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Raising the Hatchet or Raising the Glass: Prohibition in Clark County, Arkansas

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“Raising the Hatchet or Raising the Glass:
Prohibition in Clark County, Arkansas”**

written by

Katie McCormack

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for completion of the
Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

(Name) thesis director

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(Name) third reader

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Raising the Hatchet or Raising the Glass: Prohibition in Clark County, Arkansas

Prohibition did not begin with the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1920, nor did it end after the repeal of the Prohibition Movement in 1933. In fact, by the time national prohibition was sent to the states for ratification, twenty-seven states had already adopted statewide prohibition laws. When national prohibition was repealed, previously enacted state prohibition laws remained intact. Therefore, despite the repeal of prohibition at the national level, thirty-eight percent of the nation's population lived in areas with state or local prohibition after 1933.

After national repeal, however, state prohibition laws were gradually abandoned as more regions of the country became wet. In order to appease counties that wished to remain dry, some state enacted local option laws, which allowed individual counties to readopt prohibition. After Arkansas established local option elections in 1942, forty-three counties opted to become dry again. Those forty-three counties remain dry today.

Clark County, Arkansas, is one of a handful of counties across the country that has remained dry. The issue of alcohol continues to be just as contentious in Clark County as it was decades ago during the height of the prohibition era. Attempts to repeal prohibition in Clark County have all been unsuccessful. The most recent attempt in 2006 failed after months of heated debate.

The distinction between wet and dry is being blurred in Clark County and other counties as they continue to wrestle with the debate over alcohol. Several dry counties are now opting to become "damp" by granting liquor licenses to certain establishments. Other counties are outright rejecting their dry status in favor of becoming completely wet. Many dry counties have reached a difficult impasse between the need for progress and

the respect for tradition. True to its history, the prohibition of alcohol remains a controversial and dividing issue.

Arkansas and Clark County personify the past, present, and future of prohibition. Although the issue has faded from the national scene, it has not completely faded from local debate. Decades removed from national prominence, prohibition still manages to harshly divide communities along wet and dry lines. Al Capone, a famous gangster and bootlegger, may have summed it up perfectly when he stated, "Prohibition has made nothing but trouble."

Early History of Alcohol in America

The Mayflower not only carried a handful of hopeful Puritans to the New World, but it also carried America's first cargo of alcoholic beverages. In fact, the Puritans packed the Mayflower with more beer than water before sailing across the Atlantic Ocean.¹ America's first taste of alcohol would not be its last.

Throughout Colonial history, alcohol played a predominant role in communities across the fledgling nation. Colonists viewed alcohol as a harmless aspect of everyday life and public consumption of alcohol occurred on a regular basis. Drinking was not only considered a social activity in America's early history, but it was a political necessity in many American colonies. Elections, workplace gatherings, weddings, and funerals all featured alcoholic beverages.²

Local taverns also played an important role in American colonies. Taverns functioned, both politically and socially, as the central institution of a colony. Colonists gathered in their local taverns to conduct community business. People of all ages were welcome at taverns for these meetings and gatherings, which represented various interests. Weddings, funerals, court sessions and even church services were often held at the local tavern.³ During this period, tavern owners enjoyed a higher social status than clergymen.⁴

As the open acceptance of alcohol and its suppliers was passed down to

¹ James E. Royce, *Alcohol Problems: A Comprehensive Survey* (New York: Free Press, 1981), 38.

² Stanton Peele, *Alcohol & Society: How Culture Influences the Way People Drink* (San Francisco: The Wine Institute, 1996), 6.

³ H.G. Levine, *Alcohol & Disinhibition: Nature and Meaning of the Link* (Rockville, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 1983) 115.

⁴ John A. Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition* (New York: Knopf, 1925), 44.

subsequent generations, its societal approval expanded even further. Children were regularly exposed to alcohol. Learning to drink was a key aspect of cultural development. Parents feared that neglecting to accustom their children to drinking liquor in small amounts would result in eventual overindulgence and drunkenness.⁵ Beer and cider were offered as beverages at every meal to all members of the family.⁶ Alcohol was also promoted in the home as a source of nutritional value. The pilgrims considered alcohol to be essential to their health, and Virginia colonists continued that tradition by accepting alcohol as a natural food product that was beneficial in moderation.⁷ One life insurance company mandated that alcohol abstainers pay rates 10% higher than alcohol drinkers.⁸

Alcohol proved to be a social and political necessity to Colonial America. Even more importantly, alcohol was a vital economic interest to the Colonists. The early colonialists creatively produced alcoholic beverages by fermenting any available crops including carrots, tomatoes, squash, corn, and dandelions.⁹ The first rum distillery began operating in Boston in 1657. One of the first buildings constructed at Harvard College was a brewery to supply beer to the student dormitories.¹⁰ The manufacturing of rum

⁵ W.J. Rorabaugh, *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 14.

⁶ Mark Lender and James Martin, *Drinking in America: A History* (New York: Free Press, 1982), 9.

⁷ Baron, 1962 3-8.

⁸ John Kohler. *Ardent Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 26.

⁹ Jack H. Mendelson and Nancy K. Mello, *Alcohol: Use and Abuse in America* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown 1985).

¹⁰ J.C. Furnas *The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1965), 20.

quickly became the most prosperous industry in early New England colonies.¹¹

While rum producers enjoyed economic success in the North, whiskey dominated in the Southern and Western colonies where rum shipment was costly and difficult. A Baptist minister produced the first Kentucky whiskey in 1789.¹² The availability of grain *also made whiskey a natural choice for these frontier colonies. Its popularity soon spread* across the landscape overtaking rum as America's favored liquor. The advent and popularity of Kentucky bourbon reinforced the distinctly Southern identity of whiskey.¹³

By the end of the colonial period, alcohol remained a staple of American life. America's positive view of social drinking transcended cultural boundaries. People of all classes, economic statuses, and religious views accepted moderate drinking.¹⁴ The new century, however, would bring change to this long-standing tradition. The "good creature" of the 18th Century was soon to be overshadowed by the "demon rum" of the 19th Century.¹⁵

Alcohol consumption between the 1790s and 1830s skyrocketed. The average American consumed over seven gallons of absolute alcohol during this time period, a quantity about three times the current rate.¹⁶ Society's view of alcohol had not changed. Public drinking was still a widely accepted social norm, but overindulgent individuals

¹¹ Berton Roueche, "Alcohol in Human Culture," in *Alcohol and Civilization*, ed. Salvatore Lucia (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), 167-182.

¹² William Grimes, *Straight Up or On the Rocks: A Cultural History of American Drink* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993) 52-53.

