

"I sometimes wonder if it pays to make beer this way"

by Walter J. Matt

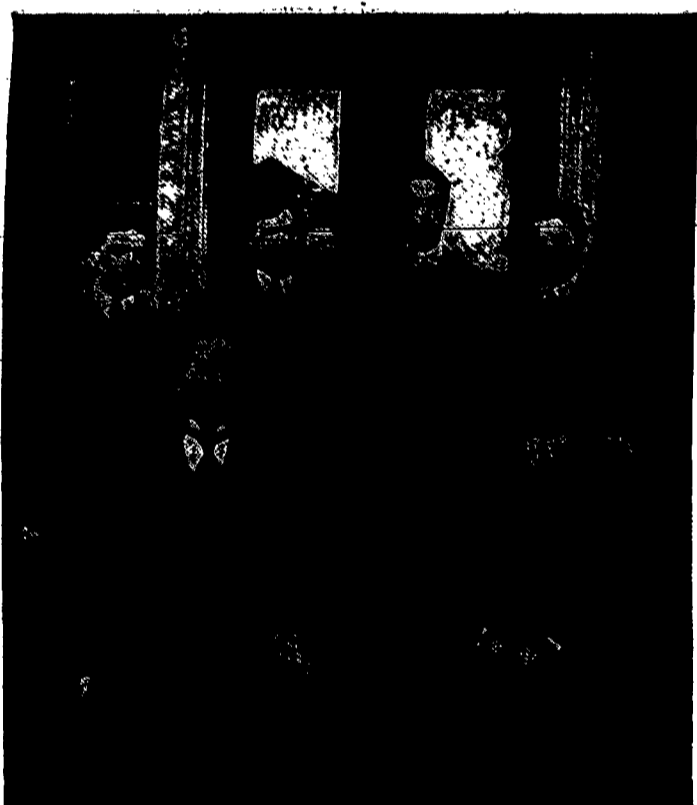
When my father came to this country from Germany in 1878, he had some very strong convictions about the way beer should be made.

My father had learned the trade in the celebrated brewery of the Duke of Baden in the Black Forest region. And up to the day my father died last year, at the age of 99, he felt that many of the old ways were still the best ways to make beer (although they were certainly not the fastest).

Only last year, when I returned from Europe with some movies I had taken of the Baden brewery that he loved so, he turned to me with tears in his eyes and said, "You see, Walter, all those wonderful things I told you about Baden—they were really so."

