Prohibition Era Rochester: A Family Affair

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by

Russell Hendrick

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# Table of Contents

Title Page.........................................................................................................................1

Signature Page ..................................................................................................................2

Table of Contents ..............................................................................................................3

Abstract ............................................................................................................................4

Part I: Historiography .....................................................................................................5-23

Part II: Original Research ..............................................................................................24-56

Part III: Education Connections ....................................................................................55-68

Work Cite .........................................................................................................................69-73

Website ............................................................................................................................74
Abstract

This project researched the largely overlooked historical topic of Rochester, NY during the Prohibition Era. It draws upon a wide variety of sources, including oral history from the author’s family who were directly involved in the illegal sale of alcohol in Rochester. These stories offer unique insight into the heretofore-undocumented side of the speakeasy operators. The combination of oral history and more traditional research offers a diverse interpretation of Rochester NY during the Prohibition Era. The project also includes a historiography of research on Prohibition in general and Rochester specifically as well as a DBQ designed for 8th grade US history students.
PART I: Historiography

An Introduction

The Prohibition has been a source of a great deal of discussion within American society. The 18th amendment was a piece of legislature that tried to change American culture at a fundamental level by banning the sale, manufacturing and transportation of alcohol. Today an enormous body of work exists on the Prohibition era, which can broadly be defined as the time from the passage of the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act in 1920 to its eventual repeal in 1933 with the 21st Amendment. Vast amounts of popular sources have been produced, of varying academic quality on the era. Movies and books about gangsters like Al Capone, and hidden speakeasies have always captured the American imagination. One needs only mentioned the roaring twenties and Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*, Howard Hughes’ *Scarface*, Kevin Costner’s *The Untouchables*, and DeNiro’s *Once Upon a Time in America* steam into our minds. Flappers, speakeasies, alcohol, and a pension for law breaking have become synonymous with Americas Prohibition era. Or to say in another way, American history from its inception to the 1930’s can be summed up with the phrase, “Columbus, Washington, Lincoln, Volstead, two flights up and ask for Gus.” It has become engrained in the national popular understanding of our History.
Scholars of many persuasions are not immune to the American obsession with the era, and have studied Prohibition for decades. Obviously American historians have shown interest in the time period as it offers so many political, and social areas of study. Politically, a relative minority interest group was able to push through a constitutional amendment despite enormous efforts by liquor, and brewing lobbyists. Equally interesting for political historians is the fact that in less than twenty years the 18th amendment was overturned, the first and only amendment to ever be repealed. This has had enormous implications for Constitutional, state and federal law, as well as acknowledging the power of special interest groups. Socially, issues of immigration, culture, socio-economic status, and religion were all factors in the Prohibition of alcohol. Finally historians have considered Prohibition in its many previously mentioned facets but on a local, rather than national level. This has allowed local historians to speak specifically about issues facing certain communities without becoming embroiled with other factors that affected different parts of the country. For example the experience for people in Chicago would be very different than that of a small town in Oklahoma.

However historians are not the only ones who have shown interest in Prohibition. Predictably other social scientists in politics, economics, and sociology have discussed the implications of a small but vocal segment of the population imposing their will on the rest. Less predictably are the modern law, gender studies, and addiction experts who have weighed in and then argued for various interpretations of the Prohibition era. Scholarship concerning modern drug law
enforcement has used Prohibition’s successes and/or failures as ammunition in many debates. Those that see Prohibition as a total failure see modern attempts to punish drug users as the country repeating the mistakes of the past. They point to the apparent disregard Americans had for the 18th amendment, as even normally law abiding citizens broke the law and more hardened criminals flourished. Those that see Prohibition as a success in terms of changing America’s saloon culture argue the reverse. They point out that while illegal alcohol was widely available it still became much harder to find than it was previously which led to significant reductions in alcohol consumption.

Still other groups have argued the legal implications related to the passage, enforcement, and eventual repeal of the 18th and 21st amendment. The US government, in its eagerness to enforce the 18th amendment tread on rights guaranteed by other amendments. Additionally precedents set by the legal system during Prohibition has colored the modern application of American law. Issues related to wiretapping, and search and seizure rights were all affected by the 18th amendment and continue to be influential today, despite its repeal. This has had far reaching implications for the application of law despite the fact that the 21st amendment came into being 80 years ago because precedents are the basis of much of are legal system.
Was Prohibition a Failure?

With such an important and controversial social topic it is inevitable that scholars will have had significant disagreements. However the first, and arguably most important question is if Prohibition was a success or a failure. Depending on whether you see Prohibition as a success or failure is central to your fundamental understanding of the topic. It is the basis of any other question related to Prohibition.

A great deal of period literature from the 1920’s and 30’s discusses the merits and faults of Prohibition. H. L. Mencken, a journalist, wrote in the midst of the Prohibition that:

"Five years of Prohibition have had, at least, this one benign effect: they have completely disposed of all the favorite arguments of the Prohibitionists. None of the great boons and usufructs that were to follow the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment has come to pass. There is not less drunkenness in the Republic but more. There is not less crime, but more. There is not less insanity, but more. The cost of government is not smaller, but vastly greater. Respect for law has not increased, but diminished. (Engdahl, 2009)"

This short quote summarizes early popular discussion of Prohibition as it was largely considered to be a total failure. The people who had orchestrated it
were considered to be misguided busy bodies that in the attempt of their social experiment proved that legislation couldn't change social behavior. Most of this early work is considered to be hopelessly rooted in the partisan politics of the time. These period pieces fail to add to the scholarly discussion, as hard data on the effects of Prohibition in relation to the economy and society at large, were not reliable. Hard information on speakeasies, arrests, and police efforts was still difficult to come by and the effects of Prohibition on the country were still not fully understood (Warburton, 1932). An exception that ruled was the work of Charles Merz who avoided the partisan debate by using a concrete analysis of voting information. He showed that, despite anti-prohibition propaganda to the contrary, that the while the vote had been close, wets had won by a solid majority. Additionally Merz disproved with widespread misconception that women voting had been the reason for the passage of Prohibition. In reality women only participated in voting in seven states (Merz, 1969).

The first serious research on the causes of Prohibition began in the 1950’s with Richard Hofstadter’s *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.* which framed the years leading to Prohibition as an element of the progressive movement. He linked the work of social and political reformers like William Jennings Brain with the Temperance movement. Since its publication in 1955 Hofstadter’s work has been a seminal piece on the social movements leading to the Prohibition. Though frequently cited in other research Hofstadter is also well known for being extremely controversial (Howe, 1974.) Not least of all because he argued that the Populist
movement, which helped drive temperance, supported anti-Semitism (Dinnerstein, 1970.) His views on the subject were colored by his own experience with populism in the form of the rise of the Nazi party and Hitler in Germany. Additionally some have been critical of Hofstadter's analysis of the political forces that created the Prohibition in which he devalues the work of protest groups (Pollack, 1960.) He produced enormous amounts of research throughout his life, so much so that entire historiographical studies exist on just his work (Singal, 1984.) His research, whether it was supported or questioned, was instrumental in encouraging others to continue researching the topic (Brinkley, 1985.) Most recently historians have started coming to the defense of Hofstadter, arguing that while some of his work may have faults it is still largely relevant and was incredibly important to the study of Prohibition (Johnston, 2007.)

Andrew Sinclair built off of Hofstadter's work in his piece, *Prohibition an Era of Excess*, in which he argues the Prohibition movement was not so much a health movement as a moral crusade against sin. He goes on to show that is was a naïve, failed attempt to legislate moral behavior, which he says is utterly impossible. He connects it with the idea that this was a protestant rural American campaign against the new urban immigrant upstarts. He attributes the success of the temperance movement first to aggressive political strategies that removed uncooperative politicians from office or intimidated them into submission. Additionally post-World War 1 anti-German sentiment and a national push for reform in many areas of American life. (Sinclair, 1962).
A major turning point in the field of study came in 1968 with John Burnham's *New Perspectives on the Prohibition 'Experiment' of the 1920's*. He argued, counter to the vast majority of work that came before him, that the temperance movement was not the failure that it was popularly considered. Burnham's central point was that the two most common criticisms of the temperance movement, that the law was never able to really stop people from getting alcohol and that the illicit trade it created funded the creation of a large organized criminal underworld, were in fact false. In his paper Burnham points out that reformers had attempted to decrease alcohol consumption, not stop it entirely. In this far more limited goal it could be considered to have been largely successful. Alcohol use in general and especially in the lower classes saw a marked decrease. Also Burnham was able to show that organized crime was already a growing problem in America's cities long before Prohibition was enacted. He does not argue that Prohibition created new avenues of revenue for criminals but instead that the already burgeoning organized crime world merely took advantage of an opportunity. Burnham's piece is one of the first to move past the partisan politics of the Prohibition era commentary try to a truly new approach to studying Prohibition.

