



Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California

www.gilbertgia.com

Bakersfield Breweries, 1866-1920

ver 3

by Gilbert P. Gia

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In fall 1866 Chris Dockweiler delivered a keg of his new beer to the Havilah Courier. The weather was warm, and the men at the Kern County seat appreciated his good-will gesture.¹



Havilah about 1870. Brewery is above.

¹ Havilah Weekly Courier, Sep 8, 1866. Owners were H. and C. Dockweiler who also wholesaled wines, liquors, and Havana cigars to saloons and traders.

Three years earlier and 50 miles below Havilah at today's Bakersfield where the Kern River spreads out onto the planes of the San Joaquin Valley, Col. Thomas Baker settled his family about 100 yards from the river. Because the Kern was unpredictable, one of Baker's earlier projects was construction of a dirt levee on the northwest border of his homestead. The river formed a U-bend there before it resumed its westerly path along today's 23th street,² and at that place Baker set up a saw mill. But on new year's day 1868 a catastrophic flood relocated the river a mile to the north leaving Baker's mill without power.³ The river's old bed became a pestilent *"rich vegetable mold [with] masses of rank and constantly decaying vegetation."* Nearby, the hand and-dug wells had become contaminated with the *"filth and poison of the surrounding surface,"*⁴ but in 1870 a visiting well-boring company sunk several wells and brought up "pure and healthful water" from 50-ft.⁵

The mining boom at Havilah declined, and the population of Baker's Field grew. In 1869 John B. Tungate opened the settlement's first

2 Until 1970, Twentieth Place was an east-west street dividing Blk 208 into a north half and a south half. Downtown School now occupies all of the block.

3 See George Gilbert Lynch, *Great Floods of the Kern River*. The name Kern Island was less meaningful after the flood, and Baker's Field came into general use.

4 *Kern County Weekly Courier*, Oct 22, 1870

5 *Ibid.* Sections of 1-1/4-in galvanized, riveted and soldered iron pipe was manufactured on location. Mechanical pumps delivered the water to the surface.

saloon and prospered so well that in 1870 he built a cellar for summer customers.⁶ Tungate soon sold to Withington & Prentis, but nearby he built another saloon, and by early 1871 Tungate's public house was called "*creditable anywhere.*"⁷

Water from the new wells must have been acceptable; in January 1871, Bakersfield received the "gratifying information" that a new lager beer brewery would open by summer.⁸ The report, however, was about a year premature. Brewery equipment did not arrive until February 1872,⁹ but a month later Bakersfield Brewery was selling lager.

"Near Col. Baker's new mill. The undersigned having established a first class brewery in this place is now prepared to furnish Lager beer to this and surrounding towns at Reasonable Rates. Orders from the country promptly filled and in a satisfactory manner. HA Jastro."¹⁰

Jastro, then 22, probably was assisting his father-in-law, Col. Baker, in

6 Eugene Burmeister, *City Along the Kern, Bakersfield, California 1869-1969*, p 11

7 Tungate sold spirits, cordials, and a "large stock of malt liquors on drought." (*Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jan 21, 1871, p 3) The malt liquor was probably a dark, high-alcohol drink.

8 *Kern Co Weekly Courier*, Jun 14, 1870, p 2. Tungate apparently had business savvy: Wrote the *Courier*, "We tender thanks to the new firm for the ale and cocktails furnished to the printers of this office." (*Kern County Weekly Courier*, Jan 21, 1871, p 3)

9 *Kern Co Weekly Courier*, Feb 24, 1872

10 Jastro's first advertisement appeared in the *Kern County Weekly Courier* on Mar 22, 1872.

the operation of Jastro & Co brewery.¹¹ Five months after its opening Jastro bought two lots (for \$200 from Col. Baker) on the west side of M street between 20th and 21st,¹² which today are in City Block 208, the site of Downtown Elementary School.

BOOK 2 PAGE 284
This Indenture, made the Eight day of May A D One thousand, eight hundred and seventy-two, Between, Thomas Baker, of Bakersfield, Kern County, California, the party of the first part, and Henry A. Jastro of the same place, the party of the second part. Witnesseth that the said party

**Col. Thomas Baker to H.A. Jastro
Kern County Hall of Records, June 14, 1872**

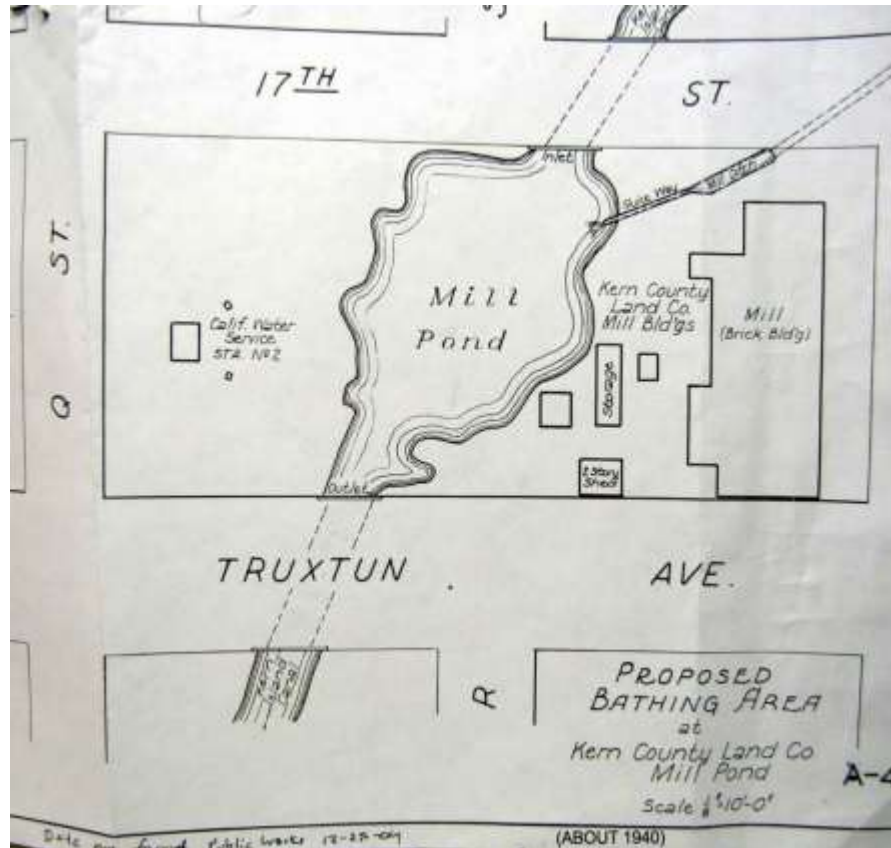
Jastro's ad mentioned "*Near Col. Baker's new mill.*"¹³ Where was that new mill? In 1870 San Francisco patent-medicine millionaire Horacio P. Livermore and partners, including Col. Thomas Baker, formed a corporation to develop canals, water power, and manufacturing on Kern Island. To that end they built a canal and installed flouring and

11 On Oct 24 Baker sold the adjacent Lot 7 to Jastro. Col. Thomas Baker died Nov 24, 1872 of typhoid pneumonia (Kern County Weekly Courier, Nov 30, 1872.)

