

PEOPLES BEER: BREWING AND BIGOTRY IN AMERICA

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Introduction

The dream wasn't supposed to end like this, on a hot day in June, sunny and sticky with humidity. All the hard work, all the money, all the hope: all for naught. Lives had been threatened, life-savings decimated, beliefs shaken. Those beliefs – a belief in the American dream, a belief that success followed hard work, a belief that equality would be won through industry – were of course reexamined and questioned in the weeks, months, and years that followed.

But on that day, June 18, 1974, a bright Wisconsin summer day, as people perused and picked over the scattered remnants of his dream, it's hard to believe Theodore (Ted) Mack felt anything but utter defeat. It's easy to imagine his head down, his large frame, so typically filled with energy and ambition, now sunken, his broad shoulders sagging. While he'd always been so good at putting on a positive, upbeat façade, he'd lately been wearing the truth out in the open. He'd been noticeably morose, probably because he knew this day was coming. It was evident in the letter he wrote to stockholders and the board. It was evident in the letter they had to write to him – demanding he hold a meeting to provide an update on the situation with the brewery. And it was evident in his tone and somber mood at that meeting at Jabber's Bar.

Ultimately, Ted had known it was over. Peoples Brewing Company, Ted's company, had been seized by the U.S. government – the same government that had promised to help him turn it into a great success - and all he could do was stand by and watch as the bargain hunters inspected the remains to see what they might walk away with. The bottles were already gone. Pabst and Leinenkugel had bought them earlier and hauled them away - over 12,000 cases of new beer bottles to be washed, sorted, and then eventually filled with their own products. Everything else would later be hauled off too: fermenting tanks, bottle washers, labelers, cappers, and even the 5,000-pound copper brew kettle

(removed by actually demolishing the walls of the brewhouse). All would go to service in some other brewery in some other town.

In short time, everything was sold, allegedly raising between \$114,000-\$125,000. It would have been helpful to apply that to the debt of over \$400,000.00 that Ted and his partners owed, but unfortunately that wasn't the case. Instead, the money was going to the private Milwaukee auction company, Klein Industrial Corporation, which bought the brewery and its contents from the Small Business Administration for only \$24,000 six weeks earlier - another suspicious move by the SBA that would later raise questions about the way it conducted business with Ted.

The lawsuit that Peoples Brewing Company had filed against the SBA and the Department of Defense – the last grasp at the only straw they had left – would be dismissed, and then the whole episode would be over, at least publicly. It was an episode that had started less than a decade before with the dream of buying an established business – a brewery no less. But in truth, it was more than a dream, much more. Ted said so himself, telling the Associated Press in an interview that, 'if the black man is going to survive in this country, he is going to have to get into the corporate structure. While the white man will give you welfare, you can really believe he is not going to give you industry'.¹

People's Brewing Company was to be his industry, his corporate structure. And it should have been a roaring success.

But then, while Ted was a master of the media, of controlling the message, he found there were many things that were just too far out of his control. There was racism, of course, but this was nothing new to him. He'd been battling racism, racists, and bigots all his life. He knew how to rise above them, how to ultimately beat them. The problem was the type of racism. It wasn't the kind that hid its face behind a white mask and burned a cross on your front lawn. That was

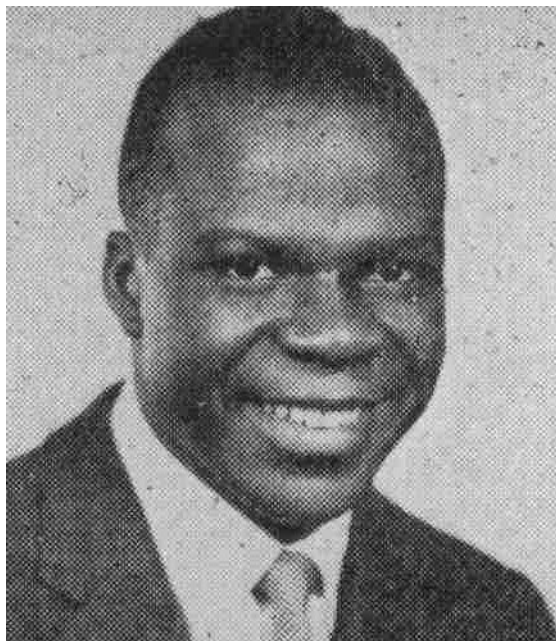


Figure 1. Theodore (Ted) A. Mack Sr.

the type Ted was used to. But this was another type. This type smiled at you, gave you confidence into thinking you were safe, and all the while worked behind the scenes to destroy you. This was the kind of racism they had faced in trying to run Peoples.

But it was more than just racism. Ted's decision to purchase a small brewery in a small town in Wisconsin couldn't have come at a worse time. The brewing industry was coming under control of a handful of large brewers, and they didn't fight fair. Over time, little by little, they had systematically taken over smaller brewers that got in their way. If they couldn't be taken over, they forced them to close through monopolistic business practices. The brewery that Ted chose to buy was a mere 75 miles from three of the largest breweries in America, and it was subsequently squarely in their crosshairs.

Ted had also put a lot of faith into help that had never materialized. He first had assumed that the Black community, his community – the one he'd worked so tirelessly to help for all those years – would rally around him and the brewery. He'd also assumed that, because of their status as the only minority-owned brewery in America, and because of the lofty rhetoric and platitudes about “helping the Black man” that never ceased to flow from Washington, Peoples would be a shoo-in to gain lucrative government contracts. But neither of these hopes panned out either.

And between his big plans and small budget, Ted also spent more than he had while trying to expand operations and sales. He took a number of risks and gambled much of Peoples' money in the hopes of some big gains. Those gambles could have paid off had it not been for the tempest of other elements that battered and bashed the small brewery before those gambles had time to start showing dividends. For Ted, it seemed the fates were against him.

But to be fair, some blamed Theodore Mack himself for the failure of Peoples. In their book, *The Breweries of Oshkosh: Their Rise and Fall*, authors Ron Akin and Lee Reilherzer intimated that it was Ted's ambition, perhaps more so than any other factor, that caused the brewery's ruin. They wrote that “[Ted] Mack had not come to Oshkosh with the goal of running a moderately profitable regional brewery. His aim was much higher”.² Likewise, Vernon Wiedenhaft, who at 26 years old worked for People's Brewing Company as a bottling lineman when Ted arrived, told me that “[Ted] tried to go all over with [Peoples]” instead of keeping the beer local, as it had been for the previous 60 years'.³

Frankly, it's hard to blame these and others for seeing Ted as the face of Peoples' downfall. After all, he was the very public face of Peoples, and Peoples – brewing beer in Oshkosh since 1911 – closed within two years of Ted's purchase of it. From the moment that purchase was finalized, Ted was in a different newspaper seemingly every week. He criss-

crossed the state giving presentations and speeches as the 'first black brewery owner in America.' He was celebrated by politicians and the African American press. He was given positions on political advisory committees. He became a public figure. So, when the Peoples Brewing Company shuttered after 62 years, Ted was conveniently portrayed as the primary cause.

