

Francis Cardinal Spellman

Ballantine Burton Ale Tasting

April 5, 2005



- May 12, 1946 / November 1963 Francis Cardinal Spellman
- May 12, 1954 / December 1955 Gerard Sassong
- May 12, 1954 / December 1955 Benjamin Schagfer
- May 12, 1954 / December 1942 William H. Alley
- May 12, 1946 / November 1966 William H. Alley
- May 12, 1946 / November 1966 Fun Fur & Feathers Club
- May 12, 1946 / November 1960 Del Webb
- Ballantine IPA beer 1940s (aged in the wood one year)
- Ballantine Boek beer 1950s
- Ballantine Porter beer 1950s



The Ballantine Brewery Story



Peter Ballantine was born in Scotland on November 16, 1791 and came to seek his fortune in America in 1820. He found work at a brewery in Albany, NY and being clever and thrifty opened his own brewery there in 1833. He took his wife and three children to Newark, NJ in 1840 to be closer to the growing New York City beer market. In the beginning he leased a brewery founded by Gen. John N. Cumming but around 1850 built his own ale brewery nearby. By 1877, P Ballantine & sons was the fourth largest brewery in the USA and the only one brewing ales exclusively in the top 20. Production is listed as 107,592 bbl. The famous Ballantine three ring symbol ("Purity, Body, Flavor") was inspired by the wet rings left on a table as Peter Ballantine consumed his beer and was first used by the brewery in 1879. This same year Ballantine purchased the Schalk brewery to produce lager beer. The increase in immigrants from central Europe meant America's taste was moving away from the traditional English type ales. By the 1880s, Ballantine Brewing plants covered 12 acres and was the sixth largest brewer in America. It was located at Ferry & Freeman streets and some buildings still survive today. In late 1882, Ballantine's oldest son Peter H. suddenly took ill after a trip to Europe and died (a pic of his grave is below). His father, active in the business until he died, quickly followed him in January of 1883 at the age of 91.



The running of the brewery was passed to John H. Ballantine, and later Robert F. Ballantine. John Herbert's oldest son John, got into a fight with his family about saving a batch of beer, and left the family business. He went on to found the Neptune Meter Co. After the death of the last son Robert, the company was headed up by non-family members. By 1895 production had reached the 500,000 bbl per year mark, making Ballantine the 5th largest brewer in the country after Pabst, Anheuser-Busch, Jos. Schlitz, and the Ehret Brewery of New York. The original ale brewery was eventually closed and all activities moved to the lager brewery site in 1912.

Ballantine's management was forward thinking and saw the coming of Prohibition. In order to allow the company to survive, they produced malt syrup and diversified into insurance and real estate. Many of the family members left to join the Neptune Meter Co.



ARCHIBALD FERGOUSON MacKENZIE - Brewmaster. He came from Scotland as a consultant for six months and decided to stay.
 OTTO BADENHAUSEN - Plant manager, architect, engineer. He came to respect the earthy mysteries of beer and ale.
 CARL BADENHAUSEN - President. He sold brewing equipment in South America before taking control of Ballantine in 1933.

Following the lifting of the Volstead Act, German brewing equipment salesman Carl Badenhausen and his brother Otto approached Ballantine to purchase the brewery. During the "dry" years, Badenhausen had sold equipment to breweries in South America. The management of Ballantine did not want to return to brewing as so many in-house skills had been lost during Prohibition. The brothers purchased the brewery and imported a brewmaster, Archibald MacKenzie, from Scotland. The Ballantine beers and ales quickly returned to their original popularity in the greater New York City area.

