

If I Tell U Will U Buy Another Drink?

What did a bar on North Main Street in Fairport have in common with John Steinbeck's 1939 literary masterpiece, *The Grapes of Wrath*? Not much, except for a sign behind the bar at Sam Saporito's Northside Restaurant, with the mysterious acronym, IITUWUBAD. The sign can be seen over his shoulder as he pours a drink in the accompanying photo, circa 1940. A sign with the same message is referenced in Steinbeck's iconic novel. The meaning? "If I Tell U Will U Buy Another Drink?"



Salvatore "Sam" Saporito was born in Sicily in the late 1880s. He served his country, in fact two countries, as a soldier, first in Italy, and after immigrating to the United States also served in WWI. He received an honorable discharge in December, 1918.

In 1923 Sam and his wife Victoria purchased the hotel and saloon of William Dolan at 49 North Main Street and renamed the business the Northside Restaurant. They made their home in the building, and carved out a living, made more difficult as Perinton was declared a dry town in 1916, even before Prohibition restricted the sale of alcohol in 1920. The hotels and bars up and down Fairport's Main Street, known as "Whiskey Flats", tried to make a living selling food and soft drinks, with mixed success. Some of the booze business went underground, literally, to the basements of homes and establishments. Many were periodically raided and shut down, including that of Sam Saporito, until the repeal of prohibition in 1933.

Joseph Saporito was born in 1920, spent his youth at 49 North Main Street, and eventually took over his father's business. And like his father, he also served his country. Sargent Saporito was a decorated radio operator and crew member on military transport planes traveling the famed "Hump", the route from India to China over the imposing Himalaya Mountains, at the time considered the most dangerous air route on earth. After serving three years and surviving three crash landings, Sargent Joseph Saporito was honorably discharged in September of 1945.



The establishment at 49 North Main Street changed names a few times during the years the Saporito clan ran the business, and included the Northside, the Italian-American, Joe's Bar and Restaurant, and finally, the Nickelodeon. The building has been the home of T-Foots since 1974, and continues to serve customers from Fairport and beyond, as it has for over a century. But alas, the IITUWUBAD sign is long gone.

Written by Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

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