

# THE THACKREY LIBRARY

## AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF PLEASURES

The Thackrey Library is the greatest collection of wine books and manuscripts in private hands in the United States. Comprising more than seven hundred titles, the Library includes all of the important works in oenology and viticulture from the 15<sup>th</sup> century to the phylloxera epidemic in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is also a remarkably complete picture of the culture of wine in Western civilization.

Some of the early manuscript highlights include a 6<sup>th</sup>-century receipt for the purchase of grape vines (written on papyrus); a lovely late 14<sup>th</sup>-century illuminated leaf depicting someone crushing grapes; and a mid-15<sup>th</sup> century winemaking manuscript formerly in the collection of André Simon, the 20<sup>th</sup>-century's leading bibliographer of wine books. Also present are three early editions of Arnaldus de Villanova's *De vinis*, widely considered to be the first printed book on



Arnaldus de Villa Nova, *Dryser Tractat helt in von Berayttung der Weine*, 1530.

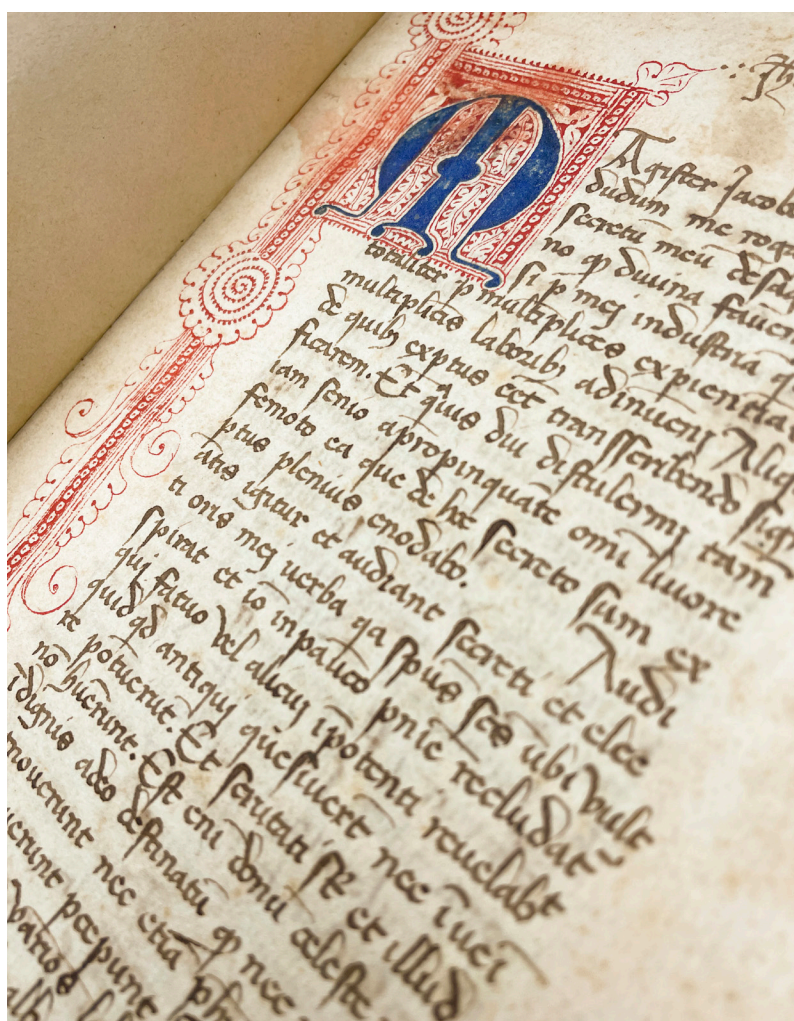


(Manuscript.) Kirchner,  
*Wejnbüchlin*, 1571.

