

ELIZABETH JOHANNECK

# TWIN CITIES PROHIBITION

Minnesota's Blind Pigs & Bootleggers

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*Dedicated in loving memory to*

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*Ed Michael & my red-haired nephew, Andy Johanneck*

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# INTRODUCTION

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There are, within the state of Minnesota, speakeasies and Prohibition-related historical sites that are still operating today as legitimate businesses. They are the inspiration for this book. Speakeasies, also referred to as “blind pigs,” were business establishments that served liquor without proper licenses when the sale of liquor was prohibited by the Eighteenth Amendment—the “Noble Experiment.”

The 1920s and '30s in Minnesota are a fascinating time in history. Besides Prohibition, there was a friendly relationship between Canadian distillers and local gangsters and a style of law enforcement that tried to make the best of a bad situation through unconventional policies. Like in the rest of the country, our economy boomed and crashed like the percussion section of a junior high school band.

The era is commemorated culturally today in a variety of ways. The memory of Minnesota's Andrew J. Volstead from Granite Falls, who nurtured and guided the Eighteenth Amendment into law, is kept alive across the country. For instance, there is the Volstead Restaurant located at 125 East Fifty-fourth Street in New York City, which serves a tongue-in-cheek cocktail called Volstead's Lemonade made with Ultimat vodka, fresh lemon, sugar and club soda. For lunch, one can dine on the Volstead Burger, an eight-ounce burger topped with lettuce and tomato, with the option of adding cheese, bacon and sautéed onions. I'm a little disappointed there isn't more to it than that, but then I suppose Volstead would have had a rather conservative diet.



Minnesota men enjoying a beer. Photo courtesy of Monica Fischer, Wabasso, Minnesota.

Within this book, you will find a description of a number of former speakeasies in Minnesota that continue as legitimate businesses today. The idea of having refreshments in a vintage speakeasy appeals to certain types of diners—of whom I am one. There is a tiny perking up of the rebel in some of us, in much the same way the Prohibition era found some of the elite delighted to risk bumping elbows with the seedier class, covertly sneaking into back rooms and basements, only to brag about behind their hands to friends the next day after church. Oh the thrill of being common!

Here in St. Paul, the Great Minnesota History Theater, founded by Lynn Lohr in 1981, has featured productions written by nationally recognized playwright Lance Belville revealing tales and folklore of the 1920s and '30s. Those plays include *Scott and Zelda*, a performance about Minnesota writer Scott Fitzgerald and his tortured wife, Zelda, an icon of the flapper era whose antics and literary success defined the Roaring Twenties. In much the same way our nation experienced the giddy heights of the 1920s and the devastating economic bust of the 1930s, Belville's play documents the boom and bust of the Fitzgeralds, whose haphazard lives went up in flames fueled by alcoholism and madness.

*Nina, Madam to the Saintly City*, based on the real-life madam Nina Clifford, details the hypocrisy of the city of St. Paul promoting itself as a pillar of virtue while crooked cops and politicians were encouraging women to open candy stores serving children and then collecting graft from the backroom brothels. It was a tax, really, for conducting an illegal business within the city limits. Nina



was a real brothel, which served, among others, many of the city's finest decision makers and politicians. ~~There is a wonderful coffeehouse on the corner of Selby and Western Avenue in St. Paul that is named after the famous Nina. On the lower level, you will find Common Good Books, Garrison Keillor's bookstore, promoting many of Minnesota's writers.~~

During the process of pulling together the events that constituted our state's Prohibition era, I discovered stunning similarities to the economic and social events taking place today. The parallels are unmistakable, and though you may not see the connection at the beginning of this book, I trust that by the end you will.

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# A DIFFERENT TYPE OF LAW AND ORDER

## MINNESOTA NICE

According to the Wikipedia definition of “Minnesota Nice,” Minnesota is the second most agreeable state in the nation. One might argue that we should be in first place, but we don’t want to make a fuss. We Minnesotans take pride in being nice, but there are those who have besmirched our good title with their bad behavior, adding a bit of spice to the otherwise vanilla narrative of who we imagine we are. Minnesota has been home to some deliciously shady characters during an era of rapid economic expansion and, later, during the depths of the Great Depression.

