

# the WAYWARD TENDRILS Newsletter

Vol.5 No.3

A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S CLUB

July 1995

## THE WINES OF BURGUNDY: PRE-VICTORIAN ENGLISH SOURCES

by  
Christopher Fielden



ere, from my own collection, are some early books in English where qualitative comments are made about the wines of Burgundy. Whilst the wines may have been drunk in England from the times of King John, there has been very little written about them in English. However, in France where, with Champagne, they were considered to be the greatest wines - largely because it was easy to deliver them both to Paris, the capital - they were widely discussed. Indeed, all early writings on Burgundies were based upon French works.

*Maison Rustique, or the Country Farme* by Charles Stevens and John Liebault, translated by Richard Surfleet, 1606, is a translation of the classic work by Charles Estienne and his son-in-law Jean Liébault, which appeared in no less than forty-eight editions in French, as well as others in German and English. Interestingly, this edition seems to be unknown to André Simon, who mentions one appearing ten years later. In it there is detailed mention made of those wines which were, at that time, popular in Paris. Distinction is made between the wines of "Burgundie, which are sent us from Sens, Auxerres, Tonnerre, Iogny, and Chablie" and those of Beaune, amongst which "the wines of Dijon must be reckoned, and they are those that grow in the kings vineyard at Chenoue, Fontaine, Plombiere and Tolent.... These are so esteemed of in Paris, because they are of a subtile substance, of the colour of a partridges eie, not given to fume or fill the head full of vapours, and thereby less assailing, and hurting the braine, then those of Orleance." (The spelling is as is!)

For many years, the basic source for English writers on wine, when they came to Burgundy, was *Dissertation sur la Bourgogne et sur les Vins qu'elle Produit* by Claude Arnoux, a priest from Beaune who

had come to London as a private tutor. This was published in London in 1728, and whilst it did not appear as a separate book in English, it was translated and incorporated in full in the second edition of Philip Miller's *The Gardeners Dictionary*, which appeared in 1733, with full acknowledgement to the author. Sir Edward Barry in his *Observations Historical, Critical and Medical, on the Wines of the Ancients* (1775) gives credit to both Arnoux and Miller and says, "I shall therefore extract a few material passages from the Dissertation, and make such observations on them as may be sufficient to answer my intention."

Not so honest, however, was Dr. Robert Shannon in *A Practical Treatise on Brewing, Distilling and Rectification*, published in 1805. His section on Burgundy has been widely praised, but consists of nothing more than selected chunks of Miller's translation of Arnoux, without any attribution whatsoever, down to the phrase, "and my conjecture is founded on more than twenty-five vintages that I have seen made."

Whilst I have in my possession a song dedicated to the Musical Society at Five Bells Tavern

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in the Strand, entitled "In Praise of Burgundy," which dates from about 1740, such opening lines as "Hail Burgundy, thou Juice divine" add little knowledge to our general appreciation of the wine. The earliest specifically English technical mention that I can find on the wines of Burgundy is in *General Instructions for the Choice of Wines* by Duncan M'Bride, 1793. In



the main, this is a "puff" for a wine, *Spanish Toc-kay*, which seemed to have unlimited medical benefits, the source of which was known to no-one but him. However, there is a page specifically dedicated to the wines of Burgundy, where, amongst others, he recommends Romanée-Conti, which "when any of it happens to be sold on the spot, is at so high a price that it could not be brought to England at less than a guinea a bottle." Also to be sought out is "Vin de Chable...a light pleasant wine, and not unwholesome to be used at table instead of beer."

It was not really until Victorian times that investigative wine-writing, as we know it, began.

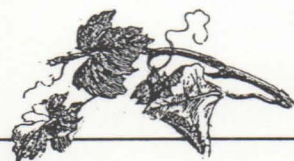
[Christopher Fielden, our British Tendril, wine expert, and author, promises "Part Two: Victorian Sources" for our next Newsletter.]

DISSERTATION  
SUR LA  
SITUATION,  
DE  
BOURGOGNE,  
SUR LES  
VINS quelle produit, sur la ma-  
niere de cultiver les VIGNES, de faire le  
VIN, le de l'éprouver : sur les qualitez, force, couleur,  
le durée des différents VINS que produit la comté de Beaune  
avec le nom de tous les bons coteaux gravés exactement  
dans une carte Geographique des Collines de la haute  
BOURGOGNE; sur la facilité d'avoir de ces VINS, à  
qui il faut s'adresser pour cela, deux moyens pour les  
faire venir à LONDRES sans alteration le à bon marché.  
le tout precedé d'une Ode Latine qui fait l'éloge du VIN  
de Valner adressée à un des plus savants Hommes de  
l'EUROPE, avec la COPIE de la LETTRE que ce savant  
envoia à l'AUTEUR de cette ODE le de cette DIS-  
SERTATION.

Par Mr. ARNOUX, Precepteur de M<sup>rs</sup>. les  
Fils de J. FREEMAN, Elq.

Modicus fed Unicus.

A LONDRES:  
Imprimé chez SAMUEL JALLASSON, en  
Prinjan's Court, Old Bailey, & se vend chez  
P. du NOYER, à la Tête d'Erafme, & chez  
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## NEWS & NOTES

### WELCOME to our new Tendril members:

Jim Gabler sent in a membership for **Warren Winiarski**, proprietor of the famed Napa Valley Stag's Leap Wine Cellars, and a "fellow wine book lover" for more than 30 years (5766 Silverado Trail, Napa, CA 94558). Warren's main interest is books on wine making and viticulture, in English, Polish, Italian or French. And we have, not one, but two new members from Cherry Hill, N.J.! **Jay Amsterdam** (P.O. Box 1931, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08034) writes that he has collected for about 3 years: "The more I read about wine, the more I want to know." He is particularly interested in the pre-1950 wine books, and welcomes all bookseller catalogues and members' duplicate lists. **Steve Burnstein** (15 N. Woodleigh, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08003) has been collecting English language wine books for 10 years.

