

**SALOONKEEPERS IN FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, 1860-1920:
TRADITIONAL BUSINESS IN AN EVOLVING MODERN
COMMUNITY**

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INTRODUCTION

Beginning in the 1820s, temperance movements arose across America, prompting debate over the morality of drinking and selling spirits; factions argued whether drinking was a personal liberty or a social evil and whether government should allow non-drinking citizens to pass legislation circumscribing the behavior of drinkers. The saloonkeeper, as a dispenser of hard drink, found himself balancing the values of his customers and the values of the modernizing society around him.

In my study of the saloonkeepers of Fairbury, Illinois, will explore whether they maintained a respectable place in the town's business and social community despite the opinion of anti-saloon forces, represented by people like philosopher John Bascom, who in 1877 said that the drinker continued "to stand across the path of public progress, to check the movement of society, and so ultimately to destroy his own well-being as well as that of others." [1]

I have drawn upon the works of historian Richard E. Jensen to define the opposing sides as "traditional" and "modern;" I will also consider the moderates, for whom the saloon was more of a practical problem than a moral problem. As the main indication of the saloonkeeper's social status and reputation, I have relied on the events reported by and the opinions expressed in the local Fairbury newspapers, primarily the Fairbury Blade, a weekly paper which began publication in 1871 as the Fairbury Independent.

This research paper consists of four sections covering, first, the general historical background of Fairbury; second, the traditional/modern perspectives in this particular moral conflict; third, the saloon as a business and the saloonkeeper as businessman; and fourth, the social status of Fairbury saloonkeepers as evidenced by the local newspapers.

I will establish that the Fairbury saloonkeeper, while caught up in the liquor conflict and vilified by some fellow citizens as an obstacle to the moral and political progress of America, still maintained a balance between his traditional-minded customers and the more modern Fairbury business community, and that he combined the two outlooks in his own life.

Richard Jensen in *The Winning of the Midwest and Illinois: A Bicentennial History*, approaches the conflict from the perspective of conflicting cultural viewpoints of modernism and traditionalism. I attempted to apply his explanations of these two perspectives to the situation of the saloonkeepers of Fairbury, Illinois, The first group in the conflict, the moderns, or "drys," "considered even moderate drinking to be sinful and properly subject to legislative prohibition." [3]

The drys included those to whom Jensen refers as the "modernizers," often people of Yankee stock who brought their concept of town culture to the frontier. [4] The emerging middle class were often modernizers, [5] and the most vocal group were the pietists, members of revivalist churches, who felt a duty to spread their own moral beliefs across America. [6]

Republicans, while not all "drys," tended in general to lean towards a modern position on the drinking question. [7]

The second group, traditionals or "wets," regarded drinking as a human liberty not subject to the

control of fellow citizens or of government. Several cultural groups made up the "wets": the traditional pioneer stock who settled across the U.S. frontier, the traditional immigrant groups such as the Irish and Germans, and the liturgical churches, including Roman Catholics and most Lutherans, who wanted sole moral governance of their members without state interference.[8] The Democratic party also supported the freedom to drink as a personal liberty.[9]

The third group, the moderates, who might or might not drink, viewed liquor in more practical than moral terms, and were likely to advocate control by legislation rather than outright prohibition or uncontrolled sales).[10]

The moderns, traditionalists, and moderates lived side-by-side in Fairbury as they did all across Illinois. In addition to considering the modern/traditional conflict as it emerged in Fairbury, I will detail Fairbury's specific problems with lawlessness that increased the persistence of the anti-saloon groups. Sources for Fairbury history include Livingston County histories and also an informal history of the town written by Alma Lewis-James.

The main source of information in this paper regarding the actual saloon business is Perry R. Duis's *The Saloon*, which deals primarily with the urban saloons of Chicago and Boston. This work contains valuable information regarding liquor laws in the state of Illinois and details the nuts-and-bolts operation of the tavern business.

For background on the saloonkeepers themselves, I examined the United States population census reports for the town of Fairbury for the years 1860, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920. The years 1860, 1870, 1880, and 1910 list the "saloonkeeper" occupation; the census of 1890, destroyed by fire, leaves a gap from 1880 to 1900; the 1900 census lists only the occupation of "bartender" and does not indicate saloon proprietors, which widens the gap in census information from 1880 to 1910. I attempted to fill in that gap by checking business directories and county histories, as well as newspaper articles, for mention of saloonkeepers in that time period. (See Appendix I)

By tracking saloonkeepers through the censuses, I discovered their ethnic backgrounds and was able to get an idea of how long they stayed in business or if they moved on. Occasionally a saloonkeeper would list his occupation with a term such as "salesman," which once again I tried to cross-check with other sources.

To describe the status and reputation of the Fairbury saloonkeeper with respect to his fellow businessmen and townspeople, I turned to newspaper articles as a measure of public opinion. Jensen states that citizens were often extremely well-informed on current political issues[11] and that "the vast majority of the electorate relied upon general newspapers." [12]

The newspapers create a picture of the saloonkeeper through articles written describing both the respectable and seamier aspects of these public drinking places. The papers followed the activities of local saloonkeeper citizens, as they did other businessmen; sometimes a glimpse into the respectability of the publican's profession and reputation comes from what the newspaper holds back as much as what it prints. In addition, the papers often printed the names of participants involved in saloon brawls or drunken incidents, offering some insight into the background of the saloon patrons.

HISTORY OF FAIRBURY

The town of Fairbury lies in Livingston County, Illinois, in the north central part of the state, about sixty miles east of Peoria and 100 miles southwest of Chicago.¹³ (See Map #1) Livingston County, part of an area known as the Grand Prairie, was one of the last areas of the state to be settled. The land, though fertile, was difficult to farm, and no sizeable river ran through the area to convey the settler to this land or the farmer's grain to market. Potential settlers needed reliable transportation routes, good land and markets, and supporting facilities such as grain elevators and blacksmiths before establishing new farms."

The coming of the railroad finally brought settlers into this last unbroken prairie in Illinois. In 1857 Caleb L. Patton, a landowner in Livingston County, approached Octave Chanute, the chief engineer constructing the Toledo, Peoria, & Warsaw (TP&W) Railroad through central Illinois. He convinced Chanute to run the right-of-way through his property and to plat the town of Fairbury along the route.

A town located on the railroad line promised a future viable community; John Marsh bought and platted land as an addition to the town, and people in the surrounding settlements began moving their belongings and their businesses to Fairbury, for business would follow the railroad.^[15]

Since a railroad depot would draw farmers with produce to ship to market, the depot-to-be at Fairbury began attracting businessmen who could sell services to the farmers and to the railroad itself.

