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MICHIGAN'S LARGEST BRUNSWICK DEALER

Tours/CARL STODDARD

The Detroit area has its own unique flavor. In fact, it has several flavors — everything from ginger ale to red pop to fire brewed beer.

Several soda pops and at least one beer originate here. All offer a taste of the Detroit area and its heritage. One local bottler has even opened its facilities to tours unlike the auto companies which have closed theirs.

A CERTAIN mystique is associated with Vernors, one of the oldest bottling firms in Detroit. First, there is that business of the oak barrels that are used in the four-year aging of the drink. And then there are the elves or gnomes, winking at us from the labels on the front of the bottles and cans.

Vernors was first manufactured in Detroit on June 19, 1866. In those early days after the Civil War, it was sold in pharmacies, the birth place of many softdrinks. Early pharmacists often prescribed Vernors for upset stomachs. The carbonation apparently helped calm the queasies. But the present manufacturers make no medicinal claims.

Vernors started as a family business, but was sold about a dozen years ago to United Brands — a parent company that owns Chiquita Banana and other food distributors. Shortly after the sale, tours of the plant were discontinued for insurance reasons.

According to a spokesman at the Vernors plant in Detroit, their ginger ale is distributed to 26 states, from Michigan to Florida and through much of the

Southwest. They sell only Vernors and One Calorie Vernors.

Vernors is still made in the plant at 4530 Woodward in Detroit. Its manufacture is a result of the work of man and machine. There are, we've been told, no gnomes or elves working at the bottling plant.

STROH'S Brewery Co. was founded in 1850 by Bernard Stroh Sr. He migrated to Detroit from Germany and he brought with him a beer recipe developed by his family in 1775.

Today, the Stroh descendants sell their brew in 19 states and the District of Columbia. They still brew beer at only one location, Detroit. The brewery is the eight largest brewery in the country and, last year, it shipped six million barrels.

They manufacture Stroh's Bohemian, Stroh's Light and Gobels beer. Stroh also makes and sells an ice cream, but only on a limited basis. The ice cream sideline was started during Prohibition.

Stroh plant tours are free and open to the public from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays at the brewery on Gratiot at the Chrysler Freeway. Tour takers will be able to watch the brewing process and sample the product. The entire guided tour takes about 30 minutes.

The plant will be closed the week between Christmas and New Years, so don't delay too long if you would like a tour during the holiday season.

A BOATLOAD of CHRISTMAS IDEAS



Bill McMachen
SeaRay

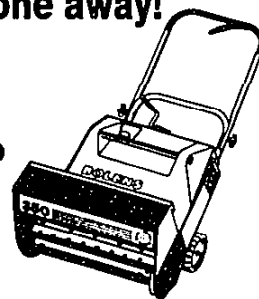
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