12 Kern County Hall of Records, Deeds Book 0002-0084. Jun 14, 1872, According to Thomas Baker's first town map, Lot 8 and Lot 1 in Block 5 North, Range 3 East were located five blocks north of the intersection of today's Truxtun and Chester Ave and three blocks east of Chester. The deed described the lots as "on the south of the south bank of the slough or ditch intersecting the outlet or the tail race of Baker's Saw Mill." Lots 1, 7, and 8 were improved real estate because Baker sold them "with all and singular appurtenances."

13 Today the mill's location can be described as in the two blocks east of the US Federal building at Truxtun and P streets.

saw mills on the old south fork a few hundred yards southeast of Baker's farm.¹⁴ The flouring mill had been in operation about four months by the time Jastro opened the brewery.¹⁵



The Livermore-Baker Mill at northeast corner Truxtun and Q. Map about 1940

Bakersfield's summer climate meant Jastro could not brew year-around, but he apparently had challenges other than the heat. On

- ¹⁴ The old channel is now occupied by the canal that flows through Central Park. "Col. Baker is building a saw mill and a flouring mill." (Visalia Delta, Mar 16, 1870)
- ¹⁵ The canal that is labeled Mill Ditch carried river water from Panorama Bluffs. Mill Ditch was abandoned in 1947. (Bakersfield Californian, May 20, 1947)

March 14, 1874 the *Courier* reported that Jastro & Co was "again in running order," and two weeks later the newspaper blessed the new product: "Having had the pleasure of testing a few bottles of the beer, we have no hesitation in pronouncing it a good article." The paper was also glad that local money wasn't leaving of town for the "indispensable article."¹⁶

The well-water that Jastro used emerged at a constant temperature of 71°, which made possible the control of bottom-fermenting yeast. But he also needed hot water for brewing. The fuel came from great mounds of trees that had been uprooted during the flood of 1868 and deposited along the realigned bed of the Kern River. Beer-making also requires barley. An agricultural summary of 1860-70 Kern county shows that Col. Baker harvested 1,000 bushels of barley from his 10-acre field.¹⁷ Beer from Jastro & Company quenched the town's thirst for the next two years.¹⁸

16 Kern County Weekly Courier, Mar 28, 1874, p 3, c 1

17 1860 and 1870, Census of Kern County Agriculture and Industry (Beale Memorial Library, Bakersfield, CA, microfilm R630.201, Jun 1, 1870) notes that Thomas Baker owned Improved land of 120 acres, unimproved land, 1,200 acres, and 1,000 bushels of barley. That count was high compared to other county farmers listed. During brewing, malting converts barley to sugar, and yeast converts the sugar to alcohol.

18 Havilah still had a brewery. Across the street from the Golden Gate Hotel in spring 1873, Ebrich & Company turned out a fine-quality product and enjoyed first-rate business. Their low-alcohol brew, "not the kind that carries one home on it," was probably Buck Beer. (Havilah Miner, Jun 28, 1873)

Baker died November 24, 1872, and in July 1874 Jastro sold the brewery for \$2000 to Constantine Baker and John Schlachter.¹⁹ Baker, who was unrelated to the colonel, had operated a bakery, saloon, restaurant, and barbershop, but Schlachter, recently from Mendocino County, had come with brewing experience.²⁰ A month later at the old Jastro brewer, Drs. Warner & Co were selling their curative "Chemical Vapor Baths."²¹

While the Warners cured their patients, Baker and Schlachter built Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery at the corner of 18th and M streets today.²²

19 (1)Kern County Hall of Records, Jul 28, 1874, Deeds Bk 0003-0346. (2) *"Thirty dollars per front foot was paid for a lot in Bakersfield the other day. Six years ago the same property was sold by Col. Baker for one dollar per acre."* (Southern [Bakersfield] Californian, Oct 14, 1875, p 3)

20 Census and Great Register names and dates are from Shirley Jackson, Kern Co Genealogical Society

21 Kern County Weekly Courier, Aug 29, 1874, p 1

22 At *Second Street North*, about three blocks south of Jastro's old brewery

GAMBRINUS BREWERY,
SECOND-ST., NORTH,
 South of Baker & Muehe's Restaurant, Bakersfield.
Beer in Bottles, Kegs or Barrels, furnished to
all parts of the surrounding country, to
Bars and Private Families.

A BEER GARDEN
 And Cellar

Is on the premises, where the beverage is dispensed
 to customers and may be drank amid sur-
 roundings of comfort and quiet.

BAKER & SCHLACHTER.

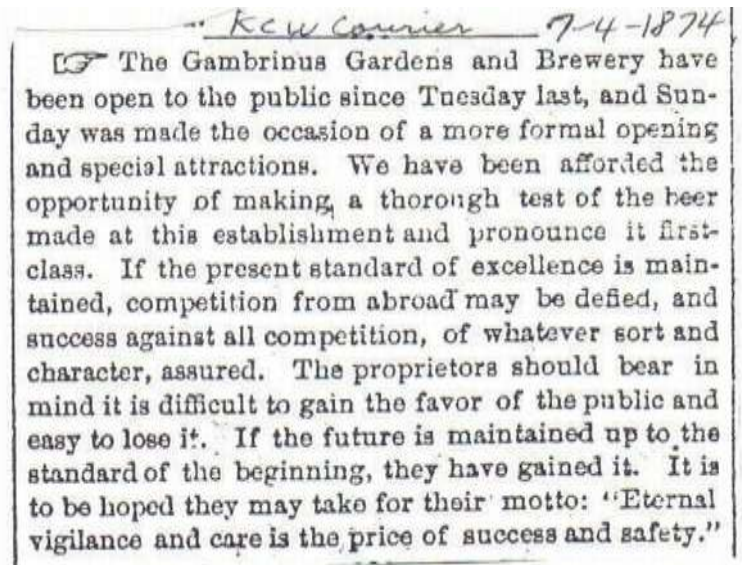
Je271f Weekly courier July 4, 1874

July 4, 1874

Government tax licensing delayed opening, but by late summer 1874

Baker & Schlachter's Gambrinus had become a first-class addition to

the town.²³



Gambrinus opening, Kern County Weekly Courier, July 4, 1874

A reporter from the Courier wrote on June 20th that the building was not completely finished, but its customers were being served anyway in the cool cellar. Outside, the landscaping was laid out "in German fashion...and a handsome garden with summer house and fountain has been arranged... Great taste and art have been displayed in making the locality a pleasant one."²⁴ The Courier concluded, "Their accommodations for those who may feel disposed to imbibe on the premises are first-class."²⁵ Gambrinus, the mythical King of brewing and recognized symbol for beer, was an imposing name for a

²³ Kern County Weekly Courier, Jun 27, 1874, p 2

²⁴ Kern County Weekly Courier, Jun 20, 1874, p 2

²⁵ Ibid.

settlement the size of Bakersfield. The building soon simply became known as City Brewery.