Many in the nearby community of Avoca, realizing that town growth would come with the railroad, moved to Fairbury, even dismantling and transporting homes and business structures.^[16]

Settlers were now setting up shop in Fairbury to support the railroad and its employees and the surrounding farmers. According to Alma Lewis-James in her history of Fairbury:

During the first winter [1858] they built themselves a grain elevator and a general store. When spring came, a dry goods store started competition. A small hotel followed, then two boardinghouses, grocery store, drug store, wagon making and repair shop, tavern, lumber yard, and Methodist church.^[17]

Then, in 1868, Marsh bored for coal on his end of town, and was successful in finding it.^[18] The railroad was eager to have the coal for fuel, and new businesses grew up to support the coal mine and the miners employed there.^[19]

Entrepreneurs such as the Walton brothers, (see shops in Illustration 1), who ran several businesses including dry goods, groceries, and a grist mill, recognized that Fairbury's economic future rested with its retail position in rural Livingston County rather than with the coal mines.^[20] The two railroads in town helped Fairbury to emerge as a prominent grain market, and the local businesses sold supplies to farmers served by the railroad.^[21]

Friction and violence attended the growth of Fairbury. Patton, who owned the original platted land on the east end of town, and Marsh, who owned the land on the west end, rivaled each other in the

race to become the business center of town. (See Maps #2; the dividing line between East and West ends was Second Street).[22] Each had a grain elevator, coal mine, and retail stores. Eventually, each side had its own railroad depot (TP&W on the West and the Chicago and Paducah on the East). Patton sold out to Bruce Amsbary, who continued the feud, which lasted through the 1860's. The rivalry reached the point where competing groups on both sides of town accused each other of burning down parts of the other side.[23]

Given the constant feuding and frequent fires, Fairbury acquired a reputation in Illinois as a rough town, full of railroad men, miners, and gangs of young boys looking for excitement. The railroad men bore a grudge against the townspeople because the town, trying to collect money owed them by the railroad, had helped force the debt-ridden railroad into bankruptcy. The railroad workers would come into town, get drunk at the saloons, fight with each other, and do their best to aggravate the citizens.[24] The Blade of July 5, 1884, relates such a row:

Some of the crowd displayed too much enthusiasm yesterday, and there were four arrests. A couple of railroad men engaged in a slugging match, in front of O'Malley's saloon at night.[25]

Some of the pioneer farmers living outside Fairbury came into town to trade and mingled with the citizenry, the men pursuing their traditional pastimes of "getting drunk, fighting, racing horses, and gambling." [26]

Many newspaper accounts of bar fights refer to "boys from the country" who came into town and mixed it up with each other and the locals, as the following article from the Blade indicates:

Rumors of a row at Jim O'Malley's saloon last Sunday a week, could not be traced to a reliable source till this week, when we are told that Jim McKiernan and a couple young men from the country named Murphy, kicked up a "shindy" there in the afternoon, upsetting the stove, and inflicting a severe cut in the face of one of the Murphy's. Too much benzine was the cause of the rumpus.[27]

Another troublesome group adding to the widespread lawlessness of Fairbury were the gangs of drunken boys who roamed the town. There was no age limit on the sale of liquor, so juveniles could go into any saloon and procure it. The boys, "some of them under ten years of age...rampaged the streets until late at night, and terrorized the inhabitants with their fighting and vandalism." [28]

Combining the traditional country people, the railroad men, and the drunken juveniles, Fairbury at night would have been a violent and dangerous place. The saloon and the liquor sold in Fairbury saloons, common element in all this disorder, fueled the violence of the town. The Blade had been urging the citizens to remedy the problem of continual drunkenness and fighting commonplace on the streets of Fairbury, and printed this article on July 30, 1886, indirectly including saloons as part of the problem:

From a business viewpoint, Fairbury cannot be excelled by any town in the state, but when it comes to public enterprise, public pride and public welfare, we are not out of the woods by any manner of means. Last week our businessmen complained bitterly of the parties who egged the baseball umpire, claiming it would have a tendency to hurt their business interests, but they

should remember that their own lack of interest in a public way is doing more damage to Fairbury than all the eggs this side of Easter. Dead! Positively dead and decomposing, is the verdict against us when considered in any other light than that of business. Churches standing vacant, the streets growing up in weeds, boys and hoodlums exercising their own home rule; as protection against fire, no waterworks of any kind, and \$3000.00 a year from six saloons. Such a state of things should make every one of our citizens blush with shame, but it won't."[29]

Some of the law-abiding citizens in town finally had enough of fires and factional fighting; they called a town meeting denouncing the east-west rivalry and pledging to improve the situation. Although a grand jury brought no charges against east-end and west-end ringleaders Amsbary and Marsh, both sued each other, and then they finally left town for good."[30]

The idea of reforming the drunken youth of Fairbury prompted some citizens to establish a temperance society for regulating the activities of the saloons, or stopping them altogether. Citizen groups addressed the problem of drunken juveniles by pressuring the town council for laws regulating the sale of liquor to minors.[31] (See "Dramshop Acts," Appendix II).

The Fairbury saloons were in the middle of these conflicts in several senses. Bound to the local business community because they were burned out as often as the other business owners, they also had an interest in taming the town.[32] In addition, saloons were important to businesses in Fairbury who relied upon the railroad men as well as the outlying farmers for their trade; saloons were part of the appeal of the community to some of these people. On the other hand, many considered that liquor sold in saloons contributed to the problem of violence in Fairbury.

TRADITIONALISM VS. MODERNISM

Throughout this study I will refer to the terms "traditional" and "modern" to describe two sets of values coexisting in society in 1860-1920. Richard E. Jensen, in *Illinois: A Bicentennial History*, defines traditional as "a psychological outlook of people who are comfortable with things as they were, who distrust strangers and progress for progress' sake" Modern values, on the other hand, refer to the future-oriented, upwardly mobile, reformist Yankees who came to the state before the Civil War, as well as to their imitators in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The 'modern' person emphasized efficiency, progress, independence, education, science, technology, and, especially, strict self-disciplined internal motivation."[33]

Some of these qualities of traditionalism and modernism came into conflict over the saloon question in Fairbury and across the country when the moderns, believing their value system to be morally correct, tried to impose their moral beliefs on their fellow citizens.

In addition to, and paralleling the traditional/modern split in U.S. culture, were the more specifically theological differences between liturgical and pietist churches.

Politically, the priests advanced an "image of a united America, in which all elements of society cooperated in Christian harmony,"[34] an idea at odds with the liturgical wish to maintain a separate theological identity.[35] Pietistic religions, such as the Methodists and most Baptists, taught that an individual could be saved by "a direct confrontation with Christ through the conversion experience" without intervention of clergyman or church, believing that salvation

depended upon strictly correct moral behavior. Liturgical churches, such as the Roman Catholic and most Lutheran churches, required faithful adherence to the creeds, rituals, sacraments, and hierarchy of the church...one key element in the liturgical outlook was...the belief that the denomination was the one true church of God and that most outsiders were probably damned.

