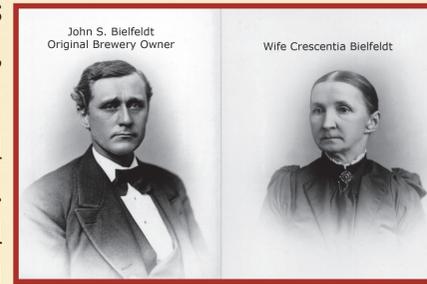


THORNTON BREWERY HISTORY TIMELINE

John S. Bielfeldt biography:

John S. Bielfeldt: Born January 27, 1834, in the town of Hemme, Holstein, Germany. Emigrated with his parents in 1851 and located in Blue Island, IL, where they remained one year. On January 26, 1858, he married Miss Crescentia Ladoux, born September 13, 1835, in Canton Berne, Switzerland. Her death occurred August 14, 1895. Ten children were born.

Mr. Bielfeldt was a Republican, and was honored one term with a seat in the Legislature, the Thirtieth General Assembly of the State of Illinois, but finding it took too much of his time, he declined to serve another term. This was in 1877, and he was on the Committees on Roads, Bridges and License. He later served in many local Township positions. He died on December 31, 1899 and is buried along with his family in Homewood Memorial Gardens Cemetery in Homewood, IL.



John & Crescentia

1836

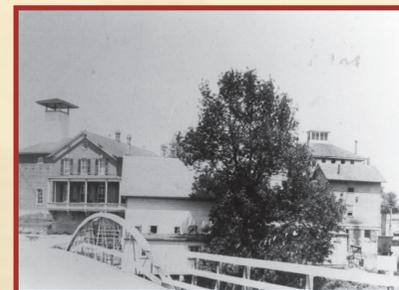
Don Carlos Berry brewed beer in a log cabin that was located on the site of the present 400 Margaret Street.

1857 - 1897 John S. Bielfeldt Brewing

John Simon Bielfeldt located in Thornton and erected a brewery in 1857 with a ten barrel kettle. In 1876, he constructed the building with a residence which is on the site at the present time and began a 20 barrel business.



Brewery 1862



Brewery Late 1890s

In 1895, he placed a 50 barrel kettle, and in 1896 put up an ice plant.

The beer was known as "J.S. Bielfeldt Lager Beer." Thornton's clear spring water was a great influence in starting the business. A few years later a well was drilled. The grain was ground by horses on a small scale grist mill. His market was the surrounding towns, mostly in Blue Island, Lansing, Thornton and Hegewisch, but Bielfeldt also delivered the beer by horse and wagon as far as Beecher and Eagle Lake, Illinois, and Crown Point, Hessville and Dyer, Indiana.



Beer being delivered by horse and wagon

1897-1920 John S. Bielfeldt Brewing Co.

Upon J.S. Bielfeldt's death in 1899, the business was turned over to his children. Bottles bearing the name Bielfeldt Brewing Co. have been found in nearby Thorn Creek.



Bielfeldt owners early 1900s

1902:

Thorn Creek flood, brewery partially damaged.

1902:

The brewery was the site of the first whistle for the Volunteer Fire Department.

1904:

The brewery was partially destroyed by tornado.



1902 Flood



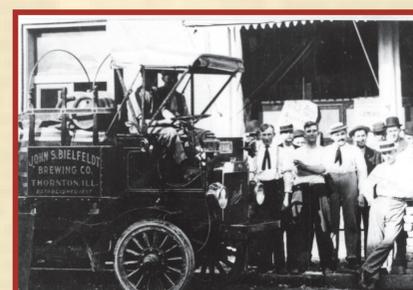
1904 Tornado

1910:

A truck was acquired in 1910 for delivering beer.

1915:

No longer needed, the brewery barn was bought and moved to the northeast corner of Williams and Ridge Road.



Delivery Truck



Brewery Barn

1918:

The brewery was partially destroyed by fire. Carl Ebner, Sr., was added to the management of the Bielfeldt Brewery, and was made its president and manager on December 1, 1918. In the earlier part of his career, Ebner was Brewmaster at Jung Brewery, and later superintendent at Chicago Brewery and North Western Brewing Company. Carl Ebner added a modernly equipped bottling department to the general establishment of the Bielfeldt Brewery. Officers of the Bielfeldt Brewery were president and manager Carl Ebner Sr., vice president John B. Bielfeldt, vice president & treasurer Paul J. Mueller Jr. and secretary Carl Ebner Jr.



Bielfeldt and Ebner

1920: Prohibition

National Prohibition of alcoholic beverages (beer, wine and distilled spirits) existed in the U.S. between 1920 and 1933. The Bielfeldt family sold the brewery at the onset of Prohibition, probably to Carl Ebner. Ebner is listed in the 1920 Illinois Census as a manufacturer of soda pop.



The Blank Family's answer to Prohibition

1922: The brewery was partially destroyed by fire. Some beer making continued in the 1920s despite Prohibition. Revenue agents came in with axes and smashed the vats. It was about this time that the Chicago crime syndicate took control. It was not uncommon to see the notorious Prohibition beer runner and gangster, Joseph "Polack Joe" Soltis, aka "Public Enemy Number 9," roll up in a black sedan to check on his bootlegging operation. Trucks would pick up the beer during the night for deliveries to Chicago's speakeasy customers.

