



WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY

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WINE, ART, and NICOLAS

by
James Gabler ©

[We are especially pleased to inaugurate Volume 11, bearing our new masthead, with this premier study of the highly prized publications of *Établissements Nicolas*. Jim Gabler, a Wayward Tendrils founding member, is well-known to the wine book world. Among his award winning wine works are *Passions*, *The Wines and Travels of Thomas Jefferson* (1995) and his 1985 bibliography, *Wine into Words*, the standard reference for English language wine books. He is currently finishing up a novel and well along on the much-awaited second edition of his bibliography. — Ed.]



lthough wine and art have a history of over four thousand years, the Nicolas catalogs and special wine publications are unique in bringing together the best contemporary artists, graphic designers and printers with the world's best wines. The graphic art that

the publications display is innovative, assertive, and attractive for its style, illustrations, typography and printing. The text is in French.

A complete set of the publications consists of thirty-three *Liste des Grands Vins Fins* catalogs, five *Monseigneur Le Vin* tomes, three *Plaquettes* illustrated by Paul Iribe, *Mon Docteur le Vin* illustrated by Raoul Dufy, and *Le Génie du Vin* illustrated by André Derain.

The genesis of the publications occurred when *Établissements Nicolas*, the largest of all French wine retailers, with headquarters at Charenton-Sur-Seine, a Paris suburb, began publication of *Monseigneur Le Vin*, a series of five, color-illustrated monographs in 1924. The lively line and color illustrations that fill the five tomes all relate in some way to wine. The tomes were issued with presentation letters describing what they are about; they are identical in size, 5¾" x 7¾", bound in fragile

marbled paper wraps having a suede-like feel, with *Monseigneur le Vin* stamped in gilt to the front cover.

The first tome, *Le Vin à Travers l'Histoire*, issued in 1924, deals with wine from Biblical times until the time of publication. The text is by Georges Montorgueil (1857-1933), a well-known history writer, with fanciful color illustrations by Marcel Jeanjean (1893), painter, illustrator and cartoonist, and beautifully printed by J. Van Gindertaele Press, Paris. It contains 46 pages, plus two foldout charts at the end. The number of copies printed is not stated.

The next year, 32,000 copies of *Le Vin de Bordeaux* were printed in red and black on Madagascar paper and illustrated with over sixty four-color drawings by Pierre Lissac (1878), painter and illustrator. Georges Montorgueil provided the text; the printing is by Poyet Frères, Paris. This second tome of the series has eighty-three pages plus a detailed, colored folding map and statistical tables at the end.

The third book, *Le Vin de Bourgogne*, appeared in 1926. Issued in 32,000 copies, it contains 84 pages plus a large, folding map and statistical table at the end. It is illustrated with over fifty color drawings by Armand Vallée and printed by Poyet Frères of Paris on Lafuma vellum paper. The text is again by Georges Montorgueil.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ANNOUNCING *VINEXLIBRIS TENDRILII*
- ZINFANDEL HISTORY – PART VII
- PUSHKIN AFTERWORD by Robert Hutton
- BIBLIOGRAPHIES: FOREIGN, LOIRE
- BOOKS & BOTTLES by Fred McMillin
- BOOK REVIEWS, NEWS & NOTES and MORE

Charles-Emile Carlègle (1877-1940), painter, engraver, designer, and illustrator of high quality

literature, is the artist whose seventy-five muted watercolors grace the fourth tome, *Anjou-Touraine Alsace, Champagne et autres Grands Vins De France*. Georges Montorgueil's text, and Carlègle's beautiful illustrations, along with four maps and statistical tables, take the reader on a fascinating 110-page journey through France's other wine regions. The number of copies printed is not stated, but given the fact that the two preceding tomes, and the final tome, were issued in 32,000 copies, it is probably safe to assume that the same number of copies were printed in 1927. With this publication, Draeger Frères at Montrouge, Paris, the best color printer in France, and perhaps the world, became the printer. Draeger printed every Nicolas catalog and special publication from 1927 until the series ended in 1973.

In 1928, the fifth and final tome of the series, *L'Art de Boire. Préparer, Servir, Boire* was issued in 32,000 copies. It is printed on French vellum paper and contains 121 pages. The text is by Louis Forest, and the art deco line and color drawings are by Charles Martin (1848-1934), a prominent illustrator, and designer of fashions, furniture, sets and costumes for the theatre and ballet. The text describes the wine cellar, decanting, matching wine and food, and a discussion on the proper use of wineglasses, with eight tipped-in wineglass plates. One of the plates illustrates the "perfect glass," created for Nicolas by Cristalleries of Saint-Louis, the oldest crystal manufacturer in Europe.

An altered version of this book, titled *Wine Album. Adapted from Monseigneur Le Vin*, was reproduced in 1982 by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, New York. The seventy-nine-page text is in English. It does not have the tipped-in wineglass plates, but includes additional line drawings by Charles Martin taken from a four-page advertising insert.

Liste des Grands Vins Fins

The success of *Monseigneur Le Vin* inspired Nicolas to launch *Liste des Grands Vins Fins*, a series of catalogs that were issued annually from 1928 through 1973, except for 1937, the war and immediate post-war years 1940-1948, and 1952, 1968, and 1972. The project was initiated under the supervision of Étienne Nicolas, himself an art collector, who personally selected the artists. Monsieur Nicolas engaged A. M. Cassandre (1901-1968), perhaps the greatest poster artist and graphic designer of his time, to design the first catalog in 1928. Cassandre remained the designer and typographer of the catalogs and special publications through 1949. Beginning in 1950, Alfred Latour assumed responsibility for the catalogs' design and

layout, and he continued in that capacity until it was turned over to Jean Latour in 1966.

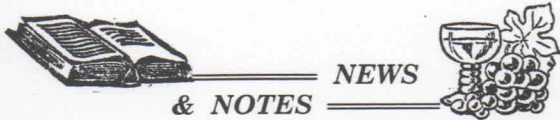
The *raison d'être* for these beautiful catalogs was promotional, but with the specific intention of serving Nicolas' customers. Each catalog contains a list of Nicolas wines and prices. Beginning with the first catalog in 1928, the wines are listed under two categories: regular bottles, and exceptional bottles (*Bouteilles Exceptionnelles*). The following year a third category was added, prestigious bottles (*Prestigieuses Bouteilles*) consisting of 68 Grands Crus Bordeaux ranging in age from 1878 Lafite to 1840 Ausone. Nicolas' customers obviously knew a good thing when they saw it, because the list of prestigious wines had dwindled to five bottles when last offered in the 1970 catalog.



The conditions of sale are set out in the first issue, and repeated in subsequent issues, advising that the wines are strictly reserved for private consumption and not intended for the stocking of private cellars, or for resale by restaurants and hotels. A "star" beside a bottle indicated that the wine was the authentic product of the Château or Domaine. An "R" indicated that the wine was not available in regular Nicolas retail stores, but could be ordered in minimum quantities of five bottles; this minimum order requirement was soon discontinued. Nicolas, however, reserved the right to reduce orders that appeared to them to be exaggerated. The symbol "(R)", found only beside the *Prestigieuses Bouteilles*, warned that these bottles were sold advisedly and in good faith. In 1950 a further condition was established for the *Prestigieuses Bouteilles*; when ordered they would be decanted by a Nicolas representative and brought to the customer's residence in an insulated container one hour before they were to be drunk. A further provision stated that orders for the prestigious wines would be accepted only for Paris and the nearby suburbs.

Although publication numbers were not stated, about 30,000 copies of *Liste des Grands Vins*

— continued on p. 13



WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY

Our *Newsletter*, having outgrown its name and deserving of a more "prestigious" title, proudly displays a new masthead! The *Newsletter* was originally launched to be the "linking tendril" between members, maybe four or five pages of newsy bits, some "duplicates" and "wants" lists, etc. But over the past ten years, our members have generously increased their contributions of top-quality articles on all aspects of collecting wine literature, and we have filled sixteen to twenty pages each issue. As the *Wayward Tendrils* **QUARTERLY**, notably the only publication of its kind, it will now reflect this quality. With sincerest appreciation from your Editor—who tendril-ly encourages more members to participate—congratulations on ten impressive years!

JANUARY IS
TENDRILS RENEWAL TIME!!
A renewal form is enclosed.



Welcome New Wine Library Tendrils!

We have gathered into membership three new wine libraries, who each have secured a complete run of our newsletter for their collections: Cal Poly University, Pomona; California State University, Fresno; and the Viticulture and Enology Research Center, Fresno (Petrucci Library).

TRIBUTES...

The Miniature Book Society has shown a big interest in **Leonard Bernstein's** article on "The Miniature Wine Book" (July 2000 issue), and will reprint it in their Newsletter. We are pleased to learn the **State Library of South Australia** has established a new website, "The Wine Literature of the World" (www.winelit.slsa.sa.gov.au), based on the library's extensive collection of wine related materials. They have posted W-T membership / subscription details and will, from time to time, reproduce some of our articles on wine book collecting.

"ANTEBELLUM NECTAR"

Tendril **Mannie Berk** continues his love affair with Madeira and its early U.S. history with his latest publication, *Antebellum Nectar. Champagne & Madeira in Pre-Civil War Charleston & the U.S.* (Sonoma, CA: The Rare Wine Co., 2000). It is a beautifully printed and illustrated 30-page booklet, 11¼ x 8¼, limited to 150 copies. \$25 (postpaid). Available from The Rare Wine Co: FAX 707.996.4491

or e-mail Mannie at: berk.rwc@snet.net.

