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BRITISH BREWERS IN NORTH AMERICA—GEORGE WEATHERALL SMITH

MARTYN CORNELL

George Weatherall Smith, who died in 1872 after a career of nearly 50 years running breweries in New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia and Ontario, was born in 1799 in Canwick, a small village just outside the city of Lincoln in eastern England, to a wealthy landowner and farmer named Thomas Smith and his wife Ann, née Weatherall. He very probably learnt to brew on the 450-acre farm his father ran in the village of Waddington, a few miles from Canwick.

Thomas Smith, despite his wealth, was a Dissenter in religion and a Radical in politics, and in 1819, sickened by what he saw as the corruption of British life, and probably disheartened by the state of the British economy in the slump that followed the end of the Napoleonic Wars, he sent his oldest son, also called Thomas, and then aged 22, to explore opportunities in the United States.[1]

Thomas junior's report was evidently satisfactory, and Thomas senior left England for New York in October 1821, eventually settling in Frankford, then just outside Philadelphia, where he rented a small farm. Thomas's family, including his wife, daughters, Thomas junior, and younger son George, joined him on the Frankford farm in 1822.[2] However, Thomas senior died at Frankford in September 1823, aged 57, after less than two years in the United States.[3] His wife and daughters returned home to England, while George and Thomas junior stayed on in the U.S.

The following autumn George, now 26, was leasing the brewery in Anthony Street, New York, just off Broadway,[4] that had been earlier occupied by Peter Snyder & Co. The concern was also known as Jones's brewery, and had been put up for rent in March 1824 after Snyder's death.[5] Under its new occupiers the business was called G.W. Smith & Co., and was selling 'winter stock Beer of the first quality,' and 'rich Cream Beer, similar to that made in Philadelphia.' One source says George ran the brewery with his brother Thomas.[6] Certainly, the business was listed as Thomas Smith & Co., brewers, on the corner of Anthony Street and Broadway in 1826.[7] The Anthony Street brewery and maltings were put up for letting again in July 1826,[8] and Thomas Smith & Co. had moved to James Street in New York by the time the 1827 New York directory was prepared. The firm was gone by 1828.

After New York, George W. Smith worked for Uri Burt's ale and porter brewery in Albany,[10] before joining Brown and Verner in Pittsburgh, where he was employed between 1829 and 1833. Here he was allegedly, according to an account from 1890, 'paid the largest salary west of the Allegheny mountains for this position, the sum paid being $500 ... receiving for the last two years he was with them a salary of $1,000 per year'.[11] Unfortunately this same account completely garbles the account of Smith's arrival in the United States, which makes it an unreliable witness. In 1833 Smith moved to Canada, opening a brewery in St. Thomas, 15 miles south of London, Ontario, with William Peacey.

Peacey's cousin was Samuel Eccles, born in 1802 in Northleach, eleven miles south-east of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, England.[12] Eccles left home in 1824, and travelled to New York, where he appears to have worked as a brewer, before moving on to Kansas, New Orleans, the West Indies and Colombia, returning to England in 1827. Five years later, Eccles, his parents and other members of the family emigrated to Ontario, Samuel bringing with him from Gloucestershire a flock of Cotswold sheep, and family and flock settled in St. Thomas. It seems highly probably that Smith and Eccles had known each other in New York, and quite likely that Eccles had called on Smith to help his cousin out in starting the brewery in St. Thomas. In Ontario Smith married Eccles's sister, Mary, but moved back to the United States following her early death just a month after their marriage.[13]

The Union brewery on Liberty Street in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania began when Messrs. William Hamilton and James



Figure 1. George Weatherall Smith – photo courtesy of Oglebay Institute.

Brown announced in July 1813 that they were 'about erecting an extensive brewery in this Town and as of November next will have it in complete operation.' The brewery, they said, would be supplying bottled ale and porter, and draughtt porter and strong beer — 'They wish to purchase a quantity of Barley, for which the highest price in Cash will be paid'.[14] Hamilton and Brown were still in partnership in 1815.[15] The brewery was 'a pile of smoking ruins' in December 1825, after a fire that leveled most of the area between Liberty, Penn, St. Clair and Irvine Streets.[16] It was rebuilt and continued as the Pittsburgh Brewery, run by Messrs. Brown and Verner. Smith joined, or rejoined, Brown and Verner on his return from Canada in 1834, becoming a partner in the firm in 1837, and continuing on his own account from 1839.[17] At the same time he moved the brewery to Penn Street.

