

# ROCHESTER HISTORY

Edited by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck  
*City Historian*

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## A Brief History of Brewing In Rochester

by Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck





*Temperance songs and total abstinence pledge cards spread anti-alcohol sentiments and made the Temperance movement strong. Courtesy of Len Rosenberg.*



*Cover: The Genesee Brewing Co. celebrated the end of Prohibition by parading its beer wagon in Washington, D.C. Gannett Photograph, Office of the City Historian.*

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*The Frankfort Tavern was located at the corner of Lake and Lyell Avenues. Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.*

## **Temperance in Rochester**

Intoxication was a social problem that arrived along with the earliest settlers; an individual lifestyle carried from communities left behind. Distilleries were among the earliest industries in the Genesee country. Farmers grew corn and rye for sale to distilleries because the profits were higher than wheat sales to flour mills. A jug of hard liquor was commonly passed when a roof was raised or a field of wheat was cut by community effort.

Taverns were among the earliest businesses built, finding ready use among travelers moving into the new country. It became a friendly gathering place for the men to tell stories of the Revolution, of wild animals and adventures.

Excessive drinking was not unnoticed, but it took decades for the attitudes towards drinking and hospitality to evolve. The liquor jug was considered indispensable when dozens of men

gathered to raise a roof and running a distillery in the days when liquor was perceived as medicinal was not frowned upon. One pioneer being interviewed in the latter part of the 19th century said, "Put it in that I ran a distillery. It was no disgrace then."<sup>1</sup>

Intoxication was indeed noticed, but to protect the living, according to historian W. H. McIntosh, it was overlooked among respectable people. But many pioneers acknowledged the ruin of fellow citizens by intoxication.<sup>2</sup>

How much alcohol was too much? Temperance advocates could not agree. Some recommended moderation, but could not agree on the definition of a moderate drinker. A growing number of temperance advocates believed abstinence was the only way to avoid gradual addiction to alcohol.

The temperance movement in Rochester began early, before Rochester was incorporated as a city. In 1827 the Rochester Presbytery, following a call of the Presbyterian General Assembly, resolved, "temperate use of ardent spirits...(is) to be avoided and discouraged."<sup>3</sup> The following year the first public meeting was held at the Monroe County Court House. Dr. Joseph Penney of the First Presbyterian Church urged fellow clergymen to ban social drinking from church groups. Total abstinence was called for at the first National Temperance Convention in 1830.

Alarming statistics were given by speakers like Theodore Weld who said in 1831 that brew created 30,000 drunks, 200,000 paupers and 20,000 convicts in the United States."<sup>4</sup>

The Temperance movement grew stronger. By 1835 there were one and a half million members of Temperance societies in the United States. They claimed that 4,000 distilleries went out of business since the movement began.

Temperance advocates attacked intoxication in a variety of ways. There were speeches by physicians who pointed out the damage alcohol produced in the body and mind, they gave concerts to raise money for printing tracts and paying speakers, and they listened to testimonials of reformed drunks. One man even testified that he considered himself a moderate drinker, but when he abstained he became perfectly well and was cured of consumption.

The healthfulness of hard liquor was questionable. Early pioneers sometimes added it to the drinking water and invalids

# THE ABSTAINER AND THE DRINKER

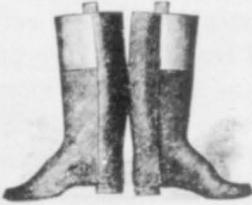
BY EDWARD CARSWELL.



I am worn by a man who works  
and thinks.



And I by one who don't, and drinks.



We guard his feet from damp and  
dust.



Like him we are always on the  
"bust."



I am the coat my master wears.



I resemble mine in terrible tears.



When master thirsts he comes to me,  
I cost him nothing; to all I'm free.



My master's throat I only burn.  
And cost him all he can borrow or earn

drank it like a tonic; but its misuse seems to have outweighed any benefits it may have offered, for use of strong alcohol became less and less respectable.

