

Industry (Brewery)  
Copy 2

*Brewing Company*

SEBEWAING, MICHIGAN



*Sebewaing*  
Since 1880

*1880 - 1965 - 1981  
Its Birth, Growth,  
Decline and Death*



*Reference only*



# *It Started as*

## *The E. O. Braendle Brewery*



Beer is probably the oldest alcoholic drink in the world - dating back more than 6,000 years to ancient Babylon and Egypt. It is a fermented beverage, made from malted barley, but many cereal grains can be utilized, and the most available crop is generally the one used in any given part of the world. Beer was known in ancient China and Japan, and also in Britain.

Generally regarded as a "poor man's drink", the techniques and needed ingredients for making beer were brought to the New World by the early settlers. Many towns, even though small, had brewing operations to supply the thirsty residents with beer. Although several saloon-keepers were known to have made beer in early Sebewaing, the first full-fledged brewing operation was started by E. O. Braendle in 1880, on East Main Street. The wood-frame building served as the Braendle Brewery until about 1893, when a few hours before the week's brewing was to begin, fire broke out and quickly the building was enveloped in flames. The Conrad Schoeller family lived next door, and it was Mrs. Schoeller who first saw the flames and her husband, Conrad, rang the fire bell. Jack Schoeller, who was born in 1891, often

recalled the excitement and the terror of the huge fire next door to his home.

The structure was rebuilt in brick, with 3-foot thick walls in the basement. Through the years it delivered a good product. The arrival of Prohibition in 1920 through the 18th Amendment closed the brewery, and Charles Beckman purchased the premises. The Sebewaing Products Company was organized in 1927 and bought back the building to produce malt extract, which was legal, and was used in the home manufacture of beer. The extract company sold its product in many parts of the Thumb, and continued until Prohibition was repealed in 1933. The brewery was reorganized by William B. Wreford, and manufacture of Sebewaing Beer was resumed.

Dr. J. E. Wurm, veterinarian and auto dealer, became president of the firm in 1938 and continued until his death in 1945, when Otto Thede became manager. He continued until February 1, 1948, when Arthur E. Mast was made president and general manager, Mr. Thede became secretary-treasurer, and Millard J. Ringle was vice-president and brewmaster.

The company ran successfully with sales reaching more than \$1 million in several of the years. Profits were never huge, by today's corporate standards, but Sebewaing Brewing Company was a dependable employer of about 30 men, a valued customer of the town, and the best-known





identification for Sebewaing throughout Michigan. Sebewaing Beer won acclaim across the state as a good, low-priced beer, and thousands of cases were trucked to stores and taverns every week. For years the A&P Stores were one of the leading outlets for Sebewaing Beer. The names of "Sebewaing" and "Beer" and "Pheasant" - the brewing company's trademark - were synonymous to thousands of Michigan's beer-drinkers.

While other beers were selling around \$3.75 to \$4 per case, Sebewaing Beer remained steady at \$2.75 and \$2.90. The Sebewaing Beer "Pheasant" was a refreshment symbol across the state.

New and larger equipment was added regularly, and the beer business in Sebewaing was a source of employment, civic pride and publicity.

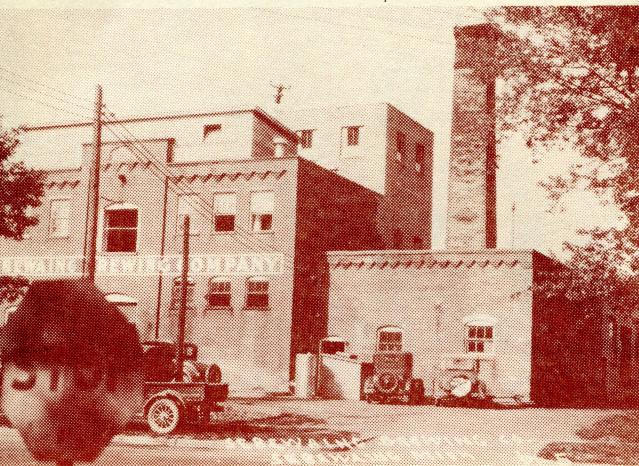
Taxes from state and national levels were increasing, and they cut deeply into the company's profits, as they did into the earnings of all Michigan breweries. At the time of World War II there were 62 breweries in Michigan, and by 1965 the number had dwindled to 7 -- 6 in the Lower Peninsula and one in the Upper.

