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Wiedemann Brewing a Newport institution

HISTORY OF NORTHERN KENTUCKY

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Written by Deborah Kohl Kremer Enquirer contributor

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NEWPORT - One of the largest breweries of the late 19th and early 20th century was located in Newport. The Wiedemann Brewing Company traces its origins to George Wiedemann Sr., of Germany, who studied brewing in his home country before immigrating to the United States in the mid-1850s.

Wiedemann worked with several breweries in New York, Louisville and Cincinnati before forming a partnership in 1870 with John Butcher of Jefferson Street Brewery in Newport. The combination of German craftsmanship and the use of the finest ingredients proved to be the key to the popularity of the beer and by the late 1870s, the Butcher Wiedemann Brewery was the largest in Northern Kentucky.

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The brewery site covered five acres at Sixth and Columbia streets in Newport, which included a five-story brew house and a 150-horse stable. With the popularity of brands like Standard Lager, Extra Pale Lager and Muenchener, the George Wiedemann Brewing Company became the largest brewery in the southeast by the turn of the century.

With the ratification of the 18th Amendment in 1919, the United States entered the era of Prohibition, which banned importing, exporting, transporting, selling or manufacturing intoxicating liquor. Around

this time Newport achieved its "Sin City" status, as bootleggers, gamblers and members of organized crime descended on the city.

Wiedemann tried to get through those dry years by producing nonalcoholic drinks and alcohol used for industrial purposes. In reality, the brewery was a major supplier for George Remus, a well known bootlegger. Remus and his political connections kept the

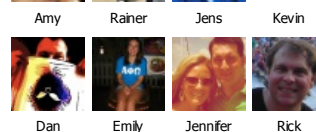
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company safe until 1927 when the brewery was shut down by the government. Wiedemann Brewery was charged with producing more than 1.5 million gallons of alcohol per year. Carl Wiedemann, grandson of George Sr., took the fall for the family and the company and served eight months of a two-year sentence in jail.

The 1930s brought the repeal of Prohibition and the Wiedemann Brewery was back in business. With family members at the helm, Wiedemann continued as one of Greater Cincinnati's most successful independent breweries. According to the Encyclopedia of Northern Kentucky, production increased from 150,000 barrels in 1938 to 850,000 barrels in 1955.

Wiedemann merged with G. Heileman Brewing Company of La Crosse, Wis. in 1967. And although brands like Wiedemann Bohemian Special Beer and Royal Amber Beer were successful for the company, in 1983 the Newport production facility was closed. This closure was a huge loss for Newport, as Weidemann was the largest employer in the city at that time. The result was the loss of 400 jobs and massive slashes in payroll tax revenues.

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