

THE LIVERMORE BREWERY

by Larry Mauch



At the turn of the century many of the beverage products produced today by large nationwide concerns were only available from small local companies. Soda pop, seltzer water, wine and beer were products sold in Livermore, produced by local companies. The Livermore Soda Works produced soda pop and seltzer water. Many local wineries produced several varieties of wine and the Livermore Brewery satisfied the area's demand for beer. By 1900 the Livermore Brewery had already been in business for over 25 years.

Born in 1837 in Germany, Wendell Jordan came to the United States in 1854. Living in Louisville, Kentucky for some time Jordan moved to Idaho and Oregon before settling in Livermore in

1874. In 1875 he purchased the Livermore Brewery from Charles Schwerin. Located between J and K Streets, on the South Side of First Street, Wendell Jordan added to the brewery operation in Dec. 1875 by buying William Sinkwitz's saloon next door. The saloon served wine, liquor, cigars and of course lager beer produced by the brewery. The 1878 directory listed 13 saloons in Livermore serving a population of about 1000 people.

The demand for the brewery's product was great enough that in the 1880's the brewery almost doubled in size. An 1888 ad stated beer could be purchased in bottles or kegs and would be promptly delivered. In 1897 Wendell Jordan closed the saloon next door to devote all his time to the brewing

of beer. Later that same year the brewery advertised that it was also an agent for Weiland's, Fredricksburg and United States beer, all products of San Francisco breweries.

**LIVERMORE
BREWERY.**

W. JORDAN, . . . Proprietor.

HAVING PURCHASED THE ABOVE Establishment I am now prepared to supply orders at the shortest notice with

First-Class Lager Beer,
At the most reasonable prices.

SATISFACTION GUARANTEED.

A share of the Public Patronage is respectfully solicited.

W. JORDAN, Proprietor.

Ad from 1876 Livermore Enterprise

On Jan. 17, 1901 disaster struck. Wendell Jordan fell into a vat of boiling malt while cleaning a smaller tank located above the vat. Carl Granitz, an employee, stated in the local paper that he had "stepped out to get a drink of water just as Mr. Jordan began work, and as he was returning a few moments later he heard a stifled cry. He went at

once to the vat and found Mr. Jordan in the boiling mass. As it was impossible for Granitz to remove him unaided, he ran to the street and called for help." With the help of several others Jordan was removed from the vat, giving one last gasp before expiring. Jordan's wife had been in their apartment above the brewery during the accident.

The Jan 24, 1901 local paper stated that the Livermore Brewery had been under control of the IRS for several days due to alleged irregularities in its management. This has caused some to speculate that Jordan committed suicide, but this is highly unlikely.

Wendell Jordan was well liked in town, noted for his charity. He helped organize the Livermore fire department and served as its foreman for over twenty years. He served as a town trustee and was chairman of the board for two years. He was also a member of the Masons, Oddfellows and Hermann Sons.

**LIVERMORE
BREWERY!**

First street, Livermore.

WENDELL JORDAN, PROP.

Customers Supplied
On Short Notice!

Agent for Weiland's, Fredricksburg and United States lager beer, in kegs and large and small bottles. Delivered to any part of town or vicinity.

Ad from 1897 Livermore Echo



Wendell Jordan

Mrs. Jordan sold the brewery in July 1901 to Dennis Bernal for \$7800. Bernal paid \$2800 down with the balance due in two years.



Dennis Bernal

Dennis Bernal was from one of the earliest families to settle in the valley. Born in Pleasanton in 1856 he left the valley at the age of fourteen to travel to South America. Returning in 1875 he attended the Golden Gate Academy in Oakland until 1878. He also attended business school in San Francisco for 1 year. In 1883 he married Josephine Bailey (Josephine's mother, Casimira, was Robert Livermore's stepdaughter) and they moved to Livermore. The Bernals started out in farming. In 1892 D.F. Bernal purchased the Livermore Flouring Mills as well as the Power and Light Company.

After purchasing the brewery the Bernals moved into the apartment upstairs. In Jan. 1908 Mr. Bernal remodeled part of the building. A clothing store was opened in an old storeroom. In August of that year a moving picture show operated by Isadore Durand opened as well.

At 3:45 am on November 6, 1908 disaster struck the brewery again when fire broke out in the building. The Livermore Herald reported the story the next day: "Isadore Durand, who slept in the rear of the second floor, was awakened by the crackling of flames and when he opened the door was confronted by a wall of fire. He rushed through to warn the sleeping occupants of the front part of the building and was badly burned about the hands and face in doing so. D.F. Bernal, proprietor of the building, and his family were roused and made their escape in their night clothes, and the fire spread so rapidly that none of their personal belongings could be saved. Mr. Bernal saved his account books and papers but all his other possessions were consumed. The fire department was on the ground early and did excellent work but the building was a two and three story structure, old and dry, and on account of its construction was drafty and made a terrific blaze."

Livermore, Cal., *Nov 6th* 1902

M *Dania Society*
TO D. F. BERNAL, DR.
Proprietor of the

LIVERMORE BREWERY

First Street.

<i>To & Pay \$ 800</i>				
<i>Paid Cash</i>				
<i>D. F. Bernal</i>				

Receipt from brewery, signed D.F. Bernal

The fire destroyed the brewery building as well as the Saloon next door, which was by then again in operation under its new owner, T.B. Nunez. Also damaged was the Beck Drug Store located next door to the saloon.

The following week a story ran in the paper telling how several days earlier as Mr. Bernal was having breakfast and looking despondent over his loss, his wife told him to cheer up as all was not lost. It seems she had been stashing gold coins away behind the brewery chimney for some time and at least they should be able to find the melted gold. When a search was made, over \$2000 in gold coins were found and they were only slightly discolored from the fire. The article praised Mrs. Bernal's foresight.

The Livermore Brewery never reopened after the fire as the building was totally destroyed. The only thing left are the brass letters in the sidewalk downtown which mark the site of the "Brewery". D.F. Bernal lived a long and prosperous life, passing away in 1932.

Final Note: Amber beer bottles embossed with "Livermore Brewery - D.F. Bernal - Livermore, Calif." exist today. These bottles are very rare. Less than two dozen are known. These were probably made just before the fire, with most being destroyed in the fire.



Bottle from Livermore Brewery

Photo on front circa 1905. First Street, south side, between J and K Streets. Two story brewery building indicated with arrow. T.B. Nunez saloon located to the right with the Beck Drug store next door on corner. Two story Mally building located to left in center of block. The two story building on left at corner is the Palace Restaurant and a dry goods store with rooms to let upstairs.