

# ONE

## ARRIVALS

---

---

Credit for the first grapevine plantings in the Finger Lakes region goes to the clergyman son of a tavernkeeper, Reverend William W. Bostwick. A descendant of Arthur Bostwick, one of the first seventeen settlers of Stratford, Connecticut, in 1639, William Bostwick arrived in the Finger Lakes in 1829 to establish an Episcopalian congregation and church in a tiny village at the southern end of the Crooked Lake, known for its cursive y shape. Bostwick's connection to Connecticut is fitting since, in one way or another throughout its early history leading up to independence from Britain, New York was tied to New England, first as an extension of the colonial settlement and then as a welcome discovery by men and women breaking away to start new lives and families.

Among the first group of settlers in New England's Danbury, Connecticut (1684), were Thomas Taylor, Thomas Barnum, and John Hoyt. These three first families of Danbury remained intertwined for generations. On July 5, 1810, Ira Taylor had a new first cousin named Phineas Taylor (P. T.) Barnum. Ira and Phineas were fourth generation descendants of Thomas Taylor and Thomas Barnum respectively. The Barnum family was connected to the Hoyts by marriage.

Around the start of the nineteenth century, Ira Taylor left Connecticut to settle on a farm in Tioga County's Halsey Valley, near Binghamton, New York, where he and his wife Mary raised four children on the farm: Horace, Fred, George, and Sarah. As an adult, George, the third child, operated a successful cooper's shop in Halsey Valley. In 1854, George married another Danbury founding family member, Maria Lucy Hoyt, the granddaughter of Nathaniel Hoyt Jr. who fought with George Washington at White Plains. George and Maria Lucy subsequently had two children, Josephine and Walter Stephen. Born January 25, 1858, Walter grew up helping his father on the farm and in the cooper shop where they handcrafted barrels for butter, cider, and other foods.

At age twenty, Walter married Addie Chapman and left Halsey Valley; two years later, he lured his parents George and Maria Lucy into making the trip some ninety miles east to settle with him and his wife at the western shore of the Crooked Lake, in the spectacular Finger Lakes region of New York, which, like the Taylors' ancestors, had once belonged to New England.

After the American Revolution, with the British firmly pushed out of the Great Lakes region, and the Iroquois Nation subdued, New York State legislators discovered that, citing a 1629 royal land grant from Charles I, the Massachusetts Bay Company claimed rightful ownership of central and much of western New York. New York State, however, claimed the same region as a grant given to the Duke of York under England's Charles II. After much debate, in 1786 Massachusetts agreed to turn over sovereignty of the territory east of Seneca Lake to New York. Located in the approximate center of the south-central Finger Lakes region, Seneca Lake is one of the eleven Finger Lakes. In return for the land, New York acknowledged Massachusetts' right of purchase of the property held west of Seneca Lake—in all, about six million acres that included the long southern tier border that divides New York and Pennsylvania and as far north as the shores of Lake Ontario.

In 1788, Massachusetts sold its right of purchase of the New York land to two of its citizens, Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham. The many thousands of square acres took in what today includes the counties of Steuben, Yates, Ontario, and parts of Wayne, Allegany, Genesee, Livingston, and Monroe. Phelps and Gorham were unable to attract as much money from settlers as they had imagined; in 1790, they defaulted on their agreement with Massachusetts. As a result, the partners gave up all but 260,000 acres that began at the western shores of Seneca Lake and ended to the west at the Village of Dansville, in Livingston County. The area's northern border began approximately along today's auto Routes 5 and 20, which once served as the main east/west arteries across the state, and extended south to the Pennsylvania border. Needing money, Phelps and Gorham soon sold the land to Revolutionary War financier, Superintendent of Finance of the United States, founder of the Bank of North America, U.S. Senator, and for a time the richest man in the republic, Robert Morris. At the time, however, Morris was heavily invested in land speculations that later ruined the good name that he had acquired since his arrival from Great Britain as a young man. Needing money himself to cover some of his bad investments, Morris quickly sold the 260,000 acres to British speculators in London, Sir William Pulteney, John Hornby, and Patrick Colquhoun. The land that these men bought thereafter came to be known as the Pulteney Estate. By the end of the 1793 summer, an agent for the "Estate" established the Village of Bath

about twelve miles south of the Crooked Lake, from which he parceled land to the buying public.

In 1796, the Pulteney Estate became part of what later was officially designated Steuben County, named after Major General Frederick William Baron de Steuben, who volunteered his services during the American Revolution. Settlers came to the region from the British Isles, from neighboring states, and from the rolls of Revolutionary War soldiers and officers. Many of the war veterans settled in the valley located between the Town of Bath and the southern shore of the Crooked Lake, an area that became known for its timber, fruits, grains, and animal feed crops—they called it “the pleasant valley.”

