

HPC

RECEIVED

APR 03 2017

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TEMPORARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION PETITION

1. Name of Property: A. Gettelman Brewing Company (former)  
Address of Property: 4400 W. State St., Milwaukee, 53201  
Zip Code

2. Name and Address of Owner

Name: Milker/Coors

Street Address: P.O. Box 482

City: Milwaukee State: WI Zip Code: 53201

Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Area Code)

Applicant (if different from owner) David Boucher

Street Address: 1727 N. 34th St.

City: Milwaukee State: WI Zip Code: 53208

Daytime Phone Number: (414) 517-4398 Evening Phone Number 414-931-0587

3. Attachments

The following information is enclosed:

Exterior photographs or digital images (required)

Copy of newspaper notice of demolition permit application

Copy of Orders from the Department of Neighborhood Services

Other (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Legal Property Description

Attached.

5. **Description of Structure**

Number of stories: 1-3

**Wall cladding** (check each that apply)

Clapboard  Brick  Stucco  Stone  Wood Shingle  Terra Cotta   
Asphalt Siding  Asbestos Tile  Aluminum/Vinyl Siding  Artificial Stone   
Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Outstanding Features:

*Attached*

## 6. Significance

Areas of Significance:

<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> science	<input type="checkbox"/> theater	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)	

Date Built: 1854

Date Altered (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Builder/Architect: Unknown

Written Statement of Significance, including history of structure:  
(continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Attached.

7. Major Bibliographical References SEE ATTACHED

8. Form Prepared By:

Name: DAVID BOUCHER Date: 4/1/17

Address: 1727 N. 34TH STREET

City: MILWAUKEE State: WI Zip Code: 53208

Telephone: (414) 517-4348 (414) 934-0587

Signature: David Boucher

Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission  
Office of the City Clerk  
200 E. Wells Street Room B-4  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

414-286-5722

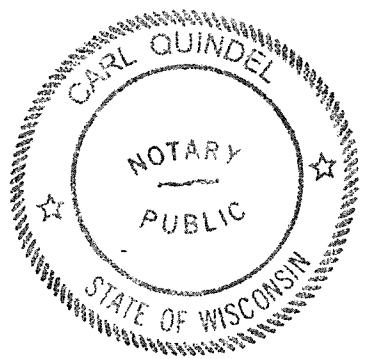
STATE OF WISCONSIN )  
 ) ss.

MILWAUKEE COUNTY )

Personally came before me this 1<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2017, David  
Boucher executing the foregoing instrument and acknowledged  
the same.

Carl Quindel

My commission expires on  
8-5-2019





**Anticipated Permit Issuance Date: 4/4/2017**

Date permit application received: 3/13/2017

SUBJECT: Building Address: 4400 W State St

Building Name or Owner: MillerCoors PO Box 482 Milwaukee WI 53201

Occupancy: 1-sty warehouse #56 & #57

Historical Area:\*

Year Built: 19??

Contractor's Name: Veit & Company Inc

Phone #: 414-702-2928

Address: 2445 S 179 St STE E New Berlin WI 53144

You are hereby notified that we have received an application for a permit to demolish the subject building. We will hold this application for 16 working days before a permit is issued. A check in the amount of \$ 331.55 for the structure must be submitted by you within 7 days prior to the anticipated issue date shown above. Also, all necessary documentation must be on record with the Condemnation Division prior to a permit being issued. No wrecking will be allowed until the permit is issued. If you have any questions regarding this notice please call the Development Center Tech Team at 414-286-8208.

The following parties are also being notified:

Alderperson Murphy

City Clerk's Office, City Hall Room 205

Historic Preservation Commission

Attn: Carlen Hatala

City Hall Room B-4

\*IF THIS BUILDING IS IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT YOU MUST APPLY FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS THROUGH HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Contractor: Veit & Company Inc

This advertisement has been sent to The Daily Reporter newspaper and the City's account will be billed.

Daily Reporter

P O Box 05902

Milwaukee WI 53205

Please run this notice shown below in the Daily Reporter for one (1) day as soon as possible and send us one (1) affidavit of publication and bill our account.

NOTICE PURSUANT TO SECTION 200-26-5 OF THE MILWAUKEE CODE OF ORDINANCES:

AN APPLICATION FOR A PERMIT FOR THE DEMOLITION OF 4400 W State St HAS BEEN RECEIVED ON 3/13/2017 BY THE CITY OF MILWAUKEE DEPARTMENT OF NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES.

CC: Condemnation Division

Plumbing Division

Mayor's Office

Cheryl May (DPW John Moxness)

Anthony Goodman, DNS

Martha Brown, DCD



## DESCRIPTION OF STRUCTURES

Two attached Cream City brick buildings are the oldest surviving original structures of the former A. Gettelman Brewing Company, located at 4400 W. State St. in Milwaukee. The buildings' foundations were laid in 1854 for a planned brewery, by two partners who both died in the cholera epidemic that year. The foundations appear to be locally quarried limestone blocks.

The smaller building has three sections, which are one and two stories with gabled roofs. It is believed to have been built circa 1856-57 as a residence for the George Schweickhart Family. It was used as such for many decades, before becoming brewery offices. There is an enclosed front porch, two entrances and many windows.

The larger structure is three stories high with a flat roof. It has at least three doorways. Some windows have been boarded up with wood or filled in with brick.

Beneath both building are intact underground lagering cellars, which are connected. Milwaukee brewing historian Leonard P. Jurgensen attests that they are the last viable brewing cellars in the city. They were standard in breweries built before mechanical refrigeration was introduced in 1880. These manufactured "caves" cooled beer naturally.

Some exterior brick shows typical darker coloration, while some brick appears to have been restored to its original cream color. Remnants of once-vigorous climbing vines cover much of both buildings. There are evergreen and deciduous plants in front of the smaller building. A walkway that formerly led to the street, which now abuts a retractable chain-link fence, connects to the front porch. The buildings are surrounded by a vast parking lot used for semi-trailers. To the southeast, a former brick bottling house is now an employee fitness center, with an adjacent parking lot.