¹³ Mendelson and Mello, 31.

¹⁴ Ibid, 34-35.

¹⁵ Ibid, 41.

¹⁶ N.H. Clark, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition* (New York: Norton, 1976), 20.

were increasingly disregarding the policy of moderation.¹⁷

The rise in excessive drinking and intoxication was quickly followed by growth in antiliquor sentiment. Although liquor had been acceptable to most Americans throughout the colonial period, it had not always been acceptable to everyone. The longtime critics of alcohol denounced liquor more adamantly as consumption increased. As the opposition voices grew louder, more citizens rallied around the antiliquor cause.

One of the first organized antiliquor campaigns was launched in 1810 by Justin Edwards, Leonard Woods, and fourteen other ministers associated with the Congregationalist Andover Seminary in New England. The group primarily created pamphlets that were used by ministers to preach against the consumption of alcohol. However, the broad appeal of their message allowed them to expand their vision. Thus began the socialization of a new institution: the temperance society.¹⁸

The fledgling temperance movement was a predominantly religious crusade. All across New England, prayers were being offered on behalf of the “evil” consumers of alcohol, while fire and brimstone sermons were being preached against drink and drinkers. The movement soon spread to other religious groups. Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Anglicans, and other denominations quickly followed suit by denouncing alcohol.¹⁹

The temperance movement soon spread out of the church and into mainstream society. The American Society for the Promotion of Temperance was formally established in 1826. The Society did not advocate full prohibition, but rather adopted a

¹⁷ Mendelson and Mello, 58.

¹⁸ Rorabaugh, 191-193.

¹⁹ Lender and Martin, 67.

stance of increased moderation. By preaching solely against distilled beverages associated with hard liquor, the Society effectively gathered impressive local support. Over 200 state and local chapters were formed around the country.²⁰

Temperance gained even more steam through the use of propaganda. Pamphlets were printed, lectures were given, and essays were distributed. The grassroots efforts sparked fervent debate and gathered even more supporters. Local citizens were constantly bombarded with the antiliquor messages, which appeared in churches, at town meetings, and in several aspects of their daily lives. By 1851, over 5 million temperance pamphlets had been printed and distributed.²¹

Society had already transitioned from the open acceptance of alcohol to condemnation over alcohol's tendency to be abused. The next major societal shift transitioned public opinion from advocating alcohol in moderation to promoting total abstinence. This shift emerged primarily in the 1830s as temperance movements around the country gradually devoted themselves to the elimination of all intoxicating liquors, not just hard liquors.²²

However, the shift to abstinence was not as welcomed as the shift to moderation. Many temperance leaders, politicians, and elites were hesitant to support complete prohibition. They knew the notion of total abstinence was still far ahead of popular public support. In fact, outside of the actual movement, prohibition had little backing. Without overwhelming public approval, political pressure could not be generated. Without political support, laws could not be changed and mandated prohibition could not

²⁰ Ibid, 68.

²¹ Rorabaugh, 196.

²² Ernest Cherrington, *The Revolution of Prohibition in the United States of America* (Westerville, OH: American Issue Press, 1920), 116-118.

be realized.²³

Nonetheless, the first organized temperance movement was not a complete failure. The fervent efforts of the reformers sparked an important debate. Although they did fail in realizing their ultimate goal of mandated prohibition, they laid the vital groundwork for future antiliquor movements. Unbeknownst to them, another movement would take up their cause several decades later. Where the temperance movement failed, the progressive movement would succeed.

²³ Lender and Martin, 68-86.

The Progressive Movement and National Prohibition

The move toward national prohibition followed closely on the heels of the progressive movement that began in the early 20th Century. Unlike previous temperance movements, the progressive push for national prohibition began with the optimistic belief that eliminating alcohol consumption would reduce poverty, crime, and other social problems.²⁴ Thus, the fight against drink expanded its message once again.

Prohibitionists were now citing alcohol as the cause of many social downfalls and calling for that cause to be eliminated.

The progressive movement came as a response to the rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization. The movement embodied a wide array of social, religious, and economic reforms aimed at stabilizing and protecting the American lifestyle. One of the most important but least understood tenets of the progressive movement was prohibition. Both the progressive movement and prohibition were rooted in the reform of moral law.

There were four main arguments contained within the progressive agenda that demanded the prohibition of alcohol. Religious, social, economic, and political reasons were all cited in the case against alcohol.²⁵ Advocates of the progressive movement used these different arguments to appeal to a broad audience. By citing reasons beyond moral concerns, the reformists gathered expansive support.

Skepticism toward intemperance had long been associated with organized

²⁴ Paul Aaron and David Musto, "Temperance and Prohibition in America: An Historical Overview" in *Alcohol and Public Policy: Beyond the Shadow of Prohibition*, eds. Mark Moore and Dean Gerstien, (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1981), 157.

²⁵ James H. Timberlake, *Prohibition and the Progressive Movement, 1900-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 1-2.

religion. Therefore, a natural relationship between prohibition and the church already existed. The progressive movement simply capitalized on that relationship. Prohibition rhetoric sprung up in Protestant churches across the nation. Grape juice replaced wine at the Lord's Supper, alcohol became an abhorrent evil, and liquor businesses were branded as moral stumbling blocks.²⁶

The official church position against alcohol, however, was not the most powerful religious player in the fight for prohibition. Several prohibition groups, rooted in religious reason, strongly influenced the prohibition debate. The most influential group was the Women's Christian Temperance Union, which initiated a successful campaign to mandate temperance education throughout the entire public school system.²⁷ In 1886, the WCTU persuaded Congress to require the use of a WCTU- approved text in Washington, D.C., and the territories. Mary Hunt, the founder of the WTCU, wrote a petition to publishers with a checklist for selecting textbooks that would comply with the temperance instruction laws. "Books should stress," she said, "That a little drink creates an uncontrollable craving for more, illustrate the 'appalling effects of drinking habits upon the citizenship of the nation,' and omit reference to the fact that doctors used alcohol for medicinal purposes."²⁸

The social argument against alcohol had also long been associated with the temperance movement. The progressive era simply highlighted previously existing social

²⁶ Timberlake, 12.

²⁷ Jonathan Zimmerman, "The Queen of the Lobby: Mary Hunt, Scientific Temperance and the Dilemma of Democratic Education in America 1879-1906", *History of Education Quarterly* (1992): 1-30.

