PROHIBITION

DISCOVER THE TRUTH BEHIND THE 13 YEARS THAT CHANGED AMERICA FOREVER

INSIDE
THE RISE OF THE AMERICAN GANGSTER

DIGITAL EDITION

ST VALENTINE’S DAY MASSACRE • TRUE STORY OF ELIOT NESS • BIRTH OF THE SPEAKEASY
The 'Noble Experiment' of Prohibition took effect in the United States in January 1920. However, in the 13 years before the 18th Amendment was repealed it had changed the face of the United States forever.

In this book of Prohibition we'll explore the factors that led to the decision to outlaw the sale and manufacture of alcoholic beverages and the individuals and organisations that pushed for change, as well as those who fought against it. We'll discover what happened when America went dry in 1920, from the birth of illegal drinking establishments known as speakeasies to the growth in illegal production and smuggling of alcohol as people did what they could to quench their thirst for liquor. Another major consequence of Prohibition was the huge increase in organised crime. In our fascinating features we look at how Prohibition changed the face of crime in the United States, leading to the rise of notorious gangsters such as Al Capone and Lucky Luciano, while we also meet the men and women who had the unenviable task of policing Prohibition and battling the mob as we uncover the true story of Prohibition agents like Eliot Ness and his team of Untouchables. Cheers!
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PROHIBITION

A TIMELINE OF TEMPERANCE AND TIPPLING

THE YEARS OF PROHIBITION WERE THE RESULT OF A CENTURY OF DEBATE CONCERNING THE PROMOTION AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

CONGRESS PASSES THE WARTIME PROHIBITION ACT AFTER THE ARMISTICE ENDING WORLD WAR I
18 November 1919 ■ Washington DC

VOLSTEAD ACT VIOLATIONS SKYROCKET AS LAWS GO INTO EFFECT
January-June 1920 ■ Nationwide

Volstead Act possesses Congress
28 October 1919 ■ Washington DC

Volstead Act

Following ratification in Congress a year earlier, the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution goes into effect. In section 1, the amendment states, "After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited." While the amendment places stiff regulations on many aspects of the use of alcohol, it does not specifically prohibit consumption. The language of the amendment leaves to Congress and the states the specific powers to enforce the amendment with future legislation. The 18th Amendment remains the only amendment to the Constitution repealed in US history.

Volstead Act, 1919

Months after the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution establishes Prohibition, the Volstead Act, sponsored by Republican Representative Andrew John Volstead of Minnesota, brings some degree of specificity to the amendment, defining and prohibiting intoxicating liquors, regulating the manufacture, sale and transport of such beverages, and providing for the continuing supply of such liquors for use in scientific research, religious rituals, the manufacture of fuels and other commercial concerns. It specifies that "...no person shall manufacture, sell, barter, transport, import, export, deliver, or furnish any intoxicating liquor except as authorized by this act." President Woodrow Wilson vetoes the Volstead bill on 27 October due to technical objections; however, the Senate overrides the president's veto. According to the Volstead Act, an intoxicating liquor is defined as any beverage containing at least 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume.

Volstead Act, 1920
Bootlegger George Remus looks through the bars of a jail cell in 1927.

**George Remus raided**  
May 1920 — Chicago, Illinois

Federal agents raided the law office and operations center of George Remus, also known as the ‘King of the Bootleggers’, after being tipped off that 15 barrels of whiskey have been relocated with false permits. Remus is a well-known attorney, pharmacist, and bootlegger, who has scoured the text of the Volstead Act for loopholes to exploit within the shadowy liquor trade. The charges specify that the address where the whiskey is to be delivered is a vacant lot, with a small garage used as a distribution center in one corner. Remus, whom some believe is the inspiration for the title character in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s classic novel *The Great Gatsby*, relocates his operation to Cincinnati, Ohio, a safer location to ply the illegal liquor trade. In 1925, he is convicted of Volstead Act violations and sentenced to two years in prison.

**Bootslegger Roy Olmstead, King of Pacific Northwest Bootleggers, Is Convicted**  
20 February 1926 — Seattle, Washington

**Schooner Tomoko seized**  
23 November 1923 — Atlantic Ocean

The US Coast Guard cutter Seneca seizes the schooner Tomoko on the high seas. The ship is carrying illegal whiskey and is owned by William ‘Bill’ McCoy, a well-known rum runner who traffics between the Bahamas and the US East Coast. A highly successful smuggler, McCoy is a pioneer of the clandestine activity, already famous for delivering 1,500 cases of rum from Nassau, Bahamas, to the port of Savannah, Georgia. McCoy, who claims to have patterned his activities on those of Revolutionary War hero John Hancock, tells reporters prior to going to trial, “I have no tale of woe to tell you. I was outside the three-mile limit, selling whiskey, and good whiskey, to anyone and everyone who wanted to buy.” He is convicted of smuggling and serves a nine-month sentence in a New Jersey jail. He later invests the fortune he earned during Prohibition in Florida real estate.

**Billy McSwiggin murder**  
27 April 1926 — Chicago, Illinois

Assistant State’s Attorney Billy McSwiggin, only 26 years old, is gunned down in front of Harry Madigan’s Pony Inn after a “little good beer” with some known Chicago hoodlums. The youthful McSwiggin has already earned the nickname of the ‘hangman prosecutor’, and questions immediately emerge. Mafia kingpin Al Capone is considered a suspect, arrested and held for three days. However, insufficient evidence forces the authorities to release the gangster chieftain. Although McSwiggin and Capone once opposed one another, they have recently become friendly. Capone tells police, “I didn’t kill McSwiggin. I liked the kid.” A grand jury concludes that McSwiggin was a bystander in the midst of a brewing war involving Capone’s men and a rival gang. The murder investigation leads to a series of raids on bars in the Chicago suburb of Cicero.

During one of these a ledger is discovered that leads to Capone’s conviction for tax evasion.
**St Valentine’s Day Massacre**

14 February 1929  ■ Washington DC

Seven members of Irish mobster George ‘Bugs’ Moran’s gang are gunned down in a garage on Chicago’s North Side. No one is ever brought to trial for the murders, but the rival gang under mob kingpin Al Capone is suspected of carrying out the murders to eliminate competition for the lucrative bootlegging, gambling, and prostitution business in the city. The crescendo of the gang warfare that gripped Chicago during the Prohibition era of the 1920s, the so-called St Valentine’s Day Massacre is probably carried out by Capone’s men dressed as police officers, who enter the garage, stand Moran’s men facing a wall, and open fire with automatic weapons, pouring at least 70 rounds into them. By an amazing stroke of luck, Moran himself is en route to the garage at the time of the massacre and escapes death by just a few minutes.

**Stock market crash**

29 October 1929  ■ New York

The crash of the stock market precipitates the worldwide Great Depression, and federal and state governments seek sources of revenue to replace those depleted through high unemployment, business failures and the loss of wealth. Many government officials consider Prohibition, which has created a highly profitable black market in alcohol sales, to be an obstacle to full economic recovery while depriving their coffers of the substantial tax revenue generated through liquor-related commerce. During the presidential election campaign in 1932, both Republican incumbent candidate Herbert Hoover and Democratic hopeful and future president Franklin D Roosevelt voice support for the 21st Amendment to the US Constitution, which would repeal Prohibition and hopefully provide support for a comprehensive economic recovery in the struggling US.

**Al Capone convicted**

17 October 1931  ■ Chicago, Illinois

Al Capone, king of the Chicago underworld, is convicted in federal court of tax evasion and sentenced to 11 years in prison. He is also fined $50,000, assessed $7,692 in court costs and judged to owe $215,000 in delinquent taxes and interest penalties. Capone has made a fortune in organised crime, and Prohibition has contributed to his wealth - one year’s income is estimated at $60 million - as a brisk trade in illegal liquor has become his primary source of revenue. Capone had earlier pleaded guilty to tax evasion and violation of Prohibition laws, and told the press he has worked out a deal to serve two and a half years in prison. However, the presiding judge announces that he is not bound by any deal. Capone changes his plea to not guilty and is ultimately convicted. He serves his lengthy sentence in federal prisons in Atlanta and on Alcatraz Island in San Francisco Bay.

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**The bureau of narcotics is formed within the treasury department**

14 June 1930  ■ Washington, DC

The Bureau of Narcotics is formed within the Treasury Department to regulate drug trafficking and manufacture. The Bureau of Narcotics is established by the criminal justice act of 1930, which makes it illegal to manufacture, distribute or sell any drug included in the list of Schedule I or II drugs. The Act also requires federal authorities to establish a drug情报 system and to report all drug-related crimes.

**Senator John J Blaine of Wisconsin drafted the legislation that led to the end of Prohibition**

16 September 1931  ■ Detroit, Michigan

Senator John J Blaine of Wisconsin drafted the legislation that led to the end of Prohibition. Blaine introduced the Prohibition Amendment to the US Constitution in 1917, which was ratified in 1919 and went into effect in 1920. The amendment ended the sale, manufacture and transportation of alcoholic beverages in the United States for 13 years, until it was repealed by the Twenty-First Amendment in 1933.
HERBERT HOOVER SPEAKS AGAINST PROHIBITION WHILE ACCEPTING NOMINATION FOR PRESIDENT
11 August 1932 Chicago, Illinois

PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT SIGNS CULLEN-HARRISON ACT LEGALISING SALES OF BEER AND WINE
22 March 1933 Washington, DC

Blaine Act drafted
6 December 1932 Washington DC

Wisconsin Senator John J Blaine drafts the Blaine Act, which serves as the basis for the legislative repeal of the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution and the end of Prohibition in the United States. The Blaine Act allows states to form committees that could possibly ratify a proposed amendment for the repeal of Prohibition, and a three-fourths majority of the 48 states is required. Although Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas has previously stated that there is “as much chance of repealing the 18th Amendment as there is for a hummingbird to fly to the planet Mars with the Washington Monument tied to its tail” and plans a filibuster (a rambling, long and largely uninterruptible speech to the US Senate, often used to derail voting on a Bill) to kill any such measure, the process of undoing 13 years of Prohibition in America is underway.

End of Prohibition
5 December 1933 Washington, DC

The 21st Amendment to the US Constitution is ratified in Congress, ending the Prohibition era in the United States. Utah becomes the 36th state to ratify the measure, which repeals the 18th Amendment enacted 13 years earlier. Some states, however, continue to enforce Prohibition laws, while two-thirds of them maintain some form of local authority to allow individual voters to enforce measures permitting or prohibiting commerce in liquor. Mississippi is the last state in the Union with explicit ordinances on the books, ending its status in 1966. With the announcement that Prohibition has ended, celebrations erupt across the country. During family Christmas observances, President Franklin D Roosevelt brings out a 51-year-old bottle of wine and proclaims, “It was a great privilege for the family to drink the family toast... in an honest product.”
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From social issues to politics, discover the factors that...
Europeans brought various customs with them aboard ships like the Mayflower, including their drinking habits.
The European settlers who arrived in North America in the 17th century brought with them various customs and traditions. One of these was the Old World’s taste for liquor. The consumption of alcoholic beverages was commonplace and its production was big business across the other side of the Atlantic, with these drinking habits being transferred across The Pond.

A professional brewer was among the settlers who started up the inaugural Plymouth Colony in the 1620s and brewing beer was a part of life in colonial North America. As more colonies were established, drinking became more popular with workers often having wine for breakfast along with tipples for lunch and dinner – the modern equivalent of a morning coffee and an afternoon tea. It wasn’t just the thirst of workers – a valuable income stream for early colonial governments was a tax on alcohol. A licence to produce beer was introduced and any unlicensed brewing would result in a fine. The first tavern licence was written in 1634 and soon regulations on the strength and price of beer had been introduced.

Drunkenness was considered a sin by the Christian churches set up in the colonies but very rarely was action taken to prevent people from drinking themselves into a drunken stupor. The role of alcohol in American society wasn’t just limited to a frequent tipple – liquor was used as a substitute for water and was a part of many prescribed medicines and treatments.

Importing alcohol from Europe was a costly and timely business so many colonists soon took to making their own. European immigrants, in particular the Germans and the Dutch, brought with them the method of
The first temperance society in the USA was founded in the New England region. Rum was another home distilling became so popular that it actually had an effect on the sale of beer in breweries in the lead up to the American Revolutionary War. Not everyone in the colonies was a big-time drinker. Native Americans commonly used tobacco and herbs such as peyote and Datura for recreational and medicinal uses, but alcohol was not a tradition like it was in the Old World. As European settlers came into contact with different tribes and nations between the 16th and 19th centuries, Natives were offered alcohol as a bargaining tool in trade, which for some was their first experience of it, at least in this quantity and strength. During the Plains Wars, Native Americans would often come into contact with hard drinking military men on the frontier who drank distilled drinks that were a lot stronger than what the Natives would have experienced, Wovoka, a religious leader who led the popular Ghost Dance movement towards the end of the conflict, encouraged his followers to abstain from alcohol, having seen the effect it had on his people. One Native group that did have a good knowledge of alcohol production before any contact with colonists were the Puebloan culture from what is now New Mexico. There are records that they brewed a type of corn beer, with archaeological findings tracing the age of the drinking vessels at 800 years old.

In later years, the idea of a drunken Native American was used as demonised propaganda by European settlers. Alcohol was prohibited on tribal lands by President Thomas Jefferson in 1802 and then the sale of alcohol to Native Americans was banned in 1832. The ban wasn’t lifted until 1953. An illustration of a settler trading rum with a Native American.

During the Plains Wars, Native Americans in Milwaukee was a major brewing hub, partly down to the high amount of German immigrants who moved there.

Benjamin Rush was a talented intellectual who tried to encourage limited public drinking rather than complete prohibition.
THE WHISKEY REBELLION

WHEN THE US GOVERNMENT INTRODUCED A TAX ON WHISKEY, MANY FARMERS REFUSED TO PAY AND FOUGHT BACK AGAINST THE NEW LAW

The outbreak of the American Revolutionary War made importing alcohol tricky. This led to American-brewed whiskey becoming popular, especially with Scottish and Irish immigrants. This continued after the war, with corn from Kentucky and Ohio harvested en masse at 25 cents a gallon – a steal compared to beer and wine even to tea, coffee and milk.

In the years after the war the USA had accumulated a national debt of more than $50 million, which resulted in a tax being imposed on whiskey production in 1790. Farmers refused to pay this new tax and the Whiskey Rebellion began in 1791. The rebellion was centralised in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania where farmers protested by abducting tax collectors, stripping them naked and branding them with a red hot poker or tarring and feathering them. Some collectors were also beaten or even shot. Around 1,500 people marched to Pittsburgh to protest against the federal excise tax during the rebellion. These intimidation tactics meant west Pennsylvania managed to avoid the tax for years but the rebellious activities stopped after troops were called in. Several rebellion leaders were later captured, charged with treason and then either sentenced to prison or hanging.

A newspaper cartoon from 1902 that encourages decreased drinking in Hawaii

A National Prohibition Convention in full swing in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1892

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Marchers take to the streets to protest the consumption of alcohol. The temperance movement gained renewed strength after the Civil War.
The temperance movement in the United States is as old as the nation itself. Often inspired by the Protestant church, those who sought to regulate and then to eliminate the consumption of alcoholic beverages traveled a long, difficult path towards the ratification and enactment of the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution in 1919-1920. Their zeal in support of Prohibition was the product of social, moral and religious experience that pointed to an affliction that destroyed lives and adversely affected virtually every aspect of the human experience – or so they believed.

Temperance advocates characterised their movement with criticism of alcohol consumption, and their aims were either to control the availability of hard liquor or to eradicate its use, including the consumption of beer and wine, through complete abstinence. The movement warned against the evils of alcohol abuse and often invoked the admonition that such activity is a sin. The movement has long pointed to the social ills that emerge from alcoholism, including broken families, violence, crime, lost worker productivity and risks to personal and public health, and their rationale for strict regulation has been simple: one drink usually leads to another and an inevitable downward spiral towards perdition.

During the early years of European settlement in America, the consumption of alcohol was a part of daily life. Water supplies were sometimes scarce or contaminated, medicines contained alcohol, and hard cider, beer, wine and distilled spirits were traditional drinks that were brought by colonists from their mother countries. Although alcoholism existed, it was rarely seen as a social problem until the phenomenon of...
the Industrial Revolution required sober workers to operate heavy machinery and equipment. Workplace accidents were a major concern, and the loss of productivity became an issue for business owners who often joined the ranks of the temperance movement for financial reasons.

The roots of American temperance emerged during the Revolutionary period as an extension of European perspective, with advocacy groups becoming active in Virginia, Connecticut and New York. By the 1790s, Benjamin Rush, a prominent Pennsylvania physician and signer of the Declaration of Independence, opposed the use of distilled alcohol but did see health benefits in the moderate consumption of beer and other common fermented beverages. Rush warned against the potential social evils of alcohol, but few colonists heeded his words.

Temperance as a movement found its early voice in England, Scotland, Ireland and Scandinavia during the 1820s. Historians recognize the first formal organization promoting the practice to have formed in Ireland and then spread through the British Isles to Norway and Sweden. In the United States, the clergy followed suit with major European theologians such as John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, who advised, "...buying, selling and drinking liquor, unless absolutely necessary, are evils to be avoided."

Temperance societies sprang up in New England and New York during the 1820s and 1830s, and later, in 1842, reformed alcoholic John Bartholomew Gough began travelling across the region, asking audiences to pledge complete abstinence from alcohol. In 1828, Lyman Beecher, another Presbyterian, published his book Six Sermons on Intemperance, calling drunkenness a "national sin" and becoming one of the earliest proponents of governmental action against the production and sale of liquor. Temperance almanacs, complete with weather forecasts and the latest news on the movement, were printed and widely distributed.

As alcohol reformers moved from moderation to advocating self-help and group support for drinkers, and then to government intervention to end the manufacture, sale and consumption of beer, wine and liquor, they found common ground with abolitionists seeking to end slavery and women's rights activists during the groundswell of progressivism that swept across the nation. Those who pledged complete abstinence were identified on rosters with a capital "T" next to their names, and the moniker of "teetotaller" was derived from it. These groups also identified themselves as the Pure Water Army, as they promoted drinking only water in response to the growing social problems in America's large cities.

Anti-alcohol factions stirred the political arena, and 33-year-old Abraham Lincoln, a member of the Illinois House of Representatives, addressed the Springfield Washington Temperance Society in 1842 stating, "I believe, if we take habitual drunkards as a class, their heads and their hearts will bear an advantageous comparison with those of any other class. There seems ever to have been a proneness in the brilliant and warm-blooded to fall into this vice."

The Washingtonian movement had begun in Baltimore, Maryland, in the early 1840s. Interestingly at its core was a group of craftsmen and skilled artisans, many of whom were rough and tumble men known as hard drinkers themselves. The Washingtonian perspective, echoed in Lincoln's remarks, did not condemn the individual who had become slave to demon liquor. Instead, it offered sympathy and support. The Washingtonians did not support government interference in alcohol commerce and consumption but chose to utilise peer pressure and coercion to fight the spread of alcoholism. In fact, the group was suspicious of the Protestant movement and the inherently divisive.
LEADERS OF THE TEMPERANCE MOVEMENT

Numerous individuals dedicated themselves to the advancement of the temperance movement in the United States through persuasion and activism.

Benjamin Rush

A Pennsylvania physician during the Colonial period and surgeon general of the Continental Army, Benjamin Rush was one of the earliest Americans to raise concerns surrounding the consumption of ‘hard liquor’. He was also a signer of the Declaration of Independence and saw some medicinal value in the moderate drinking of beer and wine.

Lyman Beecher

A Presbyterian minister and co-founder of the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance, Lyman Beecher published his influential work Six Sermons on Intemperance in 1826 and called alcohol abuse a national sin during the 1820s and 1830s. He was the father of 13 children, including Harriet Beecher Stowe, who was the author of the anti-slavery novel Uncle Tom’s Cabin.

Charles Grandison Finney

The father of modern revivalism, Presbyterian minister Charles Grandison Finney preached against alcohol, slavery and other social issues that garnered increasing attention during the Second Great Awakening. His great revival in Rochester, New York, in 1830-31 led to many such gatherings across the region that included appeals to individuals to sign pledges against drinking.

Frances Willard

The second president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, Frances Willard served from 1879 to 1898, and shaped the future of the organisation with a broadened mission, as explained in her “do everything” philosophy that addressed a variety of social issues during the late 19th century, while abstinence from alcohol was the organisation’s central theme.

Wayne Wheeler

The foremost leader of the Anti-Saloon League during the early 20th century, Wayne Wheeler’s tactic of political persuasion and coercion of lawmakers to obtain favourable votes was a critical element in the success of the temperance movement that led to the adoption of the 18th Amendment and the implementation of Prohibition in the US.

“In 1826, the average American over the age of 15 was consuming seven gallons of alcohol per year – three times the modern consumption”
nature of the Christian denominations. They refused to see drunkenness as a sin and rapidly found themselves under attack by Christian-motivated reformers. By 1845, the Washingtonians had begun to wane under attacks from the evangelical element of the temperance movement because they refused to label alcoholics as sinners. However, the Washingtonians themselves suffered reputational erosion as some members of their rank and file slid back into alcoholism, sometimes in quite public displays. Internal viewpoints on anti-alcohol legislation further divided the Washingtonians, and other organisations stepped up to offer sympathy and outreach to the individual alcoholic. The Good Samaritans and the Sons of Temperance held meetings that were closed to the public, required members to meet certain qualifications and levied fines for offences. Still, by the 1850s, the general temperance movement was pivoting towards government regulation and away from its focus on the individual and families impacted by the affliction of alcoholism. In 1855, Massachusetts had passed a law banning the sale of certain types of liquor, while the Michigan legislature had designated the authority to act on temperance issues to local municipalities. In 1846, the state of Maine passed the first state-wide law in the US prohibiting the sale of alcoholic drinks. It was followed in 1851 by the famous Maine Liquor Law. Spearheaded by activist and politician Neal Dow, known as the 'Napoleon of Temperance' and the 'Father of Prohibition', the effort to draft such a law was opposed by members of the hearty working class in Maine, as well as large numbers of immigrants who had settled in the state. However, with the passage of the Maine Liquor Law a new era in the temperance movement had dawned. The law stated that: the production and sale of alcoholic beverages was forbidden except for ‘medicinal, mechanical or manufacturing purposes.’ Rioting erupted in Portland, where Dow was mayor, and the city hall was attacked because demonstrators believed Dow was keeping liquor in the basement. The Maine Liquor Law was repealed in 1856, but during its short tenure the measure was lauded across the globe, spawning similar legislation in 12 other states by 1855. These were quickly labelled ‘Dry’ states as opposed to ‘Wet’ states, where alcohol remained legal. The strength of the temperance movement in Maine kept the issue at the political forefront even after the repeal of the Liquor Law, and various measures were reconstituted in the years to come. Leading to Prohibition being written into the state constitution in 1885.

International cooperation was a primary strength of the emerging temperance movement, and one of the most effective organisations in bringing this about was the Order of the Good Templars, founded in Utica, New York, in 1851. Describing itself as the ‘premier global interlocutor for evidence-based policy measures and community-based interventions to prevent and reduce harm caused by alcohol and other drugs’, the order was founded as a fraternal organisation that admitted both men and women and initially made no racial distinctions among its members. The merging of two earlier groups under the leadership of newspaper editor and politician Wesley Bailey marked the birth of the Good Templars. British activist Joseph Main returned to his homeland in 1868 and established the first international Good Templars’ lodge in Birmingham, England. Within the next few years, the group spread like wildfire across Europe and the rest of the world, with lodges in China, Japan, India, the Caribbean, France, Portugal, South Africa, Argentina and Central America. By the turn of the 20th century, more groups were established in the Netherlands, Burma and on the African continent. During the late 1970s, the group still numbered roughly 700,000 members worldwide.

**Women Take the Temperance Lead**

The role of women in the success of the temperance movement during more than a century of effort cannot be diminished. Women became prime temperance activists largely due to their religious motivation and the obvious ill effects of drinking that many of them experienced first hand. As the nation grew, so did the availability of liquor, beer and wine, and women made pioneering contributions to fight against this insidious foe. By the early 1830s, at least 24 temperance organisations led by women were active in the US. Middle-class Protestant women, imbued with the moral conviction that drinking is a sin, mobilised. Interrupted somewhat by the coming of the Civil War, they pursued their agenda with renewed vigour in the 1870s with the founding of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union and the work of its prominent leaders, Sarah ‘Annie’ Turner Wittenmyer and Frances Willard. At the same time, women’s suffrage brought the support of leaders such as Susan B Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who found common purpose in advancing social welfare. Eventually, the WCTU became a political force to be reckoned with as its membership blossomed.

One of the most visible and radical elements of the temperance movement was led by women such as Carrie Nation, whose violent destruction of a saloon with rocks and a hatchet led to arrests and newspaper headlines across the US. While her approach was controversial, it was effective in raising the profile of the temperance movement.
Both during and after the American Civil War, the roots of the temperance movement in the Christian gospel remained firm. During the period known as the Third Great Awakening in the mid-19th century, several organisations came to the forefront of the temperance movement and exerted tremendous influence in shaping its future. Amid the revivals, camp meetings and altar calls for repentance, preachers clamoured for commitments to abstinence from alcohol.

Founded in London in 1844 under the guidance of philanthropist Sir George Williams, the Young Men’s Christian Association, popularly known as the YMCA, espoused a motto of developing a healthy “body, mind and spirit”. Along with its counterpart directed at young women, the YWCA, the organisation became relevant as young men flocked to cities while seeking employment during the Industrial Revolution. Offering housing in a wholesome environment along with recreational activities that hopefully steered young people away from the vices of alcohol consumption, gambling, prostitution and street crime, the organisation, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, gained momentum in the United States as well and continues to be active today in promoting physical fitness and positive diversion in a Christian evangelical context.

In 1865, the Salvation Army was founded in London as a religious organisation in the Wesleyan-Arminian and Methodist traditions, and soon it was active in America, too. Its initial focus was on social welfare, and among its first converts were reformed alcoholics and drug addicts.

During the Victorian period, the temperance movement edged toward stronger legislative action to eradicate the consumption of alcohol rather than efforts to simply curb its abuse. The post-Civil War period saw the effort expand to a tangible mass movement.

In the political arena, the Prohibition Party was founded in 1869, with Methodist minister John Russell of Michigan as its first chairman. The oldest third party in American politics, the organisation’s primary platform was support for the temperance movement. Fielding presidential candidates in every US election since 1872, the party was most influential during the years prior to Prohibition and actually garnered about 5,600 votes in the election of 2016. In the early 1900s, Californian Charles H Randall was elected three times to the US Congress as a member of the Prohibition Party, while Sidney J Catts was elected governor of Florida in 1916.

Among the earliest organised women’s organisations to join the crusade against strong drink was the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), founded in Hillsboro, Ohio, on 23 December 1873, and firmly established at a national convention in Cleveland, Ohio, the following year. Within a decade an international component of the organisation was operational. The WCTU boldly stated that its raison d’être was to create a “sober and pure world” through purity and abstinence from alcohol on the firm foundation of evangelical Christianity.

Under the leadership of its first two presidents, Sarah ‘Annie’ Turner Wittenmyer and Frances Willard, the WCTU rapidly grew in numbers and espoused the slogan

“The Prohibition Party has fielded presidential candidates in every US election since 1872. It garnered about 5,600 votes in the 2016 election.”

“Women from Minnesota march for temperance in 1917, around the time that the United States entered World War I.”

“Well-dressed men, women and children stand with a wagon as they begin a march in favour of temperance.”

“A temperance parade complete with vehicles and marchers hits the streets of Chicago in this photo taken in 1908.”

“Carrie Nation inspired others to violently attack drinking establishments in the name of the temperance movement.”

“A preacher delivers a message of sobriety in front of a saloon located in Corbin, Kentucky.”
THE ROAD TO PROHIBITION

written by the ancient Greek philosopher Xenophon, “... moderation in all things healthful: total abstinence from all things harmful.” Willard served as president of the organisation from 1879 until her death in 1898, and by 1890 the WCTU was the largest women’s organisation in the world. Taking aim at the evils of tobacco and other social issues as well, the group was led by feminists who eventually joined forces with the suffrage movement of the early 20th century, appealing to its leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B Anthony.

Wittenmyer and Willard differed in their approaches to accomplishing the aims of the WCTU. Wittenmyer didn’t want to extend beyond the focus of the group, which centred on individuals who were enslaved to alcohol, citing morality as its motivation and attempting to reform those who had succumbed to the temptations of liquor because of low moral fibre. Willard, however, saw women as the “morally superior” gender and believed the power of the vote would propel the efforts of the WCTU to new heights. She advocated the “do everything” philosophy, saw value in an alliance with the suffrage movement, and sought such social reforms as an eight-hour workday, a reasonable living wage and equal justice under the law for everyone. Her methods included preaching, social activism, prison reform and temperance instruction that reached into the classrooms of public schools. By 1927 despite the factionalism within its ranks, the WCTU had grown to 766,000 members in 40 countries.

By the turn of the 20th century, the temperance movement had become a part of the fabric of everyday life in America. Approximately one in ten citizens are believed to have signed a pledge of abstinence of some sort by that time. Temperance activists mobilised to offer lectures, lobbying efforts in legislative halls, international conferences, school textbooks, shelters for recovering alcoholics and anti-liquor petitions. The trend towards higher visibility and a much more vocal position took control of the effort during the next 20 years.

Among the prime movers of temperance to surface during the period was the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), which was founded in Oberlin, Ohio in 1893. Originally a regional organisation, it quickly spread nationwide from its headquarters in the Ohio capital of Columbus and then the city of Westerly. Protestant clergymen strongly supported the Anti-Saloon League, and its leader, attorney and outspoken Prohibitionist Wayne Wheeler developed a programme of pressure politics, leveraging the media and public opinion to persuade or even coerce politicians into taking action favourable to the temperance movement. To that end, the ASL operated the American Issue Publishing Company to spread the organisation’s message across the country.

Wheeler created a systematic method of political persuasion that came to be known as Wheelerism, and proved to be remarkably effective. He believed that simply asking for a vote in favour of Prohibition was not forceful or effective enough to persuade lawmakers to act. Instead, Wheeler asid constituents to flood the offices of Congressmen with letters and telegrams, and, amid the avalanche of correspondence, newspapers acknowledged his growing influence. The Cincinnati Enquirer, for example, called Wheeler “the strongest political force of his day.”

During its 20th anniversary convention in 1913, the leadership of the ASL announced the organisation’s intent to press Congress into national Prohibition through the ratification of an amendment to the US Constitution. Through strong ties with other groups in the temperance movement, particularly the WCTU, the

Defining moment
Benjamin Rush Publishes
1790

Physician, politician and social reformer Rush published An Inquiry into the Effects of Spirituous Liquors on the Human Body. The account draws attention to drinking, and includes means of preventing and curing its effects.

Defining moment
WCTU Takes Shape
1873

The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, destined to become the largest temperance organisation of its kind, is formed in Ohio and subsequently spreads worldwide with more than 700,000 members.

THE TEMPERANCE TIMELINE

1826

American Temperance Society Formed
The leading organisation of its type during the Second Great Awakening, the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance is formed in Boston, Massachusetts to focus on the growing social problem of alcoholism.

1828

Beecher’s Bible-based Warning
Presbyterian minister Lyman Beecher’s Six Sermons on Intemperance calls attention to the sinfulness of drinking alcohol. The book is reprinted many times and in numerous languages.

1830-31

Great Rochester Revival
During a major revival meeting of the Second Great Awakening led by Charles Grandison Finney, worshippers are required to sign an abstinence pledge to receive forgiveness for their sins.

1840

The Washingtonian Movement
Concentrating on the suffering of the individual alcoholic and offering sympathy and support, the Washingtonians, founded in Maryland, take a decidedly social approach to fighting the scourge of drink.

1851

The Maine Liquor Law
A landmark law is enacted in Maine, mandating full Prohibition and influencing similar legislative action in a dozen more states, although it is repealed in 1856 following the eruption of violence.

PROHIBITION PARTY
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE
JOHN BIDWELL OF CALIFORNIA RECEIVED MORE THAN 270,000 VOTES IN THE ELECTION OF 1892

1890

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ASL was instrumental in achieving favourable outcomes in the elections of 1916. Susan B Anthony remarked, "The only hope of the Anti-Saloon League's success lies in putting the ballot into the hands of women."

An additional boost to the temperance movement in the United States came as an unintended consequence of the outbreak of World War I. The US government enacted measures to limit or suspend the use of grain for the production of alcohol, asserting that the foodstuff was needed to feed a hungry army overseas and to provide relief for the starving refugees of war-ravaged Europe.

Shrewdly, the ASL partnership with the WCTU and the suffrage movement proved advantageous for both causes. Seeking 'Dry' majorities in both the US House of Representatives and the Senate, the temperance effort was successful, and Wheeler's tactics were largely responsible for the transformative passage of the National Prohibition Act in 1919 and the ratification of the 18th Amendment that followed in 1920, making Prohibition the law of the land.

Few movements in American history have mobilised to such great effect as the march of temperance. However, the expected achievement of far-reaching social reform that would result from the eradication of alcohol remained illusory—much more a mirage of theory than a concrete success in practice. After all, the constitutional amendment did not prohibit consumption, and the commerce and trafficking of alcohol that it did prohibit merely went underground and became the province of the criminal element.

Characterised by a cadre of committed leaders and the dedication of millions of adherents, the temperance movement reached its zenith with the enactment of Prohibition. However, as the noble experiment began to lose its lustre, so did the organised effort that had provided its energy and shrill voice.

1861
• Civil War Interruption
  The coming of the Civil War disrupts temperance efforts partially due to the US government’s need for the tax revenue generated through alcohol commerce. The war ends four years later.

1893
• Anti-Saloon League Forms
  The Anti-Saloon League is established in Ohio. Under the aggressive leadership of Wayne Wheeler, the organisation exerts tremendous influence on legislators and hastens the coming of the 18th Amendment.

