A PREVIEW FROM PART 2: THE RISE OF THE MAJOR BREWERIES

NATURALLY BREWED NATURALLY BETTER

A HISTORY 1859 – 2018

THE HISTORIC BREWERIES OF DULUTH & SUPERIOR

TONY DIERCKINS & PETE CLURE

Zenith City Press

A PREVIEW FROM PART 2: THE RISE OF THE MAJOR BREWERIES

Northern Brewing Co. employees in front of the brewery, ca. 1898. [P. CLURE COLLECTION]

A RESHUFFLING IN SUPERIOR (1894–1900)

As things came together for Hoch and Meeske and Fitger and Anneke in the Zenith City of the Unsalted Seas, in the Eye of the Northwest Klinkert and Rueping were falling apart. The Panic of '93 had taken a toll, and in July 1894 the *Superior Evening Telegram* mentioned that Louis Rueping had applied for receivership of the firm, implying it stood on very unstable financial footing. Yet the following September the same newspaper ran a lengthy, glowing description of the brewery, calling it "one of Superior's thriving industries." It mentioned that Klinkert operated its own cooperage to make barrels and that "as far as the process of making beer is concerned the Klinkert plant can be surpassed by none in the state." One innovation employed by the brewery was a magnetic fork placed at the feeding end of the grinding mill to catch "nails or pieces of steel wire which may be scattered in the grain."

The story mentioned that the brewery, of course, sourced none but the finest ingredients, including hops and malt from California. Klinkert had also begun to use maize instead of raw corn or rice "for sweetening the beer" and added that maize "gives the beer a lighter color and is much pleasanter to the taste... [and] does away with the use of sweet malt." Klinkert suggested that he enjoyed "large retail patronage" because he never let beer leave his brewery before it had aged six months, boasting that "I have always made it my business to see that no beer leaves my place until it is well seasoned." Shortly thereafter, Klinkert announced his retirement from the brewing business, and for a brief time the brewery was called L. Rueping & Co.

The *Superior Inland Ocean* announced on February 19, 1898, that "the old Klinkert Brewing Company has been entirely reorganized under the name Northern Brewing Company. The incorporators are L. Rueping, Frederick Rueping, Fred J. Rueping and L. A. Erhart. The capital stock is $150,000. Mr. Erhart is the manager and is now living in Superior. He was formerly the mayor of Fond du Lac, Wis." Hoverson suggests Louis Erhart actually resigned his position as mayor to run the new brewing operation in Superior. Besides managing the plant, Erhart also served as the company's secretary and treasurer. There is nothing to indicate Erhart had any experience operating a brewery; in Fond du Lac he had owned and operated L. A. Erhart Cigars. Northern first labeled its bottled beer as Northern Special Brew.

Klinkert had sold his interest in the brewery to Rueping, but news of his retirement was premature. In fact, a month before the old Klinkert Brewery became Northern, he had leased the former Kenyon Woolen Mill at Twenty-Fourth Street and Scranton Avenue and traveled to Chicago to purchase brewing machinery. In May the *Superior Inter-Ocean* ran this description of the repurposed facility, to be named Klinkert Brewing & Malt:

> The old woolen mill building...has been thoroughly remodeled and equipped with the latest machinery for the manufacture of beer. The capacity of the plant at

Left: Label for beer bottled by the West Superior Brewing Company in the 1890s.

Right: Labels for beer bottled by the Northern Brewing Company, ca. 1898–1906. [J. STEINER COLLECTION]

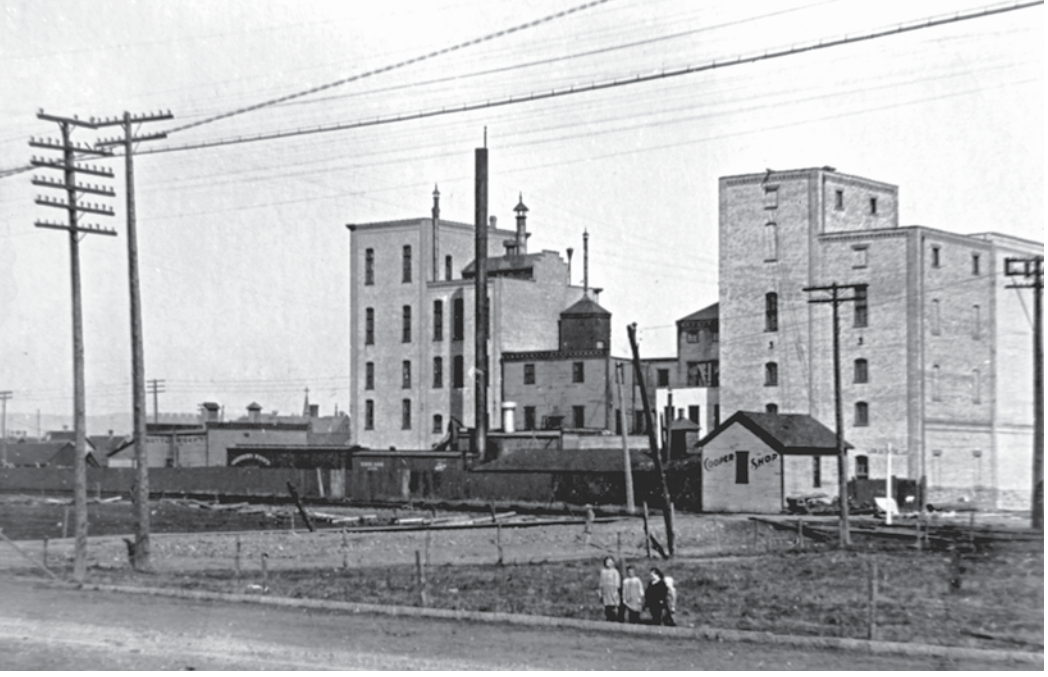
> present is fifty barrels per day, or 15,000 barrels per annum. There are thirty storage vats with a storage capacity of 2,000 barrels. The first and second floors are filled with machinery and other appliances, while the third floor will be used for storage purposes.... The plant will give employment to fifteen men.

Klinkert spent $30,000 turning the woolen mill into a brewery. The facility's capacity of just fifteen thousand barrels a year indicates that Klinkert did not intend to compete with the two large Duluth breweries and hoped to carve out enough of the Superior market to feed his family and workforce, which were one and the same. The Klinkert clan made the new brewery a family affair. Ernest and Albert had worked at the old brewery in various capacities, from engineer to bottler to bookkeeper. With the new facility, John managed the plant while Albert served as head brewer, and Ernest as secretary and treasurer while Lillian did the bookkeeping. John Klinkert's brother-in-law Frank Pabst came onboard as vice president. Pabst had been in Fargo with Klinkert and made the move to Superior where before joining the new Klinkert brewery he operated the Exposition Saloon at 1222 Tower Avenue.

As the century came to a close, three breweries operated in Superior and the city's population had grown to over 36,000 people, making it the second-largest city in Wisconsin (but still far behind Milwaukee). Smaller Wisconsin communities had many more breweries, but they did not have two large commercial breweries making beer just across the state line. Fitger & Co., DB&M, and several large breweries in Milwaukee and La Crosse, Wisconsin, all operated saloons in Superior (see "Breweries and the Saloon Business," page 50).

The West Superior Brewing company struggled to keep up with increased competition, and Bernard Schwanekamp could no longer turn to his original financial benefactor, brother-in-law Joseph Hennes. The Houghton businessman, described as "one of the greatest merchants of the copper district," died in October 1897; he had broken his back when he was knocked out of his carriage by a branch as he drove beneath an overhanging tree. He left his widow and eight children $250,000—about $7.3 million today—but little or none, apparently, went to his brother-in-law.

