



# Marnell Beer Blog Article

## Wachusett Brewing June 2015

### The Malt “Monsta” of Central Mass



## BREW STATS

**History:** First Batch Brewed in September 1993, First keg of Country Pale Ale shipped 1994

**System Size:** 50 bbl Brewhouse (5 Vessel state of the art, fully automated), **30 Fermenters** – 3-70bbl, 4-120bbl, 4-180bbl, 1-360bbl, 5-450bbl and 5-500bbl and 8-650bbl, **9+ Brite Tanks** – 2-50bbl, 5-100bbl and 2-200bbl Brite Tanks (9 total) with some of the 500 and 650 bbl fermenters to also be used for conditioning

**Largest Canning System in North East, 2nd Largest Packaging Brewery in Massachusetts, 5th Largest Independently Owned New England Brewery**

**Founders/Owners:** Ned LaFortune, Peter Quinn, and Kevin Buckler

#### **Brew Crew:**

**Head Brewers:** Brew Master Dave Howard, Head Brewer Caleb Goodrich, Lead Brewer Dave Higgins,

**Asst Brewers:** Pete Mattison, Paul Decoteau, Steve Dennet, Seth Wright

#### **Production Stats:**

**Initial Approx. Barrel (bbl) Output 1994: 1378 bbl**

**Projected bbl Output 2015: 36,000 bbl +**

**Packaging:** Sixtels, Halves, Growlers, 12 oz Bottles, 12 Oz Cans, 32 Oz Cans

**Distribution:** 80% of all beer is sold in MA, with ditribution in the rest of New England, NY & NJ

**Biggest Selling Beer-** Blueberry followed by Green Monsta IPA

**Brewery’s Movie Theme** - Animal House

**Brewery Theme Song** - Running Down A Dream by Tom Petty

#### **Favorite Craft Beer not made by the brewery:**

Founder Ned LaFortune - Sierra Nevada Pale Ale

Director of Sales and Marketing TJ Morse - Cambridge Brewing’s Flower Child

Brew Master Dave Howard - the one in his hand

Head Brewer Caleb Goodrich - Ballast Point’s Sculpin IPA

Lead Brewer Dave Higgins - Lagunitas Lil Sumpin Sumpin

Asst Brewer Pete Mattison - Barley Wine

Asst Brewer Paul Decoteau (Hootie) – Downeast Cider

Asst Brewer Steve Dennet - Brooklin Brewery’s Chocolate Stout

Cellarman and Asst Brewer Seth Wright - Harpoon IPA

# Wachusett Brewery - The Malt Monsta of Central Mass



Wachusett lends its name to both the second largest body of water and the second largest packaging Brewery in the Bay State and you will find a hell of a lot of volume in both. With its new home and new brewery in Westminster, (where one of the founders was born and raised) Wachusett Brewing, one of the top 5 independently owned breweries in New England now has the potential to rollout a whopping 200,000 BBL per year.

I was set to head to a wedding in nearby Leominster Mass on a beautiful Saturday afternoon and had part of an early afternoon to kill. Just a short 7 minute ride away from where I was staying, I ventured out to see what all the buzz was about a brewery that was clearly the king or shall we say the Monsta of Central Mass. On several occasions, I had the opportunity to sample one of their flagships, Green Monsta IPAs, and this was my chance to finally belly up to the source for this tasty

beer and whatever else I could sample.

The Brewery is set in a small Industrial Park called Westminster Place. Upon entry, there is a merchandise store on the right selling, hats, clothing, glassware and of course beer, a tap-room on the left serving beer behind which the brewery sits. Tours were scheduled that day so I was lucky to run into two of the most passionate beer ambassadors any brewery could ever have in TJ Morse, who started with the company as the NY NJ Sales Rep and is now Director of Sales and Marketing, and Lead Brewer Dave Higgins. We chatted, we laughed, praised beer of course and I was given the opportunity to quickly pop in the brewery for a visual sweep, unfortunately without my camera. The pictures I do have were stolen from the cell phones of my brother Matt and his wife Betty. Thanks to TJ and Dave, my time at the brewery was enjoyable and productive, supplemented by some mighty

tasty samples! Wachusett Brewery had its seminal beginnings in the late 80s at Worcester Polytechnic Institute when Engineering students Ned LaFortune and Kevin Buckler met Biology student Peter Quinn. Their friendly college partying morphed into a greater bond and a serious love of homebrewing that continued after graduation. In 1993, they designed a homemade three vessel system and started brewing test batches. This was quickly followed by their very first batch of Country Pale Ale, brewed in 1993 with their first commercial keg being shipped in 1994.

Wachusett Brewing was born out of an intellectual curiosity, some science and a whole lot of enthusiasm and passion. Since the 1379 BBLs made in 1994, their output has ballooned by over 26 times to what is projected to be more than 36,000 bbls in 2015. These large numbers are made possible by a new larger space and a relatively new 5 vessel



Brewhouse designed by J.L. Process Design out of St. Louis Missouri and built by McCann Fabrication out of New Gloucester Maine. What puts the proverbial froth on the beer at the new location is the fully digital, automated nature of the system, designed by Wachusett Brewing's Director of Operations, Brad Dufour. His automation helps to streamline the process for a potential of over 4x previous volumes. This is the kind of story you expect to read when three guys meet at a technical engineering college and become classically trained in problem solving. Out of the three founders, former civil engineer Ned LaFortune is still active in the day to day business as President, working for his brewery in the very same city that he grew up in.

