WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY

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U.C. GRAPES AND WINE:
A Discourse on the Institution of Wine Research in California, With Reflections on the Early Workers...

by *Charles L. Sullivan*

[*To inaugurate our 19th year, the WTQ presents the second installment of Charles Sullivan's in-depth study on the founding fathers of the viticultural school of the University of California. In this series, covering the period 1868 to 1918, these industrious, pioneer winemen–Hilgard, Bioletti, Twight, Wickson, et al–and their many contributions to wine and its literature will be reviewed.* — Ed.]

Part II: Phylloxera

The year from which real progress can be traced in Professor Eugene Hilgard's program for viticultural research at the University is 1880. In April the governor signed legislation that made it the public policy of the State to support research in winemaking and viticulture and appropriated monies to pay for it. The chief motivation and concern behind this legislation was the threat to the State's vineyards from the phylloxera root louse.

The Viticultural Commission and The University

As more and more Sonoma vineyards fell to the pest, and after Professor Hilgard announced he had found phylloxera in lower Napa Valley, a concerted effort, led by the State Agricultural Society and the State Vinicultural Society, was made to pass this bill. The central idea of the bill was to create a State body to survey the situation, collect statistics, and establish and enforce quarantines. This State body would also serve an educational function: collect and make available viticultural information and provide annual lectures in each of the seven districts established by the new law. Thus was created the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, usually termed the State Viticultural Commission.

Hilgard was instrumental in pushing for this legislation. He testified at length, both supporting the bill and helping to educate the senators on matters viticultural. His special interest lay in the fact that the bill would require the University "to provide for special instruction ... in the arts and sciences pertaining to viticulture ... fermentation, distillation ... and the management of cellars." The Professor of Agriculture was to conduct surveys and "to make analyses of soils, wines, brandies, and grapes" on "proper request of citizens of the State." The University would print and distribute his reports. In his testimony Hilgard promised to conduct fermentation experiments, to analyze potential vineyard soils, to work for the planting of better wine grape varieties, and to explore methods of fighting the phylloxera.

Thus was created a means for establishing a special section in the University's College of Agriculture that would eventually become world renowned, the subject of this historical inquiry.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- RECENT FINDS by Christopher Fielden
- YVOR WINTERS' POEM by T. Pinney
- BOOKS & BOTTLES by Fred McMillin
- BOOK REVIEWS by Cattell, Brown, & Foster
- PINNEY & SAINTSBURY by Bo Simons
- NEWS & NOTES....and MORE!!

The Viticultural Commission came primarily from the mind of Charles A. Wetmore, its first CEO. The valedictorian of the 1868 class of the College of California, he had been something of a gadfly in several areas of endeavor prior to his taking over this post. But he had begun writing about wine and winegrowing in 1874, mostly newspaper articles, and by 1878 was considered by many to be something of an expert in this field. He had travelled widely in the wine country of Europe and was well acquainted with most of the leading producers of California wine. As yet, however, he did not have any practical experience in winegrowing.

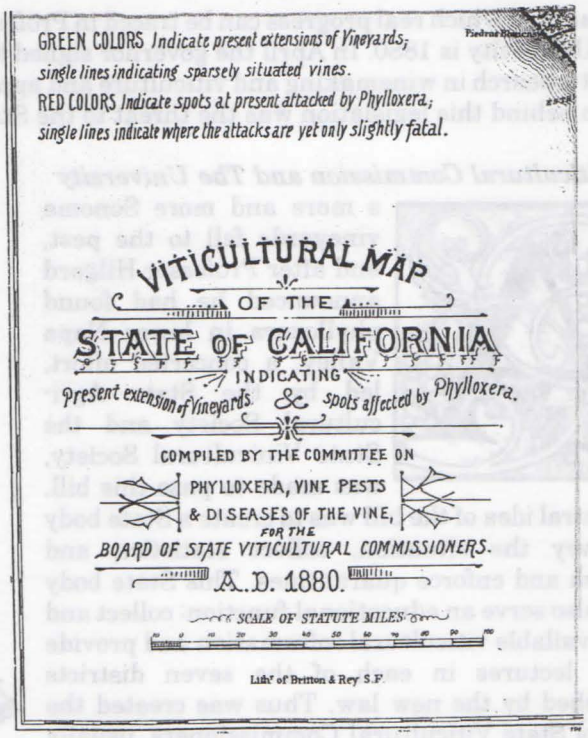
The legislature appropriated $4,000 for the work of Wetmore's Board. Hilgard received $3,000. It was generally understood by all involved that he and Wetmore would cooperate in their anti-phylloxera work.

The times had changed in California since 1876, when the first attempt to pass such legislation was unsuccessful. The fortunes of the State's tiny wine industry were looking up. The great national economic depression, triggered by the Panic of 1873, was obviously coming to an end. By 1878, investment in vineyard expansion was the order of the day in California. And leaders like Hilgard and Wetmore understood that the investors' new vineyard land had to be protected.

The first step was to discover the extent of the infestation. Hilgard met with Wetmore and the rest of the Board on April 23, four days after the governor signed the bill. All agreed that the two men would get together and select someone to survey conditions throughout the State. Hilgard had a candidate at Berkeley, Frederick W. Morse, a recent graduate who was an assistant in the chemical section of the agriculture laboratory. Wetmore agreed, and Morse went straight to work, now officially "Assistant in Charge of the Viticultural Laboratory of the University." This appears to be the first official recognition of a discrete viticultural entity in the College of Agriculture.

Morse proved to be an excellent choice. In the next months he scoured the state and came up with findings that Hilgard was able to include in his first report to the Regents and which Wetmore used in the Board's first Report (published in 1881). Included in each was Morse's map of California, which gave a graphic picture of the phylloxera's spread. Morse found that Sonoma was suffering more than generally thought. He also found vineyards in Napa, Solano and Yolo counties with infestations. A short while later he found the pest in Santa Clara, El Dorado and Placer counties. His report included material on the insect's life cycle and tips on how to spot the bug. He also reported on the general condition of vineyards throughout the State, descriptions that indicated the economic depression had led to general neglect in many areas. Hilgard and Wetmore made certain the press was well informed on these findings.

It was clear that California's phylloxera spread very slowly when left to do so by itself. This was, of course, fortunate for California winegrowers, but it also made it difficult to raise the level of concern among ordinary growers. The winged form of the pest in Europe was able to spread like lightning in most areas there. But there were virtually no verified sightings of this form in California. Therefore, the first step promoted by the Board and the College was to set up a system of quarantine that would make it difficult for the phylloxera to spread through the exchange of vine cuttings. The Board accomplished this with dispatch, appointing inspectors statewide. This approach appears to have helped since the spread of the infestations remained slow indeed. Of course, inspectors were not able to examine the mud on growers' boots or on their wagon wheels. These and other less than obvious things were certainly vectors for the insect's spread.



Legend of the 1880 large fold-out 13"x18" Map of California showing the extent of the Phylloxera Invasion

Resistant Rootstock

Hilgard and Morse were in the field continually in the eighties and always their talks took up the threat of phylloxera. But there was a paradox in their efforts. Outside respecting local

quarantines, what was the individual vineyardist to do? No practical means for eradication in established vineyards was ever set forth, for good reason. There was none. This meant that the use of resistant rootstock was the only weapon at hand. And that meant that only new vineyards could possibly be defended. But this approach was expensive and most were not ready to foot the bill. There were a few, led by Sonoma's Julius Dresel, who acquired from the Mid-west native stock thought to be resistant to phylloxera attack. But there were few sure sources for such rootstock and to graft *vinifera* onto resistant stock meant the loss of a year's profits from such newly planted vines.

The phylloxera was simply spreading too slowly to cause general concern. In Napa, for example, where there were a few growers devoted to the resistant solution, the statistical outcome of their efforts is almost laughable. In 1887 there were 651 acres planted on resistant stock, that is, about 3.9% of the county total. There was little that Hilgard and Morse could do but sound an alarm. But as the years passed these vines on resistant stock survived, while vineyards all over the northern California wine country collapsed. By the nineties there were few in the wine industry not paying attention to the alarm.

By the late seventies French research had shown clearly that *vinifera* wine grape varieties could be protected from phylloxera by grafting them onto native American varieties, taken from the area native to the pest. In other words, over thousands of years the two had learned to live peacefully with one another. The two American species that seemed best suited for this task were the *Vitis riparia* and *Vitis rupestris*, both natives of the Mississippi/Missouri Valley, also the home of the phylloxera. But the whole matter of rootstock selection in the 1880s was clouded at first by a misconception almost universally held by those involved in California winegrowing. By the late eighties this misconception, which I shall discuss below, had almost totally befogged the matter.

In California a wild grape abounds along the state's rivers and streams, the *Vitis californica*. Throughout the 1870s and '80s it was taken for granted that it was resistant to attacks from the phylloxera.

The earliest evidence to support this belief came from the experience at Charles Lefranc's celebrated New Almaden Vineyard south of San Jose. In 1857 he had imported a large collection of top quality French vines. To expand his ability to propagate more vines he made one-bud grafts onto *V. californica* from the vines growing profusely along the banks of Guadalupe Creek, just south of his vineyard. These plantings flourished over the years helping Lefranc become the acknowledged leader of the Santa Clara Valley winegrowers during the dismal seventies. Everyone knew how his Cabernet and Malbec vines had been propagated. But the phylloxera had not yet been introduced to this area. By the time these vines started to die in the nineties, the truth was already out.

Almost everyone was taken in. To Wetmore the vine was "surely resistant." And he planted part of his new Livermore vineyard on *californica*. George Husmann, the noted expert on resistant stocks, also was sure. Hilgard held fire for a while until Mr. Klee drew his attention to a little vineyard on campus that was isolated from the main planting. In 1881 Klee had discovered phylloxera there, so Morse decided to make it a spot to observe the tiny bugs in action. In 1882 he and Klee planted Mataro (Mourvèdre), Charbono and Verdal vines grafted onto *californica* in the very holes from which the dead and dying phylloxerated vines had been uprooted. In 1884 Hilgard reported that they were flourishing. Throughout the eighties Hilgard's Experiment Station Bulletins included *californica* in his list of good resistant stocks.

Like many other Californians in the 1880s Hilgard caught whatever bug it was that moved so many professional men to plant wine grapes. He had discovered an area around the old Mission San José, south of Oakland and several miles north of San Jose. He studied the soils and watched others buying up inexpensive land in the area. In 1884 he joined in, bought a 26-acre plot and began planting vines. He wanted to graft them onto *V. riparia* rootstock but could not find a source nearby. But there was plenty of *californica*.

The next year he added more vines, mostly from southern France and Spain, similarly grafted. He wrote a colleague in 1887 that his vines were "phylloxera proof," and in 1888, "the phylloxera cannot hurt me." In 1903 he wrote his sister that he would have to sell the place "for its value as bare land, if we can." Actually he was exaggerating, a bit of family fun, since sister Rosa had lent him money to keep the place going. Since 1901 he had been replanting the vines on *riparia* stock.

How was it that so many could have been so wrong about *californica*? Pierre Viala [1859–1936], probably the greatest of the French viticulturists, toured the United States in 1887 and traveled through the California wine country, examining native vines, their growing patterns, and their resistance; he had a good look at the *californica*. In his book that recorded this trip, *Une Mission Viticole en Amerique* (1889), he was clear as to that vine's usefulness. In spite of its great vigor, he said, "it is no value to us [the French] in reconstituting our vineyards."

V. CALIFORNICA.

(*a*) *Description*.—Stump very vigorous, trunk very strong; habit, creeping; wood of the year deep greyish-brown, tendrils discontinuous. Leaves (Fig. 9) large, entire, obicular, as wide as long; petiolar sinus widely open; limb, thin, bright green on the upper-face, whitish-green tomentose on under-face; teeth acute, in two series. Bunch long, small; berries small. spherical, of a deep violet black colour, clean taste. Seeds (Fig. 10) small, distended; beak blunt; chalaze oval, terminating level with the position of the raphe (which is absent). Roots rather large.

(*b*) *Varieties*.—The variations in form of V. Californica are excessively numerous; certain varieties have very marked characters, such as those growing in the dry sands of the south of California, which T. V. Munson regarded as a species and named *V. Girdiana*. These forms often have lobed leaves, without teeth, and thick, short, stiff hair on the under-face. We also meet with variations differing from the main type in other ways, such are the forms with very large, thin, entire leaves, with acute teeth, very slightly tomentose; these are the most vigorous forms. These morphological variations are almost always dependent on the fertility of the soil, but as they do not present any interest for the reconstitution of our vineyards it is of no advantage to discuss them.

Fig. 10.—Seed of V. Californica.

In the north of California (especially the counties of Napa and Sonoma) the V. Californica is found growing in calcareous soils, and in reddish or blackish rather calcareous marl. In these soils the wild forms of the species become rapidly chlorotic. The Californians who tried to propagate it as grafting stock have been compelled to limit it to sandy, rich and fresh alluvials. This species is almost as sensitive to chlorosis as the V. Labrusca In chalky soils of the Charentes, it rapidly becomes yellow, and, what is more, its resistance to phylloxera is not even equal to that of the V. Labrusca, and may be expressed by the number 4.

It is on account of this feeble resistance that it has never been cultivated in Europe, where it only exists in collections. It roots freely from cuttings, and knits well with V. Vinifera; but its leaves are very liable to cryptogamic diseases.

FROM: Viala & Ravaz, *American Vines: Resistant Stock. Their Adaptation, Culture, Grafting & Propagation*, 1903. Translated from the French 2nd edition by Raymond Dubois and Edmund Twight.

