

Pioneer Vignerons:

Johann GRAMP: (1819-1903)

Johann Gramp was born at Eichigt, near Kulmbach, Bavaria, on 28th August 1819. He emigrated to South Australia on the *Solway*, arriving at Kangaroo Island in October 1837 and working there for about a year before moving to Adelaide, where he was engaged on the construction of the South Australian Company's wharf at Port Adelaide. He then moved to a small German settlement at Hope Valley, where he farmed for several years.

In November 1846 Gramp purchased 83 acres of land for £83 at Jacob's Creek, near Rowland Flat in the Barossa Valley, and the following June he bought a further 97 acres costing him £185. His naturalization papers, which are dated 2nd May 1848, record that he was a farmer on part of the Wiltshire Special survey. Wheat was his main crop but he also planted a garden and vineyard.

Family tradition says that Gramp made his first wine, an octave of Hock, in 1850. However, the first documented evidence of his wine dates from 1859 when he exhibited at the Lyndoch Valley Agricultural and Horticultural Society Show. He was awarded a first prize for the best collection of wine grapes, was unplaced in the class for the best wine of the 1858 vintage, in which he exhibited two wines, and obtained the first prize in the class for wine of any vintage. Grape growing was expanding rapidly in the Barossa Valley at this time and the local shows attracted large numbers of exhibitors.

Johann Gramp married Johanne Eleanore Nitschke, from Brandenburg, Prussia, on 26th November 1851. Their family comprised three daughters and four sons. The Gramps were active in the Lutheran Church, and in the 1860s Johann was a member of the Barossa East District Council, serving for a time as its Chairman. He was also one of those who proposed that a public school be established at Rowland Flat.

Gramp remained a farmer all his life but gradually increased the size of his vineyard. In 1876 he had six acres of vines and by 1892 he had extended it to eight acres. The cultivars he was growing were Hermitage, Shiraz, Mataro, Verdelho, Blanquette, Sherry (Albillo), Malaga, Black Portugal, Madeira and Pedro Ximines. In 1876 he produced 2,000 gallons of wine and his output remained around this volume for the next 30 years.

He exhibited regularly in local wine shows, winning numerous awards, though he did not show his wines at the annual Adelaide Wine Show. The best known of his products was a dry table wine of a Hock style which was sold by Adelaide wine merchant W.P. Auld under the name 'Carte Blanche'.

The Gramps' eldest son Gustav established his own vineyard at Rowland Flat in 1874 on a property he named 'Orlando'. He built large wine cellars at Orlando Vineyards in 1886 and by 1892 had 23 acres of vines, 17 of which were in full production. In that vintage he produced 3,200 gallons of wine. Production doubled to 7,500 gallons in 1903, the wines produced being Blanquette, Sherry and Mataro.

Johann Gramp died at his Rowland Flat home on 9th August 1903 and was buried at the local Lutheran cemetery. The wine business established by him and his son Gustav was still a relatively small affair at the time of Johann's death but Messrs. G. Gramp & Sons Ltd. was to grow into one of the giants of the Australian wine industry by the 1930s under the direction of Gustav's sons Hugo and Fred.

Source

John Healey; *S.A.'s Greats – The Men and Women of the North Terrace Plaques*, Historical Society of South Australia Incorporated; 2001

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