

June 16, 1947

15c

Newsweek

Television in the Tavern

Gil's Bar, on Eighth Avenue in New York, was almost deserted one afternoon last week. In the same block three other taverns were packed close to their shiny brass rails with beer-drinking patrons. Ed Abbott, bartender at Gil's, knew why. "Our television set is busted," he explained. "Soon's we get a new one, people'll drift back in again. The other places got their sets working. Meanwhile we lose 20, maybe 30, bucks this afternoon – and with a double-header on out at the Polo Grounds too!"

While Ed mournfully polished glasses, an estimated 8,000 television-equipped bars and grills in New York and vicinity lured off-duty sailors, night-shifters, and assorted other patrons to watch afternoon baseball games – at the total cost of a few beers. In the evening new customers arrived to watch prizefights telecast over the three New York channels. Other television shows feature fashion shows and special events, but bar owners find sports telecasts more popular. One radio writer recently estimated that some 500,000 fans will be seeing their ball games next season via television.

Here to Stay: No longer a passing fad, television is fast becoming a magnet to attract bar patrons during otherwise slack business periods. From swank cocktail lounges in the 50s to sawdust-scented Greenwich Village joints, it is taking hold with customers and bartenders alike. "It might not make a difference in a neighborhood bar, but we've got to pull people in off the street," declared an Eighth Avenue drink mixer.

Beverage Media, bar and liquor-store trade magazine, in a June survey reported

that New York state tavern owners from Peekskill to Jamaica had noted 30 to 60 per cent increases in business since installing television receivers. The U. S. Television Manufacturing Corp., which turns out 95 per cent of the large, projection-type sets bought by bars and hotels, has a difficult time filling orders, even with a monthly production of 300 sets. Its product, a tall box with built-in loudspeaker and a 25 by 19 inch screen, costs bar owners \$1,995, plus \$100 for installation and three months' service charge. Telicon builds a set with a slightly smaller screen for the same price plus a lower service charge. Other manufacturers are DuMont, RCA, Philco, and General Electric.