

CHARLES STEGMAIER GOLD MEDAL BREWERY

WHEN?
1821-1902

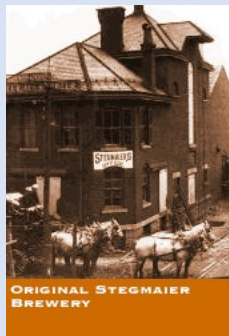
WHERE? Wilkes-Barre,
Pennsylvania



VOCABULARY
brewmaster
lager
Panic of 1873
pasteurization

Born in Württemberg, Germany in 1821, Charles Stegmaier was apprenticed at the age of 15 to learn the art of brewing (Stegmaier Beer). Recognizing that he could advance more quickly in the United States than in his home country he arrived in New York in 1849. He went to Philadelphia when an opportunity arose to work with Engle and Wolf brewers. By 1851 he was invited to the Wyoming Valley by John Reichard and began brewing the first lager beer in Wyoming Valley.

By 1857, he had saved enough money to invest in his own brewery. Since Wilkes-Barre was a growing community, he felt that the area would be fertile ground to grow his business (Stegmaier Beer). Eventually he and father-in-law George C. Baer formed a partnership and erected a small brewery on South Canal Street. Charles personally delivered the barrels of beer to the customers in a small cart pulled by a large goat. The two partners also had to figure out where to store and age the beer. According to Stegmaier Beer webpage, an abandoned mine tunnel owned by George Hollenback filled the need while a new brewery was built on East Market Street that had underground vaults. The Baer and Stegmaier company lasted until the Panic of 1873 which had a devastating effect on businesses.



Charles worked in the hotel industry for two years until the economy stabilized. He and his son Christian purchased Bowkley Brewery on North River Street and increased business until they could repurchase Baer and Stegmaier in 1880. A new brewhouse and storage facility were built in 1894 increasing capacity to 300,000 barrels which at the time was very large. Charles' other two sons, Fred and George, joined soon after. They were able to outpace many other local breweries due to their use of pasteurization, bottling, and transportation of their product using the New Jersey Central Railroad to more distant markets (Kashatus 101). Over the years the Stegmaier brand found its way from Maine to Florida.

Between 1910 and 1913 the brewery won eight gold medals at various competitions in Brussels, Paris, and Rome (Kashatus 101). Eventually it grew to the third largest in the state and 20th largest in the country. Thousands of valley residents found employment working for the company.



Other businessmen valued Stegmaier's shrewd business sense. He was considered as a very honest man, charitable, and always willing to help a worthy cause. Though he died in 1902 the



business continued to grow until 1974 when his great-great-grandson, Edward Maier, announced the sale of the business to Lion's Brewery. It had not been an easy decision, but the financial picture was bleak and deteriorating year-by-year as the larger breweries provided difficult competition that ate up the smaller breweries.

A group of local citizens, legislators and Luzerne and Lackawanna historical societies came together to create a plan to save the Stegmaier buildings. The brewery complex on East Market Street has been refurbished and now serves as a federal office building.

The brewing of the famous beer is also back under the control of family according to a Times-Leader article (O'Boyle 2022). Maier and partners Mark Nobile and J. Fred Maier formed the Susquehanna Brewery Company in Pittston in 2012. O'Boyle states that 2021 the group was given the chance to buy back the Stegmaier Beer brand back.

"My response was 'absolutely,' as I knew immediately that this was meant to be," Maier said. "The legacies of Charles Stegmaier and the Stegmaier Brewing Co. are back in the family's hands. My goal is to once again brew Stegmaier creations that would make Charles Stegmaier and the beer-loving citizens of NEPA proud" (O'Boyle 2021).

ONLINE RESOURCES

[Stegmaier Beer](#)

[Frederick Stegmaier Mansion](#)

[Times Leader](#)

PRINT RESOURCES

Kashatus, William. *Valley With A Heart*. Luzerne County, PA: Luzerne County Historical Society and Luzerne Community College. 2012.



Frederick Stegmaier mansion
304 South Franklin Street Wilkes-Barre