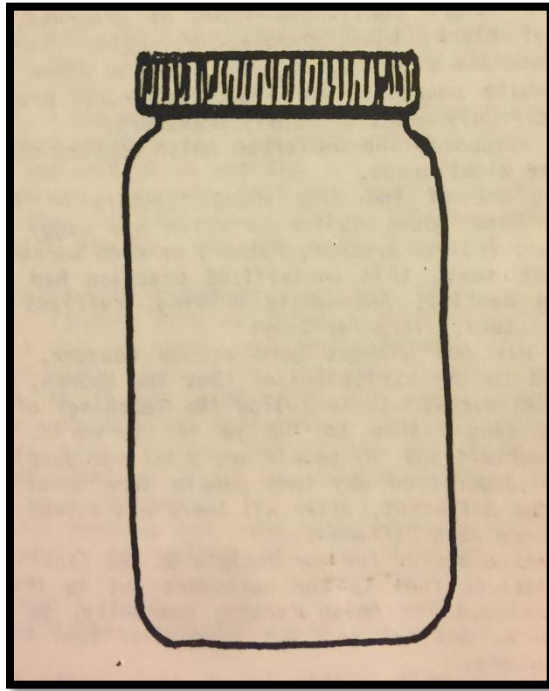


DUST

## FINE AMISH WINE



My Great-Grandfather, Absalom Hooper, and his wife Mary (Smith) Hooper, with their children and other family members, came from Tennessee to Oklahoma at the end of the nineteenth century.

Being a Blacksmith and Stone Cutter by trade, he opened shop for business in town and soon started looking for a church his family could attend. But there was no Quaker congregation and although there was a sizable Amish Church Southeast of town and his wife had been born to Amish-Baptist parents in Georgia [actually Polk County, Tennessee], it was too far to travel three times each week for "The Gathering Together" at the Amish home assemblies. So he and his wife started looking around for a church that held to the doctrine they could both readily adhere to. After a lot of searching he discovered that the Quaker Church was strictly an American Church. The Amish Church was a Holland Dutch Church, and the Baptist Church was an English Church, according to their origin, but they each held to the same basic doctrine. So he and most of his family joined the Baptist Church in town, which had been chartered by his oldest son Bill and a brother-in-law [Greenberry Smith] and began to work with others in the community to build the First Baptist Church house in Thomas. But the family always kept very close friendship and respect for their Amish Brethren.

The Amish Dutch Farmers Southeast of town were very strange people to those who never took the time to understand why they chose to live as they did. No automobiles, electricity, store bought clothing, or what others considered items of progress. They wore plain clothing of black, blue, purple, or white. The Men, when they married allowed their beards to grow and the women

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always wore small black or white bonnets. Horse back and horse drawn buggies or wagons were their only means of family transport.

The children attended the Jefferson Amish country school until graduating from the eighth grade.

When courting one of the fine young "Sisters of The Church" it was custom for the young suitor to drive his buggy around the mile with young ladies. Brother, Father, or even worse HER MOTHER riding in the back seat. This uncivilized practice had a tendency to keep us young Baptist, automobile driving, ruffians, away from the pretty young sisters. Very far away!

All of this was not without good reason however. The Elders of the Church held to the strict belief that The Church, being made up of individual believers, was to follow the teachings of the Bible in as much as it taught them to "be ye in the world, but be ye separate from the world" and "My people are a strange people".

I could never understand why some people were upset about the Amish choosing to be different, after all there was a thousand people in town and they were each different.

Dad's job, when he worked for our Uncle's at the Sinclair service station, was to deliver fuel to the customers out in the country. These customers included the Amish farming community, so there was hardly a day when he was not sent out to deliver fuel to at least one of the Amish farmers.

A few days before Christmas 1941, Uncle Sam handed Dad an order to deliver kerosene lantern and tractor fuel to one of their Amish farm customers. When Dad delivered the fuel the farmer asked, "Frank, did the brother up the road give you some of the vine (wine) as a Christmas present?"

Yes, as a matter of fact he did. Why?

He said he did, and I will prove to you, that he doesn't like you any better than I do. You wait here.

With that said, he went down into the root cellar quickly returning with a half gallon of his Fine Amish Wine, handing the jug to Dad, he said very quietly, "You try this vine, you'll like it a lot better."

