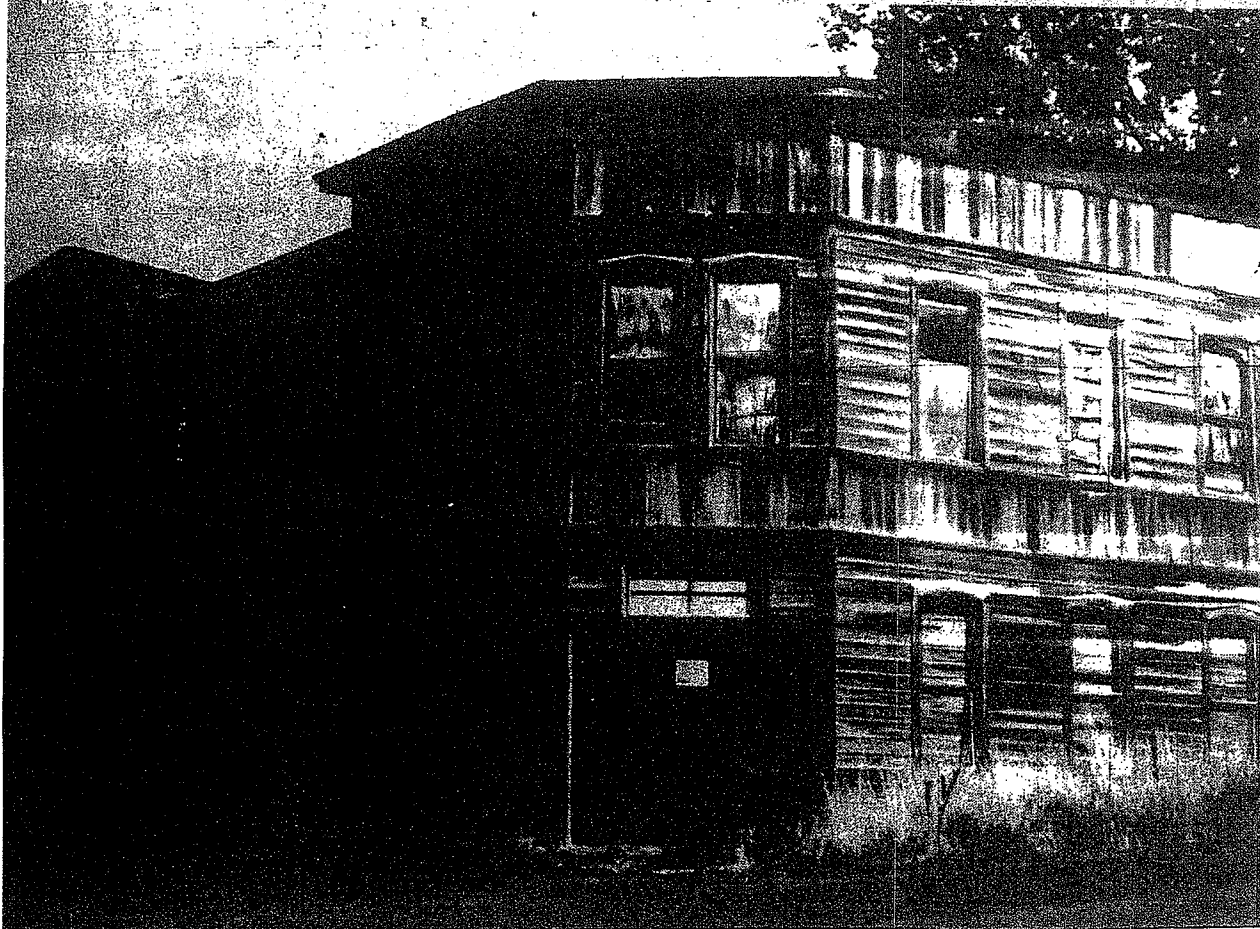


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here now

If You Can Remember Grangeville's Two Breweries, Consider Yourself an Old-Timer

BY ED STEPANEK



EAGLE BREWERY appears forlorn in this scene just before it was shut up and demolished. The site it stood on would be located where the Forest Service parking lot is now located, on Mill and Main Street. Photo was taken by Mrs. Claude Northway just before the old building was demolished in 1961.

