

By Kathy Warnes



I decided to write down some of my stories instead of just talking about them from generation to generation because I've known century's worth of interesting people and lived century's worth of stories. These are just a few of them.

By John Barleycorn

Mugs over Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia Milestone

According to my friend, the reforming Reverend Ernshaw, stills are as old as the demand for them. One of the earliest stills dates to Mesopotamia - it was a ceramic vessel excavated at a level dated 3,500 B.C.

I whistled when he told me this. "Maybe moonshiners have been around for a long time, too. Since you're the expert on this subject, Reverend, why are they called moonshiners?"

"Moonshiners are called moonshiners because their stills were illegal. They have to do their distilling by the light of the moon, so they are called moonshiners."

"We're going to do a lot of brewing by moonlight, now, Reverend. We're going to turn into a country of moonshiners."

"Beer," he said. "The ancient peoples knew how to make beer, too."

Like a dedicated drinker, he plowed face first into his scholarly spiel. "In Mesopotamia, the land between the rivers, the ordinary Mesopotamian grew a barley crop in terraced fields and harvested it."

"How long ago are we talking, Reverend?"

"About 5,000 years ago. You're interrupting my train of thought, John."

"I don't want to derail it," I muttered.

I shut my mouth and listened. According to the Reverend, the Mesopotamian began his brewing by soaking the barley until it sprouted, then he dried the sprouted grain, ground and pounded it and shaped it into small cakes. Then he lightly baked the small cakes. The theory is that's where the connection between brewing and baking began. Perhaps that's the reason a bakery and a brewery were often in the same building or close to each other. After he baked the barley cakes, the brewer crumbled them into a jar of water and allowed the mixture to ferment. This finished beer was sometimes flavored with honey, dates, or cinnamon and was drunk like water. Even school boys drank two jugs of beer a day.

"This practice laid the foundation for the misuse of spirits in the 20th Century!" the Reverend thundered.

I laughed in his face. Any minute I expected lightning to strike me down and thunder to blow

me away, but I laughed. "Reverend Earnshaw, you can't honestly believe that people today drink because Mesopotamian school boys drank beer."

He twisted his hands in his lap. "It wasn't only the Mesopotamians," he said. "The first account of the Flood says that "beer, oil, and wine were taken aboard the Ark."

"Who says Noah didn't know how to preserve the important creatures!" I hooted.

"And the spirits flowed from generation to generation," the Reverend intoned. "When the Mayflower creaked into Plymouth, Massachusetts, she was carrying the remainder of the beer left by thirsty Pilgrims. Almost as soon as they got their land legs, they located and harvested Indian corn and started brewing their own beer. The Pilgrims called the liquor "the good creature of God." They used it to produce tax revenue, establish forts, and build and maintain churches. And they used it for refreshment."

Now the Reverend was getting onto some ground I've walked over too. He's the scholar, but I've studied a little bit about drinking in Colonial America. "The Pilgrims brought over an English custom called the tavern and it was important in Colonial life," I said like I was lecturing him. I was! "In America's early days the taverns were orderly and looked pretty spiffy. The General Court of Massachusetts ruled in 1656 that each town must maintain a well-managed tavern or be subject to a fine. The government even offered tavern owners tax exemptions and land pastures."

I paused to breathe, bursting with pride at my display of knowledge in front of the Reverend.

"That is quite correct, John, but even in those early times there was rowdiness in taverns," he said.

"But you have to remember another thing, Reverend. The church and tavern were so closely related that rowdy church goers were often rowdy tavern goers and vice versa."

"Now see here, John! I don't like your tone of voice or the snicker in it."

"Reverend, all I'm saying is that lots of times the church and tavern stood a mug's length away from each other. Church lunches were often held outdoors so that refreshments could be hauled over from the tavern without too much exertion. Read your history books. You'll find it all in black and white. "

"You're only telling part of the story, John. That's what you do in that newspaper column of yours, too!"

His face was flushed and I saw an angry gleam in his eyes. "All right, Reverend. I'll write about the harm beer and spirits can do to people. Just give me a few hours to research the topic."

He glared at me. "Are you sure that's all you need? It took God six days to create the world!"

"I'll rest on the seventh day too," I said. "And have a beer," I added under my breath.

John Barleycorn

The Rum Bath for Baldness

Quincy, Massachusetts
June, 1762

This story's been handed down in my family like genes for brown eyes and amiable temperament. I don't know if it's true or not - probably some of it is and other parts have been embroidered through the years like grandma with six greats in front of it used to embroider pillow shams and coverlets for her log cabin home.

In those rough days on the frontier, rum was like death and taxes - everywhere and considered an unavoidable part of life, like a dose of physic.

Grandma with six greats in front of it used to rub rum on the gums of her teething children and she swore that it eased their pain and sent them snoring into slumber. Rum was considered to be a tonic and grandma would spoon feed it to ailing children to cure upset stomachs, headaches, worms, and consumption. Rum would kill any germ children could discover on the American frontier.

But even grandma with six greats in front of it showed sublime faith when she used rum to cure grandpa with six greats in front, from baldness. Grandpa with six greats in front had started going bald when he was in his late twenties. This was considered to be the onset of middle age, in a society where middle age was early thirties and you were lucky if you lived past forty. Since grandpa with six greats in front was entering middle age, no one viewed his rapidly disappearing hair with alarm except him.

"Tabitha, I'm starting to look like Deacon Jones," he said to grandma one night after he tried to comb his hair. It had taken only two swipes of the comb and even that had been optimistic.

"Alexander, you know Deacon Jones was scalped during one of the Indian uprisings and was lucky to get away with his life. A scalp is a small trade for a life. He has an excuse for his baldness."

"What is my excuse, Tabitha?"

"Alexander, you are no longer a young man. It is fitting that you should lose your hairs."

"Tabitha, if I am losing my hairs, it is not fitting that I parade my loss in front of the entire town. I must wear a cap on my head. Will you make me a cap to hide my baldness?"

"Alexander, how will you hold a cap in place without any hair?"

"Perhaps by thongs tied around my ears or by wearing a hat 24 hours a day. There is a way to

accomplish this, Tabitha."

"The best way to face the loss is to thrust your head into the world unadorned and unashamed," grandma with six greats in front of her name told him.

Grandpa with six greats in front of his name pressed his lips together. He didn't say any more about his hair, but grandma knew he was upset. She decided to think of some way to help him. That night, she fixed an especially good meal-venison stew, wild berries and apple pie. Then she poured a mug of the precious rum that was such a favored drink of the people with six greats in front of their names.

Grandpa yawned while he basked in front of the fire digesting his venison stew. By the time grandma joined him there after settling the children in their beds in the loft, he was snoring peacefully. His head nestled on his chest like a hen brooding her nest.

"Now for the next step of my plan," grandma whispered. Stealthily as an Indian creeping up on a colonist, grandma crept over to the jug of rum that she kept in a dark corner of the cabin behind the broom. She poured about half a mugful of rum and carried it carefully over to grandpa.

"Alexander, are you sleeping?" she whispered.

Grandpa stirred and mumbled, but he didn't wake up.

Grandma prepared to carry out the next step of her plan. Carefully, she dipped her hand into the mug of rum and scooped some up in her cupped palm. Carefully, she drizzled the rum on grandpa's head. Carefully, she rubbed in the rum like she was rubbing homemade soft soap into lather.

"Mpph!" grandpa said.

"It's all right, Alexander. Go back to sleep," grandma said. "There, there." She stroked his forehead and of course he went back to sleep.

Grandma watched his scalp like a cat a mouse hole. When great clumps of hair didn't sprout like daisies on the bald top of his head, she sighed.

"It will take another application," she said. She crossed over to the rum jug again.

A second application produced the same results and a strong, rummy smell permeated the room. It smelled like the Royal Eagle Tavern on the Pike Road. Grandpa must have thought so too, because a dreamy smile appeared on his face. He muttered, "Yes, pretty maid. I will have another glass of your best ale. What a well turned-out maid you are!"

When grandma heard this speech, she spilled the rum she had cupped in her hand smack on top

of grandpa's head instead of rubbing it in. The rum trickled down into his eyes and all over the front of his face. This rum bath also woke him up.

"Why do I have rum in my mouth?" he spluttered.

"Tabitha, answer me!"

"Yes, yes, Alexander. I'm right here. And what else did you say to that bar maid?"

"Tabitha, what are you talking about? Why do I have rum trickling down my forehead?"

"I was just trying to help you. You had such concern about your lack of hairs. I was trying to grow you more. And what do I get for my concern? I get to hear you complimenting the bar maid at the Royal Eagle!"

"Tabitha, were you trying to make my hair grow back with rum?"

"Dame Ambridge said rum is a cure for baldness. I was going to cure you until you started talking to that barmaid. Now, go cure yourself!"

Grandpa was never able to entirely convince grandma that there had been nothing between him and the barmaid but a glass of rum. Grandma was never able to entirely convince grandpa that his rum bath hadn't cured his baldness. When he died at the ripe old age of 55, he still had his hair. It had stopped falling out the night of his rum bath!

John Barleycorn

The Most Popular Man in Town

The Colonies, 1770

There he sits in the Golden Eagle Tavern with quill and paper in hand writing down our names, and him drinkin' on the sly like he does," complained Heckler Number One.

"Giving himself airs, thinking he's so much better than anybody else. Why he ought to be put in the stock, not Jedidah Stokes," added Heckler Number Two.

These indignant comments didn't crack the armor of indifference that the Temperance Enforcer wore. They bounced off it like Indian's arrows did real armor. He continued to sit in the Golden Eagle tavern complete with his powdered white wig. He watched how many times the other patrons bent their elbows and wrote down that number on the paper in front of him.

Heckler Number One hedged closer to the Temperance Enforcer. "Sure is a good thing your mother and father named you Temperance. No other name would fit you. . You know what? You forgot to write down my name. I had three flagons of ale today and that's over your limit, isn't it?"

Heckler Number Two moved to join his companion. "Aren't you going to join in the jeering at Jedidah? He's going to be hanging there all day. Justice in this here colony of Massachusetts is so just that it don't matter that you drink more than he does on the sly. All that matters is that you're the Temperance Enforcer appointed by Justice Hawkinson. One squiggle of your little pen and a man goes up in the stocks."

The Temperance Enforcer didn't acknowledge that the two men had spoken. He continued to write, his quill pen flowing along the paper as smoothly as the creek that flowed through Cambridge.

"What do you say you have a drink with us, Temperance Enforcer?" Heckler Number One asked.

Temperance aimed a glance like a flintlock at him. "I don't drink on the job."

"That's right, you don't," Hecker Number Two said. "Since Jedidah did drink on the job, we must comfort him as he hangs in the stocks."

"Let's go do just that," said Hecker Number One.

The two hecklers hurried out of the Golden Eagle Tavern and onto the common where prominently featured in the center, hung Jedidah Stokes, encased in the rough wooden stocks. A

swarm of children buzzed and darted at his head and further back stood a knot of village men and women. Goody Damson, the woman with the busiest tongue in the village stood in front.

"Did you hear that the Temperance Enforcer said that Jedidah had six flagons of ale?" Goody shrilled.

Some of the people smiled approving and others frowned at the discomfort the children inflicted on Jedidah.

The two hecklers hurried past the knot of villagers and pushed their way through the children. "Shoo, scat~" Heckler Number One waved the children away like pesky flies. "Go away! You don't belong here!"

The children scattered.

"There, got rid of them," Heckler Number One said.

"Until we turn our backs," muttered Heckler Number Two, the more realistic of the two.

Heckler Number One addressed Jedidah. "Jedidah, how did he present his case? What bit of incrimination sealed the wax on your sentence?"

Jedidah sniffed. "I would like to boil the Temperance Enforcer in oil. I would like to seal him in the hold of a ship and keep him there for forty years. I would like to send him back to England!"

"We'll help you, but we have to get our hands on him first. We have to get him in enough trouble to bring him before the justice," Heckler Number Two said.

Jedidah sniffed again. "Justice Hawkinson hates drink in any form. It is said that he will clap a man in the stocks at the slightest whiff of drink on his breath."

"Hmmm," said Heckler Number One. "Hmm, Jedidah. I won't breathe a word to the Temperance Enforcer that you wanted to challenge him to a duel. I won't tell him you consider him responsible because you're hanging there."

Heckler Number Two nodded. "I won't tell the Temperance Enforcer that you swore he drank one more flagon of ale than you did and that he should be hanging in the stocks alongside of you.

"Maybe you won't tell, but I will!!" Goody Damson said. She disappeared into the doorway of the Golden Eagle.

"While Goody does her work inside, we'd better do ours outside," Heckler Number One said. He tiptoed around to the back door of the Golden Eagle Tavern and rapped softly. A hand thrust out a flagon of ale and the door closed quicker than a long, choppy wave dashed on and off the

beach. Heckler Number One carried the ale under his coat over to the stocks and smiled at Jedidah. "I think I have a way to get you out of there, goodfellow."

Jedidah sniffed for the third time. "The Judge said that I must stay here all day."

"We shall see," said Heckler Number One. "Just bide your time, Jedidah. Just bide your time."

"There's not much else I can do," Jedidah said.

"Here comes the Temperance Enforcer," said Heckler Number Two. "Goody Damson did her work well."

"I'm holding a flagon of ale in my hand, Jedidah," said Heckler Number Two. "See that you don't bump it against anyone so it won't spill."

"Yes," added Heckler Number One. "Can't spill it on anyone, especially the Temperance Enforcer or the gossipy, Goody Damson. Both of them are coming."

Goody Damson sailed out of the tavern door with the Temperance Enforcer close at her heels.

"I thought it my duty to tell the Temperance Enforcer of the things you said behind his back," Goody Damson told the hecklers. "A man should have the opportunity to defend himself."

"Yes, he should," said Heckler Number One. He pointed to Jedidah hanging there in the stocks.

"I shall be glad to accept your challenge to a duel," the Temperance Enforcer said to Jedidah. "What do you say tomorrow morning at dawn? You should still be pretty stiff and sore from the stocks then, so my chances of winning are excellent."

The Temperance Enforcer spotted the flagon of ale in Heckler Number Two's hand. "What do you mean flaunting your excessive habits in front of me? I will report you to the Justice for this!"

Heckler Number Two winked at Jedidah. Jedidah moved his hand, knocking the flagon of ale out of Heckler Number Two's hand. Ale splashed all over the Temperance Enforcer.

"Now, see what you have done," the Temperance Enforcer spluttered. "The Justice will certainly hear about this . . ."

"Hear about what?" Heckler Number One asked. "He will smell you before he will see you. And you know how he feels about anyone smelling of ale. We have witnesses here who will swear to the fact that the ale spilled on you."

The Temperance Enforcer stared at the villagers. "You saw what happened!" he roared. "I want

every man of you to step forward and swear you will tell the Justice what really happened. Step forward! "

No one moved, not even Goody Damson.

The Temperance Enforcer gazed at Heckler Number One. "What is your price?" he demanded.

"Release Jedidah from the stocks immediately. And no more reporting our drinking habits to the Justice."

"This is preposterous! This is impossible!" spluttered the Temperance Enforcer. "This is an injustice!"

Heckler Number One pointed to Jedidah hanging in the stocks. "So is that," he said. "Would you rather be hanging there instead of Jedidah? Remember your ale smell is strong than his and there's plenty more where that came from."

The Temperance Enforcer scowled fiercely at the crowd. He dug the key to the stocks from his pocket.

John Barleycorn

From the Whiskey Rebellion to NASCAR- George Washington's Whiskey Legacy

Virginia
1799

Along with his other talents, [George Washington](#) was a skilled distiller and entrepreneur and according to his military aide an enthusiastic consumer of his own creation.

[George Washington's Distillery and Museum](#) is located about three miles from Mount Vernon and he and his horse likely wore a deep rutted path between the main house and the distillery. According to museum records, his distillery and grist mill served as the focal point of economic operations at Mount Vernon. In 1799, at its production peak, the distillery and grist mill featured five stills and a boiler that produced 11,000 gallons of whiskey with an estimated value of \$7,500. He helped transform distilling from small local operations into today's national industry

The fact that George Washington, the first president of the United States, established a distillery on his property testifies to the prominent part that whiskey played and still plays in American history. It also illuminates his double sided relationship with whiskey- distilling it with one hand and enforcing a tax on whiskey during the Whiskey Rebellion with the other.

Illegal, untaxed moonshine can trace its history long before the booming Prohibition years in the United States. People living in the Appalachian mountain regions including East Tennessee, Southern Kentucky and Western North Carolina have been moonshiners since before the American Revolution.

As settlers pushed west and south across the Appalachian Mountains, they used surplus grains like corn to make whiskey. When the British tried to stop importing sugar and molasses to the Colonies, the Americans substituted whiskey for rum to use as part of the Revolutionary Army rations.

Early New England settlers established distilleries throughout the colonies, including a rum distillery in Boston that began operating in 1657. Rum became New England's largest and most profitable industry within a generation. Scots-Irish immigrants arrived in British North America complete with generations- honed knowledge of distilling techniques and the determination to practice these techniques in their new country. The enterprising and flinty Scots-Irish helped fight the Revolutionary War to liberate themselves from what they considered oppressive British taxes and when the new government passed [an excise tax on whiskey and spirits](#), many of them moved to remote mountain areas to produce their products by moonlight and sell them by stealth.

The home brews that Early English smugglers and distillers in the Appalachian and Blue Ridge Mountains and even as far as Atlantic Canada produced most often illegally was called moonshine because it was often distilled by the light of the moon. It didn't take long for mountaineers in Tennessee, Kentucky, among others, to establish a national reputation for consistently rebelling and refusing to pay taxes on their moonshine

Geographic and financial necessity also steered them toward building and maintaining stills. The ups and down of mountainous terrain made transporting corn crops to market a tedious, time consuming process. Distilling the corn into whiskey for easier carrying in jugs and barrels provided to be a better and more profitable alternative.

For two hundred years small family owned distilleries had made whiskey without regulation from the British or American governments. Then in 1791, shortly after George Washington became President of the new born United States of America, the government decided to levy an excise tax on whiskey. These independent, small business distillers immediately resented the excise tax on whiskey and they took out their resentment on the tax collectors. Rebellious farmers and distillers rioted, protested and even tarred and feathered tax collectors.

Despite his own distilling background, President George Washington believed that the federal government must be strong enough to keep state and regional interests from seizing power. To underscore this belief, he ordered approximately 13,000 militia to squash the "rebellion," and the militia crushed the rebellion without any bloodshed. The "[Whiskey Rebellion](#)" that new American citizens fought from 1791 to 1794, left a lasting imprint on American history. Paradoxically the [Whiskey Rebellion](#) demonstrated the will and ability of the new national government to quell violent resistance to its laws while illustrating how citizens could demonstrate against government policies they disagreed with without being imprisoned or otherwise punished.

In his [1796 Farewell Address](#), President George Washington again emphasized his point that the federal government had to maintain enough clout to overrule regional and state interest and political parties.

After the Whiskey Rebellion, many of the rebellious Dutch and Scots-Irish farmer and distillers moved farther west to escape the tax collectors. Many found the right kind of water for whiskey distilling in Southern Indiana and Kentucky. Historians say that Reverend Elijah Craig distilled the first Kentucky whiskey at Georgetown in Bourbon County. He used corn for his whiskey because it was more common than rye and his whiskey became known as Bourbon County whiskey. The name Bourbon has evolved to identify whiskies that are made from a corn mash.

The new United States government discontinued the excise tax on liquor in 1817, but the [mountaineers](#) didn't slow their production of corn mash whiskey. By 1860, the 207 distilleries in Kentucky had produced whiskey worth \$1,446,216 annually. and the Union government

reinstated the excise tax on whiskey in 1862 to help finance the Civil War. Back in the hills, the battles between revenue agents and moonshiners increased and stories on both sides produced legends of famous escapades. The pendulum of public opinion began to swing toward the side of the tax collections instead of the moonshiners.

By 1891, Kentucky distilleries alone had produced 142,035 gallons of whiskey or 34 percent of all of the distilled spirits in the nation. Kentucky continued to produce its signature bourbon whiskey and other states like Tennessee and Virginia continued to produce whiskey as well. In 1920, when Prohibition became the law of the land moonshiner blockade runners easily outran lawmen with newer and faster cars. According to the [Oscar Goetz Museum of Whiskey and the Bardstown Museum](#), these customized cars motivated their owners to establish stock car racing which in turn developed NASCAR Racing.

In 1933 when public works programs were an important part of the Depression Era economy, the state of Virginia decided to restore [George Washington's grist mill](#). The excavation and George Washington's records revealed that as well as the grist mill, he also operated a whiskey distillery and the Virginia authorities of the time quickly reburied its foundation.

Possibly the Virginia authorities remembered with a twinge of conscience that National Prohibition instituted by the 18th Amendment of the Constitution banned the sale of all alcoholic beverages. They also could have been painfully aware that the Washington Temperance Benevolent Society founded in Baltimore in 1840, a forerunner of Alcoholics Anonymous, identified with George and Martha Washington. The Washington Temperance Benevolent Society vehemently opposing alcoholic consumption and revered George Washington as did many ordinary Americans. Authorities weren't certain how his admirers would feel about George Washington if they discovered that as well as drinking whiskey he also manufactured it.

More than eight decades later, [George Washington's reconstructed Distillery and Museum](#) is restored and demonstrating its operations and history to visitors. George Washington's reconstructed Distillery and Museum provides a fascinating window into his practical and entrepreneurial side as well as an indirect connection to NASCAR.

John Barleycorn

Rum and Whiskey Rebellling

Chicago Star
April, 1791

Thanks to the Georgia settlers, rum was the first drink distilled in America. The colonists learned how to make it from pure cane sugar or fermented molasses and Yankee merchants hit the big time when they brought molasses to New England to be made into rum.

When their rum was finished, they took it to Africa and traded it for slaves, then took the slaves to Barbadoes in the West Indies and traded them for the sugar cane that was grown there. They brought the sugar cane back to New England to be made into more rum to be traded for more slaves. The "ring- around-the-rosy game went on and on.

This set up grew to be so profitable that by 1750 there were 63 rum distilleries in Massachusetts alone and more than 1,000 ships engaged in the rum trade out of Boston. Rum became the basis for the early economic prosperity of the colonies. Rum was the everyday drink of the colonists and they consumed about 12 million gallons of it a year. Rum flowed at weddings, house risings, log rollings, the christening of churches, funerals, town meetings and most community affairs and gatherings.

The minister drank rum as liberally as the merchant. It was the common beverage of the rich and poor, both sexes and all ages. There were very few abstainers. Rum was used as a household remedy, in recipes such as hot buttered rum and a hot strong punch called Rumbo. Parents spoon fed rum to their children and mothers rubbed it on the gums of teething babies to ease their pain. It was even used as a "cure for baldness."

When the English levied taxes on it, rum-smuggling was responsible for the colonists developing fast sailing ships and skillful sea captains. Sailors used rum as a basis for chants and rhythms that helped them keep time when they were rowing, loading casks and hauling up ropes. The words Rumbolo and Rum Tee Dee were sung as accompaniments and later incorporated into folk songs and children's games. Sailors jeered at someone too freely indulging in rum as "carrying too much sail."

About the only dissenting voice in the rum soaked colonies was Cotton Mather's. He was a colonial minister and writer who deplored the fact that anyone could buy rum, "The poor and wicked" included. But despite the good minister's opinion, rum remained the key to colonial prosperity, trade, and the development of commerce.

The Revolutionary War brought a rum shortage to the soldiers and colonists alike, because trade from the West Indies was cut off and there were no more imports of rum or the molasses needed

to make domestic rum. Profiteering flourished because of the shortages and finally, a substitute for rum was introduced in the form of whiskey.

In time, whiskey grew to rival rum and surpass it as the drink of the new nation. One of the reasons the brew of the future was whiskey was that by 1775, one third of the American population was Scotch-Irish. These Scotch-Irish immigrants brought with them and shared freely their whiskey distilling knowledge acquired in the misty green glens of Scotland and the Emerald Isle.

After they immigrated to America, the Scotch-Irish settled in frontier Western Pennsylvania and back country Virginia and grew crops of rye and corn for distilling whiskey. Not only did they need whiskey to drink, but they desperately needed it as a trade item. It was a matter of practicality. Two gallons of home made whiskey represented about one bushel of grain. A horse could carry about four bushels or 240 pounds of grain to market up and down the thickly wooded hills and valleys at no profit. The same horse could carry two eight gallon jugs of whiskey at a healthy profit. The backwoods farmer needed his whiskey to barter for goods like nails and cloth and the other things he couldn't grow or make for himself. Whiskey became such a popular trade exchange that in some regions, prices of commodities were figured in barrels of whiskey. The frontiersmen needed whiskey for economic survival.

