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THE HISTORY AND CULTURE OF WINE

by *Kathleen Burk*

[In our October issue of last year Kathleen Burk, the Professor of Modern and Contemporary History at University College London, presented the little-known 17th & 18th century "Grub Street Hack," Ned Ward. Professor Burk, author of a lengthy list of works in her field, has also published the entertaining *Is This Bottle Corked? The Secret Life of Wine (2008)*. We welcome Kathy's richly referenced "The History & Culture of Wine," adapted from her public valedictory lecture at University College London, May 2011. — Ed.]

WINE FOR ME IS AN AVOCATION rather than a vocation. My primary work is as an historian of Anglo-American relations, but it will not be the first time that an increasing interest in a hobby has developed into an interest in its origins, its history, its importance – and in this instance, in the way in which it is intertwined with the culture of many parts of the world. Who invented it? Why are there so many myths about it? Does it play much of a part in art? And, perhaps closer to more mundane concerns, why do we need guides?



Who first invented wine? It is probably more to the point to ask, who first discovered wine? It is not difficult to make it. On the outside skin of the grape is the yeast and on the inside is the sweet juice: mix them together, leave it for a few days for the yeast to ferment the

sugar and turn it into alcohol, and the result is wine. All you really need are grapes. One claimant for first place is Noah. According to Genesis chapter 9, verses 20-21: 'And Noah began to be a husbandman, and he planted a vineyard: And he drank of the wine, and was drunken'. So for Christians and Jews, at least historically, it was Noah.¹ For the ancient Greeks, the discovery of wine by men was the gift of Dionysos, the god of wine, Hesiod's 'Inspirer of frenzied women',² the avatar who burst out of Thrace—or perhaps Phrygia (the 'land of vines')—and brought the knowledge of wine to Attica. Certainly, the vine was widely cultivated in Greece and Grecian areas by the early Bronze Age—both Homer and Hesiod make it clear that wine was an essential part of life—and clay tablets dating from the late Bronze Age, about 1200 BC, connect Dionysos with wine.³

Another candidate is the legendary, or mythical, Persian King Jamshid, a great lover of grapes. One

day it was discovered that a jar of them had spoiled, and it was taken to a warehouse and labelled 'poison'. Not long after, a very depressed lady of his harem went to find the jar. According to one source, he had banished her from his kingdom; according to another, she was plagued with horrendous migraines. In any case, having lost the will to live, she found the jar and drank deeply, after which she fell into a deep and healing sleep. She went back to the King and revealed what she had found: he and his court drank it with pleasure, and she was welcomed back into the harem. This Persian legend has some plausibility. By the use of microchemical techniques on archaeological residues in some of the earliest wine jars known, which were found at Hajji Firuz Tepe in the northern Zagros Mountains of northwestern Iran, it has become clear that wine was being produced in the highlands of Persia in the Neolithic Period from about 5400 BC.⁴

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The primary competitor, and probably the winner, is the Transcaucasus. This could be in what is now Georgia, but was once ancient Armenia, which once included much of eastern Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. The vine was indigenous to the Armenian valleys, having established itself there over a million years ago, with petrified grape pips found at several Neolithic sites; there have also been found vessels dating back to 6000 BC⁵, and special pruning knives dating back to between 3000 and 2000 BC. Georgia was always my favourite as the home of an old and pervasive wine culture, because when Christianity arrived in Georgia in the fourth century, the first cross was made of vines. But today's Armenia has recently pulled ahead, in particular if you are of a technological bent. Recently discovered, in the Areni-1 cave complex near Armenia's southern border with Iran—and outside a tiny village still known for its wine-making activities—is the world's oldest known winery. The site includes grape seeds, withered grape vines, remains of pressed grapes, a rudimentary wine press, a clay vat apparently used for fermentation, wine-soaked pieces of pots and a cup and drinking bowl.⁶ From the grapes to the glass: what more evidence does one need?

What is clear is that the drinking of wine was widespread over the ancient world. The tomb in Abydos, Upper Egypt of King Scorpion I, dated to about 3150 BC, showed a chamber filled with imported ceramic wine jars.⁷ In the tomb of King Tutankhamun were found thirty-six wine jars, with labels giving the name and vintage of the wine, its source, and sometimes the name of the grower or winemaker. So, for example, one of the jars had written on it 'Wine of the House of Tutankhamun Ruler of the Southern On, l.p.h. in the Western River. By the chief Vintner Khaa.' There were faint traces of residue in the jars, and by analysing the component that gives the red colour to young red wines, Spanish scientists determined that the favourite wine of the young king was red.⁸

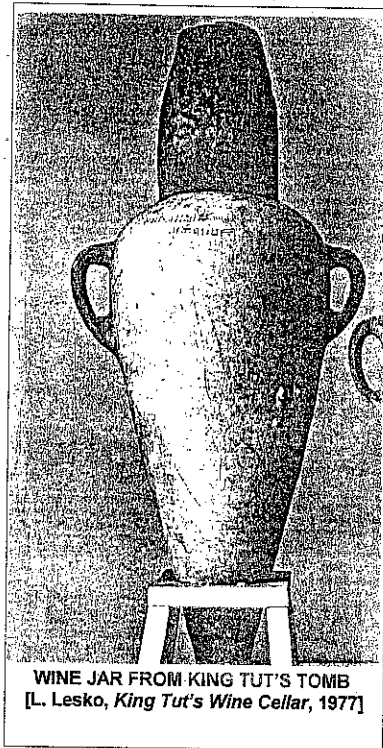
In Egypt, wine was drunk primarily by the kings and the upper classes. In Greece, however, it was drunk by everybody. It played an important role in *The Odyssey* of Homer, in Odysseus' fight with Polyphemus. Odysseus relates how he had saved from harm Maron, a priest of Apollo and his wife and child,

who in thanks gave Odysseus many gifts, amongst them twelve jars of a very precious wine, red and honey-sweet, which was so strong that it was drunk by diluting it twenty to one with water. When the ships reached the land of the Cyclops and the men landed, Odysseus took with him a wineskin of the Maronean wine. When, then, they were caught by one-eyed Polyphemus, and the monster had eaten a number of Odysseus' shipmates, the hero offered to him an ivy bowl of the undiluted black wine. He drank it, and Odysseus offered him a further two bowls. The Cyclops then fell back to sleep, after some of the wine gurgled up from him, carrying gobs of human meat with it. Odysseus and his shipmates then, with a hardened stake, put out his one eye.

