

# History of Nye's Bar

The bar at the corner of East Hennepin Avenue and Lourdes Place (org. Prince Street) was called Nye's since 1950, when Albin Nye took over Prince Café owned by Hefron's, a "working man's bar" occupying the 1880's building. From the beginning whenever it was open, Al, a former machine shop foreman at Minar Ford, was determined to be there serving drinks to the mostly blue-collar Northeast crowd.

Business was good, and before long Al began to envision a dining room addition unlike any other. In 1964, Al opened a piano lounge resplendent in oak paneling, red carpet, and curvy, gold glittering, Naugahyde booths. Al designed the colored-glass and stone light fixtures himself and had them custom-made by the Winona Lighting Company. The original historic lights now adorn the "New" Nye's Bar. Above the piano, Al hung a portrait of Frederic Chopin, the Polish composer famous for his works in the style of "Polonaise", the Polish national dance. "Polonaise", the French word for "Polish", also gave Al a name for his unique, new dining room. Business remained robust, so in the late 60's Al opened the Chopin Dining Room, which was located next door on the first floor of a former Harness Shop that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The brick exterior of the Chopin Dining Room is a contributing property to the Saint Anthony Falls Historic District. The building's façade still stands today in its entirety.

Al retired in 1994 at the age of 79, and he continued to frequent Nye's as a customer until his death at the age of 89 in 2004. Nye's Polonaise Room was sold in 1994 to Steve Anderly and subsequently sold to two Northeast descendants Rob and Tony Jacob in 1999. The Jacob Brothers continued to operate the legendary Nye's Polonaise Room the way Al did with supper club fare in an atmosphere with Piano Lounge and Polka Bar.

In December 2015, the buildings became too much to repair. The decision was made to close Nye's Polonaise Room including the Nye's Polka Bar to develop the property to make way for the 6-story 'M on Hennepin' apartment building. Nye's Polonaise Room closed to crowds of farewell customers saying their final goodbye in April 2016. Shafer Richardson partnered with the Jacob Brothers in successfully preserving the original building that once held the Nye's Polka Bar and secured the 'Harness Shop' façade. The adapted completion of the 'Historic Meets New' building was completed in November 2017.

The Jacob Brothers, with an over-pouring of requests from dedicated customers and the developer, were urged to open a new bar in the original building that once held the Nye's Polka Bar. In October 2017, the decision was made to create the 'New' Nye's Bar in January 2018. The desire was to operate a bar that captured the feeling of the famed Nye's - recognizing the need to accommodate customers between 22 to 80 years. Nye's libation collection caters to that mission featuring Classic & Craft Cocktails/Beer/Wine/Champagne pairing old and new.

Careful consideration was dedicated to the design of the totally renovated space to include a nostalgic built-in piano bar design reminiscent of the Polonaise Room. The original Al Nye designed lights adorn the interior hanging in the front window, suspended from the replicated rafter overhang that once graced the Polonaise Room and perched above the new piano bar. The authentic Nye's Bar sign that once hung outside on the corner of the building, welcoming folks to Northeast, is an interior entry fixture that hangs on the exposed original brick wall. On the opposite brick wall, the historic days of Nye's are captured by a full-length hand painted mural of three iconic portraits of the Legendary Al Nye, the Namesake - "Sweet" Lou Snider, The Piano Chanteuse that tinkled the ivories for so many years - and Ruth Adams, the Accordion Leader of the "The World's Most Dangerous Polka Band". The middle of the muraled wall depicts the unique classic entrance that gated so many that passed the doors of Nye's.

The Jacob Brothers are committed to preserve Al Nye's legacy in providing their guests with the highest quality cocktail and friendly service in a fun, swanky atmosphere created over 60 years ago!

Nye's Bar - Home of the Jumbo Cocktail