



# Minnesota Beer Day Information

Presented by:





# What is Minnesota Beer Day?

“Minnesota Beer Day” is dedicated to celebrating the history, tradition, and community surrounding beer in Minnesota. Since 1848, the citizens of Minnesota have relied on beer for their livelihoods, benefited from its economic impact, or simply raised a glass in celebration. Beer has been (and still is) an integral part of the story of Minnesota, and we celebrate that on Minnesota Beer Day.

## The Process

**Minnesota Beer Day** was an initiative of the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild, however, the effort was supported and assisted by other stakeholders, advocates, and citizens of the State.

Over 2 years of discussion, research, advocacy and planning were done in the process of making “Minnesota Beer Day” State recognized and celebrated.

### House of Representatives

On April 10, 2024,  
Rep. Maria Isa Perez-Vega  
(65B, D), passed a  
Resolution in the House  
declaring November 1  
“Minnesota Beer Day.”



### Senate

On March 21, 2024,  
Sen. Jeff Howe (13, R),  
passed a Resolution in the  
Minnesota Senate declaring  
November 1  
“Minnesota Beer Day.”

On July 12th 2024,  
Governor Tim Walz  
Also signed a Proclamation  
declaring  
November 1, 2024  
“Minnesota Beer Day”.

### Is Minnesota Beer Day a State Holiday?

Minnesota Beer Day is not an “Official State Holiday” as Minnesota prioritizes Federal holidays. Although the Governor does not have the authority to proclaim recurring dates, both Legislative Resolutions state that November 1st is “henceforth” Minnesota Beer Day, meaning it will be an annual celebration.



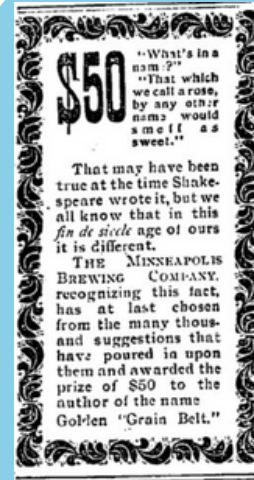
## Why was November 1st chosen as the date of Minnesota Beer Day?

There was much discussion about the most suitable date to celebrate the history and industry of beer in Minnesota. Ultimately, the date with the most significance in numerous regards was November 1st.

On **November 1, 1850**, John Orth founded the John Orth Brewing Company, the second brewery in the Minnesota Territory (eight years before statehood).



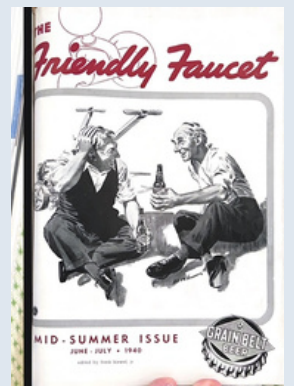
On July 16, 1890, Orth joined the Heinrich Brewing Association, the Frederick Norenburg Brewery, and the Germania Brewing Association to form the Minneapolis Brewing and Malting Company.



Eventually, they would simplify to the "Minneapolis Brewing Company," and on November 1, 1895, they placed an ad in the "Minneapolis Tribune."

announcing the winner of their contest to name a new beer. The winning name was "Grain Belt."

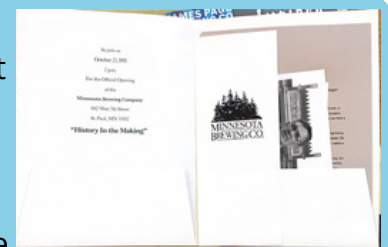
In 1967, the brewery rebranded as "Grain Belt Brewing" and became the 18th largest brewery in America by the end of the 1960s. Advertisements for the brewery flourished during this time, and Minnesotans often heard the tagline "It's been a long time a-brewin'!" during broadcasts and sporting events.



