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Equal Age for Age: The Growth, Death, and Rebirth of an Arizona Wine Industry, 1700–2000

By Erik Berg

On January 20, 1989, Arizona wine was flowing in the nation's capital. Newly elected president George H. W. Bush had just taken the oath of office, and all of Washington, D.C., was buzzing with the inauguration ceremonies. At the Commerce Department headquarters, members of Congress and officials from across the country gathered at a special luncheon as part of the celebrations. Among the beverages featured at the event were two Arizona wines (a Cabernet Sauvignon and a Fumé Blanc) from the Sonoita Vineyards Winery south of Tucson. For many of the East Coast attendees, it was the first time they had even heard of an Arizona wine, let alone tasted one. Rising from almost nothing in the 1970s, the Arizona wine industry had blossomed during the 1980s with the sudden appearance of new wineries, vineyards, and even a federally recognized viticulture area.¹

¹ Jean Novotny, "Arizona wines get recognition," *Arizona Republic*, January 17, 1989. The author would like to thank the following people for their assistance in researching and writing this article: Gordon Dutt, Lori Reynolds, Robert Webb, Jon and Frances Harvey, Penelope Edwards Pipkin, Jon Marcus, Tino Ocheltree, William Staltari, Eric Glomski, Kent Callaghan, Ann Buhl, Lori Barile, Sam Pillsbury, Gary Ellam, Rod Keeling and Jan Schaefer, Jon Hays, Kathy Knox, Bert Teskey, Wade Wolfe, Larry Clemson, Andres Ruiz-Olaya, Homer Thiel, John Kessell, Rick Hendricks, Mark Santiago, Lee Hill and the Arizona Department of Liquor, Bruce Dinges, Shay Pearce, and Phil Varney.

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On the other side of the country, Arizona's potential had caught the attention of West Coast wine enthusiasts much earlier. James De Barth Shorb, one of the most successful winemakers in California history, had even admitted that Arizona wine was "equal age for age with California wine." It was an impressive statement coming from someone in the nation's most famous wine-producing state. But even more astonishing than *what* Shorb said is *when* he said it. Shorb made that claim in 1888—more than a century before the Bush inauguration—and he went on to predict that "age, care, and experience are all that is required for Arizona to make a table wine equal to the already famous Zinfandel [of California]." By the end of the twentieth century, Shorb's predictions would finally begin to bear fruit but only after more age, care, and experience than he ever imagined.²

The notion of an Arizona wine industry is nothing new. Arizona's wine history is surprisingly rich and well aged—the current iteration being just the latest budding of an ancient vine with roots that long predate the state, and probably even the territory. Its earliest origins are the subject of legends and misconceptions stemming from the fading twilight of the Spanish colonial empire. It evolved in the pioneering days of the Arizona Territory and helped inspire the agricultural revolution that would transform the Salt River Valley. Before Prohibition, locally made wine graced tables from Jerome to Bisbee and, after the ban, it continued—now under the table—in illegal basement wineries and family kitchens. Finally, in the late twentieth century, a revitalized American wine market inspired a new generation of winemakers to rediscover Arizona's grape-growing potential. The current revival is the fruition of two centuries of struggles, false starts, forgotten successes, and lessons learned and relearned. Wine flows through every phase of Arizona's history and binds the region to larger viticulture trends and traditions that have shaped America's wine industry.

Priests and Settlers: Missions and Viticulture in the Spanish Colonial Era

Although Native Americans had been making fermented beverages since pre-colonial times, it was the Spanish who brought traditional

² "Arizona Wine," *Prescott (Ariz.) Weekly Journal-Miner*, November 21, 1888.

European winemaking to the Southwest with the introduction of the Old World wine grape (of the species *Vitis vinifera*). In many parts of the New World (and particularly the English colonies) *Vitis vinifera* struggled to survive as it encountered a host of new insects, animals, and plant diseases. Fortunately for the Spanish, much of Mexico was more conducive to grape growing. Equally important was their choice of grapes. Over the centuries, humans had cultivated many different varieties of *Vitis vinifera* (such as Merlot, Zinfandel, and Chardonnay) and one of these varieties brought by the Spanish soon proved hardier than its brethren. This vine did well in its new home and became the dominant grape. In Spain, this grape variety bore the name Listán Prieto, but in Mexico it was more frequently called Criolla. Years later in California, settlers would associate this grape with the gardens of missionary priests and refer to it as the Mission grape. Leveraging the advantages of the Mission grape and the Mexican climate, the Spanish established a new colonial wine industry within a few decades of their arrival. As they expanded north, they brought viticulture and winemaking with them.³

Viticulture in what would later become the western United States first began around 1630 when two Franciscan priests, Antonio de Arteaga and Garcia de Zuniga, established a vineyard at the short-lived mission of San Antonia de Padua at the village of Senecú (near the present town of Socorro, New Mexico). Farther south along the Rio Grande at El Paso, Franciscans also planted vines at the mission of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Mansos. Here the floodplains of the Rio Grande proved quite suitable for grape growing, and soon local settlers were starting their own vineyards and making wine for both personal consumption and trade. With limited

³The relative success of viticulture in New Spain was in stark contrast to the English colonies, where a range of problems prevented the establishment of a significant wine industry until well after the American Revolution. For an excellent overview of winemaking history in the United States, see Thomas Pinney, *A History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition*, vol. 1 (Berkeley, Calif., 2007). Historians and enologists (wine-grape growers) had long debated the exact origins of the Mission grape until the question was largely resolved by genetic analysis at the Centro Nacional de Biotecnología in Madrid, Spain. See Alejandra Milla Tapia, José Antonio Cabezas, Felix Cabello, Thierry Lacombe, José Miguel Martínez-Zapater, Patricio Hinrichsen, and María Teresa Cervera, "Determining the Spanish Origin of Representative Ancient American Grapevine Varieties," *American Journal of Enology and Viticulture* 58 (June 2007): 242–51. For a brief overview of early viticulture in Spain's New World colonies, see Rod Phillips, *9000 Years of Wine: A World History* (London, 2017), 181–92.

equipment and resources, these frontier winemakers made do with the materials at hand—often crushing the grapes and fermenting the juice in large rawhide sacks suspended on wooden poles. By the early eighteenth century, the El Paso vineyards extended north as far as present-day Mesilla, and “Pass wine” became popular throughout the entire region and was later traded along the Santa Fe Trail.⁴

Despite the early start in El Paso, it was in California where Spanish colonial winemaking would have the greatest lasting impact on American viticulture. Franciscan priests planted California’s first grapevines in the late eighteenth century and eventually established vineyards at many of the California missions, several of which proved to be in excellent grape growing locations. None was more successful than the famous San Gabriel mission near Los Angeles, which had over 170 acres of vines by the early nineteenth century and was annually producing tens of thousands of gallons of wine, brandy, and angelica (an aged-fortified wine made with Mission grapes). As with El Paso, the successful mission vineyards provided both vine cuttings and inspiration for local Spanish—and later Mexican and American—settlers who started their own private vineyards and laid the early foundations for the commercial California wine industry. By the start of the American Civil War, California was already producing more—and, by most accounts, better—wine than anywhere else in the country at the rate of a quarter million gallons annually. The rapid growth and early domination of California’s mission-born wine industry would eventually influence (and occasionally

⁴ Writing in the 1690s, Franciscan historian Augustín de Vetancurt noted that missionaries Antonio de Arteaga and Garcia de Zuniga planted a vineyard at Senecú in 1630 and made wine for the surrounding missions (other authors give a date of 1629). Vetancurt’s brief mention of the vineyard does not specify how large it was or if it was productive for the entire life of the mission. The mission at Senecú was destroyed and abandoned during the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, with many of the survivors resettling near El Paso. See Augustín de Vetancurt, *Chronica De La Provincia Del Santo Evangelio De Mexico: Quarta Parte Del Teatro Mexicano De Los Successos Religiosos* (Mexico City, 1697), 98 (author’s copy courtesy of the Louise Bulkeley Dillingham Collection, Bryn Mawr University. Passage was translated at the author’s request by Andres Ruiz-Olaya). The Spanish settlements of Parras (Coahuila) and Parral (Chihuahua) were also significant early wine producers. For a detailed account of El Paso’s early wine industry, see Rick Hendricks, “Viticulture in El Paso del Norte during the Colonial Period,” *Agricultural History* 78 (Spring 2004): 191–200. Also Paul Kraemer, “Origins of New Mexico’s Wine Industry,” *Tradicón*, September 2011, pp. 68–81. Hendricks notes that as many as 250,000 vines were growing in the El Paso area by the 1750s. Many El Paso vintners continued to use the old traditional methods up to the start of the twentieth century. For a detailed description of El Paso winemaking techniques from the 1870s, see William Pierson, Reports 98 and 101 to the Assistant United States Secretary of State, November 30, 1872, Microfilm Department, University of Texas–El Paso.



This 1872 sketch by William Pierson depicts an El Paso winemaker using techniques that dated back to the Spanish colonial period. Winemakers crushed grapes by foot using a leather sieve stretched across a large cowhide vat that collected and fermented the resulting juice. From the Journals of William Pierson. Courtesy of the University of Texas–El Paso Library.

undermine) those of its neighbors.⁵

Although missionaries played an important role in the early viticulture of California and El Paso, their use of wine and the extent of their winemaking is often misunderstood. Then, as now, wine was

⁵ Famous missionary Junípero Serra is often credited with introducing wine grapes to California in 1769, but wine historian Roy Brady and others have shown there is little to support this in the historical record. Evidence suggests that Fathers Pablo de Mugártegui and Gregório Amúrrio at Mission San Juan Capistrano produced California's first wine around 1782. See Roy Brady, "Alta California's First Vintage" in *Book of California Wine*, ed. Doris Muscatine, Maynard A. Amerine, and Bob Thompson (Berkeley, Calif., 1984), 10–15. Much of the wine produced at San Gabriel was intended for sale rather than consumption by the church. See Pinney, *History of Wine in America*, 238–46, v313. The 1860 census reported California making 246,518 gallons of wine that year, but Pinney believes the actual amount was probably higher. See *ibid.*, 266.

important for the ritual of Communion during the Catholic celebration of Mass where it embodied the blood of Christ. In many churches in the United States today, the priest and each adult member of the congregation may take wine during Mass, leading to the assumption that remote frontier missions had to produce their own wine in order to ensure a large enough supply. But the congregation sharing wine is a relatively recent practice, only becoming widespread in the last century. During the mission period, the Catholic Church followed the precepts of the older Tridentine Mass and only the priest took wine. As a result, the early missions and churches required only a modest store of sacramental wine for religious purposes. In much of the Southwest, this wine was sent to the missions from major supply centers along with other critical items like lamp and holy oil, candle wax, and writing paper. In his detailed account of New Mexico's Mission Supply Service, historian Frances V. Scholes notes that during the seventeenth century, the caravans from central Mexico always included a three-year supply of sacramental wine (typically some forty to forty-five gallons) for each priest. After the seventeenth century, priests were usually given an annual stipend to purchase supplies.⁶

Of course, missionaries might have wished for additional wine to use for trade or enjoy at the dinner table, but there were a lot of things frontier missionaries wished for and did not always have—including dinner tables. Then as now, not every region is suitable for wine-grape growing and many missions were in poor winemaking locations. Cuttings need to be kept moist and cool during transportation and, once planted, require several years of growth before producing any significant fruit. During this time,

