



# WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY

Vol.20 No.2

A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S SOCIETY

April 2010

## The 1870 Cellar of Charles Dickens

by *John Danza*

WHEN CHARLES DICKENS DIED prematurely in 1870 at the age of 58, he was an icon of English literature. From humble beginnings and somewhat questionable financial management in his early career, Dickens was quite fiscally comfortable at the time of his death. In keeping with his social station, Dickens kept a cellar. I can't properly call it a "wine cellar," as much more than wine was stored in it, typical for the time. Several months after his death the contents of the cellar were inventoried and sold with many other items from his Gad's Hill Place home. Using the inventory for the auction sale, we'll take a look at the contents of his cellar and I'll provide what context I can on the vintages and beverages. We'll see that Dickens must have been a masterful host for his time, his fame, and his station in life.



Charles Dickens bought almost all of his wine, liquor, and cordials from a single purveyor, or more accurately, through a few related purveyors over the years. By 1843, Dickens was making purchases from Joseph Ellis & Son, Wine Merchants, of Hill Street, Richmond. This firm was originally founded in

1831 by Joseph Ellis, who was also the proprietor of the Star & Garter Hotel in Richmond. (Dickens would use the Star & Garter for entertaining guests over the years.) Ultimately, Joseph Ellis turned his attentions to the hotel, and the wine merchant firm went to his sons Charles and George. At first, the firm became Charles Ellis & Co. of Brickhill Lane, London, and eventually became Charles & George Ellis, Wine Merchants to the Queen at 21 College Hill, London, and Hill Street & Friar's Style Road, Richmond. There are letters documenting orders to all three firm names, with some of them overlapping.

As we go through the inventory, you'll see in many places that the grower or winery name is not noted and only the wine type or area is listed. As an example, some Burgundies are listed only as "Volnay" and some Sauternes wines are listed only as "Sauternes." This practice dates back to the time

when wines were typically shipped in bulk to the wine merchant who would then bottle the wines upon receiving an order. It was not at all unusual to have wines referred to by their location of origin and ordered that way, because it was felt the quality was in the general area and the wines from that area would be on the same footing. The wines were generally less expensive this way as well, since the merchant could fill the order with any wine from that area (i.e. Sauternes) instead of with a specific winery (i.e. Château d'Yquem).

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- WINE IN CALIF—THE EARLY YEARS by C. Sullivan
- DRUNK ON STRONG WINE by Valmai Hankel
- HENRY SHAW AND HIS BOOK by Gail Unzelman
- BOTTLED POETRY: A REVIEW by Will Brown
- BOOKS & BOTTLES by Fred McMillin
- BOOK REVIEWS by Bob Foster



### Clarets

Dickens, with an excellent taste in Bordeaux, was also advised well by his wine merchant, Charles Ellis. The cellar inventory shows a good quantity of wines from the superb 1858 vintage, including:



1 dozen Château d'Issan  
6 dozen Brane [sic] Mouton  
4 magnums unnamed claret



Of special note is the Brane-Mouton of 1858. Baron Nathaniel Rothschild had purchased the château in 1853 and the wines were not yet being labeled as Mouton Rothschild. The 1858 Mouton was known to be an extremely fine wine that continued to drink nicely well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

André Simon's experience with the 1858 vintage includes two bottles of Lafite, consumed a year apart in 1929 and 1930 from the cellar of his good friend, Ian Campbell. The first, "a splendid old fellow ... all that a fine Claret ought to be, but, of course, in an attenuated form: sound but feeble of body; its bouquet charming but so faint; its fruit still sweet but so little of it." The second was noted "a finer bottle ... it was fresher; its colour is fading out, but it has kept its sugar wonderfully, and there is still in its bouquet and flavour that 'breed' of the *ancien régime* aristocrats which is admirable" [*Tables of Content*, 1933].

Like many cellar notes of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the remaining stock of claret in Dickens's cellar was either listed generically or with a producer's name, but without a vintage. The other clarets were:

16 dozen Médoc  
2 dozen La Rose  
3 dozen Château  
Margaux Bourjois [sic]  
5 dozen Léoville

It is unfortunate that the vintages of the Margaux and Léoville are not recorded. In addition, it was not unusual at the time for the three separate Léoville châteaux (Las Cases, Barton, Poyferre) to be referred to collectively as "Léoville" as if they were still together, as they had once been.

#### Port, Madeira, Sherry

Listed in the inventory as "Iberian wines," the Dickens cellar was well stocked with excellent Ports, Sherries, and Madeiras. These wines were favorites of Britons at the time, so a thoughtful host would be sure to have a good supply.

The stock of Port contained only three entries, but they were well chosen, and represent three of the best vintages of the century:

Over 5 dozen 22-year-old Port, v. dry &  
delicate (Cockburn)  
18 magnums 1851 Port, v. dry  
5 dozen 1834 Port

The "22-year-old Cockburn" is almost certainly the tremendous 1847 vintage, arguably the greatest vintage of the century. Prof. George Saintsbury felt that it was at perfection when he had it in 1870,

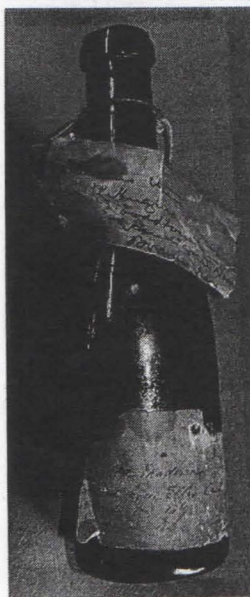
coincidentally the year of Dickens's death, yet thought it was "little but a memory" at age sixty. However, André Simon writes that the 1847 Cockburn was still drinking very well, "dark, sweet and lively," when he opened four different magnums between 1922 and 1924 [*Vintagewise*, 1945].

The 1834 vintage was the best known vintage until 1847, and remains one of the top five vintages of the century. It is unfortunate that the producer of Dickens's 1834s went unrecorded. They certainly would have been just entering their drinking window at the time of his death. What a shame for him, to have left all that fine Port in the cellar. Drink up I say!

The 1851 vintage was a remarkably fine vintage, yet not quite up to the quality of 1847 or 1834. Dickens's 18 magnums would not have been close to being ready to drink at the time of his death in 1870. While we don't know the producer for sure, it is likely that these were Cockburn as well since they're noted to be very dry, the same as the 1847 Cockburn. Professor Saintsbury was a devout fan of the 1851 vintage in all its forms, noting that "the Almighty might no doubt have caused a better wine to exist, but ... He never did." André Simon remembered that the 1851 Cockburn had a somewhat dry finish and was a first-rate drink of "breed and body" when being enjoyed in the 1930s: "it retained to the very end a rare degree of distinction; it was ever a real aristocrat" [*Vintagewise*, 1945]. The magnums Dickens owned would most certainly have lasted that long.

There was comparatively little Madeira in the Dickens cellar, but this was not unusual for an English gentleman. Madeira was more of an American taste, while the British were more fond of Sherry. Dickens had two types of Madeira in his cellar: almost

four dozen "rare old Madeira" bottled by Ellis and five bottles of 1818 Madeira. While it's impossible to know the vintage of this "rare old Madeira," it's likely that the wine was at least 50 years old based on the nomenclature of the day.



A Madeira Bottle from Charles Dickens's Cellar...hand-written label 'Very Old Madeira bottled from Ellis Cask of 1864.' Sold in 2009 at Keys Auctions, England. £1250.



As noted previously, the British palate was well tuned to Sherries, and their use while entertaining was a must. It's not surprising for there to be a number of Sherries in the Dickens cellar:

- 12 dozen brown Sherry, dry,  
golden (C & G Ellis, shippers)
- 2 dozen Solera Sherry (Ellis)
- 1 dozen Amontillado
- 13 magnums Golden Sherry,  
v. old, full flavoured, dry (Ellis)



It is not unusual to see Sherry listed in this manner in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were few named shippers and the wines were typically blended and bottled by the merchant, hence the listings noting the Ellis name on three of the four entries. It's likely that the Amontillado was an Ellis wine as well. The most unusual thing about this inventory is the bottles of Sherry in magnum—an infrequently seen format for any kind of fortified wine.

There are several letters from Dickens to Ellis ordering a "quarter cask" of Sherry. The bulk wine would not have been delivered to Dickens or any other customer by Ellis; the firm would have bottled the wines prior to delivery.

#### Red and White Burgundy

When looking at his cellar inventory, it is probably not a big assumption to think that Charles Dickens was not fond of Burgundy. Out of approximately 2200 bottles of wine and various other spirits, there was a grand total of 46 bottles of Burgundy:

- 16 bottles Clos de Vougeot
- 7 bottles Chambertin
- 17 bottles Volnay
- 6 bottles Chablis

Clos de Vougeot is arguably the most famous Grand Cru in Burgundy, so it is of little surprise to see this wine listed separately and specifically. The same holds true for the Chambertin, which is very high quality and was Emperor Napoleon's favorite wine. The other wines are generic, village-level classifications with no specific grower noted.

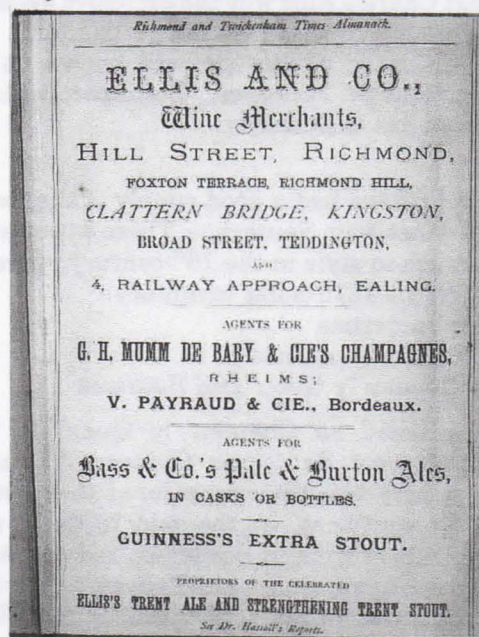
#### Champagne

The Dickens cellar was heavily stocked with wines from Champagne. The inventory lists two simple entries: 17 dozen Bouzy and 8 dozen dry Champagne. With these two entries, however, we can tell much.

The wine from Bouzy would have been a red wine, as the dominant grapes in the Bouzy area are Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier. Of greater importance is that this wine would have most certainly been a still wine, with no effervescence at all. For centuries, the majority of wines made in the Champagne region

were of this type. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century these wines were much in demand, especially in England. The red wines of Bouzy were known to be of excellent quality, sometimes rivaling those of Burgundy, but for a lesser price. The fact that Dickens had 17 dozen bottles of Bouzy in his cellar is a likely explanation for why he owned so few bottles of red Burgundy. André Simon's comments on the 1914 Bouzy support this assessment: "The Bouzy rouge I found delightful, but it was not understood by the majority of our guests, who found it difficult to judge it except as a Burgundy, which it resembles in colour, but a Burgundy with a peculiar flavour, which, being new to them, made them suspicious" [*Tables of Content*, 1933].

The "8 dozen dry Champagne" is another story. There are several letters from Dickens to Ellis for the ordering of "dry sparkling champagne." No additional information exists in the letters to indicate any specific vintage or producer, so this wine would be an average quality sparkling wine carried in bulk by Ellis to satisfy such orders as these.



1883 Ellis & Co. Advertisement

#### Hocks and Moselles

Letters from Charles Dickens to C & G Ellis show that Dickens ordered German wines fairly regularly. Those that remained in the cellar at the time of his death were:

- 2 dozen Moselle "Kuperberg"
- 2½ dozen Stein
- 3½ dozen Hock Johannisberg "Metternich"
- 16 bottles 1861 Moselle "Zullinger Schlossberg"

In a letter to Ellis dated 16 December 1853, Dickens ordered 2 dozen Metternich Hock "cheapest



seal." A follow-up letter several days later accompanied a payment of £7 10s for the Hock. This Metternich Hock is actually the wine of Schloss Johannisberg, whose vineyards have been owned by Prince Metternich since 1820. Schloss Johannisberg has historically used different color seals or capsules to distinguish the various wine qualities, which then also dictated price. According to the Schloss Johannisberg website, here's the key to the colors they've used and continue to use:

Yellow seal:	QbA
Red seal:	Kabinett
Green seal:	Spätlese
Silver seal:	1. Gewächs (first growth)
Pink seal:	Auslese
Pink-gold seal:	Beerenauslese
Gold seal:	Trockenbeerenauslese
Blue seal:	Eiswein

Based on his letter, Dickens is looking for the least expensive wine, regardless of its style. It should also be noted that Charles Ellis was the exclusive agent of Schloss Johannisberg wines for the British Isles.

The 1861 vintage of Moselle was known as an outstanding vintage. However, "Zullinger Schlossberg" has been lost to posterity.

#### Sauternes

Charles Dickens had a good supply of the sweet white wines from Sauternes. These wines were very much in style in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, more so than today. In his 1870 cellar inventory:

- 18 bottles Sauternes
- 2½ dozen Haut Sauternes
- 5 dozen Château "y Quen" [*sic*] Bourgois

The wine listed as Château "y Quen" is undoubtedly the great Sauternes Château d'Yquem. While this winery has been considered the best in Sauternes for centuries, in the mid-1800s it was considered the best wine in Bordeaux, red or white. Charles Dickens again shows excellent taste in wine, or appropriate trust in his wine merchant to follow their advice. The other Sauternes were clearly of a lower quality to the extent that the growers and vintages were not recorded.

#### Random Other Wines

The cellar contained 30 bottles of "Australian red and white wines" and 2 dozen sparkling Muscatel. It's impossible to know which Australian wine was in the cellar. Penfolds, the most famous grower known today, was making wine at this time. However, in 1870 it was not being distributed beyond Dr. Penfolds' town of Magill, South Australia.

#### Spirits, Whiskeys, Cordials, &c.

Charles Dickens outfitted his cellar in a well-rounded manner. Beyond the wines, the cellar contained a good supply of spirits, cordials, and other drinks that were popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century:

- 10 dozen Dark Hennessy Brandy, 10 yrs old
- 18 dozen Pale Brandy (F. Courvoisier)
- 11 dozen Highland Whisky (Cockburn, Leith)
- 16 bottles Old Hollandche Genever Hoboken
- 12 dozen Milk Punch
- 5 dozen Pine Apple Rum
- 3 dozen Cordial Gin
- 17 bottles Curacao
- 2 dozen 1854 Black Forest Kirschwasser
- 1 bottle Maraschino, Eau de Vie Dantzic, Char treuse, Elixia de Spa, and Parfait Amour
- 2 dozen cyder

Brandy was extremely popular as a gentleman's *digestif* and it's evident that this was the case in the Dickens household. It's interesting to see that Dickens had both Brown and Pale Brandy in the cellar. The Pale Brandy is the same style of brandy we know today, but at the time of Dickens's death, it was only coming into vogue in England. It was the Brown Brandy that was more widely known in England.