The Greeks loved wine. Aristophanes has the orator Demosthenes declaim in *Knights* that 'tis when men drink they thrive, Grow wealthy, speed their business, win their suits, Make themselves happy, benefit their friends.' Plato, however, was quite clear in Book II of *Laws* just who should drink and when: 'Boys under 18 shall not taste wine at all, for one should not conduct fire to fire. Wine in moderation may be tasted until one is 30 years old, but the young man should abstain entirely from drunkenness and excessive drinking. But when a man is entering his fortieth year ... he may summon the other gods and particularly call upon Dionysus to join the old men's holy rite, and their mirth as well, which the god has given to men to lighten their burden—wine, that is, the cure for the crabbedness of old age,

whereby we may renew our youth and enjoy forgetfulness of despair.'⁹ In other words, once you are forty and thus an old man, you can drink as much as you wish and get as drunk as you want.

There was one Greek social convention which has come down to our time, but whose organisation has, regrettably, changed. This was the symposium, a word which meant nothing more or less than 'drinking together', and which we would today see as a dinner party of a special sort. Its modern definition as a learned conference probably derives from the habit of aristocratic Greeks of indulging in after-dinner conversation, although one faint hangover during the modern period might be the after-dinner conversation over a bottle or two of port. The so-called flute girls, who in Socrates' time were part of the ambience, seldom now make an appearance, although the geisha is perhaps a possible comparison. Plato, in his dia-



WINE JAR FROM KING TUT'S TOMB
[L. Lesko, *King Tut's Wine Cellar*, 1977]

logue *The Symposium*, emphasises the symposium as a search for truth, and the discussion that night focused on the nature of love. But his dialogue also provides some clues as to the uses made of wine. After the meal was cleared away, the guests had their hands washed, and were sometimes garianded with flowers and anointed with perfumed oils, although not on this occasion. The symposium began with a taste of unmixed wine, accompanied by hymns to the god Dionysos. Subsequently, wine was mixed with water in a large bowl called a kratêr, normally in the proportion of five parts wine to two parts water which was often sea-water. For the Greeks, only barbarians, such as those from Thrace, or Polyphemus, drank unmixed wine. The resulting drink was roughly the strength of modern beer; you could get drunk, but you had to drink rather a lot of it. One person, the symposiarch, was elected to set, in consultation with others, the precise strength of the mixture, the number of bowls to be mixed, usually three, and the size of cups to be used. The andrôn, a square room in the men's part of the house, had seven to eleven couches. Guests reclined on them, typically two to a couch, in the manner learned from the Assyrians in about 600 BC. Wine was poured, and the party began. I suspect that Plato's injunction as to how much one ought to drink was not always followed. One example was Alcibiades, described as the handsomest man in Athens, and madly desired by Socrates. He arrived drunk at the symposium, and took over the proceedings.¹⁰

The Greeks did differentiate between the different types and qualities of wines, preferring wine which was a bit sweet. Wines were often referred to by their islands or regions of origin—Lesbian wine from the Island of Lesbos, or Chian wine from the island of Chios, for example—but true connoisseurship apparently had to await the Romans. Here, my hero is Pliny the Elder, who is probably remembered primarily for being killed in 79 AD by the eruption of Vesuvius. But in his own day, for centuries thereafter, and amongst those today who are interested in the ingathering of knowledge, Pliny was famous above all for his *Naturalis Historia*, in whose thirty-seven books he surveys all of nature. Book XIV is devoted to the vine and wine. He describes the various ways of cultivating the vine, and follows this with pages on the many varieties of grapes and their uses. He talks about famous wines of former times, the oldest of which was the wine of Maronea, grown in the seaboard parts of Thrace, and used by Odysseus against Polyphemus. He also celebrates a more recent vintage, that of Opimius, called such because it was the year of the consulship of Lucius Opimius; this was in 121 BC, a year as memorable for the assassination of Gaius Gracchus 'for stirring up the common people

with seditions', or proposals for reform. That year the weather was so fine and bright—they called it 'the boiling of the grape'—that wines from that vintage, according to Pliny, still survived nearly two hundred years later. He did, however, add that they had 'now been reduced to the consistency of honey with a rough flavour, for such in fact is the nature of wines in their old age'. He discusses the unbelievable sums such wines attracted, stupidly, he clearly felt, and here one might think of the few bottles of wine from the cellar of Thomas Jefferson which still exist, one of which, a bottle of Château Lafite 1787, fetched £105,000 at auction in 1985.¹¹

Many are familiar with the Bordeaux classification of 1855, when the red wines of Bordeaux were classified as Premier, Deuxième, Troisième, Quatrième and Cinquième crus. Pliny pre-dated this classification technique by nearly two thousand years, when he listed Italian wines in order of merit, for, he says, 'who can doubt ... that some kinds of wine are more agreeable than others, or who does not know that one of two wines from the same vat can be superior to the other, surpassing its relation either owing to its cask or from some accidental circumstance?'¹² He then classifies Italian wines into first-, second-, third-, and fourth-class wines, other wines, and foreign wines. He does not, however, follow fashion blindly. Many commentators have exalted Falernian wine, and, indeed, he remarks that 'no other wine has a higher rank at the present day'.¹³ Pliny, however, puts it into the second class: the reason, he says, is that 'the reputation of this district also is passing out of vogue through the fault of paying more attention to quantity than to quality'.¹⁴ Modern parallels leap to mind.

