

WEISSNER BREWERY, BUILDINGS 6 AND 7
(American Brewery, Buildings 6 and 7)
1700 North Gay Street
Baltimore
Baltimore ~~County~~ City
Maryland

HAER No. MD-25-A

HAER
MD,
4-BALT,
226A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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Location: 1700 North Gay Street, Baltimore, Baltimore ^{City} ~~County~~, Maryland
USGS Baltimore East, Maryland Quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:
18.361170, 4352105
363132, 4352072

Date of Construction: 1873.

Architect/Builder: Unknown.

Original plans and construction: Not available.

Present Owner: Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City.

Present Use: Unoccupied commercial warehouse building.

Significance: Built in 1873 these buildings provided support and storage space, of beer bottles, for the Weissner Brewery. The buildings preceded the construction of the large main building in 1887 and are examples of Victorian era commercial warehouse architecture.

Project Information: This project was sponsored by KCM Architects, the Jay French Company, the Department of Housing and Community Development, and Mohamed El-Menshawly, Environmental Policy Analyst. The historical documentation was undertaken by the Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) under the direction of Kathleen Kotarba, Executive Director. The documentation was completed by Walter Edward Leon, City Planner: Historic Preservation, in 1996. Current plan drawings were provided and completed by KCM. The photography was produced by Brough Schamp.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Historical Context:

In 1853, ten years prior to the American Civil War, John F. Weissner (1831-1897) arrived from Uhlfeld, Bavaria. He worked for several years in Baltimore before being hired to work at the brewery owned by George Rost. This is where Weissner became a brewmaster along side of his brother-in-law George Baurenschmidt, who would later prosper with his own brewery. In 1862 Weissner returned to Bavaria to discuss with his family the plans to open his own brewery. A year later he returned with some money and family approval to build his own brewery. Levi and Henry Strauss, then in the malting business, extended Weissner credit for starting up his.

Weissner opened his brewery, in 1863, and added his brewery to the twenty-one already in operation throughout Baltimore. The brewery was built on part of the estate known as Greenwood, originally established by Philip Rogers in 1807. It was Charles Rogers, grandson of Philip, who leased Weissner two acres and a dairy farm for his brewery site, which fronted Belair Avenue. It is reported that the brewery skirmished with Union soldiers who "mooched" the beer being produced.

During the early operation of the brewery Weissner himself was the plant's brewmaster. He emphasized producing high quality beer rather high quantity. Weissner's beer sold for \$2, per barrel, more than any of the other local beers. Weissner also followed the tradition of providing board and lodging for fellow brewery workers. This helped establish the large German community that lived in northeast Baltimore. Throughout the 1870s to the mid-1880's production steadily increased to 20,000 barrels per year with only small expansions of structures occurring.

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In 1886, Weissner obtained a mortgage, for \$10,000 to build a new plant. The new plant that was constructed was a Victorian vernacular style some have called Teutonic Brewery. Locally the five-story building was called the Germanic Pagoda. The building stands impressively with three towers, stained glass windows, and distinctive decorative details. After this construction the plant was able to produce up to 40,000 barrels per year. The new plant also progressed later that year with the purchase of two Linde Wolfe ice machines and steam kettles which pushed production to 100,000 barrels per year.

The business was incorporated into the John F. Weissner & Sons Brewing Company in 1891 with addition of his sons to the business. Five years later on June 4, 1896 the land was deeded to Weissner. In that same year the plant began its own bottling department. Prior to this, the bottling was performed by William F. Kuzmaul. The kegs were brought one block to his facility, at 1743 North Gay Street, and carried by the Weissner employees. At this time Weissner also began a major building expansion to accommodate the expanded production capabilities. John F. Weissner passed away on the first of January, 1887.

After the death of their father John F. Weissner Jr., George F. Weissner, and Henry F. Weissner took over the brewery with John becoming the new president. Beer production peaked to about 110,000 barrels a year in the following years after the death of the elder Weissner. The plant continued its expansion to accommodate its new bottling and shipping needs. About nine years later, in 1906, John F. Weissner Jr. passed away. In 1909, George F. Weissner succeeded his brother as president of the company. The brewery continued to progress and modernize under the new president. Finally in 1920 beer production ended with the passage of Prohibition.