Smith was both a brewer and maltster, and as well as offering brown stout, pale and amber ale 'of superior quality' in 1845, he was also selling malt made from barley, wheat and rye.[18] He also sold hops — in the spring of 1848 he was advertising hops for sale at the Pittsburgh brewery from Eastern and Western New York, and Belmont County, Ohio.[19] In June that year, Smith announced that he had left the Penn Street premises and moved his whole business to the Point brewery site in Pittsburgh he had acquired two years earlier.[20] The Pittsburgh brewery on Penn Street, with all its brewing apparatus was offered for sale or rent, but appears to have found no takers.[21]

The Point brewery originated in a concern founded by Peter Shiras, born in Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, Scotland in 1734, who emigrated to America in 1768 with his older brother Alexander, settling first in Philadelphia but later moving to Mount Holly, New Jersey, when his sons were born in the 1770s and 1780s. His second son, George, born 1774, was sent to Pittsburgh with the New Jersey Militia in 1794 to help suppress the 'Whiskey Rebellion,' a revolt against taxes on distilled spirits centred on western Pennsylvania.[22] George Shiras decided to settle in Pittsburgh, and persuaded his parents and brothers to join him. Peter Shiras bought the site of the partly ruined Fort Pitt in Pittsburgh, and in partnership with a Philadelphia merchant named Robert Smith, set up a brewery there in 1795, having decided that

> By means of a brewery of his own, he could supply the rapidly increasing number of taverns with the porter, ale and beer demanded not only by the native population, but by the emigrants swarming westward, of which as many as two or three thousand at a time could now and then be seen swarming about the borough.[23]

Shiras bought Robert Smith out for £1,750 a year later, and ran the brewery with his son George for six years, until, in 1802 he sold it back to Robert Smith, with an agreement that George should continue as manager. Robert Smith soon passed ownership of the brewery on to James O'Hara, a former quartermaster general with the U.S. Army, and owner of a glass factory. O'Hara had been running a brewery nine miles south of Pittsburgh in McKeesport, founded in 1798 in partnership with a local whiskey distiller, John Reed, of Reedsburg (today Pleasant Hills).[24] The pair exported porter, beer and whiskey down the Ohio and Mississippi rivers to Natchez and New Orleans: a letter to O'Hara from the New Orleans merchant William Kenner suggests some of the problems that breweries faced when shipping their beer long distances:

> Your Pittsburgh Porter would also sell immediately at the prices, but unless it can be made different from that sent by Mr Spraul, you will agree with me that it will not answer, the porter is good but for want of age or some other cause it cannot be confined in the bottles: out of the 20 barrels sent by Spraul but 20 Dozen came to hand, and from every appearance I incline to believe it was not for want of attention in Spraul, for a number of bottles burst after it had been put in the cellars.[25]

Reed sold his share in the McKeesport brewery to O'Hara in 1802,[26] but rather than carry on brewing there, O'Hara acquired the former Shiras operation, which became known as the Point brewery. In February 1803, O'Hara announced that he had gone into partnership with 'Mr Joseph Coppinger (Porter Brewer from Europe)' at the Point brewery and urged 'neighbouring farmers in general to raise considerable crops of spring and fall Barley the ensuing year, as ... as ten thousand bushels may be required during the present year' — implying that the pair were hoping to brew 3,000 barrels of beer.[27] Coppinger was actually from Midleton in County Cork, Ireland, where his family were brewers.[28] He had arrived in New York in 1802, and by January 1803 he was in Philadelphia, where he advertised his services in the local newspaper, and was picked up by O'Hara, who was himself born in County Mayo, in the west of Ireland, and doubtless happy to have the help of a fellow Irishman. However, Coppinger lasted only weeks at the Point, writing from Pittsburgh to John Carroll, Bishop of Baltimore, in March 1803 that 'the violent and uncontrolled resentment of the parties (three in number) who conducted the business before me, feeling their pride hurt by my interference, induced me to quietly withdraw and give up the contemplated advantage'.[29]

(Coppinger wandered the young United States for the next seven years, before arriving in New York, where, in December 1811, Joseph Coppinger & Co. opened The New Brewery on Deane Street, Brooklyn, brewing 'Porter, Pale Ale and Table-beer of superior quality, transparency and flavour'.[30] In 1815, he published *The American Practical Brewer and Tanner*. This contained three recipes for porter, probably