But then, thanks to the barbarian invasions and the fall of Rome, we lost wine connoisseurship almost entirely, and in this case, if no other, the next thousand years or so were truly the Dark Ages. In part, this was the result of the neglect or destruction of farms and vineyards by the invaders (although the fact that many preferred barley- or grain-based alcoholic drinks to those made from grapes had an effect once they had settled down). Numerous accounts in Gregory of Tours' *History of the Franks* tell of this destruction and pillage: 'Those who had attacked Nîmes ravaged the entire neighbourhood, burning the houses and the crops, cutting down the olive-groves and destroying the vineyards'.¹⁵ Yet the greatest damage done by these invaders was arguably not the destruction of the vineyards and wineries, but the subsequent collapse of the economic and social structure of the western Empire. The division of Italy, Gaul and Iberia into a number of small warring kingdoms effectively undermined the long-distance wine trade whilst the decline of the population of

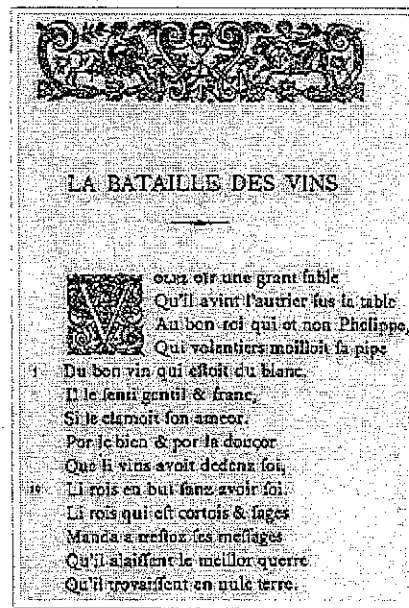
cities, such as Rome itself, dramatically curtailed the demand for such wines. Furthermore, there were reasons in the transport of the wine itself which mostly killed any chance of drinking decent wine. The Romans had used airtight amphorae for both storage and shipping, closed with cork stoppers, but this knowledge of the use of cork was lost during the mediaeval period. Instead, amphorae gradually gave way to wineskins and barrels and the cork was replaced by beeswax and oil-soaked rags—only in the seventeenth century did cork make a re-appearance.

But we must celebrate the attempt during the reign of Charlemagne as King of the Franks and then Emperor of the West (768-814)—or, perhaps, that of his son, Louis the Pious (there is some uncertainty)—to reform the making and the shipping of wine.¹⁶ Reforms were mandated in many areas of the economy. For wine, it was required [Clause 8]: 'That our stewards shall take charge of our vineyards in their districts, and see that they are properly worked; and let them put the wine into good vessels, and take particular care that no loss is incurred in shipping it.' [Clause 48]: 'That the wine-presses on our estates shall be kept in good order. And the stewards are to see to it that no one dares to crush the grapes with his feet, but that everything is clean and decent'; and [Clause 68]: 'It is our wish that the various stewards should always have by them good barrels bound with iron, which they can send to the army or to the palace, and that they should not make bottles of leather.'¹⁷

As a result, although the growing of vines and the making of wine merely survived in Southern Europe as part of a subsistence economy, it prospered north of the Seine and the Mosel, around Aachen, Rheims and Cologne.¹⁸ The concurrent expansion of monasticism provided both continuity and record-keeping. There are arguments over the actual importance of the Church in keeping alive the intelligent growing of grapes and making of wine—some ascribe great responsibility, since wine was necessary to the liturgy, whilst others argue that private enterprise, such as lay winemakers, were more responsible for keeping the knowledge and traditions alive.

The consumption of wine in Europe increased significantly in the late Middle Ages. After 1400, as the French historian Ferdinand Braudel has written, 'the whole of Europe drank wine [although] only a part of Europe produced it.' He also notes a geographical demarcation, pointing out that 'the whole population of northern Europe did not drink wine. Only the rich did as a rule',¹⁹ whilst the other normally drank beer. Nevertheless, overall, wine consumption increased, a trend as true for the lesser sort as for the better sort. (It has been estimated that the daily average in the fifteenth century was up to two litres a day.)²⁰ The better sort, of course, drank

better wine. This better wine became increasingly available because of more specialised varieties of grape being grown and much more attention being paid to how they were grown. It was not only Burgundy which benefitted from this attention.



Signs of a revival of a connoisseurship such as Pliny's are first recorded in the poem titled *La Bataille des Vins*, written by the Norman poet Henri d'Andeli in 1224. The French king Philip Augustus had more than seventy different wines from across Europe called for,²¹ including ones from the Mosel, Spain and Cyprus, to be judged and the winner to be a wine which

Par sa bonté, par sa puissance
 D'abreuver bien le roi de France.'

The judge was an English priest, an unbiased expert:

Une prestre englois si prist s'estole,
 Qui moult avoit la teste fole

—is this the first example of the celebrated English palate? This priest classified each wine as either 'celebrated' or 'excommunicated'. Naturally, most of the wines were French, yet a sweet wine from Cyprus, probably Commandaria, was the overall winner of the battle:

Vin de Cypre fist apostoile,
 Qui resplendist comme une estoile.
 And thus,
 Prenons tel vin que Diex nous done.
 Explicit la Bataille des Vins.²²

During the period of the Renaissance, regional distinctions became more pronounced, and specific grapes might be cited. Today in Italy, a useful but usually pretty neutral white wine is made from the Trebbiano grape; well, in his poem 'The Partridge Hunt', Lorenzo de Medici has hunters celebrating with a 'cask of cooling wine', adding that

'The Trebbiano wine was most suspicious,
 But longing will make anything delicious.'²³

There were a number of sixteenth-century treatises on wine, but two from the 1550s stand out. One is by Sante Lancerio, *bottigliere* or bottle master

to Pope Paul III, and is an account of fifty-seven wines which the two of them had sampled. All are Italian, except for a 'vino francese' and 'vino di Spagna'; they are classified by region and evaluated for their appeal to the palate. Here, apparently for the first time, colour, aroma, texture and taste are carefully considered. Words such as round, rich, delicate, powerful, smoky, and mature are used, and the foods with which certain of the wines would match most harmoniously are sometimes named. After most of the wines, Lancerio notes whether or not the Pope drank the wine with pleasure. The French wine was, they decided, unfit for gentlemen, whilst the Spanish wine was unfit for everyone. The red wine of Montepulciano, the pope's favourite, earned the greatest praise, and was proclaimed a wine for lords. To this day, it is called Montepulciano Vino Nobile. The other treatise, by Giovanni Battista Scarlino, is essentially a list of all of the wines available for sale in Roman wine shops, and, like Lancerio, the author says which ones are worth buying. He also suggests the linking of certain foods and wines, a fairly commonplace habit during this period.²⁴

There were, of course, many, many less good wines, produced in quantity from common-or-garden vines and with the highest yield possible squeezed out of them. Not expected to last very long, they were usually made with an eye to the wholesale markets in the larger cities. Cheap wine contributed to what Braudel noted as an ever-increasing number of ordinary drinkers and 'drunkenness increased everywhere in the sixteenth century.'²⁵ In Rome, for example, several hundred wine shops served a population of only about 40,000. The rest of Europe was just the same. Rulers from England to Venice tried to outlaw drunkenness, usually with little effect.

