

# ON TAP

BY MATT ALLYN

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? OLDE BURNSIDE BREWING COMPANY

**L**ong before the days of Sub-Zeros and freon, this brewery had Alfred McClellan, a chap of hearty Scottish stock who in 1911 built an icehouse next to a pond and set up an ice business in East Hartford, Conn. When naming his new venture, McClellan harkened back to the mid-1850s when the town was divided into several post office boxes (the predecessor to modern ZIP codes). His location in Hartford was officially incorporated as the “Burnside” post office box. McClellan brought his services throughout the town, including harvesting and delivering frozen pond blocks to the iceboxes of local homes, restaurants and businesses. As the years passed and the Olde Burnside Ice Company was passed down two subsequent generations, it expanded its trade to include selling rock salt, snow plowing services and bottled spring water.

In the mid-'90s, ice workers mounted a spigot at the front of the building so locals could fill up gallon jugs of the fresh water for a quarter. When a small army was filling up heavy five-gallon jugs, third-generation iceman Bob McClellan's curiosity was piqued: “I asked [one of the visitors] if he had an aquarium at home and he said, ‘No, it makes good beer.’” It turns out that word had spread among area homebrewers who prized the clean taste and purity of his spring water, sourced from a 400-foot well beneath layers of limestone that filtered the H<sub>2</sub>O. “The mineral content lends itself really well to brewing beer...It mirrors the water at Burton-On-Trent, England [a spot also prized for water that begets quality beer].” A lightbulb went off, and with the help of one of the homebrewers, McClellan launched a brewing company with a focus on the clan's traditional Scottish-style ales. Even the beer labels boast a tong and thistle logo that traces back to the family's prized ice.

When it came time to name their flagship ale, McClellan recalled his grandfather's tales of a time when the cost of a pint of ale was a nickel. Though, if it was very fine ale, the cost increased to a dime, hence the name of the Ten Penny Ale. —Sally Semegen