Few in Grangeville remember the two breweries and the distillery in the area.

The story of the breweries goes back into the 1800's with the start of the town.

They stopped operating at the beginning of this century.

However, Grangeville is lucky enough to have individuals around who remember not only the buildings, but what the beer itself tasted like.

Taste, which is always opinion, varied from "as good as today's beer," to "Better than today's beer," which at least gives rise to some speculation that the breweries of long ago, although small, put out a good product.

The story is by no means complete, we would appreciate anyone with pictures, recollections, or information, no matter how great or small, contributing to the history.

We know little about individuals in the area who might be related to individuals who either owned or operated the breweries or distilleries.

Any bit of information would help for we think this type of industry is an interesting one.

According to Dale Elmers, who is familiar with the early history of the town, Von Berge's Saloon was located where the Bazar store is now.

The Brewery, the Eagle Brewery, Von Berge's also, was below the Nezperce National Forest Building, where the parking lot now is.

The Grangeville Brewing Company's building was located where the Mobile Service Station is now, across from the A and W Root Beer restaurant.

We'll start with the Eagle Brewery, the first one in Grangeville, to our knowledge.

We have a little information about it, thanks to some history books, old Free Press records, and personal recollections.

We do know that a Wm. Von Berge was an individual from Illinois who began a brewery in the area, and from old Free Press records, was quite active.

According to a history of Northern Idaho, published in 1903, "Von Berge saw a first class opportunity to begin a brewery in Grangeville, to see for him was to act and in 1889 the business had assumed such proportions that he retired from his farm and rented it to give his entire attention to the business in town."

That seems to be an example of private enterprise at its best. Von Berge's past mentions no breweries. In fact he worked in Illinois, where Chicago now is, with his father and brother in the omnibus business. The history explains they "were getting wealthy and had a fine business but a street car opposition broke them up and from 1847 to 1878 they lost over \$100,000 in clean cash."

To go back farther, Von Berge's father was born in

1801, and settled where the present city of Chicago is now located in 1846. He died in 1891 in Idaho County, where he traveled in 1880.

Von Berge's mother was born in 1814, and died in 1880. The family came west in 1878, with a capital of \$300, which he had gathered from the "wreck" of apparently his omnibus business. He took land on Camas Prairie and at the time of the writing of the history, owned a brewery.

He at once, on arriving on Camas Prairie went to work raising "the fruits of the field and stock" which continued until 1889. In 1887 Von Berge saw a "first class opportunity" to start a brewery in Grangeville.

At the time of the writing of the history book, we find that Von Berge "is now placing in his plant an additional steam engine and ice machine."

In 1887 Von Berge married Kate Smith, a native of Germany, and they had 3 children, Amil, Rudolph and Elsie.

Von Berge had one brother, J. H. Von Berge, in "this country a member of the Red Men, and in politics, a staunch Republican."

On June 17, 1892 we find an article in old Free Press records saying "Wm. Von Berge is starting up the brewery and expects to have his first brew in the market by July 1." This is all of the article. In those days, the article (Continued on following page)

Von Berg Expands Operations in Grangeville

(Continued from previous page)

teles were short, to say the least. This not only resulted in many small articles, but is a contrast to today's style of newswriting.

On July 1, 1892, which was a Friday, we find an article saying, "W. Von Berge will have a ten . pin alley ready when he opens the Grangeville brewery July 1."

The July 8 paper says, "Brewery opened July 1." That is the entire article.

July 15, 1892, we find that "Wm. Von Berge has built a bowling alley 64 feet long at the brewery and those who delight in that sport will find good accommodations there.

