

the



WAYWARD TENDRILS

Newsletter

Vol.5 No.4

A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S CLUB

October 1995

IN THE WINE LIBRARY: A REVIEW by Bob Foster



Passions - The Wines and Travels of Thomas Jefferson, James M. Gabler, Bacchus Press, 1751 Circle Road, Baltimore, (410-828-9463), 1995, 318pp., hardback, \$29.95.

Jim Gabler has written a terrific book about America's first wine connoisseur, Thomas

Jefferson. From his voluminous writings and journals it is clear that Jefferson was a man of many passions. Gabler's book does a marvelous job of chronicling two of Jefferson's better known loves: travel and wine.

But this is not a dull academic work simply reciting that Jefferson went from point A to point B and made certain comments. Gabler traveled the route himself and vividly described what Jefferson saw. This is particularly apparent as Gabler describes many of the Roman ruins in France that enticed Jefferson. Even more interesting is what Gabler does with Jefferson's comments on specific wines. Gabler, a renown antique wine book collector and wine enthusiast himself, is able to weave in numerous contemporaneous descriptions of the wines and the vintages Jefferson tasted. He offers insights and comments many authors without this background would have missed. For example, it's well known that one of the wines that Jefferson tasted and greatly liked were the wines of Chateau d'Yquem. A reader might dream of Jefferson sitting at Monticello and sipping the wonderfully sweet nectar from this best of the Sauternes producers. But Gabler goes further and points out that the vintages that Jefferson adored came before the vintage of 1847. It was in that year that the Chateau discovered that by leaving the grapes on the vines far longer than ever before they would become fully affected with botrytis, yielding the sweet almost syrupy wines that have won Yquem acclaim in recent times. Using other tasting notes

from other wine writers of that era, Gabler is able to explain that in those days Sauternes were slightly sweet when young but aged into a dry taste. It's the fascinating kind of detail that only a wine lover would think to include.

Similarly, Gabler carefully notes that when Jefferson fell in love with wines from the Champagne region, they were available as both sparkling and still wines. Jefferson far preferred the still wines and preferred those made from Pinot Noir rather than Chardonnay.

It is also intriguing to watch certain patterns that have not changed. Having been stung in some early transactions in France, Jefferson tried to always buy directly from the Chateau and insisted on the wines being bottled before shipment. Jefferson found that too many quality detracting things happened to wine shipped in barrels or bottled by third persons. Centuries later all of the major producers in Bordeaux would adopt this approach.

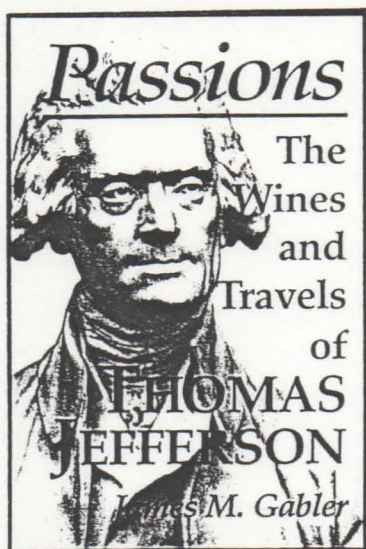
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An additional plus is that time and again Gabler is able to describe what has happened to the various producers whose wares appealed to Jefferson. For example, Gabler takes the white Hermitage wine that Jefferson found particularly attractive and traces it into modern times. It turns out to be M. Chapoutier's Chante-Alouette, still acknowledged as one of the best whites of that region. Again and

again, the quality level of Jefferson's palate is impressive.

Gabler does not set this book in a time warp stripped of the events occurring in England, France and the U. S. Instead, major historical events in Jefferson's life such as the writing of the Declaration of Independence or observing the beginnings of the French Revolution are woven into the tapestry of the book. Indeed, often major historical events allowed Jefferson to continue his wine pursuits. For example, during the War of 1812 British troops seized Washington DC and burned the White House and the Capitol, which contained the nation's library. Jefferson would later sell his extensive book collection to the government for \$23,950. This collection formed the basis for the Library of Congress. The funds allowed the then retired president to fund his wine expenses during the later years of his life.



Gabler writes in an entertaining and easy to read style. The book is exceptionally well documented and the appendices contain several gems including Jefferson's notes on the White House cellar that are annotated by Gabler. There is a section on English and European wine measurements that is the best I have ever seen. Utterly intriguing is a list of the contents of Jefferson's travel box and Gabler's speculation on how some of contents were used by Jefferson. Capping of this first rate book is a top notch, detailed index.

Jim Gabler has written a superb book that offers wine lovers an entertaining education into both the passions of Thomas Jefferson and the wines of the later 1700s and early 1800s. Even if you have never been a fan of historical works, this book will capture your attention. This book is a must for wine lovers. Very Highly Recommended.

[Bob Foster, a founding Tendril member, writes his wine book reviews for the California Grapevine. We thank both for their ready permission to reprint in our Newsletter. For a sample issue of the Grapevine write to P.O. Box 22152, San Diego, CA 92192-9973.]

NEWS

& NOTES

Tendril **Darrell Corti**, of Corti Brothers Grocers and Wine Merchants in Sacramento, CA (P.O. Box 191358 Folsom Blvd, Sacramento 95819) puts out a very informative newsletter of new "treasures" in stock, plus other food & wine tidbits. In the latest issue we learn of the Radcliffe Culinary Times, the publication of the Schlesinger Library at Radcliffe College, Cambridge, MA, overseen by Barbara Haber, Curator of Printed Books. Darrell says, for anyone "remotely interested in food" a subscription is "a must." For information contact Barbara Haber, Schlesinger Library, 10 Garden St, Cambridge, MA 02138; 617-495-8647.

Anyone interested in books should get on the mailing list of The Spoon River Press to receive their catalogues. Books about books: collecting, selling, identification, care...including a 638-page gem: *A Gentle Madness: Bibliophiles, Bibliomanes, and the Eternal Passion for Books* by Nicholas Basbanes (NY: Holt, 1995). Their address is 2319-C West Rohmann Ave, Peoria, IL 61604-5072; phone 309-672-2665; fax 309-672-7853.