⁶ During the Council of Constance (1414–1418), Catholic leaders specified that only the celebrating priest should partake of wine (the blood of Christ) during Communion with bread alone (the body of Christ) being sufficient for the laity. This approach was incorporated into the official Mass during the Council of Trent (1545–1563) and remained the prevailing practice in most Catholic communities until the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. For a detailed account of wine's changing role in Christianity see Tim Unwin, *Wine and the Vine: An Historical Geography of Viticulture and the Wine Trade* (London, 1991), 142–45. See also John O'Brien, *A History of the Mass and Its Ceremonies in the Eastern and Western Church* (London, 2014), 263–65; and Keith Pecklers, *The Genius of the Roman Rite* (Collegeville, Minn., 2009), 17–18. Rod Phillips also notes that church practices at that time required only small amounts of wine and was not the primary driver of Spanish colonial viticulture. See Phillips, *9000 Years of Wine*, 186. Frances V. Scholes, "The Supply Service of the New Mexican Missions in the Seventeenth Century," *New Mexico Historical Review* (hereinafter *NMHR*) 5 (Jan. 1930): 93–115; *ibid.* (April 1930): 186–210; *ibid.* (October 1930): 386–404.

they are particularly susceptible to the ravages of bird, beast, and bug. Although a mature vine can be surprisingly hardy, the fruit always remains fragile. In cooler locations, spring frost can damage new buds before the fruit forms, and, in warmer regions, the summer heat and humidity may ruin the fruit before it ripens. Finally, even in good growing areas, mission priests did not always have the necessary time, expertise, or materials to care for the vines, process and ferment the grapes, or store the results. As naturalist and historian William Dunmire observes, in the Southwest, “Contrary to claims that grapes were abundantly grown in mission gardens, conditions were not conducive for making decent wine.”⁷

Nonetheless, the romantic image of missionary winemakers remains popular today, particularly in Arizona where numerous websites, magazines, and newspaper articles have suggested that Arizona's wine industry dates to the arrival of the first priests—or earlier. For example, one common claim is that Jesuit missionaries brought winemaking to Arizona in the sixteenth century—a highly unlikely scenario that predates any Europeans (missionary or otherwise) settling in the area. A review of existing historic accounts from the Spanish colonial period provides a very different perspective of early Arizona viticulture and raises questions about who really did produce the first wine and when. We do know that Arizona's first permanent European inhabitants were Franciscan priests who established the mission of San Bernardo de Aguatubi (Awatovi) among the Hopi villages of northern Arizona around 1629. But at

⁷ William W. Dunmire, *Gardens of New Spain: How Mediterranean Plants and Foods Changed America* (Austin, Tex., 2004), 212. Dunmire blames alkaline soils and water quality for limiting missionary winemaking but does not provide sources for this conclusion. For an overview of the work and challenges associated with growing wine grapes today, see Ted Goldhammer, *Grape Grower's Handbook: A Guide to Viticulture for Wine Production* (Centreville, Va., 2015). Although the Mission grape did better than other varieties, it was not immune to molds, plant diseases, and other problems. Today's growers have many advantages over earlier generations, including access to extensive literature and reports, pesticides, and particularly the development of disease-resistant rootstock. Even with modern grape varieties, a new vine in southern Arizona needs to grow for several years before it has a good chance of surviving on its own without further human assistance and protection. The author wishes to thank Arizona winemakers Rod Keeling and Eric Glomski for their insights regarding the challenges with starting new vineyards in the Southwest. Early mission conditions were often spartan, particularly at newly established sites far from other existing Spanish communities. For an overview of conditions at the early Arizona missions, see John L. Kessell, *Mission of Sorrows: Jesuit Guevavi and the Pimas, 1691–1767* (Tucson, 1970). Thomas Pinney notes that beyond El Paso, colonial viticulture in New Mexico was mostly limited to small vineyards along the Rio Grande southward from Bernalillo and that these did not produce enough to generate significant wine trade.

an elevation of six thousand feet, it was not an ideal winegrowing location. Awatovi would have received sacramental wine as part of the New Mexico mission supply system, and there is no historical or archaeological evidence to suggest they ever made their own. Missionary efforts among the Hopi were not very successful and were eventually abandoned.⁸

The Spanish would have greater success in southern Arizona, where early efforts were led by the famous Jesuit explorer and missionary Father Eusebio Francisco Kino. In 1687, the Jesuit leadership assigned Kino the difficult task of exploring and converting the Native Americans in a remote region known as the Pimería Alta (meaning land of the northern, or upper, Pimas). Here the Pima people (known today as the O'odham) lived in scattered villages across a vast area covering today's southern Arizona and northern Sonora, Mexico. Kino established his base of operations at the new mission of Nuestra Señora de los Dolores near the village of Cosari (some sixty miles south of the present border town of Nogales). In a 1703 report to the viceroy of New Spain (Mexico), Kino proudly described the abundant resources of the Dolores mission including "cultivated land, productive gardens, a vineyard sufficient for mass-wine, trees that supply us with abundant Castilian fruit, and so on." From Dolores, Kino expanded outward, visiting other villages, mapping the region, and establishing new missions. In his memoirs, Kino mentioned instructing his fellow priests to start additional vineyards at the nearby missions of Remedios, Cocóspera, and Tubutama (all south of the modern border).⁹

⁸ As of this writing, just a few of the websites making the sixteenth-century (or older) claim include the Wikipedia entry for "Arizona Wine," en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arizona_wine (accessed May 6, 2017) and the "Appellation America" website, wine.appellationamerica.com/wine-region/Arizona.html (accessed May 6, 2017). Similar statements can be found in local magazine and newspaper articles. In 1582, a small exploring party led by Antonio de Espejo did report seeing wild grapes while passing through the Verde Valley, but they did not attempt to make wine from them. See Katherine Bartlett, "Notes upon the Routes of Espejo and Farfán to the Mines in the Sixteenth Century," *NMHR* 17 (Jan. 1942): 21–36. In his report on the excavations at Awatovi mission, architect and historian Ross Gordon Montgomery notes that wine was scarce in the region prior to the Pueblo Revolt of 1680 and thus they found no sign of a dedicated winemaking or storage room in the mission ruins as a simple cabinet would likely have sufficed to hold the small amount sent by the caravans. See Ross Gordon Montgomery, "San Bernardo de Aguatubi, an Analytical Restoration," in Ross Gordon Montgomery, Watson Smith, and John Otis Brew, *Franciscan Awatovi: The Excavation and Conjectural Reconstruction of a 17th-Century Spanish Mission Establishment at a Hopi Indian Town in Northeastern Arizona* (Report No.3, Reports of the Awatovi Expedition, Peabody Museum, Harvard University, 1949), 214–15.

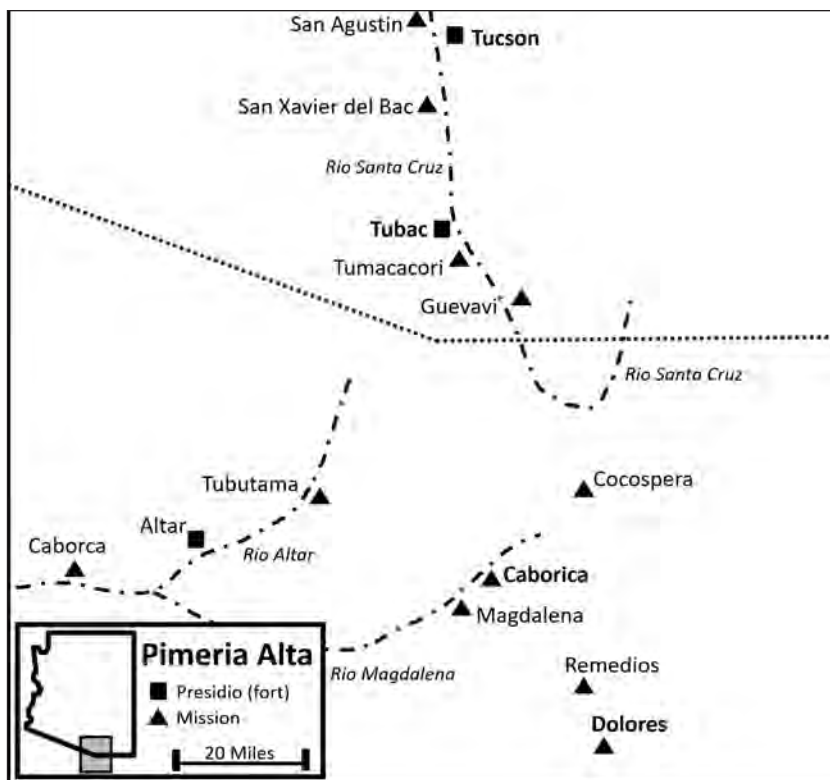
⁹ Eusebio Francisco Kino to Francisco Fernández de la Cueva, 1703, in *Kino's Plan for the*

Although Kino and his contemporaries were the first to bring viticulture to the larger region of the Pimería Alta, it is very unlikely that they produced any wine in what would become Arizona. In his travels along the Santa Cruz River Valley, Kino visited several villages in Arizona that would eventually have missions (including Guevavi, Tumacácori, and San Xavier del Bac), but for most of his lifetime (and for many years after), these sites were missions in name only without resident priests, assigned staff, or extensive development. The brief exception was in 1701, when Kino did assign a pair of priests to Guevavi and San Xavier del Bac, but both soon left their posts due to illness. If either priest had attempted to plant grapevines, they certainly did not stay long enough to ensure they would mature and bear fruit. Following Kino's death in 1711, the Jesuits' hold on the area weakened considerably and many of the existing missions were abandoned—including Dolores. The center of Jesuit activity transferred to nearby San Ignacio de Cabórica (sometimes spelled Caburica), where Kino's friend and successor Father Agustín de Campos tirelessly struggled to support the remaining missions and keep viticulture alive. While staying with Campos in 1732, fellow missionary Philipp Segesser reported that Campos still had a large garden with "plenty of grapes growing there to make enough wine for the offering of mass."¹⁰

In the 1730s and 1740s, the Jesuits made sporadic attempts at restarting the Arizona missions and additional Spanish settlers began to trickle into the area. Few of these new priests stayed at their posts for long, and Segesser noted that most missionaries across the Pimería had to purchase wine (and other essentials) by bartering with corn and wheat. "With this field produce," he reported, "the missionary pays for wax candles, wine for mass, church ornaments, and his own household." The longest-serving Arizona priest

Development of Pimería Alta, Arizona and Upper California, trans. Ernest J. Burrus (Tucson, 1961), 27–28; Eusebio Francisco Kino, *Historical Memoir of Pimería Alta*, 2 vols., trans. Herbert Eugene Bolton (Cleveland, Ohio, 1919), 2:265. For a general overview of Kino's life and career, see Charles W. Polzer, *Kino: A Legacy* (Tucson, 1998).

¹⁰ Kino assigned Father Juan de San Martín to Guevavi and Father Francisco Gonzalvo to Bac. San Martín left in the fall of 1701 and Gonzalvo in the summer of 1702. For a detailed account of Jesuit missionary activity in the Pimería Alta, see Kessell, *Mission of Sorrows*. For a history of the other Pimería Alta missions see Paul M. Roca, *Paths of the Padres through Sonora: An Illustrated History & Guide to Its Spanish Churches* (Tucson, 1967); Philipp Segesser, *The Letters of the Swiss Jesuit Missionary Philipp Segesser (1689–1762): An Eyewitness to the Settlement of Eighteenth-Century Sonora (Pimería Alta)*, ed. Albrecht Classen (Tempe, Ariz., 2012), 152.