However, a conflict in dates is apparent here. Von Berge, according to the history book, began his brewery in 1887, while the Free Press records say the brewery was started in 1892. The Free Press records we quoted indicate "Von Berge is starting up the brewery," not rebuilding. Also, he was expected to have his "first brew" on the market by July 1.

On July 22, 1892, "Von Berge's Brewery is tastily fitted up and is rapidly becoming a popular resort these hot days. Our temperance editor says there is nothing like a drink of cold beer to go right to the thirsty spot in hot weather."

In 1893 Von Berge was in-

voled in agriculture because we find for Sept. 21 of that year, "The Meyer and Von Berge threshing crews were heading and threshing for C. H. Brockman last Tuesday. The grain was excellent."

On June 29, 1894, an article says, "The Von Berge brewery is shipping large quantities of Grangeville beer to Denver, Cottonwood, and Keuterville these days." For the uninitiated, Denver, was at one time a town between Cottonwood and Grangeville, just north of Fern. Old newspaper accounts gave glowing ac-

counts of the prospects of Denver. However, the railroad coming in south of Denver, at

Fern, hurt the town immensely. July 6, 1894, we find that, "Wm. Von Berge is now located above the meat market with his brewery saloon. He is also having the same fitted up in a tasty manner with a fine refrigerator to keep his beer cool."

In the February 8, 1895 edition we find that "The school dance in the Von Berge district last Friday night was very successful and netted a goodly sum for the benefit of the school."

An article on new buildings dated Feb. 15, 1895, says that W. Von Berge built a brick brewery in 1894, valued at \$800. He also constructed an ice house for \$150. These were the days for construction.

April 15, 1895, we find that "Mrs. Rieft is in town superintending the change required in her building to convert it into the beer hall premises required by Wm. Von Berge, who has leased the building and will open up there shortly. A lunch counter in charge of Bob Hogan is to be a feature of the new place."

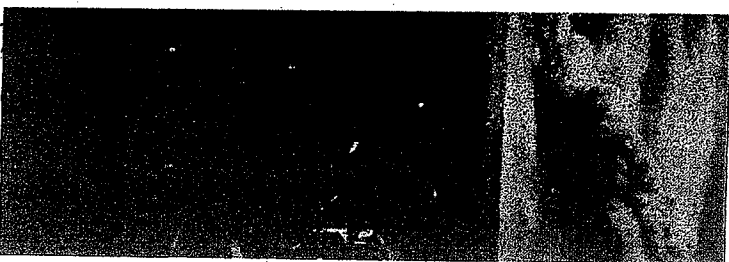
On May 24, 1895, the Free Press says, "The roof of the Eagle Brewery building caught fire last Friday evening but was speedily discovered and quenched."

As a sidekick in the same issue we discover that "Schroeder and Hendricks have started up their brewery and saloon in Cottonwood and are making a success of it. Their beer is excellent and meeting with large demand, as Cottonwood is essentially a beer-drinking community. This makes the third saloon in Cottonwood."

A fire in 1897 destroyed some parts of the town. According to the history of North Idaho, quoting Idaho County Free Press records, "The Dec. 19 fire occurred in the "Eagle Brewery" at 12:30 a.m. in the morning, a Sunday, and in a few minutes "The entire building was a mass of flames."

The fire was said to have started in the SW corner of the second story of the Eagle Brewery Building, west of the Free Press office. (This is an old location of the Free Press). The saloon building had

