

Way We Were
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Beer and Ice Cream?
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Beer and ice cream served at a saloon in Park City? Yes, as part of a unique marketing strategy. Let's investigate this unexpected combination.

The Oak Saloon, opened in 1902, was one of the most popular bars in town. It was a large two-story building covering three city lots. The second floor was primarily used for political and business meetings. The first floor was used for fun!

The bar was intricately carved and thirty feet in length. A large stuffed eagle hung above it. Mirrors covered the wall behind the bar. A picture of a nude woman was attached to one of the mirrors. A large brass cash register sat just behind the bar close to the entrance.

With two full-sized swinging doors, the entrance was unique as well. In winter one of the doors was locked to minimize cold drafts. Billiard tables and lively poker games rounded out the entertainment - along with an occasional brawl. The Oak was open six days a week. It was closed only on Mondays for cleaning.

The "golden years" for the saloon began in 1923 when best friends Bill Neil and Leslie Roach Sr. became co-managers and business partners of the Oak. Their competitors, in particular the Cozy Tavern, were off-limits to kids. Seeing an opportunity, the new managers decided to differentiate the Oak by creating a family-friendly environment, especially for children of the Oak's adult patrons. Food and beverage offerings were adjusted accordingly.

While the town's beer aficionados might debate whether the Oak served the coldest beer in town, amongst the saloon's youngest clientele there was no debate regarding the ice cream – for them, it was the best! After dinner, parents would dial 575 on the telephone to let the managers know kids were on their way to pick up ice cream. Twenty-five cents a pint served in blue cartons with three available flavors: vanilla, chocolate, and strawberry. We all know that kids will hound their parents for ice cream under any circumstances, but for the youngsters of Park City, there were extra incentives at the Oak.

First - the cartons were piled high. You could say that the folks dispensing the ice cream had a heavy hand! The generous portions were then "right sized" before heading home. After all, one had to close the lid. Second – as if the first wasn't enough – the kids received one free candy bar with each order.

When it came to serving a "cold one," the younger patrons could quench their thirst as well. The Oak exclusively sold "Mc's pop" from a local bottling company owned by Ed McPolin, who doubled as a distinguished politician in the State Legislature. Ten-ounce bottles were ten cents each and dispensed from a repurposed Coca-Cola cooler behind the bar.

Tune in next week to learn more about the Oak, its family-friendly policy and the two-man "dream team" who managed it for thirty-eight years.



Image ID: 1957.214.18c

Credit: Park City Historical Society and Museum, Kendall Webb Collection

Caption: Bill Neil and Leslie Roach Sr., pictured here on the right circa 1957, co-managed the Oak for thirty-eight years. They encouraged a family-friendly environment that catered to tastes of all ages.