Brown Brandy was a thicker, treacly liquid that is practically non-existent today. George Saintsbury noted that Brown Brandy was a better basis to make the drink beloved by Mr. Pickwick, hot brandy and water. This mixture could be a revitalizing tonic for Pickwick, as can be seen from the following passage from *The Posthumous Papers of The Pickwick Club* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1836). Mr. Pickwick's party has just had a testy encounter with a group consisting of Lieutenant Tappleton, Doctor Slammer and Doctor Payne. Not knowing the activities of the previous evening that are the source of the encounter, Samuel Pickwick is livid, feeling that he and his friends have been unjustly insulted, and is trying to pursue his insulters to get satisfaction. At this point, his friends intervene to restore his good humor:

"Restrain him," cried Snodgrass, "Winkle, Tupman – he must not peril his distinguished life in such a course as this."

"Let me go," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Hold him tight," shouted Mr. Snodgrass; and by the united efforts of the whole company, Mr. Pickwick was forced into an arm chair.

"Leave him alone," said the green-coated stranger – "brandy and water – jolly old gentle-





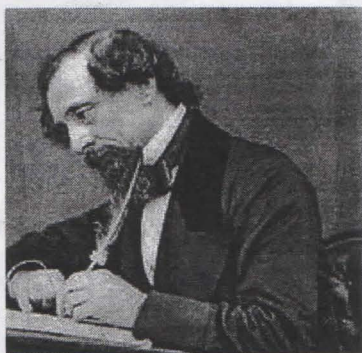
A Pickwick Meeting – Mr. Pickwick addressing the Club in a tavern...



man – lots of pluck – swallow this – ah! – capital stuff.” Having previously tested the virtues of a bumper, which had been mixed by the dismal man, the stranger applied the glass to Mr. Pickwick’s mouth; and the remainder of its contents rapidly disappeared.

There was a short pause; the brandy and water had done its work; the amiable countenance of Mr. Pickwick was fast recovering its customary expression.

Could this also have been a favorite drink of Charles Dickens? It very well might have been, or something very similar. There exists a letter from Dickens to his wine merchant Charles Ellis, dated 23 April 1860, in which Dickens orders for his Gad’s Hill cellar “one cask of dark Brandy for mixing.”



I was quite amazed to find over 130 bottles of Scotch Whisky in the Dickens cellar. Scotch had not become popular in Britain by the time Charles Dickens had died. Also, he rarely ever referenced it in any of his books, with the exception of a couple of mentions in *Sketches by Boz* early in his career.

Rum and gin were staples in the 19<sup>th</sup> century British cellar. The fact that the gin is listed as “Cordial Gin” is indicative of how both of these spirits were typically used, as primary ingredients in mixes. Rum’s most popular use was mixed with water, sometimes hot. Gin on the other hand was (and still is) the basis for a myriad of mixes and cordials, not the least of which was the venerable gin and tonic.

The “cyder” in the Dickens cellar is not recorded as being any particular designation. This is unfortunate, as we learn from Professor Saintsbury that the ciders from different areas of England and France have very different profiles. Saintsbury tells us that the ciders of Normandy and the west are weak, yet the ciders from Herefordshire and Worchestershire can be very strong. No letters survive from Dickens indicating the type of cider ordered. The cider could also have been used for mixing with the brandy or rum in the cellar. Both were, and continue to be, popular drinks.

There is a significant amount of Milk Punch (12 dozen) and Pine Apple Rum (5 dozen) in the cellar. Both were very popular in Victorian England, and clearly in the Dickens household as well. Each had its season however. The Milk Punch was served iced during the summer, while the Pine Apple Rum was a

winter drink, served slightly warmed. Dickens died during the summer (June 1870), so we can speculate that the volume of Milk Punch in the cellar was due to the house making ready for the summer months, while the Pine Apple Rum supply was depleted to a “mere” 5 dozen as it had not yet been replenished for the next winter.

#### **Pine Apple Rum** [*Drinking with Dickens*]

1 Pineapple  
1 bottle dark rum  
Sugar

Slice a pineapple very thinly, sprinkle with a little sugar and leave for a day. Set aside two slices and press the juice out of the rest adding it to an equal amount of sweetened rum (two oz. sugar to half pint of rum). Put into a jar with the spare slices of pineapple. Leave, well stoppered, for three weeks. Strain and bottle.

The remainder of the bottles in the cellar were a variety of liqueurs, punches, and mixing liquors. In the culinary history of England, there are a large number of mixed cordials and punches, most made with either brandy or rum. Some, such as Milk Punch, used both brandy *and* rum. The properly stocked cellar would not have been without these items. It was important to have the ability to mix these cordials, as some were recognized as being appropriate for service before lunch, others for service before dinner, and others yet for service after dinner. The consummate 19<sup>th</sup> century host would have been prepared for all occasions.

#### **Milk Punch** [*Convivial Dickens*]

Juice and thinly pared rind of 12 lemons  
Juice and thinly pared rind of 2 tart oranges  
2½ lbs sugar  
1 or 2 nutmegs, grated  
1 bottle Pale Brandy  
1½ bottles old rum  
5 qts water  
1 qt scalded milk

Combine rind of fruit, brandy, rum, sugar, and nutmeg and let stand one week. Then add fruit juice, water, and, last, the scalded milk. Let stand one hour, then strain until clear. Bottle for later use, adding a tot of brandy for keeping. Serve well chilled.

#### **The Sale**

Charles Dickens’s cellar was sold as part of an auction of his artwork, furniture, and other household items from his Gad’s Hill residence. The auction spanned from August 10–13, 1870, two months after his death. The cellar was sold on the last day of the sale. The sale realized over £521, quite a tidy sum for the day. This was driven not only by his fame, but also due to the quality of his cellar.



While Dickens had good taste in wines, it's clear from surviving letters written to Charles Ellis that Ellis was making suggestions on purchases. [See rear cover illustration.] Dickens had the good sense to take Ellis's advice, and he was rewarded with some very fine vintages, especially of Port. But letters also clearly show that Dickens knew what he liked and would request specific wines and wine tastes. This is certainly a far cry from his simple beginnings that were the basis for his incredible writings.

#### SOURCES

Dickens, Cedric. *Drinking with Dickens: being a Light-hearted Sketch by Cedric Dickens, Great-Grandson of Charles Dickens*. England: Mears et al, 1980.

[Dickens, Charles]. *The Pilgrim Edition. The Letters of Charles Dickens*. Edited by Madaline House, Graham Storey and Kathleen Tillotson. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Ellis & Co., Charles. *A Link with Charles Dickens*. London: Chas. Ellis & Co., Brickhill Lane, ca 1923.

Ellis & Co., Charles. *Charles Dickens Writes to His Wine Merchant*. London: Charles Ellis & Co., ca 1950.

Hewett, Edward and Axton, W.F. *Convivial Dickens. The Drinks of Dickens & His Times*. Athens Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1983.

Redding, Cyrus. *A History and Description of Modern Wines*. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851.

Saintsbury, George. *Notes on a Cellar-Book*. London: Macmillan and Co., 1920.

Simon, André L. *Tables of Content: Leaves from My Diary*. London: Constable and Company, 1933.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Vintagewise: A Postscript to Saintsbury's "Notes on a Cellar-Book."* London: Michael Joseph, 1945.

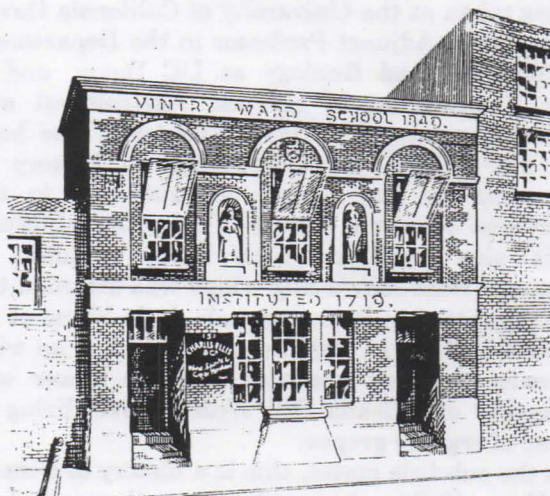
Wagh, Alec. *In Praise of Wine and Certain Noble Spirits*. New York: William-Sloan, 1959.

[EDITOR NOTE: John currently serves on the I.W.&F.S. Board of Governors of the Americas. He is a devoted fan of André Simon, and we have enjoyed his essays on several of his favorite Simon books. He admits his wife brought him into the captivating world of Charles Dickens in their membership in the International Dickens Fellowship.]



Illus by Phiz, *Pickwick Papers*

## CHARLES DICKENS WRITES TO HIS WINE MERCHANT



THE ANCIENT VINTNERS' SCHOOL IN LONDON,  
OCCUPIED BY THE HOUSE THAT SERVED  
CHARLES DICKENS WITH HIS WINES.

Charles Ellis & Co. *Charles Dickens Writes to His Wine Merchant*. London, ca 1950:

A promotional pamphlet containing fourteen letters  
in facsimile sent by Charles Dickens  
to his wine merchant, dated 1849-1860.

See rear cover illustration.



## *Bottled Poetry: Napa Winemaking from Prohibition to the Modern Era*

A Review by Will Brown

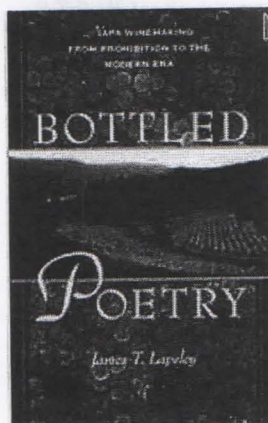


hy, one could ask, is this person reviewing a book that was published more than a decade ago? Well, because it is a great book and it has not been reviewed previously in our *W T Quarterly*. The book in question is *Bottled Poetry: Napa Winemaking from Prohibition to the Modern Era* by author James Lapsley, published by the University of California Press in 1996. I had actually read this book some years ago, but had an opportunity to re-read it recently for research that I am doing on the history of wine in Oregon, and I was reminded of what is required to develop a significant wine history. In addition I have had the pleasure of knowing Jim Lapsley for a number of years through courses taken at the University of California Davis. The author is Adjunct Professor in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis, and is Chair, Department of Science, Agricultural and Natural Resources UC Davis Extension. The book grew out of his PhD dissertation in History at Davis, and he has become an authority in the history and economic history of wine in California. He is also co-author with Kirby Moulton of *Successful Wine Marketing* which was awarded the OIV (Organisation Internationale de la Vigne et du Vin) Grand Prize in 2001 for the best book on wine economics. Lapsley has also been an owner and winemaker of Orleans Hill Winery specializing in the use of organic grapes.

As the sub-title states, this is a history of wine in the Napa Valley, but only from the repeal of Prohibition to the modern era. The latter term leaves, as somewhat vague, the time frame for when the modern era actually began. Lapsley asks the question "how did this region representing roughly 5% of all California wine grape vineyard acreage become synonymous with wine quality and achieve such dominance?" (p.2) His answer is in his hypothesis that "Napa producers were leaders in defining wine quality and creating a market for such wine." (p.2) For the next two hundred-twenty-five pages he recounts this history in support of his thesis, employing a good deal of economic history along the way.

After Repeal the number of Napa and California

wineries expanded rapidly as opportunists hoped to realize fortunes in the new wine boom. This failed to materialize for many, and even in the Napa Valley, from the beginning there were but a handful of wineries. The number considered to be quality producers could be counted on one hand. In the beginning there were the big four of Beaulieu, Inglenook, Beringer and Larkmead, soon becoming the big seven with the addition of Christian Brothers, Louis M. Martini and Charles Krug. Four major bulk producers joined these seven in the decade before World War II. It is nearly impossible for those of us familiar with today's wine industry to comprehend the devastation that Prohibition had wreaked in the industry and the negative impact on the appreciation of good wine in America during those Dry years. Forget that there had been a significant industry producing some fine wines before Prohibition, for there was nearly total devastation of the industry by the time of Repeal. A few wineries, Beaulieu and Larkmead among them, had survived by producing altar or medicinal wines and they had a head-start, but for the rest it was starting from scratch with poorly equipped facilities, virtually no winemaking skill, and only the standard pedestrian grape varieties, popular during Prohibition, with which to work. "For small producers viticulture was essentially a form of peasant agriculture." (p.46) Spoilage problems afflicted many wines as producers attempted to market wines made and stored before Repeal, or ones that were poorly made in less than sanitary conditions.



wines by utilizing modern winemaking technology in sanitary surroundings, and bottling on the premises. (Prior to the 1940s, most California wine was shipped in bulk for bottling in the East.) Once

Lapsley builds his case as over the next three decades the Napa industry with the active collaboration of the scientists in the Department of Viticulture and Enology at UC Davis slowly emerged from the chaos of the post-Repeal era to improve the quality of the vineyards with a move toward premium varieties such as Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, improving the quality of the

*continued on p.12 —*



## IN SEARCH OF THE MISSOURI WINE CONTINGENT:

### HENRY SHAW AND HIS BOOK

by Gail Unzelman

[In celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> year of our Wayward Tendrils Society and its quarterly publication, I thought it might be a worthwhile exercise to review during the year a few vintage articles by our members that the more recent membership did not experience. This second offering—revised, with added material—appeared in our first volume, issue number four, December 1991, when our young journal was still named *The Wayward Tendrils Newsletter*. — Ed.]



seek and ye shall find. The search is exciting adventure and success is exhilarating satisfaction. A recent two-week trip to Missouri [August 1991] provided a rich harvest of both. My mission was to search out the stomping grounds of five of my 19<sup>th</sup> century American wine-

writer heroes—George Husmann, Friedrich Muench, Isidor Bush, George Engelmann, and Henry Shaw. During the search, Charles V. Riley was added to my list as a supporting character. All of these gentlemen were important historical contributors—practical and scientific—to the promotion and survival of the world's wine industry in the 1800s. To this date, these pioneering winemen and their works have been largely unheralded, their histories neglected.

It shouldn't be surprising that so much wine history—with my contingent tightly enmeshed—occurred in the state of Missouri. During this busy period of the mid-to-late 1800s in the developing American wine industry, Missouri was the country's second largest winegrowing state.

#### Henry Shaw

In my quest, I first sought-out Henry Shaw. I desperately wanted to see a copy of his book, *The Vine and Civilisation* (St. Louis, 1884). Strangely, for some reason, I had never connected Henry Shaw, author of the elusive little book that I had been seeking for my wine book collection these many years, with Henry Shaw, founder of the world-renowned Botanical Gardens of St. Louis. But they are one and the same.

Henry Shaw (1800–1889) emigrated to the U.S. from his native England as a young man and became a very successful hardware and cutlery merchant and importer in St. Louis. By age forty he figured he had accumulated enough wealth to allow him to retire, and with a steady income from his many St. Louis real estate holdings, he could now devote the remaining years of his life to his love of botany, plants, travel, the languages—and enjoy his fine wines and many books.

In 1857 he engaged Dr. George Engelmann, noted botanist and physician, to advise him in establishing a Botanical Garden at his St. Louis country residence, Tower Grove. Under Engelmann's direction, a botanical library was developed that has become one of the most prestigious in the U.S. and a world renowned research center. Upon Shaw's death, the magnificent, scientific, gardens—covering over 250 acres—along with the library and one of the world's largest herbariums, were willed to the city of St. Louis.

Shaw's papers (correspondence, receipts, invoices, notes—it seems that he diligently saved everything) are kept in the Botanical Garden Library archives, expertly catalogued; it is a researcher's paradise. Here, in finely scripted invoices and receipts, and detailed household inventories, you can—item by item—experience Shaw's love for excellent wines, and splendid books in almost every language. In a special archival box, the library also houses a copy of his book on wine. Henry Shaw believed wine to be a civilizing drink and wrote his little book to educate his circle of friends to its benefits and “give a brief history, drawn from various authorities.”

