

KENTON COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 641, Covington, Kentucky 41012 (606) 431-2666

E-MAIL nkyheritage.kchs@juno.com

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KCHS MEETING

DATE Friday March 24

TIME 7 PM

PROGRAM Irish Heritage in
Kenton County

Tom McGovern, president of the Hibernian Society and professor of Irish Studies, will present Kenton County's Irish participation in local business, medicine, education, law, and music. He will be assisted by Dr. Paul Teuhotte and Dave Schroder, of Thomas More College.

Plenty of parking available on each side of church.

Bulletin

March 2000

From the President.....

Don't forget to come to the 7th Annual History Day on Saturday, March 11 at University Center on the NKU Campus. See you there!

Some deliberation should accompany an individual before joining a historical society, some effort to reflect on one's personal rationale. Hopefully you are gaining significant personal satisfaction from belonging to KCHS; learning about the past through articles read; sharing stories with others at meetings.

KCHS has 375 members who live not only in Kenton County but all over the USA. To keep the Society healthy, the membership needs to be active, giving and taking. What are some of the things you could do to be an active member?

Dues are an important first step. They pay for this Bulletin to be printed and mailed, publishing and mailing NKH Magazine, publishing historical papers. Dues are indispensable for KCHS operation. Membership and NKH subscriptions make great gifts.

Research, however, is not paid for with dues. It is man/woman power. Have you ever wanted to be a private detective? Searching newspapers and library sources is a lot like detective work; following leads, piecing together mismatched dates and information. A historical story cannot be assembled without this research.

For starters, the following list of topics are just a few of the stories the Board would like to have researched:

The George W. Hill Seed Company

Motch Jewelers

John W. Stephenson, former Kentucky Governor and U.S. Senator

Amos Shinkle's life

Covington mayors

Klingenberg family of hardware stores

Thomas Bird, founder of Trinity Church

Do any of these resonate with you? If so, call me, Karl Lietzenmayer, at (606) 431-2666. The Board is open any ideas you may have.

We do have some stories already written by hand or entered, but they need to be typed onto computer disks so we can use them in the magazine or Bulletin. They also take less space to store. Even those who live outside Northern Kentucky can do this job if you have a computer.

Down the road, the Board envisions the development of videos on Kenton County history for use in schools and civic groups. As yet we have not connected with the necessary expertise to produce them.

This would also take special funding. A writer of grant letters is necessary for this task.

Share your talent and time with KCHS as well as the portion of your treasure

WEB SITE <http://www.kenton.lib.ky.us/~histsoc/>

19th Century Covington Breweries

by Jo Ann Brown

This area, Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati, probably had more breweries in the 19th Century than any other part of the country, or at least rivaled Milwaukee and St. Louis. German names are prolific: Geisbauer, Seiler, Fink, Brenner, and Jung are just a few.

But, Germans were not the only nationality making beer. Peter Jonte, native of France, began his brewery in 1837 at Sixth and Scott Streets. He also had a brewery in Cincinnati.¹

**Philipp Jung Brewing Company
alias Covington Brewery alias
Covington Lager Beer Brewery
alias John Brenner Brewing
Company alias Louis Geisbauer
Brewery**

The one brewery building left in Covington is on Scott Street. The date "1840" inscribed is on it. The building now has a green awning with the name "Covington Brewery Building."

The History of Kentucky and Kentuckians published in 1912 lists John Brenner as a junior member of the firm in its early history. The book states that this brewery was the "oldest industry of its kind at Covington," and that it was founded in 1840.²

In 1845, Peter Jonte sold his Covington plant at Sixth and Scott Streets to Charles Geisbauer. Geisbauer enlarged the brewery and made it a thriving business.³

In 1879 John Seiler was named the official receiver of the Louis Geisbauer Covington Brewery.