The 1970's saw a number of papers and books, including *Deliver Us From Evil: An interpretation of American Prohibition* by N.H. Clark which delved into the political roots of Prohibition. Specifically he argued that a key factor related to its success was social conflict between urban and rural Americans. The rural middle
class saw bars as dens of drunkenness and sin. As a result they waged a successful political campaign to fight bars and the sale of alcohol (Clark, 1976.) In essence it was, according to Clark, a battle between the new Americans and the old, or in a more geographic sense, the Northern cities versus the South and West's small towns (Clark, 1976.)

H.G. Levine in *The Birth of American Alcohol Control* argued that Prohibition was able to become a constitutional amendment largely because upper-class groups like the Committee of Fifty to Investigate the Liquor Problem were able to convince middle class Americans that liquor was the root of most of the major social issues in America. Crime, and poverty would be swept away if only liquor were to be removed from society. The popular evangelist Billy Sunday said on the passage of the 18th amendment that, “The reign of tears is over. The slums will soon be a memory. We will turn our prisons into factories and our jails into storehouses and corncribs. Men will walk upright now, women will smile and the children will laugh. Hell will be forever for rent.” Levine argued this was not the case, instead the 18th amendment not only failed to prevent alcohol sales but it also gave power and money to criminals and produced a general disrespect for the law (Levine, 1982).

**Prohibition as a Social Crusade**

Joseph Gusfield *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement* in 1963 added another layer to the historical discussion by
discussing the sociological factors related to the movement. Specifically he brought
the discussion of Prohibition a new level of depth by adding the idea that the
movement was deeply related to class. He points out that it was the rich and middle
class who most pushed for Prohibition as a way of “improving” the lower classes.

Both the Democratic and Republican parties became divided on the issue of
Prohibition as geography, class, sex, class, and religion forced people to take sides.
Coker and Gusfield in their pieces, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern
White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement* and *Symbolic Crusade: Status
Politics and the American Temperance Movement* respectively make cases for the
effect class, geography and religion played in Prohibition politics. They argue that
the wave of Catholic immigrants before Prohibition led to an us versus them policy.
It is no accident that Bible belt, Anglo-Saxon, Protestants were at the forefront of the
dry movement (Coker, 2007.) These mostly middle class people saw themselves as
protectors of the working poor who wasted their hard earned, though meager,
wages on booze and sin. Meanwhile for the new immigrants who were largely
working class and of European heritage, beer and wine were critical parts of social
life.

The temperance movement found success in the rise of modern single-issue
politics (Burns, 2011.) Groups like the Anti-Saloon League were able to accomplish
what other, less single focused groups such as the WTCU which mixed women’s
rights with their dry politics, were unable to do (Blocker, 1989.) Blocker goes on to
describe how the Prohibition movement became a way for the middle class to consolidate power, and was not really a real attempt at helping the lower class. The middle class was able to form coalitions with other like-minded groups that would never have worked together. Unions and captains of industry such as Henry Ford were an unlikely group to work together but both saw alcohol as a major social problem. The unions saw alcohol as a plot by capitalists to keep the worker drunk and down. Henry Ford thought he would have more productive workers without alcohol in their lives. Similarly Booker T. Washington and the Ku Klux Klan supported Prohibition on the grounds that it would help African American men and women advance in society and prevent blacks from turning into drunk, violent brutes, respectively (Burns, 2011.)

Austin Kerr in *Organized For Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* shows how this single-issue group was able to succeed using a corporate model that relied on organization and political unity. The Anti Saloon League aimed to control the 10% margin that most elections are decided by. In that way they were able to sway elections in one direction of the other, intimidating or replacing uncooperative politicians. By using their aggressive policies they were able to do the impossible and pass the 18th amendment (Kerr, 1985.)

David Kyvig in his article on *Repealing National Prohibition* argues that the repeal of Prohibition was far from the foregone conclusion that we often think of it as today. The process of repealing the 18th amendment, the only amendment to ever
be overturned, was a fierce political battle for the hearts and minds of Americans. He made a special point of arguing that much of the negative feelings towards Prohibition were the result of a media frenzy surrounding organized crime and speakeasy culture. Kyvigs point being that these negative images showed Prohibition exacerbating the problems that its proponents said it would fix.

**LAW**

In 1981 Kenneth Murchison wrote *Prohibition and the Fourth Amendment: A New Look at Some Old Cases*. In it he offers an alternative assessment of the historical significance of Prohibition by discussing its effect on law. Specifically he argues that it had a great deal of influence on interpretation of the 4th amendment. Murchison explains how the 18th amendment not only influenced legal thought during the Prohibition era but continues to manipulate our legal system (Murchison, 1981). Noah Feldmen in Ken Burns documentary *Prohibition*, supports Murchison’s analysis the Prohibition set many legal precedents despite its eventual repeal (Burns, 2011.) Specifically he mentions wire tapping as admissible evidence against Roy Olmstead and the use of tax evasion to arrest Al Capone (Burns, 2011).

In the 1980’s and 1990’s historians such as Richard Hamm in *Shaping the Eighteenth Amendment: Temperance Reform, Legal Culture, and the Polity, 1880-192* delved into the legal and propaganda tactics used to by the temperance movement to promote its message. These new historians focused on the tactics used to create
the tremendous support needed to pass a constitutional amendment. Specifically Prohibitionists were able to use the introduction of the Federal income tax as leverage to the creation of the 18th amendment. Additionally by wording the amendment in such a way that both the State and Federal government had control over the enforcement of Prohibition for the purposes of getting the necessary votes in congress it led to a gap in whose job it really was in enforce. By giving the job of enforcement to everyone it created a situation where no one was accountable. (Hamm, 1995.) Prior to the income tax, alcohol excise taxes was upwards of 60% of the federal revenue and it would have been impossible to ban it without the new revenue generated by the income tax (Burns, 2011).

**Addiction**

In 1989 Ethan A. Nadelmann brought new light to the discussion of Prohibition in his argument for the ineffectiveness of drug Prohibition. Nadelmann who is a Politics professor used the 18th amendment as an example of the failure of such polices in an essay arguing for a fundamental change in modern American drug policies. By making an argument that countered John Burnham’s *New Perspectives on the Prohibition ‘Experiment’ of the 1920's* he pointed out that the decrease in alcohol consumption was not a result of the Prohibition of alcohol. He discusses that while the number of people admitted to hospitals for alcohol related liver damage decreased during the years of Prohibition as opposed to the years before it was not because of a change in law. Nadelmann points out that the years with the
least number of alcohol related medical treatments were actually the years immediately before the passage of the 18th amendment. Patriotic pressure during World War I to shun all things German, like beer, played a role as well as a temperance groups who put out massive amounts on information highlighting the evil of alcohol, and had numerous public demonstrations in the decreased the use of alcohol nationally. However the trend for hospital cases related to alcohol use was actually on the rise in waning years of Prohibition. Nadelmann’s asserts therefore that social, rather than legal efforts were much more effective at curbing alcohol abuse. Numerous psychologists, drug counselors and historians have come out criticizing Nadelmanns work and is very much a lively debate (Nadlemann, 1989).

Gabriela Recio argued for further connections between the modern-drug trade by discussing the roots of the drug trade between Mexico and the United States. Specifically she relates how the drug trade of today has its origins in the Prohibition era. During that period Mexicans and Americans learned how to work together for their mutual profit and developed the logistical systems to bring illegal materials across the boarder. Additionally opium and other illicit materials were discovered to be very profitable trade items and also began to be transported across the border (Reico, 2009). Reico discussed how the modern drug market owes a great deal to the Prohibition era.

Besides the battle against hard drugs Prohibition has also been used to ague against many laws that try to legislate the way Americans live their personal lives.
Daniel Okrent, a popular writer on the subject of Prohibition (see “Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition”) wrote an article in the New York Times entitled Paradox of Prohibition, comparing Bloomberg’s ban on large soft drinks with Prohibition. Okrent argues that that it is a futile attempt to change social habits, and will, like Prohibition, fail in the long run. He restates the same fundamental point in an interview saying, “who the hell are you to tell me how to live my life?” His opinion is given extra weight when he reveals that he himself is an alcoholic. His decision to become sober was the result of personal decision-making, which he argues, is what each person needs to do, not the government (Burns, 2011.)