Around the year 1775, city distilleries began to operate and whiskey drinking increased so much in popularity that there was a potential grain shortage for bread. Some people feared a national famine. The Continental Congress and a few of the states tried to adopt strict laws limiting the amount of grain to be converted into whiskey, but these laws weren't enforceable. People fiercely defended their right to individual liberty, "especially in the matter of drink."

After the Revolution, the financially pressed new American government levied a liquor tax as a way to raise funds. In 1789, the first tariff bill of Congress put a tax on all imported alcoholic beverages and on all of the molasses for making rum. Two years later, Secretary of Treasury Alexander Hamilton pushed a bill through Congress that taxed whiskey imports and also the American manufacture of whiskey. This bill led to an armed rebellion that was called "The Whiskey Rebellion."

Congressman Fisher Ames of Massachusetts commented about the bill. He said "If any man supposes that a mere bill can turn the taste of people from ardent spirits, he has a romantic notion of legislative power."

There you are Reverend Ernsshaw! I'm going to have this quote printed in large, red, capital letters so you can read it again and again. I'm going to write them in the sky above your house! Because you know what happened in Pennsylvania? This whiskey tax bill inflamed the entire Pennsylvania countryside and the people took up arms. President Washington called up the militia of three states. Soon the tramp of 15,000 soldiers marching was heard in the state. He personally led the troops in putting down the rebellion and the frontiersmen agreed to pay the tax. The new government had demonstrated it could enforce the laws of Congress no matter how

unpopular, but the law was bitterly resented and disobeyed at every opportunity.

Tell me Reverend, do you think the government today is prepared to send battalions of our Doughboys throughout the country to enforce Prohibition?

John Barleycorn

Fair Trade

Highmount, North Carolina
1815

Tom Pollack readjusted his saddlebags so they hung more evenly over his horse Nellie's back. The bottles of moonshine whiskey in them made them bulge out like the wad of snuff his wife, Sarie, chewed when she was thinking on something.

Tom jumped on Nellie's back and dug his knees in her sides. "Come on gal. We gotta go quick down the mountain to the Barnes place."

Nellie flicked her ears and whinnied.

"Yeah gal, I know twenty miles is a long ride for you and I wouldn't make you do it, cept I gotta. I gotta give this corn whiskey to Miz Barnes right away. Come on Nellie, we gotta go quicker than a snail. That's a good gallop, that's it Nellie. Pick your way careful like, this is a steep part of the trail. Watch that rock, Nellie. Listen to it falling all of the way down the mountainside. It's a long way down, Nellie, and I don't aim to follow it. Got a lot to live for, especially now Nellie."

Tom and Nellie picked their way up and down the narrow, winding mounting trail and turned off at Jess Barne's fork. It was another half mile slow going up an even narrower trail before they reached the Barnes cabin. Tom jumped off Nellie and ran to the door.

"Miz Barnes, it's time! You set to come back with me?" he hollered.

"Sissy Barnes flung open the wooden door. "Come on Tom, time's a wasting. Got my bag all ready."

"Wait jest a beat until your partner gets here." Jess Barnes loomed up behind his wife. His hair hung in long, greasy strands to the stubble of beard that rimmed his face. His eyes were black circled like a coons and he leaned against the front door post.

"Hey Jess, you look like I'm supposed to," Tom smiled. Jess tried to straighten up, but he weaved back and forth on his feet. "Sissy gal, you stay right there in your tracks until he shows me he can make a fair trade."

"We gotta hurry, Miz Barnes," Tom urged. "Hop up here on Nellie's back. Here, I'll give you a leg."

"Sissy gal," I said freeze in your tracks!" Jess repeated.

Tom reached over into Nellie's saddlebags and pulled out three jugs of whiskey. "Here's the payment, Jess, three jugs of my best corn whiskey. Come on now, Miz Barnes, up you go.!"

Tom swung Sissy Barnes into the saddle in front of him. "We got to hurry, Miz Barnes. Sary's ready and calling for you. Shake a leg, Nellie, we gotta get home."

Zing! The bullet whizzed by Tom Pollack's ear and plowed with a thwack into the tree behind them.

"Jesse Barnes, what the tarnation are you trying to do?" Sissy screamed.

"Tom Pollack's gonna tell me how he makes his whiskey or he's not setting foot out of this yard."

"Jess, what the devil do you mean? You know how to make whiskey. We both grew up in these mountains."

"That fella that buys mine says yours is the best in these parts. Says the city fellas lap it up and they wanna pay lots of cash money for more."

"I've been telling you, Jess, it's the creek water we use. Our branch has the purest, sweetest water in the whole wide world."

"You gotta do more than tell me, Tom, if you want my woman to help you. Get down off that horse, Sissy gal."

Sissy Barnes drew her four feet nine inches as tall in the saddle as she could. "Jess, you made a deal and you're gonna keep your word. Sary needs me and I'm going to her. Now!"

Sissy snapped a hickory stick from the same tree that had hosted the bullet. She whipped the stick across Nellie's flanks. "Let's go, Nellie!" she hollered.

Nellie took off for home like she was trying to out race the bullets from Jess's gun. She did out race the other two bullets that Jess fired after them. She even out raced Jess's horse.

Jess tried. He jumped on his horse and thundered after Silly and Tom, thundered after but never caught up with them. Jess was so far behind that he didn't come clumping up on Tom and Sary Pollack's porch until a loud, lusty wailing came from inside the cabin.

Tom Pollack threw open the cabin door. "It's a boy, Jess! A big, bawling, baby boy! And Sary's all right. Miz Barnes midwifing did it all."

Jess Barnes slapped Tom Pollack on the back. "Yeeeeowww! A boy and healthy. My gal Sissy did herself a proud job this time."

"So did my Sary," Tom said, grinning like a coon in a corn field.

Jess Barnes turned and pulled his rifle from the side of his saddle. He pointed it at Tom. "Now march! You're gonna show me how you make that whiskey so good!"

John Barleycorn

Milwaukee, 1855

Do Ghostly Lovers Still Haunt Miller Brewery Caves in Milwaukee?

The story goes that ghostly lovers still search for each other during Halloween and for the rest of the year in the caves at Miller Brewery in Milwaukee

Over a hundred years ago when life was slower and somehow more mysterious, workers at the Miller Brewery on State Street in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were whispering stories to each other about a ghost who haunted the cooling caves.

The workers glanced over their shoulders fearfully as they went about their business of producing beer for thirsty Milwaukeeans. Some of them swore they felt damp hands on their shoulders.

The caves were shadowy passageways from the past to the present. In 1850, the Best brothers dug the first cave in the State Street hillside when they built the Watertown Plank Road Brewery.

[Frederick Miller](#) bought the brewery five years after the Best brothers started digging their cooling caves. Born in Germany in 1824, Frederick had worked in the Royal Brewing Company at Sigmaringen, Hohenzollern, German. In 1850, when he was 26 years old, Frederick came to the United States with his family. He wanted to open his own brewery and Milwaukee seemed to be the ideal place because of the large population of Germans who brought their love of beer with them when they immigrated.

By 1855, Frederick Miller had enough backing and funds to buy his brewery. He purchased the Plank Road Brewery from Charles Best and his father for \$8,000. The Plank Road Brewery was located in the Menomonee Valley, several miles west of Milwaukee. The brewery stood far out of the city, but near to good water sources including the Menomonee River and close to surrounding farms where the grains and other raw materials needed to make beer were grown.

Frederick Miller stood to make a good profit on his beer. After all, beer sold for \$5.00 a barrel to the Milwaukee saloons and other businesses that bought it. Thirsty customers paid from three to five cents a glass for Frederick's beer in Milwaukee saloons.

The remote location of his brewery motivated Frederick Miller to open a boarding house next to the brew house for his single employees. His workers ate their meals in the family house which stood on top of the hill overlooking the brewery. The workers earned their meals and lodging as well as between \$480 and \$1,300 a year for working for Frederick Miller.

In an 1879 letter to German relatives, Frederick Miller described the kind of meals he served to

his employees. They started working at 4 a.m., so he served a six o'clock breakfast which included coffee, bread, beef steak or some other roasted meat, potatoes, eggs and butter. A nine o'clock lunch consisted of meat, cheese, bread and pickles. The midday meal at noon included soup, the choice of two meats, vegetables, and cake. The 6 o'clock evening meal consisted of meat, salad, eggs, tea and cakes.

Frederick Miller introduced several innovations into his new brewery business, including a German beer garden and refurbished caves. He created a beer garden that drew crowds for bowling dancing, family and fine lunches and old fashioned good fellowship. In another letter to his German relatives he wrote, "You can perceive that people in America, especially where Germans are located, also know how to live."

He also featured good music at his beer garden, both the classics and popular tunes. Many a work worn Milwaukee citizen refreshed his spirit by thumping his glass of good beer on the table at the Miller beer garden and lustily bellowing, "Du, Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen." "Du, Du, Du Liegst Mir Im Herzen," a German folk song that originated in northern Germany around 1820, was one of the most popular songs that wafted on the winds of the Menomonee River Valley on a Sunday afternoon. Families also enjoyed birthday and christening celebrations at the Miller Beer Garden.

The Bests had begun to install a system of storing beer in caves which provided cool, undisturbed places for aging after the beer was brewed. The Bests had a good idea, but their caves were small and poorly maintained. Frederick Miller decided to improve the Best system of caves. He built brick caves that amounted to 600 feet of tunnels, 15 feet wide and 12 to 15 feet high, with a capacity of 12,000 barrels. The caves were as cold and clammy as a ghostly hand and formed a natural icebox for the huge beer casks placed along the walls.

Dark spooky caves seem to attract ghosts and the Miller caves produced their own homegrown ghosts. Two of the Miller caves own ghosts achieved lasting fame because of the Romeo and Juliet ending of their romance.

On a long ago summer day, a young brewery worker's smile shone warm and sweet and his sweetheart's face blushed bright as the wildflowers growing on the hillsides around Frederick Miller's brewery. The couple had a secret meeting place. Every Saturday night they met at the mouth of a Miller Brewery cave where it opened on the hillside at the rear of the brewery. They strolled through the cool vaults and passed pleasant moments under the lantern light in the shelter of the huge casks.

One Saturday night before his shift was over, the young man had an accident. Some brewery workers testified that he missed his footing on the stairway in one of the caves. However it happened, the young man fell and struck his head. His fellow workers took him home, unconscious.

Unaware of her lover's accident, the young woman waited for him at their meeting place. After

several anxious hours of waiting, she finally went home and her parents told her about the accident. She rushed to her young man's bedside, but he died several days later without regaining consciousness.

Before the winter snows melted from the hills above the caves, the girl died too. The doctor spoke of lung trouble, but the brewery workers spoke knowingly of the girl's broken heart.

Shortly after the deaths of the young couple rumors began to circulate around the brewery. Workers insisted they saw the spirit of the girl searching the dark corners of the cave for her lover. Some of them reported that they had seen her lover lingering in their meeting place and some said they had heard him calling her name.

The ghosts searched for each other fruitlessly and freely until about 1887, when the Miller Brewery introduced mechanical refrigeration and the use of the caves began to taper off. By 1906, the brewery had completed the last of the four refrigerator buildings or stock houses, which had a capacity of more than 200 barrels. The caves were abandoned that year.

For over 40 years, the ghostly lovers searched for each other through the caves, abandoned empty reminders of past glories that remained closed and almost forgotten.

After Frederick Miller died of cancer in 1888, his sons Ernest, Emil, and Frederick A. and their brother-in-law Carl took over the brewery and incorporated it as the [Frederick Miller Brewing Company](#). They increased the Miller Brewery's production to 500,000 barrels.

Then in 1952, brewery officials decided to open a portion of the caves to remodel them for a museum and to use as a starting place for tours of the brewery. The remodeling was completed in August 1953. Today's Cave Museum utilizes about one-third of the original caves, but brewery tours still depart from them. Do modern tour takers feel a ghostly hand on their shoulders and a plaintive voice calling a long lost lovers name?

On dark, windswept nights when the lights from the brewery dance over the Menomonee River Valley, do the lovers still search for each other?

John Barleycorn

The One-Armed Chaplain of Whiskey Island

Cleveland Press
1868

The well-dressed stranger didn't realize that only the brave or the very foolish ventured into Cleveland's Flats after dark in the year 1868. He wanted a drink, so he went to the section of town where he could get one.

The saloons were located on Whiskey Island, where the Cuyahoga River empties into Lake Erie. They made up the waterfront district of warehouses, saloons, and brothels, lit by gas and oil lamps and whispered about in more respectable quarters of town.

The stranger selected a saloon, swung open the door, and walked in. A ragged, shifty-eyed man spotted him immediately as a mark with a full wallet and sidled over to the stranger. Just as the well-dressed stranger was darting nervous glances over his shoulder, the swinging saloon doors opened and gasps and cries of "It's the Chaplain, it's the one-armed Chaplain," came from all corners of the shadowy room.

The shifty-eyed man backed away from the well-dressed stranger. He walked over and slapped the one-armed Chaplain on the back. The one-armed Chaplain had saved one more unwary person from the waterfront penalty for unwariness.

John David Jones was the name of the one-armed chaplain and every man around the Cleveland docks knew and liked him. He was a native son, born April 30, 1845 at Cleveland. His father had been a local Methodist preacher, and one of the owners of the first rolling mill built at Cleveland.

John Jones went before the mast on the Great Lakes in 1852, with Captain Solon Ramage on the schooner "Wings of the Morning." For twelve years he sailed the Great Lakes, then sought salt water, taking service on merchant vessels. The guns of Civil War echoed down the lakes as well as on land in 1861. John enlisted in the Seventh Ohio Volunteer Infantry and served one year there. Then he followed his true calling and joined the Navy. The Navy appointed him carpenter on the gunboat Yantic and he served on her for two years.

During the fighting at Fort Fisher, John took part in the attack under General Butler. A one hundred pound parrot swivel gun burst, killing the gunner and the officer of the division. Although John stood next to them, he was not hurt. At the second attack under General Terry, volunteers were recruited to go with Lieutenant Cushing to storm Fort Fisher. John Jones went along and he was standing by the side of Lt. Porter when he was shot. A squad of seven or eight men who were with him was all killed and wounded. John Jones said, "This was the most trying moment of my life and I thank God for his great mercy."

After his services in the Civil War, John returned to the lakes and signed on as watchman on the propeller Winslow with Captain Robert Anderson, who was considered in those days one of the most skillful and able navigators on the lakes. John had previously sailed on the bark Pomery, which he laid up in Chicago at the end of the season. After his service with Captain Anderson, John served on the schooner N.C. Winslow. He also sailed on the T.P. Handy, William Chase, Champion, C.S. Casper, the bark Bridge and many others. In his hitches as a sailor, he developed a taste for damsels, drink, and devilry, and was one of the wildest sailors of them all.

In fact, he said that he never had command of a vessel because he was a "victim" of drink. The transformation of John David Jones from wild sailor to Christian convert took place in 1868, soon after his return to the lakes. He worked for a short time on the railroad and during this time, he fell under the wheels of a freight train and lost his arm. Since his life had been spared, he became a Christian and vowed to mend his ways and try to help his fellow sailors.

Chaplain John David Jones preached the gospel to the poor, visited the sick and reclaimed the wayward. Reverend J.S. Reeger, one of his contemporaries, said of him, "Chaplain Jones knows their sorrows, knows their sick fathers and mothers, knows the calamities that have come into their homes; everything connected with their lives seems to have come to the knowledge of this man."

The waterfront men liked the one-armed Chaplain right away. He was a short and stocky man with a dignified manner, but he could hold his own in any waterfront fight and the men knew it. His eloquence and persuasive manner made him many friends and his refinement and culture surprised those meeting him for the first time. Many of the sailors thought that if religion had helped him, it could do the same thing for them.

The one-armed chaplain had friends in high places, too- men of means in the early lake shipping trade, all anxious to improve the lot of the sailor. He got to know police officers, judges, politicians, doctors and clergymen.

When city police hurried to a waterfront brawl in high wheeled horse-drawn patrol wagons, more often than not they turned their prisoners over to Chaplain Jones. They reasoned that they would save jail costs, court costs, and the culprit would benefit more from a talk with the one-armed Chaplain than a judge. Most of the time the police were right.

Chaplain Jones provided a safe, secure berth for the sailors and other people of his ministry. The berth was a boat about 60 or so feet long, substantial in beam, and with a blunt nose and a square stern. The sailors called her the Floating Bethel, and she became a familiar sight as she lay moored on the Cuyahoga River and in Cleveland Harbor. The Floating Bethel had no means of propulsion, so a friendly tug or bum boat would drag her to various docks around the harbor. Sometimes she would sit in one spot for months before she moved.

Some sources say that Chaplain Jones lived inside the Floating Bethel, but if he did it could only have been for a short time. He founded the Floating Bethel in 1868, and he also married in 1868.

The woman he married, Miss Lydia Pepperday, happened to be the organist of the Old Bethel and he took his courtship from there. The couple eventually had eight children.

The inside of the Floating Bethel was almost as interesting as the Chaplain who ran it. There was one large room in its interior with a pulpit sitting near the bow. There were chairs and benches for the congregation to sit in while they listened to the Chaplain's sermons. He preached a sermon that could match any clergyman of the day. For after sermon reading, he provided daily papers and current magazines for the sailors and also maintained and kept orderly a reading room for unemployed sailors.

The Floating Bethel became a haven for water front transgressors and the Chaplain had many lasting converts. The Bethel was a water front fixture in the Cuyahoga River and Cleveland Harbor for years. No one remembers what became of her. Some say that the one armed Chaplain had her hauled ashore and mounted on wheels where she served as a revival tabernacle in the more remote spots of Lake Erie County. Others say that she drifted out into Lake Erie and was lost in one of the violent storms that the lake brews so swiftly.

The History of the Great Lakes, published in 1899, has a biography about Chaplain Jones and states that his work on the Floating Bethel dated from 1868 to the present. The officers of the Floating Bethel in 1899 are listed as Captain Thomas Wilson, president; Captain George Stone, first vice president; Stiles H. Curtiss, second vice president; C.O. Scott, treasurer; H.F. Lyman, secretary; and J.D. Jones, chaplain and superintendent.

The biography also says that in 1895, Chaplain Jones received a handsome present amounting to \$6,183.75 for the purpose of lifting the mortgage from his home. The reason the Chaplain had a mortgage on his home was his generosity to the poor of Cleveland.

In 1897, Chaplain Jones had another idea that seemed to operate separately from the Floating Bethel. He thought that with a boat nicely fitted up and mounted on wheels he could reach many people not in the habit of going to church. He went to Detroit and visited the different boat houses until he found a suitable boat. He paid \$50 for his boat, brought it to Cleveland, and mounted it on wheels.

As soon as the boat was in commission, he cruised the different parts of the city with a crew of singers and did much good spreading of the gospel in this novel manner. The Floating Bethel and the Chaplain's gospel ship on wheels were practical ways that Chaplain John David Jones used to minister to people and a logical extension of his life-long fascination with ships. Many of his sermons were about the spiritual significance of ships and the sea and Jesus being "fishers of men."

The fun loving side of Chaplain Jones also came out in the Bethel. The story goes that he maintained a standing offer for years to vanquish any one-armed man who cared to challenge him. History doesn't record any challengers.

John Barleycorn

Grandpa, Potato Beer, and the WCTU Lady

1905

As far as Pat's Grandpa was concerned, the biggest tragedy of Prohibition was not being able to legally "bend an elbow" in his favorite tavern. As far as Pat's Grandma was concerned, Prohibition was salvation. Now her Joseph would be snatched from the jaws of demon rum by the long and righteous arm of the law.

But Grandpa didn't want to be redeemed. He was so upset by the lack of taverns in his life that he decided to make home brew. After all, what a man concocted in his own home was his own business!

Grandma grumbled when Grandpa and Pat peeled a Mt. Everest of potatoes for potato beer. She even hid the potatoes in the flour bin, but Grandpa and Pat found them, dusted them off, and kept peeling. Grandpa put the potato peelings in the bottom of the bathtub and announced that the mixture had to work for a few weeks.

Grandma said, "Ach, Joseph, and where do you expect to take a bath?" She thought she had him, because Grandpa was more germ conscious than Doc Henderson. But Grandpa solved the problem. He installed a bathtub in the spare bedroom off the parlor, so everyone could bathe while the fermenting went on.

Grandma tried another approach. About a week after the fermenting began, Grandma marched into the bathroom and scoured the sink, and other pertinent enamel surfaces thoroughly. Then she tackled the tub. Soon small white flecks of cleanser peppered the thick brown liquid in the tub. When Grandpa found her and demanded to know what she was doing, she replied innocently, "Cleaning the bathroom. I know how you feel about germs."

Grandpa examined his brew suspiciously, but by this time the cleanser had been devoured by the mixture in the bathtub so the evidence had disappeared. None the wiser, Grandpa bottled his first batch of potato beer and basked in the self-satisfied glow that comes from a job well done - about 80 proof.

One night when Pat was sitting by the parlor radio shivering over "The Shadow," she heard a pop, pop, pop and the soft thud of blows to the cellar ceiling. Pat and Grandpa rushed down to the shooting gallery, but all they could do was watch the caps pop until the entire batch of potato beer was liberated. Grandpa could never prove Grandma had anything to do with the caps working loose, but he always had his dark suspicions that she had tampered with that batch of beer!

Grandpa didn't let that stop him from brewing, though. He made another batch and decided one Saturday that it was ready to be bottled. Pat was helping him run the first bottles through their

two man production line in the kitchen and Grandma was at the sink washing the supper dishes when the doorbell rang. She hurried to answer it, wiping her hands on her apron. When she returned to the kitchen, her cheeks were flushed and a wobbly smile hovered on her lips. Behind Grandma sailed the president of the local chapter of the WCTU, as formidable in the righteousness of her cause as her 160 pounds of corseted flesh was in her black dress. She fixed her reforming eye on Grandma. "Anna, how can you allow Joseph to make this devil's brew in your kitchen?"

Grandma faced the WCTU lady. "It's Joseph's kitchen too. In America, a man's home is his castle, that is why we came here. Besides, that beer would make the devil himself change his mind. Grandma grabbed one of the finished bottles and held it out to the WCTU lady. "Take a sip and you'll see what I mean."

The WCTU lady backed away from the bottle and coughed some of the disdain from her face. "You may be right," she told Grandma.

"I am right. By the time Joseph finishes brewing, the devil himself will prefer lemonade punch," Grandma assured the WCTU lady.

The WCTU lady excused herself and marched off to reform other drinking souls. Grandpa kept brewing and Grandma kept cleaning the bathroom. If the devil ever did taste Grandpa's home brew, he does prefer lemonade punch!

John Barleycorn

I Attend My Own Funeral

Chicago Star- January 1919

We're having a funeral here tonight in Chicagoland and in cities and towns all over the country. John Barleycorn is dead, killed by the legislative pen. Over 15,000 citizens are marching in his funeral procession. Church bells are ringing all over the city and throngs of people follow the funeral procession as it winds its way down State Street. The lead wagon pulling the coffin, is decorated with white carnations and a huge banner. The banner says, "Death to John Barleycorn, Health and Prosperity to Our Children."

The two horses pulling the wagon both have bright red blankets on their backs. A lady in the crowd bends to pick up a carnation that has fallen in the snow. She smiles at me as she straightens up and fastens it in the buttonhole of her coat. "This comes straight from O'Meara's flower shop. You know, the man that supplies flowers to the gangsters? I'm going to take it home and press it." She clutches the flower like it a rosary.

Goodbye, John Barleycorn.

A gentleman stands, watching the horse drawn hearse go by. He smiles like a Bishop at a christening.

"Why are you smiling like that?" I ask him.

"I think this funeral marks the end of centuries of sin and strong drink. It means the start of God's reign on earth."

A fanatical light gleams from the minister's eyes. I feel my cynicism choke me. "I hope you're right, Reverend. But I think it's going to take a lot of convincing to get people to give up their will to drink."

Goodbye, John Barleycorn.

The next few people I talk to echo my thoughts. They tag along behind John's funeral wagon. A lot of them wave beer bottles in circles over their heads and cheer John at the top of their voices. One woman reacts differently. Tears run down her cheeks. "I hate to see him go," she sobs. "I don't get rolling-in-the-gutter drunk, but I do like a glass of wine or beer now and then. I just want to keep on with that. I don't want to give up my choice to have them."

