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## THE QUEST FOR CRAHAN

by *Bo Simons*

[*Bo Simons, a founder of our Society and longtime librarian of the Sonoma County Wine Library, Healdsburg, CA, is well-known to WT members. From the beginning, he has been a welcome contributor to our Quarterly, whether one-page book reviews or in-depth studies. In his "Quest for Crahan," Bo has tenaciously traveled many trails to give us the story of one of the most famous, yet mainly unknown, collectors of wine and gastronomy books. Saluté! — Ed.*]

"Of all the pleasures in this wondrous world, none, other than being in love, equals for me, the delight of seeking, acquiring and sharing the wonders in fine books." — MARCUS CRAHAN

**I** TURNED LEFT OFF HIGHWAY 128 in Anderson Valley, Mendocino County, and crossed the Navarro River. The Greenwood-Philo Road ascended quickly after it passed the entrance to Hendy Woods. The tentative March rain spat and sizzled in inconclusive shudders. The gothic columns of redwoods held sway till just before the coast. Then they fell away and majestic Elk Cove lay sprawled beyond Highway 1 like a plein-air masterpiece. I was on my way to visit Elizabeth Crahan, the aging but still active and bright widow of Marcus Esketh Crahan [1901–1978], one of the great wine book collectors of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### *California and Its Place Among the Wine Nations*



In 1948, one of the dark times in California wine history, Marcus Crahan, a Los Angeles physician, gave a talk, "California and Its Place Among the Wine Nations," to a club dedicated to Western Americana. It was a singularly inauspicious time to try to place Californian wines in relation to the wines of the world. In the

late 1940s, the California wine industry was a shattered, disreputable thing. The few quality producers were the hard-to-find islands in a syrupy sea of lousy sweet fortified wine. But Crahan was singular and surprising in a number of ways. He was a bibliophile, a gourmet, and a wine lover. In sunny, philistine Los Angeles, he was a civilizing force, joining and promoting and serving as an officer in clubs that embraced book collecting, gastronomy, the culinary arts and wine. He was a prodigious collector of books on those same subjects. But the corker was that he worked a day-job as the physician and psychiatrist for the Los Angeles County Jail, a

position he held from the 1940s to the 1970s, over thirty years.

Dr. Crahan's talk on California and how it compared to other wine-producing countries began with a quote from Hilaire Belloc on how small the part of the world is that can produce good wine. As the talk progressed, Crahan focused on the history of wine in the Old World and then the New World. He was well into the talk before he mentioned California. His tone is light and knowing, but not scholarly. He sketches California's wine history, repeating then commonly held beliefs about when the first Mission wine was

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made and Haraszthy's importance to California. He quotes a witty aphorism of H. Warner Allen, without naming him, calling him only "a European expert," to the effect that America has visited the plagues of "mildew, Phylloxera, cocktails and prohibition," on the wine-loving world, and that maybe they will reciprocate by producing some good wine. Crahan gives a snapshot of some of California's wine regions, names a few producers, and mentions the then new UC-bred grape varieties, Ruby Cabernet and Emerald Riesling. It constitutes a pleasant talk. It's mostly correct and its author certainly knew his way around both a cellar and a library.

### The Noir Angle

We know the contents of his talk today because it was printed as a separate pamphlet and as part of the host club's (Los Angeles Corral of Westerners) *Westerners Brand Book #2*. It is one of a number of lovely books, pamphlets and bibliographies Crahan authored and/or published. He had amassed a great wine and food library and written about wine, but then, so had a number of others. He became interesting to me when I learned he had been both physician and psychiatrist for the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department that ran the county jail. I knew about Crahan and his publications and that his book collection was auctioned after his death by Sotheby's, and of his contributions to the bibliography of wine, but not that this guy had been part of the criminal justice system, and had testified at the trials of Charlie Manson's followers and of Sirhan Sirhan. Crahan even had a bit part in Joseph Wambaugh's nonfiction book, *The Onion Field*, though not in the movie that sprang from it.

This added dimension to Crahan making him part of the "Bright and Guilty Place," as Orson Welles called Los Angeles, the noir landscape of *Chinatown* and *Chandler*, where the corrupt cops and judges cut deals with criminals both petty and well-heeled. All my reading life I have loved the vivid and stylish prose of Raymond Chandler, and the noir world he created for his detective hero, Philip Marlowe, in the Los Angeles of the 1940s and '50s. Lots of cops in Chandler novels are bent. There are evil doctors who run shady rest homes and recovery clinics. The filthy rich were as despicable as the filthy poor. Everyone is guilty, and the detective must navigate this sun-splashed existential hell without compromising himself. "Down these mean streets a man must go who is not himself mean, who is neither tarnished nor afraid." That mythic Los Angeles Chandler created, the neon LALA land that has been emulated by a thousand lesser writers and as many filmmakers, burns bright in my imagination. So when I became aware that Crahan the wine book collector was the tinsel town jail doctor, I wanted to know more. What

kind of guy was he? Was there an interesting dark side to this bon vivant book collector and gourmet who had been part of the criminal justice system of Los Angeles during the '40s, '50s and '60s?

### The Facts in the Case: Books by Crahan

#### *The Wine & Food Society of Southern California*

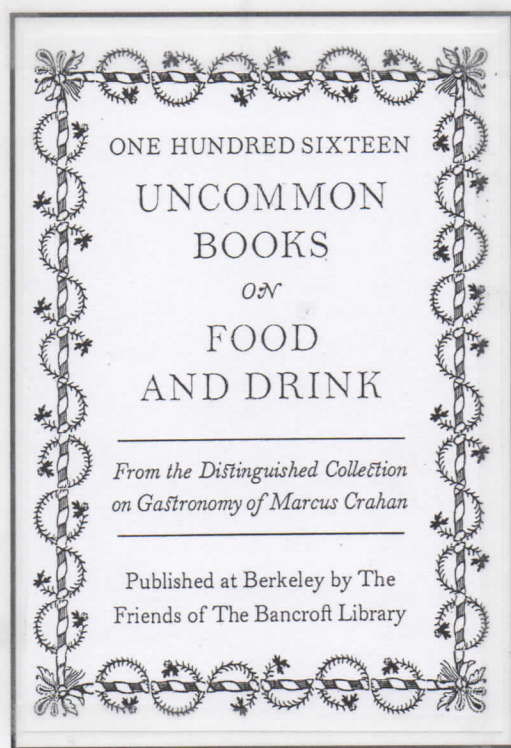
I started with his books and articles. Besides *California and Its Place Among the Wine Nations*, Crahan's books include *The Wine & Food Society of Southern California: A History with a Bibliography of André L. Simon* [Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press, 1957]. This, like all of Crahan's books, is scarcely a book, and yet it is quite a book. All of his books are slim volumes, cloth-bound pamphlets, really, and none startle with new ideas, vivid history, or memorable prose. Yet all possess charm and beauty: they are admirable physical feats of typography, printing, and binding. This one, published by the dean of Los Angeles bookmen and printers, stands in reddish brown cloth, with a gilt decoration of a grape cluster within four concentric rectangles on the front cover. It recounts the history of the Los Angeles Chapter of André Simon's Wine & Food Society, of which Crahan was a founding member. If I were forced to judge this book on brains or beauty, I would come down on beauty. There is some intellectual content. The recitation of names and dates involving a group of people in L.A. who loved wine and food and organized a W&FS branch in 1935 probably provides scant interest outside its members, but there is the bibliography of André Simon as well as his correspondence with Crahan and some menus. Does any of this shine any light on Crahan, his character, that this bibliophile and jail doctor had a hidden dark side? Not much. All I gather is that he could turn a phrase, compile a decent history and bibliography, and was favorably impressed with André Simon.

#### *Early American Inebrietas*

Crahan's next book is *Early American Inebrietas: Review of the Development of American Habits in Drink and the National Bias and Fixations Resulting Therefrom* [Los Angeles: Zamorano Club, 1964]. Here Dr. Crahan sets out to show that America was born a sodden nation. His tone is light, and his observations are sweeping, and though supported by footnotes, this is neither scholarly history nor closely argued polemic. Crahan remains learned, anecdotal and charming. He begins with a preface that traces some culinary and drinking habits of the Britons, Saxons, Danes and Normans in England as the British Isles become England, up through Henry VIII, and then mentions in passing both the Boston Tea Party and Whiskey Rebellion as examples of the American aversion to "the excise." "This book," Crahan says in the Preface, "is not



intended as definitive work, but merely hopes to touch upon the high spots in early American history through the first quarter of the nineteenth century, when inebriety was at its peak." Chapters follow on the various British colonists' drinking habits, and the harsh laws passed to rein them in, the Whiskey Rebellion, rum and its influence on the slave trade, and on the image of the early republic as a drunken nation. Wine is held out as a moderate alternative to distilled spirits, but it is more inference than argument. The book is lovingly made, handsomely illustrated, and bound with a linen spine and decorated boards. He explores lightly a dark side of America's past. This left me wondering whether this book came from or was informed by his work with the alcoholics and drug addicts that made up, then as now, much of the population of urban jails like Los Angeles County. The book came out in the shank of his career (the 24<sup>th</sup> of 30 years), and one can only speculate whether the theme sprang from his work among its wretched inmates.



#### *One Hundred Sixteen Uncommon Books ...*

Marcus Crahan's next book was published eleven years later, soon after he retired, and it is a paean to collecting wine and food books. In his introduction to *One Hundred Sixteen Uncommon Books on Food and Drink, from the Distinguished Collection on Gastronomy of Marcus Crahan* [Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library, 1975], Crahan states: "Of all the pleasures in this wondrous world,

none, other than being in love, equals for me, the delight of seeking, acquiring and sharing the wonders in fine books." At the invitation of James Hart—scholar and Director of the Bancroft Library, U.C. Berkeley—Crahan selected some of the books he had collected over 40 years and annotated them for an exhibit at the Bancroft. This 84-page book with tan card covers is a catalogue of that exhibition, showing off what Crahan considered some of his best books. There are two ways a bibliography like this tells of its compiler: one is the selection, the other is through the annotations. The selection is eclectic, showy, and whimsical. In the introduction, Crahan says that he and his wife, Elizabeth, a librarian, and Irene Moran, librarian and head of public services for the Bancroft, made the selections. They were limited by the space that the Bancroft had to display them, and that is probably why the number came to the unprepossessing 116. They felt "just age was not important enough," but Marc and Elizabeth and Irene were guided by the "importance, rarity, beauty and, perhaps perversity" of the books. Many are important landmarks. He had a folio 15<sup>th</sup> century edition of Arnaldus de Villanova's *De Vinis* in German (*Von Bereitung und Bruchung der Wein*), printed in Strassburg by Martin Schott in 1484. The next entry in the alphabetically arranged bibliography is Timothy Shay Arthur's *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, and What I Saw There* [Philadelphia, 1854], the book that helped fuel the Temperance movement in America. That he includes it indicates that Crahan was interested not only in fine gastronomy, but in the darker aspects of food and drink and the effects of wine on health. There is a 1472 tract by St. Augustine on drunkenness. There is a first edition of Bernard M'Mahon's *American Gardener's Calendar* [Philadelphia, 1806], not a particularly rare or pricey book, but important as a milestone in horticulture and the most comprehensive gardening book published in the United States in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Crahan also includes *Mon Docteur le Vin* [Paris, 1936] that contains Raoul Dufy's magnificent watercolors as well as some of the most absurd health claims ever made for wine.

Crahan annotates with coyness and flair, his silence sometimes as loud as his pronouncements. I am assuming Crahan did the annotations though this is not explicit. For the Arnaldus he just describes the physical book: "small folio, lacks initial blank, bound in new limp vellum..." and writes not a word that this is a subsequent edition of the earliest printed book on wine, nor anything on Arnaldus, who died in 1371 and was a pretty interesting if shadowy Catalan physician, also accused of being (or at least described as) an alchemist, nor anything on the contents of the work, which discussed wine as a therapeutic agent.



Perhaps as a wine book collector and a physician, Crahan expected those interested in such things to know this man and his work. Although his annotations generally follow this pattern, sticking to bibliographic description, not content, he occasionally becomes chatty about the book's context and subject matter. He goes on about the historic importance of *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room*. He discusses M'Mahon's association with the Lewis and Clark expedition and the subsequent editions and importance of the *Gardener's Calendar*. For *Mon Docteur*, he notes that Dufy himself could not find a copy of his book in Paris six months after publication. The selection shows judiciousness mixed with humor and an interest in more than gastronomy. The annotations indicate solid bookmanship and a droll but selective scholarship, and some attention to things other than the sensual pleasure of food and wine. While the selections hint at either a moral sense or an interest in the darker aspects of gastronomy, food and wine, neither selection nor annotations reveal much of Crahan's character.

#### *Marcus and Elizabeth Crahan Collection of Books on Food, Drink and Related Subjects*

These then are the books that he authored while living, but what of his posthumous work? This is not really a book he wrote, but he was certainly the author of it. It is the Sotheby's catalogue of the sale of his collection: *Marcus and Elizabeth Crahan Collection of Books on Food, Drink and Related Subjects: New York, October 9 and 10, 1984*. [New York: Sotheby's, 1984.] Here you gain some idea of the scope of Crahan's collecting: this is a major piece of wine bibliography. What sold was over a thousand books divided into 786 lots, dates ranging from circa 1420 for an illuminated manuscript to reference works from the 1950s. There are 88 works before 1600, and nine before 1500 (including the illuminated manuscript, not properly a book, and a Thomas Aquinas piece on theology that may not belong in a collection on wine and food.) Many of the later lots consist of multiple books thrown together by subject. What was hinted at in the Bancroft catalogue is manifest here: this is a great collection, and a tribute to the thoroughness and scholarly acquisitiveness of Crahan. It takes time, diligence, tenacity, connections, and luck to put together such a library.

Sotheby's divided the works into sessions by date, with the 15<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century titles to be auctioned on the morning of October 9, and 18<sup>th</sup> century in the afternoon; 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century works on the block the following day. The catalogue follows this structure.



The prefatory materials state that he annotated

his books in pencil or pen on the endpapers and elsewhere. Most of the books carried Crahan's distinctive bookplate or label. [See book label below, his bookplate on p.10] Here's a clue: I like a collector who defaces by personalizing his books in this way, stamps them as his.

We also learn the official version of how Crahan got the bug for collecting books on food and wine. Elizabeth Crahan, his widow—the woman I am driving to see in the opening paragraph—in her two-page introduction, explains that while a medical student at Syracuse University he had two experiences that she considers catalysts to his enthusiasm for collecting gastronomic books. He had a professor who was a bibliophile and introduced him to fine books. Crahan elsewhere recorded this, and the transformative sensuous joy of handling laid paper and vellum for the first time. His second experience was that he skipped lunch most days, but once a week he would treat himself to a fine lunch at the best hotel. This bit of denial and then indulgence suggests that Crahan was an on/off, no-half-way-measures type of man: he would prefer to go without and then feast, rather than eat moderately every day.

#### *Joseph Wambaugh's Testimony*

Still, I put down this catalogue somewhat dissatisfied. These are platitudes, the public acclaim, richly deserved praise for a man and his love and learned study of the good things of the world—food, wine, books. What about his workaday self, who attended the human wrecks in the jail? His books do little to reconcile this erudite bon vivant with that doctor.

