

Forge

C E L L A R S

VINTAGE 2019 OFFERING

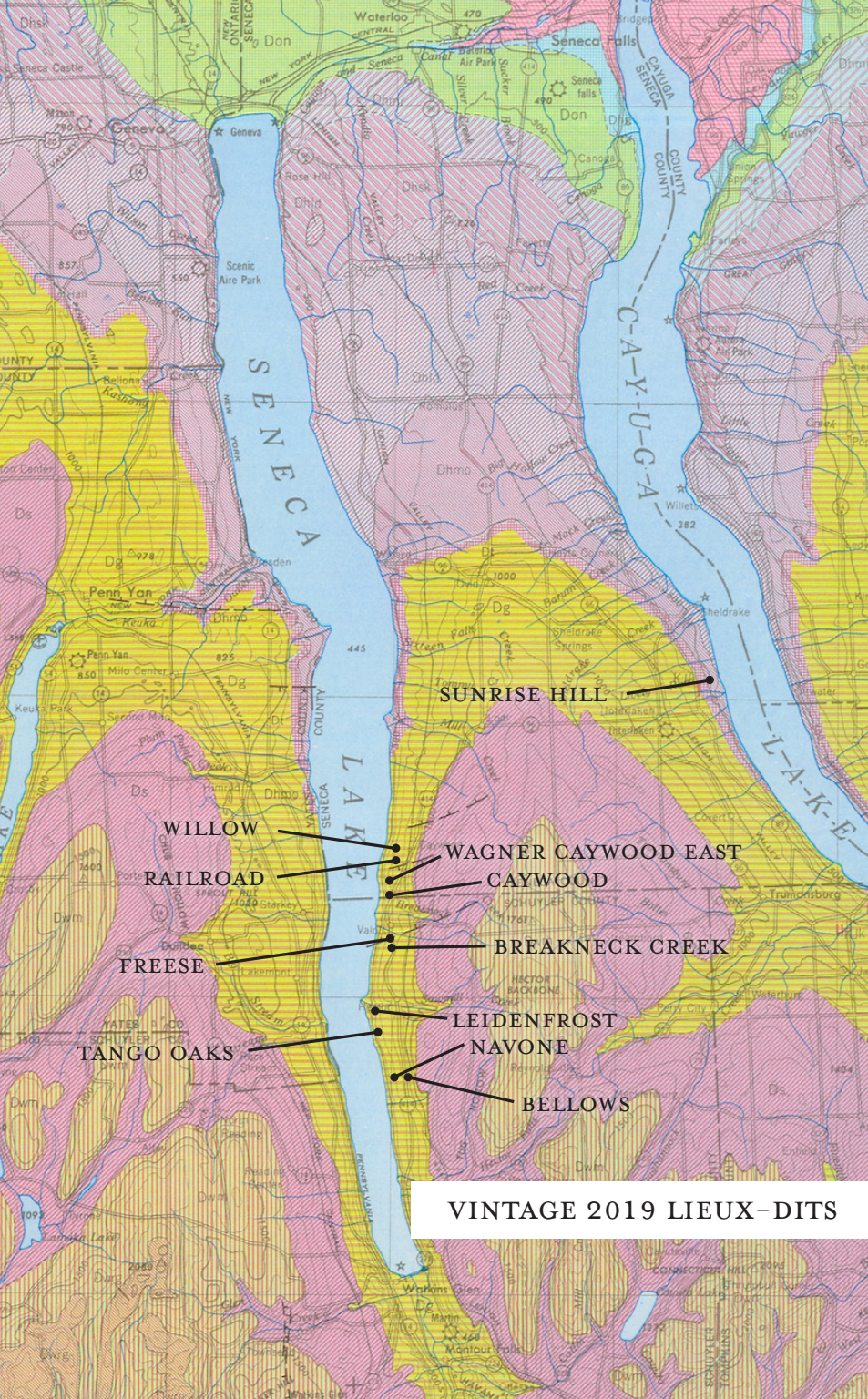
LOUIS BARRUOL ~ RICHARD RAINEY



INTRODUCTION

Writing about the 2019 vintage has been especially pleasurable, and much of that is owed to truly watching the story of Forge Cellars come to life more than ever before. We've always been explorers, working with new or different sites and putting together the narrative of our eight-mile stretch along southeast Seneca Lake, but 2019 was different. We worked with 17 sites, and sometimes even small individual parcels within these sites. Our work had depth and detail, and we observed it carefully. We tasted constantly during the winter months as the wines were beginning to take shape, all noting the idiosyncrasies of sites reflected in the glass. Fifteen *lieux-dits* were produced in 2019. More than any other vintage. We have often remarked that walking into the new "summer house" and seeing a display wall of all these single vineyards in bottle feels like a big, meaningful achievement. It reads as a collection of stories that we have been painstakingly working to capture and write. Each site is connected to a unique human experience, reflects a piece of Finger Lakes *terroir* and geology, and represents a chapter in our examination of the region.

Recounting these places and sharing the wines with you has been fun because it's providing more than just a tasting note. We are giving voice to the land and you are among the first to learn about our region's history in this special way.



VINTAGE 2019 LIEUX-DITS



Tasting through hundreds of barrels each vintage is always a momentous task filled with pages of notes and several days of analysis. It is a time of the year that we look forward to, knowing that our teams in the U.S. and France will be united to recount our work from the year and to continue painting a picture of southeast Seneca Lake. This year, travel restrictions associated with COVID-19 required us to rely heavily on technology and the good work of our friends at DHL to send several samples to Louis and his team at Saint Cosme in Gigondas, France. What we gleaned from our distance collaboration was that in challenging times, a strong partnership and dedication are the keys to success.

1.

BELLOWS VINEYARD

fennel, hyacinth, crystalline