The man standing next to her mutters angrily. "An outrage! Just an outrage! Those fanatics have finally pushed this stupid law through, but they're not going to be able to make it stick. Those briefcase bunglers will find out the hard way you can't legislate morality. Mark my words,

they'll find out the hard way."

These are about the only comments I can hear. Most of the people are celebrating so loudly I can't get them to stop for sober comment or sober anything for that matter. Some of my buddies from the Blue Angel with slouch hats pulled over their eyes are lounging in the building doorways. I don't ask them to comment.

The police are here too, just to keep things in order they tell me. I see an officer, a sergeant I think, by his stripes, walk over and say something to one of the doorway loungers. They have a long conversation. I want to go over and see if they're talking about the demise of John Barleycorn, but if I do I'll lose my place in the crowd. It will be worth losing my place to find out what they're saying, though. I've heard rumors around the city room that Mayor Sorrenson and most of the police force are friendly with the gang bosses of the city and are working together to keep John alive. Judging from the number of policemen paying their respects, I'd say the rumor is true.

I finally get close enough so I can see John Barleycorn himself, lying in state in the lead wagon. He's in a regulation size coffin and his grave clothes are a red and white striped pair of pants, a white shirt and a tall black hat. His hands are folded across his chest. He's holding a sign that says, "Goodbye John."

As the horses clop, clop along over the cobblestones and patches of snow and ice, their hooves and the wagon wheels throw up clots of snow. One of the clots lands on John's hat. I run up and brush it off. That's the least I can do for John.

It's a good thing that John's dressed warmly, because the air out here is about 20 degrees, enough to bite your nose red. The wind is whipping off Lake Michigan like a bucket of icy water. The clusters of people break up and scurry off toward the bars and night spots that can be found tucked in just about every block of State Street. Even though the Prohibition Law has been on the books for a year now and can officially be enforced today, few of the saloons around the city have closed down. The attitude of their proprietors, and I've talked to quite a few of them, is, "Let's bide our time and hope that somehow we'll be able to keep our customers supplied with liquor. They are doing a good job so far.

We walk all of the way to the Clark Street bridge. By the time we get there the crowd has thinned out. The Reverend is still there and some of the slouch hats and a few of the police, but most of the other people are busy warming their hearts with the last of the legal liquor. Is this really goodbye, John Barleycorn?

It looks like goodbye. Someone chops a hole in the ice with a hatchet. Several people heave to and throw John's coffin into the Chicago River. The crying lady comes up beside me. I put my arm around her shoulder.

"Don't take it so hard, lady. They're only burying him for safekeeping. He'll be back. I'm

willing to bet you he won't ever really go away. I hear rumors that huge supplies of liquor are stockpiled in the warehouses all over the city. I hear that men like those slouch hats over there are waiting with ten bottles in each hand for a mob of thirsty customers. Don't worry lady, we're not really burying John, we're just putting him under for safekeeping for a little while. In a few days we're going to drag his dripping corpse from the bottom of the river, with his elbow still bending. He's going to enjoy a resurrection like this country has never seen!"

"How do you know that for sure?" she asks.

I draw myself up to my full 6 feet 2 inches. (Oh all right, 5 feet 9 inches). "Because it's my job to know these things."

"She stared at me. "You don't look like I pictured you."

I stuck out my chest. "How did you picture me?"

"I didn't picture you so short and with red hair and freckles! Are your cheeks red from the wind or are they always red?"

"They're red most of the time from my nip and shot," I said.

"And the blue suspenders--"

I interrupt her. "I use blue suspenders to hold my trousers up because I like blue," I said. "And you'd better believe that I'm going to make sure there's enough stuff around to keep my face red and my heart warm. You don't have to worry, lady. I intend to do my part to make sure that reports of John Barleycorn's death are greatly exaggerated."

John Barleycorn

Can You Enforce It?

Chicago Star
March 1919

Since you accuse me of not telling all of the facts, Reverend Ershaw, I've got more facts here on Colonial drinking. The colonists weren't habitual drunkards, probably because they didn't have time to be. Most of them drank because of custom, health, to be hospitable -reasons like that. And some drank simply to make the challenge of confronting a solid wall of virgin forest and hacking a home and a living from them a little more manageable.

For the most part though, moderate drinking was the norm for the colonists and the drunkard was a social outcast. The habitual drunkard was sentenced to the stocks, sent to the whipping stool, or put in prisoner and sentenced to periods of hard labor. Some were forced to wear a patch of cloth with a scarlet D for "Drunkard" around their necks for a year. The tavern keeper who didn't obey the government regulations against habitual drunkards could have his place closed down. Drinking hours were usually curtailed as was the amount of liquor a person was allowed to drink.

The Reverend couldn't keep still any longer. "That's exactly what we're trying to do now with Prohibition! See what a historical precedent we have? And now people are civilized. Things will be different when we have Prohibition enforced properly!"

"I can quote some facts right back at you," I said. "Limited drinking was just as hard to enforce in Colonial times as it's going to be now. Some colonies had informers to check on tavern conduct and official lists were made of those who imbibed too freely."

"There were courageous, law-abiding men even then," the Reverend said with trumpets in his voice.

I laughed. "I can see a pompous man in a powdered wig sitting in the tavern with his scroll and quill pen. Listen to the scratching of the pen, the gurgle of the whiskey and ale being poured and the pungent language of the drinkers as they tell the pompous man what he can do with his list.

The Reverend started to say something to rebut this, but I didn't give him a chance. "And when the Colonial government clamped down too tightly on the drinking habits of the populace, the first speakeasies sprang up for people who wanted to drink free of official snooping. The speakeasies were unlicensed, often rowdy, and were breeding places for crime. The Colonial legislatures and town officials tried to curtail them, but they grew like yeast in a vat of beer. When the government tried to curtail liquor by increasing import duties and excise taxes, smuggling, rum running, and moonshining grew like gossip."

"You have to give Prohibition a chance to work. You have to have the right people in charge of it," Reverend Earnshaw said.

"I think I'd better tell you what happened to the very first Prohibition experiment in America, dear Reverend Earnshaw. In Colonial America, Prohibition was first tried to protect the Colonists from attacks by Indians who were under the influence of "strong waters" given to them by the settlers. Massachusetts and other early colonies passed rigid prohibition laws forbidding the sale or gift of liquor to the Indians. But these laws were almost impossible to enforce. This is prophetic, Reverend!"

"Why were they so hard to enforce?" I have to give the Reverend credit. He looked thoughtful.

"The reason the Prohibition laws were almost impossible to enforce was that traders smuggled liquor to the Indians in their boots, that's why they were called bootleggers. The Indians prized this bootlegged liquor so much they gave up their furs, their choice tracts of property, and many of their rich stands of timber for it. Laws against bootlegging weren't even considered valid by the colonists, much less enforced."

The Reverend still looked thoughtful. "Wasn't there any colony that tried to stop this abuse?"

"Georgia was the only colony that tried to enforce Prohibition laws and this was to curtail the drinking of the whites, not the Indians. When Georgia's founding father, James Oglethorpe, led the first colonists to Georgia in 1733, he vowed to create a group of sober, industrious citizens undefiled by hard liquor. The English Trustees of the Georgia Colony back in London agreed with Oglethorpe and furnished 100 copies of "Dr. Hales Friendly Admonition to the Drinkers of Brandy," to the colonists, urging them to drink beer instead of other alcoholic beverages.

But the new colonists didn't want to be undefiled by hard liquor. As soon as they hung their guns over the pegs in the doorways of their rugged log cabins, they began to make rum and even imported rum from South Carolina. Governor Oglethorpe informed the English Trustees of this state of sobriety in the Colony and the Londoners responded by "absolutely forbidding drinking." The British Parliament and King George II backed them up with the full force of an act forbidding the import or sale of rum in Georgia. This act became effective in 1735, but what the good King and the illustrious Parliament forgot to consider was how they were going to enforce it.

They couldn't enforce it. The act was almost totally disobeyed. Average citizens and community leaders alike viewed it with contempt, or at best, ridicule. There were no effective controls and not enough men to police lawbreakers. Public sympathy was usually on the side of the lawbreakers. Illegal stills dotted the back country areas and colonial agents who tried to round up the moonshiners were greeted with gunfire. Rum runners paddled through backwaters and secluded coves in all manner of canoes and other craft. Creators carried rum on foot on horseback over forest trails. Rival bootleggers fought each other and bootlegging pirates

hijacked rum. Bootleggers posing as peddlers traveled country roads, speakeasies flourished in the settlements, hidden in back rooms of stores and houses.

Much more seriously, settlers neglected the business of their colony to brew rum and officials were corrupted with bribes. Prohibition made a mockery of the court system. When rum runners and bootleggers were caught, they demanded a trial by jury and usually their fellow citizens refused to convict them, no matter what the evidence.

James Oglethorpe wasn't a man to give up easily, but finally he had to admit there probably weren't "twelve men in all of Georgia who would convict anyone for selling rum."

Even though Oglethorpe still strongly believed in Prohibition, he was convinced it couldn't be enforced against the public will. In 1742, he repealed the act and a new law was passed, providing for a system of licensing taverns and public houses and permitting imports of rum. The pioneer rum runners, bootleggers and speakeasies faded from the scene for a time. They had no place in every day Colonial life when rum was legal."

The Reverend pounded his fists on the table. I stopped for breath and looked at him. "You mark my words. Prohibition will work because this is 20th Century America and people are aware of the evils of you, John Barleycorn. It's not the eighteen century anymore!"

"People don't like snoopers today anymore than they did then," I said.

"But the churches and the government are solidly behind this law. There are too many voices defending it to be stilled." The pure light of the crusader gleamed in his eyes. "There is no way it can not be obeyed."

I took a gulp of the whiskey that the waitress here at the Blue Angel always keeps for me.

"There are lots of ways it can't be obeyed and people will find every single one of them," I said.

"They'll even invent some ways of their own. You wait and see."

John Barleycorn

A Few of My Enemies

Chicago Star
October 1919

Just to be fair to Reverend Ernshaw I'll have to tell you about some of my enemies. In other words, meet the friends of Prohibition. Probably my number one enemy after the Father of Prohibition, Governor James Oglethorpe of Georgia, was Dr. Benjamin Rush.

Dr. Rush was the first professor of chemistry in the America colonies and later the University of Pennsylvania's first professor of medicine. In his spare time, he signed the Declaration of Independence, and he served as a member of Congress and a patriot plotter of the Revolution as well as the Physician General of the Continental Army. When he was in charge of the troop hospitals, he concluded after much study and observation that heavy drinking was destroying more fighting ability in the American soldier than British weapons.

Dr. Rush made a lengthy and continued study of intemperance. He decided that alcohol wasn't the health tonic and medicinal cure that it always had been thought to be. (Mind you, this is Dr. Rush's opinion!) In 1778, Dr. Rush published a pamphlet called "Directions for Preserving the Health of Soldiers," which warned against excessive use of hard liquor. It didn't have much impact on army drinking but it did pave the way for research to begin.

After retiring from the army, Dr. Rush devoted himself to research on the effects of alcohol on the human body and in 1784, he published a pamphlet that inspired the real start of the Temperance movement in America. The title of the pamphlet was : "Inquiring Into the Effects of Spiritous Liquor on the Human Body an Mind." Containing 40 closely printed pages, it was the first documented attack against alcohol and it became a fundamental temperance text. (I started to read it, but I fell asleep before I finished the title!)

Some of my other enemies besides Dr. Rush included Dr. Billy J. Clark of New York who organized America's first Temperance Society and Reverend Lyman Beecher. Reverend Beecher consolidated the church behind the Temperance Movement and gave it intellectual importance. His sermons convinced thousands of people to put down the bottle and take up the pledge.

Although many drunkards and nippers took the pledge, conscience and religious faith weren't doing enough to halt drinking completely, so the Temperance people turned to the law. By the middle 1840s, Temperance lobbies were at work in most big cities and nearly every state legislature. Maine's political boss, Neal Dow, developed enough lobbying skill and clout to convince his state to adopt a Prohibition Law on June 2, 1851. The Prohibition band wagon in Maine rolled to 12 other states in the next four years, from New England to the Midwest.

Then the Temperance Movement stopped short until almost a quarter of a century later. Temperance leaders, jubilant at first, grew morose as Temperance laws gradually were ruled unconstitutional in some states and voters rebelled and demanded the return of liquor in others. One by one, all of the Temperance Laws were repealed or modified except the one in Maine.

During the Civil War, the Temperance issue was tabled in favor of the more urgent concerns of preserving the Union and getting it to function as a unit again. Then in the 1870s, feminist lions seized demon rum in their jaws and vowed to lay him prostrate at the feet of the Lord. A crusade of singing, emotionally roaring women invaded the saloons of twenty states to close them down.

It's not surprising (at least to me) that this lady's crusade was begun by a man. The man's name was Dr. Dioclesian Lewis and according to his friends he was an outstanding health expert, educator, writer, and advanced thinker. Other people like me, thought he was a spell binding charlatan. As well as writing, teaching, and running health spas, Lewis traveled the lyceum circuit as a public speaker and visited dozens of cities across the country.

Dr. Lewis was tremendously popular with the ladies. The fact that he was a handsome, blue-eyed six footer with a flowing white mane of hair and a charismatic personality might have had something to do with it. He so inspired women in Fredonia, New York, that they organized a committee to pray and sing hymns in front of the town saloons. This idea of getting rid of me and my followers by "visitation bands" caught on in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and most other states. Even the Eastern States and New England got into the act, although the most effective crusades were in the Midwest. The movement was more successful in small towns and rural areas.

The ladies' crusades began to simmer down in the summer of 1874, but before they got cold, they had gained world-wide publicity for the Temperance Movement and made the country more Temperance minded. Out of these crusades grew the Women's Christian Temperance Movement which declared as its battle cry, "We hold Prohibition to be essential to the full triumph of this reform."

The WCTU grew to become a national force and its greatest strength was promoting its views among young people through temperance teaching in public schools. Its influence was so strong that school authorities edited text books to conform to WCTU policy and the WCTU brought the first real demand for national prohibition.

And I, John Barleycorn, hug my whiskey glass close to my heart and shudder at the power of a small group of determined fanatics.

John Barleycorn

Chicago Star
November 1919

More of My Enemies

In 1896, another enemy attacked me. This time it was the Anti-Saloon League that marched across the American scene waving flags and shouting slogans in its efforts to "suppress the saloon." This movement grew out of the splintering of the Temperance forces and was spearheaded by Dr. Howard Russell, a Protestant minister from Ohio. The Anti-Saloon League was the patron saint of Prohibition. It raised funds and solidified religious and emotional appeals. It was one of the most effective propaganda and political machines that Temperance movements operated in America. Worse of all, it was the central force that made Prohibition part of the United States Constitution.

Some of my better known enemies held hands with the Anti-Saloon League. William Jennings Bryan of the silver tongue and the rapier wit helped turn public opinion for the dries in the Midwest and South. He attacked brewers and saloons from the lecture platform of hundreds of tents and halls.

Evangelist Billy Sunday used God as an ally to persuade drinkers to go on the wagon and hate the "stinking, dirty, rotten, Hell-soaked saloon business as much as I do." He was a showman and worked like an actor to dramatize his delivery. He would slap his head, grab one foot in his hand and hop about on the other, make faces and leap into the air. He would rip off his coat and stand in his shirtsleeves drenched with sweat. He would whisper with tenderness or shout with rage. He deliberately stirred up controversy and one of his favorite tricks was lining up a row of handsome young boys on a platform and offer them as "one day's contribution to the saloon's grist of manhood."

Carry Nation was even more acrobatic than Billy Sunday in her anti-saloon antics. She kept public attention focused on saloons when they could ill afford the publicity. She accomplished this by raiding saloons, smashing their furnishings with her hatchet and symbolizing a Messiah for the growing number of Americans who wanted to see the saloons destroyed.

At first saloon keepers thought she was a good joke. One of the most popular signs of the times in saloons read, "All Nations Welcome but Carry." But by the time she died in a Kansas hospital in 1911 of "nervous trouble," Carrie had kept her anger against the liquor trade on the nation's front pages for more than ten years. And she did much to publicize her cause and help bring about national prohibition.

In spite of the best efforts of my enemies, at the beginning of the Twentieth Century Prohibition existed in only three states: Maine, Kansas and North Dakota. This made the Anti-Saloon League work a few jiggers harder. In 1907 Georgia and Oklahoma went dry. That's not too surprising for Georgia. Remember James Ogelthorpe!

In 1908 Mississippi and North Carolina voted for state prohibition and in 1909, Tennessee joined them. West Virginia dried up in 1912 and in 1914, Virginia, Oregon, Washington, Colorado and Arizona clambered aboard the "How dry I am" wagon. Around the time America entered the First World War, 33 states had chosen state prohibition.

You have to remember though, Prohibition was strongest in agricultural and small town America and in states where legislatures were dominated by rural lawmakers. Big cities and industrial areas of the North and East remained soaking wet. Another thing to remember is that many of the so-called dry states weren't bone dry. Only 13 states totally prohibited all manufacture and sale of liquor and the laws were aimed mostly at abolishing the saloon and bringing the liquor trade under strict control.

Most Americans didn't want to be dry. In fact, they were drinking more spirits and having a good time doing it. Liquor flowed across state lines from wet to dry states. Mail order sales of liquor did a booming business and if you really wanted to visit a saloon, you could find one.

To combat this wet world, the Anti-Saloon League with the help of its attorney, Wayne B. Wheeler, drew up a law. Senator Kenyon and North Carolina representative Edwin Webb introduced this law in Congress. The Webb-Kenyon Bill was designed to give states instead of the Federal government control over liquor shipped across state boundaries. The Webb-Kenyon Bill was passed over the veto of President William Howard Taft by a 2/3 majority of the House and Senate.

The passing of the Webb-Kenyon Bill gave the Anti-Saloon League the green light to start the battle for national prohibition. In 1913, the League held a convention in Columbus, Ohio, and adopted a resolution for national prohibition. In December 1913, 5,000 men and women demonstrated in Washington and demanded a saloonless nation by 1920. On the Capitol steps, they presented petitions to Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas and Representative Hobson of Alabama.

The very same day, the Congressmen introduced the League's resolution into both the Senate and the House. Wayne Wheeler helped draft the resolution for a change in the Constitution. He and the League worked to win votes in the Congressional elections of 1914.

I have to say one thing for the Anti-Saloon League fellows, they aren't afraid to spend money. The League spent nearly three million dollars in the campaign and started off with about 20,000 speakers from all over the United States. During the final stages of the campaign, it had about 50,000 trained speakers and volunteers and regulars orating against the wets in every village, city, town, county and state across America.

The election returns of 1914 showed that the League's campaign was paying off, but the dries still lacked a Constitutional two-thirds majority in both Houses. The League bided its time until 1916, five months before America entered the First World War. I've heard a lot of people say the League probably couldn't have pushed through Prohibition if the U.S. hadn't entered the War,

and I think they're right. I think the League capitalized on the wartime hysteria and used it to hasten the adoption of the 18th Amendment.

Well, by hook or crook, the Anti-Saloon League won. President Woodrow Wilson called the new Congress into special session in the spring of 1917 to declare war on Germany and to consider another important item on its agenda. Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas had introduced the Anti-Saloon League's resolution to add a Prohibition Amendment to the Constitution. The resolution was referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee and stayed there three months while Congress passed war legislation. The League used the three months to bargain with the wets. After a token battle in the House and Senate, the 18th Amendment was passed and enacted on November 21, 1918, ten days after the Armistice in Europe.

A year after ratification by the states began, 35 states had approved the amendment and it was declared part of the Constitution of the United States. The official word was out that Prohibition would go into effect in the United States on January 16, 1919.

The next battle in the Anti-Saloon League's war was working out how to enforce the amendment. Attorney Wayne Wheeler stepped forward again. He had been working many months before the 18th Amendment was ratified to rough draft an enforcement law for the Anti-Saloon League. He finally produced the National Prohibition Act, which he turned over to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Andrew J. Volstead of Minnesota.

Talk about a man getting his name on a piece of legislation without doing any work! This law became known as the Volstead Act, although all Volstead really did was re-arrange some sections that Wheeler gave to him. The Volstead Act was approved by the House and Senate in October, 1919.

Basically, the Volstead Act prohibits the manufacture, sale, barter, transport, import, export, delivery or illegal possession of any intoxicating beverage. Intoxicating is defined as one-half of one percent alcohol by volume. Permits are to be issued for the manufacture of industrial alcohol and for alcohol for medicinal, religious and other specialized uses. A curious thing about the act is that although the War has been over for eight months, the Volstead Act provides for the enforcement of the 18th Amendment and immediate wartime prohibition. President Wilson vetoed the Volstead Act, but the House and Senate overrode his veto, even though Wilson correctly point out that the war time emergency had long since passed.

So that's a little bit of the history of "The Nobel Experiment," as one of its more optimistic supporters calls it. I won't write down some of the names me and my friends call it. Prohibition wasn't to be enforced until a year after its enactment, which would make the enforcement date last January. It hasn't been enforced too well. People are calling it "the unenforceable law."

I don't think Prohibition is going to be a very popular law and it hopefully isn't going to last very long. It can't, because just like America's early history, people in the 20th century don't take too well to having the government tell them what and when and where they can drink. Already, I see trouble brewing (pun on purpose) and it's going to be a witches brew before Prohibition is over.

We're going to have a long, national drunken brawl and hangover before we see the end of Prohibition!

John Barleycorn

Reverend Merriweather

Starwind, South Dakota
December 1920

True to his cloth, Reverend Merriweather, my ma and dad's minister, didn't approve of beer or any other kind of "John Barleycorn." He even cast a suspicious eye on the bottle of vanilla Mrs. Merriweather used in cake baking. Hadn't he read on the label that it had a 45% alcohol content? The Reverend has his blind spots, but ma and dad like him, so I try to think kindly of him while I sip my nightly brew.

But as ma and dad grow older, I am too heartsick and tired to drink my nightly brew much any more, because I am coming nose to nose with the inescapable fact of their mortality. Mom has a bad heart and has been in the hospital once already, and dad's health is failing too, probably aggravated by his worry over mother.

I have a wife and two sons of my own and a full time job, so I am beginning to feel like I am being drawn and quartered among my responsibilities. But the tie that binds me to ma and dad is stronger than steel and forged with love not duty. I keep my home fires burning as well as theirs.

Mom had to go into the hospital again shortly before Christmas and this time is even more difficult for dad than before. This time the doctor shakes his head and presses his lips together as he examines her. "She's so weak, I'm afraid she doesn't have too much longer," the doctor says.

The doctor tells Reverend Merriweather the same thing, but when he tries to talk to me about it, I won't listen. With a cheeriness I don't feel, I tell dad that mom is going to be fine, she just needs a little rest. The doctor says she can come home for Christmas!

The day before mom is supposed to come home, I hurry over to their house after work to check on dad. I'd gotten off later than usual, so the street lights make yellow light pools on the snow. I admire them as I hurry along the street, but something is wrong. Lights shine from all of the windows but mom and dad's. My heart thuds with alarm. I throw open their front door.

"Dad, are you here? Dad?"

There is no answer. I slam the door behind me and turn on the lamp that stands on the table in the front window. Dad is sitting motionless in the chair next to the lamp. He doesn't even blink. Without taking off my coat, I kneel in front of him.

"Dad, what's wrong? Does something hurt? Should I call the doctor?"

"Nothing hurts. Nothing's wrong. I just don't feel like Christmas, son."

"Dad, mom's coming home tomorrow. And next Saturday is Christmas. Those are two things to be happy about."

Dad looks at me. I pull back from the naked pain in his eyes. "Your mom's going home, she's not coming home," he said.

Dad knows and there's nothing I can say. I look around the room that now seems as barren as mom's hospital room. There has to be something I can do. The first thing I do is open the evening paper to the comics and laugh even though my tears blur the print so I'm not reading. Everyone always says that dad and I laugh alike and our laughs make other people laugh too.

Dad doesn't move, so I laugh again, louder.

"What's so funny, son?"

"Look how this dog decorated his dog house for Christmas."

I put the paper in dad's hands and hurry down to the basement store rooms where mom keeps the Christmas decorations. She has always loved Christmas, so though the years she's accumulated enough Christmas items to stock the entire North pole.