Wry, droll commentary, judicious selection, a fascination with the darker aspects of indulgence and a tendency towards all or nothing where food is concerned were all I took from Crahan's legacy in books that might integrate his vocation with his avocation. So I sought some live sources. Obsessed with the noir angle, I was intrigued by the mentions of Crahan in *The Onion Field* by Joseph Wambaugh. Here is Crahan depicted at work in the criminal justice system. In the book Crahan is just mentioned in passing. The book concerns a murder of a police officer by two petty criminals, and the resulting legal and human costs. Crahan was an expert witness in the subsequent trials, and the book has but a few mentions of him and some dry excerpts from his testimony. These tell nothing about him except that his professional opinion was that the cop killers in the book were not criminally insane when they committed their kidnapping murder. But I thought writer Wambaugh might have met Crahan or may have known about him. Wambaugh was a Los Angeles police officer first, a novelist of police-themed novels second, and the author of nonfiction about Southern



California law enforcement third. His career at LAPD overlapped Crahan's with the LA Sheriff's Dept at the jail. Perhaps he knew something about him he did not put in the book. It was not straightforward, but I tracked down the author's residence in San Diego, and sent him a letter, explaining my interest in Crahan and asking whether he had met him or had heard about what he was like at the jail. I received back an official Joseph Wambaugh bookmark listing all twenty-one of Wambaugh's books, from the *New Centurions* (1970) to *Harbor Nocturne* (2012). On the back of the bookmark, Wambaugh had written: "Dear Bo Simons, No, I never had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Crahan and I missed the era of corruption, having joined the LAPD in 1960. He sounds like a great character. Thanks for your kind words of praise. All the best, Joe Wambaugh."

#### Billie Connor-Dominguez

So that stamped "paid" to that line of inquiry. But there were other live sources. One was a librarian who knew Crahan. More than a decade ago this article started as an idea shared by Wayward Tendrils Quarterly editor and publisher, Gail Unzelman and myself. Gail took the first extended foray into trying to craft an article on Crahan in the year 2000; she corresponded with the Los Angeles Public Library and was helped by librarian Billie Connor-Dominguez. Billie was able to provide some articles and materials on Crahan, but, more importantly, she had known Marcus Crahan. Billie was nearing the end of a long and vibrant career at LAPL: she had been head of first the Business and Economics Department of Los Angeles Public Library, then the Science, Technology and Patents Department, and then both. So when I restarted this quest for Crahan in 2011 and looked over the great array of reference materials Billie had sent earlier, it was clear that she had at least been acquainted with Crahan. I hoped that Billie as a fellow librarian might have a professional perspective on Marcus Crahan. I arranged to talk to Billie by phone and ask her about Crahan.

Billie's connection to Crahan turned out to be both personal and professional. Billie had married John Connor in the late 1960s about the same time Marcus Crahan was marrying Elizabeth Aker. Billie had come to know Elizabeth as a fellow librarian, and also because Elizabeth worked for Billie's fiancée, John Connor. Elizabeth Aker met Marcus Crahan through her work at the Los Angeles County Medical Association Library. Marcus Crahan, as a Los Angeles physician, was, of course, a member of the L. A. County Medical Assn. He advised them on their acquisition of rare books, and he knew their head librarian, John Connor. These two couples married at nearly the same time, and for three of them—Billie, Marcus, and Elizabeth—these were not first marriages. Both Billie

and Elizabeth waited out their divorces in Reno, Nevada; Marcus was there as well. Billie describes Marcus as "really a fun person, a wonderful cook, good company." He took what could have been an awkward and boring time and made it light, shimmering and alive. Billie remembers Marcus referring to her as "Bridey Murphy" because she was in a hurry to remarry, and to an Irishman; she married the afternoon of the morning her divorce decree came in.

I pressed on. It turns out she and husband John kept up, not closely but with some regularity, with the Crahans in the succeeding years. They shared "wonderful meals" at the Crahan home. Billie worked in the same special libraries' world as Elizabeth, while her husband managed the library where Elizabeth worked. Both ladies were active in the special library circles in Southern California. But Billie did not know much about Marcus Crahan's career at the L.A. County Jail. "No, I only knew about it second hand."

"What kind of a library user was he?" I asked. "I don't think he used the public library," Billie answered. "He was a very good library user at the L.A. Co. Medical Assn. Library, where my husband was the chief. I am sure he gave advice on the rare books there, although medicine was not his area of specialization. And when the LACMA Library closed, its books went to the Huntington Library."

"What kind of a guy was he? How would you characterize him?" "He was very, very amusing, funny, loud, ... a fabulous cook," Billie replied, and trailed off into an anecdote about recently running across his handwritten recipe for salsa.

I was not getting the detailed personal portrait of Crahan from Billie I had dreamed of. But what I was getting was far from the dark conjectures in my mind because he had been the jail doctor. Billie was willing to be very helpful, and what she gave was useful, but I wanted more.

#### The Testimony of Doyce Nunis

I teased at another lead. The best reminiscence that Gail had unearthed in her foray in 2000 came from Doyce Nunis, a professor of history at University of Southern California, a leading scholar in early California history, an editor for decades of the Southern California Quarterly, and a friend of Marcus Crahan. In the years between Gail's first research for an article and this present attempt, Doyce had gone from being a retired historian to being history. He died in January, 2011, so I could not talk to him, but I had the correspondence between him and Gail, and his eulogy of Crahan. Doyce's letters gave great leads to Crahan's writings in the Zamorano Club's newsletter, Hoja Volante. The Zamorano Club, a book collector's club that began in the 1920s in Los Angeles, takes its name from Agustín Vicente Zamorano, California's first printer (Monterey, 1834). Crahan



had been an active member and contributor from 1947 through the 1970s; he was elected to the Zamorano Board of Governors in 1954, and served as President from 1957–1959.

Nunis' eulogy of Marcus Crahan was reprinted in the *Hoja Volante* for May 1978 (pp. 6-8), and reprinted again in *Zamorano Club Biographies and Memorial Tributes 1956–1997* [Los Angeles: Zamorano Club, 1978]. This fine and fond reminiscence stands as a tribute to a man Doyce had known for sixteen years when he died in 1978. Doyce begins the remembrance

with a meet-cute story of his first encounter with Crahan. In 1962 a group of library and book people met at Cave des Roys, a private wine tasting club, to discuss starting a wine book collection at the University of California, Los Angeles. It was to be a fine dinner in which even finer wines would dominate. Bob Vosper, then director of the UCLA library, put the dinner together. Doyce was on Bob's staff, and he was puzzled: "I never could figure why Bob invited

me," Doyce writes in the eulogy. He was no wine geek, and his reputation as a scholar lay in the future. He arrived early, before anyone else, and ordered a mixed drink. Marcus Crahan arrived, ordered a Sherry, and started talking wine with the bartender. Doyce and Marcus introduced themselves. Then Marc spied Doyce's mixed drink, and started berating Doyce for ruining his palate with a cocktail: "He looked down with a scowl at the hard-liquor drink in my hand and remonstrated in no uncertain terms. No general could have ever dressed down a subordinate more thoroughly than that meted out to me on the spot. I was absolutely speechless. Then with a rising sense of anger compounded, I suspect, by humiliation, I rose to the challenge and rebutted. The debate was as good, volley for volley, as any championship tennis match. I fear I lost." Marc was gracious in victory, invited Doyce to his table and started a friendship that endured until Marcus Crahan died. Doyce appreciated his bluntness, and that "his bluntness was always directed at arrogance, insolence, sloth or stupidity." He talks of another debate Crahan had, this one with André Simon. Simon criticized Crahan's criteria for



MARCUS E. CRAHAN 1901–1978

judging California wines. Crahan parried back, "point by point, in a brief that would have reflected credit on a distinguished lawyer. Their difference reconciled, they became fast friends." I notice a pattern here. Crahan does not shy from speaking his mind. Doyce puts it kindly: "Marc liked a good debate, or, rather, a healthy discussion." He is always civil and those who debate back get respect.

Doyce goes on in his eulogy to praise Crahan's service to the Zamorano Club: seven years on the board, twice president, prodigious contributor to *Hoja Volante*, the chronicler and custodian of the club's history. He praises Crahan's prowess as a collector. He mentions his sparkle, his "wonderful sense of humor pointed puckish and brittle."

He does not mention directly Marcus Crahan's role as a physician for the L.A. County Jail, except, perhaps, for this: "In his public demeanor, Marc presented a crusty appearance. There is no question: he could be as tough as steel when the circumstances or situation demanded." Did Crahan in his job speak truth to power? Did he let his bluntness carry over so that, instead of being some dark, corrupt, evil jail doctor, as my pulp fiction reading was leading me to imagine, he was an agent of good, helping the poor inmates get proper medical treatment?

#### The Widow Speaks

Doyce provides some splendid insights into Marcus Crahan: blunt, crusty, tough as steel; but he provides no concrete details about his life as the jail doctor. He does give us a lead. Go find the Widow Crahan, Crahan's second wife, nee Elizabeth Schmidt Acker, Mrs. Elizabeth Crahan, of Elk, California. Was she still around? Would she see me? There was one way to find out. I called her, and she agreed to see me. So, as we began this piece, I found myself driving west through Anderson Valley to the Mendocino Coast and to Mrs. Crahan.

I hit Highway 1 and turned south, went about a mile and found the Crahan house—a magnificent architect-designed residence in the modern style, all glass, steel and blonde wood, commanding a jaw-dropping view of Elk Cove. One of Mrs. Crahan's staff met me at the door and took me to the main room, with tall glass walls behind which the Pacific met the Redwoods in an opulent pristine grandeur. I felt more like Philip Marlowe being led into General Sternwood's orchid hothouse than a librarian approaching another librarian to find out more about her book-collector husband.

The *Mendocino Beacon* told me she was 98 years old. She was frail but lucid, if a little tenuous. There was something fixed about one eye, and she moved with the aid of a walker. She lives in this isolated splendor on the Mendocino Coast surrounded by an attentive retinue of caregivers. It had taken several



phone calls to assure her and her staff that I was no threat and would not tire her. She married Marcus Crahan in 1968. He died a decade later. She had four children in a previous marriage. After we were seated, had been given some lovely tea and nibbles by her staff, she started talking. She related how she and Marcus met: she was working for the Los Angeles County Medical Association Library. Her boss, John Connor, Billie Connor-Dominquez's husband, was away for a few days. There was a scheduled exhibit of wine and food books to be displayed in the library, and the books had not arrived. She called the person who was loaning the books, a man named Marcus Crahan and asked where the books were. He apologized, there was some trouble with his car and he could not get the books there.

"So I took my little Ford and went to visit him. He had the books all ready, with cards in each book with descriptions of the books. All I had to do was prop them up and find some way to exhibit them in the cases."

While impressed with the way he had prepared the books for the exhibit, she was less than overwhelmed with the man himself. "I was a little disappointed. He was causal in shorts and bare feet."

Our conversation flitted from topic to topic. From meeting Marc in 1968, to meeting Ward Ritchie (during World War II when she was working at Douglas Aircraft, and Ritchie was producing pamphlets as part of the war effort), to her wondering whether I had anything to do with André Simon—it was hard to follow sometimes where we were going.

At one point I tried to ask my big question: "How do you reconcile your husband's avocation, his love of food and wine and books, with his vocation, his work as a physician at the County Jail? It seems like they were two separate realms..."

"No, I don't think so," she replied. "In a way actions of money are very much involved in collecting. He spent a lot of time seeing what the market was in books and studying the early books." I guess she was saying that Marc applied the same diligent economic scrutiny to his book collecting as he did the business of his professional life, and the same studiousness to researching early books as he did to studying medicine. She answered a question, but not the one I was trying to ask. We talked for a while longer, but we never got close to what Marc Crahan's life as a jail doctor was like.

#### Marcus Crahan Tells about being a Jail Doctor

I came back from the Mendocino Coast and my talk with Mrs. Crahan again incomplete. I had learned from Elizabeth Crahan, from Marcus Crahan's books, from Billie Connor-Dominquez, and from Doyce Nunis what Marc Crahan, the bon vivant, gourmet, host, oenophile and bibliophile was all about. He was

loud, blunt, opinionated, feisty, smart and fun. He brought towering concentration and will and intelligence to bear on amassing one of the world's great wine and gastronomy libraries. None of the sources, not his widow, nor any others I had talked to or read, was either able or willing to help me find out what Dr. Marcus Crahan of the L.A. County Jail was like.

I went back to the Internet, and started poking around. I went through all the works by and about Crahan that are listed in the bibliographic utility OCLC. I compared these with Gail's list and the printouts she had gotten from Billie in 2000. Something made me go to the Huntington Library's website. Maybe it was the awareness that Crahan had helped build the L.A. County Medical Association's rare books collection, and that those books had gone to the Huntington. A search of the Huntington's online catalog gave me

Author: Crahan, Marcus

Title: Cops and robbers : jail doctor

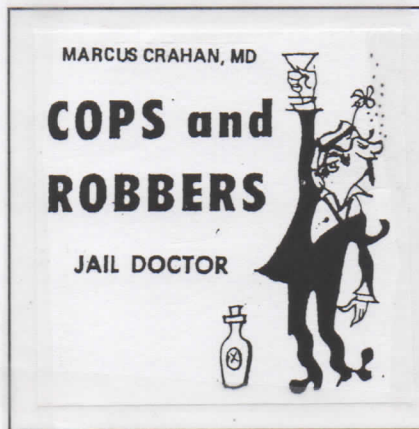
Imprint: Los Angeles : [s.n.], 1971

Description: 4 p

Note: Reprinted from The Bulletin of the Los Angeles County [Medical] Association, Aug. 5, 19, 1971

HEH Copy Gift-Author 9-16-71.

Kevin Miller, Stacks Supervisor, Rare Books, at the Huntington was kind enough to scan and send me a pdf of the article.



I read the two-part, four-page article. It is a breezy, anecdotal, informed, richly detailed report of what it's like to work at a major urban jail trying to provide health care. He was writing in the Bulletin of the Los Angeles County Medical

Association, so his audience was primarily other physicians, and he was writing at the end of his career, so he need not pull punches. In short, it is paydirt: Crahan speaking across the years to me.

He begins by telling how he got the job. In January 1941, Crahan was doing his rounds at the Los Angeles General Hospital, and Los Angeles Sheriff Eugene Biscailuz had phoned him offering him the job of "jail physician." Crahan is none too eager to take the job. "I pointed out that I was perfectly happy as I was, doing research at the hospital and enjoying



a modest but comfortable practice, and besides—who in the world would want a jail doctor as their physician?" The Sheriff prevails upon Crahan not to turn down the job until he has seen the jail hospital. He agrees to go the next day, still has not made up his mind, and goes to see the Sheriff again. He walks into an office full of reporters and the Sheriff announces Crahan's appointment as the new jail doctor. After the reporters leave, he tells the Sheriff he will stay on for 90 days, and to start looking for someone to replace him.

