

Saxonia House Brewery

Wisconsin is known as the home of many German descendants thanks to ancestors arriving in the mid-1800s. An example would be Johann Andreas Klessig. He financed a 32-foot by 72-foot house with an arched basement under half the house and a sizable attic. His son Ernst Klessig built the structure. This structure became known as the Saxonia House, the largest commercial use of German half-timber construction in Wisconsin, if not the United States.

In 1860 son Ernst started a brewery south of the main building. The structure constructed into the side of a hill was approximately 18-foot by 30-foot. A stone building was built on the lower floor with the upper floor wood planking. Beer was brewed on the lower level while the upper level was used for storage.

Ernst created a cave on a hillside to the southwest of the main house to lager the beer. The 75-foot by 30-foot cave was dug out of the hillside with a stone roof built over the cavity. The stone roof was then covered with earth. There was originally a wooden structure providing an entrance and roof, complete with a cupola, fronting the cave. Ernst Klessig died in 1864.

The brewery itself went by several names: The Klessig Brewery, The Farmington Brewery, The Jaehnig Brewery and the Fillmore Brewery. While there are references to the brewery, there are no official records, outside of census records, which lists Ernst as a farmer and brewer.

The brewery produced beer in 1/8, 1/4, and 1/2 barrels according to verbal stories. Beer was delivered to neighboring taverns by horse. Ernst Jaehnig passed away in 1879. His stepson, John, is listed in the 1880 Census as superintendent brewery and farming. Once again by consulting census records it is believed the brewery closed between 1880 and 1885.

The above information was obtained from the book, The Saxonia House, Preserving the Past, Building the Future by Michael Besch. The home and

grounds are located at 421 County Hiway H, Fredonia, WI 53021. Further information can be obtained through their website: www.saxoniahouse.org