On the first of November 1900, the *Evening Telegram* reported a merger between the West Superior Brewery and Northern Brewing. The article quoted both Schwanekamp and Erhart, who cited several reasons, including a rise in labor cost and the federal tax on beer, which had doubled from one to two dollars a barrel. But the main reason was outside competition and the local saloon men who operated their



Above: The back of the Northern Brewing Co. facilities, ca. 1902. [Douglas County Historical Society]

Right: An early label for Northern's Blue Label beer. [J. Steiner Collection]

tied houses. Schwanekamp said that together West Superior and Northern, including its days as the first Klinkert Brewery, had together lost about $65,000 in the previous ten years, including West Superior's entire original investment. They weren't the only Wisconsin breweries that suffered through the Panic of '93. Between 1890 and 1900, thirty-seven Wisconsin breweries had closed, dropping the state's breweries to 176, a decrease of nearly 18 percent.

Consolidation would reduce labor and management costs. Brewing would move to Northern and the West Superior facility would be used for cold storage. Schwanekamp would focus on expanding business in Superior. Erhart assured the public the operation had plenty of capital to work with, but asked for its help as well, explaining that the company desired "to make the industry a success, but in order to do this it must have the solid support of the citizens and saloon men to accomplish these results." That year Erhart hired John R. Kuehlthau as brewmaster. At about this same time Northern started bottling its flagship beer, Blue Label.

NORTHERN GROWS & KLINKERT CLOSES (SUPERIOR, 1901–1909)

Northern found the support it was seeking from Superior's booming population, and in 1901 announced that a Milwaukee architect was busy at work on plans for a "fine brick and stone building for brewing purposes" that would double Northern's capacity. Newspapers reported that the new, "much larger" brewery along Catlin Avenue would be "modern in every detail." Plans changed the next year, calling for an addition to the brewery and the construction of a large warehouse.

The brewery promised its revamped facility would be "the best in this section of the country." It could produce 25,000 barrels a year and would employ thirty-five men. The *News Tribune* reported that while Northern had a sales branch in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, and its beer was sold from southern Wisconsin to western Minnesota, the "major portion of the product of the brewery is consumed in Superior."

With the expanded plant, the old West Superior Brewing Company's Hammond Avenue complex was no longer needed for storage. In 1902 Northern sold it to National

Boiler Works, which refit the facility to make and repair boilers. (National later became Whitney Boiler works; today the site is home to Allstate Peterbilt of Superior.)

Despite the bigger brewery, Northern couldn't keep up with demand. The next year it grew again, adding a new, five-story brick brew-and-mill house and a three-story malt house, with a corner tower, on the site of the old bottling house. When complete, the new facility stretched 510 feet along Eighth Street and 160 feet along Caitlin Avenue. Its owners boasted that it would be capable of producing 100,000 barrels a year and would likely employ sixty men when operating at its peak. (Other reports put the brewery's annual capacity at 20,000 barrels). The brewery said it had invested $700,000. In the end, the brewhouse stood four stories high and the malt house was never built.

Lithographic postcard of Superior's Northern Brewing Company, ca. 1905. [HARTEL FAMILY COLLECTION]

Within three years market growth required a new storehouse and another addition. The firm also purchased property for a new bottling works along Eighth Street, but construction was delayed for several years. When it was complete, the brewery installed glass-lined storage tanks purchased from Anheuser-Busch.

Besides its equipment, Northern invested in real estate, buying up Superior properties "suitable for saloon purposes" for its own tied houses. Beginning in 1906 the company went on a spending spree, buying up Superior hotels and saloons and building even more saloons. By 1909 Northern owned so much real estate it had become Superior's largest depositor of property tax.

As Northern expanded its size and market, Klinkert Brewing & Malt appeared content to stay small and local. Both the business and the family took a hit in April 1904 when Albert unexpectedly died at thirty-two years of age. The brewery remained a true family business, as daughters Juliette and Molly and son Adam began working for the brewery, and they all lived in a house next door. Frank Pabst, while still serving as the brewery's vice president, had moved to Montgomery, Alabama, to work as brewmaster for the Montgomery Brewing Company.

While his children helped run his business, in 1905 John Klinkert began having trouble with the local constabulary. That April he was charged with selling liquor to minors, specifically "one eighth of a keg of beer for $1 to six boys whose ages range from 14 to 17 years." Klinkert pleaded guilty and paid a $25 fine.

The next year Klinkert purchased the property and buildings he had been leasing since 1898, planning to increase the plant's capacity, but he couldn't keep out of trouble. In January 1907 Klinkert was again charged with providing liquor to a minor, even though the keeper of one of

BREWERIES & THE SALOON BUSINESS

American saloons prior to Prohibition were often unclean and unsavory places. While some saloons, particularly those within upscale hotels, could be rather posh affairs adorned with expensive furnishings and artwork, most were much more modest, working-class affairs housed in poorer sections of a city.

Since most communities banned women from saloons, men didn't feel the need to be on their best behavior. They cursed, and fought, and spit—chewing tobacco was popular, and spittoons were everywhere. At the turn of the century many saloons installed long, trough-like spittoons along the bottom of the bar, some with running water. Patrons often used them as urinals.

Duluth allowed women in saloons until 1897, but they had to inconspicuously enter through a side door, as unescorted women in saloons were often assumed to be prostitutes. It also provided direct access to the back room to purchase beer or liquor and take it home. Some stayed and socialized, but did not enter the bar room, where they were generally unwelcome. After the law changed, women found in saloons faced a fine of up to $100 or ninety days in jail.

Since much of their product was sold in saloons, brewers found owning saloons quite lucrative. Nearly every brewery had its own attached "brewery saloon" for retail sales, and most also built or purchased saloons throughout their sales territory. Until laws changed, an agent working for the brewery purchased the liquor license, and a saloonkeeper was brought in to operate the establishment, often as nrewery employe. These were called "tied houses."

Independent saloon owners could find themselves tied to a brewery as well. Some entered agreements with breweries that provided a deep discount but demanded the saloon sell no other brand. If patrons didn't like the beer, the saloon had little recourse. Those saloons that remained truly independent paid higher wholesale prices for beer than did tied houses.

In 1902 nearly half of Duluth's 164 saloons operated as tied houses. That June the *Duluth News Tribune* reported that the city had denied liquor licenses to agents of breweries in an attempt to "prevent breweries from owning saloons to the detriment of the independent saloon man who has his money invested in his business." A measure ruling that only those who owned a liquor license could operate a saloon failed in council.

Duluth's liquor license issue came to a head in 1908. Republican Roland D. Haven, who ran an antisaloon campaign, won the mayor's seat by defeating Emil A. Tessman, the choice of the "saloon men of Duluth." Soon thereafter a study revealed that a dozen brewery agents owned half of Duluth's saloon licenses. To end this "monopoly" Duluth passed an ordinance declaring that "no liquor licenses shall be granted to employees or agents of any brewery." It had little effect. While saloonkeepers purchased their own liquor licenses, breweries often covered the fee and maintained ownership of the facility and its furnishings. The saloonkeeper leased everything and owned nothing more than the license and the clothes on his back, thus remaining obligated to serve only the brewery's beer.

In Superior, breweries could still buy liquor licenses, and breweries in Milwaukee, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Duluth purchased most of the 154 the city handed out in 1908. By then Superior's Northern Brewing Co. owned so many saloons it paid more property tax than any other business in town. A new law restricted liquor licenses to businesses incorporated in Wisconsin and Michigan's Upper Peninsula, forcing out Fitger's, Hamm's, and the St. Louis brewers. Duluth Brewing & Malting, whose investors all hailed from Marquette, had filed its incorporation papers in Michigan, making it exempt from the law.

During the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, local elections on both sides of the bay often centered on temperance issues, pitting Wets against Drys. Dry factions accused breweries and saloons of engaging in political meddling; similar scenarios played out across the nation.

