

ADDRESS: 2301 FAIRMOUNT AVE

Name of Resource: Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Lager Beer Saloon

Proposed Action: Designation

Property Owner: Fairmount LG Holdings LLC

Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia

Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 2301 Fairmount Avenue as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that the property has significant interest or value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation, as a survivor of the early stage in the development of the city's lager brewing industry, for which Philadelphia was nationally known by the late-nineteenth century. Under Criterion J, the nomination contends that the corner building, constructed in 1845, exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community, serving as the first location of what eventually became two of the largest lager beer breweries in the adjacent Brewerytown neighborhood of Philadelphia during the late-nineteenth century.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 2301 Fairmount Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J.



**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**20 JULY 2022, 9:30 A.M.
REMOTE MEETING ON ZOOM
EMILY COOPERMAN, CHAIR**

CALL TO ORDER

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:00:00

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. The following Committee members joined her:

Committee Member	Present	Absent	Comment
Emily Cooperman, Ph.D., chair	X		
Suzanna Barucco	X		
Jeff Cohen, Ph.D.	X		
Bruce Lavery		X	
Debbie Miller		X	
Elizabeth Milroy, Ph.D.	X		

The meeting was held remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

The following staff members were present:

Jon Farnham, Executive Director
Kim Chantry, Historic Preservation Planner III
Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner II
Nika Faulkner, Historical Commission Intern
Shannon Garrison, Historic Preservation Planner II
Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner II

The following persons attended the online meeting:

Matthew McClure, Esq., Ballard Spahr
Cheryl Feldman
Meredith Trego, Esq., Ballard Spahr
Celeste Morello
Kevin McMahon
Nick Kraus, Heritage Consulting Group
Michael LaFlash
Justino Navarro
Aaron Holly
Katelyn Lucas
Marlene Schleifer
Patrick Grossi, Preservation Alliance
Patricia Freeland
Jay Farrell
Steven Peitzman
Kamia McDaniels

Hal Schirmer
Maya Hogarth
Robert Powers
David Landskroner
Paul Steinke, Preservation Alliance
Oscar Beisert
David Traub, Save Our Sites
Holly Scally
Michael Phillips, Esq., Klehr Harrison
Brian Bishara
Alina Macneal
Khan Shibly
Zachary Goldberg

ADDRESS: 2301 FAIRMOUNT AVE

Name of Resource: Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Lager Beer Saloon
Proposed Action: Designation
Property Owner: Fairmount LG Holdings LLC
Nominator: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
Staff Contact: Kim Chantry, kim.chantry@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate the property at 2301 Fairmount Avenue as historic and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The nomination contends that the property satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J. Under Criterion A, the nomination argues that the property has significant interest or value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation, as a survivor of the early stage in the development of the city's lager brewing industry, for which Philadelphia was nationally known by the late-nineteenth century. Under Criterion J, the nomination contends that the corner building, constructed in 1845, exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community, serving as the first location of what eventually became two of the largest lager beer breweries in the adjacent Brewerytown neighborhood of Philadelphia during the late-nineteenth century.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 2301 Fairmount Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J.

START TIME IN ZOOM RECORDING: 00:05:45

PRESENTERS:

- Ms. Chantry presented the nomination to the Committee on Historic Designation.
- Patrick Grossi of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia represented the nomination.
- Attorney Meredith Trego and preservation consultant Nick Kraus represented the property owner.

DISCUSSION:

- Mr. Grossi summarized the historic significance of the property as it related to German lager beer brewing and its continuous use as a saloon.

- Ms. Trego agreed that the three-story main block and one-story brick rear addition satisfy Criteria for Designation A and J. She requested excluding the later rear additions from the designation or classifying them as non-contributing.
- Mr. Kraus presented a series of slides, arguing for the significance of only the main block and one-story brick rear addition. He explained that the glazed greenhouse addition at the rear dates to 1986, and above that is a mechanical screen enclosure of no historic significance. He concluded that there is nothing at the rear portion of the existing site that conveys anything that may have related to a building from that period.
- Ms. Barucco asked for more information about the second-story frame addition at the rear that is currently clad in vertical metal siding. She noted that a 1947 photograph showed it as a frame addition with cornice. She asked if the frame addition remains under the cladding.
 - Mr. Kraus responded that, during the period of significance specified in the nomination, there was a one-story brick bump out, and the frame addition above seems to have been constructed after the period of significance, which ends circa 1900.
- Ms. Milroy asked Mr. Grossi about the period of significance, which is proposed as 1859 to circa 1900. She noted the building was constructed in 1845.
 - Mr. Grossi responded that the period of significance begins with the Rothacker ownership but added that he would support it beginning with the construction of the building.
- Ms. Milroy noted significance owing to proximity to the newly established Fairmount Park and the Schuylkill River.
- Ms. Cooperman asked about the location of lagging caves.
 - Ms. Milroy responded that the lagging caves were near Mount Pleasant but the precise location is unknown.
- Ms. Barucco observed that the nomination describes the building as being faced in brick, but rather it should say that it is a brick building.
- Ms. Barucco returned to the question of the second-story rear addition and if it should be considered non-contributing, as proposed by Mr. Kraus. She suggested including it as contributing unless and until it is proven that it is later than the period of significance or if no historic material remains under the cladding.
 - Ms. Trego reminded the Committee that the proposed period of significance ends circa 1900.
 - Mr. Cohen suggested that the Committee could make a general recommendation that all additions that fall within the period of significance are contributing.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