⁴ And in 1881, Geisbauer sold his business to John Brenner and John Seiler. Three years later Brenner

bought out Seiler.⁵ Or as an 1884 newspaper states, "trouble brewing," there was a "business wrangle between Messrs Brenner and Seiler."⁶

Brenner, born in Germany, had been a partner of Henry Foss and William Schneider at their brewery in Cincinnati.⁷ He wanted to start his own business, and joined John Seiler to buy the Louis Geisbauer Brewery at Sixth and Scott Streets. In the book, *The Great Railroad Centers of the South and Southwest*, "The City of Covington's Business Houses," written in 1886, (which reads more like an advertisement than a historical document) states that when John Brenner became "sole proprietor," he "greatly improved the buildings and appliances..... The brewery and malt houses are spacious and substantial buildings, each four stories high....." The brewery worked at its fullest capacity of 30,000 barrels a year employing 50 men. "The trade of the Covington Lager Beer Brewery extends all over Kentucky and Ohio, and is rapidly increasing. One of the beer's names was IXL Lager Beer."⁸

In May 1888, The John Brenner Brewing Company was incorporated, with a paid up capital stock of \$300,000.

In 1893, John Brenner died. His wife was left with a controlling interest in the company, "after which it was to go to his and her heirs. She died in 1897." She did make substantial improvements to the business and, in 1895, built "one of the finest brewing houses in northern Kentucky."⁹ It was at this time that Charles Fink, former superintendent, became president of the company.

In 1905, the president was

A.J. Lauer and vice president was Charles Fink, son of Brenner's successor.¹⁰

In 1911 Brenner stockholders petitioned the Kenton County Court to put the company into receivership until the business could be sold as a "going concern." Two of the stockholders were Rosa Fink and Carolina Fink, widow of Rudolph Fink. "The petition states that one Junk (sic) of Milwaukee, is the owner of a large amount of stock and is in control of the Board of Directors; that for a considerable time had sold them machinery and raw materials and other commodities at a price above their market value, creating pretended indebtedness of many thousands of dollars against the brewery; that the affairs of the brewery are mismanaged; that there is dissension among the stockholders, and that the brewery has not means to manage or do business."¹¹

In February, a bankruptcy suit was filed against the brewery.¹² One of the creditors was Phillip Jung, of Milwaukee, nephew of Daniel Jung, the Cincinnati brewer.¹³ The U.S. Court took precedence over the action of the Kenton County Court.

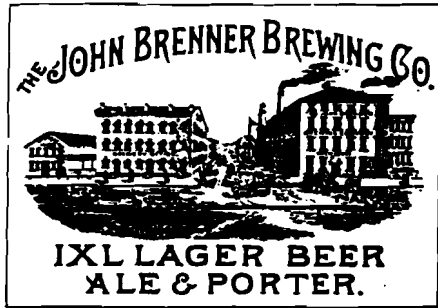
In May 1911 The Brenner Brewery, appraised at \$125,000 was sold for \$40,000 to Philipp Jung Brewing Company of Milwaukee.¹⁴

In 1916 Jung became president. In 1917 he took over the brewery which became Philipp Jung Brewing Company but it was still commonly referred to as Covington Brewery. Jung's son, Philipp was vice president and John B. Bommersheim, secretary and treasurer.¹⁵ Bommersheim had been

CHAS. FINK,
President

CLEMENS BRAMLADE,
Secretary

TELEPHONE No. 4054.

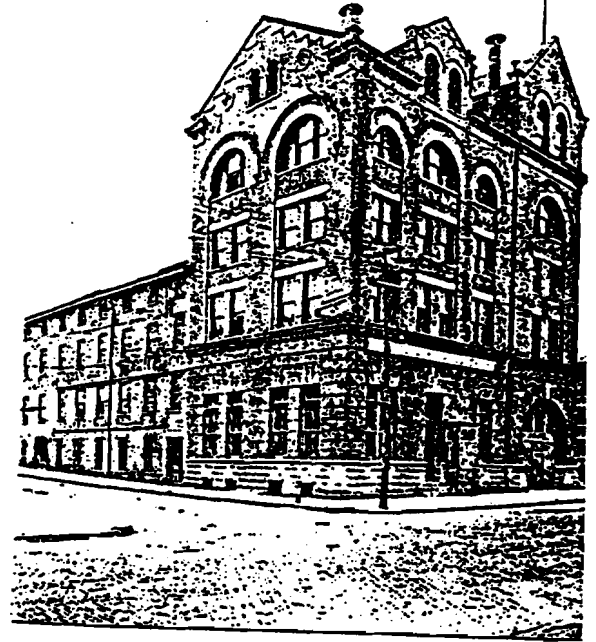


BREWERS OF

IXL LAGER BEER

601-627 Scott Street,

COVINGTON, KY.