Some large blocks of stock were sold to Detroit owners in 1962, and in the spring of 1965 came the shattering news that they intended to sell the company to Buckeye Beer of Ohio, which planned to close the brewery and to take over the trademark for its own use. Local residents were outraged, and a sharp proxy battle resulted. In a heated, special meeting, enough local stockholders attended and cast their votes against the sale. However, in anticipation of the sale, the new management had ceased brewing, laid off workers, and started clos-

ing down. The Detroit management was swept out of office at the April meeting, and locals again took over. The brewing company resumed operations on Monday morning, June 7, 1965, for the first time since March 2. The familiar 7 a.m. brewery whistle notified the community that brewing was about to begin. Otto Thede, who had been elected president and general manager, stated that 2 brews would be made daily Mondays through Thursdays, producing more than 1,000 barrels each week. Beer that had been in storage from February and March brews was being delivered across the state, and residents



Bottled Sport Beer, the familiar tan-colored can, and the best-known bottle label.



believed all was well with their beloved company.

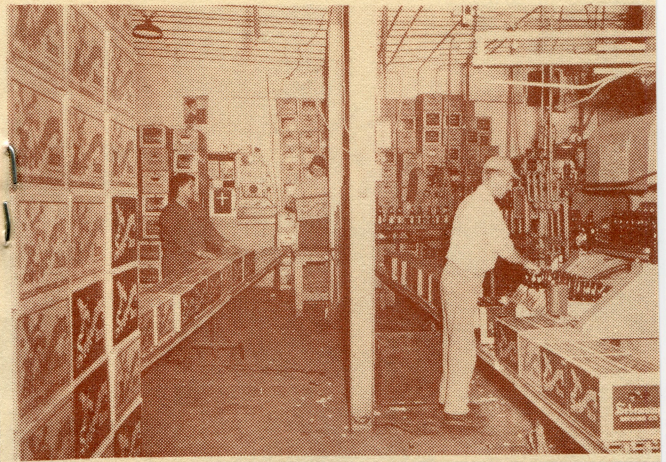
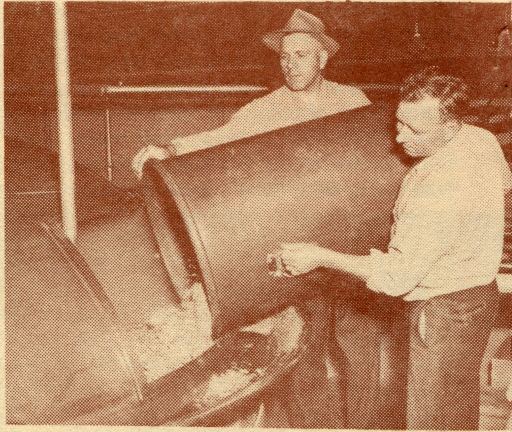
But court actions caused freezing of assets, markets were lost during the 3-month layoff, and starting-up costs were higher than anticipated.

While there were hopeful signs at times, the company never really got going again. The drag of government regulations and taxes, together with stiff competition from brands that had moved in while Sebewaing Beer rested in its storage vats, proved too much, and the brewery closed its doors forever late in 1965. Thousands of gallons of tasty, frothy, well-aged Sebewaing Beer had no place to go but to run off, and trickle into oblivion.

