

Spirited: Prohibition in America

Glossary

80-proof

Alcohol proof is a measure of how much alcohol (ethanol) is contained in an alcoholic beverage. In the United States, the proof of an alcoholic beverage is twice its alcohol content expressed as percentage by volume at 60°F. An 80-proof whiskey is 40% alcohol. Recently, the United States began labeling bottles containing wine and spirits with the percentage of alcohol by volume, instead of proof.

Al Capone

Prohibition-era criminal Alphonse Capone (known as Al or Scarface) was born in Brooklyn, New York, and got involved in gangs at a young age. He worked for New York gangster Frankie Yale (1893–1928) who sent him to Chicago in 1919 when Capone hospitalized a rival New York gang member. Capone became a prominent gang member in Chicago by working for John Torrio (1882–1957) and helped him manage his bootlegging business. Capone eventually took over the Chicago Outfit (previously run by Torrio) and controlled speakeasies, brothels, distilleries, nightclubs, breweries, and more. He was Chicago’s “public enemy number one” after multiple murders including the 1929 St. Valentine Day’s massacre. He served a one-year sentence for gun possession and later eight years of an eleven-year sentence for tax evasion.

Amendment

A change in the words or meaning of a law or document (such as the Constitution); the process of amending by constitutional procedure. The following are amendments (in full text) that relate to the Prohibition era.

- **Fourth Amendment**—The right of the people to be secure in their persons, house, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.
- **16th Amendment**—The Congress shall have the power to lay and collect taxes on incomes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States and without regard to any census or enumeration.
- **17th Amendment**—The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, elected by the people thereof, for six years; and each Senator shall have one vote. The electors in each State shall have the qualifications requisite for electors of the most numerous branch of the State legislatures.

When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.

- **18th Amendment**—After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the transportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.

The Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

- **19th Amendment**—The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.
- **21st Amendment**—The eighteenth article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.

The transportation or importation into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors, in violation of the laws thereof, is hereby prohibited.

This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by conventions in the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.

Anti-Saloon League

The ASL was one of the leading organizations in favor of prohibition and was founded by Howard Hyde Russell (1855–1946). The ASL called itself “the Church in Action against the Saloon” and used political force through national legislation, congressional hearings, and religious leaders to eliminate liquor in America.

Billy Sunday

Billy Sunday (1862–1935) was a baseball player who played for the Chicago White Stockings, Pittsburgh Alleghenys, and Philadelphia Phillies from 1883–90. He gave up his baseball career to become a preacher and preached against liquor. When Prohibition was finally enacted, he said “The reign of tears is over—men will walk upright now, women will smile, and the children will laugh. Hell will be forever for rent.”

Black-and-Tan

The term black-and-tan refers to nightclubs in larger cities in which social mingling of blacks and whites took place united by jazz music, dancing, and drinking.

Bootlegger

A bootlegger is a person that makes or sells alcohol illegally. Moonshine was also known as “bootleg” during Prohibition.

Carry Nation

Carry Nation (1846–1911) was born Carrie Amelia Moore in Kentucky in 1846 and lived in Missouri during the Civil War. Married to a doctor, Nation had a marriage that fell apart as a result of alcohol abuse. Her husband died, she then married David Nation and settled near Medicine Lodge, Kansas where she organized a local branch of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and campaigned for enforcement of the state’s liquor laws. Nation supported women’s suffrage and women’s rights. She is most famous for conducting raids on saloons, smashing bottles and barrels, and using a hatchet in support of Prohibition. Carry Nation’s group of followers were known as the “Home Defenders.”

Charleston

This dance became popular in the 1920s and defines the flapper era. The Charleston was danced to ragtime jazz music in a fast paced rhythm and consists of moving ones’ knees (twisting in and out) and swinging ones’ heels (sharply outward) and kicking sideways on each step.

Constitution

A constitution is a charter that establishes how the government will operate, what the roles are, and how power is balanced. The Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of our country and defines how the government works. It was written in 1787 at a convention in Philadelphia and went into effect (after being ratified by nine states) in June of 1788. Constitution Day is celebrated on September 17, the day the document was signed by the convention delegates in 1787.