Roadhouses (Dutch's Place, Blue Lantern, Rose Bowl, Red Lantern, Viking Gardens) were built east of Thornton on Ridge Road. They were disreputable and were raided frequently by federal officers due to suspicions of violating the 18th amendment.



Joe Soltis

1933-1936 Thornton Brewing Co.

When Prohibition ended in 1933, it was reported that installation of new brewing equipment had begun in the old brewery. Owner John M. Kubina stated that although former "Beer Baron of the South Side" Joe Soltis wanted to own a piece of the brewery he was denied. President and treasurer was John M. Kubina, along with a partner named Henry Detmer. Vice president was Edward B. Kenny, secretary R.W. Bielfeldt and brewmaster was Andrew Marra. Chief engineer was G. Swanson and they had an annual capacity of 25,000 barrels of old Thornton Special beer.

By October 1936 Thornton Brewing Co. filed for bankruptcy listing debts of \$20,000. An auction of the property was held in December of 1936, with the two leading bidders being Jacob Silver and Dominick Frederick. Offers went as high as \$8100, plus the amount necessary to pay the creditors. Joe Soltis, one-time beer runner of Prohibition days, warned Frederick that if he persisted in his bidding there wouldn't be any brewery left. Frederick withdrew his bid. Bankruptcy Court Referee Wallace Streeter had Soltis cited for contempt and the brewery property went to Frederick.



Thornton Brewing truck

1937-1940 Illinois Brewing Co.

In 1937, Dominick Frederick and his brothers joined Mr. J. Capodice to incorporate the Illinois Brewing Company in Thornton, Illinois. Among their many brands were "Old Fashion" Lager Beer, Pennant, Queensville, Export Pale and Muenchener Bohemian Beer. In mid 1940, the brewery contracted with Crown Cork and Seal to produce J spout cans of Pilsner and Frederick's beer. Later that year, the company name was officially changed to Frederick's Brewing Co.



J Spout Can

1940-1948 Frederick's Brewing Co.

Frederick's Brewing was a partnership of James, Frank, Joseph and Dominick Frederick. Brewmaster was Henry Scholl and assistant brewer Ernest Buehler. They operated two bottling lines and had a 75,000 barrel capacity and manufactured Frederick's Four Crown Special Beer. The beer was shipped by railroad car to army camps throughout the U.S. Boys from Thornton were always surprised to get beer from home. The empty bottles would be shipped back to Thornton to be refilled. Over \$400,000 was spent to modernize the one-time log cabin. In the late 1940's, the brewery employed approximately 65 men but Frederick's Brewing went bankrupt.



Frederick's truck

1948-1950 McAvoy Brewing Co.

McAvoy Brewing was originally located on Brewers Row in Chicago but it did not survive Prohibition. The Frederick Brothers acquired the name in 1948. They brewed McAvoy Malt Marrow, American Club Pilsner Beer, and Van Nestor. McAvoy had a 100,000 barrel capacity. The Fredericks were apparently poor businessmen and the brewery again filed for bankruptcy in 1943 but remained in operation until 1949 when they went bankrupt from race track gambling debts.



McAvoy Brewing Co. Announcement

1951-1957 White Bear Brewing Co., Inc.

In 1951, the brewery was sold to an Ildefonsas "Joe" Sadauskas, an immigrant from Lithuania who was sponsored by Thornton families after the war. The first stock certificate for 200 shares was issued Nov. 8, 1951. Sadauskas produced White Bear Beer from a Lithuanian recipe. It was not very popular with the people of the town.

Sadauskas advertised in Lithuanian newspapers in Chicago. He made his own barrels in a small cooper shop attached to the brewery complex.

In 1957, Sadauskas allegedly refused to pay the crime syndicate for protection and they tried to run him out of business. It was said that they came over and dumped about 140,000 gallons of beer from bottles and kegs into the creek. At that point Sadauskas and partner Anthony Stakanas brought in small industrial companies. It was called Thornton Industrial Complex. Beer was never again brewed on the site.



White Bear Brewing Co.

1970s After his partner died, Sadauskas sold the brewery to a syndicated group. Ed Huelat was one of three owners.

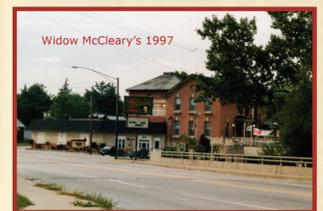
1977: Brewery gutted by fire. Owners were Frank Halagiere of Dolton, Robert Ried of Dolton, and Joseph Genovese of Riverdale.

1980s: Building bought by Gierczyk Development Co.



1970s

1980s: Bambino's Hideaway Restaurant, owners Frank and Debbie Elton.



Widow McCleary's

1980s: Two Dolton businessmen, Butch Sikora and Greg Cooper purchased the brewery from Gierczyk Development Company.

1986: Ken & Dick's Pizza.

1990s: Building purchased by Warren & Son.

1997: Widow McCleary's Bar & Restaurant.



Ghost Sign

2000: Still called Widow McCleary's Bar & Restaurant, new owners.



Soltis Family Spirits

2014: Steve Soltis (great-grandson of Joe Soltis), Andrew Howell, their distiller Micah Kibodeaux and building owner Jake Weiss got to work restoring the oldest standing brewery in Illinois into what is now Soltis Family Spirits.

2017: Soltis Family Spirits open for business.