

What's "Knew" in the FLX?!

*Examining its past,
what is happening now and
what is being said about its future*

Society of Wine Educators
Virtual Conference
October 20, 2023
With Lorraine Hems, CWE, CSS



1

Speaker

Lorraine Hems

- Starting 43rd year this month in this industry
- Senior Lecturer at the Rochester Institute of Technology
- Certifications/Certificates
 - SWE's CWE and CSS
 - WSET Level 3 and instructor
 - CS with CMS
 - AWS Certified Wine Judge and instructor
 - WSG's Lustau CSWS
- AmaWaterways host (Captivating Rhine – August '24)

2

Wines Being Tasted

- Dr. Konstantin Frank Saperavi 2020
- Bully Hill Vineyards Niagara NV [or can substitute white grape juice ;)]
- Hermann J. Wiemer Field Blend Red 2021
- Ravines Wine Cellars Chardonnay 2020
- Boundary Breaks Gewurztraminer 2022
- Wagner Riesling Ice 2021
- Osmote Pet Nat White 2022

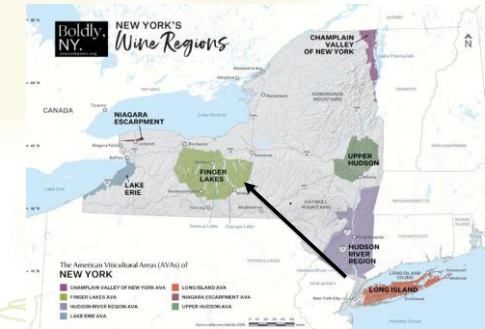
3

Where are the Finger Lakes?



4

Where are the Finger Lakes?



5



Keuka Lake looking east from the west side

6



Shale, shale, the gangs all here! + limestone + loam + gravel, etc.

7



8

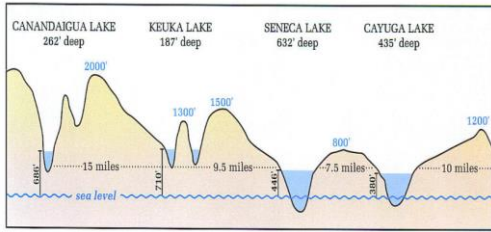


Vineyards planted east and west on sloping lakeshores

9

Finger Lakes: Topography

- Varying Slopes and Aspects

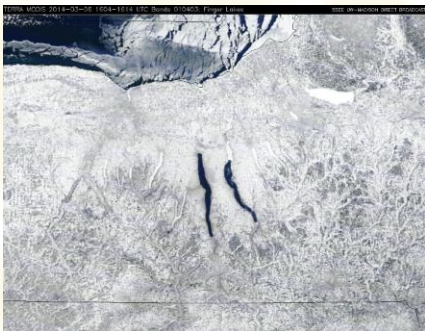


10



Effect of Proximity to Lake Ontario

11



Winter 2013-2014

12

Finger Lakes – Past History

- 1829 – First grape vines (natives Isabella and Catawba) planted by Reverend William Bostwick
- Next 70 years, native and hybrid grapes used for largely sparkling, sweet and fortified wines
- 1860 – The Pleasant Valley Wine Company founded on Keuka Lake became US Bonded Winery No 1; international reputation for sparkling wines
- 1873-1900 – sparkling, dessert and table wines won major awards at several European competitions
- Prohibition – sparkling and table wines for sacraments



13

Finger Lakes – Past History, Pt. 2

- 1933 – Charles Fournier leaves Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin to join Urbana Wine Company (Gold Seal) as winemaker
 - Credited with introducing French-American hybrids to NYS
 - Supporter of vinifera experimentation with Dr. Frank
- 1945 – Sands family opens Canandaigua Industries
 - Bulk wine to bottlers in the eastern US
 - 1954 – Richards Wild Irish Rose!
 - 2021 – Canandaigua Wine Company purchased by E. & J. Gallo
- 1951 – Dr. Konstantin Frank immigrates from Ukraine
 - Experiments with Vinifera at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station; did not speak English
 - Then worked with Charles Fournier at Gold Seal Vineyards

14

Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery

- Born on July 4, 1899, he worked the vineyards on his parents' farm in the Ukraine and began experiments with vines and equipment
- Made his first wine at 15
- Family lost farm in WW I
- Moved to Austria in WW II
- 1951 – Immigrated to New York at the age of 52-years-old with no money
- 1957 – Dr. Konstantin Frank successfully planted the first vinifera vines in the Eastern US; "Vinifera Revolution".
- 1962 – Opened winery; 60 + varieties planted!
- 1985 – Passed; son, Willy (passed in 2006), then grandson, Fred, and great-granddaughter Meaghan
- Ships to almost states and exports
- Tasting room on west side of Keuka Lake

