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# RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORY



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# Ramsey County History

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*Cover Photo: This photograph of the Yoerg Brewery, nestling up against the bluffs of St. Paul's West Side, was taken in 1933. The brewery was located at Ohio and Ethel streets. Photos with the story on St. Paul's family breweries are from the collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. Sketches for the Montgomery Schuyler story are reproduced from Vol. LXXXIII, Number 497, of Harper's New Monthly Magazine for 1891 (pages 736-755).*





A stone remnant of the Banholzer Brewery, as it looked in 1936.

## *Beer Capital of the State* — — St. Paul's Historic Family Breweries

BY GARY J. BRUEGGEMANN

In 1887, Minnesota, in spite of being the twentieth ranked state in the nation in terms of population, ranked fifth in the nation in terms of beer production, with 112 different breweries operating in Minnesota. Of these establishments, twelve were located in St. Paul — the number one brewing center in the state.<sup>1</sup>

What made 19th century Minnesota and St. Paul such a hot bed of brewing activity? The answer is simple: Minnesota had one of the largest German concentrations in the country and St. Paul had the largest German population in the state.<sup>2</sup> And Germans, of course, were the key ingredient to beer-making in America. The German immigrants with their culturally-induced mass thirst for "bier" not only provided the demand for brewing, but German technology with its innovative methods of fermenting also provided the best process of brewing.

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The Germans who flocked to Minnesota beginning in the 1840s and accelerating in the 1860s and 1870s brought with them the same old-country baggage that their fellow "Deutchlanders" carried to many other parts of the United States; namely, music, philosophy, gymnastics, and lager beer, the old German invention that revolutionized brewing in America. Created by a different type of yeast, along with a different preparation method (aging of the brew in a cold place), lager beer had a cool, light, foaming quality that, to many people's tastes, far excelled the common English ales and Porter beers.<sup>3</sup>

The Germans of Minnesota found no special difficulty in setting up beer-making shops in this region. After all, Minnesota provided the three essentials necessary for lager brewing: (1) climate and soil well-suited for growing hops and barley, beer's key ingredients; (2) ample fresh water supply, obviously beer's main ingredient; and (3) a large number of cool, natural caves, ideal for aging beer.

Of all these essentials, what perhaps especially caused Germans to take up brewing so readily in the St. Paul vicinity (aside from the





Barrels of Yoerg's "Golden Treasure," stored in a cave and ready for delivery.

large market the capital city provided) was the easy availability of the aging caves. In the pre-electric world of 19th century brewing, underground refrigeration was a necessity. St. Paul's Mississippi river bluffs not only provided a number of deep caves, but the soft texture of these sandstone terraces made it relatively easy to artificially create cooling caverns. Thus, in St. Paul brewers were spared the expense in time and money of building costly brick cold cellars — a savings that was particularly helpful to small-time operators with little capital. At one time or other, at least fourteen different local breweries took advantage of St. Paul's sandstone terraces.<sup>4</sup> The following account is the story of seven of the most significant of those breweries.

THE FIRST BREWERY to be built in St. Paul was also the first to be established in Minnesota. In 1848, the year before Minnesota became a territory, Anthony Yoerg, an early St. Paul German immigrant, began operating a small brewery near where Eagle and Washington streets used to meet<sup>5</sup>, below today's Civic Center parking lot. Born in Gundefingen, Bavaria, on October 5, 1816, Anthony Yoerg came to the United States at the age of 19 after receiving "a superior education"<sup>6</sup> in Germany. He first settled at Pittsburgh, then moved to Galena, Illinois, and finally found his way to St. Paul in 1848. After an unsuccessful attempt at running a butcher shop in the capital city, Yoerg tried his luck at brewing\* — a career switch that proved to be fortuitous,

*\*Yoerg had been trained as a brewer in Bavaria.*

for Yoerg was destined to build one of the most successful breweries in Minnesota history.

Yoerg's Washington street brewery (the only one in town until 1853) was a small-scale operation, but functioned successfully for twenty-one years in St. Paul's heavily German Uppertown around Seven Corners. In 1871 Yoerg moved his business across the river to the west side bluffs of Ohio street (another German neighborhood), two blocks south of today's Water street. There, nestled into the cliffs, Yoerg built an extensive stone brewery consisting of three buildings and carved out nearly a mile of underground cooling caves.<sup>7</sup> There was no question about it, at his new location Anthony Yoerg was going big time. His new brewery would be a modern, steam-powered, assembly-line beer factory capable of churning out more than fifty barrels of brew a day. Indeed, by 1881 Yoerg's facility was producing 20,000 barrels of beer a year and, by 1891, it had risen to 35,000 barrels a year.<sup>8</sup>

At the close of the 19th century, Minnesota's first brewery was also one of its largest. "Yoerg's Cave Aged Beer" (its official label) was distributed throughout Minnesota in both kegs and bottles. The kegs were made right on the brewery's premises in the company's own cooper shop.<sup>9</sup>

THE YOERG BREWING COMPANY was typical of all of St. Paul's old breweries, in that it was a family-run organization. In the early years of operation, Anthony Yoerg and his young St. Paul bride, Elovina Seitzinger,\* managed the business themselves. The couple, however, was blessed with seven children (five boys and two girls) and soon their sons were assisting their father at the brewery. The eldest son, Anthony Yoerg, Jr., born in St. Paul in 1854, was sent to the University of Minnesota for two years and came back in 1874 as his father's first general manager. Like many other German brewers, Anthony, Jr., was also active in Democratic politics; consequently, he was elected to the city council in 1890, the school board in 1896\*\* and the state legislature in 1903. In addition to these activities, young Yoerg also became heavily involved in banking and real estate — interests which ultimately led him to leave the brewing business in 1891. He served the brewery in an executive capacity for close to twenty years. In 1896,

*\*Anthony met Elovina when she worked as a servant for Governor Alexander Ramsey.*

*\*\*His three daughters, Florence, Martha, and Louise, were all public school teachers.*



when his father died, Anthony, Jr., put aside his real estate business for a year to succeed its founder as president of the company.

