

Where People Worked

Made in Germany: Brewing in Cleveland, 1857-1907

Scott N. Hendrix

Historians of immigration to the United States refer to certain nationalities of immigrants in the United States as occupying “economic niches.” “Economic niches” were occupations which one particular ethnic group came to dominate. One group of nineteenth century German immigrants found an economic niche, in brewing, in Cleveland, Ohio. In the half century from 1857 on was a period when Germans came to dominate the brewing industry, both in Cleveland and throughout the United States. Brewing seemed to have been an occupation where Germans could find employment and lucky Germans could become rich and successful. The German immigrant brewers of the 1850’s were fortunate. They had arrived in America as lager beer, a distinctly German product, was becoming popular with all Americans. Thanks to this newfound taste for lager beer among the citizens of his adopted home and a built in customer base of German immigrants (who regarded lager as important to their culture and who were arriving in large numbers) German brewers in Cleveland and elsewhere came to dominate the brewing trade. As a result, many German immigrants found employment and prosperity, and a fortunate few, wealth while brewing beer.