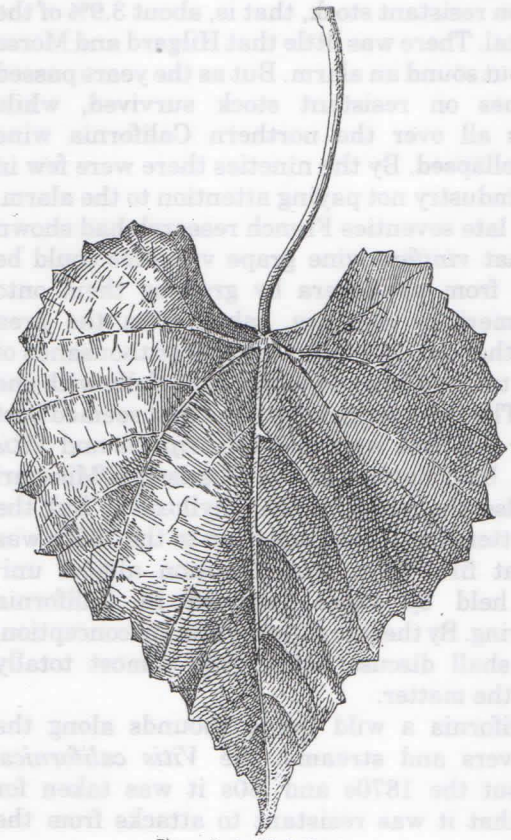


Fig. 9—Leaf of V. Californica.

Earlier, French botanist and Professor of Botany at Bordeaux University, Pierre Millardet, had made a rating scale for the resistance of various native American species. On a scale of 0 to 20, he gave *californica* a 0; *riparia* got an 18 and *rupestris* a 19.5. Later Viala awarded the *californica* a 5. In December 1887 he hurriedly transmitted his conclusions to Wetmore's Viticultural Commission, which did not publish this letter for three years. The English translation, probably by Charles Wetmore or his sister, was in my opinion far less emphatic on the *californica's* lack of resistance than the French original. But by 1890 the vine's weakness was no longer a secret.

There were some in California who had their doubts. As early as 1883 Morris Estee, the Napa winegrower and 1882 Republican gubernatorial candidate, had rejected the *californica's* resistance, and he never gave in. At the 1888 Annual State Viticultural Convention the issue arose when Leonard Coates, the renowned nurseryman, declared that the *californica* had proved resistant only "in some few instances." Later in the same session an anonymous voice from the floor asked if the *californica* had not proved a failure in all sections of the State affected by phylloxera. Coates answered that he did know of a few places where it had done well and turned to Professor Hilgard for an expansion on the subject. Reminiscent of moments in the 2008 presidential debates he began, "Before answering that question," and went on to discuss proper grafting techniques of that stock. The round-table discussion on this general subject continued for more than an hour. But no one attempted to answer the embarrassing question from the floor. Scores of California winegrowers had been grafting to *californica* and few were willing to enumerate its failures. If and when the *californica* was understood to be useless, the value of all the vineyard land planted to it would collapse.

Like the infamous AxR1 rootstock of recent years, so long the sweetheart of California vineyardists, the *V. californica* gave promising early signs of resistance, particularly under conditions that promoted the vines vigorous growth. But in the long run, like the AxR1, it collapsed before the continuous onslaught of the tiny pest. No one dared point a finger of reproach at Morse or Hilgard. Practically everyone had been fooled, including Charles Wetmore and the rest of the Viticultural Commission. We shall see that in the late eighties Wetmore would have happily roasted the academics at Berkeley, if he could.

But there were no hard feelings and no need for reproach. By the early nineties, when the truth was out, the wine industry was again in a deep depression. No one needed a dependable rootstock because virtually no one was planting any vines. Some wine men even looked favorably on the advance of the phylloxera, since it held down production in the face of falling prices due to over production.

Later in the decade, when the economic clouds lifted and grape prices shot up, there was a powerful drive to replant dead vineyards and to expand into new areas. Then California vineyardists turned for help from Hilgard and his assistants, en masse. This time, as I shall explain shortly, they got proper help from the University.

Better Wine from Better Grapes

The circumstances of the historical moment forced Professor Hilgard to focus the main thrust of his work on phylloxera. But the true leitmotif that informed and underlay his efforts at the University through the early nineties was the need to improve the quality of California wine, so as to establish a solid reputation throughout the country and in the rest of the wine-consuming world. It should be a reputation for wine that was sound, dependable, and enjoyable. Such wine need not mimic the styles of established European wine districts, but if the basis for the State's production was to be European vinifera varieties, California producers should at least look to these styles as suggestions.

Hilgard was sure that some day California would have a reputation as a world class wine producer. His analysis of the climate and soils of the northern California coastal valleys guaranteed that potential. It was clear to Hilgard that the climate of these valleys closely resembled those of the great wine-producing regions of the Mediterranean world, that is, a dry, warm summer and a mild but fairly wet winter and spring. There would be winter freezes, which rarely hurt the vines; but there would be occasional spring frosts that might do some damage.

When the German climatologist, Wladamir Köppen, revealed his still-standard climate classification in 1918, he came to the same conclusions about the similarity between California and the Mediterranean. Hilgard also thought from the outset that the great Central Valley was too hot for the production of delicate table wines. But dessert wines and brandy would surely work. Köppen classified most of the Central Valley as a great desert. But Californians were fast learning that the snow pack on the Sierra Nevada made it possible to irrigate most of that hot land.

Nevertheless, Hilgard came to see that there were special conditions in California that did not run exactly parallel to the Mediterranean region. The Köppen formula for the Bay Area and the northern

cont. on page 9 —

NEWS & NOTES

Whatever Fortune sends,
Let me have a Good Store of Wine,
Sweet Books and Hosts of Friends.

A FOOTNOTE to BUMSTEAD

Last issue, in her article on "Bumstead's Bibliography," **Gail Unzelman** posed the question of why the "time lapse of some 17 years between the Sotheby Sale of Smith's library and [the appearance of] Bumstead's *Bibliography*." Robert Gilbert (sacregis42@hotmail.com), antiquarian bookseller and a leading authority on the history of the publishing of occult literature in Victorian England, kindly responded: "I believe that the delay between the Sotheby sale and the *Bibliography* is a simple matter of time available to George Bumstead. He was still actively bookselling in 1867 and would have had little time for compilation, assuming that he did add material other than just the contents of the sale catalogue." Mr. Gilbert adds, "My bibliography of A.E. Waite was 15 years in the making, so I can sympathise with him."

LOIRE BIBLIOGRAPHY Update

In our January 2001 issue, we noted member **Donald Rice's** impressive bibliographic project to document the wine literature of the Loire Valley. We are now pleased to direct the attention of Tendrils to http://homepage.mac.com/donrice1/bib/bibintro.html for his posted work, "CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARD A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF LOIRE VALLEY WINE AND VITICULTURE TEXTS." In his Introduction, Don states: "One of the challenges of being a reader, collector or researcher of Loire Valley viticulture texts is the lack of an existing comprehensive bibliography to use as a guide. Without such a resource, locating relevant texts to help understand the region's complex grape growing and winemaking history can be hit and miss at best, requiring a large dose of good luck as well as patience and perseverance. Most texts about the river's numerous viticultural districts provide introductory material and perhaps a little more, yet comprehensive works are rare, and rarely obvious on the bookshelf. In fact, much of the best writing is within journals and learned society bulletins that, by their title alone, might not alert the reader to the valuable content therein. ... This [bibliography] is clearly a work in progress. While many of the major works are included here, there are of course numerous significant texts which remain undocumented, especially those published in rarely preserved media as regional trade periodicals, pamphlets, and broadsides... I encourage readers to forward information regarding sources which have been overlooked. [Contents] Part I. 1529–1879. Part II. 1880–1944. Part III. 1945–Present."

A FEW NOTEWORTHY *NEW* RELEASES

▪ ***The Widow Clicquot: The Story of a Champagne Empire and the Woman Who Ruled It***, by Tilar Mazzeo. New York: Collins, 2008. 264 pp. Hardcover. $25.95. "The story of the visionary young widow who built a champagne empire, showed the world how to live with style, and emerged a legend" is "as much a fascinating journey through the process of making this temperamental wine as it is a biography of this uniquely tempered woman,...one of the world's first great businesswomen and one of the richest women of her time." [d.j.] ▪ ***250 Years of British Antique Wine Bottles. Sealed Wine Bottles, the Wine-Drinking Classes and other Associated Bottles 1665–1915. Part I***, by Fay Banks. Oxford: Fay Banks, 2008. Edition limited to 50 copies, numbered and signed by the author. 126 pp. Well-illustrated. Spiral-bound glossy card covers. $35. There is a favorable number of published titles on antique wine bottles and drinking vessels (Gabler has a subject heading for each), but in this latest book, historian Banks presents a different view, and looks at the owners of specific sealed wine bottles. ▪ ***Angels, Thieves, and Winemakers*** by Joseph Mills. Winston-Salem, N.C.: Press 53, 2008. 87 pp. Paperback. $12. This is an entertaining, rather unique, collection of over fifty poems "that make light of the nonsensical pomp & circumstance of wine." Mills also is the co-author of *A Guide to North Carolina's Wineries* (2003, 2007).

A *SPECIAL* REPRINT of a MOST IMPORTANT WINE BOOK

The Robert Mondavi Institute, UC Davis, has issued a 125th Anniversary Edition of Emmet H. Rixford's 1883 landmark text on wine making, ***The Wine Press and the Cellar. A Manual for the Wine-Maker and the Cellar-Man***. Rixford's manual is the earliest California imprint devoted solely to winemaking, and was "probably the most advanced treatise in English in 1883 on the subject." The original is extremely rare, so this reprint is doubly welcome. There is an added Foreword by Paul Draper, Ridge Vineyards, California, and an Afterword by Clare Hasler, Executive Director of the Robert Mondavi Institute for Food and Wine Science. The reprint, of the finest quality, is carefully modeled on the original; the type was reset to match as closely as possible, and the gilt-stamped binding is an exact replica. The Afterword tells the very interesting, and heretofore unknown, story behind the illustrations that Rixford used for

his book. 1000 copies were produced, and sell for $150 each. The book is available from Tendril **Darrell Corti** (Corti Bros, Sacramento, CA) 916.736.3803. The Rixford book inaugurates a series of reprints that will be produced "on an occasional basis," featuring the most important 19th century treatises on food, wine, olives, and olive oil.

WANTED !!

Saintsbury dust jackets! **Isaac Oelgart** is interested in purchasing / trading / accepting as a gift the November 1920 and the 1927 editions of George Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar-Book* with dust jacket. The d.j. is the important factor, as he needs these two to complete his bibliographic survey. If you can help, contact him at isaacoelgart@gmail.com.

WINELINE POSTERS & A GUIDE

Wine writer and educator, **Thomas Pellechia**, has produced the first of his exciting new Wineline Poster series "Featuring wines famous in history." "Volume 1: 6000 BCE to 1500 AD" is printed in full color on heavy matte paper, 20" x 30". Volume 2 will cover the New World from the Middle Ages to the 21st C; then, a few of the separate U.S. State winelines. http://www.creativelinkgraphics.com/pages/poster00.html. Also just released is Pellechia's latest book, *Starting and Running a Winery* (New York: Alpha-Penguin, 2008, $18.95, paperback), a 344-page addition to the "Complete Idiot's Guide" series. It's all here to "make your winery dream take root."

THE PORT LOVER'S LIBRARY,

"Publishers of fine pamphlets and books on the great Port Wines of the Douro," under the dutiful guidance of Tendril **Isaac Oelgart**, is pleased to offer ***A Life in the Port Trade*** by James Symington. The Symington family—one of the three remaining members of the Factory House in Oporto—are "the quintessential Port shippers" and have the largest share of the Port trade, with brands such as Grahams, Dows, Warres, Cockburns, Smith Woodhouse. The edition of only 78 copies for sale is hand-printed, in two colors, on mould made paper, with 13 hand-tipped illustrations from old and new photographs. The work, completed in July 2008, is a stunning book that belongs in every wine lover's library. It is signed by the author, and numbered and initialed by the designer and publisher. A Prospectus and a letter from the publisher with special Tendril ordering details are enclosed. isaacoelgart@gmail.com.

RIESLING RULES

is a nicely produced 40-page pamphlet from Pacific Rim Winemakers "that captures the wonders and virtues of all things Riesling ... to serve as an informative and engaging exploration of our favorite grape variety." It is free for the asking: rieslingrules.com.

A WINE WITH A BOOK

Isaac Oelgart is a busy Tendril! He writes: "I am working on an informal essay for the WTQ about matching classic wine books with classic wines, or so-so wine books with so-so wines—reading and drinking of both, literally and figuratively, appeals to me greatly. I invite all lovers of wine and wine books to share their recommendations for matching a specific wine to a specific wine book; and if so inclined, to elaborate on the process, justification, rationalization of why such a pairing." This could make a very interesting, entertaining essay (or even an on-going column?). Give it some vintage thought and contact isaacoelgart@gmail.com.

VOL.18 WTQ INDEX ENCLOSED

Enclosed with this issue is a 4-page Index to the four numbers of Volume 18 of the WTQuarterly. In 2010 we will compile and publish a 5-year Index for volumes 16 through 20 (2006–2010).

BOOKS in SAN FRANCISCO in February!

Two spectacular book events will be in the S. F. Bay Area the second week of February. The CODEX Book Fair, featuring internationally renowned book artists, printers, publishers, and educators, will be held Feb 9–11 on the University of California, Berkeley campus. See the CODEX website for details: www.codexfoundation.org. On Friday the 13th, the world's largest Antiquarian Book Fair opens in San Francisco, and runs through Sunday the 15th. Over 240 rare booksellers from around the world will be in attendance to show off their wares. A Feast!

Ooops! Correction Please!

Your editor wishes to set the record straight. On p.20 of our October 2008 issue, it was wrongly stated that "L. & H. Photojournalism was started by Lee Stauffer ...." In fact, it was started by "Hudson Cattell and Lee Stauffer..." Apologies.

THE WAYWARD TENDRILS is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1990 for Wine Book Collectors. Yearly Membership / Subscription to the WAYWARD TENDRILS QUARTERLY (ISSN 1552-9460) is $25 USA and Canada; $30 overseas. Permission to reprint is requested. Please address all correspondence to THE WAYWARD TENDRILS, Box 9023, Santa Rosa, CA. 95405 USA. E-m: tendrils@jps.net. Editor and Publisher: Gail Unzelman. —

NEW DIGITAL RESOURCE
by *Marvin Collins*

[*Wine historian Marvin Collins is researching a number of California's prominent, and not so prominent, pioneer wine people for a forthcoming book, and has contributed several articles to our WTQ.* — Ed.]

