

# The whiskey ring scandal

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Was the Whiskey Ring a public scandal? Yes, the Whiskey Ring was in fact a public scandal. This is true according to many different sources, this is because it could not be destroyed because of its strong political connections. The Whiskey Ring was a group of whiskey distillers, (they were dissolved in 1875) and they made secret plans to defraud the federal government of taxes. They operated mainly in St. Louis, Mo., Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Chicago. The Whiskey Ring pursued Internal Revenue officials and other people involved in the scandal in Washington to keep the liquor profits for themselves. Benjamin H. Bristow, (secretary of the Treasury) had organized an investigation which was meant to be a secret and this idea exposed the ring meaning the results ended in 238 indictments and 110 convictions. Claiming that the idea was illegal, the tax money (which was being held illegally) was being used in the Republican Party's national campaign for President Ulysses S. Grant to be re-elected, which raised suspicion for the public. Although President Grant was not suspected to do this, his private secretary (Orville E. Babcock) was pointed out in the secret plan, but ended up being declared guilty after President Grant testified to his innocence.

There were many people involved in The Whiskey Ring scandal. At the time of the scandal, the president of the United States was President Ulysses S. Grant. Grant didn't know about The Whiskey Ring Scandal, but he was responsible for giving jobs to many old friends who ended up being dishonest. President Ulysses S. Grant (original name Hiram Ulysses Grant), was born on April 27, 1822 in Point Pleasant. He graduated from West Point in 1843, where he was known as a skilled horseman, but he was not so good of a student. Grant was authorized as a lieutenant in the 4th U. S. Infantry,

and he was then stationed at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri which was near St. Louis. After Grant was done with his schooling years, he met his spouse Julia Dent, which was the sister of one of his West Point classmates. After seeing action in the Mexican-American War, President Grant was to return to Missouri and then had married Julia, (his spouse) in August of 1848. The couple had four children together. In the early years of their his marriage, President Grant was assigned to a series of remote army posts, and some of them were on the West Coast which parted and eventually separated him from his family. He then resigned from the military in 1854. Grant was introduced to the White House during Reconstruction era. As president, Grant tried his hardest to keep a peace bond between the North and South territories. He also supported ideas from former confederate leaders and meanwhile was attempting to help and protect freed slaves' civil rights. In the year of 1870, Amendment number 15 was ratified. This amendment gave black men a right to vote. Grant then signed a legislation in order to limit activities of white terrorist groups, like the Ku Klux Klan, which used violence to scare blacks and prevent them from voting in elections. At various times in the chaos, the president stationed federal troops throughout the South to keep law and order. The highly judgmental group involved in the scandal charged that Grant's actions violated states' rights, while others knew and supported the fact that the president did not do enough to protect freedmen. In 1877, after leaving the White House, President Grant and his family pursued a two-year trip around the world. While they were abroad, they met with dignitaries and cheering crowds in many of the countries they visited. At the Republican National Convention 1880, a group of delegates voted to nominate Grant for president again; but James Garfield (a U. S. congressman <https://assignbuster.com/the-whiskey-ring-scandal/>

from Ohio (1831-1881), ultimately earned the nomination instead of Grant. After those events, Grant went on to win the general election and become the 20th U. S. president. Grant was the U. S. commander of the union armies of the American Civil War during the years of 1864-1865 and the 18th president of the United States. Stated in the article " Reconstruction and Corruption in the Grant Administration", " When Grant took office he admitted that he lacked political experience. In his inaugural address he said, " The office has come to me unsought." Grant strongly believed in racial equality, not only in the South, but also in the North. In his inaugural address he spoke in favor of " security of a person, property, and free religious and political opinion in every part of our common country." Grant took no action as president to enforce this belief, however, and his motto guided him: " Let us have peace." Grant had a very powerful presence and did his best to be a good president. Next, United States' 30th Secretary of the Treasury Benjamin H. Bristow, (he was an American lawyer, the first Solicitor General, a union military officer, reformer, civil rights advocate and a republican party politician). Also, Orville E. Babcock, (which who was acquitted through the personal intervention of the president), 4th, John McDonald (former senator), Last, John B. Henderson, (Co-author of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution and government official and United States Senator from Missouri). These individuals were also a part of many more events throughout history. The Whiskey Ring was fast to include hundreds of government officials and also people in the liquor industry throughout the Midwest.

