

Wine Report from the Fort

By Fred McMillin

Northside San Francisco 1880 edition – Napa winery reviewed by Robert Louis Stevenson!

Mr. Schram's ... is the oldest vineyard in the [Napa] valley, eighteen years old, I think ... in the cellar ... Mr. Schram ... followed every sip and read my face with proud anxiety ... I tasted every variety and shade of Schramberger, red and white ... Schramberger Golden Chasselas, the latter with a notable bouquet ... [the vineyard] made a pleasant music for the mind. Here, also, earth's cream was being skimmed ...

– *The Silverado Squatters*



Jacob Schram (1826-1905) was a pioneer Napa Valley vintner.

Now let's fast-forward to the present. Another British author-critic, Hugh Johnson, praises Schram's, saying that the current owners, the Davies family, have produced California's best sparkling wine. The flagship label? What else but J. Schram! We've tasted it at the Fort and my notes read, "foamy elegance, memorable." Hugh Davies and the team also craft a J. Davies Cabernet Sauvignon mostly from grapes grown on their Napa Valley Schram vineyard, first planted in 1862. Hugh is still skimming that earth's cream. For more, visit www.jdavies.us

Postscript – Hugh and I have a "Bowdoin Bond," that is, we both attended Bowdoin College in Maine. He majored in American history. I, as a U.S. Navy electronics officer, took technical radar training.

A 2000-case gamble

"... the distinctive taste of chardonnay, it is actually rather neutral. The flavor many American chardonnay lovers enjoy is oak."

– *The New York Times*

The Gamble: 2,000 cases of 2007 Valley of the Moon Russian River unoaked Chardonnay (\$16/bottle).

Our contacts say it is far from neutral, so we'll taste it at the Fort and report next month. If you try it, fax us your opinion at 415-567-4468 and we will include it in our evaluation.

Get smart ... take a wine class

Saturdays, 1 p.m., 20 wines.

- June 14: *Basics for Beginners* – Learn the five basic types of wines and how they are made.
- June 28: *Taste the Terms* – Taste wines that illustrate the 100-plus terms used to describe wine.

To enroll or wait-list, phone San Francisco City College at 415-561-1840, or visit www.ccsf.edu/Services/Continuing_Education.

Was Mendocino named after a Spanish friar?

No. Two centuries before the first Spanish friars set foot on what is now California, an exploring Spanish ship, saw "this point of land" and named it after the viceroy of New Spain, Don Mendoza.

Postscript – Cape Mendocino is not in Mendocino County, but in Humboldt County.

Postpostscript – Here are the best Mendocino wines we've tasted at the Fort recently:

Rated good:

- Frey Vineyards Redwood Valley Zinfandel 2006
- Dynamite Mendocino County Zinfandel 2005
- Blockheadia Ringnosii Mendocino County Zinfandel 2007

Rated very good:

- Frick Winery Mendocino County Carignane 2005

Scored 91!:

- Handley Cellars Mendocino County Pinot Noir 2006

A white wine Twofer

Twofer? It's rare but at the Fort we just had two for one: best buy of tasting and best of all the white wines:

- Montpellier Vineyards (Bronco Wine Company) California Viognier 2005, \$7!

Northside's hunk of the month

My teaching partner Edgar Vogt described it as "big and deep." Vintner Jacob Hawke says the purple power came from a late harvest (Oct. 30) in Sonoma's Alexander Valley. Here's this single-vineyard treasure:

- Hawkes Alexander Valley Red Winery Road Vineyard Cabernet Sauvignon 2003, \$60

Postscript – The name Alexander? A fur trapper named Captain Cyrus Alexander came west from Pennsylvania about 1840, received a 48,000-acre land grant, and planted wine vines in the area that now features his name.

Bogle the beautiful

Northside S.F. reader Charlotte M. has been checking our Fort class selections with her own tasting group. Her results: Like our students, her group finds an outstanding value in:

- Bogle Vineyards Merlot 2005, \$9

Postscript – After writing the

above, we were happy to see *The Wall Street Journal* report that a leading producer of American lower-priced wines was Bogle!

And a final gourmet grin

When our son was a vigorous 15-year-old, I was surprised that on his own he bought his mom a beautiful Mother's Day card with a very nice sentiment on the front. The message inside said, "What's for lunch?"

Credits: Edgar Vogt; *Statistics:* Ophie Mercado

Fred McMillin was voted one of the best wine writers in the United States by the Academy of Wine Communications. Phone him with questions at 415-563-5712 or fax him at 415-567-4468.

FOR ADVERTISING INQUIRIES
PLEASE CALL 415.823.7797

WineStyles

Wine & Gifts

- Accessories • WineClub
- Wine Tasting • Gift Baskets

Exceptional wines at extraordinary prices!

Always a 10% mix n' match case discount, join our WineClub for a 15% case discount in addition to other great benefits!

2118 Union Street
between Fillmore & Webster

415.346.4700

thePetPhotographer.com
Lori A. Cheung 510.559.8119