Toward the end of the eighteenth century, Revolutionary War veteran Captain John Shether started a grain farm right at the southern tip of the Crooked Lake, about two miles north of “the pleasant valley.” The village in which Shether made his home was known as Pegtown, named after a factory in the area that used surrounding timber to produce wooden pegs for shoes and boots. Shether failed in business and later sold land to Judge Lazarus Hammond. Soon after that, former General George McClure established the first retail general store in Pegtown. Hammond and McClure kickstarted what became a bustling community. By the start of the nineteenth century, industrious settlers around the Crooked Lake were harvesting timber from the surrounding forests to build homes, barns, tools, and furniture, and raised corn and grains, especially barley and buckwheat. As the communities around the lake continued to expand and reduce the forests, agriculture slowly grew in importance.

In the early 1820s, Judge Hammond took great interest in that part of the Erie Canal plan that concerned itself with a smaller canal to be dug between the Crooked Lake and Seneca Lake, which was connected via existing waterways to the Erie Canal system and to the Hudson River. Envisioning the commercial growth the small canal between the two Finger Lakes could produce, Hammond laid out a port at the southern tip of the Crooked Lake and planned a street grid. Thankful to Judge Hammond for his donation of a separate section of land to establish a central square, the community changed the name of the village from Pegtown to Hammond’s Port, later to become known as Hammondsport.

Grain was the first crop to benefit from the Erie Canal when it opened in October 1825. By the mid-nineteenth century more than a million acres of wheat was grown in New York State, mostly in the western part of the state, and more than five hundred thousand acres of corn. A wide swath of agricultural land developed along the path of the canal system from Buffalo to the Hudson River. In the 1840s, the number of New Yorkers involved in

agriculture reached a peak of nearly five hundred thousand. This spurt in agricultural wealth became the catalyst for the development of an industrial revolution of manufacturing to supply growing communities across western and central New York with both consumer and industrial goods; this in turn caused a drop in the farming population by 1870 from five hundred thousand to 350,000.

One agricultural crop that had been on America's mind since Spanish explorers arrived in North America—grapes—received attention in nineteenth-century New York State, and, by extension, in Hammondsport, where grape farming began after Judge Hammond sold Reverend William Bostwick enough land in 1829 to build the Saint James Episcopal Church and rectory, and to plant a garden. Being an avid gardener and apparently seeking to produce wine, although no evidence exists that he ever did, Reverend Bostwick contracted for grapevines from Hammondsport's first tavern owner, Richard Sheffield, who had arrived from the Hudson Valley and had grape-grower connections downstate.

In the 1980s, the late Hammondsport area historian, Richard Sherer, discovered a copy of a *Genesee Farmer and Gardener's Journal* for which Bostwick had written a column.

February 23, 1833

The Vine. It's [*sic*] Cultivation in the United States.

[P]ermit me . . . to offer a few remarks on a subject which is daily increasing interest and importance in our country, the cultivation of the vine. I know not that they will be of much value, or add anything to the improvement of this interesting branch of husbandry. I would indulge the hope, however, that they may not be altogether useless. They will be ranged under the following heads: 1<sup>st</sup>, the acclimating of the European grape. 2<sup>nd</sup>, the improving of our native varieties.

From Thomas Pinney (*A History of Wine in America, Vol. I*), and other historians, we learn that the first recorded grape plantings in New York State were at the Dutch settlement on Manhattan Island in the early seventeenth century, to no apparent success. Then, in 1667, French Huguenots tried to grow European grapevines just north of Manhattan, but when their attempt failed they made wine from the native vines around them. They did not like the results.

In the 1820s, a Frenchman named Alphonse Loubat tried but failed to grow European vines in Brooklyn. Following Loubat, Alden Spooner, the publisher of the *Long Island Star* newspaper, with headquarters on Fulton Street in Brooklyn, failed with vineyards he had planted on land where the revolutionary Battle of Long Island had been fought, now part of Brooklyn's Prospect Park. Finally, at West Point a Frenchman, Thomas Gimbrede, who taught art to Army cadets, decided to try to create European-style wines from North American grapes. When Gimbrede discovered he could not achieve the subtle taste of European wines, he abandoned his efforts.

The reason for the failure to grow European vines was still unknown. All that horticulturists knew at the time was that the vines lived for a brief period, maybe up to three years, and then abruptly died. They correctly assumed the cause was environmental. Climate certainly had something to do with the failures, especially humidity, which introduced fungus to the vines that may not have been known in Europe, but climate was only part of the problem. Another four decades would pass before they uncovered the main culprit.

It seemed that the only early-nineteenth-century European grapevine successes in New York were the specimens in the nursery at the Linnaean Gardens branch in Flushing until, when visiting South Carolina during the period, William Prince, the man who ran the gardens, came across what he thought would make a good table grape. He named the grape Isabella, after Isabella Gibbs, the woman from whom he had received the cuttings, who knew neither the grape's origin nor its name. Robert Underhill had planted and failed to grow European vines at Croton Point in 1825–26; he decided to try Prince's Isabella grape in 1827. Along with Isabella, Underhill planted Catawba, another grape that was discovered in the Carolinas—North instead of South—between 1801 and 1802. Underhill grew each as a table grape, and both survived.