This site is aptly named “Bellows” because of the intense winds that blow across the land, and is special because of the drying, cleansing, and toughening effect of these winds. It is a high-density planting, with vines spaced 3ft apart and 7ft between rows—roughly twice the typical planting density. The intent is to control vigor and reduce yields, optimize the energy input used in the vineyard, and encourage natural competition among the vines, prompting the roots to dig deeper and offer a greater expression of the site.

The greatest attribute to long-lived *lieux-dits* is the ability to command attention at the table. Texture and nuance overflow from the glass, leaving little chance of easing into these wines. Bellows, our “home farm” is unmistakable, translating the *terroir* with impeccable purity and precision. This Riesling does not simply paint a picture of place, it brings you here.

Bellows is a site of exploration and research for the potential of Riesling produced on Seneca Lake. We follow “biointensive” or “regenerative” practices, which allow us to farm 90-95% organic. The holy trinity of soils (clay, limestone, and shale), extremely low yields (less than one ton per acre), and handwork have all played a part in shaping the story of this site.

*East side of Seneca Lake (Burdett)
Soils: clay, limestone and shale
1,000ft elevation
Years Planted: 2016-2017*

*Harvest Date: October 21
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.4% (4 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.33 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 79 cases*

2.

BREAKNECK CREEK VINEYARD

peach, sea salt, refined

A momentous part of the region's history dating back to the 1890s, the construction of the Lehigh Valley Railway culvert above Breakneck Creek is an engineering marvel. The immense sandstone and limestone archway required the labor of nearly 3,000 men, and kept excursion boats in business, bringing spectators to and from the construction site throughout the years. Canal boats carrying materials unloaded at the mouth of the creek, leaving the steep trek upstream to small rail carts and mules. According to local lore, Breakneck Creek was given its name due to the severity of the slope and subsequent injuries from unsuccessful ventures uphill.

Still standing today, the archway is 20ft wide and 20ft tall and 378ft in length, while the entire culvert spans more than 1,000ft and is roughly 140ft tall.