### Changes for the MEMBERSHIP ROSTER:

**John Thorne** (Books on Wines-Beers-Spirits) now has a Fax number! 0181-220-0082. Well done, John. **Christian Gerber** has a new address: 4112 Hyer St. #50, Dallas, Texas 75205. **John Biklen/David Streeter** have cleaned off their desk and rejoined us (866 Hillcrest, Pomona, CA 91768).

Further note on the "Bushberg Catalogues" [see Vol.5 No.2 April 1995]: **Marion Piper**, present-day owner of the Bushberg property and an interested Tendril, writes, "I certainly did enjoy the article on the Bushberg Catalogues. So did several members of the Bush family. My feeling about the whole operation is that Isidor Bush handled the business end (his son Ralph didn't seem as capable) and Gus Meissner was the horticulture expert. He had the training and experience in Staten Island and Iowa before coming to Jefferson County [Missouri]. One of the Bush great-grandsons told me he learned more about his family from that article than he'd ever known before. I don't have a great deal of contact with the Meissner descendents but I sent a copy of the article to the wife of a great-grandson. Did I tell you that Gus Meissner's uncle and cousin (Roebings) built the Brooklyn Bridge?" Ed. - Marian and her husband Vernon have labored for many years to restore, preserve, and search out, the history of the Bushberg property. Cheers!

The **Wayward Tendrils** received a nice mention in the April 1995 issue of *Diversion* magazine. Eunice Fried, noted wine book author (*What Every Woman should Know about Wine*, 1974; *Burgundy: the Country, the Wines, the People*, 1986), included the Tendrils in a short article on the hows & whys of collecting "vintage" wine books. If anyone would like a copy of her article, drop me a note.



## DUPLICATES! DUPLICATES!

**Steve Burnstein** (15 N. Woodleigh, Cherry Hill, N.J. 08003; FAX 609-665-4897) has duplicates of Jim Gabler's bibliography *Wine into Words* and Roy Brady's 1990 limited edition *Old Wine, Fine Wine?*

**Christian Gerber** (4112 Hyer St/#50, Dallas, TX 75205) lists the following for sale or trade:

Dubois, Urbain. *La Cuisine Artistique*, 1888, 3rd ed. 2 vols bound in one. Full leather, 166 plates. Scarce classic, v.g. condition. \$975.

Gouffe, Jules. *Le Livre de Cuisine*, 1893, 8th ed. With 4 color plates, 13 b/w plates. 1/4 leather binding with raised bands, v.g. \$350.

Ward, Artemas. *The Encyclopedia of Food*, 1923. 71 color plates. v.g. \$200.

Audot, Louis. *La Cuisiniere de la Campagne et de la Ville*, 1902. Original cloth covers. v.g. \$120.

**Christopher Fielden** (393 Ham Green, Holt, Trowbridge, Wiltshire BA14 6PX) offers his swap list:

Saintsbury, George. *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, London, 1931. *Second Scrap Book*, London, 1923, 1st.ed.

Campbell, Ian M. *Wayward Tendrils of the Vine*, London, 1948.

Schoonmaker & Marvel. *The Complete Wine Book*, London, 1938.

Simon, André. *The Wine & Food Menu Book*, London, 1956. *English Wines & Cordials*, London, 1946. *Wines & Liqueurs from A to Z*, n.d. London.

Heaton, Nell & A. Simon. *A Calendar of Food & Wine*, London, n.d.

Clos Jouve, Henri. *Le Promeneur Lettré et Gastronomes en Bourgogne de Dijon à Lyon*, Paris, [1951].

**Mortimer Schwartz** (1200 California St, #6D, San Francisco, CA 94109-5075) has a collection of *The Vinifera Wine Growers Journal* available for sale or trade: 1977 (Fall, Winter), 1978 (Summer, Fall, Winter), 1979 - 1982 (4 issues each year), 1984 (4 issues), 1985 (Spring), and 1974-1983 Cumulative Index. All are in "first rate" condition. He also has various monthly editions of *Vintage* magazine from the years 1977 - 1985. Contact him for further info.

## WANTED, PLEASE!!

New member **Warren Winiarski** (see News & Notes) needs a copy of François Champagnol's 1984 *Elements de Physiologie de la Vigne et de Viticulture Generale*, and Mario Fegoni's *Viticultura Generale*, Roma, 1985.



## BOOKS & BOTTLES

by  
Fred McMillin

### WHEN CHARDONNAY CAME CALIFORNIA'S WAY

**The BOOKS** - In *California's Great Chardonnays* noted author James Laube wrote that the history of Chardonnay in California is obscure, with little substantive evidence that the vine arrived in the Golden State before 1900. That struck me as odd, to think that we're not sure whether or not Chardonnay arrived in California before the 20th century did. After all, the 1890s were not part of the Stone Age. The zipper was invented in 1891, canned pineapple in 1892, and the Ford auto in 1893. So, I decided to dig through some old wine volumes - and here's what I found about the arrival of the great white grape of Burgundy.

In 1887 Professor George Husmann, American viticultural pioneer and Napa County resident, wrote that among "the wine grapes of high promise for this State [is] the famous White Burgundy...though it has not yet been well and thoroughly tried." (See *Grape Culture and Wine-Making in California*, 1st.ed., 1888, Chap.XII).

Nine years pass. The trials must have gone well, for now we read, in 1896: "The White Burgundy, or Chardenot [sic], the celebrated white wine grape of Burgundy...is a modest grower, uniformly healthy and productive; berries are very delicate, sweet and juicy." Prof. Husmann now lists it as one of the four top white wine grapes, devoting more words to it than to the better-known Sauvignon blanc. Clearly, the "Chardenot" was alive and well in California before the turn of the century. (See *American Grape Growing & Wine Making, with Several Added Chapters on the Grape Industries of California*, 4th ed. revised, Chap.XL).

**The BOTTLES** - A century later, what California Chardonnays are the best? My San Francisco Scott's panel tastes about two dozen of them every month - here are the current sizzling seven: 7th - '94 Bandiera, \$8. Best buy of the lot!

6th - '93 Flora Springs, \$20.

5th - '93 St. Clement Carneros, \$18.

4th - '93 Guenoc Reserve, \$25.

3rd - '92 Grgich Carneros, \$35.

2nd - '92 Lockwood Partners' Reserve, \$18.