- Ms. Chantry noted that the Committee was provided with a packet of public comment in advance of the meeting, all from near neighbors or community groups, and all in support of the designation.
- David Traub, representing Save Our Sites, commented in support of designation. He stated that the building is handsome.
- Bob Powers, a resident of the Spring Garden neighborhood, commented in support of the designation.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:

The Committee on Historic Designation found that:

- The building was constructed in 1845 but the proposed period of significance begins in 1859. The proposed period of significance ends circa 1900.
- The rearmost greenhouse addition and clad addition are later additions and should be considered non-contributing.
- The second-floor rear addition atop the first-floor rear brick addition may be an earlier frame addition, but its provenance is unknown based on the information provided.

The Committee on Historic Designation concluded that:

- The property has significant interest or value as part of the development, heritage, and cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation, as a survivor of the early stage in the development of the city's lager brewing industry, for which Philadelphia was nationally known by the late-nineteenth century, satisfying Criterion A.
- The property exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community, serving as the first location of what eventually became two of the largest lager beer breweries in the adjacent Brewerytown neighborhood of Philadelphia during the late-nineteenth century, satisfying Criterion J.
- The period of significance should begin with the construction date of the building, being 1845.

COMMITTEE ON HISTORIC DESIGNATION RECOMMENDATION: The Committee on Historic Designation voted to recommend that the nomination demonstrates that the property at 2301 Fairmount Avenue satisfies Criteria for Designation A and J and should be designated as historic and listed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, with the recommendation to amend the period of significance to 1845 through circa 1900, and to classify any post circa 1900 rear additions as non-contributing.

ITEM: 2301 Fairmount Ave.

MOTION: Designate, Criteria A and J; period of significance to be 1845 to c. 1900 with later additions classified as non-contributing

MOVED BY: Cohen

SECONDED BY: Milroy

VOTE					
Committee Member	Yes	No	Abstain	Recuse	Absent
Emily Cooperman, chair	X				
Suzanna Barucco	X				
Jeff Cohen	X				
Bruce Laverty					X
Debbie Miller					X
Elizabeth Milroy	X				
Total	4				2

NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE *(must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)*

Street address: 2301 Fairmount Ave

Postal code: 19130

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Lager Beer Saloon

Current/Common Name: _____

3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building

☐ Structure

☐ Site

☐ Object

4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins

Occupancy: ☐ occupied ☒ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown

Current use: Restaurant space on first floor. Upper floor uses currently unknown.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1859 to c. 1900

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1845

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Unknown

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Unknown

Original owner: William H. Winder

Other significant persons: Henry Rothacker, George F. Rothacker, Francis Orth

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☒ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☐ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☐ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date August 17, 2021

Name with Title _____ Email patrick@preservationalliance.com

Street Address 1608 Walnut Street, Suite 1702 Telephone 215-546-1146 x5

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: August 19, 2021

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: September 17, 2021

Date of Notice Issuance: September 20, 2021

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Fairmount LG Holdings LLC

Address: 2220 Fairmount Avenue

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19130

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: July 20, 2022

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: _____

Date of Final Action: _____

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/7/18

5. Boundary Description

BEGINNING at the Northwest corner of 23rd Street and Fairmount Avenue (formerly called Coates Street); thence extending along the said Fairmount Avenue Southwestwardly 16 feet 3-3/4 inches; thence Northward at right angles to the said Fairmount Avenue 57 feet 3-7/8 inches to a point; thence on a line at right angles to a certain 20 feet wide street laid out and opened by William H. Winder for public use running from and at right angles to the said 23rd Street called Olive (formerly called Virginia) Street 31 feet 7-7/8 inches to the South side of the said Olive Street; thence along the South side of the said Olive Street Eastwardly 24 feet 5-3/8 inches to the West side of the said 23rd Street; thence Southward along the West side of the said 23rd Street 86 feet 2-7/8 inches to the place of beginning.

OPA Account # 871280900

Map Registry # 007N180039



Figure 1 – Boundary Map showing 2301 Fairmount Avenue (Google Maps imagery, 2021).

6. Description

2301 Fairmount Avenue is a three-story, late Federal-style building at the northwest corner of North 23rd Street and Fairmount Avenue in the Fairmount neighborhood of Philadelphia. Built in 1845, the building operated continuously as a bar and restaurant (with a hotel and, later, apartments on the upper floors) from 1857 until the closing of its most recent tenant, the London Grill, in 2019. The south elevation, which faces Fairmount Avenue, is faced in red brick on all three floors. The first floor features late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century storefront alterations, including a large arched wood window, to the right of which is the main entrance, consisting of a glazed wood door with a decorative leaded glass transom. A wood cornice, which is currently partially covered in aluminum panning, separates the first floor from the upper floors. The second and third floors, which are faced in Flemish bond red brick is characteristic of pre-1850 commercial and domestic architecture in Philadelphia (unlike the common bond of the first floor), each contain two one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with marble sills. The south elevation is capped by a prominent, painted metal cornice.



Figure 2 (left) – South elevation, 2021.



Figure 3 (right) – South elevation, 1930 (Philadelphia Department of Records).

