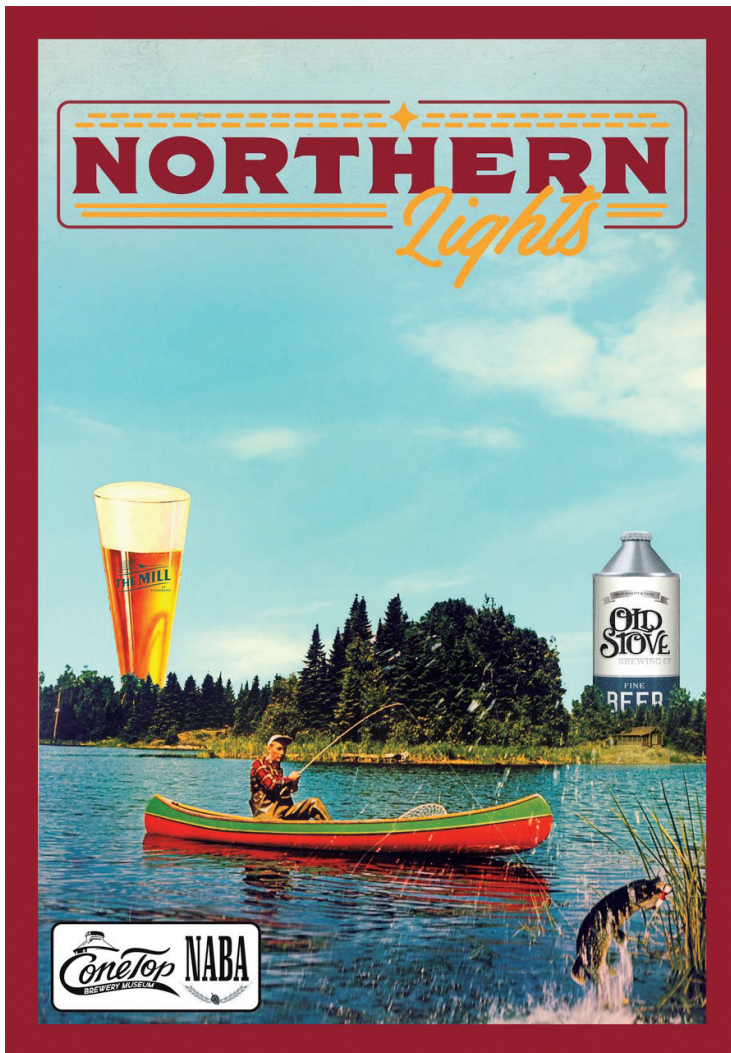




# The “Northern Lights” of breweriana

by Ken Quaas

Cone Top Museum  
presents an amazing  
experience



A poster was created to promote the exhibit using a period visual from one of the breweriana pieces. The same visual also was made into a limited-edition tin- over-cardboard sign.

Dusk is approaching. Streaks of bright orange and red sunset are fading at the close of what has been a beautiful day. It started as a cool morning with clear blue skies. There was fishing in an old, wooden boat on a sparkling, still lake. Soon, there will be trout sizzling in a cast iron skillet for dinner.

The hike back through the crisp air of the woods is scented by pine and a discovery of wild onions to go with the trout. As the cabin draws into sight, there is nature’s music to enjoy—wind rustles the leaves in the trees the soft waves of the lake lap against the rocky shore.

The cozy cabin and its comforts beckon. Its rustic walls of exposed wood bring the outside in. Now it’s high time for a reward. Grab a church key, flip open the cooler, and punch a couple of holes in the flat lid of a steel can of frothy beer. It could be Falstaff, Hamm’s, Leinenkugel, Schmidt’s, Olympia, Genessee, or many others.

After the feast of fish and caramelized wild onions, step outside to view Mother Nature’s encore. The starry night sky explodes with a colorful stream of bright light. This is the Northern Lights display and it might be as close as heaven gets to Earth. It is a rare and astonishingly beautiful view - one that deserves to be enjoyed with another cold beer. This was an exhilarating day in the “Great Outdoors.”

## Idealized in advertising

This scenario above might be a description of an ideal that advertisers were trying to depict when they married their beer brands with the back-to-nature scenes of fishing, hunting, and camping. The combination of beer and the outdoors must have struck a chord with beer

drinkers, because for a period of 20 years or so following the end of World War II in 1945, beer brands across the country offered up a consistent array of point-of-sale advertising with these themes. They likely appealed to war-weary former G.I.'s, who no doubt sought solace in getting "back to nature" to help them forget what they had experienced.

