



New Sierra Nevada facility open for business in WNC

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Walking through the heavy front doors, the smell of malted barley, hops and yeast entices the senses. The aroma of homemade duck fat fries and the steak du jour mingles with the scents of popular pale ales, stouts and lagers.

Barely a year and a half old, the Sierra Nevada Brewing Company in Mills River broke ground in 2014, after the demand for beer outpaced the supply, forcing an expansion from California to North Carolina. The move would supply fresher beer, faster, with a smaller environmental impact to thirsty fans on the East Coast.

And it has.

"About seven years ago or so, we were all sitting around kind of looking at the future, wondering what exactly we could and should do," says Bill Manley, beer ambassador, over the phone. "It was pretty obvious we were going to run out of space in Chico sooner rather than later."

Along with the space for a new brewery, and access to good water and decent shipping channels, Manley said the company also considered its em-

ployees' wants and needs.

"If we're going to ask people to move from California, it better be to a place they want to live," Manley says. "A place with that same culture, that same sense of a community we've always had in northern California."

After meticulously choosing hundreds of potential cities, the company eventually fell in love with the Asheville area.

With a brewery culture similar to California, it was reminiscent of home. It also had access to good water and shipping channels, affordable housing, a decent quality of life and live music, Manley says.

So Asheville moved to the top of the list.

Sierra Nevada announced the move in January 2012 and opened the doors in April 2014, along with 12 of their Chico employees.

Tour Supervisor Scott Randall was one who made the 2,600-mile move.

"It was a big decision for sure," Randall says. "I was kind of the lone wolf leaving my family out on the West Coast, but it's definitely been worth it."

For a few months after Sierra Nevada broke ground on the Mills River



Photo by Ashley Elder - News Staff Writer

Andres Arias and Mary Beth Cox smell the sweet aroma of hops as they tour Sierra Nevada.

property, he says he wasn't so sure.

2013 was one of the largest rainy seasons the Carolinas had experienced, halting progress in construction.

Aside from that, Randall said the progress, although slow, has been beautiful to watch come together.

"The Chico brewery had kind of been a culmination of a few years, you

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Malt Disney: Sierra Nevada brews beer the green way

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Orlando has its theme parks. Asheville has its breweries. Sierra Nevada's Asheville location might as well be called "Malt Disney."

Bill Manley, beer ambassador, said he has been with the company for nine years.

Dressed in a button-down plaid shirt, jeans and Converse, Manley discussed how Sierra Nevada brews so much beer without negatively affecting the environment.

Inspired by hiking, owner Ken Grossman named Sier-

ra Nevada after the mountain range.

He decided to skip his high school graduation and started the company soon after in 1980.

"Being stewards of the environment has been one of the core fundamentals from the very beginning," Manley said.

It was not just having respect for being outside, Manley said, in the early days there was no such thing as small-scale brewing.

"Ken figured out that reusing and recycling was not just a platitude that you say or a bumper sticker, but something

you did because you had to as part of the business model," Manley said. "There was no other way to do it."

The Chico location in California brews 900,000 barrels a year. Asheville brews a third of that with 300,000 barrels.

After only a year and a half, the extra space built into the Asheville location for the fermentation process is already being utilized, Manley said.

Sierra Nevada talks about sustainability as a whole corporate structure, he said.

The Chico location has 11,000 photovoltaic cells to collect sunlight, allowing the

brewery to supply almost all its own electricity during the summer.

This property is one of the two largest privately owned solar installations in the country. The other belongs to Google.

The Asheville location uses solar panels to supply some of its electricity as well.

"We also have hydrogen fuel cells that put out hot gas," Manley said, "which we use to heat our kettles. So it's a closed loop of inputs and outputs."

He said the company sends employees reminders about

recycling. All the lights are on motion sensors at both locations. Little things like that add up to be a big deal, he said.

"With 30 years of hindsight they were able to design this building from the ground up to be more sustainable and efficient," Manley said.

All the buildings are constructed with panels made of prefab concrete Manley said. And all those panels work as individual cells making them airtight.

When looking to build another brewery, Manley said, the new location had to have

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