

**WINE NOTES** | By Dorothy J. Gaiter and John Brecher**THE EAGLE HAS ... DISAPPEARED?**

We recently opened a bottle of Mont Eagle 1984 Cabernet Sauvignon from Napa. (We bought the bottle, along with others, from the estate of an old friend who collected wine.) It was so good that I wanted to find out more about it. No matter how I searched, I cannot find any information. I must assume that another winery bought them out and there is another name. Can you give me any information?

—Maureen Schmitt,  
Naples, Fla.

We are asked questions like this every couple of weeks and they always make us smile. Many years ago, we, too, bought and opened a dusty bottle (of Zinfandel) from an unfamiliar California winery, loved it—and couldn't find anything about it.

We even wrote to the winery, but the letter was returned.

So we finally contacted the Wine Institute in California, which told us that the winery was long out of business, adding, "Your dealer must not sell much wine if a bottle stayed on his shelf that long." And that's the problem. Wineries come and go, so your chances of drinking a bottle from a winery that no longer exists are greater than you might expect. Not only that, but more and more large wine companies and négociants are creating new labels all the time that they use for a while before they simply move on to a new label. And, on top of all of this, some places now create personalized labels for individuals. If you can't find the winery anywhere on Google or on any of the big wine search engines, such as wine-searcher.com, wineaccess.com and winefetch.com, just enjoy the wine for the very rare item that it is. (Don't save it! Drink it and celebrate it.)

It is true, though, that sometimes old labels connect you with some very interesting history. Consider that Mont Eagle. First, it's not related to Monteagle Winery of Tennessee, which we wrote about a few years ago. We

couldn't find anything about Mont Eagle in any of our old books or anywhere online. So we went to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office Web site to look for a registered trademark (go to [uspto.gov](http://uspto.gov), click on trademarks and then search TM database). Aha! That led us to a 1987 trademark registered under Vichon Associates and Robert Mondavi Corp. We double-checked this information by searching the online records at the Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau Web site (go to [ttonline.gov/colasonline](http://ttonline.gov/colasonline) and click "Public Cola Registry"). This search brought up Vichon Associates again, with records on the Mont Eagle name dating back to 1981.

We remember the charming Vichon Winery on the Oakville Grade. We dropped in there more than 25 years ago and especially enjoyed a

charming white that they called Chevrier Blanc.

It was a blend of Sauvignon Blanc and Sémillon. Vichon was purchased by Mondavi in 1985. So, with these clues, we contacted Mondavi, where no

one remembered the name, but they, in turn, advised us to check with George Vierra, who was one of the three owners of Vichon and a former employee of Mondavi. He told us that Mont Eagle "was a second label I started at Vichon before selling the winery." Julia Flynn Siler writes in her book "The House of Mondavi" that when Mondavi purchased the winery, "Vichon was stacked to the ceiling with unsold cases." Chances are Ms. Schmitt has one of those bottles.

Mondavi ultimately turned Vichon into La Famiglia to make Italian varietals when that was a hot trend in California. We liked its Moscato. The brands La Famiglia and Vichon were sold to different companies, while the original, former Vichon winery itself is now a small family-owned winery, called Diamond Oaks.



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