

Maristen Gymnasium Furth

Chicago: Legends, History and Myths

Chicago during the time of Prohibition

*The steps towards and
the changes brought about by Prohibition*



Presented by:

Clara Roswitha Flegel
Hoher Weg 6
84107 Weihmichl

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Verfasser der Arbeit: Clara Roswitha Flegel

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1 Enormous national taste for alcohol

“By 1810 the number of distilleries in the [US] had increased fivefold, to more than fourteen thousand, in less than two decades.”¹ Coffee and tea were expensive, water was dirty, and milk was often hard to get. In contrast to that, liquor was abundant and constantly available, since many farmers distilled their rye and corn into whiskey and rum to make it easier to transport to the market and trade it for other goods.²

Alcohol had been well established in the lives of everyone, so it was “widely understood that common workers would fail to come to work on Mondays, staying home to wrestle with the echoes and aftershocks of a weekend binge”.³ From quieting down babies to treating the sick, alcohol was found to be applicable and people became used to the idea of liquor as the panacea.⁴

Abraham Lincoln, who publically supported temperance, summarized domestic life in 1842 with the famous words:

*“We found intoxicating liquor used by everybody, repudiated by nobody. It commonly entered into the first draught of an infant and the last thought of the dying man.”*⁵

Although saloons were mostly “nasty places”⁶ at that time - sawdust on the floor covered spills and tobacco juice - they were providing solace and refreshment to the deprived working-class men. Women, however, were not allowed. The Puritans already forbade drunkenness but since the Bible itself was frequently referring to “the joys, and blessings of liquor”⁷ drinking in general was not despised. Saloons had various other purposes such as providing a free lunch, mail services, and even in a few cases a place to sleep. Under pressure of the breweries, saloons were operating 24/7 for gaining the

¹ Okrent, D., Last Call. The rise and fall of Prohibition, New York 2010, page 8

² Blumenthal, K., Bootleg. Murder, Moonshine, And The Lawless Years Of Prohibition, New York 2011 ,p. 17

³ Okrent, Last Call, p. 8

⁴ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 17 f.

⁵ Behr, Prohibition, p. 32

⁶ Okrent, Last Call, p. 16

⁷ Behr, Prohibition, p. 8

most profit. Albeit not approved by owners prostitutes occasionally used saloons to conduct their business. Consequently, problems for the family left behind at home arose. Several times, the “wallet [was] emptied into a bottle”⁸, maybe even the job lost or the farm work left undone, and if that was not sufficient cause for pain, a constantly drunk father certainly was.⁹

Those increasing domestic problems ultimately lead to the temperance sentiment that later spawned the intention of complete abstinence - Prohibition.

2 Chicago during the time of Prohibition

2.1 The steps towards Prohibition

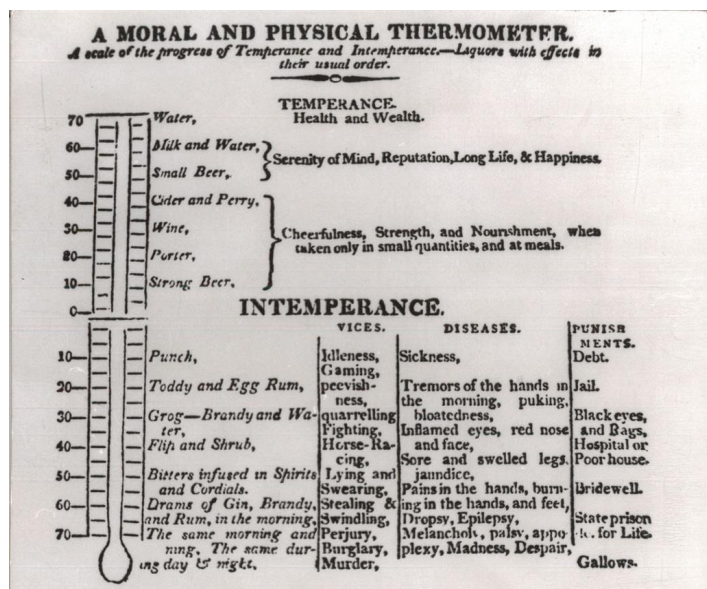
2.1.1 Opposition on alcohol consumption

2.1.1.1 Temperance Movement

One of the first to publically advocate moderation in drinking was Benjamin Rush. The renowned doctor published a pamphlet in 1784 “warning of serious troubles that hard liquor caused drinkers”.

According to Rush’s *Moral and Physical Thermometer*, beer and wine had positive and healthy effects. Ardent spirits and intemperance, however, would lead to various vices and diseases including “Stealing [and] Swindling” or “Lying and Swearing”.¹⁰

[1] Moral and Physical Thermometer



⁸ Okrent, Last Call, p. 16

⁹ Behr, Prohibition, p. 8; *ibid.*, p. 50; Okrent, Last Call, p. 16; Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 24

¹⁰ Okrent, Last Call, p. 9; Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 14 f.; Illustration [1], above

With the spreading “anti-alcohol sentiment”¹¹, temperance societies began to grow. In 1840 six habitual drinkers pledged their commitment to total abstinence in Baltimore. They launched what became known as the *Washingtonian Movement*. During its course, advocates of abstinence delivered thousands of speeches persuading vast audiences to sign pledges to never drink alcohol again.¹²

*“Those who agreed to live completely ‘dry’ were noted with a ‘T’ by their names on the society’s membership rolls. Displaying their ‘total’ commitment [and] in time, those people were known as ‘teetotalers’.”*¹³

Temperance groups also spawned children’s societies like the *Cold Water Army*. Their aim was to influence behavior at young age by teaching about the dangers of alcohol and letting them participate in the adult’s temperance rallies.¹⁴

American culture was influenced as well. With plays and novels like *Ten Nights in a Bar Room*, temperance advocates aimed at discouraging liquor by displaying the tragic effects inebriation could have.¹⁵

Temperance advocacy did, impressively, have effects on liquor consumption, even if only for a short period of time.¹⁶

*“Impressively, by 1950, the amount of hard liquor consumed per person each year dropped by more than half compared with 1830 [..]”*¹⁷

2.1.1.2 The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union

The *Woman’s Christian Temperance Union* (WCTU) was founded in 1874, but the foundation for “the nation’s first female political powerhouse”¹⁸ had been laid a year before already.¹⁹

¹¹ Okrent, Last Call, p. 9

¹² Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 19; Okrent, Last Call, p. 10

¹³ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 19

¹⁴ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 20 f.

