PLACE-MAKING THROUGH BEER-DRINKING: A CASE STUDIES OF MONTANA'S CRAFT BREWERIES

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ABSTRACT. Montana's craft brewing industry has grown astronomically in the last few decades and has spawned many breweries with local names and themes. Using Montana's craft breweries as a case study, this paper demonstrates that craft breweries play a significant role in contemporary place-making. First, brewery and beer names are analyzed to extract several place-based themes, and it is argued that these perpetuate a particular New West identity for the state. Then, through the lens of tourism and the quest for "authenticity," surveys of brewery visitors are used to identify the various attractions that drinking craft beer and visiting breweries offer their patrons. Besides the taste of the beer, the local nature of breweries and their community focus prove to be an important draw for brewery visitors and provide the chance to experience the community in a more authentic way, and thus, offer an opportunity to make a meaningful connection with place. This research proves that craft breweries have become an important venue for place-making, not only in Montana, but in other cities and states with a significant craft-brewing industry *Keywords: place-making, craft breweries, neolocalism, New West, Montana.*

*I*n his travelogue, *Travels with Charley in Search of America*, John Steinbeck writes, "I am in love with Montana. For other states I have admiration, respect, recognition, even some affection, but with Montana it is love, and it's difficult to analyze love when you're in it" (1962, 158). This is one way to express the aim of this paper. When I moved to Montana a few years ago, I was a novice beer drinker. Regardless of that fact, I was drawn to craft breweries as a way to get to know my new state. This research is driven by the question of why visiting breweries has formed the basis of my connection to Montana, and so, the aim of this research is to demonstrate the role that craft breweries play in place-making.

PLACE AND PLACE-MAKING

Place comes into existence when meaningful experience is attached to a particular location. As Yi-Fu Tuan explains, "What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (1977, 6). Edward Relph defines places as "profound centers of human existence," which involve a "concentration of our intentions, our attitudes, purposes, and experience" (1976, 43). Similarly, Arturo Escobar suggests that "places gather things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations" (2001, 143). For Tim Cresswell, "Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we

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experience the world" (2004, 12). As such, in a world that consists increasingly of images, place is not entirely material. It is also of the mind, a product of various images and associations, memories and emotions (Aitken and Zonn 1994; Hanna 1996).

At the same time, place isn't a static entity, but instead is a dynamic process that "can never be completed" (Thrift 1999, 317) and is "constantly becoming" (Pred 1984, 280). New associations, representations, and interactions continuously reshape it. According to Doreen Massey, place is "a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus...It is, indeed, a *meeting* place" (emphasis in original) (1994, 154).

From such an understanding of dynamic, meaningful, experiential place, this research argues that drinking a beer at a craft brewery is a very effective form of place-making. This argument will be addressed from two complementary angles: that this activity provides visitors with a memorable connection to the brewery's location, and that this connection is reinforced and may, in fact, be "pre-loaded" by brewery imagery and naming trends. After providing some introductory information about the growth of the craft brewing industry, an analysis of imagery utilized by Montana's craft breweries will be undertaken to reveal several common themes. Then, results of surveys taken by visitors to Montana breweries will be used to explore the ways in which place-making occurs through such outings.

The Growing Popularity of Craft Beer

In 2014, Montana ranked fourth in the nation in breweries per capita, behind Vermont, Oregon, and Colorado, respectively (Brewers Association 2015a). Montana was home to only one craft brewery in 1990 (McLaughlin and others 2014), while today it has sixty-three. Montana's recent embrace of craft brewing can be explained by two main factors. First, a 1999 state law allowed small breweries to operate tap rooms without purchasing an elusive quota-based liquor license, Montana being the last state in the United States to allow breweries to sell beer for consumption on premises (Newhouse 2013). Although this "sample room exception" restricts consumption to three pints per person and tap rooms must close at 8:00 p.m., this legislation encouraged many new craft brewers to open their doors (Newhouse 2013). Second, a couple of Montana's main agricultural products, barley and wheat (not to mention hops from nearby Washington and Oregon), create a natural symbiosis between the product and the origin of its ingredients. High-quality water is also said to have played a role in location decisions made by several brewers (Newhouse 2013).

The rise of craft breweries (defined below) in Montana reflects general trends in U.S. beer consumption. Although per capita beer production in the United States has declined since the 1980s, the number of breweries has increased from 80 in 1983 to over 4,000 as of September 2015, with 99 percent of those existing in 2014 being "small and independent" (Metcalfe 2014; Watson 2014, para. 2; Watson 2015). Overall U.S. beer sales rose by only 0.5 percent

during 2014, while craft beer sales increased 17.6 percent during that year (Brewers Association 2015b). This growth was not experienced uniformly throughout the U.S. The West, and specifically the Pacific Coast region, leads the nation in both the number of breweries and breweries per capita, while the South lags in both measures (Baginski and Bell 2011; McLaughlin and others 2014).

As defined by the Brewers Association, a craft brewer[1] is "small, independent, and traditional" (2015c, paras. 1–3). More specifically, a brewer is a craft brewer if "annual production is 6 million barrels a year or less," "less than 25 percent is owned or controlled by an alcoholic beverage producer that is not itself a craft brewer," and a majority of its beers derive their flavor from "traditional or innovative brewing ingredients and their fermentation." Because of their unique and independent character, the popularity of craft beers has been explained as the result of demand for product differentiation and growing consumer preferences outside of the mainstream, as well as by the related trend of neolocalism (Baginski and Bell 2011; McLaughlin and others 2014).

Neolocalism is defined as the "deliberate seeking out of regional lore and local attachment by residents (new and old) as a delayed reaction to the destruction in modern America of traditional bonds to community and family" (Shortridge 1996, 10). Wes Flack (1997, 38) identified the growing popularity of microbreweries as an expression of "this self-conscious reassertion of the distinctively local" (along with farmers' markets and opposition to Walmart), as well as an attempt by an increasingly rootless population to create a sense of place.

Montana Brewery Imagery

Images play a critical role in creating meanings attached to place, whether found in place-based novels (Shortridge 1991), film (Aitken and Zonn 1994), television (Fletchall and others 2012), or other media (Zonn 1990). Although they reach a far smaller audience than do the popular media, many breweries in Montana employ imagery to present their establishments and the beer they make in way evocative of place.