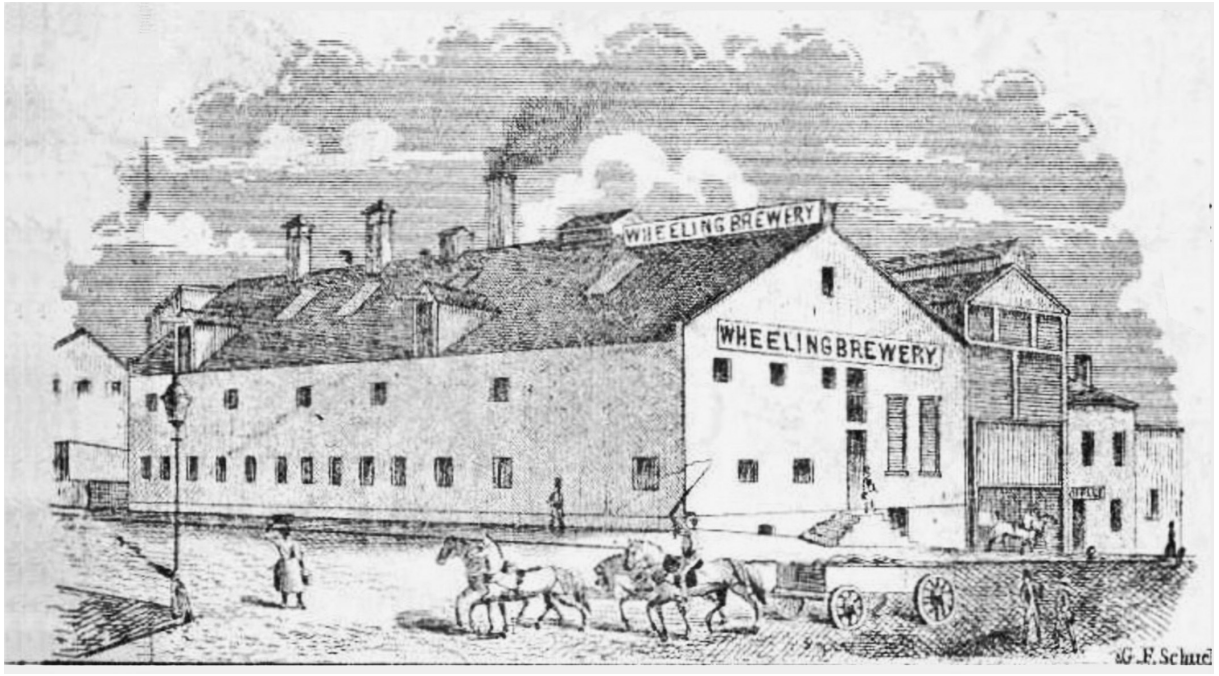


Figure 2. The Wheeling brewery as depicted on a billhead circa 1860.

based on Irish practice from the years when Coppinger worked in Ireland, though parts of the book, at least, were copied from Richard Shannon's *A Practical Treatise on Brewing*, published in London in 1805.)

The Point brewery meanwhile continued under the management of George Shiras. In November 1806 Shiras was advertising that 'Porter fit for the Natchez and New-Orleans market can be furnished at any time at seven dollars ninety cents per barrel'.[31] O'Hara died in 1819, and the brewery continued in the ownership of the Shiras family, with George Shiras junior taking over control in 1825, when the concern, the largest in the city, was making 2,500 barrels of porter and 1,500 barrels of beer a year.[32] The brewery moved home in 1837, to a site at Pitt Street, near Penn Street, when it was turning out 6,000 bottles of porter, ale and beer a year. Control of the business passed in 1840 to George Shiras junior's younger brothers, first Oliver and then, from 1844, Charles.[33] Two years later, in 1846, it came into the hands of George Weatherall Smith. Smith announced that he would "continue to have a constant supply" of ale, porter, brown stout, and X and XX draught ale.[34]

Smith then acquired the brewery in Wheeling, 45 miles to the south-west in what was then still the Virginia panhandle, in 1848. It had been founded as the Wheeling Brewery by Henry Moore in 1822,[35] becoming Moore and Morris when Thomas Morris junior joined as a partner in 1828.[36] A visitor that year found it an 'extensive' property, 100 feet by 50 feet, and "strongly built of brick and stone." It was brewing around 2,600 barrels a year, split 47 percent porter and 53 percent beer.[37] The brewery was handily placed on the Ohio river to reach markets such as Louisville.[38]

Smith ran the two concerns, in Wheeling and Pittsburgh, side by side: in 1854 he was advertising his ales, porters and brown stout in a newspaper in Plymouth, Ohio, 145 miles from Pittsburgh and 120 from Wheeling, declaring that he would be commencing brewing for the season in both Pittsburgh and Wheeling on 1 August and would be ready to fulfil orders for his 'Ales &c' about the tenth of August, 'except Kennett [sic], which will be ready about the First of October.' Kennet ale, named for the village in Wiltshire, England, where it was first made by a brewer called George Butler,[39] was a style of strong Old Ale, 1090º original gravity, 8% alcohol,[40] made by a number of American ale brewers in the 19th century.