¹⁵ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p.20

¹⁶ Alcohol Consumption During Prohibition: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w3675.pdf>; last accessed 23 October 2016; Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 21

¹⁷ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 21

¹⁸ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 27

¹⁹ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p.27

The “*Woman’s Crusade*”²⁰ was a movement that “sought the destruction of liquor and the closure of saloons”²¹. It was launched on December 22, 1873, in Hillsboro and spread over several states in the following months. The aim was to persuade proprietors of drinking establishments to close down their business by praying for them, but without any new laws the women were powerless to keep the saloons and taverns closed and many reopened after only a few months.²²

In 1879, Frances Willard became the leader of the WCTU, whose main aim was to “[dry] up America”²³. In order to do so they needed to change the laws, accordingly, the right to vote was necessary. Therefore, Frances Willard and the WCTU agitated for woman suffrage as part of their agenda.²⁴ She argued that “[the issue] could not be resolved if authority was left solely in the hands of men.”²⁵



[2] Suffragists
Parade down
fifth avenue;
among them
the WCTU

As temperance societies did before them, the WCTU also picked up the issue of education. Going even a step farther, they not only encouraged children to join Temperance legions, such as the *Cold Water Army* but also started intervening on federal educational levels.²⁶

²⁰ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 26

²¹ Prohibition: http://www.umich.edu/~eng217/student_projects/nkazmers/prohibition1.html; last accessed 1 November 2016

²² Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 26; Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 13

²³ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 27

²⁴ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 27; Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 17

²⁵ Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 17

²⁶ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 29

Mary H. Hunt, member of the WCTU, achieved that Congress passed the *Alcohol Education Act* requiring all students to learn about temperance, in 1886. Later she started adding her own seal of approval to textbooks, which presented the issue in the way she saw them, so children would grow up despising alcohol.²⁷

„The day is surely coming, when from the school houses all over the land will come trained haters of alcohol to pour a whole Niagara of ballots upon the saloon.“ - Mary Hunt (1886)²⁸

2.1.1.3 The Anti-Saloon League

The *Anti-Saloon League* (ASL) was formed for the purpose of administering political retribution by Reverend Howard Hyde Russell in 1893. He determinedly started building a political base to fight for „national annihilation“²⁹ of liquor traffic. About one-third was already living under either local or statewide so-called prohibition laws, by early 1908. Following on from supporting statewide optional Prohibition the ASL turned its attention to state governments. Newspapers noted that „the group was clever with friends in high places and a growing war chest of donations.“³⁰

Details on the process of submission and ratification of the *Eighteenth Amendment* will be laid out later throughout chapter 2.1.3. However, it is important to note that the ASL played a main role in forming the support necessary to win over a sufficient part of the Senate and later the individual states. One of the means to call attention to the cause and thus amplify the prevailing anti-alcohol sentiment was propaganda. Accordingly, representatives were sent letters, telegrams, and petitions to demonstrate the wide range of supporters. Volunteer speakers were organized for public lectures and pamphlets, posters and books were constantly printed and either mailed or delivered to individuals as well as churches and temperance groups³¹

²⁷ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 28 f.; Okrent, Last Call, p. 20; Behr, Prohibition, p. 51

²⁸ Okrent, Last Call, p. 23

²⁹ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 47

³⁰ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 45; ibid., p. 47; Okrent, Last Call, p. 34

³¹ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 48 f.

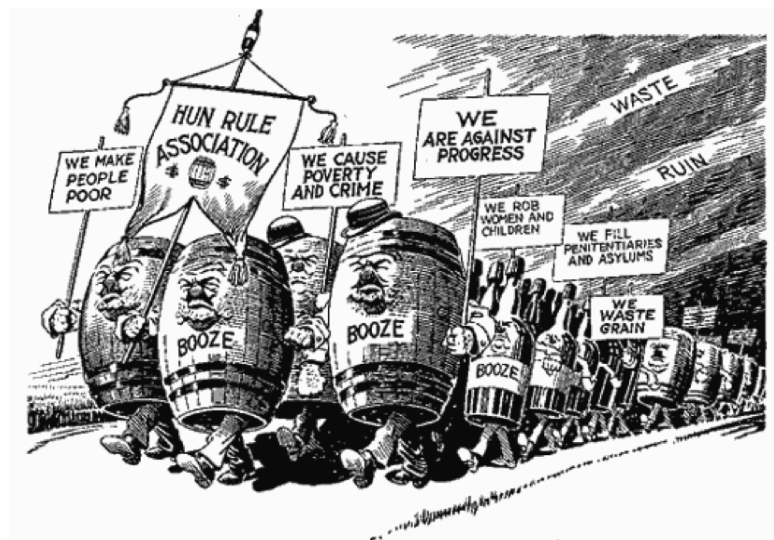
The message, the ASL's propaganda contained was clear. Alcohol "ruined health, broke up marriages and led to general economic ruin."³² Saloons were the evil's origin, so they had to disappear in order to diminish crime, mental illness, and poverty.³³



Down the Rapids of Rum



Additionally, racism was amplified and the black population was once again discriminated against - predominantly in the south - when the whites tried to keep alcohol away from them for they were said to turn into savages if exposed to liquor.³⁴



[3] [4] [5] (in succeeding order) ASL placards

³² Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 49

³³ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 49

³⁴ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 49; Okrent, Last Call, p. 44 f.

