

UNKNOWN STORIES

Unknown Stories of WNY: A new future brewing for former malt house

The Silos at Elk Street reimaged what was an abandoned eyesore in Buffalo's Valley neighborhood.



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BUFFALO, N.Y. — It is no secret that many parts of Buffalo are experiencing a renaissance, and a lot of that development is strongly rooted in our past. Such is the case in a rebirth of old grain silos on Elk Street in the city's Valley neighborhood, what's old is new again.

It has been part of the Valley landscape since 1894, when William Kreiner opened a drying house for the brewing industry at 50 Elk Street.

"It's the history, it's part of what we were. We started in Larkin Building, so we're very excited about the rebirth in this area also," said Architect Jerry Young.

Over the next few decades they added the malt house and silos to the complex. It was a facility that provided jobs to the neighborhood and barley malt to breweries from Utica to Erie, PA including Genesee, Kohler's, Koch's, Iroquois, Simon Pure and Utica Club breweries.

Young's business partner and fellow architect, Shawn Wright adds, "I enjoy building new buildings but bringing buildings like this back to life, there's something about it before and after

that is so much more powerful."

The Kreiner Company operated until 1971, but the building stood vacant until 1975 when it was taken over by the Buffalo Malting Corp., which operated until 1986. Wright and Young bought the buildings 32 years after the site was abandoned.

"It's about Buffalo coming back and everybody's happy about that," Young said.

Young and Wright have transformed this historic, and abandoned site, into [The Silos at Elk Street](#). It is a mixed-use complex that is breathing new life into the neighborhood and bridging the gap in development between the Old First Ward and Larkinville.

In addition to the Young and Wright company headquarters, there are also two apartments, as well as Cove & Mill Barbering.

Trinidad and Tobago native Oral Roberts says it was the perfect spot for his pirate and caribbean themed shop.

"This has been really great. This has been so good and the building is so rich with history and when people come in here I love walking around show them the place," Roberts said.

It is also restoring the original purpose of the site, beer. Briar Brothers Brewing opened its doors this summer in the foot print of this facility which was once instrumental to some of the most iconic beer brands in the state.

"A building was originally a malthouse we've been looking for a tenant like Briar Brothers because we just figured that you know beer belongs in this building in one way or another," Wright said.

Briar Brothers co-owner Joel Betti says, "It's full circle. It feels like I'm being able to bring beer to a building and serve beer out of this building that was such a pivotal role in providing brewer's mall for breweries between Erie, PA and Syracuse New York for all those years, it's just like something that you dream up when you're trying to start a microbrewery."

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