

# the WAYWARD TENDRILS Newsletter

Vol.6 No.2

A WINE BOOK COLLECTOR'S CLUB

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## THE WINE LIBRARY: A BASIC SHELF OF WINE BOOKS

by Ron Unzelman



aryl Saunders, Executive Secretary of the Society of Medical Friends of Wine, recently asked me to list "the twenty-five wine books which you think are essential for a basic wine library."

My first reaction was "can't do." It would be too difficult to limit the shelf to just twenty-five books. But then I thought: why not present this provocative exercise to the members of the Wayward Tendrils, and perhaps we could gather a consensus of twenty-five essential titles.

My criteria for the list: written in the English language, readily available, and no "coffee table" picture books - useful information is the standard for inclusion. This check-list strives to cover the wine appreciation categories for reference and reading, with material for both the novice and the advanced wine student.

Some might insist that every major wine producing area in the world should be represented by at least one book in a "basic" library, but this approach makes the compilation even more difficult, and would tragically narrow the scope of deserved books. Perhaps a separate check-list of the best books on the different wine regions of the world should also be tackled. My list does include books on the wines of California, and offers a choice from suggested titles for Bordeaux and Burgundy. But, to stay within the allotted numbers, it was necessary to leave out Italy, Australia, Germany, Portugal and other important wine producing regions.

With further frustration, I have had to omit from the list many of the classic wine writers of earlier times. Even the veritable André Simon, who has written more books on wine than any other author, is not included in this "must" list. The prolific H. Warner Allen, for example, merits mention, but not inclusion. Should we consider another compilation,

perhaps organized by century, of these classic wine writers and their now out-of-print titles?

Alphabetically by author, here are my choices for a basic wine library bookshelf.

Adams, Leon. *The Commonsense Book of Wine*. Originally published in 1958, and several times revised, the latest edition of 168 pages was published in 1991. Every beginner on the wine trail should start with this book, and those who have become "experts" should re-read it.

Adams, Leon. *The Wines of America*. (4th ed, McGraw-Hill, 1990, 528 pp.) Even though some specifics are necessarily dated, a search on wine growing areas of North America should begin with this, Adam's final edition. The historical information endures, and Leon Adams' persistent philosophy is intertwined throughout.

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Amerine, Maynard A. and Edward Roessler. *Wines: Their Sensory Evaluation* (1993 edition, 250 pp.) Along with Emile Peynaud's *The Taste of Wine: The Art and Science of Wine Appreciation* (Translated from the French by Michael Schuster and published by W.A.G., 1987, 256 pp.) Not for the novice, these two authoritative and academic texts are for the serious and professional scholars of wine tasting.

- Baldy, Marian, Ph.D. *The University Wine Course: A Wine Appreciation Text and Self Tutorial* (1993, 426 pp.). A University level course in wine appreciation that should be a must-buy for the advanced student who seeks more detailed information about wine tasting. And, for the beginning student, Kevin Zraly's *Windows on the World Complete Wine Course* (1996 edition, New York, 192 pp.) is probably the best introductory book on wine tasting. It is written by a leading American sommelier and wine educator, and is based on his course at the Windows on the World restaurant in New York City.
- Broadbent, Michael. *The New Great Vintage Wine Book* (1991, 455 pp.). An invaluable reference book of wine tasting notes by one of the world's most experienced tasters, it is a follow-up/companion volume to his 1980 edition, *The Vintage Wine Book*.
- Gabler, James. *Wine into Words. A History and Bibliography of Wine Books in the English Language* (1985, Baltimore, 403 pp.). Every library requires a guide to the published works on wine, and this is the one to have for English-language wine books. Although now ten years old and lacking the most recent titles, it includes almost all titles from the earliest days onward, and is an indispensable tool for any serious wine lover who cares to explore the literature of wine.
- Johnson, Hugh. *Vintage: The Story of Wine* (1989, 480 pp. Published in New York and London (*The Story of Wine*). Unquestionably, the finest book on the history of wine.
- Johnson, Hugh. *The World Atlas of Wine* (4th ed, 1994, 320 pp.). Something for everyone: from the wine novice to the wine nut. Written by the best English-language wine writer in the world today. Bob Foster calls it "staggeringly excellent...by far the single best wine atlas ever written...and one of the best books on wine ever published."
- Laube, Jim. *California Wine. A Comprehensive Guide to the Wineries, Wines, Vintages and Vineyards of America's Premier Winegrowing State* (Wine Spectator, 1995, 758 pp.). An accurate, detailed review of the producers of California wine, with specific comments on vintage wines, history and vineyards. Also provided is information on how wine is made, how to build a wine collection, and a summary of the vintages from 1933 to 1994.
- Muscantine, Doris; Amerine, Maynard; and Thompson, Bob, eds. *The University of California/ Sotheby Book of California Wine* (1984, Berkeley/London, 615 pp.). A dazzling pot pourri of California wine topics by a broad spectrum of experts. Although now out-of-print, this magnum opus - with most of its material undated - can usually be found in used bookshops. Don't miss the chapter by Roy Brady on the "Literature of California Wine."
- Pellegrini, Angelo. From a number of Pellegrini titles, it is a toss-up between his first book, *The Unprejudiced Palate* (1948, 235 pp. reprinted in 1984 by the North Point Press, San Francisco) and his *Wine and the Good Life* (1965, New York, 307 pp.) for the one Pellegrini book to recommend. Down-to-earth essays about wine, food and life by an Italian immigrant who became an eminent professor of English. Wonderful reading.
- Pinney, Thomas. *A History of Wine in America. From the Beginnings to Prohibition* (1989, Berkeley, 553 pp.). We could call this America's counterpart to Hugh Johnson's *Vintage: The Story of Wine*. For the story of wine in America, this is without peer. Pinney gives us both a scholarly and an extremely readable book. His notes to the chapters and list of sources are invaluable.
- Ray, Cyril, ed. *Compleat Imbiber, No.1-14*. Published in London between 1957 and 1989, edited by Ray (an author himself of numerous books about wine), and written by prominent wine writers, this series of entertaining and informative anthologies is perfect bed-time reading. Even though some of these volumes are becoming scarce, they are worth the hunt, and must be included in my list.
- Robinson, Jancis. *Vines, Grapes and Wines* (1986, New York/London, 280 pp.). As the sub-title states, this book is the "first complete guide to grape varieties and the wines made from them. A new approach to the appreciation of wine," and an essential wine library reference to track down and appreciate more than 1000 different grape varieties grown world-wide.
- Robinson, Jancis, ed. *The Oxford Companion to Wine* (1994, Oxford/New York, 1088 pp.). A magnificent tome, orchestrated by Master of Wine Robinson, that covers wine from A to Z. Written by wine experts from around the world and generously illustrated with maps and photographs, this should be a most welcome addition to all wine libraries.
- Thompson, Bob. *The Wine Atlas of California and the Pacific Northwest: A Traveler's Guide to the Vineyards* (1993, New York, 243 pp, large format). A comprehensive survey of the West

Coast wine regions: beautiful photographs, detailed maps and the unique insights and humor of author Thompson make this the number one book on California wine.

[Bordeaux] Parker, Robert. *Bordeaux: A Comprehensive Guide to the Wines Produced from 1961 to 1990* (1991, New York, 1026 pp.); Penning-Rowell, Edmund. *The Wines of Bordeaux* (1985, 5th ed.); Peppercorn, David. *Bordeaux* (1991, London/Boston, 722 pp.); or, Clive Coates' recent masterpiece *Grands Vins: The Finest Châteaux of Bordeaux and their Wines* (1995, U.C.Press, 816 pp.).

[Burgundy] Hanson, Anthony. *Burgundy* (1995, 2nd.ed., London/Boston, 718 pp.). The British author's wit and honest, candid insight make the reading enjoyable and provide a clear pathway to understand the intricacies of this "gigantic jigsaw puzzle" wine district. Also, Remington Norman's *The Great Domaines of Burgundy: A Guide to the Finest Wine Producers of the Côte d'Or* (1993, New York, 1st.Amer.ed., 286 pp.); or, Kramer, Matt. *Making Sense of Burgundy* (1990, 528 pp.).

