

A Reading and Discussion Guide

Minnesota Winner – 20th Annual Minnesota Book Awards

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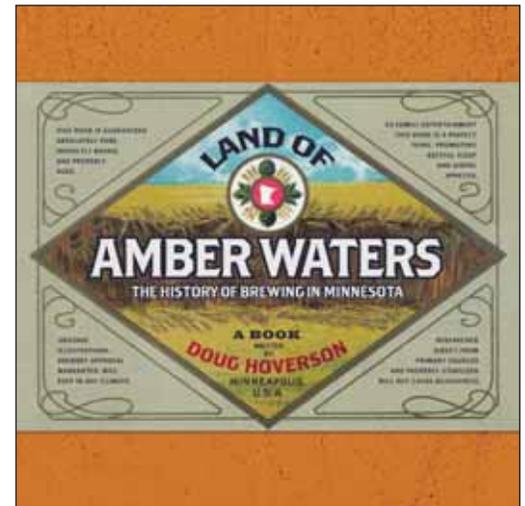
Land of Amber Waters: The History of Brewing in Minnesota **by Doug Hoverson**

University of Minnesota Press

Prepared by the Minnesota Book Awards/The Friends of the Saint Paul Public Library.

SUMMARY:

Starting with Minnesota's first brewery in 1849, *Land of Amber Waters* tells the story of the state's beer industry, from small town breweries to larger companies with regional and national prominence. The book brings to life a colorful beer history including nearly 300 breweries which have opened at one time or another in 125 cities and towns around the state, beginning with the first illegal brewer at Fort Snelling and including today's beer culture led by a new wave of breweries and brewpubs. Photos, beer labels, and advertisements help capture Minnesota's interesting and rich beer history.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What was most interesting and surprising in reading about the state's brewing history?
2. In what ways did learning more about the history of beer and brewing industry help you gain a better understanding of how Minnesotans lived and what they valued during various periods of the state's history?
3. Should consumers support local businesses such as breweries or brewpubs? Would beer drinkers be better served by a wider selection of national or international brands, or by the proliferation of local specialties?
4. In what ways has the brewing industry had a positive or negative impact on our state's history?
5. If you could travel back in time to visit one brewery and sample its beers, which would it be, and in what year would you go?
6. What is your favorite beer? Is this choice based simply on flavor, or are there cultural factors such as advertising or a memorable experience influencing this choice?
7. Has the brewing industry done enough to combat the dangers of over-consumption and underage drinking? What more could or should be done?
8. In what ways did the book increase your interest in the beer industry? Have you tried any new brewpubs and/or beers as a result?
9. What is your fondest beer memory?
10. Looking into your crystal ball, what predictions do you have for what the state and national brewing culture will be like 10, 25, and 100 years from now?

A CONVERSATION WITH DOUG HOVERSON:

Q. What inspired you to write your award-winning book?

I wrote this book to satisfy my curiosity. When doing research on the Northern Pacific Railroad for my M.A., I discovered old newspaper advertisements for breweries I had never heard of. When I looked for a book on Minnesota breweries to find out more about them, I discovered there wasn't one. Once the project was underway, it took on elements of a quest as I sought out long lost breweries and tried to finish a project many people assured me was impossible.

Q. What research did you undertake in writing this book?

While most people assume that the bulk of my research took place a pint at a time, by far the greatest amount of time was spent with obscure primary sources. I looked at hundreds of years' worth of old newspapers, thousands of pages of census records, excise tax records, and manuscripts of various sorts, as well as more beer cans, bottles and other artifacts than I could ever count. In order to be able to converse intelligently with master brewers, I became a home brewer and certified beer judge to learn about brewing science. Of course, I had to sample the beers themselves to be able to describe the differences between styles.

Q. How long did it take you to write *Land of Amber Waters*?

The first time I introduced myself to anyone as an aspiring brewing history writer was almost exactly ten years before *Land of Amber Waters* came out. For the first six years, I worked casually during summers and school vacations. I was granted a sabbatical during the 2004-05 school year, and began researching seriously and drafting the manuscript. Unfortunately, this process created more questions than answers, so the research and writing continued after my sabbatical ended. I gave up keeping track of the hours spent on the book early on, though the index alone took well over 100 hours.

Q. What interesting challenges did you encounter in writing the book?

Of the 290 breweries that existed throughout Minnesota's history, very few still exist, and the records of the defunct breweries are mostly lost. While newspaper articles were often useful, some of the breweries predated the local paper, and the newspaper collections are not complete.

Q. What do you hope readers take away from this book?

My major goal was to encourage readers to appreciate the variety in the world of beer, both in the styles of beer itself and in the way that beer was presented, or advertised, to the public. In addition, I hope readers will see the brewing industry as an organic part of Minnesota's economy and culture - one that ties together rural and urban, rich and poor, across history.

Q. How do you most enjoy spending your time when you're not working or engaged in beer activities?

Apart from time spent with my family, I spend most of my free time in some sort of musical performance. I am a member of the Bass II section of VocalEssence and the Plymouth Congregational Church (Minneapolis) choirs. My brain still wants to play lots of basketball, but my body doesn't always consent.

ABOUT DOUG HOVERSON:

Doug Hoverson teaches social studies and coaches the debate team at St. Thomas Academy in Mendota Heights. He is associate editor of *American Breweriana Journal*, an award-winning homebrewer, and a certified beer judge. *Land of Amber Waters* is Hoverson's first book.

For more information about the author and his award-winning book, as well as links to Minnesota breweries and brewpubs, visit www.landofamberwaters.com/.



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