

Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California
www.gilbertgia.com

Bakersfield Breweries, 1866-1920, v4

By Gilbert P. Gia

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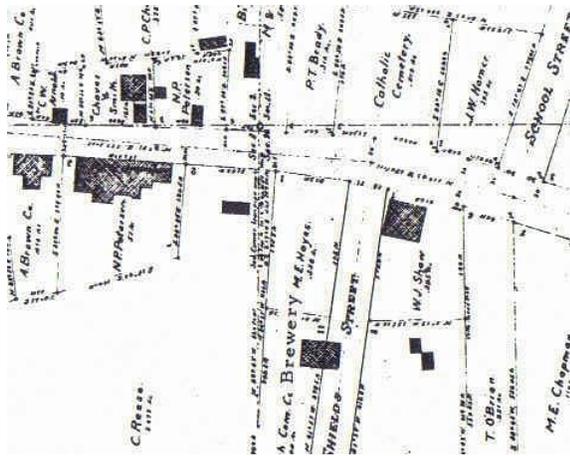
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In fall 1866 Chris Dockweiler delivered a keg of his new beer to the Havilah Courier. The weather was warm, and the men at the Kern County seat appreciated the good-will gesture.¹

¹ Havilah Weekly Courier, Sep 8, 1866. Owners were H. and C. Dockweiler who also wholesaled wines, liquors, and Havana cigars to saloons and traders.



Havilah about 1870

Three years earlier, and 50 miles below Havilah at today's Bakersfield where the Kern River spreads out onto the planes of the San Joaquin Valley, Col. Thomas Baker settled his family about 100 yards from the river. Because the Kern was unpredictable, one of Baker's earlier projects was construction of a dirt levee on the northwest side of his homestead where the river formed a U-bend before resuming its westerly path along what is today 23th street.² At that place Baker set up a saw mill. But on new year's day 1868 a catastrophic flood relocated the river a mile north leaving Col. Baker's mill without power.³ The river's old bed became a pestilent "rich vegetable mold [with] masses of rank and constantly decaying vegetation." Nearby,

² Until 1970, Twentieth Place was an east-west street dividing Blk 208 into a north half and a south half. Downtown School now occupies all of the block.

³ See George Gilbert Lynch, Great Floods of the Kern River. The name Kern Island was less meaningful after the flood, and Baker's Field came into general use.

hand and-dug wells were contaminated with the "filth and poison of the surrounding surface,"⁴ but in 1870 a visiting well-boring company sunk several wells and brought up "pure and healthful water" from about 50-ft.⁵ This water source would eventually be used in local brewing.

The mining boom at the county seat at Havilah declined, and the population of Baker's Field grew. In 1869 John B. Tungate opened the settlement's first saloon, and he prospered so well that in 1870 he built a cellar for the comfort of summer customers.⁶ Tungate soon sold to Withington & Prentis, but nearby he built a new saloon. By early 1871 Tungate's public house was deemed "*creditable anywhere.*"⁷

In January 1871, Bakersfield received the "gratifying information" that a new lager beer brewery would open by summer.⁸ The report, however, was about a year premature. Brewery equipment did not arrive until February 1872,⁹ but a month later Bakersfield Brewery was

4 Kern County Weekly Courier, Oct 22, 1870

5 Ibid. Sections of 1-1/4-in galvanized, riveted and soldered iron pipe was manufactured on location. Mechanical pumps delivered the water to the surface.

6 Eugene Burmeister, *City Along the Kern, Bakersfield, California 1869-1969*, p 11

7 Tungate sold spirits, cordials, and a "large stock of malt liquors on drought." (Kern County Weekly Courier, Jan 21, 1871, p 3) The malt liquor was probably a dark, high-alcohol drink.

8 Kern Co Weekly Courier, Jun 14, 1870, p 2. Tungate apparently had business savvy: Wrote the Courier, "We tender thanks to the new firm for the ale and cocktails furnished to the printers of this office." (Kern County Weekly Courier, Jan 21, 1871, p 3)

9 Kern Co Weekly Courier, Feb 24, 1872

selling its lager. The Courier wrote,

"Near Col. Baker's new mill. The undersigned having established a first class brewery in this place is now prepared to furnish Lager beer to this and surrounding towns at Reasonable Rates. Orders from the country promptly filled and in a satisfactory manner. HA Jastro."¹⁰

Jastro, then 22, probably was working closely with his father-in-law, Col. Baker, in the operation of Jastro & Co brewery.¹¹ Five months after its opening Jastro bought two lots (for \$200 from Col. Baker) on the west side of M street between 20th and 21st,¹² which today are in City Block 208, the site of Downtown Elementary School.

10 Jastro's first advertisement appeared in the Kern County Weekly Courier on Mar 22, 1872. Jastro had no brewing experience. See Gilbert Gia, *Henry A. Jastro, Commodore of Kern County, Biography, Kinships, Politics, 1848-1925*

11 On Oct 24 Baker sold the adjacent Lot 7 to Jastro. Col. Thomas Baker died Nov 24, 1872 of typhoid pneumonia (Kern County Weekly Courier, Nov 30, 1872.)

12 Kern County Hall of Records, Deeds Book 0002-0084. Jun 14, 1872, According to Thomas Baker's first town map, Lot 8 and Lot 1 in Block 5 North, Range 3 East were located five blocks north of the intersection of today's Truxtun and Chester Ave and three blocks east of Chester. The deed described the lots as "on the south of the south bank of the slough or ditch intersecting the outlet or the tail race of Baker's Saw Mill." Lots 1, 7, and 8 were improved real estate because Baker sold them "with all and singular appurtenances."

BOOK 2 PAGE 284
This Indenture, made the Eight day of May A D One thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two, Between, Thomas Baker of Bakersfield, Kern County, California, the party of the first part, and Henry A. Jastro of the same place, the party of the second part: Witnesseth, that the said party

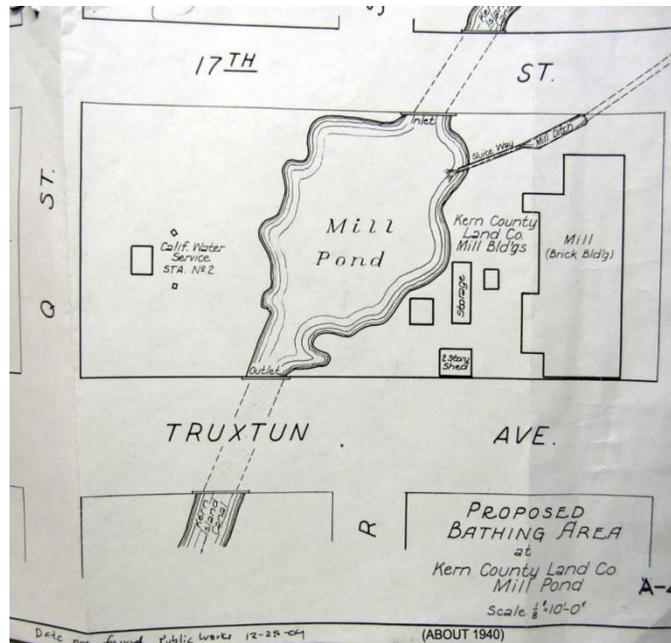
**Col. Thomas Baker conveyed the brewery to H.A. Jastro.
Kern County Hall of Records, Bk 002-0284, June 14, 1872**

Jastro's ad mentioned "Near Col. Baker's new mill."¹³ Where was that new mill? In 1870 San Francisco patent-medicine millionaire Horacio P. Livermore and partners, including Col. Thomas Baker, formed a corporation to develop canals, water power, and manufacturing on Kern Island. To that end they built a substantial canal and installed flouring and saw mills a few hundred yards southeast of Baker's farm near the old south fork.¹⁴ The flouring mill had been in operation about four months by the time Baker and Jastro opened the brewery.¹⁵

13 Today the mill's location can be described as in the two blocks east of the US Federal building at Truxtun and P streets.