1900
• Hacking Up A Saloon
  Militant temperance activist Carrie Nation, guided by an apparent vision from God, storms into a saloon and begins destroying its wares with a hatchet in a violent response to the evils of alcohol.

1913
• Towards A Constitutional Amendment
  Leaders of the Anti-Saloon League announce their intent to introduce temperance through the law via an amendment to the US Constitution. The move fosters the adoption of the 18th Amendment.

1929
• The Movement Falters
  After the adoption of Prohibition in America, an emerging criminal element engaged in alcohol trafficking and the coming of the Great Depression begins to erode the influence of the temperance movement.
A group of anti-Prohibition marchers make their sentiment clear during a rally against the 18th Amendment during the 1920s.
The opponents of Prohibition, known as ‘Wets’, mobilised against the 18th Amendment for a variety of reasons. They were wealthy and poor, native-born and immigrant, industrialist and farmer, priest and reformer. And they all saw injustice in Prohibition, the sweeping attempt at social engineering that banned the manufacture, sale, transportation and distribution of alcoholic beverages for consumption.

Although their reasons for opposing the idea of Prohibition, the 112 words of the 18th Amendment that made it law, and the Volstead Act that gave it the power of legal enforcement, the diverse group of opponents, known commonly as ‘Wets’, campaigned against the ban on alcohol and were eventually successful with its repeal after nearly 14 years of controversy.

When Prohibition went into effect in January 1920, the fifth-largest industry in the United States, the business of liquor and beer, was essentially in jeopardy of extinction. Going out of business meant the idling of workers, the loss of alcohol-related tax revenue and the immediate emergence of an underground economy based on the supply and demand for liquor that remained, even though it had been deemed illegal. The coercion and efficiency of the ‘Dry’ movement, led by Wayne B. Wheeler of the Anti-Saloon League, temporarily prevailed as Wheeler led the charge for the ratification of the 18th Amendment. He effectively wielded ‘Wheelerism’, or pressure tactics, to threaten politicians at local, state and federal levels into supporting Prohibition legislation or risk the wrath of the Dry machine, which would likely bring enough voters to the polls to defeat any candidate who did not bend to Wheeler’s will.

In response to the well-financed and strategically savvy Dry movement, the Wet faction came somewhat late to the battle. During pre-Prohibition days, the opponents of the measure were not nearly as well organised or as vocal as their adversaries. Then, as the
United States went dry; the momentum of the Wet faction increased. After five years, journalist H.L. Mencken wrote of the situation, “There is not less drunkenness in the republic, but more. Not less crime but more. There is not less insanity, but more. The cost of government is not smaller, but vastly greater. Respect for the law has not increased, but diminishes.”

Indeed, amid the apparent failures of Prohibition millions of Americans had already begun to back away from their early support of the alcohol ban. Although the consumption of alcohol was curtailed and reports indicated that issues with alcohol-related death and disease were trending positively, the gains were only temporary. The average American, therefore, observed several disturbing phenomena. They were saddled with a federal income tax that had been approved by constitutional amendment essentially to replace the revenue lost from the abolition of alcohol. They observed that the growth of organised crime and gang wars and high-profile murders. They were aware of the hypocrisy of politicians who publicly pontificated in favour of Prohibition and patronised their own bootlegger connections while drinking behind closed doors. All this over a simple pleasure that at one time had held no mystery, no aura of wrongdoing, as long as it was conducted in moderation and did not infringe on the rights of others.

The problems that Prohibition had been intended to cure: drunkenness, domestic violence, crime. overcrowded jails and court dockets, and poor public health persisted. Some elected officials, despite the threats of the Anti-Saloon League and Wayne Wheeler, remained ardent opponents of Prohibition. Massachusetts Congressman George Tinkham blasted the 18th Amendment and earned the nickname ‘Wettest of the Wet’ among American legislators. As more Americans began to perceive Prohibition as a failure, whether it actually was or not, the movement for repeal of the 18th Amendment gained strength. With its roots in evangelical Christian Protestantism, Prohibition was seen by some as a movement to foist the morals of rural Protestants on those who lived in American cities. those who immigrated from Europe and brought their traditions with them, and those who simply wanted to legally enjoy a glass of beer.

For the Drys, any institution or individual that opposed their effort was fair game. The brewing industry, for example, was strongly associated with German immigrants, and when the United States entered World War I in April 1917, that industry was vilified. Wisconsin Lieutenant Governor John Strange commented, “We have German enemies across the water. We have

**BREWERS STRUGGLE TO REMAIN Viable**

During Prohibition, companies that had brewed millions of gallons of beer were forced to find other ways to stay in business.

When President Woodrow Wilson banned the production of beer during WWI, he signed the measure in September 1918, and it went into effect in December – after the war was over. Nevertheless, the ban remained in effect. At the time, Anheuser-Busch had enough beer in its tanks to last until June 1919, but in that year the mammoth brewer produced only 218,000 barrels of beer. In contrast, it had brewed more than a million barrels each year from 1901 to 1915.

As Prohibition came into force, the brewers’ situation became dire. Some closed their doors forever. The William J Lemp Brewing Company was sold in 1922 to the International Shoe Company for only $588,000. Anheuser-Busch sold off vehicles and real estate and weathered four years of operating losses totalling $5.6 million between 1919 and 1922. The company broke even in 1923, but one of the reasons for the turn in fortunes was its investment in other products. Along with several brewers, Anheuser-Busch, Pabst and others marketed near-beer, a malt beverage with alcohol content below the 0.5 per cent volume mandated by law. The Anheuser-Busch product was called ‘Bevo’, and the company also experimented by removing alcohol from its Budweiser beer. Surprisingly, when Pabst entered the dairy market and began selling cheese, over eight million pounds of it, Kraft filed a lawsuit to protect its interests and won in court.

After President Franklin D Roosevelt signed the ‘Beer Bill’ into law, 1.5 million gallons were consumed on its first legal day at 3.2 per cent alcohol by volume on 7 April 1933.

**George Tinkham Blasted the 18th Amendment and Earned the Nickname ‘Wettest of the Wet’ Among American Legislators**

This demonstration against Prohibition took place in the summer of 1933. ‘Wets’ had already won a victory with the ‘Beer Bill’.
German enemies in this country, too. And the worst of all our German enemies, the most treacherous, the most menacing, are Pabst, Schlitz, Blatz and Miller.” Each of these was the name of a popular German-American brewing enterprise.

Strange’s remarks were not only inflammatory against German-American citizens, but also smacked of a smouldering nativism, or prejudice against those who had come to the United States as foreign-born immigrants in favour of the supposed interests of citizens born in the US. The Prohibition effort, therefore, aroused a curious blend of anti-immigrant sentiment: German, French, Italian, Irish and Eastern European immigrants were perceived as enemies of moral behaviour as they corrupted American society with their supposedly dangerous beer, wine, champagne and whiskey. They were agents for the primary adversary of Prohibition – demon alcohol.

Business and industry leaders realised their workers were no more productive during Prohibition than they had been in earlier days. Leaders of organised labour warned Congress that making beer illegal might generate a wave of unrest among workers. Many women concluded that family-related concerns were not effectively addressed. Each of these constituencies, at first loosely allied and later in cooperation with one another, formed anti-Prohibition groups that raised their dissenting voice to a crescendo in the late-1920s. By the time Prohibition was repealed in 1933, as many as 40 organisations were active with the stated goal of ending the ‘noble experiment’.

Meanwhile, the brewing industry diversified, doing its best to stay afloat. Anheuser-Busch, the St Louis-based brewer of Budweiser, became the largest producer of malted milk in the world, and its investment in porcelain products resulted in a ceramic production business that survives today. Breweries such as Yuengling and Pabst entered the dairy business, producing ice cream and cheese. Vintners began making grape ‘bricks’ that could be fermented in the home and turned into wine for personal consumption. Six major distilleries managed to stay in business by registering for licences to produce whiskey for medical purposes.
THE SOFT DRINK EXPLOSION

THE PROHIBITION ERA USHERED IN UNPRECEDEDENT POPULARITY FOR SOFT DRINKS AS CONSUMERS PURCHASED THEM REGULARLY

The dominant soft drink of the past 150 years, Coca-Cola, was invented in the 1860s, and other sweet, non-alcoholic carbonated beverages came along as well. With Prohibition their popularity surged to new heights. Americans bought and drank soft drinks with a gusto that mirrored their love of pre-Prohibition beer. Other entrepreneurs developed their own soft drinks, including Charles Hires, a pharmacist in Philadelphia whose recipe for root beer was the product of several such beverages that dated back to Colonial America. Hires was marketed directly to the public as a "temperance drink". Sales of Coca-Cola alone tripled during Prohibition.

During the 1860s, Dr. Thomas Bramwell Welch received permission from the administration of the Methodist Church to use his product, Dr. Welch's Unfermented Wine, as a substitute for real wine in the sacrament of communion. Welch's Grape Juice, a familiar brand today, established tremendous sales records during the Prohibition years. In 1924, the Chero-Cola/Union Bottle Works Company, founded by Columbus, Georgia, pharmacist Claud A. Hatcher, who was already selling Royal Crown Ginger Ale and later entered the cola market, introduced Nehi, a soft drink that was offered in several fruit flavours, including grape, orange and peach. The business changed its name to the Nehi Corporation and later to Royal Crown.

Adolphus Busch built his family's brewing business into the largest enterprise of its kind in the US, a sprawling 70-acre facility on the St Louis riverfront. Members of the brewers associations looked to the company to respond to the Prohibitionists. He curried favour with politicians, newspaper editors, and others with bribes and paid poll taxes for Mexican and Black voters in the state of Texas because he believed they were likely to vote in favour of beer sales. When his father died in 1913, August Anheuser Busch Sr took over the family business and shepherded the enterprise through the Prohibition years.

The German-American Alliance, formed to preserve and promote German culture in America, became an organisation dedicated to defeating "The Prohibitionists' assault on German manners and customs and the loyalty of the German people." Over two million Americans joined, and states with large populations of German extraction became less likely to vote in favour of anti-alcohol legislation. Still, the brewers were often at odds with the distillers of spirits, pointing an accusing finger at liquor producers while promoting beer as a "healthy" drink.

Organised labour was among the most powerful components of the Wet movement. In January 1931, the American Federation of Labor (AFL) formed its National Committee for the Modification of the Volstead Act. Matthew Woll, a co-founder of the committee, lashed out at Congress and noted that American taxpayers, members of the working class, were footing the bill for those engaged "in racketeering, gangsterism, debased morality and poisoned citizenship." He added that Prohibition had become a "miserable farce" and a "most tragic mistake.

In March 1931, the AFL's National Committee for the Modification of the Volstead Act added an advisory committee formed with representatives of 75 national and international labour unions. Labour leaders argued that the 18th Amendment marked the first time in American history that citizens were deprived of their rights rather than protecting or augmenting personal liberties. As early as December 1917, while the nation wrestled with the idea of Prohibition and involvement in World War I, AFL President Samuel Gompers had written an open letter to the Washington Times newspaper. He commented, "In addition to and quite apart from the direct injury which the Prohibition amendment to the Constitution would inflict upon the workers primarily involved, I am constrained to say that the turmoil and
dissension which are sure to be generated in the minds of our people as the result of this Prohibition proposition causes me mental and conscious disturbance.”

Organised in 1923, the Moderation League of New York worked with the AFL and the Constitutional Liberty League of Massachusetts to urge Congress to modify the definition of ‘intoxicating liquors’ under the Volstead Act. Although the group’s name implied a state-level perspective, its efforts were national in scope. With its support, at least 100 bills were introduced into the House of Representatives along with Senate Bill No 1524. These measures sought to modify the Volstead Act, changing the content of ‘intoxicating liquor’ from 0.5 per cent alcohol content by volume to 2.75 per cent. None of these attempts succeeded, but the organisation successfully raised the profile of the anti-Prohibition movement. In 1926 its members conducted a survey of 602 police departments across the United States and concluded that violations of Prohibition laws had risen dramatically over the years, while arrests had increased.

The Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA), founded by William H Stayton in 1918, was one of the country’s largest and most effective anti-Prohibition organisations. Included in its ranks were powerful businessmen and industrialists, politicians, and a former mayor of New York City. The Women’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR) was founded in 1929 by Pauline Morton Sabin and became the most influential organisation of Wet women with over 1.5 million members at its peak. Working as an auxiliary of the AAPA, the Molly Pitcher Club, named after a heroine of the Revolutionary War, comprised of women. Founded in 1922 by M Louise Gross, the organisation’s position was clear in condemning the “tendency on the part of our National Government to interfere with the personal habits of the American people except those habits which may be designated as criminal.” The group also lobbied for a formal party position in favour of repeal of the Prohibition Act.

The Molly Pitcher Club never became national in scope; however, it was influential for some time in New York and Pennsylvania. When its momentum slowed, Gross led a reinvention of the organisation as the Women’s Committee for the Modification of the Volstead Act, later renamed the Women’s Committee for the Repeal of the 18th Amendment. Attorneys got into the anti-Prohibition Act in 1927 when an influential group headed by Joseph H Choate founded the Voluntary Committee of Lawyers with a focused mission statement against it, which read in part: “The 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act violate the basic principles of our law and government and encroach upon the powers properly reserve to the states and the people.” The attempt to enforce them has been productive of such evils and abuses as are necessarily incident to a violation of these principles, including disrespect for law, obstruction of the due administration of justice, corruption of public officials, abuse of legal process, resort by the government to improper and illegal acts in the procurement of evidence and infringement of such constitutional guarantees as immunity from double jeopardy and illegal search and seizure.”

Prior to the Republican National Convention of 1932, during which Herbert Hoover was nominated as the party’s choice for re-election as president, prominent members formed the Republican Citizens Committee Against National Prohibition. Among the founders were Choate, Lammot du Pont, Raymond Pitcairn of the Pittsburgh Paint and Glass Company, Pennsylvania legislator Thomas W Phillips of the powerful Phillips Oil and Gas Company, and Henry B Joy of the Packard Motor Company. The group pressed for a formal party position in favour of repeal of the Prohibition Act, but despite its efforts the platform stopped short, and issued a statement that was essentially neutral. While the Wet faction was at times well organised, it was also sometimes uncoordinated in its efforts.

For both ‘Wets’ and ‘Drys’ Prohibition raised issues related to personal freedom. Roy Olmstead was a lieutenant with the police department in Seattle, Washington. He was also a successful bootlegger. His business was only halted with his arrest in 1928 based on evidence gathered through surveillance of phone conversations. For several months, federal agents listened to his discussions with customers and business associates. Olmstead was convicted of Prohibition-related violations.

Olmstead appealed his conviction on the grounds that the surveillance violated his constitutional rights under the 4th Amendment, which forbade unlawful search or seizure. The Supreme Court ruled against Olmstead, and Chief Justice William Howard Taft wrote, “... There was no searching and there was no seizure. The evidence was secured by the use of the sense of hearing and that only...” The ruling stood until 1967, when the court judged that wiretaps were subject to obtaining warrants. In the 1928 case, Justice Louis Brandeis dissented, famously stating the 4th Amendment had been violated and Olmstead deserved “the right to be left alone – the most comprehensive of our rights, and the right most valued by civilized man...”
Protesters line a street in Washington, DC to call attention to the detrimental effects of alcohol restrictions during the Great War.
DRAFTEES AND THE DRINK

WORLD WAR I BROUGHT GREATER FOCUS ON THE PROHIBITION OF ALCOHOL IN THE US AND MADE DRINKING A SOMEWHAT UNPATRIOTIC ACTIVITY

The propaganda poster's message was stark. Illustrated with a combat soldier pointing an accusatory finger, it read: “Will You Back Me – or back Booze? Vote ‘Yes’ for Prohibition Nov. 5th.” The message of the Ohio Dry Federation was clearly in support of an anti-alcohol measure at the state’s polling places.

When the United States entered World War I in April 1917, the Selective Service Act passed that year in Congress specified strict control of liquor distribution and consumption by service personnel, and its regulation was in political and moral step with a temperance movement that had been active across the country for around 90 years. Contrary to some misconceptions, therefore, World War I did not cause the US government to enact Prohibition in its wake. Instead, the war became an ally of the temperance movement, and a powerful one at that.

The Anti-Saloon League, YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association), Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the United Committee on War Temperance and other organizations leveraged the experience of war to communicate the message that consuming alcohol was amoral and unpatriotic. Along with Germany and the Central Powers, American soldiers, they reasoned, were also fighting the horrors of liquor. Propagandists promoted the theory that American soldiers were crusaders fighting an enemy that was inherently evil, not only because of its political and cultural standards, but also because of its wanton alcohol consumption. Along with the evils of drinking alcohol, the specter of starvation in Europe was apparent, and grain that was diverted from the production of food for the brewing of beer and distilling of spirits made the situation worse.
By the time the United States entered the Great War, the Prohibition movement was on the brink of prevailing against the ‘Wet’ faction. In the presidential election of 1916, neither Democratic incumbent President Woodrow Wilson nor his Republican opponent Charles Evans Hughes openly voiced an opinion on Prohibition, and it was not included in the policy platform of either party. Still, its influence weighed heavily on the nation. The introduction of a graduated personal income tax in 1913 with the 16th Amendment to the US Constitution lessened the government’s dependence on tax revenue from alcohol commerce, while the promise of support for women’s suffrage, granted by the 19th Amendment in 1920, brought more women into the ‘Dry’ fold. By 1920, brought more women into the ‘Dry’ fold. By

The voices of prominent pro-alcohol leaders were muted with the war. Particularly affected were the German-American brewers who’d come to the US generations earlier and brought their skills with them. The heirs of Adolphus Busch of the Anheuser-Busch brewing empire and Johann Gottfried Friedrich Pabst of the Pabst Brewing Company, for example, were marginalised when their fathers’ native country became an enemy of the US and the Allied cause. Some zealous opponents deemed their product ‘Kaiser brew’.

Pragmatic President Wilson needed the support of ‘Dry’ legislators to enact his own policies, including the declaration of war that he’d tried so hard to avoid. The government took action in mid-1917 with the Lever Act and the Food and Fuel Control Act, regulating the uses of grain. Wilson appointed Herbert Hoover as the head of the US Food Administration, while Yale University economist Irving Fisher spearheaded the effort of the Committee of Sixty against using American grain for alcohol production with the motto, “Save 11,000,000 loaves of bread a day.” In February 1918, President Wilson received a petition with the signatures of six million women demanding a ban on the manufacture and sale of beer. Although Wilson personally opposed the measure, its political impact could not be ignored. That summer, Hoover’s Food Administration issued a mandate that all brewing of beer and malt liquor should end at midnight on 30 November 1918. Again, the German- and Irish-American brewers, who also were among the most prolific consumers of the product, were easy targets. The so-called Grain Crisis precipitated by the war had converged with the temperance movement to produce an avalanche of anti-alcohol sentiment. On 18 November 1918, after the armistice that ended the war, Congress, ironically, passed the Wartime Prohibition Act. While the measure, its political impact could not be ignored. That summer, Hoover’s Food Administration issued a mandate that all brewing of beer and malt liquor should end at midnight on 30 November 1918. Again, the German- and Irish-American brewers, who also were among the most prolific consumers of the product, were easy targets. The so-called Grain Crisis precipitated by the war had converged with the temperance movement to produce an avalanche of anti-alcohol sentiment. On 18 November 1918, after the armistice that ended the war, Congress, ironically, passed the Wartime Prohibition Act, while a resolution calling for an amendment to the Constitution that would make Prohibition the law of the land had already passed both the House of Representatives and the Senate the previous year.

When American soldiers reached the Western Front in France, their experience with wartime alcohol differed...
In its 30 December 1917 edition, General John J. ‘Blackjack’ Pershing, commander of the American Expeditionary Force in France, told the New York Times, “Although I am heartily in favour of prohibition for the American expeditionary force, the situation in France and the United States is not the same. Comparatively few French people drink water as we do, they drink wine instead. This is partially because the French water supply is not as pure as ours. French wine is light and much less intoxicating than generally supposed.

An intoxicated Frenchman is a rare sight indeed.”

Three days later the weekly news magazine The Outlook offered its readers a perspective on the prohibition of alcohol among American service personnel. It read, “Associated Press despatches from our Expeditionary Force state that General Pershing has issued a general order covering the liquor problem among our soldiers abroad. In this order General Pershing announced: ‘Soldiers are forbidden either to buy or accept as gifts whisky, brandy, champagne, liqueurs or other alcoholic beverages other than light wines or beers.’ General Pershing’s order, however, does not stop with the prohibition of heavy liquors. It contains drastic provision for the punishment of men who drink to excess, and also for holding responsible the commanding officer(s) of units in which drunkenness occurs.”
A gathering of the Anti-Saloon League is documented as participants pose for a group photograph at the end of their proceedings.
The Reverend Billy Sunday stood before a packed house and railed, "I am the sworn, eternal and uncompromising enemy of the liquor traffic. I have been, and will go on, fighting that damnable, dirty, rotten business with all the power at my command." The charismatic preacher was one of the best known in a long line of religious leaders who ardently campaigned for the prohibition of alcohol in the United States. One of his most famous sermons was titled, "Booze, or, Get on the Water Wagon," and he told crowds, "Whiskey and beer are all right in their place, but their place is in Hell." For Sunday and others, there was no compromise. The demon liquor deserved a death sentence, and their relentless attack on the production, sale and consumption of alcohol finally led to the ratification of the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution after more than 150 years of spreading the word against the terrible vice.

Religion, however, was not the only compelling force that brought the crusade against alcohol to the forefront of the American political scene during the 19th and early 20th centuries. Social reformers consistently pointed to the harmful effects of drunkenness. Alcoholism, they said, was destroying the family. It led to ill health and fatal disease, violence, physical abuse and broken homes. It weighed on the nation’s economy as hard-working taxpayers were required to fund the construction of jails and the care and upkeep of prisoners who were incarcerated due to crimes they had committed while under the influence of liquor. Industrialists supported Prohibition because they...
perceived a loss of productivity among workers who spent their wages on liquor and failed to show up for work on Monday morning after a hard weekend of binge drinking. Further, the movement for women's suffrage and other activists found common ground with the Prohibition movement.

True enough, Americans were fond of the drink. European settlers had brought alcohol with them, and their traditions of beer and wine, of whiskey and hard liquor, were continued. The consumption of alcohol of some variety was a common experience of everyday life. In 1790, the typical adult drank about 5.8 gallons of alcohol per year. By 1810, that average had risen to 71 gallons. In 1830, Americans over 15 years of age were believed to be drinking 90 bottles of 80 percent proof liquor, or about four shots of alcohol per day. A normal workday included the ringing of a bell at 11am and again at 4pm to signal 'grog time' as workers set their toil aside and enjoyed a stiff drink. Barrels of hard cider or beer were often among a home's furnishings, for members of the family and visitors to drink whenever they wished. And alcohol consumption knew no social or economic barriers; the wealthy were just as enthusiastic in their enjoyment as subsistence farmers.

Evangelist Billy Sunday preached enthusiastically against the evils of alcohol and helped bring Prohibition to reality. The temperance movement, which ran the gamut from moderation in drinking to full prohibition, used stark statistics to bolster its case against alcohol. The New York State Temperance Society published an informational pamphlet in the mid-1830s that unequivocally asserted, "Mr Samuel Chipman, of Rochester, visited personally, every jail and poorhouse in the state of New York, and obtained from the officers, under their own signatures (with one or two exceptions), precise statements of the number of persons who had occupied them during the year 1833, with their habits, and from the county clerks the expenses attending the same."

The publication went on to say, "It shows conclusively, that in this land of FREEDOM and of SCHOOLS, there would be almost NO CRIME, NO PAUPERISM, AND NO TAXES, but for the DISTILLER and the RUM Seller.

At the time of Chipman's visits, there were 24,169 individuals imprisoned or in poorhouses in New York. Of these, 18,312 were identified with their current condition having been caused by liquor. Taxes collected in New York's counties to handle the associated expense totalled more than $875,000. The pamphlet concluded that an estimated 143,709 people were in some adverse state due to alcohol abuse across the US and that more than 300,000 Americans were 'drunkards.'

From 1870 to 1900, it is believed that the number of saloons or drinking establishments across the country increased from 100,000 to 300,000, fuelled by a wave...
ALCOHOLISM ENGENDERS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

THE HORROR OF DOMESTIC ABUSE LED MANY ADVOCATES, PARTICULARLY WOMEN, TO ENDORSE PROHIBITION TO PROTECT THEIR FAMILIES

In 1847, a classic anti-alcohol pamphlet titled 'Temperance Manual' was published by author Justin Edwards, shedding stark light on the problem of alcohol-related domestic abuse. In rather melodramatic fashion, it read, "A father took a little child by his legs and dashed his head against the house, and then, with a buckstave, beat out his brains. Once that man was a respectable merchant, in good standing, but he drank alcohol..." The temperance movement took to the stage as well during the period, including productions of The Drunkard, The Fallen Saved, One Cup More and The Doom of the Drunkard, depicting husbands who had lost control due to the influence of liquor and put their families through untold suffering with economic privation and physical assaults.

The problem of domestic violence was a central theme of the Prohibition movement from the beginning. Temperance advocates believed that attacking the problem of family violence at its source might bring some relief to the loathsome existence of women and children caught up in the cycle of abuse that stemmed from the over-consumption of alcohol by fathers. They closed saloons and drinking establishments through protest, both peacefully and with hatchets in hand to destroy stocks of liquor and beer. While the coming of Prohibition may have brought a decrease in family violence early on, it remains highly likely that such situations returned to levels similar to those of earlier days as alcohol became more available despite the existence of laws against its sale and consumption.

Prior to the Elections of 1916, the Anti-Saloon League spent the equivalent of $50 million in 2010 to elect favourable politicians.

Wayne Wheeler, leader of the Anti-Saloon League, was largely responsible for bringing about Prohibition through political wrangling.

Of European immigration to the United States. These saloons were exclusively for men, and their connection to the social ills that plagued the country were undeniable, according to those that chose to confront the issue of alcohol abuse. During the decades that followed, the voice of the temperance movement grew even louder, a clarion call to action.

The anti-alcohol movement in America may trace its religious roots to the Second Great Awakening, a wave of religious fervour that was driven by Protestant evangelical ministers and swept across the mountains and prairies during the westward settlement and expansion of the United States during the mid-19th century. The social conscience of many Americans was stirred to action in social reform that focused on the abolition of slavery and temperance, among other issues. Preachers such as Charles Grandison Finney and Lyman Beecher admonished those gathered at camp meetings to refrain from alcohol, and their sermons were printed and distributed in cities across the country. The American Temperance Society was formed in 1826, and its membership steadily increased to more than 1.2 million within 12 years. Then, after the Civil War, the end of slavery brought even greater focus on temperance.

On Christmas Eve in 1873, Eliza Thompson organised a group of women in Hillsboro, Ohio, and they visited each of the town's 13 saloons, praying, and singing hymns with the idea of shutting the doors of the drinking establishments. Within nine days, they had accomplished their goal, and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was born amid an effort to eliminate the consumption of alcohol rather than simply curtail it. At the same time, the temperance movement became a component of the political agenda of the Progressive Era, a period in American history when citizens became keenly aware of issues that were caused not only by alcohol, but also by rapid industrialisation, the urbanisation of major cities, the growing gap between the wealthy and those who lived in grinding poverty, and other aspects of life in the young country. Under dynamic leaders Sarah 'Annie' Turner Wittenmyer and Frances Willard, the WCTU became a force in American politics with a membership that exceeded a million people. Anti-alcohol programs were introduced in public schools, and the realisation that women could be more effective politically with the right to vote brought members of the suffragette movement into the ranks of the WCTU.

By the late 19th century, alcoholism was common across America as incidents of domestic violence, criminal activity, and health problems related to overconsumption increased at alarming rates. Alcohol related deaths in New York City between 1900 and 1909 averaged 526 annually. During the decade prior to Prohibition, death rates from alcoholism and cirrhosis of the liver reached their peak in the United States.
THE ROAD TO PROHIBITION

the roots of the temperance movement and the drive towards Prohibition deeply rooted in the evangelical Protestant churches, the effort evolved from one of abstinence and curtailment to eradication of alcohol consumption in America.

As pervasive as the temperance movement had become across the US by the late 19th century, it certainly would not have reached the level required to push for a Constitutional amendment and the coming of Prohibition without the single-minded effort of Wayne B Wheeler, a leader of the militant Anti-Saloon League (ASL), founded in Oberlin, Ohio, in 1893 by former attorney Howard Hyde Russell, who had responded to a higher call and turned his attention towards the elimination of alcohol consumption. At the age of 24, Wheeler attended one of Russell’s anti-alcohol sermons at a Congregational church in Oberlin, and his life was abruptly changed. Recently graduated from Oberlin College, having worked as a janitor, salesman and teacher to pay his educational expenses, Wheeler approached Russell, prayed with him, and became an early employee of the ASL.

Through Wheeler’s leadership the Prohibition movement managed some degree of unity. Until that time, it had been hampered by a lack of cohesion despite the fact that millions of people had signed abstinence pledges and joined one organisation or another in support of the effort. Willard had led the WCTU into advocacy of other issues beyond Prohibition including women’s suffrage and social reform, while the newly formed Prohibition Party, which still exists today, had dabbled in other government issues including the conservation of forests and the operation of the nation’s postal service. In sharp contrast, the team of Russell and Wheeler focused on one goal only, abolishing the sale, manufacture, transport and consumption of alcoholic beverages in the United States.

Wheeler practically invented the doctrine of pressure politics and coined the phrase ‘pressure group’ as he targeted politicians and lawmakers on local, state and national levels to implement his agenda. Anti-alcohol legislation was nothing new. States and municipalities had enacted a number of such laws since the early 19th century. However, these varied in scope, severity of penalties, capabilities of enforcement and their legitimate ability to stand up in court if scrutinised. Therefore, Wheeler sought an unequivocal solution to the vulnerability of Prohibition-related legislation. At first the ASL advocated anti-alcohol laws eliminating the production and sale of liquor in every state, and then demanded an amendment to the US Constitution, which would make the eradication of alcohol for consumption the law of the land.

Wayne Wheeler, standing a diminutive 5’7” tall, was a titan of the Prohibition era. A thoroughly dedicated zealot, he tirelessly rode his bicycle from town to town across Ohio while working as a clerk in the office of a Cleveland attorney. He received a degree from Western Reserve Law School in 1898 and became the head of the state’s ASL legal arm. He launched telegram campaigns that urged ordinary citizens to cable their representatives and vote for Prohibition measures. He delivered countless speeches and recruited hundreds to the ASL cause. He called his efforts ‘petitions in boots’ and was described by one of his college classmates as a ‘locomotive in trousers’.

Wheeler’s methods were so successful that candidates for political office that garnered the
ASL’s support were soon in control of the Ohio state legislature. In a single election, Wheeler’s political machine opposed 70 incumbent legislators and was instrumental in defeating every single one in their bid for re-election. When Governor Myron T. Herrick, a Republican, signed a modified bill allowing local governments to decide whether their jurisdictions were ‘wet’ or ‘dry’ rather than the hardline original version, Wheeler went after him and brought the powerful politician down.

In the wake of the Anti-Saloon League triumph, Wheeler boasted, “Never again will any political party ignore the protests of the church and the moral forces of the state.” Wheeler took his pressure tactics nationwide and in 1913 influenced the passage of a graduated personal income tax that would hopefully take the place of government tax revenue generated from the liquor industry. The ASL issued a statement that acknowledged, “The chief cry against national Prohibition has been that the government must have the revenue.” That issue was eliminated, and the primary focus of the ASL became “National Prohibition... secured through the adoption of a Constitutional Amendment... The Next and Final Step.”

Wayne Wheeler then became the nation’s foremost apostle of Prohibition, traveling from Ohio to ASL headquarters in Washington, DC. He boldly stated, “We'll vote against all the men in office who won't support our bills. We'll vote for candidates who will promise to. We are teaching these crooks that breaking their promises to us is sure of punishment than going back on their bosses, and some day they will learn that all over the United States - and we'll have national Prohibition.”

Rapidly, Wheeler had become one of the most powerful political forces in America, and his constituency, although in the minority, could provide the necessary swing vote to ensure a candidate’s election or political demise. The New York Evening World newspaper commented that Wheeler was “the legislative bully before whom the Senate of the United States sits up and begs.” Meanwhile, the allies formed with the suffragette movement and its leaders such as Susan B. Anthony expanded to include pro-income tax elements, social reformers, labor unions, and even the racist Ku Klux Klan in the South that sought to quash the voting rights of African Americans and take away their access to alcohol.

Inexorably, the move towards Prohibition crept forward. In 1914, a Prohibition amendment failed in Congress, but the vote was astonishingly close, 197 to 190. The elections of 1916 proved the turning point. Woodrow Wilson was re-elected as president, “dry” majorities were elected in both houses of Congress, and within weeks Texas Senator Morris Sheppard introduced a resolution that became the foundation of the 18th Amendment. It passed both houses in late 1917. Fortuitously for the ASL’s aims, the United States had entered World War I. The organisation leveraged the exigencies of the conflict to its advantage just as well as it leveraged issues of religion, domestic violence and race.

In early 1919, just 13 months after the resolution for a Constitutional amendment favouring Prohibition had breezed through Congress, 36 states had ratified the 18th Amendment. The long journey to Prohibition had ended, but a new road fraught with upheaval that had largely been unforeseen, loomed ahead.
AMERICA GOES DRY

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The enactment of the 18th Amendment began an era of fundamental change in the US

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Short-staffed and plagued by corruption, Prohibition agents struggled to enforce the 18th Amendment

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Discover the birth of speakeasies, where illegal alcohol flowed freely during Prohibition

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The illegal alcohol trade prospered on land and sea as bootleggers raised smuggling to new heights of success during Prohibition

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Uncover the fascinating story of Harlem's legendary Cotton Club

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Discover the truth behind Prohibition-era Atlantic City and Enoch 'Nucky' Johnson
The Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all.
In this painting of a mock funeral for a bottle of whiskey by Achille Beltrame, revelers lament the coming of Prohibition.
GOOD TO THE LAST DROP


Although it had come with plenty of warning, there was nevertheless an outcry in the land. For some, the act of drinking alcohol was a part of living, a perfectly acceptable social activity. For others, it was a simple pleasure — even one of those inalienable rights that had been referred to by the Founding Fathers in the Declaration of Independence. At 12.01am on 17 January 1920, that fundamental freedom was sharply curtailed, and in many circumstances outlawed.