In 1926, the American Malt Company took over the Baurenschmidt Brewery for its malt production. By 1931 the American Malt Company outgrew this site and purchased the Weissner Brewery complex. John Loughlin FitzSimons (1883-1942) made the purchase and also created one of the biggest moves of machinery and equipment in Baltimore's history. The move was completed and the plant made operational in 30 days. Only a small part of the equipment left at the brewery was usable in the production or packaging of malt syrup due to the fact that much of the equipment had become outdated.

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The company amended its charter in 1933 and became the American Brewery Incorporated, in the anticipation of the repeal of Prohibition. In July of that year the company began selling beer under the name American Pilsner and also became the third brewery to start producing beer in the hours after Prohibition had been repealed. FitzSimons decided that both beer and malt be produced when Prohibition ended as malt was still a very lucrative product.

In 1934, the brands that were being produced were American Pilsner, Old Baron, and Nut Brown Ale. This year also marked the change-over from steam to electric power. Two years later the brewery added a large platform to assist in its distribution. April 3, 1942 marked the death of John L. FitzSimons just at the time the nation was entering the Second World War. Claude A. FitzSimons was named president and succeeded his brother.

The brewery ended the production of malt, in 1948, in order to prevent the rise in beer production costs. The plant then saw a series of expansions and modernizations of new equipment in this period. Throughout this time to the mid-1960's beer production on the average reached 300,000 barrels a year.

By coincidence the nation, in 1967, was once again in the midst of war when the brewery was sold to the Allegheny Beverage Corporation. The corporation began brewing Heibrau, Keg, and Arrow beers. Finally due to competition from several national breweries, Allegheny donated the 2 acre site of the Weissner brewery to the City of Baltimore, in 1973. The plant has remained boarded-up and unused since.

B. Physical History:

1. Date of erection of Buildings 6 and 7: 1873. The first definitive record of these buildings is from documents kept at the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

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2. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses: Reference is to the Land Records of Baltimore City, Maryland, which fall under the supervision of the Baltimore City Circuit Court. Current record is:

1977 Deed recorded in Liber RHB 03529, folio 0809
to Mayor and City Council of Baltimore
10/06/1977

C. History of the Site:

The earliest view of the Weissner Brewery site comes from the E. Sachse & Co's Bird's Eye View of the City of Baltimore of 1869. In this view only the original brewhouse and main residence exist on a smaller site that now exists. From 1863 to 1967 the brewery site grew with each change in ownership or change in production needs. Both buildings 6 and 7 were originally three-stories high on all four sides and after 1910 the central courtyard was raised and both buildings became only two-stories on the south elevations. The north elevation is no longer discernable with the addition of building 10 in 1937. The buildings have maintained the same use as storage structures until the end of brewing in 1973.

Part II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

A. Physical Description of the Buildings:

Buildings 6 and 7 are examples of Victorian era commercial Gothic and Greek Revival styles. They are constructed of brick and are representative of late nineteenth century utilitarian shipping and storage structures found throughout Baltimore. The current conditions of buildings 6 and 7 is poor.

The buildings are situated northeast from the main pagoda brewhouse which faces Belair Road. The buildings face an open courtyard to the south, and are directly attached to building 10 on the north. Building 25 is also attached on the west side.

1. Exterior:

Buildings 6 and 7 are attached to one another and form a rectilinear structure that does not appear to have any kind of structural rhythm. Building 6 measures 67'-4" by 36'-0" and building 7 measures 57'-0" by 36'-0". And both buildings together measure a total of 124'-4" by 36'-0". The foundations of both buildings are of brick and stone. The walls are of brick and are laid in a common bond pattern. Both buildings are brick load bearing construction with steel and wood framing. Building 6 has a modern concrete ramp leading to a pair of doors accessed through the courtyard while building 7 has only a concrete sidewalk in front of it. Neither of the buildings has a chimney or fireplace.

The doorway openings to buildings 6 and 7 are made of brick and are rectangular in shape. The door frames are made of brick and are peeling or decaying where exposed to the elements. All of the original window openings have been filled-in with brick or boarded over. There is no clear pattern to the window openings, reflecting the numerous renovations that have taken place. Also no wood frames remain intact except for one on building 7 where a wood vent shutter is located.

