

# FEATURE ARTICLE



## A TASTE OF HISTORY

### The Leacock Family Madeiras

THE MONACO HOTEL, SAN FRANCISCO ~ JUNE 7<sup>TH</sup> 2009

ARTICLE & PHOTOS BY ROY HERSH © JUNE 2009

I received an email invitation to **Rare Wine Co.'s** extraordinary Madeira tasting while I was still in Portugal and had just been in Madeira a few days earlier for the fourth consecutive year. With that experience freshly ingrained and the historic nature and provenance of the bottles made available for the upcoming tasting in San Francisco, it was simply impossible to miss this event.

**RWC's Mannie Berk**, is unquestionably one of the world's foremost authorities on Madeira and although he's one of the calmest, most laid back individual's I know, it was very clear how excited he was to try these Madeiras too. The fact that he had researched some of these rarities for decades, even studying the auction catalogues of Christie's going all the way back to the 1970s, to gain perspective on the prices paid in the past and the sheer scarcity of this Leacock's collection, speaks to his exceptional passion for Madeira. Much to his credit, when an opportunity of this nature arises, he is fully armed with detailed information, resources and the fortitude required to pull the trigger.

Original plans called for one tasting on Sunday the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, but given the resounding response to attend this once-in-a-lifetime tasting, a second date was added (Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup>). Between the two sessions there were 34 participants and Mannie was the moderator, educator and host.

The venue selected was **The Peacock Terrace of the Grand Café at the Hotel Monaco**. The ambience was nearly perfect, as it was well appointed and spacious, with a board room table set for 18 each day. Just walking towards the room from down the hall, I could detect the caramelized aroma of Madeira and I let my nose lead me to it.

Many of the participants brought cameras to take photos of the set up and especially these uber-rare old bottles. Few people ever get the chance to see wines of this age, no less Madeira from such old bottles (as lots of old vintage dated Madeira has been bottled in the past decade or three). We had plenty of time before the actual tasting began and it was a real pleasure to meet so many very serious Madeira lovers.

We were offered a nice glass of 1988 Veuve Clicquot Brut "Vintage Rare" bubbly while we were mingling and getting to know one another. Some guests had been collectors of Madeira for 20-30 years and we even had a Madeira-loving NBA head coach in the room. It was a very eclectic crowd that hailed from all over the USA, joined by a common passion. I was proud that FTLOP Forum participants showed up in force, at least seven that I am aware of, split between the two tastings.

Tempting platters of light snacks were on hand, but I refrained from eating anything until I had made my first pass through all of the glasses before me. With wines like this, I certainly did not want food getting in the way of being able to taste them with total clarity. It is amazing how different a wine can taste right after a bite of cheese and these wines deserved the utmost respect.

Mannie then led us through the five fantastic flights. They were laid out in the following order:

FLIGHT #1:

Leacock 'A'  
1825 Leacock Seco  
1890 Leacock Sercial

FLIGHT #2:

1928 Leacock Verdelho  
1934 Leacock 'SJ'  
Leacock Malvazia 'VMA'

FLIGHT #3:

1896 HFS 'E'  
1895 HFS 'JPW'

FLIGHT #4:

1881 Leacock Terrantez  
A.G. Pacheco Madeira  
1868 EBH Very Old Boal

FLIGHT #5:

1845 Quinta da Paz  
1836 Lomelino Bastardo  
HMB Terrantez (undated)



I asked **Mannie Berk** of **The Rare Wine Co.** for permission to include the original invitation in the body of this article, which provides detailed insight into the historic nature of the bottles exhibited at the tasting. However, the fact that Mannie spent countless hours researching these wines over the years ... it is in your best interest to get the information directly from RWC's site here. It really provides an even greater sense of just how rare and valuable this collection truly is:

<http://rarewineco.com/html/feat/leac.htm>

Additionally, **The Rare Wine Co.** just started a brand new blog and Mannie's current entry details the pair of tastings here: <http://blog.rarewineco.com/?p=64#more-64>

Although the **Leacock Family** collection's bottles are not being sold at this time (there will be an opportunity to purchase some later this year) you can use the RWC's website to learn more about Madeira here: <http://rarewineco.com/html/made.htm> and for those of you looking to purchase some extraordinary bottles of Madeira, in all price ranges, here is the current list of what RWC is offering: <http://rarewineco.com/downloads/madeira/RWC%20MADEIRAS.pdf>

So while I will provide my own tasting notes from June 7<sup>th</sup> (**below**) and some additional photos, I strongly urge you to check out the links above to get the full historical perspective that would be redundant for me to try to relay.