The liturgicals such as the Irish Catholics, considering moral precepts to be the province of the church and not government, adhered to the teachings of their faiths and resented interference by the pietistic, or revivalist churches.[36]

A third perspective on the liquor question belonged to the moderates, who, "whatever their own drinking habits, viewed the question not in the stark tones of the wets and the dries, but in the gray zone of matters of practical public policy." [37] To this group belonged many politicians and civic leaders, and many of the local newspaper editors.[38]

The pioneers in the early days of frontier settlement can be considered a "traditional" group.[39] Self-sufficient, they valued individual freedom and an independent, leisurely lifestyle; their society was male-dominated and featured rough entertainment, hard drinking, gambling, and hunting.[40]

Hard drinking was customary in early Illinois; pioneers who grew corn commonly could turn an acre into 75 gallons of whiskey, a year's supply. "Ambition and devotion to hard work were neither prized traditional qualities, nor were they of much use to the backwoods farmer," who generally had little access to markets for any surplus he might produce and sell.[41]

In this lifestyle, drinking was associated with almost every occasion for going to town, for political rallies, fairs, the Fourth of July, court days, even just for shopping for supplies.[42] For the pioneer, election times were particularly appropriate for "heavy drinking, excited talk, fancy speechmaking, and the inevitable brawls..."[43] Alma Lewis-James, describing a typical Fairbury Fourth of July, writes that "Each family took its basket dinner, and refreshments of various sorts were sold on the grounds. Not all of it was pop...The Glorious Fourth ended with a good percent of the male population in varying stages of drunkenness..."[44]

The saloon would fit naturally into the lifestyle of the traditional man, with the all-male socializing and drinking encouraged and made comfortable. Fairbury had its share of early-settling pioneer stock, many from southern states; new immigrants such as the Irish and Germans, also representing traditional values, came later.[45]

The political party of the traditionals was the Democratic Party, which generally stood for the ideal of individual independence and opposed legislating a set of morals upon the whole country; the party "argued that real temperance could not be legislated, and told farmers that prohibition would ruin the corn market.[46]

The modern thinkers, valuing progress, believed the heavy drinking on the frontier must give way to a more temperate society. Yankee tradition came from "an old, well-ordered, established society...their towns [had] a special atmosphere of dignity and solidarity." [47] The moderns had chosen the saloon as a symbol of all that was wrong with traditional ways: drink impaired a man's ability to act rationally, interfered with his capability to carry out meaningful work, and impeded

the moral progress of America. Moderns, considering intemperance "the root of all social evil in America," worried that the saloon would stand in the way of the progress of their town and their citizens, and especially their children; they felt it kept men from reaching their potential and generally downgraded the moral atmosphere of the community."[48]

B. Walton, Fairbury businessman, owner of a Fairbury gristmill, expressed this concern in a letter to the editor in the Fairbury Journal of May 6, 1871:

When I see our saloons constantly filled with young men, and people coming to our town, reeling under the influence of strong drink, I wonder why there is no warning voice to be heard...another class of gentlemen claim, in the name of liberty, the right to educate [our children] for a course of drunkenness, misery, and poverty...a set of men are licensed by us to catch [the children] as soon as they are allowed to step from under the paternal roof..."[49]

Moderate voices championed control of the saloon through laws and licensing. Political leaders and some businessmen were more amenable to compromise and saw things more in practical terms than in terms of good and evil. Newspapers, even Republican newspapers, were generally moderate voices in the liquor dispute. Editors were more likely to promote control through license and laws rather than prohibition. While the Midwest newspapers generally did not publish any kind of saloon or liquor advertising, neither did they condemn the entire industry.[50]

The Fairbury Independent-Blade, a Republican newspaper,[51] came close to advertising for a saloon proprietor in a special New Year's listing of Fairbury businessmen: "James O'Malley stakes his reputation on keeping a 'kerrect house.'"[52]

Town officials and politicians, attempting to find a compromise that would appease both factions, promoted liquor laws. Whether temperance men or not, they did not wish to see the progress of their town slowed by the violence and bad reputation that sometimes clung to saloons. In addition, the town governments wanted to preserve the sizeable incomes they received from liquor licenses and fines paid for violations of liquor laws.[53] The liturgical faction also produced compromisers such as John Ireland, Roman Catholic bishop of St. Paul, Minnesota, who favored "personal temperance...coupled with local option and high annual licenses for saloons."[54]

The friction among these groups directly influenced the saloonkeeper's position in Fairbury society during this period. The traditional viewpoint was well-stated by Fairbury resident John Finnegan, who had been scolded in print by the local newspaper, The Fairbury Blade, for allegedly getting drunk and abusing his family. He replied in a letter to the editor:

But I say the person or persons who say that I came home drunk on Thursday night of last week, and abused my wife and family and throwed them out of doors, are liars of the first water. If drink, that is my own business; hence I would advise everyone to tend to their own business, as I don't pay anyone for tending to mine. I am Irish.[55]

Some businessmen, such as B. Walton, whose pro-temperance letter to the editor is quoted earlier, probably saw the saloon as a hindrance, rather than an asset, to the growth of the local business community, so the saloon owner faced that barrier to attaining status in the business community; the moral values of customers like John Finnegan were at odds with the moral values of

businessmen like B. Walton.

Traditional and modern viewpoints also differed regarding the responsibility for drunkenness. The traditional view held that the drunk, when under the influence of alcohol, was not in his right mind and therefore not responsible for his actions.[56] The modern viewpoint held the drinker to be morally weak and the saloon directly to blame for any damage done by the drunk; in a sense the moderns believed that saloons were actively harming people.” [57]

The Anti-Saloon League (ASL), which led the prohibition forces at the turn of the century, focused the blame more on the saloon than on the moral weakness of the drinker.[58] This view expressed by the Livingston County Blade on February 5, 1876 seems to presage the position of the ASL:

Any saloon-keeper that would sell poor old Uncle John Maxwell whiskey, such a cold night as we had last Thursday deserves to have his license revoked and then compelled to pay damages to his outraged family as long as a constable could find anything upon which to levy.[59]

The saloon problem also highlighted the difference between the traditional and modern notions of raising children. The traditional pioneer families tended to raise the children to learn how to survive on the farm, to hunt, and for the women, to keep house, "letting the children run wild, hitting them when they were a nuisance, and ignoring them otherwise."

The moderns, on the other hand, carefully reared their children to strive for "self-discipline, reliability, high moral standards, a maximum of schooling, and plenty of exercise, nourishing food, and honest labor." They wanted their children to find a respectable place in middle-class society.[60] The easy availability of alcohol to children of any age created problems of drunkenness among the young to the consternation of many parents.

THE SALOON BUSINESS

The saloon was first of all a participant in the local economy, a business that provided services to its customers, a living to its proprietor, and taxes to its local government. Like any other business, the owners worried about such matters as fire protection and water supplies, the state of the sidewalks and streets in front of their buildings, and the effect of the weather on trade. Local business directories listed saloons along with their neighboring barbershops, milliners, and restaurants. The singular difference between the saloons and the other legal retail businesses in the town was the question of immorality associated with the selling and consuming of the saloon's wares, an attitude that did not apply to the sale of hats, haircuts, or most anything else in town.