Leon Adams, the dean of American wine writers and life-long promoter of the civilized use of wine, died September last at the age of 90 years. His acclaimed books included *The Commonsense Book of Wine* and four editions of his encyclopedic *The Wines of America*. A proper biographical sketch of Leon will be run in our next issue.

To All Tendrils: Remember to send to the Newsletter bits and articles that you have gleaned in your readings and would be of interest to the group. Help keep us all informed!



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THE ELUSIVE CHARDONNAY

by
Charles L. Sullivan

[In our last Newsletter (Vol.5 No.3, July 1995) Fred McMillin's "Books & Bottles" briefly examined the arrival of the Chardonnay grape in California. This spurred Charles to check his notecards for further tracking... - Ed.]



red McMillin is correct in thinking that the Chardonnay was in California before 1900, but there is much more evidence to support this idea than George Husmann's not very informative notes. If James Laube [in *California's Great Chardonnays*] meant that there wasn't good evidence of the vine's being here before 1900, he is wrong. If he meant there wasn't *lots* of evidence, he is correct.

The Chardonnay was first introduced to the Golden State by Glen Ellen's J. H. Drummond in 1879 or 1880. (There was something in the 1861 Haraszthy catalogue about a white "pineau," but he got it in Germany, and nothing came of it, anyway.) Charles Wetmore wrote in his 1884 Second Report as head of the viticultural commission that it was bearing well for the Sonoma vintner. Napa's H. W. Crabb probably got his "White Pineau, or Chaudenay" from Drummond. It appeared in Crabb's To Kalon nursery list in October 1882. This Oakville winegrower then became the variety's chief and just about only advocate, although Wetmore did recommend the "Chardenai" elsewhere in his report. But he noted that the variety was "not practically known to us," admitting to "scattered lots" and mentioning specifically those of Drummond and Crabb.

In 1884 Crabb penned an article for the *Napa Register*, which was copied by the *San Francisco Merchant*, in which he praised the variety. Two years later he was selling "Pinot Chardonnay" cuttings with such others as Cabernet franc, Beclan, Semillon, Merlot, and Sauvignon blanc. That same year (1886) he made a Chardonnay and showed it at the 1887 Viticultural Convention in San Francisco.

I believe at this time Crabb supplied Chardonnay to Tiburcio Parrott on Spring Mountain, who used it in his "Montrachet" which he showed at the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Meanwhile Crabb was using his "Chardonnay" as the backbone for his "Chablis." He suggested it be picked at 20° Balling and that the must rest on skins for 24 hours before pressing. Such a wine, he wrote, needed three years of "bottle ripening."

There is also fair evidence that Paul Masson

imported Chardonnay vines from Burgundy in 1896. He used the variety in some of his sparkling wines.

I believe that Theodore Gier, in the late 1890s, got Chardonnay from his neighbor Parrott's Spring Mountain estate and planted the variety in his own Livermore Valley vineyard. It is from Gier that Wenté acquired the Chardonnay which we today identify as the Wenté clone. The Masson and Gier selections are those that survived Prohibition in California and account for the few examples of Chardonnay found by Professors Winkler and Amerine in the 1930s which they analyzed in their *Hilgardia* report (15:6).

I think almost all the Chardonnay planted in the 1880s and 1890s was destroyed by phylloxera or pulled between 1895 and 1915. There was virtually no interest in such a low bearing variety, whatever its quality. Masson and Gier being such early devotees to the use of resistant rootstock, it is logical that some of their Chardonnay vines survived.

We can see that there were no awards at the 1915 San Francisco Panama-Pacific Exposition for any wines that hint of Chardonnay in their makeup, except for some labeled "Chablis." But that is not evidence, at all. It is clear that Chardonnay, even in the earlier years, played no important part in California's premium commercial wine production. This was not to take place until the post-Repeal years with the wines of Wenté, Inglenook, and Beaulieu. The first time that "Pinot Chardonnay" appears as a category at the California State Fair wine competition was in 1941 and Wenté won the only gold. When competition resumed after the war, Wenté did it again. 🍷

TOKALON VINEYARD

NAPA COUNTY, CAL.

—

IMPORTANT

VINE CUTTINGS

FOR SALE.

—

CABERNET SAUVIGNON,
MERLOT,
BECLAN,
CABERNET FRANO,
TROUTSKAU,
MATAO,
PETITE BIRRAH,
CARIGNAN,
MALVOC,
ALCANTO BOUSNET,
GRISSE BLAUER,
B. BURGUNDY,
BLAUE PORTUGUESER,
TANNAT,
PIED DE PERDRIX,
GAMAYTEINTURIER

CLAIRETTE BLANC,
SEMILAN BLANCH,
PINEAU CHARDONAY,
SAUVIGNON VERTE,
SAUVIGNON BLANCH,
PETITE BIRRAH,
And all the more common varieties in any quantities.

H.W. CRABB,

OAKVILLE,

NAPA COUNTY, CAL.

[*San Francisco Merchant*, Dec.10, 1886]

ROMAN NUMERALS DECIPHERED!!

[No longer shall we be puzzled by those mysterious dates on early title pages: In his very interesting *The American Printer: A Manual of Typography* (Philadelphia, 1889, 17th ed.), Thomas MacKellar, Ph.D., explains... - Ed.]



It has been supposed that the Romans used M to denote 1000 because it is the first letter of Mille, which is Latin for 1000; and C to denote 100, it being the first letter of Centum, the Latin term for 100. Some also suppose that D, being formed by dividing the old M in the middle, was therefore appointed to stand for 500, that is, half as much as the M stood for when it was whole; and that L being half a C was, for the same reason, used to denominate 50. But the most natural account of the matter appears to be this:

The Romans probably put down a single stroke, I, for one, as is still the practice of those who score on a slate, or with chalk; this stroke they doubled, trebled, and quadrupled, to express two, three, and four: thus, II, III, IIII. So far they could easily number the strokes with a glance of the eye; but they found that if more were added it would be necessary to count the strokes one by one: for this reason, when they came to five, it was expressed by joining two strokes together in an acute angle, thus, V.

