

A HISTORY OF BUBE'S BREWERY

One of the lost legacies of Lancaster County's German heritage is the fine art of brewing beer. During the nineteenth century, most every town in the county had its own brewery and Lancaster city was considered the brewing capital of the United States. The growth of the brewing industry was due to the flood of German immigrants, particularly from the southern states of Germany, to the Lancaster area in the 1860's, in order to escape the political turmoil of central Europe.

One such person was a Bavarian immigrant named Alois Bube who came to this country to avoid the military draft. He was born on May 31, 1851 in the village of Miltenberg am Main in northern Bavaria. His father and grandfather were coppersmiths, but Alois received his training as a brewer. When he came to this country in 1869, Alois was able to find work in a brewery. Two years later, he went to work at the Lawrence Knapp Brewery in Lancaster.

While Alois Bube was laboring in Lancaster, in Mt. Joy, Philip Frank was looking for someone to take over the brewery across the street from his malt house. Frank had immigrated to this area in 1851 from Baden, Germany. He worked at several occupations, including brewer, before he settled into the malt-making business at which he became extremely successful. One of his investments was a small, two-story, stone brewery which sat on a triangular lot between Market Street and Market Street Extended. He sold it to Leonard Frank, who was no relation, in 1869. But, it must not have been a profitable venture, for in 1874 Philip had to sue Leonard to recover a past debt. The brewery was sold back to Philip Frank at a sheriff's sale.

In 1876 Alois Bube bought the brewery from Philip Frank for \$4250. The property had been described two years earlier in the Sheriff's Deed as "a building occupied as a dwelling, beer saloon and brewery, a stable and other improvements, also two excellent beer vaults wherein 700 barrels can be stored." In 1879 the beer saloon and dwelling were rebuilt as the Central Hotel. For the first five years, the hotel was only used as a restaurant or "eating house" as described in Bube's petition for a hotel liquor license in 1884. The Court of Quarter Sessions of Lancaster County was petitioned by thirty-five citizens of Mt. Joy to grant Alois Bube a hotel license as he is "a worthy and law abiding landlord whose public spirit, enterprise, and disposition to accommodate deserve recognition...and has within a few years past, erected commodious, brick building for hotel purposes. It is a well appointed hotel with all improvements and conveniences, has fourteen rooms for the accommodation of guests, had good stabling and yard accommodations." Apparently, the Court wasn't impressed with his personal qualities or his hotel accommodations, for in March of 1886, he again petitioned the Court. This time he was accepted.

While he was building up the brewery and the hotel, Alois was also building a family. His wife Pauline came from Altensteig, a neighboring town to Philip Frank's home in Germany; and it was through his auspices that she emigrated to the United States. A photograph of Pauline was sent ahead to her relatives in Lancaster. Alois Bube was living in Lancaster at the time and somehow saw the photograph. On that basis he decided to marry her. Their first child Mary, was born in 1876. Next came Josephine in 1877 and another daughter, Pauline was the first child born in the hotel in 1879. A fourth daughter Anne was born in 1886, and their only son, Karl was born around 1892. Twenty years after the birth of their first child, Mary, a fifth daughter Tekla was born.

The Bubes, it would seem, were good parents to their six children. Many photographs exist of the children, picturing them with their parents, or engaged in lively activities such as group sing-alongs. Alois was generous with his children as evidenced by cancelled checks for books, magazines and clothing. He also included the children in the operation of the business. His oldest daughter Mary served as bookkeeper for her father, and he directed that after his death she be paid \$200 for her services.

With four eligible daughters of a wealthy businessman, it was natural that Alois Bube had a number of sons-in-law. His oldest daughter Mary wed Oscar Donaven who was a clerk at the Grey Iron Casting Company in Mt. Joy. Josephine married Henry J. Engle, a corporal in the PA National Guard, who had experience in many trades, but was apparently the master of none. The third daughter, Pauline married Dr. William R. Heilig who was a dentist and principal of the local school. Anna was married a month after her father's death, to Harry Wagner, "a very popular man of Elizabethtown" as he was described by the Mt. Joy Herald newspaper account of the wedding.