## SIGNIFICANCE

The goal of this Temporary Historic Designation Petition is to allow the pursuit of a mutually beneficial path to preservation of Gettelman Brewery's earliest buildings. They are exceptionally significant as they have used the buildings as offices and more recently for storage. The site's historic cellars, originally used for cooling vaults, were transformed into a "rathskeller" in the 1930s and became a longtime hub of Milwaukee civic life.

Beer literally made Milwaukee structures and among the oldest that served Milwaukee's brewing history. The property is currently scheduled for demolition unless the Historic Preservation Commission grants a stay. If razed, a major site of Milwaukee's 19th-century brewing history will disappear, along with the 100-plus-year heritage of the Schweickhart-Gettelman family business that operated there until it was sold to Miller Brewing in 1961. The property has had significance in Milwaukee in the following areas: commerce, industry, exploration/settlement, architecture, communications (advertising and promotion), economics, invention, science, social/humanitarian.

### Miller

famous. The brewing industry epitomizes Milwaukee, long called "The Beer Capital of the World." The earliest brewery dates to 1840, six years before the city was incorporated. Breweries continue to thrive here. This brewing history deserves to be celebrated and tangible--now and for future generations. While some of that heritage has been preserved, much more has been demolished, especially relating to breweries outside the "Big Four" (Blatz, Miller, Pabst and Schlitz). Only Miller still has a major operation in Milwaukee; its executives work elsewhere.

A. Gettelman Brewing Company was one of Milwaukee's most prominent breweries (often ranked among the top seven), a century-long economic and civic anchor, and an esteemed family-owned business. The brewery carved out a niche as a regional brewer and highlighted that focus through clever advertising and brand-identity efforts. In turn, the company's contributions helped define Milwaukee's character and identity. Members of the Gettelman Family still reside in Milwaukee County.

The following are aspects of the Gettelman property's historic significance:

- Work on the buildings' foundations began in 1854, eight years after Milwaukee was founded. The oldest structure was completed in 1856.
- What are believed to be Milwaukee's only surviving "underground lagering cellars" are beneath both buildings. Such naturally cool vaults were an industry standard prior to the introduction of refrigeration in 1880. The cellars, transformed into a "rathskeller" in the 1930s, were a longtime hub of civic life.
- The smaller building served variously as the Schweickarts' and Gettelmans' residence, Gettelman offices, and the brewery's public reception area.
- In 1895, a railroad spur was connected to the brewery property. Securing an extension of the railroad to that vicinity is a collaborative effort by both Gettelman and Miller breweries.

- In 1898, the Gettelman Brewery got connected to the City of Milwaukee water supply via a 6-inch pipe and was no longer dependent on spring or well water. The new water line is one of the first extended outside of Milwaukee's city limits and is shared by both Miller and Gettelman breweries, the result of another collaborative effort.
- The larger building served varied brewing functions, including as a malt house, and was converted to offices in 1948.
- Starting in the post-Prohibition period, the cellars were used as a *Sternewirth*/reception room. It was full of antiques, many from the brewery's early days. Gettelman family members "whitewashed" the curved walls of the vault to create a rathskeller (German for "council's cellar").
- Gustave Pabst, Jr., paid tribute to Fritz Gettelman in an undated article for an "early" *Brewery Journal*. He wrote: "The rathskeller is like Fritz, like the whole works. *Gemuetlich* it is, like the old back bars of 40 years ago..."
- The rathskeller was a gathering place for the Gettelmans' associates, including the Harleys and Davidsons, and weekly conclaves of members of the "Five O'Clock Club," which also became a Gettelman beer brand.
- Gettelman Brewery gained renown for more than beer. Ben Barbera, curator of the Milwaukee County Historical Society, recently told the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* that Frederick "Fritz" Gettelman, Jr. designed an efficient all-steel beer keg and sold the manufacturing/distribution rights to A.O. Smith in 1933. Its wide center ring afforded easy rolling.
- Fritz, a gifted engineer and inventor, also designed the "Gettelman snowplow," bottling and pasteurizing innovations including a "disposable beer bottle" in 1949, the first in the nation, and other brewing advancements.
- Gettelman was the first American brewery to import and distribute a foreign beer--the premium German Tucher brand--in 1959.
- The brewery used innovative advertising and won many awards for its labels and promotions. It was reportedly first to advertise in Milwaukee on commercial television--in 1947--and on city bus exteriors in 1958.
- One promotion, started in 1891, offered \$1000 to anyone who could prove that Gettelman used anything beyond water, hops and barley malt to produce their pure beer--at a time when beer additives were becoming common. No one ever succeeded in doing so and Gettelman drew attention to the campaign with their popular "\$1000 Beer."
- Gettelman employed a "cute advertising stunt," according to a 1952 article in *Pageant Magazine*. They had "found that all choice ad space was taken--leaving only walls that were broken up by windows, drainpipes and cluttered yards. So it commissioned artist Elton Grafft to make its uninhibited trademark 'Fritzie' at home in cramped quarters." One popular and memorable 1950s' advertising slogan was "Get...Get...Gettelman." Other light-hearted Fritzie scenes suggested "Let's have a Beer!" Fritzie also graced a "Welcome Home General MacArthur" billboard.
- Gettelman's also used labels and ads for public-service advertising to encourage voter registration and to promote local events, which they could do as regional, rather than national, brewers.

## Summary of Schweickhart-Gettelman History

Separate unpublished research by Milwaukee brewing historian Leonard J. Jurgensen, and architectural historian Susan K. Appel of Champaign, Illinois, has chronicled the brewery's history in great detail. Gettelman's first building originated on the site two years prior before Frederick Miller purchased the nearby Plank Road Brewery. In 1856, the unfinished buildings, which had stood idle for about two years, were acquired by George Schweickhart (originally "Schweickhardt") who completed construction and began brewing operations the same year. After he finished the main brewery building, he built the brick two-story attached residence. During construction, he and his family lived in a small log cabin on the three-acre property. George Schweickhart used the name Schweickhart Brewery and also "Menomonee Brewery."

