

AUGUST 2023

HERITAGE is the newsletter for Pabst Mansion, Inc., a historic house museum dedicated to the restoration of the Pabst Mansion and the preservation of the Pabst family legacy.

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MILWAUKEE MASTERPIECES: *Pabst and the Panoramic Artists*

BY DAVID ZEH

During the late 19th century, American city-dwellers enjoyed a variety of entertainment forms including theater performances, amusement parks, museums and galleries, and cycloramas. Cycloramas were massive panoramic images placed upon a 360° cylindrical platform wherein the viewer is completely surrounded by the scene. Dioramas were also constructed in the foreground, which provided audiences with a unique and immersive experience. The effect achieved by these realistic, three-dimensional dioramas earned cycloramas the distinction of being considered a forerunner of moving pictures, particularly as they focused on subjects such as famous Civil War battles, fires, and religious scenes. At the time when cycloramas swept the nation, Milwaukee became a hub for the panoramic artists who created some of the largest paintings the world had ever seen.



F.W. Heine in his dining room.

In 1885 William Wehner, a Chicago-based businessman, founded the American Panorama Company and built a studio at 628 Wells Street in Milwaukee where panorama artists both worked and displayed their one-of-a-kind pieces to the public. Wehner hired two German-born artists, Friedrich Wilhelm Heine and August Lohr, to serve as the directors. Heine began working with panoramas in Saxony and Dresden where he helped create a detailed rendition of the Franco-Prussian War. During the New Orleans Exhibition of 1884, Lohr supervised the hanging of the panorama *Siege of Paris*, which was created by the company he worked for in Germany. Before they left Europe for Milwaukee, they also recruited other artists who were experienced with painting landscapes, human figures, and animals. These artists included Hermann Michalowski, Franz



F.W. Heine's sketch for 'Battle of Atlanta.' Image courtesy of Milwaukee County Historical Society.

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F.W. Heine's Colored sketch of 'Jerusalem on the Day of Crucifixion.'
Image courtesy of Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Rohrbeck, Bernhard Schneider, and Robert Klotzer. They later recruited artists such as Richard Lorenz, Theodor Breidwiser, George Peter, and the Pabsts' soon-to-be son-in-law, Otto Von Ernst. Each artist utilized their different areas of expertise while working with these large canvasses. Schneider and Von Ernst were experienced landscape painters, while Michalowski, Rohrbeck, and Breidwiser specialized in human figures. Peter and Lorenz were also well known for their particular skill in depicting horses.

The American Panorama Company initially focused on producing renditions of Civil War battles including the *Battle of Missionary Ridge* and the *Battle of Atlanta*. Some of the artists even traveled to southern states to sketch and record details of the landscape in order to capture a more authentic experience that made audiences feel like they were actually witnessing the battles in-person. The artists also used photographs that were taken after battles in the 1860s and some veterans gave eyewitness accounts of their experiences. Once all the details were gathered, Heine and Lohr were responsible for drafting the initial layout using



Sketch of 'The Light Horse Squadron.' Image courtesy of Milwaukee County Historical Society.

a grid-like format. Individually, each artist then began working on hand-woven canvasses from Brussels, which were fifty feet high and 365 feet long. Upon completion, canvasses were then fastened to the wall with wooden rings and wrapped around the entire panorama structure.

In early 1887, Heine and Lohr purchased the American Panorama Company from Wehner. Within the following months, the artists displayed one of their crowning achievements, *Jerusalem on the Day of Crucifixion*. The panorama itself took six months to complete; however, the preparations for this piece took nearly two years. During this time, Heine and Lohr hired another German artist named Karl Frosch who traveled to Jerusalem to make sketches of people and landscapes while collecting costumes for models to wear back in Milwaukee. Later that year George Peter, Richard Lorenz, Franz Rohrbeck, and Hermann Michalowski produced *The Light Horse Squadron*, a 75-foot-long illustration of soldiers charging into battle.