A NOTABLE BOOK

David Bird, Chartered Chemist and Master of Wine, has recently written and published *Understanding Wine Technology. A Book for the Non-Scientist that Explains the Science of Winemaking* (Newark, England: DBQA Publishing, 2000). Originally written as a text book for students of the UK WSET Diploma exams and for Master of Wine students, it should prove popular with wine lovers in general. 226 pp., well illustrated, glossy card covers. Available from the author / publisher: DBQA Publishing, ☎ / FAX 44 (0) 1777.838.990 or email: davidbird@dbqa.co.uk. £16.50 postpaid (in UK); £19.50 postpaid (to U.S.).

Wine Country ANTHOLOGY

Benjamin Russack, editor, has gathered together in *Wine Country. A Literary Companion* (Berkeley: Heyday Books, 1998) stories, reminiscences and poems to pay tribute to the beauty of Northern California's Wine Country. Arranged chronologically, each piece—by writers Robert L. Stevenson, Idwal Jones, Sidney Howard, Sir George Simpson, Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, M.F.K. Fisher, Jessamyn West, and others—was chosen for its unique literary or historic value. An enjoyable, rich sampling.

Wine Country MYSTERIES

Don't miss these two! *Conversations with a Corpse* by Robert C. Dennis (Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1974). The dust jacket sets the scene: "Paul Reeder's psychic powers lead him into bad trouble when he rents a car at the airport of the small California town of Orofino, the Wine Capital of the West." Later, caught in a spell-binding chase in the vineyard, he muses, "All I was doing was running to be on time for my own murder." A good story. *Deadly Vintage* by William Relling Jr. (NY: Walker & Co., 1995) features retired Treasury agent Jack Donne, now a So. California vintner. Perhaps a little too much detail to keep the story revved up, but Relling's wine references, with plenty of vinous name dropping, are accurate.



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BIBLIOGRAPHY: FOREIGN-LANGUAGE WINE BOOKS

by
Gail Unzelman



In our last issue we reviewed some of the standard bibliographic sources for the wine book collector — auction catalogues, Gabler, Simon, Vicaire. We continue this bibliographic tour with some of the more important foreign language wine book guides (other than French, already covered).

As Tendril and antiquarian bookseller Hans Weiss recently pointed out, "It is essential for a collector of early wine books to have bibliographies for books printed in Germany and Italy—these two countries took the lead in the early history of printing and were at the same time major wine producers."

The following is in part excerpted from "Wine Book Bibliography: An Extended Journey," first published in Vol.4 No.1 (January 1994):

GERMAN WINE BOOKS

For German works on wine, "Schoene" is the standard reference: *Bibliographie zur Geschichte des Weines* by Renate Schoene [Mannheim: Südwestdeutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1976; Supplement 1, 1978; Supplement 2, 1982; Supplement 3, 1984]. In 1988 [Munich: K.G. Saur] a second edition was issued that handily combines these four books into one volume of 480 pages listing 14,713 entries, from incunables to modern times. Another to consider is the now quite rare *Verzeichnis der Litteratur über Speise und Trank bis zum Jahre 1887* by Carl Georg [Hannover, 1888], describing some 1700 titles on food and drink, dating from 1475 to 1887. Thankfully, it has been reprinted in facsimile by Martino Publishing [Mansfield Centre, CT, 1966].

ITALIAN WINE BOOKS

Although Lord Westbury's checklist is titled *Handlist of Italian Cookery Books* [Firenze: Leo Olschki, 1963; 237 pages, illustrated], it contains many wine-related entries. He covers the period from the earliest printed book in Italian dealing with gastronomy (c1475) to the year 1860. Westbury reminds us that "the greater part of the [Italian] literature on wine-making is contained in books which deal with agriculture as a whole and this is particularly true in earliest times." He provides a substantial listing of these works. His book, one of the Biblioteca di Bibliografia Italiana series, is finely printed, but unfortunately is bound in less-than-sturdy card wraps. The titles are listed by author, with a chronological index at the end; included is an in-

teresting Appendix of a "List of Wines brought to Rome in the mid-16th century" taken from Scarlino's *Nuovo Trattato della varietà & qualita de Vini che vengono a Roma*. A complementary reference is Giacomo Sormanni's *Catalogo Ragionato delle opere di Viticoltura ed Enologia* [Milano: Eusebiana, 1883; Reprint edn., Bolognese: A. Forni, 1983]. This work of 139 pages lists Italian publications printed to the year 1881. In 1994 the Foundation Bibliothéque Internationale de Gastronomie issued the three-volume *Catalogo del fondo Italiano e Latino delle opere de Gastronomía*. Bound in silk cloth in matching silk slipcases, Weiss names this "the most luxurious publication of books on food and drink existing." Most all of the books are in the Foundation, the most prestigious private collection on gastronomy worldwide, and which can be visited in Lugano, Switzerland. [See NOTE below for ordering information.]

PORTUGUESE WINE BOOKS

Referred to as "the I.V.P.", *Esboço de Uma Bibliografia* [Porto: Instituto do Vinho do Porto, 1945], with its two supplements, is the recognized bibliography of works on the Portuguese wine trade. *Segundo Aditamento ao Esboço de Uma Bibliografia* was published by the I.V.P. in 1947; in 1952 the *Terceiro Aditamento ao Esboço de Uma Bibliografia* was issued. These three volumes, issued in flimsy card covers (!), list over 4600 books and pamphlets. Although not readily available, a diligent search should turn up a copy of the set.

[NOTE: Hans Weiss advises that he has available copies of the Sormanni reprint (60Sfr / \$34 US) and the *Catalogo del fondo Italiano...* (1000 Sfr / \$570 US). His e-mail address is: bibliotheca.gastronomica@bluewin.ch or fax 41 01 341 9790.]



SPECIAL EVENING FOR ALL FINE-BOOK LOVERS

On Saturday, January 20th at 7 p.m., the Sonoma County Wine Library will host an evening with James and Carolyn Robertson, fine press artisans and proprietors of Yolla Bolly Press. In their "workshop in the woods" in remote Covelo, CA, the Robertsons design and produce some of the world's most beautiful books (wine labels, too!). Wine book collectors prize their limited edition copies of *The Man Who Made Wine* (J.M. Scott) published in 1998. Other Yolla Bolly gastronomic delights are *Two Kitchens in Provence* (M.F.K. Fisher, 1999) and *The Adventures of Chef Gallois* (Idwal Jones, 2000). These, and other fine books by the Press, are on display at the library. Wine and savories will be served. Call the SCWL for tickets! 707-433-3772.

IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by Bob Foster



A Century of Wine. The Story of a Wine Revolution. Edited by Stephen Brook. San Francisco: The Wine Appreciation Guild, 2000. 192 pp., hardback, \$50.

Finally! A wine book that does justice to the end of the millenium. While there were a number of wine books published in the last year that tried to tie into the festivities over the end of the 20th century, almost all simply worked the word millenium into their title. The text was merely ordinary. But, this book has hit on the proper perspective: a look back on the major wine regions or key wine techniques and how they evolved during the last century.

The editor has assembled an amazing array of wine writers; they are clearly the best of our times. Notable all-stars such as Hugh Johnson, Michael Broadbent, James Halliday, Anthony Hanson, Andrew Jefford, Tom Stevenson, and Bob Thompson have each contributed sections to the book. As noted, some of the chapters cover wine regions. For example, Anthony Hanson's chapters on the Burgundy are rich and fascinating as he chronicles the changes brought on by economics, new wine making techniques, improvements in transportation, and the growth of the negociants.

Other chapters cover the making or marketing of wine. I was particularly struck by Andrew Jefford's chapter on "Wine, Geography and Transportation." Jefford notes that at the beginning of the 20th century most wine was simply consumed in the region where it was made. The development of modern transportation systems has allowed wine to be rapidly and efficiently shipped around the world. Wines from around the globe are now readily available in most large wine shops. The other major development of the century was the shift to bottling wine at the source. In the early portion of this century transporting huge casks or tuns was hazardous and accident-prone. So too was bottling in a large variety of vastly different locations where the levels of cleanliness and attention to detail could vary widely. Bottling at the source eliminated all of these issues. Quality control improved immensely.

The other pattern Jefford discusses is the emergence of the "flying winemaker." These are winemakers who make wine at multiple locations around the globe. On the plus side, he finds that it allows for vast improvements in quality as successful techniques can be rapidly implemented. On the negative side, he worries that winemakers trying for a certain style (perhaps one to earn high scores from

American wine critic Robert Parker) will produce wines lacking in local, stylistic individuality. This trend towards making wines in a universal style simply to receive high scores, is a controversial trend that is touched on by several of the authors.

The book is profusely illustrated with both color and black and white photographs — many from the early portion of the century have not been seen before in any reference work. There is a detailed index.

This work is a triumph. It gives the wine lover a sense of not only how much wine has changed in the last millenium but also insights into why those changes occurred. The inter-relationship of wine with the technological changes in our society is fascinating. The detailed, interesting historical perspective is superb. It belongs in every wine lover's library. Very highly recommended.

The Oxford Companion to the Wines of North America. Edited by Bruce Cass. Oxford / New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. 302 p, hardback, \$45.

Following in the footsteps of Jancis Robinson's excellent *Oxford Companion to Wine*, this book uses the same detailed approach to North America. The work begins with fifteen short essays from top notch wine writers on an amazing variety of topics from the emergence of the neo-Prohibitionists to the latest in DNA testing to determine the source of the major American vines. The essays are scholarly, yet very thought provoking and informative. (In this regard, Dr. Carole Meredith from U.C. Davis reports that DNA testing has proven that Zinfandel is the same as the Italian Primitivo. It is not, as once thought, related to the Dalmatian grape Plavac Mali.)

