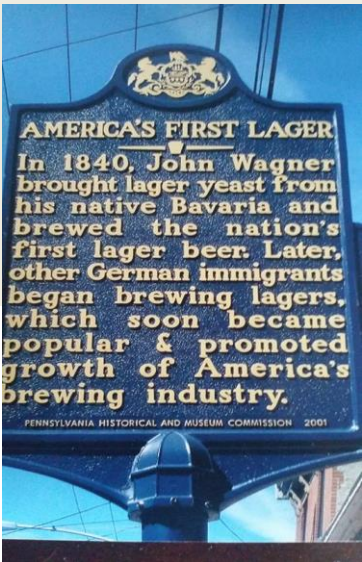


WISCONSIN BREWERIANA JOURNAL

MILWAUKEE’S FIRST LAGER BREWER

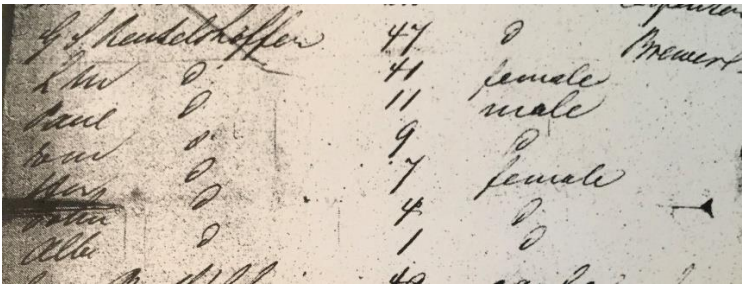


AMERICA’S LAGER BEER

Nationwide lager phenomenon started in 1840

BY: DAVE OLSON 8/1/2020

1840 is generally accepted as the year that Lager beer brewing started in the United States. John Wagner, of Philadelphia is typically given credit for that starting point. Milwaukee, the Queen of lager brewing in the US, also has a claim to the 1840 start date. Perhaps if the documentation was more prominent Milwaukee’s claims would be more widely known. In 1840, however, Milwaukee was at the edge of the Western frontier and Wisconsin wouldn’t become a state until 1848. Documentation is thin, but definitive proof exists documenting that Georg Simon Reutelshöfer, a titled Master Brewer from the Württemberg region of Germany migrated to the United States in 1840 to start a brewery.



PORT of NY - 1/1/1840: Manifest of the ship “The Anna”



Example ship conditions German Immigrants faced



WALKERS POINT JUST BEFORE 1840: Lot 2 Section 32 would soon be home to a German Lager brewery.

First Lager brewery in town

While an Ale and Porter brewery was already started in Milwaukee, just across from the main Pier facing Lake Michigan, plans for a second, German lager brewery were afoot. The “why” is not entirely clear in the public record, one account states the decision for a second brewery was questioned given the population of only 1810 people. Additionally, in 1840 the temperance mindset was already decades old, not everyone was keen to continue the “old ways” in the new world. German culture and taste in beer were not to be overlooked. Would George Walker, one of Milwaukee’s three founders and land speculators, want his hotel and saloon investment in Walker’s Point to be dependent on a competitor’s English styled brewery? Walker and Juneau certainly would not have allowed a brewery startup on their lands if a business case did not exist. It appears that Reutelshöfer never owned the land, rather a land contract existed. While all of Milwaukee’s founders solicited the type of settlers they desired for their plans, no definitive proof of an invite has surfaced. It seems plausible that Reutelshöfer may have been recruited to help build a Brewery in Walkers point, but by whom?

Solomon Juneau was said to have invited John B. Meyers to Milwaukee, (per Meyers’ wife), a wealthy German entrepreneur and baker who would soon invest in the new brewery. When Reutelshöfer immigrated he was not a twenty something young man looking for new opportunity in America. Reutelshöfer was a 47-year-old, German Master Brewer with a family of 6 when he was signed into The Port of New York. (The 5 children aged 1 to 11) I will speculate that Reutelshöfer did not pick up his family and move them across the Atlantic, in the winter, without a solid plan. Reutelshöfer arrived January 1, 1840, after sailing the Atlantic on the ship the Anna in conditions that were notoriously difficult, even in good weather. It was not a journey of chance, it was a deliberate move. Perhaps the timing of crossing during winter was a money saving choice for the family of 6. A number of Milwaukee’s early settlers were writing home and giving rave reviews of Milwaukee and Wisconsin’s lands as opportunities. Surely every German in Milwaukee who was not making homebrew would have concluded that they needed some real German Lager beer in Milwaukee. The first one to produce Lager commercially would be a success.

