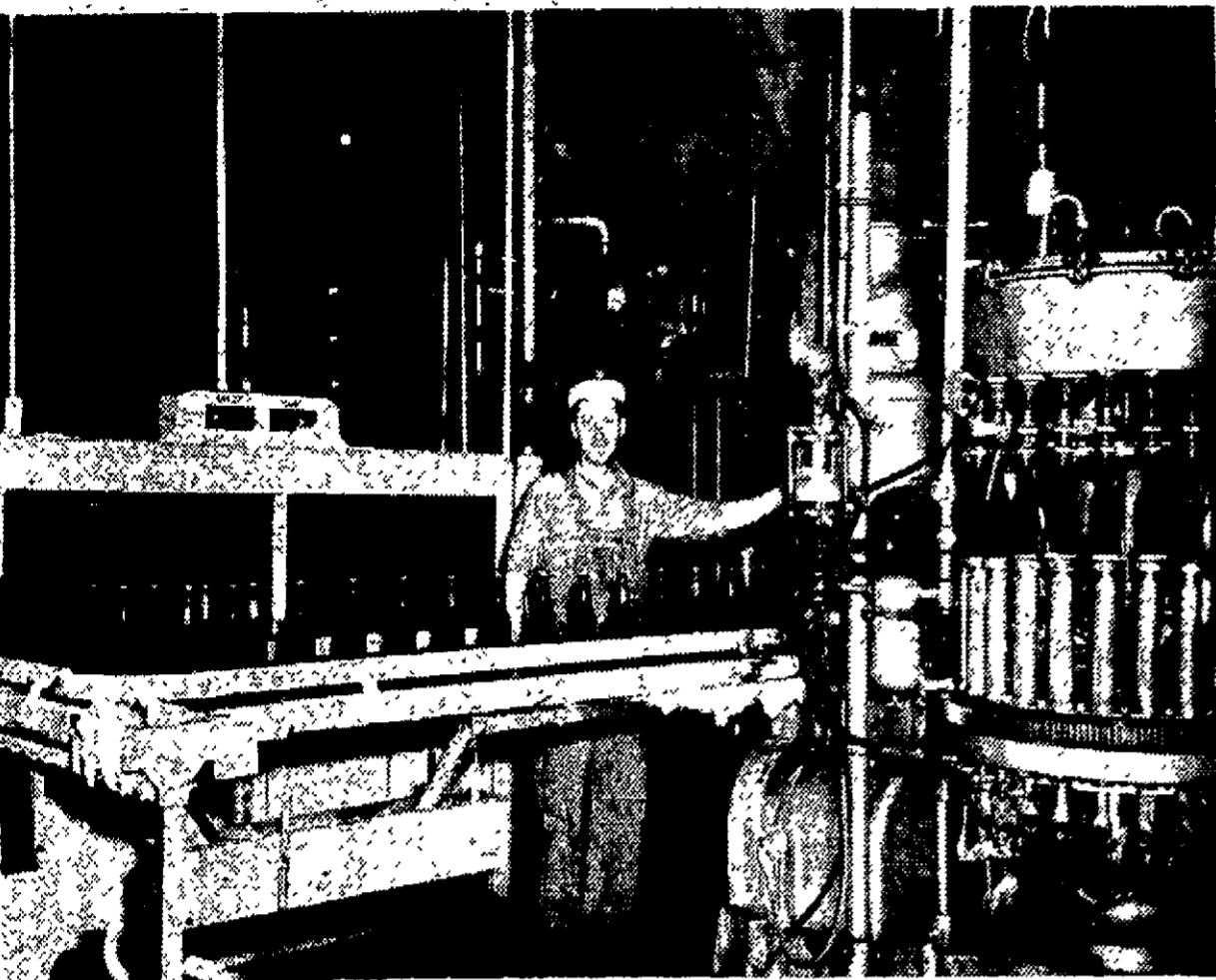


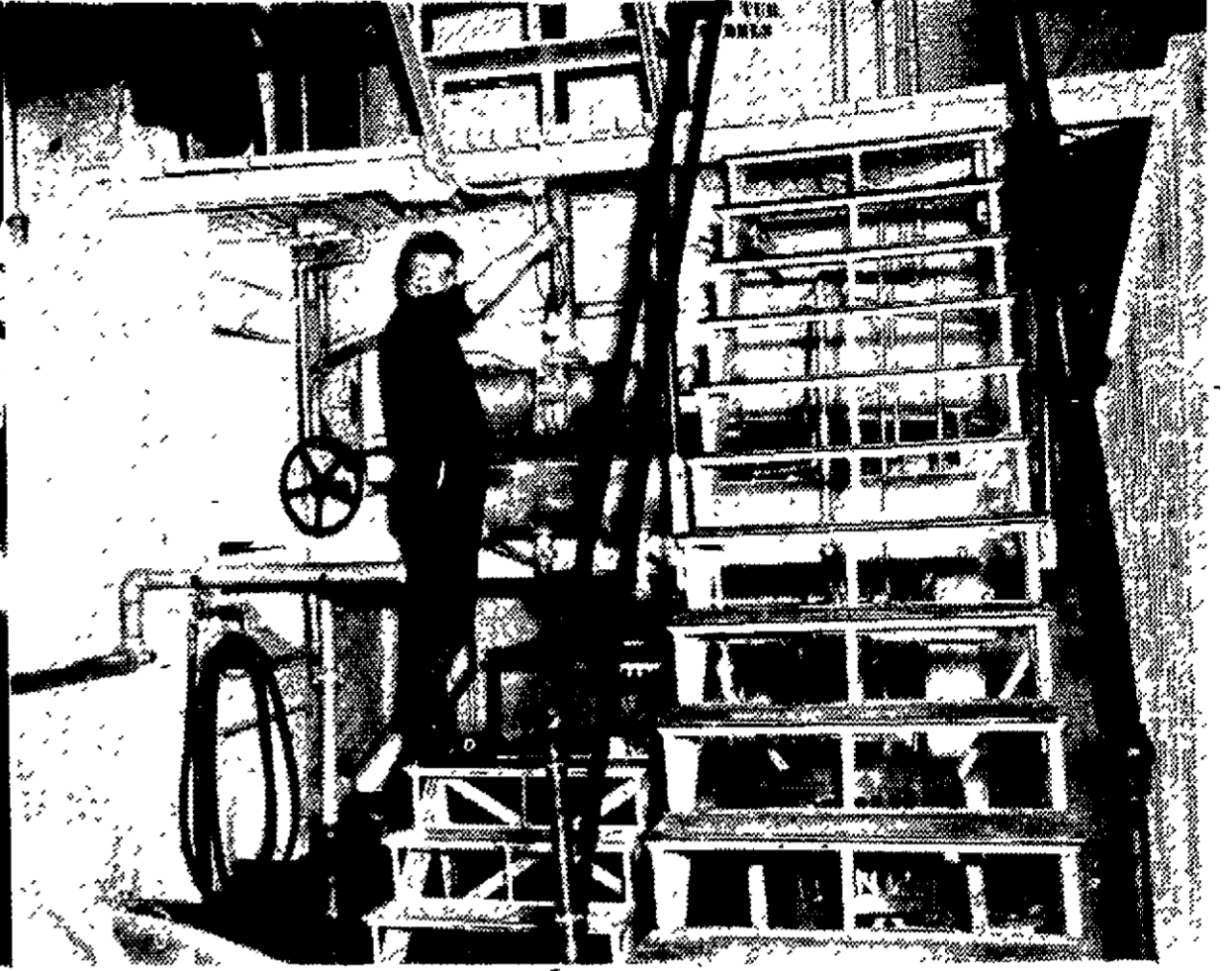
## Kessler Brewery One of First Industries for Helena



HERE'S THE FINISHED PRODUCT on its way to the customer. Ralph King, bottling superintendent, watches the process as the bottles are filled and capped on the machine at the right. They then pass through the large pasteurizer at the left for 35 minutes after which they are labeled and cased. Over 24,000 bottles a day are sent through the system.



MALT FLAKES AND HOT WATER are brought to a boil in this huge copper kettle. Hops are added to the mixture just before it is sent to the bandelot cooler. The kettle contains 100 barrels and two brews are made in it each day. Pictured are John Herold, left, and G. R. Porter.



THE PROCESS STARTS HERE in this mash tank. Different types of malts are placed in the tank for blending and are then sent off to the cooking kettle. After hops and corn syrup are added to the mixture it goes to a fermenting tank and then to storage barrels where it finally becomes beer. Porter is shown taking a sample from the big tub.

### Nickolas Kessler Established His Plant Near Sprawling Placer Camp Late in 1864

By C. J. Hansen

Late in the colorful gold rush year of 1864, a Virginia City merchant named Nickolas Kessler decided to build a small brewery near the sprawling placer camp of Last Chance gulch.