What my father learned about beer in the old country

My father believed in the natural way of



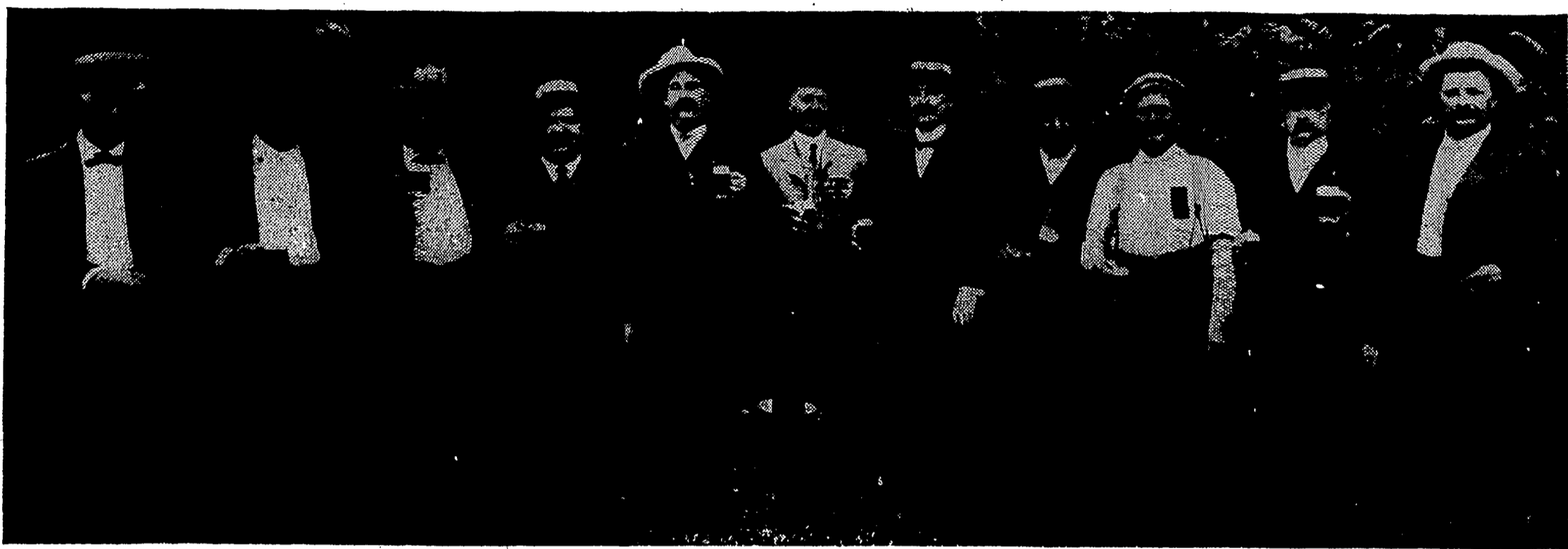
F. X. MATT AND OFFICE FORGE (AROUND 1900).

making beer. He felt that beer should be made from the harvest, not from the laboratory.

In later years, when many breweries turned to using syrups and extracts as a convenience, my father would have none of it. To this day, only *whole grain* is ever used in Utica Club beer. No commercial syrups or extracts.

My father ran his brewery the way mother ran her kitchen. Like a good cook, he insisted on the best tools and a spotless kitchen. He left us one of the most beautiful breweries in the world, gleaming with polished copper and stainless steel and tile.

Right up to his 90th year, he even did the "shopping" himself. And he bought nothing but the best. Ever since I can remember, the malt we've used in Utica Club has been "choice grade." This is not one of those vague words that anyone can use—like "fine," for example—but the highest grade you can buy.



SUMMER CLAMBAKE OF WEST END BREWING COMPANY, AROUND 1895. (F. X. MATT IS FIFTH FROM RIGHT.) BEER WAS A WAY OF LIFE WITH THESE MEN.

My father was so proud of the ingredients he used that he put them right on the label for the whole world to see. You can see them there today.

Real foam vs. artificial bubbles

Now it may surprise you to learn that most of the beers in the U.S. today are *artificially carbonated*. (What they do is inject carbon dioxide under pressure into the beer while it is in the storage tank.) This makes it possible for a brewer to reduce the aging time to 2 or 3 weeks and still turn out a beer with "life."

My father felt that beer should not be artificially carbonated.

Today, Utica Club is one of the few beers left in the country that has a natural life of its own; no artificial bubbles. To create this natural life, our beer must be aged for months instead of for weeks. Not in a bottle in a warehouse, you understand, but in glass-lined refrigerated tanks, under close supervision.

Is aging worth the extra money?

Natural aging is a very expensive proposition, requiring 3 or 4 times as much storage space, 3 or 4 times as many of the huge glass-lined tanks, and 3 or 4 times as much refrigeration capacity. (In other words, a very substantial investment in extra equipment to turn out the same quantity of beer.)

Even more important, the extra aging ties up hundreds of thousands of barrels of beer (representing about a million dollars of the brewer's working capital).