Reutelshöfer’s move was documented in Germany

German Franz Neukirch, also from the Württemberg region like Reutelshöfer, arrived in Milwaukee in 1839, and soon sent for his family in 1840. His letters to home were copied and widely distributed in his homeland, in fact he has been credited with recruiting numerous Settlers to Wisconsin with his descriptions such as the following:

“Most fruits grown here are indigenous. Wild apples, cherries and plums are found in abundance. There is plenty of hunting and fishing. The Indians are peaceful and the character of the white settlers is above reproach Nothing is ever stolen and everything is left wide open. Envy is unknown. Work alone commands respect. The inhabitants are all hard working people and help each other as much as they can. There are no beggars. Every male inhabitant is obliged to work two days a year on the streets, which are in bad condition. Canals and railroads are projected to form a direct communication with New Orleans. I think that Wisconsin will someday be one of the wealthiest and best states in the Union.”

The mid to late 1830’s were tough times for Germany’s Saxony region where Neukirch and Reutelshöfer were from. Reutelshöfer’s family was one of only a few landowners and he owned a Saxony area farm along with his half-brother. The Reutelshöfer’s were known to permit use of their barn when area festivals occurred on the occasion of bad weather. A gentleman’s agreement existed that if the festivities burned the barn down the nobles would pay to rebuild the barn. As part of the German state some production from the farm was due to the State annually. Droughts, locusts and other natural issues farming in mid to late 1830’s may have pressured the Reutelshöfer’s to seek greener pastures, literally. Reutelshöfer was a Master Brewer from the town of Leutershausen too. The Bavarian State had a law stating anyone immigrating to America was required to publish their name in the weekly gazette, to enable any creditors the opportunity to settle up. The record below is one of the few that survived WWII bombings, it clearly shows “Braumeister” (Master Brewer) Georg Simon Reutelshöfer’s family of 6 is planning to immigrate to North America from Leutershausen in January 1840.

3. Vom kgl. bayer. Kreis- und Stadtgericht
4. Bekanntmachung der beabsichtigten Auswanderungen nach Nordamerika.

Nro.	Polizei-Bezirk.	Wohnort der Auswanderer.	Name und Stand der Auswandernden.	Zahl der mit auswandernden Familienmitglieder
1	Landgericht Leutershausen	Leutershausen	Braumeister Georg Simon Reutelshöfer	6
2	"	"	Schneidermeister Georg Adam Stumpf	3
3	"	"	Tagelöhner Gg. Barthelmäs Gehring	5
4	"	"	Dienstmagd Eva Barbara Hornung	—

Allenfallsige Forderungen an vorgenannte Individuen sind bei Vermeidung der Präclusion binnen 14 Tagen hierorts anzumelden. Leutershausen den 19. Januar 1840.

Leutershausen is located within the Ansbach district of Bavaria and is the birthplace of previous United States Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s mother.

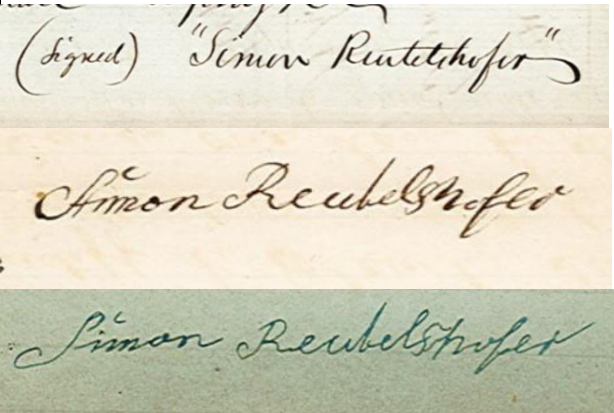


It isn’t clear which German brewery Reutelshöfer may have apprenticed at or worked for prior to coming to Milwaukee. To gain the title “Braumeister” it is almost assured that he would have followed an apprenticeship and performed as a brewer professionally as he progressed his career in Germany. Documentation for most of the area breweries was lost to WWII bombings. Aside from his title, there is a reference to another brewer in the

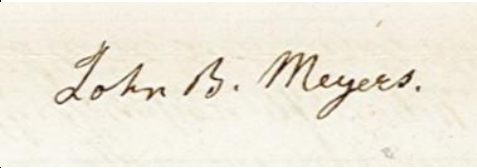
Spelling challenges

REUTELSHÖFER? MEYERS?

