

Mount Clemens Public Library

Local History Sketches

Mount Clemens Brewing Company

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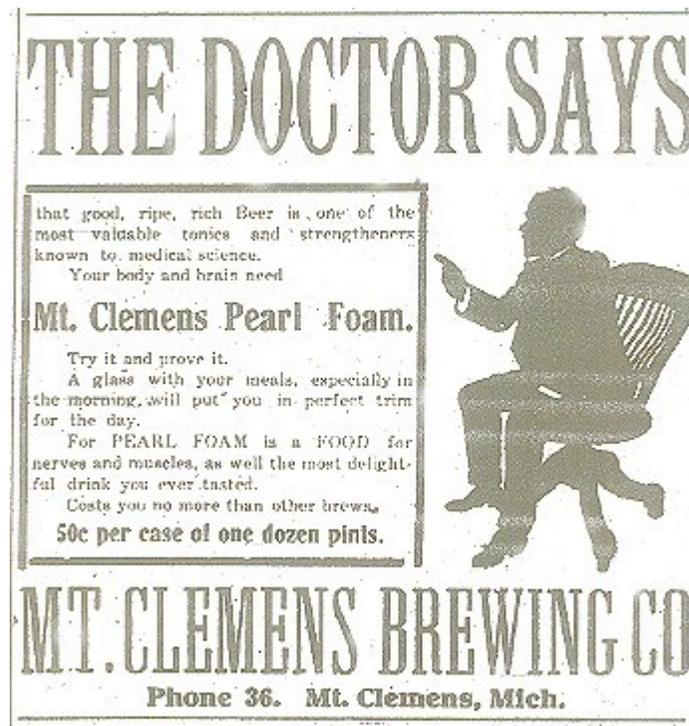
Mount Clemens Brewery at 37 S. Front St. as it appeared about 1897

The **Mount Clemens Brewing Company** had its roots in **Biewer's Brewery**, which was established in Mount Clemens in 1873 by a German immigrant named **August Biewer**. In 1889, the Mount Clemens Press noted that Biewer had sold his brewery interests to **Joseph J. Noeker** for a sum of \$14,000, but that Biewer planned to remain in Mount Clemens and engage in other business enterprises. Indeed, while the new Mount Clemens Brewing Company was gearing up for business, Mr. Biewer was busy launching a new brewery and beer garden which he continued to operate until his death in 1912, and which his son, **August Biewer, Jr.**, continued until Prohibition ended the business a decade later.

Meanwhile, the Mount Clemens Brewing Company was up and running at 37 S. Front St. with Joseph Noeker as president, **Paul LeFevre** as secretary and treasurer, **Joseph Oberstadt** as brewmaster, and **Peter Henkel** as general manager. The *Mount Clemens Press* of September 12, 1889, noted that "the Mount Clemens Brewing Co. is out with a new wagon painted red. Peter Henkel is general manager and is delivering a first-class quality of the popular German beverage." By 1897, the brewery was reporting a capacity of over 5,000 barrels per year. The original product appears to have been known as "Mount Clemens Export," but in April, 1905, the company announced a new product known as **Pearl Foam Beer**. The brewery's beer would be known as Pearl Foam for the rest of the firm's history.

In 1904, the company partnership dissolved in squabbling and the brewery was forced into a receivership under the administration of local industrialist and former mayor **A.T. Donaldson**. Mr. Donaldson was always proud that he returned the brewery to profitability with the simple act of boarding up the entrance to the free tap room which had been the frequent hang-out of the town bar

flies. The court eventually ordered the sale of the brewery; it was purchased by some of the former partners and reorganized in 1905.



THE DOCTOR SAYS

that good, ripe, rich Beer is one of the most valuable tonics and strengtheners known to medical science.
Your body and brain need

Mt. Clemens Pearl Foam.

Try it and prove it.
A glass with your meals, especially in the morning, will put you in perfect trim for the day.
For PEARL FOAM is a FOOD for nerves and muscles, as well the most delightful drink you ever tasted.
Costs you no more than other brews.
50c per case of one dozen pints.

