

This publication made and printed in Michigan, USA since 1997

# MICHIGAN Beer Guide

JULY - AUGUST 2013

VOLUME 17

ISSUE 127

Clubhouse BFD  
The Place for  
Beer Enthusiasts

Paw Paw Brewing  
Relationship with  
St. Julian Winery

A Shorts to Shorts  
Experience

Balancing your  
Portable Draft  
System

Plus Tech Talk,  
Lansing Report,  
MBG Map,  
Directory,  
and Events

## Griffin Claw Brewing Company



NOW ON-LINE @ [www.michiganbeerguide.com](http://www.michiganbeerguide.com) and [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/michiganbeerguide)

## From Big Rock Emerges Griffin Claw

By Rex Halfpenny

The Griffin has emerged in Birmingham. Laying in wait, comfortable yet cramped under a Big Rock, the time has finally arrived for nationally respected and award winning brewer Dan Rogers to emerge from rest, like the Griffin he elected for the brewery's name, wings unfolded to take flight across Michigan, and soon beyond. The strength and majesty of a lion and the head and vision of an eagle; a union of two creatures traditionally labeled the kings of land and air, its claws thought to possess medicinal properties, the Griffin is described as symbolizing courage, boldness, intelligence, strength and leadership. Like beer, the Griffin is as ancient as civilization itself.

**Griffin Claw Brewing Company** is ready to open its doors as I write this. Located in a brand new production facility constructed from the ground up, it's a short walk from its parent, **Big Rock Chop House**, located inside the former Birmingham train station at 245 S. Eaton Street.

Birmingham itself has morphed from its initial founding. First settled in 1819, the city of Birmingham has a population of just over 20,000 today. It was founded not as a community of farmers as many Michigan villages began, but manufacturers, who elected to name their village after the English industrial city as a symbol of their hope for the future. By the 1860's, manufacturing was being replaced by entrepreneurs, crafts, business and professional services.

The train station was a hub of activity as it was in most population centers of the era. A "modern" train station was opened there in 1931, but with declining use, GTW closed the station in 1978. In 1984 the station was renovated into a restaurant and still serves that purpose today. It is the site of Big Rock Chop House. Owner-operator Norman LaPage added a 15-barrel



Pictured shortly after the Craftwerk system install are (L to R) owner Bonnie LaPage, head brewer Dan Rogers, assistant brewer Jason Giroux, and Big Rock owner Norm LaPage.

DME brewing system in 1997 converting his restaurant into a brewpub. When his brewer Dean Jones decided to move east, **Michigan Brewing Company** brewer Dan Rogers was offered and subsequently accepted the position. Dan made remarkable beers and won many awards for Big Rock, including the coveted IPA category, but his skills were underutilized in the small brewpub.

As plans emerged for a "Big Rock" production brewery, Dan petitioned to rename the new facility Griffin Claw. He wanted a name that portrayed action and strength from which to market his beers. Due to Michigan licensing laws, ownership had to change as well. Big Rock is owned by a partnership between Norm

LaPage and Ray Nicholson (whom I feel compelled at this point to mention was my former boss during my stint in corporate America). Because of Michigan's no tier crossing ownership law, Norm and Ray's wives, Bonnie LaPage and Mary Nicholson, own Griffin Claw.

The 15-barrel DME brewing system in Big Rock was sold, restoring Big Rock back to a restaurant. A new 20-barrel brewing system made by Craftwerk in Lake Orion is now installed and fully operational in the new facility at 575 S. Eaton Street. As it stands at opening the start up already has a 5000-barrel capacity. However, new tanks are still being manufactured and when delivered will increase theoretical capacity up to 15,000 barrels.

The highly efficient Belgian made Meura Mash Filter is one of only a few in the USA and the only one in Michigan.



The brewing system is four vessels with mash tun, mash filter, boil kettle and whirlpool, all running via Siemens BRAUMAT Compact process control system. What is most exciting about this brewing system is the Meura mash filter that replaces a traditional lauter tun as employed by 99 plus percent of the brewing systems in the USA. No other brewery in Michigan has one, and there are very few in America (yet 25% of

See **Griffin** on page 17

Griffin concludes from page 4

the world's beer is brewed using this technology) and Dan Rogers is pioneering it for the Great Beer State. The high efficiency filter produces wort that is clearer, uses less water, and is not challenged by wheat or rye. If you want to learn more about this technique and what makes it so great, consider reserving a seat and coming to the Master Brewers Association of the Americas District Michigan fall meeting, which will take place at Griffin Claw noon Thursday, October 17, the technical presentation will be made by Dan and his subject is the Meura filter. (RSVP Debbie Smith dsmith@energocorp.com, a small fee is required to attend.)

In addition to the brewery, a 90-gallon pot still was procured from Nestlé in Europe where it was employed to make cordials. At Griffin Claw it will be used to distill vodka, gin and rye. It is located on the far side from the main entrance. In that far corner, separated from the still by a plate glass wall, is a retro-lounge dedicated to their distillates.

At the main entrance is the restaurant and beer garden. It is very well laid out with a long bar with 16 direct draw taps, a stand up counter that divides the bar from the seating area and a roll-up door to the adjacent courtyard sized beer garden. There is a large kitchen that will feature bar food, burgers, burritos, sausages and charcuterie and cheeses, all Michigan sourced to the extent possible. Unlike Big Rock, the décor is not lavish designer filled, but clean industrial utility.

The brewing team is Head Brewer and Director of Brewing Operations Dan Rogers, Assistant Brewer/Distiller Jason Giroux, who cut his teeth at **Dragonmead** in Warren, and Assistant Brewer/Distiller Stacey Roth, most recently from **Arcadia Brewing Company** in Battlecreek. They already have lots of beer in the tanks that will be pouring by the time you read this, including Wit, Hefeweizen, Red, Pale, Brown, Triple and IPA. There is also a nice supply of Bourbon Barrel Aged Russian Imperial Stout.

Griffin Claw products will go immediately into distribution.

Advertised opening is July 18. The free parking behind the facility will hold 188 cars. Reach them at 248.712.4050. **MBG**



... wild ponies at the Laundry

The Laundry, Fenton, Michigan, will present its fourth annual Dark Horse Tap Take Over

Wednesday - Sunday, July 24 - 28

- Artic Dekoorc Eert - IPA, 6.9%
- Fig Crooked Tree - IPA, 6.5%
- What'supwiththemonkey Blueberry Pale, 6%
- The ROD - Herbal Amber, 7%
- Long Palmer John Doughnut Sweet Stout, 8%
- Plead the 5th - Imperial Stout, 12.5%
- Bourbon Barrel Plead the 5th Imperial Stout, 14.1%
- Bourbon Barrel Maple Porter, 10%
- Sapient - Tripel, 9%
- Raspberry Ale, 5.5%
- Rye Kwan Do - Scotch Ale, 9.75%

**The Laundry**  
FENTON MICHIGAN

125 W. Shiawassee  
Fenton, Michigan  
lunchandbeyond.com  
810-629-8852



IT'S AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN PACK INTO A 12-OUNCE BOTTLE. FLAVOR IS NOW IN SESSION.

NATURALLY BREWED WITH A COMPLEX ARRAY OF GRAINS AND HOPS. BALANCED FOR OPTIMAL AROMATICS AND A CLEAN TASTE. [FOUNDERS-BREWING.COM](http://FOUNDERS-BREWING.COM)

BREWED FOR US

**Founders**  
Brewing  
EST. 1997

**Founders**  
ALL DAY IPA  
SESSION ALE