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Seneca city administrator Scott Moulder, left, helps Keowee Brewing Company owner Alex Butterbaugh brew a special "Sesquicentenni-Ale" in honor of the city's 150th birthday at the brewery on Thursday.

## Brewery creating special beer for Seneca's 150th birthday

**BY LAUREN PIERCE**  
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — There's no better way for those who indulge to celebrate the 150th birthday of Seneca

than with a new beer on tap at a local brewery.

Keowee Brewing Company will soon be rolling out "Sesquicentenni-Ale," a pale ale specially brewed for Seneca's birthday. The

city was founded in 1873 and chartered a year later.

"We knew, obviously, it had to be an ale versus a lager for the

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name. ... We were originally trying to think of something that we could do with local ingredients, maybe with local honey or something like that, and just couldn't decide on something that we wanted — that we thought would represent the general masses in the town well," said Alex Butterbaugh, who owns the brewery with his wife, Allison.

Eventually, the two decided to stick with a pale ale, an easier drink suggested by city administrator Scott Moulder.

"We're doing it with Simcoe, Sequoia and Centennial hops. All those together kind of sound like sesquicentennial," Butterbaugh said. "Centennial hops have been around forever. It's one of the older hop varieties that comes out of the U.S. It's something that a lot of people are really familiar with, and it just seemed perfect to use for this beer since it's the sesquicentennial."

The "Sesquicentenni-Ale" is slated to be available in the beginning of March for almost a two-week period. Butterbaugh said the future of the celebratory beer depends on how it's received.

"It'll be available until it's out, but we are in the process of possibly talking to a distributor to distribute some of our beer just locally in the Upstate," he said. "We think this would be a really good one to maybe start with. ... I think it'd be a great thing to have on tap for around Seneca, different establishments around to really promote the whole Seneca environment and community around the sesquicentennial and the 'Sesquicentenni-Ale.' That is our goal."

## BREWING THE BEER

Moulder joined the Butterbaughs on Thursday morning to start brewing the special beer. He helped with mashing the grains in the mash tun to kick off the process.

"I thought it was a great opportunity to promote what they're doing and promote the impact that they've had on downtown," Moulder said. "Alex was the first application



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**Seneca city administrator Scott Moulder smells the mixture of hops to be included in Keowee Brewing Company's "Sesquicentenni-Ale."**

that took advantage of our downtown incentive programs that we created to generate additional development in the downtown area. ... I think (Keowee) had a large impact on the development of this side of the downtown square. We've been very pleased and grateful and blessed to have Keowee Brewing here in downtown."

Once the mash grain is transferred to the boil kettle, it's rinsed with more hot water — a process called sparging.

"We want to start with about 185 gallons in the boil kettle," Butterbaugh said. "We will boil some off, lose some with the hops, lose some in the transfer, all that kind of stuff to where we get 155 gallons over to the barrel tank."

Once inside the 10-barrel tank, the brew ferments for about two to two and a half weeks.

While preparing, Butterbaugh said he had to alter the beer's recipe with fewer grains

because it was expected to have as high as a 8 percent alcohol by volume, but settled with a 5.3 percent.

"The yeast consumes sugar to make alcohol, so the amount of grain dictates the amount of sugar that goes into it," he said. "I originally had another bag (of grains) but came in this morning, and I was like, 'No, if it's going to be a pale ale, it's got to be a little bit on the lower side.'"

Butterbaugh added being a brewer never gets old for him.

"It's funny, because everyone's like, 'Oh, when are you going to hire a brewer?'" Butterbaugh said. "And I'm like, 'Why? This is my favorite part.' ... Not anytime soon."

"We always tell everybody ... we don't make beer — the yeast makes beer. All we do is clean all day, and we're glorified janitors," Butterbaugh added. "You have to have everything 100 percent clean all the time, or it just doesn't turn out right. You ruin your beer, ruin your name."

## MORE TO CELEBRATE

The 150th celebration comes at a time when the downtown and city are growing, which has been a goal over the past several years.

Keowee Brewing has been in the process of expanding and brainstorming new ideas to elevate the business.

"When you're reinvesting in your company, you're certainly reinvesting in the city," Moulder said to the Butterbaughs. "On behalf of us, we certainly appreciate your investment here. ... It's been a very nice anchor on this side of town."

City officials are planning to use events — including Jazz on the Alley and Cruizin' On Main — with themes to recognize the historic milestone throughout 2023. While dates haven't been released yet, plans are also under way to celebrate the sesquicentennial at other city events throughout the year, including Race for the Green, Independence Day and the city's Christmas parade.