MT. CLEMENS BREWING CO.
Phone 36. Mt. Clemens, Mich.

John G. Freimann, German immigrant and experienced brewmaster, purchased the company in 1912. The thriving bath industry and its adjunct businesses provided plenty of outlets for the brewery's product, and business was good until May 1, 1918, when Mount Clemens and all of Michigan went "dry." The nation followed in January, 1920, when the full force of the 18th amendment and the Volstead Act ushered in the age of Prohibition. The stockholders of the company met in October, 1918, to discuss their options now that their primary product was illegal, and voted to close the company.

In about 1921, the company was re-organized as the **Mount Clemens Beverage Company**, manufacturers of soft drinks and cider, but troubled times were yet ahead. Early in 1924, a federal judge ordered the destruction of 17,250 gallons of beer stored in tanks at the brewery and ordered the plant padlocked for a period of one year. The actions were taken in response to an earlier seizure of a truckload of beer from the brewery. In February of 1925, the U.S. District Attorney's office threatened to collect on a \$10,000 bond given to the government by the brewery to guarantee compliance with the prohibition laws. Later in 1925, legal wrangling among the stockholders placed ownership of the brewery in the hands of the court. In 1928, owner Freimann died and the plant was rented out for the production of liquid malt.

John Freimann's son and widow re-organized the company after the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, returning to the original name of Mount Clemens Brewing Company, and taking on 15 employees. They announced in the July 14, 1933, issue of the *Monitor* that Pearl Foam Beer would once again be sold in Mount Clemens beginning three days hence. The new company soon lost its brewmaster to a concern in Pontiac, however, and went bankrupt in 1935. The property was sold at auction in 1936, and the building was razed in October of 1939.

For more information about the Mount Clemens Brewing Company, we recommend:

- Selwa, Robert. "Antique Beer Bottles Re-Tell Story of Mount Clemens Brewery," *Macomb Daily*, April 21, 1972.
- "Wrecking of Brewery Awakens Old Memories," *Mount Clemens Advertiser-Monitor*, September 29, 1939, p.1., col.7.
- "New Brewery to Open Here," *Mount Clemens Advertiser-Monitor*, November 26, 1937, p.1, col.8.
- "New Company Will Reopen Local Brewery," *Mount Clemens Advertiser-Monitor*, January 29, 1937, p.1, col.5.
- "Court Confirms Brewery Sale," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, July 31, 1936, p.1, col.7.
- "Locally Made Beer on Sale Here July 17," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, July 7, 1933, p.1, col.4.
- "Beverage Company Faces \$10,000 Suit," *Mount Clemens Daily Leader*, February 28, 1925, p.1, col.4.
- "Brewery Men Fined \$8,000 and Padlock: Federal Court Exacts Penalty For Making Real Beer," *Mount Clemens Daily Leader*, March 12, 1924, p.1, col.4.
- "Padlock Order For Beverage Plant Issued: Mt. Clemens Brewery Put Out of Commission One Year," *Mount Clemens Daily Leader*, January 12, 1924, p.1, col.6.
- "Orders All Beverages Be Dumped," *Mount Clemens Daily Leader*, January 4, 1924, p.1, col.7.
- "Mt. Clemens Men Heavy Losers in Seizure, By U.S., of Two Brewery Plants," *Mount Clemens Daily Leader*, December 10, 1923, p.1, col.7.
- "A Hop Mill Closes," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, October 25, 1918, p.1, col.4.
- "Brewing Co. Reorganized," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, April 14, 1905, p.1, col.4.
- "The Brewery Sold," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, February 3, 1905, p.4, col.2.
- "Brewing Company Case," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, November 11, 1904, p.9, col.4.
- "The Chemistry of 'Lager' : How the Brewing Co. Makes the Favorite Mt. Clemens Drink," *Mount Clemens Monitor*, July 18, 1890, p.8, col.3.