

## chapter I

# *The Road to a Dream*

I can't recall exactly how or when my fascination with wine started, but Dene says that she decided to go out with me a second time because on our first date I ordered a bottle of wine with our dinner. She was nineteen and I was twenty-three, and apparently that bottle of wine created an aura of glamour that intrigued her. At the time, I was an art student in Los Angeles. My choice of an art career did not have the enthusiastic support of my conservative family back in Oklahoma. From their point of view, it was clearly my duty as the eldest son to help run the family farms, and they tolerated my errant pursuit of art only in the certainty that it would become as clear to me as it was to them that I couldn't make a living at it.

More than anything else I wanted to be an illustrator like Norman Rockwell or Pruett Carter and paint pictures, as they did, to accompany stories in magazines like the *La-*

*dies' Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, and Saturday Evening Post.* My scholarship at art school did not provide enough money, so I rather reluctantly went to work as a sketch artist in the men's wardrobe department at 20th Century-Fox film studios.

Because I could draw like an illustrator, I was able to present my proposals for wardrobe in vivid action sketches which would usually carry the likeness of the actor who would wear them in the film. Before long I was given designer status with an office-studio of my own. Hollywood was at its zenith. Film budgets seemed to be limitless, film stars were accorded the importance of royalty, and even those of us who were merely servants in their courts gave ourselves extravagant airs.

Self-indulgence was the order of the day. Dene's and my interest in wine was pursued as far as we could take it. Our small self-appointed cognoscenti spurned the local California wines, perhaps justifiably at that time, since the great entrepreneurs of today's West Coast wine world had not yet appeared and the general quality of that region's wine was far below today's standards.

Dene was the most intoxicating thing in my life, however, and romance quickly fermented toward marriage. At first we resisted such an important step. Hollywood might take such things lightly, but our roots were in a more conservative world. We knew there were inevitable career changes ahead for me and we were very young.

As it did for so many others, Pearl Harbor made the decision for us. Against the ominous background of impending war, long-term planning seemed silly. We drove to Las Vegas one evening with a few friends and were married in a quiet little chapel.

The World War II years interrupted our hedonistic education, but when they were over we returned to California to resume the life we had enjoyed before. With the help of my brother Sam, I built a house on a hilltop near Los Angeles, overlooking the San Fernando Valley. We became

interested in sports cars, through which we met another group of stimulating people. We drank wine with them, talked wine with them. We read books about wine. Wine had a daily place on our table. We even began to think about making our own wine. In fact, our constant talk of wine prompted a neighbor to suggest that we write to the State Agricultural College for advice on how to plant the hillside outside of our house with vines. It seemed a natural idea and I decided to do it.

But that's not what happened. When I returned to Fox after the war, the film industry was in the throes of incipient unionization. As a designer, I was of no interest to the union organizers; there were only a handful of us working in the entire industry at any one time. But, when Fox became embroiled in a particularly bitter interunion struggle involving my old artist chums, I decided to take a vacation rather than cross their picket lines. As the strike dragged on I had to find other work and turned to illustration to make a living.

An opportunity arose to go to New York, the center of the greatest market for magazine illustrators, and we bought a home in the suburban town of Hartsdale, forty-five minutes by train from New York City. I commuted by train to the city every day to work in advertising and at night continued to improve my skills as an illustrator.

The move east did not quell my interest in wine. Dene gave me a book, *The Wine Grower's Guide* by Philip Wagner, which triggered anew my desire to grow grapes. I ordered ten vines from Wagner's Boordy Vineyards nursery: Ravat 262 for red wines because it was a hybrid of Pinot Noir, a fine Burgundy grape, and l'Aurore, because it was described as very hardy. I planted them around the border of our half-acre garden, spacing them ten or more feet apart to assure plenty of sunlight on all the leaves. In no time they began to take over the garden—the shrubbery was overwhelmed. Dene even accused me of pulling out her peonies to make more room for vines.

Inside the house, things weren't much different. Because there was no attic or basement in the house there was little place to store things. I had begun to make wine, learning from Wagner's book how to test the grape juice for its sugar content with a saccharometer to determine the amount of alcohol that would be in the finished wine and how to find the acidity of the juice by using strips of litmus paper as an indicator. Since I needed more than I could grow, and there were no local sources of grapes, I bought grapes shipped from California to eastern produce markets for the express purpose of supplying home winemakers. The grapes, which were usually of the varieties Alicante Bouschet, Carignane, and sometimes Zinfandel for red wines and Thompson Seedless or Muscat for white wines, usually arrived around Columbus Day and were sold directly from the refrigerated freight car which had transported them.

