



*"Blackberry beer--blackberry beer?" By now I was sputtering. "Who would drink the stuff?"*

*It was September 1985 and I was shouting at Mike McMenamamin, proprietor and owner, with brother Brian, of Oregon's first brew pub, the Hillsdale Brewery and Public House. Mike was plotting which beers he might make in the newly installed stainless steel fermenting vats which, along with the beautiful copper kettle and cooling tubes constituted the modestly priced brewing plant.*

*The Oregon legislature had just passed a brew-pub law, and the McMenamamins were determined to have the first in the state. I was only trying to talk some sense into his head. "Mike," I said, "Portland is an entirely unlikely place to sell crazy beer, folks here are educated, they know what is supposed to be in beer, and blackberries from the parking lot are not included."*

*"Wait'll they try the blueberry beer," he said.*

This is how our friend Fred Eckardt so perfectly described the outset of our adventures at Captain Neon's Fermentation Chamber (as the Hillsdale's brewing facility was christened) for his article that ran in All About Beer in April 1986. And since its inception, the Hillsdale brewery has been a launching pad for creative experimentation. Mike Mc put it this way in 1985: "The only rule is there are no rules. The main thing is to have fun!"

So, with that in mind, we boldly ventured where other brewers feared to tread. In some cases, they were right, and we emerged with egg on our faces and kegs of undrinkable beer. But this philosophy--a hybrid of a navigator's great passion for discovery, the finicky creativity of a chef, and more than a bit of the reckless spirit of a rodeo rider--produced the area's first fruit beers, unfiltered wheat ales and other concoctions that have since become hallmarks of the Northwest craft industry.

Predictably, public reception to the Hillsdale's more unorthodox releases--Blackberry Ale, Mars Bar Ale, Java Ale, Spruce Ale and Purple Haze--was mixed. Yet, customers were daring. They were ready to journey into the frontier, far beyond the known (and tired) limits of industrial lagers, to educate themselves in the college of beer.

Now, more than two decades down that frothy path, a great many of our customers possess very sophisticated beer palates--they've earned their Ph.D. from beer college. Still, that excitement of old, brought about by things new and untried, is guaranteed to be found at the Hillsdale, especially during the annual brewfest, an event that's achieved cult status among our brewers and loyal brew friends.

Of course, the Hillsdale is more than just good beer. It's been a great gathering spot since way back when. In fact, our longtime customers may not recall that the Hillsdale began life solely as a pub--no brewery to be seen. Opened February 8, 1984, by the fabulous Thursday Jane (who is still putting up with us after all this time!), it was McMenamamins' third location, following closely behind the Barley Mill and the Greenway pubs, which had opened the previous year.



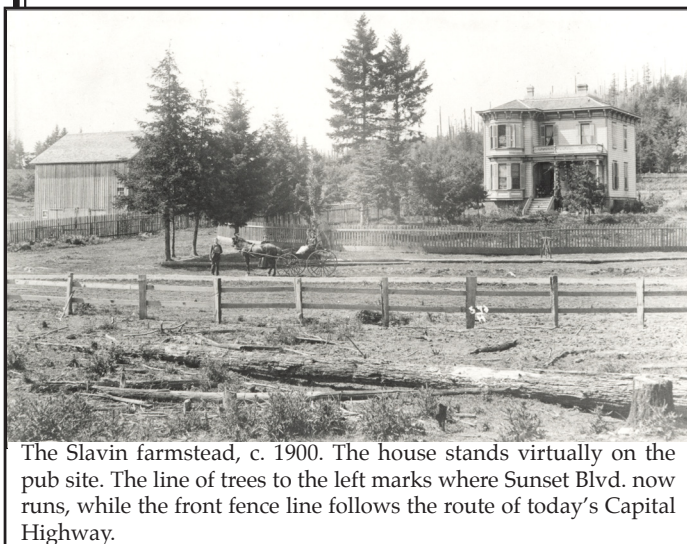
Mike and Brian and brewer Ron Wolf raise a toast to McMenamamins' inaugural brew, crafted at the state's first brew pub, October 1985.