After they had made this acute angle, V, for five, they then added single strokes to the number of four, thus, VI, VII, VIII, and then, as the strokes could not be further multiplied without confusion, they doubled their acute angle by prolonging the two lines beyond their intersection, thus, X, to denote two fives, or ten. After they had doubled, trebled, and quadrupled this double acute angle, thus, XX, XXX, XXXX, they then, for the same reason which induced them to make a single angle first, and then to double it, joined two single strokes in another form and, instead of an acute angle, made a right angle, L, to denote fifty. When this was doubled, they then doubled the right angle, thus, C to denote one hundred, and, having numbered this double right angle four times, thus, CC, CCC, CCCC, when they came to the fifth number, as before, they reverted it, and put a single stroke before it, thus, D to denote five hundred; and, when this five hundred was doubled, then they also doubled their double right angle, setting two double right angles opposite to each other, with a single stroke between them, thus, M, to denote one thousand; when this note for one thousand had been repeated four times, they then put down IV for five thousand, X for ten thousand, and LV for fifty thousand.

The corners of the angles being cut off by transcribers for despatch, these figures were gradually brought into what are now called numerical letters. When the corners of D were made round, it stood thus, D̄, which is so near the Gothic [Old English] M̄ that it soon deviated into that character; so that D̄ having the corners made round stood thus, D̄, and then easily deviated into D. C also became a plain C by the same means: the single rectangle, which denoted fifty, was, without any alteration, a capital L; the double acute angle was an X; the single acute angle, a V; and a plain single stroke, the letter I. And thus these seven letters, M, D, C, L, X, V, I, became numerals. As a further proof of this assertion, let it be considered that C D̄ is still used for one thousand, and D̄ for five hundred, instead of M and D; and this mark, M̄, is sometimes used to denote one thousand, which may easily be derived from this figure, D̄, but cannot be deviations from, or corruptions of, the Roman letter M. The Romans also expressed any number of thousands by a line drawn over any numeral less than one thousand: thus, V̄ denotes five thousand, LX̄ sixty thousand; so, likewise, M̄ is one million, MM̄ two millions, &c.

Upon the discovery of printing, and before capitals were invented, small letters served for numerals; not only when Gothic characters were in vogue, but when Roman had become the prevailing character. Thus, in early times, i v x l c d m were, and in Roman type are still, of the same signification as capitals when used as numerals. Though the capital J is not a numeral letter, yet the lower-case j is as often and as significantly used as the vowel i, especially where the former is employed as a closing letter, in ij iij vj vij viij dcij &c. In Roman lower-case numerals, the j is not regarded, but the i stands for figure I wherever it is used numerically.

During the existence of the French Republic, books were dated in France from the first year of the Republic: thus, An.XII (1803), or twelve years from 1792.



F I N

19th CENTURY ENGLISH SOURCES ON BURGUNDY

by
Christopher Fielden



ne thing that English schools used to be keen on teaching you in history were the dates of all the kings and queens. Somehow, I seem to have related Queen Victoria to all the nineteenth century - she did not reign that long - and so I have had to

change the title of this piece from what I had promised you in the last *Wayward Tendrils*.

The earliest book in English, specifically on the wines of Burgundy, mentioned by André Simon, is *Notes on Burgundy* by Charles Weld, which appeared in 1869. This book was brought out, after his death, by his widow and is more a travelogue than anything else. Whilst he was there during a vintage, his descriptions are more bucolic reminiscences than hard facts.

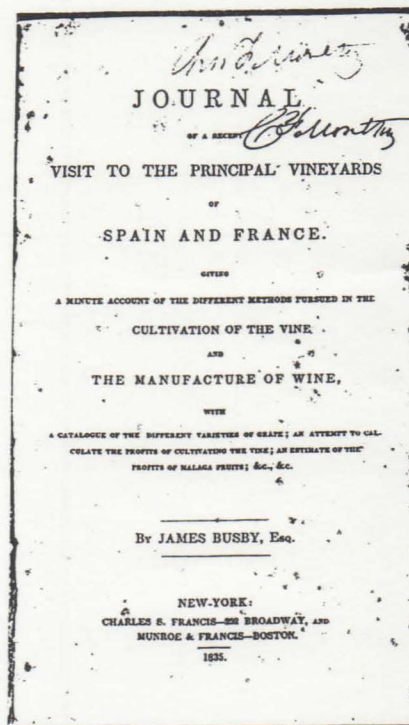
The first great wine book of the nineteenth century is Alexander Henderson's *The History of Ancient and Modern Wines* (1824). It is apparent that he had read Jullien's *Topographie de Tous les Vignobles Connus*, which had appeared eight years earlier. For the first time mention is made of the fragmentation of the vineyard holdings in Burgundy as a result of the French Revolution, and also of individual vineyard owners, such as Ouvrard and a Monsieur Montmort in Fixin. In one of the appendices, there is a list of the prices for Burgundies in 1822, mainly of the 1819 vintage.

Cyrus Redding, the author of *A History and Description of Modern Wines* (1833) had spent some years in Paris as a journalist and made the most of it by visiting vineyards in both France and Italy. He was thus probably the first Englishman to write from first-hand experience and this gave him the opportunity to compare prices, not just within the region, but also to compare them with those of elsewhere in France. Ouvrard, the owner of Clos Vougeot, has now become the "notorious" Ouvrard, a reputation that was perhaps better earned by his father.

In the same year James Busby, a major figure in the history of viticulture in not only Australia, but also of New Zealand, published his *A Journal of a Tour through some of the Vineyards of Spain and France*. Two years earlier he had spent four months collecting vine cuttings in Spain and France for experimental plantings in New South Wales. He spent three days in Burgundy and seems to have suffered from bad weather. However, this did not prevent him from visiting Beaune, Gevrey-Chambertin

and Clos Vougeot, where he was welcomed by Monsieur l'Écrivain, Ouvrard's steward. His description of the vineyard and the winery is very detailed.