A phenomenal digital resource has been given recently to wine historians and other researchers working with the history of the State of California. The Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research (CBSR), U.C. Riverside, has scanned a number of historical California newspapers, and placed them in an ingenious, easy to use website, the California Digital Newspaper Collection. The home page address is http://cbsr.tabbec.com.

While there are other sources of scanned historical news articles available on the web, they are invariably "pay per view," charging as much as a dollar for each article recovered. Both the Washington Post and the New York Times provide these services, and there are several firms specializing in supplying large numbers of regional titles. The beauty of the CBSR site is that it is "open source," meaning provided without charge to the user. Open source software has been the long-time idyllic dream of computing, in which digital material would be made available freely to all.

The site was developed by Benjamin Arai and Craig Boucher, software engineers associated with U.C. Riverside. Their stated goal is "to provide an Open Source, easy to use interface by which users can search and view historical articles in full resolution from any computer. Our system employs various technologies to offer accurate searches with full resolution images to the user's computer."

The San Francisco Alta California and Morning Call, the Amador Ledger, Imperial Valley Press and the Los Angeles Herald have been given the treatment, and what a treatment it is. The site provides a powerful search engine that quickly examines the scanned papers for the requested search term and returns lists of hits in panels of ten, in the same manner that Google, for example, reports its findings.

The Alta California is, in this researcher's opinion, the doyen of historic California newspapers, and was founded on the amalgamation of several Gold Rush era journals. I have spent five years reading it on microfilm and this new site has gifted me with dozens and dozens of items I had previously missed.

The hits are listed by article title, date, and title of newspaper but are not posted in chronological order. The user is given several options for viewing the recovered text. The first is a highlighted clip of the requested term surrounded by some or all of the article containing it. The second is to view a Portable Document Format (PDF) copy of the complete page on which the story is printed. The third option is to see a text of the piece generated by Optical Character Recognition (OCR).

Since the clip focuses mainly on the highlighted search term, the display often cuts off the article in ways that don't allow you to see the entire line or paragraph, but does give a quick glance at the context of the term and what it will look like printed on the original page.

The PDF presentation is absolutely wonderful, and is the core of the site's usefulness. Once the newspaper page is displayed, the user can easily zoom in for enlargement of the page, and move the page up, down, and across the computer screen. The software resharpens the letter forms with each degree of enlargement. If you know what the article looks like, with a little practice it is easy to find it on the page. And, for anyone who has spent time reading grayed, scratched up microfilm, these PDF pages are high contrast and clean.

The OCR version comes up on the listing screen within a second of clicking on the term "highlighted text." OCR software finds the article containing the search term and displays it as word processable text. The quality of the resulting text ranges from gibberish to near perfection, and with a couple of quick manipulations, can be cut and pasted into the user's own database. Click Control and Left command to highlight the text and then Control and C to copy, followed by Control and V to paste into the user's document. Even with multiple corrections necessary, it is often much faster to clean up the OCR text than to type it out from scratch. It is easy to tile the PDF original on the screen alongside the word document, so both can be seen at once, and I find that a line-by-line reading of the material while making corrections involves me in the meaning of what is written as in no other manner.

There is also an advanced search function that uses more complex algorithms to allow the user to combine related search terms, to search by title of the newspaper and to search by date. Search terms are significant. "Viticulture," "viticultural," and "viticulturist" will bring different results, although with

cont. on page 24 —

SULLIVAN, *cont. from page 5* —

coastal valleys is CSbvn. The first three letters mean "Mediterranean climate, but not extremely hot." In some areas he used CSa which indicates a lot more heat. The Stockton/Lodi area is an example. The "v" stands for the Cape Verde effect, that is, a long extension of summer conditions deep into the fall. Thus, while very cool weather may have descended already on Burgundy or in Italy's Piedmont in mid-October, Napa and Livermore may be sizzling in the high eighties.

The "n" stands for Nebel, German for fog. California's coastal fogs are famous and can creep up the coastal valleys throughout summer and fall, usually burning off by noon. They make it difficult to ripen grapes near the coast, but provide the valleys with a natural air-conditioning in the morning hours.

Hilgard was pleased to find that much of the industrial leadership out in the wine country was made up of Germans, French, and ethnic French and Italians from Switzerland. Many of these knew something about growing grapes and making wine. But he was constantly after them to modify their practices in light of California's special conditions. It was the Cape Verde effect that caused the most trouble. In Europe there was almost always concern about getting grapes ripe enough. When they were, you had a good vintage. A bit of warmth before the fall rains was looked on as a blessing. In California there was usually more than enough fall heat, especially when the winegrower copied the European tradition of letting the grapes hang as long as possible before the rains hit. Hilgard knew that weaning growers from such a practice was central to his educational efforts.

After the 1880 vintage the professor visited Napa and spoke to the local winegrowers at Vintners' Hall in St. Helena. In his talk he summed up the principles that would guide his work in coming years. He called on wine men to stress quality, not quantity. California wine must "show its face in the best of company." The best of California's wines must no longer travel under foreign labels. Since good wines come from good varieties he argued that the ubiquitous Mission variety should no longer dominate the State's production. He advised them to graft over their Mission vines to better varieties and to distill whatever wines they made from Mission grapes. He also came down hard on the unhappy practice of blending wines from better varieties into Mission wines to make them a bit more drinkable.

He urged them whenever possible to move wine grape production to higher ground, to the foothills and the upper valleys. He begged them to send him soil samples and specifically mentioned the excellent possibilities of viticulture on Howell Mountain, the volcanic knob that stands above the Napa Valley east of St. Helena. Later Charles Krug planted there and Hilgard's subsequent report started a land rush on the mountain.

He promised to test grapes from as many growing environments as possible. And if producers would send wine samples to Berkeley he assured them the University would try to determine which varieties gave what kind, and what quality, of wine in the State's established wine districts. He closed with a challenge: "Now is your golden opportunity; and if you act wisely, energetically and unitedly, you are sure of success."

This address acquired the title, "The Permanent Maintenance of Our Vineyards," and was published and distributed by the Viticultural Commission in 1881. Newspapers throughout the state copied it, which led to a flood of correspondence to Hilgard's office. This huge collection of letters and the replies by Hilgard and his staff afford historians mountains of useful information on California wine history. They are collected in the archives of U.C. Bancroft Library, Berkeley.

In August 1880 the professor got his appropriation money and instructed workers to begin digging a small brick cellar just below South Hall on the slope to Strawberry Creek. Upstairs at ground level was a small wooden structure that was finished in October. Hilgard had already worked out the arrangements to get grapes to make a few experimental wines. The grapes arrived by express—Zinfandel, Cinsault and Burger from Charles Krug (St. Helena), Charbono from Henry Naglee (San Jose), and Mission from John Strentzel (Contra Costa County). The little crew of three, Hilgard, Morse and Klee, made up fourteen seven-gallon lots. The main thing they learned this year were the steps necessary to receive grapes in good condition, and how to handle such small lots.

Morse made detailed notes on their winemaking process, which they purposely made complicated by treating different batches from the same lots of grapes by various practices, so as to note the effects of various cellar techniques on the same grapes. He also kept detailed analyses of musts and the resulting wines. They tried to compare the wines from different areas, and the effects of different fermentation temperatures on them. Morse also noted grapes that arrived in moldy condition, and in various stages of ripeness. Thus they made several very poor wines, on purpose, which they hoped would convince producers to take specific steps to protect and improve their grapes.

One fact emerges from Hilgard's early reports and his public statements. Many producers, even the best of them, were too often allowing their grapes to get

too ripe. Such long "hang time" brought flabby wines with low acid and little character. Often the fermentations from such overly sweet grapes got too high and the fermentations "stuck." The result was undrinkable milk-sour "wines," or wines with residual sugar whose stability was doubtful.

The knowledge gained in these early years would have almost no immediate effect on the quality of California wine. But what the little team learned would be very important to the future. Hilgard and his assistants were learning how to conduct a complicated, and for California, unique experimental operation. Each year they got more and more first-rate producers to cooperate—from Lodi, Cupertino, Sonoma, Fresno, and Southern California. Within five years they had the mechanics down pat.

What they didn't have were adequate facilities; the professor was determined to fix that situation at the State Viticultural Convention in December. He intended to dazzle the attending winegrowers with the quality and the educational usefulness of his laboratory's wines, and by the wide range of varieties and blends in their exhibit.

He had been in close contact with Horatio Livermore, the superintendent of the gigantic Natoma Vineyard northeast of Sacramento. Earlier Livermore had imported and planted a huge array of European varieties, some rather exotic. In 1884 the young vines had enough grapes to supply Hilgard with 44 different lots, which Livermore expressed by railroad down to Berkeley. There were many others who shipped Hilgard grapes, from all over the State, from Los Angeles to Lake County.

In December the wines were hardly out of their fermenters and were not commercially ready to drink. But at the convention the winegrowers had enough experience to take the wines' youth into account. All the wines in the exhibit were from the current 1884 vintage.

A committee of three reported on the wines, but everyone at the convention got a sip. J.H. Drummond of Sonoma was noted for his passion for viticultural experimentation. Frederico Pohndorff was an experienced European wine expert. The third was Hilgard himself. In all, the University submitted 85 wines for inspection, 36 pure varietals and 49 blends. Later Hilgard wrote that he was surprised how well most of the wines turned out. But there were a number of poor ones, as well. There were moldy wines, a Trousseau from Napa, a Pinot Noir from Lake County. The port style wines were very unimpressive, even those made from authentic Portuguese varieties. There were several inauspicious attempts at blending Mission wines with better varieties. (Hilgard and his staff were happy

EXHIBIT OF WINES AND BRANDIES.

A.—Experimental fermentations and blends, made at the State University, by Prof. E. W. Hilgard, from grapes furnished as indicated below, by vine-growers in different parts of the State :

NO.	NO. OF SAMPLES	VARIETY.	VINTAGE	VINE GROWER.	PLACE OF PRODUCTION.
1					
2	3	Malbec	1884	Chas Lefranc	San Jose
3	2	Bastardo	1884	Natoma Water Co.	Folsom
4	½	Boal	1884	do	do
5	1	Zinf., Mataro, Meunier	1884	Doyle, Drummond	
6	1	Sauvignon Blanc	1884	Natoma Water Co.	Folsom
7	2	Semillon, ⅔ Sauvignon Blanc, ⅓	1884	do	do
8					
9	1	Tinta Madeira	1884	do	do
10					
10a	3	Mondeuse	1884	do	do
11	1	Zinfandel	1884	C. W. Howard	Lower Lake
12	2	Petite Syrah	1884	Natoma Water Co.	Folsom
13	1	Malv., Lenoir, Trousseau	1884	Warfield, Doyle	
14	2	Marsanne	1884	Natoma Water Co.	Folsom
15	2	Roussanne	1884	do	do
16	½	Malbec, 4–5 Petite Syrah, 1–5	1884	do	do
17	2	Semillon	1884	do	do
18	2	Muscadelle de Bordelais, loose bunch	1884	do	do
19	2	Muscadelle de Bordelais, compact bunch	1884	do	do
20	2	Meunier	1884	Wm. Scheffler	St. Helena
21	1	Sauvignon Blanc	1884	Natoma Water Co.	Folsom
22	2	Merlot	1884	do	do
23	3	Verdot	1884	do	do
24	3	Cabernet Franc	1884	do	do
25	2	Semillon	1884	do	do
26	1	Zinfandel, Lenoir	1884	Warfield, DeTurk	
27	2	Tinta Amarella	1884	Natoma Water Co.	Folsom
28a	4½	Petit Bouschet	1884	do	do
29	2	Clairette Blanche	1884	do	do
30	3	Cinsaut	1884	do	do
31	2½	Mourisco Preto, 1–10 Moretto, 4–10 Petit Bouschet, 1–10 Tinta Cao, 4–10	1884	do	do
32	2	Tinta Cao, 1–5 Mourisco Preto, 2–5	1884	do	do
33	3	Beclan	1884	do	do
34	3	Cabernet Sauvignon	1884	do	do
35	1	Zinfandel, 3–5 Mondeuse, 2–5	1884	do	do
36				do	
37	1½	Folle Blanche,	1884	do	do
38	2	Verdelho	1884	do	do
39	1	Sauvignon Blanc	1884	do	do
40	1	Clairette Rouge	1884	do	do
41	2	Zinfandel, 72 lbs Grosser Blauer, 21 lbs Folle Blanche, 7 lbs	1884	do	do
42	2	Port, blend of 31 and 32	1884	do	do
43	2	Cabernet Sauvign, 66 lbs Grosser Blauer, 34 lbs	1884	do	do
44	1½	Cabernet Franc, ⅔ Grosser Blauer, ⅓	1884	do	do
45	1	Zinfandel, 62½ lbs Lenoir, 37½ lbs	1884		Martinez Napa
46	2	Carignan	1884	Pellet	St. Helena

First page listing of Hilgard's Exhibit at the 1884 Convention
FROM: *Report of the 3rd Annual State Viticultural Convention...1884*

these did poorly.) An overripe Grenache from Santa Clara was flabby. Malbec and Syrah made a poor blend.

But the successes were more numerous, far too many to chronicle all of them here. The red Bordeaux blends from Cabernet Sauvignon and Malbec were quite good. The Tannat and Cinsault proved to be excellent blenders. The Syrah from grapes grown at Napa Valley's To Kalon was a triumph.

Hilgard's blends and his varietal selections clearly indicate that he used the best European wine traditions as suggestions, perhaps guides. The blending of the red Bordeaux varieties is obvious. Two white wine combinations are also indicative. He made separate wines from the white Rhône varieties, Marsanne and Roussanne. He also blended them together, and then he blended them into reds, as is occasionally practiced in the northern Rhône. In another set he used Semillon, Sauvignon Blanc and Muscadelle de Bordelais to make separate wines, and then made a blend of the three as is often done in the Grâves and Sauternes districts of Bordeaux. The Committee liked the results but suggested that such wines should be fermented dry, to avoid the residual sugar becoming common then in French Sauternes.

Looking back at more than a century of California wine history since this event, I get a rush of adjectives to describe Hilgard's experiments— learned, prescient, brilliant, even cunning. I think I can see Pohndorff's hand in some of this success. And the fact that he and his son worked as volunteers for Hilgard in the 1884 vintage strengthens this conviction. Later Hilgard noted that his success would have been impossible without Pohndorff's help.