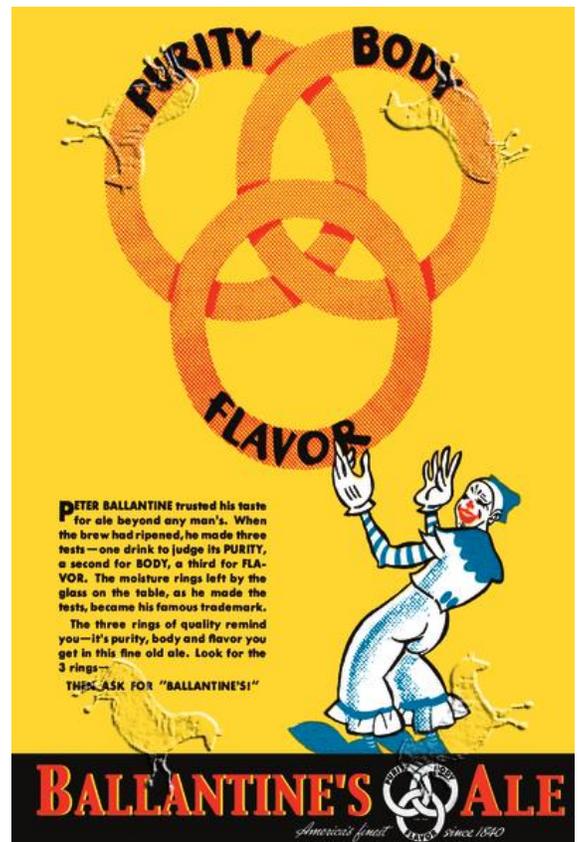
During WWII Ballantine sponsored "Uncle Miltie" Berle on the radio as well as the New York Yankees in the 1940s and 50s. Ballantine were also one of the first breweries to sell canned beer in six packs for home consumption. Prior to Prohibition, virtually all beer was sold in kegs or individual bottles. In 1943, Ballantine acquired the Christian Feiganspan Brewery also of Newark and ran this as a second brewery until 1948, when it was closed. Their brands included P.O.N. (Pride of Newark) and Munich.

Ballantine had a close association with local sports. N.Y. Yankee announcer Mel Allen's called every Yankee home run a "Ballantine Blast" on his radio and later television coverage. Ballantine also later owned the Boston Celtics basketball team for a time.



By 1950 Ballantine was the [third](#) largest brewer in America, surpassed only by Schlitz and A-B, brewing 4.3 million barrels. Shibe Park aka Connie Mack Stadium for the Philadelphia Phillies featured a 60 ft Ballantine Beer sign

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The late, great Ballantine - traditional American ale

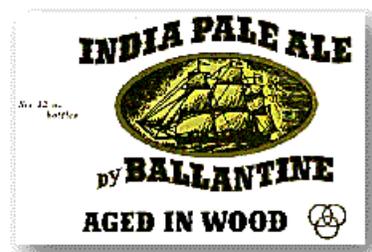
Modern Brewery Age, March 27, 2000 by Greg Glaser

http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m3469/is_13_51/ai_63841298

The real story of the greatest of the traditional American ales.

Mention the name Ballantine to beer lovers, especially beer lovers with more than a few flecks of gray in their beards, and more often than not they will begin to rhapsodize rapturously about this famous ale. You'll hear stories of old bottles mysteriously and wondrously discovered and tasted; tales of long-discarded techniques employed by the original brewers; accounts of the slow, steady decline of the beer's greatness as it passed from brewery to brewery, the result of corporate takeovers.

Beer writers often praise Ballantine. Michael Jackson, writing in the August 1980 British beer journal, "What's Brewing," described Ballantine IPA as "wonderfully distinctive ... an outstanding American ale unique in its fidelity to the East Coast tradition of Colonial ales." More recently, in the February-March 2000 "Celebrator Beer News," Fred Eckhardt wrote, "Ballantine IPA would be a good choice for the greatest and most enduring American brewing triumph of the early and mid-20th century." Pat Baker stated in an interview, "Ballantine IPA was just such a beautiful looking beer. It had a deep amber color and a sparkling head. And of course the hops were just monstrous. It was one of those beer tasting experiences that just stays with you."





Intrigued by such writings and comments, I decided to delve deeper into Ballantine lore and search out its history. This is what I discovered: In 1830 Peter Ballantine, a Scottish brewer from Ayr, emigrated to the U.S. Several years later, in 1837, he opened a brewery in Albany, New York, and named it Peter Ballantine and Sons. The brewery moved to Newark, New Jersey, in 1840, where it remained until purchased by Falstaff in 1971. (From 1879 to 1911 Ballantine operated a second Newark brewery, and in 1943 the company purchased Newark's Christian Feiganspan Brewery and ran it as a Ballantine plant until 1948.) At its peak in the 1950s, P. Ballantine & Sons brewed five million barrels a year. Production of all Ballantine beers (there were several) moved in 1971 to the Narragansett Brewery in Cranston, Rhode Island. Narragansett, which opened in 1890, was purchased by Falstaff in 1965 and closed in 1983. Falstaff, bought by Pabst in 1975, moved Ballantine production to their Ft. Wayne, Indiana, brewery in 1979, where the brand remained until 1991 when the plant closed. (This was the old Berghoff Brewery, purchased by Falstaff in 1954.)

