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U N I V E R S I T Y

## PROHIBITION IN AMERICA: A BAD RAP AND A BIASED ACCOUNT

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By Laura Smith

Since December 5, 1933, scholars have debated and struggled to determine the true results of Prohibition in America. Authors have written countless works trying to answer these questions, some hailing, but most criticizing, the amendment that transformed American drinking culture. A careful study of the topic reveals contradictory statistics, rampant biases, outside factors, and generalizations galore that prevent historians from completely uncovering Prohibition's specific results. What can be seen, however, is that the effects Prohibition did have were not as negative as historians so long claimed and, perhaps even more importantly for this audience, the repercussions of Prohibition are no longer present today.

In the Prohibition debate, one thing is certain: America's relationship with alcohol was getting out of control and had been for a long time. Americans had always had a history of drinking hard liquor and often in excessive amounts, especially during the last half of the eighteenth and the majority of the nineteenth century. Herbert Asbury describes the period in his renowned work, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition*. He writes, "The aged and infirm sipped toddies of rum and water—heavy on the rum; babies were quieted by copious doses of rum and opium, and so spent their infancy in a happy fog; and able-bodied men, and women, too, for that matter, seldom went more than a few hours without a drink."<sup>1</sup> Daniel Okrent similarly portrays America's drinking history in his work, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. He acknowledges that regardless of the reason, the modern drinking culture is drastically different from that of earlier America. In the first chapters, Okrent gives a synopsis of life in America before Prohibition, emphasizing the early dependence on alcohol that had American adults "guzzling, per capita, a staggering seven gallons of pure alcohol a year."<sup>2</sup> He puts it into perspective by equating the amount of alcohol consumed per nineteenth-century individual to three times that of the typical American today.

Even so, a phenomenon soon occurred that would forever change the drinking pattern. As poverty and oppression drove millions of immigrants from Germany and Ireland to the country, they transformed the make-up and culture of society. They introduced the inexpensive beer that changed the look of the saloon culture, and heavy displays of public drinking became even more acceptable. It was at this point in time that opponents of this rapidly expanding

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert Asbury, *The Great Illusion: An Informal History of Prohibition* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1950), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010), 8.

drinking culture organized. These opponents were largely Christian organizations and temperance leagues run by women, and it made sense that these would be the groups to step forward. In their *Drinking in America: A History*, Mark Edward and James Martin illustrate the climax of the alcohol invasion. They ask, "How, for example, could the nation logically promote better care for the mentally ill or the imprisoned if it allowed people to drink themselves to insanity or to a life of crime?...It seemed impossible to cure national ills without acknowledging the centrality of the liquor question."<sup>3</sup> To the nation's dries, it seemed the answer to that question was endorsement for the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment and the enforcement of a national prohibition of alcohol. What ensued would rock the nation and introduce the average American imagination then and ever after to the glamorous portrait of the speakeasy and the bootlegger.

In order to judge the success or failure of Prohibition, it must be clear what the goals of Prohibition truly were. Many authors have set out to say that the ultimate goal of Prohibition was to stop all consumption and distribution of alcohol. In this light, Prohibition is almost certainly a failure, as the one thing historians agree on is the abundance of speakeasies lining the streets of every major city in America. A 1933 newspaper article lamenting the evils of Prohibition argued, "For many years, the American took his whiskey at the bar, openly and unashamed. For fifteen years, he took what was sold in the speakeasies as whiskey, furtively and in fear of thugs and raiders. In either case, he has contracted a liking, perhaps a habit, and he will continue to desire his whiskey."<sup>4</sup> It is hard to know exactly how many speakeasies there actually were, and estimates are all over the map. Michael Lerner's book, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City*, attempts to attach a number and struggles. His estimates for Manhattan and Brooklyn alone range from roughly 15,000 to more than twice that many, but nobody can be sure.<sup>5</sup> This is a glimpse into one of the biggest problems with Prohibition numbers: it is hard to measure what is done in secret. If Prohibition had very little chance of putting a complete end to the liquor trade in America, perhaps the goal was more about lowering overall consumption.

When looking at consumption, mortality rates due to cirrhosis, records of rest homes and mental hospitals, and crime statistics are the general means by which scholars can evaluate American drinking habits. These numbers are risky, as they are often given without context and can be easily molded into ammunition for propagandists. The statistics often lie about the real situation,

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<sup>3</sup> Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin, *Drinking in America: A History* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 66.