2.1.2 Prior political attempts

2.1.2.1 Alcohol Tax and Income Tax

The alcohol tax was introduced as a temporary “war-relief measure”³⁵, in 1791. It was immediately rebelled against, since farmers who used to trade goods in exchange for whiskey could not pay the taxes levied on their products for they neither had the currency nor sufficient income to do so. Protests reached from tarring and feathering tax collectors to burning the barns and homes of those who yielded and eventually paid their taxes. They reached their climax with what became known as the “*Whiskey Rebellion*”³⁶ or “*Whiskey Insurrection*”³⁷, when on August 1794, about 7,000 men, carrying arms and weapons, marched through the streets of Pittsburgh.³⁸

Providing about “twenty to forty percent of all federal revenue”³⁹, the liquor tax had become one of the most profound sources of income to the government's budget. With an amendment prohibiting the sale and manufacture of alcohol funding the cost of government would have been impossible. Advocators of Prohibition started supporting the tax forces to solve the problem they were facing. The plan was an income tax which substituted the loss in revenue Prohibition would later cause.⁴⁰

The Sixteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, allowing for an income tax, was adopted in 1913.⁴¹

³⁵ The Local-Option Movement: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1010546?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, last accessed 1 November 2016

³⁶ Okrent, Last Call, p. 54

³⁷ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 17

³⁸ The Local-Option Movement: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1010546?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, Last accessed 1 November 2016; Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 17

³⁹ Okrent, Last Call, p. 54

⁴⁰ Okrent, Last Call, p. 54f.; *ibid.*, p. 57

⁴¹ 16th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true-&doc=57>, last accessed 1 November 2016; Okrent, Last Call, p. 57

2.1.2.2 The Local-Option Bill

The *Local-Option Bill* marked the first step to nationwide Prohibition.⁴²

It enabled states to independently oppose saloons by granting the voters of a given local community the option to independently decide for or against liquor. As explained in the ASL's concise statement on *What is Local Option?* the law was exercised by "the court ordering an election in that territory to determine whether or not for a certain period of time the sale of liquors shall be prohibited therein."⁴³ In his paper *The Annals of the American Academy* from 1908, Nicholson, Superintendent of the Pennsylvania Anti-Saloon League, stated that the ASL only served a public sentiment that called for the end of liquor traffic which he called *The Local-Option Movement*.⁴⁴



[6] Local-option placards in Ohio (1903)

2.1.3 The Sheppard Amendment

The *Sheppard Amendment* owes its name to the man, who introduced it in Congress for the first time. Morris Sheppard had been actively supporting Prohibition before he became Senator in 1913, and proclaimed the end of liquor-sales when accepting this new job. He became known as *the Father of National Prohibition* for his role in the amendment's ratification process.⁴⁵

On December 10, 1913, the WCTU and the ASL gathered at the steps of the Capitol to hand over the prospective Eighteenth Amendment to Senator Sheppard and Representative Richmond Hobson.⁴⁶

⁴² Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 39

⁴³ The Local-Option Movement: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1010546?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, Last accessed 1 November 2016

⁴⁴ The Local-Option Movement: https://www.jstor.org/stable/1010546?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents, Last accessed 1 November 2016, pp. 3-5

⁴⁵ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, pp. 8-11

⁴⁶ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 11

[7] (right)
WCTU-gathering
typical dresses with a
white ribbon signalling
purity

[8] (bottom)
WCTU-march about
4,000 people gathered
that day; leading the
march were women and
children



The amendment they proposed aimed at the permanent prohibition of liquor sales throughout the country and was expected to be ratified by 1920.⁴⁷

When the First World War broke out, in 1914, Prohibitionists used it to their advantage by calling

Americans “truly unpatriotic”⁴⁸ for drinking beer and propagating “anti-German hysteria”⁴⁹ to support the dry-sentiment for most of the breweries were owned by German immigrants.⁵⁰

In the course of the following two years ten more states adopted laws that limited liquor sales - bringing the total number to nineteen. In 1917, when President Wilson declared war on Germany, the increasing shortage of food and other supplies let to the passing of

⁴⁷ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 9

⁴⁸ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 52

⁴⁹ Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 101

⁵⁰ Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 44 f.; Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 52

the wartime food-control bill which forbade the use of grains and other foods to produce hard liquor.⁵¹

Even though support for Prohibition was growing and sufficient prohibition supporters had been established in the crucial political organs (Senate and House of Representatives) the proposed amendment of 1913 had been seemingly disregarded in the 1916 elections. In June 1917, Senator Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania added a linguistic change to the prospective 18th amendment, with the consent of Senator Sheppard. In order to be ratified a constitutional amendment has to be approved by Congress as well as at least three-fourths of the states. The addendum stated that the gap between approval from congress and the states must not exceed six years.⁵²

Subsequent to the linguistic change the amendment was introduced on the Senate floor in July 1917 and approved after a mere thirteen hours of debate over three days. The House of Representatives agreed that the amendment would not go into effect until one year after it was ratified, giving the Drys seven instead of six years to win over the states in exchange. By December 17, the new Amendment was approved by a vote of 282 to 128. In January 1919, the 18th amendment was ratified after thirty-six states had approved.⁵³

2.1.4 The Volstead Act

The last step was a bill which spelled out penalties and consequences if the amendment was violated as well as, most significantly, defined the term “intoxicating” which was already previously used in the amendment.

Drafted by Andrew Volstead, hence the name, the Volstead Act was passed in October 1919.⁵⁴

According to the act, any beverage with an alcohol content of more than one-half of one percent was prohibited. Exceptions were made for wine used for religious purposes

⁵¹ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 52 f.

⁵² Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 52 f.

⁵³ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 54

⁵⁴ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 55 f.

alcohol used for medicine, and cider. Furthermore, individuals were allowed to keep liquor in their own homes, for their own use.⁵⁵

2.2 Examination of the situation in Chicago during Prohibition

2.2.1 Changes brought about by Prohibition

2.2.1.1 Hoarding Supplies

Not only in Chicago but all over the United States people had been hoarding supplies until the night of Friday, January 16, 1920 when the 18th Amendment would finally go into effect. After that day, Americans were only allowed to drink whatever alcoholic beverages had been in their homes the day before. According to Daniel Okrent, porches, staircase landings, and sidewalks had been piled high with boxes and crates delivered on the last day possible before transporting their contents became illegal. The wealthy were less affected by national Prohibition. Some simply bought the entire inventory of a liquor store and had it relocated to their basement. At the end of the day, drinking merely moved from bars and restaurants to the home.⁵⁶

2.2.1.2 Speakeasies and Blind Pigs

As the once-legal saloons closed, illegal drinking establishments began opening up and multiply. By 1924, an estimated 20,000 so-called “speakeasies” had been operating. So as not to attract attention, customers should always “speak easy” - both in the illicit bar and about it. Hence the name, which originated in the old Irish language. Many of them were - at least partly - owned by or had the support of famous gangsters like Bugs Moran or Al Capone. Since the slightly more discreet “Blind Pigs” or “Blind Tigers” had no protection of one of the neighborhood gangs and were run by independent entrepreneurs, they demanded a code phrase in order to enter and were often fitted with a peephole. The nickname stemmed from the trick by which vendors got around the temperance laws that forbade selling alcohol. Instead, the customers paid for a chance to

⁵⁵ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 55 f.; Behr, Prohibition, p. 79 ff.

