

**GERMAN BREWERS AND THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT:
CRAFTING A POSITIVE IMAGE
IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA**

When German brewers introduced their lager beer to America in the 1840s, they quickly faced attacks from a morally-charged Temperance Movement. Since the 1820s, temperance movers had been fighting the alarming rates of alcohol drinking in America, enlisting the talents of ministers, scholars, homemakers, and politicians. As producers of beer, German brewers were criticized as purveyors of poison but they countered this by announcing the lighter effects of lager as opposed to highly inebriating distilled liquors. Temperance advocates wasted no time side-stepping this argument with emotional rebuttals tying the social evils of alcoholism to any beverage including lager beer.

Yet by the 1880s, German brewers managed to recast themselves as solid businessmen in America who supplied a beverage fit to sustain a modern workforce. Historians have done a good job addressing how German brewers demonstrated a dedication to their craft but writers have paid less attention to the brewer's deliberate self-promotion as new stewards of America's agriculture. This article examines how German brewers in America crafted a new image of themselves that served to deflate temperance accusations that beer was the same as liquor.

What strategies did German brewers use to outflank the damaging rhetoric of America's Temperance Movement? I argue that they used a campaign of detailed statistics to educate the American public backed up by an empathetic appeal to American founding values. Such values included the paternal stewardship of American agriculture, Americans' freedom to make choices, and the utility of lager beer in the settling of the American West. This strategy paid off in 1876 when German brewers outmaneuvered teetotalers by getting permission to publicly display their lager beer at America's first Centennial.

An additional problem for German brewers to overcome was that the American Temperance Movement was heavily "gendered". Through much of the 1800s, the movement portrayed women, children, and the family as victims, helpless against domineering and violent drinkers. If alcohol abusers were generally typed as masculine, then beer brewers were cast in the image of the non-caring businessman, pushing his product on a helpless "feminine" public. German brewers needed to maneu-

ver themselves away from this emotional gendering, and they did this by using “female” imagery to paint themselves as rescuers of America’s farmlands.

The brewers’ efforts were assisted by a fortuitous change in strategy by American temperance leaders. By the 1870s, abstainers in America were turning their efforts toward an international temperance union, to bring western morals to the rest of the world. Temperance movers were allying themselves closely with women in Britain and northern Europe, but they tended to ignore America’s more provincial needs. One historian has argued that these leaders were now seen as international stateswomen whose allegiance was to “gender more than nation.” I believe this internationalism allowed German brewers to claim an image as American boosters.

HISTORIOGRAPHY

Historians have evaluated the American Temperance Movement with empathy and depth. The focus has generally been on what drove the movement, primarily the moral cry against the abusive drinking which touched many American families. Alcohol was viewed as a cause of social ills like crime, poverty, and sickness; the only cure was to purge America of this pastime. Calls for abstinence were heightened by the arrival of German and Irish immigrants who brought with them traditional drinking rituals. By the mid-nineteenth century, a powerful and emotional temperance movement was lined up against drinkers and foreigners.

Some of the best treatments of the temperance movement include works by W. J. Rorabaugh, Joseph Gusfield, John Rumbarger, Carol Mattingly, and Ian Tyrell. Gusfield sees the Temperance Movement as indicating social status, while Rumbarger focused on employers’ belief that alcohol drinking damaged America’s industrial economy. Mattingly shows that nineteenth-century temperance women were diverse and addressed more than the issue of drinking, while Tyrell takes the reader into the international campaigns of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union.¹ These books all expand on the social, political, and economic clout wielded by temperance advocates, and reveal a potent national movement.

There were also responses and histories authored by brewers themselves. These often rely on statistics or techniques placing brewers in a positive light but they also remind readers of their fundamental right to choose products they want to buy. George Ehret wrote a tribute to beer brewing in 1891 and included impressive statistics on American hops and barley production. Thomas Cochran showed that the Woman's Christian Temperance Union was truly effective in moving state legislatures to pass prohibitory bills, and Mark Noon confirmed that temperance and nativist groups presented very real threats to foreigners arriving from Europe.²

With these sources as a starting point, my study will argue that German brewers employed determined agency to improve their image in America. Temperance and American nativism were very real threats to beer producers and to say that lager beer was "less harmful" than whiskey was not enough to silence critics. Instead, German brewers took the high road by casting themselves as earnest businessmen playing a nurturing role in the building of their adopted country.

