

12

A NEW DAWN (II)

The South

MARYLAND AND VIRGINIA

Maryland, quite apart from anything else that might be accomplished there, will always have an important place in the modern history of American winegrowing as the scene of Philip Wagner's pioneering and deeply influential work.¹ Starting in the early '30s Wagner was the inspiration and the guide for countless enthusiastic grape growers and winemakers throughout the East. Wagner's own winery, Boordy Vineyards (established in 1945), was run on sound commercial lines and paid its own way, but it was never Wagner's ambition to make a lot of wine. On the contrary, he wanted more than anything to set an example of domestic winemaking, to show his countrymen that they might have good, sound wine of their own growing. As he put it strikingly: "The finest wines in the world are homemade wines"; and if he included the great château wines of France among the "homemade," he was at least technically right. "Wine," he said, "is made in the home, whether the home be a farmhouse, a peasant's cottage, or a great estate, and is made of grapes grown on the place."² His example inspired any number of others to try winemaking; the few who went into business did so, as Wagner would have wanted, on a very modest scale.

There are two notable constraints on winemaking in Maryland. One of them is the climate, described by Wagner as a rich compound of storms, wildly varying temperatures, floods, droughts, lethal winters, hail, and other afflictions: "Anything that survives in Maryland is worth trial anywhere this side of the Arctic circle."³

But with only a little modification, this description could be applied almost anywhere