Sadly, the brand declined in the 1970s and was eventually purchased by G. Heileman Brewing from Wisconsin. The Minneapolis brewery closed, and production moved to the historic Jacob Schmidt Brewery in St. Paul. Then, in 1989, Heileman closed the brewery and moved production out of Minnesota.



In 1991, Grain Belt would return to its homestate



when Minnesota Brewing Company bought the rights and re-opened the historic Jacob Schmidt Brewery once more. They also produced a beer honoring the founder of Saint Paul, "Pig's Eye."



In 2002, The Grain Belt Brand landed in the most historic lagering tanks in the State where it is still proudly brewed today, the 2nd Oldest Family Owned Brewery in the United States of America, Schell's Brewery.





# The Friendly Beer

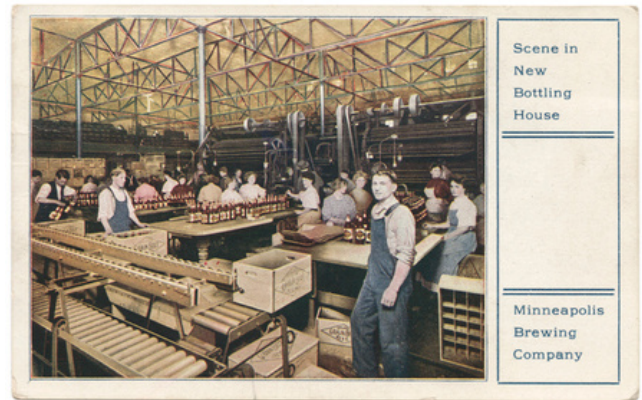
## The Story of a Beer that's Been A Brewin' A Long Time



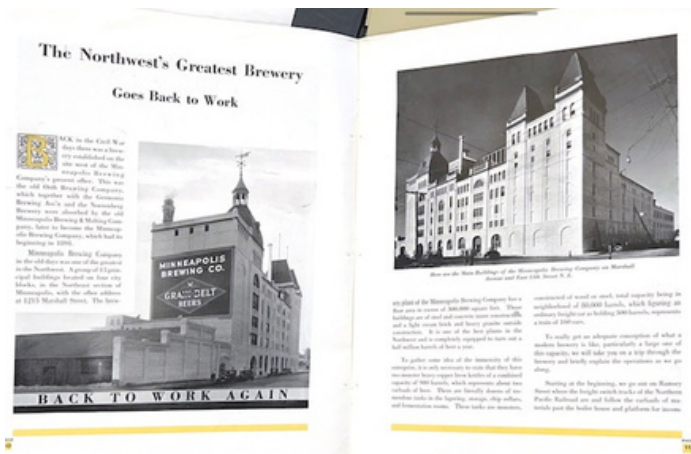
Orth Brewery, 1228 Marshall Northeast, Minneapolis. Approx 1880  
Courtesy of MNHS

The story of Grain Belt Beer is 174 years old and begins with a young immigrant from Alsace, France: John Orth. On November 1, 1850, John Orth started his brewery in an 18x30 foot wooden building in St. Anthony Falls. He was the second recorded brewer in Minnesota and the first in Minneapolis. His beer became popular, and by 1880, he was producing over seven times as much beer as he had in 1860.<sup>6</sup> John passed away in 1893 but left his successful business to his sons, John W., Alfred, and Edward.

In July 1890, the sons merged with three other breweries in Minneapolis to form the "Minneapolis Brewing and Malting Company." They built the impressive brewery that still stands today in 1893, and simplified their name to "Minneapolis Brewing." On November 1, 1895, the Minneapolis Tribune published an ad announcing the winner of their contest to name a new beer. "Grain Belt" was the winning name, and by 1897, the phrase appeared on all their products.



