

*Cottage Vineyards
Marlboro on the Hudson
New York 12542
914 236-4870
Hudson River Region*

March 8, 1981

Director
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
Washington, D.C. 20226

Dear Sir:

In accordance with 27 CFR 4.25a (e)(2), and on behalf of the grape growers and wine producers of the Hudson River Region, this petition is submitted to obtain designation of the Hudson River Region as an approved viticultural area.

On January 8, 1974, one local winery received BATF permission to use the words "Hudson River Region" on its labels. Since then, most wineries in the area have been using that designation. And, as shown by the enclosed news clippings, the region has been recognized by a variety of publications.

The history of the Hudson River Region as a grape producing area is long. Leon Adams in The Wines Of America refers to the area as the "oldest winegrowing district in the United States." In the Grapes Of New York, considered to be the definitive tome on the subject of viticulture in this State, written by U. P. Hedrick as the report of the New York Agricultural Experiment Station for the year 1907, the Hudson River district is defined as one of the four commercial grape districts in the State.

Hedrick and Adams refer to a variety of specific locations including the towns of Croton Point, Washingtonville, Marlboro and New Paltz, as well as the counties of Westchester, Orange, Ulster, Rockland, Dutchess and Columbia. In addition, grapes are currently being grown in parts of Greene County along the Hudson River.

The Hudson River region has been referred to as one of the most complex geological regions in the world. The grape lands in the area are in a geological division known as the Taconic Province. Glacial deposits of shale, slate, schist and limestone form the soil throughout the region.


Climatography publications of New York and the United States show that mean annual precipitation is similar in the proposed area of the Hudson River Region, with 44 inches the norm. The mean date of the last 32° F. temperature in Spring is May 10, and the mean date of the first 32° F. temperature in the Fall is October 10. Thus, the proposed Hudson River Region has a mean growing season of 153 days.

The proposed Hudson River Region would have the following boundaries, which are

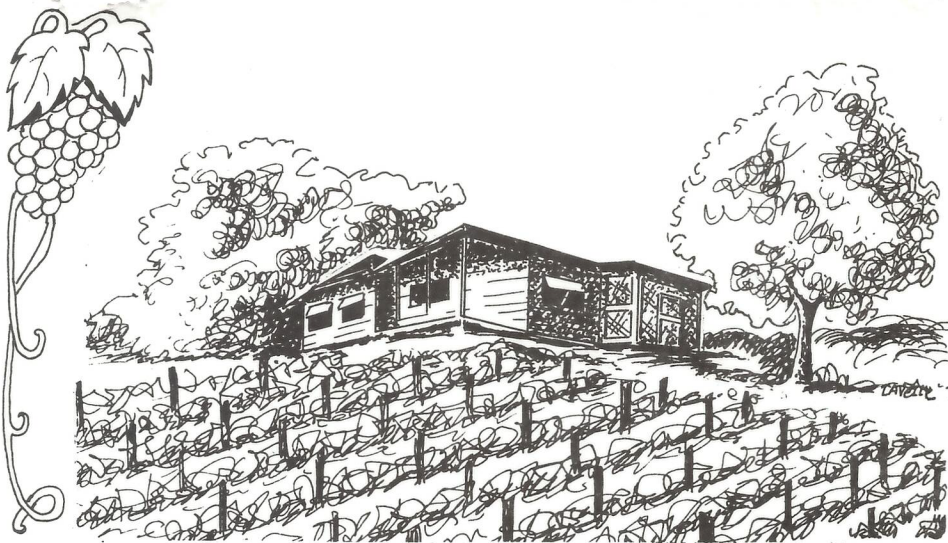
clearly marked on the accompanying U.S. Geological Survey Map (Hudson River NK-18):

Beginning at the point where the New York and Connecticut State borders meet on the Long Island Sound, northerly along the New York and Connecticut State border to the Northeast corner of Columbia County; thence westerly along the northern borders of Columbia and Greene Counties to the point where the western borders of Greene and Albany Counties meet; thence southerly along the eastern border of Catskill Park to Ellenville, continuing southerly along the eastern side of Route 209 from Ellenville to Port Jervis; thence easterly along the New York and New Jersey State border to the beginning of Route 287 near Sloatsburg, continuing easterly along the northern side of Route 287 to the point of beginning.

Sincerely,



Allan W. MacKinnon



*Cottage Vineyards
Marlboro on the Hudson
New York 12542
914 236-4870
Hudson River Region*

June 6, 1981

Mr. Thomas L. Minton
Coordinator, Research and
Regulations Branch
Department of the Treasury
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
Washington, D.C. 20226

Dear Mr. Minton:

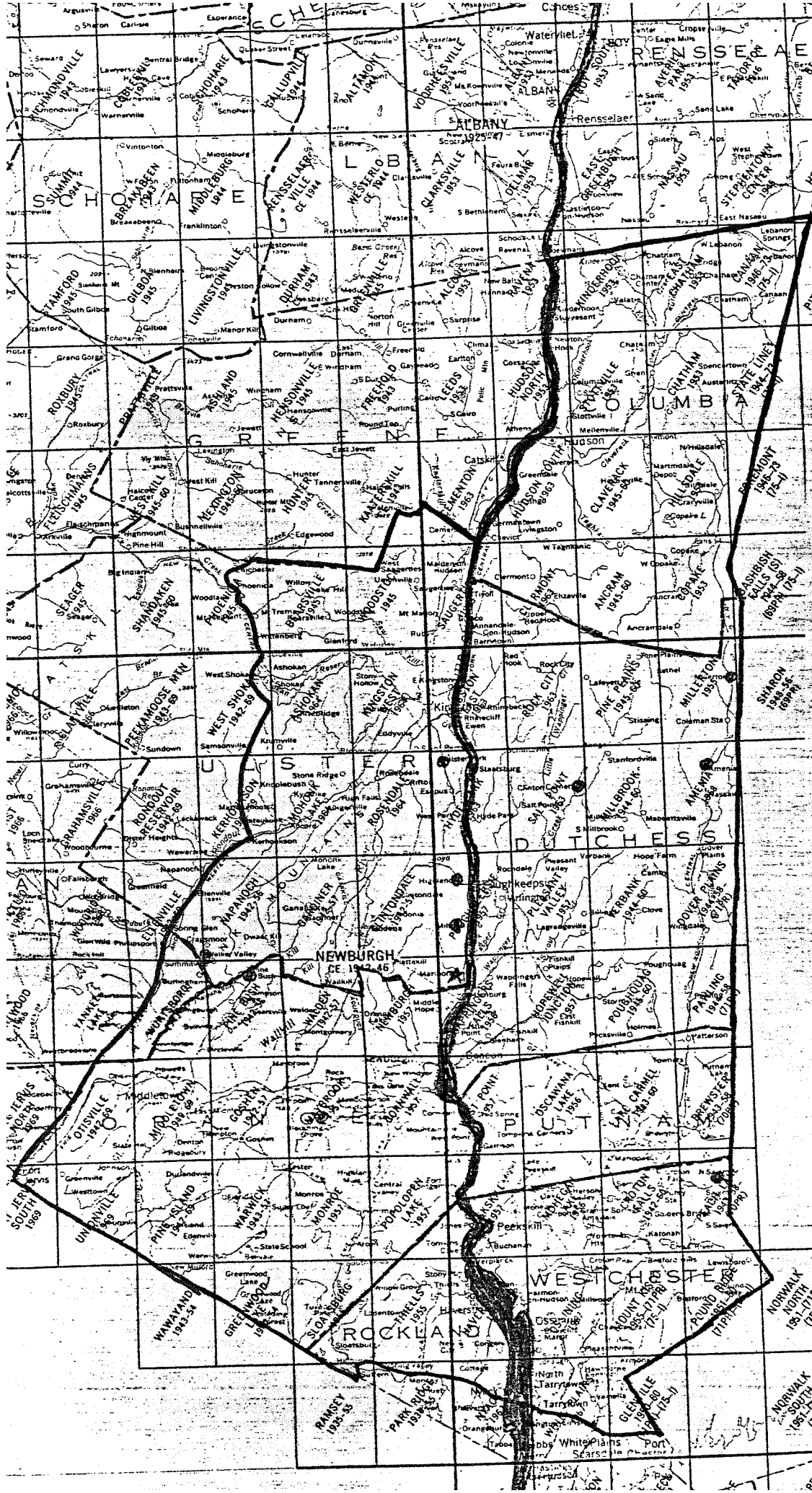
In response to your letter of April 16, 1981, you will find enclosed the four maps that you requested. The description of the Hudson River Region viticultural area boundary is as follows:

Beginning at the point where Route 15 (Merrit Parkway) intersects the New York-Connecticut border, northerly along the western side of the New York border to the northeast corner of Columbia County; thence westerly along the northern border of Columbia County to the Hudson River; thence southerly along the Hudson River to the northeast corner of Ulster County; thence westerly along the northern border of Ulster County to Route 214; thence southerly along the eastern side of Route 214 to Phoenicia; thence southerly along the eastern side of Route 28 to Route 28A; continuing southerly along the eastern side of Route 28A to a road leading to Samsonville; continuing along the eastern side of said road through Tabasco, Mombaccus and Pataukunk to Route 209; thence southerly along the eastern side of Route 209 to the New York-New Jersey border to the point where Route 17 intersects the New York-New Jersey border; thence northerly along the western side of Route 17 to Route 287; thence easterly along the northern side of Route 287 to the point where Routes 287 and 15 intersect; thence northerly along the northern side of Route 15 to the point of beginning.

Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the March 8, 1981 petition refer to the geological division and climatography maps that distinguish the proposed Hudson River Region from surrounding areas. If these do not satisfy 27 CFR 4.25a (e)(2)(iii), I would appreciate more specific comments from you.

Sincerely,


Allan W. Mackinnon



- Vineyards with Sales of \$ 2,500 & Over
- Columbia - 32 Vineyards
372 Acres
 - Ulster - 21 Vineyards
486 Acres
 - Dutchess - 3 Vineyards
44 Acres
 - Sullivan - None
 - Orange - 6 Vineyards
29 Acres
 - Putnam - None
 - Rockland, Westchester and 4 other New York counties combined as all other - 11 Vineyards
47 Acres

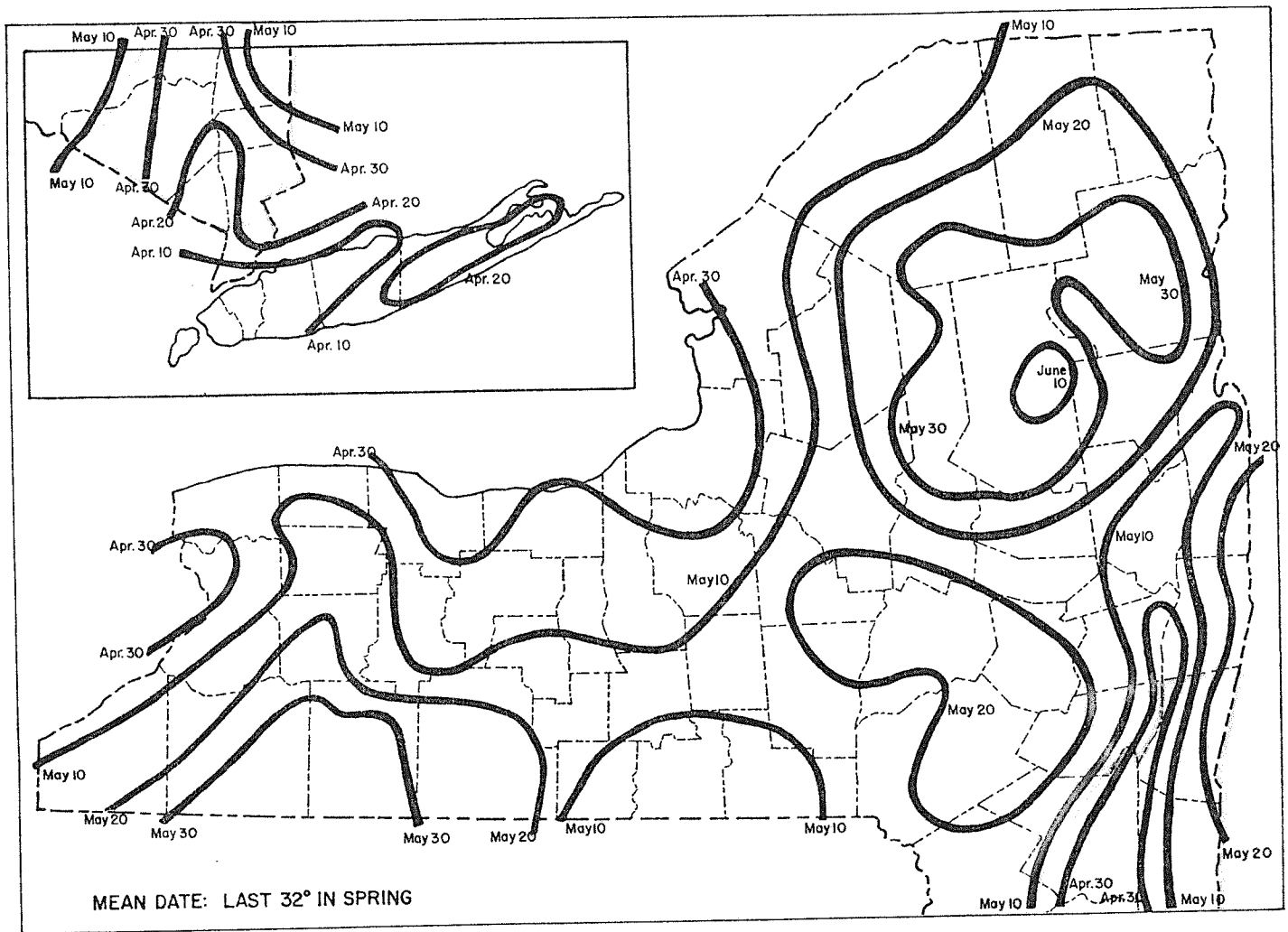
Source: U.S. Census of Agriculture - 1974 Data

