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AUSTRALIAN WINE BOOKS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: A PERSONAL SELECTION OF THE TOP TWENTY

by

Valmai Hankel

[Although she would much rather be pursuing her research of the Australian outback wine pubs, our indefatigable wine librarian — now retired after forty-three years at the State Library of South Australia — has generously responded to your editor's request for a "follow-up" to her scholarly essay on, and checklist of, the early wine writers of Australia (See Vol.11, No.3 & No.4). — Ed.]



In nineteenth-century Australia, most Australian wine books were written by winegrowers for winegrowers. This was unlike England where wine book writers were mainly wine merchants or doctors. In Australia in the early twentieth century very few wine books were published at all, but this began to change especially in

the 1960s, when the current plethora of wine guides written for consumers began. Today, there are hordes of guides on what in the opinion of the writer are the best wines to drink, several on how wine is made, and a few histories; the comprehensive and authoritative history of the Australian wine industry is yet to be written. Collections of essays and contemplative books are few and far between.

This is a very personal and select list, to which anyone at all familiar with Australian wine books will doubtless make objections. All books by my chosen authors have not necessarily been included, mainly because I haven't time! I have selected books to which I keep returning. Most of them are out of print but occasionally turn up in Australian second-hand or antiquarian book-shops. I make no apologies for this choice, but as soon as I see it in print will doubtless think of something I should have included.

ALLEN, Max. *Red and white. Wine made simple.* Photography Adrian Lander. Sydney: New Holland, 1997. xii, 154 p. Illus.

Enthused over by James Halliday as "by far the most enjoyable basic guide to wine I have ever read, or am ever likely to read. Indeed it is one of the best books on wine of any description I have seen," this exuberant and personal look at wine from vine to cellar door is very Australian in its irreverence. Adrian Lander's unconventional photographs add to the book's appeal. It is followed by *Crush. The new Australian wine book* (2001), in similar vein. English-born Max Allen is probably Australia's most promising and innovative wine writer.

AEUCKENS, Annely; BELL, George; BISHOP, Geoffrey; and others. *Vineyard of the Empire. Early Barossa vignerons 1842-1939.* Adelaide: Australian Industrial Publishers, 1988. 256 p. Illus.

This scholarly but eminently readable and well-illustrated book looks at one of Australia's oldest and



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best-known winegrowing regions. It was one of the first to cover any Australian winegrowing region in

historical depth. Both the paperback and limited quarter-leather-bound editions are still available.

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND WINE INDUSTRY DIRECTORY. Adelaide: Winetitles. Annual.

Known as the bible of the industry, this comprehensive work summarizes developments and statistics for the year, has a detailed directory of wineries; lists of wine organizations, and much more. It is an essential reference work for anyone in the industry, rather than a collectors' item.

BISHOP, Geoffrey. *Australian winemaking. The Roseworthy influence. The contribution of Alan R. Hickinbotham and Roseworthy College to winemaking in Australia*. Hawthorndene, S.A.: Investigator Press, 1980. 344 p. Illus.

Roseworthy Agricultural College, some 50 kilometres north of Adelaide, was established in 1883 and was responsible for educating many of Australia's best known winegrowers. This was particularly so after the establishment in 1936 of a diploma course in oenology. Hickinbotham was a lecturer and wine researcher at Roseworthy from 1929 until 1948, and one of Australia's earliest wine chemists. While not aimed at the general reader the book is a most useful summary of technical developments in the Australian wine industry in an especially important period. Geoffrey Bishop has written or contributed to other books on mainly South Australian wine history.

DUNSTAN, David. *Better than Pommard! A history of wine in Victoria*. Kew, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1994. xviii, 266 p. Illus.

Beginning in the 1830s, Victoria's wine industry reached great heights towards the end of the century, when its wines were often compared favourably with the great wines of France. (So were wines from South Australia.) For various reasons winegrowing went into something of a decline, until the beginnings of a revival in the 1960s. Dunstan's book brings alive the people and events of those first hundred years or so. It covers the subject in far greater detail than *Journey to wine in Victoria* by W.S. Benwell, first published in 1960 and twice revised and enlarged: highly regarded by many, Benwell's book does not even appear in Dunstan's extensive bibliography, perhaps because it is light on history.

DUNSTAN, Keith. *Not a bad drop. Brown Brothers*. Kew, Vic.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1999. xi, 204 p. Illus.

This Victorian property has been in the hands of the one family since 1857, with its first vintage being

produced in 1889. Today it produces a range of high-quality wines, some of them made from grape varieties not yet fashionable in Australia. David Dunstan's father has written a most entertaining and handsomely produced history of the company that is likely to become a collectors' item.

EVANS, Len (comp.) *Australian and New Zealand complete book of wine*. Sydney: Paul Hamlyn, 1973. 528 p. Illus.

Published under similar titles over several years, this was the first attempt at an encyclopaedic look at the history and wines of the two countries. Although out-of-date it remains a useful source. Len Evans wrote probably the first regular columns on wine published nationally (*The Bulletin*, 1962), and certainly produced the first magazine for wine consumers (*The Wine Buyer*, 1968). His many books on wine include *Cellarmaster's guide to Australian wines* (1966), *Indulgences* (1980), and *Good Evans* ©.1981). His role in educating Australian consumers about wine, especially in an informed, non-pompous way, cannot be over-estimated. He is undoubtedly *le grand homme* of the Australian wine industry.

FORNACHON, John. *Bacterial spoilage of fortified wines*. Adelaide: Australian Wine Board, 1943. ix, 126 p. Illus.

_____. *Studies on the sherry flor*. Adelaide: Australian Wine Board, 1953. xiii, 146 p. Illus.

Foundation Director of the Australian Wine Research Institute in Adelaide, Fornachon exerted considerable influence as a wine microbiologist, not only in Australia but far beyond. His *Studies on the sherry flor* is still regarded as one of, if not the, best book on the subject. In addition to these two books he wrote numerous papers, and contributed to other books on wine science.

GLADSTONES, John. *Viticulture and environment. A study of the effects of environment on grape growing and wine qualities, with emphasis on present and future areas for growing winegrapes in Australia*. Adelaide: Winetitles, 1992. 310 p. Maps.

Western Australian agronomist, Gladstones, foresaw the potential of his state's Margaret River as a viticultural area. His landmark work has been compared to Darwin's *Origin of species* in its "similar attention to detail...precise but mesmerizing prose, and the gradual building towards broad conclusions new to the world."

HALLIDAY, James. *Wine atlas of Australia & New Zealand*. Sydney: HarperCollins, 1998. 416 p. Maps, Illus.

The doyen of contemporary Australian wine writers (having taken over from Len Evans), Halliday continues to maintain a prodigious output. He produces an amazing number of books, newspaper and magazine articles with the care and authority which are his hallmarks. His annual publication, *Australian & New Zealand wine companion*, is still regarded as the best of its kind in Australia, although younger writers such as Huon Hooke, Max Allen, Tim White (yet to do a book), Ben Canaider and Stuart Gregor write in a breezier style perhaps more suited to younger drinkers and readers. His *Atlas*, which looks to be inspired by Hugh Johnson's *Atlas*, gives details of wineries, reproduces some labels, has precise maps and beautiful photographs. The 1999 edition comes with an interactive wine companion disk.

ILAND, Patrick and GAGO, Peter. *Australian wine; from the vine to the glass*. Adelaide: Patrick Iland Wine Promotions, 1997. v, 206 p. Illus.

A clear, understandable and comprehensive introduction to the subject, written by a wine educator and winemaker, which needs updating.

JAMES, Walter. *Barrel and book. A winemaker's diary*. Decorations by Harold Freedman. Melbourne: Georgian House, 1949. 109 p. Illus.

This is the first of a series of beguiling, fetchingly-titled books which did a great deal to introduce people such as myself to both the literature of wine and to wine itself at a time when both received very little attention in Australia. James, himself a winegrower, wrote charmingly and wisely, and his books are just as readable today as when they were first published. Among other titles are *Nuts on wine* (1950), *The gadding vine* (1955), and *Antipasto* (1957). More serious but still witty are *Wine in Australia. A handbook* (1952, reprinted at least four times) – the first book “to tell something practical about the wines we drink in Australia, which of course are usually but not always Australian wines,” as James claimed; *What's what about wine. An Australian wine primer* (1953); and *A word-book of wine* (1959). *Barrel and book* and *Nuts on wine* were reprinted as *The bedside book of Australian wine* (1974). He still has no successor.

KERRIDGE, George and ANTCLIFF, Alan. *Wine grape varieties*. Rev. ed. Collingwood: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Office (CSIRO), 1999. 205 p. Illus.