I want to pause for a look at the most obvious example of the intertwining of wine and culture, and this was in art. From the paintings and sculpture of Dionysos in Greece, to Bacchus and his followers in Rome; from the invocation of wine in religious paintings, to its place in the secular art of the seventeenth century and later, wine for millennia has had a prominent place in visual culture. After water, wine was the most widely consumed drink in ancient Greece. (Water, after all, could kill you.) Beer was dismissed as effeminate by Aeschylus,²⁶ and viewed with suspicion by many Greeks. Wine was a man's drink, and it is thus not terribly surprising that the image of Dionysos in early Greek verse was of a ruggedly masculine and sometimes violent figure, as well as a bearer of wine and good cheer. Religious rituals dedicated to the god virtually required that large quantities of wine be consumed; then there was music and dancing and heightened pleasure. Of course, at times the party got out of hand, and people

could be torn limb from limb, as Euripides makes clear in his play *The Bacchae*. But religious festivals were not the only occasion when large quantities of wine would be consumed: it was central to upper-class sociability, and was present at both weddings and funerals. And let us not forget its use in the symposium, when it stimulated the interplay of ideas, as well as, sometimes, other activities.

Dionysos, once he segued into the Roman god Bacchus, had a very different image. Here he was more likely to be unclothed, youthful, delicate, and rarely intoxicated. In his *Metamorphosis*, Ovid writes that 'For he is one whose youth never fades: he remains always a boy, the loveliest god in the heights of heaven',²⁷ a complete transformation of the Greek manly deity. In Roman art, except for individual statues, depictions of Bacchus tended to be limited to a few episodes taken from Ovid. One of the most popular was his rescue of Ariadne, daughter of the Cretan King Minos, from the island of Naxos where she had been abandoned by Theseus after she had helped him to slay the Minotaur.²⁸ From Roman sarcophagi to Titian, this story has stimulated the creativity of artists.²⁹

Wine was critical in both Dionysian and Christian rituals, but in very different ways. In Dionysian ritual, wine was drunk in large quantities in order to achieve an ecstatic, intoxicating union with the god; Christians, conversely, took wine in small quantities as a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and resurrection. There are thousands of drawings, illuminations, and paintings of Christ with wine. It is central to Christ's first recorded miracle, the turning of water into wine at the wedding at Cana. Another favourite subject was the Prodigal Son, whose welcome home feast normally included wine. Religion continued to play a predominant part in the visual arts for several centuries thereafter, but by the early seventeenth century, more and more genre paintings were being produced, particularly in Northern Europe. In many of these, wine has a central role to play, for good or, more often, for evil.³⁰

Genre paintings bring me firmly back to the secular life, in particular to the nature of a drinking culture. I want briefly to look at a country where it thrived and then was stopped, and at a second where it did and still does thrive. The first is Persia, or Iran; the second, of course, is Britain. As you will remember from the tale of Jamshid and the evidence of archeological remains, Persia had been a wine-drinking culture practically since the dawn of time. But in 642 AD, barely ten years after the death of the Prophet, the Arabs brought Islam to the country. In northeast Persia, where another of my heroes, the mathematician, philosopher and astronomer Omar Khayyam, was born, the orthodox principles of Islamic

law were determinedly enforced. Islam forbade its followers from drinking wine, a prohibition strengthened in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by the growth of religious factions, many of whom were fanatical in support of their beliefs. Born in 1043, Khayyam was nominally a Muslim, but he was secular in his bones, and had little time for turbulent religious controversies. Nevertheless, it was safer to wear an outward conformity, and the ruba'i, a two-lined stanza of poetry set out as a quatrain, provided a vehicle with which to express his disdain.

The ruba'i was epigrammatic: beginning with a reflection or a description, it drew a moral in the final line. Witty and intelligent people, such as Khayyam, could use it to express their feelings and opinions. With examples circulating anonymously and often voicing criticism of imposed doctrines and prohibitions, it was a favourite verse form amongst intellectuals, who might meet in each other's home and recite a ruba'i or two. Given that Persia had been a wine-drinking culture and Islam prohibited wine, what could be more natural than to use verses about taverns, the grape and wine both as descriptors and as metaphors for private opposition to the attempts to stamp out suspicious opinions? This is what Omar Khayyam did.³¹

Here is a verse with a touch of anti-Islam about it, in the famous translation by Edward Fitzgerald:

As much as Wine has played the Infidel,
And robb'd me of my robe of Honour – well,
I often wonder what the Vintners buy
One-half so precious as the Goods they sell.³²

This is even clearer in a near-literal translation:

Drinking wine and consorting with good fellows
Is better than practicing the ascetic's hypocrisy;
If the lover and drunkard are to be among the damned
Then no one will see the face of heaven.³³

But according to Khayyam, heaven probably does not exist—and this in itself might have been enough to condemn him, had the authorities known:

When the world is filled with the fresh rose
Command, love, the wine to be copiously poured;
Don't bother about houris, heavenly mansions,
Paradise, Hell – they're all rumour, too.³⁴