1st - '92 Robt. Mondavi Reserve, \$27.



## IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by  
Bob Foster

*Grands Vins: The Finest Châteaux of Bordeaux and Their Wines*, Clive Coates. University of California Press, Berkeley, 1995, 816 pages, \$45. Clive Coates, British Master of Wine and longtime publisher of a newsletter called *The Vine* has written a huge, detailed and fascinating evaluation of the best wines of Bordeaux. There are detailed sections on nearly one hundred of the top producers from this incredible wine region.

Coates generally begins with long introductions on the history of the château followed by a detailed description of its vineyard. Where appropriate, there are sections on the châteaux and the chai. In a section entitled "The Wines" Coates gives his overall assessment of the wines with emphasis on their style, concentration and quality. He is not afraid to be critical. For example, "The first five vintages of the 1980s (of Ch. Clinet) are one-dimensional, herbaceous and uninspiring." Refreshingly, Coates uses traditional descriptors for the wines, leaving aside the verbal hyperbole of some modern wine writers.

For each château there is a plethora of tasting notes going back decades and, on some of the major names, going back nearly to the last century. But I'm a bit troubled by the tasting notes. For the most part they seem to be un-blind notes often made at tastings at the château with the owner. These are, of course, circumstances that would bias even the most experienced palate. Moreover, there is no way to tell just how old the tasting notes are. Some of the tastings seem to have been held as long as five years ago. For each wine no point score (or stars) is given, but the author gives his recommendation for when to drink the wine. He states that older tasting notes have been adjusted so they are current as to drinkability. (I don't know how one can adjust a note in that manner if the wine hasn't been tasted in a few years.) Sometimes the tasting notes stop in the late 1980s, sometimes they go as far as the 1993 vintage. Regardless of all these concerns, the notes are detailed and give precise descriptions of the wines and their states of maturity.

Number lovers will be pleased that at the back of the book Coates discusses the wines of Bordeaux vintage by vintage. In these sections he gives his tasting notes with point scores (on the 20 point scale) for each of the wines. But there is not perfect symmetry. While the 1979 Ch. Pichon Lalande has an entry under the château in the front of the book, it is totally omitted from the assessment of the 1979s as a vintage.

I find Coates' writing to be very readable and interesting. His notes on the wines provide an interesting counterpoint to Broadbent and Parker's detailed works on the region. Highly recommended.

*Discovering Wine*, Joanna Simon. Fireside Books (Simon and Schuster), New York, 1994, 160 pp., paperback, \$15. Far too many people perceive wine as a complex, almost impenetrable topic, understandable only with years of study. The only way to demolish this terrible misapprehension is with beginner's guides that break down the pretense and the fuss into straight-forward, entertaining and enjoyable text. Kevin Zraly has already written such a book, and now, Joanna Simon, one of the emerging young wine writers from England, has written a similarly accomplished volume.

Simon starts by trying to explain to the reader how to "get the most out of every glass." She does not try to turn her readers into overly serious connoisseurs swirling, slurping and spitting every glass, but goes through all of the basics so even a beginner will feel comfortable about critically examining a glass of wine. The author follows this with interesting sections on serving wine and matching food with wine. She writes in an unpretentious style, filled with interesting asides. Moreover, she often does not follow conventional wisdom but stakes out her own personal views. For example, consider the following, "How we ever came to regard cheese and red wine as natural partners I cannot imagine."

The second major part of the book discusses the making of first class wine. In this section she covers topics such as the grapes, major winemaking techniques, the effect of soil and climate and even a section on the winemaker's role. One of the more interesting features comes as Simon discusses each of the major varieties. As a visual reference, there are photographs of the tastes she associates with a particular grape. Thus, when discussing the flavors in Chardonnay, there are photographs of apples, pears and pineapples. The visual presentation is very more effective for cementing the idea in a beginner's mind. Once again, her strong personal opinions are readily set forth: in discussing Chenin Blanc her description is the most unusual I have ever seen, "...unripe Chenin Blanc has a cheesy and - sorry - vomit like flavor."

The final section of the book is an overview of each of the major winemaking regions of the world. Given there is so much territory to cover, the descriptions are, of necessity, very brief. The Napa Valley rates only one moderately long paragraph. But for a beginner it is probably enough for a generalized overview.

The book does have an adequate but not highly detailed index. American readers may have to



adjust to certain English phrases such as puddings or starters, but given the context, the translation from English to American is normally fairly obvious.

This is an excellent starting book for a person looking for a lively, down to earth guide to wine. Highly recommended.

***Old Vines, A History of Winegrowing in Amador County***, Eric J. Costa. Piedmont Publications (11008 Quail Drive, Pine Grove, CA 95665), 1994, 86 pp., paperback, \$14 (including sales tax and shipping). The first Zinfandel I ever fell deeply in love with was the 1968 Sutter Home Zinfandel from the Deaver Vineyard in Amador County. As a result, over the years I've had a soft spot in my heart for wines from the Amador area and a curiosity about the history of winegrowing in the region. Unfortunately, most of the reference books on California wine tend to gloss over this region with a paragraph or two at most, in sections often entitled "Other Wine Growing Areas in California." The region deserves more, and now, thanks to Eric Costa, there is a first rate historical work.

Costa begins with the discovery of gold in California and carefully traces the development of agriculture in the Amador region to satisfy the miners' needs. Even from the first, the demand for grapes far outstripped the supply. Costa explains the movement from the Mission grape to Eastern hybrids such as Catawba and finally to Zinfandel by the 1860s. There is a separate section reviewing the most current information on just how Zinfandel came to California in the first place. For decades the myth had been that it was amongst the cuttings brought to California by Agoston Haraszthy. But modern research by many, including noted wine historian Charles Sullivan, has debunked this idea. Instead, the grape seems to have come to California as a table grape via New England.

One of the real pluses of this book is that Costa has carefully combed the local historical records, and the book is crammed with illustrations including photographs of the early winemakers, drawings of their wineries and newspaper advertisements for their products.