The Prohibition era arrived after decades of political, moral and social wrangling, and the last ‘wet’ days in America were swiftly accomplished once the momentum of the lobby that advocated the end of legal sales, distribution and transportation of ‘intoxicating liquors’ had become virtually irresistible. On 19 August 1917, the US Senate voted 65 to 20 to approve the proposed 18th Amendment to the US Constitution. The House of Representatives followed suit in December with a vote of 282 to 128. A vote of three-fourths of the states was necessary to make the amendment the law of the land, and Mississippi started the process on 18 January 1918. A year later, Nebraska became the 36th of 48 states to ratify the 18th Amendment, and the subsequent effective date was set.
AMERICA GOES DRY

AMENDMENT VERSUS LAW

PROHIBITION BECAME US LAW THROUGH A CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT RATHER THAN SIMPLE PASSAGE OF LAW, MAINLY DUE TO A PERCEPTION OF PERMANENCE

The passage of the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution made Prohibition the law in the United States. Since the amendment was ratified by the states after passage through Congress in 1919, questions have lingered as to why it was necessary to amend the Constitution rather than apply the standard process of passing laws.

The primary reason has to do with the interpretation of the Constitution itself. The document contains a list of "enumerated powers" that are specifically within the purview of the federal government. In other words, if a certain piece of legislation were to become federal law, the narrow interpretation of the Constitution required the subject legislation to relate directly back to those enumerated powers. During the decades following the ratification of the Constitution in 1787, it was not uncommon for the US Supreme Court to strike down laws or presidential actions on that basis.

In the case of Prohibition, the Supreme Court had not yet broadened its interpretation of the 'commerce clause' contained in Article I, Section 8, of the Constitution. Although the regulation of 'interstate commerce' is one of the enumerated powers, disputes on the limitations of these powers often happened. Therefore, those who favoured Prohibition sought a Constitutional amendment to solidify their victory rather than the simple passage of a law that the Supreme Court might strike down.

While there were existing Prohibition-related laws on the books in many states and cities, a Constitutional amendment was mistakenly believed to be more permanent. The 18th Amendment was in effect for 13 years until its repeal.

On 28 October 1919, despite the veto of President Woodrow Wilson, Congress passed the National Prohibition Act, providing the authorisations of law necessary to enforce the 18th Amendment. Wilson had exercised his veto power due to the inclusion of language related to restrictions on alcohol already enacted because of US involvement in World War I; however, the veto was overridden by the House of Representatives on the same day, and by the Senate the next day.

Minnesota Republican Congressional Representative Andrew Volstead, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, sponsored the measure in Congress, and it went on to be commonly known as the Volstead Act. The legislation was actually authored by Wayne B Wheeler, the militant leader of the Anti-Saloon League, whose aggressive methods of advancing the cause of Prohibition actually culminated with the successful passage of the 18th Amendment. Wheeler resorted to coercive measures to gain the support of lawmakers on state and federal levels and actually became one of the most powerful men in America during the period. Wheeler had gained such sway that his endorsement could mean the difference between winning and losing an election. As the Anti-Saloon League's chief lobbyist in the halls of Congress, he was also able to put together a coalition that included factions as diverse as promoters of women's suffrage and elements of the Ku Klux

A government agent inspects the contents of a glass containing moonshine from a still recently confiscated during a Prohibition raid.

Minnesota Republican Congressman Andrew Volstead sponsored the National Prohibition Act into law and the measure took his name.

Talk of the repeal of the 18th Amendment began soon after its ratification. Here a man and woman march in support.

GEORGE WASHINGTON SAID:"The Constitution which at any time exists, till changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all."

UPHOLD THE 18TH AMENDMENT!
Klan. He utilised the calamity of World War I to further his agenda, while also advocating the approval of a graduated personal income tax to replace the revenue that would be lost to the federal government when Prohibition went into effect. The Volstead Act enabled the intent of the 18th Amendment to be carried out. The amendment itself did not provide specific punishments for violators or define the term ‘intoxicating liquor’, leaving the states themselves, along with the federal government, with the power to enforce the measure with appropriate legislation. Therefore, the Volstead Act established the penalties for violations of the Prohibition amendment and defined exactly what constituted an ‘intoxicating liquor’. It specified that penalties for those convicted of alcohol-related violations could include fines of $1,000 or more along with lengthy prison terms. It also pronounced that an intoxicating liquor was any beverage containing more than 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume.

The Act included three basic provisions. first, to prohibit intoxicating beverages; second, to regulate the manufacture, sale or transport of intoxicating liquor; and third, to ensure an ample supply of alcohol and promote its use in scientific research and in the development of fuel, dye and other lawful industries and practices, such as religious rituals. The Volstead Act did not outlaw the consumption of alcohol. Along with the exemption for religious ritual use, it also allowed physicians to prescribe and pharmacists to dispense alcohol for medicinal purposes and for households to preserve fruit through fermentation.

The Volstead Act placed federal enforcement responsibilities with the internal Revenue Service, an arm of the Treasury Department, and its commissioner established the Prohibition Unit with federal funding for only 1,500 agents nationwide, roughly enough for 30 agents per state. At the same time, these agents were often political appointees or cronies who were not required to undergo any law enforcement training or pass a civil service examination. Aside from a few notable successes, the enforcement of Prohibition rapidly became an exercise in futility.

However, all that was in the future on 16 January 1920, as the clock ticked toward the end of life as Americans knew it. Horrible wagons clattered down the streets of American cities that day, making the last deliveries of bottled beer and liquor before their distributors shut their doors or found some other way to stay in business. Heavy trucks rumbled along roads with the last of the legally sold and transported alcohol meant for consumption. Around the country there were parties, glasses clinking the hours away. Mock funerals were carried out as mourners followed small caskets containing bottles of liquor to resting places. Front porches, street corners and alleys were stacked high with crates and boxes, emptied of their soon-to-be forbidden contents.

The lament was loud. Secretary of the Interior Franklin K Lane moaned. “The whole world is skew-jee. awry. distorted and altogether perverse... Einstein has declared the law of gravitation outgrown and decadent. Drink, consoling friend of a Perturbed World, is shut off, and all goes merry as a dance in hell.” The San Francisco Chronicle newspaper reported that two weeks earlier the last New Year’s Eve with alcohol had been celebrated with great rapture as celebrants brought out their best stock from a variety of secret locations, including ... cells, club lockers, bank vaults, safety deposit boxes and other hiding places.”

For a while prices were inflated. a good bottle of whiskey selling for as much as $20 or $30, but then as time grew short an enterprising New York City liquor store offered the last of its stock from a wicker basket on the sidewalk beneath a sign reading. ‘Every bottle. $1”

Years earlier, author Mark Twain had observed the movement towards Prohibition and declared. “Prohibition only drives drunkenness behind doors and into dark places, and does not cure it or even diminish it.” In this case, Twain’s view was visionary. In anticipation of Prohibition an ‘underground’ America was beginning to take shape even before the 18th Amendment took effect. Shipment of Canadian whiskey were hustled across the frontier into the United States, hidden in forests and caves only to emerge later as the wares of shadowy, clandestine black marketers and then sold in the illegal bars. Known as speakeasies, that sprouted across the country like weeds that could never be eradicated by even the most diligent gardener.
Rather than ending the consumption and abuse of alcohol as its proponents had hoped, Prohibition drove drinking behind closed doors and technically made criminals of ordinary Americans. Bootleggers either smuggled the goods into the country, engineered makeshift distilleries in their basements and bathrooms or began operating illegal stills secluded from prying eyes. Further, Prohibition opened the Pandora’s box of its associated with organised crime.

While the speakeasies flourished, with an estimated 100,000 operating in New York City at any given time, gangsters carved up the big cities and even rural areas as territories, purchased liquor illegally manufactured or smuggled into the country, and then supplied it to their good-time houses for sale to eager purchasers. While mobsters made millions with their newly found source of revenue, the inevitable violence - murder and mayhem - followed in the streets. Corruption was rampant as law enforcement officers and public officials received bribes that was in high demand.

Prohibition itself was less than an hour old before the first documented instance of a crime related to it occurred. At 12.59 am on 17 January 1920, Chicago police reported that six men, each brandishing a weapon, had stolen two freight train cars full of whiskey intended for medical purposes. The heist, they said, had netted about $100,000 worth of the illegal beverage.

Members of organised crime and those willing to risk arrest, trial and imprisonment to make a buck also engaged in the clandestine manufacture of alcohol that was of dubious quality and sometimes dangerous for humans to consume. Millions of gallons of denatured industrial alcohol, intentionally mixed with toxic wood alcohol, that according to government standards made it unsuitable for drinking, were nevertheless stolen, mixed with other substances or cut with water to diminish the unpleasant odour or disguise the poor taste, and then sold to unwitting consumers. If enough of the tainted 'rotgut' was ingested, it could cause blindness, neurological damage, and even death.

The legal loopholes of the Volstead Act were exploited with vigour from the very beginning. Thousands of so-called 'ministers of the Gospel' applied for the necessary exemptions to conduct religious services that required wine or spirits. By the autumn of 1920, a cottage wine industry had sprung up across rural America as families took advantage of Section 29 of the Volstead Act, which stated: ‘The head of a family who has properly registered may make 200 gallons exclusively for family use without payment of tax thereon’ Industrious families could legally generate nearly three bottles of wine per day, or close to 1,000 bottles per year, without incurring any tax liability.

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As the secretive sale of homemade wine exploded, consumption actually exceeded pre-Prohibition levels. Grape growers produced bricks or cakes of compressed and dehydrated fruit that they sold as primary ingredients for fruit juice; however, it was obvious that these compressed blocks were meant for the production of homemade wine. One fruit company added helpful directions to avoid running afoul of the law. Its label read, “After dissolving the brick in a gallon of water, do not place the liquid in a jug away in the cupboard for 20 days, because then it would turn to wine.”

Physicians were allowed under Section 7 of the Volstead Act to prescribe alcohol for patients who were ill. A medical doctor who “in good faith believes that the use of such liquor as a medicine by such person is necessary and will afford relief to him from some known ailment” was free to pursue a proper course of treatment according to the law. However, the American Medical Association had already published its view in 1917 that alcohol had no scientific value in medicinal treatment and its use should be discouraged. Still, the ancient practice survived even the coming of Prohibition, and the hypocrisy of Prohibition was never more evident when the AMA came out two years later with an endorsement of alcohol as a viable medical treatment for more than a score of infirmities.

Doctors were required to apply for a permit from the US Treasury Department and typically did so in anticipation of treating patients for colds, influenza and various vague ailments that provided flimsy excuses to obtain whiskey from their local pharmacy. The enterprise proved quite profitable for physicians and pharmacists alike. The doctor could lawfully prescribe one pint of liquor for an individual patient every ten days. In exchange for his or her ‘diagnosis,’ the patient paid the doctor $3. The pharmacist then charged the patient $3 for filling the prescription.

Despite the surge of illegal and questionable activity that surrounded it, Prohibition in its early days appeared to be working. Statistics revealed that overall alcohol consumption was cut in half in the 1920s and remained below pre-Prohibition levels for the next two decades. Rates of alcohol-related diseases, such as cirrhosis of the liver, fell by a full 50 per cent during the early Prohibition years but rose sharply following its repeal in 1933.

Ironically, it was the unintended consequences of Prohibition that eventually spelled the end for the noble experiment. The rise of organised crime and the violence and corruption that plagued American cities, the onset of the Great Depression that spawned the need for increased federal and state tax revenue, and the ever-present demand for beer and liquor among a thirsty population eventually led to an erosion of support for its continuation in succeeding years.

From the outset, though, Prohibition changed American culture and society, fuelling the Jazz Age and the emergence of women and minorities in social settings that were previously forbidden. When America went dry, the 1920s began to roar.
New York City Deputy Police Commissioner John A. Leach watches as Prohibition agents pour illegal booze into the sewer following a raid, ca 1921.
No sooner had it been passed, the Dry Law was broken. Within the first hour of Prohibition coming into force, Chicago police reported six armed men stole $100,000 worth of ‘medicinal’ whiskey from a freight train. At around the same time, another gang stole four barrels of grain alcohol from a government warehouse. A third hijacked a truck transporting liquor. This was just the beginning of a crime wave that would sweep the United States, with King Alcohol going underground, fostering a black market of bootleggers ruled by gun-toting gangsters. Prohibition agents were tasked with upholding the 18th Amendment. However, while they made early gains and were given tougher powers to tackle the growing criminal underworld, they were doomed to fail.

Given how violently Prohibition was eventually resisted, it’s perhaps ironic that many advocates didn’t think the Noble Experiment would need much enforcement. Some reluctance was to be expected at first, zealous teetotallers believed, but every American would experience the benefits of sober living. Eventually even recalcitrant drinkers would give up their wicked habit, so there would be no incentive for bootleggers to carry on peddling the ‘demon drink’.

Despite this, Congress passed the National Prohibition Act in 1919, which filled in all the detail the 18th Amendment was missing. Better known as the Volstead Act, after its champion, Congressman Andrew J Volstead of Minnesota, the legislation was fiercely contested by dry members seeking a total ban and wets seeking concessions. The end result was imperfect, but it covered many key points.
First of all, the Volstead Act banned beverages with an alcoholic content above 0.5 per cent. The sale of equipment used to brew or distill was also outlawed. Recipes and formulas for making alcohol were also forbidden, creating a real quandary for public libraries. However, loopholes existed so that alcohol of a higher strength could be used for medicinal, religious or industrial reasons, but required a special permit. To further prevent anyone from being tempted to drink this higher-strength hooch, manufacturers were obliged to ‘denature’ it. That’s to say, where possible, it was mixed with at least one noxious substance to effectively make it undrinkable.

Crucially though, neither the 18th Amendment nor Volstead Act actually banned the purchase or consumption of alcohol. If you were caught imbibing an intoxicating beverage you were not breaking the law. If you were found doing so in a speakeasy, you could still be charged with patronising an illegal business. But the emphasis for law enforcement was to catch those who distilled illegal-strength alcohol (known as ‘moonshiners’) smuggled it into the USA from abroad (‘rum-runners’), and sold it (‘bootleggers’).

To catch these crooks, the Volstead Act called for the Inland Revenue (IRS), an agency within the Treasury Department, to spearhead enforcement. While it might sound odd for the taxman to be tackling bootleggers, even before booze was banned, the IRS employed revenue agents to track down moonshiners and others who evaded the liquor tax. In the early days of Prohibition, lawmakers considered the Volstead Act the logical extension of this.

Nonetheless, the IRS had to create a new division to manage enforcement of the alcohol ban. The Prohibition Unit was headquartered in Washington, DC, with fields offices across the country. The first Prohibition commissioner to run this national task force was John F Kramer. It’s telling that while Kramer was an Ohio attorney and former state legislator, he had never worked in law enforcement. However, he was a prominent Evangelical Lutheran and Sunday school teacher. This was enough for the Anti-Saloon League, who enthusiastically endorsed his appointment to the post. Kramer directed the work of nine assistant commissioners, each of whom presided over a district made up of two or more states. Within these districts, each state had a director with a staff to do the office work. The actual job of hitting the streets fell on federal Prohibition agents. most often referred to as ‘Prohis’ (‘pro-hees’). ‘dry spies’ or ‘revenue men’ These were assigned on the perceived need in each district, instructed to collect evidence of the Volstead law being broken, and arrest the individuals responsible.

The sheer scale of upholding the Dry Law nationwide was titanic; the Prohibition agents had to police the country’s 19,300 kilometres (12,000 miles) of shoreline, as well as the Canadian and Mexican borders that reached close to 6,300 kilometres (3,900 miles). As well as catching criminals producing illegal liquor, agents had to monitor the 643.5 million litres (170 million gallons) of legal industrial alcohol, medicinal whiskey and sacred wine produced annually.

Despite this, the US government initially only provided funds for 1,500 agents. In early 1921, this worked out as fewer than 300 agents being assigned to New York, a state that was not only home to the country’s largest city, but numerous wet towns, an international border and many busy ports. Even when Al Capone was declared Public Enemy No 1, with 1,000 hoodlums...

“WE’D GET A WARRANT, GO IN AND ARREST THEM, CALL THE TRUCKS AND MOVE ’EM OUT. WE’D MOVE EVERYTHING BUT THE WALLPAPER”

LADY HOOC HUNTER

DAISY SIMPSON SENT SHIVERS DOWN THE SPINES OF WINE COUNTRY VINTNERS

The Prohibition Unit only hired a handful of female agents, who were usually assigned to office work. However, Daisy Simpson joined the unit from San Francisco Police’s moral squad, walking the beat in Frisco’s red light district, making her well suited to field work.

In fact, Simpson’s gender gave her an advantage over her male colleagues. While it was considered inappropriate – and in some states illegal – for Prohis to search female bootleggers, who often hid liquor on their person, Simpson had no such problem.

Nicknamed ‘Lady Hooch Hunter’ by the press, Simpson went on to lead many high-profile stings. During a 20-day period in February 1925, she single-handedly made eight arrests, “confiscated 10,000 bottles of beer. 60 cases of gin, 12 cases of Scotch and a large quantity of wines and other liquor,” according to the Sotoyome Scimitar newspaper. With a remit that extended to northern California, she also led raids in Napa Valley and the surrounding Wine Country. One operation led to 8,400 gallons (38,187 litres) of pre-war vintage being poured down the drain at the well-known Frei Brothers’ winery.

Like Izzy and Moe, Simpson was also known to use aliases and don disguises, dressing as everything and anything from a charwoman to a society matron in an effort to be served alcohol at restaurants, hotels and speakeasies. She would also feign illness, once pretending to faint outside a suspect establishment, then arresting the bar staff that tried to revive her with whiskey.

However, while Simpson often played enfeebled characters to disarm suspects, she was far from one herself. The agent always carried a gun and arrested multiple suspects while heavily outnumbered on more than one occasion.

ARRESTS FOR PUBLIC DRUNKENNESS AND DISORDERLY CONDUCT DECLINED 50 PER CENT BETWEEN 1916 AND 1922

Simpson’s Prohibition Unit ID, issued on 6 September 1931
IZZY AND MOE

This dynamic duo's penchant for disguises saw them rack up arrests—often catching 20 to 30 bootleggers before breakfast.

Isadore 'Izzy' Einstein and Moe W Smith were two of the most successful Prohibition agents, arresting 4,953 people for selling alcohol, with a 95 per cent conviction rate, they confiscated up to five million gallons (19 million litres) of liquor, worth up to $15 million. However, to look at them you would never suspect they were G-men, which was the secret of their success.

Short, overweight and middle-aged, their unprepossessing appearance would lead many to assume they weren't a threat. Einstein's easy charm also encouraged perps to take him into their confidence. In fact, on more than one occasion, he walked up to a speakeasy wearing his federal badge and asked, "Would you like to sell a pint of whiskey to a deserving prohibition agent?" The doorman would let them in, thinking it a great joke.

However, the pair weren't always so forthright. They also donned a number of disguises, driving a coal wagon through New York City's Upper East Side, selling fruit in the Bronx, and ice in Brooklyn to gain entry into illegal bars. They also posed as musicians, workmen, doctors—complete with long white coats—and even as women.

The outlandish agents soon attracted the press and happily posed for photos after busting bootleggers. But their burgeoning celebrity had a downside.

Speakeasies began pinning up their pictures, warning staff not to serve them. While this did not perturb the pair—they just doubled down on their costumes as their superiors in Washington, DC were not impressed. In November 1925, Izzy and Moe were let go. "The service must be dignified," a Prohibition official said by way of explanation. "Izzy and Moe belong on the vaudeville stage."

Thousands of stings like this were carried out across the country. However, while this free publicity helped project an image of power, raids were actually symptomatic of how understaffed the Prohibition Unit was. Unable to arrest all the bootleggers, Prohs had to choose their targets carefully. In general, agents mostly worked in the big cities and gave top priority to the urban bootleggers. Small towns were almost entirely ignored. If they were raided, bootleggers would resume their business as soon as the authorities left.

As it became clear that the Golden Age of Sobriety was not as close to dawning as optimists hoped, enforcement was stepped up. The budget of the Prohibition Unit increased fivefold between 1920 and 1930. Punishments for Volstead violators were beefed up. This began with 'padlocking', which was spearheaded by Emory Buckner, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, in 1925-26. While many speakeasies simply restocked their bars and reopened after being raided, padlocking was a legal action that could be used to either temporarily or permanently close a business.

What more, padlocking actions could be issued for something as simple as causing a public nuisance, so Prohibition agents didn't have to go to great lengths to prove illicit alcohol was being produced or sold on site. With an air of raid-era spectacle, properties hit with the injunction would be physically padlocked shut. In 13 months, Buckner padlocked more than 500 speakeasies in the Big Apple; his crusade didn't have a huge impact.
many bootleggers simply moved their operations to different premises. However, it did reduce the number of high-class speakeasies. With the threat of being shut down hanging over them, barkeepers focused on turning a quick profit rather than spending on glitzy decor to entice wealthy customers as they previously had.

In 1929, the Jones Act was passed. Nicknamed “the five and ten,” it allowed judges to issue fines up to $10,000 and/or prison sentences up to five years for breaching the Volstead Act. The stiffer punishment allowed law enforcement to put many bootleggers behind bars, as well as changed the liquor trafficker’s cavalier attitude to arrests. While on the one hand, officials in Kansas, Missouri reported that fear of the Jones Law closed 257 speakeasies in a month. Baltimore police reported 250 closed in their area. On the other, criminals that continued to flout the 18th Amendment began to take up arms to avoid capture. The death toll of lawmen, gangsters and civilians caught in the crossfire escalated.

President Herbert Hoover, elected in 1928, while not an enthusiastic supporter of Prohibition, arguably provided more support for enforcement than either Warren G Harding or Calvin Coolidge had. The Hoover administration shook things up by taking a two-pronged approach. First, as violent crime grew worse, Prohibition agents were transferred to the Department of Justice under the new Bureau of Prohibition in 1930. However, the IRS continued to be involved in Prohibition enforcement, with Elmer Irey’s Special Intelligence Unit to go after bootleggers for tax evasion and money laundering. These two departments worked in tandem to bring down Al Capone in one of the most notable successes of Prohibition enforcement. However, the fact that Eliot Ness, who led the campaign against the mob boss, and his crack team of agents were nicknamed “the Untouchables” speaks to a wider problem. By 1930, 1,587 out of 17,816 federal Prohibition employees had been fired for everything from lying on their applications to perjury, robbery, bribery, embezzlement and contempt of court. An investigation by the Chicago district attorney’s office revealed “systematic graft on a very large scale” among Prohis in the Windy City. Corruption was rampant, ranging from taking a bribe to look the other way from the mob, to actively extorting money from bootleggers and speakeasy owners. They also sold government permits required to obtain industrial alcohol, medical whiskey as well as peddled the booze they confiscated.

Some have traced this corruption back to the lax rules for recruiting Prohibition agents. Possibly to fill the urgent need for dry spies quickly when the Prohibition
While many moonshiners were brewing their own at home, smuggling the ‘demon drink’ into the United States was also big business. Gangs brought whiskey in from Canada via the Great Lakes and the North Atlantic, while syndicates smuggled rum from the Caribbean and Bahamas, and big European exporters funneled booze through both avenues. The first line of defense against these foreign foes was the United States Coast Guard.

After Prohibition was introduced, 25 destroyers were transferred from the US Navy. It was thought that adapting these older warships for the Coast Guard would be cheaper than building new ones, some of which predated World War I - seaworthy. Equally, these battleships were by far the largest and most sophisticated vessels to enter the service. The Coast Guard were forced to hire hundreds of new recruits to man them. However, some of these destroyers were relatively lightweight flyers that could reach 25 knots (29mph; 46km/h). While this was still not fast enough to keep up with the contact boats that ran the contraband ashore, this allowed them to catch the mother ships that carried the bulk of the cargo further out at sea.

The United States Coast Guard Tucker, left, and Cassin formed part of the ‘Rum patrol’

By 1928, 50,000 Americans had died from alcohol poisoning since Prohibition was declared.

Unit was set up, applicants were not required to take the usual civil service exams. Unfortunately, this left the door open for members of Congress and local politicians to appoint cronies, bestowing the job as payment for services rendered to them or their party. Naturally, this was not the best way to hire qualified lawmen. Not only did many Prohibition agents lack training or experience, a shocking number had prison records. Only two months after Volstead began, Agent Stewart McMullin shot and killed an unarmed bootlegger. In court, it was revealed McMullin had previously been convicted of involuntary manslaughter, forgery, and highway robbery, serving prison time in three different states. State Senator Jimmy Walker - later the mayor of New York City - had pulled strings to get McMullin the job.

Another reason for corruption was that Prohibition wages were very low. While an upstanding dry agent made less than $50 a week, a dishonest one could afford luxuries most Americans only dreamed of. For instance, when a Californian woman filed for divorce from her estranged Prohibition agent husband, she demanded half of his impressive assets. While officially the agent made only $35 per week, it was revealed he owned a townhouse, a country home, two cars, a speedboat, and had multiple bank accounts. Life as a Prohibition agent could be so lucrative, there were several instances of criminals impersonating Prohibition agents so they could enjoy the backhanders.

However, greed was not exclusive to the Bureau. The wealthy gangsters also bought local policemen, jurors and judges. Even the Attorney General of the United States was corrupt during Prohibition. Harry M Daugherty, who was in office from 1921-24, was plagued by allegations of corruption. These were given credence in 1930 when Gaston B Means, an ex-convict employed by the FBI, testified before a Senate investigative committee that Daugherty’s personal assistant Jesse Smith had charged him with collecting protection money from bootleggers to ensure they were pursued.

As public resentment to Prohibition grew, dry agents were demonized as trigger-happy and corrupt in the press. But most Prohibs were on the up and up. From 1920-30, they took about 577,000 suspects into custody, and prosecutors won convictions from almost two in three. Agents confiscated 16 million stills and other liquor-making devices, 40 million litres of hard liquor, 4.5 billion litres of malt liquor, an equal amount of wine, cider and mash, plus 45,000 cars and 1,300 boats. The value of the property federal dry spies seized was set at $40 million ($550 million in today’s money), and state and local officials seized a similar amount. 
Playwright Noel Coward was a frequent customer of the fashionable speakeasy known as the Marlborough House on New York's East Side
For all its grand and moral intent, the era of Prohibition failed to end the consumption of alcoholic beverages in America. Instead, wrapped in the success of the temperance movement’s victory with the 18th Amendment was a recipe for disaster – even more virulent than a stout shot of whiskey.

Rather than wiping out demon liquor, Prohibition drove drinking underground and ushered in a reign of mayhem and racketeering, steerèd largely by the kingpins of organised crime. Among the offspring of Prohibition were the appalling criminal activities of extortion and murder, corruption of public officials and law enforcement officers, and the undercurrent of a black market in liquor that thrived just out of sight.

Perhaps the most influential child of Prohibition was the speakeasy, the clandestine bar or goodtime house, born of the era when the manufacture, transport and sale of alcohol were forbidden by law.

Logically, the birth of the speakeasy was inevitable. The allure of the secretive nightclub, its illicit offerings, and the atmosphere of glamour it engendered were irresistible. Arguably, the consumption of alcohol increased rather than diminished during Prohibition, and the heyday of the speakeasy was largely responsible for this startling unintended consequence.

The speakeasy, often operating as a secret adjunct to a legitimate storefront restaurant, grocery store or other business, evoked a spirit of adventure and participation in an activity that the patron could not reconcile as being against the law. Prior to the establishment of Prohibition as the law of the land in the United States, having a drink was considered by many as just good adult-oriented fun, a socially acceptable activity.
The term ‘speakeasy’ was popularised in reference to the drinking and entertainment establishments that sprouted across the country when formerly highly visible bars and nightclubs were shut down. Various theories as to the origin of the term itself include old-time references to bars where patrons were encouraged to maintain decorum and ‘speak easily’ to avoid confrontations with one another or the authorities. Others assert that it was derived from the mysterious and cautious management of the illegal bars that urged secrecy to protect their franchises. Still another suggestion is that the term speakeasy came into common usage with the whisper of a password to gain entry through a hidden or locked door - the uttering of something as simple and familiar as ‘Joe sent me’ might assure the bouncer that the party was interested in a good time instead of making arrests. The speakeasy, also referred to as a ‘blind pig’, a ‘blind tiger’, or simply a ‘gin joint’, helped usher in a transformation of the American social experience.

Clouds of smoke wafted towards the ceiling in low light, while jazz artists and dancers performed, sometimes invitingly close to those being entertained. The wealthy and well-known mingled with the ordinary citizen, the flapper with the businessman and the wage earner. Colour barriers were diminished as both whites and blacks drank, chatted, danced and even romanced. The main draw for the speakeasy, though, was the liquor, and it flowed freely, more freely than ever before in American history.

The speakeasies in major cities became focal points of evening entertainment and diversion, and at their peak in New York the city was said to be home to as many as 100,000 such secret establishments. That number was rivalled in Chicago, and the illegal bars also flourished in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Boston and Miami. Prohibition had opened the door for organised crime to exploit a new and free-flowing revenue stream, and though some entrepreneurial individuals opened their own drinking establishments in basements, garages and back rooms, the majority of the speakeasies were operated by the mob. In Chicago, Al Capone controlled up to 20,000 such establishments and made millions during the 1920s, dominating the flow of bootleg liquor into the city and its distribution to an extensive, thirsting speakeasy clientele.

In New York, Charles ‘Lucky’ Luciano was raking in $12 million annually by 1925 and clearing one-third of that sum after paying off police officers and public officials and covering the purchase of vast quantities of bootleg liquor imported from around the world.
few of the inventive methods employed to avoid the long arm of the law. One of Capone’s favourite Chicago haunts, the Green Mill was built with a secret passage that allowed customers to quietly slip away if police officers came nosing around.

In New York’s 21 Club, a secret cellar safely held up to 2,000 bottles of bootleg liquor; while bottles could be thrown down invisible chutes, the doors were obscured, and the bartender could press a button that would flip a revolving bar shelf around. Another button dropped liquor bottles from a shelf straight down a chute into a cellar equipped with a drain. Speakeasies advertised surreptitiously through word of mouth, and as risks of discovery increased passwords used to gain entry might be supplemented by a secret knock or even a membership card. The Stork Club on East 51st Street in New York did, in fact, issue such cards to regular clients, and holding one of these earned the bearer a measure of prestige.

In some instances, the liquor purchase was a quick, straightforward transaction. A patron walked up to a heavy door with a pair of slits cut into it. Placing his order, he slipped payment into a tray under the watchful eye of the unknown bartender on the other side. In a moment, the drink was sent back through the tray and both slits were closed. Other venues, known as clip joints, were disreputable establishments that took advantage of unwitting customers, luring

A pair of federal agents are shown before and after donning disguises, in order to infiltrate a speakeasy to make arrests.
them inside with the promise of pretty girls and tasty drinks. Once the victim was inebriated sufficiently, he was often robbed, beaten and thrown into the street. However, these establishments were not indicative of the speakeasy mystique, the phenomenon that has come to characterise the era of Prohibition and the carefree, hedonistic and debauched lifestyle of the Roaring Twenties.

Public support for Prohibition was always lukewarm at best, and the post-World War I euphoria combined with greater social involvement and freedom for women who smoked openly, bobbed their hair and enjoyed new freedom of expression. The great migration brought African Americans to the cities of the North where they found jobs, and the rise of the 'Jazz Age', a phrase coined by the author F Scott Fitzgerald, launched legendary entertainment careers. Jazz singers and musicians found large, receptive and appreciative audiences and gained fame in these venues where ‘speakes was a term in sharp contrast to the loud, boisterous nightlife experience.

As speakeasy crowds grew, the demand for live entertainment grew as well, appealing to patrons while table service became more common as ladies often disliked sitting at bars. Food was transformed as well, and the modern concept of the restaurant matured with menu items and ‘exotic’ fare, such as Italian cuisine. At times, the available alcohol was of dubious quality, bathtub gin or rotgut industrial alcohol tainted with chemical additives that were watered down. To disguise their bad taste, these were mixed with fruit juices, soft drinks or other pleasant liquids, giving rise to a new generation of mixed drinks, many of which have become staple offerings in modern drinking establishments.

Daring also came into vogue as young men and women socialised without the direct supervision of parents or other older adults. The speakeasy, therefore, influenced every aspect of American social life, reaching far beyond its closed doors and smoke-filled revelry rooms.

Decades after the wane of the speakeasy with the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the legend of these venues lives on. Old photographs and tales of partying have conjured visions of gangsters, bootleggers and Mafia bosses involved in bootlegging. Prohibition-era drinks or other pleasant liquids. Giving rise to a wave of nostalgia, and some of the clubs operate legitimately even today. The era of speakeasy society still fascinates.

In New York, the most famous speakeasies included the 21 Club on West 52nd Street, where legendary entertainment careers were launched and where mob bosses such as Frank Sinatra and Humphrey Bogart were frequent visitors and author Ernest Hemingway was also known to frequent the establishment. Casa Blanca, where mob boss Larry Fay sold whiskey he had smuggled into the US from Canada and was gunned down by an angry door man in 1932, and both the 300 Club and Club Intime, owned and operated by Texas Guinan, one of the most colourful figures of the shadowy speakeasy scene, who always insisted to law enforcement agents that she had brought her own liquor to the establishments rather than purchasing bootleg alcohol. Club Intime was located next door to the heavily trafficked Polly Adler brothel in midtown Manhattan. The famed Stork Club on West 58th Street was owned by bootlegger Sherman Billingsley, and writers Robert Benchley and Dorothy Parker frequented the Puncheon Club on West 49th Street.

