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## "Red as Alicante Wine": The Wines of Alicante in English Life and Letters, 1500–2007

by *John Maher*

[John Maher, our resident Tendril in Valencia, Spain, first graced our *Quarterly* with his incomparable essay on the life of Fróna Eunice Wait, "Herculean Deeds of Worthwhile Achievement" (Vol.21 No.3), and followed almost immediately with two lively book reviews in our April 2012 issue. We sincerely welcome his latest scholarly inspiration. — Ed.]

INSPIRED BY TWO TASTINGS—one vertical and one horizontal—of Fondillón<sup>1</sup> at Vínolite in Valencia in April 2007, and by Joan Martín's introduction to the tasting of the nine current producers of Fondillón, "Los Nueve Magníficos," in which he emphasized the wine heritage of Alicante and the fact that Ferdinand II's 1510 charter forbidding foreign wines in Alicante could be considered as the world's first Protected Designation of Origin,<sup>2</sup> I was tempted to engage in some research myself. I set out to explore references in English to the wines of Alicante.<sup>3</sup> It has been fascinating to encounter early English allusions to these wines, and I hope that I will be forgiven for succumbing to the lure of the footnote.



THE REFERENCES that have emerged suggest the possible trajectory of Alicante wine in England over the centuries. They convey a "heroic" Elizabethan and Jacobean period of buccaneers and bloodshed, when Alicánt (also alycaunt, allecant, aligaunte, allegaunte, ale-

gaunte, alligant, alicant, alicante)<sup>4</sup> was a staple of the mighty drinkers of the time. This was followed into Hanoverian and Victorian times by a more orderly age of travellers and writers rather than pirates, and specific wine references rather than the earlier full-blooded literary context, with a gradual falling off of the presence of Alicante wine into the realms of the archaic and the obsolete. It was not simply the arrival of phylloxera in Alicante just when the rest of Europe was recovering from the pest (exports of Alicante wine halved between 1900 and 1901)<sup>5</sup> that undermined the province's wine, but the culmination of a long process of entrenchment of hierarchies and orthodoxies that saw Bordeaux and Burgundy enshrined as the pinnacle of winemaking, with fortified Port, Sherry and Madeira as the only "generosos" worth noting. It

is instructive to compare the magnificent eclecticism of the sixteenth century wine references with the narrower accounting of nineteenth and twentieth century engagement with the drink. It may be that the scientific and cultural certainties of the Victorian age, and the ideological rigidities of the twentieth century are being replaced by a more dynamically fragmented return to the all-inclusive energy of earlier times, when Alicante's wines, and especially the unique Fondillón, can again take their place in the limelight.

### Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

The earliest English reference that I have been able to find is in "Colyn Blowbols Testament," a c.1500 parody, by an unknown author, of more serious works in honour of drink. It begins:

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Whan that Bacchus, the Myghti Lord,  
and Juno eke, by one accorde,  
Hath sette a-broche of myghti wyne a tone,  
And after wardys in to the brayn ran  
Of Colyn Blobolle, when he had dronke a tante  
Both of Teynt and of wyne of Alycaunt,  
Till he was drounke as any swine;<sup>6</sup>

The same long poem lists more wines and beers, including Alicante again, towards the end:

Rede wyn, the claret, and the white,  
With Teynt and Alycaunt, in whom I delite;  
Wyn ryvers and wyn sake also,  
Wyne of Langdoke and of Orliaunce therto,  
Sengle bere, and othire that is dwobile,  
Which causith the brayn of man to trouble;  
Spruce beer, and the beer of Hambur,  
Whiche makyth oft tymes men to stambur;  
Malmasyes, Tires, and Rumneys,  
With Caperikis, Campletes, and Osneys,  
Vernage, Cute, and Raspayes also,  
Whippett and Pyngmedo, that ben lawyers therto;  
And I wille have also wyne de Ryne,  
With new maid Clarye, that is good and fyne,  
Muscadelle, Terantyne, and Bastard,  
With Ypocras and Pymment comyng after warde<sup>7</sup>

It is clear that Alicante wine kept both high and low company. If Colyn Blowbol is hardly a picture of refinement (Blowbol is a synonym of the time for drunkard), there are plenty of more approving and courtly references. The c.1517 manuscript of the morality play "The Interlude of the Four Elements," attributed to John Rastell (Thomas More's brother-in-law) includes the lines:

Taverner: Ye shall have Spanish wine and Gascon,  
Rose colour, white, claret, rampion,  
Tyre, Capric, and Malvoisin,  
Sack, raspice, Alicant, rumney,  
Greek, ipocras, new-made clary,  
Such as ye never had;  
For if ye drink a draught or two,  
It will make you, ere ye thence go,  
By Gog's body, stark mad!<sup>8</sup>

In 1542 Dr Andrew Boorde in his *Breuyary of Health* recommended the therapeutic, and even metaphysical qualities of wine, including "Aligant":

I do take good Gascon  
[Bordeaux] wine, but I  
wyl not drynke stronge  
wines, as Malmesey,  
Romney, Romaniske  
wyne, wyne Qoorse, wyne



Greke and Secke; but other whyle, a draught or two of Muscadell or Basterde, Osey, Caprycke, Aligant, Tyre, Raspyte, I wyl not refuse.<sup>9</sup>

The general esteem in which Alicante wine was held in Tudor and Stuart England is corroborated by our being told that the abstemious Queen Elizabeth I "loved Alicant wine above any other."<sup>10</sup> Her successor James I was less discerning and seems to have used Alicante wine as a remedy for stomach trouble:

In drink he errs in quality, quantity, frequency, time and order. He drinks promiscuously beer, ale, Spanish wine, French sweet wine, and especially, his ordinary drink, thick white muscatel; whence diarrhoea. Sometimes, when his stomach is loose, he takes red Alicante wine, but he does not care whether the wine is good so long as it is sweet. He hates water and anything watery.<sup>11</sup>

King James himself described his urine to his doctor as being "red as Alicante Wine."<sup>12</sup> This in itself is interesting, because the dark red, purplish colour described, and associated with porphyria, is not the colour of the long-lived oxidized vino rancio we know today as Fondillón. The Alicante wine of the period had not been leached of its colour by ageing. On the contrary, its high colour appears to have been a key feature of its appeal.

Sir James Smith, James I's ambassador to Russia, and also governor of the East India Company, wrote of his toast drinking at the court of the tsar Boris Godunov:

The ambassador receiving his cup from his princely hand, returned againe to his owne place, where all of us standing, drank the same helth out of the same cup, being of fayre christall, as the emperor had commanded, the wine (as farre as my judgement gave leave) being alligant.<sup>13</sup>

Whether the wine used in the tsar's toast was in fact Alicante is perhaps less significant than the fact that it seemed highly plausible in such circumstances.

James I also sent the first official ambassador to India in 1615, Sir Thomas Roe, to smooth the path of the East India Company at the Mughal court. A welcome element in Roe's diplomatic overtures was Alicante wine ("one Case of Aligant. It was somewhat sower, yet soe much in request that it was receiued with good acceptance"),<sup>14</sup> so Alicante wine can be said to have helped pave the way for what would become the British Empire. The Indian connection is reiterated in the references to Alligant by Walter Mountfort, an official of the East India Company, in his play "The Launching of the Mary or The Seaman's Honest Wife," written on the author's return from East India in 1624, in which these lines are spoken: "I am somewhat bold, but I assure you for a morninges



draft no better wine in the world then Alligant," and a later dialogue includes the remark, "as good alligant as ever I drew."<sup>15</sup>

In contrast to the references above to royalty and aristocracy, Alicante wine was also commonly available. It could be bought in the humble London bor-

1602 tells us was seen on several occasions by Elizabeth I, whose preference for Alicante wine has been noted): "I warrant you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift; smelling so sweetly,—all musk, and so rushling, I warrant you, in silk and gold; and in such alligant terms; and in such wine and sugar of the best and the fairest, that would have won any woman's heart," the use of "alligant" for elegant is underlined by the immediate reference to wine. Immediately before this speech Mistress Quickly makes another wine-related verbal slip when she says: "Marry, this is the short and the long of it: you have brought her into such a canaries as 'tis wonderful. The best courtier of them all, when the court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary." Here the use of "canary," with its evocation of Canary wine, instead of her intended "quandary," primes the audience for the "alligant"/Alicante reference immediately afterwards.<sup>20</sup>

The audience would have been familiar with theatrical references to Alicante wine. There is a passing reference in "Timon, a play" (1585), a version of the story of Timon that predates Shakespeare's "Timon of Athens" (though there is no indication that he ever read it). This "old" Timon play was first printed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and includes the following lines:

Pseudocheus. In Ganges Iles I thirty rivers saw  
Fill'd with sweet nectar.

Laches. O dainty lyer!

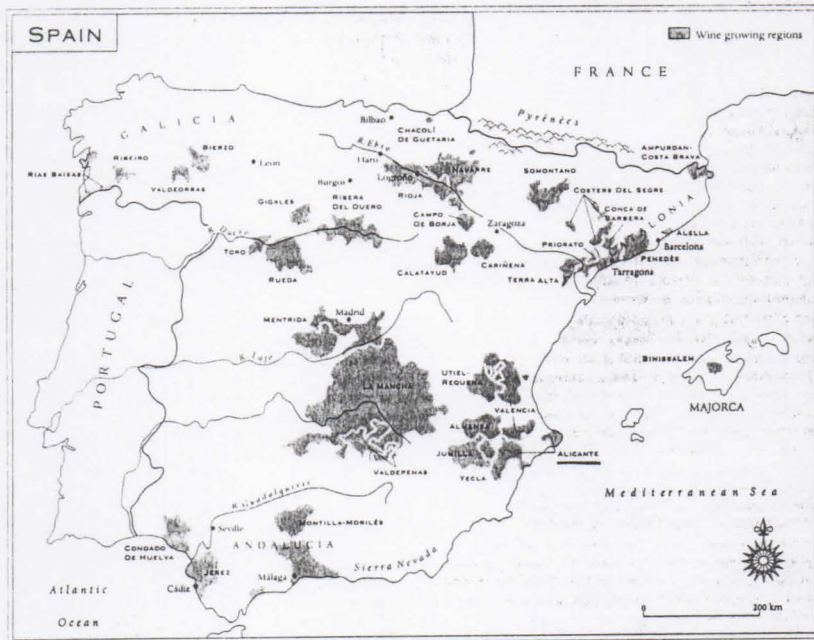
Pseudocheus. Thirty rivers more  
With Aligaunte.<sup>21</sup>

The first performance of "The Devil's Charter," a play by the now almost forgotten Barnabe Barnes, was given by Shakespeare's Company in 1607. In Act iii, Scene v, there is a mock-heroic reference to "purple Aligant the bloody gyant" in a list of mythical deities with wine-related names.<sup>22</sup>



From *A Vade Mecum for Malt-Worms*, 1865

Alicante seems to have been ideally suited to full-blooded Jacobean playwrights of all ranks, particularly when writing in tandem, which despite the



From *Oxford Companion to Wine*, 1994

ough of Islington in 1608 for 6d a pint.<sup>16</sup> In the same year of 1608 the pirate John Ward entered Algiers harbour with two prizes, a French ship carrying oil, cochineal and hides and a Spanish ship laden with "alligant wines."<sup>17</sup> A few years earlier, the highwayman Luke Hutton wrote a horror story set in Newgate prison, *The Discovery of a London Monster, called, the Black Dogg of New-gate*, based on his experience of the dreadful conditions there (he was hanged at York in 1598). He set the scene thus:

I found Scottish, Welch, Irish, Dutch, and French, in several roomes, some drinking the neate wine of Orleance, some the Gascony, some the Burdeaux, there wanted neither Sherry sack, nor Charnoco, Maligo, nor Peter-Seemine,<sup>18</sup> Amber coloured Candy, nor liquorish Ipcoras, brown Bastard, fat Aligante, nor any quick spirited liquor that might draw their wits into a circle to see the devil by imagination.<sup>19</sup>

The strength and sweetness of "Fat Aligante" was no doubt much prized at this time when Falstaff's beloved Sack ruled the roost in preference to "thin" French wines. Shakespeare's sole reference to Alicante wine is characteristically indirect. When Mistress Quickly gabbles in the "Merry Wives of Windsor" (which the first page of the first quarto of



evidence of these references is a relatively rare occurrence. Perhaps Alicante wine helped to lubricate the joint creative process. In "A Cure for a Cuckold" (performed 1624; printed 1661), co-written by John Webster and William Rowley, the following exchange takes place in the Three Tuns tavern:

Boy: What wine drink ye, gentlemen?  
 Lionel: What wine relishes your palate, good Master Pettifog?  
 Pettifog: Nay, ask the woman.  
 Compass: Ellegant for her, I know her diet.<sup>23</sup>  
 Pettifog: Believe me, I con her thank for't: I am of her side."<sup>24</sup>

Another co-written play, "The Chances" (c.1617), by Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, has a landlady berating a lodger carrying a baby with the words, "Bring hither, as I say, (to make my name Stink in my neighbour's nostrils,) your devices, Your brats, got out of Aligant, and broken oaths!"<sup>25</sup> This suggests that Alicante wine was a precursor of Flanders and Swann's "Have some Madeira, m'dear" as an effective aid to caddish seduction.<sup>26</sup> Alicante wine puts in an appearance in a reference to blood at the start of "An Honest Whore" (1604) by Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton,<sup>27</sup> and a similar reference to blood in the context of various popular wines of the day can be found in William Cartwright's "The Ordinary":

Hearsay. Thou hast forgotten Wine, Lieutenant, wine.  
 Slicer: Then to avoid the grosse absurdity  
 Of a dry Battel, 'cause there must some bloud  
 Be spilt (on th' enemies side, I mean) you may  
 Have there a Rundlet of brisk Claret, and  
 As much of Aligant, the same quantitie  
 Of Tent<sup>28</sup> would not be wanting, 'tis a wine  
 Most like to bloud. Some shall bleed fainter colours,  
 As Sack, and white wine. Some that have the itch  
 (As there are Taylors still in every Army)  
 Shall run with Renish, that hath Brimstone in't"<sup>29</sup>

In his peculiar "Praise of Hempseed" (1630),<sup>30</sup> John Taylor the Water-Poet also lists several Spanish wines:

And braue wine Marchants, little were your gaine,  
 By Mallegoes, Canaries Sacke from Spaine,  
 Sweet Allegant, and the concocted Cute,  
 Hollock and Tent would be of small repute;

An enemy and rival of John Taylor's in London theatrical and poetical circles was William Fennor,<sup>31</sup> polyglot poet and soldier, who is the probable author of *Pasquil's Palinodia, and His Progress to the Taverne; Where, After the Survey of the Sellar, You Are Presented with a Pleasant Pynte of Poeticall Sherry*,<sup>32</sup> which includes the suggestive lines:

In dreadful darkenesse Alligant lies drown'd,  
 Which marryed men invoke for procreation.

To calm our fevered brow after the blood and baseness of these early Stuart references to Alicante wine we must turn to Francis Bacon, who urged more soothingly in his *Sylva Sylvarum*, that a cure for stomach ailment was to take some new bread "bedew it with a little Sack or Alegant," and lay it on the stomach.<sup>33</sup>

The early seventeenth century marks the high-water mark of literary references to Alicante wine in English. It was routinely invoked for boisterous and metaphorical effect, perhaps most joyfully conveyed in the drinking song "Sack for my Money," also from the time of James I, whose repeated chorus runs:

The purest wine, so brisk and fine,  
 the Alligant and Sherry,  
 I hold it good to purge the blood,  
 And make the senses merry.<sup>34</sup>

From the earlier allusions to the rapid souring of Alicante wine, we can assume that these references are both to ordinary red wine which might become vinegary in barrel, and to what came to be known, and we know today, as Fondillón, the aged, oxidized, noble Monastrell "vino rancio."<sup>35</sup> This latter was in fact very long-lasting, and much prized by sailors for its effectiveness in preventing scurvy. Ferdinand Magellan is said to have taken 200 barrels of Alicante "rancio" on his voyage to circumnavigate the globe. It came in particularly useful in the Philippines, where the expedition was able to exchange the wine for fresh water and fruit.<sup>36</sup> It was also cherished by English explorers. Captain Thomas James at the lowest ebb of his "dangerous voyage" after an icy winter kept the bulk of the Alicante wine for those most in need of sustenance:

I ever doubted that we should be weakest in the Spring; and therefore had I reserved. A Tun of Alegant Wine unto this time. Of this, by putting seven parts of water, to one of wine, we made some weake beverage: which (by reason that the wine by being frozen, had lost its Vertue) was little better than water. The sicker had a Pint of Alegant a day, by itselfe.<sup>37</sup>

"The Wives Excuse: or, Cuckolds Make Them-selves" by Thomas Southerne was a failure when first performed at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, in 1691. As a comedy of manners it was full of topical references. On being complimented as to the quality of his wines, the foppish arriviste Friendall asks his dinner guests (Act iv, Scene i): "How did you like the *Lucina* I gave you, the *Galicia*, the *Mountain-Alicant*? You taste the Sun in them perfectly, Gentlemen." This is the prelude to an all too familiarly pompous



discussion of wine and other luxuries. From this we can gauge that Alicante wine still smacked of luxury and desirability, though it was readily available. Out of 9,862 pipes of wine from Spain entering the port of London in 1693, 1,081 were Alicante wine.<sup>38</sup>

This luxuriousness is alluded to in more exuberant examples, such as the uproarious menu imagined by the previously mentioned John Taylor in his "Bill of Fare" offered in *John Taylor's Feast* which had as its centrepiece, "A Rhinosceros boyld in Allecant."<sup>39</sup> Over a century later, we can also find Alicante present in such magnificent, and real rather than imaginary, banquets as that offered by the Duc de Richelieu in 1756 to aristocratic Hanoverian prisoners during the Hanoverian War, at which the endless array of second course dishes was rounded off with "Beef Jelly with Alicante Wine and Verdun Mirabelles."<sup>40</sup>

The drink's popularity spread far afield, as can be seen from the value put on it in the American colonies. In the new colony of Virginia,

To check exorbitant charges on the part of innkeepers, special rates were now laid down for retailers of the different wines and strong waters. The price by the gallon for canary, malaga, sherry, muscadine, and allegant was fixed at thirty pounds of tobacco; for madeira and fayal, at twenty pounds; for French wines, at fifteen for the finest brands of English spirits, at eighty; and for brandy or aquavitæ, at forty.<sup>41</sup>

It can be seen that "allegant" and the other Spanish wines mentioned ("muscadine" being moscatel) were double the value of "French wines."

