

*The*  
**Prohibition  
Hangover**

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*Alcohol in America  
from Demon Rum  
to Cult Cabernet*

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# Introduction

It's a cold April afternoon, one of those damp North Atlantic days whose cold drizzle and gusts makes carrying an umbrella irrelevant. Your only defense is a raincoat, but even then the wind whips right through it, chilling you to the bone. Not an Arctic cold, but a wet chill. You expect this on Cape Cod or in Seattle, but not in our nation's capital—certainly not in spring. It's cold enough to keep the cherry blossoms around for a few more days in their pink-and-white glory. Cold enough that you wonder, who would be crazy enough to go to a baseball game, when you can watch it on TV? Cold enough that I wish I had brought a winter hat and a hip flask. Indeed, it's too cold for an ice-cold beer, but beer is what we drink, because this is baseball, baby.

The Washington Nationals are playing the first of a three-game series against the Florida Marlins at the brand-new Nationals Park. After more than three decades, Washington, D.C., finally has a baseball team, one that played its first seasons at decrepit RFK Stadium while the new ballpark went up. So far, no corporation has yet bought the naming rights, but if it stays Nationals Park, that would be fine by me. The *Washington Post* playfully suggested it be named Dubya C. Field (President George W. Bush threw out the first pitch at the season opener).<sup>1</sup> Ten days after my visit, Pope Benedict XVI delivered a mass at the ballpark on his first papal visit to the United States.

Vendors in bright yellow shirts walk through the stands, hawking, "Cold beer! Ice-cold beer! Cold beer!" They charge \$7.50 for a twelve-ounce plastic bottle of Miller Lite or Budweiser. There are few takers until a young man comes through with a giant thermos strapped to his back. It reads "Hot Chocolate." He does a killer business. In the concession concourse, the longest lines are not at the beer stands or Ben's Chili Bowl but rather at the Mayorga Coffee stand.

Today, April 7, 2008, is a special anniversary in drinking America's history. It is the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Cullen Act, the law that legalized 3.2 percent alcohol beer in the waning days of Prohibition. Most people are oblivious—they are just trying to stay warm. To celebrate the event, Anheuser-Busch has trucked out its famous Clydesdale horses and red Budweiser beer wagon for the pre-game. A team of the beautiful brown-and-white horses with a furry white feather over their hooves is parked just in front of the main gate. A small crowd gathers to take pictures. One woman even climbs aboard to sit next to the driver while her husband snaps their picture. Say cheese!

Baseball and beer fit like a glove. Nationals' advertising soon sprouts up on city buses. One bus sign reminds the reader that baseball is "A game of countless algorithmic possibilities. And beer." Advertising is scattered throughout Nationals Park. Surrounding the giant high-definition scoreboard are four ads. A sign for PNC Bank. Another for Coca-Cola. A big square ad for the *Washington Post*. And one for Miller Lite. Miller also has a tapestry-like ad draped over the wall of a parking garage. Missing are the three towering billboards at RFK that read "Budweiser," each with a picture of a freshly poured glass of beer.

Anheuser-Busch InBev, which makes Budweiser, is the nation's largest brewing company, followed by SABMiller, which recently formed a joint venture with the third largest brewery, Molson Coors.<sup>2</sup> The new company is called MillerCoors LLC. One concession stand sells Blue Moon Ale, a Coors-owned craft beer, near the other stands where people have lined up to buy hot dogs, pretzels, and Nationals T-shirts. Otherwise, the Base Line Brews beer stand looks like a United Nations of beer: the choices are surprisingly good. Before the game, I have a Hook and Ladder Backdraft Brown, a dark, deliciously malty creation brewed locally, while my friend has a Yuengling Lager (pronounced YING-ling). Yuengling is produced at America's oldest brewery—and it's from his home state of Pennsylvania.

We are cold enough after the first inning that we get up to walk, in search of more beer. We make for the craft beer stands. I have a Sierra Nevada Pale Ale, while my friend has a Red Stripe. We feel slightly giddy, but not enough to be drunk. We both took the subway, so driving home is not a concern. But the dominant beers on every level of the concourse are Budweiser and Miller Lite. These two share exclusive brewer advertising rights at Nationals Park, for which they paid dearly (brewers are some of the highest-paying advertisers in sports). They hope that their advertising translates into more beer sold at the ballpark. But I scratch my naked head in curiosity: why would people

drink thin, light lager when they can have a craft beer for the same price? Everything is \$7.50. All things being equal . . .

Though a high-scoring game, it is a sad loss for the Nationals. The Nats, as they are called locally, catch up in the exciting fourth inning, but the Marlins pull ahead, driving home run after run. They cinch the game in the ninth inning with a two-run homer. The final score is 10–7. It's even worse when I return two nights later, when the Nats suffer a crushing defeat of 10–4 against the Marlins. At least the weather was twenty-five degrees warmer, a nice spring evening to sip beer and people-watch.

This spring baseball game underscores a subtle truth about American society. Most adults drink. In fact, almost two-thirds of American adults consume alcoholic beverages. These drinks have become a common consumer product, one that many people use daily. Yet the United States has never grown comfortable with alcohol since the country repealed Prohibition in 1933. This shows itself in many ways, from the economic to the cultural level.

Alcohol is a powerful economic driver. According to the Beverage Information Group, Americans drank \$189 billion worth of alcoholic beverages in 2007.<sup>3</sup> This consumption means economic opportunities. It has created jobs for hundreds of thousands of people, generated an entirely new industry—wine tourism—and pumped billions of tax dollars into federal, state, and local economies. Alcohol acts as a strong multiplier for economic development. On the other hand, the industry wields an economic tight fist in Washington. Alcohol excise taxes were once a strong source of revenue for the federal government, but now they account for less than one-half of 1 percent of federal income. The industry uses its economic power to keep taxes from rising on its products.

But the government, at the state level, pushes back. States maintain a paternalism about drinking, believing it is something that must be controlled. The states determine who is old enough to drink, where you can buy liquor, even when you can buy it. Some states still prevent alcohol sales on Sunday, clearly out of deference to the Christian Sabbath. This raises questions of both constitutionality and fairness, because alcohol is singled out. You can buy jeans, gas, and groceries on Sunday, but you cannot buy liquor in many places.

