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Sourisseau Academy

Smith-Layton Archive presents:

Wetting Your Whistle in the Valley

by Ralph M. Pearce

Les Amis (The Friends)

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[128] **The Infamous El Dorado Street.** San Jose is California's oldest civilian settlement; and by the 1850s, had gained a reputation as a hard-drinking town. In the Downtown area, infamous El Dorado Street was home to a great many saloons and "bawdy" houses. This late 1860s photograph of the Knoche Block at the northwest corner of El Dorado (now Post) and South First Streets was taken by photographer John Heering. Heering's photography studio was located on the second floor of the corner building, while the El Dorado Saloon and a grocery store occupied the ground floor. By 1870, the building housed Louis Krumb's saloon and J.B. Bompard's grocery store. The fine brick building stood until 1925, when it was replaced by the Holman Block, which housed Hartfield's department store for many years.

October 2016



[129] **The Town of Alma.** The sister towns of Alma and Lexington stood along the stage line to Santa Cruz in the hills above Los Gatos. When a railroad replaced the stage line in 1880, Alma thrived when the Southern Pacific elected to put a depot there. Originally named Forest House, the name was changed to Alma by a post office official who felt there were too many towns with the name Forest. As many as twelve saloons existed at one time in the busy mountain town, like the Alma Park Saloon, shown here around 1880. In the early 1950s, the towns of Alma and Lexington were evacuated, and their remains now stand at the bottom of the Lexington reservoir.



[130] **One of Ninety Saloons.** Here's a fine interior shot of the Palace Saloon taken on November 10, 1902. The saloon was located in the Palace Hotel on The Alameda, adjacent to and just west of the railroad tracks. At the bar from left are a bicycler, a sign painter, two wagon drivers, and the bartender Frank Welch. Notice the kneeling man putting the finishing touches on the new linoleum! By 1902, there were approximately ninety saloons in San Jose, which was one saloon for every 240 San Joseans!



[131] **Saloons for Travelers.** Saloons were located all over the Valley, especially along well-traveled byways like Monterey and Almaden Roads. Here is the Files' Tavern at the junction of Alviso (now Lafayette Street) and Agnew Roads. This scene is from about 1905, the year that proprietor George Files received his liquor license. The saloon would experience some flooding in the wet winter of 1911.



[132] **Filling up Before Prohibition.** This mid-teens image captures six patrons and a bar tender at August Pancera's saloon. Let's hope these gentlemen drank well, for San Jose would shut down the city's saloons in 1918, two years prior to Prohibition. The 18th Amendment was a Constitutional amendment, which banned the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages beginning January 17, 1920. Pancera's saloon was located on the southwest corner of South San Pedro and West Santa Clara Streets in the Carroll Block.



[133] **Real Beer?** Well, here is Chester Bunnell's saloon in the south county town of Gilroy. I wonder if we'll be able to order up a beer or have to settle for tall, cold "root beer," as the wall calendar is giving us the Prohibition date of October 1921. Besides a case full of cigars, one can see spittoons, beer mugs and various bottles behind the bar. Certainly not your typical soda parlor!



[134] **An Opportunity for Celebration.** San Jose did not go thirsty during Prohibition, thanks to numerous speakeasies like LoCurto's San Carlos Club on West San Carlos Street and Henry's on North First Street. This circa 1933 photograph depicts a gathering to celebrate the end of Prohibition. Featured is Prohibition-era liquor man John LoCurto (center with glass), founder of LoCurto Gardens (later Olympian, Italian, and then finally Hawaiian Gardens). Behind LoCurto (to the right) is Harry Ferrari, owner of the notorious Silver Slipper Café on Alum Rock Avenue, then a local billiard idol named Jimmy Mills, and then John LoCurto's brother-in-law Frank Gairnese.



[135] **Back in Business!** The Valley had little trouble retooling for the legal production of alcohol following Prohibition. Wineries and breweries soon returned to business, and bars reappeared to attend to the thirst of our local citizenry. This photograph captures the bar of the Sainte Claire Club, one of the higher class establishments of its time. From the large “56” above the bar, it appears to have been taken during the Sainte Claire Club’s fifty-sixth anniversary which was celebrated in 1944.



[136] **Not So Tiny.** Tiny's Drive-In Restaurant and Cocktail Lounge, built by Frank Marten, opened in 1941 at what is now 1205 The Alameda in San Jose. It was operated by restaurateur William "Tiny" Naylor (who stood 6' 4" at 320 pounds) on the site of the old August Marten home. This beautiful photo was taken by Arnold Del Carlo on May 4, 1956. Del Carlo's photography studio was just a few doors away at 1295 The Alameda.



[137] **Tiny Interior.** Arnold Del Carlo shows us the beautiful interior of Tiny's bar and lounge in 1956. Tiny Naylor went on to open a string of restaurants in southern California. Tiny passed away in 1959, but his son Biff continues the family business out of Los Angeles, as the owner and operator of Du-Par Restaurants



[138] **A Big Name Draw.** In 1946, Lou's Village opened its doors at 1465 West San Carlos Street. A dinner and dance club, it soon became "the" place to go in San Jose. Lou's hosted such celebrities as Lucille Ball and Walt Disney and showcased such performers as the Ink Spots and the King Sisters. This beautiful 1950s Del Carlo print features owner Lou Santoro (right) with a guest at the bar.



[139] **A Saloon for Lawyers.** Manny's Cellar was located in the cellar of the old Fallon House at 175 West St. John Street in downtown San Jose. Owned by Manny Pereira, Manny's was a popular watering hole and restaurant that served an eclectic clientele from 1963 until its closure in April 1990. Shown here in about 1975, the 156-year-old building spent far more time as a boarding house, hotel, and/or restaurant than it did as Mayor Fallon's home.



[140] **Still Wetting Our Whistles.** This is how Manny's Cellar appears today. The house was built in 1854 as a residence for our one-term Mayor Thomas Fallon and his wife Carmelita (Castro). The building housed a boarding house, an Italian hotel, and restaurants from the late 1880s through 1990, when the old house was acquired and restored by the San Jose Redevelopment Agency. With all of the changes we've seen in the Valley, one constant has never waived: you'll never have far to go to wet your whistle.