I hadn't found a source for a barrel, which Wagner recommended as a fermenter, so I borrowed a large twenty-gallon crock from a neighbor whose German mother used it at other times for making sauerkraut. My two sons, aged three and five, were hardly taller than the walls of the crock and I still carry a vivid picture in my memory of the two of them inside the crock enthusiastically "squashing" the grapes with their feet.

At first we could only find a place for one or two five-gallon glass jars, or carboys, into which I put the juice from the squashed grapes to finish its fermentation. Soon the clothes closets were full of wine jugs. We kept our shoes under the bed because the floor space in the closet was filled with carboys. Even the fireplace was used to store wine. Inevitably some got spilled on the new carpet.

I became fascinated with finding and buying equipment for my new hobby. In my spare time, I'd often go to Spring or Mulberry street in New York City searching among the shops for a new press, an antique this or that. The family car was displaced and sat exposed to the weather in the driveway so the garage could shelter wine equipment. I still re-

member the look of disbelief on Dene's face one night when I told her that that morning while riding on the train I had spied a beautiful old wine press and stacks of barrels in someone's backyard. "I've got to go find them," I told her.

Finally, in exasperation I think, Dene said, "Mark, you've just got to have a farm." She had seen an advertisement in *Town and Country* magazine that described a small farm in Virginia. "Just the place for us," she thought—a place for cows, a vegetable garden, a stream and, of course, plenty of room for grapevines and wine jugs.

I began to get commissions to paint illustrations for stories in what we called household service magazines such as *McCall's*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and so on. This was the goal I had been striving hard for, and once the breakthrough was achieved, I seemed to have what it took to succeed. My timing was bad, however. Television was taking hold in American society, and its enormous growth, together with the increasing use of photography in place of drawings and paintings were making such an impact on American advertising that three major magazines promptly went out of business. Household magazines curtailed their use of fiction and began to print more feature articles, many of these of the sort which could be more suitably and economically illustrated by photography.

In Europe, however, television and the use of photography had not yet become so common. The magazines were still providing light romantic fiction to receptive readers, and their editors were said to be willing to pay quite well to obtain illustrations from sound American artists. I gathered up a few typical samples of my work and flew to Paris to see what kind of a market I could find for my services.

Happily my reception in the offices of European publishers was more cordial than I could have imagined, and in both London and Paris, though I had made no advance appointments, I was given the most gracious welcome and a promise of future work.

A highlight of my visit to Paris was treating myself to

a dinner in a "great" restaurant, one of those *ne plus ultra* temples of dining which, like great wines, are so usually associated with France. On a rather whimsical basis I chose the Tour d'Argent restaurant because of its magnificent view of the historic Cathedral of Notre Dame, which is illuminated with floodlights in the evening.

When I arrived I sensed from a general air of excitement that something unusual was going on, but I did not notice anything in particular as I was led to a small table in the very middle of the dining room's center aisle beneath a large brightly lit chandelier. I felt as conspicuous as an actor on stage front and center. Nevertheless I was soon enjoying one of the establishment's most famous specialties, pressed duck, and sampling its excellent wines, and in spite of being alone I was having a grand time.

I had forgotten the earlier sense of excitement I had felt, when there was a sudden hush in the conversations about me. I glanced up. Every staff member of the restaurant seemed to have come to attention, their eyes all focused upon something behind me. I turned to look just in time to see the ex-President of the United States, Harry Truman, briskly leading a party of friends out of an alcove in the rear of the restaurant. There was a polite spattering of applause as he passed through the room. Since my table was directly in his path I felt compelled to stand, and as he passed I said, "Goodnight, Mr. President." Instantly, with the conditioned reflex of an old political campaigner, his hand reached out and warmly shook my own. "Goodnight, young man," he said. "I'm glad to see you."

When his party had passed I resumed my dinner, a little flustered and conscious of the fact that the President's ebulliently friendly gesture had called considerable attention to me. Apparently it had also given me a certain increase in status as well. My waiter seemed to be slightly more formal when he accompanied the cheese cart to my table. The sommelier approached to pour the bottle of Clos de Vougeot

which had been opened earlier, and with him, the maître d'hotel. He waited until the sommelier had assured himself that I was pleased with the wine, then he said, "Would Monsieur care to visit our wine cellar after his cheese and have cognac and coffee in the tasting room?" I was delighted. It was the perfect way to finish an unusual evening.

