



Arctic Bar

148 South Franklin Street, Juneau, AK (907) 586-1040

License Issued: September 14, 1933 to James Carlson and R.J. McKanna

CLOSED September 30, 2014

Amenities: TV, jukebox.

Web site: Facebook

History and Notoriety: The Arctic was originally located at 91 Front Street and was first known as the Arctic Billiard Hall and then the Arctic Cigar Store. The bar moved to 152 South Franklin in 1936, and to its current location in 1939. By then it was known simply as the Arctic Bar. The building housing the Arctic Bar was built in 1910.

Mike Kosoff owned the Arctic Bar from 1938 – 1942. From 1943 - 1964, Joseph H. McNallen was the sole proprietor, and he made sure that the locals and tourists knew about his bar, buying advertisements in the newspapers and early tourist guidebooks. Although the Arctic is contained

in just one small room, period photos show plenty of customers, who enjoyed the beautiful artwork depicting the Gastineau Channel at one end, and a range of snow-capped peaks spanning the wall directly behind the bartenders.

Joe also owned the Imperial Saloon from 1954 – 1963, and sponsored the 1955 Juneau Imperials, the city's first Gold Medal championship basketball team. In 1962, Joe formed the Arctic Lights, later called the Arctic Knights. With six championships, the 1973-1978 Juneau Arctic Knights are the lone team to win five or more consecutive Gold Medal titles.

Joe took on a partner, James B. Neal, in 1965, and by 1970 he had transferred ownership entirely to James. James and his wife Loretta continue to own and operate the Arctic Bar to the present day.

The Arctic is noted for its jukebox. According to Suzy Lafferty, reporter for the *Juneau Empire*, the bar used to have a 45 machine when James' son Paul started bartending there in 1976. Currently, the Rockola CD jukebox is probably the most respected bar jukebox in town. The musical selection is constantly updated by bartenders and patrons. "People will come in here because they heard a certain song out on the street," Paul Neal has said. The wide variety of music includes Rainbow's 1982 "Straight Between The Eyes" and Will Smith's 1997 "Big Willie Style." There is even an album of traditional Native music. The selections start at "00" with Juneau band Moses Kane's "DLDS." From there, it's a sudden 180-degree turn into "Live at the Gathering of the Pow-Wows" at "01."

Visiting the Arctic Bar: The Arctic is frequented by locals, which to some cruise ship companies equates to a bad atmosphere. Ignore their warnings and venture inside. Although the mountain motifs are long gone, they have been replaced by a fascinating collection of old black and white framed photos. I noted the photos of the Juneau-Douglas Fire Department Basketball Team, who were state champions in 1940 and 1941. Also check out the antique sinks and toilets in the bathrooms. The toilets have been described as "The most realistic interpretation of a maximum-security prison cell since Clint Eastwood's 1979 film 'Escape from Alcatraz'." The Arctic Bar is particularly popular during Gold Rush Days in late June, and during 4th of July celebrations.



Interior of the Arctic Bar. *Alaska Life* magazine - July 1945.



ICE POOL tickets are a topic of conversation for Joe McNallen and his comely guest in the popular Arctic Bar.

Joe McNallen hard at work. Tewkesbury's *Alaska Business Directory*, 1948.



Photo by Doug Vandegraft – 2011

One of Juneau's oldest bars is getting a new name and new look

Posted: August 8, 2016 - 6:36pm



Jared Cure has bought the Arctic Bar and is renaming it The Narrows. He plans to have the upscale bar open as early as October or November. Michael Penn | Juneau Empire

By JAMES BROOKS
JUNEAU EMPIRE

For one of the few times since it opened 106 years ago, the Arctic Bar is changing.

Since 1910, a bar with a polar bear on its sign has occupied a tiny niche in downtown Juneau. Two years ago, the bar closed on a Monday and never reopened. Through dusty glass, tourists and locals alike could peer into the bar and see upturned stools and arrayed bottles waiting for an opening day that never came.

Now, that glass is covered by paper, and the bar's new owner, Jared Curé, is preparing a new name and a new plan for the longtime Juneau business. But it's not really a new plan — it's an old one, used back before Prohibition, when the bar opened more than a century ago.

"I want to get back to using fresh ingredients, classic cocktails, new twists on classic cocktails, and get the mixology scene going up here," Curé said on Monday, standing outside the front door of the bar with his sleeves rolled up.

"I think people are going to see we're not just another bar downtown. We're trying to bring in a clientele that's underserved currently. My mom's a teacher. Her teacher friends are not going to go to the Viking or the Imperial. There's plenty of people, older, maybe professionals, that don't want to get caught up in a younger, more rowdy demographic," he explained. "I think a bar that's catering to a higher-end, a little more catered experience, is going to do nothing but clean up downtown."

But before he can clean up, he has to clean up.

Right now, Curé is renovating the interior of the Arctic Bar, exposing its original tin ceiling and walls put up when the building was erected. There's a new bar coming from the shop of Curé's father, woodworker Brad Curé.

By the time the bar reopens in October or November, it'll have a completely new look, and a new name: The Narrows.

It's a double entendre, a nod to the bar's slot-like location at the corner of Franklin and Front Streets, and to the nautical lingo that appears on maps across Southeast Alaska.

Jared Curé, a 30-something, was born and raised in Juneau, graduated from Juneau-Douglas High School and left Juneau to go Outside. He worked in the San Francisco Bay Area's booming technology industry and last year became interested when the Arctic Bar's liquor license went up for sale.

State regulations distribute liquor licenses by population — but many licenses were grandfathered into that distribution when regulation was established in territorial days. By virtue of those grandfathered licenses, Juneau has many more licenses than normally allowed by law, and they tend to be closely held.

When Curé asked about the Arctic Bar's license, he was told a deal was in the works to sell it to someone else.

"I stopped thinking about it and went back to normal life," he said.

Earlier this year, he was contacted by the owner of the license and was asked if he still wanted it.

In about 30 minutes on a Friday, he had agreed to buy the license. He flew from Oakland to Juneau on a Saturday and met the owner at the bar on Sunday.

“My only goal right now is to get this place going and make sure it’s a success,” Curé said.

His goal is to create a comfortable place with an inviting atmosphere that welcomes customers willing to spend a dollar or two more on quality.

He’s not thinking of live music or a lot of visual distractions, but a place where the focus is on the drink and the conversation, a place where you don’t have to raise your voice to be heard.

Curé knows downtown Juneau has a problem with alcohol-driven vagrancy, but his goal is to not aggravate that problem. His bar won’t be a place that people go to simply to get drunk, he said.

“Our clientele, they’ve got work in the morning, too,” he explained.

Brad Curé said the most important thing Juneau should take away from the opening of The Narrows “is that here we have a born and raised Juneauite, and he moved away, and he’s come back to open up a business. I think that’s really what Juneau needs: to have the youth come back and do business here.”

- Contact reporter James Brooks at 523-2258 or james.k.brooks@juneauempire.com.

Hi Doug,

My name is Jared Cure, I recently purchased the old Arctic Bar and am renovating the space. I heard from Tanna Peters you were interested in hearing about the various oddities I found in the wall. One being the old painting of the bear.



Feel free to reach out, my number is xxx-xxx-xxxx

I'd also be curious to hear any historical info you have on the bar.

Jared