In 1849, one of the earliest books on Bordeaux, and of great historical interest, *Les Grands Vins de Bordeaux: Poème* by Monsieur P. Biarnes, was published in Paris; the first part of the book is *d'Une Leçon du Professeur Babrius intitulée 'De l'Influence du Vin sur la Civilisation'*, a sixty-five-page lesson prepared for the Cours d'oenologie in Bordeaux in 1840 by the learned Prof. Babrius.<sup>1</sup> Shaw translated this enlightening lecture directed “to certain students of Bordeaux, on the geography, the history and the effects of the cultivation of the vine and the consumption of wine, on the civilization of man,” and relayed Babrius's theory that “wine producing countries being the most favoured of God's creation, and wine-drinkers the most temperate of men, the cause of the vine and civilization is clearly advocated. ...Everywhere where the grape ripens, the arts, poetry, eloquence, the exquisite sentiment of the beautiful bursts and expands, as under the enchanted zephyr of a beneficent divinity. We may say with truth, and without restriction, that civilization is a flower that grows only spontaneously in the midst of vineyards.”



Shaw continues the history of the vine and its wines from "remote antiquity" to "the strenuous exertions [being made] for the improvement of wine production in California," and delves deeply into the influence of wine upon civilization. He cites the Roman poets, and quotes from Horace, Pliny, Brillat Savarin, Shakespeare, Redi, and Moore. He discusses the wines of the world, covering them country by country, and specifies the great vineyards and wines of France, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece, and other wine growing countries.

### Henry Shaw's Wine Cellar

While reviewing the archived invoices of wines purchased by Shaw, it became clear that he was partial to the classed growths of Bordeaux and the fine wines of Burgundy that he describes in his book. Latour, Margaux, Mouton-Rothschild, Leoville-Poyferre, Clos Vougeot, Chambertin, Kirwan and Pape Clement were frequently ordered, usually in one or two-case lots, but often more. The invoices also reflect his fondness for vintage Port and old Madeira. (The Directors of his Gardens would enjoy his Port at the annual banquets for many years after his death.) Shaw writes with pleasure that "Chianti wine has recently been imported to St. Louis; it comes in flasks of about a quart, and is fine, mild, and pleasant to drink." A number of invoices record his enjoyment of it. Shaw occasionally ordered casks of California Carignan and "California Claret" from the St. Louis distributors of the Napa & Sonoma Wine Co. and the Napa Valley Wine Co. Local wines, such as Herbemont and Catawba, were purchased from Stone Hill Vineyards & Winery in Hermann, a major and pioneering winegrowing area of Missouri.



HENRY SHAW (From Bailey's  
*Cyclopedia of Horticulture*)

In his book, after he has carefully related the story of the vine and its wines, Shaw composes several helpful pages specific to his wine friends—"a few old amateurs of Claret" who "highly relish Château Pape Clement"—on the "difficult task" of choosing wines, and on the management of a "good cellar well filled." He offers that "fine

wines should be kept in cellars where no motion can affect them, far

from vibration or trembling of the earth, or from traffic over granite pavements. They should be as far removed from sewers, and the air of the courts, where trades of a bad odour are carried on, as possible. No vinegar should be kept in the wine cellar. A great object in the preservation of wine in the cellar is to keep the bouquet as long as possible, with that agreeable aroma which marks the highest class of wines ... chiefly met with in those from France. Wines lose their bouquet by being kept too long. Mere age is no criterion of the excellence of wine. ... The first object to be attained in choosing good wine is its purity. Whatever be the country from whence it comes, if it be adulterated with anything foreign to its own growth it ought not to be selected. The higher classes of wine should be transported to the purchaser with great care, removing the more delicate wines in the spring and autumn, when the weather is temperate."

According to several receipts found in Shaw's "Household Expenses" file, we can expect that he bottled some of his wines himself. It is evident that he commissioned wine labels from his printer R.P. Studley & Co. He also regularly ordered "fine wine corks" (\$1 the gross) and bottles. Two bottling machines were purchased—one in 1874, another in 1885. Since he ordered almost all of his European wines by the case "Bottled at the Château," presumably most of these supplies were reserved for the bottling of his U.S.-produced wines, and probably some Port.

### Henry Shaw's Wine Library

Naturally, I was hoping to find booksellers' invoices showing Shaw's purchases of books on wine and grapes, but found only one. In February 1886, he bought a copy of the 1864 edition of Thomas Shaw's *Wine, the Vine, & the Cellar* from David Francis, Dealer in New and Second Hand Books, New York City. According to Francis' letterhead, he issued "Catalogues of Books in stock—many of which are rare—from time to time." Shaw's 1886 order for 13 books from one such catalogue totaled \$64. Item No.898, *Wine, the Vine, & the Cellar*, cost \$2. (Nine other wanted titles had already "been sold"—Henry Shaw likewise experienced these familiar disappointments.)

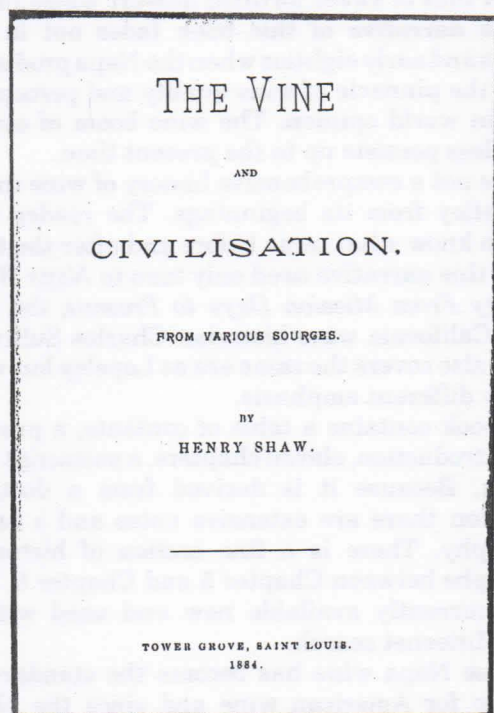
In his sizeable library containing major works on many subjects (in several languages), Shaw did have other volumes on wine, as evidenced today in his books now kept on the Botanical Library shelves. They sit proudly, bearing his bookplate, and include the contemporary treatises *Culture of the Grape and Wine Making* (1854) by Robert Buchanan, the 1862 edition of *Open Air Grape Culture* by John Phin, F.R. Elliott's *Fruit Book*, several editions of Bush &



Meissner's *Bushberg Catalogue & Manual*<sup>2</sup>, and the two-volume 1801 *Traité Théorique et Pratique sur la Culture de la Vigne, avec l'Art de Faire le Vin* by Chaptal, Rozier, et al, a cornerstone of French wine-making literature. I might add that the Botanical Library is a treasure trove of early agricultural works, including all of the U.S.D.A. reports and the Missouri State Agricultural Reports (in which C. V. Riley's pioneering studies on phylloxera first appeared in the early 1870s).

### *The Vine and Civilisation*

Henry Shaw printed his 71-page treatise in a small edition of 100 copies, a fact I happily discovered (explaining its rarity on the book market) after finding the receipted invoice from his printer R.P. Studley. Dated October 1884, "Henry Shaw Esq." was charged "\$100 for 100 copies of The Vine and Civilisation" (using the British spelling).



Since Studley & Co. advertized their business as Printers • Lithographers • Binders • Stationers, can we suppose the invoice amount included binding? The book—published for distribution to his friends and not for sale—was handsomely bound in a shiny black cloth, the title boldly stamped in gilt within blind-stamped decorative borders on the front cover; the decorative borders are repeated on the rear cover, all page edges are gilt. It is a lovely book.<sup>3</sup>

Among the "various sources" that Henry Shaw mentions and quotes in his book, he specifically calls attention to the "valuable treatise on the Grape Vines

of the United States" lately published by Dr. George Engelmann, and the Bushberg Catalogues in which "much useful information is given in regard to the varieties, propagation, and proper mode of culture of American grape vines." But these are another chapter in my continuing search . . .



HENRY SHAW'S BOOKPLATE  
Courtesy: MO Botanical Garden Library

(The Botanical Garden Library Archivist had never seen a bottle of Henry Shaw's wine with his personal wine label—either full, empty, or pictured. It might be a reasonable guess that he utilized this same design, using the "ribbon" at the bottom to record the name of the wine.)

### NOTES

1. Prof. Babrius was a pseudonym used by Jules Arthaud [1802–1859], a noted doctor and writer, born near Bordeaux in the town of Tonneins on the Garonne. He spent his career in Bordeaux and founded the *Revue de la Gironde*. He also wrote *De la Vigne et ses Produits* in 1858. Vintage Tendril Eberhard Buehler has written an interesting and informative annotation for Biarnez *Les Grands Vins de Bordeaux: Poème / d'Une Leçon du Professeur Babrius... de l'Influence du Vin sur la Civilisation* in his *Wine & Gastronomy Catalogue B* (1997). If you do not have these invaluable *Wine & Gastronomy* catalogues in your reference library, they can be down-loaded at his website [bookdaemon.com](http://bookdaemon.com).
2. See "The Bushberg Catalogues" by Gail Unzelman, *Wayward Tendrils Newsletter*, Vol.5 No.2, April 1995.
3. *The Vine and Civilisation* has remained a very elusive book, even with the miracles of today's internet searches. Yet, three years after my journey to Shaw's Botanical Garden, a copy of his book "dropped from



heaven" into my library. The bookseller provided no description other than "it seems an uncommon book" and priced it at \$100. If he had only known I would have gladly paid many times more to have this rare jewel! I have no record of other copies being offered for sale; but I sincerely hope there have been, and that Tendril members found them for their libraries. Let me know, as we share a splendid treasure.



One of the engaging illustrations from *Biarnez*

#### SOURCES

- Bailey, L. H. *Standard Cyclopaedia of Horticulture*. 3 vols. New York: Macmillan Co. 1935. New edition. 3,639 pp.  
 ■ With substantial sections on the Grape, Horticulture, Horticulturists, and the Literature of Horticulture, this massive work has been called the best single listing of American publications on the subject [U.P. Hedrick, *History of Horticulture in America to 1860, with an Addendum of Books Published from 1861-1920*, by Elizabeth Woodburn, (Portland, OR: Timber Press, 1988), p.518.]
- Faherty, William B. *Henry Shaw. His Life and Legacies*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1987. 228 pp. Illustrated.
- Missouri Botanical Garden, Henry Shaw Papers.
- Shaw, Henry. *The Vine and Civilisation. From Various Sources*. Tower Grove, St. Louis: [Author], 1884. 71 pp.



THE WAYWARD TENDRILS is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1990 for Wine Book Collectors. Yearly Membership / Subscription to the WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY (ISSN 1552-9460) is \$25 USA and Canada; \$30 overseas. Permission to reprint is requested. Please address all correspondence to THE WAYWARD TENDRILS, Box 9023, Santa Rosa, CA. 95405 USA. E-m: [tendrils@jps.net](mailto:tendrils@jps.net). Editor and Publisher: Gail Unzelman. —

BROWN, *cont. from p.8* —

the issues of wine quality were established, the growers and producers turned their attention not only to marketing the wines but also to represent them as quality or premium wines in a market that was more or less hostile to that concept, and where the market niche was very small. Advertising, public relations, tasting rooms and winery tours, wine judgments, varietal labeling and vintage dating all contributed at length to the improvement of the image and acceptance of Napa wines as the ultimate in quality for California wines.

In the 1960s the modern era began with the wine revolution, a cultural phenomenon when a quantum shift in American wine tastes and a doubling in per capita consumption led to a boom in the industry, in a plethora of new wineries, and ever increasing levels of quality. The landmark year was 1967 when, for the first time since Repeal, the sale of dry table wines exceeded that of sweet fortified dessert wines in the U.S. The narrative of this book fades out in the seventies and early eighties when the Napa producers reached the pinnacle of wine quality and perception thereof in world opinion. The wine boom of course more or less persists up to the present time.

This is not a comprehensive history of wine in the Napa Valley from its beginnings. The reader who wishes to know what came before and after the time frame of this narrative need only turn to *Napa Wine: A History From Mission Days to Present*, the fine work of California wine historian Charles Sullivan. Sullivan also covers the same era as Lapsley but with a slightly different emphasis.

This book contains a table of contents, a preface and an introduction, eleven chapters, a postscript and an index. Because it is derived from a doctoral dissertation there are extensive notes and a select bibliography. There is a fine section of historical photographs between Chapter 5 and Chapter 6. The book is currently available new and used with a minimal Internet search.

Because Napa wine has become the standard of excellence for American wine and since the Napa Valley is now widely considered one of the world's premium wine regions, this book would have wide appeal for all lovers of fine wine. It should be in the library of wine historians, as well as economists and economic historians. Winemakers and viticulturists will find it fascinating.

In summary, this book is a gem of wine historical scholarship, well written, insightful and timeless in its appeal.

[Will Brown, a longtime WT, is the most active retired physician and winemaker on the planet. He is working on "the" book of the history of the Oregon wine industry. — Ed.]





BOOKS &  
BOTTLES  
by  
Fred McMillin

### AN "ONLINE" TENDRILS

**The Book:** *Origins: A Very Short History of California Wine* by Fred McMillin. Seagram's Online, 2000.

[EDITOR'S NOTE: Some time ago Seagram's asked Fred to write an introductory history of wine in California for their website. In this Books & Bottles column, he provides us with some of the highlights, including contemporary gastronomic tidbits in the form of questions and answers. In each set, one statement is false. Can you pick it out? If you get three right, Fred awards you an A.]

#### 1223 A.D. –

- a) Tofu was introduced to Japan from China.
- b) Russian czars were importing French wines.
- c) The Gray Friars were founded by St. Francis of Assisi in Italy. At Assisi they made fine wine.
- d) Some five centuries later they would be the first to ferment the grape in California.

WHICH IS FALSE?

- c) – At Assisi the Friars were forbidden to make wine.

#### 1523 A.D. –

- a) The New World was changing the diet in England by shipping them food from the New World like turkey and potatoes.
- b) The Conquistadores of Cortez were in Mexico, but could not make drinkable wine from the local grapes.
- c) In Spain, Cortez's father sent him a European winemaking grape, which today we call the Mission grape.
- d) Since the Spanish Friars did not take the Mission grape to South America, it was grown only in North America.

WHICH IS FALSE?

- d) – South America received Mission grapes from the Spanish Friars, where it was known as the Criolla.

#### 1769 A.D. –

- a) Benjamin Franklin tried to teach women in London how to cook cornbread.

- b) Thomas Jefferson's 1769 wine cellar was stocked with hundreds of bottles of French wines.
- c) Franciscan Friar Padre Junipero Serra crossed the border from Baja California into the Spanish province, Alta California. His fellow Friars would soon plant the first winemaking vines in California (Mission).
- d) How good was the wine of the Friars? Sir George Simpson, a visiting Hudson's Bay Company executive, tried it and noted in his diary that "Politeness alone induced me to swallow it!"

WHICH IS FALSE?