But ultimately, with a whole gallery of factors to blame (including himself), Ted pointed his finger directly at the Small Business Administration as the cause of his failure. According to him, the SBA gave he and his partners the loan to buy Peoples with the promise of helping them succeed. That promise was comprised of two parts – assistance in getting federal contracts, and technical assistance in running the brewery. Peoples got neither. At a Congressional oversight hearing about SBA mismanagement in 1974, Ted told the panel, 'we did not get anything (contracts or help) in that area. We signed the loan guarantees, and now the SBA wants us to pay them back about \$400,000. They did not do their job but they want us to pay them back'.⁴

But the truth about why Peoples Brewing Company closed in 1974 is much more complicated, and it is made up of all of these different causes, each a different story to tell. From the systemic racism to opposing ideas of Black power, from government abuses to capitalist corruption, from bravado and hubris to bad timing; the story of Peoples Beer – how it started and how it ended – is a tragic story that combines all the best and worst of American business and society in the Midwest in the 1970s. And to tell this story, the best place to start is not in Milwaukee or Oshkosh, but much further south: in Alabama in 1930.

Chapter 1. From the red dirt of Alabama

Theodore (Ted) A. Mack Sr. was born on 8 May 1930, not too far from the small town of Prattville, Alabama located in Autauga County (about 20 miles west of Montgomery). The country was idyllic in songs and poems, which recounted good times and green farms as far as the eye could see. In truth it was much less ideal than that. It was the Cotton Belt and fewer than 70 years removed from the Civil War. It was a place of muddy fields, intense poverty, Jim Crow and the Klan. Anyone born here was in for a difficult life. Some more than others. This was especially true for Ted.

Before his birth, his father abandoned him, his seven siblings, and his mother, to start another family. He completely broke off contact with young Ted and the others, never visiting or supporting them. And to make matters worse, he remained in the area, a constant reminder of his rejection of

them. Abandoned in the midst of depression and poverty, this was the first of many tests for Ted's mother, Earline, who seemed imbued with a steely and uncommon determination. Instead of buckling under the prospect of what must have seemed an overwhelmingly grim future, Earline found the courage and strength to carry on without him, keeping and passing on her maiden name to her children. She never spoke about their father (and rarely about any of their hardships), but instead took his place as breadwinner and patriarch of the family. As it turned out, that's exactly what they needed.⁵

Ted's immediate family, dating back to his great-grandparents on his mother's side (and most likely his father's as well) were all born somewhere in the area, and none of them moved too far from there. Both his grandparents and his great-grandparents, all of whom had already died by the time Ted was born, were most likely emancipated slaves⁶ – as were many of the others in the area. For the most part, anyone that Ted would have met growing up were either the offspring of former Cotton Belt slaves, or former slaves themselves (a sad life detail to share with others). Most everyone in the area had something else in common too, they were almost all farmers. Sharecroppers to be exact.

At the end of the Civil War, contrary to the wishes of the majority of Congress, many large southern landowners (most, in fact) who supported the Confederacy were allowed to keep their property. While before the war southern plantations were mighty agricultural machines that supplied the nation and the world with cotton and tobacco, after 1865 the land was idle, unsown, and unproductive. The problem the landowners had, of course, was a lack of labor force due to the emancipation of their slaves. Another problem was little capital after most of their cash was consumed during the war. In other words, they no longer had people to work their land for free. To make matters worse, and the reason lawmakers in Washington D.C. even cared, without their crops and the income raised from them (not to mention the associated income based on taxes and peripheral expenses), the southern states themselves would be tossed into poverty. This would in turn make it immensely more difficult for the nation as a whole to recover from the travails of the previous decade. So, the solution that was arrived at was an exchange-based farming system known as sharecropping.

Sharecropping seemed, to the now ruined but very obstinate Southern elite, like a convenient solution to the problem. Instead of hiring their laborers outright with capital they didn't have, landowners could instead make an arrangement with local farmers (that is, emancipated slaves), allowing them to work a portion of the property – usually ten acres – in exchange for a share of the crop they produced. The land-



Figure 2. Peoples Beer advertisement.

owners turned landlords supplied the land, and the newly freed slaves supplied whatever was needed to farm it.

For emancipated slaves, this was a far cry from the “40 acres and a mule” they thought they’d receive from the U.S. Government. Promised at first by Major General Sherman in 1864, freed men and women were quick to celebrate a world where they would be granted land on which to settle and farm after a lifetime in chains. Sherman even promised them the coasts of Georgia and South Carolina – this would be their very own region to settle as they wished. These dreams were dashed, however, when President Andrew Johnson turned the land back to the Southern owners, effectively crushing the hopes of emancipated slaves who had longed for their own soil to plant, till, and harvest. Now they were faced with working the farms owned by the very same people who had terrorized them for the past hundred years.⁷

Sharecropping, then, was yet another mechanism to exploit the country’s most vulnerable – a population of tired, starved, and unskilled people still recoiling from a lifetime of forced servitude. What made it even worse was the insatiable greed of the white, southern landowners.

While the sharecroppers did indeed receive a plot of ten acres on which to farm, they still had to procure the items needed to actually conduct the farming. The implements used to work the farm—the plows, shovels and hoes—might be owned by the farmers (and frequently were), but the

seeds they actually planted had to be purchased, almost exclusively on credit from local merchants. This was the start of a vicious credit system that kept sharecroppers in their place and let local merchants and landlords exploit the most helpless population in the country.

Even worse were the living conditions these people suffered. On the same ten acres the sharecroppers worked was found the smallest, meanest, and most ramshackle of buildings – the sharecropper’s shack. These were simple and crudely made, assembled with rough planks of thin wood nailed together so clumsily as to be barely standing. Sunlight streamed through the gaps between boards, and they lacked glass windows, insulation, electricity, or running water (toilets were outhouses in the yard, and water was drawn from open wells or nearby springs). Scorching in the summer and freezing during the winter, these shacks crowded the landscape of the south through the 20th century. While a source of misery for their tenants, they were a goldmine for their owners, the farm’s landlords. They rented them out to their sharecroppers who had no choice but to live in them as they had no other place to dwell.

To add to their tenants’ suffering, landowners demanded they grow only the valuable cash crop (cotton in Ted’s case) and nothing else. They were not allowed even a measly vegetable garden from which to feed their family, nor could they keep animals, like pigs, cows, or chickens, for food (though horses or mules for pulling ploughs were permitted).

Nothing could take away from the crop-bearing acreage they rented and farmed. But because the sharecroppers needed food and other necessities, making them a convenient (and conveniently captive) population, landlords operated general stores or commissaries to sell them the most basic of provisions. To say these shops lacked variety is an understatement. Their stock amounted to little more than corn meal, fatback pork, and molasses. Malnutrition was rampant, as were maladies like hookworms and rickets, ailments all but forgotten in most other parts of the country.⁹

Another injustice was found in the financial situation sharecroppers were forced to live under. None of what was supplied to them was ever free. Nor, interestingly, did the landlords or merchants bother with collecting money from them as payment, at least not right away. Instead, everything, from seeds to shack and equipment to food, anything and everything sharecroppers bought, was supplied through a credit system called a crop lien. Throughout the year, landlords kept track of the items the farmers acquired from them. Every month they added rent for the shack, the groceries taken from the commissary, and anything else used or purchased. Merchants, meanwhile, had also been keeping track of what was owed for the seeds or other equipment rented or bought. This was added onto what the landlord was owed. Also added on were random charges like ‘supervision fees,’ which were supposed to compensate the landlords for the work of being landlords. And, of course, on top of all of this was added interest at extravagant rates.

The books were balanced at the end of the growing season when the farmers brought their crops in. Every year, assuming the crop didn’t fail, the landlord took his share of the crop ‘owed’ to him for supplying the land, and then an additional amount considered recompense for everything the farmer used in credit throughout the year, like rent, groceries, and supplies. Likewise, local merchants would do the same, charging the farmers for the seeds and anything else they might have been furnished (plus interest of course). And, as in any good grift, the landlords and merchants kept the books, while the sharecroppers often couldn’t read. So, in the end, there was small chance of knowing how honest the tallies really were. Most of the time, they weren’t, a fact commonly known by all.