Before and during the Convention Hilgard did a lot of lobbying. He wanted the legislature to give him more money, clearly earmarked for viticultural work. He needed better facilities and equipment. The premise that he and his supporters successfully spread and asked was, that if he can produce these wines under such tight conditions, what might he do with improved quarters, proper equipment, and more manpower?

The Convention answered by appointing a committee to act in the matter. Its report deplored the conditions under which Hilgard was working and suggested that the legislature appropriate $10,000 to help correct the situation. The legislature came through with that amount but placed the money under the joint control of the University and the Viticultural Commission. Then, for more than a year Hilgard and Wetmore were at each other's throats trying to control these funds. It was a grudge fight to the death, which I shall describe in detail later.

Hilgard didn't depend solely on his wine exhibit to impress the regents and the wine industry. The legislature had called on the regents for reports on the University's work to fight phylloxera and improve California wine. In January 1884 Hilgard noted that he had been criticized in the press for lack of published material at the Station. He then decided to correct the situation by issuing Bulletins with "everything that is publishable as soon as possible."

In 1884 he wrote and had published eleven reports (on various subjects) as California Agricultural Experiment Station Bulletins. In the next few years he issued 77 of these, all mailed to most newspapers in the State as ready-to-publish columns. After 1888, the Bulletins were issued as pamphlets, sometimes booklets. Many newspapers published them in full, others announced the subject and gave the Station's address; those who requested one got it in the next mail.

By the end of 1892 the Station had published its first hundred Bulletins. Of these, 41 were specifically on viticulture, enology, or phylloxera and resistant rootstock. Of the rest, 16 were devoted to the wine-related fields of entomology and soils. This powerful emphasis on wine-related research was unique to these early years and clearly reflected Hilgard's current interests and concerns. Of the next 200 Bulletins between 1893 and 1918 only 10.5% were devoted to wine-related subjects. Fertilizers had 12.5%. But no subject field was dominant in the later years as was the case during the first nine years of publication.

The 1884 Bulletins dealt mostly with the red wines of the coastal valleys and the Fresno area, and the grapes that produced them. Hilgard paid special attention to Zinfandel and the manner in which its wines varied from district to district. He made a point of noting the relationship of hotter climates to higher alcohol content and lower acidity, and he deplored the tendency of using high sugar content as the chief criterion used by wineries in buying wine grapes.

There were ten Bulletins in 1885 with an emphasis on wine varieties and the effect of where they were grown on the resulting wines. Between 1884 and 1887 there were several Bulletins directed to the phylloxera problem, four in 1885. To the extent that they emphasized the seriousness of the problem and the precise delineation of its geographical spread, they may have been effective. But none of them was of much practical value to growers since they gave their continued support to the *V. californica* as a valuable stock and they discussed possible methods of eradication which were never of practical value.

In 1887 the Bulletins began dealing directly with the technical aspects of fermentation. Hilgard had noted in an earlier Bulletin that close to half of the wines sent to the laboratory for analysis in 1886 had

contained residual sugar, clearly a problem for their eventual stability. He pleaded with producers to manage their cellars to avoid milk-sour wines, volatile acidity, and unwanted residual sugar. He felt that too many wines were placed on the market far too early, often a few months after the vintage. Such a practice was killing any hope of California gaining a reputation for good wines. In 1887 he wrote, "It is quite time that these remnants of the good old style should be definitely consigned to the rubbish pile."

One of his most interesting experiments was conducted during the 1886 and 1887 vintages. First he fermented nine batches of slightly under-ripe Zinfandel grown at Mission San Jose (not from his own vineyard there). These fermentations were conducted under a variety of conditions: various fermentation temperatures, submerged cap, punched down cap, stirred cap. One tank was subjected to the Morel process, something like the whole-berry method sometimes used today. One batch was crushed and left to ferment untouched, "Vinegar flies and all..., the old Californian, or 'go-as-you-please' method."

He repeated this complicated process in 1887 with Carignane grapes. This time the sugar was high, the acid low. There were eleven lots with all the modes of 1886 repeated except for the "go-as-you-please," for obvious reasons. He added some new procedures: pumping the must over from the bottom of the tank, and lattice frames holding down the submerged cap. One tank had air pumped into the bottom for the first three days. A hot fermentation "stuck" and went milk-sour, "an undrinkable, vicious tasting compound." Hilgard commented on how often he was served such wines at respectable San Francisco hotels and restaurants.

His explanations and suggestions were included in a three-page Bulletin, later expanded and published as a 48-page booklet in 1888. Producers could use these findings as a short textbook on the practical outcomes of employing varying approaches to fermentation. He was understandably proud of such work and laughed off complaints that his fermentations were not conducted in a "real winery," and that his small-lot approach was useless.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA SEAL THAT ADORNED THE UNIVERSITY'S REPORTS AND BULLETINS

He admitted that the days of the seven-gallon batches were over. Now his fermentations took place in open-ended 50-gallon barrels he got from Natoma Vineyard. He argued that he could afford to spoil purposely a few such tanks of wine. What "real winery" was willing to ruin a commercial lot, on purpose, for experimental purposes? When small-scale experiments gave good results, "real" wineries might safely try them on a large scale. "This is precisely the object of the experiment station."

Pasteurization was a method that could protect young wines from spoilage, if properly handled. By this process the wines would be heated to 120°-150°F. to kill dangerous micro-organisms. Hilgard was convinced that this process was a way to correct the problem of shipping young wines in barrel cross-country via the railroad. He recommended the practice and published two Bulletins devoted to the idea. He convinced his good friend and neighbor at Mission San Jose to try it. Juan Gallegos owned a huge winery there and purchased a pasteurizing machine to use with a large portion of his 1889 vintage. The exact results were never broadcast in detail, but something certainly went wrong. For some reason, when the Gallegos wine arrived on the East Coast, it was undrinkable. A San Francisco journal, later unfriendly to Hilgard, termed the incident "disastrous beyond all precedent." The treated wines ended up having to be distilled, and Hilgard's enemies later made much of the outcome in the press. But he was correct. Wine pasteurization is a perfectly logical treatment, but only for ordinary grades of wine. If performed correctly it does not render a wine undrinkable. Years later it became common practice in California for bulk wines. But not in California in the 1890s.

It is impossible to quantify the effectiveness of Hilgard's campaign for better California wine in the eighties. But if the volume of his amicable correspondence with producers in the wine country is a measure of their attention, his bulletins and reports were certainly well attended. His laboratory was continually swamped by wine samples whose producers wanted expert analysis. Was the war on sloppy fermentation technology corrected more by market forces than by Hilgard's warnings? That question I cannot answer. But his continued call for better varietals was heard and heeded. The market did not give clear direction in that matter. His success is clearly evident in the overall quality of wine grapes produced in California in 1910 when compared to that of the 1880s.

Perhaps even more important is the tradition of practical research he began in these years. When, in the mid-nineties, Hilgard was able to step back and let a solid corps of faculty and assistants handle the

day-to-day work of the viticultural department, we shall see that there was almost perfect continuity in the program. The great change in the nineties and in subsequent years was that, quite properly, viticulture no longer dominated the work of the Experiment Station.

Grudge Fight

The struggle between Eugene Hilgard and Charles Wetmore for control of a $10,000 legislative appropriation really isn't important in the history of the University's work to improve California wine. But to tell the impressive story of that work without giving a clear picture of the public fight that broke out in the spring of 1885 would be like omitting the Burr–Hamilton duel from a history of the early republic.

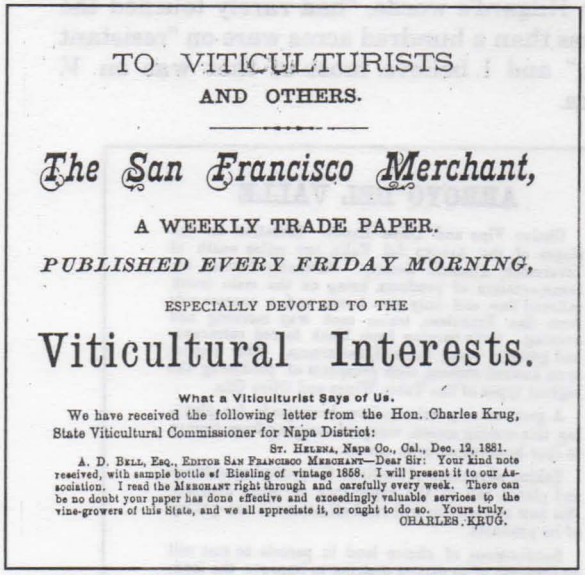
Wetmore had given early notice that he was willing to work with Hilgard for the common good of the wine industry. Their cooperation in the selection of Frederick Morse is a good example. Before 1884 Wetmore had characterized the University's viticultural work as "ably directed" by Hilgard, "a man of rare attainments and character ... extremely competent," and the Berkeley fermentation team as having worked with "a zeal and promptitude that deserves the gratitude of the entire State...."

The spark that ignited six years of open combat is not clear. Did Wetmore and Hilgard have some kind of private agreement on the use of the appropriation? Hilgard's reaction to Wetmore's plans suggests that there was. The Commissioner suddenly demanded that the viticultural work being done at the University should be conducted in San Francisco, not Berkeley. It should be supervised by experienced cellar men under the guidance of men with years of practical winemaking experience. (N.B. It was common then for the word "viticultural" to be employed to work done in the vineyard and cellar.) Hilgard replied that he wanted to cooperate on the basis of their "previous agreements." I can find no record of any specific agreements, which, of course, doesn't mean there weren't any.

The professor was understandably furious, at least in private. (A tendency of the combatants in this protracted fight was for Hilgard to express his virulent incivility toward his foe in private, while Wetmore unleashed his personal barbs in public.) What made Hilgard see red was the fact that it was his wines, and the conditions under which they were produced, that led the 1884 Convention to petition for research money. Now Wetmore was scheming to take over that work.

Hilgard first appealed to Arpad Haraszthy, President of the Viticultural Commission, to put an end to Wetmore's machinations. But in his fury Hilgard's language verged on the intemperate. Haraszthy was moved to reply, "Your letters marked 'private' contain abusive matter I cannot show Mr. Wetmore...." In May the Hilgard/Haraszthy correspondence ended. By June Hilgard was referring to Wetmore as his "enemy," attacking him as "a stupidly envious pretender to viticultural infallibility."

Hilgard turned to the Napa and Santa Clara Valleys for producer support and to the editors of the country press and farm journals for his editorial muscle. (The leading West Coast wine and spirit journal, The S. F. Merchant, later The Pacific Wine & Spirit Review, was in the Commission's pocket.) Napa was almost solidly behind him, then and in the years to come. George Husmann, now stationed there after years of viticultural work in the Mid-west, wrote his fellow academics attacking "that impertinent rascal, Wetmore, who has not even the principles of a dog."


TO VITICULTURISTS
AND OTHERS.

The San Francisco Merchant,

A WEEKLY TRADE PAPER.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY MORNING,

ESPECIALLY DEVOTED TO THE

Viticultural Interests.

What a Viticulturist Says of Us.

We have received the following letter from the Hon. Charles Krug, State Viticultural Commissioner for Napa District:

St. Helena, Napa Co., Cal., Dec. 12, 1881.

A. D. Bell, Esq., Editor San Francisco Merchant—Dear Sir: Your kind note received, with sample bottle of Riesling of vintage 1858. I will present it to our Association. I read the Merchant right through and carefully every week. There can be no doubt your paper has done effective and exceedingly valuable services to the vine-growers of this State, and we all appreciate it, or ought to do so. Yours truly,

CHARLES KRUG.

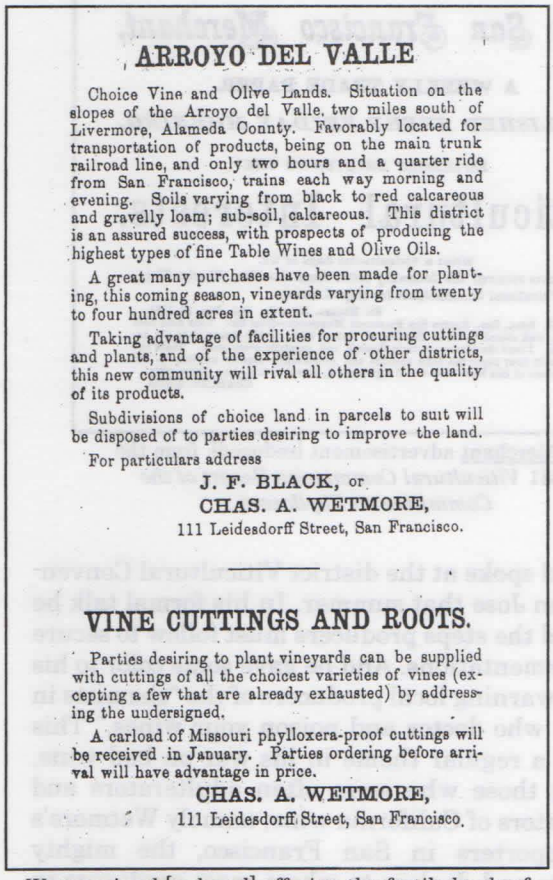
S.F. Merchant advertisement [reduced], from the 1881 *Viticultural Commission Report of the Committee on Phylloxera...*

Hilgard spoke at the district Viticultural Convention in San Jose that summer. In his formal talk he delineated the steps producers must follow to secure proper fermentations. And he gave some color to his delivery, warning local producers of the "chemists in the cities who doctor and poison your wines." This was soon a regular theme in his war on bad wine, attacking those who were often adulterators and sophisticators of California wine, namely Wetmore's chief supporters in San Francisco, the mighty merchants and dealers to whom most producers in northern California had to sell their wine, in bulk. The San Jose Herald and News came out strong for

Hilgard, the News warning that "Those in power are giving the Santa Clara Valley a cold shoulder."

The public battle continued through all of 1885. In the spring of that year Wetmore had picked up a clever weapon, one that he never gave up and which best shows the personal spite behind his continued attacks on the University's work. In March the San Francisco Call "discovered" there was phylloxera in the Station's vineyard in Berkeley. It had been no secret, Morse having openly used the spot for four years' experimentation on the pest's movements and life style.

