

## THE EARLY HISTORY OF WINE MAKING IN ST. CHARLES COUNTY

*The following speech was read on July 28, 1962 by retiring president, William F. Baggerman before members and guests attending the regular quarterly meeting of the St. Charles County Historical Society held at Augusta (St. Charles County) in the cellars of the old Mount Pleasant Wine Co. Two hundred-forty nine persons were served a buffet supper in the wine cellars by caterer Glen Wood of Washington, Missouri. The serving was done in the room under the winery building and members then sat down to tables in the other room. There were about twenty-five tables set up on this room. Each table had a red and white checked cloth and several old wine bottles topped with lighted candles, the only light used. Wepprich's Virginia Seedling was served.*

Virgil, the poet of the vineyards and the wines, long ago wrote: "Bacchus is partial to broad, sunny hills." Universally, we associate grape growing with rugged lands. In Italy, the slopes of Vesuvius are planted with grapevines; the hills of Madeira are covered with the vines; Burgundy comes from the rolling lands in France; and all the world knows of the vine clad banks of the Rhine. These examples show how desirable rolling lands are for grape growing. It is a source of wonder to visitors to the famous grape lands of the world when they see how steep and lofty the slopes of many of them are, yet kept in perfect condition. Often in stony, shallow soils on the hillsides of French and German wine regions must be carried up on human backs, one sees vines at the height of growth.

Soil is the supreme factor in grape growing. Important though climate is, soil dominates. A vineyard on one side of the road may be excellent, on a slightly different soil of the other side, miserable. In many of the European grape-growing countries are to be found vineyards in which the soil is so precious that vines are planted to the edges of the roads and in the shadow of buildings. Of these vineyards, Ernest Peixotto, in his admirable "A Bacchic Pilgrimage" has written:

"So valuable, indeed, is this soil that when the vine-dressers leave their work in the evening, they caressfully wipe off their sabots, so that not an ounce of the previous earth will be lost upon the road, even as the gold-workers, when they quit their work, comb out their hair and clean their fingernails so that none of the precious metal will be lost."

Virgil, writing in Christ's time, gave good advice on selecting soils for the grape:

"A free loose soil is what the vines demand,  
Where wind and frost have help'd the laborer's hand,  
And sturdy peasants deep have stirr'd the land."

It is not a matter of chance that so many of the best grape regions in the world are bounded by water. In New York, Canada, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan, grape districts are on the Great Lakes or on inland lakes. In Europe there is the wide Rhine and the winding Moselle. The former vineyards of our own St. Charles County were located on these and other slopes overlooking the Missouri River. The reasons for the partiality of the grape to lands on the shores of lakes and river is apparent: the temperature of sites of large bodies of water is warmer in winter and cooler in summer, there are fewer late spring and early autumn frosts.

In a chapter on American Wines, in the volume, "Grapes and Wines from the Home Vineyards", the author U.P. Hedrick has the following comment regarding our area:

"There are a good many grapes grown in Missouri, the industries of grapes growing and wine making having been brought to the state by German vintners about the middle of the last century. Grapes seem to thrive best in Missouri, in the Missouri River Valley, a center of agriculture, once important, being at Hermann and Booneville. All growers of American grapes are greatly indebted to this region, as can be seen by reading the chapters on varieties, to a dozen or more men, Germans, who, in the last half of the nineteenth century, bred and distributed a hundred or more good grapes, some of them being among our best wine grapes."

The volume, "HISTORY OF MISSOURI", published 1885, on page 139, has the following information about the vineyards of our county:

"There are 400 acres in vineyards 200 acres in Femme Osage Township, and near the town of Augusta; the other 200 acres are distributed around St. Charles, up to O'Fallon, Wentzville, New Melle, Hamburg, Cottleville, etc. Wine is made in considerable quantities, and meets with ready sale, as also the grapes for table use, and each at remunerative prices. The most of the vineyards, planted prior to 1860, were of the Catawaba variety, which after a few years of successful cropping, proved to be a failure. At the present time two thirds of our vineyards consist of the Concord. The other principal varieties are Norton's Virginia Seedling and Herbemont. Connoisseurs here consider our white wines equal, if not superior to the best Rhine wines. The Concord will produce 500 gallons per acre. The annual production for the county in 1872 was about 100,000 gallons. New Melle has 8 wine cellars; total capacity 50,000 gallons. Augusta, 20; total capacity 100,000 gallons; Wentzville 1, capacity 20,000 gallons. St. Charles, 3; capacity 60,000 gallons, besides several small cellars, with aggregate capacity, 100,000 gallons. Hamburg and Weldon Spring have a number of small cellars, with a capacity of about 30,000.