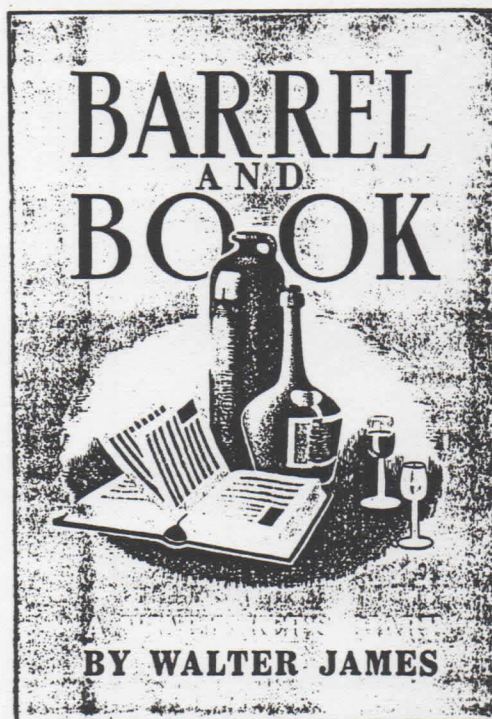
The standard work on Australian ampelography, with descriptions and coloured photographs of both traditional grape varieties and those new to Australia. Previously published under other similar titles.

LAKE, Max. *Classic wines of Australia*. Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1966. 134 p. Illus.

Surgeon, winegrower, and expert in analyzing the flavours of wine and food, Lake wrote this book for an Australian public increasingly thirsty for knowledge about what Australian wines to drink and why. Among his other books are *Vine and scalpel* (1967), a look at the many doctors who have been wine growers in Australia from the earliest times.

LINN, Rob. *Earth vine grape wine: Yalumba & its people*. Angaston, S.A.: Samuel Smith & Son, 1999. xiii, 274 p. Illus.

The Yalumba Wine Company in South Australia's Barossa Ranges celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1999. This lavishly produced, very readable and detailed book tells the story of the amazing Smith family and their exploits, not only in winegrowing. Like the Brown Brothers history it is likely to become a collectors' item.



MURPHY, Dan. *Dan Murphy's classification of Australian wine*. Melbourne: Macmillan, 1974. 216 p.

Claiming to have produced “the first comprehensive classification of Australian table wines and vineyards,” Murphy, a Melbourne wine merchant, grouped red and white Australian table wines by area and vineyard into “outstanding,” “very great” and “great.” The wines are today only memories for most of us, but at least some of the brand names still exist. At the

time of publication the book provoked much controversy. Murphy's first book was *The Australian wine guide* which, in 1966, together with the books of Len Evans and Max Lake, began the flood of Australian books for consumers.

OUSBACK, Anders (ed.) *The Australian wine browser*. Sydney: David Ell Press, 1979. 123 p. Illus.

Unique in Australian wine books, this anthology of articles written especially for this book ranges from the entertaining and hilarious to the serious. Contributors include Len Evans, Walter James, and James Halliday in an early appearance, as well as the cartoonist, Michael Leunig. [Ms. Hankel modestly does not mention her significant contributions. — Ed.] It remains Australia's only real wine anthology.

PORT, Jeni. *Crushed by women. Women and wine*. Melbourne: Arcadia, 2001.

I had to get a woman in somewhere! Although Australia has a rapidly-growing number of successful women winemakers, unlike the U.K. there are so far comparatively few women wine scribes. The aptly-named Jeni Port is probably the most successful. Her book looks at the role played by women in Australian wine, from Governor William Bligh's daughter, Mary Putland, in the early 1800s, to the present day.

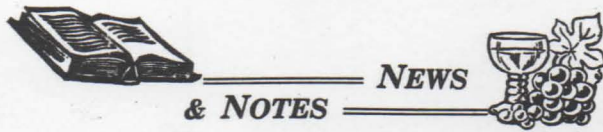
RANKINE, Bryce. *Making good wine: a manual of winemaking practice for Australia and New Zealand*. With an introduction by Maynard Amerine. South Melbourne: Sun Books, 1989. 374 p. Illus.

_____. *Tasting and enjoying wine: a guide to wine evaluation for Australia and New Zealand*. Adelaide: Winetitles, 1990. 120 p. Illus.

Rankine, a protégé of Fornachon, is himself a legendary teacher, researcher and wine scientist, as well as being the author of other books and a large number of research papers. These two books contain some technical information but are also aimed at consumers. His *Evolution of the modern Australian wine industry. A personal appraisal* (1996) looks at 45 years of the most dynamic growth in the industry.

WHITINGTON, Ernest. *The South Australian vintage 1903*. Adelaide: The Register, 1903. Facsimile edition, Adelaide: Friends of the State Library of South Australia, 1997. x, 74 p. Illus.

Written soon after the federation of the Australian colonies at a time when confidence in the South Australian wine industry was high, this is a wonderfully exuberant, informative and sometimes lyrical look at South Australia's wine personalities, vineyards, cellars, and the countryside.



VINTAGE ERROR!

Your editor tendrily requests all members to neatly change the date on the January issue masthead from 2001 to 2002 ... thank you.

MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

Please find, enclosed with this issue, the yearly updated roster of members with contact numbers and members' collecting interests. Keep your editor informed of subsequent changes!

SPECIAL BOOK OFFER!!

Spring cleaning reward! Tendril and wine historian, **Charles Sullivan**, has found a cache of forgotten, brand new copies of his 1982 book, *Like Modern Edens. Winegrowing in Santa Clara Valley and Santa Cruz Mountains 1798-1981*. Only 1,000 copies were printed. He is offering to Tendrils signed (or inscribed if you send him details) copies for \$20 each, postpaid. 107 Belvale Dr, Los Gatos, CA 95032.

A FINE TRIBUTE

Copy No.34 (of an edition of 60) of our privately printed booklet, *Vinexlibris Tendrilii: The Wine Bookplates of the Wayward Tendrils*, now graces the collection of bookplate books in the library of the Book Club of California, San Francisco, California.



The Board of Directors of
THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA
thanks you for your generous gift.
It is deeply appreciated.

Charles Taylor
The President

VIEUX PRESOIRS sans FRONTIÈRES

by Xavier Humbel is a fantastic book! The January *Tendrils* article, "From Wine Press to Printing Press" by **Allan Shields** prompted **Nina Wemyss** to send us information on this 1976 French production (Paris: Librairie Guenegaud, 269p.): "A wonderful book of presses, of a vinous nature, with great illustrations!"

SPECIAL THANKS

to **Isaac Oelgart** and his Port Lovers' Library for our facsimile reprint insert this issue!

**HARRY WAUGH (1904–2001):
In Memoriam**

[The “grandest old man of wine,” as lovingly described by Jancis Robinson, died 29 November 2001, in London. Respected British wine merchant, connoisseur, one of the first to appreciate and promote the wines of California, a founder of London’s Zinfandel Club and the Bordeaux Club, member of the Saintsbury Club, author of ten “wine travel diaries,” winner of the Wine Literary Award ... Harry Waugh has earned an entry in *The Oxford Companion to Wine*, and lives on in his wine writings. — Ed.]

A REMEMBRANCE OF HARRY WAUGH

by *Hugh Johnson*

I am trying to remember if I ever saw Harry Waugh frown. No, I can’t see it. His face in repose always wore a smile, and when he smiled in earnest you were looking at a picture of happiness.

I didn’t know Harry well enough to understand what gave him this angelic quality—and come to think of it I can’t think who, outside his family, did. He was serene. He was private. And he seemed to proceed through life in a state of innocence. Would Harry even be capable of plotting or deceiving? Not a chance. And a guile-free head rests easy on its pillow: Harry, from all accounts, slept like a cat, whatever the entertainment of the evening. Nor did he leave half-empty glasses or picked-over food. His unaffected appreciation of life’s good things lasted his whole life, and allowed him to enjoy them well into his 98th year.

But Harry the amazing survivor must not block the memory of a determined, decisive man who led the Bristol fine wine trade of his day. For thirty-five years or so from his joining Harveys of Bristol in 1945 his enthusiasms—punting strongly on the clarets of the early ’50s, preaching Pomerol, single-handedly showing Britain that Beaujolais was a pure wine to drink young, fresh and cool rather than an inferior blended burgundy, recognizing the quality and high promise of California’s pioneer Chardonnays and Cabernets (but finding them overpriced)—his enthusiasms permeated the Anglo-Saxon wine world, and so did his pupils and protégés, from Martin Bamford to Michael Broadbent.

Harvey’s one-quarter interest in Château Latour may not have been Harry’s unaided doing, but his work as a director, from 1962 until recently, was decisive for the First Growth. As a young journalist I had voiced doubts about the “suits” from England in this hallowed corner of the Médoc. When I became a director too, twenty-three years later, Harry had the last laugh.

The flavour of Harry’s enthusiasm is easy to catch. His Wine Diaries are the man himself—utterly unaffected, speaking as he finds (but tactfully; never rude). He always preferred blind tastings, and habitually gave scores out of twenty. (Fourteen was a very low mark.) He never tried to describe wines in the modern manner. Rather he recorded the kinds and degrees of pleasure they gave him, in classical terms that mean as much now as they ever did. He talks succinctly about people in a way that can faintly remind me of Noel Coward. “Monsieur Coche is a tall dark young man who likes to play the saxophone.”

Harry toured the United States tirelessly (as only he could), often for the Friends of Wine. Everybody learned from his talks, lectures, dinners and visits. Only Harry, in his innocence, returned home not a penny richer. He so neglected the business of earning, in fact, that for his 80th birthday his friends made a gesture towards rebuilding his depleted cellar.

Which is my favourite memory of this commandingly unaffected man? There are many of dining together. Many of wonderment after a car crash took away his sense of smell—the taster’s most vital weapon. He passed each wine to Prue to sniff for problems. Then bathed his palate in it and somehow produced an unerring judgement. In his last years he spoke little. At Bordeaux Club dinners he tasted, drank, and smilingly pointed to the wines he liked best—not always necessary, as those glasses would be empty.

