

ISSUE #129 | RESPECT BEER

Beeradvocate

HELPING HANDS OR UNPAID LABOR?

4 NEW SLOVENIAN HOP VARIETIES

HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA'S RISING BEER TIDE

BOOKING
A TRIP TO
ROME'S
HOP STOP

BEER CHOIR:
A JOYFUL NOISE

WHERE
ART MEETS
BREWERY



Huntsville, Alabama



Campus No. 805

To outsiders, Huntsville might seem like the least likely city to support a vibrant beer scene. Not only was Alabama the last state to legalize homebrewing in 2013, breweries and brewpubs couldn't sell beer to go until June 2016. Yet, the city's long history with beer eventually prevailed, and today local taps pour a variety of Huntsville-born brews.

The Badlun brothers opened Huntsville Brewery, Alabama's first brewery, in 1819 on 14 acres near the city limits. Records indicate that the property housed a malthouse, gristmill, and a hops field. While Huntsville may have experienced a robust beer culture in the 1800s thanks to these industrious brothers, that love affair with ale was short-lived due to two periods of statewide Prohibition.

When Alabama finally lifted its ban on intoxicating beverages in 1937—four years after the federal government—breweries were saddled with temperance-influenced laws that made it nearly impossible to operate. A number of beer companies came and went during the 1990s, and in fact, none of Alabama's currently operating breweries were in business prior to 2008.

Thanks to the persistence of the grassroots Free the Hops movement, however, Alabama finally began to right its wrongs starting with the passage of the Gourmet Beer Bill in 2009, which raised the ABV cap on beer from 6 percent to 13.9 percent. Then, in 2008, the taps began to pour with the opening of Birmingham's Good People Brewing, followed by Gadsden's Back Forty Beer in 2009. Not long after, the craft brewing movement spread to greater Huntsville with the opening of Straight to Ale, Yellowhammer Brewing, and Blue Pants Brewery. Today, the Huntsville-Madison metro area boasts nine breweries with another in the works.

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[Venues with ratings from BeerAdvocate.com
have their scores listed in brackets.]

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you'd like to see profiled here? Let us know:
@BeerAdvocate or editorial@beeradvocate.com.

Begin a Huntsville beer journey at Campus No. 805, a former middle school that has been converted into an entertainment complex. **Straight to Ale** [3.98, straighttoale.com] occupies what was the building's gymnasium, where it pours the strong, barrel-aged ales it has become known for. Also within Straight to Ale's walls of boozy adolescence is a pinball arcade, an eatery preparing dishes like Kimchi Pork Tacos and Southern BBQ Poutine, and hidden behind a sliding wall of lockers, a speakeasy serving the company's spirits.

Across the former track field is **Yellowhammer Brewing** [4.23, yellowhammerbrewery.com]. Try Yellowhammer's German- and Belgian-inspired beers, like its flagship Midnight Special Schwarzbier. Or, opt for the Hops Fell Hop Lager, which pairs perfectly with The Favorite, a wood-fired white pizza topped with mozzarella, Italian sausage, and fresh basil from Earth & Stone, located inside the taproom. Thursday through Sunday, revelers can leave the taproom with beer in a purple Dixie cup and not worry about open container laws, as Campus No. 805 is one of Huntsville's four designated Arts and Entertainment Districts.

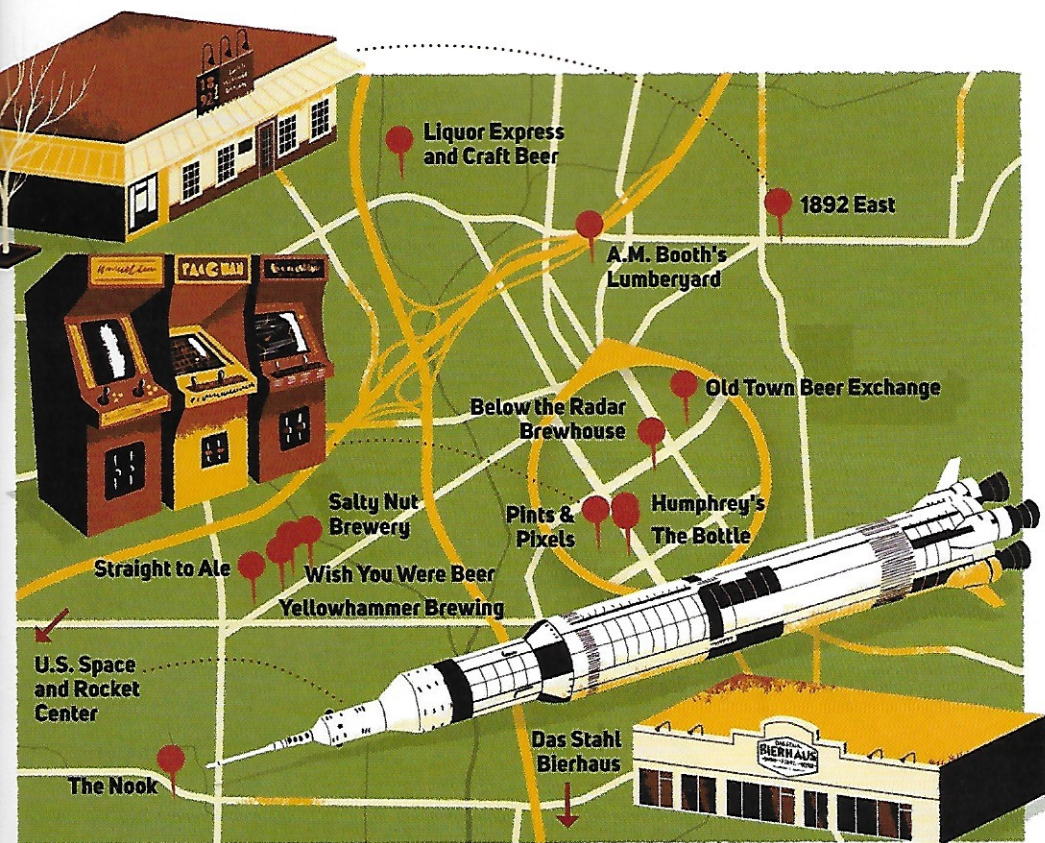
For a deeper look at Huntsville's recent brewing history, grab a to-go cup and walk a block north to **Salty Nut Brewery**