Wetmore had established his Cresta Blanca Vineyard in the Livermore Valley in 1882 and was joined by several friends and associates in similar ventures. In that valley Wetmore was the leader, having been chiefly responsible for its discovery in 1880 as a premium wine area. By 1885 there were almost 2,500 acres of young, high quality vines, planted mostly by viticultural dilettantes whose hands, in Hilgard's words, "had rarely touched the plow." Less than a hundred acres were on "resistant rootstock," and I believe most of that was on *V. californica*.



ARROYO DEL VALLE

Choice Vine and Olive Lands. Situation on the slopes of the Arroyo del Valle, two miles south of Livermore, Alameda Connty. Favorably located for transportation of products, being on the main trunk railroad line, and only two hours and a quarter ride from San Francisco, trains each way morning and evening. Soils varying from black to red calcareous and gravelly loam; sub-soil, calcareous. This district is an assured success, with prospects of producing the highest types of fine Table Wines and Olive Oils.

A great many purchases have been made for planting, this coming season, vineyards varying from twenty to four hundred acres in extent.

Taking advantage of facilities for procuring cuttings and plants, and of the experience of other districts, this new community will rival all others in the quality of its products.

Subdivisions of choice land in parcels to suit will be disposed of to parties desiring to improve the land.

For particulars address

J. F. BLACK, or
CHAS. A. WETMORE,
111 Leidesdorff Street, San Francisco.

VINE CUTTINGS AND ROOTS.

Parties desiring to plant vineyards can be supplied with cuttings of all the choicest varieties of vines (excepting a few that are already exhausted) by addressing the undersigned.

A carload of Missouri phylloxera-proof cuttings will be received in January. Parties ordering before arrival will have advantage in price.

CHAS. A. WETMORE,
111 Leidesdorff Street, San Francisco.

Wetmore's ad [reduced] offering the fertile lands of Livermore Valley and Vine Cuttings [from the 1881 *Viticultural Commission Report ...on Phylloxera*.]

Wetmore warned his friends that the Berkeley plot posed a powerful threat to their young and unprotected investment. He described the pest's life-cycle with special emphasis on the winged female stage that had helped spread the insects like wildfire in France. On one windy day, he warned, the phylloxera might be blown across the hills thirty miles from Berkeley to Livermore. His warnings provoked a letter-writing campaign against Hilgard.

Several San Francisco newspapers ran the story and the professor found himself under public attack as the man supposedly hired to protect the State's vineyards. Now he was helping bring their demise by the infected plot. Calls went out to the University Regents: pull up the vines and fire Hilgard.

From our vantage point the whole affair has to bring a smile. Hilgard pointed out that the winged form of the bug was virtually unheard of in California and was probably infertile here. It is. He also drew attention to the fact that the infested vines were in an isolated plot and that after many years the main vineyard nearby had never had a hint of the pest. Could such a situation be a threat to Livermore vineyards? He tried to explain to his critics that in California phylloxera was transmitted from one area to another by the action of human beings, and that should be their concern. He explained the matter to the Regents and, as usual, they gave him their backing. Actually, there was not a confirmed sighting of the bug in the Livermore Valley until 1896.

Hilgard was devastated by these attacks. He had never experienced such treatment in his professional life. He had not thought it possible. In the summer of 1885 he wrote his sister that the situation was so bad that if another good job turned up, "I might with satisfaction resign this laborious and ungrateful office."

In March 1886, the $10,000 question was solved by a compromise between the Regents and the Viticultural Commission; the money was split between the University and the Commission. Without the money he had counted on to expand his facilities in 1885, Hilgard was forced to store that year's vintage in the basement of a nearby building.

But he stuck to his guns and kept the Bulletins coming, defending the University's viticultural work and speaking out against the large amount of California wine he considered to be of inferior quality. One of his Bulletins was titled, "Misconceptions of the University Viticultural Work." He continued his visits to the wine country, hammering away at what producers could do to make better wine. In 1887 alone he spoke three times to the monthly meetings of the Santa Clara Valley Viticultural Association.

The California vintages of 1886 and 1887 displayed the results of the enormous planting boom

of earlier years that were starting to take effect. In the face of declining wine and grape prices there appeared to be more and more poorly made wine being dumped in eastern markets at distressed prices. By 1888 it was clear the California wine industry was in deep trouble. The San Francisco wine merchants, who bought, processed, and sold most of the State's wine, were forced to cut back their purchases and lower their prices to producers. The situation heightened the tension between Hilgard and his opponents. More and more he was seen as a hero in the wine country, but despised by the wine merchants and the Commission as a scold and as a potential catalyst for even worse conditions.

In the summer of 1889 the San Francisco Examiner ran a series of articles describing the wine industry's pains and sent a circular throughout the industry, asking for explanations to account for the hard times and for suggestions as to how the situation might be corrected. The analyses and suggestions poured in and were printed: make more brandy, establish brandy cooperatives, grade wines and price them as to quality and variety, plant no more grapes, avoid dumping wines at low prices, develop regional cooperatives to hold wines until prices improved, make better wines. There was a steady stream of invective against the policies of the San Francisco wine merchants, who were seen as a close-knit conspiracy gradually strangling the producer. There were more than a hundred replies, all but two of them from growers and producers. The two wine merchants who replied were both critical of the larger dealers.

On August 8 the Examiner published Professor Hilgard's detailed answer. He made several generalizations about the industry's problems, but the gravamen of his complaint was the low quality of a large percentage of California wine. Specifically he condemned:

- Huge crops on rich valley lands "best adapted to corn and pumpkins."
- Huge vineyards unmanageable to harvest.
- Masses of grapes in fermenters in all degrees of soundness and ripeness.
- Fermenters too full.
- Hot grapes crushed in oversized fermenters.
- Acetified cap stirred into fermenting musts.
- Wine too long on pomace.
- Milk-sour red wine resulting from mishandled secondary fermentations.
- Overlarge tanks full of oxidized wines.
- Wines released too early, before stable.
- Too many inferior grape varieties.

Hilgard agreed that the best California wines were very good indeed. The problem was making the bottom-half better.

Wetmore's answer to Hilgard appeared August 14, 1889, in the Examiner. There was the same tired mantra on "the judgement of a college professor rather than the taste and experience of educated, practical men ..." But he also acknowledged there was too much poor, cheap, early-released wine being pushed onto the market. But he answered none of Hilgard's specific complaints, merely noting that the professor's response was "illogical."

Before taking on the final stage of this war of words, we need to step back and look at the country as a whole at the end of the 1880s. The wine boom of that decade was part of a national agricultural expansion. By the end of the decade all rural America was suffering from agricultural over expansion and falling prices. The American farmer's back was against a wall of debt and foreclosure. The great hurt was in the Mid-west and the South, where by 1890 there was a serious drive for a third party to represent the farmers' interests. By 1892 the Populist Party had a presidential candidate who won electoral votes in six states.

In California that party never caught on but there was a spirit of agrarian discontent in the State Legislature that in one way manifested itself in a general contempt for the State's numerous agricultural boards and commissions.

The Viticultural Commission Abolished

When we look today at the Viticultural Commission's list of accomplishments, its many successes are clearly evident, notwithstanding the Hilgard/Wetmore clashes. But the Board's fate became wrapped up with other such bodies. And the fact that independent winegrowers and producers were attacking the Commission for having continued to boost vineyard expansion on into the mid-eighties did not help its case in Sacramento. The clincher came from Napa where Wetmore was seen as an enemy of the independent producer, in the hands of a conspiracy of San Francisco wine merchants. The Napa Wine Growers' Union sent a resolution to the Legislature calling on it to abolish the Commission. On March 27, 1895, the Legislature did just that.

Hilgard was pleased to see the Commission's demise. In a letter of March 6 he certainly abused the historical record by remarking that the Board's work "has been not at all or badly done." To another correspondent on the same day he stated that he had been working on several senators to have the Board's "assets" transferred to the College of Agriculture. A week after the Legislature's action he wrote that he had "emerged victorious," and that "We met the enemy and he is ours." On April 7 he wrote that for the previous ten weeks he had subordinated every-

thing to legislative work. That would have traced these efforts back to late January. The assets of the Board which Hilgard acquired included its library and papers. Far more significant was the fact that State-sponsored research in viticulture would now rest solely with the University. This situation would prove to be of vast importance, and greatly to the wine industry's benefit, when the final assault on the phylloxera was soon launched.

By the 1890s Edward Wickson had become Hilgard's de facto second in command at the college. He later succeeded him as dean. Looking back on the grudge fight, he termed Hilgard "a warrior bold and confident." But he added, "Sometimes we thought he fought not wisely but too well. Sometimes the cause of the war seemed not worth the time and the munitions." Today, it is doubtful that many would take Wetmore's side in this fight, unless it was to agree that Hilgard was a stubborn, almost unyielding fighter, who, although admirable in his philosophy and his crusade for better wine, occasionally shot scientific blanks.

It is worth noting that Hilgard's personal life in these years was enough to make anyone cranky. In one of his letters he labeled himself "a laboring machine." He felt he was underpaid and was always on the lookout for a better position. His wife's health was deteriorating, as was his, "which hangs over me like a Damocles sword." In 1889 his son, a brilliant scholar, suddenly died. He seemed always in debt, partly from expenses related to his little vineyard and summer retreat at Mission San Jose. And the national depression of the nineties forced the University to cut back. He wrote, "If we can escape without docking salaries we shall deem ourselves lucky." But he hung on and soon achieved some solid successes in the nineties.

[*Continued next issue*]

SOURCES

■ EDITOR NOTE: See also Installment 1 in Vol.18 No.4, Oct 2008, p.6. Among the many primary sources researched for this invaluable study, Charles Sullivan has drawn on the vast number of early publications of the University of California College of Agriculture and the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners. For a fine overview and listing (comprehensive?) of these all-important works, see Gabler's *Wine Into Words*, 2nd ed., under "California" and "Hilgard." Another good reference to these works is *A Bibliography on Grapes, Wines, Other... Works Published in the United States before 1901* by Maynard Amerine and Axel Borg (UC Press, 1996).

Board of State Viticultural Commissioners. *First Annual Report of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners.* San Francisco: Bosqui & Co., 1881.

Contains: "First Report of the Committee on the Phylloxera ... and Diseases of the Vine" with a "Viticultural Map of the State of California ... Phylloxera, 1880"; "The Permanent Maintenance of Our Vineyards" by Prof. E.W. Hilgard, December 1880, pp.57-66.

_____. *Report of the Third Annual State Viticultural Convention ... December 1884.* San Francisco: The San Francisco Merchant, 1884. 184 pp.

_____. *Report of the Sixth Annual State Viticultural Convention held at ... San Francisco, March ... 1888.* Sacramento: State Office, 1888. 218 pp.

Hilgard, Eugene W. *University of California. College of Agriculture. Report of the Professor in Charge to the Board of Regents... 1880.* Sacramento: State Office, 1881.

Contains "Appendix No.8–Viticultural Department: Investigations Concerning the Phylloxera," pp.83-91, and "Appendix No.9–Report on the Occurrence of the Phylloxera in California" by F. W. Morse, pp.92-108.

_____. *University of California–College of Agriculture. Agricultural Experiment Station. Reports of Experiments on Methods of Fermentation ... during the Years 1886–87.* Sacramento: State Office, 1888. 48 pp.

With 4 folding tables of Experimental Fermentation data.

_____. See also Board of State Viticultural Commissioners.

Pacific Wine & Spirit Review.

Began in 1880 as the San Francisco Merchant. A key resource on the California wine industry after 1880.

Viala, Pierre. *Une Mission Viticole en Amérique. Avec Huit Planches en Chromolithographie et Une Carte Géologique des États-Unis.* Montpellier / Paris: C. Coulet / G. Masson, 1889. 387 pp.

This is generally considered to be the first major study of American viticulture published in France.

_____. "Resistant Vines Best Suited to Calcarious (Limey) and Marly Soils." 1887. IN: *Annual Report of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners for 1889–90.* Sacramento: State Office, 1890. pp.103–110.

FROM: *Report of 3rd Annual State Viticultural Convention, 1884*

BOOKS & BOTTLES
by
Fred McMillin

CALIFORNIA'S SAINTLY WINE DISTRICTS

[*In an earlier episode of "Books & Bottles" (Vol.11 #3, July 2001), our indefatigable octogenarian wine writer and educator, Fred McMillin, introduced us to a few "Saintly Vignerons," including St. Antony, St. Martin, St. Pourcain, St. Wenceslas, St. Vincent, and St. Morandus. We continue this saintly journey into California wine country.* — Ed.]

THE BOOKS: ▪ ***Oxford Dictionary of Saints*** by David H. Farmer. Oxford University Press, 1998. ▪ ***One Hundred Saints: Their Lives and Likenesses Drawn from Butler's "Lives of the Saints" and Great Works of Western Art*** by Bulfinch Press. Boston: AOL Time Warner Books, 2003. ▪ ***California Place Names. The Origin and Etymology of Current Geographical Names*** by Erwin G. Gudde. Revised & enlarged edition. Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1969. ▪ ***A Companion to California Wine: An Encyclopedia of Wine and Winemaking from the Mission Period to the Present*** by Charles L. Sullivan. Berkeley: U.C. Press, 1998.

While some names in California's wine districts are of American Indian origin (Sonoma, Napa, &c), many others bear the names of saints bestowed by the Spanish friars as they moved northward. Here are a few examples of this heavenly legacy.

SANTA BARBARA. Saint Barbara is named after the Roman maiden who was locked in a tower for years, and then executed, by her pagan father because she had become a Christian. During the Spanish period of California's history, Santa Barbara County was home to three missions, Santa Barbara, Santa Inés, and La Purisima Concepcion—all having thriving vineyards. Today, the county contains the saintly AVAs of Santa Ynez Valley and Santa Maria Valley, excellent locales for Chardonnay and Pinot Noir.

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO. The fighting priest, Saint John Capistrano (1385–1456), played a heroic role in successfully defending Vienna against Turkish invaders. At the Mission San Juan Capistrano, founded in 1775, Alta California's first successful vineyard was planted in 1778, with a vintage in 1782— California's first wine.

