

A Local Wine With Tradition

"Some of the most dreadful mischiefs that afflict mankind proceed from wine; it is the cause of disease, quarrels, sedition, idleness, aversion to labor and every species of domestic disorder."
—Ancient Greeks

"Who loves not wine, women and song
Remains a fool his whole life long."
—German verse

The latter assumption is the more popular one at LaSalle Wines and Champagne, Inc., on Grand River Avenue in Farmington. LaSalle was begun by Morris Twomey as the Windsor Wine Co. in Walkerville, Ont. But when Prohibition was repealed in the United States, the company moved to Farmington and set up shop under its new name on April 10, 1933.

And for the last 34 years the firm has occupied the old Detroit United Railways building here.

It has shown that a Michigan firm can succeed in an industry dominated by California products and imports—in fact, LaSalle has an importing subsidiary.

PART OF THE CURRENT success of the domestic winery can be attributed to Fritz Doerflinger, chief wine maker and chemist.

Fritz—he tells everyone to call him by his first name because his last name is too hard to pronounce—joined the company in February 1967, and he proudly announced that sales figures rose 15 per cent since he started.

It appears that LaSalle has a good thing in Fritz because his family has been in the wine business since 1811 at Muelheim in Baden, Southwest State, Germany.

The chemist attended Geisenheim Wine Institute for Chemical Research for Wine, reputed to be one of the best of its kind in the world.

THE CHIEF CHEMIST'S job at LaSalle is to make sure that every "batch" of wine meets stringent government requirements for varying degrees of alcoholic content. First the grapes are crushed.

Fritz explained that LaSalle uses three

basic kinds of grapes which are all grown in Michigan.

Probably the most common is the Concord, which is blue. From this grape is made dark wines, chianti, burgundy, port, and sweet red wine.

Next is the Niagara, colored a yellowish-gold, which yields white wine, sauterne, Rhine, sweet sauterne, and sweet white wine. The other grape is named Delaware and is a rose color.

The Delaware's juice is blended with the Niagara's to make various sherries and a muscatel, both of which must be baked for several weeks at about 150 degrees temperature to create the right flavor.

GRAPE JUICE is stored, after crushing the grapes, in fermentation tanks where the sugar already in the juice turns to alcohol. This year LaSalle used 15,000 tons of grapes.

Corn sugar might be added to the juice to speed fermentation. Cane and beet sugar is used only for sweetening.

There are 20 fermentation tanks all lined with glass, each holding approximately 5,980 gallons of juice.

Fritz explained that from the fermentation tanks, the wine is then pumped into storage tanks. They have 135 of these tanks at LaSalle, some with a capacity of 22,000 gallons.

When the first fermentation is complete, the wine is then drawn off the lees (the mass of skins, stalks and stems). It is stored for the balance of the winter, and in the spring it begins its slow fermentation.

During the second fermentation some of the wine might be mixed with brandy. Brandy stops the fermentation, leaving the desired sweetness.

Any wine that has over 14 per cent alco-

holic content has had brandy or something similar added to it.

When the wine mixes with oxygen, it turns to vinegar. One of Fritz's main jobs is to make sure that not too much wine has turned to vinegar while fermenting and bottling.

Fritz makes an acid test of the wine, which takes about half an hour. The test is for vinegar content in the "batch." If there is too much, adjustments must be made by adding more sugar.

Fritz visits his home ever so often where his brother Herman operates the family winery. Their mother, who was 93 in September, still controls the winery and also owns most of Fritz's home town.

THE WINERY EMPLOYS 16 full time workers who in 1966 helped produce 2,400,000 bottles of wines which netted \$1,044,000 in sales for that year.

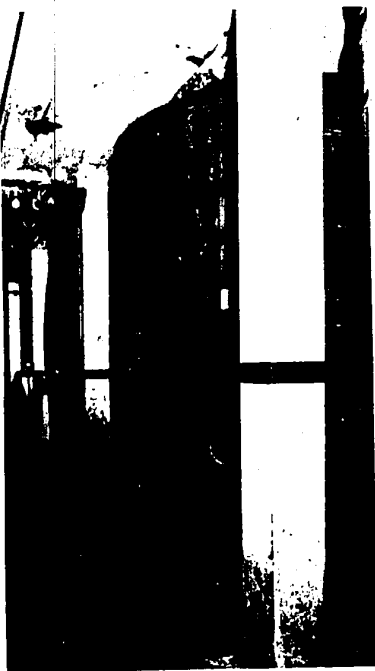
Twomey died four years ago, and the winery is now owned by Chamberlin of America, a New York-based corporation that owns many wineries throughout the U.S.