To complete my shelf are several fictional stories with a wine-related theme. While most novels can not be called significant contributions to the literature of wine, these five favorites offer the reader further insight into the understanding and appreciation of wine. They should not be missed.

*The Madeira Party*, by S.Weir Mitchell. Originally published in 1895, a superb reprint - which contains excellent additions by William Dickerson and Roy Brady - was issued by Corti Bros. of Sacramento, CA in 1975.

*The Man Who Made Wine*, by J. M. Scott (London/New York, 1953, 125 pp.). The story, and the woodcut illustrations by Biro, will bring you to the heart of the meaning of wine.

*The Vineyard*, by Idwal Jones (1942, New York, 279 pp. - recently reissued in paperback). Set in California, this novel has been called the "best work of fiction on the wine country and one of the six best books of fiction about California of all times."

*Taste*, by Roald Dahl. A short story in the best Roald Dahl tradition.

*A Cask of Amontillado*, by Edgar A. Poe. A classic of macabre fiction.

Let me know what you think of my list, and send your choices to the *Newsletter* for the next [July] issue (FAX 707-544-2723). ☘

## ===== NEWS & NOTES =====

Enclosed with the current issue of the *Newsletter* is the updated **Membership Roster**. Please send any corrections or additions to the Editor. Those *Wayward Tendrils* who have not yet paid their 1996 dues will receive a gentle jostle with their *Newsletter*.

**Steve Burnstein**, who joined us in mid-1995, sent an appreciated message with his dues payment: "I greatly enjoyed the latest issue re Roy Brady and Leon Adams."

We are pleased to welcome new member, **Robert Hutton**, from Alexandria, VA, whose special collecting interest is in the wine books of Eastern Europe, Russia and the former Soviet Union. He knows the Russian language and can be called upon to help *Tendrils* decipher any Russian wine book titles they might have in their collections. Bob is the wine book cataloguer for the Library of Congress, and in the near future we hope to include the LC Wine Collection to our Wine Libraries of the World Series. In the meantime, he sends us a wonderful **Leon Adams** anecdote: "I was quite taken with your articles about Leon Adams [V.6 #1 Jan 1996]. Leon and I have had our private joke ever since the first edition of *Wines of America*. I had just joined the American Wine Society in 1967, shortly after it started, and Leon sent me a letter soon after. He wanted to cover every state in the union and could only find out about Sands in Petersburg, which made such stuff as Wild Irish Rose, and he wanted proper wineries in his book. I replied that I had a dozen vines in my city back yard, called grandiosly Shooters Hill Vineyards, and it would be ridiculous to include such a small effort in his book. I did allow that the only other winemaker I knew about was Willard Scott, who was our local weatherman at the time. Leon insisted that he would include us, since he hadn't found anything else for Virginia at the time. Sure enough, both Willard and I were in the first edition. When the 2nd edition came out, there were real vineyards in Virginia, and Leon sent a message through channels hoping that I wasn't upset about being left out. My reply was that it was ridiculous to have been there in the first place!"

**LOVELY EXTRAVAGANCE!** Would you like to visit, with great envy I am afraid, forty of the most breathtaking private libraries in the world? *At Home with Books. How Booklovers Live with and Care for their Libraries* is an opulent, mouth-watering production that should not be missed. Written by Estelle Ellis and Caroline Seeborn, with glorious photography by Christopher Sykes, it is published in New York by Carol Southern Books (1995). Cost, \$50.

===== NEWS &  
NOTES ===== cont'd.

**TREASURE TROVE OF WINE LITERATURE FOUND!** We recently discovered that the University of Texas at Austin houses the papers of publisher Alfred A. Knopf who, for many years, had the best line of wine writers and wine books (beginning with P. Morton Shand in 1928?). In the Library Chronicle of the University of Texas at Austin (XXVI, No.12, 1995, 272 pp) is a catalogue of an exhibition drawn from the Knopf papers. There is a section on "Knopf Cooks" (items 493-557) which is devoted to some of the books on food and wine that Knopf published, and also illustrates Knopf's own interest in these things. There must be much to be learned about the literature of wine from this important collection, which includes correspondence between authors and publisher and other related material. This cache of papers is just waiting for a Tendril researcher to dig through it, and report. Inquire at Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas, P.O. Drawer 7219, Austin, TX 78713-7219.

**WANTED! WINE BOOKS WANTED !**

- **Fred McMillin** reminds us that he still needs Vol.I of Edward Emerson's *Beverages Past & Present* (1908).
- **Roy Brady** is looking for the 1980 (1st) and the 1982 (2nd) editions of *The Connoisseur's Handbook of Calif Wine* by Olken, Singer and Roby. These little books are packed with "an extraordinary amount of information on winery d.b.a.s" and other matters helpful in cataloguing his wine label collection.
- **Gail Unzelman** lacks five of the six books published as a series by Maurice Ponsot, Paris (ca 1940s?). Titles needed are *Chronologie Anecdotique du Vignoble Française* (by Pierre Andrieu); *Le Docteur Rabelais et le Vin* (by Paul de la Borie); *La Gastronomie et le Vin* (author?); *Bacchus* (by André Ransan); *Alcool Flamme de l'Esprit* (Pierre Andrieu). The one title so far acquired is *Le Vin et les Médecins à Travers les Âges*.
- **Linda Stevens** would like to fill in the missing gaps in her U.S.D.A. run: needed are the reports for *1861, 1868, 1878 - U.S.D.A./ Report of Commissioner of Patents*. She has for trade the *1860 Report* (articles on grapes and wine by Ludwig Gall, Daniel Goodloe, S.J. Parker). Also has a **DUPLICATE COPY** of the *1904 U.S.D.A. Report* (Geo.C. Husmann, "Some Uses of the Grapevine and Its Fruit;" Letters from Paul Masson and E. Goodrich).
- We heartily welcome new member **John Hayes** - Boston wine book lover who has been collecting for almost twenty-five years: 20 years "unknowingly" and

five "knowingly". Here is his **Want List**:

- Allen, Herbert Warner. *Mr. Clerihew, Wine Merchant*, 1933 mystery novel.
- Biddle, Anthony J.O. *The Land of Wine*. 1901.
- Campbell, Ian Maxwell. *Reminiscences of a Vintner*, London, 1950.
- Chaloner, Len. *What the Vintners Sell*, London, 1926.
- Cobb, Gerald. *Oporto, Older and Newer*, 1965.
- Cockburn, F.A. *Wine & the Wine Trade*, 1947.
- Codman, Charles Russell. *Vintage Dinners*, 1937.
- Croft-Cooke, Rupert. *Wine and Other Drinks*. 1962.
- Crowdy, William. *Burgundy and Morvan*, 1925.
- da Fonseca, A.M. *Port Wine*, 1981.
- Foster, Wm. *Short History of the Cooper's Company*, London, 1944.
- Hall, Holworthy et al. *The Six Best Cellars*, 1919.
- Ott, Edward. *From Barrel to Bottle*, London, 1953.
- *A Tread of Grapes*, 1982.
- Ray, Cyril. *The Compleat Imbiber*, No.8 (1965); No.9 (1967); No.12 (1971); No.15.
- *Ray on Wine*, 1979.
- *The Wines of France*, 1976.
- Rhodes, Anthony. *Princes of Grapes*, 1975.
- Robson, E. *A Wayfarer in French Vineyards*, 1928.
- Sellers, Chas. *Oporto, Old and New*, London, 1899.
- Simon, André. *Blood of the Grape*, Duckworth, 1920.
- *In Praise of Good Living*.
- *Tables of Content*, 1933.
- Tait, Geof. *Port, from the Vine to the Glass*, 1936.
- Waugh, Harry. *Bacchus on the Wing*, 1966.
- *The Treasures of Bordeaux*, 1980.
- Vizetelly, Henry. *Facts about Port and Madeira*, 1890.
- *Facts about Sherry...*, 1876.
- *Glances back through 70 years...*, 1893.