It is not lost on me that the era of Prohibition lit the fuse for an explosion of crime and underworld activity, making Minnesota one of the top destinations for gangsters, crooked politicians, cops and illegal speakeasies. It spurred an era of whistleblowers and gangland murders.

Unfairly charged by the media with employing economic warfare, farmers and laborers joined forces to create a new political party with which to defend themselves from abuse by the elite, who were already stacking the deck against the middle class. Sometimes it’s hard to tell who the real gangsters are. It is surprising to me that the same issues being used to divide our country today were used back then. Immigration, accusations of socialism and communism and a lack of patriotism have all been around the block before. The more we study history, the more we can see the battle between the wealthy and the poor, between good and evil. I love my state, and I am proud to hail from here. In spite of the rabble, Minnesota’s good-hearted citizens have prospered and prevailed. Isn’t that nice?

## THE SHAME OF MINNEAPOLIS

Minneapolis, St. Paul’s twin city across the Mississippi River, was memorialized in an article called “The Shame of Minneapolis” written by Lincoln Steffens for *McClure’s* magazine in 1903. It tells the history of Doc Ames, who was, shall we say, a very bad man. In his article, Steffens described Minneapolis as a “New England town on the upper Mississippi” and the metropolis of Norway and Sweden in America. It was settled by Yankees “straight from Down East” with a New England spirit. He described Minneapolis as having “a small Puritan head, an open prairie heart, and a great, big Scandinavian body.” He said its citizens worked hard, made money, stayed sober and were satisfied and busy with their own affairs, without much time for public business, leaving the enforcement of law to others.

He claimed that those who were left to govern the city—“the loafers, saloonkeepers, gamblers, criminals, and the thriftless poor of all nationalities”—despised, more than anything, strict law.

Without the Irish to boss them around, they followed the lead of Doctor Albert Alonzo Ames, the son of a pioneer who moved his family of six sons from Illinois to Fort Snelling in 1851, before Minneapolis had even been founded. The younger Ames received a medical degree from a college in Chicago and returned home at the age of twenty-one. Plying his skills with a gracious bedside manner, Ames became a beloved member of the Minneapolis community.

## THE TAVERN OF NORTHFIELD

*212 Division Street, Northfield, Minnesota*

*I think, in a previous life, I was a bad girl (not a famous one or anything) who hung out with bootleggers and rumrunners during Prohibition. I am fascinated by the 1920s and '30s. I still have a tendency to be a little on the naughty side, which may be cellular memory, but more likely it is the result of having grown up under a strict family regime and attendance at an uncompromising Catholic grade school. A girl needs to have a little fun, so it makes perfect sense to me that I would be drawn to former speakeasies, and Northfield in southeastern Minnesota has a wonderful example called the Tavern of Northfield hiding under the fabulous Archer House.*



Relaxing in the courtyard of the Tavern, a former speakeasy located under the Archer House in Northfield, Minnesota.

*This former speakeasy is located in the old cistern. Clever, right? It is now an intimate little restaurant with heavy, dark furniture and thick stone walls—and beneath it all, a tangible sense of history.*

*Remember, it was our own state representative Andrew Volstead from Granite Falls, Minnesota (a community that, ironically, also has a former speakeasy called Bootlegger's on the edge of town), who signed the Eighteenth amendment leading to the prohibition of alcohol. Congress*

*meant well. My own opinion is that the more laws you make, the more laws there are to break and enforce. It gets complicated. And let's face it: you simply can't legislate morality, though lord knows we continue to try.*

*My friend Melanie and I slunk in through the back door of the Tavern and looked around for a discreet place to sit where we wouldn't be spotted. Nah, I'm just kidding. Discretion isn't our strong suit. But eating is. We chose a table in the shady courtyard out back and ordered up a couple cold, foamy...floats, made with Schwan's ice cream. I used to make corn dogs at the Schwan's plant in Marshall, Minnesota. If you want to know how it's done, I've got the scoop. Oh man, do I wish I could have made ice cream instead! That would have been one jukin' pun! (Insert a high-five here.)*

*I'd love to take a tour of every speakeasy in the state. I wonder if there is such an itinerary. I bet our Minnesota Office of Tourism could advise me. In the meantime, I'll try to behave, and maybe Melanie will let me continue riding along with her on Saturday afternoon adventures around Minnesota.*

