

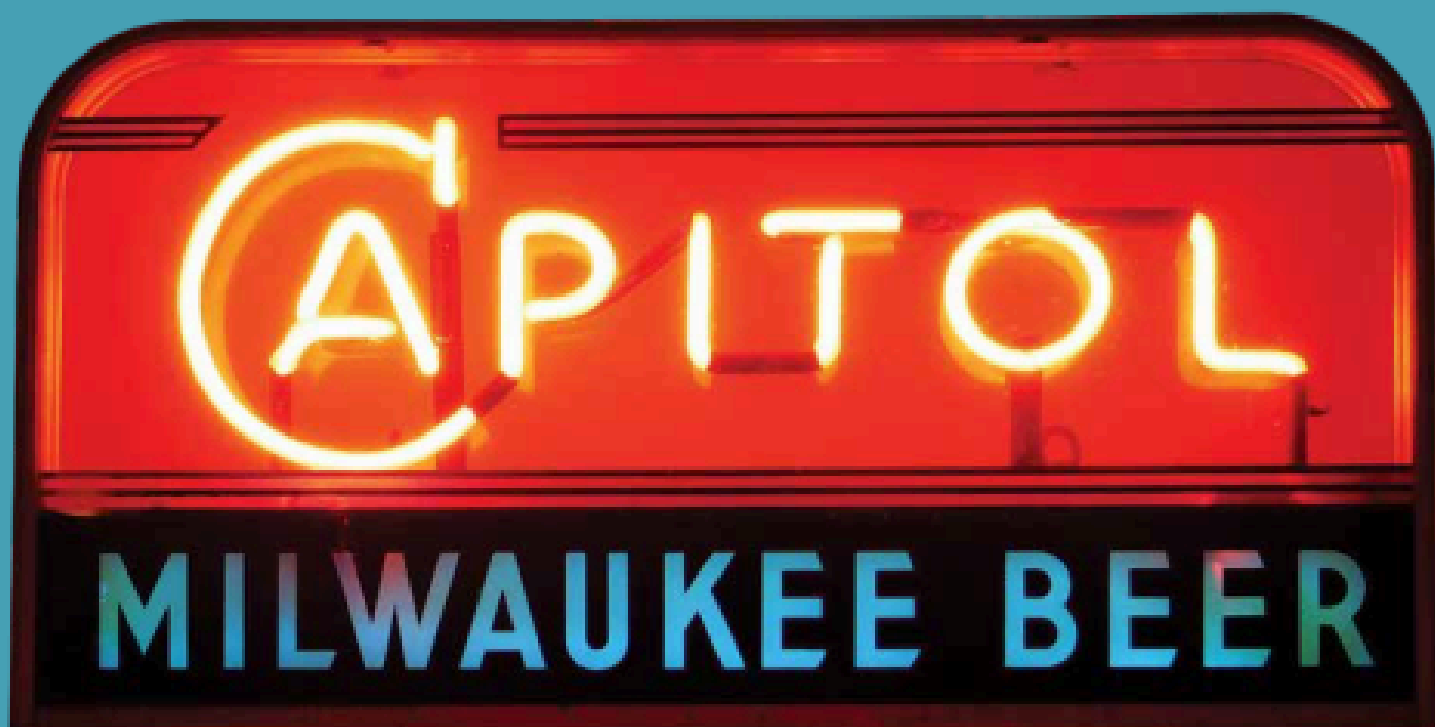
BREWERIANA



COLLECTOR

VOLUME 192

WINTER 2021



Effinger's
of Baraboo

Stoney's Jones
Brewery

The Miller Family
Collection

Tom Noonan's
Amazing Sangamo

The Beauty of
the TOC



Special Bonus 80-page issue!

A breweriana dream comes true

Tom Noonan's



brewery displays his amazing collection

by Rusty Long

What beer and breweriana lover hasn't played this "what if" game: What if you could display your collection in a setting that looks like a 1940s tavern? The scene would include enough space to display a wide array of breweriana, and you'd decorate beautifully, with well-organized sections and display cases filled with an amazing selection of (only the best) items from the different breweries and brands you collect. What if you even had enough space for some stunning outdoor

signs, in addition to back bar breweriana, trays, TOCs, and smalls?

