimed at the serious American reader interested in learning about the world of wine now opened by Repeal. For the next forty years Schoonmaker wrote about California wine, as a professional journalist and author, as a wine dealer, and finally as a part of the California

wine industry he had helped to transform. (In the middle of this he took off a few years to pretend to be a sherry broker in Spain during the war, working for the OSS and spying on the Germans.)

Schoonmaker is most important in California wine history as the man who almost single handedly led the state's producers to see the light on varietal labeling. A few like Louis Martini, Georges de Latour, the Wentes and Concannons, Martin Ray, and Inglenook's John Daniel followed eagerly, a few others grudgingly, most kicking and whining. But that is really not a direct part of my story, except for the fact that Schoonmaker became an almost wild advocate of Martini's Sonoma Zinfandel.

For this story I want to follow Schoonmaker's words on Zin from his first book until the years just before his death in 1976. For as his perception changed so did that of others close to California's premium wines. It isn't that he alone caused people to modify their ideas about Zinfandel, or even that he was most important among many. It's that he represents a sort of *Zeitgeist*, a spirit of his times.

Schoonmaker gave Zinfandel short shrift in his early articles and first book. So far as he was concerned it was a "mediocre" wine grape. Although it could produce a "wholesome, ordinary red wine when grown in the coastal valleys of Northern California." Here was the first face of Zinfandel after Repeal.

During the next seven years Schoonmaker made several trips to California and drank lots of California wine. In San Francisco he contacted the leaders of Medical Friends of Wine and of the Wine and Food Society. Who was making really good wine here? When he got his answers he went out into the countryside and talked and drank. He was particularly interested in making some solid connections with the best producers in the late 1930s as the war clouds in Europe were gathering. He knew that if war came German, Italian, and probably French wine sources would disappear in the American market. He put together a marketing company and contracted with several of the state's finest producers to market their varietal wines east of the Rockies: Beaulieu, Wente, L. M. Martini, Inglenook, Larkmead, and Fountaingrove. In fact he hired Inglenook's general manager, Carl Bundschu, to work for him in San Francisco. It was during these years that he discovered the Martini wines, which had heretofore not been marketed under their own labels. One of the Napa vintner's best wines, in Schoonmaker's mind, was his Mountain Zinfandel grown at the Monte Rosso vineyard in the hills above Sonoma Valley.

Just before America entered the war Schoonmaker published his *American Wines*. In it he



wrote that "Zinfandels from the upland vineyards of Napa and Sonoma Counties are among the pleasantest table wines of the world." Schoonmaker had seen the other face of Zin.

His next major work came in 1964 when he published his really authoritative *Encyclopedia of Wine*. It was the first book on the whole world of wine that really gave the best California wines their due. Up to this point the Zinfandels he had had the most contact with had been light and fruity. The Martini wines were obviously an exception to his general experience. He praised the California Zinfandel as "about as pleasant a *vin ordinaire* as one could ask for." It was wine "unlike that of all other mass-production grapes." Zinfandel had an "easily recognizable varietal character, bouquet and flavor, especially when from hillside vineyards in a cool district." But he was obviously not thinking about the Martini 1941 Zinfandel when he added that Zinfandel "gains little by ageing." When I last tasted that great wine, shortly before its fiftieth birthday, it was fading but still delicious.

Soon Schoonmaker was picking up on the muscled marvels being produced in the mid-1960s and he modified the Zinfandel entry in the next edition of his encyclopedia to read that its wine "gains relatively little by ageing." Then in the last edition before his death in 1976 he wrote, "Occasionally when made in the classic European manner it can have great body and a long life." Frank Schoonmaker had come full circle in the previous forty years and now saw clearly the other face of Zinfandel, much closer, probably, to the one that you and I see today.

### Revolution

A great fact of American wine drinking in the 1950s and into the 1960s was the gradual and steady rise of table wine consumption. Production of table wine in California between 1950 and 1960 more than doubled. Even more important was its rise in relation to sweet wine production. At the beginning of the decade the ratio of sweet wine to table wine produced in the Golden State was about four to one. In 1960 it was a little less than two to one. One might certainly suspect that if Americans were discovering California Cabernets and Rieslings in these years, they might learn to say "Zinfandel." But just a few premium producers brought out a varietal Zinfandel and almost all of it was sold within the state. Looking back on the situation from the seventies wine expert Roy Brady thought that Zinfandel "seemed destined for oblivion except for *ordinaire*."