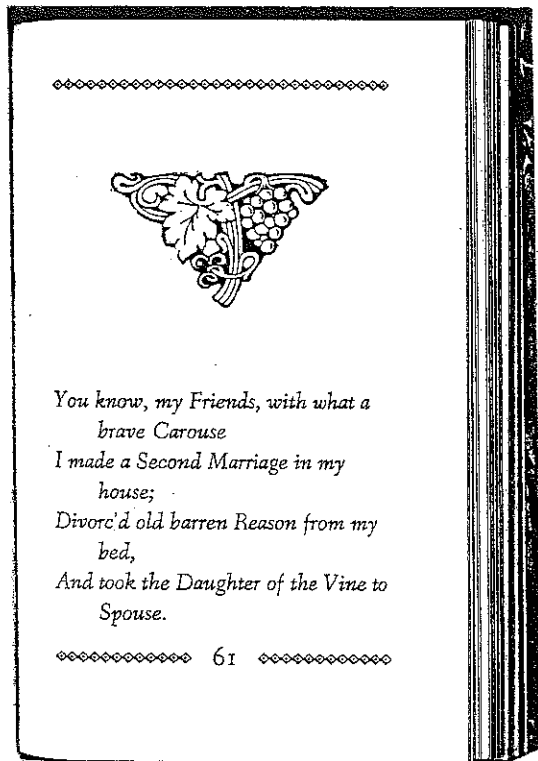
For Khayyam, wine was a metaphor for life: drink it whilst you can, because you will eventually die and there is nothing more. This is Fitzgerald's version:

YESTERDAY *This* Day's Madness did prepare;
TOMORROW's Silence, Triumph, or Despair:
Drink! For you know not whence you came, nor why:
Drink! For you know not why you go, nor where.³⁵

Yet, he was not always so ridden with anguish, or such a sense of finality. His ruba'iyát must also have struck sparks because of their occasional devil-may-care cynicism:

You know, my Friends, with what a brave Carouse
I made a Second Marriage in my house;
Divorced old barren Reason from my Bed,
And took the Daughter of the Vine to Spouse.³⁶

I wish, I wish that I had been there, sipping a glass of wine whilst listening to Khayyam recite his verses.



From THE LOVELY 1951 GREYSTONE PRESS PRINTING

But less enjoyable might have been to be stuck with that exemplar of British over-indulgence, Sir John Falstaff. His drink was sherry. Sack, or sherris-sack, was a very popular drink from the early Tudor period and through the next century or two. The plays of Shakespeare are littered with references to sack, but probably the most famous, as these things go, is Falstaff's paeon in Act IV of Henry VI, Part II:

'The ... property of your excellent sherris is the warming of the blood; which before, cold and settled, left the liver white and pale, which is the badge of pusillanimity and cowardice; but the sherris warms it, and makes it course from the inwards to the parts extremes ... [S]kill in the weapon is nothing without sack, for that sets it a-work.'

But sack did more than make men brave: it also 'Ascends me into the brain; dries me there all the foolish and dull and crudy vapours which environ it; makes it apprehensive, quick, forgetive, full of nimble, fiery, and delectable shapes: which is delivered o'er to the voice, the tongue, which is the birth, becomes excellent wit.'

So sack was a wine which could make the drinker—depending on the point of view of the spectator—witty and brave, or garrulous and foolhardy.

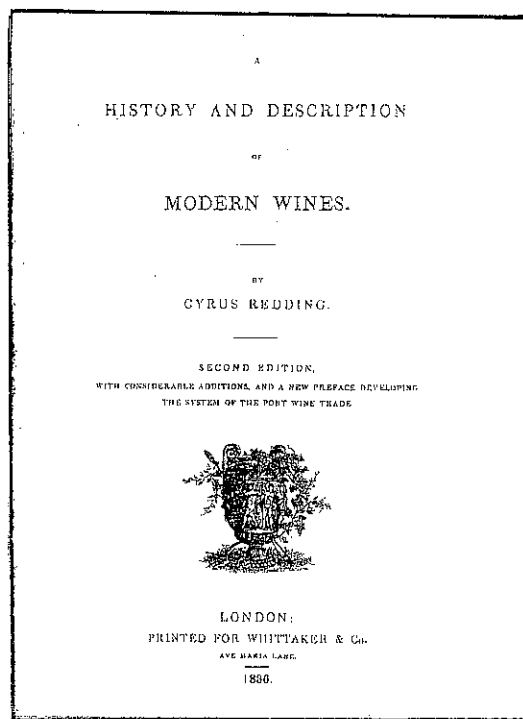


The English had a centuries-long affair with the wines of Iberia for reasons of taste and politics: centuries of war with the French had rendered access to their wines less than affordable, and the English were the most notable devotees to sack. Sack could be both dry and sweet, and the English—who had a notorious sweet tooth—often themselves added sugar or honey to it. But this passion for sack or its residual legatee, sherry, has drifted away—who knows why—but today, sales of sherry in Britain and in many other countries are notably low. The question is unanswerable: why is sherry—delicious and varied as it is—now out of fashion and drunk by only a minority?

The alternative for wine both alcoholic and sweet was port. For much of the period since 1386, Portugal has been a British ally; conversely, for even longer, France was an enemy. British governments therefore preferred that their subjects spend their drinking money elsewhere than in France, so they prohibited the importing of French wine, whilst keeping the duties on Portuguese wine very low. But port had to be massaged for the English market. It began life as a rather light red wine, but it then went through a makeover. First of all, in the Douro where port was made, twelve gallons of brandy were added to a pipe of port, then measuring about one hundred and forty-five gallons; then, 'the colour of the skin of the grape not being deemed deep enough, elderberry colouring is added', as well as another four gallons of brandy. The wine then went to Oporto, where another two gallons of brandy were added. At nine or twelve months old, most port was then shipped to England, another gallon of brandy being added on shipping. Two-thirds of port was thus immature when shipped, and it required being sweetened and softened. In all, twenty-four gallons of brandy were added to each pipe of one hundred and forty-five gallons; as well, a mixture called geropiga was added afterwards and before bottling (recipe for geropiga: fifty-six pounds of dried elderberries, sixty pounds of coarse brown sugar and treacle, seventy-eight gallons of unfermented grape juice, and thirty-nine gallons of the strongest brandy).³⁷ I have no idea how much geropiga was added to what was already a drink of some power. You

can imagine the result. But Englishmen loved it. There developed the concept of the three-bottle man—three bottles of the wine I've just described drunk at a sitting—and there were even clubs devoted to its drinking. One famous one was 'The Brilliants', a club in Covent Garden in London, whose only rules were the minimum number of bottles every member had to drink. Today's heavy drinking continues a long British tradition.