[saltynutbrewery.com], located in Yellowhammer's original home. Order the Vertical House Black Ale, brewed in collaboration with Huntsville's Vertical House Records, and enjoy the lively taproom and beer garden dubbed the "adult frat house" by locals.

Also within Campus No. 805 is homebrew shop-meets-bottle shop-meets-beer bar **Wish You Were Beer** [4.48, wishyouwerebeer.net]. The company's second location (the first is out in Madison) features over 40 taps pouring both international and regional options. Or, take a bottle to go from the extensive selection including Alabama favorites like Cahaba Brewing's Irish Stout.

Downtown, a second Arts and Entertainment District is dotted with plenty of beer-forward establishments. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays, **Humphrey's Bar & Grill** [humphreysdowntown.com]



80 taps—including a wall of 36 dedicated strictly to Alabama—and a bottle selection that tops 400. Choose from hard-to-find Belgians like Brouwerij Van Steenberghe's Gulden Draak or, closer to home, Pillar to Post Rye Brown Ale, from Birmingham's Trim Tab Brewing, to sip alongside the Cajun-influenced menu.

In the historic Five Points neighborhood, **1892 East** [1892east.com] serves Southern-influenced dishes finished with a French precision, like its Crispy Shrimp & Grits, alongside a well-curated draft list. Often, the bartender holds back kegs for aging like Blue Pants Brewery's Bourbon Wee Heavy Scotch Ale.

offers a local draft beer for \$3. It's the perfect place to catch a game, snack on smoked wings with Alabama white BBQ sauce, and wash it all down with Cave City Lager from Madison's Old Black Bear Brewing. Next door, **The Bottle** [thebottledowntown.com], Humphrey's upscale sibling, curates a seasonal list of 12 bottles, like Blue Pants' Weedy's Double IPA, to pair with its prime New York strip steak slathered with roasted shallot blue cheese butter.

Below the Radar Brewhouse [4.02] pours its own Ironside English Brown and Warpath Ridge Wheat Ale alongside made-from-scratch dishes like hot buffalo wings with ghost chili peppers (for that lingering heat) and a grilled New Zealand lamb rack over crispy polenta cakes with a basil mint veal reduction. And BTR supplements its own beers with hard-to-find selections

like the Evil Twin-Westbrook collaboration Imperial Mexican Biscotti Cake Break.

A late-night option with over 50 old-school arcade games, **Pints & Pixels** [pintsandpixels.pub] has 20 taps pouring mostly Alabama beer. Order Good People's Coffee Oatmeal Stout to keep the gaming going into the wee hours. When the munchies kick in, the kitchen serves 10 different kinds of homemade chili.

A downtown bottle shop, **Old Town Beer Exchange** [otbxhsv.com] sells an interesting variety of beers with a bias toward Belgians. It also has 32 drafts measured with Digital Pour, which tracks how much beer is left in each keg so you'll never miss out on that last drop. Try a local favorite like Rocket Republic Brewing's Dark Matter Belgian Quad.

For a sample of Huntsville's live music scene, check out **A.M. Booth's Lumberyard** [amboothslumberyard.com]. The 120-year-old former lumberyard features an eclectic mix of bars and music stages all housed in a hodge-podge of historical buildings. The best part? Forty taps pouring popular locals like Mad Malts Brewing's Raspberry Blond—the perfect quencher after a night of getting down to rockabilly or the blues.

Das Stahl Bierhaus [dsb-hsv.com] in South Huntsville is a new addition to the city's beer scene. The bottle shop and neighborhood pub offers unconventional imports like Einstök Icelandic Arctic Pale Ale. Look for hidden gems like Founders Brewing's KBS on its 32-tap digital draft menu.

Resembling a roadside tavern, **The Nook** [4.15, thenooktavern.com] boasts

On Thursday nights from March through October, the **U.S. Space and Rocket Center** [rocketcenter.com/biergarten] hosts a biergarten under the famous Saturn V Rocket. Hearty dishes like Jaegerschnitzel and Brathähnchen (roast chicken) celebrate NASA's German influences alongside a rotating selection of both German and American brews.

Wrap up the beer odyssey with **Liquor Express and Craft Beer** [liquorexpress.net]. More than 1,100 packaged selections and 105 taps make it the largest beer retailer and taproom in town. Keep an eye out for rare offerings like Straight to Ale's 7th Anniversary Bourbon Barrel-Aged Quad. ■

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