

Genesee Beer sign in Auburn shines again



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AUBURN, NY (WSYR-TV) - Signs of suds were everywhere at Auburn's Founders Day celebration.

The centerpiece, an old Genesee Beer sign, has stood atop Mike Speno's music store since 1952.

The old neon tubes went dark decades ago, in the 1970's, when Genesee said the cost was just too high to justify.

"During that energy crisis, in that time period, there was a very very negative feeling and that was just one more thorn in your side," said Speno. "It was depressing."

Speno spent years trying to convince the brewer to refurbish the sign.

The company has rented the rooftop from his family for 60 years. Threats to take the sign down entirely ended when the brewer introduced a new marketing campaign, pushing their beer as a retro brand. Suddenly, Auburn's piece of history had a new purpose.

"It's just a perfect fit," said Genesee Brand Manager Lisa Texido. "We've had this sign here for so long and we're now able to relight it to really give a nod to both Genesee and Auburn's shared history. But then, also as a physical representation of the great things to come for both of us."

The company paid about \$65,000 to refurbish the sign with more than 9,000 LED's, inside of 380-feet of rope. The good news is the updated lights are low voltage and use half the power of traditional neon signs.

Anthony DePerno's team at Victory Sign and Lighting was hired to handle the upgrades.

"It was a very big job. We have about 350 man hours and the toughest part was, we had to do it in a three week time frame," said DePerno. "With New York State weather, we had a lot of wind and a lot of rain over those three weeks. So, it was very difficult to do."

The sign was put on a timer to stay lit from dusk to dawn. With the flip of a switch just before 9pm, the job was done and Mike Speno's night got a little brighter.

"It's like rolling back the hands of time, going back to when my grandfather and his partner opened up right here in this location," said Speno. "They've been here as long as we have and it's kind of our good luck charm on the building."

North American Breweries, the company that owns Genesee, paid about 65-thousand dollars to refurbish the sign.

The new lights will cost as little as \$25 a month to keep on, with a timer, from dusk to dawn.

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