

A History of the Former William Ulmer Brewery 81 Beaver Street, Bushwick



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Make the Road by Walking / Se Hace el Camino al Andar

by
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Credits and References

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*This study is dedicated to the memory of William Ulmer, who died 99 years ago today.
- December 15, 2006.*

1. Introduction

Building research has been the focus of our Bushwick Mini-studio (PR 511: Documentation and Interpretation of the Built Environment), as a methodological necessity in preserving historic buildings, but also for more far-reaching reasons. Buildings tell stories, which are not only related to their particular sites, but which also help us trace the history of a neighborhood, as a physical and social entity, especially when they are representative of this whole in some way. The present-day situation of buildings also indicates problems and future potentials for the whole neighborhood and the community. Thus, we have studied several buildings in Bushwick that also offer clues for forming a coherent narrative of the neighborhood's historical evolution up to the present day.

In selecting representative buildings within my area of study, that could fulfill the aims of the mini-studio, I decided to focus my research on a site that was not too obviously documented, such as Cook's Mansion on 680 Bushwick Avenue, but which still deserved attention. This was an industrial building on Beaver Street, known as the **former William Ulmer Brewery**. It was a decisive factor that the American Institute of Architects' Guide to New York City found it noteworthy to include the building in its chapter on Bushwick, although with a slightly derogatory tone: "A sad and ghostly remnant of a brick brewery complex". However, the Guide also acknowledged an interesting clue as to the building's significance and association: that the same **Ulmer's Mansion** – or Cook Mansion – was on Bushwick a few blocks east.¹

For other buildings to study, I chose the immediate neighbors of the Ulmer Brewery, No.s 31 and 32 Belvidere Street, and a fourth building on a farther site, which was a beautiful and unusual, detached mansion at 751 Bushwick Avenue. However, these buildings were not able to be intensively examined like the Ulmer Brewery, due to a later shift in the focus of our course to include more neighborhood-wide studies. Thus, the findings on these buildings are not included in this study.

The **research methodology** used for this study mainly follows the guidelines of the PR 511 course. However, I must say that it has not been a sufficiently in-depth investigation as this building deserves, and it is my wish for this research to be completed for the building, even leading up to a landmark designation. The steps of the research process used in this study can be outlined as follows:

- Site survey: Observation of the external characteristics of selected historic buildings
- Bibliographical and documentary research: Scanning of archives, collections, libraries and online resources for primary and secondary sources
 - New York City Municipal Archives: Collection of tax photos (none were available for the Ulmer Brewery)
 - Brooklyn Borough Hall / Department of Buildings – Block and Lot Records: Study of building permits (again, none were available for the Ulmer Brewery)
 - New York Public Library – Milstein Division Reading Room: Study of census records, access to rare books
 - New York Public Library – Map Division: Study of historic maps
 - Brooklyn Public Library – Central ve DeKalb branches, Columbia University – Avery Library and Pratt Institute Libraries: Secondary sources
 - Online resources: General information; primary and secondary sources

- Further on-site investigation on the Ulmer Brewery
 - Observation of the interior physical characteristics
 - Interviews with some of the current occupants
- Analysis of findings
 - Bringing the gathered information to the table for discussion with fellow mini-studio members, in light of preservation principles

For the Ulmer's Brewery / 81 Beaver Street site, there have been certain gaps in the findings, especially for the period after the 'Golden Period' of the building (when the Brewery was active). Contributing factors in this were the absence of a tax photo in the Municipal Archives and of the building permit folder in the Block and Lot records of Brooklyn Borough Hall. The reason for the latter gap may be explained by the fact that an attempt has been made for leasing units in the building as lofts, and the folder may have been removed for this purpose. Since the findings in this report specifically regarding the building have been limited, I have made an extra effort to provide a substantial account of Bushwick's brewing history as the context of the building history.

2. The Wider Context: Brewing in Bushwick

The story of the William Ulmer Brewery becomes fully appreciated when put into the wider context of Brooklyn's and particularly Bushwick's brewing history, the height of which spanned more than 130 years. It is often said that the history of Bushwick has been the history of brewing, ever since a large German population emigrated here in the middle of the nineteenth century, after unsuccessful uprisings in the Fatherland in 1848 and 1849, mostly because of poverty and lack of opportunity.² The growth of the brewing industry sparked the construction of new homes and churches in the neighborhood, as well as a diverse business sector and created a vibrant community.³

A few words should be said at this point on the history of beer pre-dating these transformative events. Frank Trial talks of the presence of beer before 1660, evident from the oldest maps of New Amsterdam showing a Red Lion brewery, and the fact that Dutch settlers were beer drinkers who set up many small taverns and started commercial beer production. They were later succeeded by the British brewers. As for the German 'braumeister's, they chose Brooklyn because of its soft water; breweries only started to be built in Manhattan after the Croton Aqueduct began to bring fresh water there around 1840-50. The only real survivor among the Manhattan brewers was Trommer, who actually came to be associated with Brooklyn.⁴

Henry Stiles describes the distilling and brewing industries of King's County as "of great extent and their production a very large amount," although accurate information has been scarce, owing to these industries not being distinguished in the 1880 Census and the brewers themselves being opposed to giving information about themselves (attributed to purposes of tax evasion). What is known includes the presence of 35 breweries in King's County in 1884, mainly producing weiss beer and lager bier, the latter's total production amounting to about \$8,000,000. "The ale and lager bier of King's County have always borne a high reputation, and that of some of its breweries is not surpassed anywhere. () The whole product is fearful to contemplate – nearly a barrel and a half of beer for every man, woman and child in the county." The employment provided by the industry is estimated to be exceeding 1,800 employees. The advent of the refrigerating machine is noted as further increasing the capacity of production.

Stiles cites the leading breweries of Brooklyn as the Williamsburg Brewery, Warren G. Abbott and S. Liebmann's Sons, followed closely by Otto Huber, H. B. Scharmann & co., Obermeyer & Liebmann, Boulevard Garden Brewery and N. Seitz's Son, and those followed by other brewers of nearly the same rank such as Joseph Burger, Charles Lipsius, Ferdinand Munch, the Leavy and Britton Brewing Company, **William Ulmer** and Ochs & Lehnert.⁵

The list of the main Brooklyn Brewers that operated in and around Bushwick, as given by Robbins and Palitz, are as follows:⁶

1. Claus-Lipsius (1865-1902), 493 Bushwick Avenue
2. Edelbrau (1868-1951), 1 Bushwick Place
3. Conrad Eurich / Elm (1889-?), Wyckoff and Halsey Streets
4. Frank (1805s-1916), Cypress Avenue and Hancock Street
5. S. Liebmann's Sons / Rheingold (1855-1902), 36 Forest Street [a successor must have existed to carry it from 1902 to 1976]

6. North American/ Schaefer (1892-1946), 1303 Greene Avenue
7. Obermeyer & Liebmann / Havana (1868-1924), Bremen (obsolete) and Noll Streets
8. Joseph Schlitz/ Ehret (1949-1973), 24 George Street
9. Welz & Zerwick (1861-1925), Myrtle and Wyckoff Avenues
10. **William Ulmer Brewery** (1872-?), Beaver and Belvidere Streets
11. Congress (1855-1923), 197 Humboldt Street
12. Diogenes (1898-), Decatur Street and Wyckoff Avenue
13. Excelsior/ Kings, 239-269 Pulaski Street
14. Fallert (1878-1920), 86 Lorimer Street
15. F&M Schaefer (1916-1976), 430 Kent Avenue
16. Meltzer Brothers (1865-1917), 60 Meserole Street
17. Ferdinand Muench/ Hittleman (1880-1936), Bushwick Place and Montrose Avenue
18. New York & Brooklyn (1888-1913), Scholes Street and Lorimer Street
19. Otto Huber (1861-), Meserole Street and Bushwick Place
20. Piel Brothers/ Associated/ Schaeffer (1883-1973), Liberty and Sheffield Avenues
21. Trommer/ Evergreen (1896-1951), Bushwick Avenue and Conway Street