Even better: your amazing collection is displayed in a working, open-to-the-public tavern—and guess what—it's all connected to the brewery where you make your own beer.

Sound like a dream? Well, then you'll be inspired by NABA member Tom Noonan, because he has made that dream come true.

In February 2020—just before the pandemic hit—Tom opened his Sangamo Brewery in Chatham, Illinois, a small town about 10 miles southwest of the state capital, Springfield, IL. The business is a full bar, restaurant, and craft brewery with a chef-inspired food menu.

The inside of the brewery's tap-room/restaurant looks like an ode to famed Central Illinois breweries of yore, with a smattering of St. Louis and Chicago breweriana and even some of the bigger regional and national brands to spice the mix.

A quick stroll through the tap-room offers a view of some spectacular signage from all of the prominent brands once sold in the area. There are southern Illinois brands like Dick Brothers from Quincy, Bluff City from Alton, Highland from Highland, and Stag from the Griesedieck Western Brewery in Belleville, among many others.

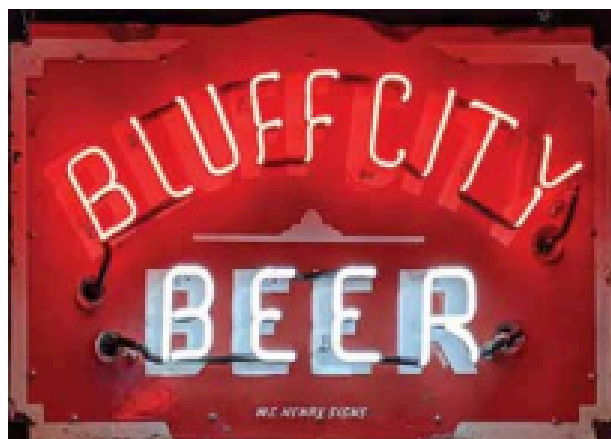
Visitors to Sangamo also can gaze upon dazzling antique signs from Hyde Park and Falstaff of St. Louis, as well as Monarch and Atlas from Chicago—not to mention those from Midwestern stalwarts Schlitz, Blatz, Hamm's, and Miller. There is more than enough eye candy to satisfy any breweriana collector as he or



Above: After major renovations and an incredible infusion of high-quality local breweriana, the Sangamo Brewery took over the space of a former restaurant and opened in February of 2020.

Below: Tom Noonan's project, part brewery, part restaurant, and part museum, takes its Native American name from a pre-Prohibition brand issued by Reisch Brewing Co. of his native Springfield. Label from the collection of John Steiner.





Bluff City Brewing Co., Alton, IL, porcelain is 3 x 3 ft., by W.C. Henry Signs, Springfield, IL.



Joliet Citizens Brewing, Co. Joliet, IL, porcelain is 56 x 36 in., by QRS Neon, Spring Valley, IL—may be only example known.



Burgemeister Beer, Warsaw Brewing Co., Warsaw, IL, two-sided porcelain sign is 66 x 20 in., by Economy Signs, Quincy, IL—may be only example known.



she enjoys one of Tom's fine brews and basks in the old-timey atmosphere.

It started early

Like many breweriana collectors, Tom Noonan has always enjoyed sharing and showing his collection with others. His love of brewery-related items started early. While growing up, Tom and his brother spent many hours hunting, digging, and collecting beer cans in and around their Springfield hometown. During that time, Tom estimates he amassed about 1500 cans.

Other brewery items would find a way into his collection, most memorably, a Reisch Brewing Wiener Style tin-over-cardboard sign given to him in high



Engelking's Beer, Springfield Brewing Co., Springfield, IL, lighted reverse fired on glass sign, 16 x 12 in., Gill Glass & Fixture, Co., Philadelphia, PA, (shown lit and unlit) purchased from the Adolph Grenke Auction in 2012.

school by his mother. After graduating from college Tom recalls that the cans were packed in boxes in his father's attic. When he received the call to "come get the cans or they are going in the trash," Tom saved them, and has them to this day.