The wine revolution that had been brewing in America in the 1950s finally exploded into the streets in the 1960s. And it was a true revolution, unlike the

great wine boom of the 1880s. Then the growth in consumption had resulted from a change in population, as a new wave of wine drinking immigrants poured into the country. The great change of the post-war years was a change of behavior; Americans were drinking more wine per capita and the essential modification was coming in the table wine category.

By 1966 Americans were finally drinking more table wine than sweet wine. And a large portion of this table wine was coming from premium producers, some who had been around for a long time, others new to wine production. Since premium wines cost considerably more than *ordinaire*, it follows that a large percentage of the new market was made up of middle class, well-educated professional people. They formed wine tasting groups, took wine classes, they read books on wine, and some even made wine themselves.

It is difficult to explain the rise of premium Zinfandel in Northern California out of this complex of variables, but rise it did. The old premium wineries had kept at it: Martini, Parducci, Krug, and Mirassou. There were a few newer producers, enthusiastic entrepreneurs, men and women mostly with an eye on the European model where Zinfandel had no place, such as the owners of Hallcrest, and at Martin Ray, and Freemark Abbey. But there were others of the same mold, such as Frank Bartholomew at Buena Vista and Lee Stewart at Souverain, who enthusiastically produced elegant Zinfandels in the 1950s. Before 1966 it was the Zinfandels of Souverain that hooked me. They were a splurge at \$1.89 per bottle, but those wines from Napa's Howell Mountain made me a believer. (Stewart won his first Zinfandel gold at the State Fair in 1955.)

Some of this new class of wine drinkers drove out from their urban and suburban homes into the countryside with Melville's book as a guide and discovered small country establishments making excellent varietal Zinfandel, often in a delicious well-aged rustic style. There was Foppiano (Healdsburg), Cadenasso (Fairfield), Gemello (Mountain View), Ruby Hill (Livermore Valley), and York (near Paso Robles). I was fresh out of college and learning to drink wine when a former classmate, in 1959, directed me to Ruby Hill near Pleasanton where Ernesto Ferrario was selling tasty jugs of Zinfandel and Barbera. For the equivalent of about .35\$/bottle my wife and I were able to have delicious red wine on our table, at that price, nightly.

It was the enthusiastic entrepreneurs of the 1960s who really made a juggernaut out of the fine Zinfandel phenomenon. Dave Bennion and his partners at Ridge Vineyards made their first Zin in 1964 from grapes grown on ancient vines at the



Picchetti Ranch in the hills above Silicon Valley. Then forgotten as a winegrowing district, the name Monte Bello soon became part of every serious California wine drinker's vocabulary from the work of Bennion and his successor, Paul Draper. By 1967 Bennion had also found old-vine fruit in Geyserville and at Templeton, outside Paso Robles. In 1969 he was even making vineyard designated wines from Lodi grapes.

David Bruce, in the hills behind Los Gatos, also found old Zinfandel vines growing in the Santa Cruz Mountains and made some wine in 1965 at his new winery. Next year he made seven barrels and had two bottlings with the "cask" numbers on the label. In 1967 he made fourteen barrels. For all these wines he suggested extended bottle aging. Earlier he had even made a "white" Zinfandel, the first sold as such in California in this century.

Perhaps the Zin of the sixties that got the most notice in these years was Robert Mondavi's from the 1966 vintage. The San Francisco Wine Sampling Club featured it and Walter Peterson, its president, wrote a lengthy description for the Club's newsletter, with an excellent explication of what I have been calling the new face of Zinfandel. The wine was unfinned and had been aged two years in French Nevers oak barrels. (Should we be surprised that Walt's son, Joel, is the winemaker and one of the founder's of Ravenswood?)