*—Minnesota Country Mouse*

It was to the detriment of the community that Ames also had a dark side. He catered to the “vicious and the depraved,” offering another drink to the drunk and convincing law enforcement to drop charges against criminals. He was a vain man and adored being commended and praised. As a politician, he enjoyed the office of Republican mayor and then twice served as a Democrat. He ran for Congress but failed to be electable outside his hometown. After serving his terms, the people of Minneapolis assumed he would retire from politics. He was headed in a downward spiral, neglecting his family and then separating from his wife altogether. While sitting in a local saloon, he received a note from his daughter letting him know that his wife was on her deathbed and wanted to see him and offer her forgiveness. He responded with an obscene statement scribbled across the note. Banned from the funeral, he sat in a carriage, observing and smoking a cigar, and later made a ridiculous scene.

His behavior should have ended his career, but he was elected mayor of Minneapolis one more time as a reformed man. In his article, Steffens claims that Ames “set out upon a career of corruption which for deliberateness, invention and avarice has never been equaled.” His first course of action was to turn the city over to outlaws, who would answer to the police. His brother, Colonel Fred W. Ames, was appointed chief of police. Norman W. King, a former gambler, was made detective. King was ordered to create a force of thieves, pickpockets, confidence men and gamblers. Some were released from the local jail to join the force. The men were divided into departments, according to their trade, and dispensed across the city to set up a system for collecting graft—payments made to keep the criminal activities viable. Irwin A. Gardner, who was a medical student in Dr. Ames's office, was appointed a special policeman for the purpose of finding young women for brothels.

The new chief of police reviewed the work of the city's 225 police officers, dismissing the best 100 men and then charging the remaining men for the privilege of staying on the force. John (Coffee John) Frischette, owner of a “notorious” coffeehouse, was made captain of the police force, with the sole responsibility of hiring the “right” men for the job and collecting their payments to serve. Ames then released the criminals from jail, ordering them to advise the underworld that “things were doing” in Minneapolis. Underworld figures were recruited into the city, reporting to Detective King for direction. Gambling was openly allowed, and the population of prostitutes grew.

In Minneapolis, vices were forbidden yet permitted under certain conditions. Saloons were allowed to run along the riverfront. Brothels were essentially “licensed,” with fees collected from women showing up in court on a regular basis to pay their fines. The women were encouraged to open “apartment houses” and candy, tobacco and magazine stores, fronting their real businesses. Gambling and those requiring licenses to operate within city limits were now paying Ames directly. Opium joints and unlicensed saloons were protected by the police. Ames assigned city physicians the duty of calling on the brothels periodically for health inspections and then charging between five and twenty dollars per visit. Eventually, the visits became so frequent that the inspections were suspended, and the visits’ purpose became merely the collection of fees.

Ames’s activities did not appear to cause the citizens of Minneapolis distress, but they brought in the criminal element, which was invited to stay, as long as it checked in with King and agreed to the terms of the stay. Minneapolis experienced frequent burglaries, with the police department often in attendance. Take, for instance, the Pabst Brewing Company robbery. The police convinced two men to learn the combination of the safe in the brewery’s office and then stood guard while the men opened the safe and cleaned it out. Any officer of the law who wanted to actually prevent a crime would have to face the wrath of the mayor’s office and possible dismissal.

As one might imagine, it was foolhardy of Ames to trust the men he hired to take over Minneapolis and infighting ensued. Things were clearly out of control. In April 1902, a grand jury made up of ordinary citizens, headed by Hovey C. Clarke, decided it wanted to take on the Ames gang. Clarke hired a group of detectives with whom Ames was familiar and whom Clarke knew would talk about what they were doing, and the police began keeping an eye on them. Then he hired detectives Ames did *not* know, who found men in jail with grievances against Ames and were ready to spill the beans on the police department. They were compelled to testify before the grand jury under oath.

Mayor Ames fled town an old, broken man, and later his brother also disappeared. A new mayor, Percy Jones, was elected, and the Ames gang on the police force was replaced. Brothels were still permitted within a certain district and were no longer required to pay fines. A gambling syndicate, in danger of being completely shut down, offered the new mayor a deal. If they were allowed to continue their business, they would control crime for the city. Jones turned down their offer several times, and each time a rise in crime occurred. He gave them his final word: “There should be no gambling, with *police connivance*, in the city of Minneapolis during his term of office.” He left office wondering if a city could truly be governed without an alliance with criminals.

