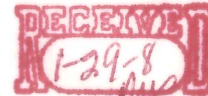




Fenn Valley®

VINEYARDS

January 26, 1980



Armida Stickney
Research and Regulations Branch
Dept. of the Treasury
B.A.T.F.
12th & Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington D.C. 20226

Dear Mr. Stickney:

We hereby apply for an appellation of origin for wine.

NAME OF AREA: Fennville, Michigan. Fennville is a major trading center in the described appellation; population 850.

BOUNDARIES OF AREA: Lake Michigan on the West; Kalamazoo River on the North; 86° 5' West Longitude on the East; Middle Fork of the Black River on the South. See Yellow hi-lited area on the enclosed maps.

REASONS: Grapes grown within the Fennville appellation are distinctive in flavor, as evidenced by the exceptional body, bouquet, and fullness of wines vinified from them. See Appendices L & N.

The higher elevations of the Fennville area have been producing fruit since the mid 1800's, including peaches, apples, pears, plums, cherries, and grapes. See Appendix Q.

The soil is very light, sandy, well-drained, and ideally suited for such grapes. See Appendices: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, & O.

Because the terrain is rolling, excellent air drainage into the surrounding lowlands of cold air on frosty nights and during severe cold spells results in a 2-4°F higher temperature on the higher grape growing areas than in the lowlands. See Appendices B, C, & O.

Proximity to Lake Michigan moderates both winter and summer temperatures by as much as 10°F. Thus, winter minimums seldom are registered below -10°F and summer maximums seldom above 90°F. Higher winter minimums permit the winter survival of most suitable wine grape varieties; lower summer maximums prevent the sun burnt grape flavors from developing here.

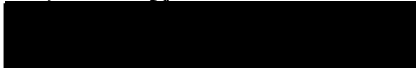
Thus, white wines grown in the Fennville area have those delicate flavors and bouquets which can only be realized in the northern, colder viticultural regions. See Appendices: E, F, G, J, I, J, K, & O.

There is a fine balance required between air drainage, soil, protection from excessive temperatures, frost-free days, and adequate rainfall. The Fennville viticultural area has the required balance of these parameters to permit the commercial growth of the following wine grape varieties:

White Riesling
Gewürztraminer
Aurora
Seyval Blanc
Cascade
Baco Noir
Chelois
Foch
Vignoles
Vidal Blanc
etc.

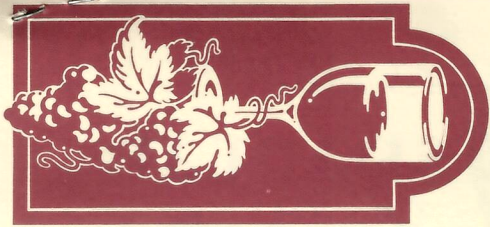
See Appendices: A, B, D, K, L, M, & N.

Respectfully,


William Welsch, President
FENN VALLEY VINEYARDS

The Wines of Michigan

Michigan Wine Institute



TABOR HILL VINEYARD

OF SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN



Tabor Hill Vineyard and Wine Cellar began a rebirth of new wineries in Michigan. In 1968, vineyards of 27 varieties of hybrids and vinifera were planted; in 1972 new varietal wines and blends began to appear on the market.

Proprietor, Lenard Olson, believed that the growing region in Berrien County, Michigan was as fine as any in the world for premium wine-grapes.

He has singled out a few choice grapes and uses them to produce a limited selection of wines.

Cuvee Blanc, Cuvee Rose and Cuvee Rouge are wines from a number of hybrids blended. Vidal Blanc, Seyval Blanc, Riesling and Chardonnay have all made their Michigan debuts at Tabor Hill. Now several vintages and degrees of sweetness (or dryness) are offered of these varietals.

Baco Noir reigns as the sole red varietal marketed. Aged in small oak barrels, it has great potential for longevity. Several vintages of this varietal are also available.

Tabor Hill takes credit for being Michigan's first winery to vintage date the wines and the first to harvest late-picked varietals in the German tradition.

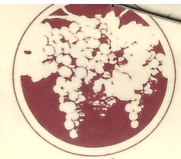
The history of Tabor Hill is being carefully recorded in carvings of the oak casks in the cellar of this rustic winery. The Presidential Seal carving represents the year President Gerald Ford served Tabor Hill wines in the White House.

A multitude of press clippings written by nationally acclaimed wine writers who have visited the winery adorn a cork board across the room from the majestic fireplace.

The traditional blessing of the Harvest celebration is the Sunday following Labor Day at Tabor Hill. After the "Blessing," grapes are stomped and hay covered wagons tour the vineyards, which gently slope away from the winery perched high atop Mt. Tabor. Music, dancing, games and picnicking add to the wine tasters pleasures.

To visit Tabor Hill, travel I 94 to exit 16; follow signs to the winery. The winery is open daily from noon to 5:30 p.m. Phone: (616) 422-1515. Address: RR#1, Box 746, Buchanan, 49107.

Fenn Valley



The Welsch's search for a prime vineyard location brought them from Illinois to the sandy hills of Michigan, near Lake Michigan in 1973. The land was then rearranged and groomed to make an ideal home for the hybrid and vinifera grape vines soon planted.

In this small family-owned vineyard and wine cellar, the art of Old World techniques are combined with modern vinifying technology to produce delightful grape wines styled after those of the famous wine regions of Germany, which was the homeland for generations of preceding Welsches.

Distinctive white wines are White Riesling, Vidal Blanc, Vidal Blanc 1976 Reserve, Aurora Blanc, Seyval Blanc, Gewurztraminer 1976 and Regal White. Two rosé wines and three new red wines complete the table wine selections. The reds are Ruby Red, Baco Noir 1976 and Chancellor 1975.

For the first time in Michigan, wines are now being commercially produced from other bountiful fruits of the area, as well as grapes. Fenn Valley ferments pears, peaches, plums, strawberries, tart and sweet cherries. They now offer these true, distinctive fruit wines made from the natural fruit juices without the addition of water or artificial flavors.

Visitor facilities include a tasting room where all the wines may be tasted, balconies and a viewing area to observe most aspects of the winemaking procedure, including the laboratory, processing area and fermentation facilities, a home winemakers' shop where winemaking supplies and grape juice may be purchased and a new educational room where talking displays explain the various types of wines and how to enjoy them.

In season visitors may walk in the vineyards surrounding the wine cellar and see 9 varieties of hybrid and vinifera grapes as well as cherries and peaches all being exclusively grown for wine. A tree shaded picnic area is available for visitors who may wish to enjoy their chilled wine available at the cellar with a picnic lunch. The beautiful setting and delightful Fenn Valley wines will make your visit a memorable one.

To visit Fenn Valley, travel I 196 to exit 34; travel east 3 miles to 62nd street, then south one mile. They are open Monday-Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., all year, and Sundays 1:00-5:00 p.m. May through November. Phone: (616) 561-2396. Address: RR#4, 122nd Ave., Fennville, 49408.

1976
1977

OFFICIAL
TRANSPORTATION
MAP



For Free
Distribution Only



MICHIGAN
GREAT LAKE STATE

A tour through Fenn Valley Vineyards

IT WASN'T EASY clearing the land for Fenn Valley Vineyards and Wine Cellar, at Fennville, Mich., a few miles from the eastern shore of Lake Michigan, below Holland, the "tip town."

The William Welsch family bought the property in 1973. "You should have seen it," says Ruth Welsch. "It was an old, abused fruit farm. Most of the trees were diseased and we had to remove them and then build up the soil."

"And we had to clear out the junkyards," said her son, Douglas, the 26-year old former biology teacher, now winemaker for Fenn Valley. "I'd go to the dump every week with a load of old bed springs, refrigerators and stoves, and parts of junked cars." The junk was left by migrant orchard workers.

"They'd get a car that would bring them this far and then fall apart," said Douglas. His mother, a very pretty woman with a warm smile who describes herself as having "graduated from school marm to bar maid" in the tasting room, said she hadn't been sure that Douglas would stick it out.

BUT THE LABOR of converting neglected orchards and junk piles to tailored vineyards and a handsome winery are behind them now, and the future is a happy challenge for the Welsches. William Welsch is the key figure in the establishment of the winery, but as president of Welsch Lumber Company, near Chicago, he can't be on deck at all times.

Douglas's wife, a school teacher in Fennville, also is involved in the winery operation. Another Welsch

Let's learn
about wines
By Ruth Ellen Church



daughter, who lives in Iowa, may be feeling a bit out of it, her mother thinks, since she is the only member of the family not really tied into the new family business.

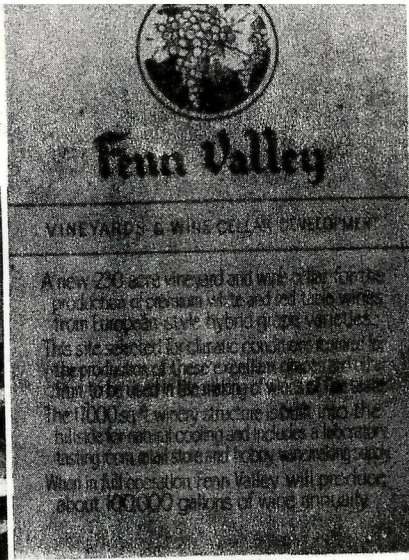
RED WINES WON'T be available in the attractive tasting room until next year, but Fenn Valley White [mostly seyval blanc], and Regal White [a less dry blend of seyval and vidal blanc grapes] are available, and there's an excellent white riesling, a charming rose, and several delicious fruit wines [strawberry is lovely!]. The fruit wines include both sweet and dry cherry wine from montmorency cherries and a blueberry wine.

