



Introducing the “Collector Series”

Capturing the stories of breweriana collectors on video

by Rob McCarty



A map showing the inaugural journey of the Cone Top Brewery Museum's video crew to capture the stories of some of NABA's legendary collectors.

NABA members likely noticed a film crew taking videos at the annual conventions in Milwaukee and Pittsburgh during the past two years. Many of you have met our video crew—Taylor, John, and Rob. They are part of the team from the Cone Top Brewery Museum in Vicksburg, MI, and work in partnership with NABA.

Last year, working with the NABA Board of Directors, we used the footage from the convention to create a video about NABA, which you can currently find on the NABA website homepage and on YouTube.

This year, we traveled to Pittsburgh to film NABA's national convention where we once again captured all the great experiences it brings, ranging from room-to-room trading, hospitality room hijinks, brewery visits, seminars, and of course, the annual presentation banquet. We currently have a video in the works that documents this experience that will use footage from the event.

In addition to the convention video, we are also working on a larger, broader project: the “Collector Series.” The idea behind this project—which will be ongoing—is to interview many of our notable NABA members and capture on video their spirit and

stories about what they collect. We hope this captures their stories and collections in their own words for posterity while fostering interest and growth in the hobby that brings joy to so many people.

First six interviews

Each of the collector video stories is the product of a comprehensive information-gathering process where we discover the why behind what motivates each collector and what inspired each of their unique collections. Our goal is to shine a spotlight on these folks and their accomplished collections as they invite you into their own homes.

The perfect time to start this project proved to be the road trip we all took to Pittsburgh this summer to attend the convention. With the help of NABA leadership, we identified some outstanding members and collections that we could visit on the way from Michigan to Pennsylvania and once we landed in the Pittsburgh area.

So, in late July 2022, our video crew jam-packed John's Volkswagen full of gear and snacks and set out for the 1,000-mile drive from Vicksburg to Pittsburgh and back.

During our journey, we interviewed six of the region's most notable collectors. The following pages contain a snapshot of what we discovered in the interviews.

What we've learned

After 15 hours of travel over three days, our journey landed us back at the NABA Convention to grab a cold beer and catch up with many of you in the hospitality suite.

While our filming intends to focus on the story of the collector, we learned so much from these breweriana fanatics about the hobby itself. For most

of our interviewees, collecting started at a young age—picking up random beer cans or signs they happened upon. And the thrill of the hunt and exploring and appreciating the art in breweriana were both part of everyone's stories. As far as the obsession to collect, Larry Moore put it nicely: "The collector gene is something 'ya either got or 'ya don't."

Many of the members interviewed also mentioned the desire to lead younger generations into the world of breweriana collecting hoping that they will keep the hobby alive for many generations to come. Members fondly speak of the sense of community that NABA brings, referring to one another as old friends who first met at a trade show

or conventions. Everyone we met during our travels helped us feel like old friends, too. While this is what many of you know and love about NABA, for us previous outsiders we appreciate the warmth and hospitality.

We'd like to thank NABA President Ken Quaas and Vice President Mike Michalik for helping us connect with these amazing collectors



The video crew: Taylor Kallio, John Kern, and Rob McCarty—are part of the team from the Cone Top Brewery Museum in Vicksburg, MI, who have been working in partnership with NABA to create the "Collector Series" of video interviews and

across Ohio and Pennsylvania to conduct these fascinating interviews.

Next year, we will focus on Chicagoland collectors as we visit that city for NABA's 2023 Convention. If you happen to get an email from Mike, Ken or another Board member asking for a video interview with you and your collection, you will likely be sitting down with the three of us. In the meantime, we invite you to check out the videos on the NABA website (nababrew.com) and Cone Top Brewery Museum website (conetopmuseum.com) to learn more about the "Collectors Series" videos.

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Above: A variety of eye-catching and high-quality signs stretch the expanse across the fireplace mantle in Mike's living room.

Above right: A sample of the wide range of tin and tin-over-cardboard signs in Mike's collection.

Right: Mike holds a "tempting" sign of a pretty lady for Burger Beer, Burger Brewing Co., Cincinnati, OH.



Collector Stop #1

Name: Mike Cunningham

Home: Royalton, OH

Collection: Ohio & Pennsylvania; also collects items from all over the country.

Fun Fact: The bar in Mike's basement is made from hatch covers salvaged from Liberty Ships!

When you're out on the road, coordinating arrival times and navigating new cities and towns can be challenging. The first stop is typically the most daunting, but fortunately for us, we landed

first at Mike Cunningham's home. Mike warmly welcomed us and graciously shared his vast collection of tin-over-cardboard signs (his specialty), trays, reverse-on-glass, and die-cut cardboard signs. Many are the only known existing examples. We also caught the tail end of a baseball game together as Mike shared more about his passion for collecting.

Mike's home is breweriana. He has been collecting since he was a young single guy in New Jersey, where he rented a house with his buddies in Patterson. They transformed the entire first floor of the house into a bar which Mike decorated with brewery signs of all kinds. During our tour, it became evident that his passion for the hobby runs deep.

Right: Tracy (left) shares a laugh with Les Jones, Sr. during the home tour he hosted at the NABA Convention on Aug 2.

Left: The unique old social hall that Tracy lovingly renovated has two stories that showcase his massive collection.





Larry and Amy Moore with just some of their extensive collection of signage from historical breweries in the Youngstown, OH area, where they live.

Collector Stop #2

Name: Larry & Amy Moore
Home: Girard, OH
Collection: Anything Youngstown Ohio
Fun Fact: Larry has been a collector since he began digging up cans in 1975.