AMERICA IN 1865: A NEED FOR TEMPERANCE?

After America's first half-century, social reform movements gained regional and national attention through their goal to protect the American family by removing corrupting influences. The violent and masculine world of the early republic was being challenged by reformers who demanded better treatment of women, children, and the aged. The most striking of these social movements was the American Temperance Movement, which wanted to restore sanctity to the American family by eliminating the excessive drinking of alcohol.³ The crusade against alcohol was pictured time and time again as a female attack on the threat to the family.

The "Women's Holy War" image (Figure 1) features women crusaders, some on horseback, smashing vessels of distilled and fermented liquors. The women are fierce and determined, and their banners attest they fight for God, humanity, and America. The most prominent barrels are whiskey, gin, and rum, with wines and beer slightly to the edges of the scene. But all of these vessels yield their product to the righteous axe-wielding warriors. And if temperance was portrayed as female in character, then alcohol producers and drinkers were painted as male.



FIGURE 1: “WOMAN’S HOLY WAR” (1874)

FIGURE 2: ANTI-IMMIGRANT CARTOON (KNOW NOTHING, C. 1850)



FIGURE 3: CENTENNIAL VIEW (1875/1876)



Most historians concede that there was reason to be concerned over alcohol abuse. W. L. Rorabaugh states that by the 1820s, the annual consumption of alcohol was estimated at over four gallons for every man, woman, and child. Alcoholic beverages were commonly found on almost every American table, and beer, whiskey, and gin were readily available in any urban space. Social occasions were fueled by alcoholic drink, women indulged in cocktails or alcohol-based medicines, and youngsters were known to taste their parents' sweet drinks. Rorabaugh's conclusion is that in the early Republic, Americans were essentially "living drunk."⁴

From early frontier life, drinking liquor had become a way for American males to claim their citizenship and manhood.⁵ America's growing class differences further complicated the alcohol issue, as rituals associated with drinking could now separate Americans. The abstainer could point to social reasons for damning the drinker, therefore connecting him or herself with the middle class.⁶ But efforts to elevate lower-class drinkers were threatened when immigrants from northern Europe brought a culture of drink that many working-class Americans could relate to.

THE MENACE OF AN IMMIGRANT DRINKING CULTURE

Before the mid-century waves of immigration, indications were that temperance advocates were making great strides against America's systemic drinking. The American Temperance Society (ATS) proudly announced the numbers of new pledges and institutional changes. Temperance movers also pushed for abstinence abroad: American missionaries in Europe held meetings and claimed that in the British Isles, hundreds of thousands were pledging abstinence.⁷ But the focus of American temperance movers had been the end to distilled liquor drinking and so the lager beer introduced by German immigrants could undermine the serious nature that temperance advocates had conveyed. By the mid-1860s, the *New York Times* was publicly conceding the benignity of lager beer and if Americans paid attention to this message, beer would present a threat to temperance success.⁸

Temperance advocates who originally believed they could convert foreign workers to a sober middle class were disappointed by cultural resistance.⁹ As it became clear that Europeans would not be easily

changed, the temperance movement lashed out against German immigrants and their drinking rituals. In 1859, they published a twenty-five-page treatise railing against the German “Sunday concerts.” Temperance writers accused Germans of getting around a recent New York law prohibiting liquor sales on Sundays. Germans advertised their Sunday “sacred concerts” but the same ads mentioned the availability of cheap lager beer.¹⁰

A self-appointed “Sabbath Committee” acknowledged that Sunday concerts had been a national custom in Germany but they countered that these immigrants had decided to locate in America and had thereby accepted “our institutions, civil and religious.” This acceptance included acquiescing to restraints that Americans deemed necessary to a “government of law,” which meant abandoning any customs offensive to the host country.¹¹ German immigrants accepting American customs would have to respect native Sunday customs, which did not include concerts held in beer halls.¹²

Anti-immigrant discrimination was briefly interrupted by the American Civil War, which gave immigrants an opportunity for patriotic sacrifice. Germans and Irish had been prime groups from which to recruit and New York’s well-known Steuben Regiment paid a \$552 bonus for experienced German soldiers.¹³ But this temporary pro-German sentiment did not prevent German immigrants from being targets of abstainers, as their culture was freighted with lager beer (Figure 2).¹⁴ Though they generally fared better than Irish immigrants, many German arrivals sensed this ambivalence from American natives and were sensitive to temperance rhetoric.¹⁵