In those days few persons thought of constructing anything more permanent than a log cabin or a sluice box. Miners drifted from camp to camp, following the ore deposits like the love of a woman and the life of a boom town was insured only by its supply of mineral wealth.

But Nickolas Kessler decided to gamble his future on the latest darling of the placer miner and establish his brewery along Ten Mile creek, located two miles west of the present city of Helena.

Today the large modern plant of the Kessler Brewing company stands as a tribute to the foresight and vision of that early-day pioneer. It has grown from a few humble buildings to one of Montana's most active manufacturing industries and its product is known throughout the entire northwest.

The story of the Kessler Brewing company covers more than 84 years in the development of Montana and the city of Helena. It is a leading chapter in this region's history.

Virginia City's gold supply was dwindling in 1864 when Kessler first considered building a brewery near the fast developing Last Chance gulch camp. At that time he operated a small store and bakery but his talks with Henry Gilbert, another pioneer brewer, turned his interests toward that business.

Kessler contacted his friend Charles Beehrer, a miner with brewing experience whom he had met in Colorado. The two men decided that Beehrer should go to the new camp and begin construction of a brewery if conditions warranted.

Beehrer was apparently impressed by the bustling growth of the Last Chance gulch settlement because he immediately initiated plans for the new enterprise. By May of 1865 the plant was in operation, producing beer on a small scale.

Kessler meanwhile disposed of his Virginia City interests and moved to Helena. Shortly thereafter he bought out his partner Beehrer's interest in the brewery for 345 ounces of gold dust and some additional gold coin. This unique transaction is recorded on photostat of the original ledger.

Another photostat of the land office patent granting the brewery site to Kessler bears the signature of U. S. Grant, who was at that time president of the United States.

Construction was not the mechanized process in 1864 that it is today. Heavy equipment had to be hauled many miles over hard roads by mule and horse teams. Kessler and his partner had no engineers or architects to aid them in the erection of their brewery but both men had definite views as to what was required for a practical and workable plant.

In 1873 Kessler brought his bride, Louise Ebert of New York, west to Helena. The log house that he built for their home still stands on the original site. Its two rooms today form a part of the company president's residence next to the brewery.

The difficulties of operating any type of manufacturing enterprise in the rugged Montana territory during those early days are almost impossible to imagine in these modern times of railroads, airways and paved highways. When Kessler and Beehrer opened their brewery, they were required to obtain their malt in Utah and transport it by mule and ox teams to Helena over the crude roads that were guarded by the army



TOP OFFICIALS OF THE BREWERY, Charles N. Kessler and Marc Buterbaugh, are pictured conferring in the company office. Kessler, vice president and brewmaster in charge of plant operations, is the son of Founder Nickolas Kessler. Buterbaugh became president of the concern last January following the death of Frederick E. Kessler, the founder's other son.

from unfriendly Indians and highwaymen.

Hops were extremely hard to get and oftentimes the old timers in the territory had to resort to native bitter herbs as the root of the wild grape and spruce boughs. Kessler obtained his hops from the Washington and Oregon territories. They were brought over the mountainous Walla Walla trail for the then reasonable freight rate of 12 cents per pound.

Since no hardwoods were native to this region, the pioneer brewer had to have whisky barrels cut down and coopered to suitable quantities. Makeshift devices were used in the plant's early operating period. A frontier machinist built the original malt mill with brass gears. Many years later, that same machinist had established one of the largest mining machinery shops in the west at Denver.

He recalled his early efforts in Helena on behalf of his friend Nickolas Kessler and his small brewery in a letter written to the company.

Between 1868 and 1874 the brewery was enlarged under the direction of Kessler. The plant installed the first carbonic ice machine west of the Mississippi. A unique piece of machinery, it was made in Germany by Frederick Krupp, the great gunmaker of Essen.

Nickolas Kessler died Dec. 11, 1901, after the brewery he had established during the gold rush in Last Chance gulch had grown to one of the most modern brewing establishments in the northwest. His foresight never failed him and he always pioneered the use of the latest manufacturing equipment.

Control of the company was passed to his two sons, Frederick E. Kessler, who became president of the concern, and Charles N. Kessler, who served as brewmaster and vice president.

The vigorous leadership of their father was carried on by the Kessler brothers. Another "first" was established by the company when it installed the first government pipe line between the brewery and bottling plant in 1905.