<sup>4</sup> "The Saloon and the Speakeasy," *America* 50, no. 4 (October 28, 1933): 75.

<sup>5</sup> Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan: Prohibition in New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 138.

especially in the case of alcohol consumption, where illegal production of alcohol may at times drastically rise while overall alcohol consumption remains down over the entire decade. Quantitative historian Jeffery Miron describes the problems behind the numbers in his work, *The Effect of Alcohol Prohibition on Alcohol Consumption*. He explains the flaw with conclusions based on cirrhosis deaths by arguing that, while the number of them decreased during Prohibition and seem to indicate lower levels of consumption, World War I and the following flu epidemic killed off a significant number of young men who would have contributed most to the cirrhosis death rates had they lived longer.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, the decrease in that factor alone is susceptible to much suspicion.

Even so, in her 1998 work, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America*, Catherine Murdock adamantly argues that Prohibition was at least partially successful on the basis that consumption numbers were down. She writes, “Americans in the first years of federal prohibition drank one-third to one-half as much as they had a decade earlier...Even later in the decade consumption rose to only two-thirds of that in the early 1910s.”<sup>7</sup> She cites then recent research by Clark Warburton to produce these numbers and says that, regardless of the amendment’s flaws, a drunken man was rare to see on the streets of even most large cities after January 16, 1920.

Assuming that consumption was at least temporarily lower during Prohibition, which even the most biased historian will generally concede, the question then becomes whether the amendment or unrelated environmental factors caused this decrease. Numerous sources argue that drinking was already going down before 1920. As World War I created a need for labor and brought change and substantial profit to America, the economy was not the only positive change in its wake. In her work, *Alcoholism in America: From Reconstruction to Prohibition*, Sarah Tracy argues that by 1919, a year before the amendment went into action, “public drunkards had all but disappeared...The environment—with its high employment rates and wartime restrictions on alcohol—appeared to slow down the production of chronic drunkards.”<sup>8</sup> For many Americans of the early twentieth century, their argument against Prohibition rested in a general belief that the alcohol problem would most likely take care of itself. They had seen the power of the Temperance Crusade on decreasing consumption by mere suggestion, and many felt coercion would not be necessary. Tracy writes that by the time Prohibition was in debate in Washington, “the number of inebriates was already dropping—thanks to an expanding labor market—the state reasoned with millennial optimism that habitual drunkenness would altogether vanish

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<sup>6</sup> Jeffrey A. Miron, *The Effect of Alcohol Prohibition on Alcohol Consumption* (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1999), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Catherine Gilbert Murdock, *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1998), 94.

<sup>8</sup> Sarah W. Tracy, *Alcoholism in America: From Reconstruction to Prohibition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2005), 193.

from sight.”<sup>9</sup> Tracy is not the only one suspicious of the claims that Prohibition caused the staggering drinking levels to lower from those in the century preceding it. As Miron draws his own data to a close, he makes a similar realization that the decrease may not be a result of government control. He states that, though drinking did decline during the duration of the amendment, “this does not prove what alcohol consumption would have been during the Prohibition years in the absence of Prohibition.”<sup>10</sup>

Still other historians believe that even if Prohibition was not the sole reason people drank less, it at least changed how they drank, which perhaps was its goal in the first place. The provision in the Volstead Act which allowed any alcohol hoarded before January 17 for private consumption created two drastically separate classes of American society: those who had the money and the space to store enough alcohol for a decade of dryness and those who were at the mercy of the speakeasy. At least for the first few years of Prohibition, drinking drove many Americans home to their private stashes, thus giving the once liquor-saturated streets the appearance of sobriety. Murdock’s work hinges on this very argument, and she states, “Federal prohibition effectively dismantled the public drinking culture of the saloon and in this respect should be considered a success.”<sup>11</sup>

The saloon culture of the nineteenth century seemed to many Americans something worth killing. Though once perceived as fit settings for the mingling of political ideas and fit spots of recreation for both the lower and the upper classes, saloons gave way to a very different kind of meeting place produced by the Industrial Revolution. Factory life and long hours of drudgery instilled in many the desire to find escape, be it through a bottle or through one of the many female patrons. Large factories brought numerous young, often unattached men looking to spend their weekly wages on drink and riotous living, and, as for which came first, the need for alcohol or the surplus of it, the drys seemed in a general consensus that neither could survive without the other. In John Marshall Barker’s 1905 work, *The Saloon Problem and Social Reform*, he argued, “The supply of liquor creates the demand, and not, as in the case of necessities, the demand the supply. In a multitude of ways it fosters and overstimulates a thirst for drink.”<sup>12</sup> Regardless of the public’s opinion on the place of the saloon in society, no one could argue against the fact that they were on nearly every street corner before Prohibition began. If the disappearance of saloons in major cities was the goal, then Prohibition appeared to succeed, though the argument that the saloon was replaced by the speakeasy is valid.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>10</sup> Miron, *The Effect of Alcohol Prohibition on Alcohol Consumption*, 20.