In fact, there was a joke recited in those days about a sharecropper who presented all but two bales to the landlord at the end of the season. After conducting his tally on what the farmer had charged over the last year, the landlord told the farmer he owed exactly the number of bales presented. After hearing this the farmer brought out the two other bales he’d held back. The landlord wiped his brow and admonished the

farmer, saying, ‘I wish you’d told me, now I have to add it back up again, so it come out right!’¹⁰

The joke was based on the cruel truth of sharecropper economics. By the time the credits were all added up and the value of the cotton bales taken into account, the farmer was usually left with very little, or – as was sometimes the case – still owed the landlord money (the balance of which was added to the next year’s credit). If they did somehow manage to eek a little profit, it wasn’t much at all. It’s estimated that the average income of a sharecropper family was less than 65 cents per day in the early 1940’s,¹¹ which amounts to less than \$12 today.

Through this system it was next to impossible for sharecroppers to get ahead. Instead, they were almost always playing catch up with what they owed the landowners. So, what should have been a satisfying transaction at the end of a hard year of farming was instead a soul crushing moment of despair. The future would have indeed seemed bleak as they faced yet another year of farming to fill the pockets of others all the while knowing there was no way out of the cycle.

Daily life, too, was a terrible routine that consisted of getting up when the sun rose and working in the fields until the sun went down. The cycle stopped when farmers were too old to work, too injured to work, or dead. There was usually no escape from this life. A mere six years after Ted’s birth, Edwin Embree, a businessman who studied and then wrote about the situation in the southern states, summed up the situation thusly:

The cultural landscape of the cotton belt is a miserable panorama of unpainted shacks, rain-gullied fields, straggling fences, dirt, poverty, disease, drudgery, monotony. Submerged beneath the system which he supports, the cotton tenant’s standard of living approaches the level of bare animal existence. The traditional standards of the slave required only subsistence. The cotton slave—white or colored—has inherited a role in which comfort, education, and self-development have no place. For the type of labor he performs, all that is actually required is a stomach indifferently filled, a shack to sleep in, some old jeans to cover his nakedness.¹²

In essence, after the Civil War, the emancipated slaves, and eventually their ancestors, swapped one kind of slavery for another. Sharecropping lasted until the late 1940s, when it was finally cheaper to replace this type of human labor with machinery and automation. When that happened, thousands of sharecroppers with little to no education were turned out, and most of them migrated to larger cities, where they tried to find menial jobs or simply continued living in poverty. For young Black children growing up in the Cotton Belt,



Figure 3. Peoples Beer advertisement.

there was really little to hope for or aspire to, and the opportunity for a better life would have seemed pitifully remote.

On 16 April 1930, William Thompson, the census taker for Precinct 3, Autangaville, Alabama, penciled in an entry for Earline Mack (though misspelling it ‘Erline’). At that date, 22 days before Ted Mack was born, Earline was renting a house on a farm and listed “farmer” as her occupation. The household at the time had five members (including Earline), none of the four children were attending school, but instead, at the ages of twelve, nine, and four and a half, they were most likely helping their mother in the fields.¹³

By 1940 the household had grown to eight.¹⁴ There would have been one more, but yellow fever had cut a swath of destruction through the shacks of Alabama, killing Ted’s brother Lester among many others. It also took the parents of his first cousins, who then moved in with Earline and the children.¹⁵ For the first seventeen years of his life, Ted would live in a two-room shack on a ten-acre cotton farm, cramped with sometimes up to thirteen people – himself, his

mother, three sisters, three brothers and five first-cousins.¹⁶ How they managed to cram so many bodies into a small shanty is anyone’s guess, but they somehow made it work.

Having large families was not at all unheard of. Tenant farmers and sharecroppers often had them out of necessity because the children were seen as resources to work the farm, just like their slave-ancestors were. So, while undoubtedly uncomfortable with the living conditions (to say the least), a large family like Ted’s could certainly help increase the productivity of the acreage they were expected to cultivate. They might have even worked for other farmers in the area who needed help. In other words, children were assets of the farm, not just children. And it was for this reason so few sharecroppers (both Black and white) were able to attend school with any regularity – they were needed to work.

But at least while they were young, and not quite strong enough for the more physical demands of farming, some children were able to get a basic education. Fortunately, Ted was one of these. According to the 1940 census, at nine-

years-old he was attending the second grade (the appropriate level for a nine-year-old)¹⁷ at a regional (segregated) school at the Davis Chapel AME Church where his family attended worship services every Sunday. There was no other option, as formal schools (that is, publicly supported schools) for young Black children simply didn't exist anywhere nearby. However, Earline was very religious, and she raised her family according to the lessons of the Bible anyway, so learning scripture alongside the alphabet must have been fine with her, and at least Ted was getting some form of education (more than most others got). But though Ted and his classmates would have learned at least some of the fundamentals normally taught in a grade school (alongside Bible stories), their education would have been far less advanced than what was enjoyed by white children in the state-run elementary schools. Such disparity was common in those days according to Edward Redcay, an early advocate for Black education in the south, who, in 1935, observed:

[Black children's] school terms average 2 months less than the white school year; attendance is difficult and irregular; enrollment is congested in the first three grades; buildings are dilapidated and inaccessible; and teaching equipment is meagre or lacking. Even more serious is the instructional situation under which large numbers of unqualified teachers are still retained and paid salaries averaging less than half of the white school salaries. Dominating all else is the problem of financial support, involving a current annual expenditure of \$87.22 per child for the Unites States as a whole but an annual expenditure of only \$12.57 for the average Negro child.¹⁸

White children received a full academic year of instruction (eight months) from actual teachers who were trained as educators. Black children like Ted, by comparison, usually had a six-month school term to make sure they were still available during the planting and harvest seasons. For these kids, school was a luxury, taking a backseat to the farm. For white children, in contrast, an early education was compulsory and important to their future. Ted, his siblings, cousins, friends, and all the other Black children living in the rural south were not nearly so lucky. But, at the same time, Ted was fortunate because he had a staunch advocate of education in his mother. Earline wanted her children to be educated, she wanted them to leave the farm, and so she made sure they attended as regularly as possible. She also insisted that the older help the younger. Ted's oldest brother by nine years, Thomas, had left the household by 1940 to find work elsewhere (though his twin brother, Richard stayed behind). Eventually he became a stone mason, and dutifully sent checks home to his mother so his younger brothers and sisters could go to school.¹⁹

Despite the hardships they faced, Ted had a pleasant childhood. His days were filled with hard work for sure, but they

were also filled with family, friends and community. His mom's strong religious beliefs taught them to have hope, when the truth of their conditions would instead have them live in despair. Despite his mom's best efforts, though, the reality of the region's insidious bigotry was a constant companion. Later in life, Ted recalled the locals would throw rocks at him and call him names. On one occasion, when he was no older than ten or eleven, he wandered in to the local general store. The store owner demanded that Ted address his son (who was Ted's own age) as 'sir.' When young Ted refused the man threw him out, remarking he'd probably find him dead and drunk in an alleyway someday. This wouldn't be the last time Ted would be treated like this.

Earline, though, taught them to be proud of who they were and ignore the insults and racism they endured. She taught them to rise above it through a regiment of religion and discipline. And her discipline could be fierce. One day, Ted brought home a dollar. Smiling from ear to ear he presented it proudly to his mother. 'Where'd you get that?' his mother demanded.

