

10. Nielsen op.cit., p. 23. However Burger R., 'The Coming of the Wends,' *Yearbook of the Lutheran Church of Australia 1976*, p. 34 gives a lower estimate of only 400 families.
11. 'Autobiography' op.cit.
12. 'Autobiography' op.cit., p.6
13. Clamor Wilhelm Schuermann arrived in South Australia in 1838 as a missionary to the aborigines and worked with them until 1853, when he answered the call by Wends and Germans to come to Portland as their minister. He died in 1893.
14. For more information about this commune see Meyer, C. 'Two 19 Century German Communes in Victoria', *Vic.Hist.Journ.*, No.4, Nov. 1978.
15. *Tydzenske Nowiny* (Bautzen), No. 3, 19 Jan. 1850. For this and other letters from this Wendish newspaper I thank Pastor K. Zwar of Warrnambool, who himself is a descendant of a Wend, Michael Zwar who, with six other Wendish families landed in Melbourne on the *Pribislav* on 24 Feb. 1849. Like many other Wends (and Germans) Zwar and Deutscher did not write for some years after arrival, being ashamed that they might have made the wrong decision in emigrating.
16. Nielsen op.cit., p. 56.
17. Nielsen op.cit., p. 57.
18. *Tydzenske Nowiny* 13 December, 1851.
19. *Tydzenske Nowiny* 20 December, 1851.
20. *Tydzenske Nowiny* 27 December, 1851.
21. *Tydzenske Nowiny* 27 December, 1851.
22. A map of Brunswick dated 1855 in the old section of the Land Titles Office, Melbourne, shows that many Germans and Wends had settled there. The details about Michael Zwar come from a typewritten m.s. on the life of M. Zwar compiled by Pastor K. Zwar, Warrnambool.
23. In 1860 Christian Kupsch, probably a Wend, bought 43 acres in North Preston (Melbourne) for £581 and commenced farming. See *History of Preston*, Preston Council, 1968, p. 28.
24. A descendant, I. O. M. Maroske, has written a book on some of the families, *The Story of Pella*, Wimmera Mail Times, Horsham, 1975. Pella is a small town near Rainbow in Victoria. Unfortunately, though some names are obviously Wendish (Wedding, Noack, Domaschenz, Schuller, Nitschke), Maroske does not go into this aspect.
25. See Burger, R., op.cit.
26. Burger, op.cit., p.44-45.
27. Nielsen, op.cit., p.11. However Engerrand op.cit. p. 46 has different figures and already by 1925 claims only 71 000 Wendish speakers, of whom 42 800 were in Lower, 28 200 in Upper Lusatia.

La Trobe and Swiss vine growers in Victoria

S. WEGMANN # and C.B. THORNTON-SMITH *

A frequently accepted account of how Swiss came to the Port Phillip District, which became Victoria from 1851, has it that they were encouraged to emigrate and establish vineyards near Geelong and Lilydale by Superintendent La Trobe. Thus Lynette J. Peel writes:

Few other Europeans settled in the Port Phillip region. Of course those who did, the Swiss were the most numerous. The emigration from Switzerland, mainly from Canton Neuchâtel, is an example of chain migration which in this case was initiated by Charles La Trobe, Superintendent of Port Phillip District from 1839 and Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria from 1851 to 1854. La Trobe, although an Englishman, had lived in Neuchâtel from 1824 to 1827 and later married the daughter of one of the leading aristocratic families of the Canton. Shortly after he and his wife came to Port Phillip, there was considerable political unrest in the Swiss cantons as a result of which the aristocracy lost much of its power. With encouragement from La Trobe to come to Victoria a number of Swiss people emigrated to the colony and, in turn, induced more of their countrymen to emigrate.

These Swiss people settled near Lilydale, in the Barrabool Hills and in the Bannockburn division around Batesford and along the Moorabool River. Their major contribution to the agriculture of the region was in viticulture, in which they were the acknowledged leaders, and the wines from such vineyards as Yering, Yeringburg and St Hubert's near Lilydale, or Paradise and Victoria near Geelong, were successfully exhibited at a number of international exhibitions.

