

**Crystal Ball**

The next ten years of Inland Empire growth

**John Wayne**

Retracing the film legend's roots in the I.E.

# INLAND EMPIRE

October 2018

The Magazine of Artful Living

## FALL PREVIEW

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A close-up photograph of a wooden barrel head, showing the staves and the metal hoops. The word "Brookside" is written in a dark, ornate calligraphic font across the center of the barrel. The background is a wall of vertical wooden planks.

Brookside



# BROOKSIDE

## THE LOST WINERY *of the* INLAND EMPIRE

Prolific and innovative, the IE's Brookside Winery once dominated the state's wine scene.

**TEXT:** PENNY E. SCHWARTZ

It was born in the 19th century beside a trickle of water in Redlands, grew to produce a river of wine by the mid-20th century, then evaporated into history in the 1980s. But during its prolific life, Brookside Winery set the stage for the Inland Empire to become an important part of the California wine scene.

“With its tasting rooms and retail stores throughout Southern California, Brookside Winery was responsible for turning a lot of people on to wine,” says Don Galleano of Galleano Winery in Mira Loma. It helped that their wines were sweet and easy to drink, he says, adding that some of the up-and-coming wine writers of the time, such as Robert Lawrence Balzer, enjoyed their first experience with wine at Brookside. But success is rarely born overnight. In Brookside's case, it was launched nearly a century before.

It started in the 1850s when Dr. Benjamin Barton of Redlands purchased from several Mormon elders property that had originally been established as a mission by the Franciscan friars. Near the present-day Asistencia on the west end of Redlands, he planted 60,000 grape vines and soon developed a winery.

From France came the Vaché brothers—Emile, Theophile and Adolphe—who leased the property



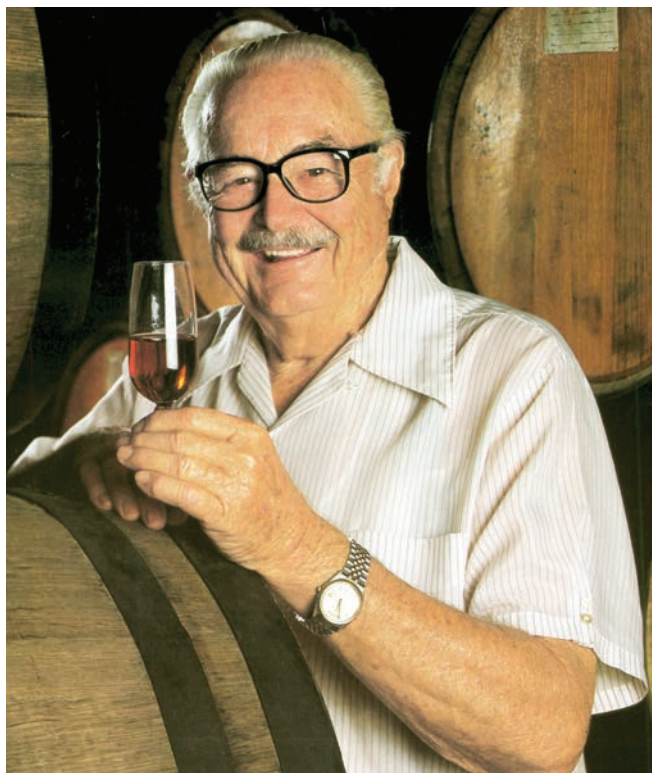
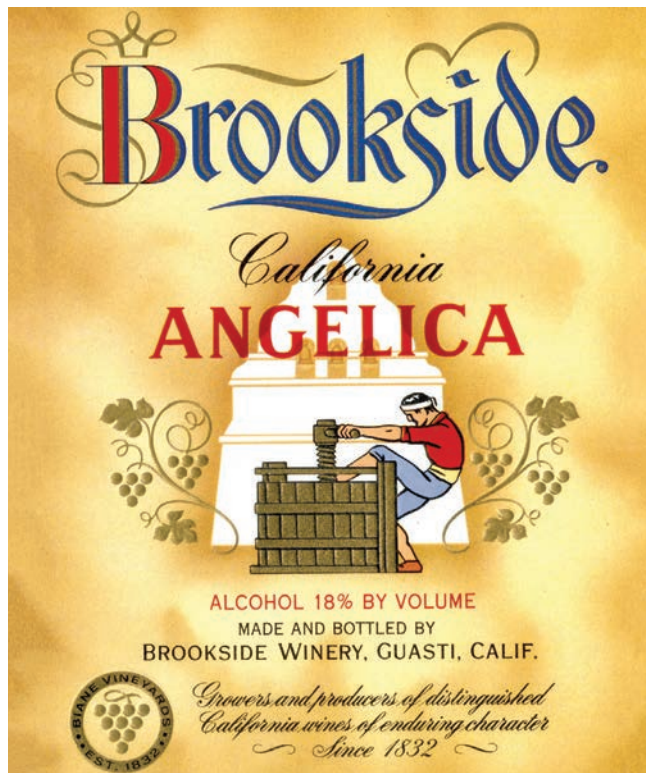