- b) Thomas Jefferson's cellar in 1769 contained only nineteen bottles of wine. The hundreds of bottles of French wines appeared only after he had been the U.S. Ambassador to France (1784–1789).

#### 19<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. –

- a) 1861: Isabella Beeton, 25, completed her landmark three-pound, 1296-page cookbook in London. For a middle class picnic for forty people, she recommended taking "three corkscrews along with six bottles of sherry, six claret, other light wines, and Champagne." Now that's my kind of picnic!
- b) Across the Atlantic, Mrs. Lincoln was shaking up the White House staff by serving European wines at State functions.
- c) c1837 – Mexico had replaced Spain as the ruler of what is now California and General Mariano Vallejo was in charge and he planted the first secular vineyard in California.
- d) Centuries earlier. General Vallejo's great-grandfather Admiral Alonso Vallejo had taken a prisoner in chains from the New World back to Spain...His name? Christopher Columbus!

WHICH IS FALSE?

- b) At the White House, European wines were served regularly. Mrs. Lincoln broke tradition when she served American wines at State dinners.

**The Bottles:** Here are a few related wines that sparked a lot of interest in my classes at the Fort Mason campus of San Francisco City College.

Mission Wine: Story Vineyard, Shenandoah Valley, California, 2004. \$35

French Wine: Vouvray (Chenin Blanc), George Meurgey, Loire, France, (Boisset, USA), 2007. \$8

Sparkling Wine: J. Schram, Schramsberg Vineyards, North Coast, 2001. \$100

Norton Grape: Mrs. Lincoln served a wine made from Norton, a native American grape. The last Norton our class tasted was made by St. James Winery, Missouri.



## Drunk on Strong Wines: A Glance at Some Pre-Twentieth Century, Non-Australian Wine Books in the State Library of South Australia

by  
*Valmai Hankel*

[*Wayward Tendril Quarterly* readers have enjoyed over the seasons several grand tours of the "largest collection of wine books in Australia's biggest wine producing state" personally directed by Valmai Hankel, Rare Books & Special Collections Librarian for over forty years. For a historical look at the Australian-authored "Books on Grape Growing and Winemaking Important in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Australia" see *WTQ* v.11, #3, #4. "Drunk on Wines" was originally published in *Bibliofile* (Aug 1998, v.9, #4), the journal of the Friends of the State Library of South Australia. We sincerely appreciate their permission to reprint. Ed.]

AS SOUTH AUSTRALIA produces most of Australia's wine, it is appropriate that the State Library of South Australia has the southern hemisphere's largest collection of information about wine. This article will look at some of the Library's books on wine published mainly in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and earlier.. All of the books here mentioned come from the State Library's Rare Books Collection, Thomas Hardy Wine Library, or Cellarmaster Collection of Rare Wine Books.



South Australia's first library was formed in London in 1834, two years before the first European settlers arrived. Among those books, all of a practical nature, was one described as 'Busby's New South Wales'. Its actual title was *Authentic Information Relative to New South Wales, and New Zealand*, and it was published in London in 1832. It has a one-thousand-word footnote about the author's importation to

Sydney of vines from Europe, and his belief in the need for a 'light unadulterated' wine for the rum-sodden inhabitants of New South Wales.

Seven years earlier, in 1825, Busby had published Australia's first wine book. *Authentic Information...* is one of some 36 books from that first library—now known as the Gouger Collection and on view in the Mortlock Library—which survived a salty baptism when the ship *Tam O'Shanter* went aground on arriving here in December 1836. From that small beginning the State Library's collection of wine information has grown to an impressive size.

### The Biblical Noah and Drunkenness

There are many references to the vine and wine in the Bible; in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, for instance, we learn that Noah planted a vineyard, and that 'he drank of the wine and was drunken'. This incident was sometimes featured in illustrated versions of the Bible, including an English manuscript of around 1320 known as the Holkham Bible. The State Library's facsimile edition of this manuscript, published in 1954, shows Noah and his sons harvesting grapes, followed by a vivid portrayal of the first recorded drunkard.

Drunkenness is also the theme of our oldest original wine item, a vellum manuscript leaf from the *Decretum* of Burchard of Worms. Composed originally about 1008–12, the *Decretum* was a manual for the instruction and guidance of young ecclesiastics. Our leaf, written in Latin in a beautiful cursive Caroline script by a German scribe in the first half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, contains a list of punishments for drunkenness—fifteen days on bread and water if one drank so much that one vomited; thirty days if anyone who was already drunk encouraged others to get drunk; and forty days if, through drunkenness, one vomited the communion wine and sacred Host. This manuscript leaf was presented by the Friends of the State Library in 1986.

Our other wine-related early manuscript item, which is on permanent loan from the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide, is an exquisitely illustrated prayer book or Book of Hours from Paris, written and decorated by hand, on vellum, in about 1490. Among its brilliantly coloured miniatures is one illustrating the calendar for September which shows grapes being trodden. In addition to the treader and someone pouring grapes from a basket into a vat, a worker in the background having a surreptitious tippie adds a humane, and humorous, touch. The miniature makes a delightful comparison with other depictions of treading the grapes in facsimile editions of Books of Hours which we hold.

### Pliny's *Natural History*

The Library's oldest printed book has, inevitably, winegrowing references. Pliny's *Natural History*, the remarkable encyclopedia of the ancient world, was a major source for most medieval knowledge and was printed in several editions in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The State Library has two incunabula editions (i.e., printed before 1500), each presented by



the Friends. Nicolas Jenson's version, printed in Venice in 1472, is recognized as the highest achievement of Renaissance printing and, purchased in 1984, it is also one of the Friends' most important gifts to the Library. Andreas Portilia's version, printed in Parma in 1480, had already been presented in 1944–45. The *Natural History* is full of information on winegrowing in ancient times, and for those who cannot read Latin, we have modern translations.

Another finely printed work is *De re Navali*, by Lazarus Bayfius, published in Paris by the scholar, printer and type designer, Robert Estienne, in 1549. This early compendium of maritime information contains a description of how wine was carried at sea, with a woodcut illustration showing how barrels were securely stored on board.

#### The First Book in English on Wine

The first book in English on wine, William Turner's *A New Booke of the Natures and Properties of All Wines that are Commonlye Used Here in England*, was published in 1568. Turner, a distinguished botanist, physician and medical adviser to Queen Elizabeth I, was interested in winegrowing, the effects of wine, and its use in medical practice. He firmly believes that light white Rhine wines can relieve kidney and bladder stones, and in support quotes several classical writers; his book, of which only a handful of original copies have survived, was known to Shakespeare, and was almost certainly a source of wine information for the plays. We have a facsimile edition published in 1941.

#### Walter Charleton's *Mysterie of Vintners*

Seventeenth century English winemakers encountered problems mostly undreamt of today, and the remedies used to deal with them have a fascinating horror. Walter Charleton [1619–1707], another learned physician, presented his treatise on such matters to the newly formed Royal Society in 1662. Our copy of *The Mysterie of Vintners. Or a brief discourse concerning the various sicknesses of wines, and their respective remedies, at this day commonly used*, was published in London a few years later, in 1675, and includes such remedies as beetroot or ripe elderberries for colouring pale claret, and burnt alum, lime, chalk or salt for

wines 'faulty in consistence'. The 'mysterie' of the title means 'trade'.

#### *Juice of the Grape* by Dr. Shaw

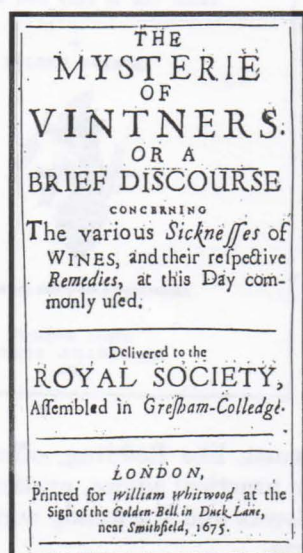
With all this advice around on how 'to help stinking wines' that are sick it is not surprising that several books were published on wine and medicine. One that should find favour with today's believers in the healthful benefits of wine is *The Juice of the Grape: or, Wine preferable to water. A treatise, wherein wine is shown to be the grand preserver of health, and restorer in most diseases* by Dr Peter Shaw, published in 1724. The doyen of 20<sup>th</sup> century oenographers, André Simon, considered that Shaw's accounts of interviews between himself and his patients were very amusing and that as he prescribed wine almost as a panacea he must have been the most satisfactory of physicians. Shaw, who served as physician 'extraordinary' to King George II, claims that wine cures everything from smallpox to venereal disease, including gout. Our copy of *The Juice of the Grape*, presented by the Friends in 1974, is of especial significance as it comes from Simon's own library and contains his distinctive bookplate.

#### Sir Barry's *Observations* and Henderson's *History*

Sir Edward Barry, a Dublin-born physician, published in 1775 what may be the first English-language survey of wines. In his *Observations historical, critical, and medical, on the wines of the ancients. And the analogy between them and modern wines* Barry argues that 'modern wines' should be judged by the standards of 'the ancients' such as Hippocrates, while begrudgingly acknowledging the fact that he has not himself tasted the wines he is praising. It is instructive to compare Barry's book with that of his later detractor, yet another physician, Alexander Henderson. *The History of Ancient and Modern Wines* was published in 1824 and concentrated far more on contemporary wines; the book is based on Henderson's experiences in France, Germany and Italy. Henderson notes a problem common to today's wine educators, writers and consumers—how to find words to convey flavours. He writes 'the only satisfactory and intelligible way the description can be given ... is by a comparison with some other known sensation of taste, regarding which all men are agreed' (p 134). Today's wine scribes have certainly not always heeded Henderson's advice, comparing as they do wine flavours with barnyards, sweaty saddles and cigar boxes.

#### Jullien's Remarkable Book

Eight years earlier, in 1816, the Parisian wine merchant André Jullien published the first edition of his remarkable book, *Topographie de Tous les Vignobles Connus*. We have the second (1822)





and third (1832) editions. Jullien catalogues all the world's known—and unknown—vineyards, including those in China, in passes of the Hindu Kush and on ocean islands, and classifies almost every wine into one of five categories of quality. Leading contemporary English wine writer, Hugh Johnson, describes the book as 'a work of breathtaking breadth and boldness' and 'the foundation-stone of modern writing about wine'. While Jullien travelled extensively he did not visit all of the vineyards he describes, but relied on information sent to him.

#### Agoston Haraszthy

**A**mong other 19<sup>th</sup> century vagrant vinographers was the Hungarian-born Agoston Haraszthy, who arrived in New York in 1840. He joined the Californian gold rush in 1849, and planted vines near San Francisco in 1854. In 1861 the Californian State governor commissioned him to visit Europe in search of both information and vines. The entertaining and informative account of his rapid but critical visit to the vineyards of France, Germany, Italy and Spain was published in New York in 1862 under the title *Grape Culture, Wines, and Wine-making*. Tiring of the vinous life Haraszthy moved to Nicaragua, where in 1869 he was taken by an alligator—an unfortunately watery death for such a man.

#### Notes on Vineyards in America and Europe

**T**he winegrowing link between California and South Australia could be said to date back at least to the 1880s, when Thomas Hardy, founder of the company now part of BRL Hardy, visited the vineyards of California, Portugal, Spain, France and Germany. He wrote a series of letters which were published as a book, *Notes on Vineyards in America and Europe*, in 1885. Thomas Pinney, an American academic, has recently identified it as 'the first book about California wine'.<sup>1</sup> It is amazing that, although wine had been produced in California for about fifty years, no one had earlier bothered to write a book about it.

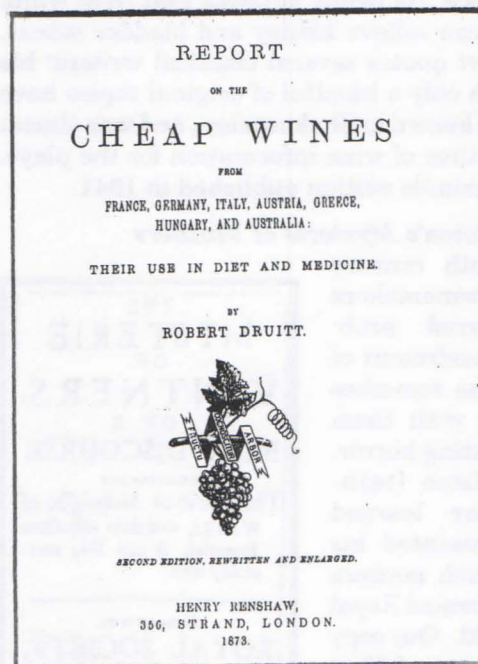
#### 19<sup>th</sup> Century British Wine Writing: Redding, Druitt, Forrester, Vizetelly

**T**he nineteenth century can well be described as a golden age for wine writing in Britain. Some of the books were written by wine merchants for wine merchants and to a lesser extent for consumers. Two of the many writers of importance are **Cyrus Redding**, a journalist, and **Robert Druitt**, another doctor-writer. Redding's *A History and Description of Modern Wines*, first published in 1833 and frequently revised and reprinted, makes an interesting comparison with Jullien's more analytical and matter-of-fact work. Redding writes lyrically and with enthusiasm, and with particular passion on his

favourite topics of adulteration and fraud—which were then common in the wine trade. He is especially vehement in his denunciation of the British taste for strong wines, declaring that for England no wine would do without brandy.

Robert Druitt's contribution to wine writing has not been sufficiently recognized. He was, I believe, the first to write about wine specifically for women, and also possibly the first to outline the contents of a practical course in wine appreciation. Until the middle of this century wine books were invariably written by and for men, but in 1865 Druitt published *Report on the Cheap Wines from France, Italy, Austria, Greece and Hungary; their quality, wholesomeness, and price, and their use in diet and medicine. With short notes of a lecture to ladies on wine, and remarks on acidity*.

In his six-page lecture Druitt suggests what the lecturer should present as examples for tasting, including 'specimens of grapes, fresh and dried ... with samples of *grapy* wine to match' (p. 172). The lecture cannot have been popular, because it is omitted from the second edition of the book published in 1873—which adds a brief section on Australian wines.



Druitt, like Redding, offers strong opinions and much practical advice, particularly on the benefits of Bordeaux and Burgundy wines. Bordeaux wines, he asserts:

... are admirably well adapted for children, for literary persons, and for all whose occupations are chiefly carried on indoors, and which tax the brain more than the muscles (p. 40).



Furthermore, he argues, for men 'unaccustomed to public speaking' a glass of wine 'to oil the brain' is much more effective than 'the glass of cold water provided for public lecturers' (p. 61). Perhaps some of these innovative suggestions could be adopted profitably by today's Australian wine marketers in their push for new consumers. [EDITOR: See also *WTQ*, v.14 #2, 2004: "Robert Druitt's Joyous, Forgotten Classic" by Hankel.]

Another writer to denounce the adulteration of wine, especially Port, was **Joseph James Forrester** [1809–1861], an Englishman who travelled extensively in Portugal and owned property there. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were many styles of Port wine and it was a favourite tippie of the English. Forrester's pamphlet, *A Word or Two on Port-Wine! Addressed to the British publick generally, but particularly to private gentlemen; showing how, and why it is adulterated, and affording some means of detecting its adulterations*, was first published anonymously in 1844, and then reprinted under Forrester's name; we have the 1844 and 1848 editions. He speaks strongly against the adulterations, including brandy, inflicted on Port by its Portuguese manufacturers. He had his detractors: Forrester was hopeful but wrong in believing that his countrymen did not desire wine full of brandy but preferred the most pure and the least inebriative wines possible. The forceful feelings of Forrester, his supporters and his opponents—some of whose views are included in the 1848 edition—make fascinating reading today.