One challenge in documenting the Simon Reutelshöfer story is the numerous ways his name was spelled in the various records. Very few historians that didn’t work from original documentation have spelled this brewer’s name correctly. Some reporters and authors have repeated other’s mistakes. Herman Reidelshoefer was one such mis-spelling. The Ellis Island Foundation’s database spelling is perhaps the most unusual. The 1840 Port of New York ship manifest has two “f”s in Reutelshoffer, a common error. The computer OCR scan however does not come close with “G. Sheutelshoffer”, missing that his first two initials G. S. are actually used. Ancestry.com’s OCR scan of the 1842 Milwaukee census similarly derives “George Sime O Rutherhoffer” Even when Reutelshöfer hired a lawyer or had his name written by the Clerk of Courts his name was misspelled by one or more letters. Fortunately, Reutelshöfer signed his own name in several Court documents. Simon consistently signed his name “Simon Reutelshofer” without consistently crossing the “t”. Typically crossing the “t” with the downstroke of the lowercase “t”.



Reutelshöfer’s business partner, John B. Meyers also has been mis-spelled frequently. Spellings Maier, Meirs, Meyer frequently change places in the record, but in the same Court documentation Reutelshöfer signed we find John Meyers’ signature.



One of the most egregious mis-spellings is "Herman Reuthlisberger", which (first?) appears in the 6/6/1897 Milwaukee Sentinel, stated by Meyers’ wife when she was interviewed about being the wife of one of Milwaukee's pioneer brewers. Authors of early Milwaukee history have repeated it, but this interview is the only instance I could find of this spelling in the public record. It seems odd, would Meyers’ wife really not know the name of her husband’s business partner of several years, who sued her husband twice? Her husband John Meyers was even convicted of attempting to kill Reutelshöfer. Perhaps since Meyers spent several years in court being pursued by Reutelshöfer the family had coined another name for their perceived nemesis?

family. Reutelshöfer’s sister married a brewery owner from Katterbach, the city where they were born. His name was Fredrick Strobel, and a church record references him as "owner and Master Brewer", but no records exist which connect Simon with his brother-in-law. There is evidence that several breweries existed in and near Leutershausen, two brewery buildings are still standing near town. However, records do not exist which describe the buildings history. Investigating the breweries with the local library staff turns up no facts for analysis. That said, one brewery cellar building in Leutershausen does appear to be of similar construction to the brewery in Milwaukee. A stone foundation cut into the bank of a hill with a wood construction above the full cellar/basement is similar to what Reutelshöfer built in Milwaukee, per several accounts.

Was Reutelshöfer’s brewery part of an early Walker’s Point development plan?



North of the Milwaukee river in 1840, the city was already mapped out on a proper plat map. The Walker’s Point area developed a similar organizational layout in between 1839 and 1842, with the brewery construction taking place sometime after Reutelshöfer’s arrival in 1840. It’s documented that the brewery was built on a stone foundation with a cellar under it. The spring of 1840 probably had to arrive to enable digging and laying the foundation. The carpentry work was performed by Stoddard H. Martin and Lucien V. Zander. The footprint of the brewery was about 3 stories over a stone cellar/basement measuring 20X30 ft, with a cellar built into the embankment. An account by laborers who helped build the Brewery states that the first keg was tapped in May of 1841. Within the year, Reutelshöfer became heavily in debt with his small brewery. After a short time he partnered with fellow Württemberger, John B. Meyers for business capitol. Meyers married a daughter of Neukirch and eventually their connection to Reutelshöfer’s homeland would be one factor in a contentious betrayal of trust. The land Reutelshöfer would build the lager brewery on was controlled by Walker and Juneau. It's possible that the brewer was recruited to come to Milwaukee to enable their vision of brewing Lager beer. The Germans were NOT fond of the English Ales and Porter being produced. Early German visitors lamented the fact that proper Lager was not available, until Reutelshöfer started his efforts. The first 1840's brewing activity in Milwaukee was largely orchestrated by

ALL persons are hereby forbidden to trespass in any manner upon the fractional lot no 2, in section no 32, Township 7, Range 22 East in Wisconsin Territory. And notice is hereby given to all whom it may concern, that the proprietors of said fractional lot no 2 will in a lawful manner call all persons to account for past and future trespasses upon said premises.
GEO. H. WALKER.
S. JUNEAU.
M. L. MARTIN.
Milwaukee, April 2d, 1839.