The second eldest son, William, was head bookkeeper from 1880-87, bottling plant manager from 1887-1892, and general manager (after Anthony, Jr., resigned) from 1892-96. William left the brewery at his father's death to run the real estate business of his brother, Anthony. In 1899, William moved to Winthrop, Minnesota.<sup>11</sup>

THE THIRD ELDEST son, Frank, who was born in St. Paul in 1867, attended Boston's Massachusetts School of Technology and was subsequently employed in an architect's office for four years. In 1893 he joined the family trade and worked as "a collector" until 1896 when he moved to Mankato. In 1899 he returned to Yoerg's Brewery and served in the following executive positions: bookkeeper (1899-1904), vice president (1904-1905), president (1905-1934), and secretary (1934 until his death on July 13, 1941).<sup>12</sup>

In 1890 the fourth son, Henry, also was sent to the Massachusetts School of Technology to study mechanical engineering. In 1896, upon his father's death, he became vice president of the brewery. A year later, Henry left the family business for a mechanical engineering job at the Great Northern Railroad (he eventually became superintendent of the Great Northern Shops). However, in 1934 Henry returned to the brewery to serve a five-year term as vice president.<sup>13</sup>

The youngest son, Louis E., born in 1874, decided against college and began work as a clerk, first for Bohn Manufacturing Company and later for Gotzian Shoe Company — two old St. Paul businesses. However, the death of his father also brought Louis back into the fold of the family trade. From 1896-1935 he was the brewery's secretary-treasurer and from 1935 until his death in 1950, he was its president.<sup>14</sup> It should be mentioned here that Louis and Frank were the executives who saw the brewery through the difficult Prohibition Era of 1919 to 1933. During their tenure, the brothers led the company through a successful transition from beer production to soft drink production\* and then, when Prohibition was repealed, they organized the company's transformation back once again to beer production.

ALTHOUGH THE FAMILY'S two daughters, Alvonina and Annie, never worked at the brewery, they both played important indirect

*\*Schmidt's and Hamm's Breweries also produced soft drinks during this time.*

roles in the company's management. Alvonina married John A. Seegar, president of Bohn Manufacturing Company, and he became the third president of Yoerg's Brewery, serving from 1897-1905. Meanwhile, Annie married Gustave Heinemann, who also worked for many years at the brewery, becoming its third general manager in 1896.<sup>15</sup>

When Yoerg's Brewing Company went out of business in 1952, the president of the 103-year-old firm, Alfred Yoerg, the son of Anthony, Jr., represented the third generation of Yoerg brewers. Today the only reminder of St. Paul's west side institution is the brewery's cave and foundation ruins toward the bottom of Ohio Street and the beautiful former estates of Anthony Senior and Junior at 215 and 235 West Isabel Street.<sup>16</sup> Anthony Yoerg is buried in St. Paul's Calvary Cemetery, approximately 25 yards from the headstone of another old German brewer — Martin Bruggemann\*\*, who in all probability was the proprietor of the second brewery established in St. Paul.


"Bruggeman's Brewery" began operations sometime in 1853 in a house near the corner of

*\*\*No apparent relative of the author.*

**Ad from Polk's 1894 St. Paul City Directory for the makers of "Funk's Fighting Beer."**

CHARLES FUNK. WILLIAM FUNK. JOHN FUNK.

**M. FUNK BREWING Co.**  
**Brewers.**



**STANDARD BEERS**

**CASCADE STREET,**  
Northwest Corner Colborne Street.,  
**ST. PAUL, MINN.**



**NORTH MISSISSIPPI BREWERY,**  
 Wm. Bauholzer, Proprietor.



BREWERS  
 PILSENER  
 LAGER  
 AND  
 EXPORT  
 BEER

BREWER OF  
**PREMIUM LAGER AND EXPORT  
 BEER,**  
 Stewart Ave. near city limits, St. Paul, Minn.  
 H. ORLEMANN, 91 W. Third St., City Agent.

Ad from 1880-81 *St. Paul City Directory* published by R. L. Polk and Company and J.D. Leonard.

today's Smith and Kellogg Boulevard. The brewery at that time was only a hand-operated,<sup>17</sup> light-volume facility, worked essentially by one man, Martin Bruggemann. He was a 25-year-old Prussian bachelor, who in 1843 at the age of 15 had emigrated to America with his mother and older brother. Martin lived for ten years in Detroit, where he apprenticed as a carpenter before moving west in 1853 to the booming frontier town of St. Paul.<sup>18</sup>

After only a few years of business, Bruggemann's wood brewery burned down, so he built a stone structure, this time on the corner of Sixth and Pleasant (the neighborhood of Minnesota's first German Catholic Parish — Assumption Church). During this period, Martin struck up two close friendships — one with an Alex Schweitzer, who he made his business partner, and the other with a Barbara Keller, who in 1855 he made his wife. The firm of Bruggemann and Schweitzer turned out small quantities of beer at Sixth and Pleasant until 1864 when Schweitzer left town and Bruggemann became the sole proprietor.