I don't take time to be neat and systematic like mom. I grab a string of lights here, an angel there, and a star and tinsel and ornaments on the way back upstairs. I leave them on the kitchen table and grab dad's hat and coat out of the closet. I dash into the living room and throw them in his lap.

"Put these on quick!" I tell him. "Mom's coming home tomorrow and we're going to make this house look like department store window decorated for Christmas."

Dad opens his mouth, but I don't give him a chance to argue. "Put that coat on or I'll put it on for you," I tell him. "Remember, that's what you used to tell me!"

He grins and puts on his coat and hat. Luckily I know that there is a Christmas tree lot three blocks from the house, so we don't have far to walk. I pick out a tree so scrawny it looks like a toothpick.

"There's a good one," I say. "Mom will feel sorry for it and decorate it up so pretty."

Dad comes alive at that one. "Nothing doing," he says. "Your mom gets only the best tree."

We have to drag the tree we pick out home behind us, because it is so big and bushy. About a block away from the house I start singing Jingle Bells. People come to their windows and wave and smile when they see us. Dad waves back and laughs. I don't feel like laughing.

We get the tree in the house, brush most of the snow off it, and settle it in its stand with a few choice Irish phrases from dad. When I hear his Irish cussing, I do an Irish jig in my mind, because dad only swears when he's feeling chipper.

Dad is stringing the lights on the tree and I am pawing through a box of mom's ornaments when the doorbell rings. "Now who in the name of Paddy's pig can that be?" dad mutters, a totally preoccupied look on his face. "Tell them to go away and don't bother us. We're getting ready for Christmas."

The caller is Reverend Merriweather. His nose is so red from the cold that I have to bite my tongue to keep from offering him a hot toddy. He thaws out on the living room sofa, watching dad and me getting that tree ready for mom. Then he stands up and rubs his hands together. "Mr. Anderson, do you have a victrola?"

Dad glances up from his lights. "We do. It's standing in the corner."

"Do you have Bing Crosby's record, "White Christmas?"

"We do," I say. "That's mom's favorite."

I put down my ornaments and go over and get the record for him. He puts it on the victrola and cranks it up. The honey tones of "Der Bingel" fill the room. Something hard and painful dissolves in my heart and healing tears fill my eyes.

"Tell you what, dad. We've been working so hard, what do you say we have a Christmas toddy?? Some of that stuff you've been saving for a special occasion?" I cross my fingers, hoping that the Reverend will understand and not raise too much of a ruckus.

Dad laughs the first real laugh he's come up with in a long time. "Great idea son. Go down to the cellar and get it, will you?"

I give the Reverend a look. "Right away, dad.

I walk back into the living room with three toddies in my hand. The Reverend has three glasses sitting on the table. Dad is still laughing at something he said.

"To mom," I say, pouring the toddies and raising my glass.

"To mom," Reverend Merriweather echoes.

John Barleycorn

Rum Running on the Detroit River

Detroit News
1920

On January 2, 1920, the Gray Ghost sailed his ice cutter across the Detroit River to Windsor, Ontario to buy a motorboat license. This was probably the last law abiding act he performed in his short life. During the Prohibition Years in America - 1920-1933- the Gray Ghost and other Detroit River pirates and rum runners, both professional and amateur, provided swashbuckling action enough to rival the Spanish Main.

Canadian breweries and distillers enjoyed a boom year in 1920. Customs officials in Windsor reported an unusual demand for motorboat licenses that year and in its early months nearly 25% of the Ontario population near the Detroit River participated in the illegal liquor business. Nearly 900,000 cases of liquor were shipped to the border cities during the first seven months of 1920.

The rum runners even had more cause for celebration on August 11, 1921, because that was the day a Canadian police magistrate ruled that shipments of beer and liquor from Canada to the United States were lawful. More significantly, he ruled that the government had no legal powers to prevent the shipments. This ruling opened up a glittering world of rum running, rostabouts, and riches for the ordinary people of Detroit and Windsor.

Immediately, three workers from Ecorse, a down river community, took their paycheck from the shipyards and some savings and traveled to Montreal where the sale of liquor was legal. They bought 25 cases of whiskey and drove back to Windsor. They rowed a small boat back and forth across the river until all of their treasure was ferried to the American side. They posted a lookout for Canadian and American customs officials just in case, but all went well. They sold their liquor in Ecorse and used the profits to finance a second and third trip. Multiply this enterprising group of workers by thousands and you have some idea of the volume of rum running on the river.

Both Canadians and Americans with their secret caches of beer, and liquor waited "like Indians" between the trees and tall grass on the Canadian side of the river. Boatloads of smugglers would glide across the river, signaling with pocket torches. A blue light flashed once and then twice meant all was clear. A large sheet hung on a clothesline meant there were police in the area. A flashing red light meant "turn back immediately, the police have arrived."

Rum running affected all of the downriver communities, but Ecorse, especially, became the hub of the rum running. Before Prohibition, the Detroit News described Ecorse as a "rather dull and

undistinguished community, not unlike thousands of other small towns in America, and furnishing not a jot of interest, possessing scarcely a single arresting quality. This riverside Gopher Prairie can best be described as a nice place."

Then the Eighteenth Amendment transformed Ecorse from boring to booming. Commercial fishermen, tugboat operators, shippers, dockworkers, and just ordinary workers joined the rum running profession. During the 1920s, the rumrunners in the downriver villages were the local business barons. Journalist F. L. Smith, Jr. wrote that "to have seen Ecorse in its palmy days is an unforgettable experience, for no gold camp of the old West presented a more glamorous spectacle. It was a perpetual carnival of drinking, gambling, and assorted vices by night and frenziedly businesslike community by day. Silk-shirted bootleggers walked its streets and it was the Mecca for the greedy, the unscrupulous, and the criminal of both sexes. When the police desired to lay their hands on a particularly hard customer they immediately looked in Ecorse and there they generally found him."

Rum running boats by the dozen were moored each day at the Ecorse municipal dock at the foot of State Street, which ran through the village's central business district. Rumrunners transferred their cargoes to waiting cars and trucks, while residents, police, and officials watched. Some Canadian breweries set up export docks on the shore just outside of LaSalle, Ontario, which is directly across the Detroit River from Ecorse. Fighting Island, situated in the middle of the river between Ecorse and LaSalle, conveniently hid rumrunners from police patrols.

Rum running was no respecter of age in Ecorse. Ecorse rumrunners employed as many as 25 schoolboys as spies, lookouts and messengers. In 1922, police arrested a 15 year old boy delivering a truckload of liquor to a downriver roadhouse. The boys said that he was only one of several local boys working for the rum runners. He insisted that he worked only on weekends and night so he wouldn't miss school. These 13 to 16 year old boys did such a good job as lookouts that the police couldn't make unannounced raids on blind pigs and boat house storage centers in Ecorse. They were usually spotted long before they arrived by the boys. One state police officer complained that "they spread out along the waterfront and are very awake and diligent. "

Federal and state officials more often than not had a difficult time making rum running arrests stick in Ecorse because the local police were in sympathy if not cahoots with the rumrunners. Rumrunners served on juries and the only cases from Ecorse tried successfully were the ones tried in federal courts.

A wild west style battle between law and order and the rumrunners and their defenders took place in 1928 in Hogan's Alley in Ecorse. Several cars and three boats holding about 30 Customs Border Patrol inspectors gathered at the end of Hogan's Alley to wait in ambush for the rum runners. Rum running boats pulled up to a nearby pier and the agents rushed out and arrested the seven crew members of the boat.

As soon as they were arrested, the crew members of the boat shouted for help and rescuers rushed from all around. Over 200 people arrived to stop the agents from leaving with the

prisoners. The people attacked the cars the customs agents had driven to the scene. They slashed tires and broke windshields. They pushed other cars across the alley entrance and threw rocks and bottles at the agents. Before the situation got too desperate, the agents banded together, rushed the barricade, and escaped.

State and federal agents raided and raided the downriver communities, with only temporary success. In July 1922, Michigan Governor Alex Groesbeck ordered the state police, with the help of the federal agents, to occupy Ecorse, enforce the law, and clean up the downriver area. The raids did not begin to dry up the river of illegal liquor, so Governor Groesbeck established a permanent state police post near Ecorse to keep an eye on things. In reply to the governor's action, Ecorse village president and chief of police visited local blind pig owners and warned them that the state and federal officials meant business. The officials suggested that they destroy their liquor supplies to prevent more raids in Ecorse. The leading bootleggers conferred and verbally agreed that Ecorse would be liquor free for 30 days to prevent federal raids. After the thirty days expired, liquor traffic in Ecorse returned to normal.

The liquor business kept booming in the downriver area. Every time federal and state officials swooped down on the downriver liquor traffic, more liquor appeared and business went on as usual. After a series of brutal murders in the downriver area in 1931, Governor Wilbur Brucker sent the state police to patrol Wyandotte streets. But no state actions destroyed or even slowed down the illegal liquor business in the downriver area during prohibition. Only its repeal brought a better state of law and order to Ecorse and the other downriver communities.

John Wozniak of Ecorse is remembered as one of the more honest rumrunners. Wozniak's early twenties coincided with the early rum running years on the river, and he was enterprising enough to form his own navy of twenty five "tars" to carry Canadian liquor into America across the Detroit River. His fleet went by the nickname of "Peajacket's Navy" and Wozniak gave his sailors standing orders to avoid violence and out think law enforcement patrols. In keeping with their admiral's nonviolent policy, Wozniak's men did not carry arms and neither did Wozniak. If and when one of his men got caught, Wozniak backed him and his defense and paid the fine if the rumrunner was convicted.

His love of sports helped bring the downfall of John Wozniak and his fleet. He sponsored a football team for Peajacket's Navy and his team got to be well known in Ecorse, Lincoln Park, Wyandotte, and River Rouge. Law enforcement people would come to the games frequently to get to know the rumrunners on Wozniak's team so they would know who to arrest.

Wozniak's navy was successful because he successfully bribed Customs Border Patrol officials, but in 1928, the Admiral was arrested when a federal law enforcement officials broke up a large bribery ring. At his trial he told the judge, "When I was indicted I was through for good. The law was getting too strong. I sold my boats and scuttled the others. I went into the automobile business and have done pretty well."

After his navy's demise, Wozniak still sponsored his football team, but he changed its name from

"Peajacket's Navy" to the name of his new automobile agency.

Besides Ecorse, the haven for rumrunners, Lincoln Park, Ford, and Wyandotte were the export centers for Ecorse-landed liquor and liquor from these communities supplied big buyers in Detroit. The police chief of Trenton plotted with rumrunners to land their cargo in town with police protection. The River Rouge chief of police seemed to be the only exception. "River Rouge is clean. There is no bootlegging here. My department will remain honest. But we have to cope with all the drunks and rumrunners and speeders from Detroit and Ecorse, Ford and Wyandotte. We collected \$2,000 in fines from liquor violators last month and 90 percent was paid by Detroiters," he said.

In the beginning rum running on the river was a friendly business. Hardly anyone packed a gun. The atmosphere was party and people were friendly. Women participated as freely as men in the river bootlegging and the person in the next boat could be a local councilman or the high school drama teacher. Boat owners could transport as many as 2,500 cases of liquor each month at a net profit of \$25,000 with the owner earning about \$10,000. Some rumrunners made 800% profit for one load of liquor. The rum running boats were called the "mosquito fleet." The only real perils of the sea that the rum runners encountered during those first years were losing directions in the middle of the river at night and collisions with other boats.

The rumrunners and The Gray Ghost worked even in the winter time because people in Detroit didn't go on the wagon in the winter. They just went on the river if they were thirsty. The river often froze solid in the winter and the rumrunners, including the Gray Ghost, took advantage of the ice road. They used iceboats, sleds, and cars to transport liquor from Canada to America. Convoys of cars from Canada crossed the ice daily. Cars on the American shore lined up at night and turned on the headlights to provide an illuminated expressway across the ice.

A prolonged cold spell in January and February of 1930 produced thick and inviting ice on upper Lake Erie and the Detroit River. Hundreds of tire tracks marked the ice trail from the Canadian docks to the American shore. On a February morning in 1930, a Detroit News reporter counted 75 cars leaving the Amherstburg beer docks. He wrote that ten carried Ohio license plates and headed downriver for south and east points on the Ohio shore. Others drove to the Canadian side of Grosse Ile. When they arrived on Grosse Ile, the liquor was unloaded into camouflaged trucks and driven across the toll bridge to the American mainland.

But most of the cars drove from the Amherstburg docks to Bob-lo Park around the north end of Bob-lo Island. From there the trail headed west for about 2,500 feet to the Livingstone Channel. When the Channel was safely reached, the cars drove south for a mile, where the trail divided into two forks. One trail led to a slip on the lower end of Grosse Ile. The other fork led for about two miles further north. As the car drove, the road was about two miles from the upper end of Bob-lo Park to the Grosse Ile slip. Or translated time wise, it was about a six minute ride over the ice.

The dangerous part of the ride was along the Bob-lo Park side, where the ice was tricky. There

rumrunners drove with two wheels as far on the shore as they could get. The road from the upper end of Bob-lo Island to Gross Ile was safe and the ice solid.

The rumrunners didn't try to hide their goods from the law. One of them told the Detroit News that "the law isn't the thing we fear most. What we are really afraid of is the ice. Anytime it may give way beneath and let one of us through."

The iceboats were the bane of the Coast Guard cutters because they were fast enough to be "phantoms" to the pursuers. Ice boats had obvious advantages over cars on frozen Lake St. Clair and the Detroit River. The Detroit News said that rum running by iceboat was "adventure framed in moonlight, and as grim as the romance of the buccaneers of the Spanish Main."

The rum runners outfitted their iceboats with sails and thus equipped, an iceboat could speed across the river in 12 minutes or less. Law officers didn't have much hope of catching them. The Detroit News summed up the situation when it said, "A gust of flying snow and perhaps now and then a trace of silver canvas stretched taut in the wind and the boats were gone."

State police used tire chains on their cars when they pursued iceboats, but even the fastest patrol car on the lake couldn't keep up with the iceboats. "Get near the iceboat and there is a sudden tack, perhaps near enough to send an auto skidding for many feet, and the phantom rum smuggler is hundreds of feet away," the News continued.

The police would try to ambush iceboats at their destinations, but if vigilant eyes spotted them hiding on shore, the boats changed direction and in a blink were far downriver. The enforcement officers spent many a freezing night waiting for less sharp-eyed ice boat rumrunners.

Both police and rumrunners used their imaginations on the ice. Rumrunners nailed ski runners to boats and pushed them across Lake St. Clair or towed several behind a car. When the police got too close, the rumrunners cut the boats loose. The federal agents fit a spiked attachment over their shoes called "ice creepers." This prevented them from slipping on the ice, but running with creepers was slow. Some rumrunners, knowing this, wore ice sakes and gracefully skated away from the slower policemen.

Then in 1921 the pirates, including the most famous one, the Gray Ghost, moved in. Go-betweens called "pullers" would carry cash across the river to the Canadian export docks for large purchases. Many of these "pullers" were robbed and killed and their bodies would be found floating in the river. Often rum runners would be shanghaied on the way back from Canada, their cargoes stolen, and sometimes they would be murdered. In 1922 it was a nightly occurrence to find bodies floating in the river near Ecorse.

The Gray Ghost was responsible for a few of these bodies, but generally he was a gentleman pirate and let his victims keep their lives. He was the most famous pirate on the river. His official title was pirate, extortionist, counterfeiter, and friend of the Purple Gang from Detroit. People called him the Gray Ghost because he piloted a gray boat, and dressed entirely in gray, including a gray hat and a gray mask. He also carried two gray pistols and a gray machine gun.

One of his favorite tricks was plundering pullers on the way to Canada. He would intercept them in midstream, using his powerful speedboat and rob them of their cash.

Once the rum runners got the liquor across the river from Canada, they could dispose of it in several ways. Some rum running syndicates paid farmers \$20,000 or more to store liquor in their barns around Detroit. Other rum runners moved in, uninvited, to the docks and storage areas of the wealthy home owners along the Detroit River and Lake St. Clair. Often, a sleeping Detroit tycoon would be jerked from his slumbers by gunfire and shouts of "Halt, it's the police!" The night was often filled with shouts, more gunfire, and the sounds of the chase.

The rumrunners didn't get caught very often. To them rum running was worth the risk because the political and police protection available made Detroit the principal port of entry for liquor smuggling from Canada into the United States. In 1922 alone, at least \$35,000,000 worth of liquor came to Detroit through the 70 miles of river and lakefront stretching from Lake St. Clair to South Rockwood.

When the Gray Ghost went to Canada for his buying trips, he had a large selection of liquor to choose from. On the Canadian side of the river, the exporters had rows and rows of liquor docks. They could replenish their stock from 83 breweries and 23 distilleries if it got too low.

The Gray Ghost continued to play his pirating trade without too much interference and disposed of his booty among the bootlegging syndicates of Detroit. Then one day he made a fatal error. He purchased large load of liquor in Canada with a bad check and got some wholesalers mad at him. Five of the wholesalers kicked in \$1,000 each and hired someone to take care of the Gray Ghost. He was shot down on a Detroit Street by a gunman in a passing car. The gunman was supposedly from the Purple Gang. The murder of the Gray Ghost was never solved. Neither was his true identity ever discovered.

John Barleycorn

Turncoat

August 1920

Tom and me sat at my table at the Blue Angel and drank his Old Log Cabin Canadian whiskey until he was in such a mellow mood she asked me if I wanted to borrow some money. I couldn't do anything but take advantage of a mood like this, so I said, "Was it just the money that made switch from being a Fed to a Rumrunner, Tom?"

He thought for a few minutes. He twisted his glass around in his hands for a few minutes. Finally he said, "I'm gonna level with you, John. The reason I turned to rumrunning is because I couldn't stand being a Fed anymore. I could 't stand it when people turned away from me with contempt in their eyes when I told them what I do for a living. I can't stand the contempt for me in my eyes when I look in the mirror."

"Why do you feel contempt for yourself?"

"Something happened one day out on the river and I won't ever get over it. I'll see those pink overalls until the day I die."

"By now I'm so curious I can't stand it. "Tom, what happened?"

"I'd better explain something first," Tom told me. "The federal agents are trigger happy, at least the ones on the Detroit River are. They're so eager to capture rumrunners on the river they don't care who they hurt. If you happen to get in the way, God help you. And even He can't spare you from the wrath of a Federal agent."

Tom paused for a minute, his cheek muscles twitching. I could see that he was fighting back tears. He swallowed and went on talking.

"One day me and four other guys were patrolling the river, keeping a real sharp eye out for rumrunners. We were around Fighting Island, right in the middle of the river, and suddenly this speedboat comes barreling out and it's headed straight for our boat. Now our boat was pretty slow and leaky and there's no way we could have caught that speed boat. The captain figured we'd be better off trying to shoot a few of the rumrunners to slow them down. We were so far out of range that we couldn't have hit them, but the captain ordered us to shoot, so we did. The rumrunners didn't pay any attention to us. They just kept flashing across the river.

Then out of nowhere, a third boat pops up. It's a little row boat with a man and a little girl in it. Suddenly they're right in the middle of our battle. They were probably fishing on Fighting Island and then decided to head for home or something like that. I don't think the man saw our boat until it was too late. He waved his arms, trying to signal our boat that he was there.

I tried to tell the captain about him. The captain didn't listen. "We have to catch those rumrunners," he hollered at me.

"We can't!" I hollered back. The rum running boat was out of sight because the row boat had slowed ours down further. Those rumrunners were probably down at the docks in Ecorse already unloading their cargo.

"Damn little boats," the captain muttered. He cupped his hands to his mouth and shouted at the man in the row boat. "Get out of the way! This is a government boat and we're after fugitives from justice. Get out of the way!"

The man in the row boat did his best, but with the wake from the rumrunner's boat and the wash from ours, he couldn't get out of our path. The waves kept washing him right back in front of us.

"Captain, we have to turn or we're gonna plow right into him!" I screamed.

"We're not turning," he said. "They're the ones that need to get out of the way."

We didn't turn. Our boat rammed into the row boat head on. The man and the little girl fell into the water and our boat cut the row boat in half. I swear, the captain wouldn't stop. That little girl was tangled in the propeller of our patrol boat and he wouldn't even stop to untangle her. He just backed away from the row boat and sped off. "We can still catch those rumrunners if we hurry," he said.

I screamed at him. "Captain, she's caught in the propeller. The little girl's caught in the propeller!"

"What did he do then?" I asked, but I think I knew the answer.

"He didn't do anything and he wouldn't stop. The worse part of it was that one of the men in the back of the boat laughed as we took off. He laughed at the little girl's body flipping up in the air when it finally came loose from the propeller. Can you imagine laughing at a murder and we're supposed to be the guardians of justice? We didn't go back to look for the bodies or anything. The captain refused to do that. When we got to shore, the first thing I did was quit the Feds and join the rumrunners."

"A little girl caught in the propeller didn't bother them at all, Tom?"

"Not them, but it does me. I can still see those pink overalls," Tom said. "When she finally came loose from the propeller, pieces of those pink overalls were floating all over the water."

I winced. I could picture the scene. The little girl is laughing, proud of the pink overalls, proud of the stringer of fish she's caught. She holds them up so her daddy can admire them. The little girl looks across the sunlit water for one more glimpse of the island. Then she screams, "Daddy,

look out, there's a big boat coming!"

Her dad frantically rows, trying to get out of the way. The wakes of the Fed boat causes the row boat to bob up and down like a cork, washing it closer to the Fed boat instead of his frantic pulls on the oars taking them to safety. The father sobs despairingly as the prow of the Fed boat looms over them like a giant whale. Then comes the impact, wood splintering. They are both thrown violently into the water. He sees pink overalls going around the propeller.

"I can't believe it," I say to Tom. "You mean the Feds actually laughed?"

"Like it was a real funny joke," Tom said. "But the Detroit paper didn't think it was so funny.

The newspaper story the next day said it was a "summary execution" on the part of the Feds.

I sigh. "I wonder how the Feds can justify the execution of a father and daughter fishing as law enforcement."

Tom sighs. "I couldn't. It's easier to justify being a rumrunner."

John Barleycorn

Green Christmas Beer

1920

Uncle Shamus and my dad didn't speak to each other for five days before Christmas one year, and I was there the night their feud began. In fact, I was the cause of it.

It all started two weeks before Christmas sometime in the 1920s, when houses on Brady Street featured Christmas trees in the windows and Santa Clauses on the doors. The air was crisp and cold enough to throw your breath back at you like a slap and if the wind blew just right you could hear the sleigh bells on Santa's reindeer tinkling. Being only seven at the time, I was wrapped up in unwrapping Christmas presents on the magic day and trying to find out what mom had hidden in the hall closet.

When I burst into the kitchen that Friday night after school, my cheeks cherry red from the cold, I hollered at mom, "How many more days until Christmas?" When she told me fourteen, I danced an Irish jig like dad taught me. I danced even harder when she told me that Uncle Shamus was coming for the night. Uncle Shamus was my dad's youngest brother and my favorite uncle. I loved his name because it reeked of the Emerald Isle. Whenever I said "Uncle Shamus," I saw the mists rising over the emerald green grass of Ireland and the sails on Galway Bay. Uncle Shamus came in time for supper like he usually did, and mom fixed corn beef and cabbage like she usually did when he visited. He burst in the door in a wave of cigar smoke and beer fumes, with bear hugs for everybody, and a new green cloth hat.

"I like your hat, Uncle Shamus." I touched a corner of the smooth green expanse with my fingertips and admired the fur-lined ear flaps. Uncle Shamus' ears weren't a bit red, but his nose was. I knew him well enough to know the beer and not the cold made his nose red.

"Sit down, sit down, Shamus. Supper's just about ready," dad said. "How about a glass to brew to warm up your insides?"

Uncle Shamus winked at me. "Well, I've had enough to make my insides lukewarm, but I like my insides toasty warm, even boiling hot if I can manage it."

He laughed his deep, hearty laugh that made me laugh right along with him just for the sheer joy of laughing. "Still making that good stuff?" Uncle Shamus asked dad.

"I'm making up a new batch. It should be ready for Christmas," dad said, pointing to the crock of beer standing by the radiator to get the full benefit of its steamy warmth. It was right behind my chair at the table, so I could sniff its yeasty odor and hear sighs and flutterings as the fermenting mixture talked to itself.

"Have you changed your mind about telling me your secret recipe?" Uncle Shamus asked while

he struggled out of his coat. He lay the green cloth hat on top of the crock of beer. I saw him do it, but I figured no harm done, because dad always put a muslin cloth over the top to keep out thirsty insects and specks of dust that somehow eluded mom's dustcloth. I figured the cloth would protect the hat and besides I wanted to see what would happen.

