

## FIRST DRAFT

# THE DRIVE TO DRINK

### Going from dry to wet was a popular decision in 1933 Colorado

It's likely that many glasses were raised — although not yet legally — to toast the election results of Sept. 12, 1933. That's when Colorado joined 28 other states that had already voted to repeal the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the 1919 measure that had prohibited alcohol throughout the country.

Repeal of the 18th Amendment required the approval of another amendment, the 21st amendment. And it needed the support of 36 states. However, the final ratification from the last of the 36 states didn't come until Dec. 5, 1933.

Even so, the September vote elicited support and excitement in Colorado and around the country. Everyone knew that prohibition was on its way out.

Fourteen years of the federal ban on alcohol had proved to be a disaster. Rather than alleviating alcohol-fueled violence as supporters had predicted, bootlegging became rampant during prohibition and criminal gangs made millions of dollars selling and distributing illegal liquor.

Many of those who had supported prohibition when it was voted into the U.S. Constitution were among the voices that pushed for repeal in 1933. The Daily Sentinel was one of them.

"Are we, then to continue in our present predicament, whereby the bootlegger and the racketeer are acquiring wealth and, through this illegally gotten wealth, veritable control of our nation?" the Sentinel asked in an editorial two days before the Sept. 12 vote.

The answer was a resounding "No," throughout Colorado, although the vote was less resounding in Mesa County. Statewide, Coloradans voted by a margin of more than two-to-one to repeal prohibition. But in Mesa County, repeal won by just 5 percentage points.

Delta and Montrose counties voted against repeal, but Garfield County voted in favor of repeal by more than three-to-one. With the exception of Delta County, every county with a large mining industry voted strongly in favor of repeal.

Coloradans had actually voted to eliminate alcohol prohibition nearly one year earlier, during the election of 1932. But that vote only repealed Colorado's ban on alcohol, which had been passed by the state in 1916. It did not affect federal prohibition.

To repeal the 18th Amendment required the approval of three-fourths of the 48 states — or 36 states. That number was reached on Nov. 7, 1933, when voters in Ohio, Pennsylvania and Utah all cast ballots to repeal prohibition. But the actual end of prohibition didn't occur until Dec. 6, after four state legislatures, including Utah's, ratified the 21st Amendment.

Interestingly, Utah voted in favor of repealing prohibition in the other states, but it remained a dry state itself, at least for the time being.

By voting to repeal the 18th Amendment, the Salt Lake

Tribune said, Utah lawmakers "not only expect to restore the control of the liquor problem to the lawful forces of state government, but to end once and for all the vicious evils which have attended the dry era."

Along with the repeal vote, Utah Gov. Henry Blood announced he would form a commission to examine the problems and benefits of legalizing alcohol in Utah. That commission began meeting at the end of 1933.

On Dec. 6, President Franklin Roosevelt, who had campaigned in part on repealing prohibition, issued a proclamation declaring the 18th Amendment repealed and prohibition ended. Almost immediately, festivities began across much of the country, primarily in the 24 states where alcohol sales were immediately legal once more.

"End of Prohibition Celebrated Like New Year's Day as Joyous Crowds Try New Freedom," read a headline from Chicago.

In Boston, "Jovial but orderly crowds swarmed around the tap rooms calling for cocktails that went for 40 cents, whisky that sold for a quarter."

There were photos of liquor trucks legally delivering booze in New York City for the first time since 1920.

In Denver, the Brown Palace Hotel planned a large "Jubilee Party ... to commemorate the return of better, happier times."

The party was to begin on Dec. 5, but "Promptly at the stroke of Midnight, Old Man Prohibition will be given the pass keys to oblivion," according to an advertisement that ran a few days before the celebration.

In Grand Junction, however, no such parties were promoted in the newspaper. If there were celebrations, they were held quietly. In fact, it appears that liquor was still banned here, despite the nationwide repeal.

On Dec. 31, 1933, the Sentinel ran another editorial, chastising the Grand Junction city council for planning to hold another municipal election regarding the repeal of prohibition. Grand Junction voters had strongly supported repeal in 1932 and again in September 1933, the newspaper noted. "Yet the city council thinks they should have another opportunity to pass judgment."

But no municipal election regarding alcohol was held in 1934. Apparently, the city council chose to let the issue expire quietly and allowed the state law that authorized the sale and consumption of alcohol to take effect within the city limits.

