

READER VINEYARD

Alan Westfall

Cook Station, Missouri

In 1993 the Westfall family purchased a 160-acre farm in Cook Station, Missouri, along the Meramec River and approximately 90 miles from our home in St.



Alan Westfall standing in his Cook Station, Missouri vineyard.

Louis, Missouri. This property is located in the Missouri Ozark Highlands American Viticultural Area (AVA) district.

When we bought the land, the elderly man we purchased the property from told me of an abandoned one-acre vineyard on top of the hill that had the old "stone" vineyard post from the St. Stanislaus Seminary which was once located in North St. Louis. I didn't give this much thought, or even explore the vineyard for almost two years following our conversation.

Eventually, while clearing several rows in the vineyard to plant apple trees for a Cub Scout project with my sons Zachery and Benjamin, I noticed that many of the old Concord grape vines were still alive. These vines had extended in excess of 40 feet into the trees sur-

rounding the vineyard. We cleared a half-acre of the vineyard of the trees and brush, leaving the Concord grape vines untouched.

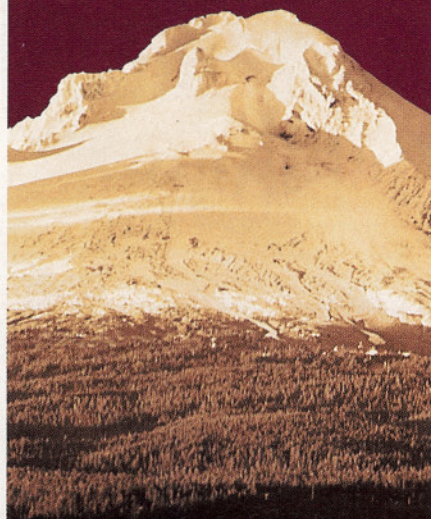
Later that year I attended a winery tour in Napa Valley, California which led to my interest in growing grapes and making wine. When I returned to St. Louis, I researched and found the Missouri Winemaking Society and the Missouri Grape Growers Association. The Missouri Winemaking Society was established in 1977 as a non-profit organization to focus on developing amateur winemakers as a hobby while increasing appreciation for wine.

While attending a winemaking meeting and discussing my newly found vineyard, I related the story of having discovered the beautiful exposed aggregate "stone" vineyard post from St. Stanislaus Seminary. Several of the members of that group became very excited about my story and explained to me how this historical winery was the only Missouri winery, as well as one of the few cellars, that were allowed to remain in operation during prohibition. The Jesuits at St. Stanislaus Novitiate made "Florissant Valley Wines" for altar wine for their churches. We have a copy of a photo of the vineyard post with their caretaker who joined the Seminary in 1936. The vineyard was destroyed in the early 1960s. At St. Louis University, there is a museum with a display about the history of the Seminary and their vineyard.

Since discovering the posts and clearing the one acre of Concord grapes on our property, we have expanded the vineyard to include Chardonnay, Vignoles and Vidal Blanc. With each year I have a deeper appreciation for the art of viticulture and winemaking. Many of our wines have won awards in Missouri, Kansas and Illinois.

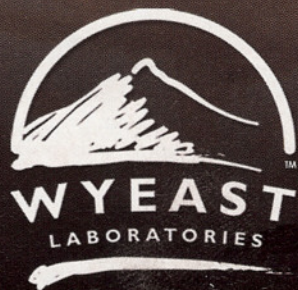
With the help of the Missouri Winemaking Society, my family and friends, maybe someday we can boast of owning our own winery.

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