IN 1872 MARTIN decided, like Anthony Yoerg, to relocate his business across the river at the foot of the attractive sandstone cliffs west of Wabasha Street. The brewery on the West Side was built approximately 150 yards east of Yoerg's facility or, according to Polk's *St. Paul City directories*, on the corner of Channel and Edward (two presently defunct streets). It would be there at 22 Channel street that Bruggemann's Brewery would be a city fixture for more than twenty-five years.<sup>19</sup>

Bruggemann's west side facility was described in Neill's 1881 *History of Ramsey County* as being a "2-1/2 story brick building employing five men".<sup>20</sup> Like Yoerg, Brugge-

mann utilized the adjacent sandstone caves for aging and refrigeration purposes. Unlike Yoerg's, however, Bruggemann's Brewery never became a large-scale enterprise. Available production figures indicate that the business only produced at a rate of around 2,000 barrels of beer a year.<sup>21</sup> Still, 2,000 barrels per year in the 1880s was more than many other state and local breweries were producing and more than enough to turn a sizable profit for Martin Bruggemann. Indeed, the beer business not only enabled the Bruggemanns to comfortably support ten children (two boys and eight girls), but it also allowed them to contribute heavily to the construction of St. Matthew's Catholic Church, a German parish on the city's west side. Martin Bruggemann's large donations to St. Matthew's are especially noteworthy, since he was not a Roman Catholic. His wife, however, was a devout Catholic who walked a mile to Mass every morning.<sup>22</sup>

The Bruggemanns' two sons, John and Frank, were important factors in the brewery's success. John became his father's first general manager in 1887 and later served, in effect, as the brewery's top executive from 1890 to 1900. Frank also worked at the brewery in different capacities until its termination in 1900.<sup>23</sup>

THE ROLES OF the daughters in the family enterprise are unknown, but it is interesting to note that one daughter (Justina) followed in her mother's footsteps and married a German brewer. His name was William Pfeiffer and he was the brewmaster-vice president of Yoerg's Brewery from 1907 to 1918. Another daughter (Mary) married a German named John Minea, who was involved in a number of trades, but did, in fact, spend some time working and managing at Bruggemann's Brewery.<sup>24</sup>

Martin Bruggemann died suddenly at age 69 at his home on Edward Street on February 8, 1897, one year after his neighbor, Anthony Yoerg. After his death, Bruggemann's Brewery continued operations under John Bruggemann's leadership for three more years. In 1900 the 47-year-old enterprise dissolved and the facility was sold to Aiple Brewing Company (formerly of Stillwater), who utilized the site until 1905. With the brewery's demise, the Bruggemann boys left the beer trade for greener pastures. John moved to California and Frank became a St. Paul fireman and amateur bike racer.<sup>25</sup>

In many respects, Bruggemann's Brewery has become one of the lost businesses of St. Paul history. Few people living today are even aware of its existence. Unfortunately, very





**William Hamm, Sr.**

little physical evidence (pictures, documents, articles, buildings, etc.) has been left behind to remind us of either Martin Bruggemann or his brewery. To date, the only known traces of the brewery are the following relics:

- The sandstone caves formerly used by Bruggemann, situated two blocks west of South Wabasha street.
- One Bruggemann beer bottle owned by the founder of the North Star Bottle Club, Doug Shilson.
- One Bruggemann beer mug owned by Frank Bruggemann's son, William.
- One Minnesota Historical Society document which shows (with the aid of a magnifying glass) a drawing of the brewery.
- Two Bruggemann beer stoppers owned by a member of the North Star Bottle Club.<sup>26</sup>

In addition, there are located on the West Side a few reminders of Martin Bruggemann's children:

- The former home of John Bruggemann at 42 West Isabel.
- The grocery-store residence at 678 Ohio Street, which was built by Frank Bruggemann.
- The former home of William and Justina (Bruggemann) Pfeiffer at 308 Cherokee Avenue.<sup>27</sup>

THE THIRD BREWERY established in St. Paul was the North Mississippi Company, built sometime in 1853 by an obscure beer-maker named "Mr. Rowe".<sup>28</sup> The brewery was situated on the east side of the river, but far upstream from the original Yoerg and Brugge-



**Anthony Yoerg, Jr.**

mann plants. (Specifically, it stood on top of the river bluffs at the junction of today's Shepard Road and Drake street in the heart of the West Seventh Street neighborhood.)

The North Mississippi's early years were marked by many owners and little success. The most significant figure in the brewery's early history was a hardluck German named Charles Rausch. Rausch, who was born in Germany in 1812, bought the facility for \$45,000 in 1859 after cashing in on his successful restaurant business. Rausch had been the proprietor of the Apollo Hall, St. Paul's first restaurant located on Third (Kellogg) and Wabasha streets and "the most popular place in the city."<sup>29</sup> Curly-haired Rausch had overcome the misfortune of two separate fires which totally destroyed his tailor shops in New York and Indiana before he finally found luck, prosperity, and popularity in St. Paul.

The brewery business, however, was a return to misfortune for him. Shortly after he began operations at North Mississippi, a freak accident occurred in which a worker fell into a hot vat of beer and was boiled to death. Rumor quickly circulated around the city that Rausch's beer was contaminated with human skin. In spite of his efforts to squelch the rumor, beer sales continued to drop and Rausch was ultimately forced to sell the brewery at a great loss in 1865.<sup>30</sup>

AFTER RAUSCH'S DEPARTURE the brewery continued to flounder. The subsequent owner, F. A. Renz, lost everything he owned and went \$2,000 into debt when the





**"City Brewery," founded by Dominick Troyer in 1855 at Eagle and Seven Corners.**

plant caught fire the very year he bought it. Eventually, however, North Mississippi was resurrected and reconstructed in 1871 by an industrious father and son named Frederick and William Banholzer.<sup>31</sup>

Frederick Banholzer, who was born in Wurttemberg, Germany, in 1824, had been since 1856 a busy St. Paul stone mason and contractor, working primarily around the Uppertown district. Described "as a man of great humor,"<sup>32</sup> Banholzer was less interested in brewing than was his son, and so after only six years in the trade he sold his interest to 30-year-old William.

