



**Historical Museum**  
715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL 62025

The museum is currently closed for renovation.

**Archival Library**  
801 N Main Street

**Hours:**  
Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm  
(Reservations recommended)  
**Library Phone:**  
618-656-7569

**MCHS Connections:**  
**Website:**  
madcohistory.org  
**E-mail:**  
info@madcohistory.org  
**Phone:**  
618-656-1294

**About Us:**  
The MCHS museum complex, consisting of a modern archival library, a museum in the 1836 Weir House and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the nonprofit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## BREWERIES OF EARLY MADISON COUNTY

by Kevin Kious and Donald Roussin

The brewing industry was established early in the history of Madison County and was prominent up until the advent of Prohibition in 1920. When beer was legalized again in 1933, breweries in Alton, Highland and Granite City quickly reopened.

But when the Bluff City Brewery closed in 1952, it would be decades before another brewery opened in the county. It took the craft-

brewing revolution to bring American brewing full circle and put small local breweries back on the map.

William Charley was likely the first brewer in the county, establishing a brewery in Alton as early as the late 1830s. Since Alton has the richest brewing history in the county (sorry Highland) we'll start there and take an alphabetical city-by-city look at the industry.

## BREWERS AND BREWERIES: ALTON

By the 1860s, the City of Alton was home to three successful breweries. What would become the Bluff City Brewery (often described as being located "back of cemetery") was started in 1842 by German immigrant George Yaekel. His competitors were Baumann & Peters, located in north Alton, and Runzi & Company at 16<sup>th</sup> and Easton streets.

The Yaekel brewery folded in the early 1870s, but was later reopened, and, once the Netzhammer family took it over in 1883, it enjoyed many successful decades. It soon became known as the Bluff City Brewery.

John Jehle had taken over the brewery in north Alton only to have it destroyed by fire in 1883. He decided not to rebuild, but rather to buy and rehab the former Runzi brewery which had been closed several years earlier.

Jehle's relocated brewery would also thrive over the next several years. But, he began suffering ill health in 1889 and soon died. The \$75,000 price tag that Anton Reck paid him for the brewery shortly before his death would allow his widow and children to live a life free from financial worries.

The Anton Reck Brewing Company and

Bluff City Brewery both operated successfully until the U.S., via a constitutional amendment, decided to make alcoholic beverages illegal. Bluff City hobbled along during the dry years making soft drinks and near beer and was



ready to start brewing again in 1933.

Bluff City owner/brewer Bill Netzhammer Jr. was well-respected in the industry and the brewery did well before World War II. But, under competition from the huge national breweries and their giant advertising budgets, sales began to decline, so when the brewery's refrigerating unit failed in 1952, the decision was made to close the business.

*continued page 4*

## ABOUT US

### MCHS BOARD

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### VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the Museum or the Archival Library. If interested, please call 618-656-7569.

### MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, or at the Archival Library.

### PUBLICATIONS

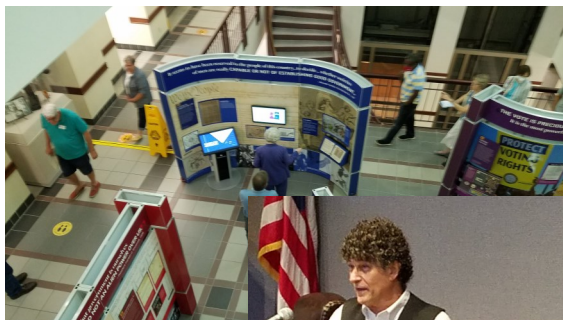
#### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor  
618-656-1294

## MUSEUM & ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

Museum and archival library staff have made significant progress on a number of important projects.

By the time members receive this newsletter, the Smithsonian exhibition, *Voices and Votes: Democracy in America*, will be removed from the Madison County Administration Building. The last day was August 20. After that, it will be disassembled and moved to the next Illinois community.



Above, visitors view the Smithsonian *Voices and Votes* Exhibition; at right, folk musician Chris Vallillo who presented songs of the Civil Rights Movement.



Staff, MCHS board members and volunteers served as docents during the exhibition. In addition to the exhibit, there were four events and a special exhibit organized to compliment the exhibition. Superintendent Jon Parkin, working with Board member Lynn Engelman, applied for the exhibition, scheduled events, organized volunteers and took care of hundreds of other details required to make this exhibition possible.