14 The old channel is now occupied by the canal that flows through Central Park. "Col. Baker is building a saw mill and a flouring mill." (Visalia Delta, Mar 16, 1870)

15 The canal that is labeled Mill Ditch carried river water from Panorama Bluffs. Mill Ditch was abandoned in 1947. (Bakersfield Californian, May 20, 1947)



Livermore-Baker Mill at northeast corner Truxtun and Q. Map about 1940

Bakersfield's summer climate meant Jastro could not brew year-around, but he had operational challenges other than the heat. On March 14, 1874 the *Courier* reported that Jastro & Co was "again in running order," and two weeks later it wrote, "Having had the pleasure of testing a few bottles of the beer, we have no hesitation in pronouncing it a good article." The paper was also glad that local money wasn't leaving of town for the "indispensable article."¹⁶

The well-water Jastro used for brewing emerged at a constant

16 Kern County Weekly Courier, Mar 28, 1874, p 3, c 1

temperature of 71°, which benefited bottom-fermenting yeast, but Jastro also needed hot water for brewing. Fuel came from the great mounds of trees that had been uprooted during the flood of 1868 and deposited along the realigned bed of the Kern River. Beer-making also required barley. An agricultural summary of 1860-1870 Kern county shows that Col. Baker harvested 1,000 bushels of barley from his 10-acre field.¹⁷ Jastro & Company's beer quenched the town's thirst for the next two years.¹⁸

Baker died November 24, 1872, and in July 1874 Jastro sold the brewery for \$2000 to Constantine Baker and John Schlachter.¹⁹ C. Baker, who was unrelated to the colonel, had owned a local bakery, saloon, restaurant and barbershop, but Schlachter, who had recently

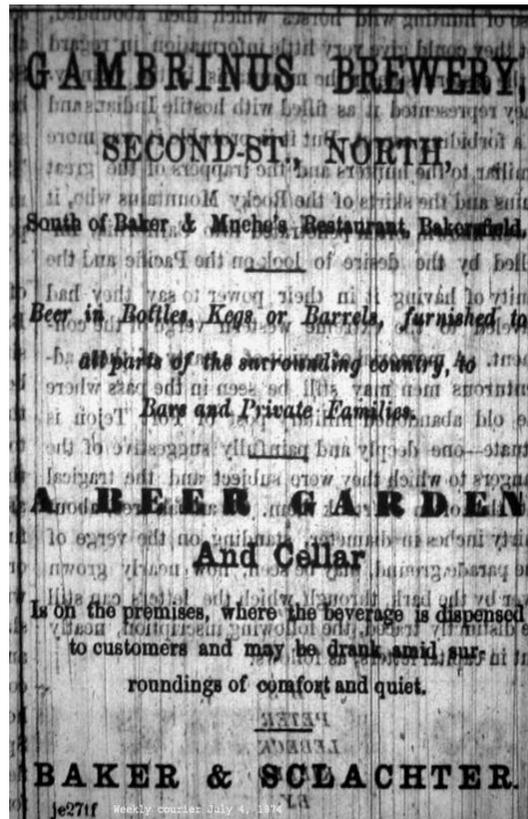
17 1860 and 1870, Census of Kern County Agriculture and Industry (Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, CA, microfilm R630.201, Jun 1, 1870) notes that Thomas Baker owned Improved land of 120 acres, unimproved land, 1,200 acres, and 1,000 bushels of barley. That count was high compared to other county farmers listed. During brewing, malting converts barley to sugar, and yeast converts the sugar to alcohol.

18 Havilah still had a brewery. Across the street from the Golden Gate Hotel in spring 1873, Ebrich & Company turned out a fine-quality product and enjoyed first-rate business. Their low-alcohol brew, "not the kind that carries one home on it," was probably Buck Beer. (Havilah Miner, Jun 28, 1873)

19 (1) Kern County Hall of Records, Jul 28, 1874, Deeds Bk 0003-0346. (2) *"Thirty dollars per front foot was paid for a lot in Bakersfield the other day. Six years ago the same property was sold by Col. Baker for one dollar per acre."* (Southern [Bakersfield] Californian, Oct 14, 1875, p 3)

arrived from Mendocino County, had brewing experience.²⁰ Meanwhile, the old brewer boilers were put to use: Drs. Warner & Co were selling their curative "Chemical Vapor Baths" there.²¹

While the Warners cured their patients, Baker and Schlachter built Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery at the corner of what today is the intersection of 18th and M Streets.²²



Weekly Courier, July 4, 1874

20 Census and Great Register names and dates are from Shirley Jackson, Kern Co Genealogical Society

21 Kern County Weekly Courier, Aug 29, 1874, p 1

22 At *Second Street North*, about three blocks south of Jastro's old brewery

Government tax licensing delayed its opening, but by late summer 1874 Baker & Schlachter's Gambrinus was a first-class addition to the town.²³

Kern County Courier 7-4-1874
☞ The Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery have been open to the public since Tuesday last, and Sunday was made the occasion of a more formal opening and special attractions. We have been afforded the opportunity of making a thorough test of the beer made at this establishment and pronounce it first-class. If the present standard of excellence is maintained, competition from abroad may be defied, and success against all competition, of whatever sort and character, assured. The proprietors should bear in mind it is difficult to gain the favor of the public and easy to lose it. If the future is maintained up to the standard of the beginning, they have gained it. It is to be hoped they may take for their motto: "Eternal vigilance and care is the price of success and safety."

The Gambrinus opening, Kern County Weekly Courier, July 4, 1874

A reporter from the Courier wrote on June 20th that although the building was not completely finished, its customers were being served in the cool cellar. Outside, landscaping was laid out "in German fashion...and a handsome garden with summer house and fountain has been arranged... Great taste and art have been displayed in making the locality a pleasant one."²⁴ The Courier concluded, "Their accommodations for those who may feel disposed to imbibe on the

23 Kern County Weekly Courier, Jun 27, 1874, p 2

24 Kern County Weekly Courier, Jun 20, 1874, p 2

premises are first-class." ²⁵ Gambrinus, the mythical King of brewing and recognized symbol for beer, was an imposing name for a settlement the size of Bakersfield. The building soon simply became known as City Brewery.