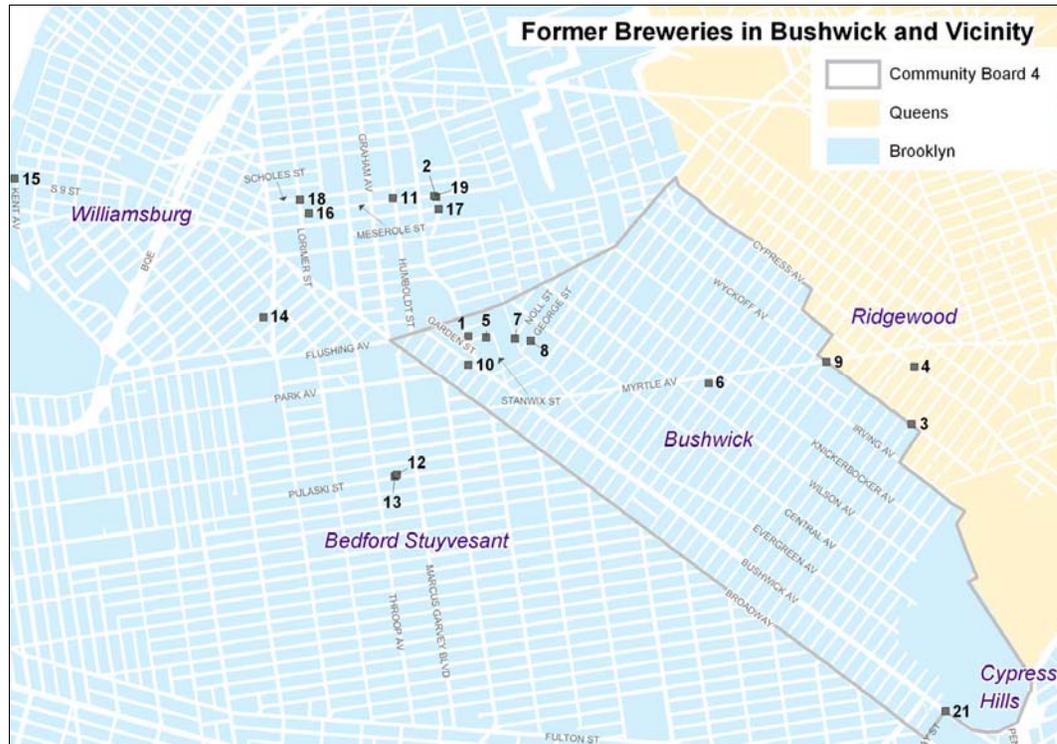


Fig. 1: Map showing locations of the breweries listed above, with corresponding number coding (prepared by Paula Crespo)

The accumulation of brewers' plants in Bushwick was epitomized by 'Brewer's Row', where at least eleven breweries were operating within a fourteen-block area between 1840 and 1880.⁷ The names included among them are cited as Schaefer, Piel, Trommer, Ulmer and Samuel Liebmann, the founder of Rheingold, and the location is given as around Scholes and Meserole Streets.⁸ Interestingly, the location of Brewer's Row is given elsewhere (by Benardo and Weiss) as North 11th Street, between Berry Street and Wythe Avenue, which is further west in Williamsburg.⁹ Still more interestingly, Brewer's Row has been understood by others as Bushwick Avenue, with its brewmasters mansions...!¹⁰

While its location disputed among sources, it is also known that beer gardens, reminiscent of Bavarian beer halls, served up exuberant family entertainment in this small urban enclave.¹¹ Beer halls are described in the Encyclopedia of New York City as the prominent feature of Kleindeutschland and other German-dominated communities of NYC at the height of the brewing era, as well as Yorkville on the Upper East Side, where they survived later after that date.¹² Brooklyn was also a center of beer-based entertainment,

as Trommer's Brewery and biergarten were famous, and Long Island's reputation for a few seasons as a fashionably pastoral resort brought visitors staying in its hotels and enjoying its new brewery gardens.¹³

As Jankowski informs us, Brooklyn produced 10% of all beer in the United States for a time before the Prohibition, and Bushwick provided the majority of that. Furthermore, **Bushwick** was also notable as a brewing center that produced pre-Prohibition-style pilsners that were unique not only for their distinctive style and highly hopped character, but also their variety of **unique products**.¹⁴

"Trommer's was one of the few breweries in America to produce all-malt beers and ales. The beer strike of 1949 not only hurt sales but killed the original yeast strain when strikers locked out the management workers who cared for the cultures. A new yeast strain was introduced, but many loyal drinkers were dissatisfied with the product. Trommer's closed its doors in 1951, though it continued to be contract-brewed by Piels through the mid-1950s. The Liebman Brewery hosted a catalogue of beers including Rheingold Extra Dry, Bock, Pale Bock, Scotch Ale, Cream Ale, and, under contract from Germany, Wuerzberger Dark. Rheingold was known as the official beer of the New York Mets and was also famous for its Miss Rheingold contests. Liebman Brewing also introduced a light beer in 1967. Called Gablingers, it had one-third the calories of normal products, but the clientele of the period chose not to buy it. Liebman sold the recipe to Miller, and that beer is now known as the successful Miller Lite. The most civic minded of the Bushwick Brewers was F&M Schaefer. In addition to being the beer of the Brooklyn Dodgers, Schaefer sponsored exhibits at both New York World's Fairs and hosted dancing tents at Jones Beach Theater. At the 2.5 million-bbl plant in Brooklyn it produced its pilsner, bock, and Beverwyck's Irish Cream Ale. Schaefer was also the last brewery to close in Brooklyn in 1976. Another of the larger breweries was Piels. Their catalogue of beers included Piels Real Draft, Draft Ale, and a special Christmas beer brewed for employees and friends of the company. New Yorkers fondly remember the television cartoon characters of Bert and Harry Piel, whose voices were the comedy team of Bob and Ray. For more than 10 years (and intermittently thereafter), Bert and Harry stumbled and bumbled through commercials espousing the virtue of Piels."

Jankowski goes on to inform that the **Prohibition** forced many breweries out of business, while some hung on by producing "cereal beverages," contemporary terms for "near beer." The Volstead Act allowed the brewing of beer as long as the alcohol content was kept to <0.5% (w/w). (Ironically, when the law re-permitting the manufacture of beer containing 3.2 percent alcohol by weight was signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the new beer had little of the strength of the best locally made illegal beer.) Other breweries survived by diversifying their product offerings, including malt extract for home brewers. After the repeal of the Volstead Act in 1933 drastically cut down the number of breweries, the remaining dozen or so in Bushwick included continually successful brands, which entered the top 10 producers in the country, such as Schaefer and Liebmann.



Figs. 2-3: Schaefer's brewery (Source: www.beerhistory.com); Frank's brewery, 1912 (Source: www.timesnewsweekly.com)

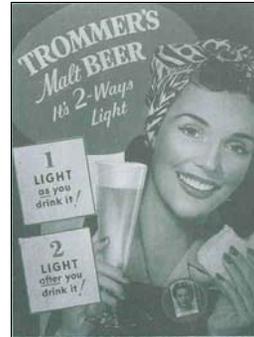
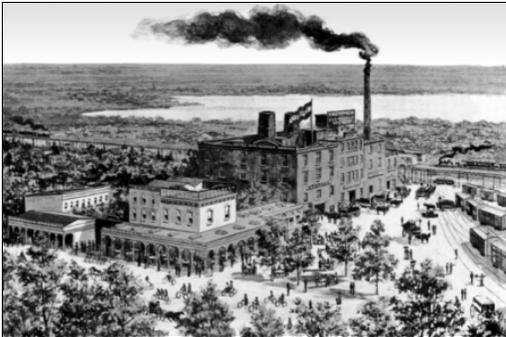


Fig.4: Trommer's brewery (Source: www.beerhistory.com); Trommer's beer advertisement (Source: Robbins and Palitz 2001)

Other industries also flourished in Brooklyn, to make it “one of the greatest manufacturing centers on earth” by 1930 (though infamously accompanied by organized crime). The most important industries included glass and porcelain manufacturing, printing, petroleum and gas refining, and ironmaking. By 1890, Brooklyn possessed large factories, chemical works, foundries and iron mills, candy companies, coffee and syrup mills and sugar factories, as well as Peter Cooper's famous glue factory.

However, Breweries maintained a special role among these industrial facilities. Brewery history is also considered as **reflective of the whole history of Brooklyn**, as attested by Kenneth Jackson in his account of the rise and fall of Brooklyn's ‘glory days’:¹⁵

“In 1900 Brooklyn was so important in the production of beer that the borough alone had 45 breweries, more than Chicago, Milwaukee, St.Louis, Pittsburgh, Louisville and Cincinnati combined. In the single neighborhood of Bushwick, there were never fewer than ten breweries along a single street between 1850 and 1890. As late as 1960, one fifth of American beer production took place in the New York area, and half of that was in Brooklyn.”