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The roof of building 6 is a sloped cross gable covered with modern tar paper and fiberglass shingles. The roof of building 7 is a two-part shed covered with tar paper and fiberglass shingles. The cornice of both buildings are made up of imitation brick dentils. There is a portion of a modern rectangular brick tower located on the southeast corner of building 7.

2. Interior:

The basement level, formerly the first floor prior to the construction of building 10, was inaccessible. The first floor of the buildings is accessed from the northwest corner of building 6. The entrance leads into a small room that opens into a narrow three foot wide main hall which runs the length of both buildings. The first floor is composed of five main areas separated by partition walls. The second floor is accessed from a set of stairs located near the entrance of building 6. The stairs lead into a large open space floor plan composed of three main areas. Both floors have immediate access to building 10 through openings cut through the walls.

The floors throughout both buildings are made of either poured concrete or wood. The walls are covered with modern drywall attached to metal rail studs. The ceiling material that remains is made of acoustic drop ceiling panels on metal rails.

The doorways in both buildings are made of modern metal framing that have no frame moulding remaining. There are no doors remaining on the interior as well as no windows or window frames remaining in either structure.

Neither building has any original decorative features throughout in the interior of either building as well as having no original or hardware remaining.

Of the heating and air conditioning systems only a small portion of the modern aluminum ducts remained. There were no lighting features to be found in the interior of either building. While there is a first floor bathroom area at the east end of building 7, there are no pipes or tubes remaining.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Plans: None located.

B. Early Views:

1900 Baltimore City Directory, p. 1008.
R.L. Polk Publishing Company
Baltimore City Archives.

1907 Baltimore City Directory, p. 2107.
R.L. Polk Publishing Company
Baltimore City Archives.

1908 Baltimore City Directory, p. 2215.
R.L. Polk Publishing Company
Baltimore City Archives.

1910 Blum, Isador. The Jews of Baltimore. Historical Review Publishing Company. Baltimore, 1910, p.xxx.
Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary unpublished sources:

Baltimore City Archives, Baltimore, Maryland.

Hawley, Monica E. HAER MD-25: Weissner Brewery. Library of Congress, Washington D.C. 1983.

Land Records of Baltimore City, Clarence Mitchell Courthouse, Maryland.

2. Secondary published sources:

Dorsey, John and Dilts, James D. A Guide to Baltimore Architecture,
Tidewater Publishers, Centreville, 1981:125-126.

Greene, Granville. "No Return: The Landmark American Brewery Building
Lingers in Limbo", The City Paper, July 11, 1989:9.

Industries of Maryland, Historical Publication Company, Baltimore,
1882:279.

Kelly, William J. Brewing in Maryland: Colonial to Present,
Baltimore, 1965: 292-308, 587-598.

Klein, Marilyn W. and Fogle, David P. Clues to American Architecture,
Starrhill Press, Washington D.C. and Philadelphia, 1986:30-31.

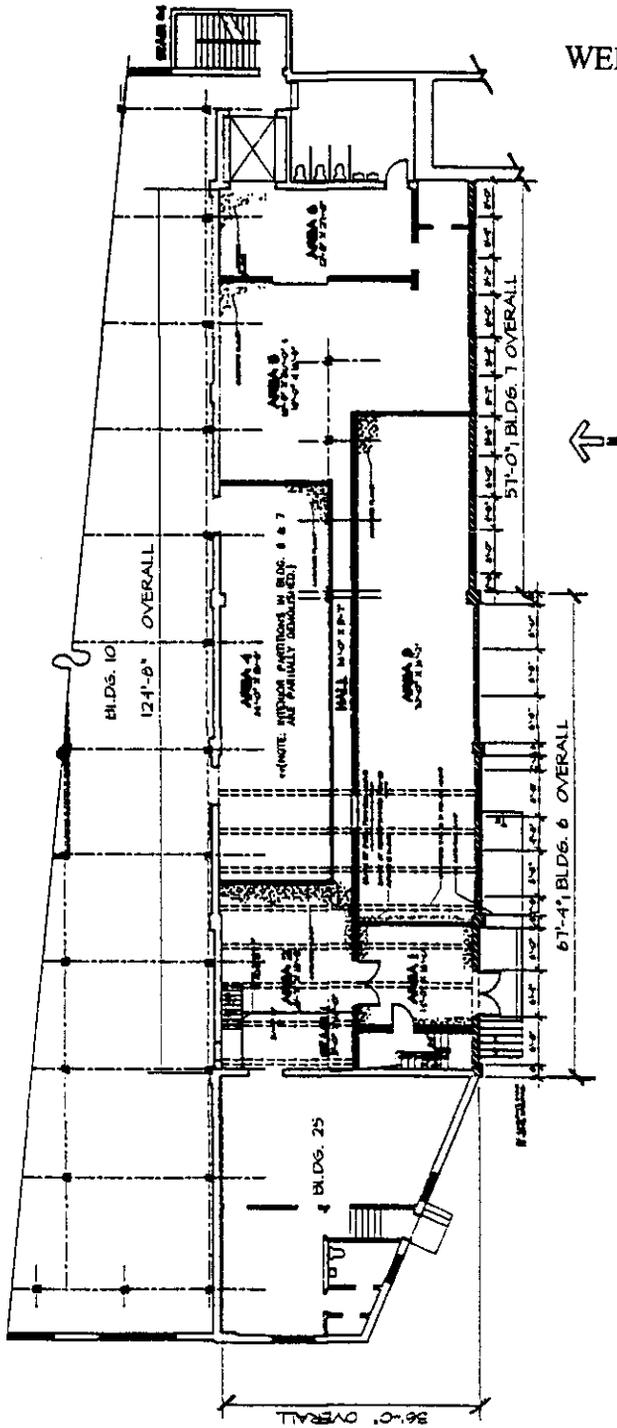
Olson, Sherry H. Baltimore: The Building of an American City, JHU
Press, Baltimore and London, 1980:264.

