

Way We Were

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"King of Denmark"

Geo. Wanning's Saloon

George Wanning was born around 1859 in Denmark, arriving in Park City as one of the first settlers in the late 1870s. Wanning, a well known member of society, helped build Park City and assisted in an assortment of occupations while doing so. Some of those jobs included Lake Flat Mining Company treasurer, proprietor of several different saloons, and an agent for Lemp Brewing Company, during which time he built the first cold storage facility in 1900. As a member of the Park Lodge and the Knights of Pythias, he was also prominent in fraternal affairs.

What might have been his most significant mark on the history of Park City was his saloon. Not twenty four hours after the Great Fire of 1898, the Geo. Wanning's Saloon had been constructed and was open for business. Although it was not much more than a shack, the structure hosted a bold sign emblazoned with the word "SALOON," and an American flag waved from the roof, marking its spot through the smoke and ash. For a community ravaged by hardship, the saloon was like a beacon in the night sky.

The Geo. Wanning Saloon was located at what is today 591 Main Street, just north of the Park Hotel, and was a popular location for special events and celebrations throughout the year. Wanning gave himself the nickname the "King of Denmark" because of a particular party held once a year in the summertime. The entire town treated the party as its own unofficial holiday and eagerly awaited its arrival each year.

Wanning, in addition to hosting a good party, was admired by many for his good deeds. When times were hard, people would occasionally hold a raffle to raise money in order to pay back debts. Wanning was known to purchase items at these raffles, and rather than keep them for himself, he gave them back to their rightful owners. One such time was printed in the September 1, 1900 *Park Record*, "At the raffle for the large music box which took place at Bates & Kimball store last Saturday evening, George Wanning was the successful man...When Mr. Wanning was apprised of his good fortune he did just what anyone who knows him would expect that is he immediately gave the box back to Mrs. Harris the woman who was raffling it. The box is a valuable one, and the action of Mr. Wanning was both generous and commendable."

Unfortunately, health problems began to affect his business, and by 1913 his creditors foreclosed his saloon. The property was then purchased by W.J. Kappus and renamed the Gold Label Liquor Company. Not long after foreclosure, Wanning moved to his wife's hometown of Ogden, Utah, where he spent the last years of his life, passing away due to heart problems in March of 1932.



Image: 2007.11.351

Caption: Rising up from the ashes of the great fire of 1898 sits Geo. Wanning's Saloon, built just 24 hours after the fire.

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