From 1991 to 1996, Pabst brewed Ballantine in Milwaukee. There is a possibility that towards the end of this time Ballantine may have also been brewed at the Heileman Brewery in Lacrosse, Wisconsin, where some Pabst brands were made. During 1996 to 1999, Ballantine came out of Pabst breweries in Tumwater, Oregon, and San Antonio, Texas. Today the brand is solely brewed at Pabst's plant in Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania, the original 1972 Schaeffer brewery that was later sold to Stroh in 1980 and acquired by Pabst in 1999.



Through all these moves, Ballantine ales constantly changed character. The brands most often brewed were Ballantine XXX and Ballantine IPA, the latter being the most widely loved and praised. In Newark, Ballantine IPA was a strong, 7.5% abv amber ale with great hop bitterness (60 International Bittering Units or IBUs) and a powerful hop aroma. This aroma came from hop oils distilled from Bullion hops at the brewery and added to the storage tanks. These

tanks them-selves were unique, in that they were made of oak. Ballantine IPA was aged for a full year in the wood, a technique unheard of today except for the most artisanal microbrewery. The woody character found in Ballantine IPA was as important to the beer's profile as were the hop oils. The Newark brewery also produced a special ale named Ballantine Burton. This extra strong beer, perhaps 10% abv, was aged an amazing ten years in wood and bottled sporadically as holiday gifts to brewery employees and friends. The labels created for these bottles would state the date the beer was brewed and bottled and the name of the recipient.

When Ballantine moved to Rhode Island, the IPA aging was first lowered to nine months, then six and finally to five. Oak barrels were replaced by wax-coated cyprus, according to Bill Anderson, Narragansett's master brewer in the early 1970s. Hop oils continued to be used for a while, with a distillation unit on premises, but this process was later abandoned. Overall IBUs for the IPA dropped to 50, then 45. Bullion hops were used at first, but were later changed to a blend of Brewers' Gold and American Yakima. The IPA was dry hopped in storage tanks after the hops were put through what Anderson called a hammer mill. "We ground them to a consistency that was a cross between corn flakes and sawdust," he remembers. The strength of the beer remained constant during most of the Narragansett years, at 7.5% abv, but Anderson says this was later reduced to 6.7%.

In that same 1980 What's Brewing article quoted previously, Jackson wrote of the Ballantine IPA: it had a "thick, rocky head, delightfully hoppy nose, powerful and lasting bitterness, extremely firm full body, superb balance and soft natural carbonation." Alan Kornhauser, a Ballantine aficionado and brewmaster for Pabst Brewing Company, Far East Division, based in Zhaoqing, China, remembers the Rhode Island-brewed Ballantine IPA as, light and refreshing, with great hop aroma."



Ballantine Burton was never brewed outside Newark, but XXX came out of Narragansett as a golden ale of about 23 IBUs and 5.6% abv. Another ale produced there was Ballantine Brewers' Gold, a strong (7% abv), moderately hoppy (30-34 IBUs) golden ale. A lager was also made.

Once Ballantine production moved to Ft. Wayne, a decidedly different beer emerged. Gone were the wooden aging casks; gone were the hop oils. "It stopped tasting like Ballantine at that time,"

recalls Kornhauser. "It must have been a different formula and maybe not even an ale yeast. And the hop aroma was gone." Pat Baker remembers much the same: "The wood character disappeared and the hop character faded."

I couldn't find anyone to provide notes on Ballantine when it was brewed in Milwaukee, Tumwater or San Antonio, but I did speak with Dan Melideo, master brewer at Pabst's Lehigh Valley plant, Ballantine's present home. Melideo says that today Ballantine XXX, the only Ballantine in production, finishes with a strength of 5.45% abv (a far cry from the original) and is hopped to a bitterness of about 22 IBUs (again, much lower than in the past). And the hops have changed again. Melideo uses Cascade hops in the boil and also in storage to dry hop the beer. Aging in wood remains a thing of the past. Jim Walter, VP of Business Administration for Pabst, explains that Ballantine XXX is marketed primarily in the northeast corridor with some sales in the Mid West and West Coast. He says that in the future Pabst may also see a market develop for Ballantine IPA.