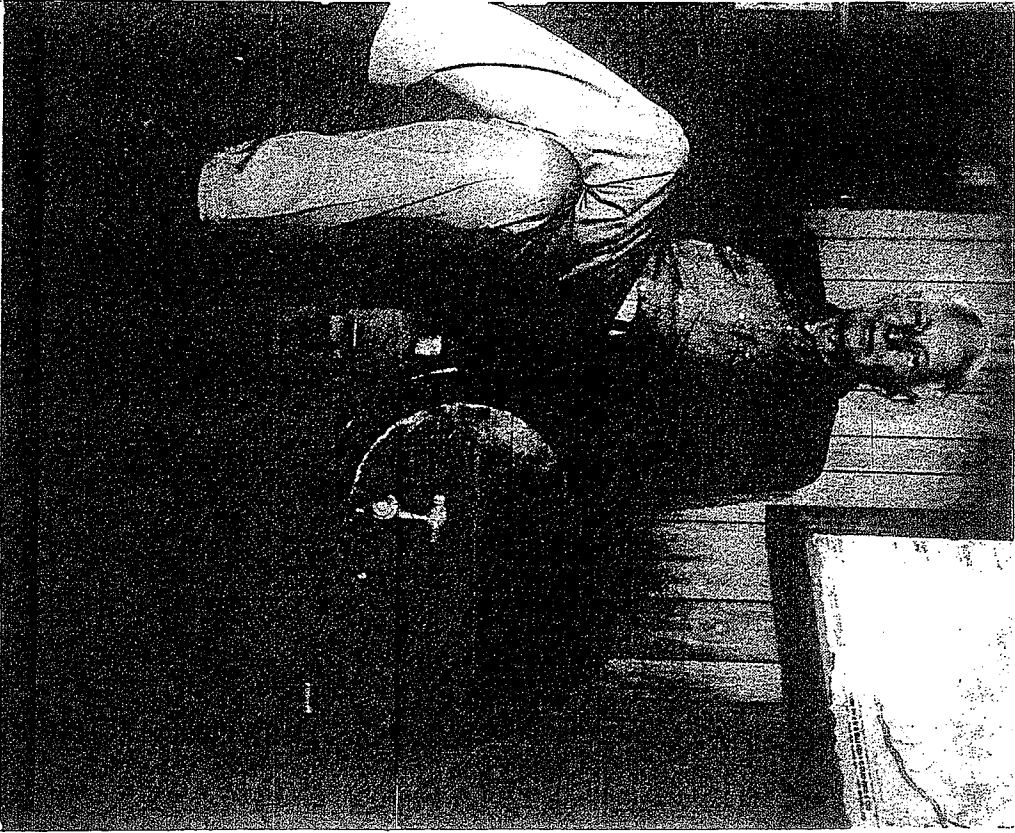
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NG CO. appears in this photo. He is background, with two stories.—Photo



of the eagle which came from a rig's, located across the street from as obtained the eagle during an late.—Free Press Photo



RICHARD HAUGER SR. sits beside one of the casks used by the Von Berg brewery. The spout is not quite original but the rest of the cask is from the old brewery. The brewery used numbers for each cask.

Brewery

(Continued from previous page) started a fire in the Free Press building, completely destroying the Free Press building, except for a few articles.

"Hanson photograph gallery to the west quickly caught and thence the flames easily spread to the adjoining building owned by Mrs. Crea and occupied by H. F. Shissler as a restaurant."

Another article in the same issue of the paper says "Wm. Von Berge closed his saloon at 11:30 Saturday night. The fire occurred about one hour later and it originated in the west corner of the upstairs fronting on Main St."

The article says the origin of the fire, which began in an empty room, "Presents a mystery."

The saloon building lost, was owned by Mrs. Rhett, while Von Berge lost \$250 in saloon fixtures, according to the newspaper article.

The Free Press' new cylinder press was installed in the Palace Hotel building, and Sunday Mr. Edmundson started for Stuart with a team for the old "Cayuse" plant, the old records say.

We find yet another article in the same paper, dated Dec. 24, that "Von Berge has commenced work on a 20 x 44 saloon building on the site of his stand and hopes to re-open by Jan. 1."

In the Jan. 7, 1898 Free Press, we find that "Von Berge's new saloon building is roofed with asphaltum."

From the explanation of the building of the new saloon, and the fire starting in the upstairs of the saloon, it would appear that the fire originally began in the saloon, and not the brewery building itself, although the first part of the fire story began "in the Eagle Brewery Building."

