

CITYVIEW'S

# BUSINESS JOURNAL



## SPEAKEASY TREND GROWS IN DES MOINES

Three metro establishments use the style of the once-popular private bars.

By Colson Thayer

After Congress ratified the 18th Amendment in 1919, the manufacturing, sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages were banned nationwide. However, Iowa started its own prohibition in 1916. But prohibition efforts within the state began even before that. The Iowa Liquor Prohibition Amendment was approved in 1882 but was found unconstitutional by the Iowa Supreme Court in 1883. Despite the efforts to ban alcohol, there was no shortage of drinking during prohibition.

"The sale of alcohol did not stop," said Leo Landis, curator for the State Historical Museum of Iowa. "There's even a report of bootleggers selling to Roosevelt kids."

The decor of Good News, Darling reflects its name, with vintage newspaper wall coverings.



## FEATURE

**Prohibition era speakeasies**

Alcohol was not in short supply, and there was no shortage of venues to have a drink during prohibition. Speakeasies, at the time, were known as places where alcoholic beverages were illegally sold. Popular culture might paint a picture of secret doors, stairs, entryways and knock combinations, but in Des Moines and other parts of Iowa, speakeasies were often found in small establishments in a back room or separate areas for consuming alcohol. They often operated out of already-established businesses that had to disguise themselves as something else.

"While speakeasies were common in larger cities such as New York or Chicago, it was likely that such clubs were rare and short-lived in Iowa," said Landis. "Gatherings of people even in larger towns the size of Des Moines, Sioux City and Cedar Rapids would have eventually attracted the attention of law enforcement."

Law enforcement was well aware of speakeasy culture. Des Moines' police chief at the time, John Hammond, led a hardcore prohibitionist police force. In the 1920s, nearly 300 liquor nuisance charges were filed per year, almost one a day in Des Moines.

Oftentimes, Des Moines speakeasies sourced their supply from local producers. A notable example is a producer who kept 800 gallons of mash, which would become 325 gallons of liquor.

One of the most famous Des Moines-based bootleggers was Kenneth Sonderleiter. He was responsible for trafficking alcohol to all kinds of individuals and establishments. He became known as Des Moines' "society bootlegger." Sonderleiter eventually faced federal liquor charges in 1931 and was stripped of his citizenship. However, these rights were restored by a presidential pardon provided by President Roosevelt in 1942.

During the height of his bootlegging, Sonderleiter might have been responsible for the marketing and advertising of Des Moines' speakeasies. During prohibition, pirate-themed literature was floating around the city discreetly promoting some speakeasies. When police raided Sonderleiter's home, his basement was pirate-themed.

From a business perspective, Landis said the revenue generated from operating a speakeasy ranged from "reasonable extra income" to a "somewhat lucrative source of revenue."

In December 1933, the 18th Amendment was repealed with the 21st Amendment. A national inability to enforce prohibition led to the repeal.

Soon, Iowa started to see the presence of state liquor stores, and customers could begin purchasing beer at venues. Liquor by the drink was still illegal, and wine and spirits could only be purchased at state



In the basement of Iowa Taproom, one will find Ken's – A Not So Secret Speakeasy

liquor stores. During the gubernatorial election of 1962, alcohol regulation became a political issue again in Iowa. Democrat Harold Hughes, who was an alcoholic, promised Iowans they would be able to buy more than just beer at a bar. Hughes won the election, and, in 1963, Iowans were able to purchase liquor by the drink like today.

**Modern day speakeasies**

Recently, a nationwide trend to recreate prohibition-era speakeasies with modern-day service and drink selections has emerged. While some of these venues use prohibition as their inspiration, their accuracy is said to be lackluster.

"It's hard to get it right because there's always those nuances. It's hard to get it exact," said Landis.

Tim Wilcoxson, general manager of the Iowa Taproom, agrees.

"That would be really hard to do," he said.

**Ken's – A Not So Secret Speakeasy**

Located in the basement of the Iowa Taproom is Ken's – A Not So Secret Speakeasy. Some of the owners of Ken's are history buffs and decided to name the venue after Des Moines' Kenneth Sonderleiter. Don Short from West End Architectural Salvage had an eye for the style the venue was trying to achieve, and he helped build the space three years ago.

The tables are built from old trailer truck beds.



## FEATURE

The lower bar is made from an auditorium stage from Haverhill High School. The booth dividers are old elevator doors from the Equitable Building. The mirror is from an old mansion that used to be on Grand Avenue.

What helped the style of the venue was a fire that once burned down the building where the Iowa Taproom is now located. This was during the Korean conflict, so an iron embargo meant both upstairs and downstairs would be finished with wood.

The look is not the only thing retro.

"We like to do a little bit of everything," said Wilcoxson about the venue's drink selection. "We have a lot of classic drinks on the menu."