Here was the majority of the information which appeared in The Rare Wine Company's original invitation, which provides a fascinating read:

*On June 7, 2009, in San Francisco, we will host a Madeira tasting of profound importance. The wines are all from the Leacock family collection that was auctioned last December in London. The provenance of the wines is sufficient cause for interest. But the full significance of the sale—and our June 7<sup>th</sup> tasting—goes far beyond that: it's the first time in more than three decades that so much truly rare and iconic Madeira has come on the market. And as the history of Madeira continues its slow march, it will almost certainly be the last.*

On December 11, 2008, William Leacock, the last of the Madeira Leacocks, sold his wine collection at Christies in London. Other former members of the Madeira trade have sold wine at auction, but since records have been kept, there's never been a sale even remotely like this one. For one thing, his collection represented everything that belonged to the Leacocks, major players in the Madeira trade for 250 years, longer than any other British family. William was the only son of Edmund Leacock, who had bought out his brother Julian's interest in the business in 1953. All the wine ended up with William. But there's more. The Leacocks' collection was the *crème de la crème*—the result of a consolidation that began in 1913. In 1925, the Leacock's joined with the Blandys—the second oldest British family in the Madeira trade—to found a company called the Madeira Wine Association (MWA). Over the next four decades, almost every Madeira shipper of note was absorbed into the MWA, pooling not only their brands but their old wines. Quietly,

with an eye to the future, the Leacocks and Blandys pulled out a few bottles of all the greatest wines for their own collections. There has never been a major auction of Blandy family-owned wines. The Blandys had more children than the Leacocks, which led to more dividing of the family jewels over the generations. No Blandy descendent has ever sold more than a few bottles at a time, but in one shot William Leacock sold virtually all the Madeira he inherited: twenty-five unique and irreplaceable wines, of which two-thirds were from the 18th or 19th centuries. The Leacock Madeiras have blue chip written all over them—how could they not, coming from one of the most prominent families in the Madeira trade? But in surveying the catalogue, the importance of many of the wines would not have been obvious to most readers. In fact, some of the most mythic, and potentially valuable, wines in the sale received little or no comment.

## *The Leacock Family Madeiras*

### *The Mythic Quinta da Paz*

Among the hidden gems in the sale was 1845 Lomelino Quinta da Paz, a wine we had lusted after for as long as we knew of its existence. But we had never had the chance because the last bottle came up at auction 22 years ago. This wine came into the possession of the Leacocks and Blandys in the 1930s and was cherished by generations of both families. In 1971, Graham Blandy gave each of his children two bottles, calling them “museum pieces.” Prior to the Leacock sale, only seven bottles are known to have ever appeared at auction: at least two came from Blandy children and two more from Tom Mullins, who ran the MWA for a half century. These bottles brought among the highest Madeira auction prices for their time.

### *A.G. Pacheco*

The pre-phylloxera A.G. Pacheco challenges the Quinta da Paz for rarity. Since the 1970s, we know of only four bottles having been sold at auction, the last in 1986. Bottled by the Madeira Wine Association in 1927, the bottles previously sold had come from Tom Mullins. In 1978 a bottle sold for the same price as a bottle of 1789 Avery's C ma do Lobos in the same sale. But, ironically, the Pacheco was overlooked by casual bidders at Christies, having been “lost” in the catalogue between 1927 and 1928 vintage wines, with nary a note of its distinction.