'I did the Hambone for some white folks at the store!' Ted replied enthusiastically, referencing the type of rhythmic body slapping done in the south by the Black community to create music. Earline immediately grabbed the young boy, dragged him into the house and set about beating his rear end. 'Never perform for those people, you understand? You are a MACK!'²⁰

Starting in sixth grade, Ted's education continued past church-turned-elementary-school to the Autauga County Training School. Substituting for the junior and senior high schools attended by the white youth, these training schools were often the first formal school many Black children in the Cotton Belt ever went to (considering that if they went to elementary schools they were most often of the ad-hoc type that Ted attended). Created in the early 1900s, training schools were supposed to teach employable skills to Black teenagers across the south.²¹ In those early, post-Civil War years, the white majority refused to fund traditional academics for Black teenage sharecroppers at formal high schools. They believed that students weren't mentally capable of getting anything out of traditional academics anyway and therefore weren't worth spending the money on. However, that white majority accepted the idea of those same teenagers learning technical knowledge that might make them employable (they understood that a poor, out of work population was worse than a poor working population). For this they would spend money.

The technical skills taught to Ted and his classmates focused on subjects that the white community thought would be

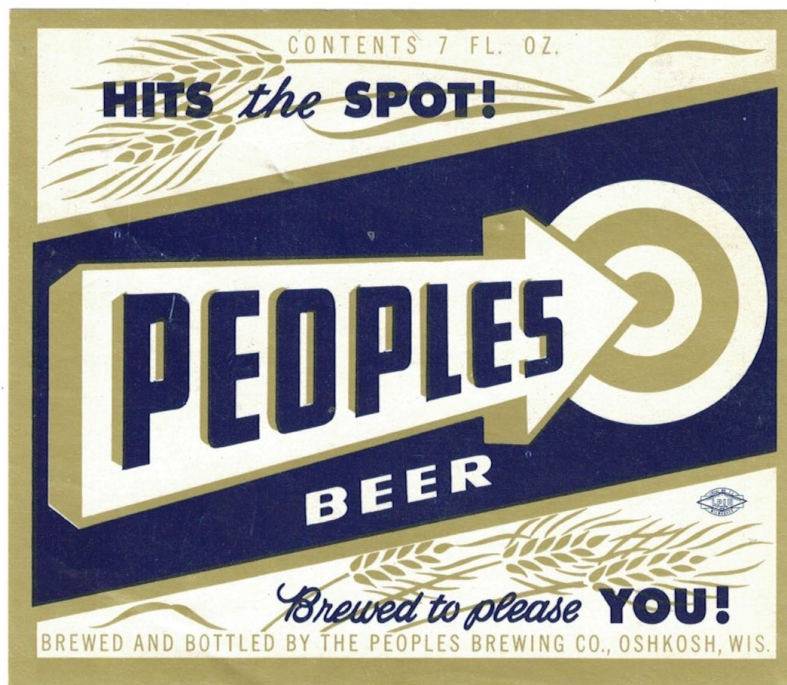


Figure 4. Peoples Beer advertisement.

'useful' for the Black community. Teenage boys were taught how to plant and grow crops (the cash crops of the south), how to manage farms, and how to use farming equipment. The teenage girls, conversely, were taught to clean and organize the home, make and mend clothing, do laundry and other household tasks. In essence, both were being taught to work for wealthy white people as their farmers and housekeepers. As segregation ended, many of these training schools eventually transitioned into typical, traditionally academic high schools equal to the schools attended by white teens. But not all did. In fact, this type of 'education' lasted even into the 1960s in some parts of the south. The Autauga County School Board, for example, fought to keep the Autauga County Training School, the same one that Ted went to, training kids to farm and nurse (and to keep them segregated) as late as 1968.²² In 1965 students in Greenville Alabama held protests and boycotts over the training school they were forced to attend. In one student's words, 'you just learn two trades up there: how to pick cotton and how to take care of white folks' babies.' Outside of the south this education wasn't really good for much (not that it was that valuable in the south either). One former student of Greenville's training school applied to Colorado State University but was rejected and told he wasn't prepared for college. None of them were. Such was the training at the training schools.²³

This was the type of 'education' Ted had to look forward to when he started the sixth grade. Despite its shortcomings, though, Earline was insistent he take advantage of what was available, and so Ted made every effort to make the best of it, though it took some time and work for him to do so. Every day Mack trudged 14 miles to and from the training school, down muddy dirt roads in the desolate Alabama countryside. As he plodded along, every morning and afternoon, a bus carrying white kids passed by (often hanging out of the windows to taunt him or throw rocks) on their way to and from their schools.

Earline would see to it that Ted eventually went to one of those schools too. When he was 17, and facing the last two years of education, Earline moved Ted and the rest who were still in the house to nearby Montgomery. Through thrift and against all odds (and probably more than a little help from Thomas who had moved out years earlier to work and was sending money home), she bought a house in the city, and Ted was able to settle into Booker T. Washington High school. This was a huge break for him. Not only did his new school give him traditional academic preparation, it also provided an organized sports program that would become vital to Ted's future. Though he played almost all sports, as his future would demonstrate, he seemed to shine in football. Allowed go play only other Black schools, Ted's

high school football team excelled. He said once that they were so good that 'at halftime the first team wouldn't even dress for second half. We'd be in the stand with our girlfriends, watching the game'.²⁴

Despite his sharecropper background, despite the shortcomings of his early education, and despite his time spent pursuing sports, Ted still ranked third in his class when he graduated in 1950. The fact that he graduated at all was astounding when only about 14% of Black students completed high school that year.²⁵ Considering where he came from, Ted's accomplishment is exponentially more impressive. Unfortunately, it wasn't impressive enough for the University of Alabama, the college he hoped to attend. 'My application was denied,' he later wrote, 'not because of academic reasons but solely because I was black.' In fact, Ted's application was waded up and thrown into the trash in front of his eyes. The same would happen to any Black person hoping to go there. It would take another 15 years and armed soldiers to get the school to finally desegregate. At first, he accepted his fate, deciding to study at the Alabama State College for Negroes (now Alabama State University), but he never got the chance to attend. Instead, like many other poor, Black southerners, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Korea.

In the Army, Ted would find the same type of segregation and racism that hounded him on that small dirt patch in Alabama. Though President Truman integrated the military in 1948 by issuing executive order 9981, it would take years for that order to really be followed. Officers still kept Black and white soldiers segregated, especially on the front lines. This would change by the end of the war, but when Ted initially entered the Army, he served in an all-Black unit. And for such a unit, inequality persisted. He once told his wife, Pearl, that before he and his comrades were allowed to eat, he and the other Black soldiers had to clean up after the white soldiers first.²⁷ But, as usual, he endured, rose above the injustices he suffered, and found a silver lining.

Since the U.S. military's founding, sports have been closely tied to service. As far back as the 18th century, soldiers, sailors and marines passed the time engaged in sport of all types, sometimes involving skills they needed or used in battles, like horse racing or fencing. Team sports, loosely organized on bases, also became popular, especially in the 19th and 20th centuries. On any given day, barring other duties that needed to carry out, it was common to find baseball games being played at Army bases throughout the country. In 1882 the Naval Academy at Annapolis introduced football to the armed services when they founded a team. Eight years later a team was founded at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. And as years passed more and more teams

were added at bases around the US, complete with stadiums, uniforms, and bands. At first, they played local college teams until the early 20th century when college sports were formalized and schools only played each other in different conferences. Past that point, service teams began playing each other. At a time without television or the internet, finding ways to pass time on a military base was important, and so sports programs, especially service football programs, became treasured.²⁸ Ted, thanks to his playing time and experience from high school, got a spot on a team and began playing service football for the Army.