In a later issue of the *Genesee Farmer and Gardener's Journal*, Reverend Bostwick claimed that the native varieties possessed excellent properties unknown to the European vines; they were “hardy and adaptable to the local climate.” He went on to say that European grapes “had thinner skins and more abundant juice,” and that may have made them “superior for wine production.” He recommended crossing the species to create hybrids.

The good reverend was onto something. Isabella and Catawba were first thought to be native wild grapes, but were actually field hybrid crosses, the result of spontaneous breeding between true wild American grapes of the *Vitis labrusca*, *Vitis riparia*, and other native species and some of the European vines of the *Vitis vinifera* species that were planted alongside them by Europeans and Americans throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries. (The field crosses are often referred to as *Vitis labruscana*. A marker of their hybrid status is how the vines handle weather conditions and diseases compared to European grapes)

By recommending the development of hybrids, Reverend Bostwick was prescient by thirty years, which was about the time a major infestation of a microscopic root louse, *Phylloxera vastatrix*, threatened to clear Europe of its vineyards.

*Phylloxera* was the second wave of disease to hit France in the nineteenth century; the first had been a serious fungal attack that was subdued by the use of sulfur sprays. Both diseases were native to North America but *Phylloxera* proved more disastrous and not so easily subdued. The louse lives in North American soil, where, over millennia, grapevines had developed resistance to its hunger for root material. During nineteenth-century scientific experiments, North American vines being studied in Europe introduced both the fungal and root louse diseases to that continent. Around 1865, just after the fungus was treated in French vineyards, problems caused by *Phylloxera* started showing up in the French Gascony region where vines began to wither. The local problem turned rapidly into devastation across France and then the rest of Europe, and even across the ocean back to the United States where, in California, the European species *vinifera* had become a primary grapevine crop. Fixes to the problem included such drastic measures as using explosives or dumping chemicals in vineyards. One fix was the one referred to by Reverend Bostwick: purposeful cross-pollination of two or more species that creates an interspecific, or hybrid, grapevine species.

Not all Europeans were happy with the hybrid solution. Further work was done to find a cure. Success was achieved in the latter part of the nineteenth century, when scientists recommended grafting European scion wood onto American rootstock so that below the graft a *Phylloxera*-resistant North American root system supported European *Vitis vinifera* cultivars above the graft. This grafting to maintain resistance continues even today in nurseries for rooted cuttings that are sent to wineries to establish or replenish vineyards worldwide.

Reverend Bostwick planted Isabella and Catawba in Hammondsport at around the same time that the first commercial wine success with Catawba was shaping up at Nicholas Longworth's winery in Ohio. A transplant from Newark, New Jersey, Longworth became a prominent Cincinnati banker and lawyer whose interest in winemaking led him to plant Catawba grapes in the Ohio River Valley. The success of his sparkling Catawba wine placed Longworth among the first commercial wine producers in North America. Others quickly followed Longworth's success, especially in Missouri and New York.

In 2007, retired philosophy professor and amateur winemaker Gary Cox stumbled across information that Cox claims establishes the first commercial wine success in New York. In 1830, a New Englander named Samuel Warren planted grapes in the Village of York in Livingston County, west of Hammondsport. By 1836, Warren was advertising wine for sale in Livingston County newspapers. His intended market included churches, for sacramental wine, and pharmacies for medicinal. Warren's grapes supposedly came from the same source as Bostwick's and were of the same North American varieties. The Warren family winery lasted into the 1870s, until railroad developers managed to acquire the land on which the family and its wine business were situated.

The next New York commercial wine success got its start in the Hudson Valley region in 1839, when Jean Jacques established Blooming Grove Winery in Washingtonville, west of the Hudson River. He used Isabella and Catawba grapes, too. Later, Blooming Grove merged with two wineries from the Erie region of western New York and, still located at Washingtonville, it was renamed the Brotherhood Winery.

In 1859, Robert Underhill Jr., a doctor and the son of a Croton, New York, grape grower, stepped outside the table grape industry and sent what he called "therapeutic" wines to the New York City market. By that time, the first commercial wine to come from Hammondsport had been produced, but only after considerable groundwork in the form of a successful table grape industry.

From Bostwick-supplied cuttings, table grapes grown around the Crooked Lake made trips by horse and wagon from small vineyards to landing ports; there, they were loaded onto scows and barges and distributed locally. The promise of a longer reach for grapes came with the first wood-burning steamship on the lake in 1837, but the Crooked Lake's variety of deep and shallow points initially made navigation dangerous—the steamship eventually got stuck in the mud and was dismantled. Eight years later, the steamboat *Steuben* was launched; it remained afloat and greatly speeded up lake navigation. The first long-range trip for grapes took place in 1847, from the Crooked Lake all the way to New York City via the Erie Canal. The grapes were grown and shipped by Lemuel Hastings. His grape shipments at first seemed profitable, but over time lost him money because of the prohibitive combination cost of shipping (loading, offloading, and loading again) and keeping grapes fresh during the journey.

