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Old-Time Breweries

Academic and Breweriana Historians

DAVID M. FAHEY

In the years between the Civil War and National Prohibition, Ohio brewed more beer than almost any other state. In 1880 it ranked third, behind only New York and Pennsylvania. Although by 1915 it had fallen to fifth place, it still brewed more beer than Anheuser-Busch's home state of Missouri. But while Ohio's breweries flourished, temperance and saloon cultures clashed in the Buckeye State, a result of a volatile mixture of "Yankee" and immigrant ethnicities. For instance, in 1872 when Cleveland authorities tried to impose Sunday closing of all businesses that sold alcohol, "the flag was hauled down to half-mast and wrapped in mourning" at Lied's Garden, a favorite drinking place for German Americans.¹

Historians have shown how Ohio played an important role in the temperance agitation from the 1870s to the 1930s. In 1874, Ohio villages and small towns constituted the stronghold of the women's temperance crusade. Cleveland was the site of the national convention that organized the Woman's Christian Temperance Union in 1874. The headquarters of the Anti-Saloon League of America was located at Westerville, near Columbus, and Akron was the birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous. In the mid-1980s academic historians published several well-known books that describe and analyze

I am grateful to Kevin A. Grace, University of Cincinnati, and to K. Austin Kerr, Ohio State University, for their suggestions. I thank Kevin as well for securing the illustrations from the University of Cincinnati Archives.

1. Martin H. Stack, "Local and Regional Breweries in America's Brewing Industry, 1865 to 1920," *Business History Review* 74 (Autumn 2000): app.; Carl Wittke, "Ohio's Germans, 1840-1875," *Ohio Historical Quarterly* 66 (Oct. 1957): 342.



Ad for Lion Brewery. University of Cincinnati Archives.

aspects of Ohio’s “dry” story.² In contrast, academic historians have written little about the “wet” side of the story—the breweries, saloons, and other sectors of the business of alcohol drink and how they interacted with society.

This essay combines a literature review with a summary of the history of beer in America. It asks academic historians to pay attention to the non-academic historians who have done so much of the historical research. It sketches the national context, particularly for the era between the Civil War and National Prohibition, and it looks briefly at the post-Prohibition period: the consolidation of the traditional brewing industry and the rise of microbreweries. Finally, it offers a case study of Ohio. All of these topics are united by a call for new research on the business of drink.

With a few important exceptions, research on the alcoholic drink industry has been left to nonacademic historians. University and other prestigious presses seldom publish their books, academic journals rarely review them, and in many cases the books cannot be found at research libraries. Such historians are a mixed lot, but most of them collect what is called “breweriana,” material culture souvenirs such as signs, steins, and coasters.³

2. Jed Dannenbaum, *Drink and Disorder: Temperance Reform in Cincinnati from the Washingtonian Revival to the WCTU* (Urbana: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1984); Jack S. Blocker Jr., “Give to the Winds Thy Fears”: *The Women’s Temperance Crusade, 1873-1874* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985); K. Austin Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale Univ. Press, 1985); Ernest Kurtz, *A.A.: The History* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988). The Kurtz book is a revised edition of *Not God* (1979).

3. See Herbert A. Haydock and Helen I. Haydock, *World of Beer Memorabilia* (Paducah, Ky.: Collector Books, 1997) and *Beer Advertising Memorabilia* (Paducah, Ky.: Turner, 2003).

Little noticed by historians of popular culture, breweriana has become a hobby industry with its own organizations, publications, meetings, and web sites. Why the breweriana phenomenon? Nostalgia probably is the key. Unlike stamp collecting, breweriana seldom bothers with things created in order to be collected. The cultural artifacts that breweriana hobbyists prize belong to history, often a recent history that collectors remember. There also is the matter of practicality. Breweriana collectables are widely available at prices middle-class Americans can afford.

National and regional breweriana organizations include the American Breweriana Association (founded 1980), which publishes the *American Breweriana Journal: The Magazine of Brewing History and Advertising*; the National Association [of] Breweriana Advertising (founded 1972), which publishes the *Breweriana Collector*; the Brewery Collectibles Club of America (founded in 1970 as the Beer Can Collectors of America), which publishes *Beer Can and Brewery Collectibles Magazine*; and the Eastern Coast Breweriana Association (founded 1970). Smaller organizations specialize by artifact, such as Just for Openers (founded 1979), or by a specific brewery or a type of brewery. For instance, the members of Microbes collect artifacts from microbreweries.

Most nonacademic historians write histories for breweriana, local, and other popular audiences. They publish histories of individual breweries and of brewer families and also more general histories about the breweries in a particular city or state or region, especially breweries that flourished before Prohibition. Sometimes this overlaps with German American history, as German immigrants dominated the business of brewing beer. These nonacademic historians include breweriana enthusiasts, former brewery employees and their children, and local historians. (And although not literally correct, in most cases the term “nonacademic historians” should apply to college faculty members who teach German or English or adult education rather than history or economics, the two academic departments whose disciplines are most relevant to the study of brewery history.)

These nonacademic historians rarely report significant access to brewery archives. Part of the explanation is that these records often do not exist or are closed to researchers. An equally important reason is this brand of historian generally regards dusty account books and business correspondence as less instructive than what was created for the public to see. They favor as their sources newspapers, city directories, local histories, and a great variety of physical evidence, ranging from buildings to bottles. Often brewery histories are richly illustrated “picture books” that provide a good record of material culture and advertising. Unfortunately, although concerned with breweries as businesses, books by nonacademics seldom show familiarity with business scholarship.

From the perspective of academic historians, much of the work by non-academic writers offers facts without interpretation and fails to place research into larger contexts. However, even when this charge is justified, the information that nonacademic historians painstakingly collect is indispensable for more ambitious, interpretative scholarship. Furthermore, at least a few amateur historians provide analysis as well as raw data. “Nonacademic” doesn’t necessarily mean substandard.

