

## New Lebanon & Nassau

# Two Brothers Find Their Roots Through Artisan Brewing

by Denise Wright

Many people enjoy craft beers and love to explore new artisan brewing businesses. During the global pandemic companies were struggling. Some went out of business. Michael and Thomas Rivenburg decided it was the perfect time to delve into their family roots and fulfill a life-long dream of opening an “ancestral-inspired” brewery on Main Street in Valatie. In researching their genealogy, they found that their German ancestors operated bier gardens in the Munich, Bavaria region. Both “realized that their longstanding passion for bier was a connection to their ancestors and cultural roots.” They decided to use the “Reifenberg” spelling of the family name as a tribute to their German ancestry.

Michael, a retired computer/systems engineer, and Tom, a former project superintendent in commercial construction, had been home brewing together for over eight years. Both brothers decided that instead of indulging in other “post-mid-life male crises,” they would purchase stainless steel brewing equipment and develop their hobby into a small business venture.

Their next goal was to find a building and area that would be perfect for their business. The Rivenburg brothers settled on an 1888 Commercial storefront on Main Street because they felt that Valatie was “in a state of renewal” with the Valatie Community Theater and the Rail Corridor Hiking and Nature Trail, besides several restaurants nearby, so it was a perfect place for a brewery. They have produced a great selection of beers from a ‘true-to style’ German, IPA, Pale Ales, Belgian styles, porters, and stouts. Their Facebook, website and online store keep patrons updated about the varieties available. They allow outside food to be brought in, which helps stimulate the restaurant patronage in the area. Michael commented that “the local restaurateurs are pleased with our business model as it has boosted their to-go sales, especially during the COVID time where they need the extra sales to stay open. We look at it as a win-win situation for us all.”

The building does have a diverse history. While it started as a mercantile, it was also a church, sewing center, the first of the Grand Union chain and even a Pilates studio. Both brothers are always interested in learning more about the building. If anyone has any pictures or information about the history of the building, they would love to see it. It took the brothers two months to create their floor plan and design for the installation. They “wanted a warm, friendly and inviting tasting room” and “wanted to restore the



Tom and Michael Rivenburg welcome patrons to Reifenberg Brewing. Photo by Denise Wright.

building’s look to the vintage main street appearance” that included ship lapped pine walls and 11’ high tin ceilings with casual seating for 46 that offers at least 14 beers on tap. To make it interesting for patrons, they can see the brewhouse equipment and fermenters from the tasting room. Patrons can genuinely taste the difference in the proper German style process the Rivenburgs use and the quality ingredients they incorporate in their brews. One patron described the flavor difference as being the epitome of the “artisan brewing experience.”

In the future, they hope to host live music, trivia, games and genealogical nights where people will come and exchange information. To celebrate their German heritage, they would love to hold an Oktoberfest-themed weeklong event with German food supplied by some local eateries. There is also a wall available for projection events.

Both Michael and Tom enjoy the chance to be working together and feel it has brought them closer. They can have fun and joke with each other but understand how they think, which makes the business run smoothly. They are incredibly appreciative of the support they have received during such a challenging time in history. “We wouldn’t have been able to open Reifenberg Brewery during a global pandemic if it wasn’t for the strong encouragement and support from our friends, neighbors and community.”

## Hoosick Falls’ New Armory Signs Continued from page 1

Elsewhere in the Village the HFCS 7th and 8th grade gym class worked hard to clean up the community gardens on Church Street. John Street was alive with activity as Dave Sutton worked with volunteers to plant new trees on both sides of the street. Money from Whipstock Hill Preservation Society (WHIPS) paid for the trees that came from Jim Sutton’s Elhannon Nursery. Volunteers of all ages are at work everywhere.

Another annual regular at Village Cleanup Day is Village Board member Kevin O’Malley. Newcomers to the project were the entire Scarp Farm Family. All of these efforts reinforce the adage “it takes a village...”

## Berlin/New Lebanon School Districts Honoring Seniors ... Continued from page 1

the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course there were concerns as well about the two district’s rivalry in many sports and how the students would adjust.

Most all Fall sports were put off to March, and called Fall Sports 2. This unique sports season is now winding down, with Spring sports taking their place. So how did it go? Let’s say swimmingly, in honor of the one sport the two schools have been combined in for many years.

And now competing in the much larger WASAREN League as compared to their former association with the CHVL, these teams became a force to be reckoned with in most levels of competition. As to the students, they put that rivalry aside and blended into one team with courage and pride.

At a time when many states or cities or communities refer to themselves as tough, we have repeatedly been shown by the students in our schools, not just Berlin and New Lebanon, but throughout eastern New York and the nation as a whole, how tough they really are.

## Eastwick Press Looking Different Continued from page 1

You will also notice a difference in the paper stock. For years we have used the highest quality available, but the price of that paper stock is going up almost weekly. Again, to maintain the bottom line, we had to make a switch.

Of course, this will take a little getting used to, but we, as publishers, are committed to keeping *The Eastwick Press* your community newspaper.

### Here We Grow Again

You may have noticed we have expanded our coverage area in Rensselaer County, to include the towns of Nassau and Schodack. Slightly more than a year ago, we began to cover the Town of Brunswick as well. We hope the people in these communities will subscribe or pick up a copy of the paper to find out what is going on in their hometown. We are also adding to our retail sales locations, starting with the Stewart’s Shops in Nassau and Schodack, with more locations to follow. You can always subscribe online as well at [www.eastwickpress.com](http://www.eastwickpress.com).

We welcome news of religious and civic organizations at anytime. You may submit your articles to [news@eastwickpress.com](mailto:news@eastwickpress.com).

We look forward to working in these communities, and hope you will welcome us as your community newspaper.

Our deepest thanks,

Tom Withcuskey  
Doug La Rocque  
Publishers