### *The Earliest Bastardo Known to Exist*

Another star in the sale was the 1836 Lomelino Bastardo, a previously unknown wine. It undoubtedly came into the Leacocks' possession when Lomelino joined the Madeira Wine Association in the 1930s. At age 173, this is not only the oldest vintage Bastardo known to exist, it is a wine of mindboggling richness. From a pre-sale tasting, Michael Broadbent wrote:

“\*\*\*\*\* Tawny-bronze colour with pronounced yellow-green rim; though typically tangy; totally different, unfamiliar, spiry bouquet; very sweet, soft texture, lovely flavour.” Also from a pre-sale tasting, *erobertparker.com*’s Neal Martin wrote: “96 rating ... heavenly bouquet ... wonderful balance and subtlety ... just gets better and better in the glass.”

## *Eugenia de Bianchi Henriques’ Wine*

While the Bastardo was previously unknown, the 1868 “EBH” Very Old Boal is famous—or at least it is to serious students of Madeira wine history. The initials stand for Eugenia de Bianchi Henriques, who had two famous grandfathers: on her mother’s side, Tarquinio Torquato da Camera Lomelino, the founder of Lomelino, and on her father’s, Carlo de Bianchi, who ran Lomelino after Tarquinio’s death. She was also the aunt of Noël Cossart and wife of Tiburcio Henriques, scion of C ma do Lobos’ important Henriques family. Such connections explain the great Boals that appeared under Eugenia’s initials from vintages like 1869, 1870 and 1893. But the 1868 is the most revered. In his *Great Vintage Wine Book*, Michael Broadbent wrote: “\*\*\*\*\*. Translucent, ethereal, herbaceous, full, rich, lovely texture, great length ... A famous wine, surpassed only by the 1862 (HMB) Terrantez.”

But while the EBH 1868 is famous, it’s also incredibly rare. Since 1988, it had appeared only three times at auction: a single bottle in 1999, three bottles in 2006 and three bottles in 2008 (which we purchased). But over the course of five minutes on December 11, 2008, bidders had the chance to seize an unheard-of 23 bottles of this iconic wine—the last bottles owned by the Leacock family.

## *The Terrantez Mystery*

But the most important lots in the entire sale were possibly the 48 bottles of undated Terrantez from the legendary Henriques Men zes Borges. Though the wine is clearly vintage Terrantez, and of celestial quality, the bottles bear no date, merely “TERRANTEZ H M B” on two lines. Until his death in 1916, Borges was arguably Madeira’s greatest judge of Terrantez, best known for the 1846 and 1862 vintages that bore his name and initials. Despite the absence of a date on the bottles, William Leacock’s HMB Terrantez rivals those two legendary wines. Notes from the presale tastings bear this out. Michael Broadbent, for example, wrote: “\*\*\*\*\* Medium-deep bronze colour with apple green rim; tangy. High toned bouquet; very rich, very powerful, lovely texture and hot dry finish. Magnificent wine.”

And from Neal Martin (*erobertparker.com*): “96 rating ... a delectable barley sugar scented nose ... harmonious, very honeyed ... a beautiful Madeira.” But the question remains, what vintage of H.M. Borges Terrantez is in those bottles? Unfortunately, William Leacock doesn’t know; the wine was acquired by his father or grandfather. Nor does Christie’s know. The sale catalogue stated that the vintage is “believed 1920s,” but during the presale tasting, this was corrected to “bottled in the 1920s,” with a possible vintage in the mid to late 1800s. Inevitably, the speculation zeroes in on 1862: the Terrantez considered not only Borges’ best, but one of the greatest Madeiras ever made, and a wine that in recent years has regularly sold for between \$3000 and \$5000 a bottle. But why 1862? Apart from the staggering quality of the wine in the Leacock bottles, we’re riveted by the stenciling, because of all the H.M. Borges Terrantezes we have ever seen—including 1760, 1790, 1846, 1862, 1877, 1890, 1899 and 1900—only 1862 is typically stenciled “Terrantez HMB” on

separate lines as are the Leacock bottles. The stenciling of the Leacock bottles also fits the description of two bottles belonging to the late Tom Mullins—longtime Madeira Wine Association Director — that were sold at Christie’s in 1982 as “believed to be 1862.”

