

Wine Maker

Curtis Steele was born in 1887 to a Stavrosian family in Wales. From the town called Nanty Glo, Glamorgan County. His father was a maker of wine. The craft was handed down to Curtis. His grandfather passed the skill down to his son, and so it all started.

Curtis moved to Canada in 1917 at 30 years old. When he arrived, he lived in Ontario making a life as a grape grower and selling to local wine makers. He had a good but modest vineyard for about ten years. He met a man named Ronald Lewis who had a simple bottling company in the area. The two men set up a partnership to make and bottle Curtis's wine. Prohibition came to Canada with a quiet rumble.

Things started to heat up over all Canada, eventually coming to the Curtis doorway. Local officials would look the other way as long as they got a taste of the proceeds. Although Curtis made wine, his big money came from bottling his and other people's wine, also hard spirits. The wine was shipped out and much of it made it across the border to America. Whose own prohibition was in high gear.

The money was great, the lifestyle was dangerous. During a late-night raid at Lewis's warehouse, as whiskey was being loaded onto trucks bound for America, the Canadian police came crashing in. In the scuffle that followed, Ron's son Dal was shot and killed. After this heart crushing event, Ronald Lewis lost his taste for it all. The Steele & Lewis bottling company came to an end. The Steele family sold their business to an underground relabeling company in Saskatchewan mid-1937.

Ronald moved to Quebec. Curtis Steele closed down his storefront ending his wine business as prohibition was winding down. Curtis had also lost his desire for the wine trade. He moved to Montreal working as a truck driver. In 1989 Curtis Steele passed away at 102 years old. He died in his home with his children and grandchildren at his bedside.

The Steele family held their "First Life" on Lake Barlow. Today the family makes a pilgrimage to Lake Makokibatan right off the Albany River. The Curtis style way of making wine was reborn by Ray Avenue Winery of Ohio. The customs and craft were put back to use around 1992. They are still quietly working to this day. Their wine is a staple at the "First Life Celebration" held in Ohio. Curtis Steele's great grandson, Jeyson Delong, has moved most of the wine operation to Spain. However, the Ray Avenue Winery still puts out a fine selection of table wines.

They are well known by the families around Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. There are still some families left in Montreal, but they don't work making wine anymore. They have turned to farming.

Delong's sister Julie Delong found the S.G.L. off of a site called Roundtown UFO Society. Her story of her family is now recorded with the library. Her letter was reviewed by G.Stavros on 11 27, 2021.

Note: Julie's family runs a Fly-in fishing service into the wilderness Thunder Bay Fish camp.

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<https://stavrosianalienancestry.com/stavrosianarchives.html>