The east elevation, which faces 23rd Street, is faced in common bond red brick. The original 3 ½-story main block, which consists of a gabled wall, consists of the first four bays north of Fairmount Avenue. To the north of the main block is the historic, two-story rear ell with twentieth-century alterations.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Nomination of 2301 Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19130

The southernmost bay on the first floor of the main block contains a former entrance, which has been infilled with a single-light wood window with painted beadboard paneling below. Above the window is a leaded glass transom matching the transom on the south elevation. To the right of this former entrance is a large arched window matching the arched window on the south elevation. The south elevation cornice continues around to this side, extending as far north as the arched window.



Figure 4 – South and east elevations, looking northwest from Fairmount Avenue.



Figure 5 – East elevation, looking southwest from 23rd Street.

Farther north, the first floor contains a pair of late-twentieth century glazed wood doors, which are accessed by four brick steps with stone treads and brass handrails on each side. A modern canvas awning is attached to the wall above this entrance. To the left of the side entrance is a small former window opening with marble sill and lintel that has been infilled with brick. To the right of the side entrance is a glass block window. The second and third floors each contain three one-over-one, double-hung wood windows with marble sills as well as a single-light circular window. A modern neon sign and a wire sculpture resembling a champagne bottle are attached to the wall at the second and third floors.

Moving north, the first floor of the rear ell contains a single-leaf, modern aluminum-clad door with a single-light transom that is accessed by two marble steps. West of this door, the first floor consists of a greenhouse-like structure on a red brick base that was built in 1986. The two story portion of the rear ell, which wraps around the south and west sides of the greenhouse and extends north to Olive Street, is entirely clad in corrugated aluminum siding and has no visible window openings. On the first floor, the north elevation of the rear ell, which faces Olive Street, consists primarily of a stucco-coated concrete block wall with a roll-down metal garage door.

The north elevation of the main block, which is only visible on the third floor, consists of painted brick and contains a single one-over-one, double-hung wood window.

7. Significance

The three-story building at 2301 Fairmount Avenue, which was built in 1845, served as the first home of what eventually became two of the largest lager beer breweries in the Brewerytown neighborhood of Philadelphia during the late-nineteenth century. Founded by German immigrants and brothers Henry and George H. Rothacker, the brewery, like most early lager beer breweries, started as a small operation and was attached to Henry Rothacker's home and first-floor saloon at 2301 Fairmount Avenue, then known as 2301 Coates Street. Although their names are not widely known today, the Rothackers and, later, their cousin Francis Orth, who took over the building in 1863, were among the pioneers in lager beer brewing in Philadelphia, particularly in the area along the Schuylkill River northwest of Center City. While the history of lager beer brewing in Philadelphia is often associated with large, imposing brick brewery buildings, especially those designed by brewery architects Otto C. Wolf or William Decker, 2301 Fairmount Avenue represents an important early stage in the development of the city's lager brewing industry, for which Philadelphia was nationally known by the late-nineteenth century. This relatively small building typifies the beginnings of Philadelphia's lager beer industry, when German brewers were only just starting to realize the commercial possibilities of this increasingly popular brew. Although comparatively small in size, the building served as a springboard for the growth of two of Philadelphia's best known lager breweries of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, also remaining a German-owned lager beer saloon well into the early 1900s. The Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Lager Beer Saloon is significant under Criteria A and J:

CRITERION A

Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past.

CRITERION J

Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

The Rothacker-Orth Brewery and Lager Beer Saloon was built in 1845 as the easternmost of a row of ten three-story brick houses.¹ Built as investment properties by wealthy Philadelphia lawyer William H. Winder, "Those new three-story brick dwellings, situate on the North side of Coates Street, West of Nixon Street," were advertised for rent in the *Public Ledger* in May, 1845 (Coates Street was renamed Fairmount Avenue in 1873, and Nixon Street became 23rd Street sometime before 1860). In July 1846, Winder sold all ten houses to merchant Edward E. Marvine, who held onto most of them well into the 1860s and, like Winder, rented the houses out to families of various backgrounds.²

¹ Advertisement in the *Public Ledger*, May 15, 1845, p. 3. Despite some minor alterations, seven of the ten houses remain largely intact today.

² William H. Winder to Edward E. Marvine, July 15, 1846, Philadelphia Deed Book A.W.M., No. 14, page 351.

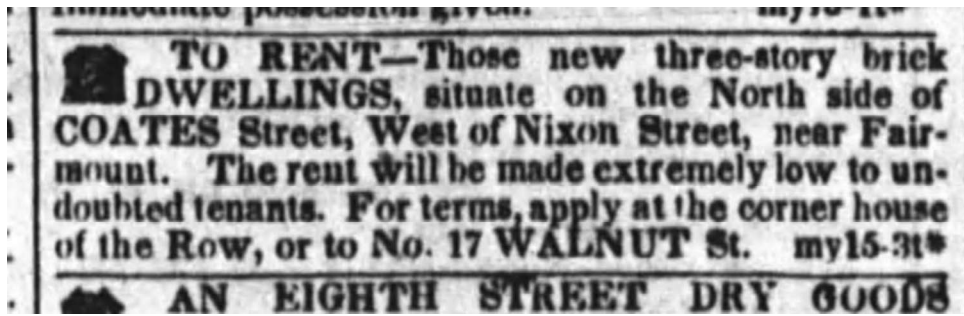


Figure 6 – Advertisement in the *Public Ledger*, May 15, 1845, for the lease of 2301-2319 Fairmount Avenue (Fairmount Avenue was Coates Street until 1870 and 23rd Street was Nixon Street until the 1850s).