During the earthquakes of 1935-36 a great amount of damage was done to the brick building. The stack was knocked down and the boiler plant was put out of commission. Despite these setbacks, the brewery was kept in operation by a Northern Pacific locomotive which supplied the necessary steam pressure for the plant.

Additional improvements were made by the brewery following the earthquake damage. The company's policy of obtaining the latest equipment available has been maintained through the years. Recently a completely modern sterilization machine was installed at the plant.

Marc Buterbaugh assumed the presidency of the company following the death of Frederick E. Kessler Jan. 9, 1949. Charles N. Kessler carries on the family tradition in his present post of vice president and brewmaster in charge of plant operations.

Viewing the large modern plant two miles west of Helena, few persons would be aware of the wealth of Montana history contained on

### Few Enjoy Secret Of Brewing Excellent Beer

A lot of people buy it, drink it and enjoy it, but the process of making beer is still an art known only to a select few.

The complicated network of machinery and tanks at the Kessler Brewing company's plant testifies to the fact that beer is a pretty tricky thing to manufacture. Charles N. Kessler, as brewmaster in charge of plant operations, watches over each step in the process with a craftsman's care and professional pride in his product.

Each brewery and brewmaster follows a "recipe." That formula is what gives each brand its slight mark of distinction. Old brewers contend that the real difference in beer is in the "balling" or weight of the materials that go into the mixture. "Heavy" beer has a high balling content while "light" beer has a low rate of balling.

Many laymen say "it's the water that counts" but while good water is a factor to be considered by any brewer, most of the brewmasters watch their balling content with a careful eye.

Another factor in the manufacture of any beer is the type of hops used. The hops do more to provide a product's flavor than any other single ingredient. They are what lends a certain beer its slightly sweet or bitter taste according to the types used.

The formula or "recipe" now used by the Kessler Brewing company is essentially the same that Nickolas Kessler initiated when he opened production at his small brewery.

Modern machinery, of course, has brought quite a change in the actual process but the workers at the Kessler plant say that beer still demands a personal touch. The workers there all have had long experience in brewing. John Herold, for instance, first began work in a German brewery when he was only 14-years-old. Like the other Kessler employes, he takes great pride in the skill that produces fine beer.

The entire process begins at the unloading shed in the Kessler plant where the various materials are unloaded from railroad cars.

Malts are hauled by an elevator into the mash tub where they are blended. Both types of malts, eastern and western, are mixed in the tub with hot water.

After four hours in the mash tub, the mixture is piped into a huge copper kettle that has a capacity of 100 barrels. The residue is drained off the mash tub to be sold for cattle feed.

Beer is never called beer until it reaches the storage cellars. During practically the entire process, the mixture is referred to as "wort."

Once the wort is put in the copper kettle, it is cooked for four hours. Just before it comes to a boil, the hops are added. The entire kettle room has a pleasant smell from the constant cooking of the sweet smelling malts. Two brews a day are cooked in the kettle.

From the kettle, the brew goes through a series of pipes to the bandelot cooler where corn syrup is added. Two hours later the wort is sent to one of the many fermentation tanks. Various gases are drained from the wort for storage in a series of cylinders.

After two weeks in the fermentation tanks, the wort is piped down to the storage cellars in the basement. At that moment, the mixture finally becomes beer. The gases are released into the beer for carbonation and after about six weeks of aging in the glass-lined tanks, the beer is ready for consumption.

A pipeline carries the beer from the storage cellars to the bottling plant where it is poured into bottles, sterilized and capped. Another portion of the beer is kegged for wholesale distribution.

Two brews a day are sent



THE ORIGINAL KESSLER BREWERY is shown in this old photograph, believed to be the first taken of the structure. The stone malt house at the left was constructed under the supervision of Charles Beehrer in 1865. Several improvements were added during 1874-85, and the large modern plant of the Kessler rests upon approximately the same site today.