There were anti-temperance people, many of whom considered themselves moderate drinkers capable of controlling their behavior. Others had a financial interest in alcohol. Tavern

keepers made a healthy profit on alcohol sales and so did grocers. Temperance advocates targeted both businesses for campaigns. Grocers were asked to dispose of their "ardent spirits" and give up their liquor licenses. In 1829 there were fourteen grocers on the east side of the Genesee River, twelve of whom sold alcohol. By the following year only six sold liquor. The number of grocers selling alcohol on the west side was not reported, but many grocers voluntarily refused to sell alcohol.<sup>5</sup> Austin Steward, Rochester's first black grocer, stopped selling alcohol though it was a large part of a grocer's receipts. William Bloss dumped the alcohol from his tavern on East Avenue into the Erie Canal. This act was noted on the monument at his grave in the old Brighton Cemetery. P.G. Jones dumped the liquor from his bar in the National Hotel and reopened as a Temperance house.<sup>6</sup> Several other Temperance houses opened as well and though they were patronized by Temperance advocates their profits were reputedly under those taverns selling alcohol.

Some campaigns against taverns were more forthright than a mere request to dispose of alcohol. In January of 1843 a crowd of 200 Temperance advocates marched behind a Temperance flag and gathered at Brown and State Streets opposite the Frankfort Market.

The Temperance speakers stood on a cask to address the crowd when the tavern keeper stepped out of the door waving a bottle and threatening to whip the speaker. He kicked over the cask knocking the speaker to the ground and invited his friends in for a drink. Only two people followed him into the tavern. <sup>7</sup> Most Temperance gatherings did not draw such attacks, but they did draw attention and they became more numerous. Newspapers reported that intemperance was the major cause of poverty. "What does intemperance cost the public? the family?" asked the Rochester Observer.<sup>8</sup>

Temperance advocates asked officials granting alcohol sales licenses if they realized that every license probably produced at least one pauper. Granting licenses to "pauper factories" was "licensing persons to make paupers and (to) prepare men for the commission of crime and ... levying taxes for building poor houses and jails ... all for the support of their tenants."<sup>9</sup>

Granting of licenses became a heated issue and government officials were asked not to grant them. There was pressure, of



*Women around the country pleaded with bar keepers to close. As early as 1843 two hundred people marched behind a Temperance flag at the corner of Brown and State Streets where a bitter confrontation took place. **Harper's Weekly**, March 14, 1874.*

course, to grant them in greater numbers too as the population of Rochester grew. Under such pressure, Jonathan Child, the city's first mayor, resigned rather than grant liquor licenses.

Alternatives to liquor were offered to thirsty people in downtown Rochester. At Reynolds' Arcade, where a tavern drew frequent customers, a water fountain was placed to offer a clean, free drink. In 1879, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) purchased ice to keep the water cool. Mortimer Reynolds placed an ice box under the fountain. <sup>10</sup>

The growing Temperance movement effectively reduced the production sales of hard liquor. The medical community publicly supported their movement toward moderation or abstinence. In 1830, the Monroe Medical Society met at the Monroe County Court House. The Medical Society resolved "that the Medical Association, deemed it (their) duty to add (their) testimony to that of other societies and medical gentlemen, that in-



*The Doud Saloon on Front Street in the late 1800s. Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.*

temperance, in any degree, is an alarming physical and moral evil,... that (they) view the prevalent opinion that spirits are an antidote to the fevers and other diseases of our climate, exceedingly erroneous, and in many instances fatally so .... that (they) hesitate not to declare (their) belief (that) persons who use spirits daily or even occasionally, are more subject to the diseases of the climate, and that their chances of recovery when diseased are greatly diminished."<sup>11</sup>

Indeed, the Medical Community stood behind the Temperance advocates in a movement that successfully diminished production, sales and consumption of hard liquor; but with the immigration of the Germans in the 1840s and 1850s, the campaign against alcohol had to be launched against beer, a less potent and increasingly popular drink that did win the support of the medical community despite the growing strength of the Temperance movement.



## The Growth of the Breweries

The earliest documented distillery opened in Rochester in 1815. It produced sixty gallons of whiskey a day in a thirty gallon capacity boiler. Its production was considered essential to health ... and was a subject of great importance."<sup>12</sup>

The earliest brewery was the Aqueduct Spring Brewery opened in 1819 on the east bank of the Genesee River just north of Main Street.<sup>13</sup> Nathan Lyman opened a brewery on the south end of Water Street near the second aqueduct.

In 1812 only a handful of Germans lived in the present Rochester. By 1834 one in forty United States citizens were German; by 1855 the figure was one in seven. German Jews emigrated to America in the 1840s and after the 1848 German Revolution thousands of Germans moved to America. In Rochester a German-speaking school was needed. St. Joseph's Church opened the first parish school in the city. That school expanded in 1851 and in 1856 an adult German institute opened.