A rotund man with a handlebar moustache, William Banholzer "was all business."<sup>33</sup> Almost single-handedly he turned a 1,000 barrel-a-year brewery into a 12,000 barrel-a-year operation. "Banholzer's North Mississippi Beer" became by the 1880s one of the five most popular brews in the city. The company's facilities included a total of nine buildings and a one-half-mile deep, multi-chambered cave.<sup>34</sup> The cave was accessible from both the bottom of the river bluff (south of the brewery) and from the top of the cliff (right inside the plant's main stone building). Today this cave still runs from the river bank, under Shepard Road, to the vicinity of Butternut street and one can still see the old stone archway at the lower entrance — a lasting reminder of Banholzer's Brewery.

In 1886 William established "Banholzer's Park" in the empty lots north of the brewery. The park was to serve as a recreation area for neighborhood picnickers who drank at Banholzer's outdoor beer garden, and it provided barbeques, outdoor bowling, German band music, balloon rides to Lilydale and, of course, cold kegs of North Mississippi beer.<sup>35</sup>

THE FINANCIAL SUCCESS of the North Mississippi Company can probably best be measured by the prosperity of its owner, William Banholzer. In 1885 he built a magnificent stone house at 689 Stewart avenue for \$10,000,<sup>36</sup> a great expense for 1885. The still-standing mansion is one of the more impressive 19th century houses in St. Paul, a testimonial to the success of the North Mississippi Brewery.

William Banholzer died at the young age of 48 on July 5, 1897, (four months after Martin Bruggemann), and his death signaled the death of the brewery. Unlike Anthony Yoerg, William Banholzer's sons (William, Jr., George C., Arthur, John, Fred, and Anton) were all too young to take over the company's management. (All his sons were in school at the time of his death.) His father, Frederick, who lived until 1903, apparently was still uninterested in brewing and so his wife, Louise, had to preside over the business. This



task proved too great for the 43-year-old widow and in a year's time, the brewery was closed.<sup>37</sup>

The year 1855 brought three more breweries to St. Paul. Which one came first is unknown, but for the sake of simplicity, we will deal first with the one known as "City Brewery". Its founder was a German immigrant named Dominick Troyner. Troyner built a small 1-1/2-story stone and wood facility near Eagle and Exchange streets, right in the heart of Uppertown. The brewery used the adjacent sandstone hill for its refrigeration caves. Traces of these caves can still be seen inside the Exchange street tunnel below Kellogg boulevard. Troyner operated City Brewery for only five years. In 1860 he decided to make a return visit to Europe and thus sold the enterprise to William Funk and Ullich Schweitzer (perhaps the brother of Martin Bruggemann's former partner.)<sup>38</sup>

Funk and Schweitzer, two native Germans, owned the brewery collectively until 1866 when William Funk sold his interest to a man whose name would become synonymous with City Brewery — Frederick Emmert.<sup>39</sup> A short, fiery, red-haired, bearded man, Emmert had made most of his money in the hotel and saloon businesses. Born in Germany in 1831, he emigrated to the United States in 1849 and, in the span of four years, lived in Columbus, Milwaukee, Chicago, St. Louis, Omaha, and Council Bluffs, while working as a cooper, butcher, and lumber dealer. The well-traveled German arrived in St. Paul in 1854 and quickly became involved in the hotel and saloon businesses. The St. Paul House (Seven Corners), The Emmert House (Robert below Kellogg), Oak Hall Saloon (Third and Washington), and Emmert's Saloon (Third and Robert) were all at one time or another owned by Frederick Emmert.<sup>40</sup>

EMMERT'S INPUT into City Brewery was tremendous. In 1865, when he first entered the business, the brewery was only a small-time company, struggling to compete against eight other local beer-makers. However, by 1878 Emmert's City Brewery (Emmert bought out Funk in 1871) had established itself as St. Paul's second-most productive brewery. Although the 1880s would bring other local breweries to surpass his in production, Emmert's City Brewery functioned as a steady 6,000-barrel-a-year enterprise until the turn of the century.<sup>41</sup> Insurance atlases from the 1880s reveal the water source for "City Beer." According to the Sanborn map, the brewery used artesian wells. This water system represented

another contribution of Frederick Emmert.

During his brewing career, Frederick Emmert could boast of having some rather famous friends. Not only did he consider Governor Alexander Ramsey a close personal friend (Ramsey, who was part German, lived near Emmert on Exchange street and the two were also fellow members of both the Athenaeum German Hall on Wilkin and Exchange and the Republican Party), but he also considered Otto Von Bismarck himself a good friend.<sup>42</sup> (Emmert met the famous "unifier of Germany" in 1885 during his vacation to Germany and was a guest at his castle.)

When Frederick Emmert died at the age of 58 in 1889, he left behind three sons, Fred, William and Charles, who were all educated and experienced brewers. Led by Charles and William, the three brothers kept the family business alive and well for twelve more years. In 1890 they honored their father by changing the name of the firm from "City Brewery" to the F. Emmert Brewing Company.<sup>43</sup> During the 1890s, the brewery specialized in catering to the large saloon district on Eagle Street. Dozens of bars lined the hillside from Seven Corners to the Levee. In fact, Charles Emmert owned one of the saloons himself, a frolicking drinking spot at 301 Eagle (or 192 South Washington),<sup>44</sup> which was sometimes referred to as the "Bucket of Blood" because of its many bar-room brawls.

