

Vintage Revival

Drewrys Returns To Winnipeg

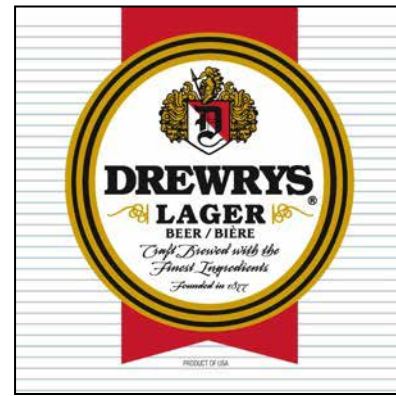
By Bill Wright

Once long ago, Drewrys was a legendary name in the beer business. For 80 years the brand was a dominate force. It grew to include breweries in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and even branched out into the United States. In 1957, when Canadian Breweries bought out the plant at Redwood and Main, the illustrious name slowly disappeared from the lexicon of beer drinkers. But now, after 65 years, the brand has returned to our province, albeit in a rather roundabout way.

In 2013, Chicago businessman Frank Manzo resurrected the name with plans for renovating an old department store in downtown South Bend, Indiana. South Bend is where Drewrys U.S.A. had been brewing beer for the American market beginning in 1936. However, after Frank suffered a bout of illness, the brewery plan lost momentum. Initially, Manzo began brewing Drewrys through a long established brewery in Monroe, WI. Currently, Drewrys is brewed at Sand Creek Brewing in Black River Falls, WI. Their beer is available in Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin and now in Winnipeg.

So how did Drewrys find its way back to the Peg? I'll let Great White North member Ray Padua tell the story.

"I had reached out to Drewrys when I heard that they had started operations again and then began the process of getting a special order into Winnipeg to be their first Canadian customer. I then started looking for a listing agent for the brand and magically, while I was looking, Bernice Sharples came on to the scene as the listing agent. My contact at the MLCC put me in touch with Bernice and that's how we met. Everything was happening at the same time it seems! Drewrys was meant to come back."



Top: Roger Lambert and Ray Padua

Bottom: Listing agent Bernice Sharples and Ray at the Charleswood Beer Market.



Back in September, Ray invited me to meet with Bernice just before a tasting event at the Charleswood Beer Market. Bernice was very interested to know about Drewry's history and has since become a member of the GWN. We talked about marketing and how saturated the craft beer scene is in Manitoba. Although Drewrys is brewed at a craft brewery, the recipes are vintage light lagers and ales and so the craft beer drinker won't be their focus. Even the packaging has a vintage feel with graphics from the original products and ads. Bernice gifted us with a couple of six packs and one them is now on display in my basement.

It's hard to say how sales will go in the current beer market. Since it is an American product, will the old Drewry name make a difference? With the right publicity, it might be able to take the place of the now defunct Standard Lager. The price is cheaper than premium brands and that will certainly help. If you're interested in trying a few Drewrys, its available at these outlets.

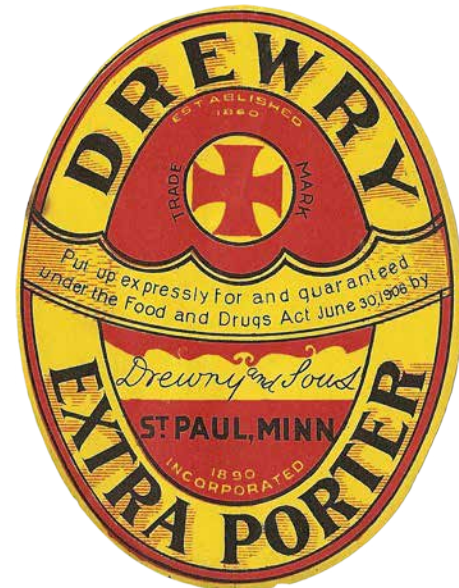
Charleswood Beer Market, The St Norbert Hotel, The Norwood Beer Store, Canad Inns Bottle Stop - Transcona, Canad Inns Bottle Stop - Portage La Prairie, The Howard Johnson Express, St James Hotel.
Soon to be: Lockport Grocery, Lockport Vendor, Four Crowns, The Tux Beer Market, Green Brier, Quality Inn Beer Store.



Ed Drewry Sr.

The following is a reprint
from the book
"300 Years of Beer - An Illustrated
History of Brewing in Manitoba."

Drewrys American Connection



When Ed Drewry Sr. established his brewery back in 1860, it's doubtful he imagined how widespread the Drewry name would become. Nor would his sons realize how important their decision was to move north. Ed Sr's brewery faltered during Prohibition, but it was the son's legacy that carried the name right up to the 1990's.

Drewry founded the North Star Brewery in 1860 with fellow Englishman George Scotten. The brewery, located at the foot of Dayton's Bluff near Phalen Creek, was one of a few that brewed ale in a time when the popularity of lager was sweeping over the Midwest. Perhaps this is why Drewry never achieved the level of success his two sons enjoyed.

