

Curator's Choice

“Let No Man Thirst For Good Beer”

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This pithy quote is attributed to American Founding Father and Revolutionary War hero Samuel Adams. More importantly here, Adams was also involved in the brewing industry as a maltster. Several generations of his family produced malt—a vital component in beer (Baron 1962:462). Pierced tiles (Figure 1) were used in the floors of malting houses.

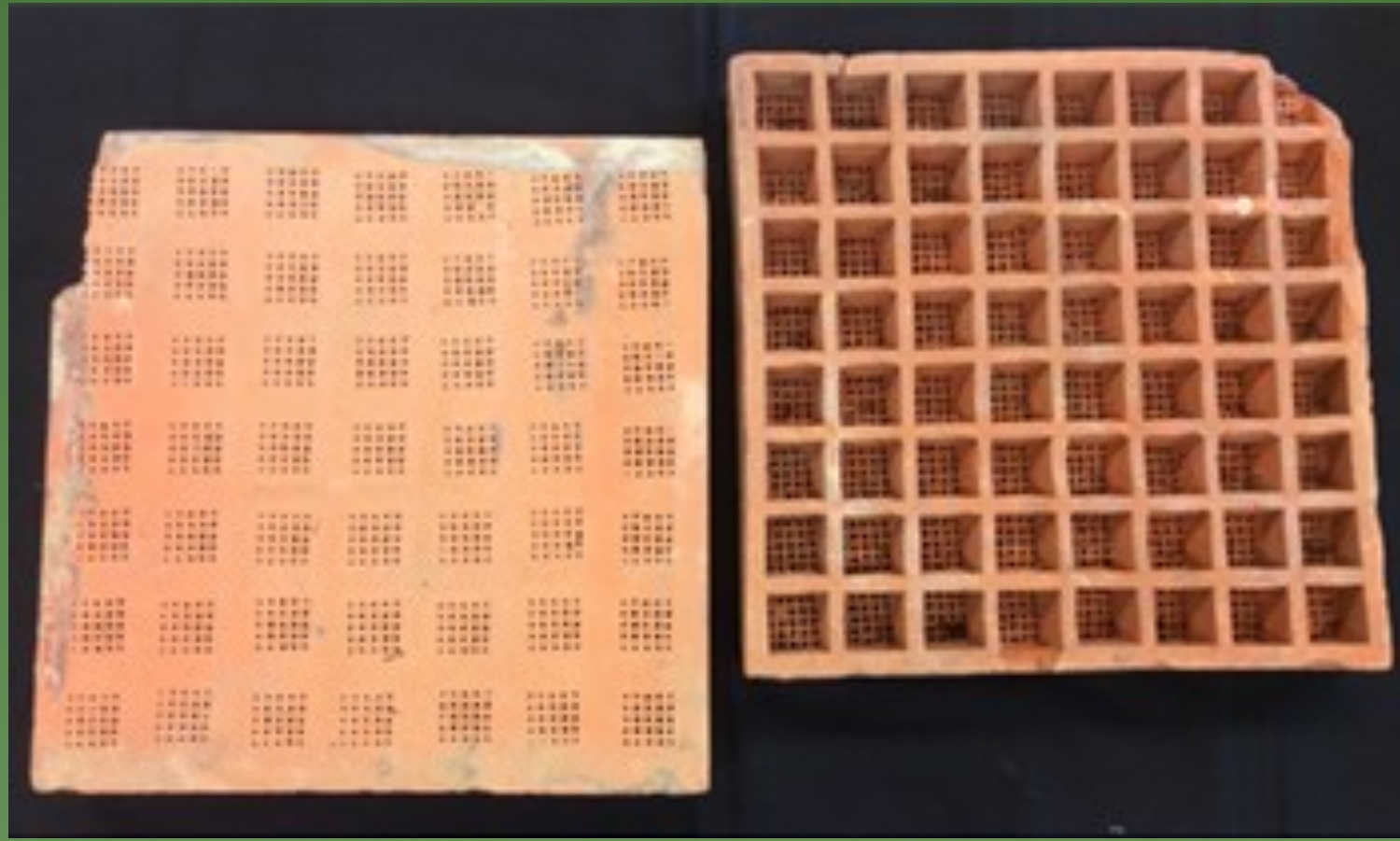


Figure 1. Two of the malting tiles found at the Clagett Brewery site. The tile on the left shows the malting floor surface side, while the tile on the right shows the underside, with the deep cell structure.

Archaeologists working for the Baltimore Center for Urban Archaeology found these tiles during a 1983 excavation at the site of the former Clagett's Brewery (Comer et al. 1984). The brewery began producing ale in 1784 and operated until 1880 under as many as ten owners, including Eli Clagett (Akerson 1990). In addition to discovering the foundation of the brewery's malthouse, other artifacts related to the brewery operations were found, including several dumps of nineteenth-century bottles. More unusual were over three dozen perforated unglazed ceramic tiles used as flooring for the malting kiln. Manufactured in England by two companies in operation in the second and third quarters of the nineteenth century (Figure 2), each tile measures one-foot square and contained 1600 small holes (Bromwich 1984). Hot air passed through these holes to enter the drying room from the floor below, preventing the sprouted barley from growing so that it could be used to produce malt (Figure 3).