A turning point

As he grew into adulthood, Tom began to focus more on breweriana than cans. A turning point in 2012 pushed Tom to a new level of collecting, and was the

genesis of an idea. That was the year the famous and astonishing collection of the late NABA member, Adolf Grenke, was auctioned. That event, which liquidated over 4000 high-end items and cleared \$1.5 million in sales, inspired memories for many in the hobby.

Tom participated in the event but was saddened by the thought of dispersing such a great collection. He felt it would have been great if such a remarkable collection could have been kept together and displayed in a museum-type setting for all to enjoy.

Tom also had begun to build his own impressive collection. The Grenke sale inspired him to create a plan to bring his own large collection "out of the basement" and display it in a way that many could enjoy. This is when the idea of what would become Sangamo Brewing began.

What is "Sangamo?"

When considering a name for his museum/restaurant/brewery project, Tom was drawn to an old label from a beer once brewed by Springfield's defunct Reisch Brewery. Springfield is in Sangamon County, named for the river that runs through it.

Though historical accounts vary, the widely accepted version of how the river got its name is that it is derived from the Pottawatomie Indian word *Sain-guee-mon*, Anglicized to Sangamon, meaning, "Where there is plenty to eat."

Reisch made a pre-Prohibition beer brand called Sangamo, and Tom was captivated by the beautiful label graphics featuring a native American motif as well as the local significance of the name. And so, he decided to bestow the Sangamo name on his dream.

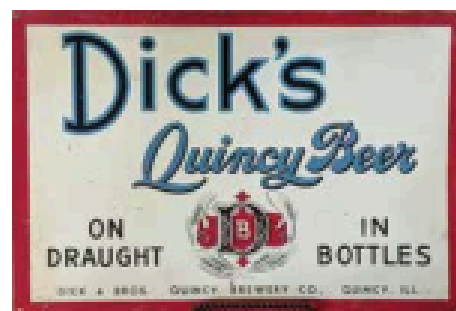


Old Tavern Beer, Warsaw Brewing Co, Warsaw, IL. This two-sided porcelain is 6 x 2 ft., by Quincy Neon Signs, Quincy, IL—may be only example known. Tom says, "This one is my favorite because of its rugged edges. I chose the neon to make it pop off the dark porcelain. And it does. That's why I made sure it was front and center when you walk in the front door."

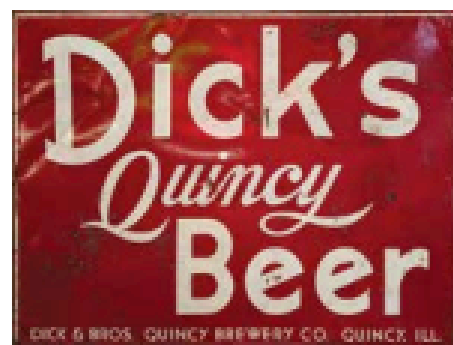
The right location

Originally, Tom envisioned a brewery and restaurant with a museum featuring local breweriana and Route 66 memorabilia. Ideally, the location would be downtown, near Springfield's numerous other historical attractions—especially the famed and widely visited Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum.

Tom was forced to modify his original plan, however: he couldn't find a suitable in-city site, and was unable to obtain a significant collection of Route 66 historical items. It was in nearby Chatham that he found not only an optimal location but also a business partner—Jason Butler—who owned the long-popular Fat Willy's pub and restaurant.



Dick & Bros. Quincy Brewery, Quincy, IL: tin sign above is 13 x 9 in., and below is 38 x 28 in., both by American Can Co., Chicago, IL.



Alpen
Brau Beer,
Columbia
Brewing Co.,
St Louis,
MO.
masonite
9 x 4 ft., no
mtgr. mark.