But I carry one ten-year-old cameo indelibly in my mind. I was driving down Camden Road in London when a trim straight figure, almost boyish, standing at a bus stop looking away caught my eye. A young army officer? No, an old one.

**IN APPRECIATION OF
HARRY WAUGH’S WINE BOOKS**
by *Ron Unzelman*

Underline the text in a treasured wine book—who would do such a thing!? Well, we did when we were first learning, in a serious way, about wine in the late 1960s. Especially in Harry Waugh’s books, beginning with *Bacchus on the Wing* in 1966: his wine tasting notes for wines we had in our own wine cellar were quickly marked and noted. On page 62 of *Pick of the Bunch* (1970) we have written in ink(!) (but neatly!) “HEITZ” and underlined: “Cabernet Sauvignon 1968 — Martha’s Vineyard. This is going to be a winner.” (Harry was seldom wrong.) We eagerly awaited each volume of his Wine Diary series. At the time there were no more valuable guides. They remain enjoyable reading today.

THE BOOKS OF HARRY WAUGH:
*"...enthusiasm and honesty as catching
 as it is rare."*

1966 - *Bacchus on the Wing: A wine merchant's travelogue*. London: Wine & Spirit Publications. 8½ x 5½. 203 pp. Cloth, with dust jacket. [Wine Diary, Vol.1].

Illustrated, as are all of his Diaries, with black & white photographs of the author along his journeys.

1968 - *The Changing Face of Wine. An assessment of some current vintages*. London: Wine & Spirit Publications. 8½ x 5½. 109 pp. Cloth, with dust jacket. [Wine Diary, Vol.2] Reprinted, 1969; 3rd ed. 1970.

L. Boilly's 1825 lithograph, "La Dégustation" (owned by Harry Waugh), adorns the front dust jacket cover, as it would for all of Waugh's Diaries to follow. With this second Diary, Harry thoughtfully added a much-welcome Index.

1970 - *Pick of the Bunch. (Sequel to The Changing Face of Wine)*. London: Wine & Spirit Publications. 8½ x 5½. 237 pp. Cloth, with d.j. [Wine Diary, Vol.3]

1972 - *Diary of a Winetaster. Recent Tastings of French and California Wines*. NY: Quadrangle Books. 9 x 6. 228 pp. Cloth, with d.j. [Wine Diary, Vol.4]

1973 - *Winetaster's Choice. The Years of Hysteria: Tastings of French, California and German Wines*. NY: Quadrangle Books. 9 x 6. 208 pp. Cloth, with d.j. [Wine Diary, Vol.5]

With a frontispiece and drawings by Michael Broadbent.

1975 - *Harry Waugh's Wine Diary: Volume Six*. London: Christie Wine Publications. 9½ x 7½. 109 pp. Glossy card covers.

With a frontispiece black & white photograph of the author. Volumes 6 through 9, published by Christie's under the direction of Michael Broadbent, displayed a new, larger format, bound in stiff wrappers—described as "most attractive, with bountiful illustrations, clean-looking pages of clear type, quality paper and supple binding even in the so-called paperbacks" [Katie Bourke, *Wine*, February 1979].

1976 - *Harry Waugh's Wine Diary: Volume Seven*. London: Christie Wine Publications. 9½ x 7½. 132 pp. Glossy card covers.

With a frontispiece black & white photograph of the author.

1978 - *Harry Waugh's Wine Diary: Volume Eight: 1976-1978*. London: Christie's Wine Publications. 9½ x 7½. 164 pp. Glossy card covers.

With a frontispiece black & white photograph of the author.

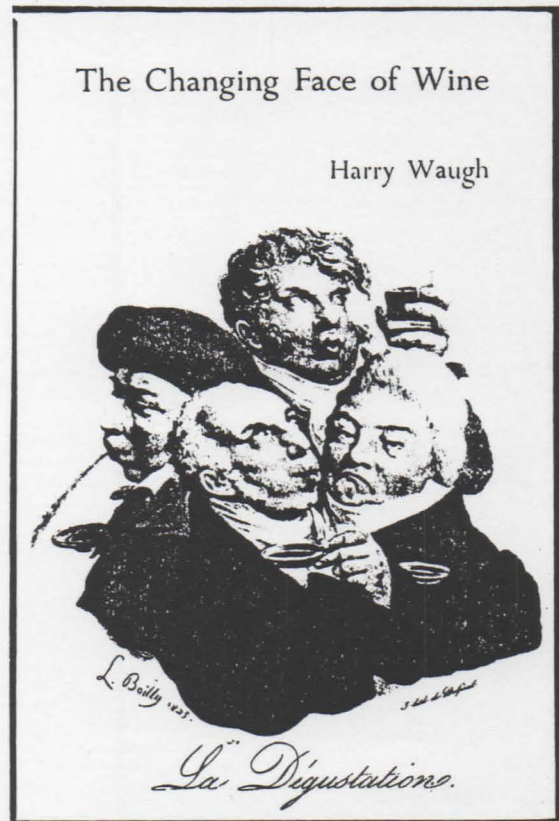
(1979) - *The Treasures of Bordeaux*. Produced by Les Amis de Vin. Printed by Howard G. Hoffman Printing Co., Washington, D.C. [x, 120 pp.] 11 x 8½. Spiral bound card wrappers.

1000 copies; signed by Waugh. Sixty châteaux, chosen from the 1855 classification, are presented—each with a short historical sketch and original tipped-in wine label, and many with a tipped-in postal card photograph of the château.

1981 - *Harry Waugh's Wine Diary: Volume Nine: 1978-1981*. London: Christie's Wine Publications. 9½ x 7½. 205 pp. Glossy card covers.

With a frontispiece black & white photograph: "La Dégustation" brought up to date," cleverly posing the author and three members of "the team from Jackson's, Piccadilly."

1987 - *Harry Waugh's Wine Diary, 1982-1986*. London: Christopher Helm, Ltd. / San Francisco: Wine Appreciation Guild. 8¾ x 5¾. 234 pp. Cloth, with the familiar-four on the dust jacket.



A TOAST TO HARRY WAUGH

by *Bill Dickerson*

Certain individuals stand above the crowd when they possess a formidable intellectual curiosity and a strong sensual appreciation co-mingled in their personality, and are additionally blessed when they treasure friendships, embrace humility and enjoy the good life. Just such an exemplary individual was Harry Waugh. Harry, whose friendships spanned continents, will be missed, but his memory is irreplaceable.

Like many others, I first met Harry through the world of wine, regrettably not during my year of medical fellowship in London, but a few years later in San Francisco.

It all began circuitously after a group of us had staged an extensive vertical tasting (serial vintages) of Château Latour. Having collected our impressions, and with thoughts of sharing them, I submitted an article entitled "Twenty Years of Latour" to a previously receptive English publisher. It was rejected as "featuring a single château might appear too commercial."

So I turned to an alternative English wine magazine, *Vintage*, detailing to the editor the reason for rejection, an unlikely cause of alarm to Harvey's, the publishers and one of the owners of Ch. Latour.

The editor, a Mr. Harry Waugh, wrote his thanks and also of the possibility of meeting in San Francisco during an upcoming trip to explore California vineyards. Hoping to return the hospitality extended in England and eager to meet, a dinner party was planned at our home for Mr. Waugh together with wine knowledgeable guests and California wines we thought exciting. The following day featured a drive to the Heitz Winery in Napa Valley where Harry met the remaining members of the Berkeley Wine & Food Society. Harry's gracious manner, his encyclopedic wine knowledge, acuity of taste, and genuine friendliness proved no less charming to our fellow wine friends from throughout the Bay Area who likewise became Harry's admirers and many friends.

As friends, we appreciate Harry for his generosity and good fellowship. As Californians, we owe great thanks for his strong advocacy of California wines to a vast European and American audience through his personal and written accounts of his travels and wine encounters. Additionally praiseworthy was Harry's presenting not just our New World wine editions of older continental wines, but also for introducing our single "American varietal" to Europeans through the Zinfandel Club he founded with Hugh Johnson.

So I ask you to join in a toast to Harry Waugh:
With this glass of Zinfandel, we bid you a heartfelt and fond farewell, dear friend.

ELISABETH WOODBURN COLLECTION ...

UPDATE

[In response to Tom Pinney's article on Elisabeth Woodburn last issue, we received the following letter from Thomas Camden, Director of Special Collections, Library of Virginia, Richmond, Virginia. — Ed.]

Dear Mrs. Unzelman,
My dear friend, Mary Gilliam of Charlottesville, Virginia, recently sent me a copy of Thomas Pinney's article from *Wayward Tendrils* regarding the Elisabeth Woodburn Collection. I am sorry Mr. Pinney had so much difficulty tracking the collection to the Library of Virginia and I am even more apologetic for the response he got once he tracked it here. Although the collection has not been maintained as a physical unit, it is still easily reconstructed as an intellectual unit through our online catalog. Anyone searching under Elisabeth Woodburn's name will be directed to a full catalog of the collection. A great many of the titles are housed in Special Collections due to their rarity, but other more common titles (government publications, etc.) are housed in our stacks area which is closed to the general public.