In 1911 the number of Duluth saloons peaked at 187 when the population stood at 78,466, below the state regulation of one saloon per 500 residents. In 1916, when Duluth voted itself dry, that number was down to 148. Superior had 40,384 residents and 161 saloons at its peak in 1912, just over the Badger state's limit of one saloon for every 250 citizens. When Superior first went dry in 1916, it closed 145 saloons. Only 66 opened in 1917, and in 1918 the city dried itself out again.

Klinkert's six tied saloons had actually poured the drinks. He was acquitted after a witness failed to appear. In July he was arrested for selling beer direct to consumers, and soon after Arthur Zimmerman, a Klinkert employee, was arraigned on the same charge. Zimmerman had actually been set up, selling beer to undercover police on a Sunday. Superior had recently enacted an ordinance prohibiting saloons from operating on Sundays. Zimmerman's trial would be a test case in the argument over whether breweries could sell direct to consumers and if so, should the same Sunday prohibition apply to brewery sales. Zimmerman was fined $50, but the brewery appealed. The following January police again

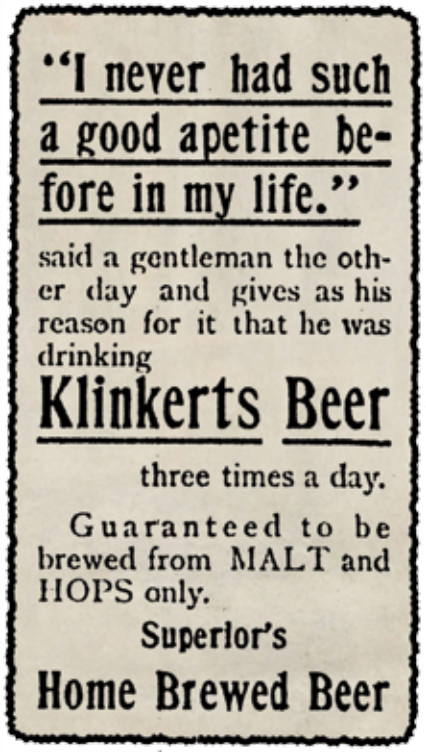
arrested Klinkert for selling beer direct to a consumer on a Sunday. But while Zimmerman had waived his right to a jury trial, Klinkert decided to place his fate in the hands of his peers. On the stand Klinkert admitted he did not have a liquor license and had sold beer on a Sunday.

His attorney argued that Klinkert would have obtained a proper license if he could have applied for one, but another new ordinance forbade the city from issuing new liquor licenses until 1911. The city attorney countered that even if a brewery had a retail license, it would be unfair to saloonkeepers to allow breweries to sell on Sundays. Despite his own testimony the jury found Klinkert not guilty, but the larger issue remained unresolved. To stop Sunday sales, Superior slapped an injunction on the brewery.

The day before his acquittal, Klinkert lost a lawsuit brought by a saloonkeeper William Thompson for misrepresenting the ownership of a retail liquor license. That summer, Superior's city council reviewed all of the municipality's liquor licenses and refused to reissue licenses to four saloonkeepers, including Thompson, forcing Klinkert to close the Iowa Avenue saloon Thompson operated.

John Klinkert must have grown weary of liquor laws when the Northern Pacific Railway offered to buy his brewing complex two weeks later. The railroad was expanding its Superior yards and had purchased land adjacent to the brewery. The *News Tribune* reported NP had offered Klinkert $60,000—worth over $1.6 million today. If the deal went through, the fifty-nine-year-old brewer would retire.

Instead, according to the *Evening Telegram*, in January 1909 NP paid Klinkert about $35,000 for the facilities and property, and Duluth Brewing & Malting purchased the brewing equipment, horses, wagons, and saloons for $25,000. In June, workers demolished the former brewery and woolen mill. The Northern Brewing Company stood alone as Superior's only commercial brewery.



Almost exactly a year after Klinkert Brewing & Malt closed, Frank Pabst, who had severed his ties with the brewery in 1907 following the death of his wife, Margaret, killed himself in Montgomery. He was forty-three years old. Alabama had just gone dry, but breweries could still make beer to sell in other states. Loss of their local audience forced Alabama's breweries to make drastic budget reductions, including cutting its highest-paid staff. Pabst's ongoing despair for the loss of his wife and an unstable financial future, *News Tribune* speculated, led to his suicide. He left behind a thirteen-year-old son, Henry, who was raised by relatives in Hibbing.

John Klinkert died in 1915 of complications following surgery. He was eulogized by his fellow Elk Solon Perrin, who said that "in Germany, [Klinkert] was a German. In Milwaukee, he was a German-American. After he came to Superior in 1890, he was a just an industrious, successful American."

Left: A newspaper ad for Klinkerts beer, ca. 1905. [ZENITH CITY PRESS]

Above: Ernest Klinkert, son of brewery founder John Klinkert, poses before a false backdrop while donning a dandy fur coat and smoking a cigar, date unknown. [J. ANDREWS COLLECTION]

Top: Fitger's employees in front of the brewery, ca. 1900.

Right: Percy Anneke (left) and August Fitger in their office, 1903. [C&R JOHNSON COLLECTION]

FITGER'S KEEPS GROWING (1900–1909)

When the century turned, nearly fifty thousand people lived in Duluth, and before the decade was out that number would rise to just shy of 78,500, which greatly expanded the beer market. Fitger & Co. and Duluth Brewing & Malting both responded by expanding their operations to keep up with demand and competition from large breweries in Milwaukee and St. Paul. St. Paul's Theo. Hamm Brewing Co. was particularly aggressive at the Head of the Lakes, and Milwaukee's Val. Blatz Brewing Co. built several buildings in Duluth. As the century began, Minnesota was home to eighty-five breweries. A. Fitger & Co.'s capacity had reached 75,000 barrels a year, making it the fourth largest in the state. At 45,000 barrels a year, about 5,000 less than the company claimed, DB&M was the seventh largest. Twin Cities' giants Hamm's and the Minneapolis Brewing Co.—which later became Grain Belt—topped the list with 500,000 barrels each, followed by Gluek's, another Minneapolis brewer, at 150,000.

Fitger & Co. started out the century with a construction project that would turn out to symbolize the renovations that marked the next ten years—and still stands today as the landmark brewery's most recognizable feature: a 135-foot chimney the *News Tribune* described as "two stacks in one." While the paper assured readers Fitger's was not the tallest smokestack in Duluth (that honor fell to the 208-foot metal chimney of the Great Northern Power Company, predecessor to today's Minnesota Power), its design was the most innovative. Using 160,000 bricks, masons built two chimneys, one encircling the other. Single-wall chimneys were exposed to heat on the inside and cold on the outside, which over the years produced cracks and leaks. Since the outer chimney was not exposed to heat, it could last longer without cracking. A gap of several inches separated the two chimneys, allowing the outer layer to sway during heavy winds without damaging the inner layer. (See photos page 97 and 180.)

The next year the Lake Superior Brewery spent $22,840 on a new four-story brew-and-mill house along Superior Street. Drawn by Chicago architect Louis Lehle, the plans called for an all steel-and-concrete structure faced with local bluestone and trimmed with brownstone to match the stock house. Lehle and his sons specialized in breweries and designed facilities for more than sixteen beer manufacturers, including the Minneapolis Brewing Co.

The new brew-and-mill house was built adjacent to the original 1881 brewery, and its equipment was upgraded at the same time. Improvements included a new 240-barrel copper kettle which the newspaper described as being "as shining and bright as a brand new copper penny—inside as well as outside." The kettle had a diameter of nearly fifteen feet and, when covered, stood seventeen feet tall.

With a new brewing facility, Fitger and Anneke decided it was time they invested in a new brewmaster. The pair had already gone through four brewmasters—including John Beier, Joseph Besser, and Richard Sippel—dismissing them, according to Johnson, "for being too bossy, conceited, lazy, or impish."