**DUPLICATES! DUPLICATES!**

- **Gail Unzelman** has duplicates for sale or trade:
  - Field, Sara Bard. *The Vintage Festival*, 1920. 500 copies printed by John Henry Nash.
  - Truman, Maj. Ben. *See How It Sparkles*. 1973 reprint of 1896 original. Does anyone have an original available?!
  - Mallette Dean Artist & Printer: His Influence on...Calif Wine Labels*, 1982, 200 copies.
  - Haraszthy, Arpad. *Wine Making in Calif*, 1978, Book Club of CA.
  - Johnson, Hugh. *Pop-Up Wine Book*, 1989.
  - Giulian, Bertrand. *Corkscrews of the 18th Century*, 1995. Well-researched and illustrated.
  - Pellegrini, A. *Unprejudiced Palate*, 1948. Signed.
  - Dewey, S. *Wines, for Those Who have Forgotten and Those Who want to Know*, 1934, Lakeside Press.
- For a complete list, contact me!

**IN MEMORIAM:  
MICHAEL McKIRDY  
The Dean of Rottingdean  
1942 - 1996**

Mike McKirdy, the Dean of Rottingdean, and co-proprietor with his wife Tessa, of Cooks Books in Rottingdean, England, died January 10th from cancer. His sudden death was a sorrowful shock to book collectors and fellow booksellers the world over: up until he was diagnosed with the disease last October, he was fit and well, busily buying and selling cookery and wine books - used, old and rare.

Born in Zimbabwe of missionary parents, Mike grew up in Glasgow, Scotland. When adventure called at age 18, he and a friend emigrated to Australia. For almost 10 years he travelled the continent and New Zealand, working at whatever was at hand (picking tobacco, harvesting grapes, waiting tables, running a cafe, bartending). In 1967 he met, and married, Tessa while they were both working at a ski resort in the Snowy Mountains. Three years later they set off for England - they wanted to return by driving the length of Africa, but prohibitive regulations and unfriendly political climates forced them to abandon this route and travel across Asia instead. In a blue VW Beetle they made the trip from Calcutta to Sussex in ten months. Here, in Tessa's home county, they settled.

With their keen interest in fine food and love of books, the founding of Cooks Books in 1975 was inevitable. Almost immediately, the McKirdy's were recognized as important dealers in cookery and wine books, and their thrice-yearly, jam-packed catalogues were eagerly awaited by anxious collectors.

Mike sincerely loved the work. Whether searching-out, buying, cataloguing, selling or packing books, it was all "good fun." (He liked to refer to the time before Cooks Books as "when I had a real job.") He travelled wherever necessary to get the books; his presence at auctions selling books in his specialty was routine. He wouldn't have missed it. And, he always returned with offerings of books for his customers.

At home, Mike was a superb cook with an eclectic taste; he enjoyed modern jazz (which he played); and was a devoted soccer fan. Before each February ABAA Book Fair, he looked forward to a week of big-game fishing off the coast of Africa.

He and Tessa produced two fine sons, Luke and Andrew. The boys have assisted in the business, but as yet, they have not chosen to follow in Mike's bookselling footsteps. Tessa will continue Cooks Books, and the Jottings will be hers now.

Mike McKirdy's exceptional knowledge of his specialty was well-known and respected by his colleagues; this expertise was truly appreciated by the many collectors who bought books and sought out his

advice. His spirited, honest and warm personality was valued by all. None of us was ready for Mike to die; he will be dearly missed.

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**"Goodby to Mike" from Marian Gore**

The loss of Mike McKirdy is overwhelming to those of us who knew him as colleague and friend. It is indescribably painful to realize that he won't be at book fairs any more. At his death, he was the number one dealer specializing in books on food and drink, and his catalogues will forever be collectors items.

My personal memories of Mike are varied. The first time I met him was when he and Tessa, his wife and Cooks Books partner, lived in Brighton. I had made an appointment to come from London to see his books. I remember that he was smarting from an earlier appointment with an American dealer who was very late and then didn't buy anything. To heal his annoyance he had been to a soccer match just before I arrived. We hit it off immediately and were friends from then on.

Through the years we met at book fairs in both San Francisco and Los Angeles, and, as he wrote in his last "Jottings from the Dean" (Issue 41), we, along with many other dealers, were witnesses at the Crahan sale in New York in 1984. I say witnesses because none of us could buy anything because of the Nevada buyer who bought it all! Oh well, I'm still glad I went.

The last time I saw Mike and Tessa was at his bailiwick in Rottingdean. I was with a colleague, and after going through his stock, Mike took us to his pub for libations. It was great fun and a treat for Americans. I don't think there is anything in the U.S. that compares to the local English pub for camaraderie and good spirits.

As I write, the last Cooks Books catalogue, Sixty-Eight, is in front of me. I think it was his opus. Tessa and their two sons must be proud of Mike's body of work during his relatively short life. We share their loss and wish them well.

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Dear Gail:

I couldn't send my renewal for annual membership to Wayward Tendrils without mentioning Mike McKirdy. I didn't know him very long, and I didn't get to know him very well. But I enjoyed his humor, and his creative instincts; and I admired his approach to the enjoyment and appreciation of the books he chose as a specialty. His enthusiasm was an

inspiration.

I looked forward to his catalogues, because they were educational and enjoyable reading - to be referred to over and over again. Typically, the catalogue might arrive with the usual: latest tax regulations, unimportant announcements, or local requests demanding immediate attention. All that would be pushed aside, so that I could dig into another feast from Cooks Books. More than once, I would get excited at something special and pick up the phone to place an order. After learning to judge the time differences more accurately (I once got him out of bed), I would wait for that pleasant voice to say "Item 429; yes, that's yours."

It is obviously quite difficult for me to estimate the influence of someone I knew for just a short time, but I think Mr. McKirdy will be remembered and respected for a long time.

With kind regards,  
[s] **Leonard Bernstein**  
Caravan Book Store

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#### **Richard Kaplan's remembrance:**

When I learned last October that Mike McKirdy was ill, I did not for a moment consider the possibility that I would not see him again. After all, he exuded such vitality, energy and class. This was a man in his prime; a man at the pinnacle of his profession. He should have had many years left in which to enjoy life. And, selfishly, we should have had many more years in which to benefit from his skills, his counsel and his unique knowledge.

My first contact with Mike and Tessa resulted from my written request for a catalogue. The arrival of this initial catalogue filled with so many interesting books marked a significant step in my evolution from a casual buyer of books on wine and viticulture to a passionate collector. After studying the catalogue and its detailed descriptions at length, I telephone England to order a number of items, including several scarce André Simon titles. I immediately learned that Mike was extraordinarily knowledgeable about wine books, and that the McKirdys had customers who obviously were also quite knowledgeable. Nearly all of the books in which I was most interested had already been sold. Our interesting conversation about the books tempered somewhat (but only somewhat) my disappointment at not obtaining the sought after items.

Thereafter, as the anticipated arrival date for each new Cooks Books catalogue approached, I would anxiously await the daily mail delivery. As soon as the catalogue arrived, I would stop doing whatever I was doing and pour over the list of wine books. My

secretary would hold my calls and make excuses to my colleagues who tried to see me. I was paranoid that a delay of minutes or even seconds could determine whether I would be able to acquire some particularly desirable item. Then, after making my preliminary determinations, I would call to discuss my proposed purchases. Tessa and Mike were always polite, even on those occasions when, because of the time difference, my call must have awakened them from sound sleep. This ritual occurred as regularly as the change of the seasons, except it took place three times a year rather than four.

