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OWEN COVINGTON, 9



# FROM BEER TO BAKED BEANS



You may not have heard of M.G. Newell, but chances are the 131-year-old company had a hand in creating the equipment and processes used to make many of the products you consume.

BY STEVE HUFFMAN STORY, PAGES 4-7



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## COVER STORY

# STEEL GOING STRONG

*You have likely never heard of M.G. Newell, but it touches your life daily, from beverages to foods to medications. Buggies gave way to beer and motorcycles to machinery, but that's how a 131-year-old company thrives.*

BY STEVE HUFFMAN  
Contributing writer



J. Michael Sherrill, left, is president of the family-owned M.G. Newell, while Gray E. Sherrill is vice president and general manager.

JULIE KNIGHT/TRIAD BUSINESS JOURNAL

Tucked away in an industrial park in west Greensboro is one of the Triad's unknown treasures. Whether you favor buttermilk or beer, odds are you've benefitted from M.G. Newell's handiwork.

In existence for 131 years, it is the eighth-oldest family-owned business in the state. The company plays an important role in the production of an array of food, beverage and pharmaceutical items – everything from Coca-Cola to Crest toothpaste, from Bush's Baked Beans to Doritos.

Companies that Newell does work for are some big ones – General Mills, Procter & Gamble, Herbalife and Sierra Nevada Brewing, included. Ever spread

Duke's Mayonnaise on your sandwich? Newell has done work for C.F. Sauer Co., producers of the mayonnaise brand, for years.

Heck, at one time, the company even sold Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

But you say the name "M.G. Newell" doesn't ring a bell? Don't feel bad; you're not alone. "We're one of those companies, you've had our products almost every day, but you've probably never heard of us," said Gray Sherrill, Newell's vice president.

"We tell people what we're involved with and they say, 'right here in Greensboro? Y'all do that?'"

Gray's brother, Michael, is

Newell's president.

"It's a craft, it really is," Michael Sherrill said of the myriad jobs his company performs.

## "Stainless steel masterpieces"

The work that Newell does may not be well-known or stuff that makes for great conversation, but it's labor that's important to the safe production of many items.

It's also twofold.

Newell is a full-service provider of sanitary equipment for the food, beverage, dairy, pharmaceutical and personal care industries. The company carries a range of pumps, valves, tanks, fittings and other manufacturing supply needs for produc-

## "We make masterpieces. Stainless steel masterpieces."

MIMI CARTEE,  
Newell's director of marketing and business development

tion of these items. The second aspect of the work that Newell does is more complicated.

Engineers with the company design and fabricate customized processing systems that do any number of jobs – from playing a role in the pasteurization of milk to the safe and sanitary journey of beer as it makes its passage from vats to bottles.

Finally, once a system is

installed and operating, Newell remains in the picture, with the company's field technicians performing instrument repair, preventative maintenance and calibration of existing equipment.

"We make masterpieces," said Mimi Cartee, Newell's director of marketing and business development. "Stainless steel masterpieces."

Workers at the Dairy Fresh plant just off Business Interstate 85 Loop in High Point produce milk, buttermilk, bottled water and fruit drinks. The plant measures 75,000 square feet, stretches across 15 acres and is one of the largest producers of buttermilk in the Southeast.

Bob Paxton, plant manager,



COVER STORY



A technician with Natty Greene's Brewing Co. cleans a flowmeter panel at the brewery in Greensboro.



Joshua Fotusky fabricates a nitrogen-infuser for use in making stout beer in breweries.

PHOTOS BY JULIE KNIGHT/TRIAD BUSINESS JOURNAL

said that from the time raw milk arrives at the plant via tankers until it's bottled and ready to head to grocery stores, Newell plays a role in the work.

Newell's engineers designed an elaborate system at the plant that includes pumps, fittings and automated control panels. The automated process involves the blending, pasteurizing, incubating and packaging of milk and other products.

"They're basically a one-stop shop for food processing," Paxton said. "They're the best at what they do, absolutely top-notch. They've got a great engineering staff, a great technical staff and great welders."