With names like Randolph Field Ramblers, Camp Peary Pirates, and Camp Davis Fighting AAs, armed forces service football teams played at a high level and were enthusiastically followed by football fans as well as scouts from college and professional organizations. Ted found out while playing for one of these teams that his ability on the field could earn him a scholarship to a college 'up north,' a non-segregated college – a good college. Ted asked his high school coach to send out game films of him playing, and his accomplishments were impressive enough to score an interview with Ohio State University, the ambitious Big Ten conference school in Columbus, Ohio. Equally impressed by his character and background, Ohio State awarded him a scholarship, and in March 1953, Ted became the first Black player from Alabama to play at a Big Ten school.²⁹

Moving to Columbus brought Ted closer to his mother and three of his brothers, Will and the twins, Richard and Thomas, all living in Middleton, about 100 miles west of him. Thomas had traveled there years before to work as a stone mason, and his other brothers and Earline followed.³⁰ The move also brought Ted under the tutelage of Woody Hayes, the famed Ohio State coach in his second year of what would become one of the most celebrated coaching runs in college football history. Woody had a reputation as a nonsense leader who valued hard-work and commitment to the game almost more than anything else. In his 28 seasons as the Buckeyes' coach, he led the school to thirteen Big Ten Conference titles and five National Championships, the first of those was in 1954, two years after he took the job and one year after Ted arrived.³¹ Coach Hayes was beloved, a legend, even after getting fired in 1978 for punching a Clemson player in the nose after he intercepted an Ohio State pass.

Despite his size, 5'11", Ted was a powerful and skilled offensive guard, and played with the Freshman Football Team that fall of 1953.³² He earned his Freshman Sweater and Numerals that November and joined a fraternity, settling into his life as a college student, though struggling in his Spanish class, but generally finding success. His coach



Figure 5. Peoples Beer advertisement.

proved to be a powerful motivation in his life at this time, making sure he kept ahead in his courses, tutoring him when he needed it, and telling him that he was lucky to be there, that he had a chance to improve things not only for himself, but for other Black people as well.³³ Hayes was a big believer in recruiting from the Black community, and became one of the first to recruit Black players to a major college team. Despite the image he earned later as a shouting, wailing tyrant of the sideline, he seemed to genuinely care for his players, at least that was Ted's impression.

One day, the coach mentioned to Ted that they were going to try to get him another job. 'Good, I can always use a little more loot!' was Ted's response. Hayes snapped at him to get in his car, and then immediately drove them both to East Long Street, which was, according to Ted, the 'roughest ghetto area in Columbus.' He parked the car and looked at Ted. 'Take a look around here, son,' Hayes instructed him, 'Which world do you want to live in? This one or the one the university can offer? Don't ever call money, "loot".'³⁴ Ted would remember that lesson for the rest of his life.

That season, 1953, the Buckeyes went 6-3, and alumni and fans were already clamoring for Hayes to be replaced. Instead, the university kept him on and in 1954 he led the team to the first of three National Championships they claimed with him as head coach. Ted should have been part of that team, he might have even played in that game, or perhaps the championship of 1957, but instead, tragedy struck, forcing him off his path and down yet another road that would define his future.

On 3 June 1954, while laying bricks for a smokestack, 100 feet off the ground, Ted's oldest brother, Thomas, fell through the scaffolds and plunged to his death. On the same scaffolds were two of his brothers, Will and Richard, Thomas' twin, who saw him fall and reached out to try to save him, but was a split-second too late.³⁵ It was Thomas who had left the sharecropper shack so many years ago, who traveled north to find work, and who had sent home money when he had it. He had been working in Ohio as a stone mason since 1949, and all his siblings but two (his young sisters) had moved to Middletown, Ohio, to be close to him.

He had found work for his two other brothers and had helped his mom pay for the move to Montgomery to help Ted go to high school. The death crushed them all, but it seriously affected Ted. He later said that the reason he left Ohio State was because he wasn't very good and got injured.³⁶ But the consensus from his family is that was just a story he told to avoid the truth. In fact, he was simply heartbroken, unable to cope with his brother's death, and unable to concentrate on school or football. He dropped out of Ohio State that June and accepted another scholarship to Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In Marquette's 1957 yearbook, the Hilltop, Ted is pictured as a member of the varsity football team of 1956. That year, the yearbook notes, the team went winless 0-11. The same story held true for the following year as well, when Ted was again part of the winless varsity team in 1957. In only three more years the university would indefinitely end its intercollegiate football program citing the financial burden it put on the school (they claimed they lost \$50,000 to it the preceding year). Clearly, for Ted, the draw at Marquette was academics, not athletics, and a chance to forget the tragedy of Ohio. In the yearbook for his senior year, 1958, he's noted as a member of the 'Veteran's Brigade' and of the Sociology Club, and that year he graduated from Marquette University with a Bachelor of Science in sociology. He had finally achieved what his mother set out for him to achieve so many years before – his education. Now it came time to decide what to do with it.

The path that took him to this point in his life was wracked at every curve with tragedy. It was those experiences that would leave him, like many of his contemporaries from similar backgrounds, with an overwhelming desire to help others. This desire led him to the Milwaukee County government, where he was hired as a social worker with the most difficult assignment in the county. He was immediately responsible for the section of the city called the 'Inner Core,' the all-Black region of north Milwaukee. In this part of town, a small area with houses and apartments stacked on top of each other, was found all of the Black residents of the city. It wasn't that they wanted to live there, it was that they had no choice – nobody outside of this area would rent or sell to them. In fact, Ted himself lived there, as did everyone he associated with. It was a practice called redlining, in which financial institutions graded neighborhoods as desirable or undesirable, literally mapping out the city to determine whether or not to lend money within those areas. Areas with a high concentration of African Americans were considered undesirable, and so people rarely invested in them. In time, their conditions followed this lack of investment, and the housing became more pitiful and run-down, crime increased, and conditions worsened. It was a practice

that occurred in cities large and small all over the country, starting in the 1930's, and was especially pernicious in Milwaukee.³⁷

Settling into his new life, though, Ted worked diligently, trying to contact and help the many welfare recipients in the neighborhoods he was responsible for. It wasn't easy. At first nobody wanted to talk to him when he went to their houses and apartments to introduce himself. Eventually, they came around, and Ted became a valuable resource for those of the Inner Core who had little or no other options.

A true part of the community, Ted also began networking with other Black leaders in the region, and was beginning to make a name for himself among them. Many of these new associates were found at the church he'd joined, Saint Matthews Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, also located in the segregated area of the city. A number of those in attendance, indeed even the church itself, would play central roles in the upcoming battle for civil rights in Milwaukee.³⁸ But before all of that was to happen, Ted met another transplant from Alabama, a young woman named Pearl, who was working at the county hospital. Having never met, yet growing up only about 60 miles from each other, they quickly fell in love and were married at their church. It would be a lifelong partnership.

Up to this point in his life, and by all measurements, Ted could be considered an unequivocal success. Born in a sharecropper's shack on ten acres of Alabama dirt that his fatherless family was responsible for farming, he had by all rights defied the odds. There's little doubt that most of the children he attended his make-shift church-school with were still back on a farm in Alabama, or otherwise still living in poverty somewhere in the south. But Ted refused to define his life by where he came from, and instead he looked at where he could go, and then he went there. It's hard to say what shaped his fortitude, what made him so set on lifting himself above his past, but whatever it was it pushed him to ever-increasing achievement. By this point in his life, in his early 30's, he had graduated high school, left the slavery of tenant farming in the Cotton Belt, served in the U.S. military, received a football scholarship for a Big 10 college, played varsity football for a private university, graduated with bachelor's degrees, started a career and a family. Anyone would be proud of these accomplishments, but when considering who he was – a Black man in America in the late 1950s – these accomplishments are made much more profound.