The principal kinds of grapes raised are the Catawaba, Norton's Virginia Seedling, Concord, Cassidy, Clinton, Taylor's Bullitt, Herbemont, Delaware, and Hartford Prolific. Among these, for table use, the Delaware stands first and the Concord next. But when Catawaba succeeds it is the most profitable, and ordinarily, when it makes a full crop, it yields more than any other kind. The average yield of the whole is about 500 gallons per acre – in a favorable season 800 gallons can be obtained – the ordinary calculation being 18 pounds of grapes in the gallon of

wine." SOURCE: HISTORICAL SERIES Famous Winery Flourished (St. Charles Journal, Jan. 11, 1962)

With the exception of the wine cellar operated in connection with the Wepprich Wine Garden, the only known (though not in use) wine cellars in St. Charles are the cellar at 1400 South Fifth Street, on the property of the new motel and the wine cellar under the house at 305 Chauncey Street. The latter cellar is 16 feet wide and 26 feet long. It is built of Burlington stone and is about 10 feet high. The ceiling is arched and made of handmade brick. In the center of the ceiling is an opening, because the grapes were pressed on the floor above and the juice brought down to the cellar through a hose. SOURCE: HISTORICAL SERIES -- True French Style Home", by Edna Olson St. Charles Journal, July 7, 1960.

The famous St. Charles wine cellar located at 1400 South Fifth and built in 1833 is still in a perfect state of repair and will be maintained as a feature of Interest on the grounds of the new tourist motel being built at this address on Fifth Street. The cellar is of German architecture and the structure is entirely underground with the entrance made of Burlington stone dramatized by huge double doors lined with copper or brass on the inside. The doors hang on long handmade wrought iron hinges. The huge doorlock contains a crest and is made of iron, but the large key was lost long ago. The floor of the building is made of brick, laid in a pattern with an elevated brick stand on both sides. The stands run the full length of the building and served as racks for the wine barrels. Two of the wine barrels remain on the brick rack at this time. Eighteen inch walls support the brick arched ceiling that is vented in several places. The press house at the extreme end of the winery has windows of small glass panes, full of bubbles. Many copper pipes lead from the press house to the winery. The press house was demolished during the recent construction of the tourist motel. In the year 1833 the winery was built by L. Benoist, who had just come over from Germany and in the year 1835 he bought the winery. There were many owners later, including Arnold Krekel who became Judge of the United States District Court. He bought the winery in 1850. Edward Gilt owned the winery in 1885. The heirs of Edward Gut sold the winery and vineyard to Peter Minges and his wife, Ann. It was they who made the winery famous. They owned a very well known winery in Mannheim, Germany. Their oldest and favorite son, named Jakob, came to America at the age of 4 years to live with his uncle, Ake Gerst who owned a pork packing house in St. Louis. His parents missed him so they sold their winery in Germany and came to St. Charles with their four small children in May, 1885. On June 1 that same year they bought the old winery. Very fortunately they brought many grape seedlings with them and planted them their vineyard here and soon they were making a wine from dark grapes and sold for a tonic. The old ledger shows huge orders for this tonic for medicinal purposes to many parts of the country. Another noted wine they made was without sugar or water, the same wine they had made for use in churches in Germany. The ledger shows they shipped this "Mass Wine" in large quantities to New York, New Orleans, Kansas City, Jefferson City, etc. Mrs. Minges, the wife of the owner was known as a good cook and soon helped to popularize the establishment with local residents. Dinners under the grape arbor were served at 50¢ per person. Later a large outdoor dance hall was built and later a building was constructed for dancing and dining. Groups numbering as many as 50 came from St. Louis to enjoy themselves at the winery. They had to cross the Missouri on a ferry boat and

were taken to the winery by horse drawn busses, then operated by Barney Feuerstein. Some years later Mrs. Mingus became known as Grandma Mingus with an advertisement for the winery reading, "Every Day with Grandma is like Sunday". She continued to operate the winery after her husband's death, but in 1908 sold the business to Angelo Boggiano. The winery went out of business when the prohibition law went to effect. Recently the hill on which the buildings of the winery were located has been leveled for the construction of a motel and now only the cellar remains of this winery.

