

Book traces Bargetto family's winemaking history

There's nothing like deciding to write a book about your family to reveal all sorts of history you never knew. Fortunately for the Bargetto Winery family, the worst you can say about them is they got caught making some wine during Prohibition.

"Vintage Bargetto: Celebrating a Century of California Winemaking" traces the history of the winemaking Bargettos from Piedmont, Italy, to San Francisco to Soquel, set in the context of California's vibrant history. The book is available



STACEY VREEKEN
Wine Press

in the winery's tasting room in Soquel.

"Last summer I realized this year the winery would celebrate its 80th anniversary, and I should get organized and put down our history before it's lost," says John Bargetto, who oversees the vineyards and operations at the winery.

Bargetto knew he couldn't undertake such a project alone, so he asked local historian Geoffrey Dunn to co-write the book and graphic artist and

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BARGETTO WINERY
'Vintage Bargetto' chronicles the family's history in words and pictures.

BARGETTO

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label designer Ed Penniman to design it.

Dunn discovered new history to be added to the family story, and new photos, too.

"We're not as big as Gallo, we're not as big as Mondavi, but we have our own piece of California history," says Bargetto.

"It isn't just a Bargetto family album, I wanted to put it in the context of California history," he says. "We talked about the (1989) earthquake and how that affected the winery and trends through the decades. It's a pictorial book as well."

The book traces the family's journey from Italy to California in the 1890s, where first Phillip put his winemaking heritage to work at Casa del Mas, one of the biggest wineries of its time, and later, joined by his brother John, founded their own winery in 1909 in San Francisco, the South Montebello Vineyard and Wine Company.

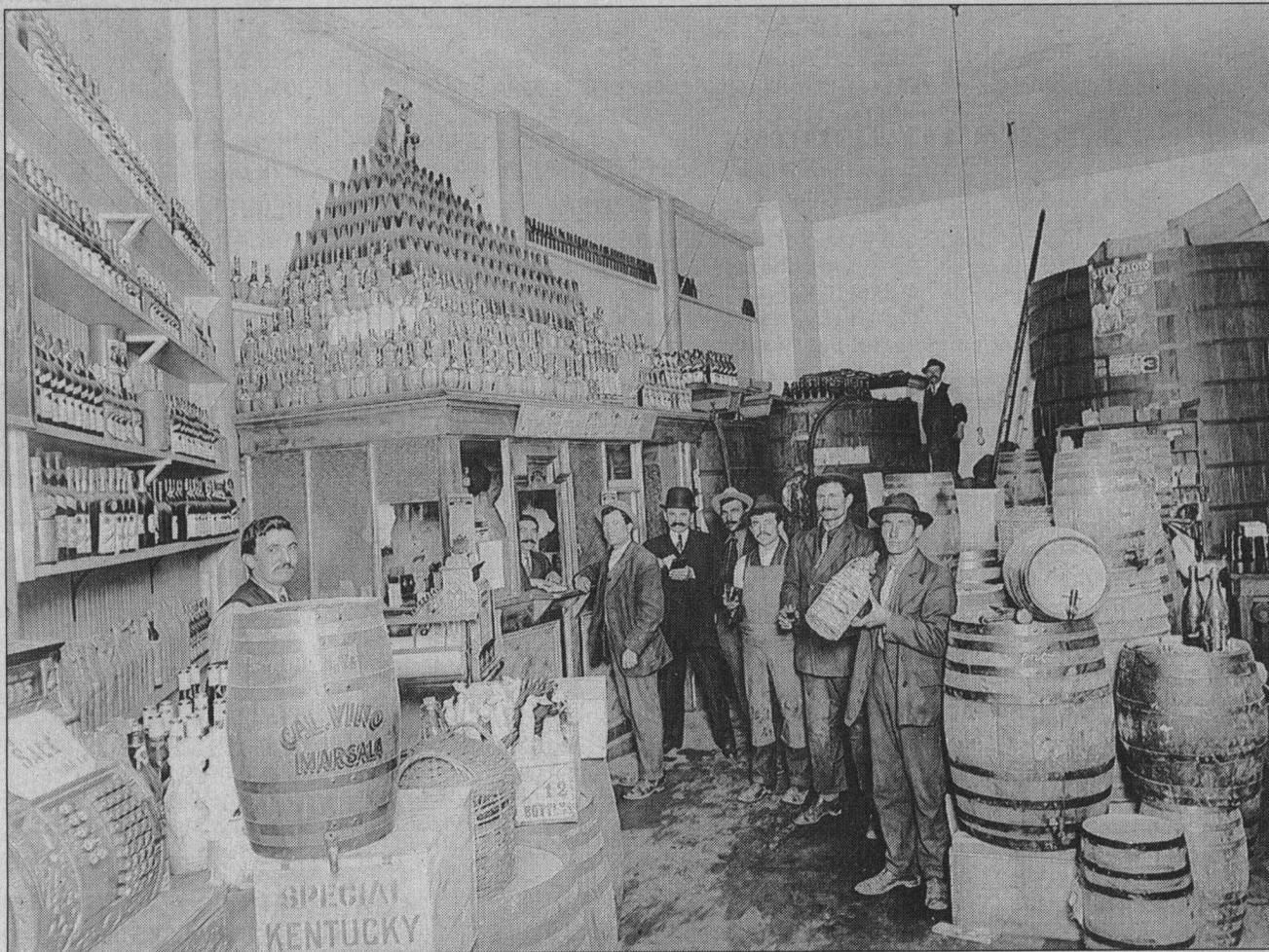
"Geoffrey was great. He dug up the information on Casa del Mas," says Bargetto.

