



**EL DORADO**  
**WINE GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

---

POST OFFICE BOX 454, CAMINO, CALIFORNIA 95709

December 13, 1984

James A. Hunt  
FAA Wine and Beer Branch  
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms  
Washington, D.C. 20226

Dear Mr. Hunt:

This letter is, I hope, the last in reference to the viticultural area El Dorado. A modification to the western boundary of the area is made necessary to add a producing vineyard that was left just outside the original boundary, yet met all other requirements for inclusion in the Appellation.

It is requested that the boundary of the El Dorado Viticultural Area be modified in the manner listed below. No additional maps are needed for reference.

With reference to 27 CFR Part 9, subpart C, Paragraph 2, 9.61

(C) Boundaries

Listing (1) through (11) no change

(12a) thence north along the range line to its intersection with U.S. Route 50.

(12b) thence west along U.S. Route 50 to its intersection with Cameron Park Drive.

(12c) thence north along Cameron Park Drive to its intersection with Green Valley Road.

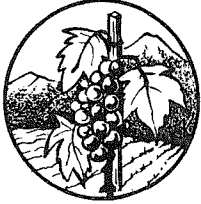
(12d) then east along Green Valley Road to its intersection with range line R.10 E/ R.9 E.

(12e) thence north along the range line to its intersection with the township line T.10 N./ T.11 N.

Listing (13) through (15) no change.

Sincerely,

A. G. Boissevain, President



**EL DORADO**  
**WINE GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

POST OFFICE BOX 454, CAMINO, CALIFORNIA 95709

March 19, 1985

*RM*  
*3-25-85*  
James A. Hunt  
FAA Wine and Beer Branch  
BATE  
Washington, D.C. 20226

Dear Mr. Hunt:

I apologise for the poor telephone connection this morning. Something is lacking from a combination of cut-rate phone equipment and cut-rate long-distance lines. But de-regulation is not today's subject.

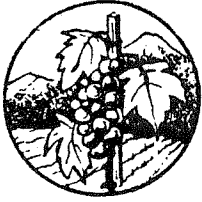
My letter to you of December 13, 1984, proposed a modification to the western boundary of the viticultural area EL DORADO. Specifically, the vineyard in question is located in Section 25 of R 9 E - T 10 N in the Shingle Springs Quadrangle. Note that Section 25 is just west of the original boundary definition of the Range line R.10E./R.9E. as listed in 27 CFR Part 9, Subpart C, paragraph 2 9.61 (c) Boundaries (12).

The vineyard in Section 25, R9E-T10N, fulfills all the criteria originally established for the viticultural area EL DORADO and was left out of the originally defined area through a breakdown in communications when the simplified boundaries were established along Range and Township lines rather than along a more complicated contour line of 1200 foot elevation (which is also somewhat arbitrary because of the critical importance of local micro-climates on grape characteristics). So far as we can tell, there are no other vineyards left out of the proposed boundaries that meet all the criteria of the area. The vineyard in the Latrobe area is in a completely different climatic area at an elevation of 600 feet.

I am enclosing copies of the documentation submitted to BATE in support of the original petition. Note that it was Section Four, A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF "EL DORADO" BASED ON FEATURES WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAPS as originally submitted/<sup>part</sup> had the subject error of omission as well as some other errors in trying to go North and South on Township Lines and East and West on Range lines. This is fairly difficult to do, if not impossible. Note also that the Official Description of the Boundaries sub-paragraph (5) also falls in that trap.

If there is anything else I can provide to assist in the resolution of this problem, please call.

Sincerely, *A. G. Boissevain*  
A.G. Boissevain 916/333-1565



**EL DORADO**  
**WINE GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION**

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POST OFFICE BOX 454, CAMINO, CALIFORNIA 95709

BATF  
Washington, D.C. 20226

Re: American Viticultural Area

Dear Director:

In accordance with 27 CFR 4.25a (e) (2), the El Dorado Wine Grape Growers Association hereby petitions for the establishment of an American viticultural area to be named "El Dorado". In support of this petition we offer the appended evidence and descriptions.

There are currently 164 acres of producing winegrape vineyards in El Dorado. In addition, there are 252 acres planted, but not yet bearing, and many more are in the planning stages. Daily inquiries are made from prospective new growers investigating the suitability of this area for their vineyards.

El Dorado has within its boundaries six bonded wineries, ranging in size from 3000 gallon fermenting and storage capacity, to 30,000 gallons. Planning is underway for more wineries. These wineries all have vineyards, and, to be entitled to use the estate bottled designation, seek to have the area approved.

Although most of the El Dorado grapes are crushed by its own wineries, other wineries in California are marketing wines with the El Dorado County appellation, and therefore, also have an interest in the establishment of "El Dorado" as an American viticultural area. Some of the brands currently offering El Dorado wines are, Boeger, David Bruce, Ravenswood, Sierra Vista, Sutter Home, Stevenot, Shenandoah Vineyards, Amador Foothill Winery, Kenworthy, and Santino.

All of the wine grape growers, and winery owners, within the area are in support of this petition. To our knowledge, there is no opposition to this petition.

