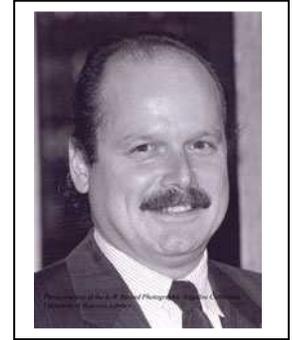


Jim Brickman



Shortly after Jim Brickman opened the Brick Brewing Company Ltd. in 1984, there was a lockout at Ontario's large breweries. Beer lovers from as far away as Ottawa flocked to the new microbrewery in Waterloo – one of the only places still selling beer - to buy their favourite beverage.

Beer came into the store on King Street South at nine a.m. and was sold out in forty-two minutes. There was a three-day delay before more beer could be brewed and bottled, but Brickman didn't rush the process to satisfy the huge demand. He would not compromise quality to keep up with thirsty consumers.

It was the first of many tests that Brickman would encounter in his quest to bring a quality European-style beer to the people of Waterloo Region. Despite owning a company in Toronto, he chose his hometown to launch the brewery because of the City's long history of brewing and the area's large European population.

Brickman uses high-quality ingredients and imports his hops from Germany. The beer is aged for the maximum period legally permitted in Ontario, and is brewed without preservatives.

"I've always wanted to market my own product. I didn't want to re-invent the wheel but I wanted a product that was relatively recession-proof, had a high profile and was easily introduced. I felt that beer was that product," he said once.

Brickman was raised by his grandmother in Waterloo after his parents died. He was sent to private schools in Canada and Switzerland before graduating from York University in Toronto with a B.A. in English and psychology. He ended up writing copy for a friend's advertising agency in Toronto before founding Brick Promotions in 1976, a promotional and marketing incentive company with offices in Toronto and Waterloo.

Brickman investigated starting his own microbrewery by travelling to more than twenty-nine countries and visiting sixty-eight breweries. He also hired marketing and research professionals to conduct studies and focus groups to see whether his dream was a realistic one.

After receiving positive feedback, Brickman moved on to the challenge of obtaining financial backing. Eventually the venture capital division of a major chartered bank put up most of the funds. "It was a close call, I have to admit," he said later. "My situation was such that had the project been turned down, I would have been bankrupt."

Jim Brickman had an old nineteenth-century furniture factory on King Street South turned into a brewery within six months of getting the financing. Brick Brewery opened its doors on December 21, 1984, Brickman's thirty-second birthday, to a line-up of people waiting to taste one of the first craft beers to be made in Canada.

Today the Brick Brewing Company sells several premium brands including J.R. Brickman Pilsner, J.R. Brickman Honey Red and J.R. Brickman Amber. Less expensive brands include the popular Laker brand, Red Cap, Formosa Springs and Waterloo Dark. Brick bottles about 4.9 million cases of twenty-four bottles a year. It started out in 1984 hoping to produce 110,000 cases of beer annually. Brick beers have won Gold Medals at International Quality Competitions in Paris, Brussels, Amsterdam, Barcelona and Luxemburg.

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