Dr. Crahan never explains in so many words why he stayed for 30 years, but the rest of the article provides an answer of sorts. It is a dirty, challenging, sordid job, but rewarding and meaningful work. Crahan writes of trying to administer medical aid to alcoholics, addicts, criminally insane, tough connected mobsters, incorrectly arrested innocents (all claim to be in this category) and cold-eyed killers. He attempts to manage syphilis, gonorrhea and TB before antibiotics. He has to contend not only with surly patients, but with a correctional staff who look at every sick inmate as a lying subhuman, not worth sympathy or medical attention. He deals with privileged outsiders trying to assert their will, and with the lowly, powerless inmates routinely getting deprived of proper treatment. He mentions in passing his accomplishments in building better facilities, instituting humane procedures and lobbying for things like adequate meals.

He talks with clinical frankness about drug addicts and alcoholics in jail, and does not favor methadone as a treatment of heroin addiction. "It seems a little immoral to me to arrest a man for use of a narcotic and then treat him legally with another narcotic." He sees the pervasive and costly problem of alcoholism. "More than half our 11,000 inmates in the county jail system are there primarily because of alcohol." To avoid a costly ineffective trip to the drunk tank, he recommended taking inebriates home to their wives, "where their reception would probably be more effective than overnight jailing." He had the jail participate in some trials of Antabuse, a drug designed to reduce alcoholism. Using a group of carefully screened volunteer inmates and a group of private patients outside of jail, the results showed Crahan how serious alcohol addiction is, and proved to him that alcoholism was beyond an impulsive derangement.

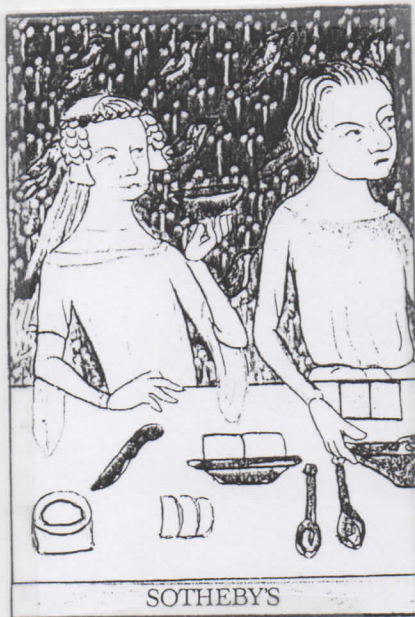
At one point Crahan considers how tough the guards are on prisoners, how hard it is to give medical care in a penal setting. "Every penal institution...is comprised of a trinity consisting of custodial management, prisoner population and the medical department...Custodial officers think of the inmates, as they call them, as no-good screw-ups who are not worthy of

any consideration. Custody resents any form of medical care, considering it pampering, or thinks that the medics are being taken in by gold-brickers." He writes movingly of fighting for adequate medical care and humane conditions. Yet he was far from being a bleeding-heart. He recalls his intervention in a capital punishment case on behalf of carrying out the death sentence on "the most savage man I ever had to deal with."

Marcus Crahan comes across as a principled, conscientious doctor who worked three decades in a brutal place and tried to provide good medical care under challenging circumstances. He did not seek this position, but it was thrust upon him. He seemed to stay out of a sense of duty, and that this was the highest and best use of his talents. This conception of Crahan is far from the "noir vision" I had of the dilettante physician, corrupt as all the Doctor Feelgoods in Chandler's fiction. He was a noble doctor, who collected wine books on the side.

His real worth was captured accurately in his L.A. Times obituary. The headline of the article (Los Angeles Times, January 12, 1978, Part II, Page 8) reads: "Marcus Crahan, Physician at Jail for 30 Years, Dies." The obituary concentrates on his years of service as a medical director at the county jail, his service on psychiatric panels for the courts. What we wine book collectors know him for is his book collecting, and his books on wine books, but his lasting contribution, the dent he made in the cosmos, stands as his career in medicine and psychiatry forged in the Los Angeles County Jail.

#### Coda: The Sotheby's Auction



Snippet from Sotheby's Catalogue cover:  
A 15<sup>th</sup> Century Banquet Scene

Six years after his death, Elizabeth Crahan, sold their collection of wine and food books in an auction at Sotheby's, New York, in what has to be one of the biggest and most bizarre auctions of wine and gastronomy books in history. Everyone I contacted for information about Dr. Crahan mentioned the sale, and its size, im-



portance and strangeness. Gail Unzelman, our WTQ editor, was there and witnessed the whole thing. Her witness is informed by her decades as a collector, student of the literature, and bibliographer. Allow me to let Gail, in her own words, relate the Crazy Crahan Collection Caper:

There had not been a sale of wine and cookery books in the U.S. as fine as the Crahan collection in many a year, if ever. The catalogue was mouth-watering; the items were richly previewed both in New York and California.

Premier booksellers, collectors, and librarians gathered from afar for the much publicized affair. All were aware of the bounties to be had—not just very rare titles, but many very rare titles with coveted provenance of esteemed collectors like André Simon, Harry Schraemli, Lord Westbury, Leon Lambert. Mike McKirdy, the dean of gastronomical bookdealers, came from England; Elizabeth Woodburn and Jan Longone, two of America's leading specialists in the field, were in attendance. Jeremy Norman, an antiquarian bookseller in San Francisco, was an active participant, as were several other noted San Francisco bookmen that I recognized. The filled auction room was abuzz in anxious anticipation.

The two-day sale featured 786 lots (many with multiple, desirable items), offered chronologically beginning with the 15<sup>th</sup> century. As the sale began, it became almost immediately clear that something "was up." I was seated next to Mike McKirdy, and he whispered to me, "What is going on!?" Three gentlemen, nattily dressed in dark business suits, sitting strategically around the room, were buying-up almost every item—no matter what the price, and often three, four, five times the high estimate. It was found out that this Citibank "consortium" was bidding to take the collection for a Nevada oil heiress, Willametta Keck Day. Word was that she wanted a fine gastronomical library, and this was to be it!

Ms Keck Day took possession of an estimated two-thirds or more of the Crahan library—at what were deemed ridiculously high prices. Some of these prices were the direct result of some tom-foolery on the part of a number of angry bookdealers: with mischievous grins, they kept the bidding going on many items, knowing their bids would be matched and surpassed. (This actually resulted in falsely recording values for these rare books; for many years, when you saw "Crahan Sale, \$xxxx" listed in book offerings, it was by no means a reflection of the true value.)

Hopefully Ms Keck Day enjoyed her new-found library; she would die less than a year later, and

the books would be auctioned at Sotheby's in 1986. This time the prices were correct.

NOTE: There is a fine article on the Crahan and the Crahan-Keck Day Collection sales, "An Auction of Rare Cookbooks" by Corby Kummer, in Journal of Gastronomy (v.2 #4, Winter 1986–1987, pp.91–98).

A CHRONOLOGICAL CHECKLIST OF  
BOOKS BY MARCUS CRAHAN  
Compiled by *Gail Unzelman*

1949. *California and Its Place Among the Wine Nations. A Talk given before the Los Angeles Westerners August 20, 1948.* Los Angeles: Homer H. Boelter. [10] pp. Illustrated with historical images; large, folding map (28½ x 18) of the Wine Districts of California attached inside rear cover. 10 x 8. Card covers, stapled, with decorative vignette on front cover.

150 copies lithographed on Strathmore Text, by Homer H. Boelter, for Marcus Esketh Crahan as a Keepsake for His Friends, May 1949.

1957. *The Wine & Food Society of Southern California. A History with a Bibliography of André L. Simon.* Los Angeles: Ward Ritchie Press/Wine & Food Society of Southern California. 60 pp. Attractive title page decorated and printed in red and black; no other illustrations. 9¼ x 6¼. Brick-red cloth, with gilt decoration to front cover, gilt-lettered spine.

200 copies printed by Anderson, Ritchie & Simon: Ward Ritchie Press. 100 copies for distribution to members of the W & F Society, 100 copies for sale.

This title seems to be the rarest of Crahan's books.

1964. *Early American Inebrietas. A Review of the Development of American Habits in Drink and the National Bias and Fixations Resulting Therefrom.* Los Angeles: The Zamorano Club. Printed by Saul and Lillian Marks, The Plantin Press, Los Angeles. 62 pp.



Illustrated with drawings by Marion Kronfeld and half-tone title-page reproductions from early American books on drink. 10½ x 7½. A striking binding of brownish-red paper covered boards decorated by Kronfeld artistry, natural linen spine; red-lettered paper spine label.

150 copies printed for members of the Roxburghe Club, San Francisco, and the Zam-

orano Club, Los Angeles, 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Joint Meeting, September 26–27, 1964.

No doubt Crahan's most handsome book. See our Quarterly back cover illustration.



1975. *One Hundred Sixteen Uncommon Books on Food and Drink. From the Distinguished Collection on Gastronomy of Marcus Crahan*. Berkeley: Friends of the Bancroft Library. Designed and Printed by Wesley Tanner, Berkeley. 84 pp. Illustrated with 20 magnificent, full-page half-tone images. Title page printed in gold and black. 10½ x 7. Tan card wraps, lettered in gilt. See title page illustration, p.3.

This exhibit catalogue, presenting a well-chosen sampling of the treasures one might consider for a first-class wine and gastronomy library, has been a worthy reference for books of the "civilizing arts."

1984. *Marcus and Elizabeth Crahan Collection of Books on Food, Drink and Related Subjects: New York, October 9 and 10, 1984*. New York: Sotheby's, 1984. [pages unnumbered] 786 Lots. Illustrated throughout with title page reproductions and images from the books. 10½ x 8. Cream colored glossy card covers illustrated with a striking color reproduction of an early gastronomic scene.

An often cited reference for booksellers and collectors. Crahan's bookplate, present in most of the books, is a desired provenance, especially when it is coupled with a bookplate of a celebrated owner before him.



—Intriguing bookplate of Marcus Crahan—

BOOK COLLECTING PROVIDES a feast for the senses and nourishment for the mind, and it is almost effortless. Reading catalogs, bidding and buying, cataloging and collating, searching for provenance involve not so much work as excitement of the chase and thrill of discovery. It's a game like most games, in which one improves with practice—and with age. — MARCUS CRAHAN, *One Hundred Sixteen Uncommon Books on Food and Drink*.



Welcome! New Tendrils! From Dundee, Oregon, in the beautiful Willamette Valley wine country, Peter Bouman ([peterbouman@gmail.com](mailto:peterbouman@gmail.com)) is a 20-year collector with a special interest in viticulture, wine-making, wine history (English, French, Spanish).

#### WINE WRITER FRANK PRIAL

passed away in November 2012 at age 82. His "Wine Talk" column in the *New York Times*, which began in 1972, ran for more than three decades. In 1978, his first book, *Wine Talk* was published (New York: Times Books, 264 pp.). Eighty-four of his columns, "a pure distillate of the best," are presented on such diverse subjects as "The Company of Vintners," "Thomas Jefferson, Wine Lover," "Julia Likes Wine, Too," and "Some Nice Little Wines." A second compilation, *Decantations: Reflections on Wine*, was published in 2001 (NY: St. Martin's Press, 304 pp.). He arranged ninety-eight of his columns, mostly written in the 1980s and 1990s, by topics, including: "Wine Writings and Writers," "Tending the Vine & Making the Wine," "Personalities," "Wine, Restaurants, and (Sometimes Intimidating) Sommeliers," and "Raise Your Glasses High!". Prial's writings are timeless and make perfect bedside reading material.

#### Proof

by Dick Francis, the award-winning novelist whose best selling mystery thrillers are set in the arena of horse racing, might not catch your eye as being a "wine novel" suitable for our fiction shelves. But it is indeed. Written in 1985—one of more than three dozen Francis titles—the protagonist is one Tony Beach, a young wine merchant whose tasting expertise gets him involved in a liquor scam that leads to murder and spreads from the world of fine wine and 12-year-old Scotch to the world of 3-year-old thoroughbreds. It is called "wonderfully complex."

Author Dick Francis (1920–2010) was a champion steeplechase jockey in Britain and knows his showcase arena well. He also enjoyed a fascination with the details of the occupations of others, and he immerses his readers in the day-to-day scenes of his varied fictional heroes, including architect, diplomat, banker, artist, film director, toy inventor, chef, and wine merchant. Having won numerous awards for "best crime novel of the year," his books come highly recommended.

*Proof*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1985. 334 pp.



#### A BIT OF PROVENANCE TRIVIA

The book collecting world loves provenance—that magical connection to the book and its former owner who quietly or proudly housed it in his library. We know that a special provenance can enhance a book's value, especially if the book bears a bookplate. New WT member **Fred Frye** contacted your Editor about an André Simon title in his library: a 1946 pamphlet, *Let Mine Be Wine*, that had been nicely bound into cloth covers, and had the interesting bookplate of one Bob Gries. Does this name ring a bell with any Tendrils? It did with me! I had a similar situation: my copy of Simon's 1958 pamphlet, *Table Manners for Boys*, had been expertly bound inside dark green cloth covers lettered in gilt—with the bookplate of Bob Gries. The booklet, inscribed by Simon "For my friend, Bob Gries," has the Gries bookplate attached under the inscription. The bookplate has a "busy" design, rather "homey," but definitely fascinating (see reduced image).



It is dated 1956, with portraits of the Gries family shown above the family shield that displays their special interests and the motto "Wong su Hctaw" within \$-sign quotes. Fred and I both wanted to know the story. After several unsuccessful attempts at Google Translate for the meaning of the motto, it hit us: "Watch Us Grow"! (Fred's 1953-dated bookplate featured 10 portraits.) After some enjoyable online searches, we learned who was behind the bookplate, and a friend of Simon. Robert Hays Gries (1900–1966), a 4<sup>th</sup> generation Cleveland, is quickly known as one of the founders of the Cleveland Browns professional football team—hence the football and the "B"-labeled helmet on his bookplate. He and his wife, of the noted Cleveland Dauby family, were avid collectors of Oriental porcelain and antique silver—see the vignette in the upper right hand corner. He was a voracious book collector who is credited with having one of the largest known collections of tobacco literature in the country; he was also keenly interested in wine and food, and from the musical notes scattered throughout the design, music was another passion. The rural barn scene has not been explained (country estate?). No further news on the dispersal of his magnificent libraries.

#### RECOMMENDED: *Bouquet*—A Joyful Romp

Tendril Joe Lynch recently enjoyed very entertaining reading in this 1920's wine novel by G. B. Stern, and thought it worthy of a WTQ mention. *Bouquet*, a joyful romp through the vineyards and restaurants of France, was written by Gladys Bronwyn Stern [1890–1973]. Our review is borrowed from fellow bibliophile **Eberhard Buehler** and his *Wine & Gastronomy Catalogue S* of June 2001 (online at our WT website):

First published in England in 1926 by Chapman & Hall, the first American edition was published in New York by Alfred Knopf in 1927, printed by The Plimpton Press, Norwood, MA. (263 pp + 8 glossy photo plates, map-decorated endpapers; green cloth with dust jacket). This edition saw a second printing in 1928, a third in 1933, and at least one more in 1936.

In this book, Stern gives us an interesting example of the wine-and-dine tour by automobile, which was so popular in the '20s and '30s, when automobiles were not yet in the hands of the masses.

The author, together with her husband Johnny, and another couple, Rosemary and Humphrey, toured the wine country of France, with Humphrey at the wheel of his red Fiat, Sept. 5th to Oct. 8th, 1926. Stern tells an entertaining story.