As ever with alcohol, the taxman tends not to be far off. In 1660 parliament decreed:

Provided always, and be it Enacted, That from and after the First Day of September 1661, no Canary Wines, Muscadell, or Alligant, or other Spanish, or Sweet Wines, shall be sold or uttered, by any Person or Persons within his Majesty's Kingdom of England, Dominion of Wales, and Town of Berwick upon Tweed, by Retail, for above Eighteen-pence the Quart; and that no Gascoigne or French Wines whatsoever shall be sold, by Retail, above Eight-pence the Quart; and that no Rhenish Wines whatsoever shall be sold, by Retail, above Twelve-pence the Quart<sup>42</sup>

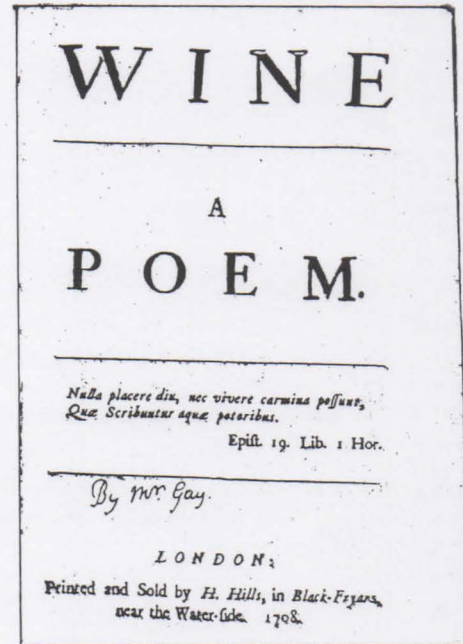
Similarly in William of Orange's reign the costs of war against France required revenue. Consequently,

...of every Butt or Pipe of Muscadels Malmeseyes Cutes Tents Alicants Bastards Sacks Canaries Malagaes Maderaes & other Wines whatsoever co[m]monly called Sweet Wines of the Growth of the Levant Spain Portugal or any of them or any of the Islands or Dominions to them or any of

them belonging or elsewhere that shall come or be brought into the Port of London by his Majesties natural borne Subjects the Su[m]m of Forty five shillings of current English Money ...<sup>43</sup>

#### Eighteenth Century Onwards

The beginning of the eighteenth century saw the appearance of John Gay's first published poem, a burlesque called "Wine" parodying Milton,



written to celebrate the Act of Union between England and Scotland, so we have Alicante wine appearing again in the chorus witnessing a key moment in the development of Great Britain:

Name, sirs! the wine that most invites your taste;  
Champaign, or Burgundy, or Florence pure,  
Or Hock antique, or Lisbon new or old,  
Bordeaux, or neat French white, or Alicant<sup>44</sup>

Over in Dublin, the wine-loving Jonathan Swift wrote in a letter of 20 October 1714 that "I cannot stir from hence till a great Vessell of Alicant is bottled and till my Horse is in a condition to travel and my chimney piece made." Victoria Glendinning makes a minor but tellingly modern slip in her 1998 biography of Jonathan Swift when she states that Swift was referring to forty-six wine bottles he had recently bought. Swift's letter makes it clear that there were in fact a more reassuring forty-six dozen bottles to be filled.<sup>45</sup>

There is another fleeting Anglo-Irish encounter in a later eccentric eighteenth century work, *The Life of John Buncle, Esq.* by Thomas Amory, in which the sharing of a bottle of "old Alicant" gives rise to a learned and seemingly endless postprandial conversation between the Anglo-Irish narrator (a thinly



disguised Amory), and the father of Miss Noel, one of his many objects of affection.<sup>46</sup>

However, we are rather beginning to scrape the barrel. References to Alicante wine clearly become more occasional and prosaic, appearing generally in the specific context of wine and travel books. Joseph Townsend describes part of the process of making "Fontillon" in *A Journey Through Spain in the Years 1786 and 1787*, in virtually the only specific use in English of the name the wine has come to be known by:

For the Fontillon wine, the grapes are gathered, picked from the stalks, and exposed on elevated wicker frames for the space of fifteen days to the influence of the sun and wind, in order to evaporate the superfluous moisture, after which they are submitted to the press.<sup>47</sup>

Townsend's great successor as a traveller in Spain, Richard Ford, wrote in 1845:

The [Alicante] wines, rich, with a rough taste combined with sweetness, are used to doctor thin clarets for the British market. The celebrated Aloque, the best of them, ought to be made from the Monastrel grape: however, the Forcallada Blanquet and Parrell are used indiscriminately, and hence it is said arises the name Aloque—"A lo que saldra."<sup>48</sup>



"The Vintage" from Redding,  
*History & Description of Modern Wines*

Cyrus Redding, a wine writer rather than a traveller, wrote in 1851, "At Alicante there is an excellent red wine, which becomes of the very first order by age; it is made from grapes of two or three sorts, mingled together."<sup>49</sup> Whether the reference to blending is accurate is hard to judge. However, the occasional nineteenth-century reference indicates that Alicante wine became less well-known. If at the start of the century a soldier could refer to the "valley of Alicante, where the so well-known Alicante wine is produced,"<sup>50</sup> and a physician could refer to "Alicant wine" as "one of the most precious cordials in pharmacy,"<sup>51</sup> a later dictionary reference of 1857 presents the reader with

the deflating, "Alicant. A Spanish wine formerly much esteemed, said to be made near Alicante, and of mulberries."<sup>52</sup>

In fiction, nineteenth-century allusions to Alicante wine appear to occur mainly in such historical adventures as Charles Kingsley's buccaneering *Westward Ho!*<sup>53</sup> set in Elizabethan times. Conan Doyle also refers to "Alicant," though somewhat disparagingly, in his third novel, set in the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>54</sup> This is rather a comedown when it is considered that Fondillón at one time commanded a price of 800 francs per hectolitre, when Sherry was selling at 204, Port at 153, Malaga at 135 and Valdepeñas at 60.<sup>55</sup> There are still references from the same period suggesting that the reputation of Alicante wine continued to be high. James Lemoine Denman, in his 1861 *Brief Discourse on Wine*, wrote:

Alicant produces an excellent red wine, which ripens by age into one of the very first order; but this town is noted most for a red sort, both strong and sweet. It comes from the *tintilla* grape, and, like the wine of Cyprus, is said to possess healing qualities, and to be efficacious as an external remedy for wounds.<sup>56</sup>

By contrast, Thomas George Shaw, writing at the same time, described a depressing wine-drinking situation on this coast:

We sailed that evening for the interesting town of Alicante, where, and indeed as far as Barcelona, I could meet with nothing but the same dark, coarse red wine, universally drunk with water at meals along this eastern coast.<sup>57</sup>

There is an odd echo of the early sixteenth century associations of Alicante wine with sourness (and urine) in the figure of the German founder of neurochemistry John Louis William (originally Johann Ludwig Wilhelm) Thudichum, who had moved permanently to England in 1853. Having written an analysis of urine as his first book,<sup>58</sup> he wrote in a subsequent treatise on wine that "The British Consul at Alicante informed him that a quantity of Alicante wine had in 1860 been shipped to England, to which an addition of only 3 to 3½ gallons of spirit per pipe had been made at the time of exportation, no spirit having previously been added; and that on arrival in England the whole was found to be completely spoiled."<sup>59</sup>

This practical approach is some way from the glories of 250 years previously. To find more evocative references to Alicante wine at this time, it is helpful to move in the opposite direction to Dr Thudichum and head to the Continent. Alicante wine has been described as both prolonging the life of King Louis XIV as it was coming to its end, and saving the life of his



great-grandson and unexpected successor, the future Louis XV. The wine's benefit to the ailing Sun King is described by Saint-Simon:

On donna donc au roi dix gouttes de cet élixir dans du vin d'Alicante, sur les onze heures du matin. Quelque temps après il se trouva plus fort.<sup>60</sup>

The role of Alicante wine in the saving of Louis XIV's great-grandson, after the death from smallpox or measles of all his immediate family and precursors in line to the throne, is narrated by the Duchesse d'Orléans:

The King's brother died of the small-pox in consequence of being injudiciously blooded; this one, who is younger than his brother, was also attacked, but the *femme de chambre* concealed it, kept him warm, and continued to give him Alicante wine, by which means they preserved his life.<sup>61</sup>

These eminent figures are joined by such luminaries as Balzac ("Hé! bourgeois, peut-on vous offrir un verre d'Alicante et des talmouses? dit Georges au comte") and Casanova ("Not a drop of water was drunk, for the Champagne, Tokay, Rhine wine, Madeira, Malaga, Cyprus, Alicante, and Cape wines would not allow it"),<sup>62</sup> as well as a much-quoted exchange in *The Count of Montecristo*.<sup>63</sup> The Marquis de Sade also puts in an appearance, as the unfortunate Madame de Noirceuil is poisoned in (and by) his Juliette before suffering further depredations in her death agony:

Aimable infortunée, lui dis-je après avoir mêlé la poudre dans un verre de vin d'Alicante, avalez ceci pour vous restaurer, et vous allez voir l'état de réconfortation où ce breuvage va mettre vos esprits<sup>64</sup>

Perhaps the continuing lustre of Alicante wine in Europe and the relative ordinariness with which it was coming to be regarded in Britain is reflected in these two quotes, one from the French sophisticate Eugène Sue and the other from Walter Scott. In *The Wandering Jew*, Sue writes "Bordeaux, Madeira, and Alicant sparkled like rubies and topazes in large glass decanters."<sup>65</sup> While Scott in *Woodstock; Or, The Cavalier* has the following exchange:

"But what liquor is there?"

"Only a bottle of Alicant, and one of sack, with the stone jug of strong waters," answered Phoebe.<sup>66</sup>

In the story "Little Zaches called Cinnabar" in the *Tales of Hofmann*, Professor Mosch Terpin has been given by his future son-in-law the dream job of researching the difference in taste of wine and water. We are told that his studies have embraced the Rhine and Champagne and that he is halfway through a butt of Alicante.<sup>67</sup>

In Spanish literature Azorín kept the flame burning for Fondillón. Born in the heart of Fondillón country in Monóver in the high Vinalopó valley, but making his literary and political career in Madrid, he refers to the wine in his writings, and is said to have doused his handkerchief in aromatic Fondillón in order to carry its perfume with him.<sup>68</sup>

In twentieth-century writing in English, it is left to a rumbustious Irishman, Brendan Behan, and a diffidently nomadic English gentleman, Norman Lewis, to hold the fort for the wine of Alicante. Behan's wife describes how "Brendan hated the [local] wine. As soon as our money arrived he ordered a thirty-gallon barrel of imported Alicante wine which cost him thirty shillings."<sup>69</sup> This is confirmed by E.H. Mikhail: "Sometimes, in the afternoon, we would sit outside Francisco's drinking our Alicante wine and watching the happenings of San Jorge."<sup>70</sup> But this was red wine rather than Fondillón. Similarly, Norman Lewis spent several post-war summers in Farol on the coast of Catalonia, described in *Voices of the Old Sea*. Both these episodes represent straightforward descriptions of living in Spain and drinking Alicante wine, so may be said not to really represent Alicante wine in English literature. However, it is worth noting that both authors present Alicante wine as being more desirable than the wine of the locality in which they find themselves. In *Voices of the Old Sea*, the Alicante wine is so desirable that it is used to bribe the local mayor.<sup>71</sup>

Who knows where the future lies for this drink. In the horizontal tasting at Vinoelite the "Nueve Magníficos"—spearheaded by Bodegas Primitivo Quiles and Salvador Poveda, instrumental in the survival and reappearance of Fondillón—the last Fondillón to be tasted came from Felipe Gutiérrez de la Vega, whose version is startlingly different to the other eight, bright red rather than amber, and far younger—going back just to 1996, compared to Salvador Poveda's 1980 and Primitivo Quiles' 1948. This could prove to be a dynamic debate. The wine is certainly back on the map, given the ultimate accolade in our day of approval (and over ninety points) in Robert Parker's *Wine Advocate*. In February 2007 there appeared the following:

Casta Diva Fondillón 1996

Made from 100% Monastrell, is a saturated purple, offering aromas of plums, prunes, and raisins. On the palate this intensely sweet wine remains slightly tight and tannic. It is reminiscent of an Italian Recioto ... should be consumed within 2–3 years of purchase.—92 points.<sup>72</sup>

This encomium from the most influential organ in the wine world might be a first step on the road to seeing Fondillón return to the international wine



arena. The Primitivo Quiles bodega sells half of its tiny 30,000 annual production of Fondillón in the USA.

As stated in the opening paragraph, the first draft of this article was written in 2007, when the global economic crisis was merely looming. The Vinoelite tasting which sparked my interest was part of the jamboree surrounding the holding of the America's Cup in Valencia that year. In the intervening four years, Spain's economy has been battered more than most, and Alicante wines have not achieved a noticeably higher profile. It is instructive to note that Oz Clarke's comment in his *Pocket Wine Guide 2010*, "...Alicante to the south [of Valencia] produces a little-known treasure, the Fondillón dry or semi-dry fortified wine,"<sup>73</sup> is identical to what he wrote in the 1999 and 2004 editions. Jon Hurley in his 2005 *A Matter of Taste: The History of Wine Drinking in Britain* is both slightly disparaging when referring to the wines of Alicante (and inaccurate when describing Fondillón as intensely sweet):

The region still makes a variety of wines, from the basic brews, earthy and powerful—Monastrell-driven reds which happy tourists use to accompany their chicken and chips—to Fondillon, a solera-made, intensely sweet dessert wine.<sup>74</sup>

Nevertheless, I look forward to the day when Alicante wine is mentioned on screen or TV, or even as an app, in a contemporary parallel of the Jacobean playwrights for whom Alicante wine was everyday alcoholic and metaphorical currency.

EPILOGUE: However, there is a more immediate threat to the region's centuries of distinctive winemaking in the shape of current moves by the Valencia region's ministry of agriculture to blur the lines of the regional Denominaciones de Origen (Alicante, Utiel-Requena and Valencia) through the creation of a single giant Valencia DO. This is a prospect that is doubly galling as the Valencia DO is smaller, and generally making less interesting wines, than the other two denominaciones. We can be sure that Alicante will do its best to resist this putsch and to preserve its ancient heritage and qualities.<sup>75</sup>

Perhaps there is no one better equipped to express this than the doyen of Valencian wine writers, Joan C. Martín. He started his newspaper article "Alicante, the essence of the kingdom" (referring to the medieval east Iberian kingdom of Valencia): "The wines of Alicante are the link with winemaking immortality of the people of the País Valenciano."<sup>76</sup>

Long may this be so.

#### NOTES

1. Fondillón is a semi-sweet "vino rancio" made from grapes which are left to overripen on the vine before

fermentation, resulting in a sweet wine that is very high in alcohol (the finished product comes in at 16-18% ABV). It is then aged in giant wooden barrels for no less than eight years and often more than twenty. The process slowly oxidizes the wine, adding complexity and refinement. The original brilliant red turns gradually to amber until the result is not unlike its fellow "vinos nobles" of Madeira or Oloroso Sherry in colour and style, though unlike these it is not fortified.

2. See Joan C. Martín, "La cultura del origen en la gastronomía," *El País*, 14 June 2005.
3. It is sometimes claimed (see Fulbert Dumonteil, "Les Vins de Paris" in "Le Cuisinier Français," no. 494, July-Aug-Sept. 2000, pp. 12-13) that Alicante wine was successful at the first recorded wine challenge ("La bataille des vins"), overseen by Philip II of France in Paris in the early thirteenth century, as narrated in a poem by the troubadour Henri d'Andeli (available at [http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/La\\_Bataille\\_des\\_vins](http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/La_Bataille_des_vins)). Here were represented the best wines from France, Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal. The tasting committee was presided over by King Philip II (Philippe Auguste) aided by an English monk. The Cyprus wine was deemed overall champion, but I suspect that the occasional inclusion of Alicante among the winners is a misreading of "Vin d'Aquilat" (probably Aquila in the kingdom of Naples), especially as all the wines were white. See Legrand D'Aussy, *Fabliaux ou contes. Fables et romans du XIIIe et XIIIe siècle* (Jules Renouard, 1839), vol. 3, pp. 38, 46, 47.
4. As indicated by the *Oxford English Dictionary*, though we have also encountered "Aligant" and "Ellegant," see notes 6 and 12.
5. Gavin A. Smith and Susana Narotzky, *Immediate Struggles: People, Power, and Place in Rural Spain* (University of California Press, 2006), p. 41.
6. See W. Carew Hazlitt (ed.), *Remains of the Early Popular Poetry of England* (John Russell Smith, 1864), pp. 92-109.
7. The full text is available online at <http://oldpoetry.com/opoem/53962-Anonymous-Old-English-Here-Foloweth-Colyn-Blowbols-Testament>.
8. See W. Carew Hazlitt's edition of R. Dodsley, *A Select Collection of Old English Plays*, vol. I (Reeves and Turner, 1874; first published in 12 vols., R. Dodsley, 1744-45), p. 53. The full text is available online at <http://www.fullbooks.com/A-Select-Collection-of-Old-English-Plays1.html>.
9. See the introduction by F. J. Furnivall to his 1870 edition of Andrew Boorde, *The Fyrst Boke of the Introduction of Knowledge* (Elibron Classics, 2005, facsimile of 1870 edition published by N. Trübner), p. 75.
10. According to Edmund Bohun, *The character of Queen Elizabeth* (R. Chiswell, 1693). See also Christopher Hibbert, *The Virgin Queen: Elizabeth I, Genius of the Golden Age* by (Addison Wesley, 1992), p. 105.