## THE ST. PAUL O’CONNOR SYSTEM

It took four months, 385 phonograph records of wire-tapped police conversations and three thousand typewritten pages of evidence to bring down the O’Connor system, which had given gangsters a safe haven in St. Paul. A few bad apples ruined it for the rest of the criminals. A new generation of gangsters like the Barker-Karpis Gang, “Machine Gun” Kelly and “Baby Face” Nelson deviated from the agreement of enjoying safe haven as long as they behaved while staying in town. The kidnapping of brewery heirs William Hamm Jr. and Edward Bremer, as well as robberies of mail delivery trucks and banks, signaled the end.

St. Paul, Minnesota, was first settled by three Irish soldiers who served at Fort Snelling and through the assistance of Archbishop John Ireland, soon welcomed a mass immigration of Irish

settlers. Ireland founded the Irish Catholic Colonization Association with progressive Catholic John Spaulding in the late 1800s, purchasing land to settle new Irish communities in Minnesota. Ireland worked with the railroads and the Minnesota state government to bring more than four thousand families from the slums of the East Coast and settled them on 400,000 acres of rural farmland. Although they were eventually outnumbered by Germans, it was the Irish who had the most political influence in St. Paul at the turn of the nineteenth century.

In 1855, at the tender age of one year, John J. O'Connor moved from Louisville, Kentucky, to St. Paul with his parents. His father was a well-heeled businessman who served on the St. Paul City Council. O'Connor grew up in St. Paul, taking a position with the Beaupre & Kelly accounting firm where he worked for a decade. But O'Connor was looking for a more adventurous line of work and accepted a position as a detective with the City of St. Paul, working his way up to the position of chief of detectives. He was removed from his position for four years, while Mayor Andrew Kiefer led the community. During those years, the city became infested with criminals.

O'Connor worked as a private detective while not on the police force. People said he had a twinkle in his eye and a jaw set for business. He compiled an extensive register of criminals in the St. Paul area. When Robert A. Smith was elected mayor in 1900, he appointed O'Connor chief of police, a position in which he served until 1912. It was as chief that O'Connor built his reputation as a clever, clear-thinking officer of the law, fighting crime with "organized intelligence." He created a system in which criminals were given safe haven in St. Paul as long as they checked in with the police upon their arrival and didn't commit any crimes while they were in the city. They were safe from extradition to other states, where court cases, fines and possible prison sentences awaited them.

## A HELL OF A NICE GUY

Dapper Dan Hogan was a St. Paul underworld character who straddled the divide between the law and the lawbreakers. The Federal Department of Justice considered him one of the most resourceful criminals in the nation. As owner of the Green Lantern Saloon on Wabasha Street, he carried out the work of the O'Connor system, keeping law officials abreast of which criminals were in the city and at the same time planning crimes and laundering dirty money.

Born in California about 1880, Hogan's first arrest was in Los Angeles in 1905 for breaking and entering, and he served a prison term in San Quentin. Upon his release, he moved to the Midwest where he plied his craft of robbing banks and stealing furs. Here in St. Paul, he became so entrenched with local law enforcement that they learned to fear him. The Department of Justice tried several times to convict him but failed to ever send him to prison.