This essay aims to draw attention to publications written outside academe and shared in less scholarly forums. When researching brewery and saloon history, academic historians should explore nonacademic research. I provide this neglected literature with an interpretative context drawn from the few professorial studies that address the history of American breweries and saloons. By doing so, I hope to encourage academic historians to write more about breweries and saloons. Perhaps this essay will also help nonacademic historians appeal to academic readers as well as to breweriana hobbyists and a popular regional audience. The shifts from political history to social and cultural history, from elites to ordinary people, from traditional analysis of written texts to a new sensitivity toward the language of written and nonwritten “texts” should make the story of beer attractive to historians. In practice, few academic historians have seized this opportunity to explore a neglected aspect of popular culture.

BREWERY HISTORIES

I am struck by the contrasting ways in which the United States and England regard breweriana. England supports a thriving market for public house histories.⁴ But then, with the possible exception of the cowboy saloon, American drinking places—the saloon, tavern, bar, and cocktail lounge—do not arouse the affection that the English pub takes for granted.⁵

Histories of beer—its manufacture, sale, and consumption—are more common in Britain than in the United States. The British take their beer seriously. For instance, in 1971 British enthusiasts for traditional beer organized the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). Nostalgia in an age of rapid change helps sustain British interest in pub and brewery history. Today Britain has only about 55,000 pubs, a little more than half the number that poured pints a century ago. Supermarkets soon will sell more beer than the

4. See Paul Jennings, *The Local: A History of the English Pub* (Stroud, England: Tempus, 2007).

5. For cowboy saloons, see Richard Erdoes, *Saloons of the Old West* (New York: Knopf, 1979).

public houses. After decades of consolidation, international firms own all the major breweries.

Although there are public houses throughout the British Isles, the love affair with the pub is nowhere stronger than in England. Illustrated histories of English (and occasionally Scottish) pubs appear virtually every year. Academic historians have written a few of them, for instance Paul Jennings's *The Local: A History of the English Pub* (Tempus, 2007) and David W. Gutzke's *Pubs and Progressives: Reinventing the Public House in England, 1896-1960* (Northern Illinois Univ. Press, 2006). In 2004 the organization English Heritage, in cooperation with CAMRA, published Geoff Brandford, Andrew Davison, and Michael Slaughter's *Licensed to Sell: The History and Heritage of the Public House*. And *Victorian Pubs* (1975; repr. Yale Univ. Press, 1984) is the work of architectural historian Mark Girouard. Despite the contribution of academic historians, most English pub histories are written outside academe. Inspired by affection for a district or town or neighborhood, they look in detail at a specific locality. Local organizations or presses sponsor many of them, while a few are self-published. Sometimes they include breweries as well as public houses.

Paralleling the many richly illustrated books about English pubs, America has a much smaller number of richly illustrated brewery histories organized around particular cities, states, and regions. In practice, these brewery histories also depict the story of the saloons, with the help of old photographs and illustrations. With rare exceptions, these histories are the work of nonacademic historians and are directed at a sizable audience of brewery enthusiasts. Yesterday's breweries and saloons are sufficiently popular for Chicago to offer bus tours. St. Louis is the home of the Brewery Museum Association, located at the long-closed Lemp brewery. And Milwaukee has its own Museum of Beer and Brewing, as well as the Pabst Mansion.

Urban brewery histories are most common for the Great Lakes and the Ohio and Missouri valley regions. Leaving aside for a moment books about Ohio, five more-or-less recent books stand out: Bob (Robert F.) Skilnik, *Beer: A History of Brewing in Chicago* (Barricade, 2006); Peter H. Blum, *Brewed in Detroit: Breweries and Beer since 1830* (Wayne State Univ. Press, 1999); H. James Maxwell and Bob Sullivan, *Hometown Beer: A History of Kansas City's Breweries* (Omega, 1999); Stephen R. Powell, *Rushing the Growler: History of Brewing in Buffalo* (rev. ed., Apogee, 1999); and Peter R. Guetig and Conrad D. Selle, *Louisville Breweries* (Mark Scaggs Press, 1995). An older book about America's forgotten brewing capital is Will Anderson's self-published *Breweries of Brooklyn* (1976). There also are a few state and regional histories, among them Doug Hoverson, *Land of Amber Waters: The History of Brewing in Minnesota* (Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2007); Jerold W. Apps, *Breweries of Wisconsin* (Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 2005); Herman Ronnenberg, *Beer and*

Brewing in the Inland Northwest, 1850 to 1950 (Univ. of Idaho Press, 1993); Cindy Higgins, *Kansas Breweries and Beer, 1854-1911* (Ad Astra Press, 1992); and Gary and Gloria Meier, *Brewed in the Pacific Northwest: A History of Beer-Making in Oregon and Washington* (Fjord Press, 1991).

Surprisingly, there is no book-length urban history of old breweries in St. Louis or Milwaukee, cities that, along with Cincinnati, make up what has been called the Midwest's "German brewing triangle." However, there are several histories of the most famous St. Louis brewery, Anheuser-Busch, one being Ronald Jan Plavchan's 1969 St. Louis University dissertation-turned-book, *A History of Anheuser-Busch, 1852-1933* (Arno, 1976). Earlier the brewery published its own centennial history, written by Roland Krebs and Percy J. Orthwein, *Making Friends Is Our Business: 100 Years of Anheuser-Busch* (1953). A less sympathetic version is Peter Hernon and Terry Ganey, *Under the Influence: The Unauthorized Story of the Anheuser-Busch Dynasty* (Avon, 1991). In addition to Apps's statewide survey of Wisconsin, Milwaukee is served by the principal scholarly history of an individual brewery. In 1948, New York University Press published Thomas C. Cochran's *The Pabst Brewing Company: History of an American Business*. It focuses on the period from the company's incorporation in 1873 to 1919. According to the Greenwood Press, publisher of a reprint edition, most of the company archives exploited by Cochran have disappeared since he did his research.