One of her pet peeves is the attitude of men to women in matters of wine, and she finds it difficult, as a woman, to write in praise of wine. "So many crusted connoisseurs believe that the ladies—God bless 'em!—are always happy if you give them Champagne, or a sweetish white wine like Barsac—and finish up with crème de menthe because it's such a pretty colour! — The audacity! ... Have I not had Romanée-Conti poured ... by a man who had cooked for an emperor? And you would fob me off with Barsac! Even Château Yquem—but we are still a long way from Bordeaux, and the heresies that I shall presently utter against the monarch of Sauternes." [pp 1-2] And that she does. With Louis Calvet as their guide, they are given a grand tour—after the Médoc—of the Sauternes district. At their lunch before the tour, they were served some very sweet Sauternes—in deference of course to the ladies, at which point the author did not much look forward to the visit to Château Yquem, even though her interest in wine had first been aroused by that wine some seven years earlier. "Why should we prefer sweet wine? Has not a woman eyes, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions, even as a man has? And have we not palates, intelligence, taste, subtlety, and a fastidious discrimination ...?" But they finished the Sauternes—both bottles, out of politeness, then went on to Yquem, which was nevertheless a thrill for her. But upon hearing the story of the discovery of this wine, she "swore softly"

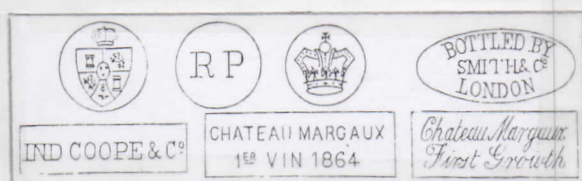


at "that fatal year 1847, in which vineyards which might have produced wine fit for gentlemen to drink—ay, and even for ladies, God bless 'em!—produced instead this clinging, highly perfumed, luscious, and full-blooded horror known as the great wine of Sauternes!" Of course, the day had been hot and they had tasted far too many of these heady wines. After that, they headed for "a dinner at Libourne where we could choose the wine ourselves—dry wine, *vin sec*, not *demi-sec*, but *sec, sec, sec*" [153-165]. And there you have a good sample of Stern's style. About their visit to Romanée-Conti, Stern remarked about the "disdainful smallness" of the cellars, which could have been held ten times over by Château Margaux. She felt that the small vineyard with its few sought-after barrels affected the staff who worked there. "I felt shy at Romanée-Conti. They were polite, and they were cordial, but — But, in the Republic of France, they kept the key to the King's cellar." [220-223] At the end of the trip, and the end of the book, the two couples had parted company. "Johnny and I dined tête-à-tête that night, at Hiely's [at Avignon, where it can be found today]. We turned to the Bordeaux on the wine-list, and ordered a Château Latour 1914. With the exception of the Château Ausone, it proved to be the best claret we had tasted on the tour. But they would never believe us . . ."

Stern was born in London [Gladys Bertha Stern], and died in Wallingford, England.. She wrote numerous books, mostly novels (the first one at age 20), short stories, biographies, literary criticism, plays (one with Rupert Croft-Cooke—familiar to WT as the respected author of a trio of wine books, *Sherry*, 1956, *Port*, 1957, and *Madeira*, 1961.) She was a fan of Jane Austen and of Robert Louis Stevenson, of whom she wrote a fictionalized biography. She also gave us *The Ugly Dachshund*, 1938.

#### FANTASTIC CATALOGUE!

We recently learned of a 1997 facsimile reproduction of the *1898 Centenary Catalogue of Farrow & Jackson*, Wine and Spirit Merchants and General Engineers, London. Reprinted by Richard Dennis, Somerset, card covered book (187 pp) has a Foreword by Bernard Watney, renowned expert on wine antiques. Hundreds of fascinating wine and spirit-associated objects are displayed—"a unique insight into the social history of a 100 years ago" [Watney]. It is also a valuable resource for the collector and historian.



CORK BRANDS [reduced]

## IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by Bob Foster



*The Vintner's Apprentice: An Insider's Guide to the Art and Craft of Wine Making, Taught by the Masters*, by Eric Miller. Beverley, MA: Quarry Books, 2012. Softback, 207 pp., \$24.99.

"... a masterful job"

Most wine books start with a short chapter or two on how grapes are raised and how wine is made. But many wine lovers want to go further and learn more without having to take college level courses in plant science or chemistry. This book is the solution. It covers far more depth than most wine books but is clear and straightforward enough that you do not need to master molecular biology to understand the topic.

The author, the founder and winemaker at Pennsylvania's Chaddsford Hill Winery, has done a masterful job. He begins with five chapters on starting a winery, including topics such as choosing a site, picking the grape varieties to be planted, and what to expect at harvest time. The remaining twelve chapters cover making wine including fermenting, blending, bottling and laboratory analysis. Interspersed within each of these chapters are interviews with highly regarded well-known winemakers such as Eileen Crane (Domaine Carneros), Peter Gago (Penfolds), and Gary Pisoni. These sections are set up in a question and answer format and offer fascinating insights to the philosophy of each of the winemakers.

The book is lavishly illustrated with color photographs set out in interesting patterns. The back of the book has a detailed index and resources that anyone starting a winery or simply wanting to learn more can pursue. Highly recommended.

*The Vineyard at the End of the World: Maverick Winemakers and the Rebirth of Malbec*, by Ian Mount. New York: W.W. Norton, 2012. Hardback, 350 pp., \$26.95.

"...worth a read by every wine lover"

What a superb book! Ian Mount tells not only the history of Argentina in general but also the development of the Argentine wine industry. The vinous output has gone from oxidized, poorly made plonk to some really top notch wines. The land that would become Argentina's prime vineyard area is desert on the eastern slopes, the dry side of the Andes.

The story of how the ancient civilizations created irrigation channels, and then modern individuals



improved and expanded them is a tale unto itself. Argentina has had an amazing array of political and economic turnovers. Each of these upheavals has crippled, or spurred, the wine industry. It is an almost dizzying pattern of progress and regression. Additionally as was true in Europe, ornamental plants brought from outside the country caused an epic infestation of phylloxera.

While Malbec was, at one time, heavily grown in Bordeaux, after that region's phylloxera epidemic, it was largely abandoned by the growers as it was perceived as too disease prone. (A terrible frost in 1956 wiped out the few Malbec vines that remained in this part of France.) Cuttings of the grape were first brought to Argentina in 1853. While the vine had proven to be disease prone in the cool, moist communes of Bordeaux, it grew well in the hot, dry upper desert vineyards of Argentina. As Mount notes, the longer, warmer growing seasons vastly increased the yields of the grape as well.

Argentina seems to be the perfect location for this grape. The struggle was to match the winemaking techniques and procedures with this variety. As the author shows, the winemaking practices in Argentina were primitive for decades. Some of the difficulties also came from the way Argentinians do business. Many of the early winemakers learned that a contract with a grower was almost meaningless. Winemakers would show up on a designated day to pick their crop only to find the field already harvested of every grape. The growers would simply tell the winemaker that they had received a better offer after the original contract and had taken that offer.

I was fascinated that the drive for lower alcohol levels, championed by *California Grapevine* columnist Dan Berger and Sacramento wine merchant Darrell Corti, is nothing new. The legendary Eva Perón disliked higher alcohol wines and decreed that all Argentine wine had to be below 11.5% alcohol. This forced the winemakers to add large amounts of water to the fermenting juice. When her reign ended so did the decree. Everything old is new again.

In more recent times, the book shows the major boost to the wine industry provided by the now legendary American winemaker Paul Hobbs working with the Catena family. It was a long struggle to get rid of ancient production methods that made lots of bad wine. But even the drive to modernization was not smooth. When wine giant Kendall Jackson attempted to build vineyards and a winery, the project failed, apparently because K-J did not take into account local practices and attitudes. The author concluded that tight U.S. business practices simply could not be imposed on the Argentine culture.

It is an amazing story, well told. The work has a good index and a few maps to help the reader

visualize the region being discussed. This fine work is worth a read by every wine lover. Very highly recommended.

*The Finest Wines of Burgundy, A Guide to the Best Producers of the Côte d'Or and Their Wines*, Bill Nanson. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012. Softback, 320 pp., \$34.95.

The University of California Press is clearly on a roll, producing great wine book after great wine book. Here is the latest, a superb guide to the wines of Burgundy by Bill Nanson. Nanson, who regularly visits Burgundy and has his own web site, [Burgundy-report.com](http://Burgundy-report.com), has produced a topnotch work. [See *WTQ* Oct 2012 for Tom Pinney's "The Wine Book List of UC Press."]

[Bob Foster, a founder of the *Wayward Tendrils*, has been the longtime reviewer of wine books for the *California Grapevine*, based in San Diego, CA. We send our Tendril thanks for their always generous permission to reprint Bob's reviews. —Ed.]



#### A PIECE OF TWO PARTS:

*The Wine Book of the Year and a Virginia Book Barn*  
by Christopher Fielden

*Wine Grapes* by Jancis Robinson, Julia Harding & José Vouillamoz. London: Allen Lane, 2012. 1242 pp. £120.

*The Judgment of Paris* by George M. Taber. New York: Scribner, 2006. 330 pp. \$16.

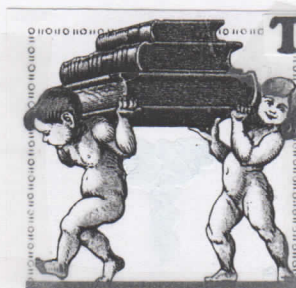
*I'll Drink to That* by Rudolph Chelminski. New York: Gotham Books, 2007, 302 pp. \$27.50.

*Passion on the Vine* by Sergio Esposito. New York: Broadway Books, 2008. 284 pp. \$14.95.

*The Far Side of Eden* by James Conaway. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002. 365 pp. \$28.

*Wine Drinking for Inspired Drinking* by Michael J. Gelb. Philadelphia: Running Press, 2010. 272 pp. \$19.95.

*Virginia Wines—A Vineyard Year* by Felicia Warburg Rogan. Charlottesville: Thomasson-Grant, 1987. 32 pp.



how have passed me by.

THIS IS A PIECE OF TWO PARTS: the first is a review of what is unquestionably the wine book of the year; the second is the result of a visit I paid to a book barn in Virginia, which enabled me to catch up on a number of American wine books that I know I should have read, but which some-



### *Wine Grapes: A Complete Guide . . .*

Jancis Robinson has long had a fascination with grape varieties. As long ago as 1986, she wrote *Vines, Grapes and Wines: The Wine Drinker's Guide to Grape Varieties* and followed this ten years later with *Jancis Robinson's Guide to Wine Grapes* which profiled over 850 different varieties of grapes. Both of these she suggests you should now throw out as she has taken a quantum leap forward with *Wine Grapes: A Complete Guide to 1368 Vine Varieties, including Their Origins and Flavours*, written in conjunction with her longstanding research assistant Julia Harding MW and Swiss ampelographer José Vouillamoz, whose recent research has been into where wine grapes were first grown.

This is a monumental work of over 1200 pages in which descriptions are given of 1368 grape varieties, their parentage, where they are grown, the diseases to which they are susceptible, the styles they produce, and who are the best producers. In addition we are given the various aliases under which they are known around the world and other varieties with which they might be confused. The work is illustrated with colour plates from the classic seven-volume *Ampélographie* of Viala and Vermorel that appeared over the first decade of the twentieth century. (The only time I was offered a copy of this, the asking price was over £3000!)

In addition to the individual entries, there are essays on such topics as *grape varieties, mutation and clone, rootstock, grafting and fashion and DNA profiling*. It is the latter which at last enables us to name with some certainty the roots of each variety. Thus we can now say that the Zinfandel originated as the Tribidrag in Croatia before arriving in California via Puglia where it is known as the Primitivo. In addition we can now dismiss any claims that the Dalmatian Plavac Mali might have to parentage.

This might appear to be a scholarly book, and it is certainly that, but do not be put off, for the information is given in readily digestible form. It is a book that can be dipped into, as I did to check up on Zinfandel, and it has many facts with which to astound the stuffiest of wine buffs. Which country can lay claim to be the birthplace of most grape varieties? Italy, with 377. What is the more common name for the Bangalore Blue grape of India? The Isabella. Who is the one grower to make a wine from Zinfandel in France? Domaine de l'Arjolle.

Any book that describes itself as "a complete guide" immediately throws down a challenge. What is missing? I came up with a list of ten tests and it only failed on one of them. Nowhere does it appear to mention my favourite name for a grape variety—"Dog Strangler," "Etrangle-chien," one of the French synonyms for the Monastrell, or Mourvèdre, grape.

One other small criticism, in addition to the colour plates of a small number of varieties, I would have welcomed outline pictures of the leaves, and, possibly, grape bunches of some of the better known varieties, as an aid to recognition in the field.

Whilst I cannot see that I will be throwing out my earlier books on the subject by Jancis, or, indeed my *L'Ampélographie Française* by Pierre Galet, they will certainly be superceded by this latest work, which will surely be irreplaceable as a work of reference for many years to come. This is not a cheap book, but it is handsomely produced and comes in a slipcase. I would suggest that it is worth breaking into your piggy-bank to buy it. It is one of the rare modern classics in the world of wine writing.

### **Virginia Book Barn Bargains**

My bargain book-buying in Virginia provided many hours of enjoyable reading and some frustration. From it I drew two conclusions. Firstly, American wine writers are generally at their best when they are telling a story, whilst their English colleagues are best when recounting facts. Secondly, and I feel sadly, on the shoulder of every American wine writer there appears to be perched the figure of Robert Parker. Now I recognise that Mr. Parker has done much to raise awareness of wine in the United States, but the influence that he now has on wine tastes, and, consequently, prices, is way beyond that of a similar critic in Britain or Europe. It cannot be a coincidence that he features, not always favourably, in all of the following five books.

I am particularly pleased to have at last caught up with *Judgment of Paris* by George M. Taber, as I was an early visitor to the Caves de la Madeleine in the rue Boissy d'Anglas, the wine shop that Steven Spurrier, the hero of the book, bought. Indeed, I have known him in his previous, and subsequent, career in wine in Britain, where he has now become a well-respected writer and vineyard proprietor. The story is well-known of the results of the tasting which was to revolutionize firstly the world's appreciation of the qualities of wine from California and, more slowly, to galvanize the thinking of, as I know at first-hand, Burgundian producers. (I can well remember when I worked in Burgundy and we were visited by a leading winemaker from Australia, my employers suggested that he was only there to steal their ideas. The next generation of Burgundian growers will now all have been to California, Australia and New Zealand, to see what they can learn there.)

The tasting was originally conceived as little more than an informal event to show some French critics the capabilities of the Napa Valley. As such, it certainly achieved rather more than might have been anticipated, but the tasting alone scarcely provides enough material for a full-length book. Mr. Taber,



almost coincidentally, was the only English speaking journalist to attend, and afterwards he researched each of the wines that were offered at the tasting. Unsurprisingly, most of the accent is placed on those from California and here he goes into great detail as to the creation of the vineyards that produced them and their creators.