*“Twenty years later, New York’s breweries were all gone. No one factor was responsible for the shutdown of this vital local industry; rather, at least four reasons were behind the change. First, the Prohibition reduced the number of New York breweries from 70 in 1918 to 23 in 1935. Afterwards, a series of **strikes** () stopped local breweries in 1948 and 1949 (). At the same time, the introduction of easily transportable beer cans in the late 1940’s meant that it was cheaper for a large company like Schlitz, for example, to ship beer from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, than to produce the beverage locally. Finally, the last two Brooklyn breweries to close, the Rheingold in 1974 and Schaefer in 1976, noted that the **cost of energy** was so prohibitive in Brooklyn that they could cut their power costs in half simply by moving 100 miles West.”*

Jankowski gives a similar account of the decline of breweries in Bushwick, as following a pattern of plant consolidation among large breweries, the emergence of national brands and the ‘**superbrewery**’, which displaced the smaller regional breweries. Also, the **indigenous problems of New York**, such as the labor constituency and peculiar city taxes (imposed on billboards, brewing machinery, and ingredients), and little room for expansion next to existing plants, are cited as factors that caused Bushwick breweries to relocate or close.¹⁶

Like in many other commercial centers, the period of transformation undergone in Bushwick after World War II, after the relocation of brewery plants and other manufacturing activities, left behind **vacant buildings**¹⁷, and a landscape of brickwork bearing faded lettering and razor wire atop corrugated gates or fences. Industrial and manufacturing uses have continued in some of these buildings, although taken over by **other types of businesses** and the sites altered to fit the new industries’ needs. The **problem of finding new uses** for the obsolete facilities can be observed in instances like the 1973 closing of Schlitz, which could find no buyers when they tried to sell the plant.¹⁸ In the case of Rheingold – where the scenes of emotional sit-ins were followed widely in the press – Pepsico, Inc., which bought the plant, made no secret of its desire to get out of the beer business.¹⁹ Instances of more success in reusing the facilities are also found, such as around the former Rheingold Brewery site, where city-owned property was leased to Mademoiselle Knitwear and a 350,000-squarefoot sweater factory was built for 500 workers in the mid-1980s.²⁰ On the adjoining site that occupied the former Rheingold plant, the leveling of the buildings in the mid-80’s had left “a despicable property with mountains of garbage”²¹; but following workshops of a local-city partnership initiative, the site was remediated and plans went through for the **Rheingold Brewery Redevelopment Project**, featuring a mixture of affordable housing, community and commercial uses and now entering its last phase of construction.²² The **William Ulmer Brewery**, which is also adjacent to this development site, has generally followed the patterns described, with a status that can be described as lying between complete obsolescence and full, wholesome reuse.

Beside new uses for the old plants, there are also efforts to carry on the actual **brewing tradition** of old days. The **Brooklyn Brewery** opened in 1995, using the recipes and techniques of old masters and their accolades who are still alive and working – such as the grandson of a worker at the Claus Lipsius Brewery.²³ Similarly, the Rheingold brand restarted in 2003 at a brewery in Utica, N.Y., with headquarters in Manhattan, and the first Miss Rheingold was chosen after a break of 38 years.²⁴ This interest could perhaps be tapped as a **potential source of sponsoring the repair** of some of the important remaining industrial buildings and their reuse for **cultural uses** celebrating this brewing heritage.



Figs. 6-8: Miss Rheingold competition (Source: www.beerhistory.com); one of the remaining industrial plants on Flushing Avenue; logo of Brooklyn Brewery (Source: Robbins and Palitz 2001)

3. The Evolution of the Former Ulmer's Brewery

a. Beginnings of the Site

Not much information could be gathered on the site of William Ulmer's Brewery prior to the construction of the present building. However, examining Bushwick's general growth lends some clues to the state of the site in its earlier years.

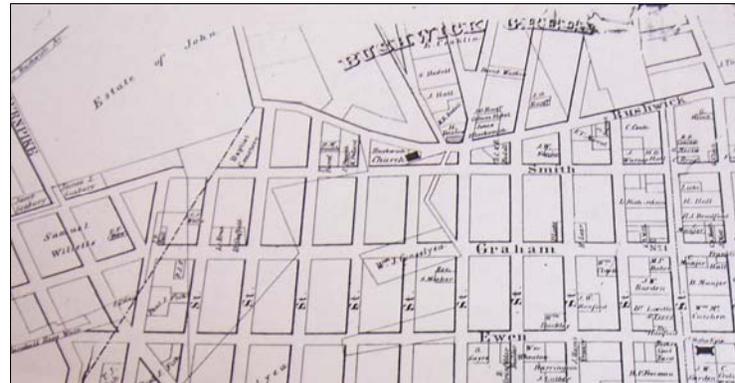
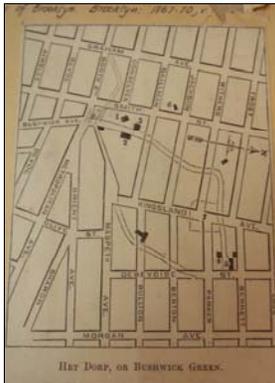
As late as 1810, Brooklyn was occupied mostly by farms; the chartering of **new lots** came about in the following decades, as Brooklyn's attraction as a quiet, pleasant, middle-class area accessible to Manhattan was discovered, and ferry lines increased between the two cities.²⁵ **1869** is cited as a milestone date, when Bushwick notable A. M. **Suydam** subdivided his Bushwick farm for development, apparently ushering in the era of **real estate boom** that was supported by the elevated train line along Broadway and Myrtle Avenues.²⁶ Henry Stiles, as quoted by Snyder-Grenier, describes the town that hardly had one and a half square miles of close built houses in 1834, had now (in the 1880's) about 34 miles of densely populated houses and factories, with numerous churches, school-houses, theatres, halls, and vast warehouses.²⁷



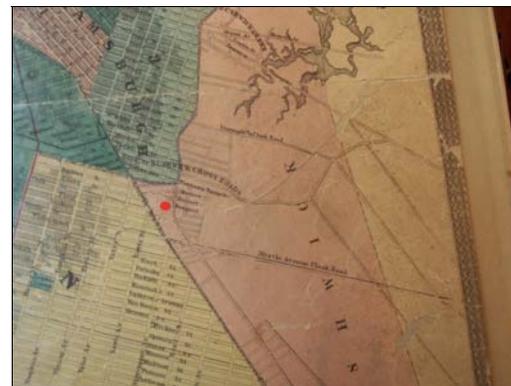
Fig.9: Bird's-eye-view of Brooklyn, Woldmere Realty Co., 1908 (Source: Library of Congress)

At the close of the revolution, there were three distinct settlements in Bushwick, retaining their Dutch names and character: '**Het dorp**' (or **Bushwick Green**), the town plot laid out by governor Peter Stuyvesant in 1661, at the junction of North Street (today the location of Kosciuszko Street) and Bushwick Avenue; 'het Kivis padt' at the crossing of the present Bushwick Avenue and the Flushing Road, and 'het strand' along the East River shore. The site of William Ulmer's Brewery would be somewhere around '**het Kivis padt**', which is described as long retaining several old houses which clustered there in old times.²⁸ The Ulmer site was most likely undeveloped or occupied by a lesser estate at that time, particularly as it was Het Dorp that was the social center of Bushwick.²⁹

The site of William Ulmer Brewery and vicinity in maps of different years, prior to 1872 (with the Brewery marked when applicable):



Figs. 10-11: Maps of Het Dorp/Bushwick Green in the early 1800's and 1852 (Source: New York Public Library)



Figs. 12-13: Perkins Map of 1852 (Source: New York Public Library); map of 1850's (Source: New York Public Library)

b. The 'Golden Period'

Along with the rapidly increasing parcellation of lots and the settling of the German brewmasters, 1872 witnessed the construction of the **Vicelius & Ulmer's Continental Lagerbier Brewery** (also cited as Vigelius and Ulmer's Brewery), which later became the **William Ulmer Brewery**.

The site occupied the corner of **Beaver Street and Belvidere Street** (also written as Belvedere in some instances, but Belvidere is preferred in this study due to more frequent use) and was located within the range of the 'cluster of breweries' in this western section of Bushwick. In the first 20 or so years, the block and lot numbers covered by the facility were **1018/ 4** and **1018/ 14** (as seen from the earlier maps); after the 1890's, the block number became **3135**, while the lot numbers showed variation over the years portrayed by the old maps (the way the present-day block and lot are labeled as 'historical' in the New York City information system, initially made me assume it was always 3135/ 27, which proved to be a mistake). As to the address, many different versions have been encountered, such as 71 Beaver Street, 71-83 Beaver Street, 81 Beaver Street, 35-47 Belvidere Street, and even 31 Beaver Street, according to Armbruster (although the one taken as main address for this study is **81 Beaver Street**).³⁰ Armbruster also mentions that the Minck Brothers & Co., makers of mineral water, were located on No. 45-53 Beaver Street, which presents an interesting case to solve since the street numbers ranging from 31 through 81 on Beaver Street are attributed to this block.

