

Mark Marnell's Beer Blog

Mad Jack Brewing

@ the Van Dyck Restaurant & Lounge
Schenectady NY, May 2015

BREW STATS

History: Van Dyck bought in 2008, re-opened the brewery in the Spring of 2011

System Size: 10 BBL System with 6 10 BBL Fermenters

Founders Owners: John (Jack aka "Mad Jack") McDonald and son Jeff, John's brother Dennis and son Bill McDonald. Van Dyck Restaurant managed by Mike McDonald

Head Brewer: Sam Pagano

Production Stats:

Initial Approx. Barrel (bbl) Output 2011: 100 bbls

Projected bbl Output 2015: 500 bbl with Max capacity for growth at 1000 bbl.

Packaging: Kegs: 1/6 and 1/4 (20 and 50 Liters) as well as pub Growlers

Distribution: Local in Schenectady with some clients being: Pinhead Susan's and Stockade Inn (Both also owned by the McDonalds), DeAngelo's, Johnny's and Proctor's Theater. Looking to expand next year into the wider Capital District in Albany, Troy etc.

Biggest Selling Beer- Fighting Irwin IPA

And just for fun:

Brewery's Movie Theme - Ghostbusters

Brewery Theme Song - Talking Head's "This must Be The Place (Naive Melody)"

Brewer's Favorite Beer - Ithaca Flower Power



Brewpub at a Legendary Restaurant and Jazz Club

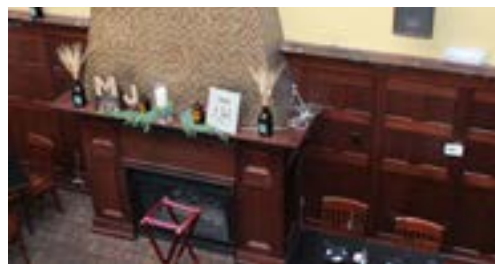


Schenectady has an electric reputation, known for being home to fortune 500 company, GE, and the once home of its headquarters for many years. It also has the good fortune of being home to the Van Dyck Restaurant and Mad Jack Brewing. Located at 237 Union Street in Schenectady's Stockade district, The Van Dyck is a legendary landmark with a storied past. World Class Jazz musicians like Dave Brubeck, Chick Corea, Thelonius Monk and a host of others have graced the upstairs lounge since original owner, Marvin Friedman opened it in 1947.

It has changed hands a few times since him and was previously a brewpub but it sat idle from 2005 until 2008 when the restaurant was bought on auction and so was the brewery for a steal of around 80K. The buyers were part of the local McDonald clan who own a number of other businesses in the Schenectady area; John and son Jeff & John's brother Dennis and his son Bill. The family Brewpub endeavor reopened in 2011 and the associated brewery was renamed with a play on John's nick-

name Jack. When the brewery opened, it was stewarded by Brewer Drew Schmidt who had previously worked at Olde Saratoga Brewing in Saratoga Springs and Big House Brewing in Albany. As the only Brewpub in Schenectady it enjoys the company of a faithful horde of beer drinkers with a reputation as a great place to eat and a great place to hold an event. Drew Schmidt has moved on to Schmaltz Brewing in Clifton Park and the new sheriff in town is Sam Pagano. He is all fired up with an arsenal

of beer styles and he will blow you away with his enthusiasm. There are a whole lot of good Bs going on at this business: beers, bands, bars (2), beauty as in architecture and bread, butter, beef, baked goods, burgers, buffalo chicken, beans, battered haddock, bowls of soup, Black and Blue Salads, BBQ, bite sized crab cakes, pretzel bites and well, ok, you get the point.



The Welcome sign, The mantle, tables and fireplace extraordinary in the Dining Room beneath a massive sky light and a nice wrap around balcony

The Cast of Characters



Brew Master Sam Pagano, since 2014

Each Brewery has its own setting, its own story line and its very own cast of characters who together create their own play, plot, and passion. Mad Jack Brewing's plot line entails an historical drama about a dynastic Celtic Clan who sets out on a journey full of adventure, conquest and; because no worthwhile story is without this distinguished beverage, beer. In this episodic journey, you get a tale of a beautiful building full of great food,

great beer, great music and, judging from the McDonald I did meet, great people. Shortly after I walked into the restaurant with Brewer Sam Pagano, I met Mike McDonald who manages the place by day and Chef Ryan Samek who stopped by to get some suds for a few of his beer centric dishes like Fish and Chips made with IPA and Steak served with Stout Sauce. I got the feeling that these players were serious but that they also interjected a good

amount of fun into their professional routine. The main brew man, Sam Pagano is a well rounded gent, once a Captain of the SUNY Albany Great Danes Football team where he received his BA in English. He went on to get his MA in English from Trinity College, Hartford CT in 2010. He comes here to Schenectady via two local Capital District breweries. He began his beer career at Brown's Brewing in Troy from 2010 to 2012 as a Sales

Manager and as an assistant to the brewery. Whatever help the brewery needed he was up to the task. From here he made his way to CH Evans Brewing at the Albany Pump Station as assistant brewer under the tutelage of Ryan Demler from 2012 through December 2014. He took the Head Brewer job at Mad Jack in December 2014 and never looked back.