---

FRANK HERBERT, PRESIDENT  
El Dorado Wine Grape Growers Association

## PREFACE

Prior to the discovery of gold in what was later to be the State of California, the Sierra Foothills were very slightly populated, primarily with Indians and trappers or hunters. To support the rapid influx of population following the discovery of gold at Coloma, came the beginnings of agriculture. An important part of this was the growing of grapes: in the 1860's El Dorado County probably had more grape vines than Sonoma or Napa County. Wine from these grapes was very good and won prizes and awards. Interestingly, one of the most significant figures in viticulture in the later gold rush days, was James W. Marshall, himself, the discoverer of gold.

The diminishing population, as the gold played out, the scourge of phylloxera, and the Volstadt Act, all caused the grape/wine industry to virtually disappear by the end of World War II.

In the 1960's, however, renewed interest took place. Test plots were established. Advice and counsel was sought from the University of California. All signs indicated that certain areas of El Dorado County could again produce grapes that would make premium wines - encompassing most of the significant varieties.

The Boeger Winery in Placerville was started in 1973 at the site of the old Fossati winery. Boeger Wines, made from their own grapes and from a vineyard near Coloma, have consistently won awards and received favorable reviews from wine writers. The Sierra Vista Winery in Pleasant Valley was started in 1977, and it too has won awards and favorable reviews. Presently four more wineries have been bonded, and others are in various stages of development.

Vineyard growth has paralleled that of the wineries. From 11 acres in 1967, the area now has a total of 380, planted to 15 different varieties, including Chardonnay, Reisling, Gewürtztraminer, Sauvignon Blanc in whites, and Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, Petite Sirah, Syrah, and Zinfandel in the reds.

Because there are parts of El Dorado County where it is not possible to grow premium grapes, it would not be accurate to use the County as the designated area. We propose that only the smaller portion of the county where it has been established, both in the past and currently, that premium grapes can be grown, be given the appellation "El Dorado".

Following is the body of our evidence to support that position.

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SECTION ONE

EVIDENCE THAT THE NAME "EL DORADO" IS  
LOCALLY AND NATIONALLY KNOWN TO REFER  
TO THE PROPOSED VITICULTURAL AREA

A selection of current newspaper, magazine and other articles is appended to this petition to show that "El Dorado" has been receiving local, state and national recognition for a number of years (Appendix A). Not all of the references are to the name "El Dorado" per se, but some are to towns within the proposed viticultural area, or to the general vicinity. Refer to Table I for a listing of areas described in Appendix A, a cross reference to the articles in which they appear, and the frequency of appearance. The three most frequently appearing names, in order, are: El Dorado County, Placerville and El Dorado, all of which are evidence that "El Dorado" is the appropriate name for the viticultural area.

Since Placerville is a city within the area, it is not appropriate for it to bear the name for the entire area. However, because it is known to be within the area, references to it, and public knowledge that it is a grape growing region are evidence in support of the petition.

El Dorado County is not the appropriate name because it denotes the political subdivision, all of which is not included in the region. However, references to the county are evidence that the El Dorado region is known, because almost all of the agricultural lands of the county are included within the boundaries. Refer to Section Two for elaboration of this point. It can be argued that the thousands of bottles of El Dorado County appellation wines which have reached consumers have spread the word via the labels that "El Dorado" is a region. In addition, the many wine newsletters, such as "California Grapevine", "Balzer's Private Guide to Food & Wine", "W.I.N.O. Newsletter", etc., which have not been included in Appendix A, have routinely reviewed El Dorado County wines and hence some portion of the readers are no doubt aware of the "El Dorado" region.

TABLE I

INDEX OF WINEGRAPE GROWING AREAS WITHIN "EL DORADO"  
TO WHICH THE CURRENT ARTICLES (APPENDIX A) REFER

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ARTICLE NUMBER</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Apple Hill	2,4,5,6,7,9,12,13,16	9
Camino	3,4,6,9	4
Coloma	1,3,6	3
"EL DORADO"	1,2,4,6,7,9,16,24,26	9
El Dorado County	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,9,13,15,16,18,19, 20,21,22,24,25	18
Fairplay	3	1
Foothill(s)	3,6,10,12,13	5
Gold Country	13,19,26	3

TABLE I (continued)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ARTICLE NUMBER</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Gold Hill	1,3	2
Hangtown	7,11	2
Mother Lode	12,18,23,24,25	5
Oak Hill	4,6	2
Placerville	2,3,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,16, 18,21,24,26	16
Pleasant Valley	6,9,12,21,24,26	6
Shingle Springs	3	1
Sierra Foothill(s)	9,19,20,22,23,25	6
Somerset	9,21	2

None of the other names in Table I is the appropriate name for the region, because they are either towns or sub-areas within it, or refer to the entire Mother Lode or Sierra Foothills. Because the re-emergence of this area as a premium grape growing region dates only to about 1970, there is some tentativeness as to naming evident in some of the articles. In fact, most contain more than one name. It is quite clear from the texts, however, that there is a consensus that there is a region as proposed, and that the name "El Dorado" pinpoints it -- it could not be interpreted to refer to any other area. Following are some highlights from the articles of Appendix A which are offered as evidence that the name "El Dorado" is known.