<sup>11</sup> Murdock, 88.

<sup>12</sup> John Marshall Barker, *The Saloon Problem and Social Reform* (Boston: Everett Press, 1905),

Understanding the true goal of Prohibition presents its own challenges. Not only is the true goal hard to discern, its immediate results are equally difficult to sift out. That is in part due to a major event that hurled itself into the public eye in the fall of 1929—that is, the stock market crash that ushered in the Great Depression. The people of the United States had not seen an economic downturn to that extent before, and it seemed to some that the wets had been right all along in saying Prohibition was too costly to keep up. Many felt the time had finally come for everyone to pay for it.

However, the economy experienced a period of relative prosperity just after the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment. A prominent economist of the time, Irving Fisher, had named the illegalization of alcohol an economic success in his 1927 work, *Prohibition at Its Worst*. Even without proper enforcement, Fisher contended that Prohibition had saved six billion dollars in the last year, seven years after its start in 1920. Fisher argued, “If Prohibition enforcement cost us even \$1,000,000,000 a year, it would be well worth while purely as an economic investment.”<sup>13</sup> Fletcher Dobyns gives a similar defense in his 1940 work, *The Amazing Story of Repeal: An Exposé of the Power of Propaganda*. He claims that those who blamed the depression on Prohibition had fallen prey to wet propaganda seeking repeal. He writes that they failed to see “that under prohibition we had had ten years of unexplained prosperity, that the depression was world-wide and due to causes with which prohibition had nothing to do, and that it had come earlier and was more severe in countries like England and Germany which were not ‘afflicted with prohibition.’”<sup>14</sup> Looking back, it is likely that those arguing that the alcohol abeyance had produced a massive economic catastrophe were wrong, but there were other more legitimate accusations doubting Prohibition’s immediate results.

When asked to describe Prohibition, even the most unlearned student of history will pepper his or her answer with depictions of gangsters roaming the streets of major cities and the black market liquor trade. This is largely because these things are known to have existed during the “dry decade,” and few can argue that a rise in crime did not occur in the years of Prohibition enforcement and lack thereof. This is often the central argument condemning Prohibition as an embarrassment of history, as is the case with Edward Behr’s 1996 work, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America*. He introduces the book by describing the climactic scene in the life of a man named George Remus who shot his second wife, Imogene. Behr reveals little else about Remus’s life before his violent act, but says only, “Prohibition itself was the real culprit,” bringing

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<sup>13</sup> Irving Fisher, *Prohibition at Its Worst* (New York: Alcohol Information Committee, 1927), 162.

<sup>14</sup> Fletcher Dobyns, *The Amazing Story of Repeal: An Exposé of the Power of Propaganda* (Chicago: Willett, Clark, 1940), 376.

with it “irresistible temptations in the wake of unprecedented corruption.”<sup>15</sup> Behr heavily implies that Prohibition provided the opportunity for otherwise good men to become entangled in a world of seedy speakeasies and organized crime, and perhaps he is right. There is no doubt that the number of homicides did in fact rise after the enactment of Prohibition.

It is important, however, to look at the nature of the homicides and once again look behind the numbers. In 2009, Mark Asbridge and Swarna Weerasinghe published an article in which they looked at the data on homicides involving alcohol and those unrelated slightly before and during Prohibition. What they found was that, while non-alcohol-related homicides rose during Prohibition, alcohol-related homicides remained steady. They argue, “If the rise in total homicides is due to an increase in violent forms of conflict resolution, the flat trend in alcohol-related homicides suggests that this increase is not a direct product of the illicit production and sale of alcohol.”<sup>16</sup> Asbridge and Weerasinghe further muse that overall homicides may have risen due to a general trend towards violence in the twentieth century, and not due to Prohibition at all. Dobyns also promoted this notion, declaring,