King Gambrinus, from a beer coaster



Kern County Hall of Records deeds suggest that other investors had interests in the new brewery. Brewers John and Henry Becker were two, and Ignatz Kruger and Robert Gardner were two other brewers.²⁶ To the public, however, Bakersfield Brewery belonged to Constantine Baker and John Schlachter.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ignatz Kruger and Robert Gardner were probably out-of-town investors. Hall of Records entry: Granted from Robert Gardner of Sacramento County for \$5 to John Becker and John Schlachter an undivided 2/3 of all of Lot 1 south of the slough and all of Lots 7 and 8 in Blk 208. (Kern County Hall of Records, Dec 21, 1876, Deeds Bk 0006-0330)

Although in 1874 Henry Jastro was a farm manager in the vast agricultural interests of Haggin & Carr,²⁷ Kern County tax rolls of 1874-1875 show he was taxed on 100-lbs of hops.²⁸ Beer from Visalia was then wagoned into Bakersfield,²⁹ and Jastro would not have feared that competition, but he probably anticipated the eventual arrival of the railroad.³⁰ Jastro sold his brewery equipment and property that year when Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery was still under construction. Just three months after Baker and Schlachter opened the Gambrinus, the Southern Pacific's northern line reached Bakersfield, and with it came a new beer market.³¹

The Courier's reporter visited the new Baker and Schlachter brewery and wrote,

"The Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery have been open to the public since Tuesday last, and Sunday was made the occasion of a more formal opening and special abstractions [*sic, attractions*]. We have been afforded the opportunity of making a thorough test of the beer made at this establishment and pronounce it first class. If the present standard of excellence is maintained, competition from abroad may be defrayed... The proprietors

27 Sunset Magazine, Jun 1911, v26, p 633

28 Kern County Tax Rolls 1874-75

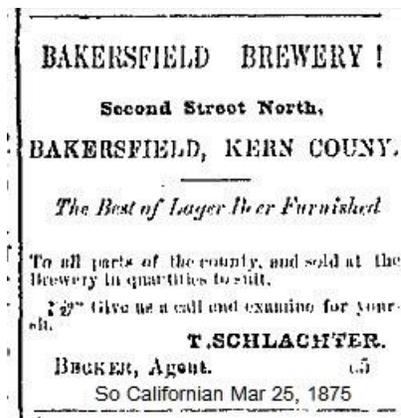
29 "Good beer, as the large supplies brought from Visalia indicate, is highly appreciated in this section..." (Kern County Weekly Courier, Jun 27, 1874, p 2)

30 See Gilbert Gia, *Henry A. Jastro, Commodore of Kern County*, www.gilbertgia.com

31 By Oct 1874 passenger and freight service was in operation a few miles east of Bakersfield at Sumner.

should bear in mind it is difficult to gain the favor of the public and easy to lose it. ... It is to be hoped they may take for their motto: 'Eternal vigilance and care is the price of success and safety.' "32

The brewery's ad of March 1875 said T. Schlachter was a proprietor, and a person named Becker was the beer agent. City Brewery continued to do business, but as the months passed, beer imports increased and within a few short years put the Bakersfield brewery out of business.



Gambrinus, aka Bakersfield Brewery, 1875

Constantine Baker's words *Eternal Vigilance* also meant looking after his own financial health. In late 1874 he bought two lots at 19th and M from the estate of Col. Baker and there erected a brick saloon called

32 Kern County Weekly Courier, Jul 4, 1874, p 2. Kern County Hall of Records, Deeds 0001-0004, Jan 9, 1875

the Palace.³³ In 1875 a newspaper said the Palace was Bakersfield's first brick house, but it was indeed a drinking place³⁴ It opened its doors a few days before Christmas 1875, but the event was probably not of great import to Bakersfield's 700 residents because the town already had six saloons.

The Palace was well-situated, a block off 19th which with Chester Avenue was one of the town's two main streets. The saloon had smooth, hard-finished walls, ceilings of alternating stained redwood and white cedar, and a full cellar "built up in brick and cement," and Baker's place was a "choice suburban retreat."³⁵ Surrounding the building were pepper and eucalyptus trees, ornamental evergreens, and young orange trees from Visalia.³⁶ The Palace offered a free lunch and was the sole distributor of Humboldt Beer and the "renowned" Milwaukee Beer, which Baker personally warranted as the "genuine imported article." As a customer of the Southern Pacific's beer

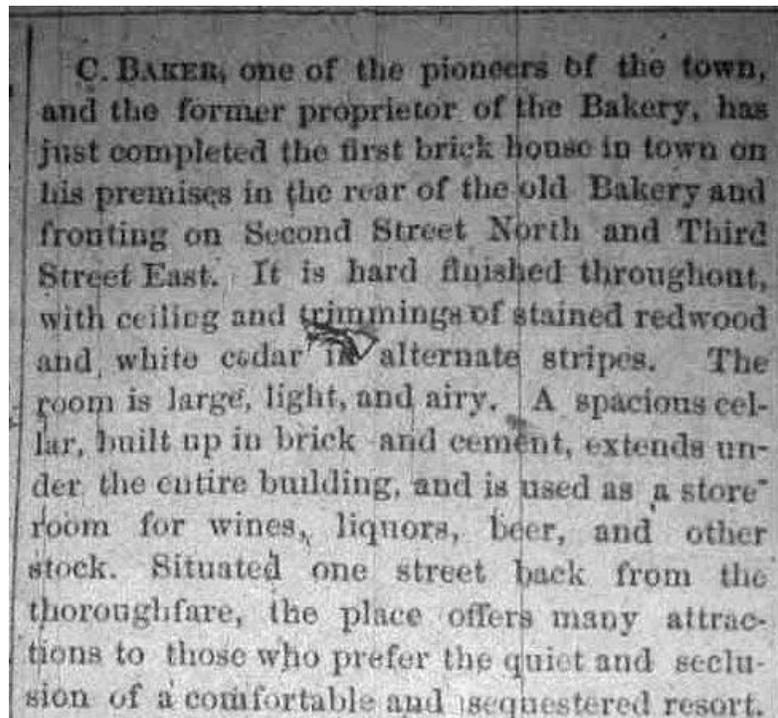
33 Kern County Gazette, Dec 18, 1875

34 Kern County Gazette, Jan 6, 1875. The Palace probably occupied the grounds of Baker's old Bakery Restaurant which in 1872 was at 2nd Street North and 3rd Street East, today 18th and M streets. The Bakery burned to the ground in 1872 (Kern Co Weekly Courier, Dec 28, 1872) Henry Jastro might have had an interest in the Palace because he owned the half the block next to it.

35 Kern County Gazette, Dec 18, 1875

36 Kern County Weekly Courier, Jan 15, 1876, p 2

delivery,³⁷ Baker did not advertise the local beer made at the Gambrinus.



C. BAKER, one of the pioneers of the town, and the former proprietor of the Bakery, has just completed the first brick house in town on his premises in the rear of the old Bakery and fronting on Second Street North and Third Street East. It is hard finished throughout, with ceiling and trimmings of stained redwood and white cedar in alternate stripes. The room is large, light, and airy. A spacious cellar, built up in brick and cement, extends under the entire building, and is used as a store room for wines, liquors, beer, and other stock. Situated one street back from the thoroughfare, the place offers many attractions to those who prefer the quiet and seclusion of a comfortable and sequestered resort.

Constantine Baker's Palace, Kern County Courier, December 18, 1875

The Palace was never a real brewery, although the 1926 Bakersfield Californian said it was. The error was understandable because in 1926 that building at 1801 M Street was the oldest brick structure in town and for the past 51-years had gone through many uses. The newspaper

³⁷ 6,975-ft San Fernando Tunnel was completed in Aug 1876. Train travel between Los Angeles and Oakland via Bakersfield was 24 hr, 40 min.

wrote about it because it was being demolished.³⁸

As for the Gambrinus brewery, its life span lasted just three years. At 11 am on January 18, 1877 wind-whipped flames appeared on the roof, and soon the brewery and all basement supplies of beer agent T. Becker were destroyed.³⁹ The wind had driven flames away from nearby buildings, but because the brewery's water-supply tank was also destroyed, neighbors had no water pressure for many days. After the Gambrinus was burned, Bakersfield had no commercial brewing for about a year. During that time a new one was going up.