Presently we descended by elevator to the *rez-de-chaussée*, then down a stone stairway to the enormous *cave*, where I was shown their rich store of great vintages. Many celebrities who regularly frequented the restaurant had their own private bins for storage of wines chosen and reserved for them alone. The bin of the Duke and Duchess of Windsor was pointed out in particular. After a brief tour we retired to a small cozy room adjacent to the cellars, where coffee and fine cognac were served in front of a fireplace. It was a rare privilege to visit the sanctum sanctorum in this historic old hostelry. As we sat and looked into the embers of the fire, I thought of the many famous names associated with its early history—Henri III, Madame de Sévigné, Alexandre Dumas—and silently I drank a toast to Harry Truman.

After I finished my business in Paris I decided to indulge myself in an overnight side trip to the wine country of Burgundy. To most people the little city of Beaune is the heart of Burgundy. It lies in the geographical center of the Côte d'Or, and even though it shares its commercial importance with Nuits-St.-Georges on the northern end of the Côte, its medieval charm has made it the destination of every tourist who wishes to visit Burgundy. It couldn't be reached directly by air but my guidebook told me that two of the fastest trains in western Europe, the Bleu Rapide and the Mistral, pass through it every day on their way to the French Riviera, whistling down through the center of France like the famous winds for which the morning train is named. I would have to *descendez* at Dijon, a few kilometers north, and bus the rest of the way. Nonetheless, my maps showed the bus route passing through vineyard lands. I asked my

hotel concierge to reserve a ticket to Dijon for me on the Mistral so that I would have a chance to see more of the landscape in daylight. This was my first opportunity to get outside of city environments in any of the countries I had visited and I was very eager to see what it was like.

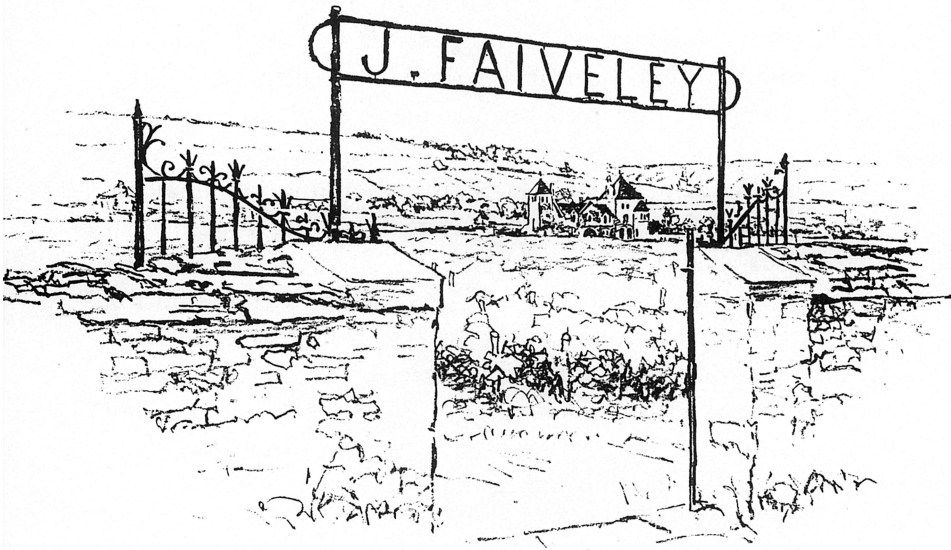
The French landscape as seen from the train seemed very intimate to me. Nearly every inch of it was in use. In the villages close to the city, every house seemed to have a kitchen garden. Fields were small, as if intended for private use rather than large-scale production. Instead of the ubiquitous two-car garage and extensive lawns of the American suburban scene, outbuildings were designed for the confinement and protection of farm animals. Cows grazed in nearly every yard, and a leggy rooster on the roof was not just a weather-vane decoration but an actual feather-bearing, crowing reality. As we moved south, fields grew somewhat larger and there was evidence of farming on a commercial scale. Still, the intimacy of the landscape persisted. There was almost no point on the journey when one could not see three or four little villages silhouetted on the horizon. Distances between them were short and reflected the fact that local transportation was by bicycle and shanks' mare rather than by fast modern vehicles. A few grapevines were growing in every garden but vineyards on any large scale were not to be seen.