Local El Dorado County citizens were being made aware of the region through "THE GOLD MINE" which proclaimed in 1972 that "the new vineyards of El Dorado promise to set the county's name once again on the lips of connoisseurs of California's fine wines." (Article 1). In the 1973 *SACRAMENTO BEE* article headlined, "El Dorado Shows Budding Grape Wine Industry", the UC farm advisor was quoted "that since 1964 when a UC Davis viticulturalist indicated that El Dorado County would be an ideal spot to grow winegrapes, agricultural and farm specialists (there) have been attempting to cultivate the winegrape industry. They are apparently on the threshold of fulfilling that aim." (Article 2). In 1974, in the "COUNTRY LIFE" magazine section of *THE SACRAMENTO BEE*, the points were made that "in areas of Fairplay, Placerville, and Camino at elevations of between 2,000 and 3,000 feet... this county is known for its deep soil and climate beneficial to vineyards." (Article 3). In the September 1974, "GOLD MINE", the local business community was given a run down of several grape grower's activities to show that "the renaissance of the El Dorado County wine industry is for real". (Article 4). In a 1974 *MOUNTAIN DEMOCRAT* article about the inclusion of a winery in the Apple Hill Growers Association, it was noted that it



"already has started producing wines such as gave El Dorado County an honored name in the wine world during pre-prohibition days. The winery has more than a 100-year history." (Article 5) In a 1976 article on "The foothills wine industry" appearing in the Business section of *THE SACRAMENTO UNION*, it was noted that "A steady increase in the demand for wine stimulated a statewide search for new growing areas capable of producing top quality wines and in 1965 the trial plantings began. Evaluations by the Department of Enology at Davis continued to provide positive evidence of the suitability of El Dorado County for producing dry wines of exceptionally fine quality." (Article 6) In a 1977 article about the potential for the viticultural area, in the "*CALIFORNIA AND WESTERN STATES GRAPE GROWER*" magazine, it was said that "Famous grape growing regions of the world often become known by the wines they produce ... And, of course, there's El Dorado County, which has brought forth Hangtown Red." (Article 7) Note the title on the photographic cover page for the October 14, 1978 "*CALIFORNIA LIFE*" section of *THE SACRAMENTO BEE*: "The Vintners of El Dorado" --- evidence of its recognition as a viticultural area. In the text of the story, it was said that "El Dorado County's wine industry, the oldest yet newest premium wine producing region in California, just won't die." (Article 9) In *THE WINE SPECTATOR*, a national publication, in his 1979 article "Head for the foothills!", Richard P. Watson advised his readers that "Wines from Placerville and Plymouth are beginning to show up (in markets) .... this may well be a new appellation region to watch." (Article 10) In the annual review of Cabernet Sauvignon in the "*CONNOISSEUR'S GUIDE TO CALIFORNIA WINE*" the reviewers note the winemaking history associated with "areas near 'Hangtown' (Placerville)", and go on to say that the winery "seems destined to prove that there was viticultural merit in this mountain region". (Article 11) Robert Lawrence Balzer, the eminent wine connoisseur, wrote in his nationally syndicated column, "The Placerville locale, re-emerging as a fine wine area, especially for Zinfandel, has been bringing some fame to this foothill gold rush area ...". (Article 13) And also Jerry Mead, another nationally respected wine critic and columnist, wrote that the "wines carry a new appellation, El Dorado County, that should eventually earn a reputation the equal of such names as Napa, Sonoma, Mendocino and Amador". (Article 16) Note that the headline for Article 16 reads, "Superb Wines From El Dorado". More direct evidence of national recognition of "El Dorado" is the article in the *KANSAS CITY TIMES* featuring one of the areas wineries. (Article 18) In a March 1980 column from Carmel, California, it was reported about "a relatively new growing region, El Dorado County, an area in the Sierra Foothills in what used to be Gold Rush country ... you can look to hear a great deal about El Dorado County in coming years." (Article 19) In Mead's June 15, 1980, *SACRAMENTO BEE* column on award winning wines, he said that "the gold for (the) 1977 El Dorado County shows the promise of this emerging Sierra Foothills wine growing region is being fulfilled." (Article 20)

The fact that winning in the Orange County Fair Commercial Wine Competition brings recognition, on a national scale, to the El Dorado region is the subject of Article 21. In another article about the Orange County winners, Mead said in the July 6, 1980 *THE SACRAMENTO BEE* column, that the "1978 'El Dorado County' made a statement for this emerging Sierra foothill region". (Article 22) Harvey Steiman, in his July 23, 1980, *SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER* column, refers geographically to the new region, stating "the Zinfandel, from the Mother Lode Country in the Sierra foothills, has the typical berry-like aroma ...". (Article 23) It was noted in the August 15, 1980 *MOUNTAIN DEMOCRAT* article that "the prize cup ranneth over for El Dorado County wines and grapes at the Amador County Fair wine judging last week, keeping flowing the recent recognition of the county's vineyard products." (Article 24) Harvey Steiman prefaced his *SAN FRANCISCO EXAMINER* story about the 1980 Amador County Fair wine awards with a brief history about the Sierra foothills wine areas. (Article 25) In the September 11, 1980, "Breakaway" section of *THE SACRAMENTO UNION*, it was noted that "there are more than a dozen fine wineries which begin less than 50 miles east of here in historic Placerville ... These wineries are rapidly becoming famous for their rich and powerful Zinfandels." (Article 26)

