

The Burgundy Vineyard

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Introduction

The story of JBJ and Mathilde Portal and their Burgundy Vineyard was originally told by my father's cousin, James R. Tormey Sr., (1909-1990) in the 1970s. He recorded a series of audio tapes to verbally augment the genealogical record of how our branch of the Portal family came to become land owners in the Santa Clara Valley. Twenty years later, Tormey's nephew, Robert W. Tormey, had the tapes transcribed into text; it became 'The Portal Saga'. The text was confusing: events were frequently recorded in no particular order, some dates were obvious errors and several names were misspelled. Tormey often left the story line to include his own thoughts and ideas creating a long manuscript.

The story itself, however, was fascinating. I decided to rearrange and rewrite Tormey's words and present the story with the events recorded in chronological order. I have frequently used Tormey's words. This manuscript is a blend of my thoughts and ideas and the observations of Tormey from 'The Portal Saga'. In order to preserve the flow of the story, I have not noted exact quotations from Tormey's work. Here is the story of 'The Burgundy Vineyard'.

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The Burgundy Vineyard

On July 4, 1861 Jean Baptiste Jere (JBJ) Portal arrived in California. He had sailed from the Port of Marseilles, France, to the docks of San Francisco at the peak of the gold rush. He did not come to California to look for gold; he wanted to establish a vineyard. He was nineteen years old.

Although JBJ did not have enough money to purchase land and set up a vineyard when he arrived, his plan was to use his money to set up a small business that could garner him the necessary capital. Born in the small village of Marvejols, France, and orphaned at the age of eight, JBJ had traveled to Paris and studied law at the University of Paris. He was unable to practice law in California. Not only did he have a minimal grasp of English, but his training had been in sailing law, not in the Anglo-Saxon law which was the basis of the California Justice system. He noticed that while many people were arriving daily to look for gold, a lot of businesses didn't exist and among these was the laundry business. Everyone had to have at least two shirts - one shirt to wear, and the other sent by ship to a Chinese laundry in Hawaii where it would be cleaned and returned. Mine owners and successful gold seekers might have three

shirts - one to wear, one on it's way to Hawaii and one shirt returning from Hawaii. So JBJ decided to establish a French laundry business. He knew nothing about the laundry business but he somehow found a stranded Frenchman who had jumped ship in San Francisco. The Frenchman had come for California gold but ended up broke and hungry on the streets. He'd worked in a laundry in France and JBJ took him in and set up a French laundry business.

The business was very successful and JBJ began looking for land for his vineyard. He traveled as far north as Solano County and twice went as far south as Bakersfield, once in the summer and once in the winter. He was offered land there for as little as 10 cents an acre but he declined saying, "in the winter it's a lake" (he apparently was there when the San Joaquin was in flood) "and in the summer it's a desert". Some of that land is the Coalinga Oil fields.

In 1865, while continuing to look for suitable land for his vineyard, JBJ sold the laundry and moved to San Jose where he became acquainted with Anglo-Saxon law and established himself as a counselor in law. He also carried on an insurance business and a real estate operation. He purchased a house with several acres on South Street, later renamed Park Avenue. The house

was one of five houses in San Jose that had been prefabricated in New York, dismantled, then brought by ship from the east coast and reassembled in San Jose before locally milled lumber was available. This was the first Burgundy Vineyard site.

JBJ married Mathilde Blanche Zimmerman Widmann in 1866. Mathilde was born in Simpson, Ohio in 1849. She was about four years old when her family traveled across the country to California. She was seventeen when she married JBJ.

JBJ choose Santa Clara Valley for his vineyard and purchased about 180 acres in Cupertino on Stevens Creek Road. An additional 220 acres were purchased at a later time. Why did he select Santa Clara Valley rather than Napa or Solano where some of the best California vineyards were located? There are several reasons why Santa Clara Valley won out. One reason was economic. San Francisco was the main shipping point as well as the largest local customer for wine. It was much easier to ship from the Santa Clara Valley to San Francisco than it was from the North Bay area. There were no bridges connecting the North Bay to the San Francisco docks at that time and few amenities were available. Santa Clara Valley had land available and was

close to market.

Another reason that JBJ chose Cupertino (called West Side) was the soil. He was looking for a lighter soil than could be found on the east side of the Valley. He was particularly pleased with the land of what would be the Burgundy Vineyard because there was a certain amount of gravel in the soil. JBJ's home village of Marvejols produced sheep, cattle, goats and wine. The vineyards were just little plots of land of several hundred square feet, tilting at impossible angles. The available pasture was used to graze animals; the vines were planted on the rocky hillsides and some excellent wines came from those tiny backyard plots. When JBJ went to Paris to the University he would pass right through the heart of the main wine producing part of France, perhaps giving him his ideas on what kind of vineyard he wanted to build.

JBJ was also influenced by the large French colony in the Santa Clara Valley. The colony was so large that there was a French ministry in San Jose. DeSaisset was counsel there and was a good friend of the Portal family. The presence of these French families appealed to JBJ and the number of Germans living there was important to Mathilde, who was of German descent. In addition to English, she spoke both German and French

fluently. JBJ and Mathilde settled into the house in San Jose and did not want to move. The Stevens Creek Road site would be close enough for JBJ to supervise the development of the Burgundy Vineyard, especially with assistance from one of his three brothers, Louis.