The last part of the book deals with the globalization of wine and considers possible contenders in the future capable of taking on the great wines of France, in addition to looking at other subsequent tastings, including the one in September 1997 organised by Jean-Claude Rouzaud, managing director of Champagne Louis Roederer, where he chose thirty of what he considered to be the world's greatest wines. As well as wines from Bordeaux and Burgundy, France was represented by one wine each from Champagne (it is not difficult to guess which) and the Rhône, four each from Germany and California, two from Italy and one each from a further five countries. Mr. Taber describes this as seeming "a little too much as a United Nations of wines, with some questionable ones selected for international balance. Nonetheless, it was a good stab at naming the International First Growths."

For his own part, as a result of his travels overseas, he offers rather a conservative selection of candidates for this pantheon: Cloudy Bay from New Zealand, Penfold's Grange and Leeuwin Estate from Australia, Rustenberg from South Africa, Quinta da Carolina from the Douro valley, Almaviva from Chile and Domaine Drouhin, Oregon. Each of us could make our own selection and, if I were to make mine, it is doubtful whether I would include any of those wines, but individual opinions are based on individual tasting experiences and each one of these differs, depending not just on the wines, but also on the circumstances. There are now many more contenders for inclusion than there were forty-six years ago.

It may be difficult for us to understand now just what a shock the Judgment of Paris caused. I can remember at about the same time putting up, in a blind tasting, Jekel Vineyard's Cabernet Sauvignon against a number of top clarets of the same vintage. England's leading writer on Bordeaux at the time went away feeling that he had been deceived when he picked the Californian wine as being the best. Lalou Bize-Leroy is quoted as having told her partner in the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Aubert de Vilaine, that his participation had put back progress in their estate by a hundred years. How wrong hindsight, and current prices, have shown her to be!

This is a fascinating book about a fascinating moment in wine history; a moment worthy of being recorded and Mr. Taber has recorded it in a more than worthy fashion.

I will declare from the start that I was put off by the subtitle on the cover of *I'll Drink to That* by Rudolph Chelminski. It reads "BEAUJOLAIS and the French Peasant Who Made It the World's Most Popular Wine." It was these last four words that grated with me, as, if only because of the limitations placed upon its production by its geographical borders, it is difficult to make such a claim. Certainly Beaujolais, and particularly Beaujolais Nouveau, have been in vogue, but fashions are transitory and the Beaujolais has, over the past few years, suffered gravely because this fashion has passed, with the result that vast swathes of vineyards have been uprooted. I can remember attending a conference in the region some thirty years ago, when the wine buyer for a major French supermarket chain said that Beaujolais lost its popular appeal the moment it became a luxury item.

This book has two sides to it and the side that I really enjoyed is the picture of the Beaujolais as a region and the people who live there. For those who have enjoyed the *Clochemerle* series of novels, this book shows just how close to reality they are.

I am less happy about the hagiographic picture that is painted of the subject of the book, Georges Duboeuf. It is true that, by hard work, he created the biggest brand of Beaujolais in the world. It is true that he dragged himself up from almost nothing—his father, a farmer in the Maconnais, who happened to own some vines, died when he was two. It is true that his breakthrough came when he set off on his bicycle with a couple of samples of Maconnais wine and rode ten kilometres to Le Chapon Fin, a Michelin rosetted restaurant owned by Paul Blanc. It is true that his striking labels stood out, their modernity being well ahead of his time. What I have reservations about is described by the author as "*le gout Duboeuf*—the Duboeuf taste—what a good Beaujolais should do for the nose, the palate and the soul." In effect, forty years ago he did what Robert Parker is accused of doing now: moulding consumers' tastes to a very personal style. The result of this is that wines are made against certain style parameters and lose their individuality. The customer chooses his Beaujolais, because it is a Duboeuf wine, not because it is a Chiroubles or a Saint-Amour.

The author no way seeks to hide his closeness to his subject; indeed he is justly proud of the fact that he has been able to work alongside Duboeuf over a period of years. However this closeness has, on occasion, clouded his judgment. Let me give two examples. Firstly there is the *Lyon Mag* affair. *Lyon Mag* is a local monthly published in the city of Lyons. In the summer of 2002 it published an article on the wines of the Beaujolais, with the opinions of both the local trade and wine writers represented. At the time



there was a widely held opinion that many Beaujolais growers were selling inferior wine at inflated prices, though Duboeuf's feelings were that "Beaujolais wines have never been as good as they have become over the past five years or so." Unfortunately for the magazine it included the opinion of one Parisian critic François Mauss (described by Chelminski as "somewhat obscure"), who said that Beaujolais was "*vin de merde*" "shit wine." The author's description of this tale is one-sided, as he does not point out that this was just one opinion among a number on both sides that was expressed.

Having spent some years researching the book, it must have come as some surprise to him when, three years later, Duboeuf was prosecuted for wine fraud. In all fairness the offence appears to have been more technical than wilful, though it resulted in a fine of 30,000 euros. Chelminski describes this as "doubtful justice at best" and claims merit for Duboeuf in that he "downgraded all the litigious wines one notch." The truth is, under French wine law, he had no choice.

This is a fascinating portrait of one man and the region that he has come to represent. Would it have been better if it had been painted at arm's length?

Wine is such a broad subject that all of us have gaps in our knowledge and I am sad to admit that Italian wine is such a gap in mine. Thus I am happy to come across a book on the subject, particularly one that is written with joy and enthusiasm. Such a book is *Passion on the Vine* by Sergio Esposito. Again this book can be divided into two parts: the first depicts the author's progress from his natal suburb in Naples to his creation of the top retail outlet in New York City specialising in the sale of Italian wine. The second tells of an extended trip that he made with his parents and his family to the vineyards of Italy. It is not quite clear to me whether he brought his parents along primarily so that they could visit their relatives or to act as babysitters, whilst he and his wife went to visit their wine friends.

It is these last that I find particularly fascinating. I feel that I now have a personal letter of introduction to the top names in many of the major wine regions of the country. This book puts flesh on the bones of wine labels that I might have seen. We meet the growers round their kitchen tables rather than on the shelves in wine stores. Before I next go to Italy, this is a book that I will consult before creating my itinerary.

Having really enjoyed his *Napa* some years ago, I was more than happy to find, at a bargain price, James Conaway's *The Far Side of Eden*. This is history written close to the ground, a wonderful tale of the vinous politics of the Napa Valley, largely written from an ecological point of view. In many ways it is a sad story, for it shows just how far ambition, money and power can corrupt. In many ways Robert

Parker is one of the villains of the piece, for it is his palate, and his power, that has driven so many to create vineyards, at whatever cost, moral and financial, to produce the wines that gain the elusive 100 points and instant fortune and fame. Behind these multi-millionaires seeking the legendary El Dorado is a small group of experts—consultants in vineyard creation and winemaking—who have the ear, and the taste buds, of the guru.

All this has a heavy price to pay and the once almost pristine Napa Valley has paid, and is still paying, this price. Trying to limit the cost is a group of dedicated environmentalists and harassed civil servants. Occasionally they have their victories, but more often they appear to have their reverses.

This book paints individual portraits of all those involved, on both sides, and the reader feels that he is living in the community, with all its problems. Is wine the hope for the future of the valley, or will it be its destruction? The book is a gripping read, but there is no final solution. We are left with a sign of hope as a steelhead trout is seen swimming up the Napa River to its spawning ground. However, this is not the end. I am looking forward to the next instalment in the story. This was a book I could not put down.

The next book, I must admit that I did put it down in frustration. Michael J. Gelb, the author of *Wine Drinking for Inspired Thinking* is certainly full of himself. After the first twenty pages or so I felt that whilst the book contained much useful advice, I had no reason to learn any more about the author's importance as a "self-employed creativity consultant." Did I need to have a chapter titled "How to enjoy reading this book"? Did I want, or need, a succession of quotations about wine that seemed to have no more relevance than to show me how widely read the author was? The answer to all these questions is "No!" However, I have now discovered how to approach the book. You open it at random and you might well discover a gem. I imagine it is somewhat like diamond mining; for every thousand tons of rubble there is the single stone that makes it all worthwhile. Woefully, the book finishes on a somewhat sad note. Obviously the author ran out of inspiration, for each of the last ten pages is blank, apart from the heading:

Name of Wine

Comments, Inspirations, and Poetic Musings.  
Hopefully, it will be some time before I have to rely on mining for diamonds!

My visit to Virginia was not just to buy books. I did manage to include a wedding, a fair amount of wine and some vineyard visits. My last book is really little more than a pamphlet: *Virginia Wines—A Vineyard Year* by Felicia Warburg Rogan. This was published in 1987 and the local wine industry has

*continued on p. 19 —*



The Strange Case of Frona Eunice Wait  
and Major Ben C. Truman  
by Thomas Pinney

[Tom Pinney, our indefatigable researcher and wine author, is Professor of English, Emeritus, Pomona College, and a noted Kipling scholar, among other achievements. His most recent wine-related book is *The Makers of American Wine: A Record of Two Hundred Years*, published this year. — Ed.]



FRONA WAIT'S *WINES AND VINES of California*, 1889, is a book that all collectors know. It is often referred to as "the first book about California wines from the popular standpoint" or words to that effect, and the fact that it was written by a woman is by itself enough to give it real

distinction. It is, as I once wrote in this journal, "full of information" and "must be read by anyone with an interest in the history of California winemaking."<sup>1</sup>

That estimate is still valid, but, as Charles Sullivan and I have recently discovered (quite independently, coincidentally, and accidentally), a large part of the book was not written by Mrs. Wait but was simply lifted—"plagiarized" is the official word<sup>2</sup>—from the work of another writer, Major Benjamin C. Truman.<sup>3</sup> Truman was commissioned by the *New York Times* in 1886 to write a series of articles on the "fruit and raisin culture" of California. He wrote eleven articles, or letters, for the series, nine of them on California wine; they appeared in the *Times* from 16 January to 6 April 1887.<sup>4</sup> He never collected them in book form and they have not been reprinted since—except for the nearly thirty pages of them quietly taken over by Mrs. Wait and scattered through her 1889 book.

The victim of Mrs. Wait's thefts was one of the most active journalists in California from shortly after the Civil War down to the turn of the century: Truman had a varied career, working for the government, owning newspapers, doing publicity for the Southern Pacific railroad, writing about the California missions, and many other things. But the unifying theme of his work is the enthusiastic promotion of California's virtues and attractions—he was an unashamed booster, and Southern California was his special object of devotion, though he did not confine himself to the South. His best-known work is probably *Semi-Tropical California*, 1874, a sustained hymn of praise to what were then the cow counties of California. If, in order to praise, it was necessary to omit much of the truth, Truman was happy to obey the need. He was also, in my opinion, a bad writer, displaying the characteristic faults of 19th-century journalism to an exaggerated degree, including verbosity, inflated diction, elegant variation (not "a

marble" but "that precious gambling implement of the average naughty boy"), periphrasis, and abundant cliché. His prose is loose, wordy, inaccurate, and fluent, all too fluent. Apart from all that, I suppose he was good enough. Mrs. Wait apparently thought so.

In the introduction to her book, Mrs. Wait acknowledges the help of three "workers who have scattered fragments of much needed information along the way." She then names Ferdinand A. Haber, who at the time was sales manager for Gustave Niebaum's Inglenook Vineyard and was later a wine merchant in San Francisco. So far as I can find, he published nothing and was thus immune to plagiarism. The second source acknowledged was Arpad Haraszthy, son of the distinguished Agoston. Arpad, in the late 1880s, was enjoying success as the producer of Eclipse champagne, the first California sparkling wine to achieve any reputation. His standing in the trade was confirmed when he was made president of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners on its founding in 1880. In *Wines and Vines of California* he is acknowledged (in small type and not in the table of contents) as the author of chapter 4, "How to Drink Wine."<sup>5</sup> Haraszthy would have been in a position to furnish Mrs. Wait with much information gathered by the Board—in particular the long, undigested, lists of names of wine makers and grape growers that are piled up in a number of the book's chapters.

Mrs. Wait gives special prominence to Major Truman among her sources: "First among them is Major Ben C. Truman in a series of letters about California Wines to the *New York Times*." This seems generous enough, and on page 104 of her book she acknowledges Truman before quoting from one of the *Times* articles at length. What she does not say is that some thirty passages of varying length—some several pages long—have been taken *verbatim* from Truman's letters and put into her book as though they were her own. I imagine that most plagiarists make at least a nominal effort to adapt their stolen texts to their own purposes. Not Mrs. Wait. Truman's words reappear in their new settings just as he wrote them. That has made it easy to identify the thefts, but it raises questions about what Mrs. Wait thought that she was doing.

Truman, for example, begins a sentence in the second of his wine letters (*Times*, 30 January 1877), "I was once conversing with Mr. J. De Barth Shorb, an extensive wine maker at San Gabriel, Los Angeles County," and goes on to report what Shorb said. Mrs. Wait copies this and the rest of the passage faithfully on p. 40 of her book. I doubt that she ever met Shorb; what would he think if he read the statement? And what was she thinking?

Since Truman's articles remain buried in the



remote back numbers of the New York Times I won't make reference to the page and column where one may find the stolen passages in their original places. Instead, I give the date of the plundered article, so that anyone who wishes to repeat my labor of comparison can do so. I give the page or pages of *Wines and Vines of California* where the plagiarized texts appear. In some cases a given page will have passages taken from more than one place in Truman's articles. Each of the pages from Wait's book in the following list is composed in whole or in part of passages taken from the corresponding article by Truman.

Wait	Truman
10-11-12	16 January 1887
12-13	30 January 1887
13-14	16 January 1887
23-24-25-26	30 January 1887
28-29	30 January 1887
29-30	6 April 1887
33	16 January 1887
35-36	16 January 1887
40-43	30 January 1887
43-44-45	16 January 1887
103-104	13 March 1887
172-173-174-175-176	20 February 1887
196-197-198-199	6 March 1887
199-200	20 March 1887
202-203	6 March 1887

The thefts fall into four clearly-marked divisions of Mrs. Wait's book, the first being by far the largest, and consisting of the first three chapters. The second and shortest division, pages 102 and 104, is part of chapter 7, on Napa County. The third division is chapter 10, on the vineyards and wineries of Los Angeles. The fourth is chapter 13, "Other Wine-Making Counties." A look at these chapters makes it pretty clear what sort of thing she stole, and why she stole it.

The first three chapters of *Wines and Vines of California* bear the following titles: "The Art of Wine-Making," "How Our Native Wines are Managed," and "Early History of the Industry." These all involve matters of broad general information and of more or less technical understanding—e.g., how vineyards are managed and how wine is made—and since it appears that she had neither the general information nor the technical understanding, she simply went and took what she needed from Truman. Truman did not know much of these things either, but he knew more, or at least pretended to know more, than she did. Truman's first two articles are her main support: they cover such topics as how California differs from Europe; the increasing respect given California wines; the conditions of grape growing in California; the viticultural divisions of the state and their different products; the planting, training, and cultivation of

grapes, and the manufacture of wine. These she is content to let Truman explain. The section on wine-making, pp. 40-43 of her book, from the first of Truman's letters, is the longest single passage among her many thefts.

