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DIXIE BEER FACT SHEET

Dixie Brewing History

- ✓ Dixie Beer was born in New Orleans in 1907.
- ✓ The founder of Dixie Brewing was Valentine Merz, who also was a supporter of the Audubon Zoo.
- ✓ In the 1920s, during Prohibition, the name was changed to Dixie Beverage Company. It survived prohibition by producing other drinks like sodas and near beers, returning to brewing beer by the early 1930s.
- ✓ In its heyday, Dixie Beer was known as the neighborhood beer of New Orleans, and it enjoyed a market share of more than 30 percent.
- ✓ In the '80s, local breweries were challenged to compete with mass-produced national brands such as Pabst, Miller and Budweiser.
- ✓ Joseph and Kendra Bruno bought the struggling Dixie Brewing Company in 1985.
- ✓ Hurricane Katrina and the levee failures in 2005 left the brewery with 10 feet of water that ultimately destroyed the equipment and left the Tulane Avenue building in disrepair.
- ✓ Today, the original location on Tulane Avenue sits within the footprint of the new Veterans Affairs Medical Center, which plans to use a portion of the original building to house a research center. The building's distinctive cupola is being incorporated into the design.

- ✓ Without a functioning brewery after Katrina, the Bruno's moved to a contract brewing arrangement with a craft brewery in Monroe, Wisconsin. In June of 2017, brewing was moved to Blues City Brewery in Memphis, Tennessee, right up the Mississippi River from its birthplace.

Road to Rebirth

- ✓ Gayle Benson, just as her husband Tom did, has a passion for New Orleans and for restoring things that make the city unique. Dixie Beer is one of those "lost" iconic New Orleans brands that make up the city's history and identity.
- ✓ Brewing of Dixie Beer will return to New Orleans.
- ✓ The traditional Dixie Beer, using the original recipe for a rich and higher-quality, better-tasting lager, as well as a new 91 calorie Dixie Light and Dixie Blackened Voodoo Lager are now available throughout the Gulf South.

About Brewing in New Orleans

- ✓ The first commercial brewery in New Orleans was opened in 1852 by brothers Louis and Samuel Fasnacht, who came to New Orleans from Switzerland. Its location is where the Cotton Mill apartments now stand. It closed by 1876.
- ✓ Dixie Brewing was founded in 1907 by Valentine Merz, who also was a supporter of the Audubon Zoo.
- ✓ Brewing continued to grow through the end of the century, making New Orleans the largest beer-making city in the South. Merz, Pioneer Merz, Southern Brewing Company, Crescent City Brewing, Weckerling Brewing, Pelican Brewing Company, Lafayette Brewing and Louisiana Brewery all distributed their beverages regionally.
- ✓ In 1891, a group of investors opened Jax Beer across from Jackson Square in the French Quarter. The facility closed in 1974, and currently is a specialty shopping center.

- ✓ By the 1950s, the incredible diversity of the industry prior to Prohibition was reduced to four brands that controlled 80 percent of the New Orleans market: Falstaff, Regal, Dixie and Jax.

About Dixie Brewing Company, LLC

- ✓ Tom and Gayle Benson purchased Dixie Brewing Company, LLC, from Joseph and Kendra Bruno, who were stewards of the brand beginning in 1985. Joseph and Kendra Bruno will continue to contribute their invaluable knowledge, experience and passion for Dixie Beer as minority owners and members of the Board of Managers.
- ✓ The purchase agreement was finalized in December 2016.
- ✓ Dixie, Dixie Light and Dixie Blackened Voodoo Lager are available in kegs, 12-ounce longneck bottles and 12-ounce cans. Dixie and Dixie Light are also available in 16-ounce cans. Crescent Crown is the distributor in the New Orleans area. Additionally, there is a variety pack of all three brews in 12-pack bottles where Dixie Beer lovers can try all three named the Dixie Dozen.
- ✓ Director of Operations is Jeffery “Mel” Coleman. Brewmaster is Kevin Stuart.

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Sources:

- ✓ <http://gonola.com/2012/10/15/nola-history-beer-and-brewing-in-new-orleans.html>