Less distinguished histories celebrating individual breweries are fairly common. For instance, see William Kostka, *The Pre-Prohibition History of Adolph Coors Company, 1873-1933* (Adolph Coors, 1973), as well as more recent studies by Mark A. Noon, *Yuengling: A History of America's Oldest Brewery* (McFarlane, 2005); Paul D. Koeller and David H. DeLano, *Brewed with Style: The Story of the House of Heileman* (Univ. of Wisconsin-La Cross Foundation, 2004); and Stephen P. Walker, *Lemp* (rev. ed., Lemp Preservation Society, 2004). And a few books focus on brewer families, such as Tim John, *The Miller Beer Barons* (Badger Books, 2005), and Dan Baum, *Citizen Coors* (W. W. Morrow, 2000).

SALOONS

Perry R. Duis and Madelon Powers have written the most important books about urban American saloons. In *The Saloon: Public Drinking in Chicago and Boston, 1880-1920* (Univ. of Illinois Press, 1983), Duis contrasted wide-open Chicago, where alcohol was easy to buy, with restrictive Boston. Writing fifteen years later, Powers focused on saloons' working-class customers, often young and single. *Faces along the Bar: Lore and Order in the Workingman's Saloon, 1870-1920* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1998) argues that reg-

ular saloon-goers belonged to informal groups whose members alternated in buying rounds for their friends or pooled their funds to purchase beer for the group. In 1999, when Duis reviewed Powers in an online forum, he complained that she exaggerated the continuity in saloon life during the fifty years before Prohibition. Rejecting a static picture, his own book had highlighted the forces for change: "Saloons constantly evolved in response to the changing economic structure of their wet-goods suppliers, local licensing laws, real estate and transportation trends, legislative attacks from temperance interests, ethnic transitions, competing diversions, rival dealers, and a host of other factors."⁶ In her 2006 essay "The Lore of the Brotherhood: Continuity and Change in Urban American Saloon Culture, 1870-1920," Powers responded; she does recognize the reality of change as well as continuity.⁷ There is a handful of related articles, notably Elaine Frantz Parsons, "Risky Business: The Uncertain Boundaries of Manhood in the Midwestern Saloon," *Journal of Social History* 34 (Winter 2000).

Beyond the Midwest, there are a couple of books that serve the western states, namely Thomas J. Noel, *The City and the Saloon: Denver, 1858-1916* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1982), and Elliott West, *The Saloon on the Rocky Mountain Mining Frontier* (Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1979). And a section in Roy Rosenweig's *Eight Hours for What We Will: Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983) examines drinkers and drinking places in Worcester, Massachusetts. Brooks McNamara, *The New York Concert Saloon* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2002), looks at a specialized drinking place that functioned as a music hall.

Saloons were plentiful in northeastern and midwestern cities with large immigrant populations, such as New York and Chicago, and in predominantly male mining and ranching towns but were less ubiquitous elsewhere, especially in the mostly rural South. By one estimate, in the country as a whole there were 150,000 saloons in 1880, a number that almost doubled twenty years later. Several cities vie for the distinction of being the country's saloon capital. At one point Chicago had "more saloons than groceries, butchers, or dry goods stores." In 1850 Buffalo provided a saloon or equivalent for every eight-four men, women, and children, while in 1893 the ratio had declined slightly to one beer-selling business for every hundred residents: "2,512 saloons, 150 hotels, 129 [liquor] stores, and 97 boarding houses." Kansas City, Missouri, claimed to have the "wettest block in the world." It was adjacent to Kansas City, Kansas, which had become dry

6. Duis on H-Urban at www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.cgi?path=122289264502205 (accessed Feb. 21, 2008).

7. In Mack P. Holt, ed., *Alcohol: A Social and Cultural History* (Oxford, England: Berg, 2006), 145-60.

in 1881 as a result of Kansas state law. Of the twenty-four buildings on the Missouri block, “twenty-three of them were either saloons or liquor stores.” A few cities had distinctive saloon cultures. For instance, in Louisville, Kentucky, a saloon was often combined with a grocery.⁸

Although saloons sold whiskey and sometimes wine, they sold mostly beer. Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, American drinkers shifted from drinking hard liquor to drinking beer, and they did so in part because the type of beer available changed from British-style ales to German-style lagers. Compared with British-style ales, lagers were lighter in body, less alcoholic in content, and less complex in taste. In the 1870s, an Americanized version of Bohemian-style lager became the standard brew. Although German immigrants liked the heavier Bavarian lager, other Americans preferred a less filling drink. Mixing white corn or rice with barley mash, the new favorite was light in color as well as in body. In warm weather, lager was a refreshing beverage.

GENERAL HISTORIES

The United States has no book on the history of its breweries that can be recommended unreservedly. Stanley Wade Baron, a novelist, translator, and editor, but not a professional historian, wrote what until recently was considered to be the most comprehensive historical study of breweries in the United States. First published in 1962, *Brewed in America: A History of Beer and Ale in the United States* (Little, Brown) has been reprinted twice. Reviewing it, Peter Mathias, a prominent British brewery historian, praised Baron’s book for what it was but regretted that it was not more. Although based on extensive research in printed sources and well written, the book shows “no interest in the processes of change, the dynamics or the problems of growth.”⁹ Two new books largely supersede Baron’s but have their own limitations: Maureen Ogle’s *Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer* (Harcourt, 2006) and Amy Mittelman’s *Brewing Battles: A History of American Beer* (Algora, 2008). Both authors are independent scholars who earned doctorates in history but make their livings outside academe.