The second, and shortest, division consists of a couple of pages from the chapter on Napa County. Here, Mrs. Wait appears to be on secure ground: she had been to Napa, she had talked to people there, she had something of her own to write, and so she did. Truman furnished only a little. One may note what pains she took with the stolen material on p. 103 of this Napa chapter; it consists of five different texts taken from four different pages in Truman's sixth letter, cobbled together to flesh out a couple of paragraphs. This is a striking exception to her usual practice of transferring a passage unchanged.

The third division, chapter 13, "Los Angeles Vineyards," is in some ways the most interesting. The chapter is only a bit over six pages long (172-178), and a full two pages consist of one of those lists of names poured out in several chapters, suggesting that Mrs. Wait found little to interest her down south. Or, rather, I am sure that she never went there. Almost the whole of the chapter is lifted directly from Truman: she shows no knowledge of anything beyond what is in Truman. The following chapter, about Lucky Baldwin's Santa Anita Ranch, is also a Southern California subject, but there is nothing in the chapter that Mrs. Wait could not have found in other printed sources. Life is too short, however, to pursue all of her possible thefts.

The last division, "Other Wine-Making Counties," is also heavily dependent upon Truman, and I do not doubt that Mrs. Wait compiled the chapter without taking the trouble to visit the Foothills, the Sacramento Valley, or even the East Bay.

There are 14 chapters in *Wines and Vines of California*. If we subtract the first three, the tenth, and the thirteenth as derived from Truman, and the fourth, as avowedly by Arpad Haraszthy, that leaves seven that can be credited to Mrs. Wait's account. They include Napa (7), Sonoma (8), and Livermore (9); Fresno (12) too may be mostly her work; I have no evidence, but given the limits of her travelling enterprise, I have my suspicions. Her heart was evidently in Napa County, and that chapter I am willing to believe is all her own work.

Where, one wonders, was Major Truman in all this? He lived in San Francisco, in a suite at the Palace Hotel, from 1878 to 1890, while he was in charge of the "Literary Bureau" (read "publicity office") of the Southern Pacific Railroad. He was active and prominent among the city's journalists, and Mrs. Wait must have known him. Given theft so blatant, so open, as that of Mrs. Wait, is it conceivable



that Truman did not know what she had done? Did he perhaps assist her in the work? That seems to me very possible. He had written and been paid for the articles; he evidently did not mean to collect them; he might be willing to see them plagiarized in a good cause. Perhaps he knew Mrs. Wait and was willing to assist her in a generous way. Would she have been able even to see the Truman letters if he had not provided them? Who had back files of the New York Times in San Francisco in the late 1880s? These are questions to which I have no answer.<sup>6</sup>

I do not think that Mrs. Wait can have been ignorant of what plagiarism is. She was a journalist; she certainly knew the difference between copying and putting things in one's own words from one's own inquiries. Kipling's verses put the matter of literary tradition clearly:

When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,  
He'd 'eard men sing by land an' sea;  
An' what he thought 'e might require,  
'E went an' took—the same as me!

The market-girls an' fishermen,  
The shepherds an' the sailors too,  
They 'eard old songs turn up again,  
But kep' it quiet—the same as you!

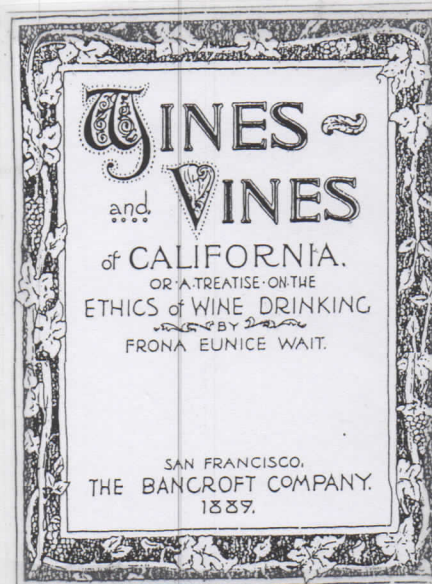
They knew 'e stole; 'e knew they knowed,  
They didn't tell, nor make a fuss,  
But winked at 'Omer down the road,  
An' 'e winked back—the same as us!

"They knew 'e stole; 'e knew they knowed" does not apply here: basic literary forms—"old songs"—that all poets and story-tellers must inevitably use are one thing; reporting is quite another. The whole point of journalism is that what it reports is not old—something already done—but new, what keeps you up with the current moment. My guess—it is only that—is that Mrs. Wait badly needed to publish a book that would qualify for the title of *Wines and Vines of California*; that she did not have material enough or means enough to carry the job much beyond the northern counties; and that she therefore ransacked Truman's letters to fill out the manuscript. But why did she not disguise what she had done?

#### NOTES

1. WTQ 15 (July 2005).
2. The *Oxford English Dictionary* offers a succinct definition of plagiarism: "The action or practice of taking someone else's work, idea, etc., and passing it off as one's own; literary theft."
3. Charles discovered the fact first, in his research on early California wine. He refers to it in a note in his chapter on El Dorado County, WTQ, Oct. 2012, p. 24, n. 22. I stumbled on it in the course of trying to annotate Truman's articles.

4. The two others were "Raisins from California," 17 April 1887, and "The Fruits of California," 24 April 1887.
5. Most readers will probably assume that the chapter was written especially for Mrs. Wait's book. It was not, though no reference is made to that fact. The chapter was originally a talk that Haraszthy gave to the Sixth Annual State Viticultural Convention meeting in San Francisco on Saturday, March 10, 1888; it is printed in the Report of the Convention, Sacramento, 1888, pp. 183-200. The talk is reprinted in full in Wait's book, pp. 47-75, to which is added a further six pages not in the Report. They have to do with matching food and wine, with liqueurs, and with clarifying wines. I suppose that Haraszthy gave her these supplementary pages together with his permission to reprint the talk in the way that she has done.
6. Gail Unzelman raises the question of whether, if the material is given to you rather than stolen, can you be said to have plagiarized it? I suppose not, according to the letter of the law. But it is surely unethical to come before the public as having written what was in fact written by someone else. The public is still deceived, even if the original author is not injured.



FIELDEN, *cont from p. 16* —

come a long way since then. Most of the text could apply to any vineyard region, but it is accompanied by some truly beautiful photographs.

Even though I did have to buy an extra bag to carry them home, my visit to the book barn was well worth the detour.

[Christopher Fielden, our chief British correspondent, who has nearly a half-century in the Wine Trade and a dozen books to his credit, enjoys the wayward search for new wine titles to bring to our attention. We are grateful for his wanderings. — Ed.]



FREDERICK A. McMILLIN [1923–2012]:  
IN MEMORIAM



IN OUR OCTOBER 2011 (v.21 #4) issue, we wrote: "With this 'Books & Bottles' column, our octogenarian Wayward Tendril, Fred McMillin, announces his retirement. Fred and his writings have graced our Newsletter/Quarterly from the first issue ... twenty-

one years without missing a deadline! We will give him due rest, with our utmost thanks, and wish him wonderful retirement pleasures—which we can be certain will be filled with his wine book treasures." It is a blessing that we were able to express our gratitude to Fred at the time; he would pass away just over one year later.

Fred McMillin, with his writing and teaching, has left an immense legacy to the world of wine. He always promised he would "write up" his personal history with wine for the WTQ, but he never seemed to find a spare moment to do it; too many online columns, newspaper columns, magazine columns, and Wayward Tendril columns to get out—plus his weekly wine tasting sessions. At one point, he had over 400 wine articles to his credit (from Teheran, Grand Bahamas Island, New York, London, Texas, San Francisco, Los Angeles, to New Mexico, and on).

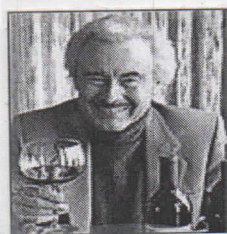
Our veteran wine writer had taught wine history and conducted wine tasting classes—on three continents—for almost four decades. He established his very popular weekly Fred McMillin Wine Courses in San Francisco in 1975. Before his retirement from a thirty-eight-year career as a chemical engineer with Chevron Oil Co., his passion for wine and its appreciation followed wherever his work took him. And in 1995, Fred was honored by the Academy of Wine Communications as one the twenty-two best American wine writers.

From early on, Fred was keen to be a writer; he won a national journalism contest in high school that included a scholarship to Columbia University in New York. But his parents, both trained in chemistry, reminded him that then, in 1940, chemical engineers were making three times as much as journalists. He studied chemical engineering. He was a brilliant student, and later pursued a masters degree in philosophy to go with his two degrees in chemistry.

He first learned about wine in the mid-1940s while doing graduate work in chemistry at the University of Washington: he befriended Angelo Pellegrini, professor of English, who became his handball partner. Fred built a custom brandy still for the wine loving Pelle-

grini (entertaining author of a number of wine books familiar to WT members), and the professor taught Fred about wine.

Fred's writings were always snappy and light-hearted, yet filled with well-researched facts about all aspects of wine. He completely enjoyed the amusing side of wine and often closed his articles with a "Wine Smile" of some little tidbit that he savored. "Bad news to report this week," he once wrote your Editor, "I phoned Egypt, spoke to the Trader Jomal shop, and they said they were out of Two Buck Tut." Fred even had one of his quips printed in the legendary San Francisco Chronicle column of Herb Caen: "I don't know what you're up to [wrote Caen], but Ruth McMillin is at Cambridge studying early English baking for a course on the history of bread and wine that she and her husband, Fred, will teach at the City College of San Francisco. 'Her only problem so far is the library,' reports Fred. 'It seems that visiting bread scholars may use it only on a knead-to-know basis.' Uh-huh."



Fred had an extensive wine library, his shelves filled with those books he felt were best suited to compliment his untiring passion for educating others about wine: Barry, Henderson, Simon, Hedrick, Allen, Johnson, Sullivan and Pinney were among

his favorites. His books reflected the story of wine—its history from the earliest times to the present—and its appreciation—wine in everyday life, selecting, storing, serving, enjoying.

Kate Heyhoe, celebrated author of several cookery books and co-author of *Harvesting the Dream: the Rages-to-Riches Tale of the Sutter Home Winery*, (2003), perfectly summed up Fred McMillin. She dedicated the book "to Fred McMillin, wine scholar and gentleman" and inscribed it, "thanks for your wit, warmth & brilliance these many, many years."

Cheers, Fred. Many will miss you very much.

P.S. As per Fred's wishes, his library will be dispersed so that others with a similar passion might enjoy them. To that end, your Editor is proud to offer a vintage selection to Wayward Tendrils members. Please see list enclosed with this issue.



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# Wine in California: The Early Years

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

### Part II: Amador County, Southern & Northern Foothills

by *Charles L. Sullivan*

*[In Part I of the Sierra Foothills segment of this great wine history we explored and studied El Dorado County, its winegrowing pioneers, vineyards, and statistics. With our present installment we conclude our inspection of the Foothill winegrowers. As in previous chapters, extensive, informative footnotes, and a substantial library of references (all recommended for WT bookshelves), are provided. — Ed.]*

UNDERSTANDING 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY WINEGROWING in Amador County depends greatly on understanding its geography. Even though Amador today is the king of the foothill wine country, in the early years it was little more than an afterthought when writers described the development and potential of the foothills' wine industry. Today it is the home of more than twenty wineries and 2000 acres of the finest winegrape varieties.



MADOR COUNTY had a complicated geographical beginning. It was not one of the original counties, but in 1854, after some confusion, it was formed from pieces of El Dorado and Calaveras counties. At first the town of Jackson was part of the Calaveras portion. There it

had been the county seat. Now part of the new county, it was selected the Amador County seat. Thus in a period of two years the little mining town, and soon to be the viticultural center of the county, had been the county seat of both Calaveras and Amador counties.<sup>27</sup>

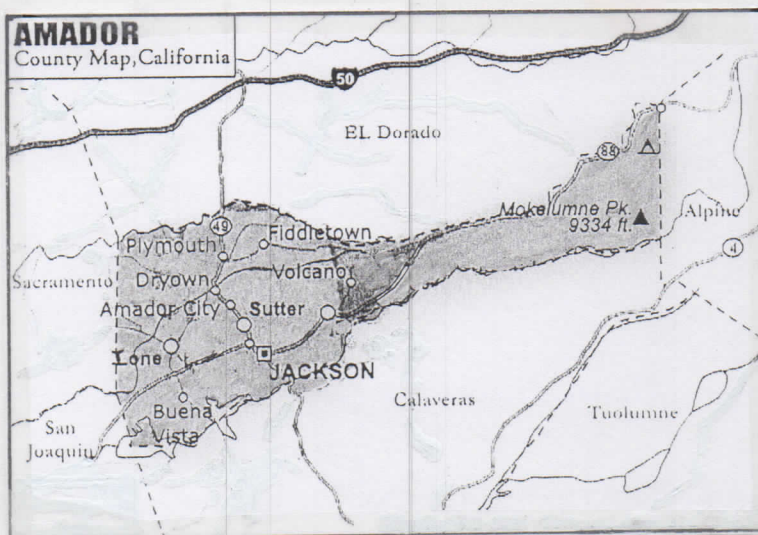
Today Plymouth is Amador County's chief wine town, the so-called "Gateway to the Shenandoah Valley." In the early days winegrowing was concentrated north of Jackson along what is today's Highway 49 through Drytown, Amador City and Sutter Creek. There was also lots of viticulture from Jackson to the northeast toward the village of Clinton. These lands have elevations of 1000 to 2000 feet, definitely inside today's Sierra Foothills AVA. The other early areas of importance were located to the west of Jackson around the towns of Ione and Buena Vista. That land has barely an elevation of 300 feet and is certainly part of the Central Valley, not the foothills.

Eric Costa has written the best history of Amador County winegrowing. His meticulous research informs much of the history that follows.<sup>28</sup> Benjamin Burt is Costa's nominee as the county's first vineyardist. Located northeast of Amador City, he was primarily a horticultural generalist, but in 1852 he did plant about three acres of Mission vines. By 1860 he had a substantial orchard and was still in business growing grapes in the 1880s.<sup>29</sup>

Samuel Page was a more important horticultural

pioneer, mainly for the detailed report he supplied the State Agricultural Society in 1859 on the varieties of grape vines and fruit trees he had planted on his land. Horace Kilham had sold Page his eight-acre spread just south of Jackson in 1857. Page was a physician and like Burt he quickly developed his place into a handsome and profitable nursery. He had acquired his planting material from Anthony Smith's great Sacramento nursery. In his report he listed by name his varieties of apple (29), pear (27), plum (15) and peach (17). There were also nectarines, cherries and quince.

The grape varieties he listed help us understand the continuous recital of the number of "foreign" varieties being planted all over northern California in the fifties and sixties. By "foreign" varieties we must understand that these were vinifera varieties other



than the Mission, which is also vinifera. The press and reports of the state's agricultural societies continuously spread the word about all the "foreign" varieties that this or that vineyardist had planted. Almost never was there any mention of the actual



name of the varieties involved. As the years went by writers reading these reports too often inferred that the original provenance of such varieties had probably been the most noted wine regions of Europe: Bordeaux, Burgundy, the Rhineland. This was not so.