Constantine Baker had partnered with a 38-year-old miner from Havilah named Charles Hickisch, and in January 1878 they announced that their new brewery was finished. The beer would be ready by the 15th and would be "as good and cheap as any that can be imported."⁴⁰ The Californian was happy that "home industry" had returned and beer money would stay in town.

38 Mar 16, 1926

39 Misprint of John Becker's name?

40 Courier Californian, Jan 3, 1878



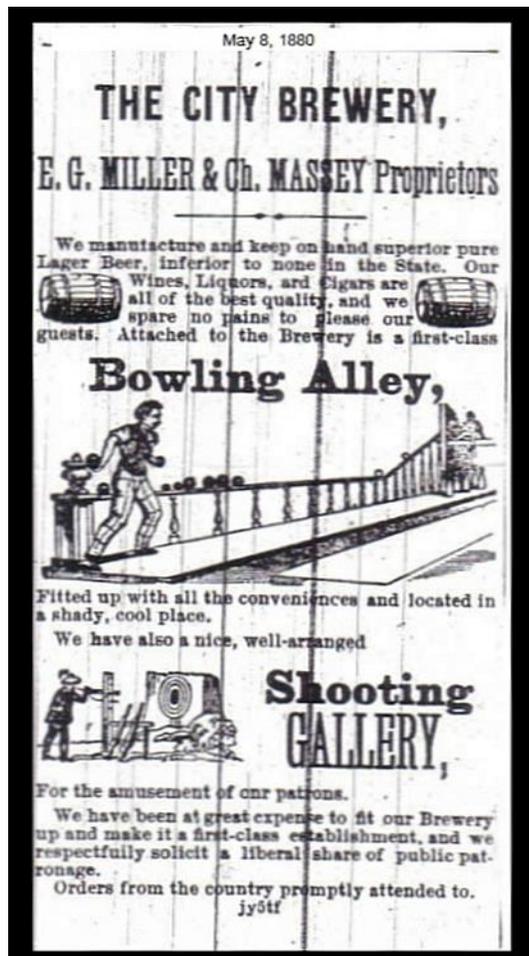
"Patronize Home Industry," 1878

The Southern Pacific line from Los Angeles was already shipping beer to town when Baker and Hickisch open the new Gambrinus, but the beer shipments to Bakersfield saloons did not slow.

Within two years Charles Hickisch had died. In 1880 a 35-year-old brewer from Germany named Egid Gustave Miller registered to vote in Kern County. Before the summer of 1880 he and C.H. Massey, 27, opened City Brewery on the site of Jastro's old brewery.⁴¹ Their ad read, "*We manufacture and keep on hand pure Lager Beer.*" By this date, entertainment had become a necessity for a successful saloon business.⁴²

41 Bakersfield Weekly Gazette. This author was unable to find information about brewery events between 1878 and 1880. The Hickish-Miller brewery was not the same as the new Gambrinus.

42 Kern County Weekly Record, May 13, 1883. Report of the Grand Jury: "...The great mass of the disturbances and crimes of the county is directly traceable to the retail liquor traffic therein, and we therefore urgently recommend that our Supervisors fix a license tax thereon at the rate of not less than



City Brewery, 1880

City Brewery did not yet have cold storage, but new construction was set-aside until resolution of a legal challenge to the building's title. That was apparently settled by summer 1883 when the Courier announced, "*G. Miller of the City Brewery has erected the largest refrigerator for beer in the State.*"⁴³

\$100 per quarter."

43 Kern County Californian, Jun 2, 1883. Ice was not manufactured at Bakersfield until after 1895. Miller's refrigerator would have been an insulated, walk-in box. Miller also sold ice, which was wagoned in from Breckenridge Mt or shipped by rail from Truckee in Northern California.

Brewery operations were disrupted in 1883 when Miller died.⁴⁴ City Brewery might have stopped making Bakersfield's own "*superior, pure, lager beer,*" but that did not happen because within weeks Miller's 38-year-old widow Lucy, the mother of nine Miller children, hired Louis P. Biebesheimer as brewmeister and manager. In May 1885 the 30-year-old New Yorker married Lucy's 17-year-old daughter, Barbara, and took on a larger part of management.⁴⁵

"The City Brewery has recently undergone a general renovation and adoption for the summer season. The Lager Beer is of a better quality than it has ever been before, and the Bar is supplied with the very choicest of Wines, Liquors, and Cigars. The Bowling Alley and Shooting Gallery which are kept running day and night have also been greatly improved, and now the Brewery is the most comfortable and best place of resort in the County. Beer put up expressly for Saloons and Family use and delivered promptly on receipt of order. L.P. Biebesheimer, Manager."⁴⁶

With new bottling equipment Biebesheimer was more competitive.

44 Kern County Californian, Jul 14, 1883

45 By 1897 the couple had separated. In November, Los Angeles police arrested Barbara and a friend for shoplifting. The case against her was dismissed in Feb 1899.

46 Jan 1886. "Put up" means bottled.

"Excellent beer is now being made at the City Brewery and is being bottled in the latest improved system. Mr. Biebesheimer with a view to extending the business and placing this excellent article within the reach of everybody has reduced the price to \$1.50 a dozen." ⁴⁷

In spring 1886 Biebesheimer's name was gone from the brewery's ads, probably because in spring a Joseph Weringer married widow Lucy P. Miller.⁴⁸ Although Weringer might have come into the family without beer-making experience, he did bring energy, determination, and a practical nose for business.

Bakersfield newspaper ads indicated that most beer sold in Bakersfield in the mid-1880s was made elsewhere. Some of the major brewing companies were Buffalo Brewing of Fresno; San Francisco Breweries (a consortium), and D. Mahlstedt Philadelphia Brewery of Los Angeles, which after 1882 was called Maier & Zobelin. Although Biebesheimer was a trained brewer, brewing at Joseph Weringer's City Brewery was still more an art than a science, and Weringer could not depend on the same-tasting beer batch to batch. However, highly-capitalized Los

47 Kern County Californian, Jan 2, 1886. p 3

48 Married April 1886. Lucy Miller Weringer's tenth child, Franz Joseph, was born In Dec 1886. In 1888 Josephine was born. Lucy died in 1890. In 1900 Joseph Weringer married Rosa Haberstroh. (Dates and names from author's interview with Marge Gillette, granddaughter of Joseph Weringer.)

Angeles and San Francisco breweries could. Newly developed European yeasts, mechanical refrigeration, and advances in brewing science produced a consistent product, and the expansion of railroad systems meant the big companies could deliver it.

About 300 independent breweries operated in California in 1881, but aggressive distribution by the major brewers eventually forced almost all independents out of business. Bakersfield's thirst for beer was so important to them that in 1887 Herman Wieland, senior owner of Wieland Brewing, met in Bakersfield with local distributor A.P. Eyraud.⁴⁹

City Brewery was unable to compete with the corporations, and Joseph Weringer stopped brewing. On February 21, 1888 about 100 miles north of Bakersfield, fire destroyed the Fresno Brewery, maker of Buffalo Beer. If the shortage was felt here, it did not encourage investors to restart brewing at the Bakersfield City Brewery.

