

As Americans debate a wall to prohibit illegal entrance, we remember the decision 100 years ago tomorrow to shut down the fifth largest industry in the U.S. with the prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages. The Year 1919 was one of significant changes in the United States. (Strikes, race riots, Treaty of Versailles, baseball bribery scandal, civil war in the Soviet Union, turmoil in the White House after Wilson's stroke, Debate of the League of Nations, national steel strike, etc.)

### **The 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Eighteenth Amendment**

January 16, 2019 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment which prohibited “the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors” but not the consumption, private possession, or production for one’s own consumption. In contrast to earlier amendments to the Constitution, the Amendment set a one-year time delay before it would be operative, and set a time limit (seven years) for its ratification by the states. New Jersey ratified the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment on March 9, 1922, two years after it became effective and Connecticut and Rhode Island are the only two states that never ratified it.



### **Historic Repeal of Prohibition**

The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment is the only constitutional amendment that was repealed and the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment is the only amendment ratified by state conventions rather than state legislatures. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment closed the fifth largest industry in New Jersey (meat packing, railroads, steel, telegraph, sugar, banks, etc.) The campaign began with the temperance movement, Anti-Saloon League and by the 20<sup>th</sup> century the prohibition of intoxicating liquors had the support of women and Protestant clergy.

### **Significance of the Amendment**

We see applications from the lessons of the debate and decision on beer and liquor to the issues of medical marijuana vs. medicinal alcohol and sacramental wine, bootlegging and illegal drugs,

financing of local saloons by big business and investments by corporations in the production and distribution of marijuana, social and health issues, and new technology. The sale of beer and wine in glasses significantly increased revenues over the sale in bottles or barrels. For the year 1914, the revenue collected in taxes from liquor alone was \$226,000,000 (million). (Ames. 264)

The Bureau of Internal Revenue estimated that the prohibition cause the shutdown of over 200 distilleries, a thousand breweries, and over 170,000 liquor stores. (Funderburg 9) The entertainment industries also experienced a loss in revenue. Movie theatres although expected to increase revenues found themselves losing them, from a result of not being able to sell alcohol. The money brought in through night life also saw a dramatic loss. Many bars had to shut down due to the fact their business was now considered illegal. Night clubs and dance halls which heavily depended on alcohol sales found themselves losing customers and revenue.

The amount of money used to enforce prohibition started at 6.3 million in 1921 and rose to 13.4 million in 1930, almost double the original amount.

<https://prohibition.osu.edu/american-prohibition-1920/fiorello-laguardia-prohibition>  
<https://prohibition.osu.edu/american-prohibition-1920/federal-council-churches>  
<https://prohibition.osu.edu/brewing-industry-prohibition/beer-production> (Production of Beer)  
<http://digitalexhibits.libraries.wsu.edu/exhibits/show/prohibition-in-the-u-s/negative-economic-impacts-of-p>  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1470475/> (National Institutes of Health)

### **Congressional Testimony of Mayor LaGuardia Opposing Prohibition** (see source listed above)

Fiorello LaGuardia: (1926) “There may not be as much liquor in quantity consumed to-day as there was before prohibition, but there is just as much alcohol.

At least 1,000,000 quarts of liquor is consumed each day in the United States. In my opinion such an enormous traffic in liquor could not be carried on without the knowledge, if not the connivance of the officials entrusted with the enforcement of the law. ...

I believe that the percentage of whisky drinkers in the United States now is greater than in any other country of the world. Prohibition is responsible for that. ...

At least \$1,000,000,000 a year is lost to the National Government and the several States and counties in excise taxes. The liquor traffic is going on just the same. This amount goes into the pockets of bootleggers and in the pockets of the public officials in the shape of graft....

I will concede that the saloon was odious but now we have delicatessen stores, pool rooms, drug stores, millinery shops, private parlors, and 57 other varieties of speak-easies selling liquor and flourishing.

I have heard of \$2,000 a year prohibition agents who run their own cars with liveried chauffeurs.

It is common talk in my part of the country that from \$7.50 to \$12 a case is paid in graft from the time the liquor leaves the 12-mile limit until it reaches the ultimate consumer. There seems to be a varying market price for this service created by the degree of vigilance or the degree of greed of the public officials in charge.

It is my calculation that at least a million dollars a day is paid in graft and corruption to Federal, State, and local officers. Such a condition is not only intolerable, but it is demoralizing and dangerous to organized government. ...

The Government even goes to the trouble to facilitate the financing end of the bootlegging industry. In 1925, \$286,950,000 more of \$10,000 bills were issued than in 1920 and \$25,000,000 more of \$5,000 bills were issued. What honest business man deals in \$10,000 bills? Surely these bills were not used to pay the salaries of ministers. The bootlegging industry has created a demand for bills of large denominations, and the Treasury Department accommodates them.”