There is only a single drawback to the book. The author simply assumes that the reader has a solid geographic understanding of the entire Amador region. I think this is an unwarranted assumption and believe a detailed map of the region would have made the work even more valuable. Moreover, while there is an index, it is hardly comprehensive. For example, Sacramento wine merchant Darrell Corti played a major role in the modern rediscovery of the region when he helped convince Sutter Home Winery to make the 1968 Sutter Home Deaver Vineyard

Zinfandel. While the story is recounted in the text, there is no reference to Corti or Bob Trinchero, owner of Sutter Home, in the index. If an author goes to the trouble to put in an index it needs to be reasonably complete.

The price of the book may seem a bit steep for its slim size, but it must be remembered that the work is self-printed in small numbers which always drives up the per book price. In any event, Zinfandel lovers will want this book for their libraries. It's an interesting account of one of California's smaller but high quality regions. Recommended.

[Founding Tendril Bob Foster writes a regular wine-book-review column for The California Grapevine, a bi-monthly publication (P.O. Box 22152, San Diego, CA 92192; \$32 per year). We reprint Bob's lively reviews with their/his kind permission.]

## NEW RELEASES - BOOK REVIEWS

Another informative source for the latest wine book releases, with reviews, is "The Book Report" by Maurice Sullivan which appears in the monthly Wine Trader, published by Jerry Mead, long-time wine advocate. Write to P.O. Box 1598, Carson City, Nevada 89702 for subscription information.

## COLLECTING: MAN & THE MAGPIE

"Collecting is as instinctive in man as in the magpie, and it can be a fruitfully absorbing hobby. Whether ridden at random or guided along a well-marked course to an ordered destination, it is good therapy for those of us who need escape from the strains of business life, who need change from demanding routines, who need an interest to fill leisure hours. Too-hard riding of a hobby is to be avoided, however: it may lead to a complex, that psychological state in which the hobby rides the collector and cunningly, by tortuous paths, forces back to itself all thoughts and conversation no matter how far afield they may have strayed. Thus the collector runs the risk of becoming a bore -- except perhaps to fellow collectors. And of course, exciting as the hunt may be, since few collectors are misers gloating over a secret hoard, the ecstatic heights of collecting can be reached only by sharing the fruits of pursuit with like-minded companions, not only through the collection itself but also through the spoken and printed word. Inevitably, the things man collects inspire their own literature..." [From *American Bottles & Flasks and Their Ancestry* by Helen McKearin and Kenneth Wilson, New York: Crown, 1978.]



## AN INTERVIEW WITH JANCIS ROBINSON

by Bo Simons



he Wine Appreciation Guild honored Jancis Robinson, MW, with a dinner and an award in April at the Marriott Hotel in San Francisco. Elliott Mackey of the Wine Appreciation Guild was gracious in arranging for a small interview.

Jancis Robinson in person compares favorably with Jancis Robinson in print. She looks as good, if not better, than her dust jacket and column-head photographs. She converses with the same informative zeal with which she writes. I started out very ill at ease. I had just bought a new micro-cassette recorder, and there was an awkward bit of unwrapping the machine and the tape and assembling them. She somehow put me at ease with small gestures and understanding looks while she politely kept me on task. She made sure I had run a sound-check before we began our interview. The following discussions are culled from a longer interview which will be part of the Sonoma County Oral History series.

BS: In the introductions to a number of your books, you strike at the theme that the book is to fill a perceived need on your part. Is there an overall direction when you're writing a book?

JR: I suppose if I feel that this is territory that has been covered already, the project has much less interest for me, certainly. In fact, vis-à-vis the *Oxford Companion*, several years before taking that on, I was asked to write an encyclopedia and I said no. Because the idea of sitting down to write an encyclopedia did not appeal at all. Whereas, and some people on the outside would not understand this, editing an *Oxford Companion* did. Partly through sheer admiration for previous *Oxford Companions* and the nice synchronicity of having been to Oxford and feeling this is for the University, it is not related to fat cat shareholders. But what really excited me about the project is that in an *Oxford Companion* you are allowed to exercise editorial discretion and you can stamp your personality on it and some of your judgments and you can shape it the way you think. As someone said, it is a collection of essays, perhaps. I hope that I became a whiz at cross-referencing: I tried to make sure that most terms that anyone would want to look up were there.

It's not an unopinionated book. I hope that it is not a dry book. It is full of judgments and thought-

provoking observations, which is much more fun than doing an encyclopedia within the predictable confines. It was lovely taking wine outside just geography and varieties and include other disciplines: history and art and literature.

BS: When you mentioned an encyclopedia, I could see where that might be daunting. Because most encyclopedias, by the time they get to be encyclopedic, are bland.

JR: That's right. Daunting is actually the wrong word. This was daunting. Just a little boring in prospect really, an encyclopedia.

BS: This has a personality.

JR: Yes, which is not by any means just mine, it is shaped by all the contributors.

BS: How did it come to be?

JR: As I understand it, as it is quite some time ago by now, my agent had lunch with someone from Oxford University Press. It was just one of the things. You know lunches. Things blow out of lunches. It was just one of the things that blew out of that lunch. What was nice was that it enthused me and it enthused Oxford. Although OUP publishes, you know, hundreds of books, to be an *Oxford Companion*, it has to get official sanction from the committee of dons. This one did and I know that they have been very pleased at the way this one has gone. It has gone terribly well.

BS: How many years did you spend doing this?

JR: Five. You know, there is an *Oxford Companion to Food* in train, which was commissioned, I think, 20 years ago. The most valuable thing that happened to me in the early days of agreeing to do this book, was to see how easy it was to get bogged down, to see the fate of the *Oxford Companion to Food*, and to realize that if you were going to do it, you've got to go at it just hell-for-leather, meet the deadline, not be distracted and just go for it, really.

BS: How did you pick the sub-editors and contributors, like Dinsmore Webb and Richard Smart?

JR: That's an absolutely crucial element in the thing. Actually I was lucky, I think, Richard was an obvious choice, having a truly international perspective and writing English. I think that he would say the same, that we really helped each other along, we had our little panic attacks together, worked through the crises in the early stages. With all that number of words ahead of you, for both of us, it was bigger than anything that we had ever done. We were looking at the mountains together.