SAN LUIS OBISPO. The county (founded 1850) and the mission (founded 1772) were named in honor of Saint Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, son of a 13th century King of Naples and Sicily. Following a losing sea battle with the Spanish, Louis spent seven difficult years in a Barcelona prison. Freed, he renounced his royal position and became a Franciscan monk. This Central Coast county's large-scale winegrowing industry began in the 1970s, some 200 years after the first vineyards were planted at the mission.

SANTA LUCIA. According to legend, Saint Lucy, a saint of the early days of Christianity, was born to wealthy parents in Syracuse, Sicily. She immortalized herself by giving the family fortune to the poor. The Santa Lucia Highlands, in Monterey County, was granted its own AVA in 1992, and is known for its remarkable alluvial terraces, Cabernet Sauvignon, Chardonnay, and Merlot.

SANTA CLARA / SAN JOSÉ. The history of Santa Clara County's wine industry dates to 1777 when the Mission Santa Clara de Asis and its neighboring pueblo San José de Guadalupe were established. Saint Clare of Assisi, born *c* 1193, was a co-founder of the Franciscan Order of Poor Clares. A devout follower of St. Francis, she governed the convent for forty years. Of all the saints' names, that of San José, Saint Joseph, husband of the Virgin Mary, is probably the most popular of place names. The city of San Jose, the county seat, has the distinction of being the oldest civic municipality in the State. In the 1850s, Santa Clara County led all Northern California counties in vineyard acreage, and by the mid-1880s the area was a leader in the State's production of high-quality table wines.

THE BOTTLES: Enjoy a beneficent sampling of wines from these saintly wine districts; all were high scorers in my San Francisco wine classes.

St. Barbara – Daniel Gehrs, Cabernet Sauvignon, Santa Barbara County.

St. John Capistrano – Red Mission, Story Winery, Amador County.

St. Louis of Toulouse – Adelada Cellars, Cabernet Sauvignon, San Luis Obispo County.

St. Lucy – Chumeia Vineyards, Pinot Noir, Santa Lucia Highlands.

St. Clare – Try a J. Lohr wine. Their winery is in the Santa Clara Valley, although their grapes come from elsewhere.

EDITOR NOTE: Fred wishes to thank Ophelia Mercado and Gail Unzelman for help with research and editing.

MAKING SENSE OF SAINTSBURY
A Review by *Bo Simons*

[*Bo Simons, a founder of The Wayward Tendrils and for some twenty years the wine librarian of the Sonoma County Wine Library in Healdsburg, CA, has been a steady contributor to our Quarterly. We appreciate his continued enthusiasm.* — Ed.]

Notes on a Cellar-Book by George Saintsbury. Edited and Annotated by Thomas Pinney. Berkeley: U. C. Press, 2008. Hardcover. 360 pages $29.95.

After a long and distinguished career as journalist and professor of literature, George Saintsbury wrote a little book that was published in 1920 titled *Notes on a Cellar-Book*. The book received a good reception and has since achieved a sort of cult status. It was written years after Saintsbury had stopped drinking, and he discovered an old account book that recorded the contents of his once bounteous cellar. To me the book seemed until now both sweet and maddening. I call it sweet because it captures an old man's banked and informed passion for wine and other drinks. I call it maddening because it is stuffed with allusions and references that, without a deep knowledge of English, and other European literatures, as well as the Greek and Roman classics, as well as the history of wine, you were apt to be frustrated in fully understanding *Notes*. Now the University of California Press has republished the book, edited with an introduction and copious notes by Thomas Pinney, and you can end your frustration.

Tom Pinney in his editing of George Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar-Book*, performs a duty no other person has been able to do: track down and explicate many of the bewildering allusions and deliberately obscure references in Saintsbury's unique little book. I don't think anyone else could do it. Pinney, Professor of English Emeritus at Pomona College, has the background specifically in Victorian and Edwardian English literature, and in literature in general; moreover, he happens to be one of the foremost scholars of the history of wine. His Introduction and Notes together inform the reader in two ways: (1), they bring alive and make comprehensible to a contemporary reader the references to drink, to wine and spirits and beer of the Victorian and Edwardian era that Saintsbury recalls; and (2), they follow and pin down all the prodigious literary allusions Saintsbury threw into his book—the deliberately elliptical and vague references to literature from the Bible and the Classics through the English canon to Swinburne and the poets of Saintsbury's era. To know what Saintsbury's abstruse toss-off to William Makepeace Thackeray or Thomas Love Peacock meant and what the wines were makes the text of this book more than a curio. To have the depth of the relationship between Saintsbury and Kipling plumbed by a major Kipling scholar, as Pinney is and does in the Introduction and amplifies in the Notes, makes the book even more valuable.

Saintsbury's little book has always been an undervalued classic. Cults and clubs have formed around it. However, while most people who know something about wine may have heard of it, and some have tried to read it, some fewer have actually finished reading it, and some smaller percentage even partially understand it. It has justifiably infuriated some critics, who deplore its snobby and know-it-all tone. The difficulty modern readers encounter remains that often three or four times a page one gets an allusion or quotation, puzzling and sly enough to baffle the reader, even one well-versed in the history of wine, even one with a passing knowledge of English literature. Here Pinney shines, providing the keys to a full understanding of Saintsbury with footnotes to most of these literary and wine allusions and oblique references.

Pinney's 17-page Introduction provides just the right amount of context and biographical information so that one can assimilate what an accomplishment the book is, and appreciate its prickly charms. The reader learns that Saintsbury, from rather modest beginnings, graduated from Merton College, Oxford, but failed to win a fellowship and was forced to go to work. And work he did. First briefly as a schoolmaster, then for twenty years as a journalist, and then for another twenty years as a literature professor at the University of Edinburgh. Pinney traces his career, but also fills-in how Saintsbury received his education in wine, and drink in general. He tells how this book came about in Saintsbury's retirement —after this lifetime of reading, writing, and teaching; after twenty years of reading a French novel before breakfast every day; after writing and publishing hundreds of books and articles on literature, and enough anonymous journalism to fill at least another hundred volumes. You understand, after this succinct and powerful Introduction, what colossal levels of concentration and erudition Saintsbury could command.

Saintsbury throws the full weight of his maddening allusiveness at us in the very beginning of his book. The motto of the book, right there on the title page, below the title and author is "*Trinc!*" In his Introduction and Notes, Pinney explains that Saintsbury, in this one word, is being both donnish and anti-Prohibitionist. The Don is teasing us with the "oracular word of the Holy Bottle delivered to

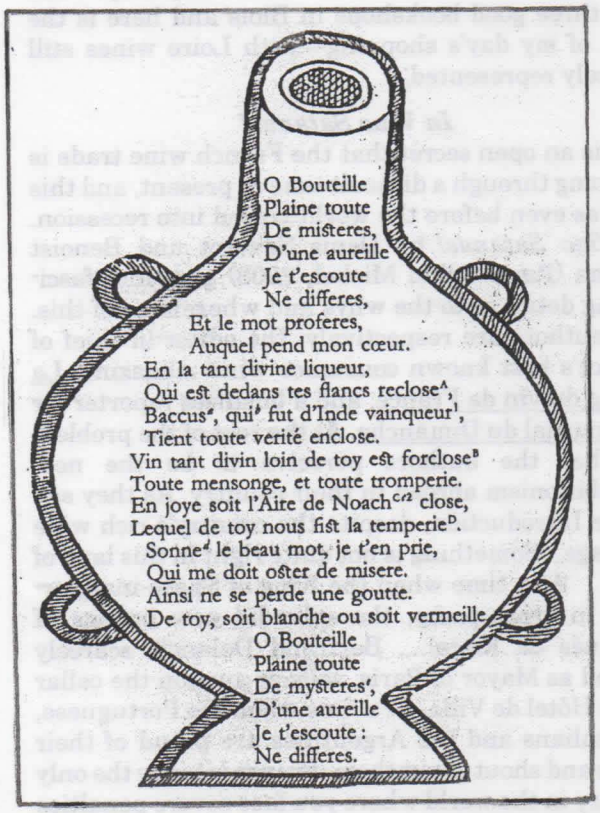
Panurge and Pantagruel" in François Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel.* The anti-Prohibitionist is saying "a very loud and imperative 'Trinc!' ... in contradiction to the Dry Spirit's 'thou shalt not drink.'" Both of these quotes from Pinney's Notes and Introduction show how adroitly one professor explains the other.

Pinney's scholarship is superior, and I only wish he did not credit us readers with so much intelligence and wide reading. I think he assumes too much erudition on his reader's part at times, and does not give quite enough information in his annotations to make a reader feel fully satisfied. At the beginning of his chapter on Claret and Burgundy, Saintsbury quotes William Makepeace Thackeray. Saintsbury explains that when he began to build his cellar in the late 1870s and 1880s, the great vintage year of 1858, the "Year of the Comet," was hard to get. But Saintsbury cannot just say that. He has to quote Thackeray in this manner: "The great '58s—respecting which Thackeray had enquired, 'Boriai-je de ton vin, O comète?' and Fate had answered 'No'—were very dear, not very plentiful and getting a trifle old." Pinney nails the citation, saying that it is from Chapter 4 of Thackeray's *Lovel the Windower*, and even provides the full quote, and tells us that Thackeray died in 1862, too soon after the Comet Year to fully enjoy the claret. But he does not translate the French, so those of us without a command of French are left to clumsily translate, and finally say, 'aha' as we get it: "Will I drink your wine, O Comet?" Thackeray had asked, and Fate took him before he could. It is something like explaining a joke, and, yes, annotation should not be too lengthy, but I still wish Pinney gave us a bit more sometimes, not just the quotation but the context. But this is a quibble on my part. Pinney has performed a great and everlasting service: he has made Saintsbury much more appreciable and approachable.

But as long as I am quibbling, I wish the designers at U. C. Press had put Pinney's Notes as footnotes, on the page they are helping us understand. Instead they appear at the end of the book. One has to keep paging back and forth. (Although unexplained to the reader, these footnotes are marked on the page of text with marginal "dots" to alert the reader there is a note at the rear of the book.)

Pinney also includes, kind of like the "Bonus Material" on a DVD, an Appendix containing nine brief items on wine and spirits written by Saintsbury between 1894 and 1924. These are interesting curios "that fit readily into the spirit and manner" of *Notes.* The illustrations throughout the book are well-chosen to contribute to the "period flavor of the work."

Notes on a Cellar-Book remains an interesting footnote in English literature, an addenda to the bibliography of Saintsbury as a major Victorian and Edwardian voice of English literary criticism and literary journalism. To the world of wine literature it is more important. It might be argued that Saintsbury started modern wine writing with this book. His keen enjoyment, his note of personally engaging the reader, and his erudition had a great influence. Simon, Pellegrini, Broadbent, Johnson, Asher, and Kramer all owe something to Saintsbury. Even the great levelers, those who want to make wine accessible and less snobby, from Cyril Ray to Oz Clarke, all had to define themselves in opposition to Saintsbury's conservative, educated Tory tone. Yet few readers really get Saintsbury because he is out of print, out of favor, highly literate, meandering and garrulous. This edition of Saintsbury's *Notes on a Cellar-Book* is important in that it helps the reader to an appreciation of this rather dense stew, and to pick out, identify and understand the individual ingredients and aromas that without these helpful annotations would remain hidden or opaque.



"The Holy Bottle" sought by Panurge and Pantagruel in Lantern-Land [Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel*] Pinney, page 115.

RECENT FINDS, reviewed by *Christopher Fielden*

[*Christopher Fielden has nearly 50 years' experience in the wine trade, 11 wine-related books under his name, has been a featured lecturer for the Wine & Spirit Trust for over 30 years, and a frequent contributor to our WTQ. We applaud his enlightening and entertaining wine book reviews.* — Ed.]

At the beginning of October, I spent a week in the Loire Valley and, not unnaturally, I spent much of my time looking for books on the local wines. Surprisingly, there appears to be nothing in print in French on the subject. I could have bought a two-volume history of the brothels of Touraine, numerous coffee-table works on the châteaux of the Loire and a limitless number of travel guides—but nothing on the wines. At the end of my stay, I did find three good bookshops in Blois and here is the fruit of my day's shopping—with Loire wines still scarcely represented:

In Vino Satanas!

It is an open secret that the French wine trade is going through a difficult time at present, and this was even before the world lapsed into recession. *In Vino Satanas!* by Denis Saverot and Benoist Simma (Paris: Albin Michel, 2008) goes into fascinating detail as to the whys and wherefores of this. The authors are respectively, the editor-in-chief of France's best known consumer wine magazine, La Revue du vin de France, and a business reporter for the Journal du Dimanche. At the root of the problem is what the authors perceive to be the neo-prohibitionism abroad in their country. As they say in the Introduction, despite the country's rich wine heritage, "Something is not quite right in this land of wine... At a time when the King of Spain inaugurates, in great pomp, the splendid new bodega of Marqués de Riscal.... Bertrand Delanoë, scarcely elected as Mayor of Paris, sells at auction the cellar of the Hôtel de Ville. At a time when the Portuguese, the Italians and the Argentines are proud of their wines and shout about them, France is today the only country in the world where you face severe penalties for daring to show publicity of a smiling winemaker beside a vat of his recent vintage. You have to go to Australia to read posters saying "Drink Bordeaux Wine." It is France that has invented the logo of a pregnant woman furiously crossed out to warn mothers-to-be of the dangers of the bottle. The President of the Republic refuses to wet his lips with Château d'Yquem."

This gives just a sample of what is to come, with story after story telling of the problems of the French wine producers. We hear how the village of Soultzmatt in Alsace has stopped having its *Fête du Vin* because it was "facing an Ubuesque situation; the sous-prefet and the police chief came to have a drink with us at the inauguration of the fête, but, as soon as they had left, they surrounded the village with police armed with breathalyzers."

Little escapes the attention of the authors. It is interesting to learn that more is now spent in France on anti-depressants than on wine. The root of the problem they suggest is that the French wine industry, despite its importance, is too fragmented to fight the Rechabite might of the government. There are eight different organisations that represent the interests of the wine lobby, but there has been so much backbiting between them, that they have never been able to act together effectively to take on the joint foe.