Saloonkeepers faced the same expenses as their fellow businessmen: Duis writes that the man behind the bar had traditionally supplied his own capital or borrowed from a bank or his friends. He paid his rent and utilities and went downtown himself each year to purchase his license. His barroom reflected his personality and tastes--honest or crooked, fancy or plain--because he owned his fixtures. If he conducted his business properly, he prospered...[61]

In some areas, saloonkeepers faced higher expenses than other local businessmen. Insurance in particular could be much higher: life insurance costs for saloonkeepers soared because of such

factors as a tendency to alcoholism, overweight, and possible physical attacks by patrons.[62] Fire insurance was also higher, and in the case of Fairbury saloonkeepers facing waves of fires and possible arson, practically unobtainable.[63]

The person who took up saloonkeeping was often an immigrant. The proprietors of the saloons of Fairbury were almost all natives of either Germany or Ireland. (See Appendix I). Up to 1877, I could ascertain only two native-born saloonkeepers: Jacklin Phillips, who was born in Virginia, moved from there to Indiana and Ohio, and finally to Illinois, and was possibly of a traditional pioneer background;[64] and John (Jack) Jamison, who was born in Ohio, but whose father was from Ireland.[65] Later in the century, more saloonkeepers were born in the U.S., the majority children of immigrants. (See Appendix I)

William V. Shannon's comment on Irish saloonkeepers in America helps explain why immigrants chose to make a living in the saloon business:

The early Irish businessmen, like most immigrants and entrepreneurs, did not have the capital resources or the personal connections to make a frontal entry into the main areas of business such as manufacturing, mining, and banking. Rather, they operated in its interstices. They were the blacksmiths, saloonkeepers, grocery store owners..."[66]

Duis sees saloon ownership as the immigrant's attainment of the American Dream, and says that the saloon brought its owner "financial comfort and status in the community." [67]

Finding no financial records regarding Fairbury's saloons and their owners, I turned to the local newspapers to search for clues to their prosperity or lack of it. I used articles referring to various purchases, investments, and building improvements as indications of affluence and entrepreneurship.

Several issues of the Blade mention the purchase by saloonkeeper Jack Jamison, for \$565, of a Hambletonian trotting horse, which he drove around town with a fine carriage. He changed the stallion's name to Fairbury Chief and advertised it at stud at a local stable.[68] To understand the expense of the horse, I compared it to an auction notice of June 25, 1892, listing a bay horse plus roadster selling for \$20."

Two examples of investments by saloon proprietors involve Tom McKiernan and James O'Malley. " McKiernan," announced the Blade, "has purchased the right for sale of the Champion post-hole augur. [70] James O'Malley invested in land; the Blade of July 2, 1890, reports that he "this week sold to Mr. Garber, four lots in the northwest part of the city for \$1200. Mr. Garber will remove to town and intends erecting a couple of nice residence houses." [71] Mentioning land investment again, the paper on November 25, 1898 reported that "James O'Malley has been in Iowa this week looking after his real estate." [72]

The newspapers frequently mention saloons being painted and re-wallpapered or having new signs made. The papers for April, 1885, report a block of buildings burning down, including buildings owned by saloonkeepers Tom McKiernan and James O'Malley; a small series of notices reported the progress of rebuilding.

On April 23rd, McKiernan is getting ready to put a fine block on his old site. He also proposes to have water works of his own, having purchased new apparatus capable of throwing water a distance of 50 feet...an architect from Chicago now being engaged in drawing up the plans."[73]

Also improving his place was Jack Jamison, who has just added a new beer pump--one of the most improved patterns to his saloon fixtures, thus doing away with the ice-box and faucet system."[74]

The only saloonkeeper for whom I could find evidence of economic disaster was Ed O'Malley, whose assets were put at auction in a tax sale "for the taxes, special assessments, interests, and costs due therein for 1881." [75] Because I could not look through every issue of the Blade, I can only conclude that it appears the saloonkeepers were more prosperous than not. Following the saloon owners through the census years to see if any changed occupations, I discovered only one who changed jobs yet stayed in Fairbury: Pat Moran, a saloon proprietor from at least 1868 to 1872, (See Appendix I), is listed as a laborer in the census of 1880.[76]

Unlike the rest of the business community, saloons in Fairbury and all across Illinois were burdened with myriad license fees, taxes, fines, and regulations. Federal government left most liquor legislation to the states;[77] in Illinois, the state early on gave over most such legislation to local governments.[78] The saloon became entangled with town governments that could hardly formulate budgets without consideration of income from saloons, or legislate restrictions and regulations on its sales without consideration of the political and social reactions of its customers.

An example of the large share of taxes born by the local saloons appears in the annual tax report for Fairbury printed in the Blade for the year ending August 10, 1885:

Received from saloon license:	\$ 2,680.46
Received from billiard license:	\$ 72.50
Received from drug license:	\$ 100.00
Received from Show and Peddlers:	\$ 143.25
Received from extra sidewalk:	\$ 62.06
Received from sale of oil barrels:	\$ 17.25
Received from Road Commissioner:	\$ 10.00
Received from sale of cemetery lots:	\$ 22.00
Received from rebate of freight:	<u>\$ 7.04</u>
	\$ 3,114.56[79]

Politicians running for local office might promote temperance in their campaigns, but a hard look at loss of saloon income on town economy often tempered their actions once in office.[80] Many local government officials attempted to satisfy both the pro- and anti-saloon factions by retaining the saloons but raising license fees and fines to make the saloon pay for the perceived harm it caused, and to keep saloon owners in line by threatening license revocation.[81] Officeholders kept in mind that saloon patronizers could very well use their votes to express opposition to temperance politicians.

In the 1870's brewing companies began investing in saloons, and the number of establishments mushroomed, causing a civic response in the form of Dramshop Acts.[82] In Illinois, the

Dramshop Acts of 1872 allowed no liquor sales to minors and drunkards; liquor sellers had to pay for mishaps to illegal drinkers and were responsible for damage they caused.[83] Widely ignored, by the 1890's, courts were routinely dismissing lawsuits brought under the Dramshop Acts.[84]

Another piece of legislation passed by the General Assembly in Illinois, the Harper High License Act of 1883, established a state-wide minimum of \$500 per license.[85]

With the Dramshop Acts and the Harper High License Act, the Illinois general assembly began to move into the area of closer saloon regulation.[86] In 1890, Fairbury passed its own Dramshop Acts in response to pressure from temperance groups; the acts required a saloonkeeper to give two securities, post a \$3000 bond, and pay a \$600 license fee, which would be revoked if he broke the law. In addition, hours were set at 5 a.m. to 10 p.m., windows had to allow unobstructed view into the interior, games such as billiards were not allowed in the saloon, liquor could no longer be sold to minors, and saloons had to close on Sundays.[87] (See Appendix II)

STATUS OF SALOONKEEPERS IN THE FAIRBURY COMMUNITY

To be successful in their business, saloonkeepers in Fairbury needed to maintain a friendly relationship with their customers, who were probably traditional by disposition: country people, immigrants, people for whom drinking was a socially acceptable behavior. Given the attitudes of the modern citizens of Fairbury and of the newspapers towards drinking and drunkenness, were the saloonkeepers able to claim a respectable place in the progressive business community by virtue of their financial success and sometimes modern behavior? Excerpts from the Fairbury papers are contradictory, describing the "evils" of saloons next to favorable articles about the saloonkeepers and their families. Jensen writes that moderns created institutions for economic and cultural improvement such as benevolent societies; the paper mentions saloonkeepers who belonged to such societies. Attitudes towards saloonkeeping as a profession are also evident in personal notices such as obituaries and wedding announcements.