Interior, Minneapolis Brewing Company, Minneapolis. Approx. 1908  
Courtesy of MNHS



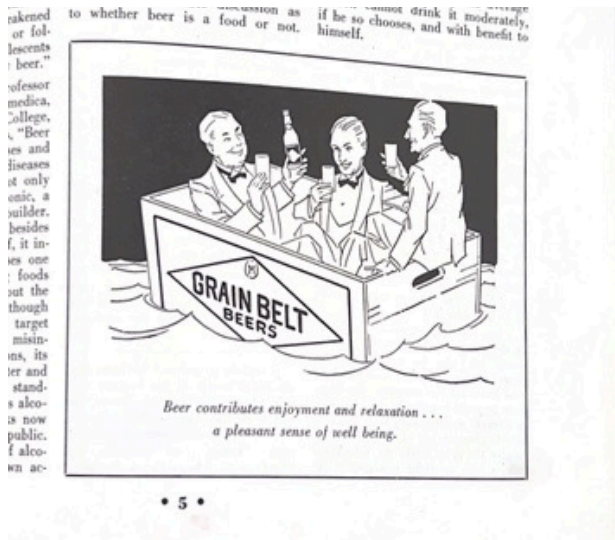
5- 1933. Courtesy of MNHS

By 1900, Minneapolis Brewing had become a regional company, but two decades later, challenges arose. Prohibition forced the company to transfer its investments to the Golden Grain Juice Company and close the brewery in 1929, leaving its future uncertain. However, just a few months after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, Minneapolis Brewing and the "Grain Belt" beers made a comeback.



# The Friendly Beer

## The Story of a Beer that's Been A Brewin' A Long Time



"The Friendly Faucet". 1937. - Courtesy of MNHS

Minneapolis Brewing weathered challenges over the next few decades but remained a top choice for Minnesotans. Although there was little to no growth in the 1940s (partly due to wartime rationing) and the early 1950s, new management began to rebuild the brand in the mid-'50s. Eventually, the brand became a staple, so much so that in 1967, the Minneapolis Brewing Company changed its name to "Grain Belt Brewing."

Grain Belt continued to grow through the late 1960s and 1970s, and Minnesota citizens frequently saw the name and heard the slogan "It's been a long time a-brewin'" in their everyday lives. A strong supporter of the community, Grain Belt was a popular choice at bars and events, and it was served at the 1965 MLB All-Star Game at Met Stadium.

However, by 1975, larger national brands entered the Minnesota market with force, leading to the brewery's closure and the sale of the brand. Eventually, it was bought by G. Heileman Brewing in La Crosse, WI.



Plattner, Stephen W., Grain Belt Beer Sign. 1975  
Courtesy of MNHS



Grain Belt beer advertisement. 1990-1993: Courtesy of MNHS

Heileman moved production to their facility at the Jacob Schmidt Brewery in Saint Paul, where Grain Belt Beer was produced until the company shut down that facility in 1990. Production of Grain Belt Beer then left the state. In 1991, the Minnesota Brewing Company was formed by many former employees of the Jacob Schmidt Brewery, and the rights to Grain Belt returned to Minnesota. In 2002, the brand was purchased by Schell's Brewery.





# Schell's: The Hardiness of Heritage

(Note: The vast history of Schell's cannot be fully captured on a single page, and historical research is limited because all that knowledge is still in the family's possession. What better way to learn about this rich heritage than to visit in person?)



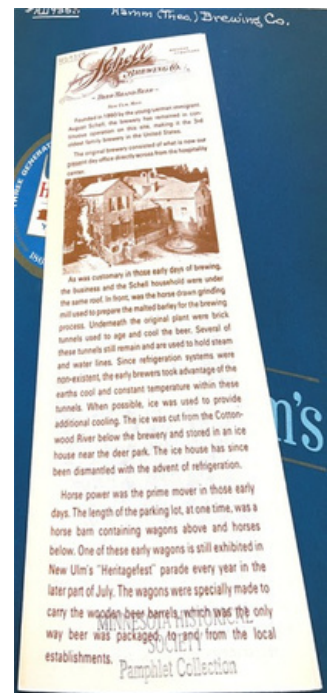
"100 Years of Brewing". 1903.  
Courtesy of MNHS