This preoccupation with attempting to persuade

imbibers to give up strong drinks such as spirits and adulterated wines and take to light, pure wines is a theme which runs through much of English—and Australian—nineteenth-century oenography.

Journalist and publisher **Henry Vizetelly** was another pioneering and influential 19<sup>th</sup> century English wine writer. A friend of Charles Dickens, Vizetelly wrote several enthusiastic books on wine, usually adorned with elegant and informative engravings. His major work, the profusely illustrated *A History of Champagne with Notes on the Other Sparkling Wines of France*, was published in London and New York in 1882, and is the first popular illustrated wine book; it is also scholarly and full of detail.

#### French Wine Writers: Chaptal and Pasteur, Rendu and Mares

Not all of the State Library's 19<sup>th</sup> century wine books are in the English language—many are in French, German, Italian, Spanish and other languages. Jean-Antoine Chaptal, chemist and Napoleon's Minister of the Interior, was possibly the first wine writer to work from the evidence of recent, that is 18<sup>th</sup> century, science rather than from the classics. He is remembered today for giving his name to the process of adding sugar to the grape juice to increase the alcoholic content of the wine—Chaptalization. His book, *L'Art de Faire, Gouverner, et Perfectionner les Vins*, was published in Paris in 1801 and, like the works of many other 19<sup>th</sup> century French wine writers, was to have considerable influence in Australia.



From: Vizetelly *A History of Champagne*... 1882, "the first popular illustrated book"



The great French scientist, Louis Pasteur, made two discoveries of immense importance to wine-makers. One was that fermentation is due to the action of yeasts in reproducing. The other was that when wine is exposed to air, its resident bacteria take over and sooner or later the wine turns to vinegar. Pasteur's solution was to heat the wine in its bottle for long enough to kill the bacteria or microbes. Pasteurization also prevents further fermentation and stabilizes the wine. We have the first edition of his land-mark work, *Etudes sur le Vin: ses maladies, causes qui les provoquent, procédés nouveaux pour le conserver et pour le vieillir*, published in Paris in 1866.

The knotty problem of identifying grape varieties has taxed experts for centuries, and continues to puzzle them. Two superb ampelographies—books which list and describe grape varieties and their characteristics and are sometimes illustrated—were published in France in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Ampélographie Française* by V. Rendu (Paris, 1857), and *Description des Cépages Principaux de la Région Méditerranéenne de la France* by H. Marès (Montpellier, 1890), both contain magnificent colour plates which reproduce in actual size a bunch of grapes with leaves and a cut-away section of each grape variety.

#### Fanciful and Satirical Treasures



Not all of our pre-20th century non-Australian wine books are practical or serious, however. Hans Sachs, who died in Nuremberg in 1576, was a member of the Meistersinger Guild there, and the subject of Wagner's opera, *The Mastersingers of Nuremberg*. His very rare pamphlet, *Die Vier Wunderberlichen Eygenschaft und Würckung des Weins*, was published in Nuremberg in 1553, and describes in entertaining verse 'the four wondrous properties of wine and their effects.' We are fortunate to have a translation of the verse by Emeritus Professor Ralph Elliott.

Richard Ames, described by André Simon as a minor poet of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, wrote several books of satirical verse about wine, of which we have three. *A Farther Search after Claret; or a Second Visitation of the Vintners*, published in 1691, is the oldest. *The Bacchanalian Sessions; or, The Contention of Liquors; with a Farewell to Wine* (1693) describes the varied tastes of 17<sup>th</sup> century toppers, while *Fatal Friendship; or, The Drunkard's Misery, being a Satyr against Hard Drinking* (1693), is a

quite early tirade against the drinking of spirits.

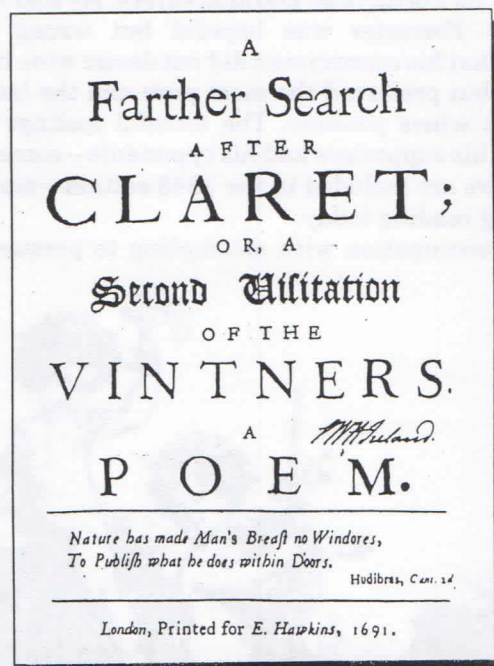
The anonymously assembled *The Buck's Bottle Companion: being a Complete Collection of Humorous, Bottle and Hunting Songs* published in London in 1775 is a riotous collection of drinking songs—unfortunately lacking the music.

In the light of a certain preoccupation with drunkenness in this article, it is appropriate to end with a verse from *The Buck's Bottle Companion*:

When Bibo thought fit from the world to retreat,  
As full of champaign as an egg's full of meat;  
He wak'd in the boat, and to Charon he said,  
He would be row'd back, for he was not yet dead.  
Trim the boat, and sit quiet, stern Charon reply'd,  
You may have forgot, you was drunk when you  
dy'd. (p.8)

#### NOTES

1. Pinney, Thomas, ed. *The Vineyards and Wine Cellars of California* (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1994), p.xxi.



#### The Epistle Dedicatory.

Who with Peggs, Peircers, Addice, and large pair of Bellows,  
In their Vaults would be thought to be very good Fellows.  
To all the choice Lads who are Cellar-men known,  
Who visit the Hogheads when Company's gone.  
To all Dealers in Wine, of what Figure or Fashion,  
Is Humbly Presented

This new Visitation.



IN THE  
WINE  
LIBRARY  
by Bob Foster



*Into the Earth: A Wine Cave Renaissance* by Daniel D'Agostini and Molly Chappellet. Plano, Texas: Parnache Books, 2009. 238 pp. Hardback. \$50.

"luxurious underground facilities..."

Winemakers love caves. Being underground means that the wine is stored at a constant cool temperature and humidity is higher reducing evaporation. The result is larger amounts of better quality wine. But in recent years many wineries have gone far beyond mere wine depositories and have dug elaborate, even luxurious, underground facilities capable of hosting elegant meals and events.

This work is a chronicle of thirty of the most interesting caves in Napa Valley. Each of the selected caves has a page describing the winery and its cave, followed by gorgeous full-color photographs of the finished work. It is stunning to see how elaborate a cave can become.

This major part of the book is followed by a section on each of the primary cave diggers and their companies, with photos of their projects. Interestingly, many of the caves were dug using one of the giant machines that was used to dig the Chunnel that now links England and France.

The Napa Valley Vintners website states that there are sixty-six wine caves in the Napa Valley. This book should challenge the wine lover to explore many of them. Very highly recommended.

*South-West France: The Wines and Winemakers* by Paul Strang. Berkeley: U.C. Press, 2009. 375 pp. Hardback. \$45.

"top-notch text ... color photographs ... and maps"

Back in 1994 Paul Strang wrote a terrific book about an obscure wine-producing area of France near the Spanish border (*Wines of Southwest France*, London, 355 pp). History repeats itself. He has written another terrific book about a wine-producing area that is still unknown (and wines difficult to obtain) in the U.S.

The area covered by the book is roughly east and south of Bordeaux stretching to the Spanish border. Strang notes that most of the original grapes in the region were probably brought back by pilgrims who had gone to Spain to worship at the shrine in Santiago. But in recent years, growers are switching over to international varieties such as Cabernet, Merlot, and Sauvignon Blanc.

The author divides the area into nine major sections; within each section there are two to seven growing areas. For each of these areas he offers short essays about the region, its history, and the various grapes grown within the district. This is followed by detailed notes on each of the growers with detailed analysis of the wines offered for sale. The author rates the wines from zero to three stars. Contact information is given for each of the producers.

Many of the grapes grown in southwest France are unknown to U.S. wine lovers. There is a comprehensive list of which grapes are used by which growers. There is also a very detailed chart indicating which wines from this region go with which foods. Want to know what goes with Brulhos? It's here—mushrooms, chicken, or hard cows' milk cheeses.

The top-notch text is augmented by lovely color photographs and multiple good maps. Because it remains difficult to visit this region and finding wines from any of these areas can be a struggle, this book may not have a huge audience in America. Nevertheless, it is a first-rate book on a slowly emerging wine area. Highly recommended.

[We express our thanks to the *California Grapevine* for their kind permission to reprint Bob's reviews which appeared in the Dec 2009/Jan 2010 and Feb/Mar 2010 issues. — Ed.]

SULLIVAN, cont. from p. 31—

33. Palóu's Serra, 179.
34. Leggett, 9.
35. *California, an Interpretive History*, New York, 1968, 50.
36. Jaime Legaspi. "Los Vascos en el Noroccidente de México, Siglas XVI-XVIII," in Eusko Sare (Basque World internet).
37. Alejandra Milla Tapia et al. "Determining the Spanish Origin of Representative Ancient American Grapevine Varieties." *American Journal of Enology and Viticulture*, 58:2 (2007), 242-251; *Wine Spectator*, February 12, 2007. The Listan Blanco is also called the Palomino Blanco in the Canary Islands. Since the Palomino came to California from Peru, a connection between the white and red grapes can be logically inferred.
38. Clements R. Markham. *History of Peru*, Chicago, 1892, 164; John Hemming. *The Conquest of the Incas*, New York, 2003, 556; Marieli Balbi. *Pisco in Peru*, Lima, 2003.
39. Maynard Amerine and A. J. Winkler. "Composition and Quality of Musts and Wines of California Grapes," *Hilgardia*, 15:6 (February 1944), 557-558 (Mission), 573-574 (Muscat); Jacob N. Bowman. "The Vineyards in Provincial California," *Wine Review*, May 1943, 11; Harm Jan de Blij. *Wine Regions of the Southern Hemisphere*, Totowa, New Jersey, 1985, 19-20; for the history of all California wine grape varieties see my *Companion to California Wine*, Berkeley, 1998.
40. Webb, 92, 97-99.





## Wine in California The Early Years by Charles L. Sullivan

[Wine historian Sullivan has given us another gem. Our *WT Quarterly* pages have carried "The History of Zinfandel" before it was published as a book, and a multi-part "Discourse on the Institution of Wine Research in California." We have had a studious look at "The Etymology of 'Winery,'" an unusual visit to "Nicholas Longworth of Cincinnati & St. Louis," and a brief tour of Sullivan's "Basic 25 Wine Book Library." Early on he indexed the wine material in "The Hidden Treasures of Government Publications (U.S.D.A. Annual Reports)" and introduced us to the "Two Frenchmen in America" who were so vital in saving the vineyards of Europe and California from phylloxera. Sullivan's present essay extends to us his newly researched material, never before gathered together anywhere, on the earliest days of California wine: a landmark contribution to the literature of wine. — Ed.]

### PART I — MISSION WINES, 1698–1822

THE AZTEC EMPIRE OF MEXICO was conquered by a small Spanish force under Hernan Cortés between 1519 and 1521. But it would be almost two and a half centuries before the Spanish expanded their American empire into what is today California. And it would be a few years more before the first European grape vines were planted in this land which has unquestionably become the most important winegrowing region in the Western Hemisphere.



little time elapsed between the conquest and the beginning of a steady flow into New Spain of adventurers, settlers, priests, and European goods and plant material. Among the latter were grape vines. But in the early years after the conquest, viticulture

played an extremely minor role in the lives of the Spanish conquerors, the settlers, and of the native peoples there. It was found that the wild grapes growing in the lands of Mexico, or New Spain, were virtually useless for wine and brandy production, even for eating. And the climates of the lands first penetrated by the Spanish soldiers and missionaries did not suit the European vinifera vines introduced in the 1530s. Nevertheless, the European inhabitants of New Spain did not go without their wine and brandy, always present in large quantities aboard the ships coming from the home land.<sup>1</sup>

The discovery of gold and silver in New Spain quickly focused the attention of the Spanish crown and of the *conquistadores* on expansion into the rugged lands to the north of Cortes's outpost in the area of the Aztec capital, the site of today's Mexico City. This expansion was closely linked to the crown's powerful desire to bring Christianity to the native population of the New World. To implement this goal a well organized system of missions was established along the expanding frontier.

These missions were founded and run by estab-

lished religious orders. Of these the Franciscans were the first and by far the most important missionaries to work in New Spain. The first contingent landed at Vera Cruz in 1524. Within twenty-five years they had established eighty missions north and south of Mexico City. But it is only the advance of the northern colonial frontier that is important to this story.

The Spanish goal was to extend this frontier and bring stability to the region by establishing mission communities in which the native peoples would be collected in orderly agricultural villages. There they would learn to be productive farmers and in the process be converted to the Roman Catholic faith. Underlying this complex process was the understanding that these communities would be populated eventually by loyal subjects of the Spanish crown. The mission, in theory, was to be a temporary institution. When the hoped for process came to fruition the padres of the religious order would move on to other tasks and the secular clergy under the local bishop would take charge of what was now the parish church. The land was to be divided among the Indians. In Mexico, particularly in the north, this outcome was fairly common. Later, in California, there was never such success.

For this history the Franciscan missionaries in the Sierra Gorda are of particular importance. This rugged highland country north of Mexico City ranges over today's states of Queretaro, Guanajuato and San Luis Potosí. Although the missionary work in this isolated region was underway in the early 1630s, it was not until the 1730s that it was firmly under Spanish control. Our interest in these Sierra Gorda missions has little to do directly with viticulture and winegrowing. But it was to this region in the mid-1700s that many of the Franciscan padres came who



would carry the cross into Alta California. Chief among these was Father Junípero Serra who led the missionaries to San Diego in 1769.



