Finding aid to the California Wine Association records, 1894-1936, MS 300

Finding aid prepared by California Historical Society staff.
California Historical Society
678 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA, 94105-4014
(415) 357-1848
reference@calhist.org
© 2012
Title: California Wine Association records
Date: 1894-1936
Collection Identifier: MS 300
Creator: California Wine Association.
Extent: 10 flat boxes (3 linear feet)
Repository: California Historical Society
678 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA, 94105
415-357-1848
reference@calhist.org
URL: http://www.californiahistoricalsociety.org
Physical Location: Collection is stored onsite.
Language of Materials: Collection materials are in English.
Abstract: Consists of bound records of the California Wine Association (1894-1936), a group of San Francisco Bay Area winemakers and dealers who combined interests to gain favorable financial control over the market. Volumes contain minutes of Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings; membership lists; and contract terms with grape growers and other winemakers, including Napa winemakers Frederick and Jacob Beringer. The records also shed light on the association’s formation; the general state of the California wine market; competition with national and international markets; Prohibition; and the dissolution of the C.W.A., including lawsuits and member resignations. Significant association members represented in the collection include founders Charles Carpy of C. Carpy & Company; Charles Kohler and Henry Kohler of Napa Valley Wine Company, Kohler and Frohling, C. Carpy & Company, B. Dreyfus & Company, and Kohler and Van Bergen; Arpad Haraszthy of Arpad Haraszthy & Company; Albert Lachman, Henry Lachman, and Samuel Lachman of S. Lachman & Company and Lachman & Jacobi; winemaker John Frohling; Benjamin Dreyfus of B. Dreyfus & Company; and Nicholas Van Bergen of Kohler and Van Bergen. The firms Aguillon & Busatelli and C. Schilling & Company, both part of the association’s combined holdings, are also represented.
Access
Collection is open for research.
Publication Rights
All requests to reproduce, publish, quote from or otherwise use collection materials must be submitted in writing to the Director of Library and Archives, North Baker Research Library, California Historical Society, 678 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94105. Consent is given on behalf of the California Historical Society as the owner of the physical items and is not intended to include or imply permission from the copyright owner. Such permission must be obtained from the copyright owner. Restrictions also apply to digital representations of the original materials. Use of digital files is restricted to research and educational purposes.
Preferred Citation
[Identification of item], California Wine Association Records, MS 300, California Historical Society.
Processing Information
The collection was reprocessed by Megan Hickey Nespeco in 2012.
Administrative History
The California Wine Association was formed during the depression of 1894 from seven leading California wine firms in an effort to secure favorable options from grape growers and winemakers, and to raise prices and stimulate trade. In 1894 the wine industry was in a perilous state. California’s 200,000 acres of vineyard were overproductive, and California wines were being sold for as little as ten cents a gallon. The country’s financial depression also lingered, and both California winemakers and the dealers were in dire financial straits. On August 10, 1894, the California Wine Association was incorporated with a capital stock of $100,000, and with the intent to control eighty percent of the wine produced in the state. For the next two decades the uniform syndicate held substantial bargaining power over winegrowers. The combined firms would also set prices based on vintages and regional characteristics of the grapes they contracted to grow. From C.W.A.’s incorporation until Prohibition, the history of winemaking in California is largely connected to the history of the California Wine Association. The C.W.A. became a syndicate or cartel, the single buyer for ripe grapes from winegrowers. In response, winegrowers formed their own interest groups, which led to the wine wars of the 1890s. In order to successfully negotiate grape prices, the two factions came to agree upon standards for terms such as “hill grapes” and “valley grapes”, and stabilized the quality of California wine in the process.
By the early twentieth century the quality and production of California wine had vastly improved, which led Isaias W. Hellman, bank president and owner of a vast southern California vineyard, to invest in a substantial amount of C.W.A. stock. Hellman’s influence expanded the Association’s hold across the state, and made them the largest wine distributor in the country. By 1907 C.W.A. had a storage capacity of nearly thirty million gallons, effectively controlling the forty-three million gallons produced annually in California.