In 1866 JBJ sent for his brother, Louis Baptiste Portal who came from France bringing with him the vines that became the basic rootstock (*vitis vinifera*) for the vineyard. The vines were planted at the South Street location and grown for two or three years, before being transplanted to the larger Burgundy Vineyard. Since there was no well on the new property at first, the vines were close to water and much easier to take care of at the South Street location.

Louis and his daughter, Mamie, lived at South Street until a temporary residence was built on the new property. Louis, with assistance from Mamie, supervised the development of the Burgundy Vineyard. A well was dug, a windmill put in and the initial buildings were built. A second well was dug. JBJ was the first wine maker to experiment with underground irrigation pipes and stationary steam engines for pumping irrigation waters. The main part of the winery was three stories high with a large storage basement. There were additional buildings including two large barns, two tank

houses with tanks, a general workshop, a blacksmith shop, barracks for the laborers and storage areas for wagons and tools. Louis and Mamie lived at Burgundy Vineyard until 1870 when they moved to Redwood City.

The Burgundy Vineyard was the first steam mechanized winery in operation in the state of California (see photo section). The grapes were loaded onto a long conveyor belt and moved from the ground to the top floor of the winery. The conveyor belt was driven by a steam engine. Once the grapes were on the top floor, they were crushed and then sent by gravity flow down to the second floor where the mixture went into the fermenting vats. After fermentation, the mixture flowed down to the first floor to be stored in prepared barrels, at least temporarily, in the basement below. The vineyard produced Burgundies, Medoc Clarets and Sauternes which were widely known in Europe. The Portal label became known as a guarantee of high quality.

The house was the last structure built and was completed about 1879. It was, of course, large. It was three stories high, topped by a cupola with a weathervane (an initial 'P') and a captain or widow's walk. It was said that JBJ would walk around the three story high walk, surveying the workers in the vineyard through a pair of large binoculars and woe be to the

worker who decided to take a little snooze - JBJ would spot him and that worker would be gone. The house had 18 bedrooms, a very large salon and immense cooking facilities. Meals for the workers as well as the family were prepared there. The house was ornate and would become an entertainment center for the French and German colonies of Santa Clara Valley.

The Portal family numbered seven when they moved from South Street into the new house at Burgundy Vineyard. Mathilde and JBJ had eight children; five children lived to maturity. Their first child, Jules Jr., was born in 1867. A second son, Samuel Emile, was born in 1869 followed by Blanche in 1870. Leone was born in 1873 and Clem, the youngest son, was born in 1877. He was 2 years old when the family moved.

JBj was an active leader of the valley's winemakers and vineyard owners. He wanted them all to improve the quality of their grapes to produce better wines. JBJ was a spirited man who could make enemies as easily as friends. He was known to be imperious, clever, gregarious, and a good business man. He was also quite frugal. His youngest daughter, Leone, remembered when it was time to prune the vines, JBJ would have the smallest children go out and pick up the cuttings from the vines and bind them into neat bundles to be burned in

the wood stove.

JBJ had a very hospitable nature and enjoyed visitors. Although they had servants, Mathilde had developed into a excellent cook with both French and German cuisine. She had a reputation as one of the most charming hostesses in Santa Clara County. Visitors were always offered good company, excellent food and, of course, the best wine. There was also the liquor cabinet. The cabinet was stocked with brandies, liquors and cognacs - JBJ and his French friends didn't go in for whiskey, gin and other 'crude' drinks. The liquor cabinet was open to the many visitors, including overnight guests. Visitors could help themselves any time they wanted. The privilege was rarely abused.

The vineyard workers also liked their drink. They were fed as part of their pay and as most of them were French or Northern Italians, they were accustomed to wine with their meals. Each man was served a pint for breakfast, lunch and dinner and on Sundays they got a quart of wine with dinner. In addition, the men liked to play cards in the barracks late at night. The loser of the card game had the job of going into the small wine cellar where the wines for everyday consumption were stored, tapping a barrel and bringing up some wine for them all. This had gone on for some time with no problem when

one night, the losing player got down in the basement, turned on the spigot, then thought he heard someone coming, panicked and ran off leaving the cellar doors open and the spigot open with the wine still flowing. The wine overflowed it's container, pouring onto the cellar floor. The doors of the cellar were open and a large sow - mother pig - with six little piglets came down the steps into the basement. The next morning someone spotted the open cellar door, went down into the cellar and found mama pig and all six little pigs passed out cold. The barrel of wine was dry and the floor was dry; those pigs drank all the wine. The piglets were easy to remove from the cellar. They were only a few weeks old and didn't weigh too much. Mama pig was a different story - she weighed between 400 and 450 pounds and they could not move her. They finally left her alone until she sobered up and was able to get up the stairs under her own power. The workers continued their late night card games but were more careful in the wine cellar.

One of the challenges facing JBJ as a vineyard owner was keeping adjusted to the current market. On one occasion he had to clear his cooperage (barrels) for the oncoming crop and as a result, hit the market at the wrong time. He had to sell 100,000 gallons of year old wine at three quarters of a cent per gallon. He was

determined he would never be caught in such a situation again and built up his cooperage to where he could store 900,000 gallons at a time without having to make room for a new crop. He then took a trip back to France to visit his brother, Jean Louis, in Marseilles and worked out a system for moving his wine. JBJ had noticed that although lots of ships were coming into San Francisco Bay with goods for the miners and the developing industry, California didn't have much to ship out other than gold so the ships often traveled back empty and had to buy gravel or sand or rocks for ballast. He began sending his wine to his brother in Marseilles. The ships who would have had to pay for ballast material to keep the ships down in the water took his wine for practically nothing to use as ballast. The wine was shipped to Marseilles and Jean Louis handled it there, bottling some of the wine under French labels and shipped it back to New York as French Burgundy. JBJ was a shrewd businessman and the Burgundy Vineyard and the Portal family prospered.