At Chumley's, which opened its secret doors in the West Village in 1922, prominent literary figures of the day congregated, including Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, Norman Mailer, John Steinbeck, Edna St Vincent Millay and EE Cummings. Chumley's personnel originated the term ‘86’ that has become synonymous in restaurants and bars with cancelling an order. When the joint was about to be raided, the shout of ‘86!’ signalled customers to quickly exit through the secret door at 86 Bedford Street. The Landmark Tavern, originally an Irish saloon, was opened as a family business in 1868, the establishment on the first floor of the building and the living quarters on the second and third floors. When Prohibition arrived, the family moved

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**THE SPEAKEASY LINGO**

**ALWAYS IN THE SHADOWS, THE CULTURE OF THE SPEAKEASY DEVELOPED ITS OWN LANGUAGE AND CODE WORDS WHILE THE ESTABLISHMENTS STAYED HIDDEN**

When the speakeasy rose to prominence during Prohibition, a language all its own sprang up. Those who patronised the speakeasy called the main attraction anything but liquor. They referred to it as tarantula juice, panther sweat, coffin varnish and hooch. Those who took advantage when free drinks were offered were called ‘cellar smellers’.

And then there was the danger associated with drinking illicit alcohol, either made in unsafe conditions or with poisonous ingredients. One example of an alcohol-induced malady was the ‘jake walk’ or ‘jake foot’, describing a debilitating side effect of doctored Jake, a medicine with high alcohol content and Jamaican ginger. When the authorities wanted the ginger content elevated to prevent the medicine from being over-prescribed, bootleggers also added a plasticiser, tricresyl phosphate, a powerful neurotoxin, to keep it drinkable. The result was devastating to thousands who indulged. They developed the strange gait and sometimes became permanently paralysed. Singer Asa Martin crooned about Jake Walk Papa.

Speakeasy slang began to creep into everyday use, and soon people were frequently using ‘skid row’ to define an area where habitual drunkards lay about, rather than its original meaning from the logging trade where timber slid into the harbours of the Pacific Northwest. Other slang terms referred to every element of a night on the town, when revellers got all ‘dolled up’ in their ‘glad rags’ to have a ‘scronch’ and ‘beat their gums’, spending all their ‘mazuma’ in other words, dressing well, heading to a speakeasy for a few drinks and a dance, and socialising until all their money was gone.

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**AMERICA GOES DRY**

**HOLLYWOOD BROUGHT STORIES OF ORGANISED CRIME TO THE SILVER SCREEN AND MADE CULT FIGURES OF MAFIA BOSSES INVOLVED IN BOOTLETTING**

A potential customer eyes a sign written on a city street that points the way to illegal refreshment during the Prohibition era.
the Jazz Age, and legendary entertainment mecca in Harlem. Themed as a merry entertainment. Connie's Inn hosted some of the best known jazz entertainers of the Roaring Twenties, including legends such as Louis Armstrong and Fats Waller. Also located in Harlem, Connie's Inn was owned by Conrad Immerman and his brothers, George and Louie, who had emigrated from Latvia and ran a delicatessen along with a thriving bootlegging operation. Patrons of these competing clubs and others danced the Lindy Hop, the Foxtrot and Charleston, and they drank... and drank.

Queen of the Night Clubs

Texas Guinan was a well-known speakeasy proprietor during the Prohibition era in New York City

Mary Louise Cecilia Guinan was better known as 'Texas', since she hailed from the city of Waco in the Southwestern state. Born in 1884, she worked as a female lead in numerous silent films, particularly Westerns as she portrayed gun-toting and horseback-riding cowgirls in more than 30 productions. She was lured to New York following an introduction to mobster Larry Fay and began working as a hostess at his El Fey club. She went on to gain a reputation as an entertainer in her own right, engaging customers in lively conversation and greeting them with her familiar "Hello suckers!"

Guinan opened her own speakeasies after leaving Fay, and when law enforcement officers arrested her in 1922 she claimed she was only the hostess at her 300 Club. The jury found her innocent of violating the Volstead Act. Interestingly, she only drank coffee. Later, Texas took on a West Coast tour and starred as Texas Malone, a character based on her own persona, in the movie Queen of the Night Clubs. In November 1933, while performing in Vancouver, Washington, she became seriously ill with ulcerative colitis. She died the next day during emergency surgery. 12,000 mourners attended her lavish funeral in New York.

The well-known Cotton Club was located on 142nd Street in Harlem, and its glittering signage beckoned customers to enter.

At another Cotton Club, one of Chicago's finest speakeasies located in the suburb of Cicero, jazz greats performed to packed houses. The enterprise was run by Al Capone's brother, Ralph. Even Chicago mayor Jimmy 'Big Bill' Thompson was a patron. Armstrong recorded a drinking song called Knockin' a Jug, and Bessie Smith sang the line "Any bootlegger sure is a pal of mine," on her hit titled Me and My Girl.

When the Wall Street stock market crash struck like lightning on 29 October 1929, the carefree days of the speakeasy quickly began to wane. Their own numbers worked against them, and disposable income plummeted, causing many of the establishments to close their doors voluntarily, something law enforcement officers had never been able to accomplish. Speakeasy owners became targets for a wave of prosecutions on tax-evasion charges rather than bootlegging counts, and the need for government tax revenue and job creation contributed to the repeal of Prohibition in 1933.

Like Prohibition itself, the speakeasy faded from the limelight, its memory an enduring aspect of a bygone era. Still, it played a dynamic role that transcended the base need for a stiff drink. It was the place where varied cultures flowed together and became an amalgamation of perspectives on life and living. In its own way, the speakeasy continues to influence the American experience.
There was money to be made, a demand to be satisfied, and it brought out the daring and intrepid, the career criminal, the mom and pop producer, and the otherwise law abiding citizen during the Prohibition era. Bootlegging, the illegal transport and sale of liquor as specified in the Volstead Act, flourished during the period from 1920 until the repeal of the '18th Amendment to the US Constitution ended the 'noble experiment' in 1933.

America's thirst for alcohol, particularly distilled spirits and good liquor, did not slake with the beginning of Prohibition. In fact, the consumption of alcohol may have become an even more popular pastime. There was something exciting about taking a drink during a period when the manufacture, sale and transport of the substance was forbidden by law. Clandestine bars, known as speakeasies, sprang up across the United States, and their primary draw was, of course, the alcoholic beverage. It followed logically that serving the customer meant tapping into a ready supply of illegally obtained liquor.

There were many 'entrepreneurs' ready to oblige. The term 'bootlegging' was already in use by the 1920s, having originated during the American Civil War when soldiers hid small pots of whisky in their boots to smuggle them into camp. The moniker became common during Prohibition in reference first to individuals who sold liquor from flasks hidden beneath their trousers on the streets. From there, it has remained part of the familiar lexicon, referring to anything that is an illicit copy of an original.

The illegal production of liquor did not originate with Prohibition - the practice had been around for years as individuals sought to avoid paying taxes or dealing with other restrictions on the product. Moonshine stills
Federal tax agents dismantle a New York City bar after its owner was arrested for bootlegging.
located in the woods of the South or the mountains of the Northeast were not uncommon. Small boats that brought untaxed rum to America from the Caribbean were already plying their craft. During Prohibition, though, the art of bootlegging and the millions of dollars it produced made the practice thrive.

The illegal manufacture of alcohol occurred in cities and remote areas of the United States. It was pursued on an industrial scale and in the basements of modest homes. At the same time, the illegal importing of foreign-made liquor was a commercial boon for organized crime and the bootlegger, as well. Canadian and Mexican liquor found its way across the borders of the United States. From Canada the routes were either overland or via the Great Lakes or the Saint Lawrence Seaway. From Mexico, bootleggers brought tequila and other liquor across the largely unprotected international border.

The three-mile limit soon became known as the "three-mile territorial limit of American waters and selling to bootleggers"

were added underneath to manage weight distribution, and dirt plates were installed to protect radiators. The introduction of larger engines, particularly the Ford flathead V8 that became available in 1932, brought greater horsepower to the game as well.

There was no substitute for superior driving skills as bootleggers roared down dirt roads in darkness, often with their headlights out, took hairpin curves and put the gas pedal to the floor on the straightaways to evade the law. Good tires were essential, and the ability of the bootlegging driver to fix his own vehicle in a pinch gave rise to the incredible efficiency of the modern NASCAR pit crew getting its driver back into a race.

The earliest stock car racing stars honed their skills as bootleggers. One of the most famous was Junior Johnson, who carried sour mash made from corn as a teenager. Edmund Fahey of Spokane, Washington, drove a stripped-down Buick full of Canadian Scotch across the international border.

Foreign liquor was always in high demand during Prohibition, and major crime figures like Al Capone and Charles "Lucky" Luciano and their cohorts made fortunes in the cities of Chicago and New York respectively.

Bootleggers operated in almost every major city in the United States, and the illegal trade resulted in the exponential growth of organized crime across the nation. In New York, Luciano became immensely wealthy and was joined by a rogue's gallery of hoodlums and criminals, including Meyer Lansky, Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel, Frank...
CONCOCTING BATHTUB GIN

Bathtub gin was sometimes hardly drinkable, although its makers went to great lengths to produce it.

Bootlegging became a cottage industry for some Americans looking for a profitable venture, and probably the most famous of their fermented products came to be known as ‘bathtub gin’. The process for making bathtub gin was relatively simple. A small still was used to ferment a mixture or mash of fruit, potatoes, beets or corn sugar, and the resulting alcohol was high-powered indeed, sometimes reaching 200 proof or sometimes even more. The alcohol was then combined with glycerine and a dash of juniper oil to provide a measure of flavouring before it was watered down significantly to reduce its potency and provide greater volume for increased sales.

When the necks of commonly used bottles were too high to fit underneath the faucets of kitchen sinks to be topped off with water, the faucet in the bathtub would do. That gave rise to the crude beverage being called bathtub gin, a nickname that first appeared around 1920. Most of the time, the taste was intolerable, and the alcohol was mixed with fruit juice, soft drinks or anything that might make it more palatable. Many of the gin drinks that are regularly served in bars and restaurants today owe their existence to the bad taste of bathroom gin.

Costello and Vito Genovese. Capone ruled Chicago with an iron fist, and the city gained infamy for its gang violence, including the Saint Valentine’s Day Massacre of 1929. At least 1,000 people died in gang violence in New York City during the Prohibition years.

However, supplying the speakeasies was a lucrative industry and these individuals were often willing to risk their lives for a piece of the action. Capone reportedly earned a staggering $100 million dollars a year and doled out about half a million dollars annually in hush money and bribes to corrupt public officials and law enforcement officers, who looked the other way and allowed his alcohol trade to proceed without interference. In 1921, around 100 Prohibition agents were fired for accepting payoffs in New York City.

If a romantic or adventurous element emerged during the heyday of bootlegging, it came with those who supplied the Mob bosses with their liquid gold. The so-called ‘rum runners’ seized the opportunity to make personal fortunes in small ships, every available space loaded with contraband alcohol – fine wines and champagne from France and Italy, gin and Scotch manufactured in Great Britain, whiskey from Canada, and cheap rum produced in the islands of the Caribbean. For those who initially smuggled rum into the United States, it soon became apparent that other types of illegal alcohol might bring a better return, although one of the biggest names in rum-running history gained notoriety on the trek from the Bahamas to the American coast.

William S ‘Bill’ McCoy regularly brought loads of rum to the edge of the three-mile limit, where international waters met those under the jurisdiction of the United...
AMERICA GOES DRY

States Coast Guard. From there, McCoy and others like him sold their rum and whiskey to other smugglers, usually in small, swift boats that were fast and maneuverable, often converted pleasure yachts or speedboats fitted with machine guns and powered by converted aircraft engines. They usually outran the Coast Guard patrol boats that chased them. Successful rum runners made handsome profits, but the risks were high. Those that ventured into remote waterways or beaches under cover of darkness sometimes ran aground on sandbars or coral reefs and came to grief. The evidence of their demise consisting of floating bottles and debris that were discovered by the authorities in daylight.

Since neither the 18th Amendment nor the Volstead Act prohibited the consumption of alcohol, the production of homemade beverages, particularly beer and wine, skyrocketed in America during Prohibition. It has been estimated that nearly 700 million gallons of homemade wine were consumed between 1925 and 1929, more than three times the amount that had fermented in closets and basements prior to Prohibition. California vintners increased their acreage in grape cultivation nearly seven times to a whopping 680,000 acres. Meanwhile, the price of a ton of grapes soared from $9.50 in 1919 to $375 in 1924. The Volstead Act specifically addressed home winemaking and noted that heads of households that registered with the authorities were allowed to make up to 200 gallons of wine per year and remain exempt from taxation on the product.

Grocery stores stocked the ingredients necessary for the home brewer or fermenter, or the would-be bootlegger for that matter, to try their hand at the craft. Corn sugar and syrup, malt syrup, hops, yeast, bottles, bottle cappers and even small stills were available for home use.

Among the other permissible uses for alcohol during Prohibition were medicinal and religious purposes, and unscrupulous doctors and druggists made money with unnecessary prescriptions that put alcohol in the hands of those willing to pay. During Prohibition the number of licensed physicians and pharmacists increased dramatically. The same was true for those purported to be ministers in need of wine to conduct their worship rites.

The dangers of consuming alcohol of unknown origin increased the demand for quality liquor. In many cases, thieves stole industrial grade alcohol from facilities, diluted it, and then siphoned it into speakeasies despite the fact that government regulations mandated such alcohol should be rendered undrinkable with the addition of chemicals such as benzene or wood alcohol that gave it a foul taste or odor. Consuming such tainted alcohol sometimes resulted in blindness, organ damage or even death, and an estimated 50,000 people died from consuming 'rotgut' liquor that had been 'doctored' by bootleggers intent on making a quick dollar.

From the beginning of Prohibition, the deck was stacked against law enforcement, including officers
of the Bureau of Prohibition, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Coast Guard, Internal Revenue agents, Customs and Immigration officials, and local police and sheriff's offices. The Bureau of Prohibition was established in 1920 as a department of the Bureau of Internal Revenue, later becoming a unit of the Department of the Treasury and then the Department of Justice. Although law enforcement achieved some notable successes during Prohibition, arresting, prosecuting and jailing offenders for lengthy periods, funding was never adequate and the ingenuity of the bootleggers kept them largely a step ahead of the authorities. Bootleggers hid their product inside innocent-looking shipping crates, they disguised bottles of whiskey as some other substance, and they dealt ruthlessly with those who informed or broke their illicit trust.

When Prohibition went into effect in 1920, the government of the United States had provided funding for only 1,500 enforcement personnel with responsibility for the entire country and training was inadequate as well. In all of 1923, the 48 states and the federal government combined spent less than $500,000 to carry out the implementation of the Volstead Act, which supposedly provided the real ‘teeth’ of the 18th Amendment. During the 14 years of Prohibition, the task of fighting the bootlegger and the smuggler was daunting. Despite the number of federal agents expanding to 3,000 during the late 1920s, there was simply no way to guard more than 12,000 miles of coastline from the Gulf of Mexico to the North Atlantic; and from the southern tip of California to the Pacific Northwest, while the long borders with Canada and Mexico also stretched thousands of miles.

In Chicago, the 300 Prohibition officers on duty were overwhelmed by Capone’s legion of at least 1,000 thugs, while the mafia kingpin controlled some 10,000 speakeasies across the city. Still, one of the most notable successes for law enforcement during the Prohibition era was the conviction of Capone for tax evasion. Along with Eliot Ness, a young Prohibition agent largely responsible for Capone’s downfall in Chicago, two New York officers, Isidor ‘Izzy’ Einstein and Moe Smith, gained fame for their exploits in the fight against illegal alcohol.

Izzy and Moe, as they were popularly known, used unorthodox methods to get their men, including undercover operations posing as construction workers, foreigners, or individuals arriving from out of town and looking for a good time. Izzy is believed to have arrested nearly 5,000 perpetrators during Prohibition, often after making an illegal purchase and using a hidden hose to deposit the alcohol, now to be used as evidence, into a hidden flask. Although the pair were successful, they were undone. Their bosses deemed the media attention that they generated as detrimental to the service and dissolved their partnership in 1925.

In the end, the most effective antidote to bootlegging was the repeal of the 18th Amendment in 1933. With the end of Prohibition, alcohol commerce became legal once again—most of the time. But the bootlegger was never completely put out of business, and the activity still occurs in America today.
The Cotton Club was far from a secret affair, advertising its location in brightly lit letters.
PARTY GOES ON

WHILE OTHER SPEAKEASIES WERE SHUT DOWN, THE HOOCH ALWAYS FLOWED AT HARLEM’S LEGENDARY COTTON CLUB

“Any bootlegger sure is a pal of mine/ ’Cause a good ‘ol bottle o’gin will get it all the time” sang Bessie Smith, the Empress of the Blues. It would not have been out of place to hear her belt out Me and My Gin on stage at the Cotton Club, Harlem’s hottest speakeasy. Throughout Prohibition, high-class patrons from downtown Manhattan flooded into the nightclub to enjoy a drink, see the newest dances and hear some of the greatest musicians of the Jazz Age perform. While the Cotton Club gave the likes of Duke Ellington, Cab Calloway and Ethel Waters their big break, the story of gangster Owney Madden’s legendary nightspot is hardly one to be celebrated.

The Cotton Club started out as the Deluxe Club. On the corner of 142nd and Lenox Avenue, it was situated in the heart of Harlem. It was owned by Jack Johnson, the first African American world heavyweight champion. Opened in 1920, the year Prohibition began, the Deluxe was promoted as an intimate supper club. Patrons could enjoy fine dining with a cabaret show in a relaxed atmosphere. However, it didn’t remain that way for long once Owney Madden - later described by authorities as Public Enemy No 2 - was released from Sing Sing Prison.

Born Owen Mathers in 1892 to poor Irish parents in Leeds, England, he had been sent to live with an aunt in New York City as a child in 1901. Growing up in Hell’s Kitchen, a Manhattan neighbourhood dominated by working-class Irish Americans, he was rechristened ‘Owney’. By the age of 14 he was embroiled with a street gang known as the Gophers, which had their hands in everything from robbery to prostitution. Working as part of a protection racket, he made as much as $200 a
day - equivalent to $2,500 in today's money. Age 18, he gained a new nickname 'The Killer'. He earned the nickname for gunning down an Italian gang in the middle of the street. Afterward he proudly boasted, 'I'm Owney Madden, 10th Avenue!' Despite the public nature of the killing, no witnesses came forward.

By 1914, Madden had been a suspect in the deaths of five more rival gang members and arrested 44 times, but never convicted. This changed with the slaying of Little Patsy Doyle, a prominent member of the Hudson Dusters. Protesting his innocence, Madden was sentenced to ten to 20 years in prison. But by keeping his head down, the gangster managed to get released on parole in 1923. The Gopher Gang had disintegrated by that time, but bootlegging offered Madden a new golden opportunity. He went to work for Big Bill Dwyer.

Dwyer was an Irish dockworker who had gotten rich by rum-running. By smuggling and diluting contraband liquor from Europe and Canada, Dwyer made enough money not just to bribe police officers and Coast Guard members, but also to buy a home in Long Island, prime Manhattan real estate, and even a hockey team. Recognising Madden's skills, Dwyer took him on as a partner and charged him with protecting their shipments, making sure they weren't hacked by rivals.

With investment from another gangster named 'Big Frenchy' DeMange, Madden bought the Deluxe Club. While it's likely Madden had to strongarm Jack Johnson into giving up his club, an agreement was reached where the boxer was allowed to stay on. Johnson, who would prop up the bar and entertain guests, occasionally still described himself as the manager. However, there was no mistaking who was really in charge at the club.

The nightclub closed for a year while Madden renovated it. It was arranged in two concentric tiers of tables laid out in the shape of a horseshoe. Murals trimmed the walls around the room. The bandstand was a replica of a southern plantation mansion with large, white columns and a backdrop painted with weeping willows and slave quarters. The band played on the veranda of the mansion. A few steps down was the dance floor, which was also used for floor shows.

The plantation theme of the Cotton Club's decor extended to Madden's strict segregation policy. Though it was in the middle of Harlem and showcased black talent, the clientele were white only; even the families of headlining performers weren't allowed in. Chorus girls had to be, as advertisement's promised, 'tall, tan and terrific!' That's to say they had to be at least 167 centimetres (5'6") tall, light-skinned, and under 21 years of age. Both male and female dancers would be dressed like exotic savages or even plantation workers.

The nightclub opened for business at 9pm with music for dining and dancing. Just after midnight, the first show kicked off and the final elaborately staged song and dance review ended at 3am. The Cotton Club was supposed to be a front for Madden to launder money from his racketeering, which extended beyond bootlegging to illegal gambling, extortion, and rigging boxing matches. However, the fast-rising crime boss couldn't help but sell liquor under the table. Dixie's included Madden Number 1, a beer he defiantly made himself in the middle of Manhattan, in a block-long brewery he co-founded with Dwyer.

The Duke Ellington Orchestra opened as the resident band at The Cotton Club in 1927. While the band leader's top hat and tails lent class to the place, he composed some of his most famous works during this period of his career. A completely new floor show was mounted every six months, though they were also fast and furious. The chorus line gave a young Josephine Baker a taste for exotic dancing. Behind the scenes, top Broadway and Tin Pan Alley songwriters, including Dorothy Fields and Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington, but he was called 'DUKE' FOR HIS EASY GRACE

THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE

Poet Langston Hughes described the Cotton Club as a "Jim Crow club for gangsters and monied whites." While it might seem risky to openly criticise Killer Madden's club in the press, Hughes was so affronted by the whites only nightclub in the heart of Harlem as the neighbourhood was enjoying a cultural golden age that he couldn't help himself.

From the 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance saw a flowering of arts celebrating black pride. While activists like WEB Du Bois helped shape the era's politics, it was never dominated by one school of thought but rather characterised by debate. Musicians like Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Fletcher Henderson and Bessie Smith provided the soundtrack to this era, pioneering jazz and blues. Writers like Hughes, Claude McKay and Jessie Redmon Fauset published poetry, novels and magazine articles exploring black identity. Musical revues, such as Eubie Blake and Noble Sissie's influential Shuffle Along, were a staple of the time. In 1929, Wallace Thurman and William Rapp's show Harlem even played Broadway. Playwright Willis Richardson offered more serious roles for black actors with his one-act plays, as did stock companies like the Krigwa Players.

The Cotton Club arguably exploited this cultural revival for its own ends, but Prohibition did help the Harlem Renaissance last as long as it did. While the Wall Street Crash of 1929 put many out of business, wealthy white patrons in search of a drink ensured an audience remained for black performances until the mid-1930s.
and Jimmy McHugh, as well as Harold Arlen and Ted Koehler, penned hit tunes for The Cotton Club.

While the illegal hooch was flowing, the Cotton Club brazenly hosted live radio broadcasts. Transmitted each week on WHN and later NBC, these shows helped spread the fame of the club and its musicians to an audience across America. The speakeasy was briefly shut down in 1925, but Madden’s political connections ensured it quickly reopened.

As the Cotton Club’s reputation spread, celebrities and socialites were increasingly spotted there. Movie star Judy Garland, composer George Gershwin, and New York City mayor Jimmy Walker were all regular guests. The rich and powerful of the underworld also came out to play, with crime bosses like Lucky Luciano of the Genovese crime family, Dutch Schultz, and Jack ‘Legs’ Diamond present.

Madden even had a relationship with movie star Mae West, who the actress’s friends described as her “hottest affair.” Blurring the line between fact and fantasy further, Madden also helped his driver George Raft get to California to become a film star. Raft would go on to play gangsters in several Hollywood films, including 1932’s Scarface, loosely based on the rise and fall of Al Capone, and the Marilyn Monroe comedy Some Like It Hot.

While the Cotton Club continued after the Prohibition era, it relocated to the Midtown theatre district after the Harlem race riot of 1935. Owney Madden left New York City the same year, as he faced renewed police harassment, and the Italian Mafia encroached on his territory. He retired to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he married a postmaster’s daughter and died in 1965, at the age of 73.

Before her big break performing in Paris, a young Josephine Baker also performed at the Cotton Club.

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The ratification of the 18th Amendment in 1919 banned "The manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States." Though drawn from noble concern over the ills of alcohol abuse, the law enacted more mayhem than morality. The same can be said of the 1914 Harrison Act and the 1924 Heroin Act - making it illegal didn't cure the already-dependent, nor did it alter the age-old truism of supply and demand. So, while liquor poured into partygoers' cups, opiates flowed through addicts' veins, the bootleggers and dope peddlers would pour over endless piles of cash.

Fade to Red

Placing their hands against the back interior wall of the SMC Cartage garage in Chicago's North Side, seven men followed the orders of who they thought were gun-wielding uniformed and plainclothes police. Seconds later, they all felt the sting of .45 caliber rounds and 12 gauge shell fragments piercing their bodies. The only survivor of the 1929 St Valentine's Day Massacre was a German Shepherd named Highball. Investigators didn't really need the testimony of witnesses per se. It was very apparent who was behind the violence. The gruesome messes of dead and near-dead (one died in the hospital) victims were all members of - or associated with - the Bugs Moran North Side Gang, arch rivals of Al Capone's Outfit. Gang warfare had been common in Chicago, but this was different. Scarface earned himself publicity alright, to the dismay of every newspaper-reading member of society. Capone's peers were even more horrified and thus shared law enforcements' sentiment - something had to be done. That 'something' would eventually involve a Boardwalk bigwig.
Nucky Johnson, Al Capone and his bootlegging pals stride along the boardwalk in 1929.
Fade to Black
On 9 December 1968, after battling numerous ailments, the 85-year-old former undisputed ‘Boss’ of Atlantic City passed away quietly in a New Jersey convalescent home. Enoch ‘Nucky’ Johnson lived a long and melodramatic life. He endured the heartache of losing his first wife at a very young age, climbed the career ladder in record time, earned praise and courted controversy at every step of his journey. The bold and rebellious façade gave way to secrets beneath surface, landing him in Federal prison for a few years. After his release in 1945, Nucky was no longer a headline story. His death made the news of course, stirring up media recollections of a controversial history that extended back to the heyday of unabashed prohibition rebuking and political omnipotence. Then, like most sensationalised stories of the day, his name and legend again faded out of public interest. That is until a critically-acclaimed television series premiered in 2010.

Bass of the Boardwalk Underbelly
Sinister parts of history tend to make the best subjects for everything from factual studies to embellished folklore, not to mention irresistible entertainment; it provides in books, film and television – the forums most freely blurring the lines between credible and questionable. Such is the case with HBO’s premier of original series Boardwalk Empire. It became a categorical and instantaneous hit, packed with all the perfect ingredients of entertainment success – drama, violence, sex, plus an amazing cast of characters and settings. Boardwalk Empire reincarnated the legendary tales of Prohibition lawlessness, political opulence and rekindled interest in the fascinating prolific figureheads of the era.

Inspired by the real life extravagance, spectacle and exploits of Atlantic City political juggernaut Enoch Johnson, the series took viewers through the time of flappers, speakeasies, and beyond, underscored by side stories and characters that were also derived from some real events/people (Al Capone one of the more prominent).

The real life Nucky Johnson secured a multitude of job descriptions over his career climb, most notably going from sheriff to GOP boss to chief of everything in the town. Throughout his ascension, he irritated the entire Democratic Party, and a few Republicans who didn’t conform to the Nucky way. He was a dichotomy; malefactor-friendly, extravagant, loud and shady, yet also the one guy who anyone could go to when times were tough, ask for help and he would give. That power and influence made things run pretty smoothly in his little corner of the world, but not without very resilient detractors who sought to put him out of business. Besides snubbing legal guidelines and naysayers in general, Nucky Johnson minced no words in his disregard for certain rules. “We have whiskey, wine, women, song and slot machines,” Johnson was once quoted. “I won’t deny it and I won’t apologise for it.”

THE MEN AT THE TABLE
Did these East Coast crime kings talk business on the boardwalk?

Meyer Lansky
ROLE: THE BRAINS
GANG: NEW YORK FACTION
Lansky’s mind and Bugsy Siegel’s brawn took them from thieves to bootleggers to being top dogs in the fledgling mob syndicate. As Luciano’s business confidante, the ‘Little Man’ kept money issues in order. It was alleged Lansky took his honeymoon in Atlantic City so he could attend the 1929 Conference of crime lords.

Charles ‘Lucky’ Luciano
ROLE: FACE OF ORGANIZED CRIME
GANG: NEW YORK FACTION
Amid the fact versus folklore of Atlantic City’s giant crime meeting, Lucky has been one of the most frequently mentioned ‘usual suspects’ besides Al Capone. Although Lucky could never have accomplished so much without the help of virtually every other big name bad boy of the era on his side, credit where credit is due - he certainly became the timeless image of post-prohibition American gangsters.

Johnny Torrio
ROLE: PUPPET MASTER
GANG: CHICAGO/NEW YORK FACTION
Torrio mentored Capone in Chicago, retreated to Italy and then retired back to New York City in 1931. He was probably the real force behind bootlegging coalitions and ideally would have been the real arbitrator or CEO of the so-called Atlantic City Conference. His ties ran deep with Lucky Luciano and the entire East Coast mob syndicate.

Frank Costello
ROLE: AMBASSADOR
GANG: NEW YORK FACTION
The ‘diplomatic’ mobster, preferring the use of cash and favours over violence. In a 1974 biography, written Costello’s longtime attorney George Wolf, the Atlantic City board meeting was Frank’s idea. “What we all need is a vacation in Atlantic City,” said Costello to Meyer Lansky. Wolf’s depiction of his client’s part was certainly plausible, but others argue Lansky may have been the real ‘idea’ man.
Enoch ‘Nucky’ Johnson
ROLE: POLITICAL BOSS
GANG: ATLANTIC CITY
Johnson was the go-to guy for virtually everything in Atlantic City during the Twenties and Thirties. Most recognised as the force behind Republican politics in the city, he was also boss of numerous businesses, law enforcement, banks, clubs, and even sports teams. Therefore, if the mob needed something facilitated in Nucky’s world, well, Nucky would get it done. He was not a bootlegger; he made profit from those that were. New Jersey’s illicit imports were more likely controlled by Abner ‘Longy’ Zwillman.

Benjamin ‘Bugsy’ Siegel
ROLE: THE BADASS
GANG: NEW YORK FACTION
Dapper, respected and feared since his rough-and-tumble youth in the Bug and Meyer mob. His role during prohibition was firmly alongside childhood pals Meyer Lansky and Lucky Luciano; definitely a ‘boss’ in the fledgling National Syndicate. Some legendary tales say Bugsy was present in Atlantic City for the big convention, and if there was such a large representation – indeed he would likely have been there.

Joe Adonis
ROLE: UNKNOWN
GANG: NEW YORK FACTION/BROOKLYN
Adonis seemed to be everywhere, and his hands in every illicit cookie jar. Some believe he was directly involved in the Atlantic City Conference because of his reign over the shipping docks in Brooklyn (with Albert Anastasia) and close association with Frank Costello and Lucky Luciano.

Abner ‘Longy’ Zwillman
ROLE: JERSEY’S CAPONE
GANG: NEW JERSEY FACTION
As one of the most powerful individuals in the bootlegging business (dope too), Longy was another of the commonly mentioned attendees. If a summit of gangsters had taken place in Atlantic City, Zwillman would have absolutely been seated at the table.

Harry ‘Nig’ Rosen
ROLE: QUAKER SYNDICATE BOSS
GANG: PHILADELPHIA FACTION
From Russia to New York to finally setting up a racketeering base in Philly, Harry Stromberg, aka Nig Rosen, worked closely with guys like Meyer Lansky and Louis ‘Lepke’ Buchalter in bootlegging and narcotics. He was an alleged attendee at the 1929 conference.

Alphonse ‘Scarface’ Capone
ROLE: PUBLICITY NIGHTMARE
MOB: CHICAGO FACTION
Oh that Al... they liked him, but what a troublemaker he was for the underworld as a whole. The sensational Valentine’s Day Massacre brought much heat upon gangsterdom and something definitely needed done about the problem with Al’s war in Chicago with rival Bugs Moran’s gang. If anything about Boardwalk Empire the show, Boardwalk Empire the reality or a historic mob conference was true – it’s that Capone needed reining in and decisions were made to soften subsequent blow organised crime took from bootlegging battles not just in Chicago but anywhere.
AMERICA GOES DRY

LET THE LIQUOR FLOW

Nucky’s influence peaked during Prohibition, as his ambitions moved beyond his legitimate interests into a bootleg booze-smuggling network that spread from Atlantic City to the Midwest.

The primary Northeastern hubs joined forces to further control bootlegging, in the shadowy ‘Seven Group’. The Chicago faction allegedly joined just before the group disbanded. Along with Chicago, both Detroit and Cleveland had direct importing routes through Windsor Canada. Almost all the beer production was conducted under the nose of law enforcement, from East Coast to Minnesota, oftentimes in breweries taken over by mob factions. New Orleans, Miami and Tampa-based mob factions controlled most smuggling routes of both liquor and narcotics originating in the Bahamas and Cuba, some of which made its way to the North. Other Southern States produced homegrown liquor – moonshine.

**Detroit**

**KEY PLAYER: THE PURPLE GANG’S BURNSTEIN BROTHERS**
The Purple Gang, or Sugarhouse Gang were arguably far more brutal than the public outside Michigan knew. Chicago’s Valentine’s Massacre took the limelight, but the numerous acts these predominantly Jewish gangsters carried out to preserve control of liquor routes was legendary.

