



JACOB SCHRAM: 1826-1905

## Jacob Schram and the Early Days

In 1826, in the small town of Pheddersheim Germany, along the Rhine River, Jacob Schram was born. He came from a winemaking family. When he was sixteen the young Schram immigrated to New York. He was educated in the trade of barbering, and, in 1852, sailed across the Caribbean, crossed-over the Panama Isthmus, and continued up to San Francisco. He spent the next several years barbering, eventually moving his way north, to the Napa Valley.



THE ORIGINAL SCHRAM HOUSE.

In 1859 he married Annie Christine Weaver, also from Germany, and they started a family. For several years he continued to barber full time. Never far from his thoughts were his homeland and his roots in the vinelands of Germany. In 1862, Jacob purchased a large piece of land on the mountainsides of the Napa Valley. He was going to be a part of the emerging efforts by many fellow German countrymen in the Napa Valley to make wine; thus Schramsberg was born.

They began to clear the wooded and wild land, building a rustic cabin to shelter them from the weather. They planted European varietals, and began to produce wine. Jacob remained a barber to supplement his income, while the work at Schramsberg continued. After fully realizing the summer heat in the area, he hired Chinese workers to help him dig his cool underground cellars. Annie was often left in charge of the hired hands as Jacob visited fellow vintners in the valley, and took on the role of salesman both near and far.



ONE OF THE MANY GATHERINGS ON THE SCHRAM VERANDAH.

By 1876 his production was up to 12,000 gallons. From this small start, the winery and vineyards continued to grow until they had fifty acres of bearing vines and were producing upwards of 12,000 cases per year. He was shipping his Riesling, Hock, Burgundy and Chasselas to New York and beyond. His wines were winning awards at American and International competitions.

As they continued to prosper, the Schrams had a lavish Victorian built to replace the original cabin. A shipbuilder and his team were hired for the construction, and small pegs were used in place of the more modern nail. The house became a gathering spot for the many friends and colleagues the Schram's had become familiar with. The Schram house is still lived in to this day, and retains its spirit of hospitality.

In the fall of 1900 Annie was stricken with paralysis and went steadily downhill until she died in the summer of 1901. The 75-year-old Jacob continued running the business, with his son Herman, until the spring of 1905, when he took ill. He quickly worsened and died. The St. Helena Star wrote that, "His funeral was largely attended and extended the length of Spring Street, and his body was laid to rest beside his wife Anna in the marble city." Although Herman attempted to continue the business, phylloxera and Prohibition brought an end to the Schram era.



JACOB AND ANNIE, IN THEIR LATER YEARS.

Herman sold the property to Sterling Investment Company, who in 1916 sold it to a wealthy San Francisco contractor, W. J. McKillop for use as a summer home. He later sold it to a Captain Raymond C. Naylor. Following him, John Gargano purchased the property in 1940. Gargano was a mysterious character somehow connected to bootlegging activity. In 1951, he sold the property to Douglas Pringle.

Mrs. Pringle was the legendary Grande Dame, Katharine Cebrian. In 1957, the winery was named a state historical landmark. The Pringles threw a lavish party with movie stars and glamorous girls circulating in a crowd of over 500 people. Katherine Cebrian divorced Douglas Pringle 1959 and moved back to San Francisco. She sold the property to Jack and Jamie Davies in 1965. And thus, Schramsberg entered the modern era.