8. Amy Mittelman, *Brewing Battles: A History of American Beer* (New York: Algora Publishing, 2008), 48; Maureen Ogle, *Ambitious Brew: The Story of American Beer* (Orlando, Fla.: Harcourt, 2006), 89; Stephen R. Powell, *Rushing the Growler: History of Brewing in Buffalo*, 3d ed. (Buffalo, N.Y.: Apogee Productions, 1999), 32–33; H. James Maxwell and Bob Sullivan, *Hometown Beer: A History of Kansas City’s Breweries* (Kansas City, Mo.: Omega, 1999), iv; Peter R. Guetig and Conrad D. Selle, *Louisville Breweries: A History of the Brewing Industry in Louisville, Kentucky, New Albany and Jefferson, Indiana* (Louisville, Ky.: Mark Skaggs Press, 1995), 295.

9. Peter Mathias, book review of Baron’s *Brewed in America*, *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 20 (Apr. 1963): 322.

The chronological overlap between Baron and Ogle is limited. Baron devotes nineteen of his thirty-three chapters to the period before the arrival of “lager bier” and only two chapters to the period after the repeal of Prohibition.¹⁰ Ogle begins with the German immigrant brewers who remade the American brewing industry in the 1840s and devotes three of her eight chapters to the period after the repeal, two of which look at the phenomenon of microbreweries.

Although her style is chatty and anecdotal, Ogle’s readers benefit from her sound research built on academic and breweriana scholarship, newspapers and other old print literature, public archives, and interviews. Although denied access to Anheuser-Busch’s archives, she was permitted to use its corporate library. (Plavchan’s 1969 dissertation apparently remains the only instance of an “outside” historian having been allowed to consult the Anheuser-Busch archives.) Trained in the history of technology, Ogle demonstrates an impressive knowledge of how technological change shaped and reshaped the brewing industry. As a major theme, she shows how brewers repeatedly adapted their beers to drinkers’ preferences.

Directed at a popular market, Ogle entertains her readers with lively biographical sketches and avoids dull theory and statistical tables. Her endnotes provide the source for quotations and details, not for arguments. However, she does not always make clear when her interpretations or documentation are new and when they are not. Ogle’s book is a solid contribution that deserves a place in research libraries.

Mittelman’s book takes the form of a monograph directed principally at an academic audience. Her short book begins in colonial times and ends with a chapter covering events since 1970. The book builds on her dissertation at Columbia University, “The Politics of Alcohol Production: The Liquor Industry and the Federal Government, 1862-1900” (1986) and is focused on federal taxation and the United States Brewers Association. Although she certainly knew about Ogle’s book, Mittelman never cites it or even mentions its existence. In this, she lost an opportunity to engage in a dialogue that might have strengthened her monograph. As a practical matter, both books are essential reading, with Mittelman’s third chapter about “Drinkers, Saloons, and Brewers, 1880-1898,” especially valuable for this article.

Two valuable essays that look at the period bounded by the Civil War and National Prohibition provide a briefer survey and, for the purpose of this article, are even more useful. In 1998 business historian K. Austin Kerr summarized existing scholarship in his essay “The American Brewing Industry,

10. A nonacademic book that surveys the period before Ogle’s is Gregg Smith, *Beer in America: The Early Years, 1587-1840* (Boulder, Co.: Siris Books, 1998).

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1865-1920.”¹¹ Kerr emphasized the expansion of the American brewing industry. Between 1870 and 1914 the production of beer in the United States grew almost tenfold. The quantity of beer consumed increased more rapidly than the population. Despite this overall growth, individual brewers had to struggle to survive in a highly competitive industry often devastated by price wars. British investors attempted with limited success to consolidate American breweries into a cartel. By 1900 the American brewing industry was the largest in the world, with the exception of the British Isles and Germany, where per-capita drinking was still much higher.

Martin Heidegger Stack’s “Liquid Bread: An Examination of the American Brewing Industry, 1865-1940,” a University of Notre Dame doctoral dissertation (1998), provides a provocative reinterpretation. Submitted for an economics degree, his thesis tests business theories. In 2000 Stack drew on his dissertation for a major revisionist article, “Local and Regional Breweries in America’s Brewing Industry, 1865 to 1920,” published in the *Business History Review*.

Stack argues that historians have overemphasized the importance of the national shipping breweries during the period between the Civil War and National Prohibition. Large brewers in medium-sized cities, such as Pabst, Schlitz, and Blatz in Milwaukee, Anheuser-Busch in St. Louis, and Christian Moerlein in Cincinnati, had to sell most of their beer in distant markets. There simply weren’t enough local customers to drink all the beer that these brewers produced. The conventional interpretation is that these brewers became dominant because of their innovative use of refrigeration and advertising and, above all, economies of size. In fact, as Stack emphasizes, the two leading brewing states were New York and Pennsylvania. Huge modern breweries in New York City (for example, George Ehret) and Philadelphia (Berger and Engel) enjoyed insatiable local markets and so did not need to ship beer elsewhere or spend large sums on advertising. The same could be said for Ballantine: its Newark, New Jersey, brewery was conveniently located near two metropolitan markets.¹²

Stack points out that by the mid-1890s, after decades of impressive growth, the national shipping breweries lost market share to regional shipping breweries (e.g., Milwaukee’s Miller) and to substantial local breweries (for instance, George Muehlebach in Kansas City, noted for its premium

11. Kerr’s essay appeared in R. G. Wilson and T. R. Gourvish, eds., *The Dynamics of the International Brewing Industry since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1998), 176-92. Kerr also reviewed Ogle’s and Mittelman’s books in *Brewery History: The Journal of the Brewery History Society* 128 (2008): 96-100.

12. Thomas C. Cochran, *The Pabst Brewing Company: History of an American Business* (1948; repr., Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975), 72.

pilsner popular with the home trade). Even small breweries, selling undistinguished beer in local markets, prospered.