The enactment of the 18th Amendment in 1920 would ultimately lead to C.W.A.’s demise. However, the new century began with an auspicious start. By 1914 the Association had reached their intended goal, having established control over eighty percent of wine manufactured in the State. Two years later, however, Prohibition laws passed in California and the subsequent depression in the wine industry left the outlook bleak for its largest manufacturer. During the first several years of Prohibition, C.W.A. pursued other business ventures, such as manufacturing grape juice along with other non-alcoholic beverages. The Association even began a short-lived experiment with ways to extract sugar from dried fruit. Ultimately though, it was found that alternative forms of revenue failed to deliver a substantial profit. Moreover, the crisis caused by Prohibition was compounded by ensuing disorganization within C.W.A.

Prohibition led the Association to divest of their wine stock. However, many of these liquidation deals failed, which caused member firms to pursue sanctions against other member firms. The Association’s last decade was spent in litigation, though they found some success in the foreign market. By 1935, after selling all remaining wine stock to a San Francisco Cooperative, Grape Fruit Industries, Ltd., C.W.A. was officially dissolved.

Scope and Content
Collection consists of bound records of the California Wine Association (1894-1936), a group of San Francisco Bay Area winemakers and dealers who combined interests to gain favorable financial control over the market. Volumes contain minutes of Executive Committee and Board of Directors meetings; membership lists; and contract terms with grape growers and other winemakers, including Napa winemakers Frederick and Jacob Beringer. The records also shed light on the association’s formation; the general state of the California wine market; competition with national and international markets; Prohibition; and the dissolution of the C.W.A., including lawsuits and member resignations. Significant association members represented in the collection include founders Charles Carpy of C. Carpy & Company; Charles Kohler and Henry Kohler of Napa Valley Wine Company, Kohler and Frohling, C. Carpy & Company, B. Dreyfus & Company, and Kohler and Van Bergen; Arpad Haraszthy of Arpad Haraszthy & Company; Albert Lachman, Henry Lachman, and Samuel Lachman of S. Lachman & Company and Lachman & Jacobi; winemaker John Frohling; Benjamin Dreyfus of B. Dreyfus & Company; and Nicholas Van Bergen of Kohler and Van Bergen. The firms Aguillon & Busatelli and C. Schilling & Company, both part of the association’s combined holdings, are also represented.

The Board of Directors minutes (Series 1, 1894 August 10-1936 December 8) document administrative matters, including appointments, organizational bylaws, and contract negotiations between the committee and California winemakers. Additionally, this series contains committee member lists, including information on member responsibilities, and transcriptions of business reports sent to stockholders. A separate folder (1886, 1898-1917, 1919-1922, 1936), contains printed and typed copies of annual reports and statements.

Minutes of the Executive Committee (Series 2, 1903 March 23-1923 October 17), the fiscal decision-making body of California Wine Association, contain additional information on contract terms with grape growers; purchase terms of various vintages; and property acquisitions. Also included is documentation of the C.W.A.’s response to Prohibition, including its alignment with various anti-Prohibition associations; member resignations; and the dissolution of the association itself.

Indexing Terms
The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the library’s online public access catalog: Aguillon & Busatelli (Wine firm, Alameda County, Calif.).
Arpad Haraszthy & Company (Wine firm).
B. Dreyfus & Company (Wine firm).
Beringer, Frederick.
Beringer, Jacob.
C. Carpy & Company (Wine firm).
C. Schilling & Company (Wine firm).
California Wine Association.
Carpy, Charles.
Dreyfus, Benjamin.
Frohling, John.
Finding aid to the California Wine Association records, 1894-1936, MS 300

Haraszthy, Arpad, 1840-1900.
Italian-Swiss Colony (Wine firm).
Kohler and Frohling (Wine firm).
Kohler and Van Bergen (Wine firm).
Kohler, Charles, 1854-1917.
Kohler, Henry.
Lachman & Jacobi (Wine firm).
Lachman, Albert.
Lachman, Henry.
Lachman, Samuel.
Napa Valley Wine Company.
S. Lachman & Company (Wine firm).
Van Bergen, Nicholas.
Prohibition--California.
Vinters--California.
Viticulture--California.
Wine and wine making--California.
Wine industry--California.

Sources Consulted

Series 1: Board of Directors minutes and other materials 1894 August 10-1936 December 8
Extent: 5 volumes, 1 folder (1.5 linear feet)
Scope and Contents
Bound volumes document administrative matters, including appointments and organizational bylaws. Additionally, volumes 2-5 contain transcriptions and copies of annual reports to stockholders. A separate folder, "Annual reports and statements," contains printed versions of these reports.