The Hillsdale was pegged to be host to our first brewing venture for the pragmatic reason that it already had a usable floor drain, a feature installed by the building's original tenants. In the mid-1970s, Skipper's Fish & Chips acquired what was then a vacant lot and constructed the present building as another

franchise of their restaurant chain. Its run was a relatively short one, and within eight years, Skipper's pulled up anchor and sailed away. Arnold's Burgers next made a go of it, but it's tenure was even shorter than Skipper's. Thus by early '84, the space was open and awaiting McMenamins' reincarnation.

That's the tale of the building but the saga of the site is much lengthier and punctuated by the historic and bizarre, dating back to before Oregon gained statehood.

Here, at the intersection of what is now Capital Highway and Sunset Boulevard, is where Hillsdale founding father John Addison Slavin settled around 1850. He built the substantial home shown at right in 1882 on virtually the exact spot where the pub stands today.



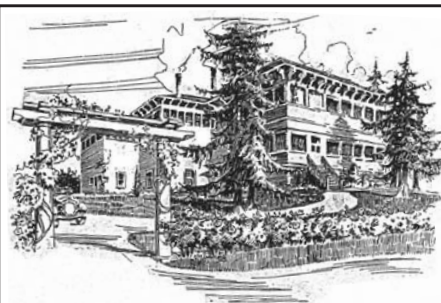
The Slavin farmstead, c. 1900. The house stands virtually on the pub site. The line of trees to the left marks where Sunset Blvd. now runs, while the front fence line follows the route of today's Capital Highway.

In Slavin's day, Sunset Boulevard was a farm road that passed between his house and barn, and Capital Highway was a thoroughfare he helped build, called appropriately enough, Slavin Road.

After Slavin's death in 1908, the family parceled the expansive farmstead and sold off lots. In 1917, the lot containing the 1882 home was bought by Dr. Edward A. Pierce, a pioneer of the open-air method of tuberculosis treatment. Dr. Pierce did substantial renovations to the building to create the Pierce TB Sanatorium, set in a very rural locale, literally steps beyond the Portland city limits (a city ordinance required that such facilities be established outside the city proper). Complaints from concerned neighbors arose immediately and persisted until 1924, when Pierce grudgingly closed the sanatorium.

With the sanatorium a thing of the past, Dr. Pierce set out to find a creative new use for the property, and in 1925 it was transformed into the Portland West Side Auto Camp. A concept borne of the meteoric rise in popularity of the car, auto camps sprung up like mushrooms around the city's suburbs (and around the country) providing camp

sites--often with cabins--for families desiring a convenient overnight spot or a stopover on a long trip. This camp, operated by George and Elsie Battey, included 25 furnished cabins in addition to the former Slavin house and sanatorium.



## Pierce Sanatorium

This 1924 ad shows the TB facility that operated for 6 years on the future pub site.

Dr. Pierce passed away in 1948 at the age of 93, His widow, Martha, sold the property to a Portland developer who continued the auto camp another five years until finally closing the doors in 1953.

For the next 30 years the old auto camp was quiet, and this lot vacant. Over time, the surrounding area gradually emerged as the commercial core of the Hillsdale neighborhood—a prime spot, it turns out, for a Skipper's turned neighborhood gathering spot.

When the first beer was poured from the Hilldale's copper kettle there must have been a sense that some new adventure was just beginning, a joyous anticipation of what was to come. That anticipation and sense of experimentation has spread like wildfire from this place to virtually everything McMenamins has done since, the fearless customers that always seem game for a new angle on beer, and indeed, through the larger microbrew culture of the Northwest. Looking out over that microbrew culture more than twenty years later, the view from the Hillsdale is more spectacular than ever and its original guiding principle still rings true: "The main thing is to have fun!"