We arrived at Dijon in about three hours' time. I found a taxi and drove to the bus station, where I made direct connections for the remainder of my trip, which was to terminate in Beaune. Leaving Dijon, the bus took the National Highway 74 to the south. From the point of view of my special interest there was nothing to be seen for quite a distance. A few fields of mustard, some black currants, but no grapevines. At last we passed a sign which brought me to rapt attention—"Fixin"—it said, and pointed to the right. Sure enough there in the distance were the unmistakable parallel rows of green I had come to see.

From here on the famous vineyard names appeared



regularly as the bus rushed along past signs marking the turn for Gevrey-Chambertin, Morey-St.-Denis, Chambolle-Musigny. By this time the vineyards were growing right up to the highway, the beautifully kept rows deep green against red stony soil. I was fairly hypnotized as they flashed past. Suddenly, the sight of a man in beret and blue clothes, riding an *enjambeur* tractor, which straddled the low trellised rows instead of running between them, made me remember my camera. I must have taken three thirty-six-exposure rolls



of film during the next fifteen minutes. Every village sign, every change of terrain, any sign of activity in the vineyards was snapped. Other passengers in the bus, used to the familiar scenery, must have thought me a strange one to spend my film so wildly on a landscape which was all so much the same.

The first really identifiable "postcard" scene we passed was the famous old Clos de Vougeot, sitting low among its vines about halfway up the slope. The *Clos*, or walled vineyards, were established by the Cistercian monks in the twelfth century. They reshaped and drained its swampy lowlands to create the largest of the really great plantations

in Burgundy. Every few feet of its highway frontage there was an arched gateway bearing the name of an owner of a portion of its fabled vines.

The bus swept on past Vosne-Romanée into Nuits-St.-Georges, the capital of the Côte de Nuits and center of trade for the firm, full-textured, deep-colored wines of this northerly part of the "Golden Slope." Prémieux was next, marking the southernmost limit of grape production in the Côte de Nuits. The Côte de Beaune begins with the vineyards of Pernand Vergelesses, just south of the village of Comblanchien, which is devoted to the quarrying of limestone, and continues through beautiful little Aloxe-Corton and Savigny-lès-Beaune, on into Beaune itself, then southward to include Pommard, Volnay, Meursault, Auxey-Duresses, Blagny, Puligny, Chassagne-Montrachet, and Santenay.

My brief stay in Beaune, which was so much more beautiful than I had expected, was spent wandering the narrow, cobblestoned streets of the inner city and admiring its curious mixture of architectural styles. I remember it gave the impression of bustling prosperity and friendliness, and I fell in love with it immediately. With only limited time I was able to see just a few of the city's surrounding vineyards, but by the end of the next day, when I began the journey home, I knew I had had my first glimpse of paradise.

On my return to New York we began to search quite seriously for a farm. Having grown up in small Oklahoma towns only about fifteen miles apart, Dene and I had lived in agricultural communities, had been raised among people who grew things, harvested them, and sold them. Owning a farm didn't seem to be an unusual thing. And, of course, we didn't think of grapes as being a big crop like cotton or cattle. We thought we were taking up a hobby. At the time we never dreamed that a vineyard farm would become the central focus of our lives. In fact, I think that is the difference from the people who come to call on us now. They have, in many cases, come to the point where they wish to break away from their professions and have a second career,

whereas it was strictly an avocational interest with us. We didn't really think of it as anything else.

Since neither of us had any preconceived ideas as to the "only" place to search for our vineyard site, we drove out every weekend in a different direction looking for grape land. It was surprising how many places we found that had some historical association with viticulture. Whenever we described our needs to a local real-estate agent, he or she immediately thought of a property where "that old Frenchman used to have a couple of vines," or "Grandmother used to find wild grapes when she was a girl."

At one time we concentrated our search in Maryland because of our admiration for Philip Wagner and his work at the Boordy Vineyard in Riderwood there. But despite several trips to that area we were not able to find a suitable place.

Another trip to France and a three-month tour of the wine-growing region there opened our eyes to the potential of other areas in which grapes could be grown successfully. We roamed vineyards, from the Rhine to the Adriatic, tramping the rows, talking to the growers, examining their equipment, eating the local foods and drinking the local wines, gradually becoming more and more deeply enthusiastic. At any rate, I did.

By the time our summer was over I was almost obsessed with the idea of finding a place to plant vines, and as soon as we got back to America we took up our search again. We had returned rather low in funds, though, which made us remember that it was necessary for me to be near important commercial centers where there was a market for the work of an artist.

