

## Elliott's Bar Celebrates a Centennial

Danville's own neighborhood pub is celebrating its centennial this fall. A large banner outside Elliott's announces this occasion.

Hiram Elliott founded Elliott's. He was a jockey in his younger years but decided to learn the saloon business and did this by working in several bars in Crockett and Concord. He then bought a bar on Front Street from his brother-in-law Charlie Gust in 1907. Also in 1907, he married Mildred Hartz, daughter of Danville's John and Catherine Hartz.

They bought several Hartz Avenue parcels from Mildred's father and opened a restaurant in one. In 1911 he moved the bar to Hartz Avenue and renamed it the Eagle Bar, after a red jasper eagle which he kept in a cage in the back room.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Anti-Saloon League carried the temperance fight banner in California and the nation, with the Eighteenth Amendment the result. Prohibition went into effect in January, 1920, and closed down saloons all over the county.

Prohibition impacted the Valley in several ways. Owners of vineyards on the Valley floor were unable to sell their crops and turned to growing walnuts and fruit trees. One rancher, Italian immigrant James Morengo, had planted extensive vineyards in Alamo 30 years earlier and stored his wine in a large cellar just off Livorna Road. He was devastated when federal agents came to his ranch, busted his wine barrels and drained the wine into Miranda Creek.

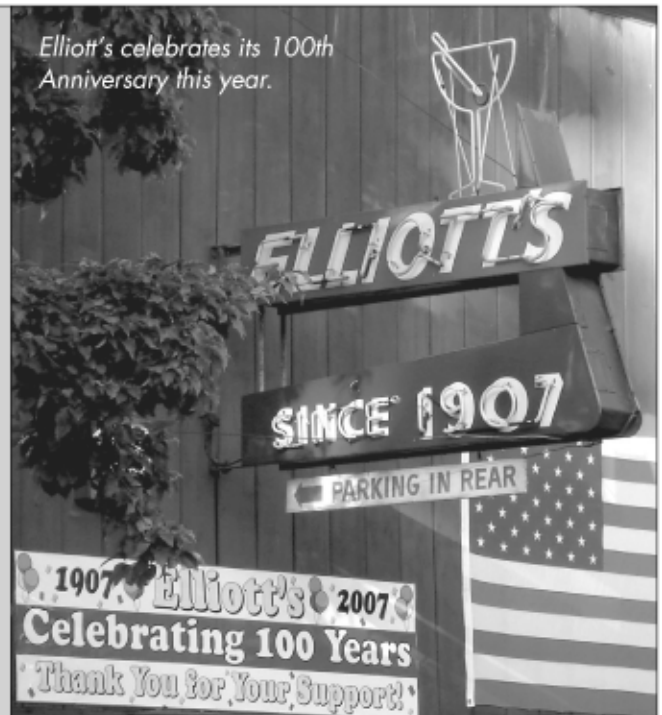
The night before Prohibition took effect, Hiram Elliott offered drinks on the house. Then he and his teen-age sons poured out his liquor supply. The next day he went to his storage area and broke all the rest of the bottles. While the county sheriff offered to let him sell liquor out of the back door, the sheriff couldn't offer any assurances about federal enforcement officers. Hiram explained that he had three growing boys and he didn't want to be a poor example to them and break the law. So the bar became the Danville Ice Cream Parlor during the twenties which reduced the family income considerably.

Owners of stills in Crow Canyon and the Mt. Diablo foothills weren't as scrupulous. A book called Jackass Brandy by Bruno Buti recounts some Crow Canyon tales of bootleggers and their experiences with federal revenue agents. But that is another story.

When Hiram opened the bar again, it was re-named "Elliott's Bar, Since 1907" and his sons Duane and Gordon ran the business. It has been Danville's neighborhood pub ever since, always with owners who have appreciated its quirky and unique history.

Sources: Carlo Borlandelli & Duane Elliott personal communications, Museum archives, Virgie V. Jones' *Historical Persons and Places...in San Ramon Valley*.

Elliott's celebrates its 100th Anniversary this year.



### LIVING TREASURE LECTURE SERIES BEGINS AT THE MUSEUM

A new lecture series, *Living Treasures*, began at the Museum this past October. The guest speaker was local Naturalist Norm Kidder, speaking on the topic of *The Primitive Clan*. His presentation emphasized how the basics; fire, fiber, shelter and simple tools, are the heritage of all humanity.

The museum's *Living Treasures* programs will take place four times each year. Each will highlight a local person who has contributed to the general well being of others. The one hour lectures will cover all aspects of community life such as: Art; Literature; History; Music; Sports; Education and Science and will be presented using various mediums. Informational handouts will be provided to attendees. Refreshments will be served at a short reception prior to each presentation.

Congratulations to **Kathy Moore**, this year's San Ramon Valley Unified School District Teacher of the Year. Kathy was also a finalist for the 2007 Contra Costa County Teacher of the Year award.

Kathy is a well respected teacher in the school district and has taught for the past 20 years. She is currently on a special assignment training other teachers in the San Ramon Valley Reading and Writing Project method. She teaches writing at Del Amigo High School and also writes a weekly education column for the *Danville Times*.

## The Branch Line

The Museum of the San Ramon Valley in the Depot

❁ Winter 2007