⁵⁶ Okrent, Last Call, p. 1; *ibid.*, p. 120

look at an imaginary “blind tiger” or “blind pig” and got a “free” drink along with it. Women could unmolestedly enter through the same door as men, which was a remarkable improvement considering that before they were risking arrest or a sullied reputation by doing so. After the 18th Amendment was repealed many of these establishments applied for new liquor licenses and remain Chicago bars to this day.⁵⁷

of Health

[9] Outside the Board



proprietors lining up for new liquor Licences

2.2.1.3 Bathtub Gin

As the liquor one could purchase from bootleggers was often too expensive the middle and working class had to find other means to acquire their drinks after national Prohibition had rolled out. Distilling spirits was prohibited by the Volstead Act, nevertheless, many households were paid by Chicago’s gangsters for producing for them. A very common and fairly simple method was practiced not only by private individuals but also in the backrooms of speakeasies. In a bathtub, pure grain alcohol was diluted and mixed up with oil of rye, glycerin, and burnt sugar for flavouring and color - hence the name “Bathtub Gin”. The mixture was then bottled and labeled with either a fictional or fake name and committed to the contractor.⁵⁸

2.2.2 Emergence of organized crime

Before the illegalization of alcohol, gambling and prostitution were already common and profitable illegal markets. During the Great Depression in 1929 the demand for gambling was amplified by the desperation of the lower class for getting released from

⁵⁷ Prohibition begins:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/chi-chicagodays-prohibition-story-story.html>;
last accessed 1 November 2016; Speakeasies in Chicago:

<http://www.timeout.com/chicago/bars/chicago-speakeasies>; last accessed 25 February 2016; Fielding D., *Untouchable Chicago. A Ride Through Prohibition*, Chicago 2008, page 9; *Bootleg*, p. 64

⁵⁸ *Untouchable Tour Chicago*; Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 66

their financial struggles. Many Chicagoans turned to horse race betting or blackjack which, in turn, contributed to the criminals' revenues who oversaw these gambling joints.⁵⁹

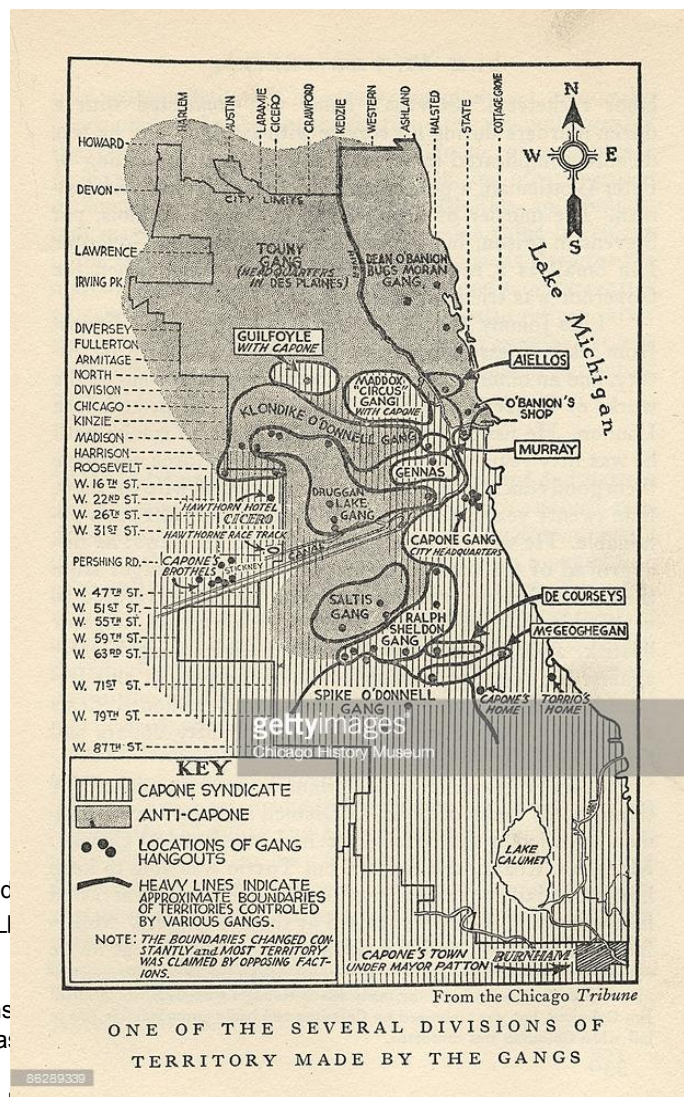
The certainly biggest development of Prohibition was bootlegging. The term actually originated in the "bible-belt" long before nationwide Prohibition of the 1920s. As it was illegal to sell alcohol, vendors tucked sample bottles of their home-distilled whiskey into the tops of their boots. Hence the name "Bootlegger" for a person who illegally sells alcohol.⁶⁰

Chicago's gangsters took advantage of the situation the nation found itself in when Prohibition rolled out. Since the demand for liquor did not actually decrease, the means of acquiring alcohol in the allegedly „dry" country turned out to be enormously lucrative. After 1920, Chicago was blossoming with gang wars over the control of alcohol-distribution territories.⁶¹

[10] Chicago Gangland

The first to enter the "wholesale moonshine industry"⁶² by paying their neighbours for producing liquor for them were the "Terrible" *Genna Brothers*, conducting business in the west side of Chicago, called the district of *Little Italy*. They earned the prefix "terrible" for forcing their hapless fellow immigrants to provide them with money.⁶³

The biggest and most influential district belonged to the *South*



⁵⁹ Prohibition: its effects on chicagoans and http://www.umich.edu/~eng217/student_ last accessed 1 November 2016, p. 9 ff.