15

Dr. Konstantin Frank Saperavi 2020

- 100% Saperavi
 - Georgian name means “paint, dye, give color”
 - Teinturier grape variety and dark skins
 - Ages well with naturally high acidity
- Hot and dry year
- De-stemmed and several day cold soak
- Open-top temperature controlled stainless tanks with twice daily pump overs
- 16 Months French oak ,20% new
- 60 year old and younger vines blended
- Sold out at the winery, but still available from Marketview



<http://www.drfrankwines.com/>

16

Finger Lakes, Past History, Pt. 3

- 1975 – Tastes change
- Enter ... **Walter S. Taylor**
- Then, Hermann J. Wiemer
- 1976 – New York Farm Winery Act
 - Lowered license fee for producing less than 50,000 gallons per year (since increased to 150,000 gallons)
 - Allowed growers to sell wine from own grapes directly to consumer
 - 14 wineries in NYS to almost 500 today

17

Bully Hill Vineyards

- Walter S. Taylor
 - 1970 - Fired as Executive VP at Taylor Wine Co.
 - Fought to keep local connections
 - Fought California juice deliveries in railroad tank cars
 - Founded Bully Hill Vineyards
 - 1977 - Coca-Cola acquired Taylor Wine Company
 - David vs. Goliath!? Bad publicity is ... ?
 - All Bully Hill materials (heritage) given to Coca-Cola
 - “Didn’t Get His Goat!”
 - Labels
 - Supported local growers’ native, hybrid grapes
 - Didn’t get along with Dr. Frank!



18

Bully Hill Vineyards



- Today
 - 1990 – Car accident and quadriplegic; passed in 2001
 - Wife Lillian (restaurant) and son Stephen
 - ~Second largest producer in the state with about 40 different wines in 187ml, 750ml, 1.5L and BIB formats
 - Sell vinifera wines as well now
 - Very environmentally conscious
 - Official sponsor of Buffalo Bills and Sabres, Nashville Predators, Carolina Hurricanes, Boston Red Sox and NASCAR cars (Watkins Glen International)
 - Ships to almost all states
 - Tasting room on west side of Keuka Lake

19

Bully Hill 'Spring White' Niagara NV

- Niagara is a Concord-cross vitis Labrusca
- "Optimal" harvest - pH 2.9-3.3, 14-18° Brix, .8-1 TA
 - Water
 - Acid
- New York State AVA
- 11% abv
- "Like a stroll through the vineyards at harvest time, this Niagara is floral with a sweet soft finish"



<https://www.bullyhillvineyards.com/>

20

Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard

- Mother's family been producing 300+ years in Mosel
- 1960s – Worked in FLX
- Worked for Walter Taylor at Bully Hill; fought over approach to grapes (others vs. vinifera)
- 1974 – Started own vine nursery
- 1977 – Started planting vines on own property
- 1979 – First vintage
- 1981 – Walter S. Taylor fired Hermann by telegram in Germany on Christmas Day
- 2003 – Apprentice Fred Merwarth, becomes winemaker
- 2007 – Sold to Fred and friend, Swedish agronomist Oskar Bynke

21

Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard

- 90 estate acres
- Hand-harvested and hand-sorted
- 2003 – eliminated the use of all herbicides and synthetic inputs
 - Incorporate cover crops and organic fertilizers
 - 33 acre HJW vineyard is Demeter certified
- 2017 – Standing Stone Vineyards acquired
- ~50 wines including SSV portfolio
- Ships to 41 states and exports
- Tasting room on west side of Seneca Lake with SSV on the east side

22

Hermann J. Wiemer Field Blend Red 2021

- Mosaic of soils in Magdalena Vineyard
- Co-picked and fermented blend of Cabernet franc, Merlot, Blaufränkisch and Cabernet sauvignon
- Indigenous yeast fermentation
- Open top wood and stainless
- Aged in small and large neutral oak for 11 months
- 12.5% abv
- Seneca Lake AVA
- 469 cases



<https://www.wiemer.com/>

23

Finger Lakes - Today

- Influx of people from all over the world work at FLX vineyards wineries
- Finger Lakes Community College and Cornell
- Environmental – Sustainability + and solar commitment
- Riesling is King!
 - Next in line?
 - Cabernet franc
 - Chardonnay
 - Sparkling
 - +++++?



