

September History on the Channel

Your Monthly News Flash from the Friends of the Juneau-Douglas City Museum



Tuesday September 3 1946:

BARTENDERS DEMAND BETTER PAY

Striking for a 25-percent pay raise, Bartenders Union Local 869 on Sunday threw picket lines around nine bars and two hotels in the Gastineau Channel area. Strikebound were the Baranof Hotel, the Alaska Hotel, Corbett's Bar, Triangle, Midget, Arctic, Capital, Victory, and Dreamland in Juneau and Mike's and Oasis in Douglas.

The decision for the strike was announced at one o'clock Sunday afternoon and pickets were stationed before bars and cocktail lounges opened.



South Franklin Street, on a gloomy 1940s day

At a Saturday afternoon meeting in the AFL Hall, union president Smith argued that the new rate was justifiable on the grounds that it was the first wage increase asked by the bartenders since the war. During the war, in Juneau, bartenders in Juneau worked for \$10 a day. A year ago they asked for and were granted establishment of the prewar wage of \$12 a day. Although a majority of Juneau bar and cocktail operators have been paying bartenders \$15, union president Robert Smith said they refused to make that the rate official by putting it in the contract.

Last night two bars, the Victory owned by Harold Aase, and the Arctic, owned by Joe McNallen were open and being operated by their owners, but they will close as soon as stocks are depleted

Holidaying merrymakers yesterday found Juneau a "drinkless town". Soft drink fountains were jammed with visitors and local residents who insisted on celebrating Labor Day with something stronger did so in the privacy of their home. Liquor stores reported a "land office business" and Mike's, usually an after-hours rendezvous for local festivities, had closed its doors almost immediately upon receipt of the strike ultimatum.

Friday September 6:

STRIKE OF BARTENDERS IS ENDED; PAY RAISE TO \$14 A DAY; BARS NOW OPEN

The strike of the Juneau bartenders union, which began at 1:00 last Sunday afternoon September 1 when the bar operators refused to grant a raise in daily pay to \$15, ended at 1:30 this morning with the union's acceptance of the arbitrated \$14.

This morning, the 11 establishments which have been strike-bound since Sunday were all open and all facilities operating. All picket lines were withdrawn. By nightfall, the liquor industry will be operating as usual in both Juneau and Douglas.

The settlement was negotiated by Mr. Walter Sharpe, Territorial Commissioner of Labor, who had been recalled from his duties in Ketchikan to Juneau for mediation between the bartenders and bar operators.

In those days, bars were our social centers (at least for the white folks), not just places to drink. So shutting them down for several days would have produced a lot of drama in our city. These are extracts from two long articles. The Empire spilled thousands of words on the crisis.