Although Anheuser-Busch and the other national shippers developed brands by bottling beer (e.g., Budweiser), brewers delivered most of their beer to retailers in kegs. According to Stack, over 90 percent of beer prior to 1895 and perhaps 85 percent on the eve of Prohibition was sold in kegs, while comparatively little was sold in bottles. (Canned beer did not exist until the mid-1930s.) Kerr puts bottled beer's market share in the early 1900s a bit higher, at about 20 percent. Bottled beer could be sold directly to the customer who drank it, but selling kegged beer meant selling it through local saloons. In turn, this often required brewers to own or otherwise "tie" saloons by financing mortgages or supplying equipment, for instance. Control over saloons helps explain how even in Milwaukee, St. Louis, and Cincinnati small local breweries could compete with nationals. When the nationals went outside their home cities, they necessarily spent more on transportation and advertising than did local firms. A member of the family who ran Cleveland's Leisy Brewing took for granted the advantage that the local brewery had over the shipping competition. "In the old days they used to say that any brewery that could see a large proportion of its market from the top of its own chimney was in good shape, and those that had to ship any distance did not fare as well."¹³ Prior to Prohibition, breweries did their brewing in a single city, though shippers had depots, or "dumps," elsewhere.

The post-repeal era transformed the beer market to the benefit of the nationals. When the legal sale of beer resumed, old-style saloons tied to particular brewers were banned, and draft beer became less important. Bottled beer and easily packed and shipped canned beer were consumed in large quantities at homes and restaurants. Most beer was sold in grocery stores. In this new commercial environment, the heavily advertised brands of the great shipping brewers flourished.¹⁴

CONSOLIDATION AND MICROBREWERIES

By the early twenty-first century, nearly all the old breweries have closed their doors, while Anheuser-Busch's flagship brands, Miller, and, to a lesser extent, Colorado-based Coors can be found wherever beer is sold. Sometimes the names of extinct brewing companies survive as brands. For in-

13. Herbert Leisy, quoted in Stack, "Local and Regional Breweries," 447.

14. Pamela E. Pennock and K. Austin Kerr, "In the Shadow of Prohibition: American Domestic Alcohol Policy since 1933," *Business History* 47 (July 2005): 383-400.



Ad for the Gerke Brewing Co. University of Cincinnati Archives.

stance, although produced today at an Anheuser-Busch brewery, Rolling Rock still comes in its distinctive green bottles with painted-on labels.

Yet, not even the American “big three” are safe from mergers and takeovers. In fact, foreign control has become the rule. Miller became a subordinate part of a brewing empire that originated in South Africa, now called SABMiller. Coors merged with a much larger Canadian brewer, and the company that resulted is Molson Coors. Recently these companies combined their United States operations in a joint venture called MillerCoors. In 2008 even mighty Anheuser-Busch lost its independence. Purchased by the Belgian-Brazilian brewery giant called InBev, Anheuser-Busch could console itself by its place in the name of the resulting company, Anheuser-Busch InBev.

Beginning in the 1970s, the growth of microbreweries partly offset the disappearance of the old local and regional breweries.¹⁵ Reacting against a monoculture of lagers, microbrewers (and home brewers) revived old-style ales and made distinctive lagers. While microbreweries include brewpubs

15. Glenn R. Carroll and Anand Swaminathan, “Why the Microbrewery Movement? Organizational Dynamics of Resource Partitioning in the U.S. Brewing Industry,” *American Journal of Sociology* 106 (Nov. 2000): 715-62.

that combine brewing with the sale of food and beer for on-premises consumption, most microbreweries seek a larger market. Among American beer drinkers, the term “craft brewery” is used interchangeably with “microbrewery,” but the Brewers Association, an organization of small American breweries, distinguishes between craft breweries (which, among other things, brew with pure malt) and other microbreweries.

Microbreweries sell to a niche market that is often in competition with high-priced imports. In the early 2000s, microbreweries collectively supplied 5 to 7 percent of the market, while imports, including beer from Canada, supplied 12 percent.¹⁶ A few businesses have outgrown the status of microbrewery to become large regional or even national shippers. For instance, the Boston Beer Company, founded in 1985, created the hugely popular Samuel Adams brand. In contrast, some microbreweries provide only a recipe and hire a contract brewery to do the brewing. Hoping to take advantage of microbrewery cachet, the big three breweries produce microbrewery-style beers for drinkers who often don't know the ultimate owner. For instance, Coors owns Blue Moon but does not put the Coors name on the bottles.

OHIO

The recent domination of bottled and canned beer produced by the national shipping breweries makes it hard to appreciate the importance regional and local breweries once enjoyed. By looking at Ohio, where regional and local breweries once flourished, we can escape the domination of St. Louis and Milwaukee. Ohio brewers did more than make good beer. They showed political imagination in the struggle against Prohibition.¹⁷

Recalling the German heritage of the Queen City, people still sometimes jokingly say *Zinzinnati* for Cincinnati. Before National Prohibition it was a major brewing center. A historical directory of American breweries devotes eight pages to Cincinnati.¹⁸ Historians have written more brewery histories for Cincinnati than for any other city in the state. There are three books to consider, all of which define Cincinnati to include near neighbors such as the brewery of George Wiedemann across the Ohio River in Newport,

16. Martin H. Stack, “A Concise History of America’s Brewing Industry,” *EH.net* [Economic History] *Encyclopedia*, ed. Robert Wharple (posted July 5, 2003) at <http://eh.net/encyclopedia/article/stack.brewing.industry.history.us> (accessed Mar. 9, 2008).

17. Austin Kerr describes a belated alliance of the Ohio Brewers’ Association with their competitors, the distillers, in 1907. In an effort to make alcoholic beverage retailing more acceptable, Cincinnati Percy Andreae drafted legislation to reduce the number of saloons. In 1912 Ohio brewers spent a million dollars to help elect a “wet” Democratic governor.