- ⊙ Wineries
- ★ 3 Wineries located in Marlboro, NY

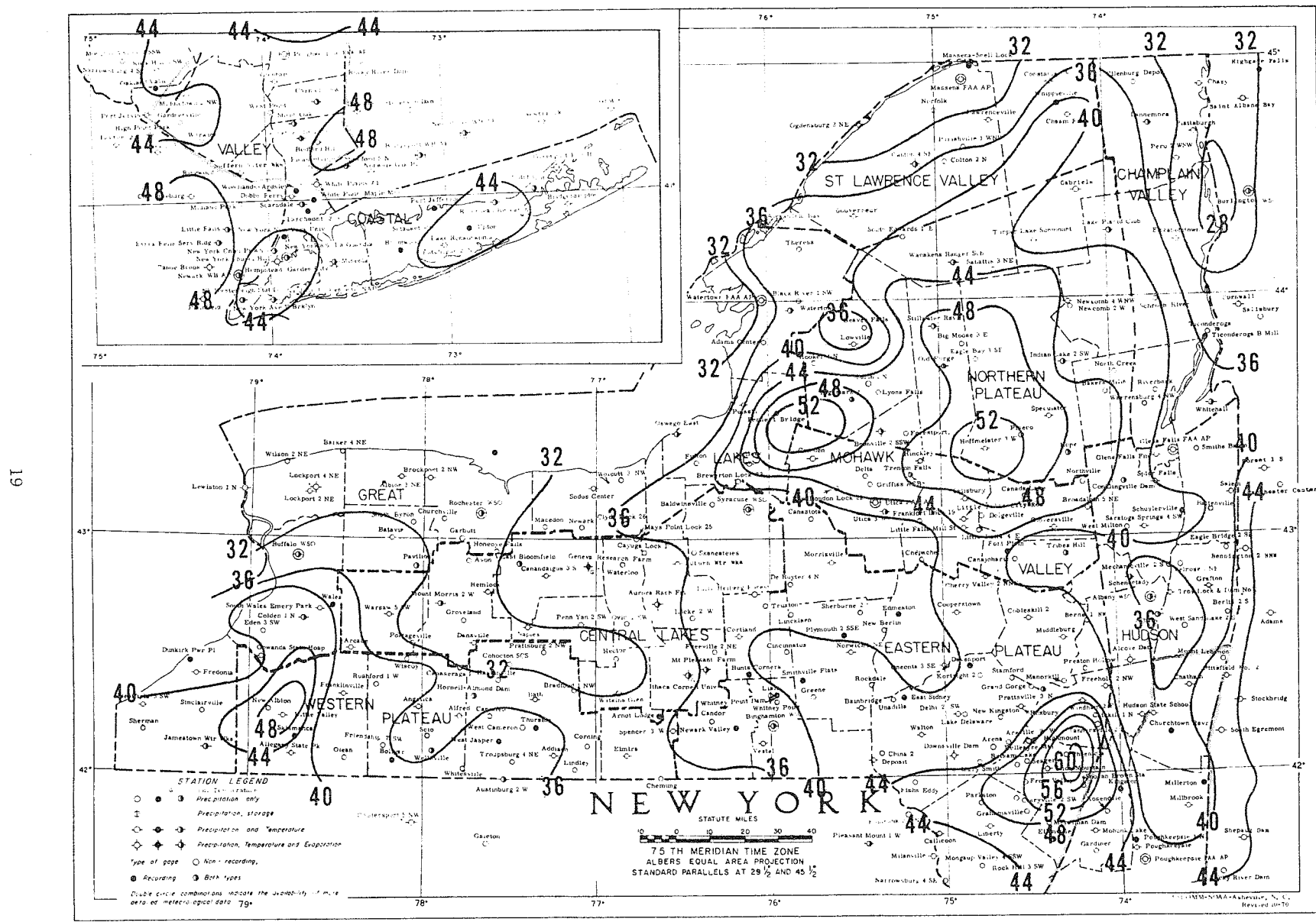
M A S S

O N G

2 Mean date of last 32°F. or lower temperature in spring.

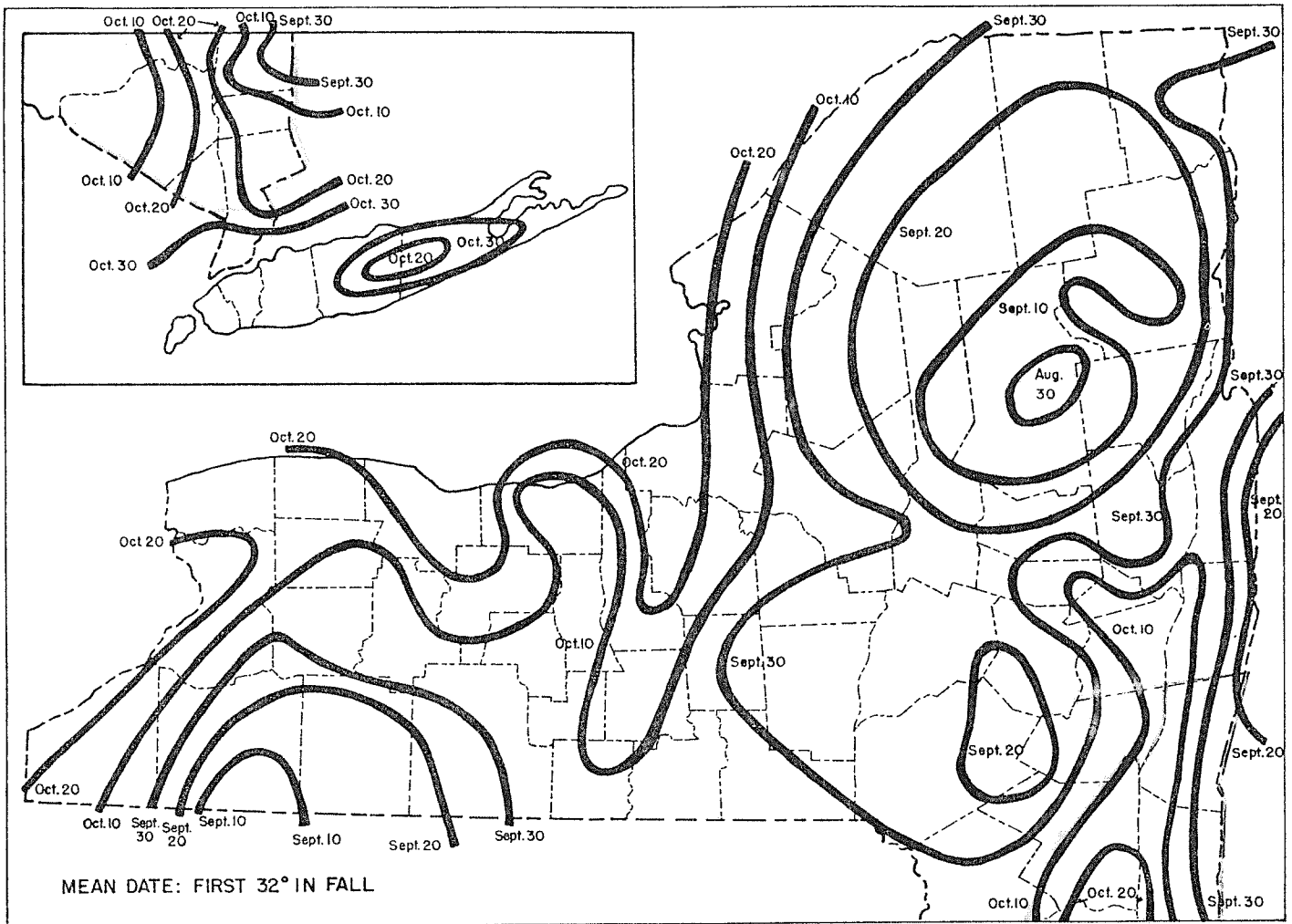


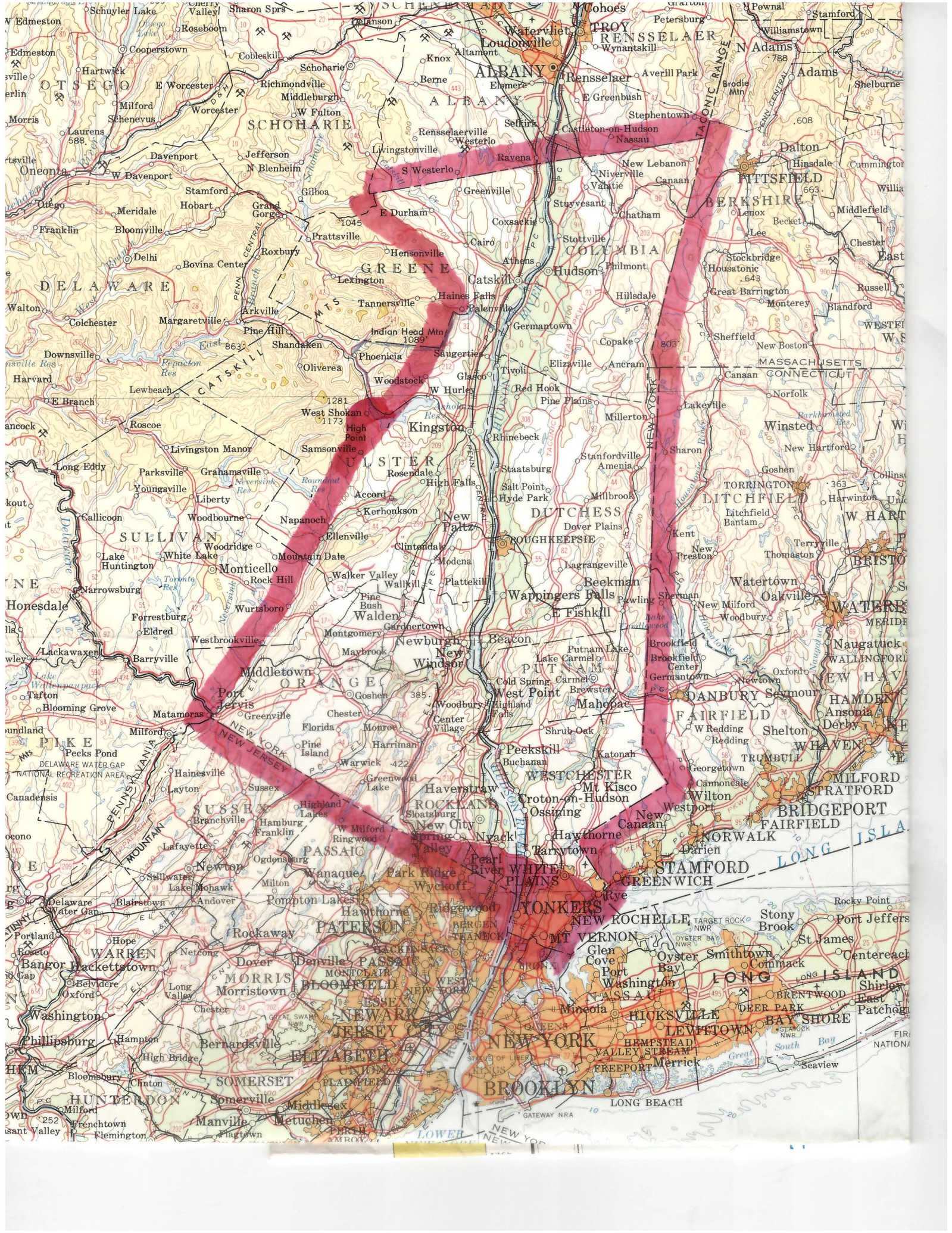
MEAN ANNUAL PRECIPITATION, INCHES



Data are based on the period 1931-55. Isohynes are drawn through points of approximately equal value. Caution should be used in interpolating on these maps, particularly in mountainous areas.