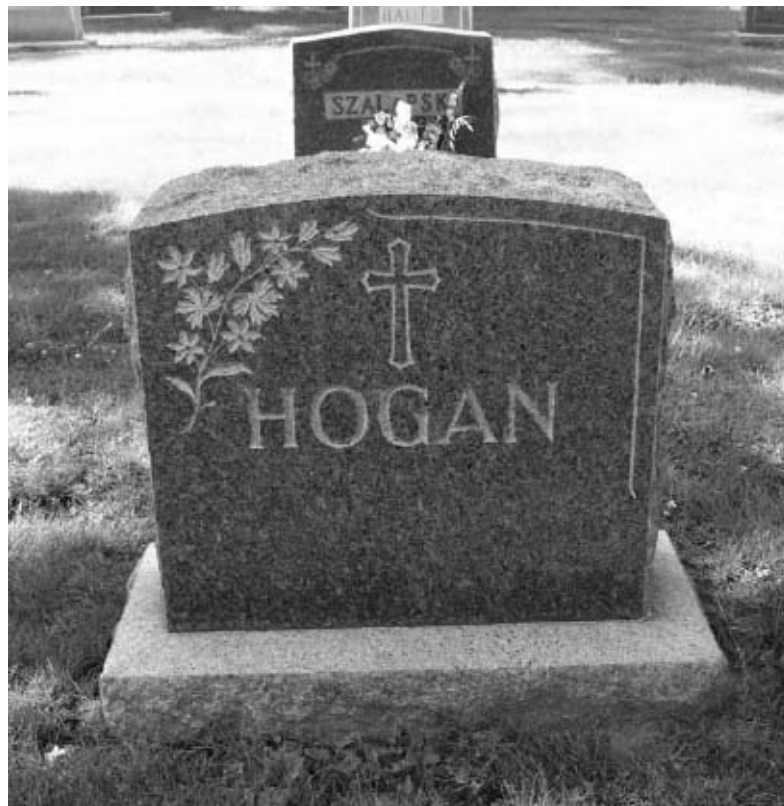
## DAPPER DAN HOGAN

*It felt very strange sneaking around Dan Hogan's yard. He was the man known as the "Smiling Peacekeeper" and enforcer of the O'Connor system. I stared at the cracked concrete of the*

garage apron, which led to the spot where his new Paige coup was parked when it blew up with Dan behind the wheel. No one knows for sure who planted the bomb under his floorboard, but people have their suspicions.

I'm from the farm. That should explain a few things—like why I thought I could just waltz into the Calvary Cemetery in St. Paul and locate the grave of St. Paul's Irish godfather without a single idea of where this icon of mobbery was buried. Some criminals are easy to find, like Kid Cann, who has a front-row grave with his brother, Yiddy Bloom. Hogan, on the other hand, eluded us.

My friends and fellow detectives, Penny and Melanie, joined forces with me to hunt down the grave of Dan Hogan. We started by driving through this old—and might I say, vast—cemetery. Around and around we drove, keeping our eyes peeled. See, this is where the country girl in me started to get a little worried. In outstate Minnesota, cemeteries are much smaller and easier to conduct a manhunt in. Penny had her Blackberry fired up, complete with Internet and GPS, and we still didn't have a clue how to track down our criminal.



The Hogan family headstone in the Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul, Minnesota.



The grave marker for Daniel P. (Dapper Dan) Hogan, godfather of the Irish mob during Prohibition. Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul, Minnesota.

*We finally gave up after traipsing through row after row of graves. Oh, it isn't that we weren't having a good time. It was a gorgeous day, and the names on the stones were like poetry: Sullivan, O'Hara, McCoy. There are an awful lot of Irish buried in St. Paul, but we didn't find Dan's stone until I went online and requested a map from Calvary Cemetery, which arrived in the mail later that week. Penny and I returned to the cemetery the following weekend, and sure enough, there was the Hogan family marker. But where was Dan?*

*I finally found his marker by digging my toe into the ground here and there until I felt something. Then I got on my hands and knees and started pulling at the grass. Soon I could see the dates of his birth and death at the hands of some weasely gangster. He died December 4, 1928.*

*It seems odd that these men, gangsters really, could now be so silent after wreaking havoc during the Prohibition years. Their graves are just like everyone else's. There's nothing special here. There are, however, the stories and disdain of their victims' progeny. And of course, the attention of the occasional writer in whose imagination these men are still very much alive.*

*—Minnesota Country Mouse*

Hogan was an expert at diffusing conflict and keeping feuds under control. He was known as a man whose word was as good as a gold bond. Yet in spite of his successful relationship with the police and underworld gangsters, he wasn't without enemies. There were those who resented his power within the city, over which he had a veritable stranglehold.

Hogan's death tells a great deal about how he lived. He has the honor of being one of the first people in the world to die from a car bomb explosion. About 11:30 on December 4, 1928, Hogan left his house at 1607 West Seventh Street in St. Paul and hopped into the Paige coupe parked in his garage. When he stepped on the gas and pushed the starter, there was an explosion that tore off his right foot completely, leaving his leg riddled with bomb fragments up to the knee. He also suffered a severe laceration to his right arm, lost his ring finger and had a deep cut above his right eye. Later, at the hospital, Hogan was completely baffled by the attack, claiming he could think of no enemy in the world who would do this to him.