The company also maintains branch warehouses and sales offices in Battle Creek and Grand Rapids. It has 22 distributors in the lower peninsula and 12 in the upper.

The Farmington winery also has a California subsidiary called LaSalle of California which handles the company's imports from Spain, France, Italy, the Rhine Valley and other parts of the world.

Last year LaSalle earned \$1,575,000 from its imported wines sales.

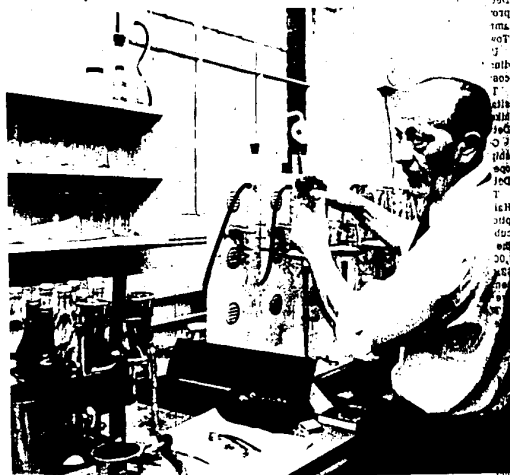
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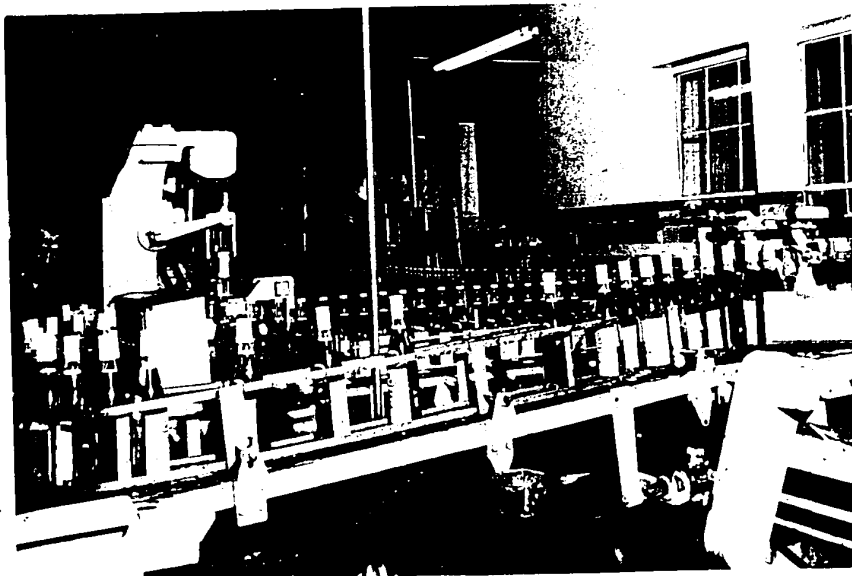
HUGE STORAGE TANKS—Wine is stored in huge casks or barrel type tanks that are loosely plugged to allow gases to escape. Some of the tanks have a 22,000 gallon capacity.



MAKING ACID TEST—Fritz Doerflinger, chief chemist, conducts tests on the wine to determine the amount of vinegar that may have formed during fermenting and bottling. The test takes about a half an hour.



OLD, OLD BUILDING—LaSalle has been in Farmington since the repeal of prohibition, 34 years. The building once housed the Detroit United Railways company which at one time supplied electricity to the old Masonic Temple in Farmington.



WINE QUICKLY BOTTLED—Nearly 1,700 cases of wine are packed a day. The bottlers must be careful that the wine is not exposed to too much oxygen which will turn the wine to vinegar. As the bottles travel along the belt they are cleaned by vacuum—the dirt is sucked out with air.

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IMPORTED WINES—Many different wines that are imported from all over the world—Spain, France, Germany and Italy. The imported wines in Farmington come from the California office which does most of the importing for LaSalle.

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