⁶⁰ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 7

⁶¹ *Untouchable Tour Chicago*; Alcohol Cons <http://www.nber.org/papers/w3675.pdf>; la

⁶² Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 13

⁶³ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 13 f.; Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 40, *Untouchable Tour Chicago*

Side Gang, with Johnny Torrio and Al Capone as its leaders. (Illustration to the right: vertical stripes)

In 1919, Alphonse Capone came to Chicago through Torrio to work for “Big Jim” Colosimo as a bouncer at the *Four Deuces*, located in the *Levee District*, an establishment offering alcohol, gambling opportunities and pretty women.⁶⁴

During that time, Colosimo was the “kingpin” of the district. He came to his fortune by marrying the wealthy Victoria Moresco and they quickly engaged into the business of prostitution by establishing a chain of brothels that yielded a fortune.⁶⁵

Johnny “The Fox” Torrio came into business with the Colosimo's when he was summoned to dispense with the blackmail organization “*The Black Hand*” by whom the Colosimo's were threatened by, as he had the reputation of a criminal mastermind. Torrio was successful in managing the task assigned to him and became Colosimo's second-in-hand.⁶⁶

Later, when Prohibition turned out to be enormously profitable for all those involved in the bootlegging business Colossimo refused to climb on the bandwagon and was subsequently murdered on May 11, 1920. The police could not confirm the identity of the murder but suspects were Torrio, Capone, and his divorcee Victoria.⁶⁷

With Colossimo out of the way, Torrio and Capone expanded their district of business - within Chicago as well as beyond its city limits to the town of Cicero - and maintained connections with two very powerful Chicago City Council members. Michael “Hinky Dink” Kenna and John “Bathhouse” Coughlin, rulers of the 1st Ward, received “a bit of tribute [...] in exchange for their ‘clout’ in City Hall.”⁶⁸ With that, the south side never had any sort of interference by the office of the Mayor upon the business of the 1st Ward.⁶⁹

Specifics about the dealings of the Mayor, namely William Hale “Big Bill” Thompson, will be given in the following chapter.

⁶⁴ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 23 f.

⁶⁵ Fielding, *Untouchable*, pp. 25-27

⁶⁶ *Untouchable Tours Chicago*; Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 29

⁶⁷ Fielding, *Untouchable*, pp. 29-33

⁶⁸ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 37

⁶⁹ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 34; *ibid.*, p. 37; *ibid.*, p. 41; *ibid.*, p. 53

Torrio established a business-like manner of ruling his district by holding plenary sessions and collaborating with the other gang leaders to gain their agreement regarding territorial borders, for instance. Furthermore, he installed Jake “Greasy Thumb” Guzik for accounting business and Capone for monitoring the actions of the relevant representatives. Allegedly, Torrio never once shot or carried a weapon.⁷⁰

The north side was overseen by Dion O’Banion and mostly consisted of Irishmen, Italians, Poles and Jews. Dion started off his criminal career with hijacking liquor shipments and later established his “operating base” and cover-up flower shop business directly across from Holy Name Cathedral. He did not tolerate prostitution for his “Catholic-conscience”⁷¹ forbade such, although the South continuously tried to expand business into his district.⁷²

Initially, the differences between Southside and Northside were treated in a “businesslike manner”⁷³ and Dion, Torrio and Capone even shared the Siben Brewery. On May 18, 1924, trouble was initiated when O’Banion sold his part and arranged a police raid on the brewery on exactly the day when he would not be present, but Torrio and Capone were. Subsequently, Torrio was arrested and due to his prior Prohibition offence sentenced to a month in prison.⁷⁴

After Dion O’Banion’s death on November 11, 1924, Earl “Little Hymie” Weiss took over the north side gang’s territory. Priorly, O’Banion had refused to add the Genna Brother’s oversupply of *Rotgut* moonshine to his inventory - for he was eager to preserve his good reputation for dealing only with quality goods - which, allegedly, got him killed. Convinced that not the Genna Brothers but Torrio and Capone, seeking revenge for the Siben Brewery incident, were responsible for Dion’s murder, Weiss teamed up with George “Bugs” Moran to pursue the task of eliminating the south side leadership.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ Fielding, *Untouchable*, pp. 39-42; *ibid.*, p. 29

⁷¹ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 12

⁷² Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 11 f.; *ibid.*, p. 43; *Untouchable Tour Chicago*

⁷³ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 13

⁷⁴ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 13; *ibid.*, p. 43

⁷⁵ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 14 ff.; *ibid.*, p. 43

As a footnote, Moran acquired his epithet from Newspaper reporters calling him “buggy” due to his “reputation for impetuous boldness”⁷⁶ by “tirelessly attempt[ing] to challenge Capone to do battle, ‘any time, any place, and any how’”⁷⁷.

On January 24, 1925, when Torrio had already dismissed his bodyguards and was about to enter his home a failed attempt to kill him marked the end of Torrio’s career as leader of the south side gang.⁷⁸ In the hospital, he passed leadership to Capone, saying “Al, it’s all yours. All that I want out of Chicago is out alive”⁷⁹.

Capone’s first official acts as the new “King of Chicago”⁸⁰ were the employment of Frankie Rio as bodyguard, as well as “Machine Gun” Jack McGurn for tasks regarding the elimination of enemies. He was Chicago’s top-class hitman with the tradition of placing a nickel and a dime in the dead hand of his victims, thereby commemorating his step-father’s death.⁸¹

Additionally, Capone’s older brother Ralph Capone became distributing manager, making sure speakeasies would always purchase an appropriate sum of liquor. General manager became Frank Nitti, also known as “The Enforcer”, for he supervised Capone’s orders.⁸²

Capone also established alliances with the north side mafia, the Genna family, who were hoping that Capone would protect them from Weiss who was recurrently trying to take over their territory and kill them.⁸³

On May 26, 1925, “Bloody” Angelo Genna was shot and hit a dozen times by four gunmen. The shooters remain unknown.⁸⁴

On June 13, 1925, Mike “The Devil” Genna was shot by the police after having opened fire at the police officers pursuing him and his two fellow passengers, in believe it was Weiss and Moran who were actually chasing him.⁸⁵

As the attacks on Capone did not cease to occur after Torrios death, Al had Hymie Weiss eliminated on October 11, 1926, following a shooting at the coffee shop of the

⁷⁶ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 60

⁷⁷ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 60

⁷⁸ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 18; *ibid.*, p. 47 f.