This month the Archival Library staff added a third collection to the online database of the Illinois Digital Archives called "Flags of Moro – Flagg Family Correspondence." This collection of 147 letters features over 70 correspondents and spans two centuries. Prominent themes include land speculation in Illinois, local and national politics, and Madison County farm life.

The collection centers on three generations of the Flagg family of Moro, Illinois:

Gershom Flagg was 23 years old when he left New England in 1816. He settled in Paddock's Grove, building one of the first houses on Springfield Road in what would become Moro, Illinois. Gershom planted an apple orchard on his farm and promoted fruit cultivation in the area. He also brokered land deals in Madison and Macoupin counties.

Gershom and his wife Jane (Paddock) Richmond had one child together:

Willard Cutting Flagg (born 1829). Willard attended Yale University (class of 1854). Willard was Republican: letters in the collection discuss national and local strategies for the 1864 election. A noted pomologist, Willard also contributed articles to horticultural publications. Willard and his wife Sarah Smith had six children, but only three survived infancy.

Norman Gershom Flagg was their youngest child. Norman graduated from Washington University in St. Louis in 1888. He married Josephine Hehner in 1896; they had six children. Norman served as a Republican in both houses of the Illinois legislature. He died in 1948, at the age of 80, on the Moro family homestead where he was born.

This latest Illinois Digital Archives (Ida) collection joins "School Houses of Madison County," and "Private and Real – a Collection of Correspondence Between Women." All three collections can be found under Madison County Historical Society at <http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/custom/byInstitution#M>

Curator Jenn VanBibber is working with the MCHS Interpretive Committee that are creating the narrative for the new museum. Jenn then needs to review the collections for artifacts that best tell the story.

SIUE summer interns have finished the summer semester, but will be back in the fall. Daniel Burns is working on transcribing the 800-page journal/reminiscence of George W. Spahr. Mindy Philips is transcribing and organizing the Bertha Love Collection in preparation for posting it on Illinois Digital Archives later this year.

Superintendent Parkin participated in two on-air recordings recently. The first was for an edition of *St. Louis on the Air* where Jon and SIUE professor Dr. Anthony Cheeseboro discussed "How Edwardsville Residents are Grappling with Their City's Controversial Namesake." This aired June 29 on St. Louis's NPR station.

The second event was a July 4 podcast for New Town Square, where he discussed events culminating in the Declaration of Independence and the resulting war for American independence. The podcast is available for listening here:

[https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/newtownsquarepod/JonParkinPodcast\\_mixdown.mp3](https://traffic.libsyn.com/secure/newtownsquarepod/JonParkinPodcast_mixdown.mp3)



## RECENT NEWS

### ITALIAN IMMIGRATION

The August Online Speaker Series program on Italian immigration featuring Joann Condellone will be posted to the society's website in late August.



A link to the program will be posted to Facebook when it is available, or you can look

for it on the MCHS website at MadCoHistory.org.

### WALTER D. WILLIAMS

#### WELCOMED TO MCHS BOARD

At the July meeting of the MCHS Board, Walter Williams, Edwardsville, was appointed as the newest member of the board.

Williams came to Madison County



Walter D. Williams

in 2014 when hired as the City of Edwardsville's Economic and Community Development Director. He recently left the city's employ to accept a position as coordinator of Madison County's Economic Development program

He currently serves as president

### CHAUTAUQUA: SEPTEMBER 11

On Saturday, Sept. 11, you are invited to step back to a time between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, when Chautauqua entertainments were all the rage. Visitors can experience Living History Days: a Chautauqua with Teddy Roosevelt and Friends, from 3-6 p.m. at Edwardsville City Park. There is no admission fee.

In the past, a Chautauqua was typically a travelling "show" that emphasized entertainment and education by presenting a program of musical performances, humorists, politicians, and speakers. Famous personalities who travelled the Chautauqua circuit included celebrities of the time. The events were so popular that Teddy Roosevelt called them "the most American thing in America."

At the 2021 Chautauqua, reenactors will portray President Teddy Roosevelt, as he describes "a strenu-

ous life," social crusader Jane Addams discussing "slums and juvenile delinquency", and investigative journalist Ida B. Wells who will speak against lynching. Humorist Josh Billings' words of wit will be an "Essa on the Mule." In addition, there will be musical entertainments, festival foods, and a selection of vendors offering books and other appropriate products for a century-old venue. Children's activities hosted by the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House will make this an event for the whole family.



In reality, Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House in Chicago, visited Edwardsville in 1899 as a guest of N. O. Nelson. While in Edwardsville she gave two lectures, one on her social settlement work and the other on the life and work of Count Leo Tolstoi. Journalist Ida B. Wells went on to become one of the founders of the NAACP, and the work of humorist Josh Billings has been compared to that of Mark Twain.