The state also plays the role of retailer. Eighteen states are still the *direct seller* of distilled beverages to consumers, not trusting them to licensed retailers. Arguably, today this is more about state revenue than alcoholic beverage control. But it does beg the question, why do these states sell alcohol, when

they do not sell any other consumer product? That's not the only contradiction. For example, Kentucky produces bourbon, the country's finest whiskey (okay, Tennessee's is just as good). Yet the state maintains both "wet" counties where consumers can buy alcohol, and "dry" counties that forbid alcohol sales. But even in dry counties, there are huge loopholes for private clubs like golf courses. A state like Kentucky is on the front line between Southern Baptists who want to keep things dry and modern society that demands shopping convenience 24/7.

What do religions really say about alcohol? The Catholic Church has no doctrinal problems with it—even the pope drinks—while some conservative American Protestant churches insist that Jesus could not have drunk alcohol. To this day, many Protestant churches still serve grape juice at communion instead of wine. This gives them ammunition to tell their congregants to abstain from alcohol altogether. It overlooks the central role that wine served in Jesus's ministry and ignores the fact that Jesus was Jewish and that Judaism has never had a theological opposition to alcohol.

The Protestant churches once pushed for Prohibition, and the issue backfired horribly. Now they are unsure how to address alcohol. They either condemn it or, more likely, ignore it. Though the Gospel of John tells the story of Jesus turning water into wine, Americans expect their church pastors to be sober and refrain from drinking. Many Protestants are embarrassed to let their fellow parishioners know that they drink. People undergo considerable anxiety about whether to bring a bottle of wine to a church potluck or offsite committee meeting dinner. An estimated one-eighth of people who drink either abuse alcohol or are alcoholics. Alcoholics can be found in most congregations, no doubt, yet few congregations are doing anything to help them.

On the secular side, Americans are becoming sophisticated drinkers and gourmet diners as we have become a nation of "foodies." We have unabashedly left our Wonder Bread tastes in mass-market beer behind. Magazines like *Wine Spectator*, *Wine Advocate*, and even *BusinessWeek* highlight a new breed of American: the wine collector. Restaurants have jumped on the bandwagon, creating extensive wine lists and seeking out hard-to-find cult wines. They entice people to pay three or more times above the wine's retail price for a richer dining experience, where food and wine combine in a lovely orchestration. And people are paying up. Bars are crafting more creative mixed drinks to satisfy the public's ever-shifting tastes. Bartenders are practically chefs these days. While mass-market beer sales are stagnant, craft brewing is on the rise, reflecting American tastes for better products.

There are clearly health benefits from drinking alcohol in moderation, yet doctors hesitate to advise patients to drink out of fear of fostering alcoholism.

It reflects a continued attitude that nothing good comes from drinking. And public health advocates are lobbying heavily to keep any positive reference to alcohol out of the nation's health-care system. Meanwhile, Americans have embraced the French paradox, believing that wine—particularly red wine—is a miracle drink that prevents Alzheimer's disease, diabetes, heart disease, prostate cancer, and aging. The baby boomer generation and Gen Xers have shifted heavily in favor of wine, partly out of faith in its health benefits.

But the single most controversial aspect of Americans' attitude toward alcohol is the drinking age. An adult at eighteen in the United States can vote, be drafted, serve in the military, get married and divorced, write a will, and buy "adult" items. Yet one cannot drink legally before reaching the age of twenty-one. Despite the law and increasing enforcement, it is easy for young people to get their hands on alcohol. They have embraced a Prohibition culture of binge drinking, fostered in part by a societal message that says alcohol is taboo and therefore alluring and exciting. Alcohol has become a rite of passage to adulthood. We do not raise our youth with the tools to make good decisions about alcohol. Instead, the message is "not until you're twenty-one." We are not instilling in them a healthy respect for alcohol—neither alerting them to the dangers of binge drinking, nor explaining the benefits from moderate use.

The United States has had a tense relationship with alcohol since colonial times, and even after Prohibition failed, Americans are still unsure how to deal with it. Our social attitudes and laws on alcohol are disjointed. Is it a normal consumer product? Is it a controlled substance? Is it a gift from God? Or is it Demon Rum? Maybe it's all of these things. As Americans drink more, there is a great strain between the many different points of view about alcohol, between freedom and reform, tipplers and teetotalers, evangelicals and secularists. But at least this is not a political issue: Republicans are just as likely to drink as Democrats.

This book came about from an insight over Christmas dinner in 2003. My mom, grandmother, and I were gathered around the table for "roast beast." I opened a nice 1997 Burgundy. My mom and I shared the bottle, but my grandmother would not have any. Three generations sat at the table: my grandmother, who grew up during Prohibition (and had an alcoholic husband), and my mom and me, both social drinkers. What explains the shift between abstinence and social drinking within a single family? Why did people abstain in the first place? Why weren't these generational values passed on?

Our grandparents and great-grandparents believed alcohol was so intrinsically evil that they amended the Constitution. After the thirteen-year noble experiment of Prohibition, they changed the Constitution back—the only

time the United States has done so. Even after Repeal, temperance did not go away. My dad's father was the distributor for Hamm's Beer in northwest Nebraska immediately after Prohibition. He and his family lived in tiny Hay Springs. He also owned the furniture store, which meant he was the coffin maker, and by default, the town mortician. Grandpa Les did whatever he needed to put food on the table; it was the Depression. He was also a Freemason, but his lodge kicked him out when he refused to quit his job as a beer distributor.

One of my best friends, Larry Slagle, grew up in the 1950s in rural Pennsylvania. His mother was a member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and she required him to turn off the radio whenever a beer commercial came on. The funny thing about Larry's story was the context: he told me of his mother's WCTU activism while we were on a wine-tasting tour of Tuscany. Larry rejected his mother's values of temperance.

The role of alcohol in American society is constantly negotiated. It is a continuing tug-of-war between those who want the freedom to drink and those who want to control alcohol. The states maintained a strong distrust of alcohol after Repeal, and many of them devised mechanisms to regulate it, from how it is taxed and distributed to who is legally allowed to consume it.

When the United States lowered the voting age to eighteen in 1970, many states lowered the minimum legal drinking age to eighteen as well, recognizing that this is the age of adulthood. The number of highway deaths from drunk driving correspondingly rose; as a result Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), an activist group that organized in 1980, waged a successful campaign to raise the drinking age to twenty-one, now the standard across the country. MADD also worked to implement legislation on standards for blood alcohol concentration, and its outreach programs aim to stop underage drinking. But it lost the battle to limit alcohol advertising when the distilled spirits industry dropped its six-decade voluntary ban on network television advertising in 1996.