The name brewery in its title might have confused the Los Angeles Times, which wrote in January 1889 that Bakersfield had "*a large brewery.*" It did not.

⁴⁹ Feb 1887

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of January 1890 shows a building between 19th and 20th streets and west of M that is marked "*Beer Bottling, Phil'-BR'Y S.F.*" But that site was a bottling plant for bulk beer brought in from the Philadelphia Breweries of San Francisco. During the 1894 railroad strike here, the Californian noted, "There is a beer famine and little ice."⁵⁰

The story of Bakersfield brewing does not take up again until 1899, but until then the entertainment at Weringer's City Brewery flourished. A Sanborn map dated January 1, 1888 indicates that City Brewery, "formerly a brewery," had become a bottling works and labeled it City Brewery Gardens.

City Brewery Gardens was an entertainment house. Joseph Weringer became the distributor of Chicago Lager, Fredericksburg Lager, and John Wieland on tap,⁵¹ but other labels were sold in Bakersfield, and Weringer probably offered those, too. An 1888 ledger from the Ardizzi-Olcese store in nearby Sumner lists Budweiser from San Diego, Red

50 Jul 5, 1894

51 Kern County Museum, Ledger of the Southern Hotel, 1889

Ribbon from Los Angeles, and a "Local."⁵² Ardizzi-Olcese also sold porter under the labels of Burke's, AH, Bull Dog, and Red Label. Bass was the only ale sold.

By the mid-1880s, Bakersfield had become an important market for the million-dollar, and growing, California brewing industry. After the 1888 fire at the Wieland brewery in Los Angeles, the plant was rebuilt,⁵³ and in October 1889 an English brewing syndicate bought it for \$3M, or about \$70M in 2010 dollars.⁵⁴

Joseph Weringer renovated City Brewery Gardens,⁵⁵ and part of his expense was probably born by Fredericksburg Brewing Company, and such outside investment was not unusual at a time when major breweries had close financial ties to hometown saloons.⁵⁶

The City Brewery bowling alley and day-and-night shooting gallery was open in 1890, but the 50 by 70-ft building also offered variety theater.

52 In this author's interview with Marge Gillette, she said her grandfather Joseph Weringer brewed beer.

53 Philadelphia Brewery of Los Angeles

54 Los Angeles Times, Oct 30, 1889

55 Kern County Californian, Jun 8, 1890

56 Local brewers also supported saloons. A later example of that was in 1916 when Jacob Niederaur leased space in his building on K street (for \$220 a month) to Gaudenz Weichelt and Rudolph A Burger for a saloon and restaurant. Baumgartner guaranteed the that lease in the name of Bakersfield Brewing Co. (Kern Co Hall of Records, Jun 29, 1916)

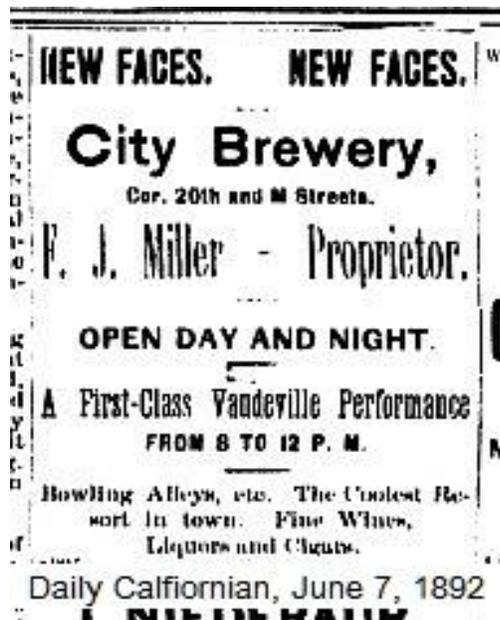
Comedians West & Cosgrove did stand-up there, and dressing rooms are shown on the Sanborn maps. In 1890 Weringer promoted a boxing match between Charley "The San Joaquin Sun-Burned Terror" Turner and Frank "Watermelon Kid" Conley⁵⁷ on the City Brewery stage.⁵⁸ In early 1891 Weringer was a distributor for San Francisco Breweries, which was a consortium of brewers Fredericksburg, United States, Chicago, and John Wieland. Weringer's customers now could choose among six lagers – Extra Pale, Standard, Pilsner, Erlanger, Culmbacher, Columbia, and Elk, as well as among steam beer and several ales and porters, all of which were available in either bottle or on tap.

Weringer expanded into wholesale liquor sales, and in 1891 an F.A. Dohrmann managed that part of the business for him.⁵⁹ A year later Weringer's stepson Fred J. Miller became proprietor of City Brewery. He expanded the vaudeville side of the business and in 1893 brought in Miss Clarence Campbell, "Queen of the High Kickers."

57 Kern County Californian, Jul 20, 1890

58 common practice in Bakersfield at the time

59 Kern County Californian, May 2, 1891



City Brewery, "Open Day and Night", 1892

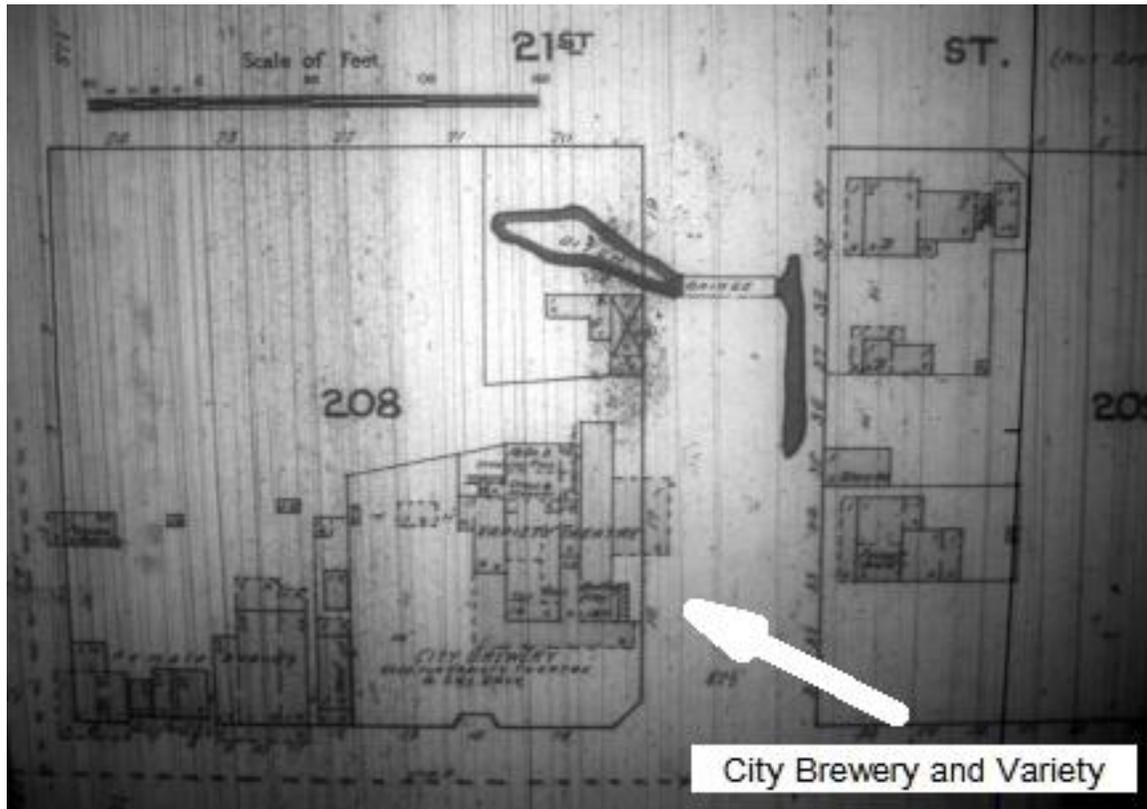
In 1894 when Michael Seidt was City Brewery proprietor, patrons watched "Hagal, Prince of Parachute Jumpers" ascend in a hot air balloon and parachute out to the gasps of spectators below.⁶⁰ At the brewery's "Grand Reopening" in May, Seidt must have anticipated a crowd of tough customers because his ad cautioned, "No vulgarity of any kind tolerated."⁶¹

