

Wiedemann to brew again in Newport



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(Photo: The Enquirer/Patrick Reddy)

NEWPORT – Wiedemann brewing is coming home.

The legendary beer that provided hundreds of jobs even in its demise and lasted more than a century in the Northern Kentucky river city will re-root in a small operation in a landmark building, WaterTower Square.

Visitors will have the chance to see the brewing operation and sample Wiedemann draft brews from a tap room in the building and a beer garden outside after its opening, which is projected to be this spring.

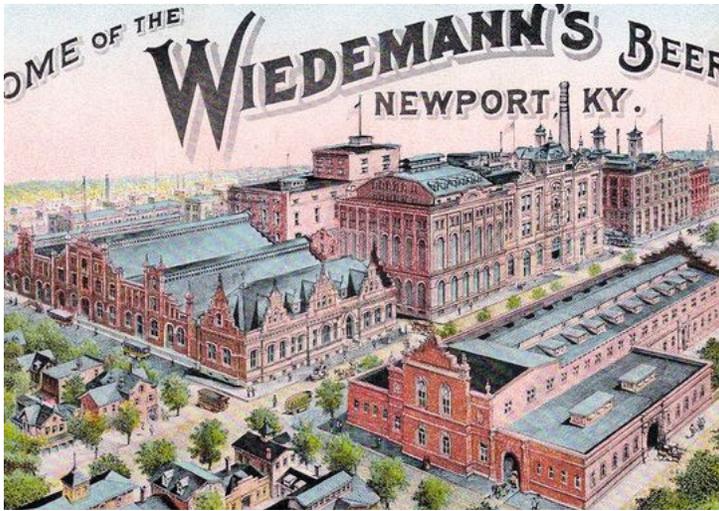
It's the latest endeavor of Jon and Betsy Newberry, who resurrected the Wiedemann label two years ago and established the Geo. Wiedemann Brewing Co.

The Newberrys introduced their new brand of the beer, Wiedemann Special Lager, in July of 2012, receiving an astonishing welcome from consumers in Northern Kentucky and Cincinnati.

It's always been the plan to open a brewery in Newport.

"Our goal from the beginning was to bring production back to Newport," Jon Newberry said. "We've been overwhelmed by the positive response we've gotten from everyone here – consumers, bar and restaurant owners, city officials.

"You'd be surprised at how many people say it was the first beer they ever drank – usually as a child, taking a sip from their parent's or grandparent's Wiedemann," he said.



Wiedemann's Beers is a large part of Newport's history. The factory was located on several city blocks in the early 1900s.(Photo: Provided)

A surge of breweries

Greater Cincinnati has seen a surge in local breweries over the last decade riding a national wave of interest in craft beers.



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<http://www.cincinnati.com/story/entertainment/nightlife/bars-and-clubs/2014/04/03/local-beers-list/7268293/?from=global&sessionKey=&autologin=>

Those who watch the beer industry, and city officials, say that Wiedemann's addition is a smart move.

Beer aficionado and historian Dave Gausepohl of Boone County, formerly a craft beer buyer for the Party Source, said Wiedemann beer brewed in Newport is certain to be a win for the region. Gausepohl currently works for Heidelberg Distributing managing specialty beer for the Kentucky market.

"With craft beer it's truly, 'the more the merrier,'" Gausepohl said. "There's all kinds of room for competition."

He said the Newberrys knew what Wiedemann needed: a home and, particularly, Newport.

"Jon didn't pull any punches. That's what they wanted to do: Bring Wiedemann back to Newport. It gives it a hometown. That means a lot."

Betsy Newberry said she can't think of a more inviting neighborhood than the historic East Row in Newport for folks to walk in, but Gausepohl noted there's also plenty of parking for visitors.



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The closest brewery to WaterTower Square is decidedly different: Hofbrauhaus, located at Third Street and Washington Avenue. Other businesses in the immediate area – Pompilios, Coaches Corner, Mansion Hill Tavern, Newberry Bros., Southgate House Revival – each have their own identities.

Newport City Manager Tom Fromme said that more businesses in close proximity to one another enhance the experience for all.

Scott Clark, historic preservation officer for the city, said the news can only be good for revitalization efforts in the East Row.

"Historic neighborhoods depend upon activities and locations that enhance the history of them," he said, adding, "Two of the Wiedemann homes are only a few blocks to the east while the original Wiedemann Brewing Company was located a few blocks to the west at Sixth and York.

How Wiedemann was reborn

The Newberrys, who live in St. Bernard, rescued the Wiedemann label after Jon Newberry learned that the previous owner had let the trademark ownership expire.