Box 1
Volume 1 1894 August 10-1895 August 8
Scope and Contents
The first part of this handwritten volume documents the development of organizational bylaws, committee member lists, and member responsibilities. The volume also contains transcribed correspondence from California grape growers and winemakers detailing purchasing contracts. Discussions include pricing; wine appraisal; and grape classification, such as the use of the terms "hill grapes" and "valley grapes." The volume also contains minutes of meetings the association held with the winemakers and grape growers, including the Beringer family.
Box 2  
**Volume 2 1895 August 8-1905 February 23**

**Scope and Contents**
Topics in this typed volume include appointment nominations; revenue; and discussions on the general state of the California wine market, as well as specific vintages. Additionally, amendments to the original articles of incorporations and contract negotiations between the committee and California winemakers are discussed. The volume also contains transcriptions and clippings of notices about the association published by the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *San Francisco Examiner*. An illustrated stock certificate (1894) is interleaved between pages 120 and 121.

**Physical Access**
Some of this volume is illegible due to water damage.

Box 3  
**Volume 3 1905 June 10-1912 February 29**

**Scope and Contents**
Minutes address financial matters and include business statements, bonds issued by the association, and insurance policies held by the association. Significantly, the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake and fire is discussed as it relates to stock and property damage. Additionally, the volume contains transcriptions of reports sent to stockholders.

Box 4  
**Volume 4 1912 February 29-1921 July 28**

**Scope and Contents**
Typed volume contains descriptions of elected positions; changes to the articles of incorporation; contracts with grape growers and winemakers; and the issue of Prohibition. Volume also contains stockholders meeting meetings and copies of reports sent to stockholders. A bond pamphlet is interleaved between pages 65-85.

Box 5  
**Volume 5 1921 August 25-1936 December 8**

**Scope and Contents**
Topics in this typed volume include the Volstead Act (Prohibition); the association's diminishing stock value; foreign wine imports and market impact; and the quality and quantity of the association's wine inventory. The issue of dissolving the corporation was raised in 1923 (page 77). The second half of the volume describes this process, including member resignations, property liquidation, and the efforts to distribute remaining wine stock. The last year of the corporation was spent in litigation. Additionally, the volume contains stockholders meeting meetings and copies of reports sent to stockholders.

Box 5, Folder 1  
**Annual reports and statements 1886, 1898-1917, 1919-1922, 1936**

**Scope and Contents**
Typed and printed annual reports and business statements sent to stockholders (1886, 1898-1917, 1919-1922, and 1936) highlighting major events impacting fiscal decisions, such as grape production and Prohibition. Reports are also found transcribed in the minutes of the Board of Directors meetings (Volumes 2-5).

Series 2:  
**Executive Committee minutes 1903 March 23-1923 October 17**

**Extent:** 5 volumes (1.5 linear feet)

**Scope and Contents**
Bound typed volumes containing meeting minutes of the Executive Committee of the California Wine Association.

Box 6  
**Volume 6 1903 March 23-1910 May 20**

**Scope and Contents**
Financial arrangements between the association and various banks, merchants, and wineries are discussed. The volume also contains information on contract terms with growers; the purchase of various vintages; and property acquisitions. Additionally, the aftermath of the 1906 earthquake and fire is described (pages 137-141).
Box 7  
**Volume 7 1910 May 27-1913 April 30**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Volume details contracts held by the association with other winemakers and grape growers. Topics also include litigation; profits and loss; wine sales; cellar stock; and real estate.

Box 8  
**Volume 8 1913 May 1-1917 July 2**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Topics include contract negotiations with winemakers and growers; profits and loss; response to proposed Prohibition laws, including alignment with various anti-Prohibition associations; and the brandy tax and subsequent cancellation of grape contracts. Additionally, internal conflicts are discussed, including member resignations. New business ventures are also raised and include raisin making, grape juice production, and sugar extraction from grapes.

Box 9  
**Volume 9 1917 July 9-1920 October 4**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Minutes detail the association’s response to Prohibition; investment in alternative markets, contracts with grape growers; dissolution of subsidiary companies; member resignations and litigation; and the dissolution of the association itself.

Box 10  
**Volume 10 1920 October 25-1923 October 17**  
**Scope and Contents**  
Topics discussed include divestments of property; litigation; committee vacancies; stock certificate redemption; the cessation of stock trading; and the dissolution of the association itself.