

# Al capone and the prohibition

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In the United States, the Prohibition marked the time when the production and sale of alcohol was banned. This ban was the result of the perception that alcohol was a moral and social threat. The Prohibition sought to decrease crimes and other unlawful acts.

Unfortunately, the end result was the opposite of the objective. Crimes increased, as people clamored for illegal alcohol. The situation also caused the domination of gangsters, which provided the banned commodity. Among all gangsters who played a role in the Prohibition, Al Capone was the most influential. This research paper aims to discuss Al Capone and his effect on the Prohibition.

The Prohibition was also known as the Noble Experiment (Kerr 564; McWilliams). The period lasted 13 years, from 1920 to 1933 (Kerr 564; McWilliams; Poholek). During this time, the “ manufacture, transportation and sale” of alcoholic beverages were banned (Clark 1; “ Prohibition”; Kerr 564; Poholek). The term “ prohibition” was used to identify the moments in history when the alcoholic ban was in effect (Clark 1).

In 19th century America, especially 1820s, citizens of the United States were consuming an average of seven gallons of alcohol per person every year (Clark 1). This statistic had begun to bother political and religious figures alike. They believed that alcoholic beverages were threatening society's institutions, especially the family and the community (Clark 1; Kerr 564). Alcohol was considered as the “ devil's advocate,” the cause of poverty, crime and death (Poholek).

As a result, the Anti-Saloon League of America (ASL) was formed; this group brought the alcohol question in the political arena (Clark 1). By 1916, U. S. Congress was dominated by dry members who were backed by ASL. Supporters of the Prohibition were called “ dry,” while opponents were referred to as “ wets” (Clark 1; Kerr 564). In 1917, the 18th Amendment was proposed; the amendment was about the prohibition of alcohol (Clark 2; “ Prohibition”). Two years later, the Volstead Act was passed to enforce the amendment (Clark 2; Poholek). The Prohibition officially began on January 16, 1920 (Clark 2; Poholek).

On the contrary, the Prohibition was characterized by the very elements it sought to avoid. In the words of Mark Thorton: “ Prohibition did not achieve itsgoals. Instead, it added to the problems it was intended to solve” (qtd. in Poholek). The deprivation of alcohol in American society exacerbated the social problems. Despite the ban, the consumption of alcohol was at an all time high (McWilliams). The period was also characterized by utmost disregard for law and an increase in crime rates (Clark 2). The Prohibition failed in its endeavor, and in the process, made matters worse.

The Prohibition actually paved the way for gangsters to gain power and authority. Since alcohol was made illegal, the gangs found the situation as an opportunity to conduct business and earnmoneyby providing the contraband (“ Prohibition”; Poholek). Because of the banning of alcohol, the public had to get their supply from gangsters; this made gangsters very rich, as bootlegging liquor proved to be a lucrative endeavor (Poholek). Among all the bootlegger gangsters, Al Capone was the most famous and influential (Poholek).

Alphonsus Capone was born on January 17, 1899 (Chicago Historical Society [CHS] 1). He was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York. At a young age, he was already part of gangs. He dropped out of school at an early age and worked several menial jobs. Near Capone's home stood the headquarters of Johnny Torrio, a gangster and future mentor of Capone (Bardsley 4). While working his multiple jobs, Capone also did favors for Torrio. In the process, the young Capone earned not only money, but also Torrio's trust. In 1909, Torrio left New York for Chicago (Bardsley 4). For a while, Capone and Torrio's paths did not cross.

Back in New York, Capone worked for another gangster, this time it was Frankie Yale (CHS 1). However, in Chicago, Torrio had made himself an influential underground boss (Allen 5). With the Prohibition in full effect, Torrio saw the potential of an illegal alcohol industry. He recognized how profitable the venture would be with the Chicago market. However, he had to consider the competition, such as the rival gangs. He had to find the right man to deal with his competitors (Allen 5).