These wines are fermented naturally from their fruits; they are not wines with superimposed fruit flavors on a grape or apple wine base. Most of the fruit wines are intended for sale only at the winery as a novelty, Ruth Welsch said. Earlier this year there was bing cherry wine as well as pear wine [rich, sweet, and sensationally popular], and plum. All of these sold out quickly and there won't be more until

next season.

The Welsches leave their cherries on the trees 10 days longer than neighboring cherry farmers, Ruth said. Then they're picked and immediately turned into wine. Fresh cherries picked dead-ripe make better wine than frozen cherries, Douglas said. And they make better pies, too, his mother told me. "What a difference in flavor!"

Fenn Valley's 230 acres in time will produce estate bottled wines from both vinifera and hybrid grapes. The winery is set up for self-guided tours. Winery hours in winter are week days between 10 and 4 p.m. Fennville is 140 miles from Chicago, 170 miles from Detroit.



A Grape Success

Mastering the practices of winemaking and vineyard management can take a lifetime. Here is the story of a grower who attained success in only four years

WHAT can you do with a ramshackle fruit farm in southeastern Michigan? If you are Bill Welsch, the answer is obvious — turn it into a vineyard!

The answer may have been obvious to Welsch, but it took a lot of hard work to create Fenn Valley Vineyards. It took even more work and dedication to create the Fenn Valley wines that took 11 out of 36 awards for Michigan wines at the 1977 Michigan State Fair.

Looking at these accomplishments, one might expect that Welsch has a formidable background in grape growing and winemaking. It comes as a surprise, then, to find out that he has been in the business only since 1973! Prior to that time, Welsch made his living by running his own building supply business in Mokena, Ill. He is still involved in that business, although it is clear that the vineyard is his first love.

Why did the Welsch family decide to try winemaking? According to Welsch, it came naturally out of family experiences and desires. "Both my son and I had science backgrounds," said Welsch. "Doug (his son) had a degree in biology, and I had one in chemistry." Doug had also become a proficient amateur winemaker. "Add the fact that we wanted to move to a farm," continued Welsch, "and the move was a natural."

Welsch searched for good grape land for several years throughout the Great Lakes region before finally selecting a place in Fennville, a small

community in Allegan County. He felt the site had good potential for several reasons. First, it was located on rolling land close to Lake Michigan, so the dangers of frost damage were reduced. The soil, a sandy loam type, was also suitable for grapes. And finally, he noted that major markets such as Chicago were reasonably close.

The first year was devoted to cutting down many of the old orchards and clearing the land. Because of nematodes, the land had to be fumigated, and the work load was increased when Welsch purchased two additional parcels of land, bringing his total acreage to 230.

The first vines were planted in 1974, with planting continuing over a three year period. A total of 50 acres of grapes was planted, mostly with French hybrids, but some vinifera varieties as well.

"No one else in this area was growing grapes," said Welsch. "We had no real experience, so we learned through trial and error. There weren't even many recommendations for this area to turn to."

Welsch was surprised at how quickly the sandy loam soil could dry out. "The vines can show water stress if it doesn't rain every week," he said. Because of this, irrigation was installed and has helped greatly over two dry summers. Mostly traveler type irrigation was used, but Welsch is considering more permanent set irrigation that could also be used for frost control.

Another problem that had to be sol-

ved was that of erosion. Sod stopped erosion but competed strongly with the vines for water and nutrients. The solution was to turn the sod over in the spring. The roots of the sod would hold the soil in place for several months before decaying without competing with the vines. The rows were then reseeded in mid summer. Welsch noted that sod could help hold back some vigorous varieties.

Welsch believes one should be very careful in selecting varieties of grapes to grow. "Put each variety through a sorting process," he advises, "and ask two questions: can you grow the grape; and, secondly, is the grape desired?"

The winery and sales room were completed in 1975. The first wines were made from grapes purchased from other growers, while another source of fruit for wines was their own peach and cherry orchards.

The fruit wines are some of the most unusual Fenn Valley wines. These wines are made from 100% fruit juice, as opposed to the "pop" wines on the market that are made from an inexpensive grape wine base with flavoring added. "Fruit wines don't compete with grape wines," says Welsch. "Fruit wines are consumed on their own, not with a meal as grape wines often are." Welsch believes there is a large untapped market for fruit wines that growers could capitalize on.

Welsch is now producing about 25,000 gallons of wine yearly. Eventually annual production may reach 100,000 gallons. However, Welsch believes strongly in not producing more than his markets can handle. He is working on increasing both his markets and his production and now has 21 different types of wines under the Fenn Valley label. In addition to the fruit wines, these include German, French, and Italian style wines.

The success of Fenn Valley wines at the Michigan State Fair was unexpected by everyone but Welsch. "Our aim is to make top quality wines," Welsch said. "We don't want to settle for second best." The well equipped laboratory at Fenn Valley would indicate that testing and analysis are necessary to produce a top quality wine. However, Welsch notes that "Science is a tool in winemaking, but winemaking is an art."

While the secrets of making a successful wine may never be known, the secrets of the Welsch family's success were easy to see. Hard work, attention to detail; and strong marketing were all instrumental. For Bill Welsch, the taste of success is like the taste of a fine wine. □

Nov., 1978

Fenn Valley Vineyards Looks Ahead to 120 Acres of French Hybrid Grape Plantings

The initial impact of Fenn Valley Vineyards and Wine Cellar on Michigan's emerging grape-wine industry will begin to be felt next year when the first wine made with "home-grown" grapes is retailed at the new winery located two miles southwest of Fennville.

According to Doug Welsch, who is viticulturist for the new vineyard operation, the first 27 acres of French hybrids were planted in April of 1974. Additional plantings of 15 acres this past spring bring to 42 the total acreage now in the ground.

Mr. Welsch said that expectations are for at least another 80 acres of French hybrids bringing their total acreage to about 120. Part of the over-all growing program, too, he added, in-

cludes test plots of new varieties to determine how well they can be grown in the area.

For example, a German hybrid not grown commercially in the United States is Muller-Thurgau. If test plantings of this hybrid prove its compatibility with the climate in the Fennville area, then it will be used as a grape in blending with Riesling wine.

Research work in conjunction with Michigan State University consists of root and top pruning at the time of planting. Varieties involved in these tests are Foch, DeChaunac and Seyval.

One important phase of the expansion at Fenn Valley is "to match the vineyard and winery," Mr. Welsch pointed out. The winery, which was opened early this past October, will retail

its first bottles of wine next year to coincide with the oncoming production of the first French hybrid plants.

All of the wine will be sold under the Fenn Valley Vineyards label.

What Mr. Welsch describes as "backbone varieties" were planted in 1975. These include Foch, Seyval, Vidal 256 and Aureore. They compare to the previous year's plantings described primarily as "blending varieties," Chelois, Baco Noir, Cascade, DeChaunac and Villard Blanc.

"Our philosophy," Mr. Welsch said, "is that you cannot make good wine from bad grapes." It is his conviction, too, that at Fenn Valley Vineyards they must grow the grapes themselves to get the quality that is so vital for future success.

The winery occupies a steel building measuring 100 x 170 feet in size with one-half of its interior under the surface of the ground. This feature was made practical by the fitting of the construction into the hillside. The wine cellar will have a capacity to hold 150,000 gallons and the winery is designed to ferment 100,000 gallons of wine annually.

A sign erected at the edge of the parking lot and near the start of the walk for visitors to the winery tells much of the story about Fenn Valley Vineyards and Wine Cellar. It reads as follows: "A 230 acre vineyard and wine cellar for the production of premium white and red table wines from European-style hybrid grape varieties. This site was selected for climatic conditions required for the production of these excellent grapes and other fruit to be used in the making of wines of fine taste. The 17,000 square foot winery structure is built into the hill-



Examining the extensive growth of a one-year-old French hybrid grape plant at Fenn Valley Vineyards are (left) Doug Welsch, viticulturist at the new vineyard-winery operation, and Bill Battiste of Hastings, a wine-grape grower visiting Fenn Valley.

retail store and hobby wine-making supply. When in full production Fenn Valley will produce about 100,000 gallons of wine annually."

The Welsch family bought the 230-acre farm southwest of Fennville, shortly before Doug

and his wife, Lynn, a teacher in the Fennville school system, moved to the area in January of 1973. The farm is a division of the Welsch Lumber company at Mokena, Illinois, a small community 35 miles southwest of Chicago, where Doug was reared.



A relative newcomer to the Fennville area and the Michigan grape-wine industry is Doug Welsch who is standing by a sign in front of the Fenn Valley winery that opened early in October. The sign provides the visitor with background information about the area.

Grape-Wine Operation

French Hybrid Planting

balcony the processing, aging and fermenting facilities all are clearly visible.

More extensive guided tours of both the winery and vineyards will be arranged for larger groups and others who may wish to see more and learn more about our operation, Mr. Welsch said.

The Welsch family bought the 230-acre farm southwest of Fennville shortly before Doug and his wife, Lynn, now a teacher in the Fennville School system, moved to the area in January of 1973. The farm is a division of the Welsch Lumber Company at Mokena, Illinois, a small community 35 miles southwest of Chicago, where Doug was reared.

When they purchased the farm it included 170 acres of fruit trees. All but 14 acres of tart cherry and one acre of sweet cherry trees, as well as five acres of peaches, were removed in preparation for the grape plantings. All of these tree fruits were "older plantings with many on poor sites," Doug said.

Working in cooperation with the soil conservation service, the future grape sites were cleared and the soil built up for the vineyard. "The sandy loam on the farm is perfect for French hybrids and other grapes," he noted.