August Schell was born in Durbach, Germany, but arrived in New Ulm, MN, in 1857. Initially an employee of the local flour mill, August yearned for better uses for the grain. Not being a brewer himself, he partnered with Jacob Bernhardt to found Schell's in 1860. Despite facing turbulent times, Schell (and eventually his sons) expanded to stay ahead of the competition, becoming some of the first brewers in the state to bottle their beer and use refrigeration.<sup>6</sup>

By 1911, August's youngest son Otto was in charge of operations when he suddenly passed away. The duties of running the brewery were handed to his sister's husband, George Marti, whose family has run the brewery ever since.

Prohibition was tough on all brewers, but Schell's survived better than most by producing "near beer" and other non-alcoholic drinks, which kept both employees and machinery working. This made Schell's transition back to brewing beer easier. Post-Prohibition was not easy for Schell's, but George's son Alfred continued to grow both the brewery and its reputation throughout the region, even as national brands began to enter the market. Al's son Warren took over in 1969, but like many breweries in the state at the time, he faced challenges in the following years. Many breweries struggled to compete with the low prices of larger brewers and were forced to close their doors. However, Schell's had a different story.

Warren's son Ted had traveled and studied with various breweries in Germany, giving him an appreciation for more than just American lagers. On July 16, 1984, under Ted's guidance, the brewers at Schell's created the first Witbier brewed in America post-Prohibition, which is widely considered the first batch of craft beer in Minnesota, and the brewery has been leading the way ever since. In 2002, Schell's purchased the rights to Grain Belt, once a competitor, and continues to brew it today. In keeping with family tradition, Ted still oversees operations with his sons. The current Brewmaster is Dave Berg, a co-founder of the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild.



"Schell's Promotional Pamphlet". 11.  
Courtesy of MNHS



## Why was the Governor's Proclamation Presented on September 27th?

Early in the legislative planning, the Guild decided that in order to make the day as official as possible, we wanted the Executive Branch to proclaim it as well. We chose September 27th to celebrate one of Minnesota's greatest beer legacies, Hamm's.


### "A RED LETTER DAY"

During research, an article from the "St. Paul Daily Globe" was discovered that described the opening of Theodore Hamm's new, updated brewery. The celebration took place on September 27, 1894.

According to the article:

"It was a formal inspection of Hamm's new brewery in East St. Paul, and the crowd that responded to the general invitation to enjoy the hospitality of the Hamm's outshone anything enjoyed by Barnum's Circus!"

And, "The fifty to one hundred barrels of beer that flowed freely down the throats of the throng of people were as fine in quality as any beer ever gulped by mortal man!"<sup>8</sup>

Many of those buildings still stand, and in fact, St. Paul Brewing  still operates out of Hamm's old keg washing building (which washed the first Sankey kegs in the American market).

#### GAMBRINUS WAS KING

Red-Letter Day for the Old Reveler at Hamm's New Brewery.

IMMENSE THROG THERE.

First People of the City and Plebeians Inspected the Plant.

MILWAUKEE K. OCKED OUT.

Hamm's New Beer Product Is Finer Than the Best Milwaukee.

"St. Paul Daily Globe: Sept. 27, 1894." <sup>8</sup>  
Courtesy of MNHS



Palmquist, Alfred U. Hamm's Brewery. Approx. 1894  
Courtesy of MNHS



"MN Beer Day" Governor's Proclamation. 2024  
Courtesy of MNCBG

One hundred thirty years to the day after Theodore Hamm's celebration, the Governor's Office presented a proclamation making November 1, 2024, "Beer Day" in Minnesota. Guests included industry stakeholders, legacy brewers, and passionate citizens. Speaking on behalf of the current owners of the Hamm's brand, Molson Coors, was Karl Hoenstein of the legacy Hamm's wholesaler Hoenstein's (also in attendance, the Hamm's Bear). Speaking for Grain Belt was Kyle Marti, the sixth-generation descendant of August Schell. Speaking on behalf of the Governor was Lauren Bennett McGinty, Executive Director of Explore Minnesota and former Executive Director of the Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild.