Every informed person knows that the gangster and the racketeer put in their appearance fifty years before the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment, and that crimes of violence increased steadily during that period. In the bitter struggle between laborers and employers that began in the middle of the last century, the employers hired strikebreakers and detectives and sluggers to protect their property, and the laborers accepted this method of warfare. The gangsters and racketeers were born of this struggle, although they were not exploited and dramatized until they became the heroes of the wet propaganda.<sup>17</sup>

This once again proves how difficult it can be to discern Prohibition’s immediate results. However, a possible result of Prohibition not examined through questionable statistics is what Prohibition proponents deemed the emergence of a more efficient working class. A principle outcry amongst the drys against alcohol was that it robbed time and presence of mind, two commodities esteemed higher than ever before with the onset of industrialization and the values held by those who wanted to move up the economic ladder. Lender and Martin comment on the brewing frustration with this wasteful trend, saying, “The practice of whiling away hours in saloons, which had been

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<sup>15</sup> Edward Behr, *Prohibition: Thirteen Years That Changed America* (New York: Arcade, 2011), 3.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Asbridge and Swarna Weerasinghe, “Homicide in Chicago from 1890 to 1930: prohibition and its impact on alcohol- and non-alcohol-related homicides,” *Addiction* 104, no. 3 (March 2009): 361.

<sup>17</sup> Dobyns, 370-71.

harmless enough in the pre-industrial era, was to be avoided on principle...According to the industrialists, wages should be put into savings, investments, and manufactured goods.”<sup>18</sup>

One of the greatest problems a foreman faced was poor attendance of his workers. These workers, often the poor, unattached immigrants who had frequented the saloon in the days before Prohibition, often failed to show up for work the day after. This was a practice the drys promised Prohibition would eliminate, and economist Herman Feldman argued that it did. His 1927 work, *Prohibition: Its Economic and Industrial Aspects*, admitted that, while little data existed to analyze absences and work accidents related to alcohol, the position of the boss was that Prohibition had cleaned up factory efficiency and attendance. He wrote, “That industry has lately been suffering a good deal less from irregular attendance caused by overindulgence than it did in the past is thus the general testimony...There are numerous and emphatic statements, by executives everywhere, that workers generally are steadier because of prohibition.”<sup>19</sup>

When trying to determine Prohibition’s results, the scholar cannot help but face cumbersome questions: why are there so many contradictions, and how do so many historians reach drastically different conclusions from the same data? Anyone hoping to delve into the murky depths of scholarship on Prohibition is soon to discover that, apart from general surveys over the topic and miniscule excerpts about it existing in other works, relatively little in-depth scholarship on Prohibition actually exists. In fact, the majority of scholars have written about the subject during three periods: the time surrounding and within Prohibition’s actual enforcement, shortly after 1970, and in the years around the turn of the twenty-first century. The interest in writing around the time of Prohibition is easy to explain, but the spark of interest around 1970 is almost certainly in direct response to another influential event in American history taking place at that time.

The passage of the Controlled Substances Act as a part of the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970 caused a heightened preoccupation in analyzing not just the prohibition of drugs but the concept of *prohibition* in general. The proliferation of Prohibition scholarship after the turn of the century is most likely directly related to renewed interest in the question of drug legalization around this time. Assuming that highly controversial, more current events drove these bursts of scholarship, it should come as no surprise that finding an accurate and unbiased account of Prohibition data is exceedingly difficult. No historian writing in the time directly surrounding Prohibition could completely determine results that would take

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<sup>18</sup> Lender and Martin, 108.

<sup>19</sup> Herman Feldman, *Prohibition: Its Economic and Industrial Aspects* (New York: D.Appleton, 1930), 212.



decades to confirm, and historians writing in tumultuous periods related to prohibition of drugs are unable to write without the blinders of this separate argument. Books abound that attempt to prove the evils of drug prohibition with evidence of Prohibition's own demise. Jeffery Miron and Jeffery Zwiebel introduce their article, "Alcohol Consumption during Prohibition," with a comment about this very phenomenon. They state, "The burgeoning debate over drug legalization in the United States has drawn renewed attention to the nation's experience with Prohibition...Prohibition provides a natural setting in which to examine the impact of legal restrictions on the use of substances such as alcohol or drugs."<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of Prohibition's role as the overlooked salvation of American society or as a disruption of man's inherent right to intemperance, Prohibition was repealed. Whether it was repealed based on the insufficiency of positive results or by outside factors is another debate, and the arguments are as various and sundry as those on Prohibition's results themselves. In Murdock's argument that Prohibition killed the saloon culture by driving drinking into the home, she simultaneously concludes that Prohibition could not last because it did not provide Americans with the positive aspects of the saloon that had once existed. She writes, "Prohibition failed to produce substitutes for alcohol or the saloon, despite warnings that people would continue to crave the companionship these afforded."<sup>21</sup> Despite the obvious societal taboos woven into the saloon, its disappearance may have in fact created a need for a social gathering place for those same tired and lonely workers that had once frequented its doors.