Oenology was very difficult, because in a way even more difficult to get the truly international view. The only people in wine making that are traveling around the world are the sort of flying wine makers in their early 20s who probably have only one view of wine making, I certainly don't have the time to sit



down and write the number of words needed. And I felt that it had to be in English, because there just wouldn't have been the time or money to translate. It was wonderful that Webb could spare the time. There he was, just having retired full-time from his practice with a broad view.

BS: May I switch gears and ask how your *Vines, Grapes and Wines* [1986] came about?

JR: Yes, that was much earlier in my writing career. It was entirely the idea of the old Mitchell Beazley team, James Mitchell and Adrian Webster, who was then his henchman, and J. Beazley whom I never met - he had already died. And they'd realized that they had "cut the wine cake," as they put it, geographically with the *Wine Atlas* [Hugh Johnson]. Then they said they had cut it chronologically with Michael Broadbent's *Great Vintage Wine Book* [1980]. And now they wanted to cut it varietally, which is a very sound idea. I remember being taken out for lunch by James Mitchell and Adrian Webster, feeling a little bit like a shy, naive wild game being hunted by those sophisticated game hunters with very sophisticated equipment. It seemed a good idea and I have never regretted it, but that is my own particular specialty. I thought it was perfectly fascinating like a good detective story. Although the varietal entries in the *Oxford Companion* to a certain extent update *Vines, Grapes and Wines*, I really do want to do a major new book taking into account the many, many new developments since the book came out.

BS: Do you collect wine books at all?

JR: I sometimes buy, fairly passively, because I'm sent so many review copies. But we are on all the mailing lists of all the antiquarian booksellers, and there are various things that I pick off their lists.

BS: I notice that you introduce the chapter heads in your *Food and Wine Adventures* [1987] with some really nice quotes.

JR: Yes, I didn't think that I put enough into the collection, I should have been collecting those for years. I collected those over months. I wouldn't claim anything for those quotes.

BS: There seems to be a tradition of British wine writers of which you are part. How do you perceive yourself?

JR: Well, I'm very sad not to be a new girl anymore. I really enjoyed my status as new kid on the block when, if I got it right, that was great, and if I got it wrong, no one noticed. I don't like being more establishment. I enjoyed particularly the journalism, being able to write really red rag sort of iconoclastic articles without having to weigh each word and think is this a seriously mature point of view. That's more personal, really. I think that it is just wonderful, wonderful to have the job that I have: I get to travel

around here, people are giving dinners for me, it is amazing.

What do we have to give? Ironically, perhaps it isn't negative, this business of not having a very large domestic wine industry and not one big enough to cloud our judgment. I know the great tradition of importing wine. It would be easy, standing outside, to say Britain's tradition of producing wine writers reflects our long line of connoisseurship, but that certainly doesn't have an effect in my case. Like all my contemporaries, I wasn't brought up to drink wine. If you look at the import figures of wine in the UK, they were practically zero in the 40s and 50s and even the 60s. It was only in the 70s that we really started getting into drinking wine. I may have subliminally inherited the tradition, but not actually directly.

BS: One final question -- who are your favorite wine authors living today?

JR: Oh -- well, I think Hugh [Johnson] writes superbly, absolutely superbly. I love Gerald, I think Gerald Asher writes... I think that Gerald is a very, very good journalist. I think that Hugh is a very good book author. My favorite journalist perhaps would be Gerald and my favorite author would be Hugh.

I suppose what I most enjoy is reading a book that I'm reading anyway, not just a wine book, with a little wine observation in it, that just tells you something about the social history ...

BS: Thomas Love Peacock.

JR: Yes, even Ford Madox Ford, his sort of voyages, his adventures, traveling adventures.

That's it in a way because that is more telling than the wine writer, well, so few wine writers anyway. I do like something with a bit of humor in it, though. That's what keeps one going. I very much enjoyed Kermit Lynch's book *Adventures on the Wine Trail*...

[Ed. - *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, published in 1994, was Jancis Robinson's eighth book. Other titles include *The Wine Book* (1979; revised 1983), *Which? Wine Guide* (1980; 1981), *The Great Wine Book* (1982), *Masterglass: A Practical Course in Wine Tasting* (1983), *Jancis Robinson's Food & Wine Adventures* (1987), the classic *Vines, Grapes & Wines* (1986), and *On the Demon Drink* (1988).]





## TAKING CARE OF A COLLECTION

by  
Ruth Walker

[Ruth is a bookbinder specializing in restoration, and the proprietor of Reade-Moore Books in Petaluma, California. Her knowledgeable advice and helpful hints appeared in Vol.1 and Vol.3 of our *Newsletter*, here extracted for the newer *Tendrils* and as a useful review for us "older vines." - Ed.]



here comes a point in every collector's experience when the housing and care of books and ephemera becomes as important as new acquisitions and cataloguing. I have found that my enjoyment and dedication to my "treasures" knows no bounds; however, I am often overwhelmed by the care and space considerations. How about you?

Let's begin with the **Optimum Environmental Requirements** for maintaining a collection:

**Subdued Sunlight** is necessary as prolonged ultraviolet light causes paper to become brittle, fades cloth spines, dries leather bindings so that the leather eventually crumbles and powders, and causes vellum bindings to warp. Incandescent lighting is preferred; however the damaging rays can be filtered out of fluorescent lighting. Book cases should be placed in rooms that do not receive direct sunlight, or placed at right angles to windows.

**Constant Room Temperature** eliminates potential dampness that encourages the growth of mold (mildew). By keeping the temperature between 65 and 75 degrees and the relative humidity at 50 to 60%, the mold spores already present in older books and the environment are less likely to become active.

**Air Circulation.** Since dampness is the most critical and often least considered problem in conservation, it is important that bookcases should be backed and never placed directly against the wall. Always leave a small space for air to circulate. Never keep books on the floor, carpeted or not. Bookcases and boxes of books should be installed along interior walls. In the case of closely fitting glass-fronted bookcases, the doors should be left open from time to time on warm days for better air circulation. Books should be placed on the bookshelf so that there is room for air to circulate behind them. The number of books per shelf should allow for ease of removal so that a book does not need to be pulled or forced off the shelf.