According to the records now available there were two large wine companies in Augusta, Missouri. One was the Augusta Wine Company founded in 1867 according to the original articles of association now in possession of Oscar Knoernschild. These articles were written in German and were known as the "statutes". Under them the company was authorized \$6,000 in capital stock which could be increased to \$20,000. The building of the company, the next building west of the Jacobsmeyer Tavern, remains in an excellent state of preservation however the cellars, having two levels, have been partially filled in. The unfilled area of the cellars has been completely sealed off and cannot now be entered. During the period of construction of the building bricks were made at a kiln on the location of the present town square of Augusta and the brick were probably obtained from this source.

The six original directors of the company were William Follenius, Christian Knoernschild, Inaz Viefhaus Gustav Muhm, John Knoernschild, and Heinrich Knoernschild. According to the articles of incorporation each member of this company was required to have at least 1500 vines, or as they were referred to in German, "wein stoeckea", literally translated, "vine stalks". Other requirements of the articles were that new members could only be permitted to join the corporation if two thirds of the members voted to approve. The directors of the corporation were required to make an annual report. According to the articles of incorporation the document was recorded in the St. Charles County recorder's office on pages 537, 538 and 539.

Though the growth of the grape and wine industry was rapid in Augusta, the heyday of this local industry was short. An Indication of the downward trend is given in a document in possession of Oscar Knoernschild, relating to the estate of John Knoernschild, deceased, dated November 3, 1884. This document indicated that the Augusta Wine Company did not have sufficient funds to pay debts due the estate. The reasons for this decline in the fortunes of the company cannot be established with certainty. Oscar Knoernschild however relates that immediate reasons usually given were that a leading salesman of the company referred to as "Wine Fritz", last name unknown, was careless or worse in extending credit to out of town accounts further made large sales on credit to customers in Chicago whose businesses were wiped out by a large fire. It seems therefore that the Augusta Wine Company went out of business as soon after 1884.

The other large wine producer in Augusta was the Mount Pleasant Wine Company, owned mainly by members of the Muench family from establishment until finally being forced, out of business by state and national prohibition laws in the earlier years of the 1900's.

In a paper entitled, "A Trip to Augusta St. Charles County" of about 1932 date, the author Helen Koch has written the following about the wine making in this community, and the Mount Pleasant Wine Company.

"The wine industry was of the most importance. As Augusta was situated on a nice sunny south slope, and the land being very fertile, it was especially adapted to the growing of grapes. The entire area which is now the town proper was once entirely covered with vineyards, as were the surrounding hills. Some of the remnants of these vineyards still remain.

There were many wine producers, but one, Carl Muench, was the most prominent. Mr. Muench had a vineyard of approximately seven acres and in the year 1882 produced about 7,000 gallons of wine. His first cellar was built in 1882 and the second cellar in 1888. The bricks from which these cellars were made were made from clay taken from the excavations. A brick plant was established on the property just for this purpose. The capacity of the cellars was about 30,000 gallons, and they were usually filled.

In 1856, while the temperance laws were being enforced the state, a number of German residents of Augusta, who found it impossible to enjoy themselves around the wine table in the manner common to their native land, took advantage of an ice blockade in the Missouri River to organize a musical and social society. They erected a tent on the ice and over the muddy waters of the Missouri organized the Augusta Harmonie Verein. Later the organization built the present Hall (now the American Legion Hall in which are held many of the town's social events."