24

Wineries & Vineyards Today

- 144 Finger Lakes wineries
- 423 farms with 10,709 acres of vineyards
- 195 day growing season
- Growing acreage of Vinifera plantings
 - Chardonnay, Gewürztraminer, Pinot Gris, Grüner Veltliner, Sauvignon Blanc
 - Cabernet franc, Lemberger, Pinot Noir
 - New plantings of Chenin blanc, Teroldego, Dornfelder, Lagrein

25

Ravines Wine Cellars

- Morten and Lisa Hallgren
 - Morten was raised and trained as an oenologist in Provence and Bordeaux (Cos d'Estournel)
 - Lisa is culinary arts and business; met Morten in TX
 - Morten was winemaker at Cordier Estates (TX), Biltmore (NC) and chief winemaker at Dr. Frank
- 2001 – Ravines founded across lake from Dr. Frank
- 130 acres of estate vineyards
- Minimal intervention, sustainable
- Restaurant focus in major cities and DTC
- Ships to about ~41 states
- Tasting rooms on east side of Keuka Lake and west side of Seneca

26

Ravines Chardonnay 2020

- 100% estate grown chardonnay; Dijon clones 95 and 96
- 50% whole cluster pressed and
 - Fermented on full lees in fairly neutral 2000L Austrian oak casks
 - Fermented on full lees in French oak (~50% new oak, so 25% of final blend saw new French oak)
- The two factions blended prior to full malolactic conversion
- Gentle filtration
- Typically use passito method, but not in 2020 (warm and dry)
- Finger Lakes AVA
- 13.8% abv



<https://ravineswine.com/>

27

Boundary Breaks Vineyard

- Bruce Murray, co-owner, grew up in Central NY
 - Worked 30+ years in publishing business
 - Traveled and liked good wine, but knew nothing about vineyards
 - In his 50's, he returned and married high school sweetheart, Diana Lyttle
- 2011 – first vintage; focused on Riesling, but now ~12 wines produced with ~1/2 other than Riesling
- Regenerative farming
- Ship to ~43 states
- Tasting room on east side of Seneca Lake

28

Boundary Breaks Gewurztraminer 2022

- Gewurztraminer in NYS?
- Top wine at 2023 New York Wine Classic
- Warm year - 23.5 Brix!
- Stainless steel
- Medium-dry, 3% R.S.
- Age 25 years, but "sweet spot" 10-15
- Finger Lakes AVA
- 12% abv
- 80 cases



<https://boundarybreaks.com/>

29

Wagner Vineyards

- 5th generation grape growers (250 acres)
- 1976 – Bill Wagner broke ground (before NYS Farm Winery Act)
- 1979 – Wagner Vineyards opens; first on east side of Seneca Lake
- 1983 – restaurant opens; wine and food!
- Bill's son and daughter + grandchildren
- 50,000 case production (diverse selection)
- Ships to ~22 states
- Tasting room on east side of Seneca Lake + brewery and restaurant

30

Wagner Riesling Ice 2021

- “Ice”, not “Ice Wine”; Why “faux”?
 - Wouldn’t ask pickers if you wouldn’t do it yourself
 - Picking around holidays
 - Picking at 15 to 17F in the dark
 - Weather - Germany, Austria, Canada
 - FLX Boundary Breaks Riesling Ice Wine 2022 - \$70,
 - Inniskillin Ice Wines - \$80-100, Wagner Ice - **\$30**
- Wagner Riesling Ice
 - 20 Brix at harvest, 36 Brix at pressing
 - 15.4% RS
- 12.9% abv
- Finger Lakes AVA
- 1991 cases of 375mls



<https://wagnervineyards.com/>

31

The Future of the Finger Lakes

- The American Wine Market is ready for a cool-climate wines
- Consumers leaning toward:
 - Fresher wines
 - Lower alcohol
 - Food-friendly
 - Dare I say “sweeter” to an entry level consumer?
- Already show love for cool-climate international regions, such as Germany, Austria, and France’s Burgundy, Loire Valley & Champagne
- **Warmer temperatures , so more Vinifera? OR**
- **More extremes, so return to native and hybrids?**

32

Osmote

- Ben Riccardi was born in the FLX; lives on Seneca Lake
- Chemistry at Air Force Academy and then on to Cornell
- Work experiences in Chile, New Zealand, France, California, City Winery in Manhattan
- 2014 - winery opened; winemaker, business manager
- “Low impact winemaking to create pure, balanced wine.”
- Purchases fruit, but 31 acre farm with plantings in future
- ~12 wines produced, but changes yearly
- Ships domestically; exports to Japan and UK
- Tasting room on east side of Seneca Lake



33

Osmote Pét Nat White 2022

- “This is Pét Nat”; new blend for this them
- 75% Cayuga White (1940s Cornell hybrid) from 50 year old vines & 25% Riesling; picked early
- Spinal Tap’s amp dial on label turned to 11 (FLX bracing acid, fun hybrid and old vines)
- Disgorged in 2023
- Finger Lakes AVA
- 9.5% abv



<https://www.osmotewine.com/>

34

Acknowledgements

- Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery
- Bully Hill Vineyards
- Hermann J. Wiemer Vineyard
- Ravines Wine Cellars
- Boundary Breaks Vineyard
- Wagner Vineyards
- Osmote
- New York Wine and Grape Foundation
<https://newyorkwines.org/>
- Marketview Liquor
<https://www.marketviewliquor.com/>

35

Questions



36

THANK YOU

to the Society of Wine Educators
and you!



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