## Handling and Care

As you remove a book from the shelf, always extend the index finger over the top of the spine about an inch, so that pressure is not applied to the head cap. Many books are damaged in this way, especially leather bindings.

When a book is being opened, the right or left hand forms a 90-degree angle for cradling the book. Never open a leather bound book to a full 180 degrees as this severely strains the spine and joints, sometimes cracking them.

It goes without saying that food and drink near books and bookcases are hazardous, with potential spills leading to stains. Cloth bindings cannot be cleaned successfully except with a soft brush or dry eraser. Leather bindings can, and should be, treated with a preservative that cleans, moisturizes, and polishes.

The care of books requires a frequent vacuuming and dusting of the area in which they are housed. Also, take time to look for insect infestations, such as silverfish, brown clothes moths, etc. The books need an annual dusting, with the tops vacuumed, not wiped, as a wiping of settled dust from the top of a book can drive dust and dirt into the text of the book.

Last but not least, what about the books and ephemeral material that there are no shelves for, or that must go into storage? I recommend that you spend money on sturdy, uniform (easier to store), archival, acid-free cartons that can be labeled to give some sense of order and sanity. Find an appropriate environment as discussed without resorting to the floor of the garage. Use good quality wrapping paper, never newspaper. Annually, on a warm day, take the books out of their boxes and stand them up, fanned out, for a 24-hour period. Use dehumidifying silicate in bags to keep moisture from collecting in the cartons.

## Book Repairs that You Can Do

After installing bookcases and book boxes to your satisfaction, the next consideration is the minor repair that you can do to individual books, pamphlets and ephemera in your collection. Upon the acquisition of an item, or in reviewing your books, carefully collate the book, page by page, looking for foreign debris: newspaper clippings, bobby pins, straight pins, paper clips, deceased critters, etc. Remove all such items, including plants, as they stain pages, sometimes actually "eating" through the paper. If you have a number of books to assess, sort them according to cloth, leather, pamphlet, and other ephemera.

**Cloth Binding** care involves cleaning the boards and spine with a very soft brush and a dry eraser-pad like Faber Castell's Magic Pad, a vinyl



cleaning pad that is non-abrasive. Never attempt to use water and soap solutions to clean cloth boards as this makes the cloth separate from the board and leaves discolored areas. Vacuum the head, tail and fore-edge areas, as well as any remaining dry erasure granules.

Frayed head and tail areas of the spine and corners can be consolidated with a white glue like Elmer's, a polyvinyl acetate (PVA). Using a toothpick tipped in the glue works well. Let dry five to ten minutes (or until dry to the touch) before placing in bookcase.

Older book cloth that shines (indicating a great deal of sizing), and leatherette may be brightened with a soft cloth like flannel that has the barest hint of anhydrous lanolin rubbed into it. Another method is the use of a silicon product called EndDust sprayed into a cloth and then used to wipe the covers. These two methods are similar to lightly dusting and waxing a small wood box. Allow the book to air for 24 hours.

No glue, no matter what the claim, is going to repair or consolidate a cracked joint or inner hinge on a cloth or leather bound book. Books that have been treated in this manner later become complex problems for the restoration book-binder. It is better to cover the book with a 3 ml. mylar jacket to prevent further wear. You should also consider protecting all of your more fragile or valuable items with a mylar wrapper, especially those with paper dust-jackets. Mylar is simple to cut if lined up with a T-square, practice, and patience. Place the mylar and book on a hard cutting surface, line the book up in the center with a good straight edge to take an accurate height measurement. After cutting, wrap the mylar around the book to ascertain the amount of turn-in needed, then trim, fold, and install.

**Leather Bindings** already in good condition (no powdery or loose joints) can be treated with a dry eraser-pad and then a barely damp cloth if dust or grime is present, taking care to do only the spine and boards. Vacuum the head, tail and fore-edge areas.

Elmer's Glue consolidates powdery, worn leather corners, as well as head and tail areas that have come loose. Leather labels and gouges can also be treated with glue. Let dry 5 to 10 minutes. Afterwards a leather preservative should be applied according to manufacturers instructions, with waxed paper inserted between the boards and first free-endpapers to prevent the preservative from staining the endpapers. Allow to dry, buff, remove waxed papers, then return to bookcase.

**Pamphlets and Ephemeral Material** can also be cleaned with a dry eraser-pad, using careful outward strokes while pressing down firmly on the item. Mylar folders that fit 3-ring binders are useful

in cataloguing and storing ephemera for easy access and display. For those who have a large number of pamphlets, a storage system using the standard 7"x10" plastic envelopes with acid-free board inserts available at Comic Book Collectors' Shops, is highly recommended. Lidded storage boxes to fit are also sold at these shops.

**Paper Tears** are easily repaired using Archival Document Repair Tape, a non-yellowing, neutral PH, reversible transparent product. Old discolored or missing tissue guards that protect wood and steel engravings and lithographic illustrations can be replaced with a neutral PH tissue.

All of these products are available from University Products, specialists in archival quality supplies. You may write for their catalog: P.O. Box 101, Holyoke, MA 01041-0101.

### Spring Cleaning Tip

Thoroughly vacuum books and bookcases in late March to late April to inhibit brown clothes moth infestations. Sprinkle borax at the back of bookshelves to discourage silverfish and firebats.

### Moving Books in Cartons

Books prefer to be packed spine down, and fairly tightly, in medium sized cartons. They need not be wrapped in paper unless the binding is fragile or the surface can rub off.

### Recommended Reading

*The Care of Fine Books* by Jane Greenfield (NY: Nick Lyons, 1988) is an in-depth discussion of how to take care of books, including a short history of book construction. *Practical Book Repair and Conservation* by Arthur W. Johnson (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988) - the **best** overview on book repair for the collector, with a useful glossary and great discussions and illustrations. *Cleaning and Repairing Books: A Practical Home Manual* by R.L. Shep (1980). Index includes everything you have ever wondered about trying to fix: dirty edges, newspaper clipping stains, sun-fading... All three books are quality paperbacks and not at all expensive. 📖



**FOR SALE!** An "Important Collection of Wine Related Items from the 18th to 20th Centuries: The Property of an American Gentleman" is being offered for sale as a whole, or by individual item. **John Thorne** (see Roster) is acting as Introductory Agent, and may be contacted for further details.



# BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: WORDS, WINE and WOMEN

by James Gabler

[Before Jim Gabler published his renowned bibliography, *Wine into Words*, he authored three pamphlets during America's Bicentennial year of 1976: *Wines of the Founding Fathers - No.1: George Washington*; *No.2: Thomas Jefferson*; and *No.3: Benjamin Franklin*. With Jim's permission we reprint his words on Ben Franklin, and await his forthcoming book on *The Passions, the Wines and Travels of Thos. Jefferson*. - Ed.]



When Congress appointed Benjamin Franklin a minister to France in 1776 he was thrust into a world of 18th century sophistication, society, intrigue - and total adulation. At the age of 70, in fact, Franklin was exceeded in popularity in France only by the King. When his carriage passed through the streets, crowds clogged the narrow alleys, leading an enterprising Frenchman to erect grandstands and sell tickets. The attention lavished on Franklin provoked John Adams to say he was "in a constant state of dissipation. At 70-odd he has neither lost his love for beauty or his taste for it."

Franklin's trust and affection for the French people was as instinctive and uncomplicated as that for their food and wine. He rapidly established himself at Passy, about half an hour's carriage ride from Paris, where his waistline became as ample as his bounty as a host. He entertained with 15-course meals, and wines from an 1100-bottle cellar that included red Bordeaux, white Bordeaux, Sherry, sparkling and non-sparkling Champagne; red Burgundy, ordinary red and white wines, half bottles of an unknown vintage, and rum. Four years later, he inventoried 1,203 bottles of wine.

In addition to wages, employers of that era frequently paid their servants with food and wine. Franklin would have been better off raising his coachman's wages, instead, for the man's wine bills amounted to more than one-third his salary for a four-month period.

Franklin's fondness for the French and his contempt for the British is evident in his vitriolic reply to an overture by King George III through an intermediary urging him to betray his country, offering him a lifetime pension and possibly a peerage: "Peerages! Alas! Sir, our long observation of the vast servile majority of your peers voting constantly for every measure proposed by a minister, however weak or wicked, leaves us small respect for that title."

The vitriol turned to humor when writing

drinking songs and essays, as he did with Abbé de la Roche and Abbé Morellet. It was the latter who speculated in song, that the American Revolution developed because Franklin wanted good French wine, not lack-luster English beer:

"...Congress stated right away  
They would drink France's claret;  
For the sake of our Champagne  
They have started their campaign  
Planned long ago  
By Benjamin.  
The English lacked humanity  
As they forced them to drink tea  
And would sell them muddy wine  
At the price of the most fine  
To the great woe of Benjamin."

Franklin did prefer French wine, ordering many from John Bondfield, the American consul at Bordeaux. The elderly minister had to watch his diet because of gout, but indulged nonetheless in wine. Instead of merely grazing comfortably on French wines, *foie gras* and truffles, however, Franklin diligently supervised all commercial transactions between Paris and Philadelphia for the war effort, and the financial disposition of all American vessels and privateers that touched at French ports. In leisure time, drinking with friends, he mused on the relationship of the elbow to the glass. What would happen if the elbow were the tibia or the femur? In its ability to carry glass to mouth, he suggested, the human arm is the pinnacle of perfection.

Friends stimulated his own sense of humor and philosophical bent. A French aristocrat, Mme. Brillion, provoked his essay "Dialogue Between the Gout and M. Franklin," by sending him a verse fable "Le Sage et la Goutte."

In his essay Franklin's gout upbraids him for lack of exercise and overeating. The reality of gout, accompanied by a kidney stone, was painful enough to make Franklin wonder if he could make the return trip home, when a letter arrived with Congressional permission May 2, 1786.

Although his health was tenuous, requiring him to walk with a cane or be carried in a sedan chair, his lightning-quick mind had not slowed down. He was involved in agricultural experiments, entertaining, experimenting with soap-making, musical instruments, and being elected President of Pennsylvania -- always with a glass of Madeira to soothe the pain.

Franklin's advanced age kept him from being the father of our country; he was 51 when he left for England at the beginning of a 24-year diplomatic career. (In contrast, at the same time, George Washington was 25, John Adams 22, Thomas



Jefferson 14.) But if he wasn't the father, he was most assuredly the grandfather, the voice of reason and sensibility, and his signature was on every important document that made America a free nation, including the Declaration of Independence, Treaty of Alliance with France, Treaty of Peace with Britain, and the Constitution.

When he died on April 17, 1790, at the age of 84, his epitaph might well have been a phrase from a letter to a friend: "...people who will live long, who will drink of the cup to the bottom, must expect to meet some of the usual dregs..."

He had met depths and heights, scoundrels and kingmakers in a career that began with his arrival in Philadelphia as a young man, angry with his brother James to whom he had been apprenticed as a printer in Boston. Tired and coated with dust from his travels, he walked across the brick footpaths, in the fall of 1723.

Walking along High Street, known today as Market, with only a few copper coins jingling in his pockets, he looked over the Quaker-plain meeting house and the plain people walking in the streets. He soon found a job, with printer Samuel Keimer, and a room in a boarding house that, fatefully, also was the home of Deborah Read, who would become Franklin's wife.

Chance encouragement by Gov. William Keith, at this crucial period, led Franklin to leave his job for England. "Over the Madeira, he proposed my setting up my business," Franklin describes the tavern scene where Keith suggests he buy his equipment in England with letters of credit from him -- letters of credit which, unhappily, turned out to be worthless. In England, Franklin found work at Palmer's print shop, and possibly out of a sense of fairness, he wrote Deborah a curt letter - his only one - saying he wasn't likely to return soon.

The strong, lithe American, unbent by the years that mark him in his best known portraits, carried double loads of type chases at his new job, shunning the workingman's drink, beer. The deadening dullness of the workmen's jobs was made bearable by beer, often as much as six pints beginning before breakfast. They found Franklin's abstinence so strange they nicknamed him "the water American."