In 1852, the Erie Railroad gave new hope to the grape industry. Grapes were loaded on a steamship along the western shore about midway up the Crooked Lake, at Gibson's Landing near Harmonyville, soon to become the Town of Pulteney. The ship took the grapes south to Hammondsport, with a

stop or two on the way. The grapes were offloaded at their Hammondsport destination and put on a wagon bound for Bath, for loading on the railroad to major cities to the southeast. Unfortunately, by the time it reached its final destination, the grape cargo had often been badly abused.

At the time, Josiah Prentiss lived and grew grapes near Gibson's Landing. He seemed content to sell table grapes locally until 1856, when he sent a ton of Isabella grapes packed in half-barrels to Hammondsport from Gibson's Landing. The grapes traveled the same route to Bath by stagecoach and by rail line to New York City, but this time proper packing allowed them to arrive in good shape in the big city, where they grossed sixteen cents a pound.

Prentiss's success resulted in more grapevines going into the ground on the west side of the Crooked Lake. The investment in the table grape industry instigated the startup of a variety of ancillary industries, including metal works to forge axles, steamship building, and small boat building for fishing to feed the populace, and also a dairy industry. Before anyone realized what had happened, prosperity arrived in the Town of Pulteney. Historical records for the period show that to service its community, Pulteney was home to a harness shop, a shoe shop plus a shoe factory and shoe repair shop, a furniture/cabinetmaker, a basket maker (for grape-hauling baskets), three general stores, a cooper, and a noisy tavern.

Wine made a brief, small showing in the area in 1850, when the combined population of the four largest towns of the old Pulteney Estate—Prattsburgh, Wheeler, Pulteney, and Urbana (which included the village of Hammondsport)—was about 8,100; the county recorded the production of 285 gallons of wine, probably for personal consumption. In the same period, thirty thousand grapevine cuttings made their way from Ohio into "the pleasant valley" between Bath and Hammondsport. Over the next ten years, the valley became home to more than two hundred acres of grapevines.

In the Town of Pulteney, a German immigrant named Andrew Reisinger (sometimes written as Risinger) had two acres of Isabella and Catawba, the cuttings for which are believed to have come from Samuel Warren's vineyards in the Village of York. Reisinger was a trained European viticulturist. He introduced to the Finger Lakes region the importance of proper vineyard site selection, plus new methods of trellising, training, and pruning vines. There's evidence that he may have been responsible for many of the grape plantings in "the pleasant valley." There's also evidence that he produced wine but didn't like the results. Mostly, we are left to speculate over the role, if any, that Reisinger played in 1857 when his neighbor Josiah Prentiss sent the first known commercial Crooked Lake wines, produced from Isabella and Catawba, to a merchant in New York City; according to historian Richard Sherer, they were under the Highland and Crystal



labels. Prentiss's winemaking operation was short-lived, but the following year, Grattan H. Wheeler and two sons founded Wheeler Wine Cellar, located about one mile south of Hammondsport. Small as it was, Wheeler Wine Cellar was the first to succeed at commercial winemaking around the Crooked Lake, although most of its wines sold locally.

In 1860, led by Charles D. Champlin, a dozen men drew up Articles of Association for a manufacturing company "to produce native wines." Two hundred shares of stock at fifty dollars per share were issued to create The Hammondsport and Pleasant Valley Wine Company, which the shareholders decided to locate in the once-timber rich pleasant valley area that had become nearly overrun with grapevines. Champlin owned the land on which the company sat and he became the largest shareholder (40 percent interest) of what ultimately came to be called simply The Pleasant Valley Wine Company. In its debut year, the company purchased nearly twenty tons of grapes at a cost of just over \$1,700, and produced about four thousand gallons of wine. In that first year, Josiah Prentiss supplied nearly one and one-half tons of grapes, making him the third largest individual supplier to the new wine company, which was off to a good start. Pleasant Valley rapidly sold out its first year's production. The following year the company increased grape purchases and produced more than 5,500 gallons of wine. A German immigrant, John Weber, was hired as winemaker. Records show that the fast-growing wine company faced the usual attendant pitfalls of doing business: payments for wine went missing, restaurants and retailers were late in paying, and some customers vanished in the middle of the night. Still, the winery went forward.

With the country on the verge of a civil war, the Treasury Department's Internal Revenue Service was given authority to license and bond alcohol as a means to control and collect excise taxes. In 1862, with Grattan Wheeler as its president (he had previously sold his own winery), Pleasant Valley became the first New York bonded distillery to make brandy. Treasury Department reports showed that more than 62,000 gallons of brandy were distilled over the next three years, by which time, 1865, the winery had also increased its initial wine production tenfold.

