

THE BEN LOMOND WINE COMPANY

While the Vine Hill vintners were expanding their vineyards and coming to grips with production, another viticultural organization was being formed in Bonny Doon on Ben Lomond Mountain. The depression of the 1870s had put an end to the Burns family's hopes of maintaining a successful winemaking operation. In 1883, two Utah mining men, F.W. Billings and John W. Packard emerged as the owners of the Burns property and several other surrounding parcels. They assigned Billings's son-in-law, J.F. Coope, the position of manager of the winery and vineyard on the Burns property. Under the guidance of J.F. Coope, the Ben Lomond Wine Company soon became recognized as not only one of the finest wine producers in the county, but in the entire state of California as well.

By 1887, the Ben Lomond Company had expanded its private vineyard to 70 acres of Cabernet Sauvignon, Chauche Noir, and Grey Riesling grapes. In addition to its own vineyard holdings, the company had contracts to purchase grapes from over 300 acres of vineyards held by small growers in the Bonny Doon region.

In 1887, Coope wrote:

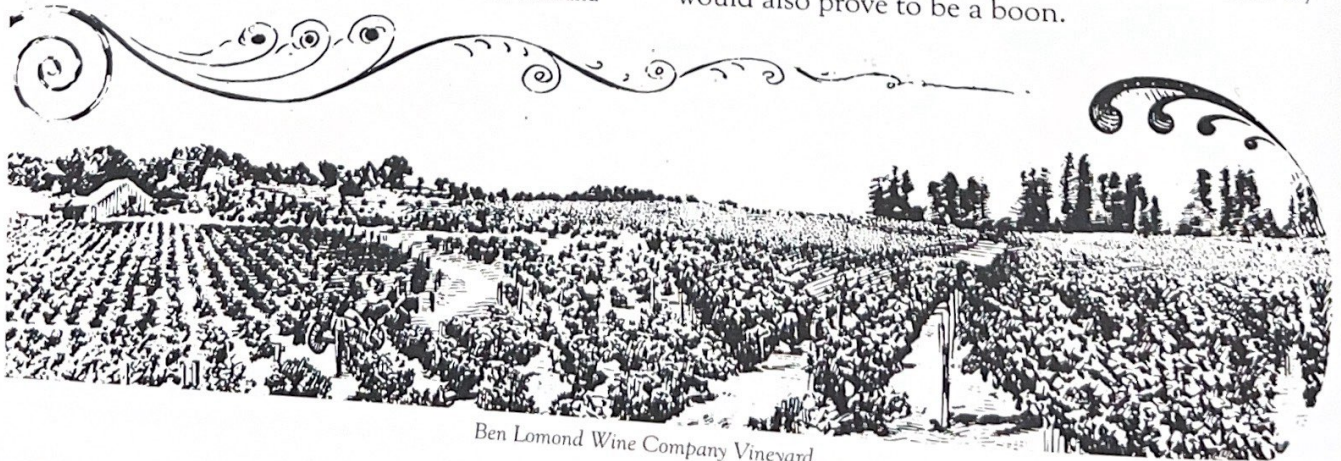
Ben Lomond, as a wine district, is yet in its infancy and is struggling to establish a name for itself in that industry. Its vineyards as yet are small, but luckily, the great majority of the grapes grown are of the first quality, being the Grey Riesling or the Chauche Gris of France. The wine yield of 1886 was 28,000 gallons part of which we grew, while a part was purchased. . . our white wines will all go east, and in regard to prices, our object is to make a first class wine and

obtain an equally good price. The time is gone when anything will do, and only those who grow the best grapes and adopt the best systems can make vines and vinegrowing a success.

