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## Jackson County Wine and Prohibition History

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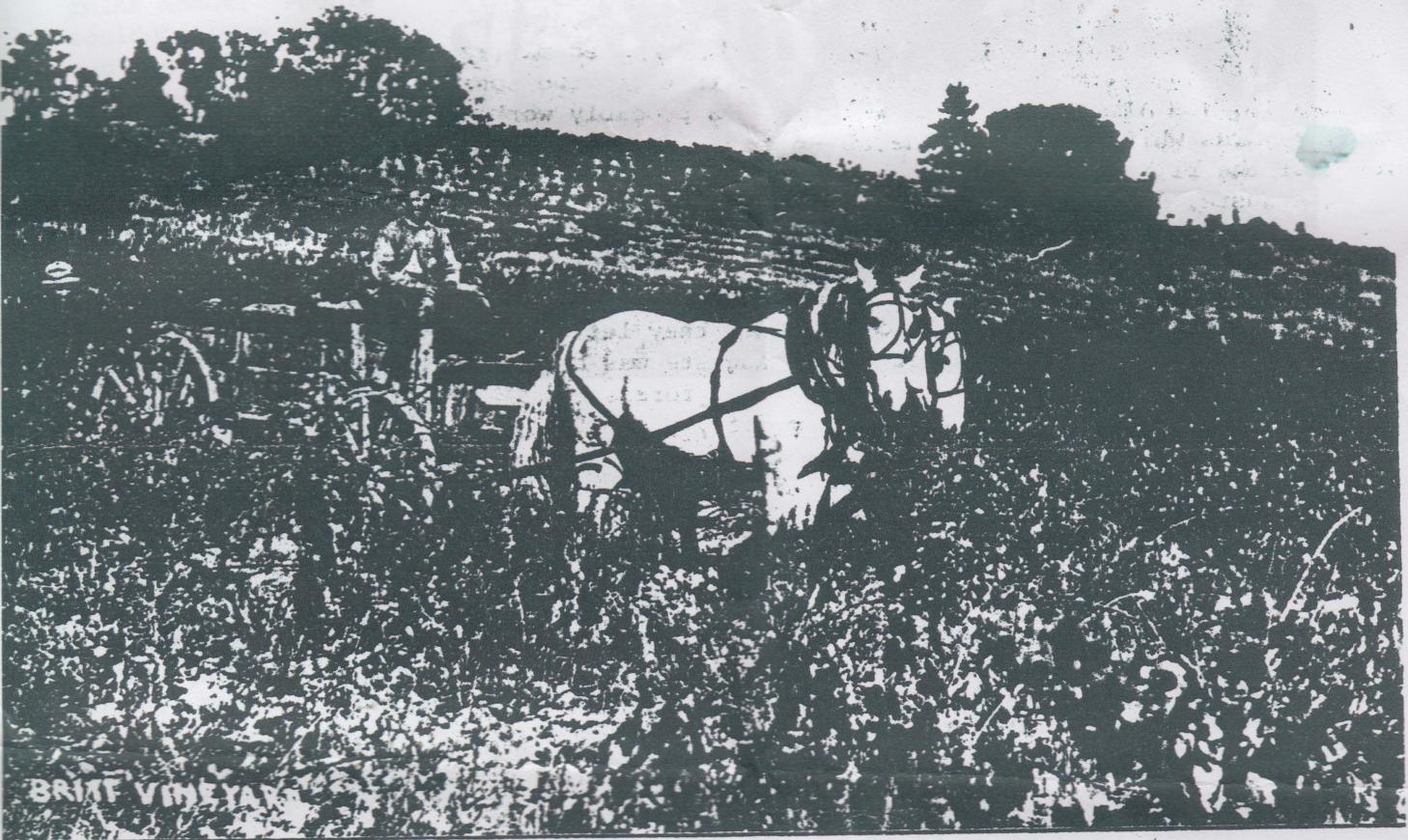
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## AUGUSTE PETARD AND THE VOLSTEAD ACT

**C**limatic conditions together with soil make the Rogue River Valley the ideal place to grow the grape," wrote A. H. Carson, an early expert on viticulture. In 1890 the editor of "The Resources of Southern Oregon," asserted, "Jackson County is specially adapted to the raising of grapes." Many early settlers in southern Oregon held the same opinions. Colonel J. N. T. Miller had twenty acres of vineyards and specialized in twenty varieties of grapes. Adjoining Miller's property was Raphael Morat's vineyard of ten acres. Adjacent to Morat's fields Amile Barbé owned six acres of vines. North of Jacksonville Peter Britt, who experimented with many varieties of grapes, had five acres under cultivation. Nearby were William Bybee's five acres of mission grapes. In addition to these vineyards there was at least a dozen more near Jacksonville. Dr. George DeBar had eight acres of vines near Central Point, Dr. Geary had about the same number at Phoenix, and there were several vineyards in the Ashland area. "It is no longer a question that all the choice grapes of California can be produced in Jackson County," continued the editor in the latter publication, "the flavor in many instances is greatly improved. It is destined to become the most profitable industry in Jackson County."