As much as I looked forward to receiving the catalogues, my greatest pleasure was seeing Mike and Tessa in person when they came to California each year for the ABAA Book Fair. Mike's enthusiasm for the books was contagious. I would "hang out" at their booth, admire (fondle) the books, discuss them with Mike, obtain his counsel and extract a portion of his vast knowledge of wine books. It is my nature to seek out bargains. Mike encouraged me to seek out quality. Among the lessons he taught me was that an important title in the finest possible condition would ultimately provide greater tangible, as well as intangible, rewards than a much less expensive copy in average condition.

The last time I saw Mike, in February 1995 at the ABAA Book Fair in San Francisco, he and Tessa had brought with them a copy of the first edition, limited to 100 copies and signed by the author, of Evelyn Waugh's *Wine in War and Peace*. I was immediately attracted to this small volume. Over the years, I had enjoyed this and many other of Waugh's works. I had on several occasions met his brother Harry, who is a significant figure in the wine trade; Evelyn, Harry and third brother Alec, have all written on wine; and annoyingly I hadn't known that a signed limited edition of this title existed. On examining the book, I discovered a bold inscription on the first free endpaper signed by a "Vser" or "Vsev." The name was quite unusual, so I asked Mike if he knew who had written the inscription. He replied "no one" and indicated that it was the only fault in an otherwise extremely desirable book. As I continued to examine the book, I eventually discovered an otherwise blank page on which there was printed in very small type "To H.H. Prince Vsevolode of Russia." That small volume not occupies a place of honor in my library. I can assure you, however, that this was the only instance of one-upmanship in my dealings with Mike where I came out on top. I will miss that challenge and so much more.



# LUTHER BURBANK AND THE WINE INDUSTRY by Ruth Walker



Luther Burbank, the great plant propagator, who along with George Washington Carver helped create modern agriculture, settled in Sonoma County, California, after he came to the West as a young man in 1875. One of five Mediterranean climates in the world, California was the perfect place for a plant genius like Burbank. He used the three to four growing seasons per year to develop and improve hundreds of hardy disease and insect resistant plants by genetic selection, hybridizing, grafting and other methods of master gardeners.

However, Burbank never applied his horticultural skill and patience in the development of varieties for the thriving viticulture industry in northern California. When asked about his work with the varieties that came from the Pierce table grape and if any of the new varieties excelled as wine producers, he emphatically stated, "This is not a wine grape." Then, with eyes full of thoughtful emotion, as if penetrating into the future, he added: "The continued use of wine destroys the finer qualities of both body and mind.... I have never produced a superior wine grape, and if I ever do produce one, it shall be at once destroyed. No wine grape will ever be sent into the world from my plant school."

Luther Burbank (1849-1926) was an honorary life member of the Sonoma County Women's Christian Temperance Union. In his youth, his mother, Olive, had been an abiding influence concerning alcohol consumption. In the New England of Olive Burbank's youth, rum, beer and hard cider flowed freely, as did a variety of brandies and 'bounces' manufactured from cherries, peaches and pears. And these strong drinks were not infrequently given to small children. When only thirteen she had signed a temperance pledge and remained faithful to it throughout her long life.

Originally baptized in the severe "hard-shell" Baptist church at Still River, Massachusetts, Luther and his mother transferred to the less severe Baptist church at Groton Junction in 1870. In his later thinking, he gradually reverted to the milder spirit of the Unitarianism his grandfather had brought with him from Harvard, and ultimately to the Emersonian transcendentalism of the era.

When Burbank first arrived in San Francisco in 1875, he wrote home: "At San Francisco I stayed two nights and one and a half days. I cannot describe the joys I felt in looking at the gardens and feeling the healing balmy breezes, but liquor selling is the great

business of that great city. No one who has not seen it can imagine the amount consumed. I used to go nearly one-half mile to get a glass of good water, and I knew of only one or two places where it could be got. I made a vow on my way over that I would not touch a drop of any kind of liquor and I shall keep it. Of those who do not drink there are a great many, and they are almost without exception the leading and most respected men, and who also own most of the property and do the important business."

Later, in Sonoma County, Burbank's temperance was a byword. In a 1940 interview, Santa Rosa banker Frank P. Doyle recalled an occasion when Burbank was prevailed upon to drink "a thimbleful or two" of liquor while taking time out from jury duty. When he and the other jurors returned to their rooms, "Luther proceeded to turn handsprings in his pajamas. His companions wondered what he would have done if he had had a real drink."

Although Luther Burbank was a committed temperance advocate, he lived in a very important viticultural community and was consulted frequently on gardening and agricultural issues by many people. The author, Jack London, wrote to Burbank from his nearby Sonoma Mountain ranch in October of 1905 (and carefully noted table grapes in his letter):

Dear Mr. Burbank:

It is with great trepidation that I proceed to trespass upon your time and good nature. But when I calculate that you can easily turn me down, and that I won't be offended, I take heart and go at it.

I have got a ranch over here. I am going to plant a table-vineyard and orchard. This is to be planted back of the house. The vineyard is on a hillside, the orchard will be on adjoining ground that is more level. The soil is deep, a couple of hundred feet or more to bedrock. It is the kind of ground that is used over here in this part of the country for vineyards. The exposure of the hill where I am going to plant the grapes is to the East.

Now, what I want to know is, could you give me a tip as to any kinds of exceptionally good fruits and grapes for me to plant?

Sincerely yours,  
[s] Jack London

Kanaye Nagasawa, one of the first eight Japanese to be sent to and educated in the United

States, was a notable and important figure in Sonoma County viticulture at the turn of the century. His Fountaingrove home, winery and vineyard was one of the showplaces of Northern California, and all prominent visitors passing through this part of the State would make a point of calling on Mr. Nagasawa. Local historian, Gaye LeBaron, described Nagasawa as often traveling in the company of his good friend Luther Burbank, driving his buggy from winery to winery, helping his neighbors on matters of vines and winemaking.

When I hear "fruity bouquet, with a hint of strawberries...", it draws me to muse upon the many wonderful wine varieties and phylloxera-resistant rootstocks Luther Burbank might have developed...

#### Sources:

Dreyer, Peter. *A Gardener Touched with Genius*, New York, 1993.

LeBaron, Gaye. *The Japanese "Baron" of Fountaingrove*, No.16, The 200 Series, Santa Rosa, CA, 1976.

London, Jack. Original Letter, Oct.7, 1905, Luther Burbank Society, Santa Rosa, CA.

Slusser, E.Y., et al. *Stories of Luther Burbank and His Plant School*, New York, 1920.

With a Special Note of Thanks to Lynn Collins, Archivist, Luther Burbank Society, Santa Rosa, CA.

#### VISITING BURBANK'S LIBRARY

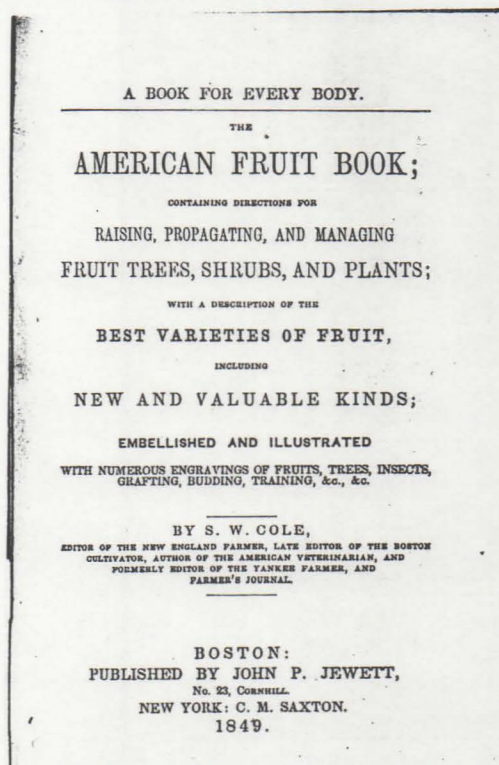
Following is a catalog of a few books from Luther Burbank's library that were assessed for their historical value before restoration was completed in the 1980s. They represent a small window on the world of botany and gardening in Burbank's era. Of course, his library housed no books on wine-growing...

