

History on the Rocks: Gadsby's Historic Ice Well

Guest Blogger Post #1

The first of our guest bloggers, I give you Steve Zimmermann; writer, PR mastermind, former Alexandria resident, favorite cocktail: a very tropical rummy drink called the Painkiller.



Steve Z.

There are so few establishments that foster great debate, sporadic fits of laughter or unabashed celebration of the company that you're in. Fewer still that act as a simple respite from the rushing world beyond the doors. Call it what you will, a pub, bar or watering hole there is something pleasantly familiar about settling into your local tavern. Occasionally you'll be greeted by faces of friends who eagerly await your arrival, while other times you may be there simply to enjoy the quiet comfort that anonymity in a crowd can bring.

Most look past the reasons that we gather around and simply take pleasure in the practice. However, for history untold, there have been singular pleasures that draw people to

establishments known to serve the most liquid of social lubricants. In recent times we often take for granted the little things that create the experience: a frosty mug in hand, or ice gently clicking together as it's dropped into a glass. For us these items and moments are simply a small thread in a much larger tapestry. Though, you can take a glimpse back in time and see that these were not necessities, but novelties. If I may invoke a bit of hyperbole, these feats of the day are akin to man harnessing the power held within flame. It's easy to keep a fire stoked and burning year round, but truly great is the challenge of keeping something cold during the slow swelter of an Alexandria summer.

The why and how of history often exist intertwined before us, but when something as relatable as gathering around a punch bowl and espousing on topics

innumerable reaches forward in time, we have the chance to truly understand the why and explore the how.

To my eyes the restoration of the Ice Well at Gadsby's Tavern Museum allows for the understanding of the lengths that our colonial brethren were willing to go in order to foster an environment that allowed for brilliant debate, easy laughter and the company of one's friends. The relevance of this project can be seen every time you sit down and share stories with your friends outside of the digital shell we've surrounded ourselves with.

So, perhaps when you next rub your elbow against the well-worn bar while sipping at your preferred drink ask and answer the question of why you've come there. Is it a knowing nod from the bartender? The way the conversation rolls off the tongue as easily as the drink slides past the lips? Or is it something more; some intangible reason that causes us in times of grief and celebration alike to gather around to toast one another?

I can't provide those answers for you, nor do I pretend to know them myself. What I do know is that from time immemorial and continuing on to time untold we'll still gather, still celebrate and still toast to each other with raised, well chilled, glasses.

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