18. Dale P. Van Wieren and Donald Bull, *American Breweries II* (West Point, Pa.: Eastern Brew[er]iana Association, 1995).

Kentucky. The publishers of the books are significant: a small university press, an antiquarian bookstore, and a Germanic name that thinly disguises the fact that the author was his own publisher.¹⁹ Two of these books demonstrate how difficult it can be to draw a sharp line between breweriana and academic histories.

William L. Downard's monograph, *The Cincinnati Brewing Industry*, is a revised version of a doctoral dissertation. Downard studied a short distance from Cincinnati at Miami University, where he received Miami's first history Ph.D. in 1969. At the time of publication, he taught history at a small Indiana college, so he clearly qualifies as an "academic historian," but his academic book differs little from the best nonacademic books on American breweries. Despite the subtitle, *A Social and Economic History*, Downard's book does not engage with economic theory. Consulting few archival sources, Downard relies mostly on local newspapers. Like breweriana books, his provides pictures, sixteen pages reproduced in black and white. With only a single National Prohibition chapter, his book is almost entirely about the years before 1920. It is organized chronologically, with the exception of two social history chapters, "Beer and Cincinnati Society" and "The Cincinnati Brewery Workers Organize." The book reports a few curious anecdotes. For instance, in 1877 an enterprising saloon keeper displayed a white whale that died after a month.²⁰

Writing after Downard, Robert J. Wimberg offers a pedestrian breweriana volume. His *Cincinnati Breweries* assembles a lot of information, much of it biographical, and collects black-and-white photographs. But Wimberg provides no true introduction and fails to cite sources. As its most useful contribution, his book provides current (for the time of publication) information about brewery and brewery-related buildings.²¹

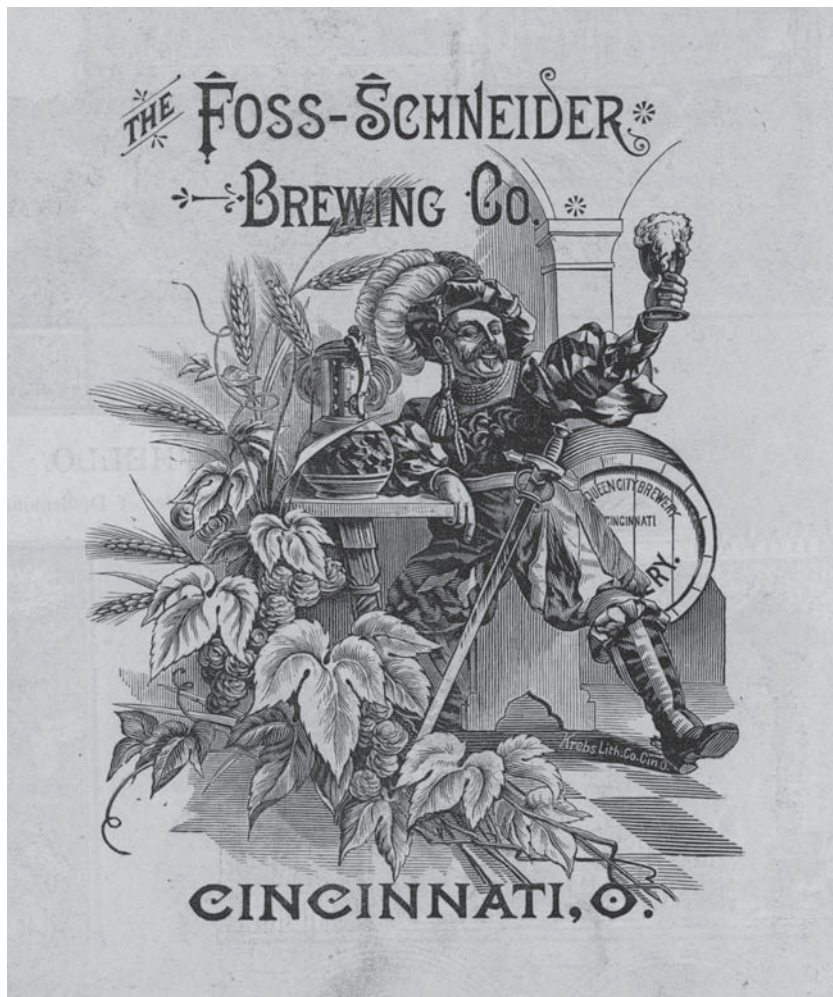
Timothy J. Holian's two-volume *Over the Barrel* stands out as one of the best urban brewery histories.²² In some ways, his book fits nonacademic criteria: it was self-published, received scant scholarly notice, and can be found in few university libraries (only two in Ohio). It looks like a book designed for a popular audience; it's magnificently and expensively illustrated, with the pictures often in color. A native of Cincinnati, Holian started out in the

19. Nonbook studies include Susan K. Appel, "Buildings and Beer: Brewery Architecture of Cincinnati," *Queen City Heritage* 44 (1986): 3-20.

20. William L. Downard, *The Cincinnati Brewing Industry: A Social and Economic History* (Athens: Ohio Univ. Press, 1973). Before his untimely death, Downard published a reference work, *Dictionary of the History of the American Brewing and Distilling Industries* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1980).

21. Robert J. Wimberg, *Cincinnati Breweries* (Cincinnati: Ohio Book Store, 1989; rev. ed. 1997).

22. Timothy J. Holian, *Over the Barrel: The Brewing History and Beer Culture of Cincinnati, 1880 to the Present*, 2 vols. (St. Joseph, Mo.: Sudhaus Press, 2000-2001).