The "Great Outdoors" is a theme that also resonates powerfully with NABA member Chris Moore, owner of Seattle's Old Stove breweries and developer of The Mill at Vicksburg, MI, which will one day house The Cone Top Brewery Museum. Both are currently under construction.

Chris has a special fondness for breweriana from the Post-War era that depicts these outdoor scenes. They bring back memories of some of the most



The inspiration for the exhibit's name is the natural light display in the Earth's sky known as the "Northern Lights," seen here in a photo taken in Barnes, WI, located in the far northwestern part of the state.

magical moments of his childhood, spending time with his grandfather and father at their family cabin in the remote woods of Canada. His grandfather acquired the property in 1956 and it remains virtually unchanged.

"We had no phones, no radio, no electricity—just an old stove to cook our meals and keep us warm, and propane to light up the space," Chris recalled. "It's a place where time stands still. The breweriana with these outdoor scenes is for me a heartwarming reminder of these times—happy, living memories of my grandpa and his buddies talking, fishing, hunting, and drinking beer."

### Showcasing Cone Top's breweriana

Not surprisingly, Chris, with the help of his team at the Cone Top Museum, has amassed a considerable collection of breweriana pieces depicting the outdoor themes of this bygone era. Chris wanted to display some of these pieces in an engaging and creative way in Cone Top's temporary museum quarters in downtown Vicksburg.

"We wanted to tell a story with the breweriana," Rebecca Luong, Director of Design for The Mill, explained. "We want to display the artifacts in a historical context that creates an

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## "Northern Lights" debut at the Cone Top Museum



Before the Northern Lights' exhibit was unveiled at the NABA convention, it made its debut in Vicksburg at the Cone Top Museum. The museum's temporary quarters are in an historic downtown building that is owned by Paper City, LLC (parent company of The Mill and The Cone Top Museum). The building, along with many others in the beautiful and historic downtown, is currently being restored to its original appearance from the late 1800s. There was an open invitation for NABA members to join the exhibit's opening and celebration festivities, and more than 70 attended.



# “Northern Lights” opens at the Cone Top Museum on June 9-10 in Vicksburg, MI

A hallmark of the “Northern Lights” exhibit is the ability to sit, socialize and storytell while taking in the vast variety of Post World War II breweriana that carries outdoor themes and imagery.



After the exhibit’s grand opening on June 9, there was a country music concert and barbecue buffet enjoyed by NABA members. This was held in The Mill’s music venue that is across the street from the current museum headquarters.

NABA’s “First Lady” Helen Haydock joined the festivities, and is pictured here with Chris Moore, owner/developer of The Mill and The Cone Top Museum.





The Cone Top Museum building has a larger footprint and more display area than the hotel suite in Schaumburg, allowing even more breweriana and accompanying props to enhance the outdoor theme. Examples from Vicksburg shown here but not seen in Schaumburg include a Hamm's billboard as well as an old wooden boat equipped with a vintage Evinrude outboard motor.

The large group of NABA members who joined the Cone Top team at the opening of "Northern Lights" in Vicksburg were treated to a generous reception of food and beverages. Just a few of that group are pictured here.



This 4-panel, outdoor billboard sign is a true survivor. It measures an impressive 12 x 8 ft. Signs like this were created by Meyer Outdoor Advertising of Minneapolis and could be throughout the roadways of Minnesota. Some of the paint is reflective to shine off car headlights at night. The sign was originally bookended by 3-D beer mugs which are currently being displayed elsewhere in the Cone Top Museum. This is a rare existing example that dates from the early 1950s.



From left: Ken Quaas, NABA President, Tom Flerlage, Sue Flerlage (holding their pup, Beanie), Tom Hardy of the Cone Top team, Jim Kaiser, NABA Treasurer, Don Kaiser, Clayton Emery, Cheryl Komp, Brian Langenbach and Mindy Reno, Cone Top's collection manager.

## The second annual Cone Top / NABA Breweriana Show held on June 10, in conjunction with the “Northern Lights” event.



Front, from left: Clayton Emery, Isaiah Gardow, Madison Gardow. Back: Heather Gardow, Troy Gardow, Bill Norton, Dave Alsgaard, NABA Secretary, Ken Quaas, NABA President, Paul Cervenka of NABA’s Membership Committee, Ed Heise, and Tina Heise.



Helen Haydock, Chris Moore, and Clayton Emery, NABA Membership Committee, BCCA President.

experience. This is an example of what will be a hallmark of the Cone Top Museum—presenting the breweriana in a way that brings it to life.”

Rebecca is part of a multi-talented team that works on The Mill and Cone Top that includes Mindy Reno, Cone Top’s Collection Manager, Tom Hardy, John Kern, Rob McCarty, and Taylor Kallio.