Another pivotal moment in the long history of alcohol occurred in 2005, when the U.S. Supreme Court made a landmark ruling in *Granholm v. Heald*. The decision struck down discriminatory bans on interstate shipments of wine, policies that several states including New York and Michigan had adopted. While affirming state control over alcohol in the Twenty-first Amendment, the Court declared that the Commerce Clause trumps state control. If states are to allow interstate commerce, then they have to do so in a non-discriminatory way. The Supreme Court's ruling provides another way for us to examine and renegotiate the role of alcohol in our society.



It has been seventy-five years since the Prohibition era, and yet that time in our history affects our attitudes toward alcohol to this very day. The social stigma against drinking has worn off, yet everywhere we hear the legacy of Prohibition, echoing down the years long after the temperance bell stopped ringing. The country has not had a national discussion on alcohol's role in society since Repeal in 1933. The intention of this book is to foster this discussion. It is written for consumers, because ultimately the freedom to drink or not drink alcohol is ours.



## Chapter 1

# The Noble Experiment

The American people are so innovative. Prohibition was a screwball law, so they just went around it.

—Juanita Swedenburg

The year 1933 was the darkest time of the Great Depression, which had started more than three years before. A quarter of the American labor force was out of work; others were barely making ends meet, struggling to hold on to their jobs, struggling to pay the mortgage, hoping and praying that the bank did not foreclose on their house or go out of business, taking away their life's savings. America's Greatest Generation—the men and women who would fight and win World War II—was still living at home, doing whatever they could to help their parents survive to another day.

A sullen winter ended, and a spring day—April 6, 1933—brought a new hope. As the day turned to evening, people got the news over the radio, from late edition newspapers, and by word of mouth. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt—barely in the Oval Office a month—had just signed a law, the Cullen Act. People broke open their piggybanks and raided change drawers, scrounging up a few pennies and nickels. They headed downtown, to the corner pharmacy, to the pool hall where crowds were starting to line up. But this was no bread line. At midnight that began the new day, April 7, the delivery trucks started to arrive, workers offloaded their trucks as the crowds grew, and people cheered when they saw the wooden kegs. In St. Louis, a team of Clydesdales pulled a wagon down Pestalozzi Street from a warehouse newly sprung to life. In these dark days of the Depression, the people had something to celebrate.

Americans could drink beer again.

With a stroke of the pen, Roosevelt signed the law that declared beer up to 3.2 percent alcohol to be nonintoxicating, and thus not in defiance of the Eighteenth Amendment, the constitutional law that had made Prohibition possible. The nation's big three brewers in 1933—Schlitz, Pabst, and

Anheuser-Busch—ramped up production quickly, but in those early days they could hardly keep up with demand. A fresh glass of draft went for a nickel. Americans' perennial favorite—watery, low-alcohol light lager—was flowing again.

Prohibition was still the law of the land, but everyone knew the law was history. Congress passed the Twenty-first Amendment to repeal Prohibition on February 20, 1933, and the issue then went to state conventions. Three-quarters had to approve the amendment, but that took less than ten months. Michigan was the first to vote for Repeal on April 3—just three days before Roosevelt signed the Cullen Act. Utah—a state where 70 percent of the people are Mormon, a faith that requires complete abstinence from alcohol—became the thirty-sixth state to ratify the amendment on December 5.<sup>1</sup> Thirteen years after the “noble experiment” began, the winds of change had swept Prohibition aside.

How quickly contemporary Americans have forgotten about Prohibition. The struggle to end the “liquor traffic,” as opponents called it, was waged during the first third of the twentieth century. Like abortion today, it was an issue that fundamentally divided Americans. Prohibition became the singular event that defined the 1920s, one that ricocheted badly on the evangelical Protestant churches that had forced it upon the country.

It seemed like a good idea at the time. The temperance movement had started a century earlier as a church-based response to the great whiskey binge of the 1820s. After the Civil War, a new generation of temperance leaders—mostly women—pushed it forward. It began in 1873 as a grassroots movement of women in Hillsboro, Ohio, who, tired of their husbands' drunkenness, gathered in front of saloons, singing hymns and praying, until the saloon owners caved in and shut down. They were called crusaders, and their efforts directly led to the formation of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Headed by Frances Willard, the WCTU espoused a “Do Everything” type of social activism, even though at the time only men had the right to vote.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout American history, higher rates of drinking have been met by reformers who want to reduce these levels. They begin by using education to advance their arguments (“moral suasion”), and when that does not work, they resort to coercion—that is, they change the law to achieve their goal.<sup>3</sup> The WCTU used moral suasion for two decades, but by the 1890s they had failed to achieve change. The Anti-Saloon League (ASL) took its place as the primary force in the movement. The ASL was the National Rifle Association of its day. It was a powerful advocacy group focused on a single issue: the total suppression of all liquor traffic—breweries, distilleries, and wineries. Cut off from the liquor supply and its main outlet, the tied-house saloon, the

United States would sober up. The organization reached across party lines, gaining both Republican and Democratic support for its cause.<sup>4</sup>

And what was so bad about the saloon? The saloon was the poor man's club, a place that was especially important in crowded cities. It provided entertainment, socializing opportunities, and a way for the working class to build community, as many patrons were immigrants. Unions and mutual aid societies met there, as did the local politicians who swept the room with handshakes and patronage. The temperance movement, dominated by middle-class ideals of a tranquil home life, never understood the real need for a working-class social outlet but instead insisted that the saloon was a demonic trap. As saloon scholar Madelon Powers puts it: "The saloon was not alternative culture. It was urban culture."<sup>5</sup>

At first, the ASL advocated for local option laws. These allowed localities to ban the liquor traffic and shut down saloons. Once communities went dry, they pressured the rest of the state to follow suit. And once the state went dry, congressmen and senators from that state had to vote dry, even if they personally consumed alcohol.<sup>6</sup> Led by Wayne Wheeler, the Karl Rove of his day, the ASL established its base among the Protestant churches: Congregationalists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Southern Baptists. They sought to impose the values of a white, Protestant, middle class on a rapidly urbanizing country. They fought for it, and they won.<sup>7</sup>

Grant Wood's iconic 1930 painting, *American Gothic*, captures the spirit of this class like nothing else. A balding farmer (in real life, the model was a dentist, B. H. McKeeby) holds a pitchfork, his dour gaze looking directly at the viewer. He has put his Sunday coat on, but underneath it his overalls peak out. His meek companion (Wood's sister, Nan) averts her gaze, her hair pulled back severely—though a serpentlike wisp of hair has escaped. She stands in deference just behind the man, who is clearly much older than her. Is she his much younger wife? His daughter? His secret lover? The white clapboard farmhouse in the background with the Gothic window gives the painting its name. The only thing missing is an outhouse where the Sears & Roebuck catalog serves as toilet paper. *American Gothic* hints at many things: rural values, traditional family structures, and sexual repression. These severely uptight white people are undeniably Midwestern Protestants.

