

FIRST BOTTLED BEER IN AMERICA

By Howard Dean

In, 1733, Thomas Quick discovered the beautiful and fertile Delaware Valley where he built his family a home on Vandermark Creek. Quick operated a grist mill on the lowlands where the Leni-Lenape Indians of the Wolf Clan hunted and fished. So began the modern history of what is now Milford, Pennsylvania. The Quick family became very famous (or infamous) later on, but that is another story.

Present day Milford is a beautiful residential borough within Dingman Township in Pike County. America's oldest commercial highway was nearby so this and the fact that there were plenty of streams cascading out of the mountains made it attractive to many people. There were wood workers, blacksmiths, farmers, wool, tanning and logging industries but the real livelihood that continues to sustain Milford economy is the tourist business. Many large beautiful Inns, hotels, boarding houses and restaurants were established here. Milford and Dingman's township has a very varied and interesting history that we will have to omit and get to the point of this article.

As a boy and young man I lived near Milford and often went there, especially after I met my wife Lillian in 1938 whose home had been Milford. Presently my sister and family live there and have an antique shop there. Over my years of collecting antique bottles I constantly heard about a local brewery that bottled beer for the first time for family use in America! Could that be true?

Try as I did I could never find a bottle from there but I did find out about that brewery.

For years I had known about the Silver Spring House, Milford PA and the gossip was that this was the site of that old brewery, the first and only one built in Pike County. I went to the Pike County Historical Society and found several items of interest, one undated news clipping was titled: "First Beer in U.S. Made in Pike County." The article goes on to state, "Pike, the county which recently gave PA its first dry Governor in Gifford Pinchot, was the very spot upon which the first beer was brewed in America." Another article dated, Milford Dispatch September 17, 1896 states that: "About three miles above Milford in the Raymondskill Valley on the old Loreaux place there stood until a short time since, a large shaky stone building __ __ has become insecure so that Mr. E.O. Boillotat, present owner __ __ in interest of public safety had the structure torn down. Such was the end of the celebrated Loreaux Brewery __ __ one of the landmarks of Pike County."

The founder of that brewery was a man named Percy Loreaux (1800-1875). He had been a successful businessman in New York and in 1833 he purchased a tract of wild land in Dingman Township which he converted into a beautiful country home. One of the attractions on this tract was an exceptional spring. In about 1840, he built the brewery, and in 1852 the plant was enlarged. This establishment operated until early in the 1870's. His beer became famous far and wide and before long his local business had spread out for many miles and he supplied large quantities to New York customers.

He was adapt as a brewer and originated a process in which corn was, for the first time used with barley malt in the brewing process. The Loreaux brewery also claims the distinction for sending out the first bottled beer for family use in the U.S.A. The liquor was put up in quart claret bottles, and the corks were forced in by hand and tied down with a string or strong twine. According to old timers, this beer was of the richest quality with more characteristics of ale than of lager. One claim was that a year and a half before any person in New York had ever taken a glass of lager over a bar, that beverage had been introduced at the taverns of Pike County, the product of Loreaux's brewery in the woods three miles from Milford. He bottled and sold beer in bottles ten years before any other brewery in the country had begun that branch of the trade. Loreaux died in 1875 and even after the closing of the brewery it was a local attraction. Miriam Cole Harris makes it the scene of a tea party in one of her novels, "A Perfect Adonis."

In the mid 1890's, Eugene O. Boillotat acquired 14 acres of the original farm and on the site of the abandoned brewery a modern boarding house, The Silver spring House was built. All traces of the

brewery and the Silver Spring House have disappeared. In its place Louis Berkowitz, the present owner, has rebuilt and landscaped the area and which is once again one of the show places of Pikes County.

In researching this story, I came across a few interesting facts to provide a little more details. (1) Like the Pinchots, Renny Loreaux came to this country in the exodus of Napoleon's followers after the collapse of his Empire. Renny was successful in New York City and after the purchase of Pike County land he sent for his relatives in France and established them on his farm. After a two year interlude in the California gold rush, he returned to run his brewery business. (2) In September of 1859 he was served papers to appear in court on the charge of operating a brewery without any license to do so, contrary to an act of assembly in which he was cited as being against the "Peace and dignity" of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I found no further reference to this action., (3) On February 6, 1879 his real estate was sold at a Executors Sale, this notice included a very detailed list of the, acreage, buildings, brewery building etc. (4) The Loreaux family established a French Cemetery not far from the brewery. This contains many names of French origin, the Township is restoring this cemetery as an historic site. (5) Notice of Sale: Brewery, Distillery and Farm of 118 acres, large house, two barns, large Brewery with ample cellars, the purest of water from a spring at the side of the Brewery, doing good business. From Milford Herald, April 23, 1860 (6) New Brewery in Pike County We learn that Mr. Young of Dingmans Township, this county, is now erecting upon his farm, a large brewery for the purpose of mfg "Old London Ale." He states that he will be ready to commence operations in a few weeks. From Milford Herald, Thursday, October 22, 1861.

The two picture postcards (Fig.1 and Fig. 2) show the old Brewery and the later Silver spring House. Thanks to Dorothy Schoupe of Milford for these photos.

P.S. No wonder I could not find any of these beer bottles – they were really claret wine bottles!

H.J. Dean 1/6/03

References:

- (1) Photo cards from Dorothy Schoupe of Milford
- (2) Henn, W.F. 1975 The Story of the River Road. Life along the Delaware from Bushkill to Milford, Pike County, PA, pages 199, 202, 203 and 204.
- (3) Dingmans Township – Pike County – a Little Bit of Pennsylvania 1814 – 1976 by Ross Kleinstuber, Historian.
- (4) Milford Dispatch clipping dated 1/10/79
- (5) Obituary Notice – 1875
- (6) Milford Dispatch – September 17, 1876
- (7) Undated paper clipping
- (8) Milford Dispatch – December 31, 1903
- (9) Hand written notes of April, 23, 1860 and October 22, 1861
- (10) Indictment dated September 21, 1859
- (11) Borough of Milford – 1997 Community Information Guide