Liquor law violations such as selling liquor on Sunday and selling to minors were frequent, and the newspapers, quick to take the offenders to task, printed the crime, the fine, and whether or not the saloon owner was taken to court. In one case of August, 1876, the matter went to trial:

On Thursday, before Esquire Shepherd, Jorias Yoe was tried for selling to minors. The case was tried by a jury of twelve men, and after matre deliberation he was found guilty and fined \$40... [88]

More frequent than reports on liquor prosecutions are descriptions of bar fights. The paper seems to have an ambivalent attitude towards the saloons; often the fight is described as disgraceful, but the reporter is careful to mention that the proprietor broke it up. An instance of this was at Thomas Scouler's saloon: "On Monday night Luke Smith made a disagreeable remark to Ben Henshaw in Scouler's saloon which resulted in Henshaw slapping Smith. Mr. Scouler stepped in and prevented a fight." [89] The next month another fight broke out: "Pat Sullivan and another fellow imbibed too much of the ardent yesterday, and tried to kick up a fuss in McKiernan's saloon, but were promptly ousted by the proprietor. [90] Pat stopped over night in the guard house." Once again, the newspaper balances a "bad" fight with the saloonkeeper's "good" response. This attitude is taken to an extreme by a description of a fight the editor seems to have found highly entertaining;

only in the last sentence does he recover in time to admonish the participants:

On Thursday night about 9 o'clock there was a big row at O'Malley and Currigan's saloon, It appears that Currigan had filled up pretty full with buck beer, and said some very naughty things to some of the Daily boys; among other things he called Daily a s-n of a b-h, when Daily's brother slapped Currigan, which was the signal for a regular rumpus, in which a number of persons got mixed up. Will McKiernan undertook to part the combatants, and piled the boys around among the beer kegs promiscuously, but got several hard knocks in course of the melee. Officer Allum arrested the Daily boys, and Emery Gregg "induced" Currigan to go home, thus breaking up the amusement. It was a disgraceful affair, and the originators of the fuss should be punished to the full extent of the law.[91]

Duis writes that the public nature of the business was a critical factor in its criminal image. The disorderly activities inside poured out onto the sidewalk...saloon disorder allowed vice on private property to make the public environment around it unwholesome.[92]

A striking example of this appears in the Blade of December 6, 1879:

...a very drunken Irishman laid on the sidewalk...in front of James O'Malley's saloon. It appears that the man...had been in the saloon named and wanted liquor, but being full, he was refused, whereupon he grew angry, and said naughty things, and began an abuse of a man in the saloon, who ejected him from the house. This drunken man fell on his face on the walk, cutting a gash near his right eye, and on his lip, from which blood flowed freely. He laid there apparently insensible, presenting a very ugly and disgraceful spectacle..."[93]

Once again the paper pulls back from complete condemnation by reporting that the bartender had refused to serve the drunk, which was the bartender's proper and legal behavior, but that the spectacle was caused by drunkenness, a common result of time spent in saloons.

I believe the equivocal attitude of the Fairbury Blade may have been quite reflective of the feelings of the majority of the business community; I think they were practical people, most of whom, like the majority of the modern middle class, belonged to the Republican party. Jensen explains that Republican newspapers supported the GOP policy which balanced the demands of the moralists, the votes of the wets, and the wisdom of the moderates and had settled upon a policy of supporting high license, local option, and the removal of the prohibition issue from the partisan arena.[94]

The Fairbury papers do mention saloon proprietors as members of benevolent societies, but I found them primarily among the Irish Catholic men. The Irish Catholic Benevolent Union (ICBU) lists among its officers in Fairbury for 1877 Thomas McKiernan, President; Ed. O'Malley, Treasurer; and P. Currigan, Steward.⁹⁵ The next year, the list included Thomas McKiernan, President, and P. Moran, Treasurer.[96]

Kerby Miller in *Emigrants and Exiles* describes societies such as the ICBU as strictly Catholic groups with membership that cut across class lines, although "the leaders of these organizations were predominantly middle class...and the bulk of their members were either of bourgeois or of skilled worker status..."[97] For the Catholic saloonkeepers, this society would provide social

contact with fellow Catholics of or approaching middle class status and also with their more traditional brethren.

One mention I found of a saloonkeeper belonging to a fraternal organization, other than a Catholic one, was in the obituary of Joe Yoe, which states that the International Order of Odd Fellows (IOOF), a secret fraternal and benevolent society, officiated at his funeral.[98] I suspect that other saloonkeepers belonged to such societies, but perhaps they were not officers, and therefore did not appear in newspaper notices of club election reports.

The Blade printed obituaries for several of the saloonkeepers, lengthier than the usual notices. In each case that I found, the occupation of the deceased was never mentioned. Perhaps the newspaper considered the printing such an occupation inappropriate or embarrassing to the family.

In the obituary of Jacklin Phillips, he was described merely as "an old and well-known citizen of this city." Joe Yoe was "a resident of Fairbury for the past twenty years.[99] James O'Malley's long obituary tells much of his story but never mentions how he made his living; it reads only "Mr. O'Malley was for 59 years a resident of Fairbury and during that time he had seen many changes take place in our city.[101]

The wedding announcements I found, like the obituaries, do not mention a saloonkeeper's occupation. The notice of Joe Yoe's daughter Sue's marriage describes the clothing, the gifts, and the guests, but never mentions her parents.[102] Similarly, the wedding notice for J.E. O'Malley, son of James, describes the bride's father as "a farmer, and a veteran of the late war, who served on General Grant's staff," and James O'Malley as "one of Fairbury's enterprising businessmen." However, at the very end of a long list of gifts appear a case of champagne, a barrel of beer, and a case of Rhine wine from various liquor distributors.[103]

CONCLUSION

Jensen writes that traditionalists did not gradually become modern, but rather that the groups existed side by side across Illinois in varying proportions[104] I think that the saloonkeepers in Fairbury were an exception to this and that they did actually become more modern in outlook along with their increased prosperity. Somehow the Fairbury saloonkeepers managed to maintain a profitable business with their traditional clientele, as evidenced by the amounts of money they were investing in various endeavors, and yet still maintained a relatively respectable reputation in town, judging by the way the local newspapers wrote about them. They ran their businesses in a modern, progressive way, keeping up the appearance of their establishments, expanding, and adding new equipment. They joined benevolent societies, a modern concept, which worked for the betterment of the community.