3 Mean date of first 32°F. or lower temperature in fall.





The New York Times

A Harvest Sampler of Wineries in New York State



Mark Miller, the owner of Benmarl, checking grapes.

Continued from Page C1

ly is the oldest wine-making region in the country. According to Leon G. Adams, the country's foremost wine historian, wine has been made continuously in the region since the 17th century. Westchester's Croton Point Park, about 25 miles north of New York, was the country's first large commercial vineyard, planted in native Isabella grapes in 1829.

Ten years later, the Brotherhood Winery was established in Washingtonville, N.Y., about 55 miles north of the city, where it still flourishes. Its founder, a Frenchman named Jean Jacques, called it Blooming Grove.



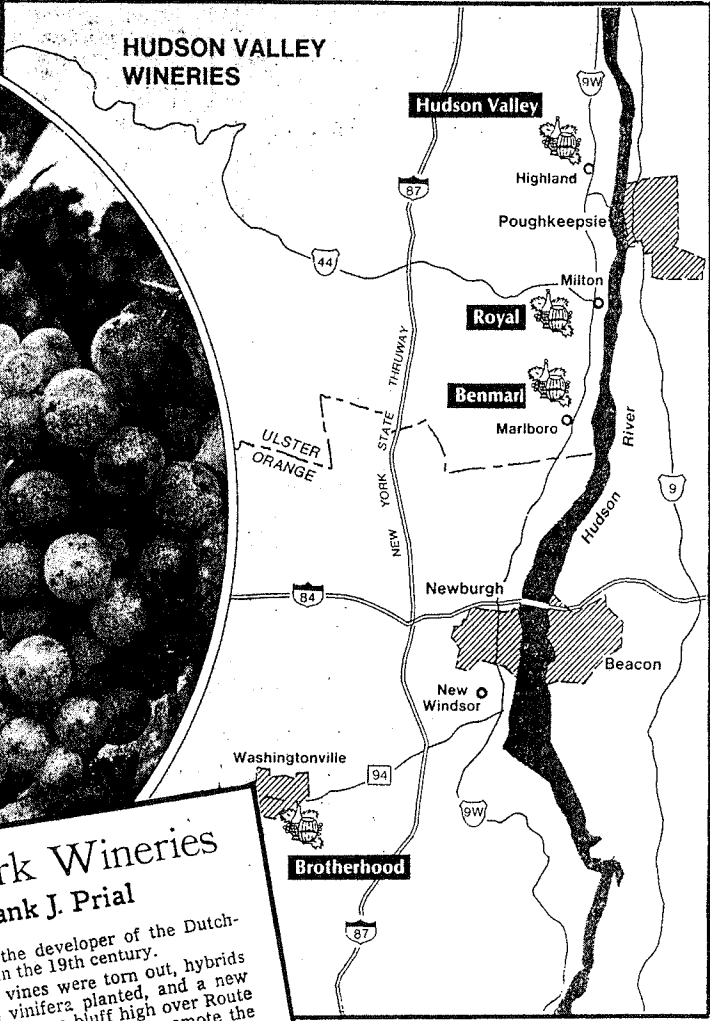
The newest winery in the region is Benmarl Vineyards, in Marlborough, N.Y. Mark Miller, a prominent illustrator, fell in love with wine while living in Burgundy after World War II. When he returned to New York he searched the region until he found the site he wanted, the former vineyard of Andrew Caywood, the developer of the Dutchess grape in the 19th century.

The old vines were torn out, hybrids and some vinifera planted, and a new winery built on a bluff high over Route 9W. To raise cash and to promote the idea of good wine in the area, Mr. Miller created his Société des Vignerons, whose members buy vine rights in his vineyard. Each vine right entitles its owner to the production of two vines, an invitation to help with each year's harvest and the right to use the vineyard's beautiful picnic area.

There are no tours at Benmarl—it is too small and the Miller family usually is too busy in the cellar or in the vineyards. But serious wine lovers are invited to call about membership in the Société and to find out if the Millers currently have any wine for sale. Benmarl's L'Aurore and Baco Noir are remarkable examples of what dedication can produce. The winery is on Highland Avenue in Marlborough, about a dozen miles north of Newburgh on Route 9W. (914) 236-7271.

The Hudson Valley Wine Company, on a high bluff overlooking the Hudson River near Highland, is even more attuned to tourism than Brotherhood. On summer weekends, as many as a dozen tour buses crowd their way into the winery parking lot, many filled with senior citizens who make the tour and drive off happily, carrying a bottle or two of Hudson Valley's sweet pink Catawba.

Hudson Valley originally was the



Harvest Sampler—New York Wineries Frank J. Prial



Caywood, the developer of the Dutchess grape in the 19th century.

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High on a bluff overlooking Lake Keuka is Butley Hill Vineyards, the creation of Walter S. Taylor, a maverick winemaker, who was ousted from the Taylor Wine Company in 1970 because he criticized New York State wineries for adding sugar, water and California wine to their products. They do, and with good reason. The short growing season in New York leaves grapes short of the sugar they need to produce sufficient alcohol.

The Hudson River Valley's oldest winery, Finger Lakes is in fact, the Finger

The Hudson River Valley, on both sides of the river boasts dozens of wine hobbyists. Two or three years ago, some of the owners told Leon Adams they would bond their wineries and sell to the public if New York State ever relaxed its high winery license fees. The state has lowered these fees and hopefully we will see more wineries open to the public.

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The Royal Wine Corporation, which bottles under the Kefem label, is located at the Hudson River's edge, about four miles south of Poughkeepsie. A modest operation that goes in for none of the tourist hoopla, Royal sells its kosher and kosher-style wines to tourists in a converted railroad station next to the winery. The winery was founded by a Czechoslovakian family that had made wine in Eastern Europe for five generations before fleeing Nazi oppression to come to this country.

The winery is open daily from 11 A.M. to 5 P.M. except on Saturdays and Jewish holidays. The winery is on Dock Road, just off Route 9W, about a mile north of the center of Milton, N. Y. (914) 795-2240.

Further along County Road 76 is Konstantin Frank's Vinifera Wine Cellars. Dr. Frank's operation is small and he has no tours. Serious wine students may call for an appointment but he warned—Dr. Frank does not suffer fools gladly. (607) 868-4884.

A few miles to the west, at the southern tip of Lake Canandaigua, is Widmer's Wine Cellars, another big winery. Widmer's was probably the first New York State winery to specialize in varietal wines, that is wines made entirely or mostly from the grapes whose name they bore. Widmer's specializes in labruscas such as Moore's Diamond, Vargennes, Dutchess and Niagara. Naples Valley Red, White and Pink are popular Widmer blends of labrusca and hybrid grapes. Widmer, on West Avenue in Naples, is open Monday through Saturday from 10 A.M. to 3 P.M. (607) 374-6311.

Penn Yan, at the tip of the northeastern fork of Lake Keuka, is the New York home of Boordy Vineyards, a branch of the famous Boordy Vineyards in Riderwood, Md., where Philip Wagner, a journalist, introduced French hybrid grapes to this country in the mid-1930's. The New York portion of Boordy is in turn part of Seneca Foods Corporation. A retail shop at Boordy Penn Yan, at 119 Liberty Street (Route 14A) is open Monday through Saturday from 9 A.M. to 4 P.M. (315) 536-2891.

A word of caution: vintners are independent people. They are liable to shut everything down in the off season to go fishing. So, except for the biggest wineries, it is good to call in advance to make sure they are open and receiving and to check on harvest dates.