To follow prohibition-era drink making, Ken's does it quickly with a minimal amount of ingredients.

The Honey Nut Bourbon-O uses Barenjager, which Wilcoxson considers an often forgotten-about liqueur. In conjunction with a local radio station to celebrate their birthday, they created a simple three-ingredient cocktail called 'Sup Des Moines, using Revelton Mulberry gin. Also on the menu is Dilley's Printing Press Punch, named after the building's former tenant, and the Presidential Pardon Martini, celebrating Roosevelt's favorite cocktail.

Ken's does everything the Iowa Taproom needs it to do. The space mainly serves as the waiting room for upstairs, Thursday through Saturday. The space only serves drinks, appetizers and desserts. The rest of the week, the venue can be rented out for private parties and events.

One of the biggest differences between today's speakeasies versus speakeasies during prohibition is the sense of secrecy and exclusivity. For Ken's, it is right in the name— A Not So Secret Speakeasy.

"We wanted people to be able to find it," said Steevo Andrews, who does marketing and public events for Full Court Press, the company that owns the Taproom. "We had a lot of secret staircase ideas, and we had a lot of secret cocktail drinks and things like that. We ended up deciding to try to make the place busy."

## Alleged Lee's

A venue with an even harder time maintaining any kind of secrecy is Alleged Lee's in Des Moines' East Village because the city made them install a front door. This gave them the opportunity to put in a patio and have some storefront advertising.

In addition to Alleged Lee's, Brian Rorris also owns Quinton's Bar and Deli. The company was at the end of its lease and was looking to move Quinton's because of COVID. However, Rorris was able to work with his landlord and divide the space between Quinton's and Alleged Lee's. At the time, Rorris believed the East Village lacked a true speakeasy.

Rorris said everything in the space is authentic. The back bar is a Brunswick Triple Arch originally built in 1890. Rorris said they looked all over the country, flying to Philadelphia, Denver and down to Texas. Eventually, they found one in Atlanta and brought it to Des Moines. The process took nine months. Sitting above the bar is an original Tommy gun. The space is wrapped in a custom wallpaper with a damask pattern. All the frames are antiques, and each picture has some relation to the prohibition era or Des Moines.



Alleged Lee's features a Brunswick Triple Arch bar originally built in 1890. Above the bar is an original Tommy gun.



Alleged Lee's may have a speakeasy feel inside, but its front door and patio give a different impression.



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## Good News, Darling

When the owner of Des Moines bar Hello, Marjorie, Nick Tillinghast, signed the lease for a big commercial space, he only needed a portion of the 5,000 square feet they offered him. He and his team operated Hello, Marjorie, for two years before Tillinghast inquired about a backroom that was being used as a construction office. Tillinghast was hoping to provide a more intimate getaway from Marjorie for a smaller number of people to relax and have deeper conversations. During the pandemic, Tillinghast had the idea to create a dark room with only 26 seats. Soon, the team was able to build out during the pandemic and opened Good News, Darling in April 2021.

Tillinghast does not consider Good News, Darling to be a speakeasy because he markets and uses social media to promote the space. But a better term to describe it would be a hidden cocktail bar. Good News, Darling has its own entrance without any signage, and the host will escort you to the back.

"We do elevated food-style culinary cocktails and have the opportunity to give very focused hospitality," said Tillinghast. "Food is kind of the inspiration behind what we do back there."

The bar seating at Good News, Darling is first-come, first serve. However, Tillinghast wanted groups to have the opportunity to plan their nights, so the rest of the space is made by reservation online.



Good News, Darling, with seating for 26, has the feeling of a speakeasy.



Nick Tillinghast, owner of Hello, Marjorie, turned a "backroom" into a more intimate getaway named Good News, Darling.

## Not exactly

Landis, the curator for the State Historical Museum of Iowa, says, "I'm not sure that they're accurate to what a speakeasy would've been like in the 1920s." Even so, he appreciates the new trend of speakeasies and calls it "a good marketing idea." ■

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# CITYVIEW'S BUSINESS JOURNAL

# EXPERT ADVICE

## ON ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOUR BUSINESS

### TECHNOLOGY

#### *What are the benefits of outsourcing to an MSP?*

First things first. MSP = Managed Service Provider.

Now, being that Platinum Information Services is an MSP you may feel like my opinion is biased. Well, it is...but seriously coming from +20 years of professional careers no matter how you look at it we've all been using MSPs. It's just a matter of how noticeable it is.

The benefits of outsourcing your IT needs can really be determined by how well you can accomplish your expected positive outcomes without creating more negative ones right? Same goes for the services you provide to your clients.

If done right you should be able to get a partnership that compliments your needs, augments things that can be done by sharing skills and resources, and is providing services that allow your business to become more efficient than it is without the relationship.