Also, the location of the farm is about 10 miles inland from Lake Michigan and six miles off the freeway which during the resort season is well traveled by tourists heading northward in Michigan.

The first fruit to be used for wine in the new facilities will be some five tons of cherries from the Fenn Valley orchards. They will provide what Doug terms a

"test batch to determine how well things are working," and also result in the first wine samples. In the future, some cherry will be included in production schedules.

By December of 1975 the first wine from grapes in our vineyard should be ready, Doug added. His expectations are to be in full operation by the 1976 season. All of the wine will be sold under the Fenn Valley Vineyards label.

In the meantime, he admitted that much of his time will continue to be taken up by reading textbooks and other material about growing grapes and making wine along with attendance at appropriate meetings.

Doug, who is 24 years old and a graduate in biology from Illinois State University in Central Illinois, also has a consultant as another prime source of information.

Other assistance comes from his parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Welsch, who moved to the Fennville area this past February.

"Our philosophy," Doug said, "is that you cannot make good wine from bad grapes." It is his conviction that they must grow the grapes themselves to get this quality which is so vital for the future success of Fenn Valley Vineyards.



Among the largest plantings of French hybrids in Michigan are the 27 acres at Fenn Valley Vineyards near Fennville. Pictured on a wintry February day in the vineyard are from left, Jordan Tatter of Paw

Paw, District Horticultural Agent; Doug Welsch, business manager of Fenn Valley Vineyards, and George Mansell, Allegan County Extension Director.

Area Vineyard Open For Tours

Bill Welsch, President of Fenn Valley Vineyards, smiles proudly as he shows visitors around the new family-owned winery located off M-89, in Fennville, Michiga, 8 miles from Saugatuck.

"Wine making is a growing Michigan industry," according to Welsch. "I believe Michigan now ranks third in the nation in the production of fine table wines and we're coming up fast. This is a good boost for the Western Michigan economy."

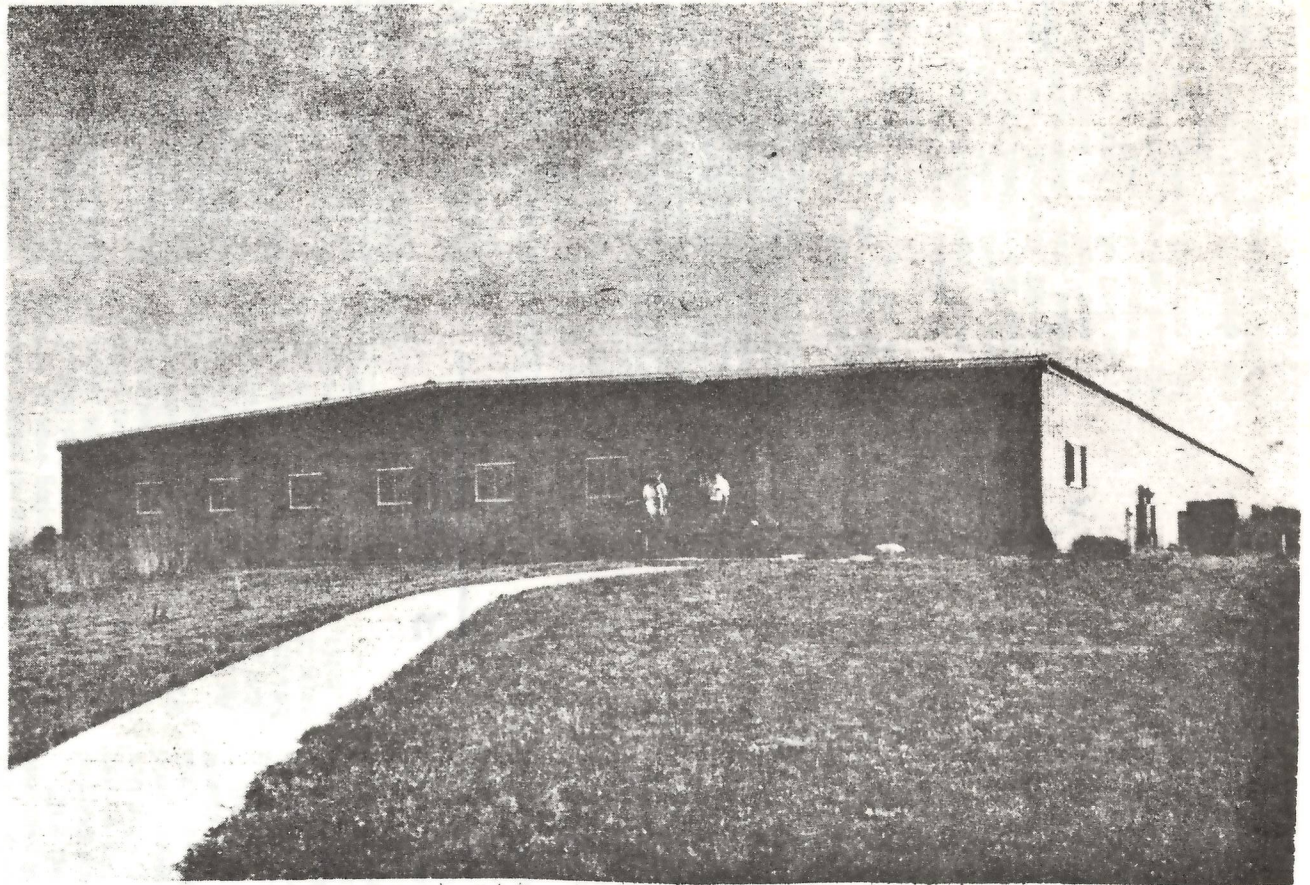
"It's surprising," Welsch continues, "how interested area people are in our self-guided tours. More people come in every day. They seem to particularly enjoy our sampling rooms where they can taste our wines to determine which they enjoy most."

"We broke ground in early 1973 at this location after considerable searching for what we thought would be the ideal wine-grape growing site. We started at the tip of the lower peninsula north of Traverse City and worked our way down. When we found our acreage in Fennville, we knew we had the right place. The rolling hills around our winery are cooled in summer and warmed in winter by Lake Michigan which is only four miles to the west. The area we chose is also ideal for our fruit wines, such as cherry, blueberry, pear and plum. All these fruits are grown within 20 to 30 miles of Fennville."

"We purchased 230 acres to grow two basic types of grapes. We grow French hybrids which provide the superior flavor of European type grapes with the hardiness of native American grapes, and Vinifera, a more fragile and tender grape variety grown in northern Germany."

"We built our winery in the side of a hill so we can take advantage of natural cooling in our aging cellars. You know", Welsch said, "good wine cannot be hurried. Even superior wine grapes require proper handling and aging to make a good wine. Though cool fermentation takes longer, it produces a fruitier wine that adds much to its final enjoyment. Then, we monitor the fermenting processes with the most modern laboratory instruments."

Fenn Valley Vineyards and Wine Cellar is open to



Fenn Valley Vineyards

visitors daily from 10 - 5 and ~~Saturday~~ Sunday from 1 - 5 (May through November). In addition to the wine tasting area, the winery also offers a com-

plete line of home wine maker's supplies, including fresh juice (in season). The winery is located off the Fennville exit of Highway 31, one mile from the intersection of M-89 and 62nd Street.

APPENDIX 2

Fenn Valley Opens Plant To Tourists

By HAROLD T. SMITH
Gazette Staff Writer

Fenn Valley Vineyards in Fennville has opened up its wine cellars and bottling plant for public tours, the firm's president, Bill Welsch, has announced.

The facilities, near M-89 and 62nd Street some 40 miles northwest of Kalamazoo, include a wine sampling room. It is open Monday through Friday from 10 to 5 and Saturday and Sunday from 1 to 5 from May to November.

In addition, the winery offers a line of home winemaking supplies including fresh juice, Welsch said.

Fenn Valley broke ground in 1973 "after considerable searching for the ideal wine-grape growing site," he said. Current production is at 25,000 gallons a year with full-scale

production targeted at 100,000 by 1979.

Fenn Valley is on 230 acres and grows French hybrid and German

grapes in addition to native American grapes.

The winery is built in the side of a hill to permit natural cooling during aging, Welsch said.

APPENDIX J

Kalamazoo Gazette - Oct. 18, 1975

APPENDIX K

— Prosch - Jensen photo

Winery At Fennville Seeks 'European' Flavor

FENNVILLE — The first offerings from Southwest Michigan's newest winery are being marketed this fall.

The first products from Fenn Valley Vineyards southwest of here are cherry and blueberry wines, both made from local fruits, but eventually the new firm will specialize in European variety grape wines, according to Fenn Valley winemaker Douglas Welsch.

"Because the climate here is similar to the wine producing regions of Germany and other parts of Europe," Welsch says, "Fenn Valley has introduced European style wine grapes to the area in initial plantings covering 40 acres of the 230-acre vineyard."

Welsch says he feels it is important for the winery to grow its own grapes to assure standards of taste.

"Additional plantings of varieties such as Chelois, Baco Noir, Cascade, DeChaunac and Villard Blanc, plus some vinifera, the major species of wine grape, will make up the eventual 120 acres of grapes now planted," Welsch said.

Fenn Valley's vineyard is located on sloping hillsides near Hutchins Lake, four miles inland from Lake Michigan. Welsch said the site was selected after a long search throughout the Midwest.

The European variety grapes, of which there are about 500 acres planted in Van Buren County, are even more sensitive to harsh weather than Mi-

chigan's Concord.

The 17,000 square foot winery building is built into a hillside for natural cooling, Welsch said, and it includes a tasting room and store that is open daily. The store will offer materials for hobby winemakers as well, Welsch said.