⁷⁹ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 47

⁸⁰ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 47

⁸¹ Fielding, *Untouchable*, pp. 47-50; *Untouchable Tours Chicago*

⁸² Fielding, *Untouchable*, pp. 48-50

⁸³ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 54

⁸⁴ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 55

⁸⁵ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 55

Hawthorne Hotel. Capone and Frankie Rio were not even harmed when the front window of the shop exploded through a fusillade of bullets coming from shooters outside on the street. Weiss and his bodyguard “Paddy” Murray were shot by Frank Nitti and Jack McGurn, using machine guns - hence his prefix - at the front of Holy Name Cathedral, at four o’clock on November 11, 1926. Consequently, George “Bugs” Moran became leader of the north side and “remained a threat to the interest of the Capone empire”⁸⁶. Nonetheless, Capone had restored “the degree of menace previously held”⁸⁷ by his gang.⁸⁸

In the harsh winter of 1929 occurred and prevailed a dramatic undersupply of whiskey in the city and consequently, control over the home-distilling industry of the west side was particularly coveted by Chicago’s bootleggers. Since presidency of the Sicilian Union was the key to gaining access to that immense stock of alcohol from the northside, Tony “The Mafia King” Lombardo, now former president, was assassinated in broad daylight, in order to initiate vacancy of the position. Rumors have it that either Moran engaged Joey Aiello to get rid of the current president or Capone was involved by instructing the bodyguard Joseph Lolardo, an alleged ally of Capone, to “set up his own boss”⁸⁹. Pasqualioro “Patsy” Lolardo, also a Capone ally became the new president. His term of office, however, was abbreviated and ended on January 2, 1929, when he was shot in his home. Even though one of the three shooters was identified as Joey Aiello by Lolardo’s wife, the case was never tried in court.⁹⁰

On Valentine’s Day at 10:30 am the “Purple Gang” had arranged a meeting with the northside crew and Moran at his S.M.C. Cartage Company’s headquarters. They had offered him “premium whisky at a discount price due to overstock on their end”⁹¹. Luckily for him, he did not arrive at the meeting point in time, which, however, gave him the opportunity to observe police cars at the scene investigating the massacre of seven men.⁹²

In a police report a “local youth”⁹³ described their observation as follows:

⁸⁶ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 60

⁸⁷ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 60

⁸⁸ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 20; *ibid.*, p. 50; *ibid.*, pp. 56-59; *Untouchable Chicago Tours*

⁸⁹ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 66

⁹⁰ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 65 f.

⁹¹ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 69

⁹² Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 69; *Untouchable Tours Chicago*

⁹³ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 71

*"[...] a police squad car with a damaged fender [slid] into a parking space in front of the garage. Four men got out. All four were carrying what appeared to be long boxes. Two men wore suits, ties, overcoats and fedoras. [...] The driver of the vehicle remained behind the wheel. [...] Shortly thereafter, the chill morning air was punctured by the deep rumble of machine gun fire from inside the building, followed by two shotgun blasts! Within seconds, the two men in civilian attire exited the building with their heads down and their hands up. The two uniformed policemen had what looked to be the fabled Thompson submachine guns planted firmly in their suspects' backs as they shoved them into the backseat, entered the vehicle on either side of the "arrestees" and calmly drove away south on Clark Street."*⁹⁴

Among the victims of the massacre were six of Moran's men, Frank and Pete Gusenberg, James Clark, Adam Heyer, John May and Al Weinshank. Additionally, a civilian who occasionally joined them for a game of cards had arrived on this morning and was killed as well. His name was Dr. Reinhart Schwimmer. One of the theories as to who was behind the complete obliteration of Moran's gang states that the *Purple Gang* had a friendly business relationship with Capone regarding the importation of whiskey across the Canadian border. Furthermore, the two apartments rented simultaneously, with a perfectly aligned view upon the S.M.C. Cartage company's front door from opposite directions, so that Moran's arrival could be monitored from any direction he came that morning. Allegedly, Dr. Schwimmer was dressed like Moran and thus mistaken for him. Even though one man, namely Frank Gusenberg, had survived the shooting and was questioned by police before he succumbed to his bullet wounds, he never identified the shooters and even insisted on not having been shot at all. The young men who had observed the incident positively identified "Machine Gun" Jack McGurn, John Scalise and Fred "Killer" Burke as the four men who had entered and exited the building after the shooting. All four of them were never convicted for their crimes due

⁹⁴ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 71

to alibis on that morning.⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Capone himself was not in Chicago and accused Moran for “lin[ing] his own guys up against a wall and shoot[ing] them all”⁹⁶.

2.2.3 Prohibition enforcement

2.2.3.1 Local police and government

William Hale “Big Bill” Thompson was mayor of Chicago from 1915 to 1923 and, again, from 1928 to 1931. He set the tolerant tone that allowed speakeasies and bootleggers to operate more or less openly since he was “completely opposed”⁹⁷ to the Prohibition law and considered it to be “unreasonable and unfair”⁹⁸ in every regard.⁹⁹

In 1928, on the occasion of his reelection - not that he particularly cared about specific occasions - he threw a party with liquor flowing openly and taken for granted. Consequently, he had no intention of doing anything to encourage his police force to enforce the law which in turn inspired cops to take a laissez-faire attitude towards the gang wars that frequently broke out over the control of alcohol-distribution territories.¹⁰⁰ Bribery, was one of the most common means of keeping one's local business running. In exchange for weekly contributions to the commander of the local precinct and the regular officer, the saloonkeeper was notified when they planned their regular monthly raids.¹⁰¹

“60 percent of my police are in the bootleg business.”, Charles Fitzmorris, chief of Chicago police, complained.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Untouchable Tours Chicago; Fielding, Untouchable, p. 68 ff.; *ibid.*, p. 73 f.

