Sonoma Mountain
Glen Ellen, California
July, 1982

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

Dear Sir:

The undersigned grape growers and winery owners request your consideration of our proposal that "Sonoma Mountain" be designated as a viticultural area. The proposed Sonoma Mountain area lies entirely within the already designated Sonoma Valley viticultural area, and we agree with that designation as far as it goes. But the unique combination of soil and climate that is Sonoma Mountain has in fact received historical and current local recognition as a distinct growing area, and we feel that that recognition should be officially acknowledged. In order to be as responsive as possible to the letter of the law, we have organized our proposal around the requirements specified in 27 CFR 4.25a (e) (2).

(i.) EVIDENCE THAT THE NAME OF THE VITICULTURAL AREA IS LOCALLY AND/OR NATIONALLY KNOWN AS REFERRING TO THE AREA SPECIFIED IN THE APPLICATION;

Any map of Sonoma County or the North Coast notes Sonoma Mountain as a prominent landmark. At 2463 feet above sea level, the Mountain divides the watersheds of the Petaluma River, the Russian River (via Matanzas Creek), and Sonoma Creek. Sonoma Mountain Road traverses the viticultural area and the Mountain itself at about the 1000 foot level, running west from Glen Ellen along the north and northeast slope. That Sonoma Mountain has been known by that name from an early date will be shown in Section (ii.), below.

(ii.) HISTORICAL OR CURRENT EVIDENCE THAT THE BOUNDARIES OF THE VITICULTURAL AREA ARE AS SPECIFIED IN THE APPLICATION;

Many original settlers in the Sonoma Valley moved into the Sonoma

Mountain area. Early historical documents are so full of references to viticulture on Sonoma Mountain that it is clear that the area was recognized and sought out for its winegrowing potential.

The first winery in California, Count Agoston Haraszthy's Buena Vista Winery, was opened in Sonoma in 1857. Some five years later in 1862 Jackson Temple planted the first vineyards on Sonoma Mountain, shortly afterwards building the first winery on what is now known as the Jack London Ranch.[1] In 1867 Robert Potter Hill, a major landowner around Glen Ellen, planted 80 acres of vineyard on land now owned by the State of California.[2]

Viticulture was well established on Sonoma Mountain by 1877, when Thomas H. Thompson published his pioneer work, Historical Atlas of Sonoma County, California. The map of Sonoma Mountain on pp. 54 and 55 of this atlas shows the many ranches which had sprung up on the Mountain by that time. J. P. Munro-Frazier's History of Sonoma County, 1880,[3] discusses many of the vineyard owners on Sonoma Mountain and corroborates much of the information in Thompson's atlas. Munro-Frazier includes Sonoma Mountain in his observation "that in the opinion of many (this area is) the finest grape growing section in the State of California."[4]

The updated version of Thompson's atlas, by Reynolds and Proctor, entitled Illustrated Atlas of Sonoma County, California, and published 21 years later, shows that by the turn of the century, grape growing on Sonoma

[1] Shepard, Milo (descendent and heir of Jack London), personal interview 7/12/82.

[2] Ibid.

[3] pp. 463-466.

[4] p. 465.

Mountain had reached its zenith. Maps in this atlas[5] note among other viticulturalists the names of five growers whose heirs still farm the original vineyards. Perhaps the most detailed description of grape growing on Sonoma Mountain at this time is Isaac de Turk's The Vineyards of Sonoma County, 1893. De Turk, as the head of the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, published this compilation of all the vineyards and wineries in the County. It lists three wineries and 10 vineyards on Sonoma Mountain, ranging in size from 8 to 125 acres and totalling 288 acres.[6] Kohler and Frohling Winery, which de Turk notes "includes a large wine cellar and distillery",[7] was one of the largest wineries in California at the time and was engaged in shipping its products to the East Coast around the Horn.[8] This winery included the original buildings of Jackson Temple's pioneer winery. In the descriptions of these Sonoma Mountain vineyards de Turk refers time and time again to the excellence of the "red loam and light red gravelly mountain soil on Sonoma Mountain,"[9] one characteristic which distinguished Sonoma Mountain from much of the greater Sonoma Valley, as we shall see in Section (iii), below.

In the early 1900's difficult economic times and the ravages of phylloxera took their toll on the local vineyards, although Jack London, in John Barleycorn, 1913[10], notes the vitality of Sonoma Mountain viticulture.

[5] p. 58, 59, 65.

[6] pp. 11-19.

[7] Ibid., p. 17.

[8] Shepard, op. cit.

[9] De Turk, op. cit., pp. 11-17.

[10] pp. 31, 193, 200.