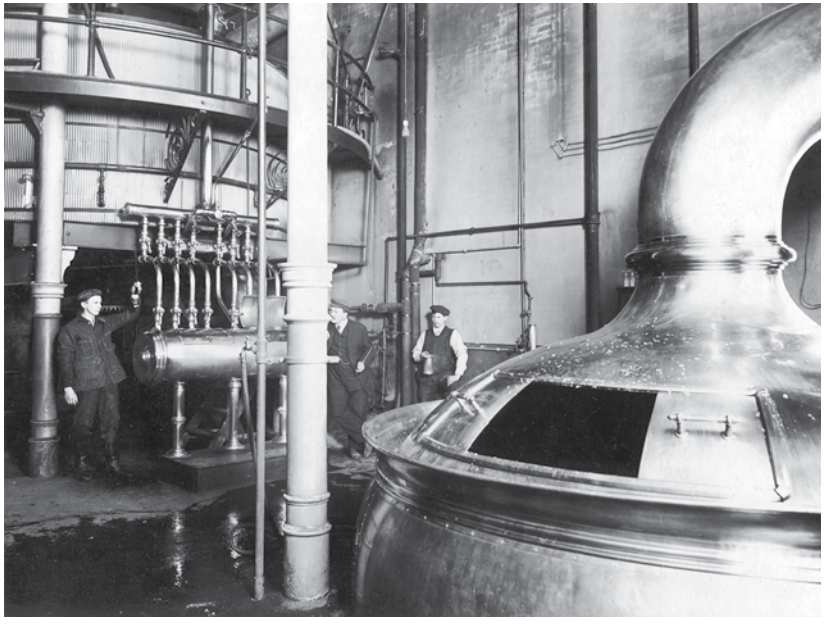
They found John Beerhalter working in a brewery in St. Louis, just as Fitger had done. Beerhalter was born in Germany in 1874 and immigrated to the U.S. in 1891 after spending a few years working for a German brewery. He attended Chicago's Wahl-Henius Institute of Fermentology and excelled academically, reportedly earning the highest scores the school had ever recorded. After graduating, he took a job with Anheuser-Busch. He came to Duluth as a twenty-eight-year-old widower and the single father of seven-year-old William, four-year-old Clara, and three-year-old Richard. While his surname seemed to symbolize his profession, it actually translates to "berry holder."

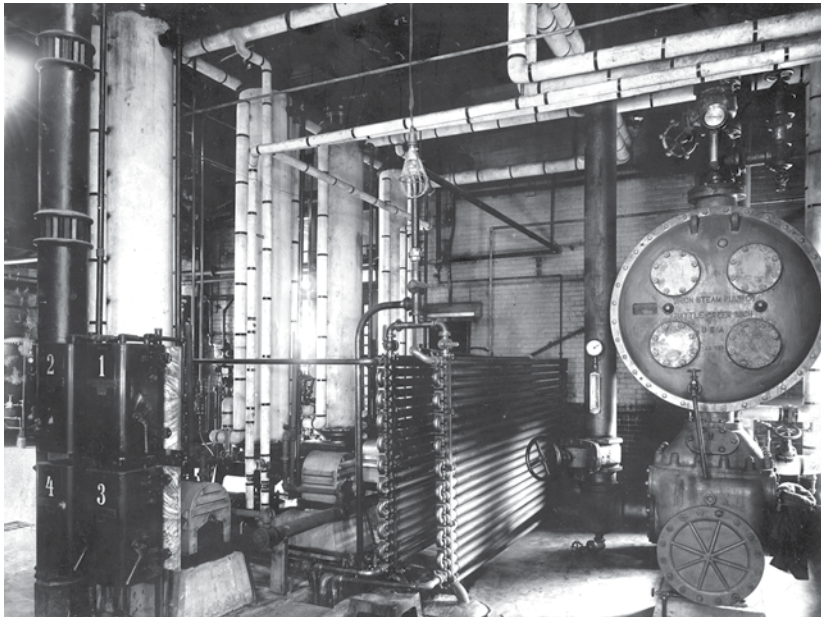
Johnson describes Beerhalter as a puzzle solver: "He had a knack for finding problems in the brewing process and remedying them." He must have found many issues with the Lake Superior Brewery, because during his first four years the company remodeled both stock houses, the boiler house, and even the new brew-and-mill house. Along

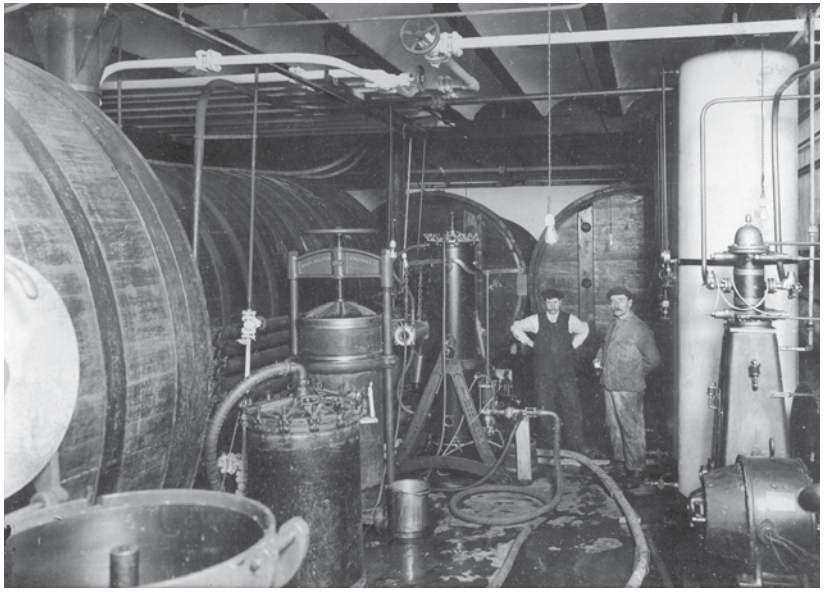
Top: Fitger's after the new brewery and stock house was built and the original brewery was turned into the bottle house.

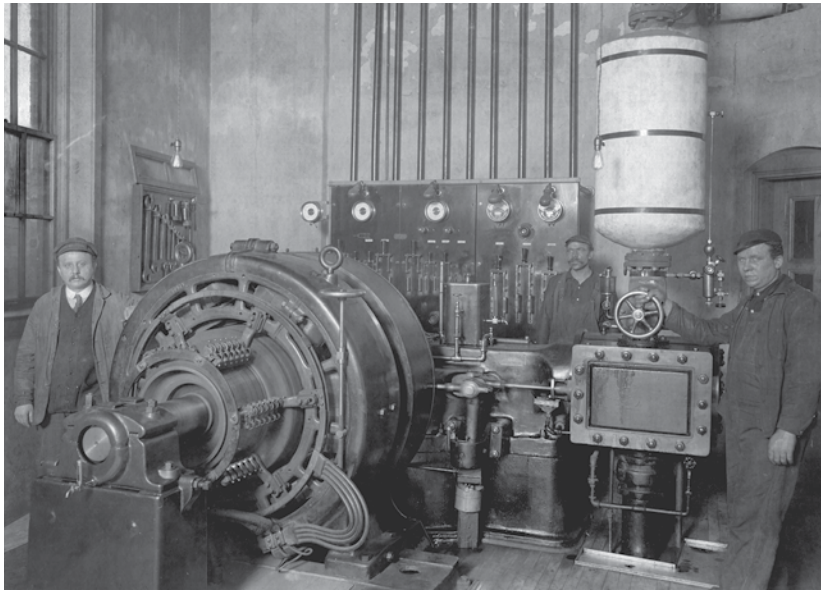
Left: August and Clara Fitger photographed in 1907. **[C&R JOHNSON COLLECTION]**