Map of Pimería Alta region. Courtesy of the author.

during this period was Father Joseph Garrucho who spent six years at Guevavi, beginning in 1745. But if Garrucho or any nearby settler started vineyards of their own, they were likely short-lived. In 1751, the growing Spanish presence sparked a violent revolt among the local Pima who drove out (or killed) all the priests and settlers and then ransacked and burned the missions and ranches. In response, Spanish authorities sent a military detachment to quell the uprising and then construct a fortress, or presidio, at Tubac. Only then were the Spanish able to maintain a permanent hold on the area and develop the Arizona missions in earnest.¹¹

¹¹ Philipp Segesser, "The Relation of Philipp Segesser," ed. Theodore Treutlein, *Mid-America* 27 (July 1945): 150. Although traditional grape wine was often scarce, Segesser noted that the Pima made a variety of intoxicating beverages from mulberries, cactus fruit, and agave. The influx of settlers during this period was partly due to a major silver discovery near the present border in 1737. Garrucho managed to escape during the revolt,

But even in the late eighteenth century, at the peak of the Spanish presence in Arizona, viticulture and winemaking still struggled to take root. For the remainder of the century, the occasional references to wine in the region are usually regarding its scarcity. In 1757, for example, Father Bernard Middendorff at San Agustín mission near Tucson wrote to his superiors complaining that he was dependent on Cabórica for supplies and lamenting, "I have not even wine for Mass nor anything to eat but grain." Ten years later, an inventory assessment of the nearby mission of San Xavier del Bac revealed just four jugs of wine in the storeroom, basic farming tools, a garden with various vegetables, and fields of grains, but no mention of grapevines or winemaking equipment. One challenge was that many of the Pimería Alta missions, including those in Arizona, were in warm desert locations where hot summer temperatures combined with seasonal monsoon rains produced an ideal environment for mold and fungus on the developing fruit.¹²

Father Ignaz Pfefferkorn, who served the area for over a decade starting in 1756, specifically mentioned this problem in his detailed written account of the region. He asserted that winemaking attempts in the region had proven to be a "fruitless undertaking" due both to a lack of expertise and because "it rains there daily in July and August when the grapes must ripen. Hence they would either rot or would not mature." Two missionaries tried to maintain grapevines, but for their efforts received only "the pleasure of seeing the most beautiful and perfect grapes, but not of pressing out a palatable wine." Pfefferkorn did not specifically identify these two locations, but he was likely referring to Father Campos's old vineyard at San Ignacio de Cabórica and another farther west at La Purísima Concepción de Nuestra Señora de Caborca, for both are

but two other Jesuit priests were not so fortunate. For a summary of the Pima Revolt and its aftermath, see James E. Officer, *Hispanic Arizona, 1536-1856* (Tucson, 1989), 31-37.

¹² See Arthur D. Gardiner, "Letter of Father Middendorff, S.J., Dated from Tucson 3 March 1757," *KIVA* 22 (1957): 1-10; Kessel, *Mission of Sorrows*, 205 (appendix 2). Kessel provides translated copies of several Arizona mission inventories from the eighteenth century. All list only small amounts of wine, typically four jugs or fewer. The numbers, activities, and locations of Spanish settlers is poorly documented compared to the missionaries and soldiers, since many settlers were unofficial squatters with no legal title to the land. See Ray H. Mattison, "Early Spanish and Mexican Settlements in Arizona," *NMHR* 21 (Oct. 1946): 273-327. Aside from the historic record, the archaeological record suggests viticulture and winemaking was limited in Spanish colonial Arizona. Archaeologist Homer Thiel, who has worked on excavations at the Tucson presidio and the missions of San Agustín and Guevavi, does not recall finding grape seeds or evidence of winemaking at those sites. Homer Thiel email to author, March 13, 2018.



Cowhide wine vats like this one at Las Cruces, New Mexico, were used by early Spanish and Mexican winemakers to crush, strain, and ferment fruit. Courtesy of New Mexico State University Special Collections.

mentioned in a 1772 report on the region by Father Antonio de los Reyes. Reyes observed that a large old vine had recently died at San Ignacio de Cabórica (“for want of cultivation”) and that they were still growing some grapes at Nuestra Señora de Caborca, but they were eating them rather than making wine. At all other Pimería Alta missions—including those in Arizona—he observed only the typical fields of corn, wheat, beans, and squash.¹³

Even in neighboring New Mexico, mission viticulture was sparse in the late eighteenth century. During a detailed inspection in 1776, Father Francisco Domínguez noted that out of twenty-five missions and churches, only three (those at Santo Domingo, Sandia, and Isleta) were growing any grapes at all and none were producing any wine. By that time, Franciscan priests had replaced the Jesuits in Arizona and, under their reign, occasional reports of grape-growing finally appear in Arizona toward the end of the Spanish colonial period. In 1776, the garrison at Tubac was moved north to Tucson. While staying at Tucson in 1804, Captain José de Zúñiga observed several grapevines but lamented that the locals

¹³ Ignaz Pfefferkorn, *Sonora: A Description of a Province*, trans. Theodore Treutlein (Tucson, 1989), 77–78; Antonio de los Reyes report, 1772, pp. 47–57, unpublished translation by Kieran R. McCarty, 1958, University of Arizona Special Collections, Tucson, Ariz.

“hardly allow the grape to mature properly before they are selling it.” Zúñiga does not explain why they were picking the fruit so early, but perhaps they were simply harvesting what they could eat before losing everything to monsoon rot. In the decades following Mexican independence, other travelers reported seeing grapes in gardens near Tucson, Tubac, and at the mission ruins of Tumacácori.¹⁴

Given the presence of grapes, some occasional winemaking probably did occur in Arizona toward the end of the Spanish period, if not earlier. But the larger historical record clearly indicates that, with the exception of El Paso, missionary winemaking in the Southwest—and particularly in Arizona—was not as common and widespread as often believed. Instead, wine production in the region centered around a few locations and was probably the work of local Spanish settlers as often as mission priests. In Arizona, several specific factors had discouraged the growth of winemaking during the Spanish and Mexican years. The area's comparatively small population and limited resources made finding expertise and equipment difficult while the availability of wine from neighboring regions made the effort less necessary. Perhaps more importantly, most Spanish missions and settlements in Arizona were not in the best winemaking locations in terms of topography and climate. This combination of factors (geography, limited expertise, and the availability of wine from other sources) is important as they would continue to challenge winemaking efforts in Arizona for the next two centuries.¹⁵

¹⁴ Francisco Atanasio Domínguez, *The Missions of New Mexico, 1776*, trans. Eleanor B. Adams and Fray Angelico Chavez (Albuquerque, 1956). The situation was essentially the same when a different group of priests made a similar report in 1801. See Rick Hendricks, *New Mexico in 1801: The Priests Report* (Albuquerque, 2008). In New Mexico, most of the missions were located in the higher northern regions where late spring frosts frequently damaged new bud growth. King Charles III of Spain believed the Jesuits had become too independent and ordered their expulsion in 1767. See John L. Kessel, *Friars, Soldiers, and Reformers: Hispanic Arizona and the Sonora Mission Frontier, 1767–1856* (Tucson, 1976), 8–9. For Jose de Zúñiga's 1804 report, see Kieran McCarthy, *Desert Documentary: The Spanish Years, 1767–1821* (Tucson, 1976), 92. In 1852, American surveyor John Bartlett included grapes among the many fruits and vegetables grown in the gardens of San Agustín near Tucson. See John Russell Bartlett, *Personal Narrative of Explorations and Incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora and Chihuahua, 1850–1853*, vol. 2 (Chicago, 1965), 296. An 1869 description of the ruins of Tubac mentions “a few grape vines.” See *Weekly Arizonan* (Tucson), December 18, 1869.

¹⁵ Historian James Officer makes brief mention of winemaking south of the Arizona border (including that by the disgraced priest Father Díaz), but specifically notes the absence of winemaking in Tucson during the Mexican period. See Officer, *Hispanic Arizona*, 370. This author has yet to find a single verifiable account of winemaking in Arizona during the Spanish colonial or even Mexican period. Beyond those sources already mentioned, other

Farmers and Immigrants: Grape and Wine Production during the Territorial Period and Prohibition

The birth of winemaking in northern Arizona is easier to determine. Following the war with Mexico and the Gadsden Purchase, Arizona and New Mexico became part of the United States, and, in 1863, Congress designated Arizona as its own separate territory. During this period, major gold discoveries in central Arizona attracted a flood of new prospectors and settlers and led to the founding of the communities of Prescott and Wickenburg. Many of the newcomers traveled along the route of the Hassayampa River and thus became known as “Hassayampers.” They brought with them a thirst for alcohol as well as gold. In popular culture, beer and whiskey are often portrayed as the drink of choice for miners and cowboys in the American West, but wine was popular as well and was often promoted by hotels and saloons as a mark of quality and distinction. In early Arizona newspapers, saloon ads frequently tempted readers with the common refrain of “Wines, Liquors, and Cigars.” Some establishments, like the California Wine House in Tucson and the French Wine House in Tombstone, specialized in wine. Aside from a night on the town, many European immigrants considered wine to be an important part of their culture, and a bottle of wine was as much a part of the family dinner table as a loaf of bread.¹⁶

However, during Prescott’s first few years, wine—and nearly everything else—was in short supply in the isolated boom camp. In 1866, some enterprising German immigrants experimented with making their own wine using the native canyon grape (of the species *Vitis arizonica*) that grew wild in the surrounding valleys and hillsides. This was likely the first wine made in northern Arizona. Once supplies started to flow into the area, stores and saloons began offering wine from California, but the wild grapes continued

contemporary Spanish/Mexican accounts reviewed by the author include those of Joseph Och, Theodoro de Croix, Jacobo Sedelmayer, Pedro Fages, Francisco Garcés, and Juan Bautista de Anza. Most early reports of the region make a point of describing economic and agricultural conditions and would have likely recorded any significant grape growing or winemaking activity. The author would like to thank veteran Spanish colonial researchers John Kessell, Rick Hendricks, Mark Santiago, Thomas Sheridan, Homer Thiel, and Rick Collins for their valuable input and perspectives on the period.

¹⁶ As just one example, the front page of Prescott’s *Weekly Arizona Miner* of November 29, 1878, features advertisements for a half-dozen different establishments touting some form of the “wine, liquors and cigars” theme. See California Wine House advertisement, *Arizona Daily Star* (Tucson), March 27, 1884; French Wine House advertisement, *Tombstone Prospector*, February 16, 1889.

ARIZONA BREWERY
Supplies the Public with
EXCELLENT LAGER BEER
WHOLESALE AND RETAIL
WINES, LIQUORS, & CIGARS
The Old Stand is Well Known
JUL. N. RODENBURG

FISHER'S,
Montezuma St. - Prescott.
THE BEST OF
WINES, LIQUORS AND CIGARS
DISPENSED AT THE BAR.
Comfortable CLUB ROOMS attached. The old
and the new are cordially invited to call and see.

