Winemaking Tradition Lives On In Edenton

years after Sir Walter Raleigh's colonists saw the first wild muscadine grapes, a small winery on the shores of Albemarle Sound is making native grape wine in a tradition that is older than North Carolina itself:

In a converted stable five miles south of here, Deerfield Vineyards Native Grape Table Wine is hand bottled four at a time, hand corked and hand labeled.

It is the only winery in North Carolina.

Sir Walter Raleigh's colonists reported: "In 1584, we departed from England with two boats and found Roanoke Island on the fourth of July and the smell was as sweet as if we had been in the midst of some delicate garden, and grapes grew abundantly. "Every shrub was covered, climbing towards the tops of high cedars and we think the like is not be found."

There are several varieities of muscadines, which is the generic name for native North American grapes. One of these is the scuppernong, from the Algonquin Indian name, 'ascopo," meaning sweetbay tree. Eighteenth century maps of North Carolina show a village and a river, both named Scuppernong. As early as 1809, the "white grape" was commercially planted around Lake Phelps, which was known then as Lake Scuppernong. A census made in 1810 showed that there were 1,368 gallons of wine being made in Washington County.

Visitors are bid welcome by a sign in front of the red barn in which Wine Cellars, Inc. is housed. The people who stop in to taste, look and buy are local curiosity

seeker and tourists who are "on the wrong road" or have relatives nearby, according to winemaker Rick Ervin.

A former shrimper and

farmer, Williams helped

produce a grape harvester

for DARF, a farm imple-

ment manufacturing com-

pany of which he is a cor-

porate officer. DARF

planted grapes for the

harvester, and that led to

Originally, the wine was

made in Arkansas and hot-

tled in North Carolina. Deer-

field Vineyards Wine has

been made in North

Carolina since December of

The winery's present an-

nual capacity is 14,500

gallons. Williams said they

hope to grow to 100,000

gallons per year. If they do, they will still be among the

smallest wineries in the

"We never intend to get

Visitors escorted through

the winery may see the wine

fermenting or aging in two

large wooden tanks. They

were bought for \$48 each form a Virginia winery that

went out of business. Later

they were dismantled and

reassembled in the North

Carolina winery's barn. The

redwood stables are caulked

with cattails and flax seeds

and the tanks are sealed

with tallow and mop heads.

is sold only in North

Carolina between Elizabeth

City and Morehead City and

east to Greenville. It also

may be bought in Raleigh

The grapes from which

the wine is made are grown

near Columbia, N.C. on the

company's 80-acre

vineyard. Presently there

are about 3,000 acres of

grapes grown commercially

Edenton is on the northern

edge of scuppernong country, Williams said. "It

grows from here south to Florida and west to Mississippi. "So it is a

southern grape, and our

customers are mostly

southerners. "It suits a

Williams said that Deer-

in North Carolina.

southern taste."

and Chapel Hill

Deerfield Vineyards Wine

big," Williams said, "you

lose that personal touch. "We want to proceed slowly,

let the wine age naturally."

nation.

plans for the winery.

Many of them are amateur wine makers themselves. They discuss their home operations and seek Ervin's advice on problems they may be having with the sometimes tricky fermentation process. Recently the winery has been getting 12 to 25 visitors daily, which indicates unusually high interest considering its off-the-beatentrack location.

"It took us a long time," Ervin says, "to get the laws changed to permit tasting and selling on the same premises." In little plastic cups, he offers tastes of the two wines the winery is currently producing. Both are Deerfield Vineyards Native Grape Table Wine. One is dry scuppernong, the other is a demi sec, a sweet scuppernong wine that outsells the dry two to one. The cost

is \$2 per bottle. The company has plans to market a rose soon and Ervin has developed a new formula for the demi sec to make it more mellow, less acidic, and lighter in body and aroma.

Ervin, 24, is originally

from Morehead City. He worked in Goldsboro as a hairdresser and began working at the winery last year as a utility worker with a job in Edenton didn't pan out. The former winemaker, now a cooper with another winery out-of-state, taught him the fundamentals of making wine and he has read intensely on the subject. A chemist helped him

with the fine points. Frank Williams is vice president of Wine Cellar Inc. and manager of the winery.

WINE LEVEL - Rick Ervin checks the wine level in one of the vats at Deerfield Vineyards in Edenton as two visitors observe. (Photo courtesy of The Chowan Herald)

blended as much as some other scuppernong wines. "We try to hold the scupper-

nong aroma and taste.' No other winery makes a dry scuppernong wine, according to Williams. 'Others are sweeter and have a higher alcoholic content," he said. "This is more of a table wine."

North Carolina's early settlers found a wealth of grapes growing wild and

soon wine making was an important part of colonial life in the eastern part of the state. At Edenton, Deerfield Vineyards Native Grape Table Wine continues that tradition.



Promotions Are Announced

Telephone Company Board of Directors at its November 10 meeting announced several promotions. Chas. Camden Blades moved from Vice-President to Senior Vice-President. W.C. Meekins, Jr., moved to Vice-President, retaining his titles of Secretary, Treasurer, and Commercial Manager. T.F. Daniels also moved to Vice-President. retaining his titles of Assis-

Treasurer, and Marketing Manager. R.M. Byrum moved from Chief Accountant to Vice-President-Comptroller; and D.G. Steele from Assistant Chief Accountant to Assistant Comptroller. S.T. Barrow, a management trainee. became Assistant Commercial Manager.

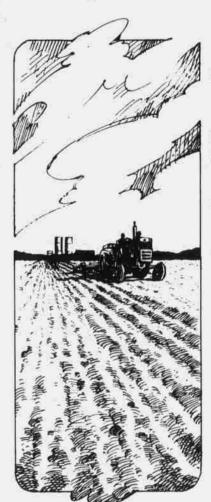
Blades began his career with the company in 1919, and has held various positions since that time. He tant Secretary, Assistant has been a director since

1919. He serves as Chairman of the Executive Commit-

Meekins began in 1954 as Commercial Representative. He has been a director since 1973, and is on the

Executive Committee. Daniels began in 1968 as General Staff Assistant. He also served as Assistant Commercial Manager. He is on the Executive Commit-

Byrum began in 1965 as an Accountant.



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Architect for the project is Ray Troxell Associates, Inc. of Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

Construction Begins

All facilities are scheduled for completion in late summer

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May we convey warm Season's Greetings and extend our best wishes for Good Health, Happiness and Prosperity in the Coming Year.