The event is a made possible through the cooperative efforts of the Madison County Historical Society, the 1820 Col. Benjamin Stephenson House, and the Southern Illinois University Edwardsville Department of Historical Studies. Funding is provided through grants from the City of Edwardsville and the SIUE Meridian Society.

of the Edwardsville Chapter of the NAACP and is the Board of the Edwardsville Community Foundation.

Williams has already volunteered to join the MCHS Interpretive Committee charged with laying out the story of Madison County in the design of the new museum.

## 2021 NEW AND RENEWING MEMBERS

(2021 Membership Year)

July - August ♦ Thank you for supporting MCHS!

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Dennis Price  
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## 2021 ADDITIONAL DONORS

July - August ♦ Thank you for your generosity!  
(Includes Memorial Donations for Suzanne Dietrich)

Nelson Lee Beneze

Ginger McCall  
Mike & Marian Smithson

Phillip & Karol Walkington

MCHS Memberships run on the calendar year. Summer memberships, expiring on December 31, are available for \$15.

To join or renew MCHS membership, go to <https://madcohistory.org/membership/> or send a check to

MCHS, P. O. Box 422, Edwardsville, IL 62025.; For additional information, call 618-656-1294.



## COOPER BROTHERS

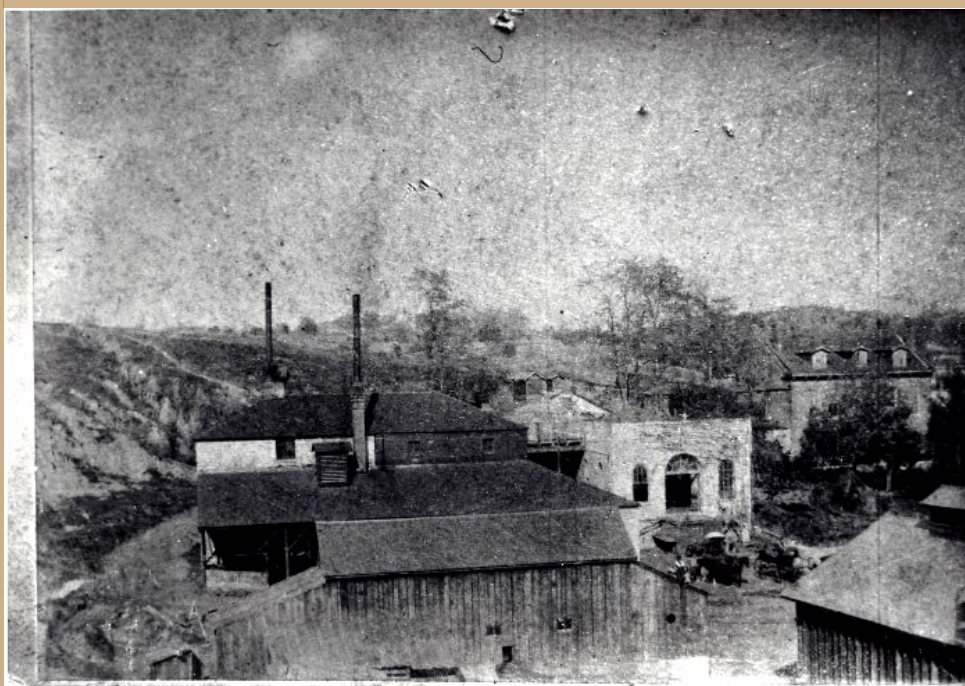
A very brief entrant in the Alton brewing business was the Cooper Brothers Ale Brewery, operated by Richard F. and Goldsborough Cooper. This brewery met a disastrous ending on Feb. 6, 1862. As reported by the local newspaper (the reporter got his details from none other than Richard Cooper), the brewery was burned to the ground following a fire sparked by a boiler explosion.

Cooper said he had been standing near the boiler at the time of the explosion but was saved from serious injury after being knocked down and covered by debris, which kept materials from crashing down on him. He told the reporter that the loss amounted to \$16,000 with no insurance coverage.

Research in the county courthouse revealed that just three days before the explosion, Cooper had taken out an "indenture" where he mortgaged basically all the brewery's assets (including a writing desk and horses) to cover overdue notes worth \$5860. Holder of the indenture was Richard Cooper, Esquire, of Cooperstown, New York. Unless somebody got the horses out of the brewery stable, he was left holding the bag.