In 1859, Marvine sold 2301 Coates Street to Henry (or Heinrich) Rothacker who soon opened a small lager beer brewery and saloon on the first floor of the building and made his home on the second and/or third floors. According to later U.S. Census returns and Civil War draft registration records, Rothacker was born in Bavaria around 1833. Although Rothacker's precise date of arrival in the United States is unknown, he is not listed in the 1850 U.S. Census, suggesting that he arrived between 1850 and 1859. Philadelphia had long attracted German immigrants, with over 40,000 settling in and around the city during the early to mid-eighteenth century. Another wave of German immigration began in the late 1840s and continued through the following decade and beyond. Henry Rothacker, along with his brother George H. Rothacker, was one of over a million Germans who came to the United States during this period.³

Most Germans who arrived in Philadelphia before the Civil War settled in and around what were known prior to consolidation in 1854 as the Northern Liberties and Kensington districts (roughly coterminous with today's neighborhoods of the same names). In 1850, nearly 46% of Germans lived in these two areas, with smaller concentrations found in the City proper, and in the Spring Garden District where 2301 Fairmount Avenue is located.⁴

Like nearly all early German brewers in Philadelphia, Henry Rothacker had experience in lager brewing in his home country and was highly skilled in this area; George H. Rothacker, on the other hand, was a baker by trade according to period directories.⁵ Although beer had been brewed in Philadelphia since the earliest period of settlement, until 1840 lager was virtually absent from the city's beer scene. From the beginning, beer brewing in both Philadelphia and the United States focused primarily around stronger, English-style ales and porters. By the 1840s, however, two significant developments shifted the focus of beer brewing and consumption in the United States forever. The first were technological advances in maritime travel, particularly steamships, which allowed ingredients to be transported between Europe and the United States much more quickly.

³ Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), 19-20.

⁴ Lesley Ann Kawaguchi, "The Making of Philadelphia's German-America: Ethnic Group and Community Development," PhD diss., (University of California, Los Angeles, 1983), 461.

⁵ Kawaguchi, 460; *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory*, Twenty-Third, Twenty-Fifth, and Twenty-Sixth Editions (Philadelphia: Edward C. and John Biddle, 1860, 1862 and 1863).

The second was the huge influx of German immigrants to the United States in general and Philadelphia in particular, many of whom brought their brewing traditions and preferences with them.⁶

Lager, which was overwhelmingly preferred by Germans, required very specific ingredients and methods of preparation. It was made with a slow-acting yeast that is fermented at low temperatures. Initially, these temperatures were achieved through the use of naturally cool cellars or underground vaults that were supplemented by large quantities of ice.⁷ The yeast itself was a highly perishable ingredient that was initially only available in Europe. However, the journey across the Atlantic Ocean took so long that it was not until the rate of travel caught up to the rate of deterioration that yeast importation became possible.⁸ John Wagner, a German immigrant who arrived in Philadelphia in 1840, is credited with introducing bottom fermenting lager beer yeast to the United States and with opening the first lager beer brewery in the city and country.⁹

According to Philadelphia historian Edwin T. Freedley, the initial reception of lager beer in the city “was not a very cordial or welcome one; and about twelve years elapsed before its use became at all general [in 1850]. Within the last few years, however, the consumption has increased so enormously, not merely among the German population, but among the natives, that its manufacture forms an important item of productive industry.”¹⁰ The German-style beer became so popular that Philadelphia became known as “the lager capital of America” by the 1850s, the beginning of an era that has been called the city’s “Golden Age of Brewing.”¹¹

Before 1860, virtually all lager beer breweries in Philadelphia were small operations attached to the brewer’s home and typically employed only a few people. John Wagner’s eight-gallon kettle was located behind his home at 455 St. John Street, on what is now the 900 block of North American Street (north of Poplar Street) in the Northern Liberties neighborhood.¹² Wagner’s operation was not a business venture; rather, he brewed lager “for friends and neighbors, [providing] a taste of home for other German immigrants,” Northern Liberties’ large concentration of which provided a “ready market.” Within a few years, however, lager consumption expanded, with brewing starting to occur in the backs of bars or stores that then directly sold individual bottles or kegs.¹³

As the popularity of lager beer grew through the 1840s and 1850s, so did the size of breweries in the Northern Liberties and Kensington districts. Increasingly, German lager

⁶ Mark Benbow, “German Immigrants in the United States Brewing Industry,” Immigrant Entrepreneurship, German Historical Institute, February 1, 2017, accessed July 22, 2021, <https://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entries/german-immigrants-in-the-united-states-brewing-industry/>

⁷ The cold cellars were typically located in basements or cut into the sides of hills.

⁸ Benbow.

⁹ Rich Wagner and Rich Dochter, “Brewerytown, USA,” *Pennsylvania Heritage* (Summer 1991). Accessed 7/21/21 at <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/brewerytown-usa/>.

¹⁰ Edwin T. Freedley, *Philadelphia and Its Manufacturers* (Philadelphia: Edward Young, 1859): 195.

¹¹ Rich Wagner, *Philadelphia Beer: A Heady History of Brewing in the Cradle of Liberty* (Charleston, SC: History Press, 2012), 8.

