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COUNTERCURRENTS

THE WINE INSTITUTE

If much was wrong with American winemaking after Repeal, there were at the same time significant efforts under way to make it better—countercurrents that eventually turned the tide. One of these efforts took shape as the Wine Institute.

In 1932, as the prospect of Repeal began to seem not merely possible but probable, the Grape Growers League was created in order to work for the legalization of wine within the Volstead Act, or, more boldly, for Repeal itself.¹ When the passage of Repeal became certain but before it had been passed, the Grape Growers League, in September 1933, transformed itself into the Wine Producers Association. The group, under either name, was made up of the veterans of the trade: the Rossi brothers, A. R. Morrow, Sophus Feder-spiel, Georges de Latour, F. Cribari, Lee Jones, and others of the same standing. They represented the table wine tradition of California. The producers of fortified wines, largely concentrated in the Central Valley, organized on their own as the California Sweet Wine Producers in 1933, and so underlined a division of interests and a source of conflict that long operated in the state.² The first work of both groups was to cooperate in writing the National Recovery Administration code for the western wine industry.³

At the beginning of 1934, constitutional Prohibition had been lifted, but in its place stood a host of new problems in the forms already discussed in this history: new federal and state regulations, new taxes, and new requirements for compliance with all the inconsistent rules affecting interstate commerce; besides these burdens, there was an uninstructed public and an absence of clear standards for the production and labeling of wine.