Richard F. Cooper was soon back on his feet at an ale brewery in St. Louis. We can only assume that his account of the fire was (or was not) the complete truth and his relative back in New York was just a victim of unfortunate timing.

## ALTON BREWERIES (CONT FROM PAGE 1)



View of Bluff City Brewery, Alton, Illinois circa 1870. The house at upper right was built for the Yeakel family in the 1860s but became the home of the Wilhelm Netzhammer family when they purchased the brewery in 1883. Below, a portrait of Wilhelm Netzhammer at about the time he purchased the brewery.



Fortunately, various portions of the brewery still stand and have been preserved by subsequent owners. These include an ancient limestone structure that has to be one of the oldest remaining brewery buildings anywhere in the country. The Yaekel/Netzhammer mansion remains a local landmark as well.

The Reck brewery never reopened after Prohibition. The old family mansion nearby was later converted into the Owl's Club, and last time we checked an old limestone structure said to have served as a brewmaster's home was also on the property.

## BETHALTO & MARINE

**BETHALTO** --- An 1860 Illinois State Business Directory lists a brewery operated by Jacob Huppert and Company. We have found nothing else on this operation, there may be property records in the courthouse that could shed some light.

**MARINE** --- Rudolph Nicolay established a brewery in the heart of Marine in the late 1850s which operated until the early 1870s. On New Year's Day 1872, the brewery was auctioned off in front of the Marine post office with a winning bid of \$2,400.



Advertising signs and serving trays from Bluff City Brewery (above right) and the Anton Reck Brewing Company, both of Alton, Illinois.





## COLLINSVILLE BREWERIES

Collinsville had at least two breweries, though neither was highly successful. The first was started on Madison Street by Louis Abegg and Henry Mayer. We know the partners made their first batch of beer on Dec. 31, 1857. Three weeks later, it was first offered for sale. How do we know this? Through the miraculous existence of the diary (or "Farm Journal") of Henry Mayer.

This historical treasure was discovered in an abandoned house in Nevada and eventually acquired by a book collector. His widow was kind enough to donate it to the Collinsville library after his death about twenty years ago. It was transcribed by local historian Doris Bauer, making our job easier.

Other things we know thanks to Henry Mayer are details on how to construct brewery storage cellars, reports on local taverns and on the doings of Collinsville temperance fanatics. There are also notes on competing nearby breweries. At one point Henry noted that "the ale made by the Edwardsville Brewery is sweet and unfit for use." In 1860, the brewery in Lebanon ran out of beer and had no barley to make more. That fall, Henry noted a beer wagon

from the Highland brewery making numerous deliveries in town.

We also learn how Mayer dealt with the brewers he employed. One of them took Henry's buggy to St. Louis, accompanied by Henry's two sons and their governess to pick up some yeast. When he returned late at night with mud covering the interior and exterior of the wagon, Henry vowed that "he shall never again use another horse or vehicle of mine."

Henry Mayer bought out his original partner in 1858, but got out of the beer business in the mid-1860s. His brewery went through a few changes in ownership while operating until the early 1870s.

A competitor to the Collinsville Brewery was started during the Civil War by saloonkeeper Joseph Berka and partners. It would operate off-and-on until about 1880. Located behind Glenwood Cemetery, part of the property was later the site of the city dump. The last brewer there, Ferdinand Banks, had the distinction of running both Collinsville breweries at different points.

## EDWARDSVILLE BREWERIES

The county seat had two 19<sup>th</sup>-century breweries, the first at the end of North Kansas Street and the other not far away at the north end of Main Street. Bavarian native Michael Kreutz had a hand in starting both of them. The Kansas Street plant opened around 1857, but soon after it was destroyed by fire, a constant threat to breweries at the time.

Kreutz wanted to stay in the beer business, but opted to build at a new location on Main Street. In addition to a brewery, a home was constructed on the site for the Kreutz family. This new facility featured a three-story brick brewhouse and a pair of cellars that ran across the road to within thirty feet of Cahokia Creek. During cold spells ice could be harvested from the creek to keep the beer cool during warmer months. The Ritter and Klingel families were also involved in this business.

Following the death of Louis Klingel in 1870, the brewery was closed. The building stood for nearly a hundred more years before being torn down. The adjacent home later became the Klingel House Tea Room and Restaurant.