There has been a great deal of discussion in the library literature regarding the virtue of maintaining collections physically. The general consensus is that in creating "pockets" of material, accessibility is diminished. The Library of Virginia has a nice collection of material regarding wine and winemaking in addition to the Woodburn Collection and many of those titles are rare early pieces that reside in Special Collections. Should there be a reason to pull materials regarding wine together physically (for an exhibition or lecture), that can be accomplished with relative ease. In addition, we are actively building the collection by adding appropriate titles as they become available.

It is very important to us that Mr. Pinney and your readers understand the rationale behind cataloging and housing the collection in a standard, generally-accepted, manner. Please feel free to contact me should you have further questions or concerns about the Woodburn Collection or any of our holdings.

Sincerely yours...

[EDITOR NOTE: We have extended an invitation to the Library of Virginia to become a Wayward Tendril!]



A GLOBAL ODYSSEY Two Book Reviews

by

Bo Simons

[Bo Simons, a founding member of the Wayward Tendrils, is the librarian of the Sonoma County Wine Library in Healdsburg, CA.. He is a reference librarian extraordinaire, and has amassed a huge database of wine-related information at winefiles.org. Check it out! — Ed.]

The Global Encyclopedia of Wine. Peter Forrestal, ed. South San Francisco: Wine Appreciation Guild, 2001. 912 pages. \$75.



his major effort to make a truly worldwide compendium of the world's wine regions started in Australia. A huge, heavy, gaudy book with a CD-ROM inside, *The Global Encyclopedia of Wine* initially put me off, then charmed me, and now, with qualifications, satisfies me. The book came on a bit strong for me, and when I flipped to the section on Sonoma and found Rebecca Chappa's cursory history of Sonoma County wrong in several important ways and her selection of wineries baffling, I was put off the whole book for a while.

Then I decided I would pit the book against my favorite single reference book on wine, *The Oxford Companion to Wine* [2nd ed., 1999, edited by Jancis Robinson, Oxford University Press]. When I am asked a question, the first book I reach for, all other things being equal, has been *The Oxford Companion*. The *Oxford* has a similar heft (820 pages) and price tag (\$65). For the number conscious among us the *Oxford* comes across as a slightly better value at 7.93 cents per page than the *Global* at 8.22 cents per page, but of course the pages for the *Oxford* are slightly smaller. The *Oxford* is truly useful in that its alphabetic arrangement facilitates reference use. To look up any subject, you just need to know how to spell it. It is not necessary to go to the index, and then flip to the part that contains the subject sought, and then search that whole page, sometimes for only a brief mention of a topic.

Before I get too deeply into the comparison of these of these two resources, I should point out the limits of such a comparison. To some extent these two books are apples and oranges. *Global*, as the name implies, is geographic in its orientation. Bob Foster called it in his review in *California Grapevine* "*The World Atlas of Wine on steroids*," and it is that, an atlas. It does not treat, except in passing, topics

related to wine that are not geographic. Robert Parker is mentioned in *Global*, but only insofar as his criticism has affected the way wine is produced in the Rhône. Michael Broadbent does not appear in the *Global* index. The *Oxford Companion* is truly encyclopedic in both arrangement and scope. Parker and Broadbent both earn entries. Technical concepts like *sur lie*, rotary fermenters, and malolactic fermentation are beneath the radar of the *Global*.

Comparing the *Global* and the *Oxford* on what I would consider lesser known countries, the *Global* comes off surprisingly well. The second edition of the *Oxford* brags in the Preface that Ethiopia is among the eight new wine-producing countries included in the new edition. So I flip right to page 263, and I am confronted with a single sentence on Ethiopia: "Ethiopia produces quite respectable red wine and some white from vines grown at relatively high altitude." Why bother? *Global* gives a column, four middling paragraphs. One still does not get the number of wineries and acres under the vine, but one learns a bit of history ("Vines were grown and wines made for use in the Holy Communion service of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church since the Middle Ages ... Commercial wine production did not get underway until about 1900 when Italian and Greek industrialists stepped in."), and the names of growing regions (Awash River Valley, Gouder, Duken and Hollots). *Global* beats *Oxford* on Ethiopia. Another off-center wine region, Bulgaria, gets a solid two pages from both books, but the layout and approachability of the *Global* make it more useful, especially if you were thinking of actually buying and trying a bottle of Bulgarian wine. "Bulgarian wine tastes different these days," begins the *Global* entry. It goes on to explain how after the Communist yoke was lifted, fresher and fruitier wines succeeded the heavily oaked cabernets. The *Oxford* entry on Bulgaria is succinct and more informative, but rather dry and academic.

How does the *Global* treat the big areas, Bordeaux, Barolo, Porto, Jerez, Australia, South Africa and California? It covers them all fully and well in lively entries. You would expect a work called "global" to give proportional attention to the great areas, and it does. James Lawther conveys Bordeaux's history, geography, great and lesser wines, and its recent changes. Over thirty-five pages allow the coverage to go beyond the standout châteaux. The *Global* accords similar depth and breadth to other major areas, and is especially fine on Australia. When it comes to California, I found *Global* a bit cursory and in need of some fact checking. However, *Global's* coverage of the big areas on the whole stacks up evenly with the *Oxford*.

Now, tired of comparisons, I would like simply to consider the virtues and perceived flaws of the *Global*

Encyclopedia of Wine on its own. Its virtues are many. The writing strides purposefully, if at times, ploddingly. The information conveyed is first rate, the figures up-to-date. The impression of an area comes forth in big, bold strokes. Telling detail follows. Sometimes the information outshines the passive voice and intransitive verbs in which it is conveyed, but mainly the prose rides along, direct and supple. The photographs and graphic design stand out. Major areas begin sometimes with a dazzling two-page spread of a panoramic photograph bled to the edge of each large page. Clarity, and intelligent, sometimes elegant, layout and design predominate.

The quibbles I have with the *Global Encyclopedia* remain, finally, minor. The biggest has to do with arrangement, or perhaps, title. To me an encyclopedia is an alphabetic arrangement of subjects. The *Global Encyclopedia of Wine* is arranged geographically by country, beginning with France, going on through the European countries, then on to Africa, the Middle East and Asia, before turning, at page 500 (of its 912 pages) to the New World. The maps could be better: they are sometimes useful and sometimes not. I want a little more: in something as strongly concerned with place as this work, more maps and more detail in the maps is desired. Another critical comment I have may reflect a local prejudice. The selection of wineries in California is arbitrary. There's a good cross-section of large and small wineries, but anything that calls itself encyclopedic should have a few more than these. Another nit I have to pick concerns attribution. Sometimes authorship of the articles is revealed only at the end of the articles. Each piece should bear its authorship both in the table of contents, and at the beginning of the articles. I can think of no reason not to. The CD-ROM which accompanies the book disappoints. It seems to have neither the elegance of the book nor any compensating techno-dazzle to make up for the lack of the book's large and lush illustrations and layout.

But the whole book succeeds. These reservations can be addressed in further editions.

I was interested in how this magnificent work came to be. I got in touch with the *Global's* editor, Peter Forrestal, but it took a while for that busy man to get a reply to me. I planned to incorporate into my review his replies to my queries, but they stand on their own, and I append them in full.

Dear Bo:

So much for dawn's early light [a reference by Peter to a promise to get back to me by a certain Monday's dawn's early light]. I'm sorry about the delay in getting back to you. It's just been a frantic few days on the road. And after a day at home I'm in the air again.

Thanks for your queries. I'll try and be as comprehensive as I can.

I edited a book called *Discover Australia Wineries* for Random House in Australia in 1999. It was a tourist guide to Australia's wineries. The publishers of that, Gordon Cheers and Margaret Olds, left Random just after finishing it to start their own company called Global (with financial backing from Oracle in the UK).

They decided to do two books which they would package for publishing world wide. One of these was the *Encyclopedia of Wine*.

They asked me to take responsibility for the (350,000 word) text of the book but wanted it done quickly. I started in October 1999 and we had the text finished by May 2000.

My responsibility was for gathering a top class group of writers, designing the structure of the book and briefing the writers. As well as this, I negotiated with the writers so that their copy fitted my brief. So the vision for this book was mine, although the vision for doing a world encyclopedia of wine belongs to Gordon Cheers and Margaret Olds.

Assembling the team was a frantic affair as our timeline was so short. I had lots of contacts through my role as editor of *The Wine Magazine* (Australia). My policy with that magazine had been to use local writers (Italian based writers for stories on Italy, &c) and so I had a good network.

I also had contacts world wide, through the (UK based) Circle of Wine Writers. Through the membership list I contacted specialists in the various countries around the world. The Masters of Wine group were also most helpful.

In the USA, Bruce Cass and Mary Ewing Mulligan provided some contacts and Patrick Farrell put together the vital Californian team.

While we used many well-known wine writers, I wasn't afraid to use good, young writers. I was keen to keep a gender balance and believe that the final result (15 or so out of 36) was better than usual.

The book design was handled by the team at Global. They commissioned photographers and handled all that. Margaret Olds could probably give you better detail should you require it.

The book was completed within a year of commencement. Obviously the pace was furious and a large team was involved.

The book has been published in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, as well as the USA. It will be published in the UK and Europe later this year. The take-over of Konnemann who had the UK and European rights set back those editions. All editions are the same except for the covers and maybe the title pages.