Prohibition (1919-1933) marked, of course, the low ebb of Sonoma Mountain viticulture, but after Repeal the industry gradually revived. Plantings in recent years have surpassed even the heyday of the late 1890's. At present count, the Sonoma Mountain area has 23 vineyards, ranging in size from 3 to 115 acres, for a total of 571 acres, with more in the planning stages. Sonoma Mountain also has three bonded wineries, and two more are being contemplated.

(iii.) EVIDENCE RELATING TO THE GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES (CLIMATE, SOIL, ELEVATION, PHYSICAL FEATURES, ETC.) WHICH DISTINGUISH THE VITICULTURAL FEATURES OF THE PROPOSED AREA FROM SURROUNDING AREAS;

This application makes no recommendation as to what restrictions, if any, should be placed upon the use of the word "mountain" in wine label approval determinations in general. We are not, in short, attempting to define anyone's mountain but our own. But since Sonoma Mountain is indeed a mountain, the land within the proposed area is higher than the surrounding portions of the greater Sonoma Valley. Elevations range from 400 feet to the Mountain's summit at 2463 feet, with most of the existing vineyards in the 400-1200 foot range. De Turk[11] notes one small vineyard at the 1700-foot elevation, suggesting that land higher up on the Mountain bears consideration as potential vineyard. Since no public roads presently traverse the Mountain at higher than 1200 feet, one would assume that the higher elevations have been left unplanted more for reasons of limited access than viticultural unsuitability.

The planted areas of Sonoma Mountain are dominated by the Spreckles-Felta soil association (see Exhibit A). This band of soil, to which de Turk repeatedly referred, attracted the early settlers, and continues

[11] De Turk, op. cit.

to be primary focus of vineyard plantings. It should be noted that this same soil association occurs in another Sonoma Valley location, on the Valley's east side, or on the western slope of the Mayacamas Mountains. The western exposure of this other area creates a micro-climate significantly different from that of Sonoma Mountain, which is discussed below.

The annual mean temperature lines drawn on the Sonoma Valley climate map (Exhibit B) indicate little difference between the Sonoma Mountain area and the rest of the region, but more detailed monthly high and low mean temperature data (Exhibit C) show that during the growing season the Mountain records higher lows and lower highs than valley-floor locations. High and low temperature data do not reflect the duration of the highs and lows. The thermograph charts from which Exhibit C was derived reflect the fact that the fog which blows in from the Pacific Ocean or San Francisco Bay in the summer usually fills the valley locations first, leaving much of the Mountain fog-free. The sun's first rays tend to burn the fog off the predominantly northeastern exposure of Sonoma Mountain earlier, maximizing the hours of sunlight and warmth to which the vineyards are exposed, even though the high temperatures reached are lower than in many valley locations. This same northeastern exposure provides shelter, in the lee of the Mountain, from prevailing southwest winds. When the heat of the midday sun reaches its highest intensity, its rays are cast obliquely across the slopes from the southwest and tempered slightly, unlike the aforementioned area in the Mayacamas Mountains on the east side of Sonoma Valley, whose western exposures experience higher afternoon temperatures. The gradual ripening which characterizes grapes grown on Sonoma Mountain results in generally higher

acids, lower pH readings, and maximum fruit intensity.

The rainfall lines on Exhibit B show that the Sonoma Mountain area receives higher average rainfall than the rest of Sonoma Valley. While the rather thin mountain topsoil cannot absorb all this rainfall in a normal year, in years of low rainfall the still relatively high level of precipitation is enough to soak Sonoma Mountain soils to field capacity by the beginning of the growing season. Non-irrigated Sonoma Mountain vineyards can, therefore, withstand dry winters; they did not suffer the debilitating effects of the 1976-77 drought, as did many dry-farmed vineyards in other areas.

(iv.) THE SPECIFIC BOUNDARIES OF THE VITICULTURAL AREA, BASED ON FEATURES WHICH CAN BE FOUND ON A UNITED STATES GEOLOGICAL SURVEY MAP OF THE LARGEST APPLICABLE SCALE;

Beginning at the summit of Sonoma Mountain, thence northwesterly toward the summit of Mount Taylor along the alignment of the boundary of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area to the point where said line intersects the line between Sections 14 and 15, Township 6 North, Range 7 West, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, thence northerly along said section line to the point where said line intersects the 800-foot contour line, thence generally northeasterly along said contour line to its intersection with Bennett Valley Road, thence easterly to the intersection of Enterprise Road, thence southeasterly to the intersection of Enterprise Road with an unnamed stream in Section 7 of the above-cited Township, thence easterly along the bed of said stream to its intersection with the 400-foot contour line, thence southerly along said contour line to its intersection with an unnamed stream, said intersection lying in the northwest quarter of Section 34 Township 6 North, Range 6 West, Mount Diablo Base and Meridian, thence westerly along the bed of said stream

to its intersection with a private road at or about 1100 feet, thence westerly in a straight line drawn perpendicular to the southwestern boundary of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area (said boundary being a straight line drawn between the summits of Wildcat Mountain and Sonoma Mountain), thence northerly to the beginning.