Our 2019 vintage marks the third single vineyard bottling of Breakneck Creek. It has become known and loved for the salinity and freshness that one finds along the seashore. Is it too early to call this bottling "iconic?" There are certain vineyards that are unmistakable in the bottle, vintage after vintage. The drama of the site is clearly magnified in the glass. This is Breakneck.

*East side of Seneca Lake (Valois)
Soils: gravelly silt loam and shale
784ft elevation
Years Planted: mid-1990s*

*Harvest Date: October 22
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.3% (3g/L)
Total Acidity: 5.06 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 420 cases*



PASSENGER TRAIN ON THE LEHIGH VALLEY RAILROAD IN HECTOR, N.Y., CA. 1910
Photo submitted to Ithaca Journal by Jerry Hazlitt, 1977



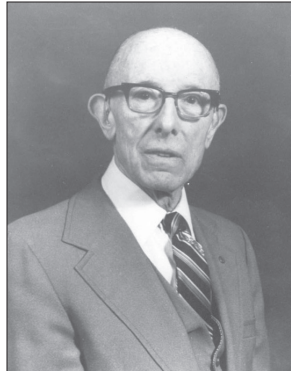
BREAKNECK CULVERT CONSTRUCTION CREW WITH "DONKEY" ENGINE, CA. 1891-1892
Photo submitted to Ithaca Journal by Jerry Hazlitt, 1977

3.

CAYWOOD VINEYARD

macadamia, salt, energetic

As Prohibition ended, Charles Fournier, winemaker and production manager at Veuve Clicquot Ponsardin in France was recruited to work for Urbana Wine Company on Keuka Lake. Fournier was instrumental in the first successful plantings and bottlings of *vitis vinifera* grapes (Riesling and Chardonnay) in the Finger Lakes region. These momentous early plantings from the 1970s on Seneca Lake are jewels among the landscape, producing wines of depth and history.



CHARLES FOURNIER
Photo: Steuben County (steubencony.org)

Caywood Vineyard is a living, breathing museum. This collection of vines was planted without clonal selection in the early 1970s by Charles Fournier. It's a site founded in history and ingenuity at a time when the Finger Lakes was beginning to realize the promise and capabilities of grape-growing in the region. The expression of Caywood Riesling is constantly evolving, yet the wine continues to retain a signature profile dominated by herbs and spices rather than fruit.

*East side of Seneca Lake (Lodi)
Soils: thin topsoil with shale
699ft elevation
Years Planted: 1970s*

*Harvest Dates: October 18-19
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.3% (3 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.62 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 322 cases*

4.

FREESE VINEYARD

mandarin orange, lilac, succulent

This vineyard is named after a family farm that used to occupy the site where the vines are now planted. We have been working with Freese since the 2015 vintage, and bottled it for the first time as a *lieu-dit* in the 2018 vintage.

The Freese Vineyard is essentially a northern extension of Breakneck. We can think of these two sites as siblings, their composition is similar (comparable soils, same grape) but the way they carry themselves (the fruit, the flavors, the aromas) show total individualism. Freese is prudent and precise, offering ripeness and restraint, while Breakneck carries intensity and drama.

*East side of Seneca Lake (Lodi)
Soils: loam with shale
768ft elevation
Years Planted: mid-1990s*

*Harvest Date: October 20
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.2% (2 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.18 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 137 cases*

5.

LEIDENFROST VINEYARD

flint, rose, power

We have spent several vintages counting the ways in which Leidenfrost Vineyard could be classified as a *Grand Cru* site in the Finger Lakes, but have we given voice to the person who farms the land? This Riesling vineyard is multi-faceted, layered with different plantings from a variety of sources. Like his land, John Leidenfrost is a man of great complexity. He wears many hats, from farmer and winemaker to artist and architect. And much like the fruit he grows, John possesses a power that is both humble and unmistakable—even a broken back could not deter him from his work.