⁹⁶ Fielding, Untouchable, p. 74

⁹⁷ Fielding, Untouchable, p. 7

⁹⁸ Fielding, Untouchable, p. 8

⁹⁹ Fielding, Untouchable, p. 7 f.; *ibid.*, p. 38

¹⁰⁰ Prohibition begins, in:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/chi-chicagodays-prohibition-story-story.html>; last accessed 1 November 2016; Fielding, Untouchable, p. 7 f.; *ibid.*, p. 37

¹⁰¹ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 67

¹⁰² Prohibition begins, in:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/nationworld/politics/chi-chicagodays-prohibition-story-story.html>; last accessed 1 November 2016

2.2.3.2 Federal Police

On the federal level, the situation was not very different. Under President Harding the prohibition force grew increasingly corrupt.¹⁰³

Prohibition agents were paid less than, roughly \$2,500 a year, and a large number also took bribes from the gangsters operating in their jurisdiction to mend their wages.¹⁰⁴

Violence was inherent to the enforcement of Prohibition since it was not part of the job requirement to be free of any prior convictions or prison stays. Among the agents were wife beaters, murderers, and robbers.¹⁰⁵

The problems originated partly from the lack of sufficient appropriation for all federal enforcement of Prohibition. Until 1925, the total budget amounted to about five million dollar, per year. Consequently, the Prohibition Department, led by Roy Haynes, was not only ill-trained but also understaffed and thus, unable to cope with the rising lawlessness of the US population.¹⁰⁶

The Coast Guard and the Bureau of Internal Revenue were the two main components of the Prohibition Department, with the former consisting of about 60 boats and the latter of around 3,000 agents and office personnel. Their tasks encompassed everything from “patrolling the nation’s 4,993 miles of coastline”¹⁰⁷, conducting raids and searchings, to finding new methods of preserving the law.¹⁰⁸

In order to prevent people from drinking industrial alcohol, intended for car antifreeze or other goods like perfumes, it was tainted with poisons that could cause blindness or death if drunk. Some were less lethal and bootleggers tried to remove them. Nonetheless, thousands of people died due to poisoned alcohol each year.¹⁰⁹

Capone himself saw his purpose of business as a mere “supplier [for] a public demand”¹¹⁰, but not every American citizen shared his opinion. When on February 14th, 1929

¹⁰³ Okrent, Last Call, p. 135 ff.

¹⁰⁴ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 67; *ibid.*, p.70; Fielding, Untouchable, p. 81; Okrent, Last Call, p. 137

¹⁰⁵ Okrent, Last Call, p. 136 f.

¹⁰⁶ Okrent, Last Call, pp. 142-144

¹⁰⁷ Okrent, Last Call, p. 144

¹⁰⁸ Okrent, Last Call, p. 144 ff.

¹⁰⁹ Blumenthal, Bootleg, p. 83

¹¹⁰ Prohibition, and its Effects on Chicagoans, and Organized Crime, in:
http://www.umich.edu/~eng217/student_projects/nkazmers/prohibition1.html;
 last accessed 1 November 2016, p.12

seven men were killed in a massacre, the climax of the police's obliviousness had been reached and a federal effort was launched to stop Capone, who was generally suspected for the so-called St. Valentine's Day Massacre.¹¹¹

President Herbert Hoover authorised a special operation with the sole purpose of "bring[ing] down Al Capone"¹¹². Under the jurisdiction of the Justice Department, Eliot Ness was assigned as Prohibition agent and was "allowed to hire his own squad of incorruptible agents [...] to assist him"¹¹³. Together they worked undercover and installed informants to gain detailed information about the dealings of Capone. Their aim was to destroy and raid breweries in Cicero and the Northside so as to reduce his profits. Afterwards, the procedures were made public and the *Untouchables* gained fame and supporters. There are various stories about how the group came about their name. One possible option is that it was given to them by a local reporter when one of the arrested gangsters allegedly proclaimed "These guys won't take bribes. They are untouchable!"¹¹⁴. In 1931, the joined effort of the Untouchables, as well as of the local police and the International Revenue Service managed to bring the charge of "failing to report approximately one million dollars income"¹¹⁵ against Alphonse Capone.¹¹⁶



¹¹⁴ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 81

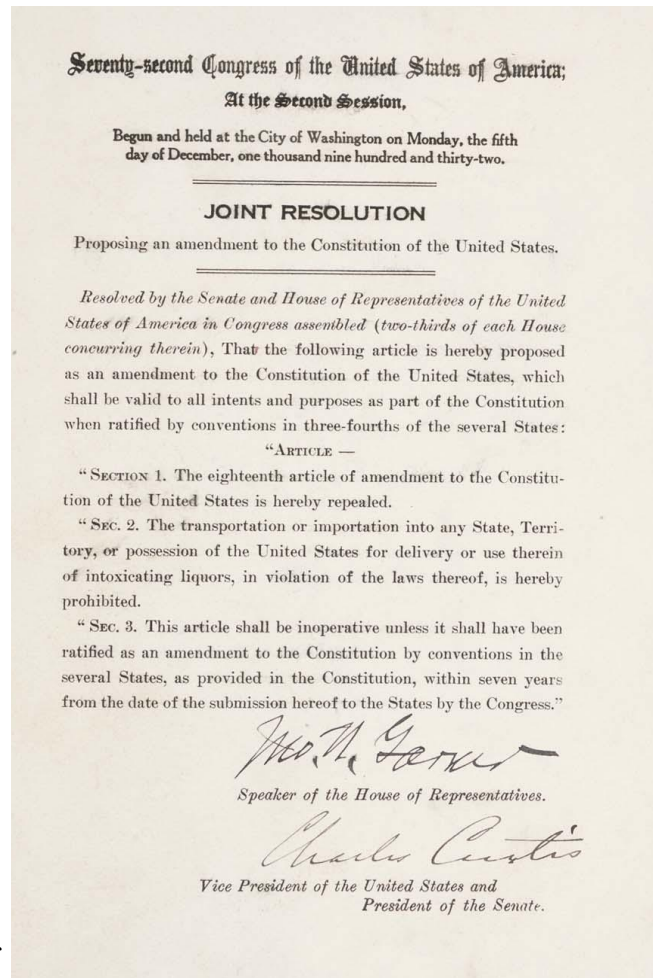
¹¹⁵ Fielding, *Untouchable*, p. 85

¹¹⁶ Fielding, *Untouchable*, pp. 78-81

2.3 Was Prohibition pointless?

With the ratification of the 21st amendment, on December 5th, 1933 (taking effect with the start of the new year), the 18th amendment was repealed.¹¹⁷ However, according to section two of the new amendment, within which the local-option-bill was reintroduced, individual states had the authority to issue their own laws for prohibiting the transportation, importation, and/or use of intoxicating liquors if they wished.¹¹⁸

[12] Twenty-first Amendment



The causes for the repeal of nationwide Prohibition can be divided into two main factors. Due to the economic downturn of 1929, following the famous stock market crash, unemployment was rising in the entire United States.

