



# *SIGN OF THE BIG STORM*

SIGN BUILDER ILLUSTRATED // PUBLISHED - SEPTEMBER 2016

**Innovation in Light™**

---



# SIGN *of the* BIG STORM

*Craft brewing a one-of-a-kind landmark lighthouse sign.*

**B**ig Storm Brewing Co. (Big Storm) began in 2012 in Tampa Bay, Florida, to fill a void in the local craft beer market—approachable beer, made with spirit, authenticity, and quality. From the quintessential beer nerd to the novice beer drinker, the company has earned the reputation for being exceptionally drinkable.

Big Storm is a true craft pioneer using locally sourced ingredients like wild flower honey to lend a subtle sweetness. Their award-winning suds are named after the common summer storms along the Gulf Coast of Florida. Big Storm is committed to growing the brand in Florida, specifically the Tampa Bay area.

Consumer demand meant expansion, so this past spring, Big Storm completed construction on a state-of-the-art, 16,000-square-foot brewery and tap room with a thirty-barrel production system in a converted warehouse in Clearwater, Florida.

To visually identify and brand this new facility, Founder Mike Bishop,

CEO Jonathan Golden, and Principals father and son Leo J. Govoni and son Leo “LJ” Govoni knew they needed signage that was just as outstanding and unique as their beers.

Continuing with their commitment to authentic and local, they turned to forty-seven-year-old national sign manufacturer Thomas Sign & Awning Company, Inc., also of Clearwater, Florida, to design, manufacture, and install an on-premise identity sign for the new site. The company has built quite a reputation as a custom signage provider for lots of unique projects such as LEGOLAND® theme park, Walt Disney World® resorts, and the largest North American-built sundial in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Big Storm contacted Kevin Hunsicker, long-time executive sales director at Thomas Sign & Awning, to lead the project. “We had a vision of what the sign should look like,” comments Golden. “Then it was just a matter of finding the right company that could implement and manufacture our idea.”

The original idea proposed by Thomas Sign & Awning was a giant beer mug, but the Big Storm team knew that a custom pylon resembling a New England-style lighthouse amidst a brewing storm (to play off the company’s name) would make a more noticeable addition to the surrounding landscape and even become a landmark, particularly in the light industrial neighborhood where the brewery is housed.

“We’re located off a six-lane street, where traffic is passing by at forty to fifty miles per hour,” says Golden. “It was very compelling to have something [there] that would be different for people’s normal daily routine yet be easily recognizable and identifiable.

“We’re not anywhere near a beach or jetty that would have a lighthouse. So that juxtaposition and contrast of the area and the lighthouse make it stand out even more.”

The Thomas Sign & Awning art department picked an image of a lighthouse out of the Northeast corridor coastline, imported it into CorelDRAW®, and designed from there. To complete the comprehensive design, they also incorporated an electronic message center (EMC) and their main identity around that theme.

The cabinet, resembling the lighthouse, is round aluminum with a base



The twenty-five-foot-tall lighthouse sign comes with LED lighting and an EMC.

“

*We’re not anywhere near a beach or jetty that would have a lighthouse. So that juxtaposition and contrast make it stand out even more.*

”

width of eight feet tapering to four feet and an overall height of twenty-five feet, which required special zoning approval.

“I do a lot of work with the local municipality,” says Hunsicker, “and they had never dealt with a lighthouse design before. So we did a lot of back-and-forth with them to avoid variances. We worked directly with the building department to ensure they would be very pleased with the end result.”

The “Big Storm Brewing Co.” graphics are a double-faced, pan-formed, em-

bossed sign face. The “brewing storm” was depicted by two channel letter-style, face-lit LED lightning bolts measuring 18-by-48 inches.

The entire lighthouse was painted using AkzoNobel acrylic-polyurethane paints.

Polycarbonate railing and translucent plastic windows with 3M vinyl applied over them were added design elements. Thomas Sign & Awning placed LED modules from HanleyLED behind the windows. “The windows light up on the side of the lighthouse, the main identity

of Big Storm, the lighting bolts, and the EMCs,” says Hunsicker. (Note: LED up-lighting around the base illuminates the column as well.)

To grab the center attraction, a 5-by-10-foot double-faced electronic display by California-based OPTEC Displays, Inc.® with a 10MM, RGB full-motion video board was added and tied to the main frames. The electronic display features products and promotions—especially their craft beers—to wait-out any storm.