This 1880 newspaper advertisement demonstrates that wine was a popular drink in the saloons and restaurants of frontier Arizona. From the Weekly Arizona Miner (Prescott), June 11, 1880.

to fascinate a local businessman named Daniel Hatz. The son of a Swiss wine dealer, Hatz had trained as a baker before immigrating to the United States in the early 1850s. A decade later, he joined the rush to the Bradshaw Mountains as a prospector, but he would eventually become one of Prescott's leading citizens as the owner of a hotel, bakery, and saloon. Hatz was also an amateur botanist and spent much of his free time roaming the surrounding countryside collecting plant specimens—including wild grapes—which he sent to botanical gardens and scientists around the country.¹⁷

One recipient of Hatz's plant samples was pioneering California botanist and wine researcher Charles Wetmore. With Wetmore's

¹⁷ "San Francisco to Prescott," *Arizona Miner* (Prescott), January 12, 1867. For details on the life of Daniel Hatz, see Mona Lange McCroskey, "Albert William Bork: Prescott's Hometown Historian and International Scholar," *Cactus & Pine*, August 1997. Bork was Hatz's grandson.

encouragement, Hatz began experimenting with winemaking using the native grapes and, by early 1881, he was offering his wild grape wine for sale. That January, Hatz won the “earnest prayer of the printer boys” at the *Weekly Arizona Miner* with “a sample of that genuine native grape wine.” Despite the newspaper’s accolades, the wine probably sold more due to quantity and availability, rather than flavor. Like many native grape species, the canyon grape has smaller berries than its Old World relative and the fruit often has a sharp astringent and bitter flavor. The resulting wine was likely an acquired taste that paired well with low expectations and frontier necessity. Even Hatz admitted that he had to dilute his wine with large amounts of water and then add twenty to thirty pounds of sugar per forty-gallon barrel before it was drinkable enough to bring to market. Hatz stopped selling his wild wine after just a few seasons.¹⁸

Although Hatz’s winemaking career was short-lived, one of his protégés would become one of Arizona’s most successful early vintners. German immigrant Henry Schuerman arrived in Prescott in the late 1870s, where he found employment working for Hatz and may have participated in his native grape winemaking experiments. Around 1882, Schuerman acquired a section of land along Oak Creek (near present-day Sedona), where he later established a large and successful farm. In addition to other crops and orchards, Schuerman planted a vineyard of Zinfandel wine grapes. By 1890 at the latest, he was producing and selling a quality red wine. Sedona historian William Howard has noted that in the nearby copper smelters of Jerome, it may have been coke that heated the blast furnaces, but it was Schuerman’s wine that kept the smelter workers warm. Schuerman erected a substantial stone winery building and by the early twentieth century was annually producing over thirty-five thousand pounds of grapes (both wine and table varieties),

¹⁸ “More about Wild Grapes, Wine-Making, Etc.,” *Weekly Arizona Miner* (Prescott), October 8, 1880; “Local Intelligence,” *Weekly Arizona Miner*, January 7, 1881. Charles Wetmore’s pioneering experiments with grafting Old World grapevines to hardier New World rootstock would help save the global wine industry from the phylloxera plague of the mid-nineteenth century. Wetmore’s experiments included Arizona vines sent by Hatz and others, although he eventually settled on other rootstock sources. Canyon grape can still be found throughout Arizona. The fruit, while edible, often has a strong and long-lasting peppery taste. Winemaker Ray Stephens of Trident Winery in Pine, Arizona, has experimented with using local wild grapes and, like Hatz, found the resulting flavor was so strong that it had to be heavily diluted or blended with other wines to be drinkable (discussion with author September 19, 2015).



Schuerman's large stone winery at his farm near Sedona was one of the largest and most successful wine producers in territorial Arizona. Courtesy of the Sedona Heritage Museum, Sedona, Arizona.

with his popular Red Rock grape wine being a regular part of the business.¹⁹

Despite pioneering efforts to the north and south, it was the Salt River Valley where grape growing—and eventually winemaking—would reach its peak during the territorial period. In late

¹⁹ Deed records indicate Schuerman purchased the property from the Carroll family for \$800, although some accounts say he received it as payment for a debt. Leonard and Minerva Carroll to Heinrich Schuerman, Yavapai County Deed Book 15, pp. 238–41, May 9, 1882, copies housed at Sedona Historical Society Museum; *Mohave Miner* (Mineral Park, Ariz.), November 8, 1890; William Howard, "Sedona Treasures," *Red Rock News*, November 16, 1977. For more on the Schuerman family, see William Howard, *Sedona Reflections . . . Tales of Then for the Now* (Sedona, Ariz., 1981). Howard reports that in addition to making wine himself, Schuerman also sold wine grapes directly to families in Jerome for home winemaking. The author would like to thank Schuerman descendent Larry Clemson for information and insights on Schuerman's life and activities.

1867, Jack Swilling began digging the valley's first modern irrigation canals to grow crops for the soldiers at Fort McDowell and the miners at Prescott and Wickenburg. A small farming community known as Phoenix sprang up along Swilling's canals; the region soon developed into one of the biggest agricultural regions of the Southwest. Wheat, corn, and beans were the primary crops of the early Salt River farmers, but most also planted some fruit trees and grapevines. In an 1870 survey of farming activity, the *Weekly Arizona Miner* recorded grapevines at nearly all the Salt River farms, including those of Jack Swilling and his partner Darrel Duppa. Two years later, the county assessor reported over seven thousand vines growing across the entire valley. By the end of the century, several Arizona farming regions had become significant grape producers. One report in 1884 estimated there were several hundred thousand vines in the Salt River Valley alone.²⁰

Most of these early Salt River Valley vineyards were focused on growing grapes for eating ("table grapes") or for making raisins rather than growing wine-grape varieties, but winemaking remained an aspiration from the start. Wine and brandy could fetch a significantly higher price than raw grapes, had a much longer shelf-life, and was easier to transport and store. Moreover, it also carried a certain cachet as a symbol of culture and success. In neighboring California, wine production would surpass seven million gallons per year by 1880 and had already made fortunes for prominent winemakers like James De Barth Shorb and Agoston Haraszthy. California's wine dominated the American market and was a symbol of that state's bounty. Arizona farmers and promoters enviously gazed on their neighbor as both an inspiration and rival. Even as the first vines were taking root in the Salt River Valley, the *Weekly Arizona Miner* pointed to the success of the California wine industry and predicted that "we expect to live long enough to say the same of Arizona."²¹

²⁰ Albert R. Bates, *Jack Swilling: Arizona's Most Lied about Pioneer* (Tucson, 2008); "What our Farmers have put in the Ground," *Weekly Arizona Miner*, August 27, 1870. The same article noted a hundred new grape cuttings at the farm of Henry Wickenburg. At the time, the Salt River Valley was still part of Yavapai County. "From Maricopa County," *Weekly Arizona Miner*, July 13, 1872; Patrick Hamilton, *The Resources of Arizona*, 3rd ed. (San Francisco, 1884), 317. This 1884 report noted that most of the grapes were of the Mission, Muscat, or Black Hamburg varieties.

²¹ Pinney, *History of Wine in America*, 272–312; *Weekly Arizona Miner*, December 12, 1868. Most types of *Vitis vinifera* grapes can be used to make wine, raisins, or eaten raw, but the

Farmer George R. Roberts was among the first to answer the call. In 1872, he partnered with French-born winemaker Joseph Romaine and planted a large vineyard of Malaga grapes north of Phoenix. Unfortunately, Romaine died the next spring, and without his expertise, half the vineyard soon died as well. Roberts succeeded in bringing the surviving vines to maturity, but without a winemaker, he apparently sold the raw grapes in town. In 1878, local saloon owner James Cotton purchased a batch of locally made wine from farmer Gordon Wilson and began marketing it in newspapers as *Vino del País* (French for “Local Wine”)—likely the first advertised Arizona wine. Cotton claimed that a group of California wine connoisseurs had sampled his product and “after duly testing and canvassing this wine, (they being the experts in such matters) unhesitatingly pronounced it to be far superior in body and flavor to any found there of like age.” Despite such accolades, Cotton admitted that he was “prepared to dispose of it at a low figure” and does not appear to have continued the business. Undaunted, local editors and promoters continued to encourage efforts with one Arizona newspaper predicting that “for raisins and wine we will yet excel the south of France and Spain.”²²

The valley’s farming boom did catch the eye of wealthy Los Angeles businessman James De Barth Shorb, the president of the large San Gabriel Wine Company and a founder of Alhambra, California. Starting in the mid-1880s, Shorb became a major stakeholder in several Phoenix-area land development ventures, including the Arizona Canal Company and the Arizona Improvement Company, which developed fruit orchards and sold lots in their “Alhambra Tract” northwest of town. Like its California namesake, the new Alhambra was hailed as a place whose “fruit or vine lands can not be excelled.” Local farmers and businessmen celebrated Shorb’s interest in the valley and eagerly sought his advice on how to build their own wine industry. In 1887, he predicted the valley’s grapes could surpass those of California for winemaking, in which case there would not be “land enough to fill the demand.” Despite

characteristics of different varieties often lend themselves to specific uses and growing conditions with the best table and raisin grapes usually producing lower-quality wines.

²² “From Maricopa County,” *Weekly Arizona Miner*, November 2, 1872; “Sudden Death,” *Weekly Arizona Miner*, August 2, 1873; “Phoenix,” *Arizona Sentinel* (Yuma), July 25, 1874; “Vino Del Pais!” advertisement, *Weekly Republican* (Phoenix), September 21, 1878; “Town and Country,” *Weekly Republican*, September 28, 1878; *Arizona Weekly Citizen* (Tucson), August 8, 1885.

his public enthusiasm, Shorb never actually produced any wine in Arizona, preferring instead to make money by selling land rather than pressing grapes. Around the same period, other California and Arizona businessmen considered establishing several wine-focused farming colonies in Arizona, but none progressed beyond the planning stages.²³

Several factors conspired against the area's winemaking efforts. Although vines grew in the Salt River Valley, the hot summer temperatures and frequent monsoon rains often ruined the delicate wine grapes or produced an inferior fruit for winemaking. As local farmer B. M. Crenshaw later admitted, "I do not find the Salt River Valley especially adapted to wine grapes." Echoing Father Pfeifferkorn's observations from decades earlier, Crenshaw observed that heat and moisture from summer rains encouraged mold and fungus to grow in the tightly compacted wine grape clusters and "causes them to rot very badly." Even when farmers did have a successful harvest, he noted that the grapes often ripened too early for the major wine producers who preferred to purchase grapes and make wine during the cooler fall months. Finally, what wine the valley did manage to produce was frequently of poor quality compared to those readily available from nearby California. After sampling some early Arizona wines, one California wine merchant dismissed them as both too sweet and too high in alcohol. Responding to this critique, the *Phoenix Gazette* retorted that locals liked their home product well enough and, anyway, "it is impossible to concentrate too much alcohol in one bottle to displease the average Hassayamper."²⁴

Despite these challenges, a small wine industry eventually developed in the Salt River Valley—primarily around the town of Mesa,

²³ Promotional map of the Alhambra Tract in Arizona, addenda, Series IV: Land Papers, James De Barth Shorb Papers, Huntington Library (hereinafter HL), San Marino, California; J. McMillan to James De Barth Shorb, April 4, 1889, Shorb Papers, HL; "Angelenos Abroad," *Los Angeles Daily Herald*, April 7, 1887. In late-nineteenth-century California, businessmen and investors often used farming colonies to develop large agricultural areas. Migrants with farming skills (usually from a specific country or region) were enticed to settle and farm the company's land on a lease or lease-to-buy basis. The communities of Asti (near Sonoma) and Anaheim were originally started as winemaking farm colonies. In Arizona, investors briefly considered starting winemaking colonies at Gila Bend, Yuma, and later Duncan. See "An Arizona Colony," *Tombstone Epitaph*, January 23, 1884; *Arizona Sentinel* (Yuma), April 4, 1885; "An Italian Colony for the Duncan Country," *Arizona Republican* (Phoenix), September 9, 1906.

²⁴ B. M. Crenshaw to B. M. Stanley, August 8, 1927, mssHM 68273, HL; "Territorial," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, March 14, 1885.

where slightly higher elevations and cooler temperatures helped offset other disadvantages. Brothers Daniel and Samuel Bagley were among the first to consistently bring wine to market from their vineyard southwest of downtown Mesa. During the Territorial Fair in the fall of 1884, they displayed a sample of the two thousand gallons of madeira, port, sherry, and claret (a French-style red wine) they had produced that year using both Mission and Zinfandel grapes. By the end of the decade, Dan Bagley had expanded his vineyard to thirty acres and his output to seven thousand gallons. George Serrine, one of Mesa's original founders, also got into the business with both a winery and a distillery to process local fruit into a variety of brandies. As one newspaper noted, Serrine "pleases the ladies with a sweet wine he brews from mixing Zinfandels and Black Hamburgs." Another early winemaker was Welsh immigrant John Jones, who started a small vineyard and winery with his brother Tommy around 1888.²⁵

But the most successful of the Mesa winemakers was Alois Cuber. Cuber came to the United States from Austria and spent much of his life in the Midwest as a harness- and saddle-maker. Looking for a change of climate and career, he moved to Mesa in 1888, where he purchased part of Sam Bagley's property and hired experienced California winemaker Martin Shule to start a winery and distillery. Cuber eventually grew his vineyard to twenty-five acres and produced a wide range of products including angelica, port, sherry, rieslings, and clarets. Unlike most of his local competitors, this was Cuber's primary business, and he earned a reputation for quality. In a brief 1893 article, the *Arizona Republican* admitted that the area was known for "inferior wine" but hoped that Cuber's superior product would "give our fine grapes a market."²⁶ Other valley farmers who dabbled with winemaking during this period included W. C. Collier, Sylvester Moot, and John George. By the fall of 1897,

²⁵ "Territorial Fair," *Weekly Republican*, November 13, 1884; "Territorial," *Arizona Weekly Citizen*, February 7, 1885; "Let the Blank Mormons Dig," *Arizona Enterprise* (Florence), May 10, 1890; "Mesa," *Arizona Republican*, July 3, 1901. Madeira is a fortified wine that was originally produced on the Madeira Islands off Portugal, but like port was more commonly used in the American West to refer to a general style of fortified wine. Black Hamburg grapes are more commonly known today as Black Muscat.