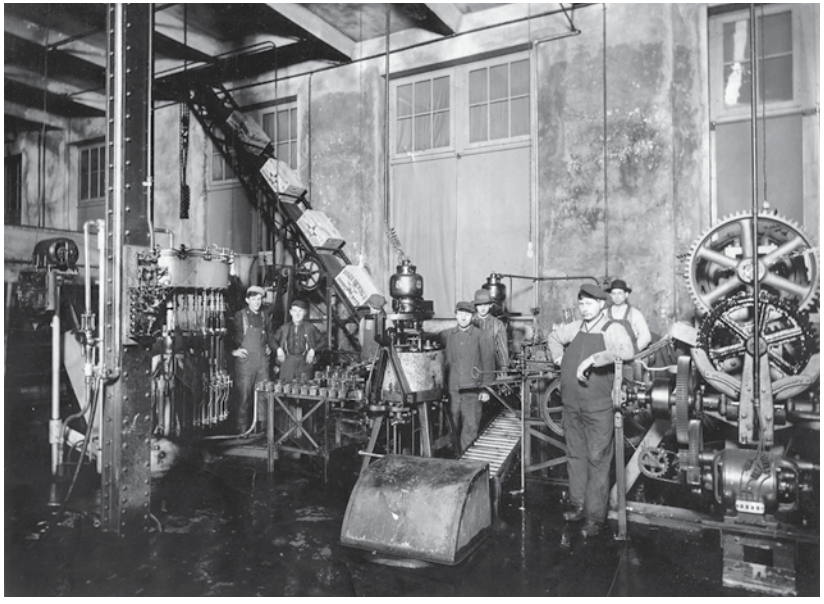
INSIDE FITGER'S, CA. 1901–1909











FACING PAGE: TOP LEFT, THE 1901 BREW KETTLE; TOP RIGHT, THE STEAM WORKS; BOTTOM LEFT, THE AGING VATS; BOTTOM RIGHT, THE DC POWER PLANT.

THIS PAGE: TOP LEFT, THE 1908 OFFICE; TOP RIGHT, THE 1908 BOTTLING WORKS; BOTTOM LEFT, THE WASH HOUSE; BOTTOM RIGHT, THE COOPERAGE.

[ALL IMAGES C&R JOHNSON COLLECTION]

Above: Fitger's employees, June, 1907. [UMD MARTIN LIBRARY]

Top Right: Along with beer, Fitger's brewed malt extracts sold in drugstores as restorative health tonics. [P. CLURE COLLECTION]

Bottom Right: a rare Philadelphia Porter label. It was actually a malt extract made to comply with North Dakota liquor laws. [C. OLSEN COLLECTION]

the way they added a wash-and-racking house, again designed by Lehle.

During all the remodeling, Fitger and Anneke incorporated their operation and changed its name from the A. Fitger & Company Lake Superior Brewery to the Fitger Brewing Company. On January 1, 1904, Fitger was named president and Anneke secretary and treasurer; Benjamin Grimm, who had been managing the brewery's sales for seventeen years, became vice president. That year a railroad spur was extended to the Fitger campus. Since the brewery no longer had to truck beer to the railroad cars, Johnson explains, the company saved thousands of dollars in labor and kept its beer cold.

A few months later the *News Tribune* reported that in 1904 Fitger's sold 50,000 barrels of beer, though it now had the capacity to brew 100,000 barrels per annum. That new railroad spur also made it easier to ship beer to the more than twenty-five agencies it operated on the Iron Range and in northwestern Minnesota. The firm would soon start building hotels in Bemidji, Bovey, Ely, Tenstrike, and Virginia, where they also planned a one-thousand-seat opera house. In 1905 Fitgers built a cold-storage facility in East Grand Forks on the North Dakota border.

Shipping more beer meant moving more ice, and in 1906 the company built a new three-story wooden icehouse designed by prominent Duluth architect William A. Hunt. The next year contractors began building a three-story bottling house designed by Lehle and faced with the same brownstone and bluestone used for the brew-and-mill

house. Three large glass-lined aging tanks were delivered in September; the *News Tribune* story heralding their arrival included this lofty statement:

> The brewers of this country are under a moral and conscientious obligation, to give to the great American people, for consumption in their homes, and for their children, as well as for themselves, a healthful and natural brand of beer—a home beer. Such beer will develop brain and body, might and mind, in the coming generation. It must be brewed and aged in honor, not merely in advertising. A beer which will retain every article of the pure food values contained in the barley grains. In short, an ideal health drink.

Above: A tin lithograph sign advertising Fitger's beer, ca. 1908, when the Zenith City hosted the Fourth Annual National Ski Tournament of America. **[C&R JOHNSON COLLECTION]**

Top Left: A full-color Fitger's logo, ca. 1905. **[FITGER'S COMPLEX]**

Bottom Left: A Fitger's beer label, ca. 1908. **[K. MALZ COLLECTION]**

AUGUST FITGER'S ARTISTIC BROTHER ARTHUR

DETAIL FROM A POSTCARD FOR THE BREMEN RATHSKELLER. [C&R JOHNSON COLLECTION]

August Fitger came from a large family, one of ten children raised by postmaster/innkeeper Peter Fitger and his wife, Clara, in Delmenhorst in the Grand Duchy of Oldenburg, Germany—and the brewer-turned-businessman wasn't the only one to make a name for himself. His older brother Emil, born in 1848, walked away from a business career to pursue journalism, becoming editor-in-chief of *Weser Zeitung*, a politically driven daily newspaper published in Bremen, just a few miles west of Delmenhorst (the Weser river flows through Bremen; *zeitung* is German for newspaper). His ideas about liberal business practices made the newspaper internationally important until his death in 1917.

Another older brother, Arthur, also became a writer, but was better known for his painting. Born in 1840, Arthur Fitger studied art at the Munich Academy and moved between Antwerp, Paris, and Rome, studying and painting while financed by a scholarship from the Grand Duke of Oldenburg. In 1869 he returned to his homeland and established a studio in Bremen. In Bremen he earned a reputation for painting large works depicting scenes from history and mythology and was commissioned to paint large murals in important public buildings, including Bremen's Ratskeller, where wine has been stored and sold since 1405. (Ratskeller means "council's cellar"; Americans changed it to "Rathskellar" to avoid connotations with rodents.) During the 1870s and 1880s Fitger employed both brush and pen, working as a playwright, poet, critic, and translator. His plays include 1873's *Adalbert of Bremen*, 1875's *Here Empire! Here Rome!*, 1878's *The Witch*, 1884's *From the Grace of God*, and *The Roses of Tyburn*, completed in 1888. His poetry includes the 1871 short epic "Roland and the Rose" and two collections, *Traveling Folks* (1875) and *Winter Nights* (1881). As an art critic, Fitger was known for his conservative views and opposition to "artists who followed fashions that were modern at that time." In 1893 Arthur Fitger submitted a four-by-six-foot painting of a scene from Greek mythology titled *Diomedes Wounds Aphrodite* to the Chicago Columbian Exhibition (aka the World's Fair). It was awarded the Gold Prize. When August Fitger's new brewery office was completed in 1908, the painting was hung above its fireplace. When the St. Louis County Courthouse opened in 1910, August Fitger loaned the painting to the county to be displayed in the courthouse's art gallery. Arthur's painting of Bacchus, Roman god of wine, was installed over the mantle in the office building's boardroom. The painting is said to have disappeared during a 1983 redevelopment of the brewery complex; a sketch of the painting hangs in its place today.

Prior to his death, Arthur Fitger drew a sketch for a proposed statue his brother August intended to install in a rooftop garden in a proposed addition to the brewery that was never constructed. The statue was to depict Gambrinus, the mythological Flemish king of beers. Today the sketch hangs in the lobby of Fitger's Inn.

