

ALBANY'S BREWERIES OF THE 1600s

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In the first article in this series on brewing in Albany, we discussed the religious and political freedoms that existed in New York's Upper Hudson valley in the 1600s as well as the competing governance structures of the local patroon and the Dutch West India Company. This unique culture included forms of brewing with local products and techniques that guided Albany's brewing history well into the 1700s, even after the advent of British rule.

Despite the clear generosity of life afforded the local inhabitants, the grain growing, malting and brewing capacity of the Dutch in the upper Hudson appears to have been greater than simply the supply local demand. The Albany area was a huge supplier of grain - primarily wheat - and acted as the breadbasket of all of New Netherlands. The colony exported wheat back to the homeland as early as 1626. From the 1630s, breweries were built to take advantage of this supply. These were not settlers simply making beer for personal consumption, either. This more formal brewing was in addition to household brewing and all were both regulated and taxed.

The first individual to brew in Rennselaerwijck under the authority of the patroon Van Rennselaer was Jacob Albertsen Planck, who was authorized in 1632: 'at his own expense and risk and full charge ... [to] brew beer to be sold to the men of the Company or to the savages, or do otherwise therewith as he shall think fit.'

In 1643, the patroon contracted Evert Pels to work as a public brewer for six years between 1643-1649, in the colony at what would become the colonial brewery in Greenbush. Cornelis Cornelisz and Jan Witmont,

William Brouwer, and Cornelis van Nes and Jan Oothout all operated breweries across the river in Greenbush as well, while Jacob Hevick and Harmen Hermanse van Ganesvort owned breweries to the south of Beverwijck, near the Normanskill, in what is now the town of Bethlehem.

Separate from the control of the patroon, the area directly in and around Beverwijck had by far the greatest density of breweries, twelve at its height with eight surviving into the 1650s. The following has been identified in relation to these early brewers:

1. Beginning in 1647, Jan Labatie operated a small brewery in Fort Orange. There is no record of Labatie brewing past the mid-1650s. There are mentions of other breweries in the Fort, but none by name or owner. These may have been home-based, non-commercial breweries.
2. The brewery on Broadway between what is now Hudson and Division Streets had a rather long life span. It was operated first by Pieter Bronck in 1645, then by Jacob Hevick and Reyndert Pietersz. Harmen Hermanse and Jan Harmenz Weendorp rented it and finally it was sold to Albertus Janse Rijckman in 1678. Albert Rijckman, or Ryckman, would become arguably the most prominent brewer in Beverwijck of the late 17th century. Albert's son Harmanus, assumed control of the brewery at the turn of the 18th century and ran it until his death in 1755.
3. The brewery off the Rutenkill (Rat Creek), on State Street between South Pearl and Green Streets didn't fair so well. Opened in 1649, Rutger Jacobsz and Goosen



Figure 1. Rutger Jacobsen window attributed to Evert Duyckinck (1621-c.1702). Stained glass with lead inset in wood frame. 26" high x 20 9/16" wide. Courtesy of the Albany Institute of History and Art, Exchange with Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute.

This stained glass, heraldic window is from the Reformed Protestant Dutch church in Beverwijk, erected in 1656. It shows the Jacobsen family crest. Rutger Jacobsen was an early brewer in Beverwijk, and this heraldry reflects that. Mash tubs and paddles are clearly visible adorning the crest.

Gerritsz operated it on Jacobsz property, but in 1657 Jacobsz tears down the brewery and sells the land to Harman Vedder.

4. Franz Barensten Pastoor established the brewery on Broadway between Stueben and Maiden Lane in 1653. Jan Dircksz van Eps also brewed there until he re-settled in Schenectady in the 1660s. Unfortunately, van Eps was killed in the 1690 massacre there when French and their aboriginal allies swept down from the north. The brewery site in Beverwijck, however, would remain a brewery until being sold in 1736 to be used as a parsonage.

5. Dean Street is a courtyard now but in 1654 it is where partners Pieter Hartgers, Volkert Janse Douw and Jan Thomase built their brewery. This is the site of the 'Old Post Office' building today. Ownership would later transfer to Goosen Gerritse, a fur trader, brewer and long time resident of Beverwijck. After Gerritse's death in 1679, his wife sold half of the brewery to Sybant Van Schiack, Gerritse's son who had been operating the brewery. Van Schiack would die at the age of 30 in 1686. Sybant's younger brother Anthony would assume control of the brewery but then capitalized more on the success of his father-in-law Teunis Cornelisse, a prominent businessman and politician. There is no mention of a brewery in Van Schaick's will, written in January 1737.