²⁸ James Thomas and David Tyack, "Moral Majorities and the School Curriculum: Historical Perspectives on the Legalization of Virtue", *Teachers College Record* (1985): 513-537.

concerns by connecting them to alcohol. Industrial growth and urbanization awakened Americans to such problems as crime, disease, and poverty.²⁹ All of these troubles were believed to be caused by alcohol, linked to alcohol, and/or aggravated by alcohol. A number of scientific studies reinforced public belief by proving that alcohol was related to many of the problems.³⁰

New scientific evidence also played a role in changing social thought about alcohol's health affects. Increased technology led to more advanced medical tests that ultimately discovered the harmful health implications of alcohol consumption. Previous notions of alcohol's beneficial health effects were swept aside as alcohol's negative effects were increasingly discovered and highlighted.³¹ Temperance and Progressive leaders manipulated this new data to spread their anti-alcohol message.

“The temperance societies set out to diffuse the results of medical research through pamphlet and pulpit. But they were careful to diffuse only that scientific data which was in line with their beliefs. The research which supported God's ban against drink was good; the research which found for the moderate use of liquor was faulty, biased, bought, or downright evil. The dries perfected techniques for misrepresenting scientific experiments, for quoting out of context, for making final dogmas out of interim reports, and for manufacturing literary water bottles out of laboratory test tubes.”³²

The temperance movement gained support in the economic realm from a number of highly successful businessmen. Industrial managers, entrepreneurs, and other

²⁹ Timberlake, 39-40.

³⁰ Timberlake, 45-66.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sinclair, 38-39.

businessmen widely advocated prohibition during the progressive era.³³ Although their motives were spurred by the potential for increased production and moneymaking, business leaders did much to advance the sobriety message. Workers were encouraged, and sometimes even forced, to reduce their alcohol intake.³⁴

Industrial bosses stressed that a reduction in alcohol intake would increase industrial safety and efficiency. Prohibition literature and temperance lectures became common in workplaces. Hiring practices were tightened to enforce sobriety, and incentives became available to those who abstained from alcohol. Many industrial bosses personally practiced sobriety to further encourage sobriety among their employees.³⁵ The practice of prohibition among some of society's most prominent and influential men, such as John D. Rockefeller, helped increase its popularity among the general public.

Finally, the progressive movement focused attention on politics. Alcohol interests had a strong position in the political realm dating back to the period of saloon politics.³⁶ To counter the strong influence of alcohol supporters, temperance reformers joined together to form the Anti-Saloon League in 1893. The two-fold purpose of the league was to unite all the temperance factions under a broader message against saloons and to begin intensely lobbying in the political arena.³⁷

The League struggled in its beginning years, but rapidly expanded to forty-three states by 1908. The state branches worked on influencing local policy, while the national organization molded itself into a formal agency with its own structure, constituency,

³³ Timberlake, 67-68.

³⁴ Ibid, 75.

³⁵ Ibid, 73.

³⁶ Timberlake, 108.

³⁷ Peter H. Odegard, *Pressure Politics: Story of the Anti-Saloon League* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1928), 3-20.

leaders, and policy initiatives.³⁸ League contributions expanded exponentially, further strengthening their bargaining power by funding increased propaganda literature, sponsoring dry crusades, and endorsing political candidates. The mass publicity of the league increased its influence and led to several successes.

By the turn of the century, the hard work of the temperance reformers had only resulted in the adoption of local option prohibition laws in five states.³⁹ However, despite discouraging results, workers continued spreading their message. Their efforts paid off when local option laws were gradually adopted in more states – particularly in the South. The sudden increase in dry states in the South around 1907 piqued public interest.⁴⁰

America's entry into World War I helped bolster the prohibition movement. Propaganda produced by the Anti-Saloon League and other temperance groups characterized the liquor industry as a foreign endeavor controlled by German-Americans and other immigrants. These claims fit nicely within the progressive movement's "Anglo-Saxon" agenda, which was becoming increasingly less tolerant of foreigners and immigrants. Prohibitionists and progressives alike readily believed arguments alleging that immigrants were inferior since they had begun drinking at an earlier age.⁴¹

The Webb-Kenyon Act, passed by Congress in 1913, further revived the efforts of prohibitionists and once again brought the issue to the national forefront. The law heralded a huge success for reformers by transitioning the issue from local and state levels to the national level. The bill stipulated that interstate transportation of

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Timberlake, 147.

⁴⁰ Timberlake, 50.

intoxicating liquors was prohibited if the use of that liquor violated a state law.⁴²

Congress had finally used their jurisdiction over interstate commerce to control state prohibition.

Congress adopted other legislative actions, which were primarily backed by the Anti-Saloon League. These small and large victories signaled the gradual move toward national prohibition. The Anti-Saloon League finally gained success when they lobbied Congress for a third time with their prohibition measure. Introduced on April 4, 1917, this resolution expanded on previous versions by outlawing private and commercial liquor manufacture, sale, and consumption. Congress bickered over several points of the proposed bill for months, but it was ultimately passed by both legislative chambers and sent to the states for ratification as the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution.⁴³

By the time the Eighteenth Amendment reached the states for ratification, the Anti-Saloon League had already successfully campaigned for prohibition in many of those states. Local option laws in twenty-seven states virtually assured the support of those states in ratifying national prohibition.⁴⁴ Only nine more states were needed to ensure passage of the amendment. The measure had overwhelming support with forty-five states accepting the amendment by huge majorities. Only three states rejected the amendment.⁴⁵

The Eighteenth Amendment commonly referred to as the Volstead Act took effect

⁴² Ibid, 164.

⁴³ Cherrington, 322-330.

⁴⁴ Timberlake, 178.

⁴⁵ Timberlake, 178.

on January 16, 1920.⁴⁶ The amendment prohibited the manufacture, sale, transportation, importation, and exportation of all liquor in the United States. The advent of the progressive era brought renewed strength to the temperance message. After decades of rallying, lobbying, and campaigning, the temperance movement finally realized its ultimate goal of national prohibition.

⁴⁶ Norman H. Clark, *The Dry Years: Prohibition and Social Change in Washington*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965), 142.

The Prohibition Movement in Arkansas

The fight against drink in the South both resembled and differed from the national movement. The prohibition movement enjoyed solid support in the South, and many national temperance and prohibition groups boasted high membership numbers in Southern states. The South was also home to other unique organizations that advocated prohibition.

Liquor, particularly whiskey, was common in Arkansas during its early history. Whiskey was a profitable endeavor for corn farmers; small distilleries and taverns dotted the landscape.⁴⁷ During the Civil War, the Confederate government of Arkansas enacted statewide prohibition to deal with the looming grain shortage, but the law was virtually unenforceable.⁴⁸

The organized fight against liquor in Arkansas began after the Civil War during the period of Reconstruction. Near the end of the 19th century, local temperance societies regrouped as the South began to reconstruct. Federal law enforcement officers worked to shut down illegal moonshining operations while local citizens used moral and religious reasons to promote prohibition.⁴⁹ The most important temperance development of this era was the organization of an Arkansas chapter of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

The WTCU was one of the largest and most influential temperance organizations

⁴⁷ Ian R. Tyrell, "Drink and Intemperance in Antebellum South: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Southern History* 48 (November 1982): 505-506.