Germans were generally stereotyped by Americans as being industrious, serious, and (for the most part) Protestant. German immigrants were also seen as heading to farmlands which seemed to sit well with many Americans, perhaps because German cultural influence appeared less visible than Irish.¹⁶ The *New York Times* cheered that “farming districts of the West afford opportunities,” and advised immigrants to not “tarry in the city where you landed [but] bend your steps to the West.”¹⁷

This call to move beyond New York was heeded by many Germans, who migrated to the Midwest. Few would disagree that America’s future lay to the west after the Civil War the western frontier quickly moved

beyond the Mississippi River.¹⁸ That the West was looking for settlers is evidenced by one booster pamphlet published by Iowa to attract stable populations. Iowa boasted a lower land requirement to achieve homestead status and swore that nowhere else gave people such an “absolute interest in the soil.”¹⁹ There was wheat, corn, oats, barley, rye, and potatoes; a golden opportunity for “young men of the crowded East, where the avenues of manly independence are already closed.” Of foreigners coming to Iowa, Germans numbered the most (38,555), followed by Irish (28,072), and English (11,522).²⁰ This was an opportunity for Germans but their reputation for drink could taint their migration because the spread of lager beer into the American West would be anathema to temperance advocates.

TEMPERANCE’S RENEWED ATTACK ON LAGER BEER

The potential acceptability of lager beer made it imperative that temperance rhetoric be elevated to keep the public’s attention. The consumption of any spirited liquors must be seen as a temptation that served as a dark manifestation of Hell, and temperance images of devils and alcohol were to be employed. In 1833, George Barrel Cheever had set an example for this trope when he published “The Dream,” story of Deacon Jones, a distiller whose business was suffering after being attacked by the temperance movement. Jones was visited by a secretive man offering to help his struggling business and when Jones agreed, devils were employed the very next night to turn the ailing distillery into a profitable brewery.²¹

Cheever’s demons worked and cavorted all night, chanting songs that recalled Macbeth’s witches, and labelling their finished casks with the following:

Best London Porter from Deacon Jones’ Brewery; Pale Ale of the Purest Materials; Temperance Beer from Deacon Jones Brewery; Mild American Porter for Family Use; [and] Pale Ale for the Nursery.²²

The naming of these English brews was critical to Cheever’s message since they mirrored the drinks that some had promoted as acceptable for “family use.” And Cheever made sure to show the demons adding spices, acids, and tar to the brew, a warning that beer’s alleged “softness” could be undermined by impurities added during brewing. This temperance tale

was crafted to publicize that beer was brewed for the same reasons that whiskey was distilled.²³

Another style of temperance writing is seen in Minister James Dunn's subtle critique of the brewing world. Dunn claimed he had been offered management of a brewing establishment that would actually aid temperance reform, because his experiences would show that barley was yielding "wholesome beer and pure ale."²⁴ Dunn allegedly did attend the brewing process to get a first-hand look but then turned this opportunity to show the "real things" that went into beer. He claimed that barley comprised only one-tenth of the final product and that America's best farmland was being used to produce "disease, crime, and perdition."²⁵

Temperance literature had adapted to the brewers' "lesser evil" argument through soft novelettes. In *The Brewer's Fortune*, Mary Dwinell Chellis presented the plight of townspeople employed by local brewer Mr. Ainslie. When Ainslie's brewery burned down the townspeople were left without jobs or any savings, because the brewer had been paying his workers in beer.²⁶ The townspeople had been told that barley was good for them but Chellis reverses this when one character admits that "every drunkard starts with his first glass of beer." The beginning scenes of a productive brewery and pastoral, hearty workers were now shifted to scenes of personal regret and financial loss, brought on by beer.²⁷

Mary Dwinell Chellis was known for her sympathetic and tragic characters, which captured Americans' imaginations. Rather than emotionally chiding Ainslie for his brewery, Chellis shows that even a well-meaning employer could not maintain the beneficial situation. The novelette is weighted with a deep sadness as the townspeople must face a future with no jobs or prospects. The moral is that even if beer was less harmful than spirits, it was not the antidote to intemperance as brewers had argued.²⁸ Chellis told America that there could be no refuge in beer's benignity.