Manager Mike McDonald and Brewer Sam Pagano



Chef Ryan Samek

The Brewery, 10 BBL System with 6 10 BBL Fermenters



A view of the Brewery behind the glass from the outdoor courtyard diner's perspective, Left 10 BBL Fermenter, right Mash Tun



Mash Tun

The Brewery resides in a detached building behind the Restaurant. The equipment is comprised of a 10 BBL system with 6 10 BBL fermenters. Current production is 500 BBLs per annum with another 500 BBL capacity for future growth. The pub is open Monday through Thursday 4-10pm, Friday 11:30am-11pm and on Saturdays

12-11pm. One entire facade of the Brewery is one big window so you can spy in on the brewing equipment and the brewer's happenings while eating or quaffing in either the courtyard between buildings or the dining room. The brewery pumps out sixtels and quarters and in the restaurant you can get growlers to go.



Fermenter



3 of the six 10 BBL Fermenters



Spiral Staircase leading to storage under the brew-house



The Beers running the gamut of styles, from Lagers to Strong Ales

Mondays - Thursdays, you can get Happy Hour Beers for 4 bucks



Mad Jack has plenty of beers that you can go cuckoo over. The beers run the spectrum, with an insane count of ten in-house taps. The brews run light to dark in color, light to heavy in alcohol content, top to bottom in fermentation and Old World to New World in styles.

Beers are brewed at least twice a week and they are named after local phenomena, old and new. Bellevue Blonde is a lighter ale mildly hopped with 22 IBUs of hops and named after a local neighborhood. Pinhead Pale Ale named after another of the McDonalds local



establishments (Pinhead Susan's) is a 5.1% American Pale Ale hopped with 30 IBUs of American Hops. AlCo Ale is a 6.2% cold fermented ale singly hopped with 40 IBUs of Bravo hops and it takes its name from a once Schenectady Locomotive Company. Their best selling beer is 6.2% Fighting Irwin IPA, brewed with Canadian 2-Row, and Carapils malts, Cascade, Centennial and Citra hops and is named after a member of the clan. Dutchmen Lager takes its name from the local Union College athletes. It is an easy drinking 4.7% abv hopped with 26 IBUs of hops. River's Rye is an unfiltered and

rye filled 5.8% Belgian Pale Ale hopped with 35 IBUs of Equinox and Sorachi Ace hops and named after the River's Casino that will be built close by the brewery. Electric Lager derives its name from the two companies that merged to form GE making Schenectady a city that was all about Electric. The beer is a strong 7.5% Indian Pale Lager that is amped up with a bunch of malt and 63 IBUs of Bravo, Equinox, Styrian Celeia, and 4 Cs of Citra, Chinook and Cascade and Centennial. Named after a local thoroughfare, State Street Saison is a hefty and spicy 7.4% Farmhouse Ale. Stockade Stout, made



in the district of the same name is a 5.6% Oatmeal Stout made with Munich Malts, Roasted Barley, Oats and Chocolate. The final beer I got to try was Lawrence Strong, so named for a Mohawk Indian who helped convince the Dutch to resettle Schenectady after they were massacred at the hands of the French and the Algonquins. It is a whopping 9% Belgian Strong Ale, made with plenty of pilsner malt, oats, greater than 80 pounds of fresh raspberries and Citra Hops. This one was worth a growler on my way out. I enjoyed all the beers; there was not a bad one in the lot. Other upcoming seasonal Mad Jack beers that I wish I could have tried: a Farm Beer made with 20% malt and 100% hops purchased from Indian Ladder Farms, a summer Hefeweizen, a malty Brown Ale, a Fall spiced Pumpkin Guord Beer called McToberfest, Mad Jack Frost Winter Ale & a White IPA brewed with the local Ales for ALS Charity hop blend for which a buck a pint will go to the ALS Therapy Development Institute.



My 2 Ounces: A Beautiful Building with a Bounty of Beer.

This building is beautiful, the woodwork is mad cool and the feel is a bit upscale with no pretensions at all. It is a neat place to sit and quaff. One is taken by the architectural features; the massive skylight above the dining room, the detailed wood-working and the grand staircase that takes you upstairs. Upstairs, where the jazz legends used to perform and where you still can catch some big name bands. This place is a gem; from the balconies, the two bars,

the French doors that open into the outdoor courtyard, the grand fireplace and mantle in the dining room to the brewery window with a good view for anyone interested in brewery activities. The trip here is a worthwhile endeavor: for the beer, the grub and the building. I visited in the morning, before the lunch crowd sauntered in and was not privy to the beer drinking imbibers that come for a quaff of good brew. That was my only regret, not

being able to people watch. You can get both a great education and a good feel for how the place is by simply observing the folks. I guess this gives me a good reason to return during drinking hours! Suffice it to say that amid some good conversation, some good laughs and some great beers like Lawrence The Strong, my visit was very fruitful. I could see myself frequenting this joint if I lived in the Schenectady area. If you

have not yet visited the Van Dyck and have not had a chance to experience their slate of fine brews, I suggest you do it forthwith! Go on in, go single, go Dutch (it is the Van Dyck after all), go crazy. Grab a beer, sit at the bar and just try to imagine the great artists who have graced this place through time. Your foot might just start tapping as you “**Return To Forever**” “**Round Midnight**” “**In your Own Sweet Way**”



Courtyard between the Pub and the Brewery

The historical upstairs venue where you can catch some great bands



Skylight and balcony upstairs above the Dining Room



Upstairs Music Lounge, Sound Equipment and Tables



Upstairs Music Lounge, More Tables and an Upstairs Bar