⁴⁸ Ben F. Johnson, *John Barleycorn Must Die: The War Against Drink in Arkansas* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005), 21.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 22-23.

of the 20th Century. The first Arkansas chapter was established in Monticello in 1876.⁵⁰ By 1888, 75 local unions had formed across the state.⁵¹ Since women were still denied suffrage rights, members of the WTCU were not allowed to vote in local option elections that decided whether or not a community would adopt prohibition. Regardless of their voting restrictions, the women of the WTCU were still extremely influential. They lobbied to stop the sale of liquor within three miles of schools and worked to convert prisoners to abstinence. The WTCU also played a significant role in shaping public thought and bringing attention to the prohibition debate.⁵²

Not all women followed the WTCU's democratic means of protest. One of the most famous prohibitionists was Carry Nation. Her tactics were so controversial that the WTCU condemned her actions. In 1900, Nation vaulted into the spotlight by attacking saloons in Kansas. She often showed up unannounced to physically destroy drinking establishments with her hatchet. Tavern patrons watched in disbelief as this tiny woman destroyed bars without protest.⁵³

A newspaper recounted a scene in Kansas City when Nation addressed the bar patrons who barricaded themselves in a saloon as she approached. "Poor boys," [Nation] said, her face full of amusement and kindness. "I'm sorry for you, boys. You look so much ashamed of yourselves. I'm not mad at you, boys. I'm not hating you a bit, even when I come around with my hatchet. I'm treating you just as I would treat one of my

⁵⁰ Henrietta Caldwell McQuiston, *History of the W.C.T.U. of Monticello* (1920), 2-3.

⁵¹ Johnson, 39.

⁵² *Ibid*, 41-42.

⁵³ *Ibid*, 45.

own boys if I found him with something that would do him harm.”⁵⁴

Carry Nation visited Arkansas on a frequent basis. She traveled across the state preaching for prohibition. Although she did not attack any taverns in Arkansas, she was arrested in Hot Springs on one trip for lecturing patrons in a local bar. She retired to Eureka Springs in 1908 where she eventually opened Hatchet Hall, a home for abused women and the elderly.⁵⁵

While the women of the WTCU worked in non-political ways, the men of the Anti-Saloon League directly strove to influence political decisions. Several influential businessmen and politicians formed the Arkansas chapter of the Anti-Saloon League in 1894.⁵⁶ The League initially suffered from internal fighting, but rebounded to form a strong organization. By 1910, the League had helped win the fight against alcohol in almost every county in the state. Only twelve counties survived the League’s pressure to enact prohibition. Within those twelve counties, 210 of the 289 existing saloons operated in only four cities.⁵⁷ Statewide prohibition seemed inevitable.

The local victories encouraged the League to broaden its vision. In 1910, the League proposed that a statewide prohibition measure be added to the ballot, but the League’s overestimation of its support and strength led to a sound defeat for the proposal.⁵⁸ The failure, however, only served to strengthen their resolve. The League began applying more political pressure to the state legislators, and their efforts resulted in

⁵⁴ “Boys, Boys, Come and Let me In,” *Kansas City Star*, January 31, 1901. Kansas State Historical Society Online Exhibit.

⁵⁵ Johnson, 47.

⁵⁶ Austin K. Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 67-81.

⁵⁷ Johnson, 51.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the statewide enactment of prohibition in 1915. An Arkansas state law further expanded prohibition in 1917 by barring liquor shipments into the state.⁵⁹

When the ratification vote for the Eighteenth Amendment came before Arkansas voters in 1919, they overwhelmingly approved the measure.⁶⁰ National prohibition seemed like the next natural step to voters who had just recently supported state prohibition. However, not everyone in Arkansas chose to take part in the “Noble Experiment,” as prohibition was often called. Bootleggers and moonshiners sprung up across the state during the prohibition era.

The years of prohibition were a politically chaotic time in Arkansas. The enforcement of prohibition laws proved to be a difficult task, and normal laws of order were bypassed in an attempt to impose absolute prohibition. Law enforcement officers used extreme tactics often shooting bootleggers who tried to flee. In rural areas, it was not uncommon for state and local officials to depend on non-sanctioned groups to help deal with prohibition violations. One such group they turned to was the Ku Klux Klan.⁶¹

One of the major supporters of national prohibition was the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan was revived in Atlanta in 1915 to defend prohibition, which existed locally in Georgia at that time.⁶² Prohibition became one of the Klan’s leading issues, and they strongly supported its strict enforcement. Because the Klan adamantly opposed the sale of alcohol, the Klan made it their mission to raid illegal stills and attack bootleggers.⁶³

⁵⁹ Ibid, 54-56.

⁶⁰ George H. Hunt, “A History of the Prohibition Movement in Arkansas” (Master’s Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1933), 13-14.

⁶¹ Johnson, 63-68.

⁶² Royce, 38.

⁶³ J.C. Furnas, *The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1965), 20.

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⁶¹ Johnson, 63-68.

⁶² Royce, 38.

⁶³ J.C. Furnas, *The Life and Times of the Late Demon Rum* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1965), 20.

Although the Klan existed nationwide, membership was more widespread in the South. The Klan first arose in Arkansas in 1921. KKK membership quickly spread across the state, with the Klan eventually claiming over 50,000 members.⁶⁴ The Klan was originally a strictly male organization, but women were eventually allowed to establish their own auxiliary branch. The Women of the Ku Klux Klan organized their headquarters in Little Rock. The first woman to head this female auxiliary was a former president of the Arkansas WCTU.⁶⁵

The newly reformed KKK marked bootleggers as one of the groups that needed to be purged from a morally upright community. The Klan challenged bootleggers by organizing armed patrols to intercept shipments of alcohol. Their biggest raid was in 1922 when over two hundred Klansmen torched saloons in Union County, Arkansas. The raid displaced almost 2,000 people associated with illegal liquor activities in that county.⁶⁶ The KKK was also actively involved in breaking up speakeasies, illegal establishments that existed to sell alcoholic beverages during the prohibition era. Even as prohibition became increasingly unpopular, the KKK strongly and actively continued to oppose its repeal.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Johnson, 63-83.

⁶⁵ Johnson, 63-68.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (Boston: Little Brown, 1962), 26.