In conclusion, the foregoing quotes were selected to show specifically that the proposed viticultural area is known locally, statewide, and nationally through the mass media and the wine press. The reader is requested to review Appendix A in its entirety where the evidence is overwhelming that "El Dorado" is known to refer to the proposed viticultural area.

SECTION TWO

~~HISTORICAL AND CURRENT EVIDENCE THAT THE PROPOSED~~  
BOUNDARIES OF EL DORADO ARE AS SPECIFIED

## BOUNDARIES

The boundaries of "El Dorado" have been drawn to include all known and potential premium grape growing areas within El Dorado County. Factors of soils, climate and terrain limit this to areas above 1200 feet elevation, and below 3500 feet. Because contour lines were extremely convoluted, range and township lines have been used to smooth the upper elevation boundary on the east, and the lower elevation on the west. The county lines form natural north-south boundaries -- the steep, craggy canyons of the North Fork of the American River on the north, and the South Fork of the Consumnes River on the south.

So that the proposed El Dorado Viticultural Area can be seen in its entirety on one map, the Map of El Dorado County (Quad Map Index) has been included in Appendix C. The areas highlighted in red are the titles of the applicable USGS maps. The areas to which the historical report (Appendix B) and the public record (Appendix A) refer are highlighted in yellow.

## HISTORICAL EVIDENCE

Historical data will show that El Dorado County has a long and well publicized history of grape growing. Public knowledge of El Dorado County as a region is evidence that the proposed boundaries are correct. This is obviously true in the case of the north and south boundaries which are identical to the county lines. In the case of the eastern boundary, it represents the upper limit of possible agricultural activity. It is general knowledge that the rocky, mountain terrain and climate of the Sierra Nevada Mountains limits farming to the lower elevations, so it is herein assumed that public knowledge of El Dorado County as a grape growing region also supports the eastern boundary as correct. The modern market for premium winegrape varieties, and the viticultural fact that such grapes are suited to cooler regions, are evidence which supports the western (1200 foot elevation) boundary. Even though there were some vineyards planted below the 1000 foot elevation in the historical record -- less than 10% of the total acreage in 1889 -- it does not contradict the assertion that the boundary should be drawn higher, on the basis of elevation. There are no current vineyards of premium grapes today planted below the 1200 foot elevation. It will be shown that almost every historical reference to grape growing areas in "El Dorado" falls within the proposed boundaries, which serves to reinforce them all as correct. Refer to Table II (page 6) for a list of those areas, and to Appendix C for their location on the map.

Mr. Charles L. Sullivan's report, "*HISTORIC WINEGROWING IN EL DORADO COUNTY*" is submitted as historical evidence that the proposed boundaries are correct, and is attached to this

petition as Appendix B. Not only does Mr. Sullivan offer a detailed account of acreage, growers, locations and economics of "El Dorado" grape growing, but also he documents it by references to periodicals and records, both historic and current, that show that the material was and is public knowledge. The fact that (1) virtually all of the areas he describes are within the proposed boundaries of "El Dorado", and (2) that references to El Dorado County itself can be assumed to establish the boundaries, as explained above, and, (3) that these areas have been publicized since 1855, all show that the proposed boundaries are correct.

#### CURRENT EVIDENCE

Numerous articles are appended to this petition which show that the public attention has been drawn to "El Dorado" for several years as a winegrape growing region (Appendix A). The specific areas referred to in the articles have been indexed in Table I and highlighted in yellow on the map. That they all fall within the proposed boundaries is current evidence that the boundaries are as specified in this petition. All references to the county of El Dorado reinforce the boundaries as well, because the boundaries take in all possible viticultural lands in the County except those below the 1200 foot elevation, where no premium winegrapes are planted.

#### TABLE II

INDEX OF AREAS TO WHICH THE SULLIVAN HISTORICAL REPORT REFERS

COLOMA

COULTERVILLE

DIAMOND SPRINGS

EL DORADO

EL DORADO COUNTY

EL DORADO DISTRICT

GARDEN VALLEY

GEORGETOWN

GOLD HILL

GREEN VALLEY

KELSEY

LATROBE

MICHIGAN FLAT

MUD SPRINGS

PLACERVILLE

SHINGLE SPRINGS

UNIONTOWN

SECTION THREE

EVIDENCE THAT THE GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES OF "EL DORADO"  
PRODUCE GROWING CONDITIONS WHICH DISTINGUISH IT FROM  
SURROUNDING AREAS.

## CLIMATE OF THE EL DORADO REGION

The climatic conditions which distinguish "El Dorado" from surrounding areas will be presented in relation to the four seasons. One of the most important factors is not seasonal, however. Throughout the year, the evenings and nights are cooled by breezes which originate from the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the East.