But your Briton not only drank port. Indeed, the Scots and especially the English, in spite of the difficulties of war or high excise duties, were the most notable consumers of the wines of Bordeaux, and nearly all of the first growths, such as Châteaux Latour, Lafitte, and Margaux, were consumed in Britain. Unfortunately, rather as was the case with port, they could not leave it alone because, as the 19th century wine writer, Cyrus Redding, wrote, 'the pure wine is not spirituous enough for the English palate'.³⁸ In order to make the wines attractive for this market, they had to use certain methods, which together were referred to as *travaillage à l'Anglaise* or 'working' the wine. There were two steps. Firstly, to give it a warmer or more intoxicating effect, approximately



Cyrus Redding's classic history was the first book in the English language to deal exclusively with "modern" wines. First published in 1833, its immediate popularity saw a 2nd edition in 1836 and a 3rd in 1851. four and a half gallons of brandy 'of the best kind' were poured over grapes as they were being trodden. For the second step, the producer or broker added more body to the wine by the addition of wine from the Rhône, such as Hermitage, or full-bodied wine

from Spain. The result was big, red and alcoholic, just what the British liked.³⁹

It is a curious thing that in spite of all of this, by the twentieth century, Britain was not a particularly wine-drinking country. There was beer, there was gin, there was champagne for special occasions, and Christmas called for a glass of sweet sherry. Port certainly continued to be drunk, but as for wine's making a regular appearance with meals, this was relatively rare, even amongst the upper middle and upper classes, the traditional buyers and drinkers of wines. The Second World War appears to have changed this. Many Britons spent at least part of the war in Italy or France, and there they discovered the pleasures of a glass of wine with meals or over conversation with friends, and when they returned to Britain, they wanted to continue this new way of life. But what to drink? Fortunately, Slovenia came to the rescue and provided a wine which took the new drinking classes by storm, becoming the best-selling white wine for several decades. This was Lutomer 'Riesling', really Rizling. The grape juice was fermented in Slovenia, shipped in bulk to the coast, substantially sweetened, shipped in tankers to the London docks, stored, and bottled as needed. Britain became awash with cheap, medium-sweet white wine which went down easily, and the drinking of which gave a touch of sophistication to households. Everyone needs a starter wine, and for many, this was it. Some presumably went on to prefer dryer wines.

But as the range of wines available vastly expanded, a lot of these new drinkers felt insecure: what should they buy in the shop, faced, as they were, with a bewildering choice? Great Britain now imports wines from at least sixty-five countries. Who can know all of these, which are good and which should self-destruct?

The ranking of wines has, as I've already indicated, a long pedigree: remember Pliny, remember Lancerio. A big step was taken in the mid-nineteenth century with the Bordeaux classification of 1855. Prince Napoléon-Jérôme, organiser of the 1855 Paris Exposition, asked for an exhibition of the wines of the Gironde, to be arranged by category. This task was eagerly undertaken by the wine brokers, who were rather more interested in the commercial possibilities than in anything else. The result was a listing of sixty of the leading châteaux of the Médoc plus one from the Graves and the leading sweet wines from Sauternes and Barsac. But how did they decide the classification to which each wine should belong? There had been earlier classifications of quality, one from 1647 and another in 1767; they also paid attention to lists compiled by later connoisseurs such as Thomas Jefferson. But most did nothing so unnecessary as actually to taste the wines to put them in their

rightful place. Rather, they listed the wines in descending order according to the prices they then fetched in the market, on the assumption that price reflected quality. This is the origin of the list which has an apparently unbreakable hold on the throat of the wine trade and of the more affluent consumer.⁴⁰ Yet, the mergers, acquisitions and breakups affecting most of these wine estates since 1855 means that the fundamental basis of the classification—that of a wine produced from the grapes grown on land belonging to a named estate—is, at the least, muddled. The whole situation supports the theory that the human quest for certainty is stronger than the desire for a more truthful ambiguity.

So—the list is imperfect, and limited to a small group of wines which few of us can easily afford to buy frequently. The need for help in grappling with choice was met in 1977 with the publication of the first edition of Hugh Johnson's annual *Pocket Wine Book* (he no longer writes the guide part). Wine merchants could be seen carrying a copy in their coat pockets, useful as it was for the comprehensive nature of its coverage and its sensible comments. In due course, native guides appeared in virtually all countries where wine was produced commercially, whilst in Britain, the number of guides to both vintage wine and plonk proliferated. Things were clicking along very nicely until, suddenly, a guru appeared. This was Robert Parker, whose mission is to help the poor consumer to find out more about a wine than could be gleaned from reading a label. But because rather than just telling you about the wines, he scores them, this imbues his choices with an objectivity and precision which others deride. How can you tell if a wine is an 89 or a 90, a 97 or a 98? This arguably spurious precision, and Parker's rock-hard certainty that he is accurate, gives him thousands of followers who place their wine bets on his choices. One also hopes that they like the kinds of wines he apparently tends to prefer—heavily extracted, alcoholic, less acidic, with 'gobs of fruit', what one female sommelier has referred to as 'penis wines'. Because the wines he picks shoot up in price, sometimes stratospherically, amongst those who invest in wine rather than just drink it, he is accused of having driven many winemakers to skew their winemaking methods in order to create so-called 'Parker wines', which he is likely to rate highly and which as a result will be swept up by eager customers—and by eager investors.