The influence of the Swiss in the field of viticulture was out of all proportion to their numbers: they do not appear, however, to have influenced any other sector of agriculture, and the greatest influence in viticulture was due to the activities of only a very few men, in particular Hubert and Paul de Castella, and Baron Guillaume de Pury near Lilydale, and Louis Pettavel, John Belperroud and James Dardel near Geelong.

The de Castellans and de Purys brought capital with them when emigrating and subsequently developed the three large vineyards near Lilydale – Yering, Yeringburg, and St Hubert's – vineyards which overshadowed all others in the neighbourhood both for the scale of the undertakings (the largest was 260 acres) and the enterprise with which they were conducted. They sold on the London as well as Australian and New Zealand markets and imported much of their equipment from France and Switzerland.¹

It should be pointed out first of all that while the coming of the first de Castella and the first de Pury to Melbourne was to some extent inspired by the presence of La Trobe's Swiss-born wife, Sophie née de Montmollin, it had nothing to do with wine.

After his involvement in the Sonderbund, the league of Catholic cantons whose attempt to break away from the Swiss Confederation provoked a three-week civil war in 1847, Paul de Castella realised that he could no longer hope for any sort of preferment in government service, and was sent by his father to England in the company of Adolphe de Meuron to learn the language and possibly fit himself for some post in banking or commerce. While there he heard of the fortunes to be made on sheep and cattle stations in the Port Phillip District, and persuaded his father to let him go out with some capital to buy a station in partnership with his friend. The fact that de Meuron was a nephew of Mrs La Trobe would it was hoped smooth the way for them, and indeed it was at La Trobe's house that Paul met Mr Piper, a surveyor who showed him the Yarra Valley area, and William Ryrie, from whom he was to buy the licence for the Yering run, a cattle fattening station, in 1850. The Yering homestead had a small vineyard planted by the Ryries soon after their arrival in 1838, but it was not until about 1854 that Paul began expanding this.²

Guillaume de Pury, another nephew of Mrs La Trobe, also left Switzerland in the aftermath of political turmoil, this time in Protestant Neuchâtel, where in 1848, paralleling the anti-monarchist uprisings in other countries of Europe, a more democratic leadership supplanted the old patrician one. An abortive counter-revolution meant that members of aristocratic families like the de Purys were *personae non gratae*. Also after a stay in England, he came in 1852 with capital to buy a run, but first of all stayed at Yering to learn the essentials of management from Paul de Castella.

He was still there when Hubert de Castella arrived in 1854 at his brother's invitation, also intending to acquire a run. The following year Hubert and Guillaume in partnership bought a neighbouring outstation of Yering called Dalry from Donald Ryrie.

Hubert returned to Europe in 1856, Dalry was sold in 1858, and it was not until 1862 that he went back to Victoria with Guillaume, who had returned to Europe in 1861. Hubert brought with him as much capital as he could muster to help retrieve the situation of Paul, who had meanwhile gone bankrupt partly as a result of trying to buy the freehold of as much of the Yering run as he could after it was thrown open for selection. It seems that Hubert and Guillaume individually again had squatting runs in mind, but in the event both bought sections of the freehold of parts of the old Yering from Paul's creditors and established vineyards close to his.

In none of these decisions, then, was there either encouragement from La Trobe or the intention before the first or second arrivals

of Hubert and Guillaume to establish vineyards. Paradoxically, Peel makes no mention above of Guillaume's brother Samuel, who alone seems to have come to Victoria specifically to engage in vine growing in 1856.

Another more limited version of the influence of La Trobe has him responsible only for the arrival of the Geelong Swiss vigneron. In the chapter 'History of wine in Australia' in *Len Evans' Complete Book of Australian Wine*, Jaki Ilbery writes:

Although these activities were significant, La Trobe's great contribution to Australian winemaking was to influence some of the people of Neuchâtel to come out to the colony and practise their viticultural skills there. Five years after La Trobe's arrival, in Melbourne, eleven men had started from the Canton of Neuchâtel for Australia. They settled near each other in the district of Geelong, and all planted vineyards around their homes.³

As we shall see, Ilbery's second and third sentences are almost a transcription of something which Hubert de Castella had written, but before examining exactly what he said, let us look at the testimony of La Trobe himself, as contained in a letter dated 9 March 1840 to James Macarthur, reproduced below by permission of the Mitchell Library.