The Germans entered many professions including tailoring, gardening, building and most notably optics and brewing. The Germans were perceived by others as scientific, analytical, orderly, untiring, sanitary and temperate... <sup>14</sup> and on this final attribute the brewers built their case against the Temperance movement. The brewers believed the movement should have focused on hard liquor and indeed they recognized a serious problem among heavy drinkers. They pointed out that Presidents Madison and Jefferson passed favorable tax laws for beer production in order to provide an alternative to strong drink. In 1795 over two million barrels of beer were produced in America. Its production benefited brewers, drinkers and farmers growing wheat, barley and hops. <sup>15</sup>

Beer was applauded by brewers and many doctors as healthy—a liquid bread. Brewers publicized the sanitation of production methods and purity of ingredients. Many special recipes were brewed to capture a growing audience. German brewers won the taste of Americans from ale to lager. Beer production in Rochester grew to nearly 200,000 barrels a year.

Certainly for a Temperance movement, the increase in production was alarming. The movement intensified. The Brewers' Association retaliated by opening a free bar in

Reynolds' Arcade to show public that beer was not the "vile" brew that Temperance spokesmen called it.

Henry Cogswell placed a fountain in the Arcade and it was kept cold by ice provided by Temperance supporters.

In 1907, the Brewers' Exchange wrote in History of Brewing and Liquor Industry of Rochester, N.Y. in defense of beer's healthy attributes: "Beer is liquid bread and this 'bread' is raised just the same as the bread you eat, that is, yeast is used to get the desired results....When the FDA passed water standards no changes were required in Rochester's breweries because cleanliness and pure water were already used."<sup>16</sup>

The brewing industry spent thousands of dollars combating the Temperance supporters. Instead of attacking beer, the industry said, Temperance advocates should applaud it as a Temperance drink.



*Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.*

## **How Beer was Produced**

Hundreds of acres of hops, corn, barley and wheat were grown by area farmers who sorted the grain and sold the best to brewers or maltsters who cleaned the grain with fans and magnets in the first of two cleaning processes. The grain was then placed in steep tanks and allowed to collect moisture for 36-60 hours. The time varied according to the grain.

To make malt, the grain was turned by shovels on a drying floor or was placed in a compartment and dried by forced warm air. Hair-like sprouts grew from this 'green malt.' When it was sufficiently mature, it was placed in a hot drying kiln. A second kiln assured that it was completely dried.

During the second cleaning process the dry malt was put through sieves and blowers to remove rootlets, dust and broken kernels. The maltster then bagged the malt for sale to the brewer. A brewer, however, moved on in this process.

In an elevator a mill house the ingredients are weighed and prepared. Wort (or beer) is produced in the brew house. The wort was fermented and treated in the cellar. Aging after fermentation made the beer a lager. While aging it absorbed gas to give it head. This was called krausening. The beer was then cooled, filtered and pumped only once to the top before being bottled or barreled.