Heavy use of place-centered imagery is not unique to Montana breweries. Steven Schnell and Joseph Reese (2014) proved Flack's (1997) neolocal hypothesis by identifying a significant trend of "locally rooted names" used by microbreweries to forge a "sense of belonging." Many of these names draw upon local history (early industries, town founders, local legends), "seasons and the harvest cycle," and nature (particularly in the West) (Schnell and Reese 2014, 179). Derrek Eberts found a similar trend afoot in Canada (2014). His analysis revealed the categories of "place names," "physical environment," and "history" to best describe the various "neolocal strategies" utilized by Canadian microbreweries in branding their companies and products (Eberts 2014, 195).

Taking cues from both Schnell and Reese's (2003, 2014) and Eberts' (2014) analyses, I categorized the names of Montana's breweries and their beers, as

well as brewery logos, to demonstrate how such imagery works to construct a particular place identity, and thus is part and parcel of the place-making process.

Of Montana's sixty-three breweries plus four named breweries in the planning or construction phase at the time of writing, forty-three (64 percent) have some type of place-based name. Drawing from Ebert's (2014) and Schnell and Reese's (2003, 2014) categorizations, I divided these place-based brewery names into three main categories: physical environment, local history, and town/state names (Table 1). The physical environment was by far the most popular category of Montana breweries with twenty-five names, most of which honor either the mountains or rivers that define the brewery's local area. Those such as Blackfoot River Brewing Company, Cabinet Mountain Brewing Company, and Lolo Peak Brewing Company were placed in this category.

The smaller "local history" category includes those such as Beaverhead Brewing Company, named after Dillon, Montana's, turn-of-the-century brewery. Blacksmith Brewing Company of Stevensville is so named because it occupies the main street building, which once held the town's blacksmith shop (Figure 1). Quarry Brewing in Butte draws its name from the area's mining history, and Great Northern Brewing Company pays tribute to the prominent railroad depot in its Whitefish home (Newhouse 2013).

In the town/state names category, it should be noted that two additional place-based brewery names, Big Sky Brewing in Missoula and 406 Brewing Company in Bozeman, represent statewide themes: a common state nickname and the state's area code (there is only one in Montana), respectively.

I next compiled the names of flagship beers and year-round offerings from each of Montana's breweries. (Seasonals were generally excluded to make the list a more manageable size and less dynamic, as seasonal offerings can vary much throughout any given year.) For most breweries, I was able obtain a comprehensive beer/on tap list from Newhouse (2013) or from the brewery's website. For those remaining, I was able to piece together beer selections from Facebook pages, Untappd posts (a beer rating website and app), and my own visits. My content analysis found that beer names are heavily skewed toward three main themes: fishing and rivers, mountains, and wildlife (Table 2).

Fishing and rivers was the most prominent theme in Montana beer-naming. Several breweries offer beers with a clever fishing reference in their names, from Big Sky's Trout Slayer to Kettlehouse's Double Haul IPA to Madison River's Salmon Fly Honey Rye to Mighty Mo's Lip Ripper.

Mountain-related themes are also quite common, from hiking references (Peak Baggin' Pale Ale) to skiing (Rope Tow Pale Ale) to local mountain ranges (Cloudcroft IPA) or peaks. Missoula Brewing Company, brewer of Lost Peak Montana Lager, Bighorn Peak American Bock, Mount Jumbo Northwest IPA, and Devil's Hump Red Ale even declares on its website, "As Montana means 'mountain,' our beers are named after mountains in Montana"

TABLE 1—MONTANA'S PLACE-BASED BREWERY NAMES.

Physical Environment
 Backslope Brewing
 Beaver Creek Brewery
 Beehive Basin Brewery
 Bitter Root Brewery
 Blackfoot River Brewing
 Bridger Brewing
 Cabinet Mountain Brewing
 Canyon Creek Brewing
 Elk Ridge Brewing*
 Flathead Lake Brewing
 Glacier Brewing
 Great Burn Brewing
 High Plains Brewing
 Katabatic Brewing
 Lolo Peak Brewing
 Lone Peak Brewery
 Madison River Brewing
 Meadowlark Brewing
 Might Mo Brewing
 Missouri Breaks Brewing
 Muddy Creek Brewing
 Ruby Valley Brewing*
 Tamarack Brewing
 Ten Mile Creek Brewery
 The Front Brewing
 Yellowstone Valley Brewing
Local History
 Beaverhead Brewing (also named for its county)
 Blacksmith Brewing
 CopperWild Brewing
 Great Northern Brewing
 Lewis & Clark Brewing (also named for its county)
 Sheriff Henry Plummer's Outlaw Brewing
 Quarry Brewing
Town/State Names
 406 Brewing
 Big Sky Brewing
 Black Eagle Brewing
 Bozeman Brewing
 Butte Brewing
 Kalispell Brewing
 Missoula Brewing
 Philipsburg Brewing
 Montana Brewing
 Red Lodge Ales Brewing

*Brewery in the planning or construction phase at the time of writing

Fig. 1—Stevensville's Blacksmith Brewery. (Photograph by the author, October 2014).

(Missoula Brewing 2015). Similarly, Big Sky Brewery's trio of "critter beers" exemplifies the wildlife trend with its popular and widely distributed Moose Drool Brown Ale, as well as its Scape Goat Pale Ale and Slow Elk Oatmeal Stout.[2]

In addition, several breweries without overtly place-based appellations employ local themes in naming their beers. For example, Kettlehouse Brewing in Missoula sells a popular beer called Coldsmoke, "named after the light, bottomless powder that falls in Montana" (Kettlehouse 2015). Bowser Brewing Company, named after its founder, Evan Bowser, has an Electric City IPA on its menu, a paean to the brewery's home, Great Falls (Newhouse 2013).

To complement these naming trends, I also analyzed brewery logos in search of common imagery. In my logo inventory, I found one particular style to dominate: those depicting a mountainous landscape, often with a river in the foreground. This style is exemplified by the logo of Bitter Root Brewery, as shown in Figure 2. Twenty-two of Montana's brewery logos contained similar scenery and/or included a mountain. Besides a common inclusion of barley and hops (also seen in Figure 2), no other such dominant styles emerged from my analysis.

Whether referencing the local mountain peak, the local river or creek, local history, or simply being named after the town it is located in, Montana

TABLE 2—BEER NAME CATEGORIES.