It was 1880, just one year after the family moved into the new house at Burgundy Vineyard, when Clem had his accident. He was three years old and sitting on his big sister Blanche's lap on the seesaw when the boy on the other end jumped off. Blanche and Clem fell

suddenly to the ground and Clem's back was broken. He grew up quite shortened with a humped back. When he was six he heard his doctor tell his mother not to worry about sending him to school as he was not going to live long. He decided he'd show them. Clem had long had the reputation of being a 'gutsy' man when he died in 1941 at the age of 64.

All five children spoke some French and some German as both languages were often spoken at home. Blanche and Leone were almost as fluent as their mother in both languages. In the spring of 1886, JBJ was dickering with a German firm in San Francisco and Blanche was with him. She was sixteen years old. There was a long, long negotiation and they were not getting anywhere. When one of the two German partners had to leave, he said to his partner in German, "Well, stick with it a little more but if he won't take our price, give him his". He probably thought with a name like Portal he was safe talking in German. Upon hearing his words, Blanche went over to JBJ and appeared to straighten his tie as she whispered in his ear in French, "You stick with your price and you'll get it - I just heard something". JBJ stuck with his price and he got it. It must have been a profitable negotiation because in gratitude, JBJ treated Blanche and a chaperon, a Mrs.

Fittere of San Jose, to a trip to Europe.

In 1887 the family was photographed in front of the new house at Burgundy Vineyard (see photo section). There are no signs in the photo of the devastating events about to occur. Jules Jr., the oldest son was a handsome young man and highly intelligent, having a touch of haughtiness about him - just like his father, JBJ. Jules' sister, Leone, said he was ambidextrous to an unusual degree and could write two different things with each hand and carry on a conversation at the same time. He was also an excellent rifle shot. Marksmanship was an important skill, particularly among the German community, and Jules was half German. The Germans frequently held shooting matches at the 'shootsenpark', a German center for parties of various sorts but particularly for shooting matches. It was located in San Jose, south of where Almadin Avenue cuts into the El Camino. Jules won countless medals as a rifleman.

Leone remembered that Jules and JBJ could not get along with each other. They had frequent altercations which generally ended up as shouting matches. She described one day when they were going at it hot and heavy and JBJ shouted in French at Jules, "Oh, you son of a fool", and Jules' face was red and contorted as he got the significance of what JBJ had said. If he was the

son of a fool, what was his father? Jules started to laugh. JBJ was shocked to have his son laugh right in his face until the point sank in for him too - and he started to laugh. That argument was over but not all of them ended that happily. There was a final confrontation between Jules and JBJ and Jules left the Burgundy Vineyard for good. He stayed with his friend Jack Halford for a short time and then he headed for Alaska. His skills with the rifle led him into contact with people who were hunting fur seals in Alaska. Russia and the United States had just concluded the treaty setting seasons and limits and conditions on hunting these seals so what Jules was actually doing in Alaska was poaching. Jules Jr. was shot and killed as a poacher (or by a poacher) in 1888 in the Bering Straits. He was 21 years old.

JBJ was devastated. His success had turned sour. He had lost his first born, his namesake, and he felt the weight of his faults. There was intense strain between JBJ and Mathilde immediately following Jules' death; Mathilde blamed JBJ for the death of her first born. JBJ decided to return to France to live. He asked Mathilde and the children to go with him but they did not want to move to France. Mathilde and the children had all been born in the United States and had no ties with France. They had no intention of giving up their friends and their

lives at Burgundy Vineyard. France meant nothing to them and so JBJ left for France, never to return to America.

He went to France without his wife or any of his children. For a man of his position to leave his family and leave the country was a scandal. To make the situation worse, he did not go alone. He returned to France accompanied by his niece, Marie, who was the daughter of Jean Louis, his brother in Marseilles. It was suggested by some that there was 'hanky-panky' going on between JBJ and his niece which would have been incest. This added more fuel to the scandal fire. JBJ went back to his home village of Marvejols in 1888 or, possibly, 1889. Although he still had relatives living in Marvejols, he did not stay long. He had lost considerable face when he returned without his family, without even his wife. He decided to move to Mende, a village in the same préfecture, or county as Marvejols. He lived alone receiving occasional domestic help until his later years when he had a live-in housekeeper. In 1919, JBJ wrote his daughter Leone expressing his desire to return to the United States and visit his family. Leone talked to Blanche and Clem and Emile and possibly to some friends about JBJ's possible return. Her answer to him was that there were too many friends

of Mathilde who were still bitter about the conditions under which he left. She advised her father to forget any idea of returning to this country. JBJ died in Mende in 1925 and was buried in Marvejols. It was customary in France, for people to be buried in the village, town or city where they were born. He was 83 years old. He was my great-grandfather.