Perhaps the two most interesting accounts of Burgundy and its wines in the 19th century both come from wine merchants. *Wine, the Vine and the Cellar*, by Thomas George Shaw (1863) is a wine book which is openly critical of much that goes on in the wine trade. The author "visited the principal cellars.... For above a week, I lived within half an hour's walk of the most celebrated vineyards of Burgundy." He stayed with a grower/merchant in Nuits Saint Georges and gives notes of more than fifty wines that he tasted. He has a wry sense of humour, recommending the Hotel de Chevreuil in Beaune "for its strong smells and excellently cooked frogs." Could it be that the largest of all Californian wine produces has read, "All common cheap French red wines seem now to have got the name of Beaujolais, as whites have that of Chablis."



The other wine-merchant wine writer is Charles Tovey, from Bristol. In his *Wine and Wine Countries* (1862) he mentions his debt to Cyrus Redding, but says that he was not "practically acquainted with his subject." Tovey visited Burgundy and stayed with the Count Leger-Belair. In later editions, he is one of the first to attack chaptalised wines as being "sugared wines, dull and heavy." Indeed, his text might almost be a quotation he takes from an article in the *Times*, "We do not care to drink

chymical messes under the name of wine." He also talks about pasteurisation, though he is not clear as to the effect it has on wine.

One of the main targets of Tovey's criticism is Dr. J.L.W. Thudichum, a German by origin, who may be best remembered for the attack he led on the sherry trade. In both is *A Treatise on Wine* (1894), which was conceived as a successor to the work of Cyrus Redding, and *The Origin, Nature and Use of Wine* (1872) which he wrote with Dr. August Dupré, much attention is given to both the viticulture of Burgundy and also to the making of its wines, but little to the individual vineyards and growers.

A book that I can find in no bibliographies is *An Extract from the Work Entitled The Grand Wines of Burgundy* (1893), which is a translation of part of *Les Grands Vins de Bourgogne* of R. Danguy and Ch. Aubertin, which had appeared the year before. This is a hard-backed work, complete with plates and maps, and deals with those villages where the merchants Bouchard Père et Fils had vineyards, particularly Beaune and Volnay.

The *Handbook of Wines* of Thomas McMullen (1852) is the first book to deal with the wines of Burgundy written by an American. Whilst it has been criticised for being a ragbag of other people's work, its portion on Burgundy has some originality, and Jullien is among those quoted.

Among the other 19th century wine books where there is some mention of the wines of Burgundy are: *An Essay on the Inventions and Customs of both Ancients and Moderns in the Use of Inebriating Liquors...and the Effects of Opium*, 1838, by Samuel Morewood. *Report on the Cheap Wines from France, Italy, Austria, Greece and Hungary*, 1865, by Dr. Robert Druitt. *The Vine and Its Fruit*, 1875, by James L. Denman. ❖

Booksellers' Catalogues

"To read these catalogues is like drinking wine in the middle of the morning; it elevates one into that state of felicitous intoxication in which one feels capable of anything. I must control myself and not write to booksellers in haste; there must be a gap between the perusal of the catalogue and my postcard... I will wait until the effects are worn off, and then write a postcard, sober, temperate, moderate, brief, restrained...

"But while I wait, those more intemperate than myself will have rushed in and bought... It is obvious that I cannot wait. Probably I should telephone..." --- *Rose Macaulay: Personal Pleasures*.

NOTES FROM THE "OPEN TRENCH" by R. Hume Andrews



perhaps I was the last person in the world to learn about the hugely successful novelette by Robert James Waller. But since the book has a wine and food theme, the "Open Trench" is pleased to reprint key passages for those Club members who still are not enlightened by the stunning Robert James Waller prose in:

The Fridges of Sonoma County

It was hard to leave Francesca, but the gulf between their worlds was too great to bridge. "I love your long, hard lens," she said, "and the quiet flutter of your shutter. But you must go, Robert Kincaid, because your f-stop here is already too great."

"Yes," said Robert Kincaid, "you are the Chianti Classico of my life -- light, supple, made according to a time-honored formula that longs to be broken and reshaped to reach the heights of pure Sangiovese. But I am the Super Tuscan of your life -- making my own rules and soaring to price levels that mere Chianti will never know. Ours is a forbidden blend."

Still, Robert Kincaid talked Francesca into one last exposure, in a relationship that had ceased to develop.

It was then that Robert Kincaid sensed the raw power of chilled food storage in Santa Rosa, which is how he came to photograph The Fridges of Sonoma County.

It was dark in the first restaurant Robert Kincaid visited, but Robert Kincaid felt oddly at ease in the dark room. The young waitress eyed his lean, hard body and tripod. "I can picture myself with this man," she thought. "I venerate his silver hair and face lined with wisdom."

In the back room Robert Kincaid saw men gathered around dozens of still-empty glasses. None of them were women, but still Robert Kincaid wondered what wines would be poured. Would it be Cabernet Sauvignon? Should his story change to The Ridges of Santa Cruz County?

Then one man spoke, as if answering Robert Kincaid's unspoken question: "These are chardonnays, you nit wit. The fridges are in the kitchen."





**BOOKS &
BOTTLES**
by
Fred McMillin

A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

In Spanish, Rio is river and Oja is a small river in northern Spain, i.e. the Rio Oja. Rioja, a contraction of Rio Oja, is the name of Spain's best known red wine district. The Oja Valley is at the west end.

The Books - A river runs through Rioja. The Rio Oja joins the larger Ebro and flows eastward into the Mediterranean Sea. The first Rioja wine-makers, the Phoenicians, came up that river. Later, the Romans followed the same route, and as was their custom, organized the vineyards. In fact, some believe the Romans supplied marshy Bordeaux with wine from Rioja. As an aside, the Medoc was so swampy, instead of cultivating grapes there, the Romans cultivated oysters!

In any case, Frank Prial of the New York Times has lavished praise on the modern Rioja reds. Here are some milestones in their rise to fame.

1092 A.D. - The name first appears in writing, spelled "Rioxa."

ca 1210 - Castilian is standard, modern Spanish. The first praise of Rioja wines written in Castilian is attributed to a local monk, Gonzalo de Berceo, who in a poem recommended "enjoying a glass of good [Rioja] wine."

1860 to 1900 - Bordeaux's curse was Rioja's blessing. As the French vineyards were attacked by oidium mildew and then the phylloxera insect, many Bordeaux winegrowers moved to Rioja. This produced major upgrading of the vines.