Temperance pushers added this literary front to their already effective use of American electoral politics. They convinced more states to pass laws forcing distillers and brewers to purchase a license unless their product was medicinal. When criticized for going around Congress's power to regulate commerce, temperance champions countered that a state regulating its own commerce could pass laws that checked the

“peace, safety, and well-being of society.” Massachusetts had done exactly that by regulating liquor sales in quantities less than fifteen gallons, despite charges that it violated an American’s freedom to purchase,²⁹ and an 1855 New York law made it illegal to sell intoxicating liquors or transport liquor into the state.³⁰

GERMAN BREWERS DEFEND LAGER BEER

With the effectiveness of the temperance literature and political lobbying, brewers of lager beer needed a strong and public rebuttal. They had an American public that seemed sympathetic to their product, but that public was more and more being frightened by temperance attacks. The *New York Times* had joked that “the German and his beer cannot be parted” and even the “loyal, submissive” German temper was attributed to their “mildly narcotic and largely nutritive national beverage.”³¹ But teetotalers quickly countered that the German beer drinker’s “submissive” mental state stifled any idealism he might have. This was happening despite the German’s reputation as a “model of moderate drinking” and so the temperance movement was showing a nimbleness in rebutting any tolerance toward lager beer.³²

With German acceptance diminishing after the Civil War, brewers publicly announced important things their beverage had brought to America. In 1867, the Congress of United States Brewers met in Chicago and called for lager beer to become America’s beverage. German brewers advertised their beer as the rational solution to the nation’s drinking crisis, condemning the “drunken liquors” of whiskey, brandy, and rum.³³ The congress called these spirits the real enemies of temperance movers because they were cheap and led to American drunkenness. German brewers claimed that their lager beer had already “vastly diminished the consumption of the drunken liquors.”³⁴

Brewers’ congresses soon became the new public sphere in which the liquor question was debated. Meetings held in New York, Boston, Cincinnati, and Cleveland rallied followers with speeches and statistics. The 1872 German Brewers’ Congress (at Turtle Bay Brewery) proclaimed that in the last ten years, investment in the brewing industry in America had jumped from \$1,500,000 to almost \$8,000,000.³⁵ But they warned the public that their craft was threatened by prohibitory liquor

laws in Wisconsin, Illinois, Ohio, and New York. Brewer Frederick Lauer vowed to stop this “fanaticism” by making prohibitory laws a political issue.³⁶

German brewers accelerated their political lobbying and the tenor of meetings got hotter each year. The 1873 Cleveland Brewers’ Congress passed strong resolutions against “actions of the Temperance Party [which were] a source of alarm to brewing interests and the interests of the public.”³⁷ They accused teetotalers of “encroaching on personal liberty, interfering with innocent social customs, and influencing political votes.” The brewers requested the U.S. Congress declare a “proper distinction” between beer and distilled liquors and promised to “secure election of those who look after the brewers.”³⁸

The brewers’ congresses were quickly matching the volume of rhetoric used by the temperance movement. The New England Association of Brewers’ 1874 meeting bristled with heady statistics: twenty-two million bushels of malt and twenty million pounds of hops, harvested from one million acres of land. An estimated 133 breweries made and sold over eight million barrels of beer in 1872, employing laborers from trades such as blacksmiths, coopers, masons, and machinists. Keeping up the political pressure, New England’s brewers asked American political parties to “hurl all would-be moral reformers from their midst.”³⁹

THE 1876 PHILADELPHIA CENTENNIAL

Despite their counter measures played out in public, German brewers were still threatened by the soft novelettes and emotional politics of the temperance movement. They therefore clutched at an opportunity in the mid-1870s to make their argument at America’s first centennial celebration. The 1876 Centennial Exposition was to be held in Philadelphia and was to be a world-class demonstration of America’s technology, industry, and agriculture. German brewers wanted and needed to be there.

Like other nineteenth-century world fairs, America’s Centennial was to be a universe designed to impress and edify. Every industrial or agricultural product moving America’s economy would be placed in its best light and fortified with detailed explanations, guidebooks, and samples of wares. And a scientific approach was essential to impressing the Gilded Age men and women who would attend this paean to American technol-

ogy.⁴⁰ Since technology was a relatively new doorway into the American psyche, brewers at the Centennial would have to showcase their commodity scientifically.