**Imports from Canada**

**Chicago**

**KEY PLAYER: AL CAPONE’S OUTFIT, GEORGE ‘BUGS’ MORAN’S NORTH SIDE GANG**
Bitter rivals, Capone and Moran’s battle over booze turned incomprehensible on 14 February 1929. Moran himself was one of the intended targets that day, but running late saved his life. The entire burgeoning mob syndicate decided something had to be done, hence the big pow wow in Atlantic City a few months later.

**Imports from Canada**

**Cleveland**

**KEY PLAYER: MOE DALITZ**
He was a key player in Ohio bootlegging, and remained very close with the New York gangsters. Dalitz’s real legacy, however, came years later when the mob infiltrated Las Vegas. Though regarded as a ruthless booze baron during prohibition, and after his influence in Vegas, Dalitz was actually able to live out his life as a regular citizen.

**Imports from Canada**

**Philadelphia**

**KEY PLAYER: HARRY ‘NIG’ ROSEN, MAX ‘BOO BOO’ HOFF**
Rosen’s hands were into everything, and held close ties with Meyer Lansky. Besides liquor, was suspected of running drugs and gambling rackets that stretched into Baltimore, Atlantic City, and even some Western States and Mexico.

**Imports from Canada, Europe (via Seaboard Hubs)**

“CAPONE’S PEERS WERE EVEN MORE HORRIFIED... SOMETHING HAD TO BE DONE. THAT ‘SOMETHING’ WOULD INVOLVE A BOARDWALK BIGWIG”
New York
KEY PLAYER - JOHNNY TORRIO, CHARLES ‘LUCKY’ LUCIANO, MÉYER LANSKY, JOE ADDONIS, ARTHUR ‘DUTCH SCHULTZ’ FLEGENHEIMER, TOO MANY TO NAME!
Torrino was likely the overseer of all these guys, after the murder of Arnold Rothstein in 1928. It can be argued that the New York boys truly ran the entire bootlegging show by proxy. If someone didn’t ‘fit in’ to the new system - they were usually eliminated or ostracised.

New England
KEY PLAYER - CHARLES ‘KING’ SOLOMON
Based in Boston, Solomon’s racket included booze, dope and prostitution throughout New England. Rival regional gangs eventually deposed of the King, shooting him to death in the Cotton Club, which he owned at the time.

Rhode Island
KEY PLAYER - DANNY WALSH
One of the very few remaining Irish gangsters aligned with the mostly Jewish and Italian combination that had taken over by 1931. Walsh controlled lower New England’s imports with many ship captains on his payroll. Walsh disappeared in 1933 - allegedly dropped in ocean with cement shoes.

New Jersey/Atlantic City
KEY PLAYER - ABNER ‘LONGY’ ZWILLMAN, WILLIE MORETTI, ENOCH ‘LUCKY’ JOHNSON
Zwillman and Moretti worked together, but the former was probably the true top dog. Nucky’s Atlantic City, however, was an entity in and of itself like no other, and as such, he controlled everything directly coming in and distributed through his town.

Main Product
- Beer
- Wine
- Hard Liquor (corn, cane, beet, sugar and mash)
- Hard Liquor (Diverted, withdrawn and smuggled)
- Hard Liquor (apple jack, hard cider and other fruit liquors)

Gangsters Gone Wild
Nucky’s world was fuelled by the almighty dollar, supply and demand. Through the Twenties and Thirties people flocked to his grand city by the sea to spend their money on the vice he made accessible. Despite the apparent societal disregard for Prohibition there were certainly hardcore proponents of the new amendment,
and those who wanted the law to at least be given a chance. Of the latter conviction, 24 businessmen – Henry Ford and Thomas Edison among them – signed an open letter to the American people in 1929. "Our whole system of self-government will crumble either if they elect what laws they will enforce or citizens elect what laws they will obey. There would be little traffic in illegal liquor if only criminals patronised it. We must awake to the fact that this patronage from large numbers of law-abiding citizens is supplying the rewards and stimulating crime. We believe that prohibition should be given an honest trial."

The message clearly tried playing the decency card. The attempt fell flat, but they were correct in the stimulation of crime part. Liquor wasn’t the root of all evil, money was. and oh, did those villains and outlaws fight for the cash. Robbery of shipments, murder of competitors, disorganised shipping lanes and even dangerously distilled bad batches of illicit consumables were issues plaguing the entire racket. Bloodshed, infighting and territorial disagreements between criminal competitors obviously came to a head on Valentine’s Day 1929. The Chicago vexation was, however, only one of many underworld atrocities related to gang warfare. This totality of violence was a nationwide problem that forced all the major mob bosses to quickly undertake some damage-control actions. Worse yet, for the outlaw entities at least – the incident fully commanded the unwavering resolve of law enforcement. It was simply bad for business, period. Here’s where Enoch ‘Nucky’ Johnson and Al Capone crossed paths, or so the legend says.

**Boardwalk of Directors**

In light of the highly compromising and immediate situation the Valentine’s Massacre put virtually every American outlaw in, plans to solve the problem were initiated quickly. Reputation, micromanagement and prime geographic location made Nucky Johnson a prominent figure in 20th century political theatre and ostensibly within gangland circles. Furthermore, because Atlantic City under his control had an ‘anything goes’ policy, it appears Johnson was the logical go-to providing a safe and welcoming venue where the Kingdom of Prohibition crime could commiserate. Iron out differences and establish some rules.

From 13-16 May 1929, the overlords of vice rackets converged in Atlantic City. This event went down in history as the first of three major mob conferences held during the 20th century. Some historians consider it to be the most significant of the trio (Havana 1946 and Apalachin 1957 were the others), and probably the largest. The invitees arrived from the Midwest, New England, Philadelphia, New York and possibly from as far as Florida Jewish and Italian mob bosses, flanked by their trusted entourages of advisors and bodyguards, descended upon the Breakers Hotel. The Anglo management was not having Italians and Jews stay in their illustrious establishment, which caused a chaotic situation in the lobby. Oddly, Nucky’s influence had little effect on the hotel’s ethnic prejudice and he was forced to relocate the ensemble cast to the President’s Hotel instead. Once all settled in, the gang got down to business in the board room, made a treaty and enjoyed numerous ‘amenities’ Johnson’s unconventional city had to offer. Or so the story goes.

**Pandora’s Box**

Did any of this really happen? And who were all the pact-signing leaders? It seems not everyone can agree. But a century later and the myths of Atlantic City’s mob fest still stir up endless conjecture, argument and debate. These are the three prominent theories of what probably did or did not go down in Atlantic City from 13-16 May 1929.

Standing Room Only. Enoch ‘Nucky’ Johnson hosted all the prominent Midwest and East Coast gangland
Bottles and a barrel of confiscated whiskey, much of which made its way down the coast from Canada to Atlantic City.

The bustling Atlantic City boardwalk during the height of Prohibition.

“The Situation in Atlantic City Requires a Searching Investigation Into the Activities of Enoch Johnson and Others”

— Utah Senator William H. King, 1928

figures for a three-day summit in Atlantic City. The purpose: to work out territorial disputes, importing, payoffs, distribution and deal with the specific problem in Chicago — Capone’s Outfit versus Bugs Moran’s North Side Gang.

Limited Engagement. Johnson facilitated a meeting of mostly Chicago-based gangsters. The purpose: to settle the problems between Capone’s faction and other Midwest bootleggers. Bugs Moran most importantly.

No Show. As a crucial figure in the overall prohibition bootleg game, Johnson likely knew and occasionally met with leaders of organised crime factions, but there simply isn’t any verifiable proof of any crime convention being held in Atlantic City in May of 1929.

If you subscribe to the belief that Atlantic City was filled with the nation’s top gang bosses. New York gangsters would have filled most of the seats, followed by Chicago, New Jersey, Philadelphia and so forth. The marquee names in attendance included Charles ‘Lucky’ Luciano, Meyer Lansky, Joe Adonis, Frank Costello, Frank Erickson, ‘Dutch’ Schultz, Benjamin ‘Bugsy’ Siegel, Al Capone, Charles ‘King’ Solomon, Bugs’ Moran, and the man who ultimately pulled the strings — John The Fox· Torrio.

Alternately, according to the stories run thereafter in the Chicago Tribune — the ‘leaders’ Capone spoke of were all Chicago-based. The only non-Chicago name ever mentioned was Johnny Torrio (who was technically considered a local gangster at one point in time).

“Yes, they were all there,” says Arthur Nash, author of New York City Gangsters and a collector of rare mob artifacts, “Capone, Luciano, and the rest.” He unequivocally believes there’s enough evidence in existence to prove it, not the least of which is a family photograph brought to his attention in 2006 by a relative of Ciro ‘The Artichoke King’ Terranova. The picture, he says, clearly depicts, “Capone, Lucky and Ciro Terranova in their hotel pool together.” Nash noted the photo was lost or stolen, but a copy appeared sometime later on an internet message board. The image has since been removed at the behest of the photograph’s original owners.

“Some photographer caught me with Al Capone once. From now on I’m being careful,” said Enoch ‘Nucky’ Johnson denying a reporter’s request for a picture pose.

Then, of course, there is the iconic New York Evening Journal photograph of a smiling entourage, strolling the boardwalk — Capone and Johnson prominently the focal point. This piece of evidence was convincing for both the national meeting theory and the Chicago-only theory.

Johnny Torrio, the man many agree was probably more in control of all mob activities than anyone (also probably the ‘real’ arbitrator during the Atlantic City Convention), was hit the same way his student Al Capone was — tax evasion. Torrio’s trial in 1939 revealed much more than just his unreported earnings, the ‘Seven Group’ and the namedropping of organised crime longhorns who, incidentally, were most of the same roll call thought to have attended the 1929 crime conference. Still, after a flurry of talkative insiders divulged many of the mob’s secrets, Torrio remained stoic. He saw the writing on the wall, changed his plea, paid a hefty fine and served a tolerable 23-month prison term. When asked what made him change the plea, he replied, “Mrs Torrio told me to do.”

Enoch Johnson had been dogged by the government for years. To the their dismay, though, he was able to dodge serious trouble for two decades. Having everyone from bankers to police officers under his control allowed most of his illicit activities to continue without a hitch. Investigators pressed many of Nucky’s loyalists until the house of cards began to crumble. All it takes is one to talk and, just like his gangland pals, if the only way to get them is through the tax man, then so be it. Nucky was not going to skate by this time and he knew it. He was convicted in 1941 for failing to pay $125,000 in taxes. The day before sentencing, Johnson wed his showgirl fiancee Florence Osbeck, and proclaimed to guests, “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we may go to jail.” A week later he began serving what turned out to be only four years in Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary.
CRIME & PROHIBITION

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Gangsters lined up in a Chicago jail, (from left to right) Mike Bizzarro, Joe Aiello, Joe Robbino, Nick Manzello and Joe Russo.
For all the success of the temperance movement in bringing about the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act - and thereby the outlawing of the manufacture, sale, and movement of alcoholic beverages - millions of Americans still wanted to drink beer, wine, and hard liquor. On the frontier, it had been a staple part of everyday life. This was a nation of immigrants, with a population of incomers growing all the time, and drinking was part of many European cultures, Irish, Italian, German, Polish to name but a few.

Immigrants often took difficult jobs, working long hours to fuel America’s industrial boom, and at the end of a hard day’s labour they wanted a drink to help them unwind. The persistent demand for alcohol therefore prompted its illegal production and sale during the Prohibition era, which became known as bootlegging. This sparked the rise of the speakeasies - illegal, clandestine establishments founded specifically for the consumption of potent drinks.

Illegal alcohol production, procurement and distribution expanded into big business and, given the breadth and fiscal potential offered by a new industry that spanned the entire country, it is perhaps no surprise that it was soon seized upon by organised crime gangs. Indeed, the Prohibition era changed the very nature of organised crime across the United States.

Of course, crime was rife in America from the time of the very first settlers, where there are people and laws, there will always be criminals and underworld activity.
For the organised crime gangs in the pre-Prohibition era, the illegal activities that offered the most lucrative markets revolved around vices like gambling and prostitution as well as the labour market. Here gangs flourished at the expense of smaller operations and the independent crooks who could not match the gangs' logistical organisation or their ready supply of muscle, both of which were absolutely key to running these types of illicit businesses.

Abuse of the labour market provides a prime example. Using their size and influence, the gangs would rustle up plenty of tough, hard men with a penchant for violence, and dispatch them to either form a union or to muscle in on an existing outfit, thereby ensuring control of the labour market in any given area. The classic Marion Brando film, *On The Waterfront*, deals with this very issue. Once the gang controlled the labour market, they could raise their members’ wages and boost their profits through members’ fees, as well as via the kickbacks they received from employers who became reliant on their goodwill. With no work force, the employers simply had no business.

In America’s second city, Chicago, the gangster Martin ‘Skinny’ Madden emerged as the first major labour racketeer, and his gang was soon followed by those headed by ‘Mossy’ Erwitt and Coni Shea. During 1905, a 105-day strike organised by Shea’s gang cost the major union International Brotherhood of Teamsters and other Chicago businesses more than $9 million, while at least 21 men died and more than 400 were injured.

It was Prohibition, however, that really boosted organised crime. As Prohibition took hold and many existing vendors complied with the new laws, it was the gangs that stepped into the breach, filling not only their pockets but also those of the men who worked alongside them – corrupt officials, politicians and lawmen. To influence the corruptible, and to raise the finance necessary to fund and control a complex industry like bootlegging, took a certain amount of pre-existing financial liquidity. It also required a sizeable workforce. This is where organised crime thrived; again, the freelancer or low-level crook could never compete with the power of gangland. Well-organised groups soon learned that they could control the full chain of the bootlegging operation, from the hidden distilleries and breweries through to the storage and transport to the retail outlets – speakeasies, restaurants and nightclubs.

Criminal activity had been organised well before Prohibition took hold. The director of the Chicago Crime Commission, Henry B Chamberlain, spotted in 1919 that, “Modern crime, like modern business, is tending towards centralisation, organisation and commercialisation”. Yet the skills learned when running vice and gambling proved especially transferable. Any gangs that ran a
PROHIBITION AND THE CHANGING FACE OF AMERICAN CRIME

MURDER ON THE WATER

RUM ROW WITNESSED SOME GRIZZLY EPISODES COURTESY OF ORGANISED CRIME. THE SCUTTLING OF JOHN DWIGHT WAS A CASE IN POINT...

Rum Row along the Atlantic seaboard was a profitable avenue for smugglers during the Prohibition era, with the Florida skipper William McCoy said to be the pioneer of this illicit trade, sailing a schooner loaded with 1,500 cases of liquor from Nassau in the British colony of the Bahamas to Savannah and pocketing $15,000 in profits for his trouble. By the middle of the 1920s, organised crime syndicates were all too aware of the trade’s importance and some vicious incidents ensued.

A portent of what was to come arrived in 1923 with the scuttling of the 107-foot steam trawler John Dwight, which was ferrying barrels of Canadian-made ale through ‘Rum Lane’ near Martha’s Vineyard, Massachusetts. Hijacked by other bootleggers, or possibly one of the larger organised crime syndicates, the crew suffered a horrible fate. It seems the pirates were after the $100,000 in cash they were carrying for an upcoming purchase.

The bodies of eight crewmen washed into the surf at the hamlet of Menemsha. It must have been a horrible sight. Some of the men had had their eyes burned out and their fingertips burned back by flesh-eating acid. Three had had the skin stripped from their faces. The captain’s son was discovered adrift in a dinghy with a fractured skull.

The government responded to the Rum Row for an upcoming purchase. business by recruiting 4,000 coastguards who were said to be incorruptible. With a wage of around $36 a month, this was unlikely and the Atlantic seaboard remained a part of America’s bootlegging network.

Waterways were a prime route for the gangsters. This bootlegger is dumping his cargo over the side as the federal boat draws near.

John Dwight was scuttled as it passed ‘Rum Lane’ near Martha’s Vineyard (pictured).

Mark Brando film *On the Waterfront* focused on labour racketeering, a favourite pre-Prohibition business for organised crime.

number of brothels or gambling dens knew how to service a broad range of different establishments in varied locations. They knew how to handle large sums of cash and they knew how to protect their interests and hurt their enemies. All of these skills were pivotal to the running of a major bootlegging operation.

Though gangs continued to remain involved in pre-Prohibition criminal activity, bootlegging offered greater rewards and traditional operations like racketeering and gambling became a sideline for many liquor operations. In Chicago, most of the big gangs pulled back on their labour racketeering and prostitution, the latter remained taboo for many Chicago citizens. Naturally, this was not always the norm. Though Chicago’s North Side gang leader Hymie Weiss eschewed prostitution, Tony Colosimo’s infamous gang, and then Capone’s, were happy to profit from vice. Still, in 1930, the Chicago Daily News estimated that the city’s revenues from organised crime totalled $326 million, with more than half ($183 million) coming from bootlegging, breaking down as $103 million from beer, $56 million from hard liquor and $23 million from pure alcohol.

Many historians consider Chicago the epicentre of bootlegging during the Prohibition era. In April 1926, another major newspaper, the Chicago Tribune, estimated the illegal sale of alcoholic beverages as $3.6 billion nationwide, with a $200 million figure for the Windy City, ranking at 5.6 per cent of the total. Prohibition enforcers (according to the same newspaper) designated the western Chicago suburb of Cicero ‘the wettest spot in the United States’. Certainly, the city’s central position and its proximity to Canada, courtesy of the enormous Lake Michigan, made it the ideal place to locate a bootlegging empire. As profits increased, so did the gangs’ bids to expand their territories. Gradually, outfits in different cities began to cooperate with each other.

The key was transportation. This is what marked out the liquor business from the more established arenas of organised criminality. It would make the bootleggers’
An alcohol smuggler is shot dead by a member of a rival gang in New York City, 1929

Al Capone stands as the best-remembered gangster of all time, rising to prominence in the Prohibition era businesses pan-regional. Once they had acquired transport they would then build confederacies. Chicago's Canadian whiskey came through Detroit's Purple Gang, who had direct access to America's northern neighbour. In Cleveland, the mobster Moe Dalitz used aircraft and boats to carry liquor across Lake Erie before distributing his product through associates in Ohio and Pennsylvania. He also formed ties with Meyer Lansky in New York. Lansky had started out peddling booze from his car and truck rental business based beneath the Williamsburg Bridge.

These alliances, though difficult to manage, became of paramount importance to the big liquor peddlers and they began promoting conferences in a bid to keep the peace. One such meeting saw gangsters from Newark, New York, Chicago, Cleveland and Philadelphia get together at the Hotel President in Atlantic City, where they delineated boundaries and granted territorial exclusivity. As author and Prohibition expert Daniel Okrent notes, "This sort of arrangement would harden into formal partnerships." and he cites the cartel formed between Lansky, fellow New Yorker Lucky Luciano, Newark's Longy Zwillman, Charles 'King' Solomon of Boston and Daniel Walsh of Providence, who would control the entire illegal booze trade from Boston to Philadelphia. Chicago's John Torrio helped broker the deal and was richly rewarded with a grant of 5,000 cases of liquor each month.

The mobsters' armies were filled by tough-nuts, many of whom had received weapons training while serving with General Pershing's American Expeditionary Force during World War I, and the gangs operated with near-

THE AMERICAN MAFIA CRIME SYNDICATE WAS BORN FROM THE COORDINATED ACTIVITIES OF ITALIAN BOOTLEGGERS IN NEW YORK CITY IN THE LATE 1920s AND EARLY 1930s
military precision. An army-like hierarchy was formed and loyalty was expected, as it was with regular soldiers. This was ensured, in many cases, by promoting through family ties, with brothers, brothers-in-law and cousins all collecting around the gangland boss. According to John Binder, author of Al Capone’s Beer Wars: "the Italian-dominated bootlegging gangs were more focused, if not more professional, than their counterparts".

Certainly, the rise of the bootlegging gangsters was swift. As early as 1923, the New York Times wrote of the new-style gangster, claiming, "He shoots from ambush, and preferably at backs," while in the following year Vermont senator Frank L Greene was badly hurt when caught in a crossfire between bootleggers and Prohibition agents just a few blocks from the Capitol.

A string of famous names rose to prominence through the Prohibition era and the American Mafia crime syndicate - the most famous of all gangsters - was born from the coordinated activities of Italian bootleggers in New York City in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Indeed, for all their illicit behaviour and the machine-gun violence that formed the soundtrack to their lives, the gangsters emerged with a peculiar respectability, formed partly from their involvement in city nightlife and their links to the entertainment industry. Longy Zwillman dated Hollywood doyenne Jean Harlow, while the ruthless Owney Madden romanced Mae West.

The rising number of tabloid newspapers, meanwhile, sensationalised the mobsters' lives in a bid to drive sales (see boxout), and Hollywood heavyweights Howard Hughes (producer) and Howard Hawris (producer and director) released Scarface loosely based on the life of Al Capone, in 1932, adding more glamour to the gangster life. Prior to Prohibition, gang bosses had operated on the periphery of society, moving in the shadows away from America's apple pie sensibilities. Not so the new breed. After all, as historian Mark H Haller writes, the bootleggers, though criminals, "had customers, not victims". Pimps and brothel owners often used force against the women who worked for them, while gamblers and brothel owners took huge cuts of their customers' cash. When providing illegal alcohol, however, the bootleggers were simply charging their customers what they were prepared to pay.

The gangsters weren't the only people to profit from bootlegging. The very men recruited to police these crooks were also taking in huge sums as bribes. Lawman Pat Roche said in the Chicago Tribune that, "A one-legged Prohibition agent riding a bicycle could dry up the Loop [a once-notorious area in Chicago] in half a day, providing he was honest". That may well have been true. But dishonesty paid a whole lot better.

Corruption had long been a problem in America, but during Prohibition it took on an industrial stature. The extent of corruption linked to bootlegging was revealed by a Chief Morris who said, "Reports and rumours reaching me indicate that 50 per cent of the men on the Chicago police force are involved seriously in the illegal sale or transportation of liquor." The US Attorney for North Illinois, meanwhile, reckoned the size of the kickback industry in 1926 stood at $330 million per annum. The early Prohibition directors for New York and Pennsylvania, a judge and a state senator, were under indictment for corruption within a year of taking office.

Daniel Okrent records how at the very moment former Congressman Joshua E. Russell, the Prohibition director for Ohio, was extolling the virtues of lawfulness to an audience at Sidney Baptist Church, his cronies were diverting almost 22,500 gallons of alcohol from a distillery in the town of Troy. Though the corrupt lawmakers and enforcers could help the gangsters in any number of ways, the mobs could not rely on the civil authorities to settle interecne disputes. "When there's competition there's bound to be little tiffs," said Rocco Fanelli, one of Al Capone's toughs. "The cleanest way out of them is with a gun. We do not have them for ornaments. He was right. During a three-year period in Chicago there were 215 mob killings. The Thompson submachine gun earned the nickname of 'the Chicago Typewriter', courtesy of its clattering voice.

Gangland violence during the 1920s expanded to record levels. Some historians believe that Hollywood and the popular imagination have fuelled the story - who hasn't heard of the St Valentine's Day Massacre? But the evidence is there. As Okrent points out, "Epidemic violence in the 1920s ... did increase by quite a bit." crime figures of slightly fewer than 12 murders or assaults per 100,000 in 1920 to 16 by Prohibition's final year, 1933. It had then fallen to fewer than 10 by 1940. From the assassination of Dean O'Banion in his Chicago flower shop in 1924 through to the St Valentine's Day Massacre five years later, Okrent writes, "the most famous killings of the era were ignited by alcohol."

Men like Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, Frank Costello and Meyer Lansky built their empires during Prohibition, washing to prominence on a wave of illegal booze. Once alcohol Prohibition was repealed, the gangsters were not going away. On no Prohibition had mobilised organised crime on a scale never seen before and with the rise of the big syndicates, the transnational scuffle was going to blossom even further. Plenty of gangsters invested in legalised alcohol businesses but many more returned to the lucrative vice rackets of prostitution and gambling, as well as drug trafficking and labour racketeering, using their new-found organisational skills and nous to become more powerful than ever before.
Arguably the most famous gangsters of them all, Al Capone ran an underworld empire in the city of Chicago during Prohibition.
PROHIBITION AND THE MOB

Prohibition provided extraordinary opportunities for American gangsters to profit from the illegal bootlegging trade in banned alcohol and empowered the criminal organisation known as ‘The Mob’.

Prohibition played a crucial role in the rise of the American gangster. There were certainly gangsters in America before Prohibition, and there would be gangsters after it was repealed. But the banning of alcohol gave underworld criminals a lucrative product to sell that many were willing to pay a high price for and break the law to get.

That alcoholic beverages could be banned in America must at first glance seem surprising, even shocking. Americans had a long history of alcohol consumption and had enthusiastically produced their own spirits, such as rum and whiskey. But for a long time there had been voices who had spoken against alcohol, or at least too much of it. One famed Puritan preacher from early American history, Increase Mather, proclaimed: “Wine is from God, but the drunkard is from the devil.”

Social factors also gave impetus to the drive for reform. In the late 19th century, the United States had been transformed into an industrial, urban nation. Millions of Americans had migrated from their farms to the cities to find work in factories. The introduction of rural America to the often unwholesome conditions of city life was an uneasy one. Many Americans fresh from the country blamed urban ills on alcohol.

Another disquieting aspect of the cities to the minds of rural folk was the presence of many millions of ‘alien’ immigrants from non-English-speaking nations. The late 19th and
The Thompson submachine gun had its origins in the need for a firearm well-suited for trench fighting. After the US had entered World War I, the full-sized, bolt-action Springfield rifle, otherwise an excellent weapon, was found to be less than ideal for close combat. The US Army desired something handier for its troops, with a high rate of fire that could sweep an enemy trench. General John T. Thompson came up with the fast-firing submachine gun in response. It spat a chunky .45 ACP cartridge of fire that could sweep a big benefit in combat. The Thomson submachine gun, known as ‘Tommy gun’, was nicknamed. gained notoriety as the signature weapon of the American gangster during the Prohibition years. The Chicago gangsters who used it in their gun battles became known as ‘Tommy men’. The Thompson was also called the ‘Chicago Piano’ due to its association with the mob. It figured prominently in the infamous 1929 St Valentine’s Day Massacre. From a mob gunman’s point of view, the Tommy gun was close to perfection. Its high rate of fire - 700 rounds per minute - meant it could lay down a curtain of lead. Often, gangsters armed with Thompsons outgunned the police.

As a consequence of its underworld popularity and its appearance in cinematic portrayals of gangsters, the weapon became wedded in the minds of many Americans with organised crime and gangland shootouts. However, during World War II, the Thompson was used to equip US troops and was also supplied in huge numbers to numerous Allied armed forces. The soldiers battling Axis tyranny greatly appreciated the Thompson’s remarkable stopping power.

THE PURPLE GANG
SOLD THE LIQUOR IT STOLE TO LOCAL DETROIT SPEAKEASIES, OF WHICH THERE WERE AROUND 25,000 IN 1925

The Purple Gang of Detroit was notoriously violent and known for hijacking other gangs’ shipments of bootleg liquor.

early 20th centuries were the heyday of immigration from Eastern and Southern Europe. Many of these immigrants came from countries where alcohol was not only drunk, but embedded in the national culture. Many were also Catholic and this was a source of suspicion for the more established Protestant Americans. The temperance movement was itself largely Protestant in its support.

The advent of World War I also had a powerful impact on energising the move for Prohibition. Most breweries in the country were owned by German-Americans. Once the United States entered the war against Germany, alcohol could be tarnished by its association with the enemy, making it seem unpatriotic.

Politically, the Prohibition movement gained strength in the early 20th century with the Anti-Saloon League exemplifying its growing power and confidence. A Prohibition constitutional amendment bill was brought before the US Senate for a vote in July 1917. It was approved, and the House of Representatives did the same in December. For it to become enacted law, it would have to be ratified by at least three-quarters of the then 48 states. In just 13 months, 36 states had ratified the proposal, which went into effect as the 18th Amendment in 1920.

Prohibition’s advocates had won the long battle fought against massive odds over many decades. The 18th Amendment would bear bitter fruit, however. A terrible menace, one worse than the problems caused by the consumption of alcohol, would soon arise, fuelled by the insatiable thirst for the liquor that, even though now illicit, Prohibition could never dispel - the mob.

When liquor had been made illegal, organised criminal gangs stepped in to provide Americans with what they wanted, for a hefty price. The cost to America of this flourishing of organised crime was not merely money. The sheer amount of cash to be made through illegal means was so great that gangs would fight pitched battles over the right to supply liquor.

American cities became the domains of gun-toting bootlegging gangsters, all striving and killing and dying because they had a product that could not be legislated out of existence. In acknowledgement of the utter failure of Prohibition, in 1933 the 18th Amendment was repealed. 13 years after it had gone into effect, by another amendment, the 21st. By then, however, the damage had been well and truly done. Prohibition meant that the mob had become a force far larger and more powerful than what it had been before.

Arguably the most famous of all Prohibition-era mobsters was Al Capone. He was not alone or even the first in his criminal activities, and he initially had a patron under whom he ‘learned much about the world of organised crime. Capone got his start as an underling in Chicago running brothels on behalf of Johnny Torrio. Torrio had moved to Chicago from New York and had craftily bought up breweries that had been put out of business by Prohibition. Hard liquor was smuggled...
“JUST AS MODERN CORPORATIONS COMPETE FOR MARKET SHARE, SO TOO DID CHICAGO’S GANGSTERS FOR THE UNDERWORLD BUSINESS. THIS WAS OFTEN VIOLENT”

from Canada. These banned substances became part of the attraction of the gambling parlours, bordellos and speakeasies - illegal bars that served alcohol - that Torrio controlled. Since these were all illicit enterprises, protection was bought by paying generous bribes to politicians, judges and police officers.

However, the direct threat to Torrio, who had his crime empire in Chicago’s south, came from other gangsters. Just as modern corporations compete for market share, so too did Chicago’s gangsters for the underworld business. This was often bloodily violent.

Torrio was 17 years Capone’s senior, and quite unlike his brutal young acolyte. He was quiet, and exuded a mild aura. He may not have been vicious like Capone, but he was no angel either. He certainly employed other men to do his dirty work when necessary. One major hit authorised by Torrio was the murder of another gangster, Dean O’Banion. O’Banion’s North Side Gang had been hijacking Torrio’s alcohol shipments and also had a hand in getting Torrio arrested for an alcohol-related offence. Since this was Torrio’s second, he could potentially be sent to prison. Torrio, and another gang that had a grievance against O’Banion, the Terrible Gennas, who ran an illicit industrial alcohol production racket, teamed up to have him killed. On 10 November 1924, a trio of men walked into the flower shop that O’Banion ran. When O’Banion extended his hand in greeting, one of the men gripped it and would not let go. His two companions took out handguns and shot O’Banion dead.

It was Torrio’s turn next. Surviving members of the North Side Gang caught up with Torrio three months later and shot him three times. Astonishingly, Torrio survived the assassination attempt but his days as a gangster were over. He decamped for Italy and handed over the reins of his Chicago outfit to his protege, Al Capone.

After Al Capone, perhaps the most famous gangster to emerge from the Prohibition era was Charles ‘Lucky’ Luciano. Born in a poor village in Sicily in 1897, Luciano was brought to America by his mother in 1906, settling in New York City on Manhattan’s Lower East Side. He was a school dropout at 14 and was soon involved in small-scale criminal activities, including robberies and muggings. From an early age he was an admirer of the local gangsters he saw around him. “[T]hey were rich,” he explained later, “and rich was what counted, because the rich got away with anything.”

He took up with other young gangsters who would become dark legends in their own right, including Bugsy Siegel, Frank Costello and Meyer Lansky. The enactment of the 18th Amendment would give such ruthless, enterprising criminals unparalleled opportunities to make fortunes. Luciano became a stalwart of the bootlegging business in New York.
Maranzano's men worked over Luciano badly, with Luciano taking serious knife cuts to his face. He was left with a permanent droop to his right eye, but Luciano lived. For his unexpected survival, he was dubbed 'Lucky' by fellow gangster Meyer Lansky.

Luciano was repelled by the wasteful fights between gangs that disrupted the otherwise lucrative business of the criminal underworld. He believed that there was enough for everyone and that crime should be run as if it were a legitimate business, efficiently and with as little friction as possible. The feuds of the older generation of mob bosses, such as Masseria and Maranzano, were not at all to his liking. He had especially disliked what the so-called 'Castellammarese War' had done to the underworld business. To Luciano, and other younger mobsters, the older generation was too hidebound, too set in their ways, and too ant-quoted in their notions of honour to see which way the business of organised crime was heading. He had a hand in the 1931 murder of his old boss, Masseria, and also in the subsequent killing of Maranzano.

Luciano, at the urging of Johnny Torrio, then instituted the Commission in 1931, an umbrella organisation for the mob in which each group, or family, ran its own businesses on their own turf, but the heads of each would meet periodically to manage relations between them. Luciano was adamant that they had to cooperate for the good of all. "I told 'em jealousy was our biggest enemy," said Luciano. "In our kind of business there was so much money to be made that nobody had the right to be jealous of nobody else." In modern business terms, Luciano had organised the criminal syndicates into a cartel that would eliminate needless competition. Luciano was the Commission's first chairman, and the heads of the other families were similar to a corporate board of directors.

Luciano's considerable luck, like that of so many mobsters, would eventually run out. In 1936 he was convicted on prostitution charges. He had built his empire on prostitution as well as bootlegging, and at his trial there came a stream of women from his operation who testified against him. That June he was given a sentence of 30 years in prison. For a man just shy of 40, it was effectively a life sentence.

Luciano's later years were not as dramatic as those of the Prohibition era, but he did still manage to find himself embroiled in events nonetheless, and always made sure to use it to his advantage. Though still in prison in the early 1940s, Luciano dominated the Longshoremen's Union, which included men who worked at the docks. With American entry into World War II, there was a real fear that German saboteurs would hurt port operations. The US Navy requested Luciano ensure that the docks remained secure. In 1946, on account of his aid, his prison sentence was commuted and he was deported to Italy. Though he tried to remain relevant to the organised criminal underworld from various perches outside the United States, his influence declined and he died in Italy in January 1962.