When Dad returned the delivery truck to the service station that evening, he had three jugs of the Fine Amish Wine as Christmas presents from his Amish customers. Upon seeing that his Dad's car and Uncle Isaac's car were parked in the alley alongside the service station, he stepped out and placed a jug of wine in each of their cars, then pulled the truck up close to the stock tanks to lock it up for the night. Then took the third jug into the back room where they kept the batteries and canned oil, there he set the jug down, and went into the front office to turn in his invoices for the day. When he walked out of the office after turning the invoices in to Uncle Sam, Pa [Enos Hooper] and Uncle Isaac motioned for him to come over to where they were setting on the nail and bolt bins.

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Frank, is that Amish wine that you set in the back room?

"Yes, Dad," he said. "As a matter of fact it is. Why?"

Well your Uncle Isaac and I thought you might be in the holiday mood enough to share a little of it with us.

Well Dad, I was going to take that jug home for myself.

Pa looked quickly at Isaac, then with a flushed face he looked back at Dad and said quiet sharply, "Frank, do you mean to tell me, that I raised a boy, who is so selfish, that he has a half gallon of Fine Amish Wine, and he won't even give his Pa and his Uncle Isaac as much as a sniff of it?"

Dad chuckled with amusement, then told them, "Pa, the farmers gave me three jugs of wine today and I have already put a jug in yours and Uncle Isaac's cars, but you better find a better place to hide it than you did the last time, because if Ma [Elizabeth Pike Hooper] finds it in the seed wheat bin again, you'll lose another ten bushel of seed when she brakes this one, just like last year."

You don't have to worry about that son, I'll never again hide anything where your Ma might go looking for some chicken feed when she runs low on laying mash.

Later that evening, Dad came home carrying a brown paper lunch sack from which he pulled the jug, placing it into Mother's refrigerator.

Frank, what's that?

It's a Christmas present that one of my Amish friends gave me today.

"Well it better last a lot longer than Christmas, you know I told you and Ab [Greene Hooper's son, Absalom], I didn't want any more of that kind of stuff in this house."

Marvell, I have already given Dad and Uncle Ike the other two jugs which they gave me today, but this one is special.

Well if it is so special, you better keep it in the jug.

Mother, what's that?

Well uh, Gary, that's your Daddy's pop.

Can I have some of Daddy's pop?

No! That is your Daddy's pop.

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Later that evening Dad and Mother hosted a neighborhood card party, several other couples would come over to play in the card tournament. The winning couple would win a host prize such as a salt and pepper shaker set for the lady and a new deck of cards for her tournament partner.

In the heated, but friendly competition, everyone could forget about their problems and just enjoy the evening with their friends and neighbors. NOT ALWAYS!

Gary, where are you?

In here.

What are you doing in the kitchen?

Nothing.

Don't tell me nothing, when you're being that quiet. Now what are you doing?

I'm just drinking some of Daddy's pop.

I told you that was your Daddy's and for you to stay out of it. Oh my Lord! Frank! Come here, this baby of yours has drank half of this jug of wine. Frank, do you think that much wine will hurt him?

I don't know. I've never seen a baby drink a quart of homemade wine before.

Don't get smart with me now. This is serious!

Oh Marvell, calm down, that's good wine, after all it is Good Amish Communion Wine.

Don't tell me that it's good and won't hurt him! He's as limp as a wet dishrag and his eyes are rolling around in his head like they are loose in the sockets. Frank, you better call Dr. Ryan right now!

Mother, I told him to leave Daddy's pop alone.

R.E., you're a little too late to be telling me that now!

For a long time Mother was swinging me around the house while I kept trying to get a fix on something, but all I could see were things passing before my eyes. A light bulb on the ceiling, the corners of the room, strange faces, shoes, lots of shoes.

(I don't know why she's doing this to me, it's making me so dizzy that I'm getting sick to my stomach. She sure must be angry to be punishing me this way. You would think that would be enough! All I did was drink some of Daddy's pop. After all, I did leave half of it for him, besides

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Mother told him that he wasn't suppose to drink it and I don't think he wanted it, because he hadn't opened it.)

Cold chills suddenly came all over my body as the front door opened. A strange man, with a very round red face, cigar, pajamas, and a large black bag in hand, was standing there looking at me.

(Oh no, Mother is so mad she's giving me away to this strange man. ALL this fuss over a little pop. What's he laying me on top of the table for? Oooops. Someone turned all the lights out.)

I have been told that after giving me a thorough physical, Doctor Ryan said, "He'll be all right. He's just drunk. He'll probably sober up sometime tomorrow, but he isn't going to feel too good when he does, and don't give him very much water for a couple of days if you don't want him drunk again."

As Dr. Ryan was leaving with a chuckle, he said, "I don't think that boy is going to want any more wine for a few days."

Dr. Ryan was right, I still don't care much for wine and it's "been a few days", about nineteen thousand days.

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