11. Théodore Turquet de Mayerne left a vivid portrait of the king in a memorandum for those who were to tend to him while Mayerne was on a diplomatic mission to Switzerland. For the description of James I's urine see BL Sloane MS 1679, folio 20v. See Deborah Lupton, *Medicine as Culture: Illness, Disease and the Body in Western Societies* (Sage, 2003), p. 124; see also Ida MacAlpine and Richard Hunter, *George III and the Mad-Business* (Allen Lane, 1969), pp. 204, 206-7; and Peter N. Miller, "Persecution and the Art of Healing," in *The New Republic*, 11 June 2006, available online at <http://www.tnr.com/doc.mhtml?i=20061113&s=miller111306>.
12. T. Cox, N. Jack, S. Lofthouse, J. Watling, J. Haines, M. Warren, "King George III and porphyria: an elemental hypothesis and investigation," *The Lancet*, vol. 366, issue 9482, 23 July 2005, pp. 332-5. James I probably suffered from porphyria.
13. Sir Thomas Smith, *Sir Thomas Smithes Voiage and Entertainment in Rushia With the tragicall ends of two emperors, and one empresse, within one moneth during his being there: and the miraculous preseruauon of the now rainging emperor, esteemed dead for 18 yeares* (Nathaniel Butter, 1605).
14. Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615-1619: as narrated in his journal and correspondence* (Kraus Reprint, 1967) p. 208. This tendency to sourness is repeated by James Howell, later historiographer royal to Charles II, writing in 1643, "Those kinds that our Merchants carry over are those only that grow upon the Seaside, as *Malagas, Sherries, Tents and Aligants*: Of this last there's little comes over right, therefore the Vintners make *Tent* (which is a name for all Wines in *Spain* except white) to supply the place of it." See J. Jacobs (ed.), *The Familiar Letters of James Howell* (David Nutt, 1890), p. 455.
15. Walter Mountfort, *The Launching of the Mary* (OUP, 1933), pp. 82-3.
16. See John Harland (ed.), "The House and Farm Accounts of the Shuttleworths of Gawthorpe Hall, in the County of Lancaster at Smithills and Gawthorpe," in *Remains Historical and Literary Connected with the Palatine Counties of Lancaster and Chester* (The Cheetham Society, 1858), vol 46, p. 1112.
17. Like a good Englishman, Ward was happy to swap a tun of red wine for a tun of beer. See C. Estrange-Ewan, *Captain John Ward, Arch-Pirate* (privately printed, 1939), p. 9. See also Daniel Vitkus (ed.), *Three Turk Plays from Early Modern England* (Columbia UP, 2000), p. 41.
18. This refers to Pedro Ximénez.
19. Luke Hutton, *The Discovery of a London Monster, called, the Black Dogg of New-gate* (1596, repr. 1612).
20. See the 1990 OUP edition of "The Merry Wives of Windsor" edited by T.W. Craik, p. 129, note 65. See also the similar play on words in "A Cure for a Cuckold" referred to in footnote 22 below. The vinous play on words is noted in Edward Holdsworth Sugden, *A Topographical Dictionary to the Works of Shakespeare and His Fellow Dramatists* (Univ of Manchester, 1925).
21. Alexander Dyce (ed.), "Timon, a Play," (first performed 1585, first printed The Shakespeare Society, 1842), act ii, scene v, p. 39.
22. See Barnabe Barnes, "The Devil's Charter" (Nick Hern Books, 1999), p. 54, p. 123.
23. "Ellegant" here is a play on words with "Allegant," and the Boy immediately goes on to ask, "A cup of neat Allegant?"
24. "A Cure for a Cuckold", act iv, scene i.
25. "The Chances", act i, scene viii.
26. And to sexual performance. "Pimlyco or Runne Red-cappe," an anonymous tract from 1609 that has been described as "a satirical rhapsody on the age's animal spirits and headlong folly," refers to "fat lecherous Alligant Whose juice repaires what Backes doe want."
27. Again, as an alternative to what would become the long-standing use of claret in the same context (also first found in this play, I believe), "you'll bleed three pottles of Aligant, by this light, if you follow 'em," ("An Honest Whore Part I," act i, scene i).
28. "Tent" is a corruption of "tinto" referring to Spanish red wine.
29. "The Ordinary" (1635?), act ii, scene ii.
30. "The Praise of Hempseed" is subtitled, "The Voyage of Mr. Roger Bird and the Writer hereof, in a Boat of browne-Paper, from London to Quinborough in Kent." In 1619 the eccentric Thames ferryman, John Taylor the Water-poet, made an extraordinary journey from London to Queenborough in a paper boat. Taylor's 40-mile journey stood as the world-record distance travelled in a paper boat until 2003.
31. John Taylor challenged William Fennor, "the King's Rhymer," to a "trial of wit" in the Hope Theatre, 1614. Fennor failed to appear.
32. *Pasquil's Palinodia* (1619, repr. 1620, 1634, 1866) has been attributed also to Nicholas Breton, who wrote several "Pasquil" texts (including *Pasquil's Fooles cappe*, entered at Stationers' Hall in 1600, *Pasquil's Mistresse* (1600), *Pasquil's Passe and Passeth Not* (1600)), but Fennor (who was probably a Dutchman) is considered the most likely author of this work.
33. Francis Bacon, *Sylva Sylvarum, Or a Natural History in Ten Centuries* (first printed 1627), this reference from Basil Montague, *The Works of Francis Bacon* (A. Hart, 1852), vol. II, p. 16.
34. See John Payne Collier (ed.), *A Book of Roxburghe Ballads* (Longman, Brown et al, 1847), pp. 177-203.
35. The "rancio" style refers to a type of wine obtained by means of intentional oxidation or maderization, generally achieved by prolonged (decades in some cases, as with Fondillón) periods of ageing in wood, or exposure to heat.



36. See Joan C. Martín, *Manual de los vinos valencianos* (José Huguet, 1986), p. 103. This is the best book on the wines of the Valencia region and their history, and indeed on Fondillón (pp. 102–8). A new updated edition is highly overdue.
37. See Thomas James, *The Dangerous Voyage Of Captain Thomas James, In his intended Discovery of a North West Passage into the South Sea, Wherein the Miseries Indured Both Going, Wintering, Returning, and the Rarities Observed, both Philosophicall and Mathematicall are Related in this Journall of it* (John Partridge, 1633), p. 73. See also Robert James Merrett, "A Political and Social History of Wines and Spirits in Canada, 1630–1900," in *Etudes Canadiennes/Canadian Studies*, no. 35, 1993.
38. See José Ignacio Martínez Ruiz and Perry Gauci, *Mercaderes ingleses en Alicante en el siglo XVII: estudio y edición de la Correspondencia Comercial de Richard Hounsell & Co.* (Universidad de Alicante, 2008), p. 94.
39. John Taylor, *Taylor's Feast. A Bill of Fare* (J. Okes, 1638). See <http://www.godecookery.com/mirth/mirth019>.
40. See Prosper Montagne, *The New Larousse Gastronomique* (Hamlyn, 2001), p. 95. The duke was limited to serving beef-based dishes due to a shortage in his food supplies. The first two courses consisted of:  

FIRST COURSE

Tureen of Garbure Gratinée – Palate of Beef à la Sainte-Menehould – Kidneys with Fried Onion – Tripe à la Poulette with Lemon Juice – Rump of Beef with Root Vegetables – Oxtail with Chestnut Puree – Civet of Tongue à la Bourguignonne – Paupiettes of Beef à l'Estouffade, Pickled Nasturtium Buds – Filet of Beef Braised with Celery – Beef Rissoles, Hazelnut Puree – Beef Marrow on Toast.

SECOND COURSE

Roast Sirloin – Endive Salad with Ox Tongue – Beef à la Mode with White Jelly – Cold Beef Gateau with Blood and Furancon Wine and Glazed Turnips – Beef Bone Marrow Pie, Bread Crumbs & Candy Sugar – Beef Stock Aspic with Lemon Rind and Pralines – Puree of Artichoke Hearts, Beef Stock & Almond Milk – Beef Jelly with Alicante Wine and Verdun Mirabelles.
41. Hening's Statutes, vol. I, p. 300, quoted in Philip Alexander Bruce, *Economic History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (Macmillan, 1895), p. 221.
42. From: "House of Commons Journal Volume 8: 27 December 1660," Journal of the House of Commons: volume 8: 1660-1667 (1802), pp. 227-31, available at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=26335>.
43. See <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=46872>. William III, 1696-7: An Act for granting to His Majesty a further Subsidy of Tunnage and Poundage upon Merchandizes imported for the Terme of Two Yeares & Three Quarters & an additional Land Tax for One Yeare for carrying on the Warr against France. [Chapter XXIV. Rot. Parl. 8 & 9 Gul. III. p. 8. nu. 2.].
44. See John Gay "Wine" (1708), in James Parton, *The Humorous Poetry of the English Language: from Chaucer to Saxe* (Mason Brothers, 1856) p. 355. Also the website "Spenser and the Tradition: English Poetry 1759-1830," compiled by David Hill Radcliffe (<http://198.82.142.160/spenser/TextRecord.php?action=GET&textsid=38062>).
45. Victoria Glendinning, *Jonathan Swift* (Hutchinson, 1998), p. 140. For the relevant letter see George Birkbeck Hill (ed.), *Unpublished Letters of Dean Swift* (T. Fisher Unwin, 1899) pp. 14-15.
46. Thomas Amory, *The Life of John Bunclie, Esq. Containing Various Observations and Reflections, Made in Several Parts of the World, and Many Extraordinary Relations* (J. Johnson & B. Davenport, 1756-66), p. 56: "We sat down immediately to two very good dishes, and when that was over, Mr. Noel and I drank a bottle of old Alicant." *Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable* provides the following under Bunclie: "A prodigious hand at matrimony, divinity, a song, and a peck." He marries seven wives, loses all in the flower of their age, is inconsolable for two or three days, then resigns himself to the decrees of Providence, and marries again. ("John is a kind of innocent Henry VIII, of private life."—Leigh Hunt).
47. Joseph Townsend, *A Journey Through Spain in the Years 1786 and 1787. With Particular Attention to the Agriculture ...* vol. 3 (C. Dilly, 1791), p. 200.
48. Richard Ford, *A Handbook for Travellers in Spain* (John Murray, 1855), Part I, p. 354. Richard Ford (1796–1858) spent the years 1830–34 on riding tours in Spain. A connoisseur and critic, this work (first published in 1845) was from the first regarded as one of the finest travel books in the English language. *The Times* declared upon its publication, "So great a literary achievement has never before been performed under so humble a title."
49. Cyrus Redding, *A History and Description of Modern Wines* (Henry G. Bohn, 1851, first publ. 1833), p. 199.
50. Johann Christian Mämpel, *Adventures of a Young Rifleman in the French and English Armies, During the War in Spain and Portugal. Written by Himself* (Henry Colburn, 1826), p. 263.
51. See M. Pissis, "Observations upon Alicant Vine, and particularly the Alicant Raisin Wine" in *The Philosophical Magazine*, vol 25, June-September 1806, pp. 313-17.
52. Thomas Wright, *Dictionary of Obsolete and Provincial English* (Henry G. Bohn, 1857), p. 52, and a nearly identical reference appears in Robert Nares et al., *A Glossary: Or, Collection of Words, Phrases, Names, and Allusions to Customs, Proverbs, Etc.* (J.R. Smith, 1867), p. 17.



53. Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho! Or, The voyages and adventures of Sir Amyas Leigh* (B. Tauchnitz, 1855), p. 302: "And so Jack was sent home, with a pint of good red Alicant wine in him (more, poor fellow, than he had tasted at once in his life before)." By a nice coincidence "Westward ho!" happens also to be the title of a play by John Webster, see note 22.
54. "But what is this upon the table? Alicant? Fie, fie, it is a drink for boys. Let us have some good sack with plenty of body in it. Claret for youth, say I, sack for maturity," in *Micah Clarke: His Statement* (Longmans, Green & Co, 1890), p. 114.
55. From a leaflet (unpubl.) by Juan Ferrer Espinosa, "Historia del Fondillón," available on the internet at <http://www.monover.com/2006/fondillon.htm>.
56. James Lemoine Denman, *A Brief Discourse on Wine: Embracing an Historical and Descriptive Account of the Vine* (J.L. Denman, 1861), p. 59.
57. Thomas George Shaw, *Wine, the Vine and the Cellar* (Longman, et al, 1863), p. 60.
58. John Louis William Thudichum, *A Treatise on the Pathology of Urine...* (John Churchill, 1858).
59. John L. W. Thudichum, *Treatise on Wines: their Origin, Nature and Varieties, with Practical Directions for Viticulture and Vinification* (Macmillan, 1872), p. 656.
60. See M. le Marquis de Saint-Simon *Mémoires complets et authentiques du duc de Saint-Simon sur le siècle de Louis XIV et la Régence*, vol. XII (A. Sautelet, 1829, first publ. 1788), p. 486: "Ten drops of [Le Brun's] mixture in Alicante wine were therefore given to the King about eleven o'clock in the morning."
61. See Elizabeth Charlotte of Bavaria, Palatine du Rhin, Duchesse d'Orléans, *Secret Memoirs of the Court of Louis XIV. and of the Regency Extracted from the German Correspondence Duchess of Orleans* (Whittaker, 1824), pp. 382-3.
62. Honoré de Balzac, *Un début dans la vie* (first publ. 1842). "Hey! bourgeois, may I offer you a glass of Alicante and some cheese-cakes?" said Georges to the count," Katherine Prescott Wormeley transl., *A Start in Life and Other Stories* (Roberts Brothers, 1895), p. 84. See Giacomo Casanova, *The Many Loves of Casanova* (Holoway House, 2005), p. 152, for this reference to a sumptuous society breakfast he hosted.
63. Alexandre Dumas, *Le Comte de Monte-Cristo* (La Bibliothèque électronique du Québec – <http://jydupuis.apinc.org/vents/Dumas-comte-3.pdf>, first publ. 1844), vol. III, p. 349: "Maintenant, dit le comte, voulez-vous prendre quelque chose; un verre de xérès, de porto, d'alicante? — D'alicante, puisque vous le voulez bien, c'est mon vin de prédilection.  
— J'en ai d'excellent. Avec un biscuit, n'est-ce pas?  
— Avec un biscuit, puisque vous m'y forcez."  
(“Now,” said the count, “would you like something to drink: a glass of sherry, port or alicante?” “Alicante, if you please; it is my favorite wine.” “I have some that is very good. You will take a biscuit with it, will you not?”).
64. Marquis de Sade, *Histoire de Juliette, ou les Prospérités du vice* (1797-1801). The complete text is available at <http://www.sade-ecrivain.com/juliette/juliette.htm>
65. Eugène Sue, *The Wandering Jew*, Part 3 (National Library Company, 2005), p. 63. First published as *Le Juif errant*, 1844-45.
66. Walter Scott, *Woodstock; Or, The Cavalier. A Tale of the Year Sixteen Hundred and Fifty-one* (A. Constable & Co., 1826), vol. 1, p. 96.
67. See E.T.A. Hoffmann, *Klein Zaches genannt Zinnober* (Elibron Classics, nd, first publ., 1819), p.73: “Er hat schon einen halben Oxhoft alten Rheinwein sowie mehrere Dutzend Flaschen Champagner verstudiert und ist jetzt an ein Faß Alikante geraten.”
68. Azorín was the pseudonym of José Martínez Ruiz (1873-1967), novelist, essayist and the foremost Spanish literary critic of his day. He was one of a group of writers engaged at the turn of the twentieth century in a concerted attempt to revitalize Spanish life and letters.
69. Beatrice Behan with Gus Smith and Des Hickey, *My Life with Brendan* (Nash Pub., 1974), p. 103.
70. E. H. Mikhail, *Brendan Behan 1: Interviews and Recollections* (Macmillan, 1982), p. 93.
71. See Norman Lewis, *Voices of the Old Sea* (Carroll and Graf, 2005, first publ. 1984), pp. 179, 186-7, 203.
72. Jay Miller, *Wine Advocate*, Feb. 2007.
73. Oz Clarke, *Oz Clarke's Pocket Wine Guide 2010* (Sterling, 2009) p. 302.
74. Jon Hurley, *A Matter of Taste: The History of Wine Drinking in Britain* (Tempus, 2005).
75. See, for example, “La defensa del vino alicantino” by Eladio Anierte Aparicio in *Diario Información*, 19 May 2012 (<http://www.diarioinformacion.com/opinion/2012/05/19/defensa-vino-alicante/1255347.html>).
76. Joan C. Martín, “Alicante, la esencia del reino,” *Diario Información*, 6 December 2011.



Thomas George Shaw's 1863 *Wine, the Vine, and the Cellar*, acknowledged as one of the most interesting books on the subject, included his thoughts on the wines of Alicante.





## NEWS & NOTES



### A Special Napa Valley Wine History

Published this summer, *Napa Valley's Jewish Heritage* by Henry Michalski and Donna Mendelsohn, is a noteworthy addition to the history of California's Napa Valley, particularly its wine industry. The well-illustrated book is one of the Images of America Series published by Arcadia Press (128 pp, card covers, \$22). The Jewish involvement in California's wine history has not been thoroughly addressed before, and authors Michalski and Mendelsohn have dug into many archival collections to bring us stories of the well-known players, along with an outstanding supporting cast, from the mid-1800s to the present. It is a valuable resource, and a very good read. (As with most of Arcadia's publications, it does not have an index, but your Editor has created one for the "Wine Industry Names" in the book and will be happy to share. Just send me an email at [waywardtendrils@att.net](mailto:waywardtendrils@att.net) or [nomispress@att.net](mailto:nomispress@att.net).)

### A Good Link

Tendrils Joe Lynch sent in a useful website to search for book sales in your area, or perhaps somewhere you might be planning to visit. <http://www.booksalefinder.com/index.html>.

### Arpad Haraszthy's Library

This tidbit was gleaned by Marvin Collins from an article in the November 12<sup>th</sup> 1899 *San Francisco Call*, "Valuable Private Libraries." Marvin writes: This feature story describes and comments on the private libraries of many of the wealthy men of San Francisco. It is written in a very chatty style, and was illustrated with cameo photographs of some of the library interiors. The article is framed in answer to the quote from the London paper to prove that San Francisco is an educated and refined city.

"Twenty-one years ago a London paper said that San Francisco does not care for art and learning.

A brilliant measure of its taste.... There is one curious library in town which is largely made up of works on grapes and wine. It belongs to Arpad Haraszthy, and is apropos of his business. He knows all there is to know about wine-making, said one of his friends. He even studies the classical side of his work, and knows the whole history of wine from the Bible down before Bible times, maybe. You know wines were invented sometime before telephones or even printing. Haraszthy thinks that the making of it was instinctive, and I don't know but he's right.