From the dozens of books I had read on the subject of grape growing, I learned that the mid-Hudson Valley was once a center of a burgeoning grape industry, so we made a few sorties up the river. It seemed to have the right sort of land—there were actually grapes to be seen as we drove along the roads.

The sight of growing vines was as exciting to me as a red flag to a bull. No matter that the varieties growing were probably juice and jelly grapes, unsuitable for winemaking, I intended to plant my own choice of vines. The mere presence of sizable vineyards of any sort said that here was the probability of a climate of adequate rainfall, at least a minimal growing season, and tolerable winter temperatures. As the leaves fell and the terrain became exposed we could see that nearly every hillside had once borne grapes, even those now overgrown with weeds and brush. The gaunt landscape was ribbed with narrow horse-plowed terraces. The woods were hung with great swinging vines. To a grape grower (and already I thought of myself as one) these wooded areas were filled with the history of a vigorous grape industry long since passed.

The trees, sometimes more than thirty feet tall, all grew in orderly ranks, marking old vineyard rows, where their roots, chopped back during the days when vines were being cultivated, had lain in wait. Then, when the vineyard was abandoned, they had leapt toward the sky, benefiting from the fertilization and tillage that had been given the soil in past years. In most cases the vines had expired from lack of pruning and lack of sunlight, shaded by the vigorous young trees. But occasionally an intrepid vine would refuse to give up, its tendrils clutching one low branch to reach a higher one until at last it reached the treetop, where it spread its canes among the branches, insisting upon its fair share of sun and fresh air. These vines developed again a kind of wild wisdom, which kept them from trying to produce too much fruit from their copious branches as a domestic vine will do, to its great damage, if not pruned carefully by its vineyard manager. In the years since, I have come across vines in my own woods forty feet or more in length, carrying their life-giving fluids through multiple trunks four inches in diameter from a base almost three feet across.

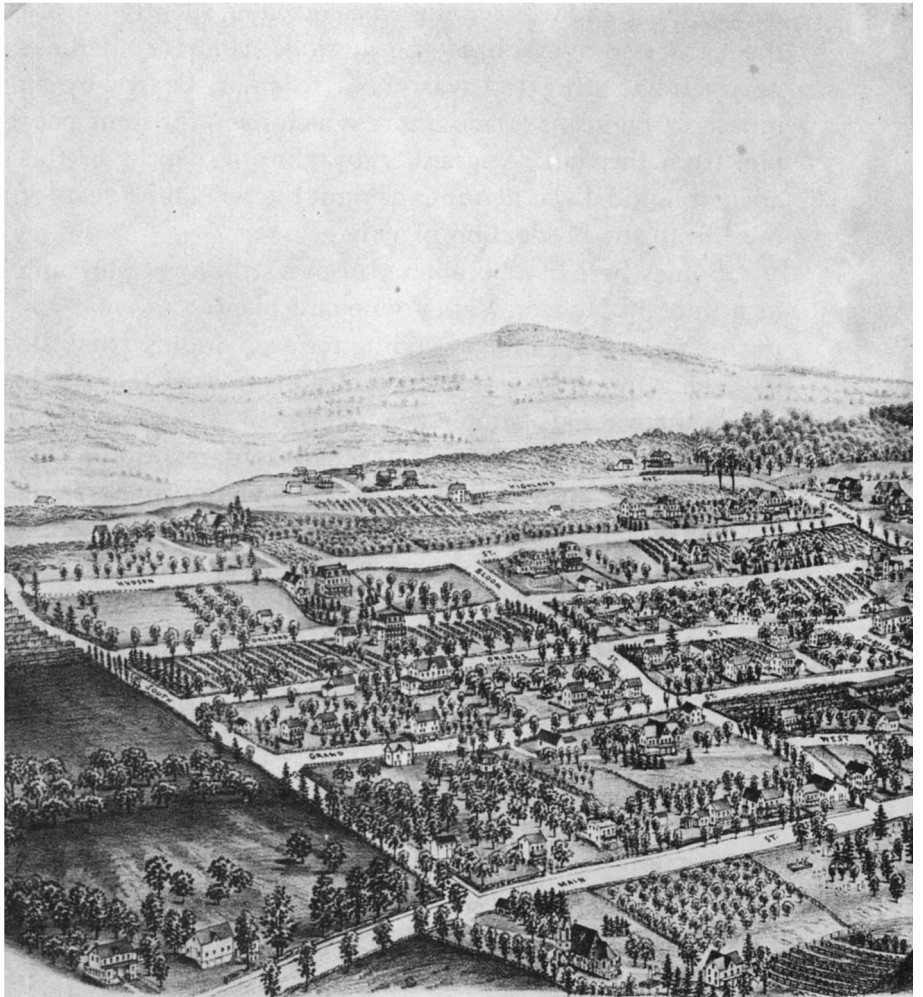
These woods were like an old battlefield, the ghost of past struggles were all around, and although I didn't realize

