



The Nation's Capital Brewmaster

Christian Heurich and His Brewery, 1842–1956

Mark Elliott Benbow

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Christian Heurich (1842–1945) was not only Washington D.C.'s most successful brewer, he was the world's oldest, with 90 years' experience. He walked across central Europe learning his craft, sur-

vived a shipboard cholera epidemic, recovered from malaria and worked as a roustabout on a Caribbean banana boat—all before age 30. Heurich lived most of his life in Washington, becoming its largest private landowner and opening the city's largest brewery. He won a "beer war" against his rivals and his beers won medals at World's Fairs.

He was trapped in Europe while on vacation at the start of both World Wars, once sleeping through an air raid, and was accused of being a German spy plotting to assassinate Woodrow Wilson. A notably odd episode: when they began to tear down his old brewery to build the Kennedy Center, the wrecking ball bounced off the walls.

Drawing on family papers and photos, the author chronicles Heurich's life and the evolving beer industry before and after Prohibition.

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