Turning our attention to the men who were responsible for the building's creation, G. **Vigelius** is mentioned in available sources as one of the men who founded **St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church** in 1868.³¹ The other, more prominent partner, Mr. **Ulmer**, is stated in the **1880 Federal Census** as, born in 1833 in Wurt, Germany, residing at 84 Jefferson Street in Kings (the Cook Mansion was yet to be built as their home five years later) with his wife Catherine, 50, daughters Catherine Ulmer, 20 and Margaret Horn, 19, and having the occupation of beer brewer.³² His **obituary** informs us that he came to this country from Germany at the age of 17 (which would be 1850), and worked for his two uncles who had a brewery under the firm name of **Clausen & Betz**, which afterwards became known as the **Eagle** Brewing Company. Later, the two uncles dissolved partnership, the head of the firm starting his own company under the name of the Clausen Brewing Company in 1870. Mr. Ulmer was not a member of this firm, but seven years later branched out for himself, opening one of the largest breweries in Brooklyn, located in Belv(e)dere Street. In 1900 he retired from active participation in the conduct of the business, turning over most of his interest to his two **sons-in-law**, John T. **Becker** and John W. **Weber**. He **died in 1907**, of a complication of diseases at 74 years of age, in his home in 680 Bushwick Avenue (showing that the Cook Mansion was indeed built to be their life-long home), leaving behind a wife, two daughters, nine grandchildren and one great-grandchild.³³

The William Ulmer Brewery is understood to have been an important brewery in its time, although not much remembered as such today. It was also, in typical fashion for a large institution, a place **where other famous brewers were raised** or worked in important positions. One of these is John F. **Trommer**, who immigrated from Hersfeld, Germany in the 1840s, and after working for some time in Portland, Maine and Boston, moved to Bushwick and became brewmaster for William Ulmer, until 1897 when he founded J.F. Trommer's Evergreen Brewery and left it upon his death to his son George Trommer.³⁴ The son George Trommer also started his

career as an apprentice at the William Ulmer Brewery, at the time it was headed by his father.³⁵ (In this source, his father's death and his becoming president of the John F. Trommer Evergreen Brewery is given differently, as 1921, but the former date seems more plausible). Another figure who was associated with the Ulmer Brewery was Charles Fasbender, who had previously been a partner of the St. Clair Brewery on Mill and North 1st Street prior to its closing in 1851.³⁶

The reputation of the Ulmer Brewery seems to typically feature both a profit-oriented capitalist's and a philanthropist's position. In the **strikes** organized by the brewer's labor union in the 1880's (a predecessor of the better known ones of the 1940's), Ulmer was among brewers who signed a concession in 1881 to pay 50 cents per hour on Sundays to workers, but also who rescinded their concessions shortly afterwards³⁷. Ulmer's beer was also among the boycotted in the 1888 strikes of the union.³⁸ As opposed to this standing, the Ulmer Brewery had also been noted for many years for their acts of **charity**, donating, in 1906, \$250 to the San Francisco post-earthquake aid effort³⁹, and in 1907, a few months before William Ulmer's death, \$300 to the Carl Shurz Memorial Fund for erection of a monument in this man's name.⁴⁰

A notable enterprise of the William Ulmer Brewery was the **Ulmer Park**, an amusement park in Bath Beach, to match the more famous Coney Island entertainments. Opened in **1893** and advertised as a 'family resort', Ulmer Park offered rides, a dance hall and swimming; a residential community grew up around it that remained after the park closed in 1899.⁴¹ Numerous activities are cited in the New York Times which are held in the park, such as the grand prize singing contest of the United Singing Societies of Brooklyn in 1896⁴², and Labor Day celebrations in 1900, featuring picnics, athletic contests, games and the reunion of the District Assembly.⁴³ Ulmer Park survives today as the name of a bus depot in Bath Beach and a branch of the Brooklyn Public Library.⁴⁴ Beside Ulmer Park, **Dexter Park**, an early recreational park in Woodhaven, Queens, was purchased in 1901 by the Ulmer Brewery, and Conrad Hasenflug was installed as proprietor. Along with sundry other amusements, Dexter Park became a popular venue for football and baseball.⁴⁵



Figs. 14-15: Ulmer Palace Road House; Children's Day at Texter Hotel at Ulmer Park, 1919 (Source: Brooklyn Public Library, Brooklyn Collection)

Developments at the site in the early 20th century can be traced through the **real estate transactions** and other legal actions announced in the New York Times and Brooklyn Eagle, some of them listed below (although, since the Brooklyn Eagle only has an online archive until 1902, the fate of the Ulmer Brewery still remains unclear):

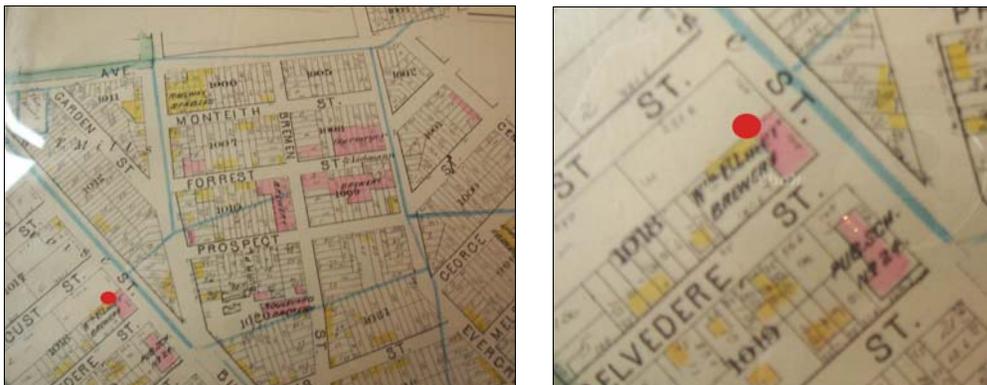
- May **1900**: Articles incorporating the William Ulmer Brewery were filed with the **Secretary of State**. It was proposed to acquire the property, plant and goodwill of the business and to own and operate that business. The **capital** stock was then **\$550,000**, consisting of shares of \$100 each, and the directors for the first year would be Catherine Ulmer, John F. Becker and John W. Weber, who constituted the stockholders, together with Catherine Becker and Caroline Weber.⁴⁶
- November **1900**: The property at the corner of Myrtle Avenue and Cypress Hills Road, Newtown was **purchased** by the William Ulmer Brewery for \$1,500.⁴⁷
- August **1901**: The parcel at the corner of Jamaica was '**conveyed**' to the William Ulmer Brewery (the price is not stated in the article but the website lead is named \$373,095, which urges one to assume that was the purchase price)⁴⁸
- July **1907**: A plot of 125'x154' located on the west side of Fresh Pond Road just north of the Myrtle Avenue Elevated Railroad Line was **purchased** by the William Ulmer Brewery from Frederick Brommer and wife Marie Ring at a total cost of \$20,250. "With all the houses being built in Ridgewood, the William Ulmer Brewery thought this side at the Fresh Pond Road station would eventually have heavy pedestrian traffic and would be an excellent location for a saloon to sell **Ulmer Beer**. On the site, they constructed a three-story brick building which they outfitted as a **saloon** on the ground floor. They subsequently leased the saloon to a proprietor who served only Ulmer Beer."⁴⁹
- June **1909**: The **plot** at the southeast corner of Eighth Avenue and President Street (Park Slope, Brooklyn) was **purchased** by John W. Weber, president of the William Ulmer Brewery, from Timothy L. Woodruff et al for about \$50,000, for a handsome **residence** to be erected on the property.⁵⁰
- February **1914**: William Degelman, a former employee of the William Ulmer Brewery, who was blinded a week after being assigned to varnish the inside of a beer vat, settled with his employers for \$12,000, after an action was started in the **Supreme Court** of Brooklyn claiming the brewery's negligence. This was the first case of **alcohol wood poisoning** to be brought to a successful conclusion.⁵¹
- January 1920: A court case was scheduled for William Ulmer versus di Giovanni in the Kings County Supreme Court.⁵²
- June 1923: A **sale** was announced for William Ulmer Brewery Co.'s estate property, northwest corner of Hillside and Flushing Avenues, Hollis, Queens. (On today's map, Flushing Avenue does not run through Hollis; these avenues never cross, running fairly parallel with quite a distance between each other – an address error or a drastic name change might be accountable) The property consisted of a house, hotel, riding and driving academy, and gasoline station on premises, seeking an investor who would make considerable investments in it.⁵³
- July 1924: Premises 132-136-140 Herkimer Street, Bedford-Stuyvesant, formerly owned and built by William Ulmer Brewery Co., were **sold** for investment. The three 16-family apartment houses, with frontage of 120 by 160, modern improvements had an aggregate rent potential of \$42,000.⁵⁴
- September 1925: A debt judgment was satisfied for Frederick Becker to William Ulmer Brewery, in the amount of \$427.18.⁵⁵
- March 1930: A **name change** was announced, from William Ulmer Brewery to William Ulmer.⁵⁶ (This seems to reflect the Prohibition-era shedding of company names that were associated with alcoholic beverages.)