Before joining Pabst in China, Alan Kornhauser was a brewer at Portland Brewing in Portland, Oregon. While there he wanted to recreate the Ballantine he knew and loved from years ago, and to introduce this re-creation to West Coast beer lovers, unfamiliar with the old ale. He says he brewed the best version of Ballantine XXX he could in 1996. The beer, originally named Summer Ale, is now called Portland Pale Ale in some parts of the country, and Kornhauser's Oast Ale in the Pacific Northwest, where it is available from April through August. Kornhauser wanted to use hop oils just as was originally done in Newark and Rhode Island, and he built a still to extract oils from Oregon-grown Brewers' Gold hops. Not completely satisfied with the results, he sent a batch of hops to England where he knew of an established hop distillery. The hop oil returned to Oregon was blended with the oil he extracted and used in his ale. The result is a 4.7% abv ale with about 28 IBUs and a highly aromatic fragrance from the hop oils. In comparing it to his benchmark, Ballantine XXX, Kornhauser says that for flavor it rated eight on scale often, but for hops it was a perfect ten. "The burp after a few sips was all hop oil," recalls the proud brewer. The Narragansett-brewed Ballantine IPA was the model Kornhauser used when he developed Woodstock IPA for Portland Brewing, a beer in year-round production. Woodstock is a 6.3% abv ale with

45 IBUs (no hop oil, but plenty of dry hops) and a noticeable woody flavor from Kornhauser's "secret oak aging process."

"These were two of my favorite beers in the world, Ballantine Ale and IPA, and I was very fortunate that Portland Brewing allowed me to try to recreate them as best I could," says Kornhauser.

It's safe to say that bottles of the old, original Ballantine IPA, the Newark and even the Rhode Island versions, are not to be found today. If any exist, the beer would have aged into something completely different, as have old bottles of Ballantine Burton. With regrets, none of us can taste this highly lauded ale. With Pabst's Ballantine XXX being brewed so differently from the original, it's hardly fair to compare it with the older version. The most that die-hard beer lovers can do is read the reviews of the past, talk with any gray-beards they can find who tasted the original Ballantine ales and search out microbreweries such as Portland Brewing Company who brew hoppy ales. Those are our best chances of getting even the slightest handle on the late, great ale they called Ballantine.

Gregg Glaser is a beer writer and educator who makes his home in Wilton, CT. His writings are a regular feature in Modern Brewery Age.

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Ballantine Burton Ale Tasting Notes

May 12, 1934 December 1948 Charles W. Heller

Closed at first, but a solventy aroma comes out, then it opens up to show spice character. Tannic in the mouth, overly woody, with light notes of gooseberry and some tropical fruit -- the interesting notes barely discernible under a dusty, moldy cellar quality. - Willi Loob

A distinct flavor of lightly burnt malt. Quite earthy and tannic (no surprise, after 9 years in wood), flavors that came together better with a little air. At an original gravity of 1100, there was definintely some alcohol present. - Jim Anderson

May 12, 1934 December 1943 2/10/2001 - Casey Stengel

A little ropey aroma and some hints of oxidation on the palate. This is worty, with evident alcohol and a starkly bitter, alkaline finish. A murky sherry color. - Willi Loob
Massively infected and undrinkable. Jim Anderson

May 12, 1946 November 1960 F.B. Kuhlman 2/10/2001 - Casey Stengel

Tawny appearance, richly malty aromas with bready tones. Not a lot of flavor at first, but it eventually shows hints of barrel-aging -- a rummy taste up front, black olive and light brininess on the finish. - Willi Loob
After 14 years in wood, this beer had a very sweet, nutty

aroma, but much less in the flavor department. - Jim Anderson

May 12, 1946 December 1959 Casey Stengel 2/10/2001 - Casey Stengel

Subtle flavors and aromas with balanced hops that are still lively on the palate. Burtonized character comes out as a slightly salty taste, hints of pear and apricot with a sudden hop bitterness on the finish. Fairly bright, clear amber color. - Willi Loob

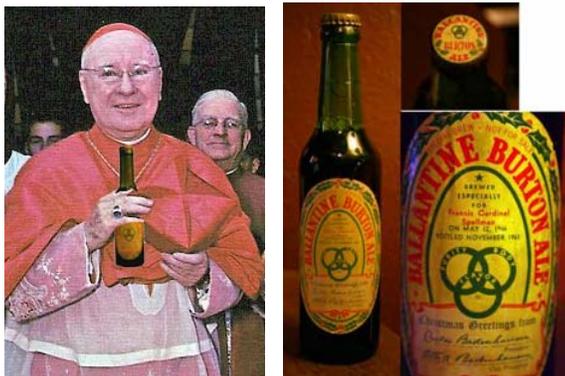
Nicely carbonated after all this time, hoppy and oaky with overall an amazing balance of its flavors. Quite a nice beer regardless of age. - Jim Anderson