Paxton said when Dairy Fresh is about to install a new

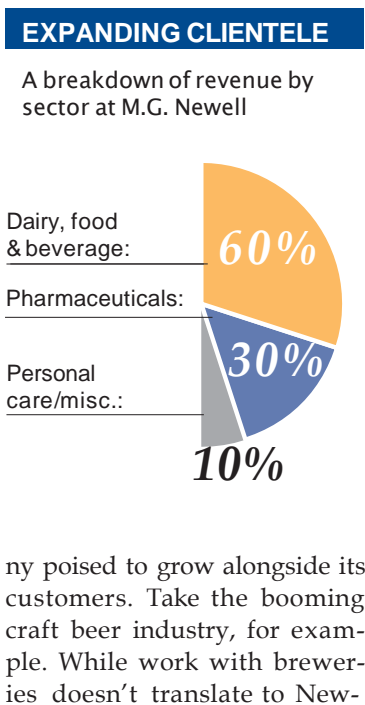
processing system, or upgrade an existing one, the plant's parent company, Dean Foods, puts the project out for bid. Newell's competitors come from such distant states as Texas and California.

Paxton said that inevitably, Newell beats its competitors in price and craftsmanship.

He's glad, Paxton said, because Newell is in such close proximity to his plant. He likes that company expenditures stay close to home.

"Plus, they're just great people to work with," Paxton said. "They've got the best interests of their customers at heart."

**Riding the beer boom**  
M.G. Newell is also a compa-



ell's leading source of revenue, it represents an ever-growing share. Five years ago, brewery work accounted for about 1 percent of Newell's annual revenues. Today, that figure is closer to 5 percent.

Consider, for example, its work with Natty Greene's Brewing Co. on Gate City Boulevard across from the Greensboro Coliseum. Scott Christoffel, head brewer, said that from the brewery's piping to its control panels, Newell's engineers did the design. Its shop workers built the pieces and the company's installers assembled the finished product.

"We turn it on and it does all the work," Christoffel said of the equipment that Newell

produced.

He's exaggerating ever so slightly. Press him and Christoffel will admit that beer-making is hard work, involving hauling huge bags of hops and rolling endless barrels of beer, chores that no amount of technology can replace.

Natty Greene's opened its brewery in 2007. In 2015, the company produced 18,500 barrels of beer, each barrel containing 31 gallons. Brewers there produce five core beers and another dozen or so seasonal offerings.

The brewery has been through five expansions at its current location and Newell

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## COVER STORY

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has played a role in each. And Natty's has since last year been working on plans for a consolidated campus that would host a larger production brewery and a new restaurant. Revolution Mill is a contender for that relocation, with Greensboro approving \$390,000 in incentives to make that happen, but Natty's has yet to fully commit to it, as it continues to mull options such as Danville or Charlotte.

Whenever and wherever Natty's lands, M.G. Newell would hope to have a hand in the relocation. And its long track record with Natty's certainly doesn't hurt.

"They've been with us since the get-go," Christoffel said. "You find someone you trust, someone so precise, you stick with them."

He said that in some ways, Newell's engineers know more about the process of what's involved in the production of beer than Natty Greene's own brewers.

"We go to these guys and say, 'how do we go from point A to point B? How do we make that happen?'" Christoffel said. "They're the ones who figure it out. They make it happen."

As he was leading an impromptu tour of the brewery on a recent weekday morning, Christoffel pointed to everything from the piping to the heat exchangers and control panels that play a role in producing the end product in the competitive world of craft beers.

"They engineered all that," Christoffel said. "They know their stuff."

Overall, work in the dairy, food and beverage industries accounts for about 60 percent of Newell's revenues. Pharmaceutical work makes up another 30 percent while the remaining 10 percent comes from the personal care industry and miscellaneous jobs.

Cartee, Newell's marketing director, said that when Newell is asked to bid on a project, the company's engineers sit down with the customer and start finding out everything they can about the work involved.

How many ingredients? What's the viscosity? (For the record, Newell's engineers consider anything from water to peanut butter a liquid.) What are the space limitations? How much of the product must be produced?