A general pattern emerging from the events above is that purchases by the brewery were being made up to the **1920's**, after which time sales by the brewery become prevalent, signifying a demise in the prosperity of the business. However, the information that could be found is too scattered to understand exactly **when and how the days of the William Ulmer Brewery as a business ended**. It evidently continued operation after the Prohibition, but might have been closed some time in the 1930's. A news article from **1938** is of

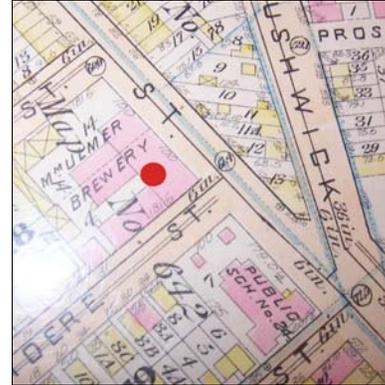
interest. It is the **obituary** of Frederick W. **Becker**, of 680 Bushwick Avenue, Brooklyn, vice president of the Brooklyn Brass Works, who died of a heart attack at the age of 51. “He was a grandson of the late William Ulmer, founder of the Ulmer Brewery, and for several years was superintendent of the brewery. Mr. Becker was also secretary and a director of the Ulmer Park Realty Company and of William Ulmer, Inc. Surviving are his mother, Katherine Ulmer Becker, and a brother, William U. Becker”.⁵⁷ Grandson Becker must have directed the brewery in his later years, but seemingly not until his death, at which time he was president of another company. Also, many business closure and bankruptcy announcements are seen in the New York Times archive for around 1937, and the brewery might be included in this wave.

Furthermore, in returning to the point of residences, we know that **670 Bushwick Avenue** (originally the William Ulmer House), was occupied by the Ulmer family from its construction around 1885 at least until William Ulmer’s death in 1907. **Frederick A. Cook**, the famous explorer, who died in **1940**, lived for a time here, long enough to give his name to the building as it is known today. The fact that grandson Becker’s death occurred in the adjoining 680 Bushwick Avenue (unless there is a misprint on the part of the newspaper) shows that the Ulmer family could have already sold no. 670 to Cook by that time. These findings show there is still room for a much investigation. Current databases related to the property give only superficial chronology of previous ownership and building works, with no revealing names. If the Ulmer family migrated away from Bushwick, perhaps they might have taken their business legacy elsewhere. For instance, **other breweries** can be found that operated under the name **Ulmer**, such as Koch/Ulmer/Michigan/Ekhardt & Becker of Detroit⁵⁸, or brands like Ulmer Style Beer produced by Bosch Brewing Co., of Lake Linden, Michigan in the 1920’s.⁵⁹ However, these leads are just as likely to be coincidental.

The site of William Ulmer Brewery and close vicinity throughout maps of different years – after 1872



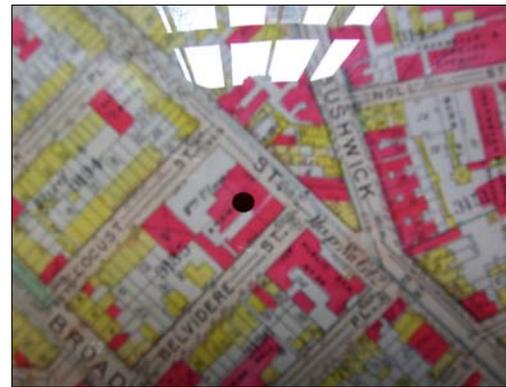
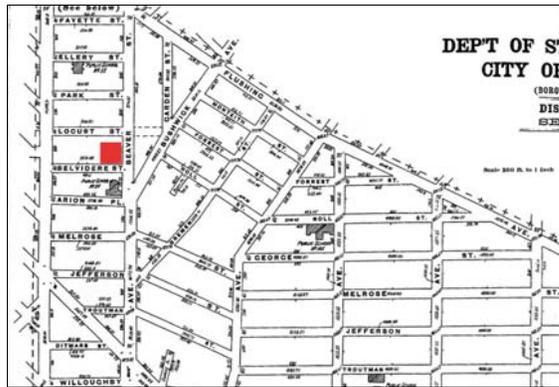
Figs. 16-17: Bromley map of 1880 (Source: New York Public Library)



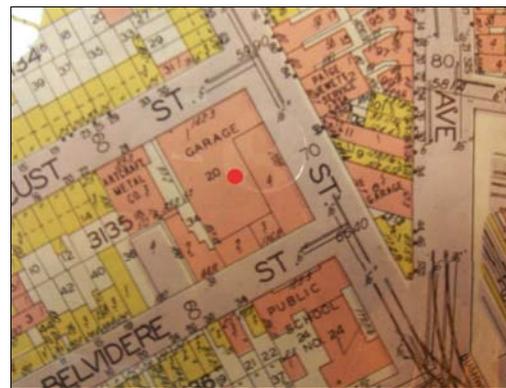
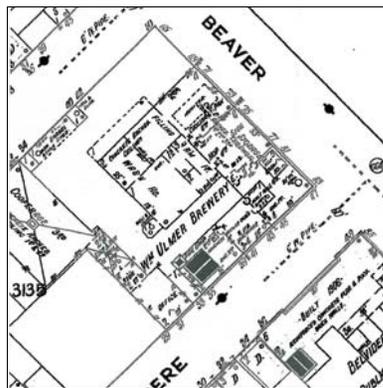
Figs. 18-20: Robinson map of 1886; a different Robinson map of the same year (Source: New York Public Library)



Figs. 21-22: Hyde map of 1893; a map of 1898 (Source: New York Public Library)



Figs. 23-24: Sanborn map of 1905; Bromley map of 1908 (Source: New York Public Library)



Figs. 25-26: Sanborn Map of 1918; Hyde Map of 1929 (Source: New York Public Library)



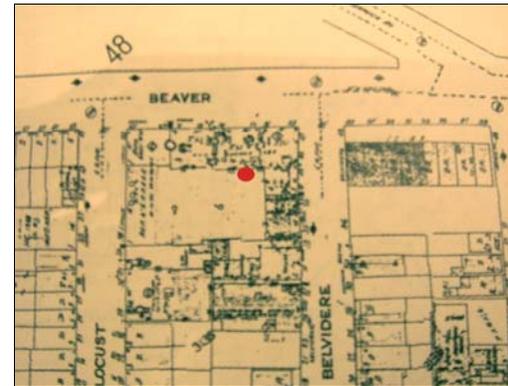
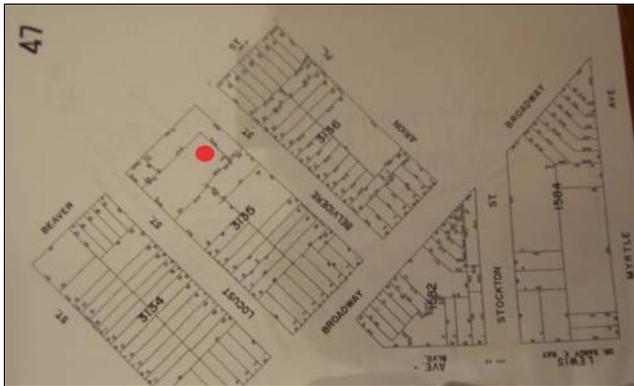
Figs. 27-28: Bushwick Avenue looking north to Arion Place, PS24 at Beaver Street, 1940 – Ulmer Brewery marked with red spot (Source: www.brooklynpix.com); approaching Ulmer Brewery from Bushwick Avenue today



Figs. 29-30: Cook Mansion, 670 Bushwick Avenue (photo by Ege Yildirim); Catherine Lipsius Mansion, 580 Bushwick Avenue – recently demolished (Source: www.forgotten-ny.com)

c. The Site and Building Today ⁶⁰

The way the former William Ulmer Brewery has made it to the present day appears as **physically intact**, despite some changes in use and ownership that it obviously underwent, and of which we currently have no sufficient documentation.