Ad for the Foss-Schneider Brewing Co. University of Cincinnati Archives.

mid-1970s as a collector of breweriana. He holds no advanced degree in history or economics and never has held an academic appointment in either discipline. Yet Holian is a historian. The University of Cincinnati awarded him an M.A. in German for a thesis exploring the history of Cincinnati's predominantly German American brewery industry and a Ph.D. in German for an unrelated historical dissertation. Holian has taught German at colleges in Missouri and Wisconsin. Holian's excellent book illustrates how artificial it can be to distinguish between the academic and popular in breweriana histories. His book is not an uncritical assemblage of details. It is carefully researched and footnoted. If a university or commercial press had published *Over the Barrel*, Holian would have been forced to cut his manuscript drastically and eliminate many costly illustrations. His decision to create Sudhaus

Press benefits those who get their hands on the book; however, in the absence of reviews, few prospective readers will know about it.

Holian supersedes Downard as the authority on the Cincinnati brewing industry. Compared with Downard's 270 pages, Holian provides more than 390 pages in his first volume on the period until the eve of National Prohibition and nearly 340 pages in the second volume, carrying the story to the beginning of the twenty-first century. The second volume may be the most detailed account of the National Prohibition and the postrepeal era for any city. Holian is particularly strong on beer advertisements, a kind of material culture that has survived better than business archives. A couple of years after the publication of his second volume, he added an article on labor relations in the Cincinnati brewing industry that a specialized German American journal published.²³

Holian's acknowledgements in *Over the Barrel* remind us of the changes in Cincinnati and Ohio brewing during the last few decades. In his book he thanks the brewery Hudepohl-Schoenling and its Cleveland-based parent Snyder International for "sponsorship assistance." At the end of the 1980s, Hudepohl-Schoenling, the product of a merger of two leading Cincinnati breweries, had become America's ninth-largest brewery. But in 1999 it was sold to Snyder International. Cincinnati no longer had a major independent brewery. Soon Snyder crumbled too.

Prior to Prohibition, Christian Moerlein had been Cincinnati's largest brewer and its only national shipper. In the early 1980s, Hudepohl-Schoenling revived the prestigious name Christian Moerlein when it created a new premium beer, supposedly the first beer in the United States that met the German purity code. In 2004, after Holian had published his second volume, Snyder International sold the Christian Moerlein brand to a new company that adopted the venerable Moerlein name.

The twenty-first-century Christian Moerlein enterprise is a marketing company that does not brew its own beer. A contract brewery does that. In 2006, after the new Christian Moerlein purchased other Hudepohl-Schoenling brands, it also marketed Hudy Delight, a low-calorie beer, as well as its high-end namesake brand.²⁴

Beer continues to be brewed on a large scale in Cincinnati, in the greater Cincinnati area, and elsewhere in Ohio. In 1996, the Boston Beer Company purchased the old Hudepohl-Schoenling brewery to make Samuel Adams beer. Another major brewery is located to the north of Cincinnati in the

23. Timothy J. Holian, "'Des Arbeiters Starke': German-American Brewery Owner-Worker Relations, 1860-1920," *Yearbook of German-American Studies* 38 (2003): 205-20.

24. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, Apr. 1, 2004 and Aug. 13, 2006; Gregory Hardman to author, Aug. 15, 2006; Bob Driehaus, "Beer Goggles: A Look at the Past, Present and Future of Cincinnati's Breweries," *CityBeat*, Oct. 4-10, 2006.

small town of Trenton. Miller built a modern brewery there in the 1980s but did not start brewing until the 1990s because of a flat beer market. Anheuser-Busch owns the other major brewery in Ohio, located in Columbus, which has been in operation since the late 1960s.²⁵

Cincinnati was known for its saloons and beer gardens as well as for its breweries. As early as the 1860s, Cincinnati “had over two thousand places where drinks were sold.”²⁶ Politicians affably mixed with other drinkers. For instance, Republican boss George B. Cox, himself a former saloon keeper, patronized Wielert’s Garden in the largely German Over-the-Rhine district.

Cincinnati is fortunate to have two articles dedicated to its saloon history. One amounts to a primary source. A retired antiquarian bookseller recorded his salty memories of the 1880s in an obscure book, with the saloon chapter reprinted in a local history journal. An eyewitness account, it captures the atmosphere of urban saloon life. Bill Smith (1872-1968) patronized innumerable, mostly German-managed saloons to drink, eat, and enjoy camaraderie. Once he visited an Italian-owned saloon “as an undercover agent” for a wholesaler with an exclusive contract who suspected that another brewer’s beer was being sold there. The other article is the work of a Civil War historian with no special expertise about Cincinnati’s drinking places. Writing after Smith, Stephen Z. Starr provides a lively essay, but he adds little not in Smith.²⁷ In addition to these articles, there are pictures of saloons and beer gardens (as well as of breweries and beer advertising) in Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *German Cincinnati* (2005), a picture book in Arcadia’s Images of America series.²⁸

Other than Cincinnati’s well-documented breweries, those of northeast Ohio have attracted the most interest from historians. Carl H. Miller’s *Breweries of Cleveland*, self-published in 1998, is the definitive book. Miller, a major figure in breweriana history, is the host of the American Brewery History web site and runs the Internet bookstore BeerBooks.com. His interest in breweries started at age twelve when his grandfather gave him an old beer mug bearing the name of a Sandusky, Ohio, brewery where the boy’s great-great grandfather had worked, Kuebler-Stang Brewing and Malting Company.

25. In addition to its Boston Beer Company brewery, Cincinnati remains the home of a major distillery operated by Jim Beam Brands. The best known winery in the Cincinnati area is Meier’s, established in 1856. The surviving breweries are the exception. Cleveland’s standard brewing ended in 1984, but a good-sized microbrewery, Great Lakes Brewing, has been in operation since 1988. Akron’s last brewery closed in 1973, Toledo’s in 1972, and Dayton’s in 1961.