IN 1901, AFTER forty-six years in business, the brewery closed its doors at 168-170 Exchange street for good. The Emmert Brothers, like the Bruggemann boys, had decided to pursue other careers and thus sold the facility to the Theo Hamm Brewing Company of St. Paul. The Hamm Company was never really interested in operating the plant — they merely wanted to buy out some very tough competition — and so the brewery became a storage area.<sup>45</sup>

Today the buildings are long gone, but there do remain two structures that have Emmert Brewery connections. At 272 Chestnut street stands the former home of Charles Emmert, who built the house for \$3,000 in 1904 when he was engaged in the legal and real estate professions. Charles (1857-1919) was made in the tradition of his father — short, moustached, well-educated (he spoke nine languages) and "kind". His daughter, Violet Dire, presently lives in the house, thus keeping the Emmert legacy alive in the old Uppertown district.<sup>46</sup>

A mile west of Chestnut street at 734-36



Stewart avenue stands a brick building which also has a connection to Emmert's Brewery. This place was the former home of long-time city brewmaster, Blessius Bleissang, the large blue-eyed brother of Frederick's wife, Anna, and a native of Alsace-Lorraine. He had lived in Canada and Scott County, Minnesota, before he joined the brewery in the 1880s. Bleissang built this house in 1890 and it stands only two blocks away from the home of Frederick Emmert's old competitor, William Banholzer.<sup>47</sup>

THE FIRST BREWERY to make use of the land now occupied by Heilemann's was Christopher Stahlmann's Cave Brewery. Stahlmann's facility was officially opened on July 5, 1855,<sup>48</sup> in what was then the western reaches of the city and a rural wilderness paved only by a wagon trail named Fort Road. What no doubt lured Stahlmann to this particular out-of-the-way spot was the existence of both cool natural springs and caves on the property. The caves, which still exist under West Seventh Street, were eventually excavated by Stahlmann (at a cost of \$50,000) to reach three levels in depth and a mile in width.<sup>49</sup> An 1883 business publication described the caverns as follows:

"A perfect labyrinth of rooms and cellars and under cellars three deep, reminding one of the catacombs of Rome, for none unacquainted with these subterranean vaults, without a guide, could grope their way through them and find their way out to daylight."<sup>50</sup>

Christopher Stahlmann, the founder and developer of Cave Brewery, was described by Newsom as "a large man, slow in his movements, yet a man with a good deal of business tact and sagacity and very generally known throughout the city."<sup>51</sup> He was born to an affluent family in Bavaria in 1829, but due to the bankruptcy of his father, he emigrated to America in 1846 with only "five dollars in his pocket!" After stays in Canada, Indiana, Cincinnati, and Iowa, Christopher and his Iowa bride, Katherine Paulas, moved to St. Paul in 1855 "with just a few dollars."<sup>52</sup>

From these "few dollars" Stahlmann created an enterprise that quickly became the largest brewery in Minnesota. According to available beer-production records for the years 1876-1879, Stahlmann was the number one beer-maker in the state. (He averaged more than 10,000 barrels of beer per year.) Although Stahlmann lost his number one position in the mid-1880s, his brewery continued to increase production, reaching a high of 40,000 barrels a year by 1884. Cave

Brewery, according to an ad in an 1883 city directory, made "the finest quality lager beer" in "the most extensive brewing establishment in the state or the Northwest."<sup>54</sup>

IN ADDITION TO BREWING, Christopher Stahlmann was also engaged in a variety of other activities. He was a member of the state house of representatives (1871 and 1873), a Ramsey County commissioner (1871) and a director of St. Paul's National German American Bank (1883).<sup>55</sup> On December 3, 1883, at the height of his career, Christopher succumbed to tuberculosis. At the time of his death his brewing operation was taking in a quarter of a million dollars of business a year. His plant consisted of five three-story buildings on sixty lots (valued at \$150,000), two large steam engines, three boilers, a variety of smaller machinery, and a work force of forty-seven men.<sup>56</sup> The inheritors of this thriving enterprise were his wife, Katherine, and their three sons, Christopher, Jr., Henry-Conrad-Gottlieb, and Bernard U. All three sons were mature, experienced brewery workers, quite capable of carrying on their father's work. Chris and Henry C.G. had each served as the firm's treasurer, while Bernard had experience in a variety of clerical jobs. Unfortunately, however, in a short period of time the same disease that killed their father would strike down everyone of the Stahlmann brothers. Thus, tuberculosis claimed the lives of 31-year-old George and 26-year-old Bernard in 1887 and of Christopher A.J., Jr., in 1894. (Christopher resided in the large wooden house at 877 West Seventh.)<sup>57</sup>

During this difficult disruptive decade of 1884 to 1894, the brewery's presidency fell into the hands of Henry C.G.'s father-in-law, George Mitsch, Sr. (1854-1895), a native of Germany and the founder of St. Paul's Catholic Aid Society, who lived at 395 Daly street. Mitsch, a blacksmith by trade and a druggist by desire (as well as a former legislator and councilman), was unable to lead the brewery through the disaster of losing four key executives.<sup>58</sup> In 1897, the once great Stahlmann Brewing Company went bankrupt and its last president, Charles J. Dorniden, had to sell the plant to a new enterprise, The St. Paul Brewing Company. The company existed only three years, for in 1900 the entire facility, including the beautiful stone mansion of Christopher Stahlmann at 855 West Seventh street, was sold to the Jacob Schmidt Company<sup>59</sup> (formerly the North Star Brewery).

