

## MAHANOY CITY CHRONICLES/Researched by Lorraine Stanton

# Kaier put town on the brewery map

(The following biographical sketch of Charles D. Kaier, Mahanoy City's pioneer brewery magnate, was provided by Lorraine Stanton from a county genealogical publication.)

**CHARLES D. KAIER**, for many years prominently identified with the commercial life of Schuylkill County, was born in the grand duchy of Baden, Germany, March 6, 1839, and died in Philadelphia on May 31, 1899.

When he was about 15 years of age he came to America with his parents, Andrew and Crescentia (Witmer) Kaier, who first located in Norristown where the father followed his occupation of blacksmith and the son began learning the trade of baker and confectioner.

In 1850 the family removed to Saint Clair where Charles entered the bakery of Fred Epping with whom he completed his apprenticeship.

When President Lincoln called for 75,000 men in the spring of 1861, Charles was one of the first to respond. He enlisted as a private in Company 11, a Pennsylvania volunteer infantry, and after serving for three months was honorably discharged on August 21, 1861.

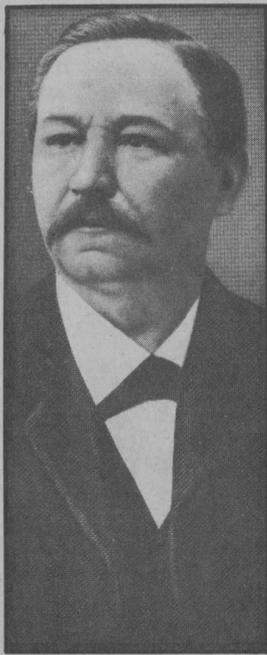
In 1862 **HE** located in Mahanoy City where for a time he was associated in business with Frederick Gantert. He then erected a building at 113 E. Centre St. and engaged in bottling ale and porter. Subsequently he became the agent for Bergner & Engle, the great brewing firm of Philadelphia. His territory embraced the counties of Schuylkill, Carbon, Columbia, and Northumberland.

To this position he brought all his energy and fine executive ability and in a short time his agency became one of the best known and most profitable in the state.

His desire, however, was to be a brewer on his own account, and his work as an agent for Bergner & Engle was but a stepping stone to that end.

On 1891 he erected a brewery equipped with all the latest improvements and began the manufacture of malt liquors. This establishment was enlarged from time to time until at the time of his death it was one of the greatest in the state, having a capacity of over 100,000 barrels a year and employing constantly 150 men.

**MR. KAIER** WAS also interested in other business institutions in the county. He was connected with banks in Shenandoah and Girardville, was one of the organizers and at the time of his death was president of the Union National Bank of Mahanoy City; was the founder



**Charles D. Kaier**  
Brewery entrepreneur

and controlling spirit of the Broad Mountain Ice Company which he operated in connection with his brewing interests; controlled the operations of the Anthracite Light, Heat and Power Company.

He owned the opera house as well as other valuable property in the city where he lived for nearly 40 years and although he was one of the well-to-do men of the place, not one dollar of his wealth was accumulated except by the most upright methods.

He was a Democrat in his political affiliations and was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. But his charity was not limited by nationality, party line or religious creed. Many instances of his generosity and kindness might be mentioned though it is highly probable that many more would remain unknown as his benevolence was of that unostentatious kind that lets not the left hand know what the right hand doeth.

He was a member of Severn Post No. 110 Grand Army of the Republic in Mahanoy City and the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick in Philadelphia where he died on May 31, 1899. He had been afflicted for several years and had gone abroad in search of health, placing himself in the hands of the most skillful physicians of both this country and Europe. His remains were brought to Mahanoy City and interred in the

family plot in Saint Fidelis Cemetery.

**MR. KAIER MARRIED** Miss Margaret Curry of Pottsville and of the 10 children born to this union, seven reached the age of maturity. Ella married John B. Liberman and is now deceased; Josephine is the wife of M. J. Haughney of Mahanoy City; Margaret is Mrs. John B. Liberman; Mary and Crescentia are unmarried; Amelia is Mrs. Henry Schreyer; Charles, the only surviving son, is interested in the management of his father's estate.

Concerning the career and death of Mr. Kaier the Mahanoy City Record said: "In his death Mahanoy City loses not alone its foremost business man but one who by the confidence which he manifested in its welfare inspired others to invest and awakened faith in the future of the community."

"To his pride in the town was due some of its greatest improvements, notably an opera house which in the completeness of its appointments and the elegance of its decoration is unsurpassed in the state.

"In his family relations he represented an excellent example of husband and father. Devoted to his wife and fond of his children, he was constantly aiming to provide for their pleasure and gratification. Those special occasions in the history of families which marked domestic history were always observed in a manner to make them memorable and fragrant memories."

This encomium from of who had known him in his life is an index to his character and in few words shows what manner of man he was in his relations with his fellow men. His death was deeply felt not only by the surviving widow and her children but also by the entire community which he had done so much to elevate in a moral and material sense.