Fishing & Rivers
 Paddlefish Stout (Beaver Creek)
 Trout Slayer Wheat Ale (Big Sky)
 Roe River Pale Ale (Black Eagle)
 North Fork Organic Porter (Blackfoot River)
 Buzzmaker Ale (Bowser)
 Without a Paddle Porter (Bowser)
 Ross Creek Red Ale (Cabinet Mountain)
 Cold Creek Scottish Ale (Canyon Creek)
 Sandy Water Amber (Canyon Creek)
 Shadow Caster Amber (Draught Works)
 Wild Mile Wheat (Flathead Lake)
 Two Rivers Pale Ale (Flathead Lake)
 Grave Creek IPA (HA)
 Big Creek Porter (HA)
 Clear Water Crystal Ale (Higherground)
 Dry Fly IPA (Highergound)
 Whitewater Wheat (Himmelberger)
 Merging Waters River Ale (Imagine Nation)
 Double Haul IPA (Kettlehouse)
 Eddy Out Pale Ale (Kettlehouse)
 Yellowstone Golden Ale (Lewis & Clark)
 Buffalotrout Golden Ale (Lolo Peak)
 Class V Amber (Lone Peak)
 Swiftwater Pilsner (Lone Peak)
 Salmon Fly Honey Rye (Madison River)
 Hopper Pale Ale (Madison River)
 Copper John Pale Ale (Madison River)
 Black Ghost Oatmeal Stout (Madison River)
 Rising Trout Pale Ale (Mighty Mo)
 Pelican Point Porter (Mighty Mo)
 Lip Ripper IPA (Mighty Mo)
 Undertow Double IPA (Mighty Mo)
 Sand Pike Stout (Missouri Breaks)
 No Paddle Amber Ale (Muddy Creek)
 Muddy Creek Chocolate Stout (Muddy Creek)
 River Water IPA (The Front)
 Keep Cool Creek Blonde Ale (The Front)
 Wild Fly Ale (Yellowstone Valley)
Mountains/Skiing/Hiking
 Snowcrest Dark Lager (Beaverhead)
 Sawtooth Ridge Golden Ale (Bitter Root)
 Powder Hound Winter Ale (Big Sky)

(continued)

Peak Baggin' Pale Ale (Cabinet Mountain)
Backcountry Tripel Crown (CopperWild)
Old Baldy Scottish Ale (Elk Ridge)
Black Mountain Black IPA (Elk Ridge)
Two Bull Ridge Double IPA (Elk Ridge)
Cold Trail Pale Ale (Great Burn)
Great Burn IPA (Great Burn)
Base Camp Irish Ale (Higherground)
Two Ski Brewski Pils (Kalispell)
Cloudcroft IPA (Kalispell)
Snowslip Stout (Kalispell)
Rope Tow Pale Ale (Kalispell)
Cold Smoke Scotch Ale (Kettlehouse)
Back Country Scottish Ale (Lewis & Clark)
Alpenglow Wheat Ale (Lolo Peak)
Steep Terrain Double IPA (MAP)
Badlands XPA (Meadowlark)
Lost Peak Montana Lager (Missoula)
Bighorn Peak American Bock (Missoula)
Mount Jumbo Northwest IPA (Missoula)
Devil's Hump Red Ale (Missoula)
Beartooth Pale Ale (Red Lodge)
Glacier Ale (Red Lodge)
Switchback Stout (Tamarack)
Headwall Double IPA (Tamarack)
Firetower Coffee Porter (Ten Mile Creek)
Mountain Man Strong Ale (The Front)
High Country Hefeweizen (The Front)
Pack Mule Vanilla Porter (The Front)
Rimrock'd Amber Ale (Thirsty Street)
Wildlife
Whitetail Whit (Beaverhead)
Moose Drool Brown Ale (Big Sky)
Scape Goat Pale Ale (Big Sky)
Slow Elk Oatmeal Stout (Big Sky)
Black Eagle IPA (Black Eagle)
Bufflehead Brown Ale (Flathead Lake)
Golden Grizzly Ale (Glacier)
Beavertail Brown Ale (Himmelberger)
Double Eagle Scotch Ale (Lolo Peak)
Wolf's Den Wheat (Missouri Breaks)
Black Bear Brown Beer (Missouri Breaks)
Whitetail Wheat (Montana)
Sharptail Pale Ale (Montana)
Bear Bottom Blonde (Tamarack)

(continued)

Full Curl IPA (The Front)
Big Bison American Stout (Thirsty Street)
Duckface IPA (Triple Dog)
Grizzly Wulff Wheat (Yellowstone Valley)

F‍ɪɢ. 2—Bitter Root Brewery logo. (Used with permission of Bitter Root Brewery.)

breweries, by and large, pay homage to the local in a manner very consistent with Schnell and Reese's national-scale studies (2003, 2014). Taken as a whole, though, we can see a clear focus on the physical landscape emerge in all three sources of imagery: brewery names, beer names, and brewery logos. Lolo Peak Brewing Company's tagline indeed sums up the majority of these findings: "Mountains, Rivers, Beer" (Lolo Peak 2016). With presentations so centered on mountains, rivers, and fishing, in particular, its breweries paint Montana as a place full of outdoor recreation opportunities and spectacular scenery. Although not wholly untrue, this particular image is consistent with a "New West," rather than an "Old West," identity and is more accurate in the western, mountainous part of the state than in its eastern plains.

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For many years, the Mountain West has undergone a significant change in identity, from an "Old West" based on the frontier, ranching, agriculture, and mining to an amenity- and recreation-rich "New West." This Old versus New West dichotomy is evidenced not only in an economic shift away from extractive industries to tourism, construction, and other services, but also by rapid population growth and changing in-migrant characteristics toward the more affluent and highly educated (Shumway and Otterstrom 2001; Winkler and others 2007). Not all counties and communities in Montana can be classified as part of the New West, but many in mountainous western Montana fit the description (see Shumway and Otterstrom 2001; Winkler and others 2007).

Even though "New West" doesn't describe economic and population characteristics across the entire state, popular images associated with Montana certainly seem to correspond with a New West identity. Montana's popular image, and in turn, its touristic appeal, has long been highly dependent upon outdoor recreation activities and the natural environment (Gartner 1989; Yuan and Moisey 1992; McCool and others 2001). Even before Montana became a state, Yellowstone National Park had been established. The northern and western edges of Yellowstone National Park now fall within Montana state lines, so many visitors to the park enter by way of Montana. The establishment of Glacier National Park in 1910 brought a second large park to the state (National Park Service 2016). Before it became a national park, John Muir described the West Glacier area as containing "the best care-killing scenery on the continent" (1901, 17). John Steinbeck offered these additional musings on Montana in *Travels with Charley*:

> It seems to me that Montana is a great splash of grandeur. The scale is huge but not overpowering. The land is rich with grass and color, and the mountains are the kind I would create if mountains were ever put on my agenda...It seemed to me that the frantic bustle of America was not in Montana. (1962, 158)