After Schweickhart plant foreman Adam Gettelman married Schweickhart's daughter Magdalena in 1870, he bought an interest in the brewery within a year. (Gettelman was born in 1847 in Washington County, and began working at another Milwaukee brewery at age 16. His father, Peter Gettelmann, an early pioneer in Wisconsin, came from Hesse-Darmstadt, Germany in 1837 to Washington County.) Another Schweickhart son-in-law briefly owned an interest in the brewery, starting in 1874, but was bought out by Gettelman in 1876, according to *A History of the A. Gettelman Brewing Company* by Nancy Moore Gettelman (1995). It was renamed A. Gettelman Brewing Company around 1876 after Adam fully took over operations.

The residence survived a disastrous fire in 1877. George Schweickhart was reportedly still living there. The brewery gradually expanded. The federal survey in 1888-89 reports that the Gettelman Brewery was comprised of ten buildings, many of which were connected. The brewery was then powered by 2 boilers and 2 engines and was reported to have 23 male employees.

All except these two extant buildings and a circa-1939 bottling house have been demolished since the brewery was acquired by Miller Brewery in 1961.

The two lagering cellars could jointly hold 800 barrels of beer. The brewery had an annual capacity of brewing about 1,500 barrels. Jurgensen, who has researched every brewing operation in Metro Milwaukee, believes the Gettelman cellars are among the last in the city. The only other known lagering cellars are beneath the Falk Brewery, which has been deemed beyond repair and is scheduled for demolition. (Miller Brewery's "historic caves" are built into the side of a huge hill, with no structure above them.)

In contrast to the Falk Brewery, the much-smaller Gettelman surviving buildings remain "sound and sturdy," according to Jurgensen and others who have toured the property. Even after 20 years of serving only as storage, they are intact. Thus, they could be constructively re-purposed in numerous ways to benefit the current owner, or a tenant, while preserving unique aspects of Milwaukee's brewing legacy.

The Gettelman brewery remained focused on serving the local and statewide community, not a national market. The Schweickhart-Gettelman Family executives were also active in Milwaukee's civic life, in addition to conducting diversified economic ventures. Founder Schweickhart started a stone quarry on Hawley Road after he turned over brewery operations to his son-in-law and family members were involved in the West Bank.

Frederick “Fritz” Gettelman Jr. contributed to the local economy and to the advancement of brewing and other fields through his many inventions and scientific explorations, including in pasteurization of beer and milk. The Schweickharts and Gettelmans were “long-time friendly neighbors,” including of the Miller Family down the road. They helped to found early bank and fire department. In collaboration with the Millers, they enlisted the first city-water hook-up and railroad spur to serve the area.

In 1948, the need for larger offices led to renovating the old malt house into offices, including the part that was originally the first Gettelman homestead. Its living room became the office reception room, with walls paneled with cypress from old beer storage tanks. Nancy Moore Gettelman wrote in 1954 that “Fritz inaugurated this, but insisted on keeping his office in the second story room in which he had been born and from which had come many of his ideas on the humble brown butcher paper be left inviolate-- and so it has been, to this day.”

**Note from Petitioner David Boucher:**

Although I have never been inside of the Gettelman building, I have heard about it from my neighbors, customers and others who fondly remember visits there, Gettelman beer products (including “Milwaukee’s Best” beer, still produced by Miller) and their memorable ads. Gettelman’s was clearly a long-time positive force within my West Side neighborhood and Greater Milwaukee.

It’s my hope that a temporary and subsequent long-term historic designation will enable creative thinking and discussions about potential ways to preserve, celebrate and capitalize on this irreplaceable heritage-- while also meeting Miller/Coors’ business goals. I am among numerous community members who will gladly assist in such solution-seeking discussions.

During the past 10 years Milwaukee has lost the historic Gipfel Brewery, the Ogden Avenue Brewery, the Obermann/Jung Brewery (the three oldest then-standing brewery structures in the city) and the spectacular Schlitz 1890 Brew House. We must make a valiant effort to save what little is left of Gettelman’s priceless brewing structures. They have been the site of so many significant events and contributions to Milwaukee’s life and economy—and are well poised to do so again. I urge the Historic Preservation Commission to approve a Temporary Historic Designation for the A. Gettelman Brewery.

*Note: A detailed unpublished timeline of the brewery’s history by Leonard P. Jurgensen is attached as an addendum, along with other supporting documents.*

## REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

*Milwaukee Industrial Properties Intensive Survey*, Prepared for Wisconsin Historical Society by Mead & Hunt ([www.meadhunt.com](http://www.meadhunt.com)) <http://www.wisconsinhistory.org/pdfs/hp/Milwaukee-Industrial-Intensive-Survey.pdf>

## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

A. Gettelman Brewing, *Century of Brewing, 1854-1954: The A. Gettelman Brewing Company*. Milwaukee (company brochure) 1954. <http://www.beerhistory.com/library/holdings/gettelman1954.shtml>

Apps, Jerry. Breweries of Wisconsin. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Jim Draeger and Mark Speltz, *Bottoms Up: A Toast to Wisconsin's Historic Bars & Breweries* (Madison, Wis.: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, n.d.), 188.

Gettelman, Nancy Moore. *The A. Gettelman Brewing Company: One Hundred and Seven Years of a Family Brewery in Milwaukee*. Milwaukee: Procrustes Press, 1995.

John Gurda, *Miller Time: A History of Miller Brewing Company, 1855-2005* (Milwaukee, Wis: Miller Brewing Company, 2005), 1, 15, 24–25, 50, 76.

Walzer, Joseph B., *A. Gettelman Brewing Company*, *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*, 2016.

<https://emke.uwm.edu/entry/a-gettelman-brewing-company/>

United Press International, “Milwaukee Loses ‘Beer Capital’ Title As Breweries Shut Off Tap: Corporate Raids Remove Fizz From Once-bubbling Business,” April 1, 1985.

