

Lemons Mill Brewery marks ten years of beer, friendship and community in Harrodsburg

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Herald Staff

What began with a garden, a few homebrew kits and some friends wondering whether they could make a better beer has grown into a Harrodsburg gathering place that is now celebrating a decade in business.

Lemons Mill Brewery is marking its 10th anniversary, a milestone owners LeMayne Ellis, Jay Anderson and Keith McQuerry admit they could hardly have imagined when they first began experimenting with homebrewing.

"I know we're still very small, but looking back at the brewery behind my house, making 5-10 gallons of beer at a time, to where we are today is pretty exciting," Ellis said.

For McQuerry, the anniversary brings a similar thought: "How far we have come."

Anderson said it is amazing to see how a small idea developed into what exists today. The brewery's beginnings actually predate the taproom, with the partners initially operating as a microbrewery in a dry county and distributing their beer to other businesses. Harrodsburg's eventual vote to allow alcohol sales changed the trajectory of the business.

"When we initially started as a brewery in a dry county and later moved operations to our current location, we had no idea that Harrodsburg would vote to go wet," Anderson said. "Sometimes you need a little luck on your side."

The story of Lemons Mill began casually.

Ellis remembers that he and McQuerry kept a garden behind his house and would often drink beer while "gardening." One day, McQuerry suggested they try making their own.

"So we bought a couple homebrew kits and made beer," Ellis recalled. "After that Keith said, 'I can make better beer than this,' and here we are today."

Anderson remembers another early conversation involving himself, Ellis and McQuerry while they were volunteering with the Fort Harrod Beef Festival. A discussion about gluten-free beer led them to believe they might be able to make something better than what was available at the time. With craft breweries such as Country Boy Brewing gaining popularity, the group took a homebrewing class at Lexington Beer Works.

"From there the seed was planted," Anderson said.

The feedback they received from friends encouraged them to continue, McQuerry said, although none of the three was thinking about celebrating a 10-year anniversary.

"No, I never thought that far ahead," McQuerry said.

Ellis' answer was even simpler: "No."

At the time, Anderson said, brewing was a hobby. The business was distributing through Kentucky Eagle, Harrodsburg was still "moist," and there was little indication that a wet vote was on the horizon. The partners moved from Ellis' farm to the brewery's current location on Meriman Avenue in part because they had acquired a walk-in cooler and had outgrown their original space.

"When the wet vote passed, we were just in the right place at the right time," Anderson said.

Ellis said there was excitement in knowing Lemons Mill would become Harrodsburg's first brewery since before Prohibition. It was also a period when small craft breweries were appearing across the country.

But getting ready to open required more than excitement.

McQuerry remembers

"all of the work and long hours it took to get ready," while Anderson remembers the community pitching in.

"Most of the construction of the taproom was done with the help of our friends and family," Anderson said. "We called in many favors, and every time someone answered the call."

Any uncertainty about whether people would show up was quickly answered when the doors opened.

McQuerry remembers the size of the crowd. Anderson remembers a fast-paced evening in which the brewery skipped a soft opening and instead worked out the inevitable problems as customers arrived.

"I honestly don't think I moved from the point of sale the entire night," Anderson said. He also remembers how genuinely excited people were to finally have a taproom in Harrodsburg.

Ellis remembers one customer in particular.

Brandon "Lurch" Hurst was waiting outside in the parking lot waiting to earn the distinction of being the first patron at the new brewery and taproom.

Keeping those customers coming back became one of the brewery's early challenges.

McQuerry said the partners were focused on giving people a reason to return, while Ellis remembers the difficulties of getting the Lemons Mill name established throughout Central Kentucky and navigating distribution.

Then came COVID-19.

Anderson said the pandemic arrived just as the business was beginning to gain momentum.

"We survived, but it set us back quite a bit, as I know it did others," he said.

A customer who visited Lemons Mill during its first year would find a much different brewery today.

Over the decade, Lemons Mill doubled its taps from 12 to 24, extended its bar, added seating and a covered patio, increased brewing capacity and most recently expanded the taproom to include dedicated space for live music and special events.

Ellis said the brewing operation itself has grown from a one-and-a-half barrel system to a three-barrel system. Lemons Mill has also added a beer trailer that allows it to take its products to festivals and events away from the taproom.

Its beer selection has evolved as well.

McQuerry said seasonal beers have become a larger part of the lineup, although longtime offerings such as dark amber, blonde and peach blonde remain. Ellis points to Bollocks, the brewery's flagship, along with blonde ale and jalapeño ale as beers dating to the early days.

Anderson said most of the original beers continue to anchor the brewery's operation. Its original gluten-free beer, "180," has been retired, but two gluten-free beers are now rotated seasonally.

Lemons Mill has also become much more than a place to stop for a pint.

