

# Gambrinus Statue Is Coveted

## Inventor of Beer Still Toasts City As Collectors Cast An Envious Eye

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When will Gambrinus tip his tankard?

It's been some 74 years now since he took his stand on a third-floor pointed ledge of the old Stoeckle Brewery building, facing Fifth Street, and he's kept most folks guessing through the years.

Gambrinus is a commanding figure and he puts a flourish to the face of the brewery building. He stands at least eight feet in height, is of solid, durable wood and was made in Germany. His actual "weight" has been felt in the Fifth and Adams Streets section for decades.

Although time has somewhat dimmed the once bright colors of his garb, he still holds his overflowing brown ale tankard or mug up above his brown crown in swaggering fashion — the red of his cape held together by a brown link-chain from which dangles a brown medallion, is set off by a brown scabbard falling from his side to brush the brown beer keg at

his feet draped with a green wreath.

### Invented Beer

"Gambrinus," according to encyclopedia data, "is a mythical king of Flanders, to whom is ascribed the invention of beer. His figure is familiar in German beer-cellars. He is customarily identified with Jan Primus, duke of Brabant in the 13th century. Jan, the president of the brewers' guild of Brussels, was represented in a guild-hall painting with a tankard of ale in his hand, and from this portrait is said to have been derived the myth of the king who invented beer."

His counterpart was placed in the Fifth Street niche by Joseph Stoeckle when the building was first constructed in 1882.

Those were the days of drays and drayhorses and polished harness, and beer and ale kegs piled high.

Later Joseph Stoeckle shifted the weighty part of the business over to his son, Harry, who was closely associated with a long-time family friend, Harry S. Neher, whose widow lives at 1123 West Fifth Street.

Came the time when things were motorized and a lot of glamor and color attached to the brewery business, bowed out of the picture. Then came prohibition when the brewery turned out birch beer.

Finally descendants of the elder Stoeckles, who reside in Wilmington today, leased the building to Harry Wachtel who used it for his Diamond State Brewery firm. When this venture ended a few years back, the buildings were unused until recent purchases.

### Is Link to Past

Gambrinus has watched all these changes from his high perch, and now, perhaps, because of his unyielding spirit and his link to the dray horse days, antique dealers, oddity collectors and even nearby brewery owners have cast a covetous eye toward him.

It is said that offers of from \$100 to \$1,000 have been made for Gambrinus, but the apparent costly process of bringing him down from the ledge has so far forced would-be purchasers to back off.

Cohen Brothers, the building's new owners, have already intimated that Gambrinus will not go for a song, if he goes at all.

And, as to the malt and hops king tipping his tankard, Mrs. Neher said there may be an answer to that question in revealing what the late Harry Stoeckle used to say, "If you want to see Gambrinus lift his cup you have to come around about 12 o'clock on New Year's Eve."