By 1888, the team of Milwaukee artists developed a reputation for producing some of the most realistic and awe-inspiring panoramas the United States had to offer. That year Heine and Lohr also decided to rename the firm Milwaukee Panorama Company. To celebrate their success, Heine decided to design a drinking establishment that reminded them of the popular beer halls they enjoyed in Germany. The Kuenstler Heim opened in May of 1888 as a haven for artists, and also served as a meeting place for members of the German Journalists Association and actors from local German theaters. The tavern was primarily funded by the Phillip Best Brewing Company and a souvenir booklet from 1888 described the establishment as "a resort of kindred souls: a place of true Gemütlichkeit." In June of 1889, the studio debuted their last panorama titled, *Christ's Entry Into Jerusalem*. An article by *Yenowine's Illustrated News* commented on the artists' work stating, "this very picture, a most realistic panorama, executed from colored sketches made on the spot by celebrated artists, is now on view in our city."



Hermann Michalowski's pair of murals outside Captain Pabst's office.



Stained-glass window of King Gambrinus.



Hermann Michalowski's 'The Art of Brewing.'

After years of showcasing several masterpieces, the *Milwaukee Journal* praised the Wells Street studio stating, "The artists' colony which has now grown to such proportions that Milwaukee can now claim for itself a predominance of artistic talent over all other cities of like size in the United States, making the name of 'Athens' no longer a mere pretense." While it seemed like the success of the Milwaukee Panorama Company could never waver, the general public's interest in cycloramas began to dwindle by the early 1890s and the studio was auctioned in 1891.

Fortunately, many of these artists were able to continue creating their artwork through people like Captain Frederick Pabst. Throughout the 1890s, Pabst hired Heine, Michalowski, Peter, Lorenz, and Otto Von Ernst to create incredible works of art for the brewery, his businesses in downtown Milwaukee, and his mansion on Grand Avenue. In 1892, Captain Pabst hired Michalowski to design the decorations and frescoes for the dining room at the Pabst Hotel. He also completed two murals, *The Art of Brewing* and *Pabst Brought to the East*, for Pabst's office at the brewing company the following year. In 1893, Heine drew a sketch of the patron saint of beer, King Gambrinus, which was used to create a 700-piece art glass window for Pabst's new brew house.

On June 22, 1897, Emma Pabst married Rudolph Nunnemacher at the Pabst Mansion. The ceremony took place in the Music Room and a banquet hall was built on the front lawn for the 134 guests who attended the reception. The Pabst family spared no expense for their youngest daughter's wedding and surprised each guest with individualized menu cards that included watercolor paintings by Heine. Most of the illustrations were created using Nunnemacher's photographs that he took while traveling around the world.



A Pabst-Nunnemacher wedding menu card by F.W. Heine.

The legacy these artists left on the city of Milwaukee can still be felt today. Many continued to have successful careers well into the early 1900s and displayed their works at exhibitions across the nation. Peter brought his expertise to the Milwaukee Public Museum and produced incredible paintings for the dioramas that are still on display today. He also created wonderfully detailed sceneries and the main curtain for the Pabst Theater. Lorenz's Milwaukee clientele was vast and his renderings of horses can still be found on display in many iconic historic buildings in Milwaukee, including the Pfister Hotel, Milwaukee Athletic Club, Milwaukee Club, and Pabst Mansion. While many of the original Milwaukee panoramas were lost in fires long ago, one still survives today. The Atlanta History Center recently restored the *Battle of Atlanta*, and it has been on display since 2019, attracting a new generation of visitors who wish to see this unique form of art. Despite their short history, these panoramic artists truly helped make Milwaukee, "The German Athens of America."



Richard Lorenz's 'Hard Toilers,' which hangs in the Pabst Mansion.

