

Union Brewery Stable  
1425 1/2 4th Avenue  
Fourth Ward Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5843

HABS  
PA,  
7-ALTO,  
84-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

UNION BREWERY STABLE

HABS  
PA.  
7-ALTO.  
84 -

HABS No. PA-5843

Location: 1425-1/2 4th Avenue

Date of Erection: by 1894

Description: Although situated at the alley in the middle of the block, this two-and-a-half-story, brick-veneered stable is the only surviving building on the property and is clearly visible from the street. The entrance is oriented toward the lot and the avenue where the rest of the brewery complex was once located, rather than to the alley throughway.

A front-facing cross gable and a ventilation tower above are centered within the original facade--these are now off-set as the building has been extended at left. The current entrance bay shows signs of reworking in the brick. Running the middle third of the front facade, it has a wide inset wooden lintel with a sectioned, glazed, and panelled door below. Domestic-scale windows provide light and air on two levels.

History: In keeping with the Fourth Ward's German character, most of Altoona's breweries were originally located within or near its boundaries. The brewery at 4th Avenue and 15th Street may have been one of the first in the city.<sup>1</sup> The only extant building on the site was built as a stable during the brewery's heyday.

The 1873 city directory lists "Fisher and Haid, brewers," on 4th Avenue near 15th Street. In June of that year Charles Haid and Michael Fisher purchased lot Nos. 5 and 6 from Joseph and Catherine Stehle for \$5,000. The high price indicates that the brewery was already in existence, yet the Stehles had only purchased the lots from John and Emma Wright in March 1873; apparently the transaction represented only the final installment of a longer payment schedule, and they chose to sell after the property was clear in their name.

Haid bought out his partner's interest in lot Nos. 5 and 6 in 1874 and began consolidating other sections of the brewery complex under his ownership. He bought lot No. 8 in 1878, and lot No. 7 in 1886; clear title to lot No. 4 was transferred in 1891. The 1880 city directory called the business the Union Brewery, with an address at 1419 4th Ave. That year Haid was assessed for a house, brewery, and a stable. A stable and a substantial brewery structure appear on the 1894 Sanborn map.

Haid died in August 1886 and his widow, Mary, became proprietor of the brewery and struggled to deal with the consequences of his investments. Between 1889 and 1891 she took out more than \$10,000 in mortgages on the property and renamed it the Mountain City Brewery. She remarried, to Daniel Rittman, a brewer who boarded in her home at 1330 2nd Ave. in 1888. Although the 1891 directory lists Michael M. Kimmel and John Werner as proprietors, and the 1896 directory lists William Bender, at 1324 3rd Ave., as president, secretary, and treasurer, the business remained in Mary Haid Rittman's name. In 1896 she lost it at sheriff's sale to her mortgagor, Girard Fire and Marine Insurance Company of Philadelphia. Lot Nos. 4-10, measuring 250' x 120', were described in the deed as:

having thereon erected a three and four story brick building 46 x 85 known as Mountain City Brewery, a brick stable, a frame ice house, frame office building, two story frame tenant dwelling 20 x 44 with kitchen attached together with all permanent machinery such as an engine, boiler, brewing kettles, vats, tubs, and other machinery.

---

<sup>1</sup>According to Blair County historian Tarring S. Davis, "the first brewery in Altoona is reputed to be the one established by Albert Schultz, and later known as the Union Brewery." Although the brewery discussed here was known for a time as the Union Brewery, none of the people found to be associated with it was named Schultz. This does not rule out Schultz's involvement and the pioneering role of this brewery. Considering its location, however, and the pattern of development in early Altoona, it seems more likely that the city's first brewery was located closer to the tracks and the original city core.

UNION BREWERY STABLE  
HABS No. PA-5843 (Page 2)

By 1900 directories no longer listed the brewery. In 1909 the property was sold to Charles F. Heinsling and William B. Batton, who converted the complex to service as the Logan Laundry Company. Probably as part of this conversion, the stable structure was enlarged with a brick-veneered extension on the north gable end sometime between 1909 and 1932. Charles's widow, Mary Eva Heinsling, sold the property for \$25,000 in 1944 to Elwood and Margaret Wertz, another family in the laundry business. They also owned Altoona Sanitary Laundry and Zoric Dry Cleaners at Oak Avenue and 28th Street in the Millville section of South Altoona.

A property card recorded in 1959 when the Wertz formed the Altoona Logan Corporation noted that "3 or 4 beer vaults" were buried on the property, "once a brewery." All buildings but the stable were destroyed by fire in 1967.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1894. Deed books: U/161, 30/152, 35/679, 35/680, 37/586, 39/486, 49/565, 60/639, 84/493, 112/636, 156/413, 188/24, 956/952, 980/73. Mortgage books: W/500, 28/468, 31/337, 36/25. City directories. Tax assessment records. Davis, 131.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.