Figs. 31-32: Sanborn Map of 2005; Sanborn Map of 2005 – detail (Source: New York Public Library)



Figs. 33-34: Oasis map of 2006 – neighborhood information; Oasis map of 2006 – block and lot information (Source: www.oasisnyc.net/oasismap.htm)

The address of the building varies from 71 to 81 Beaver Street, but as previously mentioned, the main address for this study is **81 Beaver Street, Brooklyn 11221**. The block and lot number is still **3135/ 27**.

Regarding land use, the New York City agencies have registered '**industrial and manufacturing**', and the zoning is designated as '**M1-1 - Light Manufacturing District (High Performance)**'. The building class information states it is an '**elevator apartment, with artists in residence (D2)**'. The online database Property Shark has two different sections stating '16 Residential units' and '1 Commercial unit and no residential units'. The tax class is Type '2 (**residential property over 3 family units**)'. This usage information does not seem to be very coherent, which might be an good reflection of its actual transitional status.

In terms of **occupants**, the current **owner** of the building is officially recorded as **Asset One Corporation**, 71 Beaver St, Brooklyn NY 11206-4536 (as of 12/9/2005 in the system). According to the information given by a man exiting the unit on the Beaver Street side, the ground floor is used by a general **merchandise distribution** company. (The entrance door carries the name of Telstar Sprint International Inc. Online searches reveal that Telstar is a large long-distance phone and carrier company, which has lately been active in some merges with other companies, among them Sprint.⁶¹ An online search for '77 Beaver Street, Brooklyn' yields a website in Chinese, with Telstar Products listed under this address, with the name of Mr. **Daniel Sivarak**.⁶²) The man said that this company is the owner, and is leasing the upper floors are to different **tenants**. These tenants have been later revealed to be **artists** renting studio spaces, two in number, in accordance with the 'artists in residence' status (though they do not reside, but work here). The smaller door at the right end of the Belvidere façade has its own sign next to it, reading "Ark Media – Art Frame Shop – Levent Tuncer", which has been a valuable lead in my site investigations. (The artist's name is Turkish, and as a fellow national of his, I enthusiastically called him at the phone number I found online, and a cordial dialogue soon ensued between us.)

The physical features of the building can be described as follows: In terms of **size**, the lot area is **10,470 sq. feet**, with lot frontage at 152.08 feet, lot depth at 136.76 feet; and building gross area at 36,375 sq. feet. There are **4 floors** (and apparently one cellar) and a total number of 5 units. The garage square footage is 1,750, while the factory square footage is 34,625. These dimensions give us a 'Floor/Area Ratio (**FAR**) as built' of **3.47**, as opposed to allowed FAR by the zoning ordinance being 1. I assume that the historical nature of the building is the reason this is not considered an offense.

To describe the **architectural features**, the building has a solid, rectangular form as viewed from the streets, with a wide side facing northwest on Beaver St. and a narrow side facing southeast on Belvidere St. It is in reality an **L-shaped** lot and building, with the structure enclosed by the two wings (in another lot) being 1-storey high. The **windows** on the top floor of the wide façade and all floors of the narrow façade have round **arches**, also being smaller, more in number and densely placed. Other windows on the wide façade are larger, more plain and more widely spaced. The windows on the **first floor** have been **sealed** with bricks (this has been done in 2001 according to building records). There are **three doors** (one small and two large) on the Beaver Street side, covered with metal shutters, and **four doors** (two small and two large, three of them on the lower mass), and an impressive **iron gate** at the left end, on the Belvidere Street side. The narrow façade has a **3-storey section** to the left of the main 4-storey mass. There are black **star-shaped iron** pieces, which could be structural retention elements, mounted on the façades in a sparse fashion but quite visible and adding interest to the facades. There are also fire escape stairs to the right of the Beaver Street façade. The building does not really show elements of a distinct architectural style, except that of a robust late 19th century industrial building. Perhaps exceptions

could be the low-relief dentil-shaped **decorative rows** on the southeast (Belvidere) and northwest facades, and the windows with **Romanesque-revival arches**. One should also make note of the **graffiti** sprayed on walls at ground level and along fire escape stairs, which could be considered as giving a different sort of character to the building. Ulmer's Brewery is **not a designated landmark**.

The architectural **materials** are typically **brick** (masonry, for the structure), with wood (for the window frames) and iron (for the fire escape stairs and window cages) elements. The condition of the building appears **structurally sound**; architectural features are also in good basic condition, although orange stains of corrosion/ damp are found below windows. From evidence seen in the artist's studio later visited, the interior is also structurally sound, with minor or superficial wear-and-tear, although the holes in the walls could lead to accelerated damage.

Here are some comments which could count as observations of '**building archaeology**': The varied massing and the slight differences in window placement patterns hint at the **gradual process of accretions** rather than one-time final construction. The 19th and early 20th century city maps of the area support this, with the differences they display in the massing of the brewery. The 1880 Bromley map only shows a **brick structure on the Beaver Street side** and none on Belvidere Street; the 1886 Robinson map shows two new **smaller additions to the southwest** side of the old mass, one lining Belvidere Street and one more 'inland' within the block. These additions are slightly enlarged over time, and by **1929**, an evenly **solid massing** is depicted, although there is no more labelling as a brewery, but as a **garage**. Perhaps the answer to the question, when did the brewery close, can be found here. Also after this date, the brewery plant seems to **shrink back into the L shape** it has today. A good depiction of the industrial plant, when it has not yet lost its heyday, is in the **1918 Sanborn map**, where sections like the 'Ice Machines', 'Storage Ceilings', 'Cooling Room', 'Filling Room', 'Wash' section, 'Hop' section, etc are separately shown. (This actually reminds one of the 'Calidarium'/ Cold Room, 'Tepidarium'/ Luke-Warm Room, 'Calidarium'/ Hot Room, etc make up a Roman bath house) A brewing expert might look at the building today and see how spaces on each floor carry traces of these sections.

Ulmer Brewery and environs today:



Figs.35-36: Belvidere Street today – looking west and southwest



Figs. 37-38: Ulmer Brewery today – looking south from Beaver Street; northeast façade on Beaver Street



Figs. 39-40: Northwest façade – looking from on Locust Street; southeast façade on Belvidere Street



Figs. 41-43: Inscription on northeast façade; graffiti on walls; rental sign on Belvidere Street façade



Figs. 44-46: Old gate on Beaver Street façade; sign by entrance door on Belvidere Street to artists studios; entrance door on Beaver Street to commercial unit



Figs.47-48: Neighbors of Ulmer Brewery: 31 and 32 Belvidere Street (a Public School is depicted in earlier maps, which is today replace by new, low-rise rowhouses)



Fig. 49: Ulmer Brewery at night time

As a result of following up the site investigations, I was able to pay **two visits to the studio of Turkish artist Levent Tuncer**. On the first visit, I was able to meet Ms **Emily Wagner**, Mr Tuncer's assistant, and have a brief interview with her inside the building. His studio **occupies the whole of the third floor** of the four-storey **main wing**, which is accessed from Belvidere Street, and interestingly consists of a **lower and higher section**. The difference in elevations is detected in the interior by a flight of stairs leading up from the lower-level section (where the Belvidere Street entrance leads, containing the artist's lower-level painting studio) to the higher-level section (containing the artist's higher-level painting studio, his private office and occasional resting space, framing workshop, and two large empty spaces accessible through the framing workshop and used informally for storage). This is related to the history of separate consecutive accretions, as the **main wing** is actually comprised of an **earlier section** lying along Beaver Street (also partly explained above), and a **later section** of the same total height but different individual floor levels, which starts the L-shape formation. The lower wing is actually a continuation, ie the left section and not the whole, of the Belvidere Street wing, and one must be careful not to be confused here. According to information given by Ms. Wagner, Mr Tuncer has an **agreement with the owner**, in which he has access to the empty spaces without extra rent, and looks out for the safety of the building. There are **holes in some walls**, by which birds have gotten stuck inside the building. Since some windows of the studio cannot be opened, Ms Wagner has had to direct the birds to rooms with open windows to help them escape. On being asked about the surroundings, Ms Wagner describes this as a **friendly** neighborhood in terms of 'hey-how's-it-going-on-the-street' kind of friendliness. She has had an occasional sense of being perceived as a **threat** in terms of **gentrifying** the neighborhood. Ms Wagner said that the floor **upstairs** was being rented by an electronic **music studio**. She suspected they may have been evicted, but an encounter on my way out with a young man (with an Eastern European accent) confirmed that the studio was still in use by the tenants.