The work then goes into an encyclopedia format covering not only wines and wine regions but also technical matters such as yeasts or "pre-certification clones." The material is well done; the scope is not limited to the United States, as there are detailed entries on Canadian and Mexican producers as well. While there are a few charts and color photographs, the majority of the pages are simply text.

There is a wealth of information in this work. It provides an impressive overview of North American wines and winemaking at the turn of this century. Highly recommended.

Wine-Tasters' Logic. Thinking about Wine and Enjoying It by Pat Simon. New York/London: Faber & Faber. 199 pp., softback, \$18.

There is no question that the author has solid credentials. He has been in the wine trade for over fifty years and has been a Master of Wine since 1966.

Given this wealth of experience, I had expected a book that reflected years of contemplation and deep insights. Instead I found a work that seems to jump from topic to topic covering huge areas — sometimes in great depth and other times just musing, leaving the reader with no direction or conclusion.

Some of the material is fascinating. In other realms, the author leaves the reader mystified. In other areas he seems to make so much out of small things. For example, he goes to great lengths to detail a procedure whereby one can create bottles of a solution with a sediment so that the reader can practice decanting. Perhaps it's me, but decanting just isn't that hard to do. By setting up such elaborate procedure it just makes the task seem more daunting than it really is.

I found this book more confusing and puzzling than clarifying my thoughts about the logic of winetasting. Not recommended.

[Bob Foster's wine book reviews appear regularly in the *California Grapevine*. Permission to reprint is much appreciated. — Ed.]



AN AFTERWORD: PUSHKIN on WINE by Robert Hutton

[In our last issue, Bob gave us a most interesting look into Russian wines and the poetry of Aleksandr Sergeevich Pushkin. He sends us an update. — Ed.]

Dear Tendrils:

My major reason for writing the Pushkin article was to give an introduction to the existence of Russian wines, and also make the connection with Konstantin Frank and what he had done for wines in the Eastern U.S. In anticipation of your welcome comments, I would like to put the following information forward.

1. The translations of Pushkin's poems are my own feeble efforts to give a fairly accurate rendition of what the great poet was saying, not coming anywhere close to producing a poetic impression of the music he wrote. If the Russian text would be useful, I can provide it.

2. The Don Cossack sparkling wine method, I have discovered, was the usual method of making sparkling wine in cold (high altitude or high latitude) regions in many other areas of the world where cold weather would stop the fermentation, allowing for a period of clearing sediment and rebottling, with warmer weather in the spring permitting a second fermentation with what was left of the natural sugar. It seems that even Champagne was made this way until the end of the 17th century.

3. In Georgia, skins (goat, sheep, or whatever) were the usual containers for wine as late as the early 1900s, while the traditional Georgian method of making wine in vats buried in the ground (kveri) in wine-cellars (marani) is still very much in use, particularly by home winemakers. The sweet wines I mentioned were, as I found out from Georgian winemakers on my visit there, made mainly for the Russians who didn't know any better. The local wines the Georgians made and make for themselves are dry reds and whites.

Moldavia is what I called that area of Bessarabia. I was corrected in this in my original article, written in 1988, because while Bessarabia is the area between the Prut and Dniester rivers, Moldavia was a medieval kingdom west of the Prut River now located in Romania. In 1988, the Soviet Union was very much in existence, and the area which then was the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic is now known as the independent Republic of Moldova.

A NEW AND VALUABLE RESOURCE ON THE LITERATURE OF THE LOIRE

Tendril Donald Rice, whose special wine book collecting interest is the wines of the Loire Valley, is on a mission to document and organize Loire wine texts. Although admittedly "a bigger task than I had anticipated," he explains: "One of the challenges of being a collector of books and publications related to Loire Valley wines is that there is no existing comprehensive bibliography to work from or use as a guide, and relatively few sources of authoritative significance. Without a master reference that enumerates and describes what has been written, locating good primary documents to help understand the region's winemaking history requires patience and perseverance. Most texts about the Loire supply introductory material and perhaps a little more, yet comprehensive works are rare, and rarely obvious on the bookshelf. ... much of the best writing is buried in periodicals and compilations that by title alone might not alert the reader to the valuable content therein." Following several years of research, cataloguing, and annotating, he has uploaded his work to a website, and welcomes all input: <http://members.aol.com/loireindex/bibintro.html>. Interested Tendrils are encouraged to check it out — Rice's work is a welcome addition to any wine reference library.





**BOOKS &
BOTTLES**
by
Fred McMillin

It Wasn't Easy: The American Wine Story

The Book: *American Vintage. The Rise of American Wine* by Paul Lukacs. Boston/New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000. 370 pp., hardback, \$28.

- "Dago Red" sales by Gallo to Chicago and the East Coast rose to 350,000 gallons in 1935.
- "Zapple" and similar wines by the Italian-Swiss Winery were lightly carbonated and fruit-flavored; some were not even made with grapes.
- "Torpedo juice" was what we called our distilled alcohol. (Gallo plant manager)
- In the 1960s most U.S.A. sparklers were coarse and crude, made from grapes considered not good enough for quality still wine.

Thus does author Paul Lukacs give us the flavor of the American wine industry not so long ago in his irresistible new book, *American Vintage. The Rise of American Wine*.

To understand the meteoric rise of American wine quality in the last three decades, you must get this book and enjoy the lucid description by Prof. Lukacs, chairman of the English department at Loyola College, Maryland, and wine columnist for the *Washington Times*. However, here are a few more tantalizing tidbits.

- **THE IMPOSSIBLE DREAM.** His parents had remained loyal to the British crown during the American revolution; their New Jersey estate lay in ruins. Penniless, only five feet tall and just twenty-one years old, he fled west to rid himself of the royalist taint. In the summer of 1803, he hopped off the flatboat at the frontier town of Cincinnati. He became America's first commercially successful vintner and one of the wealthiest men in the country. His name was Nicholas Longworth and his story starts on page 10.

- **THE FRENCH CONNECTION.** The arrival of French winegrowers greatly improved wines years ago in South Africa, Spain (Rioja) and Italy (Chianti). Prof. Lukacs tells how they led the charge to upgrade California sparklers as well, when, in 1972, Moët & Chandon bought 800 acres in the Napa Valley and created Domaine Chandon.

- **THE FALL OF BOTTLE AGE.** Historically, bottle age may have been a mark of class, but the new American wines have defined quality somewhat differently. More and more of them provide delicious drinking when young.

- **THOSE NAPA REDS.** As early as 1889, the Napa Valley reds were becoming celebrated; a typical leader in this new "claret country" was a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon, Cabernet Franc and Malbec. Modern-day Mondavi continued the quest for quality wines, those that could hold their own with the best from Europe.

- **CHARDONNAY.** "If I were forced to choose only one California Chardonnay to drink and cellar each year, it probably would be Grgich Hills." Lukacs endorses this quote of ace observer James Laube. It is interesting that while Mike Grgich appreciates the effects of soil, vineyard, &c., he feels the chief factor is a good winemaker not making too-large volumes of the wine.

- **THE CHANGING CENTRAL VALLEY.** Three decades ago premium grapes were planted in inappropriate areas of California, such as the huge, hot San Joaquin Valley. But, modern advances in viticulture and enology have made it possible for large-volume wineries to produce palatable central valley wines at very low costs.

- **THE PROFESSOR PREDICTS.** Lukacs notes that "Prof. George Husmann, the 19th century's most ardent popularizer of American wine, said in 1888, 'Nature has designed this to be a great Vineland.' A hundred years later, in the last decades of the American century, he would be proved right."

And Prof. Paul Lukacs provides a fascinating account of how it all happened.



[Fred McMillin, whose column has regularly appeared in our Newsletter (now Quarterly!) from the beginning, has taught wine history for thirty years on three continents. He presently teaches a monthly course in San Francisco. — Ed.]

ZINFANDEL: A HISTORY OF A GRAPE AND ITS WINE

by
Charles L. Sullivan

INSTALLMENT VII

Of Pendulums and Roller Coasters: 1970–2000



If a wine loving Rip Van Winkle had tasted the “magic flagon” in 1970 and awakened thirty, not twenty, years later, he would certainly not have been as confused as Irving’s Rip, at least not about Zinfandel. Looking back three decades he’d not

be surprised to see the average price of a bottle at \$20.00 (1970 C\$ = \$3.90 [C\$ = Constant Dollars]), nor would he blink at the large number of the highest priced bottles with alcohol readings of more than 14%. Little could he tell from the current Zin condition about the marvelous swings in popularity and style that California’s Zinfandels had undergone since 1970.

The most important American wine facts of the seventies are the rise in per capita consumption of wine in this country, and the explosion of the interest in fine table wine here, both from Europe and from California. Together these historic tendencies help define the modern U.S. wine revolution in its simplest terms. California Zinfandel rode the crest of this revolutionary wave.

In the seventies, for an important segment of the American drinking public, wine was a fad. Per capita consumption rose continuously through the 1970s, but peaked in 1985. Then for the next ten years consumption declined steadily by 26% until it began turning around in 1996. For many, Zinfandel was also a fad, but a very popular one for more than ten years.

