

# **John Orth and Family Collection**

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James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library  
300 Nicollet Mall  
Minneapolis, MN, 55401  
612-543-8200  
[specialcoll@hclib.org](mailto:specialcoll@hclib.org)

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository</b>	James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library
<b>Title</b>	John Orth and Family Collection
<b>Date</b>	1857-2004
<b>Extent</b>	0.21 Linear feet
<b>Language</b>	English

## Biography

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John Orth was the first brewer in the Minneapolis/St. Anthony area. His brewery along with 3 other brewers merged in July 1890 to become the Minneapolis Brewing and Malting Company (later Minneapolis Brewing Company and Grain Belt Breweries Inc.).

Joh Orth was born in Rott, Alsace in France on May 20, 1821. He learned beermaking in Rott and augmented his skills in Germany, Italy and Spain before emigrating to Erie, Pennsylvania in 1849. Orth met Prussian-born Mary C. Weinell in Erie and they married on August 6, 1849.

Shortly after their marriage, the Orths moved to Galena, Illinois and then on to St. Anthony in July 1850. At the time the only brewer in the region was Anthony Yoerg who started brewing in St. Paul in 1848. John Orth constructed a brewery shortly after he arrived in St. Anthony and this ad in the December 17, 1850 *Minnesota Democrat* followed:

MINNESOTA BREWERY, AT ST. ANTHONY FALLS - I am now ready to supply the the citizens of this Territory with Ale and Beer, which will be found equal--yes, superior--to what is brought from below. I am now demonstrating that malt liquors of the very best quality can be manufactured in Minnesota. Try my Ale and Beer and you will be convinced of the fact. JOHN ORTH

The Orth Brewery was located at 1228 Marshall Street NE, nearby where the later Grain Belt Brewery was built. By 1860 Orth Brewing capacity was 1,000 barrels, increasing to 7,000 by the late 1870s. Cold storage was first a beer cave on Nicollet Island and later Orth was one of the first to use ice cellars for lagering beer.

Besides brewing, Orth was also involved in politics. He was elected to the St. Anthony city council in 1855. His election caused concern with local temperance activists. The *Minnesota Republican* feared that Orth and other councilmen would not be supportive of temperance in St. Anthony and urged them to make "the sale of posionous beverages a crime," and to condemn the "vile saloons and drunken street displays which disgrace the town." Orth later served on the Minneapolis city council after it merged with St. Anthony from 1872 to 1875. Although a committed abolitionist and early member of the Republican party, Orth later became a Democrat as the Minnesota Republicans became increasingly prohibitionist in their outlook.

Although Alsace was a region in France when Orth left it in 1849, it became a part of Germany after the 1870 war between France and what became the German empire. In the 1857 and 1860 censuses, Orth identified as being born in France. Beginning in 1870 the censuses listed Germany which was technically correct since Alsace-Lorraine was German from 1870-1918. This move also solidified Orth's status as a leader of the German-American community and made his product more marketable.

John and Mary Orth had six children: John W., Charles, Sophia, Edward, Virginia, and Alfred. All of the children except Charles lived to adulthood. All of the sons worked at the brewery in some capacity for some duration. The 1884-1885 census reflected the family run business: John Orth--President, J.W. Orth--Vice President, E.F. Orth--Secretary and Alfred Orth--Treasurer.

In the last years of John's life his sons got more involved in the business as he stepped away, traveling with Mary to Europe and Africa. While in Africa in 1887, John became ill and died en route to Minneapolis in Chicago.

The John Orth Brewery continued as an independent brewer for three more years after the patriarch's death, run by John W. and his two brothers. In the late 1880s British syndicates were taking over U.S. breweries for their investment value. To combat foreign takeover and to reduce competition and to increase profits, breweries consolidated. In 1890 the Orths, Germania, F.D. Noerenberg and Heinrich brewing merged to become Minneapolis Brewing and Malting. Gluek Brewing Company, founded in 1857, remained independent. The Orth brothers left the business in 1893 to focus on real estate. The Orth Brothers were a well known name in real estate for many years and later ran the City Ice Company. The last family connection to Minneapolis Brewing was Mathias J. Bofferding, the husband of Virginia Ann Orth.