I found this a fascinating book, as the targets of the authors are many and varied. They have strong opinions on vineyard classifications, Robert Parker, the European Union, as well as the French Government. This is one of the most enjoyable books on wine that I have read for a long time and it should be sent as a present to every law-maker in France. The dangers are clearly pointed out. It is up to President Sarkocsy to take the steps to preserve that most important part of the country's patrimony, wine.

Le Guide des Vins de Bourgogne

Burgundy has always been my preferred French wine. I imagine this is because it is the wine region I know best and because I lived there for four years. However, it is always changing and it is useful to have the latest information. For this, one can subscribe to the monthly magazine Bourgogne Aujourd'hui or buy their annual *Le Guide des Vins de Bourgogne* (Beaune: Ecrivin, 2008. Thierry Gaudillère & C. Tupinier, eds). The 2008–2009 edition has just appeared and is packed with much useful information. At its heart are tasting notes on more than 3,000 Burgundies currently available, but there are also notes on each of the regions, a starred rating of the best producers, notes on how to taste, and a host of other useful information. Whilst, for me, much of the pleasure must be vicarious, as I can only afford to buy a small proportion of the bottles tasted, I feel this is a book that every Burgundy lover should have.

Dictionnaire Amoureux du Vin

Apparently the *Dictionnaire Amoureux du Vin* (Paris: Plon, 2006) is part of the 'Lover's Dictionaries' series, which includes such random topics as trains, Islam, rugby, Provence (by Peter Mayle), hunting, and the opera. The author, Bernard Pivot, is best known as a presenter of literary programmes on the television channel France 2. He says that the book consists only of what he knows, loves and inspires passion in him. This knowledge is extensive—it runs to more than four hundred and fifty pages—and eclectic. It is a fascinating mixture of thoughts and facts. We all might have heard of Saint-Amour in the Beaujolais, but have we heard of the village of the same name in the vineyards of the Jura, which is where the person to whom Saint-Exupéry dedicated *The Little Prince* was born? Do we need to know this? Probably not, but I have built my reputation on knowing a trash-can full of useless facts, so the book appeals to me.

Monsieur Pivot is a man of opinion; the two people that he respects most in the wine world are Georges Duboeuf, from the Beaujolais, and the Burgundian Henri Jayer, who might be said to be at opposite extremes of the wine trade. The breadth of his interests in wine is shown by the subjects covered. These range from Abû Nuwâs, among the As, an Iranian poet who wrote of the glories of wine, to Zinc, the traditional bar counter, as the sole Z representative. This is a book to dig into to find the information that will astound the most pretentious wine buff. Some information gleaned may be of more use; every man can benefit from reading the entry *Don Juan, quel vin!* This miscellany is a fascinating reflection of one, cultivated, man's love for wine.

Le Pineau des Charentes

On the other hand, I can find little to recommend about *Le Pineau des Charentes* by Pierre-Brice Lebrun (Paris: Quatre Chemins, 2008). This aperitif from the Cognac region is a wine that I really enjoy and I am proud of being a member of the Confrerie du Franc Pineau. I had high hopes of increasing my knowledge. However this slim, and overpriced book consists of little more than a regurgitated history of the production of Cognac, fattened out with a selection of recipes featuring Pineau. As the French say, "à éviter," "to be avoided."

Le Dictionnaire ... Cépages de France

Le Dictionnaire des Noms des Cépages de France by Pierre Rézeau (Paris: CNRS Editions, 1998) is a valuable reference work to have in conjunction with books by Pierre Galet and Jancis Robinson on grape varieties. It is particularly useful as to the host of different regional names under which grapes disguise themselves: the Cot in the Loire Valley is the Pressac in Pomerol, the Malbec in Bordeaux, the Auxerrois in Cahors, and the Bouchalès in Haute-Garonne. *Cépages* also gives dates for the first mention of each variety and its specific characteristics. I consider this to be a potentially active newcomer to my wine-book library.

L'Anjou, ses Vignes et ses Vins

In the end, my search for books on Loire wines did not go totally unrewarded. In a small second-hand bookshop, in the shadow of the château at Blois, I found Volume 2 of *L'Anjou, ses Vignes et ses Vins* by Dr. P. Maisonneuve, that appeared in 1926 (Angers: The Author). This volume is sub-titled *Le Vigneron Angevin* and deals with viticulture and vinification. What I found to be of most interest is the list of grapes that were grown in Anjou eighty years ago. Whilst we might expect the Chenin Blanc for white wines and the Cabernet Franc for reds, it seems that their importance was only confirmed with the introduction of the appellation contrôlée laws. Before then, they were in open competition for making white wines with such low quality varieties as the Folle-Blanche and the Muscadet, not to mention the now long-forgotten Blanc Emery, the Angevine Oberlin and the Blanc Carrière. For red wines there were plantings of Côtes Vertes, Albourion and Lacryma Christi. In addition, as the author says, "A delicate problem—the battle which began with the appearance of Hybrid Grape Varieties on the field of viticulture between their supporters and their opponents, still continues and in no way do we appear to be on the eve of a peace-agreement. Those who support them are called, to put it mildly, foolish, whilst their opponents are considered to be reactionaries." Of such is wine history created!

Reflections of a Wine Merchant

My final book is *Reflections of a Wine Merchant. On a Lifetime in the Vineyards and Cellars of France and Italy* by Neal I. Rosenthal (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, 2008). I am sorry to say that this proved something of a disappointment to me. I have never met Mr. Rosenthal, but I respect the way in which he built up what was little more than a corner shop in New York into a significant force in the U.S. wine-trade. This has been achieved by creating a portfolio of very distinctive wines—wines which appeal to the author's tastes. So far, so good, but he begins the book with the sentence, "I admit to a firmly held prejudice." For me, the main problem is that not only does he not suffer fools gladly, but he also does not suffer a great number of intelligent, and successful, people in the wine-trade either. I must

admit that I know few of his cast of characters, but there is no doubt who is the principal. I suppose this is natural in what is an autobiographical work, but he is exceptional in the world of wine in that he never appears to have made a mistake. It saddens me that he is so dismissive of help offered by such experts as Lalou Bize-Leroy of the Domaine de la Romanée-Conti, Becky Wasserman, and fellow wine importer, Kermit Lynch. Certainly, I enjoyed Kermit's literary offering, *Adventures on the Wine Route*, much more than this work.

PACIFIC PINOT NOIR : A Review

by

Will Brown

[*Since joining the WT some ten years ago, Will Brown, retired physician turned winemaker, has given us a cluster of reviews on the wine literature of his home wine region, the Pacific North West. We send our thanks for his latest contribution.* — Ed.]

Pacific Pinot Noir: A Comprehensive Winery Guide for Consumers and Connoisseurs by John Winthrop Haeger. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008. 454 pp. Card covers. $21.95.

In 2004 U.C. Press released John Winthrop Haeger's book, *North American Pinot Noir*. Many considered the book (reviewed in Wayward Tendrils Quarterly Vol.15 #1) an instant classic. It was the most comprehensive book on the grape in North America up to that time, and included sections on the grape, the wine, and the history, followed by profiles of 72 producers meriting inclusion by the author. In just four years, much of the information in the winery profiles has changed, so the author set about to update the book by editing and enlarging that section. Among the criteria for inclusion were that the wines appeared on the wine lists of major restaurants, on the shelves of major retailers, or in favorable reviews by trusted critics. This brought the total number of wineries profiled to 239, but twenty-three of the wineries selected were not included in the book for various reasons. The finalists chosen were a group of producers from California and Oregon, but none from the other wine regions of North America; thus the title for this book was changed to "Pacific Pinot Noir."

The State of Pinot Noir

In an introductory chapter, the author considers what he calls the "state of Pinot Noir." Here he recognizes that the release of the movie *Sideways* in 2004 had a measurable effect on the sales of California and Oregon Pinot Noir which experienced double-digit growth in the ensuing several years. He terms this phenomenon the "Sideways Effect." In this essay he poses four questions and then proceeds to discuss each of them. First, is the effect real? Is it a durable change? Has the boom been good qualitatively, and finally, has Pinot Noir been affected stylistically by the boom? The sales figures are indisputable. Their durability is conjectural due to the faddish nature of consumer tastes. The increasing quality of the wines continues a trend established well before the movie and is attributed to a combination of better "terroirs" and more attentive and Pinot-specific winemaking principles. The final question of stylistic change is addressed by considering widespread technical and artistic changes in the production of many wines from the western region of North America in recent years.

The Winery Profiles

Each profile covers historical and background information on the wineries, a summary of wines produced with notes on the provenance of the grapes and the winemaking protocols employed. In addition there are tasting notes on selected wines from each producer, thankfully shunning numerical scores. I found these profiles to be very detailed and of value both for their historical perspectives and for the qualitative information they contain. This collection of profiles is of course a large quantitative advance from those in the previous book, but is still not comprehensive due to of the author's selection criteria. For example, very small boutique wineries in Oregon are under-represented here. This is not so much a criticism of the author as it is advice to the serious collector. Also it should be pointed out that even this list of wineries has changed since the publication of the book, so that the profiles only represent a snapshot of a moving target.

Cover to Cover

John Winthrop Haeger has written on wine for numerous publications including Wine & Spirits, Saveur, and Connoisseur, and has taught Chinese language and Chinese history at the Claremont Colleges in California.

His book, nearly five hundred pages in length, contains effective maps of the principal Pinot Noir growing regions in California and Oregon and a comprehensive index. In addition there is a listing

of the wineries omitted with regret, contact information for each profiled winery, notes on vintage characteristics from 1999–2006, a glossary of terminology, and a key to the icons used in the winery profiles.

The Bottom Line

This book represents another superlative effort by one of America's leading wine writers. Haeger has made a seamless transition from academia to the more contentious world of wine writing.

His book should have appeal to the wine buying public but will be appreciated more by the serious Pinotphiles among us. It is not a book that one reads from cover to cover but rather a reference to peruse before going to the wine shop looking for a good bottle. Although it should stand by itself it would best be paired with the companion volume *North American Pinot Noir*. Amazon.com notes that buyers purchasing one, usually also bought the other.

I value both books for their historical content and consider them as references. As such they belong together in the libraries of serious wine connoisseurs and students of American wine history. ▪

IN THE WINE LIBRARY

by *Bob Foster*

Parker's Wine Buyer's Guide—6th Edition by Robert M. Parker, Jr. and Pierre A. Rovani. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008. 1513 pp. Card covers. $35.

"...the reader deserves far more."

Four pounds of numbers. For $35 you get pages and pages filled with no specific wine descriptions, just lists and lists of numerical scores on the 100 point scale. I don't get it. For years , whenever this scale has been debated, Parker has always responded that a reader should never just rely on the number he gives to a wine. The reader must also consider the written evaluation of the wine. Indeed he makes this same point in the introduction to this work. "However, it is also vital to consider the description of the wine's style, personality, and potential." If it is "vital," why have all of these descriptions been stripped out of the book? All that the author provides is the score and a window of drinkability. Other than some general comments about the winery as a whole, there are no specific comments about any of the wines. So a wine gets a score of 94, but will it go well with duck confit? No guidance is given at all. The reader deserves far more.

Given that Parker is the most influential wine critic in the world, I would have thought that before making derogatory remarks about a wine producer, he would have done extensive detailed research about the wines. Not so. Parker takes a swipe at the wines of Kosta Browne stating, "I find them somewhat superficial and overripe." Here is a winery that made its reputation on small lots of Sonoma County Pinot Noir. But Parker only lists scores on two Pinots, both from the Central Coast, not Sonoma County. I thought perhaps other Kosta Browne wines made from Sonoma grapes might have been tasted but dropped from this work because of space limitations. But when one goes to the Parker website, the only tasting notes are on these same two Central Coast Pinots. Wouldn't you think such a powerful critic is under an ethical obligation to taste all, of most, of the wines from a producer (especially their best wines) before publicly disparaging them?

To be fair, I really liked the section of the book that presents an annotated bibliography of wine books. Thankfully the books get more than just a naked numerical rating.

Parker afficionados will probably adore this work from their guru. I find it frustrating and missing key components. Not recommended.

Wine Politics: How Governments, Environmentalists, Mobsters, and Critics Influence the Wines We Drink by Tyler Colman. Berkeley: UC Press, 2008. 186 pp. Hardback. $27.50.

"It's utterly fascinating."

Every time I look at a glass of wine, I contemplate the fact that there were probably a hundred decisions that the winemaker had to make along the way, each of which contributed to that glass of wine. A bad decision on any one of those steps could have resulted in the wine being flawed and mediocre. But this view is far too short-sighted. Along with those winemakers' decisions, there were probably another one hundred political decisions along the way that contributed to that glass of wine.

The author defines politics in the widest possible sense. He uses the term to cover any legislative, judicial, agricultural, or environmental factors that impact the wine industry or the specific producer.

He also recognizes the impacts the major critics like Parker and the Wine Spectator have on wine. Watching how these factors affect wines and wineries is fascinating. He tells a detailed tale of the "backstory" of wine.

What is equally interesting is the way the author compares and contrasts France and the United States. How they respond to the same issue in vastly different ways is compelling. Colman insightfully notes that in France, wine is considered an integral part of the culture. Thus political decisions are always made with a deep sense of respect for the wine and the wine industry; while in contrast, wine has never held such a key role in our national culture. As such, wine related issues are treated differently in this country. It's utterly fascinating.

This book may not make your glass of wine taste any better, but it will make you far more aware of the myriad of invisible factors that also contributed to that glass of juice. Highly recommended.

[*Bob Foster, a founding member of the Wayward Tendrils, has written a wine book review column for the California Grapevine for many vintages. Their permission to reprint has always been generous. The above reviews were published in the October - November 2008 issue. For subscription information see www.calgrapevine.com.* — Ed.]

COLLINS, *cont. from page 8* —

some overlap of articles in the listings. I have had better results with a single term such as "Wetmore" or "Haraszthy" than with "C.A. Wetmore" or "Arpad Haraszthy." The user will have to sort through the other Wetmores that gained their fifteen minutes of long-ago fame, but the article title or the OCR text will guide the searcher.