But his library tastes do not stop at wine history. He has travels and philological work, and histories besides. He owns 5,000 volumes."



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### While on the subject of Arpad Haraszthy

let's enjoy this wine-y passage from *Ambrose Bierce: The Making of a Misanthrope* by Richard Saunders (SF: Chronicle Books, 1985), sent by Bo Simons.

"The wine of Arpad Haraszthy has a bouquet all its own. It tickles and titillates the palate. It gurgles as it slips down the alimentary canal. It warms the cockles of the heart, and it burns the sensitive lining of the stomach." [from Bierce's "Prattle" column in the *S.F. Examiner*]

Haraszthy was outraged by the column and immediately consulted his lawyers and demanded that they threaten the *Examiner* with a lawsuit unless Bierce ran a retraction. Bierce and

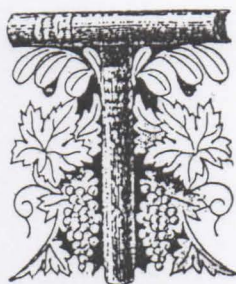
Hearst [*Examiner* owner/ publisher] were equally insulted by the threats of libel issued by the vintner, and the "retraction" in the next column was a good example of how the writer and publisher could team to jointly thumb their noses at legal threats as well as deliver a highly sarcastic apology: "The wine of Arpad Haraszthy does not have a bouquet all its own. It does not tickle and titillate the palate. It does not gurgle as it slips down the alimentary canal. It does not warm the cockles of the heart, and it does not burn the sensitive lining of the stomach."



## The Wine Book List of the University of California Press by Thomas Pinney

[With his love of wine and its history, Thomas Pinney is well-known and applauded by any wine enthusiast who has even the slightest inkling of an interest in the history of wine and its printed word. His books in the field now number eight titles, while his contributions to our *WTQ* have provided significant additional insight into the historical literature of wine. We salute his valuable efforts. — Ed.]

THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS is now the leading publisher of books about wine and related subjects in this country, having long since outpaced the former leader, Alfred A. Knopf.<sup>1</sup> How it got to that position may be briefly outlined here. A close look at the list of books it has published and is publishing will also tell us something about the fortunes of wine in this country over the last sixty or seventy years.



THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA—but not the University of California Press—has long been a publisher of work about viticulture and winemaking. California has been the overwhelmingly dominant producer of vinifera grapes and wine in America since the 1850s, and so important a branch of the state's agriculture inevitably became a subject for scientific and practical study. Such work was carried on in the College of Agriculture and the associated Agricultural Experiment Station of the University, and it was from these sources that the early publications issued. The first that I know of is Dean Eugene W. Hilgard's "Lecture on the Phylloxera or Grape Vine Louse," Bulletin No. 23 of the University of California, 1876 (the University had been founded at Oakland in 1868 and moved to Berkeley in 1873). This early publication was followed by innumerable others by Hilgard and his associates in the years following, down to Prohibition. It would be tedious even to sample them, but among their authors one may mention, as well as Hilgard, Arthur Hayne, Frederic Bioletti, F.C.H. Flossfeder, Leon Bonnet, E.H. Twight, and F.W. Morse. Hilgard himself is said to have written 1,250 pages of viticultural reports alone.

Prohibition, coming into force at the beginning of 1920, of course put an end to further publication concerned with wine, though studies about grapes could and did continue, so long as it was pretended that grapes had nothing to do with the dreaded thing called wine but only with the innocent supply of fruit for the table or for juice. Prominent among the researchers at the University during these dark years were W. V. Cruess, A. J. Winkler, and Harold Olmo.

Publication of research about grapes and wine by the Agricultural Experiment Station resumed soon after Prohibition came to an end in December, 1933. One of the notable items was Frederic Bioletti's *Ampelography*,<sup>2</sup> the work of a lifetime, now at last permitted to appear. It was Bioletti's *nunc dimittis*, for he died in the year after its publication. The

University of California's work in agriculture, now carried on by what is called the department of Agriculture and Natural Resources, continues to include much work on wines and vines, but that work is not now nor has it ever been published by the University of California Press.

So where does the Press come in? The answer is, not for a long time, and then very hesitantly. The University of California Press, founded in 1874, was literally, in the beginning, a press; that is to say, a place where things were printed. The needs of the University for printing were many and various: the catalog, course lists, bulletins, information of all kinds for faculty, staff, and others. The Press began to take on a publishing function only when the University founded a series of monograph studies, beginning in 1893, in geology, archaeology and anthropology, botany, zoology, classical philology and so on. These were non-commercial, scholarly publications in serial form, and they were the only sort of publication that the press was permitted to produce. Under the autocratic control of President Benjamin Ide Wheeler, who had founded most of the monograph series, the activity of the Press was strictly limited: "No books, no royalties, no advertising except bare lists, virtually no sales, no practices remotely commercial in nature. Distribution was primarily by exchange with other libraries."<sup>3</sup> And so it continued for many years, even after Wheeler retired in 1919.

But after a time, a book or two was manufactured and sold by the Press, as we may call it, and this activity gradually grew in an irregular way. August Frugé, who came to the Press in 1944, found it in a gradual process of change but still recognizably working in the way that Wheeler had designed it. Frugé had a different idea; that the Press should become a general publisher of scholarly books, after the model of the great presses at Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Yale, Princeton, &c. With the help of like-minded people, Frugé presided over this change, not without opposition, and so opened the way for the University of California Press to publish books about grapes and wine.

Frugé's strategy for leading the Press away from



its old restrictions was to build "lists" in different subjects, on the theory that once you had published, say, a book about Ancient Greece, you would attract another book in that field, and the power of attraction would grow with the growth of the list. At some point you would find that you had a large field to cultivate. So there was a classical list, a Latin American list, an Asiatic list, a film list—but no wine list. One reason for that was, I think, that Frugé did not want the Press to be identified as a regional press. American wine, if people thought about it at all, was largely a California commodity, so anything published about it would have a provincial character. But the main reason that no list of wine books developed was simply that there was no supply. Before around 1970 wine, as a thing to write about, was nowhere. The exceptions, such as Frank Schoonmaker's publications, surely prove the rule in this case.

The beginnings, and the erratic progress, of the Press's career in wine publishing, are clearly displayed in the chronological list that follows. My comments on that list will make up the rest of this article. [EDITOR NOTE: In brackets are the WT notations or reviews of the book.]



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS

Berkeley Los Angeles London

#### Chronological List

1946. Hutchison, Claude, ed. *California Agriculture. By Members of the Faculty of the College of Agriculture*, University of California. 444 pp.
1951. Amerine, Maynard A., and Joslyn, M.A. *Table Wines: The Technology of Their Production in California*. 397 pp. [v.17:3, pp.16-17]
1951. Amerine, M.A., and Wheeler, Louise. *Check List of Books and Pamphlets on Grapes and Wine and Related Subjects, 1938-1948*. 240 pp.
1951. Carosso, Vincent. *The California Wine Industry, 1830-1895: A Study of the Formative Years*. 246 pp. [v.10:1, p.5]
1962. Fisher, M.F.K. *The Story of Wine in California*. 125 pp. [v.10:1-3]
1962. Winkler, A.J. *General Viticulture*. 633 pp. Rev. ed., 1974. [v.14:4, p.11]
1965. Amerine, M.A., and Singleton, Vernon. *Wine: An Introduction for Americans*. 357 pp. Rev. ed., 1977. [v.8:3, p.10]
1984. Muscatine, Doris; Amerine, M.A.; and Thompson, Bob, editors. *The University of California / Sotheby Book of California Wine*. 615 pp. [v.6:2, p.2; v.6:3, p.7]
1986. Amerine, M.A., and Phaff, Herman. *Bibliography of Publications by the Faculty, Staff, and Students of the University of California, 1876-1980, on Grapes, Wines and Related Subjects*. 244 pp. [v.18:4, pp. 1, 7; v.19:3, p.8]
1989. Pinney, Thomas. *A History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition*. 553 pp. [v.20:3, p.22]
1995. Coates, Clive. *Grands Vins: The Finest Châteaux of Bordeaux and their Wines*. 816 pp. [v.5:3, p.4]
1996. Amerine, M.A., and Borg, Axel. *A Bibliography on Grapes, Wines, Other Alcoholic Beverages, and Temperance Works Published in the U.S. before 1901*. 294 pp. [v.19:1, p.16; v.19:3, p.8]
1996. Lapsley, James. *Bottled Poetry: Napa Wine-making from Prohibition to the Modern Era*. 296 pp. [v.20:2, pp.8, 12]
1997. Coates, Clive. *Côte d'Or: A Celebration of the Great Wines of Burgundy*. 608 pp. [v.8:1, p.8; v.9:1, p.6]
1997. Jones, Idwal. *The Vineyard*. [Fiction] 279 pp. [v.20:1, p.10]
1998. Sullivan, Charles. *A Companion to California Wine*. 441 pp. [v.8:4, p.9; v.9:1, p.8]
1998. Wilson, James E. *Terroir: The Role of Geology, Climate and Culture in the Making of French Wines*. 336 pp. [v.9:2, p.9]
2000. Coates, Clive. *An Encyclopedia of the Wines and Domains of France*. 608 pp. [v.11:2, p.13]
2003. Sullivan, Charles. *Zinfandel: A History of a Grape and Its Wine*. 224 pp. [v.13:4, p.4; v.14:3, p.3]
2004. Coates, Clive. *The Wines of Bordeaux: Vintages and Tasting Notes, 1952-2003*. 720 pp. [v.16:2, p.21]
2004. Fanet, Jacques. *Great Wine Terroirs*. 240 pp. [v.15:2, p.18]
2004. Haeger, John. *North American Pinot Noir*. 445 pp. [v.15:1, p.10]
2004. Swinchatt, Jonathan, and Howell, David. *The Winemaker's Dance: Exploring Terroir in the Napa Valley*. 229 pp. [v.15:2, p.18; v.15:3, p.8; v.16:2, p.23]
2005. Heimoff, Steve. *A Wine Journey Along the Russian River*. 285 pp.
2005. Johnson, Hugh. *Wine: A Life Uncorked*. 383 pp. [v.16:1, p.7; v.16:3, p.12]
2005. Livingstone-Learmonth, John. *The Wines of the Northern Rhône*. 704 pp. [v.16:2, p.13]
2005. Pinney, Thomas. *History of Wine in America: From Prohibition to the Present*. 532 pp. [v.15:3, p.4; v.15:4, pp.1-3]
2006. Goldstein, Evan. *Perfect Pairings: A Master Sommelier's Practical Advice for Partnering Wine with Food*. 328 pp.



2006. Goode, Jamie. *The Science of Wine: From Vine to Glass*. 216 pp. [v.16:3, p.14]
2006. Halliday, James. *Wine Atlas of Australia*. 324 pp. [v.17:2, p.19]
2006. Sokol Blosser, Susan. *At Home in the Vineyard: Cultivating a Winery, an Industry and a Life*. 256 pp. [v.16:4, p.16]
2006. Warrick, Sheridan. *The Way to Make Wine: How to Craft Superb Table Wines at Home*. 267 pp.
2007. Matasar, Ann B. *Women of Wine: The Rise of Women in the Global Wine Industry*. 252 pp. [v.16:4, p.16; 17:4, p.14; v.20:1, p.20]
2007. Gregutt, Paul. *Washington Wine and Wineries*. 360 pp. Also, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2010. [v.18:1, p.13]
2008. Ausmus, William. *Wines and Wineries of California's Central Coast*. 376 pp.
2008. Colman, Tyler. *Wine Politics: How Governments, Environmentalists, Mobsters, and Critics Influence the Wines We Drink*. 186 pp. [v.19:1, p.23]
2008. Coates, Clive. *The Wines of Burgundy*. 896 pp.
2008. Heimoff, Steve. *New Classic Winemakers of California*. 285 pp.
2008. Saintsbury, George. *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, Thomas Pinney, ed. 348 pp. [v.19:1, p.17]
2008. Haeger, John. *Pacific Pinot Noir: A Comprehensive Winery Guide for Consumers and Connoisseurs*. 496 pp. [v.19:1, p.22]
2008. Pitte, Jean-Robert. *Bordeaux, Burgundy*. 268 pp. [v.18:4, p.17; v.20:3, p.21]
2009. Belfrage, Nicholas. *The Finest Wines of Tuscany and Central Italy*. 320 pp.
2009. Edwards, Michael. *The Finest Wines of Champagne*. 320 pp.
2009. Graham, Randall. *Been Doon So Long: A Randall Graham Vinthology*. 318 pp. [v.20:3, p.23; v.21:1, p.23]
2009. McGovern, Patrick. *Uncorking the Past: The Quest for Wine, Beer and Other Alcoholic Beverages*. 352 pp. [v.20:1, p.18]
2009. Mendelson, Richard. *From Demon to Darling: A Legal History of Wine in America*. 320 pp. [v.19:4, p.10]
2009. Strang, Paul. *Southwest France: Wines and Winemakers*. 376 pp. [v.20:2, p.19]
2010. Goldstein, Evan. *Daring Pairings: A Master Sommelier Matches Distinctive Wines with Recipes from the Favorite Chefs*. 364 pp.
2010. Lawther, James. *The Finest Wines of Bordeaux*. 320 pp. [v.21:2, p.10]
2010. Olken, Charles, and Furstenthal, Joseph. *New Connoisseur's Guidebook to California Wines*. Rev. ed. 200 pp.
2010. Theise, Terry. *Reading Between the Wines*. 189 pp. [v.20:4, p.32]
2011. Asher, Gerald. *A Vineyard in My Glass*. 179 pp. [v.22:1, p.15]
2011. Barquin, Jesus; Gutierrez, Luis; and de la Serna, Victor. *The Finest Wines of Rioja*. 320 pp. [v.22:1, p.16]
2011. Brook, Stephen. *The Finest Wines of California: A Regional Guide*. 320 pp. [21:3, p.23]
2011. Gale, George. *Dying on the Vine: How Phylloxera Transformed Wine*. 323 pp. [v.21:3, p.13; 22:2, p.9]
2011. Goode, Jamie, and Harrop, Sam. *Authentic Wine: Toward Natural and Sustainable Wine-making*. 272 pp.
2012. Asher, Gerald. *A Carafe of Red*. 280 pp.
2012. Nanson, Bill. *The Finest Wines of Burgundy*. 320 pp. [v.22:2, p.27]
2012. O'Keefe, Kerin. *Brunello de Montalcino*. 312 pp.
2012. Pinney, Thomas. *The Makers of American Wine: A Record of Two Hundred Years*. 319 pp. [v.22:3, p.11]
2012. Reinhardt, Stephan. *The Finest Wines of Germany*. 272 pp.
2012. Shafer, Doug, and Demsky, Andy. *A Vineyard in Napa*. 284 pp.

The first item on this list, *California Agriculture*, is included only by courtesy. It contains about four pages on wine in a long, long chapter called "The Rich Pattern of California Crops" and is the product of many different contributors. Two of them are W. V. Cruess, of Berkeley, and A. J. Winkler, of Davis, and they are doubtless responsible for the brief but well-informed remarks on grapes and wine that make a small part of the chapter. To say that the book belongs on a list of books about wine is a very long stretch indeed. But we may put it down as at least the beginnings of a beginning. Hutchison, the editor, is remembered as a strong supporter of the University's work in viticulture and enology. Maynard Amerine recalled Hutchison as saying that California was the only university that would have a department devoted to grapes and wine, so, he said, "we better have a good one." This attitude was all the more remarkable given the fact that Hutchison was a Mormon.

The year 1951, with three publications, looks as though it might mark the beginning of a steady growth, but a glance at the list shows that for the next decade these three had no successors at all. The Amerine-Wheeler bibliography (1951), as the dates of its coverage show, was an effort to fill in the gaps in the record created by the war years. The Amerine-Joslyn *Table Wines* (1951) was a re-writing of what originally was an Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletin from 1940; such border-crossings are, as has been said, unusual: there have not been any since, I



think. The book was intended for professionals. The comatose condition of the profession meant that the book had only a modest sale, to Amerine's great disappointment.

The ground-breaking book in the trio from 1951 is Vincent Carosso's history of the early California wine industry. There had been brief specialized studies of the early California wine trade before Carosso, but no one had yet consulted the original sources or had studied the subject closely enough to see what the issues were.<sup>4</sup> Carosso's book therefore deserves to stand as a landmark in the history of this particular subject. Carosso had a distinguished career as an economic historian after publishing *The California Wine Industry* (originally a Berkeley doctoral dissertation), but so far as I know he never returned to the subject of wine.

The Press appears to have fallen back exhausted after the effort of producing three books on wine in the same year, 1951, for nothing further appears until 1962. But the two books that came out then were both noteworthy, and they could not have been more different from each other. Albert Winkler's *General Viticulture* summed up his forty years of work in scientific viticulture at Davis; it remains the standard authority on the subject for an American audience. *The Story of Wine in California* was a book quite unprecedented in scholarly publishing—a big, glossy, coffee-table book devoted to wine, with a text by a famous writer on gastronomical things, Mary Frances Kennedy Fisher. The idea for the book came from the California Wine Institute, the promotional body of the trade, and why the Institute chose the University of California Press as publisher I do not know. The Press was not wholly passive in the matter. Mrs. Fisher was reluctant to take on the job, and August Frugé had hard work persuading her to accept. He finally prevailed, but only after much cajoling and correspondence. The photographs, by Max Yavno, had been accumulated over many years of travels up and down the state for the purpose. Together, the Institute, Press, author, and photographer made a formidable combination, but they failed to overcome the inertia of the American public about the subject of wine. Sales of the book were disappointing and must have dampened any enthusiasm for wine publishing at the Press.

Since the sponsor of the book was the Wine Institute, it had to avoid any appearance of favoritism towards any one of its supporting wineries, so none of the scenes exhibited in the photographs was identified by name. Years later I had the idea of providing those identifications and spent many happy hours running them down, thinking that they would justify a new edition of the book. I could not sell that idea, but Gail Unzelman

was kind enough to publish my results in *WTQ*.<sup>5</sup> August Frugé, then long-retired from the Press, was pleased to help me make a good many of the identifications and put me in touch with others who could also help. August was then living in Twenty Nine Palms and could not do any leg work for me. "But I am a demon letter-writer," he said, and proceeded to demonstrate the fact. He was then nearing blindness and had to use a magnifying device to write at all. He was a special person.