²⁶ "Alois Cuber," *Portrait and Biographical Record of Arizona* (Chicago, 1901), 796–97; *Arizona Sentinel*, September 8, 1888. Early reports of Cuber's winery include a partner named Ainsworth, who is not mentioned in later years. Shule's exact identity and previous history are unclear. In some reports, his name is listed as Shude.



By the early 1900s, the Salt River Valley was a major grape producer, but most vineyards focused on table and raisin grapes like the ones shown here near Camelback Mountain. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

the major Mesa wineries alone were producing over fifty thousand gallons of wine and brandy annually. And beyond the farmers and commercial wineries, many people across the territory continued to make their own small batches of wine at home for personal consumption or sale. This tradition was particularly popular among the immigrant communities of Jerome and Bisbee.²⁷

Ironically (and perhaps not coincidentally), the growth of Arizona's wine industry was mirrored by that of the prohibition movement at both the local and national levels. Appalled by widespread alcoholism and its associated problems, organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League demanded tighter restrictions, and even outright bans, on alcohol production and sales. Although the *Arizona*

²⁷ "Local Briefs," *Arizona Republican*, September 7, 1893; "Mesa City," *Arizona Republican*, November 2, 1897. In Bisbee, the Lombardini, Correto, and Muheim families were associated with winemaking. The Bisbee museum archives include a simple wine recipe used by Joseph Muheim. Muheim Collection, Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum Archives, Bisbee, Arizona. See also Helen Henderson interview (unknown interviewer), October 10, 1989, and Edna Wishart interview by Deborah Meus (unknown date), Oral History Collection, Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum, Bisbee, Arizona.

Republican had long been an enthusiastic booster of the local wineries, by the late 1890s, it too was increasingly blaming them for a range of community ills. In January 1896, the newspaper credited the “fumes of Mesa wine” for the larceny conviction of one George Harris while attributing the murder of a winery customer the following summer to “that famous wine which inspires bloodshed.” The Jones winery in particular seems to have been associated with a questionable product and clientele. In the fall of 1897, the winery was the scene of a violent drunken brawl between local youths and a group of homeless men, one of whom died from his injuries. The newspaper blamed the incident squarely on Jones’s beverage, which it described as a “homicidal wine, which has a tendency to make one lapse into forgetfulness of his duties to society, the church and state.” Shortly afterwards, Jones was fined for selling alcohol to minors.²⁸

In 1901, the Phoenix City Council passed an ordinance that banned women from working in or even “visiting, frequenting, loitering or continuing about any saloon or other place where intoxicating liquors are sold.” The law was officially aimed at curtailing female saloon singers, but it also applied to so-called wine rooms. These were secluded and semi-private lounge areas in the back of saloons and restaurants that often catered to female customers as a place to enjoy a drink away from the rowdier (and publicly visible) main hall. Wine rooms were particularly popular in Bisbee, where the Hansen Beer Garden promoted its “private entrance and wine rooms for the ladies.” In 1905, a wine room behind the Comet Saloon in Brewery Gulch was the scene of a shooting sparked by a dispute involving two men and a woman. The *Bisbee Daily Review* linked the event with “the practice that is increasing whereby women are frequenters of the back of saloons” and suggested the city pass regulations like those in Phoenix.²⁹

²⁸ “A Glorious Decade: Tenth Anniversary of the W.C.T.U. of Phoenix,” *Arizona Republican*, May 3, 1894; Richard Mendelson, *From Demon to Darling: A Legal History of Wine in America* (Berkeley, Calif., 2009); “An Appreciative Person,” *Arizona Republican*, January 15, 1896; “A Murder at Tempe,” *Arizona Republican*, June 21, 1897; “A Murder at Mesa,” *Arizona Republican*, November 5, 1897; “Jones, the Winemaker,” *Arizona Republican*, November 18, 1897.

²⁹ “Warbling Must Stop: Shrill Voiced Sirens will no longer drive Men to Drink,” *Arizona Republican*, May 18, 1901; *Bisbee (Ariz.) Daily Review*, February 13, 1902; “Bloody Deed in City,” *Bisbee Daily Review*, June 15, 1905; “The Wine Room Habitue’s,” *Bisbee Daily Review*, June 18, 1905.

Events like the Mesa winery brawl and the Bisbee shooting did little to help the cause of brewers and winemakers. With each passing year, Arizona saw additional alcohol and saloon regulations.³⁰ In 1910, the legislature banned saloons from operating near any public-works project, and three years later a Yuma school teacher was discharged in part for “the alleged offence of taking a glass of wine.” Finally, in November 1914, Arizonans voted on an amendment to the state constitution to ban the manufacture or use of alcohol entirely. The vote narrowly passed and on January 1, 1915, Arizona officially went dry. In the Verde Valley, Henry Schuerman was still making his famous red wine and saw little harm in continuing to sell off his existing inventory. In August 1917, police arrested Schuerman and sentenced the sixty-six-year-old farmer to six months in jail and a \$300 fine. Although he was soon pardoned by the governor on account of his age and good standing in the community, the event made it clear the new law was to be taken seriously. By the time the United States enacted nationwide prohibition in 1920, Arizona’s local wine industry was already long gone.³¹

Neither local nor national prohibition succeeded in its goal of eliminating the production or consumption of alcohol. Like the rest of the nation, Arizona became home to speakeasies, illegal stills, and bootleggers. Particularly in the mining camps, underground wineries continued to produce wine (or wine-like substances), often by fermenting raisins. In Jerome alone, officials discovered six separate raisin wineries in the fall of 1918. Usually of poor quality and sometimes containing questionable additives, some of these illegal wines were as unhealthy as they were illegal. In 1922, a Casa Grande newspaper humorously warned its readers about the dangers of bootleg wine with a poem reading: “Mary had a little wine,

³⁰ Many of the Mesa winemakers ceased operations even before Arizona’s prohibition, perhaps in part due to tightening restrictions and pressure from the prohibition organizations. Following additional legal troubles, Jones appears to have closed his winery around 1900 and died in 1901. See “Mesa,” *Arizona Republican*, July 3, 1901. In 1907, Alois Cuber moved to California to recover from illness and died a short time later. “Some Local Darts,” *Arizona Republican*, July 15, 1907.

³¹ “License Denied to California Wine Co.,” *Arizona Republican*, October 30, 1910. In Phoenix, the Anti-Saloon League attempted to use the work camp law to revoke all the city’s saloon licenses. “Superintendent of School Answers Attacks of Enemies,” *Yuma* (Ariz.) *Examiner*, May 28, 1913; “Maricopa County Goes Dry and Adds to State Majority,” *Arizona Republican*, November 4, 1914; “Pioneer Is Pardoned by Gov. Campbell,” *Coconino Sun* (Flagstaff, Ariz.), December 21, 1917.

she bought it from a stranger. The watchful doctors still decline, to say she's out of danger."

Although national prohibition was devastating to legal wineries, it did result in an unexpected boost for farmers as desperate drinkers bought raw grapes (including less-desirable table-grape varieties) to make their own wine at home. National grape prices quickly tripled, inspiring a land boom in many grape-growing regions, including Arizona. In a 1923 promotional pamphlet, Tucson's Mt. Lemmon Water & Land Development Company noted the growing demand for grapes and slyly observed, "Whether or not this is caused by the prohibition amendment to the constitution is for you to determine. We know, of course, that more grape-juice is being drunk than ever before." The state of the "juice" at time of consumption was left to the buyer's discretion.³²

Enthusiasts and Entrepreneurs: The Return of Arizona Wine-making after 1970

The widespread failure of national prohibition (and the need to raise revenues during the Great Depression) led to its repeal in 1933, but the law's impact would last for years to come. In California, a handful of wineries had remained in operation to legally produce wine for religious or medical purposes. Following prohibition, they formed the foundation from which the California wine industry would slowly rebuild itself. But in Arizona, no wineries had enjoyed such exemptions, and by the time of repeal most of the state's pioneering winemakers had either died, retired, or moved away. Commercial winemaking may have gone dormant in California, but in Arizona it had truly died. Less obvious, but perhaps more significant, was prohibition's impact on the country's wine tastes and consumption. Many Americans continued to abstain from drinking entirely and those who did drink wine had become accustomed to the high-alcohol fortified wines and simple sweet homemade wines that had dominated the underground alcohol market. Demand for traditional dry table wines, with their subtle flavors and modest alcohol content, revived slowly.³³

³² "About the State," *Bisbee Daily Review*, September 27, 1918; "A Warning to Maidens," *Casa Grande (Ariz.) Valley Dispatch*, May 5, 1922; "Success from Grapes in Southern Arizona," promotional pamphlet (1923), "Agriculture-grapes" ephemera file, Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Arizona.

³³ Mendelson, *Demon to Darling*.

In Arizona, local beer brewing quickly resumed production following repeal, but winemaking was much slower to return. In fact, post-prohibition Arizonans showed almost as little interest in drinking wine as they did in making it. In the two decades after World War II, America's wine production nearly tripled, yet per-capita wine consumption in Arizona remained well below the national average. In a 1966 editorial, *Arizona Republic* business editor Don Campbell attributed this in part to a lingering reputation of wine as the lowbrow beverage of choice for problem drinkers. Opinions about wine began to change in the 1970s. In 1971, California's large Brookside Winery opened a tasting room in Tucson and offered classes and parties to educate local diners on wine and wine culture. Similar wine-tasting events began occurring in other Arizona communities, but the rebirth of a true local wine industry would have to await the arrival of a young soil expert and wine enthusiast named Gordon Dutt.³⁴

Raised in Montana, Dutt received his PhD in soil science from Purdue University in 1960 and shortly afterwards took a job doing water-quality research for the University of California at Davis. As a leading center of viticulture research, the UC–Davis extension campus introduced Dutt to that state's wine-growing regions and refined his own interest in the winemaking process. In 1964, he took a new position at the University of Arizona, where his focus was improving commercial agriculture in arid regions. While traveling around his new state, Dutt noticed many locations where the soil and topology were similar to those of California's best vineyards. Climate was also an important factor to consider. Despite Arizona's desert image, Dutt soon realized the state offered a surprisingly wide range of different climates depending on elevation. "Hell, we've got any climate you want," he observed. "If you want a cooler climate, you go up hill. If you want a warmer climate, you go down hill." But could Arizona really produce quality wine grapes?

³⁴ Ed Sipos, *Brewing Arizona: A Century of Beer in the Grand Canyon State* (Tucson, 2013); Don Campbell, "Old Bacchus Trips over Wino Image," *Arizona Republic*, September 28, 1966; "Local Winery to Reflect Old World Atmosphere," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, March 16, 1971. In 1976, two California wines unexpectedly won the top prize against leading French wines in a blind taste contest in Paris. This event (known as the "Judgement of Paris") shook the international wine world, boosted the reputation of the California wine industry, and led to a renewed interest in locally made wine in general. See George Taber, *Judgement of Paris: California vs. France and the Historic 1976 Paris Tasting that Revolutionized Wine* (New York, 2006).

