

A small well-like opening in the southwest corner dropped to the level of the old storage caverns; another ladder was needed to reach the seven lower storage cellars of 1856-57.

The lateral led into the central one of the three caverns. These were about ten feet wide and ten feet high with arched ceilings bricked with old fashioned brick masonry of the lime mortar era. The floor was not level, more than two-thirds being a raised dirt platform. Originally this was topped with hugh flagstones, and on the flagstones rested rows of big wooden beer vats, each with a 750 gallon capacity. Into these vats, to age and mellow in the never-changing coolness of the cavens, was piped the brew as it was made during the winter months. When summer came, the workers drew off the beer into quarter barrels which were then lifted on a crude chain hoist through well-like openings into the tunnel ceilings.

John Breitstadt, long time superintendent of the brewery, used to say that he believed the caverns were not used after 1885.

After the stock house was built on the north side of York in 1875, the caverns continued in use for another ten years. Then with development of refrigeration methods, brewing became a year round business; the brewery expanded, and the old cellars were abandoned.

The old casks were removed and the old flagstones upon which they rested were used for fire and bridge walls in the boilers. Later the eastern end of the main tunnel was walled off, and the northern and eastern laterals were closed.

When the big chimney, now gone, of the big boiler house south of York Street was built, its great stone foundation ran right down through the middle of the western lateral.

There was scarcely a town or city where Dick's Quincy Beer was not sold. It was probably the greatest advertising medium the city ever had from one source. But then came the Volstead Act of 1918, and the sale of alcoholic beverages was stopped by Prohibition. The company tried the manufacture of "near-beer", but it was not successful, and the plant shut down until the return of beer by an act of Congress, in 1933.

DICK'S BREWERY ON YORK BETWEEN 9TH & 10TH STREETS

from Carl Landrum's "Historic
Sketches" of Quincy

On July 21, 1857, "A new brewery is being erected on Ninth Street between York and Kentucky, on ground formerly owned by Mr. Shanahan. It will be 51 feet by 52 feet and three stories in height. Extensive cellars are being excavated for the purposes of storing beer by three brothers from Belleville".

The three Dick brothers, Jacob, Mathew and John, came to America in 1854, from Bavaria, where they were born. They located first in St. Louis, moving to Belleville in 1855. Mathew was a cooper, John a baker, and Jacob a salesman for a hardware store. When they came to Quincy in 1856, Mathew was 37 years old, John was 29, and Jacob was 22 years old.

The Dick brothers erected a large double, two and-a-half story house on the corner where Jacob Dick lived, with Mathew living on the northwest corner of Ninth and Kentucky, and John somewhere on Jersey near Ninth.

The brothers excavated under the brewery for three large sub-basement tunnels to hold the large 750 gallon wooden vats in which the beer was stored. These tunnels consisted of three "laterals", nearly a half-block each in length, extending southward from a "parent" tunnel that ran east and west along York Street, partly beneath the sidewalk on the south side of York, partly undelying the street.

The main tunnel extended from the eastern line of the bottling house building westward almost to Ninth street where it ended in the large ice storage cellar that had stone-masonry walls and arched masonry ceiling.

East of where this main east-west tunnel was located, a more modern tunnel angled beneath York Street from the north side of the street, originating in the old stock house building erected in 1876. This newer tunnel carried the pipes used to transport beer from the main brewery plant north to York street to the government meter room where all beer to be bottled was measured and the tax labels placed on it.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
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