In the coming years, Ted would prove he was as courageous as he was intelligent and ambitious. He would defy not only the odds, but the law, the authorities, and the power struc-

tures of the city of Milwaukee, the state of Wisconsin, and even the United States. His trajectory would eventually take him to Oshkosh and to a small brewery where he would face the biggest challenges of his life. That small brewery would test and fracture all the beliefs he'd formed over a lifetime of struggle.

But that brewery had been testing men for decades. In fact, it started out that way. The brewery, Peoples Brewing Company, was founded as a means of resistance two decades before Ted was even born. It was almost destiny that he should end up there.

Chapter 2 – A beer born of resentment

Nobody is really certain why William Glatz and Joseph Nigl had a falling out. Some suggest there was a face-to-face altercation at Nigl's tavern, while others point to Glatz' new rules and price changes, which most assuredly needled Nigl (well known for his short temper). Whatever the exact cause, it was no doubt Glatz' fault. As the president of Oshkosh Brewing Company (or OBC as it was called locally), the largest brewing concern in Oshkosh, he was known to be hard-nosed and no nonsense. But Nigl, too, had a reputation of being a tough businessman, especially when it came to the business of selling beer. When men as mulish and headstrong as these two crossed paths, a falling out was sure to happen eventually.

The relationship between Glatz and Nigl spanned two decades, back to when their fathers were doing business together. OBC supplied the beer sold at Nigl's tavern, and Nigl sold so much of it that they eventually sold OBC beer exclusively, becoming what was known as a 'tied-house' (the tavern was tied to the brewery and sold only their beer). In return, OBC paid for the bar equipment in the tavern, and the president at the time, August Horn, would often frequent the place for a mug or two. But all that changed in 1911, and OBC, not to mention the brewery scene in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, would never be the same again.

The Oshkosh Brewing Company was founded in 1894 with the merger of the three largest breweries in town: The Gambrianus Brewery, the Brooklyn Brewery and the Union Brewery. Their respective founders, Lorenz Kuenzl, August Horn, and John Glatz were immigrants from roughly the same part of the world (in and around Germany). Of the three, Horn was the only one who wasn't trained as a brewer in his homeland (Horn was a stone mason, but his brother-in-law had been a brewer and partner in his brewery). Their separate decisions to open breweries in Oshkosh were partly based on a number of factors, like the nearby freshwater source and the

abundance of local grain. But perhaps most of all their decisions were primarily based on the local population.

Much of northern Wisconsin had been settled by sweat-stained immigrants from the Germania region of Europe. For these people, beer was a cultural marker, not just a beverage. Each of these areas – from Bavaria to Bohemia – had its own preference and style. Bavaria, in fact, still has a beer purity law dating from 1516 called the *Reinheitsgebot*, which dictates that beer is only to be made from water, barley and hops (later, yeast was added).³⁹ The people from these areas had grown up drinking beer and had enjoyed it throughout their lives, right up until they immigrated to the United States. When they got to America, however, they found that much of the beer made and sold throughout the country was of the heavy type of ale common in England – dark and sweet. It would do for a time, but they sorely missed the type of beer they found at home. So, when immigrant brew-masters from Germany started making the crisper, lighter style of Lager beer they were used to, they almost literally couldn't get enough of it.

In the early days of beer making, for the three breweries that later merged anyway, business boomed in Oshkosh. Union and Brooklyn Breweries were located on the south side of the city and each saw enormous growth starting from the day they were founded. Gambrianus, on the other hand, located on the north side, had much more moderate growth, but it was still enough to draw business away from the other two. At that time beer was also a much more localized beverage, and so in whatever pocket of the city the brewery was situated, its beer was usually favored by the locals that surrounded it. However, in the 1880s, the Oshkosh breweries started to feel pressure from their competitors in Milwaukee, only 90 miles away. The larger of the three Oshkosh breweries – the Brooklyn Brewery – was capable of turning out 40,000 barrels of beer a year, while Union capped at about 30,000 barrels, and Gambrianus at only about 10,000.⁴⁰ Pabst in Milwaukee, by comparison, was producing a million barrels per year and distributing nationally. Schlitz and Miller were not far behind.⁴¹ Luckily the citizens of Oshkosh seemed to be loyal to the local beer producers – for the time being, anyway, but little by little the larger brewers were making in-roads.

Those larger breweries, the ones that would eventually threaten Oshkosh brewers (indeed small brewers around the nation), also had their own humble beginnings. Like Oshkosh, Milwaukee was settled by European immigrants, and many of them from Germany, Bavaria and other beer loving regions. Jacob Best, who immigrated to Milwaukee in 1844, was from such a region (Rhenish Hesse, west of the upper Rhine River), and had learned to brew at an early age. He founded his brewery upon arriving to Milwaukee and pro-

duced only 300 barrels in his first year. But through steady growth and smart management, his small brewery grew until it was producing over 100,000 barrels by 1874, and by 1898 it was brewing over one million barrels per year. By then it was owned by Frederick Pabst, the husband of Jacob Best's granddaughter, and the name had been changed to Pabst Brewing Company.⁴² Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company had a similar story. In 1849 the brewery produced only 150 barrels (it was still known at this time as the August Krug Brewery), but by 1886 it was renamed and brewing over 500,000 barrels per year. And lastly, Miller Brewing Company, which produced 300 barrels its first year, brewed over 80,000 barrels per year by 1888.⁴³

The output of these breweries, despite having origins comparable to the Oshkosh brewers, dwarfed their competitors to the north. As the Milwaukee brewers demonstrated exponential growth and nationwide distribution, their eyes turned to Oshkosh, one of the few cities in which they weren't out-selling the local beers. By the late 1880s, though, Milwaukee breweries had built distribution centers in and around Oshkosh. Their intentions were clear – they were going to battle the local brewers for control of Oshkosh beer sales.

Seeing this, and in the interest of self-preservation, the three Oshkosh breweries made the decision to merge in 1894. There was another brewery in the city, Rahr Brewing Company, but it was small and excluded from the new organization. The breweries that did merge were the largest and most notable – perhaps they thought that because of Rahr's size it had nothing to contribute. It didn't matter, Rahr would do just fine for itself for years. But for those merging, the future was going to be very bright. After the merger, they installed Kuenzl as brewmaster, John Glatz as vice-president and August Horn as president. Horn was a well-known and affable man about town, liked by both politician and tavern patron. He could always be counted on for generosity – or perhaps grandiosity. He was known to stop in at one of the many taverns selling OBC beer (like Nigl's tavern) to buy rounds for the customers. He was also known to extend enormous amounts of credit to the tavern owners, and rarely bothered to make timely collections. This was a practice that drove John Glatz' son, William Glatz, absolutely insane with anger. William Glatz, company treasurer, noted in 1896 that OBC was owed over \$20,000 dollars in past due accounts from tavern owners.⁴⁴ That bill would amount to almost \$600,000 today. But despite William Glatz' insistence that he stop, as long as Horn was still president that was the way business would be done.