Dutt got the opportunity to find out in 1972. That year he began a new project at the university's Page Ranch experimental farm near Oracle to determine if treating the soil with salt could help concentrate rainwater in marginal farming areas. The location seemed suitable for grapes, so Dutt planted a selection of California wine grapes as part of the test crop. When the vines matured two years later, he harvested the fruit, crushed it with his bare feet, and made a small batch of wine in his home kitchen.³⁵

In the spring of 1975, Dutt invited a group of friends and local reporters to sample his homemade wine—the first made from Arizona grapes in over half a century. To their surprise and delight, the experimental wines from the young Oracle grapes were quite drinkable—even potentially marketable. The event caught the attention of local newspapers and also the Arizona governor's office. A few years earlier, the states of Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico had formed the Four Corners Regional Committee to foster economic growth and explore new industries across their region. In 1976, the committee funded Dutt to investigate the potential for developing a profitable wine industry in the Southwest. Joined by fellow researchers Eugene Mielke, Sam Hughes, and Wade Wolfe, Dutt and his team traveled around the four states gathering climate and soil data and establishing vineyard test plots. The results of their study, published in 1980, confirmed what Dutt and others had long suspected: if the correct grape varieties were planted in the best locations, the Southwest—particularly Arizona and New Mexico—had the capacity to produce world-class wine. Many of the region's past struggles were the result of trying to start vineyards in poor locations or using unsuitable grape varieties. Rather than bring wine grapes to the farmers, farmers needed to go to the best wine-grape growing areas.³⁶

³⁵ Dr. Gordon Dutt interview with author at Sonoita Vineyards Winery, August 23, 2015. During an early drive to Yuma, Dutt was surprised that he did not see any wine vineyards along the way. That observation led him to study how the modern Washington and Oregon wine industries had started. Dutt's later decision to plant wine grapes at the test plot was not just a personal whim. Despite their lush appearance, wine grapes are surprisingly drought tolerant and thus a potentially valuable crop in locations across the Southwest that would be unsuitable for other forms of commercial agriculture.

³⁶ Dutt interview, August 23, 2015; Lawrence W. Cheek, "Wine in state's future?" *Tucson Daily Citizen*, October 9, 1974. The article notes that Blake Brophy was already considering planting vines at the Babacomari Ranch at that time. Barbara Barte, "State's infant wine business develops startling product," *Tucson Daily Citizen*, May 21, 1975; Gordon Dutt, Eugene Mielke, Sam Hughes, and Wade Wolfe, *Grape and Wine Production in the Four*



Arizona's first wine in fifty years. In 1975, an informal panel of judges tasted and tested the first wine from Gordon Dutt's test vineyard in Oracle. Courtesy of Sonoita Vineyards.

One of the study's most promising test vineyards lay on the historic Babacomari Ranch near Sonoita, Arizona, where the soil and climate were similar to the Burgundy region of France. The Brophy family owned the property, and it was Blake Brophy who encouraged Dutt to place a test plot there in hopes that the land might prove useful for more than just cattle raising. When the vineyard proved a success, Dutt leased the land from the Brophys in early 1979 and started Vina Sonoita Vineyard—the first commercial wine vineyard in Arizona since Prohibition. The initial planting featured mostly French grape varieties including Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, French Colombard, and Chenin Blanc. The same year that Dutt started his business, the *Arizona Republic* ran an article detailing the progress of the Four Corners study and discussing Arizona's wine potential. Accompanied by a humorous cartoon of wine-drinking cowboys, the article observed that wine consumption was growing rapidly in the United States while vineyards required only a third as much water as Arizona's cotton crops. Perhaps Dutt was on to something.³⁷

Corners Region, University of Arizona, Agricultural Experiment Station, Technical Bulletin 239, April 1980.

³⁷ Dutt interview, August 23, 2015; Grant Smith, "Project seeks to revive wine industry in state," *Arizona Republic*, April 2, 1978. After the publication of the Four Corners Report, California writer and wine expert Leon Adams contacted Dutt and later became a valuable

Many people were intrigued by Dutt's wine activities. For some it was a source of amusement, for others a source of inspiration. In Scottsdale, a young chiropractor from South Africa named Adrian Hugo Bosman was particularly fascinated with the idea of helping a new wine region develop literally from the ground up. Bosman contacted Dutt and soon he and his wife, Rosemary, were volunteering their time at the Sonoita vineyard. The Bosmans were joined by their in-laws, fellow South Africans Jon and Frances Harvey, who had also recently moved to Arizona. In late 1979, the Bosmans and Harveys bought their own forty acres of land adjacent to Dutt and started the Jon Hugo Vineyard. Another friend from Scottsdale, Penelope "Penny" Edwards, also caught the wine bug. In 1981, she started the small Viva La Vista vineyard near Marana, but later joined the others with her own vineyard at Sonoita.³⁸

All of these new vineyard owners—including Dutt—were still working full-time jobs and could only develop their properties on weekends and holidays. Sometimes joined by family and friends, they would camp at the vineyards where an old gnarled oak tree served as the base of operations. Even before planting could start, they had to clear the land, drill wells, and install irrigation pipes. The work was hard, but rewarding. "We all got our feet dirty, we got our hands dirty, we slept on the ground or in our cars," remembers Edwards of those early days. "It was a wonderful experience." Occasionally the camp would attract unexpected visitors. "It was always a little bit nerve-racking going to bed at night wondering if you were going to wake up with a rattlesnake in the morning," recalls Jon Harvey. Once the vines were established, the Harveys and Bosmans built a small barn-like building to serve as a winery and storeroom. Together with Dutt and Edwards, they organized the Sonoita Vineyards Winery in 1983 as a cooperative venture with Dutt as lead winemaker. By that time, however, two

source of advice and encouragement regarding the establishment of a true wine industry.

³⁸ Agreement of Sale between Babacomari Ranch Co. and Adrian and Rosemary Bosman and Jonathan and Frances Harvey, December 4, 1979, Cochise County Deed Book 269, p. 424; Jon and Frances Harvey interview with author, January 15, 2017; Agreement of Sale between Babacomari Ranch Co. and Penelope Edwards, March 22, 1984, Cochise County Deed Book 379, p. 412; Penelope Edwards Pipkin telephone interview with author February 7, 2017. Rosemary Bosman was Jon Harvey's sister. The Bosmans and Harveys purchased the land from the Babacomari Ranch Company in December 1979 and began planting the following year. The agreement references Dutt's earlier lease of nearby land on January 1, 1979.



In 1978, Dutt started Vina Sonoita Vineyards on the historic Babacomari Ranch—Arizona’s first modern commercial wine vineyard. Courtesy of Sonoita Vineyards.

other Arizonans—Robert Webb and William Staltari—had already launched independent wineries of their own.³⁹

Robert Webb was born and raised in Douglas, where he secretly started making his own wine at the tender age of twelve. “I did it because I wasn’t supposed to,” he would later recall with a rebellious chuckle. While serving as a navy pilot near San Francisco in the 1960s, he refined his tastes and techniques with visits to local wineries. In the early 1970s, he returned to Arizona and purchased the Tucson Hobby Shop, where he added new home beer brewing and winemaking sections. The shop attracted a small band of home winemakers who frequently met to discuss recipes, equipment, and processes. Soon Webb was purchasing grapes from California

³⁹ Penelope Edwards Pipkin interview, February 7, 2017. The winery started with a three-hundred-gallon tank and added a five-hundred-gallon tank the following year. Harvey interview, January 15, 2017. Sonoita Vineyards, Ltd., was incorporated on February 24, 1984, by Gordon Dutt, Richard Dutt (Gordon’s son), Jon Harvey, Adrian Bosman, and the Babacomari Ranch Company. Sonoita Vineyards, Ltd., Incorporation Papers, Filed February 24, 1984, File No. 01633137, Arizona Corporation Commission. In 1987, the company moved to a new larger winery and tasting room nearby.

Arizona's Wine Industry



The owners and operators of the Jon Hugo Vineyard near Sonoita. From left to right: Adrian Bosman, Penny Edwards (kneeling), Jon Harvey, Frances Harvey, and Rosemary Bosman. Courtesy of Jon and Frances Harvey.

vineyards and hauling them back to Tucson for impromptu wine-making parties in the parking lot behind the store. During one of these gatherings, a friend and fellow home winemaker named Dr. Martin Withers noticed Webb sitting thoughtfully alone and asked what was on his mind. “I’m just thinking about how wonderful it would be to have a winery,” Webb replied wistfully. “Well, why don’t you?” Withers asked. Less than a year later, in May 1980, Webb opened the R. W. Webb Winery in a north Tucson warehouse—the first licensed winery in Arizona since Prohibition.⁴⁰

Without a vineyard of his own, Webb bought and field-crushed his first load of grapes from a vineyard in California and hauled

⁴⁰ The Tucson Hobby Shop was located at 4352 E. Speedway Boulevard and the original winery was on Sullinger Avenue south of Wetmore Road. Robert Webb telephone interviews with author, December 12, 2015, August 26, 2017, and November 19, 2017. R. W. Webb Winery, Inc., Incorporation Papers, May 19, 1980, File No. 05043532, Arizona Corporation Commission; “State’s 1st winery a homespun venture,” *Arizona Daily Star*, June 3, 1981.

them back to Tucson in a tanker truck for fermentation and aging. In the following years, he continued to purchase raw grapes from a variety of suppliers in Arizona, California, and Mexico. In 1984, he started his own vineyard in the area south of Willcox known as Kansas Settlement. The first planting included twenty acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Johannisberg Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, and Petite Syrah grapes. By the mid-1980s, Webb had increased his production to about three thousand cases per year, and his wine was sold in nearly every grocery store in Tucson. With these successes, he continued to expand his operation and in 1986 opened a large new winery and tasting room along I-10 southeast of Tucson. Resembling a Spanish mission, the facility was clearly visible to interstate travelers and featured a production line capable of handling ten thousand cases a year.⁴¹

Like Webb, William Staltari also started as a home wine-maker—a skill that he learned from his Italian-immigrant father and grandfather while growing up in Brooklyn. In the early 1960s, Staltari moved to Arizona, where he supervised food operations for American Airlines in Tucson and later opened an insurance office in Scottsdale. In the late 1970s, he bought land along I-17, just south of the Verde Valley, where he opened the San Dominique Winery around 1981. Staltari planted a small vineyard on the property, but foraging animals and spring frosts routinely ravaged his vines and reduced his harvest. Eventually, he gave up maintaining the vineyard and instead purchased most of his grapes from other growers and chose to focus on making small-batch boutique and novelty wines, including some accented with chiles. Other early wine-grape growers at this time included Leon Dombrowski, near the Mexican border at Sasabe, and Bert Teskey, who planted a small trial vineyard with help from Adrian Bosman along the Dugas Road near Staltari's winery in northern Arizona.⁴²

⁴¹ Webb interviews, December 12, 2015, and August 26, 2017. Shortly before Webb retired in 1996, a group of students from the Eller School of Business at Arizona State University produced a detailed report of Webb's business operations and finances. See Luis Ramirez, Roxanne Riddle, and Judy Shei, "R. W. Webb Winery: Evaluation of a Business Opportunity," unpublished report, circa 1995, copy of the report courtesy of Robert Webb. In the early 1980s, Webb also served as consultant for a large winery in Hermosillo, Mexico. Webb interview, November 19, 2017.

⁴² William Staltari telephone interviews with author on January 23, 2016, and June 23, 2017; Dayna Lynn Fried, "Vines of Arizona," *Arizona Republic*, December 9, 1984. Webb sometimes purchased grapes from Dombrowski and remembers that he grew a wonderful Petite Syrah grape. Teskey and Bosman planted about six acres of grapes at Teskey's



Robert Webb on the bottling line at his Tucson winery. Courtesy of Robert Webb.

