

8

BACK EAST

TWO SORTS OF WINE

The immediate postwar years are a convenient point from which to take a survey of American winegrowing outside California. In common with their California counterparts, the winegrowers in the rest of the country had had to endure Prohibition, struggle through the Depression years, and hang on during the war. Now, in the first moment of the postwar era, they shared the same euphoria. "Everyone connected with the industry is optimistic," a writer on winegrowing in Arkansas reported in 1946, "and, to the last man, the belief is that the State is but at the threshold of a great development."¹ But what, we may ask, had in fact survived through these years, and in what condition? What expectations could be reasonably held? On what basis? The answers to such sober questions were not particularly encouraging, though few paused to ask them.

Commercial winegrowing had been established in the eastern states in the first half of the nineteenth century after more than two centuries of hopeful experiment and repeated, comprehensive failure.² Beginning with small successes in Ohio and New York, winemaking in some form had, by the end of the century, been carried on in almost every state east of the Rocky Mountains, from the Atlantic Coast westward to Kansas, and in the Southwest as well. Almost all of the many wineries in question had only a local trade, and most of them had a very uncertain tenure on life. But a pattern had gradually been established before being obliterated by Prohibition. In the northern parts of the region, exposed to the extremes of continental weather, the tempering effect of water was crucial. Thus the Great Lakes states dominated: New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michi-