The Whiskey Ring that was revealed in May 1875, with its center at St. Louis. The Whiskey Ring scandal had a very simple idea. According to the article named, " Secrets of the great Whiskey Ring", " Here, in very simple terms, is how the scam worked: Sometime around 1870, government agents charged with keeping an eye on how much whiskey was being made, arranged to ignore a certain percentage of the distillate in return for cash in the amount of roughly half the money the distillery would have paid in taxes. When 'straight' tax collectors who were not part of the ring were due to call, the distillers were forewarned to 'play safe' and pay up. Whiskey distillers paid federal agents with massive bribes. In return the federal agents helped the distillers evade federal taxes on the whiskey they produced and sold. Whiskey was supposed to be taxed at 70 cents per gallon, but the distillers could pay off agents involved in the ring for 35 cents per gallon. The 'crooked whiskey' was stamped as having its tax paid by the agents and the distiller made great profit."

The scandal itself was a group of public officials who defrauded the federal government of liquor taxes. According to Andrew Wanko (Public Historian), " Millions of dollars in annual taxes were being siphoned off in an elaborate scandal. The Whiskey Ring involved hundreds of individuals across half the nation. Nearly half of those involved worked though St. Louis, with the rest spread across major cities including Chicago, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, New Orleans and Washington D. C. Among the Conspirators, were storekeepers, distillers, politicians, reporters, U. S. Treasury workers and IRS agents. The corruption stretched all the way to General Orville E. Babcock (Private Secretary), to President Grant and a Whiskey Ring plotter."

From 1870 to 1875, the Whiskey Ring was still in effect. Also, many other significant events that happened around the time of The Whiskey Ring, which may have had an impact on this scandal. The first event that happened was The Franco-Prussian War, which was Bismarck's influence on the German states which led to a year long conflict in which France was defeated against. Another event that occurred in 1870, would be when congress adopts the Fifteenth Amendment. This very much had an impact on The Whiskey Ring. The 15th Amendment of the United States Constitution forbids all governments in the United States from denying a citizen the right to vote based on that citizen's color or race. The 15th amendment was ratified on February 3rd of 1870. What is interesting about this is that there was no mention made of gender, and it then took another 50 years to guarantee that women had a right to vote, with the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920. Another example is John D. Rockefeller. In 1870, he formed the Standard Oil of Ohio company. By 1890, Standard Oil controlled 88% of oil in the U. S. John D. Rockefeller was a chairman and major shareholder, founder, and the company he worked with made him the richest man in history. By the year of 1871, British Columbia became a part of Canada. Last, finally recognized as an imperial territory by Britain, British Columbia was named British Columbia in 1858, and became part of Canada in 1871.

There was a lot of background talk about The Whiskey Ring. This includes the rumors. An example would be that Orville E. Babcock was acquitted through the personal intervention of the president. Many people believed that The Whiskey Ring was part of a plot to finance the Republican party by fraud but this rumor was actually never proven. There were also various rumors that

people involved in The Whiskey Ring in St. Louis were openly advertising that the prosecutors would not be pressed until the end, because if they were they would reach the white house.

The rumors about The Whiskey ring were an issue. They were causing problems. Due to President Grant's incompetency and the other scandals within his administration, by the end of year 1874, President Grant was no longer popular among his people. Although he was thinking about running for a third term, he had once told the congress that he was in fact not prepared for the office at all. In fact, people within his administration were without hope, in result of some of the people he had chosen to work with him. The rumors of The Whiskey Ring were coming to a truth and many people at the White House were relieved when Bristow was appointed to the Treasury. Bristow was a very well respected man. One of his first acts of Treasury was to grant money to highly sort out the alleged corruption within the Internal Revenue Service. With the help from news and papermen in St. Louis, Treasury (Bristow), was about to crack the ring wide open. During The Whiskey ring, the government was specifically affected by the Republican party, which contributed to the national weariness of Reconstruction which had ended after Grant's presidency with the compromise of 1877.

The Whiskey Ring was a cause and effect event, just like many. Soon after the Civil War, taxes were raised to some very high levels. In some cases, the price of liquor was raised up to eight times the price. Meaning people had to pay way more than normal price. Grant was not directly involved in the scandal but his reputation was damaged, as a result. The scandal, along with other abuses of power by the Republican party, contributed to national

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weariness of Reconstruction, which ended after Grant's presidency with the Compromise of 1877.