When JBJ left for France, he left Mathilde in 'possession' of the Burgundy Vineyard which had a newly settled \$40,000 mortgage. It was almost impossible for a married woman to own property in California at that time. Mathilde was advised by legal council that her possession of the property was insecure and her children's right to succession to it was also impaired. She was further advised to secure a divorce because in that process, the possession of the property could be legally established. Mathilde was a Roman Catholic (as was JBJ) and this was a difficult decision to make. Two years after JBJ left this country Mathilde filed for divorce on the grounds of adultery. It was not contested. The divorce was filed in San Francisco to avoid publicity and further scandal but word spread quickly to San Jose. At that time in California, the grounds for which a woman could seek a divorce were limited to insanity and adultery. Desertion as an option

for grounds for divorce was only available to the man. The basis of that law was that a woman's place was with her husband - if a wife did not follow her husband, she was guilty of desertion. Insanity was also not an option for Mathilde. JBJ's business sense and his reputation in the community would have made any attempt to have proven him insane or mentally incompetent impossible, even in a non-contested situation. That left Mathilde with adultery as the only possible grounds with which to seek a divorce. Her home and livelihood depended on this suit and so she went to court and charged JBJ with adultery because, after all, he had left the country with this young woman, this niece. The court accepted it and the divorce was secured in 1890. As a lawyer himself, JBJ would have known that a divorce would be necessary to provide Mathilde with clear title to the vineyard and that adultery would be the only grounds available to her. Although some members of the family believed in the 'hanky-panky' story, JBJ was not known to be a 'ladies man' and it is possible that in addition to escorting his niece back to her family, he was providing Mathilde with a means of securing the property for herself and his remaining four children.

As the owner, Mathilde managed the Burgundy

Vineyard successfully. She was not only a wonderful hostess and mother, she became an excellent business woman. She was able to take charge of the extensive properties and the complicated manufacturing procedure. Emile, her eldest living son, was the vineyard manager and the vineyard did very well. The Portals were able to meet their living expenses, their operating expenses, and they were paying off a portion of the mortgage on a regular basis. Emile was 21 years old. In 1894 and 1895, pictures of the Burgundy Vineyard were published as one of the outstanding features of Santa Clara Valley. All was well.

No one is sure of the exact year that Phylloxera arrived in Santa Clara Valley and no one really knew how devastating its effects would be on the California vineyards. Phylloxera (pronounced 'fil-ox-era') is a small yellow-coloured aphid. The adult insect is about 1mm long and is barely visible to the naked eye. It is native to North America where it lives in harmony on vines of American origin without causing them harm; these American vines are Phylloxera resistant. Grapevines used in growing grapes for winemaking are a different species - vitis vinifera. They are not resistant to the Phylloxera which kills the plant's root system (see www.otagowine.com - Phylloxera and Central Otago).

The insects were inadvertently imported to England and France on nursery stock between 1854 and 1860 and brought back to California (Anaheim) on imported vitis vinifera rootstock or cuttings between 1886 and 1888. The Phylloxera reached Sonoma and Central California about 1890 and was first noted in Santa Clara Valley between 1893 and 1895. The epidemic hit the Burgundy Vineyard in 1895 with disastrous effect. The vines began to die and no one knew what it was or how to treat the plants. By the time infestation was detected, it had spread throughout all the vines and there was no way to eradicate the pests. The only known way to save a vineyard was to remove the vines entirely and replace them with rootstock from North American resistant vines. Cuttings from vitis vinifera vines could then be grafted onto the North American resistant rootstock to create a vineyard free from Phylloxera infestation. This action was simply not possible for the Portal family. They did not have the necessary physical or financial resources to undertake such a major operation. In fact, with the failing crops, they were finding it difficult to pay on their substantial mortgage. The Phylloxera epidemic was wiping out their major source of income and threatening their principal investment.

The family fought back. Blanche took a position as a

teller at the First National Bank in San Jose. When she married, Leone took her position at the bank. Clem went into the real estate business in San Jose. And still, they had to seek additional bank loans to carry them through. This was probably the final straw. The bank took over the property sometime around 1900. Clem tried a last desperate attempt to salvage the situation; he bought 20 acres which included the house. In 1910, Clem was forced to sell the house and remaining lands to the Doig family. The Burgundy Vineyard ceased to exist.

What happened to the house and land?

The Doig's replaced the remaining vines with prunes and cherries. They sold the property to Michael Caputo in 1944; he sold the property to George Yamaoka in 1958. Yamaoka removed most of the trees which had replaced the vines - he planted strawberries in their place. On October 6, 1959, the great house of Burgundy Vineyard was razed. A pair of bulldozers and a giant cable pulled down the ornate Cupertino landmark. Upon clearing the site, a large old wine cellar was discovered. There were shattered remains of wine, barrels, etc. that indicated it was used for wine storage yet there was no structure or building over the cellar and it was not connected with the main winery and wine cellars. James Tormey, son of JBJ's youngest daughter, Leone, said the family never mentioned this cellar. He believed that JBJ built a secret cellar and hid some of his aging wine so as not to have to pay federal taxes on it. One last scandal for the Burgundy Vineyard.

What happened to the Portal family?
Did they stay in Santa Clara Valley?

Mathilde died in San Francisco in January of 1909 at the age of 60. She was living with daughter Blanche and her husband, Fredrick Gehret and their two children, Robert and Clarise. Her other daughter Leone married Thomas Tormey and they had two sons, James and Warren. James was the narrator of 'The Portal Saga'. Mathilde's oldest son Emile Portal and his wife Ann purchased some property in the eastern foothills of Santa Clara County and grew fruit trees. They had two sons, Emile Jr. and George Leslie. George Leslie had no children; Emile Jr. and his wife, Marie had a son, Emile III and a daughter, Jeanette. Jeanette had four sons and Emile III had four daughters leaving the continuance of the Portal name up to Clem.