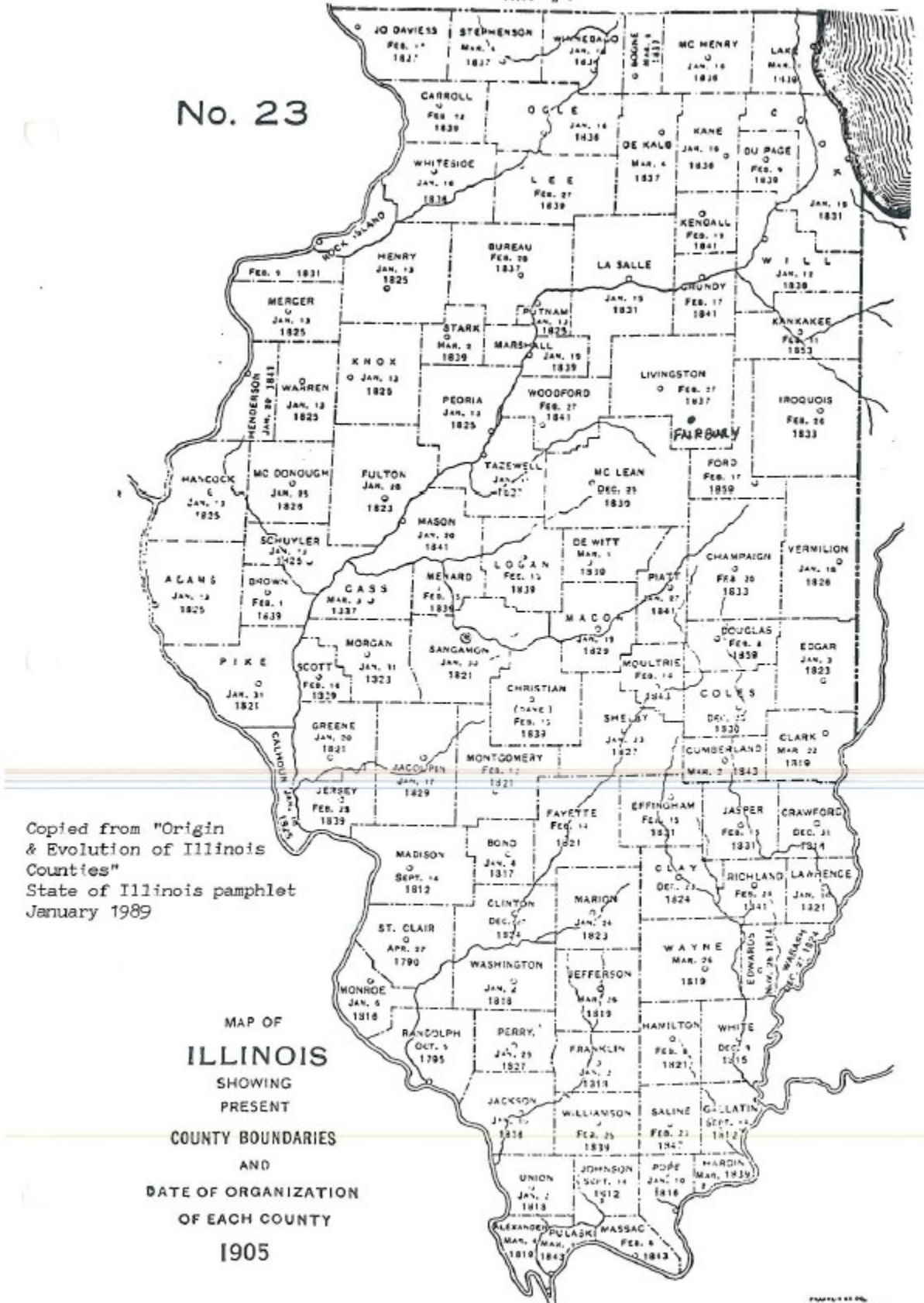
Towards the turn of the century, the traditionalists began to dwindle in number. Agriculture "was rapidly becoming much more businesslike and commercial than ever before," pushing out the traditional, subsistence farmer.[105] Traditional farmers who wore out their land probably moved on, selling off their acres to more modern-oriented, progressive farmers.[106] Immigrants, another traditional group in Fairbury, grew older and retired. The population of Fairbury seemed to stabilize at the turn of the century, showing no great influx of new immigrants to take up saloonkeeping. (See Table 1)

The papers expressed the opinions of their editors who, while "taking a clear position on issues that divided their local community...were not at all critical of the basic economic and social arrangements of America's village society,[107] reflecting the attitude of Fairbury towards the saloonkeepers as businessmen, an attitude as ambivalent as the partly traditional, partly modern style of the tavern owners themselves. The papers reported saloon fights and bloody public displays, at the same time giving saloonkeepers credit for maintaining some order in their places; they printed lengthy and respectful obituaries and wedding notices but did not allude to the occupation of saloonkeeper, as though somehow that aspect of the person was unmentionable.

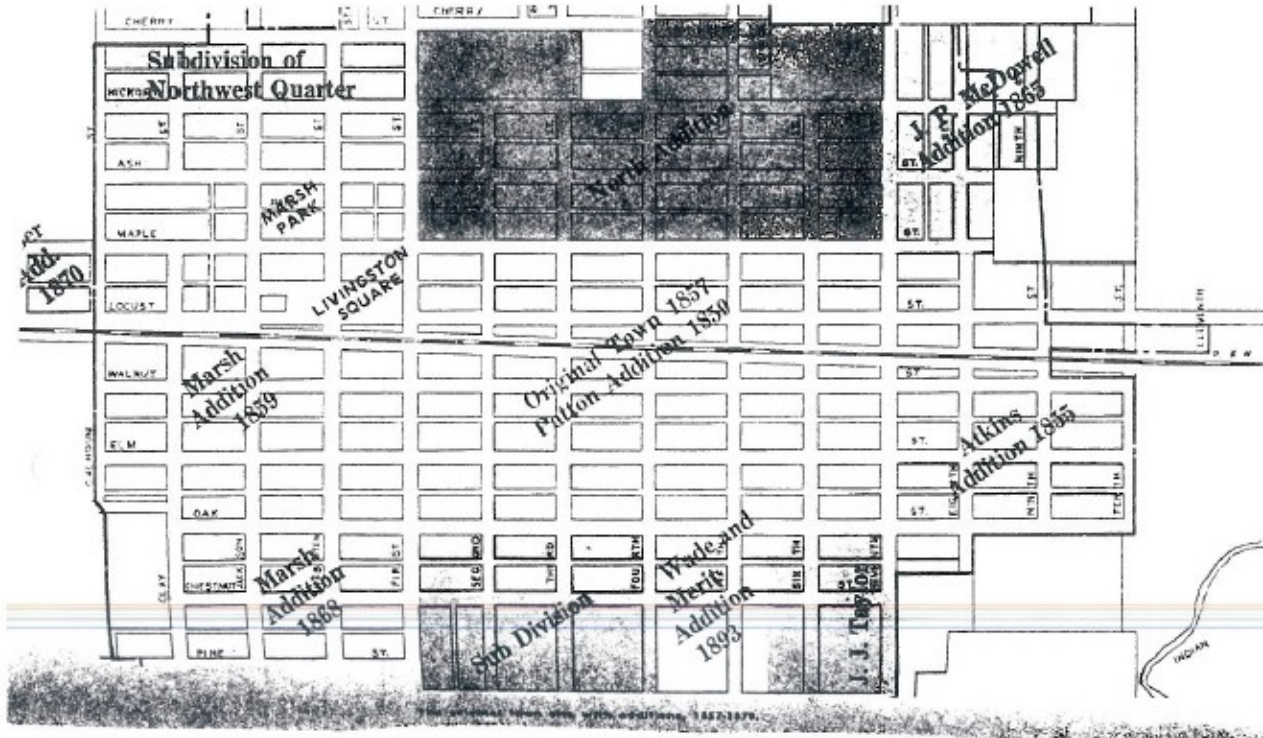
I do not believe the saloonkeeper in Fairbury ever could have achieved truly equal status among his fellow modern businessmen because there was no way to minimize his close association with those modern evils, liquor and drinkers; however, where he could, he moved capably in the modern business and social world of Fairbury, making a profit and investing, joining benevolent societies, and improving his place of business.