making wine (1530, 1532, 1585); Jacobus Praefectus' *De diversorum vini generum natura liber*, a dialogue about wine between friends; Bartolomaeo Taegio's extremely rare and thorough handbook on viticulture and oenology (1564); the Basel physician Guglielmo Gratarolo's study of the health properties of wine (1565); several editions of Piero de Crescenzi's early illustrated work on agriculture (1511, 1513, 1530, 1538, 1542, 1548, 1561); a German wine-maker's manual, in manuscript, from 1571; Johann Rasch's *Weinbuch* (1580); Andreas Helmreich's winemaking guide (1592); and a superlative copy of Andrea Baccio's *De naturali vinorum* (1596), richly gilt and bound in 17<sup>th</sup>-century red morocco. This volume is from the collection of Raymond Oliver, the greatest collector of French gastronomy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In terms of provenance, in addition to works from the Simon and Oliver collections, there are works previously belonging to the Inglenook Library, the Nordkirchen Library, Marcus Crahan, Leon Lambert, Charles Monselet, Bernard Chwartz, and Killian Fritsch.

Since so much important wine material is embedded in encyclopedias of rural estate management – what the Germans call *Hausväterliteratur* – the Library has an unparalleled collection of rural encyclopedias which, as a scholarly resource, go far beyond winemaking to include almost every aspect of European rural life and economy since the Middle Ages. In addition to viticulture and oenology, within these works you find directions for accounting; architecture; beekeeping; beer making; baking; carving instructions; culinary recipes;

making wine (1530, 1532, 1585); Jacobus Praefectus' *De diversorum vini generum natura liber*, a dialogue about wine between friends; Bartolomaeo Taegio's extremely rare and thorough handbook on viticulture and oenology (1564); the Basel physician Guglielmo Gratarolo's study of the health properties of wine (1565); several editions of Piero de Crescenzi's early illustrated work on agriculture (1511, 1513, 1530, 1538, 1542, 1548, 1561); a German wine-maker's manual, in manuscript, from 1571; Johann Rasch's *Weinbuch* (1580); Andreas Helmreich's winemaking guide (1592); and a



A 15<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript on winemaking and its effects on the body.



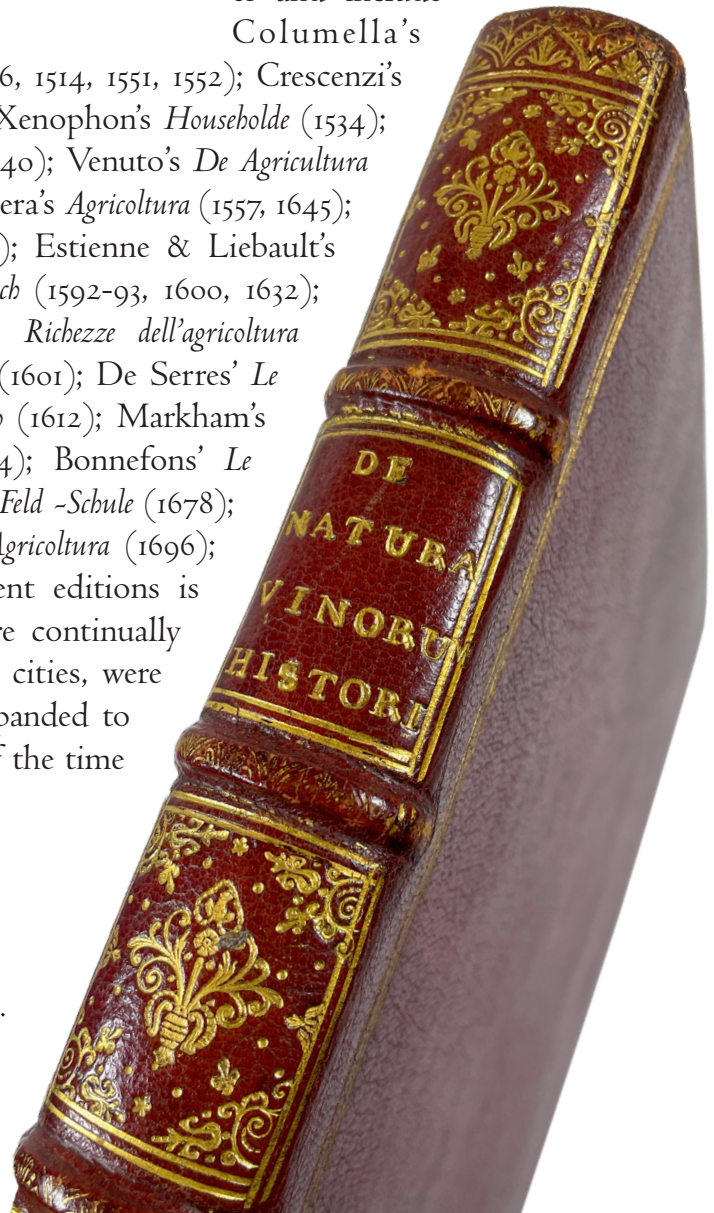
Rasch, *Weinbuch*, 1580.