The way some of this wine was sold gives a fair picture of what was happening with Zinfandel in the hands of some of the most knowledgeable retailers. Esquin Imports was one of San Francisco's best importers with a newsletter that today is one of the best primary sources for the history of wine in Northern California in these years. They bought a barrel of the Mondavi wine and had it bottled for their customers. And in Sacramento wine merchant Darrell Corti bought three barrels for the wine-conscious clientele at his family's upscale grocery stores.

This was not a purely Northern California phenomenon. There was also a growing interest in fine wine in the Los Angeles area. There in 1968 Trader Joe's markets began putting out a regular "Insider's Wine Report." It covered all types of European and California wine. And Trader Joe Colombe knew his Zinfandel and guided his customers to what he thought were the best bargains. Louis Martini and Parducci were always favorites in the early years. He also liked Ridge for Zinfandels with aging potential. The 1965 Ridge was the first in that category which he recommended.

There were also Bay Area and Southern California restaurants involved in promoting the new fine wines of California. A perfect example was Hank

Rubin's Pot Luck in Berkeley which had a vintage festival dinner during the fall. (Rubin also wrote a pioneer wine column for the *San Francisco Chronicle*.) In 1970 the Pot Luck had its seventh such event and featured the 1966 Mondavi Zinfandel with the \$6.50 five course dinner. One would naturally have drunk it with *Le Boeuf Façon Sanglier*. Rubin sold it for \$6.00, a dollar more than he charged for the Beaulieu Private Reserve Cabernet Sauvignon.

On the menu he explained the two faces of California Zinfandel. "It is made in two styles; one a light, fruity wine to be drunk young, the other, like the one tonight from Robert Mondavi's Napa Valley winery, more like a Cabernet, full, heavy-bodied, improving with age." (If you had gone into the kitchen between courses you would have found chef Narsai David hard at work.)

I like to think of 1968 as a symbolic vintage for great California Zinfandel. This was the year of the late harvest Zin, one at Mayacamas and a Zinfandel Essence at Ridge from Lodi grapes. But these wines were the beginnings of a fad that didn't last. For me the symbolism comes from two 1968 wines, not necessarily better than other wines I've already discussed, but wines that seem to bring the rest of the decade into focus for the growing number of Zinfandel-made-like-great-Cabernets lovers.

## CORTI BROTHERS

RESERVE SELECTION

ZINFANDEL

AMADOR COUNTY VINTAGE 1969

This Zinfandel was produced from grapes grown on the K. Deaver Ranch in the Shenandoah Valley just north of Plymouth, Amador County. This family ranch is situated on an east-west exposure and is the oldest established vineyard in Shenandoah Valley.

Climate and temperature make Amador County perfect for growing Zinfandel. Here these grapes produce a superior wine with great depth and fullness and more spiciness and richness than anywhere in California.

1969 was a year of excellent growing conditions. The grapes for this wine were picked on 19 September, having 25° Balling and .8 acidity.

Since this wine was bottled unfinned and unfiltered, it will throw a deposit with time and should be decanted.

PRODUCED AND BOTTLED BY SUTTER HOME WINERY  
ST. HELENA, CALIFORNIA

ALCOHOL 13.5% BY VOLUME

The first was made from Amador County grapes at Napa's Sutter Home Winery. Through the offices of Sacramento home winemaker Charles Myers, Darrell Corti had discovered the old Zinfandel vines of Amador's Shenandoah Valley, specifically the vines of the Deaver Ranch there. Corti had already caught the Zin-bug from the 1966 Mondavi



wine. Now he contacted Bob Trinchero of Sutter Home about the Deaver grapes and 1968, a really fine year for California wine generally, became the first vintage of the great Corti / Sutter Home Zinfandels. I didn't buy this wine. I was too late. But it seemed that everyone in the world of Northern California fine wine, and Southern California too, for that matter, was talking about it. "A wine for the next millennium!" It came out under the Sutter Home label. Corti's share was aged in French oak barrels and was sold under the Corti Brothers label.

When the 1969 became available from Corti I got my case and am still waiting for the right situation to drink the last bottle. In 1974 I drank one of my first with Joe and June Swan. He had not tasted it yet and on first sniff remarked, "Sorry Charles, it's corked." And it was. I raced off to the cellar and brought up another. I felt good watching the great master of Zinfandel smiling as he sipped, and eventually saying, "You'll have to be patient with this one. I'll have to get in touch with Darrell."