FATHER JUNIPERO SERRA, 1773

The Franciscans did plant vineyards in the Sierra Gorda, but with poor results. The weather there is too cold and rainy to ripen fruit from the traditional European vinifera vines the padres used.<sup>2</sup> That the Franciscans were interested in viticulture can be seen in their successes in that field farther north at an even earlier date. There in the 1600s, in the modern states of Coahuila and Chihuahua, along the Rio Grande River, and in today's New Mexico and Texas, the Franciscans established missions, planted vineyards and made wine.<sup>3</sup> Commercial winegrowing in southern Coahuila State in the Parras region had a small beginning in the 1590s. But pressure from Spanish wine producers, who were profiting from the heavy exportation of their wines to New Spain, led to a royal ban in 1595 on commercial wine production throughout the province. This prohibition did not apply to wines made at the missions for the padres' own use, nor was it enforced in Coahuila or later in California.<sup>4</sup>

The missionary work in the northwest regions was accomplished by the Jesuits, who arrived in New Spain in 1572. They concentrated this work first in Sinaloa whose west coast was on the Gulf of California. They also had missions east of the Sierra

Madre, but the frontier movement there into the states of Durango and Chihuahua is not part of this story. It is the advance up the west coast, eventually to today's Sonora, right across from Baja California, that finally brought winegrowing to what was then called "California." By the mid-1600s Jesuit and Franciscan missions were at work by the hundreds from Sonora through Arizona, New Mexico and Texas. In historian Earle Forrest's words, the "trail of the Padres was like an octopus with a thousand tentacles. It began at Mexico City. . . its many branches penetrating to every corner of the old Southwest."<sup>5</sup>

The Jesuits tried their hand at viticulture and planted vines at some of the missions near the west coast of the mainland, but they did not have much success. Mexican colonial historian Francisco Clavegero suggested that their lack of interest was due to the 1595 royal order against commercial wine production in New Spain. It is more probable that the climate of coastal Sonora and Sinaloa blunted their viticultural zeal.<sup>6</sup>

#### Baja California—California Antigua

After their conquest of the Aztecs the Spaniards first plundered the gold and silver of the natives, and then moved from the old capital, Tenochtitlan, or Mexico City, to find more. The land to the northwest of New Spain was a mystery to the *conquistadores* and they set out on several historically well known expeditions in a vain search for treasure. Cortés himself led the search up the west coast, sending out ships in 1532 and 1533. In the latter year a party of explorers discovered a bay they named La Paz and thought the land there was an island. Cortés led a voyage to this "Island of Santa Cruz" but the venture was abandoned in 1536. Three years later Francisco Ulloa headed up the west coast of the mainland, eventually arriving at the head of the Gulf of California. He then sailed down the east coast of the "island" past La Paz and thus discovered that it was a desolate peninsula.

There were several other explorations farther north above this peninsula, along the west coast of what would eventually be called Alta California; the peninsula is Baja California. The most notable were those of Cabrillo in 1542 and Vizcaíno in 1602. They mapped the coast and supplied numerous place names, many still in use today. But they found not a hint of riches. Thus, there would be no quick thrusts of empire up the west coast of the continent. The Spanish expansion into the coastal regions of northwestern New Spain would be a gradual movement of the mission frontier up the Gulf of California and then onto that apparently desolate peninsula. Historian H. H. Bancroft concluded that from "1603 the trend and general character of the





FROM: *Historical Atlas of California*, D. Hayes, 2007. This map was originally published in Mexico City in 1787 in Palóu's biography of Junipero Serra, and most likely the first map to show a division of Baja and Alta California. Sinaloa can be seen on the mainland, Loreto almost directly across the gulf in Baja. The location of all the Missions in the "Californias" is also shown.



California coast, together with most of its chief harbors. . . were well known to the Spaniards. . . But for more than a century and a half there was no addition to this knowledge."<sup>7</sup>

The mainland tribes in Sinaloa, along the east coast of the Gulf of California, were agricultural and receptive to the security of mission life and to conversion. By 1624 there were more than a hundred thousand converts at these missions. Historian John Walton Caughey has written that these results "were standing proof of the effectiveness of the mission as a frontier agency."<sup>8</sup> I would make that "possible effectiveness," for the Jesuits' work in Baja California and the Franciscans' in Alta California, must be deemed failures.

The advance of the mission frontier to the north from Sinaloa was led by Padre Eusebio Kino. He also was an advocate for the establishment of missions across the gulf to "California."<sup>9</sup> Government opposition to such an undertaking melted away in 1696 when the General of the Jesuit order visited New Spain and gave his approval to the venture. The following year Father Juan María Salvatierra with six soldiers sailed across the gulf and selected a site for the first Spanish settlement on the peninsula, today the town of Loreto. Later a mission was established nearby, Nuestra Señora de Loreto. There, probably in the spring of 1698, Salvatierra planted a small vineyard, the first in the Californias. The fact that this Jesuit father planted vines here at such an early date is a clear indication that there were already vines growing at some of the Jesuit missions along the coast of Sinaloa, although there is not much evidence of viticulture there in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

A more important step in Baja viticulture took place in 1699 when a mission was founded a few miles to the southwest of Loreto. Two years later Padre Juan de Ugarte was sent to take command at this Mission San Javier. He had been responsible for raising funds for the Baja mission before he crossed to Loreto. In historian Charles Chapman's words, "he wanted to be an active toiler in the field." He was fit to be a toiler. Bancroft wrote that "he had the physique of a gladiator," and that "the old writers never tired of narrating his deeds of prowess."<sup>11</sup>

Ugarte was able to develop San Javier into an agricultural success unique among the Baja missions. The physical environment was atypical for the peninsula. San Javier sits in a highland valley more than a thousand feet higher than Loreto to the east. The valley has good alluvial soil still watered by a small spring about a half mile above the great mission church, built by the Jesuits between 1744 and 1758. The viticultural advantages at San Javier far exceeded those of any other area in Baja California. Historian Theodore H. Hittell exaggerated some when

he wrote that Ugarte succeeded in reducing even the desert slopes to cultivation, "covering their natural sterility with smiling fields and laughing vines."<sup>12</sup>

Padre Ugarte's first interest was grain and cattle breeding, but by 1707 he had brought over to San Javier fig and olive trees, and grape vines. Over the years this mighty man made his mission the wine capital of Baja California. Eventually he produced such a surplus that he was able to trade wine with the mainland for needed provisions. San Javier, and probably six other missions were able to keep the rest of Baja supplied with wine for the Mass.<sup>13</sup> South of San Javier, Mission San Luís Gonzaga also produced wine surpluses which went to Loreto in trade. Father Johann Baegert was there for seventeen years (1751-1768) and supplies us with rare first hand comments on Baja wine in his *Observations in Lower California* published in Mannheim in 1772.<sup>14</sup> Well north of Loreto was Mission San Ignacio, about forty miles west of today's Santa Rosalia. It also had wine surpluses which were traded at Loreto. For a while in the 1750s this mission out-produced San Javier, but ceased to be an important factor in such production in the decades to come.<sup>15</sup>

Bancroft has compiled a useful list of the Baja missions with specific reference to wine and brandy (*aguardiente*) production. He found most of this material on Baja in the Spanish archives for Alta California for the years after 1773. Such data are useful to this study since the Franciscan missions in Alta California depended on Baja mission wine for the Mass well into the 1780s. Santa Gertrudis, founded in 1752 and San Francisco de Borja (1762) were on the northern mission frontier. Both produced wine but probably only the latter sent wine to Alta California. San José Comandú (1708), Mulegé (1705), La Purísima (1719) and San Ignacio (1728) were farther south and had good access to Loreto and the gulf. And of course there was Father Ugarte's San Javier.<sup>16</sup>

The Spanish move into Alta California in 1769 and the establishment of a mission system from San Diego to the San Francisco Bay area would surely have happened when it did whether or not the dramatic events of 1767 had taken place. But because of the events of that year, the mission system the padres established to the north was not run by the Jesuits, and the history of viticulture and winegrowing in Alta California was certainly affected in many ways. In 1765 the crown dispatched José de Gálvez to New Spain as *visitador-general*, a sort of inspector general with powers often exceeding those of the viceroy. In 1767 he was informed that the king had ordered all members of the Jesuit order expelled from Spain and its dominions. Gálvez was charged with overseeing the expulsion in the lands of New Spain. The reasons for the decree rested on events in Europe and had



nothing to do with Jesuit activities in the northwest.

Gálvez appointed army officers to remove the Black Robes from the northwestern areas and to take over the missions. He sent Captain Gaspar de Portolá to Baja California to effect the expulsion, which took place February 3, 1768, and to oversee the mission properties. Gálvez also determined that the Franciscans would take over the Jesuit missions in Sinaloa, Sonora and Baja California. He was impressed by their effectiveness in New Mexico and Texas, and particularly in the Sierra Gorda. He saw to it that Father Junípero Serra and several of his associates were sent to Baja. Serra, a native of the Catalán island of Mallorca, was named president of the Baja missions. He and fifteen other Grey Robes (later brown) arrived at Loreto in April 1768. They had no idea of what lay ahead of them in the months to come.<sup>17</sup>

Gálvez took advantage of the confused situation in the northwest to set in action a bold plan to stabilize the northwestern frontier and to advance the limits of the Spanish empire by establishing military outposts on the bays of San Diego and Monterey. There had been news of Russian exploration in the Alaskan waters between 1741 and 1765. Suddenly exaggerated rumors of Russian plans to expand activities down the Pacific coast moved the crown to ask the viceroy of New Spain to investigate. He passed the matter on to Gálvez who moved quickly to put together what came to be called the "Sacred Expedition" into Alta California.

Gálvez named Portolá to head the expedition. Father Serra was the obvious choice to superintend the system of missions that would be developed to create a stable native population that would be Spanish, Catholic and loyal to the crown. He had accepted the presidency of the less than successful Baja missions as a great challenge. To take the cross to the north was for him a blessing: in Alta California, Serra and his fellow Franciscans saw a new Eden, isolated yet fertile with a good climate. Most of Baja California was an inhospitable wasteland. They were overjoyed that there was a pagan people there "living in a state of innocence awaiting salvation." I have already noted that Gálvez had been particularly impressed by Serra's work in the Sierra Gorda, where several mission communities had been successfully developed by the Franciscans, who were then able to move on and turn over religious matters there to the secular clergy.<sup>18</sup>

Serra was fifty-five years old when he set out from Mission San Javier in late March, joining Portolá's large company north of Loreto. Earlier a larger land contingent had headed north with four hundred head of livestock, leaving a trail easy to follow. Before these land expeditions left, three ships had sailed north

from La Paz, but only two arrived in San Diego. All parties, save the lost ship, had arrived in San Diego by July 1, 1769. Of the approximately three hundred men who had set out from Baja, 126 were still alive, but half of these were unfit for service. Nevertheless, Portolá's orders directed him to establish a base at San Diego and at Monterey. Thus, but two weeks after his arrival, the commander headed north with about half of the survivors, leaving Serra at San Diego with the rest.

#### Alta California

Portolá did not return to San Diego until January 24, 1770, unsuccessful in his attempt to find Monterey Bay. Serra and the others had barely survived. Nevertheless, the members of both unhappy parties had wine and brandy to drink, for a while. The manifest of the *San Carlos* indicates there were five large "earthen casks" of brandy and six of wine aboard when the ship set sail from La Paz. A portion of this wine was specifically apportioned to the padres for Mass at the San Diego mission.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the first wine in Alta California was Baja wine. Many years would pass until a local wine was produced. Virtually all the wine available in Alta California until the 1780s would be the product of the Baja missions, except for the few exceptional imports of Spanish wine occasionally shipped up from the west coast of New Spain.

Until recent years careful historians of California wine avoided giving a precise date for the planting of the first wine grapes in Alta California. But most placed the date at some time between 1769 and 1773. Their caution is understandable since the voluminous primary sources available dealing with the earliest years of mission agriculture make no mention of viticulture. Less cautious writers, rarely historians, were content to date viticulture here from 1769, the year Father Serra founded the San Diego mission. The basis for this claim is a note by General Mariano Vallejo written in 1874.<sup>20</sup> In it he stated that his father, Ignacio Vallejo, had told him that Father Serra had brought the first vines to San Diego in 1769. Ignacio Vallejo was a soldier at San Diego, but did not arrive there until five years after the mission was founded. He was then twenty-six and was later described by Bancroft as "a somewhat unmanageable soldier, often in trouble." He died forty-three years before his son made this note. Despite Ignacio's good service in later years, his son's note on the situation more than a century after the event in question is not useful evidence, particularly when all available contemporary evidence points to a much later date, which I shall explain shortly.<sup>21</sup> Historian Thomas Pinney argues, correctly I think, that such "documentary evidence as exists for the early mission years



plainly contradicts (this) testimony." And a leading authority on the economy of California's missions has written that there is "no evidence that attempts were made at this early date to provide fruit trees or grape vines."<sup>22</sup>

When Portolá returned to San Diego the desperate condition of the survivors moved him to consider abandoning the entire expedition, but on March 19 a ship arrived from the south with abundant supplies. Portolá and Vicente Vila, the quick-witted Catalán captain of the supply ship, recalculated the position of Monterey Bay and realized that the land expedition had marched right by it. A small ship was quickly loaded with supplies and sailed north with Father Serra aboard. The next day Portolá and his company marched off using the same route he had previously followed. On June 3 they all celebrated the founding of the presidio (fort) and mission (San Carlos) at Monterey.

Thus were the first two missions established in Alta California. From the outset they, and the three missions founded in 1771 and 1772, were on precarious footing. These three were San Antonio (in the hills twenty miles west of today's King City), San Gabriel (just east of Los Angeles), and San Luis Obispo. Anyone conversant with the history of the early years at these five missions knows that survival could not be taken for granted. The natives who came to the missions and accepted Christianity, termed "neophytes," had to be taught how to raise crops. It was a long, slow process. For example, the first two grain crops at San Diego were failures; they did not get a good crop until 1775. And in that year Indians outside the mission, termed "gentiles," assaulted and burned the mission, killing one of the padres and several Spaniards and neophytes. Except for the violence a similar story can be told at the other new missions.

Grain was essential for survival, as were the ever present vegetable gardens. Pasturage for livestock was plentiful from the beginning. Primitive irrigation had to be developed to get through the almost rainless California summers from June to October. In these

years progress to create self-sufficient agriculture was slight indeed. Even if vines had come up from the south in the 1770s the padres would have had no time to bring them to bearing. The same was true for planting orchards. Basic annual crops were what was needed.

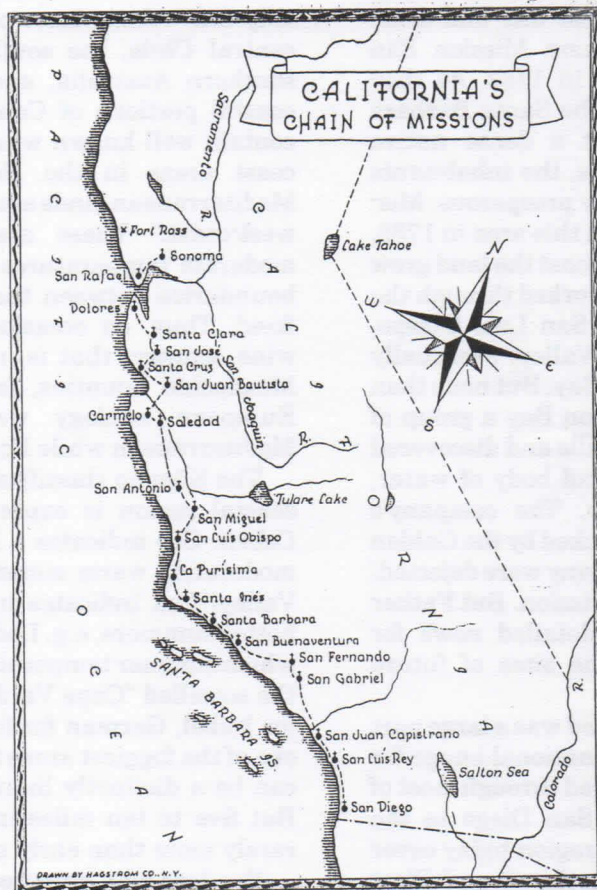
### The New Land

Several mariners had touched and mapped the Alta California coast in the years between 1542 and 1769. The few descriptive words collected over the years were enough to fascinate José de Gálvez and to enrapture Father Serra and his Franciscan cohort. Nevertheless, the first real look at coastal Alta California had been gained by Gaspar de Portolá and the company he first led all the way from San Diego to the San Francisco Bay area, right after their arrival in San Diego. We have a very complete record of the expedition; no less than six participants

left written accounts, the most useful being the diary of Father Juan Crespí, a native of Mallorca, a veteran of the Sierra Gorda missions, and a close friend of Father Serra. However troubled and unsuccessful this land expedition was for Portolá, for the missionaries it gave a detailed picture of the fertile lands on which they would be working and of the native peoples they hoped to win to Christianity and to convert to a community-based agricultural way of life.