By FRANK J. PRIAL

IN TEMPERATE (and some not so temperate) zones all over the Northern Hemisphere, September and October are vineyard-visiting months. The weather is cooler than during July and August, the foliage is at its peak, many of summer's tourists are off the roads and, of course, it is vintage time. There is nothing to match the heady bouquet of fresh-crushed grapes during harvest time and, even in mediocre vintage years, there is a festive feeling in the sharp autumn air. New Yorkers are fortunate in that they have two winegrowing areas in the state, one in the still unspoiled Finger Lakes, about a five-hour drive from the city, the other as close as the nearby Hudson River Valley. The Hudson River Val-

Continued on Page C10

Thriving, Surprising Hudson Valley Wine

By FRANK J. PRIAL

ONLY a handful of New Yorkers are aware that there is a thriving little wine region an hour's drive north of the city. Come to think of it, it may be just as well so few people do know. The vineyards are beautiful, the winemakers are friendly and hospitable and the wines are good and getting better.

These are not the sweet, grapey wines you used to associate with New York State. These are dry, often elegant table wines, fit to grace any table. They are made from French-American

Wine Talk

hybrid grapes, crosses between the best European vines and native American varieties capable of withstanding our harsh eastern winters. There are even a few pure vinifera varieties — European vines that have been cultivated successfully, despite the New York State winter.

The new wine area is called the Hudson Valley Wine Region, and it extends from Marlboro, about 75 miles north of New York City on the west bank of the river, about 20 or 30 miles north toward Albany. On the east bank of the Hud-

son, the vineyards area reaches to the Connecticut border.

At the moment there are eight working wineries in the area: on the west bank, Benmarl and Great River in Marlboro; Cagnasso and Royal Kedem in Milton; Hudson Valley in Highland and Brotherhood in Washingtonville. On the other side of the river are Cascade Mountain in Amenia and Clinton Vineyards in Clinton Corners. Silver Mountain in Millerton is licensed but has not yet produced any wine commercially.

All these wineries are involved in some way or other in producing quality table wines; some more so than others. Brotherhood, for instance, specializes in a long list of wines, most of them sweet, made from traditional New York grape varieties. Hudson Valley is much the same. Both wineries depend for much of their income on tourist business. On any day in the warm weather, both places cater to dozens of busloads of visitors, many of them elderly, for whom the day is an outing that has little to do with wine.

Both wineries are beginning to produce one or two dry hybrid wines, however. Tastes are changing and the two wineries are going along with the trend. Royal Kedem, down on the edge of the river in Milton, concentrates on kosher wines, most of them heavy and

Continued on Page C16

New Yorkers Can Take Pr

Continued From Page C1

weet in the traditional kosher style. here, too, the trend is to lighter and ryer wines and Kedem makes at least ne dry hybrid wine.

The Hudson Valley is the oldest wine istrict in the United States. French uegenots grew vines and made wine a the 17th century near New Paltz. ichard T. Underhill, a Manhattan hysician, planted the first commer-ial vineyard at Croton Point, 35 miles orth of the city in Westchester County,

Wine Talk

1829 and later built a winery whose roducts were sold in the city before e Civil War.

Brotherhood, across the river in ashingtonville, was established in 39 by Jean Jaques, a French shoe-aker who arrived in the area in 1816. e called his winery Blooming Grove; e name derives from another wine-aking operation in Amenia, on the ist bank of the Hudson, not far from here Cascade Mountain is today. The inery was started by Thomas Lake arris, the leader of a utopian group illed The Brotherhood of the New ife.

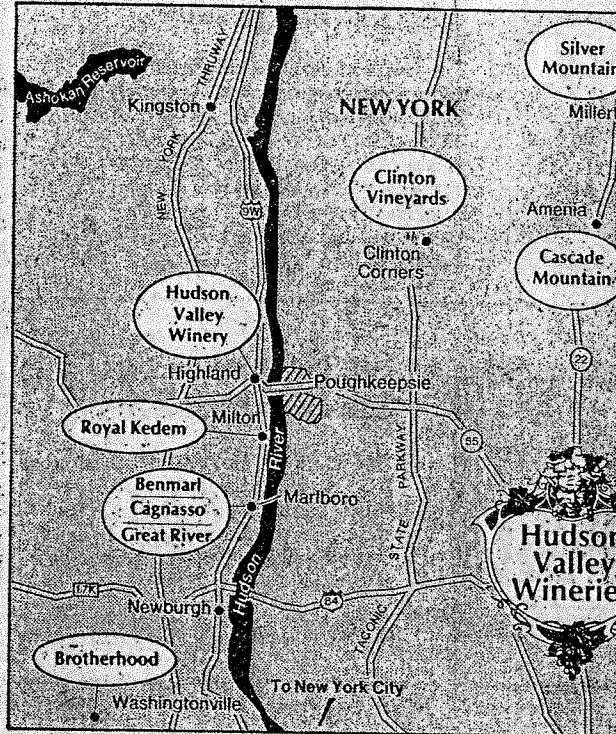
Amenia was the Brotherhood's third olony and wine was first made there ound 1860 before the group wandered est to Sonoma County, Calif. Both the rotherhood wines from Amenia and an Jaques' wines were purchased by

New York wine merchant who ended them and sold them under the rotherhood name. When, in 1885, the



Harris group went west, the merchant purchased the Jaques winery at Wash- ingtonville and changed its name from Blooming Grove to Brotherhood.

Incidentally, the Brotherhood of the New Life founded a famous winery in Sonoma called Fountain Grove. It dis- appeared years ago when the region



The New York Times

around it became urbanized.

Grapes were grown in the Hudson Valley throughout the 19th century. Indeed, the symbol of the town of Marlboro is designed around a bunch of grapes, and the label of the Great River winery is a charming engraving of 19th-century vineyard workers with the Hudson River in the background.

The forerunner of the new crop of wineries is, alas, no longer with us. High Tor Vineyards, founded just north of Nyack in 1951, was closed two years ago, its equipment put up for sale and its vineyards abandoned. Everett Crosby, the playwright, founded High Tor and made some excellent wines from French hybrids. He sold the vineyard and winery in 1971 and the new owner decided, after five years, to move on to other things.

If there can be said to be a driving force behind the new wine movement in the Hudson Valley, it has to be Mark Miller, the founder of Benmarl. Mr. Miller, a prominent magazine illustra- tor, in the days of Colliers and The Saturday Evening Post, fell in love with wine and wine making while living in France in the early 1950's. On his re-

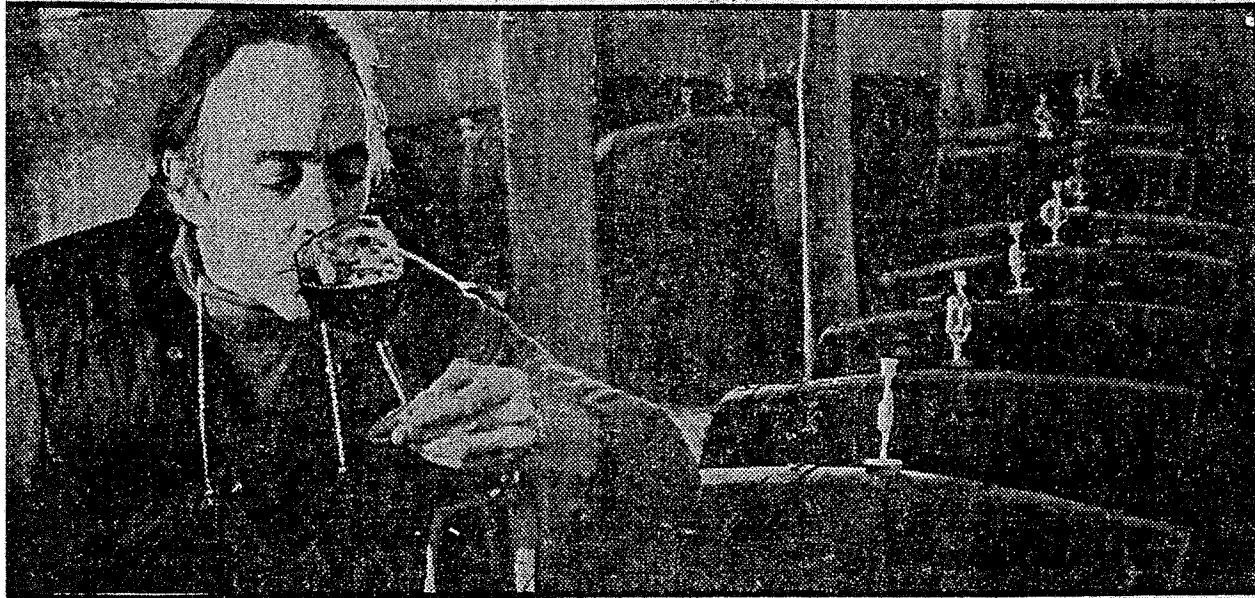
in activities at the winery, vineyards, including harve fall. Initial cost of a vineryg \$500 or \$300 depending on the and there are about 1,000 hol are called the Societe des Vi

Mr. Miller and his son, Er winemaker, produce severa cluding varietals — wines from one grape — and ble Hudson Region nonvintage r tasted a few days ago, is an e ally good red wine — by an of judgment. It has good bo ful color and a delightful, taste. Mr. Miller says it rec two good French Rhone wine tasting. I can see why.