In 1857 George W. Smith & Co. was advertising six different ales in casks – porter at $7 a barrel exclusive of cask; X ale, XX ale and 'American Bitter Ale' at $8 a barrel; and Kennet ale and Brown Stout at $9 a barrel. Four beers were available in bottle, all at $1.25 a dozen: Kennet Ale, East India Pale Ale, Porter and Brown Stout. The EIPA was evi-

dently the same as the American Bitter Ale, for the firm declared that 'Smith's American Bitter Ale is guaranteed equal in flavor and keeping qualities to Allsopp's and Bass's imported English East India Pale Ale, so celebrated all over the world'.[41]

Smith continued to brew in Pittsburgh until around 1860, when that concern closed,[42] although in 1857 it had the capacity to brew 14,000 barrels a year and produce 100,000 bushels of malt,[43] and he concentrated on the brewery in Wheeling. As well as the brewery, he had bought a 400-acre farm just outside the town, and named it Waddington Farm, after the family home in Lincolnshire. In 1861 the Wheeling brewery was producing American Bitter Ale, 'Smith's Champagne Ale' and Kennet Ale ('Highly recommended to Dyspeptives and Consumptives.')[44]

Smith had evidently kept up his contacts with his former Canadian friends, since in 1859 he took on as an apprentice at the Wheeling brewery John Labatt, third son of John Kinder Labatt.[45] J.K. Labatt was running a brewery in London, Ontario where he had earlier been in partnership with Smith's former brother-in-law Samuel Eccles. Two years after the start of the Civil War, Smith moved temporarily in March 1863 to Prescott, Ontario, on the St. Lawrence, 420 miles north-east of Wheeling, to take on William Ellis's Prescott brewery.[46] Ellis had opened his brewery in 1849, and had earlier been brewing East India Pale Ale, X, XX and XXX ales and Stout Porter, draft and bottled.[47] Under Smith the brewery continued to make ale, stout and porter. Several reasons have been advanced for Smith's move, including high grain prices caused by the war, the uncertainty and danger posed by the war situation, and also, it has been claimed, the alleged fact that Smith sympathized with the Confederate cause. The Confederacy was highly unpopular in Wheeling and the surrounding area of West Virginia, with the district in the middle of separating from Virginia itself and joining the North as a new state even as Smith set up in Prescott.[48] However, given Smith's father's Radical politics, it would be surprising that George would support the South.

Smith, who had brought John Labatt junior with him back to Canada, only stayed in Prescott for a year, returning to Wheeling in the spring of 1864. He apparently offered to lease the brewery to John junior, who preferred to go and work at the family brewery in London, Ontario. Instead, the Prescott brewery was taken on by John Labatt senior's two older sons, Robert and Ephraim, who were running it in May 1864 as Labatt Brothers, and again producing ales and stout porter.[49] John Labatt junior is said to returned from Wheeling with a recipe for India Pale Ale that he had learnt to brew at Wheeling, and which he subsequently produced at the London brewery:[50] if so, this would have been the 'American Bitter Ale'. However, it could equally well have been Ellis's EIPA recipe from Prescott.

A description of the Wheeling Brewery in January 1865 noted that the cellars, nearly as large as the lot upon which the brewery stood, 'were lit by gas made at a gas works on the site'.[51] In the autumn of 1865, Smith, by now 66, retired from the business. He had married twice after the death of his first wife, first to a widow named Elizabeth Faddington, from Yorkshire, in 1834, who bore him a daughter and two sons, and then after her death around 1863, another widow, Ellen Darlington, whose son Henry ran a brewery on First Avenue, Pittsburgh with Joseph M. Carson. In November 1865 Smith announced that he had sold the Wheeling Brewery to his stepson, Henry Darlington,[52] who continued brewing porter and brown stout, and X, XX, Kennett, bitter and champagne ales,[53] before it was leased to a trio of Wheeling businessmen called Reilly, Barnes and Hobbs. They held it until the spring of 1871, under the name 'Smith's Wheeling Brewery,' when their lease ran out, and they decamped to the Eagle brewery on Smith Street, Wheeling.[54]