The idea began to really take shape in 2018. Fat Willy's was closed and its conversion to Sangamo Brewing began. This required significant renovations and of course, the addition of brewing equipment. It also required finding local experienced talent in the form of a chef and a brewmaster.

A brewery museum

For Tom, the construction of the building and the effort made to display his collection was truly a labor of love. He has made Sangamo a place where people can enjoy good food and craft beer in a historic and nostalgic setting.

Tom's museum celebrates his collecting focus on Springfield breweries. But because the variety and availability of items from those two breweries is limited, his massive collection also encompasses "Downstate Illinois" or "south of I-80" as the locals say.

He also has antique signs promoting other beers that were available in the area at one time—those from nearby St. Louis and Chicago, as well as other Midwestern breweries. In fact, it is hard to imagine seeing so many stunning, large outdoor neon beer signs in one establishment.



Three stunning Stag Beer signs, Griesedieck Western Brewery, Belleville, IL. Clockwise from top left: "diamond" tin is 36 x 36 in.; long tin sign is 53 x 18 in.; neither have mfg. mark; two-sided porcelain is 36 x 30 in., by McCord Tubelite Co., E. St. Louis, IL. The neon is all original.

In addition to Downstate Illinois, the collection has a strong St. Louis representation, particularly from the Griesedieck Brewery, which had a branch in nearby Belleville, IL. Tom notes that Griesedieck's bold, red color scheme in its numerous advertising pieces adds considerable visual appeal to the displays.

Bringing it all together

Like many, Tom has amassed his abundant collection through shows and auctions. But he gave special recognition for his successes to having made connections within the hobby, noting a handful of fellow NABA members who were instrumental in helping him track down and obtain many of the items now on display. Tom also noted the role social media played—he started the Facebook group "Breweriana Exchange" and originated the "days of the week" postings, e.g., "Signs on Sunday" and "Women on Wednesday," in which collectors participate to this day, sharing

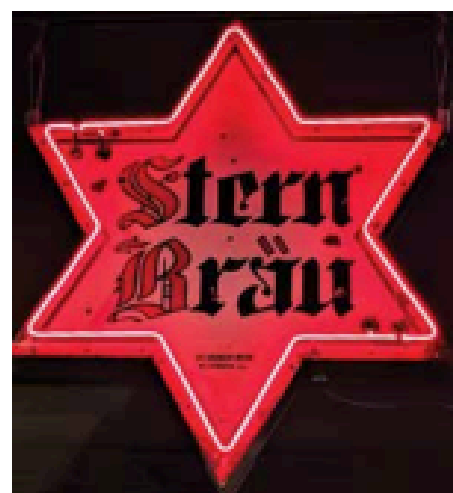
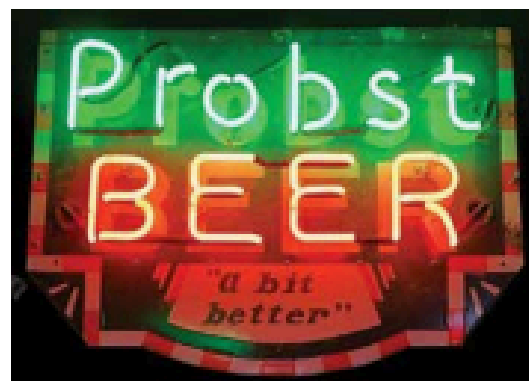
Below: Prince of Pilsen Beer, Mound City Brewing Co., New Athens, IL, porcelain is 24 x 27 in., by Mt. Vernon Neon, Mt. Vernon, IL.



images of their breweriana.

He recalls his tremendous excitement and sense of accomplishment when the building was finally ready, and he began the process of bringing his collection out of storage for hanging, placing, and arranging. He treasures the experience of seeing his many years of collecting and hard work showcased in the Sangamo project for all to enjoy.

Continued next pg.



A collection of Stern Bräu (stem is German for "star") signs from Star-Peerless Brewery, Belleville, IL, porcelain (above) is 34 x 40 in., by Mt. Vernon Neon, Mt. Vernon, IL; (at right) three framed tin signs, all 32 x 16 in., no mfg. mark.