Philipp Jung Brewing Company

SUCCESSOR TO "BRENNER"

Brewers of Fine Lager and Bottled Beers



The Covington Brewery Building
on Scott Street



JOHN SEILER,

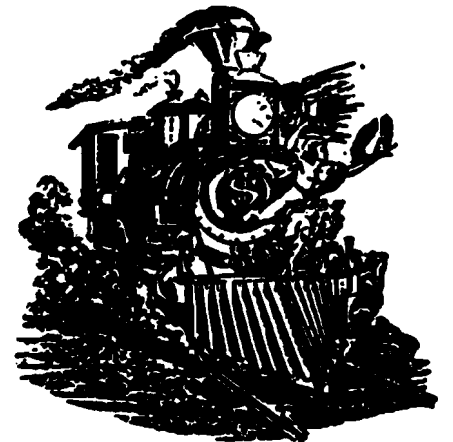
Successor to Chas. Long & Co.

BREWER AND BOTTLER OF THE

F·A·M·O·U·S

SELDOM EQUALED.

NEVER EXCELLED.



LAGER AND EXPORT BEER.

Telephone 4156.

OFFICE, COVINGTON, KY.

Upcoming Events throughout the State

Interpreting Our Heritage at the Gateway to the 21st Century

April 5-9, 2000, St. Louis Mo.

This workshop, sponsored by the National Association for Interpretation and the Cultural Interpretation and Living History Section of the NAI, will feature pre-workshop sessions, two keynotes, and four workshop tracks. The tracks include the CILH Training Track, the Lewis and Clark Track, and two advanced topic tracks. For more information, contact Diane Pawling at (610) 777-6761 or email historyalive@compuserve.com.

Alert!

If you did not yet send in your KCHS dues, this is your last issue of the Bulletin.

Membership Marketing: Strategic Planning for Success

April 13-14, Indianapolis, In; presented by Membership Consultants

For more information, call (314) 771-4664 or visit website at www.membership-consultants.com

Civil War Living History Weekend

March 24-25, 2000 Paducah

For more information, call (270) 441-7897

The Opening of Kentucky:

Marking the 250th Anniversary of Dr. Thomas Walker's Arrival at the Cumberland River

April 15, 9 am - noon, Pine Mountain State Resort Park, Pineville
Symposium will feature keynote presentation by Dr. Thomas D. Clark and a panel of other noted historians. Teachers, historians, and the public are invited to attend. The symposium will kick-off a full week-end of activities in celebration of the event. For more information, contact Dr. Dwight Henn at (606) 248-5163 or Jerry Browning at (606) 337-2351

A Three Hour Cruise Up the Licking River

Saturday August 5, 2000

Join the Campbell County, Kenton County Historical and Genealogical Societies

Aboard The Spirit of Cincinnati

Boards 1:30 PM Departs 1:50 PM - Returns 5:00 PM

from

Queen City Riverboats Harbor, Dodd Drive, Dayton, Kentucky

\$10:00 per person

Send your Payment as soon as possible to
The Campbell County Historical And Genealogical Society

19 East Main Street

Alexandria, KY 41001

Phone 635-6407

appointed receiver in the bankruptcy suit of just 6 years earlier, 1911.

The brewery closed in 1918, never to reopen. One building is still there on Sixth Street. The larger and more architecturally striking building across from it on Pike Street was razed in 1928 to make way for a hotel.¹⁶ The hotel was never built, and there is now a parking lot where the old brewery stood.

Lewisburgh Brewery

In 1866 Charles Lang and Frank Knoll operated their Lewisburgh Brewery on the northwest corner of Lewis and Baker Streets in Covington. They not only made lager beer, but advertised and sold the necessary ingredients to their competitors: malt and hops.

When Seiler's relationship with John Brenner at Geisbauer Covington Brewery soured,¹⁷ Seiler bought the Lewisburgh Brewery. By 1886, Seiler had gained full financial control of the Lewisburgh Brewery.