### WINTER

Winter temperatures fall to 20° to 35° at night and warm up to 40° to 60° Fahrenheit in the day. More than half of the annual precipitation falls in the months from December to March. Average annual rainfall ranges from 33 to 45 inches, varying with elevation. For every 300 foot rise in elevation, precipitation increases 3 to 4 inches. The higher average elevation of "El Dorado" as opposed to the lower foothill areas, and the Central Valley, guarantees it a more favorable growing climate as far as rainfall is concerned. The moisture-laden winter storms from the Pacific Ocean are carried across Central California by the prevailing west to east winds.

"The Coast Ranges catch some of the resulting rain, especially in the north, but there is no barrier at the Golden Gate and the heaviest precipitation occurs to the east and north of the gap as the air<sup>1</sup> ascends the gradual western slope of the Sierra."

The winter fog, so typical of California's Great Central Valley and the coastal valleys, rarely extends above the 1200 foot elevation in "El Dorado"

### SPRING

Spring temperatures occasionally fall below 30 Fahrenheit, but more often range from 30° to 45° Fahrenheit at night. Daytime temperatures warm up to 50° to 70° Fahrenheit, with late spring temperatures at times reaching 80° Fahrenheit. Approximately 20% of the annual precipitation falls in the months of April and May. In some years, when little rain falls during these months, the grapevines begin to use some of the available stored water.

### SUMMER

Diurnal temperature variation is greater in "El Dorado" than in the other regions of California. Summer temperatures commonly fall to a minimum of 50° Fahrenheit at night, and rising often to 90° Fahrenheit during the day. Cool mountain breezes temper the influence of the great valley's hot air mass, and for every 300 feet rise in elevation, a temperature drop of 1° Fahrenheit occurs. Little or no rainfall occurs during June, July, August, or September except for a rare

<sup>1</sup> *Sierra Nevada Natural History*, Page 13

thunder shower created by the influence of the Sierra Nevada. Unlike many of California's wine regions, the influence of smog is almost nonexistent.

#### AUTUMN

An Indian summer is characteristic of autumn in "El Dorado", extending the growing season into October. Cooler nighttime temperatures of 35° to 50° Fahrenheit, with slightly cooler days in the 70° to 80° Fahrenheit range are typical. Little rainfall occurs until late October and November, insuring ideal maturation of the grapes and no problems associated with a wet harvest. Daily westerly breezes from the Sierra Nevada Mountains lower actual vine temperature below the ambient air temperature. The long warm days and cool nights ripen the grapes to an unexcelled quality with distinctive character apparent in the wines of "El Dorado".

#### SOILS OF THE EL DORADO REGION

The El Dorado region is on the western slope of the central Sierra Nevada. It is dominated by steeply dipping, faulted and folded metamorphic rocks that have been intruded by several types of igneous rocks. Overlying the bedrock in many places are mantels of river gravel and volcanic debris.

Parent material exerts one of the strongest influences on soil formation in this region. Most of the soils are on uplands, formed in place in material weathered from metamorphic rocks or andesitic conglomerate rock.

Typically, in the western part of "El Dorado" below 2000 foot elevation, the land is steep and angular, consisting of faulted and folded metamorphic rocks. Metamorphic rocks are generally not easily weathered -- they commonly form shallow gravelly soils that have many outcrops. The metamorphic rocks are fine-grained and form soils that have a surface texture of loam, and silt loam.

In the southern part of "El Dorado" in the 2000 to 3000 foot elevation range, the land typically consists of granitic rocks and is rounded and smooth with a basin-like appearance. Soils underlain by granitic rocks occupy places where the overlying rocks were stripped away and the Sierra Nevada batholith is exposed. The parent rock is weathered to a considerable depth, and the soils are 3½ to more than 5 feet deep. The weathered rocks contain many angular, coarse grains of sand, mainly quartz, that form soils that have a surface layer of coarse sandy loam. Typical vegetation in this region is Ponderosa Pine.



In the volcanic areas of land above the 2500 foot elevation throughout "El Dorado", the terrain is flat and smooth (Camino ridge). The andesitic conglomerate (volcanic mud flows) is deeply weathered, especially in the Aiken soils, because the material is porous and weathers easily. The andesite is moderately grained and forms soils that have a surface texture of loam and sandy loam.

Soils represent a cumulation of the effects of climate, geology and vegetation. The soil characteristics play an important role in the winegrape's productivity and quality. In "El Dorado", although the soils vary in texture and depth, their parent materials were all formed from common Magma materials of the great Sierra Batholith. This is in contrast to the lower foothill and the central valley regions, where the soils are sedimentary (transported materials of ocean sediments, stream deposits, etc.), and consist of a conglomerate of materials representing the changing erosive patterns of the geologic past. In contrast, "El Dorado" soils are residual (formed in place) and igneous in origin, and have the characteristics described in detail in the foregoing.