A great MSP realizes they are in business because of your business!



**Scott Hardee**

*Business Development Executive – Branch Manager*



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### ACCOUNTING

#### *Can I afford to hire employees?*

When hiring an employee there are a lot of expenses to consider. As an employer the company has to match FICA and Medicare tax, FICA and Medicare is 7.65% of the employee's wage. In addition to the FICA and Medicare tax the company is subject to both Federal and State Unemployment tax. This tax can range from 1% to as high as 8% of the employees wage up to a maximum of \$36,100 in wages.

Therefore, the "burden" that is over and above the employee's wage can be as high as 15.65% of the gross wages.

In addition to the payroll taxes, you will be required to get Worker's Compensation Insurance, which varies depending on the industry your business is in. It can be very high if you are in the construction industry and lower if your business is more of an office type business.

Lastly, you will want to consider benefits. If you have less than 50 employees the business is not required to provide benefits. However, if you want to attract and keep good employees you will need to decide if you can afford benefits, such as health, dental and life insurance, vacation and retirement plans just to name a few.

When hiring employees it is important to consider the expenses involved. However, as a business owner, you should consider how much more income the company would bring in if your duties were freed up to work on sales. The financial aspect is not the only factor that one should consider when making hiring decisions.



**Ann M. Hartz**  
CPA



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### ADVERTISING

#### *Advertising can be \_\_\_\_\_!*

Advertising can be annoying, irritating and sometimes even offensive. It can also be entertaining, helpful and desired. It just depends on the medium.

Businessinsider.com states that about 30 percent of all Internet users are now ad blocking. That's nearly one in three digital ads that will never even have the opportunity to be seen. And the trend is growing. Research has shown that consumers do not want to be bothered with ads in their social media space or while they are shopping on the Internet. And, according to Time magazine, less than 6 percent of a business' organic Facebook posts can even be seen by their "fans" due to the social media site's continually changing algorithms. Are your Internet marketing dollars selling product or service for you? Or are they simply annoying people and driving up the use of ad blockers?

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Midwest Fabrication & Welding, LLC	Tipton	CEDAR	02	\$229,000	0	8	8	NEW BUSINESS	Sheet Metal Work Manufacturing
Ingersoll Water Conditioning	ROCKWELL	CERRO GORDO	04	\$176,000	0	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	N/A
CJBIGLANES	CAMANCHE	CLINTON	02	\$180,000	0	8	8	NEW BUSINESS	Bowling Centers
River Valley Management LLC	CLINTON	CLINTON	02	\$247,500	0	0	7	NEW BUSINESS	All Other Specialty Trade Contractors
Spencer a Melvin LLC	CLINTON	CLINTON	02	\$50,000	0	7	7	EXISTING BUSINESS	General Automotive Repair
Vita Chiropractic & Wellness LLC	WAUKEE	DALLAS	03	\$90,000	2	0	0	NEW BUSINESS	Offices of Chiropractors
Woofys LLC	Manchester	DELAWARE	01	\$184,000	7	1	1	EXISTING BUSINESS	Pet Care (except Veterinary) Services
Employvio Employment Background Checks, LLC	Dubuque	DUBUQUE	01	\$150,000	2	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	Investigation Services
ShineOn designs	JEFFERSON	GREENE	04	\$75,000	2	4	4	EXISTING BUSINESS	All Other Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
QD ZOOTY Ent., LLC	PANORA	GUTHRIE	03	\$88,900	1	0	1	EXISTING BUSINESS	All Other Specialty Food Stores
Outzen Enterprises LLC	Mt. Pleasant	HENRY	02	\$144,900	10	3	3	NEW BUSINESS	Fitness and Recreational Sports Centers
Property Simple Solutions, LLC	MARENGO	IOWA	01	\$202,100	2	0	2	NEW BUSINESS	Car Washes
Vertical Peak Technologies, LLC	Cedar Rapids	LINN	01	\$381,500	10	17	17	NEW BUSINESS	Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction
Vertical Peak Technologies, LLC	CEDAR RAPIDS	LINN	01	\$118,500	10	0	17	NEW BUSINESS	Power and Communication Line and Related Structures Construction
W.D.I. Pest Control, LLC	MARION	LINN	01	\$139,100	0	1	1	EXISTING BUSINESS	Exterminating and Pest Control Services
TOTALSCAPES INC	SPRINGVILLE	LINN	01	\$50,000	0	2	3	NEW BUSINESS	Landscaping Services
Ver Steegh Manufacturing LLC	OSKALOOSA	MAHASKA	02	\$409,000	1	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing
Ver Steegh Manufacturing LLC	OSKALOOSA	MAHASKA	02	\$90,400	1	1	1	NEW BUSINESS	Farm Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing
GlenwoodQuickserve, LLC	GLENWOOD	MILLS	03	\$496,800	20	22	2	NEW BUSINESS	Limited-Service Restaurants
LET IT BEE, LLC	MUSCATINE	MUSCATINE	02	\$99,000	5	0	0	NEW BUSINESS	Executive Search Services
Duck Duck Pi LLC	LE MARS	PLYMOUTH	04	\$665,000	30	30	1	EXISTING BUSINESS	Limited-Service Restaurants
BENCHMARK AUTOMOTIVE SOLUTIONS LLC	URBANDALE	POLK	03	\$50,000	1	1	5	NEW BUSINESS	All Other Automotive Repair and Maintenance
QC MCSKINNER, LLC	BETTENDORF	SCOTT	02	\$175,000	25	2	2	NEW BUSINESS	Baked Goods Stores
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SALE PRICE: \$450,000  
SELLER: WHITWER ENTERPRISES LLC  
BUYER: LANDWORKS LLC  
ACRES: 0.186  
SQUARE FEET: 6,348