King Gambrinus, from a beer coaster



Kern County Hall of Records deeds suggest that other investors had interests in the new brewery. Brewers John and Henry Becker were two, and Ignatz Kruger and Robert Gardner were two other brewers.²⁶ To the public, however, Bakersfield Brewery belonged to Constantine Baker and John Schlachter.

Henry Jastro sold his brewery in 1874 while Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery was still under construction. Why did Jastro leave? Beer from

²⁶ Ignatz Kruger and Robert Gardner were probably out-of-town investors. Grant from Robert Gardner of Sacramento County for \$5 to John Becker and John Schlachter an undivided 2/3 of all of Lot 1 south of the slough and all of Lots 7 and 8 in Blk 208. (Kern County Hall of Records, Dec 21, 1876, Deeds Bk 0006-0330)

Visalia was then wagoned into Bakersfield. ²⁷ Jastro would not have feared competition, but he probably felt differently about the arrival of the railroad.²⁸ Just three months after Baker and Schlachter opened the Gambrinus, the Southern Pacific's northern line reached town, and with it came competition in the Bakersfield beer market.²⁹ In 1874 Jastro was a farm manager in the vast agricultural interests of Haggin & Carr,³⁰ although the Kern County tax rolls of 1874-75 show he was taxed on 100-lbs of hops. ³¹

The Courier's reporter visited the new brewery and wrote,

"The Gambrinus Gardens and Brewery have been open to the public since Tuesday last, and Sunday was made the occasion of a more formal opening and special abstractions [*sic, attractions*]. We have been afforded the opportunity of making a thorough test of the beer made at this establishment and pronounce it first class. If the present standard of excellence is maintained, competition from abroad may be defrayed... The proprietors

27 "Good beer, as the large supplies brought from Visalia indicate, is highly appreciated in this section..." (Kern County Weekly Courier, Jun 27, 1874, p 2)

28 See Gilbert Gia, *Henry A. Jastro, Commodore of Kern County*, www.gilbertgia.com

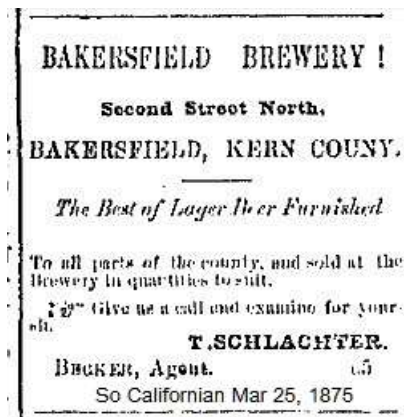
29 By Oct 1874 passenger and freight service was in operation a few miles east of Bakersfield at Sumner.

30 Sunset Magazine, Jun 1911, v26, p 633

31 Kern County Tax Rolls 1874-75

should bear in mind it is difficult to gain the favor of the public and easy to lose it. ... It is to be hoped they may take for their motto: 'Eternal vigilance and care is the price of success and safety.' "³²

The brewery's ad of March 1875 showed T. Schlachter as proprietor, and a person named Becker as beer agent. The City Brewery continued in business, but as months passed, beer imports increased. Within a few years those shipments would put the Bakersfield brewery out of business.



Gambrinus, aka Bakersfield Brewery, 1875

Constantine Baker's words *Eternal Vigilance* also meant looking after his own financial health. In late 1874 he bought two lots at 19th and M from the estate of Col. Baker and there erected a brick saloon called

³² Kern County Weekly Courier, Jul 4, 1874, p 2. Kern County Hall of Records, Deeds 0001-0004, Jan 9, 1875

the Palace.³³ In 1875 a newspaper said the Palace was Bakersfield's first brick house, but the building was indeed a drinking place.³⁴ It opened its doors a few days before Christmas 1875, but the event was probably not of great import to Bakersfield's 700 residents because the town already had six saloons.

The Palace was well-situated, a block off 19th, which with Chester was one of the town's two main streets. The saloon had smooth, hard-finished walls, ceilings of alternating stained redwood and white cedar, and a full cellar "*built up in brick and cement,*" and Baker's place was a "*choice suburban retreat.*"³⁵ Surrounding the building were pepper and eucalyptus trees, ornamental evergreens, and young orange trees from Visalia.³⁶ The Palace offered a free lunch and was the sole distributor of Humboldt Beer and the "renowned" Milwaukee Beer, which Baker personally warranted as the "genuine imported article." As a customer of the Southern Pacific's beer delivery,³⁷ Baker did not advertise the local beer made at the Gambrinus.

33 Kern County Gazette, Dec 18, 1875

34 Kern County Gazette, Jan 6, 1875. The Palace probably occupied the grounds of Baker's old Bakery Restaurant which in 1872 was at 2nd Street North and 3rd Street East, today 18th and M streets. The Bakery burned to the ground in 1872 (Kern Co Weekly Courier, Dec 28, 1872) Henry Jastro might have had an interest in the Palace because he owned the half the block next to it.

35 Kern County Gazette, Dec 18, 1875

36 Kern County Weekly Courier, Jan 15, 1876, p 2

37 6,975-ft San Fernando Tunnel was completed in Aug 1876. Train travel between Los Angeles and Oakland via Bakersfield was 24 hr, 40 min.

C. BAKER, one of the pioneers of the town, and the former proprietor of the Bakery, has just completed the first brick house in town on his premises in the rear of the old Bakery and fronting on Second Street North and Third Street East. It is hard finished throughout, with ceiling and trimmings of stained redwood and white cedar in alternate stripes. The room is large, light, and airy. A spacious cellar, built up in brick and cement, extends under the entire building, and is used as a store room for wines, liquors, beer, and other stock. Situated one street back from the thoroughfare, the place offers many attractions to those who prefer the quiet and seclusion of a comfortable and sequestered resort.