Hope this has been useful. Ask if you would like to know more. Best regards, Peter.



Rhoda Stewart has produced a big intelligent, passionate book on Zinfandel, profiling the growers and winemakers from Dry Creek to Baja, from Amador County to San Luis Obispo. It is a fascinating and lively investigation of a versatile and mysterious grape upon

which much ink has been spilt already, a work which despite its flaws, illuminates and pleases.

Ms. Stewart, a professor of English at Napa Valley College and a journalist and photographer, has worked for *Practical Winery and Vineyard*, *Wine Spectator*, *Sauveur* and numerous other magazines. For this book she took her long love affair with Zinfandel and combined it with her long professional association covering the grape. She began her fling with Zin as she began a real-life romance with a man from an old Amador County winemaking family, adding a calypso-like frisson to her odyssey.

Ms. Stewart organizes her book into three main sections of different length. Part I, comprising about forty pages, covers the history of Zinfandel, the wine-making practices, the characteristics of a great vineyard, the definitions of some of the varying styles of Zinfandel, and the author's romance with Zinfandel. Part II is the main attraction: 380 pages devoted to following Zinfandel around its adopted terroir in California, both Alta and Baja. Separate chapters cover the Sierra foothill counties of Amador and El Dorado, the Lodi area of San Joaquin County, Contra Costa County, San Luis Obispo County, Southern California and South of the Border, Lake, Mendocino, Sonoma, and Napa counties, and a chapter on those Zin producers "within sight of San Francisco," comprising Ridge and Rosenblum. Part III consists of a short conclusion, three appendices ("A Perspective on Quercus," "Mayacamas, the ATF and Late Harvest Zinfandel," "Zinfandel in Australia") and a bibliography.

On the "Plus" side:

For about a decade and a half, as Zinfandel's popularity has mushroomed, Rhoda Stewart has been right in the thick of it, reporting for various magazines on the producers, their vines, and their wines. She brings us George Zeni, master of the great "Islands in the Sky" vineyards along the ridges of Mendocino County, and grouses about how Zinfandel producers have lost the true Zinfandel flavor in the last forty years as they let the grapes hang longer and make a sweeter, stronger, harsher wine. By the time we meet George, Ms. Stewart has prepared us so well

that even the least savvy among us know about the style changes in growing and making Zinfandel to which George refers. She also brings us dozens of other winemakers from all over the state who would challenge Old George. There are the "Rs": Ravenswood, Ridge, Rafanelli and Rosenblum. She shows us the Deavers, Leon Sobon, Greg Boeger and a host of others in the Sierra foothills. The Zinfandel producers remain an interesting and diverse batch of people. You get the feeling from the book that most of them, as they lived through and helped shape the Zinfandel explosion, changed, and their wines changed. More than several charted their winemaking from the old-time straightforward Italian Zinfandels to tannic beasts (some of which aged into beauties), to the subtler but still robust and fruit-forward wines currently favored.

You would expect an English professor to write well, and Professor Stewart does. Her prose is modulated and balanced, lithe, economical and firm. You would expect a wine journalist with Ms. Stewart's experience interviewing growers and winemakers to both know the right questions, and bring out her subjects deftly and appealingly. Again Ms. Stewart does not disappoint. She remains self-effacing, knowledgeable, respectful and direct. Like a wine-maker who knows he has good fruit, she stands back and lets her interviewees shine. Ms. Stewart is also an accomplished photographer, and the small black and white photographs that accompany the text and the eight pages of color photos about a third of the way into the book help one get a picture of the vineyards, growers and winemakers.

I have heard that originally Rhoda Stewart and Charles Sullivan were going to team up and do a Zinfandel book. At first I thought it too bad that did not happen, because Charles certainly could have added some historical perspective to this book. However Sullivan's book, the meat of which appeared in these *Wayward Tendrils* pages as a nine-part series of articles, may still be published. Two books are better than one. You cannot have too many books on Zinfandel.

On the "Minus" side:

Prof. Stewart slights the history of this grape. She covers, in about 15 pages, all the convoluted story of Agoston and Arpad Haraszthy, the entrance of Zinfandel as a table grape into Gold Rush-era California, the widespread planting in the 19th century, the mixed blessing of Prohibition, all the research of Charles Sullivan and Carole Meredith. It simply does not do justice to the subject. I sense the hand of her editor and publisher, Don Neel, here. Don takes the word "Practical" in his publication's title to exclude any serious, prolonged inquiry delving into the

cont'd., page 11

"What Wondrous Life"

Husmann Exhibit to Open in May

Tendril Linda Walker Stevens is project director for a traveling exhibit titled "*What Wondrous Life: The World of George Husmann.*" The exhibit will open in Hermann, Missouri, on May 5th. On June 1st it opens for a two-month exhibition at the Missouri State Museum in Jefferson City, followed by showings at the University of Missouri-Columbia in August, and at the Napa Valley Museum in Yountville, California, from October through December. It will be displayed at the 2003 Midwest Wine & Grape Conference, held at the Lake of the Ozarks, and is tentatively scheduled for a showing at the German-American Heritage Museum in Cincinnati sometime in 2003. Once its traveling days are over, the Husmann exhibit will reside at the Deutschheim State Historic Site in Hermann.

George Husmann (1827-1902) emigrated with his family from Meyenburg, Hanover, to Hermann, MO., in the late 1830s. He matured into one of America's most prominent nineteenth century grape and wine experts. The exhibit illustrates his life and career through 150 photographs, many of which were borrowed from the private family collection and are previously unpublished. Additionally, a collection of Husmann and early wine industry artifacts will be on display at select sites. The timing of the exhibit commemorates the centennial of Husmann's death.

In 1897 George Husmann wrote, "It has been the ruling object of my life to make American wines and to teach Americans to cast aside their prejudices." Throughout his fifty-year career, Husmann served as the conscience of the American wine industry and as its staunchest advocate. Wine writers and wine historians consider Husmann "Missouri's greatest gift," in recognition of his wholehearted participation in perfecting and promoting American wines and vines in every region of our developing young nation.

The Deutschheim Verein sponsored "*What Wondrous Life: The World of George Husmann.*" in partnership with the Missouri Humanities Council and with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the State of Missouri. The Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, the University of Missouri Department for Russian and German Studies, and the Missouri State Museum are co-sponsors, with additional support from the Max Kade Foundation, Inc., of New York, and the German American Heritage Society of St. Louis. *Wayward Tendrils* editor Gail Unzelman served as California consultant on the project.

A 36-page catalogue containing an overview of George Husmann's life and accomplishments, illus-


trated by thirty or forty images, will be available for sale at exhibition sites. Publication of the full-blown Husmann biography has been delayed by obligations incurred during the exhibit project, but watch for its debut in the near future.

Tendrils who know of a museum or organization in their area that would be interested in hosting the exhibit in 2003 may contact Linda Stevens at 573.486.3744, or email her at lws_vines@hotmail.com.



Simons, cont'd. from page 10 —

history of a grape, wine, or region. The bibliography is sadly and curiously short. Where is David Darlington's excellent *Angel's Visits*? Where's the interview with Joe Swan in the Vintner's Club book? The layout of the textblock on the page strikes me as a waste of paper. Each page has a three and one-eighth inch margin on the outside edge. If I am laying out \$60 for a book, I don't want to think I am paying about \$22.50 for blank space. The book has an index, but the index has huge holes. George Zeni gets pages in the text, but no entry in the index. Rod Berglund is in the book but not in the index.

Again, minor quibbles. The book is wonderful; pricey, but worth it. It certainly conveys the state of Zinfandel now and in the recent past, of distances traveled and the passage of time. Ms. Stewart calls her book an odyssey, and this picaresque, journeying character of the book is appealing and also limiting. The sense of narrative, of a story onto which can hang all the interviews and descriptions of different grape growers and winemakers, is lacking. The books about wine that really float my boat are the ones that tell me something about wine but also tell a story: Eunice Fried's *Burgundy* with its central focus on Becky Wasserman overcoming the misogyny and anti-Americanism as she became a negotiant; David Darlington's *Angel's Visits* with its quest for the solution to the Zinfandel origin mystery; and James Conroy's *Napa*, with the almost epic land-use struggle rising out of a soap opera of dirty linen. Perhaps, on reflection, this insistence on a strong narrative betrays a critical flaw on my part. I keep insisting on a narrative while Ms. Stewart has produced an epic. Like Odysseus she journeys and adventures, and the myth of arrival is finally that, a fiction. The destination is the journey. 



**BOOKS &
BOTTLES**

by
Fred McMillin

**CURNONSKY: The PRINCE of
GASTRONOMES**

The Book: *The Traditional Recipes of the Provinces of France*. Selected by Curnonsky. Translated and edited by Edwin Lavin. Paris: Productions de Paris, 1961.

