

100 MOMENTS

PROHIBITION AND BCI

By Nathaniel McLaren (2006-current)

The 18th Amendment of the United States Constitution, which banned the manufacture, transportation, and sale of intoxicating liquors, was ratified on January 16, 1919. Prohibition officially went into effect on January 17, 1920, with the passage of the Volstead Act. Due to the difficulty to enforce such legislation, the era of bootlegging and establishments called speakeasies sprang up all over the country. The 18th Amendment stayed as law of the land until Prohibition was repealed with the passing of the 21st Amendment on December 5, 1933. During the 13 years of Prohibition, the mafia found a new business model and spread their influence across the United States. The Mafia had its strongholds in New York City, Chicago, and Buffalo, New York. Due to the adaptation of the mafia and its business model, the Mafia expanded its operations throughout the United States including Iowa.

The State of Iowa utilized Agents with the Iowa Bureau of Investigation as the lead state agency to investigate illegal alcohol creation and sale. The agents would actively look for manufacturing locations, transport, and sales of the illegal alcohol.

Crime and violence increased during the 1920s. In Iowa, bootleggers created very lucrative businesses from the illegal sale of alcohol. Due to Iowa being a

primarily agricultural state, bootleggers had easy access to the key ingredient in the manufacture of alcohol—corn. These businesses were primarily set up in rural areas, allowing the bootleggers the ability to stay anonymous and off the radar of law enforcement.

One very famous whiskey, which is still in existence today, was set up in a small town in western Iowa, in the small town of Templeton. Templeton Rye quickly became a popular drink at speakeasies across the country from Chicago to Kansas City to New York City. It was said that



BCI DIRECTOR JAMES RISDEN
(1924-1933)

Templeton Rye was the alcoholic beverage of choice of Al Capone.

With the introduction of prohibition, bootleggers became more and more brazen to get their product to the public. This activity was spread across the country and right here in Iowa. On March 28, 1929, after the start of a pursuit and subsequent shootout. State agents James S. Day, Arthur Mead, Jess Quinlan, and Frank Neiman encountered bootleggers on Highway 20 in Buchanan County near Independence, Iowa. During the subsequent pursuit and shootout, three individuals were taken into custody and 100 gallons of alcohol was recovered from the car.

The lack of oversight and testing during the manufacturing process of alcohol brought extreme health dangers to those that may consume any contaminated alcohol. The health dangers included but were not limited to loss of sight, paralysis, possible death, and other health effects. Some names given to the illnesses contracted by drinking contaminated alcohol were Swell Head, Limber Neck and Jake Paralysis.

Although alcohol was illegal nationwide, there ways around the law. Doctors could prescribe alcohol to a person for medicinal purposes. One notable doctor's prescription was obtained by Winston Churchill when he visited the United States in January 1932. This doctor's note allowed him no less than 8.4 ounces of alcohol during the day, especially at mealtimes.

Following the end of Prohibition, the State of Iowa set up state-run liquor stores in 1934. The 1934 Liquor Act establishing state liquor stores remained in effect until July 1987. State law also prohibited producers from selling directly to consumers. The role of the state was reduced in

1985 when the legislature authorized private retailers to sell wine. In 1987, a law was passed to close the 219 state liquor stores and set up a system to permit private retailers to sell liquor.



FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF JAMES RISDEN, THIS SEIZED BOTTLE OF "HOCH", ALONG WITH OTHER ITEMS, WAS DONATED TO THE DCI.

NATHANIEL MCLAREN – 2021

The current Special Agent in Charge for the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, Nate joined the DCI in 2009 as an Special Agent at Prairie Meadows Casino. Prior to the DCI, Nate spent 9 years as a Trooper.