Constantine Baker's Palace, (Kern County Courier, December 18, 1875)

The Palace was never a brewery, although the 1926 Bakersfield Californian said it was. The error was understandable because in 1926 the Palace building at 1801 M Street was the oldest brick structure in town and for the past 51-years had gone through many uses. The newspaper wrote about it because it was being demolished.³⁸

As for the Gambrinus, its life span lasted only three years. At 11 am on January 18, 1877 flames appeared on the roof, and soon the brewery was destroyed, including the basement supplies of beer agent T.

38 Mar 16, 1926

Becker.³⁹ Winds had driven the flames away from nearby buildings, but because the brewery's water-supply tank also burned, surviving building had no water pressure. For about a year no beer was made in Bakersfield.

Constantine Baker partnered to rebuild the brewery with a 38-year-old miner from Havilah named Charles Hickisch, and in January 1878 they announced that their beer would be ready by the 15th and moreover be *"as good and cheap as any that can be imported."*⁴⁰ The Californian announced it was happy that the "home industry" had returned. The newspaper was also pleased that some beer money would stay in town.



"Patronize Home Industry," 1878

39 Misprint of John Becker's name?

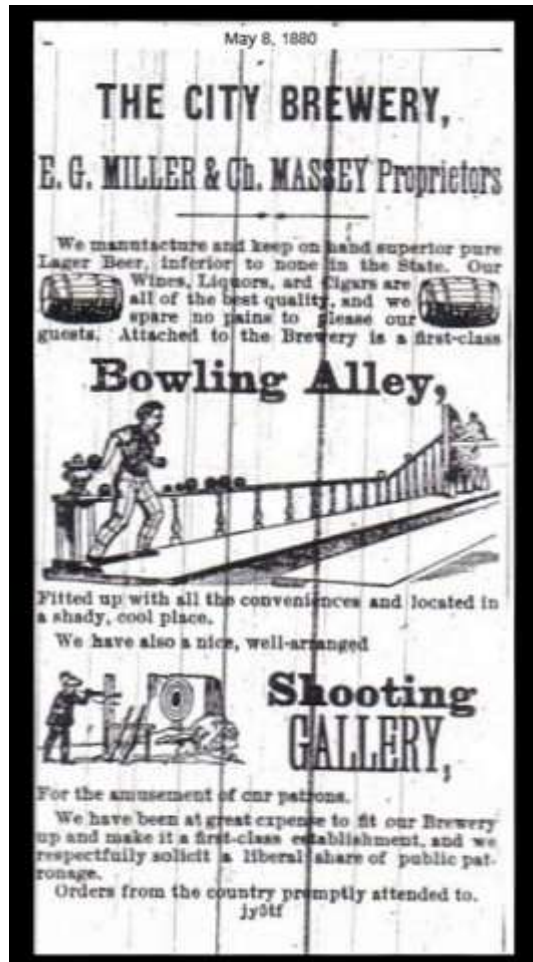
40 Courier Californian, Jan 3, 1878

Southern Pacific freight rates remained high, but they did not slow orders from Bakersfield saloons. The railroad line from Los Angeles was already shipping beer to town when Baker and Hickisch open the rebuilt Gambrinus.

Not long after that, Charles Hickisch died. In 1880 a 35-year-old brewer from Germany named Egid Gustave Miller registered to vote in Kern County. By that summer he and C.H. Massey, 27, had opened City Brewery on the site of Jastro's old brewery.⁴¹ Their ad read, "*We manufacture and keep on hand pure Lager Beer.*" By this date, entertainment had become a necessity for a successful saloon business.⁴²

41 Bakersfield Weekly Gazette. This author was unable to find information about brewery events between 1878 and 1880.

42 Kern County Weekly Record, May 13, 1883. Report of the Grand Jury: "...The great mass of the disturbances and crimes of the county is directly traceable to the retail liquor traffic therein, and we therefore urgently recommend that our Supervisors fix a license tax thereon at the rate of not less than \$100 per quarter."



City Brewery, 1880

City Brewery did not have cold storage, but that was set-aside until resolution of a legal challenge to the building's title. By summer 1883 Miller and Massey had settled it, and the Courier announced that "G. Miller of the City Brewery has erected the largest refrigerator for beer in the State."⁴³

⁴³ Kern County Californian, Jun 2, 1883. Ice was not manufactured at Bakersfield until after 1895. Miller's refrigerator would have been an insulated, walk-in box. Miller also sold ice, which was wagoned in from Breckenridge Mt or shipped by rail from Truckee in Northern California.

Brewery operations were disrupted in 1883 when Miller died.⁴⁴ The business might have stopped making Bakersfield's own "*superior, pure, lager beer,*" but within weeks Miller's widow, Lucy, 38 and mother of nine children, brought in Louis P. Biebesheimer as brewmeister and manager. In May 1885 the 30-year-old New Yorker became part of the Miller family when he married Lucy's 17-year-old daughter, Barbara.⁴⁵

"The City Brewery has recently undergone a general renovation and adoption for the summer season. The Lager Beer is of a better quality than it has ever been before, and the Bar is supplied with the very choicest of Wines, Liquors, and Cigars. The Bowling Alley and Shooting Gallery which are kept running day and night have also been greatly improved, and now the Brewery is the most comfortable and best place of resort in the County. Beer put up expressly for Saloons and Family use and delivered promptly on receipt of order. L.P. Biebesheimer, Manager."⁴⁶

New bottling equipment made it possible for Biebesheimer to be competitive. "*Excellent beer is now being made at the City Brewery and*

44 Kern County Californian, Jul 14, 1883

45 By 1897 the couple had separated. In November, Los Angeles police arrested Barbara and a friend for shoplifting. The case against her was dismissed in Feb 1899.

46 Jan 1886. "Put up" means bottled.

is being bottled in the latest improved system. Mr. Biebesheimer with a view to extending the business and placing this excellent article within the reach of everybody has reduced the price to \$1.50 a dozen."⁴⁷

In spring 1886 Biebesheimer's name was gone from the brewery ads, probably because in spring a Joseph Weringer married Mrs. Lucy P. Miller.⁴⁸ Weringer might have come into the family without beer-making experience, but there is not doubt he did bring energy, determination, and a practical nose for business.