I also tasted his limited, chardonnay, a wine made fr mous white wine grape of B grape no one thought could b the Hudson Valley. It was an impressive wine, a wine Ne can be proud of.

Great River was founded b vestors who also own a chate deaux and who originally become involved in Benmarl vineyards on Mt. Zion.

...n Their Thriving, Surprising Hudson Valley Wines



The New York Times/Lou Manna

William Wetmore, left, novelist-turned-winemaker, began Cascade Mountain vineyards in the early 1970's. Ben Feder, the artist and designer, started Clinton vineyards in 1975.

urants in New York City. Just up from Marlboro in Milton is seph Cagnasso's roadside winery aring his name. Mr. Cagnasso took winemaking skills from Italy to exico to Southern California and ally to Brotherhood before he retired ear or so ago. "I only sell to people who stop buy y place," he said. "I make what I

want and I sell what I want; a few hundred gallons of this, a few hundred of that. I don't have any managment at my back now, saying 'Make money, make money.'" Mr. Cagnasso has several young wines, blends, that he sells soon after they are made. He is also keeping a couple, made from Léon Millot and De-Chaunac grapes, for aging.

William Wetmore, a novelist-turned-winemaker, began Cascade Mountain Vineyards in the early 1970's to supply home winemakers and to build up a nursery business. Like so many grape growers, he couldn't resist the urge to become a professional winemaker. He will make up to 4,500 gallons of wine this year and plans to eventually make 8,000 or 10,000 gallons each year.

His specialty is a harvest wine, ready to drink by Thanksgiving of the year in which it is made — sort of a Hudson Valley Beaujolais Nouveau. He makes a harvest red, a harvest white and a harvest rosé. There are also some reserve wines aging in the little winery he and his family built themselves. I tasted his 1977 harvest red last winter. It was bet-

ter than most of the doctored Beaujolais Nouveau the French send us. Mr. Wetmore concentrates on sales at the winery. He sold out everything he made in 1977 with the exception of the aging wines, and half of those are spoken for. Ben Feder, the artist and designer who started Clinton Vineyards litle more than a year ago, plans to concen-

trate entirely on white wines, particularly Aurora. His first wine, released last spring, is an unusually good bottle, with the richness and intensity normally associated with the best chardonnays. The wine is a classic and, I think, the best white wine from French-American hybrids made in New York State. It too is available only at the winery for the time being.

Local Wines More Than a Flight of Fancy

By FRANK J. PRIAL

A NORTH SALEM VINEYARD in Westchester is for the birds. At least that's what the birds seem to think. The only vineyard of any note in the county, here in North Salem, is owned and operated by Dr. George W. Naumburg Jr., who, over the years, has become accustomed to sharing his grapes with feathered intruders. Recently, they have begun to share with him. In fact, they have left so many grapes for him these last couple of years that he is about to open his own winery, the first in the county's recent history so far as anyone can determine.

Dr. Naumburg, a Manhattan psychiatrist during the week, is a grandson of Elkan Naumburg, a banker who donated the band shell in Central Park,

and a son of George W. Naumburg, also a banker, who for many years sponsored the concerts played in that band shell.

Dr. Naumburg spent a lot of his youth in northern Westchester County. He did not want to be a banker — or a doctor, either, for that matter. He wanted to be a farmer. Now he is, if only from Friday to Monday.

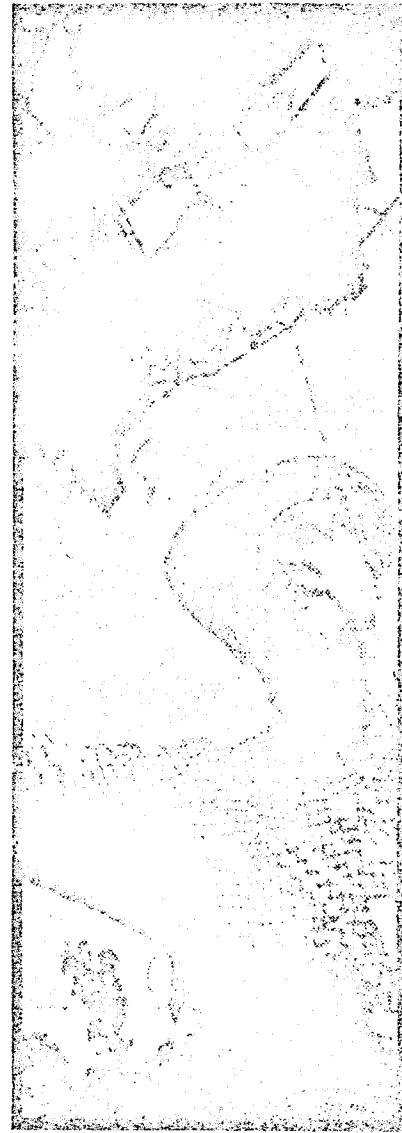
"We started the vineyard in 1965," he recalled recently, "and since 1972 we've been selling grape juice and grapes to home wine makers. But I've decided that selling my wine for \$5 a bottle is a better idea than selling the juice for \$5 a gallon. I'll be way ahead."

The Naumburg vineyard is on about 13 acres of his 260-acre spread. "It used to be all dairy farms around here," Dr. Naumburg said. "They date from the Civil War, when there was a big canned-milk industry in this area." He thought of continuing the dairy tradition but realized that a dairy farmer can't work only on weekends. "My brother does it," he said, "and it's a full-time job."

"I'd always been interested in wine," Dr. Naumburg continued, "and grapes seemed like the perfect way to combine two careers." In fact, he has a full-time employee on the scene all week even though much of the routine work can be done on his long weekends.

The Naumburg vineyard, along with just about every other successful vineyard in the Northeast, owes much of its success to Philip Wagner of Boordy Vineyard, near Baltimore. Mr. Wagner is the father of the French hybrid-grape movement in this country. French hybrids are crosses between the best European wine grapes and the hardy native grapes of the Northeast. The best of them produce European-style wines from vines capable of withstanding the rigors of Northeastern winters.

"We tried vinifera," Dr. Naumburg said, "but it just didn't work." Vinifera



The New York Times / Jack Manning

Dr. George W. Naumburg Jr. at his vineyard

vines are the great wine-producing vines of Europe and California. Only a few have ever succeeded in this part of the country. Since 1965, Dr. Naumburg has experimented with at least 30 different kinds of French hybrid grapes.

Among them have been grapes with names such as De Chaunac, Chelois, Cascade, Marochal Foch and Chancellor. Mr. Wagner once advised Dr. Naumburg to grow grapes that would produce red, white and rose wines, but the psychiatrist has chosen to take a different route.

About 40 miles north of here in Clinton Corners, another New Yorker, Ben Feder, is producing an exceptional white wine from a hybrid grape called Seyval Blanc. Dr. Naumburg has experimented with the grape and now is in the process of converting a large part of his grape acreage to it. "We have only two acres now," he said, "but we planted four more acres this spring and we will plant an additional four next spring."

If all goes well, Dr. Naumburg's as-yet-unnamed winery should be producing 5,000 to 6,000 cases of wine — Westchester County wine — in another couple of years, birds permitting, of course. Recently, he has been covering his vines with netting, an expensive proposition when 13 acres of vines are involved. It is, however, less expensive than abandoning an entire crop to hordes of voracious birds whose migration routes each fall seem to be right over the Naumburg vineyard during harvest season.

"We've tried everything on the birds," Dr. Naumburg said. "The netting is expensive, and most chemicals are forbidden for grapes." One promising chemical that drives birds away is now being tested, but it has yet to be approved and may not be available for several years.

