

A History of Wine in America: From Prohibition to the Present. *By Thomas Pinney*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. xvi + 532 pp. Index, notes, bibliography, illustrations, maps, photographs. Cloth, \$45.00. ISBN: 0-520-24176-2.

Reviewed by Mansel G. Blackford

Thomas Pinney has written a masterful account of winemaking in the United States from the 1930s through the 1990s. This encyclopedic volume is a worthy companion to his earlier book, *A History of Wine in America: From the Beginnings to Prohibition* (1989). An emeritus faculty member in English at Pomona College, Pinney is clearly in love with his subject, which he treats as important in its own right, and he capably passes on his enthusiasm to readers. Anyone interested in the recent history of wine or the present-day status of wine in America should consult this volume.

In the first five chapters, which make up roughly one-third of his text, Pinney examines the watershed impacts of Prohibition and its repeal, along with the more general impact of the Great Depression, on making and selling wine. Most Americans drank alcoholic beverages other than wine, Pinney shows. When they consumed wine at all, the exigencies of Prohibition led Americans to drink low-quality, fortified sweet wines, such as sherry, port, and muscatel, rather than dry table wines—a reversal of the drinking patterns that existed before Prohibition. In fact, not until 1967 did the production of table wine once again

surpass that of fortified wine. The decisions of the federal and state governments to regulate and tax winemaking and sales after the repeal of Prohibition contributed to this situation and, Pinney cogently argues, slowed and complicated the development of markets for table wines for decades.

In the next section, which comprises four chapters, Pinney describes how America's wine industry began to shift direction in the 1940s and 1950s. However, he stresses that the changes were only tentative, as a few winemakers, mainly in California, began to experiment with new varieties of grapes and launched new production technologies and marketing methods. As late as the 1950s, only 2 to 5 percent of California's wine could be classified as "premium."

Pinney concludes his text by exploring the revolutionary alterations in America's wine industry from the 1960s onward. Many readers will probably find this part of the study the most interesting and valuable. "Within a single decade," Pinney writes, "almost every significant feature of the California wine landscape had been altered out of recognition: small new wineries had greatly multiplied, the sale of fortified wines had gone into steep decline, the consumption of table wine had risen to levels undreamed of, and the big wineries were struggling to keep a hold on the market" (p. 225). Two chapters explore the new trends taking place in California, while separate chapters describe what occurred in the northern and central states, the South, and other western states.

Pinney's history offers a close look at important aspects of the history of the U.S. wine industry: the entrepreneurship important in many firm developments (Pinney outlines the histories of the most important firms and of

many lesser-known ones); industrywide developments in growing grapes, making wine (including valuable expositions of evolving technologies), and marketing wine; and the federal and state government policies that shaped the nature of the wine industry (including scientific investigations undertaken by state officials and government-sponsored university research to improve and promote the industry). A detailed index facilitates the search for information on specific topics, and an extensive bibliography and endnotes lead readers to additional primary and secondary sources.

Even this monumental volume has shortcomings, however. Pinney neglects some issues related to winemaking, such as labor relations. More seriously, perhaps, he does little to relate his findings about the history of the American wine industry either to developments in other U.S. industries or to the changes occurring in European winemaking. Pinney tells much of his story in a vacuum, paying scant attention to the changing economic and social contexts that have affected developments in the wine industry. Nonetheless, *A History of Wine in America* is a sprightly narrative that is enjoyable to read. Scholars interested in the evolution of America's food and beverage industries, as well as wine lovers, will savor this volume.

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