¹² A Pennsylvania historical marker, installed in 2001, commemorates the former Wagner brewery on North American Street. See: <https://explorepahistory.com/hmarker.php?markerId=1-A-31C>

¹³ Benbow.

beer brewers looked farther afield for space for cold storage, with many moving westward to the undeveloped area that is now the Brewerytown neighborhood. This part of the city offered plentiful open space that could be used for the construction of large underground vaults, which provided the low temperatures required for the storage of lager beer and the yeast used in its production. Charles Engel and partner Charles Wolf were the first to establish a lager beer brewery in this part of the city, in 1849 at Fountain Green along the banks of the Schuylkill River.¹⁴ By the mid-1860s, there were over a dozen lager beer breweries in this area, as recorded by the Hexamer General Survey.¹⁵

Eschewing the traditional areas of German settlement in Philadelphia – Northern Liberties and Kensington – Henry Rothacker saw an opportunity in the westward movement of the lager beer industry, acquiring 2301 Fairmount Avenue (then 2301 Coates Street) in 1859.¹⁶ Although not located in what is today Brewerytown, which is about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the northwest, Rothacker's new home and brewery nonetheless reflected the geographic shift of lager brewing during this period. In fact, Rothacker was somewhat of a pioneer, for it was not until about 1870 that the westward movement of brewers intensified and constituted a major trend.¹⁷

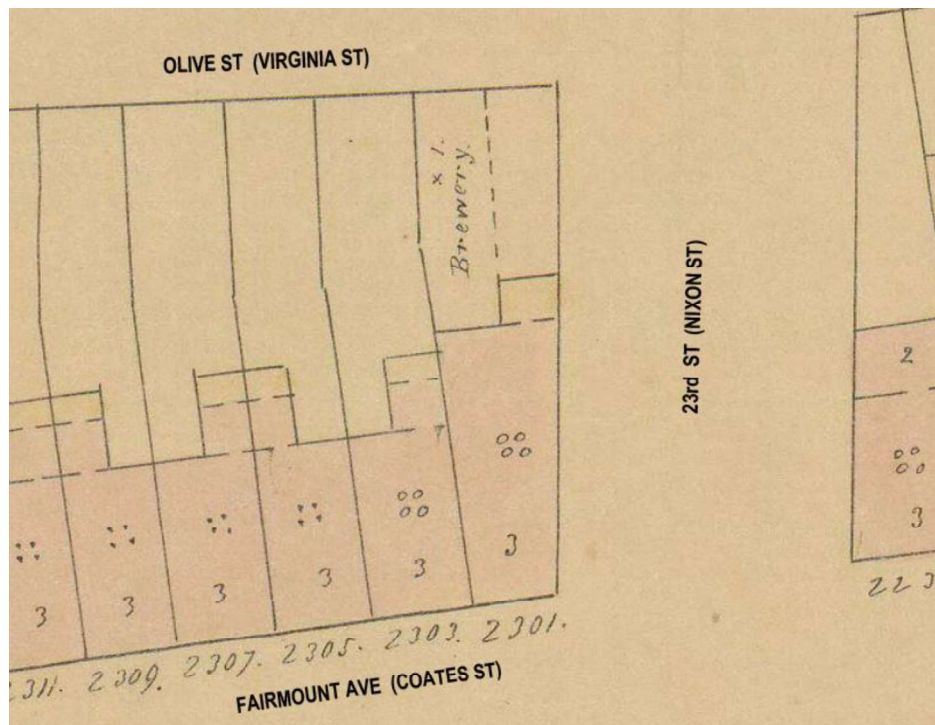


Figure 7 – Map from Hexamer & Locher's *Maps of the City of Philadelphia, 1858-1860* (Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network). 2301 Fairmount Avenue is marked as a brewery.

¹⁴ Wagner and Dochter.

¹⁵ Hexamer General Survey, Surveys 275-278 (1866). Accessed 7/21/21 at <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/HGS/index.cfm>.

¹⁶ Edward E. Marvine to Henry Rothacker, July 13, 1859, Philadelphia Deed Book A.D.B., No. 70, page 540.

¹⁷ Kawaguchi, 461-462.

Typical of most lager beer breweries in Philadelphia during the 1850s and 1860s, Henry Rothacker's facility was attached to his home (likely utilizing the basement for its cooler temperatures), reflecting the overall small-scale and artisanal nature of lager brewing at this time.¹⁸ Like most of his competitors, due to the brewery's limited output, Rothacker's lager beer was primarily sold directly from the adjacent saloon, located on the first floor of the building (others had beer gardens adjacent to their breweries). This space was likely easily adapted from the liquor store that had operated there for several years, according to city directories from the mid- to late-1850s.¹⁹ At some point during these early years, Henry Rothacker was joined by his brother George, who remained a baker, but whose knowledge of yeast and fermentation in the baking of bread was likely easily transferrable to the brewing of beer.