May 12, 1946 December 1958 Lewis Kesaris

May 12, 1934 December 1941 Café Joris - Nov 2003

Very cloudy - not much head. Aroma - very heavy oak. Flavor: sharp, some coffee, also nutty, and spicy. Some perfumy flavors. Lots of vanilla. - Bill Coleman

Michael Jackson: *I sampled a 1950s edition in the late 1970s. It was hazy but otherwise in remarkably good condition, like a very aromatic, hoppy, barley wine. It has been made at the Ballantine brewery in Newark, New Jersey. That brewery produced its own hop oil, which it must have used lavishly. The brewery has long gone, as has Ballantine Burton. The IPA and the regular Ballantine Ale were later made in Providence, Rhode Island; Fort Wayne, Indiana; and the Pabst brewery (now closed) in Milwaukee. Pabst has been making the regular Ale at Heileman, in LaCrosse, Wisconsin. Sample the Burton now, rather than keeping it any longer. If you have a bottle to spare, I would be delighted to have a further taste two decades down the pike. Incidentally, I believe Ballantine Burton was one of Fritz Maytag's inspirations in the creation of his Old Foghorn Barley Wine at the Anchor brewery, in San Francisco.*



A Holy Grail of Beers: Ballantine Burton Ale

May 28 '00

<http://www.epinions.com/fddk-review-1D02-29596AD-39318EAC-prod5>

Brewed by P. Ballantine & Sons, Newark, N.J. Not intended for commercial sale, this bottle brewed exclusively for L.M. Cannon on May 12 1934, bottled December of 1941. Ballantine Burton was brewed and aged at the brewery in several batches over the years, with the intent being to distribute it as gifts to family friends and sales contacts.

It's not everyday you drink a beer that's old enough to collect Social Security. Frankly, I wasn't expecting much from this beer. I had

heard a lot of doubts about how good it could be after all this time. True, many beers will improve with age, but this one had not exactly been stored under optimal aging conditions. When I popped the cap, a small sigh of CO2 escaped, almost as if the beer was giving up the ghost. I poured half of the 7oz. of beer into two glasses, one for myself and one for a friend. The beer poured to a beautiful ruby color, the bottom of the bottle was covered with a sludge of yeast and protein sediment. It pretty much stayed there though, and didn't end up in the beer. The nose was quite sherry like and vinous. Then the first sip. Not surprisingly, a lot of oxidation. Not very beery tasting. But the finish was VERY interesting. Reminiscent of Scotch, hinting at vanilla, a very high octane burn, perhaps 10% or so alcohol seemed to be present.

I'm sure this beer tastes nothing like it did when it was first released. It's not something you'd spend an evening sipping. Still, it's interesting to drink a piece of history, a beer that was brewed the year after prohibition was repealed, sat in oak through most of the depression and the start of World War II, was bottled the month Pearl Harbor was bombed, sat in someone's house for God knows how long, was sold at an auction in a box of assorted junk, was auctioned on E-Bay, survived the Postal Service, and was drunk 65 years after being brewed.

Try it, if you can find it.



Drinking History..The Legendary Ballantine Burton Ale

Jul 03 '02

http://www.epinions.com/content_2737152132

If ever there was a beer in American brewing history that could be called a holy grail, Ballantine Burton Ale most certainly is it. This beer over the decades has gained an almost mythical status, and is a true icon in American brewing history. For those who know about this beer, the honor of drinking a sample of the legendary Ballantine Burton Ale is something they are willing to pay a heavy price for, and will give them serious bragging rights among beer geeks. Some bottles manage to go under the radar, and can be purchased for as little as \$10 or \$15 dollars. But more often than not, a bidding war will ensue, and the prices beer geeks are willing to pay for a bottle of Burton Ale, can go sky high. I once saw a 7 oz bottle of this beer go for over \$100 on Ebay, and there are beer geeks out there, that have been willing to pay up to \$500 or more, just to get a sample of this legendary brew. So, you must be asking by now, what on earth makes Ballantine Burton Ale so special? A lot really, and in lies a tale...

Ballantine Burton Ale was brewed by P. Ballantine & Sons of Newark, NJ. Ballantine of course, is a familiar name to many America beer drinkers, the brand name Ballantine still exists to this day, but only as a label. The brewery in Newark has long since closed, when it was purchased by Fallstaff in the mid 1960's, and the Narragansett Brewing Company of Cranston, RI took over brewing Ballantine beers in 1967. One beer however, was never brewed or bottled again after the brewery closed, and that beer was Burton Ale. Ballantine brewed some ales of distinction over its rich history, including another legendary American beer, Ballantine

India Pale Ale, which up into the Mid 80's was still a flavorful beer, and one American beer lovers held in high regard. But the most special beer Ballantine ever brewed was Burton Ale, and it without question, has become the holy grail of American beers.