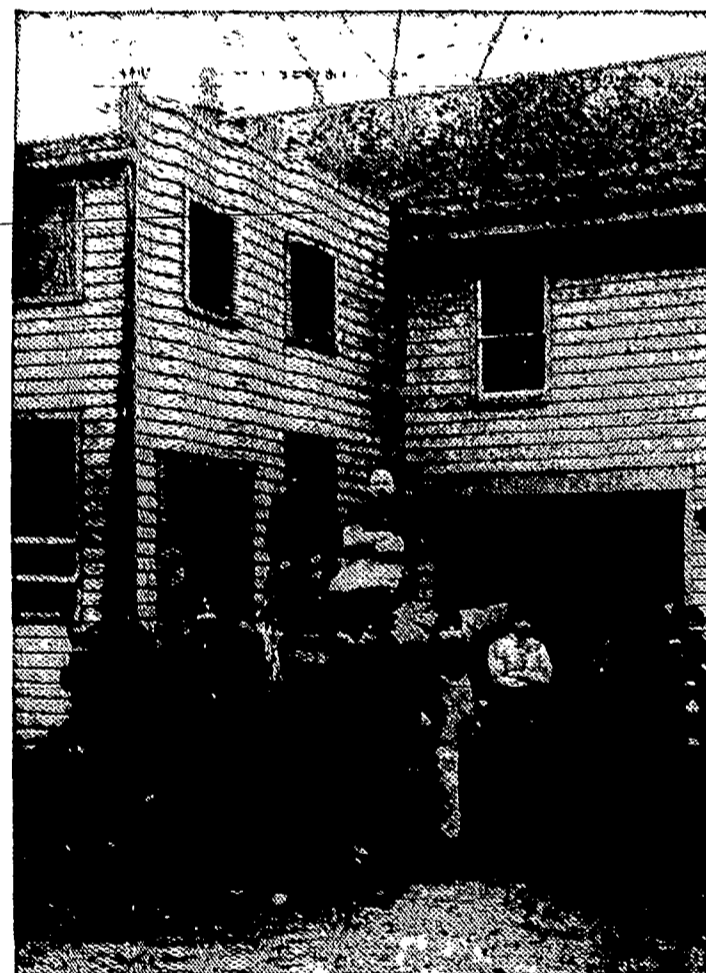
You have to be something of a saint to do it. Especially during the warm weather months, when the dealers are hollering for their beer. It takes a very stubborn man to tell them they can't have their beer because it hasn't been aged enough yet. But my father was a very stubborn man.

What a difference it makes in the taste of a glass of beer when it's made like this.

The taste is mellow. There is absolutely no bitterness. The foam is thick and

creamy, with fine bubbles. And the sparkle lasts right down to the bottom of the glass, because these are natural bubbles, like you get in champagne.

This is one of the reasons why Utica Club is the first choice with so many bartenders. It keeps its life right down to the bottom of the keg.



FROM THIS SMALL BEGINNING GREW A MODEL BREWERY.

Is brewing an art or a science?

My father felt that being a brewer was a way of life, not just a way of making a living. You could find him among the kettles and vats in the brewery every day. Even on Sunday he would come in for several hours to check the aging beer, because beer is a living thing that must be looked after every minute until it is bottled.

He had the old-world philosophy that the head man in a brewery should be a brewmaster, first and foremost, rather than a salesman or a financier. And he himself was one of the greatest brewmasters this country has ever known.

He felt that brewing was an art, not a science. An art that you hand down to your children. Ever since I was a child, fifty years ago, he trained my brother and me to be able to take over the brewery some day.

Bob Welch, our sales manager, is also a graduate brewmaster. My eldest son, F. X. II, has already graduated from brewer's school. And my younger son, Kemper, has just started in brewer's school. Although our brewery employs around 500 people, it is still a family-run brewery.

Does all this trouble really pay?

People tell me that the world has changed. They tell me that there's no place in business any more for the old-fashioned craftsmanship.

Frankly, I sometimes wonder about it myself.

I sometimes wonder if it still pays to make beer the way we do. I sometimes wonder if we wouldn't be better off spending more time in the front office and less time in the brewery. I sometimes wonder if people really care any more about what goes into their beer, and the way it is brewed and aged.

But whether it makes business sense or not, I am going to keep making it the way I feel is the right way; the only way my father would have made it.



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