"Shamus, you ought to know better than to ask that," dad grinned. "But knowing you, you'd ask it on your deathbed. No, I haven't changed my mind!"

Uncle Shamus grinned and slapped dad on the back. "Sure and begorrah, I'd be disappointed if you'd said anything else, Dan!"

Once in awhile while we were eating supper, I'd sneak a glance at the green cloth hat sitting on top of dad's new batch of brew, but I didn't say anything. Most of the time I was too busy listening to Uncle Shamus and dad and mom kidding each other. Then after we helped mom with the dishes, we got involved in a game of gin rummy and I forgot about the hat on the beer. I didn't think of it as I snuggled down in the twin bed next to Uncle Shamus' bed, but I got sidetracked then, too.

"Sure and begorrah, are you going to leave that window wide open all night, lad? It's got to be 20 below zero in here!"

"Uncle Shamus, I gotta leave the window open in case Santa and his reindeer fly over and need a place to stop and get warm. Mom told me they make scouting trips sometimes, just to be certain of their Christmas Eve route. And I sure wouldn't want them to freeze to death on our roof."

"Don't worry about that." Uncle Shamus' teeth chattered and he pulled the bedclothes tight enough around him to fit like a glove. They'll freeze to death quicker in here than they will outside!"

I was torn between Uncle Shamus and Santa Claus - a terrible choice for a kid to have to make. Naturally, I chose Santa Claus, so the window stayed open all night. I didn't sleep very well because Uncle Shamus didn't sleep very well. He kept me awake with his tossing and shivering and "sure and begorrah, it's damn cold in here!" every few hours.

Finally, I heard mom rattling around in the kitchen. I jumped out of my warm bed. "Uncle Shamus, it's time to get up. Santa Claus didn't stop last night, but maybe tonight," I said, closing the window.

"I can't get up until I thaw the ice off my feet," moaned Uncle Shamus.

He was still grumbling when he staggered into the warm kitchen where mom fixed pancakes and eggs and bacon. My nose wrinkled at the smell of the bacon and the smell curled around in my stomach and made it growl. Dad came to the table, grinning and yawning. "Breakfast almost ready? My fair lassie's making pancakes and eggs."

"You always call me fair lassie when I make pancakes and "hey you" when I make oatmeal," mom teased.

"Dad, do you think Santa Claus might stop tonight?" I moved my chair around a little so I could get a better view of dad's face and a better perspective on his answer. As I moved, I exposed Uncle Shamus' green cloth hat on the beer crock to dad's full view. He stopped in mid-yawn. "What the devil is that sitting on my beer?"

"It's my hat, Dan, and it's too bad I didn't have it on my head last night. I nearly froze to death sleeping in that bedroom with that snowman of yours!"

Dad rushed over to that crock of beer so fast you'd have thought it was the winning Irish sweepstakes ticket. He grabbed the hat off the top of the crock. Since I was sitting the closest to it, I had the best view and it wasn't encouraging. The hat made squishing sounds as dad held it and I saw green drops of water dripping down on the floor. I jumped out of my chair and bent over the crock. The muslin cloth on top was also green. Catching my train of thought, dad bent over the crock too, and filled the air blue and green with his swearing. The dye from the cloth hat had seeped into the beer and turned it a bright Shamrock green.

"Maybe we could use it for St. Patrick's Day?" I suggested, without much hope of dad appreciating my humor.

Dad didn't appreciate it. He glared at Uncle Shamus. "Of all the damn fool things, this is the most damn fool thing you've ever done! You've ruined my Christmas beer. The whole batch is green!"

Uncle Shamus jumped out of his chair and grabbed the still dripping hat from dad's hands. "Beer! Bother your blasted beer! What about my hat? I paid a pretty price for it and your beer took all of the color out of it. What do you put in that stuff?"

"None of your business!" dad bellowed. "Is this another one of your fool schemes to get my beer recipe? It is, it's not going to work!" Dad put his finger in the green beer and then in his mouth. He made a face. "Awful, just awful! You ruined it, Shamus!"

"Dad.." I said. I had to tell him about the hat being there all night and the fact that I didn't remove it as soon as I saw Uncle Shamus put it there.

"Not now, son." dad said, not even looking at me. He still stared, brokenhearted, at his beer.

Uncle Shamus stomped to the closet and pulled out his coat. He rammed the soaking wet, beer-reeking hat on his head. "Not only do I freeze to death all night, I get accused of ruining your beer before breakfast! Never will I darken your door again, Dan!"

"Dad!" cried. "I have to tell you something!"

Dad didn't pay any attention to me, he was so busy glaring at Uncle Shamus. "All you care about is your hat!" he hollered. "What about my beer? Beer is harder to replace than a hat." Muttering and swearing under his breath, Uncle Shamus stomped to the door. He bowed to ma. "I'm sorry for any inconvenience I may have caused you, Rosie," he said to her. He slammed the door so hard that the breakfast dishes rattled.

"Inconvenience!" Dad shouted. "I have to throw out a whole batch of green beer that tastes like baked peat, that's all. It's no inconvenience!"

Ma went over and put her arms around him. "Dan, the beer isn't worth losing your brother over, is it?"

By the time Ma calmed dad down, I had on my coat. "I'm going after Uncle Shamus," I said.

Dad nodded. "Bring him back. Tell him we have to talk this over," he said.

I raced down the street, my breath steaming in front of me, my hands turning to slabs of ice because I had forgotten my gloves. Uncle Shamus was almost to his apartment before I caught up with him.

"Please Uncle Shamus, dad wants to talk to you. It's important," I panted.

Uncle Shamus glared straight ahead. "We have nothing to talk about. His beer ruined my new hat and he hollers at me!"

"It's my fault, Uncle Shamus. I saw you put your hat on the beer and I wanted to see what would happen, so I didn't say anything. I'm sorry, Uncle Shamus. If you come back, I'll leave the bedroom windows closed when you stay overnight."

Uncle Shamus hugged me. "Sure and begorah, how can I resist an offer like that?" he chuckled.

Dad was waiting for us in the kitchen doorway, and he and Uncle Shamus slapped each other on the shoulders and shook hands.

"Now that the fire works are over, can we eat breakfast before it gets cold?" Ma asked.

"Take off your coat and hat, Uncle Shamus," I said.

I took his coat and hung it in the closet and went back for his hat. He pulled and tugged at it, but Uncle Shamus couldn't get that hat off. The beer-soaked hat had frozen to his head!

It took Ma two hours to get his hat thawed out enough to take it off Uncle Shamus' head. It

took five days before dad and Uncle Shamus would speak to each other again. And the only reason they did then was because Santa Claus told them they had to make up or they wouldn't get anything for Christmas!

John Barleycorn

Wine Bricks

Chicago Star
March 10, 1921

This morning I saw a sales lady selling wine in bricks at the corner of Clark and Winnebago Streets. Yes, she was selling wine in bricks, not bottles!

This particular corner of Clark and Winnebago Streets is called "The Corner" because it's the gathering place where race track fans, bootleggers and underworld friends mingle with the more respectable citizens.

This morning, the usual mingling was taking place and a policeman was walking his beat and twirling his nightstick about half a block away. Then a Model T Ford drew up in front of the policeman, a stylishly dressed lady inside talked to him for a few minutes, handed him something in an envelope and then proceeded to drive up to the corner where I was standing and talking to my friend Jerry. The lady got out of the car and tugged a large, black suitcase from the back seat. It looked so heavy I said to Jerry, "Let's go over and help the lady with the suitcase."

We both walked over and I smiled and Jerry tipped his hat. "May we help you with the suitcase?" he asked her.

She smiled back. I felt Jerry dissolve into putty in her hands.

"Why yes, thank you, but I'm only carrying it as far as the running board of my car," she said.

Jerry's eyes were glued to hers. "I'll carry it to the running board for you."

He lugged the suitcase the five steps to the running board and put it down. "May I open it for you?" he asked her.

She smiled that smile again and said, "yes, please do. Maybe you'd be interested in seeing what I have to sell."

Jerry helped her open the suitcase and we watched her take a blue linen cloth off the top of the suitcase and arrange it on the running board of the car. On the cloth she put a pile of bright yellow square packages with a red bow tied around each one of them.

"These are for sale at \$2.00 apiece," she told us.

"What are they?" I ask.

"They are wine bricks."

"What are wine bricks?" Jerry wanted to know.

"You'll see." She smiled into my eyes, making me forget what I was going to do next.

I helped Jerry pile the bricks on the running board of her car. When that was filled, we piled them almost halfway up the car door. Then she smiled at us and said, "Let's take the rest of the bricks out of the suitcase, close the top, and pile them on top of the suitcase."

"Sounds fine to me," Jerry said. We had most of the wine bricks piled on top of the suitcase.

I just couldn't keep my mouth shut any longer. "What are these winebricks?" I asked her. I think I already knew. Some of the bootleggers had the bright idea of bringing wine bricks here to Chicago as part of the total bootlegging picture. If all of the sales people were as pretty as this lady bootlegger, they would sell fast.

"Stay with me awhile and I'll show you about winebricks," the lady said.

By this time a crowd of people had gathered around us, because it doesn't take much to attract a crowd at "The Corner" and the lady went into a sales pitch that put P.T. Barnum, Colonel McCormick and Henry Ford to shame. She reached into the front seat of the Ford and took out a gallon glass jar filled with water. Then she reached over and picked out one of the bricks.

"Should we try port, or would you prefer champagne, sherry, burgundy, Rhine wine?" she asked the crowd. "I have at least 12 kinds of wine to choose from."

Naturally, she got 12 different answers to her question. She looked at Jerry, smiled prettily and said, "Since this gentleman was kind enough to help me sit up my wine shop, I'll let him choose what we make first. What will it be, sir?"

I knew what Jerry was going to say, because I know his drinking habits as well as I do my own. We both said "port" at the same time.

"Port it is," she said. She took the yellow paper off one of the square packages. There was a brick under the paper.

"Now here's what you do to get good port wine out of this brick," the lady said. "You dissolve the brick in a gallon of water and it is ready to be used immediately."

She dropped the brick into the jar of water.

"Here are some precautions you must remember to take so you will not allow the bricks to ferment and make illegal wine.

Do NOT stop the bottle with this cork that contains a patented red rubber siphon hose. This is

necessary only when fermentation is going on.

Do NOT put the end of the tube into a glass of water. This helps to make the fermenting liquor tasty and potable.

Do NOT shake the bottle once a day because that makes the wine work.

Now that you know what NOT to do, would anyone like to buy a wine brick? For \$2.00 you may take one home and try yourself."

I don't have to tell you there were many takers. "I'll take two bricks of sherry," a man hollered, waving four one dollar bills.

"I would like a block of burgundy," a fur-lined women said.

"Make mine 12 bricks of Irish Rose," a brogue hollered.

It must have taken our lady all of ten minutes to sell all of her bricks. She put the money in a small steel box she shoved under the seat of her Ford. Then she climbed into the driver's seat.

"I thank you very much for your business," she shouted to the crowd. "Come back at exactly the same time, same place, two months from today. I will be here with more bricks."

She waved goodbye to the cheering crowd and drove away, but not before she pressed two bricks of Bordeaux into the policeman's hand. Needless to say, Jerry and I bought a brick or two and hurried home with them like a dog carting away his prize bone.

While I was waiting out the 21 days it takes for the brick to turn into wine, I dug out a little more information about the bricks. I don't need to tell you the Drys that are so dead set against having anything stronger than soda pop around are doing their best to stop the manufacture of these wine bricks. But there is one important factor in their favor. Most of the wine bricks are shipped from California and the California grape growers benefit from huge Federal Farm loans. President Hoover's home state is California and California has a lot of electoral votes. Need I say more about the California grape growers?

The Drys couldn't pack enough of a punch to keep the wine bricks from circulating. Fact is, the local con artists are more of a problem for the California brick sellers than the Federal Government is. Some of the local tricksters sell bricks made out of boiled seaweed or compressed sawdust. Others sell door to door, asking for a deposit and promising to send bricks C.O.D. Of course the bricks never come and the deposit isn't returned.

Our lady friend in the Model T Ford never came back to "The Corner." A few months after Jerry and I bought our bricks, we checked around with the bootleggers we know and some other Chicago contacts and we couldn't find any bricks in the city. One guy told us to try New York and another said maybe Cleveland. When I asked him why we couldn't get bricks in Chicago, he

said,

"It's a funny thing. Last year I must have sold \$50,000 worth of those bricks. But a lot of people brought them back, because the bricks don't make as good a wine as grandpa or Uncle Carlo. Why should they buy a \$2.00 brick that may or may not work when Uncle Carlo already has a superior product working or ready to drink?"

My bootlegger friend put it another way. "Those California grape growers don't have nothin' on us here in Chicago. Clamping a lot of grape skins together and shipping 'em out doesn't mean you have a good product. You soak a wine brick in some water, you pack it down with yeast and sugar and sure you're gonna get some action. But it's the yeast that moves things, not the grape skins. You can get the same kick from Uncle Carlo's blackberry wine as long as you add yeast.

So you see, the expertise of Chicago bootleggers and home brewers are the factors that did in the wine bricks around Chicago, not the Drys with their rhetoric and their political lobbies in Washington.

We Chicagoans can brew a better brick!

John Barleycorn

The Swiss Cheese Law

St. Louis News

July 1922

The Volstead Act, the law that was passed to enforce the Prohibition Amendment, is so full of holes it looks like a Swiss cheese.

One of the biggest holes in it is the provision that allows for the use of industrial alcohol to encourage the expanding new factories that require alcohol for their products. In 19 states, licensed distilleries manufacture industrial alcohol and denature it to make it unfit to drink. Each distillery has its own formula for making the alcohol unfit to drink and many add harmless denaturants, but others add strong poisons.

After it is denatured by whatever method, the alcohol is stored in government warehouses and sold under permit to companies that need it for manufacturing.

How do you get a permit to buy this alcohol? You have to present proof of a legitimate use for the alcohol, but this proof isn't too hard to furnish. Fact is, these permits have paved the way for thousands of new chemical companies, some backed by bootleggers, to not manufacture anything but make their money by selling alcohol illegally. Some companies use their permits to get the industrial alcohol, store it for a time, and ship it to bootleggers. The bootleggers use some of it without treating it at all. Others send it to "cleaning plants" where it is redistilled to pure alcohol with varying degrees of success.

Whatever its origins, all of the bootleg alcohol ends up at "cutting plants." Here at the cutting plants, the bootleg alcohol is mixed with water and flavoring and bottled so you can't tell by the label whether you're getting denatured alcohol that isn't properly denatured or just flavored water or the real thing. Thousands of these cutting plants are springing up all over the country. I see new ones every day.

I visited a cutting plant the other day and interviewed one of the owners, who will remain nameless for obvious reasons. He showed me how cutting is done.

"Cutting is so simple a kid can do it," he said. He poured alcohol or some real whiskey into a vat, stirred warm water into it, added burnt sugar or caramel for color and oil of rye or bourbon for flavor.

"If I get an order for imitation Scotch, I use creosote and a different coloring," he told me. "If I want to mix gin, I add oil of juniper."

When he finishes creating his own liquor, he bottles it, puts fake labels on it, and sends it to the packager. Then he has his boys deliver it to the speakeasies or to bootleggers for their own customers. Large cutting plants are protected by payoffs and political influence. My friend says one of his biggest customers is a high ranking city official.

But the biggest hole in the Volstead Act is the one that leaks beer. In one clause, the Volstead Act outlaws beer and shuts down all breweries, but in another it allows the breweries to reopen. They can reopen as "cereal beverage" plants for the manufacture of "near-beer" which is not to be more than one-half of one per cent alcohol.

I'll tell you, I visited another friend who owns a brewery. He tells me that near-beer doesn't sell well, even though about 500 breweries in the country hold permits to produce it. "The main customer complaint against near-beer is that it tastes like barley water," my friend says.

There are also ways of bypassing near-beer my friend says. Nearly all of the breweries are still brewing the real thing. The key to the whole picture is that you can only make near-beer by first making real beer the conventional way and the conventional strength. Then the Volstead Act says the brewer is supposed to draw off the alcohol until the beer has been reduced to the legal limit of near-beer. Since the government doesn't have that many beer checkers, it's a simple matter for brewers who are so inclined to fill barrels with real beer and ship them out labeled as near-beer.

"I'm not saying all brewers do this," my friend grins. "But enough of them do to insure the working man his full strength glass of beer after a long, hard day."

The government can't do much about this, since making legal beer is a part of making near-beer and prohibition agents can't touch the beer as long as it is in the brewery. If they suspect real beer is being shipped, they have to capture it outside the brewery and prove in court where it came from. It's a simple matter for brewers to post lookouts for government agents or pay protection money to officials.

"Near-beer would be doomed even if it did taste good!" my friend laughs. "Why settle for a pale copy when you can still get the real thing!"

John Barleycorn

More Swiss Cheese

St. Louis News
July 1922

I am proud to say it is possible to get real beer legally in Chicago and other parts of the country. The day after the Volstead Act went into effect, most of the real liquor in this country rested in government guarded warehouses and most of it was labeled "for medicinal use." The government plan was for it to be released to wholesalers who would sell it under permit to drugstores to fill doctor's prescriptions.

My friend, Dr. X, came into the Blue Angel to talk to me about selling liquor for medicinal use. He told me some interesting facts and figures. According to Dr. X, the number of wholesalers withdrawing medicinal liquor on permits swelled to about 3,000 since Prohibition started and about 57,000 druggists have applied for permits to buy it.

"I don't have to tell you many wholesale houses are fronts for bootleggers," he told me. "And bootleggers and druggists both mix good liquor with water and alcohol, re-bottle it, and divert half the supply to the black market. Even if the liquor reaches the drugstores intact, it is often cut by the druggists themselves."

"How do you know this?" I ask him.

"One of my best friends is a druggist and he's involved in this kind of racket," Dr. X said. "I've tried to convince him to stop because it is illegal, but he's making too much money to stop. All of that money makes him reckless and eager to make more."

"What about you? Can't you make money off the prescriptions if you want to?"

"Certainly I can," he says. "The number of doctors with permits to write prescriptions for whiskey has climbed to more than 100 thousand a year. Last year the doctors wrote a total of 11 million prescriptions!"

Dr. X says that Prohibition agents are supposed to check each one of these liquor prescriptions carefully, but how can they possibly do this when there aren't enough agents. There aren't even one million prohibition agents, much less 11 million of them.

"How would I go about buying a bottle of whiskey from a black market doctor?" I ask him.

"It's a pretty simple thing to do," he said. "If you want to buy a bottle of whiskey, all you have to do is find the doctor, go to his office, pay a two dollar office call fee, and he'll give you a prescription. Or if you're really brave, you can forge a prescription. Just take a doctor's name

from the phone directory, forge his signature, and take the blank to the nearest drug store. That's all there is to it."

"It sounds easy," I said. "Do that many people do it?"

The doctor sighed. "You can imagine what percentage of the people really need the liquor for medicinal purposes. But the Volstead Act says they can get whiskey by getting sick, so they get sick and get whiskey. And a lot of doctors and druggists yield to temptation and become bootleggers."

Another hole in the Volstead Act is wine. You can make fruit juices at home, according to the Volstead Act and you can also make cider. If you make cider, you're not supposed to let it ferment, and if you make fruit juice, you're not supposed to let it ferment either. But a lot of people are careless. They forget about the jug of grape juice hidden on the front porch until it's already fermented into wine or they forget about the apple juice in the cellar until it's already hard cider. When it ferments you can't throw it away since waste is sinful, so you hold your nose and force it down.

Why, even if you don't buy bootleg liquor, make wine, or open a still, there are other things around to drink. I've heard that some folks are drinking perfume, hair tonic, bay rum, radiator antifreeze, and canned heat. Some have tried "Jake," you know that stuff that's really an extract of Jamaica ginger. The trouble with these not so good substitutes is that they can knock you cold, give you stomach trouble, cause muscular paralysis, blind you or even kill you.

One way of getting further around the Volstead Act is making your own drinks. There are lots of magazine articles and books that will tell you how to distill in tea kettles, coffee pots, washbasins and other things you have around the house. You can buy 100 pounds of corn sugar for five dollars and a portable one gallon still for seven dollars, even though they're supposed to be illegal.

You can make your mash from apples, oats, barley, beets, berries, peaches and apricots and lots more unusual sources including horse manure. Or you can go to the specialty stores that sell all of the supplies the home distiller or brewer needs. If you would rather buy alcohol from the bootleggers, you can bring it home and mix your own liquor by adding water and flavoring.

You can make bathtub gin by filling the tub with water and alcohol and juniper drops. And there are so many flavorings on the market that you can make imitation rye, bourbon, scotch or create your own brand. That's why there are millions of do-it-yourself brewers and distillers springing up all over the country and rapidly making home brewing into a national cottage industry.

That's why St. Louis and other cities are afloat on a sea of booze and the law enforcement officials who are trying to dry up this sea might as well try to write the Volstead Act on the head of a swizzle stick!

John Barleycorn

Fred From Florida

Miami Milestone
August 1922

I talked to "Fred" (not his real name) last night here in a beachfront cafe and he figures he made a million dollars in rumrunning the last six months. Yes, I wrote that right. He made a million in the last six months. I asked him how he did it. Before I say any more, let me tell you that Fred is 6'4", weighs 240 pounds, and has a thick black beard, bushy black eyebrows and hands like shovels. I'm going to try very hard not to ask him questions he doesn't like.

"How'd I do it?" Fred echoes my question. "I started out with one small boat, not much bigger than a row boat."

He said that he was Florida boatyard operator at the beginning of Prohibition and he had a hungry pocketbook. His first run was from the Bahamas to Georgia with 1,500 cases of whiskey on board. "Lucky for me I made enough of a profit to buy a schooner, because I never would have made any more trips in that little boat I had," Fred said.

From his second trip on, he made enough of a profit to buy more and more boats until he had a fleet of rum ships. "Did you plan on staying around Florida all the time or did you intend to branch out to other states?" I asked him.

Fred smiled. "I decided to branch out in May of 1921," he told me. "I loaded a cargo of liquor in Nassau and sailed it north to the Long Island coast, well beyond the three mile coastal water limit. I telegraphed the bootleggers that I was coming, so when I got there, there was a flock of small boats waiting off Long Island to claim the cases of liquor on my boat. It looked like a regular Sunday afternoon on sailboat row," Fred chuckled. "You could walk from boat to boat without getting your feet wet."

Well, according to Fred, this was the first of lots of trips down the coast for him. Pretty soon he was making a trip a month and managing to keep out of the clutches of the coast guard while delivering about three million dollars worth of liquor for thirsty Easterners. A lot of writers and newsmen are his friends and they say in print that he's just a seagoing Robin Hood. He doesn't hurt or kill anybody. Once he even rescued a treasury agent from the clubs of the bootleggers. They had ganged up on the treasury agent and were beating him when Fred jumped in and broke up the fight.

Things went along pretty well until one day Fred got himself in trouble. A Coast Guard cutter chased him off the New Jersey coast and the Feds boarded his boat. Fred said that there was a fist-swinging, chair-breaking brawl between his crew and the Coast Guard people and he ordered his ship to sail with those nosy agents still on board. "I told 'em I'd kidnap them and carry them

to Nassau, where the British courts would take care of them," Fred grumbled.

"What happened then?" I asked Fred.

He grinned. "We gave them a run for their money. The Coast Guard boat fired at us. One of the Feds on board, still bleeding from the mouth from the punch he got from one of my boys, said if I kidnapped them the President might get the whole American Navy after me. I thought about that and decided to send the Feds back to their boat.

"Did you get off all right?" I asked him.

"Naw, the Feds hauled me and the boys back with them and I had to go to court. I had enough friends to bail me out so I didn't have to sit in jail until the case got through the courts. The judge sentenced me to nine months in jail. By the time I got out of jail the bootleg syndicates were running the smuggling game and there was no place for me anymore, so I took my money and retired. I got enough to eat steak and drink beer for the rest of my life."

"Are you sorry your rumrunning didn't last longer than it did?" I asked him.

"I should have thrown them Feds overboard when I had the chance," he said with a sad smile. Then he grinned. "I miss the rumrunning, but when I start feeling too sad, I say to myself, 'I started the whole rumrunning circuit up and down the coast. I started it and now everybody else is following in my wake.' That's something for me to be proud of when I'm sitting by my fireside at night, dreaming of pirates and treasure. I started the whole thing!"