### Swan Zinfandel

And it was the 1968 Joseph Swan Zinfandel that lit the fuses not already sizzling on the powder keg. In retrospect it and the subsequent 1969 Zin seemed to be the final blast in the modern Zinfandel revolution.

Joe had quit flying for Western Airlines and bought a spread near Forestville in the Russian River Valley. He wanted to grow Pinot noir and Chardonnay in that area's somewhat Burgundian climate. The old ranch he acquired had some ancient Zinfandel vines. In 1968, before he pulled them, he made some wine from their fruit. He didn't bond his place in time for that Zin to be a commercial item. But did the word ever get around. Roy Brady claimed it was the greatest of those great Zinfandels of the 1960s. Next year Swan bought Zinfandel grapes at the Teldeschi Ranch in Dry Creek Valley. The rest is well known in the Zinfandel chronicles. There was soon a waiting list to get onto the Joseph Swan mailing list, even before Brady's article appeared in *Wine World* magazine. There he wrote, "It was a classic example of the big spicy style of Zinfandel, which had become virtually extinct before Ridge Vineyards took the lead in its resurrection. . . . Joe Swan hit the target dead center on the first try."

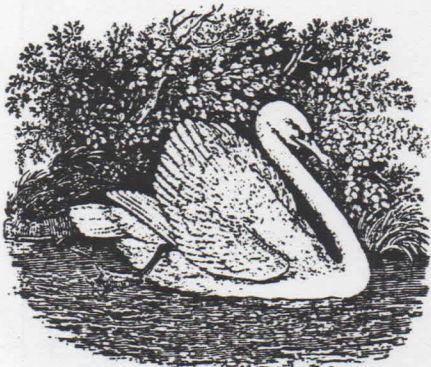
One might wonder what convinced the new-borne winemasters of the sixties that Zinfandel could be made in "the classic European manner. . . . to have great body and long life," (Schoonmaker's words) in the style of fine red Bordeaux. Robert Mondavi in 1966 and Bob Trinchero, who made the 1968 Amador wine, knew very well from their experience that Zinfandel could be made with the proper flavors, structure, and chemistry to warrant long term

cellaring. For the others there were some wines still around in those years that the latter day pioneers had tasted in the early sixties. These were three Sonoma Zinfandels, the 1935 Simi, the 1937 Fountaingrove, and the 1941 Louis Martini. I have tasted the Simi and Martini wines in their old age and I have talked to people who have had the Fountaingrove. In my view these were great wines and obviously demonstrated Zinfandel's potential. And if you were looking at Bordeaux as a model why not use French oak barrels? The Mondavi (1966), Corti (1968), Swan (1968), and Bruce (1968) wines were all given that treatment that puts a special smile on the finer face of Zinfandel.

BY THE END OF THE SIXTIES we are in modern times for the story of California Zinfandel. In 1970 I saw some of these "hot" Zinfandels on the shelves of upscale bottle shops in New York City and Washington, DC. But there is still a lot of story left. There is the swinging pendulum of approval and disdain, and the meandering of stylistic taste. In fact the diversity of Zinfandel products almost defies analysis. Red table, white, blush, late harvest, sparkling, and port-like have all become Zinfandel adjectives. And there are now fighting varietals, premiums, super-premiums, and ultra-premiums, but rarely real jugs, not with Zin prices up 45% per ton in the last five years, while grape supplies were growing 35%.

Now you have been armed to resist and counter the mythology / baloney surrounding the first hundred and forty years of Zinfandel in America. Let's take a look at the ups and downs of the last thirty years.

[Continued next issue. — Ed.]

<b>Zinfandel</b>

<b>Joseph Swan Vineyards</b>
Produced and Bottled by Joseph Swan Vineyards, Forestville, California



## A SPECIAL BOOK: THE GRAPES OF NEW YORK

by  
Tom Pinney



Some books have a way of recurring in one's life, so that at last they seem to be Special, quite apart from any intrinsic virtues they may possess. One of these, for me, is *The Grapes of New York*, by Ulysses Prentiss Hedrick and others, published in 1908 by the State of New York.<sup>1</sup> Of course, this book is special in itself, and my relation to it is wholly accidental and impertinent. But there may be a mild interest in the description of that relation.