The significance to grape growing of the unique soils of "El Dorado" is that it differentiates it from neighboring areas in several ways. Some of the positive aspects which favor winegrape growing in "El Dorado" are:

1. The soils are acidic, having a pH range from 5.0 to 6.2, in contrast to the alkaline soils common throughout California.
2. Hardpans, claypans and restricting layers are uncommon.
3. Soil water drainage and infiltration rates are moderate to fast.
4. High water table conditions which are unfavorable to grape growing are near non-existent in "El Dorado", unlike the Central Valley.

In conclusion, it has been shown that both the climate and the soils of "El Dorado" are different from surrounding areas, and that these geographical features produce unique growing conditions which distinguish it from others.

SECTION FOUR

A NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF "EL DORADO"  
BASED ON FEATURES WHICH CAN BE FOUND  
ON THE U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAPS

BEGINNING at a point being the intersection of the North Fork of the American River and the Northerly line of Township 11 North, Range 8 East, M.D.M., thence, generally in a North-easterly direction along said North Fork of the American River which is also the El Dorado County Boundary, to the point of intersection of said river and the easterly line of Township 13 North, Range 11 East, M.D.M.; thence, Southerly along the township lines to the Northeasterly corner of Township 11 North, Range 11 East, M.D.M.; thence, Easterly along range lines to the Northeast corner of Township 11 North, Range 12 East, M.D.M.; thence Southerly along township lines to the Southeast corner of Township 11 North, Range 12 East, M.D.M.; thence, Easterly along range lines to the Northeasterly corner of Township 10 North, Range 13 East, M.D.M.; thence, Southerly along township lines along the Easterly line of Township 8 North, Township 9 North, and Township 10 North, all Range 13 East, M.D.M. to the point of intersecton with the South Fork of the Consumnes River; thence, in a Westerly direction along the South Fork of the Consumnes River, which is also the El Dorado County Boundary, to the point of intersection of said River and the Easterly line of Township 8 North, Range 10 East, M.D.M.; thence Northerly along township lines to the Northeast corner of Township 8 North, Range 10 East, M.D.M.; thence, Westerly along range lines to the Northeasterly corner of Township 8 North, Range 9 East, M.D.M.; thence, Northerly along township lines to the Northeast corner of Township 11 North, Range 9 East, M.D.M.; thence, Westerly along range lines to the point of beginning.

INDEX TO APPENDIX A - Articles

Art. No.	Date	Title of Article and Name of Publication	Page No.
1.	9/72	"New Wine In Old Vineyards", <i>The Gold Mine</i> , Placerville, CA	1
2.	2/23/73	"El Dorado Shows Budding Grape-Wine Industry, Hopes to Encourage Growth", <i>The Sacramento Bee</i> , Sacramento, CA	3
3.	8/1/74	'Wine Revival', "Country Life", <i>The Sacramento Bee</i> , Sacramento, CA	2
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\* Chronicle

HISTORIC WINEGROWING

in

EL DORADO COUNTY

by

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Los Gatos, California

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## HISTORIC WINE GROWING IN EL DORADO COUNTY

Although wine growing in California was fairly widespread in the coastal areas during the Spanish and Mexican periods prior to the American conquest, it was the discovery of gold in 1848 that actually brought viticulture and eventually winemaking to the Sierra foothills area. Foremost among the counties in which these activities developed in the 1850's was El Dorado County. In fact, so important did wine growing become in the 1860's and the early 1870's that some experts thought the county would eventually become as important as the most developed of the coastal counties. Actually, El Dorado County probably had more grapevines in 1860 than did Sonoma or Napa Counties. Disease and transportation problems, followed by Prohibition, precluded "El Dorado" reaching these heights, but for decades the area was counted among the most important in California wine growing.

The first grape vines here were probably planted near Coloma, south of Rescue, on Sweetwater Creek, perhaps as early as 1849, by a man named Stevens, 32 vines in all. These were expanded and in five years a German from Saxe-Weimer, Jacob Zentgraf, bought the property and by 1857 was producing about 2000 gallons of wine per year. In 1859, Zentgraf had built a little distillery and was selling his wines in Pennsylvania through his cousin in Johnstown, John Schiffhauser. The Zentgraf Winery was in production until the 1890's, when it burned down, but the walls were still standing in the 1960's.<sup>1</sup> This winery was typical of winemaking operations in El Dorado County during the last half of the 19th century.

In 1855, the *California Farmer* reported about 3000 vines in the county, mostly Missions, but in the next few years as the placer mines gave out and the inhabitants looked about for profitable agricultural activities, many more vines were planted.<sup>2</sup> By 1857, A. T. Taylor had 1650 vines near Placerville. B. F. McCormack was also an important grower, as were C. W. Robertson and Charles L. Ingalsbee near Coloma.<sup>3</sup> By the end of the decade these tentative beginnings had expanded so that in the 1860 census about 800 acres of grapevines could be counted.

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<sup>1</sup> Ernest P. Peninou and Sidney S. Greenleaf. *A Directory of California Wine Growers and Wine Makers in 1860*. Berkeley, 1960. According to a report in the *Sacramento Record* 1874, the first vines in the Coloma area were planted in 1852.