National Repeal & The Advent of Local Option Laws

During the prohibition period, from 1920 to 1933, temperance dissenters became just as vocal as temperance supporters had been before the adoption of national prohibition. Organizations were instantly formed to crusade for the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. Their fight against prohibition, however, was not the same struggle that anti-alcohol forces had fought. It did not take long for the American people to realize that their Noble Experiment was failing miserably.

Prohibition created serious and disturbing social problems throughout the country. Rather than cure social woes, most believed prohibition only made them worse, which led to disillusionment among millions of Americans. H. L. Mencken captured public thought when he wrote in 1925 that “Five years of prohibition have had, at least, this one benign effect: they have completely disposed of all the favorite arguments of the Prohibitionists. None of the great boons and usufructs that were to follow the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment has come to pass. There is not less drunkenness in the Republic but more. There is not less crime, but more. There is not less insanity, but more. The cost of government is not smaller, but vastly greater. Respect for law has not increased, but diminished.”⁶⁸

Several organizations formed to support the repeal of Prohibition. One of the most prominent organizations supporting repeal was the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, which led a powerful propaganda campaign.⁶⁹ In response to the Women Christian Temperance Union, Pauline Sabin formed the Women’s Organization for

⁶⁸ David Kyvig, *Repealing National Prohibition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

⁶⁹ *Intemperance*, 191.

National Prohibition Reform. The WONPR quickly surpassed the height of the WCTU's strength by enlisting over 1 million members. Their voice was also more influential because women were politically more powerful than ever before; they were now able to vote.⁷⁰

As the membership of repeal organizations grew, the demand for repeal became impossible to ignore. Once the country entered the Great Depression, prohibition's survival was bleak. Unemployment skyrocketed, farm prices fell, tax revenues dropped, and the economy was in shambles. Many began to believe that legalizing alcohol would ease the economic burden. By repealing prohibition, grain prices would rise, jobs would be created to meet the production demand for alcohol, and taxes could be increased to generate revenue.⁷¹

The pressure to repeal prohibition even shaped Presidential politics. In the 1932 election, the Democratic Party platform included an anti-prohibition agenda. Their nominee, Franklin Roosevelt, promised repeal to the voters. That promise was fulfilled on December 5, 1933.⁷² The popular vote for repeal of prohibition was 74 percent in favor and only 26 percent in opposition. The American people, one decade after supporting prohibition, now rejected prohibition by an equally large majority of the vote. Three states, including Rhode Island, Illinois, and Indiana, had denied ratification of the Prohibition Amendment, now only one state, South Carolina, denied repealing that same

⁷⁰ Grace C. Root, *Women and Repeal: The Story of the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform* (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1934).

⁷¹ Timberlake, 192.

⁷² Randolph Childs, *Making Repeal Work* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Alcoholic Beverage Study, 1947), 260-261.

amendment.⁷³

The Twenty-first Amendment did more than just repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. Section one repealed national prohibition by allowing the importation, production, and sale of alcohol. Section two, however, delegated to individual states the authority for regulating alcoholic beverages, thus allowing states to continue prohibition on a regional level.⁷⁴ Almost two-thirds of all states adopted some form of local option, which enabled residents in political subdivisions to vote for or against local prohibition. Therefore, despite the repeal of prohibition at the national level, thirty-eight percent of the nation's population still lived in areas with state or local prohibition after 1933.⁷⁵ Arkansas was one state that adopted local option laws after the repeal of national prohibition.

Arkansans considered the Twenty-first Amendment on July 18, 1933, one of the first Southern states to do so. Fifty-two of seventy-five counties supported the repeal of prohibition.⁷⁶ The defeat of the Eighteenth Amendment angered the fervent activists who had worked hard to enact and defend prohibition. Cora Gillespie, the President of the WCTU at the time, asserted, "The line broke because the church members did not stand for the law."⁷⁷ Discouraged but still resolved, the anti-liquor camp quickly turned their attention to the local fight. They were resigned to the lost battle over national prohibition, but they were determined to win the battle for prohibition in Arkansas.

Shortly after ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment, the General Assembly

⁷³ Cherrington, 337-384.

⁷⁴ "The Constitution of the United States," Amendment 21.

⁷⁵ Mendelson and Mello, 94.

⁷⁶ Johnson, 69.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 69.

of Arkansas authorized the production and sale of alcoholic beverages containing a small percentage of alcohol by weight. The enactment of this measure served to protect the wine industry in Arkansas.⁷⁸ In 1935, during the height of the depression, Governor Marion Futrell proposed allowing the sale of all alcoholic beverages to raise tax revenue. The legislature supported his initiative and repealed the remaining state prohibition laws.⁷⁹

Proponents of remaining dry began to concentrate their efforts on local option votes. The repeal measure had also established a procedure by which a local voting district could readopt prohibition. The act required that a petition be signed by thirty-five percent of registered voters before local officials could conduct a special election on the decision to outlaw alcohol. The law also stipulated that a special election could only be held once every three years.⁸⁰

The strict requirements for local option elections made it difficult for counties to reinstitute prohibition. The Anti-Saloon League once again organized a political campaign to change the local option law. Throughout the 1930s, the ASL worked to enact a new local option provision. The ASL finally succeeded in 1942 when statewide Initiated Act No. 1 finally passed. The act lowered the signature requirement from thirty-five to fifteen percent and suspended the special election limitation.⁸¹

Initiated Act No. 1 was a huge success for prohibitionists. In the same year that the act was passed, several counties were able to hold special elections. By 1943, forty

⁷⁸ J.R. Morris, "The Wine Industry in Arkansas," *American Wine Society Journal* 29 (1997).

⁷⁹ Johnson, 74.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 75.

⁸¹ *Arkansas Gazette*, 3 November 1942.

local option elections were held. Thirty-two of those elections resulted in victories for the dry advocates.⁸² The overwhelming local support for prohibition sparked hope of possibly reenacting statewide prohibition.

Spurred by local success, temperance and prohibition groups rallied to campaign for the statewide outlaw of alcohol. The Arkansas chapter of the Temperance League of America proposed Initiated Act 2 of 1950, which forbade the production and sale of alcohol statewide.⁸³ The months leading up to the election were a tense time across the state. Hundreds of concerned citizens protested on the Capitol steps in the days leading up to the vote. Choir members from Ouachita Baptist University could be heard chanting, "Vote dry." Despite persistent campaigning, the dry proposal was rejected by a fairly wide margin.⁸⁴

After the 1950 vote, prohibition tensions eased across the state. Local option elections were still achievable, but the statewide prohibition movement quieted substantially. Throughout the next few decades, liquor laws were tweaked as the issue continued to lurk in the background. The next significant changes to state liquor laws were in 1985 and 1993. These measures reverted the local option laws back to stricter standards.⁸⁵ The required number of petition signatures was raised to thirty-eight percent of voters and the number of specials elections was restricted to one every four years.⁸⁶

Prohibition remains a contentious issue in Arkansas. Forty-three of the state's

⁸² Johnson, 77.