it then those gaunt surviving vines reaching silently toward the light also symbolized the glorious, comic, sometimes nearly tragic struggle I was about to enter. Drawn by an indescribable scent of adventure which rises, for some people, from the dark, fragrant, ruby-glinting depths of this ancient liquid, I was about to commit the remaining years of my life to the production of wine.

Somewhere in a book I had seen a striking photograph of a fine old Hudson Valley vineyard planted in what appeared to be a steadily ascending terrace winding from the base of a moundlike hill, around and upward to its top, where there stood a simple wooden cross. "The Vineyard at Christian Hill," the caption read without mentioning its location. One rainy day as Dene and I were driving along Route 9W, I glanced toward the river and there, silhouetted against the squally sky, was Christian Hill!

It was bare now, its vines long since dead, its winding terraces barely discernible through the brush grown over them. Its old cross was still standing, and in the dim light of this stormy afternoon one could imagine the vineyard in its prime. I stopped the car for a few moments to gaze at this relic from other days. Having done so I became aware of other features of the surrounding landscape which otherwise I might have missed, since our goal for the afternoon's drive was further up the road, where we had an appointment to look at some property. Near the base of Christian Hill was a fine old-fashioned barn with shuttered windows, a large arched doorway, and an ornate Victorian cupola topped by a weather vane. A few hundred yards to the south a pretty little red brick church stood under its ancient elms, against the background of the river. As we drove on into a small village I was pleased by a large old frame house with a little barn, both neatly maintained and freshly painted.

This was my first impression of the town of Marlboro, which was to figure so largely in the next years of my life. I liked it. We went on our way that day to keep our appointment. We frequently went through the village in the follow-