In more recent memory, the film version of *A River Runs Through It* (1992), starring a young Brad Pitt and based on the novel of the same name by Norman Maclean, proved to be a landmark event in Montana iconography. Its story of two young men coming of age near Missoula in the early twentieth century cemented an association between Montana and the sport of fly-fishing. The fly-fishing industry grew by 60 percent in the year of the film's release and by another 60 percent in 1993 (Devlin 2012). The film's Academy Award–winning cinematography drew many others, both tourists and in-migrants, to the state (Devlin 2012). According to Riley and others, this was a clear case of movie-induced tourism based on dramatic visual icons:

> After the movie opened, the Chamber of Commerce in Livingston, (Missoula, Montana, in the movie) was flooded with requests from people who wanted to move there permanently. One of the Chamber members told a reporter: "The calls came from everywhere – Chicago, New York, Florida, California. You name it. People don't like where they live." (1998, 925)

Tourism remains one of Montana's main industries. In a 2013 survey conducted by the University of Montana's Institute for Tourism and Recreation Research, the most popular reasons given for visiting Montana were "mountains/forests," "Yellowstone National Park," "rivers," "open space/uncrowded areas," and "wildlife" (Nickerson and Jorgenson 2015, 9). ("Glacier National Park" and "fishing" were a just few spots further down the list.) Accordingly, landscape images play a key role in the state's marketing efforts. According to Daniel Iverson from the Montana Office of Tourism, "spectacular, unspoiled

nature" is the "leading pillar of [Montana's] brand platform." This focus on nature is evident in the opening pages of the state's official guidebook. Of the roughly thirty images included in the first twenty pages of the guidebook, all feature a physical landscape or someone pursing an outdoor activity against a spectacular backdrop; Glacier and Yellowstone National Park vistas are particularly prominent (Montana 2015).

The dominant trends in brewery imagery, as discussed in the previous section, certainly reinforce the picturesque and outdoorsy New West identity that both tourists and in-migrants are drawn to. However, as Table 3 shows, the number of Old West–themed brewery and beer names is substantial and bears some discussion. Butte, for example, is a city in western Montana with a strong

TABLE 3—OLD WEST-THEMED BREWERIES AND BEER NAMES.

Breweries
 Bandit Brewing Company
 CopperWild Brewing Company
 HA (Homestead Ales) Brewing
 Harvest Moon Brewing Company
 Lewis and Clark Brewing Company
 Sheriff Henry Plummer's Outlaw Brewing
 Quarry Brewing
Beers
 Pioneer Porter (Beaverhead)
 Smoke Stack Scottish Ale (Black Eagle)
 Smelter Men Blonde Ale (Black Eagle)
 Copper Nail Nut Brown Ale (Black Eagle)
 Pulaski Porter (Blacksmith)
 Sheriff John Brown (Bonsai)
 Ghost Town Coffee Stout (Bridger)
 Bullbucker ESB (Cabinet Mountain)
 Copper King's Rye (CopperWild)
 Pit Water Nut Brown Ale (CopperWild)
 Pioneer Pale Ale (HA)
 Miner's Gold Hefeweizen (Lewis & Clark)
 Tumbleweed IPA (Lewis & Clark)
 Lewis and Clark Amber (Lewis & Clark)
 Custer's Last Stout (Montana)
 Hangin' Judge IPA (Outlaw)
 The Gambler American Amber (Outlaw)
 Horse Thief IPA (Outlaw)
 Galena Gold (Quarry)
 Open Cab Copper (Quarry)
 Open Pit Porter (Quarry)
 Shale Pale Ale (Quarry)
 Gneiss IPA (Quarry)

copper mining history, and it is classified by Winkler and others as an Old West community (2007). Butte's Quarry Brewing employs a consistent mining theme in all of its flagship beers (Table 3). Similarly, at Black Eagle Brewery near Great Falls, several beers pay homage to the smelting operation that once employed many in the area (Table 3). Various Montana breweries contain references to the settlement of the frontier, from Homestead Ales to Lewis and Clark Brewing Company, and from Pioneer Porter to Custer's Last Stout. Sheriff Henry Plummer's Outlaw Brewing also applies a coherent Old West theme to its operation, beginning with its namesake, a sheriff of questionable repute in one of Montana's most lawless historic mining towns. Outlaw Brewing's beer names employ several amusing Old West clichés, such as Horse Thief IPA and The Gambler American Amber (Table 3). No matter that the brewery is located in the now definitively New Western community of Bozeman, home to Montana State University and many a celebrity vacation home.

Three breweries—Bandit Brewing Company, Great Northern Brewing Company, and Yellowstone Valley Brewing Company—use playful cowboy imagery in their logos, although very little of their other imagery speaks to the Old West. Great Northern Brewing Company, located in touristy Whitefish, is, in proper Old West fashion, named after a railroad depot, but its flagship beers fall under a loose theme invoking nearby Glacier National Park (Figure 3). The logo chosen by Billings' Yellowstone Valley Brewing Company depicts a cowgirl riding a fishing fly, creatively blending two Montana icons.

As mentioned earlier, Montana's New West communities can be found mostly in the western, mountainous part of the state, as opposed to its eastern plains, where out-migrants outnumber in-migrants (Young and Zimmerman 2013). Breweries in eastern Montana, although many fewer in number (fourteen

FIG. 3—Great Northern Brewing Company logo. (Used with permission of Great Northern Brewing Company.)

of sixty-three, including those in Billings), do sustain the natural-environment themes so prominently seen in their western cousins. Four breweries are named for rivers (Beaver Creek, Canyon Creek, Missouri Breaks, and Yellowstone Valley) and several beer names pay tribute to fish and wildlife associated with the plains. Examples include Missouri Breaks' Sand Pike Stout, Beaver Creek's Paddlefish Stout, Thirsty Street's Big Bison American Stout, and Montana Brewing Company's Sharptail [Grouse] Pale Ale. Other region-appropriate names that reference the physical environment are High Plains Brewing, Badlands Extra Pale Ale (from Meadowlark Brewing), and Sandy Water Amber (from Canyon Creek Brewing). Harvest Moon Brewing Company recognizes the agricultural nature of its surrounding area, as does Meadowlark's Harvester Cream Ale and its Black Steer's Tookus Oat Malt Stout.