[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-04-01/business/8501180549\\_1\\_milwaukee-brewing-beer-capital-beer-barons](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/1985-04-01/business/8501180549_1_milwaukee-brewing-beer-capital-beer-barons)

## **Legal Description**

<http://assessments.milwaukee.gov/>

Account Nr	Premise Address	Doing Business As (DBA)	Business Codes
94258001	4400 W STATE ST	MILLER BREWING CO.	D 3 BW

Owner Names Mailing (Billing) Address

MILLER BREWING CO. 3939 W HIGHLAND BL

MILWAUKEE, WI 53201

Related RE KeyRelated PP Keys      Taxable Assessment      Exempt Assessment

3860202200 Parent Curr.Yr N/A N/A

Prev.Yr 0 0

Current Year Account Status

Initial Rollover

### A. Gettelman Brewing Company

By Joseph B. Walzer, *Encyclopedia of Milwaukee*

The A. Gettelman Brewing Company (1856-1961) was one of Milwaukee's major industrial brewers. Although remaining a mid-sized brewer among the city's giants, Gettelman was an important innovator of beer packaging and advertising and a significant acquisition in the expansion of the Miller Brewing Company.

The Gettelman Brewing Company originated as George Schweickhart's Menomonee Brewery, established near what is now 44th and State Streets in 1856. Coming from an established brewing family in Mühlhausen, Alsace, Schweickhart purchased a half-built brewery started by Strohn and Reitzenstein, who had both died in a cholera epidemic two years earlier. The brewery's location in the Menomonee River Valley west of Milwaukee provided ideal access to clean water from nearby Wauwatosa wells, ice from the river, natural caves for storage cellars, and hops and barley from surrounding farms, while still maintaining easy access to Milwaukee and surrounding towns via the old Watertown Plank Road and later railroad connections.

In 1871, Schweickhart brought Adam Gettelman on as a partner in his brewery. Gettelman was an apprentice at the brewery who had married Schweickhart's daughter in 1870. In 1874, Schweickhart sold off his portion to his son-in-law, Charles Schuckmann, whom Gettelman later bought out to become sole owner of the brewery in 1876. Officially named the A. Gettelman Brewing Company in 1887, the Gettelman family remained in control of the brewery for three generations, until it was sold in 1961.

Fire destroyed a significant portion of the original brewery in 1877, and Gettelman rebuilt and updated their facilities. Gettelman kept the brewery relatively small—just big enough for the family to manage and maintain a high quality product. In 1891, Gettelman introduced its flagship

“\$1,000 Beer” brand, offering a \$1,000 reward to anyone who could prove that it was made with anything other than pure barley malt and hops. Gettelman also introduced its popular “Milwaukee’s Best” brand in 1895.

Gettelman survived Prohibition making “near beer” and through several different investments outside of brewing, like the West Side Savings Bank, the development and manufacturing of snow plows, gold-mining in the American Southwest, and a sugar beet processing plant in Menomonee Falls. Gettelman returned to brewing in 1933, with Frederick “Fritz” Gettelman as president.

In order to counteract barrel shortages as brewing resumed, Frederick Gettelman personally designed the first practical steel keg in 1933, manufactured by the A.O. Smith Company of Milwaukee. Shortly after, he also consulted with the American and Continental Can Companies on how to apply his design to the development of what became known as the “keg-lined” beer can. In the late 1930s, he developed new glass-lined storage tanks, also manufactured by A.O. Smith, and a more efficient bottle-washing machine.

The company introduced a new eight-ounce beer bottle labeled “Fritzie” in 1946, inspired by heinzelmännchen, the house gnomes of German folklore. By 1952, Fritzie had evolved into a cartoon beer bottle with a rotund face and Tyrolean hat that was famously featured in different humorous scenes painted on the exterior walls of several Milwaukee taverns. Moreover, the company became an important pioneer in television advertising in Milwaukee, sponsoring televised wrestling matches in 1947, and World Series pre-game shows in 1949.

Gettelman Brewing also made major investments in modernizing and expanding their operations in the 1950s. They entered the Chicago, Boston, California, and other regional and national markets as they briefly opened in the wake of industry consolidation. Gettelman released a new, lighter “Milwaukee” brand beer in 1956, and began importing and distributing Tucher beer from Nuremberg, Germany in 1959—the first American brewer to establish such a relationship.

Nevertheless, the company was unable to continue competing with the national giants, and the Gettelman family sold the brewery to the neighboring Miller Brewing Company in 1961. The Gettelman plant and brand continued on with brothers Tom Gettelman and Frederick Gettelman, Jr. as plant managers until Miller formally merged the two operations in 1971.

Elements of the Gettelman brewery remain part of the Miller Brewing Company complex, and its Milwaukee’s Best brand lives on in Miller’s portfolio.

## Sources

Apps, Jerry. Breweries of Wisconsin. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

Gettelman, Nancy Moore. The A. Gettelman Brewing Company: One Hundred and Seven Years of a Family Brewery in Milwaukee. Milwaukee: Procrustes Press, 1995.

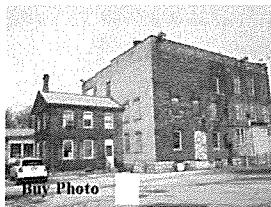
The Distant Mirror (website), Chronicling Milwaukee's Historic Breweries (posted May 6, 2011)  
"Legacies of Milwaukee Brewing Westside Tour"

<https://distantmirror.wordpress.com/2011/05/06/chronicling-milwaukees-historic-breweries/>



# MillerCoors to demolish historic Gettelman brewery building

**Kathy Flanagan, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** Published 1:46 p.m. CT March 24, 2017 | Updated 8:25 p.m. CT March 24, 2017



(Photo: Michael Sears/Milwaukee Journal Sentinel)

Goodbye, old brewery. You were Milwaukee's Best.

[Fullscreen](#)

You brewed Milwaukee's Best, anyway.

## Photos: Gettelman Brewery to be demolished

The last surviving building from the old Gettelman Brewery, established on Milwaukee's west side in 1856, is being demolished. MillerCoors owns the 19th-century building where Gettelman once brewed \$1000 Beer and Milwaukee's Best.

The plan is to turn the site into a staging area for truck transit.

Gettelman never cracked the top four of nationally known Milwaukee breweries; Miller, Pabst, Blatz and Schlitz took those spots.

But Gettelman wasn't any less innovative.

The brewery produced and sold beer. But it also made snowplows. It is where Fritz Gettelman invented the steel keg in 1933. The brewery promised \$1,000 to anyone who could prove that Gettelman didn't use anything but pure malt, hops and water.