**1928 Leacock Verdelho “EEL” (Edmund Erskine Leacock)** A wine we had not seen before for the likely reason that it was bottled exclusively for the Leacock family. Michael Broadbent:

" \*\*\*\*. Medium pale green-tinged amber, pale yellow-green rim; rich, 'meaty' bouquet; medium-sweet, rich, good length, dry finish."

### **1881 Leacock Terrantez Madeira**

Terrantezes are rarely seen after Phylloxera arrived in the early 1870s. Michael Broadbent: “\*\*\*\* ... fine colour; mediumsweet, tangy, distinctive, very dry finish."

Neal Martin: “93 rating ... Clear amber hue with a noticeable gold/lemon rim. The nose is fresh and lively, quite feminine, citrus fruits at first, mandarin and a little spice. The palate is medium-bodied, good acidity, fresh and zesty, quite lithe with orange zest and a touch of strawberry. Very elegant and refined. Lovely.”

Jancis Robinson’s Purple Pages: “... a soft, milk or white chocolate aroma. The taste was perfect. Beautifully sweet, but not rich or cloying. Refreshing, zesty and cleansing.”

### **1825 Leacock Madeira Seco**

Bottled in 1932, after 107 years in cask. Michael Broadbent: “Palish, open, apple-green rim; tangy; medium-sweet attractive flavour leading to a slightly drier finish."

Neal Martin: “92 rating ... a lovely hazelnut nose ... quite sweet on the entry and then bang! That razor-sharp acidity really hits you and leads to a spicy, walnut-tinged finish ... Nice focus, very tangy towards the finish.”

### **1934 Leacock “SJ” Madeira**

Another early 20th century rarity, this one from the Leacock family’s own vineyard, St. John’s, on the outskirts of Funchal.

### **Leacock Malvazia 'VMA' Madeira**

A rare 19th-century Malmsey believed bottled between 1910 and 1930.

### **1890 Leacock Sercial**

Very rare; a wine that's never before appeared at auction or in any records we've seen. Michael Broadbent: “ \*\*\*\*. Medium amber with pronounced yellow-green rim; superb, ethereal, tangy bouquet; swingingly dry ....”

Neal Martin: “95 rating ... complex nose with hazelnut, cooking apple and tangerine, smooth and subtle on the entry, perhaps the caramel element a little too pronounced compared to others and yet with sublime balance and freshness on the finish. It is a beautiful Sercial ... an ephemeral finish. Very feminine and sensuous.”

### **1896 HFS E Madeira and 1895 HFS JPW Madeira**

A pair of intriguing rarities. Our still-to-be-confirmed suspicion is that these wines were laid down for two of the sons of John Milburne Leacock: Edmund Erskine (born 1891) and Julian Philip (born 1893).

## Leacock “A” Madeira

An ancient wine, possibly Sercial, that Michael Broadbent believes may be of the 1860 vintage. He writes: " \*\*\* .... razorsharp old Sercial character, possible of the 1860 vintage; medium sweet entry, very dry finish, good texture and flavour."

Jancis Robinson’s Purple Pages: “The nose was savoury and beautifully caramelised, with butterscotch and vanilla. On revisiting it, there was fudge, sweet vanilla biscuits and some chocolate. It was the first wine we tasted and seemed quite spirity in the mouth, but with a delicious balance of sweet and savour – almost salty.”

*(still part of RWC’s original invitation):*

In all of life’s pursuits there are opportunities where we know we must act—and if we don’t, we’re likely to regret it. This is particularly so with something as ephemeral as Madeira, a wine that has been vanishing before the world’s eyes for the past century. Since we bought the hundreds of cases of old Madeira that launched our business in 1988, we’ve acted decisively when important Madeira opportunities have presented themselves. The Leacock sale was no exception. Knowing there would never be another chance—and being able to draw on our 25 years of exhaustive research on many of these wines—we bought virtually every wine of importance in the sale. On the afternoon of June 7, 2009, we will host a momentous tasting of the wines. The setting will be particularly appropriate: the *art nouveau* Peacock Terrace of the Grand Café in San Francisco’s Hotel Monaco. The Peacock Terrace was named by Forbes Magazine one of America’s thirteen finest private dining rooms. The tasting will include the 14 irreplaceable Madeiras at right. Appetizers will accompany the wines. And because many of these Madeiras will be offered for sale later this year, those attending will have priority for purchasing them.