<sup>2</sup> *California Farmer*, November 9, 1855.

<sup>3</sup> *Alta California*, July 9, 1857.

In the Coloma area by far the most important grower was Martin Alhoff. He and Robert Chalmers had built a hotel in Coloma in 1852 and had planted a vineyard, mostly to Catawba grapes to produce wine for the place. In 1860, Alhoff built a winery with lava rock from Granite Hill. He committed suicide in 1867 and Chalmers married his widow. Alhoff won awards for his white wines at the State Fair in 1860, 1861, and 1862. The Transactions of the State Agricultural Society also show prizes for red wines and brandies. It was thought for some years during the 1860's that his successes with Catawba and Isabella grapes for making white wines might indicate those eastern native hybrids as varieties best for winemaking in the cooler northern counties of California.

There were others in the Coloma area, Peter Calyer, Robert Clark, Charles Graves and Conrad Eitzell, all with good vineyards. Near Placerville, G. W. Foster was the chief grower. John L. Knight had a vineyard near Diamond Springs as did Ekin Smith. J. M. Woods was<sup>4</sup> located around Mud Spring, as were several other small holders.

By 1863 there were 772,000 vines in El Dorado County, almost all in the foothills between the elevations of 1000 and 2800 feet. One of the most important of the winegrowers was located at Coloma, famed not for his viticulture, but from the fact that he had been the man who first discovered gold in 1848. He was James W. Marshall, who now spent his time growing vines and serving the area as a nurseryman. He spent the rest of his life here in this activity. By the 1870's, he had 75 varieties in his collection and had imported vines and cuttings from the east coast and from Europe to supply vineyardists in the area.

In 1866, the *Alta California* ran an article extolling El Dorado County as "undoubtedly the leading county in the Sierra wine business." This respected defender of the state's wine industry predicted that someday it might surpass even Sonoma County. The *Alta* was particularly impressed by the 30 acre spread of M. Foster at Placerville and the several vineyards around Diamond Springs, particularly those of E. M. Strout, D. Brooke and M. Snyder. H. B. Newell had a good 10 acre vineyard at Gold Hill. And the<sup>5</sup> El Dorado Wine Company at El Dorado also had 10 acres in vines.

By now there were almost one and a half million vines in the county and the wine product was well over 200,000 gallons. There were also about 7000 gallons of brandy.

The next year at El Dorado the firm of Jackson and Weatherwax headed by C. T. Jackson, was making good enough wine to be able

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<sup>4</sup> See Peninou's analysis of the 1860 census reports.

<sup>5</sup> *Alta California*, May 6, 1866



to establish a short lived depot in Chicago. In 1867, the Diamond Springs district alone made 50,000 gallons of wine. The El Dorado Wine Company, just up the road, was making over 20,000 gallons.<sup>6</sup>

The planting of the late 1860's came into full production in the early 1870's. By now a fairly large amount of the county's grape production was going down to the Sacramento Valley to be made into wine by the larger wineries there. Also, a large part of the production went into brandy making. There were no less than 40 commercial distilleries in the county in 1871, mostly small operations. Still, planting continued for a couple of years and although growers complained about prices and markets, there was no talk of pulling up El Dorado vineyards as there was in some of the wine growing areas in the Central Valley and coastal valleys.

By then the Robert Chalmers operation at Coloma had become the dominant wine interest in the area and certainly the most colorful.<sup>7</sup> In 1871, the *Pacific Rural Press* ran an article praising his "mammoth wine cellars" three stories high. He now had 85 acres of vines and also bought widely in the Coloma area, making about 40,000 gallons of wine that season and 15,000 gallons of brandy. His winery capacity was listed as 60,000 gallons. He also made several types of fruit wine.<sup>8</sup>

Within three years his vineyard had expanded to 110 acres. His wines and his famed Catawba bitters had found an eastern market and in 1878, he built his famed Vineyard House Hotel in Coloma, an imposing structure that is still standing. By the end of the decade his position in the local industry is best indicated by the results of the competition at the El Dorado Agricultural Association's tenth annual fair in Placerville. Chalmers won awards for the best red, white and sweet wines, and for the best port and sherry. He won special awards for his Angelica, Burgundy, Green Hungarian, sweet Muscat and for his flavored brandies and cordials.<sup>9</sup> C. G. Carpenter of Diamond Springs was also developing a good reputation as was Philip Kramp of the same district. In that same year, he won awards for the best brandy and the best sparkling wines.

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<sup>6</sup> *Alta California*, December 7, 1867; August 19, 1867;  
*California Farmer*, May 28, 1867

<sup>7</sup> For a remarkable story of this man and his wife see "The Coloma Ghosts", *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 15, 1971.

<sup>8</sup> *Pacific Rural Press*, November 11, 1871

<sup>9</sup> Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society, Sacramento, 1880.