"Chemists all over the country tried in vain to collect the \$1,000," said Ben Barbera, curator and operations manager at the Milwaukee County Historical Society, who pulled the files for the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

The once ivy-covered building at the western edge of the MillerCoors campus on State St. is across the street from the MillerCoors Visitor Center and directly across the parking lot from the brewery's clinic. The Gettelman building has been mostly empty for the last two decades — used occasionally for law enforcement SWAT team training (proof is in the pink splatters marking a missed target).

But it still holds memories.

"I went to Wauwatosa schools and a couple times a week I would walk to the brewery after school to get a ride home with Dad," said Frederick L. Gettelman, whose father, Fred W. Gettelman, was a brewmaster, chairman of the board and executive vice president for the brewery.

"I had the run of the place. I loved the brewing and the smell of cooking barley and hops," he said. "After that, the bottle house was exciting because of the noise and activity."

Miller Brewing bought Gettelman in 1961 and operated it as a stand-alone brewery until about 1970, when production was folded into the rest of the Miller Valley campus, said Erik Brooks, spokesman for MillerCoors. The building was used for brewery engineering offices and as the sales and marketing offices of the Plank Road Brewery, which marketed Icehouse and Red Dog. The offices were abandoned in the 1990s.

Five years ago, MillerCoors added a metal sign to the outside of the building. It spelled Gettelman wrong and was replaced by a new one that spelled the name correctly.

There isn't much to save inside the empty building — a few of the office doors have been marked for auction. The Gettelman family has requested some of the brick, grayed with weather.

There is no power inside and the water was shut off long ago. Newspapers are strewn on a bathroom floor, and the crunch of broken glass bounces off empty walls. The warehouse is more spare, less littered. Down a flight of stairs are the cellars — one of them a wide rathskeller with an arched ceiling, refurbished for the 1937 convention of the Master Brewers of America, according to the book "A History of A. Gettelman Brewing Company."

They used to hold meetings there at 5 p.m. each Friday. The Five O'Clock Club was open to men only.

Gettelman started life at the Menominee Brewery in 1856 when George Schweickhart purchased the land. In 1870, Adam Gettelman married Schweickhart's daughter and in 1871, bought a share of the brewery. By 1887, Gettelman had full control of the brewery and ran it — with his name on it — until his death in 1925, Barbera wrote in an email.

In 1934, Frederick "Fritz" Gettelman took over. He was "something of an engineer and designed a steel beer keg, the rights of which he sold to A.O. Smith immediately after Prohibition," Barbera wrote. "Fritz also designed a snowplow that the Gettelman brewery sold during Prohibition."

The brewery, known for its slogan "Get-Get-Gettelman," was among the first in the city to advertise on television. Gettelman sponsored wrestling matches at the Eagles Club in 1947, Barbera said.

A labor strike in 1953 hurt the company financially. When Fritz Gettelman died in 1954, his son Tom took over the brewery with his brother Fred as chairman of the board, Barbera said. Fred and Tom Gettelman sold the brewery to Miller Brewing in 1961, according to archives at the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

The brewery building, last of what was once a large complex that included the Gettelman family home, is expected to be demolished in the next two weeks.

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A good book...



Pabst Brewing Company: History of an American Business by Thomas C. Cochran Price: \$24.45

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► [BeerBooks.com](http://BeerBooks.com)

Antique Beer Photos:



Dozens of prints available in a variety of sizes up to 40x50.

Get More Info At  
► [BeerBooks.com](http://BeerBooks.com)

## A Century of Brewing, 1854-1954: The A. Gettelman Brewing Company. (Company brochure, 1954.)

Gettelman pic in the Photo Gallery:  
... Photo: A. Gettelman Brewing Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

OBSCURE as might seem the relationship between a cholera epidemic and the origin of a brewery, no one recording the history of the A. Gettelman Brewing Co. can over-look the fact that if it had not been for the former the latter might never have existed -- or, at least, not as it is known today.

Around the middle of the nineteenth century, two men known as Strohn and Reitzenstein bought a three-acre tract of land on the old Watertown Plank Road in a village west of Milwaukee then called Center City. Even in that early year, the seed of the reputation Milwaukee was to gain as the world's beer capital was beginning to show signs of germination. The predominantly Germanic strain of its population probably had something to do with it, but the real reason was the same then as it is today -- its proximity to a limitless supply of water ideally suited for brewing good beer.

There was at least one other important consideration that led the Messrs. Strohn and Reitzenstein to select the spot they did -- the fact that it was close to the Menominee River from which ice might be harvested to supply the all-important refrigeration.

But, despite their canny judgment in the choice of a site for their brewery and all their plans for its construction and operation, the two men were never to see their dream materialize. Both were cut down by the cholera epidemic then ravaging the country at a time when their project had advanced no further than the excavation stage.

Meanwhile, the word that Milwaukee was an ideal spot for brewing beer had reached as far east as Buffalo, New York. One of its citizens, a brewmaster by the name of George Schweickhardt, heard it and, with his brother, made the trip west to investigate. They came across the excavation on the Watertown Plank Road. Like the men who had first chosen it, the Schweickhardt brothers knew a good spot when they saw one and it was not long before the structure which today forms part of the A. Gettelman Brewing Co. began to take shape.

The problem the Schweickhardts faced was not merely one of building their brewery and selling its product to an eagerly awaiting public. Even then competition in the beer business was keen. There were about 15 other breweries in and around Milwaukee vieing for the favor of the great Milwaukee beer palate. It was then, as it is now, a question of survival of the fittest.

In time, however, the brewing know-how George Schweickhardt had accumulated in New York and, before that, as a brewer and wine-maker in his native Alsace began to pay off. With the disappearance of the weaker of his competitors and passage of the years, it became evident that the Menominee Brewery -- as it was then called -- would take its rightful place in the great family of breweries that was to make Milwaukee a by-word wherever beer drinkers gather.

For anyone accustomed to highly organized metropolitan Milwaukee, the thirteenth largest city in the nation, it is difficult to imagine the rugged conditions existing when the A. Gettelman Brewing Company was in its early formative stages.