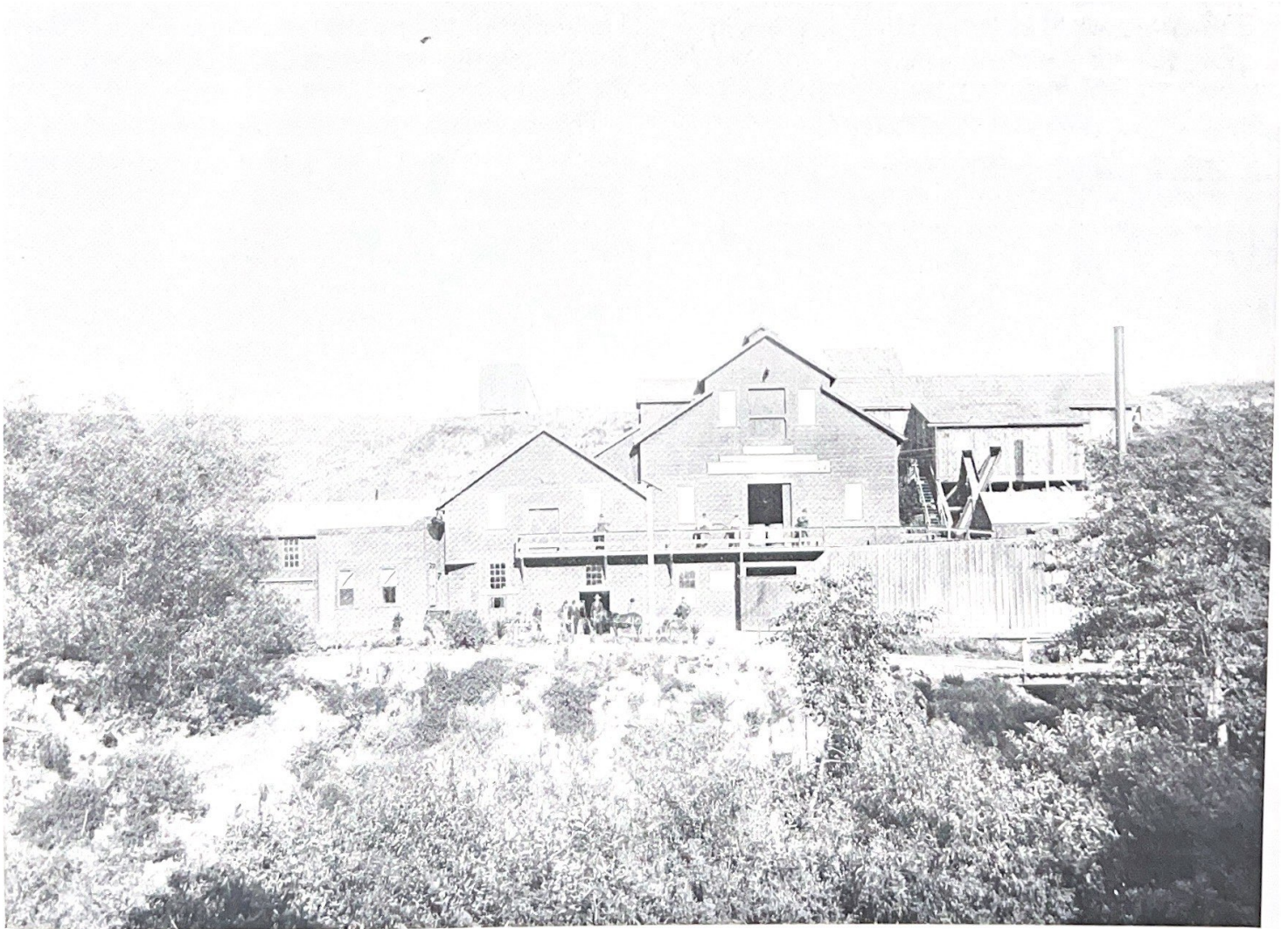
Coope's approach to grape growing and winemaking was impeccable and explains the longlived success of the Ben Lomond Wine Company. He was from the beginning supported by strong financial backing, but the success of his operations stem from his organization of the winery and marketing operations. Soon after the vineyard was established at Bonny Doon, Coope came up with a unique innovation unmatched by other Santa Cruz winemaking concerns. The grapes were pressed and fermented on Ben Lomond Mountain; however, once through the initial fermentation, they were sent to the Ben Lomond Wine Company warehouse in San Francisco where the wines were finished, bottled, and distributed.

This innovation precluded the capital outlay required to construct a full scale winery and storage facility in Santa Cruz. Once in San Francisco, the wines were easily accessible for analysis by Professor Eugene Hilgard, the great wine chemist of his day and co-founder of the California State Viticultural Commission.

By centralizing its winemaking operations in San Francisco and forging a close connection with the Viticultural Commission, the Ben Lomond Wine Company assured itself of quality wine production. Being in the center of mercantile activity would also prove to be a boon.



Ben Lomond Wine Company Vineyard



The Ben Lomond Wine Company winery in 1900. This building was originally constructed by the Santa Cruz Mountain Wine Company group in 1887



*The Viticultural Exhibition Hall at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, 1893
The Jarvis exhibit can be seen beneath the arches on the right hand side of the photograph*

in Europe.

Late in 1889, the Ben Lomond Wine Company sent samples to the Paris Exposition, where it received an honorable mention for its 1886 Riesling, submitted under the name of "California White Wine."

In 1890, the Santa Cruz Mountain Wine Company winery on Branciforte Creek was visited by two Viticultural Commissioners, Charles Bundschu and E.C. Priber. In his report to the Viticultural Commission later that year, Bundschu opined:

... The Santa Cruz Mountain district had a good opportunity to show its superiority in many respects. The wines are not very heavy in alcohol, but develop a most delicate flavor and highly distinctive aroma which may be attributable to the proximity of the ocean. The yield of the vines is generally light, and cultivation is more difficult and expensive than that of the valley lands, but the result shows immense possibilities, limited only by the degree of the skill and knowledge of the vineyardist to assist Nature's efforts and to overcome the difficulties of fermentation and development.

In 1893, the Ben Lomond Wine Company and Dr. Stewart were selected by the Viticultural Commission to represent Santa Cruz County in the

California Wine Exhibit at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Although no competition had been organized to ascertain the best wines, all wines deemed worthy of merit were awarded bronze medals. Both the Ben Lomond Wine Company and Dr. Stewart received medals and their wines were described as follows:

The Ben Lomond Wine Company:

Riesling and White Burgundy—Good, sound wines with agreeable bouquet.

Dr. J.A. Stewart:

White Burgundy 1891—A very clean wine, in excellent condition.

Haut Medoc 1890—A fine example of Cabernet Sauvignon in good condition, very heavy.

Haut Medoc 1891—In good condition, very heavy.

Not satisfied with the results of the Chicago Exposition (many wines were destroyed by heat and excessive movement enroute), the California winemakers organized another exhibition to be held at the Mid-Winter International Exposition in San Francisco in 1894. Santa Cruz participants included the Ben Lomond Wine Company, the Santa Cruz Mountain Wine Company, and Emil