In January 1876, leaders of the American Brewers' Association arrived in Philadelphia to secure their participation. The executive committee was made up of H. H. Reuter, William Marcy, Gustavus Bergner, John Gardner, Henry Clausen, Jacob Ables, and Philip Merkel, and they quickly contracted for a plot of land near the proposed Agricultural Hall.⁴¹ But before they could start, the German brewers were to be stopped by opposition from temperance leaders. In December 1875, the National Temperance Society had announced their resolution against the sale of wine in the Centennial's buildings and grounds. The NTS heightened the pressure by demanding the Centennial's Commissioners "prohibit the sale of all intoxicating beverages in connection with the Exhibition." This would effectively end any chances that German brewers could present their product to the American public.⁴²

Temperance movers increased their visibility by staging an International Temperance Conference in Philadelphia on the eve of the Centennial. Women and men from no less than twelve temperance camps announced plans to form an international union and issued a 700-page series of reports and speeches. The reports contained rebuttals to each assertion made by German brewers, countering statistics on barley and hops production, wage rates, and commercial investment. At this eleventh hour of the Centennial's start, temperance movers tried to derail the brewers' objective, factual approach.

This international conference was designed to revive reformist passions through religion, patriotism, and gender. American government seemed ineffective in stopping the foreign drink culture and so prohibition must be the order of the day through "the aid of women and the blessing of God."⁴³ Gendering had always been in the temperance arsenal but reached a fever pitch at this conference on the Centennial's eve. Brewers were naturally assigned a masculine identity but more damaging, that of Pontius Pilate. One abstainer contrasted the brewers' congresses with temperance congresses: the first which "would crucify Christ, ... the other side all that is Christly, especially the pure true womanhood of the land."⁴⁴

But the international direction being taken by temperance advocates had an unintended consequence in their battle with German brewers. Temperance movers were increasingly turning their zeal toward missionary activity in Europe, gathering abstinence pledges from the British Isles to the Far East.⁴⁵ Seeing Britain's Empire as a pipeline through which to reach a wide drinking world, American temperance women courted and worked with international figures. This positioned America as a model of democracy and activism that could save the rest of the world from drink, but this emphasis on international successes made it seem like these temperance movers were more focused on worldwide triumphs than with American issues.⁴⁶

But temperance pressure on the Centennial Commission was quite real as suggested by early guidebooks printed for the Exhibition. Several guidebooks made no reference to brewers and included a map that showed no Brewers' Building (Figure 3).⁴⁷ Thus early plans for the Centennial did not envision a place for the German brewers to display their product. Instead the German brewers had to rely on the Centennial Commissioners' fortitude to decide between temperance cries and the Exhibition's goals. Commissioners were in a difficult position, as few politicians could ignore pressure from the American Temperance Movement.

How were the Commissioners to decide this emotional issue? The answer is suggested in the minutes taken during their first planning meetings in 1872. Twenty-nine commissioners met in Philadelphia in early-March and hammered out the basic expectations for the Centennial. The first day, Chairman David Atwood (former mayor of Madison, Wisconsin) wished that "all sections of the country should be considered." He felt the Centennial would only succeed when "harmony throughout the nation" prevailed so that "the whole people may cooperate zealously" in the enterprise.⁴⁸

Over three days in March, the commissioners presented their aspirations for the event. They took note of the successes or failures of past world fairs: the 1851 London Exhibition, the Paris Exposition of 1867, and the 1853 New York Worlds' Exhibition of Industry. The commissioners agreed that New York had been a failure because it had not emphasized the products of mining and agriculture. On the other hand, Paris and

London had succeeded because they “promoted the material and moral well-being of the people” through an appreciation of “labor as the basis of national wealth.”⁴⁹

Orestes Cleveland (former mayor of Jersey City, NJ) proposed that what would elevate the Philadelphia fair would be the triumph of American agriculture. Commissioner Cleveland said that if the Centennial enlisted all America’s states and territories, it would arouse in “our own people a sense of agriculture’s great value.”⁵⁰ This inclusive theme was repeated in each meeting, affirming America as a “home for the downtrodden and oppressed of all climes.” The celebration must include “men of all races, creed, and pursuits” who were immigrating every year to the United States.⁵¹ To alienate one group of immigrants would push the Centennial in a direction that the commissioners pledged not to permit.