John Barleycorn

After Fred

Miami Milestone
October 1922

Fred started something all right. His one boat grew into a "ghost fleet" of hundreds of rum boats, so many of them, that almost the entire coast had "mother" ships lurking off shore with liquor for bootleggers to pick up. They picked up their liquor with rafts, rowboats, tugs, cabin cruisers, yachts. Probably the most famous Rum Row is off Long Island and the New Jersey Shore, which affects people in Chicago, because a lot of the stuff is shipped to the Midwest by truck and car.

Other "ports of supply" are Savannah, Norfolk, Baltimore and Boston. There are rum ships off Florida and others in the Gulf of Mexico. Even the west coast, which we don't do much business with, has ships that run liquor down from Vancouver and up from Mexico.

"The funny thing is that most of these ships don't carry rum," Fred says. "Wonder how come they got to be called rum runners?"

"That's easy," I said. "They used to smuggle rum in Colonial days and a lot of people called all liquor "demon rum." But if you weren't carrying rum, what did you carry?"

"That's easy," he said. "Whiskey. You can get whiskey legally in the West Indies and Central America and smuggle it into the U.S. I did some checking around down there on one of my trips and do you know, before we passed Prohibition here in the United States, the Bahamas imported about 50 thousand quarts of whiskey a year. After Prohibition, the imports totaled about ten million quarts."

"That ought to say something to the boys in Washington," I said.

He shook his head so hard his black beard waggled. "It won't," he told me. "They got thick heads. Seems to me they're the ones with the scrambled brains, not the folks who like a little nip once in awhile."

"What was the thing that worried you the most when you were rum running?" I asked him.

"It wasn't being captured by the Feds like you might think," he said. "I can handle the Feds. The thing that used to scare me out of my sea legs was the pirates. I used to arm all of my crew and have a couple extra machine guns laying around, but I was still taking chances. There were lots of pirates cruising Rum Row in fast boats. They could hijack liquor and pump lead into you faster than you could say 'don't shoot.'"

"How did the pirates get involved in this ?" I asked him.

"When America negotiated with Britain and other countries and got our territorial waters extended to 12 miles out. This meant Rum Row was extended 12 miles out too, and this forced the small-time operators like me out of business. But it opened the channel for the big bootlegging syndicates, because they had enough money to buy large, fast boats for the runs from shore and back and pretty soon they organized the entire smuggling racket."

"Tell me more," I said.

He told me more. "They used illegal short wave radio stations for instructions and information about landing areas. Why some of them rascals even used seaplanes to help direct operations and to look out for the Coast Guard cutters. They used illegal radio stations to send out fake SOS calls to decoy the cutter away from the unloading rum ships. Sometimes they set old ships on fire to mislead the Coast Guard and decoy them away from actual operations. Sometimes the crews would toss empty liquor cases overboard so the Feds would think they were on the right track. Rum runners would alter ship flags and markings so their boats would look like legitimate ones."

"They had a bagful of tricks," I said. "Did the Feds ever chase them like they did you? What was it like when the Feds chased you?"

Fred thought for a minute. "We knew we had the Feds on our tails when they started shooting at us. We circled around trying to shake them. It was foggy so we dodged them for a while, but pretty soon they were on our tail again, so this time we tried to make them ram up on a sandbar we knew about. We got as close as we dared, and then we made a real sharp turn. Since our boat was faster and easier to handle than theirs, we almost got rid of them."

"Why just almost?" I asked him.

Fred laughed. "They turned the last minute, even though it seemed to me they did scrape the bottom. We headed for Jacksonville Harbor and they were still tailing us. Every time they got us in range, they took potshots at us and it made me damn mad. So I led them right into the harbor."

"What happened next?" I asked him.

"The Feds kept following us and pretty soon we were so close to the beach that the people swimming scattered. Somebody must have called the local police, because there were some policemen dancing up and down on the end of a pier at least half a mile away from us, shooting their guns like little tin soldiers. I tell you, we laughed at them for a long time. And we laughed at the Feds in the boat following us too, because we lost 'em. I know all of the harbors and all of the creeks and inlets around Jacksonville and it was duck soup to lose them. I never worried much about the Feds, but I hear that a lot of the fellas in the rum running business today have worries."

"Why is that, Fred?"

"I did a lot of checking up on this so I know what I'm talking about. When Prohibition started, the Coast Guard was a real small part of the Treasury Department and most of its job was to protect government revenues and prevent ordinary smuggling. Its main peacetime duty was saving lives and property at sea. There were only a few hundred officers, a few thousand enlisted men and about thirty cutters and some small harbor boats and launches."

"You sound like you counted everything. Where did you find out this stuff?"

"I got a buddy in Washington that I used to deliver whiskey to. In return, he'd tell me things he thought I should know. Like the fact that Congress gave the Coast Guard limited funds at first, but then as Prohibition continued the funds grew to millions of dollars and more officers, men and vessels. Why the government even threw in about 300 inactive destroyers from the Navy."

"That's a lot of hardware to use against bootleggers," I said. "Why didn't it wipe them out?"

"Very simple," Fred chuckled. "When you spread all of those boats out along thousands of miles of coastline they only average out to about one vessel for about every three hundred square miles of water within the 12 mile limit."

"Hmm, I see what you mean," I said. "How is the Coast Guard doing against the bootleggers so far in the fight?"

"The Coast Guard is capturing thousands of bootlegging boats, cutting profits of the bootleggers and making their smuggling more difficult. But I don't think they're going to win," Fred said.

"Why not?" I wondered.

"Because the number of bootleggers smuggling is so much greater than the number of men in the Coast Guard and the distances involved are so enormous that I don't think the Coast Guard will ever really do more than slow them down."

"You know, Fred, I think you're right and I hope you don't slow down either. Happy retirement."

He grinned. "I earned it," he said, gulping down his whiskey sour. "Every time you drink one of these, say a word of thanks to me."

I took a big drink of my own whiskey. "Cheers!" I said.

John Barleycorn

Mr. Commissioner

May 1923

Trying to enforce Prohibition is wearing out the president of the United States and a lot of dry. The wets? They're just getting wetter.

I read on the wire service line at The Star office yesterday that President Harding called Prohibition enforcement conditions "savoring of a nationwide scandal." So I thought I'd go over and talk to the newly appointed Commissioner of Prohibition, a gentleman by the name of Randall W. Ross. Mr. Ross arrived on the 7:30 a.m. train from Washington D.C., and will be in Chicago for a week to confer with local enforcement officials as to ways and means of better enforcing Prohibition. I picked him up at the railroad station and brought him back to the Blue Angel so we could have a nice, peaceful talk. When he was settled at my table, I decided to start the conversation with a tease.

"I've heard rumors that the President himself has a private supply of liquor hidden away that he visits when the thirst moves," I said.

"Fact is, I've heard another rumor that Attorney Wayne Wheeler, the lawyer for the Anti-Saloon League, has more than once chided the president for sipping on the sly. Mr. Wheeler is supposed to constantly remind him to be a shining example for the rest of the country, a dry shining example. Is that true?"

Mr. Ross has a sense of humor, I'll say that for him. He pointed to the whiskey sour I was drinking. "I've heard that Chicago is the wettest of all of the cities in the country. Is that true?"

"It's true," I said. "What about the President nipping on the sly? Is that true?"

"I don't know," he said. "I don't spend much time with the President. I'm too busy being the Commissioner of Prohibition."

"What was the Bureau like when it first started?" I asked to get him talking.

"The Prohibition Bureau started with an annual budget of less than five million dollars. That was doubled within five years, but by then the illegal bootlegging trade had become a three billion dollar business."

Mr. Ross sat up straighter in his seat. "Did you know that bootleg syndicates are better financed and better manned and better organized than we are?" He twirled his pencil in his hand and sucked in his lower lip with his teeth. I'm sure he has these two nervous habits because of the

nature of his occupation.

"I hear you're hiring new agents again," I say, to keep him talking.

"We're always hiring new agents," he complains. "Why last year we hired ten thousand men and there were only two thousand jobs, but we have to keep them filled. Ohio has had a new Prohibition director every two months and I won't even try to tell you what the directorship is like in Illinois."

He doesn't have to tell me. I know what the directorship is like in Illinois. The director is bought and paid for by the gang, Dominec Santello to be exact. Instead of commenting, I asked Mr. Ross another question.

"If it's such a bad job, why did you take it?"

"Because I feel that it is the will of the American people to see the nation become bone dry," he said. "I thought it would be relatively easy to accomplish, just a matter of enforcement, but I'm finding out it isn't that way at all."

"What are the especially difficult problems in enforcement?"

He tapped his pencil on the table while he thought that one over. Then he said, "We're running into a lot more public hostility than we thought we would. We're in the spoils system and jobs as agents are given as favors by Congressmen to their patronage bosses. The Anti-Saloon League passes on applicants to us we're obliged to take and the Anti-Saloon League also dictates our decisions to a large degree. But I see things improving in the near future. I am visiting mayors all over the country, enlisting their support for Prohibition and with their help, I know we can win the battle. We ARE winning the battle against home brew. The home brew fad is now on its last swallow," he said.

By biting the inside of both cheeks, I managed to keep from laughing in his face, but just barely, because I had just come from having a glass of home brew at a friend's not four blocks from here. I choked and kept asking questions. The next thing he told me was "bootleg patronage has fallen off 50% and that moonshining in the cities is on the wane."

I laughed outright at that, I couldn't help it. "This year alone in Chicago I've seen millions of gallons of illegal liquor being made and sold at tremendous profit and you're telling me that moonshining in the cities is on the wane? If Prohibition agents stretched all of the moonshine bottled in Chicago for the past three years end to end there would be a line of bottles up to the moon itself!"

His answer to my statement was that he wished he had enough Prohibition agents to stretch to the moon, then his problems would be solved. But since he doesn't have that many agents, Mr. Ross has lots of problems. One of the most severe is that so far into Prohibition, the states have only given the Federal government verbal enforcement support and not too much manpower to

back up their words. On the average, Mr. Ross told me, the states spend four times as much money to maintain parks and monuments as to enforce Prohibition.

Most of the states put the burden of conviction on the Federal courts and attorneys and let the Federal Prohibition Bureau try to cope with the violations. You can guess the results.

"The Federal courts are overwhelmed with violators," Mr. Ross complains. "I think everybody and his grandmother is getting caught bootlegging liquor. Federal attorneys are spending three fourths of all their time on liquor violations. In three years, the unfinished cases on the court dockets increased one thousand percent. Enough arrests are being made in a month to keep all of the Federal judges busy for a year. At that rate, in ten years the courts will be a century behind in their work!"

He tapped his teeth with his pencil. "Would you like a job? The pay is lousy, but the work is challenging and there's plenty of it."

I laughed. "Too many of my friends would be facing me in the courtroom."

"They don't have too much to worry about in Illinois," he said. "In wet states like Illinois, it is very difficult to get a verdict of any consequence. There is a lot of public hostility in areas where the court jams are the greatest so we've decided in many wet states that a way of dealing with this is to set up "bargain days" and "cafeteria courts."

"I give up," I said. "What are bargain days and cafeteria courts?"

"That's very simple," he said. "The judge sets aside certain days on the court calendar and bootleggers, speakeasy proprietor, moonshiners, smugglers and other Prohibition violators all plead guilty. The catch is that the judge promises them in advance if they plead guilty they can escape jail sentences. Fines are about five or ten dollars and hardly ever go over one hundred dollars. So you can easily see a lot of liquor peddlers pay less in fines to carry on their business than they paid in license fees when the liquor was legal. They just come to court, pay the fine, and it's business as usual."

"But what about the speakeasy raids?" I ask. "Aren't they effective?"

He looked around to see if anybody else was listening. "This is off the record, otherwise we'll have a speakeasy in every block instead of every other block," he said. "Most of the speakeasies are operating full bottles again as soon as the raiders leave. We've got to come up with a better way of dealing with them and I have an idea of how we can do that."

"What's your idea?" I ask him.

"It says in the Volstead Act that a place where liquor is sold or kept can be padlocked as a common nuisance by a court injunction," Mr. Ross says. "It seems to me that's about the best

weapon we have right now. We need to use it more."

"How often have you used it?" I ask.

"Hmmm, let me see." He fishes around inside his vest pocket and draws out a sheaf of papers. He shuffles them around and studies them closely for a few minutes. He takes his glasses out of his pocket and settles them on his nose and studies the papers a little further. Then he says, "In New York City we padlocked 500 speakeasies in one year and hundreds in cities like Cleveland, Detroit, and St. Louis. We padlocked large hotels and I have one case on record where an illegal distillery had 200 padlocks on it to make sure it was completely shut down. In some states, we even had agents padlock the doors of a private home where they suspected liquor was being made, but I'm not sure that's legal. We could be opening ourselves up for law suits."

"How do you make sure the places stay padlocked without standing 24 hour guard duty?" I ask him.

"That's the trouble," he says. "We don't have enough agents to make sure places that we padlock stay that way. Locks are picked, broken open, by-passed. And the lawyers for bootleg syndicates manufacture so many legal technicalities that we have trouble getting the injunctions."

"It sounds to me like you need a million or so more men."

"Try a billion," he says, permitting the slightest pencil of a grin to touch his lips. "The trouble with the entire enforcement angle is that we don't have enough men or money to catch more than a few percent of the Prohibition law violators, and the ones that we catch usually get off easy. We have what I call "hit or miss enforcement" - sporadic raids concentrating on one area or type of violation while the others get ignored. And once we've made our raid and left, it's business as usual."

"It's hard to enforce a law that most people don't agree with or feel any pangs of conscience about breaking," I said.

"Would you call that a fair assessment of your problem?"

He grunted and sucked his lip with his teeth. "Do they sell bicarbonate of soda in this place?" he asked.

"You'll probably have more trouble getting that than a whiskey sour, but we can try," I tell him, signaling the waitress.

Mutt and Jeff

Chicago Star
December 1923

Mutt and Jeff are in town and I'm sitting here in a Chicago speakeasy interviewing them. Since this isn't the Blue Angel, I had to get in this speakeasy by passing the peephole test. You know, the one where the guy eyeballs you and says "Where's your I.D.?"

Well, this friend gave me the password so I said it. "Joe sent me," I whisper and the guy opens the phone booth door. I walk through what looks to be an honest to goodness phone booth in a hotel lobby corner and here I am in this speakeasy with a long polished bar and a gleaming mirror over it. Behind the bar is a long row of the thirst quenchers that you go through all of this rigmarole to pour down your throat.

I did a little asking around before I came to this speakeasy tonight so I can tell you a little bit about speakeasies in Chicago. How do you find a speak around here? If you want a speak in Chicago you ask: taxi drivers, hotel bell hops, shoeshine boys, barbers, druggists, clerks at soda fountains, cigar stores and delicatessens. Lots of people. Speakeasies are located in lots of places like boarding houses, political and social clubs, gymnasiums, dancing academies and some office buildings.

There are about 32,000 speakeasies in Chicago, according to police figures and that number is rising daily. In Chicago, New York and the rest of the nation's cities, speakeasies operate in back rooms, basements and first floor flats. Some neighborhoods have so many speakeasies in them that innocent residents put up signs that say, "This is no speakeasy." Most speakeasies are behind plain doors that are locked and have peepholes so a customer can identify himself.

You don't run that much of a risk of arrest if you visit a speakeasy, because police and federal agents are usually well paid enough not to interfere with the business at hand. The only thing the peephole does it provide adventure and excitement.

Two guys - one tall one short - Mutt and Jeff- come and sit next to me while I'm drinking and give me information. They say they are feds. "We raided one speakeasy in New Jersey that has an entrance behind the vault of a savings bank," Mutt tells me.

Jeff shrugs. "The others operate right out in the open."

According to Mutt and Jeff, it's expensive to run a speakeasy. Landlords in Chicago (and probably everywhere else) charge speakeasies up to three times the normal rent.

The owner of this speakeasy told Jeff he has to pay five hundred dollars in protection money to

police and Prohibition agents and graft to the district attorney's office, other politicians and fire and health department inspectors.

Even though he's near the bottom of his bankroll, he still has to pay \$50.00 to the cop on the beat every time he makes a home delivery of his liquor. The speak owner lives with threats of robbery, shooting or bombing by a rival, blackmail, extortion, the cutting of sources of supply, raids that can't be prevented or a padlocking that might wipe out the operator's total investment.

In Chicago the police are pretty cooperative. When a show of law enforcement is required to make the police look good, the police often tip off the speakeasy proprietors in advance of the raid so they can put their cheap stock on the shelves for the raiders to seize and smash.

Mutt grins. "I never let any of my speakeasy owners know in advance that I'm coming. I like to see the good stuff poured out. But I hear tell here in Chicago when a speakeasy is raided, there is a rebate in protection money in the amount of whatever fines or court costs have to be paid before business can be resumed. Chicago is a good place to own a speakeasy. A lot better than New York."

He's right. Chicago is a good place to own a speakeasy because Mutt and Jeff don't come here very often. Mutt and Jeff (not their real names) are two federal agents who between them have made over 4,000 arrests and confiscated more than 15 million dollars worth of liquor in three years. They agreed to come to this speakeasy with me and show me how they operate. They can't raid it because the owner is in good with the governor and pays good protection money. Otherwise, I'd never let them know about it. They like raiding speaks too much.

John Barleycorn

More Mutt and Jeff

Chicago, January 1924

Mutt and Jeff have a difficult job. There are only about 1,500 Prohibition agents in the entire country and the money isn't too good, either, only about \$2,500 a year. It's not too surprising to me that a lot of them switch sides or can be paid off. Mutt and Jeff aren't like that though. They are probably the two most energetic, loyal, and efficient Prohibition agents around. And the two most versatile.

What Mutt and Jeff do is adopt different disguises when they go about their daily routine of raiding speakeasies, just so the owners and customers won't recognize them as agents and lynch them before they can be arrested. Tonight Mutt and Jeff are dressed as auto mechanics, complete with grease stained coveralls. Jeff even has a wrench in his hand.

"Sit down, sit down." I wave them into seat. "Would you like some soda pop or coffee?"

"No, no. We agreed to tell you about our experiences, so let's start talking," Mutt says.

Mutt reminds me of the Tribune Tower he's so tall. Jeff probably weighs about 250 pounds and his 5'2" height doesn't leave much area for distribution.

"How do you guys get the doormen to open the door for you?" I ask them. "What did you do on your very first raid. Were you scared?"

"One question at a time," Jeff laughs.

Mutt thinks for a minute, then he laughs. "Our very first raid I walked up to the door of the speakeasy and the guy asked me who I was. I say to him, 'I'm a newly appointed Prohibition agent and my boss sent me out to see how good I do raiding places.' Well, the guy is laughing so hard he can barely swing open the door. But he lets me in, slaps me on the back, and tells me what a good sense of humor I have. We still use that one, don't we Jeff?"

"It still works," Jeff says. "And the singing does too. We use the singing a lot."

"What's the singing?" I ask him.

"One time Mutt sang some numbers on a program at a German beer garden and he was good. He was so good that the audience called for an encore and gave him a standing ovation. He waited until they were finished clapping, then he told them he had an announcement of his own to make."

"What announcement?" I ask. But I know the answer.

"He said to them, 'This place is pinched.' They were sore at him, but they still think he's a good singer."

Mutt grinned. "Another time Jeff and me pretend we are musicians and march in a fourth of July parade to find out where a speakeasy is operating. And another time we took over an ice wagon route and made deliveries to saloons. We closed them down after we made the deliveries."

"Tell him about the time we got into the speakeasy because we were both carrying large pails of dill pickles," Jeff says. "When I asked the doorman later why he let us in, he said, 'Who would think a fat man and a beanpole carrying a pail full of dill pickles were Federal agents.'"

"I even got into one speak carrying a string of fish," Jeff chuckled. Mutt grinned. "One time Jeff and I were supposed to raid a soda fountain on the edge of a park in New York where they were selling stuff besides sodas and sundaes. The owner could smell a Prohibition agent a mile away and we didn't think we'd ever be able to catch him. Then we come up with this idea. We'd get about six of our buddies and all of us dress up in football uniforms, smear dirt on our faces, and I'd carry a football under my arm. We hit the place whooping and hollering that we won our last game of the season and wanted to celebrate by breaking training. The owner sold each of us a pint and we got him!"

"We pretended to be Broadway actors once too," Jeff remembered. And opera singers, grave diggers, pushcart vendors, longshoremen, horse dealers, streetcar conductors -you name it and we've probably played it. Anything to get our evidence."

"What do your bosses in the Prohibition Bureau think of your raids?" I asked them.

Jeff looked concerned. "At first they didn't care how we did it. All they were interested in was results - like how many speakeasies we shut down, how much booze we threw away, how much equipment we broke up. But now they're getting more critical."

"I don't think they like it because people laugh at us," Mutt says. "You know, they laugh at us because of the way we operate and the newspapers give us lots of publicity. We even got written up in the New York Times and Colliers Magazine. But all of the time people are laughing at us, we're slapping handcuffs on bootleggers and slapping padlocks on speakeasies. We're doing our job and having a good time and making people laugh. Everybody needs to laugh!"

"Yeah, one of the boys from Washington says we belong on the Vaudeville Stage," Jeff says.

"In the same breath they use to criticize us, they tell us that no other pair of agents has ever equaled our arrests, convictions and seizures of bootleg booze," Mutt says proudly.

"We get 95% convictions," Jeff says just as proudly.

"Yet the guys in Washington keep complaining," Mutt sighs. "Jeff and me got called to Washington a few weeks ago. One of the bosses says to me, 'You get your name in the newspapers all the time and I hardly ever see mine. Remember, you're just a bit player, not the whole show.'"

"Can you believe it?" Jeff says. "They're mad at us because we're doing a good job."

"Don't worry about it," I say. "The boys in Washington just don't have much of a sense of humor." I take a sip of my scotch and water.

Both Mutt and Jeff grin at me. "If we were on duty tonight, I'd haul you in for drinking that scotch," Mutt says.

"But we're not on duty, so go ahead," Jeff says.

I lift my glass and go ahead. These guys are all right. May their disguises increase!

John Barleycorn

The Whole Country's Going on a Spree

Chicago Star
January 1924

Agents like Mutt and Jeff are fun to have around and even when they're arresting you, you can get a laugh out of the experience. But some of the other Prohibition men aren't funny. Some of them go in for activities like wire tapping and informers, bribing witnesses and using tricks to trap people. One thing recently that didn't set too well with people is when they found out the government had set up a speakeasy in a ritzy section of Manhattan and paid informers to write down who the patrons are. The government does this in a lot of other cities too and a lot of people figure this is dirty pool.

And many drinkers are up at arms over denatured alcohol. If you remember, the Volstead Act provides that industry can use alcohol and industry puts poisons in this alcohol so it's unfit to drink. A lot of people drink it anyway and many get seriously ill or die from drinking it. People are saying that the government is deliberately doctoring alcohol with deadly poisons and the government is responsible for the "brutal murders" of its own citizens.

But I think the people around here and the ones from other places too, are more upset by the violence and corruption that keep growing and growing since Prohibition took effect. So far, 30 Federal agents have been killed in gun battles with bootleggers and the Federal men have killed 90 civilians who may or may not have been guilty of bootlegging.

There are many more shootings by state officials, agents, constables, police, special officers and other enforcers that the Feds don't have any control over. Sometimes Prohibition agents invade private property without warrants. And often when people are arrested for bootlegging, which they don't consider a crime, they try to get away and are killed by stray bullets during a chase. Maryland Senator Millard Tydings says that during the first five years of Prohibition about 900 people were killed in trying to either enforce or escape Prohibition and the Washington Herald in a nationwide survey estimates about the same and says that at least one thousand others were wounded.

Bribery and payoffs are taken for granted because the speakeasies and bootleggers can't operate without police protection. There aren't many governments at any level where government people aren't working with liquor gangs at one time or another. Judges, prosecuting attorneys, mayors, aldermen, city, county and state officials - the supposedly incorruptible are often indicted for being in collusion with the liquor gangs. Sometimes entire city or county administrations are involved.

Even the Prohibition Bureau isn't immune. Agents aren't paid high salaries and when they start buying country homes, expensive cars, furs and jewelry and reporting for work in chauffeur driven cars, they become suspect. Some agents are guilty of staying on the job just

long enough to learn the ropes and make the necessary contacts. Then they quit to become bootleggers or speakeasy operators. Customs agents and Treasury men are often charged with taking bribes or conspiring to help liquor smugglers and even the Coast Guard, probably the most incorruptible, has whole crews of men and officers accused of corruption.