We can perhaps deduct from this that the saloon was also called the Eagle Brewery.

Also, no mention is made of him rebuilding the brewery, in the papers, which he surely would have done, had it burned.

Anyone who could clarify this is asked to do so, as it seems to be an important point.

In March 2, 1905 edition of the Free Press we find "William Von Berge is treating his brewery to a new coat of paint and also making substantial improvements about his property."

Also, we find that "The Grangeville Brewing Company have closed a deal with P. C. Sherwin for a ten-acre tract of land in the western part of town on which they will erect their big brewing plant. Work will be commenced next week and they expect to have their product on the market by the first of May."

Von Berge was apparently a man of many talents for we find in the same March 2, 1905 issue that "Wm. Von Berge is spending some time making exhaustive experiments on a new kind of concrete and believes it will be a success. The finish and coloring is very attractive and he believes it is almost indestructible. He has built a work shop on East Main Street and will manufacture a number of articles from this composition."

We find in the April 20, 1905 issue that "Bert Dearing has purchased the interest of George Tonnies in the livery business also in the Grangeville Bottling Works, and hereafter will be known as Hockersmith and Dearing." What did they bottle? We are not sure. However, Elmers has mentioned that a distillery did exist in Grangeville, perhaps this is it. According to Idaho County records, William Von Berge died December 1, 1914.

Thus passed from the face of the earth an individual who perhaps represents the very

epitome of American capitalism. Starting from almost nothing, he then branched off into various businesses, including: a shooting gallery, sawmill, cement block plant, brewery and saloon.

The June 8, 1905 issue of the Free Press, an article says, "Joe A. Basler, president of the Grangeville Brewing Co., left for Pendleton and other points below yesterday, during his absence he will have plans and specifications prepared for the erection of a substantial two-story brick building—75x90—feet on the premises now occupied by the Wax Store. The building will cost in the neighborhood of \$25,000 and the 33 rooms upstairs will be equipped with steam heat and hot and cold water in every room." This building sounds more like a hotel upstairs than anything else.

June 22, 1905 was the date that "The machinery for the new brewery has arrived and in a short time this establishment will have their product on the market."

However, disaster struck again with this large article in the September 14, 1905 issue, that, "Grangeville in ashes, quarter million lost," Principal Losers, Jos. Basler, buildings, \$7,000; while the article does not say this was the brewery, we know that Jos. Basler is the president of the Grangeville Brewery.

In the September 21, 1905 issue, we find that "The Basler Building which had just been completed was a heavy loss and it is not known just what will be done as Mr. Basler is in Oregon."

We find another advertisement in the December 14, 1905 issue, saying, "Wanted, 500 to 1,000 bushels of good brewing barley. Call on Grangeville Brewing Co." We also find an article saying, "Joseph Basler is expected to return to the city the first of

the week at which time it is said he will make known his plans for the erection of his new brick block on his property on East Main Street."

The third article in that issue says "Anton Fisher, manager of the Brewing Company, states that everything is in readiness for the making of their bottle beer, and they will begin to operate their bottling plant in about two days."

Since the opening of the brewery here the company has enjoyed a pleasing trade and their products are being used all over this and Nezperce Counties with the assured prospect of an increasing trade as the popularity of the beer grows.

"They state that already many advance orders have been placed for their bottle beer and believe that the new department will be successful."

These articles give one the impression that the brewery didn't burn down in the fire mentioned. And also, the building which did burn down belonging to Jos. Basler was something other than the brewery, maybe a hotel, although possibly the brewery could have been rebuilt.

We don't know that the Grangeville Brewing Company changed hands, and was operated by a Leonard Becker-Jurgen, with two dots over the J in Jurgen.

The Brewery was taken over when the electric light plant was built in Grangeville, one source who wishes to not be quoted remembers.

Becker-Jurgen operated this plant until the local prohibition in 1910, then reopened in 1912, and operated until 1916. Becker-Jurgen then left the area.