Most of America was rural in the early twentieth century, and many believed in the inherent wickedness of urban life. Cities were full of immigrants, Catholics, and Jews. They were sinful places, given over to drunkenness, prostitution, and vice. The social standard set by the temperance movement was for total abstinence from alcohol, unlike the moderation embraced by the mostly Catholic immigrants. Some industrialists believed that

drink undermined the morals of their workers—and even more important, it hampered productivity. Henry Ford was an outspoken teetotaler, as were John D. Rockefeller Jr. and William Randolph Hearst. And among religious conservatives, there was—and still is—a distrust of intellectual freedom that challenged biblical literalism.<sup>8</sup>

By 1916, nineteen states were dry, and four more would be added that year. The abstinence forces were on a roll.<sup>9</sup> When Prohibition went into effect in 1920, thirty-three states had some form of temperance legislation on the books. Supposedly all thirty-five million people living in those states had gone dry as well—law-abiding citizens all.<sup>10</sup> Still, the idea to ban alcohol nationwide was not so far-fetched; there was indeed broad-based support for Prohibition.

The United States entered World War I in 1917 when it declared war on Germany. The Anti-Saloon League seized the opportunity to push its agenda. Wayne Wheeler lobbied Congress, which speedily passed Wartime Prohibition, as grain and barley were needed for the war effort. The most popular beverage at the time was beer. Americans loved the frothy brew and were drinking about twenty gallons per person each year. The problem was that beer was perceived as a *German* beverage (the U.S. Brewers Association still kept its minutes in German)—and the country was at war with Germany. Suddenly drinking did not seem so patriotic. And it wasn't just beer that fell into disrepute in those jingoistic days: all things German became unpopular. Sauerkraut was renamed liberty cabbage, and Kaiser rolls became liberty buns. German toast became French toast, while frankfurters were magically transformed into hot dogs. Oddly enough, hamburger remained hamburger.<sup>11</sup>

The ASL then pressured Congress to adopt the Eighteenth Amendment to outlaw the liquor traffic by making it unconstitutional, a very bold move, as it is quite difficult to change the Constitution. Any amendment requires a two-thirds majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate, and then either three-fourths of the states must ratify it, or it must be ratified at a constitutional convention. The Eighteenth Amendment sped through Congress and was soon passed to the states for ratification on a wave of war-bred nationalism. All but two of the forty-eight states—Connecticut and Rhode Island—ratified the amendment without much thought. “The country accepted it not only willingly, but almost absent-mindedly,” recorded 1920s chronicler Frederick Lewis Allen. He added: “Fervently and with headlong haste the nation took the short cut to a dry Utopia.”<sup>12</sup>

Prohibition took effect on January 16, 1920. John Barleycorn supposedly was dead, replaced by John Drinkwater. But Mr. Drinkwater was born into

a troubled era. The ASL had won its victories quickly through balance-of-power politics, but it had never turned itself into a popular movement. It never recognized that public support was not entirely behind it and that its tactics had marginalized significant parts of society. Nevertheless, Prohibition had broad public support in its initial years. Sinclair Lewis wrote the novel *Babbitt* in 1922 with a clear eye on the changing social mores surrounding the era. The sentiment of decent, middle-class society was that Prohibition was a good thing—with a big caveat. A passenger on a train remarked to the protagonist, George Babbitt: “I don’t know how you fellows feel about prohibition, but the way it strikes me is that it’s a mighty beneficial thing for the poor zob that hasn’t got any will-power but for fellows like us, it’s an infringement of personal liberty.”<sup>13</sup> In a nutshell, that was it: Prohibition was for *others* to obey, especially the working class.

People perceive the Jazz Age as one long, drunken brawl in illegal speakeasies, yet overall alcohol consumption during Prohibition actually declined. In the eyes of historian Austin Kerr, “prohibition worked.” It halted the legal liquor traffic, and drinking rates and drunkenness plummeted.<sup>14</sup> Prohibitionists claimed that the rise in productivity was a result of no liquor in the workforce, which led to greater prosperity for the nation.<sup>15</sup>

Yet historical opinion about Prohibition is overwhelmingly negative. Frederick Lewis Allen published his history of the 1920s, *Only Yesterday*, in 1931—just one year after the “Postwar Decade” had ended. He calls Prohibition “the most violently explosive public issue of the nineteen-twenties.”<sup>16</sup> Fox News’s Eric Burns writes in *The Spirits of America* (2004): “the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States [was] perhaps the worst idea ever proposed by a legislative body anywhere in the world for the ostensible goal of a better society.”<sup>17</sup> Equally damning is Michael Lerner’s *Dry Manhattan* (2007): “Having pushed their reforms into the Constitution through pressure politics rather than democratic debate, [the ASL] had set the stage for a spectacular wave of resistance to Prohibition, and for the dramatic failure of their own agenda.”<sup>18</sup>

Temperance advocates were naive to believe that Americans would obey a law simply because it was on the books. They seriously misjudged the desire of Americans to drink. They were fighting against a much more powerful obstacle: alcohol was too deeply embedded in American culture for people to give it up—even if that relationship has always been fraught with anxiety and contradictions.<sup>19</sup> Catholics, ethnic minorities, and the working class were deeply offended by the temperance movement’s riding roughshod over their rights. Eager to profit from Prohibition, millions of Americans willingly disobeyed the law. The idealism of a dry nation shattered on hard reality.

Another constitutional amendment, the Nineteenth, went in effect in 1920, giving women the right to vote. Women had been a driving force for temperance: in order to win suffrage, they tied their cause to temperance. It was expected that they would support Prohibition, but that did not happen. Now that the sexes were politically equal, a younger generation of liberated women demanded the same opportunity to drink at the speakeasy, even as they bobbed their hair and ditched their petticoats. The old alliance of suffrage and abstinence broke apart.<sup>20</sup>

But no one really noticed these fractures, at least not for several years. The 1920s were an economic boom time for the United States, a decade of explosive technological and social change, one where Americans embraced consumerism, the automobile and the radio, psychoanalysis, sex, and self-fulfillment. The up-and-coming generation rejected the piousness of their elders. Norman Clark writes in *Deliver Us from Evil*: “The defiant rebel with his pocket flask had become an almost irresistible symbol of dignity, courage, manhood, and liberation from hypocrisy and pigheaded repression—a symbol which could elevate drinking into a sacrament of true individualism.”<sup>21</sup>

Disobeying the Prohibition enforcement law, the Volstead Act, became the American thing to do, particularly among the younger set, as it meant standing up for liberty. To bootleg was to strike a blow against tyranny. Bootlegging became glamorous, chic, even heroic. It was a good time to be a lawbreaker. The nation’s borders proved porous as liquor was smuggled in along the three-thousand-mile undefended frontier with Canada. Detroit was especially well positioned, directly across the river from the Canadian Club distillery. Likewise, liquor flowed across the Rio Grande from Mexico. The stretch of coast along Long Island and northern New Jersey became known as Rum Row. Ships laden with booze anchored outside the territorial limit, and speedboats brought the cargo to secret landing points, usually at night. Rum Row soon extended along the eastern seaboard and Gulf Coast. Customs agents and the Coast Guard did not have the manpower or enough fast boats to stop much of it.