Pietilla, Antero. "American Brewery Stands Empty: A Monument to a less
Hurried Age", The Sun, Baltimore, April 13, 1973.

"John F. Weissners New Brewery", The Western Brewer: and Journal of
the Barley, Malt. and Hop Trades, 12, May 15, 1887:1012.

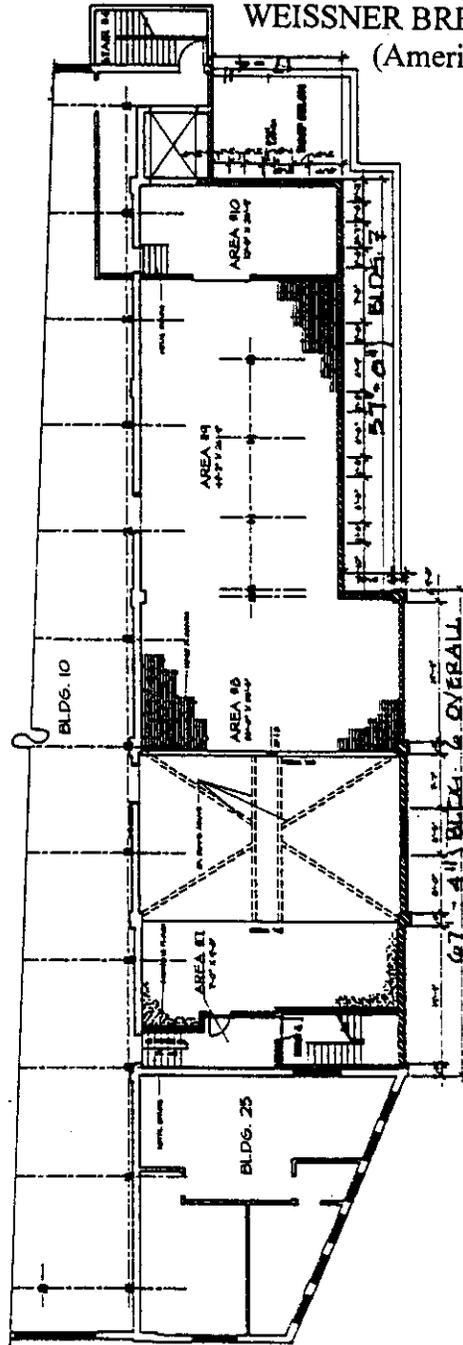
Zembala, Dennis M. Baltimore: Industrial Gateway On The Chesapeake
Bay, The Baltimore Museum of Industry, Baltimore, 1995:81-82.

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First Floor Plan of Buildings 6 and 7, 1996.
Drawing by KCM Architects.

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Second Floor Plan of Buildings 6 and 7, 1996.
Drawing by KCM Architects.