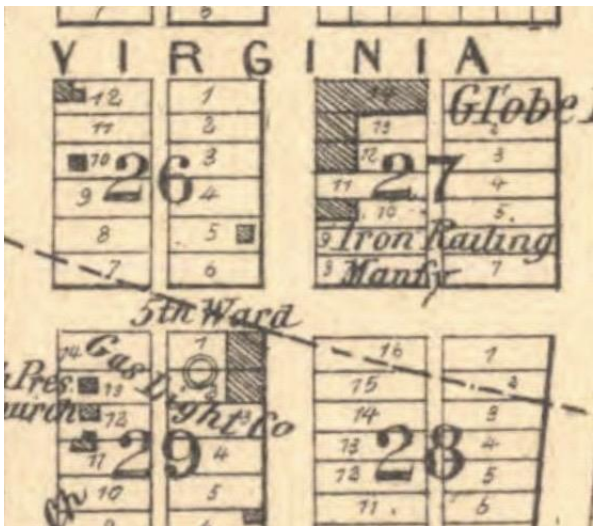
PLANS IN MOTION: 6 months before Reutelshöfer arrives, squatters are advised to clear out of the same area that will soon host the next Milwaukee development plan, see 1842 plat above, plans include a new brewery. business men, making a product that was in short supply. Owens, Davis, and Pawlett were making beer in 1840, in what some described as a copper lined wood box. Their brews were the simplest type of beer style recipes, typically % ABV(alcohol by volume) for brews in this era would have been low by modern standards, 2.5-3.5% They could make these top fermenting brews at room temperature quickly, in a matter of weeks, but they wouldn’t keep long. Ice was available in abundance in winter, but it could not be stored indefinitely as no mechanical refrigeration yet existed. Brewing a lager recipe would require a cold, underground cellar to brew the bottom fermenting brews. Building a brewery from ground up, by a trained Master Brewer, would greatly improve the quality of beer produced as well as bring a little taste of home to Milwaukee’s German settlers. Lager beer was missed and desired by the German settlers. It would seem Reutelshöfer's plans were destined for success, if only that were the case.



The Leutershausen area brewery and cellar building, which resembles the foundation and construction description in the Milwaukee record. In the 1844 Meyers letter wrote home to his mother describing the brewery he owned stated it was three stories.



WALKERS POINT 1853: Corner of Virginia and Hanover over a decade after construction this artist map closeup shows the “German Brewery” building. (Lower right)



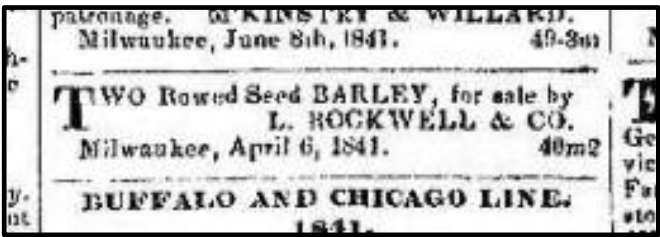
PLAT MAP from 1859: Still shows the former footprint of the brewery on the corner. (Lot 27_14)

OPENING A NEW LAGER BREWERY

The word "Lager" in German means "to store". The cooler and slower fermentation requires some months for the lager brews to complete and age. Our early brewers did not know anything about pasturization, that invention was 3 decades into the future. Thus early brewing required a quick turn around time to make and sell brews such as ales. The specialized, more scientific approach of lager brewing helped to keep the beer from going bad. Cold storage benefited from the winter months. Some seasonal brewers could only brew lager in the winter, but with a purpose-built lager cellar they could brew year round, IF the materials were available. Storage of grain was as important as beer storage, and early efforts in brewing lager would have required access to barley, which was not as abundant as other grains in the early 1840's Milwaukee. 1841 is one of the first years a "Barley for sale" ad appears in a Milwaukee paper.

