



# An Unexpected and Exotic Past

"[John Barleycorn] is the august companion with whom one walks with the gods."

--Jack London, *John Barleycorn* (1913)

In the young days of 1996, McMenamins was in stride with the "august companion" while gods stormed all around. We were erecting our monument to John Barleycorn in Tigard, Oregon, as flood waters raged, winds howled and the dead stirred. Were these the actions of angered deities or a sign of their thunderous approval? Uncertain and nervous at first, now, years later, we're pretty confident the gods are on our side.

John Barleycorns Pub and Brewery had a tumultuous beginning, with roots older and more exotic than you might expect.

First, the brewpub's namesake, John Barleycorn, is a centuries-old icon for whiskey, and more generally, alcoholic beverages of all varieties. Since the 1500s, the saga of John Barleycorn has been told countless times by pontificators, propagandists, storytellers and musicians, ranging from Scotland's 18th-Century poet, Robert Burns, to the rock band Traffic.



While temperance-minded folks conjure up the apparition of John Barleycorn as a target of their persecution--'John Barleycorn must die!' was their battle cry--others, such as Burns, united in defense of Barleycorn's redeeming qualities.

John Barleycorn was a hero bold,  
Of noble enterprise,  
For if you do but taste his blood,  
'Twill make your courage rise.

--Robert Burns (1759-1796) *Ballad of John Barleycorn*

In 1996, McMenamins clearly exhibited its alliance with the Scottish poet's point of view by naming its new Tigard brewpub in honor of the ancient, embattled icon.

More unexpected is the brewpub's link to the exotic island of Hawaii, circa 1900, the place and time of the birth of the Tigard pub's forefather, the Kaka'ako Pumping Station. On a vacation to Hawaii in the early 1990s, Mike Mc spied the long vacant, but still majestic-looking pumping station moldering just off the main road to Waikiki. Mike was immediately and completely entranced by its stone construction, battlement detail, and soaring arched windows.



Views of the 100-plus-year-old Kaka'ako Pumping Station which inspired John Barleycorns' design.

A series of photos taken at that time of the 100-year-old Hawaiian building became the model for Leon Hamblin and Ken Hattan, architects of the John Barleycorns Pub and Brewery. The process of transposing the design from snapshots to blueprints had its challenges, but at least the architects weren't battling ferocious natural elements. The crew of Pacific Crest Construction wasn't so lucky.



John Barleycorns' bar, crafted of remilled redwood from wine barrels, is flooded by light from a window reminiscent of the Hawaiian pumping station.

A sign of foreboding came early with the exhumation and reinterment elsewhere of a dog previously buried on the site. The winter of 1995-96, and particularly the first months of 1996, were marked by some of the harshest weather encountered by Oregonians in several generations--heavy snowfall, gale-force winds, torrential rains, and ultimately, flooding. Pacific Crest owner Joe Vondrak and foreman Jack Haedinger recalled that floodwaters inundated the neighborhood and powerful gusts threatened to topple the progressing walls of the brewpub, but the crew and the building persevered.

As construction neared completion, the tumultuous weather calmed. When the doors were festively thrown open on March 14, 1996, it was plain to see that it, our first pub designed inside and out by McMenamins, was both an enduring tribute to Sir John Barleycorn (fittingly furnished with its own brewery and a ceiling and bar crafted from remilled redwood wine barrels) and a faithful interpretation of its Hawaiian ancestor.

The gods are happy.

Then let us toast John Barleycorn,  
 Each man a glass in hand;  
 And may his great posterity  
 Ne'er fail in old Scotland!  
 --Robert Burns