■ Balfour, John Hutton, M.D. *Phyto-Theology or Botanical Sketches: Structure, Functions and General Distribution of Plants*. London, 1851. An uncommon title by a popular botanical writer. His works included *Plants in the Bible* written in 1866. Such discussions were very relevant to the Victorians as debates raged over Darwin's Theory of Evolution, and natural history and plant-hunting expeditions had become the public focus since the discovery and colonization of the New World in the 15th century.

■ Brown, Thomas. *Observations on Zoonomia of Erasmus Darwin, M.D.* London, 1798. Very uncommon. Erasmus Darwin (1731-1802) supported Linneaus' binomial nomenclature of plants. However,

in doing so, he involved himself in the serious debate as to the "sinful" sexing of plants and misnaming such as "husbands and wives" for stamens and pistils. Many botanical writers and clergymen debated this issue, including Thos. Brown, an important transitional figure anticipating the scientific debates of the next century.

■ Cole, S.W. *The American Fruit Book*. Boston, 1849. New Englander, Samuel Cole, wrote this comprehensive treatise containing information on "propagating and managing fruit-trees, shrubs and plants; with a description of the best varieties of fruit, including new and valuable kinds." With its many engravings of fruits, trees, insects, and methods of grafting, budding and training, it was an important contribution to the literature of horticulture and useful in upgrading farming and gardening practices. (There is a 15-page chapter on grapes.)



■ Darwin, Erasmus. *Phytologia or the Philosophy of Agriculture and Gardening*. London, 1800. Quite scarce London first edition. Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of Charles Darwin, was a freethinker and radical who, along with Lamarck and other 18th century materialists, believed that species modified themselves by adapting to their environments in a purposive way. He dedicated his life to the work, raising agrarian production and scientific investigation based upon simple observation, a rather innovative principle at the time.

■ Gregory, G. *The Economy of Nature*. London, 1804. Three volumes: I. Physics. II. Minerals & Geology. III. Vegetables, Animals and the Human Mind. Gregory's work represents the accepted summation of all the sciences up to the late eighteenth century. Tracts such as this were used as texts in general university courses on Natural Philosophy, the term for all the sciences before being fully defined as separate disciplines.

■ Hughes, Rev. Griffith. *The Natural History of Barbados*. London, 1740. Important to the British concerning the eventful colonization of the Caribbean world. The elegant illustrations were done by the celebrated botanical artist, Ehret, and include most of the common tropical fruits.

■ Linnaei, Caroli. *Philosophia Botanica*. Vienna, 1755. Linnaeus (1707-1778) made enduring contributions to botany by formalizing Gaspard Bauhin's idea of giving two names to all creations. His work established order in what had been casual and chaotic nomenclature in preceding years. Erasmus Darwin translated and financed the publishing of Linnaeus into English.

■ *Reports of Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practicable and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*. Volume IV: Botany of the Exploration. Washington, D.C., 1856. Following in the footsteps of John Bartram, the first American frontier plant hunter, the Botanical Survey described the unknown flora of the west to the growing and ever land-hungry agrarian United States.

■ Thornton, Robert John. *A New Family Herbal: A Popular Account of the Natures and Properties of Plants used in Medicine, Diet and the Arts*. Blackfriars, 1810. Since the use of synthetic drugs did not begin until after Burbank's death, the importance of plant propagation, identification and history becomes obvious. The first books about plants were herbals and farming practices. Thornton's work continues that tradition, being a comprehensive herbal of its era that is well illustrated with the accurate engravings of renowned artist Thomas Bewick.

[Ruth Walker is proprietor of Reade Moore Books, a general used and antiquarian bookshop in Petaluma, California. Her second love is restoration and conservation bookbinding. Equally important to her are all things horticultural.]



## BITS FROM BO SIMONS

■ **Books, Wine and All that Jazz!** I would like to alert all Tendrils of an upcoming event. The 2nd Annual Sonoma Odyssey will take place on Saturday, June 1st (1 - 5 pm) at Richard's Grove, Saralee's Vineyard, 3575 Slusser Road, Windsor, California, as a benefit for the Sonoma County Wine Library. There will be over a dozen wine and food authors signing their books. These authors include Norm Roby (*New Connoisseur's Guide to California Wine*), David Darlington (*Angel's Visits: An Inquiry into the Mystery of Zinfandel*), Michele Anna Jordan (*Cook's Tour of Sonoma*), James Laube (*California Wine*), Bruno Buti (*Rumbling Wine Barrels*), Heidi Cusick (*Sonoma: The Ultimate Winery Guide*), Suzanne Rodriguez-Hunter (*Found Meals of the Lost Generation*), Meeesha Halm (*Savoring the Wine Country*), and Jack Florence (*A Noble Heritage: The Wines and Vineyards of Dry Creek Valley*). In addition there will be hundreds of rare and out-of-print wine books for sale. Thirty of Sonoma County's best wineries will pour their wines, and some of Sonoma County's finest foods will be served. Great music will be provided by the Susan Sutton Trio. There will be both a live and silent auction. All this for only \$15 for Sonoma County Wine Library members and \$20 for non-members. For tickets write The Wine Library Associates of Sonoma County, P.O. Box 43, Healdsburg, CA 95448. For information call 707-433-2485.

■ **Corti Brothers Finds Some Madeira Parties!** I would like to share a piece of e-mail. Founding Tendril Bob Foster writes on CompuServe: "Back in 1895 a Philadelphia doctor by the name of S. Weir Mitchell published a small book, *A Madeira Party*, that was a fictional recreation of a madeira tasting for four in an upper class home in Philadelphia in the second quarter of the 1800s. The book is VERY rare and highly sought after. (I don't have a copy and have only seen two in all my collecting days.) In 1975 Corti Brothers (Sacramento wine merchants) reprinted it. This reprint is also very rare. I have never seen the book in a second hand book store. But, Corti Bros. has just found two cases of the reprints that were lost in the store room. They have a few copies available for \$58 (\$62.50 incl all taxes). While this is not cheap, for wine book lovers this is a must addition to the library. I bought my copy earlier today. Corti Brothers, 5810 Folsom Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95819. 916-736-3800 or FAX 916-736-3807. They take Mastercard and will ship anywhere. I have no financial interest in any of this -- just excited to finally get a copy." [Ed.: See Unzelman's article this issue on a basic wine library, which includes this book.]

## SAINTSBURY SLEUTHS SURFACE

[In the last issue of our *Newsletter*, Tom Pinney asked for our help with some *Saintsbury Notes on a Cellar-Book* puzzlers. It is pleasing that several *Tendrils* responded to the challenging assignment...]

From Dr. Vernon L. Singleton:

Dear Mr. Pinney,

I was intrigued by your note in the 6(1) *Wayward Tendrils Newsletter* and moved to this response. Of course these are mostly speculations on my part, and I don't have specific references in most cases.

Old rose Champagne may refer to what was elsewhere called "partridge eye." I'm told the European partridge, *Perdix*, has reddish brown eyes. I believe this Champagne, which had a reputation in England in earlier times, was a combination of more bottle age after disgorging and probably a bit more pink from Pinot noir than others. I know from personal trials that bottled commercial sparkling wines can darken and develop an extra bottle bouquet reminiscent of other white wines on top of sparkling characteristics.

There seem to me to be two clues in what you say about Picardan wine. "Northernmost" implies underripe, highly acid grapes and low alcohol wine. *Piquet* is used in France to describe slightly acetic table wines. *Ardent* implies strong. A tart, low alcohol, recognizably vinagary wine would certainly qualify for *Saintsbury's* description. Furthermore, such wines of low alcohol and poor reputation are most likely to become acetified, both from their nature and inattention. I suspect the term was not related to a specific area or group of producers, but was descriptive - something like *vinhos verdes* in Portugal.

Thomas Jefferson liked Syracuse along with the Madeiras popular in early America. Syracuse is a port of Sicily. As a type, Syracuse wine was probably like today's Marsala, a maderized, brown, cooked must, high alcohol wine.

