

St. Michael Historian



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Picturing the Corner Bar

by Bob Zahler



With the recent announcement that the Corner Bar is on the market after being run by Scott and Dorothy Braun for the last twenty-one years, the longest tenure of any Corner Bar proprietors, it seemed like a good time to dig into the archives and share some of the rare photos connected to the famous liquor dispensary in downtown St. Michael.

The one at left was donated by Don Barthel of Albertville who acquired the photo from his father, Albert Barthel (my grandfather) who is the young man standing at the far right. Uncle Don's recollection was that Grandpa told him that they were working in front of the Corner Bar in St. Michael, but he did not know what were they working on, specifically, or when the photo was taken. Also not known is the identity of the other men. A close inspection of the photo reveals that they were doing masonry work. In their hands can be seen hoes, trowels and pails dripping with concrete. It's also clear that they are working below grade. Just above their heads is a hewn, log floor beam notched for crossing joists. Could they have been working on the foundation for the Corner Bar in 1897? It's possible.

Albert Barthel was born south of the Village of St. Michael in 1879, so he would have turned eighteen years old in 1897, and he certainly looks

like he could be that age. Also, there was an existing, smaller wooden structure on that corner: J. Henry Dick's saloon which had been built in the early 1880s. That could be the structure visible above them. It also appears that it has been at least partially demolished, exposing a portion of the interior. Perhaps they were laying an expanded foundation in preparation for the new Corner Bar (or Golden Corner Saloon as it would be known when first built). The mugs of beer in their hands (yes, they drank dark beer back then) also indicates that they were likely working in proximity of a saloon, since bottled beer was still rare; and so maybe the proprietor was treating the men to a refreshing beer break. The identity of the other men, and the boy sitting above them, is still a mystery. Do you recognize any of them? If so, be sure to contact Bob Zahler or another historical society board member.



Here's another great photo of the Corner Bar from approximately 1905. The photo is likely that early since there is not a telephone pole on that corner yet, nor is there a concrete sidewalk. The sidewalks were laid in 1910 and the telephone pole was likely raised after 1905 as the Osseo Rural Telephone Company had only recently been formed. On the front left corner of the building can be seen two signs, each advertising Gluek Beer. The Gluek Brewing Company purchased the Corner Bar in 1905. It was very common at this time for breweries to purchase saloons as a way to guarantee the distribution of their product. Perhaps the photo was taken at the request of the brewery so that they could advertise their latest acquisition? Do you recognize any of these men? The man at the far right may be Henry Kasper. Again, contact Bob Zahler if you can identify any of the other men.

The photo to the right is from 1889 and shows the saloon that existed on the corner of Main Street and Central Avenue prior to the 1897 construction of the present Corner Bar. This structure was likely built about 1883. The saloon proprietor was J. Henry Dick. As the signage on the front of the building indicates, it was both a saloon and a hotel. The wagon route between Minneapolis and St. Cloud came through St. Michael. A horse-drawn wagon, depending on the load, would only cover 15-25 miles in a day, especially since the horses or mules would need to be fed and rested. A livery stable was located directly behind the hotel for the horses.





The above photo is the historical

to society courtesy of Greg and Debby Dahlheimer. Debby's grandparents are the two behind the bar: Irene and Wally Eull. Seated at the bar is Howard Sipe, the local Gluek Beer distributor. Standing next to Howard is Wally Dick, brother to Lambert Dick who was the Grain Belt Beer distributor. Wally was probably making a delivery since he's wearing his work apron. Debby Dahlheimer was told by her mother that the bar was located on the north wall at the time where-as today it is on the south wall. This photo is likely from the late 1930s. If you look closely you can see a portrait of President Franklin D. Roosevelt hanging on the back bar behind Irene and Wally. The Eulls ran the Corner Bar until 1952.

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The photo at left shows the interior of the Corner Bar in 1957. Behind the bar to the right is proprietor Cletus Barthel. Do you know the bartender to the left? Seated at the bar are members of the Bill Vetsch family who were there to celebrate Bill's 60th birthday. Sitting at the bar from left are Joe Valerius, Lloyd Vetsch, Orville Vetsch, Kenny Vetsch, Don Vetsch, Bill Vetsch, Willy Vetsch, Joe Vetsch and Earl Vetsch. You'll notice that the back bar is obviously different from the one in the top photo. Thanks goes to Earl Vetsch for the photo.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

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Meetings held on the second Monday of the month at the St. Michael City Hall in the Gries and Lenhardt Public Meeting Room adjacent to the library.

This newsletter is published quarterly for the benefit of the members of the Saint Michael Historical Society. Reprints of this or any other newsletter by the Society are not permitted without the express written consent of the Saint Michael Historical Society.

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Stephen Barthel

Night Hawk Club



Where the name "Night Hawk Club" came from is not sure, but the above photo was in the collection of Olivia Barthel Diem Chervenak and submitted by her son Dr. Tom Diem. The name was scribbled in the bottom margin of the photo along with date 1929, and at the top she wrote "home brew days". Prohibition lasted from 1920-1933 and the home brewing of beer became quite common, especially in German communities like St. Michael. Sitting in the center of the photo with one bottle in each hand is Oscar Dehmer. Olivia is standing in the overalls at right pouring a beer. Church organist Edmund Linnemann is to the right of her. Let us know if you recognize any of the others in the photo.

Charter Member Alfred Zachman Passes Away

On April 7th we lost a former historical society board director and a good friend, Alfred Zachman. Alfred was born in Frankfort Township on April 6, 1927 to Gregor and Susan (Servaty) Zachman. Alfred and his wife Rosie lived on one of the oldest farms in the area. Alfred was very interested in St. Michael's history and proud of his family's role in that history. In 2005 he was one of the charter members of the St. Michael Historical Society and he served on the board of directors until 2012. We will miss Alfred's wisdom and easy laughter. The board of directors extends its condolences to Rosie and the family.

Annual Meeting Results

At our Annual Meeting on April 14th, the following board members were re-elected to a three-year term: Stephen Barthel, John Jaeb, Wayne Kessler and Lisa Marx. Newly elected to the board, also for a three-year term, was Calvin Schoen. Four changes to the by-laws were also proposed at the Annual Meeting and then passed by the majority of the members present.

After the Annual Meeting was closed, a regular Board of Directors meeting was held. Board members then elected Sheldon Barthel as president and Stephen Barthel as vice-president. Re-appointed to the treasurer's position was John Jaeb. Calvin Schoen was then appointed to the position of secretary. Some of the committee appointments were also then made. Steve Barthel will continue on as website manager, Crystal Sayen as Media Specialist, Bob Zahler as Newsletter Publisher, Sheldon Barthel will continue on as Membership Director, Rose Ann Gindele will keep her role as Archivist.