- "Let your good Champagne age a little, but not too much: ten to twenty years."
- "A great Alsatian white wine, when it comes from well-ripened grapes and has been well-handled, gives a magnificent bottle ... [they] have the strongest bouquet of all French wines."
- "Pebbles, ruins, and vines, with the mistral blowing down the Rhône. Here, popes were once dictators, and the colors of their robes have been replaced by the colors of the wines, from the deepest purple to white ... the splendid Châteauneuf-du-Pape is king ... The Rosés are perfect, devilishly fruity."
- "Sound silver trumpets! Uncover yourself and kneel! His Majesty Montrachet ... the greatest white wine in the world. Full of fire, to ice it is a crime."
- "A good Pinot blanc Chardonnay Maconnais from Pouilly or Fuissé will keep thirty years ... nearby we drank white Mercurey with oysters ... full-bodied, with its bouquet of hawthorn blossoms."
- "The 'noblest wines of all' are born in Bordeaux ... The greatest wine I have ever had was a Château la Tour. It was fifty years old!"

Edwin Lavin, Commandeur de la Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin, wrote in 1961: "Curnonsky knew more about French food, wine, and their related histories than anyone did in the past hundred years."

WHO WAS CURNONSKY?

Maurice-Edmond Sailland (1872-1956) was born in Anjou. By the turn of the century, things Russian were in vogue. Hence, the journalist-chef-critic rechristened himself. He took the Latin for "why not"

— *cur non* — and added the Slavic "sky." His massive girth, wit, and memory led to such respect that in time he became known as the "Prince of Gastronomes."

Curnonsky was comprehensive. He was a French grammarian and a ghost-writer with Colette. With a friend in the early 1920s, he wrote the twenty-seven volume *La France Gastronomique*. In *Traditional Recipes* he writes of both the wines and typical dishes (with recipes) of twenty-nine districts of France.

It was September 1967 when I heard whoops of delight from my wife in a Parisian bookshop when she found this English translation of Curnonsky. We still treasure it ...

The Bottles: Here are half-a-dozen current California wines that probably would have pleased the Prince of Gastronomes, rated by my wine class.

1st — Beaulieu 1998 Tapestry. \$40. The best wine Curnonsky ever tasted was a blend of Bordeaux varieties. And so is the best wine of these selections.

2nd — Phelps 1996 Vin du Mistral (Syrah). \$30. Joseph Phelps produced California's first Syrah in 1974. The 1996 dazzled my tasters, who gave it a 90!

3rd — Domaine Brut Reserve. \$24. "Champagne is THE wine of France," wrote the sage of Anjou. Our latest winning California sparkler is produced from grapes half from Sonoma and half from Napa.

4th — Steele 1997 Goodchild Vineyard Chardonnay, Santa Barbara Co. \$27. It may not be Curnonsky's revered Montrachet, but Jed Steele's Chardonnay is quite memorable.

5th — Fogarty Gewürztraminer. \$13. Alsace's Gewürz also enjoys the cooler regions of California. Fogarty's Monterey version is a clear winner.

6th — Curnonsky appreciated fruity rosés. He would like Handley 2000 Rosé, Anderson Valley. \$12.



*A book is like a garden
carried in the pocket. — Anon.*



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SUPERFLUOUS NOVEL FACTS:

Or, I thought you would never ask!

by
Gail Unzelman



n our household, the new year often signals the time for “tidy-up-the-wine-library” chores. This year, we heeded the cries of the wine fiction shelves: bookplates and dust jacket covers were especially desired. While

thus playing with our wine novels, the following astounding facts jumped out, facts that must be shared, as haven’t we all wondered: how often are those vinous “key words” used in wine fiction titles? For instance:

VINEYARD(S): We find *The Vineyard* (Idwal Jones, 1942, and Barbara Delinski, 2000); *The Master of the Vineyard* (Myrtle Reed, 1910); *The Secret of the Vineyard* (Monica Heath, 1968); *Lucile of the Vineyard* (Nathan Sheppard, 1915); *Return to the Vineyard* (Mary Loos / Walter Duranty, 1945); *Gatsby’s Vineyard* (A.E. Maxwell, 1987); *Mario’s Vineyard* (Michael Legat, 1980); *Green Vineyards* (Helena Leigh, 1982).

VINTAGE is equally popular: *Vintage* (Anita Kornfeld, 1980); *The Vintage* (Ursula Keir, 1953, and Lloyd Pedersen, 1998); *The ’44 Vintage* (Anthony Price, 1978); *A Lethal Vintage* (Martin Sylvester, 1988); *Deadly Vintage* (Wm. Relling, 1995); *A Vintage Murder* (Janet Smith, 1995); *The Vintage Festival* (Sara Bard Field, 1920); *In Old Vintage Days* (Frona E. Colburn, 1937); *Vintage of a Murder* (N. dal Poggetto, 1974).

HARVEST seems to be the category for “juicy” novels: *Wild Harvest* (Stephen Longstreet, 1960); *Summer Harvest* (Madge Swindells, 1984); *Golden Harvest* (Hazeldell Werner, 1980); *Late Harvest* (Yvonne Whittal, 1982); *If This be My Harvest* (Lee Atkins, 1948).

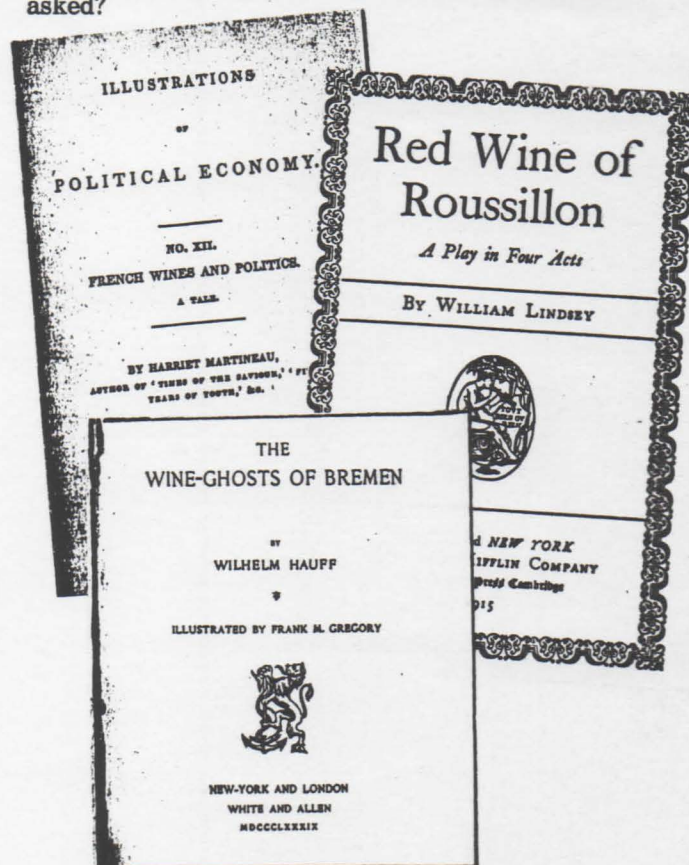
VINE(S): *The Vines of Amberfield* (Gina Stewart, 1993); *The Vines of Ferrara* (Carolyn Coker, 1986); *The Vines of Yarrabee* (Dorothy Eden, 1969); *Tangled Vines* (Janet Dailey, 1992); *Valley of the Vines* (Joy Packer, 1955); *Dying on the Vine* (Peter King, 1998); *In the Vine Country* (E.O. Somerville & Martin Ross, 1893).

WINE (of course the most popular): *The Wine Widow* (Tessa Barclay, 1986); *The Wine Princes* (Margaret Mackay, 1958); *The Wine-Makers* (Jack Bickham,

1977); *The Wine-Ghosts of Bremen* (Wilhelm Hauff, 1889); *The Wine Cellar* (Edw. Bonetti, 1977); *The Wine Room Murder* (Stanley Vestal, 1935); *Wine of the Generals* (R. Page Jones, 1978); *Wine of Good Hope* (David Rame, 1939); *Red Wine of Roussillon* (Wm. Lindsey, 1915); *Napa Wine*, (Robert Louis Stevenson, 1924 & others); *First Wine* (Jack Dunphy, 1983); *The Lucifer Wine* (Irma Walker, 1977); *Blood Red Wine* (Laurence Delaney, 1981); *Strong Wine Red as Blood* (Robert Daley, 1975); *Blood & Wine* (Penny Colvin, 1989); *Mr. Weston’s Good Wine* (T.F. Powys, 1927); *French Wines and Politics. A Tale* (Harriet Martineau, 1833); *A Taste of Wine* (Vanessa Pryor, 1982); *To Taste the Wine* (Fern Michaels, 1987); *A Strange Case of Wine* (Erica Platter, 1993); *Wine with a Stranger* (Louise Peattie, 1932); *The Man Who Made Wine* (J.M. Scott, 1953); *Dancing Imps of the Wine* (Angelo, 1880); *Mr. Clerihew, Wine Merchant* (H. Warner Allen, 1933); *Maigret and the Wine Merchant* (Georges Simenon, 1971).

GRAPE(S): Interestingly, we know and have only three, two of which are children’s stories: *The Bunch of Grapes* (Aunt Laura, 1863) and *The Grapes Grow Sweet* (Lynn Tuft, 1996); *The Brotherhood of the Grape* (John Fante, 1977).

Of some 140 wine fiction titles in our library, 59 contain the catchy words. Now, aren’t you happy you asked?