Parker's is by no means the only guide—there are a number, in addition to the wine magazines which also rate wines. Perhaps the problem now is in choosing your guide. But the Parker phenomenon has, I suspect, changed the wine world irrevocably. In the first place, the ranking of, in particular, the classed growths of Bordeaux, but also the top wines from

some other regions, and the use made of these rankings by investors, means that common-or-garden wine drinkers such as ourselves find that we are shut out, perhaps permanently, from enjoying some of the world's great wines. We cannot afford the cost. But this high cost has meant another result of the Parker phenomenon, the entry into the market of high-spending high achievers from countries in which the drinking of good wine is a prerogative of wealth, and extremely expensive wines are a status symbol of the first order. This has helped to engender a wine price bubble in the Far East which will pop sooner or later. But meanwhile, it has brought the rich classes of China, Hong Kong, Singapore and, to a lesser extent, Russia into the global wine-drinking community, and this means that demand for the great wines will permanently outstrip supply. We will never be able to catch up with the price.

What is more encouraging is that the expansion of the numbers of wine-drinkers has encouraged the expansion of the number of producers. There are now masses of interesting wines out there, for which one need not take out a mortgage. Not all of them will have a place in every guidebook, which means that the scope for personal discoveries is very large. Do you really need a guru? How much certainty do you require? Exploring is fun. The next time you go to a wine shop, go stand in front of the wines of a region which you don't know. Choose a wine, take it home, and drink it. You may not wish ever to drink it again, but you've begun a new venture. In the North of England you can go fell-walking. I myself recommend wine-walking, since it will not limit you to the geographically familiar.

The production and drinking of wine is a thread which runs through human history. And wine itself: what else can be so intellectually challenging, if you want it to be, whilst putting your senses on alert? What else has such a range of styles, of tastes, of aromas? And most important of all, what else combines all of these AND tastes so good? There are few greater pleasures than sharing a bottle of good wine with friends.



NOTES

1. For a discussion of this, see 'The Noah Hypothesis' in Patrick E. McGovern, *Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viniculture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. 16-39.
2. From the Homeric Hymn 'To Dionysus' by Hesiod, translated by Hugh Evelyn-White, *Hesiod: The Homeric Hymns and Homericica*, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 289.
3. McGovern, *Ancient Wine*, p. 244.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 72.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
6. <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/01/110111-oldest-wine-press-making-winery-armenia-science-ucia/>
7. See http://archaeology.about.com/od/predynasticearlyperiods/ss/herbal_wines_2.htm for a photograph.
8. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/4379286.stm.
9. As quoted in Book IX, Part 4 of the *Deipnosophistae* of Athenaeus. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Athenaeus/10D*.html
10. Plato, *The Symposium*, trans. by Christopher Gill (London: Penguin, 1999).
11. Pliny, *Natural History*, Books XII-XVI, trans. by H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, rev. ed. 1968), all three quotations at Book XIV, VI, 55, p. 223. See also Kathleen Burk, 'Was Pliny the First Wine Critic?', *World of Fine Wine*, Issue 21 (2008), pp. 92-3.
12. Pliny, *Natural History*, Book XIV, VIII, 59-60, p. 227.
13. *Ibid.*, 62-3, p. 229.
14. *Ibid.*, 62, pp. 227-9.
15. Gregory of Tours, *The History of the Franks*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (London: Penguin, 1974), p. 459.
16. This document instructs the stewards of the estates on how to run them. The tradition has been that it was for Charlemagne's estates, although there is no real evidence for this. His son Louis the Pious ruled Aquitaine from 794 to 813, before becoming emperor in 814, and is known to have reformed the estates in his area. See H.R. Loyn and John Percival, eds, *The Reign of Charlemagne: Documents on Carolingian Government and Administration* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975). Darryl Campbell dates the *Capitulare* to 794, when the court moved to Aachen; see 'The *Capitulare de villis*, the *Brevium exempla*, and the Carolingian Court at Aachen', *Early Medieval Europe*, Vol. 18, issue 3 (Aug. 2010), 243-64.
17. *Capitulare de villis vel curtis imperialibus* in *ibid.*, quotes on pp. 66, 70, and 73.
18. Susan Rose, *The Wine Trade in Medieval Europe 1000-1500* (London: Continuum, 2011), pp. 97-100 for Cologne, for example.
19. Ferdinand Braudel, *Capitalism and Material Life 1400-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), quotes on pp. 162 and 164.

20. A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001). The peasants of Langree drank between 1½ and 2 litres per day, whilst the inhabitants of Bologne and Florence drank almost 2 litres per day (p. 5). Her Table 2.2 (pp. 29-30) gives some annual per capita figures – e.g., a noble household in Arles drank 800 litres, whilst the annual per adult at the Hospital of San Gallo in the 15th century was 200-750.
21. The wines are all listed in the poem, but for a list in English, see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_the_Wines. For a map of where the wines came from, including their classification as Celebrated or Excommunicated, see *Hugh Johnson's Story of Wine* (London: Mitchell Beazley, 1989), p. 123.
22. http://fr.wikisource.org/wiki/La_Bataille_des_vins.
23. John Varriano, *Wine: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010), p. 102.
24. Based on *ibid.*, pp. 102-3. Sante Lancerio, "Della Qualità dei Vini," in *Arte della Cucina*: Giovanni Scarlino, *Nuova Trattato della Varietà, e Qualità dei Vini...in Roma*.
25. Braudel, *Capitalism*, p. 165.
26. Max Nelson, *Barbarian's Beverage: A History of Beer in Ancient Europe* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 27-8.
27. Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, trans. by Mary M. Innes (London: Penguin, 1955), Book IV, p. 96.
28. *Ibid.*, Book VIII, pp. 183-4.
29. Varriano, *Wine*, pp. 63-5, 112-25.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 104-73.
31. Kathleen Burk, 'Why did Omar Khayyam write so much about wine?' in Kathleen Burk and Michael Bywater, *Is This Bottle Corked? The Secret Life of Wine* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 22-5.
32. *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam: First and Fifth Editions*, trans. by Edward FitzGerald (New York: Dover Publications, 1900), verse 95, p. 48. This version is from the 5th ed., published in 1889.
33. *The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam*, trans. by Peter Avery and John Heath-Stubbs (London: Penguin, 2004), verse 222, p. 101.
34. *Ibid.*, verse 178, p. 91.
35. *Ibid.*, verse 74, p. 43.
36. *Ibid.*, verse 55, p. 38.
37. Cyrus Redding, *A History and Description of Modern Wines* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1851, 3rd ed.), pp. 240-41. See also Kathleen Burk, 'Cyrus Redding: Man of Letters and Wine', *World of Fine Wine*, Issue 28 (2010), pp. 78-85.
38. Redding, *Modern Wines*, p. 170.
39. *Ibid.*, pp. 169-70.
40. Dewey Markham, Jr., *1855: A History of the Bordeaux Classification* (New York: John Wiley, 1998), 535pp.



