

Way We Were  
April 12, 2017  
Prohibition and the Central Hotel  
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268 Main Street is one of Park City's oldest buildings. Originally constructed in the early 1880s, it operated as a brewery, restaurant, saloon, and pool hall. The second floor served as a dance hall, hosting social gatherings and live music for the pleasure of Parkites.

Dominic Giacoma took over in 1925 and converted the building into a "rooming house," the Central Hotel. Though he died just a year later, his wife Mary continued to own and operate the Hotel. Prohibition was nine years old in Utah in 1926 and many hotels, "soft drink parlors," and pool halls in Park City served as speakeasies, illegally selling alcohol to their patrons. The Central Hotel was no exception.<sup>1</sup>

In February of that year, the marshal and city police officers raided the Central Hotel "with the belief that gambling was going on." The officers found that "while card playing...was in full blast, no money was in evidence." No arrests were made on account of gambling, nor drinking, but John Galatz, a patron, was charged with "offensive conduct" and fined \$25.<sup>2</sup> There is no doubt that the Hotel was violating the laws of Prohibition, however, as Mary Giacoma found herself tied up in quite the legal kerfuffle the following year.

In 1927, W.R. Jefford, who had long been associated in some capacity with the sheriff's office, was arrested for bribery and bootlegging. The charge had been long in the making, as many in town thought that Jefford lived beyond his means and figured he must have an alternate source of income. He purchased expensive cars, took long trips, and contributed to the establishment of his son's business in California. A sting operation finally provided enough evidence for federal officers to make the arrest in November, at which point officers raided all of the establishments Jefford had been turning a blind eye to in exchange for pay-offs. The Central Hotel was one.<sup>3</sup>

Thirty gallons of whiskey and 660 gallons of wine were found and confiscated at the Central Hotel on November 12. Mary Giacoma, a close friend of the Jefford family, "freely and emphatically declared that 'Blackbird' Jefford was the man 'higher up' who shared in the profits." According to affidavits from Giacoma and the proprietors of the various raided establishments, Jefford made \$2,300 a month from the "liquor interests of Park City."<sup>4</sup>

This raid didn't deter Giacoma from her bootlegging involvement. The Central Hotel was raided again in the years following the Jefford case. Contraband wine and whiskey was usually found, Giacoma facing a \$50 fine each time.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 268 Main Street, Intensive Level Survey, Historic Site Inventory compiled by CRSA, 2015

<sup>2</sup> *Park Record*, February 26, 1926

<sup>3</sup> *Park Record*, November 18, 1927

<sup>4</sup> *Park Record*, November 18, 1927

<sup>5</sup> *Park Record*, May 2, 1930

In carrying on this historical connection to saloons, 268 Main Street now houses the speakeasy-style cocktail lounge and live music venue, O.P. Rockwell.

In conjunction with our current traveling exhibit, “Spirited: Prohibition in America,” the Park City Museum has teamed up with local partners to offer a historical pub crawl on Thursday, April 13 at 5:30pm. We’re currently sold out, but you can call the Museum at 435-647-7457 to join the wait list.



Image ID: 1987.3.93

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum

Caption: 268 Main Street has long been a part of the Main Street social scene, from its time as a brewery and dance hall in the 1880s to the present day.