“Magnificent.” It’s quite telling when that is the sole word that Louis uses to describe a wine. What else is left to say about a site that delivers impeccable consistency and strength vintage after vintage? We would call 2019 a “short” vintage for Leidenfrost—the yields were minuscule, hand-sorting was rigorous, and the production was limited. Will this be a collector’s item in years to come? We shall see.



East side of Seneca Lake (Hector)
Soils: Lordstown channery silt loam over shale
760ft elevation
Years Planted: 1990s-2003

Harvest Date: October 22
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.4% (4 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.40 g/L
Alcohol: 13%
Production: 79 cases

6.

NAVONE VINEYARD

white pepper, rose, precise

Harvest is undoubtedly one of the most exciting times of year in the life of a vigneron. Take this enthusiasm, add a plate of warm chocolate chip cookies and hot coffee, and you most certainly have a recipe for success. Our picking crew lines up to harvest this 2.5 acre site knowing that these treats await them.

Generosity abounds at the Navone farm, and Josh and Lisa Navone have certainly cultivated a sense of community and friendship around this site.

2019 marks our third year working with this vineyard, located just down the hill from our home farm. We have been impressed by the potential of this site, and 2019 further confirmed our understanding that a well-managed site, even in cooler vintages, can over-deliver. Fermented exclusively in *demi-muids*, this wine has the signature razor-like precision of Riesling with the texture and layers of long fermentations.

I love this wine because of its slow fermentation in old, large format wood—basically how Riesling was made for centuries, and it’s as close as we can get to its winemaking history.

– Julia, Cellar Master



East side of Seneca Lake (Burdett)
Soils: gravelly silt loam with shale
950ft elevation
Years Planted: mid-2000s

Harvest Date: October 26
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.2% (2 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.46 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 328 cases

7.

RAILROAD VINEYARD

lemon curd, mint, tension

Lining the paths that bisect the Wagner family's vineyards are perfectly preserved railroad ties and a clearly defined route for the historic Lehigh Valley Railroad. It is remarkable to be able to follow this path through several of our sites along the Seneca Lake shoreline.

Follow the early 1900s railroad bed from the Lehigh Valley Railroad and you'll find yourself meandering through our Railroad Vineyard. These mature vines have given us a perfect example of freshness that is not solely based on acidity. When we discuss the spirit and style of Railroad Riesling, it's the pronounced mint and herbal qualities that give it such zest and vibrancy. This site also exemplifies the drastic differences among soil composition within extremely short distances. Loam and shale dominate the landscape here while just 0.4 miles north sits Willow on predominately sandy soils. ★ Try these two wines side by side for a sensory exploration in geology.

*East side of Seneca Lake (Lodi)
Soils: loam with shale
820ft elevation
Year Planted: 1995*

*Harvest Date: October 26
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.3% (3 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.57 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 500 cases*

8.

WAGNER CAYWOOD EAST VINEYARD

lemon meringue, orange blossom, gravel

I'm often asked if I wish I owned all of the sites we work with. To put it simply, no. Our work at Forge is rooted in partnership—the partnership of myself and Louis, uniting the Old and New World, and the relationships with all of our growers. It is a privilege to work alongside and learn from multi-generational farmers like John Wagner. While the region is still young in the world of wine, there is much to be gleaned by those who have spent decades working with the land. 2019 marks the second single vineyard bottling of Wagner Caywood East. We can always count on this site to deliver mineral-laden wines thanks in part to the abundance of shale on this steep, high elevation site. - RR

*East side of Seneca Lake (Lodi)
Soils: loam over shale
978ft elevation
Years Planted: 2005-2006*

*Harvest Date: October 30
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.3% (3 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.46 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 297 cases*

9.

WILLOW VINEYARD

mirabelle plum, brioche, strength

What happens when you ask a rural farmer for directions? Chances are that you'll be given natural landmarks to follow rather than street names or coordinates. We were introduced to this site several years ago by traveling "northwest to the willow tree" among a sea of vines and dirt roads.