**“The US Navy requested Luciano ensure that the docks remained secure. In 1946, on account of his aid, his prison sentence was commuted”**
Twelve-year-old Meyer Lansky became friends with an older youth who would later go on to become better known as Lucky Luciano. Lansky and Luciano became associates in New York’s early 20th century criminal underworld. Before that, while still a youth, Lansky formed a gang with another young Jewish gangster, Benjamin ‘Bugsy’ Siegel, called the Bugs and Meyer Gang. Their specialties were gambling and protection rackets. One of the more famous members of their outfit was Dutch Schultz.

Lansky was invited to have his gang, a mixed group of Jews and Italians, work for Arnold Rothstein, one of the most prominent bosses of New York’s organised criminal syndicates. Rothstein recognised Lansky’s ambition and wanted Lansky’s help in moving liquor – doing the actual work of bootlegging.

Rothstein’s instincts regarding Lansky were correct. Under his guidance, Lansky and his youthful mob associates built the biggest bootlegging operation in the United States. Lansky would later go on to establish a portfolio of gambling casinos, which proved popular because the games played there were fair. Lansky, in the 1940s, would also be involved in the development of Las Vegas as a centre of legal gambling.

Knowing Luciano from an early age was also a plus. Lansky became an important member of the national criminal organisation that would come to dominate America in the 1930s. Lansky could not escape justice forever, though, and in 1953 was brought up on multiple charges of illegal betting. After pleading guilty to some of the charges, he was given a sentence of only three months.

Lansky would later become a leading underworld figure in Cuba, where he was involved with casinos on the island. However, the Cuban Revolution of the 1950s saw the communists come to power, expel the mobsters and close the casinos. Lansky lived in Florida during the 1960s and 1970s. Expecting to be eventually up in America, Luciano had been deeply involved in the rubout of Masseria at a Coney Island restaurant on 15 April 1931, which brought the Castellammarese War to a close. This allowed Maranzano to declare himself to be the ‘boss of all bosses’ of the New York Mafia.

Luciano was also behind the 10 September 1931 murder of Maranzano himself. Just a few months after Maranzano’s faction claimed to have ‘won’ the war, Masseria and Maranzano were no innocents, of course. Luciano was simply striking first once he had learned that each man wanted him dead too.

As with almost all Mafia-related history, the actual facts are murky and it is often impossible to separate truth from fiction. Traditional accounts have held that the war involved hundreds of gangsters across America and that around 60 perished in the struggle. Others say the carnage was much lighter, holding that the death toll was closer to around 14.
charged with tax evasion, Lansky fled to Israel in 1970, but he was ordered to leave by the Israeli government in 1972. Ironically, Lansky would be acquitted in 1974, and died in 1983 in Miami Beach.

Few gangsters of the Prohibition period were more colourful than Bugsy Siegel. Meyer Lansky's close associate from an early age. In his younger days during Prohibition, Siegel was a hot-headed gunman who took contracts from the likes of Joe Masseria and Salvatore Maranzano. He was nicknamed Bugsy, which he detested, supposedly because he was judged unstable, and other gangsters would say he was 'going bugs' when he became agitated. In 1937, after Prohibition had ended, he headed out west to Hollywood where he set up a gambling operation.

By 1946, Siegel was overseeing the building of the Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas. The Flamingo was his biggest undertaking, and entirely above-board, because gambling was legal in Nevada. Unfortunately, it turned out to be a huge money-loser, suffering from enormous cost overruns and delays. A project that had initially been budgeted at $1 million ended up costing about six. The Flamingo opened in late 1946 but was plagued with troubles. His investors, many of them other mobsters, were very unhappy and not an understanding bunch. Siegel was assassinated in 1947 at the home of his girlfriend, with nine shots fired, and two striking him. Suspicion of course fell on his disappointed gangster investors, but there were any number of people who would have wanted Siegel dead.

One of the mob's foremost assassins during the Prohibition era was Albert Anastasia. Anastasia has been placed as part of the group of gunmen who murdered Joe Masseria. One of the men who was said to have gone along with him on the hit headed up Murder, Inc. With Anastasia 'Murder, Inc was a Brooklyn, New York-based outfit of assassins who would rub out any target for a price. The advantage of using Murder, Inc's services, from a mob boss's point of view, was that the order to kill was sent from him to his lieutenant and then to the hitmen of Murder, Inc. The assassins did not know who was actually paying for the hit, and so there was very little to connect the bosses to any of the murders they had commissioned.

One of the most prominent victims of Murder, Inc was another mobster, Dutch Schultz. Schultz had made a request to the Commission that it authorise the murder of Thomas Dewey, a federal prosecutor who had indicted Schultz twice for tax evasion. Schultz, knowing that Dewey would never give up, wanted him dead. The Commission saw matters very differently. Killing Dewey would only serve to increase federal attention on the mob and it turned Schultz down. Schultz unwisely then declared that he would do the job himself. To forestall a murder that would bring nothing but bad things, Luciano authorised a hit on Schultz. On 23 October 1935, two Murder, Inc gunmen mowed down Schultz and his bodyguards at a New Jersey restaurant.

Attention falls mainly on Chicago and New York as hotspots of underworld activity during Prohibition, but there were gangs in other cities, too. Detroit was the domain of the Purple Gang. Standing atop the pyramid of the Detroit underworld, it was a Jewish gang with

**AMERICAN MOB TIMELINE**

- 1919
  - Prohibition begins
    - The 18th Amendment, banning the production and sale of alcoholic beverages, goes into effect in January 1920. American organised crime scrambles to supply it to thirsty customers.
  - 17 January 1920

- 1920
  - Johnny Torrio
    - assassinates Big Jim Colosimo
      - In Chicago, Johnny Torrio has 'Big Jim' Colosimo assassinated. One of Torrio's underlings is Al Capone, who will later take over his Chicago operations.
      - 11 May 1920

- 1920
  - Castellammarese War ends
    - Joe Masseria is assassinated, at Lucky Luciano's direction, bringing the Castellammarese War between him and Salvatore Maranzano to a violent end.
    - 15 April 1931

- 1931
  - The Commission
    - Luciano sets up the 'Commission' to solve disputes among the mob's Five Families and a handful of other criminal groups. It relies on the services of Murder, Inc to enforce discipline on unruly mobsters.
    - 1931
Johnny Torrio, a leading gangster of the early Prohibition years and mentor of Al Capone, was a penchant for murder; with 500 deaths being attributed to its members. This figure is even higher than those that were found in super-violent Chicago. A large number of the Purple Gang’s members had emigrated from Eastern Europe in the late 19th-century. It was led by the Bernstein brothers – Raymond, Joseph, Abe and Izzy. After coming to New York they settled in Michigan.

Starting out as small-time criminals as youngsters, they graduated to bigger things as adults. Prohibition provided them with extraordinary opportunities. Detroit, the capital of American automobile manufacturing, was America’s fourth-largest city and had a population of around 1 million. Importantly for the role it would play during Prohibition, Detroit lay on the US-Canadian border. This was significant because Canada became the place where liquor could be obtained and smuggled into the United States to quench the thirsts of American drinkers. When the Detroit River froze over in the winter, American bootleggers’ trucks would roll over with cargoes of Canadian spirits.

The Purple Gang had a hand in extortion rackets, truck hijackings, prostitution, illegal gambling and armed robberies. The bulk of the gang’s funds came from bootlegging alcohol. The money they earned was used to pay bribes to police and other government officials to look the other way. In the mid-1920s, the Purple Gang fought tooth and nail with Italian and Irish gangsters over territory. Such was their known power and propensity for violence that they were able to dissuade Al Capone, who was hardly reluctant to use violent tactics himself, to keep out of Detroit.

Eventually, the Purple Gang’s brutal ways brought about its downfall. In 1931, a hit gone wrong resulted in a survivor who testified against the gangsters and several of its leading members, including Raymond Bernstein, were given life sentences without the possibility of parole. The Purple Gang was mortally wounded and soon faded from the Detroit scene.

Prohibition came to an end in 1933 with the repeal of the 18th Amendment. The mob, which had profited so enormously from Prohibition, had become far stronger than it otherwise might have been by having the opportunity to sell liquor for huge amounts of cash. It would go on to find other sources of revenue, now that alcohol was legal again, and prosper.

- Assassination of Dutch Schultz
- Trial of Luciano
- Bugsy Siegel is assassinated
- Luciano’s end

1935
- Assassination of Dutch Schultz

1936
- Trial of Luciano

1947
- Bugsy Siegel is assassinated

1962
- Luciano’s end
The needle skipped as the gun barked twice in the killer's hand, the record player screeching into the silence of the restaurant's corridor as its owner crashed to the floor, blood pooling out onto the polished tiles.

Giacomo 'Big Jim' Colosimo, his body cooling from its exit wounds, had recently left his wife, filing for divorce and skipping town to marry a 19-year-old cabaret singer. His ex-wife, Victoria Moresco, or one of her brothers, was the prime suspect in this crime of passion, but the police knew enough to pay a visit to two of Colosimo's associates - the genial Johnny Torrio and his sidekick, the disquieting Alfonse Capone. Three nasty scars on his cheek contorting as he smiled. "Big Jim and me were like brothers," claimed Torrio. "Mr Colosimo and me both loved opera," added Capone. "He was a grand guy."

Colosimo's murder on 11 May 1920 is still regarded as unsolved, but perhaps it's a crime that Chicago Police Department chose to leave that way. For nearly a decade Colosimo had ruled Chicago through hard graft and intimidation - running over 100 brothels with his wife - and extorting protection money from most of the city's illegal gambling dens, the profits snaking through the entire city, supplementing the meagre wages of the cop on the street corner and boosting the bank account of the city's two-time mayor, William 'Big Bill' Hale Thompson.

Chicago was a rough town. Booming in the early 1920s thanks to heavy industry and cheap labour, the Windy City was a Wild West frontier town with chimney stacks instead of cacti and bullet-riddled Model-T Fords in lieu of horses. "She was vibrant and violent," wrote local journalist Robert St John, "stimulating and ruthless, intolerant of smugness, impatient with those either physically or intellectually timid."
Capone had arrived in Chicago from New York in 1919 to work for his old friend Torrio, who had earned Colosimo's trust by chasing off a rival extortion racket and stuck around as the boss's second in command.

Capone soon put the feared reputation he had enjoyed back home to work as a debt collector, seeing firsthand how Colosimo's operation held a stranglehold over the underworld; gambling dens who refused to pay up for the game changed again as the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution came into effect. Also known as the Volstead Act, which prohibited the production, transportation and sale of alcohol— but not the consumption—Prohibition meant a huge swathe of the population were suddenly transformed into potential customers. Torrio and Capone saw that this was a revenue stream with the potential to dwarf even prostitution and racketeering, but to their dismay Colosimo was having none of it. When Colosimo was conveniently removed from the picture, John 'The Fox' Torrio became the boss of the Chicago Outfit, and by his side stood Al Capone.

With Torrio's blessing, Capone set about covertly reopening breweries and distilleries that had been closed by the Volstead Act, setting up an ambitious distribution network to the city's mean speakeasies with the help of his older brothers Ralph and Frank Capone. 'Nobody wanted Prohibition,' he said. 'This town voted six to one against it. Somebody had to throw some liquor on that thirst. Why not me?'

The loyal Ralph was put in charge of one of the Chicago Outfit's legal enterprises, a soft-drink bottling plant which earned him the nickname 'Bottles', while Frank honed a reputation for savagery that overshadowed even Al's. Estimated to have been responsible for 300 deaths, Frank infamously advised his little bother that, 'You get no talk back from a corpse.'

It was happening under Johnny Torrio's command but there was no doubt that bootlegging was Al Capone's kingdom, and he was soon to pay for it in blood as 1923 saw the downfall of Chicago's sticky-fingered mayor, 'Big Bill' Thompson. The Democrat William Emmett Dever was voted in on a pledge to sweep the gangs from the city and Torrio entrusted Capone with an urgent relocation to Cicero— the fourth largest city in Illinois—just outside of Chicago and the legislative reach of 'Decent Dever'. While

**Capone in New York**

Born in 1898 in a run down district of Brooklyn to Italian immigrants Gabriele and Teresina Capone, Al Capone's life of crime began early, brawling with street gangs and running errands for mobsters. One, a young rising star called Johnny Torrio, wouldloom larger in his life later on.

Capone soon found work with Frankie Yale (born Francesco Ioele), a vicious thug with links to Torrio. Working as a barman in Yale's bar, the Harvard Inn—a notorious haunt of prostitutes and gangsters—Capone got vicious scars on his face when he leered at a mobster's sister. 'Honey, you got a nice ass and I mean that as a compliment, believe me.' The furious Frank Galluccio called Capone out and slashed him three times across his cheek with a knife. He needed 30 stitches, but he was lucky the hoodlum had been drinking because Galluccio was aiming for his jugular. In the bar he also picked up syphilis, which eventually caused his death, but may have affected him even earlier. Neurosyphilis attacks the brain and the spinal column, and can cause violent mood swings, delusions and megalomania.

**Johnny Torrio**

**Even after handing control over to Capone he was still involved in organised crime and became a close associate of Lucky Luciano and other mob bosses**

Capone learned his trade in 1910s New York.
1. WHISKY ON THE BOARDWALK

Ships laden down with whisky from Canada would anchor off the coast of New Jersey, well beyond the maritime limit patrolled by the US Coast Guard. Smugglers would sail out to pick up the crates of booze and New Jersey’s vast coastline became something of a free-for-all, with rival gangs hijacking each other’s shipments. The hedonistic boardwalk resort of Atlantic City became the major gateway with the town’s Irish-American racketeer Enoch ‘Nucky’ Johnson taking a major cut before it moved onward to Capone in Chicago or other mobs in New York and Jersey City.

2. RUM FROM THE CARIBBEAN

With Prohibition, Cuba emerged as a hedonistic getaway from the newly ‘dry’ US to the Bacardi-soaked Caribbean. Traffic flowed both ways, however, with ‘rum runners’ smuggling from Cuba, Jamaica and the Bahamas into South Florida, Texas and Louisiana. In Texas, Galveston became the major entry point, supplying the rest of Texas and much of the Midwest. Dubbed the ‘Free State of Galveston’, brothers Sam and Rose Maceo ruled the local vice trade and successfully held off competition from Capone and New York boss Albert Anastasia.

3. A LAKE OF WHISKY

Although Ontario had its own temperance laws, they didn’t ban distilling alcohol, leading to a flow of hooch across Lake Michigan and up the Detroit River from Windsor to Detroit. With illegally obtained papers saying their final destination was Venezuela, they would quietly off-load their cargo in Motor City instead. Detroit had been ‘dry’ well before Prohibition and the Purple Gang tightly controlled the rum-running trade and were major suppliers to Capone’s Chicago Outfit.

4. MULES FROM MEXICO

Mass smuggling of US goods into Mexico was turned completely on its head thanks to Prohibition. Now homemade tequila and mescal was smuggled in the opposite direction by mule in groups of three or four, often crossing rivers at night, or by truck and car along dusty and isolated roads. Texas’s 1,300km (800mi) Mexican border was simply too wide to be adequately policed, and cat-and-mouse chases between the smugglers and Texas Rangers became the stuff of legend.

5. MOUNTAIN MOONSHINE

While champagne, gin, rum and whisky were available to those with the cash to cover its dangerous distribution, the poorer had to be taken care of too and moonshine cut the costs significantly. Rural communities in the Appalachian Mountains and the Midwest had a tradition of home brew, but now a market opened up for their moonshine. Stills could explode and quality control was poor and potentially life-threatening - but moonshiners often expanded their operations into barn-sized breweries.

“HIS REVOLVER LEVELLED AT TORRID’S SKULL - THE GUN CLICKED ON EMPTY AND THE WOULD-BE ASSASSINS FLED”
Specially made for Al Capone by Cadillac, this car had bulletproof glass and could travel at 110 miles per hour.

Capone enjoys some down time at his holiday home in Miami, Florida.

People queue outside a soup kitchen opened by Capone in Chicago.

The public gallery at Capone’s trial cover their faces for the camera to avoid being recognised.

Capone winks at the camera after being sentenced.
Capone is transported to prison following his trial for tax evasion.

Torrio and Capone had ruled their criminal empire largely as Colosimo had – with money in the right pockets and threats whispered in the right ears – the takeover of Cicero was an overt display of force, as Capone set about rigging the mayoral election for the mob’s pet politician, Joseph Z. Polkina.

On the eve of the 1924 mayoral election, Frank Capone burst into the office of the Democrat candidate for Cicero with some of his thugs, beating the hopeful to a pulp with their pistol butts, trashing his office and firing their revolvers into the ceiling as a preamble for the next day’s audacious takeover. As cold, grey 1 April dawned, Capone hoods stormed into the polling stations to screen voters, snatching their ballot papers from them to ensure they were ticking the right box. Election officials with the stones to intervene were dealt with: a Democrat campaign worker was shot in the legs and dumped in a cellar, two other men were shot in the street and another had his throat cut.

Eventually, a desperate judge bussed in 70 Chicago police officers, deputised on the spot into the Cicero Police Department, to restore order. As the rain started to fall, Frank Capone found himself in a firefight outside a polling station, opening fire on an approaching police car, he was gunned down by the startled cops, but it was too late – the town belonged to the Chicago Outfit.

Despite the appalling bloodshed in the takeover of Cicero, Al Capone had been something of an enigma to the press. However, as he got his hands dirtier and dirtier and frequently acted unstably – a possible consequence of syphilis contracted back in New York – his name was beginning to be heard outside of darkened back rooms where shady men made deals. A few weeks after Frank’s body hit the pavement, small-time burglar ‘Ragtime’ Joe Howard was enjoying a drink in a bar, when two men entered, witnesses, who quickly forgot all the other details, recalled him say a friendly “Hello Al” before he was shot point blank – four rounds into his cheek and two into his shoulder. Nobody saw anything, nobody recognised the man, but the police knew who was responsible and so did the press, so for the first time, Capone’s mugshot appeared on the front page.

In private, Capone’s gang whispered that Howard had stuck up Jack ‘Greasy Thumb’ Guzik for $1,500, boasting he had “made the little Jew whine.” Guzik was Capone’s trusted money man, responsible for regular payoffs to cops and judges. Soon the name “Scarface” began to stick, needling away at Capone’s vanity – he never allowed the left side of his face to be photographed – and he began to lash out at the flickering flash bulbs of the photographers.

There were far more immediate threats than damning headlines, though. The predominantly Irish-American North Side Gang run by Dean O’Banion controlled the breweries and the bootlegging in Chicago’s North Side and had resisted all of Torrio’s efforts to bring them to heel. Alliances and truces had dwindled and fallen apart, but the last straw came on 19 May 1924 as O’Banion finally relinquished his share of the Sieben Brewery to Torrio. As soon as Torrio and his boys – joined by their allies in Little Sicily’s “Terrible Gennas” – showed up, a conveniently timed police raid swept in and the boss was left with a $5,000 fine and a nine-month jail sentence. “Deany was all right,” smirked Capone, who took over the day-to-day running of the mob while Torrio served his sentence. “But like everyone else, his head got away from his hat.”

One day while O’Banion clipped chrysanthemums in his flower shop, Schofields, Mike ‘The Devil’ Genna, John Scalise, Albert Anselmi and Frankie Yale strode in. As O’Banion and Yale shook hands, Scalise and Anselmi fired two bullets into his chest and two into his throat. As he lay on the floor in a pool of blood and petals, he was shot in the back of the head for good measure. He had been dealt with.

George Clarence ‘Bugs’ Moran took over the North Side Gang and nursed their grudge, moving the headquarters from Schofields to the garage that would become the site of the shocking St Valentine’s Day Massacre.
Massacre in 1929, the culmination of a brutal and bloody five-year gang war between the Chicago Outfit and the North Side Gang.

Upon his release, Torrio kept a low profile - safe in the knowledge that with Capone in the hot seat, he'd be less of a target. For all of the Fox's wiles, he just hadn't reckoned on how personal this war had become.

Returning from a day shopping with his wife on the morning of 24 January 1925, gunfire lit up the street from a blue Cadillac lurking on the curb, shredding shopping bags to confetti. Blood mingled with the groceries from a litany of wounds as Johnny Torrio stared at the sky, the shrieking of Anna Torrio strangely distant. As Bugs Moran stood over him, blocking the crisp winter sun, his revolver levelled at Torrio's skull - the gun clicked on empty and the would-be assassins fled.

Capone's ascendancy was immediate as Torrio underwent emergency surgery. Capone slept by his mentor's bedside - the men of the Chicago Outfit standing guard around the clock, eying each disinterested nurse and flower-clutching day visitor suspiciously. "It's all yours, Al," said Torrio eventually. "Me? I'm quitting; it's Europe for me."

With the Fox quietly returning to Italy, Capone moved his headquarters into Chicago's luxurious Lexington Hotel, taking over the fourth and fifth floors where he held court like an emperor, surrounded by mobsters and prostitutes. A concrete vault was installed in the basement and a secret staircase hidden behind a mirror in one of his bathrooms. Just one part of a web of tunnels that would allow him a quick escape. Rising late most days, he took his time pouring over the morning papers like a statesman. Before dressing himself in expensive finely tailored suits. Early afternoon, Capone moved into his study in another suite where petitioners waited anxiously for favours and his patronage. Nobody talked about the "Free Kingdom of Torrio" anymore. No. now the press called Cicero the "Capital of Caponeland."

Capone began to court newspaper men, handing out expensive cigars and inviting them to lavish parties, where the lord of the Chicago underworld played billiards with boxers, baseball players and the notoriously corrupt.

**"CAPONE MOVED INTO HIS STUDY WHERE PETITIONERS WAITED ANXIOUSLY FOR FAVOURS AND HIS PATRONAGE"**

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**FIVE FACTS ABOUT SCARFACE**

1. Capone's specially-outfitted, bulletproof Cadillac was seized by the US Treasury Department in 1932. It was later used by the government as President Franklin Roosevelt's limousine.
2. Even though he is synonymous with Chicago, he only lived in the city for 12 years of his life.
3. Allegedly, he had never heard of Eliot Ness, the government agent sent to bring him to justice.
4. The man who helped America swim in booze during Prohibition's favourite drink was Templeton Rye whisky.
5. His men carried out most of the deaths he is responsible for, but Capone is still thought to have killed more than a dozen men personally.
CAPONE AND ALCATRAZ

What was he sentenced for?
Capone was sentenced to 11 years for three counts of tax evasion (1927-9) and two counts of failing to provide tax returns (1928-9) as his lavish lifestyle and lack of legitimate income was used against him. A further count of tax evasion and 5,000 violations of the Volstead Act were dropped out of fear the prosecution would be unable to get a conviction.

What was his defence?
Capone's legal team originally struck a deal with the prosecution to admit to the lighter charges and serve between two and five years so business would be able to go on as usual. However, when details leaked to the press the outrage was so great that the deal was immediately canned and the judge threw the book at him.

What happened at the trial?
The jury was suddenly exchanged for another in the court by Judge Wilkerson when the police learnt of a plot from Capone's mob to bribe them. The new jury, all from rural Illinois, were sequestered overnight to keep them out of the Chicago Outfit's reach. Wilkerson sentenced Capone to 11 years. $500,000 in fines. court costs of another $30,000 and no bail.

How was life for him in jail?
Initially, Capone served his sentence in Atlanta, Georgia, continuing to rule his crime empire by proxy, bribing guards with thousands of dollars hidden in the hollow handle of a tennis racket to be able to communicate with the outside world. He was then sent to the newly opened Alcatraz, where his link to the outside world was finally severed.

Was Alcatraz a 'hard' prison?
In Alcatraz, Capone's letters were censored, prohibited subjects and current events were removed, newspapers banned and all magazines had to be at least seven months old. He was only allowed visits from immediate family, who would be separated from the one-time king of crime by a sheet of glass.

Why was he released?
Capone was released into the care of his family on 16 November 1939 due to brain damage caused by neurosyphilis. By 1946, he was deemed to have the intelligence of a 12-year-old, suffering from delusional fits. raving about communists and plots to kill him. On 21 January 1947, Capone had a stroke and suffered a fatal heart attack on 25 January 1947, aged 48.

It was only ever an irritant, taping chunks out of his income he would not - but to a mobster as egotistical as Capone, such defiance drove him into a rage. It was a fury Ness gleefully exploited - parading captured vehicles outside his hotel and taunting him on the phone. However much Ness might have damaged his ego, the real danger to the man who made the streets of Chicago swim in booze and blood came from fraud investigator Frank J Wilson as he poured over reams of paperwork.

In May 1927, the US Supreme Court's 'Sullivan decision' had reversed a bizarre legal loophole that meant gangsters were legally exempt from having to register illegal income on their tax returns, on the basis that it would violate their Fifth Amendment rights. Marilyn Sullivan, a Chicago bootlegger whose trial lent the decision its name, received a landmark conviction for tax evasion.

That same year, the Chicago Outfit's income was an estimated $108 million. Capone simply had to be next.
The bodies of the victims of the St Valentine's Day Massacre
FROM MURDER TO MASSACRE

THE SLAYING OF SEVEN MEN IN THE BLOODY ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE STANDS AS THE MOST NOTORIOUS SET OF MURDERS IN THE HISTORY OF AMERICAN GANG WARFARE.

When surveying the landscape of gangster violence during the Prohibition era, no event, no matter how brutal, can match the notoriety of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. The machine-gun murders of seven men on 14 February 1929, by gangsters dressed as police officers, became the most storied event in the history of America's violent underworld. The killings prompted thousands upon thousands of press reports and inspired numerous histories, novels, documentaries and films. Only a few witnesses heard the machine-gun fire but its echo reverberated around the world, marking the beginning of the end for Chicago's most infamous crime lord, Al Capone.

Among those witnesses in and around N Clark Street, home to the murder scene at the SMC Cartridge Company, most presumed the gunfire was a car backfiring, which was not uncommon in the early days of the automobile. Those who did suspect a shooting would not have been surprised; gangster-on-gangster violence in Chicago had become endemic during the latter half of the decade, fuelled by the 'Beer Wars' that gripped the city between 1924 and 1930.

The shooters had used Thompson submachine guns as well as shotguns, leaving a horrible bloody mess in their wake. One victim was sprawled across a chair, while the others were scattered around the concrete floor. At least two - the recipients of shotgun blasts - had their heads blown open; pieces of skull and brains were splattered on the walls. It was a scene, said Loftus, unlike any other he had encountered in his near-40-year career. He was left speechless. The only sound was the yapping of a dog that had been left tied to one of the cars in the garage. It barked repeatedly.

Regaining his composure, Loftus ordered a colleague to bolt the door. It was then he noticed that one man was still alive. It was Frank Gusenberg, one of the Irish.

THE KILLERS

Who were the mystery gunmen responsible for the notorious bloodbath?

Though most historians and investigators agree Capone was almost certainly behind the attack, there has been much disagreement over the years about who actually executed the killings. However, it is now widely accepted that five men were crucial to the hit - Fred 'Killer' Burke, Gus Winkler, Fred Goetz, Ray 'Crane Neck' Nugent and Bob Carey. Several of these men had other known aliases. Much key evidence comes from one of their lookouts, Byron Bolton, who gave a confession to the FBI that listed many details about the planning of the Massacre after he was picked up in 1935. The likes of John Scalise, Albert Anselmi and Joseph Lollo and have also been cited as killers but, in the words of historian John J Binder, the theory incorporating these three is simply a 'Solomonic compromise that includes various people who were suspected at one time or another.' Winkler later said that Burke and Goetz were in uniform and fired the machine guns.

The men who executed the killings were the remnants of a gang known as Egan's Rats, who wielded considerable power in St Louis, Missouri, up to around 1924. The new gang were a motley crew, led by Burke, and on the night of the massacre they included a number of lookouts, as well as those who drove a second police car around to the back of the garage. There could have been as many as 12 involved, other lookouts have been named as Jimmy 'the Swede' Johnson and Jimmy McCrussen. They were all outsiders, largely unknown to Chicago's police officers or mobsters. To Capone's gang, they were known as the American Boys, their relative anonymity ensured they were the perfect choice to execute the hit.
influenced North Side Gang run by George ‘Bugs’ Moran, a competitor of Capone with whom he had been locked in a long-running feud. Gusenberg was one of Moran’s primary shooters and Loftus knew him well. The officer asked the prone man what had happened, but the gangster refused to elucidate. Instead, he pleaded for hospital attention, and Loftus assured him medical help was on the way. However, Gusenberg died soon after. The local newspapers, though lacking information, went into overdrive with the Herald and Examiner printing a memorable line in one if its early reports: ‘Chicago gangsters yesterday graduated from murder to massacre.’

Six of the dead men were known members of the North Side Gang. The seventh was a civilian, Reinhardt Schwimmer, an optometrist, although he was a recognised associate of the North Siders. The SMC Cartridge Company, meanwhile, was a well-known haunt, used as headquarters by a section of Moran’s gang. Three of those gunned down were among the gang’s top killers. Two more were regarded as important operatives.

This was a targeted attack. The killers had hoped to gun down Moran himself. It now appears that a lookout across the street had signalled the killers to strike, mistakenly believing that Moran was inside the garage.

One of the gangsters, James Clark, is thought to have resembled Moran – others claim it was Albert Weinshank who bore the closest likeness – and this seems to have duped the lookout. In fact, Moran was on his way to the garage to meet his men when he spotted a black Cadillac, the type used by Chicago lawmen, pulling up outside the venue. Fearing a police sting, he sped off. The move no doubt saved his life. He quite literally dodged a bullet.

Though the real police officers stumbled through their investigations, with different areas of law enforcement unhelpfully working against each other, and the coroner’s office also working independently, most researchers and historians agree that it was Capone who ordered the hit. The police never managed to pin the killings on the notorious crime boss, but all major sources concur that he had plenty of motive.

Contrary to popular belief, historians now believe it unlikely that he targeted Moran in a bid to take control of Chicago’s bootlegging industry in its entirety, but he did have a long-standing grudge with his rival and the North Siders, which had been exacerbated by the latter’s hit on Patsy LoLordo, head of the Union Sicilian gang, in the September of the previous year. Capone’s gang and the North Siders were also at war over control of gambling at Chicago’s dog tracks, and Moran had muscled in on a number of Capone’s speakeasies, insisting that they were in his territory. Killing Moran, therefore, made good sense – cut off the snake’s head and the body would soon wither.

As to whom Capone hired to execute the hit, this has sparked disagreement among historians for years – though several leading experts now conclude that the hitmen were a secret crew from St Louis, known to Capone’s largely ‘Italian gang as the American Boys’. This group of hoodlums, thought to have been led by Fred ‘Killer’ Burke, is said to have grown out of the hardnosed St Louis gang once known as Egan’s Rats. Early reports cite the shooters as numbering four or five men – this was the number of men witnesses saw emerge from the police Cadillac and move between the car and the garage. In truth, the death squad probably stood at around a dozen men, including the lookouts and a group of men forming a second ‘detective’ squad.

The massacre brought plenty of government and press attention on the nation’s crime lords, prompting the famous Atlantic City Conference in May 1929, where top bosses from across the country convened. Here it was made clear to Capone that he needed to keep a low profile until the clamour died down. He subsequently left Atlantic City, travelled by train to Philadelphia and (after taking in a movie) approached some detectives.
Five of the seven victims, excluding May and Schwimmer, who were hit in the head by shotgun blasts

John May
John May was a young mechanic with a family of seven children. He worked as a part-time mechanic for Moran’s mob, too. He had worked as a safe-cracker but had retired for a $50 a week salary working on the gangsters’ cars and trucks instead. His head was blown apart by a shotgun.

Adam Heyer
Heyer was, detectives said, the brains in Moran’s outfit and it was he who had hired the garage during the previous December. He had served two stints inside, one for robbery and another for confidence trickery, and he was a partner in Moran’s Fairview Kennels dog track.

Pete Gusenberg
Pete Gusenberg was one of Moran’s main gunmen, along with his brother Frank. He had twice shot two shots on Capone shooter ‘Machine Gun’ Jack McGurn, often cited as one of the reasons behind Capone’s decision to order the strike. He was also involved in the Dearborn Station robbery where his gang made off with $300,000.

Frank Gusenberg
Another of Moran’s main gunmen, Frank and his brother Pete were the press media men of Unsavory Sicilian presidents Tony Lombardo and Patsy Ialdoro, which infuriated Capone. Frank is also said to have been one of the main shooters in an attack on Capone’s headquarters at the Hawthorne Hotel in 1926.

with whom he was familiar and offered himself up for arrest for possession of a firearm. Ordinary, he did not carry a weapon but, by accepting a year inside, he took himself out of the firing line and, to the wider public, it appeared that some justice had been done. Capone was behind bars. Now, the crime lords hoped, the spotlight would shine elsewhere and leave them to continue their operations in the shadows.

There was peace in Chicago, for a while at least, as the Capone gang and the North Siders worked alongside one another, sometimes in harmony. However, though he did not know it at the time, this was the beginning of the end of Al Capone. His jailing only added to his celebrity status but undermined his real power in gangland. With Moran never again rising to the prominence he enjoyed before the massacre and Capone incarcerated, a new generation of hoodlums looked to muscle in on Chicago. Under the guiding hand of the elder statesman Johnny Torrio, the likes of Meyer Lansky, Max Hoff and Frank Nitti came further to the fore.