The way that things were changing on the American wine scene is strikingly demonstrated by the next publication from the Press: Amerine and Singleton's *Wine: An Introduction for Americans*. The Fisher-Yavno book three years earlier, though an attractive package, had flopped; the Amerine and Singleton book, a deliberately pedestrian account, became a best seller, at least by scholarly publishing standards. What had happened? Interest in wine all over the country had been slowly, and largely invisibly, growing, and in the decade of the 1960s the fact at last became clear. The most striking evidence that I know of is in the sales figures for fortified and table wines. Ever since Repeal, at the end of 1933, Americans had favored fortified wines over table wines by a proportion that often ran three to one. Gradually the proportion began to change, and in 1965, the year of the Amerine-Singleton book, the sales of table wine had at last caught those of fortified wine and would soon leave fortified wine sales in the dust, a critical change in the fortunes of American wine.

The change had been felt at Davis earlier than elsewhere, given the prominence of wine at that institution. In the 1950s Maynard Amerine had lamented the falling enrolments in enology at Davis—"Registration is here—little interest in enology," he wrote. A decade later Amerine's courses were swollen and he had to call in help. That is how the Amerine-Singleton book came about, as a series of lectures that the two men wrote in collaboration for a popular introductory course about wine for undergraduates at Davis. No one, given the history of wine publication at the Press, would have predicted much of a response to *Wine: An Introduction* . . . ; it is a sober, unornamented exercise in information, without any evident charm. But the weather had changed and the book took off.

Despite the success of Amerine-Singleton, the publication record of the Press for the next twenty years is, inexplicably, a blank. And this was so at a time when trade publishers were scrambling for books about wine in order to exploit the booming national interest. Lichine, Schoonmaker, Massee, Adams, Thompson, Wagner—a long, long list of experts, a few of them old, most of them new, was producing books about wine, but not for the University of California



Press, which remained silent on the subject. I have no idea why. The explanation must have to do with something in the internal history of the Press.

A new beginning was made with a blockbuster book in 1984, and since that year there has never again been such a gap in the record as that between 1965 and 1984. Here I may call attention to some points about the list since the renewal of publication in 1984. Before that year the Press had managed to publish, in twenty years, a mere seven books having something to do with wine. Since that year, it has published 54 such books in 28 years. According to my analysis (subject to correction) that list includes the following subject categories:

Wine from California: 15 titles (including Idwal Jones's *The Vineyard* but excluding Amerine and Joslyn's *Table Wine*).

Wine from North America: 9 titles

Wines from foreign countries:

France 9 titles

Italy 2 titles

Spain 1 title

Germany 1 title

Australia 1 title

Special topics: 4 titles

Technical works: 2 titles

Add the books on miscellaneous subjects—archaeology, bibliography, biography, home winemaking—and you have the shape of the list. Most of the books having to do with foreign wines were not originally published by the University Press but were co-published with various English publishers. A few of the titles are reprints or editions—Idwal Jones's *The Vineyard*, for instance, or Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar-Book*. The three bibliographies were the special project of Maynard Amerine; I do not suppose that they will have any successors.

To return to 1984. The big *University of California / Sotheby Book of California Wine* of that year appears, in retrospect, to have been a belated response to the growing excitement about wine in America since the 1960s. Its 615 pages in large quarto size make it difficult to hold, and its 53 articles by 44 different contributors make it difficult to take in. I have never managed to read it, though I often read in it. It is as though the Press wanted, in a single volume, to catch up with the rapidly-changing scene after twenty years of neglect. The book had lots of glamour—the association with Sotheby's, the highly distinguished editors, and a glittering array of contributors: M.F.K. Fisher, Philip Wagner, Roy Brady, Hugh Johnson, Dan Berger, Gerald Asher, Darrell Corti, Alice Waters. The sheer numbers of those

involved guaranteed unevenness in the execution. It is, nevertheless, a good book that will be useful for reference for a long time to come, and its range of topics gives an interesting view of the richness and variety of the subject. They touch on everything from "The Contributions of the Chinese" to "Collecting Wine Labels," and all that lies in between.

The chronological list shows that another, dramatic, turn was made in 2003. That was the year that Blake Edgar, whose title at the Press is Senior Sponsoring Editor for Natural Sciences, came to preside over the publication of wine books at the Press. No year since then has been without one or more wine books from the Press, and in some years there have been as many as five (2006, 2011) or six (2009, 2012) or seven (2008). The acceleration in the rate of publication has been terrific; after chugging along at a slow and irregular pace for many years, the Press is now going at breakneck speed along this line. Edgar's nine years have seen 44 of the Press's total list of 61 wine books published in the last 66 years. Around 20 of those titles originated elsewhere and were co-published by the University Press, but that still leaves an impressive number of home-grown titles.

The distinctive character of the list since 2003, apart from the books about foreign wines, is its coverage of American wines. California of course plays the main role, and after California, the Pacific Coast. But studies such as Tyler Colman's *Wine Politics* and Richard Mendelson's *From Demon to Darling: A Legal History of Wine in America*, range over the whole country, as does my *Makers of American Wine*. The list is also strong in special topics: Ann Matasar's *Women of Wine*, George Gale's *Dying on the Vine: How Phylloxera Transformed Wine* (I don't think it did, but that is not the point), Patrick McGovern's *Uncorking the Past*. It also has room for such distinctive personal voices as those of Gerald Asher, Randall Grahm, and Hugh Johnson.

August Frugé's notion in building up the University of California Press as a general publisher of scholarly books was that books would attract books; that seems to have worked for him, and it is now obviously working for Blake Edgar. I have no idea what directions the literature of wine will take in coming years, so I never prophesy. But I can at least guess that wherever it is heading, the University of California Press will be right there too.

#### NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

1. See my article on the Knopf wine list in *WTQ* 13 (January 2003).
2. Outline of Ampelography for the Vinifera Grapes in California, Hilgardia, 11 (1938).

continued on page 18 —



The Early California Wine Trade Archive  
A Museum Project at [EarlyCalWineTrade.org](http://EarlyCalWineTrade.org)  
by Dean Walters

[Our WTQ is very pleased to announce the Early California Wine Trade Archive, formed by Dean Walters, longtime Tendril and astute collector of Pre-Prohibition advertising wine material. Over the years, we have been treated to a number of superb articles by Dean that have featured many never-before-seen, exciting illustrations from his collection of thousands of items. We offer our support for his ambitious archival venture. — Ed.]

"Today is part of yesterday and  
the foundation of tomorrow."

Andre Tchelistcheff, 1975

TODAY'S VIBRANT CALIFORNIA WINE industry began late in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, established by tenacious wine producers and merchants. A substantial wine industry operated in California before Prohibition effectively brought it to a halt in 1920. The earliest California wines were commercially produced mostly in and around Los Angeles. Thousands came to the state from around the world during the gold rush, seeking opportunity and adventure, bringing with them a mighty thirst.

Consequently, the wine industry grew rapidly, soon concentrating in the north with San Francisco as its hub. Ironically, although early wine producers were met with a myriad of difficult challenges, by Prohibition most issues of pestilence, disease, poor winemaking techniques, overproduction and quality control, had been resolved with relative success.

With the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the wine industry didn't find itself where it left off in 1920. The great California wine renaissance would not emerge until well into the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, even though a few stars shone brightly early on.

California's early wine trade is well documented by wine writers and historians such as Charles Sullivan, Thomas Pinney, Brian McGinty, Ernest Peninou, William Heintz, Ruth Teiser, and Catherine Harroun. However, perceptions of the early wine trade, generated from its own ephemera, have been minimal. The collections in the archives of institutions and private collections are rarely exhibited. A museum devoted to the early California wine trade would provide such a venue.

The Early California Wine Trade Archive website was created to raise interest in the founding of a California wine trade archive and museum, where artifacts from pre-Prohibition California can be collected, archived, preserved and exhibited, to educate, provide research material, and to entertain all who are interested. The images on the website tangibly connect us to the golden years of California's

viticultural history, and illustrate the importance of preserving such artifacts for generations to come.

The museum may best function as a non-profit 501c3 organization, and include a director, a board of directors, and a small paid staff assisted by volunteers. Where might the museum be established? Perhaps the most ideal location for the Early California Wine Trade Museum would be somewhere in the Napa Valley, where the audience of interested parties, including winemakers and tourists, is most concentrated.

Funding for the museum can be multifaceted with grants, contributions, membership and entry fees, annual fundraising events, and licensing fees for images from the museum archives.

If interested, you can become involved. In the pre-501c3 phase, we will be looking for pro-bono legal & financial services, and expertise in fields such as fund raising, special events planning, business planning, museum design, advertising promotion, insurance, security, and computer & internet services.

If you have talents in some of the above areas, we would love to hear from you. You can find more about these needs on the website where you will be able to fill out a form with details of what you might have to offer, including the following: pledges for contributions, donations, and volunteer services. Please note that we cannot seek monetary contributions until the museum is successfully organized as a 501c3.

This is just the beginning of the project. All journeys begin with a single step, and you can help to make this project a reality.

Stay tuned...the WTQ will carry future progress reports and announcements, as will a newly created Facebook page, "Early California Wine Trade Archive," which you can link to from the website [EarlyCalWineTrade.org](http://EarlyCalWineTrade.org).



PINNEY, continued from page 17 —

3. August Frugé, *A Skeptic among Scholars: August Frugé on University Publishing*, Berkeley, U.C. Press, 1993, p.3. My account of the general history of the Press is drawn from this source.
4. See Herbert Leggett, "Early History of Wine Production in California," published in mimeograph form by the Wine Institute, San Francisco, 1941; and the many articles on early California grapes and wine by Irving McKee in *California Magazine of the Pacific* and other periodicals, from 1947. McKee's articles have never been collected.
5. WTQ, 10 (January; April; July 2000). ■



# Wine in California: The Early Years

## The Great Valley and Its Foothills — The Sierra Foothills 1849–1900

### Part I: El Dorado County

by *Charles L. Sullivan*

[In our previous installment of historian Charles Sullivan's study of the early pioneers and framers of California's wine industry, we visited the San Joaquin Valley in the southern portion of the Central Valley, one of the largest winegrowing regions in the world. With our 11<sup>th</sup> chapter we head into the foothills of the Great Valley and El Dorado County. As in previous chapters, extensive, informative footnotes, and a substantial library of references, are provided. — Ed.]

HEADING NORTH AND EAST FROM THE STOCKTON wine country, travelers today gradually ascend into the foothills of Amador and El Dorado counties. Above the 400-foot elevation marker vineyards begin to appear. Thus it was about 150 years ago when, under much rougher traveling conditions, this region of the Sierra Foothills was developing for a short while into one of California's most productive and prestigious winegrowing regions.



**W**HAT ARE THE SIERRA Foothills so far as successful winegrowing is concerned? We have already looked at the Natoma, or Folsom Lake, area east of Sacramento. In the early years it was commonly considered foothill land. But the town of Folsom, central to this old and long-gone winegrowing area, sits

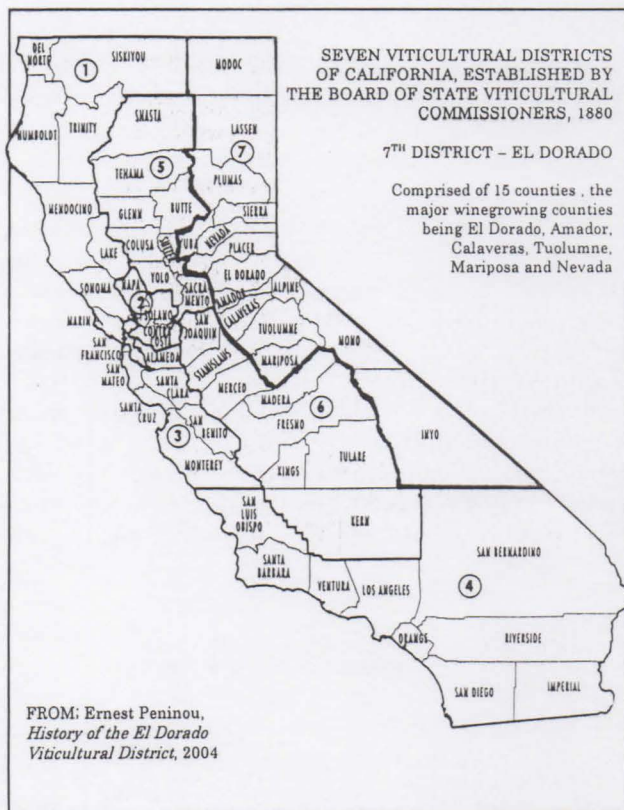
at a 250-foot elevation. Today the official 1987 Treasury Department boundary of the Sierra Foothills Viticultural Area (AVA) allows the boundary only to dip as low as 500 feet, which it does only rarely.

Heavy winegrowing in the AVA today is concentrated in El Dorado and Amador counties with vines rarely seen below the 800-foot line, most over 1000 feet. But 160 years ago the pioneer farmers in these counties, mostly fresh from the gold fields, were happy to stick a few hundred cuttings in the ground to see what might happen. There were others to the south in Calaveras and Tuolumne counties and to the north in Nevada and Placer counties who took heed. In such endeavors they were encouraged by the State Agricultural Society, its county branches and by the press all over northern California.

To construct a very detailed history of viticulture in this huge region between the Gold Rush years and 1900 is almost impossible. In the fifties and sixties the foothills were full of miners, former miners and settlers. If they wanted to stay after the placers ran out, agriculture of some sort had to be the answer for most. To their advantage almost no Spanish or Mexican land grants reached up out of the Central Valley. Thus, for most settlers it was simply a matter of acquiring government land, mostly by preemption, legalized in 1853 when U.S. law was applied to California. For \$1.25 per acre, 160 acres of land could be had by legal settlers. After 1862 the U.S. Homestead

Act made the 160 acres virtually free. Township sites not exceeding 640 acres were also quickly scattered through the foothills. Among others, Placerville, Nevada City and Grass Valley are good examples of such early foothill towns.<sup>1</sup>

Historically El Dorado was the early center of winegrowing in the foothills. It was one of the state's first twenty-seven counties and then the largest of those in today's AVA. It became number two behind Tuolumne after 1854 when its southern area became today's Amador County. Today the vineyards of El



FROM: Ernest Peninou,  
*History of the El Dorado  
Viticultural District, 2004*



Dorado and Amador counties cover about 5200 acres, almost 81% of the AVA. Calaveras and Tuolumne have 17% with a total of about 1000 acres in vines.

#### El Dorado County's First Vineyard

The first vineyard in El Dorado County may have been planted as early as 1849 by a man named Stevens on property acquired in 1854 by Jacob Zentgraf. The little ranch was located southwest of Coloma and near today's village of Rescue. At about 1110-foot elevation he planted Mission vine cuttings in the 1854–1855 dormant season. Their early growth was prodigious. By the fall of 1857 he had enough grapes to produce 1800 gallons of wine. Two years later he built the county's first distillery.<sup>2</sup>

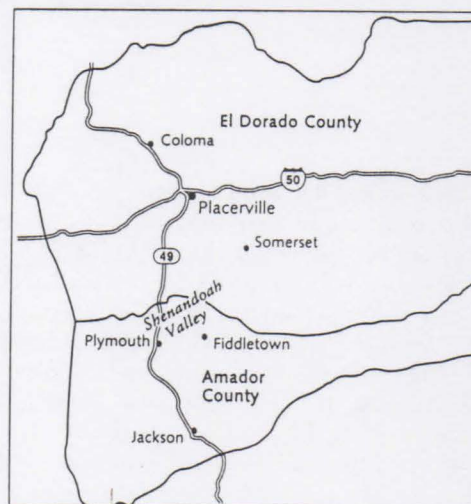
In 1855 the San Francisco press discovered El Dorado as a potential wine country. The California Farmer counted about 50 acres of vines there that year. The Alta California was impressed by A.T. Taylor's 1650 vines near Placerville.<sup>3</sup> By 1860 the U.S. Census listed seventeen El Dorado vineyardists who produced wine. Ten of them were from the Coloma area, where gold had been discovered in 1848. Seven were near Placerville, mostly southwest of town near Diamond Springs. Only two could be considered commercial wine operations, with as much as 1000 gallons on hand. But the four who had more than 200 gallons probably sold to or bartered with their neighbors. Zentgraf had one of the commercial operations, but was listed with a Coloma location, even though his little winery was nine miles from town. The other was Martin Allhoff, who by the mid-sixties was by far the county's leading winegrower.<sup>4</sup>

#### Martin Allhoff

Historian Eric Costa has cited the years between 1860 and 1866 as the time of the foothills' first vineyard planting boom. California viticulture expert Wilson Flint reported in 1859 that large numbers of former miners in the foothills were "turning their attention to winegrowing." The following year the Agricultural Society's visiting committee paid special attention to the spread of the small vineyards near Coloma and Placerville, with special attention to the work of Martin Allhoff. Official statistics are not reliable, but El Dorado vines probably covered almost 1000 acres in the mid-sixties.<sup>5</sup>

Allhoff's story, and that of the man who married his widow, would have become a legend in the foothills, even if not a gallon of wine were involved. Allhoff had come to America from Prussia in the forties and, like so many from Germany, headed for Ohio and the Cincinnati area. There he worked in the vineyards of Nicholas Longworth and was impressed with that wine master's success with the native Catawba grape for the production of dry table wine and sparkling wine.<sup>6</sup>

The lure of gold brought Allhoff to California in 1849 and to the Coloma area where James Marshall had made his historic discovery. Allhoff did well enough to return to Ohio to marry Louisa Wever, whose name also becomes a part of the Coloma legend. In 1855 the Allhoffs bought L. H. Ranney's 26-acre ranch, which already had a small vineyard of Mission vines. Allhoff was now one of the many in the Coloma/Gold Hill area dabbling in viticulture, including James Marshall himself, who planted a small vineyard there in 1857. He eventually established a small nursery business and in the late seventies successfully produced raisins.<sup>7</sup>



FROM: Sullivan, *Companion...*, 1998

Allhoff's dabbling days were over by 1858. He planted more vines and had a respectable crop that year which gave him about six tons of grapes, many of them from the Catawba vines he had brought back from Ohio three years earlier.<sup>8</sup> In 1859 he was set up for a real vintage with barrels he bought in Placerville. He made 2500 gallons, which the local miners slurped up and called for more. He planted more vines and lined up grape purchases from neighbors who had more grapes than they needed. In 1860 he hired a stone mason to build a real winery, later expanded several times. Its impressive ruins survive to this day.<sup>9</sup>

By 1862 Allhoff's vineyard covered thirty acres and his entries at the county fair were dominant, leaving no question as to who was the king of El Dorado winegrowing. The California Farmer declared, "There has never been so select an exhibition of fruit in our state as this fair." His vine collection, acquired mostly from Anthony Smith's great Sacramento nursery, reflected the current northern California rage for vinifera table grape varieties brought from New England nurseries. But there was Zinfandel and several muscat varieties useful for winemaking. All-



hoff won the prize for the county's best vineyard.<sup>10</sup>

Earlier Allhoff had begun propagating vines for the development of a commercial nursery. He opened his "Coloma Gardens" in 1862, announcing he had 300,000 vinifera cuttings for sale. His ad in the local newspaper claimed that most of these had been imported "from the river Rhine," an obvious exaggeration that might sit well with his many German-American neighbors. The rest, we read, were the native Catawba and Isabella.<sup>11</sup>

At the 1863 and 1864 California State Fairs his white wines and brandies won numerous awards. At the latter event he won two special silver cups. Allhoff expanded his winery in 1866 and had added twenty acres to his vineyard.<sup>12</sup>

The Civil War between 1861 and 1865 had done nothing to hold back California's happily buoyant enthusiasm for growth. Even before the conflict began, railroads began criss-crossing northern California. The Sacramento Valley Railroad had reached north from the capital city to Folsom by 1860. In El Dorado County the spirit of growth was stimulated in 1863 by the news that a railroad line would be built into the foothills from Folsom. The Placerville and Sacramento Railroad reached Shingle Springs in 1865 but did not make it to its target, the county seat, until 1888. But the wagon ride from the end-of-the-track at Shingle Springs was only ten miles from Placerville and seventeen from Coloma. The new line cut ten miles off the haul to Folsom, and who knew the tracks would not reach Placerville for another twenty-five years? The great thing was that now the Coloma/Placerville area had a solid link to the Sacramento Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area.