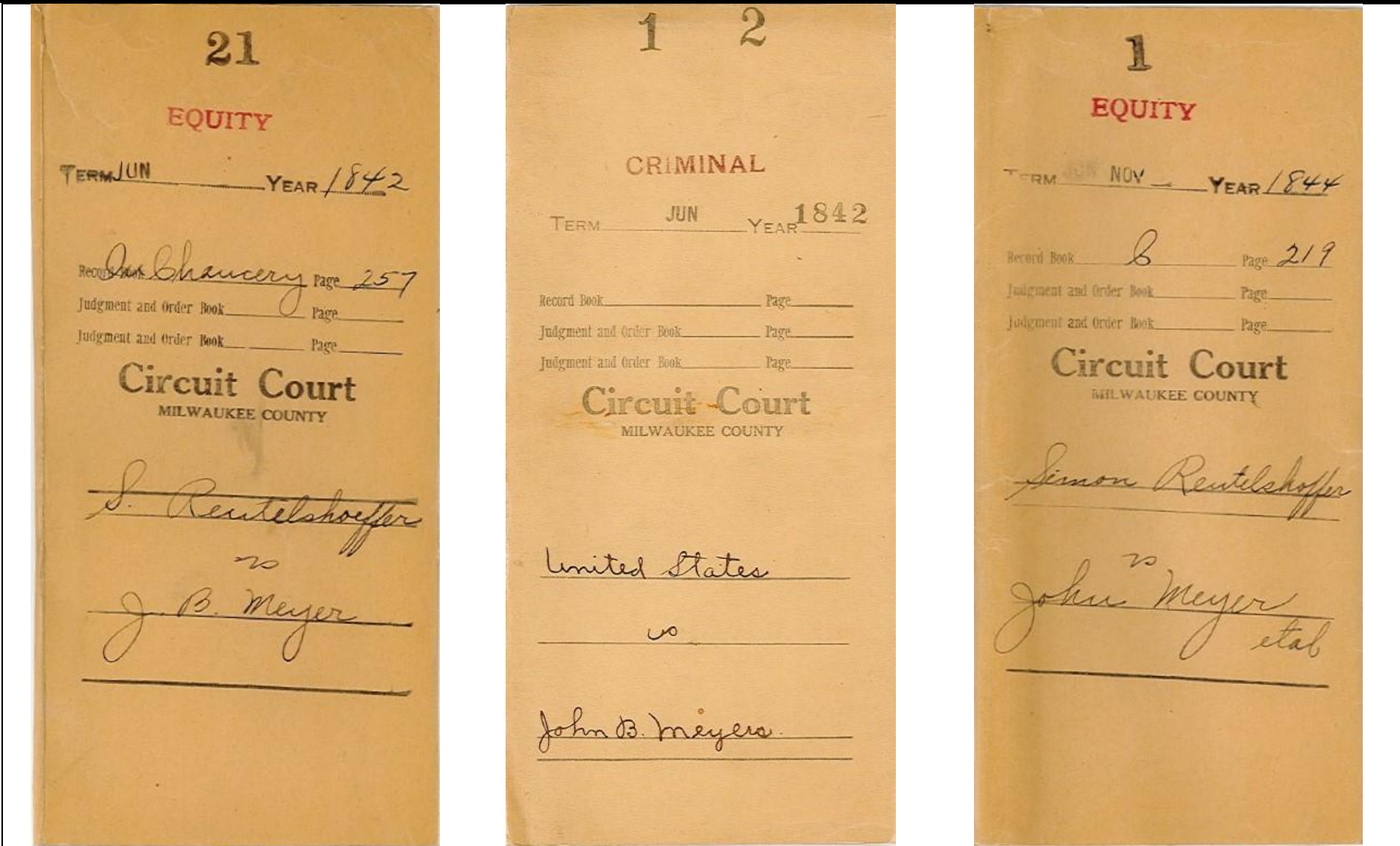
It's unlikely that Reutelshöfer's initial production was very big, typically new brewing ventures of the era could only make 30-50 barrels or less their first year. Being on the frontier would make some brewing supplies in short supply and competed for. After Reutelshöfer's journey, the cost of building the new venture would consume his capital funds and impact Reutelshöfer's ability to fulfill his plans.

Building a Lager brewery would include a cellar, and facilities to self malt barley. We have physical evidence and documentation that the Reutelshöfer brewery had both. Documents also suggest some self cooperage existed to make barrels at the brewery. Descriptions of the early "German Brewery", as he called it, state the beer cellar was cut into the hill and was under the brewery building. When no limestone or rock formations existed to tunnel and create beer caves, many beer cellars were created by trenching out the space into a hillside. Building a stone or brick arched ceiling as they tunneled, finishing the masonry top to bottom. A completed cellar could be further buried in the ground. Typically the natural temperature of underground caves and such purpose built cellars is 50-60 degrees, ice would help maintain the temperatures needed for lagering, extending the brewing season. Competing for raw materials, unless the brewery grew their own, would be another hurdle.