Bootleggers are everywhere. Before the gangsters organized the business, part time bootlegging was a profitable sideline for housewives and people from every walk of life. Bootlegger circulated business cards, price lists and brochures. Society matrons speak of their bootlegger in the same breath as their hairdresser and chauffeur. In most places, a phone call to your neighborhood bootlegger brings immediate home delivery. The bootlegger's car, often a long and sleek black sedan, is so familiar to people that it doesn't attract any more attention than the milk wagon. Some officials here in Chicago put the national total of bootleggers at one million, but there are too many part timers to make this count an accurate one. The Star took a survey here and counted about 5,000 bootleggers here in our city.

I interviewed one of the city officials here and he's fed up with the entire state of affairs. "It's disgusting and disgraceful!" he complained.. "Baseball isn't our national sport, bootlegging is. When Prohibition started, the people in the middle class were its strongest supporters, but the times are good and they got rich. Now they're acting like the wealthy drinkers. They're using the cocktail shaker as a stepping stone to social status."

"Aren't you exaggerating?" I ask. "People have always liked to drink."

He slams his fist down on the table he's so upset.

"It's true people have always liked to drink, but now that the money is plentiful and the middle class is convinced that drinking is the socially " smart" thing to do, they are doing it more and more. And do you know what the worse part of the situation is?"

"No, tell me."

"The worst thing is that women are drinking too! Women! They were never much for going to the saloons, but now that liquor is officially forbidden , women are going to the speakeasies as much as the men. That's one of the reasons we passed Prohibition, to protect women from the evils of the saloon, to keep them safe and pure - and now look at them! They bob their hair and shorten their skirts to non-existence. They smoke and they drink!"

"Is it really that bad?" He doesn't hear me.

"And the children, oh, the children," he moans, without hearing my questions. "Parents are supposed to be examples for their children and instead they're examples of the speakeasies. Youth all over the country are rebelling and drinking. There are even speakeasies that cater to the high school kids. College kids make their gin in dormitory bathtubs and bootleggers hang around college campuses because business is so good. And the hip flasks, have you seen those?"

The kids use hip flasks as much as their parents do."

"How do hip flasks work?" I ask him.

"All you need to do is get a hip flask and you have your bar with you where ever you go. Or you can carry your booze with you in hollow canes, brief cases, or thermos bottles. In offices you can hide bottles for a "quick one" in desk bars and behind false front rows of books."

"There are some people," I start to say, but he doesn't hear me. He puts his head in his hands and mutters to himself.

"The whole country's on a binge, a spree, and demon rum is the life of the party," he mutters.

I don't argue with him, because he's right.

John Barleycorn

Talking to a Bootlegger

Chicago Star
November 1, 1924

One of my best friends is a bootlegger with a head for figures. He told me last night that if the Feds and the straight local enforcement officials could make all the bootleggers from Chicago and all the bootleg money from Chicago vanish in a puff of smoke the city would go bankrupt. And the Illinois farmer would starve and the city coffers would be leaner than a skinflint's pocketbook.

The bootlegger says there has been a boom in corn sugar production from 1920-1926 that you have to be a farmer to appreciate. In 1919, there were about 157,275 pounds of corn sugar produced nationwide. Production to almost 900,000,000 pounds in 1926. Broken down to Chicago size, that means that about enough corn sugar was produced for every Chicago man, woman and child to consume 13 pounds a year. The Illinois farmer is beaming and so are the industries using corn sugar. And you can probably guess some of the industries that use it!

We have a big corn sugar user right on the outside of Chicago, in Cicero. My friend won't be more specific than that. He says there is an industrial still hidden in a grassy meadow and when I challenged him to show me where it was, he did. He just made me promise not to tell anyone. It's really something to see. The main tank is 75 feet long and 55 feet wide and it's filled almost to the top of its six foot depth with yeast, water, and cracked corn. Railings are fastened around the edges of the vat so a power agitator can circle and stir the liquid.

In 24 hours there is a first run of white liquid that is poured into eight large stills under the tank. The brew continues through several processes, utilizing the sugar and eventually, it ends up in a double cooker and the final stills. This plant turns out about 6,000 gallons of 170 proof alcohol a day. The alcohol is put into drums and brought into Chicago to make "scotch."

When the alcohol gets to the cutting plant in Chicago, the next step is to put enough alcohol, water, and real Scotch in to stretch the mixture six fold. Then Scotch coloring is added and the mixture begins to look and smell like Scotch. At this point I tasted it, and when I could talk again, I said to my bootlegger friend, "This stuff may look and smell like Scotch but it sure doesn't taste like it. It tastes like hair tonic! What do you do to get it tasting smooth and mellow like real scotch?"

"The next step," he says, "is to run an electric charge through the "Scotch" for 24 hours and that takes the bite out of it. Then we put it in shapely, initialed brown bottles made by glassmakers in Jersey City, New Jersey. We seal it with corks made in Brooklyn and we slap foreign labels on it that are printed right here in Chicago. Then the "Scotch" is finished. When it's sold in a speakeasy or direct from me, the thirsty customer on the other side of the bottle thinks he's getting a bargain at 75 cents a drink for real Scotch from Scotland."

"Sounds like you're putting the corn sugar to good use," I tease.

"The nicest thing about the corn sugar is that it doesn't leave any ash and doesn't smell. It's a lot easier to get away with making brew when you're using corn sugar than when you're using some of the smellier things like malt."

The Wets in Chicago back up the bootlegger's statement. They tell me that more than 61,000,000 gallons of proof spirits were produced this year in this country. Not bad for the corn sugar industry profits!

"Doctors and druggists are making bootlegging profits too," the bootlegger said.

I challenged him on this one. "Doctors and druggists? Prove it to me!"

He took me to his local bootlegger, druggist and doctor. My bootlegger friend's doctor gets a book containing 50 prescriptions and he signs the complete book and leaves it with the druggist. If my friend or anyone else gives the druggist \$3.00 for a prescription and another \$3.00 for a pint, he can get good whiskey, uncut. He can get brands like Old Log Cabin, the best Canadian whiskey there is.

Doctors are entitled to a hundred prescriptions every 90 days and not very many of them go to waste, I can tell you. Oh, there are a few ethical doctors who refuse to prescribe liquor except for real medicinal purposes. But the doctors and druggists are under constant pressure for their patients and friends for free prescriptions for medicinal liquor. A past-president of the American Medical Association visiting here in Chicago for a few days told me that most doctors across the country are bootlegging prescriptions.

Druggists are in the same spot. They are allowed 100 gallons of spirits every three months. In thousands of drugstores in Chicago, an active bootleg business goes on behind the red and green bottles that decorate the drug store window. Some of the druggists here buy doctor's pre-signed prescriptions and others cut medicinal liquor which is usually obtained pure from government warehouses and cut with bootleg stuff.

Some druggists trade their permit liquor for bootleg stuff and endanger the few genuine applicants for medicinal liquor. My friend the bootlegger has a yearly contract with druggists around Chicago to take all of the supply the druggists can spare. He told me he paid \$155.00 for a case of rye last week. "The two most popular brands I want is Mount Vernon and Old Overholt, because these two cut further than any others," he says.

Liquor prices in Chicago and in the rest of the country fluctuate according to the law of supply and demand. My bootlegger friend gave me one of his handbills just to give me an idea of what they are in Chicago.

Booth's dry gin.....\$1.50 a quart

Golden Wedding Rye, William Penn and Silver Dollar.....\$4.00 a pint

All popular brands of Scotch, including the kind I saw made.....\$4.00 a quart

Barcardi.....\$3.00 a quart

Barcardo, demi john.....\$12.00 a gallon

And you could get immediate delivery of any of this and twenty four hour a day service.

As a parting shot, my friend says that in 1927, drinkers nationwide are consuming 790,000,000 gallons of beer at .50 a gallon for a total cost of \$305,000,000. Wine, we are consuming 110,000,000 gallons of at \$2.30 per gallon for a total cost of \$253,000,000. Spirits we are consuming 200,000,000 a gallon at \$11.00 per gallon for a total cost of \$2,220,000,000. This adds up to a national tab of \$2,868,000,000. That puts the bootleg business right up in the category of steel, cars and gasoline. Can you blame my bootlegger friend for strutting a little?

"The fact is," my bootlegger friend says, "since Prohibition became law, it has changed people's attitude toward social drinking. Now it's the smart thing to drink. It's a defiant thing to drink to show the government it's not going to regulate your life. As a result of this widespread drinking in all areas of life, conduct that wouldn't have been tolerated at social gatherings a generation ago is accepted as the norm now."

My friend even quoted the Commissioner of Prohibition at me. This person says, "It is evident that taking the country as a whole, people of wealth, business men and professional men and their families and even the higher paid workingmen and their families are drinking in large numbers in quite frank disregard of the National Prohibition Act."

Judging from the figures he threw at me, he's right. He smiles a sleek, satisfied smile and fingers his bankroll before he leaves.

"Prohibition has been my sugar daddy," he says. "It put me on the road to riches and a way of life I never would have been able to lead in Little Hell."

John Barleycorn

A Real Moonshiner

Chicago Star
April 1925

I met a real moonshiner today. He's from Colville, Kentucky and is in Chicago visiting his cousin. Maybe he'll pass on some trade secrets for the benefit of us city dwellers. When I ask him how he starts his moonshine, he laughs and slaps his knees. "Why, when six men start to make moonshine, it's like six women starting to make a cake- no two do it the same way. Most of the moonshiners have their recipes just the same as the ladies do, and they've been handed down from generation to generation. But no matter what the ingredients, there is a basic procedure for making moonshine."

I won't give my moonshiner a fictitious name for fear I might approximate his name and get him killed. Moonshiners are a clannish, jealous bunch and I don't want to get them riled. I'll just call him the Kentucky Gentleman and leave it at that.

According to my Kentucky Gentleman, the first step in making moonshine whiskey is picking out the corn. My man sorts the grains by hand and he looks over each one like he does a prize horse or woman. Grains that are inferior, he rejects and uses for animal feed.

After this corn selection process is done, he sets up to produce the "corn malt." In other words, he has to change the starch of the corn into sugar. To do this, you put the corn a little at a time into a container with holes in the bottom. Then you pour your warm water into it and put a hot wet cloth over it and leave it there while the water leaks out. You do this several times, keeping the corn wet and warm, but making sure not to let it sour. It usually sprouts after three or four days.

When the corn's sprouted, the next thing you do is dry it in front of the fire or in the sun. When the corn is thoroughly dry, you grind it into a coarse meal that's called "corn grits" or "chop." Every farmer back home owns or borrows a tub mill to grind, the Kentucky Gentleman tells me, and if a man has a strong arm and a hefty wife or son or all three, he can grind two bushels of corn a day. He just has to remember to keep it dry and keep it coarse.

When this is done, the Gentleman says you have to make the corn grits into a mash called "sweet mash." To do this, he puts his mash into a good oak barrel and adds hot water in proportion of about one bushel of sprouted corn to half a barrel of pure limestone water from a branch or spring. He says to be sure not to fill the barrel to the top, because when the mixture ferments, it will expand. He covers the mixture to keep the mash clean and lets it stand in a warm place, indoors or in the sun, for several days.

He has to be careful to keep it at the right temperature, because too little heat ruins the texture

and too much spoils the fermentation. He usually lets three to five days pass before he uncovers the barrel. And he usually warns his small son and the neighborhood kids, "don't go breathing it. It'll knock your head off."

He breaks up or thins out the sweet mash by pouring in warm spring water and adds rye malt, which comes to the top in a layer from one to two inches thick. It seals off the air and seals in the flavor. The rye malt also acts the same as yeast by causing germination. The Kentucky Gentleman covers the mash and lets it stand for several days, keeping it at the right temperature by eternal vigilance and ancestral knowledge. During the time he's waiting, the sweet mash" turns into "sour mash" as the sugar changes to alcohol and carbonic acid.

My Kentucky Gentleman knows when the mash is "ripe" or ready to run by listening to it. It has to sound like "rain on a roof" or like meat frying in a pan before he can start cooking it in the still. He used a pot still, which is a copper container shaped somewhat like a large tea kettle with a round lid and an extra-long spout. The spout is connected to the condenser, a copper coil known as "the worm." The Kentucky Gentleman puts the pot still over a wood fire burning in a crude base, usually a furnace of stone sealed together with clay. When the mash stops fermenting, it's dipped out in buckets and strained into the still through a cloth. A bed sheet works real well for this.

The liquid product from the still is now a tart and cloudy liquid technically known as "beer" although it doesn't taste like Chicago beer or Milwaukee beer. As soon as the mash starts to cook, my man puts on the still cap and seals it with a paste made of flour and water. The paste if mixed to the consistency of putty and spread around the base of the lid to seal it entirely.

"Now, I'll tell you the same thing my grandpappy and great-grandpappy told me," the Kentucky Gentleman says. "The cooking is the most important part of the recipe. You have to keep the fire even and gentle, but hot enough to singe the devil. You got to cook the mash just right, not too slow, and not too fast. If you get it too hot, the vapor carries too much steam or the mash will scorch. If you get it way too hot, the steam builds up and the still could explode.

"That's never happened to me, but it has to some of my kin who don't know what they're doing."
"You know what you're doing. I can tell by the way you talk."

"Darn right I know what I'm doing, sonny." The Kentucky Gentleman says that when the mash gets hot enough, the alcohol starts to cook and becomes a vapor that rises in the still cap. Since the cap is tightly sealed with flour putty the vapor can escape only through the long necks and into the worm.

"I put the worm in a barrel of cold water, sometimes half a barrel, and sit it under a waterfall or some other place where water runs over it all of the time. As the alcohol vapor passes through the cold coil, it is condensed or turned back into liquid, this time a watery whiskey. It's drawn off by a petcock or allowed to run out through a pipe directly into a jug, keg or pail.

"How do ya like that talk? Do I know what I'm doing sonny or do I know what I'm doing?" the Kentucky Gentleman asks.

"You know what you're doing," I tell him. "But I thought you were a hill man with no education."

"I went to college for a year, studying to be a teacher I was. Then I decided that moonshining was more profitable and I was right."

I nodded. "You were right. Tell me what you do next after you run the whiskey into a jug."

"Well, the first run isn't fit to drink. It's called "singlings" and it's a cloudy liquid full of excess water and impurities and poisons. We make a second run -doublings- at a lower temperature and this purifies the whiskey and makes it crystal clear. Usually the second run is made in the same pot-still, but sometimes there are two stills, one for each run, and this speeds up things a little. If you use just one still, be sure you clean the pot before you do the second run. You do this by emptying the "slop" or used up mash and washing the pot out with some unstrained "beer" left in the mash barrel. This is supposed to make the whiskey extra smooth and mellow. You wipe the pot clean with a rag and now the whiskey can be "doubled."

"What proof is this whiskey?" I ask him.

"Well, my granddaddy never was sure what proof his "shine" was. He had to depend on his judgment, his experience in making it, and "bead." When you shake a bottle of new whiskey and the foam or bead raises and remains in bubbles about the size of No. 5 shot, the proof is right. If the bead is full of loose or collapsing bubbles, the whiskey is inferior."

"Sounds like you make good whiskey," I said. "Do you happen to have any samples?"

"Sure do." The Kentucky Gentleman reached inside of his coat pocket and pulled out a bottle of beautiful, tawny colored whiskey. "I got this stuff past the Feds with no problem at all. I've had lots of practice dodging revenooers back home. Why did you know that the Feds even sent General George A. Custer back in the Kentucky hills in 1871 to wipe moonshining off the map of Kentucky."

"How did he do?" I asked.

"He didn't." The Kentucky Gentleman chuckled. "The moonshiners were better at hiding than the Indians at the Little Big Horn. Custer came out of the hills swearing there weren't even any moonshiners there."

"Same as there aren't any moonshiners in Chicago." I winked at him.

The Kentucky Gentleman winked back. "Same as there aren't any moonshiners in Chicago."

John Barleycorn

Small Town Prohibition

Chicago Star
June 1925

I'm here in this typically American small town tonight, about thirty miles outside of Chicago. I'm here for the Temperance lecture and demonstration that the good ladies of the local Methodist and Presbyterian churches are giving. Got to keep in touch with the competition, I say.

If Prohibition is the law, why do they need a Temperance lecture? I ask myself the same question as I drive the rutted dirt paths that pass for roads in this part of the state. Here I am at the local schoolhouse and I still ask myself that same question.

The good ladies are sitting in a row on the stage and none of them are dressed like flappers, that's for sure. No beads, bobbed hair, short skirts or slave anklets for them! No rouged knees or stars and spangles! The uniform seems to be conservative blue and black dresses, high necked, and sober expressions to match their dresses. You can be certain these good ladies don't drink "giggle juice" from silver hip flasks or dance the Charleston. They don't even smile at their husbands in public.

And what of their husbands and sons and friends scattered throughout the rows of folding chairs in the schoolroom? These gentlemen are too, conservatively dressed. No "zoot suits," wide lapels and flowers in the buttonhole for them. No wild ties or diamond stickpins. They're just sober, earnest, hard working men and women trying to raise sober, earnest, hard working children.

"Let these lips touch nothing stronger than lemonade," a banner strung across the stage proclaims. One of the ladies, the most serious looking of the serious bunch, rises, walks to the platform and steps up, showing a shocking glimpse of black buttoned shoe. She has a bottle in her hand containing an amber liquid that looks like whiskey to me, and I should know. She has two potted plants in the other hand. She sets the plants on the podium and addresses the audience.

"I have watered one of the plants with water and I'm going to water the other one with whiskey." She uncorks the bottle and pours about half of it on the plant. The plant wilts right before our eyes. There is a collective gasp from the audience.

"Can you imagine that whiskey does to your stomach and your nervous system if it can do this to a plant?" she asks. She launches into a speech about the evils of whiskey.

I listen to the audience reaction. Most of it is favorable. The ladies, especially, are nodding their soberly hatted heads in agreement with the speaker. But here and there, I hear murmurs of discontent, of disagreement. Why? The small town, rural American scene is supposed to be the strong hold of Prohibition, the flinty backbone of enforcement. I whisper to a dissenting gentleman next to me, "Is there any place to get a drink of something stronger than lemonade around here?"

He eyes me for a minute, then he says, "Go down the street two blocks and you'll see a sign that says Todd's Ice Cream Parlor. Ask for Mr. Todd. Tell him Harry sent you and he'll fix you up."

"But I thought you couldn't get liquor anywhere except in wicked Chicago."

"You can get liquor around here," he says. "There was a big blow up here last week and that's why the good ladies are trying to reinforce their Temperance message tonight. They're afraid the whole town's falling off the wagon."

"What was the big blow up?" I ask him.

"There's a farmer who lives on the outskirts of town, has a real big place about 120 acres. A homestead farm you know. There's a big barn and a nice white clapboard house."

"What about it?"

"The farmer has a real productive still and he puts out some of the best corn whiskey you ever wanna taste. Gets a good price for it too. Why, the big boys from Chicago send a truck every few months or so just to pick up his whiskey for Chicago markets. He doesn't have to do anything but make it and have it ready. He makes a goodly amount of money on it, too. He supplies the local speakeasies. He's getting so rich he's added some rooms to the barn, bought some modern equipment so he can grow a better corn crop. Why he even bought a Model T Ford. One of the first around these parts."

"It sounds like he has a profitable thing going," I say. "Did something happen to spoil it?"

"The farmer has two sons," the gentleman says. "One is Bill. He's pretty sharp, his father's right hand man and he's going to take over the farm someday. The other son, Abe, isn't too bright, but he's a hard worker. It seems like somehow the Federal agents in these parts got hold of the fact that the farmer has a still going in his barn, hidden under the manure."

"Hidden under the manure?" Before I finished talking, I knew the answer to my question.

"It gives off heat for the still, you know. Well anyway, the Feds suspected something was up," the gentleman goes on. "So the night before last they sneak in the farmer's barn and hide in the hayloft. They are going to nab him when he comes to collect the whiskey for shipment to Chicago. The Feds found out the gang's truck comes at regular times, you know."

"What happened?" I ask him.

"The farmer and his sons come in the barn early the next morning, about six o'clock and he starts shoveling manure. "Abe," he says, "you better get some hay down for the cows and Bill, you help me shovel this manure off the still. Abe climbs up to the hayloft and starts to pitch hay down to the cows. Pretty soon he hits one of the agents in the foot with the pitchfork and the agent hollers, ouch! pretty loud in the quiet.

"What did you say Abe?" the farmer calls up to his son.

"I didn't say nothing, pa."

"Then just keep pitching hay down for the cows."

Abe kept pitching and sure enough, he hit the other agent in the leg this time. This agent wasn't as polite as the other one. He lit out of the hay swearing a blue streak and he pulled his gun on Abe and said, "You're under arrest."

Abe blinked at him. "I didn't mean to stick you, mister," he says. "I didn't see you underneath all of that hay or I never would have done it."

"The gent stands there holding the gun on Abe. Pretty soon Abe's pa calls up and says, 'come down, Abe. We need some help with loading the bottles.'"

"The agent holds his hand over Abe's mouth so he can't answer."

" Abe! the farmer hollers. Tarnation, Abe, your mouth not working at all?"

"Abe can't answer."

"Damn!" the farmer swears. Bill, you go up there and see what he's doing with himself. And hurry. The men and the trucks are going to be here any minute now and we gotta have the whiskey ready to load. That's part of the deal."

"Bill goes up the ladder to the hayloft and looks around. He don't see anyone, because Abe and the agents are hidden under the hay."

" Abe, where are you?" Bill bellows so loud that wisps of hay float down from the hayloft and out of the front barn door. The agent with the gun prods Abe in the back. Abe stands up. Here I am, Bill."

" Why the devil don't you answer then? Pa wants us to hurry. The whiskey men are going to be here pretty soon."

"I was trying to hurry, Bill, but things happen," Abe told him.

" What are you talking about, Abe?"

"While Bill and Abe are discussing things, one of the agents crawls around under the hay and gets a bead on Bill. The agent stands up. He looks like a scarecrow with hay in his hair and on his clothes. "Federal Agents! You're under arrest. Freeze!"

Bill freezes and the agents tie up Bill and Abe.. Meantime the farmer calls up from below. "What are you boys doing up there?"

Silence.

"I'm coming up with the bullwhip if you don't answer me."

Silence.

There is the sound of curses and wooden steps moaning and creaking under the farmer's weight. His gray beard appears over the top of the ladder and he finds himself looking right into the gun barrel of a Federal agent.

"You're under arrest," the agent tells the farmer.

The farmer sighs, puts down his bull whip and puts up his hands. The agents have most of the whiskey dumped out on the ground when the truck pulls into the farmyard.

The driver sees the empty bottles and the steaming ground and he figures out that something went wrong. He takes off in a cloud of dust for the safety of Chicago. The Feds let the farmer and his sons go after they pay a fine and repeatedly refuse to reveal the whereabouts of the still.

"And that very same still is operating full blast today," the gentleman tells me.

"How do you know this?" I ask him. "You talk like you were there."

The gentleman winks at me. "Me and Bill and Abe have a good thing going, and we don't want it ruined. Just tell my wife that the still's hidden under the manure pile and that'll be the last secret you ever tell!"

He winks and smiles but I'm not going to test out if he means what he says or not. He's too handy with a bullwhip!

John Barleycorn

Jenny

Madison, Wisconsin
January, 1928

Whenever I visit my friend, Tom, on the way back home I stop at this diner called Gabrellies. They have the best bacon and eggs around and their blueberry muffins are out of this world. The waitress is tall with a cap of red curls and a figure that fills out her uniform in the right places and then some.

She knows me now, and as soon as I sit down she puts coffee in front of me. This time, she says to me, "I ought to give you a door prize because you're the last customer I'm gonna serve for a while."

"Are you going somewhere?" I ask her.

"I have to go to Milwaukee today and begin my sentence."

"What are you talking about?"

"I have to serve a six-month sentence in the Milwaukee House of Correction."

A short, gray-haired lady who looks enough like the waitress to be her mother comes up behind her and says, "Jenny, have you got all of your clothes packed?" Then she throws her hands over her face and sobs.

"I don't know what I'm going to do without you," she wails. "We have to pay \$500 in American money and you're going to stay in jail six months. I don't know what we'll do!"

She throws her arms around Jenny and cries harder. "I pat the chairs on either side of me. "Why don't you two ladies come around and have coffee with me. Then you can tell me what this is all about."