The Zins that attracted the most attention in the 1970s were those that were made like fine Cabernet Sauvignon, rich, brawny, and loaded with tannin/phenolics that told the consumer to lay the bottle down as if it were a 1970 Latour. These Zinfandels also had their own peppery/raspberry fruit that distinguished them from Cabernets. (But who among us in those years didn’t confuse these varietals in a blind tasting. A study done at UC Davis in 1975 indicated that the scholars there regularly reversed them when no labels were in view. This year I took part in an “old Cabernet” tasting among some Napa vintners that was won by a 1977 Napa Zinfandel.)

The Stats

Before we look at the Zinfandels of the seventies we should examine the statistical basis for their production. Statewide acreage of the variety rose 29.7% for the decade, not much compared to the other leading premium varieties (Cabernet Sauvignon rose 204% and Pinot Noir 193%). But the low percentage is partly explained by the much larger early base enjoyed by Zinfandel. In all, there was a growth of about 2,000 acres in this ten-year period. In 1970 Zinfandel acres made up 13.6% of the state’s wine grape total; in 1980 it was down to 8.6%. (Today it is 11%.)

The counties with the largest Zinfandel growth in acres in the seventies were: 1. San Joaquin (Lodi), 2. Monterey, 3. Napa, 4. Sonoma, 5. Mendocino. The percentage leaders were: 1. Monterey (408%), 2. Napa (172%), 3. San Luis Obispo (138%), 4. Amador (134%), Mendocino (83%). The largest loser was San Bernardino which lost 1,536 acres (40%). San Joaquin led throughout the period with about 38% of the state’s Zinfandel acres; it still does with 39%. San Bernardino was second in 1971 but was overtaken by Sonoma in 1972, with 18%. Sonoma still ranks second, but now with only 8% of the state’s total.

At the beginning of the seventies the Zinfandel yield was very low, only about two tons per bearing acre, both in the northern coastal counties and in the Lodi area. By 1980 this total for the state had risen to about 3.5 tons in both areas.

Shortly before the seventies the price for a ton of Zinfandel grapes rarely hit as much as \$100. By 1970-72 the average was \$222 per ton. North Coast Zinfandel went for \$473 in 1972; Lodi grapes cost the winery \$247. By 1980, when Zinfandel that was really red was losing favor, Napa / Sonoma growers were still getting about the same prices. Lodi Zin had dropped well under \$200.

The average price of a bottle of Zinfandel from the vintages of the early 1970s was about \$3.50, about \$19.00 in 1999 C\$. I base this figure on my analysis of *Connoisseurs’ Guide’s (CG)* annual Zinfandel evaluation that began in 1974. By 1981 the average price had risen to only \$6.62, an amount actually lower than the 1974 figure when corrected for price inflation. Most will not enjoy remembering the annual percentages of such inflation between

1979 and 1982 (7.7%; 11.3%; 13.5% and 10.4%) We shall return to the reason for this real price decline in a moment.



Definitely Zinfandel? Well, of course, definitely Zinfandel. I TOLD you it was Zinfandel.

The Best Wines?

Wouldn't it be nice to be able objectively to click off the best Zinfandels produced between 1971 and 1980? But all I can convey are very subjective opinions. But some opinions are better than others, particularly when the evaluator can't see the wine label. For this reason I find the results of the San Francisco Vintners' Club's blind tastings very useful. I added up the results of all their Zinfandel tastings for these years as if each event were a track meet, with 5-3-1 points for the top three. The winner was Ridge Vineyards with Joseph Swan a close second. Well back came Montevina and Rutherford Ranch. Fifth place was a virtual dead heat between Gemello, Clos du Val and Ravenswood, a late entry in 1976.

CG is also a good source for such opinions. Their tasting panels operate with the labels hidden and are usually made up of tasters from many elements of the wine industry. (I can attest to this view as a member of their Zinfandel panels from 1975 to 1985.) For the 580 Zins they rated in their Zinfandel specials for these years I counted up the wines receiving two and three puffs ("distinctive" and "exceptional") and learned that Ridge and Swan were also their top two producers. Then came Carneros Creek, Clos du Val and David Bruce. Readers who may wonder at the exclusion of several noted producers are reminded that unless a winery was in the field 25 years ago it is unlikely that its wines could have made either of these lists.

Harry Waugh

Before Prohibition a useful anecdotal way of identifying the best California wine was to read the

comments of European experts. Frederico Pohndorff and Charles Oldham, the most famous of these, did have commercial connections here that might have colored their views. Such is not the case with Harry Waugh, who had been in the British wine trade thirty years before he came to California in 1964, shortly before retiring from the board of the Harvey's Group. Eventually he sat in on a Berkeley Wine and Food Society dinner, the guest of William Dickerson of later Napa Zinfandel fame. Waugh visited Napa and became fascinated by what he saw happening at the premium end of the California wine industry. From then on he visited the state regularly and included his observations, along with comments on the European wine scene, in a series of books that appeared between 1970 and 1987. In his *Pick of the Bunch* (1970) he told of his reintroduction to Zinfandel. Those he had tasted earlier had been so much lighter. He noted that what he was tasting in the late 1960s would benefit from more time in the cellar. He loved the Louis Martini, Parducci and Buena Vista Zinfandels from those early years. But his favorite in a blind tasting is one of historical importance I have already discussed, the 1966 Robert Mondavi. In *Diary of a Winetaster* he told of his discovery of Ridge Zinfandels. His favorites were the 1968 Geyserville and the 1971 Occidental. But he reserved his strongest praise for the 1968 Mayacamas Late Harvest, "easily the richest unfortified wine I have ever tasted."

Later he praised the Zins of Sutter Home, Harbor, Chateau Montelena, Swan, Grand Cru, and Kenwood. In 1978 he was instrumental in founding the Zinfandel Club of London, an organization really interested in California wine in general rather than the single variety. But in fact, in 1978, summing up the remarkable gains made in California wine over the previous ten years he chose not to mention Zinfandel. In his later books he began complaining of a heavy style that he did not like, using terms such as "harsh," "rough," and "cumbersome." In his final book in 1987 I can find only one mention of Zinfandel in the 36 pages devoted to his 1986 visit here. We shall see that this swing in favor was part of a general view held by many wine consumers.

Amador, Monterey, and Paso Robles

I have already alluded to the rediscovery of the Sierra Foothills in the mid-1960s as a premium grape source, first in Amador County's Shenandoah Valley. But until the late seventies the greatest success came to premium wineries outside the area using foothill grapes. The obvious exception was Montevina under Cary Gott, whose briary heavyweights came onto the

market with the 1973 vintage. But by 1975 Ridge, Sutter Home, Carneros Creek, Mt. Veeder, Gemello, Geyser Peak, ZD and others were producing very good Amador Zinfandels. The success of the region as a winegrowing area is also reflected in acreage statistics. In 1970 there were about 400 acres of Zinfandel in the region; by 1980 there were 1,275. Now there are well over 2,000 acres of Zinfandel, which accounts for about half the wine grape acreage for the region. Cabernet Sauvignon comes in a distant second with about 500 acres.

But we can see the seeds of decline in the Amador success. Already in 1976 Norman Roby, writing for *Vintage Magazine*, was concerned about the heavy, dark flavors in so many Amador Zins. He correctly noted that these wines were not for everyone. He continued to be enthusiastic about Zinfandel as a fine claret grape, but more critical of "high alcohol monsters."

The Zinfandel story in Monterey County during the years of the Wine Revolution is not as happy as that of the Sierra Foothills. There were but twenty acres there in 1968. In 1971 the number was 475; in 1974 there were 3,194 acres. The number peaked in 1978 and then plummeted. Over the next five years more than two square miles of Zinfandel vineyard disappeared from Monterey, mostly grafted to white varieties. This was part of a general miscalculation. In the seventies thousands of acres of vines were planted all over California in the wrong places. What happened in Monterey's Salinas Valley was fairly typical.

Today there are about 1,300 acres of Zinfandel in the county, mostly planted in the southern portion or in the Carmel Valley where the grapes can ripen properly. And if quality can be guessed from prices today those of Monterey bring about 80% of what Napa Zinfandel fetches. In 1980 their price had fallen to about 40% of the Napa average.

If we want to find the historic champion of Central Coast Zinfandel we must look to the south at San Luis Obispo County, specifically to the Paso Robles area. There our famed variety has not suffered Monterey's roller coaster ride of the last thirty years. The county had about 500 acres before the Revolution, which pushed the total to about 1,000 in the seventies. Since 1994 the total has jumped to more than 2,000. Grape prices are comparable to those in the Sierra Foothills, but nothing like those of Sonoma which approached \$2,000/ton during the 1999 vintage. Thus, like the Zinfandels of the Sierra Foothills, those of the Paso Robles area are often seen as delicious bargains in today's market.

The Pendulum Swings

The decline of California Zinfandel from the late seventies through the mid-eighties is not easily explained, at least not the decline of red Zinfandel in the style that made it famous in the early seventies. I think a combination of factors was involved, but I have no general theory that brings them together.

Many writers have suggested that the wide diversity of styles was near fatal. As early as 1973 Trader Joe was concerned. "Tell us the mockingbird's song and we will tell you the Zinfandel's taste. After our blind tasting our panel could form no general conclusion as to what Zinfandel ought to taste like." In 1977 Norman Roby devoted an entire article to the lack of focus in Zinfandel style. "Everyone tinkers with the grape and shapes it into some different, often delightful, wine." And even though he declared his love for its many wines, "nobody can honestly say what it should smell and taste like." Before long more were joining the chorus and the market was moving in a direction that rejected what writers were seeing as confusion, even anarchy.