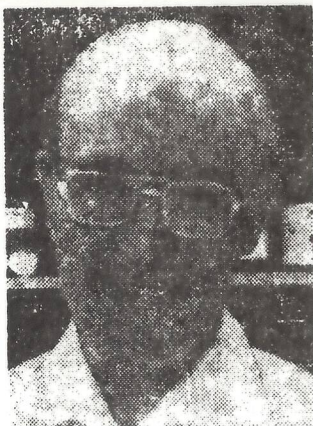
Balconies and a viewing area will permit visitors to observe most aspects of the winemaking procedure, including the laboratory, processing areas and fermentation facilities.

Welsch said his "wine cellar" has a capacity of 150,000 gallons, and that the winery can accommodate the fermenting of 100,000 gallons annually. Both red and white wines are planned, he said.

Welsch is a graduate of Illinois State University and is a former biology teacher. His father, William Welsch, owns a Chicago area lumber business and will help manage the winery and market its products. The senior Welsch has a degree in chemistry.

The Welschs have spent two years getting the winery into production, and have left Chicago to live in homes they built near their new winery. The younger Welsch will be teaching an extension course on winemaking.

Fenn Valley Vineyards is located southwest of Fennville just east of the corner of 62nd Street and 122nd Avenue. The location is a mile southeast of the intersection of I-196 and M-89.



Free Press Photo

VINTNER Bill Welsch: "The national competition could do an awful lot for us. For us and all the Michigan wines."

Family Winery Uncorks Winners

BY GEORGE CANTOR
Free Press Staff Writer

FENNVILLE, Mich. — The search went on for two years.

It took the Welsch family from their Illinois home to the Finger Lakes of New York, the southeastern shore of Lake Erie, the rolling farmlands of western Michigan.

It led down an oak-lined lane in Allegan County to a ramshackle farm with 230 acres of failing fruit trees.

That's where Bill Welsch finally settled on the site for Fenn Valley Vineyards, just south of Fennville, about midway between Holland and Kalamazoo.

He must have known what he was looking for. Just four years later his wines took 11 out of 36 awards for Michigan wines at the 1977 State Fair. They also won two places on the menu of the National Governors' Conference Banquet in Detroit last week.

And although Michigan wines are not regarded as particularly prestigious, Welsch can hardly wait to test the Fenn Valley vintages against the best of California. He has entered seven in a national competition being held in October by a Maryland organization called Maitres des Tastevins.

Fenn Valley was awarded gold medals at the State Fair for its white Riesling, Gewurtztraminer, French Chancellor, peach and strawberry wines. It took three silvers and three honorable mentions. Its closest competitor was Tabor Hill, with two golds and eight total awards. Frontenac and St. Julien had four awards apiece

and no other vineyard had more than three.

Spokesmen for older, established Michigan wineries said there were no ill feelings over the sudden Fenn Valley success.

"The Welsches are very methodical people," said one. "They've earned whatever they've got. And their success makes us all look better."

SAYS WELSCH: "The national competition could do an awful lot for us. For us and all the Michigan wines. We don't have a great national reputation. Even in Michigan it's fallen off. Back in 1964, Michigan wines accounted for 50 percent of the sales in the state. In 1976 it was down to eight percent.

"I'll be glad to be compared to the California wines. It'll help us immensely. It's not because the California wines are bad. It's that we're just as good."

Welsch says this without smugness. The Welsch family expects to excel. "The cream always comes out on top," they are fond of saying.

"I know that makes us sound cocky as anything," he said. "And I certainly don't want to come on as if we have all the answers. But we expected to do well. We strive for perfection. We're not satisfied with putting out a common wine for the masses.

"We've learned a lot in these four years. Mostly negative things — what not to do. But winemaking is an art, you know. Sure, we have a lab out there. I have a degree in chemistry and my son, Doug, the winemaker at Fenn Valley, was a biology teacher. We know all about science.

"But the science really doesn't help much when you have 20 vats of wine in front of you and start asking yourself: 'Where do I start? What do I do first?' Our training may enhance our ability to do well. But it is still mostly an art."

FENN VALLEY is a family operation. Ruth Welsch works in the tasting room (which is open to the public daily) and daughters Diana and Deborah also live on the grounds. The Fenn Valley Family, they are called in the promotional material on the display racks.

The family came from Mokena, Ill., about 40 miles south of Chicago. The Welsches were very big in the building supply business there. "Still our livelihood," Welsch says from his Fenn Valley winery.

They made wine for family consumption and also talked of relocating somewhere in a rural setting.

"Then it dawned on us," says Welsch. "Why not put it all together? The science background. The farm life. The winemaking."

So in the careful, methodical way that marks the family's endeavors, the Welsches started to look for a place to grow their grapes. They preferred to remain in the eastern half of the country. That narrowed it down to three wine-growing areas and of these the Welsches felt that Michigan had the best potential for producing fine wines.

They analyzed climate and soil studies and ranged the Lake Michigan shoreline, all

the way north to the Leelanau Peninsula. The proximity of the big lake makes the area extending about 20 miles inland almost ideal for vineyards. The lake moderates an otherwise harsh climate, making a place as far north as Traverse City milder than Chicago.

"When we found this place it was in pretty sad shape," said Ruth Welsch. "When we drove up the owners were sitting under a tree in deck chairs and the rest of the place reflected that. But we come from German background, you know, and we're not afraid of work."

We always were self-employed, too, so we knew it was not going to be any picnic."

THE FIRST four or five years are critical for any vineyard. The trees have to be cleared. The grapes have to get their roots down in the sandy soil.

By the spring of 1976 only two cherry wines were ready to market. But in the last 15 months the wines have come steadily toward a peak. Riesling, Gewurtztraminer. An Italian Baco Noir. A French Chancellor. A German Vidal

Blanc.

"If it were up to us, we'd be turning out German-style wines," said Welsch. "That's what we prefer. Slightly sweet, fruity, light. The wines that most people identify with Liebfraumilch. But we have to sell, too. So we also produce a Chancellor, which is drier and a little heavier in the French style. And an Italian red that comes on like a Lambrusco. And so on."

Fenn Valley now produces 19 wines. Retail prices for the gold medal wines range from a high of \$5.25 for a fifth of

Gerwtztraminer to \$3.50 for the Chancellor.

All of them have become available in the Detroit area since this summer. Welsch entered 15 of his wines in the State Fair and 11 of them received recognition in the first annual Michigan wine competition.

Many exhibitors claimed judging was far too critical and arbitrary. Naturally Welsch, the big winner at the fair, is not impressed.

"If there had been more leniency, Fenn Valley would have fared even better," he

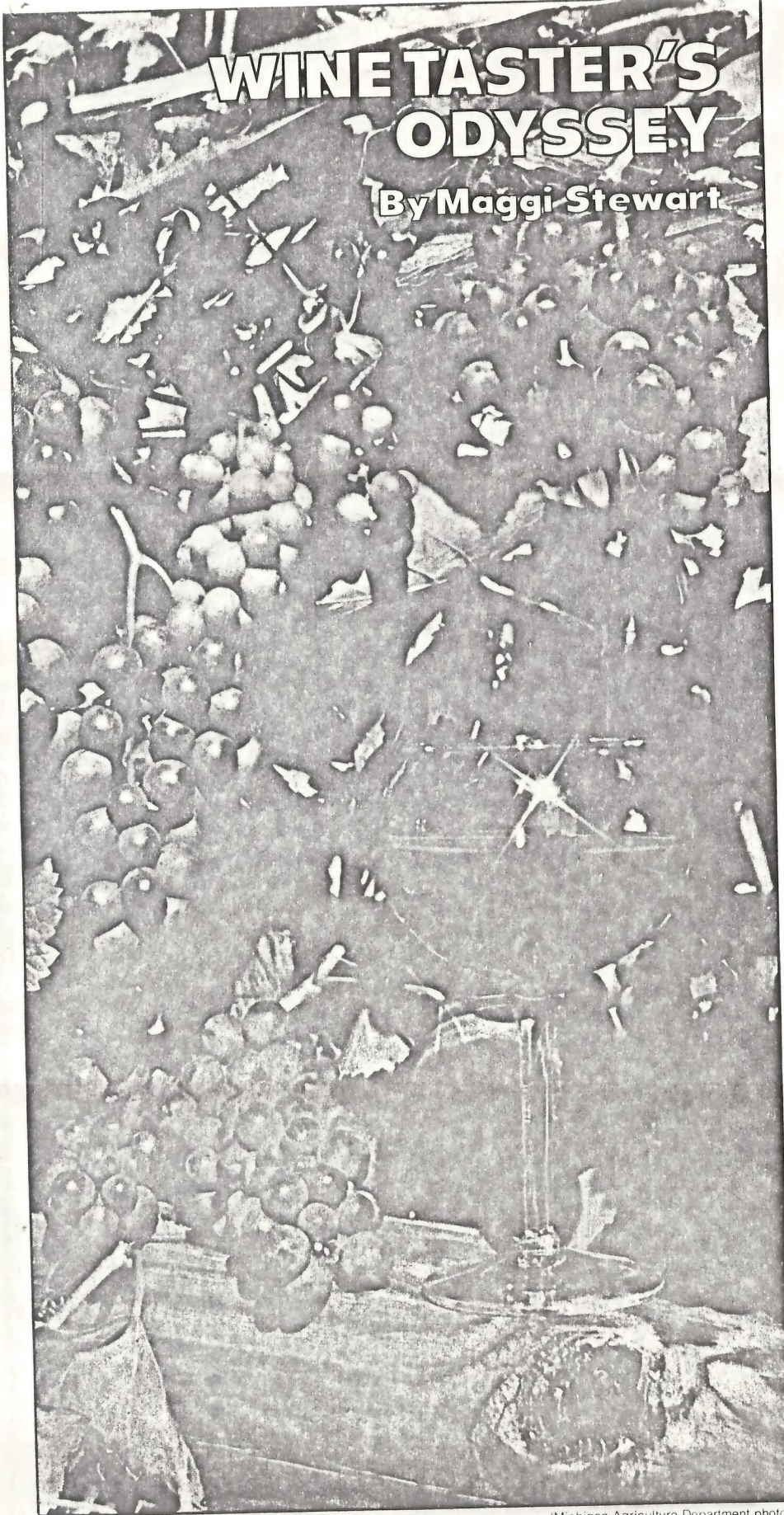
said. "If you can't meet the standards, you ought to get out. It's a competitive world."