The team’s goal was to create an interactive and immersive exhibit – where people could enjoy an experience reflected in the themes of the breweriana displayed. They landed on the idea of housing the exhibit in a North Woods-type cabin. Rebecca noted, “We wanted the exhibit to tell a story, to create a feeling, to transport people to a certain time and place. It starts with the sense that you’re walking into a warmly lit, woodsy cabin. You immediately experience a feeling of coziness and comfort.”

### “Northern Lights” theme

The team named their concept “Northern Lights” after the dramatic light displays in the night skies of places in more northerly latitudes. Sometimes called “nature’s light show,” the Northern Lights are best viewed in more remote areas that are unaffected by big city lights.

A 3-D model was developed of how the exhibit could best unfold to create the atmosphere of a rustic hunting/fishing cabin within the confines of a hotel suite at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in

Schaumburg, IL, the site of the 2023 NABA Convention. A key objective was to design the cabin so that it could “seamlessly and purposefully integrate and tell the story of the breweriana,” Rebecca said.

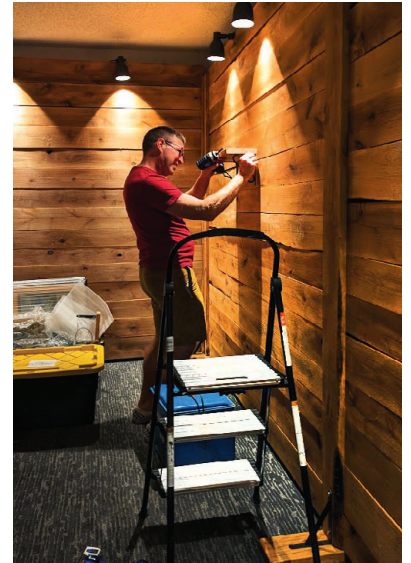
Importantly, the plan was to first showcase the “Northern Lights” exhibit in June at Cone Top’s temporary museum in Vicksburg, and then break it down and move it 200 miles by truck to the 2023 NABA Convention in Schaumburg, IL.

### Months of careful planning

The team made three separate site visits to the Hyatt to measure and plan for an experience that would transport visitors from a hotel suite to a North Woods cabin.

“The planning started last October (2022), when we sourced and prioritized the breweriana pieces (from the Cone Top collection) that were from the appropriate era and with the outdoor themes we wanted,” Mindy Reno said. “We chose about 125 pieces from roughly 400 that fit the era and outdoorsy themes we wanted”.

The visuals in those select breweriana scenes in turn became inspiration for both the materials used in the construction of the cabin’s interior, and the furnishings and artifacts used as décor. “We took note of the variety of items we saw in the breweriana scenes, like picnic baskets, metal tackle boxes, a worn, red-checkered hunting jacket and



**Above left to right:** The Cone Top team surveys the hotel suite as they get ready to reconstruct the “Northern Lights” exhibit at the NABA convention on July 30. The exhibit arrived in Schaumburg by truck after a 200-mile drive from Vicksburg. John Kern gets ready to start unloading the wooden plank walls of the “cabin.” Tom Hardy assembles the walls of the cabin.

**At right:** Tom Hardy and Mindy Reno work to unpack and set up the exhibit at the Hyatt.

the classic cooler,” Mindy said. Pictures of Chris Moore’s family cabin and its furnishings also served as inspiration.

The walls for the “cabin’s” interior were carefully constructed by Tom Hardy, with wooden planks sourced from a nearby lumber mill. The Cone Top team found camping-themed artifacts in their own basements and attics as well as by scouring estate sales in the towns along the shores of Lake Michigan. “All of us grew up going to cabins in Michigan or Wisconsin,” Mindy said. “We had a pretty good idea of what we were looking for.”



To add to the feeling of welcoming and comfort, the cabin display was outfitted with some 1960s-era overstuffed couches and chairs—the kind of second hand, well-loved furniture that might have found its way to an actual cabin in the woods, in the bed of a pick-up truck. This invited visitors to spend some time, relax, and truly experience the exhibit.

### Setting up in Schaumburg

The Cone Top team and their truck arrived in Schaumburg on Sunday July 30, with the goal of opening the exhibit on Tuesday, August 1, the first day of the convention. The team was joined by Mindy’s husband, Dave Reno, and it took the crew of six people nearly five hours to reconstruct the exhibit and transform a simple hotel suite into the “Northern Lights” exhibit.

When the doors opened and the convention attendees were greeted by members of the team with a warm welcome and a cold beer, word spread like wildfire among the hundreds of NABA member attendees that the “Northern Lights” suite this was a “must see” event.

