



# Manchester-Boston Regional Airport Brews New Business Opportunity

By Greg Gerber

**T**here was something missing at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport in New Hampshire, and the solution was born out of a centuries-old New England tradition — the Meetinghouse.

Travelers visiting the airport, and folks dropping them off and picking them up, were asking for an informal place to relax and enjoy some good food and drinks (including the adult-only kind) on the pre-security side of the airport.

When a fast food restaurant's lease recently expired, the airport had its opportunity to answer the call. Airport staff met with their primary concessions vendor, HMSHost, to investigate several options before settling on the answer: the first Samuel Adams Meetinghouse in the United States.

A larger Samuel Adams restaurant was already located on the post-security side of the airport. The challenge was to create a similar experience for guests in a much smaller corner of a busy food court on the pre-security side.

"We saw an opportunity to fill a niche by offering a full-service restaurant with adult beverages in an area where visitors often gather to wait for flights to arrive," says Tom Malafrente, assistant director of vendor services

at Manchester-Boston Regional Airport. "The restaurant also offers a grab-and-go menu for customers who prefer the takeaway option."

## Mutual Interest

Creating a smaller Samuel Adams restaurant was something the brand's owner, The Boston Beer Company, had wanted to try for some time. In fact, the company had already developed the schematics and design requirements for such a restaurant. Once they got the call to develop a spot in Manchester, the company accelerated the planning and tweaked it to fit the specific location.

"It was exciting to watch a concept on paper become a reality," recalls Michael Fetchko, senior director of business development for HMSHost. "It offers more casual dining than other Samuel Adams restaurants, but with a limited menu that ensures the food is prepared and served fast enough to accommodate travelers on the move as well as others who plan to be at the airport for just a short time."

HMSHost was an ideal partner to develop the new concept. The 110-year-old firm specializes in serving customers in time-sensitive environments like airports and tourist attractions.

## ► Facts & Figures

**Project:** Samuel Adams Meetinghouse

**Location:** Manchester-Boston Regional Airport

**Size:** 934 sq. ft.

**Buildout Costs:** \$120,000

**Primary Contractor:** Partners by Design

**Projected Annual Revenues:** \$500,000 – \$750,000 (airport's estimate)

**Concessions Vendor:** HMSHost

**Brand Owner:** Boston Beer

**Special Features:** Travelers and airport visitors requested pre-security spot for food and drinks; much of the modular construction was completed off site, which decreased disruption in the terminal



Because the space had already been utilized as a restaurant, food service infrastructure was already in place. However, a few changes, such as wall murals, a new color scheme and enhanced lighting were required to give it a more inviting look. The concept was developed around an Independence Hall theme that promoted the region's rich cultural heritage through wall decorations and Colonial-style wood furniture.

**"We were delighted that HMSHost chose our design in Manchester," says Robert Vail, director of on-premise national accounts for Boston Beer. "It was helpful to be able to have our new concept implemented so close to home."**

"The new design draws from the days of the historical figure Samuel Adams," he adds. "It's a total departure from an earlier airport Brewhouse that featured Samuel Adams. The design creates visual timelines that track the history of the man Samuel Adams, the milestones of The Boston Beer Company and Samuel Adams Boston Lager. Then, to add a local perspective, we included references to some important historical events in the Manchester area."

According to Vail, the design captures the best of the Colonial idiom without going too far and creating a "Ye Olde Colonial Brewhouse."

### Modular Construction

Installation of the restaurant was somewhat unusual, because much of it was created off site, and then assembled at the airport. Most airport restaurants and retail stores are built on site from the ground up. Boston Beer specifically designed the Meetinghouse to be installed in a short period of time to keep disruption at the airport to a minimum.

"Because there were a lot of people moving through the area every day, the airport staff wanted to make sure that we didn't create any bottlenecks or safety hazards," Vail explains.

Much of the construction work, such as drilling the floor for drainage and installing electrical services was completed ahead of time, adds Fetchko. "Once we started bringing in the other components, we had the facility ready to go within a week," he recalls.

**The Meetinghouse's modular design gives Boston Beer tremendous flexibility. "Our concept can be adapted to the space available in each airport," Vail says. "The Manchester location is a great example. Space was limited, and HMSHost was still able to make the concept work perfectly."**

Boston Beer's designers, notes Vail, kept a wide variety of customer in mind: "There is ample seating for business people who travel light and plenty of storage space for families and groups who have more luggage."

The design also follows the current airport trend of incorporating elements from the local area while still making the restaurant feel familiar and comfortable, Vail explains. The Meetinghouse design provides the name recognition and image of Samuel Adams brand coupled with Manchester architecture and historic information.

"We think it's really a winning combination designed to feel inviting both to travelers who live near Manchester as well as those arriving at the airport," says Vail. "It's designed to be supremely customer friendly, while at the same time being adaptable to varying spaces that airports have to lease."

Consumers in New England are familiar with the Samuel Adams brand, which helps the airport generate more sales. From an operations perspective, Boston Beer provides the airport with staff training plus professional point-of-sale materials to help promote the restaurants.


"It is important for these types of facilities to offer high-quality menu items that are fast and delicious. Fortunately for Samuel Adams, the quality reputation of the beer works to pre-sell the menu," says Vail. "Not every region in America has cuisine for which it is famous; so we focus more on quality than on local specialties. That said, each location can adapt its menu to include local favorites if they wish."

### More on Tap

In the months ahead, the airport plans to expand its food service options adjacent to the Samuel Adams Meetinghouse. This time, the airport hopes to add a restaurant that offers an enhanced take out menu. Airport officials are currently reviewing proposals.

"Our goal is to develop a balance of appropriate services and restaurants that meet the needs of all our customers — from children to seniors to business travelers to families," describes Malafrente.

With 85% of the airport's revenue coming from passenger activity, having the right concessions mix is essential to customer-centric and profitable operations, he says.

Samuel Adams was a logical choice for Manchester-Boston Regional Airport, he adds, because the chain has great visibility among people living in the Northeast. And, for those visiting the area, the restaurant allows them to savor a taste of old New England. 

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