Although the inspiration for Montana brewery imagery ranges from outlaws to meadowlarks, from katabatic winds to copper mining, all other themes are outnumbered by those that evoke the ample natural amenities that spoke to moviegoers in *A River Runs Through It* and now draw affluent in-migrants to the New West. It follows that most of Montana's breweries are located amidst the Rocky Mountains, in those communities that see many seasonal tourists and are growing steadily in both population and housing values (Ghose 2004; Young and Zimmerman 2013). Many characteristics associated with the New West have been found to be present in places that have a craft brewery: high cost of living, fewer health risks, higher levels of well-being, and a highly educated population, so it seems as though the two trends are mutually reinforcing (Baginski and Bell 2011; Florida 2012). It is no surprise, then, that location traits pulling in new New Westerners are accentuated in brewery marketing efforts. Fishing-, mountain-, and wildlife-themed beers represent the trifecta of contemporary Montana imagery, identity, and touristic appeal.

When exploring the relationship between Roslyn, Washington, and its portrayal as Cicely, Alaska, on television's *Northern Exposure*, Stephen Hanna concludes that televisual Cicely is an integral and inextricable part of Roslyn's history and identity and thus, to its process of becoming (1996). As such, Montana, or any other place, is as much a product of its various media depictions as it is a material form. In Hanna's words, "The place itself, with its name, buildings, history, and boundaries, is already a representation...Thus, any analysis of place must start and end with the necessarily partial representations that communicate the place's meanings..." (1996, 646). Therefore, images of the state that are perpetuated in movies, tourism brochures, and brewery imagery alike all merge to create and give meaning to the place that is known as Montana.

THE APPEAL OF CRAFT BREWERIES

By playing upon Montana's much-loved and widely accepted identity as an outdoor paradise, many breweries use this inherent attractiveness to sell their

beer, while at the same time presenting this particular "Montana" to brewery visitors, whether they are local or from further afield. As the key to place-making is meaningful experience in and of place, it is important to attempt to assess the impact of such representations upon the individual craft brewery experience. So, I conducted surveys of Montana brewery patrons to find out whether and how this widespread use of fishing, wildlife, mountains, and other local themes has had an impact on their experience of visiting a brewery and drinking its beer. And if not, in what ways does visiting a brewery in one of Montana's cities or small towns contribute to the process of place-making?

Over two weekends in September 2014, I conducted surveys at four breweries: Big Sky Brewing in Missoula, Lolo Peak Brewing in Lolo, and Blacksmith Brewing and Wildwood Brewing in Stevensville. These breweries were selected based on their proximity to my residence, but also because of their differences. Big Sky, a regional brewer, has a strong Montana theme, and I guessed it would attract more out-of-state visitors than the others, and it did. Lolo Peak is a relatively new brewery located in a town that has become a bedroom community for Missoula. Blacksmith Brewing is a small-town establishment that I knew to be popular with the local community, and Wildwood is one of just a few organic breweries in the state. Wildwood does not have a place-based name and its "woodsy" theme is more evocative of an "olde European" charm than Montana ruggedness.

After obtaining advance permission from each brewery's owner or representative, I approached brewery visitors in an informal manner and asked them several questions. Because of the informal style of my questioning and the fact that most patrons were part of groups of two or more, I recorded answers for each group, rather than for each individual I made contact with. I collected answers from sixteen groups at Big Sky, fifteen at Lolo Peak, seven at Blacksmith, and four groups at Wildwood, for a total of forty-two different groups and eighty respondents. Additionally, during April and May 2015, I conducted an online survey targeting those who frequent Montana's breweries. I used the "snowball" method of recruiting participants by asking friends in Montana to distribute the link to my survey. A link to the survey was also posted on a website dedicated to Montana breweries (montanabeerfinder.com). I obtained seventy responses to my online survey.

The first question of my in-person surveys was "where are you from?" Many more respondents were from the local area (20 percent) or the region (44 percent) than from out-of-state (36 percent); however, on the day of my survey, a Friday afternoon, Big Sky Brewing attracted many more out-of-state visitors (twenty-five of thirty-five individuals surveyed). This is presumably due to its location near the Missoula airport, as well as Big Sky's status as a regional brewery with a relatively wide distribution. I didn't explicitly ask this question in my online survey, but due to my recruitment methods and many responses, I can infer that most respondents live in Montana.

The next question I addressed to locals and participants from the nearby area was "What do you enjoy most about coming here?" Similarly, I asked visitors from farther afield "What is the attraction of visiting these microbreweries for you?" The overwhelming response I received to both questions (from thirty-one of forty-two groups or 73 percent) had to do with the opportunity to try different, unique, and tasty beers. My online survey generated similar responses. In answer to the question "For you, what is the most important factor in selecting a brewery to visit?" The answer choice "taste, style, or quality of beer" was chosen by 71 percent of respondents. "Location" was second with 24 percent and "theme (name of brewery, beer names, décor, etc.)" was chosen by only 4 percent. When asked to elaborate, "good beer" was mentioned many times. In addition, several respondents indicated that they enjoy trying new breweries, but the beer would need to be exceptional for them to return.

When asked whether they were more likely to visit a Montana brewery with a Montana-related or local theme, the overwhelming response by in-person participants at all breweries was "no." Several survey respondents at Big Sky Brewing did, however, offer that "creative names of the beers" were a draw, as was name recognition of its flagship Moose Drool Brown Ale. The brewery's name also provided a close association with the state of Montana. As one respondent replied, "I like for it to have a place of origin, that's not just thrown out there." Another simply stated: "Big Sky. Montana." In the online survey, this question was posed as:

> Would you be more inclined to visit a brewery with a Montana-related or place-based theme? For example, if visiting [the town of] Whitefish, would you be more inclined to visit Great Northern Brewing or Bonsai Brewing if you hadn't yet been to either? Please explain.

As in the in-person survey, the majority of respondents answered "no" or "both," citing the quality of the beer instead, but a sizeable number of respondents (38 percent) indicated that theme would in fact play a role in their decision. A few such positive responses were:

> "Montana-related brewery because of the more rustic and cozy atmosphere and beers related to things in the surrounding area."

> "Great Northern because the railroad is a big player along the highline [northern Montana]. Bonsai sounds like a Japanese restaurant and not a brewery."

> "Great Northern feels more like Montana."

> "Oh yes. The specific local flavor and personality of the place enhances the visit."

"I would be more inclined to visit a place-based themed brewery. I think those
names capture the essence of why they chose that town to open a brewery in."