Top left: Gipps Brewing Co., Peoria, IL, porcelain is 5 x 2 ft., by Ruesch Electric Co., Peoria, IL.

Above: Probst Beer, Mound City Brewing, New Athens, IL, porcelain is 30 x 21 in., no mfg. mark.

Below: Fecker Brewing Co, Danville, IL, two-sided porcelain is 3 x 2 ft., by Burdick Enamel Sign Co., Chicago, IL.



On tap ahead

Although Tom is happy with the way things are going at Sangamo, he admits the timing has been difficult, opening just as the COVID pandemic hit. Having to shut down and adjust for regulations has greatly reduced business after what had been a great start.

Looking to the future, Tom says he still has plenty to do. His brew-master is currently brewing offsite. So getting an onsite brewery operating is certainly a priority. Tom also dreams of re-creating Reisch's Sangamo Beer to serve in the tap room.

As far as his breweriana showcase goes, Tom notes that

only about 75% of the collection is currently exhibited. He is looking forward to getting the remaining items placed—recently, he obtained more vintage display cases he will put to good use.

Continuing to create interior enhancements to the 1940s tavern

feel he is going for, Tom plans to use vintage style ball knobs for his beer taps. The exterior of the building has experienced some important improvements, too. An outdoor patio area surrounded by a wooden fence has recently been added, expanding the outdoors into a delightful beer garden. Happily, the fence also provides a place to hang additional larger signs that Tom continues to collect.

Still, Tom enjoys the daily operations, and meeting his customers as they enjoy the collection—especially

Continued on pg. 64.



Falstaff Brewing Co., St. Louis, MO, porcelain is 5 x 2 ft., by R. Tunica Electric, St. Louis, MO.

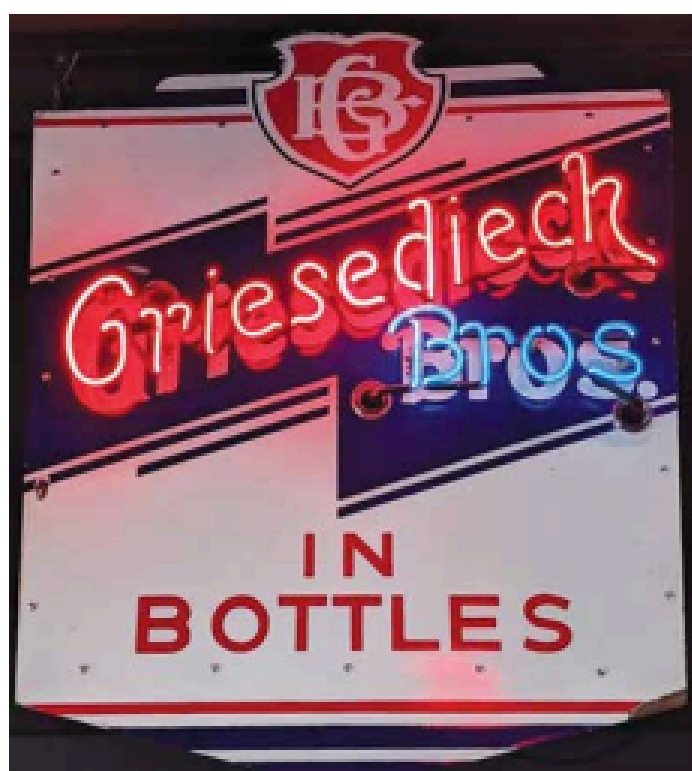


Tom Noonan (left) visited Robbie Wolfe, of TV's *American Pickers* in his shop in Iowa three years ago. He purchased this tin sign, which may have had the neon added, from Griesedieck Bros. Brewery, St. Louis, MO, 28 x 60 in., no mfg. mark.