When Horn died in 1904, however, OBC's cavalier approach to doing business was finally put to an end and the company was transformed into a disciplined brewery with

William Glatz firmly in command. William's father, John Glatz, had died in 1895, making William the de facto vice president (his mother was given the title of vice-president, but everyone knew that William held the position). Now, with William as president, things might run more efficiently, more profitably. And they did. Within four months of Horn's death, OBC announced it would stop the practice of giving beer or anything else for Christmas. Glatz also ended the exorbitant credit extensions and ensured that past-due accounts were collected on (tavern owners would now be required to pay in cash for their beer at delivery). And, as a final measure, no longer would the OBC president be buying rounds of beer for the locals at the neighborhood taverns.

The Oshkosh tavern owners, the people who actually sold the bulk of OBC's beer, viewed Glatz' changes with resentment. This was simply another reason to despise the new brewery president. After all, it was due to Glatz that the price of beer was raised \$1 a barrel in 1898 (the first price hike in decades). And as he dove headlong into improvement projects for OBC, especially his drive to construct a brand new, state of the art brewery in 1909, tavern-owners started to feel embittered. From their point of view, if a new brewery was going to be built, it would be built based on their hard work. Of those harboring such feelings, there was nobody really willing to do anything about it except an outspoken tavern owner named Joseph Nigl.

A Bavarian immigrant himself, Joseph Nigl made the journey to American when he was just a small boy. Originally settling in the Oshkosh area to farm in the 1870s, Nigl's father purchased a lot in town in 1881 and built a grocery store. The location also proved great for selling beer, and so it was soon a thriving tavern that served thirsty mill workers from the surrounding neighborhoods. OBC beer was popular among the locals, and the relationship between brewer and seller was both profitable and pleasant. So pleasant, in fact, that in 1897, Nigl sold the lot across the street to OBC. There are no records to indicate why he did this, but it's hard to believe he would have made such a sale if he had known what OBC would do with that property in the coming years. As it turned out OBC decided to create a new beer hall that competed directly with their neighboring customer, Joseph Nigl.

So it was that in 1911, perhaps because of the raised beer prices or the decision to stop buying gifts for their customers, or maybe because OBC stopped extending credit to tavern owners and opened the beer hall across the street, Nigl had apparently had enough. He decided he was going to go into the beer business and open his own brewery to compete with OBC's production monopoly. While it's hard to pin down the specific reason behind his decision, the bridge too far might have been seeing the size and scale of the OB-

C's massive new brewery with a price tag of over \$90,000 (over \$2 million today). Many tavern owners considered the cost paid for by their labor, and the rights of labor were on the minds of many in Oshkosh at the time.

In nearby Milwaukee, in fact, the labor movement was in full swing. The Milwaukee Labor Reform Association was agitating for 8-hour work days, and many industries were forming their own unions, including the lumber and brewing industries, both of which organized the workers in Oshkosh as well. In 1910, most of the Milwaukee city council seats, county board seats, and mayor's office, were won by members of the socialist party. Emil Seidel, newly elected mayor of Milwaukee, became the first socialist mayor in America.⁴⁵ And, also in 1910, Victor Berger became the first socialist U.S. Representative when Milwaukee elected him to Congress. The next year, due to legislative activism from the labor unions, Wisconsin even passed the nation's first Workmen's Compensation Act,⁴⁶ which required employers provide medical attention for injured workers and compensation for loss of life or limb. Wisconsin, it seemed was a hotbed for socialist action and thought.

And so, in this spirited age of the organized labor movement, Joseph Nigl began talking to fellow tavern owners about OBC's reign as the city's primary source of beer. What he found was that a number of them were harboring similar feelings – a sense of abuse by OBC and lack of appreciation by the company that was getting rich off of their efforts. By early May, 1911, Nigl had recruited a formidable group with which to start the new brewery. They included men like Reinhold E. Thom, a fellow tavern owner who, like Nigl, had previously been a loyal customer of the OBC brand, but who also found himself in direct competition with OBC when they opened a slew of taverns in his neighborhood to directly compete with him. Nigl also found local affluent businessmen who weren't associated with OBC directly, but who saw an opportunity for a profitable enterprise. Lastly, Nigl enlisted William Kargus who had worked for OBC as a bookkeeper before running afoul of Glatz and leaving the brewery in March of that year. Apparently, there was some lasting animosity between them, because Glatz tried to withhold stock options that were owed to Kargus after their separation (after threatening to sue, Kargus got a little less than half of what he was owed, which would be \$140,000 today). Kargus, young and intelligent, and possessing not only an insider's knowledge of OBC operations, but also a massive grudge against Oshkosh's largest brewery, promised to be an important ally for Nigl and his new business.

From the start, Nigl and his associates had decided to organize their brewery's structure much differently than that of

OBC (which was controlled by just a few), it was a structure that apparently drew inspiration from the socialist movement in local politics. Calling it at first the 'Cooperative Brewing Company,' they decided to sell stock in the brewery to the public, and they further decided that no one person or business could hold a majority share. What's more, stockholders and tavern-owners would share the profits among them, making the business a truly cooperative affair. When they filed paperwork with the Wisconsin Secretary of State, they proposed eleven different names for the brewery, including the initial choice, Cooperative Brewing Company. The Secretary of State, however, chose a different one: Peoples Brewing Company.

By the beginning of 1912 the project had received promises from enough area taverns to ensure the business would be immediately profitable. They had also issued shares to almost 200 stockholders, named their officers (making Nigl president), and picked the location for the brewery. Whether it was designed to annoy Glatz or not, the place they chose was directly across the street from OBC. Every day, traveling to and from work, Glatz would get to view the competition he helped create through his own policies. However, it would take another year and a half before Peoples would actually make any products.

In June of 1913, after a series of delays brought on by a shortage of funds, labor issues, and Wisconsin's bitter winters, Peoples Brewing Company finally started making beer. By November there were twenty-five taverns selling Peoples Beer, and many of them were selling it exclusively. Joseph Nigl's plan was quickly seeing success, and tavern owners throughout Oshkosh were able to provide an alternative to the domineering practices of OBC. For their part, though, OBC had already decided to become the leader in locally bottled beer, so while they were losing some tavern customers, they were still safely selling more beer for home consumption. Peoples, on the other hand, was bottling also, but just not in the magnitude that OBC was. Instead, Nigl's aim (as a tavern owner himself) was to focus on taverns and to sell them mainly beer kegs for draught sales. This strategy would see Peoples through some of the most difficult times for small breweries.

Neither strategy, though, would help the breweries – any breweries – on 1 July 1919. On that date the Wartime Prohibition Act went into effect, prohibiting brewers from making their product. The intention was to save grain due to the war effort, however, World War I had ended in November of 1918. But before they could start making beer again, brewers faced the passage of the 18th Amendment, national prohibition, which went into effect in January of 1920. The breweries, with that legislation, were effectively shut down. The

next thirteen years would be difficult for them, regardless of size or location. Most every brewery in the nation searched for ways to stay in business. Almost all tried their hand at making 'near-beer,' a beverage with the look and taste of beer, but without the alcohol. When this didn't prove profitable, they started making non-alcoholic beverages, like juices or flavored soda.⁴⁷ Eventually, they would make whatever they could in order to survive. By the time prohibition was repealed in 1933, the brewing industry in America had been decimated. Of the over 13,000 breweries that had been open in 1915, only 746 actually reopened in 1934.⁴⁸ And of those that emerged on the other side of the 18th amendment unscathed, all three in Oshkosh - Rahr, OBC and Peoples - were included.