Most every American high school student reads *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, one of the classics of modern American literature, published in 1925. It was Fitzgerald who called the era the Jazz Age.<sup>22</sup> In the novel, Gatsby had made his fortune by bootlegging booze, but he was undone by his affair with Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby may have been fictional, but Fitzgerald modeled him after George Remus, one of the best-known bootleggers.<sup>23</sup>

Prohibition laid out the welcome mat for organized crime. Corruption and bribery became commonplace: people simply wanted to drink, and they were willing to pay for it. Politicians paid lip service to support Prohibition,

but alcohol's interests were too deep. And there was money at stake, lots of money. Bribes flowed freely to politicians, police, and Prohibition Bureau agents. Prohibition brought a tidal wave of corruption that, hyperbole aside, was a genuine menace to the democratic system.

New York congressman Fiorello La Guardia, who would later become one of the city's greatest mayors, warned that the Noble Experiment would "require a police force of 250,000 men, and a force of 250,000 men to police the police" in New York City alone.<sup>24</sup> He staged a famous publicity stunt. Calling on the press corps, he mixed 0.5 percent "near-beer" with alcoholic malt tonic. And then he drank it while the camera bulbs flashed, declaring it tasted just like beer. He was never arrested for this—and malt tonic flew off store shelves.<sup>25</sup>

Before Prohibition took effect, the country's favorite beverage was beer, which is low in alcohol. But bootleggers went after the beverage with the greatest profit margin and highest alcohol concentration: distilled spirits—*hootch* in the vernacular of the day. Once largely confined to saloons, liquor was now everywhere. Many people set up stills in their homes to make bathtub gin, selling it to their local bootlegger. It seemed like everyone was getting a piece of the action: the money was just too enticing. Prohibition turned millions of law-abiding citizens into criminals. Maryland's official motto may be the Old Line State, but it earned its unofficial slogan, the Free State, when liquor flowed so freely over its borders. The state simply refused to actively enforce the law.

Prohibition gave rise to a new sport: stock car racing. During the 1920s, bootleggers had a hazardous job of transporting moonshine from an illegal distillery and getting it to market. They were sometimes chased by police or government agents. As a result, they souped up their cars and learned how to drive under the most hazardous conditions—even at night with the lights off. These bootleggers sometimes met on Sundays to race each other for fun—and they kept at it after Prohibition ended. This provided the inspiration for the National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, or NASCAR, which was officially organized in 1947, and is now the country's second-most popular spectator sport after football.

By the mid-1920s, most Americans realized that Prohibition was failing, and the public became cynical. People were disobeying the law, alcohol poisoning had killed thousands, and organized crime was solidly in control of major cities. Thousands of people had been arrested, and the courts faced a huge backlog of cases for Volstead Act violations. Violence was becoming a problem: in fact, it was growing worse. Gang wars in Chicago, such as the Al Capone-inspired St. Valentine's Day Massacre in 1929, made front-page



news. Prohibition cost the federal and state governments dearly, both from the loss of excise tax revenue and the cost to enforce the Volstead Act.<sup>26</sup>

A political movement was forming to repeal Prohibition. A few brave people came out as wets. One of the most prominent was New York governor Al Smith, who boldly signed legislation repealing the state's Prohibition enforcement law in 1923. Smith ran for the presidency in 1928, but the dry forces and the Ku Klux Klan viciously seized on his Catholicism, and he was trounced by Republican Herbert Hoover. It was the high-water mark of the temperance movement. Meanwhile, the nation's industrial leaders had a change of heart and turned against the ASL. The Association Against the Prohibition Amendment (AAPA) drew key defections, including the DuPonts and the Rockefellers. Even William Randolph Hearst changed his mind. An unexpected wet leader emerged in Republican socialite Pauline Morton Sabin, who organized the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform in 1929 and drew millions of supporters, eclipsing the discredited Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Yet changing the Constitution back seemed an impossible task—that is, until the economy fell off a cliff.

The Great Depression began on Black Tuesday, October 29, 1929. For weeks, the stock market had sputtered and fallen. But on this day, Wall Street took a nosedive as investors panicked and tried to sell everything they had. The stock market crash had an enormous impact on the economy, because it was not just capital that was wiped out. Many people had borrowed heavily on margin to speculate in the rising bubble, and they lost everything. Banks that had loaned the money could not collect it, and they went bankrupt.

Fearful of losing more money, Americans stopped spending and saved their dollars. Economic activity ground to a halt, and the U.S. gross domestic product contracted substantially. Without consumers to buy their products, businesses began shutting down or laying people off; eventually millions of people were thrown out of work. As each worker was laid off, his or her buying power vanished, and the result was a gigantic economic contraction. Desperate for money, more people turned to bootlegging and home brewing. The economic problem exacerbated the public's defiance of Prohibition.

The 1930 election saw a seismic shift in Congress as the nation repudiated the business-first, dry Republicans. Democrats gained seats in both the House and Senate. Two years later, the Republicans lost everything as the Great Depression grew worse. Franklin D. Roosevelt folded Repeal into an overall platform that promised to get the nation back to work again, including reopening the breweries and distilleries. He decisively won the election, and the Democrats now controlled Congress as well with a substantial majority in the House and in the Senate. The Republicans—and with them the

dry forces—were swept from public office.<sup>27</sup> Americans did not elect Roosevelt because they wanted to drink. Rather, the Great Depression was getting worse, and the country desperately needed a change. President Hoover's trickle-down economic policies were ineffective in combating skyrocketing unemployment. Prohibition may have been an adjunct issue, but the Democrats had their mandate.