If agriculture and labor were to be highlighted in 1876, Germans working in America should figure prominently and by extension, German brewers supplying America with lager should be accommodated. The Centennial commissioners made a brave decision to stick to their original aspirations despite the public protests from abstainers. Making their choice easier was that German brewers had already announced themselves as boosters of American progress. Another factor helping the commissioners to decide against temperance protests was the presence of the Centennial’s chief architect, Hermann J. Schwarzmänn, who discretely agreed to design and build the Brewers’ Building.⁵²

Hermann Schwarzmänn was born in Austria but moved to Germany to attend building trade schools. After arriving in America, he was appointed assistant engineer for Fairmount Park in Philadelphia and over the next five years he supervised the building of the park’s art gallery and dining saloon. When Fairmount Park’s chief engineer fell ill, Schwarzmänn was made “engineer of design” and so he was well-positioned to help fund and design the Brewers’ Building.

Days before the Centennial was to open, Brewers’ Association President Frederick Lauer gave an impassioned speech before the Brewers’ Congress. Titling his speech “Fanaticism and Immigration,” Lauer reminded his audience that the American public seemed insistent on stimulating beverages “to which they have become accustomed.”



**FIGURE 4: H. CLAUSEN
BREWERY ADVERTISEMENT
(1879)**

**FIGURE 5: LAGER BEER
ADVERTISEMENT (1879)**



**FIGURE 6: ANHEUSER BUSCH
ADVERTISEMENT (1892)**

German brewers would be hypocrites not to offer this, and they should in fact be seen as “honest and respectable citizens” rescuing America from whiskey.⁵³

Lauer made a point of applauding the Centennial commissioners for resisting the “protests and remonstrance against the admission of the brewers.” They should be praised for taking that “wise, liberal act” which was in keeping with the very liberties that America was celebrating in Philadelphia. It was now up to the brewers to ensure their exhibition was deemed worthy by the public, who would in turn bestow that worth on the brewers.⁵⁴ Lauer’s speech was timed with the Centennial’s opening to rally German brewers at this opportune moment.

The Brewers’ Building approved by the commissioners was built near the Agricultural building to emphasize beer’s attachment to the soil. Though relatively small, the building accommodated over 200 vendors, a large storage area, and a scale model of a brewery.⁵⁵ There were grain separators, malt shovels, and hop presses, with engineering displays that showed the workings of malt kilns, grain boxes, and beer wagons.⁵⁶

Thus German brewers were presented with a one-time opportunity to make their case to a ready audience. Their promotion needed to be more than an advertisement for beer; it would have to be a thought-provoking story of technical precision and agricultural stewardship. The brewers’ exhibits would require a well-crafted booklet showing the modernity and purity of the brewers’ craft and they used this “teaching moment” to edify the American public about lager beer. Even their use of the term “malt liquor” gave the brewing craft a more scientific veneer.

The brewers committee listed in the booklet was essentially a “who’s who” of America’s German brewing industry.⁵⁷ The Statistics Committee was made up of editors of *American Bierbrauer* (A. Schwartz), *American Brewers’ Gazette* and *Malt & Hop Trades Review* (John Flintoff), and *The Sentinel* (Louis Schade). The Malt Liquor Committee were T. C. Lyman, George Ehret, James Flanagan, Henry Ferris, Christopher Hueffel, W. A. Miles, Philip Merkel, E. J. W. Woerz, William Howard, Joseph Liebmann, John Ballantine, and Adolph Schalk. This list of notables suggests that the German brewing industry had much to gain with a strong presence at the Philadelphia Centennial.

The brewers announced up front that theirs was a product of “art, science, and industry [that] either from ignorance or prejudice has many enemies.”⁵⁸ As necessary to the common weal “as a butcher, a baker, a builder,” the brewer bolstered American agriculture through buying thirty-two million bushels of barley. Hops production was at twenty-five million dollars, and brewers purchased American trees for barrels and vats.⁵⁹ German brewers cast themselves as hard-nosed businessmen who had invested over 165 million dollars into their facilities and ingredients.

