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“Winery and vineyard historical research and business histories.”

Mr. Robert Keenan  
P.O. Box 7601  
San Francisco, Ca. 94120

Nov 2, 1976

Dear Mr. Keenan:

SUBJECT: Historical Research of the Conradi Winery, Spring  
Mtn. road, St. Helena, Ca.

1. Volume 47, Book of Deeds, County of Napa, California, page 194-195, carries the first reference of the purchase of lands on Spring Mtn. road, St. Helena, Ca. by the Conrads. This deed is dated June 15, 1890, the purchase being from the estate of Jane Dutton. There is no reference to buildings or vines, etc. in the deed.
2. The Directory of Grape Growers, Wine Makers and Distillers of California, published by the Board of Viticultural Commissioners, 1891, a very thorough record of grape growers, etc. carries no references to the Conrads.
3. The Vineyards of Napa County; Being the Report of E.C. Priber, Commissioner for the Napa District, to the Board of State Viticultural Commissioners, 1893, contains the following item:

"Page 34. Conrad & co. St. Helena--Total, 70 acres, all in bearing; soil loam; vineyard mountain, exposure north and west, crop 200 tons.

This vineyard is on Spring Mountain which is a favored locality, as phylloxera has not yet made its appearance, and frost did no damage in the spring of 1892."

(The name of Conradi is obviously misspelled, should be Conradi.)

4. Official Map of the County of Napa, California, 1895.

Located on the east wall of the Recorder's office, Napa Ca. this map shows the Conradi's as owners of several parcels of land on Spring Mtn. road.

5. Pacific Wine and <sup>IRIT</sup>Spring Review, San Francisco, Ca.  
Jan. 31, 1903, page 68

"Conradi Bros. of Oakland, have taken possession of their father's Spring Mountain vineyard and will look after the place hereafter. This is the property which for several years was managed by T.S. Vann."

6. St. Helean Star, St. Helena, Ca. Nov. 6, 1903, page 5

"Carl Conradi returned to his Spring Mountain ranch Tuesday, after spending a week with relatives in San Francisco."

7. "Day Book" of Philip Conradi. Original in the possession of Mr. David Whiting, Stockton Street, St. Helena, Ca. (963-3213).

Page 16-17 "Building Wine Cellar. January 27, 1904"

This account clearly appears to be the building of the Conradi Winery on Spring Mountain, beginning Jan. 27, 1904 and runs to February 14, 1904. The Day Book was found in the winery by Mr. Whiting when he lived on the Conradi Ranch from 1959 to the late 1960s. Subsequent pages detail the weight and prices paid by Philip Conradi for grapes.

The following testimony by long-time St. Helena residents supports the founding date.

- A. William (Jack) Lyman  
3351 North St. Helena Hwy  
St. Helena, Ca.

"I know the Conradi winery somewhat since it lies at the head of the canyon which leads down to the Lyman Winery. I left for college in 1903 and I can recall a winery being there about that time." (Phone interview 10/31/76)

- B. William Guigni  
St. Helena, Ca. (tel: 963-3095)

"My father helped build the Conradi Winery. How sure am I of that? I'm the next thing to positive that my father

*As photo copy attached*

helped build that winery! You see, he died in 1908 and I know he talked about that winery before he died. I would say it was built by about 1905." (Phone interview, 10/31/76. The elder Guigni was a principal builder of many Napa county stone wineries.)

C. Gladys Grass  
921 Hunt St  
St. Helena, Ca.  
(tel: 963-2774)

"When I was a child, we used to visit, my sister and I, the Conradi Winery, up on Spring Mountain. That was between the years 1906 and 1913. It was a small stone winery, not tall like the old Rennie winery now owned by Mr. Martini. I remember drinking wine up there. No one else would serve children wine but the Conradis did. It came from their winery. My older sister was a friend of Philip Conradi ((Jr.?)), and George. Al Carpy and the Beringer girls were their friends. I left St. Helena in 1913 and I know the winery had been there for some time by that date. Do you know why we came to St. Helena in 1906? We were burned out by the earthquake. I can remember it very well." (Phone interview 10/30/76).

D. Ernest Conradi  
206 Palo Alto Ave  
San Francisco, Ca. 94114  
tel: 681-5211

"My uncle Philip, founded the Conradi Winery. I arrived in California in 1915 when I was seventeen years old. The winery was there already and had been several years. I remember crushing grapes up there and making wine. I spent my honeymoon up at the winery in 1923. I think the production was about 20,000 gallons. I remember too, watching them bottle wine. They must have had a label for it, before Prohibition." (phone interview 10/30/76)

E. Charles Forni  
St. Helena, Ca.

"I purchased the inventory of the Conradi Winery several times during Prohibition. I sold alot of wine to the Jewish Synagogues during Prohibition. A Rabbi would come out to the winery and label whatever they needed for Kosher purposes. I think it was somewhere around 30,000 to 50,000 gallons. Abeilini crushed about 150 tons up there each year. I think I purchased between 1920 and 1925-26."

In this personal interview conducted at his home, Forni stated he was sure two Italian immigrant friends, stone masons, built that winery, named Guigni and Bognotti. They built wineries up on Howell Mtn, one near the hospital, one up on Spring Mtn. Conradi came between 1904-1910.

Forni himself, helped construct the Freemark Abbey winery and his memory, though 92 years of age, is remarkably accurate. In a lengthy study of Freemark Abbey Winery completed in 1975, Forni's memory proved very helpful.  
(Interviewed 10/30/76)

8. Official Map of the County of Napa, California, 1915.

Shows Conradi owner or co-owner of five tracts of land on Spring Mountain, one 67 acres, 25 acres, 120 acres 80 acres and 58 acres.

(See private office, Napa County Recorder)

9. William Harrington  
Silverado Trail  
St. Helena, Ca.

Mr. Harrington claims he put a new roof on the Conradi Winery in the fall of 1933, the year Prohibition ended. He remembers the year because he divorced his first wife in that year. He believes they were preparing the winery for wine production, "at least, I know there were some barrels and so forth in it already." (private interview 10/30/76)

Very detail research has been undertaken in the St. Helena Star and the Napa Register or Napa Reporter for printed references to the Conradi Winery, but to no avail. The Star has been re-read four times from Nov. 1903-to Feb. 1904 for even a small item.

Why this construction should have been missed is very peculiar. The Star printed many items on winery construction or expansion. On the other hand, there were about 150-200 wineries in Napa County

by this period, and only a handful received much regular attention in local newspapers.

1. The founding date of the Conradi Winery there is January, 1904.
2. Its estimated capacity is between 20,000 - 50,000 gallons. Maximum 50,000 gallons.
3. The final year of operation has yet to be established although it did operate for some years after the Repeal of Prohibition in Dec. 1933.

Respectfully Submitted  
William J. Heintz  
Nov. 2, 1975