6. The brewery on Beaver Street between South Pearl and Green streets backing up to the Rutenkill has a short tough life. Jacob Janz van Noortsrant originally purchased the land and built a brewery. Rutger Jacobsz buys the property in 1654 and brews there until he sells off his brewing equipment and closes shop in 1662.

7. Harmen Harmanse emigrated to New Netherlands in the 1650s and opened a small brewery south of Fort Orange. He married Maria Conyn, the daughter of Leendert Conyn a very early Beverwijck brewer. Moving to the village he and Jan Harmenz Weendorp would rent the Bonck brewery and, shortly thereafter, Hermanse would purchase his own brewery at the southeast corner of Market Street (now Broadway) and Maiden Lane. This is the future site of two well known Albany landmark - the Stanwix Hall Hotel. Harman's only surviving son, Leendert Ganesvoort would continue family business, prospering into the early 18th century. The brewery would become the center of his

property which extended from Market Street (now Broadway) east, to the river. By the early part of the 18th century, the Gansevoort family had become part of the city's commercial elite. Leendert's son, Johannes, would continue to grow the brewery after his father's death in 1762, his brother Harmen diversified the family business by opening a store near the brewery. The Ganesvoorts family operated their brewery until 1805, tearing it down and erecting their hotel, Stanwix Hall, named in honor of the fort defended by family member General Peter Gansevoort, during the War for American Independence. The name Gansevoort still lives on as a hotel chain brand.

8. The first Patroon to actually live permanently in the colony, Jeremias van Renssealer, built a series of mills and a brew house to the west of his manor near the mouth of what is now Patroon Creek, on the Hudson River in the early 1660s. It's unclear if this was a commercial or personal-consumption operation.

9. By the late 1600s, Albany begins to see its first generation of North American-born brewers emerge. At some point during the 1680s Beverwijck-born Bastian Harmanse would open a brewery along Market Street. Unfortunately, the exact location of that brewery is unknown. By the 1720s Harmanse's son, Teunis Visscher, had joined the family business, learning the trade from his father. Tuenis ran his family brewery on Market Street for more than 50 years. In 1756 Bastian T. Visscher, Teunis' son followed in his grandfather's and father's footsteps but, like many of the other early Albany brewers, he began diversifying into other business ventures most notably construction.

10. Anthony Lisenard of Rochelle France emigrated to Albany in 1669-70 at the age of 30 and was known as a baker, trader, real estate speculator and brewer. He left Albany with his family in 1684 moving south to New York City. The Lisenard family would continue brewing in the city, establishing a series of mills and a brewery near what is modern-day Canal Street. Anthony's great-grandson Leonard will continue the family business until 1804. The Lisenard's were related by marriage to U.S. President, Franklin D. Roosevelt.

As might be expected in a relatively organized colonial community, the map shows that even in 17th century Albany there were brewing zones. The success of the

breweries depended on taking advantage of local resources. The two breweries to the west along the Rутtenkill close within a short period of time, and the brewery in the fort doesn't fair much better. The other four breweries on the east side of Broadway in the heart of the village thrive for decades. In the case of the Ganesvoorts for well over a century. It's fairly easy to see why those breweries along Broadway survived - access to the river. The river provided clear, clean water year round as well as easy transportation to and from the village. The breweries along Broadway had clear access to the waterfront while the more westerly breweries along the Rутtenkill had to move their beer across the village to access the wharf. Also, even in the driest the Hudson River was not going to run dry. The smaller creeks may have. The brewery in the fort, albeit close to the river, doesn't have the support that the village supplied. Like the Rутtenkill breweries, the brewer in Fort Orange fails fairly quickly.

In addition to the location of the breweries, their sheer number intrigues. A minimum of twelve breweries operate in Beverwijck, alone. Twelve breweries to supply, at maximum, 1,000 people. That seems a bit much. Kiliaen van Rensselaer gives a clue in a letter to Johannes de Laet in, 1632. Van Rensselaer states, 'As soon as there is a supply of grain on, I intend to erect a brewery to provide all New Netherland with beer ...'

It's an interesting concept to think Beverwijck may have been supplying the whole of New Netherlands and perhaps other parts of the global empire of the Dutch West India Company with beer - just as Albany, as it turns out, would again supply the nations 200 years later under the protection of another empire. There has not as yet, however, been sufficient data uncovered to definitively confirm this possibility.

This is the second in a series of articles by Craig Gravina and Alan McLeod on factors that influenced the development of brewing in Albany, New York in the 1600s. They are the authors of a forthcoming book to be published by The History Press in the summer of 2014 as well as the founders of The Albany Ale Project. More information on the history of brewing in Albany can also be found at www.albanyaleproject.com.

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