The driveway that led to the garage where Dan Hogan was murdered by a car bomb.

His family and neighbors rushed to the scene, finding Hogan unconscious and bleeding profusely. Hogan's seventy-three-year-old father-in-law had intended to join Hogan for a trip to downtown St. Paul but returned to the house briefly to fetch a money order he had forgotten. They found the car with the floorboard blown to bits, the windows shattered, a hole blown in the roof of the car and the steering wheel missing from its post. The hood of the engine was blown off, but the engine itself was not ruined.



Dan Hogan's house in St. Paul, Minnesota.

The police ambulance arrived to rush Hogan to the hospital. Meanwhile, news of the explosion and Hogan's injuries traveled quickly, and soon the hospital was filled with policemen, businessmen and racketeers offering to donate blood to Hogan. Included in the group was Irish middleweight boxing champion Mike O'Dowd. Hogan regained consciousness at the hospital; he smiled at the surgeon, Dr. Arnold F. Plankers, and jokingly told him he'd better do his best. He refused general anesthesia as his leg was amputated in an attempt to save his life. Hogan rallied a bit following the operation but eventually succumbed to his injuries at about nine o'clock that evening.

Police investigations were unable to pin the murder on anyone, but FBI files point to “Harry Dutch,” a Jewish gangster whose given name was Harry Sawyer. Sawyer had been serving as Hogan’s underboss, and Hogan owed him \$25,000 for bailing him out of prison several years earlier. Sawyer also resented Hogan for cheating him out of earnings from the casino. Sawyer took over the operation of the Green Lantern after Hogan’s death.

## A NEW KIND OF CRIMINAL IN TOWN

With Danny Hogan dead, there were concerns of retribution, but no criminal was ever fingered for the crime. The O’Connor system began falling apart after Hogan’s demise. Sawyer took over where Hogan left off, arranging for criminals like the Barker-Karpis Gang, John Dillinger and Homer Valmeter to stay in the Twin Cities under protection of the law—all the while helping set up new criminal activity. In the 1930s, they became bolder, seeing big money in kidnappings. After enduring several high-profile kidnappings, the public reached its limit, and newspaper editor Howard Kahn, who worked for sixteen years on the *St. Paul Daily News*, called for a change. He brought in half a dozen Department of Justice operatives to prove malfeasance within the city’s Police Department. There was a grand jury hearing, and a whitewashing of the results was aired over the local radio station, but it was enough to agitate voters into electing a reform candidate who was serious about cleaning up St. Paul.

The new public safety commissioner, Henry Warren, brought in a team of investigators who set up wiretaps in a back room at the police station and began an investigation. The recorded calls showed collusion between the police and bookmakers, brothels, slot machine owners and other criminals who were consistently tipped off when a raid was scheduled to take place. In return, the police profited from graft. In addition, the judges were also tipped off when a case was likely to be coming up.

The shake-up resulted in three detectives being dismissed and five police officers, including the chief, being put on probation. In addition, grand jury and bar association inquiries were begun, leaving anyone who had colluded with the cops in an anxious state. So there you have it: law enforcement in Minneapolis and St. Paul. It’s not quite what you imagined, is it?

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# PROHIBITION

## A VAIN SUMPTUARY LAW

The prohibition of alcohol in the United States, also known as the “Noble Experiment,” was *sumptuary law* put into effect in 1920 and lasting until 1933. Sumptuary laws attempt to regulate habits of consumption and, as a rule, fail to succeed. They have been used throughout history to regulate trade and, in extreme cases of ego, were used by the bourgeoisie to try to prevent commoners from dressing like nobility.

The focus of the temperance movement became more extreme, demanding complete abstinence from alcohol, a position that grew exponentially in popularity through the late 1800s and early 1900s. For a century, individuals fought the ill effects alcohol had on society through the efforts of the temperance movement. The original intention of the farmers in Connecticut, who banded together in 1789 to halt the production of liquor, was to advocate *levelness* rather than abstinence.