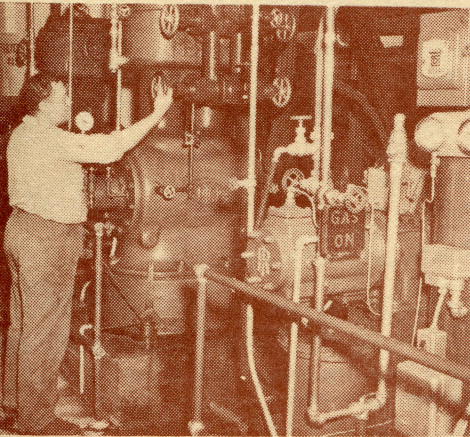


# Scenes from The 50's

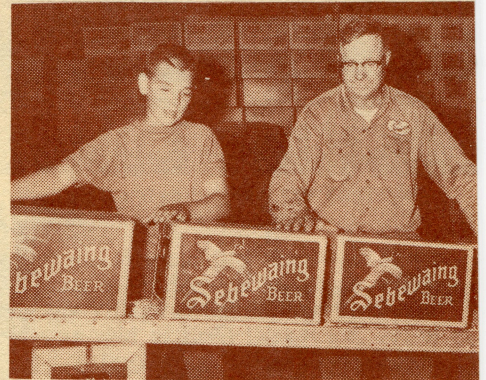
Millard Ringle and Jack Adams adding grain to boiler.



Above - Steve Papp, John Liken and Tony Bohn in bottling house.

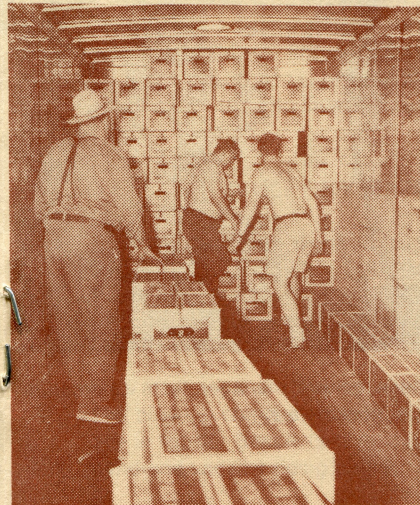
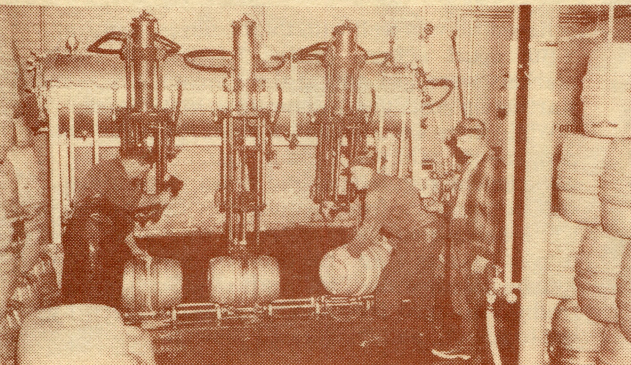


Herman Killinger adjusting gauges.



Below - Arnold Kunisch, Harold Buehler and Gus Kausch in keg house.

Above - Mike Thede and Frank Taschner.



Left - Otto Thede directs truck loading.





President, Arthur E. Mast, dictates letter to secretary, Frances Barnes.



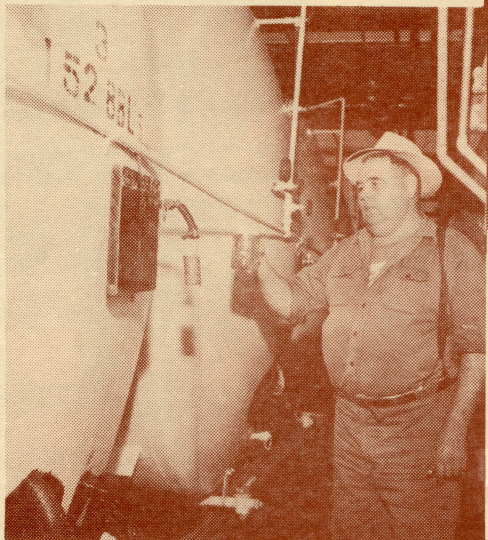
All through the 1950s and early 1960s, new equipment was added and improvements were made.

For years the massive building stood vacant, its ownership passing to the State of Michigan, which returned it to the Village of Sebewaing. Last year the property was sold to Fred Leskowich, Jr. of Sebewaing, and by the time this booklet is published, the building will have been razed.

