

Brief history of... Hammel Brewery and Museum

The Hammel Brewery is one of Socorro's landmark buildings, a reminder of the region's 1880s industrial boom years.

Jakob Hammel, and sons **Gustav** and **William**, arrived in Socorro in 1882. They established a warehouse on Manzanaras Street and bottled imported Anheuser beer, delivered bulk by the Santa Fe Railroad. The following year, **Hammel Bros. & Co.** began brewing their own beer locally.

Needing larger facilities, in 1884 they purchased property and an adobe building on 6th Street for their growing brewery. In 1886, a 3-story stone building was constructed, the familiar center section of today's Hammel Brewery. It was filled with the best brewing equipment money could buy, including an ammonia ice making plant.

The Hammel was in full production – the only brewery in New Mexico shipping beer packed in ice and delivered cold – a real novelty in 1886. They changed their name to the **Illinois Brewing Co.** in 1887.

Jakob Hammel died in 1903 with William now in control of the brewery. He expanded the facilities the following year by building the two-story addition on the north end of the complex, giving the Hammel Brewery the appearance it has today. In 1908, William also began bottling soft drinks in a building across the street.

The Hammel brewing enterprise came crashing to an end in 1918 when New Mexico passed a law prohibiting the manufacture or sale

of alcoholic beverages. The following year, the 18th Amendment was ratified. Prohibition was a huge financial loss to the Hammel family. William Hammel died virtually penniless in 1920. Son **Clarence Hammel** returned the family business to profitability by expanding the soft drink bottling franchise, bottling **Pepsi-Cola, 7-up, Nesbitt and Grapette.**

Clarence did not reopen the brewery when Prohibition was repealed in 1933. The equipment had been dismantled by order of the act, and the 40-year old equipment was now dilapidated and too costly to replace. Clarence survived well through the Great Depression years and World War II with his soft drink bottling and ice plant.

After WWII, business declined as electric refrigerators became a common household item, reducing the demand for home delivered ice. Huge soft drink bottlers began to overtake the smaller bottlers.

Clarence Hammel closed the soft drink and ice plant in 1956. Clarence died in

1986 after making arrangements with SCHS President **Spencer Wilson** to transfer the brewery to SCHS upon his death. The Historical Society restored the building, including a new roof, to the condition it is today.



An early photo of the brewery before the 3-story center building was added in 1886



Illinois Brewing Co. delivering cold beer and ice circa 1886



Hammel Brewery shortly after building the 3-story center section was completed.



The Hammel Brewery & Museum today