Mathias Bofferding replaced John Orth as president of Minneapolis Brewing in 1893. Bofferding owned \$200,000 of Minneapolis Brewing stock and was also cashier of the Bank of Minneapolis. Minneapolis Brewing was significantly restructured and stock was offered to the public. A new 150,000 barrel brewery was built in 1892 at 1215 Marshall Avenue NE, near the site of the old Orth brewery. Bofferding's tenure as president was short: he committed suicide in September 1893. The suicide was blamed on the fiscal problems at the Bank of Minneapolis where Bofferding was still cashier. Only thirty-eight years old at the time of his death, Bofferding's departure was a major loss for the 3 year old company. Despite the setback, Minneapolis Brewing grew more successful into the 20th century especially with its Grain Belt brand of beers. It survived prohibition and remained independent until the brewery was sold to G. Heileman in December 1975, marking 125 years of brewing in Minneapolis since John Orth put his advertisement in the *Minnesota Democrat* in 1850.

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## Description of the Collection

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One box of a biography of John Orth, photographs of his family and family tree information. Materials are from 1857-2004.

The biography of John Orth was originally written in 1992 by St. Cloud State University graduate student Mike Worcester. It covers Orth's founding of his brewery, his nationality (he first claimed he was French and later German after the Prussians took Alsace after 1870), his politics and his family.

The photos in folder 2 are from the scrapbook of Maude Katherine (Orth) Robb, 1878-1960. There are 19 photos in the collection, including photos the John Orth residence at 1207 Marshall Street NE and the Edward P. Orth residence at 2320 Colfax Avenue South.

The oldest photos in the collection are from 1857. John Orth and his oldest son, John W. Orth are in one photo from 1857. The other 1857 photo is of Mary Weinell Orth and son Edward Frederick and daughter Sophia Mathilda.

Most of the other photos in the collection reflect the above subjects, John and Mary Orth and their children. Other subjects include, daughter Virginia Ann Orth and Mathias J. Bofferding (their wedding photo, 1880); John Orth, son of Alfred Orth, 1897; Margaret Loftus Orth, wife of John W. Orth; son Edward P. Orth and his wife Katherine Loftus on their wedding day, May 4, 1877; Mary Demuth Orth 1861-1890, first wife of Alfred H. Orth; John Alpha Orth and his wife Minnie (grandson of John and Mary, son of John W.); Alfred H. Orth, May 1896 and a photo of the scrabook's owner, Maude Katherine (Orth) Robb at age 12 in 1890. Maude was the daughter of Edward P. and Katherine Orth.

The family group sheets in folder 3 give genealogical information about John and Mary Orth and their 6 children: John William, Charles P., Sophia Matilda, Edward Frederick, Virginia Ann, Alfred H., and their deccendents.

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Information

James K. Hosmer Special Collections Library

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## Related Materials

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### Related Materals

For more information on John Orth and early Minneapolis brewing see:

Hoverson, Doug. *Amber Waters: The History of Brewing in Minnesota*. Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, c2007. **TP573.U5 H68 2007**

*Minneapolis Brewing Company : Grain Belt Brewery history sourcebook*. [Minneapolis, Minn.] : Minneapolis Public Library, 2003. **HD9359.G72 M56 2003**

Lonto, Jeff R. *Legend of the brewery : a brief history of the Minneapolis brewing heritage*. Minneapolis, Minn. : Studio Z-7 Pub., c1998. **HD9359.G72 L66 1998**

Worcester, Michael R. *Been a long time a-brewing : a history of the Minneapolis Brewing Company, 1890-1975*. 1993. **HD9359.G72W67 1993**

## Controlled Access Headings

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### Corporate Name(s)

- John Orth Brewing Company. (Minneapolis, Minn.)
- Minneapolis Brewing Company.

### Personal Name(s)

- Orth, John, 1821-1887
- Robb, Maude Katherine, 1878-1860
- Worcester, Michael R.

### Subject(s)

- Breweries -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis -- History.
- Brewers -- Minnesota -- Minneapolis -- Biography.

## Collection Inventory

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	<b>Box</b>	<b>Folder</b>
John Orth: Hennepin County's Pioneer Brewer by Mike Worcester 2004	1	1
Orth Family Photos 1857-1900	1	2
Orth Family History	1	3