From day one, Thomas Sign & Awning always included an EMC as part of their package to Big Storm. They provided designs with a general square footage template, and then as things got more serious, they brought Optec in to do a demo.

“I showed them 4-by-8-foot 10mm and 16mm models on my demo trailer, so they could visually [judge] both resolutions,” says Shawn Klinger, southeast regional sales manager at Optec Displays. “Once they saw the clarity of the 10mm to the 16mm, they selected the tighter pitch option.”

It may look like the EMC has been

added onto the lighthouse structure, but truth be told, it is completely enclosed with all the tiles and power supplies. Optec manufactured the LED display and shipped it to Thomas Sign & Awning

“  
*To grab center attention, a double-faced, 10 mm electronic display was added onto the lighthouse sign.*  
”

ing in a single enclosure cabinet. The sign company then nailed it to the bracket system they created. It has the proper ventilation necessary to keep the sign running long into the future.

Big Storm, who’s Oktoberfest beer won Florida’s state-wide competition for

“Best Beer in Florida,” is taking existing marketing promotions, creating imagery for it in Photoshop, and using Media Editor Pro Suite to schedule the content for the EMC and update it.

“Customers in both the brewery and casino industries are very point-of-purchase-driven, so as a result, they like having content, layout, and delivery fully at their control and are well prepared to do so,” says Klinger. “They were basically able to take existing marketing promotions and Web site backgrounds and reformat them for the display.

“The [Big Storm] marketing department really invests in ensuring not only that it looks good but also that the looping content works well. They’re very proactive in making sure the colors lay out and transition and work to the brand presentation that they want done.”

An automated light sensor on the display adjusts its brightness based on the ambient light readings and falls within national standards.

“Sometimes people make a decision based on profit and money, and in



Big Storm repurposes marketing promotions for the EMC content.

PHOTO: ROBERT BLYTH, OPTEC DISPLAYS, INC.

this instance, Big Storm made a decision based on their brand clarity,” says Klinger. “The brewery is so driven in knowing what their brand is, and from a consistency level, they wanted to see the products’ colors and clarity levels that were offered.

“It’s not a cookie-cutter sign that many businesses opt to do.”

Since Thomas Sign & Awning is located in close proximity to Big Storm’s new facility, they designed the sign with anchor bolts and completely fabricated the structure in their shop. Because of this, they built a steel cage support structure around the twenty-five-foot-tall lighthouse so they could load it on their large trailer and transport it early in the morning to minimize any traffic congestion, since it was technically classified *over height* and *over width*.

The 3-by-12-foot deep auger foundation with rebar includes base plates and anchor bolts. With two of Thomas’ sixty-five-foot Elliott cranes on site, workers were able to lift and set the lighthouse all in one day.

There may be a “Big Storm Brewing,”

but this lighthouse isn’t going anywhere. It’s able to withstand any storm since the structure was engineered to 165 miles-per-hour wind load. “We even had to do an internal engineering analysis for the

“

*Sometimes people make a decision based on profit and money, and in this instance, Big Storm made a decision based on their brand clarity.*

”

local building department,” says Hunsicker, “so that, in case the sheet metal shears off, there would be interior wind deflection engineering done.”

Golden is grateful his company hasn’t

had a chance yet to test out its hurricane-preparedness. “We do have these raging Armageddon-type thunderstorms in Florida in the summer that last twenty minutes and then the sky is clear,” he says. “So far, the sign has withstood all of those storms.”

After the lighthouse sign was set up, Big Storm tackled landscaping. “After going through thousands of questions during the build and install of the sign, figuring out what plants we were going to put around it wasn’t high on our priority list,” laughs Golden.

However working with the engineer and landscaper, he soon found that adding sand-colored ivory white stones around the lighthouse brought another interesting dimension to it, almost like it was at the beach. “The landscaping on that little strip of land really helped the sign,” says Golden.

The lighthouse is proving so popular that people are having their pictures taken standing in front of it. “Thomas Sign & Awning was able to take our idea and create this iconic landmark,” says Golden, “and we couldn’t be more pleased.” [SBI](#)



PHOTO: ROBERT BLYTH, OPTEC DISPLAYS, INC.



Worldwide Headquarters  
1700 S. De Soto Place, Ontario, CA 91761 USA  
Phone: +1.800.876.1668 Fax: +1.626.369.7858  
[www.optec.com](http://www.optec.com)

© OPTEC DISPLAYS, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT NOTICE.  
ART.B5BC-10MM.OUT.09192016.