Richard Hauger, Sr., Fenn, a grandson of John Von Berge, William Von Berge's brother, farms the old land of the Von Berge's in that area.

William Von Berge's ranch home burned down but the home of John Von Berge is still standing. The homes were across the road from each other south of Fenn. Hauger is filled with memories of the old days. Born in 1900, he remembers the Von Berge brothers.

John Von Berge had a daughter Helena. Helena Von Berge married, and Richard Hauger Sr. is the couple's son.

Hauger still has one of the casks of the Eagle Brewery in his home. The best example, kept in very good shape, has the lettering, "Eagle Brewery" on the head of the cask. Beneath it is the lettering, "W. Von Berge." Beneath that is a faint word that probably spells out "Grangeville." The G and E and of the word are readable, but the middle of it is indistinct.

The cask is made of heavy oak barrel staves measuring 1½ inches in thickness.

The cask measures 12 inches across the top, including the wood barrel staves. The cask is 20 inches long at its widest point, in the middle, is 52 inches in circumference. A spout on the cask in the end was made of wood, however Hauger said that he understood in the "old days," the spouts were made of copper.

Hauger remembers that Von Berge also had a shooting gallery on the east side of Mill Street, opposite the brewery.

Richard Hauger remembers lots of rail fences when he was growing up in that area, which had a Denver mailing address at first, later changed to Fenn. He would go for the mail in town at Denver, he recalled. He also remembers going down a canyon in a horse and wagon, to get water, as at first no wells were drilled on the prairie.

Water was also collected during rains in barrels.

William Von Berge, although owning and operating the farm in that area, lived in town, Hauger remembers. However, William Von Berge did operate one of the first balling hay machines, in addition to a thrashing crew, also a sawmill in town and manufactured concrete blocks.

Lester Lanningham, who lives in back of the forest service building, remembers both breweries. Lanningham lived in the same area as a youth.

He not only drove William Von Berge to his ranch near Fenn, but also hauled beer from the Grangeville Brewing Company to Cottonwood in 1912.

Both breweries bottled beer, in addition to selling it in kegs, he remembers.

He also remembers the distillery on Three Mile Creek. The Eagle Brewery was operated by Von Berge and his sons, he recalls, with hired help being used occasionally.

As he was close to the brewery, he said he spent some time there.

Lanningham hauled the beer to Cottonwood in a horse-drawn wagon in 1912, after the local option prohibition was discarded.

Upstairs, in the Von Berge brewery, he remembers two bedrooms, a living room, kitchen and bathroom. The beer was brewed upstairs, close to the living quarters, he said.

It was stored in barrels in the ground floor store room.

Dewey Cowgill, Grangeville, remembers two breweries in Grangeville and also the distillery on Three Mile Creek, which he said led to its brand name, "Three Mile Whiskey."

George Zumwalt, now living in Lewiston Orchards, remembers the two breweries.

He operated a service station on the site of the old Grange-

vile Brewery Company's building.

The bottom was remodeled to be utilized as his shop while the pumps were out front of the building, gravity feed type pumps, he recalls.

He left the area in 1944, and recalls the building still standing until approximately 10 years afterwards.

He recalls Amil making cement blocks, after the fire in 1912, he said, when two middle blocks of the town burned down.

He recalls the fire, and was at that time in the Imperial hotel. At 4 a.m. in the morning he ran from the hotel through the burning streets, and recalled, "I didn't think I was going to make it."

He recalls Von Berge smoking cigars and playing the accordion.

Von Berge's wife Lanningham described as a fine person, who was a "mother to everyone."

Von Berge would go out to his ranch, sometimes tended bar, and also ran the brewery, Lanningham recalled.

During his days of driving Von Berge, Lanningham recalled Von Berge telling him that, "You never want to get in a hurry about anything, there's another day coming."

The Von Berge's also had a small sawmill in town, Lanningham recalls.

He said he remembers that Von Berge would make one trip for wood in the winter, then leave the wood-landing chore to someone else.