After a warm visit with our gracious hosts Mike and Mary Ann Cunningham, we felt invigorated to continue our journey an hour southeast to visit Larry and Amy Moore in Girard, OH. Upon entering Larry's basement, we were intrigued by the impressive and focused collection he had described to us. A catalyst that fueled his passion for breweriana came from his great-grandfather's work with the Renner Brewery in Youngstown, OH,

just five miles away. Larry still has an original stock certificate from the brewery—how cool is that?

Throughout our interview, we all shared beers while the couple told stories about the thrill of the hunt at flea markets, auctions, and antique shops. While Larry couldn't pin down a favorite item, Amy didn't hesitate to talk about dual collectibles—items known as both breweriana and works of art—hence her love of lithographs.

After leaving Larry and Amy's home, we headed to Pittsburgh to settle in for the conference and the filming ahead. During some downtime, we visited Pittsburgh Brewing and The German Club. If you've never been to The German Club, you NEED to find a friend who is a member and go. It was a fantastic experience, and we hope to make it back someday soon!

Collector Stop #3

Name: Tracy Wallace
Home: Homestead, PA
Collection: Western PA
Fun Fact: Tracy has a beautiful vintage Indian motorcycle in his space!

On Tuesday, we filmed all day as we followed tour groups through Western Pennsylvania as part of the NABA Convention's house tours—open houses held by collectors for convention attendees from across the country and beyond. Tracy's collection is housed in an incredible historic building in an old industrial district and the lack of signage had us knocking door-to-door until

Tracy thankfully popped his head out of the building to greet us.

Tracy's building is one of the coolest we've seen to date and creates an ideal setting to display historic artifacts, as the building itself is one. Tracy is a contractor who has lovingly restored a former Romanian Social Club that dates from 1919, just before Prohibition. He told us that his mother recalls going to dances in that hall when she was a young lady. We're sure she never imagined her son would someday own the place! Tracy's collection is beautifully displayed and focuses on breweriana from Western Pennsylvania. His favorite piece is from Rockwood Brewery of Rockwood, PA, and dates to 1907.

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Jim is interviewed by the Cone Top Museum film crew as he sits amidst his vast and beautifully-displayed collection.



A few of the many custom showcases featuring an incredible variety of smalls in the Mickinak collection.

Collector Stop #4

Name: Jim Mickinak

Home: Latrobe, PA

Collection: Rolling Rock

Fun Fact: *Jim is the king of Rolling Rock collecting, owning one of perhaps everything ever made.*

After we left Tracy's place, we packed up for the hour-long drive to Latrobe, PA, to meet the man widely known to have the largest collection of Rolling Rock memorabilia in the world—Jim Mickinak. A builder by trade, Jim has constructed a large edifice on his expansive property that he

named the “After Hours” bar, where his amazing Rolling Rock assemblage joins a vast collection of Western Pennsylvania breweriana, much of it beautifully displayed in custom-made showcases.

The pure density of Jim's collection inside “After Hours” is almost overwhelming. It's so vast he even has a secondary storage space dedicated to duplicates! All the colors and lights create a stunning visual experience—a perfect complement to Jim's 32-foot-long antique wooden bar where he entertains friends and family. Unfortunately, when we went to the editing booth to put Jim's video together, we found a memory card had failed. While we don't have the live footage at this time, we have images of Jim's space you can check out at conetopmuseum.com.



Matt's substantial collection colorfully decorates his basement with an array of high-quality breweriana that is both well organized and artfully displayed.





Chip's burgeoning collection has outgrown even its sizable home in a large outbuilding on his property and will soon be housed in a new museum at the Pittsburgh Brewing Co.



Chip holds a prized possession—an extremely rare bottle of beer from the Echnoz Brewing Co., which was founded by his ancestors and closed in 1910.

Collector Stop #5

Name: *Chip Echnoz*

Home: *Kittanning, PA*

Collection: *Western PA*

Fun Fact: *Chip's family owned a brewery in Meadville, PA during the late 1800s. Unfortunately, it burned down in 1912.*

Our next stop in Western Pennsylvania brought us to the home of Chip Echnoz, who has what is regarded as the finest collection of Western Pennsylvania breweriana that exists. We knew we'd be in for a memorable experience—and boy,

were we blown away! For some of us, it was a reunion as Chip had traveled to visit us at The Mill at Vicksburg this past spring to learn more about our Cone Top Brewery Museum. Housed in an old stable building on Chip's property, his collection is incredibly vast and impressive, and he describes it also as his personal sanctuary.

While coveted by many, Chip's artifacts—some of which are the only surviving example—are already spoken for. The plan is for them to reside at a breweriana museum being established at the new Pittsburgh Brewing Co. brewery for all to enjoy. NABA is a partner in this venture, too. For now, watch his video to see for yourself why this visit was so memorable.

Collector Stop #6

Name: *Matt Welch*

Home: *Gibsonia, PA*

Collection: *Lighted, tin-over-cardboard, and reverse-paint-on-glass signs*

Fun Fact: *Matt's favorite beer logo is the Pabst Logo!*

The next stop on our mission to capture the collector's story was Matt Welch's home to visit his first-class collection. Upon arrival, many

members were still lingering after their tour of Matt's collection. From the get-go, we realized his collection is different from many others. Rather than focusing on a specific style or era,

Matt collects a variety of eye-catching lighted, tin and reverse-paint-on glass signs from many periods that capture his interest and help keep his downstairs bar and entertainment area alive.

He did identify a few brands he particularly enjoys, and you can hear more about those and what drives his passion in his video.