
William Downard's study of the Cincinnati brewing industry attempts to demonstrate how one urban industrial enterprise can influence the economic life, institutional development, and "tone" of a city. Beginning with the establishment of the first brewery in 1812, Downard carries his narrative through the growth decades of the 1870s and 1880s to prohibition and concludes with the revival of the industry after 1933. Special attention is given to the influence of German immigrants on brewing after 1840, the changing organizational structure of the industry, the impact of such technological developments as pasteurization and refrigeration, the workers' attempts to unionize and the brewers' responses, and common business practices designed to limit competition from breweries in other cities and discourage price wars in Cincinnati.

Histories of this type are frequently less significant than they should be because authors fail to place their studies in a broad perspective. Although this is not a major weakness in Downard's study, it does cause some problems. Downard does not always successfully relate his study to the general economic development of Cincinnati. With the exception of the first chapter few references are made to other industrial enterprises in the city. Perhaps it is too much to expect in a history of one industry, but seemingly some general comments on the nature of industrialization in Cincinnati and some comparative statistics for such factors as capital investments, gross output, marketing practices, size of labor force, and the number of competing firms within each major industrial group would contribute to a better understanding of the economic importance of brewing in the city. This is particularly true for periods of growth and retrenchment.
Downard is generally very careful, however, to relate the growth of Cincinnati breweries to the development of the industry nationally, particularly in his analysis of marketing procedures, volume of production, and unionization. By concentrating on Cincinnati, where brewers produced primarily for the local market, he is able to draw some interesting comparisons with brewers in other cities (Milwaukee and St. Louis, for example) who competed mainly in the national market. These discussions are well balanced and contribute significantly to the general history of the brewing industry.

Downard's handling of the social-cultural impact of the industry is also excellent. He discusses in detail the role of brewery owners in social and philanthropic activities, the cultural contributions of the German population, and the influence of the Over-the-Rhine district and the hilltop resorts (with their beer gardens, saloons, and entertainment) on the character of the city. Downard concludes that the importance of beer and breweries in the social life of the community peaked in the 1890s and declined significantly thereafter because of suburbanization and pressure from the Sabbatarians to enforce Sunday closing laws. This analysis clearly demonstrates the intricate relationships between economic activities and the cultural development in an urban setting.

The book is well written and carefully documented. It makes a significant contribution in the field of urban history as well as the history of economic institutions. It will particularly appeal to readers who have wandered through the old sections (those that have not fallen victim to urban renewal) of Cincinnati.

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Louisville in the early years of the twentieth century was controlled by a Democratic machine and a local “boss” named John Whallen. The excesses of the city's boss ridden