A trio of signs from Griesedieck Bros Brewery, St. Louis, MO, to accompany the upper left Griesedieck sign:

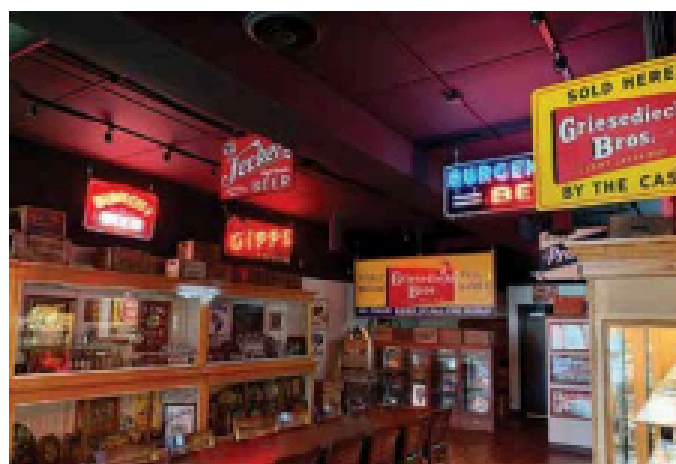
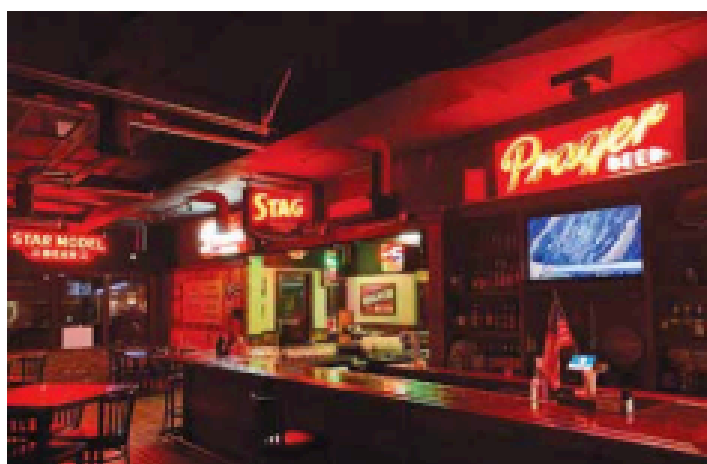
Above is a double-sided, reverse-painted-on-glass mounted in a porcelain frame, 33 x 32 in., no mfg. mark; left, 31 x 42 in. porcelain, no mfg. mark; below, large framed tin, 4 x 9 ft, by H.D. Beach Co., Coshocton, OH.



Below: Chief Beer sign from either Springfield Brewing Co. or Peoria Brewing Co.—they both shared the Chief label—porcelain, 6 x 2 ft., by Boy Hansen-Lustrolite, Davenport, IA.



Above: Leisy Brewing Co., Peoria, IL, pre-Prohibition tin 1 x 3 ft.
Left: Hyde Park Breweries Assn., Inc., St. Louis, MO, tin 6 x 3 ft.
Neither has any mfg. mark.



I know a lot of collectors with really great stuff, but it's in the basement. Mine was in storage units. No one ever sees it. This project was to bring it out so everybody can see it—to have a museum of local brewery history here in town. —Tom Noonan



Chicago is in the house, exemplified by this pair of signs, right (among others) at Sangamo. Top is Edelweiss Bock Beer cardboard, Schoenhoffen-Edelweiss Brewing Co., Chicago, IL; and Old Manhattan Beer, Manhattan Brewing Co., Chicago, IL, porcelain, 5 x 2 ft., by Electro Neon Sign Co., Chicago, IL. Tom notes, "I started collecting bock bottles and lithos before I changed my focus to downstate Illinois. I have some other Chicago signs also purchased over the years, but just couldn't part with them!"



EMS Brewing Co., East St. Louis, MO, porcelain, 38 x 54 in., by Levy & Co.