My dear Sir

I have received your kind letter introducing Mr Cunninghame to whom I shall be happy to render any services in my power – I make no doubt but he will really be an acquisition to our part of the world if he really resolves to remain with us. Mrs Latrobe joins me in returning thanks for your kind desire to renew acquaintance with us. Whether at Camden or at Melbourne we shall have equal pleasure. She joins me also in acknowledging your kindness in offering us some vine cuttings & fruit trees. I can only assure you that any thing of the kind will be acceptable as we are forming a garden in self defence as we find it too bad to pay 6d for every cabbage we get & 3/- a doz for bad apples. I am glad to hear such good tidings of your vineyard. Some months ago 3 of the good Neuchatelois, seduced by the knowledge that we were here (Neuchatel is Mrs Latrobe's native town) came out to cultivate the vine here, with the purpose of engaging a large number of their fellows to follow in case they found their prospects favorable. The country and climate they find everything they could wish but the enormous price of land has taken them quite aback – They had only brought out hundreds & it requires thousands. You know I have no power. They are still undecided what to do – but I hope to get them the rent of a Govt reserve or some other advantage to engage them to persevere. They are of a superior class & are unwilling to throw away their labour upon what is not their own.

Peaches have succeeded very well indeed as far as they have been tried at Port Phillip. I cannot conceive a better soil or climate for vegetables.

Pray when you see your worthy cousin Mr Hanibal McArthur remember me to him & believe me,

My dear Sir,
Yours very faithfully
Charles Jos Latrobe.⁴

Thus, far from having encouraged Swiss vine growers to come, La Trobe is embarrassed that his wife's presence has made them take such a rash step which now forces him to do what he can for them. The date of the letters bears out the impossibility of any communication of his or his wife's having caused them to emigrate.

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The La Trobes took four months to come from England to Sydney, where they stayed for a short time before arriving in Melbourne on 30 September 1839.⁵ The three Neuchâtelois who arrived 'some months ago', in fact in December 1839, must thus have left Europe only a few months after the La Trobes themselves.

In the absence of complete passenger lists for ships arriving in Melbourne in 1839,⁶ there is no clear indication of who these three men were, if indeed they did arrive initially at Melbourne, but as D. L. Pettavel and F. Brequet planted their first vines at Pollocksford near Geelong in 1842,⁷ and as other Swiss continued to come to Geelong to engage in viticulture, we have to presume that La Trobe managed to arrange something satisfactory for them. His 'Australian notes: memoranda of excursions, journeys and absences 1839-1854'⁸ certainly reveal frequent visits to Geelong among the almost constant round of calls to various parts of the colony that he imposed upon himself, but make no mention of ever having encouraged Swiss to come there.

When one examines the first chapter, 'Early Australian Vineyards', of Hubert de Castella's *John Bull's Vineyard* (1886), it is easy to see how an extrapolation from what the text actually says could have occurred. What de Castella is pointing out are a number of coincidences linking John Macarthur (who incidentally was not 'the first to plant an Australian vineyard'⁹ as he states), with the La Trobes and the Ryrrie vineyard.

When Macarthur was forced to leave New South Wales after his involvement in the moves against Governor Bligh, he spent some time visiting European vineyards with his sons, and the youngest, William, was placed in a school at Vevey, Switzerland, 'amidst the vines which cover the fair slopes of the Lake of Geneva.'¹⁰ Hubert sees this stay as having had an influence on the establishment of the Macarthurs' Camden vineyard and indirectly on Victorian viticulture.

At Vevey William Macarthur's closest friend was Count Louis de Pourtalès, who thus acquired a close knowledge of conditions in Australia and was later able to give his relative Sophie La Trobe some reassurance, when her husband was appointed Superintendent of the Port Phillip District, about what she would encounter there. Hubert could have added that Charles La Trobe had at one stage been a tutor to the young count, and that is was largely through this connection that he met his future wife.¹¹

The vital paragraph regarding the Geelong vine growers reads:

In a small community, such as Neuchâtel was fifty years ago, the departure for the antipodes of a lady belonging to one of the oldest and richest families of the town, created a sensation. Five years after Mr. La Trobe's arrival in Melbourne, eleven men had started from the Canton of Neuchâtel for Australia. They had settled near each other in the district of Geelong, and, being familiar with the cultivation of the vine, all had planted vineyards around their homes.¹²

Hubert then concludes his chapter by relating how in 1848 (in fact 1849) a nephew of Mrs La Trobe and his brother came to Victoria to be squatters, followed by another nephew, Guillaume de Pury, in 1851 (in fact 1852) and himself in 1854. There is nothing here to link the Lilydale vine growers with an influence by La Trobe, the coincidence which Hubert wishes to point out being that long before the existence of the Geelong vineyards there was one on the station at Yering which was planted with cuttings from Camden.¹³

It will have been noted that even regarding the Geelong vine growers, the words of Hubert which have been used by Ilbery to support the theory of encouragement by La Trobe, can be seen rather to endorse the same idea of a response to his wife's presence which we find in the letter, the real significance of which for the history of Victorian vine growing has gone unnoticed until now. While Hubert is often guilty of inaccuracy, and gives a very cursory account here of the Geelong Swiss, his eleven men being obviously subsequent to La Trobe's three Neuchâtelois, perhaps even encouraged by them, the gaps in his version are quite understandable. There is a long period between those events which happened some years before his own arrival, and his actual recording of them many years later again. He is writing in 1886 of events some forty-two years ago, and at best depending upon La Trobe's own reminiscences which would have been imparted to him after his return to Europe in 1856. When he arrived in Melbourne on 20 March 1854, La Trobe was already preparing to leave, and on 27 April had the shock of reading in a newspaper of the death of his wife, who had been in ill-health for some time and had gone back to Switzerland ahead of him. Hubert had seen her before leaving for Australia and was actually carrying messages from her to her husband, whom he only managed to see twice before his departure on board the *Golden Age* on 5 May 1854.¹⁴ It is unlikely that on these occasions La Trobe would have engaged in reminiscences about the Geelong Swiss vine growers.¹⁵

One must also point out that Hubert was writing *John Bull's Vineyard* to foster faith in the future of Australian viticulture. It is unlikely therefore that even if he knew of the initial difficulties confronted by the first Swiss at Geelong, he would want to dwell on them given what he saw as their subsequent success. When he left Australia for the first time on 20 January 1856 he was proud to take a case of Geelong wine back to Europe with him.¹⁶ Since then he had established his own vineyard, married a rich heiress whose fortune enabled him to develop it on a grand scale, and won the Emperor of Germany's Prize for St Hubert's vineyard at the Melbourne Exhibition of 1880-81. His rift with his partner Andrew Rowan was to come later in 1886, and later still the crushing realisation that he had sunk a fortune in an inherently uneconomic operation.

Nevertheless, there would on the face of it seem to be documentary evidence that La Trobe did encourage at least one Swiss to come

to Victoria to ply his trade as a vine grower. This person was Joseph Clément Deschamps, who arrived in Victoria on the *Keren Hasselaar* in January 1854 with his two older sons. The evidence is in the form of J.C. Deschamps' passport, which according to an anonymous article in *The Age* states specifically that Clément Deschamps was coming to Victoria at the request of Governor La Trobe to assist in the viticultural industry.¹⁷ The La Trobe Library in Melbourne holds a photograph of this very passport, but there is no mention of the name of La Trobe upon it, so that it is no proof of the Governor's initiative.¹⁸

The background to the coming of the Deschamps family seems to be the subject of even more confusion. A typescript by John Deschamps outlining the Deschamps family history, drawing on earlier material by Arnold Deschamps,¹⁹ states that Joseph Clément went to school with La Trobe at Neuchâtel, but La Trobe was as far as can be established brought up in England. However we know that he spent his holidays in Neuchâtel at a boarding school run by the Moravians, a sect of which his father was a minister.²⁰

The typescript also describes how Deschamps and his sons hiked from La Trobe's home in Melbourne to Lilydale to look at possible vine growing sites, did not find any suitable for sale, and then went to Kyneton where they planted vineyards which were three times wiped out by frost.