Gender Studies

Research in the 1980’s began to frame the Prohibition movement in terms of its feminist roots in such organizations as the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (Bordin, 1980). They argue that Prohibition was seen as a logical step in furthering the rights of women. In fact the Prohibition movement was largely seen as a women’s crusade. Alcohol abuse in America led to spousal abuse, and money that was needed at home was wasted on alcohol. Also the women’s rights groups that formed to combat saloons gave Women new found political power in America. It was no accident that women gained the right to vote the same year Prohibition was enacted. Additional researcher done by Ian Tyrrell in Woman’s World/Woman’s Empire: The Woman’s Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1800-1930 argue that the Prohibition movement and the Woman’s Christian
Temperance Union specifically pushed internationally in its efforts to promote Prohibition while also criticizing patriarchal society, and even national greed and imperialism. While (Tyrrell, 1991). However he argues that the group failed to find a following in other cultures because the movement was so linked to Anglo-Saxon and Protestant beliefs. The WTCU’s belief that they were culturally superior turned many people away from the feminist side of the organization (Tyrrell, 1991).

In 1998 Catherine Gilbert Murdock’s *Domesticating Drink: Women, Men, and Alcohol in America, 1870-1940* shakes the traditional view that women were exclusively temperance movement supporters by researching women who did the exact opposite. She shows us a new side of Prohibition era feminism in women who liked to drink and would fight to end Prohibition. She discusses the work of Pauline Sabin and the Women’s Organization for National Prohibition Reform, created in 1929, which were instrumental in changing attitudes across on the nation. No longer was the idea of repealing Prohibition an exclusively male idea (Murdock, 1998.)

Joshua Zeitz wrote *Flapper: A Madcap Story of Sex, Style, Celebrity, and the Women Who Made America Modern*. In it he chronicles the rise of the flapper and the growing roles Americans gained in society. From Lois Long in New York writing on the speakeasy party culture to Coco Channel who would define fashion and beauty the world over. Zeitz focused on the idea of the flapper and the women who defined what it meant to be one.
A Note on Ken Burns’ *Prohibition*

Without picking sides in the more hotly contested historical arguments Ken Burns’ three-part, four and half hour documentary, does cover massive amounts of information. It acknowledges the complexity of the topic by giving equal credit to many sides of the many debates. For example Burns acknowledges the idea that less alcohol was being consumed during Prohibition than previously while also pointing out that an enormous number of people, including the very people who created and were supposed to enforce the law, were breaking it. The documentary is not a scholarly source, in that it was not peer reviewed by other historians but it includes numerous historians, authors, and primary sources that make it worthwhile from a serious historical perspective.

Local Histories and My Contribution

Many historians have also studied Prohibition from a more geographically focused perspective. In the 1940’s James Sellers wrote on the topic of Prohibition in Alabama. In it Sellers described how racism was a major motivator for the push for Prohibition. By banning the sale of alcohol it was thought that it would help keep African Americans from turning into drunken beasts. For example Joe L. Coker’s *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement* uses the focus of the southern United States to compete with the more
traditional focus on northern and Midwestern America. Truman Clark in *Prohibition in Puerto Rico, 1917-1933* analyzes the passage, effects and eventual repeal of Prohibition in Puerto Rico. Finally *Dry Manhattan* by Michael Lerner addresses Prohibition in Manhattan and the nearby refuge of Long Island. Together these historical studies offer a more nuanced discussion of the Prohibition by avoiding sweeping generalizations of the country at large.

Rochester New York, the subject of my research has had relatively few scholarly historical treatments. The only major studies were done by Harvard graduate, and Rochester City Historian, Blake Mckelvey. He wrote a number of books and articles but his two most related to the study of Prohibition Rochester were *Rochester: The Quest for Quality 1890-1925* and *Rochester An Emerging Metropolis 1925-1961*. His works cross an enormous amount of topics related to Rochester during the Prohibition Era. He dealt specifically with the social, political, and religious factors that effected Rochester. Since Mckelvey there has been little scholarly historical study of Rochester’s history. A local historical magazine called *City History* has put out a number of useful studies on topics such as Brewing in Rochester, and a history of the Rochester Police Department (Rosenberg-Naparsteck 1992 and Mckelvey 1963.) Arch Merrill, Henry Clune, Bob Marcotte and Emerson Klees were all local writers who comments on Rochester’s history, including Prohibition. These articles, while interesting, fails to acknowledge the historiography of the topic and therefore adds little to the national or even local discussion. Curt Gerling wrote several novels in a series on Rochester called
Smugtown USA. In it he wrote about Rochester’s social scene, though it mostly dealt with the lifestyles of the rich and famous (Gerling, 1993). Several book have been published on the illicit rum trade across the US/Canada border, including the self-published *Whiskey and Ice* by C.W. Hunt and Allen Everst’s *Rum across the Border*.

My research, the study of Prohibition Rochester, can add to the historical understanding of the era. I know for example that a young Rochester Policeman listed in the history of Rochester Police Department was not as incorruptible as he appears in the magazine article (Mckelvey 1963.) Thomas Van Auker Lived at 4 Tryer Street next door to two other families, the Schleyers and the Hendricks’. The three families worked together to run the Charles Schleyer Hotel on 1005 North Clinton Avenue, which was not a particularly well hidden a speakeasy. I can discuss the heretofore-unmentioned side of Rochester, the speakeasy.

**Conclusion**

Any event that can capture America’s collective attention is bound to produce disagreements. However what the breadth of the research on this topic can tell us as historians is that Prohibition was a critical time in our nation’s history. Whatever lessons we choose to take from it will reflect heavily on our future decisions as a nation on political and social issues as well as having legal, gender relations, and drug enforcement repercussions. It is therefore imperative that historians, sociologists, political theorists, legal analysts, drug addiction counselors
and the many other scholars that have contributed to the discussion of continue to critique and refine their work.
PART II- Original Research

Depending on the person you ask, Prohibition can be connected to a seemingly infinite number of dramatic caricatures. For some it is the setting of the gritty crime escapades of Al Capone. To them no Prohibition story would be complete without men in dark coats armed with Tommy guns in shootouts with police. Others imagine the glamorous lives of New York City socialites, immortalized in *The Great Gatsby*. For them the flapper and champagne soaked parties in the Hamptons were Prohibition. Still others see the crusading wife, temperance workers protecting their families from the sin of alcohol. These caricatures of the Prohibition era are by no means inherently wrong. One needs to only look at the vast amount of scholarly writing on any one those topics, as outlined in my historiography, to see that a great deal of research exists to support a variety of different viewpoints. However, these generalizations focus on the sensational stories of the time period and ignore the mundane realities. Members of my family owned a speakeasy called The Schleyer Hotel in Rochester during Prohibition. The experience of my family was the impetus for my research. I found that what was most dramatic about their story was how little the word dramatic could be used to describe their lifestyle. For the vast majority of people in Rochester, Prohibition was not gunfire and organized crime like in Chicago; the speakeasy hidden behind a staircase in New York City, or even the Bible beating temperance workers of Kansas. Prohibition Rochester was a city where the brewing industry was too deeply rooted, where Canada and easy access to smuggled liquor was too close, and the population
was made up of too many newly immigrated families with cultures that embraced alcohol. Even modest attempts at temperance reform in the early 1900's were met by opposition in Rochester. Legislators hoped that enforcement of the 18th amendment would be like the little Dutch boy, holding back the sea by plugging up a hole with his thumb. In Rochester the reality was more akin to a screen door on a submarine. Prohibition was never going to work in Rochester.

My interviews with my family were my gateway into Rochester’s past and speakeasy culture. My grandfather, William Hendrick, was the first person in my family to mention any knowledge of any connection to Prohibition. It was something of a surprise when he casually mentioned that the Hendrick family ran a speakeasy in the 1920s. As we probed him for more information he was able to shed light on an area of history unknown to the family. My grandfather, who is 90 years old, is a man with an unusually sharp memory. He will proudly recite poems he learned in second grade with perfect fidelity or name every boy on his middle school baseball team. However as he has grown older and health issues have begun to affect his speech and short-term memory, it has become harder to elicit some of those distant memories clearly. At first the names, places, and events were jumbled but as we both slowly grew more comfortable with the topic and I became more familiar with what he was describing, we started to make real headway. I knew though that if I was going to continue this project I was going to need multiple sources of information. I interviewed all of the family members that I could and
while I found some secondary information from the children of my grandfather’s generation, he is the last person from that generation in my immediate family. It was only through a fortuitous chance meeting of a distant cousin, Todd VanAuker, who over heard me talking about the Schleyer Hotel in passing. He introduced me to Miriam Harnischfegar who was my grandfather’s cousin. She was able to share a great deal of information on the Schleyer Hotel as she lived next door to my grandfather ad behind the speakeasy. As I looked for additional corroborating evidence from other sources to support my grandfather’s and Miriam’s statements, I discovered that their memories proved to be extremely accurate. Obviously I was not able to substantiate every story they told me, there simply aren’t any records for much of what they described. Some of it was simply too obscure to have been recorded, or it was purposefully hidden to avoid criminal charges. However, in many cases by looking for secondary or tertiary sources I found a wealth of supporting information. Through the stories of my family I was able to see Rochester in a new light, that hinted at a city that was transitioning from a small mill town into a modern industrial city.