Alois Bube was also a popular man. He belonged to the White House Club - a social organization - and the Blue Bird Hunting Club. He was an active member of the local Catholic Church and was a staunch Democrat. According to Carl Germer, who worked for Mr. Bube, Alois was a good-natured and generous man. He was a successful businessman and a fair boss. Germer remembered that every Monday, Alois would ride along on the deliveries so that he could personally collect the bills. On these days he was followed by a group of five unemployed, elderly men for whom Alois would always buy a round of drinks at each stop.

Combined with his generosity was a strong work ethic and good business sense. Carl Germer recalled that Alois Bube personally added the ingredients at the important stages of the brewing, and the ingredients he used were of the highest quality. The malt came from Philip Frank's malt house, the hops were imported from Germany, and the brewer's yeast was grown by Alois Bube. The beer was aged for a period of six ~~months~~ ^{weeks} and not a day less. The final

product was a beer of the finest taste, the result of Alois Bube's personal skill.

For thirty-two years, Alois Bube worked hard at his business, and shrewdly invested his money. The Mt. Joy property was continually improved throughout his life. The brewery was expanded and a bottling works was added in the early 1890's. An ice-making machine was purchased from the York Manufacturing Co. and its output sold. Another coal furnace was built, which doubled the steam energy produced, and the excess was used to make electricity which gave the new form of energy.

In 1893, Alois suffered a setback when the hotel caught fire. The mansard roof was burned off and was replaced with a flat roof; the third floor was rebuilt with a brick facade. He also experienced some financial and legal difficulties as he was sued by Philip Frank for a past debt of \$6500. It is not known if this was a serious suit, or merely a legal ploy, for the suit was refiled four more times even as Frank continued to do business with Bube.

Alois survived the troubles of 1893 and expanded his business holdings outside of the properties in Mt. Joy. He purchased hotels in Manheim, Middletown and Columbia. By 1908, his property holdings were extensive and his business prosperous. But, on April 20, 1908, Alois Bube died, only a month away for his fifty-seventh birthday.

The Lancaster New Era bluntly announced the news on the front page: "Alois Bube Drops Dead." The cause was given as a sudden "affection of the liver." The Lancaster Intelligencer reported that his death came from acute indigestion as the result of a long-term illness. On the death certificate, the official cause was attributed to apoplexy as the result of acute indigestion.

Whatever the cause, the death of Alois Bube signaled the demise of his brewery business. The ownership of the brewery property went to Mrs. Bube and Tekla; the other children gave their shares to the mother. As Tekla was still a minor, all transactions involving her were conducted through the Orphan's Court. The management of the hotel and brewery was taken over by Oscar Donaven and Henry Engle, the two sons-in-law of Alois Bube. Henry oversaw the brewery operations while Oscar Donaven managed the Central Hotel. To their credit, these two were able to keep the business running for six years; although not without some creative bookkeeping. A note from John Coyle, the estate lawyer for Alois Bube, dated February 8, 1911 questioned Henry Engle's balancing of the books.

He said, "Can this be possible that the brewery made nearly \$11,500 in profit in six months? If it is, then the profits as compared with any other period of six months were simply phenomenal, and I cannot but think that you have made a very great mistake somewhere."

The note continued to list bills that Mr. Engle had neglected to record in his books. This was a practice that he maintained throughout his life as indicated by numerous overdue notices, and a few lawsuits dating from the 1920's, and continuing through 1965, the years of his death.

Despite the efforts of Engle and Donaven, the brewery was sold in 1914 to John Hallgren, an immigrant from Sweden. John Hallgren was a world traveller whose experiences included training as a brewmaster. He produced a Scandinavian brew which was lighter in color and taste than the lager beer that Alois Bube made. The beer drinkers of the area weren't willing to change their tastes, and the beer did not sell. However, he did have a steady customer in the person of Henry Engle who in 1915 had bought the Exchange Hotel in Mt. Joy.