Little similarity can be found for example between State street, today one of the city's most heavily traveled thoroughfares, and the old Watertown Plank Road which, at one time, was the brewery's only avenue to the Milwaukee market. Perhaps no one intimately connected with the brewery remembers this state of affairs more poignantly than "Uncle" Charlie Schmidt, veteran employee and secretary of the company at the time of his retirement in 1950. "The Watertown Plank Road . . . was a dirt road subject to heavy travel by wagons hauling stone from the stone quarries nearby," Uncle Charlie writes in his memoirs. "Extensive travel on this road resulted in six inches of fine dust in dry weather and a like amount of mud when it rained. From the Miller Brewing Co. to our plant was a walk consisting of two 12-inch planks side by side. Even so, we often had to wear rubber boots for there was still plenty of mud to walk through."

In those days, according to Uncle Charlie, the trip from the brewery up the hill to 35th Street was a task for only the stout of heart. So arduous was the ascent, in fact, that the team of horses starting to pull a wagon loaded with 35 to 40 half barrels had to be augmented about half way up the hill by an additional team.

As though just traversing this road was not painful enough, travelers entering the city were forced to pay a fee at a toll gate located a block west of the brewery.

### **There Was a Bright Side**

But all was not hardship for those who shared their youth with that of the A. Gettelman Brewing Company. In striding toward its destiny, a city often tramples underfoot some of its inherent natural charm. The Menominee River, now sullied by the wash from heavy industry, was once a fisherman's dream. Just west of the brewery the river was dammed up to make a reservoir for winter ice-cutting operations. In the spring of the year, when the water was high, pike, pickerel and suckers came up the river to spawn -- and to fall prey to the fishermen along its banks. What fish -- particularly suckers -- the farmers couldn't eat they boiled thoroughly and used for hog-feed.

As was mentioned before, protecting the beer against the extreme temperatures prevailing in this part of the country was a major problem. Refrigeration as we know it today was not even in the dream stage and the methods of keeping the beer cool in summer and warm in winter bordered on the bizarre by present day standards. About the year 1878, Gettelman had two ice house branches, one located at 14th and Highland and the other at S. 10th and Walker. Every afternoon, Gettelman's two beer peddlers -- Biegler and Hartzheim by name -- would get their day's load of beer from the brewery and haul it to the ice house assigned to their use. There they would unload it, store it overnight, and load it up the next morning to be delivered to their customers.

### **Tough on Country Drivers**

The rigors of those handling the beer in the city was nothing however, compared to those with which the country peddlers were confronted daily. Two men, a Henry Stadler and a Bill Dienberg, covered, between them, Elm Grove, Brookfield, New Berlin, Butler, Fussville and Menominee Falls. Though this would be considered an extremely limited area today, it took the two men a full 12-hour day to make deliveries. And this does not take into consideration the time it took them to load up in the morning, and to feed and clean their horses at night. As compensation for their efforts, each man received a cool \$45 per month.

### **Close Employee Association**

But the lack of transportation facilities and personal conveniences which worked such great hardships on early brewery employees made for a close association between them which belongs only to the past. Since most of the early employees of the Menominee Brewery were single, they lived and boarded on brewery premises. A large room was provided for sleeping quarters and what is now the office reception room served as a dining area. The task of serving the men their meals fell to Mr. Schweickhardt's daughter and a full day's job it was. Breakfast was at 6 a.m., lunch at 9, dinner at 12 and supper at 6 p.m.

As Magdelana Schweickhardt hustled around the groaning board matching the supply of good German home-cooked victuals to the hearty appetites of the boarders, she was regarded with special interest by a man whose natural leadership qualities had won for him the position of brewery foreman. As day followed day, the friendship between Magdelana Schweickhardt and her father's foreman ripened and eventually culminated in marriage. That was in 1870 and the day was a fateful one for the Menominee Brewery for the man Magdelana married was Adam Gettelman who was later to give his name to the company as it is known today.

By the year 1870, the brewery which Strohn and Reitzenstein had begun about 18 years before had grown into a vigorous young business. The brewing lore that George Schweickhardt had learned in his former brewery at Buffalo plus the increasing demands of a robust and thirsty Milwaukee populace had put the business on a sound financial footing and made it a force to reckon with on the competitive market.

Jointly guiding its destiny until 1876 were George Schweickhardt and his son-in-law Adam Gettelman. In that year, the senior partner of the firm left the brewing business to devote his full time to a stone quarry on the Hawley Road of which he was half-owner. The move left the youthful Adam Gettelman to conduct the affairs of the brewery by himself.

The next year -- 1877 -- was a trying one for the new proprietor and everyone associated with the brewery. About noon of October 30 fire struck the brewery buildings and caused more than \$31,000 damage before it was finally brought under control.

A good idea of the journalism of the day can be gained from the story of the catastrophe carried by the Milwaukee Sentinel the next day. It read, in part: "Yesterday noon a man rode in on horseback post-haste, over the Watertown Plank Road, to secure the services of the fire department. The brewery of Adam Gettelman & Co. in the Menominee Valley, about half a mile northwest of Fred Miller's Brewery, had taken fire and would be reduced to ashes if the city authorities failed to honor his call for assistance. The

beer that smacked of the good old days.

Consequently, the little brewery on the old Watertown Plank Road never loomed as a Titan among others of its kind, nor does it to this day. But, in staying small, it retained the warmth and "family feeling" it had in the days when Magdelena Schweickhardt -- later the bride of Adam Gettelman -- served steaming hot "vittles" to the brewery's jovial worker-residents.

Despite the fact that the "drys" had tapped off most of the gemuetlichkeit from Gettelman's satisfying old brew, the suds-sipping citizenry of Milwaukee remained loyal.

As if bowing out after he was assured of that fact, Adam Gettelman died in 1925. For the next four years, the affairs of the brewery were guided by Adam's eldest son, William, who at the same time, succeeded his father as president of the West Side Bank which the latter had founded.

The cohesiveness and general esprit de corps with which Adam Gettelman, in his wisdom, had inoculated his company began paying real dividends with the coming of prohibition in 1919. While breweries made of blander stuff withered away under the arid provisions of the Eighteenth Amendment, Gettelman tightened its belt and turned its attention to the manufacture of "near beer" and malt syrup.