By early 1934, Grand Junction liquor stores were advertising in The Daily Sentinel.

On Feb. 2, the Raso Liquor Store on South Second Street announced its grand opening, with "the most complete stock of fine liquors in Western Colorado."

Soon, other businesses were advertising whiskey, wine, brandy and Coors beer, as well as free home delivery.

Despite the vote and the elimination of prohibition nationwide, anti-alcohol forces



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Throughout prohibition, Brown-Forman whiskies were acknowledged superior for prescription purposes. Today, the descendants of the original family of distillers proudly present Old Hawthorne. A really fine blended whisky at a price that everyone can pay... Both pint and quart sizes are bottled in clear glass, so that you can see what you're buying. Try Old Hawthorne. It's on sale everywhere. You'll like it.

CECIL E. PACE  
District Representative... Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico  
326 Continental Oil Building, Denver, Colorado

DAVIS BROTHERS DRUG CO.  
Colorado Distributor—1025 Fifteenth Street, Denver, Colorado

BROWN-FORMAN DISTILLERY COMPANY, INCORPORATED  
At LOUISVILLE in KENTUCKY—DISTILLERS OF THE FINEST SINCE 1870

National liquor companies also began advertising in Grand Junction in 1934. This ad ran in March, 1934.

AT RIGHT: This photograph from 1932 highlights efforts by the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform to get the 18th Amendment repealed. The location where the photograph was taken is not specified.



vowed to continue their fight. Some claimed they would reinstate prohibition. Others said, if they couldn't prevent alcohol from becoming legal again in most states, they would work to see the strictest regulations possible enforced, temperance leaders vowed.

Additionally, although the 18th Amendment was repealed, things didn't return to exactly the way they had been prior to prohibition.

The federal government would now have a greater role taxing legal alcohol, while the states would have greater control over regulating the sale and consumption of liquor. Also, the taverns and saloons of the pre-prohibition era would be different now.

In the years before prohibition, liquor establishments were largely the province of men. Few women but dance hall girls, prostitutes and those of dubious character frequented bars, saloons or dance halls.

But during prohibition, when speakeasies took the place of legal drinking establishments, women who were seen as more respectable, regularly joined men in the illegal establishments.

As the Rocky Mountain News put it in one headline following the 1933 repeal: "Women Refuse to Budge from Their Place at the Bar." The story added that "It begins to look as if the girls would put up a stiff fight for the equality they have recently attained."

Prohibition had ended, and Americans were eager to begin consuming alcohol without the threat of being arrested.

Sources: Historic newspapers at www.newspapers.com and www.coloradohistoricnewspapers.org; "Prohibition," by Ted Richthofen, Colorado Encyclopedia, www.coloradoencyclopedia.org.

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Announcing

Wines - Liquors - Cordials

These fine old twangy wines from the sunny slope of Italy, sparkling champagnes and burgundies that release the imprisoned laughter of peasant girls of France. Whiskies with that famous Scotch "burr" or ale that twangs with the delightful Irish "bragoo." Aged beer with high alcohol content, gin that is crystal clear, wines from the sunny shores of California... all vying for your favoritism among the finest products that are known and esteemed by the discriminating drinkers of older days.

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COGNAC  
SCOTCH  
RUM  
ALE

RASO LIQUOR STORE  
220 South Second We Deliver Phone 799

This advertisement from Feb. 2, 1934, announces the opening of the Raso Liquor Store in Grand Junction, indicating that alcohol was legal in Grand Junction by then.

EDITORIALS BY  
WALTER WALKER AND ESTELLE WALKER REESE

REPEAL—A NEW START

Would keeping the 18th amendment against the expressed desires of the majority of the states improve the liquor situation in our nation? It seems to us we would be in an even worse predicament than we are today. Evidence shows that the federal government cannot prohibit the drinking of liquor. Under the 18th amendment the states have no authority to control the traffic in liquor that all the world knows goes on. The delay of repeal means we would still have neither prohibition nor control, for public opinion has expressed itself against prohibition and the amendment forbids states to regulate because they cannot even admit that such a thing as liquor traffic exists. Are we, then to continue in our present predicament, whereby the bootlegger and the racketeer are acquiring wealth and, through this illegally gotten wealth, veritable control of our nation?

The opening paragraph of an editorial that appeared in The Daily Sentinel on Sept. 10, 1933, two days before Colorado and Mesa County voted to repeal the 18th Amendment.