The most serious complaint that echoed across the country in the late seventies and early eighties came mostly from wine and food writers for newspapers and centered on the high alcohol "dark monsters." In later years explanations of Zinfandel's decline, especially from wine writers, tended to focus on this facile explanation. But there are some good data that tend to belie this simplistic view.

In 1978 *CG* evaluated 246 wines in its Zinfandel review. They thought 9% were undrinkable. Of the satisfactory wines they thought that 37% would benefit from cellaring. In other words it is difficult to conclude that most of the varietal Zinfandels being offered consumers then were "dark monsters." I don't believe that the wine being offered the public was the problem. Perhaps wine writers' complaints about some few specific wines were more to blame for the situation. *CG* noted in their Zinfandel review three years later "the falling prestige of Zinfandel at the premium end of the scale." But they went on to argue that "there are more attractive, well-made Zinfandels being offered now than ever before."

I think the editors of *CG* had it correct in noting that Zinfandel bottle prices had been flat or had been declining while Cabernet prices were soaring, partially from simple price inflation that was countrywide. This was a time (1979-81) when US consumer prices rose 43%. It was a great time for us Zinfandel consumers but producers were hurting. Shortly, several important ones left the field, most notably Robert Mondavi.

It is certainly true that laying down monster Zinfandels was a fad that ran out of steam in the early eighties. But the general situation is one that to me is beyond any simple explanation. In 1982 Kenwood's Robert Kozlowski determined to organize such as us into a Zinfandel Guild. It fell flat primarily from the lack of industry support. At the same time wine writer Jerry Mead began one of his campaigns, this time to save the Zinfandel. It got nowhere, although I treasure my huge ZinFan button he gave to all who asked.

White Zinfandel

Perhaps the most important factor that made it possible for serious Zinfandel producers to stay the course was the remarkable development in these years of White Zinfandel. The idea of making a white, or better a pink, wine from Zinfandel grapes was not a new one. George West near Lodi had one in the 1860s. Arpad Haraszthy had used a "white" Zinfandel in the first really successful cuvées of his "Eclipse" sparkling wine. Charles Wetmore had promoted the idea of making a pink wine from the free-run Zinfandel crush in the 1880s, specifically pointing to the Lodi area as the place where such a wine would be a success.

David Bruce had made a White Zinfandel in the 1960s, but Sutter Home under Bob Trinchero was the primary agent for that drink's modern success. It began on a small scale in 1972 with a small batch of dry pink Zin. By 1980 production of a slightly sweeter end product had risen to 25,000 cases. By 1984 the total had reached 1.5 million cases and continued to go up for several years. Other producers large and small jumped aboard this Zinfandel express. Even Ridge had a white Zin. Many writers later contended that the real key to Beringer's financial success in the eighties was their popular White Zinfandel.

One of the economic pluses to the producer of this style of wine was the fact that it could be on the market but a few months after the harvest, thus generating an early cash flow not possible with most red Zinfandel. There were not a few producers of powerful Zinfandels in the 1970s who stayed the course in the next decade with a boost from their White Zinfandel cash flow. So many men and women have told me that they were able to keep producing small amounts of rich red Zinfandel because of dollars generated by White Zinfandel, that I believe this to be a major factor in the survival of our muscled friend in the 1980s. It should be noted that Trinchero never gave up on red Zinfandel for a moment, producing about 100,000 cases in 1986. He

also made his presence in the red Zinfandel field more noticeable by buying Montevina in 1988.

We can see the main source for this White Zinfandel flood by examining Central Valley acreage statistics. In 1985, understandably, the Lodi area had 10,000 acres; it had always been Zinfandel country. But the unlikely desert counties of Kern, Fresno, Madera and Stanislaus had but 510 acres. By 1990 they had 3,365; by 1996 they had 8,800.



White Zinfandel was something of a fad, but nothing like Cold Duck or wine coolers. After 1989 consumption dipped but it is still in the millions of gallons.

Modern Times

To prepare the reader for the next roller coaster ride on the Zinfandel express I should like for a moment to come down to very recent history.

On November 2, 2000 the San Francisco Vintners' Club had its almost annual Zinfandel taste-off, pitting the winners and runners-up of the past year's tasting against one another. The average price of the twelve finalists was \$25.33. The average alcohol content was 14.8%. The winning producers were Domaine Danica (Sonoma), Ravenswood, and Signorello. None of these wines was an "inky monster." But they all were powerful, complex, with excellent varietal definition and the kind of phenolic structure that urges its owner to "lay me down" for a few years. But they all could be drunk today with pleasure, with the right food. Such could not be said of powerful Zinfandels of the late 1970s.

These high-priced and now virtually unobtainable wines are symbolic of recent Zinfandel history. The renewed interest of red Zinfandel as a fine wine in the premium market dates roughly from 1986-87. In 1983 *CG* had lamented that "the bloom is off the Zinfandel market." Sutter Home's Bob Trinchero admitted that Zinfandel "for the moment had lost its status as the darling of wine writers." Winery inventories were backing up; the number of producers was declining sharply. But *CG* noted that "A few stalwart producers have hung on to their sources of grapes and have continued to offer a stream of well made wine."

Soon wine writers were beginning to point to the greater emphasis on less harsh tannins and bright fruit flavors. They also did not overlook the value that these fine wines offered. In 1986 you could easily buy a bottle of first class Zinfandel, to drink or lay down, for \$6.50.

In 1987 for the first time Robert Parker gave Zinfandel a special section in his annual *Wine Advocate* review. In 1988 the Los Angeles *Times* cheered the Zinfandel's comeback. *CG* thought that "all current signs indicate that red Zinfandel table wine has entered a new phase of popularity, after almost half a decade in the doldrums."

Now producers with names beginning with R were becoming the darlings in this growing market. Rosenblum, Ravenswood, Ridge, Rafanelli, for example. Hop Kiln won the 1987 Vintners' Club taste-off. Nalle took second and third in 1988 and 1989. But the Rs took eleven of the 18 top places in these three years. By the end of the eighties the best Zinfandels were still averaging under \$10 per bottle while Cabernet prices continued to soar. Writers were talking about Zinfandel as the affordable alternative to the higher priced varietal.

The reason for the difference can be seen in grape prices. From 1988 to 1994 Sonoma Zinfandel was steady at \$714 to \$740 per ton. (In 1999 the average per ton was \$1,943.) In 1988 Napa Cabernet Sauvignon went for \$1,235, 73% more than their Zinfandel.

In 1994 the state's total Zinfandel acreage reached 38,000, up 26% since 1988. But almost all this increase occurred in the Central Valley where producers began taking advantage of Zinfandel's rising name recognition all over the wine drinking portions of the nation. For the most part the additional wine from this huge region became part of the "fighting varietal" market, affordable, cork-finished wines, usually light and fruity, and ready to drink. This aspect of the state's premium varietal market has continued to grow as the country's per capita table wine consumption began rising again in the late eighties.

Today there are about 52,000 acres of Zinfandel in California. Two-thirds of these are in the Central Valley and almost 60% of this number are in the Lodi area. Almost 90% of the growth in Zinfandel acreage since 1990 has been in the Central Valley. What makes this growth more remarkable is the fact that the Zinfandel yield per acre in that huge region almost doubled in the nineties to about six tons per acre. In contrast, Sonoma / Napa yields have held fairly steady between three and four tons.

Going into vintage 2000 there were almost 6,000 acres of Zinfandel vines so young they had not yet yielded a crop. Most of these vines are in the Central Valley. When they do come to bear they have the potential of adding 25,000,000 bottles of wine to the state's total.



Wait a minute. You didn't introduce me to zinfandel. I introduced you to zinfandel. You introduced me to Elizabeth.

[Cartoons from Charles' collection. Our Zinfandel ride continues next issue. — Ed.]

[Inspired by the *Wall Street Journal's* "Open That Bottle Now" column, our vintage poet recently opened a 1964 Martin Ray Cabernet Sauvignon and shared it, talking "old times," with his friend who had given it to him. The wine, they reported, was still very good; the resulting poem is ours to enjoy. — Ed.]

WHEN SHALL I DRINK THIS WINE by *Marts Beekley*

When shall I drink this wine?
In the moonlight.
When shall I drink this wine?
With candlelight.
When shall I drink this wine?
With you in my sight.
When shall I drink this wine?
Before we share the night.
When shall I drink this wine?
Tonight.



— NICOLAS, *continued from p.2*

Fins were distributed annually in late autumn, but dated the next year. Nicolas advised that the wines be drunk during the holiday season—*fêtes de fin d'année* and, to insure that they were, notice was given that the wines would be "withdrawn from offer within a few weeks of the beginning of the year."

Concerned that the *Prestigieuses Bouteilles* offerings might be more window dressing than fact, Edmund Penning-Rowell, an English wine writer who wrote on this subject, visited Nicolas and found a plethora of 19th century Bordeaux wines resting comfortably in its caves. "When I was inspecting the cellars containing some of these bottles, I asked if they ever sent out a bottle which on opening proved deficient. I was assured that they did not; it was often necessary to open a second and even a third bottle of some of these very old wines." The admission that more than one bottle sometimes had to be opened is not surprising considering their age; it was not until 1969, forty-one years after the inception of the *Liste des Grand Vins*, before a wine produced in the 20th century was allowed on the prestigious bottles list. The Nicolas veneration for old wine is not just found in the prestigious wine listings; it pervades the catalogs from beginning to end. Apparently Nicolas' obsession with old wines was not entirely shared by its customers, because a 1911 Montrachet first offered for sale in 1928 was still for sale in 1957.