We have come to find more exotic expressions of Riesling from vines planted closer to the lake. This site, planted 0.4 miles from Seneca Lake is the perfect example. The warmth associated with the proximity to the water produces a distinct ripeness that we find in the flavors and aromatics of Willow.



*East side of Seneca Lake (Lodi)
Soils: sandy loam with shale
725ft elevation
Year Planted: 2014*

*Harvest Date: October 18
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.2% (2 g/L)
Total Acidity: 5.08 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 124 cases*

10.

SUNRISE HILL VINEYARD

flint, honey, fresh

Sunrise is the most gracious host, approachable and welcoming, a friend that you can count on to liven up any occasion. This is one of our longest-lived *lieux-dits*, as its debut came in the 2014 vintage. It is a wine that consistently appeals with its openness, fruit-driven character, and ability to unite everyone at the table. The magic of Sunrise is that it can transcend preferences with its density, ripeness, and Sancerre-like minerality.



*West side of Cayuga Lake (Interlaken)
Soils: loam and clay
750ft elevation
Year Planted: 1999*

*Harvest Date: November 4
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.3% (3 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.58 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 176 cases*

11.

Dry Riesling
LES ALLIÉS
apricot, lemon confit, savory

LES ALLIÉS: THE ALLIES, THE FRIENDS, THE UNITED ONES.

This wine represents the heartbeat of Forge Cellars. It reflects our partnership as friends, the union of America (Rick Rainey) and France (Louis Barruol), and our connection with the land and growers.

Our *Les Alliés* Dry Riesling is produced from a blend of barrels that captivated us throughout *élevage*, stand-outs that warranted their own special bottling. This is a wine that is only made in the best of vintages.

We think of *Les Alliés* as a wine that reveals itself to us over the course of the long winter. During this period, certain barrels may “sing” for a few days then fade for some time before coming back to life in the spring. Other barrels from other sites may never stand up and shout, but consistently charm with a balance of fruit, mineral, and savor. This is the story of the 2019 *Les Alliés*, a blend of barrels from sites that we could always turn to bring joy.

- Julia, Cellar Master

East side of Seneca Lake
Harvest Dates: October 25, 29
Soils: gravelly loam and clay on shale
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.2% (2 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.78 g/L
Alcohol: 12%
Production: 346 cases

12.

Dry Riesling
CLASSIQUE
grapefruit, violet, persistent

In our dive into the archives of past offerings, we came across this note from Louis referring to our 2014 Riesling *Classique*. Now, more than ever, as our collection of sites has expanded considerably over the years, we find this sentiment especially meaningful.

This is the beauty of Seneca Lake: to be able to consolidate the various elements of a perfectly balanced wine. Very few regions in the world provide in a natural way this perfect combination. Sorry to be so “French,” but this perfect combination is the concept of “Appellation Contrôlée.” Seneca Lake can be considered as an “Appellation Contrôlée,” simply because Riesling “makes itself” here and it expresses itself in a way that cannot be imitated in any other place in the world.

Our intent with *Classique* is to harmonize all of the snapshots of *terroir* provided by the *lieux-dits*, to create a balanced representation of the small (eight miles) yet complex region that we work in, to communicate the idiosyncrasies of the vintage, and to create a tactile narrative of place.

East side of Seneca Lake
Harvest Dates: October 16–November 4
Soils: gravelly loam, clay, and shale with limestone
Spontaneous fermentation in barrel
Residual Sugar: 0.2% (2 g/L)
Total Acidity: 4.71 g/L
Alcohol: 12%

13.

Cabernet Franc
WILLOW VINEYARD

blackberry, embers, lush

It may come as a surprise to find a Cabernet Franc in our offering for the 2019 vintage. The varietal, which thrives in “the lakes,” set us off on a new challenge to achieve site-expressiveness through a different medium. As Pinot Noir and Cabernet Franc ripen several weeks apart, we were able to ferment them comfortably one after the other. We were able to pick perfectly ripe grapes with lovely yellow stems. Adding 40% of whole clusters, just like top Loire Valley wines, therefore seemed an obvious choice.