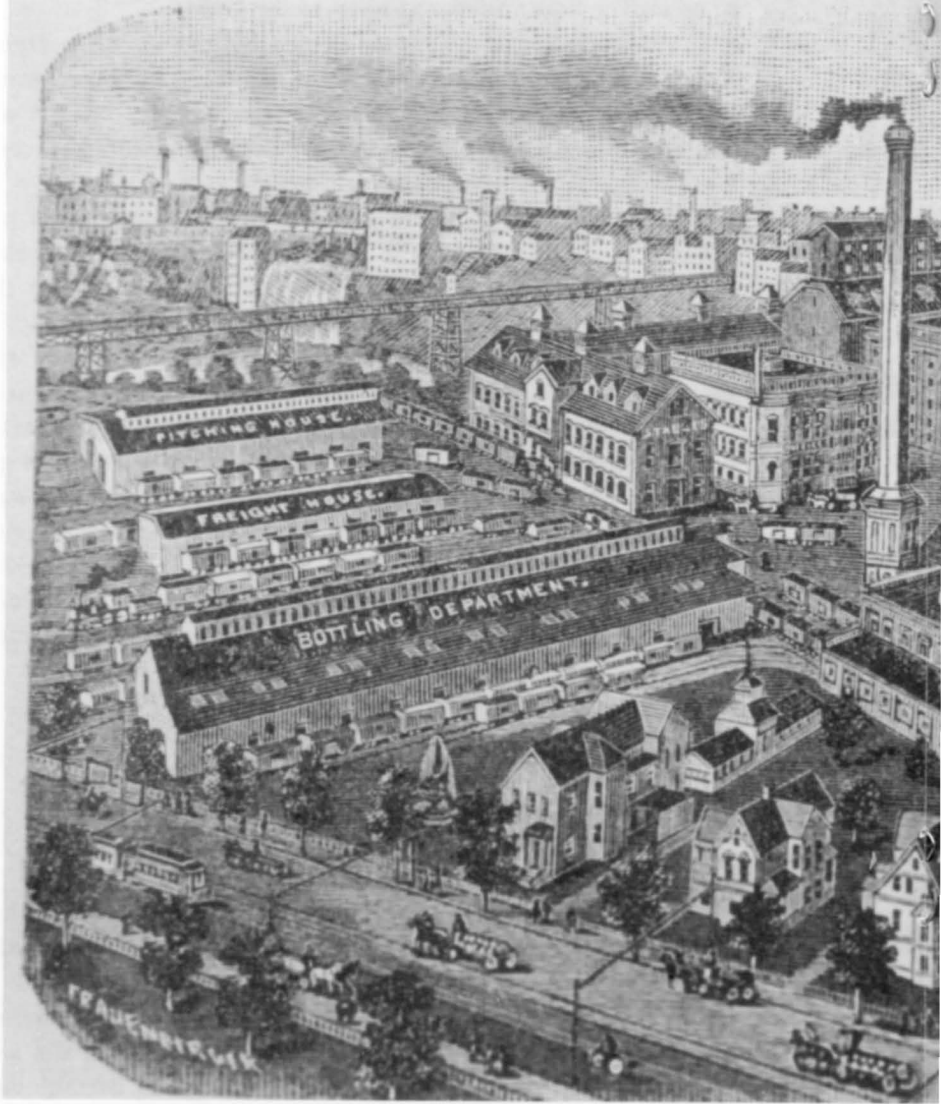
The Germans introduced hops to beer. It produced a bitterness that soon became desirable. Until Prohibition the German breweries were a major industry in Rochester.

## **The Brewers Before Prohibition**

In 1919 the 18th amendment ended production of most alcohol. Two brewers converted to dairy production. Others produced a malt beverage under the alcoholic limit allowed by law.

There were at least two dozen brewers in Rochester before Prohibition. In its heyday, the Bartholomay Brewing Co. was the largest brewer when Prohibition was enacted. Bartholomay converted its facilities to dairy production. In the 1880s

# BARTHOLOMAY



Bartholomay Brewery Co.,

# BREWERY CO.,



Office of the City Historian.

Bartholomay Brewing Company's main buildings overlooking the Upper Falls ran 450 feet including the brew house, beer storage vaults and malt house. A large elevator stored malt and barley. Nearby were the wash house, freight depot, office, stables and pitching sheds. The refrigeration machine houses were an important addition to the brewery.

Bartholomay employed 150 men to produce 300,000 barrels of beer a year. Seventy-five large handsome grey horses hauled kegs and bottles of beer to homes and establishments around the city.

The capability of cooling by refrigeration gave the brewer greater temperature control during the brewing process. Refrigeration also helped to capture a greater market for brewers when refrigerated railroad cars began to carry beer rapidly. Bartholomay was able to ship quickly because it was connected to the main line of the Central-Hudson Railroad by the Upper Falls bridge, also called the "Brewers' Railroad."

In the winter men and boys were employed cutting ice from ponds and lakes. An ordinance was passed requiring ice houses to state where their ice was obtained. Spitting on ponds and lakes where ice was to be cut was forbidden. Before refrigeration brewers kept ice houses lined with saw dust. Keeping the brew at the correct temperature could be costly.

In 1890 Bartholomay and Rochester Breweries began to use Genesee River water instead of Hemlock Lake water for making ice for cooling, washing wagons, sprinkling lawns and firefighting. The breweries claimed they could pump and store river water for one cent per thousand gallons instead of 14 cents per thousand gallons for Hemlock water. The Rochester Brewery alone saved \$65 a day. The Bartholomay and Genesee Breweries dug wells into the river bed behind the Genesee Brewery with a capacity of 160,000 gallons. The rock naturally filtered the water and kept the temperature ten degrees cooler than the flowing river water.