MANNIE BERK, FOUNDER OF THE RARE WINE CO. © 6/7/09



## FACTOIDS FROM THE TASTING –

- Mannie decanted all bottles for at least six days in advance of the tasting, and double decanted them back and forth several times to provide more aeration. The old and idiosyncratic bottles had lots of bottle “stink” and really benefited greatly from the extra air time. Mannie mentioned some of these probably could have used several weeks of being open in decanter.
- Prior to the scourges of Oidium and Phylloxera on the island, Madeira were shipped out as young wines at 1-2 years of age.
- All of the legendary bottlings in this tasting came from William Leacock’s personal cellar, and were “aged in bottle” (compared to recently bottled old vintages) which makes them richer and more concentrated due to the oxidation.
- If I am not mistaken, Mannie said they all had about sixty year’s minimum bottle-age and some were much older. All of these particular bottles had been stored on their side ... very atypical ... and none appeared to have been re-corked.
- The family members of Blandy and Leacock had pulled out a few bottles from the Madeira Wine Association stocks, maybe 20 or 30 out of the hundreds or even thousands. Mr. Leacock sold his interest in the MWA about 30 years ago and auctioned more than 1400 bottles in 2008. He explained why this was the last time in history there’d be a Madeira auction of this magnitude.
- The 5 flights were arranged from what was expected to be the driest to sweetest styles.
- The first six bottles we tasted were made for the Leacock’s family to drink ... not sell. The third flight, (1895/1896) was produced for the two brother’s birth years. In my opinion, the parents loved one more than the other ... the Madeira that is.



## Without further ado, here are my tasting notes:

**n/v ~ Leacock's "A" ~ Madeira** – Light honey-amber color with a golden-greenish tinge on the rim. Light whiffs of spirituous VA entwined with pipe tobacco, citrus rind and an elusive torrefacted note. Medium in weight, elegant, soft and framed by roasted coffee, spice and light Brazil nut flavors which introduce a modest sweetness early on. The restrained acidity and drying finish reverberate with a burnt caramel aftertaste. Mannie mentioned that on Saturday “it showed like a weak aguardente” and he surmised that may be where the “A” comes from. I am still pondering how Mr. Broadbent conceived this to possibly come from the 1860 vintage. A most enjoyable opening volley.

**92 points ~ 6/7/09**

**1825 ~ Leacock's ~ "Seco" ~ Vintage Madeira** – Bottled in 1932 and moved between wood and demijohn. A fine medium amber-maple color and lime hued meniscus. Scents of sea mist, golden raisins, and mandarin orange kept it worthy of several revisits. Off dry and sweeter than expected for a “Seco,” I was immediately convinced this was Verdelho-like. Others believed it to be a Sercial and Mannie felt it was probably a blend of grapes, (a common practice in that epoch) likely Verdelho dominant. Noticeably light in body and driven by sophisticated yet medium level acidity. Caressed by feminine textural charm; the mid-length aftertaste of pralines and citrus was striking.