⁸³ Ibid, 79.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ *Acts of Arkansas*, 1993, 430.

⁸⁶ *Acts of Arkansas*, 1985, 423.

seventy-five counties remain dry today.⁸⁷ Special elections routinely challenge prohibition laws, and the debate still rages over the issue in several counties. Former Senator Lu Hardin's words still hold true, "There is nothing that polarizes a community like a wet-dry election."⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Johnson, 82.

⁸⁸ Johnson, 82.

Clark County: A Local Case Study

Clark County, Arkansas, has struggled with the issue of alcohol and prohibition throughout its history. Stories of moonshining and illegal distilling dot the county's earliest days, while religious opinion and social activism dominate its more recent encounters with the issue of prohibition. Today, Clark County exists as a dry county, but maintaining that distinction has created controversy and strife.

The prohibition impulse was felt very early in Clark County. An opinion piece that appeared in the *Arkansas Daily Standard* in 1880 lambasted the prevalence of whiskey in the county. The author blamed alcohol consumption for local debt and stunted population growth.⁸⁹ Halting the sale of alcohol, particularly whiskey, served as the solution to all the problems the county was facing.

The viewpoint that alcohol was a blameworthy evil reflected national and state sentiment. Near the turn of the 19th century, national temperance groups began establishing local chapters in Arkansas.⁹⁰ The influence of their message had certainly reached Clark County by this time. The state legislature approved a local option bill in 1885 that made it possible for townships and counties to adopt prohibition.⁹¹ By 1910, sixty-three counties, including Clark County, had adopted prohibition through local option elections.⁹²

In 1912, when Act No. 2 presented the alternative of abandoning local option elections in favor of statewide prohibition, Clark County citizens supported the measure.

⁸⁹ "A Baby Without a Mammy," *Arkansas Daily Standard*, 25 September 1880.

⁹⁰ Ian R. Tyrell, "Drink and Intemperance in Antebellum South: An Overview and Interpretation," *Journal of Southern History* 48 (November 1982): 505-506.

⁹¹ Laura Winfield Scott Butler, "The Result of a Small Beginning," *Daily Siftings Herald*, 18 July 1919.

⁹² Johnson, 59.

Their approval of local prohibition foreshadowed their support for statewide prohibition. A local writer summarized public thought in Clark County on the statewide prohibition vote with this statement: “As a moral question, there is little debate. That the open saloon is a menace to society, a robber of woman’s food, and a thief of the rights and privileges of little children, is conceded by every honest man...If you want to line up with the decent, law-abiding, intelligent, progressive and home-making element of the citizenship, you will have to line up and vote for Act No. 2.”⁹³

Anti-liquor rhetoric and propaganda gradually spread across Arkansas during this time. Citizens who did not support prohibition did so quietly at the risk of being ostracized by mainstream society. Strong words describing prohibition supporters as “decent, law-abiding, and intelligent” were hard to ignore as voters went to the polls. Act No. 2 failed to garner enough votes throughout the state, but just a few years later, in 1915, statewide prohibition was adopted.⁹⁴

Religious and temperance groups fostered most of the early support for prohibition in Clark County. Moral and religious reasons were often cited in support of local prohibition. In 1885, Mrs. Dan Steel organized a temperance society in Arkadelphia from the steps of the Methodist church. The group started with four church members dedicated to answer the “call for freedom from the accursed drink habit that was fastening its fangs in the lives of many of our boys.” Like many women temperance groups, these mothers were particularly interested in protecting their sons and husbands

⁹³ Dr. H.L. Winburn, “Local Option vs. Democracy,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 5 September 1912.

⁹⁴ Johnson, 54-56.

from “a life of drunkenness.”⁹⁵

Before the enactment of local prohibition, Pennington’s was the most popular saloon in Arkadelphia. The women condemned the saloon for promoting alcohol among young boys and worked to eradicate its influence in the county. The four women began their anti-liquor campaign by canvassing Arkadelphia with a petition mandating that saloons be at least three miles from the nearest church. Other women from the community supported the petition in droves. Men, on the other hand, feared that the eradication of alcohol and its revenue would cause economic depression. Although not all of the women lived to see the success of their work, two of the society’s founding members celebrated state and national prohibition during their lifetimes.⁹⁶

The decade of national prohibition was a lawless period for Clark County. The consequences of prohibition, which were manifested nationally and regionally, also appeared in Clark County. The illegalization of alcohol created new categories of crimes related to the sale and manufacture of alcohol. Enforcing these new laws and punishing previously legal acts created confusion and chaos for local officials.

Although the Volstead Act prohibited all forms of alcohol, remnants of liquor subsisted in Arkadelphia. An article published in 1920 uncovered the continued use of alcohol in the county. “There is entirely too much high powered medicine and moonshine being drunk in Arkadelphia. Where the stuff is being sold in this city or brought into town from other places we do not know, but it is coming from somewhere.”⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Butler.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ “Too Much Moonshine,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 29 November 1920.

The responsibility to protect the hundreds of college students from alcohol increased citizens resolve to eradicate every last drop of liquor from the county. “We have in our charge over 600 young people, who have been sent to this city to help mold their future destinies...[liquor] finds its way into the hand of the young men...It is time for the good citizens of Arkadelphia to get behind officers of the county and see that this traffic is put down.”⁹⁸

In 1921, the Clark County bailiff called a meeting of local sheriffs and deputies to discuss the most “still-infested” counties of the state. The mountainous region of Western Arkansas proved to be the ideal location of bootleggers and moonshiners. Without forming a united front, the sheriffs and deputies feared that the bootleggers would continue, “stealing, plundering, and destroying the property of others.” After the meeting, the officers joined forces to raid an area of northwest Clark County. Two large stills were uncovered in the raid.⁹⁹

The tactics used by local officials and moonshiners were often extreme. In one 1924 incident, a man assisting local officials in a still raid lost his hand. The victim, Harvey Cash, was hiding in a bush as the deputy sheriff approached the still. Believing that Cash was the sheriff, an operator of the still opened fire on him. The failed plot was clearly designed to capture the sheriff. Three men were ultimately arrested for the crime.¹⁰⁰

Other prohibition crimes were not punished as severely. A man traveling through Arkadelphia made the mistake of offering liquor to the chief of police because he “looked

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ “Nine Counties Unite in War on Moonshine,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 20 April 1921.