By 1864 Scotten sold out and was replaced by L.B. Greig. Now under the name of the Northwestern Brewery, the partnership lasted three years before Ed Drewry Sr. went out on his own and relocated to Payne Avenue. This new location was next door to the huge Theo Hamm Brewery on Minnehaha Avenue. In the shadow of Hamm's, Drewry and Son's operated as a brewery until it became a casualty of Prohibition. Edward Jr. served on the board of directors of the St. Paul plant and step brothers Arthur, Harry and Richard also held various positions. On December 16, 1926 Ed Sr. died at the ripe old age of 97. He had been working at his desk only a few days earlier. By then the firm had turned to producing soft drinks and in 1932 Drewrys Limited of Winnipeg took over operation of the company.

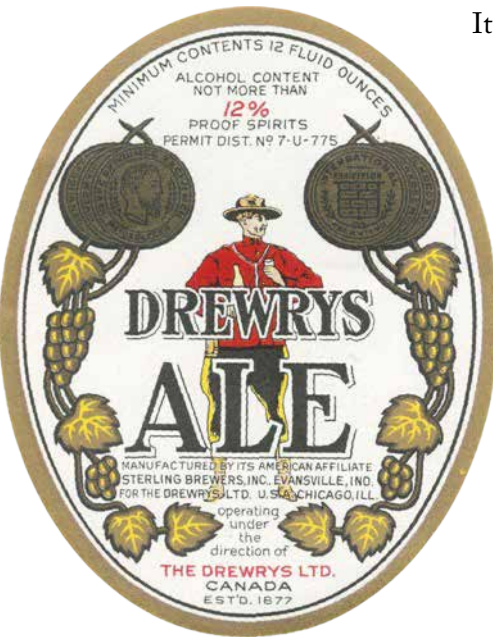
Taking control of the St. Paul plant was the first step in a plan George M. Black devised to move into the U.S. market. In 1932, Drewrys Limited announced they would open a plant in the Chicago district as soon as congress repealed Prohibition. The St. Paul location was to be part of their brewing plan, but that never transpired. Black was convinced that Roosevelt would be elected and the sale of beer would soon be permitted again. He wanted to be the first to brew Canadian ale in America and tap into the thirsty market that was waiting to be satisfied.

It soon became evident that an American company needed to be formed and so Drewrys Ltd. U.S.A. was incorporated. After abandoning the idea of opening its own plant, Drewrys first U.S. brewed beer was produced in 1933 under contract by the Sterling Brewing Co. of Evansville, Indiana. Roosevelt received the first case of Drewrys Canadian Ale brewed in the United States.

The importance of the brand's Canadian heritage was illustrated by the ever present Mountie on all its labels. So too was the slogan "First brewed in Canada in 1877, now brewed in the U.S.A." As the brewery grew and established its own consumer base, the Mounties role in advertising lessened and by the 1960's was only a small part of the label graphics.

Early in 1936, the Canadian connection was severed when the assets of Drewrys Ltd. U.S.A. was sold to a group of American investors and the Muessel Brewery in South Bend, Indiana was bought for production. With a solid local management base in hand, Drewrys popularity grew and the company expanded by taking over breweries in the Midwest and the eastern seaboard. At their peak, Drewrys was rated one of the top ten breweries in the U.S. In 1965 Drewrys merged into the Associated Brewing Company of Detroit.

By the 1970's, regional breweries began to lose sales to the larger nationwide companies such as Anheuser-Busch. Associated Brewing Company began to cut their losses and the Drewrys plant in South Bend was sold to G. Heileman Brewing of La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1972. That same year Heileman closed the South Bend plant, but continued to produce Drewrys at their Evansville Brewery (the former Sterling plant—what goes around comes around). The plant later became the Evansville Brewing Co. and this is where the brand finally drew its last breath. When the brewery closed in the late 1990's the Drewry name ended its association with beer after a run of more than 130 years.