Red Bordeaux were the emphasis throughout the forty-five-year span of the catalogs' existence, followed in importance by Sauternes (Ch. d'Yquem consistently made the exceptional and prestigious bottle lists) and red Burgundies. The 1970 catalog is the last listing for *Bouteilles Exceptionnelles* and *Prestigieuses Bouteilles*, although the 1971 catalog offered 1961 Ch. Latour and 1959 Ch. Mouton Rothschild, exceptional and prestigious wines by anyone's standards.

Although red Burgundy wines never merited a *Prestigieuses Bouteilles* rating, in 1932 a *Bouteilles Exceptionnelle* list was added for them. The Burgundy *Exceptionnelle* lists routinely included such wines as Chambertin, Romanée Conti, Clos de Vougeot, Musigny, Grands Echézeaux, and Corton-Grancy, but with the exception of Vogüé and Louis Latour, the names of the producers are rarely given. For example, Grands Echézeaux is present on the *Exceptionnelle* lists, but whose Grands Echézeaux we are never told. Surprisingly, no white Burgundy, including Montrachet, ever made the *Exceptionnelle* list.

A sprinkling of wines are offered from other regions of France such as the Rhône, Touraine, Jura, Champagne, Arbois, Anjou, and Alsace, and a few

German and Swiss wines, with an occasional Sherry, Madeira or Port, but not in any depth. Dry white Bordeaux did not make the lists until 1966, and then just two châteaux, Carbonnieux and Laville-Haut Brion.

There exists today an elite hierarchy of red Bordeaux wines consisting of châteaux Haut-Brion, Lafite-Rothschild, Latour, Ausone, Margaux, Cheval Blanc, Mouton-Rothschild, and Petrus. (Château Le Pin is not included here because it did not come into existence until 1979.)

As far back as 1787, when Thomas Jefferson visited Bordeaux, and into the present, Lafite, Margaux, Latour, Haut-Brion, and Mouton have generally sold for about the same prices. This price parity is broken, of course, when one of these châteaux in a particular vintage makes a wine of extraordinary quality, such as Latour, Cheval Blanc, and Haut-Brion did in 1961, 1982, and 1989, respectively. The Nicolas catalogs reflect throughout the First Growth price parity, and recognized Mouton's equality long before the French government officially conferred First Growth Grand Cru status on Mouton in 1973.

The two great St. Émilions, Cheval Blanc and Ausone, currently sell for a bit more than the five First Growths, and this price difference is reflected in the *Listes des Grands Vins* prices. Ausone, whose yearly production is miniscule compared to its Médoc neighbors, in the early catalogs sold for as much as 25% more than the First Growths. Cheval Blanc's price differential, though narrower, narrowed even further in later years.

In the case of Petrus, however, the past does not reflect the present. When Petrus first made an appearance in the Nicolas catalogs in 1958, it was not the price leader. In fact, comparing its price against those of its peers through its last entry in the 1969 catalog, we find that Petrus usually sold for less. Clearly, something extraordinary has happened since 1969, because Petrus now sells at a premium of three and four times its competitors' prices.

Unfortunately, the Nicolas archives were of little help in providing information to round out this study. The Nicolas representative advised that what information it still had was contained in boxes, and related mainly to correspondence with paper suppliers about the quality of the paper—obviously of high quality because none of the publications show any evidence of paper deterioration. No correspondence was found between Nicolas and the artists.

What happened to the original paintings? Nicolas does not have a clue. The paintings were retained by the artists and, I suspect, are in private collections.

Are the catalogs and special publications still available? Yes, and you don't have to go to Paris to

find them. A few booksellers offer them for sale over the Internet and, in my judgment, they are still reasonably priced. But if I were going to compile a set of the publications, I would go to Paris. The Internet is wonderful, but Paris is much more fun.

THE CATALOGS AND OTHER SPECIAL WINE PUBLICATIONS

1928: The first *Liste des Grands Vins Fins* has a dull gold cover background with scattered letters tumbling down the cover forming the word "NICOLAS." The front illustration features the Nicolas wine porter (created in 1922 by the artist Dransy) on a billboard in a Metro Station with a clutch of wine bottles in both hands; the center pages feature him fanning Bordeaux bottles in his left hand and Burgundy bottles in his right hand. In the last illustration, he is transformed into evening dress wearing his porter's peaked cap, while holding with the thumb and index finger of each hand a Bordeaux and a Burgundy bottle. The graphic design and, probably the drawings, are by A. M. Cassandre. 12½" x 5¼", 24 pp., stapled. [See rear cover illustration. — Ed.]

1929: The cover is black and features the Nicolas porter in gold with the letters "NICOLAS" in red. Illustrated with four full-page black-and-white photographs, and small gold marginal drawings of the Nicolas wine porter by Charles Martin. Design and layout by Cassandre. 9" x 6", 24 pp., stapled.

1930: A gold cover features the Nicolas porter in black. Illustrated with two full photographic plates reproduced in black and gold with small marginal drawings of the porter in red. Design and layout by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 24 pp., wire spiral-bound.

With the United States still undergoing the convulsions of Prohibition, Nicolas engaged Paul Iribe, a multi-talented artist, to design and illustrate a series of publications contrasting the virtues of wine with the evils of liquor. Iribe (1883-1935) — illustrator of haut-couture women's fashions, designer of textiles, wallpaper, Chanel jewelry, and furniture, movie director, and artistic director of Cecil B. DeMille's first (silent) version of the Ten Commandments — produced three booklets, each on a different theme, that Nicolas issued in 1930, 1931 and 1932. The booklets do not contain wine price lists. They are listed below chronologically.

Blanc et Rouge. Plaquelette No.1: La Belle au Bois Dormant. 1930. The solid bright red cover, front and back, is relieved by the letter "N" in white that

extends the cover's full length and width. There are ten black-and-white full-page drawings by Paul Iribe of scenes in an elegant cabaret with text by Georges Montorgueil. The essence of the dialogue is that the art of eating and the art of drinking wine are inseparable, and that the new enemy of wine, the cocktail, is a "social poison." The number of copies printed of the regular edition is not stated, but two limited editions were issued: 20 copies printed on Japanese vellum, and numbered I to XX, and 500 copies on deluxe paper, numbered 1 to 500. 12½" x 10", 28 pp.

1931: The catalog has a blue and silver cover with a star shaped die cut in-laid with the letter N. Designed and illustrated by A. M. Cassandre with color lithographs, one a double-page color centerpiece. 9½" x 7¼", 26 pp., wire spiral-bound.

Rose et Noir. Plaquelette No. 2: Le Mauvais Génie. 1931. The design of the cover is the same as *Plaquelette No.1*, but in black and pink. Paul Iribe's nine full-page drawings are preceded by a 16-page pamphlet titled, "A Modern Dialogue in Three Acts and Three Cocktails," by René Benjamin. The inane dialogue, between a man a woman, becomes sillier as they continue drinking cocktails. All of Iribe's drawings feature a cocktail shaker or a reference to drinking. The anti-liquor message is perhaps best illustrated by a drawing showing a recently married couple standing in an open doorway looking into an empty room. In the caption, the concierge says, "Here is the children's room." The husband replies, "My dear, this would make a lovely bar." In addition to the regular edition, twenty copies were printed on Japanese vellum and 500 copies on deluxe paper. 12½" x 10", 28 pp.

1932: Edy Legrand (1882-1970), painter, prolific book illustrator (especially children's books) and set designer, is the illustrator. The cover is black with color drawings of vineyard scenes. The catalog is illustrated with eight full-color plates and twelve black-and-white drawings of mythical Bacchanals picnicking and frolicking in a forest. Legrand was the illustrator of a number of classic novels republished by the New York "Limited Editions Club" in the 1950s and 1960s. Graphics by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 32 pp., wire spiral-bound.

Bleu Blanc Rouge. Plaquelette No.3. France. 1932. The cover is styled in the same manner as the previous two plaquettes, but in blue, white, and red. Paul Iribe's first drawing depicts a beer stein, and vodka, whiskey and mineral water bottles captioned, "Today the world gets intoxicated by terrible poisons." Four

black-and-white two-page foldout drawings illustrate the ruinous effects these four libations have had on the cultures of Russia, Germany, England and the United States — Russia's Utopia, labeled "Dumping," or unfair competition; Germany's Mechanism, labeled "Gold of the Rhine River," or industrial pollution; England's Imperialism, labeled "Freedom of the Seas," or monetary greed; America's Megalomania labeled "Arbitrator of the World," or gangsterism and urban sprawl. The final illustration is a color painting of a pastoral French scene with two peasant couples enjoying a repast of wine, bread and fruit. The caption reads, "But when one drinks wine, one doesn't lose one's head." In addition to the regular edition, twenty copies were printed on Japanese vellum and 500 copies on deluxe paper. 12 ½" x 10", 20 pp.

1933: The metallic silver cover decorated with a vineyard scene and 21 color plates of vineyard scenes are by Jean Hugo (1894-1984), the great-grandson of Victor Hugo. Hugo was a talented artist and illustrator who earned a reputation for the magnificent stage sets he produced for his great-grandfather's dramas, adapting them to a contemporary format. He designed the stained glass windows for the Monastery of Sarte in Hury, Belgium, and he was engaged by Baron Philippe de Rothschild to design the 1946 Ch. Mouton Rothschild wine label. A. M. Cassandre is the graphic designer. 9½" x 7¼"; 32 pp., wire spiral-bound.

1934: Alfred Latour (1888-1964), painter, engraver, graphic designer and typographer, provided the wood engraved ornaments that decorate the cover and the twelve color woodcuts of French country scenes that illustrate the catalog. (In 1950, Latour assumed the design and layout of the Nicolas publications through 1965.) Graphics by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 32 pp. With this issue, a more attractive plastic spiral binding replaced the wire binding.