The Von Berge brewery had a bottling works on the opposite side of the street, down a little ways from the brewery, Lanningham remembers. He said the brewery was located where the Forest Service parking lot is now.

The brewery itself was remembered by Lanningham as being part brick and part wood. The front was wood, he said.

(Continued on following page)

Brewery

(Continued from previous page) while the part on Mill Street, where Von Berge kept the beer, was brick. This would be the middle of the brewery.

The rectangular brewery had a flat roof, was two-story and the room where beer was kept was described by Lanningham as a "cooler" as the room was always cool.

A barn in back of the brewery was used to keep horses and a milk cow. They also stored barley there, raised from their ranch near Fenn.

Lanningham recalls that Von Berge won a first prize at a Chicago Fair for brewing barley.

Lanningham described the beer from the brewery as being "better than you can get now."

Lanningham said he never could recall seeing Von Berge drive a team when at the ranch. He described Von Berge as being a supervisor in all his affairs of business.

Lanningham remembers Rudolph as being more of a rancher, while Amlil was more like his dad, not wanting to stick to anything particular.

William Soltman, another Grangeville resident who remembers the breweries, described himself as not much of a beer drinker but said the beer from the local breweries was good beer.

Particularly the one in the west end of town, he recalls, although both were good.

The beer in those days was a bargain, he said, selling for \$1 for a "baker's dozen." That is, 12 bottles for \$1 with an extra bottle for good measure. These were quart bottles.

He remembers Leonard Becker-Jergen as later an owner of the Grangeville Brewing Company, a small dark complexioned man.

Soltman came to Grangeville in 1906 at the age of 21 as a

tailor, and remembers seven saloons open, although he had heard that as many as 11 were open at one time.

The two breweries were supplying beer to the saloons, he said.

The only beer he recalls imported was Rainier beer, then from Spokane.

Local beer was darker than today's beer, but not much different in flavor.

The local prohibition in the county was not wholly successful, he remembers.

Grangeville went dry in 1910, with the two breweries closing. However, on the west side of the county, the German people who had settled there kept on drinking beer as the saloons apparently stayed open.

It was a funny situation, he remembers, with drinking banned on one side of the county, while on the other side prohibition apparently ignored.

The living quarters in the Von Berge brewery were upstairs and to the east of the regular brewery, he said with Amlil Von Berge occupying it for a long while after the brewery was closed.

March 29, 1895, a story appears in the paper about "The new license law becomes operative on July 1 next. It requires all persons who sell liquor not to be drunk on the premises to take out licenses of \$200 per year. The law does not apply to druggists using prescriptions," the article ends.

In 1910 and 1911, Idaho county was dry, that is, alcohol was banned. This shut down the breweries, individuals remember. The Eagle Brewery didn't open again, afterwards, but the Grangeville Brewing Company did reopen in 1912, when local prohibi-

tion was repealed, according to those who remember.

Going into prohibition, was found in the December 26, 1912 issue of the Free Press that, "This has been the first year of saloons after two years of drought or rather alleged drought."

Apparently local option prohibition didn't work from 1910 and 1911, and the state prohibition which followed in 1916 and the national prohibition which followed that didn't work either.

Turning to Free Press records, we find in a February 20, 1913 story that prohibition was being thought about on the state level. The story says a state wide prohibition bill was introduced in the legislature, by a Bradley from Canyon County and Mason of Latah County, who introduced it in the lower house.

December 25, 1913, we find that a commission was to meet January 12 to grant saloons licenses to operate. Von Berge saloon is not mentioned, at least his name is not mentioned, only F. A. Tamblin, C. A. Johnson, Pat Courtney and Fenn Batty.

On January 8, 1914, the saloons were in an odd situation. The city was to be dry for two days that week because the four saloons who were licensed to sell had their licenses expire on January 9; while the commissioners met on January 12 to renew them for that year.

January 15, 1914, we find that Fenn Batty, C. A. Johnson, P. F. Courtney and F. A. Tamblin were granted liquor licenses, Tamblin was the Imperial Hotel manager.