**93 points ~ 6/7/09**

**1890 ~ Leacock's ~ Sercial ~ Vintage Madeira** – This bottling is a dark knight which has **never** before seen the dawn nor light, of auction that is. Dark amber-orange color with apple green rim. Some found a reductive bottle stink, while I took pleasure in the distinctive aromatic personality of creosote, mahogany, Asian spice and undulating VA which added heady overtones. This Sercial was not only the driest of the flight, but one of the driest Madeiras I've ever put in my mouth. Akin to sipping a desert storm, led by acidity with piercing intensity and accompanied by citrus and toffee flavors. The evocative aftertaste won me over with zesty lemon and drying grapefruit pith which had me salivating for minutes. If you truly appreciate the driest side of the Madeira spectrum, make sure not to miss the announcement when this is offered for sale. I'd love to see what another week of decanting would have done for this wine. **94 points ~ 6/7/09**



**FLIGHT #1**

**1928 ~ Leacock's ~ Verdelho "EEL" (Edmund Erskine Leacock) ~ Vintage Madeira** – EEL = William Leacock's father who this was bottled for. Medium bronze color with greenish-gold edge. The 1928 Leacock's showcases an intricate nose with an immediate scent of teriyaki sauce, followed by ripe pears, toasted almonds, sultana raisins and mild, pungent VA. Seemingly medium-bodied yet dense, it's imbued with a supple spine of acidity and a scoosh of aguardente spirit which protrudes on the palate. Mild sweetness on entry provides mid-spectrum Verdelho varietal typicity with flavors of dried apricots, hazelnuts, dates and later on an element of toffee and citrus, as it finishes quite dry with medium duration. **88 points ~ 6/7/09**

**1934 ~ Leacock's "SJ" ~ Vintage Madeira** – It is not often one can say that a 75 year old bottle of wine is very young, but this is not your typical Madeira tasting! The "SJ" on the label relates to the 5.2 hectare São João (St. John) vineyard that the Leacock family owned. Iced tea color with a greenish tinged rim. The SJ admirably exhibits a fragrant mélange of cinnamon, orange peel and roasted espresso which provide spicy, delineated aromatics. It's not a stretch to believe this stems from Verdelho grapes, but it tends towards Boal early and then finishes distinctly Verdelho. The wood influenced concentration provides a heavy cream texture and is noticeably voluptuous, while the interplay of sweet and tart is focused by the polished acidity along with caramel and tangerine flavors. There is a bit of heat that is a distraction on the mid-palate, but the dry impression and lingering aftertaste of roasted coffee and orange peel deserve some leniency. Overall, this was a very solid offering. **93 points ~ 6/7/09**

**n/v ~ Leacock's ~ Malvazia "VMA" ~ Madeira** – Believed bottled between 1910-1930, although this is so rare that nobody has an idea what VMA means. Medium amber-orange in color with a golden meniscus. The VMA featured a provocative profile of fresh mint, honey, tobacco, herbs and espresso bean that was not only complex, but vibrant. Mannie mentioned that these VMA bottles spent less time in cask, maybe 30-40 years. This is dichotomous Madeira: medium in body although rich and voluminous; it stems from the Malvasia grape but is more Boal-like in its level of sweetness; it's a bit deficient in the acid department ... yet it shows no signs of being fat or cloying. There's a light orange nuance along with a backdrop of mint and butterscotch that I found intriguing and overall this Leacock bottling provided a good deal of complexity and elegance. The nose was stunning and the mid-palate "inspired." Had there been more acidity, this would have been a knockout. **94 points ~ 6/7/09**



**FLIGHT #2**

**1896 ~ Leacock's HFS "E" ~ Vintage Madeira** – I did not catch what the HFS stood for but the "E" was for the birth of Edmund Erskine Leacock who was born in 1891 and this bottling is thought to have been laid down for that reason. Dark amber with a light apple green edge. This was really funky, musty and gave off an unpleasant damp cellar nose with a touch of vanilla. It translated to the palate as well. It was the first time I've ever had a corked bottle of Madeira. Some did not think this was TCA related, while a few others agreed. I revisited this glass several times and it provided the tell tale sign. I wonder how it showed the next day. **Not rated ~ 6/7/09**