Cotton Club

The Cotton Club was a famous Harlem, New York speakeasy originally located on Lenox Avenue where jazz musician Duke Ellington became famous. It was one of the city’s most famous nightclubs in the 1920s–1930s and hosted noted musicians such as Cab

Calloway and Louie Armstrong. The Cotton Club practiced a bizarre form of segregation—it was located in an all-black neighborhood and featured black musicians for an all-white clientele.

Decanter

A special glass bottle into which wine, whiskey, or other alcoholic spirits is poured into from its original bottle and from which it is served.

Denatured alcohol

The process of adding other substances to alcohol that makes it unfit to drink but still useful for other purposes such as medicinal use.

Diocletian Lewis

Diocletian Lewis (1823–1886) was a Temperance leader, preacher, food and health eccentric who traveled the country lecturing about the evils of alcohol. He wrote and sold books that promoted temperance. The stop he made in Hillsboro, Ohio, in 1873 inspired Eliza Thompson, famous for leading “Mother Thompson’s Crusade” against alcohol.

Dr. Benjamin Rush

Benjamin Rush (1745–1813) was a colonial physician and writer who advocated that Americans change their drinking habits. He published a moral and physical thermometer temperance diagram that showed the effects of hard liquor and other spirits on one’s psychological and physical health.

Dry

Marked by the absence of alcoholic beverages. If a person is ‘dry’ they don’t drink. If a state or county is ‘dry’ alcohol is prohibited.

Eliot Ness

Eliot Ness (1903–1957) was a Chicago police officer who became a Prohibition agent and was famous for his efforts to enforce Prohibition in Chicago. He destroyed numerous breweries owned and operated by Al Capone was responsible, in part, for Capone’s arrest and eviction for tax evasion. The Chicago Tribune newspaper dubbed Ness and his squad of agents “the Untouchables” because they couldn’t be bought by corruption “to look the other way” at organized crime.

Eliza Thompson

Eliza Thompson (1816–1905) was the daughter of former Ohio governor and the wife of a local judge who became inspired by travelling lecturer Diocletian Lewis took up action against alcohol. Eliza led a group of women through Hillsboro Ohio saloons to protest the effects of liquor and drinking establishments. They knelt in the snow and prayed outside the door of the town’s saloons. Within days of this act, nine of the town’s 13

drinking establishments closed. This act known as “Mother Thompson’s Crusade” spread across the country.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) was an author, lecturer, and chief philosopher of the women’s rights movement. She formulated the agenda for women’s rights that has guided the struggle to the present. She with Susan B. Anthony were the leaders in the women’s suffrage movement.

Flapper

A young woman in the 1920s who dressed and behaved in a way that was considered very modern was known as a Flapper. Flappers wore loose fitting clothing and shorter skirts and bobbed hair.

Flip

Flip was a colonial-era mixed drink made from eggs, sugar and alcohol. Recipes added rum, brandy, or ale to the egg and sugar mix. Flip was served in a special glass.

Frances Willard

Frances Willard (1839–1898) was a temperance leader, suffragist, and progressive reformer who was the second President for the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in 1879 until her death. She rallied women around the concept of “Home Protection” and “Do Everything” to save families from the devastating effects of alcohol. She eventually became President of the Evanston, Illinois College for Ladies in 1871 and in 1873 was the first Dean of Women at Northwestern University.

Gin

Gin is a colorless alcoholic beverage made from distilled or redistilled neutral grain spirits flavored with juniper berries and aromatics (as anise and caraway seeds).

Grape bricks

Grape bricks were solid blocks of grape juice concentrate that became juice just by adding water. Grape bricks were sold as a way for companies to legally market products useful in the manufacturing of alcohol. Instructions printed on grape bricks advised users to not add yeast or sugar or leave it in a dark place for too long because “it might ferment and become wine.”

Growler

A growler is a metal galvanized pail with a lid that was used to carry beer from the tavern home. Their insides were often smeared with lard to keep the foam down leaving more room for beer. In urban slums, housewives and children often stood outside the salon door and lunchtime waiting for someone to come outside to fill the growlers.