With significant exceptions, the results of these first several survey questions
seem to reveal that brewery imagery has a minimal impact on the decision of
whether to visit or return to a particular brewery. Despite the creative beer
names and brewery themes intended to evoke a local or Montana sense of
place, for many brewery patrons, the taste, quality and beer selection trumps
all. However, to complement the sentiments expressed in the responses listed
above, out-of-state visitors at Big Sky Brewing did indicate a stronger associa-
tion between its beers (for example, Moose Drool, Trout Slayer) with the state
of Montana than other groups surveyed. This is likely due to the alignment of
Montana's popular tourist image with Big Sky's theme, as well as the brewery's
wider name recognition. I hypothesize that if my surveys had been successful
in finding and targeting more out-of-state visitors, the results would have
shown "Montana" themes to be more central to the brewery selection decision.

THE BEER TOURIST EXPERIENCE

A fitting way to approach and describe the connections with place that can
result from visiting a brewery is through the lens of tourism. Although many
who frequent Montana's breweries are a local crowd, many Montanans enjoy
visiting breweries when they find themselves in other parts of the state. The
state's breweries are packaged in a few different ways to encourage "beer tour-
ism" (Plummer and others 2004). First, as visitors to most craft breweries in
Montana may notice on display, the Montana Brewers Association (MBA)
annually publishes a "Trail Map" with member locations mapped and listed
(Figure 4). The MBA also hosts several beer festivals each year. Second, and
more recently, a Montana beer enthusiast led a successful Kickstarter campaign
to create the "Montana Beer Passport," a booklet with space for passport
stamps at all currently existing and known future Montana breweries. These
readily available trail maps and the passport gimmick encourage visitors and
residents alike to visit breweries around the state.

Tourism is often understood as a quest for authenticity, a quality that is
absent from many aspects of contemporary everyday life (MacCannell 1973).
"Authentic" is, of course, a problematic term. In our postmodern world, it is
increasingly difficult to distinguish the real from the simulacrum and the truly
authentic from that made to seem authentic (Baudrillard 1994). In fact, just as
places are "always already representations" of various images, previous experi-
ences, and social interactions (Hanna 1996, 646); Chris Rojek (1997, 53)
describes a similar process by which tourists draw from "a range of signs,
images and symbols" [that is, "index files"], such as guide books, novels,
movies, and TV, to frame their experience at a sight. Rojek asks, "If sights are
always pot-pourris which utilize elements from a variety of index files at both
conscious and unconscious levels, how can one speak of an authentic

Fɪɢ. 4—The Montana Brewers Association 2016 "Trail Map." (Used with permission of the Montana Brewers Association.)

experience of the real place?" (1997, 55) In the case of beer tourism, the answer seems to be found where the locals go.

In my online survey, I asked the question, "How does visiting a brewery add to your experience of the place you're visiting?" Most responses expressed that, through these visits, it was possible to get a feel for the "local culture" or "local flavor:"

"Allows you to meet locals who usually have a deep love for the town and can tell you more about it."

"It allows for the community to show you more than just the tourist traps. You talk to the regulars at the breweries and they tell you about other places in their city to go visit and check out. People at breweries tend to be friendly!"

"If you want to get the most out of your trip talk to the locals. There's not a better place to get the insider tips on things to do and places to see."

"I really think stopping by a brewery or two when visiting a town in Montana really gives you a great sense of the community you're visiting. It gives you a chance to talk to the locals and to have something to connect to in that town."

Many survey responses indicated that breweries provided an opportunity to connect with locals and to learn about the area from a local perspective. The brewery atmosphere offers a comfortable means to get to know the community in a different way than is available to most tourists or passers-through. These sentiments certainly seem to correspond with MacCannell's theory that "Sightseers are motivated by a desire to see life as it is really lived, even to get in with the natives...," to search for that now-elusive authenticity (1973, 592).

At the same time, many brewery proprietors strive to facilitate that connection with the local area, and not only in their choice of names. Most Montana breweries, especially those in small towns, function as community gathering places, offering live music and other events. For example, Lewis and Clark Brewing brews a "Neighborhood IPA" and Lolo Peak brews similar "Fresh-Hopped Community" beers for which local growers contribute their hops to make a unique brew (Newhouse 2013; Lolo Peak 2016). Lewis and Clark also offers "Ales for Charity Nights" as fundraisers for local nonprofits (Lewis and Clark 2016). Blacksmith's "Pint Nights" and Draught Works' "Chug for Charity" events have similar goals. Several breweries, including Blacksmith, Draught Works, Quarry, Philipsburg, and Kettlehouse, to name just a few, are housed in renovated historic buildings and have given these spaces new life. The economic impact of breweries in the state has been significant, creating more than 670 jobs and adding $4 million in state revenues (Sorenson 2014). One of the owners of Helena's Blackfoot River Brewing Company, Brad Simshaw, sums up this community connection:

> Even with nearly forty breweries in the state now, Montana is unique because you can look at every brewery and know they opened their doors because they said, 'I like beer and want to open a brewery, and I want it to be a nice place for my community.' This isn't like some brewpub that only wants to open because it thinks it can do better than the one down the street, so they find five investors to raise a few million dollars to try it. It's much more from the ground up here. (quoted in Newhouse 2013, 84)

When asked to describe the typical Montana craft brewery, several survey respondents highlighted the community aspect, with responses including "Community-oriented," "All seem to care about the communities they are located in," "A member of the community and a great beer maker," and "Community meeting space." A few longer responses (given in answer to various other survey questions) highlighted the positive community impacts as well:

> "Helena is a lot cooler now that we have Blackfoot and [Lewis and Clark] —in many ways their presence has enriched the community and made it a more desirable place."

> "Montana craft beer is more about community. The taprooms allow for families to meet, children to play quietly, music and entertainment to be heard, it is more like the Irish version of a pub."

"I think breweries are focal points for the community and the style and atmosphere of the brewery reflects on the community that partakes of it."

"Breweries are about community. They are social places where you gather with friends and share a common love of good beer. I like the idea of visiting somewhere, having a drink or two with no pressure and just sit back and enjoy life."

Clearly, this palpable community function makes a favorable impression on visitors, and knowledge of this adds to the local, "authentic" nature of their brewery experience.

Beer and Wine Tourism, Compared

Although beer and wine tourism possess obvious similarities, some key differences between the two activities assist in illuminating the nature of the former. First of all, wineries enjoy an intrinsic connection to place. Wineries attribute the uniqueness and quality of their wines to *terroir* (that is, soil, climate, exposure, and the like), while breweries are not usually located at the source of their main ingredients (Plummer and others 2005). Unlike wineries, breweries must explicitly emphasize how their location impacts the taste of their beer, and not all attempt to make that connection. In the case of Montana breweries, it can be assumed that most barley and wheat used in beer production does come from Montana, as these are the state's main agricultural products. Hops, however, is the more charismatic and flavorful ingredient in beer, and has even been said to possess wine's *terroir* (Kopp 2014). Montana doesn't currently grow hops in large quantities, so unlike those in Oregon, Montana's beer makers are unable to promote their beers using the cachet of locally grown hops (Dapcevich 2016).