In 1873 before refrigerated railroad cars were available, Rochester's breweries competed with St. Louis, Milwaukee and Cincinnati for the New York City market. Though New York City itself had 300 breweries, the market there welcomed Rochester's distinctive beer. Brewing in Rochester was by 1873 a major industry, but capturing the New York City market could

J. A. KONDOLF.

W. H. KONDOLF.

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Respectfully Yours,

Telephone No. 216.

**KONDOLF BROS.**

**UPPER RIVER ICE,**

PUT UP BY

**CHARLES HANSEN & CO.**



**Ice Houses: Genesee Street, near Sawyer, at the Rapids.**

**OFFICE, 255 EAST MAIN ST.**

Orders may be sent to either address.

This Ice is unequalled for PURITY, being taken from the Genesee River, above the City Limits. It is free from the usual objections of sewer drainage, factory waste, etc. We guarantee this to be a PURE WHITE ICE, and especially fit for drinking purposes.

*Clean ice was needed for cooling before refrigeration was available. City Directory 1885.*



*The Bartholomay Brewery Co. kept its ice below ground level to maintain coolness. Local History Division, Rochester Public Library.*

make it even larger. The Union & Advertiser remarked that the summer months hindered the expansion of the Rochester market because beer did not transport well in the heat. The expense of constructing breweries after refrigeration was also reduced because cellars were no longer required for cooling.

There were many mergers and partnerships throughout the 19th century. The American Brewing Company grew out of Meyer & Loeb (1861) which later became the Lion Brewing Company (1879) and Loeb Brothers (1885) before becoming the American Brewing Company (1889). It was put out of business by Prohibition but produced again when Prohibition ended. It stopped producing in 1950. In its heyday in 1890 the American Brewing Company on Hudson near Drayton Street covered a full block with its fireproof six-story brick building.

During Prohibition the American Brewing Company continued to brew under legal alcoholic limits. Malt and hops were sold at ten different locations around the city.

Frederick Miller Brewery rebuilt in 1876 after a fire destroyed



it the year before. It produced one hundred barrels a day. Its main cellar was forty feet deep.

The later 19th century was active with mergers and rumors of mergers. By 1909, nine breweries had survived the mergers intact; American Brewing Company, Bartholomay Brewing Company, Enright Brewing Company, Flower City Brewing Company, Genesee Brewing Company, Hathaway & Gordon, Monroe Brewing Company, Standard Brewing Company and Charles (Margaret) Weinman Brewing Company.

Hathaway & Gordon bought the Longmuir Brewery which started on North Water Street in 1834. They added a building on the east side of North Water Street and tunneled under the street to connect the cellars of the two breweries. Thirty-two horses were kept at the stables and a large ice house was excavated in 1891.

The oldest brewery in the city was the Aqueduct Spring Brewery on South Water Street near Main Street. It was later run by Oothout & Burtis. They specialized in malt products while the old brewery still made beer.<sup>17</sup>

The sale of brewery grain to farmers brought about \$100,000 to local brewers. A controversy developed in the 1890s over whether the grain could be sold to milk-producing cows. William Bartholomay complained that the grain had been used for years by milk producers and they had never had a problem. Of course, he said, if the farmers kept it too long it would sour and sicken the cow and taint the milk. The health department found many farmers did not clean the grain troughs before adding freshly delivered grain still wet from the brewery. Together in the trough, the old and fresh grains mixed as the grain continued to ferment. Finally an ordinance was passed forbidding the sale of brewery grain to farmers for milk-producing cows.

Breweries were large employers. Not only in the breweries, but in support industries. There were bottlers, salesmen, teamsters, ice cutters, farmers, tavern keepers, lithographers (for labels), wagon makers and horsemen. When brewing ended hundreds of men in the city lost their jobs.