As far as I know there are no specifications for pale *versus* brown brandy, but certainly fashions change. The timing does not seem to correlate with the white spirit boom of "Gin Lane," but some grape distillate has certainly been sold as white spirit (distillate unaged in wood). Different intensities of brown depend on time in casks, their newness, toasting of the staves, and possible additions of caramel.

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From Lucie Morton:

Dear Tom Pinney,

Although I am trying to look neither right nor left until I finish my *magnum opus* on grape rootstocks, *Roots for Fine Wine: Rootstock Selection Beyond Phylloxera*, Riparia Press (self-publishing after the editorial disaster of my *Eastern Winegrowing* book), 1996 (God willing), I can never resist a call for bibliographic sleuthing, especially when a grape variety is mentioned.

From what I can tell, the *Saintsbury* reference is certainly not to the grape variety grown in southern France, but rather to the wines from old Picardy.

I looked up that region in Tome III of Pierre Galet's *Cépages et Vignobles de France* (Montpellier, 1962) and believe that there may be some historic justification for saying that the wines from Picardy evolved from something heavenly to something "fit only for an atheist." In a nutshell, winemaking there passed from the monks to the bourgeoisie!

A rough translation of Galet: "The vineyard in the *arrondissement* of Laon is no more than a faint reminder of the formerly great vineyard, renowned in the Middle Ages, which supplied the region of Lille, Douai, Paris, the King's table. The wines of Laon, Coucy-le-Château, made with fine varieties (the Pinots?), had a great reputation at that time when they were produced by religious congregations, including the Abbey of St. Amand near Valenciennes and the monastery of Lobbes in Hainaut. Subsequently, the bourgeoisie planted their vineyards with low quality, high producing varieties (the Gouais?) in order to cope with a scarcity of labor, a difficult climate, and competition from wines from the Midi. However, as Guyot indicates 'the marketplace and the consumer rejected these characterless, weak wines, leading to the disappearance of the vineyards.' The phylloxera invasion delivered the fatal blow to growers and few vineyards were replanted with grafted vines. Today there are only around fifty hectares of vines for family use. The communes of Septvaux and Laniscourt define the northern limit of vine culture in this *département*."

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Roy Brady combed through his collection of old Wine Lists, and found mentions of some of the wines in question. [Now, isn't this just the reason why we collect this old stuff!] The London Price List of the Victoria Wine Company (c.1875) listed under "Marsalas," three fine old Sicilian wines, and under "Sundry Wines," a Picardin:

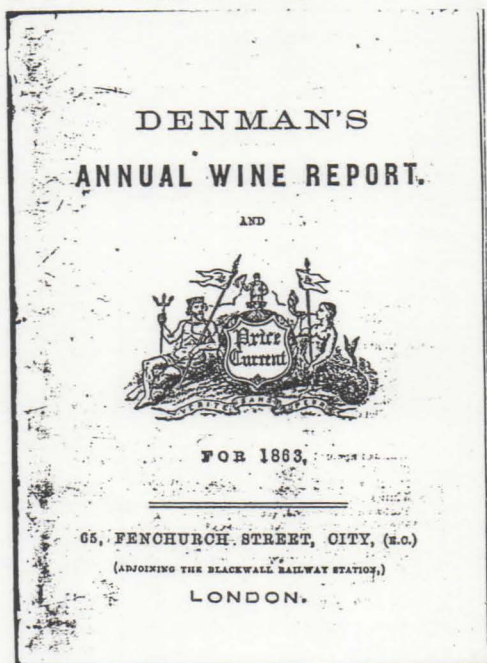
[Victoria Wine Company, c.1875]

PICARDIN. This White Wine is made in the south of France; it is exceedingly sweet, with a pleasant flavour, containing very little spirit, as it is admitted by the Customs at the lowest rate of duty.

Nineteenth century wine author and merchant James L. Denman carried "Brown Syracuse" in his stock of wines. In his *Annual Wine Report and Price Current for 1863*, he is pleased to offer the wine at a reduced price:

SICILIAN WINES.	Per Quarter Cask of 22 gallons.
Bronte Marsala, .....18s. doz.	£8 16 0
Virgin do. (Ingham's) 22s. ....	10 19 0
Brown Syracuse, 24s. ....	11 16 0

In consequence of the falling off in consumption of Marsala, the growers and shippers have reduced their terms, and it affords me satisfaction to announce a reduction in my current prices for this wine of 2s. per dozen.



A further offering of "Old Brown Syracuse" is found in the 1862 catalogue of W. & A. Gilbey, Wine Importers and Distillers, Edinburgh, London & Dublin:

MARSALA.—DIRECT FROM SICILY.. AT THE FINAL REDUCED DUTY.	
Each of the Marsalas will have branded on the top of the cork the name of the wine.	
"BRONTE" MARSALA. The best imported	20 5 6 6 12 3 10 5 6
"VIRGIN" MARSALA. Dp. very pale and delicate	22 5 13 6 12 5 3 11 5 6
"OLD BROWN SYRACUSE" MARSALA. This Wine is shipped expressly to us, and no other house in England. It is extremely old, with rich full flavour, somewhat like the Old East India Sherry.	24 4 6 6 12 3 11 5 6
The above Sicilian Wines are from the vineyards of the well-known house of Ingham, Stephens, and Company, and as the largest importers into the United Kingdom, we can supply them in great perfection. The two latter are so superior that they are rarely offered to the public under the name of Marsala.	

## SAINTSBURY ASSIGNMENT CONTINUED...

Not wanting us to rest on our laurels, Tom Pinney sends us a second round of *Saintsbury Notes on a Cellarbook* challenges:

1.) "There is a well-known wine of the class called 'Nectar de Xeres'" (p.19).  
Any evidence that "Nectar de Xeres" is a class of Sherry?

2.) "The very darkest sherry I ever possessed, indeed that I ever tasted or saw, was an 1870 wine specially yclept 'Caveza,' which I bought when it was more than twenty years old" (p.28).  
"Caveza"?

3.) Writing of Port of the vintages of 1872 and 1873 Saintsbury says: "when the '72 had turned its thirty, the superior vitality of the younger wine began to tell, and in a few years more it was better than ever, while the more delicate 'Ventozello' of '72 had certainly ceased improving and was even slightly senescent" (p.40).  
"Ventozello"?

4.) On a French liqueur: "I remember a big bottle of 'Berrichone' which was quite nice" (p.135).  
"Berrichone"?

5.) In a list of liqueurs Saintsbury includes "Père Kermann" (p.128).  
Can this be identified?

6.) "The curious 'white ale' or lober agol -- which, within the memory of man, used to exist in Devonshire and Cornwall" (p.147).  
Any reference to this?

7.) Saintsbury names three Bordeaux sources of "light claret": Châteaux Bonneval, Laujac and Citran.  
Château Bonneval?


[Ed. - Please remember to send a copy of your findings to the *Newsletter*.]

## WINE BOOK FOR SALE!

In original wraps, Count Odart's *Ampélographie Universelle ou Traité des Cépages* (Paris, 1873, 6th ed.). \$600. Contact Geoff Smith at 707-577-0373 (841 Sonoma Ave, #30, Santa Rosa, CA 95404).