Despite these challenges to marketing beer as a locally grown product, a few Montana breweries do underscore how the taste of their beer is tied to place. For example, on The Front Brewing Company's homepage, under a striking photograph of the Rocky Mountain Front, text reads: "The Front is a spectacular stretch of Montana where the prairies and mountains converge. Elements of that convergence—stream-fed water and local grains—also come together in our brews" (The Front 2016). The founders' mission of Dunluce Brewing in Superior is explained on its website: "We grow barley at Adam's family farm in North Central Montana, grow our own hops and yeast and brew at Lauren's family's farm in Western Montana. We believe that everything that goes in to our beer can be meaningful and improve the experience of drinking it" (Dunluce Brewing 2016). On the "About" tab of Ten Mile Creek Brewery's website, the brewers explain the importance of the local water supply to their operation:

Our namesake "Ten Mile Creek" comes from our most important ingredient, water. The creek is in the beer. The Ten Mile Creek watershed supplies most of Helena, including our brewery. Ten Mile Creek gives us clean water that we

use to produce hand crafted beer. Each batch has Montana grown barley and all other ingredients are sourced as local as possible [sic]. (Ten Mile Creek 2016)

Along these lines, Missoula Brewing Company's tagline is "Taste Montana," but no further explanation of how that taste is tied to place is offered. Instead, as is more typical of Montana breweries, the brewery expands on descriptions of its beers and the mountains for which each is named (Missoula Brewing 2016).

Although local ingredients are not always emphasized, the Montana Brewers Association, along with some partners, has created a "Buy Local Beer Here" campaign, involving signs displayed in bars and restaurants, as well as stickers and social media hashtags (Montana Brewers Association 2016). For many patrons, the purchase of a product that is made locally, by a local business, is more important than the use of local ingredients. Again, when asked the online survey question "What is the attraction, for you, of visiting craft breweries?," "good beer" was the overwhelming response, but approximately 12 percent of respondents included some version of "supporting a local business" or "supporting the local economy" in their answers. This type of response came up rather often in the in-person surveys as well. Although not the main motivating factor for visiting a craft brewery, the local nature of the product is clearly an important consideration.

Schnell and Reese explain that because, unlike wineries, breweries cannot draw their rootedness (literally) from the soil, they must "rely on different means to evoke localness: the art of brewing itself, and the narratives of place they employ in their marketing" (2014, 176). Of course, we saw earlier that Montana breweries do rely a great deal upon placed-based branding and images that reflect Montana's natural attributes. In promoting wineries, often images of the winery's setting, its surrounding rural environment, and "impeccably cultivated vineyards" (that is, "the rural idyll") are used in advertising (Williams 2001, 5). Accordingly, Carmichael's surveys of visitors to the Niagara wine region revealed that the rural landscape was the most important factor that influenced visitors' enjoyment of their trip (2005).

In contrast, all of Montana's breweries are located in cities and towns, and several taprooms are housed alongside the brewery in nondescript industrial buildings in parts of town zoned for light industry, so the brewery's immediate environment is not a strong draw for tourists (Figure 5). Therefore, breweries must make an effort to create a less sterile environment for their patrons, and my surveys revealed that they generally succeed. Several respondents in both surveys mentioned "welcoming atmosphere," "warm atmosphere," or some version of this sentiment (especially as opposed to bars), when asked about the attraction of visiting microbreweries (in-person survey) and when asked to describe the typical Montana craft brewery (online). Key to the creation of atmosphere, many breweries decorate their taprooms in a rustic style, using reclaimed wood and local or beer-related memorabilia (Figure 6).

Fig. 5—Industrial setting of Madison River Brewing Company. (Photograph by the author, July 2014).

Place-Making Through Beer-Drinking

Just as neolocalism has emerged as a reaction to overwhelming homogenization (Flack 1997), perhaps, in an age of the "McDisneyization" of many tourist sites and experiences (Ritzer and Liska 1997), many tourists desire experiences in place "ruled not by impersonal networks of capital, but rather by networks of local, personal connections" (Schnell 2011, 302). As a means to that end, tourists increasingly seek to experience "the 'authentic' or 'true' nature of a place" through the consumption of local food and drink (Schnell 2011, 281). My surveys revealed that the imbibing of local drink, in this case, was a source of connection. In my online survey, I asked the question "Do you feel more connected to the place you've visited after visiting one of its breweries?" Eighty-three percent of the responses to this question were in the affirmative, and these were some of the responses gathered:

> "I think so…that is the sense of place…you can drink Bud Light anywhere in the world…breweries and distilleries are original and unique to the area and region."

> "Yes, we always like to drink local beer. It both supports the local community and helps get to know the town you're in."

FIG. 6—The interior of Draught Works in Missoula. (Photograph by the author, February 2016).

"There's definitely a connection. The character of a place is expressed in a brewery, or anywhere they're producing something local, or where locals socialize."

"I would say so. You know you're drinking what the locals drink, so for a moment at least, you feel like you fit right in to wherever you're visiting."

However, a relatively small number of survey participants responded as did those above, that the connection was found in the act of beer-drinking itself. For many more, the chance to be in a community gathering place and to interact with members of that community were more important factors in forging that connection. These feelings are evidenced in these additional responses to the same question, "Do you feel more connected to the place you've visited after visiting one of its breweries?:"

"Yeah. I can peek into that community's culture."

"Yeah. It's a chance to participate in something local and get a better sense of the community."

"Watching and interacting with the people gives me a more thorough perspective of the community and why they live where they do."

"Yes, you get to see a small picture of the community blended together in one place."

"I think so. It's nice to see a place that was created by people in a community."

From these comments, the tourist experience is undoubtedly enhanced by the chance to peer through the window that the brewery provides into the community's culture. Such "authentic," local experience results in a stronger connection with that community. The question of connectedness was complemented by a similar question posed in my online survey: "How does visiting a brewery add to your experience of the place you're visiting?" Again, most answers expressed an appreciation of the opportunity to chat with locals, to get to know that community by being present in an establishment with so many ties to the local:

"It gives you a sense of what the people in the town are like and how they interact."

"Allows you to meet locals who usually have a deep love for the town and can tell you more about it."

"It definitely enhances the experience…it's a great way to get a taste of the local flavor."