When the bottling house was complete, the Fitger's Complex stretched 340 feet along Superior Street from the east end of the bottle house to the west end of the millhouse (see pages 90 and 103 for photographs). Between them stood the original 1881 brewhouse and an empty space of thirty-five feet. In 1908 Lehle was called on to fill the gap with a brand-new $35,000 three-story office building he would blend among the other buildings with the same sandstone and bluestone finish. Lehle's final contribution to Fitger's decade of building and remodeling involved designing stables and a garage: trucks had started replacing wagons.

The office building contained a suite designed to be shared by Fitger and Anneke. It overlooked Lake Superior and was outfitted with a beautiful fireplace. Above its mantel hung a four-by-six-foot painting of a scene from Greek mythology titled *Diomedes Wounds Aphrodite* by Fitger's brother Arthur, who died in 1909 shortly after the office building was completed. At the time of Arthur Fitger's passing, Percy and Lydia Anneke were themselves mourning. Marcel Anneke, their twenty-three-year-old son, died in November 1908. He had suffered from respiratory problems all his life and passed while seeking relief in California.

PUTTING THE MALT INTO DULUTH BREWING & MALTING (1900–1909)

Duluth Brewing & Malting matched Fitger's success. In 1901 DB&M made enough beer to require another storage facility. It would be the first of many buildings prominent Duluth architect J. J. Wangenstein would design for DB&M, including saloons and hotels in Duluth, Superior, and Iron Range towns. Like Northern, DB&M aggressively expanded its market using tied houses.

That year more DB&M ads appeared in local newspapers, including promos for DB&M's Moose Brand Beer, a repackaging of its malt-heavy standard beer. As the story goes, a large bull moose wandered through the brewery yard, causing a stir and inspiring Hoch to change the name. While the story might be true, the timing is likely off. The label for DB&M's original bottled beer in the 1890s featured an idealized etching of the brewing facility accompanied by the company's trademark: a moose's head emerging from a circle adorned with hops and wheat wreaths.

The moose soon became closely associated with the brewery and appeared on all of its products, whether or not it was Moose Brand Beer. And Moose Brand itself was available both as a strong porter and a brew of less than 2 percent alcohol, likely for the North Dakota market, labeled as Our Tame Moose. Some locals began calling DB&M the "Moose Brewery."

Construction of the long-anticipated malt house finally wrapped up in February 1902. It cost $100,000 and could produce 500,000 bushels a year, twice as much as the facility's original plans called for and much more than DB&M itself could use. The rest was sold to other brewers and makers of industrial alcohol, creating another income stream. DB&M shipped malt to accounts throughout the U.S. and England.

DB&M's brewing capacity had reached 150,000 barrels a year, and in 1904 the company bottled 1.1 million quarts of beer. The next year the brewery boasted that its payroll contained 125 names, including secretary Frank Hoch, Reiner's son. By then DB&M was marketing its wiener beer as Rex and also made a product called Vitosia Tonic, an extract of malt and hops described on the label as "a delicious strength-giving beverage for invalids and nursing mothers." New brewmaster John Lingelbach, a product of the Wahl-Henius Institute of Fermentology, had previously practiced his trade in Chicago and Milwaukee.

A DETAIL FROM A POSTER ADVERTISING DULUTH BREWING & MALTING'S PRODUCTS, CA. 1900. [P. CLURE COLLECTION]

As the brewery expanded, so did its sales reach. Frank Trampish took charge of DB&M's business in Iron Range towns, acquiring property and building saloons and hotels that would be operated as tied houses, including Virginia's New England Hotel on Chestnut Street, operated by J. J. Sullivan.

In early April 1906 the *News Tribune* heralded the West End brewery's $45,000 expansion designed by Chicago

DULUTH BREWING & MALTING LABELS, CA. 1900–1906

A VARIETY OF DIE-CUT LABELS USED BY DULUTH BREWING & MALTING PRODUCTS BOTTLED BETWEEN 1900 AND 1906. THE TWO LABELS IN THE CENTER ABOVE SHOW THE EVOLUTION OF REX AS IT BECAME THE BREWERY'S MOST POPULAR PRE-PROHIBITION PRODUCT. OUR TAME MOOSE, VITOSIA, AND CHOW MALT WERE ALL MALT TONICS.

[K. MALZ COLLECTION]

DULUTH BREWING & MALT LABELS, CA. 1907–1914

ABOVE: A VARIETY OF LABELS (TOP ROW WITH NECK LABELS) USED BY DULUTH BREWING & MALTING FOR PRODUCTS BOTTLED BETWEEN 1907 AND 1914, WHEN THE FEDERAL FOOD AND DRUGS ACT REQUIRED SPECIAL LABELING. THE LAW WAS ENACTED "FOR PREVENTING THE MANUFACTURE, SALE, OR TRANSPORTATION OF ADULTERATED OR MISBRANDED OR POISONOUS OR DELETERIOUS FOODS, DRUGS, MEDICINES, AND LIQUORS, AND FOR REGULATING TRAFFIC THEREIN, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES."

RIGHT: ON THE BACK LABEL FOR ITS VITOSIA MALT TONIC, THE BREWERY CLAIMED THAT THE BREW, WHICH CONTAINED ALBUMINATE OF IRON, CURED INSOMNIA, INDIGESTION, BRONCHITIS, COUGHS, AND COLDS AND SERVED AS A MARVELOUS APPETIZER.

[K. MALZ COLLECTION]

BREWERIES & UNIONS

By all accounts the breweries at the Head of the Lakes maintained a good relationship with their workers. West Superior Brewing Co. employees organized the region's first brewers' union in 1898, and by 1900 Northern and Klinkert were also union shops. Duluth brewers initially chose not to join, the *Duluth News Tribune* explained, because while "there is no objection on the part of the managers to have them organize...the men themselves do not seem greatly inclined to form an organization." Fitger's already paid better than union scale.

After Duluth brewers did unionize in 1900, they struck just twice. In 1901 they asked for a wage boost and a cut in hours from ten to nine a day. The breweries offered a more modest pay increase but no change in hours. When the union threatened to strike, the newspaper quipped, "The earnestness of the brewery employee who strikes cannot fairly be understood until you remember that he gives up free beer when he walks out." After two days on the picket line, workers accepted the brewers' offer. Two years later a week-long strike bought them the terms they asked for in 1903, and brewers also agreed to use only union-made malt.

Even as the market was dropping out beneath them as Duluth voted itself dry, Zenith City breweries continued to support their union employees. In February 1917 Duluth's breweries renewed contracts for at least two years with the 150 members of Duluth Brewery Workers' Union No. 133. The contracts were "favorable to the men" and one union man told newspapers, "There has always prevailed a good understanding between Duluth brewers and their employees."

This tradition continued after the repeal of Prohibition. When Victor Nelson purchased Northern Brewing in 1937, he promised to employ only union men and added a new message to the beer's label: "Union Made Beer." In August 1955 Northern entered into what the *Superior Evening Telegram* described as "the first guarantee wage plan" in the city's history. The brewery's new contract with Superior Brewery Workers Local No. 133 guaranteed employees 92 percent of their annual salary even if they didn't work enough hours to earn it. The agreement was an unlikely move for a brewery, which traditionally reduced production staff considerably during colder months as sales slowed down.

The brewer's union also made concessions, even agreeing to wage freezes in the late 1960s to help Fitger's, the last-surviving commercial brewery in the Twin Ports, stay open. The last union brewery workers lost their jobs in September 1972, when Fitger's closed.