## SOME NEW WINE BOOKS

Submitted by Bo Simons

- *Touring in Wine Country: Burgundy*. Edited by Hugh Johnson. Published by the Antique Collector, 1996. \$21.95.
- *Evening Standard London Wine Guide* by Andrew Jefford. Published by Trafalgar, 1996. 224 pp. \$19.95.
- *Making Wine at Home the Professional Way* by Lance Cutler. Published by Wine Patrol, 1996, 50 pp. \$10.95.
- *Short Cuts on Wine: Everything the Wine Lover Needs to Know* by Edmond Masciana. Published by Capra Press, 1996, 160 pp. \$10.95.
- *Wine from the Wilds* by Steven Krause. Stackpole Press, 1996, 192 pp. Illus. \$14.95.
- *Vintage Tales: Reflections on Wine* by Gerald Asher. Chronicle Books, 1996.
- *Recipes from the French Wine Harvest: Vintage Feasts from the Vineyards* by Rosi Hanson. Sterling, 1996, 160 pp. \$24.95.
- *Wineries of the Eastern States* by Marguerite Thomas. Published by Berkshire House, Great Destinations Series, 1996, 320 pp. \$17.95.
- *Napa Valley Guide* (17th Annual, rev.ed.). Edited by Mary Carey. Vintage Publications, 1996, 128 pp. \$5.95.
- *The Joy of Home Winemaking* by Terry Garey. Avon Books, 1996, 272 pp. \$12.
- *James Halliday's Pocket Wine Guide*, Harper Collins, 1996, 608 pp. \$13.
- *A Wine & Food Guide to the Loire, France's Royal River* by Jacqueline Friedrich. H. Holt, 1996, 384 pp. \$27.50.
- *The Master Dictionary of Food & Wine* by Joyce Rubash. Reinhold, Culinary Arts Series, 1996 (2nd.ed.), 384 pp.
- *Religion & Wine: A Cultural History of Wine Drinking in the U.S.* by Robert Fuller. Univ of Tennessee Press, 1996. \$30. (cloth), \$15. (paper).
- *The Gift of Wine: A Straightforward Guide to the Wine Experience* by Gloria Miller. Lyons & Burford, 1996, 320 pp. \$25.
- *Exploring Wine: C.I.A. Complete Guide to Wines* by the Staff of the Culinary Institute of America. Reinhold, 1996. \$59.95.
- *Corkscrews: An Introduction to their Appreciation* by Manfred Heckmann. Wine Appreciation Guild, 1996, 124 pp. \$19.95.
- *Rhone Renaissance: The Finest Rhone & Rhone-Style Wines from France and the New World* by Remington Norman. Wine Appreciation Guild, 1996, 336 pp. \$50. 

## IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by Bob Foster

■ *California Wine: A Comprehensive Guide to the Wineries, Wines, Vintages and Vineyards of America's Premier Winegrowing State* by Jim Laube. NY: Wine Spectator Press, 1995, 758 pages, hardback, \$39.95. Jim Laube, one of the editors of the *Wine Spectator*, has written a detailed, insightful book covering the wines of California. This is no easy task. There are more than 800 wineries in California that release around 4000 wines each year. Laube has been tasting for over 17 years. The core of this book is a compilation of his tasting notes.

But the book is far more than this. He begins with interesting sections on the history of California wine, the grape varieties grown in the various regions, the standard section on how wine is made, a summary of the vintages from 1933 through 1994 and a section on building a wine collection. Some of the material, particularly in this last section is superb. Laube points out that every taster has to learn which critics match that taster's palate. In doing so the taster has to learn whom to trust. Laube has a section that talks about being suspicious of wine critics who exhibit certain patterns of behavior. This section ought to be required reading for every wine buff. His criticism of any winewriter who owns any interest in any winery is equally sound.

For each of the wineries covered there is a wealth of information: the name of the winery, its region, when it was founded, the name of the owners, the name of the winemaker and any secondary labels used by the winery. This is followed by a chart that gives the price range and overall quality assessment of each of the varieties produced. For most of the entries there is a section giving annual case production, the acreage the winery owns (and its location), the grape varieties grown in the winery-owned vineyards and the grapes normally purchased from outside. Following all of this is a text section on the producer, normally covering history or style or recent trends. Finally, there are detailed tasting notes on specific wines using the 100 point scale. The tasting notes generally are as recent as the 1992 vintage and on major producers date back as far as the 1940s.

In the back of the book there are detailed charts that list of all the wines tasted; rank the wineries and each varietal by a star system; and give acreage by county. Especially interesting is a vineyard directory listing each of the major California vineyards, its region, its owner, the varieties grown, and the wineries using the grapes. (Although to be fair, this section picks up on a clever idea that I first saw in Matt Kramer's *Making Sense of California Wine*.)

Laube has produced a first class effort. The

coverage is comprehensive, accurate and informative. Every lover of California wine needs this book in his or her wine library. Very highly recommended.

■ ***Sauternes and Other Sweet Wines of Bordeaux*** by Stephen Brook. London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1995, 277 pages, softback, \$15.95. There's a certain similarity to all of the books in the Faber and Faber wine library. They are well researched, highly detailed and almost totally devoid of photos, maps or illustrations. In this era of wine books replete with lavish photographs, detailed maps and clever illustrations, it's a bit of a shock to pick up a book as visually lean as this book with just two starkly barren maps.

Nevertheless, the material in the text is top notch. Stephen Brook, a London writer and author of *Liquid Gold* (an earlier work on dessert wines of the world) begins with chapters covering such topics as the classification system of the châteaux, the diverse soils and grapes used, and the making of botrytis-infected wines. Château d'Yquem gets its own chapter. This is followed by chapters evaluating all of the major and most of the minor producers in Sauternes. Separate sections cover other regions such as Sainte-Croix-du-Mont, Loupiac and the other minor sweet wine producers.

For each producer Brook gives a short history, a commentary on the style of the wine and then some tasting notes on various vintages. He is no sycophant and does not hesitate to be critical when appropriate. For example, he describes in detail the wild bottle variation in the 1983 Ch. Coutet - with bottles running from merely good to "simply awful."

I was particularly impressed by a short section in the back of the book talking about serving Sauternes. Over the years I learned (often the hard way) that matching food and Sauternes is very difficult because of the competing levels of sweetness. Either the wine or the cuisine often tastes dull and flat as a result. Brook's discussion of this difficulty should be must reading for every lover of these wonderful wines. Highly recommended.

■ ***Wine For Dummies*** by Ed McCarthy and Mary Ewing-Mulligan. Foster City, CA: IDG Books, 1995, 402 pages, softback, \$16.99. I'm not quite sure how to characterize this book. On the one hand, it does a fine job of breaking down wine tasting, wine making and wine appreciation into tiny component parts that can easily be understood by even the rank beginner. But, on the other hand, time and again I find this book making absurd, unsupportable claims as fact. That's a great way to mislead a beginner. For example, in discussing the storage of wine, the authors recommend that wine not be stored in its original cardboard box in a cellar because, with time, the cardboard loses its strength and the box could fail if

there is any weight on it. But the authors then go on to proclaim that, "The chemicals used in the manufacture of cardboard can eventually affect the wine." This will come as a shock to those of us who have stored things like '70 BV Georges de Latour successfully for over two decades in the original cardboard box. There is simply no support of this claim in any scientific literature. What's next - soak the labels off the bottles immediately because the glue on the label might eventually affect the wine? How silly.

In talking about wineries whose production is so scarce that winelovers ought to consider buying directly from the producers, the authors include Ridge, Rafanelli and Rosenblum. At least in every major wine market I've visited those labels were readily available. Additionally, in recommending visits to some of the Russian River Valley wineries, they talk about winemakers "some of whom seldom leave the valley." While that may be a captivating rural image for these East Coast wine writers, it simply isn't reality. The winemakers often complain how much they have to be on the road promoting their wines. Finally, the index for the book is simply mediocre. I found several times that comments about a particular wine were just skipped by the index.

There is good material here but also a good bit of inaccurate absurdity that could easily mislead the novice. I'd rather start someone out with Kevin Zraly's *Windows on the World Complete Wine Course* or Leslie Brenner's *Fear of Wine*. Thus, this book is only recommended with reservations.

■ ***Champagne: The Spirit of Celebration*** by Sara Slavin and Karl Petzke. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1995, 96 pages, softback, \$14.95. What a bit of fluff. Lots of high quality paper, printing and artsy photographs - but so little substance. For the amateur wanting to learn more about Champagne there are so many better works that cover so much more material. Not recommended.

[Other Bob Foster wine book reviews can be read in the California Grapevine, an excellent bi-monthly. We thank them for permission to reprint. A sample issue of the Grapevine will be sent upon request: P.O. Box 22152, San Diego, CA 92192.]