THE SCHMIDT COMPANY had its roots in the caves of Dayton's Bluff, specifically on





**Schmidt Brewery, as it looked about 1905.**

the corner of old Commercial street and what used to be called Hudson avenue. There in 1855, in two 50 by 75-foot buildings and one tiny cave, the North Star Brewery began operations under the ownership of a Mr. Drewery and Mr. Scotten. In 1866 the brewery (sometimes called Northwestern Brewery) was sold to the Graig brothers (L.B. and C.) who, in turn, sold the plant in 1872 to a Frenchman named William Constans.<sup>60</sup> In 1879 Constans teamed up with a German named Reinhold Koch, a Civil War veteran who had been foreman at Stahlmann's,<sup>61</sup> to form the partnership of Koch and Company. By the 1880s the North Star Brewery had become "the second largest brewery west of Chicago,"<sup>62</sup> producing at a clip of 16,000 barrels of beer a year.

It was during this time that Jacob Schmidt joined the North Star firm. Schmidt, born in Bavaria in 1845, was an experienced brewmaster. In addition to working at Best, Blatz, and Schlitz breweries in Milwaukee, the old-country-trained Schmidt also had worked in Minnesota at the Shell (New Ulm), Banholzer and Hamm's breweries. In 1884 Schmidt bought out Koch's interest in the brewery and, in effect, took over control of the company. Constans became more involved in his downtown grocery business.<sup>63</sup>

In 1890 Jacob Schmidt hired as his bookkeeper Adolf Bremer, a fellow German and a man he had met while trapshooting in the woods around the site today of Hamline University. Bremer (1869-1939) became a guest at the Schmidt residence, fell in love with Jacob's only child, Maria, and eventually married her in 1896. Schmidt's new son-in-law became president of the company in 1899,

after it was officially reorganized as the Jacob Schmidt Brewing Company. In 1900 a fire destroyed the 300 by 200-foot plant, thus forcing the firm's removal to the old Stahlmann facility, which they extensively remodeled and expanded into a 200,000-barrel-a-year factory.<sup>64</sup>

In 1911 Jacob Schmidt died, leaving his entire estate to his wife, Katherine, and his daughter and son-in-law, Adolf and Maria Bremer. Thus Adolf Bremer assumed total control of the brewery. To assist him in that responsibility, he brought in his brother, Otto Bremer (1867-1951), an executive at the National German American Bank of St. Paul.<sup>65</sup>

THE BREMER BROTHERS became heavily involved in politics (Otto served a 10-year stint as city treasurer) and both donated heavily to the Democratic Party, which they believed best represented the interests of German brewers against rural prohibitionists. (The brewers were thrust into politics in the 1890s to lobby against the Minnesota County Option Law, a law that gave counties the option to institute liquor prohibition.)<sup>66</sup>

When Adolf died in 1939, Otto carried on successfully, both as president of Schmidt's Brewery and the American National Bank. However, after Otto died in 1951, the company fell on hard times and sold out three years later to the Pfeiffer Brewing Company of Detroit.<sup>67</sup> Although the Pfeiffer firm retained the name "Schmidt's Beer" (just as the plant's current owner does), the emergence of the out-of-state corporation marked the official termination of the Jacob Schmidt Company, as well as the end of another one of





**The Adolph Bremer house, still standing at 855 W. Seventh street as the Marie Schmidt Bremer Home.**

St. Paul's family breweries.

The valley of St. Paul's Phalen Creek, with its sandstone cliffs and its ample fresh water supply, was attractive terrain for 19th century brewers. Known historically as "Swede Hollow," the lower Phalen Creek area at one time or another housed at least four different local breweries. Undoubtedly the most significant of these establishments was the one built on the east bank, at the northeast corner of Greenbrier and Minnehaha. There in 1860 Andrew T. Keller, a native of Germany, established "Pittsburgh Brewery." Keller's small plant was nothing special until it was sold in 1864 to a man who would transform it into "the largest brewery northwest of Chicago"<sup>68</sup> — Theodore Hamm.

Theodore Hamm (1825-1903) was born and raised in Baden, Germany (in the village of Herbolzheim), where he learned the butcher's trade. After emigrating to America in 1854, he continued his occupation as a butcher in Buffalo, New York, and Chicago, before moving to St. Paul on August 12, 1856, with his new bride, Louisa Bucholtz.<sup>69</sup> The young city of St. Paul offered new opportunities for Hamm and so, in 1857, he changed careers and purchased a boarding house-saloon in the Uppertown vicinity of Fort Road and Sherman. Hamm and his wife ran that establishment for seven years and then, in 1864, moved to Phalen Creek to begin the brewing business.<sup>70</sup>

By 1878 Theodore Hamm, a man once described as being "strong, active, pushing,

and yet gentlemanly and obliging",<sup>71</sup> had turned Keller's old 500-barrel-a-year plant into a 5,000-barrel-a-year enterprise. By 1879, "Hamm's Excelsior Brewery" had progressed to close to 8,000 barrels a year, and by 1882, to 26,000 barrels a year. Physically, the brewery had expanded from one lot in 1860 to four acres of buildings by 1885.<sup>72</sup>

CONSIDERING SUCH A dramatic business growth, it is difficult to imagine how Hamm could have had time for anything other than his brewing concerns. However, somehow, he found time in 1874 to form a partnership with Phillip Thon and operate a flour mill (also on Phalen Creek) for more than fifteen years. In addition, Hamm was president of a number of German reading and social organizations, as well as his own realty company.<sup>73</sup>