Although lager was initially brewed by Germans for other Germans, Rothacker's saloon, which was located in a relatively ethnically heterogeneous neighborhood, represents the widening acceptance of lager among native-born Americans and other immigrant groups during the 1850s and beyond. Due to its less bitter flavor and lower alcohol content, lager gradually became the beer of choice among drinkers in Philadelphia and nationally. For its lower alcohol content, in particular, lager beer was sometimes held up by temperance movement reformers as an alternative to distilled liquors.²⁰ George H. Rothacker himself was quoted as saying, perhaps somewhat dubiously, "It is a rare occurrence to see a drunken man in Philadelphia. Lager beer containing but four percent of alcohol is surely accomplishing what reformers have failed to do in centuries."²¹

For these reasons, Philadelphia's German brewers began to view the brewing industry as a lucrative commercial opportunity and a "promising avenue for mobility," according to historian Lesley Ann Kawaguchi.²² In fact, by 1863 Rothacker's operation had presumably grown to such an extent that it was necessary to vacate the premises at 2301 Fairmount Avenue for a larger facility on 31st Street between Thompson and Master in Brewerytown proper (Figure 8). At this location, the Rothackers acquired an existing brewery from brewer Christian Schnitzel, who opened his first lager beer vaults there in 1859.²³

¹⁸ Kawaguchi, 466.

¹⁹ *McElroy's Philadelphia Directory*, Nineteenth and Twentieth Editions (Philadelphia: Edward C. and John Biddle, 1856 and 1857).

²⁰ Benbow.

²¹ "Our Brewing Interests: A Review of the Twenty-six Breweries of Philadelphia, Each Having an Output of Over 15,000 Barrels," *The Times*, May 18, 1894, p. 6-7.

²² Kawaguchi, 466.

²³ John Paul Arnold and Frank Penman, *History of the Brewing Industry and Brewing Science in America* (1933), 10.

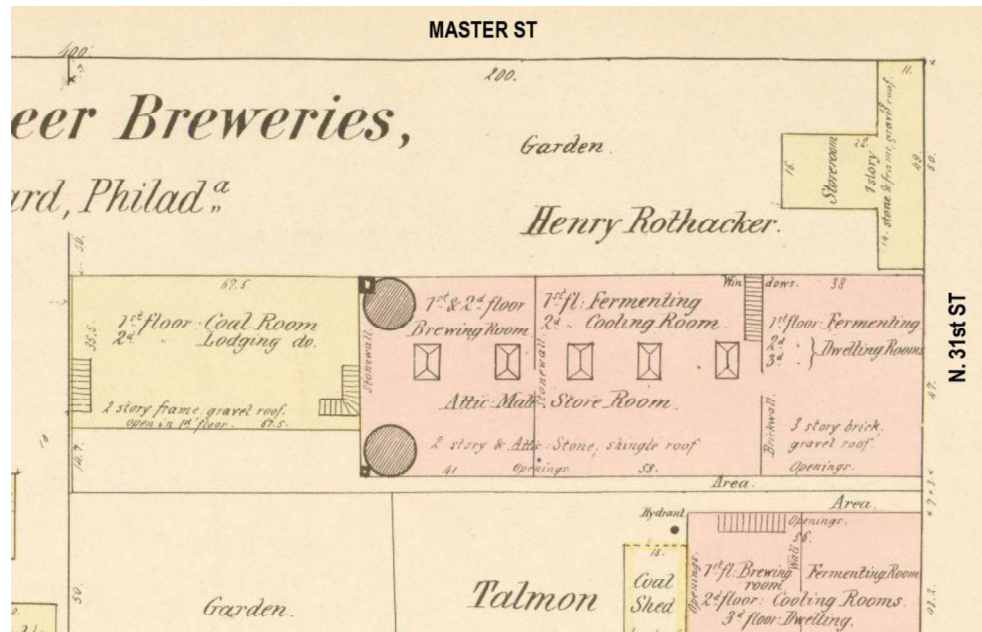


Figure 8 – The Rothacker brewery at 31st and Master (southwest corner) as recorded by the Hexamer General Survey in 1866, Plate 276 (Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network). This property was cleared before 1950 and is now the site of Brewerytown Square, a condominium development.

The Rothacker brewery, which George H. Rothacker acquired in full from his brother in 1870, expanded continuously over the following decades. Incorporating as the G.F. Rothacker Brewing Company in 1870 and as G.F. Rothacker & Sons around 1874, the Rothacker's Lion Brewery became particularly well-known for *Extra* and *Asmanshaeuser* brands, according to Philadelphia beer historian Rich Wagner (Figure 9).²⁴ Where the Rothackers were producing upwards of 500 barrels a year at 2301 Fairmount Avenue, at the new facility dramatically expand their capacity to 4,000 barrels a year by 1870, 9000 by 1880 and over 19,000 by 1893. Although not the largest lager beer breweries, such as Bergner & Engel, produced over 100,000 barrels per year, the Times reported in 1893 that the Lion Brewery's "phenomenal growth" is "one of the largest percentages for this year in Philadelphia."²⁵ By 1913, when the Lion Brewery was absorbed by Bergner & Engel, it was producing 30,000 barrels a year.²⁶ George F. Rothacker died in July, 1913, just a few months after selling his company, and was eulogized in the nationally published *American Brewers' Review* as "the sole survivor of a group of Germans who founded the brewing industry in Philadelphia."²⁷

²⁴ Rich Wagner, "Philadelphia's Long Lost Lagers, *Ale Street News* (April/May 2007), accessed 7/23/21, <https://pabreweryhistorians.tripod.com/ASN0407LongLostLagers.html>

²⁵ "Our Brewing Interests: A Review of the Twenty-six Breweries of Philadelphia, Each Having an Output of Over 15,000 Barrels," *The Times*, May 18, 1894, p. 6-7.

²⁶ "Brewing Plant Conveyed," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 1913, p. 14; "Review of Week in Real Estate," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 23, 1913, p. 29.