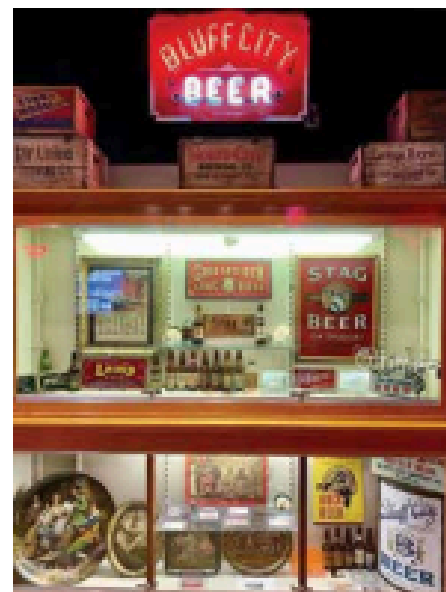
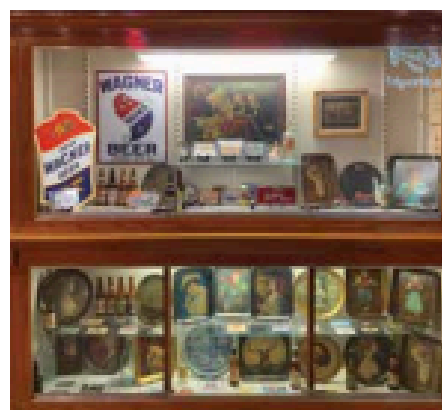


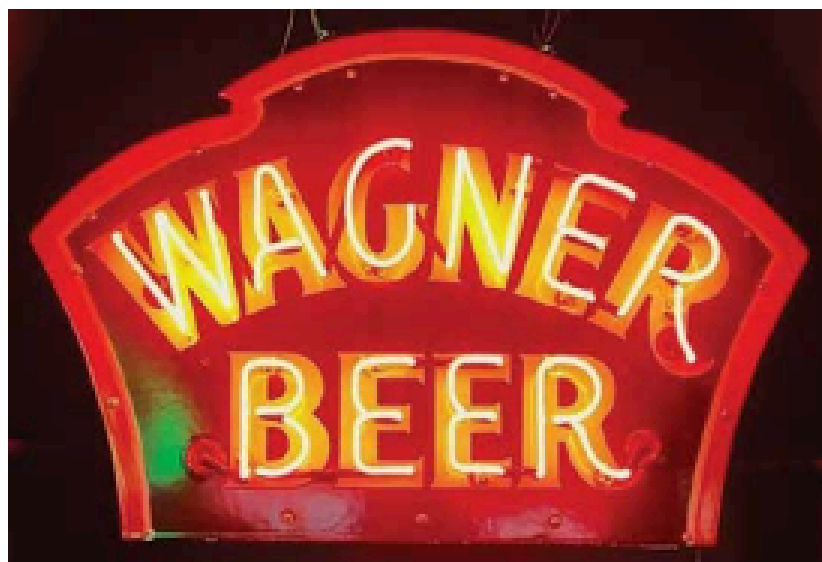
Two stars from Peru: Star Model Beer, Star Union Brewing Co., Peru, IL, porcelain is 6 x 2 ft., by Ruesch Electric Co., Peoria, IL; and Star Union Beer, same brewery, porcelain is 6 x 2 ft., by Q R S Neon Displays, Spring Valley, IL.



My goal was to have a tap room where you have the feel of walking into a central Illinois bar back in the 1940s. —Tom Noonan

Tom has much of his extensive collection beautifully displayed by brand and brewery. Of the vintage display cases, he says, "I bought them from Abe's Old Hat antique store here in Springfield. I had them taken apart and stored in my garage for over a year. Then they were re-assembled in the brewery. It was such a thrill to find all my stuff in the storage units and fill the cabinets."





This Wagner neon is an unusually-shaped sign, porcelain is 32 x 34 in., no mfg. mark.

his fellow "beer nerds" as he calls us. He has hosted many NABA members so far and if he knows you are coming and if he's available, he will gladly take time to stop and visit. Just be sure to drop him a line at sangamo-brewing@gmail.com first.



Sangamo Brewing Co. owner, Tom Noonan (center) shares a beer with fellow NABA member, Rusty Long and NABA Board member, Darla Long.



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