**Method**

In order to gather information for this project I used a mixture of primary sources and secondary sources as is standard in historical research. However, I felt it was especially important to corroborate the information I gathered from my interviews as I was depending on the memory of an extremely small group of
people. As with any endeavor that relies on human memory I was concerned that inaccuracies might slip into my paper though errors of memory or errors in my own comprehension. One of the most useful resources to this project in terms of validating the oral history were the Rochester Business Directories. They were an annual product created by the city of Rochester that was similar to the White and Yellow Pages of today. They had four main sections, first was an alphabetical list of the name, address, and occupation of the adults in Rochester. Second was a business directory. Third was a street and house directory that listed what people or businesses could be found at each address. Finally the directory had a miscellaneous data section that listed information about Rochester including office holders, their salaries, and various census data about the makeup of Rochester. I used the Rochester Business Directory to track the careers and locations of various family members and corroborate the oral history from my grandfather and other family members.

Setting the Stage

In 1906, the year my great grandfather Robert Hendrick moved to Rochester, the city, and the country in general, were in the midst of enormous change. Rochester was the 24th largest city in America, with a population of 181,666 which had grown by nearly 50,000 people in only 16 years. The infant mortality rate was 1:8, 433 children were reported to have died before their first birthday. James Cutler, a Republican, was Mayor of the city and he was paid $5,000 a year
(Rochester Directories, 1906). Early European immigrant groups, such as the Germans and the Irish, that had started coming to Rochester with the opening of the Erie Canal, had been there in large numbers since the 1800’s. They were being joined by later waves of immigrants in the form of thousands of Italians, Jews, and Eastern Europeans (Mckelvey 1956).

At the national level, Theodore Roosevelt was the President and he would receive a Nobel peace prize that year for his efforts to mediate a peace treaty between Russia and Japan. The influx of immigrants was not limited to Rochester as much of the country was experiencing changes in demographics. Partially in response to the wave of new immigrants, the Temperance Movement, pushing rural, middle class, protestant values, grew in popularity. Drawing support from a wide range of groups they advocated for social and legal change that would curb alcohol consumption.

![Figure 1: Population Distribution by Ethnicity in Rochester, 1906 and 1919](image)

In the early 1900s Rochester was already a substantial city that had grown thanks to the Genesee River and the Erie Canal. Dubbed the “Young Lion of the
West,” Rochester was outgrowing the “Flour City” designation, as it became “Flower City” and a modern industrial center. By the 1920s men’s clothing and women’s shoes were the two largest industries, though Bausch & Lomb was creating precision microscopes and George Eastman was beginning his rise as one of the most influential businessmen in Rochester through Kodak (McKelvey, 1956). The Erie Canal had steadily lost its economic importance, replaced by freight trains as the cheaper and faster option. The Canal was seen as more of an inconvenience due to its expensive maintenance costs, “putrid odor,” and dangerously slippery banks (McKelvey, 1956).

The Progressive movement was sweeping the nation, and with it was a push for temperance. Into these tumultuous times, 23-year-old Robert Hendrick moved to Rochester to stay with relatives. He was of Irish descent but had been born in Scranton, Pennsylvania. Robert was my great-grandfather and the first of my direct descendents on the Hendrick side to move to Rochester. He rented a room from John Hendrick, his distant relative, at 234 Hudson Avenue. John was a teamster and was able to get a job for Robert doing odd jobs. He would stay with John on Hudson Ave. until 1910, though his job would change many times during this period and throughout his life.

In 1910 Robert moved to New York City to work at one of William Randolph Hearst’s newspapers. Eventually he would be put in charge of circulation of one of Hearst papers. In this period of yellow journalism and stiff competition between
papers, circulation did not mean simply handing out papers. Robert Hendricks’ position in the business seems to have been closer to distribution enforcer. This included paying newsies to only hand out Hearst papers or even urinate on copies of their rivals. He rose high enough in the company that he was invited to Hurst’s home in California several times. In this period from 1911 to 1916 Robert met Helen Schleyer my great-grandmother. She had been working for her father at the Schleyer Hotel at 1005 North Clinton Avenue.

Helen, a woman of German descent, had been born and raised in Rochester. She grew up in a more affluent family than Robert, because her stepfather, Charles Schleyer, was a successful businessman. Helen’s biological father, Charles Young, died at a young age and her mother, Anna, had married Schleyer later in life. Schleyer himself was the son of a prosperous family, as he grew up in the traditionally wealthy East Ave area on Strathallan Park (Rochester Directories). He initially worked at a family owned butcher shop on Main Street called The Schleyer Market, but his business grew to own multiple properties. Charles’ longest running and most lucrative business was the hotel on North Clinton and restaurant inside of it. Originally the hotel had been farther south, at 801 North Clinton, though that was only for a year. When the Hickey-Freeman Company, an upscale suit maker, opened a factory in 1911, the hotel moved closer to the factory (Rochester Directories). Schleyer employed many members of his family to help run the business, including Helen and her sisters. He also bought up many properties in the surrounding area so his family could live near the hotel.
Figure 2: Columbus Day Parade: 1910, The Schleyer Market can be seen to the right, across from the closest trolley car with the large awning. Image courtesy of the Albert Stone Collection.

Though the exact dates and circumstances are not clear, it appears that Robert was traveling regularly between New York City and Rochester. During this time Robert and Helen met, grew close, and eventually were married. Robert Hendrick still worked in New York so Helen returned downstate with him. Trouble arose however as Helen grew tired of New York City, saying, according to my grandfather that “This is for the birds,” and she moved back to Rochester. Her husband attempted to commute between the two cities, but in the end he quit his job at the newspaper and moved back to be with his wife in Rochester. The young couple moved into 6 Tryer Street, one of three connected homes built by Schleyer directly behind the hotel at 6, 4, and 2 respectively. The daughters of Schleyer and
their families occupied the three homes. In the hotel, a small number of long-term boarders lived upstairs, which included a number of Schleyer family members, who would eat their meals in the kitchen while patrons would dine in a large public room. Besides the Factory workers and people from the community, a mostly German neighborhood, would stop in for food, which included traditional German cooking like wienerschnitzel, as well as more standard American fare. Along with the food was the ever-present accompaniment of beer, and at the Schleyer hotel you could get a free lunch if you ordered a beer. The beer for was served in a separate saloon for those who only wanted a drink while the dining room was reserved sitting down for a meal. The German immigrants, who included the Schleyer family, who had come to Rochester in the 1800s had brought with them their love for beer.

To meet the demand of the German-American population, the beer industry became an important port of the local economy in Rochester as breweries could be found all over the city (Mckelvey, 1956). At least seven major breweries were operating in Rochester prior to Prohibition, and many smaller breweries existed in the margins. The breweries themselves employed hundreds of people and the support industries like bottlers, salesmen, Teamsters, ice cutters, barley and grain farmers, tavern keepers, horsemen, label and wagon makers employed hundreds more. Significant portions of Rochester’s population were dependent upon the beer industry for their livelihood (Rosenberg-Naparsteck, 1992).
The general opinion in Rochester toward beer therefore was shaped by the importance of the beer industry and German cultural attitudes. This led to certain stances regarding laws meant to temper the consumption of alcohol. For example, the decision to call The Schleyer Hotel a hotel was not an accident. It was equal parts restaurant, saloon, and boarding house. Schleyer wanted to be able to serve alcohol on Sundays. According to a New York State blue law called Raines Law, it was illegal to sell liquor on Sundays except for in hotels. Therefore many saloons, restaurants, and bars such as Schleyer’s place of business “mysteriously” became hotels when Raines Law was passed through the New York State legislature in 1896 (Mckelvey, 1956). These Raines Law Hotels, as they were derisively called, represented a portion of the population that thumbed their nose at anti-saloon groups. Raines Law however, was one of many that were passed by anti-saloon groups across the nation to try to curb alcohol sales.