"It allows for the community to show you more than just the tourist traps. You talk to the regulars at the breweries and they tell you about other places in their city to go visit and checkout. People at breweries tend to be friendly!"

"I really think stopping by a brewery or two when visiting a town in Montana really gives you a great sense of the community you're visiting. It gives you a chance to talk to the locals and to have something to connect to in that town."

"[Visiting a brewery] makes me feel like I've experienced the place in a new way that helps me appreciate the region and local areas."

These responses reveal that visits to craft breweries do succeed in stimulating a sense of place and a connection with the local area, although this connection appears to be largely at the local scale, rather than applicable to Montana as a whole. Montana's breweries are all-around local entities: they are locally owned, locally named and decorated, and contribute to the community in both economic and social ways. Perhaps most importantly, they are frequented by locals more so than tourists. Therefore, when visiting a brewery while traveling, a connection to that place is often forged by observing and/or participating in the scene and chatting with local patrons or the bartender in a relaxed, casual atmosphere. In other words, spending time in a brewery is shorthand for being

in that community. As one survey respondent put it, he or she felt more connected to the place that was visited because "The brewery can be a microcosm of the place." Of course, it helps if the beer is good.

As a final contrast with wine tourism, the appeal of wine-tasting is often linked to Bourdieu's concept of distinction (see Ravenscroft and van Westering 2001). While beer snobbery is also a genuine affliction, these survey results reveal that the act of having a beer at a local brewery finds a good deal of its appeal in fitting in with the local crowd. It is decidedly not an act of distinction, but rather, an act of inclusion. It is a way of getting "inside" a place as an antidote to placelessness (Relph 1976). As one survey respondent put it, "A good experience [at a brewery] gives a sense of belonging to a place and someplace to return to." Here, at the breweries, while the main draw may be the opportunity to try unique beer styles and flavors, place-making emerges as a process of observations, social interactions, and personal connections that allow the town that contains the brewery to come to life.

Conclusion

My results confirm Schnell and Reese's (2003, 2014) and Eberts' (2014) findings, that breweries are, first and foremost, establishments that celebrate and benefit the local, from the imagery in their logos to the creative names of their beers, from their touristic appeal to their regular clientele, from their modus operandi to their raison d'être. Although most of my survey respondents indicated that the brewery's theme and imagery had little impact on their visitation, the local sense of place that many brewery owners work hard to convey isn't completely lost on their patrons. To the online survey question "Do you feel that Montana's craft breweries convey a Montana sense of place or identity?," the overwhelming majority of respondents (90 percent) answered yes, in one way or another. The following responses illustrate the variety of ways that sense of place/place identity was expressed by survey respondents:

> "Yes, most do. There are few exceptions to place/theme names to Montana, but for the most part, breweries do depict recreational, mountainous, animals, or [an]other twist on Montana life."

> "Yes. They let a person explore more locations in our beautiful state, which I believe is important to feeling connected to MT."

> "Yes. The patrons seem to open up and the conversations inside those walls tell a story not found in any brochure."

> "Yes, I think the breweries in Montana do a great job of advertising all of the great things about Montana."

"Yes, where else can you visit a Madison River Brewing Company or a Missouri Breaks Brewing Company?"

"I think they are great examples of the friendliness as well as the inclusion that Montana is really known for. You can have a cowboy sharing a beer with a businessman or an old-timer playing cards with his kids."

"I feel that, especially in Butte where I live, that the breweries have a very recognizable sense of local pride. And tie in local culture to their brews in the form of beer names or advertising."

"I do feel that the folks who visit breweries in MT get a feel of what "real" Montanans are like."

The preceding survey responses illustrate that it is a difficult task to separate the place-making process into disparate parts as various elements, images, and associations are absorbed into our experience of place. It is clear from my surveys that visiting a brewery can make a location personally meaningful, or a place, and this meaning may come from many different aspects of a particular brewery: its name, logo, décor, beers, and most importantly, from its community function and local clientele.

In a blurb on its website, MAP Brewing Company (yes, it is a map-themed brewery) hits on each of these aspects of place-making at Montana breweries: outdoor recreation, mountain scenery, localness, and community:

> MAP Brewing Company focuses on delivering fresh, local, and high quality Montana beer served in a warm, friendly, and comfortable atmosphere. Great craft beer, good times, and great community are the cornerstone of it all. Whether you ski, bike, fish, hunt, or just walk the dog…the MAP Room is a perfect place to unwind and enjoy unparalleled views of the mountains while sipping on a fresh MAP Beer! (MAP Brewing 2016)

The brewery website also reminds us that "You are here!" (MAP Brewing 2016). Indeed, we are. Montana is a large state with much scenery and few people. Its largest city is Billings, which is just shy of 110,000 residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2014). Montana's craft brewery industry is, therefore, at its heart, a small-town phenomenon. In a study undertaken on breweries in a different state, I would hypothesize that the outdoor/mountains/rivers emphasis would be diminished outside of the (New) West and that place-based themes may prove more difficult to sustain among the multiple breweries located in large cities in other states. But the unbridled localness that has made its mark on many patrons would undoubtedly remain, and this community ethos has proven integral to the process of place-making that is set into motion by stopping to enjoy a beer at a craft brewery.

This case study has effectively demonstrated that craft breweries are becoming an important avenue through which place is experienced and made

meaningful, not only in Montana, but wherever craft breweries are located. In Montana especially, though, breweries represent the embodiment of the more ethereal sense of place culled from books, film, tourist advertising, and other media. Breweries offer visitors a material location where these quaint images are made into something more tangible, through rustic décor, local clientele, and by drinking beer that was made on premises and named after a nearby river or mountain range. Brewery visitors revel in having found a "real" place to go, to sit and relax and stay a while, to experience that community alongside the local population, to *be* in a place. Breweries are, in a literal sense, what Massey means by "meeting place," as "articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings..." (1994, 154). Breweries provide that locus, that point of focus for our experience of a town or a neighborhood, or even a state. It is at this site of meaningful experience that place is made.

Notes

[1] I use "microbrewery" and "craft brewery" interchangeably here, but the terms do have distinct definitions. A microbrewery is defined as brewery that produces no more than 15,000 barrels per year and sells 75 percent of its beer off-site (Brewers Association 2015d), while a craft brewery is a more general term for a small and independent brewery. Most of Montana's breweries are microbreweries, and all but one are craft breweries. (Big Sky Brewing Company is better described as a regional brewery.)

[2] "Slow elk" is a local phrase describing cows (Big Sky 2015).

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