On October 1, 1890 a fire destroyed a large part of the brewery. His newly installed ice plant and refrigeration machinery were lost.

Seiler continued his business as best he could under the circumstances. But by 1892, the brewery was in the hands of B. F. Graziani and Theodore Sehlhorst, assignees. In 1895, the name of the brewery was changed to the Phoenix Brewery. The new owners thought that the name of the mythological bird that rose from its own ashes was an appropriate one for their brewery. Two years later, though, the title Covington Brewing Company was adopted. In 1904, Bernard Lemker was president of the company; H. F. Blase, vice-president; and Charles

Lang, secretary and treasurer.³ It would be interesting to know if this is the same Charles Lang which operated the business as Lewisburgh Brewery 38 years earlier or a son. The last year of the business was 1919 when John Mersmann was president.¹⁸

Biographies

John Seiler, son of Johann and Katharina Kopp Seiler, was born in 1833, in Sandhausen, near Heidelberg, Germany. He arrived in Cincinnati 1854 and for many years operated a successful ice business.

In the same year that he bought Lewisburgh Brewery, his wife, Balbina Seiler, died. They had been married 27 years and had 14 children.¹⁹

Charles Fink, born in Wuerttemberg, Germany in 1849, trained to be a tinsmith. When he reached 18, however, the urge to travel to America overtook him. When he arrived in Cincinnati, he formed a small business known as Beckman and Fink on Eighth Street near Freeman. Then in 1884, Fink became superintendent of the Brenner Brewery in Covington. When Brenner died in 1895 Fink became president of the company, but died in 1899 of a kidney disorder.

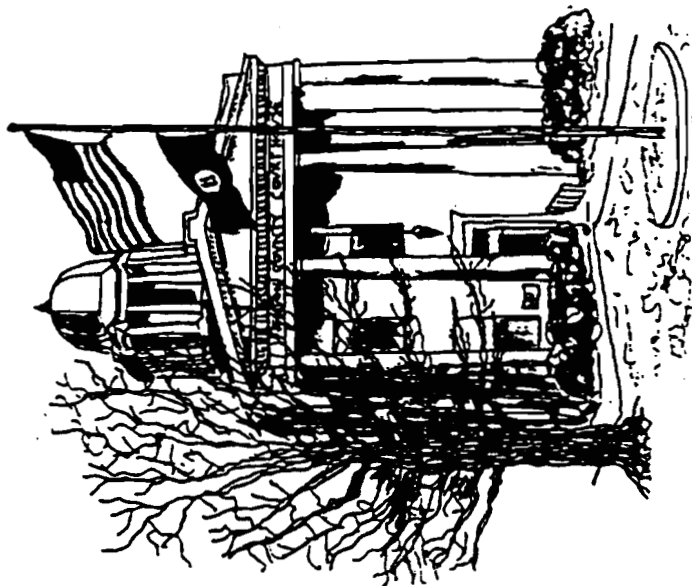
In 1875 he married Caroline Jenner. Together they had two sons and a daughter. The oldest son, Charles, became superintendent of the bottling department at Brenner, later becoming vice-president.²⁰

Notes

1. Wimberg, Robert, *Cincinnati Breweries*, p. 31, Ohio Book Store, Cincinnati, Ohio, 1989
2. *History of Kentucky and Kentuckians*, P. 994, Lexington, Kentucky, 1912
3. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 31
4. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 90
5. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 31
6. Daily Commonwealth, 6-12-1884, p.1
7. Ibid., Wimber, p. 31
8. *Great Railroad Centers of the South and Southwest*, "Leading Manufacturers of Cincinnati and Environs," "City of Covington's Business Houses," 1886, International Publishing Company, New York City, Boston, Cincinnati
9. Ibid., History of Ky. & Kentuckians, p. 994
10. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 31
11. Kentucky Post, 1-30-1911. p. 2
12. KP, 2-3-1911, p. 10
13. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 31
14. Ibid., DC
15. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 31
16. KP, 8-18-1928, p. 1
17. Ibid., DC
18. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 90
19. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 90
20. Ibid., Wimberg, p. 31

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 Breweries

Kenton County Historical Society
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