Theodore and Louisa were the parents of six children — five girls\* and one boy. The lone son, curly-haired William (1858-1931) was the heir to his father's business. William Hamm worked at the brewery in an executive capacity for forty years, serving as general manager from 1880 to 1891, vice president-secretary from 1891 to 1903, and president

\*Mrs. George Benz, Mrs. Otto Mueller (formerly of 668 Greenbrier), Mrs. John Flanagan (formerly of 680 Greenbrier), Mrs. Peter John, and Mrs. A. H. Koehler.



from 1903 until his death in 1931. In addition to his brewing activities, William was heavily involved with his steamboat business, his and his father's milling and realty companies, and Democratic Party politics.<sup>74</sup>

Although Theodore was the brewery's official president until his death from a heart attack on July 31, 1903, he unofficially retired from active management in 1891.<sup>75</sup> Thus, it would be essentially under William's direction that the Hamm Company would emerge as not only the state's leading brewery, but as a bona fide national entity.

William's son, William, Jr., also played a major role in carrying on the family tradition. Like his father before him, William, Jr., spent more than forty years on the brewery's executive board, serving as vice president from 1915 to 1931 and as president, from 1932 to 1960. Educated at the University of Minnesota's College of Agriculture, William, Jr., probably is best remembered as one of the victims of the famous Barker-Karpis gang's 1933-34 dual kidnapping schemes. On June 15, 1933, gang members kidnapped William, Jr., outside his father's former residence at 671 Cable street (now Greenbrier) and held him for \$100,000 ransom. The ransom was paid and William was released unharmed. A few months later, on January 7, 1934, the gang struck again, this time kidnapping Adolf Bremer's son, Edward, and successfully ransoming him for \$200,000.<sup>76</sup> Thus two of the most notorious kidnappings in American history (previous to the recent Piper case) were perpetuated on the families of two of St. Paul's leading brewers.

In 1975, the 113-year-old Hamm's Brewing Company, the last of St. Paul's local breweries, was sold to the Olympia Brewing Corporation of Washington state, thus bringing to a close the 128-year history of St. Paul's family breweries.

#### Other local breweries of note<sup>77</sup>

Melchoir Funk Company (1865-1901), founded by German-born Melchoir Funk (1828-1893) and continued by sons John and William. The 2,000 barrel-a-year enterprise was located near Colborne and Palace. Melchoir's 1887-built home at 398 Duke street still stands as a reminder of this brewery.

Conrad Wurm's (1863-1889), founded in 1863 by German-born Conrad Wurm (1819-1877) and carried on by his widow, Johanna (1823-1894). The facility produced at around 400 barrels a year. It was located near Funk's in the area of Jefferson and Grace.

Frank Hornung's (1876-1883), established

at 124 South Washington Street (near Yoerg's original site), this brewery averaged only around 200 barrels a year.<sup>78</sup> Hornung, a native of Wurttemberg, Germany, and an ex-Stahlmann worker, died in 1883 (the same year as his former employer), leaving behind a wife and three young daughters.<sup>78</sup>

Drewery's Brewery (1861-1913), established by Englishmen Putnam and Dexter, and sold to Edward Drewery (1829-1876) in 1866. This brewery stood atop Phalen Creek at 702-710 old Payne avenue (now Drewery avenue) and specialized in English porter and ale. Edward Drewery was the former owner of the North Star Brewery, which he sold in 1866.

Joseph Hamm and John Reimer's Company (1885-1887). For two years, a brewery was worked at Joy avenue near Lilydale Road in the sandstone cave located near the trestle by a Mr. J. Reimer and a Mr. J. Hamm. Joseph Hamm had been the foreman at Bruggemann's Brewery.

H. W. Reichow (1885-1886). This brewery operated for one year in the cave one-half mile west of the high bridge, off Lilydale Road.

#### Footnotes

1. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the U.S.: *Colonial Times to 1970*, Bicentennial Ed. (II Vols, Washington, D.C., 1975) part one: population, pg. 30.  
Frank Wing, *Brewers Handbook of U.S. and Canada* (New York: J. M. Wing Co., 1887) pgs. 67-73.
2. *Minnesota Census Bureau, Fifth Decennial Census of the State of Minnesota by Major and Minor Civil Divisions* (St. Paul, 1905) Nationalities, pgs. 197-199.
3. H. S. Rich and Company, *One Hundred Years of Brewing* (Chicago: H.S. Rich and Co., 1903).
4. This figure was arrived at by examining St. Paul city directories from 1856-1919.
5. H. S. Rich, (*op. cit.*), pgs. 241-242.
6. W. B. Hennessy, *Past and Present of St. Paul, Minnesota* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Co., 1906) pgs. 786-787.
7. Edward D. Neill, *History of Ramsey County and the City of St. Paul* (Minneapolis: North Star Co., 1881) pg. 479.
8. *Ibid.* C. C. Andrews, *History of St. Paul, Minn.* (New York, D. Mason and Co., 1890) pg. 444.
9. Yoerg Brewing Company, *Golden Treasure*, (n.p.c. 1937) pg. 4.





The original Theo. Hamm Brewery plant in 1865. "Mr. Hamm" is standing in the foreground facing the camera.