## Rochester breweries before Prohibition

<u>Brewery</u>	<u>Year Brewing Ended</u>
J.G Baetzel & Bro.	1885
J.G. Baetzel	1889
Union Brewing Co.	1899
Monroe Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition
John Boehm	About 1875
Patrick Enright	About 1885
M.P. Enright	1891
Enright Brewing Co.	About 1905
Genesee Brewing Co.	1889
Genesee Brewing Co. branch of Bartholomay Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition
Hathaway & Gordon	1912
House Bros.	1896
John Kase	1902
J. Marburger	About 1875
Marburger & Spies	1885
Christ. Matthias	About 1875
George Mayer	About 1875
Meyers, Loeb & Co.	About 1885
Loeb Bros. , Lion Brewery	1889
American Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition
Frederick Miller	1883
Miller Brewing Co.	1902
Flower City Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition
Frederick Miller	About 1875
Joseph Nunn	1890
Straub & Angele	1893
Emich & Mueller	1896
Burton Brewing Co.	1903
William Miller	About 1875
Moerlbach Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition

*continued*

Reiskey & Spies	About 1875
Rochester Brewing Co.	1889
Rochester Brewing Co., branch of Bartholomay Brewing Co.	1902
George B. Schweickardt	About 1875
Standard Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition
E. K. Warren	About 1885
E.K. Warren & son	1892
E.K. Warren Brewing Co.	1900
Frank Weinmann	1876
Margaret Weinmann	1886
Charles G. Weinmann	1900
Will & Bartholomay	1857
Henry Bartholomay	1874
Bartholomay Brewing Co.	1888
Bartholomay Brewing Co.	1920 with Prohibition
Yaman & Nase	About 1885
Joseph Yaman	1888
Zimmerman & Boehm	About 1875

### Post-Prohibition breweries

<u>Brewer</u>	<u>Year Brewing Ended</u>
American Brewing Co.	1950
Cataract Brewing Co.	1940
The Genesee Brewing Co.	Still in Business
Rochester Brewing Co.	1956
Standard Rochester Brewing Co.	1970
Standard Brewing Co.	1956
Standard Rochester Brewing Co. (plant 2)	1958

*Source: The Register of United States Breweries 1876-1976 by Manfred Friedrich and Donald Bull, Trumbull, Conn. 1976. In the collection of Len Rosenberg.*

## **Years of Prohibition**

City Health Officer George Goler believed prohibition would end death by intoxication, but in fact deaths increased because people drank poisoned home brew. Many people were arrested for running stills in their homes or garages. Prohibition created a business for illegal trade in alcohol from Canada too. Smugglers crossed Lake Ontario and made drops at isolated points along the beach or along Irondequoit Bay.

In a dramatic incident in 1927, a fifty-foot Coast Guard picket was patrolling the east shore of Lake Ontario at 4 a.m. when a crewman noticed a light among the trees on shore. A lantern could be seen as the Guard neared the beach. The Guards spotted a boat and commanded it to stop when the engines started. The men on the small boat ignored the command and sped away as the Coast Guard followed in pursuit. The Guards fired as many as 650 shots from the machine gun mounted on the boat's deck. Gunfire from revolvers and rifles was returned and the Guards took cover. When ammunition and fuel began to run low, the Guards returned to port without having captured the smugglers.

## **The End of Prohibition**

Five breweries opened when Prohibition ended; American Brewing Co., Cataract Brewing Co., Rochester Brewing Co., Standard Brewing Co. and Genesee Brewing Co.

"Hoch!" in fact "Dreimal Hoch!" declared the new Genesee Brewing Company in April of 1933 when Prohibition ended.<sup>18</sup> Gambling on the repeal of the 18th Amendment, Louis Wehle purchased the old Genesee Brewing Company buildings and its recipes in 1932. He was then vice president and general manager of Wehle Baking Company on Clarissa Street. He hired as many of the old Genesee Brewing Company employees as he could find. He brewed the famous "Liebotschaner" and on April 29, 1933 sold their first brew. A victory party was held at the Powers Hotel to celebrate the repeal.

The production of the old brewery began in 1878 and ended with Prohibition. The new brewery was deliberately modeled on the first, but increased its capacity. A thousand people were

employed by 1934. Another hundred men and horses harvested ice. The bottling industry flourished as more and more people had beer delivered to their homes by horse-drawn wagon. Wagon makers, blacksmiths, ferries, farmers all benefited. Thousands of dollars in taxes were paid by the industry.

By 1936 there were five brewers including Genesee Brewing Company, American Brewing Company, Cataract Brewing Company, Rochester Brewing Company and Standard Brewing Company. The American Brewing Company and Malt Brew Company continued production at legal levels during Prohibition. Hops and malt were available then at ten locations in the city.