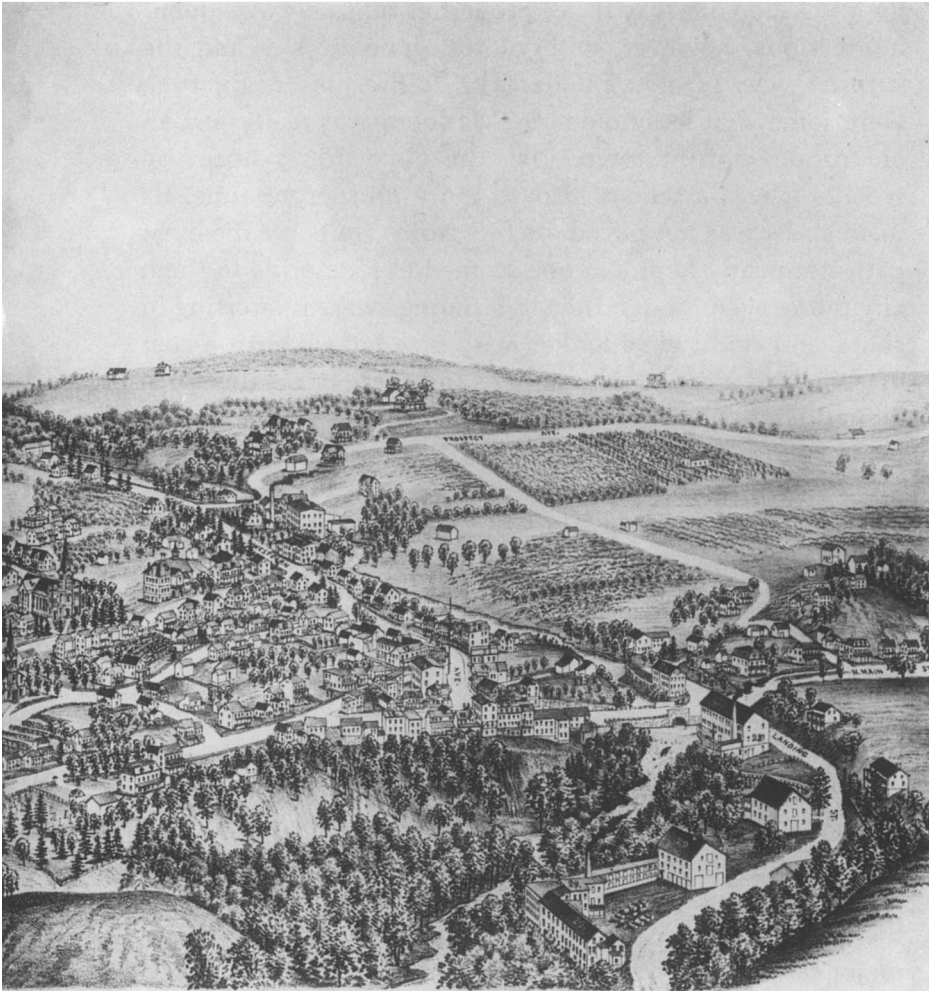


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1871.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 M. E. Church.</li> <li>2 Presbyterian Church.</li> <li>3 Roman Catholic Church.</li> <li>4 Episcopal Church.</li> <li>5 Public School.</li> <li>6 Woolen Mill, Sheard &amp; Gibson, Prop.</li> <li>7 Fruit Crate Factory, D. W. Kuffin, Prop.</li> <li>8 Charles Warren, General Merchandise.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>9 Emmet Warren, Meat Market.</li> <li>10 C. H. Harris, General Bakery &amp; Ice Cream Rooms.</li> <li>11 Office of David Mosher, Physician &amp; Surgeon.</li> <li>12 Wm. H. Newman, Plumbing, Stove &amp; Tin Store.</li> <li>13 Exchange Hotel, Henry M. Kuffin, Prop.</li> <li>14 C. H. Kuffin, General Store &amp; Post Office.</li> <li>15 J. C. Merrill, General Merchandise.</li> <li>16 John Badner, Meat Market &amp; General Store.</li> </ul> |
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# MARLBOR



# OUGH, N. Y.

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| 15 S. F. Burgess, Furniture, Carpets & Oil Cloth. | 24 Samuel Corwin's Sons, Dry Goods.                            |
| 17 Office of A. H. Palmer, Physician & Surgeon.   | 25 Pleasant View Hotel, M. McMullen.                           |
| 18 Philip A. Rion, Funeral Director.              | 26 N. W. Wright's Sons, Flour, Feed and General<br>Grist Mill. |
| 19 E. E. McNamee, Druggist & Chemist.             | 27 Marlborough Record Office, E. E. Carr,<br>Editor and Prop.  |
| 20 A. B. Masten, House & Carriage Painting.       | 28 Lawson Taylor, Blacksmithing.                               |
| 21 M. V. R. Morgan, Meat Market.                  | 29 Whitney Basket Co's Manufactory.                            |
| 22 J. S. Carpenter, General Merchandise.          |  |
| 23 Samuel Corwin's Sons, Hardware & Groceries.    |  |

ing weeks, on our way to see properties for sale. Subsequent impressions, however, without the dramatic sky and the surprise view of old Christian Hill to fire the imagination, were somewhat less favorable. Marlboro was really just an old rundown fruit town. Like the vineyards overrun by woods, it was a relic of a past, more prosperous time. Its main street was not paved. Its few stores were, for the most part, not neatly kept. No one seemed to take pride in them any more, even though the old buildings were interesting in shape and could have looked very nice indeed with a coat of paint and a flower or two here and there to set them off. Nonetheless, Marlboro began to be a kind of center for our explorations. It was, after all, a real fruit growers' town in a region which still produced vine, tree, and bush fruits as its major economic interest. In such an environment I would be likely to find the services, the trained help, and experienced advice I would probably need to carry out my own plans. A check with the county agent about early and late frost dates, minimum winter temperatures, and so on—factors that all prospective winegrowers should look into before they invest in the land they hope to cultivate—indicated almost perfect conditions for our purposes. With all its aesthetic shortcomings, Marlboro was grape country.

From many conversations with real-estate brokers and chance acquaintances and from reading, I learned interesting historical details about the town. In its past it had been a major center for grape experimentation and cultivation, part of a region which U. P. Hedrick, author of the *Grapes of New York*, referred to as "the birthplace of American viticulture." The grape and wine industry of the United States was started in this valley. Outstanding viticulturists such as J. H. Ricketts, W. D. Barnes, Dr. C. W. Grant, and Dr. W. M. Culbert had lived and done their work within a few miles. These men had done more than grow and sell grapes. They had accumulated practical knowledge and trained the men who spread this knowledge through our nation. One of the most respected of these great pioneer viticulturists, A. J.