1841 BARLEY AD: Milwaukee Sentinel.

Neukirch did own 76 acres of farmland in the Franklin/Oak Creek, WI area but no records indicate he contributed brewing raw materials. Did Reutelshöfer fund the complete brewery build himself, at this time of Milwaukee's early growth? It seems that Reutelshöfer did not own the land, thus some type of lease was an additional, and recurrent cost. The build would be more complex and costly than a typical homestead. A well would be needed, and the brewing equipment including a brew kettle, malting kiln, cooperage and other brewing tools would be added costs. Lager beer also has a longer timeline to finish the beer, thus after a few months building the brewery, additional time would be required for making and ageing the beer. Although the market was present, Reutelshöfer's personal financial capital would eventually run out, such that he had to partner with someone that had capital to invest.



Reutelshöfer's American dream to start a brewery lasted a little over a year. In March 1842 he was victim to hostile, take over by his primary investor. It wasn't until June that Reutelshöfer was physically well enough to be able to fight his former partner in court. These court cases, held within the Milwaukee Historical Society archive, have numerous pages of testimony and depositions which document the history of what became of Milwaukee's first Lager Brewery, the "German Brewery".

Immigration had as many risks as rewards

Some immigrants to America left home “just in time”, including Franz Neukrich. As a former forester in Germany who was accused of falsifying records, he denied the allegations. Despite having supporters on the same, charges were filed and Neukrich set off to America to avoid them. Neukrich and his future son-in-law John Meyers would soon take over Reutelshöfer’s “German Brewery” by a series of events that has been overlooked in Milwaukee’s history. Perhaps because the attempted murder of Reutelshöfer, by Meyers, was not good PR for a developing frontier town. Reutelshöfer had the misfortune of placing his trust with his countrymen in his business dealings, Meyers and Neukrich appear to have taken advantage of that trust.

Among the sparse information about Reutelshöfer in the early records of Milwaukee we find three court cases. Two civil cases filed by Reutelshöfer vs. John Meyers and one criminal case of the United States vs. Meyers related to the first case. The 1842 court recognized Reutelshöfer as "Georg Simon Reutelshoffer", as written repeatedly by the clerk of courts. Levi Blossom, Reutelshöfer's first lawyer was well known in Milwaukee’s founding years. In court Simon was referred to as “being of German birth and education”, thus not speaking or writing English. His depositions were recorded with aid of a translator. They include his sign-off on his lawyer's and translator's statements, which he signs "Simon Reutelshofer".

So, why did Reutelshöfer sue his business partner you should ask. Meyers was providing mortgages against the business's equity to Reutelshöfer. Per the court statements, the last time Meyers wrote up what Simon believed was a \$100 dollar loan, the paperwork was actually a bill of sale, which Meyer promptly took to the registrar of deeds to claim the brewery deed. At the office Meyers was surprised to find that another lien of \$154 dollars existed on the property, to another creditor of Reutelshöfer. Meyers would have to pay on the spot to clear the lien before the deed could be his. This appears to have been the point in which former business partner Meyers snapped. Court testimony from Reutelshöfer, Reutelshöfer's wife, their oldest daughter, a neighbor, and the town doctor tell a story of betrayal and violence. Meyers, after obtaining the deed free and clear marched over to the brewery. Heading upstairs to the flat where the Reutelshöfer's resided above the brewery, Meyers gathered a few "things". Meyers took the items down into the brewery, and then proceeded to "wreck the stovepipe" used to malt the barley. Meyers attempted lock the brewery doors too, one with some rope to tie it shut, the other door with nails. Simon's wife describes activity by Meyers as unusual and starting about 3:00 in the afternoon. By "candlelight", when Simon came home, he had to force his way into the brewery, due to the “locked” doors. Simon went upstairs and had a discussion with his wife about Meyers odd behavior and they proceeded down into the brewery by candlelight to investigate. Unbeknownst to the family, Meyers lay in wait behind a door. When Simon walked near, Meyers struck him to the ground by striking his head with a barrel stave. Meyers then proceeded to beat Simon in front of his family, while he lay defenseless on the ground. When Simon's wife approached to fend off her husband’s attacker Meyers shouted at her "to stay away or he would kill her" Apparently tiring of swinging barrel staves Meyers next knelt on Simon's chest, and proceeded to choke him. IF it were not for outside help gained by the Reutelshöfer's young daughter, from a passerby who interrupted the scene, Simon may well have been killed. The witness described Reutelshöfer as bloody, "black in the face from being choked", and needing 3-4 attempts to stand, only possible with his wife’s help. Simon's doctor testified that it was too early to tell if Reutelshöfer was going to live due to the ongoing ringing in his head, more than a month after the physical attack. Simon's wife testified it was weeks before Simon could even sit up in bed due to the beating. At the very least, his dream of starting a brewery was now over. The first civil lawsuit, Reutelshöfer vs. Meyers, was an attempt to regain control of the brewery deed and/or damages reflecting Reutelshöfer’s equity in the brewery. Despite finding in favor of Reutelshöfer, the court only awarded damages of \$154 dollars. Meyers predicted this outcome, shuffling all of his assets including the brewery deed into a trust managed for his father in law, Franz Neukrich. The defense statement gave flowery descriptions about how Neukrich had previously arranged to accept the brewery deed as debt forgiveness in a deal with his son-in-law. The court could not or would not allow the deed to be