A LUST FOR THE LADY DE COVERLY

by
Allan Shields

[CONCLUSION]

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF THE VINE



From 1890 on, the Thompson Seedless, gradually at first, then by an explosion, became the single most popular grape planted in California and probably in the world, in the 20th century. In her study in 1931, Edith Meyer found that 95% of raisin vines were

planted in the San Joaquin Valley, with an equally high percentage of these made up of the Thompson Seedless grape. She goes on to say, "We have no positive proof as to who produced the first commercial raisins in the state, but in 1863 raisins were exhibited at the [California] State fair by Dr. J. Strentzel. The only grape that had been dried successfully up to that time was the White Muscat of Alexandria."¹

By 1872, as we have seen, Francis Eisen had planted a pioneering vineyard in Fresno, and soon afterward began experimenting with raisin varieties, such as Muscat of Alexandria, Muscat Gordo Blanco, and Malaga, experimenting for the climate of the San Joaquin Valley, and discovering in the process that the Fresno area was ideal for growing raisin grapes. Only slowly, at first, did the Thompson Seedless (Sultanina) become popular, due in no small measure to the business efforts of Onstott and Stabler. It was the quality of being seedless that brought a kind of planting frenzy of the grape, but its versatility soon became apparent, for it could be used as a shippable table grape, for juice, canned fruit, varietal wine or wine supplement, for brandies. From roughly 1900 to 1915 the acreage of Thompson Seedless burgeoned.

In an article in 1985, Carol Withington states that John Paxton Onstott did more than propagate and grow the Thompson Seedless in Yuba-Sutter Counties. "By 1882, Onstott had also established nurseries in Fresno and Los Angeles to propagate the grape. He supplied growers in the San Joaquin Valley and in Southern California with Thompson Seedless roots."² (Ernest Sowell states it was about 1890.)³

John P. Onstott was not alone in the promising business of propagating the Thompson Seedless. In the Yuba-Sutter counties, the Harter Brothers and the Stabler family planted well over one thousand acres before 1892, but because of greater profits from stone fruit and other crops, and especially due to the grape scourge of phylloxera, acreage of the Thompson Seed-

less in the Yuba-Sutter counties dwindled rapidly.

THE 21ST CENTURY

Unfortunately, in 2001, a towering surfeit of the Thompson Seedless crop has brought about a sharp decline in the price of raisins; bumper crops on too great an acreage have greatly exceeded demand. Some growers believe, with evidence, that a free market for imported grapes from South American countries, such as Chile, has exacerbated the glut—and even displaced the market in the United States for California grapes. The success of the Thompson Seedless industry in the U. S. is once more facing a serious challenge in the marketplace. Many small farmers are finding it impossible to remain on their land, when costs of equipment, fertilizers, labor, water, and electricity have all risen to that proverbial point of "no return" (or no returns) on the investment. Unlike diversified farming, vineyardists cannot simply yank out 100-year-old vines (or younger, for that matter) and start raising almonds or cotton or some other crop needing years to develop. In Fresno county in 2001 (summer), a lot of acreage of Thompson Seedless is being left on the vines, going unpicked, languishing for buyers, wasted, acreage listed for sale in increasing numbers, signaling family tragedies, or the fruit being sold to the huge wineries for salvage prices.

"We have succeeded in growing ourselves out of business."

Doris and Walter Halemeier are victims of cancelled contracts for their Thompson Seedless grapes this year, a cancellation for which there is no remedy. In their case, it is no immediate disaster. Because their security is the result of a long family history of farming success, they are not hurt as much as some of their neighbors; they are, however, unhappy with the clouded future for the Halemeier Vineyards on South Armstrong Avenue in Fresno County.

Doris is a fourth generation farmer in California, originally from Clarksburg, twenty-five miles south of Sacramento. Her family arrived in California in 1848. For forty years, in Fresno County, she was a valued teacher in the schools. When she and Walter cleared a part of their vineyard to build a new home, it was Doris who drove the tractor to pull out vines, while Walter manhandled the unwilling chains.

Walter was born in 1918 and was raised on their present place in southeast Fresno County. His grandfather arrived in the Fresno area in 1886, emigrating from Wallenbruck, Germany. In 1912, Walter's father, August, planted thirty acres of Thompson Seedless vines which are still producing. Over the years, on expanded acreage, the family planted other varieties: Carignan, Malaga, Muscat Alexandria, Grenache, Malvoisie, Sultana. Encroach-

ment on their ranch by developers has proven to be an uncontrollable force they have been unable to meet successfully. By selling acreage sections of their land contiguous to the developments, they have become financially secure, managing to hold onto enough acreage to prevent a total takeover. The cost in lost heritage for their descendants cannot, of course, be folded into the loss. That is simply a given.

Doris and Walter raised two daughters, Elizabeth and Christine. Elizabeth and her husband farm in the Sanger area nearby, making her a fifth generation California farmer.

For two seasons, the Thompson Seedless crop was bought under contract by a firm in Oregon, whose business it is to make sweet juices used in various other products, an arrangement Doris and Walter welcomed, for they were relieved entirely of the labor of picking and shipping. Unfortunately, the beneficial contract was not renewed for 2001, the reason given being that the firm was able to buy Chilean "white grapes," pears and apples for less money. As a result, the Halemeier Vineyards are placed in a severely disadvantaged financial position this year. What can be done with fifty acres, four-hundred-plus tons of high quality, fast-ripening grapes when no one wants to buy them?

Just down the road from the Halemeiers, Walter Cucuk raises eight varieties of wine grapes, including Sirah, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon, and Ruby Cabernet, plus ninety acres of Thompson Seedless. Walter can trace his Yugoslavian family roots back 400 years. His father, Vido, arrived in Fresno County in 1913 at the age of 13, helping to plant some of the original vines of Thompson Seedless. Walter was born in 1932 "right over there beyond those trees" near his present home and never found a good reason to leave. Like the Halemeiers, Walter is watching the slow demise of local farming, a degradation he believes is nationwide. This year, his Thompson Seedless grapes were sold at a new low price at the huge local winery: \$75/ton. In 2000, the price was only \$125, down from 1999's price of \$225. "Just drive along any road here and look at all the Thompsons. We have succeeded in growing ourselves out of business. Only the large corporations—agribusinesses—can succeed now."

Walter also showed us new grape varieties, which today are able to produce enormous crops per vine, as a result of horticultural experimentation. Such breeding success only hastens the eventual failure of the small farmer. With his neighbors, Walter and his school teacher wife realize the commercial value of their property for development is so great they could never afford to continue farming. Selling the land becomes a hard-headed, business decision they must eventually face, however reluctantly.

■ ■ ■

IN SUMMARY

Through most of his adult life, George Thompson was intent on preserving the name, Thompson Seedless, for his father's vine. From 1873 to 1910, he continued his personal campaign to preserve the name, and in the face of some strong criticism in the national and local press. By 1915, at the age of 76, he continued his campaign as spokesman for the Thompson Seedless and for Sutter County in San Francisco at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. When, in 1888, John Paxton Onstott, his friendly competitor in the propagation of the vine, offered the motion before the Sutter County Horticultural Society to give their imprimatur to the name, Thompson's Seedless, William and George Thompson both felt honored, though George deferred to his father as the senior "discoverer." About 1910, a farmer or nurseryman in Tulare County (?) sought to be given credit for engineering the vine, prompting George to defend their title, which he did successfully. By 1915, the name and the vine were firmly established in California, and soon to be recognized throughout the world as the Thompson Seedless (in California), synonymous with many other names for the same vine and grape.

To this day, there is the serious question of whether the name, Thompson Seedless, has been legally and formally recognized in California, where varietal names have long been the responsibility of the California State Agriculture Department through its official agency.

In retrospect, it appears that William Thompson was an accidental hero for being the source for the first Sultanina vine to be recognized in California and from which subsequent cultivars stem. No one was more surprised about the development of the vine than William Thompson, even seemingly unconcerned, at least compared with his son. It seems apparent that he would have been pleased just to see it happen, for it was he who happily shared his Midas-tainted vine with the Harters, Stablers, and especially, John Paxton Onstott.⁴

UNDOCUMENTED CONCLUSIONS OF THE AUTHOR

- William Thompson did not order three cuttings of the Lady de Coverly vine; he did receive three from Ellwanger & Barry.
- The three cuttings were tagged and named by Ellwanger & Barry, and they did request information on how the vine flourished in California. (George Thompson could never report his findings to Ellwanger & Barry using the pseudonym, Thompson Seedless because it would have undermined his personal campaign to establish the name Thompson Seedless.)
- George Thompson, from the start in 1872 suppressed the knowledge about the Lady de Coverly,

especially after William Thompson recognized the fruit in 1875. George grew to believe his claim that the three cultivars were originally "unclassified."

■ At the Marysville Fair in 1875, when George hesitated to use the known name of the vine, the Clerk simply called it "Thompson's Seedless," for identification. This was an historic moment gone awry, for had George named it the Lady de Coverly to the Fair clerk, that name might have become the one used worldwide for the California vine, at least. Instead, Thompson Seedless became just another synonym for Sultanina.

■ George Thompson invented the fiction that the three cuttings were unclassified, in his later years, to justify the Thompson Seedless name.

■ It is doubtful that George Thompson ever actually wrote to Ellwanger and Barry regarding the source of the grape, for he would have had to make reference to the Lady de Coverly, revealing his misguided campaign.

