

Way We Were
For: 30 January 2012?
Title: The Oak Saloon
By: Lauren Miller, Program Coordinator

The Oak Saloon

A more beloved owner and bar could not be found in Park City than in Henry Spriggs and his Oak Saloon. Located at 419 Main Street, and named for the oak grain front, the saloon was built shortly after the great fire of 1898, and survived well into the 1960s.

According to the Park Record, by 1907 the Oak had received the only car load shipment of whiskey to ever make it into Park City, costing Mr. Spriggs \$531.70 (over \$13,000 today). Spriggs and his partner James Crooks had the whiskey aged fifty years, and received a three year supply, anticipating good business for at least that long. In an effort to keep the supply from any dishonest characters, Spriggs built a fire proof vault at the back of the building where he stored the alcohol. Unfortunately, the vault did not protect the Oak from being held up at gun point three years later. Kid Parker announced his name while holding up the Oak, yet escaped to Ogden with \$600 and managed to survive two months before being captured. In response, Spriggs built a bullet proof lookout cage where a man sat with a “young arsenal” prepared to take on any other potential criminals.¹

And yet, Spriggs and Crooks could have never anticipated nor built something to protect them from the effects of prohibition. On that wild night in 1917 when “wetdom” came to an end and Park City became dry, The Oak was the first to run out of alcohol, and therefore the first business on Main Street to close its doors.² Two months prior, Crooks, perhaps in anticipation of the nation’s turn toward prohibition, pulled out of his partnership with Spriggs who was left alone to determine how a saloon could maintain a profit while the sale of alcohol was illegal.

Like many saloon proprietors, Spriggs re-opened his doors as a “pool room and refreshment parlor,” and maintained a steady business from his devoted following.³ While it cannot be confirmed nor denied if the Oak continued to sell alcohol during Prohibition, rumor has it an old mining tunnel next to the building (still located at the back of Miner’s Park) provided an easy way to smuggle alcohol in and out of the former saloon. Regardless, only a year later Spriggs decided that anyone could do his job at that point, retired from the business, and turned over the reins to Miss Margaret Wells in a move the Park Record deemed “patriotic.”⁴ The Oak continued to operate, and even reverted to a saloon post prohibition. By the 1960s, however, it turned into a drug store before the building was finally destroyed in 1973.

¹ Park Record, Twenty Five Years Ago, 05/24/1935

² Park Record, A Wild Night, 08/03/1917

³ Park Record, Open to the Public, 08/09/1917

⁴ Park Record, Park Float, 10/04/1918



1999.17.4

Caption: Henry Spriggs, owner of the Oak Saloon, with niece Nellie at his ranch home in Park City.
Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum, The Himes-Buck Digital Collection



2005.27.11

Caption: Inside the Oak Saloon
Credit: Park City Historical Society & Museum