"On the other hand, I can agree that the judges should be more open to new ideas, hybrid wines. If it has the elements of a good wine — bouquet and color — but the flavor is something the judge isn't used to, he should make allowances for that. He should appreciate the product for what it is, not measure it against some international standard.

"But if it doesn't, I'll accept that. That's just life. The cream eventually comes out on top."

WINE TASTER'S ODYSSEY

By Maggi Stewart



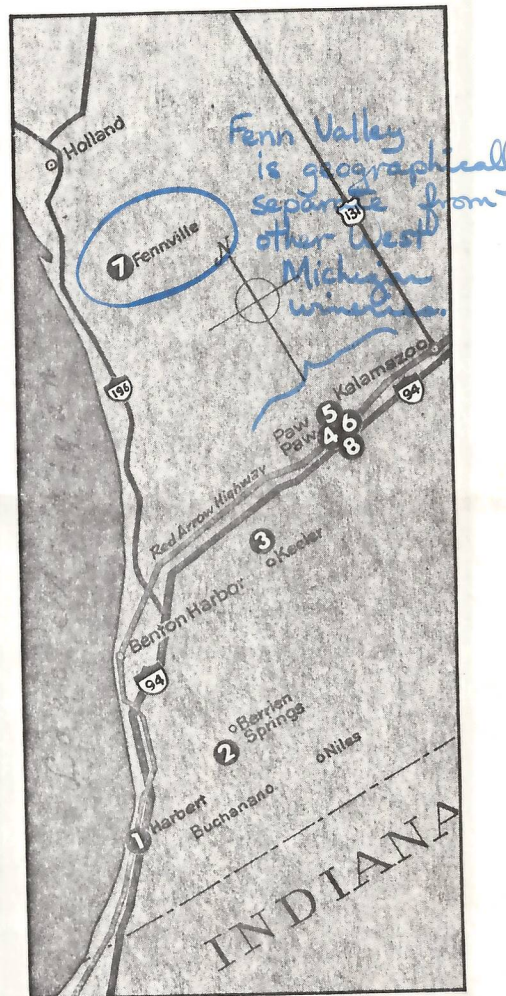
(Michigan Agriculture Department photo)

WHAT MAKES A VISIT TO southwest Michigan's wine-making land more attractive is the way the vineyards cluster to create a "valley tour" in easy proximity for a long weekend. You generally will "go west and turn left" to reach the grape-growing area. Take an "L" swing off I-94 and angle into Michigan's wine valley.

What is it really like to trip through the vineyards? What can you see and smell, touch and taste as you tour the land of American-made wine? What is the vitality here that has made Michigan third in the nation in producing wine? You will soon know.

Move among the cultivated acres of growing vines (about 430 to an acre) flowering plant life that will in autumn wear heavy fruit, ready for crushing and pressing. In the winery, the tanks and vats store the juices of the grape from fermentation through aging. Follow the process to the tasting room and sample the house specialties, sniffing and snipping to determine preferences. Your plant visit culminates in the wine shop where you can select your chosen vintages by the bottle or by the case. This is your skeletal tour.

Each of the eight valley wineries offers a unique aspect of the industry. At all times of the year something is happening "on the way to the glass." At Tabor Hill, Bronte and Fenn Valley, the growing grapes in May are the tiniest promise of the coming crop. At Lakeside, Frontenac, Warner and St. Julian, grapes come from around the countryside. You can follow the processing in all of the



wineries. Getting the grape from the vine into the bottle on its way to your table requires eight basic steps. The specifics vary in each house, and I went looking for differences.

LAKESIDE VINEYARD at Harbert-Lakeside 1½ miles west of I-94 (Exit 12) exemplifies the interesting use of the old, with the tour guides in Molly Pitcher dress and mob caps. Here the grapes are gathered in a cart, layered onto burlap cloths (which are washed after each use) and raised to the press, an ancient European style. The juice is pumped out and the pomace remains. This pomace (the seeds, skins and bits of stems), is recycled into the fields as fertilizer. Then the juices are fermented. They pass through the tanks and vats and eventually are bottled.

After a 30-minute tour of the winery, you end up in the tasting room, the "Wine Barrel," shaped like a barrel with a glorious stained-glass window. Mingling scents of the fruity flavors excite your nostrils. You can tipple 36 pure wines with no additives or preservatives.

Lingering a moment in the charming Winegarden, I spoke with the director, Helen Lundquist. "We hold our annual New Wine Festivals in May and our Winefests in October," she said. "We have seven acres of parking." You could enjoy one of the picnic tables and round out your meal with your selected wine.

TABOR HILL, a contemporary structure started in 1970, is in Buchanan and 12 miles south of St. Joseph/Benton Harbor. It does

rise on a hillside location. Lake breezes waft over the vineyard, and the gentlest ripple among the new leaves displays the tiny "fruit." In acre after acre of trellised vines, microscopic grapes clutch to life after the early May frosts and try to live up to the splendor of becoming this year's crop. Twenty cultivated acres thrive in the Lake Michigan zephyrs, one of the areas providing conditions for ideal grape growth—prevailing winds, tempering climate and sandy soil.

The growers are developing the German hybrid grapes which they bottle as the superior white wines of Michigan. They employ a new separator, the kind now used in German vineyards where soil/climate is similar. Four very interesting hand-carved oak casks depict each of the winery's vintages. All their wines come corked.

You sip from gleaming crystal the several distinctive white wines. "A foxy taste," is what I overheard at the tasting bar. It was Cuvée Blanc. But I enjoyed more the light, crisp Vidal Blanc.

I followed short-cut directions to return to I-94, and in about an hour I was spinning along the Hartford cutoff, exit 46. Though it was late in the afternoon, I pushed on for the final tour of the day.

BRONTE is five miles to the south, toward Keeler. Here you view the vines growing quite close to the winery. Leaves flourish in the May sun. If you probe, you can glimpse the "grapes." What actually appear to be fruit are the miniature floral clusters; they will bloom,

pollinate and set. The set berry will be the season's harvest.

You can ask for some grape leaves if you'd like to use them in cooking. Otherwise they are compounded into the mulch for the next crop.

Bronte Champagne and Wine Co., Inc., features a collection of antique wood storage vats. Twenty-two special containers, taller than today's models, stand in two proud rows. From the freebooting days of Al Capone, these vats were, in fact, bought from his government-confiscated Illinois property.

Also some vast beer kegs have been converted to wine storage. They have "manholes" at the bottom for a skinny man to enter to clean.

In addition to the routine processing, Bronte utilizes a cask room devoted to sherrys. One of its top products, labeled Hartford Cream, a very elegant light sherry, pours from these oak cases.

Returning to the tasting center, I paused with the chemist and the winemaker and sampled some of the products not yet on the market. Winemaker Angelo Spinazze, viticulturist and enologist, has 40 years with Bronte.

Look for the coming Scarlet Rose, with perfect bouquet and taste and a stunning dash of color.

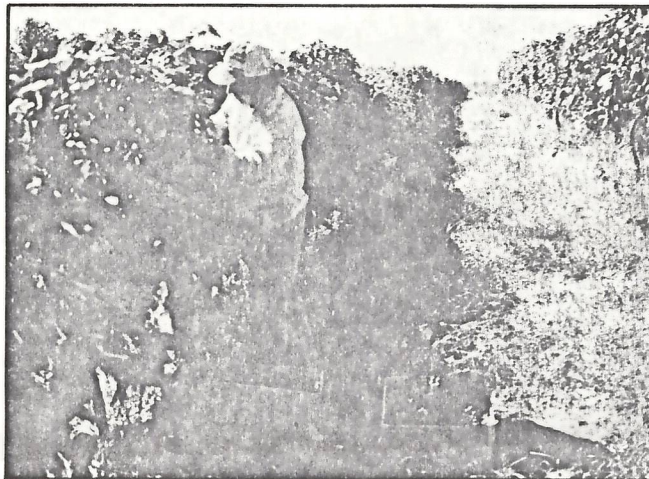
When you taste in Bronte's Hospitality Room, you may express a desire for any and all in the house. Usually the hostess serves whites to reds and sparkles, too.