¹⁰⁰ “Man Loses Hand in Still Raid,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 21 January 1924.

most like a man who is thirsty for good liquor.” He was assessed the \$100 fine that normally accompanied the illegal possession of whiskey.¹⁰¹

After the national repeal of prohibition, Clark County’s strong opposition to alcohol quieted. When the state legislature approved the sale of beverages containing 3.2 percent alcohol by volume in 1935, the local response was benign. The moral, religious, and social condemnations of past decades were replaced by indifferent feelings. After forty-seven years of prohibition, alcohol was reintroduced with little fanfare. The mayor responded by saying, “3.2 beer will [not] make much difference in the moral, economic life of Arkadelphia. The citizenship here are zealous of the good name of the college town and will hardly tolerate abuse of the new privilege that comes with beer.”¹⁰²

The period of free-flowing alcohol was short lived. When Initiated Act No. 1 was passed in 1942, several counties, including Clark County, held local option votes on prohibition.¹⁰³ The lowered signature requirement and suspension of the special election limitation once again made it possible for individual counties to adopt prohibition easily.

The anti-alcohol movement in Clark County was rekindled in 1943 when petitions were circulated to add a prohibition measure to the ballot. County Judge George Wells certified that 15 percent of registered voters in Gurdon had signed the petition and set the election for August 3, 1943. Bud Morris, a Clark County citizen and voter, and other unnamed litigants challenged the legality of the petitions charging fraud and forgery. The

¹⁰¹ “Salesman Makes Big Mistake in Setting ‘Em Up,” *Daily Sifting Herald*, 31 July 1925.

¹⁰² “Beer’s Debut Here is Dignified and Genteel; Breaks 47-Year Drought,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 25 August 1933.

¹⁰³ Clark County Circuit Court Records housed in Riley Hickingbotham Library Archives, Ouachita Baptist University, Arkadelphia, Arkansas. Heretofore referred to as CCCR.

men alleged that their names appeared on petitions that they had not actually signed.¹⁰⁴

Judge Wells refused to reexamine his authorization of the election, and the case was appealed to a higher court. In the appeal trial, Judge Dexter Bush found that the petitions lacked the valid number of signatures. Although his decision does not specifically address the charges of fraud and forgery, it can be inferred that he determined that some of the signatures were indeed fake. Once the forged signatures were discounted, the fifteen percent threshold was not met. Although that prohibition attempt failed, the measure was passed before the end of 1943.¹⁰⁵

In more recent years, women have been blamed for the reinstatement of prohibition in Clark County.¹⁰⁶ Local citizens have suggested that women covertly organized the local prohibition movement while their husbands were fighting overseas in World War II. While women were very active in the prohibition movement both nationally and locally, there is no evidence to suggest that they were the driving force behind the prohibition vote in 1943. The distribution of signatures on the petitions represents a range of citizens, both male and female, from all different areas of the voting district. The canvassers, those collecting the signatures, were also represented by both men and women. Women were likely strong supporters of this movement due to their longstanding conviction about the harmful effects of alcohol, but many men supported the measure as well.¹⁰⁷

Although Clark County has been dry since 1943, it has never been completely

¹⁰⁴ CCCR.

¹⁰⁵ CCCR.

¹⁰⁶ Hilton, "A 'Wet' Clark County?"

¹⁰⁷ CCCR.

dry. According to a state law, special liquor licenses can be granted to private clubs.¹⁰⁸ This law has long functioned as a means of allowing certain establishments to serve liquor in dry counties. In Clark County, two establishments, the Veterans of Foreign Wars and The Club House, are considered private clubs that are licensed to serve alcohol. In order to gain entrance and be served alcoholic beverages, patrons must pay a small fee to become a member of that club.

Establishments in dry counties often manipulate the private club stipulation to acquire a liquor license. The definition of a private club was recently expanded in 2003 by Act 1813, making it even easier for clubs in dry counties to obtain liquor licenses.¹⁰⁹ Act 1813 sought to amend a 1969 law, which was originally designed to strictly allow nonprofit organizations the ability to sell liquor within dry counties. The old definition included “recreational, social, patriotic, political, national, benevolent, or athletic” clubs. The new definition, amended by Act 1813, added “community hospitality, professional association, and entertainment” to the list of eligible private clubs.¹¹⁰

Under the new definition, nonprofit organizations throughout the state have used this exemption to obtain liquor licenses by lobbying to be defined as a private club. Residents of Benton County, a dry county with over 75 private clubs, challenged the new act after the Arkansas Alcoholic Beverage Control Board (ABC) granted a liquor license to a local commercial restaurant. After two years of litigation and a rejected petition to the Arkansas Supreme Court, the state ruled that a restaurant could be considered for a

¹⁰⁸ Johnson, 80.

¹⁰⁹ Aaron Sadler, “Legislative Panel Rejects Private Club Proposal,” *Arkansas News Bureau*, 21 October 2005.

¹¹⁰ John Anderson, “Benton County Watching Batesville Booze Debate,” *The Morning News*, 24 October 2005.

liquor permit under the definition of Act 1813.¹¹¹

Attempts to legislatively control the number of private club liquor licenses in dry counties have also failed. In 2005, a measure discussed by Governmental Affairs Committee of the House and Senate proposed allowing residents in dry counties to determine by vote if the ABC could issue alcohol permits to private clubs within their county. The measure was rejected, and the ABC retained full authority in issuing and denying permits to private clubs. The ABC approves over 90% of all alcohol permit requests. Twenty-nine private clubs were issued liquor licenses in 2007.¹¹²

According to ABC statutes, counties have two options in regard to their liquor laws. They can be completely wet and allow alcohol to be served at establishments and purchased in liquor stores or they can be completely dry and only allow alcohol to be served in private clubs.¹¹³ Since prohibition was readopted in Clark County in 1943, the dry status of the county has been challenged through several local option attempts. Petitions have been circulated in the hope that enough signatures can be gathered to reexamine the issue by bringing it to a vote. The high threshold of collecting 38 percent of voters' support has been a huge obstacle. Every attempt to repeal prohibition in Clark County has failed.

The last major attempt to initiate a local option vote began in 2006 under the direction of Andy Berry, a local attorney. He organized the movement out of the conviction that the matter should be solved democratically. "My whole position is that

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Sadler.

¹¹³ Johnson, 80-81.

we should vote on it. If we want to grow, we've got to change.”¹¹⁴ Berry became the public face of those who advocated for a wet Clark County. The platform for the wet movement focused on the need for economic growth and stimulation.