Vacant lots around City Brewery had filled in. Immediately north in City Block 191 was old Chinatown, but on the other sides was a growing

60 Daily Californian, Apr 14, 1894

61 Daily Californian, May 25, 1894, p 4

tenderloin of gambling establishments, dance halls, saloons, and houses of prostitution.⁶² Among that, new manager Steve Carroll brought in "a fine orchestra."

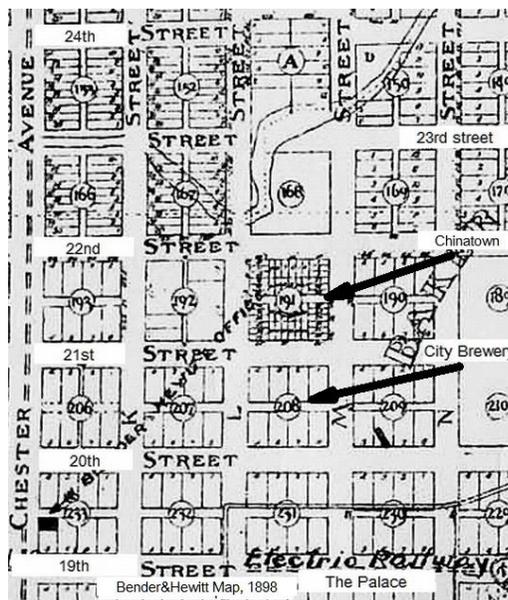


"Female boarding houses" are at left of City Brewery. Map 1892

In April 1895 Kern County Supervisors suspended City Brewery's license, and a year after that the business came under scrutiny when charges were filed against proprietor W.H. Holmes for allowing women to solicit customers for drinks and for allowing music and dancing after

62 Sanborn Fire Maps of 1900 show a line of cribs on 21st street facing north on City Brewery. Bakersfield was not yet an incorporated town.

midnight.⁶³ Holmes and other saloon owners who had similar charges against them appeared before the Board of Supervisors, but even before the meeting started, Chairman of the Board Henry A. Jastro was excused "on account of important business." The charges were moved forward. A few days later Mr. Morrison, an attorney representing San Francisco liquor interests, stood before the supervisors and contended that that charges were false and that "the girls stayed in the boxes" and did not come out to solicit drinks.⁶⁴ On April 16th a petition was circulated to reopen City Brewery. The Californian was appalled.⁶⁵



U-bend in Panama Slough shown in Block 168. Chinatown is in Block 191, and City Brewery in Block 206, bottom arrow. Map from 1898

⁶³ Daily Californian, Apr 11, 1896

⁶⁴ Probably cribs used by prostitutes

⁶⁵ Ronald McDonald, owner of Old City Brewery, rebuilt it in 1904. By then it was a disreputable saloon. (Lynn Hay Rudy, *Old Bakersfield: Sites and Landmarks, 1875-1915*. 2000. Jenner, CA. In 1912 McDonald was a beer distributor at 13th and K. (Schlitz Beer ad, Bakersfield Californian, July 2, 1912)

Bakersfield's population was nearing 7,000 in 1899,⁶⁶ and talk on the street was all about a new brewery coming to town. The news turned out to be correct but premature.

Ernest Eilert emigrated as a youth from Germany in 1845 and learned beer-making at his family's brewery at Humbird, Wisconsin. Eilert returned to Germany to study brewing science, returned to the U.S. and between 1885 and 1899 was brewmeister at Neillsville, Wisconsin.

When he was 56, Eilert hired a Chicago chemist to analyze Bakersfield water, and in May 1899 the report came back that it was "sweet, pure, clean, clear, healthful, wholesome, without odor or taste, and good for all purposes, including brewing."⁶⁷ Work on a new Bakersfield brewery would begin soon, and by January 1900 the Eilerts were expected to be "mixing barley juice with the water."⁶⁸

Mr. Eilert had not committed to Bakersfield, and he was courted. William S. Tevis, President of Kern County Land Company, offered Eilert land south of the company's Valley Road Warehouse on Union avenue.

66 Los Angeles's population was 102,000 in 1900.

67 Los Angeles Times, May 26, 1899

68 Bakersfield Californian, Apr 11, 1899

Others enticed Eilert. Charles Offer owned property with water on today's Edison highway.⁶⁹ Moreover, he pointed out, a Southern Pacific spur was nearby, and the SP wanted the brewery, too.

In the second week of June 1900 Eilert and his 29-year-old son William met with Mr. Packard, Clerk of the County Board of Supervisors,⁷⁰ and learned that the Power Development Company planned to charge the Eilerts additional fees for 24-hour electrical service. Six-foot, 215-pound Ernest Eilert turned to Packard and informed him that Fresno had offered 24-hour electrical service for \$50 a year and that town was willing to discuss cutting the rate even further.

Tevis called an urgent conference with Packard, Nick Britz, Alfonse Weill, T.E. Harding, and Hugh A. Blodget. The conclusion: It would be a great mistake to lose the brewery just because of the electrical rates. Britz, a saloon owner, informed the group that Bakersfield residents already were spending \$75,000 a year on imported ice and beer.⁷¹ Tevis responded, "I am not connected to the Power Development Company, but if Mr. Eilert wants to put a brewery here, I'll see to it he

69 Called Offer's Resort in earlier years

70 Probably Newton Packard

71 About \$1.8M in 2011

gets the lowest rate in the state."⁷² The Power Development Company director contacted the Eilerts and told them that Bakersfield would match Fresno's offer.⁷³ But by then it was too late. Later that year Eilert's 1,000 new Fresno employees were shipping beer from Merced to Bakersfield out of his new, six-story, "sky scraper" brewery.

Bakersfield had been without a brewery for 15 years, but in 1902 a local brewers union marched with other trades in the town's first Labor Day Parade on September 3. The reason? Those "brewers" were beer-bottlers. The bottling business was so profitable that in May, Maier & Zobelein of Los Angeles built a new beer-bottling plant at 15th and K Streets.⁷⁴

Bottling plants were subject to fire, and because the May, Maier & Zobelein wooden building had a 15-HP gas engine, a steam boiler, and a five-ton ice machine, it did not escape fire for very long; in summer 1905 an overheated flue ignited the plant's roof.⁷⁵ The manager's sons, Joe and Louis Vlasnik, grabbed the daybook and ledgers as flames spread to a fuel tank and crowded in on three nearby Southern Pacific oil

72 Daily Californian, Jun 16, 1899
73 H. Hunter

74 Today this is immediately south of the Kern County Jail's parking lot
75 July 24, 1905

cars. Flames gained momentum and ignited the building's insulated, refrigerated storage room. Arriving firemen raced to the east side of the building and released frantic horses in the stable.