The title, *The Grapes of New York*, as I have written elsewhere,<sup>2</sup> is a complete misnomer, perhaps an expression of the modesty of the author, or perhaps a way of propitiating the State of New York, which paid for the publication. In any case, the book is not merely about the grapes of New York, though it covers that subject thoroughly: it is about all of the grapes of all of the United States east of the Rocky Mountains, as they had been known, studied, cultivated, bred, and processed for the three centuries between the beginnings of colonization on the eastern seaboard and the publication of the book—the 300 years from the beginning of the 17th century to the beginning of the 20th.

Hedrick (1870-1951) the major author, was at the time of the book's composition, the horticulturist at the New York Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, the leading institution of the day in the scientific study of plants and crops. Without the resources of Geneva, including the group of researchers whose names appear on the title page, Hedrick could of course have done nothing approaching the completeness of the book that we know. He also had the benefit of the work of that encyclopedic writer on horticulture, Liberty Hyde Bailey, who was then re-creating the College of Agriculture at Cornell as a world leader in scientific horticulture. The combination of these formidable resources produced a magisterial survey of eastern grapes, including all of the native American species and their hundreds and thousands of varietal descendants, whether spontaneously generated or deliberately bred.

But after allowing for all the help necessary to make the book, it was Hedrick who put it all together, and it is his voice that one hears in the descriptive and historical accounts of the hundreds of

varieties included. The book is one that can actually be read with the pleasure that comes from the company of a distinct literary personality. It is meant to be practical as well as technical, and it is written not to serve some abstract scientific intelligence but to interest real people. To take a single example, chosen from the first page I find on opening the book, here is Hedrick on "Allen's Hybrid":

A half century ago Allen's Hybrid was the vine of promise in America. It was the first named hybrid between *Vitis labrusca* and *Vitis vinifera* to be disseminated and as such awakened the slumbering hopes of the horticulturists of a continent. American grape-growers had all but given up the expectation of ever growing the European grape in the New World when Allen announced this hybrid. Auspicious hope!

The style is formal, indeed, but not ponderous, and it is anything but dryly scientific. Grape varieties are a part of human history, and Hedrick makes us fully aware of what that is from the abundance of his information and expert understanding.

The book is a part of series published by the New York State Department of Agriculture that, taken together, makes up a complete pomology of the eastern states: *The Apples of New York* (1905), *The Cherries of New York* (1915), *The Peaches of New York* (1917), *The Pears of New York* (1921), *The Plums of New York* (1911), and, lest anything escape, *The Small Fruits of New York* (1925). Hedrick was the major author of this entire series, with the single exception of *The Apples of New York*—an astonishing performance. All the titles in the series are well produced and illustrated, but *The Grapes of New York* is, I think, the most splendid of the lot. In large quarto format, running to some 564 pages, it is illustrated with 101 color plates of a quality quite remarkable for their time. Hedrick explains how they were made:

Four negatives were taken of each subject with a color filter between the lens and the fruit. A copper plate was made from each negative, one for each of the four colors, red, yellow, black and blue. The color-plates in the book are composed of these four colors, combined by the camera, the artist, the horticulturist and the printer (*The Grapes of New York*, pp. ix-x).

The results, Hedrick cautions, do not "reproduce nature exactly." But he also says that "all possible means at the command of photography and color printing have been used," and I think that he must have been proud of the work.