UPCOMING SPECIALTY TOURS & EVENTS

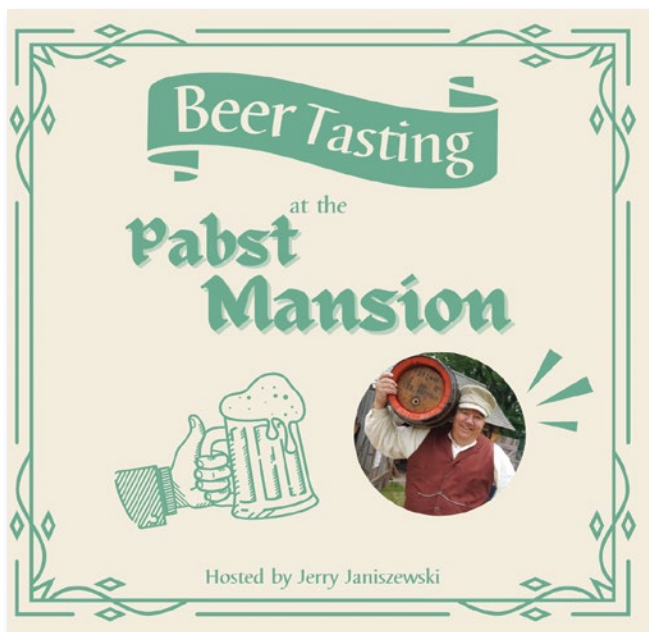
BEER PAIRING TASTING

Friday, September 8, 5:30-7:30pm

Tickets: Non-member: \$35, Member: \$25

Join beer aficionado Jerry Janiszewski as he guides your palate through pairings of local craft beers with sausage and cheese selections. Indulge your taste buds the way Captain Pabst would have intended...with beer!

Gracious thanks to our beer sponsor, Gathering Place Brewing Company!



OKTOBERFEST TOURS

September 22 & 23, 4pm and 5pm

Tickets: Adult: \$28, Senior/Student/Military: \$26, Member: \$11

Herzlich Willkommen, Oktoberfest! Delve into Milwaukee's vibrant German heritage on this special guided tour through the home of one of Milwaukee's most famous German immigrant families. Hear stories of the Mansion's history and its ties to the German community while sampling a selection of local Oktoberfest beers and German Riesling (the Captain's favorite!) paired with Milwaukee-style German cuisine. With gemütlichkeit abound, we invite you to prost like good old Captain Pabst!



**All food and drink tastings included with admission*



ILLUMINATING THE DARK TOURS

**Thursday – Saturday Evenings in October
& Halloween Day!**

Tickets: Adult: \$26, Senior/Student/Military: \$24,
Child (6-17): \$19, Member: \$9

This specialty afterhours tour will take place in a dimly lit Mansion where themes of darkness and the revealing of unseen spaces are explored, offering visitors an opportunity to see the Pabst Mansion in a 'new light.' Visitors will be guided by (battery-powered) candlelight as they explore *the dark*, in areas varying from literal light sources in the home, to approaching the darkness of loss, to viewing hidden compartments and seldom-seen lower-level spaces.



ANOTHER PABST ORIGINAL PAINTING RETURNS!

The Ludwig Rach painting *Pilgrim* came to the Mansion with puncture wounds, tears and a folded-over canvas that reduced the size by approximately one-third. After being brought back to life by receiving conservation and a new frame, it now hangs once again on the Pabst Mansion's grand staircase. Rach was an artist whom the Captain seemed to greatly appreciate, as this was one of five known Rach works purchased by the Pabsts.



'Pilgrim' before restoration.



Ludwig Rach (German, 1853-1930), 'Pilgrim', 1887.

MEMBERSHIP

Yes, I want to be a member of Pabst Mansion, Inc.!

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Comet | \$1,000 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Grand Circle | \$500 |
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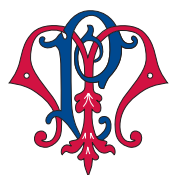
Please make checks out to Pabst Mansion. To pay securely by credit card, visit www.pabstmansion.com/shop

☐ I am interested in volunteer opportunities, please contact me.

I am currently a member but would like to make an additional contribution to the Mansion.

Enclosed is my contribution for \$ _____.

Detach and mail to: Pabst Mansion, 2000 West Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, WI 53233



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Close to Your Heart

**Bring the Pabst Mansion with you everywhere
in the form of our new pendant necklace!**

*Available online or in the Visitor Center and Gift Shop.
Remember, members get 10% off all gift shop purchases!*



PABST MANSION *tours & admission*

DAILY CLASSIC TOURS

GUIDED

Monday-Saturday 10am, 11am, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm
Sunday 11am, 1pm, 2pm, 3pm

SELF-GUIDED

Daily noon-1pm

Adult: \$17

Senior/Student/Military: \$15

Child (6-17): \$10

Child (5 and under): Free

Member: Free

Prices and hours subject to change.

SPECIALTY TOURS

The Pabst Mansion has an array of year-round
and seasonal specialty tours.

Visit pabstmansion.com to learn more!

Located on 20th and Wisconsin Avenue.

Limited parking is available. Wheelchair accessible.