A caricature of Reiner Hoch drawn in 1909.
[ZENITH CITY PRESS]

brewery architect Bernard Barthel, whose work include St. Paul's Schmidt Brewery. Wangenstein oversaw construction, which included a two-story addition to the wash house and another floor to a section of the brewhouse to make room for two large coil-system beer coolers. A new $15,000 grinding mill could process four hundred bushels of grain every

ninety minutes, and so they also added a four-hundred-gallon copper kettle—said to be the second-largest brewing kettle in the U.S. at the time—ensuring the brewery could maintain its 150,000-barrel capacity. The expansion also included a $7,000 pasteurizing machine for the bottling works, a new grain dryer, and an ammonia-process ice machine.

The same article describing the expansion noted that the brewery now shipped 200,000 bushels of malt to eastern breweries every year. Mash—the grain residue left behind after the brewing process—was once sold to local dairymen as cattle feed, but each week DB&M was sending a train car of it to Milwaukee, where brokers sold and shipped it to Germany.

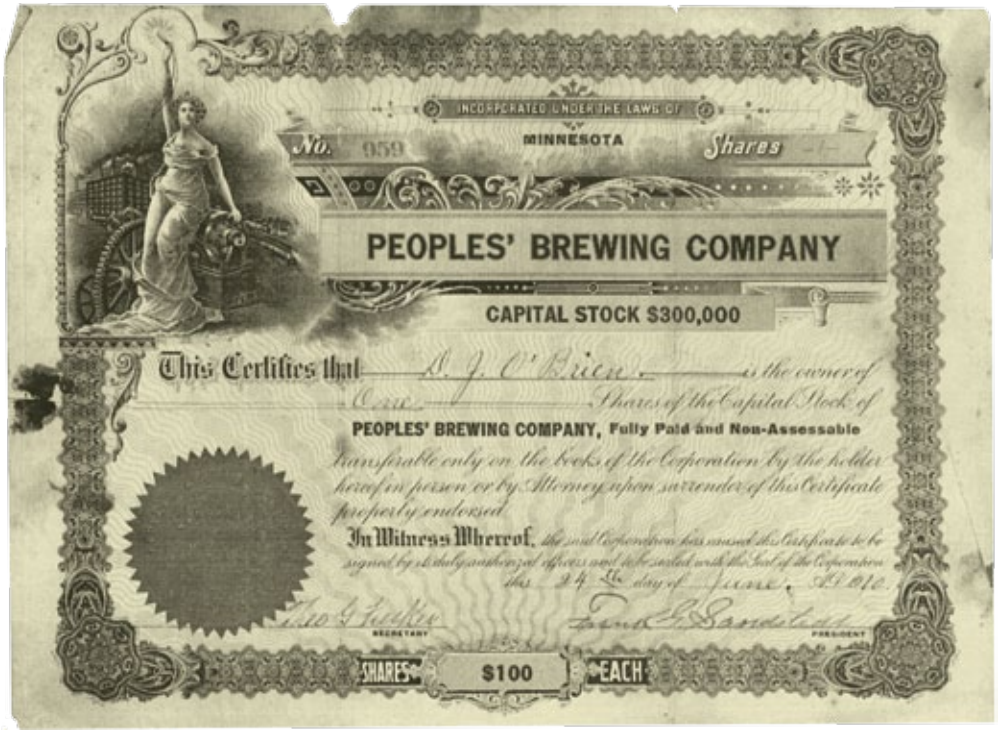
In 1907 DB&M constructed a tunnel under Helm Street to contain a pipeline connecting the brewhouse with a new bottling works, capable of putting 250 kegs worth of beer into bottles every day. The storage room held 130-barrel steel tanks lined with glass. Thanks to an 1890 exemption to the law governing the bottling of beer, the new bottling house's location across a "highway" allowed beer to be delivered from the brewhouse to the bottling works without the two buildings being considered "in communication" with each other.

But as the bottling works went up, a fire destroyed the facility's malt house and grain elevator. The loss was reported at $50,000. DB&M was rebuilding by November, incorporating the latest innovations in machinery. The malt house lost some of its castle-like features during the reconstruction.

A 1908 profile of the company that appeared in the *News Tribune* claimed the company made 100,000 barrels of beer in 1907 and employed over 200 people, 115 of them in Duluth alone. Others worked as salesmen or at one of the company's sixty branch houses "scattered throughout the states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Montana, and Kansas." Its bottled beer used imported Saazer hops while the hops for its draft beer came from Washington, Oregon, and New York—all brewed with "an inexhaustible supply of the purest and best water for brewing purposes anywhere on the globe." The malt they manufactured used barley grown along the Red River Valley in Minnesota and North Dakota.

A Duluth Brewing & Malting advertising poster known as "The Voyeur," ca. 1900. [P. CLURE COLLECTION]

Three months after the glowing *News Tribune* article, DB&M suffered a tragedy when its barn and stables caught fire. Newspapers reported eighteen horses and two mules were "roasted" in the blaze, and that barn boss Edward Graham survived only because his bulldog's howling had woken him up. Just two mules survived.



A People's stock certificate from 1910 signed by secretary Theodor Frerker and President Frank Sandstedt. The assignee is listed as D. J. O'Brien, possibly Darby "Duke" O'Brien, the owner/manager/coach of the Duluth White Sox, the Zenith City's professional baseball team. **[P. CLURE COLLECTION]**

A BREWERY FOR THE PEOPLE...? (1906–1909)

As Fitger's and DB&M were improving production, expanding their markets, and fending off outside interests, in October 1906 the *News Tribune* reported that a new brewery was coming to the Zenith City, and its investors were looking at property in West Duluth. It was to be called People's Brewing Company.

Over the decades many have come to believe that the brewery was born of socialist ideas brought to Northeastern Minnesota by immigrants to "resist the evils of capitalism" represented by larger breweries that operated tied houses. The creation of People's Brewery, so goes the tale, involved a revolt of saloonkeepers against the likes of Fitger's, Duluth Brewing & Malting, Hamm's, and the other large breweries that owned many of the city's saloons and hotels. The city's independent saloonkeepers would show them: they'd make their own beer to sell in their own saloons.

And perhaps that's just what promoter Fred C. Toelle wanted them to believe. Toelle, another German immigrant, was fifty-five when he visited Duluth in 1906. He had spent his life as a traveling salesman based in Detroit, Michigan, and had hit on a plan that had proved profitable. He came to the Zenith City looking for investors for a new brewery, trying to raise $300,000 at $100 a share. He bypassed the city's wealthy capitalists and targeted "liquor retailers"—aka saloonkeepers—to raise capital. He claimed to have done the same thing in seventeen other communities across the U.S.

Indeed, in 1900 the *Detroit Free Press* reported Toelle was promoting a new brewery, and that "many of the leading liquor dealers of the city will be among the stockholders." Toelle went on to establish at least seven breweries in 1905 and 1906 alone, including Capital City Brewing Co. of Indianapolis, Indiana; Falls City Brewery of Louisville, Kentucky; Franklin Brewing Company of Columbus, Ohio; Chicago Heights Brewing Co. of Chicago Heights, Illinois; Lake Brewing Co. of Houghton, Michigan; and Union Brewing Co. of New Orleans, Louisiana. Capital City's investors included 112 saloonkeepers, Fall City's over 200.

In 1905 he also established a People's Brewing Co. in Terre Haute, Indiana—and it wasn't the first. Between the 1880s and 1935 no less than a dozen other American breweries organized under the name People's. Toelle's method was to raise the capital and incorporate a brewery, accept payment for his organizational efforts, and then resign from the firm before it produced a drop of beer.

