

The Log Cabin Saloon

By John K. Haws Jr.

The nineteenth century saw a lot of political movements including repeal of slavery and the movement to prohibit alcohol. The Prohibition of alcohol saw large groups of women go after the prohibition of alcohol. The LDS revelation of the Word of Wisdom, although given in 1833, did not go into full force until 1921, when President Heber J. Grant announced the absolute requirement to enter into the LDS temple. LDS women like the other women of this country had fought it with vengeance.

Even with the announcement of the Word of Wisdom in 1833, Joseph Smith and his family operated a tavern in Far West Missouri. There was alcohol served in the Smith home in Nauvoo. In fact local folklore hero Porter Rockwell served as the barkeeper for some of the last events at his home before his murder. Emma hated the fact that alcohol was being served in her home and detested Porter for helping encourage it.

Lehi was no different. The pros and cons of the prohibition of were debated heatedly during the 1897 election. It was supported strongly by both the Republican Party chairman Will Ross and Democratic Chairman Abel John Evans (a member of the Alpine Stake Presidency). Prohibition was the key issue of the Mayoral campaign and Prohibition was signed into law in November ballot and won soundly and Lehi's version of Prohibition went into law.

This was before the United States version of prohibition with the passing of the 18th amendment to the constitution in 1919. The prohibition in Lehi was on paper, but did not mean there was no drinking in Lehi. The recent television , "The Walton" shows the Baldwin Sisters selling their "recipe" to all of Walton Mountain. Lehi had a pharmacist that sold the alcohol to all those who needed a prescription for what ails them. T. J. Wadworth, the local doctor and pharmacist made his fortune selling his "illegal recipe" to the thirsty residents of Lehi. His business

boomed between his doctor visits and his prescription medicines for those that needed his “recipe”. He was arrested four times for illegally selling alcohol with very small sentences.

The first experience for Lehi turned to be a failure and it was reported that more people drank alcohol than did before the Lehi Prohibition. It was repealed in November 1899.

Soon afterwards, the first saloon opened again in Lehi after the Prohibition. In anticipation of the repeal, Barber Bennett purchased property and began building the Saloon. Bennett and his partner John F. Bradshaw completed the building in Summer 1900 and established their business “Log Cabin Saloon” at 106 West Main. It soon became a center of recreation in Lehi.

The Lehi Banner stated that the owners were going into the cattle business and sold their interest in the Saloon. In 1903, Nate Rockhill bought the business and brought new life to the enterprise. He brought in pool and billiard tables and upgraded with new cement walks out front of the saloon.¹ The Lehi Banner described the saloon with the following review,”

“Nate Rockhill conducts the unique and well appointed Log Cabin Saloon and Pool and Billiard Parlor, where all may enjoy the hospitality of the Log Cabin.

Nate Rockhill is of a sunny and genial disposition and is ever zealous in according a welcom to those who wish to while away a short while sociably in the clubrooms or wielding the cue in a game of pool or billiards.

He maintains a splendid bar, the fixtures and furnishings being tasty and of antique type.”²

The business continued strong and entertained with music, betting, games, cards and lively talk of the latest political battles.

¹ Lehi Banner September 28, 1905

² Lehi Banner February 18, 1904

The August 24th, 1905 Lehi Banner reports of a story of a “bicycle rider with knee pants and strong breath” coming into Lehi on Monday and Tuesday. He was a loud and commanding man who bragged to have come from New York and was going to San Francisco to complete a wager for be able to send money to his family.

It was advertised that he was to perform 221 tricks in front of the Log Cabin School. This was in the day of the Bicycle when half of the community rode their bikes around town instead of a horse and buggy. The bicycle was the fad of the day. The citizens of Lehi were enamored to see all of these tricks, and the man had collected money for them to review his performance.

After bilking Lehi of their money, instead of riding off into the sunset, he gained a train and rode off without any effort at the expense of the Lehi townspeople.³

Carl Mellor tells the story of a Lehi man- Nels Otterson, who tried to ride his horse into the saloon. He started to ride right in, and the bartender refused entrance. The persistent horseman would not retreat. A Lehi policeman was called and a battle ensued.

A gun was fired and the horseman fell to the sidewalk bleeding from the bullet. The bullet had gone completely through his body. A Silk handkerchief was used to stop the bleeding. It was threaded right through the wound to clean it out and to stop the bleeding. The man was reportedly placed back onto his horse and saddle and sent home where he recovered.⁴

Gus Slade, a local Lehi Man and a competitor in the Saloon Business, tried to get the upper hand over Rockwell and his Log Cabin Saloon. Gus thought if he could get rid of Log Cabin Saloon, his saloon would take over its place in Lehi

³ Lehi Banner August 24, 1905

⁴ Historical Lehi Tour writings of Carl Mellor

society. Gus bought the mortgage where the Log Cabin Saloon was located from under Nate Rockwell. To get around this, Nate promptly bought the Saloon where Gus had previously had his saloon and reopened across the street at 155 West Main Street.

Nate Rockwell. “The Log Cabin Saloon’ stayed strong in business until the United States passed the 18th amendment to the Constitution in 1919. The Log Cabin Saloon was forced to close its doors forever.

It can be said of the Log Cabin Saloon that it was opened from the effects of Prohibition and it was closed from the effects of Prohibition. The United States Prohibition did not stop the flow of alcohol in Lehi. Lehi Pharmacist Wadsworth from the original Prohibition was replaced by Pharmacist Merrihew in the prescription of alcohol for his customers of Lehi during the later prohibition.