The state, meanwhile, was making its preparations prior to pouncing on Capone for tax evasion. The St Valentine’s Day Massacre made Capone the most famous gangster in the world. For that notoriety he paid a heavy price.
The real Eliot Ness, in 1935
ELIOT NESS: THE RISE AND FALL

ELIOT NESS AND HIS SQUAD OF UNTOUCHABLES SET OUT TO SMASH AL CAPONE. BUT THEIR ANTICS WERE MOSTLY FOR SHOW, AND NESS’S POST-CHICAGO CAREER WAS LESS THAN ILLUSTRIOUS

In 2014, US senators Richard Durbin, Sherrod Brown and Mark Kirk proposed a tribute to the Prohibition-era federal agent, Eliot Ness. In recognition of Ness’s famous heroics as an enforcer of law and order, they wanted to rename the national headquarters of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives in Washington, DC in his honour. It would have been uncontroversial had those heroics been incontrovertibly true. For many critics, the Ness that became known to the public through decades of books, TV shows and movies is almost entirely fictional: a mythologised version of a man who, while he had his share of successes, was far less remarkable. “Naming a building after him for his role in bringing down Al Capone?” snorted Daniel Okrent, author of Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition. “You might as well name it after Batman.”

Ness, clearly enough, was not an inspiration for the Caped Crusader, but he did provide the basis for another comic strip hero. The square-jawed crime fighter Dick Tracy first appeared in the early 1930s, created by cartoonist Chester Gould. In later years the character fought outlandish freaks but, in his early days his beat like Ness’s, was Chicago (the city was unnamed but it was clear where it was), and his enemies mobsters like...
Years earlier in 1929, Eliot Ness and his 'Untouchables' were sober and responsible middle-class citizens who owned and ran a bakery, instilling their work ethic into their five children. Moore, who worked for the US Treasury Department in the prohibition bureau, found his greatest role model. His parents, both Norwegian immigrants, were sober and responsible, encouraging his passion for stories of law enforcement and detective work, as well as teaching him to shoot. Ness graduated from the University of Chicago in 1925 with a first class degree in political science, commerce and business administration, and spent a year as an investigator for the Retail Credit Company in Chicago. He returned to academia for postgraduate work with August Vollmer, a pioneer in the nascent field of criminal justice. When his studies were complete in 1928, Jamie, now the chief investigator in the prohibition bureau, brought Ness in to work as an agent. Jamie himself would rise to the position of head of the Chicago branch of the FBI.

By 1928, it was the last to arrive on 19 April 1903. Young Eliot worked in the bakery, delivered newspapers, did well at Fenger High School on Chicago's South Side, and enjoyed reading, particularly mysteries. He always dressed unusually well, prompting school friends to tease him with the nickname 'Elegant Ness.' When his eldest sister, Clara, married a man named Alexander Jamie, who worked for the US Treasury Department in the prohibition bureau, Ness found his greatest role model. Jamie proved a profound formative influence on Ness, encouraging his passion for stories of law enforcement and detective work, as well as teaching him to shoot. Ness had turned to the law as his profession. The oldest Untouchable at 50, Ness found him to be incredibly adept at undercover work, considering his striking size and appearance.

Mike King

Analyst Mike King was Ness’s man in charge of data interpretation and tactics. He said the job was “mostly routine work” and that “we were never in any real danger during the raids or our investigations.”

Joe Leeson

Leeson had spent four years in the Navy during WWII, after which he had been a boilermaker and repair engineer for US railroad companies. When he switched careers to become a prohibition agent in 1928, he became renowned within the Bureau as an expert driver, with a particular talent for tailing other vehicles undetected.

Paul W Robsky

Robsky was a wire-tapping expert, fast driver and sharp-shooter, who learned his skills in the US military from 1917-27. He became a prohibition agent in 1928. Ness called him “a good man to have around when more than ordinary courage was needed.” He outrivaled all his colleagues and wrote an autobiography called The Last Of The Untouchables.

Samuel M Seager

The implacable Seager had been a death row corrections officer at New York’s notorious Sing Sing prison prior to joining Ness’s squad. He was responsible, with Joe Leeson, for the Untouchables’ first successful raid against Capone.

Thomas Friel

Representing America’s honest, ‘ordinary’ cops on the elite team, Friel was a former state trooper hailing from Pennsylvania.

Jim Seeley

Seeley was a late addition to Ness’s team. His skills were data analysis and detection, thanks to his former career as a private investigator.

Al Wolff

Never an official Untouchable, Wolff was a rookie FBI agent who did secret undercover jobs for Ness and never met the rest of the squad. He was nicknamed ‘Wallpaper Wolff’ because, when on raids, he would confiscate “everything but the wallpaper.”
poor baker's son," he's reputed to have said, "but Eliot Ness can't be bought: not for two thousand a week, ten thousand or a hundred thousand. Not for all the money they'll ever lay their scummy hands on." The outfit Ness eventually put together was formed of a dozen men including himself, who Ness hand-picked from more than 50 applicants. These were men who, like Ness, had proved they could not be intimidated or bribed. Recruited from around the country, several were World War I veterans chosen for specialist skills that complemented those of the rest of the squad.

"I ticked off the general qualities I desired," Ness later described in his autobiography. "(The men should be] single, no older than 30, [with] both the mental and physical stamina to work long hours and the courage and ability to use fist or gun and special investigative techniques. I needed a good telephone man, one who could tap a wire with speed and precision. I needed men who were excellent drivers, for much of our success would depend upon how expertly they could tail the mob's cars and trucks ... and fresh faces from other divisions who were not known to the Chicago mobsters."

This band of incorruptible tough guys was almost immediately dubbed 'The Untouchables' by a Chicago newspaper. The name stuck, and while the work that actually brought Capone to book - the rather prosaic business of exposing his tax evasion - was carried on behind closed doors by the methodical Irey and Wilson, Ness and his Untouchables went about making headlines with shower stunts. They were certainly a successful irritant to Capone, but they were essentially a public relations operation. It worked: Where Capone had managed to get a reputation as a Robin Hood figure in some circles, even somewhat beloved by the media who could always rely on him for a mischievous soundbite, the arrival of the Untouchables changed the popular narrative to one of straight-up good guys vs. gangster bad guys and Capone. Particularly after the brutal and game-changing St Valentine's Day Massacre (see p.104) was on its doors in a flatbed truck with a snowplough mounted on the front. The speed and violence of this procedure gave those inside the buildings no time to get away, and indeed, no warning that a raid was even imminent. Capone's stunned employees were forced to simply stand idly by as Ness and his Untouchables destroyed stockpiled barrels of beer and whiskey, allowing the contents - and Capone's profits - to seep away into the earth.

Capone and his men were no longer safe to operate out in the open without fear of arrest. The trucks had to go, with the rather less efficient system of smuggling barrels in ordinary-sized cars - which could only carry about four at a time - replacing them. Records of conservations obtained through Ness's wire taps revealed Capone was becoming rattled, not least because he was fighting opponents he didn't understand. If they couldn't be bribed or strong-armed, then what were his options?

One story has two of Ness's team having packets of money thrown at them through their car windows, to which their response was to chase down their surprise benefactors and throw the money back at them. There
“While the Untouchables were out making a noise, Frank Wilson, entirely separately, was putting in the work that would really ‘get’ Capone”

were attempts on Ness’s life and the lives of his men. But Ness’s response was to doggedly and methodically continue on his chosen course of action. He organised a parade of Capone’s confiscated trucks to be driven past Capone’s own hotel. Reports of Capone’s fury became legendary. But when a tapped phone conversation revealed that one speakeasy had run dry because there was no booze that could be delivered there, Ness knew he was winning.

The issue remained, however, that these were still PR victories, rather than events that would result in Capone’s ultimate downfall. Prohibition was an unpopular law, and the feeling among Chicago’s legal community was that the public, and by extension any jury, might still be lenient towards Capone in a court setting, given that his activities were ultimately providing something people wanted: alcoholic drinks. What the public couldn’t abide was a tax cheat, so it was on that basis that Capone was finally indicted. While the Untouchables were out making a noise, Frank Wilson, entirely separately, was putting in the work that would really ‘get’ Capone. The gangster, if he was concerned about anything, was worried about staving off potential murder charges. He wasn’t giving much thought to his tax irregularities.

Wilson, like Ness, carried an excellent reputation within his own field of expertise. His colleague Elmer Irey said that Wilson ‘fears nothing that walks,’ and would ‘sit quietly looking at books eighteen hours a day, seven days a week, forever, if he wants to find something.’ Wilson’s exhaustive trawl through any document possibly remotely pertaining to Capone’s financial operations eventually led to the discovery of a significant interest in a greyhound racing track, the ledgers of which occasionally mentioned large payments to someone referred to only as ‘Al’. Wilson spent three weeks checking documents from bank deposits to voter registrations in a meticulous attempt to identify the handwriting in the ‘Al’ notes, and, incredibly, finally did so via a deposit slip from a Cicero bank. The scrawl belonged to a bookkeeper named Shumway, who agreed to testify about this subsection of Capone’s income. While Ness was out smashing distilleries, the seeds of Capone’s downfall were actually sown by some small pieces of paper.

In Cicero a man named Reis was identified as making huge deposits of cash (in sacks), which he converted to cashier’s cheques and filtered back directly to Capone.
ELIOT NESS – THE RISE AND FALL

The Untouchables gave their name to a successful television series in the late 1950s and early 1960s, which in turn inspired Brian De Palma's blockbuster 1987 movie. Kevin Costner starred as Eliot Ness in the film, with Robert De Niro as Al Capone. Beyond Ness, none of them was truly a member of the squad. Charles Martin Smith's accountant character 'Oscar Wallace' is essentially supposed to be Frank Wilson, who wasn't an Untouchable at all. His presence in the movie team is a convenient way to fold Capone's eventual arrest for tax evasion into the narrative of the Untouchables themselves. In reality, the work of Ness and Wilson was entirely separate.

Capone and Ness never met prior to the trial, while the film has them sharing scenes on a number of occasions. Ness is depicted as having a wife and daughter, when he was actually single for the two years the Untouchables were operating. And in the film, Ness kills Capone's enforcer Frank Nitti (Billy Drago) by throwing him from a roof. No such thing really happened: in fact, Nitti continued to run Capone's remaining operations after Capone went to Alcatraz. He committed suicide in 1943 when he learned the law was closing in on him.

Res too was strong-armed into testifying. Capone noticed that Shumway and Res had both apparently disappeared (presumably into protective custody), and actually hired assassins to kill Wilson. He called off the hit when he learned that his thugs were already known to the State Attorney's office and might end up incriminating him further. Finally, with WJ's Treasury Department case deemed rock solid, Capone was indicted on 23 counts of tax evasion by a grand jury in June 1931. He was given an 11-year sentence on the brutal prison rock of Alcatraz, and his reign was over.

Ness was still a young man of 28, and found himself in the peculiar position of being renowned as the man who brought down Capone, while having done no such thing. After all of Ness's showmanship in battling Capone, the gangster's real demise must have seemed anticlimactic to the fresh-faced agent. The Untouchables were disbanded to go their separate ways, and Ness continued working at Chicago's Prohibition Bureau, where he was promoted to chief investigator. And when Prohibition was repealed in 1933, he became an alcohol tax agent in the Appalachian mountains of south Ohio. Kentucky and Tennessee, nicknamed the 'moonshine mountains' due to their reputation as notorious outposts of renegade hooch stills. He averaged an incredible one-a-day rate for the shutting down of illegal bootlegging operations. Within a year there were almost none still operating in the Appalachians.

Ness transferred to Cleveland, Ohio in 1934, and a year later Mayor Harold Burton hired him as the city's safety director in charge of the police and fire departments. His appointment was enthusiastically reported by the press, with whom Ness maintained the cordial relationships that had benefitted him in Chicago. "If any man knows the inside of the crime situation here," raved one editorial, "his name is Ness. The mere announcement of his selection is worth a squadron of police in the effect it will have on the underworld's peace of mind."

Burton had been elected on a law-and-order platform, pledging war on organised crime and on corrupt police and fire departments. Ness immediately set about cleaning up the town for him. The sloppily disorganised and often dishonest law enforcement institutions at that time in Cleveland were initially unimpressed with Ness, who appeared mild-mannered on first meeting. But they soon realised they had underestimated him. To those who were on the level he was fair, making sure they knew his door was always open, and striving to provide them with equipment that they may previously have lacked due to underfunding or legislative indifference. Those he found to be morally compromised, however, found themselves the subject of intense investigations, with Ness even employing wiretaps just as he had in Chicago.

He hired a new team of 'untouchables', this time known as the 'Secret Six', sourced from outside Cleveland and therefore with no ties of loyalty within the Cleveland
Eliot Ness’s post-Chicago years in Cleveland saw him involved in perhaps the second-most significant event of his career in law enforcement: the grisly case of a serial killer known as the Cleveland Torso Murderer.

Between 1935 and 1938, 12 known victims— and possibly as many as 20— were murdered. All were decapitated and most were further dismembered. Some to the extent that their torsos were cut in half. The killer showed no preference between male and female victims, but all were from the Depression-era social substrata dubbed the ‘working poor’, forced to live in the notorious Cleveland shantytown Kingsbury Run. The killer appeared to deliberately taunt safety director Ness when he left two of the bodies in places clearly visible from Ness’s office. Ness’s response was to raid Kingsbury Run, taking 35 officers with him to round up 63 of its homeless inhabitants before burning the shanty down. His actions were much criticised, but the killings did appear to cease in the wake of the fire and demolition. The killer, however, was never identified. Ness arrested a well-connected doctor named Francis Sweeney, who had performed amputations during WWI and failed two lie detector tests. But Ness could not put together a successful prosecution case and was forced to let Sweeney go.

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Robert Stack as Ness, from the 1959-1963 American TV series

The trigger-happy Ness of film and TV is a fiction. Ness hated guns and often wore an empty shoulder holster.
LAST ORDERS

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REPEAL
The 18th Amendment
The Crusaders
THE FIGHT FOR A DRINK

ALTHOUGH THEY WERE TEMPORARILY OUTMANOEUVRED BY THE PROHIBITION MOVEMENT, THOSE WHO ADVOCATED THE LEGALISED SALE AND CONSUMPTION OF ALCOHOL EVENTUALLY PREVAILED

The famous Budweiser Clydesdales stepped with a lively gait into the streets of St Louis, Missouri, home of the Anheuser-Busch Brewing Company, and embarked on a nationwide tour to promote their product. Their journey included the delivery of a case of beer to the White House in Washington DC.

The Anheuser-Busch campaign began on 7 April 1933, just three weeks after the US Congress amended the Volstead Act to redefine the limits of 'intoxicating' beverages - in this case beer. The minimum standard was raised from 0.5 per cent alcohol by volume to 3.2 per cent. Beer was back, and President Franklin D Roosevelt quickly signed the Cullen-Harrison Act, commonly called the 'Beer Bill', into law. "I think this would be a good time for a beer," he quipped.

By the end of the year, Prohibition itself was only a memory. The 21st Amendment to the Constitution repealed the law against the sale, transport and consumption of alcohol effective on 5 December 1933. After 13 years, it was legal to buy and sell alcohol again in the United States. During most of the 'dry' years, the possibility of repealing the 18th Amendment that had brought Prohibition into being in 1920 seemed remote. However, as the years wore on, those who opposed Prohibition in the first place were never completely silenced. The unintended consequences of the measure also weighed upon its continuation.

While Prohibition was intended to eradicate the use and abuse of alcoholic beverages in the United States, and along with that solve many of the ills that plagued modern society - drunkenness, health-related issues, domestic...
The Fight for a Drink

A woman makes her anti-Prohibition sentiments known while placing a tyre cover with an appropriate slogan on a car.
Among the unintended consequences of Prohibition was the fascinating enrichment of the retail drugstore industry. For an investment of $6, the average American could obtain alcohol without breaking the law. A visit to the doctor to obtain a $3 prescription and a stop at the corner drugstore to have it filled for another $3 meant the ‘patient’ could take home their medicinal alcohol in a brown paper bag, and in little more than a week the process could be repeated.

While it is estimated that American physicians earned an astounding $40 million in profits during Prohibition, pharmacists and retail drugstore chains experienced a windfall of revenue through such practices as well. The growth of Walgreens, a familiar brand in the pharmacy line of business today, was tremendous during Prohibition. Headquartered in Chicago, the chain experienced incredible growth during the 1920s, expanding operations from 20 storefronts in 1920 to 525 locations spanning the United States at the end of the decade.

The lion’s share of Walgreens’ growth, according to the company’s management, was due to an outstanding leadership team and its business acumen: a popular brand of ice cream that was made in Chicago, distributed across the country and sold in the drugstores’ soda fountains, and the invention of the malted milkshake by employee Ivan ‘Pop’ Coulson in 1922. While each of these factors certainly contributed to Walgreens’ financial success during the Prohibition era, there is also no doubt that the sale of prescription-approved medicinal alcohol was a prime mover in the meteoric rise in profits experienced by Walgreens and other pharmaceutical retailers.

While he is not busy dispensing alcohol, this Prohibition-era pharmacist is mixing medication with a mortar and pestle.

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John J Raskob, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, testifies before Congress regarding contributions to the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment.

Although statistics assert that violent crime levels remained constant, the gang wars and ruthless murders of rival mobsters grabbed newspaper headlines and created an impression among average Americans that major cities were essentially lawless. The graduated federal income tax approved in 1913 was unpopular, and it had been supported by Prohibition advocates as a substitute for the loss of alcohol-related tax revenue. However, even the income tax volume dropped with the onset of the Great Depression, and the federal government began to see the end of Prohibition as a means of collecting sorely needed funds for its coffers. Basic respect for the law eroded over time, as well as people openly defying anti-alcohol statutes. Tainted alcohol found its way into mixed drinks, and the so-called ‘rotgut’ killed, crippled and blinded thousands of people. Each of these circumstances undermined the effectiveness and the rationale for Prohibition.

Before and during the Prohibition years, no fewer than 40 organisations mounted opposition to the measure.

With names such as the Anti-Dry League, Light Wine and Bear League of America, National Liberty Party, Good Fellows of America and the 1776 Society, these groups were vocal in their opposition to the Prohibitionists, and they exploited each of the weaknesses derived from its enactment.

Among the most prominent anti-Prohibition organisations was the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA). Founded by former US Navy Captain William H Stayton in 1918, the AAPA grew substantially in numbers and influence after ratification of the 18th Amendment. Stayton’s concerns went beyond the law relating to alcohol and encompassed a genuine worry about overriding federal interference with state and local autonomy. The AAPA included both Republicans and Democrats and carried no specific religious affiliation, and membership required the payment of $1 in annual dues. By 1921, the organisation included 100,000 members, but in the next year its membership increased nearly five times to more than 450,000, and it reached 726,000 in mid 1926.

The AAPA was the largest organisation of its kind, and soon after its inception a gift of $10,000 was received from prominent German-American civil engineer John A Roebling, designer and builder of the Brooklyn Bridge.
Between 1921 and 1926, it raised more than $800,000 to fund efforts that were initially aimed to reform Prohibition, either through more effective enforcement or simply urging people to pay no attention to a law that they believed had failed to achieve any of the results that had been promised.

Stayton mounted an early effort to sway voter opinion against Prohibition; however, he quickly learned that attracting the support of powerful and influential people might be more effective than sheer weight of numbers. Among those who became members of the AAPA were Pierre, Irene and Lammot du Pont, the wealthy leaders of the founding family of El du Pont de Nemours and Company; John J Raskob, a businessman with du Pont and General Motors, who was responsible for the construction of the Empire State Building in New York; James W Wadsworth, a Republican politician and US congressman and senator from New York who had predicted a widespread wave of crime and civil contempt for the law before Prohibition was enacted; and Henry H Curran, editor of the New York Tribune newspaper and a prominent local politician.

As the AAPA matured, Stayton became the chairman of the board that included these luminaries, while Curran functioned as president, and real authority rested with an executive committee led by Pierre du Pont. The well-financed and organised group gained further influence when Raskob became the national chairman of the Democratic Party and worked to forge a political stance for repeal of the 18th Amendment within it. Active in the publication of propaganda, the AAPA produced several pamphlets during a publicity campaign in 1928 to galvanise the opposition to Prohibition. Among these was Prohibition Enforcement: Its Effects on Courts and Prisons, which detailed the cost of maintaining a prison and court system overloaded with alcohol-related offenders that clogged jails and hopelessly jammed dockets. Other AAPA publications were Reforming America with a Shotgun: A Study of Prohibition Killings, revealing the number of murders that had taken place during efforts to enforce Prohibition, and Canadian Liquor Crossing the Border, which asserted that only five to ten per cent of more than one million gallons of Canadian whiskey being smuggled across the border annually was actually being intercepted.

In 1932, AAPA president Jouett Shouse, successor to Curran, worked to make repeal of Prohibition a central issue in the presidential campaign after the Democratic Party leadership had agreed to make such legislation a part of its platform. The organisation continued to
distribute pamphlets like *Measuring the Liquor Trade*, which noted that alcoholism and deaths from the disease had increased since Prohibition had been enacted. *The Cost of Prohibition and Your Income Tax*, which described the loss of federal tax revenue due to Prohibition, and *Scandals of Prohibition*, describing the corruption and crime that infected five large cities: Detroit, Chicago, Pittsburgh, Buffalo and Philadelphia. When the time came, attorneys employed by the AAPA assisted in drafting the language of the 21st Amendment, the instrument of Prohibition’s demise. They also shepherded the repeal of the 18th Amendment through Congress and guided the states through their portion of the repeal process. After the organisation disbanded in 1933, several of its key members then went on to oppose the increasing authority of central government in President Roosevelt’s New Deal, founding the American Liberty League.

The AAPA successfully cooperated with other anti-Prohibition groups, including the Women’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR), founded in 1929 by Pauline Morton Sabin. Although Sabin had supported Prohibition earlier, she changed her opinion as the measure seemed incapable of delivering positive reforms. When Ella Alexander Boole, president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), stated during a Congressional hearing, “I represent the women of America!” Sabin thought in response, “Well, lady, here’s one woman you don’t represent.”

Sabin had previously been involved with the Women’s National Republican Club and utilised her organisational skills to strengthen the WONPR. One of its early goals was to draw attention to the hypocrisy of those politicians who supported Prohibition in public but continued to drink in private. Committees were also formed to concentrate on different segments of the population, delivering the message of repeal. The WONPR grew to 100,000 members in less than a year, and by the spring of 1931 there were 300,000. By November 1932, it included 1.1 million members, and when Prohibition was finally repealed the membership had climbed to 1.5 million. Some historians claim these numbers were inflated, but even so the WONPR was undoubtedly the largest organisation of its type in the United States, and it was substantially larger than the WCTU.

D. Leigh Colvin, chairman of the National Prohibition Committee, called the WONPR “Bacchanalian maidens, parching for wine - wet women who, like the drunkards whom their program will produce, would take pennies off the eyes of the dead for the sake of legalizing booze!”

Another political enemy screeched at Sabin. “Every evening I get down on my knees and pray to God to damn your soul!” Nevertheless, the WONPR leader was featured on the cover of Time magazine’s 18 July 1932 edition, just a little more than a year before the repeal of Prohibition.

The strength of the WONPR was deceptive at first, and Prohibition activists certainly underestimated its burgeoning political power. One member of the
The vote to end the experiment in morality legislation in American cities. The ordinary worker was surely to be singled out in cities. The powerful American Federal of Labor strongly opposed Prohibition and requested an exemption for beer, raising the level of alcohol by volume to 2.75 per cent. Behind it was the overwhelming support of its membership, which voted 26,475 to 4,000 in favour. However, the effort did not succeed.

Despite the fact that the Prohibition lobby had gained approval for the 18th Amendment, it seems that the proverbial deck was stacked against the success of the ‘noble experiment’ from the beginning. With the passage of the Volstead Act, enumerating the regulations under which Prohibition became operational, enforcement was problematic. There were too few federal, state and local law enforcement personnel to effectively bring criminals to justice, and when one was tried, convicted and jailed, others rapidly took his place. Bootleggers, rum runners and smugglers had a field day, while the face of organised crime changed markedly. Those who participated in the trafficking of alcoholic beverages during Prohibition reaped enormous profits and seldom were undone.

The elements of criminal activity, the hedonism of the Roaring Twenties, the sudden onset of the Great Depression that compelled the federal government to seek renewed sources of tax revenue, and the general fatigue of a populace that just wanted to have a drink without breaking the law conspired to spell the end of Prohibition. The steady and methodical anti-Prohibitionists had failed to stop the ratification of the 18th Amendment, but they had persevered, exercised power and prevailed in the long run. The Prohibition era nevertheless left an indelible mark on American society,

for the poor and lead to a charge of disorderly conduct. Labour organisations were particularly concerned with the perceived injustice of labelling of beer with an alcohol volume of 0.5 per cent as an ‘intoxicating beverage’. Their leaders came to Congress and ‘gave warning that the tranquillity of the working class may be seriously menaced by enforcement’. Prohibition laws, they reasoned, would give rise to civil unrest and promote gang-related crime.

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Americans sought any improvement in their morale and fortunes. Repealing Prohibition in 1933 was cause for celebration.
The end of Prohibition was dictated by several different factors and none by itself was enough. It wasn’t as simple as changing a mere law. The Volstead Act was also the 18th Amendment to the US Constitution, and repeal, the 21st Amendment, took a while to arrange politically. Even after national Prohibition ended in 1933, individual states were left to draw their own lines under the alcohol issue. Some embraced repeal almost instantly while others took a harder line. Mississippi, last of the hold-outs, remained a dry state until 1966. Even today, many counties remain dry under their own local laws and ordinances, including Moore County in Tennessee, which ironically is the site of the Jack Daniel’s distillery.

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression changed America’s political and social landscape even more than Prohibition. In a matter of days, America had gone into financial meltdown followed by a spiralling economic crisis. Millions lost their money, jobs and homes. Many took to the highways and railroads looking for any kind of work or even just the possibility of a paying job. Thousands of businesses folded. So severe was the Crash of 1929 that American share prices didn’t recover to pre-Cash levels until 1954.

Even hundreds of smaller banks collapsed. Few Americans had much sympathy for bankers who they blamed squarely for the crisis. Politicians, many Americans believed, had sat by and allowed
bankers and financiers to ruin the American economy. President Franklin Roosevelt had a huge job on his hands even trying to stabilise America’s economy, let alone restore any semblance of prosperity or public faith in America’s political and corporate leaders. As material conditions worsened, so did the ordinary American’s attitude to those they held responsible.

It was hoped that ending Prohibition might ease public mistrust and hostility while generating jobs and investment and raising tax revenues. It would also remove the national health problems associated with lethal ‘bathtub gin’ and similar toxic brews by removing them from the marketplace. With legal drinks available once again, Americans would turn away from the potentially deadly bathtub gin offered by the bootleggers.

The Crash and Depression alone didn’t boost Prohibition’s popularity any more than Prohibition cured America’s perceived drink problem. They did provide powerful impetus for repeal, though. The return of legal alcohol was a vote-winner in itself. Potential revenues generated through taxes and investment were incredibly attractive to a cash-strapped federal government. Anything that boosted employment and put America on the road to economic recovery was more than welcome.

Prohibition, in addition to all its other problems and failures, wasn’t going to do that. Repeal, on the other hand, would be popular and have genuine benefits for all Americans, not just those at the top. As the beer and wine flowed so would investment, employment and revenues rebound, and it would provide a much-needed boost to national morale. National recovery appealed as much to Roosevelt as to ordinary Americans, and FDR wanted his name and New Deal firmly associated with it.

Politically, repeal wasn’t the issue to register with voters and in Washington. FDR might have been one of America’s more principled politicians, but he was still a politician. He needed to sell repeal and his New Deal to an audience tired of politicians’ promises and bankers’ bungling. So many banks failed that robbers often raided them without knowing they’d already run out of money.

Crime hadn’t become any less of an issue after 1929, either. Granted, bootleggers had largely had their day, but that of the Public Enemies had only just dawned. Worse from Washington’s point of view, many bank robbers, kidnappers and killers of the ‘Crime Wave’ cut their teeth during Prohibition and garnered alarming levels of public
like John Dillinger were robbing (and occasionally Americans felt had already robbed them. Executed newspaper and newsreel industries as well. Men were a new breed of media-friendly criminals for murder in 1934, bank robber and Dillinger audiences for years. They did wonders for the associate Harry Pierpont spoke for many ordinary people when he said: “At least I didn’t become whose sprees delighted newspaper and newsreel support during the Depression. The Public Enemies were a new breed of media-friendly criminals whose sprees delighted newspaper and newsreel audiences for years. They did wonders for the newspaper and newsreel industries as well. Men like John Dillinger were robbing (and occasionally kidnapping for ransom) the same bankers many Americans felt had already robbed them. Executed for murder in 1934, bank robber and Dillinger associate Harry Pierpont spoke for many ordinary people when he said: “At least I didn’t become

president of the bank first. You’d probably be like me if you had the nerve.”

Sympathetic to people losing homes and businesses, ‘Pretty Boy’ Floyd destroyed mortgage papers during bank robberies. Aware that public sympathy mattered - and that banks were insured by the government - Dillinger returned a witness’s pay cheque during one bank robbery saying: “We don’t want your money, just the bank’s.”

America’s political elite feared Public Enemies as much as many ordinary Americans admired them. The more the Public Enemies became public idols, they believed, the greater the cracks in America’s social order. Unheard-of levels of unemployment, bankruptcy, homelessness and mass internal migration to find work were coupled with the ordinary American’s contempt for authority figures they felt had failed them. Or as playwright Bertolt Brecht put it: “The law was made for one thing alone, for the exploitation of those who don’t understand it, or are prevented by naked misery from obeying it.”

Socially and economically, Prohibition, the Crash of 1929 and the Depression formed the perfect seedbed for crime and thugs trading on economic crisis and social decay. Many of the era’s most notorious criminals were involved in bootlegging before repeal, replacing its big-money deals with armed robberies and kidnapping for ransom. By striking at symbols of wealth and privilege they drew not public loathing but public admiration.

Their victims weren’t always treated as kindly. Edward Bremer, brewery heir and president of the Commercial State Bank, drew little public sympathy when kidnapped by the Barker-Karpis Gang in 1934. Driven by desperation, hopelessness, anger and frustration and inspired by the brahado of the Public Enemies many previously honest citizens joined their ranks.

Armed Indiana robber John Dee Smith was typical of thousands of young men who, without honest work, had turned to crime during the Depression. Young, anti-social, rebellious and reckless, their attitudes were spawned by the times they lived in and criminal anti-heroes they often idolised as a result: “Our family had little. I managed one year at high school then quit. I was 16, I wanted to work - but I was 16 in 1932. There wasn’t any work. So I took what I wanted and didn’t worry about it.”

Prohibition spawned Smith’s disregard for authority. The Crash of 1929 took away his chances of honest work and Depression’s poverty sharpened his appetite for crime. For Smith, crime didn’t pay. Condemned for murdering shopkeeper Arlie Foster during a 1935 hold up, Smith was electrocuted on 1 July 1938, aged only 22.

The combination of Prohibition, the Wall Street Crash and the Great Depression changed America forever. Social attitudes, crime, politics and life itself were never the same thereafter. Whether it was always for the better is more debatable and, like America’s social ills today, there is no simple answer. Prohibition had been exactly that, a single simplistic answer to a complex set of social, moral and political questions.

**ROOSEVELT’S BEER ACT**

**THE CULLEN-HARRISON ACT OF 1933 LEGALISED MANUFACTURING LOW-ALCOHOL BEER AND WINE. IT ALSO BOOSTED EMPLOYMENT, INVESTMENT AND TAX REVENUES**

Named for its sponsors, the Cullen-Harrison Act legalised beer production after an almost 14-year drought. Taking advantage of opposition to Prohibition and creating jobs, investment and tax revenues for a cash-starved country, it also served to boost FDR’s popularity among voters.

Repeal wasn’t a top-level issue compared to poverty, unemployment and economic meltdown, but it was certainly useful to FDR and good for the country. New breweries would service an insatiable demand while delivering jobs and investment in any beer-related industry. As breweries flourished, so would production of hops, yeast, barley, brewing equipment, indeed everything down to the labels on beer bottles.

In turn, beer could be taxed at source, employees and businesses would profit and pay tax and the bar industry would flourish. FDR also knew full well that his personal association with giving the public what they wanted would win votes.

It was a crowd-pleaser, appealing to the pro-alcohol lobby and even allowing more pragmatic Prohibitionists to save face, accepting repeal as being good for the country, if not to their personal liking. As FDR said in one of his ‘fireside chats’ on national radio: “I think this would be a good time for a beer.”

**President Roosevelt signs the Cullen-Harrison Act. Many agreed it really was a good time for a beer.**

**Women, once regarded as natural allies by many Prohibitionists, were at the forefront of the repeal movement.**
One minute after midnight on 14 April 1933, a truck pulled out of the Abner-Drury Brewery and set off along the dark streets of Washington, DC. This was no surreptitious late-night run to avoid Prohibition agents – in fact, the driver was doing nothing illegal. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt had recently signed an act allowing, for the first time in years, the sale of low percentage alcohol, after which he supposedly remarked, “I think this would be a good time for a beer”.

The owner of the long-closed brewery obliged. He dispatched his delivery truck to the White House at the moment the law took effect, carrying a couple of cases and the sign ‘PRESIDENT ROOSEVELT. THE FIRST BEER IS FOR YOU’ on the side. By the time it reached Pennsylvania Avenue, a crowd of onlookers and press had gathered and half a dozen Hawaiian guitarists gave the scene a real party atmosphere. Yet one of the people not enjoying the moment was Roosevelt himself. He had already gone to bed, so it fell to the Marine guarding the gate to have the symbolic first taste of legal beer that night. Prohibition would not be repealed until the end of the year, but last orders had been called.

Opposition had been mounting higher than Al Capone’s earnings throughout the 1920s as it became clear to Americans that national Prohibition was, and always had been, unenforceable. Otherwise law-abiding citizens could readily get a drink, in spite of the health risks posed by illegal and often tainted alcohol, thus exposing them to a world of bootlegging, speakeasies and gangsters.
As soon as news spread that Utah had ratified the 21st Amendment on 5 December 1933, preparations for that evening launched into action. The mountainous stores of beer, wines and spirits kept waiting in warehouses or on boats for the end of Prohibition were instantly loaded onto trucks and delivered to hotels and restaurants. Some establishments, fearing they did not have enough or could not sort out their licence in time, even bought alcohol from now-defunct speakeasies.