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**The Cone Top Team:** The brains and brawn behind the stunning Northern Lights exhibit seen at the 2023 NABA convention includes from left, Standing: John Kern, Chris Moore, Rob McCarty, Taylor Kallio. Sitting: Mindy Reno, Rebecca Luong. Missing from the photo are Tom Hardy and Dave Reno.

# “Northern Lights” stars at the NABA Convention



A panoramic shot of a hotel suite stunningly transformed into an experiential breweriana exhibit.



Above: Breweriana featuring hunting, fishing and camping scenes were at home in the “cabin.” Beyond the ample displays of point-of-purchase advertising were beer-branded premiums, like the vintage Schmidt’s bait bucket and Hamm’s cooler shown at right.



The cabin’s décor featured many of the items actually depicted in the carefully-curated period breweriana displayed in the overall exhibit.



The rustic directional signs placed on the floor surrounding the suite signaled to convention goers that the “Northern Lights” exhibit was open for business.

## Interactive exhibit brings NABA members together



Feeling at home were, from left: Ron Satterlee, Faye Satterlee, Charlie Staats, NABA Board Member, Barry Travis, NABA Creative Director and Mindy Reno.



Turkey Lardinois relaxes in one of the exhibit's easy chairs and peruses a brochure detailing the future of the Cone Top Brewery Museum, which will be "NABA's Front Door."



Veteran breweriana collector Joe Olsen gives some words of wisdom to one of NABA's newest and youngest members, SchlitZ collector Jonathyn Mowat.



Susan Appel and Christy Bowman take in the experience of the exhibit.



Barry Travis has a chat with Helen Haydock and Chad Higdon.





The Hamm's "Dusk to Dawn" lighted sign reflects the idyllic "Great Outdoors" theme that the exhibit aimed to convey. It was one of about 120 different point-of-sale brewery signs on display, each with its own museum-like description accessible with a QR code.

## Hamm's and the Great Outdoors

While dozens of beer brands leaned on outdoor imagery in the Post World War II era, perhaps none did so with as great and lasting impact as Hamm's.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Lakeside Plastics of Duluth, MN and Chicago, IL was commissioned by the Theo. Hamm Brewing Co., of St. Paul to create a series of captivating signs that linked Hamm's Beer with the natural beauty of Minnesota and its longtime advertising theme of "From the Land of Sky Blue Waters."

"Dusk to Dawn" is one of many iconic Hamm's motion signs that comes in a few varieties. This sign is modeled on a chalet-style lake cabin, an architectural style typical of the Great Lakes region in the early 1960s. The moving scene appears in a large picture window and as the film scrolls, transforms from dusk, with a bluish purple sky, to dawn, with brighter, yellow and red tones. The day-to-night visual cycle then slowly repeats.

There are two different versions; this one has a clock with European-style Roman numerals in the upper right space. The second one instead has 3-D gold beer goblets in the same place.

The "cabin" was invariably crowded with new and repeat visitors throughout the week. They came to sit, talk, and enjoy a beer, just as they might have if they were relaxing in an actual North Woods cabin. "We really loved seeing the reactions of the NABA members and how much they enjoyed the whole exhibit beyond just the breweriana," Mindy recalled. "A lot of the guys were leaving and bringing back their wives, telling them 'You've got to see this!'"

### A hit at the convention

NABA members were duly impressed with the imagination and planning that went into the exhibit, as well as its authenticity. "I was truly amazed by the Cone Top Museum's display and how it beautifully presented the breweriana of the 'Great Outdoors.' It was really a highlight of the convention," said Scott Brown, of NABA's Board of Directors.

NABA's Creative Director, Barry Travis, said, "You'd never expect that a plastic key card to a suburban hotel room would open up a portal into a North Woods cabin full of friends, fun, and beer signs!"

NABA Vice President and Convention Chairman Mike Michalik was aware of the Cone Top team's plans beforehand but was astounded by the end result. "I was just blown away by what I saw when I first walked into the room. I had lofty expectations for the project and knew it had been a hit in its Vicksburg location. But in Schaumburg, the Cone Top crew exceeded everything I had envisioned." Mike's wife, Deb Michalik, added, "The warm cabin vibe was so cozy and welcoming. I wished it had been my room at the convention—I probably would have never left!"

By creating these types of memorable, high-impact, and experiential exhibits, the Cone Top team aims to bring the museum's breweriana to life in its future home—currently under construction as part of The Mill at Vicksburg complex. Team leader Chris Moore is excited about future developments, some of which will be on display at next year's NABA Convention in St. Louis, from July 29 – August 3. "We have some exciting plans for next year already in the works," Chris advised, "I think NABA members will really enjoy what we have in store for '24."