Bakersfield newspaper ads show that most beer sold at Bakersfield in the mid-1880s was made elsewhere. Major brewing companies were Buffalo Brewing of Fresno; San Francisco Breweries (a consortium), and D. Mahlstedt Philadelphia Brewery of Los Angeles, which after 1882 was called Maier & Zobelin. Although Biebesheimer was a trained brewer, brewing at City Brewery was still more an art than a science, and Joseph Weringer could not guarantee the same-tasting beer batch-to-batch. However the highly-capitalized Los Angeles and San Francisco breweries could. Newly developed European yeasts,

⁴⁷ Kern County Californian, Jan 2, 1886. p 3

⁴⁸ Married April 1886. Lucy Miller Weringer's tenth child, Franz Joseph, was born In Dec 1886. In 1888 Josephine was born. Lucy died in 1890. In 1900 Joseph Weringer married Rosa Haberstroh. (Dates and names from author's interview with Marge Gillette, granddaughter of Joseph Weringer.)

mechanical refrigeration, and advances in brewing science produced a consistent product, and the expansion of railroad systems meant the big companies could deliver it.

About 300 independent breweries were in California in 1881, but aggressive distribution from major brewers eventually forced almost all independents out of business. Bakersfield's thirst for beer was so important to the industry that in 1887 Herman Wieland, senior owner of Wieland Brewing, met here with his local distributor A.P. Eyraud.⁴⁹

City Brewery was unable to compete with the corporations, and Joseph Weringer stopped brewing. On February 21, 1888 about 100 miles north of Bakersfield, fire destroyed the Fresno Brewery, maker of Buffalo Beer. If the shortage was felt here, it did not encourage investors to restart brewing at the Bakersfield City Brewery.

The named might have confused the Los Angeles Times, which wrote in January 1889 that Bakersfield had "*a large brewery.*" It did not. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of January 1890 showed a building between 19th and 20th streets and west of M marked "*Beer Bottling,*

49 Feb 1887

***Phil'-BR'Y S.F.*" That site was a bottling plant for bulk beer brought in from the Philadelphia Breweries of San Francisco. During the 1894 railroad strike the Californian noted, "There is a beer famine and little ice."⁵⁰**

The story of Bakersfield brewing does not take up again until 1899, but entertainment at Weringer's City Brewery flourished. A Sanborn map dated January 1, 1888 indicates that City Brewery, "formerly a brewery," had become a bottling works. The Sanborn map of 1889 labeled it City Brewery Gardens.

City Brewery Gardens was an entertainment house. Joseph Weringer became a distributor for Chicago Lager, Fredericksburg Lager, and John Wieland on tap,⁵¹ but other labels were sold in Bakersfield, and Weringer probably had those, too. An 1888 ledger from the Ardizzi-Olcese store in nearby Sumner lists Budweiser from San Diego, Red Ribbon from Los Angeles, and a "Local."⁵² Ardizzi-Olcese also sold porter under the labels Burke's, AH, Bull Dog, and Red Label. Bass was the only ale sold.

50 Jul 5, 1894

51 Kern County Museum, Ledger of the Southern Hotel, 1889

52 In this author's interview with Marge Gillette, she said her grandfather Joseph Weringer brewed beer.

By the mid-1880s, Bakersfield had become an important market for the million-dollar California brewing industry. After the 1888 fire at the Wieland brewery in Los Angeles, the plant was rebuilt,⁵³ and in October 1889 an English brewing syndicate bought the new brewery for \$3M, or about \$70M in 2010 dollars.⁵⁴

Here in Bakersfield, Joseph Weringer renovated City Brewery Gardens,⁵⁵ and part of the expense probably was born by Fredericksburg Brewing Company. Such investments were not unusual at a time when major breweries had close financial ties to hometown saloons.⁵⁶

The City Brewery bowling alley and day-and-night shooting gallery were still open in 1890, but the 50 by 70-ft building also offered variety theater. Comedians West & Cosgrove did stand-up, and their dressing rooms appear on the Sanborn maps. In 1890 Weringer promoted a boxing match between Charley *"The San Joaquin Sun-Burned Terror"*

53 Philadelphia Brewery of Los Angeles

54 Los Angeles Times, Oct 30, 1889

55 Kern County Californian, Jun 8, 1890

56 Local brewers also supported saloons. A later example of that was in 1916 when Jacob Niederaur leased space in his building on K street (for \$220 a month) to Gaudenz Weichelt and Rudolph A Burger for a saloon and restaurant. Baumgartner guaranteed the that lease in the name of Bakersfield Brewing Co. (Kern Co Hall of Records, Jun 29, 1916)

Turner and Frank "*Watermelon Kid*" Conley,⁵⁷ and the fight probably took place on the City Brewery stage.⁵⁸ In early 1891 Weringer was a distributor for San Francisco Breweries, which was a consortium of Fredericksburg, United States, Chicago, and John Wieland. Weringer's customers now choose among six lagers – Extra Pale, Standard, Pilsner, Erlanger, Culmbacher, Columbia, and Elk, as well as steam beer and several ales and porters, all of which were available in either bottle or on tap.

Weringer expanded into wholesale liquor sales, and in 1891 F.A. Dohrmann managed that part of the business for him.⁵⁹ A year later, Weringer's stepson Fred J. Miller became proprietor of the City Brewery. He further expanded the vaudeville side of the business and in 1893 brought in Miss Clarence Campbell, "*Queen of the High Kickers.*"

57 Kern County Californian, Jul 20, 1890

58 common practice in Bakersfield at the time

59 Kern County Californian, May 2, 1891



In 1894 when Michael Seidt was proprietor, patrons watched *"Hagal, Prince of Parachute Jumpers"* ascend in a hot air balloon and jump to the gasps of spectators below.⁶⁰ At the brewery's *"Grand Reopening"* in May, Seidt must have anticipated a crowd of tough customers because his ad cautioned, *"No vulgarity of any kind tolerated."*⁶¹