## *Hamm's: The Beer Refreshing*

THEO. HAMM BREWING COMPANY, ST. PAUL.—The original plant of the Theo. Hamm Brewing Company was built in 1864 by A. F. Keller, from whom Theodore Hamm purchased the brewery in 1865. Originally the plant had an annual production of about five hundred barrels; in 1895, forty-three thousand barrels, and for 1901, two hundred and fifty thousand barrels. The business was operated by Theodore Hamm, in his individual name, until 1896, at which



THEODORE HAMM, ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA.

"100 Years of Brewing". 1903.  
Courtesy of MNHS

The story of the largest brewery ever based in Minnesota begins without a famous name. Andrew Keller opened the "Pittsburgh Brewery" around 1859. He soon sought to expand and connected with Theodore Hamm, an immigrant butcher from Baden, Germany, who ran properties in Saint Paul. To fund the expansion, Hamm took out a mortgage on the brewery that Keller was unable to repay. Theodore Hamm was now in the brewing industry whether he liked it or not, and Theodore Hamm's Brewing Company was born in 1865. Not being a brewer himself, he hired German immigrant Jacob Schmidt to produce the beer. Production steadily increased, allowing Theodore to build one of the largest breweries in the country, celebrating its completion in 1894. The brewery was one of the few in the region to bottle its beer,<sup>6</sup> which proved successful.

Theodore passed away in 1903, and his son William took over, navigating the company through Prohibition. Like many others, Hamm's produced non-alcoholic beverages to stay afloat, but the Hamm family was also still involved in real estate, which worked to their advantage during this time. Post-Prohibition saw an explosion of Hamm's expansion under William and new brewmaster Chris Figge.

On July 15, 1933, William Hamm Jr. (William's son and now president) was kidnapped near the brewery by the Barker-Karpis gang for \$100,000 (equivalent to \$2 million today).

The gang held him at cabins in Wisconsin and Illinois until the ransom was paid. Although the gang escaped, the case marked the first successful use of latent fingerprinting by the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover himself was involved in the arrest of Alvin Karpis in New Orleans and brought him back to St. Paul to stand trial for the kidnapping. Karpis pleaded guilty and received a life sentence, serving at Alcatraz and other prisons until his parole in 1960.



Reporters and onlookers at Hamm residence following kidnapping of William Hamm Jr., St. Paul. 1933  
Courtesy of MNHS





# Hamm's: The Beer Refreshing



"Reflections". 12.  
Courtesy of MNHS

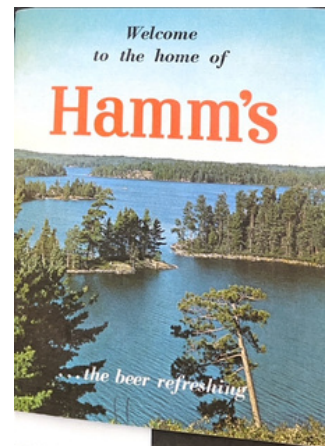
in American history. Hamm's promotional materials from the mid-1950s to early 1960s remain highly sought after by collectors, especially the lighted advertisements featuring the shimmering "Sky Blue Waters." The Hamm's Bear and its catchy jingle became famous nationwide before being retired in the early 1960s. This campaign not only solidified Hamm's brand but also helped make Campbell Mithun a well-known name in advertising. The legacy of these ads continues to resonate, contributing to the enduring popularity of Hamm's.