26. Wittke, “Ohio Germans,” 341.

27. William C. Smith, “The Cincinnati Saloon, 1880-90,” *Bulletin of the Historical and Philosophical Society of Ohio* 19 (Oct. 1961): 279-92; Stephen Z. Starr, “Prosit!!! A Non-Cosmic Tour of the Cincinnati Saloon,” *Cincinnati Historical Society Bulletin* 36 (Fall 1978): 175-91.

28. For the pre-Civil War period, there is Adam Criblez, “Tavernocracy: Tavern Culture in Ohio’s Western Reserve,” *Northeast Ohio Journal of History* 2 (Summer 2004).



Ad for the Christian Moerlein Brewing Co. University of Cincinnati Archives.

Although Miller is not an academic historian, he has written a solid urban history that surveys both the pre-National Prohibition and postpeal eras. He draws his account largely from old newspapers. Although mostly chronological in organization, it includes two topical chapters, “The Business

of Brewing” and “The Saloon.” Black-and-white photographs illustrate the book. In addition to his book, Miller has written historical articles for the local press, many of which can be read on breweriana web sites.

Other Ohio brewery historians are less impressive. Robert A. Musson, a physician with a passion for breweriana, has authored three books about northeastern Ohio, the first two of them self-published. *Brewing Beer in the Rubber City: A History of Akron's Brewing Industry* (1997) is based on city directories and the *Summit Beacon* newspaper. Like most nonacademic histories, it is heavily biographical and profusely illustrated with black-and-white photographs. Musson followed his Akron book with a regional survey, *Brewing Beer in the Buckeye State: A History of the Brewing Industry in Eastern Ohio from 1808 to 2004* (2005). This book consists of short articles about individual breweries. It includes a CD of the text with colored versions of the illustrations that had appeared in black and white in the printed book. Musson also was responsible for a picture book, *Brewing in Cleveland* (2005), in the Images of America series. Copious annotations accompany black-and-white illustrations.

Histories of breweries and saloons for other parts of Ohio are rare. Local historian Curt Dalton put together *Breweries of Dayton: An Illustrated History* (1996, rev. ed. 2002), a thin volume that is heavily biographical and filled with black-and-white pictures. Arnette M. Hawkins completed a useful M.A. thesis in education at the University of Toledo in 2004. Making good use of city directories, “Raising Our Glass: A History of Saloons in Toledo from 1880-1919” may inspire graduate students to investigate saloons of other cities. Among other things, Hawkins provides details about saloons run by African Americans and women. Reversing the pattern of brewery historians providing brief accounts of saloons, the Hawkins thesis includes a chapter on Toledo's breweries and distilleries. Hawkins also recounts changes in state licensing laws. She assembles a large appendix of photocopied illustrations, mostly from Toledo newspapers.

There is little available for the state capital. Columbus lost its last locally owned brewery in the mid-1970s. In the major relevant publication, Donald M. Schlegel focuses on German American brewery families in his eighty-two-page booklet *Lager and Liberty: German Brewers of Nineteenth Century Columbus* (1982), which includes a few black-and-white illustrations. Drawing on census records and city directories, Schlegel attempts to identify every Columbus brewery worker by name, place, date of birth, job, and residence for 1850, 1860, and 1870. In addition to Schlegel, there is the chapter titled “The Breweries” in Jeffrey T. Darbee and Nancy A. Recchie, *German Columbus* (2005), still another picture book in the Images of America series.

CONCLUSION

The terms “nonacademic” and “breweriana” can mislead. Does “nonacademic” refer to intended audience, the quality of research, or the writer’s livelihood? It is regrettable that most professional historians and economic historians are quick to dismiss breweriana collector-writers and collector-readers. Although books labeled “nonacademic” may elicit derisive sneers, the truth is that some nonacademic histories are well researched, instructive, and thought provoking, while others are useful at least for the data presented, despite the absence of an in-depth analysis.

How we assess the strengths and weaknesses of nonacademic books about the drink trade depends on our criteria. If we value information, we must value nonacademic histories for the facts they present. Scholars would do well to consult nonacademic brewery histories for what they tell us about drink makers, drink sellers, and their customers. However, if we value archival research and originality in argument, most nonacademic histories fare badly. And while we cannot expect such “popular” histories to cite business and social historians and economists, we can expect to find a wealth of information not readily available elsewhere.

Unfortunately, nonacademic histories are hard to find in research libraries. WorldCat, an online database of holdings at academic and public libraries, supplies statistics that establish their scarcity. When I wrote this article, Downard’s *Cincinnati Brewing Industry* was found in 261 libraries, a respectable number that owes much to its publication by a small university press at a time when budgets for academic libraries were relatively flush. In contrast, Holian’s self-published *Over the Barrel* was only in thirty libraries. Miller’s self-published *Breweries of Cleveland* was only in twenty-four libraries, and Musson’s *Brewing Beer in the Rubber City* was in eighteen, and his *Brewing Beer in the Buckeye State* in fifteen. The scarcity of these Ohio brewery histories is not unusual given the lack of availability of brewery studies in general. For instance, only thirty-eight libraries claimed *American Breweries II*, an indispensable historical record for all known U.S. breweries. It is even more difficult to locate breweriana journals in research libraries. Of those mentioned in this article, *Beer Can and Beer Collection Magazine* was unavailable at any library, according to WorldCat, while the other two were at only a handful of libraries, few of them being academic institutions. Only the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee library claimed the *American Breweriana Journal*, and only the University of Cincinnati library had the *Breweriana Collector*. Librarians and historians should acquire these popular publications while back issues remain available.

It is foolish for academic historians to ignore their nonacademic breweriana counterparts. Doing so handicaps investigation of the breweries and saloons that once played a vital role in American social, economic, and political life.