The brewers employed a softer tone as they pointed to the remarkable “affinity existing between bread and beer.” Beer mixed mashed barley with hot water and hops, resulting in a product with nutritious malt-extract, uncontaminated water, carbonic acid, and a low percentage (3½) of alcohol.⁶⁰ Malt-liquor (beer) was also appropriate for the workplace, as beer had been used by European artisans who “work hard in the morning and afternoon, with a glass of ale.”⁶¹ Beer gave to a large class of people “energy necessary to digest food enough to exist upon,” turning workers into “useful members of society, instead of mere drones.”⁶²

These bold claims placed lager beer as a nutritive beverage for a modern American workforce, yet some would still deny this beverage to society. The brewers cited Englishman John Stuart Mill who had warned against a state tyrannizing a people’s rights to make choices and accept the consequences. From this contemporary philosophy, the German brewers concluded that: malt liquor was beneficial to the human condition, its production and sale ought to be encouraged, and no state should interfere with the “domestic habits and enjoyment of a people.”⁶³ Recasting themselves as forward-looking American boosters, the brewers side-stepped the temperance and nativist labelling of immigrants as unproductive drinkers.⁶⁴

THE DECADES AFTER 1876

The German brewers’ intentional and focused campaign did affect America’s view of lager beer. A year after the Philadelphia Centennial, the *New York Times* published a half-page article on the history, industry, and success of German lager. The article relied on industry facts and business statistics and never defaulted to stereotypes of Germans or beer-drinkers. One column was dedicated to the history of lager beer in

America, another traced a “day in the life” of a brewery worker, and a third column showed the profitability of German brewers.⁶⁵ This factual information was printed in the *Sunday Times*, moving it from the headline pages to the cultural interest sections.

The significance of this 1877 newspaper story is that it treated German brewers the same as other American businesses. Early brewers’ names were printed without relying on humor and across the page, the work of German brewers was portrayed in a sympathetic tone. Many brewers had started with little capital but within a few years had founded “gigantic establishments, doing an enormous business.”⁶⁶ Hoffman & Merkle had started brewing 9,000 barrels of lager in 1867 and were brewing 19,000 barrels by 1873. The *Times* concluded it must be “patent to everyone that brewers amass fortunes more rapidly than any other class of manufacturers.”⁶⁷ That kind of success clearly fit in with the American dream.

An 1879 advertisement of the Henry Clausen brewery (Figure 4) is illustrative of the changed image German brewers had achieved. The full bags of barley malt and cases of hops sit atop a solid base of stone, backed by tents of flowering hops. The impish character intrigues the viewer with a glass of beer from which he has apparently received strength and stamina. While the position can be considered provocative, the character is surrounded by serious American agricultural product which lends the advertisement a positive message of bounty.

The decade after the Centennial saw a shift in news coverage about lager beer, with a noticeable absence of temperance or nativist stereotyping. In 1878, the *New York Times* evaluated the quality of lager beer in America. They reported that to out-produce competitors, some breweries reduced fermentation time by adding extra yeast at higher temperatures. The *Times* reporter wondered if “nine-tenths of the beer sold in America would be allowed into markets in Germany?”⁶⁸ That this question was even asked about German lager demonstrates a significant shift in American attitude from the drinking debate fifteen years prior. Temperance and nativist attacks on German brewers were being temporarily sidelined by the public’s attention on beer’s measurable quality.

German brewers in America continued this successful strategy after the momentum gained in Philadelphia. They brought the malt liquor issue

before an 1878 Joint Special Committee of Congress, opposing laws that would classify beer along with distilled spirits. The brewers exuded a new confidence when asserting that the question of how to lessen drinking hinged on “not a moral but an intellectual difference.”⁶⁹ They stated as fact that anyone attempting to stop the human instinct for stimulating beverages was bound to fail. Rather, a wise statesman could prevent its abuse by “seeking to guide it into the safest channels.”⁷⁰ The brewers, of course, concluded that the safest channel included lager beer.