The most obvious target for most temperance-movement groups was the saloon. Saloons were known as dens of vice and sin of all sorts, from general drunkenness all the way up to gambling and prostitution. In 1909 a letter to an editor of a Rochester newspaper, the Democrat and Chronicle, complained that despite what a recent article on the success of temperance workers in the area said, drunken men in “all states of intoxication” were still to be found. The writer, a pastor from a nearby town named Alexander Mackenzie wrote that drunks could be “counted on the lawn of a certain big saloon keeper in Charlotte.” (Town of Greece Historians Office) This letter represents the battle in Rochester between the
temperance workers and the saloons. It highlights the common perception at the
time that alcohol consumption was synonymous with alcohol abuse. Although, it is
important to recognize that alcohol abuse was in fact a major problem in Rochester
and America in general.

Between 1911 and 1915, Americans drank 2.56 gallons of alcohol per capita,
and Rochester was almost certainly well above the national average as it was a
heavily German city with a significant number of saloons and breweries (Pegram,
1998. The area of Rochester most associated with the dangers of alcohol was the
Bowery area of Front Street with bars like the Doud Saloon. It was known for its
“cheap liquor and free-for-all fights” and was considered an extremely rough street
(Albert Stone Collection). Saloons that catered to gambling and prostitution existed
across the city, state, and nation. In an effort to fight theses vices city ordinances
were passed banning ladies sitting rooms in saloons, and demanding that windows
must be clean and not be obscured by curtains (Mckelvey, 1963).
The Schleyer Hotel did have a lady's sitting room but whether or not it also ran gambling and prostitution I cannot say with certainty. My grandfather was only 4 years old in 1920 when Prohibition began and he was not allowed into the Saloon area of the hotel. However it is important to remember that saloons of this era, much like bars today, came in many varieties. The Doud Saloon on Front Street seems to have had a well-deserved and unseemly reputation. The entire neighborhood was known for its drunken debauchery. The Schleyer Hotel was located in the middle of a residential neighborhood. Since hotel was home of Charles Schleyer, his wife, and many of his daughters and their families. I would hypothesize that some of the shadier sides of saloons may have gone on elsewhere.

Rochester was not the only part of the country experiencing the effects of the temperance movement. National interest groups were mobilizing their resources to begin a push to turn the social temperance movement into a legal requirement across the nation.
The temperance movement has often been seen as an offshoot of other social reform. Historically, Rochester has been home to many ardent social reformers such as Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony. Women’s rights groups have been closely associated with temperance movements from its earliest days. Alcohol was largely regarded as the root of many social ills affecting women. Men who drank were said to waste their wages on the liquor, turn to gambling and prostitution, and finally abuse their wives and children in drunken rages. It was thought that by promoting temperance reform, the plight of women would improve.

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union, or WTCU, were early campaigners for the temperance movement (Burns, 2011). Though Rochester’s most famous women’s rights activist, Susan B. Anthony, did not support Prohibition
which she saw as a distraction from real reform for women in the form of the right to vote) many other women did (McKelvey, 1956). The local branch of the WCTU was able to exert considerable influence in Rochester through public demonstrations and protests. Women would protest outside of saloons and markets that sold alcohol. The protestors would harass patrons, causing more than one confrontation between irritated owners and protestors. In January 1874, more than 200 women marched on the Frankfurt Market, a grocery store that sold alcohol at Brown Street and State Street (Rosenberg-Naparsteck, 1992). This so-called “Women’s War” was soon to become overshadowed by a surging national movement that came from many different aspects of society (Burns, 2011).

Prohibition has also often been characterized as the immigrant versus the natives. Rochester was filling with immigrants from all over the world and at the turn of the century Rochester’s demographics were changing dramatically. The
previous minority of Catholics were outgrowing that classification. The German and Irish that had made up the majority of Catholics in Rochester were joined by an influx, Polish, Italian, and Lithuanians. Ethnic divisions along language and cultural boundaries were common. In some parishes such as St. Boniface in southern Rochester continued to say prayers in German well into the new century (McKelvey, 1956).

Rochester’s Bishop Bernard McQuaid made significant efforts to encourage integration among the various ethnically divided parishes. He was largely successful though St. Boniface in a German neighborhood on Gregory Street was the last church in Rochester to say prayers in a language other than English (McKelvey, 1956.) McQuaid actively encouraged Americanization of all Catholic children through schools and interparish activities (Salamone, 2000). My Great-grandfather played baseball in an adult, church sponsored, league through which he may a number of acquaintances from other areas of the city. Furthermore, churches from different parts of the city would parade with each other in a sign of solidarity (McKelvey, 1956). These new and old Catholic immigrants generally found acceptance with each other as well as with the other major religions in Rochester. The Catholic community had the added benefit of a shared language in that masses during the period were still being said in Latin. Certain prayers might be said in another language but the masses would be speaking the same language wherever a person went.
The Jewish population in Rochester also grew during this time, and found acceptance. Jewish immigrants settled across the area and established schools, synagogues, and industries. Rochester was largely free of the religious and racial tension that plagued many other cities. In fact the KKK, which had been growing nationally, was met by major protests when they attempted to have a rally on the top of Cobbs Hill (McKelvey, 1956).

Protestant groups such as the previously dominant Presbyterians were challenged by an influx of Baptists, Methodists, Pentecostals, and Lutherans. Like elsewhere in the country, the Protestant community was the driving force behind the temperance movement. Much of the early support for the creation of the 18th amendment was through the support of Protestant churches. The Bible Belt of the Midwestern United States were the first to adopt anti-liquor laws and were the national movement’s most ardent supporters. Rochester branches of these churches were equally fervent in their support of temperance. While the national temperance movement had the former baseball player turned minister Billy Sunday and the hatchet-wielding Carrie Nation, both made appearances the foremost activist locally was Clinton N. Howard (McKelvey, 1956). Howard was a well-known lecturer and orator at the Lake Avenue Baptist Church who spoke out on a number of topics but was particularly passionate about the subject of Prohibition. Dubbed the “Little Giant,” he was a man of short stature but powerful influence (Albert Stone Collection). Howard was a leader and founder of the Prohibition Union of Christian Men, an organization with more than 3,000 members that held weekly Sunday
forums that drew enormous crowds. His impassioned speeches and rousing sermons helped bring temperance to the forefront of Rochester politics. He would campaign ardently throughout his life for temperance (McKelvey, 1956).

Howard took it upon himself to see that Prohibition laws, such as Raines law, were obeyed. He even went so far as to recruit over 100 volunteers to go around to various saloons on Sunday, January 8, 1899, to ensure they were not selling liquor. According to local papers, this was “the driest day in Rochester’s history.” Howard touted the day as the first victory in what was sure to be a long line of victories for the temperance movement. However, a few short months later on October 30, 1899, a journalist went out into Rochester on a Sunday to investigate if the change to permanent and he found “many Sunday drunks” (McKelvey, 1956). Many saloons and “hotels” had become so brazen that they openly flouted Raines Law. In reaction to this a group of local lawyers, led by Harvey F. Remington, formed a Law Enforcement League. They began to prosecute businesses that sold alcohol on...
Sunday and were able to put pressure on dance halls, saloons, and hotels that operated flagrantly against the law on Sundays. Such was Howard’s power that he forced the Rochester Chamber of Commerce to remove a wine list from their annual banquet (McKelvey 1956).

Before the passage of the 18th amendment most police efforts in regard to saloons were in the enforcement of Sunday closing laws and the prevention of gambling. The enforcement was not equal in all places though, as Rochester mayor James Cutler pointed out; the law only seemed to affect the poor in the saloons as opposed to the rich clubs and meeting halls. Alcohol was an important element of almost all social clubs and when liquor license prices were raised only rich clubs could afford them. (McKelvey, 1956) The Whist Club, an organization with very affluent members and alcohol-serving establishment, was allowed to operate largely without interference from the law on any day of the week they liked. Meanwhile in saloons, the poor mans social club, owners were constantly being harried by police for breaking the various liquor laws. Clinton Howard, to his credit, pushed to close loopholes in the law that allowed these clubs to exist but the Whist clubs, and organizations like it operated with relative impunity. His efforts were constantly undermined by the rich and powerful who frequented the high society clubs (McKelvey, 1956).