Duluth's People's Brewing Company officially organized on January 1, 1907, with a board of independent saloon owners, including Patrick Doran, co-owner of the Campbell & Doran Saloon at 205 West Superior Street; Frank G. Sandstedt, who owned a downtown saloon at 203 West Superior

Street; Thomas Doyle, whose saloon stood in West Duluth at 5519 Raleigh Street; Martin Smith, who owned both the Hotel Astoria at 102 East Superior Street and the Nicollet Hotel at 518–520 West Superior Street, in the heart of the city's Bowery; Michael J. Gleeson, who had a saloon in the notorious St. Croix district at 204 Lake Avenue South; Charles M. Forest, who ran another Bowery saloon with Alphonse Letourneau at 615 West Superior Street; and Charles F. W. Korth, who owned a saloon and a hotel on Gosnold Street (now Roosevelt Street) in West Duluth. Traveling salesman John B. Dunphy and Toelle himself rounded out the group. Doran would act as president, Sandstedt vice president, and Smith as secretary.

So the creation of People's wasn't a socialist revolt, it was a capitalistic investment opportunity. Proprietors of Duluth's independent saloons and hotels started their own brewery so they could get beer at a lower price and profit from both wholesale and retail sales. Fitger's, Duluth Brewing & Malting, and Northern Brewing had all been started by brewers partnering with capitalists. With People's, the saloonkeepers were the capitalists. They would have to hire a brewer.

In February the new brewing firm announced it had found a location between Forty-Second and Forty-Third Avenues West along Superior Street. They planned to build a $225,000 brewery, "modern in every concern," that could produce up to 75,000 barrels a year. It would be operational by October 1907.

Top: The People's Brewing Company brewery under construction in 1907.
[UMD MARTIN LIBRARY]

Bottom: The brewery shortly after construction was completed.
[DULUTH PUBLIC LIBRARY]

In March, however, Toelle had raised only $75,000. Apparently discouraged, he ran a notice in local newspapers stating that he had resigned and the brewery would not be built, asserting that Duluth did not "offer a sufficiently attractive field for such an enterprise." The news came as a surprise to People's board of directors, who responded immediately, assuring their stockholders that the brewery would be built. They had no idea what prompted Toelle's action, and clarified that he was brought to Duluth from Detroit "to promote the deal on a percentage basis." It appears that the Duluth project was among his last; by 1910 he was working in Detroit selling wholesale jewelry.

People's Brewing Co. officers and investors pressed on without Toelle, stating they could "build a brewery which will compare to any that Mr. Toelle has ever erected and that they can carry out the plans with better results and do so sooner than Toelle contemplated."

In June the *News Tribune* announced that Duluth's "Independent Brewing Company" would soon sign with a building contractor—apparently People's had reorganized after Toelle's exit, but the business itself would still be called People's. The company's officers reshuffled: Sandstedt was now president, Gleeson vice president, Smith treasurer, and Dunphy secretary. Construction would begin soon, and they hoped to be selling beer by May 1908.

Top, from left to right: People's Brewing Company original corporate officers President Frank Sandstedt, Vice President Michael Gleeson, and possibly either Treasurer Martin Smitth or Seceretary John B. Dunphy in the brewery office, ca. 1908.

Bottom: Another view of the office with four People's employees at work.

[UMD MARTIN LIBRARY]

F. F. Bollinger of Pittsburgh broke ground on July 10. No architect is credited as drawing Duluth's People's Brewing Co. plant. Bollinger had already built several breweries in the east, and the design for its Westchester County Brewery in Mount Vernon, New York, is nearly identical to that of People's. When Bollinger broke ground in Duluth the firm was already at work on eight other breweries in the U.S.

The central building, which held the brewhouse, had a footprint of 160 by 125 feet and stood four stories high. Built of steel and concrete and faced with pressed brick and Bedford limestone from Indiana, the brewery cost $140,000. The company planned to produce 50,000 barrels of beer during its first year, although with its 175-barrel kettle the facility's capacity was twice that. Its 100-by-40-foot two-story bottling house cost $30,000, as did the 75-by-40-foot two-story stable that could house up to forty horses. The $18,000 office stood two stories tall. (The central building was also supposed to be outfitted with malting equipment capable of producing five hundred bushels a year, but there is no evidence it was ever built.)

Bollinger assured *News Tribune* readers that all equipment, from ice machines to boilers and the power plant, would be the "most up-to-date in Minnesota." To get the raw ingredients in and the beer out, the Northern Pacific Railroad extended a spur to serve the brewery. The board lured Ernest A. Koenig to Duluth to serve as brewmaster. Koenig had spent his first fifteen years in the business working as the brewmaster of Munich's Royal Bavarian Hofbräuhaus before emigrating to the U.S. to attend Chicago's Wahl-Henius Institute of Fermentology. He then worked in San Francisco and Vallejo, California, and later in Peoria, Illinois. By the time he came to Duluth he had been brewing beer for thirty years.

Koenig had beer on hand for the annual stockholders meeting in early June, but it had not properly aged and wouldn't be ready for sale until July. The brewery already employed twenty men, and its sales agents busied themselves scouring the Iron Range to expand its market; its investors had already assured them a strong opening in Duluth.

They sure had a grand time at the grand opening on June 30. An open house scheduled for 3 P.M. to 5 P.M. lasted until nine in the evening to accommodate all two thousand curious beer drinkers who showed up to try the first batch of draft beer (the bottled beer—labeled simply "Peoples beer"—was still aging). Stockholders acted as a reception

Top Left: The first label for bottled beer brewed by People's Brewing Company. **[K. MALZ COLLECTION]**

Above: Employees and investors of People's Brewing Company in front of the bottling house in 1908. This photo appears on the office wall in the photo at the top of page 66. **[C&R JOHNSON COLLECTION]**

A teamster for People's Brewing Company ready to deliver beer, ca. 1908. [UMD MARTIN LIBRARY]

committee, a full orchestra played into the evening, and many a beer was downed in the wood-paneled taproom on the brewery's fourth floor, adjacent to the brew kettle and outfitted with plush leather furniture and a hand-carved bar. Local residents John Casey and Fred LePage enjoyed the beer a little too much and began to fight; both ended up in jail on drunk and disorderly charges.

CHANGE ON THE HORIZON

As the first decade of the twentieth century came to a close, four state-of-the-art breweries were operating on either side of St. Louis Bay. At the community's oldest brewery, the death of one of its oldest employees marked the changing times. Franz Heinrich, keeper of Fitger's Brewery Saloon, died in October 1909 of an unnamed stomach ailment. (Heinrich is pictured on page 108.)

He was fifty-five years old and had stood behind the bar for Fitger's since 1886, a year after he and his wife, Marie, first arrived in Duluth from Detroit via Germany. Heinrich, known for his athleticism and good nature, was active in Duluth's Turnverein Society and the Sons of Hermann, a mutual aid society for German immigrants. He was called "one of the best-known German residents in Duluth" by the *News Tribune*, and more than fifty carriages participated in his funeral procession.

At Heinrich's funeral Duluth police officer John Link, the deceased's oldest friend, gave the eulogy. He had promised Heinrich he would do so twenty-five years before, and the bartender had made the same promise to the cop: they were both "free-thinkers, believing in neither church nor minister." Link praised Heinrich for his patriotism as both a German and an American:

> While so many forget their German home, that they are German offspring, and try to hide their nationality and lose the spirit of the Fatherland, adopting the customs of the new country and forgetting their language, Franz Heinrich was true—Franz Heinrich was ours. Not that he would for one minute forget his duty to the new adopted Fatherland, knowing the honor of being an American citizen. Still in his heart he loved Germany and never lost sight of an opportunity, in a spiritual way, to preach German culture, German ideals, German customs. And in his heart he was always true to the German language.

That type of dedication to the German Fatherland would be questioned just a few years later as World War I spread across Europe. Moreover, the temperance movement—fueled by the Anti-Saloon League—was pushing the nation toward the prohibition of alcohol. Beer, often advertised as a "non-intoxicant" and "health drink," would soon come under fire not just for its place in the saloons but also for its strong association with Germany, who would become the enemy. All four breweries at the Head of the Lakes had spent the previous decade creating facilities that could make high-quality beer for a long time, but as the future fell into focus, the horizon didn't look so bright.