The country pinned its hope on repealing Prohibition and its promise to create thousands of jobs. An estimated quarter of a million people lost their livelihoods in 1920 when Prohibition took affect. Their jobs were directly related to alcohol: brewers and distillers, saloonkeepers and bartenders, waiters and hotel operators, not to mention delivery truck drivers and warehouse workers.<sup>28</sup> Though Repeal did not end the Depression, it gave a needed boost to the economy, as well as increased the tax revenue the government collected. And now we see why people so eagerly lined up that spring evening in April 1933 for a glass of beer. It symbolized hope that better times lay ahead.

## Repeal, the Depression, and the War

You might think that there was a huge party at the end of Prohibition, that everyone went out and got smashed. Certainly if you went to the movies in 1934, you would get that impression. A big hit from that year was *The Thin Man*, the first in a six-part series of movies featuring Nick and Nora Charles and based on a Dashiell Hammett novel. The couple—played by William Powell and Myrna Loy—are rich, attractive crime-fighting detectives who throw fabulous parties. And they consume enormous quantities of liquor, shaken martinis being a particular favorite. Arguably *The Thin Man* glamorized fashionable drinking more than any other movie, until HBO produced its *Sex and the City* TV series in the late 1990s.

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer produced *The Thin Man* with an eye on Repeal, hoping to capture the mood of Americans. In many ways, it was off the mark. This was the Great Depression. Who had money to dress up in a tuxedo in a Manhattan penthouse, when people were barely scraping by? Fans could certainly fantasize that they could be like Nick and Nora—rich, glamorous, witty, crime-solving, alcoholic. Then again, escapism is a large reason why people go to the movies, and this was especially true during the Depression, as the movies offered a respite from misfortune and drudgery for an hour or two. Movies were cheap fun at a time when people did not have much money.

The United States entered the brave new world after Prohibition remark-

ably sober. There was no great wave of binge drinking. Drinking may have been legal again, but there was still a social stigma against it. Many people were unemployed, and alcohol was a luxury they could not afford. Moreover, the party of abstinence was still around to bemoan the nation's shifting social mores. The 1935 Baltimore Annual Conference of the Methodist Church decried "unescorted women imbibing cocktails in the afternoon," no doubt worried that women were lowering their morals by frequenting bars.<sup>29</sup>

There was still a strong undercurrent of distrust toward alcohol. Many people had supported Repeal because it meant restoring law and order. John D. Rockefeller Jr. had turned away from the ASL and instead promoted Repeal with strict state control of alcohol, licensing, and high taxation. He funded a report published in October 1933 called *Toward Liquor Control* that laid out the framework for today's alcohol regulations. States created commissions for alcoholic beverage control (ABC) in order to keep Demon Rum in check and to collect taxes. Along with establishing an official drinking age of twenty-one in most (but not all) states, states drafted laws forbidding driving while intoxicated. Thus, Prohibition succeeded at one thing: it created greater government regulation of alcohol, whereas almost none had existed before.<sup>30</sup>

Based on Rockefeller's report, thirty-two states and the District of Columbia set up a three-tiered licensing system: producers make the beer, wine, or liquor; wholesalers distribute them; and retailers (wine, liquor, grocery, and package stores) sell them to consumers. These are the License States.<sup>31</sup> However, eighteen states and Montgomery County, Maryland, have set up a stricter system. These are the Control States. In this model, the state itself buys alcohol, usually distilled spirits, from the wholesalers, marks up the price, then sells it directly to the public. If you want to buy alcohol in these states, you have to go to a state-run liquor store, such as an Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) store. The state government monopoly sets the price rather than the free market.

With Repeal in effect, Roosevelt signed into law the Beer and Wine Revenue Act, which boosted taxes on alcohol. On January 12, 1934, the new rates went in effect: the distilled spirits tax went from \$1.10 to \$2.00 per gallon. For wine with less than 14 percent alcohol, the tax per gallon went from 4 cents to 10 cents; for wine with 14 percent and higher, the tax doubled, from 10 cents to 20 cents. Overall, these increases nearly doubled the federal excise taxes on alcohol. Congress also reduced some tax rates. For a thirty-one-gallon barrel of beer, the tax rate was lowered from \$6.00 to \$5.00. This was calculated to give the workingman a break and encourage beer over whiskey drinking.<sup>32</sup>

The Depression was so bad that, in 1934, the federal government took

in only \$2.96 billion in revenue. Almost half of this came from excise taxes totaling \$1.35 billion (these taxes included alcohol and tobacco). The individual income tax, the main source of federal revenue today, brought in a paltry \$420 million. With the alcohol excise tax, the federal government found a reliable source of revenue. It's not too great a stretch to state that Repeal helped fund the New Deal, Roosevelt's governmental initiatives designed to get the economy back on its feet. As the country entered World War II in 1941, excise taxes stood at \$2.5 billion—about a third of the federal government's \$8.7 billion budget, and about double the revenue from the individual income tax that year (\$1.3 billion).<sup>33</sup>

Government regulations put an end to the tied-house saloon. Saloons may have reopened as bars, but things were different, as Americans had adopted new drinking habits. For one, drinking was no longer limited to men. Women had taken to speakeasies in the Roaring Twenties. The booze was potent stuff, so bartenders got wise. Women did not like whiskey, which can be bitter (besides, whiskey was seen as a man's drink, as brands like Old Grand-Dad and Virginia Gentleman reflected), so bartenders mixed cocktails that were more appealing to women. On the other hand, bars in many states had strict rules designed to control the drinking environment: only men could sit at the bar; women had to be at a table. And even men could not mingle with a drink in hand as we do at happy hour today: you were required to remain seated while you drank. If you wanted to change seats, a waiter or bartender carried your drink for you. These rules lasted until the 1960s.

Much of Prohibition-era drinking took place at home, where it was out of the public eye. That did not change after Repeal. Stripped of their ability to sell directly to consumers, brewers and distillers adopted the business model of the soft drink industry. Like Moxie, Royal Crown, and Coca-Cola, they had to work with regional distributors to move their products to market. This especially benefited producers who made products for the national market.

The industry came up with new packaging targeted at individual consumers for at-home use. Before Prohibition, beer drinkers took a small bucket known as a growler to the saloon and had the bartender fill it up. In 1935, brewers introduced the beer can as an affordable alternative for the working class. Supermarkets provided a new sales outlet for packaged alcoholic beverages besides the corner bar—and refrigerators offered the means to serve a chilled brew at home. Distillers likewise packaged their products in smaller bottles, first used by Canadian Club in the 1870s, rather than barrels or jugs—the more communal form of distribution. These small changes amounted to a large shift in consumer habits.

