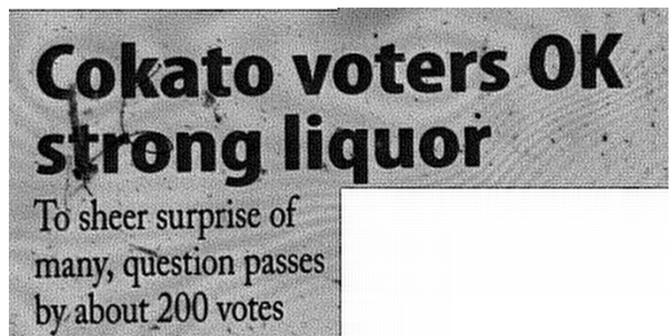


## LOST COKATO: THE “3.2” JOINTS

On election day 2006, the voters of Cokato shocked many, including themselves, by approving a ballot issue which allowed the city to issue licenses for the sale of strong beer, wine, and liquor. It brought to an end the status of Cokato being a “dry” town, a legacy dating back over ninety years.

We’ve written before about how Cokato became a dry town and what that meant. Our purpose here is to note how even with that dry status, area residents could buy beer at what were called “3.2 joints”.

Once National Prohibition ended in Minnesota in early 1933, the 3.2 establishments could apply for licenses. Many did over the years. By 2007 when the city was given the authority to issue licenses for strong beverages, only one was left, Nelson’s Bar & Grill, on Millard Avenue.



Above: Headline from the *Enterprise Dispatch* following the surprise passage of the liquor vote in November 2006.

We do not have a complete list of all the 3.2 joints that operated in Cokato from the end of Prohibition through 2006. Tracking them is not easy owing to a lack of coverage in the local paper. We have some references, but not many; and even fewer photos. Here we go, in no particular order...

(continued on next page)

The Troll Inn was located on Broadway Avenue, right next to Cokato City Hall in a building that had been used off and on as a saloon of some sort going back to the late nineteenth century. Jim Brummer was the final owner of the Troll Inn, having purchased it from Rose Kretlow. Rose and her late husband, Bill, had purchased it in January 1968. (Bill died barely two years later and Rose continued operating the bar until the sale.) Prior to the Kretlows, Myron Anderson ran it under the name "Myron's Place".

The Troll was later demolished to make way for the construction of Tower Center Mall.



Matt's Place, run by Matt and Helen Halonen, was on the 300 block of Millard Avenue South. It was sold in late 1972 to Dave Tritz, who later renamed it, The Saloon. In 1978, Dean and Ron Olson purchased the Saloon, moving it one block north about a year later. In August 1984, Mike Grosser and his fiancé, Cathy Decker, leased the Saloon from the Olsons. At some point, the Olsons renewed their operations and it was renamed as the Northwoods Inn & Saloon.



When the license issue passed in 2006, the only 3.2 establishment in Cokato was the recently-opened Nelson's Bar & Grill, descended from the Northwoods Inn & Saloon, later The Finish Line Bar & Grill, at 290 Millard Avenue.

About a year after strong beverage sales became legal, when the city finalized its ordinances on the matter, the name was changed to the Iron Horse Grill & Saloon. In August 2017 due to legal issues with a similarly-named establishment in Florida, the name changed to the Iron Headz Grill & Saloon.

Above: Interior of Matt's Place, date unknown.

Right: Dean and Ron Olson after their purchase of The Saloon, 1978

We know we are missing more than a few entries for this list, so if you, dear readers, can help fill in the blanks — even a photo or two would be great — please contact us. We'd be quite thankful.



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