

## BEVERAGES

# Syracuse's Congress Beer back in traditional cans

**Don Cazentre** [dcazentre@nyup.com](mailto:dcazentre@nyup.com)

Congress Beer, the traditional Syracuse lager that re-launched this summer, is now back in cans.

It's the first time the beer has been canned since the 1960s, when the Haberle Congress brewery on Syracuse's North Side closed. The beer has been available in draft only since it was re-introduced this summer by Willow Rock Brewing Co. of Syracuse in partnership with the Onondaga Historical Association.

"Cans were the most iconic package for Congress and we're excited to bring them back," said Rockney Roberts, co-owner at Willow Rock.

Cans of Congress will go on sale this weekend at the Willow Rock brewery, at 115 Game Road (that's behind Danzer's restaurant on Ainsley Drive). Four-packs of 16-ounce cans sell for \$9.99. The launch begins at noon Saturday.

There are also special deals on Congress swag during launch weekend, including a Congress Holiday Gift Pack, which is a four-pack of Congress cans, a Congress pilsner glass and a coaster, for \$15.

After this weekend, Congress in cans will be found in selected local retailers and bars while supplies last, Roberts said. Branching Out, a bottle shop in Camillus' Township 5, will be one outlet, with more to come.

Willow Rock plans to begin production of Congress and its own beer lineup on its new, expanded brewing system in the near future, Roberts said.

From the 1890s to the the early 1960s, Congress was the most popular "hometown" beer in Syracuse, brewed by the Haberle brewery at the corner of Butternut and North McBride streets. The brewery closed in 1962. In its day, it was the Syracuse equivalent to Genesee in Rochester and Utica Club in Utica.

The modern re-launch of Congress Beer is spearheaded by the OHA, which acquired the trademark rights to sell Congress Beer merchandise several years ago. Last year, it



secured the rights to brew a beer under the Congress Beer name as a way to raise money for its operations.

The OHA tapped Willow Rock, a small craft brewer located between Syracuse's University's South Campus and Brighton Avenue, to recreate Congress.

Roberts and co-owner Kevin Williams used a set of notes on the recipe and procedures donated to the historic association by the last Haberle brewmaster when the brewery closed in 1962.

It was Williams' and Roberts' challenge to recreate a beer that they could produce in a modern craft brewery but that would also honor the tradition of a light colored, light-bodied "pre craft beer" lager.

The beer they came up with is a relatively low-alcohol beer, at 4.8 percent, that they describe as "approachable," "easy drinking," "light-bodied and crisp" and an "everyday" beer.

It's made exclusively from New York state ingredients.

**Congress Beer, brewed by Willow Rock Brewing Co. of Syracuse in partnership with the Onondaga Historical Association, is back in cans for the first time in 50 years.**

*Don Cazentre,  
dcazentre@nyup.com*