Unlike during the Great War, there was no liquor or beer rationing during World War II. In fact, alcohol was part of the war effort. The federal government required brewers to reserve 15 percent of their production for the troops, introducing millions of young men to canned beer. Bottles were more liable to break during shipment to the various fronts, so cans were the packaging of choice. Beer consumption rose healthily. Whiskey was in short supply on the home front: the government required distillers to make ethanol for aviation fuel and industrial solvents instead.<sup>34</sup> Yet no one argued that grain was needed for the war effort, or that the alcohol industry should be cut off. More important were the federal excise taxes that helped defeat Germany, Italy, and Japan. To make up for the shortage of whiskey, the country imported rum from the Caribbean. Rum and Coke became a popular drink during the war, not least because of the Andrews Sisters' smash hit song "Rum and Coca-Cola."<sup>35</sup>

Like the alcohol industry, Hollywood supported the war effort. It set one of the most famous movies in a bar. In *Casablanca* (1943), much of the action takes place in Rick's Café, where American-in-exile Rick Blaine (Humphrey Bogart) runs a swanky saloon full of refugees, resistance fighters, smugglers, spies, and Gestapo agents. When his lost love Ilsa Lund (Ingrid Bergman) ventures in with her husband, Rick utters one of cinema's best-remembered lines: "Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine." The term "gin joint" was a holdover, a name for a Prohibition-era speakeasy that served bathtub gin.

Millions of American GIs fought in World War II and came in extensive contact with European and Asian cultures that drank every day. And being soldiers, they drank—to be social, to assuage anxiety, to pass the lonely nights, and to ease their boredom. In the 1953 movie, *From Here to Eternity*, Private Angelo Maggio (Frank Sinatra) was thrown in the stockade for getting drunk and missing guard duty. Another soldier remarked: "All he did was to get drunk. It's a soldier's nature. It's almost his sacred duty once in a while."

Soldiers who served in Europe tasted wine and decided it was for them, while those who fought in the South Pacific brought home an appreciation for the tropics. Tiki culture blossomed after the war, thanks to men like Don the Beachcomber and Trader Vic. Theirs was an fusion that did not represent any real place in the world, but one that undoubtedly looked to the Pacific Rim for inspiration: Polynesian women, Caribbean rum, Silk Road spices, and a large dose of American fantasy.

The war was truly a defining moment in American history, as it mobilized every facet of society. Women went to work in the factories in place of men to make the guns, aircraft, tanks, and ships that helped defeat the Axis Powers.

Rosy the Riveter and her sisters emerged from the war newly empowered. Women entered the workforce en masse—a significant social development that would impact the rest of the twentieth century and beyond. Women were no longer confined to the house to raise the children. And they found a place at the bar as well.

The generation that fought World War II, the Greatest Generation, rejected abstinence, and consequently the number of people who drank steadily rose. Yet drinking did not return to its pre-1917 level until the 1965. People were drinking less whiskey and beer than before Prohibition. A subtle shift had taken place: Americans were drinking more regularly as the social stigma gradually wore off.<sup>36</sup>

### A Farewell to Temperance

Repeal did not end the temperance movement—not by a long shot. It lingered on, even as it declined in influence. Despite Repeal, the alcoholic beverage industry continued to worry that temperance would claw its way back to fight round two. This fear continued well into the 1950s, two decades after Prohibition had come undone. It was probably an unnecessary worry. The Anti-Saloon League no longer existed, the leaders of the other temperance organizations were dying off, and governmental regulation of alcohol was working. Above all, society had moved on. No one wanted to fight a battle that had been settled.

The temperance movement could still make trouble. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union may have lost most of its clout, but its local chapters had political influence into the 1950s. It had one last fight: it tried to stop mass-market alcohol advertising. Since Repeal, brewers have been in a low-level trade war with the distilled spirits industry for a share of the American consumer's wallet. If people drank more cocktails, they would consume fewer beers, so brewers discovered a way to reach customers where they lived. First they started radio advertising in the 1930s, and then after the television entered homes after World War II, they ran TV commercials.

The beer industry's television tactics infuriated the WCTU, which lobbied Washington to stop these commercials in their tracks. The United Methodist Board of Temperance likewise lobbied to keep alcohol advertising out of the media. Working together, the Methodists and the WCTU won a major concession: in 1936 the distilled beverages industry promised to refrain on a voluntary basis from running radio commercials. It made a similar pledge for television in 1948. However, the temperance organizations were unsuc-

cessful at stopping the beer industry from advertising, and beer commercials have been a key part of network television and radio ever since.

Alcohol even began to appear in television programming, demonstrating that Americans were not quite so uneasy about the subject anymore. One of the most loved episodes of the 1950s sitcom *I Love Lucy* was called “Lucy’s Italian Movie.” Lucy and Ricky Ricardo (Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz) were in Italy on a European tour. Lucy’s dream finally came true: after watching her husband-performer capture all the attention, she finally won a spot in show business! Only it was a bit-part in a movie appropriately called “Bitter Grapes.” To prepare for the role, she visited a vineyard and got pulled into the wine press with an Italian woman to help stomp the grapes. She slipped and accidentally hit the woman, and the two got into a fight right in the vat. This was physical comedy at its best. Lucy was so stained from the grapes that she lost the movie role.

Even sillier was the infamous episode where Lucy tried to be a salesgirl for “Vitameatavegamin.” As she demonstrated the nutritional qualities of this liquid supplement, whose main ingredient seemed to be alcohol, she slowly got trashed. She ended up utterly soused, and the studio’s live audience screamed in hysterics. Never had getting drunk looked so funny.

By the late 1950s, the temperance movement was on an irreversible decline as the generation that had supported the movement died. The younger generation—the World War II vets—declined to take up the cause. The official positions of many Protestant churches still favored abstinence, but they downplayed the message. Significantly, the Methodists disbanded their Board of Temperance—and likewise started ordaining women as pastors. This had been the first church to embrace temperance as part of its doctrine in 1832, but now it seemed to have given up the crusade.<sup>37</sup>

Dry counties still abounded in parts of the country, especially in the South, and some states remained completely dry (in law, if not in practice). But the dry forces were losing their grip on the states. Oklahoma changed its constitution to allow alcohol in 1959, and Mississippi became the final state to go wet in 1966. American society had jettisoned abstinence as a cultural norm in favor of moderate drinking. During the peak of the abstinence movement, the telling phrase, “he’s a drinker” was a damning statement, meaning a person of loose morals and questionable character. Most people now drink, and the abstainer is the minority, the one that some people secretly dismiss for not drinking. One might indeed say that nondrinkers are marginalized in American society, because they do not succumb to peer pressure. And indeed, the peer pressure to drink can be intense.