**1895 ~ Leacock's HFS "JPW" ~ Vintage Madeira** – If the 1895 offers an idea of what the 1896 would have put forth, I am very sorry that our bottle did not show well. This was bottled and laid down in the late 1890s to commemorate Edmund's younger brother's birth (John Phillip) in 1893. Medium amber color, with a light amber-gold edge. This was open for business with a bright fragrance of white peach, honey, candied lemon drops and toasted coconut. Sweet and seemingly Boal-like, a heavyweight that was round and smooth, the "JPW" would not surprise me if it was determined to be a Malvasia. It featured crisp underpinnings of acidity to keep the sweet nectar in check and provided deft balance, while presenting an array of key lime, caramel, super ripe apricot and nectarine flavors, with a dollop of marzipan that added pizzazz. The 1895 is a delicious and sumptuous Madeira with a profound aftertaste. I never asked but am curious, what is HFS? **95 points ~ 6/7/09**



**FLIGHT #3**

It was made pretty clear that expectations for the final two flights were extremely high. Mannie light-heartedly commented that these six wines alone were worth the price of admission. Each of these bottlings was supposed to be progressively rare and we were all excited to start the swirl, sniff and sip exercise. In reality a few of these were some of the rarest and most legendary Madeira bottlings ever produced and at least one bottle, the 1881 Leacock's Terrantez had never been sold at auction before. Pretty amazing! How would these next two flights possibly live up to this type of hype?

**1881 ~ Leacock's ~ Terrantez ~ Vintage Madeira** – Historically speaking this wine is a real treasure, as Mannie has pointed out that few great Terrantez' were ever bottled after Phylloxera hit the island in the early 1870s. This was not even on his radar until the Dec. 2008 William Leacock offering at Christie's, and this is one bottling that literally has never once been offered at auction. I am a self-professed lover of Terrantez and of course, I am certainly not alone. The 1802 Acciaiolly still remains as the greatest Madeira I've ever tasted and although I have had several others that came close, none have ever surpassed it. I was hopeful that this might be such a bottling. Orange-copper color with glints of greenish-gold on the narrow rim. Expansive scented bouquet of key lime zest, coconut, grapefruit, mocha and nectarine kept my nose exploring in the glass for nearly ten minutes between swirls, without a sip. Madeira lovers are a patient lot. The 1881 Terrantez exudes an ethereal lightness of being, both aromatically and more so, on the palate. Flavors of peach and tangerine dance lightly across the tongue and the seamlessly integrated acidity is bracing and at the same time, disappears into *stealth mode* in support of the delicate fruit and gracefully seductive aftertaste.

**96 points ~ 6/7/09**

**n/v ~ A.G. Pacheco ~ Madeira (Madeira Wine Association Ltd. )** – Bottled by MWA in 1927, just two years after its establishment by the Blandy and Leacock families. Only four bottles have seen the light of day at auction, over three decades ago. Anticipation was palpable as were lofty expectations of grandeur. This bottle was a great disappointment, at least for me. I disliked it after several small sips and offered it to anyone who enjoyed it. The room was split between those who really liked it and others who felt it was flawed. Dark tea color with an orange edge. The nose was odd early on but this did improve to proffer mandarin orange, mahogany, crème caramel and a ton of VA, which I am normally a big fan of in Madeira. The palate was rich and very dry, but so overtly hot with disjointed aguardente that I found it quite unpleasant in the mouth and an offensive bitter flavor that I could not aptly describe, did not make matters better. It was not without any charm though, as the nose improved dramatically and the mouthfeel (beyond the spirit) was also very good. Heather wound up with the rest of my glass. I'm still hoping to learn who A.G. Pacheco is. **83 points ~ 6/7/09**

**1868 ~ Lomelino ~ E.B.H. ~ Very Old Boal ~ Vintage Madeira** – Up until the Dec. 2008 auction at Christie's only seven bottles had been to auction in the past two decades, three of which were purchased by RWC earlier in the year. The initials EBH are for Eugenia de Bianchi Henriques, whose ancestors had founded and run Lomelinos and other relatives of note were her husband who was part of Madeira's Henriques empire and her nephew, the renowned Noel Cossart. Nice lineage! Last December's auction unearthed the remaining twenty three bottles owned by the Leacock family. Bottled by the MWA circa the 1930s. The darkest color of any wine so far in the tasting, with the appearance of mahogany in the glass and an amber-green edge along with a smattering of sediment. From the first whiff to the last sip it was immediately apparent that this was an extraordinary wine of great pedigree. Impeccably refined scents of crème caramel, leather, orange marmalade and burnt sugar began the foreplay. Medium weight, lithe and seductively appealing, with electric acidity and an absolutely decadent mouthfeel. The Lomelino Boal exemplifies finesse and highlights the equilibrium between the tension of the acid and density of the sweetness in the confected orange and apricot preserves, hazelnut and fudge flavors that round out the profile. The meticulous and profound finish winds up with a complex combination of liquid butterscotch and citrus. Coincidentally, there was also a Cossart Gordon version of this exact Madeira. **98 points ~ 6/7/09**