Later in the 1870's another analysis of wine growing in the area appeared, this time in the *Sacramento Record*, titled "Viniculture in the Foothills." The mining camp at Coloma was dead, but the vineyards and orchards were in full bloom.<sup>10</sup> Chalmers was listed as the predominate element in the Coloma area, with 14 others listed as having vineyards of at least five acres of vines. Around Gold Hill, Mr. Veerkamp had 40 acres in vines; there were nine other growers there of note. Michigan Flat had five important vineyardists, George Williams the largest, with 25 acres. And around Uniontown, there were nine growers with ten acres or more. There were a total of 666 acres of wine grapes in these districts. There were also about 100 acres around Coulterville, 15 at Garden Valley, 20 around Kelsey, and 30 at Georgetown.

The *Record's* article cited a problem that would grow in the next fifteen years. Growers needed another large winery or two for their grapes. Chalmers could not take enough and the other few small ones still left a surplus that had to be hauled down into the Sacramento Valley or made up into brandy right there.

The decade of the 1880's opened with the establishment of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, a body that took a special interest in each wine growing area of the state. The entire area of the Sierra foothills was termed the El Dorado District, a clear indication of the continuing importance of that county. George G. Blanchard, the District's first commissioner, indicated in 1881 that there were 1150 acres of wine grapes in the county producing about 2500 tons of grapes per year, a relatively low yield for these days, indicating the amount of dry farming taking place in the vineyards of the foothill area. There were sixteen grape varieties listed, with the old Mission grape still in first place, but with some varieties of a better sort, particularly the Zinfandel and the White Riesling. He noted that the planting boom was now over and the phylloxera had been found in the county. The next year the county's wine product was about 230,000 gallons with about 20,000 gallons of brandy.<sup>11</sup>

In 1884, the *San Francisco Merchant* listed the growers and winemakers in the county. There were now 11 growers in the Coloma area with the Chalmers Winery and that of E. D. Endries, the chief producers. There were 14 growers around Diamond

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<sup>10</sup>Transactions of the California State Agricultural Society, Sacramento, 1875, pp. 334-337, copying the article from the *Sacramento Record*.

<sup>11</sup>First Annual Report of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, Sacramento, 1881, pp. 29-30.

Springs. C. B. Carpenter had a good winery there, but the Kramp Brothers Winery had taken the lead in the district and would soon pass up the Chalmers operation as it declined after his tragic death. James R. Skinner was the chief winemaker in Green Valley. There were still seven growers around Placerville and three at Gold Hill.<sup>12</sup>

The number of wine grapes here grew in the 1880's, following the pattern of the rest of the state and by 1888 the State Board of Equalization reported 1715 acres of grape vines. From this point on there was little growth in the county's viticultural product or acreage. Each year, more and more grapes went down to the Sacramento Valley to be made up into wine and brandy. The tradition of high quality in El Dorado continued, but gradually little wine or brandy was made save for local consumption. In 1890, only 60,000 gallons were produced.

After the turn of the century, there was some planting of wine grapes in El Dorado County, as was the case in most of the state. A regular planting boom was taking place in the larger established areas, since wine grape prices had stabilized and were advancing while the industry itself had ended a period of horrible cutthroat competition. Nevertheless, not much wine was made in the county except to slake the thirst of local folk. Most grapes were still being exported to the valley. In 1908, the county had a high for that period of 1770 acres of wine grapes. But as Prohibition approached, the vineyard acreage declined steadily. By 1922, there were only about 500 acres of wine grapes in the county. Much of the production now went into the barrels of local people who converted the local product into homemade wine. Most of the vineyards still in production were concentrated around Placerville, Shingle Springs, Latrobe and Georgetown.<sup>13</sup> Prohibition brought many interesting legal and illegal activities to the Sierra foothills.

Toward the end of the dry years there were still about 600 acres of wine grapes in the county, with John A. Winkelmann of Placerville the leading wine grower.<sup>14</sup> But viticulture declined steadily in the 1930's. By 1936, there were only 339 acres of wine grapes in the county and no wineries in operation.<sup>15</sup>

After World War II, there was a residual acreage of wine grapes in El Dorado County. But only 74 acres could be counted in

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<sup>12</sup> *San Francisco Merchant*, November 21, 1884.

<sup>13</sup> *Wines & Vines*, May, 1922.

<sup>14</sup> *Wines & Vines*, September, 1930; June, 1932. See also Idwal Jones, *Vines in the Sun*, New York, 1949, pp. 193-201.

<sup>15</sup> *Wines & Vines*, September, 1936.

1954 and this total declined steadily until there were but 11 in 1966. From then on the total increased gradually to 33 in 1971 and jumped to 134 in 1974. In 1978 there were 190 acres of the following varieties:<sup>16</sup>

Zinfandel	59	Chenin Blanc	22
Cabernet Sauvignon	44	Chardonnay	15
Barbera	19	White Riesling	8
Merlot	5	Semillon	5
Petite Sirah (Durif)	3	Sauvignon Blanc	7
Mission	1	Gewürztraminer	1
		Grey Riesling	1

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<sup>16</sup>

For recent developments in El Dorado County See Leon Adams, *The Wines of America*, New York, 1978, pp. 421-425; *Redwood Rancher*, February, 1973, p. 14; *California Grape Grower*, September, 1977, p. 14; *Vintage Magazine*, October 1979, p. 52.