PHOTO: DAVE CARTER

**Above:** Philo Biane (1909-1999) ran Brookside Winery for more than 20 years. Above and opposite page: Some of Brookside's many labels.



from Barton and established Brookside Winery in about 1880. They drew the name from the nearby waters of the Mill Creek Zanja, a ditch originally dug by Native Americans to bring water to the mission fathers.

The brothers had immigrated from France because the European vineyards were being destroyed by a root louse called phylloxera during the last 30 years of the 19th century, according to a 1966 article in the "Redlands Daily Facts." Adolphe and Theophile soon left the enterprise, leaving Emile as the sole owner of the winery.

A few years after settling in the area, the Vachés relocated their new winery to San Timoteo Canyon just below the spot on Fern Street where Redlands Community Hospital now stands. In its heyday, the property consisted of a winery building, distillery, aging cellar, boiler house, cooperage building, family residence and building to house Chinese workmen.

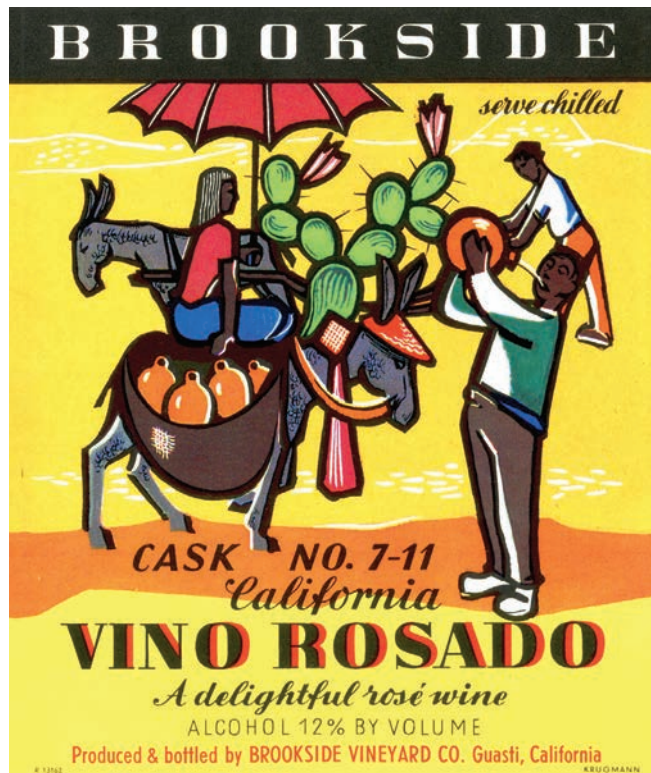
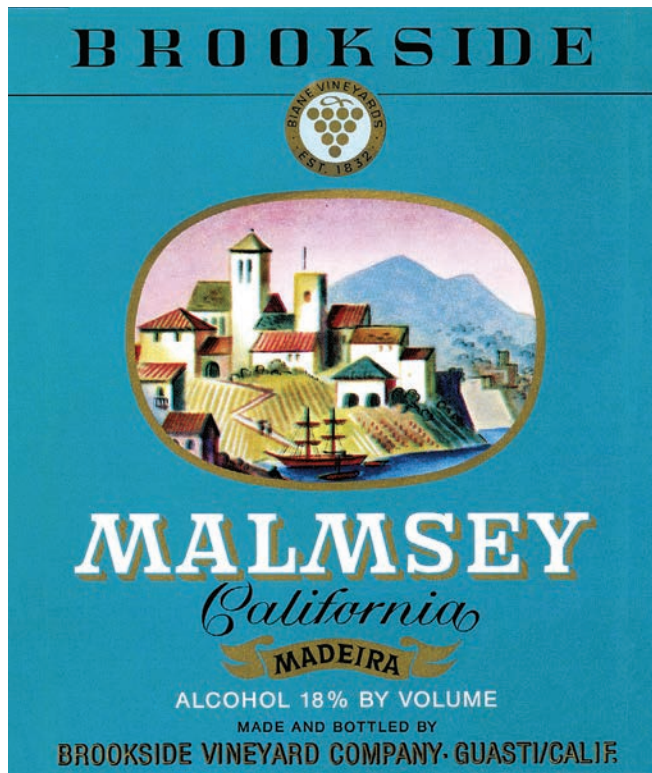
The owners kept expanding the acreage until the winery was pressing 1,500 tons of grapes a year, resulting in 200,000 gallons of wine. Barrels of wine were transported in horse-drawn wagons for delivery to as far away as San Bernardino, with more distant deliveries made by the Southern Pacific Railroad. A railroad station opened just across the San Timoteo Creek from the winery, and a small community grew there.

