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**The Noble & Murat Brand, from Exporter to Port Wine
Producer**

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The Noble & Murat Brand, from Exporter to Port Wine Producer

The Noble & Murat Company was founded in the first half of the 19th century as an exporter of Port wine, but also of other products, especially codfish. This company marked the Port wine market and kept great activity until the end of the 19th century. This historic brand was rehabilitated in the 21st century when it was acquired by descendants of two families long associated with the Port wine sector. In this communication we intend to present the early Noble & Murat company - origins, business and markets - in order to understand the reasons for the reappearance of the brand, now focused exclusively on the production of high quality port wines

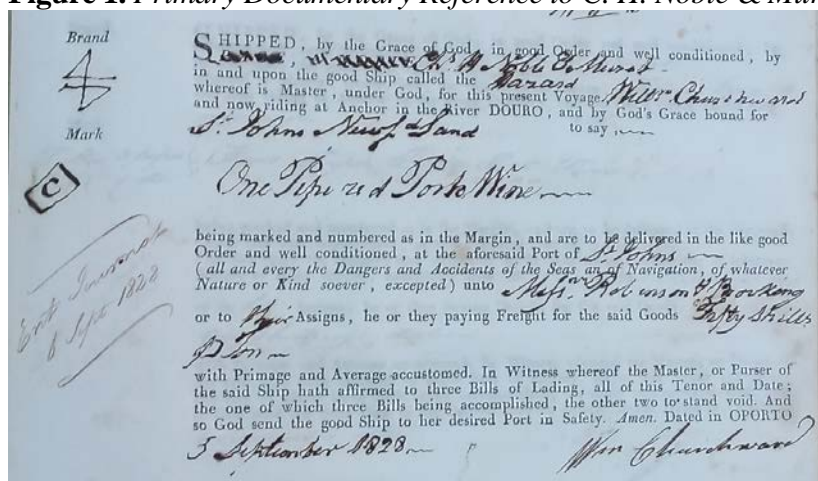
Keywords: *Noble & Murat; Brand; Trade mark; Port wine*

Noble & Murat: The Origins of the Company

C. H. Noble & Murat was an important company involved in the wine trade throughout the 19th century. Based in the city of Porto (Portugal), its origins date back to the beginning of the 18th century, having passed through several names: 1723 - Harris, Page & Pratt; 1729 - Page & Pratt; 1730 - John Page; 1754 - John Page & Son; 1760 - John & Charles Page & Co.; 1761 - Page, Campion & Co.; 1771 - Charles Page; 1800 - Page & Co.; 1802 - Page, Noble & Co; 1803 - John Hatt Noble.

Several authors established 1831 as the first year in which the company was called C. H. Noble & Murat. However, the documentation produced by the company indicates that, as early as 1828, Port wine was already being exported to London under this name.

Figure 1. Primary Documentary Reference to C. H. Noble & Murat



Source: Bills Loading 1819-1831. Symington Family Archives

At the end of December 1829, C. H. Noble & Murat formalised the purchase of a warehouse belonging to John Hatt Page, with 71 barrels, 12 *almudes* and 6 *canadas* of approved wine. The partners of this firm were Charles Henry Noble and John Queriol Murat, who belonged to families long connected with the Port wine business. The company presents itself as *négociants*.

It was a generalist import/export company. Like other companies of the time, its anchor product was codfish imported from Newfoundland (Cardoso 2008: 45-53), and it became one of the main companies in this business. But it also traded in other products such as coal, fabrics (chintz, cotton), salt, fruit and bottles, plums (for ship consumption), corn, olive oil (to supply ships and export), brandy (bought in Lisbon to supply the ships). Like other English companies of the time (Cardoso 2008: 45-53), they “anchored” their business in Viana do Castelo, at the north of Portugal, where they had company facilities and where most of the cod they imported was taken.

Brand and Trade Mark in Noble & Murat Company

The main export product was Port wine. In 1842, for example, it was among the main exporters of wine and jeropiga (“O Gratuito”, 14.03.1843, p. 1), with 80 barrels, 19 almudes and 11 canadas. The company bought the wines from various producers in the Baixo Corgo (Lower Corgo) and Cima Corgo (Upper Corgo), which it then blended to fulfil orders. For instance, in 1867-1868, they bought wines in Cumieira, Celeirós, Covas and Régua, almost exclusively red wine (plus two barrels of white wine, one of jeropiga and one of brandy). In 1874 and 1875, they bought vintage wines from a much larger number of winegrowers, which may be related to phylloxera. In 1881 they also bought from Vale de Mendiz and Passadouro.