**The A.G. Pacheco aside, the other two bottlings certainly lived up to the hype and tantalized the senses. We still had one more flight of three awe inspiring Madeiras, each in its own right would make for a stunning evening, if not an entire weekend. I could hardly wait to put my nose in the glasses before me. This was truly a once-in-a-lifetime flight and I felt privileged to be in such fine company.**



**FLIGHT #4**

**1845 ~ Lomelino ~ Quinta da Paz ~ Vintage Madeira** – Twenty two years after the last bottle appeared at auction, the Quinta da Paz finally reared its head at the now famous Leacock’s auction at Christie’s in Dec. 2008 where Mannie Berk acquired these gems. Dark coffee color with apple green rim. Explosive nose presenting a complex mélange of white peach, stewed pears, bees wax and hazelnuts. The 1845 is a contemplative wine with seriously viscous juice and precision that’s driven by laser like acidity. Luscious layers of peach marmalade, candied hazelnuts, and lime zest provide a great deal of intensity on entry and the mid-palate. The creamy smooth texture is sublime and accompanies the toffee flavored aftertaste into tomorrow. **97 points ~ 6/7/09**

**1836 ~ Lomelino Bastardo ~ Vintage Madeira** – A wine virtually unknown to Madeira collectors that was in the Leacock family’s hands for nearly 80 years. Unquestionably the oldest known bottling of any Bastardo ever produced. Very dark mahogany color with glints of greenish-gold on the edge. This is reminiscent of an ancient J.M. de Fonseca Moscatel de Setubal in profile. Exotic aromas of prune, earthy mushrooms, Cointreau, honey, citrus, pecans and some VA which were absolutely dazzling, and I am not usually a big fan of Bastardo. Flamboyant flavors of figs, prunes, Brazil nuts and raisins, with a hint of dried apricot and toffee. It finishes long, with a drying roasted nut skin nuance and lip smacking persistence. **95 points ~ 6/7/09**

**n/v ~ Borges “HMB” ~ Terrantez ~ Madeira** – This Terrantez is believed to have been bottled in the 1920s and alleged to hail from the exalted 1862 vintage, which makes sense since Mr. Borges produced one of the greatest ever Terrantez’ that year. My first thought was that this could have used another week of decanting for more purity on the nose, but it’s still a beauty. Copper-orange color with a greenish tinged meniscus. Sultry scents of spice, maple, grapefruit zest and a tangy note which blew off just a bit when I last nosed the glass before my departure. Simply stunning acidity that is piercing and sharp, segues to a rich but medium-bodied, silky smooth and sensuous palate presence. The HMB is a hedonistic extrovert displaying fine typicity of the grape with a sweet and sour component that I love in Terrantez. Sexy crème brûlée early on along with mandarin orange provide the sweet, while the sour comes from grapefruit and lime essence. Not quite on a par with the benchmark 1802, but this is an intense and deeply nuanced vinous vixen. I can only imagine what more air time would’ve allowed as my last sip was insane and what a finish. **98 points ~ 6/7/09**

## THE 5<sup>TH</sup> & FINAL FLIGHT



**My sincere thanks to Mannie Berk and The Rare Wine Company for providing us with the privilege to taste this legendary lineup of Madeiras and having the wisdom and acumen to triumph at the auction last December. I don't think anyone in attendance will ever forget this truly remarkable wine experience.**