As in the case of every other brewery that lived through those trying times, Gettelman was compelled to cut back drastically on its working force. Brewmaster Julius Stemmler headed a crew consisting of Conrad Gieger, John Haertl, William Pust, William Dienberg and chief engineer Louis Gettelman. In those days, even the office force was not exempt from plant duty. It was not at all unusual for "Uncle" Charlie Schmidt, Fred Englehardt and Charlie Mollenhauer to don working clothes and pitch in when the brew reached the bottling stage. According to memoirs set down by Uncle Charlie, though, his biggest job was "to look out of the windows and count the number of automobiles passing by."

While all this was going on, the driver's seat of the brewery was occupied by three of the Gettelman clan -- first Adam, then William, and in 1929, the rosy-cheeked Fred.

In almost every family circle there's one child that stands apart from the others -- not necessarily better or worse, but somehow different in a way that sometimes challenges description. Of all the children reared by Adam and Magdelana Gettelman in the big house on the hill overlooking the brewery, the cherubic Fritzy perhaps fitted that description more than any of the others. He shared in the heritage of good common sense handed down to him by his mother and father and their folks before them, but his had overtones of the dreamer. It was, however, flavored by a certain sharp inquisitiveness and compulsion to create that forced him to do something about his dreams rather than leave them in the air-castle stage. The same quality that caused an elastic band to appear one day on the screen doors of the Gettelman mansion so that they might shut of themselves, introduced to the beer-making world in later years the steel keg with the broad band around the middle for easy rolling. The idea for the steel keg came out of Fred's dusty and venerable old "private engineering office" located in the building in which he had been born. It first saw light of day on a piece of "brown butcher paper," Fred's favorite method of putting his thoughts in tangible form. Shortly after Fred had promised exclusive manufacturing rights to L. R. Smith of the A. O. Smith Corp., an Eastern firm offered him \$1,000,000 for the same rights. But Fred had given his word and the Eastern representative went home with an unsigned contract. Manufacture of the steel barrels is now a major item on the A. O. Smith schedule.

The spirit of not being quite satisfied with things as they were stayed with him the whole of his life. At seven Fred fitted the family baby buggy out with brakes and, with gravity as his engine, went whizzing down the decline from the house on the hill to the Watertown Plank Road far below. Much later in life he invented the Gettelman snow plow, pasteurizers for beer and milk, a washer that cleaned beer bottles with a jet of steam and a host of other things, many of which are still on brown butcher paper and will perhaps never get beyond that stage. He even played a major role in perfection of the huge glass-lined storage tanks for beer now a common sight on any brewery property.

But, though he owned as many patents as many a full-time inventor, dreaming up things to make life easier only occupied part of Fred's time. There was a practical, everyday business side to him, too. He felt deeply his responsibility to the brewery and its employees. In a way, he had the toughest row to hoe of any of his predecessors. Not only was the brewery laboring under the yoke of prohibition, but the very year that Fred took up the reins -- 1929 -- the bottom fell out of things economically. There was indeed many a time during those black days that Fred's indomitable will was the only light that pierced the darkness.

The years following repeal of Prohibition were, for Gettelman as for all of Milwaukee's breweries, full of growth and development. The thirst of the true beer-drinker, never completely quenched by poor substitutes concocted in private cellars, skyrocketed the fortunes of the brewing industry to unprecedented heights.

But no situation, however favorable, is without its attendant dangers. With a public eager to drink anything under a brewer's label the temptation was rife in brewing circles to cut corners on quality. Some

excited rider reined in his perspiring horse before the house of No.5 and thence word was telegraphed to headquarters. 'Fire beyond the city limits -- shall we run the steamer?' was the announcement. The code would not admit of a more satisfactory message. Chief Lippert hitched his gray horse in a twinkling and drove off as if the very Nick had taken to the road in the rear, and soon answered the telegraph in person. The steamer was ordered out, Supply Hose No. 1 was telegraphed for and with all due speed the burning buildings were reached."

The story goes on to relate how heroically the firemen labored to save the brewery as well as the home of Mr. Schweickhardt to the south of the burning buildings and the two-story brick ice-house to the north. Concerning the fire-fighters' valiant efforts, the article had this to say: "Engineer Dusoldt kept his steamer steadily at work, and so evenly that there was no bursting of hose to interrupt the service. All the firemen labored with a will that reflected a credit on the service and gained them the praise of all on the grounds. The steamer of the National Home had been sent for, but, owing to some misunderstanding, the veterans failed to appear. The Milwaukeeans were obliged to fight the fire alone, and right royally did they charge upon and subdue it."

### Brewery Suffers Financially

Despite the vigor with which the fire-eating stalwarts "did charge upon and subdue" the blaze it consumed enough of the Gettelman property to burn a sizable hole in the brewery's bank account since the loss was only about half covered by insurance.

Despite everything, though, a news item appearing in the *Sentinel* of November 3, 1877 -- only a few days after the fire -- stated that contracts were being let by the brewery for reconstruction.

With completion of the rebuilding program, the A. Gettelman Brewing Company continued its steady march toward popular favor. Keeping pace with the growth of the brewery was the family of Adam and Magdelana Gettelman. In 1884 a son, William, was born to them followed three years later by Fred and Elfrieda. In later years, William was to become president of the West Side Bank founded and headed until 1925 by his father. Fred stayed on with the brewery to inherit its presidency and make himself a symbol of the brewing industry in Milwaukee and everywhere Gettelman beer was consumed.

### \$1,000 Beer Introduced

It was Adam Gettelman, however, who started the famous "\$1,000 Natural Process" on its way to the high esteem it enjoys today. In 1891, Gettelman advertising started carrying an offer of \$1,000 to anyone able to prove that Gettelman's premium beer was brewed with anything but pure malt, hops and water. This occurred in a day when the brewing industry in general was swinging to substitute ingredients. Chemists all over the country made a play for the \$1,000 but, to this day, no one has ever been able to claim it.

Also carrying the \$1,000 reward was Gettelman's "Hospital Tonic" introduced in 1892. Backed by the recommendation of the medical profession, the new tonic plummeted to popularity on the wings of its especial value to nursing mothers. The "Hospital Tonic" no longer graces the shelves of the nation's drugstores -- due, probably, to advent of scientifically prepared baby formulas and increased tempo of modern day existence.