In 1869, Frenchman Joseph Masson joined Weber as Pleasant Valley's winemaker. Masson's job was to upgrade the quality of the sparkling wine. Later, his brother Jules joined the team. Jules came from Longworth's Ohio winery, which had fallen on hard times because of intractable vineyard diseases and the founder's death in 1867. Under the Masson brothers, Pleasant Valley released its first successful sparkling wine in 1870. The following year, Champlin sent some of the new wine to a friend, Marshall P. Wilder who headed a horticultural society in Boston. Champlin asked Wilder to tell him what he thought of the wine and to suggest a name for it. Wilder

served the wine to associates at a dinner party at the Parker House, at which they proclaimed it the greatest champagne in the entire Western continent, engendering one of the most durable brand names in American wine: Great Western Champagne, produced mainly from Catawba and Delaware grapes.

From the success of its wines at home, Pleasant Valley set up a fifteen-foot booth at the Vienna Exposition of 1873, where the company displayed one hundred bottles of wine and brandy; Great Western Champagne won top honors at the exposition. Duplicate honors followed in Paris, Brussels, and in Philadelphia. In the United States, the promotional value of its many awards moved the company's products throughout the northeastern and midwestern regions of the country, as well as to Maryland, Virginia, Delaware, North Carolina, the District of Columbia, and Kentucky.

Two additional commercial steamships joined the *Steuben* on the Crooked Lake between 1867 and 1872, in time for a rapid spurt of grape and wine deliveries in the '70s. The majority of grapes produced in vineyards around the lake were making their way to the Pleasant Valley Wine Company by steamship to Hammondsport and onto wagons to the winery. The company's wines went by stagecoach from Hammondsport to Bath and then onto the Erie Railroad, but Champlin grew tired of the slowness and vagaries of wagon shipments. When he discovered that steamship captain Allen Wood of the Crooked Lake Navigation Company was planning a railroad to run between Bath and Hammondsport, Champlin organized a group to fund Wood's Bath and Hammondsport Railroad (B & H), completed in 1872, which, of course, made an important stop at Pleasant Valley's distribution door. B & H connected to the Erie Railroad line on its way to New York City, speeding delivery and raising the reputation of Crooked Lake wines in Manhattan.

With the Pleasant Valley Wine Company as inspiration, at the end of the Civil War a group of investors raised \$200,000 at \$100 per share to form the Urbana Wine Company, with the express purpose of producing wine in the Champagne method. As the chief winemaker, and the first in the company's line of winemakers from the Champagne region, Urbana hired a professional Champagne maker named Charles LeBreton. By 1880, Urbana had a new executive winemaker, Frenchman Jules Crance, who arrived at the Crooked Lake in January 1874 to work at Pleasant Valley, but moved to Urbana in 1877 to serve as production foreman. Unfortunately for Crance and for the investors, Urbana had trouble competing and went bankrupt in 1890. It was revived in 1891 with a new issue of stock shares—after that, the company became a fixture in the local wine industry. In the early twentieth century Urbana began doing business as Gold Seal Vineyards, the label the company used for its Finger Lakes champagnes.

Between 1867 and 1876, the Pleasant Valley Wine Company, Urbana Wine Company, and Wheeler's, under new ownership, led a field of seventeen wineries around the Crooked Lake.

In the portentous year of 1878, the New York State Legislature gave the Crooked Lake a new name: Lake Keuka or, as most came to call it, Keuka Lake. The name was supposed to be a phonetic version of the Iroquois word, *ogayago*, which referred to the promontory known as Bluff Point that juts between the east and west branches to form the top half of the northern reaches of the cursive y-shaped lake. 1878 was also the year that *Lulu* was launched at Gibson's Landing: a new ship fitted with a former locomotive engine. *Lulu* introduced a new range of speed and competition on the lake. Finally, and most important, the year brought two pivotal arrivals to Keuka—one by birth, the other by relocation.

On May 21, 1878, a boy was born to Methodist Minister Frank Curtiss and his wife Lua; they named him Glenn, after the many waterfalls of the Finger Lakes region. The boy was also given the middle name, Hammond, to honor the man after whom Hammondsport was named. Glenn Hammond Curtiss ultimately proved a mechanical master both on the ground and in the air. He started as a young adult bicycle messenger for Western Union, which led to his own bicycle shop in Hammondsport. From there, Curtiss designed some of the earliest and fastest motorcycles in the world. Later, Curtiss's designs of "aeroplanes" and his flights over the lake made Hammondsport the birthplace of U.S. naval aviation.