Was a lesson learned during Prohibition? The Genesee Brewing Company declared in 1933, "Don't look back on Prohibition. Look to the future. What will it be? No one can say, of course, but one may fervently hope that they will be days of sanity and temperance—in habits, in actions and in words. Good beer—such as Liebotschaner—is an ideal beverage for such an era, for it is both refreshing and nourishing.... May the good taste which made and which makes it Rochester's favorite, last forever. May the fountain never run dry!"

Today only the Genesee Brewing Company brews in Rochester. The Cataract Brewing Company went out of business in 1940, the American Brewing Company followed in 1950. Rochester Brewing Company and Standard Brewing Company ended separate production in 1956 when they joined together. When Standard Rochester Brewing Company closed in 1958, Genesee Brewing Company was the sole brewer. However, its production was nearly twenty times that of all the brewers combined in the late 19th century.

Copy read by Hans Munsch.

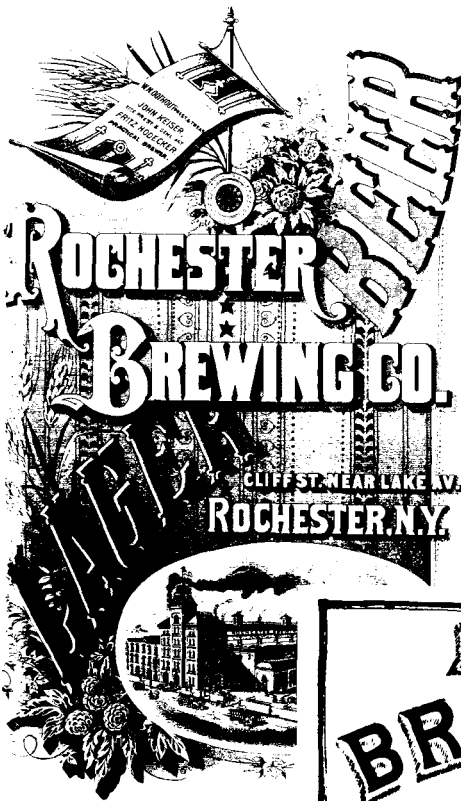
## End Notes

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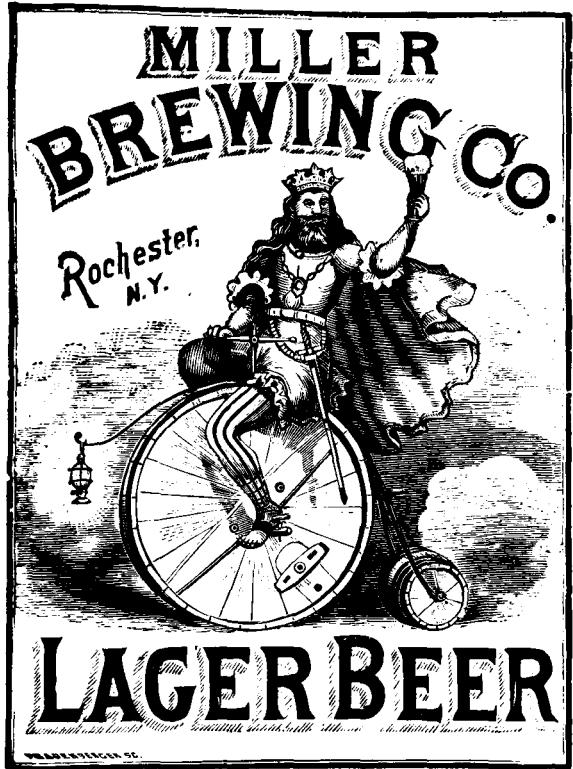
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9. Ibid, April 16, 1830, p. 62.
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12. McIntosh, p. 178.
13. **RHS-PFS**, Vol. 10, p. 282.
14. **A History of Brewery & Liquor Industry**, Kearsse Publishing Co., 1907.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. **Union & Advertiser**, January 22, 1859, 2-3.
18. **A Rochester Tradition**, Genesee Brewing Company, 1933, p. 9.



*Serving trays advertised beer for Rochester Brewing Co., Monroe Brewing Co. and Cataract Brewing Co. Courtesy of Len Rosenberg.*



*From the 1885 Rochester  
City Directory.*



*The king of beer astride a  
bicycle. Note the beer  
barrel wheel. Office of  
the City Historian.*

*Back cover: An employee of an unidentified Rochester Brewery inspects the bottling process in the 1920s. Courtesy of Len Rosenberg.*