All of these early winemakers quickly learned there was more to the business than just raising quality grapes or making good wine. Few prospective customers knew Arizona wine even existed, and those who heard about it often thought it was a joke. But an even bigger immediate challenge loomed in the form of the state's antiquated alcohol regulations. Like many states following the end of national Prohibition, Arizona had enacted a three-tier regulation system that divided the industry into producers, distributors, and retailers. Any given business could only be involved with just one of the three tiers. This meant that producers (including local wineries) could not sell their products directly to stores, restaurants, or the general public—they had to go through a distributor. And by this time, the distribution industry had consolidated into a handful of large regional and national companies that had little incentive to promote the small Arizona start-ups in competition with their large and profitable California wine accounts. Undaunted,

Dugas property in the summer of 1980, but Bosman soon dropped out to focus on the Sonoita vineyard. Teskey continued to maintain the vineyard for several more years and sold most of the grapes to William Staltari. Bert Teskey telephone interview with author, December 12, 2016.

the winemakers took it upon themselves to promote their own product and traveled across the state to personally meet with store managers and café owners. But even when they had an interested buyer, the distributors often failed to follow up for the easy sale.⁴³

Out of frustration, the vineyard owners and winemakers banded together in 1981 and organized the Arizona Wine Growers Association (AWGA), with Adrian Bosman serving as the first president. One of the association's founding goals was the passage of a farm winery exemption law like those in other states. They were aided in this pursuit by Frank Brophy, a prominent and well-connected Phoenix lawyer, and by state representative John Hays of Yarnell who saw vineyards as a potential boost to Arizona's smaller agricultural communities. In 1982, Hays introduced House Bill 2307 (known as the "Domestic Farm Winery Bill"), which would allow small-scale "farm wineries" to sell directly to the public and to also open one additional tasting room away from the winery itself. The bill was fiercely opposed by the distributors, who tried to keep it permanently in committee. In response, the wine growers appealed to the powerful agriculture lobby on the basis that they too were essentially farmers and had an inherit right to sell their product. "The distributors were against us and their liquor lobby was extremely strong," Webb later explained. "But the 'Ag' lobby was stronger than the liquor lobby. We passed it over their dead body."⁴⁴

⁴³ For general information on the origins of the three-tier system and how it evolved nationally following the end of Prohibition, see Mendelson, *Demon to Darling*. Contrary to popular belief, it was legal to commercially produce wine in Arizona prior to the 1982 Farm Winery law, although no one appears to have done so before Webb. The 1936 Arizona liquor application includes a "Winer's License" option for \$150 per year in addition to brewer, distiller, and retailer licenses. See "1936 Application for permit to engage in the manufacture or sale of spiritous liquors, as defined by Chapter 46, Laws of the 12th Legislature, 1936," Arizona Department of Liquor Records, Phoenix, Arizona. The author wishes to thank Lee Hill of the Arizona Department of Liquor for insights into Arizona's liquor laws as well as copies of the 1936 Arizona liquor application and the 1939 Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control, Rules and Regulations. Nearly all the pre-Farm Winery Bill winemakers interviewed by the author mentioned a lack of support from distributors at the time.

⁴⁴ "Wine grape growers," *Arizona Daily Star*, December 1, 1983. The AWGA was organized informally in 1981 and incorporated in 1983. When the AWGA incorporated in 1983, the original board of directors consisted of Larry McKay, Penelope Edwards, William Staltari, Robert Webb, and Blake Brophy, with Frank Brophy Jr. serving as agent. Arizona Wine Growers' Association Inc., Incorporation Papers, File No. 01556535, May 2, 1983, Arizona Corporation Commission. Larry McKay was a grape grower in the Chandler area and briefly served as the organization's president, although he does not appear to have stayed active for long in either the association or the local wine industry. John Hays telephone

With the passage of the winery bill, a fresh wave of new vineyards sprang up around the state over the following years. Outside of Benson, retiree Warren Brown started the Rincon Valley Vineyards and would later be president of the AWGA. Some of the most ambitious new operations were along the Sonoita-Elgin road, where one group of investors led by Tom Brady launched the Terra Rosa Vineyard, while a second organization run by Thomas Peabody started the nearby Whetstone Vineyards. This later effort was one of Arizona's largest and most advanced vineyards at the time, with over fifty acres of vines and large air-circulating fans to deter spring frosts. Many of the new efforts were started by people with limited commercial farming (let alone vineyard) experience, but a few of the state's large corporate agribusiness operations also began experimenting with wine grapes on their Arizona properties. Of particular note was veteran farmer Hollis Roberts, who ran one of the largest farming enterprises in Cochise County. Amidst his extensive pecan orchards at Bowie, Roberts added a vineyard that would eventually grow to over 125 acres and become an important source of grapes for wineries across the state.⁴⁵

In addition to numerous new vineyards, the passage of the Domestic Farm Winery Bill also inspired the opening of at least one new winery. Outside of Nogales, lawyer, art collector, and land developer Arturo "Tino" Ocheltree started making wine around 1983 using beeswax-lined concrete pipes as fermentation tanks.

interview with author, January 23, 2016; Webb interview, August 26, 2017. For the full text of the bill, see "Domestic Farm Winery—Licenses; Fees; Taxes; Sale and Serving of Wine," Arizona 35th Legislature, Chapter 297, House Bill 2307, 1982, pp. 1024–34. Following another legal battle in 2006, the legislature amended the state's farm winery laws with Senate Bill 1276. The new law extended the rules to cover farm wineries outside of Arizona, provided guidelines for internet sales, and allowed local wineries to open restaurants and wine bars on their premises. See Chip Scutari, "Measure will allow wine sales in the mail," *Arizona Republic*, May 1, 2006.

⁴⁵ Margery Rose-Clapp, "Wine promoters tout future of state's vineyards," *Arizona Republic*, September 25, 1985; Roderick Gary, "Arizona wine makers expect growth industry," *Arizona Daily Star*, June 5, 1988; Kent Callaghan interview with author, February 19, 2017 (Callaghan's winery is located near the site of the Peabody and Brady vineyards); Guy Webster, "Cochise County farm operator idling nearly 20,000 acres, laying off 150," *Arizona Republic*, December 12, 1985. Roberts had earlier made a fortune in central California running several large agricultural businesses, including vineyards. For a brief biography of Roberts, see Lael Morgan, "Path Back: Route 66 Is 2-Way Road These Days," *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 1971. Cochise County farmers Dan and Dennice Dunagan also tried planting wine grapes in the 1980s and briefly ran the La Chaumiere Winery. Webb remembers buying grapes from the large Phoenix ArgiVest vineyard near Aguila before it was decimated by Texas root rot in the late 1980s. Robert Webb telephone interview with author, November 19, 2017.

Two years later, he opened the Arizona Vineyards winery and tasting room along Highway 82 east of town. At that time, most of the Arizona wineries had limited public hours and offered visitors little more than a simple counter for sales and sampling. Foreshadowing future trends, Ocheltree was among the first to make his tasting room an attraction in itself and a core part of his business. Intentionally ramshackle in appearance, it invoked the feel of a rustic nineteenth-century rural winery and was filled with an assortment of art, antiques, and movie props. "It was truly a destination point," Ocheltree proudly recalls. He gave his wines equally colorful names like Worker's Red, Desert Dust, Rainbow Rouge, and Rattlesnake Red and sold them for five dollars a bottle.⁴⁶

Following the passage of the Farm Winery Bill, the AWGA turned its attention to the marketing and promotion of Arizona wines. In October 1984, they partnered with Sonoita businessman Bill Letarte and the Sonoita Trade Bureau to organize the first Arizona wine festival. Despite rainy weather and limited publicity, the one-day event at the Santa Cruz County fairgrounds attracted some 1,400 attendees. The following year, it grew into a weekend-long event with over six thousand people. By 1986, the third festival included a wine-judging contest featuring some twenty-five different local wines. They also took steps to increase the visibility of Arizona wine at the national level. Several years earlier, the federal government had created the American Viticultural Area (AVA) designation (similar to the appellation system of Europe), which recognized distinct wine-growing regions for the purpose of labeling and differentiation. In 1984, Gordon Dutt and Blake Brophy successfully petitioned the government to designate Sonoita as an official AVA—the first in the Southwest.⁴⁷

In just a few short years, the newborn Arizona wine industry had seen tremendous growth with four new wineries, a dozen

⁴⁶ Arturo Ocheltree telephone interview with author, February 4, 2017; Sam Negri, "No time like the past," *Arizona Republic*, December 3, 1985.

⁴⁷ "Sonoita to fete wines Saturday," *Arizona Daily Star*, October 18, 1984; Judith Ratliff, "6,000 wine fans make Sonoita fair a heady success," *Arizona Daily Star*, August 6, 1985; Sandal English, "Sonoita wine judged tops at festival," *Arizona Daily Star*, August 6, 1986; Dutt interview, August 23, 2015. Willcox became Arizona's second AVA in September 2016. The AVA program is managed by the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau of the United States Department of the Treasury. A full listing of all current AVAs (including their boundaries and publication date) can be found on their website at https://www.ttb.gov/wine/us_by_ava.shtml (accessed on December 16, 2017).

vineyards planned or planted, a popular annual wine festival, and a new American Viticulture Area. The future seemed bright and limitless. Instead, the following years would bring several major setbacks followed by a long period of slow growth and even stagnation that would last until the end of the century. Texas root rot, a natural fungus common in the Southwest, destroyed Dutt's first experimental grapevines at Oracle and eventually appeared in other vineyards as well. An even more devastating scourge was Pierce's Disease, a plant-killing bacteria spread by sap-sucking insects. Long a bane to California growers, it struck the Sonoita area in the late 1980s and forced Dutt to replant his entire vineyard. By that time, the Bosmans, Harveys, and Penny Edwards were no longer actively involved with day-to-day activities.⁴⁸

Finances were also a challenge for most of the early operations. Starting a new vineyard requires years of effort and expenses before there is any product to sell, and then the newcomers—often laden with debt—face a highly competitive market dominated by inexpensive California wine. The combination of plant diseases and financial struggles led to the demise of many early vineyards including the large Peabody and Brady operations, which shut down after only a few harvests. “Nobody had a lot of money,” vineyard owner Kent Callaghan remembers. “Everyone was broke basically all the time.” In Tucson, Bob Webb sold his winery and retired in 1996. Despite being one of the largest and best-known wineries in the state, he had made a profit only twice in seventeen years. The new owners did no better and soon fell into bankruptcy. “It was a hell of a learning curve and a lot of people just didn't make it,” Webb recalled of the early days. “They didn't have deep enough pockets to get through it.”⁴⁹

The industry was sustained during the 1990s by a small, but steady, stream of new wineries and vineyards. In the late 1980s,

⁴⁸ Dutt interview, August 23, 2015; Webb interviews, December 12, 2015, and August 26, 2017; Harvey interview, January 15, 2017. See also Stephen Menke, David Byrne, Erich Draeger, and Felisa Blackmer, “Pierce's Disease in Arizona,” *1999 Wine Grape Research Report*, ed. Linda Nunan and Michael W. Kilby, University of Arizona, College of Agriculture, November 1999.

⁴⁹ Webb interview, August 26, 2017; Gail Tabor, “Time running out for winery that won praise, not buyers,” *Arizona Republic*, July 31, 1994; Ramirez, Riddle, and Shei, “R. W. Webb Winery”; Callaghan interview, February 19, 2017. In 2016, the Eastman family sold their property (including the original Roberts vineyard at Bowie) to the National Pecan Company, which removed the vines in order to focus on nut farming.