Unfortunately, the files of the newspapers are not complete. The Alta California is missing the important years of 1882–1885. The Alta suspended publication in June 1891. On this site, the Call takes over in the early 1890s and goes up until 1910. With the institution of the half-tone, the Call is beautifully illustrated—the photographs usually framed by Art Nouveau-style flourishes.

These images can be captured by using the Print Screen function on the keyboard to paste the PDF into Microsoft Paint, which easily crops out the picture to be saved to the user's own files. I have had success importing the images into Adobe Photoshop where the flaws can be removed and the brightness and contrast can be enhanced.

While the San Francisco Chronicle and Examiner are mentioned in the list of scanned papers, nothing from them has ever come up in my extensive use of the site, and I wonder if these still-existing publications are holding onto the copyrights as potential profit centers for their companies. The San Francisco Bulletin was another paper with much valuable reportage that would be a substantial addition to the site.

If I was granted a wish-list for journals I would love to see scanned, it would be headed-up by the San Francisco Merchant / Pacific Wine & Spirit Review. Perhaps the good folks at CBSR can take the hint. [ED.NOTE: The Wine Librarians Association recently funded the scanning and digitizing of this very important journal at the San Francisco Public Library. This should be completed in 2009!]

MERCHANT AND VITICULTURIST.

PACIFIC WINE AND SPIRIT REVIEW.

DEVOTED TO THE WINE AND SPIRIT TRADE AND VITICULTURE.

THE ONLY VITICULTURAL PAPER IN THE STATE.

VOL. XXII, NO. 12. SAN FRANCISCO, AUGUST 22, 1889. PRICE 15 CENTS

THE CONVENTION.

Annual Meeting of California Viticulturists.

o this subject said that he had been engaged in viticulture twenty-eight years and had seen several ups and downs in the wine market. He did not consider it strange that there should be fluctuations in the market, but he did think it strange that those upon whom the success of the industry depended should "fold their hands and deplore the present condition of things without looking for a remedy." He suggested as the proper cure for the evil the

while the electro-magnetic process had the effect of destroying the nitrogenous elements in wine and making it keep indefinitely, he had not been able to discover that Pasteurization would accomplish these results.

President Wetmore and Professor Hilgard had a rather sharp discussion regarding the effects of the processes under consideration, the former asserting that they did not do what was claimed for them, and

1878 was 2,100,000 boxes, of which the United States received 1,185,000 boxes. In 1879 the crop amounted to 2,125,000 boxes, the United States receiving 1,140,000 boxes. In 1880 the crop was 2,015,000 boxes, and the United States received 1,115,000 boxes. At this point the Malaga crop began to fail. In 1881 but 1,800,000 boxes were produced, of which the United States received 1,000,000 boxes. In 1882 the crop was 1,868,000 boxes, of which the

Yvor Winters and His "In Praise of California Wines"

by *Thomas Pinney*

vor Winters (1900-1968) was a professor in the department of English at Stanford, a poet, and a respected literary critic. His best-known critical work, a study of American poetry, was called "In Defense of Reason," and that pretty much tells you what his main line of argument was. He stood for what we think of as the classic virtues in literature—clarity, precision, good sense—and he was firmly opposed to what he saw as the obscurantist and irrational tendencies of modern American literature.

He could be a formidable teacher. One of my friends, a poet who studied under Winters many years ago, said that at the end of one term Winters called him in and said: "Why are all your god-damned poems about sex?" My friend, astonished, said: "But I haven't written any poems about sex." "What about that rabbit poem?" Winters demanded. "Well, that's just about hunting rabbits," my friend protested. "Don't tell me what it means!" Winters roared. End of discussion.

Winters lived in Los Gatos, in those years still a quiet place, where one could see plenty of vineyards, though Winters himself did not grow grapes. He bred Airedales instead. But he is said to have liked wine, to have bought it in large quantities, and to have drunk it pretty steadily through the day. He must have been one of those people with extraordinarily strong heads, since he was not known as a drunkard and managed to lead a dependable and productive professional life.

"In Praise of California Wines" was first published in Poetry magazine in 1938 and was collected in Winters' *Poems*, 1940. The line about the vineyard spreading "in repetition, point and line" clearly shows that Winters has in mind a vineyard of free-standing, head-pruned vines, after the old standard California practice: modern vertical shoot-positioned vines on trellis wires would give an observer "lines" but no "points." In 1938 hardly anything but head-pruned vines would have been visible in California. I am not at all clear about what Winters means when he says that native wine "charms the skin": do you put wine on your skin? And, for a poet who valued clarity and intelligibility in poetry, the phrase "pre-Socratic stratagem," seems awfully obscure, or at least it does to me.

But these are quibbles. The intent to praise is plain enough, and though readers may think there is too much emphasis on the struggles of the poet, poets are like that. Not many people were writing praise of California wine in 1938, and the trade, in the unlikely event that it ever knew the poem, must have been grateful.

IN PRAISE OF CALIFORNIA WINES

Amid these clear and windy hills
Heat gathers quickly and is gone;
Dust rises, moves, and briefly stills;
Our thought can scarcely pause thereon.

With pale bright leaf and shadowy stem,
Pellucid amid nervous dust,
By pre-Socratic stratagem,
Yet sagging with its weight of must,

The vineyard spreads beside the road
In repetition, point and line.
I sing, in this dry bright abode,
The praises of the native wine.

It yields the pleasure of the eye,
It charms the skin, it warms the heart;
When nights are cold and thoughts crowd high,
Then 'tis the solvent for our art.

When worn for sleep the head is dull,
When art has failed us, far behind,
Its sweet corruption fills the skull
Till we are happy to be blind.

So may I yet, as poets use,
My time being spent, and more to pay,
In this quick warmth the will diffuse,
In sunlight vanish quite away.

[Yvor Winters, *Collected Poems*. Denver: Alan Swallow, 1960]

WINE IN PRINT

by *Hudson Cattell*

▪ ***The Bordeaux Betrayal: A Wine Country Mystery*** by Ellen Crosby. New York: Scribner, 2008. 270 pp. Cloth. $25.

▪ ***The Billionaire's Vinegar: The Mystery of the World's Most Expensive Bottle of Wine*** by Benjamin Wallace. New York: Crown Publishers, 2008. 319 pp. Cloth. $24.95.

The discovery of a cache of 18th century Bordeaux wines that were engraved with Thomas Jefferson's initials made news when one of the bottles was auctioned in London in 1985 by Michael Broadbent of Christie's for $156,450. Even before the auction, and for many years afterwards, controversy swirled around the origins of these bottles and their authenticity. This year, one mystery novel and one nonfiction book have centered around the provenance of these bottles.

The Bordeaux Betrayal is the third novel in Ellen Crosby's series of mystery novels about Lucie Montgomery, the owner of Montgomery Estate Vineyard, located in the foxhunting country in the vicinity of Middleburg, Virginia. When the novel opens, Lucie is involved in a fund-raising auction that will be held in her home for the benefit of homeless and disabled children in the area. One of the donations for the auction is a 1790 bottle of Château Margaux with the initials G.W. etched on the bottle, a bottle Jefferson had ordered for George Washington.

On a visit to Mount Vernon, Lucie meets the author of a book on Jefferson who tells her that she wants to see the wines being auctioned. She also drops a hint that she knows something about the origin of the Washington wine that its donor doesn't know and will tell Lucie about it when she visits her the next morning. The visit never takes place, however, because she is found dead in an overturned car in a creek near Lucie's place. This is the first of two murders that seem to be related to the Washington bottle, which is suddenly withdrawn from the auction by the donor. Lucie is determined to find out what the author was going to reveal to her and, as she soon discovers, there are several people who had a motive to kill her. Throughout the book the action revolves around the Washington bottle, the idea for which had come from the discovery of the Jefferson bottles in Paris.

In the "Acknowledgments" at the end of her book, Ellen Crosby notes that John Hailman's 2006 book, *Thomas Jefferson on Wine* [reviewed in WTQ Vol.17 #1,#3; Wine East Mar/Apr 2007], was particularly helpful in researching her novel. Hailman's Appendix B, "The Latest Jefferson Controversy: The Mysterious Case of Bordeaux," summed up what was known about the "Jefferson bottles" that had been discovered in a hidden cellar in an old house being torn down in Paris. For readers who wanted to know more about these bottles, Crosby also referred to "The Jefferson Bottles" by Patrick Radden Keefe (The New Yorker, September 3 / 10), and a book by Benjamin Wallace, *The Billionaire's Vinegar: The Mystery of the World's Most Expensive Wine*, which turned out to be published about the same time as her novel.

Benjamin Wallace's book is a well-researched chronological account of the Jefferson bottles from the time their discovery was disclosed by Hardy Rodenstock in 1985 to the conclusion of a court case in July 2007. Rodenstock, a German wine collector, had become increasingly interested in collecting old wines, and in 1980 began holding annual tastings that included rare wines that he had discovered. Michael Broadbent of Christie's in London began attending these tastings in 1984. In April 1985 Rodenstock told some German friends about the astonishing discovery in Paris of 100 bottles of old wine in a hidden cellar, two dozen of which were engraved "Th.J." They included bottles of Lafite, Margaux, Yquem, and Branne-Mouton (later Mouton Rothschild) from the 1784 and 1787 vintages. Rodenstock immediately flew to Paris and paid 20,000 French francs (US$2,227) for the lot. That was as much about the discovery as Rodenstock would ever say. He never gave details about where he got his rarities from and, for that matter, seldom revealed anything about his personal life, finances, or what was in the several cellars he kept.

There were rumors about the origins of these wines. Were they part of a Nazi hoard? Were they hidden by the French who kept their wines out of the reach of the Nazis by walling them in a section of their cellars? There would never be any answers.

The first announcement in the United States of the find was by Robert de Treville Lawrence, Sr., president of the Vinifera Wine Growers Association in The Plains, Virginia, who on October 11, 1985, issued a press release at the same time an article appeared in the Fall 1985 issue of The Vinifera Wine Growers Journal. Lawrence was one of the first to raise questions about the discovery in a note at the end of the article: Where was the wine found in Paris? How was it preserved? Why do the numbers on the etched bottles appear to be in a more modern style?

Two bottles were opened before the December 5 auction, the first on May 3, and the other on October 14. Broadbent was present at the second tasting and was convinced that the wine was genuine and that a bottle should be auctioned at Christie's. The $156,450 paid for the bottle by Kit Forbes, the son of publisher Malcolm Forbes, made headlines because it set a world record for the price of a bottle of wine.

After the auction, the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Foundation decided they would try to prove or disprove the origin of the bottle. They found nothing in Jefferson's papers, including his detailed wine orders, that would substantiate the claim. The form of the initials, however, was unknown.

Other tastings and sales followed, and Wallace details them and the opinions they generated. Meanwhile, Rodenstock kept unearthing rarities and holding more and more extravagant tastings, always taking the corks and the empty bottles of the best wines home with him. In a 1989 tasting of wines from 1921, 1924, 1926, and 1928, it was discovered that they were all the same wine in four different bottles. Questions about the contents of Rodenstock's bottles began to grow. One collector, Hans-Peter Frericks, decided to sell much of his cellar and asked Sotheby's to handle the sale. The head of their wine department, David Molyneux-Berry, examined the bottles in the cellar. There were two Jefferson bottles and a large quantity of other rarities. A number of the bottles from the 1800s and 1900s didn't look quite right. Rodenstock had sold 80 bottles to Frericks, and every one of the bottles that Molyneux-Berry thought were counterfeit had come from Rodenstock.

Laboratory tests to verify the date of the Jefferson bottles were performed. Thermoluminescence tests showed that the sediment was between 128 and 312 years old, meaning that it might have come from 1787. Tritium testing and testing on an Accelerator Mass Spectrometer, however, showed that the wine in all likelihood dated back to 1962. The engraving on one of the bottles was analyzed and rather than being done by 18th century engraving techniques, it had been done by a modern power tool with a flexible shaft, probably a dental drill.

Rodenstock himself came under investigation. It was found that Rodenstock was not his real name; he was really Meinhard Görke. It was also discovered that a Munich court had found him guilty of adulterating a wine or knowingly offering an adulterated wine for sale. Bill Koch, who had bought four of the Jefferson bottles as well as other bottles considered to be fake, sued Rodenstock in federal court in Manhattan. On July 11, 2007, Rodenstock told the judge that he intended to default and Koch received a judgment in his favor.

Benjamin Wallace has included 30 pages of footnotes at the end of his book, and there is a four-page listing of the people he interviewed, including most of the principals involved. In closing, Wallace noted that none of the evidence ended the appetite to buy or sell Jefferson bottles:

> The Jefferson bottles were *the* example of how people turned suggestible when it came to wine. It was precisely the fact that drinkers brought their own interpretations to wine that led subjects in a University of Bordeaux study to mistake white wine for red, and that led impressionable consumers to decide they liked a wine because Parker did, to buy first growths because they were first, and to detect notes of sweet Cuban tobacco only after someone else had ... Each buyer had wanted his own piece of frozen history. It was enough that Thomas Jefferson's initials were right there on the bottles, that the bottles said Lafite and Margaux and Branne-Mouton and Yquem, and that Michael Broadbent had stamped them with his approval. A standard of plausible confirmability had been met.

In writing her novel, Ellen Crosby used none of the Rodenstock story. Her Washington bottle is more connected with the Nazi provenance, but also includes a scam. Her earlier novels, *The Merlot Murders* (2006) and *The Chardonnay Charade* (2007), began Lucie's adventures in Virginia wine country, and they continue in this volume. All three of her mysteries are unusual in their accurate portrayal of grape growing and winemaking in the Eastern wine country of Virginia.

Both books are recommended reading. Ellen Crosby tells a good story, although I have a preference for either one of her earlier ones. Benjamin Wallace has done an excellent job of research and he tells the story in a very readable manner—as if he were writing a novel.

[EDITOR: *We are pleased and grateful to be able to reprint the above reviews, originally published in the July-August issue of Wine East, the last issue of this excellent periodical that covered the "News of Grapes and Wine in Eastern North America" for some 27 years. The California-based trade magazine, Wines & Vines, recently purchased Wine East and editors Hudson Cattell and Linda Jones McKee will continue to guide the coverage of the Eastern wine scene for Wines & Vines.*]

See Fred McMillin, "Books & Bottles"