

Way We Were

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The Life of a Saloon Man: Sam De Angelis

As we have been researching and writing this bar series, we have discovered that the Park City saloon/soft drink parlor business was a tangled web of familiar faces and places. One name that has shown up over and over is that of Sam De Angelis. His name is spelled in a few creative ways in the Park Record, and appears in association with several different bars in Park City, but all research points to it being the same person.

Sam De Angelis emigrated from Italy in 1909, and he first makes an appearance in the Park Record in 1916, having been arrested along with many other saloon men, druggists and store keepers for allowing slot machines and other gambling devices in their businesses.¹ We don't know which saloon he was working for at the time, but he was certainly involved in the business.

After Park City went dry in 1917, the Park Record notes that "Joe Menetti and De Angelus sold out their place of business this week to John Georgio...Mr. De Angelus has gone to farming on a place owned by him in Salt Lake."² It seems that De Angelis was a businessman at heart, though, because he returned to Park City in 1921, applied for a soft drink parlor license and started doing business at the Eagles Nest, located opposite the First National Bank on Main Street(probably at what is today Ciseros).³

Prohibition was tough on saloon men operating "soft drink parlors," and Sam De Angelis did not escape the law. His place of business, the Bank (now Ciseros), was raided on multiple occasions in the 1920s, and De Angelis was routinely arrested and fined for possession and sale of liquor. In one instance, City Marshal J. M. Baker and Policeman Sam Brown raided the Bank Pool Hall and found "a quantity of intoxicating wine."⁴ They then proceeded to go to the home of De Angelis, at 232 Grant Avenue, where they found "a quantity of the same kind of stuff."⁵

In addition to raids and arrests, Sam De Angelis was plagued with robbers on at least two occasions. In May 1925, "thieves broke into the soft drink parlor...rifling the two slot machines and stealing a quantity of cigars, tobacco, candy, etc." but the police did catch the perpetrators.⁶ Two months later, his place of business was robbed again. This time Policeman Moulding caught the

¹ Park Record, December 15, 1916

² Park Record, August 24, 1917

³ Park Record, August 12, 1921

⁴ Park Record, September 10, 1926

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Park Record, May 22, 1925

three crooks. They had broken into the rear of the soft drink parlor and taken money from the cash register and slot machines. The money was found on one of the men.⁷

De Angelis was briefly proprietor of the Diamond Bar at 222 Main Street, before purchasing the Gold Label building at 591 Main. He moved back to Salt Lake City by 1935, where he continued to get in trouble with the law because of liquor violations.

He died of cancer at age 80 in 1956. His obituary makes no mention of saloons or soft drink parlors; it merely states that he “made his home and conducted a business here in the building now occupied by Nu- Way Cleaners (591 Main Street).”⁸

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Caption: Joseph Minetti and Sam De Angelis (left to right behind the bar) in the years just before Park City went dry. The location of their bar during this time

⁷ Park Record, July 24, 1925

⁸ Park Record, February 16, 1956

is unknown.