The successes to come for newborn Glenn H. Curtiss were still nearly three decades away when twenty-year-old cooper's son Walter Stephen Taylor arrived at Keuka Lake from Halsey Valley, New York. Commercial wine was already in its second decade at Keuka. Walter was destined not just to join the local wine industry but to dominate it. His father George had a good cooperage business going in Halsey Valley and, in fact, the business became the basis for the first of many Taylor legends. As the story goes, a number of Keuka wineries went bust owing the Taylor family for barrels that they had ordered on credit. When the barrels were returned full of wine, Walter Taylor was supposed to have eased himself into the wine business by selling off the wines. The truth, however, appears to be quite different.

According to Paul Sprague, a descendant of the family that bought property from Walter Taylor in 1919 and present curator at the Greyton Hoyt Taylor Wine Museum, named after Walter's third son, Walter courted Addie M. Chapman, the daughter of a Halsey Valley dry goods businessman who had moved his family and business to Hammondsport. Addie's father owned a small vineyard on Bully Hill, more than two thousand feet above

sea level overlooking the west side of the lake, about seven miles north of Hammondsport. (A local legend has it that Bully Hill got its name in the early part of the century from the behavior of a group of rowdies who lived on the hill; every Friday night they went down the hill to the tavern in the old Harmonyville, now Pulteney, and after a number of drinks bullied townsfolk into a fight.) Sprague relates that Chapman talked to his son-in-law about the agricultural possibilities around Keuka Lake and then introduced Walter to his neighbor B. R. Streeter, the owner of a seven-acre vineyard on the slope up the hill, two miles south of Bully Hill proper.

A book written by Charles Champlin's great grandson disputes Sprague's account; the author claims that Chapman didn't move to Keuka Lake until 1889. No matter. Various archives indicate that the taciturn, hard working Walter Taylor raised bank money in 1880 to buy the seven-acre vineyard, already planted to Delaware, Catawba, and Concord.

That first autumn, Walter loaded his grapes onto a horse-drawn wagon and slowly made his way down the hill to the Grimley Grape Packing House at the lake shore in Hammondsport, right next to the railroad loading dock. Grimley's was a frenetic place at harvest time, employing more than four hundred employees to take in the grapes and pack them for shipment. Large numbers of grape growers converged on Grimley's almost at the same time each day to wait their turn until the grapes they'd brought could be weighed, boxed, and wrapped for shipment by rail to the town of Bath and beyond. While he waited, Walter befriended LeRay McCorn, who operated a winery a few yards away. It was in those conversations with McCorn that Sprague believes the young grape farmer decided to become a wine producer, although if so, Walter didn't act right away.

For two harvests, Walter and Addie lived in an old grape packing building, scratching out enough money to live on and repay the bank loan. By the end of 1880, Walter had raised enough funds to buy seventy additional acres on the Bully Hill proper. He planted twenty acres to grapes, concentrating on the Delaware and Ives grapes. He also planted fruits and grains for subsistence. With a few buildings on the farm and an old grape press, he started The Taylor Company, engaging his father to join him to press and sell grape juice in barrels. For the next two years, father and son coopered shipping barrels from the abundant white oak that surrounded the property. They sold table grapes and juice, first drawing on George Taylor's cooperage customers, which resulted in sales as far away as New York City.

The Taylors surely would have noticed the massive Pleasant Valley Wine Company's grape planting of the early 1880s. From a nursery located in Bloomington, Illinois, the company ordered cuttings comprising 100,000 Concord, 35,000 Catawba, 30,000 Ives, 15,000 Delaware, 10,000 Norton, and 10,000 Diana, all North American grapes. At the time, in response to a

growing demand for grapes, the Hammondsport *Herald* newspaper editorialized over vineyard and land purchases: "All of the choice vineyards as well as desirable or new land are so well taken up that it is difficult to purchase either. Good bearing vineyards are held at from \$500 to \$1,000 per acre while unimproved land is held at \$100 per acre. Grapes are being shipped from Pulteney, we hear, at ten cents a pound." (Five hundred to \$1,000 per acre then computes to \$11,500 to \$23,000 today.)

After receiving from the federal government Bonded Winery #17 in 1883, Walter and his father changed their company name from The Taylor Company to The Taylor Wine and Grape Juice Company. By this time, the wines of Pleasant Valley and Urbana had already gained wide exposure at expositions as far away as Chicago, with wines shipped in bottles. (In 1883, Urbana installed a mechanical bottle washer that could clean three hundred dozen bottles a day, a job that previously occupied up to three workmen.) The Taylors proceeded to produce six one thousand-gallon barrels full of wine from their vineyards, shipping some of it all the way to New York City in smaller barrels. They stayed with barrels because they had no bottling capability. They filled the barrels using steam power and gravity.