### Spring Harbinger, Bock Beer, Is Specially Brewed

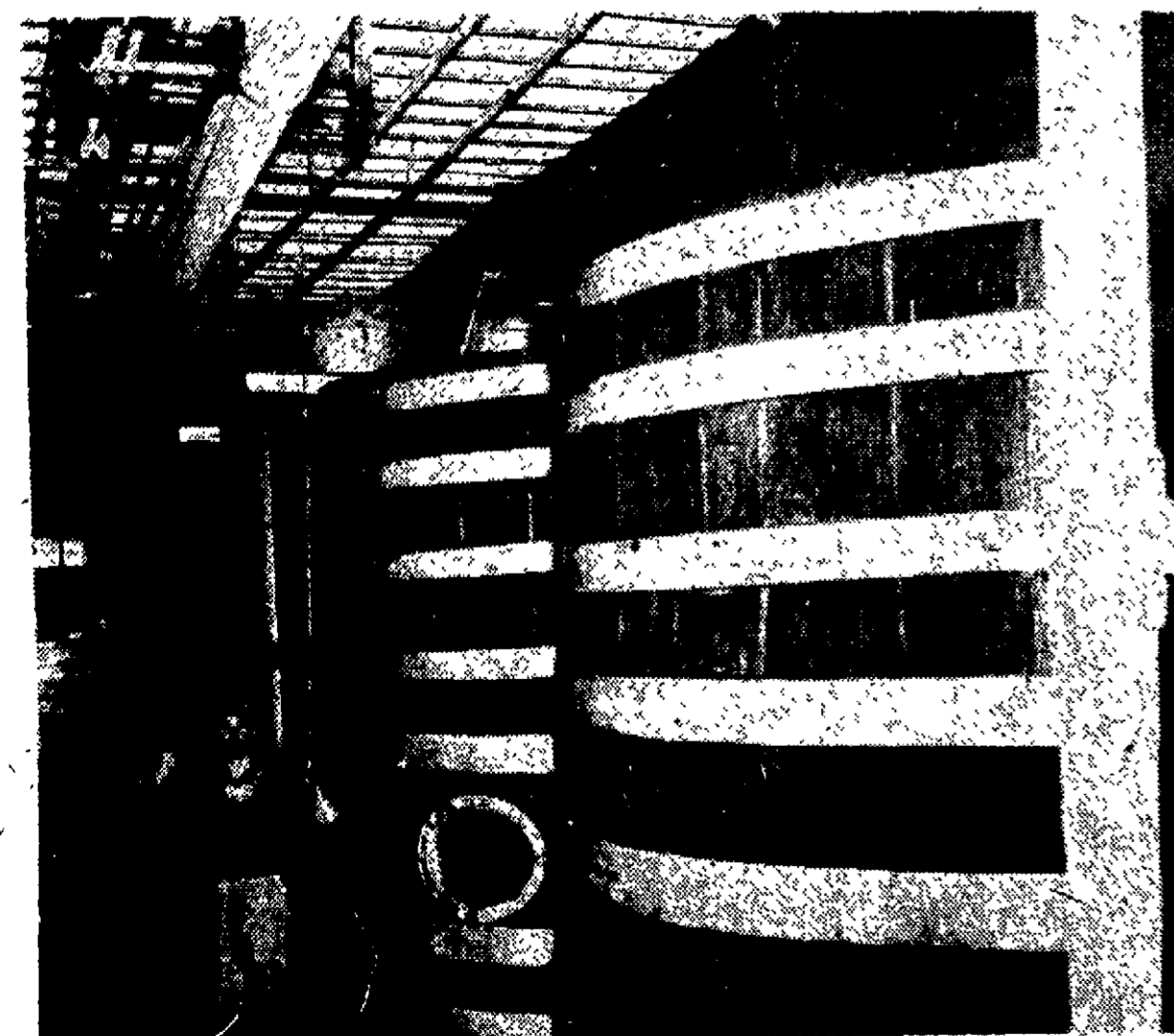
A lot of people have the wrong idea about that annual harbinger of spring, Bock beer.

"We don't make Bock by cleaning out the tanks every year," declared Marc Buterbaugh, president of the Kessler Brewing company. He explained that the product is made by a special recipe each spring.