Figure 2. Douro Region, with the Three Sub-regions



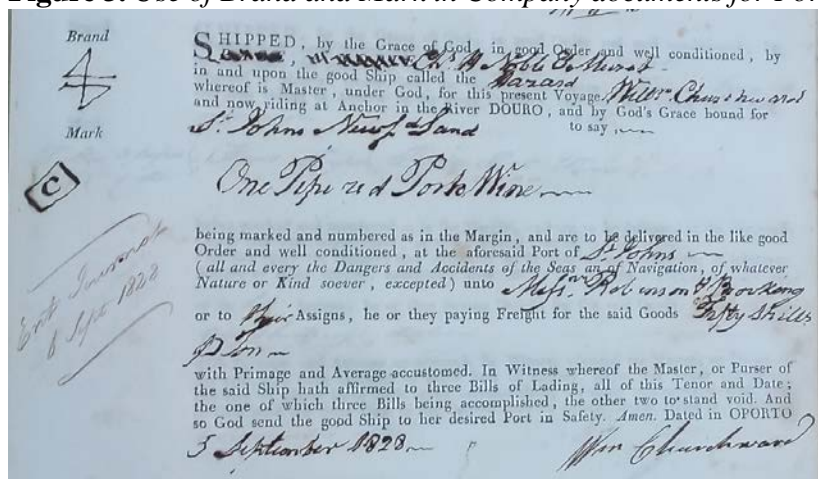
Source: <https://www.ivdp.pt/pt/vinha/regiao/rdd-mapa-da-regiao/>

Expenditure on wine blends in 1850-1851 included the costs incurred by C. H Noble & Murat for the harvests of the Azenha, Santa Comba, Portela and Soutelo estates. However, we have not yet been able to ascertain whether the company owned these farms or, if not, why it was charged these expenses, which included paying the overseers, pressing the wine and carrying the wines. It also had warehouse costs ranging from the purchase of cork stoppers for bottling, to firebrands for the heads of barrels and cork bungs. The wine was exported to numerous destinations, from London, Newfoundland, Quebec, New York and Liverpool, among others. As a firm, C. H. Noble & Murat falls into two of the types mentioned by Paul Duguid for British firms operating in the city of Oporto between the 18th and 19th centuries: the first type, as it sold wine to Britain and imported its textiles, and the third type, as it had “a well-established presence,

participating in a triangular trade, sending wine to Britain and salt to Newfoundland and bringing codfish from here to Oporto” (Duguid 2010: 226).

The wine selected for sale was identified with company’s brand. In a phase prior to the emergence of trade mark legislation, a distinction was made between brand and mark in the company's registration books, with different signs and language.

Figure 3. Use of Brand and Mark in Company documents for Port Wine Orders



Source: Bills Loading 1819-1831. Symington Family Archives.

Several authors affirm that marks emerged before modern brands as a way to establish origin, quality and differentiation between similar products (Sáiz, Castro 2018). Also, as Carlo Belfanti and Paul Duguid tell us, it was during the 18th century that the need to represent business through the adoption of a “trade mark” that could be recognised by consumers became apparent (Belfanti 2018; Duguid 2003). The authors of *Trade Marks and Brands. An interdisciplinary critique* (2008) explain that “rather like the situation with the concept of a ‘brand’ today”, in the midst of the 19th century “there was no ‘legal’ conception of a trade mark. To the extent that the term had meaning, it was a description of a particular commercial artefact or insignia” (Benty ,Davis, Ginsburg 2008: 16).

In order to understand the birth and development of trade marks, it is necessary to take into account the background of the legislation of the late 19th century, such as the role of consumption in the development of trade marks. Distribution chains composed of small firms played a significant and pre-19th century role in the genesis of modern trade marks, as these firms used the trade mark not only to face competition but also to discipline other elements of the distribution chain over which they had no direct control (Duguid 2003). Paul Duguid tells us “branding, as the physical act of marking a container, came naturally to wine shippers, who had long forged iron brands to mark their casks, generally putting their own mark at one end and that of the recipient on the other” (Duguid, 2003: 430-431). Based on this, we think that the distinction between brand and mark in the company’s documents was intended to identify the producer, through the brand, while mark could mean the fire marks that identified the buyer or the batches.