MAP #1

No. 23

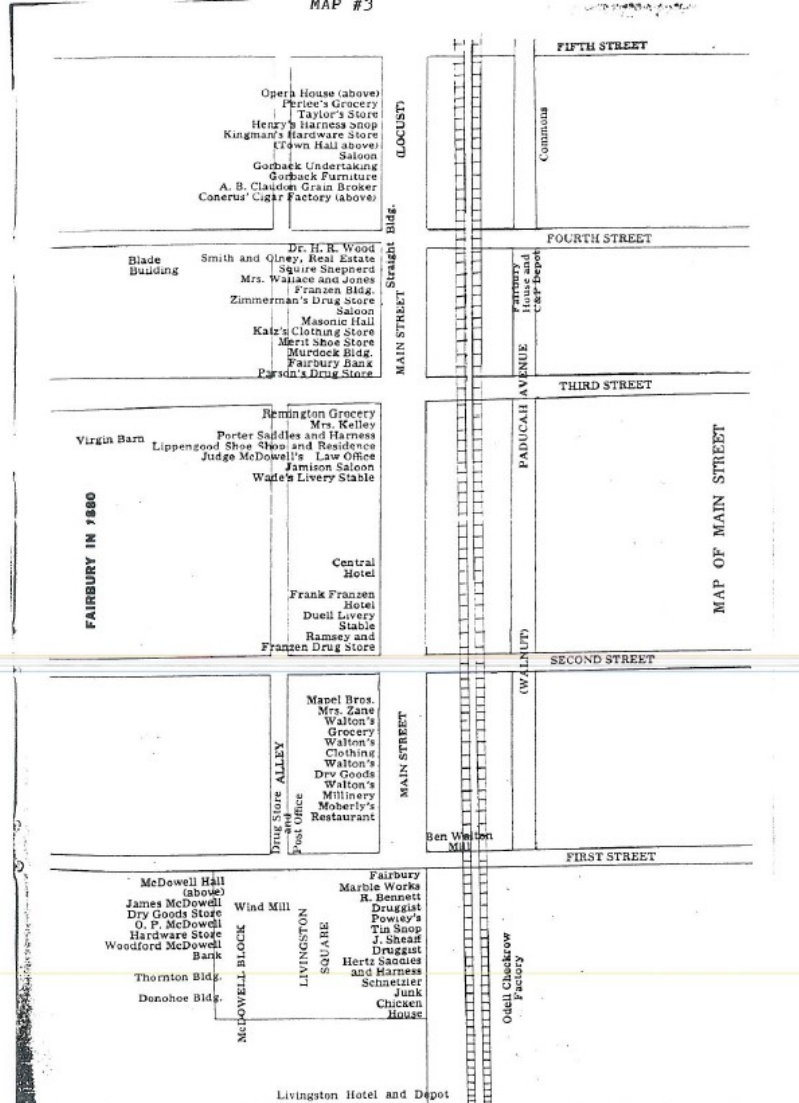


REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENTS TO 1900



From Fairbury: Stuffed Clubs and Antimacassars by Alma Lewis-James
2nd edition.

MAP #3



From Fairbury: Stuffed Clubs and Antimacassars, by Alma Lewis-James. 1st edition

APPENDIX I

KNOWN SALOONS IN FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, 1860-1920

Year	Saloonkeeper	Birthplace	Source
1860	Jacklin Phillips	VA	1860 Fed. Census
1868	Rettenmayer Franzen Moran Schmitz		<u>Fairbury Journal</u> Feb. 27, 1868
1870	Frank Franzen Zeph Smidst Chris Eores Joseph Redenmyer Pat Moran	Hannover Prussia Hannover Wurttemberg Ireland	1870 Federal Census
1872	Franzen Rettenmeyer Moran Bright Haller		<u>Fairbury Independent</u> Feb. 23, 1872
1877	O'Malley & Currigan J.S. Jamison Thomas Scouler		<u>Fairbury Independent</u> Blade Aug. 25, 1877
1878	T.T. Babcock Frank Franzen J.S. Jamison Ed O'Malley Joseph Ritemyer Shepler & Kavanaugh		<u>History of</u> <u>Livingston Co.</u> Pub. 1878

APPENDIX I, PAGE 2

KNOWN SALOONS IN FAIRBURY, ILLINOIS, 1860-1920

Year	Saloonkeeper	Birthplace	Source
1898	Karnes-Moran James Painter J. Ellis T. Scouler		Livingston Co. Business Dir. 1898
1910	Charles Blevins Dwyer & Maxwell Walter Gibb Frank J. Moran		Livingston Co. Business Dir. 1910
1920	None		1920 Federal Census

NOTE: All birthplaces are from census listings.

Not all saloonkeepers were listed in the City of Fairbury; some may have lived outside the town limits.

Much of the census material, particularly 1910-1920, is illegible.

Census of 1900 lists occupation of "bartender" but does not state whether the individual is the proprietor of a saloon.

ORDINANCES

- Of the -

VILLAGE OF FAIRBURY

Published by the authority of the PRESIDENT AND BOARD OF TRUSTEES of the VILLAGE OF FAIRBURY.

C.S. Brydia, Printer, Fairbury, Illinois, 1890.

S.M. Barnes, President of the Board of Trustees.

Attest: S.S. Rogers, Clerk.

Article 1: Defines the powers and duties of the president and Board of Trustees. Six trustees. Duties defined by Illinois Statutes.

Article 2: Clerk of village. Elected each year. Keeps records of town meetings. Historian. Keeps records of financial transactions.