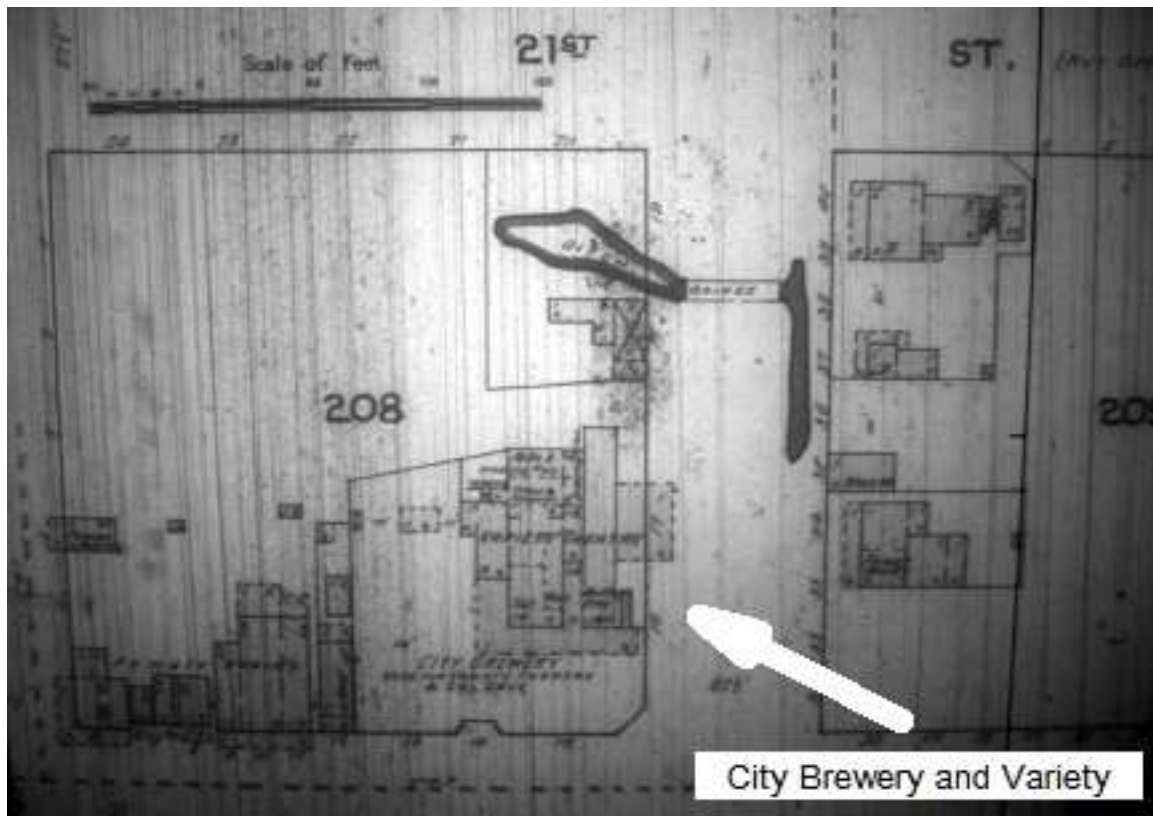
The vacant lots around City Brewery had filled in. Immediately north of it in City Block 191 was old Chinatown, but a tenderloin of gambling establishments, dance halls, saloons, and houses of prostitution bordered it on the other sides.⁶² Undismayed, the new manager, Steve

60 Daily Californian, Apr 14, 1894

61 Daily Californian, May 25, 1894, p 4

62 Sanborn Fire Maps of 1900 show a line of cribs on 21st street facing north on City Brewery.

Carroll, brought in "a fine orchestra."



"Female boarding houses," left of City Brewery, 20th and M. Map 1892

Carroll's efforts were not completely acceptable. In April 1895 Kern County Supervisors suspended City Brewery's license, and a year later the business came under scrutiny when charges were filed against proprietor W.H. Holmes for allowing women to solicit customers for drinks and for allowing music and dancing after midnight.⁶³ Holmes and other saloon owners who had similar charges against them appeared before the Board of Supervisors, but even before the meeting started,

⁶³ Daily Californian, Apr 11, 1896

Chairman of the Board Henry A. Jastro was excused "on account of important business." The charges were moved forward. A few days later Mr. Morrison, an attorney representing San Francisco liquor interests, stood before the supervisors and contended that that charges were false and that "the girls stayed in the boxes" and did not come out to solicit drinks.⁶⁴ On April 16th a petition was circulated to reopen City Brewery. The Californian was appalled.⁶⁵



U-bend in Panama Slough shown in Block 168, Chinatown in 191, and City Brewery in 206. Map from 1898

64 Probably cribs used by prostitutes

65 Ronald McDonald, owner of Old City Brewery, rebuilt it in 1904. By then it was a disreputable saloon. (Lynn Hay Rudy, *Old Bakersfield: Sites and Landmarks, 1875-1915*. 2000. Jenner, CA. In 1912 McDonald was a beer distributor at 13th and K. (Schlitz Beer ad, Bakersfield Californian, July 2, 1912)

Bakersfield's population was nearing 7,000 in 1899,⁶⁶ and talk on the street was all about a new brewery coming to town. The news turned out to be correct but premature.

Ernest Eilert emigrated as a youth from Germany in 1845 and learned beer-making at the family brewery at Humbird, Wisconsin. Eilert returned to Germany to study brewing science, and between 1885 and 1899 was brewmeister at Neillsville, Wisconsin. When he was 56 he hired a Chicago chemist to analyze Bakersfield water, and in May 1899 the report came back that it was *"sweet, pure, clean, clear, healthful, wholesome, without odor or taste, and good for all purposes, including brewing."*⁶⁷ The Daily Californian wrote that work on a new Bakersfield brewery would begin soon, and that perhaps by January 1900 the Eilerts would be "mixing barley juice with the water." The Californian did not mention that Eilert had not committed to Bakersfield.⁶⁸

But he was courted. William S. Tevis, President of Kern County Land Company, offered Eilert land south of the company's Valley Road Warehouse on Union avenue. Others enticed Eilert. Charles Offer

⁶⁶ Los Angeles' population was 102,000 in 1900.

⁶⁷ Los Angeles Times, May 26, 1899

⁶⁸ Bakersfield Californian, Apr 11, 1899

owned property with water on today's Edison highway.⁶⁹ Moreover, he pointed out, a Southern Pacific spur was nearby, and the SP wanted the brewery, too.

In the second week of June 1900 Eilert and his 29-year-old son William met with Mr. Packard, Clerk of the County Board of Supervisors⁷⁰ and learned that the Power Development Company planned to charge the Eilerts additional fees for 24-hour electrical service. Six-foot, 215-pound Ernest Eilert turned to Packard and informed him that Fresno had offered 24-hour electrical service for \$50 a year and was willing to discuss cutting the rate even further.