In 1847, there is a record of a warehouse where was kept fire brands, bottle markers, corking devices, seals and rasp marks. This warehouse received wine from various sources, which it then blended under the company’s own brand to be sold in Portugal or exported. Other marks were also produced from the blended wine, according to the client.

Figure 4. Noble & Murat Marks for Wine (1847)

Marca	Quantidade	Valor	Outros	Total
333	15	20	9	29
333	53	17	6	23
2400	35	12	6	18
333	1	10	6	16
333	3	10	6	16
333	1	10	6	16
333	2	10	6	16
333	1	10	6	16
333	1	10	6	16
333	31	15	6	21
333	7	9	6	15
333	1	14	6	20
333	2	9	6	15
333	2	10	6	16
333	5	10	6	16
333	4	10	6	16
333	10	10	6	16
333	1	10	6	16
333	1	10	6	16
333	5	10	6	16
333	3	10	6	16
333	3	10	6	16
333	11	10	6	16
333	5	10	6	16
333	3	10	6	16
333	9	10	6	16
333	190	14	10	24

Source: Livro das lotações do armazém 1847-1851 [Warehouse stock book 1847-1851]. Symington Family Archives.

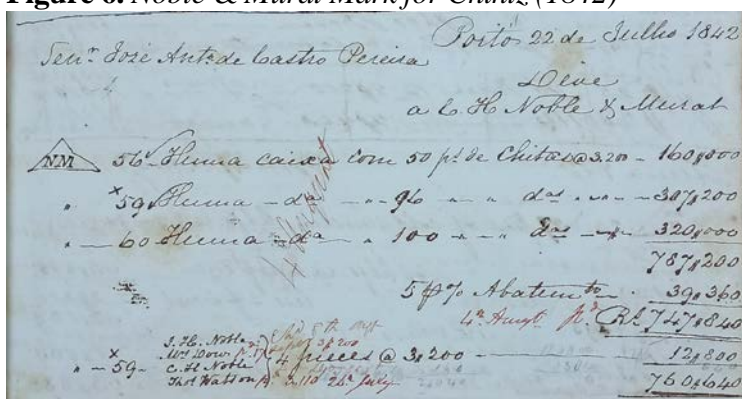
C.H. Noble & Murat sold all its products under the firm's own trade mark, the design of which varied according to the product for which it was intended. In the discussion that developed in the second half of the 19th century on the subject of trade mark, “many considered the name of a trader as the archetypal trade mark”. (Benty ,Davis, Ginsburg 2008: 21). Thus, the different Noble & Murat traded marks have the firm's initials at their centre, surrounded in different ways depending on the product for which they were intended. For instance, Noble & Murat mark for cotton (figure 5) or Noble & Murat mark for chintz (figure 6).

Figure 5. Noble & Murat Mark for Cotton (1841)



Source: Borrão do Diário 1821-1869 [Diary blurbs 1821-1869]. Symington Family Archives.

Figure 6. Noble & Murat Mark for Chintz (1842)

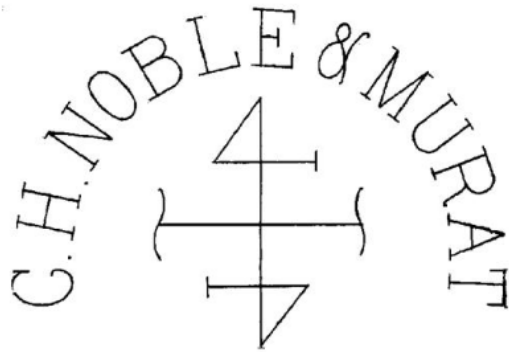


Source: Borrão do Diário 1821-1869 [Diary blurbs 1821-1869]. Symington Family Archives.

In 1891, the company registered its trade name, under the Trade Marks Act of 4 June 1883, whose aim was to guarantee fair competition in commercial transactions. The trade marks were created in the context of industrial property law and following the signing of the Paris Convention on 20 March 1883. Thus, the company registered the trade name C. H. Noble & Murat for containers of wine leaving its warehouses. The trade name consisted of the designation C. H. Noble & Murat, with a cross in the centre, the vertical points of which were terminated by a triangle.