Beer sales were so profitable in Bakersfield that no sensibly-run company could abandon the market, so two days later when T.P. Roberts of Maier & Zobelein inspected the ruins he announced that the company would immediately rebuild with the latest and most improved bottling equipment. While rebuilding was underway, Vlasnik improvised an office, sold-off his remaining inventory, and every few days received bottled beer and ice from Los Angeles.⁷⁶

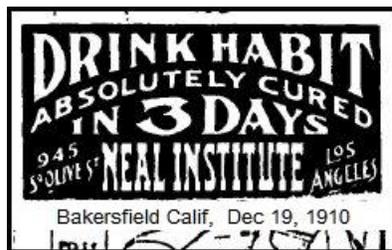
Anaconda Brewery Works of Montana eyed the Bakersfield beer market.⁷⁷ There was talk of a new brewery, but the country was in an era of social reform, and many Bakersfield residents were opposed to a construction of a local brewery. In summer 1907 members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union protested before the Board of Trade,⁷⁸ but days later, in apparent disregard of their efforts, a Mr. Scott representing San Francisco brewing interests demanded that the Board of Trade donate a five-acre site in the Krause Track for a new brewery.

⁷⁶ Daily Californian, Jul 29, 1905

⁷⁷ "A Big Brewery May Locate Here," Bakersfield Californian, May 20, 1907

⁷⁸ May 5 and May 29, 1907

Chief owner of the tract was E.T. Krause, and he let it be known up front that he had not the slightest intention of giving away the property, that he was personally against a brewery for Bakersfield, and finally he might never set a price for the site. ⁷⁹ But upon reflection, Krause said he "might look at the property." but Mr. Scott and the San Francisco brewery interests did not prevail.



Alcoholism cured, Bakersfield ad of 1910

Bakersfield bottlers also sold soft drinks. The history below entitled *The Star Soda Works* dated March 1971 was written by bottle-collector Phil McGraw of Bakersfield.

"One of the most common old bottles found in the Bakersfield area is the one embossed "Soda Works", but few of us that collect these trophies of the past know their story, so here is a brief history of the bottle and the man responsible."

"Giacomi Galli was born to a poor farm family In Lucca, Italy May 8, 1856, where he lived until the age of 24 at which time he immigrated to San Francisco. Since he had a farm background, he went into farming, moving to Bakersfield on October 1, 1879 where

⁷⁹ Bakersfield Californian, Jun 6, 1907

he continued the same trade until the year 1888. At this time he established the "G. Galli Soda Works" at 406 Grove Street, Sumner. Business at first was a dubious success, but as time went by things looked better so he expanded to 408, 410 and 412 Grove Street, living at the rear of 410 Grove Street until a later time when he owned three homes in what came to be known as Kern City."

"The first bottles used were the old Hutchinson stoppered 'jewels' in the natural green. With the advent of crown tops he changed to the new bottle but retained the old name plates which read: 'G. Galli Soda Works Summer and Bakersfield'" although the area was known as Kern City and he had renamed his plant "Kern City Soda Works', (Telephone RED 133). In the year 1904 he again renamed his business and marked his bottles with the name 'Star Soda Works Kern, Cal' in a circle surrounded by a star. Over the years these bottles were made in at least eight variants, including one that will turn purple in the sun."

"On January 20, 1923, C. Galli passed on leaving his estate in the hands of his two sons, Bernard and Charles. Other remaining survivors were his wife and four daughters. Charles had been a bottler for his father so he was not without some experience in the trade, but a Mr. E. S. Garrett had worked for the firm since October 5, 1917 so he was assigned management of the business until September of 1924 when he bought the whole works."

"In the final years yet another bottle was introduced to hold this, by now, well-known beverage. This one was tall, clear (as well as bottle-green) bottle with stars on the shoulder and embossed on the bottom 'Star Soda Works Bakersfield'. Note that they had been in the same spot all these years but held three different city names."

"The business remained in the hands of E.S. Garrett until its end --about 1932. In the last few years they also handled a product still well-remembered by many of the local residents. This product was "Golden Glow Beer". The last remnants of the 'Star Soda Works'" still stand just west of a well-known furniture store on East 19th Street and high on the back wall still hangs a sign that reads: 'Golden Glow Beer', but there remains only a small trace of the very popular 'Star Soda Works' of long ago."⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Punctuation changes were made for readability. In a telephone conversation with Gilbert Gia on Jul 29,



Bakersfield Californian, December 19, 1910

In 1907 Maier & Zobelein Brewery of Los Angeles disincorporated, and Maier became Maier Brewery and Zobelein assumed controlling interest in the Los Angeles Brewery. In July 1909 those change affected Bakersfield when the former Maier & Zobelein bottling plant on 15th Street began bottling Rainier, Maier, and John Wieland beer. Three months later, Bakersfield liquor distributor Hoaland & Ross were operating a bottling plant at the corner of 15th and Chester where they bottled Pabst, Gilt Edge, Red Ribbon, San Diego Lager, Wurtzburger, and Fresno Beer.⁸¹

Joseph Baumgartner built the town's next brewery. Baumgartner

2004, Mark McGraw said, "Yes, that would have been my dad [Phil]. He collected bottles. He passed away last year. My mother hasn't wanted to clear out his things yet. I don't think he wrote a book or anything. He was just interested in bottles."

81 This might have been the same site as the 15th and K plant.

started as an apprentice brewer in German,⁸² and in the late 1870s when he was about 16 he immigrated to New York. He moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he became brewmeister for the Drewry Brewery. In 1882 Baumgartner relocated to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, and for the next three years was brewmeister for Hipley & Son's Iron City Brewery. From 1885 to 1894 Baumgartner was associated with a large Pittsburgh brewery, and in 1893 he and a Bernard Schneider founded Spring Brewery at Latrobe, Pennsylvania. Baumgartner established breweries at Sioux City, Iowa, and Camden, New Jersey, and in 1902 he and a partner incorporated the old Spring Brewery at Latrobe as Punxsutawney Brewing Company.⁸³ All of this is to say that Baumgartner had become wealthy, and now saw Bakersfield as a good market.

In 1910 Farm Products Brewing Company of Los Angeles announced that it would manufacture malt beverages and ice at Bakersfield filed articles of incorporation with the Kern County Clerk.⁸⁴ That news was dampened by the fact that only \$300 of the company's \$500,000 in shares had yet been sold.⁸⁵ If connected to Mr. Baumgartner's idea, it

⁸² Born in the Kingdom of Bavaria, January 5, 1858

⁸³ Baumgartner family retained financial interest in the brewery through 1920.

⁸⁴ Bakersfield Californian, May 10, 1910

⁸⁵ Daily Californian

might have eventually helped fund Bakersfield's next brewery.



