Perhaps it should come as no surprise, but North Carolina's beer lovers have the Germans to thank. In 1711 Christian Janzen, who had joined Baron Christoph von Graffenried in the Swiss and Palatine German settlement of New Bern, wrote to his European relatives requesting supplies for beer making. Janzen noted that “drink is very scarce here.” There's no record of whether Janzen's relatives obliged, though by the late eighteenth century, North Carolinians were drinking beer.

And there was beer aplenty in 1980, when another German arrived in the Old North State. But Uli Bennewitz yearned not for Budweiser or Coors, but rather for the pilsners, dunkels and bocks of his homeland. As the manager of a 300,000-acre Hyde County farm, Bennewitz knew a little something about grand plans and business, so he joined with a local restaurateur to open a brewpub. There was one problem: state law prohibited beer from being sold directly to consumers at breweries. Not to be deterred, Bennewitz met with state Alcoholic Beverage Control Commission officials to draft legislation permitting brewpubs. Six months later, on July 4, 1985, the North Carolina General Assembly made brewpubs legal. Thanks to that legislation North Carolinians can select their libation from more than forty brewpubs and breweries scattered around the state.

Janzen and Bennewitz are but two of the many characters Erik Lars Myers describes in this well-researched work on North Carolina beer and beer makers. At its most basic, *North Carolina Craft Beer & Breweries* is a guidebook to forty-five breweries and brewpubs that extend from Bryson City to Manteo. In vignettes of three to five pages, Myers details the stories and the people behind the founding of such breweries as Heinzelmännchen in Sylva or Mother Earth in Kinston. He also describes the brewery’s equipment, the atmosphere of the pub (if there is one) and the business’s future plans (Note to reader: growth isn’t always in the cards, nor should it be.) Each vignette is prefaced with a list of basic information, including web and physical addresses, hours, and the names of the brewery’s regular and seasonal beers.

Thankfully Myers sought to produce more than just a basic guidebook. *North Carolina Craft Beer & Breweries* opens with a history of beer and brewing in North Carolina, where Janzen (whom Myers does not name, but simply refers to as a "colonist") and Bennewitz share space with Thomas Holmes, who ran a public house in Salisbury in the early 1820s and the Watts Bill of 1903, which prohibited the sale and manufacture of alcohol outside incorporated towns. Myers also provides a "Timeline of North Carolina Beer." Besides serving as a chronology of significant dates in the state’s brewing history, the timeline attests to the risky business that is small time brewing in North Carolina. Breweries are listed as opening one year and then closing the next.
A brewer, first at home and now as the “founder and C.E.O.” of Hillsborough’s Mystery Brewing, Myers knows beer making and the beer business in North Carolina. He has shared that knowledge on his blog “Top Fermented” since 2009. But whereas his blog reaches out to home brewers and industry insiders, North Carolina Craft Beer & Breweries is written for new converts—those who might confuse a dubbel with a doppelbock. The book includes a “Primer on Beer Styles” and even takes a crack at defining craft beer. Interspersed throughout Myers’ book are one and two page sidebars on such topics as hop farming, beer festivals, and “Pop the Cap,” the 2005 campaign that resulted in the passage of a state law allowing for the brewing and sale of strong beer (up to fifteen percent alcohol by volume). Four appendices provide listings of beer stores, cideries and meaderies, contract brewers, and soon-to-open breweries. This last listing proving that the beer brewing scene in North Carolina is a rapidly changing environment.

Myers acknowledges in the book’s preface that “it’s almost impossible to write a book about beer in North Carolina and keep it up to date.” But, considering that his book is the first on such a topic and that it’s rich with information, an investment in even a slightly out of date North Carolina Craft Beer and Breweries is a wise one for all libraries. After all, lovers of craft beer don’t just flock around college campuses.

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