The testimony before the Joint Special Committee relied on statistics and scientific links to agriculture. Temperance advocates had criticized the “wasting” of a barley crop on beer but the brewers pointed out that barley would not have been grown otherwise. Instead, barley had become America’s seventh agricultural staple, yielding the highest profit per acre after potatoes and tobacco. American hops production had increased from two million bushels in 1864 to nine million in 1877 with leftovers being sold for livestock feed.⁷¹

Taking a page from their temperance critics, the brewers employed doctors’ expert testimony. One Dr. John Reynolds of Boston testified that he had witnessed people getting off distilled spirits through drinking beer, while many who did not “have taken to opium.”⁷² Dr. Henry Bowditch presented a report from colleagues regarding levels of intoxication around the world. His conclusion was that “the love of stimulants is one of the strongest of human instincts” and that German beer could be used without “any apparent injury to the individual.”⁷³ Ten years later, Dr. Bowditch would even claim that Germans were destined to be “the greatest benefactors of this country, by bringing to us their lager beer.”⁷⁴

Thus by the late-1880s, German brewers had shifted the alcohol debate from an emotional crusade to an objective and scientific study. They advocated lager beer as a way to decrease American drunkenness and increase the morale of an industrializing workforce. Beer was now called a national drink, a relatively healthy drink, and even a “family drink” (Figure 5). Temperance crusaders would now have to fight beer drinking on a more objective front, one that they were less comfortable with. In one sense, the German brewers had stolen their thunder and the teetotalers were placed on the defensive.

A fine summation of German brewers' overcoming temperance attacks is found in George Ehret's 1891 illustrated history of beer. This book served as a history lesson, a plug for Ehret's Hell Gate Brewery, and a nod toward the future of beer brewing in America. The last twenty-five pages are dedicated to a pastoral picture of America's hops and barley growing, with the assistance that brewers had given those endeavors. Ehret estimated that in 1891, the United States harvested 200,000 bales of hops, paying pickers \$7.50 per bale harvested. At this rate, Native Indian hops pickers in Oregon or Washington could make \$100 from a single harvest.⁷⁵

Ehret's statistics for America's barley production were more impressive. Between 1867 and 1888, barley cultivation had risen from a little over one million acres to just under three million. Prices per bushel were on the increase, with the 1875 crop valued at almost thirty-eight million dollars. American consumption of barley was over seventy-three million bushels, meaning the percentage of malt in their beer was equal to that in Germany and Great Britain.⁷⁶ A contemporary reader would not have missed that America's hops and barley production was tied to the increase in German immigration and the consumption of lager beer.

Whether read by brewers or laymen, Ehret's publication exhibited a renewed sense of confidence. The numbers of course promoted the brewing industry but also discreetly connected German lager with the revitalization of American agriculture. The book is illustrated with many pastoral scenes of growing, harvesting, malting, and barrel making. By 1891, this style of book could be compared with the promotional literature used by any other American industry. Ehret's book made no reference to the temperance movement.

CONCLUSION

By the mid-nineteenth century, German brewers were threatened economically and socially by attacks from the American temperance movement. The simple fact that lager beer was less inebriating than whiskey was not enough to free the brewers from public criticism, and beer sales would have decreased if brewers had only defended their product as less harmful. Instead German brewers turned the tables on temperance movers by recasting themselves as new promoters of America's well-being. This

was done at first through the annual brewers' congresses which defended lager beer through impressive statistics that showed an increase in America's barley and hops cultivation.

Yet temperance advocates were not silenced and they soon undermined the "masculine" facts presented by brewers with literature that reached Americans on different levels. The 1876 Centennial Exposition gave German brewers an opportunity to display their craft to an available audience of Gilded Age Americans, which they did by showing their craft's industrial precision as well as statistics. They reminded Americans of lager beer's connection to native farming and to those who worked the soil. This softened approach was something that temperance advocates could not easily rebut in late nineteenth-century America.

The message presented in 1876 was promoted through American newspapers, giving German brewers a brief advantage in the liquor debate. Their self-promotion as supporters of American values shone, when compared with temperance movers who seemed preoccupied with international victories. This zealous international crusade against alcohol made teetotalers appear as a group out of step with the needs of the American working person.⁷⁷ Ironically, temperance movers were being seen as being ambivalent towards American laborers and farmers, while German brewers worked toward the American dream.

The brewers' harkening to rustic American values helped to "feminize" their image as nurturers of American workers and their soil. This made German brewers the providers of sustenance for a future American workforce, making them appear more American than the American Temperance Society. This aggressive strategy would not be permanent, as teetotalers eventually did achieve national Prohibition in the 1920s. But the German brewers' efforts did manage to shield brewers from temperance attacks in the late nineteenth-century (figure 6).

— Jeffery R. Hankins
Louisiana Tech University

NOTES

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