Hubert de Castella in *John Bull's Vineyard* gives a different and presumably more reliable version:

The old father was head vigneron of a good sized vineyard in Switzerland. In 1853, when the Yering plantation was to be enlarged, he and his family were engaged to take charge of it. He sold, before starting, a small piece of land he had in the old country, deposited on his arrival £120 in a Melbourne bank, and unconcerned by the gold mines, then at their height, took quietly to his new duties with his sons.²¹

Given that this is correct, the most that we can surmise here is that if he did anything at all, La Trobe acted on Paul de Castella's behalf to encourage Deschamps to come to Victoria, although the initial enlargement was apparently not to be a very ambitious one, and possibly for domestic rather than commercial purposes. François de Castella relates how it was only after tasting wine made 'by an old Burgundian Swiss employé from the original Ryrie vineyard'²² who was obviously Deschamps, that Captain Acland Anderson, Paul de Castella's future brother-in-law and partner in various ventures, 'proposed a large commercial vineyard.'²³

Further confusion is caused by the fact that in a later article, François de Castella relates both his father's and the Arnold Deschamps version of the first Deschamps' activities on arrival, apparently unaware that they cannot both be right as to chronology.²⁴

Hubert de Castella is responsible for another confusion in his much

earlier *Les Squatters australiens* when he states that on his arrival at Yering in March 1854 he found Deschamps' wife in charge of the household devoted to the staff of Yering. She in fact did not arrive in Australia with their youngest son until 1856.²⁵ According to *John Bull's Vineyard* again, it was two years after arrival that Deschamps and his family went to Kyneton, planted vines which were wiped out in three successive years by frosts, then suffered the loss of everything they owned there through bushfires. Subsequently they returned to Lilydale, began working for local vine growers again, in particular Paul de Castella, and at land sales in 1860 bought blocks of the former Yering run on which they established several different vineyards.

While the assertion that La Trobe was responsible for the coming of the Swiss vine growers to Geelong and of the de Castellans and the de Purys to Lilydale is not tenable, and is not proven for the Deschamps either, there is evidence of La Trobe's support for his wife's compatriots after their arrival in the Colony. Apart from his initial efforts regarding the purchase of land, he tried to get some advantages for the Swiss, as instanced in the following letter, dated 14 May 1847:

My dear Gunn,

The bearer Mr Dardell is one of our worthy wine growers. He visits V. D. Land with the wish to procure a quantity of good grafts etc. for a large garden which he is engaged in forming at S. Kilda & has applied to me to tell him who are your best nursery men etc. - I am unable to tell him, but I am sure you will kindly give him any advice & information in your power.

He is very steady hard working man & as a native of Mrs La Trobe's canton we feel an interest in him.

In great haste
Yours vry truly
C.J. La Trobe.²⁶

La Trobe's rôle here is again quite clear; it is not that of the initiator of chain immigration, but rather of the person of influence who because of his marriage, has to operate in a specific way within a system of patronage and connections which was very important in the nineteenth century and which the Swiss with their strong cantonal cohesiveness seemed particularly ready to invoke and even presume upon. One is led to conclude that the myth of La Trobe's Responsibility for the emigration of the French-Swiss vine growers was invented by themselves.

In the Deschamps family history there is evidence of a wish to maximize the connection with Governor which combines the natural propensity to exploit connection with the great pride that the Neuchâtelois in particular felt at the fact that a compatriot was first Lady in a faraway British colony.

It was the presence of his wife rather than any active fostering of viticulture by La Trobe which attracted Swiss to the colony. Nevertheless, as the letter of 1840 indicates, this chain migration would hardly have started without La Trobe's initial help in securing

land and therefore he might be held partly responsible for the early successes of the wine industry in the Port Phillip District.