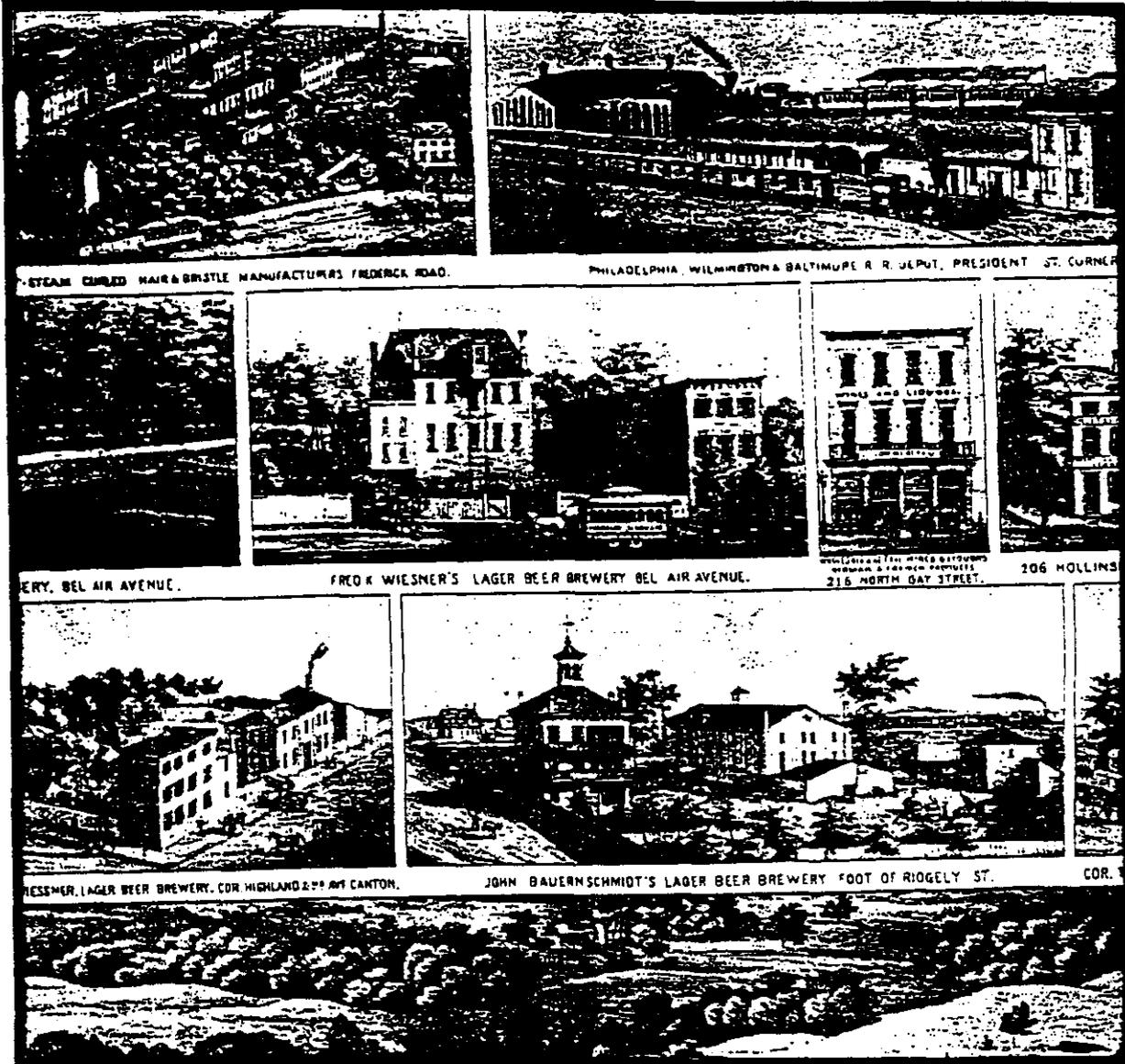
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1869 E. Sachse & Co.'s Bird's Eye View of the City of Baltimore
Peale Museum, Baltimore City, Maryland.

Section of the larger view showing the location of the Weissner
Brewery complex, prior to the construction of the pagoda building
and buildings 6 and 7.