George Smith's youngest son, Alfred Eccles Smith—his middle name commemorating George's first wife — was born in Pittsburgh in 1843, had worked in his father's brewery from 1861, and continued as brewer in Wheeling after his stepbrother Henry Darling acquired the business. After three years. Alfred then left and worked for Peter Ballantine and Son in Newark, New Jersey, at the time the largest brewery in the United States, for three more years. Returning to Wheeling in 1871, just before his father died in 1872, aged 73, Alfred took back his father's old brewery in partnership with a man named Arthur M. Teece, likely a son of the John Teece who was a brewer at George Smith's brewery in 1865.[55] Alfred and Arthur ran the business as Smith & Co, with George described as 'Special Partner' in the business.[56]

The partnership between Alfred Smith and Arthur Teece dissolved in 1877, and the business was reorganized as a joint stock company, with a president and manager, and Alfred in charge of the brewing department.[57] Then in 1878 Alfred moved his business to the former Brockhardt Brothers brewery on Market Street, Wheeling. The Market Street brewery had been opened by Francis Hegner in 1840,[58] who sold it to Frank (Francis) J. Rothacker in 1853.[59] Rothacker dug cellars into the solid rock below the brewery at a cost of $22,000, one going back 125 feet into the hill, which maintained a steady cool temperature throughout the year.[60] The Brockhardts acquired the brewery in the spring of 1875, but made just 185 barrels of beer that year.[61]

GEO. W. SMITH. C. HARTWELL.

GEO. W. SMITH & Co.

PITT STREET, PITTSBURGH, PENN'A.

CONTINUE THE BUSINESS OF

BREWING, MALTING

AND

DEALING IN HOPS,

As heretofore, at Pittsburgh, Pa. and Wheeling, Va. and will be happy to supply with these commodities, old and new customers, on their usual liberal terms. The highest market price in cash is always paid for Barley, and contracts with growers for a series of years, are made on liberal terms.

PRICES OF ALE, PORTER AND BROWN STOUT,

(EXCLUSIVE OF CASKS.)

X Ale, -	per barrel,	$8,00	XX Ale, -	per barrel,	$8,00
Kennet Ale,	"	9,00	Porter, -	"	7,00
American Bitter Ale,		8,00	Brown Stout,	"	9,00

All these in half barrels, at half these prices. No casks less than half barrels are put up.

PRICES OF CASKS.

Barrels, iron hooped, $2; Barrels, wood hooped, $1,25; Half Barrels, iron hooped, $1,50; Half Barrels, wood hooped, $1; these are always charged with their contents, but on their return, (free of charge) the money paid for them is refunded. Best metal Spigots for drawing Ale are sold at $1,50; ditto with separate key, $1,75.

PRICES OF THESE ALES, &c. IN PINT BOTTLES.

Ale, Kennet, -	per doz.	$1,25	Porter, - -	per doz.	$1,25
Ale, East India Pale, do.		1,25	Brown Stout,	"	1,25

A small extra charge is made for barrels or boxes for packing.

These Ales, &c. are put up labeled, wired and tin foiled in the same style as like articles imported, to which they are superior in richness and flavor; and they are highly recommended by the medical profession as tonics for invalids, and others in delicate health.

Smith's American Bitter Ale is guaranteed equal in flavor and keeping qualities to Allsop's and Bass' imported English East India Ale, so celebrated all over the world.

N. B. In returning empty casks, prepay freight and send Bill of Lading or Rail Road Receipts. Brewers and Distillers supplied with Malt and Hops of superior quality, on most reasonable terms.

Figure 3. Advertisement from *The Pittsburgh Quarterly Trade Circular* vol. 1 no. 1, October 1857.

Alfred Smith was initially in partnership at the Market Street brewery with George Kinghorn,[62] who had been born in Carrington, Midlothian, Scotland in 1842 and who had emigrated to the United States with his family in 1851.[63] Kinghorn left the partnership in 1880, after just two years, and Alfred continued on his own: in 1887 he was still brewing 'Smith's celebrated Kennet pale and dark stale ales and porter, in bottles, delivered free to any part of the city'.[64] Five years later, in 1892, he was scattering the local daily paper with aphorisms: ''Alf-an'-'Alf, Smith's fine porter and cream ale, the best drink at this season;' 'You're Glad You're Alive if you drink Smith's ale and porter;' 'Smith's Ale has been a household word in Wheeling for three-quarters of a century, and is better now than ever'.[65] This last claim, of course, was wildly ahistoric. A bottling plant was added to the brewery in 1897, but five years later, in 1902, it closed for good.[66]

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