World War I proved a anxious time in Rochester as the large numbers of German immigrants found themselves in a tense situation. While the U.S.
government remained firmly neutral, British efforts to sway the American public
Propaganda distributed by British supporters in America was very effective in
persuading many Americans to support the British. German-American residents
wrote editorials condemning what they saw as British propaganda regarding
German atrocities in Belgium. However, all but the most ardent supporters of
Germany lost their zeal on April 6, 1917, when three men from Rochester were
killed when a German U-boat sank the Lusitania (McKelvey, 1956). In fact, New
York State Governor, Charles Hughes, who campaigned for a more active stand
against Germany beat the isolationist Woodrow Wilson by two-thirds in Rochester,
though Wilson won the national election. Despite Wilson’s previous stance on the
war, the United States joined World War I shortly after Wilson’s reelection. The
temperance movement was able to use the war to great effect, silencing German-
American brewers by accusing them of supporting the Kaiser. Additionally, the
Prohibition supporters created a wartime Prohibition law against alcohol under the
guise of conserving resources for the soldiers abroad (McKelvey, 1956).
Riding the surge of post-World War I support, national temperance groups brought the proposed 18th Amendment before Congress where it passed through both Houses and then went to the states for ratification. In a last-ditch effort to protect their companies breweries went on a publicity campaign trying to portray beer as a moderate drink and “liquid bread.” They argued that if Americans would switch to drinking beer instead of hard liquor then alcohol-related deaths would decrease (West, 2007). Despite the work of all of its opposition groups the amendment was ratified by 46 out of 48 states. Rochester remained opposed in spite of the national and state consensus. The battle over Rochester and its liquor was far from over because if creating the 18th Amendment was the first, enforcement was the next (McKelvey, 1956).

**Enforcing Prohibition**

On January 16, 1919, the 18th Amendment was finally ratified by the states and it became part of American law. Many people were surprised when the Volstead Act, the federal law enforcing the amendment, came into effect, as it was far stricter than most had predicted. Many people had thought it would outlaw hard liquor like whiskey while leaving less potent drinks like beer and wine unaffected. Instead, the Volstead Act outlawed the sale or creation of any beverage with an
alcohol content above .05% (Burns, 2011). Despite the law, a full year after the 18th Amendment had come into effect, more than 150 saloons were still listed in the Rochester Directories. Many more saloons, masquerading as hotels (such as the Schleyer Hotel) were also still in operation. These bars and hotels should have been serving non-alcoholic drinks but many, including the Schleyer Hotel, continued to serve alcohol.

The Schleyer Hotel was in business throughout Prohibition and had an illegal speakeasy business that operated within the hotel. Beer brewed locally, according to my grandfather, at the Genesee Brewery was brought in and dropped off in broad daylight on busy North Clinton Avenue. The Genesee Brewery, along with the other few remaining breweries left in Rochester were supposedly only producing malt beverages below the legal limit of .05 percent alcohol, or dairy products (Rosenberg-Naparsteck, 1992). However, many of these businesses continued to produce alcohol despite Prohibition. I had assumed my grandfather was mistaken when he told me the beer came from the Genesee Brewery, but corroborating his version of events was a newspaper article in 1929 where seven employees were arrested (Democrat and Chronicle May 7, 1929). According to the article, the men were accused of running an enormous illegal alcohol operation out of the brewery.
Whiskey, either brewed locally or smuggled from Canada, was hand delivered in kegs once a week to the Hotel. My grandfather remembers a Jewish man who drove an expensive car would stop by to make the weekly delivery. Whether or not this was from Canada or was created locally is difficult to tell. However, the enormous amount of whiskey being brought over from Canada would suggest that some, if not all, of it was part of the trade across Lake Ontario.

Rochester and its wide Ontario coastline was a focal point for a great deal of rum running. Rum running was a colloquial term for the act of smuggling liquor into the United States. Speakeasies began to appear all along the coastline, serving a convenient clandestine drop off point. The Sea Glades, for example, was a speakeasy that operated directly on the coast in Charlotte. The Sea Glades was famous for having the alcohol delivered directly to the establishment off of boats that pulled up
to their dock. The ritual was a source of entertainment for those that came to the speakeasy and stayed late enough to see the transaction (West, 2007).

![Figure 7: A captured boat that was once used for rum running. Image courtesy of the Albert Stone Collection.](image)

Unlike the Sea Glades, which had the benefit of being on a secluded beach, the Schleyer Hotel was in the center of Rochester. Police regularly raided businesses in the city including a speakeasy just down the street that was raided several times, filled to the brim with people. As mentioned before, the houses immediately behind the hotel, 2, 4, and 6 Treyer Street were all owned by family members of the Schleyers. The Hendrick family lived at 6 Treyer Street and the Luscher family resided in 2 Treyer Street. At 4 Treyer Street was the VanAuker family, which was headed by Ruth the sister of Helen Hendrick and her husband Thomas. While Ruth, like her sister, worked at the hotel her husband was a patrolmen with the Rochester City Police Department. The VanAukers lived directly behind a speakeasy so it
would have been impossible for him not to know it was there. The question is did Thomas help to protect the speakeasy from being raided? My grandfather, born in 1923, was a child during prohibition. However he still remembers several times when his father, Robert, would get a phone call that the Police might be on their way.

When I questioned my grandfather on Thomas’ role and asked if he was the one calling and warning the hotel he said he was not. Instead he said that a Sergeant Sharpe, who was a friend of Robert’s was making the calls. After some digging I found a Sergeant Archibald Sharpe who was a member of the Rochester City Police Department throughout the Prohibition era. Sharpe and Robert Hendrick were friends through the inter-parish Catholic baseball league. Sharpe and his twin brother Earl both played on Robert’s team and a close friendship developed from their association. As a sergeant, Sharpe would have been privy to more information than Thomas would have had as a patrolman.

Figure 8: Archibald Sharpe (Right) and his brother J. Earl (left) in 1927. Image courtesy of the Albert Stone Collection.
Clinton Howard, empowered by the passage of the 18\textsuperscript{th} Amendment took a page from the Anti-Saloon League’s playbook and tried to influence local politics by bringing the temperance vote into the equation. Temperance groups had found success nationally by making temperance an election talking point. These groups found that they did not need to have a majority of people behind their cause, but only enough to give the last bit of support to replace unfriendly politicians. In this way the Anti-Saloon league was able to exert power disproportionate to actual number of people who supported Prohibition (Burns, 2011). Howard created a committee of 25 that he hoped would put pressure on local politicians to enforce Prohibition more actively. Rochester Police Chief Joseph Quigley was firmly behind Prohibition, District Attorney William F. Love and Sheriff Franklin W. Judson were seen as “unfriendly to the cause.” However, this failed and both Love and Judson were reelected. An even more striking blow came to Howard when during the mayoral elections of 1921 Clarence Van Zandt won. Despite temperance attempts to portray him as a lax enforcer, Rochester's most prominent businessman, George Eastman, gave him his endorsement and Van Zandt defeated his opponent. Additionally, local writers such as Reverend William Brown questioned if Jesus would have approved of the Anti-Saloon League’s and Clinton Howard’s methods (McKelvey, 1956).

The Rochester Police Department, despite the feelings or actions of individual officers, was officially committed to supporting Prohibition. Police Chief
Quigley touted that 41 distilleries were seized in one month of 1921, boasting, “the lid is tight.” Meanwhile, due to the lack of supply of alcohol, the demand exploded. Prices remained such that it was very profitable to make small batches locally or to smuggle from Canada (McKelvey 1956). That same year, 1921, Rochester’s public directory listed more than 150 saloons in what can only be described as a brazen disregard for the law. These saloons would have had to at least appear to serve something other than alcohol, though soft drinks are not mentioned as an option until 1924. Enforcement did continue as the following year the directory lists only 94, and by 1926 not a single saloon is listed (Rochester Business Directory). The temperance movement had supporters and denouncers in both the Democratic and Republican parties (McKelvey, 1956). In Rochester as in the rest of the country, temperance workers would support any party that moved their agenda forward.

![Figure 9: Rochester law enforcement officers destroying confiscated alcohol seized during a raid. Image courtesy of the Albert Stone Collection.](image)

The problems for law enforcement seemed to only grow in Rochester despite the work of federal law enforcement who drew additional men from Buffalo in
1927 and restructured the local police procedure. The modernization of Rochester’s police force also included adding radios to all squad cars (Mckelvey 1963). The federal law officers in charge of enforcing Prohibition in Rochester, First Harold J. Van Aanom and then Roy N. Newton, were handicapped by a small staff that relied on tips from average citizens and the work of local police. The federal officers had little training and were grossly underpaid (Burns, 2011). Meanwhile bullet-ridden corpses were floating up on Charlotte Beach as rum running, much like the illegal drug trade today, sometimes turned violent. Raids on speakeasies frequently turned up nothing as they were tipped off well in advance. In September 1928 a US Coast Guard ship chased a ship believed to be smuggling alcohol off the coast of Durand Beach. More than 700 shots were exchanged but the smugglers were able to escape (Rosenberg-Naparsteck, 1992).