Clem stayed in San Jose. He was in real estate and had properties all over the valley. He formed a partnership with B. W. Lorigan (Portal & Lorigan) and their office was at 19 North First Street in San Jose. Around 1915, he purchased some land in the Diablo Mountain Range near Mt. Hamilton. Clem named it Mt.

Hamilton Springs. It was his son, Dee's favorite place and his grandson, Ron Portal and wife, Carol live there today. In 1929 Clem wrote to his sisters, Blanche and Leone, and his brother, Emile concerning a land sale in San Jose. He was sending them each their share (one fourth) of money from a property sale. He wrote, "Enclosed you will find by check in the sum of \$3.75, I having received \$15.00 for a little parcel of land, namely 3 x 8 feet on San Fernando Street in the City of San Jose." It's hard to imagine property of any size on San Fernando Street selling for \$15.00.²

In 1904 Clem married Gertrude Quilty. She was born in 1881 and was the oldest of the eight Quilty sisters of San Jose. Her mother's father was James Hagan. He built the family home at 356 South Third Street in San Jose where he lived with his daughter Mary, her husband Charles Quilty and their eight daughters. In 1860 he secured a franchise from the city with an ordinance authorizing the city to lay gas pipes. The first lights in San Jose were turned on in January 1861. There were then only eighty-four consumers and seven street lights.³ James Hagan died at the age of 54 at his San Jose home. Gertrude's father, Charles Quilty, graduated with high honors in law and oratory from the University of Santa Clara, practicing law for many years in

San Jose. He was the President of the San Jose Gas & Electric Company at the time it was sold to Pacific Gas and Electric Company.⁴

Clem and Gertrude had two children. Vivienne was born in 1905 and DeWitt, known as 'Dee', was born in 1906. Vivienne did not stay in San Jose. She did not have children; she had a career, she studied astrology and she had flaming, red hair. She was certainly not the typical woman of the times.

Dee went to San Jose High School where he was the student body president and where he met the woman he would marry, Helen Bair. Helen's family came to California from Mt. Vernon, Iowa in 1908. The patriarch of the family, Horace Boies, a two-term governor of Iowa, moved to Southern California with his daughter Nellie and her five daughters and the husbands of the married daughters. In 1919, Nellie's oldest daughter Clara, her husband John and their three children moved to San Jose. John and Clara purchased a home at 242 South 12th Street where they raised Meredith, Horace and Helen Bair (b.1908).

Following High School, Dee attended San Jose State College where he was again student body president. He was also active in drama, public speaking and all types of athletics. Dee joined the coaching staff at

San Jose State College in 1934. He was given the job of football backfield coach, with the added duty of setting up a boxing program for the college. He was very successful. His boxers won five individual NCAA titles, two AAU crowns, 17 Pacific Coast intercollegiate championships and one Olympic gold medal. In dual match competition, the Spartans were 79-16-9 and had one string of 26 consecutive victories that spanned three seasons. He invented or developed many ideas designed to make boxing a safer sport. He was the pioneer in the use of protective headgear. Dee also was instrumental in the development of boxing as a campus activity. At its peak in the 1950's, as many as 1,300 men participated in the annual San Jose State College Novice Tournament to sold out crowds in Spartan Gym.⁵

Dee and Helen were married in the chapel at Stanford University in 1932. They lived with Helen's parents at the 12th Street house. Clara's husband, John passed away in 1935; in 1936 Ron was born, followed by Nancy in 1942. That same year Dee joined the Navy. He was stationed in Athens, Georgia and Helen and the children joined him there. They all returned to Clara and the 12th Street home in 1945. The family spent summers and all weekends in the mountains on the ranch at Mt. Hamilton Springs. Suddenly and tragically, Dee was

killed in an accident at the Mt. Hamilton Springs ranch. It was 1953 - family and friends were devastated.

Ron married his high school sweetheart, Carol Broome, in 1956. Their son Dave was born in 1958 and daughter Janet was born in 1961. Ron is a retired teacher, an author and an active sportsman. He and Carol maintain the property at Mt. Hamilton Springs. In each Portal generation, the son seems to stay in the valley and the daughter moves on and so it is with Dave and Janet. Dave and his wife Kathy have remained in Santa Clara Valley. They live in San Jose with their almost-adult children, Courtney and Kyle. Kyle is the sixth generation of Portal men to live in the valley. Janet married Craig Lammers and they have three children, Jessy, Mason, and Stacy. They live near by.

I (Nancy) married Bob Mattos in 1961 and we left California for Oregon in 1962. Our daughter Linda was born in 1965 and we moved to Tennessee in 1969. In 1984, Helen died at the age of 76. I returned to Santa Clara Valley that year to live on the property at the Mt. Hamilton Springs ranch. I returned to Tennessee in 1989 when my granddaughter Tori was born. I retired from teaching in 1998 and somehow have become the Portal Family Historian.

This is my account of the Burgundy Vineyard and the

Portal family members who have been land owners in Santa Clara Valley for over 140 years.