1970 - Bordeaux was again responsible for Rioja's final modernization, but in a far different way. The price of Bordeaux reds went through the roof, so purchasers and producers turned to Rioja reds. The resulting prosperity financed this conclusive renovation, producing the wines that got Frank Prial's attention.

To read more about all of this, we recommend: *The Rioja of the Wines* by Pealez and Cabrero (Madrid: Varese, 1989).

The New Wines of Spain by Tony Lord (S.F.: Wine Appreciation Guild, 1988).

The Wines & Vineyards of Spain by Miguel Torres (Barcelona: Emograp, 1977 & 1982).

The Wine Atlas of Spain by Hubrecht Duijker (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

The Bottles - Our San Francisco tasting panel has rather consistently given the highest marks to two fine firms that happen to have the USA headquarters in northern California. CIV is located in Sacramento (800-669-1972). CUNE is in St. Helena (707-963-7115). The Riojas of either concern are medium-bodied and full of fruit flavors. They are not big and heavy. If you prefer more age, try the Reservas. If you like these, then treat yourself to something usually even more exciting, a Gran Reserva - from the best grapes given even more time in wood and bottle before it is sold. Father Berceo would love these!



**OLD & RARE WINE BOOKS:
A CATALOGUE**

With a passionate, on-going hope of encouraging more wine drinkers to become wine readers, Tendril's member Mannie Berk, Renaissance proprietor of The Rare Wine Co. (Sonoma, Calif), and a serious, enthusiastic student of wine literature, has recently produced a splendid catalogue for his wine customers offering "Old and Rare Wine Books" for sale. This is no commonplace catalogue: following an introduction to the attraction of old books and the emergence of wine book collecting, Mannie proceeds with a succinct, well-researched, thoughtful history of most of the world's major wine growing regions and their important wine books. Interspersed are offerings of rare first editions, along with more-affordable modern limited edition reprints, of classic titles, plus other "best of the vintage" books. As collectors we are acquainted with the works of Henderson, Redding, Simon and Vizetelly, but do we know the importance of Lavalley, Boullay, Danguy & Aubertin? In less than 20 pages, the catalogue is a genuine "crash course" in wine literature and - an added bonus for the collector - a most useful bibliographic tool. Berk credits 18th century London wine merchant Duncan M'Bride with writing "the very first in a long line of books by wine merchants," and adds, "a tradition that is alive and well today." Our good fortune. [Wayward Tendrils members should receive the catalogue, but if missed, a copy can be had from The Rare Wine Co., 21468 8th Street East, Sonoma, CA 95476; FAX 707-996-4491. Also ask to receive the excellent Rare Wine Co. Newsletter.]

MARIAN L. GORE, BOOKSELLER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT



One by one, some of the great antiquarian bookselling establishments pass out of existence. A few weeks ago the doors finally closed on the premises of the Holmes Book Company in Oakland, California." So wrote Editor Chernofsky of the *Bookman's Weekly* last August about the closing of California's "oldest continuously operating antiquarian bookstore."

Likewise, dedicated collectors of wine and gastronomy books signal the departure of our longest enduring U.S. wine and food bookseller. With a pang of sadness, and heartfelt congratulations on a wonderful career, we reluctantly accept the retirement of Marian L. Gore, Bookseller.

Always a reader and a lover of books, Marian began her bookselling career working for a rare book dealer in Beverly Hills. In this position, she came to realize that there were no West Coast booksellers specializing in food and drink, and she would be happy to fill this need. Following the pattern of most booksellers in this specialty, Marian set up shop in her home and conducted, primarily, a mail-order business.

In 1967 she issued her first catalogue: "200 Years of Cookery" - listing 409 items, with about 15 wine-related books intermixed with the cook books. By 1968 her catalogue was subdivided into fourteen

categories, and included 75 books on wine (Speechly's *Treatise on the Vine*, 1821, \$30). For the next twenty-five years an average of two catalogues a year were issued.

Her first Book Fair was in 1972 at the St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco. As a member of the ABAA (Antiquarian Booksellers Association of America), Marian participated yearly in the ABAA's prestigious Book Fairs, as well as the smaller, Southern California Fairs. Often displayed in her booth were wine items never before seen - not only the old and rare classics, but wonderful, artistically fine items of the 1930s or '40s that she had picked up on her latest buying trip to France. A lesson quickly learned: snatch up these gems quickly, you will not likely see them again.

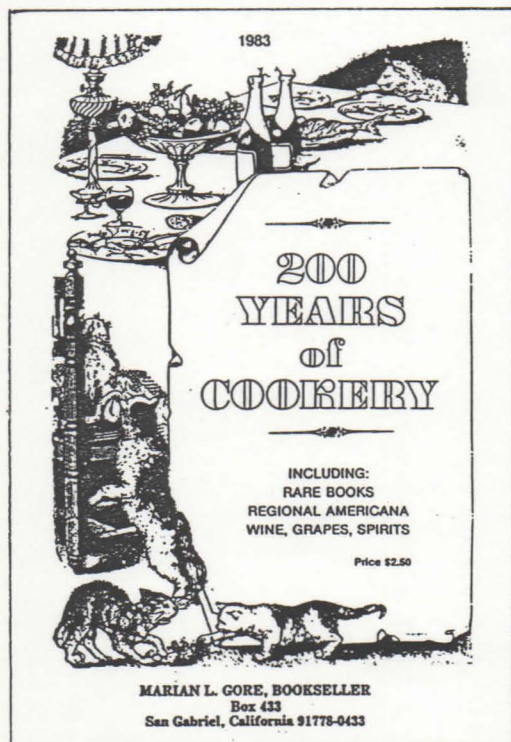
In a letter to your editor, Marian recalled "traveling to search out unusual and special items. I went to Europe every few years. I speak a little French, and France was always a pleasurable experience. In Paris I stayed usually on the Left Bank in some small hotel, walked a lot, and scoured all the book stores."

In 1990 The Book Collectors of Los Angeles published the notable *One Hundred Books on California Food & Wine* (edited by Dan Strehl) highlighting the "most desirable ... and most representative books that describe the first 120 years of California food and wine." As a member of the committee to develop this guide, Marian was also asked to contribute an introductory article, "Notes from a California Bookseller." Here she remembers her bookselling career, from being "appallingly ignorant" in her new chosen specialty to a long-time friendship with M.F.K. Fisher.