The Eighteenth Amendment changed all that.

**P**rohibition arrived with great fanfare and jubilation because virtue had at last triumphed over the demon rum, and little seems to have been written about the vast loss of money the saloon owner faced in the destruction of his stock, the abandonment of his equipment and the termination of his source of income.

that incredulous word, prohibition, but that was too confusing to think about. People couldn't live without wine any more than they could live without bread. And what could the government gain by destroying the family?



**S**uddenly it was there. All the frightening threats were true as well as the strange words which brought about disaster.

August, II, August, I, Marie, and Albert Petard.

Prohibition.  
Ratification. Volstead Act.

There was no market for the grapes. For awhile Auguste and the boys, from habit, gathered the crop, but the grapes remained unsold, rotting in the storage house. The men made some wine for family use and stored it in barrels in the winery. Fortunately there were some savings. "It's only a temporary experiment," said their friends. "It can't last. Just wait." But the temporary experiment went on and on and on.

**E**ventually representatives of the Medford W. C. T. U. informed the County Prohibition Enforcement Agent Sam B. Sandifer that there were reports and rumors of illegal wine stored in the Petard winery. "They're selling bootleg wine," announced the spokesman, and the delegation demanded action against those corrupt law-breakers.

Agent Sandifer at once notified Sheriff Terrill of this deplorable fact. The sheriff, armed with a search warrant and accompanied by a deputy and Agent Sandifer, went to the Petard farm. There they discovered at least 600 gallons of wine in barrels and 50 quarts of wine in bottles, cobwebbed and dirty with age. The deputy found, in addition to the wine, 24 empty barrels and 1,000 empty bottles "hidden away" in the cellar. The sheriff padlocked the storage shed and legal action was taken although Auguste, then nearly 80 years old, was permitted to go on his own recognizance.

The W. C. T. U. delegates were delighted about the discovery of the contraband but grievously disappointed that the sheriff hadn't immediately destroyed the barrels and poured out the contents. Sheriff Terrill stood by the law. Action for confiscation had to be launched by the circuit court. In addition one might find upon examining the prohibition law that there existed the right to have alcoholic beverages if the beverages had been made before the law went into effect.

It was deemed prudent by the court to remove the wine from the Petard winery. Perhaps temptation would be too great and the padlock might not withstand a sharp rap by a hammer. The barrels were therefore loaded into trucks and taken away. But where could they be stored while awaiting confiscation orders? The sheriff decided that a logical place was at the foot of the school house hill in Jacksonville, and the barrels were duly deposited on the field where the

tennis courts are now located. There they sat for 24 hours. During the day a few people walked by to observe them and at recess the third and fourth graders played hide-and-peek around them. As a testimony to Jacksonville's law-abiding citizens, the wine remained untouched. Today, under the same circumstances and under the cover of darkness, many of the citizens, after midnight, could probably have been discovered rolling barrels down East D. Street.

**O**n the third day the justice court ruled that the wine had to be poured out. Sixteen members of the W. C. T. U. and several representatives of the Medford Ministerial association ecstatically gathered at the school ground for the ceremony. As the deputies, with their axes, bashed in the barrels, and as \$4,000 worth of wine soaked into the weeds, it would have been fitting for the jubilant watchers to break forth with "The Doxology."

Auguste plead guilty in the court of Justice of the Peace Roe of Jacksonville and was convicted of two charges: first, for the manufacture of intoxicating liquor, and second, for possession. He was fined \$50 and sentenced to thirty days in jail on the first charge, and fined \$25 on the second charge. The jail sentence was suspended.

According to law a person manufacturing intoxicating liquor should be given at least thirty days in jail! The frustrated W. C. T. U. delegation was loud in their denunciation of the suspended sentence. Just consider the great amount of wine that was destroyed. Why, it would have supplied the Petard family with intoxicating liquor for over two years. In addition didn't they have three barrels of vinegar which had to be poured out because there was no permit for its manufacture? The delegation demanded more real punishment for Auguste, the lawbreaker.

In view of the earnest plea for clemency made by attorney Herbert K. Hanna, who represented the Petard family, that "they kept to themselves pretty much and practically lived on bread and wine," the court decision held. Auguste paid his fine and retired to his little farm house and his abandoned vineyard.

1922 was a year when the good people of southern Oregon really saw to it that justice was done.

## Postscript

### JACKSONVILLE CEMETERY RECORDS

Auguste Petard I	born 1845, died 1931
Marie Petard	born 1846, died 1928
Albert Petard	born 1882, died 1924
Auguste Petard II	born 1876, died 1958
Laure Petard	born 1893, died 1953

In 1925 August, II, made a trip to Paris and returned with his fiancée, Mlle Laure Eugenie Pousseur (pictured at right). They were married that year. To the marriage was born Auguste, III, and Simonne who no longer reside in Jacksonville. The Petard vineyard has been bulldozed to make room for a future housing project.