East side of Seneca Lake (Lodi)
Soils: sandy loam with shale
725ft elevation
Year Planted: 2016

Harvest Date: October 15
Spontaneous fermentation in wooden vat
Alcohol: 12.5%
Production: 152 cases

14.

Pinot Noir
BELLOWS VINEYARD

cassis, sage, alive

Currently two acres are planted to Pinot Noir at our home farm. Through careful listening, close examination, and watching two harvests unfold, we have gained immense knowledge of Bellows. There is much more left to glean from this site, but its affinity for growing Pinot Noir with such strength and purity has compelled us to continue our endeavors with this grape on the site. In the coming years, Pinot under vine will expand, and we will continue to farm via regenerative methods and using the site for research.

The symbiotic relationship between farmer and land is abundantly clear in our work with Bellows. Founded as a research and development site, there have been no shortages of hard-learned lessons and moments of great achievement with this vineyard. In our collection of “stories” from southeast Seneca Lake, Bellows is the enigma of the group. While it has a strong sense of identity, only through our partnership can we uncover slivers of its character each vintage and write the narrative of this great site.



East side of Seneca Lake (Burdett)
Soils: clay, limestone and shale
1,000ft elevation
Years Planted: 2016-2017

Harvest Date: September 30
Spontaneous fermentation in stainless steel
Alcohol: 12.5%
Production: 50 cases

15.

Pinot Noir
LEIDENFROST VINEYARD

raspberry, laurel, brawn

Rumor has it that the Pinot Noir vines planted in this site were "suitcase clones" from a certain clos in Burgundy. Will we ever know the true provenance? John Leidenfrost may never tell.

A great *terroir* never ceases to amaze. After nine vintages working with Leidenfrost, you would think that we have said it all in terms of the power and greatness of this site, but it's very much the opposite. Trying to hone in on a few key descriptors that define the Pinot Noir from Leidenfrost is a nearly impossible task. This is not a wine of bullet points, but one of spirited prose and contemplation.



East side of Seneca Lake (Hector)
Soils: Lordstown channery silt loam over shale
760ft elevation
Years Planted: mid-1990s

Harvest Date: September 27
Spontaneous fermentation in wooden vat
Alcohol: 12.5%
Production: 101 cases

16.

Pinot Noir
TANGO OAKS VINEYARD

wild red berries, forest, tender

For five generations, the Wickham family has farmed this land, cultivating peaches, cherries, apples, and grapes. Our first Pinot Noir harvest on this farm was in the 2017 vintage with just 1.5 tons.

With every passing year, Tango Oaks reveals itself even more. The 2019 vintage was milder than 2018, allowing Tango to express its potential. This is always a very charming wine, driven by forest berry notes. Its freshness enhances length on the palate while also revealing a powerfulness that can match Leidenfrost and Bellows.



East side of Seneca Lake (Hector)
Soils: minimal clay and loam on shale
725ft elevation
Year Planted: 2014

Harvest Date: September 20
Spontaneous fermentation in wooden vat
Alcohol: 12.5%
Production: 80 cases

17.

Pinot Noir
CLASSIQUE

bing cherry, five-spice, savory

We think of our Pinot Noir *Classique* as a book that you read without distraction. It's a story that takes time for character development and encourages you to unhurriedly move through the pages. Unlike our 2018 Pinots with their silky texture and instant approachability, the 2019 vintage is full of brawn and a sturdy frame that is built for the long haul. It's more akin to a hardcover book rather than a paperback.

Dedicated to our friends
in the restaurant industry
and all those who have
been impacted by
COVID-19.

East side of Seneca Lake

Soils: shale, gravelly loam and clay with limestone

Harvest Dates: September 27, 30, October 1

Spontaneous fermentation in wooden vat

Alcohol: 12.5%

Production: 511 cases

Forge
C E L L A R S

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