The Naumburg vineyard is the latest in a series of vineyards that have

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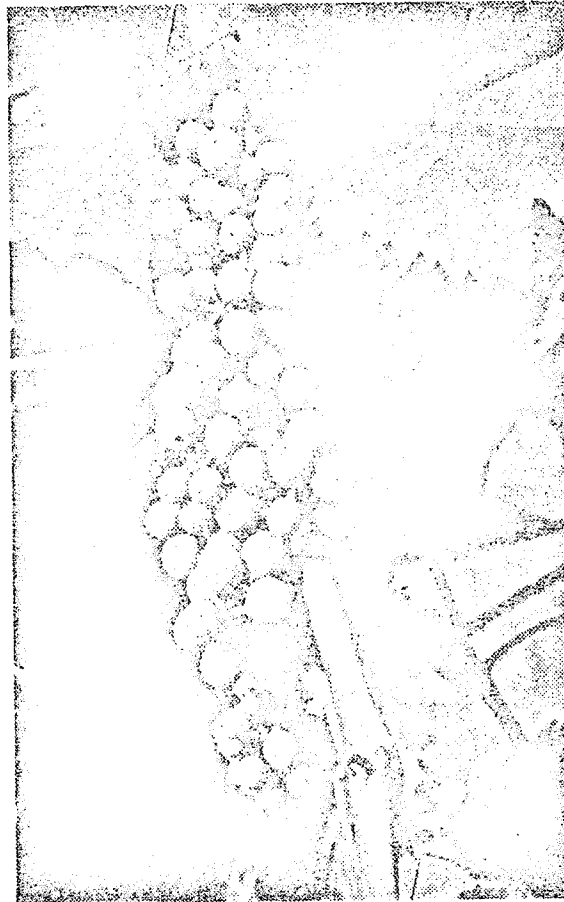
Wines More Than a Flight of Fancy

Continued From Page 1

sprung up within a few hours of Manhattan in recent years. The best-known, perhaps, are Benmarl, north of Newburgh on the west side of the Hudson River, and the Hargrave Vineyard at Cutchogue, on Long Island's North Fork, about 90 miles from Manhattan. There are probably half a dozen more, either in operation or soon to start, particularly in the Hudson Valley, in Ulster and Dutchess Counties.

The wine tradition in the region is very old, however. French Huguenots made wine near New Paltz in the 17th century — without much success, but the first big commercial vineyard in the Hudson Valley was in Westchester — at Croton Point, where there is now a big county park. The vineyard there was planted in 1827 by Dr. Richard T. Underhill, a New York City physician who eventually abandoned his practice to devote all his time to grapes and later to wine. In his book "The Wines of America," Leon D. Adams said of the Croton Point vineyard: "No marker or plaque exists to tell the thousands who now enjoy picknicking at the park that this was once their state's most famous vineyard. Campers who take shelter in the great cavern hollowed out of the hillside are unaware that it originally served as the aging vault for Croton Point wines.

Not far from Croton Point, across the river, is the site of the former High Tor Vineyard, which was closed in 1976. High Tor, was founded in the late 1940's by Everett Crosby, the playwright, and its first wines were introduced in 1954.



The New York Times / Jack Manning

Maréchal Foch grapes at the Naumberg vineyard in North Salem

It is named for the promontory on which it is located and which, in turn, was made famous by Maxwell Anderson's play of the same name. Mr. Crosby sold out in 1971 to Richard Voigt, a Connecticut restaurant owner. Mr. Voigt kept the operation going until 1976, when his winemaker, Thomas Lee Hayes, an Episcopal priest, decided to move farther upstate. Mr. Voigt sold half of his 80 acres on High Tor, but has mentioned starting the vineyard again on the remaining land. A few shops in the metropolitan area, as well as a some restaurants, still stock a few bottles of High Tor wines, also made from hybrid grapes.

Another local vigneron who hopes to profit from Dr. Naumberg's experimentation is Lee Tredenari, a New York advertising man who has a much smaller spread, about three acres of grapes, over the Putnam County line in Kent Cliffs. Mr. Tredenari is more interested in oenology than viticulture.

A winemaker in the great tradition of South Philadelphia — where he learned the art from his father — he turns out a couple of barrels a year from grapes he buys from wholesalers or from people like Dr. Naumberg. His winery is in the basement of his West Side brownstone, 53 miles south of his bird-battered vineyard.

After his initial encounter with the birds, he all but threw in the towel. "One year we got enough grapes to make about 15 gallons," he said. "We tried pie plates, scarecrows and fluttering ribbons. None of it worked. We have the best four-star bird restaurant along their flight path."

NEW YORK SUNDAY NEWS • OCTOBER 17, 1976

Everything else seems to be getting worse, but American wines are getting better. In particular, a remarkable renaissance appears to be beginning for New York State wines.

New York wines? It is to laugh, most wine snobs would say — and, unhappily, it used to be for good reason. Over the years, New York wines have gotten a reputation for being remarkably undistinguished — sturdy, unobtrusive vintages, mass-produced for a regional audience that accepted their unusual taste and pungent aroma.

Now, there's nothing wrong with mass-produced wine. Even in France, the carafe on the dining room table usually is filled with a bulk wine of no great distinction, often imported from Italy or Algeria. Everyday wine is, by definition, nothing special.

But for special occasions, the French have the great wines produced in relatively small amounts by the superb Bordeaux and Burgundy vineyards. In California, where most American wine is made, there are wines of comparable quality (and cost), produced in similarly small amounts by dedicated vintners.

It is this special tradition of greatness that New York wine has lacked. But now a relatively small group of wine makers has set out to fill the gap. They believe that they can make great wines in New York—not only in the Finger Lakes region, the traditional center of the state's wine-making activity, but also in vineyards along the Hudson River Valley, within easy driving distance of New York City.

These dedicated wine makers, carefully tending their small plots of land and taking care of each batch of grapes, have been at it for only a few years. Their young, budding effort still needs help, especially from the state's legislators. But already their efforts are starting to create a new and more respectful attitude toward New York state wines. Some that invite comparison with the fine wines of California have started to appear in wine stores, at prices that also bear comparison with those of their California competition — generally from \$3.50 a bottle and up.

One of the major enemies that these wine makers must fight is climate — specifically, the bitter cold winters that have played a major role in



New York wine comes of age

determining the kind of wine grapes grown in New York. Climate has been a decisive factor in wine making the world over. The grapes grown in all the world's great wine regions — France, Germany, Italy, California and the others — belong to the species *Vitis vinifera*. Hot summers may reduce the quality of wine made from *vinifera* grapes, but cold winters have an even greater influence: they kill the *vinifera* vines.

Early New World settlers imported European vines to the East Coast, but the first attempts at wine making died with those vines in the cold Northeast winters. It was not until colonials turned to a native American grape species, *Vitis labrusca*, hardy enough to survive American winters, that Eastern wine making began in earnest. Today the vast majority of New York State wines are made from grape varieties — the Concord, the Delaware and so on — which are believed to have originated from accidental crosses between imported vines and native *labrusca* grapes.

But wines made from *labrusca* grapes have a taste completely different from *vinifera* wines — a musky, strong taste, disagreeable to those accus-

The crusade is to raise the Hudson Valley to its rightful place as one of the great wine-making areas of the world

tomized to *vinifera*, called "fox" the "foxiness" of New York wines that sets them apart.

California wine makers have to use *labrusca* grapes, but *vinifera* vines flourish in the California climate. It is *vinifera* which has made California the dominant American wine-growing producing perhaps 10 times more wine than New York does.

But it was the hardy *labrusca* vines that saved the American wine industry — indeed, the great development of the world — a century ago — a century ago development that is just coming to fruition in the prospect of great New York wines.

The villain of the story is *Phylloxera vastatrix*, a plant louse with a deadly taste for *vinifera* roots. *Phylloxera* devastated the vineyards of California in the early 1870s. *Phylloxera* was brought accidentally to New York with equally disastrous results while things looked bad for wine.

But native American roots are resistant to *Phylloxera*. European growers in both Europe and California saved the day by grafting *labrusca* vines onto resistant American roots. Though this development is not as cheerful for wine lovers, it did

save the day for New York wine makers, who were in their all-*labrusca* formula. The California wine industry grew by leaps and bounds, while New York languished by comparison.