In cities across the country, crowds gathered and people enjoyed their first legal drink for nearly 14 years. If not ever. Late into the night, choruses of ‘Happy Days Are Here Again’ could be heard in the clubs and bars. That said, President Roosevelt had asked for “good sense” in his proclamation earlier in the day, so he must have been satisfied with how civilised Repeal Day turned out to be. “New York celebrates with quiet restraint,” read one particular newspaper headline.

The somewhat muted reaction could have been down to the fact that many Americans had drunk during Prohibition anyway. If anything, drinking legally felt less exciting. Also, the legalisation of alcohol had been building throughout the year, including the Cullen-Harrison Act in March, and 5 December did not mark Prohibition’s repeal in all of the states. Not everyone would have been in a celebratory mood. Still, many would have woken up the next morning with a different kind of hangover, a legal one, and to this day, Americans mark Repeal Day in their favourite bars.

“DESPITE A MAJORITY OF AMERICANS OPPOSING PROHIBITION, NOT EVERYONE BELIEVED REPEAL TO BE THE SOLUTION”

Crime and organised criminal empires were on the rise as trust in officials fell due to what seemed to be endemic corruption. The violence peaked with the St Valentine’s Day Massacre, when a group of Capone’s hoodlums gunned down seven members of a rival gang in a Chicago garage. Sensational headlines about the mass murder caused outrage across the US and partly inspired President Herbert Hoover, a staunchly defiant ‘dry’, to appoint a commission to evaluate the law enforcement system and propose improvements.

If Hoover hoped the Wickersham Commission would strengthen his position, though, he was mistaken. The 11 members failed to reach a consensus, resulting in an extensive report, released in 1931, full of conflicting, confusing and qualified views. The findings could not ignore the rampant failures with enforcement and a contempt among Americans to abide by the ban, which helped the ‘wets’, while at the same time generally opposing a repeal of the 18th Amendment. Hoover claimed this as a victory, but it was already too little too late by then.

In the wake of the Wall Street Crash of 1929, the Great Depression hit the country hard. People just needed a drink. More importantly, the economic incentives of ending Prohibition came to the fore. Taking back alcohol production, distribution and sale from organised crime syndicates would mean thousands of jobs and much-needed tax revenue. It is estimated the government lost nearly $11 billion during Prohibition, and spent hundreds of millions keeping it going.

Organisations calling for repeal proliferated, including the National Committee for Modification of the Volstead Act. The Crusaders and the Women’s Organisation for National Prohibition Reform. The latter had been formed by a disillusioned Prohibitionist. Pauline Sabin – who once declared “a world without liquor would be a beautiful thing” – and boasted a high of 1.5 million members. Despite a majority of Americans opposing Prohibition, with one poll claiming 74 per cent as against its continuation, not everyone believed repeal to be the solution. Morris Sheppard, a Democratic senator from Texas and author of the 18th Amendment, said there was as much chance of repeal as “there is for a hummingbird to fly to the planet Mars with the Washington Monument tied to its tail”.

Yet when the 1932 presidential election came along, Sheppard’s party disagreed with him. As the Republicans supported the incumbent Hoover’s position, the Democrats latched on to public opinion and campaigned on a platform of ending Prohibition. The candidate, New York governor Roosevelt, was hardly an ardent advocate for repeal, but he pledged to make it a fundamental policy if he made it to the White House. Campaign buttons were made showing him and his running mate,
John Nance Garner, next to a frothing glass of beer. At a speech in Seagrant, New Jersey, Roosevelt spoke of the "stupendous blunder" of Prohibition. "It is increasingly apparent that the intemperate use of intoxicants has no place in this new mechanised civilisation of ours," he said on 27 August. "But the methods adopted... have been accompanied in most parts of the country by complete and tragic failure." Roosevelt swept to victory in a landslide, and the Democrats won majorities in both the House of Representatives and Senate of Congress.

Before Roosevelt was even inaugurated, Congress proposed a new amendment to the Constitution to repeal the 18th Amendment and sent it to the states for approval. Believing that ratifying the 21st Amendment could take years, however, led Roosevelt to sign the Cullen-Harrison Act a matter of weeks after taking office on 22 March 1933. It amended the Volstead Act to permit the manufacture and sale of beer and wine with an alcoholic content of up to 3.2 per cent considered too low to be intoxicating. Soon, breweries like Abner-Drury were dusting off their equipment and starting up business again.

Getting the states to ratify the 21st Amendment took less time than expected too. What began with Michigan on 10 April, four days before the midnight drive to the White House, ended on 5 December when Utah became the 36th state to ratify, pushing the total over the three-fourths majority required. The 18th Amendment was repealed – the first time in US history this had been done – and federal Prohibition brought to an end. "We must remove forever from our midst the menace of the bootlegger and such others as would profit at the expense of good government, law and order," read Roosevelt's proclamation that followed the repeal. "I trust in the good sense of the American people that they will not bring upon themselves the curse of excessive use of intoxicating liquors, to the detriment of health, morals and social integrity."

Millions of (legally lubricated) Americans celebrated the end of Prohibition and businesses boomed, not only in alcohol manufacture, but barrel and keg making, transportation and entertainment establishments like hotels, restaurants and bars. Some 500,000 people found work. Yet the 21st Amendment did not necessarily mean the total removal of the ban, as it granted individual states the power to regulate alcohol within their own borders. Some chose to maintain Prohibition for years, even decades. On a national level, Prohibition, the "noble experiment", lasted 13 years, 10 months and 19 days and left a complicated legacy.

After repeal, the hundreds of millions of dollars brought in helped fund Roosevelt's New Deal to lift the country out of the Depression. For his work in that recovery and his leadership in World War II, Roosevelt is rightly remembered as one of the greatest presidents in US history. Yet ranking among his accomplishments should be his quick and decisive action to let Americans have a drink.

THE DRY STATES AFTER REPEAL

Prohibition did not disappear in the United States in 1933. The passage of the 21st Amendment ended the national ban on alcohol manufacture, sale and distribution, but Section 2 allowed the states to govern their own laws on the transportation and importation of "intoxicating liquors", so while 38 states had ratified the amendment by 1934, the last being Montana, a handful chose to keep the ban in place. South Carolina went even further and rejected the repeal of the 18th Amendment entirely. Gradually, these states removed their bans on alcohol too, but it would take until 1966 for the last, Mississippi, to end Prohibition. Even then, "local option" laws gave counties, cities and towns the power to vote on whether to remain dry. Today, there are still more than 200 dry counties across dozens of states, including 37 of the 75 counties in Arkansas and a quarter of those in Kentucky. Places permitting the sale of alcohol with limitations are known as "moist". The Native American reservation of Pine Ridge in South Dakota prohibits the sale of alcohol, which has led to the nearby town of Whiteclay, with a population of 14, having four liquor stores that sell nearly five million cans of beer a year.
WHAT IF...
PROHIBITION HAD STAYED IN PLACE?

PROHIBITION, USA, 1933

Dr Jack Blocker

It's hard to imagine enforcement of national Prohibition improving, and it's easy to imagine it deteriorating if Prohibition had remained in place. The problem was the division of authority between the states and the federal government that was mandated by the 18th Amendment. That caused problems during the Twenties because some states devoted few resources to enforcement, leaving the whole burden on the federal government, which itself was not adequately funded to do the job of enforcement. As a result, enforcement against Prohibition was never carried out to the level necessary to provide full compliance with the Volstead Act. It's extremely unlikely that things would have gotten any better in the Thirties because both the states and the federal government were hard-pressed for revenues [due to the Great Depression of 1929]. So it's quite likely that enforcement would have been cut back.

Dr Deborah Toner

In that kind of scenario it's very difficult to imagine how organised crime could have been reined in. This is where most people dwell on one of the key problems of Prohibition, this explosion in organised crime growing out of networks that had existed for at least 40 to 50 years before Prohibition came into effect. They really expanded rapidly because of the huge new...
economic opportunities that Prohibition created. And so one might have seen an escalation of organised crime and associated violent crime with gang warfare that we now see between the drug-dealing organisations in the US and elsewhere. It’s quite possible that if the hardline approach by the authorities to Prohibition had remained, there could have been a massive escalation in organised crime. The continuation would have supported the development of super-organised crime gangs, the kind of cartels that we see in the drug business, across these two illegal industries [drugs and alcohol].

**Is it likely the law would not have survived this increase in crime?**

**Blocker:** Anybody transporting, selling, manufacturing, or importing liquor was by definition a criminal, but they might not have been part of a criminal organisation. In other words, the deterioration of enforcement might have opened up a lot of space for ordinary citizens to make their own booze and pass it back and forth among friends. The decline in enforcement might also have reduced one of the real problems in public perception of Prohibition, in that when enforcement did take place it was often perceived as unfair when gun battles broke out in the streets between Prohibition agents and bootleggers. If enforcement was cut back that could have declined, which would have meant that one of the more visible problems as far as the public saw them would have been reduced. US citizens might have said: “Why not leave the law in the books because it’s not having much effect. We’re able to obtain liquor and the gun battles in the streets aren’t taking place.” So the law might have survived, in spite of or perhaps because of deterioration of enforcement.

**Toner:** My view is that the only way Prohibition could have survived, so that it could have avoided being repealed, was if the Prohibition camp, or the ‘dry’ lobby as they’re often referred, accepted some modifications to the way Prohibition was being enforced through the Volstead Act. If that had happened and Prohibition had remained in a more revised format then actually a lot of the aims of Prohibition would have been achieved. For instance, with that change a lot more resources would have been diverted towards cracking down on the higher-level organised crime led by mobsters like Al Capone and so on.

**Blocker:** One of the proposals made consistently through the Twenties was to modify Prohibition to allow consumption of beer and light wines. If that change had been made Prohibition may well have lasted quite a long time because, as you know, beer and wine now make up the largest contributor of per...
“IT’S QUITE POSSIBLE THAT IF THE HARDLINE APPROACH TO PROHIBITION HAD REMAINED, THERE COULD HAVE BEEN A MASSIVE ESCALATION IN ORGANISED CRIME”

capita alcohol consumption. It is possible to imagine an amended Prohibition continuing long after 1933.

Would that have been more successful?

Toner: If there had been a more moderate approach towards scaling back Prohibition, making it less of a burden to the average American and concentrating resources on cracking down on the highest levels of organised crime, then we might have seen a more effective management of that process. If things like beer and light wine had been legalised during the course of Prohibition, even if spirits and other high-percentage alcohol drinks had remained illegal, that really would have reduced the market that organised crime had to sell to. I strongly think that had those changes towards legalisation, particularly of beer and wine, been taken in the Twenties, Prohibition would have continued for a very long time.

Was there a turning point where Prohibition might not have been repealed?

Blocker: The turning point probably came in the late Twenties after Herbert Hoover’s election as US president in 1928. He created a commission to look at Prohibition, the Wickersham Commission, and if that had recommended modifying Prohibition that could well have been a turning point. But by that point the main Prohibitionist organisation, the Anti-Saloon League, was in extreme disarray, although there were a lot of people who continued to support national Prohibition, so there could have been a political firestorm had they recommended modifying it.

Toner: In the mid-to-late Twenties there were continued attempts to try to persuade the government to introduce changes to the Volstead Act, so that things like beer and wine could be legalised. But members of the ‘dry’ lobby, particularly led by the Anti-Saloon League, completely refused to countenance any changes whatsoever, either to the Volstead Act or to the 18th Amendment. It’s really that intransigence and unwillingness to compromise in any way that pushes the two camps, pro-Prohibition and pro-repeal, into completely opposite positions.

How would the economy have fared if Prohibition had remained unchanged?

Toner: It’s possible that there may have been a very entrenched period of depression in the Thirties that Prohibition contributed to. From the Fifties onwards there might have been a positive effect in terms of greater worker productivity, higher levels of personal savings and so on. Those were major goals for the Prohibition campaigners before it was brought into force, but that simulating effect on the economy didn’t manifest itself in the Twenties to any great degree.

HOW WOULD IT BE DIFFERENT?

REAL TIMELINE

18th Amendment
The 18th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States is ratified, prohibiting the production, transport and sale of alcohol. The country will go dry later that year. 16 January 1919

Prohibition struggles
With resources stretched, the government struggles to successfully police Prohibition laws, allowing criminal alcohol gangs to grow in wealth and power. 1921-1928

Enforcement of Prohibition begins
Over 1,500 federal Prohibition agents are tasked with enforcing the strict laws of the Volstead Act. 17 January 1920

Wickersham Commission
Hoover establishes the Wickersham Commission to study the effects of Prohibition and suggest changes to lower crime levels. 20 May 1929

1921-1928

The Great Depression
The Wall Street crash of October 1929 sends the US economy plummeting into a downturn. October 1929

Decision on Prohibition
The Wickersham Commission must make its decision on whether Prohibition should be modified or tackled with more enforcement to combat crime. 6 January 1931

ALTERNATE TIMELINE

16 January 1919

Prohibition struggles
With resources stretched, the government struggles to successfully police Prohibition laws, allowing criminal alcohol gangs to grow in wealth and power. 1921-1928

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Over 1,500 federal Prohibition agents are tasked with enforcing the strict laws of the Volstead Act. 17 January 1920

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Decision on Prohibition
The Wickersham Commission must make its decision on whether Prohibition should be modified or tackled with more enforcement to combat crime. 6 January 1931
resources in the midst of the Great Depression and having to spend ever more on enforcement it doesn’t spell a happy picture for the economy.

**Would a lack of repeal have encouraged attempts by other countries to bring in prohibition?**

**Blocker:** A number of other countries and territories adopted forms of Prohibition during the early-20th century. There were various international Prohibitionist organisations at work, such as the World League Against Alcoholism, and I suspect the repeal of US Prohibition represented a real body blow to efforts to internationalise that reform. Without repeal, there may well have been an instance where Prohibition became more widespread around the world.

**Would continued prohibition have affected the USA’s involvement in World War II?**

**Toner:** The only thing that might have prevented that was an economic situation if Prohibition had continued and affected the economy very badly. But it’s widely believed that with World War II came an economic recovery because of all the additional opportunities for exporting and manufacturing goods and weaponry, and that probably still would’ve had that effect in the context of continued Prohibition. If anything a continued commitment to Prohibition might have enhanced the sense of the USA being able to export a kind of morale-idealised society to other parts of the world, that kind of evangelising undertone to US foreign policy might have actually been heightened by continued Prohibition.

**How long might Prohibition have lasted if it was not repealed in 1933?**

**Toner:** If a more modified form of Prohibition had been introduced, it might have been gradually lifted according to provincial interests and be replaced by regulatory systems, in effect lifting Prohibition once its job had been done. An altered form of it could have lasted for decades, and in several states even now Prohibition is still effectively in force. But I think the Sixties or Seventies would probably have been the maximum life span for Prohibition in that modified form. If Prohibition had remained unchanged in its radical original version, it’s difficult to see how that would have survived for long. The mounting economic pressures, expansion of organised crime and generally being out of sync with the rest of the world on this issue would probably have brought itself to bear by the time of World War II. In terms of the economic demands of the US in the post-WWII era, it’s difficult to see how that kind of radical Prohibition could have survived.

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**“IF ANYTHING, CONTINUED PROHIBITION WOULD HAVE HELPED TO CEMENT THAT [ECONOMIC] DEPRESSION”**

- **Level of enforcement increased**
  The Wickersham Commission recommends more extensive law enforcement to ensure compliance with Prohibition laws across the US, but it is not successful.
  7 January 1931

- **Prohibition repealed**
  The 21st Amendment to the US Constitution repeals the 18th Amendment, re-legalisng the distribution and consumption of alcohol.
  5 December 1933

- **Prohibition is modified**
  The Wickersham Commission recommends modifying Prohibition laws to allow for lower percentage drinks like beer and light wine.
  7 January 1931

- **Prohibition continues**
  Even though Prohibition laws are relaxed to allow weaker drinks, a lack of repeal makes it increasingly difficult to tackle organised gangs peddling stronger alcohol.
  5 December 1933

- **New Deal**
  President Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal’ economic recovery plan allows the US to emerge from the mire of the Great Depression.
  1936

- **Super gangs**
  Super-organised crime gangs emerge, taking complete control of both alcohol and drug traffic in the country.
  1938

- **Economy worsens**
  Despite Roosevelt’s best efforts with his New Deal economy plan, the continued attempts to police Prohibition sees the economy get even worse.
  1936

- **World War II**
  With a now-prosperous economy, USA enters World War II, swinging the war in the Allies’ favour.
  1942

- **Minor Prohibition continues**
  Several states in the US continue to keep some form of Prohibition laws, allowing the distribution of certain types of alcohol.
  1960

- **Prohibition repealed**
  Eventually Prohibition is repealed, perhaps as it has fulfilled its goals or because it cannot be maintained, although some states keep their anti-alcohol laws.
  1960
People celebrate the end of Prohibition as bartenders pour a round of drinks at Sloppy Joe's in Chicago.
THE NOBLE EXPERIMENT

Prohibition was once called ‘The Noble Experiment’, but intending to bring sobriety and decency, it instead delivered violence, corruption and death.

It was a noble experiment that started badly and failed miserably. Weeks before the Volstead Act came into force just after midnight on 16 January 1920, gangs in major cities were quietly stockpiling beer, wine and spirits. At around 1am on 17 January, authorities having granted an extra 24 hours to thirsty Americans, the first major crime against Prohibition was recorded. In Chicago, later the epicentre of Prohibition bloodshed, six armed men hijacked a rail car holding whiskey worth around $100,000.

Prohibition’s negative consequences were lasting and far worse than could ever have been anticipated. Their effects are still being felt to this day. As beer baron, gangster and criminal icon Al Capone once said: “You can’t cure a thirst by law.”

He was right – Prohibition couldn’t cure what temperance campaigners considered America’s drink problem. Repeal couldn’t cure the damage done by Prohibition either. In only 13 years it had caused massive bloodshed and lasting damage. Before the Volstead Act, the United States had a legitimate drinks industry grossing as much as $2 billion a year. After that, it endured one of the most corrupt, whiskey-soaked, blood-stained periods in its history.

The drink business had been handed to the underworld overnight, lock, stock and barrel, and, with alcohol now illegal, prices shot up. Before Prohibition, a shot of decent, drinkable whiskey cost an average of 25...
CANNED HEAT AND COCKTAILS

COCKTAILS ARE TASTY, FASHIONABLE AND WERE INVENTED DURING PROHIBITION. THEIR BRIGHT COLOURS AND SWEET TASTE OFTEN HID A POTENTIALLY DEADLY SECRET

The Singapore Sling, Screwdriver, Tom Collins and many others still exist today, but their history is far darker and more unpalatable. Bootleggers didn’t just sell genuine wine, beer and spirits, but frequently lethal homemade drink as well.

Called bathtub gin, hooch, popskull, coffin varnish and many other names, it often contained lethally poisonous additives to improve its potency. ‘Canned heat’, otherwise known as ‘bay rum’, was among the worst. Made from adulterated Jamaica ginger, it caused blindness, hallucinations, psychosis and organ failure among other illnesses.

When stills and warehouses were raided and stocks confiscated, they were often spiked with chemicals like sulphuric acid and iodine to make them undrinkable. When bootleggers secretly bought their stock back through corrupt police officers and other officials, they simply added more colour and flavourings to hide the taste, selling it on to anyone who’d drink it. Thousands of Americans were blinded, maimed or died.

Kenneth Allsop describes such brews in The Bootleggers: The Story of Chicago’s Prohibition Era: “A Chicago city chemist, while analysing an impounded shipment of bootleg hooch, spilled a little on a sink in his laboratory: it ate away the enamel.”

Bathtub gin was literally mixed in bathtubs, usually including gallons of turpentine to boost its kick. Aside from making it even more toxic, the turpentine did little to improve the flavour. Looking to make their deadly drink more palatable, bartenders experimented, adding colour and flavour to help drinkers enjoy it a little more. The cocktail, named after the bright plumage of a bird’s tail, was born.

Cocktails came from Prohibition, but are far healthier without turpentine or sulphuric acid in the mix.

“TURPENTINE, WOOD ALCOHOL, IODINE AND MORE WERE COMMONLY FOUND IN STOCKS SEIZED FROM SPEAKEASIES AND THEIR SUPPLIERS”

Prohibition agents were sometimes careless and gangsters didn’t care, making shootouts just as dangerous for bystanders.

Corruption, always a prominent feature in American political and judicial life, grew under Prohibition. Police, politicians, lawyers, judges and more were bought and sold in their thousands, far worse than before. It could be argued that one of the reasons the ‘Untouchables’ stood out is that they were apparently incorruptible when so many in law enforcement weren’t. Corruption itself reached unheard-of levels, and the idea that bribes count for more than law and democracy flourished with it. American politics and law enforcement were permanently tainted.

Many argue that corrupters are worse than killers. Comparing Mafia bootleggers Vito Genovese (a psychopathic murderer) and Frank Costello (the Mafia’s Prime Minister of the Underworld), expert Selwyn Raab said that corrupters were far more dangerous. People like Costello subverted the entire system of government, exercising more real power than voters, legislators or the law. People like Genovese only murdered. Both Genovese and Costello rose to the top during Prohibition.

Coupled with unrivalled corruption was Prohibition’s effect on public attitudes. Corruption, always a prominent feature in American political and judicial life, grew under Prohibition. Police, politicians, lawyers, judges and more were bought and sold in their thousands, far worse than before. It could be argued that one of the reasons the ‘Untouchables’ stood out is that they were apparently incorruptible when so many in law enforcement weren’t. Corruption itself reached unheard-of levels, and the idea that bribes count for more than law and democracy flourished with it. American politics and law enforcement were permanently tainted.

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It was deeply unpopular from the beginning. The vast majority of Americans drank and disagreed in their thousands, far worse than before. It could be argued that one of the reasons the ‘Untouchables’ stood out is that they were apparently incorruptible when so many in law enforcement weren’t. Corruption itself reached unheard-of levels, and the idea that bribes count for more than law and democracy flourished with it. American politics and law enforcement were permanently tainted.

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It was no secret that President Herbert Hoover drank and held nightly poker games at the White House, while the open corruption of officials and willingness of gangsters to give Americans what they wanted spawned widespread disrespect, not only for Prohibition, but for the law generally. Prohibition had already taken a $2 billion business and handed it to gangsters. It also recast gangsters from Public Enemies to public servants. As Al Capone described it: “When I sell liquor, it’s called...”
bootlegging: when my patrons serve it on Lake Shore Drive, it’s called hospitality

The casualties from Prohibition numbered in the thousands and not only among America’s criminals. As competition increased among the underworld, violence increased with it. In towns and cities all over the country, rival’s shot, bombed, strangled and knifed each other in an extended war for control of the new racket.

Chicago was the worst with the Beer Wars causing just over 700 gangland murders. Corruption and intimidation saw only seven convictions. The Thompson just over 700 gangland murders. Corruption and intimidation saw only seven convictions. The Thompson

increased dramatically (having been pioneered in 1931 by New York gangster Vincent ‘Mad Dog’ Coll and the dreaded ‘one way ride’ became the norm. The phrase was coined by Hymie Weiss after murdering small-time criminal Steve Wisniewski in July 1921. Afterwards, Weiss allegedly remarked: ‘we took Stevie for a ride – a one-way ride...’

Alongside the gangsters died many thousands of civilians. Some of them were in the wrong place at the wrong time. They caught stray bullets in shootouts that were aimed at somebody else. They happened to be in a speakeasy when a rival gang threw grenades or packages of dynamite into it. They saw or heard things they weren’t supposed to and the gangs murdered them in case they talked.

Some were brave enough to testify in court or go on the record, publicly opposing gangland violence and bootlegging: They were usually threatened, bribed, blackmailed, beaten into silence or simply murdered for their efforts. Almost nobody was immune — including lawyers, police officers, campaigners, journalists and newspaper editors. All risked injury or death as an indirect result of Prohibition and the gangland violence it created.

Thousands more were either injured or killed by drinking homemade booze, frequently manufactured with toxic ingredients. Chemicals that weren’t fit for human consumption were routinely added by bootleggers to their products. Turpentine, wood alcohol, surgical spirits, industrial alcohol, sulphuric acid, iodine and more were commonly found in stocks seized from speakeasies and their suppliers.

Industrial-scale production of untested, toxic and lethal bootleg booze, unsurprisingly, led to industrial-scale illness and death. A drinker might survive accidentally walking into a shootout between rival bootleggers, then visit a speakeasy for a calming drink and be served something that killed them hours or days later. Those lucky enough to avoid that were likely to slowly poison themselves over an extended period. If alcohol itself didn’t destroy them, the additives in bootleg booze very easily might.

When Prohibition was finally repealed in 1933, much damage had been done to both Americans and their society. Perhaps criminals benefitted most from its gluttonous existence. Many used their profits to fund other rackets like drugs, loan-sharking and illegal gambling. In the decades since, the effects of those rackets — particularly the international drug trade — have been devastating. Many bootleggers turned to Bugsy Siegel and other underworld after Prohibition era gangsters, those who survived long enough, learned their trade partly from bootlegging. They included many former Capone underlings and future underworld titans like Carlo Gambino, Vito Genovese and Albert Anastasia. These men rose through crime’s ranks using the experience and notoriety as any criminal could want, anyway. Even the most corrupt cops suddenly had to be seen doing their job. Speakeasies were shut down, breweries and distilleries raided, and stocks of illegal booze were seized until the travelling circus moved on with the fugitives who’d created it.

One of Prohibition’s major disasters was its degree of corruption. Police officers, judges, lawyers and politicians were all on the Prohibition payroll, generously bribed to stay out of bootleggers’ business. Aside from infecting public life on every level, gangsters often had more trouble with outlaws than the police and judiciary.

While running day-to-day rackets like bootlegging, most of the top level crimelords wanted minimal police, press and public attention. With law enforcement officials stifled by bribes, threats, blackmail and violence, the gangs could conduct their criminal business with a certain stability and continuity.

However, that changed very quickly whenever infamous bandits and kidnappers like John Dillinger, Bonnie & Clyde and Pretty Boy Floyd passed through a city. Blessed (or cursed) with as much notoriety as any criminal could want, they had police and Federal agents in hot pursuit.

That caused periods of chaos. Corrupt officials and politicians suddenly became crusaders against crime (while the crack-down lasted, anyway). Even the most corrupt cops suddenly had to be seen doing their job. Speakeasies were shut down, breweries and distilleries raided, and stocks of illegal booze were seized until the travelling circus moved on with the fugitives who’d created it.

**Racketeers versus Robbers**

**With police, political and judicial corruption rampant, bootleggers often had bigger problems with other criminals than with law enforcement.**

Congressman Andrew Volstead is forever associated with Prohibition. His act became law in 1920 but Volstead was voted out in 1922.
Repeal could only be celebrated in one way - all over the country. Americans toasted the demise of the Volstead Act.
THE LONG SHADOW OF PROHIBITION

THE NATIONAL PROHIBITION LAWS WERE REPEALED IN 1933 BUT AMERICANS STILL FEEL PROHIBITION’S AFTER-EFFECTS TODAY, DECADES AFTER IT ENDED

When Americans toasted the end of Prohibition, they thought it drew a line under the issue. It didn't. Just as many Americans had been wrong about Prohibition bringing sobriety and respectability, they were equally wrong about repeal being the end of Prohibition's problems.

Organised crime and gangsterism didn't simply wither and die when Prohibition ended - it just grew more discreet. The days of Capone kicking a mayor down the steps of the town hall and Owney Madden standing over a rival he'd just murdered, bellowing 'I'm Owney Madden! From 10th Avenue!' were over. Publicity-seeking and notoriety were done, and now discretion was the order of the day. More recently, New York gangster John Gotti was often described as resembling a gangster from the Roaring Twenties rather than the 1980s. His manner, expensive clothes and love of publicity proved ruinous for the Gambino family, but provided endless inspiration for the media who liked to compare him to his Prohibition predecessors.

The old-time criminals who profited from Prohibition and somehow survived it still ruled the underworld, only less obviously. Shootouts in public places were replaced by more discreet forms of murder. Violence was still prevalent, but events like the Saint Valentine's Day Massacre of 1929 were firmly off gangsters' agendas as they kept their business interests increasingly private, even running legitimate businesses behind false names and frontmen. Having learned from Capone's downfall on tax-evasion charges, increasing numbers bought or forced their way into thousands of legitimate businesses as a cover for money laundering. Gangsters hadn't grown softer or more timid - they'd grown smarter and more shadowy. Their rules and the penalties for defying them, though, remained as firm as ever.

Socially, Prohibition did break down or weaken some social barriers. Jazz and blues musicians broke into the mainstream, albeit still in a segregated America if they weren't white. Different cities evolved different jazz and blues styles, which further enhanced the music's appeal. Aficionados today can tell the difference, for instance, between Chicago and Texas blues or jazz from Louisiana's legendary Bourbon Street and Chicago's South Side.

Of course, Hollywood profited immensely from Prohibition and the gangster era. The 1930s saw two competing movie genres. First came the classic gangster movies like Public Enemy, Little Caesar and White Heat. They often portrayed the gangster as an anti-hero and man of action who, in his own criminal way, is somehow noble and heroic. The opposite was the 'crime does not pay' genre. In most of these, the criminal comes to a sticky end at the law's hands in the final reel, ending
Jumor Johnson, a North Carolina moonshiner and NASCAR legend. He made moonshine runs in between winning over 50 NASCAR races.

"SOME WOMEN HAD EVEN GONE INTO BOOTLEGGING BEFORE AND AFTER REPEAL, BASED ON THE IDEA THAT WOMEN WERE LESS LIKELY TO BE SUSPECTED"

THE REMARKABLE ‘CARBINE’ WILLIAMS

NORTH CAROLINA’S DAVID MARSHALL WILLIAMS WAS A BOOTLEGGER JAILED FOR MURDER. HE LEFT PRISON A PIONEER OF AMERICA’S GUN INDUSTRY

Making illegal moonshine can have its ups and downs. For Williams, forever known as ‘Carbine’ Williams, this proved harrowingly true. He was convicted of murdering Deputy Sheriff Al Pate on 22 July 1921 when the Cumberland County Sheriff raided his still. Williams always denied the murder, claiming he’d fired only warning shots at Pate before handing his gun to accomplice Ham Dawson. According to Williams it was Dawson who had then committed the actual murder, but it made no difference. Williams pled guilty to second-degree murder, avoiding the electric chair but receiving 30 years’ hard labour instead. Dawson was later acquitted.

While in prison, Williams worked in the machine shop, maintaining and repairing all manner of mechanical equipment. He was eventually permitted to service the weapons issued to the prison’s guards. While doing his standard prison work he also secretly began designing a brand-new weapon, the M1 Carbine. Carbines, shorter and lighter than rifles, were later standard-issue weapons in the US military. As the Tommy gun was a military weapon popularised by gangsters, the M1 was designed by a bootlegger and adopted by many branches of the armed forces. Williams, finally released in September 1929, found himself somewhat of a celebrity.

In 1952, his remarkable story caught Hollywood’s eye and James Stewart took the leading role in Carbine Williams. Williams himself spent the rest of his working life designing guns and gun parts for a number of companies including Winchester and Remington. However, in January 1975, by then very wealthy, he died. His entire workshop is displayed at North Carolina’s Museum of History.

Carbine Williams’ story was remarkable, so much so that screen icon James Stewart portrayed him in a 1952 Hollywood biopic.
THE LONG SHADOW OF PROHIBITION

PERHAPS PROHIBITION’S DARKEST LEGACY CAME LONG AFTER REPEAL. SOME OF PROHIBITION’S ILLICIT PROFITS LATER FINANCED THE AMERICAN MAFIA’S DRUG BUSINESS

Old-school Mafiosi called it ‘babania’, Sicilian slang for heroin. The Mafia had long been involved in the drug trade, but profits from Prohibition enabled them to shift their operation into a much higher gear. Courtesy of Prohibition, Mafiosi had the skills, experience and start-up capital to begin industrial-scale heroin trafficking, a business they’re still involved in today.

Before the war, one of America’s main heroin smugglers was Louis ‘Lepke’ Buchalter. Buchalter, a former bootlegger, labour racketeer and murderer electrocuted in 1944, started smuggling heroin in 1935, bribing customs inspectors to turn a blind eye. His operation earned millions in illegal profits, but was small beer compared to the legendary ‘French Connection’.

Set up by the Corsican underworld, vast amounts of heroin were shipped to the US via Marseilles and Canada. Through the 1950s until the early 1970s, heroin was making its way into the US by the ton. The American end was organised by Mafioso Joseph Bonanno (leader of New York’s Bonanno family) and Carmine ‘The Cigar’ Galante.

Both Bonanno and Galante rose to prominence during Prohibition, Bonanno as a family boss and Galante as a bootlegger and killer. Their start-up capital came, more than anywhere else, from Prohibition.

Bootlegger and Mafioso Carmine Galante helped set up the French Connection. It flooded America with heroin bought with Prohibition profits.

Bootlegger and Mafioso Carmine Galante helped set up the French Connection. It flooded America with heroin bought with Prohibition profits.

Ironically, Prohibition, once intended to outlaw alcohol, is now used as a marketing tool. New York City’s only rum distillery is named The Noble Experiment and its signature product is Owney’s NYC Rum. During Prohibition, Owney Madden himself produced a beer named Madden’s Number One. Bathtub Gin is now the name of a popular brand of gin, although this version has definitely not been distilled in a bathtub and doesn’t contain anything it shouldn’t.

Prohibition, at first lauded for its virtue then slammed for its failure, occupies a contradictory place in American history. It will always be remembered far more for gangsters, violence and corruption than its original good intentions. That said, regardless of its failure to do what it was meant to, it’s still left an indelible mark on the United States in the 20th and 21st centuries.
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