For very practical purposes Crespí was also scouting out more places to plant missions.<sup>23</sup> They left on July 14, 1769 from the San Diego area and marched north through coastal land that Captain Vila later described as "pleasant and green with many kinds of fragrant herbs and wild grapes . . ."<sup>24</sup> Four days

later they reached the valley where Mission San Luis Rey would later be built (1798). Along the way they observed antelope grazing on green grass (in July!) and masses of wild roses in bloom. They also noted wild grapes in abundance, particularly in the area where Mission San Juan Capistrano would be founded in 1776. Father Francisco Palóu, Father Serra's biographer, later wrote that in this area "the





whole territory was covered with wild grapevines which resembled cultivated vineyards."<sup>25</sup> Viticultural history would be made here in a few years.

On July 28 the overland party learned that California was earthquake country. In today's Orange County a soldier was thrown from his horse by the first shock, which Father Crespí measured as "half as long as an Ave Maria." He thought the experience "horrifying." Three days later he was delighted by what they found in the Los Angeles lowlands. It was a green paradise on rich, loamy soil. Antelope grazed in what Crespí described as "a large vineyard of wild grapes and an infinity of rose bushes in full bloom." Here in the heat of July the rivers and streams were running freely. The San Gabriel mission would soon be founded nearby (1771) and later the little pueblo of Los Angeles (1781).

They moved on to the verdant San Fernando Valley, obviously a good site for a mission (1797). Then they headed back to the coast line and came upon a large Indian village, where Mission San Buenaventura would be founded in 1782. As they moved northwest up the coast of the Santa Barbara Channel they continued to meet a dense native population settled in large villages, the inhabitants friendly, hospitable and apparently prosperous. Mission Santa Barbara was founded in this area in 1782.

As they marched up the central coast the land grew more rugged, particularly as they worked through the Santa Lucia Mountains north of San Luis Obispo. They traveled on up the Salinas Valley, eventually standing on the shore of Monterey Bay. But none then recognized it as such. At Half Moon Bay a group of the company crossed the eastern hills and discovered what appeared to be a great inland body of water, later named San Francisco Bay. The company's attempt to go farther north was blocked by the Golden Gate. Portolá and much of his company were dejected; they had not accomplished their mission. But Father Crespí knew he had good and detailed news for Father Serra which would fix the sites of future missions.

The land that these men traversed was a large part of that region which has created a national image for today's California. They had marched through most of California's coastal region from San Diego to the Golden Gate. The counties in this region today cover about 24,000 square miles, about the size of West Virginia. Although this area amounts to but 15% of California's total land mass, about 65% of the state's population lives here. In this relatively small area nineteen of Alta California's missions were established between 1769 and 1804. Much later the San Rafael (1817) and Sonoma (1823) missions were added. For this study it is also worth noting that most of California's great wines are today produced in the

northern two-thirds of this mission region. But overwhelmingly most of the mission wine was produced in the lower third.

Father Serra and his associates were well aware of the agricultural potential of coastal Alta California. It was on a northern latitude nearly the same as that of their native Spain. Baja's latitude coincides with that of Morocco. Their experience and intuition were not scientifically verified until early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when meteorologist Wladimir Köppen brought together weather data from all over the world to devise a system of weather classification. One of his major climate types was "Mediterranean." In such areas modest amounts of precipitation are concentrated in the winter and early spring. Summers are warm, often hot, but winters are fairly mild. Summer rain is very rare. It is a climate with a glamorous reputation, naturally associated with the borderlands of the Mediterranean world. It is found in only four other places on the planet, all west coast: central Chile, the southern tip of Africa, parts of southern Australia, and the southern and central coastal portions of California. All of these regions contain well known winegrowing areas today. West coast areas in the Northern Hemisphere above Mediterranean lands are usually classified as "marine west-coast." These are regions with cooler but moderate temperatures and more winter rain. The boundaries between these climatic regions are not fixed. Thus, on occasion, California's North Coast wine country, that is, much of Sonoma, Napa and Mendocino Counties, fall into this category. For a European analogy we find that Barcelona is Mediterranean while Bordeaux is marine west-coast.

The Köppen classification for much of California's coastal region is expressed in a series of letters, Csbvn. Csb indicates a Mediterranean climate with moderately warm summer temperatures, e.g. Napa Valley; Csa indicates interior locations with much hotter summers, e.g. Lodi. The "v" stands for areas in which summer temperatures extend late into the fall, the so-called "Cape Verde" effect. And the "n" stands for Nebel, German for fog. The coast of California is one of the foggiest areas in the United States. This fog can be a distinctly limiting factor in ripening fruit. But five to ten miles inland these coastal fogs are rarely more than early morning phenomena.

Readers who have been in Southern California in July may wonder at Father Crespí's descriptions of the verdant land with year-round creeks and streams running into the Pacific. Today in the summertime the rolling hills around the Los Angeles lowland are covered with low chaparral or dusty dried grass. Most of what one sees that is verdant is the result of irrigation water brought from far away. If today there were no dams in the region between San Diego and



Los Angeles, in July one would not find a bubbling brook.

Two factors help to explain this apparent transformation. In 1769 the valleys and lowlands of California's southern and central coastal areas were dominated by perennial bunch-grasses. Even in the dry summers there was a far more green look to the land than today. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century the perennial grasses were replaced overwhelmingly by accidentally introduced aliens, particularly wild oats (*Avena fatua* and *A. barbata*). These provide a lush green landscape after late fall and winter rains, but by late May usually give the ground a yellow-brown look.<sup>26</sup>

Far more important has been the change in California's coastal weather since Spanish colonial days. Climatologists have long known of changes in the weather patterns between 1350 and 1850 in the North Atlantic world. This period is known as the Little Ice Age. In recent years research has shown that the changes were not localized, but global in nature. For this study it is enough to say that in 1769 California's coastal regions were cooler and wetter than they were in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>27</sup> This fact is illustrated by a letter from one padre to another dated March 15, 1779 from Mission San Juan Capistrano. Snow on the land is plentiful, the letter states, the streams are flooding, and the days are marked by severe cold. This sounds more like a report from British Columbia than from a mission in Southern California just south of Laguna Beach and but a few miles from the Pacific. (We shall take a longer look at this letter shortly, since its topic was viticulture.)

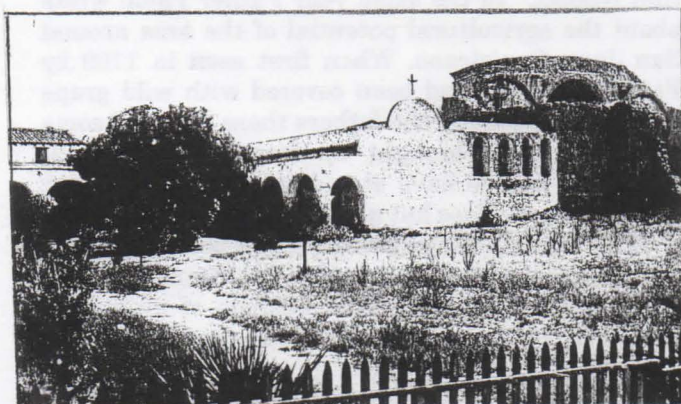
#### Wine for Father Serra

In 1772 Father Serra was able to establish a mission at San Luis Obispo; now there were five. But agricultural success still eluded the padres. Survival still depended on supply ships from the south. By 1773 only San Gabriel gave any sign of self-sufficiency. Serra now decided to travel back to Mexico City to report to the new viceroy on their very small successes and on their many needs. He arrived at the capital in February 1773, and when he returned to San Diego eleven months later he could report on a successful undertaking, with promises of increased support. He was accompanied on the voyage back by Father Pablo Joseph Mugártegui, a young priest described by Father Palóu "as another laborer in the vineyard of the Lord." This was a prophetic choice of words for he would soon make viticultural history at his new post, Mission San Juan Capistrano.<sup>28</sup>

After the journey, the next supply ship north carried four barrels of Spanish wine and four barrels of brandy for mission use. But this and later

shipments still did not meet the missions' needs for sacramental wine.<sup>29</sup> Later Serra wrote that they often needed to buy wine for the Mass at Mission San Carlos, his headquarters, from presidial stores in Monterey. There "we have to pay like an ordinary soldier—and not a cent reduction allowed to us either."<sup>30</sup>

The pressure grew for an increased supply of sacramental wine as Serra founded the second round of missions between 1776 and 1777: San Francisco, San Juan Capistrano and Santa Clara. He decided to work to solve the problem at the missions themselves, sending the viceroy in June 1777 a specific request for grapevines. It was almost a year before the first shipment of vines finally arrived at San Diego on the *San Antonio*, probably on May 16, 1778. These were dispatched to Father Mugártegui at Mission San Juan Capistrano. It is probable that some of the vines were also planted at the San Diego mission. On March 15, 1779 that good father wrote Serra on the progress of the viticultural project. The weather was frosty and the new vines needed special protection. "The vine cuttings which at your request were sent us from Baja California (países bajas) have been buried." They had just moved the mission to a new site and on April 18 he again wrote Serra; a new field or garden had been fenced and was being watered by a new irrigation ditch. The new vines had now been planted by the neophyte workers.<sup>31</sup>



MISSION SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, ca 1930s

If there were ever descriptions of Mugártegui's first vintage, they apparently have not survived. But wine he did make, which we know from various contemporary comments written by the padres. It would be nice to know the exact date of the first wine at San Juan Capistrano, better to celebrate its 250th birthday. That there was wine available in 1783 we know from Serra's letter of October 27 of that year. He noted that all the southern missions now had some wine, except for San Gabriel. A barrel headed there from Mugártegui had fallen off the mule



carrying it and had broken. Could wine of that year already be in a barrel? Perhaps, for the rude wine-making technology at the early missions makes me wonder if one of the 1782 vintage would still have been drinkable. It follows that 1782 or 1783 might be named California's vintage number one. But how about 1781? Father Fermín Lasuén writing in that year at San Diego indicated that the vines planted there had survived, but that "The lack of wine for Mass is becoming unbearable." Does this mean that Mugártegui had not made wine at San Juan in 1781? Not at all. His vines were planted in 1779, leafed out that year, and again in 1780. Vines of the Mission variety are known to give a few grapes at third leaf, sometimes quite a few. I cannot believe that Father Mugártegui did not crush a few pounds of these grapes to see whether they made wine. Thus, although 1782 may have been the first substantial vintage in Alta California, I am fairly sure that the first wine was made in 1781.<sup>32</sup> Brady awarded the palm to 1782. Previously I have opted for both 1782 and 1783. At this writing I think that 1781 deserves a good word, but evidence for settling the question has never been discovered.

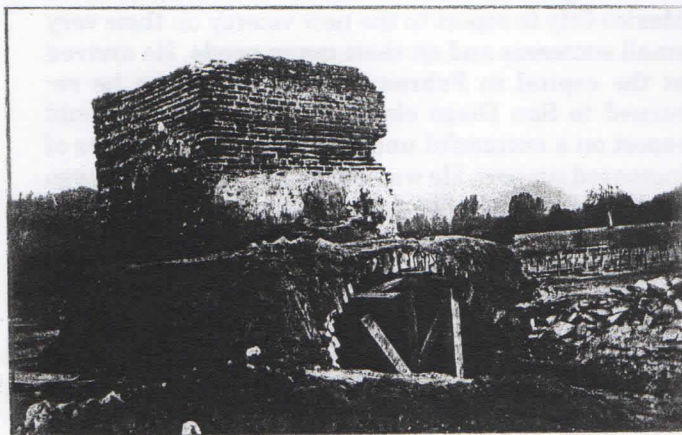
In 1784 Serra was somewhat sure that the missions' sacramental wine problem was being solved. On June 18 he wrote to Mission San Antonio on the matter of sacramental wine. "God has provided a way out, and now (the missions) are well looked after in that respect." In the same year Father Palóu wrote about the agricultural potential of the area around San Juan Capistrano. When first seen in 1769 by Father Crespí it had been covered with wild grape vines. Consequently the fathers there "planted some cultivated vines brought up from Baja (antigua) California and so have already produced wine, not only for use at Mass but also for the table."<sup>33</sup>

If we want a detailed picture of mission agriculture over the next twenty years, the significant numbers are generally available—the bushels of grain, the head of livestock, the baskets of pease and lentils. But for fruit orchards, vegetable gardens and vineyards we have almost no precise data. Nevertheless, by the 1790s we do have some useful information on the geography of mission viticulture and winemaking. Father Lasuén, who succeeded to the mission presidency after Father Serra's death in 1784, reported in 1798 that five of the southern missions were making wine: San Juan Capistrano, San Gabriel, San Diego, San Buenaventura and Santa Barbara. Besides these, vineyards had been planted north of Santa Barbara at Santa Clara, San Luis Obispo, San Antonio, Soledad and San Carlos (Monterey/Carmel). By 1801 all of these except San Carlos were reported to have produced wine.<sup>34</sup>

The slender success of the Alta California mission system in its first twenty-five years is remarkable when one considers the padres' isolated state. Conditions there were of little interest to the Spanish crown or to the rulers of New Spain. Historian Walton Bean wrote that Alta and Baja California were "outposts of a dying empire. . . on the defensive and crumbling."<sup>35</sup> But what was being achieved in the realm of viticulture, winemaking, and, by 1810, brandy production, was almost miraculous. By 1810 Alta California was the most important winegrowing area in New Spain. Admittedly, in that vast jurisdiction most of the few who drank wine drank Spanish wine. But the southern missions from San Diego to Santa Barbara were meeting their own needs and were able to supply wine to those not yet in production. Before long some southern missions were selling wine to settlers, soldiers and to occasional ships that dropped anchor nearby.

What accounts for this small but notable success? The same soil and almost the same climate help make California today the leading wine region in the Western Hemisphere. But if the Jesuits had not been expelled and if Gálvez had sent them north in 1769, would the vinous outcome have been the same? I think not. In Mexico the Jesuits had shown only a small interest in winegrowing. A large percentage of their priests had come to the New World from areas in central Europe where wine was of little importance in everyday life. And the tiny success in Baja was due primarily to two men. Father Salvatierra was Italian and Father Ugarte was a native of New Spain. In their youth most of the Jesuits had typically not grown up in a "land where the lemon trees bloom." But the Franciscans in New Spain had grown up in just such a land. Much of Spain was a land of orange and lemon groves, olive orchards and vineyards.