### Gettelman Spur Built

By the year 1895, Gettelman's production had soared to the point where it was no longer feasible to haul the beer by wagon to the railroad situated on the shores of Lake Michigan. Accordingly, a spur from the Milwaukee Road mainline was run into the brewery yard. This was a momentous event in the life of the brewery, a milestone in its progress. It was no more than fitting, therefore, that the occasion be marked by a celebration of major proportions.

And so it was. On April 13, 1895, a huge crowd gathered on the Gettelman grounds to watch Adam Gettelman drive the "golden" spike that would signal completion of the spur. While Hensler's Juvenile Band spiritedly played "How Dry I Am" and the crowd cheered enthusiastically, Adam started pounding away at the spike. About half way through the operation, one of the on-lookers --William Starke by name -- asking Adam to stop, placed a nickel on the flange of the rail so the imbedded spike might hold it there. "Here's the nickel," he said, "for a good glass of beer."

As the last stroke of Adam Gettelman's mallet was still ringing in the air, the first car was shunted into the siding. It was a beer car filled with official well-wishers from the Miller Brewing Company, two blocks away. Together, Gettelman officials, Miller officials and a hundred or so thirsty bystanders tramped into Gettelman's bottle house to get down to some serious suds-slurping. The day was a decided success.

Lying between the turn of the century and the beginning of the Prohibition era were years of growth and development for the A. Gettelman Brewing Company. In the 50-odd years of its existence, Gettelman beer had become as much a part of the Milwaukee scene as its culinary counterpart wieners and sauerkraut -- and as dear to the heart of every true Milwaukeean. In the face of an increasingly active market with that exacting taskmaster Production rapidly ascending to power, Adam Gettelman serenely guided his brewery along the path of quality brewing. While other breweries spread their supply lines to the four corners of the land, Adam was content with providing his Milwaukee friends with the kind of

breweries did just that and paid for their lack of foresight with extinction when the public's first enthusiasm no longer clouded its powers of discrimination.

Fred Gettelman, Sr., however, had piloted his brewery through the difficult days of depression and prohibition and he had no intention of jeopardizing everything he and his employees had worked so hard to preserve. Consequently, Gettelman beer, while not breaking any production records, held to the same fine quality upon which its pre-prohibition reputation had been built and the brewery came through safely.

The A. Gettelman Brewing Company first began to show signs of the new post-prohibition prosperity in 1937 with construction of an addition to the old bottle-house. An 80 x 110 foot structure, the building was twice the size of the building it annexed. Cream-colored bricks salvaged from the old Gettelman mansion atop the hill overlooking the brewery went into the construction of its walls and the bottling equipment it housed was modernity itself. In fact, Fritz Gettelman had had a hand in the improvement of the bottle washer installed in the new bottle house. It was he who had dreamed up and perfected the idea of cleaning the bottles with high pressure steam and water. So efficient was the equipment in the ultra modern bottle shop that Gettelman was able to show figures proving that breakage on bottles of all makes and ages ran only .442 per cent of total bottles handled.

In addition to the modern machinery on the ground floor the bottle shop boasted a battery of glass-lined storage tanks in the basement, an innovation which Fritz Gettelman had also helped engineer. During development of the revolutionary tanks, he had spent long hours at the A. O. Smith plant subjecting experimental models to every conceivable torture to prove his idea that molten glass will stick to steel. How he did this in the face of skeptical college "engineers" -- as he called them -- is another story, but the success he encountered is borne out by the fact that few progressive breweries today are without the big beer holders with the glazed walls.

All this while the affairs of the brewery had been directed from the office building which lies between State street and the brewery proper. By 1948, however, it was becoming increasingly apparent that the expanding brewery would need corresponding office facilities. It was decided, therefore, that an old malt-house which had, for the last several years, served as a place for miscellaneous storage be made over into an office building. Part of the building had originally been the first Gettelman homestead, antedating even the mansion on the hill. From what had once been its living room emerged the present office reception room whose walls are panelled with the cypress of the old wooden beer storage tanks. From the rest of the building the architect's skill and a lot of hard work wrought the present Gettelman offices. Fritz Gettelman went along with, and indeed inaugurated, most of the brewery's advances, but he turned a deaf ear to any suggestion that he move his office to the newly renovated building. Moreover, he insisted that the second story room in which he had been born and from which had come many of his ideas on the humble brown butcher paper be left inviolate -- and so it has been, to this day.

Modernization of brewery and office facilities was approved by every one connected with the business, but no one sanctioned them more heartily than the two Gettelman brothers, Fred, Jr., and Tom, sons of the energetic and imaginative Fritz. Actively entering the management affairs of the brewery in 1939 and 1941, respectively, the two younger Gettelmans not only welcomed the changes but were, in large measure, responsible for their execution. Interest of the brothers in increased production and administrative efficiency was not an overnight affair. The lives of both of them had revolved around the brewery almost since they had taken their first steps and they had a working knowledge of every facet of the business long before they emerged from brewers' school as master brewers.

As it turned out, the talents of the two men were so complementary that it seemed almost a part of some well-formulated long range plan. Fred found himself more at home in the operational end of the plant while Tom's talents turned to the intangibles of the business -- things like sales promotion, advertising and public relations.

It is in such capable hands that the destiny of the A. Gettelman Brewing Company rests. It seemed only in keeping with the spirit of Fred Gettelman, Sr. -- all his life dedicated to the best interests of his business and the people in it -- that, at his passing in June, 1954, he should have provided so well for his brewery's future in the persons of his two sons.



New technological advances, widely expanded markets, an ever further propagation of the proud old Gettelman name -- these are but a few of the things the two younger Gettelmans plan to make the A. Gettelman Brewing Company of the future an even better place with which to be associated than it has been in the past. To achieve these goals they look confidently to the same fine spirit of cooperation on the part of the Gettelman family of employees that has so importantly contributed to the high place the brewery now enjoys.

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*[Webmaster's Note: The A. Gettelman Brewing Company was sold to its neighbor, the Miller Brewing Company, in 1961. Miller continues to market one of Gettelman's leading brands -- Milwaukee's Best --*