

Today in Columbus History, November 2, 1833, J.M. Guerry was trying to sell his grape vineyard near Hamilton in Harris County (*Columbus Enquirer*). It could be that the previous season had not been successful for Mr. Guerry, either for growing grapes, for selling the rootstock, or making wine, which he undoubtedly did. Despite some citizens' attempts to squelch the buying and selling of spirituous liquors in the city and the state, other citizens struggled to grow their own grapes and make their own homebrew.

Vineyards and winemaking were more successful in the Piedmont, which stretches north along the fall line of Georgia, from Columbus (roughly) to Augusta. Guerry may have had the vineyard as early as 1828. At some point he hired a "vine dresser" or cultivator of grapevines, who was also the contact for sales of the vineyard: John F.B. Besson. And by 1832 he was in business with Mr. Harwell and James Kivlin (*Columbus Enquirer*, Jan. 21, 1832).

John Francois Baptiste Besson may be Jean B. Besson in Natchitoches Parish in Louisiana in the 1810 census and John Baptist Besson in Natchitoches in the 1820 census. I've been unable to find other evidence of him after 1833 except for neglected letters at the post office in Hamilton.

Mr. Besson purported to be an expert in vineyards and domestic grapes. He advertised a treatise he had written and published, *The Georgia Vine Dresser*, on growing grapes for wine in Georgia, from at least November 1832 to March of 1833, in newspapers across the state. But his expertise in identifying Georgia grapes was brought into question when his pamphlet was given a not-so-great review in the *Southern Planter*, March 27, 1833 (a Macon publication), and reprinted in the *Georgia Constitutionalist* in April.

Without access to Barfield's *History of Harris County*, I'm a little in the dark on Mr. Guerry, but from Ancestry, it looks as if J.M. Guerry was James Michau Guerry (1805-1846), born in Baldwin County, Ga. His father owned property in Twiggs County and died in 1831. Guerry worked as an attorney and was in Harris County by 1828, helping plan July Fourth festivities (*Columbus Enquirer*, May 29, 1828). He married Tabitha J Iverson Jan. 11, 1827, in Jones Co., and the couple were living in Harris County in 1830 and in Muscogee County by 1840. He was elected alderman in Columbus for at least a couple of terms and fought in the Second Creek War.

What I had forgotten until I started digging into Mr. Guerry's life, was that he and my four-greats-grandfather James Boykin, an ardent temperance supporter, died within a couple of days of each other, possibly on the same day. They were both buried the afternoon of August 11, 1846, presumably in Linwood Cemetery. There is no record for either burial except the "Tribute of Respect," in which they were both memorialized, that appears in the *Enquirer* and the *Times*, (Aug. 12, 1846).

—Rachel Dobson

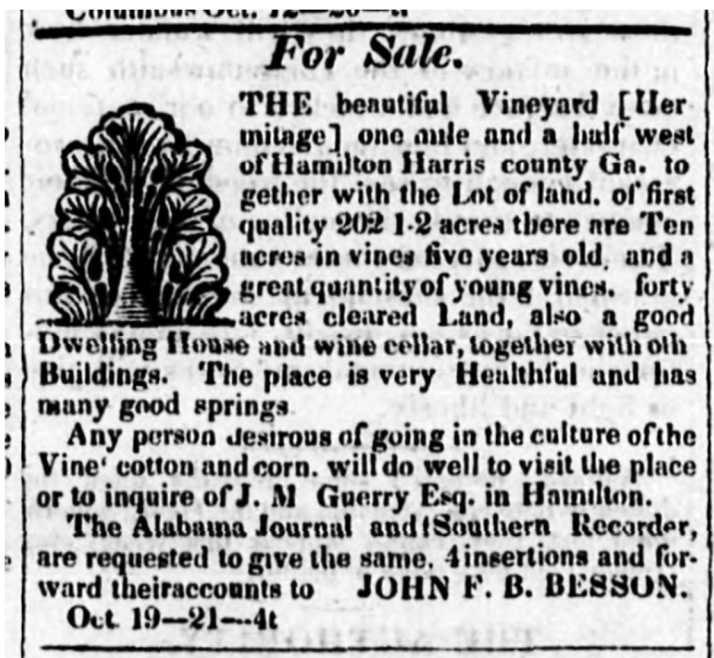
SOURCES

For more about growing grapes in Georgia during the antebellum period (mostly after 1840s), see James C. Bonner, *A History of Georgia Agriculture, 1732-1860* (Athens: University of Georgia, 1964, 2009), especially 159-167.