Entrepreneurs such as the Staud brothers, Midge, Karl, George and Eddie, operated successful illegal businesses all along Lake Ontario bringing beer and liquor to Rochester from Canada. Using 50-foot boats with large airplane engines, they were able to out run local police and evade capture. An accomplice on land would signal the Staud brothers when a cove or beach was safe and they would bring burlap sacks filled with liquor ashore. The Staud brothers were only arrested once, and were able to pay off the judge and return to their work with very little interruption (Lowell, 2011). They were not the first rumrunners to operate on Lake Ontario but they were the most successful. They used fast and heavily armed ships, apparently mounting a 50-caliber machine gun on one (West, 2007). The Staud
brothers were known for their strong-arm tactics, intimidating other would-be rumrunners with threats of violence. Henry Clune, a long-time local columnist for the Democrat and Chronicle was able to interview Midge Staud, the leader of the group. Clune maintained Midge’s secrecy by calling him “Handsome Slats” in his column but was able to write about some of his more exciting times as a rumrunner (West, 2007). The public’s fascination with the exploits of rumrunners was just a symptom of a much greater problem plaguing Rochester and the country in general. The sentiment was growing that the 18th amendment was creating more problems than it was solving.

An End to an Era

The enforcement of the Volstead Act and the 18th Amendment in Rochester was an uneven affair. On one hand, the police in Rochester filled the newspapers with reports of arrests for breaking liquor laws. Between January 17 and January 30 1927, a period of only 13 days, twelve illegal distilleries, rumrunners, and speakeasies were closed. This included the arrest of Alfio Boscarino, the so-called “King of the bootleggers,” and his 3,000-gallon distillery on Sander Street (West, 2007). On the other hand, The Schleyer Hotel operated unmolested for the duration of Prohibition. The hotel benefited from being the local watering hole in a German neighborhood; traditionally the most anti-Prohibition segment of the American immigrant community. It also operated discreetly, and counted police officers as its neighbors and patrons. Milton Silver, a retired Genesee Brewery executive, wrote
on the subject of speakeasies in Rochester in the Penfield-Republican Post in 1974. He listed many speakeasies that had operated during Prohibition. The son of a police captain ran a speakeasy on Exchange Street. A bar on Ward Street was the frequent hangout of a mounted policemen who would leave his horse, in full Rochester Police Department regalia, tied up outside at the end of his shift almost every night (Silver, 1974). Silver goes on to describe that most speakeasy owners were “quiet, unobtrusive businessmen.” I think that description fits the men who ran the Schleyer Hotel. They were not operating a secret underground lair with doormen and secret pass codes. This was a neighborhood place that undoubtedly wanted to avoid attention. It served the local people who didn’t see any reason that they shouldn’t be able to have a drink if they wanted.

This dichotomy between what the police did publicly and what was known by any reasonably aware person in a neighborhood with a speakeasy was Prohibition's undoing. People saw an uneven enforcement of laws, and a growth of violent crimes related to the illegal trade that supplied the alcohol. While Rochester was not known for a particularly violent alcohol trade, sensational stories in newspapers exaggerated their affect. Additionally, national attention was brought to cities like Chicago where violent organized crime became synonymous with the liquor trade. People like Al Capone were becoming national celebrities for their illegal actions, and operated with what appeared to be impunity. Capone was becoming rich while law enforcement appeared weak and ineffective (Burns, 2011).
These growing concerns only provided more fuel for the movement to overturn the 18th Amendment.

The push against Prohibition in Rochester was especially strong as even prominent businessmen, like Hiram Sibley of the popular Rochester department store Sibley’s, publicly gave $500 to the Association Against Prohibition (McKelvey, 1961). As national movements to repeal the 18th amendment grew, leading politicians like Franklin Delano Roosevelt ran on platforms that included its annulment. With the support of anti-Prohibitionists Roosevelt went on to win the presidency and helped to back the creation of the 21st Amendment, which officially repealed Prohibition in 1933 (Burns, 2011).

The breweries were open and serving beer in some places almost immediately after the 21st Amendment came into effect. The Genesee Brewery began producing a Liebotchaner, or cream ale, to celebrate, and anti-Prohibition groups at the Powers Hotel in downtown Rochester held a victory party. These celebrations were the exception, not the rule, as the Democrat and Chronicle reported that there were few great celebrations and very little trouble in the city the
day following the repeal of Prohibition. An editorial that same day pointed out that the repeal of the 18th amendment was the end of a ban on the sale of alcohol not the war on drunkenness (Democrat and Chronicle, Dec 6, 1933). Clinton Howard reacted predictably, comparing the repeal of Prohibition to the betrayal of Christ by Judas. He went on to say that he and his companions would be boycotting stores that sold alcohol, much as they did before the repeal of Prohibition (Democrat and Chronicle, Dec 6th and 7th 1933). The Genesee Brewery released a statement that seems to summarize the feelings of many in Rochester during the post-Prohibition era: “Don’t look back on Prohibition. Look to the future. What will it be? No one can say, of course, but one may fervently hope that they will be days of sanity and temperance - in habits, in actions and in words (Rosenberg-Naparsteck, 1992).”

The Schleyer Hotel, which had been open in one form or another since 1910, closed in 1933. Charles Schleyer continued to live on the second floor and operated a Soft Drink restaurant while sharing the space with Sattel Meats. By 1936 Robert Hendrick had taken over for Charles and started a restaurant on 1 ½ Treyer Street. The exact reason it closed it not clear though a contributing factor may have been the death of Charles’ wife, Anna Schleyer, in 1936. It is also possible that without the extra income from illegal untaxed alcohol that the hotel was no longer profitable. The adult children of the families living on Treyer Street moved out of their parents’ homes to start families of their own. The United States was in the grips of the Great Depression but the New Deal Programs created by Roosevelt were starting to give hope to those who previously had none. The looming menace of
Germany, the Soviet Union, and Japan would come to dominate the next fifty years of American History. Just as in the era of Prohibition, there are stories to be told in every era.

By bringing history out of the abstract and the white-washed versions that our textbooks teach us we can see it for what it really is, the story of people. These stories are lost when we do not pass them on to others. That is why oral history is essential to the study of our past. This project would have been impossible if it were not for the people that allowed me to interview them. Their stories, which added color and depth to an otherwise dry historical account are priceless artifacts. As historians we need to seek out oral history, and acknowledge it as the valuable resource it is. Every family has a story to tell. By learning more about our own past we can better understand our ancestors and the choices they made.

Figure 11: My father Richard Hendrick (left) and my great-grandfather Robert Hendrick (right). This image is a Hendrick family photo.
Part III: Education Connections

Educational Rationale for a DBQ

I have chosen to include a Document-Based Question in order to offer a practical way for teachers to incorporate the history of Prohibition in Rochester, New York, into their classroom teaching about this era. It’s not enough to offer just the narrative and primary documents. Teachers are busy and often don’t have the time to create the teaching strategies necessary to bring new research into their classes. Therefore, in order to maximize the chances that teachers will use this research, I’ve offered a classroom-ready teaching module, the DBQ, Prohibition in Rochester, New York, for that purpose.

Research reviewed and tested with students over the past thirty years supports the effectiveness of document-based learning as a strategy that aids student learning. They have the ability to deeply engage students in constructing knowledge. In addition, my decision to create a DBQ was in large part influenced by the research compiled and presented by Robert Marzano’s Classroom Instruction That Works. In it he draws on the years of research into effective classroom practices and argues that DBQ’s are an excellent way to address all nine of the strategies for learning that have, over time, proven to be the most effective strategies for enhancing student learning. Students will:

1. Identify similarities and differences in documents when they are deciding which documents support their thesis.
2. Summarize and take notes as they answer short answer questions
3. Be reinforced for their effort as DBQs give many opportunities for formative and summative assessment.
4. Also have extended practice through homework as DBQ's can easily be begun in class and extend into homework.
5. Have opportunities for English language learners and students who struggle with reading skills to show higher-order thinking through nonlinguistic representations of information, such as maps and political cartoons.
6. Work in collaborative learning settings as students can easily be put into peer groups where they can work cooperatively to solve problems.
7. Have flexible standards in that students can evaluate and weigh evidence presented in the documents, generate hypotheses, and formulate an interpretation based on evidence from the documents.
8. Generate and test their theories as they determine if the evidence they have supports their hypotheses.
9. Organize their thoughts and learn cues and questions that will help them to decode the information in the DBQ.

Rather than regurgitating facts students will construct knowledge as they interpret and evaluate multiple secondary and primary sources. DBQs give students the opportunity to consider multiple points of view and synthesize these varied perspectives into an essay that has a thesis and is supported by multiple sources of
information. This project also has the added benefit of being a local history topic that will engage students by making Prohibition more relatable. As a local social studies teacher I know my students are most interested in history they can relate to; history that has the advantage of familiarity; people, places, and events they recognize. This is true for all learners but is an especially powerful tool for engaging middle school students.