This trade name was also registered in Canada in 1893 as a trade mark for Port wines (figure 7). It should be noted that the central part of this figurative sign was already used in the early days of the company, in 1828.

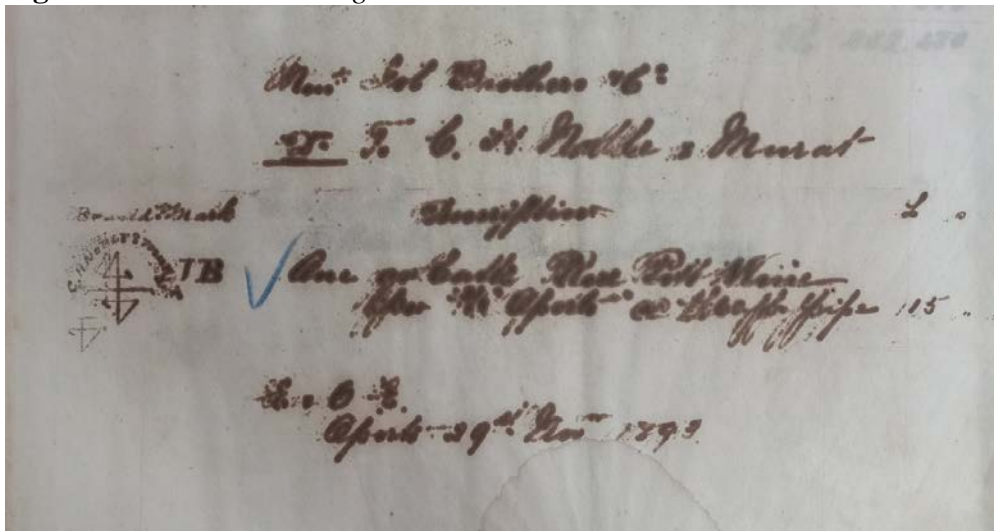
Figure 7. Trade Mark for Port Wine registered in Canada in 1893



Source: <https://www.trademarkelite.com/canada/trademark/trademark-detail/990013/mark>

From then on, the new logo (identified as a brand) was used in company documents, along with elements identifying the batch or the buyer (a mark).

Figure 8. Noble & Murat logo in 1893



Source: Invoice Book n. 6 1893-1895. Symington Family Archives.

C. H. Noble & Murat disappeared from the market at the beginning of the 20th century, in a period of crisis in the Port wine sector. The *Almanak do Porto e seu distrito* for 1903 lists Lind & Couto at the same address, presented as the successor to C. H. Noble & Murat. We have been unable to find any information on the latter company.

The Rebirth of the Brand

More than one hundred years after its disappearance, in 2012 Noble & Murat was reborn, but now only as a producer of quality Port wines (Vintage, Late Bottled Vintage). The new partners are not related to the previous families, but are

also linked to the Port wine business as descendants of producing families who sold their wine, until 2004, to exporting firms such as Taylor's, Croft or Sandeman, who commercialised them under their own brand. Based in Upper Corgo (Sabrosa) and betting in the traditional methods of production and vinification and on a “selected set of six plots of very old, centenary vines, with the best locations, in the area of Pinhão, sub-region of Cima Corgo (three of which are located in the area of Vale de Mendiz and Vale do Tedo)” (Duarte 2019), was decided to recover this historical brand of Port wine (Duarte 2019). Thus was born the new Noble & Murat, a brand registered by the company Two B & T Lda. in 2012 (INPI [national industrial property institute] – Marca Nacional [national trade mark] no. 503993). As Teresa da Silva Lopes tells us “the role of brands is even more striking when looking at the number of cases where firms have disappeared but their brands survived, having multiple ownerships and enjoying eternal lives” (Lopes 2013: 3).

In 2016 was registered a mixed sign with logo (INPI [national industrial property institute] – Marca Nacional [national trade mark] no. 575147), inspired by that of the previous company, featuring the same central sign.

Figure 9. Label on the 185th Anniversary of the Original Company (2016)



Source: Alexandre Botelho collection

Fulfilling the objectives, and maintaining the traditional qualities of the original brand, the wines produced by the new Noble & Murat have been highly appreciated by the critics (national and international) and are destined for the Portuguese domestic market and the main export markets: Belgium, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, Germany, United States of America, where the quality of the Noble & Murat product has been winning over specialists as well as consumers and connoisseurs in general. (Machado 2017).

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