Georgia Historic Newspapers (GALILEO), <https://gahistoricnewspapers.galileo.usg.edu/>.

Columbus, Georgia, From its Selection as a "Trading Town" in 1827, to its Partial Destruction by Wilson's Raid, in 1865, Part 1 - 1827 to 1846, John H. Martin, compiler (Columbus, Ga.: Thos. Gilbert, 1874) (Internet Archive).

Ancestry.com



For Sale.


THE beautiful Vineyard [Hermitage] one mile and a half west of Hamilton Harris county Ga. together with the Lot of land, of first quality 202 1-2 acres there are Ten acres in vines five years old, and a great quantity of young vines, forty acres cleared Land, also a good Dwelling House and wine cellar, together with oth Buildings. The place is very Healthful and has many good springs

Any person desirous of going in the culture of the Vine' cotton and corn, will do well to visit the place or to inquire of J. M Guerry Esq. in Hamilton.

The Alabama Journal and Southern Recorder, are requested to give the same, 4 insertions and forward their accounts to JOHN F. B. BESSON.

Oct 19--21--4t

**The Hermitage
VINEYARD,**
NEAR HAMILTON, HARRIS CO.



IS now in a beautiful and luxuriant state. Persons desirous of visiting the same, either out of curiosity or instruction, can do so, when every attention will be paid to them, by the proprietors. Refreshments are kept there for persons visiting the Vineyard.

JOHN F. B. BESSON,
June 20—6—2t *Manager.*

Visitors are welcomed to the Hermitage Vineyard near Hamilton, Harris County. *Columbus Enquirer*, June 30, 1832, p. 3.

**THE GEORGIA
VINE DRESSER.**

JUST published and for sale at the *Columbus Book Store*. *The GEORGIA VINE DRESSER*, by **JOHN FRANCIS BAPTISTE BESSON**, of Harris county, Geo.

F. S. NORTON, Broad at
Columbus, Dec. 8—30—tf

An advertisement for *The Georgia Vine Dresser*, published by John F.B. Besson, for sale at E. Sigourney Norton's Columbus Book Store. *Columbus Enquirer*, December 15, 1832, p. 3.

JOHN F. B. BESSON of Harris county, Geo. has for sale this year 600,000 cuttings and 600 rooted vines.— The whole is of different kinds and best qualities to plant and well adapted to the soil and climate of this State; he has now in hand a Treatise on vine culture, and the art of making Wine, which he will sell at a fair price, to accommodate the public in general.

November 27, 1832. 32—

Times-State Rights Advocate (Milledgeville) March 13, 1833, p. 1.

Rare Grape Vine Roots.
White Robin Eyes with big clusters,
Sweet Gaillard,
Malvoissa,
Red Foot,
Black Hamburg,
From the Garden of Alphonse Loubert, for sale
by **G W DILLINGHAM.**
Feb 23 40 tf

George Dillingham was also selling grape rootstock "from the Garden of Alphonse Loubert." *Columbus Enquirer*, April 6, 1833.

DEATH OF MAJ. JACOB M. GUERRY AND JAMES BOYKIN.

Our city is in mourning for the death of two of our oldest and most esteemed citizens.

We give below the proceedings of the Inferior Court upon their receiving the information of their demise. They were both buried on the afternoon of yesterday, Maj. Guerry with the appropriate ceremonies of the Masonic Lodge and Fire Company, of both of which he was a member.

Muscogee Inferior Court, Aug. Term, 1846,

The court met pursuant to adjournment, when Col. Alexander McDougald arose and announced to the Court and Bar the death of Maj, Jacob M. Guerry, a member of this Bar, and after a few feeling and impressive remarks: offered the following Preamble and Resolutions which were unanimously adopted:

Whereas, it has pleased Divine Providence in

Columbus Times, August 12, 1846, p. 3 (first section of a longer column)