The quest for the prohibition of alcohol in the United States began manifesting in the 1820s, but the movement lacked leadership. There was, among a number of supporters of prohibition, a utopian mindset that banishing alcohol would cure all of life’s woes. Romance would bounce back in lagging marriages, and employee attendance would spike at work.

Though attempts were made by men and women suffering from alcoholism to stop drinking, the underlying mental and emotional issues causing alcohol abuse went largely unaddressed until alcoholics Bill Wilson and Dr. Bob Smith joined forces in Akron, Ohio, in the 1930s to lay down the twelve steps and traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) to help those who wanted to stop drinking find a successful and spiritual remedy to their problem. Through working with other alcoholics and making it a point to do the next right thing, their group proves the power of being *for* sobriety rather than *against* drinking.



Dumping beer from the August Schells Brewing Company, New Ulm, Minnesota. *Photo courtesy of Gary Revier, Redwood Falls, Minnesota.*



The entrance to 2218 First Avenue South in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the longest-running Alano or AA club in the world.

AA found its way to Minnesota when a suffering alcoholic named Pat Cronin came across the *Big Book*, written by Bill W. and Dr. Bob, in the Minneapolis Public Library. Through a series of events, Cronin not only managed to stay sober, but also, in March 1942, he and other alcoholics joined together to found the Alano Society, Inc., of Minneapolis, which has the distinction of being the longest-running AA club in the world. The club is located in a mansion at 2218 First Avenue South in Minneapolis.

## THE VOLSTEAD ACT

*H.R. 6810, Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution*

*An Act to prohibit intoxicating beverages, and to regulate the manufacture, production, use, and sale of high-proof spirits for other than beverage purposes, and to ensure an ample supply of alcohol and promote its use in scientific research and in the development of fuel, dye, and other lawful industries.*

*Section 1. After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.*

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

*Section 3. This article shall be inoperative unless it shall have been ratified as an amendment to the Constitution by the legislatures of the several States, as provided in the Constitution, within seven years from the date of the submission hereof to the States by the Congress.*

Conspicuously absent from the proposed amendment was the consumption of alcohol. With the Senate voting forty-seven to eight in favor of the amendment on December 18, it was ready to be presented to the states for ratification. Ratification required thirty-six states voting in favor of implementing the amendment, and that was achieved on January 16, 1919. Minnesota voted in favor of Prohibition on January 17, 1919. Only Connecticut and Rhode Island rejected the amendment. The Volstead Act remained in effect until the passage of the Twenty-first Amendment, which repealed Prohibition in 1933. States were free to determine how they would enforce Prohibition.

## ANDREW J. VOLSTEAD

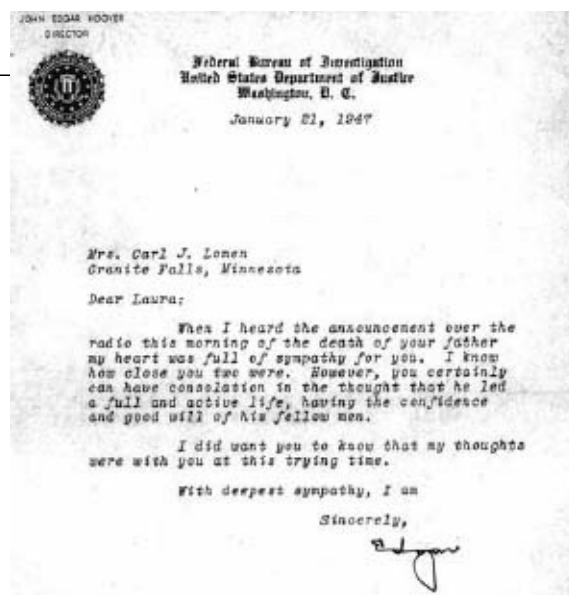
By all accounts Andrew Volstead, U.S. representative from the Seventh District in southwestern Minnesota, was a very agreeable, well-liked and notably stubborn man. Volstead was born in Kenyon, Minnesota, to Norwegian Americans Jon Einertson Vraalstad (Volstead) and Dorthea Mathea Lill. Volstead on October 31, 1860. He passed away on January 20, 1947. Upon his death, J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), sent a personal note to Volstead's daughter, Laura



Andrew Volstead, chairman of the House Judiciary Committee and coauthor of the Eighteenth Amendment outlawing the production and sale of liquor from 1920 to 1933. *Photo courtesy of Dave Smiglewski, Granite Falls, Minnesota.*



The historic Andrew Volstead House in Granite Falls, Minnesota.