1935: The cover in gold, and decorated with grapes

and grape leaves in red and black, set the tone for the winemaking theme illustrated by Darcy with six full-color plates and small drawings. Graphics by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 32 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1936: The cover carries scattered letters spelling NICOLAS, partly embossed and partly printed in color, and bordered in gray and yellow on a black background. Designed and illustrated by A. M. Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 48 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

Mon Docteur le Vin

In 1936 Établissements Nicolas issued a special publication, *Mon Docteur le Vin*, a large (12½" x 10¼") formatted work of 48 pages, illustrated with nineteen vibrant watercolors by Raoul Dufy (1877-1953). Dufy's paintings, brilliantly reproduced by Draeger Frères, look almost like originals. The message of the book is simple — wine, when drunk in moderation, is healthy, a belief that is now generally medically accepted. The text, by noted Paris gastro-nome, Gaston Derys (1875-1945), — preceded by Maréchal Pétain's letter, "Hommage au Vin" — is filled with quotes from doctors and others extolling the curative powers

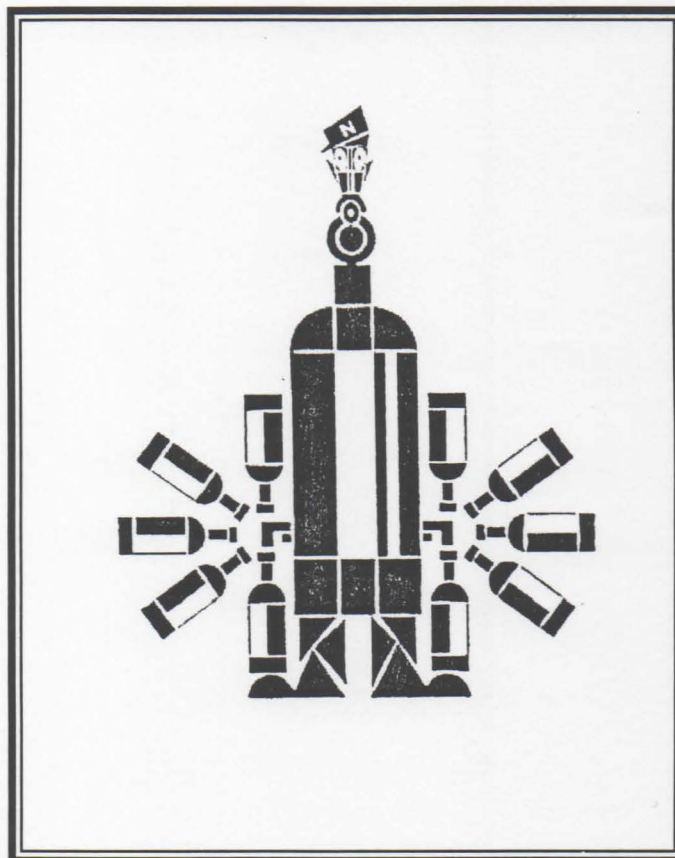
of wine. For example, beneath a Dufy painting showing two young women playing tennis, the caption (in French) reads:

"Unbelievable. Who could guess these two are mother and daughter.

No kidding! They look like two sisters to me.

Well you know, they are from Champagne, and their bodies and youth are well maintained by the local nectar."

The cover, also by Dufy, features a black-and-white drawing of grapes and grape leaves. The graphics are by A. M. Cassandre. The number of copies printed is



not stated, but *Mon Docteur le Vin* is not easy to come by.

1937: No catalog issued.

1938: A brown cover is decorated with a wood engraving of a wine pitcher. *Bois en Couleurs de Galanis*, is illustrated with 12 color still-life woodcuts by Demetrius Emmanuel Galanis (1882-1966). The facing center pages depict a peacock with fanned feathers shimmering with iridescent color. Galanis, born in Athens, came to Paris to pursue a painting career, and he became known for his landscape and still-life paintings. Catalog design and layout by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 44 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1939: A white background with a black letter "N" centered on the cover. Black-and-white drawings and watercolor illustrations of a wine harvest by C[arl] Erickson (? -1958), a popular illustrator. During the 1940s and 1950s, Erickson did illustrations for *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* under the pseudonym of "Eric." Graphics by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 48 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1940-1948: No publications issued.

Sous le Signe de ... SERIES

1949: On all pre-war issues the name or initial of the firm had appeared on the cover. Beginning with this issue that feature is discarded in favor of a cover illustration, and the title is shortened to *Liste des Grands Vins*. The 1949 issue was also the first catalog to be issued with the theme *Sous le Signe de* and continued through 1962. André Dignimont (1891-1965) is the artist whose six watercolors and eight line drawings of Paris scenes grace the cover and pages of *Sous le Signe de Paris*. Dignimont, a popular book illustrator and painter, was selected by Baron Philippe de Rothschild to illustrate the 1949 Mouton Rothschild wine label. Graphics by Cassandre. 9½" x 7¼", 36 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1950: Titled *Sous le Signe de Soleil Levant*, the catalog is illustrated by Japanese artist R. Harada with eighteen color paintings of Japanese scenes. With this issue Alfred Latour became the graphic designer and continued in this capacity through 1965. 9½" x 7¼", 34 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1951: Red and black letters on a white cover spell out *Sous le Signe d'Une Vierge Follee de Strasbourg*. The inside pages are illustrated with eleven black-and-white drawings of sculptures from cathedrals and museums throughout France. The artwork is by Louis André Berthommé-Saint-André (1905-1977),

painter and engraver. Design and layout by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 36 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1952: No catalog published.



[from *Monseigneur le Vin. Tome 4.*]

1953: A black cover with the profile of Don Quixote in gold. *Sous le Signe de Don Quichotte* features eleven Neo-Cubism color plates by Leon Gischia (1903-1990)—painter, illustrator, ceramist, and designer of theatre scenes—with text describing the valiant adventures of the knight-errant. Gischia studied literature, archaeology and art history before he took up painting in 1923. He studied under Fernand Leger and developed a style that expressed bold composition and the use of decorative colors. Gischia's style of painting objects and subjects in geometrical patterns with vividly contrasting colors is beautifully expressed in Don Quixote's travaux in the 1953 catalog. Ornaments and graphics by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 40 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1954: A pink cover carries the title *Sous le Signe de Quelques Jolies Filles des Provinces de France*. Inside are seven full-page watercolors of young women in their native costumes, and eight color drawings of country scenes by Kees Van Dongen (1877-1966). Dutch by birth, Van Dongen arrived in Paris at the age of twenty and soon got caught up in the Fauvism movement that was characterized by vivid colors, free form, and resulting vibrant and decorative effects. He became the friend of the movement's leader, Henri Matisse, and with two prominent Fauvist artists who illustrated Nicolas special wine publications, Raoul Dufy and André Derain. Van Dongen was in his seventies when he painted the works that adorn the 1954 catalog, but the vibrant colors express his early Fauvism influences. His paintings, widely exhibited, include the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Design and layout by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 38 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1955: *Sous le Signe des "Still Life"* features a cover and seventeen color prints by André Marchand (1907-1990), painter, book illustrator, tapestry, ballet and stage set designer. During the course of his career, Marchand's artistic style underwent several changes. These paintings are representative of his 1950's style of flattened and abstracted shapes in washes of color. An index identifies each work. Marchand did a considerable amount of graphic work including the illustrations for André Gide's *Les Nourritures terrestres*. His works are in the collections of many museums including the Pompidou and the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris. Ornaments and typography are by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 36 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1956: Nineteen buoyant watercolor scenes by Roland Oudot (1897-1981) — painter, book illustrator, stage set designer, and designer of tapestries for the Gobelins and Aubusson factories — illustrate the cover and pages of *Sous le Signe L'Île de France*. Early in his career Oudot worked with Leon Bakst, painter of Russian ballet sets, and later as an interior decorator. By the 1930s, his artistic reputation was established, and he was being exhibited in Australia, the U.S., and European countries. Graphics by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 36 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1957: The cover of *Sous le Signe d'Une Petite Fille* shows a pretty young woman wearing a hat and summer attire. Constantin (Kostia) Terechkovitch's (1902-1978) seventeen watercolors record pleasant events in this upper-class woman's life from birth to marriage. Terechkovitch arrived in France with his family from Russia in 1907 and became a French citizen. Although he had a versatile range as a painter, Terechkovitch is probably remembered best as a portrait artist. His portraits of artist friends, such as Matisse, Utrillo, Vlaminck, Braque, Dufy, Derain, and Van Dongen, are well-known to museum patrons. He is widely owned by museums and private collectors. Graphics by Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 36 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1958: The cover of *Sous le Signe du Soleil* is adorned with the color portrait of a young woman, with vines and the mountains of Provence in the background. Roger Marcel Limouse's (1894-1990) eighteen vivid watercolors (eleven full-color plates) illustrate the catalog. The center pages form a picture of a mother and daughter looking from a balcony onto a scene of sailboats, mountains, and azure sky. The *Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville* in Paris owns several of Limouse's paintings. Graphic design by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 38 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1959: The children and Mexican scenes that Christian Hugues Caillard (1899-1985) — painter, engraver, designer, decorator, and illustrator — created to illustrate the cover and pages of *Sous le Signe de Mexique* reflect his reputation for painting in an imaginative and exotic style that captures the character of a locality. The page ornaments and typography are by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 46 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1960: The color paintings for *Sous le Signe des Antilles Françaises* are by Robert Humblot (1907-1962). Humblot was a member of a Parisian group of artists known as the Forces Nouvelle that took a position against avant-garde movements such as Impressionism and Abstraction, advocating that art should return to the principles of representative drawings while maintaining contact with the subject and nature. Humblot fulfills that mandate here by providing eighteen pages of watercolor scenes of the Antilles and its inhabitants. Design and layout by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 38 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1961: Georges Rohner (1913), a friend of Humblot and a member of the Forces Nouvelle movement, was opposed to abstract painting on the grounds that the abstract painter had lost touch with ordinary life. He was known for painting strongly constructed still lifes, and his cover art work and seventeen pages of firmly modeled color paintings in *Sous le Signe des Fruits de la Terre de France* reflect his painting style. Rohner's paintings were exhibited throughout the world, while he expressed his other artistic talents as cartoonist, illustrator, and designer of tapestries for the Aubusson works. His work is owned by the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris. Typography and graphics by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 38 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