**5616 HICKMAN ROAD, DES MOINES**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-14  
SALE PRICE: \$600,000  
SELLER: COLAMAN RE HOLDINGS LLC  
BUYER: NWANGANGA, NELSON  
ACRES: 0.551  
SQUARE FEET: 7,304



**5801 FRANKLIN AVE., DES MOINES**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-18  
SALE PRICE: \$475,000  
SELLER: RL FRIDLEY THEATRES INC  
BUYER: DHK ENTERPRISES LLC  
ACRES: 0.503  
SQUARE FEET: 8,280



**5917 ASHWORTH ROAD, WEST DES MOINES**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-18  
SALE PRICE: \$6,300,000  
SELLER: ASHWORTH PARTNERS LLC  
BUYER: VIRINDER SINGH  
ACRES: 2.529  
SQUARE FEET: 19,736

**1850 EASTON BLVD., DES MOINES**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-20  
SALE PRICE: \$140,000  
SELLER: GONZALEZ, JOSE  
BUYER: JIMENEZ, MEREYA  
ACRES: 0.072  
SQUARE FEET: 1,928



**1000 73RD ST. UNIT 25, WINDSOR HEIGHTS**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-20  
SALE PRICE: \$98,000  
SELLER: BLYTHE, LAURA A.  
BUYER: C&C INVESTMENTS & ENTERPRISES LLC  
ACRES: 0.138  
SQUARE FEET: 1,525



**6250 N.W. BEAVER DRIVE, JOHNSTON**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-21  
SALE PRICE: \$2,000,000  
SELLER: 6250 NW BEAVER DRIVE LLC  
BUYER: EROC PROPERTIES LLC  
ACRES: 1.355  
SQUARE FEET: 16,600



**301 N. ANKENY BLVD., ANKENY**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-24  
SALE PRICE: \$977,333  
SELLER: GARDNER, WILLIAM G ROGERS  
BUYER: SIX INC  
ACRES: 0.634  
SQAURE FEET: 7,260



**112 BROWN ST., RUNNELLS**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-24  
SALE PRICE: \$134,910  
SELLER: VANDER LINDEN REAL ESTATE INC  
BUYER: VAN ETEN PROPERTIES LLC  
ACRES: 0.106  
SQUARE FEET: 1,196



**3809 EASTON BLVD., DES MOINES**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-24  
SALE PRICE: \$25,000  
SELLER: CRAM, CARL R ESTATE  
BUYER: RM MADDEN CONSTRUCTION INC  
ACRES: 0.423  
SQUARE FEET: 398

**2407 ADVENTURELAND DRIVE N.W., ALTOONA**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-25  
SALE PRICE: \$2,395,114  
SELLER: TEXAS ROADHOUSE HOLDINGS LLC  
BUYER: MJG DEVELOPMENT LLC  
ACRES: 2.145  
SQUARE FEET: 8,487



**2805 30TH ST., DES MOINES**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-25  
SALE PRICE: \$2,000,000  
SELLER: BRICKSTONE APARTMENTS LLC  
BUYER: BRICKSTONE APTS LLC  
ACRES: 0.887  
SQUARE FEET: 25,896

**1791 N.W. 86TH ST., CLIVE**  
SALE DATE: 2023-04-27  
SALE PRICE: \$670,395  
SELLER: BOESEN, CHRISTIE J.  
BUYER: 1791 LLC  
ACRES: 0.344  
SQUARE FEET: 4,384

**6150 MERLE HAY ROAD, JOHNSTON**  
SALE DATE: 2023-05-05  
SALE PRICE: \$650,000  
SELLER: EARLY NNN ENTERPRISES LLC  
BUYER: CHARLOTTE'S BELGIAN WAFFLES LLC  
ACRES: 0.744  
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