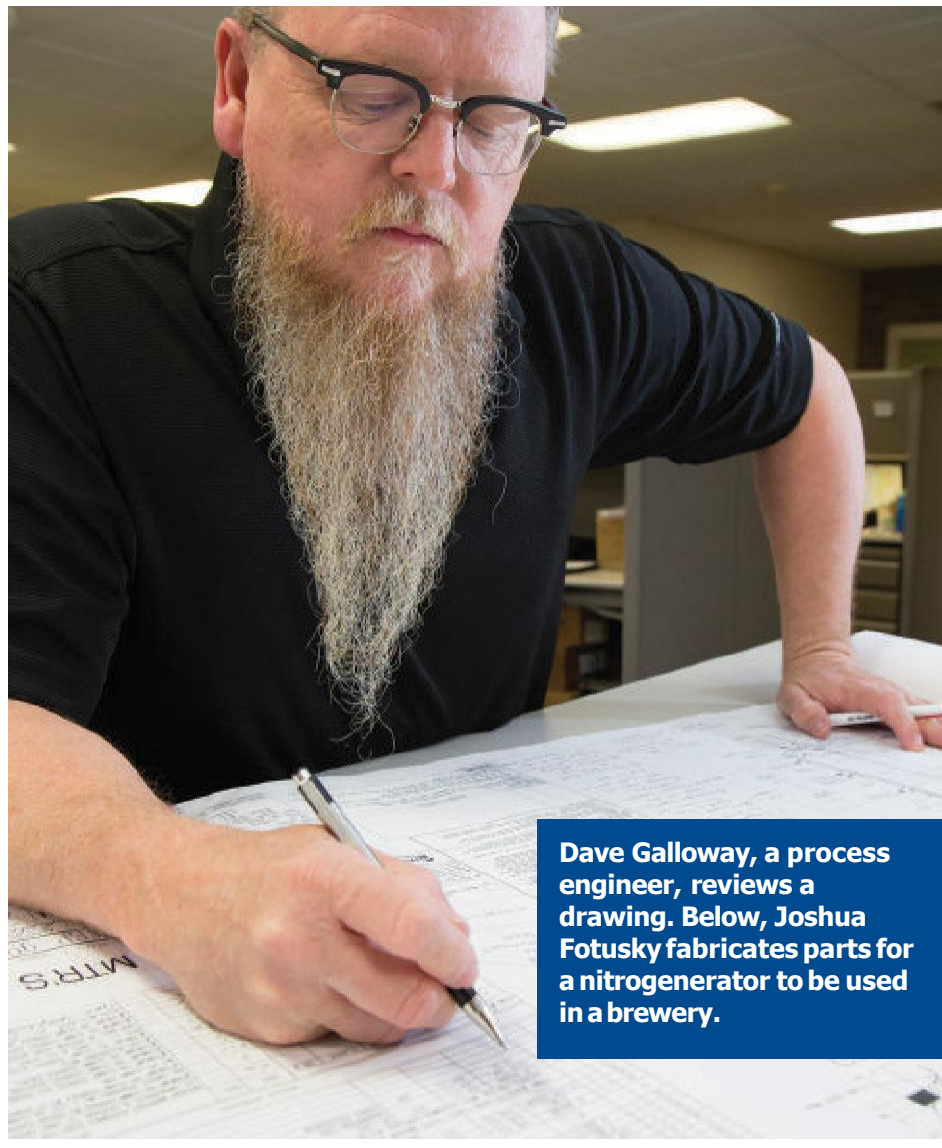
Cartee said it's a lot like assembling a house using Legos, those toy building bricks. At the end, everything must fit together perfectly.

### Much has changed

Newell got its start in a far different way. The company was founded in 1885 by Myron G. Newell, who came to Greensboro from Elmira, N.Y. In its early days, the business was South Side Grocery and sold popular commodities of the era, big sellers like hand churns and buggies.

The company was incorporated in 1908 and in 1913 added farm machinery to its product line.