Meanwhile, new owners had decided to resurrect what they appropriately called the Phoenix Brewery at the site of the burned Kansas Street facility, which opened in 1863. Mortgage activity indicates this brewery struggled to stay afloat though, with a variety of operators passing through. It became the property of the St. Louis malting firm Linze & Schmidt before being sold to Henry Mick in 1873. Mick had previously operated the Lion Brewery in St. Louis.

Mick had a decent run at the Edwardsville brewery, but he would end up closing it about seven years later. The brewery is long gone, but a portion of the aging cellar remains.



*Above right is a vintage picture the Michael Kreutz home on N. Main Street in Edwardsville, known today as the Klingel House. Below is the Western Brewery Depot in Glen Carbon. The beer was made in Belleville, but distributed through Dominick Pizzini's Depot which included a saloon.*



## GRANITE CITY'S WAGNER BREWING COMPANY

The new town of Granite City (est. 1896) became the location of the Wagner Brewing Company in 1904. It was built by the father and son team of Edward Wagner Sr. and Jr. The elder Wagner had a stellar career in the brewing business, working at breweries in Denver and Chicago prior to landing at the American Brewing Company in St. Louis, where his son had joined him. A substantial modern brewery was erected and young Ed moved to Granite City to run the business.

Just three years later the company became part of the Independent Breweries Company, a conglomerate of nine St. Louis area breweries. The IBC's flagship brand, Alpen Brau, was brewed there. The brewery remained operating until the advent of Prohibition and briefly put out a line of soda.

During Prohibition the brewery became the property of City Ice and Fuel of St. Louis, which began rehabbing the plant in anticipation of repeal. It reopened, again as Wagner Brewing Company, in 1933 and had draft beer ready for the market by late September. The brewmaster was George Schmidt, who had also supervised the last batch of Alpen Brau brewed back in 1919.

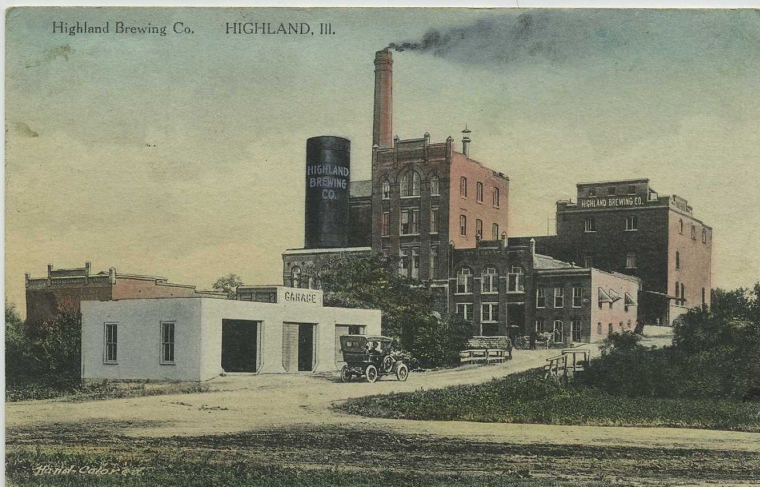
In 1938, the brewery was acquired by the American Brewing Company of New Orleans, makers of Regal brand beer. It never caught on locally, and the brewery was closed at the end of 1940. The plant was soon sold to Nestle, who converted it beyond recognition into a structure which likewise became something of a landmark.



*Pictures above and below show different delivery methods used by the Wagner Brewing Company of Granite City, Illinois*



## HIGHLAND BREWERIES



The eastern Madison County town had perhaps the most successful brewery in the county with the Highland Brewing Company, and there were several other early brewers. Among them were John Geisman, Nicholas Voge, Daniel Wild and John Guggenbuehler. But the beer that made Highland and the Schott caves famous came from a brewery started in 1854 by Charles Bernays (the brewery always insisted it was founded in 1853, but we think that was only because the Star Brewery in Belleville correctly claimed 1854).

Not long after its founding the Bernays brewery was purchased by German immigrants Gerhart Schott and his son Martin. Another son, Christian, also became a partner. By 1866 their brewery was a success and Gerhart Schott returned to Europe, leaving his sons in charge.



## HIGHLAND BREWERIES

The brothers decided to build a new brewery on the south end of Mulberry Street shortly thereafter. Martin Schott bought out his brother in 1870. By 1880 annual sales amounted to \$45,000, and there were twelve employees. Sales were enhanced by the fact that there was no other brewery on the railroad line between St. Louis and Terre Haute.

In the 1880s the Schott family moved into new homes near the brewery. The underground aging cellar was extended in order to connect beneath the homes. These extensive hand-dug tunnels were later touted on bottle labels and advertising as "the famous Schott caves."

