



## *Stags' Leap*

### THE POSTMASTER'S BANK SHOT: BILLIARDS AT STAGS' LEAP

Before the Golden Gate Bridge was ever built\*, when phone numbers were comprised of only four characters, some of them alphabetic (61F2 was the number for Stags' Leap), one could dial or wire Stag's Leap Manor to arrange a holiday from the chilly summer fogs of San Francisco. Charlotte Ruse was on the dinner menu and could be ordered for 30 cents, Bordelaise sauce (25 cents) for your Sirloin Steak Minute (a dollar), or you could go the whole hog and order the Special Dinner De Lux for \$2.50.

During this time you could address a post card to: Stag's Leap, Napa County, Calif., and the post office beneath the porch of the Manor House would be referenced. The year was 1927. It remained in operation through 1944, toward the end of the Second World War.

The post office shared the fate of many human arrangements over the course of time, taking on other duties and serving other purposes. By the era of Carl Doumani's ownership (1971–1997) it had become the gaming room, with expansive leather chairs, muted lighting, and a classic billiards table. The old postal counter served as the wet bar.

Today, winery guests who are dining at the Manor House often wander below stairs after a generous meal to the cavelike billiards room, to better admire the craftsman cigar humidor and cabinet housing alembic distillations. On many an evening, games proceed into the early morning hours. A sport that goes so well with fine cigars and spirits is played with authority on this estate by winemakers, enologists, cellar hands, travelers, food writers, botanists, poets, and vineyard workers.

On any particular evening, the language of the game can shift between English, French, German, and Spanish, but whether the game was originally learned in Berlin or Mexico



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City, the rules are universal. The stance one takes while holding the pool cue in one hand and a glass of wine in the other is a friendly handicap that honors keen competition among acquaintances old and new.

The rules at Stags' Leap are simple. The mountain is always given the option to make the break shot, having achieved prominence and stature for many more millions of years than anyone standing in its evening shadow on a night of full moon. The blow sends volcanic rhyolite ricocheting down the mountain along the felt weave of grasses matted from winter rains. Only after acknowledging the master do players turn to the tender business at hand.

**Recommended Wine Pairing:** According to one resident aficionado, you are not going to drink white wine down in the billiards room, even if it was once the official post office for the property. Billiards is an after-dinner game, and it is recommended that players have a glass of Stags' Leap Winery Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon in hand.

**Historical:** The cue stick was originally the "queue stick," or tail end of the mace used in croquet. The green of the felt comes from its origin in the croquet lawn.

\*The Oakland Bay Bridge opened in 1935, followed by the Golden Gate Bridge in the summer of 1936.

See our special wine offer in this newsletter, *Cabernet del Ocho*, and get a chance to taste the 1997 Napa Valley Cabernet Sauvignon.

For the complete rules of *El Ocho*, or Eight-Ball as it is played at Stags' Leap Winery, visit our website at [www.stagsleap.com/art/literature.html](http://www.stagsleap.com/art/literature.html)



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