It was about that time the business got into selling Harley-Davidsons.



**Dave Galloway, a process engineer, reviews a drawing. Below, Joshua Fotusky fabricates parts for a nitrogenerator to be used in a brewery.**



PHOTOS BY JULIE KNIGHT/TRIAD TRIAD BUSINESS JOURNAL

In the early 1920s, at the suggestion of Newell's son, Burton M. Newell, the company began specializing in the dairy business. By the 1930s, Newell was selling pasteurizers, cooling equipment and automated washers to the growing number of dairies across the Southeast.

The company has continued to evolve and in 1984 came under new ownership. By then, the last member of the Newell family had retired. New investors joined the family business led by John and Sal-

ly Sherrill (Gray and Michael's parents).

Today, members of the Sherrill family are sole owners of the business.

With new ownership came new direction. The company has expanded on two occasions as the business has grown increasingly involved in the engineering and installation of customized processing systems.

In 1994, Newell opened an office in Louisville, Ky., to better serve customers in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana.

In 2012, the company opened an office in Hendersonville, Tenn., (a suburb of Nashville) primarily for the benefit of customers in west Tennessee, northern Alabama and northern Mississippi.

Both expansions involved new construction. Newell has never bought out a competitor, though members of the company's management team said that's always an option.

Newell's home office remains in Greensboro, on Citation Court, not far from the Gallimore Dairy Road exit off Interstate 40.

It's that site that houses the company's main warehouse and where most of the fabrication work is completed. The Greensboro facility includes 7,400 square feet of office space and another 25,000 square feet of warehouse and fabrication facilities.

Newell has about 85 employees, 50 of whom work out of the Greensboro office. Last year, the company completed about 725 jobs, ranging from small projects that were completed within days to major engineering feats that were years in the making.

The company is privately owned and doesn't disclose its annual revenues. But company officials did say project costs may be as little as \$3,500 for work that might involve a simple portable pump cart or more than \$5 million for engineered design work that can stretch years from beginning to end.

The crux of the company's revenue comes from projects completed in areas south to Georgia, north to Pennsylvania and west to the Mississippi River. But Newell has done work in 42 states.

All of the company's business is done in the U.S.

Last May, Newell was named by the Wake Forest University Family Business Center as the 2015 North Carolina Family Business of the Year in the category recognizing companies over 100 years old. The award coincided with the company's celebration of its 130-year anniversary.

The awards are designed to recognize the achievements of family-owned businesses and their contributions to their communities.

Michael Sherrill said the Family Business Award is one of which he's especially proud, recognition of the fact that Newell has long tried to make its employees and customers its focus.

"We look at our business as a means of building partnerships and relationships," he said.

Named Newell's president in 2014, he hopes the company's legacy continues, though it's anybody's guess if the business will remain family-owned. Both Michael and Gray said their children are welcome to join the company, though they're young and it's too soon to tell where their interests will lie.

"We're proud we've been around for 131 years," Michael said. "The company was in existence long before we were here. Hopefully, it'll be here long after we're gone."

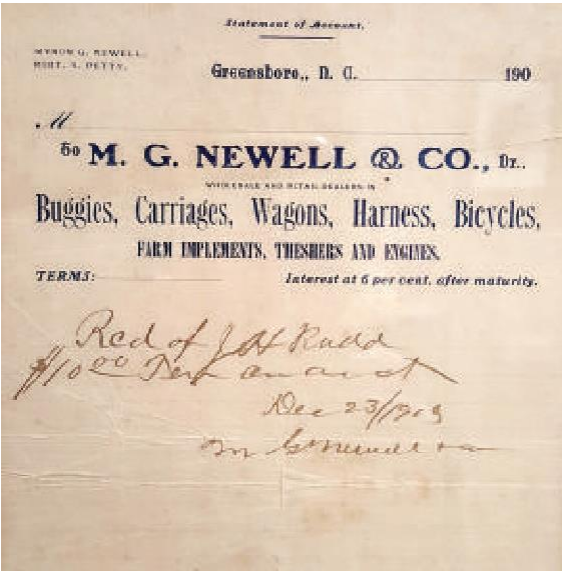


COVER STORY



COURTESY OF M.G. NEWELL

M.G. Newell operated in the 300 block of South Elm Street in downtown Greensboro from around 1895 to 1915, when it moved around the corner to a Davie Street site it occupied for nearly 40 years.