As an indication of the span of active business operation by the Mount Pleasant Company, it is of interest to note the "Official Souvenir Program, St. Charles Centennial" dated 1909 which on page 66 contains a half-page advertisement of the Mount Pleasant Wine Company, Augusta, Missouri, George Muench, president: Paul Muench, secretary. The advertisement continues with the wording, "Wholesale and Retail dealers in Native and Sweet Wines and Brandies. For Sale at all Saloons". A similar advertisement appeared in the Plat Book of St. Charles County, published in 1905 by the Northwest publishing Company. Under the heading, "Leading business firms of Augusta, the following advertising statement, "Mount Pleasant Wine Company, Wine Growers, Native Wines, Homemade Brandies and Mount Pleasant Bitters, Highest Award received at World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1903." Then the president of the company was indicated as George Muench, with Paul Muench as secretary.

There are many legends in the community regarding operations of the wine company here. The one I have heard in several forms and with different names for the central figure pertains to the minister who was supposed to have visited the cellars during the summer and after being importuned into sampling many of the wines, promptly collapsed on again reaching the outside air. The late Mrs. Ollie Schaaf was our neighbor and related to me that strangers in the community were usually amused to see the wine cellar workers leave for home on warm summer days carrying black umbrellas to avoid the unhappy experience of the minister in the legend. Mrs. Oscar Knoernschild has an old metal advertising plaque for the wine company. On it is shown the south slope of the old town of Augusta, with the Missouri River at the foot of the

slope and with steam boats at a landing near where the M-K-T Railroad Station was recently located. In this connection I have heard that wine was often sent out on river boats with the filled wine casks being rolled down to the boat landing in the days before 1900 when the Missouri River was at the foot of the bluff here in Augusta.

I have been able to get more definite information about the manner of operation of the old Mount Pleasant Wine Company from Mr. Paul Fuhr of Augusta, who may be here tonight, and he gave me the following information about the operation of the wine company at that time.

Mr. Fuhr worked here about 1912. In that year the winery had a bottler and three other regular employees. There were also other occasional employees. During the grape harvest ten to twelve women were employed to cut grapes in the vineyards located west of the present barn and on the slope south of the main house on the property. In beginning the wine making process, the grapes were first rubbed off the stems. The grapes then went into a masher of two, two foot wide stone wheels. The masher was turned by two men, and the wheels of the masher turned in opposite directions. The grapes were then put in vats in the wine house to ferment. The mixture was then shoveled out of the vats into tubs. Two men work together on a tub. When the tub was filled it was carried to the press, also located in the wine house. The presses were stored here in the cellars and located near the main entrance are like those originally used in the wine house, but are only about a third as large as the original presses. The liquid mixture was then transferred to a large vat where sugar was added and water from the nearby well was pumped in by hand. As an aside to the work, Mr. Fuhr stated that he did not drink wine, but when fermentation was in process during warm weather he would feel partly intoxicated and sometimes would have some difficulty walking home. There was a hose from the mixing vat to the cellar below. The hose being put through the square opening that may be seen at several places below the top of the arch of this ceiling. When the vat was filled with the mixture of the fermented liquid, the added sugar and water, Mr. Fuhr said he would call to John Brinkmeier in the cellar below, and the casks in the cellars would be filled from the hose. Mr. Fuhr said he seldom worked in the cellars and was not able to give much information about the work done down there. He does remember, however, that the casks were of a height that a man could just about reach to the top of them. They were of a length that with two rows in the cellar an aisle of no more than five feet remained between. Also each cask had a so-called "manhole" large enough for a man to crawl in when cleaning was necessary. He was sometimes given the cleaning job and Wits also required to wipe the inside of the cleaned casks with sulphur.

I regret that many of the details to fill in other parts of the picture regarding the operation of the winery and vineyards here are not available, but I think some of the random recollections given me by Mr. Fuhr do fill in many interesting details.

In the spring a one horse "diamond" blow was used to throw the dirt away from the rows of the grape vines. Then two men would follow using two pronged rakes, called "casts" to bring the dirt in again. The varieties of grapes raised here were, Concord, Riesling, and Virginia Seedling. The amount paid to prune the grape vines was on a piece work basis and the amount a worker

received usually varied between  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cent per vine. Earnings of \$1.25 were considered good for this type of work. The vines were tied to the supporting wires with willow boughs and a special knot was formed for this purpose.