**Congressional Testimony by the Federal Council of Churches in Support of Prohibition** (see source listed above)

Federal Council of Churches: (1926) “The belief that in dealing with gigantic social evils like disease or crime, individual liberty must be controlled in the interest of the public welfare. Second. The belief that the liquor traffic is beyond question such an evil. Third. The conviction that no plan less thoroughgoing than prohibition is sufficient to eradicate the evils of the liquor traffic. Fourth. The evidence of history that other methods of attempting to control the traffic have failed and that prohibition, despite inadequacies of enforcement, is succeeding better than any other program.

Limitation upon individual freedom in matters affecting society is the price that any people must pay for the progress of its civilization. Personal liberty can not rightly be claimed for practices which militate against the welfare of others or the interests of the community as a whole.

It is especially contrary to democratic ideals and to enlightened public policy to permit any citizen to make profit from a business which is detrimental to his neighbor. This is readily recognized by all as sound policy in regard to the trade in narcotics. It is equally true of the liquor traffic. To insure social protection against a trade whose avowed purpose was to get people to consume the maximum possible amount of alcoholic liquor is the foundation on which our national policy of prohibition rests.

The policy of prohibition was not adopted hastily nor was it foisted upon the country by a puritanical minority. It was first voted in most of the States separately and then nationally, because the people had become convinced that the liquor traffic was a social evil of such magnitude that it had to be destroyed. The eighteenth amendment was made a part of the Constitution by the regular methods which the founders of the Republic devised with a view to making the amendment to the Constitution difficult rather than easy. Yet this amendment was adopted more promptly than any other change in the Constitution ever proposed.

The reasons which led to prohibition not only remain to-day but have been reinforced by the experience of other nations. The social peril of alcoholism is becoming a growing concern to statesmen throughout the world. If serious evils have sprung up since prohibition, they are far less than the evils which arose from the liquor traffic prior to the amendment. The liquor traffic with the accompanying saloon was allied with political corruption, crime, gambling, and prostitution. It meant the wreckage of men and the degradation of families, which social workers and ministers saw constantly in their daily work. It produced needless inefficiency in industry. Moreover, the tendency in the United States, as has been the case in Europe, was toward an increasing consumption of the stronger liquors with consequent intensifying of social hazards. Methods of control short of prohibition, such as taxation, regulations, and the governmentally controlled systems of some of the Canadian Provinces, Norway, and Sweden, have all proved inadequate to cope with the evil.”

### **Dry Towns in New Jersey Today!**

- **In Atlantic County** – Port Republic is the only dry town in this county.
- **In Bergen County** – Saddle River is the only community that stays dry.
- **In Burlington County** – Only Delanco and Pemberton are dry.
- **In Camden County** – Audubon Park, Collingswood, Haddonfield, Haddon Heights are all dry.
- **In Cape May County** – Ocean City, Cape May Point, and Wildwood Crest are all dry communities.
- **In Cumberland County** – Downe Township, Lawrence Township, Maurice River Township, Shiloh, Stow Creek Township, and Upper Deerfield are dry.
- **In Gloucester County** – Elk Township, Wenonah, and South Harrison are dry.
- **In Mercer County** – Only Pennington is dry.
- **In Monmouth County** – Only Interlaken is dry.
- **In Ocean County** – Island Heights and Mantoloking are dry.
- **In Passaic County** – Prospect Park is dry.
- **In Salem County** – Elmer, Lower Alloways Creek Township, Mannington, Oldmans Township, Quinton Township, and Upper Pittsgrove are all dry.
- **In Somerset Country** – Only Far Hills is dry.
- Note: Up until 2007, dry towns included West Cape May, Pitman, Moorestown, and Stratford. All four of these towns had requested, and successfully reversed laws banning the sale of alcohol from their town.

### **1924: Prohibition-era booze washes ashore**

#### ***15 miles of booze from Provincetown's Woods End to Truro's Pamet River***

On this day in 1924, the *Lowell Sun* reported the following:

PROVINCETOWN - From Wood End to Pamet River, more than 15 miles of the sandy shore of the tip of Cape Cod, five-gallon cans of alcohol in wooden cases came bobbing ashore yesterday (Dec. 21) or floated alongside the surf.

Coast guardsmen located and destroyed many of them, the Race Point station accounting for more than 40 cases.

## **Santa's gift?**

The absence of wreckage indicated, the Coast guard officials, that the cases were thrown overboard when a run-summer was pursued by revenue agents rather than risk destruction of any craft.

They denied that Santa Claus had any responsibility for the appearance of liquor in the holiday season. <http://www.capecodtoday.com/article/2018/12/21/2181-December-21-1924-Prohibition-era-booze-washes-ashore>

"There'd never been a more advantageous time to be a criminal in America than during the 13 years of Prohibition. At a stroke, the American government closed down the fifth largest industry in the United States - alcohol production - and just handed it to criminals - a pretty remarkable thing to do." - Bill Bryson.