

# Chicago's Still A Beer-Drinking Town

**Despite 173 Years of Meddling Preachers, Politicians, and Even Beer Famines, the Frothy Beverage Continues to Put a Smile on the Faces of Chicagoland Beer Drinkers**

CHICAGO, IL – Aug. 21 (SEND2PRESS NEWSWIRE) – While libraries are filled with scores of books about Chicago's colorful history, few acknowledge the political, social, and economic impact of the city's once powerful brewing industry. When the Haas & Sulzer Brewery opened its doors in 1833, the town's population of only 200 managed to guzzle down its first year's output of 600 barrels in record time. Chicago was on its way to becoming the beer-drinking town that it is today, says Bob Skilnik, author of the just-released "BEER: A History of Brewing in Chicago" (\$24.95, Hardcover, 416 pages, Barricade Books, ISBN 1569803129).



The brewery's popularity and profitability garnered the interest of Chicago's first mayor, William B. Ogden, who joined in as a business partner.

"Chicago's early brewers were political figures, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, millionaires, socialites and scoundrels," notes the author. "By the turn of the 19th century, the local brewing community was no longer perceived as a rough and tumble group of mostly German immigrants, but one of wealth and power."

National Prohibition was supposed to stop the brewing and selling of beer in the Windy City, but beer continued to flow in its 10,000 speakeasies, courtesy of bootlegging genius Johnny Torrio. "When most people think of Prohibition-era beer in Chicago, they also think of Al Capone, but Torrio was really the man who kept Chicagoans supplied with suds. Capone just got all the good press," argues Skilnik.

Long after the bloody bootlegger battles of the 1920s, Chicago continued as a battleground for local and out-of-town breweries, beer marketers, and distributors. During the '70s and '80s, Chicago sat in the center of an amber rectangle, running from La Crosse, Wisconsin down to St. Louis and then over to Detroit and back to Milwaukee. With a large population of beer drinkers, and the local brewing industry drying up, the Chicago market drew the attention of everybody brewing in the region – G. Heileman, Anheuser-Busch, Stroh, Schlitz, Pabst and Miller.

Using Chicago as a background, BEER, also delves into the reasons why

national beers such as Schlitz, Stroh, Pabst and G. Heileman's Old Style brand have faded as Chicago's favorite beers. "Old Style was so popular in Chicago during the 1980s that an industry joke had it being used in the majority of Chicagoland baptisms," says Skilnik with a smile. Ironically, nostalgic brews like Schlitz and Pabst Blue Ribbon are becoming popular again with younger beer drinkers in Illinois, so much so that Pabst will be moving its headquarters from San Antonio, Texas to Woodridge, Illinois.

Included in the book's back material is a complete listing of every brewery that operated in Chicago since 1833, including addresses and dates of operation, and a self-guided tour of some of Chicago's remaining brewery structures. This material will be valuable for historians, genealogists, and collectors of breweriana.

### **About the Author**

Bob Skilnik is an alumnus of Chicago's Siebel Institute of Technology – the oldest school of brewing technology in the U.S. – where he earned a degree in brewing technology. He is the former associate editor for the American Breweriana Journal, a contributor to the Chicago Tribune's Good Eating food section, trade journals, magazines and newspapers. He has appeared on ABC's "The View," the Fox News Channel, ESPN2, and Chicago's WTTW. BEER: A History of Brewing in Chicago is his fifth book.

For more information on the product, or to order online, visit [www.chicagolandbeerhistory.com](http://www.chicagolandbeerhistory.com) or local bookstores.

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