

A Short History of the Oasis Saloon

Jim Pearce, November 18, 2015

One of the incomplete stories in Fair Oaks history is the saga of the Oasis Saloon. For those of you who don't know, the Oasis Saloon was located just at the southwest end of the Old Fair Oaks Bridge. While we found some articles about the turmoil the opening of the saloon created amongst Fair Oaks residents, we never found out exactly when and how it closed. A recent discovery of an archive of the Sacramento Union newspaper changed all that.

On April 4, 1901 the County Board of Supervisors granted the application of Edward F. Gross to conduct a saloon at the south end of the newly constructed Fair Oaks Bridge. The citizens of Fair Oaks were quite upset, and held a mass meeting to protest the saloon, which they felt caused them irreparable damage.

It was reported in the newspapers that the action of the Supervisors was taken in retribution because the Fair Oaks people had failed to provide a reception and banquet for the Supervisors on the occasion of their unheralded visit to inspect the new Fair Oaks Bridge.

Samuel Williams of the Fair Oaks Committee presented a petition signed by over 200 Fair Oaks residents opposing the saloon. It read in part:

"...Whereas Fair Oaks is a temperance community and there is no public demand for a saloon in the neighborhood, be it resolved that we protest against the hasty action in issuing this license..... We view with alarm the establishment of a drinking saloon at our doors for the use chiefly of excursionists from the city as a menace to the peace of a community without police protection."

It was pointed out that in the deeds for the land in that locality no saloons could be established there. The opposition pointed out that the saloon was not in Fair Oaks, but on the other side of the river. Gross demanded that the Fair Oaks residents pay him \$1000 not to build the saloon. The Fair Oaks representative offered \$40, which was Gross's cost for the license.

Eventually, agreement was reached in a closed meeting that a saloon would not be built. The terms were not made public. Gross then increased his demands and upon rejection of same by the Fair Oaks citizens, restarted building his saloon.

There the clippings end.

Sometime before 1905, the saloon was purchased by two local businessmen, Charles Slocum and Walter Davis. Records in the Davis family files show the owners having trouble getting rent from the current tenant. Davis left the property to his two daughters when he died in 1922.

It's unclear what happened in the next eight years. But in 1913 the Oasis Saloon made headlines again:

Sacramento Union, July 19, 1913

“SOLD THIRTY PINTS OF BEER TO BOYS

Fair Oaks Saloon Men Furnish Makings of One Grand Time

The trial of M. Kolb and P. Martella who conduct the saloon at the Fair Oaks bridge, and who are charged with contributing to the dependency of Albert Tagen, a minor, was begun before a jury in Judge Hughes court yesterday and will be resumed this morning.

Thirty pint bottles of beer. This is the sum total of intoxicants which, according to the testimony taken yesterday, was sold by Martella to the Hagen boy. The Hagen boy was not at all stingy with the beer. Other boys, some no older that 14, helped to dispose of the national beverage of Germany and other countries, and there was one grand time.

According to Myron Wood, aged 14, after a lot of the stuff had been swallowed, the boys enjoyed themselves by popping the corks and squirting the beer over one another.”

Kolb and Martella were convicted and the Judge “gave them until August 15 to close up their saloon and surrender their license to the board of supervisors and bound them by a promise that they will keep out of the saloon business in the county and that they will lead decent lives.”

One can assume that the Oasis Saloon didn't reopen under new ownership.