The women who picked the grapes at harvest time were paid about fifty cents per day. As part of the remunerations, wine was plentifully available for all workers in the winery and vineyards. Mr. Fuhr recalls that George Muench, who was then president of the company often gave orders that drivers of the wagons brining in the grapes bought from other vineyards in the community were likewise to be given wine to drink. The ladies usually preferred the sweet Concord wine.

During those days the Harmonie Verein continued in existence at what is now the American Legion Hall and a favorite drink at picnics was lemonade to which one gallon of Virginia Seedling wine was added to each ten gallons. This drink sold for five cents per glass.

Wine was often delivered to Washington, Missouri, during the winter in wagons over the frozen Missouri River, presumably to save the usual charges of the boatmen.

Recalling the unfortunate experiences of the supposedly legendary minister, mentioned earlier, Paul Fuhr remembers the man from Kilgen Organ Company who came to Augusta to tune the organ at the Lutheran Church. He finished his work early and came over to the wine cellar here. He met the foreman, Brinkmeier. The two men engaged in a long discussion with the visitor misjudging his drinking capacity in the cools surroundings. When he came out of the cellars however he fell over drunk. Years later on meeting he told Mr. Fuhr that he would never come back there again.

At the height of the wine making days here, the Muenches who owned the Mount Pleasant Wine Company pitted their red and white wines against the best of the European wines and won repeated honors. The two sealed bottles of Virginia Seedling wine which I have here, made in these cellars testify to this fact with the illustration of the two World's Fair gold medals reproduced on their labels.

Many years ago, George Husmann, vintage expert of the United States Department of Agriculture stated that the red wine made here at Mount Pleasant was unsurpassed. In the old days the story was told that Frederick Muench in endeavoring to buy the best wine in a Rhine Valley wine room was given a bottle of his own "Auslesse", made at Mount Pleasant from Missouri Riesling grapes.

The Mount Pleasant cellars are intact as you see, and if you have not already sounded the barrels, I must say that they are also empty.

The casks which you see in the wine cellar tonight are of white oak and along with the hand tools and other items which are on display come from the wine making establishment of the

late Alfred Nahm. These casks, presses, and hand tools are about sixty five years old. They were bought about five years ago when Mr. Hahm's property was sold and the winery dismantled.

The Nahm winery was in the basement of this brick house, Just off Highway 94, west of Augusta. His winery had a capacity of 3,000 gallons and all of the work was done by hand. I remember visiting with him on the front porch of his home during the early 1950's and hearing of the hopes he still held for his beloved vineyards. Hahm believe that a Missouri law passed several years previously, lowering license fees would help to bring about the revival of the wine industry in Missouri and particularly in this area. It seems though now that the steep Rhine River like slopes of this area in St. Charles County, even with its unusual and very favorable wind-blown loose types soil, will never again be able to compete with the grape and wine areas of California. These other areas are unable to produce the highest quality wine grapes, but are better suited to low cost machine-like production.

Most of the following information was given me by Mrs. Arnold Knoernschild, of Augusta, a daughter of Alfred Nahm. Some of the facts are from newspaper articles printed in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch and the St. Louis Globe Democrat in about 1940 and others are from Mrs. Knoernschild's recollections.

Alfred Nahm was one of the last, if not the last, of a famous group of vintners of the Augusta-Hermann grape belt. He was a grape grower and wine maker for more than 64 years and when his vineyard was in production his wine varieties would average about 500 gallons to an acre. The principal varieties which he grew were Missouri Riesling, Elvira and Virginia Seedling.

Whenever the possibility of a revival of the grape and wine industry in Missouri was discussed, he expressed himself as believing that any new wine industry would have to take much of the pattern of the old, especially in the matter of grape varieties. He believed that such fine old grapes as the Riesling, Elvira and Seedling would have to have a place, in new planting because they are so well adapted to the Missouri soil and climate. Moreover, they were in his opinion, unexcelled for white and red wines. Nahm's favorite variety was the Missouri Riesling, a white grape from which he made a dry white wine. In 1889, in the heyday of wine making along the Missouri River, the Riesling Wine competed on the New York market with the best European imports.