Tevis called an urgent conference with Packard, Nick Britz, Alfonse Weill, T.E. Harding, and Hugh A. Blodget. The conclusion: It would be a great mistake to lose the brewery just because of the electrical rates. Britz, a saloon owner, informed the group that Bakersfield residents already were spending \$75,000 a year on imported ice and beer.⁷¹ Tevis responded, *"I am not connected to the Power Development Company, but if Mr. Eilert wants to put a brewery here, I'll see to it he*

69 Called Offer's Resort in earlier years

70 Probably Newton Packard

71 About \$1.8M in 2011

***gets the lowest rate in the state.*"⁷² The Power Development Company director contacted the Eilerts and told them that Bakersfield would match Fresno's offer.⁷³ But by then it was too late. Later that year Eilert's 1,000 new Fresno employees were shipping beer from Merced to Bakersfield out of his new, six-story, "sky scraper" brewery.**

Bakersfield had been without a brewery for 15 years, but in 1902 a local brewers union marched with other trades in the town's first Labor Day Parade on September 3. The reason? Those "brewers" were beer-bottlers. That business was so good that in May, Maier & Zobelein of Los Angeles built a new beer-bottling plant at 15th and K Streets.⁷⁴

Bottling plants were subject to fire, and because that wooden building had a steam boiler, a five-ton ice machine, and a 15 HP gas engine, the structure did not escape a fire for very long. In summer 1905 an overheated flue set fire to the plant's roof.⁷⁵ The manager's sons Joe and Louis Vlasnik grabbed for the day book and ledgers as flames spread across the roof, threatened a fuel tank, and inched toward three Southern Pacific oil cars standing nearby. Gaining momentum the fire

⁷² Daily Californian, Jun 16, 1899

⁷³ H. Hunter

⁷⁴ Today this is just south of the Kern County Jail parking lot

⁷⁵ July 24, 1905

ignited the plant's insulated, refrigerated storage room. Several firemen arrived and raced to the east side to release frantic horses in the brewery's stable.

Beer sales were so profitable that no sensibly-run company could abandon the Bakersfield market, and two days later T.P. Roberts of Maier & Zobelein inspected the ruins and announced that the company would immediately rebuild with the latest and most improved bottling equipment. While rebuilding was underway, Vlasnik improvised an office and sold his remaining inventory. Every few days he received bottled beer and ice from Los Angeles.⁷⁶

Anaconda Brewery Works of Montana eyed the Bakersfield market.⁷⁷ There was talk of a brewery, but the US had entered an era of social reform, and some Bakersfield residents were much opposed to a brewery. In summer 1907 members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union protested before the Board of Trade,⁷⁸ but days later, in apparent disregard of their efforts, a Mr. Scott representing San Francisco brewing interests demanded that the Board of Trade

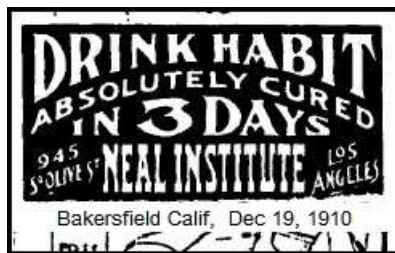
⁷⁶ Daily Californian, Jul 29, 1905

⁷⁷ "A Big Brewery May Locate Here," Bakersfield Californian, May 20, 1907

⁷⁸ May 5 and May 29, 1907

donate a five-acre site in the Krause Track for a new brewery.

Chief owner of the tract was E.T. Krause, and he let it be known that first of all he had not the slightest intention of giving away the property, secondly he was personally against a brewery for Bakersfield, and finally he might never set a price for the site.⁷⁹ Upon reflection, Krause said he "might look at the property," but Mr. Scott's brewery never materialized.



Alcoholism cured, Bakersfield ad of 1910

In 1907 Maier & Zobelein Brewery of Los Angeles disincorporated. Maier became Maier Brewery and Zobelein assumed controlling interest in Los Angeles Brewery. In July 1909 the change affected Bakersfield when the former Maier & Zobelein bottling plant on 15th started bottling Rainier, Maier, and John Wieland beer. Three months later, Bakersfield liquor distributor Hoaland & Ross were operating a bottling plant at the corner of 15th and Chester where they put up Pabst, Gilt

⁷⁹ Bakersfield Californian, Jun 6, 1907

Edge, Red Ribbon, San Diego Lager, Wurtzburger, and Fresno Beer.⁸⁰



Beer ad, Bakersfield Californian, December 19, 1910

Joseph Baumgartner built the town's next brewery. He apprenticed to brewing,⁸¹ and in the late 1870s when he was about 16 he immigrated to New York. He moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba, where he became brewmeister for Drewry Brewery. In 1882 Baumgartner relocated to Allegheny, Pennsylvania, and for the next three years was brewmeister for Hipley & Son's Iron City Brewery. From 1885 to 1894 Baumgartner was associated with a large brewery in Pittsburgh, and in 1893 he and a Bernard Schneider founded Spring Brewery at Latrobe, Pennsylvania.

⁸⁰ This might have been the same site as the 15th and K plant.

⁸¹ Born in the Kingdom of Bavaria, January 5, 1858

During this time Baumgartner established breweries at Sioux City, Iowa, and Camden, New Jersey. In 1902 he and a partner incorporated the old Spring Brewery at Latrobe as Punxsutawney Brewing Company.⁸² All of this is to say that Baumgartner had become wealthy and could do a lot for Bakersfield's economy.

In 1910 Farm Products Brewing Company of Los Angeles said it planned to manufacture malt beverages and ice here, and it filed articles of incorporation with the Kern County Clerk.⁸³ The news was dampened by the fact that at that early date only \$300 of the company's \$500,000 in shares yet had been sold.⁸⁴ If that public offering was connected to Baumgartner it might have helped fund Bakersfield's next brewery.