I wrote this DBQ for my 8th grade American history class in the city of Rochester NY. I went to great lengths to ensure that the documents, questions and vocabulary were grade level appropriate. I plan on using the DBQ in the spring when I reach the Prohibition era in my curriculum, I can’t wait to see how they do.
This question is based on the following documents. It is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Some of these documents have been edited for the question. Review the documents and answer the questions below each one. Be sure to closely review each document as you will be using them to answer your final essay question.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: Prohibition was the time in American history from 1920 to 1923 when the manufacture and sale of alcohol was banned. Dry activists waged a successful campaign in 1920 to create the 18th amendment. During that time law officers struggled to enforce laws that were unpopular and regularly ignored even by ordinary citizens. Vast networks of illegal organizations grew to meet the demand for alcohol and additional social problems developed. Pressure to repeal prohibition grew, especially in the northeastern cities, such as Rochester until the 21st amendment passed, repealing Prohibition.

TASK: Using information from the following documents and your knowledge of history answer the questions that follow each document in Part A. Your answers to the questions will help you write the Part B essay in which you will be asked to

1. What factors made enforcement of Prohibition in Rochester difficult?
2. What problems did Prohibition create?

Be sure to:

- Develop all aspects of the task
- Incorporate relevant outside information
- Use at least 4 documents
- Demonstrate a logical and clear plan
Part A—Short Answer Questions

DIRECTIONS: Analyze the documents and answer the short-answer questions that follow each document in the space provided.

Document 1

Who does the women in the picture represent? What evidence do you have to support that idea?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Do you think the women in the cartoon is for or against Prohibition? Why or why not?
_____________________________________________________________________

FROM BITION EVILS
HIP POCKET FLASKS
AUTO DRINKING PARTIES
YOUTHFUL SPIRIT OF REVOLT
SECRET DRINKING PLACES
INTERMEDIATE
POISON LIQUOR
CONTEMPT FOR ALL LAWS.
The following is a Prohibition era poem:

Mother's in the kitchen
Washing out the jugs;
Sister's in the pantry
Bottling the suds;
Father's in the cellar
Mixing up the hops;
Johnny's on the front porch
Watching for the cops.

1. Does this family seem to be encouraging Prohibition? Support your statement with evidence from the poem.
18th Amendment (Ratified by the states, January, 1919)

Section 1: After one year from this ratification of this article the manufacture sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within...the United States...is hereby prohibited.

Section 2: The Congress and several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.

Volstead Act (Passed by Congress, October, 1919)

No person shall on or after the date when the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States does into effect, manufacture, sell, barter, transport, import, export, deliver, furnish, or possess any intoxicating liquor except as authorized in this Act...

What does the 18th Amendment and the Volstead act specifically ban?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

According to the document is it illegal to consume alcohol?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
Document 4
Confiscated liquor in Rochester NY, 1921

What does this picture make you think about the availability of alcohol in Rochester during Prohibition?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________

Document 5

This document is taken from Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, 69th Congress, 1st Session (1926): 649-52. In it Fiorella H. LaGuardia, the famous New York City politician and blunt critic of prohibition, spoke on the failures of Prohibition.

It is impossible to tell whether prohibition is a good thing or a bad thing. It has never been enforced in this country.

There may not be as much liquor in quantity consumed to day as there was before prohibition, but there is just as much alcohol.
At least 1,000,000 quarts of liquor is consumed each day in the United States. In my opinion such an enormous traffic in liquor could not be carried on without the knowledge, if not the connivance of the officials entrusted with the enforcement of the law. ...

I believe that the percentage of whisky drinkers in the United States now is greater than in any other country of the world. Prohibition is responsible for that. ...

At least $1,000,000,000 a year is lost to the National Government and the several States and counties in excise taxes. The liquor traffic is going on just the same. This amount goes into the pockets of bootleggers and in the pockets of the public officials in the shape of graft....

I will concede that the saloon was odious but now we have delicatessen stores, pool rooms, drug stores, millinery shops, private parlors, and 57 other varieties of speak-easies selling liquor and flourishing.

It is common talk in my part of the country that from $7.50 to $12 a case is paid in graft from the time the liquor leaves the 12-mile limit until it reaches the ultimate consumer. There seems to be a varying market price for this service created by the degree of vigilance or the degree of greed of the public officials in charge...

The drys seemingly are afraid of the truth. Why not take inventory and ascertain the true conditions. Let us not leave it to the charge of an antiprohibition organization, or to any other private association, let us have an official survey and let the American people know what is going on. A complete and honest and impartial survey would reveal incredible conditions, corruption, crime, and an organized system of illicit traffic such as the world has never seen. ...

According to this document how much money is the government losing by not taxing alcohol?

_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________
What geographic or general location factors might have made Rochester a popular hub for the transportation of alcohol across the US border?
Appendix A

REVISED GENERIC SCORING RUBRIC FOR DOCUMENT-BASED QUESTION (DBQ)
ON THE GRADE 8 INTERMEDIATE-LEVEL SOCIAL STUDIES TEST
(For Use Beginning in June 2005)

Score of 5:
• Thoroughly develops all aspects of the task evenly and in depth
• Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates* information)
• Incorporates relevant information from at least xxx documents
• Incorporates substantial relevant outside information
• Richly supports the theme with many relevant facts, examples, and details
• Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of 4:
• Develops all aspects of the task but may do so somewhat unevenly
• Is both descriptive and analytical (applies, analyzes, evaluates, and/or creates information)
• Incorporates relevant information from at least xxx documents
• Incorporates relevant outside information
• Supports the theme with relevant facts, examples, and details
• Demonstrates a logical and clear plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that are beyond a restatement of the theme

Score of 3:
• Develops all aspects of the task with little depth or develops most aspects of the task in some depth
• Is more descriptive than analytical (applies, may analyze, and/or evaluate information)
• Incorporates some relevant information from some of the documents
• Incorporates limited relevant outside information
• Includes some relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some minor inaccuracies
• Demonstrates a satisfactory plan of organization; includes an introduction and a conclusion that may be a restatement of the theme

Score of 2:
• Minimally develops all aspects of the task or develops some aspects of the task in some depth
• Is primarily descriptive; may include faulty, weak, or isolated application or analysis
• Incorporates limited relevant information from the documents or consists primarily of relevant information copied from the documents
• Presents little or no relevant outside information
• Includes few relevant facts, examples, and details; may include some inaccuracies
• Demonstrates a general plan of organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

Score of 1:
• Minimally develops some aspects of the task
• Is descriptive; may lack understanding, application, or analysis
• Makes vague, unclear references to the documents or consists primarily of relevant and irrelevant information copied from the documents
• Presents no relevant outside information
• Includes few relevant facts, examples, or details; may include inaccuracies
• May demonstrate a weakness in organization; may lack focus; may contain digressions; may not clearly identify which aspect of the task is being addressed; may lack an introduction and/or a conclusion

Score of 0:
Fails to develop the task or may only refer to the theme in a general way; OR includes no relevant facts, examples, or details; OR includes only the historical context and/or task as copied from the test booklet; OR includes only entire documents copied from the test booklet; OR is illegible; OR is a blank paper

* The term create as used by Anderson/Krathwohl, et al. in their 2001 revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives refers to the highest level of the cognitive domain. This usage of create is similar to Bloom's use of the term synthesis. Creating implies an insightful reorganization of information into a new pattern or whole. While a level 3 paper will contain analysis and/or evaluation of information, a very strong paper may also include examples of creating information as defined by Anderson and Krathwohl.

PART A:

PART B:

FINAL SCORE:
Source of Documents:

Document 1 and 3
https://rowellsapushistory.wikispaces.com/prohibition+in+the+1920's

Document 2
http://www.albany.edu/~wm731882/life_for_the_average_american_final.html

Document 4
Albert Stone Collection

Document 5
http://prohibition.osu.edu/american-prohibition-1920/fiorella-laguardia-prohibition

Document 6
Work Cited


Burns, K. (Director) (2011). *Prohibition* [DVD].


Democrat and Chronicle (1933, December 6). *Democrat and Chronicle*. 


Rochester Business Directory, 1900-1940.


The Brighton Post (1990, July 23). At the Sea Glades, You Know the Booze was Right off the Boat. *The Brighton Post*.


Personal Interviews


Hendrick, William. (Multiple sessions in 2011-2013) Personal Interview.

Hendrick, Richard. (Multiple sessions in 2011-2013) Personal Interview.

Hendrick, Bill. (August 20, 2013) Personal Interview.

Riedl, Esther. (August 20, 2013) Personal Interview.

VanAuken, Todd. (July 15, 2013) Personal Interview.
Website

For further information, including links to download this project and supplemental pictures and information see my website at www.prohibitionrochester.com