Turn to page 41

MAP KEY

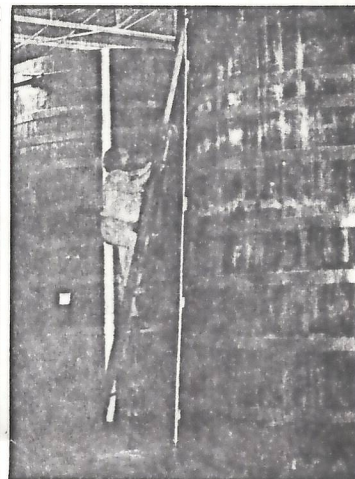
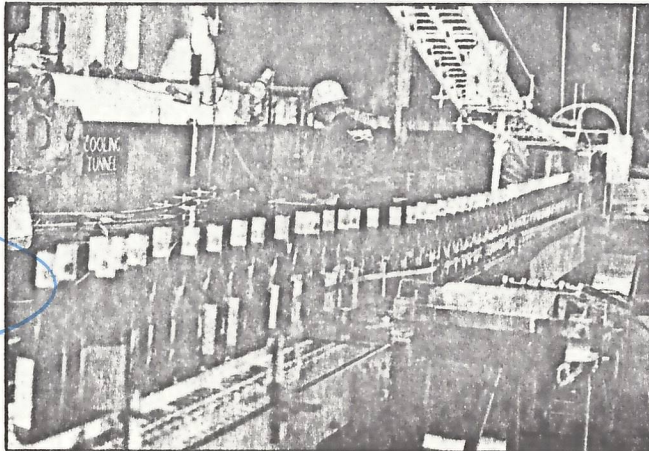
See map on page 43 for Traverse City area wineries

- ① Lakeside Vineyard (Exit 12)
Box 127
Harbert, Mich. 49115
(616) 469-0700
- ② Tabor Hill Vineyards (Exit 16)
R.R. #1, Box 746
Buchanan, Mich. 49107
(616) 422-1161
- ③ Bronte Champagne & Wines
Hartford, Mich. 49057 (Exit 46)
(616) 621-3419
- ④ Frontenac Winery (Exit 56)
3418 W. Michigan
(Red Arrow Hwy.)
Paw Paw, Mich. 49057
(616) 657-5531
- ⑤ Warner Vineyards (Exit 60)
706 Kalamazoo
Paw Paw, Mich. 49079
(616) 657-3165
- ⑥ St. Julian Wines (Exit 60)
716 Kalamazoo
Paw Paw, Mich. 49079
(616) 657-5568
- ⑦ Fenn Valley Vineyards (Exit 34)
6130 122nd Avenue
Fennville, Mich. 49408
(616) 561-2386
- ⑧ Vendramino Vineyards (Exit 56)
Paw Paw, Mich. 49079
(616) 657-5890



Grape picking is first step in the journey from vine to wine

Visitors at Warner Vineyards may view champagne bottling plant



Wine is aged in 5,000-gallon tanks

Plant manager shows Frontenac labels



(Photos by Bert Emanuele, chief photographer)

WINE TASTER'S

Continued from page 27

Bronte put out the very first Cold Duck.

On the way to Paw Paw, cut left at exit 56 off I-94. One-half mile north is **VENDRAMINO VINEYARD**, a small hand-operated winery with hospitality room, picnic area and a complete line of wine-making supplies. Seventy-five percent of the juice pressed here is used to fill orders from home wine-makers.

I stayed in Paw Paw at the Greenacre Motel, next to the Gateway Restaurant, which offers a chicken specialty. (For AAA-rated motels, check the TourBook listings under Benton Harbor, Dowagiac and Kalamazoo.)

FRONTENAC VINEYARDS, INC., just a few minutes to the west on Red Arrow, was my first stop the next morning. I found a neat reception room where the tours begin, and the largest display of wines at a Michigan winery.

We scanned first the lab where all the wines are tested repeatedly. Such tests reveal the right times for pouring the wines from tank to vat. In the winery, the aroma was a mixture of the fruit and mellowing wood. We noticed liquid on the floors, but it was just water. The glass-lined hoses allow no wine spills on the way from one storage container to the next.

In the tasting room you can visit the Gift Shop, where broken cases are sold at bargain prices; chart an evaluation sheet noting your impressions, and sample any label in the plant. Although the Cherry Chantilly is the mighty "especialada de casa," I preferred the Peach and Honey and I tried the ski-season nip of warmed apple wine with herbs. Good!

From Fontenac, it's just minutes to the main part of Paw Paw, where two wineries, Warner and St. Julian, stand side by side with the Paw Paw River running between them.

WARNER VINEYARDS provide nicely shaded parking and a picnic courtyard. Tours begin in a railroad car where a 12-minute slide show prepares you for the walking trip. Appropriately, you see the purple trucks which haul the grapes and wines from cobblestone storage bins in nearby Lawton.

And the smells—essentially the beautiful diverse scents of every winery—are wrapped in the pungent odor heavy on the air, the combined wood and wine fragrance.

Here I discovered a cooperage, the small shop where barrel repair is making a comeback. Pilings of new wood staves lend their freshness to the old woods still holding wine.

At the tops of two of these older vats, workmen were doing their periodic scrubbing and then running in cold water to tighten the wood until the next wine refill.

We moved on to a very special place where champagne is bottled. My guide, Richard Palasinski, explained the six steps and demonstrated the French *methode champenoise*. Warner's is the only Michigan wine thus made, fermented in its own bottle. Why is champagne a luxury item? I could see the obvious reasons—hand labor, space for equipment and the time required to carry out the traditional riddling. Briefly, after a year or two of exposing the wine to yeast cells, bottles are racked at a neck-downward slant and twice each day riddled—given an exact quarter turn by hand.

About two months of this and the wine has cleared, with the sediment collected in the neck. So degorgement begins. Bottle by bottle, the necks are frozen, creating an ice plug; pressure

expels this plug. Then each bottle receives a "dosage" of syrup into the empty space and is corked to seal in the marvelous flavors. Lastly, the wire hood secures the cork.

On our return to the front to taste in the Wine Haus, we passed the Wine Library, where each of the wines is recorded. The Gift Loft looks over the Wine Haus, and Warner's has added an adjacent barroom for large group entertaining.

ST. JULIAN'S WINE CO. presents very specific wine tours based on a script; guides wear hard hats and name tags.

In a special tasting room I chatted with the winemaker, Charles Catherman. Here a dramatic free-form marble table supports the wine tastings. And these are many and desirable at St. Julian. From tulip-shaped glasses we tasted the company's special Brut (bone dry, no

sugar). While you are encouraged to sample all kinds under the St. J. label, Catherman prefers to direct tastings of just one kind at a time. "All whites, for example, offer a range or spread in understanding and savor," he said.

There is a lack of palate cleansers in the Michigan wineries because the state prohibits wineries offering food. So carry in your own crackers and cheese.

FENN VALLEY is a pleasant hour and a half drive up M-40 and bearing west on M-89 through the town of Fennville. Signs along the way proved most accurate, and you plop down right in front of the new hillside cellar, four miles from Lake Michigan and 18 miles south of Holland. Begun only in 1973, this modern facility differs in offering individual tours.

You first notice the vineyards to the left, their

Turn to page 43

WINE TASTER'S

Continued from page 41

tender "grapes" struggling under the fantastic lake winds. Rustling leaves in the double rows called the Geneva Double Curtain Trellising System expose more fruit to the sun and facilitate the eventual harvest. In this 230-acre plot, only French hybrids and vinifera grapes are grown.

Inside, you find a modern plant. Starting with a one-minute overview tape and concluding with a tasting bar, this winery offers numbered stations describing the viewing points of the wine-making process. You can watch from an upper balcony. Panels in alcoves contain slides with taped explanations of the wines—whites, reds and fruits. Finishing with this modernity, you step down into the world of real folks and share with the owners, the Welsh family, the aromatic joys of wine tasting. They will happily pour from each of their varieties. Note particularly the fine fruity flavors; local fresh fruits compose these joyous nectars. I liked plum wine, a delicate sweet. I also was captured by the velvety texture of the red *Baco Noir*.

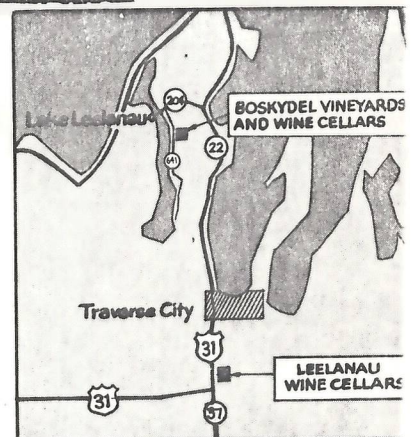
One plus at Fenn Valley—a complete line of home wine-making supplies, including seasonal fruits. Another, the personalized labeling to attach to your wine gift: "Bottled especially for . . ."

Having a common history, the five older Michigan vineyardists switched from Windsor, Ont., to Detroit when prohibition was repealed in 1933. Quick to see the advantage of being "where the grapes are growing," each removed its operations to southwest Michigan and developed the present locations.

grow French-American hybrid grapes in a 22-acre vineyard. In a totally family operated winery, they annually produce 10,000 gallons of wine. The size of the winery affords a personalized tour in small groups accompanied by one of the Rink's sons.

As you view the various aspects of wine making, your guide explains how the grapes are harvested, pressed into juice, fermented into wine and bottled. The tour ends in the tasting room, where visitors may sample and purchase the five types of Boskydel wines.

Prices range from \$2.45 for a bottle of Rosé to \$4.25 for Vignole, a dry white wine. Case lots, either one variety or a mixture, receive a 10 percent discount. For those who desire to plant grapes for eating or winemaking, hybrid vines



Visitors in the Leelanau Peninsula of northern Michigan also have the opportunity to tour yards and sample local wines. Just south of Traverse City on US-31 at 726 N. Mer Highway, **Leelanau Wine Cellars, Ltd.**, is year-round. Although no tours are offered yet, the retail outlet and hospitality room open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. F (616) 946-1653.

