



LIBRARY & ARCHIVES TREASURES

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All in the Friday Family

Western Pennsylvania has been a hub of beer brewing since 1818 when Joseph Wainwright, a brewer of English beer and ale, built the first large-scale brewery in Pittsburgh. For nearly two centuries, the region's brewing industry has employed thousands of people and has survived wars, mergers, acquisitions, and, most catastrophic, Prohibition.

The story of the John Henry Friday family intertwines family and industry. The Friday Family Collection (MSS 245) is part of the Beer Collection, which documents

the region's brewing industry in the History Center's Thomas & Katherine Detre Library and Archives. Because of the Friday family's involvement in the Duquesne Brewing Company and the American Brewers' Supply Company, the Fridays became one of the most influential families in Western Pennsylvania's brewing industry.

John Henry Friday and his wife, Franciska Fuchs, had eight children; many became involved in the industry. Friday bought the McKeesport Brewery following the sale of his three Hill District grocery stores.

In 1905, a coalition was formed between McKeesport Brewery, Duquesne Brewery, and 15 others, called the Independent Brewing Company of Pittsburgh. It was created to compete with the Pittsburgh Brewing Company Trust, which included Iron

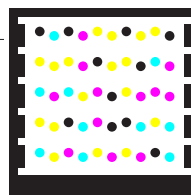
City Brewery, Eberhardt & Ober, Wainwright and Phoenix, and seven smaller regional breweries.

Friday became president of Duquesne Brewing Company in 1915, and remained president until his death in 1932. He was succeeded by his son John A. Friday. Son Harry also entered the brewing industry, co-founding in 1907 the American Brewers' Supply Company, which provided bottling equipment. The company's catalog boasts of having the newest and most reliable containers, ingredients, and machinery. Under the direction of Harry and his successors, the company supplied the brewing industry into the 1970s.

During Prohibition, Duquesne Brewing Company and other breweries produced alternative products to stay in business. Charles Wieland, brewmaster for Duquesne Brewing Company, created a "near beer" and malt tonics that met the requirements for beverage production during Prohibition. Unfortunately, these beverages were not successful, and Duquesne was forced to close its remaining breweries, which led to the demise of the coalition of the Independent Brewing Company of Pittsburgh.

Gustav "Gus" Fritz, Iron City Brewery's brewmaster for 28 years, told the *Pittsburgh Press* in November 1932 about his views on beer's imminent return: "I foresee a demand for light beer, not quite as high in alcoholic content as the beer in pre-prohibition days," he said. "A straw-colored beer, with 3.5 to 3.7 alcohol content by weight, will be popular, in my opinion, with the younger generation of beer drinkers." His foresight in trends also touched on the drinking audience that soon emerged.

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Prohibition and the will to imbibe.
http://www.beerhistory.com/library/holdings/prohibition_1.shtml



John Henry Friday and sons, believed to be, back row, L-R: Ralph Friday, Paul Friday, John A. Friday; front row: Harry Friday, John Henry Friday, Walter Friday.
HHC L&A, MSS 245, Friday Family Papers.

Shipping department at American Brewers Supply Co.
HHC L&A. MSQ 245, Friday Family Photographs.



Duke beer label, c. 1960.
HHC L&A. MSS 245, Friday Family Papers.

After the repeal of Prohibition in December 1933, only 106 of the 230 Pennsylvania breweries that operated before Prohibition survived. The industry experienced many difficulties as it resurrected its brewing and distribution. A primary challenge concerned a generation that, up to that point, never drank alcohol.

This, along with stiff competition from the remaining breweries, led to a change in advertising. In 1933, John A. Friday said, “Beer advertising ... is a radically different problem from what it was in 1915. Today we have a public that accepts as commonplace the drinking of beer—a public that is accustomed to striking displays, costly radio programs, and lavish advertisements.”

Friday kept Duquesne Brewing Company at the forefront of innovative advertising; under his direction, it became the first Western Pennsylvania brewery to advertise on the radio, reaching a larger audience. At one point, it was the country’s eighth largest brewery and distributed its products, including Duquesne Pilsner—fondly referred to as “Duke” and Silver Top beer—throughout the eastern United States.

As the company evolved to meet the tastes of the public, first- and second-generation Friday family members took pivotal roles in the company. Ralph Friday became vice president of sales, and John A. Friday’s son, John A. Jr., became president of Duquesne Brewery in 1954. In 1964, Grant Friday, brother of John A. Jr., became president, serving until 1971. The family

lost control of the company, the South Side plant was soon shuttered, and the brands were sold. Then in 2010, a local couple resurrected the Duquesne Brewing Company name and began producing a popular straw-yellow pilsener made with two-row barley. It is made by City Brewing Company in Latrobe at the Latrobe Brewing Plant, former home of Rolling Rock beer.

In addition to older breweries such as Iron City, Duquesne, and Straub, many new businesses have added their names to the list of Western Pennsylvania breweries during the past 30 years. The East End Brewing Company, Full Pint Brewing Company, Penn Brewery, Church Brew Works, and others continue the legacy of brewing in the region. ☼



The Display and Sample Room at American Brewers Supply Co.
HHC L&A. MSQ 245, Friday Family Photographs.