Despite the kidnapping, William Hamm Jr. successfully continued to grow the brand before passing it on to William Figge Jr. in 1952. The brewery expanded to become the fifth largest in America, with brewing locations in California, Texas, and Baltimore. One of Figge's main successes was his investment in quality marketing. In 1953, the Minneapolis advertising firm Campbell Mithun would release one of the most successful ad campaigns

Part of the marketing strategy also benefited their consumers. A deal with Hamm's was one of the primary reasons the Washington Senators became the Minnesota Twins. Hamm's broadcast the games across the region, helping to support the budding ballclub. It's no coincidence that the Twins' mascot is T.C. Bear. Hamm's continued its dedication to sports by sponsoring more teams across its markets than any other brewery, including both the Chicago Cubs and White Sox.<sup>12</sup>



"Reflections". 12.  
Courtesy of MNHS



"The Story of Hamm's Beer."  
15. 1960  
Courtesy of MNHS



# Hamm's: The Beer Refreshing



"Reflections". 12.  
Courtesy of MNHS

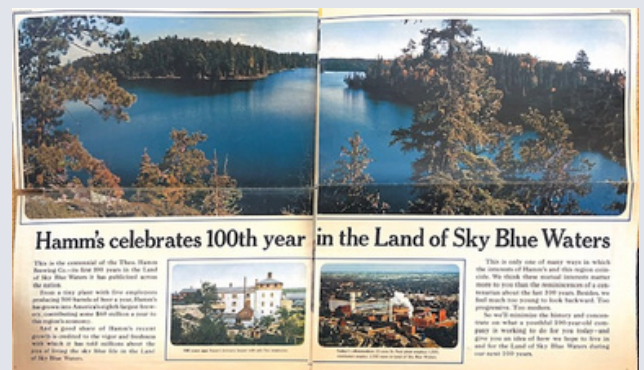
Like many breweries of the time (and craft brewers today), Hamm's was well regarded for supporting its local community. Its advertisements brought tourism to Minnesota's Northwoods. Hamm's was an early sponsor of the St. Paul Winter Carnival, and lore suggests that Theodore Hamm may have been the first King Boreas. In its early days, Hamm's employed immigrants from Swede Hollow<sup>7</sup> and helped build St. Paul's East Side, which thrived alongside local companies like Whirlpool and 3M. Employees were part of the "Skylanders Club," which organized golf outings, hunting and fishing tournaments, and Christmas parties.<sup>4</sup> Former employees still speak fondly of their time with the company.



"Hamm's Skylanders". 4. Approx. 1960  
Courtesy of MNHS



Eventually, times became tougher when trying to enter the East Coast market, leading to stagnating sales. The company decided to sell to Heublein, a company unfamiliar with brewing, before it was sold to a group of distributors. They, in turn, sold it to Olympia Brewing in Washington, which then sold it to Pabst in 1983. Pabst later traded it to Stroh's from Detroit. Stroh's attempted to disconnect the Hamm's brand from the brewery before ultimately shutting it down in 1997. The brand is now proudly brewed by Molson Coors.



"Reflections". 12.  
Courtesy of MNHS





# Yoerg Brewing: The First



"Portrait of Mr. Anthony Yoerg". Approx 1880.  
Courtesy of MNHS

Bavarian-born Anthony Yoerg is the first recorded commercial brewer in Minnesota. He arrived in St. Paul in 1848 and initially worked as a butcher but quickly opened his brewery on the East Side of the Mississippi (the exact date is uncertain). As the first settlement, St. Paul had many thirsty citizens, and the demand only grew as the German population increased. By 1871, Yoerg expanded enough to build a new brewery on the West Side of the river, allowing for greater production to meet the growing population's needs. He took advantage of the sandstone bluffs, carving caves into them to store and refrigerate his beer. Many other St. Paul brewers followed his lead, but Yoerg was the one who coined the term "cave aged."

