



Mark and Andrea Woodcock pause – a rarity for them and the business' other husband-and-wife team, Tim and Debbie Woodcock – while they get the taproom prepared for Saturday's opening of Woodcock Brothers Brewing Co. at the old Cold Storage facility, 638 Lake St. Charles Lewis/Buffalo News

## From Cold Storage, something's brewing in Wilson

BY TERESA SHARP

NIAGARA CORRESPONDENT

WILSON – Woodcock Brothers Brewing Co., 638 Lake St., is poised to open this week in a reclaimed, century-old Cold Storage facility in the heart of this lakeside community.

Mark Woodcock and his wife, Andrea, and brother Tim Woodcock and his wife, Debbie, plan to open the doors of their much-anticipated project Saturday.

Along with a restaurant featuring a wood-fired menu, Niagara County's first brewery producing beer on-site will supply other pubs and restaurants, as well.

"We have a cool building, great beer and unique food," Mark Woodcock summed up.

Mark owns Ricmar Electric in North Tonawanda, started by his father, Richard, more than 30 years ago. Tim serves as a foreman and project coordinator for Ricmar. Andrea Woodcock is the treasurer. They brought this knowledge to bear in renovating and repurposing the nearly 45,000-square-foot site to the tune of nearly \$1.5 million over the last two years.

Patrons will lean on a polished wooden bar top of reclaimed floor joists, fronted by stones secured from the 100-year-old structure. They will peer through floor-to-ceiling glass behind the bar to glimpse gleaming 600-gallon brewing vats on the floor below. They will look skyward and see that the old elevator mechanisms have been left intact, while old floor joists replace an elevator floor to create a wide, welcoming table with seating all around.

“A metal building housing a business like this would not have been as appealing – it never would have replicated the character of this building,” Andrea Woodcock said. “It’s very satisfying to see what we’ve been able to accomplish.”

“People like to see old buildings restored,” sister-in-law Debbie Woodcock added. “We love it.”



Andrea Woodcock shows 600-gallon stainless steel microbrewing vats to acting Mayor Bernard J. Leiker Jr., who is excited about economic impact for village, town and county.

The restaurant will accommodate 175 patrons to start, in the room inside the front door and a side room with a glass door that will be raised in good weather to serve folks dining on the wide concrete porch with the original corrugated metal roof. They will serve lunch and dinner seven days a week.

Because it is a new brewery, Tim Woodcock said, it will begin by producing just four kinds of beer, an American Pale Ale, an India Pale Ale, an Amber Ale and a Porter, but Mark said they intend to offer a dozen choices by spring. After that, “the sky’s the limit,” he said.

Tim Woodcock said he has been experimenting with home brews for a decade and now has to

ramp it up for the huge system they've installed in the refurbished former basement.

"We'll be producing 140 barrels a month – that's 280 kegs," he said. "We'll have our beer on tap here, as well as a guest tap and a couple of other customer beers."

They also intend to supply other local bars and restaurants. And they will stock Niagara County wines in their bar/restaurant, a nod to the burgeoning Niagara Wine Trail.

Mark Woodcock said he has visited a number of microbrewery/restaurants, most notably in Florida where he and Andrea own a home, taking note of a number of successful ideas for their venture. "We decided on wood-fired ovens for our menu – nothing fried," he said. "Everything from steaks to pizza to french fries can be done. ... We brought in two wood-fired ovens from California."

Initially, the business will employ 20, including a chef, restaurant manager and bar manager.

The two siblings and their wives will remain involved, with Andrea Woodcock overseeing the gift shop that will inhabit the small brick building closest to Lake Street that once served as the office for the Cold Storage business. Debbie Woodcock will oversee the restaurant, while Tim will be responsible for the brewery.

Remarking on the family's ability to work day and night together for long stretches of time, Tim Woodcock said, "We've been here seven days a week for more than two years, and we still like each other."

Even their father and uncle, Richard and Stanley Woodcock, have pitched in.

"They like working with wood, and they're retired and volunteered, so we said, 'C'mon down,'" Mark Woodcock said with a smile. In addition, their mother, Diane, has been recruited to help paint, while their brother, Michael, designed their business logo.

Tim Woodcock said he remembers when he and Mark first toured the facility, which had been empty for decades.

"I thought it was awfully cool," he recalled. "Then I saw the 4 feet of standing water in the basement, and I was pretty dismayed. But things got better. We kept our chins up and just kept going."

The brothers purchased the site in March 2010 for about \$70,000. After being turned down by a number of banks, they obtained a \$710,000 Small Business Administration loan through M&T Bank for renovation and equipment.





At the restaurant, this is one of two wood-fired ovens from California. "Everything from steaks to pizza to french fries can be done," Mark Woodcock says. There's "nothing fried."

The brewery and bar/restaurant will occupy about 20,000 of the nearly 45,000-square-foot space. They are in negotiations to rent a large section to a local apple vodka distillery business, while they maintain four commercial retail spots along the southeastern portion.

One site was rented to Debbie Hayes, who opened the Hair Station Salon on Oct. 2 with her niece, Lindsay Trunzo.

Hayes, a Wilson native, recalled working at the Cold Storage site while she was in high school. "It's exciting to see this whole building come together," Hayes said. "They have done such a beautiful job on this. It's gorgeous."

Another storefront is rented to Lakefront Olive Orchard, while two more are still available. "We give them the shell, with the drywall up, electric and plumbing done, and they do the interior design," Mark Woodcock said.

The Woodcocks preserved the original corrugated steel roof over the porch/walkway by painting it and covering the underside, where needed, with tin.

Debbie Woodcock is the only Wilson native of the four family members running the brewery,

though she and Tim now live in Wilson, while Mark and Andrea Woodcock live in Youngstown. “It’s amazing that we could do something with this building,” Debbie Woodcock said, remembering the site from her youth. “Everyone who lives in this town is so happy that something was being done with this building.”

“This is very, very exciting,” said Wilson Town Supervisor Joseph A. Jastrzemski. “They have done a tremendous amount of work, and it looks incredible. It will be a point of destination. People will enjoy an afternoon ride to Wilson and enjoy the brewery. My hat is off to Deb and Tim and Mark and Andrea.”

Likewise, the Village of Wilson’s acting mayor, Bernard J. Leiker Jr., said, “The village is so excited about this. This will have a real economic impact on not only the village and town, but on Niagara County, as well, because it’s the first brewery in the county.

“One hundred years ago, that was the center of commerce in this area because the railroad was there. It’s nice to see some business shift back to that part of the village. ... We’re happy to have them. All four of them are first-class businesspeople, and it’s just spectacular.”