Main Lesson: Prohibition

Day 4 – Lead-up and Start of Prohibition

Prohibition in the United States was a nationwide [constitutional](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Constitution) ban on the production, importation, transportation, and sale of [alcoholic beverages](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholic_beverage) from 1920 to 1933.

Prohibitionists first attempted to end the trade in [alcoholic drinks](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholic_drink) during the 19th century. Led by [pietistic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pietism) [Protestants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestantism_in_the_United_States), they aimed to heal what they saw as an ill society beset by alcohol-related problems such as [alcoholism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholism), [family violence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Domestic_violence) and saloon-based [political corruption](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_corruption). Prohibition supporters, called "drys", presented it as a battle for [public morals](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_morality) and health. The movement was taken up by [progressives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progressivism_in_the_United_States) in the [Democratic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_(United_States)) and [Republican](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Republican_Party_(United_States)) parties, and gained a national grassroots base through the [Woman's Christian Temperance Union](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Woman%27s_Christian_Temperance_Union) (WCTU). After 1900, it was coordinated by the [Anti-Saloon League](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-Saloon_League). Opposition from the beer industry mobilized "wet" supporters from the wealthy Catholic and German Lutheran communities, but the influence of these groups receded from 1917 following the entry of the US into World War I against Germany.

At its founding in 1874, the stated purpose of the WCTU was to create a "sober and pure world" by abstinence, purity, and evangelical Christianity. Its members were inspired by the Greek writer [Xenophon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xenophon), who defined temperance as "moderation in all things healthful; total abstinence from all things harmful." In other words, should something be good, it should not be indulged in to excess; should something be bad for you, it should be avoided altogether — thus their attempts to rid society of what they saw as the dangers of alcohol.

The [U.S. Senate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Senate) proposed the [Eighteenth Amendment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eighteenth_Amendment_to_the_United_States_Constitution) on December 18, 1917. Upon being approved by a 36th state on January 16, 1919, the amendment was ratified as a part of the Constitution. By the terms of the amendment, the country went dry one year later, on January 17, 1920.

