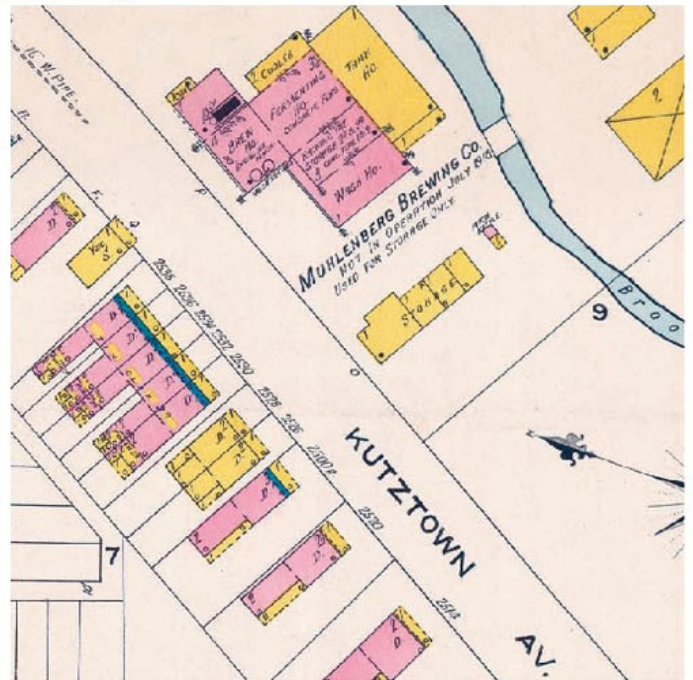


# The Muhlenberg Brewing Co. Reading, PA

*Scott Parzanese # 863*

The history and even the exact location of the Muhlenberg Brewing Company has frequently been a mystery to local collectors and historians. Several great brewery advertising pieces have surfaced over the years listing either Reading or Bernhart as the brewery location. Even today, few photos of the brewery are known to exist. The Muhlenberg Brewing Co was chartered with a capital of \$15,000 in January of 1895. The directors were Simpson Becker, Samuel S. Schuehl, William M. Becker, Nicholas G. Rothermel, and Henry J. Seidel. Production started on May 1, 1895 making Muhlenberg the seventh large brewery in Reading.



The actual location was in Muhlenberg Township, Berks County with the townships southern border shared completely with the City of Reading. Within the township are several unincorporated communities (or neighborhoods) one of which was Bernhart. In later years the address was listed as 2601 Kutztown Road. In 1851, Muhlenberg Township was formed and named after Henry Augustus Muhlenberg, a member of one of the more prominent and influential families of Berks County. Muhlenberg was a member of the Muhlenberg family political dynasty. He was born in Reading, Pennsylvania on July 21, 1823. His father, Henry A. P. Muhlenberg, was a Congressman and U.S. Minister to Austria; his grandfather, Joseph Hiester, was the governor of Pennsylvania.

The beginning of the end started on Sunday night March 12, 1916 with a large fire that caused more than \$100,000 in damages to the brewery and basically destroyed the structure with only a storage area remaining. The fire was reported to have started at 10:00 pm with most of the damage to the brew house with its collapse at 1:00 am. The fire was large enough to cause damage to a row of homes across the street from the brewery. The fire was fought by four fire companies with minor injuries to several firemen. The brewery was partially covered by insurance. There were no definite plans for the continuation of the brewery at that time but it was suggested that they might relocate to the nearby Mt Penn Brewing Company building that was no longer in operation. With this devastating fire and passage of the Volstead Act through Congress in late 1917, this was the end of the Muhlenberg Brewing Company.

This location reappeared as a brewery in May 29, 1934 when Stephen Munich was granted federal and state permits to make real beer. Stephen Munich was in the cereal beverage business making "near beer" for five years prior to the granting of these permits. In April of 1933, Stephen Munich and two others were discharged from a charge of "jumping the gun" making beer without a permit a few hours before 3.2 became