1962: André Minaux (1923-1986), painter, book illustrator, lithographic printmaker, and sculptor, was known for thickly painted, expressive brush strokes in subdued colors to portray scenes of everyday life. In the 1960s Minaux's colors brightened, and his eleven oil paintings in *Sous le Signe de l'Été de la Saint-Martin* reflect this change: serene portraits, native scenes and still lifes painted in thick expressive colors. His works are exhibited at the Pompidou and London's Tate Gallery. Graphics by Alfred Latour. 9½" x 7¼", 34 pp., plastic spiral-bound.

LARGE FORMAT CATALOGS

1963: This begins the large format (11" x 8½") catalogs and the elimination of the spiral binding. Bernard Buffet's (1928-1999) watercolors on a bull-fighting theme for the 1963 *Liste des Grands Vins*

epitomizes his early 1960's painting style that employed the use of rich areas of red and blue coloring. Buffet achieved artistic success early, and he is widely exhibited throughout the world with works in the Pompidou and the Vatican. In 1963 the Musée Bernard Buffet, devoted entirely to his works, was opened in Japan and expanded in 1988. Graphic design by Alfred Latour. 11" x 8½", 34 pp.

1964: The Seven Major Sins (*Les Sept Péchés Capitaux*) provide the theme for Claude Schurr's (1921-1994) nine striking abstract paintings. Schurr also found outlets for his artistic talents as an illustrator and painter of designs for tapestries and mosaics. His works are in a number of French museums including the National Museum of Modern Art in Paris. The catalog contains an index of the paintings' titles. Graphics by Alfred Latour. 11" x 8½", 40 pp.

1965: This is the last catalog for which Alfred Latour served as the graphic designer. The cover and fourteen plates of buoyant underwater watercolor scenes, *Profunders Marines*, are by Roger Chapelain-Midy (1904-1992), painter, illustrator, and costume designer. Chapelain-Midy's works are in museums all over the world including the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and the National Museum of Modern Art, Paris. He was also an illustrator of fashionable literary works. 11" x 8½", 38 pp.

1966: Eleven vibrant watercolor circus scenes, *Gens du Voyage*, by Paul Guiramand (1926) — painter, sculptor, lithographer, and theatrical set designer — fill the covers and pages of this issue. A few black-and-white drawings round out the illustrations. The paintings' titles are indexed. Graphic design is by Jean Latour. 11" x 8½", 40 pp.

1967: The cover illustration of *La Chaleur du Terroir* is a vineyard scene. Maurice Louis Savin's (1894-1973) bold and earthy color paintings, and five line-drawings of outdoor scenes, occupy 19 of the catalog's 40 pages. Savin also earned a living as an engraver, medalist, and tapestry designer. His paintings are well-known to curators and private collectors. Graphics by Jean Latour. 11" x 8½".

1968: No catalog issued.

1969: Eve and the Serpent are featured on the cover of Bernard Lorjou's (1908-1986) *Le Paradis Terrestre*. Lorjou, who painted from childhood and was largely self-taught, was also a talented sculptor and engraver. He developed a "violently expressive style in which strong outlines stood out from a lighter background and contrasted with decorative elements

reminiscent of the world of the Hippies and the psychedelic." That style is strikingly evident in the twelve color-plates that carry out the forbidden fruit theme. Lorjou's paintings are widely collected. Design and layout by Jean Latour. 11" x 8½", 38 pp.

1970: French-born Maurice Ghigliion-Green's (1913) eight full-color paintings illustrating the cover and pages of the 1970 *Liste des Grands Vins* beautifully carry out the title's theme, *Les Saisons*. Ghigliion-Green's works have been widely exhibited in the United States, England, Switzerland and France. Graphic design by Jean Latour. 11" x 8½", 36 pp.

1971: The cover of *Des Alpilles à la Mer* is illustrated with an abstract blaze of colors that depict the Mistral. M.[aurice] E.[lie] Sarthou's (1911) bold abstract paintings occupy ten of the catalog's thirty-six pages, and continue the southern France theme. There is an index of the paintings' titles. Graphics by Jean Latour. 11" x 8½".

Le Génie du Vin

1972: *Liste des Grands Vins* was not published as an artist's illustrated catalog in 1972. It was, however, printed on plain white paper and placed as an insert in *Le Génie du Vin*, a special publication issued by Nicolas to commemorate its 150th (1822-1972) anniversary. The thirteen color paintings that occupy the cover and pages of this beautiful publication are by André Derain (1880-1954), painter, sculptor, illustrator, stage set designer, intellectual, and art collector. Success came early to Derain, a friend of Matisse, Georges Braque, Pablo Picasso, Maurice Vlaminck, and other famous artists, and his works are in museums around the world. Classical mythology occupied Derain throughout the 1930s, and these paintings, commissioned by Nicolas in the late thirties, have as themes mythology and wine. The paintings are titled: Jupiter; The Grapes and the Animals; Joy and Hope; The Sun; The Birth of Dionysus; The Abduction of Dionysus; The Grapes of Canaan; The Sleep of Silenus; Persian Tale; Saint Martin and the Beggar; Don Quixote; Rabelais; and Peace of the Heart. The author of the florid text that accompanies each painting is not identified. Why more than thirty years elapsed between the time the works were painted and their publication in 1972 is not known, but supposition allows two plausible explanations. Initially the publication may have been delayed by the commencement of the Second World War. After the liberation of France in 1945, Derain was branded a Nazi collaborator, and he was socially ostracized. Nicolas may have held up publishing Derain's works during his lifetime for fear of criticism, but eighteen years after his death,

Derain's artistic genius had out-lived his social stigma. The number of copies of the regular printing is not stated, but there was a limited edition of 300 copies, numbered 1 to 300. The colophon notes that *Le Génie du Vin* is dedicated "to the glory of the wines of France." 12½" x 10¼", [28] pp.

1973: Paris-born Raymond Guerrier's (1920) abstract color paintings illustrate the cover and ten pages of the 1973, and final, *Liste des Grands Vins Fins*. Guerrier's assertive abstract paintings are widely known to museum curators and private collectors. Design and layout by Jean Latour. 11"x 8½", 38 pp.

The above includes only Nicolas publications issued bound in book, booklet or catalog form, and it does not include one-, two- and four-page artist illustrated inserts.

Nicolas issued wine catalogs or brochures after 1973, but not with the *Liste des Grands Vins* title. The 1974 brochure was titled simply "Nicolas," and thereafter, "Nicolas Fins Bouteilles." These subsequent publications do not contain originally commissioned artwork. For example, the 1976 brochure contains seven Charles Martin illustrations reproduced from the 1928 *Monseigneur Le Vin* tome, and the 1977 brochure contains sections of a psychedelic-like graphic of the Nicolas porter created by A. M. Cassandre in 1935.

I have read in a book dealer's catalog that "the first list proper was issued in 1927." The first *Liste des Grands Vins Fins* was issued in the autumn of 1927, but it was dated 1928. If the book dealer is suggesting that the first *Liste des Grands Vins Fins* is dated 1927, I can only say that I have never seen it, or otherwise read about it, and I do not believe that it exists.

A NOTE ON THE SOURCES

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I wish to thank Ann Muhvich for help with some of the French translations, and the library staff at the Baltimore Museum of Art for their assistance.



[*Monseigneur Le Vin, Tome 3*]

ANNOUNCING THE PUBLICATION OF

Vinexlibris Tendrilii *The Wine Bookplates of* *The Wayward Tendrils*

The idea for this special, limited edition booklet began several years ago with Tendril Issac Oelgart and a members survey that queried their interest in wine-related bookplates, and in particular, their own. December 2000 dates the publication of this unique, tendril-ly produced twenty-page booklet, compiled and privately printed by "Isaak Buchlieber" at The Port Lover's Library. An engaging prefatory note by the compiler introduces the eleven following pages, each containing a tipped-in Wayward Tendril member original bookplate accompanied by a brief description written by the plate's proud owner. A select bibliography of wine bookplate literature concludes the text. *Vinexlibris Tendrilii*, printed xerographically on 80# Mohawk Satin paper and hand-sewn into 100# Curtis flannel covers, is strictly limited to 60 numbered copies. Copies #1-22 are reserved for the participants; #23-42 are for sale for the benefit of The Wayward Tendrils; #43-60 are for sale by The Port Lover's Library. Cost is \$25 (postpaid).

A COLLECTOR'S TREASURE!





*Nicolas
Goulet*

NICOLAS
FINE BOUTEILLES

[FROM: LISTE DES GRANDS VINS FINS, 1928]