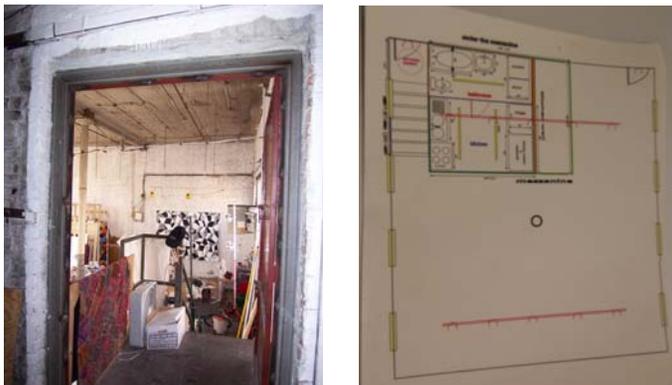
My second visit to the studio happened a few days later, when I met Mr **Levent Tuncer**. Mr Tuncer explained to me that he has been a tenant here for **three years**, after he was forced out of his studio in **Williamsburg**, where he had been since 1981. He described the way Bushwick had been known as 'the most dangerous place in America', due to **crime** per area statistics, and went on to give second-hand accounts of criminal activity (luckily he had not experienced any serious criminal incidents himself). He found the place when he saw the sign reading 'lofts for rent', in 2002. (This coincides with the denied application for residential conversion, described further on. It also reveals that the sign has been there for the last four years, and it is then natural that when I called the number on the sign, 'Dan', who must be Daniel Sivarak, answered me by saying 'they're not available'.) Upon calling the number in 2002, Mr Tuncer immediately got a positive feeling about the place and the owner (Daniel), with whom they have been continuing **good relations**. Mr Sivarak had at that time just discovered that the musicians already renting a place here had been secretly throwing large **parties** on Sunday nights. The embedding of Mr Tuncer would help to '**guard**' the **building** against these parties, and give it more of a grounded atmosphere. **Mr Sivarak's company** imports cheap **electronic equipment** wholesale from **China**, and distributes them to businesses in the tri-state area. They use the **bottom two floors** for this purpose, and carry out the distribution with four trucks that they own, which come around the site once or twice a week. As part of their relationship, Mr Sivarak had been **planning to renovate** the building and **rent units as lofts**, and agreed with Mr Tuncer to let him keep his place. They together made plans for **remodelling the lower studio** section, adding a **mezzanine** area, to use it as a living space as well. The renovation plans kept being **postponed**, until Mr Tuncer was informed to settle in indefinitely. This has suited Mr Tuncer fine, actually, since he **prefers the haphazard**, 'unfinished' look and feel of the place, where he can experiment with partitioning the spaces as he needs/ desires. He also acknowledges that Bushwick is considered **the 'now' place**, and is aware of the pressures mounting on properties for conversions into condos.

When we started talking about history and preservation, Mr Tuncer offered a **'fresh historic event'** for me: he had just been to **Dublin**, Ireland, to give a lecture to scholars in University Church, about a series of 'new reproductions' he had painted of some historic Raffaello reproductions that had been on display for many years in the Church, applying contemporary interpretations of some elements including insertion of Islamic decorative motifs, all of this causing a controversy in Dublin. He also showed interest in reading the historic building research I was doing on the Ulmer Brewery.

The interior of part of the William Ulmer Brewery (Levent Tuncer's studio) today:



Figs. 51-52: Lower-level studio (first space entered through Belvidere Street entrance), wall facing Belvidere Street



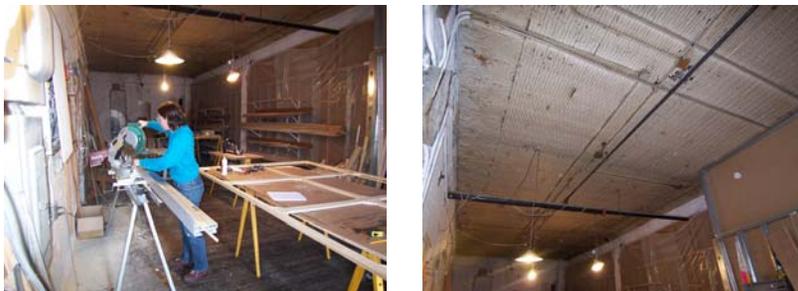
Figs. 53-54: Door leading to lower-level studio from higher level; one of Levent Tuncer's drawings for a mezzanine for the lower studio



Figs. 55-56: Higher-level section – studio, kitchen and bathroom



Figs.57-58: Private office/ resting room; artist Levent Tuncer working in his studio



Figs. 59-60: Emily Wagner working in the framing room; ceiling texture



Figs. 61-63: Views of the courtyard within the L-shape, looking southwest and northwest from framing room



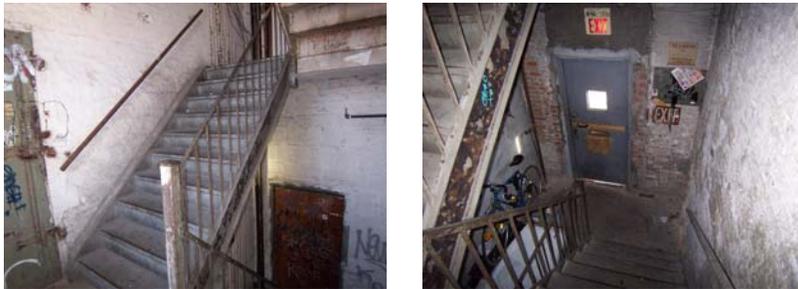
Figs. 64-65: Elevator in the framing room; entering Empty Space 1 from framing room



Figs. 66-68: Casual storage use in Empty Space 1; elevator in Empty Space 1; view of Rheingold site from Empty Space 1



Figs. 69-71: Ramp leading from Empty Space 1 to 2; Empty Space 2; cutting machines on the wall of Empty Space 2 – their bilingual (English and Spanish) labeling and good condition makes one wonder about the recent usage of this space



Figs. 72-73: Stairwell and exit to Belvidere Street

On examining the sales history as stated in the current databases, one sees that the last sale was made in 2000, with a transfer of deed from 77 Beaver Street Realty Corporation to Asset One Corporation (with Daniel Sivarak as president), and mortgage payments continuing from 2000 until 2004, when an assignment of leases and rent and a subordination of mortgage was made to Asset One by the bank. Previous to this, mortgage payments by 77 Beaver Street Realty Corporation are recorded to have been made from 1988 to 1998. There are three certificates of occupancy noted, the newest one being in 2002, with a change of occupancy/ use, and the others dating from 1919 and 1924. The older certificates might signal a change in ownership of the William Ulmer Brewery on one of these dates, and the company moving out of these premises.



Fig. 74: Certificate of Occupancy for the Ulmer Brewery, 1919 (Source: New York City Department of Buildings Information System)

Regarding the history of physical alterations and their respective official procedures – permits, Department of Buildings (DOB) and Environmental Control Board (ECB) violations, etc – a long list of these events is recorded in the database, spanning a period from 1923 to the present day. They are given here in a slightly abridged form:

- 1923: Two alteration works
- 1924: Alteration; new Certificate of Occupancy; elevator work
- 1928: Alteration
- 1932: Plumbing and drainage
- 1936: Alteration; plumbing and drainage work
- 1937: Two alteration works
- 1946: Plumbing repair slip
- 1952: Sprinklers
- 1958: Alteration
- 1963: Two building notices
- 1965: Application for oil burner
- 1967: DOB violation – dismissed
- 1970: Building notice
- 1983: Building notice
- 1986: DOB violations – two active, one dismissed
- 1988: Sprinkler works
- 1992: ECB violation for failure to maintain elevator – respondent: Mr Charles Helfrich – dismissed
- 1994: Two DOB violations for boiler – both dismissed
- 1996: ECB violation for failure to maintain elevator – respondent: Mr Charles Helfrich; 77 Beaver Street Realty – dismissed