John Hallgren's efforts to run the brewery were greatly undermined by the type of beer which he produced. He was also saddled by a great financial burden from the start, as the sale price for the brewery was quite high. The details of the sale were entered into the records of the Orphan's Court due to Tekla's status as a minor. The court was petitioned to allow the sale because the asking price of \$25,000 was "the best offer that has been received for the property, (it) is a better one than can be obtained at public sale." The sale included a safeguard to protect Tekla's interest in the property: the first lien went to Tekla's share; also all of the interest money was set aside for her. The result of the high sale price and the nature of his beer was that John Hallgren declared bankruptcy in August of 1917. He was saved from his creditors by H.C. Schock who put up \$3000 to act as trustee for Mr. Hallgren. Schock was the son-in-law of Philip Frank and had inherited the malt business when Frank died in 1905. Mr. Schock probably did this in order to ensure that the brewery wasn't seized by the sheriff and sold to pay back the creditors. Thus, the family was able to buy back the property in September, 1917 for what amounted to \$5018.33 cash. The total listed price was \$9400, but the remaining \$4281.67 was the difference for Tekla's share.

The sale of the brewery in 1917 brought an end to the days of beer-making at Bube's Brewery. Obviously, Alois Bube had the talent to make beer and efficiently run a business while the others who tried did not. The failure of Bube's family to hold together the business was also manifest in their inability to keep the family together. There was much family squabbling after Alois died. His widow was manipulated by her sons-in-law, Henry Engle and Oscar Donaven, both of whom bilked money out of her in order to invest in business ventures outside the brewery. When Mrs. Bube died in 1916, her will essentially cut out daughters Mary Donaven and Josephine Engle, and the bulk went to Tekla. Unfortunately, Tekla was easily controlled by her older sisters, Mary and Josephine, who were both twenty years older than she. Tekla was also made dependent upon Josephine and Henry as she lived at the Central

Hotel for most of her life. The hotel was sold to Henry in 1920 by his in-laws for \$1.00 and other considerations. During the time that Tekla lived at the hotel, she was "persuaded" to pay many of Henry's bills. When she died in 1963, her estate was charged for two bad debts that she had co-signed for Henry.

Tekla was not the only daughter of Alois Bube to experience misfortunes during her lifetime. Mary committed suicide in 1933, supposedly when she discovered that her husband Oscar was fooling around with their housekeeper. Anna was the victim of the Spanish Influenza epidemic of 1918. Josephine had to attractive, and highly intelligent children who, however, inherited a mental disorder from their father, Henry's side of the family. Both Karl and Pauline Engle went to college. Pauline graduated from Bryn Mawr, while Karl attended Franklin and Marshall but never finished. Despite their educational backgrounds, both were eventually sent to the mental home at Wernersville. Pauline Heilig managed to stay somewhat clear of the soap opera, and raised a large, healthy family. Karl Bube escaped the family turmoil and moved to Detroit around 1920. The two sons-in-law, Henry Engle and Oscar Donaven lived long, interesting lives, with Henry Engle dying at age 89 in 1965; and Oscar Donaven at 90 in 1966.

The history of Bube's Brewery is remarkable in that it is representative of the history of Lancaster County breweries as a whole. Alois Bube opened and operated his brewery during the heyday of Lancaster County breweries; it declined at the time when the bigger Midwestern breweries were capturing the national market while the Lancaster breweries couldn't keep up. When the Mt. Joy brewery closed its doors in 1917, it was one of only five breweries in the county. The entry of the United States into World War I forced most breweries to close as coal and barley were rationed for the war effort. After Prohibition, only a few reopened in Lancaster city, and the last one, the Wacker Brewery on W. Walnut Street closed its doors in 1956. Of all the breweries that ever operated in Lancaster County, there are very few remnants left, except for a few taverns that functioned as outlets for the larger breweries, to indicate that they had ever existed. Yet, Bube's Brewery does still stand, thanks in part to many years of salutary neglect under the ownership of Henry Engle. Much of the brewery is intact, looking as it must have in 1917; the bottling works, coal furnace, smoke house also remain. Even the Central Hotel, once slated for demolition after Henry Engle's death, is preserved with the first two floors redecorated in the Victorian style of Alois Bube's day. Thus, it stands as a monument to a time and an industry which once made Lancaster County known as the "Munich of the New World."