transferred back to Reutelshöfer's control. Reutelshöfer’s amount of equity in the property was under some dispute. But his testimony, given via his lawyer is clear. Reutelshöfer was not aware the last paperwork he signed was a bill of sale, and he clearly stated that he felt he was deceived and that some of the "creditors" were aligning themselves with Meyers hostile takeover. Reutelshöfer referred to Meyers allies as Meyers’ "confederates". At the time Meyers was actually quite rich, undeclared to the court. On paper he appeared to be a pauper, but he was carefully hiding his estate within his father-in-law's assets. This would become clearer during the second court case where Reutelshöfer sued Meyers and Neukrich for \$10000 dollars. Meyers and Neukrich seem to have lost the second civil case as well. Interestingly during early 1842 a “brewery for sale” ad is posted monthly in the local papers for most of the year. It seems to be of similar description to Reutelshöfer’s brewery, Levi Blossom was one of the agents brokering the sale. It’s not clear if this brewery was in fact the German Brewery, but the timing is curious. There could not be too many “brand new” breweries available in 1842 Milwaukee. With the attack by Meyers in March of 1842, it may be that the tensions present were due to other stakeholders in the failing effort.



In the second civil case, in 1844, Reutelshöfer pleaded with the court to either award the brewery to Simon or appoint a third party to sell the brewery and award the equity Reutelshöfer lost in the transaction. Meyers and Neukrich were jointly sued by Reutelshöfer. Neukrich denied he took ownership of the brewery to shield his son-in-law from the court decree. At the same time Neukrich admitted he let Meyers run his affairs, and that Meyers had power of attorney over Neukrich’s estate.

The 1842 criminal case mentioned earlier of the United States vs. Meyers was for "Assault and Battery, with intent to kill", for which he was convicted. During the statements, Meyers stated that he felt he owned the brewery outright and once he locked it up that Reutelshöfer had actually broken in and was trespassing. Meyers claimed the right to defend himself and "his property". The court documents note that Meyers was convicted, but no mention of the consequences. Other than the Sheriff creating a writ of levavi facias and confiscating all of Meyers belongings, which were sold at public auction. The sale netting \$83 of the \$154 dollars previously awarded, but not yet paid.

Meyers wrote letters home of his own too. In 1844 he wrote to entice his mother to join him and noted that he owned a bakery, and several rentals, as well as a 3-story brewery and a significant amount of cash holdings, 10,000 Pfennig which would be about \$345,000 today. Despite Meyers success at avoiding consequences for his hostile takeover he ended up dying in 1846. When Meyers passed, Neukrich took over the business. His leadership would see the brewery flourish and move to expand after bringing in another son-in-law, Charles T. Melms in 1846. Meyers’ sons eventually lived in the brewery building on the corner, after the operation had been moved to the new “Menomonee Brewery” four blocks west on Virginia Street, in 1851.

After his 1844 lawsuit no sign of Simon brewing seems to be found. We know he survived his initial attempt on his life because he sued, but it is not clear what happened to him afterwards. Genealogy records seem to indicate that his son's may have passed away back in Germany, but to date I cannot find any evidence of Reutelshöfer brewing anywhere again.

C.T. Melms would go on to achieve great success at the "Menomonee Brewery" eventually taking over from Neukrich in 1853. Melms is widely considered to be the first "Beer Baron" of Milwaukee and seems to not have been included in the questionable path that led to the brewery exchanging hands, prior to his ownership. But without Simon Reutelshöfer starting Neukrich/Meyers/Melms

family into brewing it seems unlikely that their path would have been the same. Although Melms took over brewery management, it’s worth noting he was not a trained brewmaster. Schussler from Oshkosh fame briefly brewed for Neukirch and Melms, as they increased in business and built what was at the time the largest brewery in Milwaukee with a capacity of 150,000 bbl. annual output. Lager beer was taking off, as predicted.