Besides the plates, the book is also dis-



tinguished by a long and authoritative introduction on the history of the grape in the eastern United States. This occupies the first three chapters—94 pages—and it remains the best account of the subject yet written. The entries for "The Leading Varieties of American Grapes" that follow take up the bulk of the book, and are full of information, lucidly presented. Hedrick gives the synonyms for each variety described, a statement of its parentage (*Labrusca*, *Aestivalis*, *Rupestris*, and so on) and a long list of references to that variety in the literature of American grapes. Then comes the meat of the discussion, in which he may tell you where the grape first came from, or who found it, and where it was first introduced. He describes the horticultural qualities in detail—vigor, productivity, disease resistance, and so on—with his unfailing vivacity. Of Diana, for example, he writes: "All grapes have their likes and dislikes but this one is capricious beyond most others." Or, he writes, the popularity of the variety called Columbian Imperial is only owing to "the panegyrics heaped upon it by misinformed or unscrupulous salesmen." One could go on indefinitely. He has much to say about fruit quality, and about wine quality, which is, after all, the main point, even for eastern grapes. He puts the bad old varieties in their place. Of the variety called Noah, for example, he writes: "the grapes are fit only for wine but the wine-makers in this state seem not to have found them desirable for their wants." Delaware, however, earns nothing but praise:

Its introduction raised the standard of quality in our viticulture to that of the Old World, for there is no variety of *Vitis vinifera* more richly or more delicately flavored or with a more agreeable aroma than the Delaware.

This is surely excessive, but at least Hedrick was prepared to stick his neck out for a good grape when he saw it. Such entries are typical, and they ensure that the book fulfills the classical requirement both to amuse and instruct.

I first saw *The Grapes of New York* when I was very young, too young to know exactly when. My father ran a wholesale nursery in Kansas, an enterprise that went back into the nineteenth century. The firm had, unsystematically and casually, acquired a number of horticultural books over the course of years, and these were kept in a glass-fronted case in my father's office. I do not suppose that they were ever consulted. One of them, notable for its size and weight, was *The Grapes of New York*. That office copy was the first one I had ever seen, and thereafter I saw it repeatedly on my visits to the office, though without any particular curiosity about it.

Grapes were a part of my father's business, but not an important part: the Midwest was not much of a region for grapes, apart from the Concords that people planted in back yards. And if grapes did not count for much, then wine, the end for which grapes are properly appointed, counted for even less. Kansas had been constitutionally Dry, and proud of it, since 1880. The Kansas State Horticultural Society, when it published a book on *The Grape in Kansas* in 1901, did so only with an emphatic title-page declaration that "To the glory of Kansas, 99 1/2 per cent. of this luscious fruit which grows freely all over the state is used without fermentation."<sup>3</sup> But all things change, and at last, in 1948, the voters of Kansas, who had fallen away from the austere standards of their Dry ancestors, decided to allow Demon Rum back into the state. But local option was still allowed, and my county remained stoutly Dry. My parents, of course, never wavered in their teetotal conviction. So the subject of grapes and wine was not one to arouse much interest or to yield much information to me in that place at that time. Nevertheless, I remembered *The Grapes of New York* as an impressive book. I must have looked at the illustrations now and then, and it was certainly one of the literally big books of my limited experience. Perhaps I imagined that there was something special about grapes to have caused the production of so weighty a book.

The scene now shifts to upstate New York, where I got my first job at a small college near Utica. In the meantime I had been introduced to wine, and, after the years of teetotal ignorance that I had innocently endured, was now eagerly trying to compensate by drinking wine, reading about wine, and listening to anyone who might want to talk about wine. In this attentive mood, I visited the home of one of my new colleagues and was struck to find a large number of handsome, framed color plates of eastern American grapes hanging on the walls of his house. I at once recognized them as plates from the book in my father's office bookcase, Hedrick's *Grapes of New York*. How could this be? The answer was simple enough. My colleague's father had been one of the scientists employed at the Geneva Experiment Station of the State of New York, where Hedrick himself had worked, and had had privileged access to copies of *The Grapes of New York*. If I remember rightly, my colleague said that the prints framed on his walls were proof copies that his father had saved from the production of the book. Perhaps they were. Perhaps they were not. I imagine that extra copies of the book had lain around the Geneva station for many years, and that dismembering the odd copy now and then for the sake of the lovely colored plates had seemed no offense at all. That is, after all, the



fate of most colored plate books so far in the history of printing. I don't remember whether I asked if I could get sets of the plates from the same source, but probably I did not. It was all something that had happened long before.