Hard cider

Distilled liquor was added to cider to keep it from spoiling giving it an alcoholic content of at least 10%. Hard cider was common in rural communities because apples were plentiful and easy to grow.

Howard Hyde Russell

Howard Hyde Russell (1855–1946) was the founder of the Anti-Saloon League (1893). He was a successful lawyer who became an ordained minister and who felt that the ASL was founded by god. His goal was to close saloon by administering political retribution to those public officials who opposed the anti-alcohol cause.

Law

A law is a system or set of rules made by the government of a town, state, country, etc.

Liquor

Liquor is a distilled rather than fermented beverage.

Lydia Pinkham's vegetable compound

Lydia Pinkham (1819–1883) founded the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine company in order to market an herbal medicine, Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, that she developed to treat medical problems of her female friends and family. The compound was made of black cohosh, life root, unicorn root, pleurisy root, fenugreek seed and a substantial amount of alcohol. In 1925 her annual profits peaked to \$3.8 million.

Mabel Willebrandt

Mabel Willebrandt (1889–1963) was Assistant Attorney General from 1921–29 who prosecuted violators of Prohibition. She was a Prohibition agent who was nicknamed "Prohibition Portia."

Medicinal alcohol

During Prohibition, certain distilleries were granted licenses to manufacture liquor for the pharmaceutical trade. Physicians sold prescriptions for a variety of ailments. Patients could redeem prescriptions at the pharmacy (one pint of liquor a week).

Moonshine

Illegal, homemade liquor was called moonshine from the nighttime secrecy its manufacture required. Moonshine is made from a "still" using a mixture of crushed grains, water, and sugar and placed in a boiler with added yeast. As the alcohol from the steam evaporates, it travels into another container. The cooled steam condenses into a liquid, drinkable alcohol and is filtered into a jug.

National Crime Syndicate

The National Crime Syndicate was the name given by the press to a loosely organized, multi-ethnic group of gangsters who bootlegged liquor. When they met in 1929 in Atlantic City at a strategic conference, criminals from Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Newark, and New York City (including Al Capone, Lucky Luciano, and Meyer Lansky) divided up territories, fixed prices, and made cross-territorial distribution deals that transformed crime from local organizations into a national network.

Nativist

In the 19th century in the United States, nativists favored the interests of established inhabitants over those of immigrants. The Anti-Saloon League enlisted the support of nativists in its cause to close saloons. Nativists thought closing saloons would undermine the comfort and influence of new immigrants in big cities, especially the Germans, Jew, Irish, and Italians.

Near beer

Near beer is a malt liquor that does not contain enough alcohol to be considered an alcoholic beverage.

Pauline Morton Sabin

Pauline Morton Sabin (1887–1955), although an initial supporter of Prohibition, founded the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform (WONPR) in 1929. Sabin's women's organization challenged the long-held assumption that virtually all women in the United States supported National Prohibition. The ineffectiveness of the law, growing power of bootleggers, and decline of temperate drinking prompted her to work toward the repeal of Prohibition. She had 300,000 members in WONPR in 1931.

Populist

A populist is a supporter of the rights and power of the people. The Anti Saloon League enlisted the support of populists in its effort to close saloons. Organizations like the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) believed liquor was a weapon used by capitalists to weaken the working class.

Progressive

A progressive is a person who actively factors or strives for progress toward better conditions, as in society or government. The Anti Saloon League enlisted the support of progressives in its effort to close saloons. Progressives considered alcohol an evil that stood in the way of their efforts to reform society, such as eliminating political corruption and strengthening families.

Prohibition

The forbidding law of the manufacture, transportation, sale, and possession of alcoholic beverages; the period from 1920–1933 during which the 18th Amendment forbid the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages in force in the United States.

Prohibition agents

These agents enforced the law that forbid the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages and were assigned to the Bureau of Prohibition under the U.S. Treasury Department. Some prohibition agents were not effective and many were corrupt.

Propaganda

The systematic propagation of a doctrine or cause or propagation of information reflecting the views and interests of those advocating such a doctrine or cause. Material disseminated by the advocates or opponents of a doctrine or cause.

Public house

A public house is a tavern, saloon or public drinking establishment where alcoholic drinks are served.