10. W. Hennessy, 787-788.  
R. L. Polk and Company, *St. Paul City Directory*, 1871-1900.
11. *Ibid.*
12. Hennessy, (*op. cit.*) pg. 787.  
R. L. Polk, 1871-1941.
13. *Ibid.*
14. R. L. Polk, 1871-1950.
15. Hennessy, (*op. cit.*), pg. 787.  
R. L. Polk, 1871-1910.
16. R. L. Polk, 1954-55.  
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17. Neill (*op. cit.*), pgs. 478-479.  
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18. Newson, (*op. cit.*) pg. 395.  
R. L. Polk, 1863-65.
19. R. L. Polk, 1872-1900.
20. Neill, (*op. cit.*) pg. 479.
21. Available sources on beer production show 1,326 barrels in 1878, 1,908 in 1879, and 2,000 in 1881. Sources: Frederick Salem, *Beer: Its History and its Economic Value*, rev. ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1972) pg. 221.  
Neill, (*op. cit.*) pg. 479.
22. Information from William Bruggemann, 5719 Orchard Lake, White Bear Lake, who is Martin's grandson. Also in church records, St. Matthew's Catholic Church, 507 Hall avenue, St. Paul.
23. R. L. Polk, 1885-1900.
24. The names of the daughters were listed in Martin Bruggemann's obituary, *St. Paul Dispatch*, February 9, 1897. The information on their husbands was found in Polk's city directory, 1888-1918.
25. *St. Paul Dispatch*, February 9, 1897.  
R. L. Polk, 1897-1901.  
Rich, (*op. cit.*) pg. 342.  
Conversations with William Bruggemann
26. For precise location and dimension of the brewery, see Reuben H. Donnelley's *Atlas of St. Paul* (2 volumes, Chicago: R. H. Donnelley Co., 1892) 2:10.
27. Conversations with William Bruggemann. See also building records.
28. Neill, (*op. cit.*) pg. 481.
29. Newson, (*op. cit.*), pgs. 365-367.
30. *Ibid.*
31. Sketchy biographies on both Banholzers can be pieced together from the following sources:  
Minnesota Historical Society, *Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society: Minn. Biographies*, Warren Upham, ed. (St. Paul, Minn. Historical Society Press, 1912) pg. 31.  
Newson, (*op. cit.*) pg. 636.  
Neill, (*op. cit.*) pg. 490.  
R. L. Polk directories, 1863-1903.  
*St. Paul Dispatch*, William's obituary, July 6, 1897.
32. Newson, (*op. cit.*), pg. 636.
33. *Ibid.*
34. Donnelley's *Atlas of St. Paul*, 1892, Vol. II, 10.



35. *St. Paul Sunday Pioneer Press*, May 1, 1938.
36. St. Paul building records.
37. *St. Paul Dispatch*, July 6, 1897.  
R. L. Polk, 1897-1900.
38. Newson, (*op. cit.*) pg. 494.  
R. L. Polk, 1863.
39. Rich, (*op. cit.*), pgs. 342-343.
40. *Ibid.*  
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41. Salem, (*op. cit.*), pg. 221.  
Neill, (*op. cit.*), pg. 479.
42. Newson, (*op. cit.*), pg. 494.
43. Salem, (*op. cit.*), pg. 221-222.  
Conversations with Charles' daughter,  
Mrs. Violet Dire, 272 Chestnut, St. Paul.
44. Conversations with Violet Dire.  
R. L. Polk, 1890-1900.  
Donald Empson, *On the Street Where  
You Live* (St. Paul: Witsend Press, 1975)  
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110-112.
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55. Newson, (*op. cit.*), pg. 531.
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R. L. Polk, 1863-1899.
61. Neill, (*op. cit.*), pg. 554.
62. J. Schmidt Co., pg. 2.
63. *Ibid.*  
Also in Rich (*op. cit.*), pgs. 341-342.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *Ibid.*  
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70. *Ibid.*
71. Newson, (*op. cit.*), pgs. 577-578.
72. Salem (*op. cit.*), pg. 221.
73. *St. Paul Dispatch*, August 1, 1903, pg. 1.  
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obtained primarily from R. L. Polk's city  
directories from 1863-1913 and F. Salem's  
beer production figures, pg. 221.  
In the cases of Funk, Wurm and Drewery,  
additional data was found in Neill's, pgs.  
479-480.  
Also useful in the specific case of Drewery  
was H. S. Rich, pg. 345.  
Melchoir Funk's exact date of death was  
obtained from his headstone in Oakland  
Cemetery.
78. 1880 federal census for Ramsey County.





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### THE GIBBS HOUSE

*at 2097 West Larpenteur Avenue, Falcon Heights, is owned and maintained by the Ramsey County Historical Society as a restored farm house of the mid-nineteenth century period.*

The Ramsey County Historical Society was founded in 1949. Its chief function is to collect and preserve the history of the city and the county and share that history with the people who live here. The Society is the county's historian. It preserves those things from the past that are the community's treasures — its written records through the Society's library; its historic sites through establishment of the Irvine Park Historic District and its successful efforts to help prevent destruction of the Old Federal Courts Building, now Landmark Center. It shares these records through the publishing of its magazine, brochures, pamphlets, and prints; through conducting historic sites tours of the city, teaching classes, producing exhibits on the history of the city, and maintaining its museum on rural county history. The Gibbs Farm Museum, the oldest remaining farm home in Ramsey County, was acquired by the Society in 1949 and opened to the public in 1954 as a museum which would depict the way of life of an early Minnesota settler. In 1966 the Society moved onto the property a one-room rural country schoolhouse dating from the 1870s. Now restored to the period of the late 1890s, the school is used for classes, meetings, and as the center for a summer schoolhouse program for children.

Society headquarters are located in Landmark Center, an historic Richardsonian Romanesque structure in downtown St. Paul, where it maintains the center's only permanent exhibit, a history of the building during the seventy-five years it was the federal government's headquarters in St. Paul.

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