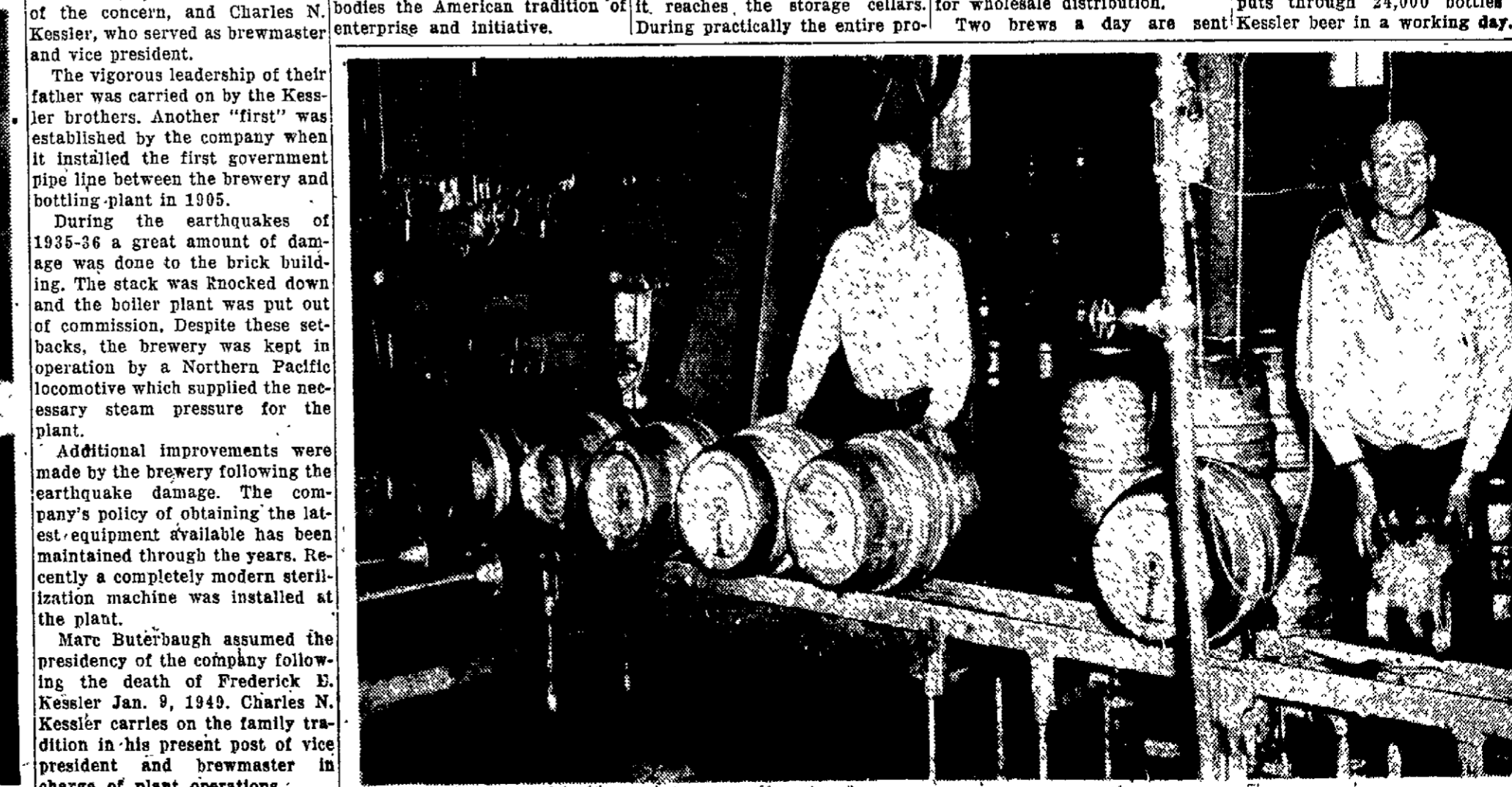
"We clean out our tanks thoroughly after every batch is drained," he said. "Bock beer is not made from the residue because there simply isn't any."

Buterbaugh revealed that the brewery devotes a period in the spring to the manufacture of Bock. "It is a good seasonal tonic but it has a limited sales period and for that reason we only make it once a year," he said.

through the big copper kettle, giving the plant a capacity of 200 daily barrels. The bottling plant puts through 24,000 bottles of Kessler beer in a working day.



THESE LARGE FERMENTATION TANKS contain the beer for ten days before it is sent on to the storage cellars for aging. The tanks are believed to be the first of their type brought west of the Mississippi. The steel cylinders behind the tanks retain the various gases drained from the beer. They are later released in the storage cellars. Emil Baenschbach is shown among the tanks.



THIS IS THE BARREL WASHER which is used for cleansing the many kegs used each day by the brewery. They are sent through the brush cleaner at the right after a thorough washing. When they reach the end of the rack, each barrel is inspected with a small light for leaks. Fred and Pete Gross and Marc Buterbaugh's dog, Biltzer, are posed with the equipment. The kegs are stored in the rear for future use.