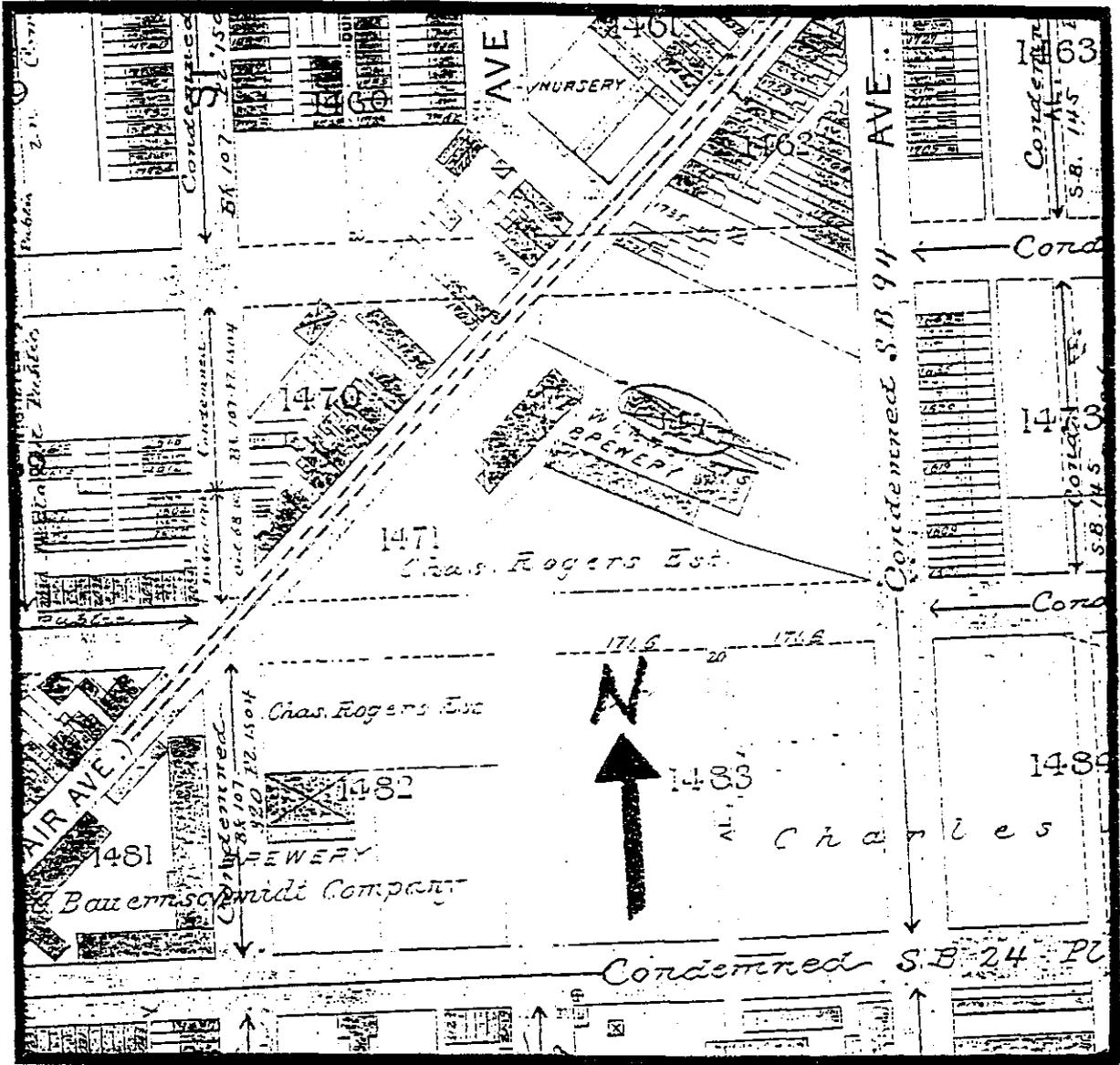
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1869 E. Sachse & Co.'s Bird's Eye View of the City of Baltimore
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Section of the larger print showing the location of the Weissner Brewery plant facing Belair Avenue. Also found in this section are other breweries and industries.