Murdock is not the only one arguing that the saloon's absence had to be filled by something. Feldman's economic look at Prohibition also commented on the changes since the saloon's departure, though he felt that more wholesome industries were thus able to profit in its place. He mused, "Has the abolition of the saloon augmented the popular demand for many other goods and services? It appears that it has, that in the degree to which the change has been bad for the saloon and liquor business, it was good for other trades catering to some of the wants which the saloon satisfied."<sup>22</sup> He felt that theaters, ballparks, radios, and Sunday drives stepped in to fill the void and provided the entertainment the saloon once did.

Regarding reasons for the repeal, factors outside Prohibition's possibly negative immediate results had quite an influence on the decision. Although historians can now see that Prohibition did not cause the Great Depression, the Great Depression quite possibly brought an end to Prohibition. The stock market crash of 1929 ushered in a decade of unemployment and wide scale poverty,

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<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey A. Miron and Jeffrey Zwiebel, "Alcohol consumption during Prohibition," *American Economic Review* 81, no. 2 (May 1991): 242.

<sup>21</sup> Murdock, 127.

<sup>22</sup> Feldman, 147.

and, as this dragged on, people were less and less able to justify progressive expenses aimed at improving the morality of a society that was struggling to survive. Bread was worth more than temperance. As Lender and Martin explain, "The battle over liquor paled before the monumental social problems resulting from the depression. Just as an earlier generation of Americans had set aside the dry crusade with the coming of the Civil War, so their twentieth-century counterparts turned away from antiliquor agitation to tackle the awesome task of national economic recovery."<sup>23</sup> As time passed, it also became harder to ignore the amount of jobs that repeal would provide in breweries, bottling companies, and bars. An example of that hope is evident in a *New York Times* article in March of 1933, only months before the force for repeal finally triumphed. The article claimed that while people expected many businesses to profit from the legalization of alcohol, the only industries they expected to lose money were the soft drink companies and, therefore, the sugar industry.<sup>24</sup> Still, many hoped that the repeal of Prohibition would give the nation's sputtering economy enough of a kick start to propel it out of the depression. As they would soon see, the path to recovery would be as complicated as the depression's causes.

Another reason for Prohibition's repeal was the serious lack of funding provided for enforcement even from the start. Few seemed to realize the expense attached to the enforcement of such laws at the time of their passage, something Asbury comments on in his work. He contradicts Fisher's earlier argument that Prohibition had saved money. Asbury instead argues, "Enforcement would cost at least three hundred million dollars a year. It was obvious that no such sum would ever be provided, and it was equally obvious that the states would do little or nothing."<sup>25</sup> He seems to place the failure of Prohibition not on an increase of alcohol-related crime but on uncooperative state legislatures that, even before the depression when the money was available, felt little need to fund enforcement on a local level. Total prohibition of alcohol, in order to succeed, would have required a level of support it never had.

When the Eighteenth Amendment passed, Prohibition was at a climax of popularity that it could not maintain. Its subsequent failure was not necessarily because of any evil the amendment produced but rather the indifference that followed its initial success. Once the dries had their legal day, many acted as if their job was done, but laws alone could not change a nation. Behr comments, "Perhaps the least-learned lesson of Prohibition is that legislation alone is no answer to America's problems. The moralists and evangelical pioneers without whom Prohibition would have remained a dead letter believed that enactment of

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<sup>23</sup> Lender and Martin, 167-68.

<sup>24</sup> "Aid for Many Lines Seen in Legal Beer," *New York Times*, March 19, 1933.