In 1892, Frenchman Marius Biane came to work for the Vaché brothers. He married Aldolphe's daughter, Marceline, and fathered four children: Francois ("Pomp"), Elenora, Philo and Hortense. The Biane family carried on the Vaché tradition of winemaking, acquiring vineyards in the Cucamonga wine district. The winery in the canyon shut down in 1916, seven years after Emile Vaché died.

With Prohibition, the county became dry and orange trees replaced the grape vines.

The Biances moved to what is currently Rancho Cucamonga, where Marius, his son Philo and his brother Frank bought 320 acres in the Guasti vineyard district of Ontario. They opened another winery in 1952, which they also named Brookside after the original. In 1956 they moved the winery to Guasti.

"In the mid-1950s, when the wine market was poor, the wine was converted into vinegar and sold in L.A.," says Rene Biane, 88, who lives in Upland. "Pomp's" son, he studied winemaking at UC Davis and became Brookside's winemaker around 1960. It was his job to ensure that the grape culture was practiced properly, from separating the red from the white grapes, to the fermentation in the wine cellars, to the analyses, clarification and blending. Brookside produced everything from Chardonnay, Zinfandel and Chablis to the sweeter sauternes,



ports and sheries.

Steve DeAmbrogio, who worked at the Biances' ranch but not at the winery, said, "The Biances worked hard to preserve the vineyards in Cucamonga and Guasti and were very influential in that area." The DeAmbrogio family also owned Cucamonga vineyards and was well known for its old vine Zinfandel.

"As the wine industry started flourishing, wineries started offering tastings on the premises in tasting rooms," Biane says. The tasting rooms were like shoe stores in that you could sample what you wanted to buy, he said, and they stimulated curiosity in the wine industry.

In 1969, Brookside acquired the 12 Mills Winery roadside cellars in northern California, which resulted in its becoming the largest direct-to-the-consumer winery operation in the country, according to "A Guide to California Wines" by John Melville.

Philo and brother "Pomp," along with their sons, René, Pierre and Michael, helped Brookside grow into one of the largest wineries in the U.S. During its heyday, Brookside was the largest winery in Southern California, with annual production of more than three million gallons of wine. The company had 150 labels, which included brandies, dessert, sparkling and distilled wines and spirits, along with 36 retail

stores and tasting rooms throughout the state and in Arizona and Illinois.