This bookseller does not retire easily. She says she still has over one thousand food and drink books for sale - but, she will issue no more catalogues and has exhibited at her last Book Fair. She welcomes "people who would like to visit and buy - with a generous discount!" "As a one-woman band the business has been very demanding and immensely gratifying. It opened up a world I would never have known other-wise. And I'm leaving all of it because it's time!"

Graciously private, with a keen, droll sense of humour, Marian has graced the book world with a stately presence. May she continue to stroll the Book Fair aisles for many years to come...

[Marian's address is P.O. Box 433, San Gabriel, CA 91778].



VINTAGE 1950 WINE WRITERS: REMINISCENCES OF PAMELA VANDYKE PRICE

[In 1990 Pamela Vandyke Price, the first woman to write regularly about wine for the general public in the UK, penned her memoirs, *Woman of Taste: Memoirs from the Wine World*. Called the doyenne of wine writers, her career spanned more than 30 years and produced countless articles and over two-dozen books on wine and food. In her *Memoirs* she devotes Chapter 3 to the 1950s wine writing scene - her personal relationships, memories, and evaluations of her fellow wine writers - commenting that it was "sufficiently unlike that of today to deserve a chapter to itself." The following excerpts are from this special chapter.]



ine writing in the 1950s was as different from wine writing today as are the wines of the post-war period from those of the 1980s. Very few newspapers or magazines had regular features about wine. The very word "wine" bore implications of luxury - with a whiff of the prefix "sinful."

At House & Garden we had the interest of the chairman, growly-voiced Harry Yoxall, member of the Saintsbury Club and a seriously interested wine lover. The Saintsbury Club - named for George Saintsbury (1845-1933) - took its name from the don who wrote *Notes on a Cellar-Book* (1920). This was an account of the wines he bought and what he thought when he drank them. He had never attempted to *learn* about wine, but his opinions are of interest to a student of wine drinking history (which is more than can be said nowadays for his ponderous writings on English literature). Many have ascribed an exaggerated importance to the *Cellar-Book*, but it is only some personal jottings by an amiable, pompous don, useful as a source of anecdotes and opinions, but for nothing serious about wine. But Saintsbury started a fashion for a particular type of wine writing, and the Saintsbury Club, with which he, an irascible type, would have nothing to do, has become one of the most select organizations devoted to wine, possessing a fine cellar and holding regular dinners at which the "orations" are memorable.

Harry Yoxall would, from time to time, send down an article for us to include, always scholarly, erudite, full of learned quotations and sound facts deriving from personal experience - but it was an ordeal to cope with his features, because he always wrote twice or even three times as much as we could accommodate and, one didn't cut the chairman. [Yoxall's books on wine included *The Enjoyment of*

Wine, 1972; *The Wines of Burgundy*, 1968; and the Saintsbury Club Oration *Women and Wine*, 1954.]

It has always struck me as ridiculous that no qualifications were - or are - required for people writing about wine. These days plenty of the wine trade write and, if they are lucky (and pleasant to the subs or copy-editor) their writing - for this is a craft that has to be learned - is usually rendered as adequate, even effective text. The pity is that the good young potential wine writers don't get much chance against members of the trade, who, probably earning more in today's world of wine, can write for less money than the full-time writer requires and therefore have regular articles commissioned. Just as the ability to write a pleasant letter doesn't qualify anybody to hold an important editorial job, so the ability to write pleasingly about a variety of subjects doesn't - or, to my mind, shouldn't - qualify anyone to write about wine.

It would have been difficult forty years ago for writers on wine to have checked what they wrote, except by talking to members of the wine trade, because there were few books on the subject in print. During the nineteenth century there had been several in English, and a few were brought out in the United States. Only in French were there some serious technical volumes concerned with wine making and treatments. The first version of Alexis Lichine's great *Encyclopedia of Wines and Spirits* came out as recently as 1967 and, at the launch party, I remember some opinions voiced as to whether the ordinary public would buy this substantial and - according to the notions of the time - expensive volume. André Simon's annotations on "Wine" (which appeared separately before being incorporated in a one volume edition concerning gastronomy for the Wine & Food Society) was, I think, the one single book to which the layman might refer that also dealt with wines that were not French or German. It was the *Concise Encyclopedia of Gastronomy*.

Otherwise, books that were published between the two World Wars followed the tradition of George Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar-Book*. In the 19th century, there were the books of T. G. Shaw, a customs officer, and Cyrus Redding, who recounted the history of many wines and tackled the practicalities of buying, storing and serving, in *Every Man His Own Butler*. There were also the admirably observed accounts - delightfully illustrated - of Henry Vizetelly (1820-94), a first-rate journalist who travelled widely in many classic wine regions. In various other writings about wine, the accounts are leisurely and urbane in style, often giving particulars of lengthy luncheons and dinners, sometimes sprinkled with famous names and often taking place in historic houses. I do not recall any reports of tastings, and

young wines, not yet ready to drink, are not mentioned. Charles Walter Berry's *Viniana* seems a far more adventurous book, because the author, in the wine trade, planned a series of meals at which only one sort of wine, including for instance sherry and port, was served in different vintages and varieties.

Viniana (published in 1929) is described on the title page as "a blend of good wines and good stories as told at table by a Wine Merchant." Charles Walter Berry, of Berry Bros, the great firm of merchants established in the seventeenth century, was encouraged to ply his pen by H. Warner Allen who, in various ways, acted as press consultant and adviser to that establishment. Amateurs always like the prospect of appearing in print, under their own by-line, but as many of those who did so in the past were well educated anyway, so their text, even when not subtly sub-edited, could be both literate and naively charming. *Viniana* describes the wines accompanying three meals, plus the conversation: at one dinner only claret was served, at another only red and white Burgundy, at a third, Champagne.

"Table talk" can seem, even when written down or taped within people's lifetimes, verbose, facetious and even embarrassing; lacking the ambience, the tones in which people speak and the delicate nuances superimposed on conversation by facial expressions and the relationships of those participating, words are inadequate. But Charles Walter Berry's writings do give an idea of what wine drinkers thought and how they expressed themselves at a particular time.