## How Many Americans Drink?

Two significant annual surveys are conducted to measure the number of Americans who drink alcohol. These are the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) and the Gallup Poll. Both agencies completed surveys in 2005. NSDUH concluded that 51.8 percent of Americans drink,<sup>a</sup> while Gallup determined that 63 percent of Americans consume alcohol. In fact, Gallup's data over the years consistently places the number in the range of 62–66 percent.<sup>b</sup> This compares to 20.8 percent of American adults who smoke, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in 2006. That ratio leveled off after several decades of decline.<sup>c</sup> Gallup similarly found in 2008 that 21 percent of Americans smoke.<sup>d</sup> This shows that three times more people drink than smoke.

At first glance, it appears that NSDUH and Gallup contradict each other. One claims 51.8 percent, the other 63 percent. Could it be that both are right? The answer is yes. In fact, the two surveys largely confirm each other. The NSDUH survey begins with twelve-year-olds, whereas Gallup includes only eighteen-year-olds and higher. That six-year gap is significant: many people begin drinking alcohol during junior and senior high school. The NSDUH survey also acknowledges that women drink less than men, partially accounted for by the fact that women often

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As the nation shed its temperance past, the alcoholic beverage industry became a powerful lobby. It was unable to prevent Congress from raising federal alcohol excise tax rates in 1951, but incredibly the government kept the same rates in place for forty years (the spirits tax was raised moderately in 1985). It was not until the recession of 1991 that federal excise tax rates were increased again; even then the amount was not significant. Much of America no longer believes that alcohol is a sin to be taxed, and federal excise taxes on alcohol have not gone up since. State taxes, on the other hand, have risen considerably.

As paychecks grew in the economic boom of the 1950s, Americans upgraded their tastes to stronger, swankier drinks, and distilled spirits began flowing again. The country adopted a cocktail culture where the two- and three-cocktail lunch was a staple for American businessmen. Bars invented their own signature drinks that people enjoyed for the glamour and el-



avoid drinking while pregnant. The Gallup poll is a composite of both sexes.

In polling, it depends on how the poller frames the question. NSDUH focuses on people who have drunk alcohol within the preceding thirty days. Gallup's question is phrased more generally: "Do you have occasion to use alcoholic beverages such as liquor, wine, or beer, or are you a total abstainer?" Thus, people who drink only occasionally (say, a glass of wine at Christmas) may answer "yes," which will raise the survey results.

Gallup has conducted this poll almost every year since 1939 and has consistently noted that between 55 percent and 71 percent of Americans drink. The Gallup polls conducted in 2006 and 2007 each confirmed that 64 percent of Americans drink—and 36 percent abstain. It dropped to 62 percent in 2008, though that is within its normal range, as the survey had a sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

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<sup>a</sup>National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2005 results, posted at <http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/NSDUH/2k5NSDUH/2k5results.htm#Ch3>.

<sup>b</sup>Jeffrey M. Jones, "Beer Again Edges Out Wine as Americans' Drink of Choice," Gallup Consumption Habits poll, July 27, 2007; and Jeffrey M. Jones, "Beer Back to Double-Digit Lead over Wine as Favored Drink," July 25, 2008, both posted at <http://www.gallup.com>.

<sup>c</sup>Centers for Disease Control, "Cigarette Smoking among Adults—United States, 2006," November 9, 2007, posted at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

<sup>d</sup>Lydia Saad, "U.S. Smoking Rate Still Coming Down," Gallup Poll results released July 24, 2008, posted at <http://www.gallup.com>.

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egance.<sup>38</sup> As Americans drank ever-greater quantities of liquor, reformers demanded action. The result was that the federal government created the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) in 1970, which produces and funds much of the alcohol and health-related research in the country. The years 1980 and 1981 marked the peak of American alcohol consumption in the twentieth century, at 2.76 gallons of ethanol per capita annually. Our drinking has been on a gently downward slide ever since; it stood at 2.24 gallons of ethanol per capita in 2005, according to the NIAAA.<sup>39</sup>

Since the first third of the twentieth century, American society has shifted from one in which married couples were the majority (84 percent of households in 1930) to one where individual households predominate (51 percent in 2006), according to the Census Bureau. In other words, single people and unmarried partners are now the majority.<sup>40</sup> Less than a quarter of all households now are married with children.<sup>41</sup> Society and our lives do not

necessarily orbit around the nuclear family (Mom, Dad, Wally and the Beav) and the PTA anymore.

Does that mean that we're all lonely, solitary people? Hardly. Single people are very effective community builders—just in nontraditional ways, such as volunteering, special interest clubs, and community organizations. Drinking alcohol is an important part of building community, as people often meet socially in bars and restaurants. Once decried as a demonic trap, the saloon has been reborn in today's bars.

A final point to make is how normalized alcohol has become in American society. We no longer have a litmus test for drinking. Politicians running for office are not asked if they will vote “dry,” as the Anti-Saloon League did in the early twentieth century. Social drinking is a personal decision, no longer judged as a moral failing. When the president makes political appointments, they are confirmed before the Senate. The Senate will ask these candidates if they have smoked marijuana, taken drugs, or hired undocumented workers to baby-sit their kids, but they will not ask if they drink alcohol. It just isn't an issue, because most people drink—including most senators.

Almost every president since Repeal has drunk alcohol while in the Oval Office (Jimmy Carter is a notable exception). Franklin Delano Roosevelt enjoyed the dirty martini (a gin martini with a splash of olive juice). Lyndon Johnson was famous for Scotch and soda, even taking it with him golfing. Cutty Sark was his favorite brand. There's a famous picture of a smiling Ronald Reagan holding up a glass of white wine. Once a heavy drinker who struggled with addiction, George W. Bush sobered up after awakening hungover following his fortieth birthday (and continued to abstain as president).

We have seen how far American society has shifted since Repeal in 1933. Abstinence from alcohol was once the cultural norm, but over the years the stigma against alcohol melted away, and Americans embraced drinking again. We now look back upon the era of abstinence as some kind of dark age, a not-so-noble experiment that deserved to fail. A socially pure America is no longer on our agenda.

The evangelical Protestant churches deserve their fair share of blame for getting the country into Prohibition. They had overstepped into the realm of public policy, trying to legislate morality instead of stressing personal piety. The temperance movement was thoroughly discredited, and it paid the price. Where are those who trumpet abstinence today? They have mostly died off, and their cause has died with them. Americans have decided that they want to drink. But like a person who drank too much the night before, the country woke up from Prohibition with a bad hangover from which we have never fully recovered.