Adding to the enthusiasm for the future was the fact that in 1863 the construction of the western leg of the transcontinental railroad began heading into the foothills, up from Folsom. Another federal government policy also fueled growth. Its inflationary monetary policy during and after the Civil War made the expansion of winegrowing in the foothills more and more attractive. The brakes were applied lightly by the Monetary Act of 1869. Events in 1873 finally popped the great speculative bubble.

By 1867 Martin Allhoff was at the top of his game. In that year the Alta California described his winery as the "handsomest wine cellar in the state." Seven days later the same newspaper reported Allhoff's mysterious demise.<sup>13</sup>

His most profitable trade outside his home market was across the Sierra in the Nevada mining towns, particularly Virginia City. Although a long haul by wagon, it was a profitable one. On October 7, 1867, Allhoff traveled to Virginia City and checked in to a boarding house. In late September a shipment of his wine and brandy had been hauled by wagon to this

town and seized by a Nevada official for non-payment of a county license fee. The teamster who had brought over the shipment paid for the license, but the barrels were then seized by an IRS agent since they lacked the federal tax stamp. The teamster then posted a \$500 bond and Allhoff hurried down to settle the suit. All witnesses agreed that the wine man became despondent and "seemed to think that his entire business was irretrievably ruined, and that his family would come to want." He thought the police were watching him and that he would surely go to prison. His friends could not convince him that he had nothing more to fear than a small lawyer's fee.

A few days later he appeared at his lodging house "unnatural and strange." When he went out but did not return for breakfast, the hostess went out and found him in a privy in the back yard in a large pool of blood; he died in a few minutes, "his throat fearfully gashed." No convincing explanation of this unhappy event has ever been made. The coroner's jury ruled temporary insanity. If Allhoff knew that his situation might lead to the uncovering of a serious crime, no later events suggest this as a logical explanation.<sup>14</sup>

It is ironic that the Allhoff tragedy took place just when El Dorado winegrowing was experiencing another period of expansion. In the spring of 1866 a group of local businessmen, many of whom had small vineyards, met in Placerville and formed the El Dorado Wine Company. The idea was to rationalize production by concentrating winemaking at one facility. They selected J. M. Weatherwax's farm southwest of town as the company's production facility and base of operations. Banker Charles Jackson, with business connections in Chicago, moved to that city, with hopes of establishing an agency for El Dorado wine. The next year the Alta California announced that Jackson had made a market in Chicago with his wine. Since shipments east by rail were still two years away, it is not clear how this was accomplished. Driving the final spike in the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869, may have changed the situation. A few weeks later the local press announced that Jackson had opened a Wine Commission House in Chicago, with El Dorado wines a specialty. After this date we read no more of this enterprise, as the cost of rail shipments and the effects of the government's new tight money policies gradually became a grim reality for California winegrowers everywhere.<sup>15</sup>

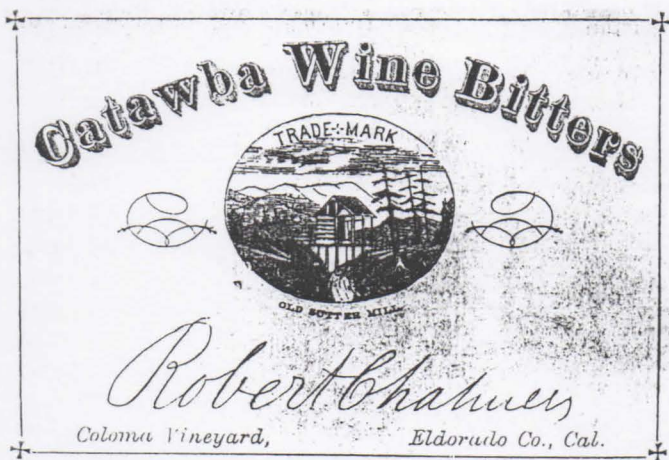
#### Robert Chalmers / Coloma Vineyards

Louisa Allhoff was able to continue operations after her husband's death with the skilled crew he had put together. By 1869 the winery and vineyards were being supervised by a Placerville businessman with a decided passion for horticulture. Robert Chalmers had known the Allhoffs for some time and in 1870 Louisa became Mrs. Chalmers. He



had come to Coloma in 1850 and in 1852 was able to buy the town's Sierra Nevada Hotel. In 1855 he acquired 160 acres through preemption south of Coloma near Gold Hill. He gradually created a horticultural paradise with no particular emphasis on grapes. By 1861 he had won first premium for the county's best fruit nursery and four years later he won a prize for his exhibit of 52 varieties of apples.<sup>16</sup>

The Allhoff Winery became Coloma Vineyards in 1870. That year Chalmers produced 20,000 gallons of wine. By 1872 his total was up to 40,000 from 85 acres of vines. By the late seventies he had an astonishingly large number of wine products, sweet and dry. There were also various fruit cordials and brandies. By 1874 he had finally given up on the Catawba and grafted most of these old vines to raisin varieties. The few of these vines left provided grapes for what may have been his most popular product, "Catawba Wine Bitters," a high alcohol concoction very popular with the Nevada miners. Like Allhoff, Chalmers made his best money in Virginia City.<sup>17</sup>



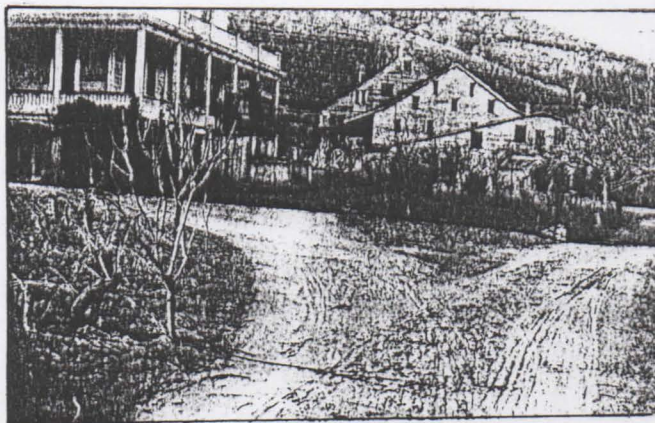
FROM: Crosly, Coloma, 1958

In 1875 the State Agricultural Society published a comprehensive analysis of El Dorado County wine-growing. There were 23 commercial vineyards in the Coloma/Gold Hill area, 19 scattered about the rest of the county, mostly near Placerville. There were 800 acres of wine grapes with a commercial wine product of 123,000 gallons and 3650 gallons of brandy. This low figure indicates that about half of these grapes were sold fresh, made into raisins, or, most probably, made into wine for home use and/or barter.<sup>18</sup>

For El Dorado vineyardists the seventies intensified the realities of their relative isolation and, after 1873, brought them the hurt of a national depression. Rising production from the vines planted in the late sixties and early seventies forced growers to get rid of their grapes as best they could. The fresh market in the Central Valley was one outlet. But the hope of getting county grapes east of the Rockies by rail was

crushed by the total failure of the attempt in 1869. The Mountain Democrat asked, "What Shall We Do With Our Grape Crop?" Part of the answer came from the increased use of the Placerville-Nevada toll road over the Sierra to the Nevada mining country. This was a profitable outlet for fresh fruit of all kinds, not just grapes. Thirsty miners were always a good market for the county's brandies and sweet wines, less so for dry wines. Four-horse teams, two tons at a time, made the nine-day trip dozens of times every month that weather would allow. Still, the permanent answer was clearly a large scale commercial winery like those that had grown up in the Central Valley. The local press's calls for such an investment went unheeded. Where would the capital come from?<sup>19</sup>

In 1878 Chalmers sensed correctly that the economic business cycle was turning around. He was able to borrow enough money to build a lavish two-story hotel with eighteen rooms and a grand ballroom. The opening of "Vineyard House" was a huge affair on April 4, 1879. A few months later Chalmers was declared mentally incompetent and, in the words of a local historian, "became a man of mystery to the people of the Coloma Valley." The mystery was, where was he? Tales of the poor man chained to a wall in the cellar of the Vineyard House have circulated for years, down to the present. He died in 1880 and from then on his and other ghosts were regularly heard and sighted in and around the Vineyard House, which still stands right across the road from the local cemetery. Twice in recent years the San Francisco Chronicle has sent reporters to Coloma to listen to and report on the ghost stories.<sup>20</sup>



Coloma Vineyard House & Winery Buildings

Louisa Chalmers inherited her husband's debts and lawsuits from the children of Allhoff's first marriage. The winery was closed down and she ran Vineyard House as a boarding establishment for several years. She remarried and died in San Jose in 1913.<sup>21</sup>



After 1878 a ten-year period of moderate prosperity came to the Sierra Foothills. County vineyard land increased in the eighties to about 1300 acres. In 1889 Frona Wait wrote the first consumer-oriented book on the California wine industry and passed on some good words for El Dorado wines. She wrote that many of them had "exquisite aroma and bouquet." She also wrote that most of the county's wines were drunk "by those who produce them." She should have included their many neighbors in that number. She also might have added that the demand for El Dorado grapes had sent up their prices by more than 50% in recent years.<sup>22</sup>

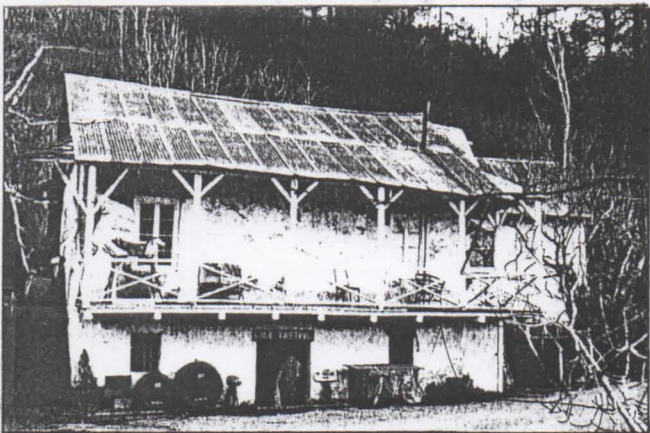
In this period many growers sent their grapes to small wineries west of Placerville. Wine prices were high enough in the early eighties that most of the wine made here could be taken by rail from Shingle Springs to Sacramento for sale to larger wineries there. Some of this wine even made it to San Francisco where the great firm of Kohler and Frohling used it to upgrade the flavor of lesser wines.<sup>23</sup>

#### Kramp Brothers

This pattern was not universal in El Dorado. Two German brothers, William and Philip Kramp, were notable exceptions. Eric Costa pictures them as "riding high atop the crest of the wine boom of the 1880s. . . ." Before 1879 they were noted for their cling peaches, but they had planted vines in the sixties and by the eighties were producing dry table wines, sparkling wine, and brandy. By 1884 they were selling their wine in the east. Figures published in 1888 indicate that the Kramps' Diamond Hill Vineyard near Placerville was probably the most prosperous winegrowing operation in the county.<sup>24</sup>

#### Lombardo / Fossati / Boeger Winery

Another winery deserves our attention for its accomplishments, its symbolic transformation after 1900, and its re-transformation as a historic part of El Dorado's wine story since the 1970s. In 1864 Giovanni Lombardo began planting Zinfandel



Lombardo / Fossati Winery, built late 1860s

and Mission vines northeast of Placerville on land already developed, which Eric Costa describes as "primitive pioneers gardens." Winegrowing at the Lombardo, later Fossati, Winery continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century; but the vines here, and in this neighborhood, were gradually replaced by apple and pear trees. In 1973 another transformation began taking place when Greg Boeger began planting wine grapes in the old orchard for the first new winery in El Dorado County in more than a hundred years. The old Lombardo/Fossati Winery survived and served as Boeger's tasting room for many years. The old distillery building also survives.<sup>25</sup>

In the nineties the previous pattern prevailed. Acreage was static and large amounts of grapes were shipped out fresh and as raisins. The great difference was the economy, which was even worse than the seventies until 1897-98.<sup>26</sup> Wine prices were rock bottom after 1893, resulting in less wine shipped down to the Sacramento wineries. This excess of grapes encouraged distillation of more and more brandy as a beverage and for fortifying sweet wines. A much lower federal brandy tax also encouraged its production. For years in the foothills, brandy and sweet wines were probably consumed by local folk in larger quantities than whisky.

El Dorado County is about three times the size of Amador County, its southern neighbor. It has a more complex early winegrowing history than its 1854 offshoot. Yet in 2012 Amador County had half again as many acres of wine grapes. Most of El Dorado is mountainous and extends all the way to the Nevada border. But Amador probably has as much upper foothill land suited for premium viticulture as its neighbor, perhaps even more. It also has an interesting early wine history. What is the source of El Dorado's earlier comparative success? I suggest it was transportation. The 1865 railhead at Shingle Springs gave El Dorado a huge advantage. It was many years later that any kind of dependable railroad service was established in Amador County.

[continued next issue]

#### NOTES

1. W. W. Robinson, *Land in California*, Berkeley, 1948, 164-167.
2. Paolo Sioli, *Historical Souvenir of El Dorado County*, Oakland, 1883, 111, 271.
3. *California Farmer*, 11/9/1955; *Alta California*, 7/9/1857.
4. Peninou, *Directory. . . in 1860*, 7-11.
5. Eric Costa, *Gold and Wine*, Placerville, 2010, 17; *Ag. Soc.* 1859, 297-299; *Ag. Soc.* 1860, 59-61; *Alta California*, 5/6/1866.
6. Pinney, *History*, 159-162.



7. Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 20-22, 25-27; Alta California, 7/18/1860.
8. Placerville Mountain Democrat, 9/25/1858; Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 22.
9. *Ag. Soc.*, 1860, 61; Sacramento Union, 9/14/1860.
10. California Farmer, 10/10/1862; Mountain Democrat, 9/27/1862.
11. Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 23, 30-31. Costa suggests Allhoff might have acquired German vines from a Placer County grower. But the chronology of Louis Miller's supposed imports does not correspond to Allhoff's 1862 ad. Placer Herald, 5/10/1862. When Miller sold his farm in 1866 he had only "about 5000 vines of the finest European and American varieties." In these or later years there were no huzzas sounded for Sierra Foothills Rieslings, Traminers or Sylvaners.
12. *Ag. Soc.* 1863, 87; *Ag. Soc.* 1864/1865, 404-405.
13. Alta California, 10/12/1867, 10/17/1867.
14. Mountain Democrat, 10/12/1867, copying the Territorial Enterprise 10/10/1867. Much of this information and more is on "The Weekly Pioneer" blog of 2/1/2010.
15. Alta California, 12/7/1867; Mountain Democrat, 2/26/1869; Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 40-41.
16. Mountain Democrat, 9/21/1861, 9/16/1865.
17. Pacific Rural Press, 11/11/1871; California Farmer, 11/10/1870; Ernest Peninou, *A History of the El Dorado Viticultural District*, Santa Rosa, 2004, 7-8; Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 50-54.
18. *Ag. Soc.*, 1885, 334-337.
19. Mountain Democrat, 3/12/1870, 5/1/1870, 4/22/1870; California Farmer, 11/10/1870.
20. Mary Edith Crosley, *Coloma*, Placerville, 1958, 24-29; SFChronicle, 2/15/1971, 10/31/1987. To access scores of articles on this legendary history, search Google at "Vineyard House Coloma." My wife and I stayed a night at the hotel in 1975. We ate well but later heard no ghostly sounds.
21. Martin Allhoff, Jr. wrote "A Correct History of ... Coloma Vineyard." in 1933. The manuscript is at the California State Library. A complete copy can be found in "The Weekly Pioneer," previously cited.
22. Frona Eunice Wait, *Wines & Vines of California*, San Francisco, 1889, 196-197. Wait copied her information on El Dorado verbatim, without attribution, from the New York Times, 3/6/1887; Ben Truman, "Vineyards of the Foothill District."
23. Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 64-66; Mountain Democrat, 10/9/1880, 9/29/1883, 10/29/1887.
24. Mountain Democrat, 9/18/1880, 11/15/1884, 5/5/1888.
25. Costa, *Gold and Wine*, 35-38. This section contains some excellent historic photos.
26. Pacific Wine & Spirit Review, 7/15/1890.