These were vines imported by numerous nurserymen in northern California from New England nurseries. There they had been used to produce table grapes. Of course, one can make wine from any grape variety, and few of California's pioneer farmers/vineyardists knew one from the other. Page's list of grape varieties gives us a clear picture of which varieties were going into most of the hundreds of new foothill vineyards, other than the Mission and natives such as the Catawba.

He listed 28 different varieties. Every one of them was a New England table variety brought to America from Europe between 1815 and 1840. There was the Black Hamburg, White Corinth, Royal Muscadine, White Syrian and twenty-four more, along with the eastern natives, Catawba, Isabella and Clinton.

There were a few from which one could make good wine, most obviously the Muscat of Alexandria and the Muscat blanc. The Zinfandel was also included, but was not listed as such. It was there as the Black St. Peters, a variety then thought in New England to be closely related to the popular Zinfandel (sic) and later found to be identical to what we now call Zinfandel. As the Black St. Peters in 1859 its wine was named best at the California State Fair. The triumph confused the judges, since the variety was understood to be a table grape. It was not until the 1880s that the confusion was finally cleared up. By then the Zinfandel was second to none in the Sierra Foothills as a red wine grape.<sup>30</sup>

The 1860 U. S. Census lists seven vineyardists in Amador County, which is an undercount, but not by much. By 1870 a very different picture emerges from the census numbers. There were six clearly commercial wineries in the Jackson/Ione neighborhoods. There was also one northeast of Drytown. All had wine on hand of more than 1000 gallons. There were also thirty-six who had 200-1000 gallons on hand, most of whom must be considered commercial in a small way. Locations given then were less than perfectly accurate, since those days were before 1897 when Rural Free Delivery began in California. Thus the Shenandoah Valley's leading winegrower was listed in nearby Fiddletown, where his family picked up its mail.<sup>31</sup>


Probably the most important winegrower at that time was Stephen Finn, located northwest of Drytown and west of today's Plymouth. He was best known for his successful roadhouse, but his little winery averaged more than 5000 gallons annually, produced from his eight acres of Mission vines. Born an Irish

Catholic, Finn's success came partly from his sale of sacramental wine to the clergy in three eastern cities. His winery operation ended with his sudden death in 1880 at age fifty.<sup>32</sup>

### Douet and Suize

No one accounted for in the 1870 census had a more colorful story than André Douet and his partner of forty years, Marie Suize. The site of their viticultural operation was on land east of Jackson near Clinton, an area scattered with small vineyards in the 1870s. Douet had come to the Gold Country from France in 1849, Suize in 1852. Both spent time placer mining and were very successful. Marie came to be called "Madame Pantaloon," since she worked their diggings in men's attire. After settling into winegrowing, she once advertised the sale of some equipment under that name, alone.

**For Sale.**



THIRTY-FIVE SPIRIT PIPES, 20 of them new; 15 of them have been in use but are in complete order. Also, 9 Casks holding from 600 to 800 gallons each. The Casks are supplied with gates for the purpose of entering to clean them.

For particulars, apply at Madame Pantaloon's ranch, near Slabtown!

Amador Ledger's 1872 ad for Madame Pantaloon's used winemaking equipment [E. Costa, *Old Vines*, p. 19]

The partners' winemaking operations were maintained separately, but the vineyard was apparently shared. Like others, André and Marie sold wine in Virginia City. In the later seventies she opened a liquor store in that town where she sold their wines and cordials. She later returned to the ranch and died in 1892. Douet remained active until 1902 when he

**FOR SALE.**

At A. Picardo's depot, near Jackson, a lot of

FINE OLD CLARET,  
ANGELICA, PORT WINE  
AND BRANDY.

They are finely flavored, of the purest and best quality. They are made at my winery, from grapes grown in my vineyard near Clinton Amador county, Cal. A. Picardo is my agent.

J. A. DOUET, PROP.

sold the ranch and retired. We get a glance at his favored product line in an 1893 newspaper ad—Fine old Claret, Angelica, Port wine and Brandy—all from his estate vineyard near Clinton, and for sale in Jackson at "A. Picardo's depot."<sup>33</sup>

Douet was involved in a historic viticultural venture in the nineties. In 1888 the University of California Agriculture Experiment Station set up three substations, one just outside Jackson. Its purpose was experimentation, demonstration, and the dissemination of planting material. U.C. Professor Eugene Hilgard was keeping up his interest in



viticulture by requiring a vineyard at each substation.

#### U.C. Amador Foothill Experiment Station

Only the Amador Foothill Station was even moderately successful, in the long run. Hilgard was in Jackson in 1889 for the official inauguration of the substation and the planting of the vineyard. At first there were Zinfandel, Carignane and Mataro (Mourvèdre); other varieties were soon added in large number. The resulting grapes were hauled down to Ione and shipped to Berkeley by rail. There they were made into wine by Frederic Bioletti, Hilgard's new cellar master at the University.

For a while the Foothill Station manager did a good job, taking his instructions by mail from Bioletti. Cuttings from the station's vineyard were liberally distributed to local growers, gratis. Growers were encouraged to send grapes to Berkeley for testing. August Douet was one of them. More important were the contributions of Anthony Caminetti, who regularly sent Bioletti Carignane, Grenache, Mataro and Zinfandel from his Springdale Ranch east of Jackson.

The Amador Station was the last substation to survive, but its end was dramatic. After a few good seasons, Bioletti became concerned by the quality of the station manager's reports. He reported these concerns to Hilgard who sent Edward Wickson, his second in command at the university, on an unannounced inspection trip of the station. His report was scathing. The vineyard and orchard had not been cultivated for more than a year. Large ferns were growing in the vineyard. Apparently the station manager had succumbed to the wild life of drinking at Jackson. He was sacked and the station closed down in 1903.<sup>34</sup>

There was later an even better story resulting from the vineyard at the Jackson Station. Apparently locals kept tending the vines for years and using the grapes. Eventually the land was allowed to revert to nature. Ownership of the land was eventually acquired by an Italian family whose title was in question for many years.

By 1963 there was practically no sign of life at the old vineyard, now totally covered by large brush. But someone knew about the old vines "in the woods of Amador County" and passed on the information to Austin Goheen, a U.S. Department of Agriculture plant pathologist stationed at U.C. Davis. He found several ancient Cabernet Sauvignon vines that had survived, and took cuttings. The vines that developed proved to bear grapes that made outstanding wine. By the 1980s this clone was planted in large number at Beaulieu Vineyards (BV#4), today the Beckstoffer ToKalon Vineyard. This clone is now known world wide as UCD#6/Jackson. Goheen continued in the role of a viticultural sleuth in 1967, when in Italy he recognized and reported the almost perfect similarity

between the Primitivo of Puglia and the California Zinfandel. They were later proved to be genetically identical.<sup>35</sup>

The 1870 census shows that thirteen had made wine in the Shenandoah/Fiddletown area the previous years. The two leaders had 600 gallons on hand. The rest had an average of 123 gallons, just right for home consumption. The leaders were Hugh Bell, for whom Bell Road was named. Later he concentrated his viticultural efforts on producing grapes for fresh sales. In 1879 he had about a hundred tons of such grapes. The other leader with 600 gallons was Adam Uhlinger, who should be considered the winegrower pioneer of the Shenandoah Valley, which today is the hub of Amador County's wine industry.

#### Adam Uhlinger / D'Agostini / Soban

Uhlinger, from Switzerland, arrived in Amador with his family in 1856. By 1864 he was working the land where his winery would be constructed on today's Shenandoah Road. He made small amounts of wine in the sixties and was up to 4000 gallons in 1879. After his death in 1880, Uhlinger's sons ran the winery—producing 10,000 gallons by 1883—and continued successfully through the depression of the nineties and into the new century. It is clear that Zinfandel was the dominant variety in the twelve-acre vineyard.<sup>36</sup>

In 1911 they sold the operation, with its now much larger vineyard, to Enrico D'Agostini. When the modern California wine boom began in the 1960s the D'Agostini Winery was probably the first foothill attraction for early wine tourists. It became the Soban Estate in 1989 with much of the old winery preserved. A portion of the building has been converted into a fine regional historical museum.<sup>37</sup>

#### Difficult Years

The 1880 census in Amador reflects the difficult times of the seventies for the county's vineyardists. There were only five producers reporting more than 1000 gallons of wine on hand. But thirty-three admitted to the census takers production between 200 and 1000 gallons, averaging 470 gallons per producer. Most of these operations probably sold or traded their excess production. Their total of about 15,000 gallons probably did not leave the county.

Grape production for fresh sales and raisins in Amador County was where most of the crop went in the 1880s. Some grapes were probably sold to the commercial producers, but only tonnage production figures were given in the census report. Twelve vineyardists reported ten tons or more; fourteen had between five and ten tons; thirteen had between three and five tons. There were about 200 who admitted having vineyards but did not declare production figures. From these figures we can see that however



meager the Amador wine production was in the eighties, much of the county's arable land was covered with vineyards.<sup>38</sup> Historian Jesse Mason, himself a vineyardist, gave perhaps a too dismal picture of winegrowing in Amador when he wrote in 1881 that "the wine industry which promised so much...proved an utter failure."<sup>39</sup>

In 1884 the San Francisco Merchant found thirteen producers in the county, six of them near Ione.<sup>40</sup> The State Viticultural Commission's grand survey of California vineyardists and wineries in 1891 was not able to come up with any statistics for Amador County; El Dorado and Calaveras counties had full and detailed reports. All we gain about Amador County is a list of fifteen names, ten for Ione and five for Jackson. That the Uhlinger name is not listed suggests how incomplete the survey was. Of the five for Jackson, two names in 1891 were listed in the 1880 census, John Batchelder and Gustavus Froelich.



Picturesque Stone Ruins of the Froelich Winery, once the largest in Amador County [Old Vines, p.38]

During the depression years of the 1890s commercial winegrowing in Amador County barely survived. But survive it did until California's second wine boom in the 1960s and '70s. Then the wine drinkers of California began rediscovering Amador wine. In the 1973 first edition of *The Wines of America*, Leon Adams gave only one page to the Sierra Foothills. At the end of the eighties, in his fourth edition, there were five pages of praise.

#### The Southern Foothills

The official Sierra Foothills AVA covers land in three counties south of Amador, first Calaveras, then Tuolumne and Mariposa. Of these, and of the three in the AVA north of El Dorado, Calaveras is

the most important, today and historically. In 2012 it contained 676 acres of winegrapes, 74% red. The top variety, surprisingly, was Syrah, just ahead of Cabernet Sauvignon.

#### Calaveras County

Early winegrowing was concentrated around San Andreas and Mokelumne Hill to the north, both on today's Highway 49. Winegrowing also persisted for some years around Milton, a hot, valley town barely inside Calaveras County. It is best known as the place where Black Bart robbed his last stage before being captured.

The 1860 census listed five growers near Mokelumne Hill who made wine, mostly for their own consumption. The county assessor reported in 1865 that what wine was being made was of "inferior quality." This situation changed in the years before the 1870 census was taken. By then 121 vineyardists reported making wine, thirty-seven of whom were producing 1000 gallons or more. Chief among these was Frederic Mayer, who began growing grapes in 1861 and produced 4000 gallons in 1870. His cellar near Mokelumne Hill could hold 10,000 gallons and for a while Mayer was able to sell wine in the east. Between 1870 and 1885 the local press's coverage of his operations suggests that his was the county's most successful winery.<sup>42</sup> His vines—Palomino, Zinfandel and Riesling, among several others—were a cut above the usual table and Mission varieties abounding in the foothills. His little distillery produced brandy for sale as a beverage and to fortify his port and angelica.

Near San Andreas, Louis Costa was an important winegrower who began planting vines in the sixties. By 1869 he was producing about 4000 gallons, using fruit from his own five acres and from those of his neighbors. By 1889 he had thirty acres of vineyard and fourteen winegrowing neighbors. By then the leader in acreage and wine production was Charles Gardella with 40 acres of vines that produced 120 tons in 1889. He had bought his land in 1882 and soon had a fine vineyard and a 90-sq.ft. cut-stone cellar.<sup>43</sup>

Although Calaveras wine production was almost mortally wounded by the economic depression of the nineties, the good times after 1897, and the resulting rise in wine and winegrape prices brought a burst of vineyard planting to the county between 1898 and 1900. In 1901 the Agricultural Society reported 1700 acres of Calaveras wine grapes, 500 of them yet to bear. Thus it became possible to ship grapes and wine at a profit by rail to Central Valley wineries.

#### Tuolumne & Mariposa Counties

Hopes for the future of viticulture and winegrowing in Tuolumne County in the 1860s were then as high as in any other foothill area. The center of interest was just across the Calaveras



County line below Angels Camp, around the mining towns of Sonora, Jamestown and Columbia, at elevations of 1500 to 2000 feet. Even in the fifties the press was noticing vines being planted around these towns.<sup>44</sup>

In the sixties there was a flurry of planting with vineyards going in to the west of Sonora and around Chinese Camp, Green Springs and La Grange. Most planting was by farmers wanting to diversify their fruit production. But there were several medium-sized wine producers whose operations lived on successfully through the depression of the 1870s.

One near Jamestown was John Pereira, who imported Portuguese varieties from the island of Madeira and developed an excellent reputation for his sweet wines. By 1868 he had attracted the attention of Titus Fey Cronise in his *Natural Wealth of California*.<sup>45</sup> Years later Ben Truman, the California journalist, remembered Pereira's wine in an 1887 article, even recalling the Portuguese varieties employed, although his memory of their spelling may provoke a second look, "Tinto, Verdeilho, Bualo."<sup>46</sup>



SIERRA FOOTHILLS WINEGROWING COUNTIES

The 1870 census counted fifty-two wine producers in the county, mostly small scale, but eighteen with more than 1000 gallons. One of these was Prentise Trask at his Gold Springs Ranch near Columbia, probably the most famous, since his family owned the ranch until the 1950s. Trask in 1857 began planting Mission vines which eventually covered twenty acres. The State Agricultural Society in 1865 cited his operation as an example of the increasing profitability of winegrowing in the county.<sup>47</sup>

Most Tuolumne wine was consumed locally. Charles Nordhoff's observations in 1872 illustrate this

point. He and four friends stopped in Columbia to water their horses and were approached by a local who wondered if they would like some wine while they rested. He directed them to a small cellar where they drank "a thin claret and sweet angelica" at fifteen cents per large glass. The owner "had an excellent vineyard; and you see vines on all the hill tops...." The riders went on up to Yosemite where they were able to buy Tuolumne wine at the inn there, "a mild wine... and a pleasant and wholesome drink."<sup>48</sup>

The little boom peaked in 1873. In that year the local newspaper crowed that the wine business was on the rise. "It has become quite a brag in Tuolumne County." Prentise Trask and a few associates took steps to consolidate production and look for eastern markets by beginning the formation of the "Columbia Vinicultural Association." There was even word out that a depot would soon open in San Francisco for the sale of Tuolumne wine. Then the bubble popped. At the end of the 1874 "vintage" the local newspaper reported that "hundreds of tons of grapes are hanging on the vines."<sup>49</sup>

The problem was the same as that facing the foothill counties to the north, perhaps worse. There was no local, large-scale producing winery to convert all those grapes into wine. And transportation costs were deadly in the face of collapsing wine and grape prices. The railroad didn't make it to Sonora until 1899.