The Elvira variety is still grown in New York State for champagne blends.

The Virginia Seedling, a blue grape with heavy pigment, makes a heavy-bodied wine and also is used for blending. When first developed at Hermann as a wine variety the Virginia Seedling enjoyed a great boom. Rootlets for the planting sold for \$1.00 each and the first wine brought \$5.00 per gallon, indeed a high price for the post Civil War period. The French families in St Louis prized this red wine for table use.

Although the full possibilities of grafting grapes on improved rootstocks to increase vigor are now well known, Alfred Nahm and his father grafted a few slow growing varieties on the sturdy



Virginia Seedling about 75 years ago. They got a sturdy vine of much vigor, but did not expand experimental work. In recent years at the Missouri Fruit Experimental Station, production of some weak varieties of grapes was increased four times by grafting them on certain compatible root systems. To demonstrate the durability of the Old Missouri wine grapes, Nahm had maintained several vines planted in 1880 and they produced until about 1950.

Earlier in this talk the volume "HISTORY OF MISSOURI" was quoted regarding the number of wine cellars in the various wine making communities of St. Charles County. In that quotation Augusta was indicated as having 20 cellars. Three cellars in Augusta have been mentioned, namely those of the Augusta Wine Company, the Mount Pleasant Wine Company and those of Alfred Nahm. I have been unable to locate any formal records naming the twenty; however, Mr. Oscar Knoernschild has given me the names and locations of many of the smaller cellars that he recalls. They are: the cellars located on the present Lindell Nadler place, the Leland Nadler place, the Bratton place (formerly Ewig), the wine cellar of Dr. Gerling under what was once the Schroer Store, now the Royal Neighbors Building, the former Eberhardt Fuhr place back of the depot near the grain elevator, the Otto Fuhr place (now the Lando Meinershagen place), the former Ernest Stock place on the bluff at the end of street to river from Haferkamp's store and the William and Theodore place, locations not now known.

As far as is known all these cellars were of the arched brick construction and it is believed that with few exceptions the brick used in construction came from the brick kiln of William Koch. This brick kiln was located on what is now the public square. Informal information indicates that the present square was once a small hill and it was brought down to its present level due to digging of the clay for use in brick making.

Though outside St. Charles County, a like minded contemporary of Alfred Nahm, living in Gasconade County during the 1940's also made a historically interesting effort to perpetuate the grape growing industry made famous by his forefathers. He was Conrad Rabenau, a grape grower who experimented for years with scores of varieties of wine grapes. He too tried to bring about a revival of wine making in this area. Before the destruction of the Hermann wine industry by prohibition he had sold grapes to the wineries.

"Our grapes and our wines were too precious to let perish", Rabenau declared. "I hope to lead the way to a revival of grape growing around Hermann by keeping alive the old varieties and demonstrating to our young men that they grow to perfection on our loose hills. I am also planting some of the very newest grapes that have promise of making fine wine. My experience gained throughout sixty-two years convinces me that any grapes will grow to perfection on the Missouri River Hills." "I know of more than a hundred varieties of grapes growing ideally and producing fine crops in Missouri soil and climate."

In Rabenau's collection of grapes were Black Pearl, Dry Hill Beauty and Elvira. Local varieties that were used by the once famous Stone Hill Wine Company of Hermann in making wines that competed at Paris and over the best wines of Europe. In Hermann that wine cellars in the commercial cellars have been entirely dismantled. The largest cellar is now used for growing

mushrooms. Therefore, it seems too that the effort there to revive the wine industry have been no more successful than in our own St. Charles County. The problem of the expensive hand labor required to produce grapes commercially on these hillsides is probably beyond solution.

Though of perhaps only academic interest, I would like to add a personal comment. When Wepprich's Wine Garden of St. Charles sold their vineyard area several years ago I was able to get ten of their Riesling vines and they are now growing profusely on our hillsides and producing well. At least I can say that the old variety of Riesling is being kept alive.