Yoerg became a household name with the new space, known for producing high-quality beer. A signature of the brewery was its use of all American ingredients, including locally sourced Minnesotan barley.<sup>3</sup> While Yoerg steadily grew, Anthony never sought the expansion that others in the city or state pursued. He died in 1896, leaving the brewery to his five sons to manage.

During Prohibition, Yoerg turned to the dairy industry, but it faced a tough market in the Midwest in the 1920s. They survived until 1952 when the brewery decided to close. In 2018, however, a pair of beer historians procured the rights to the brand and opened a brewpub, making Yoerg Beer available in its home city once again.



West St. Paul. - Anthony Yoerg's Brewery. 1886.  
Courtesy of MNHS



Yoerg Brewery, Ohio and Ethel, St. Paul. 1933.8  
Courtesy of MNHS





## THE HISTORIC JACOB SCHMIDT BREWERY: ONE LOCATION, A THOUSAND STORIES

The brewing story off West 7th in Saint Paul is filled with names, successes, and tragedy. It began in 1855 with Christopher Stahlmann, a talented brewer who, within five years, was distributing out of state. He was the first in Minnesota to produce 10,000 bbls annually and continued expanding until he passed away from tuberculosis in 1883. His children soon followed, and the brewery became known as “St. Paul Brewing” for three years before landing in the hands of former Hamm’s Brewmaster Jacob Schmidt. After a fire destroyed the brewery, they rebuilt it bigger and better, still utilizing the caves beneath. Although Schmidt passed away in 1911, he had already entrusted the majority of the brewery to his son-in-law, Adolph Bremer, and his brother, Otto. They proved to be savvy leaders, continuing the brewery's growth during Prohibition with it’s “near beers,” including “City Club.” When Prohibition ended, they brewed a full-strength version that led Schmidt to become the seventh-largest brewery in the country. Soldiers of World War II enjoyed City Club due to Otto’s personal relationship with FDR. Things changed when Otto passed in 1951, and the brewery was sold to the Detroit-based Pfeiffer Brewery. Although still successful, they discontinued City Club and only brewed Schmidt, achieving moderate success. In 1972, the brewery was sold to G. Heileman of La Crosse, Wisconsin. Schmidt was brewed alongside Old Style and its former competitor, Grain Belt. Eventually, due to corporate shake-ups, G. Heileman closed the brewery in 1990.



“Your Visit to Jacob Schmidt Brewery”. 1950.  
Courtesy of MNHS



“100 Years of Brewing”. 1903.  
Courtesy of MNHS



“Minnesota Brewing Opening Packet”. 11.  
(Pictured: Brewmaster Siegfried Plegans)  
Courtesy of MNHS



The mash tuns wouldn’t stay empty for long, as many of the same staff were hired by local investors to brew again, and the Minnesota Brewing Company was established. The brewery found success with its Pilsner “Pig’s Eye,” named after the one-eyed fur trapper who first settled St. Paul. They also brought Grain Belt back and won a Great American Beer Festival award in 1994. Unfortunately, the economy was tough for medium-sized breweries, and the brewery closed again in 2002 after selling the rights to Grain Belt to Schell’s.



# BREWING BEYOND THE CITIES: DULUTH



Fitger's Brewery, Duluth. Approx. 1925  
Courtesy of MNHS

The story of Fitger's Brewery begins in 1857 when Sidney Luce gave permission to a group of gentlemen, including J. Goettlieb Busch, to build a brewery on his property by the stream.

Although small, the brewery thrived, and in 1866, it was sold to Nicolas Decker. Decker operated the brewery for a few years before selling part of it to Michael Fink, a brewer from Stillwater.

In 1882, Fink built a new brewery on Superior Street and hired August Fitger as the brewmaster. Fitger eventually bought the brewery from Fink. Despite early challenges, such as foundation damage, the brewery modernized and expanded, producing a variety of beer styles.