Morton Shand, also in the wine trade, wrote about French wines and so, from the same trade point of view, did Ian Maxwell Campbell. Morton Shand even wrote *Other Wines than French* and, just before his death in 1960, he revised his original text concerning French wines - but of course, as still happens, the book was out of date before publication. Warner Allen, whom I knew and will describe later, went into more detail, both historically and in noting down what he was told with scrupulous accuracy (as Vizetelly had done in the previous century). But few statistics were given in such books, regulations were seldom referred to, and maps were sketchy. Maurice Healy, an Irish lawyer, wrote *Stay Me with Flagons*, another book of chatty reminiscences which some people still find attractive but which irritates me almost more than Saintsbury. Both are superficially genial "dear lady" writers, showing off the little they do know and not attempting to find out what they don't.

The general mood of the books of that time was leisurely, their style gentlemanly, much as if the author was imparting information over a glass of port in his club. Enthusiasm was modified, practicalities -

for gentlemen still had "a man" even if they didn't have a butler - very seldom included. So André Simon's *A Wine Primer* and Raymond Postgate's *Plain Man's Guide to Wine*, which was followed by *An ABC of Choosing and Serving Wine* were, when they appeared, like wafts of fresh air and voices raised in enjoyment in a previously hushed room. I remember reading and re-reading both, but, when I wanted to check some technicalities or update some statistics, the only sources of reference I then had were members of the wine trade known to me or to my editors, or the commercial departments of the various embassies. There simply was not anywhere that I knew of where such basic information could be found.

The writers about wine whom I knew in 1950s all genuinely loved and enjoyed wine. Many were scholarly to such a degree that I am still shy about misplacing an adjective when I write about them. Good manners were common to them. All were conventional in dress, although a few might, daringly, wear a Homburg hat rather than a bowler, or even go without a hat at all. Even the most constant cigarette smokers would never have thought of lighting up until the end of a meal and even then certainly never a pipe.

Top of the hierarchy of wine writers in those days was André L. Simon, who had founded what is now the International Wine & Food Society in 1933 and its *Journal* in 1934. None of us would be writing about wine today had André not lived and worked as he did.

Raymond Postgate, in every sense of the word, was big: tall, bulky but not fat, rubicund, with slightly unruly white hair, inclining his great bespectacled head towards his interlocutor courteously, full of erudition and what I, hesitatingly, term *gravitas*. This gentle giant had grown up in an austere academic family; he had to speak Latin at Sunday luncheons, and to the end of his life he made tasting notes in Greek, because "Too many people still understand if I write *Nihil bonum* or *Sino sapore*." He was a passionate classical scholar, a journalist (who provided impeccable copy on time), editor, writer of serious economic tomes and detective stories - and the *Plain Man's Guide to Wine* which came out in 1951.

Warner Allen was another considerable scholar, a bulky man, with a well-pitched but somewhat splashy and hesitating delivery. He'd been the Paris correspondent of the *Morning Post* for ten years, worked with the St. James's wine merchants, Berry Bros, wrote at least one detective story [*Mr. Clerihew, Wine Merchant*, 1933] (with E. C. Bentley) and a book on mysticism, *The Timeless Moment*. These days Warner's writing is often tagged with the description "purple prose" but, although his style is somewhat baroque, he knew a great deal about wine,

history and various fascinating things, such as the odd game of "kottabos," which the ancient Greeks played by flinging out the dregs of wine from their cups. His researches into wine history remain very valuable. But, he wrote a book about white wines without, as far as I can trace, ever mentioning *Botrytis cinerea* (noble rot)!

T.A. ("Tommy") Layton was an ebullient writer on wine. He had been the first ever scholar of The Worshipful Company of Vintners, quite something even in the days when many of the examiners were somewhat scantily informed. Bright-eyed, with a round, rosy face, Tommy started several restaurants and circles of wine appreciation, poured out articles and books, although I have learned from two of his former secretaries that these had to be firmly edited if the publishers were to accept them, and I think that the text must have been virtually rewritten by literate friends. For Tommy was something of a tragic figure, always aiming high and flopping; he was definitely a manic type. In one of his books he describes being invited by Allan Sichel to accompany him to Alsace: in the first and early editions many compliments are paid to his host, but, as the book was reprinted, Allan occupied less and less space until finally it was almost as if he needed Tommy at his side in order to do business! But Tommy's books are packed with material that, if it had been sorted out, would have made them valuable and long-lived.

He was very hospitable and, among the "old Laytonians" who worked at his restaurant, Layton's, in Duke Street, Manchester Square, are some eminent names: Ian Jamieson MW, authority on German wines, and Michael Broadbent MW, now head of Christie's Wine Department.

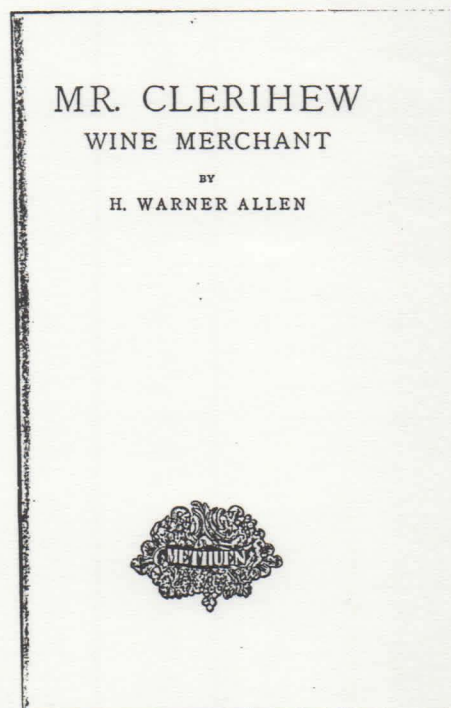
Denzil Batchelor was, like Tommy, essentially a sad figure. Both of them had grown up under the shadow of a famous father. Denzil, short and plump - he was a diabetic and certainly dug a premature grave with his teeth - had a beautiful speaking voice and was superb at making speeches with well-timed stories. Denzil had become famous for his sports commentaries and writings and was always quick to express appreciation to his hosts. He was well-liked in the southern hemisphere, where his cricket commentaries were masterly. Denzil had a warm, endearing personality and, if I tended to be bored after some of his recitals of verse, offers of more drink - and, I fear, expressions of self-pity, which I find displeasing, this is part of his tragedy.