New photos of the San Francisco winery added to the history as well.

"Montebello Vineyard and Wine Company ties us to that part of the Santa Cruz Mountains," says Bargetto, referencing one of the most fabled grape-growing locations in the region. "I found it interesting that they used that name for the winery."

The new photos reveal that not only was wine made in barrels and delivered in bulk but it was also bottled and labeled.

"It sheds some new light," says Bargetto, who is the fourth generation in his



San Franciscans buy Bargetto wine before Prohibition at the family's first winery in San Francisco, South Montebello vineyard and Wine Company.

family to make wine and the self-appointed historian.

The book also adds new tidbits to the Bargettos' local history, including information on the retail store selling produce on Pacific Avenue in the 1920s and the raid and fine incurred for making wine during Prohibition.

There's also the never-realized plans in the 1960s to plant 115-acre vineyard in the Santa Cruz Mountain with the nephew of Irving Berlin as a potential investor.

While 30 years later, 36 acres of Regan Estate Vineyards were planted

in the 1990s in nearby Corralitos, the last chapters of the book show "that heart and soul, the legacy wines are from the Santa Cruz Mountains.

"The book reminds me, my family doesn't know a lot of our history, says Bargetto, but one thing it underscores is how hard these people worked. ... Like most immigrants, they spoke no English, had no money and took the chance of a lifetime."

Wine Press appears monthly. Contact Stacey Vreeken, the Sentinel's former Food & Wine editor, at staceyvreeken@gmail.com.



Bargetto family members, 1986: From left, Beverly, Martin, John, Tom, Loretta and Paul Bargetto.

AT A GLANCE

BARGETTO WINERY

WHAT THEY MAKE: The Bargetto family specializes in cool-climate varietals, releasing wines under two labels: Bargetto and Chaucer.

■ Chaucer specializes in honey and fruit wines that John Bargetto describes as 'light-hearted,' 'fun' and 'not-so-serious,' though he also says proudly, 'There's no better in the country.'

■ The Bargetto label, under the direction of winemaker Michael Sones, produces a range of wines including traditional pinot noir, Chardonnay, merlot, pinot grigio, syrah, zinfandel, sauvignon blanc, gewurztraminer, as well as lesser known varieties such as carignane, frescolino, muscat, malbec and verdot.

THE BOOK: 'Vintage Bargetto: Celebrating a Century of California Winemaking,' by John Bargetto and Geoffrey Dunn, is available at Bargetto Winery tasting room, 3535 N. Main St., Soquel, or online at www.bargetto.com. It costs \$19.95.