Sympathy letter from FBI director J. Edgar Hoover to Laura Volstead Lommen upon the death of her father, Congressman Andrew Volstead of Granite Falls, Minnesota. *Photo courtesy of Bill Lavin and the Granite Falls Historical Society, Granite Falls, Minnesota*

Volstead graduated from St. Olaf College in Northfield, Minnesota, and became a lawyer. He married Helen Mary Osleer Gilruth and settled in Granite Falls, along the Minnesota River, serving as mayor from 1900 to 1902. He was the Yellow Medicine County attorney for fourteen years and was elected to Congress as a Republican from 1903 to 1923, serving as chairman of the House Judiciary Committee from 1919 to 1923. It was Volstead's experience prosecuting bootleggers and operators of unlicensed saloons in several dry counties in Minnesota that made him especially well suited to provide teeth in the Volstead Act.

There was a small hiccup during his run as congressman when Reverend Ole Juulson Kvale (sound like quail) from Benson ran against Volstead as a Republican, accusing him of being an atheist. The public didn't take to such a notion, and by 1920, most of the voters who once knew Volstead were now deceased and no longer casting votes. He was defeated by Kvale.

Volstead, being no stranger to the laws on Minnesota's books, relied on an obscure law stating that if a candidate lies about or verbally abuses another candidate when talking to the electorate, he can be denied the nomination even if he or she is successful in the primaries. Volstead took his case to court where his daughter, Laura, testified to Volstead's being a good, Christian man and a good father. Kvale was disqualified, and Volstead won the nomination and election.

In the following election, Kvale ran as an independent Farmer-Labor candidate. This time, Kvale won. After losing the election in 1922, Volstead returned to his law practice in Granite Falls, and in 1925, he was appointed as legal aid to the prohibitionist administrator in Minnesota, located in the post office building in St. Paul. On March 29, 1926, Volstead was featured on the cover of *Time* magazine.

## THE EIGHTEENTH AMENDMENT AND THE VOLSTEAD ACT

As a small-town attorney from Granite Falls, Volstead conducted himself with dignity and style. And although he was not a teetotaler, he sponsored the legislation—the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act—that brought about one of the most divisive and turbulent eras of our country's history.

Though the terms are typically used interchangeably, the Eighteenth Amendment prohibited the manufacture and sale of liquor, and the Volstead Act defined intoxicating liquor to that containing one-half of 1 percent alcohol, an amount considered by many to be an arbitrary figure.



The “wets” on the right are not happy about dumping booze, and the “drys” on the left are laughing. *Photo courtesy of Gary Reviere, Redwood Falls, Minnesota.*

The prohibition of liquor was a long time coming. On June 1, 1889, Minnesota implemented the Scheffer Law, requiring the police magistrate to sentence a man to prison for thirty days upon being found guilty of drunkenness for the third time. This ruling was the most severe in the country at the time. The desired effect was to punish the seller of alcohol. Prohibitionists were extremely active in the state, requiring liquor licenses in cities to cost \$1,000 and in smaller communities, \$500. Scheffer claimed he had no objections to people consuming liquor; he simply found it offensive to public morals and decency for one to be observed intoxicated. Unfortunately for the courts, identifying a drunk three times in a row was hampered by the drunk’s ability to think up a fictitious name each time he or she appeared before the court.

Under the Volstead Act, the economy changed. Individuals who had seen little chance of ever striking it rich before the Eighteenth Amendment took effect now found themselves in positions to do just that. Bellboys merely needed to have a little cash slipped to them to become a rich man’s best friend, delivering bottles of hooch to hotel rooms. Taxi drivers no longer needed to sweat the miles they put on their meters; rather, they could simply drive their patrons to the closest bootleg outlet and make the purchase for them. Barbers could help a man on with his jacket while slipping a bottle into his pocket, scoring a fabulous tip. Men could finally make more money in one day than they had previously made in a week. Policemen and Internal Revenue employees, previously underpaid and overworked, finally had a means of putting money in the bank by merely winking and turning a blind eye to the bellboys, taxi drivers and barbers—for a small charge.



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