## THE STORY OF THE VINTNERS CLUB "BIG BOOK"

by Callie Konno

*[Most wine lovers—especially those of us who count the '70s and '80s as major chapters in our education about wine—treasured our copies of the massive book published by the San Francisco Vintners Club. Tendril Callie Konno, who served as assistant to the Club founders, gives us a personal look into an extraordinary piece of wine literature. All illustrations are from the book. — Ed.]*



PUBLISHED 1988, *Vintners Club: Fourteen Years of Wine Tastings 1973-1987*, is a data-rich reflection of the wine industry in California at

a seminal moment in the industry's history. During the fourteen years covered in the book, over 9,000 wines, both domestic and imported, were tasted and scored. The results of the tastings and descriptions of the wines were collected, typed, printed and mailed to the membership. These tasting results provide the foundation of the book; but interspersed between the monumental amounts of statistical information on the wines tasted are edited interviews of respected winemakers, wine writers and wine industry professionals of the time, including Paul Draper, Joseph Swan, Merry Edwards, and Richard Graff.

Why is the Vintners Club book a reflection of the wine industry at a seminal period? Several answers come to mind. The tastings notes record the growth of the wine industry in California as well as its increasing sophistication. In 1973 the California wine industry was in its infancy and a review of the early tasting notes show the limited number of wineries and their offerings. After the 1976 Spurrier tastings in Paris, the world's perception of California wines changed forever. Not only did the Vintners Club recreate those tastings in January 1978, with similar results, the founders had helped Steven Spurrier collect the wines tasted, so he agreed to attend the Vintners Club tasting and offer his commentary on the Paris results. The interest in California wines heightened and the Vintners Club tastings notes reflect the profusion of California wineries and wines in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Additionally, the tasting results provide snapshots of significant turning points for the global wine industry. The '82 vintage in Bordeaux created quite a buzz, and the Vintners Club held seven tastings of the vintage where the results reflect the promise of those wines. The '82 vintage provided momentum to the wine futures market for Bordeaux and Burgundy,



bringing ever higher prices for those wines which continue today.

On another level, the interviews and articles in the book offer valuable insight by wine professionals on varying aspects of the industry from winemaking to wine marketing, as well as industry trends. In his article on buying and selling wines as a retailer, Steve Gilbertson reflects on the changes in the retail market over the past ten years and the various influences of personal preference, hype and fad in procuring wines for sale.

For those unfamiliar with its history, the Vintners Club was founded in 1973 by Jerome C. Draper, Jr. and W. Reed Foster, real estate developers. Both men were wine aficionados who turned their hobby into a business, first by establishing Drapier Wine Merchants (later Draper & Esquin Wine Merchants), Wine Distributors and Wine Imports. They then turned their attention to supporting the fledgling California wine industry by putting together tastings where other wine devotees could sample 12 wines weekly at minimal cost. The Vintners Club offered a venue where winemakers could taste and compare their wines against the competition and provided a forum for both experienced tasters and novices to learn about and discuss current wine offerings.

#### Wine Library

The Vintners Club also maintained a library of approximately 1,200 volumes which they made available to their membership and wine industry professionals. The core of the collection, about 1,000 volumes, had been acquired circa 1974 from a Southern California wine collector. Roy Brady, the renowned wine writer, acted as broker for the collection. It was rumored that the collection was "hot," i.e. not paid for; however, by the time of the acquisition, Roy had worked with the collector to resolve any ownership issues. Jerry, Reed and two Bohemian Club campmates of Jerry, John Huntington and Douglas Watson, paid for the collection and donated it to the club.

The collection had never been catalogued, so Jerry and Reed hired Barbara Barnhart, who later went on to head up national sales for Chalone Vineyard, to review the publications and develop a system for organizing, cataloging and lending the books. Since this was pre-hightech, the lending system was similar to what libraries of the day used. Each book had a pocket with the book's title, author, etc. When a book was borrowed the card was collected so Barbara knew which book had been lent and a due date card was slipped into the pocket so the borrower knew when to return the book. The club also subscribed to most of the popular wine journals and newsletters, including The Wine Advocate, Connoisseur's Guide to Wine and Wine and Food.

In 1984 the Board of Directors decided to sell the collection and the Sonoma County Library had expressed interest. By the end of the year, the sale was completed and 24 boxes of books, journals and newsletters transferred to the library. That purchase formed the basis for the Wine Library of Sonoma County that is now housed at the Healdsburg Branch.

#### Vintners Club Tastings

The Club tastings were held every Thursday at 4:30 to accommodate original member Bill Kent's need to get to the Bohemian Club by 6:00. The format of the tastings was drawn from Jerry's and Reed's experience with several informal tasting groups, including the San Francisco Wine Sampling Club mentioned by Joel Peterson in the book. The wines were tasted double-blind; tasters were unaware of the identity of the wines and the order in which they were served. Each taster sat before twelve glasses of wine labeled A through L. Breadsticks and water were offered to cleanse the palate. For the first hour members and their guests smelled, swirled and tasted in silence to avoid being influenced by other tasters. The tasters then ranked and scored each wine based on the Davis 20-point system. Rankings and scores were turned in to a club official, usually Reed Foster, who tallied the results. Tasters broke silence to discuss and describe the wines and a person at each table took notes that were used to develop consensus commentary for the published tasting results. Just before rankings and scores were announced, a list of the wines tasted was circulated causing a buzz of discussion as tasters tried to match wine producers to wines tasted. Results were based on the sum of the rankings, so the wine with the lowest number was first and the highest was twelfth. After the ranking results were announced, the order of the wines tasted was revealed causing many tasters to re-smell, re-swirl and re-taste.

The first two tastings were comparisons between Australian and California wines, held at the Bankers' Club in the Bank of America Building where Jerry and Reed had their offices. Jerry had gone to Adelaide, Australia on business and had met with the head of the Bacchus Club in Adelaide. They agreed to swap 50 cases of the best California wines for 50 cases of the best Australian wines and when Jerry and Reed received the 50 cases, they felt that these wines would be a perfect launch for the Vintners Club. They were also interested in German wines and decided to start with wines in the Mosel, then work their way to the Ruwer. Tasting the German wines comprised tastings three through nine (that is 84 German Rieslings over a straight seven-week span; there was a lesson learned there by the founders), and the Vintners Club was on its way.



## The Book

In 1983, after 10 years of weekly tastings, the Vintners Club Board of Directors felt that the tasting notes could serve as a valuable reference for wineries, wine historians and wine enthusiasts, and decided to look into the possibility of publishing the tasting results. In part, this feeling was supported by the fact that a 3-ring binder of Vintners Club tasting results kept at Draper & Esquin by the staff disappeared with regularity. Additionally, Jerry and Reed had developed numerous relationships with many winemakers and winery owners worldwide and felt a book would provide a great forum for industry professionals.

No one on the Board had much experience in publishing, but Jerry felt it was an important project and committed the funds and staff to make the book a reality. He looked to his newly married daughter-in-law, Mea McNeil-Draper, for assistance in bringing the book to fruition. Mea, a neophyte wine taster, embraced the project enthusiastically. For her, it was a great opportunity to learn about wine, the Vintners Club and her new family's commitment to the wine industry. She, together with Jerry's son, Jerome Draper III, or Jerry III, identified the myriad issues—from the technical to the artistic—that needed to be resolved before a manuscript could be brought to a printer. Additionally, they were aware that the budget for production and printing was tight, so it had to be done on a shoestring.



The first problem was how to transfer the tasting results and consensus commentary from stand-alone word-processing systems to a relational database so the information could be stored, sorted and formatted. To put the problem in context,

Apple released their first Macintosh in 1984, so the personal computer was not the ubiquitous presence of today. Attempts with electronic transfer and optical character readers resulted in poor results and the decision was made to manually input most of the data, excluding the consensus commentary, into an IBM System 36 that Jerry used for his businesses. For ten years of tastings, the amount of data was staggering at over 6,000 wines, with at least ten attributes for each wine. The consensus commentary was typed into an IBM PC using Microsoft Word and Samna Word IV. Not surprisingly, inputting then proofreading the data took a couple of years, and with each week one more tasting needed to be added to the database.

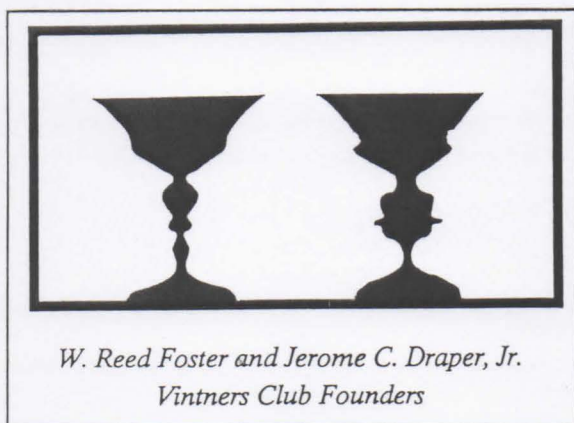
While the data was being input into the System 36, Mea and Jerry III worked on other technical issues. Jerry III was a computer expert with his own consulting business, Trilobyte Software Systems. Desktop publishing was in its infancy but Jerry III and Mea felt this was the most cost-effective way to produce a manuscript ready for printing. They reviewed the available software and finally chose Ventura Publisher, one of the first desktop publishing packages for IBM personal computers. Ventura offered the flexibility of infinite-length records and the data could be imported from the System 36 with publishing marks, i.e. font style and size, centering, column format, etc. For those with a technical bent, the Colophon of the book describes in detail how the data was transferred and laid out for printing. In layman's terms, the data from the System 36 was transferred via modem to an IBM PC where it would be prepared for printing. While Jerry III figured out how to download the data from one system to another, Trilobyte employee, Valerie Clary was learning how to use Ventura. She soon became an expert, combining the tasting data with the consensus commentary and formatting each page of the 765 tastings. Mea recalled that printing the manuscript required that she and Jerry III sleep next to the printer overnight because it only held 200 sheets of paper and the printer needed to be refilled several times since the manuscript was approximately 1,150 pages. Additionally, after the first printing, several errors were found during proofreading and another night was spent next to the printer for the second round.

In order to make the book useful, it needed several indexes so readers could find specific tastings or types of tastings with relative ease. Mea, Jerry, Reed and several board members determined that at a minimum the book would need an index by varietal and another by producer. The index by producer was simple—the database had a field for winery and/or producer and could be sorted alphabetically with a secondary sort by varietal for California wines. However, the index by varietal was a challenge because of the difference in labeling laws between Europe and the United States. Europe's emphasis on *terroir* precluded identification of varietal on the label since, by law, only certain varietals could be grown in specific wine areas. Unfortunately, because the varietal was rarely identified on European wine labels, the information was not included in the database. The problem was finally resolved by creating an index that was by varietal for wines from the United States, while European wines were indexed by region.

Mea then tackled the aesthetic components of the book. She created the end papers from linoleum block



prints which she carved. The backdrop for the end papers is Draper Vineyards, Jerome C. Draper Senior's property on Spring Mountain Road in Napa. The front end papers depict Mr. Draper, Sr. with his beloved German Shepherd, Schatze, and Jerry Draper's two grandchildren, Josh and Stephanie, with his Aire-dale, Mary. The vineyards are shown just before harvest, with grape bunches on the vines. The rear end papers show Rogelio Gonzalez, the long-time vineyard manager for Draper Vineyards, pruning the vines in preparation for winter. Mea also created the block print shown between the Acknowledgments page and the Introduction. At first glance, it looks like two wine glasses. However, the "white space" shows the profiles of Reed Foster on the left and Jerry Draper on the right, a fitting tribute to the founders of the club. A talented calligrapher, Mea also designed the jacket, cover and title page using a dip pen with Brause nibs.



From the beginning of the book project, Jerry and Reed planned to include articles and interviews by leading wine experts to relieve the tedium of the very statistical nature of the tasting notes. They drew on their many relationships in the wine business and persuaded 22 individuals to be interviewed or to write articles. The list of wine industry professionals is impressive—Warren Winiarski on Cabernet Sauvignon, Zelma Long on Chardonnay, Harry Waugh on Bordeaux, Charles Sullivan on Bordeaux Rankings at the Vintners Club, to name a few. Rick Witschonke, a board member (and now fellow Tendril), put together the template for the interviews and Mea, along with several board members, conducted them. Each interview was transcribed by Valerie Clary and then edited by Mea. Considering the dynamic nature of the wine industry in the mid-1980s, the interviews make fascinating reading.

Five years after the concept of a Vintners Club book first arose at a board meeting, a manuscript was ready for printing and publication. The technical and

artistic problems had been solved and resolved. The interviews had been conducted, the articles written, the manuscript edited, the pages printed. Jerry had found a printer, Kingsport Press in Tennessee, to print and bind the book—1,000 copies for \$10,000. Kingsport had one limitation; the binding could not exceed three inches. Thus the tasting results had to end with December of 1987. Over the five years, several important changes had transpired. Mea had given birth to two sons and Jerry and Reed had handed over the running of the tastings to Paul and Gretchen Rehs. The two founders had supported the club for over twelve years and now it was time to hand it over to their successors. The last Vintners Club project for Jerry and Reed was the book and with its publication their commitment to the club was complete. Today, 24 years after its release, the "Big Book" is not only an historical document of California wine history, but a lasting legacy to Jerry's and Reed's service to the industry.

*Vintners Club: Fourteen Years of Wine Tastings 1973-1987.* Edited by Mary-Ellen McNeil-Draper. San Francisco: Vintners' Press. 1154 pp. 10 x 8. 6.5 lbs. Beige cloth with gilt decoration and lettering, decorated end papers; with dust jacket [see back cover this issue].

NOTE: The information provided in this article is based on the recollections of Jerome C. Draper, Jr., W. Reed Foster, Mea McNeil-Draper, Jerome C. Draper III and the author who worked for the Vintners Club from 1977 through 1985. The majority of these recollections were recorded earlier this year during a two-hour meeting. While everyone strived for accuracy, Jerry and Reed are now in their 80s and their memories have faded over the years. Apologies are offered in advance for any misstatements of facts.



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## WINE NOVELS: A VINTAGE APPRAISAL

by Dr. David Ethridge

[We are indebted to Tendril Mike Fordon, Library Coordinator at Frank A. Lee Library, Cornell University, for sending us this vintage "Vintage Appraisal" of some early wine novels. The article was first published in *Friends of Wine* (Sept/Oct 1981—Vol. XVIII No. 5), the magazine of *Les Amis du Vin*, Maryland, founded in 1965. Prof. Ethridge was the *Les Amis du Vin* founder-director of the Flint, Michigan Chapter. In addition to the timely reviews, enjoy the references to 30-year-old television hit shows and to the old-fashioned, recommended method of finding a book: ask your local bookshop. — Ed.]

WITH THE RISING POPULARITY OF WINE DRINKING, it is only natural that wine makers and wine lovers have become the subjects of popular fiction. But not every year's crop of books is a vintage one. Though the wine novelist can find romance, heroics, intrigue, scandal, passion, and triumph over evil in the world of wine, it is how he crafts all the ingredients into a blend that separates the "Lafite" from the "simple Medoc" of wine story telling.

### The 1980 Vintage



THE 1980 VINTAGE of wine novels gives us Anita Clay Kornfeld's panoramic epic of life and times of the Napa Valley from the 1890s through the 1960s under the simple but somewhat pretentious title of *Vintage* (Simon & Schuster, 599pp, \$13.95). If Adam Donati, the youngest son of an

aristocratic but disenfranchised wine family of Italy, had known the trials and tribulations he and his progeny would suffer, he might well have followed his banker's advice and become a hotelkeeper.

It's easy to fall in love with the youthful, handsome, enthusiastic Donati as he sets off to build his winery, a replica of the old family villa sold to settle the estate among his brothers. But love doesn't come easy for a young Italian in an anti-Italian Napa Valley. And so, young Donati finds he must prove himself to his new country before trying to re-establish the eminence of the name Donati in the wine world. Of course the beautiful, vivacious first love is denied him and so he immediately enters an ill-fated marriage. Just as great wines have to come from roots that have to struggle for existence, great characters suffer every adversity to demonstrate their worth. To keep the reader's attention, the Donati family endures insanity, illegitimacy, the phylloxera blight, earthquake, alcoholism, prohibition, bootlegging, family feuds, courtroom drama, illegal aliens, the KKK and labor organizers.

Sprinkled in, almost as a bonus, is a well-researched history of winemaking and winemakers of the Napa Valley. The culture, attitudes, biases, and provincialism of this small winemaking valley is what makes this book rise above the common and assert itself as having a measure of substance even though at times it seems like a mixture of *Dallas*, *Knot's Landing* and *Dynasty*.

Although not like a classic California Cabernet

that will grow in stature with the years, it is like a fresh Gewürztraminer, full of spice, exciting to consume, even memorable, but not one to keep in an honored place on the shelf. It's to enjoy now while available on the market, for surely there will be a new one available next year. This vintage novel shows definite varietal characteristics, fresh and spicy, perhaps even a bit earthy, some lingering complexity but generally a little too thin and too delicate; it is a little off-dry, just a touch too sweet, without much depth and lacking staying power, but it is just right for now, for pleasant sipping on a quiet evening in front of the fireplace. My rating: 14; above average, good but not great.

### Sparse Vintages

Wine novels seem to go in spurts, none some years and big crops other years. *Vintage* is the only volume appearing in 1980. Only one little book appeared in 1979 and none in 1976. A quick review of the other recent vintages might help the occasional reader pick an interesting one, although certain selections may be hard to find while others are plentiful. Some are now out in paperback. Best bet is to try your public library, but most are still in print and you can order them through your bookshop.

