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# *Sourisseau Academy*

*Smith-Layton Archive presents:*

## **Ice Cold Beer**

by Thomas Layton

*Les Amis (The Friends)*

*September 2015*

*Your donations help us purchase historic photos. Thank you!*

<http://www.sourisseauacademy.org/>



[100] **The *Eagle Brewery***

Prior to the Gold Rush, the Missions and ranchers of Alta California raised grapes and produced wine — and a few more potent distillates — for local consumption. It was the arrival of German Americans following the Gold Rush to whom we owe the sudden ascendance of beer as the drink of choice. In 1853, Joseph Hartman, from Hesse, Darmstadt, opened the first brewery in Santa Clara County, the *Eagle Brewery*, on Market Street in San Jose. In 1856, he constructed a large modern building with a truncated corner entrance at South Market and San Carlos — the exact spot where the *Hotel Sainte Claire's* truncated corner entrance stands today! The *Eagle Brewery* produced our first named beer, and our first beer slogan — Old Joe's Steam Beer: "Its Pure, That's Sure."



[101] *Burton's Ale House*

Other breweries were soon established; and by 1868, Santa Clara Lager beer could be enjoyed at *Burton's Ale House* on South First Street. Cold storage "lagering" was necessary for the fermentation and preservation of lager beer and was at first made possible with blocks of ice cut from frozen lakes in the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History  
September 2015



[102] **The Fredericksburg Brewery**

The *Fredericksburg Brewery* was founded in 1869; and by 1889, it was brewing almost 60,000 barrels per year, much of it shipped up and down the Pacific Coast from its "castle" on Cinnabar Street.



[103] **Charles Vath's Rainier Beer Agency**

Meanwhile, brewers from outside the Santa Clara Valley were beginning to invade the local market. By 1901, Charles Vath was receiving trainloads of Seattle-brewed *Rainier Beer* at his bottling plant at 4th and Virginia Streets from which he delivered bottles and kegs to local drinking establishments such as the *Richelieu Saloon*. This 1914 panoramic photograph shows Vath's employees posing together with his impressive fleet of wagons and trucks.



[104] **The Richelieu Saloon**

His hand resting atop the beer tap, the bartender at the *Richelieu Saloon* at 20 North First Street stands proudly with his customers in this 1910 photo. Unfortunately, the *Richelieu* was closed in 1914, after the owner was arrested for selling liquor to minors.

Office of **HENRY FRENCH.**

Chairman State Central Committee

OF THE

# PROHIBITION PARTY OF CALIFORNIA

**STATE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

HENRY FRENCH, Chairman, San Jose.  
WILL D. GOULD, Vice-Chairman, Los Angeles.  
A. G. SHEAHAN, Secretary, San Francisco.  
T. L. HIERLIHY, Treasurer, Alameda.  
C. H. DUNN, Sacramento.  
GEO. D. KELLOGG, Newcastle.

*San Jose, California* June 1st, 1892.....189

[105] **The Prohibition Party of California**

But even as the market for alcoholic beverages was burgeoning, there was a growing temperance movement calling for their abolition. The Prohibition Party was founded in 1869; and by 1892, the California branch was well established in San Jose with local merchant and attorney Henry French serving as Chairman of the State Central Committee. French was the 1896 Prohibitionist candidate for Governor of California. He lost!



[106] **The Anti-Saloon League**

By 1908, San Jose's Anti-Saloon League was campaigning for a "Stainless Flag" — unstained, that is, by alcoholic beverages.





[107] **A children's rally for Prohibition**

As election day approached in 1918, a cohort of San Jose children wearing "California Dry" pennants stood ready to march with their large printed sign held high: "For a Dry State, Vote Yes."