Nancy Portal Carson

Photo Section



JBJ Portal



**JBJ and Mathilde
with Jules Jr.**



Mathilde Portal

The new house at Burgundy Vineyard

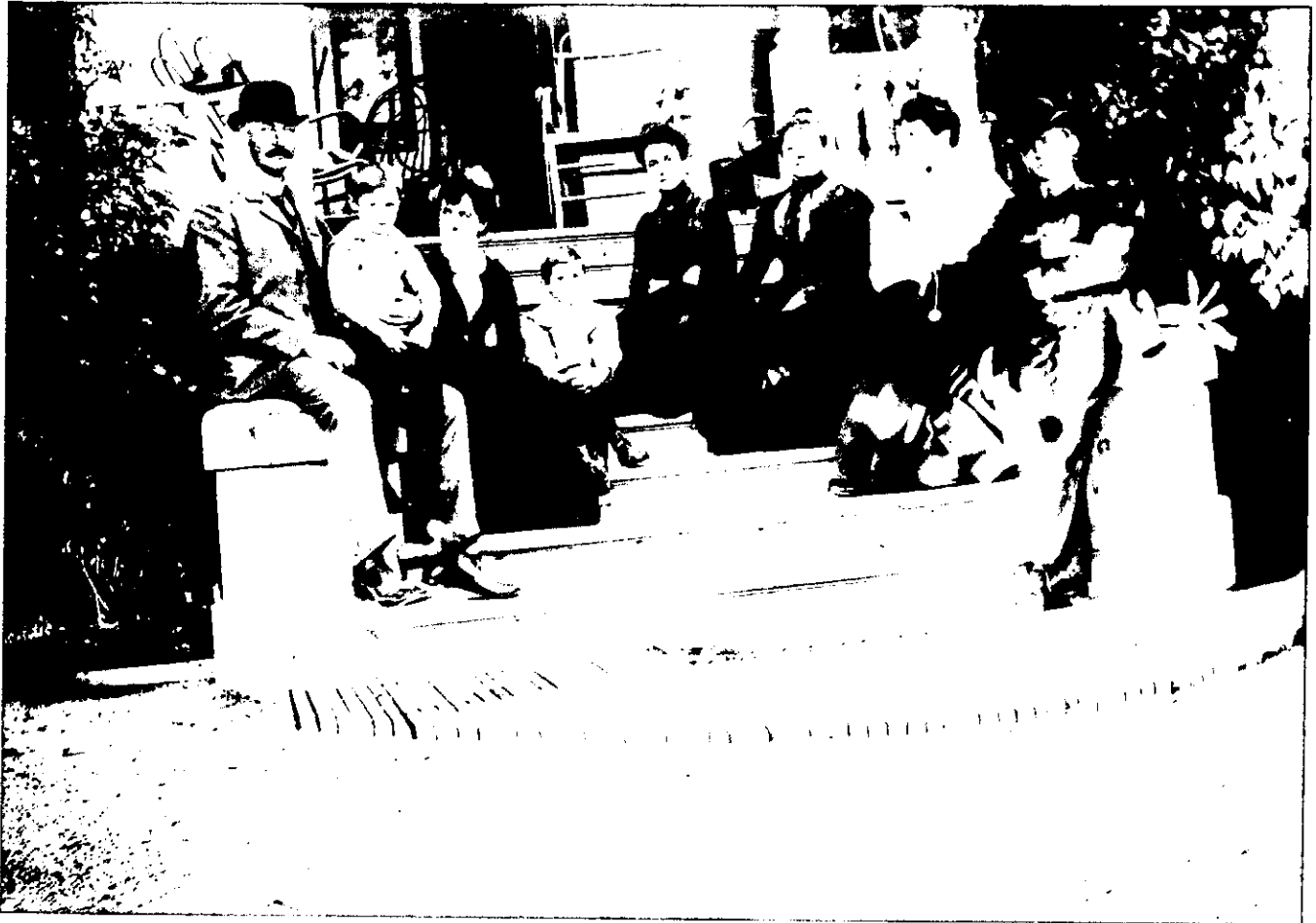
1887



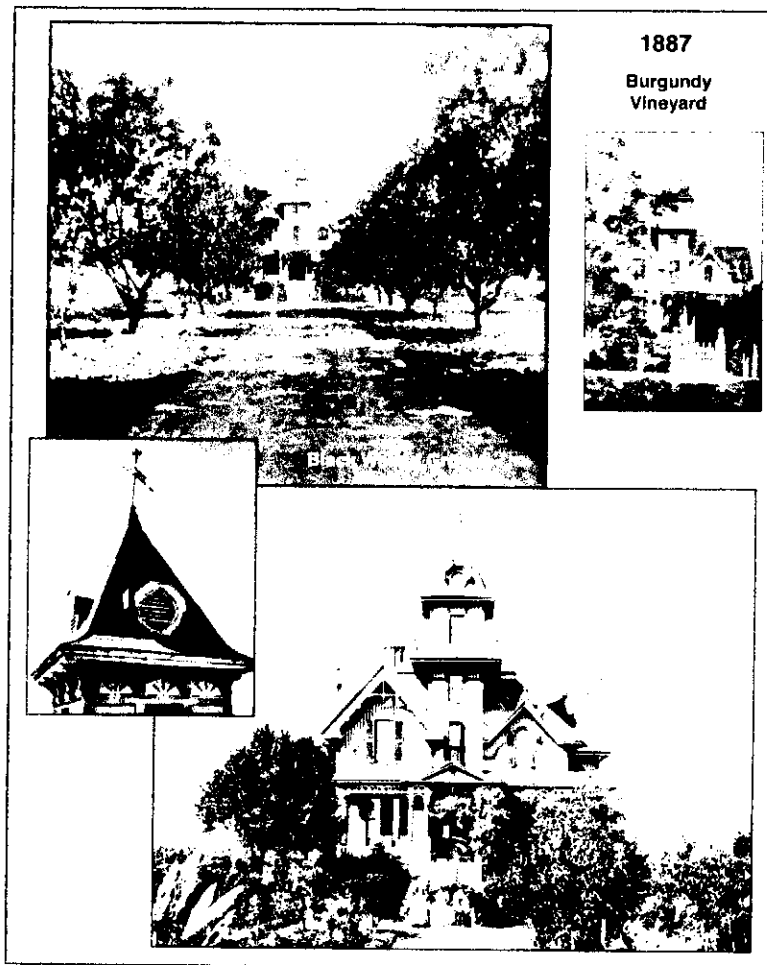
**L-R: JBJ, Leone, Mathilde, Blanche, Emile,
Jules Jr. and Clem**