But when Peoples and OBC began producing their product again, they found that much had changed. Not only did they find less competition, but they also found that consumers' taste for beer had evolved. Thirteen years without commercially produced brew created a generation with a taste for higher alcohol thanks to bootleg liquor, a fact that would benefit Peoples over the others. While OBC was making a light, low-alcohol lager before prohibition, Peoples was making a richer, higher alcohol beer that came to be identified as blue-collar beer. And so OBC had to create a new recipe to appeal to the new tastes of consumers, while Peoples merely picked up where it left off, making beer with much more alcohol and taste. Once again, Peoples was a favorite of the working class, and the taps at the taverns of Oshkosh again flowed with Peoples. At the same time, the company also returned to their strategy of focusing on kegged beer for bars instead of packaged beer (which OBC renewed their enthusiasm for). They were helped in this effort, although completely by accident, with a by-product of the end of prohibition. With repeal of the 18th amendment came a slew of new laws to regulate the production and sale of alcohol. One of those laws ended the tied-house system that breweries had used for a century to get their beer (and their beer exclusively) into taverns. With the end of this type of system, every bar and saloon in Oshkosh could serve any beer they chose, and often they chose a variety instead of any single brand. Starting in 1934, much to OBC's dismay, Peoples became available at most every tavern in the area.

After prohibition, brewers also quickly learned that consumers had changed their preference for where they drank. Before prohibition most beer was consumed in bars from taps, and only about 10-15% of beer was bottled. Beer in bottles – the only viable package you could buy beer in – was simply much more expensive than beer on tap. Plus, keeping it cold with old fashioned iceboxes needing a fresh supply of ice was just not practical for the average household. But then, in 1935, the American Can Company was able to successfully

can beer for the first time, and the Kreuger Beer Company of Virginia became the first brewery to sell it in such a package. After seeing their success, many other brewers (including and especially the larger brewers) followed suit. Also, the use of home refrigeration became commonplace in houses across the United States, making it easy to keep beer cold at home. What's more, this new form of packaged beer was easier to ship and distribute long distances, making it more convenient to sell beer outside of a brewer's region. And so, subsequently, packaged beer grew in popularity, and the sales of draught beer fell every year after 1935, from a high of 70% of sales to only 14% in 1970.⁴⁹

Those breweries that were prepared for this shift prospered and grew while those unprepared were forced to exit the industry. Larger brewers had been laying groundwork for such changes since prohibition went into effect. Brewers like Anheuser-Busch, Schlitz, Pabst and Miller had spent the thirteen dry years purchasing refrigeration equipment and trucks, and perfecting packaging and distribution methods. Such moves were made to bolster the new industries they entered, like soda and near-beer, but when prohibition ended, they were in the position to produce and ship their product far and wide. The result was massive growth for a handful of brewers. The largest five in 1938 were Anheuser-Busch (2 million barrels per year), Pabst (1.6 million barrels per year), Schlitz (1.6 million barrels per year), Ballentine (1.1 million barrels per year), and Schafer (1 million barrels per year). By comparison, OBC produced less than 50,000 barrels and Peoples produced less than 40,000 barrels.

Smaller breweries simply couldn't compete with these new norms. From the 746 that reopened in 1934, only 468 would survive until 1945. By 1970, that number had dwindled to 154. The regional breweries were doomed. Between huge yearly budgets with which to pay for national advertising and distribution, and the ability to brew millions of gallons of beer every year, not to mention a host of shadier methods they used to sell their products, the big breweries slowly squeezed the Oshkosh brewers, as well as other small brewers nationwide, out of business. The first one to fall was the noble Rahr, starting its production in 1865 and then ending it in 1956. When it first opened it had a brewing capacity of 1,500 barrels a year, making it the largest in the city. By the time it closed it was the smallest, and it just could not turn a profit. The next to go was the proud Oshkosh Brewing Company, which brewed its last batch in September of 1971, and was on pace to brew less than 20,000 barrels that year. The surprising holdout, the only one that was weathering the storm better than any of the others, was also the youngest, the upstart Peoples Brewing Company. Its strategy of focusing on taverns had continued to help it earn enough to survive. It was not growing, not by a longshot, but the modera-

tion it had shown gave it the ability to tread the new rough waters of competition while the surrounding brewers went under. If it kept to its strategy of focusing on kegged beer, it might actually pull through. Only a dramatic shift in policy would make the company as vulnerable as the rest, and that's exactly what would happen.

Conclusion

In 1970, Theodore A. (Ted) Mack Sr., along with a consortium of Black businessmen, bought the Peoples Brewing Company in Oshkosh Wisconsin. But the story about Ted and Peoples Beer is about much more than this. It is about one man's courage to do what nobody dreamed was possible in America at that time. No black man had ever owned a brewery in that country, and certainly not one in the American Midwest - 'Beer Country' - where most of the white residents had grandparents who still spoke German and remembered living under the Kaiser's reign. But Ted Mack was more than just a dreamer, he was a doer. The bravery and stubbornness he gleaned over his extraordinary life – growing up a sharecropper, fighting in the Korean conflict, playing college football, marching for civil rights – would be needed as never before in his venture.

Note

The above text is taken from the forthcoming *Peoples Beer: Brewing and Bigotry in America*, which tells the story of Ted's struggle to enter the white man's corporate world and of all the adversaries and clashes he faced on his journey. From battling the biggest brewers in America, to facing down racists and bigots in the Midwest, the tale is sometimes tragic, sometimes profound, but thoroughly entertaining. *Peoples Beer: Brewing and Bigotry in America* is complete and currently looking for a publisher. It was written based on extensive archival research and interviews. More information, including an email sign up to receive alerts about the book's journey, can be found at <http://www.peoplesbeerbook.com>.

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38. The church was immensely important to the civil rights movements in Milwaukee and Wisconsin in general, for a full accounting of its history and significance, see the unpublished doctoral dissertation "In God We Trust": Religion, The Cold War, and Civil Rights in Milwaukee, 1947-1963 by Kevin D. Smith.
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40. A large bulk of the material for this chapter came from Akin, R., and Reiherzer, L. (2012). op. cit.
41. Tremblay, V.J. and Tremblay, C.H. (2005). *The U.S. Brewing Industry: Data Analysis and Economic Analysis*. Cambridge MA: The MIT Press:
42. There is no written authority on the very colorful history of Pabst Brewing Company like the very in-depth Cochran, T.C. (1948) *The Pabst Brewing Company: The History of an American Business*. New York: New York University Press.
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45. As a political group, socialists were popular especially in Milwaukee, as they espoused the importance of infrastructure and municipal services. The term 'sewer socialism' was coined for this group of politicians by a rival in 1934 because it was said that socialists were always bragging about the excellent sewers they had installed for the community. For a very comprehensive discussion about socialism in Wisconsin, see Lorence, J. J. (1983). "'Dynamite for the Brain": The Growth and Decline of Socialism in Central and Lakeshore Wisconsin, 1910-1920', *Wisconsin Magazine of History*. 66(4), pp.251-273.
46. Guyton, G.P. (1999). 'A Brief History of Workers' Compensation', *The Iowa Orthopaedic Journal*. 19, pp.106-110.
47. Breweries did anything they could to survive, most all switched to making soft drinks, since their brewing equipment could easily be modified for it. None of it was ever that popular, though, and most breweries simply went under. Still other diversified even more (Coors, famously, tried its hand at making ceramics). For a comprehensive history of America's brewing industry, see Ogle, M. (2019). *Ambitious Brew: A History of American Beer*. Houston, TX: Blue Willow Books.
48. Tremblay, V.J. and Tremblay, C.H. (2005) op. cit.
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