

ERWIN, J. WARD

Jared Ward Erwin was born in Oakdale, Missouri in 1875. As his father was also Jared, he was known as Ward, though as an adult, many called him Mazoo for his Missouri background. He came to Montana at the age of 21, first living in Great Falls. Later that year, he and a friend decided to go to Billings, but could afford no transportation, so they walked along the road for all 252 miles.

Not a great deal is known about his life. Erwin apparently never married and had no children, and he wasn't one to be mentioned in the social notes so prevalent in the early *Gazettes*.

Shortly after arriving in Billings, Erwin got a job in a Minnesota Avenue saloon, running a roulette table. Years later, he was interviewed about one of the saloon's most notable patrons, Calamity Jane, another Missouri native. He said he met her at the saloon in 1902, where she bought the boys at the bar a round, without drinking herself, and enjoyed watching the players at the roulette table and faro games, but didn't play.

It is likely that he is the same J.W. Erwin who was arrested in a raid on his home in 1925 by a city detective, two sheriff's deputies and a federal Prohibition officer. He recognized the officers and was reported to have said, "Well, you have caught me with the goods." The officers confiscated a 50-gallon still, 15 barrels of rye mash and 20 gallons of fresh moonshine, still warm from the still. Erwin pled guilty to a charge of manufacturing intoxicating liquors. He was fined \$300 and sentenced to 60 days in the county jail.

Erwin passed away in 1956 at the age of 80, and was buried in Mountview Cemetery. No marker was ever placed on his grave. He was survived only by a younger brother in California.