Prohibition again rears its head as we find that on July 9, 1914 "Anti-booze forces put a dry plank in all platforms," of political parties.

L. A. Wisner is listed as being editor and proprietor in that year. Another part of the paper said "Parker vigorously opposing measure, as a Mormon clique." The Democratic, Republican and Progressive parties were all dry that year. Not much choice for the voter who wanted a "wet" voice.

January 15, 1915 we find that Fenn Batty, C. A. Johnson, P. F. Courtney, and the Imperial Hotel Co. were granted licenses to sell liquor

January 28, 1915, headlines proclaim, "Idaho will vote on Prohibition in 1916."

A sidelight of another type of prohibition was an article saying federal law was going to regulate the supply of habit forming drugs. This was a February, 1915 issue.

A February 1915 issue says that House Bill 142 puts Idaho on the dry line. The account continues that the "bill passed the Senate. Idaho will be a prohibition state on and after Jan. 1, 1916."

One article mentions that Idaho will join the dry ranks, along with Washington and Oregon.

The next issue says "Idaho to be driest state in the Union."

The "wets" were not to have Idaho go dry without a fight all the way, and we find in an April 1915 issue that "Prohibition Law to be Tested in Court."

The "wets" were not easily quelled, for in the October 28, 1915 edition we find that the Idaho Liquor law was to be taken to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In the Free Press for Feb. 22, 1895 we find that the Palace Hotel has advertised, and also the Jersey House, "A good bar room," with "Special accommodations for traveling and transient guests."

The Exchange Saloon was advertising "No. 1 Cutter Whiskey," with Frank McGrane as proprietor.

From the "The Daily Press," date October 2, 1895, we find that not only is the paper published every evening except Sunday, but it carries advertisements from various saloons.

The Miners Saloon with George D. Smith, proprietor, "Carries the choicest line of liquor and cigars. . . fine music in Grangeville."

The Kentucky Dew Saloon and Club Rooms, shows the name of F. B. Weber, proprietor.

The Palace Bar offered "Finest Wines, liquors and cigars in the City." Con Sullivan was listed in the ad.

Another ad listed the Exchange Saloon and Club Rooms, Frank McGrane proprietor, carried, "The choicest brands of wines, liquors, and cigars." The ad also boasted that it was best conducted house in Idaho County, and also, a "Popular Resort for Mining Men," in Grangeville.

The Daily Press also lists the "Karsten House" carrying the "Finest Wines, liquors and cigars to be found anywhere."

Interesting things about all these ads are that they don't mention carrying beer and that they all boast of carrying the "Finest Wines."

An ad in the October 26, 1905 issue of the Free Press advertises "Cottonwood Beer, on draught, a popular beverage, year ody wines and cigars, Oregon Saloon, Grangeville." The "year ody" wines was probably year old wines, a typographical error. So today we have a situation were all beer is imported, from large breweries.

Only memories remain of the

two in Grangeville which were once thriving businesses.

Perhaps this is an example of largeness, and how it is not necessarily good. Why not have local beer made, instead of paying all this money to interests outside the county?

Starting the brewery should not be too difficult a task, the only real difficult task would be obtaining a license for it.

Headlined "Brewery Wanted," a Free Press story in the first issue, June 18, 1886, reads,

"The consumption of bottled beer on Camas Prairie is something enormous, and in order to encourage somebody who knows the business, to establish a brewery and keep the money at home. The proprietors of the Press will

donate a suitable building, nicely situated for a brewery in this town. Such an institution would undoubtedly be a paying investment and Grangeville offers every facility for its establishment. The barley raised on this prairie is the finest in the world for brewing purposes."

EDITOR'S NOTE: Due to the size of this story, which was written in 1975, in the early part of the year, we have saved it for this Bicentennial edition. However, the story was set on a linotype, at a wider measure than presently used, thus only seven columns of type are placed on the page instead of the usual eight.