It was also popular with restaurant goers. When Rancho Cucamonga's Chuck and Linda Keagle opened their Cask 'n Cleaver chain of steak houses, "We bought their wine for our wines in carafes," Linda says, and used Brookside's two-liter bottles to hand-paint the menu on. A great touch, but they proved to be popular souvenirs and "we needed a steady infusion from the winery," she says.

As with most things, glory days don't last forever. In a 1969 interview for an oral history project by UC Davis, Philo Biane hinted at the changing tide for winegrowers in the Cucamonga Valley.

"We're literally being pushed out of the Cucamonga area [due to taxation and urbanization], so we are seeking out other places to raise grapes and put our winery," he told interviewer Ruth Teiser. He noted that he and his associates had "traveled the state up and down looking for locations...We almost made a deal in the Soledad area, but we just hated to leave Southern California," he said.

Turns out they didn't have to. University of California scientists had determined that an area in south Riverside County known as Rancho California had growing conditions similar to those of Napa and Sonoma valleys. Biane was familiar with the south county area that was once part of the 87,500-acre





**Mike Biane speaking**  
about the choice of  
zinfandel to visitors.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ONTARIO MUSEUM OF HISTORY & ART'S PERMANENT COLLECTION

Vail Ranch. Rancho California was formed in 1964 when the Kaiser Development Company bought out Vail. The group bought additional land, bringing the total area to 97,500 acres.

“We were approached by them to start vineyard land down there, as we knew the area,” Biane told the UC Davis interviewer. Brookside’s viticulturist, John Moramarco, planted about 1,000 acres of grapes for his company, he told “Inland Empire Magazine” in 2004.

Philo Biane felt good about the Rancho California prospects. “I think that there will be quite a few acres of grapes planted in the Rancho California area because I think it is better suited to grapes than it is to almost any other of our agricultural pursuits,” he said. He was right. Today, the Temecula Valley is home to more than 40 wineries including Lorenzi Estate Winery, which is now located on a portion of the original Brookside vineyard in Temecula.

Philo Biane’s instincts about the future of Brookside Winery in the Cucamonga Valley were also correct. In 1972, Beatrice Foods of Chicago bought the company. “They ran the winery until the inventory went to zero and that was the demise of Brookside Vineyard Company,” René Biane said in a 2004 interview with “Inland Empire Magazine.” Beatrice eventually sold the winery, its vineyards, production facilities and retail stores.

Philo, who had been born at the Redlands winery location, later established Rancho de Philo Winery in Alta Loma, which is now run by his daughter, Janine, and her husband, Alan Tibbetts. Philo died in 1999 but his award-winning triple cream sherry lives on.

The Brookside legacy also continues through the Vaché line. Tim Bacino of San Diego represents the sixth generation of the Vaché family and continues the winemaking tradition with his wife, Susanné, and their daughter, Gabriella (the seventh generation).

Under the name Gen 7 Wines, they’ve produced wine for several years and recently opened a tasting room in Napa; the winery is in Sebastopol. There is also an online store where wine fans can purchase red, white, sparkling and dessert wines.

Several of the wines reflect the ties to Brookside. The Gen 7 Noir de Noir, a sweet red blend, replicates Brookside’s Black Velvet back in the day. Two other reds carry the label Vaché “1932,” the year Theophile Vaché came to the U.S.

“We are so grateful to generations four and five for everything they did,” says Bacino, who plans to open a tasting room in Napa Valley in 2018. In the meantime, he’s working on a book and documentary film about his family.

“As one of the oldest wine-making families in California, we have a deep and rich tradition and it is important to my generation to pass it on to the next.”

For more information about Gen7 Wines, see [gen7wines.com](http://gen7wines.com).

Rancho de Philo opens to the public just a few days each fall, this year Nov. 10 to 18 from 9 am. to 5 p.m. Rancho de Philo Winery is at 10050 Wilson Ave., Rancho Cucamonga; (909) 987-4208.

*Tammy Minn contributed to this article.*