The Portal Family

c.1900



L-R: Emile with wife Ann and sons George Leslie and Emile Jr., Blanche, Mathilde, Leone and Clem at Burgundy Vineyard



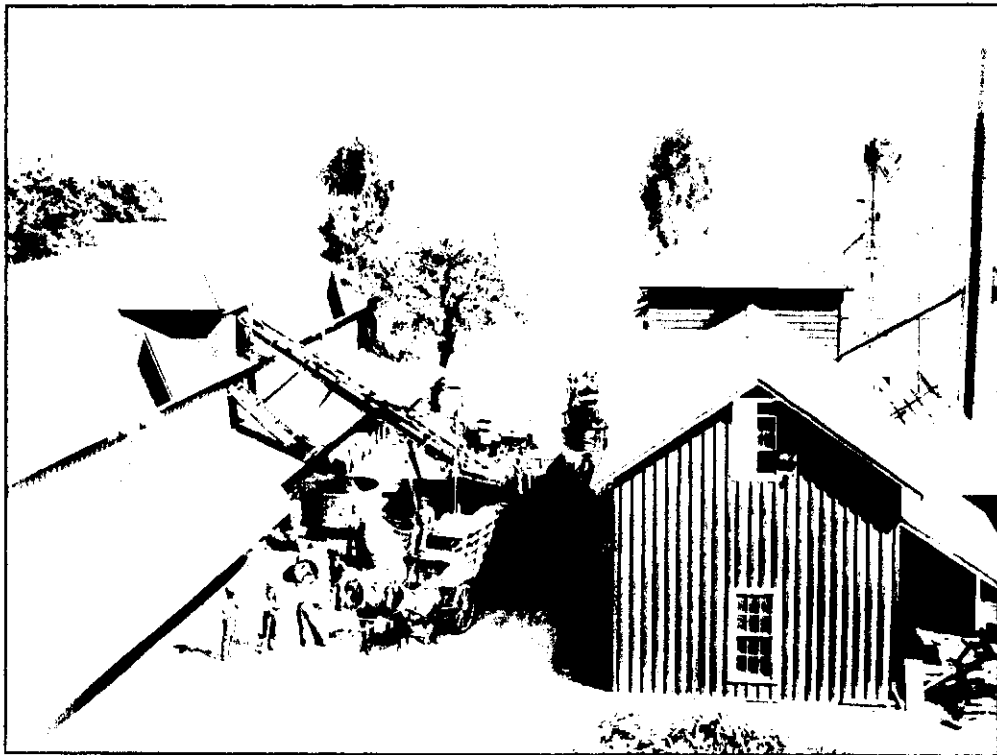
1887

Burgundy
Vineyard

The Burgundy Vineyard



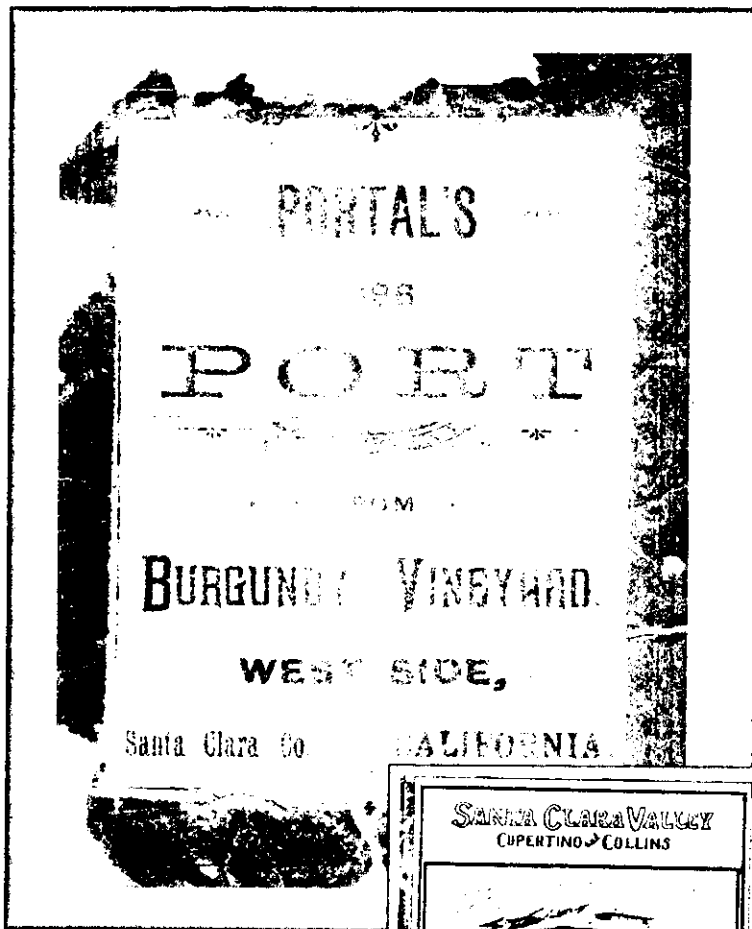
George Prothers, Photographers.