Since it's early enough in the morning for the place not to be busy, they come and have coffee with me. Jenny's mother, that's who she is, Jenny's mother, drinks noisy gulps of coffee and calms down a little.

While she's busy calming down, I lean over to Jenny. "Why do you have to go to the Milwaukee House of Correction for six months?"

"I knew this would happen to me," Jenny says. "It was just a matter of time."

Her mother starts crying when Jenny says this and since she is drinking coffee at the same time, she chokes. It takes a few minutes before we get her calmed down enough for Jenny to talk to me more. While her mother wipes her eyes and blows her nose, I try again.

"Jenny, what did you do?"

"I wish people wouldn't think I'm as bad as I've been painted," Jenny says. "I'm not a criminal though I know that I've broken the Prohibition law."

I grit my teeth. "Jenny, how did you break the Prohibition law?"

"I knew I'd get caught from the day I started selling liquor to support my mother and the kids," Jenny wails.

I leaned forward. Now, the conversation was heating up. "Jenny, do you mean to tell me you got caught selling bootleg liquor?"

"But I'm not the queen of the bootleggers," she cries. "Why do they keep calling me that? There are lots of girls bootlegging here at the University - lots of beautiful girls!"

I put my arm around her. "Why don't you start at the beginning of your story? Then I'll be able to understand it better."

"It started nine years ago when I was 14," Jenny says. "My daddy was on the way home from the factory and somebody must have thought he was somebody else, because they shot him. Daddy, didn't have any enemies. It must have been a mistake. Since I'm the oldest of my three brothers and two sisters, I quit school and went to work in a drugstore to support mother and the kids. After three years, the drugstore closed, and I was out of a job. Mother and the kids were depending on me and I didn't know where to turn."

She sobbed and I patted her shoulder sympathetically. "What did you do, Jenny?"

"I had an Italian boy friend and he got me into delivering alcohol, whiskey, gin. What else could I do? The family needed my money."

Jenny said she opened the diner as an honest business with the proceeds from her illegal liquor sales. But to make ends meet, she had to sell bootleg liquor as a sideline. "And I had to sell it cheaper than a lot of other places around," she says. "There are just too many places to buy liquor. Why, there must be at least 3,000 in Madison and the small towns around here. Besides, people don't have as much money to spend on liquor as they used to. Times are getting tough all over." She fixes those black eyes on me. "Have you ever heard of Gil Gabrellie?"

"Who hasn't?" I say. "He's only the most promising college boxer this state has come up with in years."

Suddenly, what she's driving at hits me. "Gabrellie! You mean Gil Gibrellie is your brother?"

She smiles. "He's my brother and I put him through high school. Not only that, I encouraged him to train hard and live clean. I even whipped him when he tried to sell bootleg liquor himself. I kept him on the straight and narrow. I think I even had a little to do with him becoming a boxer."

"Sounds to me like you had a lot to do with it," I tell her. I'm dazzled by the light in her eyes when she's talking about Gil.

"I did all of this for my family," she says.

"I know you have," I assure her. "But how did you get caught? I know your family didn't turn you in and I'm pretty sure none of your customers did. So what happened?"

She sighs. "One day I got a phone call from Chicago from some guys who said they're friends of Gils. They told me they were coming to Madison for a good time and Gil told them I'd sell them some stuff to wet their whistle. I met them at the train station and brought them to the diner. They wanted drinks, and as soon as I took their money, they pulled out badges and said they were Federal agents and I was under arrest. They took me to court to see Judge Baltzell."

"What did you plead?" I ask her.

"I said I wasn't guilty. I told the judge the whole story about why I was selling bootleg liquor. He didn't think I had a good reason. He told me that the Dean at the University of Wisconsin had complained to him so many times about me selling bootleg liquor to the students there that he wanted me prosecuted. When I sold drinks to those Feds pretending to be Gil's friends, that was the evidence the Judge needed."

She wipes her eyes. "What's going to become of mother and the kids? Why can't I serve my six months in jail here instead of all of the way in Milwaukee? If I was here, at least mother and the kids could visit me. I wasn't the only person selling bootleg liquor to the students. And where am I going to get \$500 to pay the fine? I give all of my money to mother to take care of the kids."

I can't drive out of town and forget about Jenny. I drive over to see the Judge who sentenced Jenny. He certainly lives in one of the rich sections of town. It takes me five minutes to walk across his highly manicured lawn to his front door and another five minutes to be announced by the maid and shown into his study. He has a mane of white hair and bushy white eyebrows. He asks me what I'm doing in his house. I tell him.

He frowns. "The young lady received a just sentence. After all, she was caught red handed with the evidence. What more is there to say?"

I'm so mad I stutter. "What about the extenuating circumstances, such as she is the sole support of her family and that's the only way she has to make a living? What about the fine job she's doing of raising her brothers and sisters to be moral, productive citizens? And what about the severity of the sentence? Don't you think that six months in the Milwaukee House of Correction and a \$500 fine is a little steep for bootlegging? Bootleggers a lot more wicked than Jenny are getting off with nothing worse than a padlocking and a slap on the wrist."

The Judge stares at me with icicles in his glance. "Bootleggers in my jurisdiction do not get off easily. This young lady is going to be an example. She is going to pay the full penalty of the law."

That's all he would say on the subject, so I'm leaving my questions with you - the public, the citizens who elect the judges and law enforcement officials. How would you like to serve six months in the Milwaukee House of Correction because you were stupid enough to get caught bootlegging, while other bootleggers worse than you get away with it?

And one last question. If the Judge put every bootlegger in Madison, Milwaukee, or the whole state of Wisconsin in the House of Correction for six months, how many people do you think would be left to elect judges?

John Barleycorn

Barn Dance Bootleggers

Granville, Wisconsin
May 1929

It's not brag, just fact, that I got to be the only woman in the country who had a sixteenth birthday barn dance where my Pa played the fiddle and the ducks got drunk!

The whole thing started a month before my birthday. I said to Pa, "Could I have a barn dance for my birthday, please Pa?"

"Cindy, I don't have the cash to throw a barn dance. You know how hard times are. We're lucky we enough to eat. I don't know about a party."

"Pa, the gang won't eat that much. We could just have donuts and cider and you could play the fiddle. I just would need a new dress."

"We can't do it, Cindy. Quit nagging me."

I'm not proud of what I said to Pa next. "I hate living here," I said. "I'm going to leave as soon as I can and go to the city and get me a job. I'm not going to be begging poor all of my life like you and Ma."

Pa's face went white like I hit him between the eyes with a pitchfork. He walked away and wouldn't talk to me for the rest of that day. The next day after school, two men in a long, shiny black car followed behind me as I walked up the dusty lane to our farmhouse. The driver had his hat pulled so far over his eyes that he looked like Sherlock Holmes.

The man sitting beside him I could only see enough of his face to know he needed a shave and he had eyes real close together like the weasel's that raided our chicken coop every week or so. When I looked a little bit closer, I saw there was someone in the back seat too. All I could make out was a shape, like a paper doll. I couldn't tell whether it was a man or woman or vegetable or mineral.

The driver pulled his hat a little lower over his eyes and said out of the corner of his mouth, "Hey kid, where's the barn on this hayseed place?"

I ignored him and kept walking. Anybody that called us a hayseed wasn't going to get my help. I walked so fast that my braids flew in the wind, but I couldn't go faster than that car.

The driver speeded up a little and glided alongside me. "Your Pa wants to talk to us. Where can I find him?" the driver asked me.

The car was closer now, so I could see the figure in the back was a man and he was carrying what looked like a bass fiddle in a black case. Now why would someone want to come all of the way here in the country just to play the bass fiddle?

The driver's voice floated from under the slouch hat. "I said, where can I find your old man, kid?"

"He's in the barn milking the cows about now," I said. Then I took off running and even though I didn't look back, I knew the car was following me like a long black snake. But the men didn't come to the house. They must have taken care of their business with Pa in the barn.

When Pa came into supper a that night, he said, "Cindy, I've changed my mind. You go ahead and plan a 16th birthday barn dance."

He smiled at my whoop of joy and untangled my arms from around his neck. "Oh thank you Pa," I said. "But how..."

"Never you mind," he said. "Just get up the best barn dance these parts have ever seen."

Now I didn't have time to worry about some funny looking men because I was too busy helping Ma clean up the house and sewing my party dress. We even went to the city to buy the yard goods for it, something we hadn't done in coon's ages. We worked hard and the house was so clean it squeaked every time someone walked around. My party dress with ruffles on the bottom hung in my closet gathering courage for its debut night.

The day before the dance, I decided to clean the barn. My little brother Bud and I swept out the part where we were going to dance and carted off some of the junk that was sitting around. I spied a pile of horse blankets in the corner and went over to investigate. Underneath the horse blankets was some milk cans that looked like the newfangled aluminum ones that Mr. Clayton down the road used.

"You better get outta there, Cindy, " Bud said. "If Pa catches you he'll skin you alive."

I unscrewed the cap off one of the cans. "I just want to see what's in them," I said. "Don't want a mess around when my company comes."

I leaned over the can and looked and sniffed. "This ain't milk," I said. "It's the wrong color and it sure don't smell like milk." I took a deep breath and choking and wheezing, I backed away from the can. "It smells more like hard cider," I said.

"I'm getting outta here," Bud croaked.

"No, you're not!" You're gonna help me drag these cans of spoiled stuff, hard cider, whatever it is, outta here. I don't want anything stinking besides the cows when my friends come tomorrow.

We're having a barn dance here in the barn and we're going to have it without these cans."

Bud and I hauled those funny smelling cans out to the barn yard and dumped all of the smelly hard cider over by the manure pile. We figured nobody would find it there, and if they did, they wouldn't notice the smell because of the competition from the manure. We hauled the cans back to the barn and put the blanket back over them. "Now everything's spic and span," I said. "Nobody 'll notice these cans here and the smell will go away by my birthday tomorrow."

My birthday - magic day!- dawned sunny and bright. I floated through most of the day. We were sitting at the supper table when Pa said casually, "I have to make a delivery in town after supper, but I'll be back in time for your dance, Cindy."

"But Pa, you said you'd play the fiddle for my party! Why do you have to go into town now? Can't it wait until tomorrow?"

"I 'll be back in plenty of time, I promise," Pa assured me.

Ma shot a worried look at him across the table. He raised his eyebrows at her like he always does when he doesn't want to talk about something in front of Bud and me. Pa hurried through the rest of his meal and went outside. I heard our old Model T truck running.

"He must be loading up some vegetables to sell," I said. "But why is he doing it at night?"

"Never mind, Cindy," Ma said. "Go put on your party dress. Your friends will be coming along pretty soon."

I was clearing the table when Pa burst into the kitchen. "Who was fooling with them milk cans in the barn?" he demanded. Instead of being beet red like it usually is when he's mad, Pa's face was whiter than Ma's powdered starch. I saw something in it I never had seen before. Pa looked like he was afraid.

"It was me, Pa," I stammered. "There was some sour smelling stuff in them, so me and Bud dumped them out by the manure pile. I didn't want that stuff stinking up my party."

Now I knew for sure it was fear on Pa's face, struggling with a look like he was going to laugh.

"Cindy, that stuff you dumped by the manure pile was gonna pay for your party and lots of other things around here." He pounded his fist on the table so hard the dishes rattled. "Damn it, Cindy. Why didn't you ask before you dumped it?"

Ma hurried over and put her arm around him. "Carl, don't get upset," Ma said. "She didn't know."

Pa stomped out of the room and Ma followed him. I ran after them shouting, "I was just trying

to help!"

It took some looking, but I finally found Ma and Pa out by the manure pile looking at the puddle of that awful smelling stuff. "Can't save any of it," Pa mourned.

"You can make a new batch," Ma told him. "With all of your family know-how behind you, you can make a better batch of bootleg alcohol than a bunch of city slicker gangsters!"

"But it's against the law, Doris. What if I get caught? I already broke the law by taking this stuff on the ground. You want me to make it worse?"

"I'd rather you be caught by the sheriff than not have the alcohol for those gangsters. Are you going to get busy? I told you, I'd rather be poor than deal with those men, Carl. Promise me you'll never do this again, not for me or Cindy or Buddy or anyone!"

Pa promised. Then that very night before my friends came, he started the last batch of bootleg alcohol he ever made. And if his fiddle playing was a little wobbly that night, I didn't notice and neither did any of my friends. They were too busy dancing and laughing at the ducks.

That's right, the ducks. Those silly creatures had sampled the pool on the ground by the manure pile instead of drinking the water. The dance was swinging and swaying when they decided to pay us a visit and it was late when they left. Some of them had to be carried to the barn, because they couldn't walk.

Have you ever seen a duck stagger sideways and backwards while trying to waddle? Have you ever heard a duck trying to say quack quack and only coming up with Crunk, croacrunck? It took them ducks two days to get over the effects of that bootleg alcohol. That made Pa happy because he says it takes a person a week to recover from the effects of his alcohol. Them bootleggers must have got a quality product, because they never bothered Pa again.

John Barleycorn

The Feds Shoot First, Ask Questions Later

Chicago Star
September 1932

In Aurora, Illinois, an amateur detective swore he bought liquor from Mrs. Lillian De King. On the strength of his story, the police obtained a search warrant and state prohibition agents tried to search the De King home.

The De King's resisted so the agents went away and returned with revolvers and shotguns. They burst into the house, surprising Mrs. De King at the telephone. As she stood up, one of the agents shot her to death. Police later discovered that the amateur detective was lying, but there was no second chance for Mrs. De King.

Jacob Hanson, a solid citizen of Buffalo, New York, was driving home one night. A coast guardsman searching for rum runners pumped a hail of bullets into his car. Hanson was killed.

The British schooner, *I'm Alone*, was sailing in American waters when a coast guard patrol boat chased her to the high seas. It sank her by gun fire, killing one member of the crew.

In the state of Michigan, a man and woman were found guilty of violating the liquor law for the fourth time. They are in prison for life.

Since March of 1928, 25 Americans have been killed in enforcing the Volstead Act. Six of the victims were government agents and 16 were alleged violators of the act. In the nine years of Prohibition enforcement since 1919, Federal agents have killed 135 citizens and 55 from their own ranks have lost their lives "in the line of duty."

There isn't any record of the human lives taken by state enforcement officials or the number of state officials killed in the line of duty. It is believed to be much greater than the list of Federal casualties. An anonymous source says that "It's apparent that enforcement of the national and state liquor laws is being accompanied by violence, bloodshed, and death."

While these happenings are being reported in the daily papers, the state legislature is in session. Before it are appearing hosts of reformers in support of Michigan's "Life for a Pint" law. This law says that four-time Prohibition offenders are sentenced to life imprisonment. The rationale behind this law is that the importance of the Prohibition Law warrants the severe punishment. Supporters of the Law argue that a more drastic punishment be given.

During the Michigan cases, Congress voted for increased punishment for liquor law violators, without telling constituents that two Congressmen were indicted for violating the Volstead Act

themselves. Congressman A. Michaelson of Illinois was later acquitted of the charge after his brother-in-law claimed a certain leaky trunk.

The question is: Is enforcing the Prohibition Law worth numerous civil rights violations, violence and bloodshed. Is there any moderation in all of this?

John Barleycorn

Happy Days Are Here Again!

Chicago Star
December 1933

The official death of the Eighteenth Amendment came in the November 1932 elections when the White House became the residence of Franklin Roosevelt instead of Herbert Hoover. The election buried the Eighteenth Amendment with a mandate from the people for repeal and the New Deal. It also ended the influence of the Drys and destroyed the rest of their power to control Congress.

The lame duck Congress of 1932 immediately set to work on measures to legalize beer and to end the Eighteenth Amendment. Two weeks after Congress was in session, the House began its withdrawal from national Prohibition by passing a bill to legalize beer by a vote of 23-165. Forty members took the floor and shouted themselves hoarse to pass the bill, but it didn't have an immediate effect because it became bogged down in the Senate and would have to be revived in the next Congress. But the Wets had registered a majority in Congress for the first time in 15 years.

From that day on "the Eighteenth Amendment was doomed," as Roosevelt had predicted. A first attempt in December to get a repeal motion through the House failed by six votes. Then in February 1933, the Senate formulated a resolution to submit a Twenty-first Amendment to the states to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. Senator Sheppard staged a futile one-man filibuster to hold back the resolution, but the Senate defeated Dry attempts to channel the resolution to state legislatures. It approved the plan for ratification called for by the Democratic platform by a simple majority vote of conventions called for that purpose in each state. There was much debate over whether Congress had the power to specify for the first time in history that the states must use the convention method of deciding on the amendment, but eventually the legal arguments were ironed out or brushed aside.

The repeal resolution was passed in the Senate and the Democratic leaders in the House called a caucus that bound its members to support repeal as a party principle. Two days after the Senators approved the resolution, it emerged on the House floor, the final vote came, and the House sent the new Twenty First Amendments on its way to the ratification battles in the states. Having accomplished this bit of legislation for the new Congress that it was certain that the new Congress wanted, the old "lame duck" Congress expired and its successors, led by the New Dealers, took command.

When Franklin Roosevelt took office on March 4, 1933, he drove the last nails in the Prohibition coffin. By executive order, he chopped the funds appropriated to run the Prohibition Bureau in half and cut nearly two million dollars from the funds of the Bureau of Industrial Alcohol. He

called for a copy of the Democratic platform and clipped out its promise to legalize beer pending the full repeal of Prohibition. He signed his name to it and sent it to Congress as a "special message" to get some action on the measure.

The beer bill went swiftly through the House and Senate because the government had a pressing need for new tax revenue to help meet the cost of emergency Depression legislation. The House voted its approval 316-97, and the Senate 43-30, and the bill amending the Volstead Act was sent to President Roosevelt for his signature. It was effective on April 7 and it authorized beer of 3.2 percent alcoholic content by weight, imposed a five dollar a barrel tax and required brewers to take out a \$1,000 federal license.

"The iron hand of the brewers is again in absolute control!" the Anti Saloon League thundered. And the W.C.T.U. warned, "No nation ever drank itself out of a Depression." Then it added a special warning to the ladies, "Beer makes you fat!"

The breweries weren't worried about making their customers fat. They announced that they would be ready to pour out the "real thing" ten minutes after the law took effect. The government creaked up its presses to produce new Internal Revenue stamps and newspaper and magazines started soliciting beer advertisements. An institute for brewmasters graduated its first class in seventeen years and expert brewers began arriving from Germany. Breweries were so swamped with job applicants that some put up signs in front that said, "No Help Wanted." Chicago, Los Angeles, New York and other large cities began issuing beer-selling licenses.

At one minute past midnight, Friday morning, April 7, 1933, a neon lit clock in Times Square began chiming, "Happy Days Are Here Again." In Washington at the same minute, a brewery official gave the order, "To the White House, let her go!" Traffic was cleared on Pennsylvania Avenue and a beer heavy truck rolled toward the White House. There was a banner strung across it that read, "President Roosevelt, The First Beer Is For You!" Inside the truck six Hawaiians thumped guitars. A crowd of cheering people lined the sidewalk.

Within 33 days of taking office, President Roosevelt had fulfilled his campaign promise to bring back beer. He was asleep when the first cases were hauled to the tradesmen's entrance of the White House, but a Marine guard eagerly accepted one of the bottles. Later in the morning, more cases were flown in from breweries in Chicago and Milwaukee. The president donated his samples of beer to the National Press Club and made several life long friends for doing so.

In other places across the country, beer trucks rolled through the streets without a guard of gangsters armed with machine guns. In Manhattan, a brewery wagon drawn by six horses pulled up to the entrance of the Empire State Building. Al Smith stepped out to welcome its arrival. "This is surely a happy day for us all," he exulted.

In Chicago, things got noisy. Sirens, pistols and cowbells ushered in a celebration. Bartenders passed drinks to customers in rows four deep. Brass bands paraded and steam whistles hooted at midnight in St. Louis. By mid afternoon the city had exhausted its first beer supply. The editor

of Brewery Age estimated that within 24 hours, thirsty Americans had guzzled more than one and one-half million barrels of beer and were still shouting, "roll out the barrel!"

Many people wondered what effect the return of legal beer would have on the repeal battles shaping up in the states. Wets hoped the national beer binge would blow over so everybody could be convinced the country was ready to handle liquor with moderation. Drys were concerned that Americans would be more likely than ever to vote for full repeal, with beer glasses in hand.

Michigan held the first state convention during the same week as beer's return and voted 3-1 for the Twenty First Amendment. But the Drys didn't lose heart. The W.C.T.U.'s Ella Boole predicted that the Drys would be able to club down repeal in 16 states, three more than enough to kill it. Mrs. Sabin, Leader of the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform, said "Repealists now face perhaps the hardest engagement of our great fight."

By early June, nine states had voted for repeal, but the Drys were expecting to make their first real showing of strength in Indiana, which was considered a stronghold of dry support. Bishop Cannon personally stormed the state at the head of a vigorous Prohibition group. He said, "If we can win here, we can prevent repeal." Indiana voted two to one to ratify the Twenty First Amendment.

The Drys moved on to concentrate their campaign on the teetotaler South. Within another few weeks, the repeal total reached 16 states, and conventions were about to vote in key Southern states like Alabama, Arkansas and Tennessee. "If all three agree to repeal, it will be all over," said Postmaster General James Farley. President Roosevelt sent a personal message to Alabama Democrats to urge repeal by every effort that "lies in our power."

The persuasion worked. Alabama broke the tradition of a solidly dry South by voting 3-2 for repeal. Arkansas voted in repeal by about the same margin, and Tennessee went for repeal by a very slim majority. Drys still hoped. They thought they could scare up 13 states to block repeal somewhere, but in Washington D.C., President Roosevelt predicted the end would come before Christmas. Even Prohibition Director Alfred Dalrymple thought it was time for the distilleries to start planning to resume production under government license so they would be ready when repeal came. "There's no use to kid ourselves and there isn't any use in delaying the start of liquor manufacture," he said. "It will mean putting hundreds of thousands of men back to work, and it will mean thousands of dollars of new business."

Texas, the home state of Eighteenth Amendment's father Senator Morris Sheppard, became the 23rd state to vote for repeal. Maine, which back in 1846, had introduced the first state prohibition law, voted for repeal. Vermont, which had been dry since 1852 voted for repeal and by mid-September only seven states stood between the Eighteenth Amendment and repeal. Even Bishop Cannon's home state, Virginia, went wet.

In Granite Falls, Minnesota, reporters rushed in to the law office of Andrew Volstead. They

found him lounging back in his chair with his feet up on his desk. They asked him how he felt and he said, "Anything I might say could do nobody any good. All it would do would be just to bring ridicule upon me. If I were to say that Prohibition had been a mistake, there would be an awful uproar."

Prohibition's wake didn't come until December 5, 1933, when the Utah convention met in Salt Lake City. It officially ratified the Twenty-First Amendment. At 5:32 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, on December 5, 1933, Prohibition died. It was 13 years, ten months and 19 days old.

Less than two hours after its death, President Roosevelt issued a proclamation to notify the country that ratification was complete and that liquor as well as beer once more was legal in the United States. "I ask the wholehearted cooperation of all our citizens to the end that this return of individual freedom shall not be accompanied by the repugnant conditions that existed prior to the adoption of the Eighteenth Amendment, and those that have existed since its adoption," he said. "I ask especially that no state shall by law or otherwise authorize the return of the saloon either in this old form or in some modern guise."

There were a few celebrations around Chicago. Stuffed dummies dressed up in frock coats and battered top hats who represented the dour Prohibition reformer were hanged from flagpoles, drowned in civic pools and fountains and shot by firing squads of merrymakers. There were dinner, parties and many celebrations. But for the most part, the national reaction to Prohibition's death seems to be a sigh of relief."

Repeal will not end the Depression. It will create about one-quarter of a million jobs in the liquor and brewing industries and even more in the trades serving them. It won't make a big dent in the unemployment figures. Farmers won't be greatly helped since their only increase in crop sales are barley, rye and hops. Repeal will bring a flow of needed tax money into the national treasury and to state and city governments. They need money wherever and whenever they can get it. More power to John Barleycorn!

Prohibition has left a highly organized, powerful, and wealthy underworld, spread across the country in interlocking syndicates of crime. The years of liquor racketeering helped this criminal syndicate grow practiced and sophisticated. Now deprived of liquor, the gang syndicates will move into other fields where greater profits are to be made.

But the most serious effect is on ordinary people. Among ordinary citizens, Prohibition has left a disrespect for law and order, a conditioning to violence, a cynicism about government and a mistrust of authority that will take a long time to heal. Maybe it never will heal.

John Barleycorn