The Great Depression had a huge impact on society's priorities and spending capacities and consequently weakened the illicit alcohol business as well. Even though, initially, bootleggers were only able to make a fortune out of the "Prohibition-situation" (due to which they could demand almost any price they wanted) as long as it remained illegal, it was obvious that with the repeal jobs could be created, consequently spending capacity would increase, and the economy would blossom again. In turn, affecting the alcohol

¹¹⁷ Fielding, Untouchable, p. 89

¹¹⁸ Illustration [12], to the right

business in positive way since more people would be motivated to purchase non-essential goods like liquor again.

Furthermore, the growing fierceness and violence with which prohibition agents - primarily the Untouchables - continuously conducted raids on breweries lead to growing agitation against Prohibition. At its peak, vast quantities of barrels filled with illegal alcohol were cast upon the streets and their content spilled into the gutters.¹¹⁹

The main reason for why prohibition, ultimately, was a failure is that alcohol over-indulgence remains a great problem of today's society, inflicting pain on entire families. A significant amount of - not only young - people dies due to alcohol intoxication or alcohol-related accidents in traffic, even though car security has improved immensely (e.g. rise of legal drinking age to 21 instead of 18). This is a problem affecting all countries of the entire world and there is still a lack of public awareness to the cause.

Prohibition, however, was not pointless and taught us a great many things.

If both sides would not have refused to compromise in the first place, Prohibition might not even have been necessary. When the temperance movement formed with increasing numbers proclaiming their wishes for a change in the prevailing conditions the saloon-owners could simply have replied by cleaning up a bit or maybe closing down the worst ones. In turn, when americans demanded only a little beer and wine for their home dinner parties and dry-forces would have slightly loosened the laws in order to meet them halfway, Prohibition might still be in place today. [13] Prohibition demonstrations

Additionally, from what we can observe today it is evident that no national rule is required at all. The local-option-bill is still in place and works perfectly fine for all the states that have decided to ban alcohol in their own territory (mainly the "bible belt").



¹¹⁹ The Hidden Secrets: Gangsters of the 1920s and 1930s. Questar, 2012 Disc 1, time 21:57 to 23:15

As a side effect, Prohibition gave rise to the horrendous amount of consumption of soft drinks like Coca-Cola, since they were a legal and acceptable substitute.¹²⁰

3 Prohibition extended the English vocabulary

The *Dictionary of American Slang* (1960) provides proof of how the English language was shaped through Prohibition. The term “He was taken for a ride” originated in the Prohibition-era Chicago and euphemizes the customary depositing of inconvenient enemies in a remote suburb. The common term “Powder room” emerged when proprietaries hastily installed additional female bathroom facilities in the previously men-only saloons, for speakeasies had become universal establishments. Even a word contest, sponsored by D. King and publicized in the *Boston Herald*, was conducted. The winner of the first prize got two hundred dollars and “scofflaw” was added to the English language as an expression for an carouser who overtly offended against the Eighteenth Amendment.¹²¹

“Rum”, defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “used generically as a hostile name for intoxicating liquors”¹²² became a familiar signifier and all-purpose determiner in every regard possible. Words like “rum demon”, “rum baron”, “rum traffic”, “rumrunners”, “rum hole”, and “rum blossom” are only a few of the multitude of derogatory terms for pre-Prohibition non-existent activities and personifications.¹²³

Most interestingly, the rum brand *The Real McCoy* was based on the story of the “rumrunner” Captain Bill McCoy, who build his own “Rum Row” empire (denotation for bootlegging near the coast) and was famous for his reliability and good-quality liquor dealings. McCoy is said to be the divisor of “Rum Row” by smuggling liquor from the Caribbean to the coast of New York in 1922. Later when import duties upon the Bahamas were raised he relocated his business north and more and more “rumrunners” discovered its lucrativity. Along the Atlantic coast “Rum Row” ships were constantly anchoring just outside the three-mile limit, where international waters

¹²⁰ Blumenthal, *Bootleg*, p. 75 f.

¹²¹ Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 164

¹²² Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 165

¹²³ Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 165

began, bearing cargo that was gradually transferred to shore by smaller boats under cover of the dark.¹²⁴

Furthermore, the expression “The Real McCoy” also signifies “The real thing - not a substitute”¹²⁵ and could stem from Captain Bill McCoy’s good-quality liquor dealings for he - in contrast to other rumrunners - did not dilute his goods. However, the term’s origin is not resolved for certain and there is a long list of several other alternative sources.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Okrent, *Last Call*, pp. 161-165; *ibid.*, p. 167; The Real McCoy: <http://spiritofrum.com/markenuebersicht/the-real-mccoy/>; last accessed 1 November 2016

¹²⁵ The meaning and origin of the expression: The Real McCoy, in: <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/real-mccoy.html>; last accessed 1 November 2016

¹²⁶ Okrent, *Last Call*, p. 161; The meaning and origin of the expression: The Real McCoy, in: <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/real-mccoy.html>; last accessed 1 November 2016

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[Frontpage] Liquor spilling on the street	Front Page
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III. [7] WCTU-gathering <i>http://s.hswstatic.com/gif/prohibition-7.jpg</i>	12
III. [8] WCTU-march <i>https://userscontent2.emaze.com/images/84c0b569-2e56-49b3-86ea-d7d66bd90ea3-Badffcdc-2565-4f2a-90cc-f584279602b1.png</i>	12
III [9] Outside the Board of Health proprietors lining up for new liquor Licences <i>http://www.e-reading.club/illustrations/1010/1010665-_62.jpg</i>	15
III. [10] Chicago Gangland <i>http://media.gettyimages.com/photos/map-that-outlines-chicagos-gang-territories-charts-al-capones-control-picture-id86289339</i>	16
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III. [13] Prohibition Demonstrations <i>http://www.e-reading.club/illustrations/1010/1010665-_57.jpg</i>	26

Erklärung

Ich erkläre, dass ich die Seminararbeit ohne fremde Hilfe angefertigt und nur die im Literaturverzeichnis angeführten Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt habe.

Ort, Datum, Unterschrift