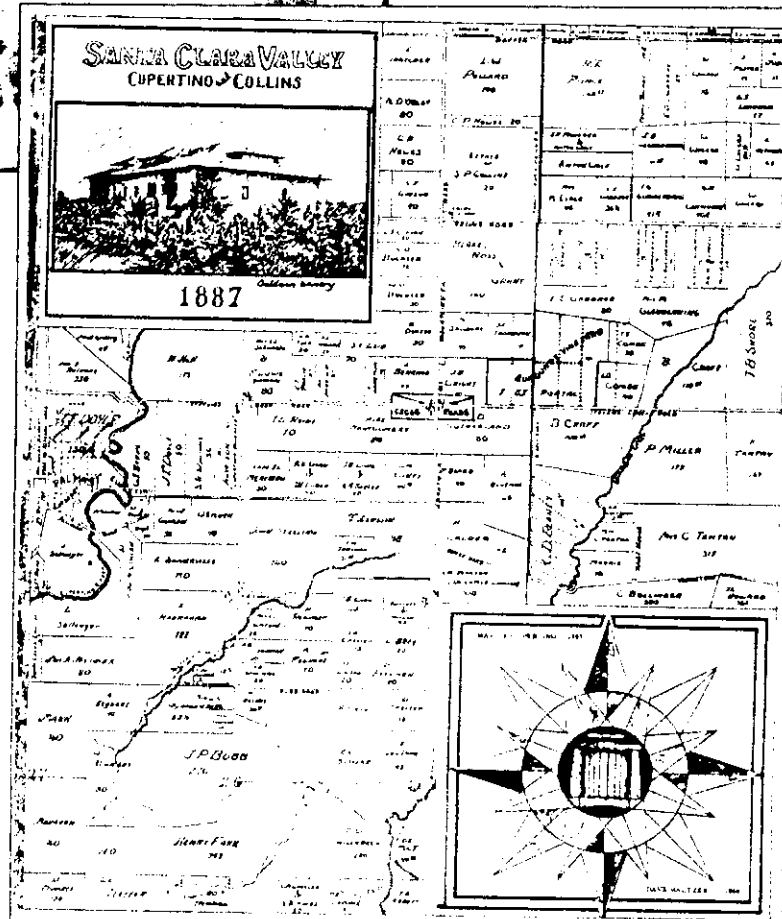
**Steam powered conveyer belt
at Burgundy Vineyard**



Burgundy Vineyard wine cellar



Original
wine label



Location of Burgundy Vineyard
Cupertino Chronicle, California History
Center, De Anza College, 1975

Sources

'The Portal Saga'; transcript of audio tapes by James R. Tormey Sr. in 1970s, transcribed March 1998, edited by Nancy Portal Carson, June 2005, Portal Family Collection

Family photographs from 1862 through 1900, Portal Family Collection

Map: location of Burgundy Vineyard; Cupertino Chronicle, California History Center, De Anza College, 1975, Portal Family Collection

Portal family discussions throughout the years

1. Phylloxera and Central Otago; www.otagowine.com
2. Letter from Clem Portal; 1929, Portal Family Collection
3. History of Santa Clara County; Chapter XXII, The Public Utilities of San Jose, page 163, Portal Family Collection
4. Heritage of Gertrude Catherine Quilty: nee Portal; Genealogy acquired from Vivienne Portal Murchie, Portal Family Collection
5. Bio of DeWitt Portal, inductee SJSU Sports Hall of Fame, San Jose State University, 2003

Note:

James R. Tormey, Sr. used many personal

sources for 'The Portal Saga'. His mother, Leone Portal Tormey, was the youngest daughter of JBJ Portal. Tormey was able to draw on her remembrances and on those of JBJ's other children and some of his close friends as well as some documents, letters and "...things of that sort".

Tormey reviewed numerous articles written about JBJ and the Burgundy Vineyard including the writings of Ralph Rambo, Clyde Arbuckle and Patricia Loomis and several articles published in the San Jose Mercury News (9/22/59 and 10/4/74). He noted that every article he read contained errors and could not be used as a reliable source for 'The Portal Saga'. For example, it was said that JBJ came to this country in 1850 (he was 8 years old in 1850), that he returned to France in 1885 (he's in a family photo taken in 1887) or he returned to France in 1910 (ten years after the vineyard was sold and a year after Mathilde's death). Some said he left his wife and seven or eight children when he returned to France (he and Mathilde had four living children at that time). He was described as a 'captain' and a 'wealthy Frenchman' when he arrived - he was neither. I reviewed a three page history paper about the vineyard that contained 11 errors which all came from the sources cited by the author of the paper. Inaccurate statements have been passed along from one writer to the next.

Using the information in 'The Portal Saga' and in family letters, photographs and miscellaneous papers in the Portal Family Collection, I have been able to fix the dates and events fairly accurately.

Nancy Portal Carson
March 2007