The 1979 novel is a zany bit of whimsy guaranteed to keep you in stitches. Nan and Ivan Lyons have followed up their earlier delight, *Someone Is Killing the Great Chefs of Europe*, with an even funnier bit, *Champagne Blues* (Simon & Schuster, 304pp, \$10; Fawcett, 1979, \$2.25). Have you ever wondered what the people who write the tour guides are like? Well, here you get to meet the two extremes; a couple who write how to tour Europe when money is no object (in a Rolls-Royce, naturally)

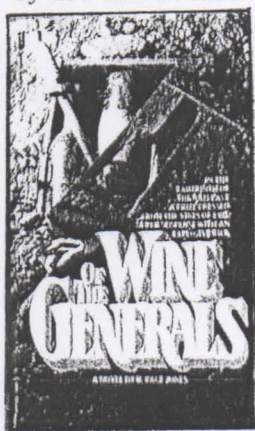




and another couple who write about doing it for practically nothing (in a VW camper-bus, of course). That these two couples would collaborate on a wine tour makes for just the beginning of the fun. As they visit their favorite haunts in Paris, interspersed with plenty of local character and more than enough sex, the fun continues to bubble forth. That some of the characters have a more sinister plot in mind does not slow down the action at all and it gets as exciting as a cork-popping party on New Year's Eve as the story races to a hilarious climax. Along the way you get a good tour of Champagne and those magnificent cellars. Our friends, the tour book writers, live out the fondest dream of any Champagne lover—to be locked away in the cellar with all the greatest Champagnes and nothing to do but sample them all; what a way to go! My rating: 13; anything this much fun has trouble being taken seriously—full of bubbles and sparkles through to the end, very earthy, so rich in zest that it may be considered vulgar by some, but sheer, unadulterated fun.

#### The 1978s

Not a particularly good year, 1978, only a couple and neither very distinguished. The chapter headings in one literally make your mouth water: Ch. Lafite-Rothschild 1924; Quinta do Noval 1920; Vieux Château Certain 1943 (yes, it's really spelled that way in the book); Dom Perignon 1941; Berncasteler Schlossberg 1936. What wine lover wouldn't take great risk to come into a cellar full of these treasures? *Wine of the Generals* by R. Page Jones (Jove/HBJ, 284pp, 1978, \$1.95) gives the wine lover a chance for vicarious thrills as an impossible assortment of characters set off behind Russian lines (naturally) to smuggle out their prize. It would have worked well on *Mission: Impossible*. But disregarding the misspelled château, that the Dom is probably flat by now and no idea whether the Berncastel is a Ka-



binett or Trockenbeerenauslese, the story moves fast and sweeps you along hoping to savor that magnificent Lafite at the climax. Fun reading but not really a wine novel; they could just as well have been going for buried art treasures with no real change in plot. Best described as a simple, straightforward, common blend of spice and mystery, intoxicating to the point it'll keep you up all night just to polish it off, but, as is

often the case, the next morning you'll wish you hadn't. My rating: 10, very average or even just a bit below but good enough to make the list.

The second 1978 appearing is not really a wine

novel either, but a winemaker and his winery are key elements in the plot, so we can keep it on our list. The second of the two-volume work by Howard Fast, appropriately titled *The Second Generation* (Houghton Mifflin, 441pp, 1978; Dell, 1979, \$2.75) continues the saga of the Lavette family where the 1977 *The Immigrants* leaves off. Although the first issue is decidedly the better (it was on the New York Times bestseller list for six months), *The Second Generation* does a lot more with wines, California during the depression, World War II, and the expanding wine years of the post-war boom. But the book is really about corporate empires, big money, and movie stars, with a counterplot of rustic simplicity and real people who seem to have it all, the winemaker and family. Even though it gets maudlin at times, Fast is a good and prolific writer, the pace is fast, the characters believable; just the thing that could be turned into a six-part made-for-TV miniseries (Fast's earlier work *Freedom Road* was on last year). More exciting than some but definitely a blend, goes down well and stands up to the competition well—perhaps a little too earthy for some but not vulgar—like a perky young Zinfandel. My rating: 15, above average from a good producer. It may have a little staying power, but is probably best now.

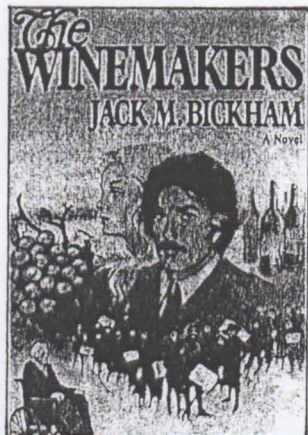
#### 1977 a Big Year

A big year both in volume and quality except for one clinker that slipped in. As we noted above, Howard Fast's *The Immigrants* (Houghton Mifflin, 494pp, 1977; Dell, 1978, \$2.75) hit the best-seller list in 1977. You'll have to read two-thirds of the way through before the winery enters, but it's fast reading and enjoyable. Dan Lavette struggles through life, the son of an Italian immigrant fisherman, orphaned by the San Francisco earthquake, to rise to the top of Nob Hill society and wealth. The winery counter theme starts late in the book as the next generation seeks a new way of life away from big business. The scandals, the Great Depression, the striving for acceptance of the Orientals in the New World, all contribute to the scene. The last 75 pages are the best and make the work of getting to them worthwhile, like the long, lingering finish on a good, vintaged California Cabernet Sauvignon. This is a good one, lots of class, rich in character, better than its successor, with staying power to last a few years but probably not destined to be a classic. My rating: 17, after a rather weak opening it builds, takes on strength and finishes strong.

Another California entry is Jack Bickham's *The Winemakers* (Doubleday & Co., 570pp, \$10). Just as its title implies, this is clearly a story about the men and women who make wine in California. That the Robert Mancini Vineyards sounds amazingly like the Robert Mondavi Vineyards seems to be no coincidence



when you throw in the family feuds and court suits that follow. Add a young, beautiful female winemaker, an old established winemaking family from Italy, a strike by grape pickers, a labeling scandal—along with other neat twists and turns—and you have a rather well-rounded taste of the Sonoma wine scene in the early 1970s. It's fun to try to figure out which wineries and famous wine names are disguised by the new names and locations used in the plot. Throw in the big corporation takeovers of famous-name wineries, the power plays on the boards of old family-



owned estates, and it makes for good reading in a brambly and lively style similar to one of "Gus" Sebastiani's (you don't suppose that's the model for "Gus Trella" do you?) young Zinfandels. The writing, a bit ponderous, lacks the excitement of some of the others, but still it is the only one of the lot that portrays the most recent California wine scene. My rating: 14,

enough life to be savored, won't keep very long, so enjoy now; a little rough around the edges but just right to take along on a picnic for light-time refreshment.

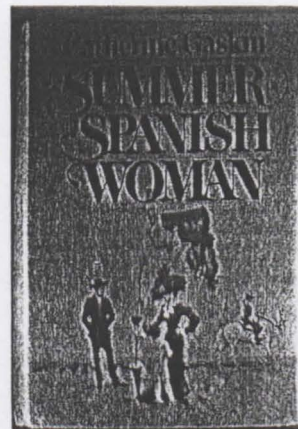
Jacques Cyprien can only be described as an unmitigated scoundrel. His daughter, an infant when they arrive from France in 1878, is a true chip-off-the-old-block. She becomes his new "French Connection" in their quest to make *The Wines of Cyprien* (by Dorothy Daniels, Pyramid Books, 317pp, \$1.75) into the equal of the great wines of Bordeaux, where Jacques had been kicked out in his youth, and where his daughter triumphantly returns, but with a sinister plot to steal the precious vines of the greatest châteaux for the glory of Cyprien. Traveling back and forth between the north coast of California and the wine country of France this three-generation story of proud wine families provides insight into both the frontier wine days of California and the snobbery of the French winemakers. Château Cyprien and Ch. Marcel share more than vines of common heritage; the lives of those who live in each are just as intertwined. As the spoiled children of Charlene take their place on the scene, the story moves toward an inescapable climax, with Cyprien in ruin and nothing to do but start again. Definitely not in the class of either a classified growth or even a prize-winning estate bottled Cabernet Sauvignon, the book ranks among the perfectly respectable "cru bourgeois," good balance, easy to enjoy, short on class and finesse but

true to type, perhaps a little rough around the edges but holds together to the end. My rating: 12, average fare, enough going for it to make it worthwhile, but not a great selection.

Not a very good year for wine in France, 1977 was even worse for wine novels about France. The French portions of *Cyprien* are weak but do present a reasonable segment of life in Medoc. The glimpse of Burgundian life presented in Ethel Gordon's *The French Husband* (Thomas Crowell Co., 257pp, \$7.95) is anything but what one would expect of a selection from Burgundy! This story tries to answer the question: "Can an innocent American girl find true love trapped in a web of European deceit?" Sound like the beginning of a soap-opera?—that's just what it is. The words generally used to describe a French Burgundy are big, rich, noble, full-bodied, complex, powerful; but unfortunately this one comes off thin, almost transparent, out of character, and even disagreeable at times. The air of mystery is all that keeps the thinking together. The conflict between brothers, their wives, and their wine estates, Château Giron and Clos Boissy, is at times overworked. This selection falls in the category of *vin de queue* (rather inferior stuff made from pressing the stalks), not even in the running to reach the level of generic-labeled "American Burgundy." Fortunately, it is a short book, not very widely distributed and you may have trouble finding it. But if there's nothing else available, I've even been known to sip on Annie Green Springs. My rating: 8, poor, decidedly below average, just enough body to it to make it through to the consumer.

#### An Undiscovered Classic

The best of '77 by far is Spanish. On the surface, Catherine Gaskin's *Summer of the Spanish Woman* (Doubleday, 503pp; Fawcett, 1979, \$2.50) might appear to be just another of those Barbara Cartland-type romantic novels. But like so many Spanish wines, we have an undiscovered classic. Not only is the story good but the wine knowledge of the sherry industry is impressive. Starting off in Ireland, our heroine, a perky red-headed Irish lass, is soon deprived of her rightful inheritance except for a bit of Spanish property unknown to the rest of the family. She takes off for Spain with her eccentric (to say the least) mother, and over the next 50 years manages to introduce us to every facet of Spanish life. The descriptions are so vivid one has no difficulty visualizing old Jerez, the *bodegas*, the *feria*, the castle





of the *marquisa*, and all the romance and excitement of the *flamenco*. As we endure the abuse of an ill-bred and spoiled first love, the drive to rise above the cruel fates and the assimilation of a strange Spanish culture, we watch the strong-willed Irish lass turn into a respected and powerful aristocratic Spanish lady. Like a transplanted *Gone With The Wind*, this is the story of a woman, her life and loves set in a location, period and culture, and is written with such knowledge and conviction that it should not be overlooked. At times one feels that the book resembles a fine Manzanilla; fresh, light, with a special tang, almost a bitterness. As it moves along it is more like a fuller Amontillado; richer, more characteristic, more pleasant but with a special unique flavor like nothing else. It mellows to a rich, full-bodied and powerful Oloroso, one you'll never forget; you will keep recalling it long after you finish it. My rating: 18, they don't get much better. Too often in wine novels something is awry—the story is too much for the wine setting, the wine lore is lost in the romance, or the necessary balance is disturbed by a creator without enough background in both story-telling and wine-making. But this one is near-perfect!

#### The Wine Novel that Set the Trends

Reaching back to 1975 we find the wine novel that set off the writing binge that seems to be slowing down of late. Robert Daley's *Strong Wine Red as Blood* (Harper's, 400pp, \$10) hit the shelves in the midst of the big wine boom, sat alongside the Hugh Johnson and Alexis Lichine wine books, and was the first wine novel read by most readers. As a trend setter it was great to savor when it was new, but how does it hold up with a little age? In comparison with some of the later entries, very well indeed. Set in Château Conderie, Margaux (a fictionalized classified growth), one has a firsthand glimpse of the battle between proud old château owners and efficiency-expert corporate businessmen. Seems like a lot of that was going on then! Add a Bordeaux scandal, a bit of love life, a fair amount of wine knowledge, and there is just enough to fill the formula of a wine novel. The descriptions of visits to Lafite, Ausone, and Palmer, among others, make it all that much more fun for the armchair traveler. This 1975 Margaux doesn't quite live up to what we've come to expect from the bottled 1975 Margaux, but then that's really asking too much. Corporate take-overs of prestigious wineries are still in vogue, wine scandals seem to crop up with amazing regularity, a hot little affair never hurt any good novel, and the good-triumphs-over-evil theme is as ancient as the written word. It all holds together pretty well. Although I can remember all the Lafites I've ever had, the rest of the classified growths get a bit more hazy and kind of blend together—it's that way with this

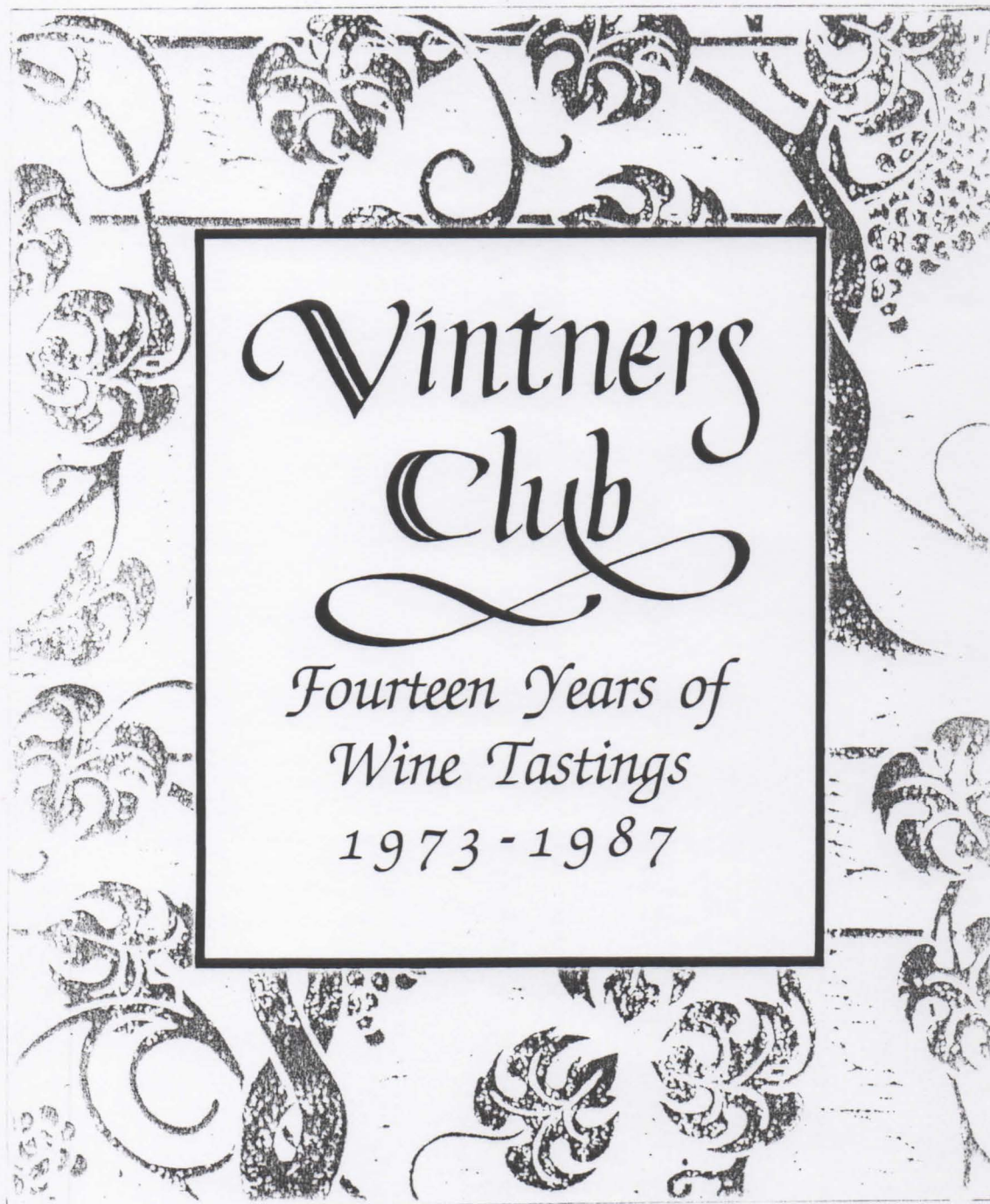
story; not a Lafite but certainly a classified growth. My rating: 17, still good now but probably at its peak, staying power questionable, but one of the better productions everyone else tries to copy.

#### A '42 Vintage, Readily Available

But what does one have to compare them with? Is there a true wine novel classic? Restricting ourselves only to those in English and published in the U.S., the answer is an unqualified "Yes." One exists, is still in print and if you haven't already enjoyed it, you must. The nice thing about books is that you can enjoy an old one over and over, but once you enjoy that rare old vintage wine in your cellar, future enjoyment must come vicariously through memories or by reading about John Grisanti and his purchases at the Heublein auctions. To have a 1942 vintage readily available to everyone makes you stop and appreciate how a wine novel can span the times and still be on top. That is exactly what Alice Tisdale Hobart's *The Cup and the Sword* (Bobbs, 1942) does. If not readily available through your bookstore, it surely is available in your local library. With insight and warmth, the narrative follows an immigrant family through the building of their winery in the great San Joaquin Valley, to expanding it to a specialty little winery for no-profit-but-great-wines in the Napa Valley, only to struggle through the incomprehensibility of Prohibition. The life and times, love and warmth, still shine through this now nearly 40-year-old jewel. But unless you want to spoil all the others, don't read this one first. After all, don't you wait for a special occasion to open a 40-year-old classic—holding back what you know will be sheer joy, and enjoying the recent vintages in the meantime? My rating: still a 20, one would have thought it peaked long ago but there's still lots of body. It is full and rich and just what you always hoped for in a vintage wine novel.

Why aren't there more wine novels? Who knows, maybe novel writers are more the gin-and-tonic, whiskey-and-water types. Not that a sip of wine doesn't play prominently in many contemporary novels . . . (who can imagine James Bond without a bottle of Dom Perignon or Bollinger R.D.?). But the wine isn't central to the theme. Surely there must be an interesting story just waiting to be developed into a novel about the start of the wine industry in the Finger Lakes, the bootlegging era in Western Michigan and Chicago, and the pioneering wine families of Arkansas, Oregon, Idaho. Historical accounts of the wine industry, the people in it, and the wine they make are fine; but for real pleasure to go with my education, give me a wine novel, a fireplace, a big easy-chair, and a good bottle of wine. My rating: a pure 20 all the way! ■





# Vintners Club

*Fourteen Years of  
Wine Tastings  
1973 - 1987*

— VINTNERS CLUB TASTINGS —

dust jacket

See "The Story of the Vintners Club 'Big Book'" by Callie Konno, p.24