Live music, trivia, food trucks and seasonal dart leagues have helped make the taproom an entertainment destination. The brewery now has space available for private events and has gradually expanded its domestic beer, liquor and cocktail offerings based largely on customer input.

But becoming a community gathering place was always part of the idea.

"We hoped it would be a gathering place for the local community close to home where they could enjoy great beer, friendship and not have to travel very far from home," Ellis said.

McQuerry put it simply: "We just wanted a place for people to hang out with



Photo Submitted
Keith McQuerry, LeMayne Ellis, Steve Anderson and Jay Anderson were hopeful when they first opened Lemon's Mill and are now celebrating a thriving business 10 years later.

friends."

Anderson described the original vision as creating a taproom that felt like "hanging out with your friends in your basement." As the business and market changed, Lemons Mill changed with them.

The past decade has also produced relationships extending well beyond Mercer County.

Both Ellis and Anderson credit Country Boy Brewing in Georgetown with helping Lemons Mill along the way. Anderson said the craft beer industry has proven to be supportive and collaborative, with breweries recognizing that a stronger industry benefits everyone.

There have also been plenty of lessons. Ellis joked that his biggest mistake was allowing his brother-in-law McQuerry to talk him into the business in the first place. "Not really," he added.

What he has actually learned is just how much work goes into producing good beer. "There is a lot more to it than just brewing and drinking the final product," Ellis said.

McQuerry said the owners learned that they "can't all do everything" and have had to trust one another to handle their individual responsibilities.

Anderson remembers an early marketing mistake involving "180," their gluten-free dark amber. The brewery placed prominent red "GF" stickers on bottles to promote the beer as gluten-free. Instead of attracting customers, the labels sometimes had the opposite effect because of the poor reputation of gluten-free beers at the time.

Then there are the stories that come from 10 years of brewing beer. Anderson remembers an experimental batch brewed from left-over ingredients at Ellis' farm that eventually became known as "Satan's Syrup." With an alcohol content of 27 percent, it fermented so aggressively in mason jars that it blew the lids off.

It was brewed only once.

Ellis remembers early taste-testing sessions behind his house with Anderson, McQuerry and Wick Hughes. He said there is a video from one of those evenings that "we can't show," adding only that plenty of beer had been sampled and "you had to be there."

For Anderson, some of the best memories aren't necessarily the unusual stories but the ordinary moments shared along the way which include the nights brewing at Ellis' farm and the long days preparing the taproom.

"Early on, brewing was a hobby; we enjoyed it and along with the camaraderie," Anderson said. "As we have grown, we have never lost track of that."

Asked what makes him most proud after 10 years, McQuerry pointed to a silver medal the brewery received in Dublin, Ireland.

Ellis takes pride in creating beer that has great taste and a smooth finish while building a lineup that offers customers a variety of styles. For Anderson, the accomplishment can be summed up in one word: "Survival."

"Owning and operating a small business is tough," he said. "The fact that the beer is still flowing after 10 years is a testament to our employees and customers."

It has also been a family endeavor.

The original ownership consisted of Ellis, McQuerry and Anderson. When the opportunity to open the taproom arrived, Anderson's father, Steve Anderson, joined them. Steve retired from the business in 2025.

For the first year and a half, the owners operated Lemons Mill without employees. Anderson gave up his high school and college basketball officiating career to devote more time to the business, while his wife and family made sacrifices of their own. His sons have essentially grown up around the brewery, helping wherever they could.

"Lemons Mill Brewery is a family," Anderson said.

Ellis also credits former partner Tim Kazimer, who left when he opened the Fudge Company, along with the many employees who have worked at Lemons Mill through the years.

His message to them is straightforward: "Thank you for making us what we are today."

If there is one point on which all three owners agree, it is that there would be no 10th anniversary without the people of Harrodsburg and Mercer County.

"It has really helped to keep the business open and growing," McQuerry said.

"Without local support we would not exist," Ellis said.

Anderson called the community "the heartbeat of business." "Without the support of Harrodsburg and Mercer County, we simply would not be here today," he said.

Ten years after customers first crowded into a new Harrodsburg taproom, the owners are now able to raise a glass to the people who helped transform a homebrewing hobby into a local institution.

McQuerry's toast is characteristically brief: "Thank

you and hurry back."

Ellis would thank everyone who believed in and supported Lemons Mill, whether at the taproom or through festivals, events, restaurants and other places serving its beer.

For Anderson, the anniversary is a celebration of the customers, friends and neighbors who have pulled up a chair, shared a pint, listened to music, celebrated milestones and made memories inside the brewery.

Those customers, he said, helped turn Lemons Mill into more than a brewery — they made it a gathering place and a part of the Harrodsburg community.

"To 10 years of Lemons Mill Brewery, to Harrodsburg, and most importantly, to all of you who made these 10 years possible."