"We decided to revive Wiedemann because I always liked it – and drank more than my share of it growing up in Cincinnati – and we saw it as an opportunity to resurrect a great local brand.

"I jumped at the chance," he said.

Jon and Betsy Newberry also lived in Prague in 1992 and developed "a great fondness for Bohemian beer," he said, and Wiedemann was a Bohemian beer.

The Newberry version of Wiedemann has grabbed the attention of craft beer lovers of a younger generation than the original.

Wiedemann Special Lager only hints of the original.

"Young craft drinkers want to take an occasional break from the heavy, high-alcohol beers they normally drink," Jon Newberry said.

Betsy Newberry said the "retro" appeal is high with Wiedemann fans, as well, and her husband added, "Wiedemann's definitely falls into the 'everything old is new again' category."

The company has brewed six different beers so far, and Newberry said a seventh – Wiedemann's Pragerbrau, Bohemian Winter Lager – is set to be brewed at the end of the month. It will be released as Wiedemann's winter seasonal beer in late October.

"We'll probably have a dozen beers available once we open the brewery here, Newberry said. Most of the brewing, and bottling, will continue in Stevens Point, Wis., where it's been brewed since December of 2012.



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Brewing up plans

The Newberrys reviewed preliminary plans Wednesday for renovations to about 9,000 square feet of WaterTower space over two floors – the basement and the main floor – with Jon J. Hemmer, president of Hemmer Management Group, which manages the property.

The Newberrys have signed a letter of intent with Hemmer for the space at Watertower Square but still have to work out the exact terms.

Hemmer said Wiedemann will be in an area formerly leased by 4C for Children, which moved to Covington in June 2013.

The project will cost more than \$500,000, not including start-up funding for staffing the brewery operation – about a dozen workers – and increased sales and marketing, or real estate, Newberry said. Brewing equipment will run about \$300,000. More will be hired for the tap room and beer garden.

Funding will come from various sources, Newberry said, with help from the Kentucky Small Business Development Center, which has an office at Northern Kentucky University.

The food, required at a location that serves alcohol, will be simple: "A lot of pretzels. Cheese," Newberry said, only guessing what they might provide. But it's not going to be a restaurant, he said.

The tops of tall brewery tanks in the basement will poke through the first floor. It's one way to allow visitors to get a glimpse of the brewing and saving space, Hemmer noted. They expect to brew about 5,000 barrels of beer a year at the Newport site.

The Newberrys anticipate private tours to give guests a view of the operations.

Roots in Newport

The original Wiedemann Brewing Co. was founded in Newport in 1870 and enjoyed a long brewing history at Sixth and Columbia streets. The facility was family owned by the descendants of George Wiedemann, who worked in brewing in New York, Louisville and then Cincinnati after immigrating from Germany. The family ran the business until the 1960s, when they sold it to Wisconsin-based Heileman Brewing Co.

The Newport brewery produced more than a million barrels of beer in a year and at its height employed about 800, but it closed in 1983. The Wiedemann name was sold again and production moved to the Pittsburgh Brewing Co. until 2007, when the name was dropped.

Wiedemann meant work for hundreds of Newport and Greater Cincinnati residents.

"I grew up with Wiedemann's being in the city," said Fromme. "The residents, their families worked at Wiedemann's."

"Wiedemann belongs in Newport, and I'm really grateful that Mr. Newberry wants to bring it back."



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Celebrating growth

The Newberrys hosted a ceremonial keg-tapping in 2012 at Pompilio's in Newport in 2012 to introduce their new, crisp lager.

They selected Pompilio's, in part, because the wooden bar in the Italian restaurant came from a tap room of the original Wiedemann's brewery.

A year later, Geo. Wiedemann Brewing celebrated its success, again at Pompilio's.

The beer went from selling in four locations to 300 locations in one year, and on the anniversary of the rebirth of the Geo. Wiedemann Brewing Co., its owners were predicting its return to Newport for brewing.

The new location for Wiedemann brewing at WaterTower Square is not only in East Row, a gem of a neighborhood in this river city, but also is an historic building.

Dueber Watch Case manufacturing company was there in the 1880s, the Donaldson Lithographing in the early 1900s and Hyde Park Clothes by the mid-1950s.

Betsy Newberry recalls sitting at Coaches Corner, across the street from WaterTower Square and thinking the building at Sixth Street and Washington Avenue looked like a perfect spot for the Geo. Wiedemann Brewing business.

"I looked across the street and you see the WaterTower Square, it's an older-looking building. I saw the water tower and I thought, 'Wiedemann.'"■

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