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PHOTOS BY JOHN CARL D'ANNIBALE/TIMES UNION

**BROTHERS** Dan Nickels, left, and Tim Nickels run DNT Express, which has 23 employees and delivers wine from Rockland County to the Canadian border. They will serve 900 retailers from this newly renovated warehouse.



JOHN CARL D'ANNIBALE/TIMES UNION

**BOXES OF IMPORTED WINE** are set for delivery to retailers at DNT Express warehouse in Menands.

## Wine transporter tastes success

Brothers renovate warehouse for Menands-based business

By **CHRIS CHURCHILL**  
Business writer

**MENANDS** — In the middle of the afternoon, the building that houses DNT Express is a fine place to read a book, contemplate the works of Aristotle or take a nap.

It's that quiet.

But in the supposedly peaceful hours of the early morning, the scene is different.

Starting at about 2 a.m., DNT trucks arrive, weighed down with wine from the big distributors in New Jersey. Workers rapidly unload the wine, transferring it to trucks bound for some of the 900 liquor stores that DNT Express serves.

If you drink or buy wine in the Hudson Valley, the DNT building, located at the Capital District Farmers Market in Menands, is an important place.

Funny thing is, Dan and Tim Nickels,



**THE FORMER** California Produce Co. building is being renovated by DNT Express at the Menands market. The company operates 18 trucks.

the brothers who own DNT, never intended to be in the wine business.

They really aren't even wine aficionados.

"I like a good single-malt scotch," Tim Nickels said.

When they launched the business in

2003, taking over what had been a trucking company called Babcock Services Inc., they figured they'd be a company that moved whatever a client requested.

And for a while they were, handling

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## DNT: Wine delivery business grows

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what Tim Nickels calls "everything and anything."

That included pharmaceuticals, auto parts and even, on one occasion, mannequins.

But the brothers slowly pared the products they delivered, choosing the profitable over the marginal.

And eventually, they only had one product left: wine.

The business started with three employees. Now it has 23.

It started with a few broken-down vehicles. Today, its fleet of 18 trucks deliver wine from Rockland County to the Canadian border.

And DNT was founded — and is still located — in a somewhat dark and cramped warehouse. But next month the brothers will

move to a newly renovated building on the other side of the Menands market.

It's a building that once housed California Produce Co., but has been vacant and deteriorating for years.

"It was a dump," Tim Nickels said. "But my brother had the vision to say, 'We can work with this.'"

Tim Nickels, 51, is a retired New York City police officer. He seems a gregarious storyteller.

Dan Nickels, on Wednesday at least, was the quieter of the two. And at 49, he's younger.

But it was he who convinced his brother that they should go into business together.

It isn't easy or stress-free work.

The days start way too early and last too long.

The work can be physically grueling, with each case of wine weighing about 37 pounds.

And there are the occasional truck breakdowns that force one of the Nickels brothers to journey out on a rescue. Or snowstorms that make routine deliveries a nightmare.

But the brothers, who grew up in Schodack, say they are satisfied and pleased with the work and the growth of their business.

In what are now tough economic times, they have a success story.

Tim Nickels said he's lucky in another way: He has a business partner and a best friend who happens to be his brother.

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