REFERENCES

1. Lynette J. Peel, *Rural Industry in the Port Phillip Region 1835–1880*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1974, p. 73.
2. See Hubert de Castella, *Les Squatters australiens*, Paris, Hachette, 1861, pp. 194–5 and his manuscript 'Réminiscences' to which C. B. Thornton-Smith was given access by his Swiss descendants in connection with a translation of *Les Squatters* . . .
3. *Len Evans' Complete Book of Australian Wine* (1973), 4th ed., Sydney, Lansdowne, 1984, p. 17.
4. Holograph letter in Macarthur Papers, vol. 26, pp. 179–82, Mitchell Library A2922.
5. See Jill Eastwood, *Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne, Oxford University Press, 1972.
6. None of the Swiss names known from other sources, and no Swiss names for December 1839 are to be found in Marten A. Syme, *Shipping Arrivals and Departures Victorian Ports vol. I 1789–1845*, Melbourne, Roebuck, 1984.
7. See W.R. Brownhill, *The History of Geelong and Corio Bay*, (Melbourne, printed by Wilkes and Co. Ltd.), 1955.
8. MS copy, Box 79/1 La Trobe Library, Melbourne.
9. *John Bull's Vineyard*, p. 11.
10. *Ibid.* p. 12
11. See 'Les deux hymens neuchâtelois du premier gouverneur de l'état de Victoria' in Jacques Petitpierre *Patrie neuchâteloise*, vol. IV, Neuchâtel, Editions H. Messeiller, 1955, pp. 129–68.
12. *John Bull's Vineyard*, 13–14.
13. It appears that the first cuttings came indirectly from Camden via a vineyard on the Ryries' station at Arnprior, but that a later expansion of the vineyard to ten acres by the Ryries used cuttings directly from Camden. See A.D.B. 4; François de Castella, 'Early Victorian Wine-Growing', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol XIX, 1941–42, pp. 140–168; Rolfe Boldrewood, *Old Melbourne Memories* (1884), intr. and ed. by C.E. Sayers, Melbourne, Heinemann; 'Garryowen' (Edmund Finn), *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne*. . . Melbourne, Fergusson and Mitchell, 1888, p. 432.
14. See Eastwood op.cit.; 'Réminiscences'.
15. After his own return to Europe early in 1856, Hubert de Castella frequently met La Trobe and spoke with him of their days in Victoria, yet nowhere in *Les Squatters australiens* is there any mention of La Trobe's connection with vine growing. This is perhaps understandable in that Hubert did not want to touch on La Trobe's sad last days in the colony. The one mention of him in the text is supported by a footnote of almost a page explaining the difficulties he encountered as Superintendent before Separation from New South Wales in 1851. However in the 'Réminiscences', where there is a sympathetic description and spirited defence of him, there is once again no mention of his having fostered vine growing.
16. *Les Squatters australiens*, p. 195.
17. See 'State's wine industry is rich in history', *The Age*, 14/2/1953, p. 2.
18. This is not the only confusion surrounding the passport, issued on behalf of Napoleon III, which the article explains as being because Switzerland was then still a French protectorate. In fact this was certainly not the case in 1853 when the passport was issued. The passport was a French one simply because Joseph Clément Deschamps, although born at Cressier in the canton of Neuchâtel, had a French father and was therefore regarded as a French citizen. It states him to be born of French parents from St. Pierre le Vieux, Saône et Loire, which was part of the old province of Burgundy (See Deschamps Papers, La Trobe Library, Melbourne). A negative corroboration of Deschamps' not being officially Swiss lies in the fact that unlike his three sons, he is not listed as a member of the Swiss Society of Victoria in Melbourne, membership of which required Swiss citizenship (See archives of the Swiss Society of Victoria.)
19. We are indebted to Mr Leigh Blackburn of the Lilydale and District Historical Society for a copy of the material by John Deschamps, consisting of sixteen typewritten or photocopied sheets entitled 'The Deschamps family' and 'History Notes of the Deschamps family and Lilydale', dated December 1978; see also Arnold Deschamps 'Lilydale and its first Generation in *Back to Lilydale Reunion 2nd–9th April 1931—Souvenir Programme*, Lilydale, Victoria, Express Office, 1931, unpaginated.
20. 'Réminiscences'.
21. *John Bull's Vineyard*, p. 49.
22. François de Castella, 'Early Victorian Wine-Growing', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. 19, 1941–42, p. 146.
23. *Ibid.*
24. See François de Castella, 'Some Pioneer Lilydale Vignerons', *Victorian Historical Magazine*, vol. 20, 1943, pp. 51–68.
25. Victorian Public Records Office, shipping records.
26. L.J. Blake (ed.), *Letters of Charles Joseph La Trobe*, Melbourne, Government Printer, 1975, p. 24.