Caywood, had actually lived in this very town. From his vineyards had come some of the finest of the early American hybrid vines, including the famous Dutchess grape, which is still regarded as the best wine grape to have its origins in eastern America. Somewhere around here there must be a place which could serve our purpose. We were homing in on our quest.



When I came upon Benmarl, my real-estate agent, a wise lady who after a few meetings had seen immediately to the heart of my interests, wasted little time on the two houses, barn and tumbledown outbuildings, none of which had seen a coat of paint in twenty-five years. As she speedily trotted me around the house that was to serve as a residence, she talked only of the vineyards, "one of the oldest and finest vineyards in the state," she said, "established in the 1800s." The owner, Mr. William Wardell, took her hint and quickly suggested a tour of the "upper vineyards," where his grandfather, "Mr. Caywood," had carried on his experiments. I was startled by the mention of this man whom I had so recently read about. Until that moment I had not been greatly impressed with the property. In spite of my good agent's avoidance of the condition of the farm, I had seen what a great deal of work it would require to make it a comfortable place in which to live. Now I could barely contain my excitement and impatience to see the rest of it.

We set out in the owner's dilapidated old Model-T Ford

along an incredibly steep narrow road, which had been carved out of the hillside by a horse and plow and certainly was never meant for an automobile, even the rugged Model-T. We cut right along the old vineyard rows, bouncing on the rocks and dropping hard into the woodchuck holes. Once or twice he slowed to point at a row of thick-trunked old vines. "These are over a hundred years old," he said, or "Those vines, fourth from the end, are some of grandfather's experiments, Dutchess, I think."

Suddenly we came out onto a high shale plateau. He stopped the vehicle and invited me to step down. He took his walking stick and pushed aside some young sumac bushes at the edge of the bluff so that we could see the terraced ranks of the old vines dropping sharply toward the river, some four hundred feet below us. From this point there was no highway, no gas station, no factory, nor any other feature of the twentieth century to be seen, only the silent handsomely ordered patterns of orchards and vineyards carpeting the valley floor under the distant Connecticut hills. Except for the dilapidated state of the vines around us I might have been standing with Caywood himself, looking at the landscape as he saw it. To me it was breathtaking. Love at first sight. We stood there for a time without saying anything. I was spellbound. Finally, Mr. Wardell said, "Always thought I'd build a little shack up here to spend some time in during the summer," as if to suggest this as an inducement to me. He was too late to initiate the idea. In those few moments I had restored all the old vineyards and built a fine *château* in which to stand guard over them.

As I drove home later that afternoon, I began to rehearse my report of the day's exciting events to Dene, who had stayed home this weekend. Somehow, though, no matter how I described the farm I had fallen in love with, it always sounded like a big responsibility, which would require a great deal of time and money to convert into a comfortable country place. The house we would use for a residence possessed enormous shortcomings; no indoor

water supply, an ancient coal furnace, a coal-burning kitchen stove, limited electricity—the list was endless. As an artist, I was fascinated by the sense of frozen time I had felt during the whole visit, by the hundred of paintable scenes both inside and outside the house.

But I knew my practical wife would point out that it wasn't necessary to buy a landscape in order to paint it. What we were looking for was a *small* piece of land on which to plant a *few* vines, with a *comfortable* little summer house. We both had busy, demanding lives. We needed a place to escape to on weekends where we could, by diverting our energies to tending a little vineyard and perhaps a vegetable garden, soothe our frayed nerves, refresh our enthusiasm for plunging back into our real lives on Monday morning.

The following Saturday I drove Dene up to see "my farm." She knew it was my farm, I think, before we made the trip. I had tried to be fair in my description of the place. No unpleasant details had been left out. But she heard something else between the lines as I talked which warned her that as far as I was concerned we had come to the end of the search. My second visit didn't improve the appearance of things. Even though I had chosen a bright and sunny day to introduce it to my wife, there was no way to minimize the difference between this rundown old farm and her shining dream of a country place. Dene was brave. A few feeble arguments against it, perhaps a tear or two were shed, but in the end she gamely agreed that we would find a way to make it do. "Don't worry," I said. "It's a working farm! It will pay for itself. Anyway, it's only a summer place. I promise, you'll never have to live there."

So we bought it. Dene started planning the renovation of the house and I began preparing to plant vines, learning the difference between a book *vigneron* and a real one. There was a lot to learn.