²⁷ Obituary of George F. Rothacker, *American Brewers' Review* (August 1913), 388.



Figure 9 – G.F. Rothacker & Sons advertisement in *The Times*, November 11, 1891.

Although the Rothackers left 2301 Fairmount Avenue in 1863, the property remained in their ownership for about two years. After their departure, the Rothackers leased the building to Francis (or Franz) Orth, a recent German immigrant who appears to have been a cousin of the Rothackers (Orth was maiden name of Henry and George F. Rothacker's mother). Like the Rothackers, 2301 Fairmount served as the first brewery of Francis Orth, who also continued to operate the first-floor saloon (Figure 10).

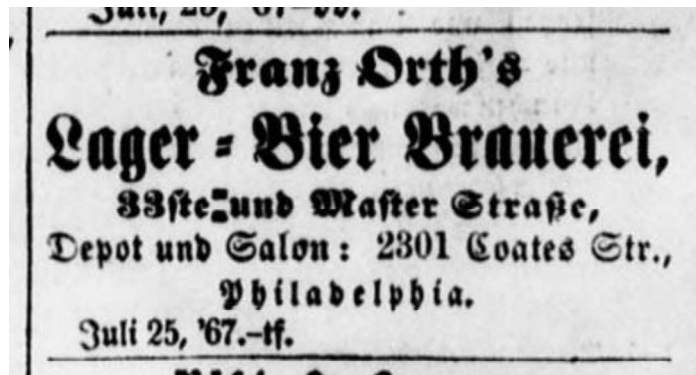


Figure 10 – Francis (Franz) Orth advertisement in the *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung*, October 17, 1867. This ad was published after Orth expanded his brewery operation from 2301 Fairmount to a dedicated brewery on 33rd Street south between Thompson and Master Streets.

Orth appears to have briefly partnered with Frank Rothacker, another of the Rothacker brothers, in the brewery operation, for in 1863 the business was listed in a directory as Orth & Rothacker.²⁸ The partnership was short-lived – Orth & Rothacker does not appear in any later directories – but Orth nonetheless experienced a run of success. By 1865, Orth purchased 2301 Fairmount Avenue from the Rothackers, and by 1866 he had opened a dedicated brewery on 33rd Street just south of Master Street in Brewerytown

²⁸ McElroy's *Philadelphia Directory*, Twenty-Sixth Edition (Philadelphia: Edward C. and John Biddle, 1863), 582.

(Figure 11).²⁹ Like George F. Rothacker's, Francis Orth's brewery was among the first dozen or so breweries to be documented by the Hexamer General Survey in a series of four plates (275-278) published in 1866. These detailed industrial site surveys are the first known and demonstrate that both Rothacker and Orth played an important early role in developing what later became known as Brewerytown. Because both Rothacker's and Orth's breweries no longer stand (both were demolished before 1950), 2301 Fairmount Avenue is the best physical reminder of these two men (and their brothers or sons) and their significant role in Philadelphia's fledgling lager beer industry.

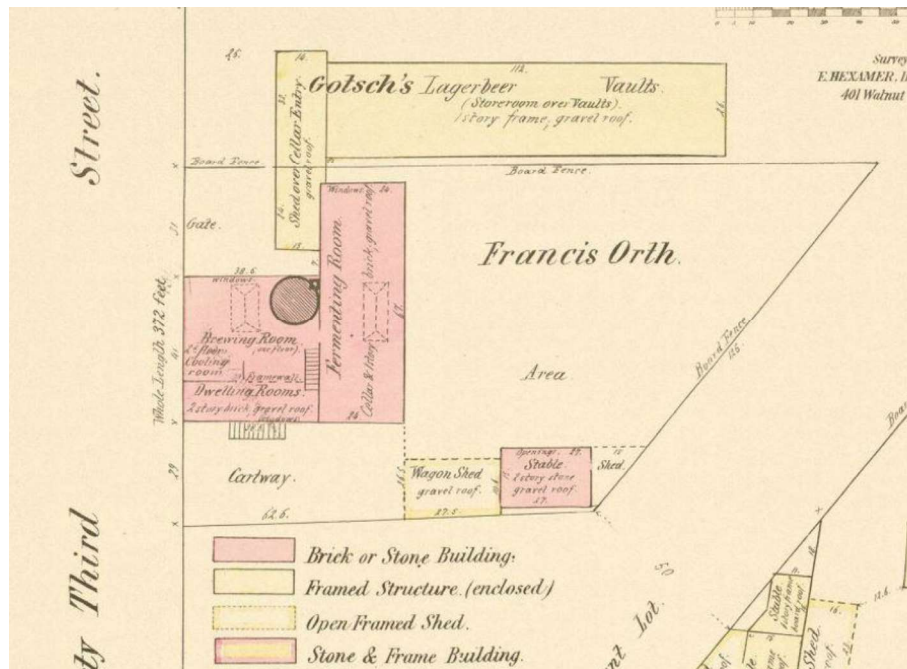


Figure 11 – The Orth brewery on 33rd Street (east side, between Thompson and Master) as recorded by the Hexamer General Survey in 1866, Plate 277 (Athenaeum of Philadelphia, Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network). This property was cleared before 1950 and now the site of PECO's Master Substation.