**PRESCRIPTION FORM FOR MEDICINAL LIQUOR**

**E86500**

R *Whisky 3 XV - 3 1 9 1 3 kv*  
KIND OF LIQUOR QUANTITY DIRECTIONS

*Donald Eddy* *4-25-29*  
FULL NAME OF PATIENT DATE PRESCRIBED

*1880 Fulton St. Calif.*  
PATIENTS ADDRESS  
NUMBER STREET CITY STATE

*Carroll B. Rom* *15405*  
PRESCRIBERS SIGNATURE PRESCRIBERS PERMIT NUMBER

*1825 Eddy St. Calif.*  
PRESCRIBERS ADDRESS  
NUMBER STREET CITY STATE

*Brewer Bros* *Cal I 266*  
CANCELED DRUG STORE NAME AS ON PERMIT PERMIT NUMBER

*B. Rom* *4-25-29* *925296-17*  
DISPENSERS SIGNATURE DATE FILLED AND CANCELED STRIP STAMP NUMBER

*1401 Geary St. Calif.*  
STORE ADDRESS  
NUMBER STREET CITY STATE

**SEE REVERSE SIDE FOR INSTRUCTIONS**  
**DO NOT REFILL OR TRANSFER UNDER PENALTY** **60**

[108] Prescription Form for Medicinal Liquor

The Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, prohibiting the sale and distribution of alcoholic beverages in the United States, was passed in 1918 and took effect on January 17, 1920. (San Jose had actually become dry in 1918 through local legislation.) Thereafter, liquor was only allowed for religious or medicinal purposes. Although you could still sip Sacramental wine at Communion, you now needed a doctor's prescription for essential medicines, like whiskey! Rumor has it that when a woman gave birth, the doctor would sometimes wink at her husband and write a prescription for medicinal whiskey — to calm *his* nerves!

Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History  
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[109] Beer bottle labels: *Fredericksburg*, *Wieland* and *Old Joe's*

Fifteen years later in 1933 when Prohibition was repealed, the *Fredericksburg Brewery* reopened under new ownership — the *Pacific Brewing and Malting Company* — and they promptly resurrected the historic *Fredericksburg*, *John Wieland* and *Old Joe's* beer brands.

Images on file at the Smith-Layton Archive, Sourisseau Academy for State and Local History  
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[110] *Falstaff Brewing Company* Photo by Arnold "Del" Del Carlo.

Then, in 1951, the *Falstaff Brewing Company* of St. Louis, Missouri bought *Pacific Brewing*, thus severing one of our last connections to local brewing grandeur.



[111] *Joseph George Distributor on St. John Street*

Meanwhile, beer distribution was being taken over by wholesale companies with warehouses and trucks allowing them to supply retailers throughout a region. One of these was *Joseph George Distributor*, which in 1940 began large-scale delivery of beer, wine and liquor from its storefront on St. John Street. The sign in the window of this 1949 photo announces their move to a brand new 50,000 square foot building at 250 Stockton Street.



[112] **Fleet of Joseph George trucks**  
Spotless dark-green Joseph George delivery trucks supplied retailers throughout northern California.



[113] **Groundbreaking Joseph George Distributor**

By 1968, the firm needed more space to house all of its operations. Thus, Joseph George and his son Glenn built a 55,000 square foot beer warehouse at 310 Martin Avenue in Santa Clara. In 1969 for their other operations, they broke ground for a 110,000 square foot warehouse (the size of two football fields, plus end-zones) at the other end of their property at 1600 Coleman Avenue. By then, Joseph George had become the largest distributor of liquor, beer and wine in Northern California. Here, Joseph and Edith George (far left and right) stand together with Glenn and Noelle "Bobbe" George (center) holding the architect's rendering for the Coleman Ave. building.



[114] **Glenn George establishes a Guinness world's record**

By the mid-to-late 1970s, Glenn George could easily establish a Guinness record for the World's Largest Beer Display: 15,000 cases of *Olympia*!



4E Monday, January 11, 1988 ■ San Jose Mercury News

## Wine

# Valley spirits distributor comes full circle

By John Schneidawind  
Mercury News Business Writer

Two years after shutting down its struggling wine and hard liquor distributing operation, Joseph George Distributor in Santa Clara is cautiously re-entering the wine business.

One table at a time.

The move, which comes as wine and hard liquor consumption continues to decline, is the idea of Bert George, the 27-year-old vice president of Joseph George and part of the third generation to help run the 47-year-old family firm.

"The liquor and wine industry is absolutely flat," Bert George said in an interview last week at the company's offices. "But I feel that the industry has to come full circle pretty soon."

George, who has the full support of his father, Glenn, president and chairman of the company, hopes to recapture a small share of the wine market with a private label brand that will be distributed exclusively to Bay Area restaurants and caterers.

Under an agreement with Weibel Vineyards of Mission San Jose, the Georges hope this year to sell about 7,000 cases of a private-label wine called Fleur de Val to more than 400 restaurants and caterers in Santa Clara County. The Georges will have an exclusive contract to buy the wine from Weibel.