COURTESY OF M.G. NEWELL

A receipt from the early 1900s reveals some of the merchandise that the company sold at the time, from buggies to bicycles.



COURTESY OF M.G. NEWELL

Dating back to its days in downtown Greensboro, this cash register was used by M.G. Newell until the mid-1980s. The \$699.99 total was the last transaction on the register.

M.G.NEWELL: HISTORY WINDS FROM SELLING SMOKED MEATS TO MAKING PROCESSING SYSTEMS

**1885** – Myron Gilbert Newell, a native of Elmira, N.Y., opens his first business, South Side Grocery Store, at the corner of Asheboro and Bragg streets in Greensboro. The store sells everything from “fresh, smoked and salt meats” to dry goods, agricultural implements and cigars.

**1892** – The business moves to Depot Street and its name changes to M.G. Newell & Co. Focus shifts to machines and supplies catering to the farming industry. Bikes, harnesses and a line of “cow remedies” are also sold.

**Mid-1890s** – Newell moves again, this time to the 300 block of South Elm Street in the heart of downtown Greensboro.

**1904** – Business is sold to Petty-Reid Co., though the Newell family remains active in its operation and the store’s name remains the same.

**1908** – Business is incorporated. It was about this time, also, that Newell was a dealer for Harley-Davidson motorcycles.

**1915 to 1924** – Another move, this one to Davie Street where Newell purchases a pair of side-by-side buildings to handle anticipated growth.

**Early 1920s** – Myron Newell’s son, Burton M. Newell Sr., suggests specializing in the dairy business. Sales territory includes much of the mid-Atlantic as Newell begins selling cream separators, pumps and sanitary process equipment.

**Sept. 21, 1936** – Myron Newell dies and leadership of the company is passed to his son.

**1946** – A new company founded by former officers of M.G. Newell splits off the implements business and is named Baldwin-Garrett Co. The shift allows Newell

to focus solely on the dairy industry.

**1955-1964** – After almost 40 years on Davie Street, Newell moves to the east side of Greensboro, to a new facility on Raleigh Street. Hase Smith, who joined the company as a shipping clerk in the 1930s, becomes president.

**1964-1974** – Newell diversifies, no longer serving only the dairy industry. The company begins stocking equipment and supplies for the sanitary processing needs of the beverage, food and personal care industries.

**1974-1984** – It’s during this time that Newell’s move into systems integration occurs. The company expands into design, fabrication and installation of sanitary processing systems. In 1984, Newell comes under new ownership, purchased by a group of investors led by John and Sally Sherrill. Today, members of the Sherrill family are sole owners.

**1994** – Newell opens an office in Louisville, Ky., to serve customers in Kentucky, Tennessee, Ohio and Indiana.

**1996** – Newell moves its Greensboro office to its current location on Citation Court. The Greensboro office serves as the company’s corporate headquarters, main distribution warehouse and fabrication shop.

**2012** – Newell opens an office in Hendersonville, Tenn., a suburb of Nashville. The office is intended to service customers in western Tennessee, northern Alabama and northern Mississippi.

January 2014 —Michael Sherrill takes helm as president, with brother Gray as vice president.

**May 2016** —Newell will celebrate its 131st anniversary.

—Steve Huffman



COURTESY OF M.G. NEWELL

M.G. Newell makes “stainless steel masterpieces” for manufacturing products. This one is used in the production of mayonnaise.



A centrifugal pump is part of a customized skid manufactured by M.G. Newell.

JULIE KNIGHT/TRIAD BUSINESS JOURNAL



An array of components are spread out before being assembled into a nitrogenerator, a machine used in brewing beer.

JULIE KNIGHT/TRIAD BUSINESS JOURNAL