Racist

A racist is someone who believes that race accounts for differences in human character or ability and that one race is superior to others. Discrimination or prejudice is based on race. The Anti Saloon League enlisted the support of racists in their cause to close saloons. Racists, including the Ku Klux Klan, used the stereotype of the "drunken Negro" to demonize African Americans and protect their own power in the segregated South.

Ratification

"To ratify" is to formally confirm approval, and it's the final step in the amendment process. Without approval of the amendment by three-fourths of the states, an amendment can't become part of the Constitution.

Repeal

Repeal is to revoke or rescind, especially by an official or formal act. Prohibition was repealed by the ratification of the 21st Amendment.

Rumrunner

A rumrunner is someone who illegally transports alcohol over water or by sea. A bootlegger is one who transports alcohol illegally overland.

Saloon

A saloon is another word for tavern or social hall where alcoholic drinks are served.

Search and seizure

During Prohibition, the Supreme Court issued dozens of decisions related to the enforcement of the Fourth Amendment that protects a person's privacy against unreasonable searches and seizures. Twenty cases arose during Prohibition surrounding issues of wiretapping, warrantless searches of homes, boats and cars and entrapment

Speakeasy

A speakeasy is a place for the illegal sale and consumption of alcoholic drinks during Prohibition in the United States.

Suffrage

The right or privilege of voting and the exercise of such a right.

Suffragists

Suffragists were women or men who lobbied for women's right to vote. The Anti Saloon League enlisted the support of Suffragists for the cause of closing saloons. Suffragists had close ties to the Temperance Movement, viewing both causes as integral to the improvement of women's lives.

Susan B. Anthony

Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) was a school teacher from upstate New York who entered public life in the 1840s as a temperance worker with the Daughters of Temperance. By the 1850s, she worked alongside fellow suffrage campaigner Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1815–1902) to secure the vote for women so they could vote to close the saloons.

Temperance Movement

Temperance may be defined as moderation in all things healthful and total abstinence from all things harmful. The temperance movement supported abstinence from alcoholic drink and originated as a mass movement in the late 18th and 19th centuries as a concern over drinking, drunkenness, and alcoholic excess as a culture rose. The temperance movement in 1830s and 1840s in America was rooted in America's Protestant churches. After the Civil War, women began to protest and organize politically for the cause of temperance and formed the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

Volstead Act

The Volstead Act is another name for the 1919 Prohibition Act. Andrew Volstead (1860–1947) was a Republican member of the House of Representatives from Minnesota who managed the legislation. He served as the House Judiciary Chairman as a member of Congress and collaborated with Wayne Wheeler to draft the Volstead Act.

Wayne Wheeler

Wayne Wheeler (1869–1927) was the chief lobbyist for the Anti Saloon League who rallied major support for the war on alcohol. He rallied votes by enlisting support state by state to send 'dry' candidates into office in state and federal elections. Wheeler was the driving force behind the 18th Amendment.

Women's Christian Temperance Union

The WCTU grew out of the American temperance movement begun in the late 1800s and 1900s. In 1874, discussions were held by women to act against the harmful effects

of alcohol and a national convention was held—the WCTU was formed. The primary objective for temperance reform was “protection of the home.” A white ribbon bow was the symbol for the WCTU and symbolized purity. Frances Willard (1839–98) was the WCTU’s most famous member and second President whose leadership made the WCTU a 250,000 army. They soon realized however that without the right to vote (suffrage) their political power was limited. Suffrage became an important element in the campaign. Agitate, educate, and legislate was and still in the mantra for the WCTU.

Wet

Wet is the term for someone who drinks alcohol or a place that allows the sale of alcohol.

Whiskey

An alcoholic liquor distilled from grain, such as corn, rye, or barley, and containing approximately 40 to 50 percent ethyl alcohol by volume.

William Jennings Bryan

William Jennings Bryan (1860–1925) was a famous speaker and statesman (a congressman from Lincoln, Nebraska). Inspired by his political and religious views, he thought Prohibition could improve the lives of ordinary Americans. He supported women’s suffrage and Prohibition. Bryan ran three times for President but lost. While serving as Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson (1897–1913) he served grape juice instead of wine at formal diplomatic functions.