We have been mentioning the famous Missouri Riesling variety of grapes often, so let us digress from history for a few moments to relate a few facts about the grape variety that was largely responsible for making the wine industry possible in this area. When ripening in the later part of September these grapes are a golden yellow. The variety was originated in the Hermann, Missouri area. It grows best on hillside locations. This type of location provides the important drainage and frost protection. The Riesling grape is known as a "white" variety. Wine made from it is a dry, white wine comparable to the finest wines of the Rhine Valley of Germany. By comparison the Virginia Seedling grapes produce red wine, which was widely used as a medicinal wine. The seedling grape was also developed for wine purposes by the old German wine makers of Hermann and Augusta.

However, necessity not choice, dictated the search that produced the fine old wine grapes of the Missouri "wine belt". The German settlers lost faith in the Concord variety shortly after the Civil War when black rot practically destroyed several crops. The Virginia Seedling came into favor because of its relative immunity to rot, and soon after, Missouri Riesling was widely planted. Not until 1890 did grape growers learn that Bordeaux mixture as a spray would effectively protect all varieties from rot.

As you now know through the paragraphs before, wine making in Missouri can only be called a thing of the past. However, we can take some local pride in the fact that our state's only legal home-made wine maker continues in operation in our own county. This is, of course, Emil Wepprich, operator of Wepprich's Wine Garden.

In a newspaper article of September 9, 1956 some interesting information is given regarding wine making in St. Charles and in conclusion I would like to quote a few paragraphs from it.

"Grapes are ripening in many vineyards, but inquiry discloses that only one citizen in the State of Missouri is ready to take advantage of the State's complex legislation permitting legal home-made wine.

Hollis M. Ketchum, state liquor control supervisor, reported this year as for years in the past, the sole holder of a citizen's license for light winemaking is Emil Wepprich, 1219 South Main Street, St. Charles.

“By paying the state \$5.00 for each 500 gallons he makes a year, Wepprich and his uncle, William Herman, continue a tradition unbroken since it was established by Wepprich’s later father, Austrian-born Michael Wepprich, on repeal of prohibition in 1933.

“But this year, for the first time since the eight acres now owned by Wepprich started producing grapes on the sun drenched Missouri bluffs in 1887, there will be no yield.

“The vines, declining in production, were taken out last fall,” he explained, “and this year he is in the market for other Missouri-grown grapes. In the past he has made Concord, Riesling and Virginia Seedling grape wine.”

The stipulation on Missouri-grown grapes (or berries or vegetables) is part of the law under which Wepprich receives his license. He may make up to 5,000 gallons if he chooses, but plans to make less than 2,000 this year, paying \$20 for the privilege, he said.

Unlike wine made by full-fledged wineries, Wepprich’s product may not exceed 14 percent of alcoholic content by weight, compared with 22 percent for wineries. Winery license fees begin at \$100.

Wepprich’s license, issued under various sets of laws that originally envisioned chiefly home consumption by family members and guests, also permits sales to licensed retail or wholesale liquor dealers in five gallon lots.

Wepprich has no idea of availing himself of this provision of the law, but he does use another – that permitting sales to consumers on the premises in quantities not exceeding 4 7/8 gallons.

Wepprich, who lives above his home winery with his wife and five small children, sells wine to visitors, who sip it slowly on hot summer nights, seated at tables in his terraced garden overlooking the river.

Cool breezes sweep the hillside to the accompaniment of recorded music, Viennese waltzes, classical selections, and old time favorites among popular numbers.

“It’s a gracious old-world custom”, Wepprich said. People come out to relax. I had no idea I was the only one left in the business, though I had not heard of any place in Missouri operating just like mine”.

On the decorative end of a large wine cask in the dining room at Wepprich’s Wine Garden and Restaurant, the following German saying appears: DER WEIN ERFREUT DES MENSCHENHERZ, WER SICH ERFREUT, THUT SIEN PFLIGHT which means “The wine brings enjoyment to a person’s heart and one who enjoys himself does his duty.” As a closing thought I could like to suggest that the study of history and particularly local history, since it takes back to slower and more quiet times can also bring enjoyment to the heart in the troubled, uncertain present. This

meeting will have served a worthwhile purpose, I think if it helps to increase the interest in local history of these attending tonight. – Thank you.