distillation; fish farming; forest management; garden design; household recipes (from cleaning clothes to the varnish on old paintings); the management of servants; marketing recommendations; medicinal remedies; parlor tricks (and magic); raising chickens; raising children; veterinary science; and so on. It could be argued that this material is an unprecedented primary resource for the study of European organic agriculture. Many of these titles are represented in numerous editions and languages and include

Columella's

*Opera agricolationum* (or *Libri de re rustica*: 1496, 1514, 1551, 1552); Crescenzi's *Agricoltura* (1511, 1513, 1530, 1538, 1542, 1561), Xenophon's *Householde* (1534); Palladio's *Agricoltura* (1538); the *Geoponica* (1540); Venuto's *De Agricoltura* (1541); Estienne's *Praedium* (1554, 1564); Herrera's *Agricoltura* (1557, 1645); Gallo's *Dieci giornate* (1566, 1572, 1591, 1603); Estienne & Liebault's *Maison rustique* (1576, 1665); Coler's *Haussbuch* (1592-93, 1600, 1632); Surfleet's *Countrey farne* (1600); Bonardo's *Ricchezze dell'agricoltura* (1601); Heresbach's *Foure bookes of husbandry* (1601); De Serres' *Le Theatre d'agriculture* (1608); Bussato's *Giardino* (1612); Markham's *Countrey farne* (1616); Barpo's *Delitie* (1634); Bonnefons' *Le Jardinier* (1665); Böckler's *Nützliche Hauß-und Feld -Schule* (1678); Thieme's *Wunder-buch* (1694); Clemente's *Agricoltura* (1696); and so on. The representation of different editions is important as these agricultural works were continually changing as they were printed in different cities, were edited by different publishers, and were expanded to accommodate new discoveries and needs of the time and regions in which they were printed.

Baccio, *De naturali vinorum*, 1596.



Of the great wine book collections ever formed, the Thackrey Library stands alone for one very important reason: it is the only such collection brought together for the purpose of winemaking. Sean Thackrey is “one of California’s most iconic and mystical winemakers” (Robert Parker). The wines are bought and celebrated world-wide due to Thackrey’s unique winemaking practices, much of which has been influenced by his collection of early wine books. When answering the question of why one should form such a library, Thackrey responds “Because wine was evolved along with civilization itself, and by the



*A 14<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript leaf depicting winemaking.*

same people. It is not a product of geology, but of human culture and understanding. Without any comprehension of this ancient and extraordinarily complex culture of wine, how can our current comprehension of wine - & thus the pleasures we take in it - not be thinner and less rich? Who can comprehend this culture without reading the only texts that preserve it?” The

Thackrey Library is a monument to such preservation and as such will be an inestimable resource for students of wine history to come.

Ben Kinmont

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The price of the collection *en bloc* is \$2,000,000.00.

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For more information, please contact us at:

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Helmreich, *Kunstbüchlein*, 1592.