<sup>25</sup> Asbury, 318.

the Eighteenth Amendment would be sufficient to change the habits of American society as a whole. They were quickly proved disastrously wrong.”<sup>26</sup>

It became clearer why Prohibition consequences are difficult to delineate, and why a close study reveals very few discernible results at all. Prohibition may have done many things to lower consumption or it may have even raised crime. The multiplicity of outside factors acting during the decade and affecting its repeal strongly suggest that Prohibition did not cause the negative aftermath many projected before it began or argued it had after its end. Testifying to this are the two interesting occurrences on January 16, 1920 and December 5, 1933. In the final weeks before enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment began, the papers abounded with projections of a nation-wide binge that would take place in the final hours before the Volstead Act’s enforcement. What actually transpired on that night, however, was very different. Behr describes it, saying, “Surprisingly, though a phenomenal amount of drinking took place all over America on the night of January 16, the occasion failed to live up to reporters’ (and saloon keepers’) expectations.”<sup>27</sup> In his own survey of Prohibition, *The Long Thirst: Prohibition in America, 1920-33*, Thomas Coffey also mentions, “Throughout the country it was a surprisingly sober night. The national binge which was widely expected did not take place. Even New York, a city prohibitionists considered the modern-day Gomorrah, was relatively sedate during the last hours of legal liquor on January 16, 1920.”<sup>28</sup> Some argue that the only reason the binge did not take place was that so many had already stored up enough alcohol in their homes to keep them out of the streets, but that does not explain the similar lack of celebration at Prohibition’s end on December 5, 1933.

Once again, journalists scoured the streets looking for phenomenal excess, and, once again, they found none. They had expected bar brawls and drunken celebrations spilling out into the streets, but Coffey comments that major cities like Boston and Philadelphia were quiet the night that Utah became the last state to ratify. Even in New York, where many had expected celebrations to rapidly escalate, the *New York Times* reported that “with the city’s entire police force of 19,000 men mobilized to guard against overexuberant celebrants, arrests did not exceed the normal number for any day of the last five years.”<sup>29</sup> A reporter on the celebrations in Times Square said, “The crowds were orderly and mildly amused at the photographers’ flashlights and the trucks unloading spirits, but they were only slightly larger than on a good Saturday night, and the 200 extra policemen assigned to the district had little to do.”<sup>30</sup> This lack of activity suggests that Prohibition came and went with little impact. The hardened drinkers were

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<sup>26</sup> Behr, 242.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas M. Coffey, *The Long Thirst: Prohibition in America: 1920-1933* (New York: Norton, 1975), 3.

<sup>29</sup> “New York Celebrates with Quiet Restraint,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1933.

<sup>30</sup> “Repeal Is Greeted Quietly in Streets,” *New York Times*, December 6, 1933.

determined to drink regardless of the law, and much of society chose to abstain with or without enforcement. The only far-reaching result of Prohibition was a change in the national perception of public drinking and general consumption. However, it was probably not a direct result of Prohibition so much as the temperance sentiment brought about by the Temperance Crusade long before January 16, 1920. Furthermore that sentiment continued to have impact sometime after December 5, 1933.

This is the position that Pamela Pennock and K. Austin Kerr take in their article, "In the Shadow of Prohibition: Domestic American Alcohol Policy since 1933." They see Prohibition as largely defective both in enforcement and in stimulating a crime wave that introduced the average, middle class citizen to lawless bootlegging, but they see the temperance sentiment that started it all as having a lasting impact on America's relationship with alcohol. They argue that even once the nation repealed the Eighteenth Amendment, "the consumption level of alcoholic beverages remained a disappointment to their suppliers and tax collectors...Drinking had increased by the end of the 1930s, but remained largely flat thereafter, partly as a result of the ageing of the population, but also because of enduring values of temperance."<sup>31</sup> Even this result, however, does not extend to today, and by the 1970s, Pennock and Kerr note that Americans returned to drinking as much as they had before Prohibition ever took place.

Herbert Asbury, the writer of what was probably the most in-depth and earliest account of those thirteen sober years, concluded *The Great Illusion* with an interesting final thought on what Herbert Hoover deemed "the noble experiment." Asbury writes, "Well, of course, there are now no 'saloons' in the United States. Instead there are bars, taverns, grills, and cocktail lounges. But by and large it is the same old rose with the same old smell."<sup>32</sup> He was right. A thorough study shows that the results many once blamed on the amendment, including increased consumption, economic downturn, and high crime, were not results of Prohibition at all but of outside factors. While it had temporarily lowered consumption and proved efficient to an extent, Prohibition had changed next to nothing permanently.

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<sup>31</sup> Pamela E. Pennock and K. Austin Kerr, "In the Shadow of Prohibition: Domestic American Alcohol Policy since 1933," *Business History* 47, no. 3 (July 2005): 395.

<sup>32</sup> Asbury, 330.