For a tour and explanation of wine making, visit the **Boskydel Vineyard and Wine Cellars** at Lake Leelanau. To reach the winery, open during the summer from 1 to 6 p.m., drive north from Traverse City on M-22 to Sutton and turn left on M-204. Just before entering town of Lake Leelanau, a sign directs you to turn left onto County Road 641 and proceed three miles to the Boskydel Vineyards.

Here, Bernie Rink, his wife and their five

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of delighted in every way, I can return the unused portion for a pro-rata refund, anytime up to 3 years.
The bottle only \$9.95 plus \$1 shipping
TWO: Two bottles only \$18 plus \$1 shipping.

used is \$ _____ or charge my

a MasterCharge MC Bank# _____

_____ Exp. date _____

SS _____

_____ Zip _____

NY RESIDENTS ADD SALES TAX

Michigan wines earn medals

Fenn Valley big in Michigan judging



PUBLISHED BY
AND FOR THE
WINE GROUP

WINE SPECTATOR

Volume II, No. 12

San Diego, California

September 16-30, 1977

APPENDIX N

Proof of success
by Joe Borrello

For the last decade, individuals have been professing the striking similarities of California and European grape growing regions with those of Michigan. Now one additional similarity is added to the comparison -- the annual wine judging, a much needed marketing vehicle for valuable publicity and media exposure.

The first Michigan commercial wine evaluation took place August 27 at this year's State Fair with 13 Michigan wineries entering 113 wines. A group of 13 wine experts that included Carl W. Damoth, editor of *American Wine Society Journal*; Philip F. Jacklich, Mid-Continental Editor of *Vintage Magazine*; Joe Muir, of the Detroit restaurant that bears his name; and Dr. Gordon Howell, Director of Grape and Wine Research at Michigan State University, were the judges.

This writer was also honored to be included with this elite company, whose conclusions suggest that highly technical and qualitative inroads have

+ uniqueness of wines made from grapes grown near Fennville.
been made within the last few years in Michigan wines.

A pioneer in this field is Len Olsen of Tabor Hill Winery. Much has been written and said about this man's endeavor to gain a respected reputation for the midwest's potential in the wine industry. As a fitting tribute to his efforts and craftsmanship, his wines earned eight awards, including two Gold medals to take back to the Berrien County winery.

But the biggest winner of the day

Joe Borrello is a member of The Wine Group, Grand Rapids (MI) Chapter Director of Les Amis du Vin, and Wine and Food Editor of the Grape Vine Column in Grand Rapids magazine.

was an up to now fairly obscure little winery in Fennville by the name of Fenn Valley. Patriarchal head Bill Welsch has parlayed his business tax shelter, and his winemaker son Doug's

dream, into one of Michigan's success stories. Eleven awards, including five Gold medals, now reside in the family trophy case.


Overall, the judges were tough, though. Only 35 awards were made -- 11 gold medals, 12 silver, and 12 honorable mention.

The following are all of the award-winning wines in individual categories:

- DRY WHITE VARIETAL**
- Medal
 - Gold Fenn Valley White Riesling
 - Gold Tabor Hill Chardonnay '75
 - Gold Tabor Hill Chardonnay '74
 - Gold Fenn Valley Gewurztraminer '76
 - Silver St. Julian's Niagra
 - Silver Tabor Hill Vidal '76
 - Silver Tabor Hill Vidal '75
 - Silver Tabor Hill Johannisberg Riesling
 - Hon Men. Tabor Hill Seyal '74
 - Hon Men. Fenn Valley Seval Blanc
- RED VARIETALS**
- Gold Warner Chancellor Noir
 - Gold Fenn Valley - Chancellor '76
 - Silver Fenn Valley Baco
- WHITE GENERIC [Proprietary]**
- Silver Fenn Valley Regal White
 - Silver Tabor Hill Cuvee Blanc
 - Hon Men. Fenn Valley White

- RED GENERIC [Proprietary]**
- Gold Vendramino Red
 - Silver Fenn Valley Ruby Red
 - Hon Men. Frontenac Burgundy
 - Hon Men. St. Julian Continental Burgundy
 - Hon Men. Bronte - Beau Rouge
- SPARKLING WINES [Champagne Style]**
- Gold Bronte Brut
 - Silver Bronte Demi Sec
 - Hon Men. St. Julian Pink Champagne
- ROSE**
- Hon Men. Vendramino Vin Rose
- NATURAL FRUIT**
- Gold Fenn Valley Peach
 - Gold Fenn Valley Strawberry
 - Silver Leelaneau Cherrywine
- DESSERT [White Sweet Type]**
- Silver Tabor Hill Late Picking Riesling
 - Hon Men. Fenn Valley - Vidal Blanc '76 Reserve
- FLAVORED [After Dinner]**
- Gold Frontenac Cherry Chantilly
 - Silver Frontenac Chateau Club Apricot Smash
 - Hon Men. Frontenac Chateau Club Blackberry Smash
- DRY SHERRY**
- Hon Men. Cask Cocktail Sherry
- CREAM SHERRY**
- Silver Warner Solera Cream Sherry

Wines of Michigan

 **A**LTHOUGH Michigan ranks fourth among the states in grape growing and fifth in wine production, few of our connoisseur writers ever write anything about Michigan wines. Yet I have tasted many Michigan wines and found them all clean and sound, and more than a few lately that I have rated as excellent. The fruit belt of Michigan is as capable, climatically speaking, of producing fine wines as most of the other viticultural districts east of the Rockies, including even the justly famous Finger Lakes region of New York. But until very lately, the Michigan wineries never tried to produce anything fine, for reasons only their history and their peculiar state law can explain. Now, however, with newly planted Old World wine grape varieties, with new modern wineries and modernization of some of the old, they are trying, and the image of their wines has begun to change.

The best way to know Michigan wines is to visit the wineries, which numbered a dozen at last count, with at least three more planned. They are hospitable, offering tasting and tours from spring through fall daily including Sunday afternoons. There is a three-day grape and wine festival at the fairgrounds near Paw Paw in the latter half of September, when you can sniff the grape fragrance as you approach the town. Some of the individual wineries also hold festivals of their own.

• 2 •

Michigan's western counties, behind the towering sand dunes on the Lake Michigan shore, are one of the great fruit-producing sections of the earth. The deep lake waters, which rarely freeze over, yield warmth for the vineyards and orchards in winter, and cool winds from the lake in spring.

Adams, Leon D., "The Wines of America",
McGraw-Hill Book Co, New York, 1973,
209-10.

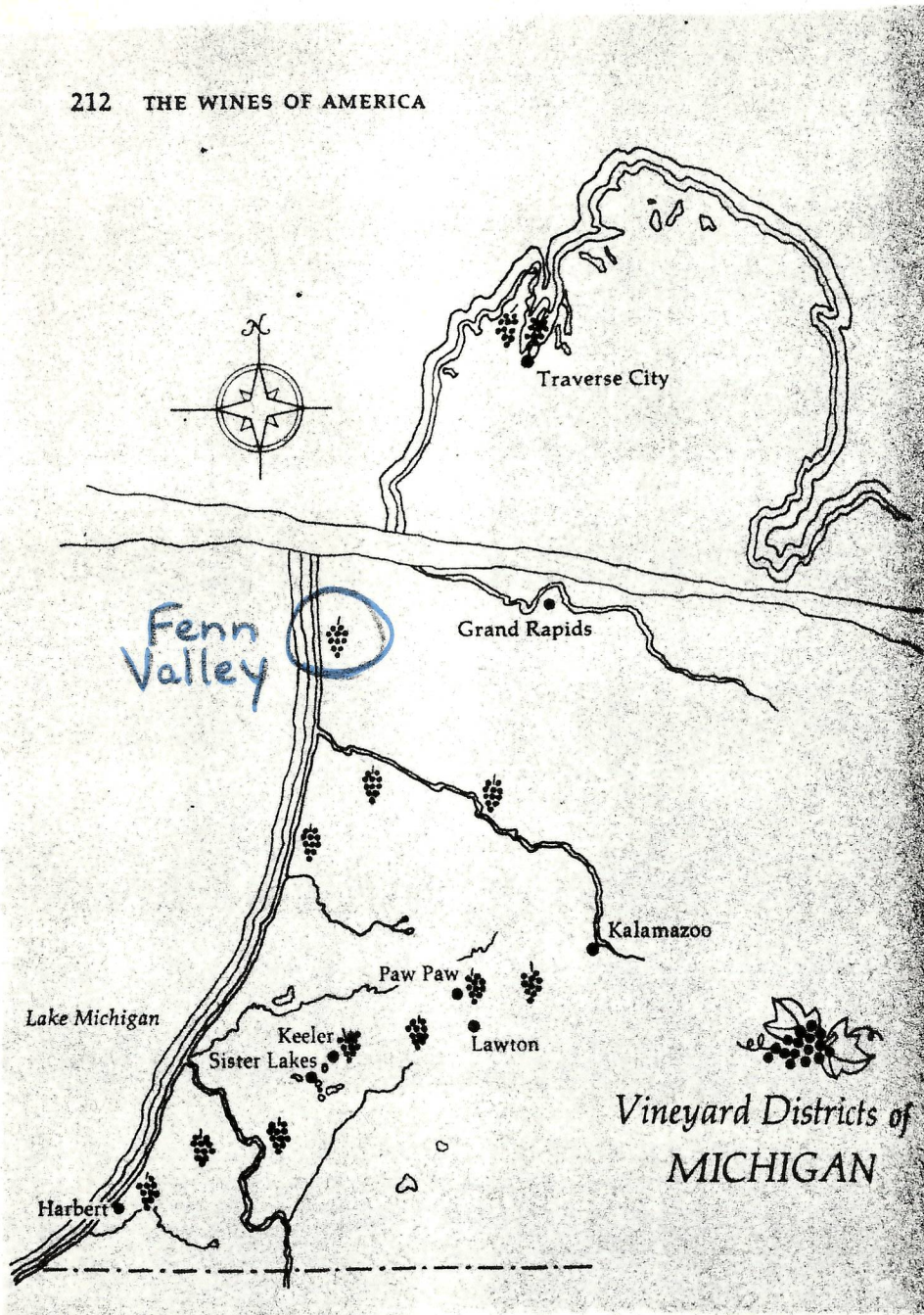
usually retard the buds from opening until danger of killing frosts has passed. This beneficent climatic influence enables fruit to grow all the way from the Indiana border north to Grand Traverse Bay, a stretch of some two hundred miles.