See, Burton Ale, was NOT FOR SALE. The brewery only released this beer as special Christmas gifts to employees, associates, and friends of the brewery. Each bottle was labeled as a Special Brew: Not For Sale Brewed especially for: with that person's name appearing on the label festooned with Christmas holly and wreaths and the words: Seasons Greetings from all of us at Ballantine. Ballantine Burton Ale was brewed in limited batches from the 1920's-1950's once a year on May 12th, and was then aged in huge oak tanks at the brewery. Vintages of Burton Ale could spend anywhere from 7 to 20 years in oak, before being bottled, and then given away by the brewery as gifts. Ballantine Burton Ale was brewed to be a high gravity, high alcohol beer, coming in at about 10-11% abv. Ballantine, who produced its own hop oils, used lavish amounts in this beer as well, to preserve it, and the high hopping, put Burton Ale at 60+ IBU (bitterness units). It was sedimented with yeast, making it a bottle conditioned beer, so further fermentation, and development could take place in the bottle.

And this is what makes Ballantine Burton Ale so special to beer geeks. Ballantine Burton Ale by style could be called a highly hopped barleywine, possibly the first example of barleywine ever brewed in America. Michael Jackson, The Beer Hunter actually sampled a bottle of Burton Ale in the 1970's that he described as:

"A strong, amber-red, well hopped Christmas brew aged for years in coated wooden tanks that were topped up like a sherry solera." His described the vintage he tried 25 years after it was brewed as a "very aromatic hoppy barleywine."

Burton Ale was brewed with the intent to be cellared and aged like a fine wine. It is very rare, and again, this beer was only brewed in very limited batches, it was not for commercial sale, and the last time a vintage of this beer was bottled at the brewery in Newark, NJ, was 36 years ago. The number of vintages that are still in existence is unknown, but most speculate only a few hundred examples of Burton Ale have survived to this day. I was fortunate enough to recently win an on line auction, and was able to acquire three bottles of Ballantine Burton Ale. All three vintages were brewed especially for Hans Hinrichs on May 12, 1946 and bottled in November of 1964 (one bottle) and 1965 (two bottles). So my vintages of Burton Ale were brewed 56 years ago, and bottled 38 and 37 years ago. The world now has one less example of Ballantine Burton Ale, as I drank one of my vintages last night.

Ballantine Burton Ale pours to a beautiful, bright, ruby red color with no head and no carbonation. I was amazed how bright this beer poured. When mailed to me they were quite hazy, but I cold stored them, the yeast settled to the bottom of the bottle and poured bright. I was also very careful when I poured to make sure the yeast sediment stayed in the bottle. The nose on this beer shocked me. I was expecting lots of oxidation, but I did not get that. Very pronounced aromas of oak, sherry, and alcohol flooded the nose. This beer matured in oak for 20 years, and is one of the reason this beer has held up so well. The palate was full on the tongue, with flavors of oak, and a surprising amount of estery fruit flavors of plum and apple, paired with a nice back drop of caramel maltiness. Ballantine Burton Ale finished with more oaky and fruity flavors up front, and ended with a peppery, soothing, warming burn that lit a fire in the belly.

I'm stunned. I was not expecting this beer to be in such good condition after all these years. I tasted an example of Burton Ale back in 1999, brewed in 1934 and bottled in 1941, and it was undrinkable. It amazed me, and my wife as well, who out of curiosity, had to take a taste, what high condition this 56 year old beer was in. It tasted as Jackson stated, an aromatic vintage barleywine. I believe the 20 years in oak really helped, as oak aromas and flavors were ever present in this beer. The bottles I purchased, were kept in very good condition. The labels were not even worn, so I suspect, who ever had these bottles before me, stored them in a cellar, in a cool, dry place. Hans Hinrichs, were ever you are, I toast you. Thank you for not drinking some of your vintages of Burton Ale, and giving this beer lover, 37 years later, a chance to taste this unique beer. Ballantine Burton Ale is truly the holy grail of American beers, and it was an honor to drink a piece of American brewing history. And you can too. Check Ebay, and other on line auctions, and you might just be able to find a bottle of this legendary beer.



We want to thank Paul Kermizian of Barcade for hosting this special event.