■ William Thompson is an accidental hero who blundered into "discovering" the Thompson Seedless only because the vine itself thrust itself bodily onto him. He certainly did virtually nothing to "engineer" the vine. "History" fell into his lap all unbidden.

■ George Thompson was absolutely denied his patented new variety, because it was not a new variety.

■ John Paxton Onstott deserves all the credit for planting, propagating, and distributing the Thompson Seedless vine. In a sense, John Paxton Onstott is the unsung hero in the saga of the vine, not William Thompson.

■ There is classic irony in the fact that William Thompson was an innocent bystander whose name became famous, while George Thompson, who truly lusted for recognition through the vine, is no longer identified with the grape, except in a narrow circle, such as his descendants.

**NOTE: WILL DNA TESTING
SETTLE THE NAMING OF VINES?**

In 2001, there is really no scientific problem about the synonymy between Thompson Seedless and Sultanina. That issue has been settled decades ago, but in 1875, for both horticulturists and farming empirics (to use Aristotle's term) like William and George Thompson and John P. Onstott, men who were only starting to become proficient vineyardists, let alone proficient ampelographers (a term that was likely foreign to them), the identity of the Lady de Coverly, Thompson Seedless, and Sultanina, not to neglect the close relative, Sultana, was a puzzle. Amateur ampelography, and vested business interests, bred many barnyard and kitchen table disputes in the late 1800s, disputes that can now be settled by more objective genetic studies.

Carole Meredith, in a brief article with a long title, "North American Geneticists Untangle the Vine Variety Web," argues that advances in DNA profiling of grapevines have already shown the eventual successes of identification of varieties and species that will survive any possible argument from cumbersome ampelographical data. Studies already completed have promised more clarification of varieties and their sources to come. Research in various countries continues.⁵

"These studies can be expected to converge eventually to produce a family tree of sorts that will include most of the major varieties. We can look forward to an increasingly clear picture of the ancient migrations and couplings that gave us the classic grapes we so appreciate today."⁶

NOTES

1. Meyer, *Development of the California Raisin Industry in Fresno County*, 1931, p.5. [What she seems not to have known is that Dr. John Strentzel was the father-in-law of naturalist John Muir, no mean horticulturist himself. Muir inherited Strentzel's fruit growing business, managing it successfully by sales in the Bay Area, especially.]

2. Carol Withington, "Yuba City Wanderings: Thompson Seedless Grape Feature of 1875 State Fair," 1985, p.2.

3. Ernest E. Sowell, *John Paxton Onstott (1841-1914): Pioneer Developer of California's Thompson Seedless Grape and Raisin Industry*, 1960.

4. Sowell, *John Paxton Onstott (1841-1914)*. Sowell (1879-1967), a son-in-law of Onstott, summarizes his view of the relationship between William and George Thompson and John Onstott: "While to William Thompson and his son George goes the credit for having introduced the Thompson Seedless Grape into California, it is to another man, John Paxton Onstott, Sr. of Yuba City, California, that the credit goes for introducing the Thompson Seedless Grapes and Raisins to the United States!" Paxton, active as a publicist for the grape, was awarded a World's Fair Medal in Chicago in 1893 for his exhibit.

5. See Bruce Cass, *The Oxford Companion to the Wines of North America*, 2000, pp.57-58.

6. Cass, p.58.



CHRONOLOGY OF THE THOMPSON SEEDLESS VINE

1816 - William Thompson is born on September 26 in Wistow, Yorkshire, England.

1818 - Ann Marie Whiteley [Thompson] is born Sept 12 in York.

1839 - George Thompson, son of William and Ann Marie, is born Sept 4 in Selby, Yorkshire. Two other sons, William and Thomas, born later in Wistow.

CHRONOLOGY, *cont.d* —

- 1847 – Gustav Eisen is born in Stockholm, Sweden.
- 1850 – Francis Eisen becomes the first vineyardist in Fresno County, California.
- 1851 – Wm. Thompson family leaves Wistow to settle for 12 years in Cacoupin Co., IL., to farm tobacco.
- 1863 – Wm. Thompson family arrives in Marysville, California, on August 25. From 1863–1875 the family farms with diverse crops and stock.
- 1872 – Wm. Thompson receives 15 different varieties of grapes he has ordered from Ellwanger & Barry nursery, finds three cultivars E & B has added to his order without charge (the Lady de Coverly?). William grafts the three cultivars onto his own rootstock; only one vine survives.
- 1875 – Single Thompson Seedless vine produces about 50 pounds of excellent grapes, which are displayed in the Marysville Fair as “Thompson Seedless.”
- 1875-1876 – Wm. Thompson freely gives cultivars of his wonder grape to friends, including John P. Onstott, the Harters, and Stablers—over the objections of son George, who believes the grape to be a new variety.
- 1882 – John P. Onstott establishes nurseries in Fresno and Los Angeles, specializing in Thompson Seedless rooted stock.
- 1888 – John P. Onstott, in a meeting of the Sutter County Horticultural Society, in Yuba City, makes the motion to name Thompson’s grape the “Thompson’s Seedless.” The motion passes unanimously.
- 1890 – Gustav Eisen’s book, *The Raisin Industry*, is published.
- 1892 – George and Wm. Thompson try to get information from Ellwanger & Barry about the source of their vine, without success.
Anne Whiteley Thompson dies June 12.
- 1898 – William Thompson dies February 25.
- 1911 – George Thompson publishes an affidavit regarding the “true origin” of the Thompson Seedless grape in the Daily Appeal, Yuba City(?).
- 1915 – George Thompson and his wife, Sarah Burgett Thompson, become Sutter County spokesmen for the Thompson Seedless grape and Sutter County at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in San Francisco.
- 1928 – Sarah Ann Burgett Thompson dies.
- 1934 – George Thompson dies September 17.
- 1940 – Gustav Eisen dies.
- 1980 – On September 12 a memorial plaque to William Thompson and the Thompson Seedless grape in California is dedicated as Historical Landmark #929 on California State Highway #20, located 2.5 miles west of Sutter.

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Walter Cucuk, vineyardist, shared his rich experience with Thompson Seedless, and provided delicious bunches of other grapes he is tending.

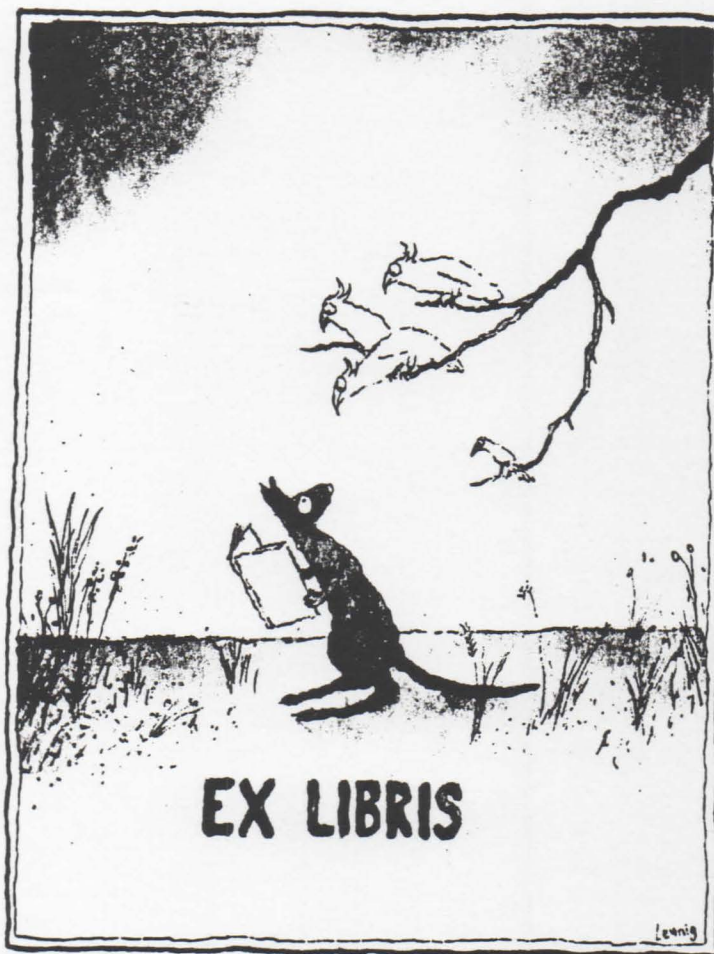
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[Allan Shields, Emeritus Professor of Philosophy, California State University - San Diego, is a man of many talents and genuine loves: the great outdoors, animals, music, wine, history. All have led to published and still un-published books, plus numerous articles and essays. Here's a sampling of his recent writings: *The Tragedy of Tenaya: A Yosemite Indian Story*, 1992; *A Yosemite Adventure in 1863*, 1992; *What Animals Taught Me*, 1994; *The Spirit of Rin-Tin-Tin*, 2001; *Tuffy, An Angel Hid in a Cloud*, 1994; *Wild Bill Neely and the Pagan Brothers' Golden Goat Winery*, 1992. His contributions to the *Tendrils Newsletter/Quarterly* have been significant, and much appreciated. At age 82, his pen has slowed down very little. A toast from the Tendrils!]



**PRE-PUBLICATION
ANNOUNCEMENT
OF THE MUCH-AWAITED
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[From *The Australian Wine Browser* — See Hankel, p.4]