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LEGAL NOTICE INVITATION TO BID

The Harrodsburg-Mercer County Tourist Commission is accepting **written bids** for the installation of synthetic turf on the infields of two (2) Little League baseball fields at Anderson-Dean Community Park, including one (1) Major League field and one (1) Minor League field.

Bid specifications may be obtained by contacting:

Chase Blain
Operations Director
Anderson-Dean Community Park
Email: chaseblainadcp@gmail.com

Written bids may be submitted by **email, mail, or hand delivery** to:

Harrodsburg-Mercer County Tourist Commission
Attn: Daarik Gray, Executive Director
488 Price Avenue
Harrodsburg, KY 40330

Email: tourismed@harrodsburgky.com

All bids must be received no later than the **close of business on Tuesday, September 8, 2026.**

The Harrodsburg-Mercer County Tourist Commission reserves the right to reject any or all bids, waive any informalities, and accept the bid determined to be in the best interest of the Commission.

PUBLIC NOTICE LEGAL NOTICE

TO: THE UNKNOWN HEIRS, UNKNOWN DEVISEES, UNKNOWN LEGATEES, UNKNOWN DISTRIBUTEES, UNKNOWN TRANSFEREES, AND UNKNOWN ASSIGNS OF THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

S.H. JONES, HETTIE JONES (SAME PERSON AS HETTIE BIRD AND HETTIE BYRD), S.B. JONES (SAME PERSON AS SAMUEL B. JONES), VIOLET C. JONES, LLOYD HUGHES JONES (SAME PERSON AS LOYD H. JONES), AND THEIR UNKNOWN SPOUSES, AND ANY AND ALL PERSONS CLAIMING ANY RIGHT, TITLE OR INTEREST IN OR LIEN UPON ANY OF THE LAND DESCRIBED HEREIN BEING TRACT THREE, CONTAINING 7.71 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, AS DESCRIBED MORE PARTICULARLY ON THE SUBDIVISION AND CONSOLIDATION PLAT OF L.H. JONES ESTATE AND LLOYD H. JONES, JR., DATED OCTOBER 15, 2024, AND OF RECORD IN PLAT CABINET E, SLIDE 193, MERCER COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE, AND TRACT FOUR, CONTAINING 114.77 ACRES, MORE OR LESS, AS DESCRIBED MORE PARTICULARLY ON THE BOUNDARY RETRACEMENT SURVEY AND CONSOLIDATION PLAT OF THE L.H. JONES ESTATE, DATED MARCH 24, 2026, AND OF RECORD IN PLAT CABINET E, SLIDE 336, MERCER COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE, AND GENERALLY ALL PERSONS WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Please be advised that the undersigned has been appointed as your Warning Order Attorney in Mercer Circuit Court, Case Number 26-CI-00241, styled as Susannah Jones, Clarice True McRae and Lloyd Hughes Jones, Jr. v. The Unknown Heirs, Unknown Devisees, Unknown Legatees, Unknown Distributees, Unknown Transferees, and Unknown Assigns of the following individuals: S.H. Jones, Hettie Jones (same person as Hettie Bird and Hettie Byrd), S.B. Jones (same person as Samuel B. Jones), Violet C. Jones, Lloyd Hughes Jones (same person as Loyd H. Jones), and their Unknown Spouses, and any and all persons claiming any right, title or Interest in or lien upon any of the land described herein being Tract Three, containing 7.71 acres, more or less, as described more particularly on the Subdivision and Consolidation Plat of L.H. Jones Estate and Lloyd H. Jones, Jr., dated October 15, 2024, and of record in Plat Cabinet E, Slide 193, Mercer County Clerk's Office, and Tract Four, containing 114.77 acres, more or less, as described more particularly on the Boundary Retracement Survey and Consolidation Plat of the L.H. Jones Estate, dated March 24, 2026, and of record in Plat Cabinet E, Slide 336, Mercer County Clerk's Office, and generally all persons whom it may concern. This action concerns the Petition to Quiet Title.

The Warning Order Attorney must file a report not later than 50 days from its appointment. If there is any reason why the relief requested should not be granted, then you should advise the Warning Order Attorney so an assertion of the same as a defense can be made.

Further, if the person to whom this legal notice is addressed is deceased, an infant, a prisoner, incompetent or disabled, a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, or under any other legal disability or immunity, then the Warning Order Attorney should be advised of the same so that it may act as Guardian ad Litem to defend and protect the interest of such person.

Be advised that I am not your private legal counsel. I have been appointed by the Court for the sole purpose of warning you of this pending case. In the event you obtain legal counsel or act as your own attorney, then you should file a responsive pleading to this action, which sets forth any defense and/or denials. Otherwise, judgment may be entered against you for all relief requested. Any responsive pleading should be filed with the Mercer Circuit Court, Ms. Jennifer Edwards, Mercer County Judicial Center, 224 S. Main Street, Harrodsburg, Kentucky 40330.

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