82 Baumgartner family retained financial interest in the brewery through 1920.

83 Bakersfield Californian, May 10, 1910

84 Daily Californian

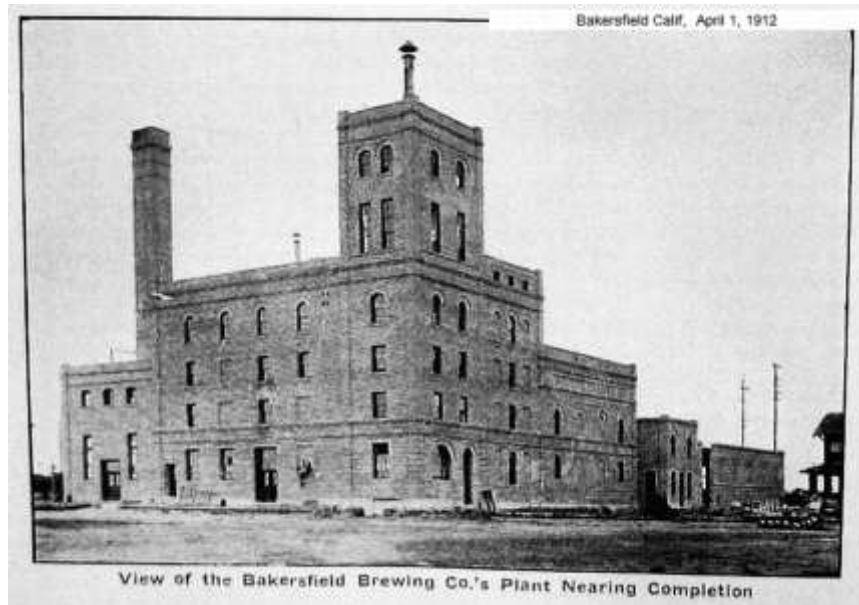


Baumgartner Brewery at 24th and Union in 1912

On January 2, 1910, 52-year-old Joseph Baumgartner bought one-and-one-quarter acres at the northwest corner of 24th and Union avenue from Philo Jewett and Hugh and Annie Blodget. Important to the sale was its 93-ft well that delivered 175 gallons a minute.⁸⁵ Baumgartner and his wife, Margaret, incorporated in 1911 as the Bakersfield Brewing Company valued at \$200,000.⁸⁶ Directors were Joseph Baumgartner, President, and his sons William (Treasurer), Joseph, Jr. (Secretary), John (Brewmeister), and William (bottling plant manager).

⁸⁵ See Bakersfield Californian, Apr 22, 1911

⁸⁶ Equal to \$4M in 2010



Bakersfield Brewery, 1911-12



As brewery rose it affected Bakersfield's psyche far before it began

production.⁸⁷ The projected output of 40,000 barrels a year prompted many of the same kind of statements that the earlier breweries had, that the operation would keep much wealth at home which until then went to other localities.

Although special hops would be imported from Bavaria and Bohemia, the Daily Californian assured readers that most of the grains would be grown in Kern County and that *"the farmers of this locality will be greatly benefited."* The paper concluded, *"The people of Kern County should show their appreciation of this new institution, which will be so potent a factor in the material developments of this community, by their patronage."*⁸⁸

Baumgartner's plant would be *"one of the most modern of its kind in America --equipped with every appliance and improvement modern science can suggest."*⁸⁹ It rose as a reinforced concrete, three- to six-stories structure occupying a base of about 10,000-sq-ft accompanied by a 4,000-sq-ft, single-story bottling plant on its east side. The ice-making department was fitted-up with a 36-ft x 20-ft x 46-in steel

87 Bakersfield Californian, Jul 14, 18, 1911. Built by C.D. Brown Construction in about 150 days for \$50,000

88 Author unable to find source of quote

89 Bakersfield Californian, Progress Edition, 1912

water tank; two high-low-pressure Triumph Ammonia Compressors driven by double-acting, 440 volt three-phase motors; and two overhead traveling American Engineering cranes. A foot of cork insulated many of the walls. The brewing room had two 100 horsepower, fuel-oil-electrically-operated boilers; 14 "chip" casks, each holding 110 barrels; 14 stock tubs each holding 185 barrels; and 12 fermenting tubs, each capable of turning out 125 barrels of finished beer. The bottling plant was a model of cleanliness, its Berry-Wehl Miller National Soaker insured

"... the highest possible sanitary service. The bottles are soaked in two separate antiseptic solutions and twice rinsed in hot water. After this they are taken to the new Eick Washer, where they are thoroughly scrubbed by the most ingenious mechanism. The bottles are filled by means of a new Henes-Keller rotary counter, pressure-filling machine and promptly corked by means of a "Jumbo" crowner. The product then is treated to a thoroughly pasteurizing process, and finally labeled by means of a new Ermold labeling machine." ⁹⁰

As Bakersfield watched the brewery rise, few realized that Joseph Baumgartner already had been seriously ill for months. In March 1912, about a month before the brewery opened, the 53-year-old founder and president died at a sanitarium in Los Angeles of cirrhosis of the liver.

90 Ibid.

The funeral in Bakersfield was held at the family's newly-built home, Rev. Father J.J. Prendeville said the mass at St. Joseph's Church in East Bakersfield, and the Elks escorted the body to Union Cemetery.⁹¹ Left behind were his wife Margaret Brautigam Baumgartner and their eight children, Joseph; John; William; George; Rose; Anna; Charles; and Margaret.



On May 1, 1912 open house was held for dignitaries and the next day was open for public sale of Lion Brew, "*made just like Lowenbrau,*

⁹¹ Pallbearers were M.A. Lindberg, Charles Lee, Fred Gunther, Harry Coffee, H. Eckenhauer, and J.T. Maguire.

***famous the world over as Germany's best beer.*"⁹² At 12-1/2 cents per quart, Lion Brew was half the cost of beer sold anywhere else in town, which prompted the Morning Echo to write, "*For years and years residents have been compelled to pay what is generally regarded at double the price of beer, but now that a local beer is at hand the price is so low that the local agencies will have to cut theirs to keep in the race.*"⁹³**

Bakersfield's temperance movement considered beer to be among the social evils, but to the Baumgartners' advantage, beer consumption here had been a fixture for a very long time, and the brewing industry built on that. A 1912 advertising supplement to the Daily Californian reads,

"Doctors say beer is a tonic and aid to digestion. It is a nourishing food. It does not stimulate but invigorates just as all good food does. Beer is an all-the-year-around drink and is becoming the national beverage of the American People. It does not over-stimulate as strong alcoholic beverages and shatter nerves by excess use as tea and coffee."

Bakersfield Brewing Company become a respected community

92 Bakersfield Californian, May 1, 1912. See also May 4, 1912

93 Morning Echo, May 4, 1912

business, and in fact in 1913 it placed an ad in the high school Oracle.⁹⁴ As business prospered, the Baumgarteners' single White delivery truck became a fleet of three. Their brewery ad in 1913 said, "*Lion Brew-- Its tonic properties will save you the usual dose of spring remedies. An old-fashioned German beer brewed from the finest malt and hops-- made in Bakersfield. One dozen quarts for \$1.50.*"⁹⁵

Wartime measures were enacted in 1917 to conserve food materials, but it also slowed business for breweries across the country. In 1919 the crusade against alcohol consumption became the next challenge for brewers. Under the War Time Prohibition Act the Federal government brought a test case against the Baumgartners for manufacturing and selling beer with more than 1/2 of 1% alcohol. In response Bakersfield's liquor interests united in defense of the Baumgartners,⁹⁶ but the brewery closed. Who would have guessed that after only nine years of use, the \$4,000,000 brewery was no more. Thirteen years would pass before Bakersfield had another brewery.

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94 Kern County Union High School Oracle, 1913 "Football Issue"

95 Bakersfield Californian, Mar 1, 1913

96 Los Angeles Times, Jul 12, 1919, p 17

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