Another arrival of the period was destined to cross paths with Walter Taylor in the early 1900s, after a varied career. J. Seymour Hubbs had graduated in 1887 from the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Baltimore and practiced medicine in Hammondsport for about one year. In 1889, he became a road salesman for Germania Wine Cellars, located just north of the Pleasant Valley Wine Company. That same year, Hubbs went into a partnership with Germania's owners, the Frey family, who had established themselves in Hammondsport in hotels, restaurants, a theater, and an opera house. Together, the Freys and Hubbs assumed ownership of The Columbia Wine Company, located a few hundred feet south of Pleasant Valley, when its two owners could not make a go of it and had to sell, and then, ten years later, Hubbs bought the Frey family's share. Over the next two decades, Hubbs developed an interest in ongoing conversion to electric power in the community, an interest that led him to an ownership position in the electric company, and to electrify Columbia's bottling line.

By the late nineteenth century, the Keuka area was a major seasonal resort, and that fact helped wineries to grow. Enterprising businessmen in Hammondsport attracted visitors to the lake in summer with newspaper ads claiming they had imported a colony of brown fruit bats to devour all the mosquitoes in the area. Outgoing mail from Hammondsport was stamped with the words, "The town with no mosquitoes." The ploy must have worked: in 1892, passenger steamboat traffic was at an all-time high, and a seven-mile stretch of Keuka's southern shore was lined with a half-dozen

hotels, some presenting top celebrity entertainment of the period (local undocumented legend has Hoagy Carmichael later penning the song *Stardust* from a room he occupied at the Keuka Hotel). A great deal of wine was consumed throughout the summer and into the fall. When vacationers went home, they asked for Keuka Lake wine. This pattern was—and still is in the twenty-first century—among the most potent promotions for the Finger Lakes wine industry.

Toward the turn of the twentieth century, the Keuka grape and wine industries supported a growing number of businesses. In 1890, the area lured the successful legacy Hudson Valley wine producer Brotherhood Winery to open an office in Hammondsport, facilitating the purchase of Keuka grapes, juice, and supplies from the growing ancillary industries for its production facility downstate at Washingtonville.

Wine production reached the north end of Keuka Lake in 1896 with the issuance of a corporate charter for the Empire State Wine Company in the Village of Penn Yan, an active milling center established in the 1790s. The winery was built conveniently near the entry point to the Keuka Outlet Canal that led to Seneca Lake. In 1901, the Rose Winery was established about nine miles south of Penn Yan, along the east shore of the lake. With Hammondsport's Pleasant Valley in the lead, by the early twentieth century the number of successful Keuka-area wineries had grown from seventeen to forty. The message was out, especially after numerous wine and champagne ads appeared in newspapers and in divergent trade and lifestyle periodicals ranging from *The American Journal of Surgery and Gynecology* to *The Church Kalendar* to *Harlem Life*.

Walter and Addie Taylor's firstborn, in 1883, was a girl, Flora Josephine; Lucy Martha followed in 1887. Their first son, Fred Chapman, arrived in December 1891. As the oldest of what would become three boys, Fred was taught immediately what his role meant: he was to be the responsible one, the heir apparent of the family business.

Fred never attended college. He graduated from high school, then attended the Kentucky Military School and a one-year course at Rochester Business School. He joined the family company at age twenty-one, in 1912. He never measured taller than about five foot, nine inches, but he had the demeanor of someone of much grander proportions. His siblings almost bowed to him as a leader. Fred took his first position as sales manager and liaison between the company and its grape growers. He had a good business head and he was fairminded. Not long after he began work at the family company, Fred learned an important business lesson.

Located in the Lake Erie district some two hundred miles west of Keuka Lake, the dominant Welch's Grape Juice Company threatened to

buy up the complete Keuka grape crop at a time when the Taylor Wine and Grape Juice Company needed more grapes and did not have the land to plant them. Faced with Welch's threat, the young Fred quickly realized that local grape growers would be crucial to his family company's success and so he set out to win them over. According to company archives, 1913 was the first year in which the Taylors bought grapes from independent grape growers. Over succeeding years, the company increased its vineyard holdings, but it always bought more grapes than it produced, using many of its vineyards as a kind of viticultural research lab. The loyalty that Fred established between the company and its growers was based on the best prices for grapes and speedy payment, business practices that Welch's did not follow. Later, the Taylors trained, supported, and directed grape growers, in relationships formed, usually, on the strength of a handshake.

Clarence Walter Taylor, the second son, arrived in 1893, and followed the same path into the business as his older brother. Clarence was the shortest of the brothers and by his teens had acquired the nickname "Stubby," although not to his face. The name came from the fact that his best friend was tall and skinny, which made Clarence look even shorter and stubbier. From childhood, it was evident that Clarence would be a fastidious man: singleminded, overly neat, and industrious. At the company, which he joined in 1914 at age twenty-one, Clarence's demand for efficiency, order, and cleanliness made him a natural as overall production and facilities manager. He helped Fred with grower relations but he was never as easy with growers as either Fred or the youngest Taylor brother, Greyton.