In four southwestern counties—Van Buren, Berrien, Cass, and Allegan—more than 15,000 acres are planted to grapes, mostly picked by the new mechanical harvesting machines since 1968. All but a few hundred acres here are Concord, because four fifths of the state's grape crop is used for juice and jelly or is sold fresh for table use. The other fifth goes into wine.

At the far northern end of the fruit belt, the lake-bordered peninsula that is Leelanau County and the Old Mission Peninsula to the east have climates that are less hospitable to Concord and more hospitable to wine grapes. Until now cherries have been the principal fruit crop on these two peninsulas, which extend north of Traverse City, the sour cherry capital of America. Vineyards of French hybrid and Vinifera wine grapes have been newly planted among the cherry orchards, and the four newest Michigan wineries are here.

Michigan's new interest in winegrowing has also inspired some planting of vines on the eastern side of the state between Lakes Huron and Erie. A new winery there, however, makes mainly wines of fruits other than grapes. I even have heard reports of a vineyard being planned on Michigan's Upper Peninsula, which crosses the forty-sixth parallel, almost as far north as Germany's Rhineland and the Champagne district of France.

What has caused the recent increase in Michigan winegrowing is that wine consumption in the state has more than doubled in this decade. So many new vineyards have been planted that Horticulture Professor Gordon S. Howell of the state university has warned Michigan farmers about creating grape surpluses, of which this state has had its share in the past.



Adams, Leon D., "The Wines of America",
 McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1978,
 212, 217-18.

• 8 •

The Welsch family's Fenn Valley Vineyard, three miles southeast of Fennville in Allegan County, is Michigan's closest approach to a European winegrowing estate. The romance of wine attracted Chicago lumberman William Welsch and his biology teacher son Douglas, both home winemakers, to Fenn Valley in 1974. They built homes for their families there and began planting their first forty acres of hybrid and Vinifera vines. A year later they built a chateau-like winery into the adjoining hillside. While waiting for their vines to produce, they made their first wines of local blueberries and cherries, then brought Riesling and Gewürztraminer grapes from Washington State, and made some excellent table wines. There is a family undertaking. Douglas, with degrees in biology and chemistry, is the winemaker. His wife Lynn, who teaches school, and his father and mother all help in the business. The 60,000-gallon winery is a model of completeness for its size, with a tasting room, a home-winemaking supply shop, and balconies from which visitors can watch how the wines are made. The first estate-bottled Fenn Valley De Chaunac was due in 1978. To reach Fenn Valley Vineyard, take the Fenn exit (M-89) east from I-196 for three miles, then turn right on 2nd Street one mile to 122nd Avenue.

APPENDIX P

In viewing Fennville fifty-three years ago--October, 1871--we found a new railroad line on the east a long uncovered corduroy road across a swamp, and on the west side of the swamp there were a few ash heaps. On the higher ground to the west there stood the mill boarding house on the south side of the road and the little M. E. church that Mr. Fenn had built standing near the road on the present school house lot. Right here we let our voice fall.

Now, at the beginning of 1925, we find a large cider mill and vinegar factory, Sanocide spray works, flouring mill, canning factory, co-operative fruit exchange, lumber company, newspaper and printing office, general repair shop, a number of garages and automobile salesrooms, two hardware stores, one of the finest banks in western Michigan, two drug stores, two dry goods stores, express office, two clothing stores, postoffice, two baker's shops, shoe repair shop, millinery store, filling station, hotel, tailor shop, restaurant, furniture store and undertaking parlor, dentist, physician, lawyer, Baptist, Methodist and Christian Science churches, with a Seventh Day Adventist church now under construction, a \$100,000 school building, \$3,500 Woman's Club building, jewelry store, etc.

The fraternal societies are: Masons, Odd Fellows, Rebekahs, Eastern Stars, Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Rubenstein Music Club, Fennville Woman's Club, Business Men's Association, Parent Teacher Association. Also there is a Farm Bureau Co-operative Association with their various lines of supplies, including feed and coal, and the Steffin coal yards. The 1920 census gave Fennville a population of 547.

Hutchins, Henry H., "Recollections of the Pioneers of Western Allegan County", p. 42

APPENDIX Q

THE FRUIT SHIPPERS' ASSOCIATION

The first co-operative venture in this section was introduced in the fall of 1888, and was brought about by the excessive freight rates we were obliged to pay between Fennville and Chicago. The American Express Co. was carrying our peaches, and their rates by the 100 equaled six cents for a fifth-bushel basket of peaches. Several growers got together and evolved the idea of handling it themselves, in the interest of the growers. Arrangements were made with a Mr. Goodrich of Chicago, who was engaged in unloading fruit there, to handle that end of the business.

The growers were organized under the name of "The Fruit Shippers' Association," though not incorporated, and closed a contract with the railroad company whereby they were to take over the entire charge of loading and unloading the fruit cars. Mr. Harvey J. Kingsley was elected president and John H. Crane secretary. They really stepped into the shoes of the express company, assumed all responsibility, and paid the railroad a hauling rate that amounted to less than two and three-fourths cents per fifth basket. They began the season of 1889 with a charge to the shipper of three and a half cents a basket but soon found they could pay all expenses with a three cent charge, and there was yet a balance left in the treasury, thereby gaining a 50 per cent cut in charges.

While the express company was charging six cents a basket the boats were charging five cents, which rate was soon cut to meet the new rail charge.

The growers carried on the business for twenty years, and until after the freeze of 1906, which killed the peach trees and removed the necessity of the association's further existence.

Much credit for the success of this enterprise is due to the capable management of A. L. Whitbeck in loading the cars and manifesting the shipments.

In one year the saving in freight to the growers of this section amounted to \$180,000 and it was carefully figured by Mr. Crane and Edward Hutchins that the total saving during the life of the association

amounted to over 1,000,000. J. R. Goodrich shipped 40,000 baskets one year, and his savings in freight was around \$1,200.

GOOD ROADS MOVEMENT

In addition to this saving to the shippers there was still a neat little balance, amounting to from \$500 to \$1,200 per year, left in the treasury, which was used from year to year to improve the roads west from Fennville. Bad grades were reduced and gravel applied, the results of which we know so well, and before the end of this work the town line was in good condition for about four miles west, as well as some of the north and south roads. The association did not take over the road work, as is done by the state now, but put their work on as an addition to the regular highway work.

An interesting discovery was that when the surveyors came to lay out the grade for the present M-89 state road they found nearly all the leveling and grading done by the growers was perfect, so they made very little change. Some grading was done by the state to get dirt for widening the crossway along section 1, Ganges. The growers had no survey but left the supervision work to John T. Dickenson, who leveled it "by the eye."

PIONEER COOPERATIVE MARKETING

The first co-operative marketing here was in 1897 when two companies were organized, with perhaps a dozen members each--the Fennville Fruit Company, with Ed Hawley president, C. B. Welch secretary, and James Wark manager, and the Fruitgrowers Company, Ltd., with Edward Hutchins president, H. H. Hutchins secretary, J. E. Hutchinson treasurer, and J. H. Crane and L. D. Wadsworth directors. Besides the officers named W. H. Owen was its first manager. Both companies built large packing houses, that put up by the Fennville Fruit Company now being occupied by the Fennville Fruit Exchange, and the one built by the Fruitgrowers company having been torn down and the Fennville Canning Company now occupying the site.

Both of these associations enjoyed two seasons of successful operation, when the severe freeze of 1899 and the ravages of the yellows and little peach so injured the orchards that the members of neither had sufficient fruit to continue the enterprises.

I have been unable to obtain statistics of the amount of business done by the Fennville Fruit Company, but from a statement of the Fruitgrowers Company it appears that in 1898 there were 65 cars sold, mostly peaches, for which \$18,783 was received, and sales in less than car lots brought the total receipts to \$19,321.81. The sales made by the other company were probably about the same. I have no hesitancy in saying that if these organizations had been established so as to have handled the crops of 1896 the output of each would have been considerably in excess of 100,000 bushels.

To give an idea of the extent of the peach industry in this section, I may say I was sales manager for Wells-Higman Basket Manufacturing Company during the five years from 1887 to 1892, and in our banner year we sold, at our three warehouses in Fennville, Pier Cove and Glenn, over 400,000 bushels--the total sales amounting to over \$20,000. At the same time Weed & Co. were working this whole territory, and J. F. Barron and Fred Hall had salesrooms in Fennville and George Clapp in Glenn. At that, there was a shortage of packages that year.

THE PRESENT FRUIT EXCHANGES

At the present time the Fennville Fruit Exchange and the Saugatuck Fruit Exchange have been in active operation for several years, so that their success is assured beyond question. During the years of those earlier co-operative ventures spraying operations had hardly started, and peaches were practically the only fruit handled, while today the enemies of apples and pears have been brought under such complete control that these fruits constitute the bulk of those put up, and peaches are but a minor part.

Hutchins, Henry H., "Recollections of the Pioneers of Western Allegan