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**BOOKS &  
BOTTLES**  
by  
**Fred McMillin**

[Editor's Note: We've asked Fred and Ruth McMillin to tell us some day about their 1000+ book library on food/bread history, wine history, and contemporary cookbooks purchased in the world's great wine districts. In the meantime, here is another sampling of Fred's wine library at work...]

**MIDI MILESTONES**

**The Books** - Inexpensive French varietal wines have been scoring well in my recent blind tastings. They are from the Midi, the crescent-shaped viticultural region that hugs the Mediterranean from the mouth of the Rhône west to the border with Spain. It produces nearly half of all French wine, more than the U.S.A. or Germany. Consequently, I thumbed through some of my favorite wine books, and here's what they had to say about it.

Warning! Readers may find the following disturbing, since this is not a simple success story. In fact, the new *Larousse Encyclopedia of Wine* says "the Midi [has been] the home of France's worst wines." So, on to some Midi milestones.

600 B.C. - Herodotus, the learned Greek historian of the 4th century B.C., tells us that "All ships in the old days had their topsides painted scarlet." Hence, one can imagine the scene in 600 B.C. when Greeks bearing vines arrived in these colorful vessels at the mouth of the Rhône River. There they established what today is Marseille, and planted what many claim to be France's first vineyard. [William Younger, *Gods, Men and Wine*, London/Cleveland, 1966, 516 pp].

1st Century, B.C. - The Romans enter the scene and were given a warm welcome: the defending warriors filled their empty wine barrels with burning pitch and rolled them down upon Caesar's besieging troops. [Edward Hyams, *Dionysus: A Social History of the Wine Vine*, New York, 1965, 381 pp].

1st Century, A.D. - Were these early French vineyards successful? Strabo, the Greek geographer, reported "the vines flourished all over the hills [around Marseille]. They are not trained on poles as in southern Italy, but trail on the ground." [Hyams,

*Dionysus*]. Now, let's fast-forward to the 18th century.

1775 A.D. - The area's wines are not distinguishing themselves, at least in the opinion of London physician Sir Edward Barry, who regarded them as that part of French wines "usually made with less care and judgement...[as verified by the fact that no] author of consequence has given an exact account of them." [Sir Edward Barry, *Observations Historical, Critical, and Medical on the Wines of the Ancients*, London, 1775, 479 pp].

1908 A.D. - By now, some of the red table wines and the sweet wines have enjoyed limited praise. Still, Edward Emerson advised that after a sip of dry wine from the western Midi, the message "the palate conveys to the brain is ... leave the balance of the wine for the waiter." [Edward R. Emerson, *Beverages Past and Present; An Historical Sketch of their Production*, 2 vols., New York, 1908, 563/514 pp].

1979 A.D. - France formally created a new category of wine, *Vin de Pays*, which permitted the Midi to start making wines labeled with the name of the grape, such as Merlot or Chardonnay. Jancis Robinson says "they have enjoyed enormous success outside of France," which generated the funds to rapidly improve the quality. [Jancis Robinson, ed. *Oxford Companion to Wine*, Oxford/New York, 1994, 1087 pp].

It is these wines that have caused a stir in my classes.

**The Bottles** - The Picks of the Panel: *Vin de Pays* (all four are recent releases in the \$7 range).

Fourth - Chantefleur Merlot.

Third - Fortant de France Rosé of Merlot.

Second - Chantefleur Chardonnay.

Winner - Fortant de France Sauvignon Blanc.



man never gets  
so much good out of  
a book  
as when he possesses it.

-- Sir Arthur Hilps

## BOOK COLLECTING: THREE REASONS WHY

[Mike McKirdy wrote this piece for the *Jottings from the Dean*, No.35, Winter 1993, which accompanied Cooks Books Catalogue Number 63. With kind permission from Tessa McKirdy, we excerpt it here for a tiny taste of book collecting pleasure.]



here are three major reasons why one would collect a book. The first - but not necessarily the most important - is the content; that is, the words and/or the pictures. Maybe the author has something significant to say, maybe the artist/photographer has created something that is special.

The second reason could be the physical appearance of the work. Leaving aside the words and pictures, the typography could be exceptional, or perhaps the binding or the paper, or any combination of these together with other physical details.

The third reason could be that the book is scarce or rare. Obviously either of the two previous criteria could also apply, but if the content was *not* important and the physical appearance was *not* good, there could still be a very good case for acquiring an item *simply* because it was rare.

In previous *Jottings* I have discussed the latter topic but, fuelled by the excitement of a very fortunate recent acquisition, the subject of the lesson from the dean today will be the second reason, books which are *physically* special.

There is no doubt that many collectors are quite moved just by the touch of a certain book. It is obvious from the way they hold it, open it carefully, gently, lovingly even. This is not to do with the words that are inside nor is it necessarily to do with the value; it is just purely and simply that the object gives them great pleasure. Yet, not *all* their books have this effect, so why would one in particular cause this reaction? The answer is simply that it is special in some way. Just that. Of course, what affects me may not affect you and vice versa, but let me tell you of a few that have stuck in my memory.

In our very first catalogue in September 1976, we had a copy of Alexis Soyer's *Pantropheon, or History of Food and Its Preparation, from the Earliest Ages of the World* [London, 1853]. Never mind if it has since been discovered that the great man took a short cut to writing this book, or that the contents are a bit pretentious to say the least, or that the illustrations are a bit doubtful. The book itself, physically, is superb. Rich blue cloth, gilt and blind

tooled; nice, large size of page, generous margins, tissue guards on all the plates, gilt edges to the pages and so on. I bought that first copy by post from a gentleman in Scotland; it was the best copy I have ever seen, and to this day I can remember the effect it had on me as I unwrapped it and first handled it.

And then I can remember the first copies of the limited editions that exist. In the wine area for example, there is the 1921 Edition de Luxe of Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, and André Simon's *Art of Good Living* [special limited edition with hand-coloured frontispiece, 1929], or the original editions of his *Bibliotheca Bacchica* [London: Maggs, 1927; 1932] and *The History of the Wine Trade* [3 vols., 1906, 1907, 1909], or Charles Walter Berry's *Viniana* [special limited edition, 1929], or the New York 1943 reprint of Arnaldus de Villanova's *Earliest Printed Book on Wine*...and of course I could go on. Nearly all of these small editions are on special paper with added illustrations and other features, usually hand-numbered and very often signed by the author.

A glance through the bibliography section of this catalogue will reveal that there are also many limited editions in this area although, once again, limited does not necessarily equal good or special. Certainly Elizabeth Pennell's *My Cookery Books* [Boston/New York, 1903] is particularly well produced and although there was an attractive reprint produced in 1983, the original is infinitely superior.

In a different way there are as well, I know, several collectors in these fields who go weak-kneed at the touch of a 16th or 17th century book, especially one in a contemporary binding - and I must say they do have a very special "feel." (My problem is that they do not usually stay in my possession long enough for me to become fully acquainted with them!)





Observe when Mother Earth is dry  
 She drinks the drippings of the sky;  
 And then the dewy ~~cordial~~ gives  
 To every thirsty plant that lives.  
 The vapors which at evening weep  
 Are ~~beverage~~ to the swelling deep,  
 And when the rosy sun appears,  
 He drinks the ocean's misty tears.  
 The moon, too, quaffs her paly stream  
 Of lustre from the solar beam,  
 Then hence with all your sober thinking  
 Since Nature's holy law is drinking;  
 I'll make the law of Nature mine,  
 And pledge the universe in ~~wine~~

WRITTEN BY ANACREON  
 CENSORED TO MEET THE VOLSTEAD ACT  
 CORRECTED BY JOHN HENRY NASH

[Len Bernstein, Tendril collector and proprietor of  
 Caravan Book Store in Los Angeles, sent us this reduced copy  
 of a John Henry Nash broadside for our enjoyment.  
 Wish we could print in color...]