Greyton Hoyt Taylor was born in 1903. As a boy, he gained the nickname "Spink" for his undying love of baseball statistics and his devotion to *Sporting News*, published by J. G. Taylor Spink (no relation). Baseball was just one of Greyton's interests. He was inquisitive, with an artistic sensibility and an expansive personality that brought him to explore the natural world; he loved hunting, horticulture, and music. As an adult, Greyton was average height, about five feet, seven inches, but he harbored a large, warm, gregarious personality, which, when the time came, made him a perfect candidate to be the public relations face of the family company. According to a local newspaper report, he was enrolled at Columbia University in Manhattan, but his oldest daughter Ellen Jane says that he attended New York University with the intention of becoming a classical violinist. She says that as a young man, her father had an apartment in Greenwich Village where he was exposed to musical and overall artistic culture (virtuoso that he was, in later years he counted the famed younger violinist Yehudi Menuhin as a friend). Unfortunately, Greyton's father would not permit his son's music studies to get in the way of the family business. In 1924, Walter cut off Greyton's college funds and hauled him back from Manhattan demanding

that he go to business school, and after that join his brothers in the family company.

Walter's estimations of his sons' talents were spot on—the ultimate success of the family's wine company over the decades proved it.

The Erie Canal lost out to the railroad in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The railroad was a faster and more economical means of transport. Not long after 1902 and the assembly line for Ransom Olds's first Oldsmobile out of Lansing, Michigan, Keuka Lake communities began to plan roads for automobile traffic. With the prospect of transporting grapes locally from vineyard to destination by land, and with the Erie Canal system already replaced by the railroad, the steamships on the lake were threatened with extinction. In the early part of the twentieth century, ships that remained in service became a source of local color for tourists and vacationers, but the opening of each new road put another nail into water transport's coffin. Yet, while the development of the internal combustion engine killed off one industry in the Keuka Lake community, it was about to become the basis for a new one, thanks to curious, inventive young Glenn H. Curtiss.

With just an eighth grade education, in his first job at Eastman Dry Plate and Film Company (later to become Eastman Kodak Company) in Rochester, New York, Curtiss invented a stencil machine. He also studied photography with a camera that he built himself using a Kodak camera as a model. In 1898, at age twenty, Curtiss married a Hammondsport girl, Lena Neff; he left Kodak and Rochester to start a family in the village where he had grown up. In Hammondsport, he became a bicycle messenger for Western Union, a job that stirred in him a new interest in the mechanics of bicycles. Soon, he was racing them, which led him to open a bicycle shop in Hammondsport. No doubt the steep hillsides of the region gave Curtiss an idea in 1901 to equip bicycles with motors. The following year, after building his first motorcycle, with a tomato can as the carburetor, he began manufacturing them equipped with his own single cylinder engine. In 1903, he was clocked at sixty-four miles per hour on one of his motorcycles—it was a land speed record and the first of many Curtiss records to follow.

In 1904, Curtiss teamed with early flyer Tom Baldwin, from California. He supplied Baldwin with a Curtiss 9 HP V-twin motorcycle engine for the first successful American dirigible, which Baldwin had named *The California Arrow*. That success led to Alexander Graham Bell inviting Curtiss to be a part of Bell's Aerial Experiment Association. For the next two years, Aerial Experiment produced four successively improved aircraft, each with a Curtiss-built engine. Curtiss designed, constructed, and on July 4, 1908, flew the third in the series, *The June Bug*, more than a mile at above five thousand feet to win a *Scientific American* trophy. It was the first preannounced



public flight in America and it placed Curtiss firmly in the limelight. A year later, he won a flying speed event in France. The win placed Curtiss's plane ahead of two Wright brothers aircraft and added to his American Pilot #1 license a French Pilot #2 (in France, he won a race against Louis Bleriot, who held French Pilot #1). Thereafter, Curtiss and his Curtiss Works Company made a number of headlines as the first "this" and the first "that" in quick succession. In 1911, from its small shop in Hammondsport, Curtiss Works developed a relationship with the U.S. Navy and its air program, and he sold aircraft to the Russian, Japanese, German, and British governments as well.

According to Maurice Hoyt Jr., a town historian of the period and a Taylor relative, the wineries and Curtiss Works combined gave rise in the prosperous village of Hammondsport to four hotels, seven bars and saloons, two livery stables, five groceries, three blacksmiths, three doctors, one chiropractor, one veterinarian, one harness shop, two shoe stores, two men's clothing stores, three millineries, three lawyers, one wire hood factory (for champagne bottles), two telegraph offices, three poolrooms, one railroad, one newspaper, one bike shop, two fire companies, three lumber companies, one gristmill, one icehouse, one dance studio, one electric company, one telephone company, four fraternal organizations, one photography studio, one potato chip factory, four coal yards, two drug stores, five insurance companies, one opera house, and five grape packing companies, and of course a motorcycle factory, an aeronautics factory, and a dozen wineries with a Hammondsport address.

The powerful prosperity of the area continued to grow steadily throughout the late nineteenth century and into the turn of the twentieth, but at the same time, the development of a social movement threatened the Keuka wine industry.