# Tapping Into Success with Straight Forward Style



TJ Morse on the right - Director of Sales & Marketing



Brother Matt bellying up to the Taproom bar

There are a whopping 16 beers offered in the taproom and most are not too over the top by design. You won't find a beer here laced with lilac and lavender. Their style is classic and straight forward. The names are also fairly mainstream as well as evidenced for instance by their very first beer ever released named Country Pale Ale and their biggest selling and very first beer that was canned, Blueberry Ale. There are of course a few exceptions like Black Shack Porter which gives a nod to the first

beer they made in a barn on Ned's father's farm and the 4 different sport centered names like Green Monsta named after the Fenway Park wall, Bella Czech Pils after the Patriots Coach, Brewin American Pale Ale named after the Boston Bruins and of course Larry Imperial Pale Ale that I presume was named after Larry Bird of Celtics fame. Cascade, Amarillo, and Centennial hopped Green Monsta is the second best selling beer and is appropriately available at Fenway Park. There

are at least 18 beers that they produce under their brand that include several seasonals and 7 have won medals. Green Monsta won a US Open Gold, Black Shack Porter won 2 GABF Silver Medals, Ryde Rye won a US Open Silver, Light IPA won a US open Silver, Nut Brown Ale won 2 GABF Bronze medals, Blueberry Ale won 2

US Open Bronzes and a GABF Bronze and Larry Imperial IPA won a GABF Bronze. They also make Horseshoe Ale for the Ninety Nine Restaurant Chain, contract beers for breweries like Old Smuttynose in Portsmouth NH and they offer canning and packaging services for external beer that they can bring in with their own food grade tank trucks.



# 5 Vessel, 50 BBL Brewhouse with 9,220 BBLs of Fermentation Space



Old retired Mash Tun that brewed 10,211 batches of beer



New 50 bbl BrewHouse on left with 120 and 180 bbl Fermenters on right

The 25,000 square foot brewery is the second largest beer packaging brewery in MA, behind Harpoon and made possible by the fact that the Boston Beer Company does their packaging outside the state at the old F. & M. Schaefer Brewing Company building in Breinigsville, Pennsylvania and at the old Hudepohl Brewery in Cincinnati OH. The layout includes a fully automated 50 BBL., 5 vessel Brewhouse that utilizes 30 Fer-

menters (3 70bbl, 4 120bbl, 4 180bbl, 1 360bbl, 5 450bbl, 5 500bbl and 8 650bbl), 9 + Brite Tanks (2 50bbl, 5 100bbl and 2 200bbl with some conditioning done in some of the newer fermenters) and the largest state of the art Caning System in the North East for standard 12 oz. cans as well as 32 oz-ers they call Wicked Big Cans. There is also a quality assurance lab to ensure that there are repeatable results and

consistent products. These reliable beers are important to the local economy, supporting, at last count, 46 employees. The brewery has local roots and they run deep. Respect for Massachusetts and all things local is evident in what the brewery and its employees do with their beer and what they do for the community. Over 80% of their beer is still sold right in the Bay State with some sales that started

in 2006 in CT, NH and Maine and now in RI, NY and NJ. Staying local has paid off big time for them, allowing them to slowly build up a solid fan base here before going else where. Local accounts like nearby Wachusett Mountain Ski resort and Fenway Park were a big part of that. Today they stand as the 5th largest independently owned New England Brewery. Ned LaFortune grew up locally and is heavily involved

in local causes and local activities like helping to originate the Westminster Industrial Development Commission and participating on the board of the North Central Massachusetts Chamber of Commerce. Wachusett Brewing company has become a local phenom, a big brewery with big economic impact both as an employer and as a magnetic malty tourist attraction.



Outside Tanks



Lead Brewer Dave Higgins



Old Mash Tun w/batches indicated



Packaging Line

# My 2 Ounces: Growing The Wachusett Way, Selling enough Beer Cans to Stretch from Beantown to Pittsburgh



Make no mistake about it, Wachusett Brewing is serious business! This year they are on track to make more than 1,116,000 gallons of beer. That's almost 12 million 12 oz. bottles or cans. If you were to line up the cans side by side without any impediments, the straight line would stretch from Boston MA to Pittsburgh PA. That is a hell of a lot of beer by any measure

and a true testament of proof that they have been around now for over 20 years and are still going strong. With a potential for 550 BBL./Day, they are nicely poised for greater growth. Still concentrated in New England, it will be fun to watch Wachusett win their way into other parts of the country. They cite the Patriots with their Pilsner, Larry

Bird with their Imperial IPA, The Bruins with their Pale Ale and baseball with their IPA. It looks like they cover all the bases with their names and have managed to skate their way to success. After a full court press it seems they have hit a home run with their fan base when it comes to successfully tackling the New England beer market. You should travel

to the brewery and the taproom in Westminster, grab a very tasty beer and chat with the genuinely nice people who work at Wachusett Brewing. You will run into the amiable beer tenders, shop tenders and other friendly and helpful employees like TJ Morse or Dave Higgins. Make the pilgrimage. The beer will not disappoint nor will the people.