(v.) A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE U.S.G.S. MAP WITH THE BOUNDARIES PROMINENTLY MARKED.

See Exhibit D.

We trust that the above proposal is responsive to the requirements for the establishment of the Sonoma Mountain Viticultural Area, and request your prompt affirmative consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

David P. Steiner

C.R. Strotz — C.R. STROTZ

Patrick Campbell, DBA, Laurel Glen Vineyards

(Glen Ellen Winery)

Myron Freiberg

Fred A. Berger — OAK SHADE RANCH

Daniel Parun — H. Cotturi & Sons

Herbert Bruning — Tony Cotturi

Mary Bruning

J. Mike Shepard

— ZEN CENTER SON. MT.

to its intersection with a private road at or about 1100 feet, thence westerly in a straight line drawn perpendicular to the southwestern boundary of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area (said boundary being a straight line drawn between the summits of Wildcat Mountain and Sonoma Mountain), thence northerly to the beginning.

(v.) A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE U.S.G.S. MAP WITH THE BOUNDARIES PROMINENTLY MARKED.

See Exhibit D.

We trust that the above proposal is responsive to the requirements for the establishment of the Sonoma Mountain Viticultural Area, and request your prompt affirmative consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

to its intersection with a private road at or about 1100 feet, thence westerly in a straight line drawn perpendicular to the southwestern boundary of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area (said boundary being a straight line drawn between the summits of Wildcat Mountain and Sonoma Mountain), thence northerly to the beginning.

(v.) A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE U.S.G.S. MAP WITH THE BOUNDARIES PROMINENTLY MARKED.

See Exhibit D.

We trust that the above proposal is responsive to the requirements for the establishment of the Sonoma Mountain Viticultural Area, and request your prompt affirmative consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Moore Vineyards
D. A. Moore
Oswald Vineyard
Donald M. Oswald
IVY GLEN VINEYARD
F. Scott McIntosh

to its intersection with a private road at or about 1100 feet, thence westerly in a straight line drawn perpendicular to the southwestern boundary of the Sonoma Valley Viticultural Area (said boundary being a straight line drawn between the summits of Wildcat Mountain and Sonoma Mountain), thence northerly to the beginning.

(v.) A COPY OF THE APPROPRIATE U.S.G.S. MAP WITH THE BOUNDARIES PROMINENTLY MARKED.

See Exhibit D.

We trust that the above proposal is responsive to the requirements for the establishment of the Sonoma Mountain Viticultural Area, and request your prompt affirmative consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

[redacted]
SANTA ROSA CA. 95404
7/27/82

[redacted]
GLEN ELLEN, CA 95442
7/28/82

[redacted]
Glen Ellen, Ca. 95442

EXHIBIT C

MEAN TEMP.	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	YEAR	Averages
HIGH	66	75	80	87	84	74	73	'72	77.0
LOW	43	49	53	58	54	50	48		50.7
HIGH	67	72	79	84	79	73	74	'73	75.4
LOW	49	51	55	58	52	54	54		53.3
HIGH	63	70	76	82	81	78	81	'74	75.9
LOW	45	49	51	59	52	52	57		52.
HIGH	57	71	73	79	79	78	66	'75	71.9
LOW	42	52	53	55	55	54	50		51.6
HIGH	63	74	80	81	79	79	78	'76	
LOW	45	52	57	58	58	58	56		54.9
HIGH	71	66	79	83	80	77	74	'77	75.7
LOW	51	49	55	56	58	58	54		54.1
HIGH	61	75	74	79	77	78	75	'78	74.1
LOW	47	53	53	50	55	51	52		51.
HIGH	61	71	75	82	81	87	72	'79	75.6
LOW	47	53	55	56	56	60	54		54.4
HIGH	64	68	74	82	77	77	73	'80	73.6
LOW	48	48	52	55	52	53	50		51.
HIGH	65	65	84	73	76	77	65	'81	72.1
LOW	46	50	56	51	52	52	50		51.0
HIGH	64	71	77	81	79	78	73	SONOMA MTN. AVERAGE	
LOW	46	51	54	56	54	54	52		
HIGH	71	76	83	89	87	86	77	(TOWN OF) SONOMA LONG-TERM	
LOW	40	43	47	49	48	46	43		45.1

SONOMA MOUNTAIN

SOURCES:

SONOMA (VALLEY FLOOR): C. Robert Elford, Climate of Sonoma County, 1964.

SONOMA MOUNTAIN: Thermograph Data compiled at 5560 Sonoma Mountain Road, 1972-81.