



Beer of Broadway Fame: The Piel Family and Their Brooklyn Brewery (Excelsior Editions)

Alfred W. McCoy

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Explores the hundred-year history of Piel Bros., one of the prominent German American brands that once made New York City the brewing capital of America.

For more than a century, New York City was the brewing capital of America, with more breweries producing more beer than any other city, including Milwaukee and St. Louis. In *Beer of Broadway Fame*, Alfred W. McCoy traces the hundred-year history of the prominent Brooklyn brewery Piel Bros., and provides an intimate portrait of the company's German American family. Through quality and innovation, Piel Bros. grew from Brooklyn's smallest brewery in 1884, producing only 850 kegs, into the sixteenth-largest brewery in America, brewing over a million barrels by 1952.

Through a narrative spanning three generations, McCoy examines the demoralizing impact of pervasive US state surveillance during World War I and the Cold War, as well as the forced assimilation that virtually erased German American identity from public life after World War I. McCoy traces Piel Bros.'s changing fortunes from its early struggle to survive in New York's Gilded Age beer market, the travails of Prohibition with police raids and gangster death threats, to the crushing competition from the big national brands after World War II. Through a fusion of corporate records with intimate personal correspondence, McCoy reveals the social forces that changed a great city, the US brewing industry, and the country's economy.

"I've long admired Alfred McCoy's writing about American imperial overreach and surveillance. In this lively new book, it is fascinating to see him discover both a spy and those spied upon within his own extended family. I've never read a family history quite like it." — Adam Hochschild, author of *Half the Way Home: A Memoir of Father and Son*

"With the same insight and wit that has made him the preeminent historian of American empire, Alfred McCoy takes us on a riveting journey from brewery to boardroom to bedroom that winds through the German immigrant experience, World War I surveillance, the vagaries of Prohibition, the rebirth of *Scientific American* and its fight for nuclear disarmament, and the unforgettable Bert and Harry Piel advertising campaign. Come for the beer but stay for the highly personal four-generational family history that opens a fascinating window into the successes and setbacks of family-owned business in America." — Peter J. Kuznick, author of *Beyond the Laboratory: Scientists as Political Activists in 1930s America*

"Alfred W. McCoy is best known for courageously exposing the misdeeds of US intelligence agencies, from drug-running to torture. In *Beer of Broadway Fame* he takes on perhaps his biggest challenge: to untangle the rise and fall of Brooklyn's Piel Bros. brewery and tell more than a century of Piel family history. Himself related to the legendary German American brewers, McCoy explores through this impressive clan great themes of the American experience. Hard-working immigrants eager to assimilate; the country's craving for beer; wartime repression of suspect groups; the disaster of Prohibition; the 'managerial revolution' and its peril for the family enterprise—it's all there in McCoy's riveting epic. Most of all, McCoy gives voice to the love, ambition, rivalry, and intrigue that define any family across generations. Reading about his, you will think in new ways about your own." — Jeremy Varon, author of *The New Life: Jewish Students of Postwar Germany*

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