

Old, New Worlds Meet in Coastal Hill Wine Country

By WILEY S. MALONEY
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San Francisco — (UPI) — The Old and New Worlds meet in the beautiful coastal hill wine country of California just north of the Golden Gate.

Within a day's journey, a visitor may evoke the romance of the past in the colorful wineries even now engaged in an industry older than civilization.

In slightly less than 200 years, California has become the mecca in this country for wine touring. This state's vineyards and wineries in the Sonoma and Napa Valleys, north of here, are typical.

The visitor leaving San Francisco across the famed Golden Gate Bridge on Highway 101, then on State Highway 12 up the "Valley of the Moon" to Sonoma.

It was here on the plaza that the "Bear Flag" of the California Republic was raised by John Fremont and his mountain men and it was here, one mile northeast of town, that Col. Agoston Haraszthy, a Hungarian nobleman, established his wine cellars, vineyards and nursery over a century ago.

The Napa Valley also abounds in wineries and vineyards carpet the lowlands and nestle in the foothills of Mt. St. Helena which dominates the valley. Robert Louis Stevenson made the valley and its wines famous in his "Silverado Squatters," written while he honeymooned here.

Some of the wineries are small family operations; others large enterprises which distribute choice wines throughout this country and abroad. Among them are chateau-like structures, grown with ivy, like the Christian Brothers' Mont La Salle, near Napa, and the famed Grey-stone Cellars at St. Helena, the latter a landmark beside Highway 29 and once known as the "largest winery in the world."

At Rutherford, along route 29, there is the Beaulieu Vineyard, a true California chateau, one of the few of its kind in the state where the accent is on wines and wine production definitely inspired by French taste.

Names Are German

But the names are not only French — there are German, Italian and American names as well. In St. Helena, the wine lover will recognize such noted names as the Bering Brothers, operated as a family concern since 1857; Freemark Abbey, the Charles Krug Winery, Hanns Kornell Cellars and Louis M. Martini. All have the welcome sign out for visitors.

The tasting rooms, where fine wines are sipped, are furnished carefully. There old wine pitchers, time-honored glasses and historic wine labels are displayed along with gold and silver medals awarded for outstanding vintages. The tasting rooms reflect the character and tradition of wine-making.

Col. Haraszthy, in 1862, imported 100,000 cuttings of choice European grape varieties for experimental purposes. The mission grapes, brought in earlier by the Spanish padres nearly a century before, fell into disuse. Haraszthy laid the foundations of the California commercial wine industry. His two great stone wineries still stand and are being operated as the Buena Vista Vineyards.

This winery is now a state historical landmark. Visitors — as in nearly all the wineries — are welcomed daily. Here one may see the wine aging in great oak casks within deep tunnels cut from the living rock many years ago by Chinese labor. A restful pause comes with the sipping of sample wines in the pleasant coolness of the rock-hewn tasting room.

World's Largest Iron Man Is in Birmingham

Birmingham, Ala. — The world's largest iron man, a statue of Vulcan, is located atop Red Mountain overlooking this steel center of the South.

Vulcan is a tribute to the giant iron and steel industries which have made this deep south city one of the industrial centers of the nation. Located on U.S. 31, Vulcan towers over Birmingham on its 127 feet pedestal.

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