In 1882 a county history looked back at the heady days of 1867 to 1872. "Many vineyards were planted, but the hopes of their owners were not realized." Most of the perhaps 1400 acres of vines planted in the boom "have been suffered to go to decay." Surely most, but not all.<sup>50</sup>

The 1880 census still counted twelve who had at least 1000 gallons of wine on hand. There were 134 vineyardists, but few with more than five acres. When the viticultural Commission did its 1889 survey there were twenty-eight names listed as vineyard owners, but no statistics were provided. Prentise Trask and John Pereira were still on the list. In 2012 there were thirty acres of wine grapes in Tuolumne. In the 1940s there had been about 140.

There has been little viticulture recorded in Mariposa County, the southernmost area with land in the Sierra Foothills AVA. But there are several areas in the foothills there where the Treasury Department recognized successful winegrowing might be as successful as some of those to the north. There were some vineyards planted in Mariposa before the 1890s. The 1870 census shows that eight made a few gallons of wine, but only one, William Wheeler near Coulterville, had a commercial operation, with 2000 gallons of wine on hand. Only one such operation was reported in 1880, and in the same area. John Danese also had 2000 gallons on hand. In later years



Mariposa disappears from winegrowing and viticulture surveys. Finally in 1982 seven acres of Sauvignon blanc appeared in official records. By 2012 there were forty-nine acres, mostly red Bordeaux varieties and Zinfandel.

### The Northern Foothills

Three counties north of El Dorado are included in today's Sierra Foothills AVA. But two of them extend out into the Central Valley, making county statistics unreliable to determine vineyard acreage in the upper regions. Heading north we come first to Placer County, whose importance was touched on in the Sacramento Valley chapter. James R. Nickerson was the main player, but his winery near Lincoln was not much above the 100-foot elevation mark. There were some small vineyards near today's Highway 80 between Auburn (1255 feet) and Colfax (2420 feet), but only one of historical importance. This was Louis Cortopassi's winery south of Colfax built in 1895. He later operated it as the Placer County Winery, closing during Prohibition. It was reopened in 1935, still in the Cortopassi family. It remained in business until 1951.

### Yuba County

Yuba County at the north end of the AVA also has a winegrowing history, but in the valley in the Marysville area, already examined. One wine operation in the upper foothills, a stone's throw from the Nevada County line, had a long success at an elevation of 2800 feet near Camptonville. In the early 1870s John Ramm acquired a large tract of land and developed a huge, diversified ranch. Among his many

crops were winegrapes for which he built a stone cellar he named Nottaway Winery. With an eventual storage capacity of 20,000 gallons, it was probably the largest in the foothills before 1900. Much of the wine he converted to brandy in a 720-gallon pot still, whose remains were recently still to be seen in the substantial ruins. Most of his wine and brandy was sold by the barrel in such mining



NOTTAWAY WINERY, 1950 [E. Peninou photo]

towns as Downieville and Sierra City. His family operated the winery until 1900 when they sold it to James Pendolo, who ran it until Prohibition.<sup>51</sup>

Ramm's success may have influenced the 1978 development of the Renaissance Winery near the village of Oregon House, southwest of Camptonville. In 1985 the Treasury Department established the North Yuba AVA based on a petition put together by the Renaissance owners. It was granted two years before that of the Sierra Foothills. In 2012 the Renaissance 44-acre vineyard amounted to almost 70% of the wine grapes in Yuba County.

### Nevada County

The truly historic winegrowing area in the northern foothills is Nevada County, which had about 400 vineyard acres in the 1870s and 405 in 2012. In the 1850s, mining activity there was not much distracted by the lure of orchards and vineyards. But that changed in the sixties, just as it had in the foothills to the south. Nevada County sits between Placer and Yuba counties but does not reach down into the hot lowlands of the Central Valley.

Successful winegrowing today and earlier has taken place near the towns of Grass Valley, Nevada City, and Rough & Ready, in elevations between 1500 and 2800 feet. Viticulture around Grass Valley and Nevada City between 1860 and 1865 attracted the attention of the Agricultural Society's visiting committees. J. E. Marshall, outside Grass Valley, had put in fifteen acres of vines, mostly Zinfandel and vinifera table varieties. E. G. Waite, the editor of the *Nevada Journal*, got praise for small quantities of excellent wine, as did R. R. Craig of Nevada City.<sup>52</sup>

The 1870 census indicates the viticultural spread of the sixties here. Six wine producers had more than 1000 gallons on hand. They were led by Josiah Rogers and Francis Seibert of Nevada City, and Robert Walters of Rough & Ready. There were also twenty-one producers of less than 1000 gallons, who averaged 135 gallons each. By 1880 there were several small-scale producers around French Corral, north of Rough & Ready, where the county leader was Henry Hatch with 2500 gallons. Felix Gillet was one of several Frenchmen involved in small-scale winemaking. He later imported authentic French wine varieties, including Cabernet Sauvignon, the leading variety in the county today.

In 1884 the *San Francisco Merchant* (PW&SR) listed eighteen producers, all but three around the two leading towns. Three years later local winegrowers combined to form the Nevada County Winery Association, led by the Seibert family. This was the only such organization contrived by foothill producers to have at least a small success. Of course in 1887 they were not yet looking into the teeth of economic depression. In 1889 the group, now the Nevada



County Winery, made 8000 gallons at their cellar in Nevada City. The Viticultural Commission's survey of 1891 supplied that information plus data that suggested a concentration of winegrowing activity in recent years.

Seventeen of the growers, with a total of 190 vineyard-acres were listed in Grass Valley and Nevada City. Nine made wine. The leaders, with twenty acres or more, were Abraham Driesbach, M. Lehman, W. A. Monroe and Thomas Payne. It appears that Payne weathered the depression of the nineties and operated until Prohibition. He specialized in the production of port and brandy.<sup>53</sup>

For a county which showed no statistical evidence of winegrowing in the early days of the modern wine boom, what has happened in Nevada County, since the first twelve acres appeared in the state survey for 1973, is remarkable. The rise in wine grape acreage has been steady: 1990=127, 2000=308, 2012=405.

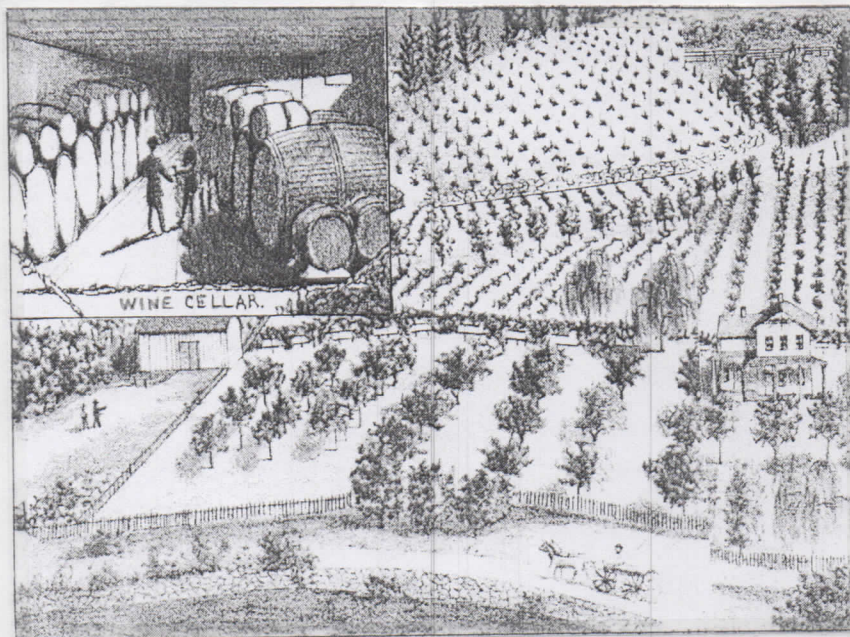
Today this is primarily red wine country, led by red Bordeaux varieties and Syrah. The growth in vineyards, wineries and tasting rooms suggests that Nevada County may be moving in the direction of the foothills predicted by writers between 1855 and 1865. That is, that the entire foothill region north of Mariposa County could one day be a truly vast wine-growing area, supporting ten times the 6000 acres planted today.

#### NOTES

27. J. D. Mason, *History of Amador County*, Oakland, 1881, 76-79.
28. Eric Costa, *Old Vines*, Jackson, 1994.
29. *California Farmer*, 11/4/1859.
30. Charles L. Sullivan, *Zinfandel, a History . . .*, Berkeley, 2003, 26-35; *Ag Soc 1859*, 213-16; Costa, *Old Vines*, 4-7.
31. Peninou, *El Dorado*, 82-83.
32. Costa, *Old Vines*, 50-51; Mason, 304-305, has a glowing Finn biography and a fine portrait.
33. Costa, *Old Vines*, 19-21.
34. Charles L. Sullivan, "U. C. Grapes and Wine," *Wayward Tendrils Quarterly*, April 2009, 19-20; Costa, *Old Vines*, 58-61; *Report of the Agriculture Experiment Station of the University of California*, Berkeley, 1898, 14-15, 245-246, 324.)
35. *Los Angeles Times*, 11/28/2001; Adams, *Wines of America*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., 428, 548; Sullivan, *Zinfandel*, 148, 156-157.
36. Costa, *Old Vines*, 25-27.
37. Costa, *Old Vines*, 55-70, follows the family and winery up to recent times. It also shows how

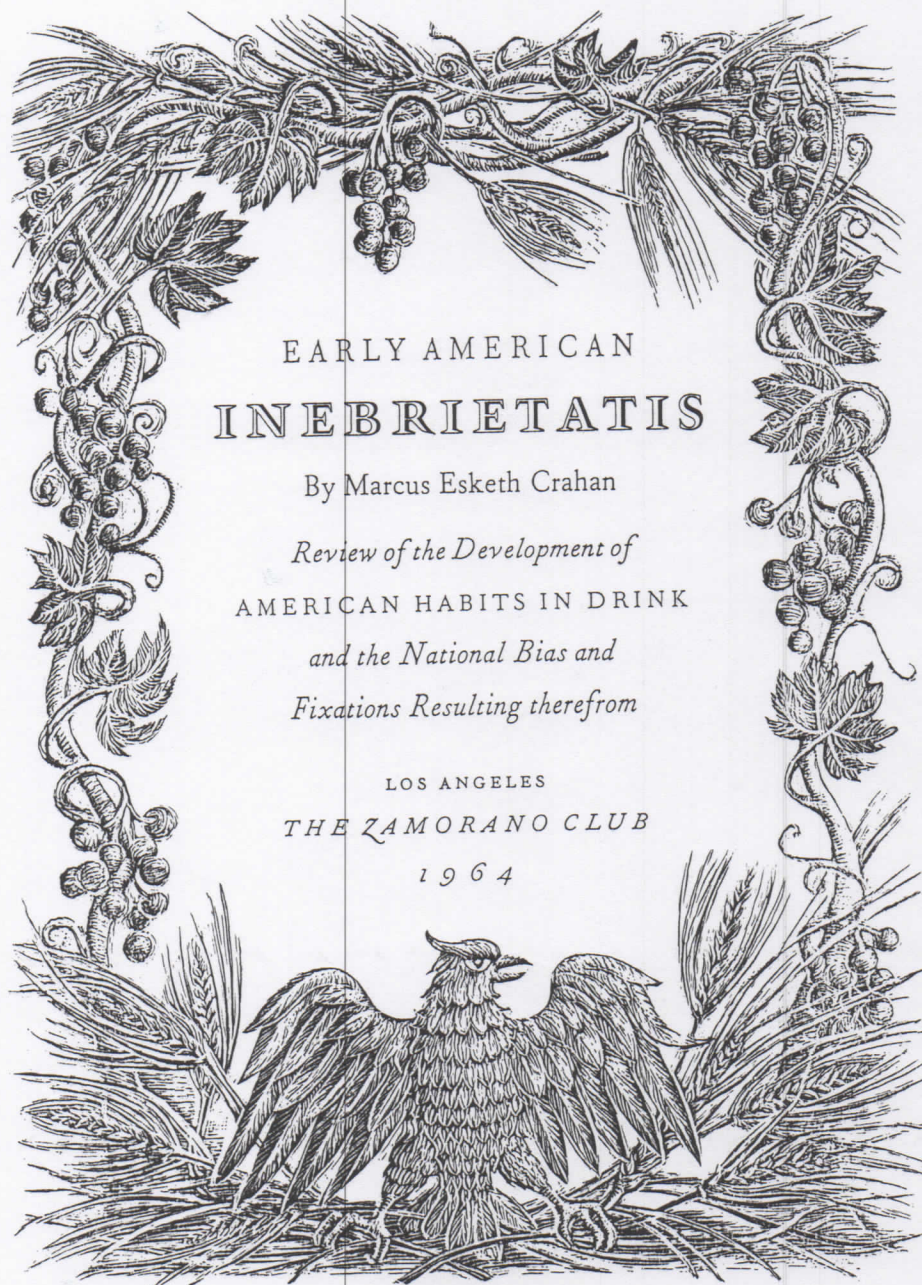
the valley's wine economy improved in the years before World War I under several newly settled Italian families.

38. Peninou, *El Dorado*, 98-102.
39. Costa, *Old Vines*, 49-50.
40. *Pacific Wine and Spirit Review*, 11/24/1884.
41. *Grape Growers, Wine Makers... California*, Sacramento, 1891, 18-20, 27-29; Costa, *Old Vines*, 37-39.
42. *Calaveras Chronicle*, 10/8/1871, 10/14/1871; *Pacific Rural Press*, 10/21/, 11/4/1871; *Calaveras County Illustrated*, 1885, 64-65. This publication printed an excellent graphic of the Mayer estate at p. 54. (below)
43. *Grape Growers, Wine Makers... 1891*, 132; *Calaveras Chronicle*, 8/21/1886; *PW&SR*, 8/17/1888.
44. *California Farmer*, 10/24/1858; *Sonora Union Democrat*, 8/19/1854.
45. Titus F. Cronise, *The Natural Wealth of California*, San Francisco, 1868. pp. 268-269, 388.
46. *New York Times*, 3/6/1887.
47. *Ag. Soc.*, 1864/1865, 225-226.
48. *Nordhoff's West Coast*, London, 1887, 72, 215. This collection was first published in 1874.
49. *Tuolumne Independent*, 4/12, 5/24/1873, 12/26/1874.
50. Herbert O. Lang, *A History of Tuolumne County...*, San Francisco, 1882, 338, 344-345, 498-509.
51. Peninou, *El Dorado*, 25-25b has a photo of the winery from the 1950s. Thompson and West's 1879 *History of Yuba County* has a wonderful graphic of the great ranch in operation.
52. *Ag Soc*, 1860, 64; 1864/1865, 65; Peninou, *El Dorado*, 13.
53. *PW&SR*, 11/6/1885; Peninou, *El Dorado*, 16.



VINEYARD and WINE CELLAR of FREDERIC MAYER  
CALAVERAS COUNTY, 1885





TITLE PAGE, *EARLY AMERICAN INEBRIETATIS* by Marcus Crahan  
ONE OF THE BOOK'S MANY STRIKING ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARION KRONFELD  
See "Quest for Crahan" by Bo Simons, p.1