Now the scene changes to California, and another ten years or so have passed. By this time my collection of books about wine has grown to a large enough number so that the term "library" is not wholly derisory. My father has retired from the nursery business, leaving behind that copy of *The Grapes of New York* in the glass-fronted bookcase standing in his old office. It occurs to me to ask him, after the manner of collectors, whether I could have the book, since I know that he now has no use for it, if he ever did, and I know enough of his partner to know that he would have no use for it either. There was some hesitation in the face of this request—after all, no one had ever before asked for any one of the books in that small office collection. My father's partner was a little suspicious: did I want to sell the book, or just to read it? But these were not very formidable obstacles, and, in the end, I got the book and happily added it to my shelves.

A few more years passed, and I decided that, having collected a good number of wine books, it was time that I should write one. It had occurred to me that no one had ever written a full account of the history of winegrowing in this country from the beginning, and I thought I might take that as a subject. So I did. And from that moment on, *The Grapes of New York* was no longer a mere ornament on my book shelves but an active partner in my historical work. I have just said that there was no full account of the history of winegrowing in this country, but the materials for a large part of that history had been assembled by Hedrick in his prefatory account of the grape in America and in his descriptions of the hundreds of varieties catalogued in his book. These were not, I repeat, mere botanical descriptions but historical accounts densely packed with information about how the different varieties had been discovered or bred, about who had done the work, and a thousand other details.

While I was still at work on the history, a colleague of mine attended a book sale at the library of Scripps College, the women's college among the Claremont Colleges in California. The Scripps Library had no scientific or botanical section—that was handled by other sources in Claremont—but, inexplicably, there among the books for sale lay a prime copy of *The Grapes of New York*. My colleague spotted it, and, remembering my interest in such things, bought it and gave it to me. I wanted to pay him for it but he said no, it had not cost much. "How much?" I asked. "Three dollars." So now I had two

copies of *The Grapes of New York*, both of them gifts. Every collector has some unearned triumph to tell about: mine is that my two copies of *The Grapes of New York*, copies of which are currently being offered on the Internet at up to \$900, cost me precisely nothing. In defense of my luck, however, I may plead that I have made extensive use of the book, have studied it closely, and have come to appreciate it as few, I imagine, have had occasion to do in these days. The fact that I don't need two copies is immaterial. We are talking about collecting here, not mere necessity or practicality.

Two more little details and I have done. Sometime in the '80s my married daughter came across a stack of the colored plates from *The Grapes of New York* in a Santa Barbara bookshop. After considerable deliberation, she selected the print of the obscure blue variety called "Janesville" to give to me, and that print, now handsomely framed, hangs in my house. Janesville is not, one gathers from Hedrick's description, much of a grape—"the fruit is worthless where better sorts can be grown," he says. But my daughter's name is Jane, which explains her choice from among the abundant possibilities.

