

THE STAGING SERVICES BREWING CO.

# SPEAKEASY

Est. 1989

On January 16, 1920, scores of thirsty Americans took to the streets to buy their last legal drinks from liquor stores and saloons. The United States officially became a “dry” country the following day, when the 18th Amendment outlawing “the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors” took effect. Despite coming on the heels of decades of pro-temperance furor, the amendment and the accompanying Volstead Act proved wildly unpopular among many Americans. Alcohol continued to flow like water in the big cities, and gangsters, bootleggers and ordinary citizens alike all flouted the law until its repeal in late-1933.



**Prohibition had been tried before.**

In the early 19th century, religious revivalists and early teetotaler groups like the American Temperance Society campaigned relentlessly against what they viewed as a nationwide scourge of drunkenness. The activists scored a major victory in 1851, when the Maine legislature passed a state-wide prohibition on selling alcohol.



**World War I helped turn the nation in favour of Prohibition.**

Prohibition was all but sealed by the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, but the conflict served as one of the last nails in the coffin of legalized alcohol. Dry advocates argued that the barley used in brewing beer could be made into bread to feed American soldiers and war-ravaged Europeans, and they succeeded in winning wartime bans on strong drink.

**It wasn't illegal to drink alcohol during Prohibition.**

The 18th Amendment only forbade the “manufacture, sale and transportation of intoxicating liquors”—not their consumption. By law, any wine, beer or spirits Americans had stashed away in January 1920 were theirs to keep and enjoy in the privacy of their homes.

*With an extensive range of Prohibition themed props and backdrops Staging Service can help deliver a prohibition themed dinner or a speakeasy knees-up. So whether it's a simple prop hire, a themed entrance feature or a fully managed prohibition themed experience; with Staging, LED Star Cloth, Dance Floor & entertainment.*

**Some states refused to enforce Prohibition.**

Along with creating an army of federal agents, the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act stipulated that individual states should enforce Prohibition within their own borders. Maryland never even enacted an enforcement code, and eventually earned a reputation as one of the most stubbornly anti-Prohibition states in the Union. New York followed suit and repealed its measures in 1923.

**Winemakers and brewers found creative ways to stay afloat.**

While many small distilleries and breweries continued to operate in secret during Prohibition, the rest had to either shut their doors or find new uses for their factories. Yuengling and Anheuser Busch both refitted their breweries to make ice cream, while Coors doubled down on the production of pottery and ceramics. Others produced “near beer”—legal brew that contained less than 0.5 percent alcohol.

**Thousands died from drinking tainted liquor.**

Enterprising bootleggers produced millions of gallons of “bathtub gin” and rotgut moonshine during Prohibition. This illicit hooch had a famously foul taste, and those desperate enough to drink it also ran the risk of being struck blind or even poisoned. The most deadly tinctures contained industrial alcohol originally made for use in fuels and medical supplies. This tainted booze may have killed more than 10,000 people before the repeal of the 18th Amendment.

**The Great Depression helped fuel calls for a repeal.**

By the late 1920s, Americans were spending more money than ever on black market booze. New York City boasted more than 30,000 speakeasies, and Detroit’s alcohol trade was second only to the auto industry in its contribution to the economy. With the country bogged down by the Great Depression, anti-Prohibition activists argued that potential savings and tax revenue from alcohol were too precious to ignore.

**It continues in some parts of America to this day.**

Even after the repeal of Prohibition, some states maintained a ban on alcohol within their own borders. Kansas and Oklahoma remained dry until 1948 and 1959. To this day, 10 states still contain counties where alcohol sales are prohibited outright.

