

Brews and booze to roll back into old Silver Skate building

Written by [Stewart McClintic](#) on October 15, 2016



(Press Staff Photo by Stewart McClintic)

Dave Crosley kisses his wife, Teresa Dahl-Bredine, Wednesday afternoon in front of the old Silver Skate rink, which they bought last year. The couple will move all Little Toad Creek Brewery and Distillery production operations into the building by spring.

History is about to repeat itself in downtown Silver City's industrial district. The Silver Skate rink will be reborn as a brew house for Little Toad Creek Brewery and Distillery, returning to its roots distributing alcoholic beverages from its original shell as the Silver City Liquor Co. warehouse.

The building began as the Silver City Liquor Co. in the late 1940s and was later a skating rink and then a tire warehouse, before it fell into disuse. Now, Teresa Dahl-Bredine and her husband,

Dave Crosley, owners of Little Toad Creek Brewery and Distillery, plan on shifting all of their brewing operations into the building and are excited to bring it back to its origins.

Built in 1946 by James S. Ryan, the Silver City Liquor Co. served as the premier distributing plant for beer, wine and spirits in the Silver City area.

Ryan leased the land from the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway in order to have a more convenient location next to the railroad to store the beverages. According to Ryan's son, Murray Ryan, his father decided to build the warehouse after the repeal of the 18th Amendment in 1933, which ended Prohibition in the United States.

"My dad was pretty much a visionary going into the alcoholic beverage business after the repeal of the 18th Amendment," Murray Ryan said. "That opened up the business of distributing alcoholic beverages."

Initially, Murray Ryan said, his father partnered with Valentin Blatz Brewing Company, from Milwaukee, Wis., which produced Blatz Beer. The Silver City Liquor Co. survived distributing that beer for a while, in addition to wine and other spirits, but Murray Ryan said the business began to go downhill after larger competitors began to beat out Blatz.

"On sort of a lucky break, I drove over to Phoenix to talk to the management and owners of the Arizona Brewing Company," Ryan said. "Their key product was A-1 Pilsner beer and it had already established itself here. It gave a new birth to the liquor company because it was already very popular. We managed to establish it pretty well."

Ryan said they were able to keep the company afloat for a few years after that before closing down.

Then, in the late 1960s, Neil Parrish bought the building and rented it out to be used as a skating rink. After the skating rink closed down in the late 1970s, Parrish said he used the warehouse to store tires for his family's company, Parrish Distributing. Parrish owned the building until 2015, when Dahl-Bredine and Crosley bought it in preparation for their new venture.

"We had it for more than 30 years," Parrish said. "When I bought it, it was just full of junk. When we went out of the tire business it sat there with nothing in it."

Although the skate rink was only around for a few years in the '70s, Dahl-Bredine and other Grant County residents have fond memories of spending a part of their youth there.

"I was about 8 years old when it closed," Dahl-Bredine said. "I went with my big sister, who was a teenager. My memory was my sister being really cool and skating backwards and having boyfriends, while I was sitting on the bench."

Grant County Assessor Raul Turrieta said he also fondly remembers the skate rink as child.

“I just wish that they would have something like that for the kids now,” he said. “We used to roller skate around this small little area even though we used to think it was so enormous. We held hands with our significant friend or whatever. They also had this little room in the back with pinball machines and everyone would hang out in there. That was the hangout place for us in the ’70s.”

Turrieta said it was quite a popular hangout for Grant County kids back in the day.

“It was the place all the kids would go. It was just a wonderful place to be. The majority of the kids would just hang out there and there would be speed skating competitions. That was probably one of the biggest memories of my life growing up here in Silver City,” he said. “It was a lot of fun. I wish those times would come back for kids this age.”

Dahl-Bredine and Crosley hope to keep the feel of the old skate rink as they breathe new life into the building to use it for their brewing and distilling operations. Dahl-Bredine said she likes how the outside of the building looks and would like to keep the faded lettering and the drawing of the skater on the front.

“I don’t know how to upgrade it without losing that,” she said. “We’re not really to that yet, but it’s something we’re thinking about it.”

Dahl-Bredine said the renovated building will also serve as a tap room for those interested in tasting the beer or touring the facility. Eventually, she said, she would also like to have a tiered terrace on the east side of the building to give customers a nice view of the Big Ditch.

The new brewery, which should be open by the first of the year, will be far more expansive than the current system at Little Toad Creek Inn and Tavern at Lake Roberts. Crosley said the operations there run on a 2.5 barrel system.

“That equipment is really small,” said Dahl-Bredine. “It was never meant for a production-size brewery.”

The new brewery will host a 15-barrel system, which will allow them to produce up to 9,000 barrels of beer each year — a lot more than the 300 barrels per year they currently produce. One barrel of beer is approximately 31 gallons. That means The Toad will be able to produce more than 279,000 gallons of beer each year — 10 times more than they now brew.

Although the more than \$400,000 system will be able to consistently produce quality beer, the couple will also move their old system from Lake Roberts downtown to be repurposed.

“It will be good for small batch or test beers,” Dahl-Bredine said.

The couple said they are not selling the country Toad.

“We’re trying to find some management to run that seasonally,” Dahl-Bredine said.

If all goes well, the roof of the building should be completed by early November, with the rest of the construction to take place between then and the first of the year. That construction includes pouring concrete into the base of the building for flooring in addition to installing electrical and plumbing. The new 15-barrel system equipment should arrive sometime late November to early December and brewing should begin by January.

“It wasn’t the most economically feasible choice for a building because it’s a huge remodeling project,” Dahl-Bredine said, “but it was a good fit for us because it’s still right downtown and it’s industrial. We looked at other buildings downtown and we felt like we would be in people’s way as far as trucks coming and going. Down there we’re not going to be in anybody’s way, but we’re close enough where people can walk.”

The new brewery will also feature a canning machine so they can easily distribute their beer.

Crosley said that they decided to can the beer over bottling for a couple of reasons.

“There’s a huge benefit,” he said. “Number one, as a business, it’s a less expensive form of packaging. It’s also a smaller footprint on the world. You can smash a can down and it recycles very easily. People already recycle aluminum. It’s lighter weight for shipping and it’s more transportable, like for outdoor use.”

Dahl-Bredine said the goal is first to start distributing to the southern part of the state, then to the whole state and eventually to the southwest United States.

In the meantime, the couple plan to keep doing business as usual at their restaurant and bar, and plan on having a great time at their annual Oktoaderfest celebration this weekend.

And, they are excited about bringing the building back to its roots.

“It’s a cool prospect to bring history back around,” said Crosley.