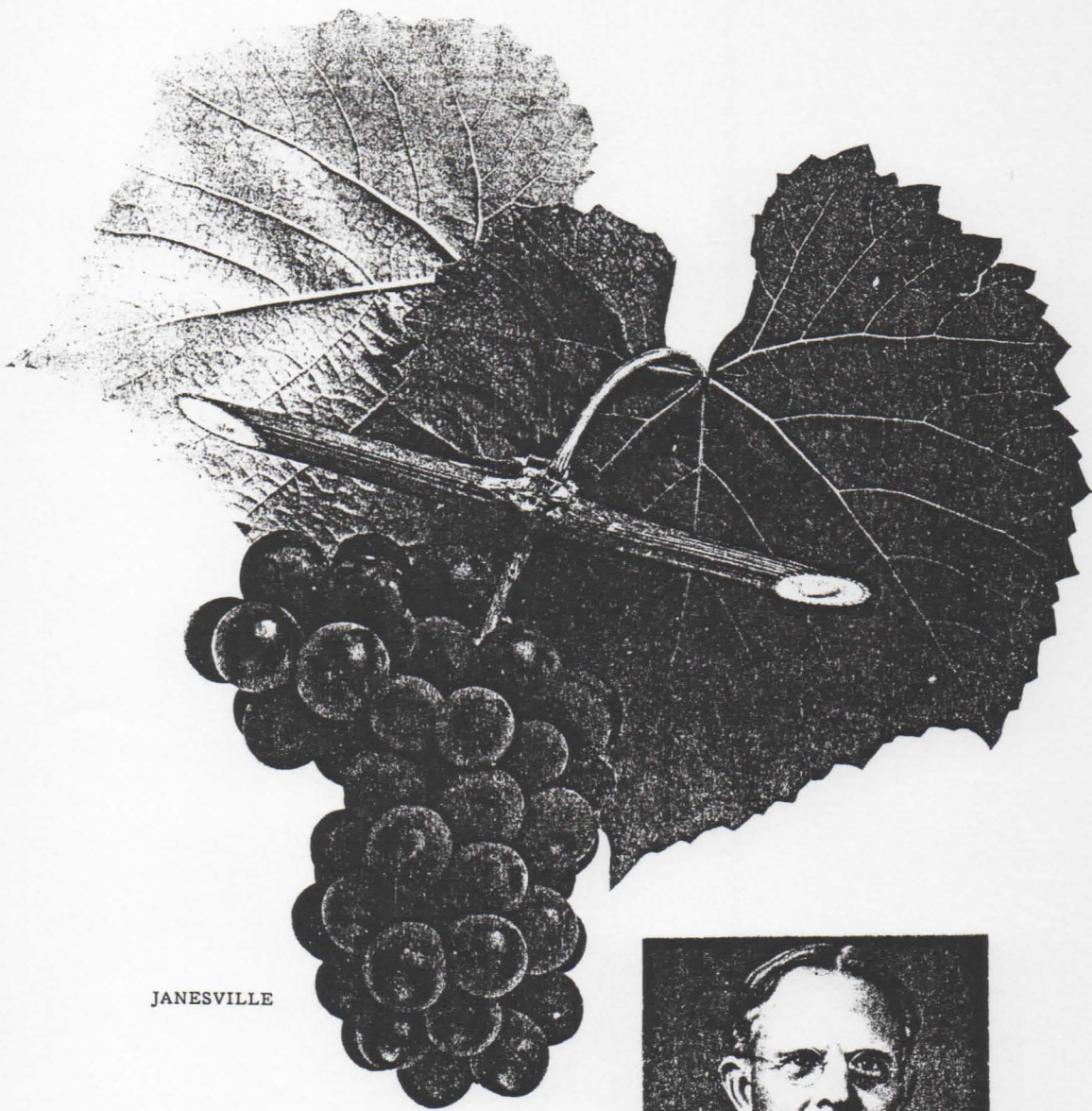
In 1990, after the publication of my *History of Wine*, that great collector and student of wine, Roy Brady, invited me and my wife to lunch at his house in Northridge. Brady had read and liked my book, and this was his generous way of saying so. I won't describe the lunch and the accompanying wines—that would be another history—but will record here only that one of the first things that leaped out to my eye on first entering the Brady house was a wall hung with the colored plates from *The Grapes of New York*, much as I had seen them many years before in a house in upstate New York.

Roy is now gone, but the colored plates are still there. I hope that, wherever they may go next, they will find an owner who admires them as Roy did and who may even take the trouble to learn about where they originally came from. The book deserves that attention.

#### NOTES

1. The full title, after the heavy-handed style of official publications, is U. P. Hedrick, N. O. Booth, O. M. Taylor, R. Wellington, and M. J. Dorsey, *The Grapes of New York*, Report of the New York Agricultural Experiment Station for the Year 1907, II (State of New York, Department of Agriculture, Fifteenth Annual Report, Vol. 3, Part II), Albany: J. B. Lyon Company, State Printers, 1908.
2. "Hedrick's misleadingly titled *The Grapes of New York* (1908) is a monumental work that takes the whole subject of viticulture in the eastern United States for its province" (*A History of Wine in America*, 1989, p. xvi).
3. William H. Barnes, *The Grape in Kansas*...., Topeka, Kansas State Horticultural Society, 1901.





JANESVILLE

[*GRAPES OF NEW YORK*, p.316 – reduced]



[U. P. Hedrick, courtesy: *FIRST 100 YEARS of the NEW YORK STATE AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION*, 1999]