The brewery continued to expand with ever-increasing sales. Highland beer was sold throughout southern Illinois and in other nearby states. In 1899 Martin Schott celebrated fifty years as a master brewer and stepped aside to let his sons run the business. With around seventy employees, the brewery was the second largest employer in town behind the Helvetia Milk Condensing Company.

During Prohibition the company pursued various alter-

native activities and stayed in the ice business, but fell into debt. Upon Repeal, Eugene Schott and several associates from Collinsville formed a stock company to reopen the brewery in May, 1933. But the business was never able to gain its pre-Prohibition prominence. In March of 1940, it was declared bankrupt.

Charles Dorries, a soda bottler from Breese, purchased the brewery, reopened the business, and more stock was sold to raise operating capital. Other investors came aboard and the brewery had a good year in 1941. But following World War II the business was struggling when it was leased to the Gast Brewing Company of St. Louis. Gast entered into a five-year lease with an option to buy, but ended up shuttering the facility in 1949. Its St. Louis plant had closed previously after a fire.

Highland Supply Corporation took over the buildings and helped preserve them, there was even a museum in the brewery for a while. But in the past decade the complex has seen considerable deterioration. It is currently for sale, Brian Nolen of Friendship Brewing in Wentzville, MO even considered buying it for a brewery.



## BREWERIES ARE BACK!

By the 1970s, the number of United States brewing companies had shrunken from the thousands to a few dozen, all primarily producing a similar lager beer. No one could have predicted it, but over the next fifty years thousands of new breweries would be opened as a small but growing portion of beer drinkers sought beers with stronger and different flavors.

Several brewers have answered the call for locally made beer in Madison County. The three most successful are located in the downtown sections of Alton, Collinsville and Edwardsville.

Matt Flach opened his Recess Brewing at 307 North Main Street in Edwardsville in 2014. It had been about 125 years since Henry Mick had brewed his last batch of beer at the city's previous commercial brewery. Recess is still going strong and offers a huge array of beer styles.

In 2015 Old Bakery Beer Company opened in the former Colonial Bakery building near the riverfront in Alton, which had closed in the 1980s. The brewery uses only organic

ingredients in all its beers and includes a restaurant. It has canned many of its styles which are available at the brewery and in area stores.

In 2019 Old Herald Brewery and Distillery opened in Collinsville. Like Old Bakery, it has a full-service restaurant in addition to the brewery/distillery. It, too, is located in an historic building, in this case the former home of the *Collinsville Herald* newspaper (and which sat empty for decades). The site is just a couple blocks from the city's original brewery location.

It looks like Highland will soon be getting a brewery too as the St. Louis Brewery (Schlafly) has announced plans for a satellite brewpub there.

The brewing industry has come full circle in Madison County. While there is still a giant international competitor just across the river, the 19<sup>th</sup>-century tradition of small breweries serving locally made beer has returned, and we think that is something worth celebrating with a fresh local beer.

## THANK YOU!

MCHS is grateful to Kevin Kious and Don Roussin for sharing their knowledge of early Madison County Breweries. Kevin was born in St. Louis, grew up in Central Illinois, and moved to Collinsville in 1991 when he went to work at Fairmont Race Track. He is recently retired. Don grew up in St. Louis and Detroit, but loves Metro East history and breweriana. He is retired from Boeing.

Both men are avid collectors of beer advertising materials and have researched local brewers for many years. They belong to the National Association of Breweriana Advertising and have been published in the organizations magazine, *The Breweriana Collector*.

Brewery photographs in this issue are all from their collections.



Pictured above are Don Roussin (left) and Kevin Kious.



**Madison County  
Historical Society**  
*Opening Doors to Madison County History*

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## COMING EVENTS

### **Saturday, September 11**

Living History Days:

A Chautauqua with Teddy Roosevelt and Friends

3-6 p.m., City Park, Edwardsville

An MCHS event

### **Sunday, October 17**

Leclaire Parkfest, Noon - 5 p.m.

Leclaire Park, Edwardsville

MCHS will be a vendor at this annual festival that highlights the history of the Leclaire National Historic District

**FOOD • DRINKS • LIVE ENTERTAINMENT • KIDS ACTIVITIES • CRAFTS**

**LIVING  
History  
DAYS**

**SATURDAY • SEPT. 11  
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**A CHAUTAUQUA WITH TEDDY ROOSEVELT & FRIENDS**

**TEDDY  
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**JANE  
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