Welcome! to our new Tendril members. Martin Doerschlag (mdoerschlag@gmail.com) in Washington, DC, is an avid longtime wine buff and an enthusiastic budding collector of wine books. Mark L. Chien (mlc12@psu.edu), is State Viticulture Educator, Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension, College of Agricultural Sciences.

The History Press Series

Thanks to Hudson Cattell we learn about the History Press series of U.S. state wine histories. Books published so far are on Virginia, Michigan, North Carolina, Connecticut and Maryland. His own contribution to the series, *The History of Pennsylvania Wine*, with Linda Jones McKee, was published this June. Each book in the series follows the History Press formula, being 125–150 pages, 70 photos and a color photo section of between 16 and 32 pages, 9 x 6, bound in colorful card wraps. The volumes are priced at \$19.99. Hudson believes the series will be limited to the states of the East and Midwest, at least for the time being. He reviewed the North Carolina and Michigan histories for *Wines & Vines*, and assessed both as "valuable contributions to Eastern wine literature." He later remarked that, unfortunately, the Connecticut volume "is more of a travel guide than a history and has more than a few serious misspellings and errors."

Congratulations to Hudson Cattell!

Mike Fordon, Library Coordinator at Frank A. Lee Library, NYSAES, Cornell University, Geneva, has passed along the splendid news that Hudson Cattell has received the first Lifetime Achievement Award of the Eastern Winery Exposition for his work in documenting Eastern North America's wine industry since 1976. For the complete award news, please visit www.winesandvines.com/template.cfm?section=news&content=98253.

Welcome Back, John Roberts!

With great pleasure we announce that John Roberts, Bookseller (Bristol, UK), has resumed his business in the world of antiquarian wine and gastronomy books. It has been a lapse of almost eight years, and we have missed him and his treasures. You can search his available books listed on ABE at www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?vci=57626123&vcat=Wine___and___Other___Drinks&vcatn=Wine+and+Other+Drinks, and at www.abebooks.com/servlet/SearchResults?vci=57626123&vcat=Cookery___Food___Gastronomy&vcatn=Cookery%2C+Food%2C+Gastronomy, or he welcomes short lists of desiderata at wine.books@blueyonder.co.uk.

Not To Be Missed

Although technically not a "wine book," *Napa Valley Historical Ecology Atlas: Exploring a Hidden Landscape of Transformation and Resilience*, by Robin Grossinger (Berkeley: UC Press, 2012), is so well-researched and written, embellished with magnificent maps, photographs, and other color illustrations, that you will gratefully welcome this fascinating atlas into your library.

The Garden of the World

is the title of a new novel by Lawrence Coates (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2012, 201 pp.), Associate Professor of Creative Writing at Bowling Green State University, Ohio. Set in Northern California's Santa Clara Valley with its once flourishing wine industry, it is a well-told, rather aching, saga of a pioneer wine family: the fiercely ambitious winegrower father, the phylloxera epidemic, the perils and trials of Prohibition, betrayal, the bitter alienation of his older son. It is a good read.

An Editor Smiles: TYPICAL TYPE TYPOS

The typographical error is a slippery thing, and sly.

You can hunt till you are dizzy but it somehow will get by.

Till the forms are off the presses, it is strange how it keeps:

It shrinks down to a corner, and it never stirs or peeps.

The typographical error is too small for human eyes,

Till the ink is on the paper ... when it grows to mountain size.

The boss, he stares with horror, then grabs his hair and groans:

The copy reader drops his head upon his hands and moans.

The remainder of the issue may be as clean as clean can be.

But the typographical error is the only thing that you see. — Anon.



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THE MAKERS OF AMERICAN WINE:

A Record of Two Hundred Years by Thomas Pinney
A Review by Hudson Cattell

THOMAS PINNEY, WHOSE TWO-VOLUME *History of Wine in America* comes as close to being a definitive history of American wine as we're likely to have for many years to come, has now retold the story of American wine in a different way. In this book, the 200 years of wine history comes alive through the stories of thirteen people who either played an important role or represented a significant change in direction that occurred at some point during the past two centuries. Some of the names are familiar: Ernest and Julio Gallo—they are counted as one person in the list of thirteen—and Robert Mondavi will be well known to most readers. Other names such as Charles Kohler and Percy T. Morgan may not be.

In his introduction, Pinney makes it clear that the individuals he has chosen to profile do not in any way constitute a "most important people" list. Sometimes they are representatives or symbolic of something new on the American wine scene. Thus, the chapter on Andrea Sbarboro, an Italian immigrant who in the 1880s helped make Italian-Swiss Colony a leader in California wineries, is subtitled "The Italians are Coming." Here Pinney recognizes the dominant role that Italians with such family names as Gallo, Foppiano, Martini, Bisceglia and Mondavi came to play in the growth of the American industry after Repeal.

Importantly, Pinney has written a history book to please himself as well as make a contribution to history of American wine. The thirteen significant advances or achievements he identifies are presented to the reader through the lives and careers of the people he associates with these events. In his introduction, he states that one of his intentions in writing the book, and a reason for choosing some lesser known people to profile, was to give them the overdue recognition they deserve.

Pinney presents a broad overview of the 200-year historical record. The first three chapters are devoted to Jean Jacques Dufour, Nicholas Longworth and George Husmann. While Dufour's Kentucky Vineyard Society in the late 1700s and early 1800s ended in failure, his determination to succeed helped make it possible for Nicholas Longworth to establish the Cincinnati area as a winegrowing center in the second quarter of the 19th century. The 568,000 gallons of wine produced there in 1859 were based on Catawba, an American grape, and marketed under that name. George Husmann, whose career began in Hermann, Missouri, in the middle of the 19th century and later continued in California, is