- 1997: Two DOB violations for boiler – both dismissed
- 1998: DOB violation for boiler – dismissed
- 1999: ECB violation for public assembly (exit door swinging against flow of egress, on 3rd floor) – respondent: Harold Volk – dismissed
- 1999: ECB violation for boiler – dismissed
- 1999: Permit given for gas installations improvement — applicant: Neal M Rudikoff, New York Engineering Assoc. P.C – Contractor: M Michael Unflat, Unflat Perotto Assoc Inc
- 2000: ECB violation for installation and boiler room not being in accordance with the approved plan – dismissed
- 2000: ECB violation for failure to maintain boiler and hazardous boiler installed, altered, repaired or used without a permit – Respondent: Cindy's Creation – active
- **2001: Replacement of existing stairs with new metal stairs and construction of new stair enclosures at 1st floor, cellar and subcellar** – applicant: Peter J Mugavero / PJM Architect, P.C/ Mei Ching Chou, Secretary – Contractor: P.C/ Steven Viglis, Arista Iron Works – dismissed (legalized)
- **2001: Application for converting the 2nd, 3rd and 4th floors from factory and vacant space to 16 residential loft-type units, with new partitions, baths and kitchens, and fire escapes.** (the job would cost \$480,000) – applicant: Martyn & Don Weston Architects – Jesse Chun, Vice-President – **denied**
- 2001: DOB violation for boiler – active
- 2001: Two DOB violations for elevator– dismissed
- **2001: ECB violation for work without a permit (an opening created in cellar floor, unenclosed convey belt installed, steps leading to subcellar altered)** – dismissed
- **2001: ECB violation for work without a permit (six window openings sealed with bricks/ with matching masonry materials, at 1st story north and six sealed at 1 story east)** – Contractor: Daniel Sivarak/ Asset One – applicant: Peter J Mugavero – dismissed (legalized)
- 2001: ECB violation for failure to maintain (missing railing around entire opening created at 1st floor north, which is occupied) – dismissed
- 2001: Additions to existing sprinkler system in cellar, subcellar 1 and subcellar 2 – applicant: Kugler Russo Architects – Contractor: Pasquale Quaratino, Hirsch Plbg & Htg
- 2001: Plan examination – applicant: Kugler Russo Architects – approved
- 2002: DOB violations for boiler and elevator – active
- 2002: Replacing of air conditioning unit on first floor – applicant: Nyron Hall PC - Contractor: Shaid Ullah, Snug Construction Corp
- 2003: Two DOB violations for boiler – active
- 2003: New oil burner at cellar – applicant: Carl Giangrande, architect/ Jesse Chun, Vice-President
- 2004: Two DOB violations for boiler – active; two DOB violations for elevator – active
- 2005: Two DOB violations for boiler and elevator safety test – active
- 2005: Legalization of boiler and oil burner violations – applicant: Neal M Rudikoff, New York Engineering Assoc.P.C – Contractor: Jack Miccininni, Jack Piccini, Inc.
- 2006: Two DOB violations for boiler and elevator – active

Records on the **technical installations** include the following:

- For **electrical** installations, a rehabilitation work was done in 1996 with the owner business name stated as New Horizon Inc, the registration being closed/ cancelled in 1999, and a rehabilitation work done in **2000** with the owner business name stated as Sprint International, Inc, which was signed off.
- For the **elevator**, the device is described as running from the basement to the fourth floor with a capacity of 2,500 lbs, and is recorded to have had 40 inspections between **1988** and 2006, 4 of these being violations.
- For **plumbing**, there are three inspections recorded for 2000, all of them being signed off.
- For **boilers**, there are records of three different boilers installed, the oldest one (without a date) being a commercial, high pressure boiler, located at the basement; the second one being a multi-dwelling, low pressure boiler, located at the basement, inspected 7 times between 1994 and 1999 and all signed off; and the last one being a commercial, low pressure boiler, located at the cellar, inspected 10 times between 1992-2006 and all signed off.

On general examination of the list, one notices there have been **many violations** related to the building, most of them **dismissed** due to correction or non-resolution, and several of them still outstanding/ **active**. These violations mostly seem to be out of **neglect** or lack of awareness of the codes, rather than deliberate non-compliance. In the period between the approximate end (1920's-1930's?) of the Ulmer Brewery days and the Asset One Corporation period of today, regular building activity occurs, which means it was **occupied** in this period, probably by **manufacturing** companies.

4. Conclusion

The information gathered on the former William Ulmer Brewery site leads one to conclude that, this is a **'survivor building'**, continued to be **used** in a way similar to its original function, and retaining its **physical form** as a 19th century industrial building. Although William Ulmer is cited as one of the largest brewing companies in its time, the site seems to be **relatively modest in size** when compared to sites such as Rheingold's, where more modern, large industrial facilities replaced the older breweries over the years. Its somewhat small scale may have helped it to escape demolition and redevelopment until today.

However, the building's survival in this fashion seems to have reached its point of **expiration**. Its presently **under-capacity usage** is **not sustainable** in terms of its physical maintenance. There is already a **demand for its conversion into residential use**, which has encountered **resistance** at official level, due to its **zoning** status. Unless an extraordinary event occurs that differs from the general trend of new housing in the neighborhood, this point of tension may cause the building to remain neglected or become the scene of illegal building activity (conversion against zoning), neither of which are desirable.

A **change in zoning seems necessary**, which could be one for **residential** use; but there seem to be room for a more varied and wider range of uses, such as **mixed-use**, encompassing **commercial**, as well as **cultural/ community** uses. The latter zoning would benefit both the owner company, which seems interested in keeping up the building, and its tenants such as Mr Tuncer, as well as new parties interested in renting lofts. Amidst the widespread trend of converting former factories and warehouses into lofts, this is one instance of unrealized opportunities, where perhaps we **still have more options** at hand (which depends of course on the available resources and the will of the owner and city authorities).

In appraising the prospects for these usage options, one should consider the **developments happening around Bushwick**. First of all, the ongoing works for the **Rheingold Brewery Redevelopment Project** hold great weight in terms of changing the area's dynamics. The last phase of the project, on the triangular block right across Beaver Street from William Ulmer Brewery, is due to be opened in 2007 as Bushwick Gardens, as a cooperative of 88 dwelling units and 20,000 square feet of commercial space.⁶³ This mixed-use development could easily **affect the William Ulmer Brewery site**, in terms of realizing the full economic potential of this vicinity, and accelerate the existing demand for conversion into residential use, as well as for commercial or mixed use. In observing non-residential new uses, which are part of the new 'gentrification' trend, one finds examples such as **Life Café 983** that opened on Flushing Avenue in 2002, an industrial building renovated around the same time and opened as a **nonprofit arts-oriented** space called OfficeOps⁶⁴, **restaurants** with fashionable names such as Kings County and Northeast Kingdom in various parts of the neighborhood, and the Bushwick Art Project⁶⁵. The many trendy businesses opening up very closeby to the west in **East Williamsburg** indicate the great potential for changes in the close environs of the Ulmer Brewery.

Although the building's potential use as housing is the most obvious, followed closely by commercial or residential/commercial mixed uses, consideration of its **cultural value** should not be neglected. The Ulmer Brewery holds a **historical significance** that is quite important for the neighborhood, mainly in terms of its **association with brewing history**, and a good case could be made for

landmark designation. In addition, the building's **connections with other significant sites** in Bushwick, such as the **Cook Mansion** and **St. Mark's** Lutheran Church, remind one that the beer barons' mansions, the churches they helped to establish as institutions and to build as monuments, accompany the brewery plants they worked, in **representing the whole lifestyle of a certain era**. Thus, these kinds of surviving sites could contribute to a **historic district designation** (more expansive than the current Willoughby-Suydam Historic District at the northern edge of Bushwick), under a theme such as a '**Brewing Historical Park**'. **Community support** could be found for such an initiative, as the mansions can be claimed as the most impressive buildings, easy for the present community (whose historical sensitivity one ought not to underestimate, as seen from our basic workshops with them) to pinpoint as important buildings of the neighborhood and show interest in preserving. Returning to the Ulmer Brewery, it would be a great success to allocate at least a part of it to house an institution such as the '**Bushwick Brewing Museum**'. This idea could be brought to the attention of institutions such as the Brooklyn Brewery, or the group reviving the Miss Rheingold Contest, who care to keep the brewing heritage alive' and their **cooperation** could be sought for renovation funding and persuading the owner to allow such an allocation.

Whatever use is favored at the end by the responsible parties, an application for **zoning change and landmark designation** should be made, in one of the ways described above, although its chances of success would be greater if attempted by a local community organization, than if it was made on individual scale. A **restoration/rehabilitation** and achievement of **full-capacity usage** could perhaps follow these steps. It is our hope that positive action is soon made, along the guidelines proposed in this study.

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