Article 3: President shall appoint a Treasurer, Constable and Street Commissioner. Must be confirmed by Board.

Sec. 2. Duties of Treasurer.

Sec. 3. Duties of Constable – deals particularly with vagrants and drunks.

Sec. 7. Fine \$10 - \$50 for helping anyone resist arrest.

Sec. 8. Street Commissioner shall enforce the ordinances of the Village pertaining to streets, alleys, public grounds, sidewalks, sewers and drains.

Sec. 9. Commissioner to keep in repair the sidewalks, streets and crossings.

Sec.10. Keep drains and sewers open and street crossings free from filth and mud.

Sec.11. Shall have charge of all street labor and shall demand the services of all persons required to do labor upon the streets of the Village and shall serve notice upon such persons of the time and place such services are needed by notifying them three days ahead of time when the labor is required. Notice shall state time, place, for what purposes his services are required and the implement with which he is to work.

Article 6: Salaries: President \$100.00 payable quarterly; clerk \$125.00 payable quarterly; treasurer \$10 at end of year. Constable \$60.00 per month. Commissioner \$50.00 per month. Special members of police force \$2.00 per day. Trustees - \$2.00 per meeting.

Article 7: Ordinances conflicting with this one shall be considered repealed.

VILLAGE OFFICERS, 1890

President – S.M. Barnes
Clerk - S.S. Rogers
Constable – Amos Brown

Street Commissioner, Amos Brown
W.E. Baker

Police Magistrate – John Zimmerman
Attorney, C.F.H. Carrithers
Board of Trustees – G.B. Brownson
George S. Scriven
P.C. James
J.L. Wright
J.T. Clements
A.G. Phelps

INDEX TO ORDINANCES

Ordinances relating to - -

Animals, - dead removal
Animals, - staking and herding in street
Animals, - slaughtering where forbidden
Animals, - who may restrain
Animals, - cruelty to
Arrests, - how made
Ashes, - how kept and stored
Auctioneers must procure license

Commitments to jail
Complaints, - how and when made
Corporation, - boundary line defined (twice amended)
Dogs running at large
Dogs, president may order them muzzled
Dram shop, - ordinance relating to, license revocable, how procured, how conducted, placing of screens, hours of opening and closing, to be closed on Sunday and election days.
Druggists, permits to sell liquors.
Dynamite and nitroglycerine...Storing of.
Elections, time of holding, special, returns how made, vote how canvassed.
Fees for impounding stock
Fines. To be paid to Village treasurer
Fire limits. Definition of, the unlawful wooden structures and their repairs, hay and straw in limits.
Habitual drunkards
Health, Board of, established, composition, powers, pest houses, appropriations for, qualifications
Horses, leaving unhitched unlawful
Injury to property, public or private
Inspection. Of buildings by board of Trustees.
Jail. Building designated, who may be committed and discharges, and who shall be the keeper.
Licenses. How applied for, duration, made by village clerk.
Liquor sale without license a nuisance.
Meat, diseased, sale of prohibited.
Minors, sale of liquor to prohibited.
Misdemeanors enumerated.
Nuisances enumerated
Ordinances
Organization of Village
Peddlers and traveling photographers must have licenses.
Pig pens to be kept clean.
Pound master and duties
Prisoners to perform street labor.
Public buildings.. Defacing of
Railroads, speed of trains, obstructing crossings, construction of crossings, construction of ditches and sewers, climbing on cars unlawful

Windows of dram shops to be kept clean.

Saloon Ordinances. Keeper has to give \$3,000.00 bond and have two good securities. License costs \$600 a year, payable in installments. No pool tables or any games whatsoever. No paint on windows or doors and the glass in them shall be kept clean. No bills or advertisements to obstruct the view. Shall consist of only one main room with no back ones. May have 3 portable screens not over seven feet high and ten feet long to be placed according to direction of Pres. of Trustees. Ice box in end of room. Bar in rear of room, the end of which shall not be farther than five feet from ice box. Hours 5 AM to 10 PM. Rowdiness and minors prohibited on premises. Closed on Sundays. Can go in through FRONT door to fix fires or light a lamp, and not a minute longer. Any violations, forfeiture of license and monies. Drug stores may sell medicinal liquors, license \$50.00. Unlawful to sell to minors without written order. President and Board have right to reject any applications.

Nuisances and misdemeanors: Unnecessarily make a loud or unusual noise or profane swearing, fighting or challenging to fight, or encouraging a fight or assisting, unlawfully collecting in crowds. Fines. \$5.00 - \$50.00

Disturbing church meetings; \$3 - \$25.00.

Vagrants and drunks; \$3.00 - \$20.00.

Indecent dress, lewd exposure of person, or indecent behavior or selling immoral publications or pictures \$10 – 100.00

No sports or exercises to frighten horses or other animals.

No person or minor can in any way attach himself to a locomotive or car, stationary or in motion in the city limits.

TABLE 1

POPULATION OF FAIRBURY 1860-1920

Year	Population
1860	269
1870	2632
1880	2140
1890	2324
1900	2187
1910	2604
1920	2486

Years 1860, 1900, 1910, and 1920 from U.S. Population Census
Years 1870, 1880, and 1890 from librarian at Dominy Library,
Fairbury, Illinois

ILLUSTRATION #1

West Main Street, Fairbury, Ill.



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6. Jensen, Winning of the Midwest, 68.
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21. Livingston County Business Directory, 1898, 85.
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83. Ibid., 97.
84. Ibid., 99.
85. Ibid., 27.
86. Pegram, Dry Machine, 177.
87. Lewis-James, Fairbury, 52.
The unobstructed view into the interior of a saloon enabled people to monitor the activities there, discouraging, for example, illegal poker games and the presence of minors.
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91. Ibid., May 25, 1878.
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March 13, 1994

Ms. Margie Hedrick
Librarian
DOMINY MEMORIAL LIBRARY
Corner of Third & Walnut
Fairbury, IL 61739

Dear Ms. Hedrick:

Enclosed please find a copy of my research paper, "Saloonkeepers in Fairbury, Illinois, 1860-1920: Traditional Business in an Evolving Modern Community." I wrote this paper for a historiography class at the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire, with help from Dr. Thomas Miller, a Fairbury native who is an assistant chancellor at the university. I hope that you will add it to your collection as an account of a small piece of the history of the town.

I wish to extend my thanks to the personnel of Dominy Library who answered my inquiries and collected information for me to use on my visit to the library. I truly appreciate your helpfulness.

To Mr. and Mrs. Everett Sutter, my thanks for taking the time to talk to me about the history of Fairbury and for allowing me to use their personal collection of Fairbury documents, books, and papers.

I hope you will find this paper interesting; I enjoyed researching and compiling all this information and learning so much about the history of Fairbury.

Yours Truly,

K. A. Strickland

K. A. Strickland

March 13, 1994

M. Margie Hedrick

Librarian

DOMINI, MEMORIAL LIBRARY Corner of Third & Walnut Fairbury, IL 61739

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Yours Truly,



K. A. Strickland