Louis Jaboulet - end of an era

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Louis Jaboulet, who turned 100 at the end of June, died last week. This marks the end of the great adventure of the family who founded Paul Jaboulet Aïné of the northern Rhône.

In 1834, Paul Jaboulet (1807-64) fell in love with the vines of Hermitage and decided to buy some plots. Favouring both work in the vineyard and wine quality, the founder's sons Henri and Paul built on his foundations. Paul, the elder, named the company Paul Jaboulet Ainé.

His heir Louis Jaboulet took over the firm. He had the intelligence and passion to develop the house into a premium wine producer whose most famous product was Hermitage La Chapelle. He was rewarded with the fabulous 1961, a mythical wine.

From 1977 his popular, cosmopolitan son Gérard (who was one of the best-informed authorities on the rapidly expanding world of wine in the 1980s - JR) managed the firm and vineyards. He was associated with his fabulous first vintage 1978. Unfortunately, Gérard died suddenly at the age of 55 in 1997, leaving the family in disarray. In 2006, the firm was sold to the Frey family, (owners of Ch La Lagune in Bordeaux).

Helen Thomson, who worked for Jaboulet's then UK importers OW Loeb, adds, 'When I first met Louis Jaboulet they still had the cellars and office and his house and the hunting dogs in a sort of cantonment in Tain. When they moved to La Roche de Glun I can remember him shouting instructions the length of the offices. He was always very kind to me and interesting company when tasting. He had a nice sense of humour. The one quote from him that I all too often recall was when I asked him his opinion of a restaurant that was much in the news: "*Correct ... sans plus*."'