Once situated in his new brewery on 33rd Street, Orth continued to operate 2301 Fairmount Avenue as a saloon, which remained the primary outlet for Orth's brews. An 1867 advertisement in a locally published German-language newspaper, the *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung* (Figure 10), indicated that while Orth's brewery was located at 33rd and Master Streets, 2301 Fairmount (still known as 2301 Coates Street), served as a "Depot und Salon." The word depot suggests that the building served the company's main warehouse or storehouse, at least until 1870 when Orth finally sold the property. Orth's Brewery remained in operation at 33rd and Master until the early to mid-1880s, when it was acquired by Burg & Pfaender, which itself appears to have been acquired by the Bergdoll Brewing Company, also a Brewerytown staple, around 1910.

²⁹ George F. Rothacker to Francis Orth, January 4, 1865, Philadelphia Deed Book L.R.B., No. 105, page 169. The 33rd Street brewery is first documented by the Hexamer General Survey, Plate 277, 1866, accessed 7/26/21 at <https://www.philageohistory.org/rdic-images/view-image.cfm/HGSv4%2E0277>.

After Orth sold 2301 Fairmount Avenue, it continued to be operated as a lager beer saloon by German immigrant George J. Happ. From 1870 until about 1880, Happ's saloon was well-known, particularly as lager approached supremacy among beer varieties in the United States. As a testament to the popularity of lager beer in Philadelphia and across the country, the various restaurants at the Centennial Exposition in 1876 had sold nearly 150,000 gallons or about 1,200,000 pints of lager to fairgoers through August 5th, only halfway through the sixth-month long event.³⁰ Although Happ's saloon was located across the river from the exposition grounds, his numerous advertisements in the *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung*, which provided visitors directions to his establishment, made it clear he hoped to capitalize on their free time away from the fair (Figure 12).

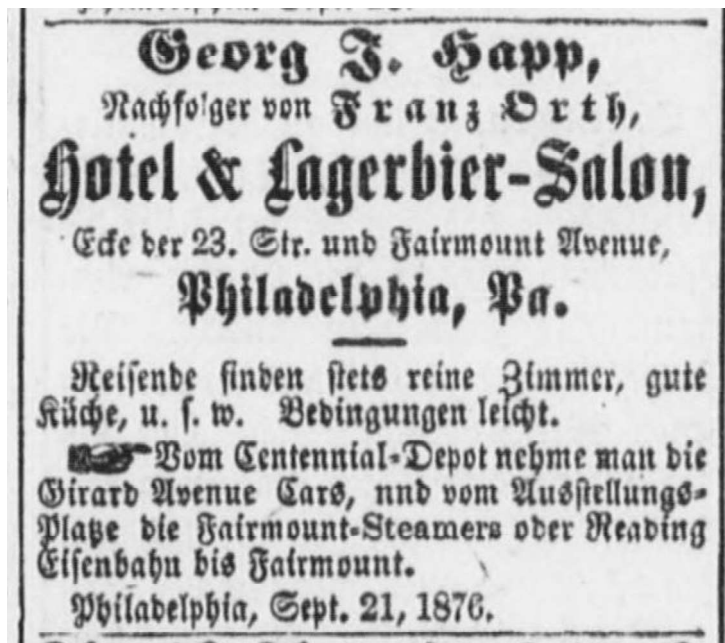


Figure 12 – Advertisement for George J. Happ's lager beer saloon at 2301 Fairmount Avenue. In this ad, which appeared in the *Pennsylvanische Staats-Zeitung* from the spring through the fall of 1876, Happ appealed to visitors to the Centennial Exposition, even providing directions.

After Happ died around 1880, 2301 Fairmount remained a lager beer saloon for several decades, virtually exclusively with German or German-descended proprietors, such as Charles Wagner (1880), Christian G. Gerne (1881-1885), Lambert Klein (1886-1897), and Paul Sigmund (1897-1903), among others. While the saloon ultimately shed its association with German lager beer culture, except during Prohibition from 1920-1933 it operated continuously as a bar and restaurant until 2019 when the last tenants – London Grill – closed their doors after nearly 30 years in business.

³⁰ "Centennial Hash. A Round of the Restaurants," *The Times*, August 8, 1876.

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places
Nomination of 2301 Fairmount Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19130



Figure 13 – 2301 Fairmount Avenue in 1947, looking northwest from Fairmount Avenue (Philadelphia Department of Records).

8. Major Bibliographic References

Mark Benbow. "German Immigrants in the United States Brewing Industry." Immigrant Entrepreneurship. German Historical Institute. February 1, 2017. Accessed July 22, 2021. <https://www.immigrantentrepreneurship.org/entries/german-immigrants-in-the-united-states-brewing-industry/>.

Kawaguchi, Lesley Ann. "The Making of Philadelphia's German-America: Ethnic Group and Community Development." PhD diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1983.

Kazal, Russell A. *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.

McElroy's Philadelphia Directory. Twenty-Third, Twenty-Fifth, and Twenty-Sixth Editions. Philadelphia: Edward C. and John Biddle, 1860, 1862 and 1863.

Wagner, Rich and Rich Dochter. "Brewerytown, USA." *Pennsylvania Heritage* (Summer 1991). Accessed 7/21/21 at <http://paheritage.wpengine.com/article/brewerytown-usa/>.

Wagner, Rich. *Philadelphia Beer: A Heady History of Brewing in the Cradle of Liberty*. Charleston, SC: History Press, 2012.