And it is impossible to overlook the powerful Catalan presence among all who early came to Alta California. Catalonia, with its center at Barcelona, is



WINE TANK at MISSION SAN ANTONIO, ca1940s



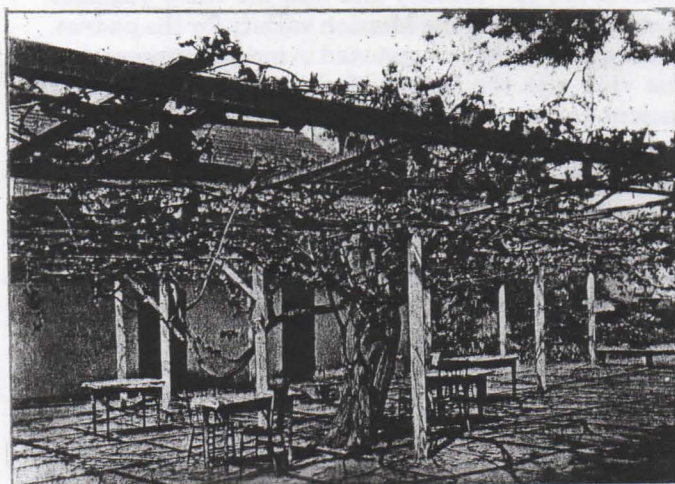
the northeastern corner of Spain, since Roman times one of the most important winegrowing regions in the Mediterranean world, as it is today. And the Balearic Islands off the coast are as Catalan as the mainland. Its chief island is Mallorca, whose limestone soils have also been producing wine grapes since ancient times. Most of the padres at the new missions in 1782 were Catalan natives, and about half of those were born on Mallorca, including Serra, Palóu and Crespí. And they kept arriving in the years to come. The missions' greatest winemaker in later years was probably Father Narciso Durán, a Catalan from Gerona. And Father José Altimíra, who brought viticulture and winemaking to the Sonoma/Napa area in 1823 was born in Barcelona. (Even Portolá and Pedro Fages, his troop commander, were Catalán. The troops themselves were drawn from the Catalán Light Infantry Regiment.) I have no theory to explain this concentration, except that some, like Palóu and Crespí, had been Serra's students in Mallorca. These men of Catalonia all knew what it was to live in a land full of vines and were quick to plant them and learn to make wine from them in this new world. It is worth noting that the two fathers in charge at Mission San Juan Capistrano where Alta California's first wine was made were also natives of Spain's wine country. Pablo Mugártegui and Gregorio Amurrio were Basques from the wine region of Navarra, west of Catalonia.<sup>36</sup>

#### Mission Wines and Vines

**T**he grape variety almost exclusively planted at the missions of New Spain has appropriately been named the Mission. The vines that the Spaniards brought to New Spain in the mid-sixteenth century were varieties of *Vitis vinifera*. The wines of Europe with rare exceptions are made from varieties of this species. Until recently scientists had not been able to find the European vinifera ancestor of what came to be the Mission variety. Some suggested that it is a close relative of the Monica variety, probably a native of Spain, which apparently survives today only in Sardinia. Thus it was logical to assume that the Mission had been propagated in the New World as a seedling from one of the early vinifera imports to the New World. Such an origin was understandable since no perfect ancestor of the Mission had been found in Europe. Normally new vines grown from seeds often differ markedly from their parents. But we had no historical record of how this vine might have been propagated in the New World. In fact, we now have good evidence that it was not.

Recently scientists working in concert in Spain and Chile have discovered what is surely the parent of California's Mission variety. Employing the complex DNA techniques of viticultural identification devel-

oped at the University of California (Davis) they have concluded that California's Mission, and its South American counterparts, the País and Criolla, are genetically identical to the Listán Prieto (LP), once grown on the Spanish mainland, but not since the 19<sup>th</sup> century destruction of the country's vineyards by the phylloxera.<sup>37</sup> Where it has survived, to this day, is on Spain's Canary Islands, off the west coast of Morocco. It has long been known that Peru's first European grapes were brought to that land from the Canary Islands in 1553 by Francisco de Caravantes. Long before the recent DNA discovery it was known in Peru that the "prieta," surely the LP, was the most important variety in the Caravantes importation.<sup>38</sup> How and when this vine later arrived in Mexico we do not know. But whoever selected it for propagation in New Spain could hardly have made a better choice. It is a variety that can thrive in an environment hostile to Europe's noble varieties. It can stand searing temperatures and moderate drought. It has a sturdy trunk and needs no support. It is a heavy bearer, but its bunches are loose enough to be able to hang until late fall without severe damage from mold.



GIANT GRAPE VINE, SAN GABRIEL MISSION, ca 1900

What we call the Mission in California is a red wine grape but produces a wine with weak color. When fermented dry its grapes produce wines dull in flavor and when they are picked ripe they give a flabby wine, lacking acid. When the skins are quickly removed before fermentation a yellow wine is the result, which soon becomes oxidized and brownish. This "white" wine has no more flavor or brightness than its pale red counterpart, which also oxidizes quickly to a deeper brown. But none of these negatives for the modern wine drinker would have been a discouraging defect at the missions. And, it should be noted, that this variety grown in California and in South America makes an acceptable brandy,



which in Peru today goes into that country's traditional Pisco beverage. This was the variety that the Franciscans carried to the Sierra Gorda and colonial New Mexico, and the Jesuits to Baja California in later years.

Mission grapes served the purposes of Fathers Ugarte and Serra. They supplied their missions with sacramental wine, and that was what was needed. The fact that this variety lacks even the standard "nobility" of the ordinary Palomino or Mataro, and much less than that of the Cabernets and Chardonnay, does not lessen its historical importance. When California became a state of the United States in 1850 the Mission variety dominated the viticultural scene there and continued to do so until the 1870s. It has continued to play a small role in California in the production of fortified wines, such as sherry. There were 8985 tons of Mission grapes crushed by San Joaquin Valley producers in 2008, from about 650 acres.

There was also a White Muscat grape grown at some of the missions. We have virtually no evidence of its arrival in California. But it was here in the early years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and had the same qualities that recommended the Mission variety for the padres. These qualities have suggested to most observers that this vine was the famed Muscat of Alexandria, an ancient variety of the Mediterranean world and well known in Spain centuries ago. The DNA research cited above also concluded that this Muscat variety came early to the Spanish New World. It grows well in warm climates, is vigorous and high yielding, ripens late and provides grapes with many uses. They make an ordinary dry wine, but a tasty sweet wine, and easily add a nice flavor to bland white wines from other varieties. This Muscat produces a good brandy and makes a delicious table grape. The same variety was also used by the Spanish in Peru and Chile to produce brandy. In Alta California it was eaten with pleasure and was sometimes blended into Angelica, a drink I shall describe shortly.<sup>39</sup>

Father Serra died just a few weeks after writing his hopeful 1784 letter suggesting that the sacramental wine problem was being solved. And it was. The presidency of the missions then passed to Father Fermín Lasuén. During his tenure, until 1803, nine new missions were added, five of which became known for their winegrowing operations: Santa Barbara (1786), La Purísima Concepción (1787, near Lompoc), San José (1797, between Oakland and San Jose), San Fernando (1797, just northwest of Los Angeles), and San Luís Rey (1798, near Oceanside). All the California mission land holdings were large; some were huge, as at San Fernando, which controlled 206,000 acres. Extensive agriculture, in grain and pasturage, was all important at every

mission except San Francisco and San Carlos (Monterey/Carmel), where coastal fog made agricultural success very difficult. These areas of extensive agriculture might be well removed from the central buildings. Areas of intensive agriculture were almost always close by, the vegetable gardens, orchards and vineyards. The vineyards were usually small by today's standards, often only an acre or two. A few of the vineyards were protected by adobe walls. At San Juan Capistrano there was a watch tower. A well tended, two-acre vineyard of Mission vines, even under the primitive conditions that existed in the early years, might yield as much as four to six tons of grapes and at least four hundred gallons of wine. These numbers explain how some of the missions developed surpluses of wine that became a small economic benefit to the padres.

The agricultural expansion and the growing prosperity of the missions were the most important developments under Father Lasuén's presidency. Additionally, during his eighteen years in office, a more obvious physical change took place. In the 1780s all the missions were a collection of rude wooden structures which housed the padres and the neophytes, and their storage and work facilities. When he died in 1803 almost all the great central churches for the missions had been built. Today most of these recently restored edifices project a historical image of the California missions that is less than accurate. Only at Missions San Antonio and Purísima Concepción is the extensive character of the old mission settlements suggested.

The new missions were quick to plant grape vines and take up winemaking. By 1804 eight missions were successfully producing wine. Those too near the coast and its foggy days were unsuccessful. San Francisco and Santa Cruz are examples. There were also poor results at San Carlos and Purísima Concepción until the vineyard sites were moved farther inland, away from the mission centers. San Francisco (Mission Dolores) made wine, but from grapes brought up from Missions San José and Santa Clara. As the years passed several of the larger missions were able to develop outlying ranchos, or *estancias*. These were generally meant to remove livestock from the mission centers. But a few had vineyards. Besides the two mentioned above there were others at San Gabriel, Santa Barbara, San Diego, San Miguel (north of Paso Robles) and La Soledad (Salinas Valley).<sup>40</sup>

[continued next issue]

#### NOTES

1. Raphael Helidoro Valle. "The History of Wine in Mexico," *Amer. Journal of Enology*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1958), 146-153.



2. Teresa Rojas. *La Agricultura en tierras Mexicanas desde sus orígenes hasta nuestras días*. Mexico City, 1990, 190; Carlos Leon Mujal, "Out of the Apocalypse to Alta California: Franciscans in the New World," Vol. I, 222. Doctoral dissertation, U. C., Berkeley, 2001; Edith Buckland Webb. *Indian Life at the Old Missions*. Lincoln, NE, 1952, 52-53.
3. Rich Hendricks. "Viticulture in El Paso del Norte during the Colonial Period." *Agricultural History*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (2004), 181-200; Thomas Pinney. *A History of Wine in America*. Berkeley, 1989, 233-235; Earle R. Forrest. *Missions and Pueblos of the Old Southwest*. Cleveland, 1929, 158-159; Hubert Howe Bancroft. *History of the Northern Mexican States*. San Francisco, 1884. Vol. I, 363-366.
4. Angel Morales. *La Cultura del Vino in Mexico*. Monterey, Nueva Leon, 1980, 19, 232; Rojas, 206; Sergio Corona Páez. *Una Disputa Vitivinícola en Parras* (1679). Monterey, Coahuila, 2000.
5. Forrest, 25.
6. Francisco Clavegero. *Historia de la Antigua o Baja California*. Mexico City, 52, cited by Valle, 148; Edward Hyams. *Dionysus: A Social History of the Wine Vine*. New York, 1965, 258. The author gives evidence of viticulture in colonial Sinaloa in a communication from the Jesuit Istituto Storico in Rome. "As (Sinaloa) was several hundred miles from Mexico City... (the Jesuits) were forced to plant their own vines. This is evident from all the mission reports (stored in Rome)... to the year of expulsion" (1767).
7. Hubert Howe Bancroft. *History of California*, San Francisco, 1884-1890, I, 105.
8. *California*. New York, 1940, 98-99.
9. In the earliest days the peninsula was called California. By the 18<sup>th</sup> century it was known as Baja below Alta California, and these were often termed "The Californias." For a while they were also referred to as California Antigua and California Nueva.
10. Edward J. Wickson. "California Mission Fruits," *Overland Monthly* (May 1888), 501; Charles E. Chapman. *A History of California, the Spanish Period*. New York, 1921, 173-176; A letter from Father Salvatierra on these early days appears in "Selected Letters about Lower California," printed by Dawson's Book Shop, Los Angeles in its Baja California Travels Series, #25, 1971, 104-113; and in Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, eds., *Lands of Promise and Despair*. Santa Clara University, 2001, 73-79.
11. Chapman, 178; Bancroft, *Northern Mexican States*, 408, 423.
12. Peter Gerard and Howard E. Gulich. *Lower California Guidebook*, Glendale, 1956, 127; Theodore H. Hittell. *History of California*, San Francisco, 1898, Vol. I, 194.
13. Bancroft, *Northern Mexican States*, 408, 423-424. Bancroft thought that the Jesuits' Baja venture would have been abandoned if it were not for Ugarte's great work at San Javier. Tomás Robertson. *Baja California and its Missions*. Glendale, 1978, 26-27; Herbert B. Leggett, "Early History of Wine Production in California," Masters thesis, U. C., Berkeley, 1939, 4-6; Webb, 217; Valle, 149.
14. Translated by M. M. Brandenburg and Carl L. Bauman. Berkeley 1952, 130-131, 149.
15. Bancroft, *Northern Mexican States*, 448.
16. Bancroft, *Northern Mexican States*, 738-740.
17. Mujal, Vol. 2, 199-200, 260; Francisco Palóu. *Palóu's Life of Fray Junípero Serra*, Washington, DC, 1955, 54-55; Webb, 3-4.
18. Mujal, Vol. 2, 424; Webb, 52-53.
19. Bancroft, *History*, I, 128-129.
20. *Documentos para la Historia de California*, Bancroft Library, University of California, Vol. 36, 288, cited by Leggett, 8.
21. Bancroft, *History*, V, 756.
22. Pinney, 238; Robert Archibald. *The Economic Aspects of the California Missions*. The Academy of American Franciscan History, Washington DC, 1978, 165.
23. Francisco Palóu. *Historical Memoirs of New California*. Herbert Eugene Bolton, ed. Berkeley, 1926, Vol. 2, 109-223; Bancroft, *History*, I, 141-157.
24. Webb, 8-9.
25. *Palóu's Serra*, 178-179.
26. Walter Ebeling. *The Fruited Plain*. Berkeley, 1979, 325-326.
27. Brian Fagan. *The Little Ice Age*. New York, 2000; E. C. Pielou. *After the Ice Age*, Chicago, 1991, 308.
28. Bancroft, *History*, I, 206-219; *Palóu's Serra*, 417.
29. Palóu, *Historical Memoirs*. . . Vol. 3, 122-1123.
30. Mujal, Vol. 2, 408.
31. Webb, 95-96. These letters were discovered by Mrs. Webb at the Museo Nacional in Mexico City. They were the key to the discovery of the Golden State's first wine. Later Roy Brady used them and other documents he found in the mission archives at Santa Barbara to piece together the chronology which follows.



THE MISSION LIBRARY AT SANTA BARBARA, ca 1900

32. Roy Brady, "The Swallow That Came from Capistrano," *New West*, September 24, 1979, 55-59. For another article and his sources see Doris Muscatine et al, eds. *The University of California/ Sotheby Book of California Wine*, Berkeley and London, 1984, 10-15.

continued on p. 19—



# A LINK WITH CHARLES DICKENS

being Reproductions of  
Autograph Letters  
to his Wine Merchant,

the Founder of  
the present House of

## Chas. Ellis & Co

5 Brickhill Lane,  
Upper Thames St.  
LONDON, E.C.



Merchants since 1831.

*Sturminster Tisbury.  
Tuesday 1st May 1849.*

*Dear Mr Ellis.*

*I am much obliged to you for  
your letter. The claret is excellent, but  
I have drunk so little of it that I do  
not want more at present. I shall  
be glad to have 3 dozen of the claret,  
at your convenience.*

*Faithfully Yours  
Charles Dickens*

*Mr Charles Ellis*

"The claret is excellent..."

See "The 1870 Cellar  
of Charles Dickens"  
by John Danza