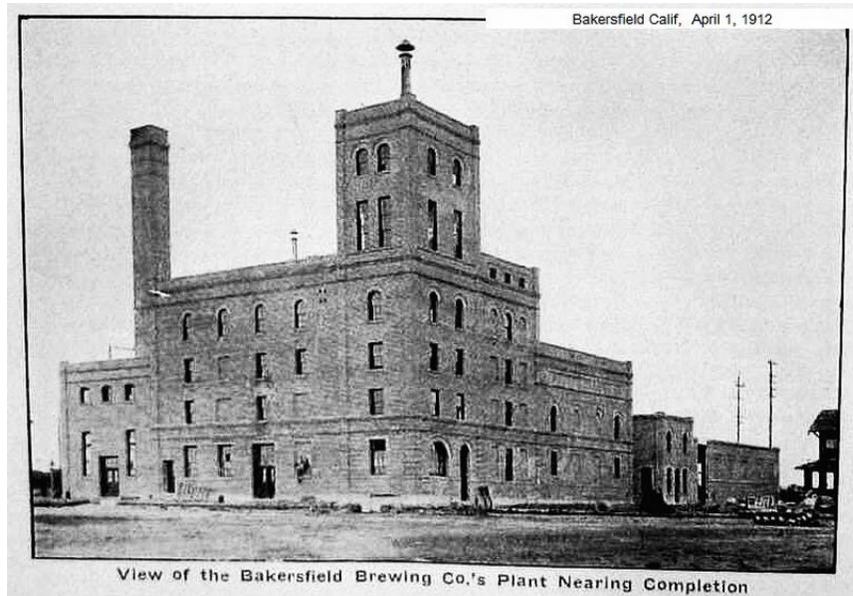
Baumgartner Brewery at 24th and Union in 1912

On January 2, 1910, 52-year-old Joseph Baumgartner bought 1-1/4 acres at the northwest corner of 24th and Union Avenue from Philo Jewett and Hugh and Annie Blodget. Important to the sale was its 93-ft well that delivered 175 gallons a minute.⁸⁶ Baumgartner and his wife, Margaret, incorporated in 1911 as the Bakersfield Brewing Company, valued at \$200,000.⁸⁷ Directors were Joseph Baumgartner, President, and his sons William (Treasurer), Joseph, Jr. (Secretary), John

86 See Bakersfield Californian, Apr 22, 1911

87 Equal to about \$4M in 2010

(Brewmeister), and William (bottling plant manager).



Bakersfield Brewery in 1911-1912



Brewery in 2008

As the brewery rose it affected Bakersfield's psyche.⁸⁸ The projected output of 40,000 barrels a year prompted statements like those associated with the earlier breweries: The plant would keep wealth at home which had been going to other localities.

Special hops would be imported from Bavaria and Bohemia, but the Daily Californian assured readers that most of the grains would be grown in Kern County. "The farmers of this locality will be greatly benefited," it wrote. "The people of Kern County should show their appreciation of this new institution, which will be so potent a factor in the material developments of this community, by their patronage."⁸⁹

Baumgartner's plant would be "one of the most modern of its kind in America --equipped with every appliance and improvement modern science can suggest."⁹⁰ It rose as a reinforced concrete, three- to six-stories structure occupying a base of about 10,000-sq-ft accompanied by a 4,000-sq-ft, single-story bottling plant on its east side. The ice-making department was fitted-up with a 36-ft x 20-ft x 46-in steel water tank; two high-low-pressure Triumph Ammonia Compressors

88 Bakersfield Californian, Jul 14, 18, 1911. Built by C.D. Brown Construction in about 150 days for \$50,000

89 Author unable to find source of quote

90 Bakersfield Californian, Progress Edition, 1912

driven by double-acting, 440 volt three-phase motors; and two overhead traveling American Engineering cranes. A foot of cork insulated many of the walls. The brewing room had two 100 horsepower, fuel-oil-electrically-operated boilers; 14 "chip" casks, each holding 110 barrels; 14 stock tubs each holding 185 barrels; and 12 fermenting tubs, each capable of turning out 125 barrels of finished beer. The bottling plant was a model of cleanliness, its Berry-Wehlmiller National Soaker insured

"... the highest possible sanitary service. The bottles are soaked in two separate antiseptic solutions and twice rinsed in hot water. After this they are taken to the new Eick Washer, where they are thoroughly scrubbed by the most ingenious mechanism. The bottles are filled by means of a new Henes-Keller rotary counter, pressure-filling machine and promptly corked by means of a "Jumbo" crowner. The product then is treated to a thoroughly pasteurizing process, and finally labeled by means of a new Ermold labeling machine." ⁹¹

91 Ibid.



Interior of brewery, 2008

As Bakersfield watched the brewery rise, few realized that Joseph Baumgartner had been seriously ill for months. In March 1912, about a month before the brewery opened, the 53-year-old founder and president died of cirrhosis of the liver at a sanitarium in Los Angeles. His funeral in Bakersfield was held at the family's newly-built home, Rev. Father J.J. Prendeville said the mass at St. Joseph's Church in East Bakersfield, and the Elks escorted the body to Union Cemetery.⁹² Left behind were his wife Margaret Brautigam Baumgartner and their eight children, Joseph; John; William; George; Rose; Anna; Charles; and Margaret.

⁹² Pallbearers were M.A. Lindberg, Charles Lee, Fred Gunther, Harry Coffee, H. Eckenhauer, and J.T. Maguire.



On May 1, 1912 the open house was first held for dignitaries and the next day was open to the public sale for of Lion Brew, "made just like Lowenbrau, famous the world over as Germany's best beer."⁹³ At 12-1/2 cents a quart, Lion Brew was half the cost of other beer sold in town, which prompted the Morning Echo to write, "For years and years residents have been compelled to pay what is generally regarded at double the price of beer, but now that a local beer is at hand the price is so low that the local agencies will have to cut theirs to keep in the race."⁹⁴

93 Bakersfield Californian, May 1, 1912. See also May 4, 1912

94 Morning Echo, May 4, 1912

Bakersfield's temperance movement named beer as a social evil, but beer consumption here had been a fixture for a very long time, and the brewing industry built on that fact. A 1912 advertising supplement to the Bakersfield Californian contained the following:

"Doctors say beer is a tonic and aid to digestion. It is a nourishing food. It does not stimulate but invigorates just as all good food does. Beer is an all-the-year-around drink and is becoming the national beverage of the American People. It does not over-stimulate as strong alcoholic beverages and shatter nerves by excess use as tea and coffee."

Bakersfield Brewing Company was so much a local fixture that in 1913 it placed an ad in the high school's yearbook, Oracle.⁹⁵ The business's one White delivery truck became a fleet of three. Their brewery ad in 1913 read, "Lion Brew-- Its tonic properties will save you the usual dose of spring remedies. An old-fashioned German beer brewed from the finest malt and hops--made in Bakersfield. One dozen quarts for \$1.50."⁹⁶

Wartime measures enacted in 1917 to conserve food materials also slowed business for breweries across the country, and in 1919 the

95 Kern County Union High School Oracle, 1913 "Football Issue"

96 Bakersfield Californian, Mar 1, 1913

national crusade against alcohol consumption became the next challenge for brewers. Under the War Time Prohibition Act, the feds brought a test case against the Baumgartners for manufacturing and selling beer with more than 1/2 of 1% alcohol. Bakersfield's liquor interests united behind the Baumgartners,⁹⁷ but the new, \$4,000,000 brewery was closed after only nine years of use, and 13 years would pass before Bakersfield had another brewery.

The shuttered brewery became an ice plant and a warehouse, but by the turn of the century its economic value had dwindled. As is the case for most such historic structures in Bakersfield, it was razed.



November 24, 2013

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⁹⁷ Los Angeles Times, Jul 12, 1919, p 17