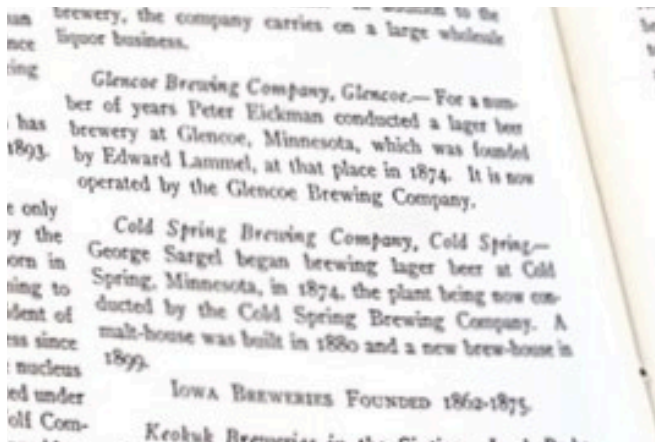
By the early 1900s, it had become one of the largest breweries in Minnesota, producing 78,000 barrels a year. However, Prohibition from 1920 to 1933 severely impacted the business, forcing Fitger's to create non-alcoholic drinks like Silver Spray, which proved unprofitable.

After Prohibition ended, the brewery resumed beer production and tried new marketing strategies. Despite rising costs and increasing competition, it continued to innovate.

However, financial difficulties escalated in the 1960s, leading to its closure in September 1972. Legal disputes followed, but the brewery's legacy was preserved when it was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.



# BREWING BEYOND THE CITIES: COLD SPRING



"100 Years of Brewing". 1903.  
Courtesy of MNHS



Men posed with bottles of Cold Spring beer. Approx. 1910  
Courtesy of MNHS

Cold Spring, Minnesota, is well named for its clean spring water, which plays a key role in its brewing history. In 1874, Michael Stargl started the city's brewing journey. Though it changed hands several times, it became Cold Springs Brewing Company in 1900 under John Oster, Ferdinand Peters, and brewer Eugene Hermanutz. Within 14 years, it was the ninth-largest brewery in the state and began bottling its spring water.

The brewery survived Prohibition, even after federal agents raided it in 1920 and dumped all its beer on site. In a dramatic turn, a federal agent reopened the brewery at midnight on April 7, 1933, allowing 400 delivery trucks to leave just after Prohibition was repealed. <sup>6</sup>

Despite continued growth, Cold Spring faced challenges in the 1970s, prompting them to start contract brewing for other brands, including "Billy Beer." Businessman Myron Johnson tried to save the brewery, but it ultimately ran out of money two years after his passing.

In 1997, a group of investors revitalized the brewery, which had acquired Gluek through a trade. The business thrived, and in 2003, one of the investors, John Lenore, bought out the others, taking sole ownership. The brewery expanded its co-packing capabilities and began brewing for Third Street Brewhouse, known for "Minnesota Gold," one of the state's best-selling craft beers. In 2017, the company was purchased by private equity, but Third Street remains active.





**The Minnesota Craft Brewers Guild reminds you that this is a Living Document that will be added to from here on out (we didn't even cover the Craft Renaissance of 1978-today).**

**The Guild also gives all thanks to Doug Hoverson, who literally wrote the book on Minnesota Beer History. If you are interested in learning more, much of the info here is covered in deeper depth in his book "Land of Amber Waters".**

**These stories also deserve recognition to Moira F. Harris, Charles Edwin Dick, and countless other historians and writers working hard to preserve Minnesota's Beer History.**

**The Guild would also like to thank the Minnesota Historical Society and staff for their assistance and support on research for this project.**

**Above all, The Guild would like to thank our members and hope this living document helps to remind them of the lineage that they are a part of. If you are ever feeling like a stuck mash, we hope this makes your wort clear again.**

**The most interesting history is the history you are currently creating. So engage with it and visit a brewery today. One day, they will be written about.**



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