The first signs of a New York renaissance came in the 1930s, when Philip Wagner, an editorial writer for *The Baltimore Sun*, got interested in the growing number of hybrid *vinifera* vines being created by plant scientists. Both France and the United States, hybrid vines can survive harsh winters and still produce interesting wines. Wagner and his wife Jocelyn were working with these hybrids in the Boardman vineyard, originally in Maryland and now in Pennsylvania. The Wagners proved that wines with little or no *labrusca* taste could be made in the East, but most of their efforts have been devoted to making decent, unspectacular export wines.

Then, with some drama, came the appeal of Dr. Konstantin Frank, an emigre winemaker who pronounced in 1951 that he not only could grow *vinifera* vines in New York but also could make great wine from their grapes. Almost ev-

laughed. But Charles Fournier, then head of Gold Seal Vineyards, second largest in the state, gave Frank the opportunity to try his theories in the vineyard on Lake Keuka, second most westerly of the Finger Lakes. (Most of the state's vineyards cluster around Lake Keuka and the neighboring Lake Canandaigua, whose waters moderate the effects of the upstate winters.)

By choosing the hardiest rootstocks and grafting carefully, Frank was able to grow true vinifera grapes in upstate New York. After a few years, he left Gold Seal to found his own vineyard, defiantly called Vinifera Wine Cellars, which is doing quite well. Experts say that Frank has done best with two classic white vinifera grapes, Riesling and Chardonnay, both of which have been rated high in tastings.

Frank isn't alone. Gold Seal now markets a Chardonnay, from grapes grown by Lake Keuka. Not far away, Bully Hill Vineyards, run by Walter S. Taylor, is dedicated to making fine wines.

Things began happening much closer to New York City. In 1954, a former radio writer named Everett Crosby founded High Tor Vineyards on the celebrated mountain, only 30 miles from Manhattan. High Tor's Rockland red and white wines, made from hybrid grapes, have earned a solid following.

An even more interesting development occurred in the 1960s, when Mark Miller, a magazine illustrator and wine lover, came back from Europe with his family and began a serious, all-out effort to make fine wines at Benmarl Vineyards, in Marlboro, a few miles north of Newburgh on the western slope of the Hudson River. Although Miller is quite eager to sell his wines, he describes his efforts as "more a crusade than a business." The crusade, he says, is to raise the Hudson Valley to its rightful place as one of the great wine-making areas of the world.

The first commercial vineyard in the United States was at Croton Point on the Hudson in 1827, Miller says, and by 1890 there were 13,000 acres planted in vines along the river. Those days will come back, Miller maintains, for both artistic and commercial reasons.

Miller has calculated that a farmer can make more money growing grapes for wine than by growing alternate crops such as apples on a small holding—say, 15 or 20 acres. One acre yields about three tons of good wine grapes, which produces 480 gallons of wine, Miller's calculations run, and that is enough to turn a profit.

But it is the prospect of making great wine in the Hudson Valley that fascinates Miller. He points out that the soil along the river has the shaly outcroppings and glacier-borne gravel deposits that

are typical of some great wine-growing regions, such as Bordeaux and Burgundy. The major plantings of Benmarl Vineyards, row on row of neatly spaced vines, are on a slope that faces south, traditionally the most favorable location for gathering the warmth of the winter sun. The vineyards roll down to the Hudson River, whose water is another moderating influence.

"My climate statistics are virtually the same as in Burgundy, and generally better than on the Rhine," he says.

Right now Miller is in the experimental stage, trying any number of grape varieties. He has bottled and sold a white Seyval Blanc, a hybrid whose wine has a fresh, apple-like taste; a Baco Noir, a red hybrid; a Chardonnay; even a sparkling white wine (which he won't call Champagne out of respect for his French friends). Miller's 27-year-old son Eric is taking over the role of cellar master.

Benmarl's output is growing steadily, as vines come to maturity. He now has some 20 acres in vines, much of it recently planted. It takes three years for a vine to yield usable grapes. Benmarl made 7,000 gallons of wine last year. The yield this year will be 14,000 gallons; by 1980, Benmarl will be making 36,000 gallons.

* Perhaps more important, Miller is starting to make residents of the area conscious of their wine heritage. He and five other growers have formed the Hudson River Winegrowers Council, and have won from the federal government a regional designation for their wines, which are labeled "Mid-Hudson Region." The other five vineyards have only 40 acres in vines, but Miller sees this as only a token of things to come.

He has chosen a unique way to popularize the Mid-Hudson wines. For a fee, anyone can buy what Miller calls "vinerights"—the output of two actual grapevines, one case of wine a year. (Miller will send information about vinerights to anyone who writes to Societe des Vignerons, Benmarl Vineyards, Marlboro, N.Y. 12542.) "We're trying to set an example in our valley," he says. "We want people around here to get to know what we're doing."

This year Benmarl and other small vineyards won a major legislative victory with the passage of a state "farm wine bill." One provision of the bill changed the old flat-rate licensing fee of \$1,600 a year to a sliding scale, with much lower fees for small vineyards. Miller sees this as the beginning of a bright new era for New York vineyards.

Small vineyards in California and other states sell an appreciable portion of their output to visitors, Miller says, and New York vineyards should have the same right. He sees the day when droves

continued on next page

of New York City residents will head north on weekends for a day of tasting (and buying) at small Hudson Valley wineries, in the way that San Franciscans head north to the Napa-Sonoma wine country.

Reportedly, opposition by large New York State wineries held back the farm wine bill. But Arthur Brody, president of Gold Seal Vineyards, denies this. He points to Gold Seal's early support of Dr. Frank, and its continuing production of Chardonnay as examples of the winery's support of anything that will help wine-growing in the state.

Brody also sees great things ahead for New York wines, but with one important proviso: "I think la-brusca is bedrock. We can't get away from it."

The next minute he is saying that New York "can do great things with Champagne — not only Gold Seal, but other producers as well. We're happy to be compared in Champagne with the best. Brody is especially pleased that one of his company's sparkling white wines, Charles Fournier Blanc de Blancs, finished first in its category in a blind tasting (with labels hidden), outscoring even a \$27 Moet et Chandon Champagne from France.

Brody is no crusader. "I want to be a commercial success and an artistic success," he says. "But to be an artistic success, I've first got to be a commercial success."

Everyone agrees that this is just the beginning of a long story. The French wine-growing tradition goes back some 2,000 years. After a century, California wines are just starting to come into their own. New York is still counting in decades. But all the ingredients for success are there — crusaders like Miller and Frank, solid businessmen like Brody, skilled researchers such as those at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station at Geneva, one of the world's great centers for hybrid grape development.

Even now, there are signs of a change in attitude. In the 1987 edition of his Encyclopedia of Wine and Spirits, Alexis Lichine devoted only a few curt paragraphs to Hudson River wines. Then he visited Mark Miller at Benmarl. The 1975 edition not only praises Benmarl's Seyval Blanc but also says that the Mid-Hudson Region may someday be to New York City what the Napa Valley is to San Francisco, a flattering comparison to one of the nation's best wine regions.

New York wines? It is not to laugh any more. □

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* A PORTION OF BENMARL'S PRODUCTION IS UNAVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC. IT IS RESERVED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE "SOCIETE DES VIGNERONS" AND IS KNOWN AS THE "CUVEE DU VIGNERON". MEMBERSHIP IN THE SOCIETY, INCLUDING DUES AND FIRST-YEAR INITIATION FEE IS \$130. THIS INCLUDES A "VINERIGHT" REPRESENTING TWO VINES IN THE BENMARL VINEYARD. EACH VINERIGHT HOLDER IS ENTITLED TO 12 BOTTLES OF WINE EACH YEAR. ANNUAL MAINTENANCE THEREAFTER \$45.

JAN 8 1974

R:T:C:RLP

Mr. Mark Miller
President
Benmarl Wine Company
Highland Avenue
Marlboro, New York 12542

Dear Mr. Miller:

This is written in reply to your letter dated December 4, 1973, and will confirm the information conveyed to you during a telephone conversation with Mr. George Bonifant, of this Bureau.

We will not object if the words "Hudson River Region" are used on your labels to serve as an appellation of origin. An appellation of origin, when required, must appear in direct conjunction with the grape varietal name or semi-generic name being used as the designation. We therefore suggest that your proposed format for labels which will use an appellation of origin, per item 4, with your letter be revised so that the appellation of origin appear in direct conjunction with those names which require the appellation.

Applications for certificate of label approval should be submitted on government printed Forms 1649, a few of which are enclosed.

Your application "Item #2" would be approved if all of the grape varietal names were removed from the application.

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) ALAN B. GRAHAM

Alan B. Graham
Chief, Commodity Classification Branch

Enclosures