Today only memories remain -- together with some bottle labels, souvenir bricks from the razed building -- and this brief history of the Birth, Growth, Decline and Death of Sebewaing Beer - 1880 to 1981.

### BREWERY MEMORIES

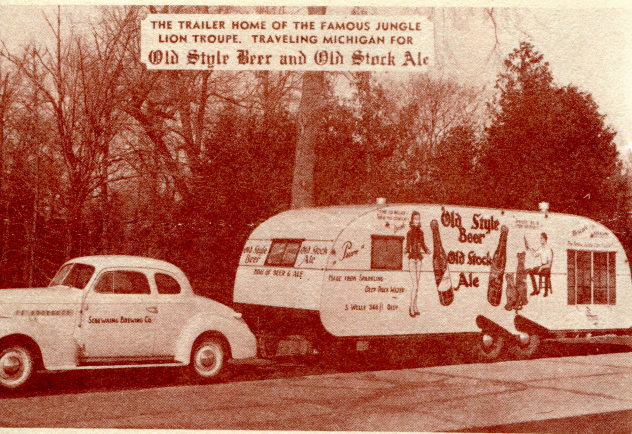
Hilbert Bergman trucked countless cases of beer to retail and wholesale outlets. In 17 years, from 1948 to 1965, he estimated that he drove 1.8 million miles.



Otto Thede, general manager, tests a sample in the deep, cool cellars.

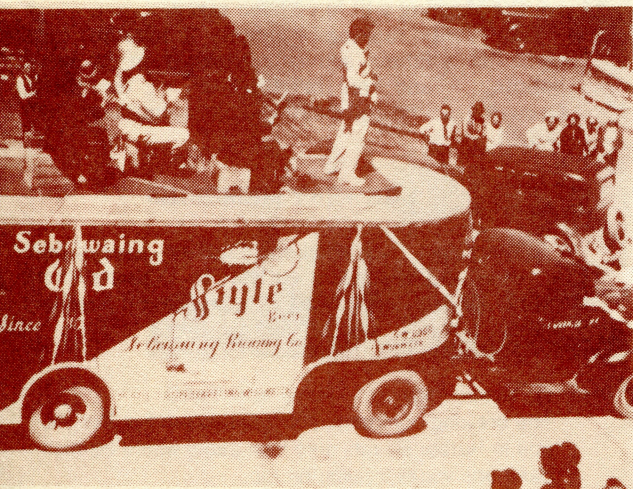
The brewing company often joined parades, like this one in Harbor Beach, (see next page) with a German band and vocalist riding on top.





### THE ERA OF THE LION

In the 1930s, the trademark was the lion, and several animals were kept in a pen and taken to parades and festivals in this trailer. More lions were procured, and eventually there were seven. Occasionally, visitors opened the pen doors, and several times the animals walked out, and had to be herded back in. Some grew surly, feeding them became more costly, and finally Otto Thede disposed of all seven of them -- via the rifle.



## GOLDEN PHEASANT

CONTENTS 12 FLUID OUNCES



Roer

"Well Water"  
SEBEWAING, MICH.

CONTENTS 12 FL. O.



## SPORT BEER



Sebewaing Township Library

411 N. Center — Box 627

*A Project of* Sebewaing, MI. 48759

## *Sebewaing Rotary Club*

This booklet on the history of the Sebewaing Brewing Company is presented by Sebewaing Rotary Club, to record a bit of community history.

Proceeds from the booklet are being used to help restore the Mast School, which was located on Volz Road since before the turn of the century. The school has been moved to Bay Street, Sebewaing, on USA School District property, and it will be used for a museum, meeting house and occasionally, a teaching station.

The photo below shows how the Mast School looked many years ago, on land which is part of the Currey Farm on Canboro Road.

Sebewaing Rotary Club is offering this booklet, along with a brick from the brewery and a beer bottle label, as a memento of the company that operated here for so many years. The bricks were donated to the Club by Fred Leskowich, Jr., of Sebewaing, who bought the brewery property from the Village of Sebewaing, and razed the structure during the summer of 1981.