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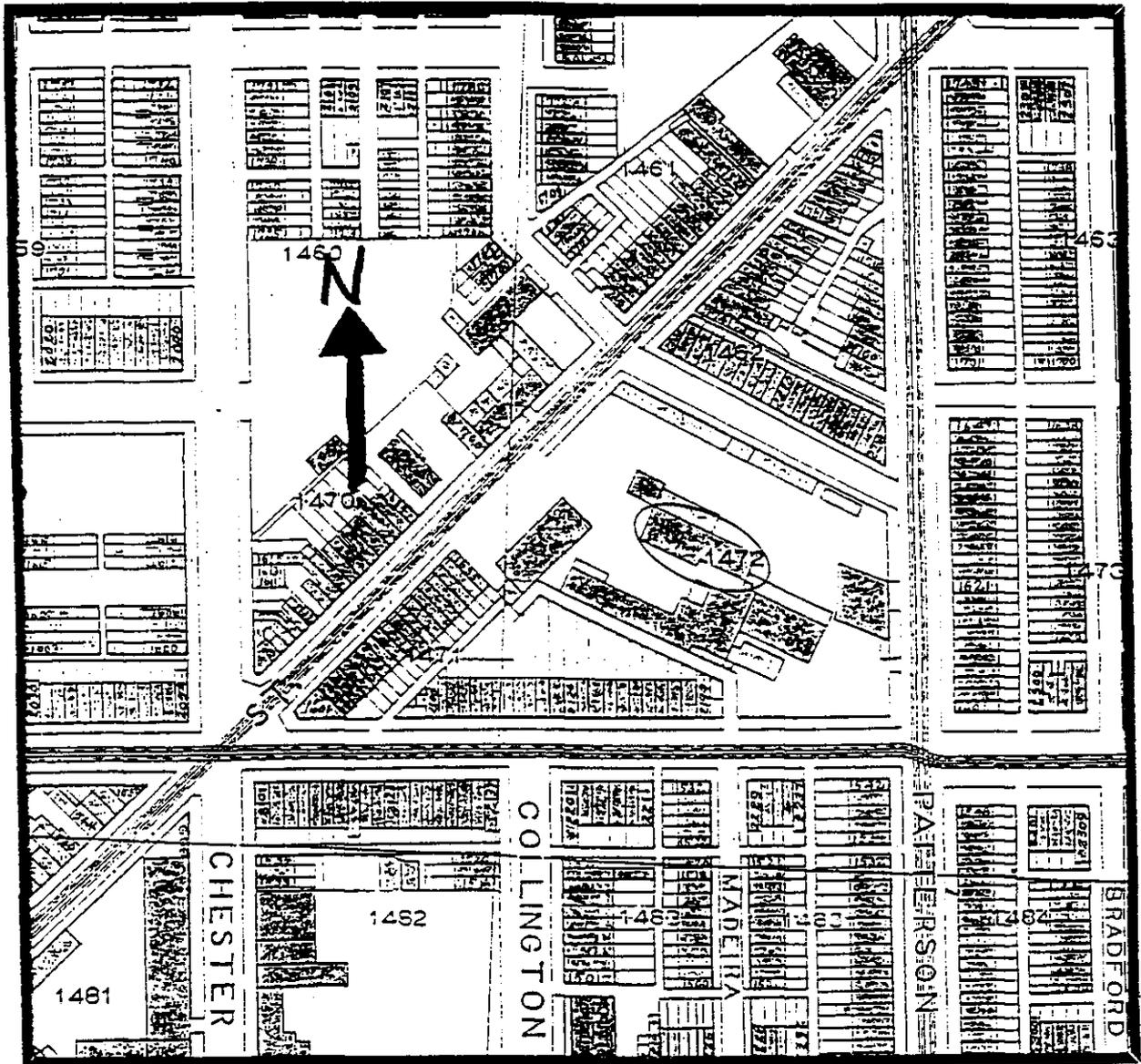
1896 Atlas of Baltimore City, G.W. Bromley and Company, Philadelphia.
 Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation,
 Baltimore City, Maryland.



1908 Baltimore City Directory, R.L. Polk Publishing Co., Baltimore.
p. 2215, Baltimore City Archives, Baltimore City, Maryland.

Illustration is an advertisement for the beers plant and products.
Buildings 6 and 7 can be seen having three full stories, loading
entrances to the north and an open courtyard to the south.

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1914 Topographical Map of Baltimore, Baltimore City.
Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation.
Baltimore City, Maryland.

Map showing the structures located throughout the immediate neighborhood and brewery plant.