Baltimore, once the second largest city in the United States, has been home to over 115 breweries since the first brewery began operation there in 1748 (Arnett et al. 1999:274). Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, the arrival of immigrants from Germany brought about a wave of breweries producing light German lagers; more than fifteen breweries are shown on the 1869 Sasche map of Baltimore (Sasche 1869). The brewery industry remained vibrant in Baltimore until Prohibition.

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Figure 2. Detail of one of the tiles, showing the stamped mark of the Hammill Company, in operation in Bridgewater, England, between 1866 and 1883.

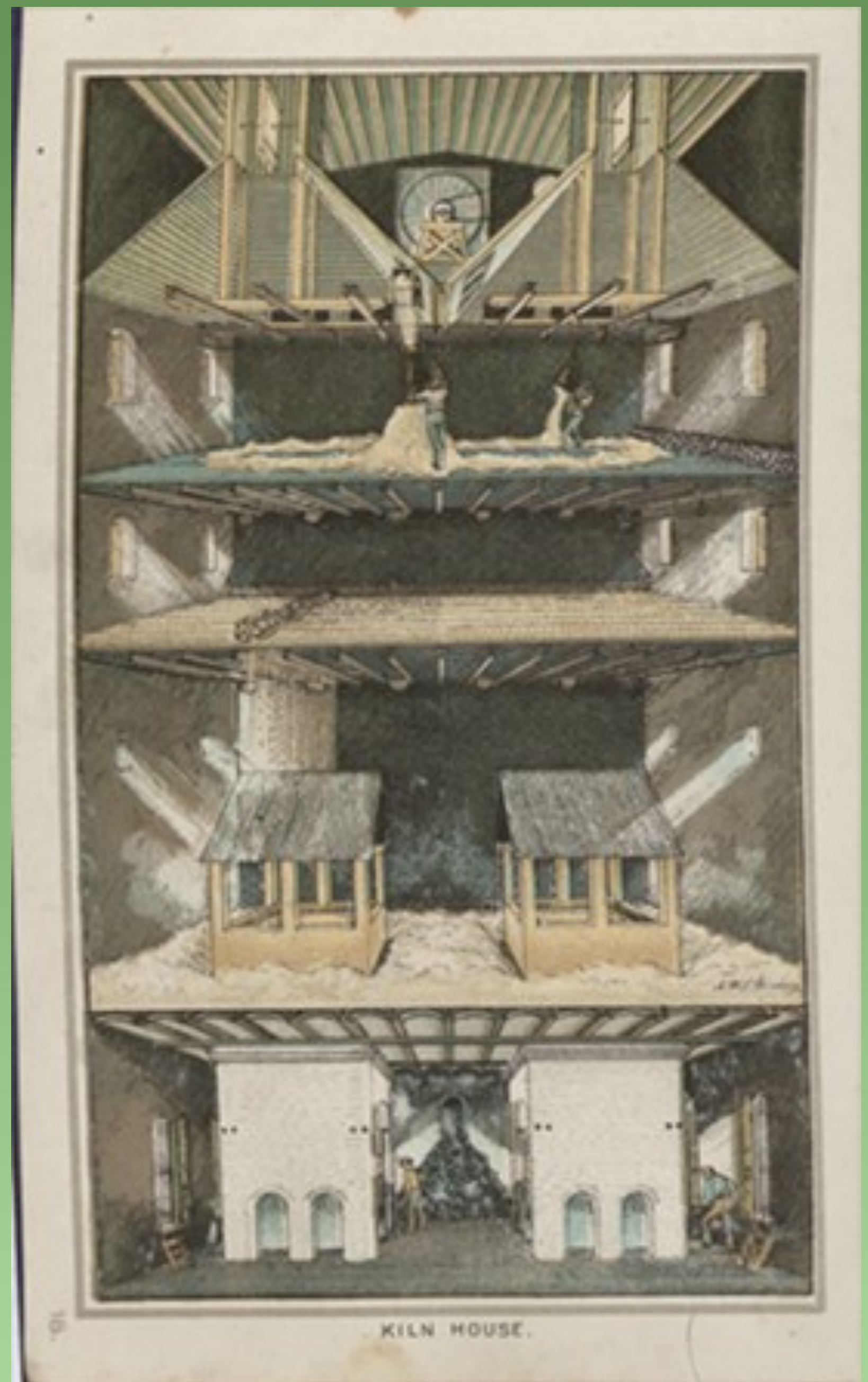


Figure 3. Lithograph from an 1892 publication of the F. A. Poth Brewing Company of Philadelphia (Mueller 1892). The kilns are shown on the ground floor, with the floors of drying barley above.



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Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum is part of the Maryland Historical Trust, an agency of the Maryland Department of Planning, Baltimore.