He was busy learning typesetting, a knowledge that would make him the first typesetter in America, and writing. The latter talent opened England's intellectual coffee houses to him, and was eventually to open kings' and courtiers' doors. Finally scraping together enough money, he returned to Philadelphia in 1726 to an intensely competitive printing trade, a partnership with Hugh Meredith, and a part-time career of writing in the *Mercury*.

He was entering another partnership, a

common-law arrangement with Deborah Read who was blocked from a religious ceremony by the uncertainties of her marriage (on the rebound when Franklin stayed in England) to a bigamous scoundrel.

The Franklins' relationship was based on mutual respect and never faltered, even when separated later for long period of time. Deborah, who wouldn't even drive a nail in their walls to hang pictures until his return from Europe, would have seemed a rough-hewn pioneer to Franklin's aristocratic European friends and their bewigged ladies. Unsophisticated and uneducated, she could not share his intellectual interests, and he founded the Junto - a wine-drinking, debating society of twelve men - for the companionship of people of like interests.

The twenty-four standing queries asked at the beginning of each meeting were read with a pause between each "while one might fill and drink a glass of wine." The Junto met on Fridays to debate social and philosophical issues; and tangentially, to originate the first circulating library, wield political power and provide a good source for Franklin's printing business.

The ambitious printer's comfortable lifestyle was at sharp odds with the popular opinion of printing as a lowly, unprosperous trade. Actually, Franklin ran a booming print business in Antigua, South Carolina and other locations, and he owned the *Philadelphia Gazette*. Soon after, he founded *Poor Richard's Almanac*. *Poor Richard* was a valuable source of income for a provincial printer with a reading public hungry for the almanac's information about eclipses, highwater, witty verses, bachelor's folly, kings and bears, marital debate, etc.

The almanac's name was borrowed from an astrologer and almanac-maker of 17th century England, while much of its content of verses, proverbs and aphorisms was "taken from the wisdom of all ages." This was the general practice of colonial periodicals, which reprinted material from American and English papers, essays from London journals, laws, treaties, debates, documents, Parliamentary proceedings and colonial assemblies.

Franklin's empathy with the working man influenced not only his writing, but also his inventions, including the Franklin stove to warm houses, and the lightning rod to protect laborers' houses against fire. His interests ranged from helping volunteer firemen to persuading Philadelphia to pave its streets.

He advised through *Poor Richard* "Eat not to dullness; drink not to elevation," although in his own life Madeira often greased the political machinery. While trying to borrow cannons for Philadelphia from New York Governor George Clinton, he was "first refused peremptorily, but at dinner with his council, where there was great drinking of Madeira wine, as



the custom of that place then was, he softened by degrees, and said he would lend us six. After a few more bumpers he advanced to ten, and at length he very good naturedly conceded eighteen."

Deborah carried on his business affairs while he was away and helped when he was home, for their printing business included a ragtag assortment of goods for sale such as New York lottery tickets, temple spectacles, and health nostrums. Franklin retired from business at 42 on about 1000 pounds a year to pursue four other careers - U.S. Postmaster General, delegate to the Pennsylvania Assembly, scientist, and peacekeeper with the restless Indians.

History has never adequately explained why Franklin ventured out in a storm with a kite. But it does tell us that he enjoyed Madeira, rum and increasing fame at local taverns, where he improvised drinking songs:

"The antediluvians were all very sober,  
For they had no wine and they brewed no October;  
All wicked, bad livers, on mischief still thinking,  
For there can't be good living where there is not good drinking.  
Derry-down."

Franklin accepted the appointment as negotiator for the Province of Pennsylvania with the Penn family (in England), who had become absentee rulers by virtue of William Penn's founding. They had increased their demands beyond the colony's means.

A portrait of Franklin reveals him at this time as a man who wears the mantle of success. He had no aspirations to the aristocracy, nor was he a true advocate of the frugal living to which he paid lip service. His home life was comfortable, and afforded him time to enjoy his glass of Madeira, or rum punch, and enough of the good life to hasten gout. The move to England to work out a compromise with the Penns removed him from his peers into England's philosophical and scientific community - and the world of coffee houses and supper clubs, like the Royal Society Club and the Club of Honest Whigs. Franklin wrote of his clubs, "I find I love company, a chat, a laugh, a glass and even a song, as well as ever; and at the same time relish better than I used to do the grave observations and wise sentences of old men's conversations...." [Ed.- Franklin founded the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, the oldest such organization in America, in 1743. It was in Volume I of their *Transactions*, that the first treatise on grape growing and wine making to be written and published in this country, appeared. See

Pinney's Twelve Historic Texts in America, W-T Newsletter, Vol.3 & 4.]

By day Franklin was the guardian of his country's interests, by night a libertine. Although he wrote of himself as a poor man (particularly when a reputed fortune hunter proposed to his daughter Sally), Franklin was living the good life, ordering beer from Philadelphia brewer Reuben Haines, drinking claret with Lord Clare, and being caught in a compromising moment with a young lady on his knee - perhaps Polly Stevenson - by artist Charles Wilson Peale, who recorded it in a pencil sketch.

It was to Polly that Franklin wrote poetry extolling the virtues of aged wine:

"No hospitable man, possess'd of  
generous wines,  
(While) they are in his vaults,  
repines  
That age impairs the casks;  
for well he knows  
The Heavenly juice  
More fit for use  
Becomes, and still as older,  
better grows;  
He only keeps it there till  
it refines."

When Pennsylvania recalled him in 1765, friends filled his house for days on his return. He was soon re-appointed emissary to England, this time adding duties as colonial agent for Georgia, New Jersey and Massachusetts, as well as Pennsylvania. Shortly after signing the Declaration of Independence, he was appointed with Lee and Deane as commissioners to France.

Franklin was on the brink of a new challenge, career and reputation - that of ladies' man. By this time he was a widower, Deborah having passed away while he was in England.

Possibly his old friend, Mme. Helvetius, of Paris, best described the versatile genius: "We shall meet again with all those who love us, I a husband and you a wife -- but I believe you have been a rogue and will find more than one." ❀



"If you drink nothing but water,  
You'll never write anything wise;  
For wine is the horse of Parnassus  
That hurries the bard to the skies."

Lord Byron (1788-1824)