(The following obituary of Charles F. Kaier, son of the brewery founder, is from the Record-American of Oct. 13, 1921.)

**WORD RECEIVED** here today announced the sad news that Charles F. Kaier died this morning at 10:40 at his summer home in Ventnor, Atlantic City, N.J.

He had been ill for some time and Dr. Riley, the family physician, with other physicians and a specialist were at his bedside almost constantly. All that medicine could accomplish was performed in order to save his life.

Charles F. Kaier was born in



**PRIZE WINNER** — This float which won first prize in the 1916 Elks state convention in Reading is an example of the talent of Charles Kaier Jr. who was a master at the art of decorating which he learned during his ex-

tended stays in Europe. His flair for decoration was greatly in evidence in the business district during the 1913 Old Home Week.

Mahanoy City in 1879 and consequently was in his 42nd year. He was educated in the public schools and attended Mount Saint Mary's College at Emmitsburg, Md.

Returning from school, he was associated in business with his father. At the time of his father's death, he, together with his sister, Mrs. Lloyd Fahler, took up the active management of the Kaier interests and successfully conducted them until his death.

Mr. Kaier's early years were spent in travel through Europe where he associated with men of much prominence. During his stay in Europe he inherited many novel ideas which in later years he put into practice. During Old Home Week in 1913 he adorned his mother's home (mansion at 8th and Centre streets) with beautiful decorations and illumination. He took unusual pride in this work and no occasion of any kind was celebrated hereabouts without the ingenuity of his active mind, along the lines of decoration, receiving his personal attention.

During the state convention of Elks in Mahanoy City he loaned his services to all local organizations and was the single most significant factor in the success of that occasion. His kindnesses were as

numerous as the sands of the shore. No person, no matter how humble, was turned away, no deaf ear was ever turned upon the needy. Charley Kaier was a chap loved by all. He was kind of disposition and his one great thought at all times was the pleasure of his friends.

He was a thorough baseball fan and in 1910 he entertained the Philadelphia Athletics when they defeated Chicago in the World Series. Connie Mack and the entire team were brought to Mahanoy City by special train and were entertained royally with a day of pleasure and an evening performance of "Madame Sherry" in the Kaier Opera House.

He was a member of the Elks Lodge, Eagles Aerie and Saint Fidelis Church to which he and his parents donated the beautiful onyx altar, the communion rail and two electric candelabra.

Surviving are his wife of three years, the former Esther McGinnis, and five sisters: Mrs. Joseph Haughney, Mrs. Margaret Lieberman, Mrs. Lloyd Fahler, Mrs. Henry Schreyer, Mahanoy City, and Mrs. Charles Kirby, Harrisburg.

**FRANZ X. KAIER**, superintendent of the Charles D. Kaier Brewing Company of Mahanoy City was born in Baden, Ger-

many, in 1852. His father, Blasius Kaier, was a school teacher by vocation and lived out his years in the German fatherland. The subject of his sketch attended the public schools of his native country and there learned the art of brewing in the thorough manner of which only native Germans are capable.

His coming to the United States is dated in 1882 and his first home in the new world in which he sought his fortune was in Pottsville. After six months of work in that city he came to Mahanoy City where Charles D. Kaier had preceded him by some years and had become well established in the brewing business. It was in this establishment that he first obtained work and when the owner moved into the new and larger quarters necessitated by the increase of business, Mr. Kaier was made superintendent, a position which he has filled with proficiency and ability ever since.

He has been twice married and by his first wife, Theresa Guenther, who was born in Ashland, he is the father of three sons, Frank, John and Edward. After death severed the first union he was united in the holy bonds of matrimony to Miss Kate Kline, a daughter of William Kline of Mahanoy City. Three children blessed the union, Faver, Harry and Charles.



### Teachers in disguise

A costume party drew this group of Mahanoy City teachers together shortly after the turn of the century. In front are (from left) Irma Dennis, Rebecca Linton, Margaret Collins, Elsie Reed. Second row: Eliza John, Mrs. Richardson, Mable Dennis, Anna Spade (Reed). Back row:

Mina Haldeman, Elizabeth Reed, Mary Entwistle, Carrie Hassel, Minnie Reed and Charlotte Haldeman. The photo is from Margaret Ashman whose mother is on the photo (Minnie Reed). Notice the young peekaboo spying from behind the curtain at right.



### Relaxing at the flats

Ed Silliman, left, and friends are obviously enjoying summer relaxation on the veranda at the Silliman summer residence on the mountain at the Mahanoy City Water Company dam north of Craigs Patch. The spot was then known as Silliman's Flats. The lone dwelling is now occupied by Bill

Gill, manager of the Mahanoy Township Authority, and his family. The township authority acquired the water system from the Silliman estate in 1941. The photo is from the Elwood Young collection, provided by George Barlow.