

Prohibition Raid at Fairport's Cottage Hotel

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

The Cottage Hotel was one of several north side establishments targeted in the Prohibition raid in May of 1922. The substantial brick building was located at the corner of North Main and John Street, later renamed State Street and now Lift Bridge Lane. Opened in 1887, the hotel was an imposing structure with a four story tower providing views of Main Street and the canal. At the time of the raid it was owned by Michael Miller, who also had financial interests in several restaurants in Rochester.



Early 1900s postcard view of the Cottage Hotel in Fairport

Miller hired Robert Connelley to run the operation, and he was in charge on the night Monroe County Sheriff Henry Morse and his deputies arrived with search and seizure warrants. Two bottles of whiskey were found at the hotel, more than enough to proceed with legal charges under the state's Mullan-Gage Prohibition Act. Soon after the hotel was shut down.

On August 7th, 1922, County Court Judge Frederick L. Dutcher ordered a restraining injunction against Connelley, who failed to appear in court. Owner Michael Miller appeared with his attorney, Harlan W. Rippey, who protested the closing of the hotel and argued that Connelley

served alcohol without the knowledge or consent of the owner. Miller was ordered to put up a \$1,000 bond and guarantee that the hotel would not sell intoxicating liquors in the future.

As for what became of Robert Connelley, deputies encountered him in a Rochester establishment on Front Street about a month after the Cottage Hotel court date. As the undercover officers entered, Connelley reportedly shouted, "Don't sell those guys anything. They're a couple of Prohibition stiff's". After a heated exchange, Connelley was charged with disorderly conduct, but broke free and escaped to the street. According to newspaper reports, "Then followed a merry chase over the Andrews Street Bridge, to North Water Street, to Wescott Street, and up to St. Paul Street. The Fairport man was the fastest runner, and it was necessary for the deputies to commandeer a truck to catch up with him. He finally was caught near the intersection of St. Paul and Andrews Streets and turned over to police."

It seems Robert Connelley, the fast running, whiskey pouring Cottage Hotel proprietor, never returned to Fairport. Michael Miller was granted permission by the court to reopen his hotel, and hired a replacement for Connelley, by the name of Mike Raftus. Prohibition agents were familiar with the new proprietor. On the same night that agents searched the Cottage Hotel, the restaurant operated by Raftus at 36 North Main Street was also shut down for serving bootleg alcohol.

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