One of those supposed to "know about wine" and who was frequently commissioned to write about it, was Vyvyan Holland, author of *Son of Oscar Wilde*. As he was quite old when I met him I could then perceive a resemblance to his father, in the pale, slightly pendulous features, which somehow looked

slightly blurred. Like most of these established wine writers - though not Raymond or Warner - he was never inclined to talk about wine. Once, when taking me out to supper, he even admitted: "I don't really care what I drink as long as I get enough."

Similarly, Ambrose Heath, who had been a very respected food writer and who often contributed drinks articles to publications (some of his books were really good recipe collections) once sent me a letter, when I had dispatched to him a bottle of rather fine 1947 claret, a vintage in which many wines threw heavy deposits, to say that he'd "enjoyed it for lunch" the day it arrived!

Of two most distinguished colleagues, Cyril Ray and Edmund Penning-Rowsell, I will not write, for, thank heaven, they are still with us; I only wish that I could command a style as elegant as Cyril's and that my activities had enabled me to gather as much experience as Eddie. Of younger wine writers it would certainly not be correct to write; there is a "generation gap" and their ways and the ways of their editors are not mine. Some of them, like Oz Clarke, taste superlatively; few of them, to my mind, write in as disciplined and taut a style as, in the days of paper shortages and brutal editors, we had to. But times have changed. If I admit to one wistful thought, it is that not many of them seem to *love* wine; they find out about it, as those of the past either didn't or couldn't. But the joy of wine, the fascination, the challenge, the wish to share the pleasure of wine with readers, with audiences - I do not find this often when I read or listen to them...



BOOK FAIR CALENDAR

The Book Fair Calendar is a service provided for book people who wish to attend fairs, exhibit at them or schedule a new fair not conflicting with the other events. The list, compiled from advertisements for each book fair in AB Bookman's Weekly, will be updated in each issue.

Oct. 17	P.B.F.A.	London, England
Oct. 19-21	Stillwater International Antiquarian Book Fair	Stillwater, Minn.
Oct. 21-22	Arizona Antiquarian Book Fair	Scottsdale, Ariz.
Oct. 22	Amherst Antiquarian Book Fair	Amherst, Mass.
Oct. 27-29	Trinity Antiquarian Book Fair	New York, N.Y.
Oct. 28-29	Atlanta Antiquarian Book Fair	Atlanta, Ga.
Oct. 28-29	Greater Fresno Book & Paper Fair	Fresno, Calif.
Nov. 3-5	Chicago Int'l Remainder & Overstock Book Expo	Chicago, Ill.
Nov. 4	Mansfield Book & Paper Show	Mansfield, Ohio
Nov. 4-5	American Book & Paper Show	Houston, Texas
Nov. 4-5	Burbank Book Fair	Burbank, Calif.
Nov. 4-5	Long Island Book Fair	Albertson, N.Y.
Nov. 5	Midwest Bookhunters Book Fair	Evanston, Ill.
Nov. 5	Toronto Book Fair	Toronto, Canada
Nov. 5-6	P.B.F.A.	London, England
Nov. 10-11	Cleveland Antiquarian Bookfair	Cleveland, Ohio
Nov. 10-12	Boston International Antiquarian Book Fair	Boston, Mass.
Nov. 10-12	Mid-Atlantic Mystery Book Fair & Convention	Philadelphia, Pa.
Nov. 11	West Coast Americana Paper, Ephemera & Book Fair	Stockton, Calif.
Nov. 11-12	Montreal Antiquarian Book Fair	Montreal, Canada
Nov. 11-12	Ephemera Show	Boston, Mass.
Nov. 12	Berkeley/Oakland Book & Paper Collectors Fair	Berkeley, Calif.
Nov. 18	Albany Antiquarian Book & Ephemera Fair	Albany, N.Y.
Nov. 18	Seattle Americana Paper, Ephemera & Book Fair	Seattle, Wash.
Nov. 18-19	Pyramid Atlantic Book Art Fair	Washington, D.C.
Nov. 18-19	Virginia Antiquarian Book Fair	Richmond, Va.
Nov. 21	P.B.F.A.	London, England
Dec. 1-3	Metropolitan Children's Book & Toy Fair	New York, N.Y.
Dec. 2-3	Golden Gate Park Ephemera Fair	San Francisco, Calif.
Dec. 9	Paper & Collectible Show	Marlborough, Mass.
Dec. 9-10	American Book & Paper Show	Dallas, Texas
Jan. 7	Columbus Paper Fair	Columbus, Ohio
Jan. 19-20, 1996	Fort Lauderdale Antiquarian Book Fair	Fort Lauderdale, Fla.
Jan. 27-28	Austin Book & Paper Show	Austin, Texas
Jan. 27-28	Massachusetts Paper & Collectible Show	Boxborough, Mass.
Feb. 10-11	San Francisco Antiquarian Book Print & Paper Fair	San Francisco, Calif.
Feb. 11	Westchester Antiquarian Book & Ephemera Fair	Tarrytown, N.Y.
Feb. 24-25	Orange County Book & Paper Faire	Costa Mesa, Calif.
March 1-3	Washington Antiquarian Book Fair	Arlington, Va.
March 2-3	Arizona Antiquarian Book Fair	Mesa, Ariz.
March 2-3	Original Philadelphia Book Fair	Phoenixville, Pa.
March 8-10	Pennsylvania Antiquarian Book Fair	Fort Washington, Pa.
March 16-17	Houston Book & Paper Show	Houston, Texas
March 16-17	Savage Mill Book Fair	Savage, Md.
April 6	Massachusetts Antiquarian Book & Ephemera Show	Waltham, Mass.
April 27-28	Pennsylvania Antique Book, Paper, Advertising & Collectibles Show	Allentown, Pa.
May 4-5	Burbank Book Fair	Burbank, Calif.
May 4-5	Dallas Book & Paper Show	Dallas, Texas