If the move is successful, it would return a one-time South Bay institution to its roots. Joseph George Distributor closed its wine and spirits operation in 1985 because of declining sales and mounting losses. Today, the company makes much of its money as



John R. Fulton Jr. — Mercury News

Bert George of Joseph George Distributor thinks that the liquor and wine industry will pick up soon

make them major fund-raisers in the city. Causes that benefited from the George touch include the Red Cross, the Camp Fire Girls, San Jose State University and the expansion of Spartan Stadium.

When Joseph George pulled out of liquor and wine distribution, it was in response to a nationwide trend toward lower alcohol consumption and the expansion of mass retailers such as Costco and Liquor Barn, which took away business from the small-package and specialty convenience stores that were Joseph George's mainstay customers.

Wine consumption is estimated to have declined 2 percent last year to 457 million gallons, according to M. Shanken Inc., a New York market research firm. Hard liquor sales are projected to have declined 3 percent to 4 percent to 388 million gallons.

Meanwhile, the growth of high-volume liquor chains has lowered liquor prices to consumers.

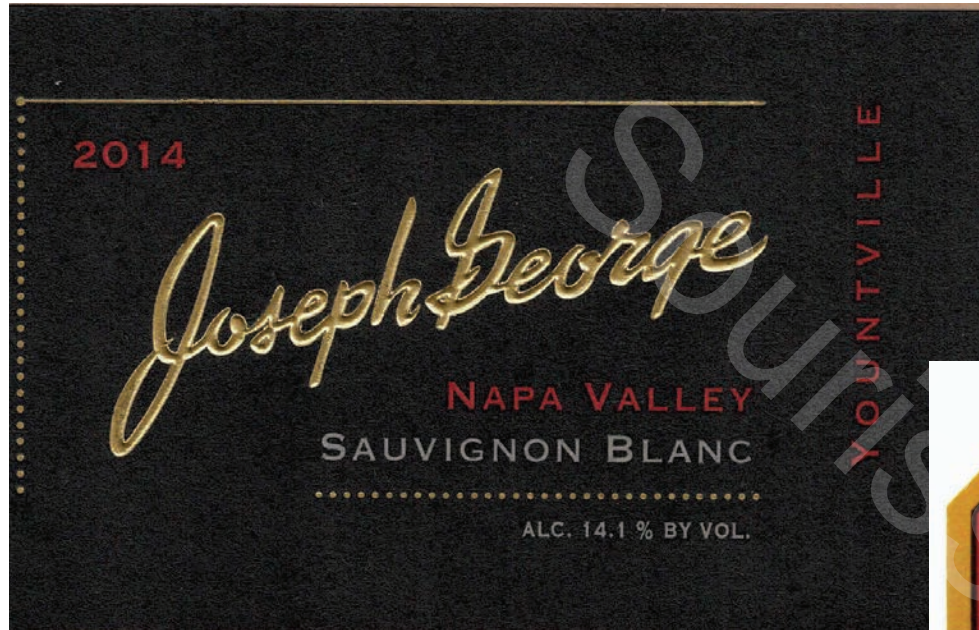
But price-cutting has its price, Bert George said. His decision to concentrate on sales of private-label wine to caterers and restaurants reflects a belief that not all brands can be mass-marketed effectively.

"You can really screw up an image of a product," he said. "What happens if you started getting widespread discounts on Cadillacs and Rolls-Royces?"

George thinks that many consumers, like himself, yearn for the days when drinking good wine meant you were a discerning person, not just a customer off the street looking for a bargain.

### [115] Bert George reinvents the firm

However, by the early 1980s, the economics underlying wholesale beer and liquor distribution changed, as producers began to ship directly to retailers. In 1987, third-generation Bert George reinvented the firm as a retailer, not of liquor and beer, but of the finest high-end wines produced in California.



**[116] Today we can once again drink the products of local firms**

The 1990s finally saw the re-birth of beer production in the Santa Clara Valley with local labels such as Gordon Biersch. And, if beer is not your "cup of tea," Bert George, having planted a vineyard of Sauvignon Blanc vines in the Napa Valley, now offered his own label, not only at his store on Meridian Avenue, but at numerous charity events throughout the Valley.