Israeli-born Zvi Naveh and his wife, Lori, started a new vineyard near Sonoita and opened the Santa Cruz Winery. Under the supervision of Tucson Rabbi Yossie Shem Tov (and with the winemaking assistance of Gordon Dutt), the Navehs produced Arizona's first kosher wine. At the tiny community of Elgin, Bill Letarte, together with Gary and Kathy Ellam, opened the Village of Elgin Winery and tasting room in the early 1990s. In Cochise County, the Eastman family bought the large Roberts farm and opened the Fort Bowie Winery, while in Scottsdale, Mike Stern briefly operated the Paradise Valley Winery using grapes from southern Arizona. Far to the north, Granite Creek Vineyards near Prescott transitioned from table to wine grapes in the late 1990s. One of the largest, and most visible, of these new operations was the Kokopelli Winery started by father and son winemakers Donald and Dennis Minchella. In 1991, the Minchellas planted the large Bonita Vineyard north of Willcox and later opened a popular tasting room in downtown Chandler. But for every new venture that started, others would fail, and those that survived rarely turned much of a profit.⁵⁰

Beyond plant diseases and limited finances, other more-subtle factors also contributed to the industry's growing pains. As an entirely new region, it took trial and error to determine which grape varieties did the best and which farming techniques were most effective. Approaches that worked in California, and elsewhere, were not always successful in Arizona. And despite the dogged efforts of the AWGA, marketing and public awareness remained a challenge. In 1991, less than 1 percent of the wine sold in Arizona came from local wineries. "Phoenix people don't even know where Sonoita is," lamented Dutt at the time. Some winemakers continued to try working with distributors, often with disappointing results. Robert Webb, for example, signed with a distributor in 1986 and saw his annual sales plummet from over three thousand cases a year to

⁵⁰ Lori Barile telephone interview with author, October 22, 2017; Sam Negri, "Making Kosher Wine in Cowboy Country," *Arizona Highways*, June 1993, pp. 34–37; Gary Ellam interview with author, June 16, 2018; John C. Stickler, "Arizona Wine Country," *Arizona Daily Star*, December 15, 1995; Carol Broeder, "Fort Bowie Vineyards sells acreage to National Pecan," *Arizona Range News*, March 2, 2016; Lynn K. Chamberlain, "Paradise Valley maker stirs excitement into state," *Arizona Republic*, March 6, 1994; Steve Ayers, "Granite Creek Vineyards," *Arizona Vines & Wines*, pp. 10–11; Edythe Jensen, "Chandler welcomes Valley's 1st winemaker," *Arizona Republic*, August 14, 2003. The Naveh's friends, Oliver and Linnette Weisel, were also partners in the winery. In 1995, the winery moved to nearby Patagonia, Arizona. Kathy Ellam was Bill Letarte's daughter.

fewer than nine hundred. “That damn near killed me,” he bitterly recalls. And even when buyers did choose an Arizona wine, they were not always impressed. Most of the winemakers were still fine-tuning their craft and using grapes from young vines grown in new, untested winemaking regions. Furthermore, many winemakers focused on simple sweet wines that sold well with casual drinkers and the general public, but were not as popular with critics and connoisseurs looking for dry wines and complex flavors. There were some very good bottles of wine produced during this period, and many people enjoyed them, but others found Arizona wines, as a whole, to be unremarkable and not in the same league as California, or even Washington and Oregon.⁵¹

Like fine wine itself, a new winegrowing region requires time to age before it can reach its true potential. Winemakers and vineyard owners improved with each passing season and new operators benefited from the experiences of those who came before. Even failed vineyards provided valuable, if expensive, lessons. At the University of Arizona, Dr. Mike Kilby and others built on Dutt’s original work with additional research and reports to guide new growers, and in 1993 the Arizona legislature established a wine commission to help promote the local industry. Over time, the perception and profitability of Arizona wine gradually improved. Among the newcomers to consistently receive positive national attention was Kent Callaghan. In 1990, Callaghan and his father Harold started a vineyard on their property near Sonoita and soon caught the attention of famous wine critic Robert Parker Jr. In a series of rave reviews for *Wine Advocate* magazine, Parker called Callaghan one of America’s best-kept wine secrets. “Those reviews basically put us on the map, effectively immediately,” Callaghan recalls.⁵²

In nearby Willcox, Robert Webb sold his original vineyard to Al Buhl, a civilian employee at Fort Huachuca, around 1990. With help from Callaghan, Buhl started Dos Cabezas Wine Works in 1995 and also began receiving positive reviews. Four years later, the Dos Cabezas wine caught the attention of New Zealand filmmaker Sam

⁵¹ Laura Brooks, “Wineries want help so they don’t wither on the vine,” *Arizona Daily Star*, December 13, 1991; Webb interview, August 26, 2017.

⁵² Edward Cook, “Winegrowers seek Legislature’s support,” *Arizona Daily Star*, March 15, 1993; Callaghan interview, February 19, 2017; Robert Parker Jr., “1992 Callaghan—Redtail Cuvee” (review), *Wine Advocate*, June 1994. The bill creating the ten-year commission was sponsored by state senator (and future governor) Jan Brewer.

Pillsbury who began working with Buhl and later started his own vineyard and winery nearby. Pillsbury was surprised to discover that winemaking and filmmaking had a lot in common. “It costs a fortune to make everything and it takes forever,” he observed about the challenges of starting a new winery. “It is a long tough haul, but I never had so much fun in my life.” Soon other winemakers, such as Robert Johnson at Colibri Vineyards, Rod Keeling and Jan Schaefer of Keeling Schaefer Vineyards, and Mark and Jacque Cook of Coronado Vineyards, were launching their own operations in the Willcox area. Famous Oregon vintner Dick Erath helped further validate the region’s winemaking credentials in 2005 when he purchased two hundred acres to start his own Arizona vineyard. Eventually, the Willcox area would develop into the state’s largest wine-grape producer.⁵³

In northern Arizona, things progressed at a slower pace. For years, Bill Staltari continued to operate his lone winery south of Camp Verde. It was not until 1993 that Detroit lawyer Jon Marcus bought some land south of Sedona with the idea of starting a vineyard. Marcus began attending seminars in California and volunteered for a while at Callaghan’s winery. In 1997, he started the Echo Canyon Winery on his Sedona property with a small vineyard there and a larger one (laid out in a circular pattern) near Willcox. A few years later, two new wineries—Oak Creek and Javelina Leap—started operations nearby. Among Marcus’s employees at Echo Canyon was winemaker Eric Glomski, who had started by making apple wine from old homesteader orchards in the Arizona mountains. Glomski was surprised by how the wine from each orchard produced its own distinct flavors reminiscent of the setting. “I realized that wine, for me at least, is an expression of place,” he remembers. “It is a liquid landscape.” Inspired to learn more, he spent several years working at the David Bruce

⁵³ Ann Buhl telephone interview with author, October 1, 2017; Al Buhl, “Grape Perspectives: Perspectives on the Arizona Wine Industry 1990-2013,” *AZ Wine Lifestyle*, March 1, 2013; Sam Pillsbury telephone interview with author, June 16, 2018; Peter Corbett, “Arizona welcomes grapes of Erath,” *Arizona Republic*, March 12, 2005. In 2007, Al sold the Dos Cabezas winery to his head winemaker, Todd Bostock, who runs it today as well as the Cimarron vineyard started by Erath. The original Dos Cabezas vineyard (which had first been planted by Webb in 1984) is now managed by Caduceus Cellars and known as the Al Buhl Memorial Vineyard. It is likely the oldest continuously producing commercial wine vineyard in the state. Keeling Schaefer started their first vineyard in 2004 modeled after the Rhône grape varieties of Johnson’s earlier Colibri Vineyard. Rod Keeling emails with author, July 2018.

Winery in California before returning to Arizona and joining Marcus at Echo Canyon. In 2004, Glomski purchased his own parcel of land along a scenic stretch of Oak Creek and started Page Springs Cellars. The pleasant setting, combined with a comfortable tasting room and quality wine, quickly made it a popular local attraction.⁵⁴

As Glomski was starting his new winery, professional musician Maynard James Keenan (the lead singer for the rock band Tool) was also getting involved in local winemaking. Keenan had taken up residence in Jerome, where he started a small vineyard and later opened Caduceus Cellars Winery. In 2007, Glomski and Keenan partnered to start Arizona Stronghold Winery, with its own tasting room in historic downtown Cottonwood. The trials and triumphs of their winemaking adventures were captured in a lighthearted 2010 documentary entitled *Blood into Wine*. Following the movie's release, Keenan and Glomski did a promotional tour, while Whole Foods and other major store chains began carrying their brand. The publicity surrounding the film and tour, Keenan's celebrity status, and their scenic locations near the tourist centers of Sedona and Jerome (as well as positive wine reviews) further raised the visibility of Arizona wine and inspired a fresh wave of new vineyards, wineries, and related businesses across the Verde Valley.⁵⁵

Since 2000, the centers of Arizona's modern wine industry (Sonoita-Elgin, Willcox, and the Verde Valley) have continued to see robust expansion, while others experiment with starting vineyards in new regions of the state. In 2009, Yavapai Community College recognized the growing importance of the industry by starting the state's first viticulture and enology program to train future generations of vintners. The visibility of Arizona wines is also growing at the national level. *Wine Spectator*, one of the nation's leading wine

⁵⁴ Jon Marcus telephone interview with author, September 21, 2017; Mark Tarbell, "Sedona-area wines come to fruition," *Arizona Republic*, October 6, 2004; Eric Glomski telephone interview with author, April 5, 2017; Angela Cara Pancrazio, "Arizonan's grand visions," *Arizona Republic*, March 22, 2006. Due to a regional shortage of grape vines, Marcus was not able to start planting until 1998. The circular vineyard that Marcus started in Willcox is now part of the Bodega Pierce wine operation.

⁵⁵ Glomski interview, April 5, 2017; Sarah Jenson and Maynard James Keenan, *A Perfect Union of Contrary Things* (Milwaukee, 2016), 235–54; Richard Ruelas, "Vineyard is a new stage for rocker," *Arizona Republic*, April 28, 2007; *Blood into Wine*, DVD, directed by Ryan Page and Christopher Pomerence (Dreamy Draw Releasing, 2010). Glomski and Keenan ended their partnership in 2014.

magazines, now features over 180 Arizona wines on its review list with an increasing number receiving high scores. Arizona wine still faces many challenges as well. With so many new vineyards, young vines, and first-time winemakers, quality and consistency can still vary greatly. Inexpensive California wines, mass-produced by large corporate wineries, continue to put pricing pressure on the entire American wine industry. And among the winemakers themselves there are ongoing debates about how the local industry might best evolve and whether local winemakers should exclusively use Arizona grapes. Whether Arizona will become a major wine producer like California, Oregon, and Washington remains to be seen. But, the emergence of a sustainable local wine industry and the growing recognition that Arizona can produce quality wine marks a significant milestone.

Among wine drinkers, the French term *terroir* describes how the character of a wine reflects the unique circumstances of its creation and the nature of the vineyard from which it came. Many believe the best wine comes from grapes that have known struggle. In the American West, few winemaking regions have known as much struggle as Arizona and yet, over generations of failures and false starts, winemaking aspirations still have helped shape the area's agriculture and society. Like the grapevine that goes dormant in winter, the roots of Arizona viticulture run deep and have always survived to grow back stronger the next season. In the Salt River Valley, a modern metropolis now covers the site of the pioneering vineyards that helped inspire the region's early growth. Local diners can order Arizona wine in restaurants and cafes that sit where Alois Cuber and Daniel Bagley once grew grapes. In northern Arizona, popular wineries and tasting rooms carry on a tradition that Henry Schuerman established over a century ago, and, in the south, where Spanish priests and settlers once struggled to survive, thriving vineyards bring new life to ancient dreams. Arizona may have a young wine industry, but it has an old history.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Wine Spectator: Wine Ratings webpage, <http://www.winespectator.com/wineratings> (accessed January 28, 2016). Recent 90-plus scores for Arizona wines include a 2010 Syrah from Burning Tree Cellars and another 2010 Syrah from Page Springs Cellars vineyards.