While Melms claimed to brew himself, we know another one of his brewmasters was Franz Falk. Falk immigrated to Milwaukee to start brewing, and worked for Melms starting in 1849 for about 6 years. Franz Falk was from the bock region of Germany, it’s possible that the

Melms’ famous bock bier was of Falk's creation. When Melms died prematurely due to tetanus in 1869, from a pin prick, the Menomonee Brewery was bought from the Melms estate in 1870 not by the Phillip Best Brewing company, which is usually stated, but by Frederick Pabst and Emil Schandein (and their Wives, per the original sale documents). When their holdings were combined with their Best’s North side of Milwaukee operation, the acquisition created a huge brewery empire. Like many of the successful brewing legacy’s in Milwaukee, if it were not for a few dedicated brewers, and timely circumstances, much of what we know about Milwaukee's brewing legacy would have been different.



The site of the former Reutelshöfer German Brewery still holds some clues from it’s past.



The site today

At 3rd and Virginia streets in the Walker’s Point district of Milwaukee there is a newer, 1910's building built over the site of Reutelshöfer's brewery, It's home to the "Chef's Table" business today, on the South East corner of the intersection. When examining the inside of the foundation of the as-is structure one can clearly see that the building was built over and reused some of the 1840s stone foundation, as well as other structural pieces. There is a remnant in the East foundation wall that appears to have an arch shape to it, all filled in with similar stone of course. The arch is not complete, the top of the arch being cut off and overlayed with brick repair work of several layers. Visually an interior wall interferes, but tracing the old stone mortar finds a left and right side, with symmetry. Additionally a very telling and unique clue remains just left of the arch remnant, embedded in a stone. There is a carved 4 pointed cross, or rosette, similar to the oak leaf cross found frequently in painted decorations on barns in the Pennsylvania Dutch area. The Pennsylvania "Dutch" immigrants were in fact German and from a similar region as Reutelshöfer. Their tradition was to paint good luck stars and designs on their barns and over their windows. Their use as traditional decorative motifs has remained constant both in Europe and the New World. The use of three painted crosses above the windows and doorways of barns finds its origins in house and barn blessing traditions of Europe, where the three crosses refer to the Three Kings, or Magi, who followed a star to the biblical nativity.



In the Pennsylvania German cultural museum there is a star template, for painting the symbols above windows which are identical in shape to the stone artifact still present in the stone foundation at 3rd and Virgina today. Can it be proven difinitively that Reutelshöfer placed this artifact? No, but it is certainly a clue left behind by the builders of the stone foundation. And just to the right of the percieved arch, at about the same height is another cup in the stone of the same size and shape, although the rosette/star is missing. This would seem to indicate the stones retain their original position, on either side of what would likely have been a cellar arch, cut into the terrain or embankment to the East.

CONCLUSION

Reutelshöfer’s story is incomplete

That said, more investigation is warranted. Milwaukee is tied closely to the history of Lager beer brewing, without the Lager brewers much we know and continue to experience today that is associated with Milwaukee’s brewing legacy simply would not be the same. Without Reutelshöfer’s brief but important efforts to bring Lager beer to Milwaukee things would certainly have been different. Reutelshöfer’s choice of business partners does not seem to be the only issue with his business failing. Once he was no longer brewing, the former partners continued the business successfully. It is clear that debts drove a fracture between Reutelshöfer and his younger capitol investor Meyers. It’s probable that Reutelshöfer was simply underfunded, which is the classic cause for business failures even today. The cost of building a brewery from the ground up is costly in any era and it’s possible Reutelshöfer under estimated a number of costs that Frontier Milwaukee would have thrown at him. It’s also possible that Reutelshöfer was simply hired to build and consult on how to get the brewery up and running. However, moving the family and trying to regain ownership of the brewery in court twice would seem to detract from the consultant theory. But many questions remain unanswered.

Among the many questions still unknown is what happened to Reutelshöfer after 1844? Local and National records do not seem to offer any clues, perhaps they will in the future. At this time it seems possible that Reutelshöfer may have moved back and rejoined with family remaining in Germany, but it’s not clear if that is the case. Fortunately, the Lager brewing seed was planted, It was brief yet instrumental in Milwaukee’s rich and continued brewing legacy becoming a global success. Cheers to Milwaukee Lager, and George Simon Reutelshofer who helped start such a storied legacy that we can still participate in today 180 years later.



(German lettering example, with symbol)

References:

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