

Bluff City Beer Company Celebrates 85 Years of History Fueled by Railroads, Diesel and Solar

Bluff City Beer Company wanted to do something special to recognize the 80th anniversary of the repeal of Prohibition and to celebrate the 85th birthday of their family owned company. It would need to entail much more than raising a glass and toasting to the dual occasion. It would mean responding to opportunity as the family has in the past.

After a fire completely destroyed the W. H. Bess and Sons General Store in Blodgett, Missouri in September of 1927, founder, William Hansford Bess moved his family and business to the Poplar Bluff area. They leased a storefront adjacent to the ice plant on the banks of the Black River. Access to the ice plant and proximity to railroad transportation provided the family with the means to enter the fresh fruit and vegetable business in March of 1928.

On December 5, 1933 came the Twenty-First Amendment which repealed Prohibition. Non-pasteurized draft beer was produced in wooden barrels. To prevent spoilage, beer was shipped and stored under ice refrigeration. Again, the ice plant and the proximity to railroad transportation offered the firm an opportunity, entry into the beer business. On August 14, 1939, Bluff City Beer And Produce Company was incorporated by the State Of Missouri.

After a fifty year period of operation, the Company divested its interest in the fruit and vegetable activities in 1978 to devote its full energies to the rapidly growing wholesale beer distributing business. Bluff City Beer Company holds the oldest Federal Basic Permit and wholesale beer license issued by the State of Missouri.

As times continued to change, the railroad was replaced with trucks. With the increasing use of diesel fuel and CO2 emissions being generated by their trucks, General Manager, Kathy Bess Holloway, started investigating more environmentally friendly ways to reduce their carbon footprint.

Compressed gas fueling (CNG) was a consideration. This involves using natural gas. However, with thirty or more trucks, there was only one station in the twenty county area to serve their fleet. That option just wasn't feasible. Also, they didn't want to stop purchasing fuel from the existing fuel suppliers that they've had relationships with for decades.

That's when Kathy saw the solution. It came in the form of a solar panel array. She saw one such structure in Cape Girardeau and contacted the company who installed it, Day & Night Solar.

Day & Night Solar Director of Marketing, Melinda Kershaw, met with President, Billy Bess, Vice President Sales, David Bess and Kathy to show how Bluff City Beer Company could not only reduce the effect of carbon emissions by one full month each year, but they would also fix their long-term energy costs in operating their building and warehouse. The solar system would reduce their carbon based consumption by 30% in the warehouse and 77% in the office.

Because Bluff City Beer Company plans to celebrate many more birthdays, they wanted their solar panel system to last too. Day & Night recommended a solar canopy array as opposed to a roof mount application for a couple of reasons. Why invest in a 50-60 year product and install this on a 20 year roof? Who would pay to have the array removed and reinstalled when the roof needs to be replaced? Bluff could also benefit from the canopy serving other purposes like a parking shelter for employees, an area to add Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging stations at a later date, and a source to generate outside electrical

needs. The timing was perfect to take advantage of maximum solar rebates and reducing their energy cost while helping the planet at the same time. The incentives and rebates will be coming to an end soon.

From rail to diesel to solar, Bluff City Beer Company carries on the tradition of investing in its future by embracing new opportunities. They do this always with the goal of serving their customers. Now they've added serving the planet.