Drewrys U.S.A. Collectibles

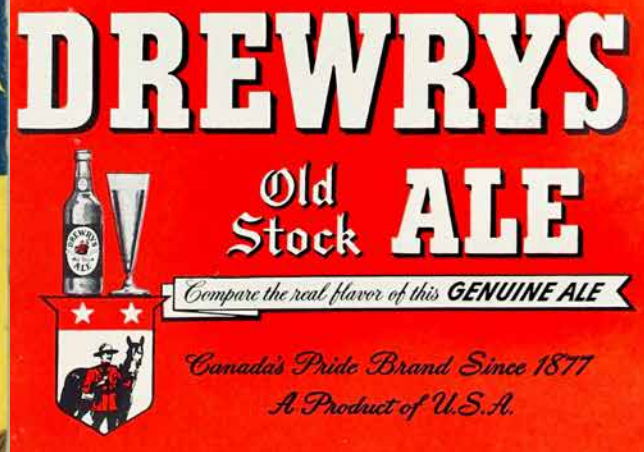
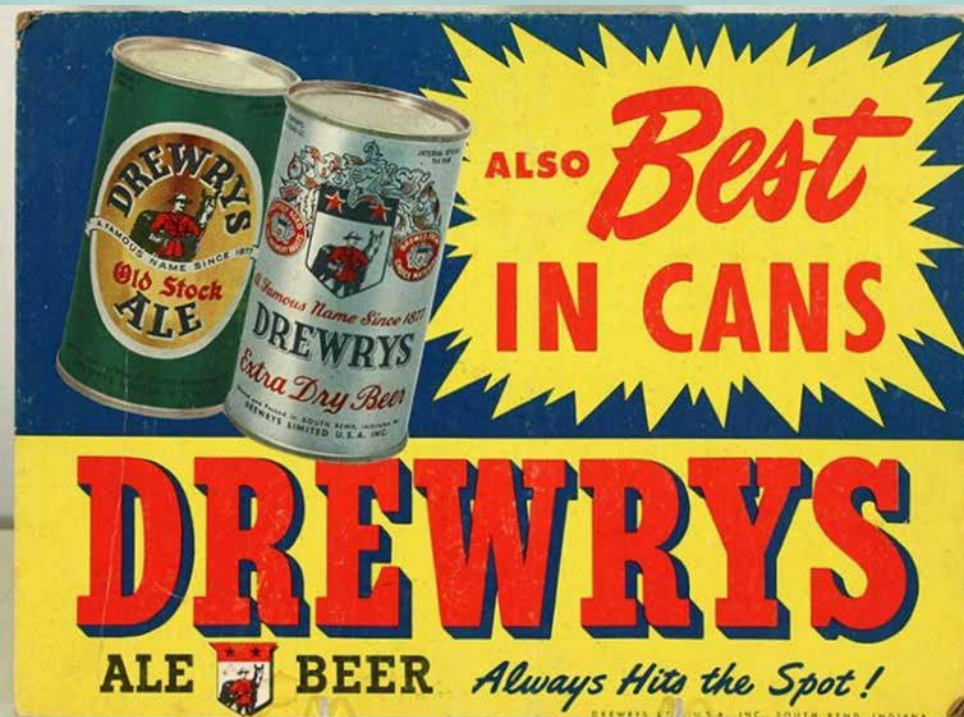
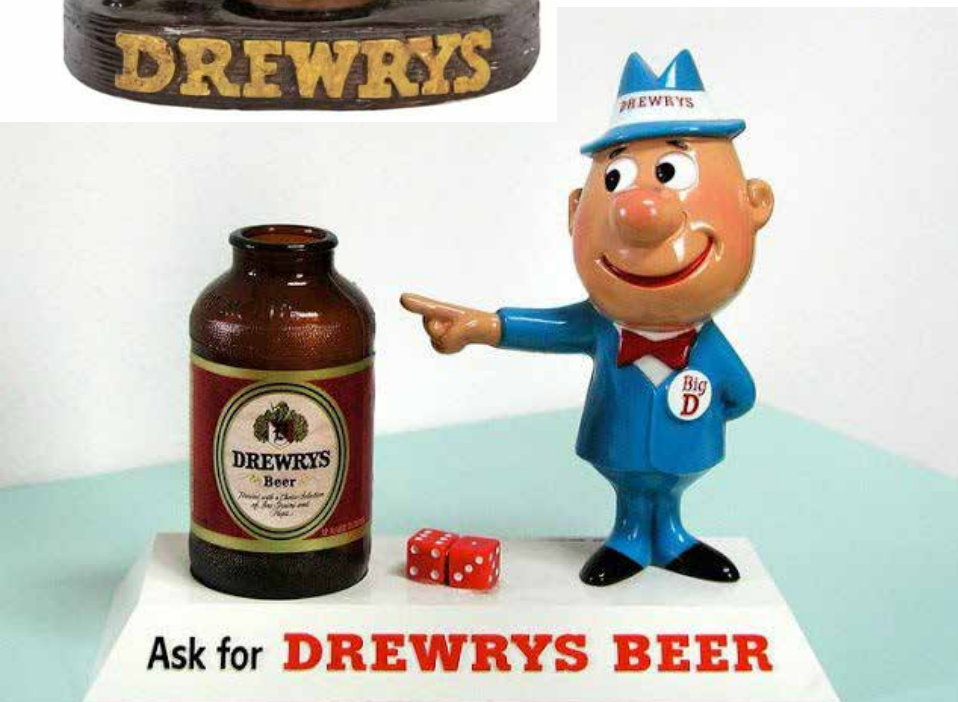


Left: A Drewrys painted plaster display.

Right: Magazine ad, 1948.

Middle: Big D store display.

Bottom: Advertisement 1950.





Drewrys Returns To Manitoba:

Find out how the Drewry name traveled from Minnesota to Manitoba and back to the United States. Now the old U.S.A. version is available to Manitobans.



Chapter 10 CCBA
Chapter 131 BCCA

PAW PRINTS

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