After months of furtive speculation and rumor, the issue became very public in a heated debate held in August 2006 at Henderson State University. Not only was the debate designed to weigh the pros and cons of the issue, but also to attract attention to the petition and upcoming vote. Andy Berry represented the interest of those endorsing becoming wet, while Travis Berry, Bill Viser, and Joe May spoke on behalf of remaining dry. Andy Berry offered that allowing alcohol sales would attract new businesses, keep revenue from being spent in neighboring wet counties, and provide a safer, legal environment for drinkers. The advocates for remaining dry cited safety concerns while denying that alcohol sales would increase economic development and reduce drunk driving.¹¹⁵

In order to revamp a struggling economy, Clark County recently developed a strategic plan to encourage community growth. According to the Clark County Strategic Plan, the county's population declined by 2% between 2000 and 2005. During that same period, 300 jobs were lost, 30 businesses closed, and 300 fewer students attended local schools.¹¹⁶ Advocates of allowing alcohol sales have cited these statistics as proof that alcohol is needed to increase economic growth and business opportunities, an argument similar to the one advanced during the Great Depression.

¹¹⁴ Dan Marsh, “Debate Over Alcohol Sales in County,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 30 August 2006.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Steering Committee of Clark County, “Clark County, Arkansas Strategic Community Plan: 2006-2017,” <http://www.clarkcountyplan.org>.

The city of Jackson, Alabama collected nearly \$200,000 in tax revenue in the first seven months after becoming wet in 2006. The Southern city of just over 5,000 people also reported a decrease in DUI arrests during that same period.¹¹⁷ Clark County could potentially experience results similar to those in Jackson, Alabama. However, there is little quantitative evidence beyond isolated cases such as Jackson that support the claim that wet counties experience significantly more overall economic growth than dry counties.

A number of economic factors must be considered in measuring economic growth. In Arkansas, both wet and dry counties are growing while other wet and dry counties are declining. Results tracing economic growth along wet and dry lines are often skewed since some dry counties, such as Benton and Faulkner Counties, are home to more liquor licenses than wet counties.

The owner of Ship and Shore Liquor, which sits just across the Clark County line in Garland County, estimates that 70 percent of his business comes from residents of Clark County. The citizens of Clark County who wish to purchase alcohol from a liquor store are forced to seek those transactions in other counties. Clark County certainly loses revenue to these surrounding wet counties where residents can purchase alcohol. However, the amount of lost revenue and its overall economic impact on the county is quantitatively unknown.

The Strategic Plan refused to address the prohibition issue. “Based on the divisive nature of this discussion, it was determined that the Clark County Strategic Plan was not the appropriate venue from which to address the Wet-Dry issue. The Clark

¹¹⁷ Evan Carden, “Alcohol income up while related problems said minimal,” *The South Alabamian*, 23 February 2006.

County Strategic Plan takes no position on the wet-dry issue but encourages citizens to establish an organized process that will bring this matter to a resolution.” The plan also lists “perceived resistance to change,” “divisive opinions on alcohol sale issue,” and “lack of cooperation” as community weaknesses.¹¹⁸

Andy Berry argued that there would not be a resolution until voters supported bringing the issue to a county-wide vote. Berry stated, “When I put the petition out, the support was inspiring. I thought I would have a large group to plan and organize with. Threats of lost business, boycott, and lost reputation to others in the group have left me holding the public banner with little support. This petition is only to get the measure on the ballot.”¹¹⁹

Over 4,000 signatures were needed to add the alcohol measure to the ballot. In the end, Berry and the Clark County Committee for Growth and Choice managed to gather the signatures of roughly twenty-five percent of registered voters. They were far short of reaching the thirty-eight percent mark. “There shall be no official count to protect those citizens who signed despite threats of public exposure and loss of business,” Berry admitted.¹²⁰

Ironically, the same reasons that were stated in the original support of prohibition in Clark County continue to drive its existence today. Safety issues and the need to “protect” the numerous college students in Clark County are still held as relevant beliefs. Deeply rooted religious convictions also sustain the idea of prohibition. The

¹¹⁸ Steering Committee of Clark County, “Clark County, Arkansas Strategic Community Plan: 2006-2017,” <http://www.clarkcountyplan.org>.

¹¹⁹ Andy Berry, “On Alcohol Petition,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 17 August 2006.

¹²⁰ “Alcohol Measure Won’t Make it to Ballot,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 12 September 2006.

movement that was formed on the steps of a church continues to find salvation in the members who fill those pews today.

The religious support that sustained Clark County's prohibition in its early years still sustains it today. While some church members and community leaders have shied from stating that their opposition to alcohol is rooted in religious belief, the evidence that religion remains a driving force behind prohibition cannot be ignored.¹²¹ Clark County is situated comfortably in a region of the country traditionally referred to as the "Bible Belt" due to the high concentration of religious influences. Clark County is home to roughly 22,000 citizens and more than 30 Baptist churches alone. According to the Clark County website, there is one Baptist church per seven hundred residents and one Protestant church of any denomination per two hundred residents.

It is the stance of the Southern Baptist Convention that church members should live "an exemplary Christian lifestyle of abstinence from beverage alcohol and all other harmful drugs." Other Convention meetings have reminded members to "reaffirm our historic position as opposing alcohol as a beverage," to view "personal abstinence" as the "Christian way," and to express their "unceasing opposition to the manufacture, sale and use of alcoholic beverages."¹²²

Arkadelphia is also home to Ouachita Baptist University, which is associated with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention. Conspiracy theories have circulated for years connecting the university to the survival of prohibition in the county. Many people believe that the county is dry because Ouachita and other religious

¹²¹ Travis Berry, interview by author, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 12 November 2006; Marsh; Andy Berry, interview by author, Arkadelphia, Arkansas, 12 November 2006.

¹²² Richard Land and Barrett Duke, "On Alcohol Use," *The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention*, July 25, 2006.

institutions have purchased all the available alcohol licenses – a complete impossibility since the ABC does not limit the number of available liquor licenses. Others believe that Ouachita would lose some of its alumni funding if the county became wet.¹²³ Although these assumptions are based on decades of false information, there is strong public support for prohibition within the university community.

Dr. Bill Viser, a Christian Ministries professor at Ouachita, responded by saying, “I think OBU’s position, as a Christian institution of higher learning, would be that we would like to see Clark County remain dry as it has been all these years.”¹²⁴

Former Ouachita President, Andy Westmoreland stated, “I am in support of the existing laws regarding the sale of alcohol because I believe the restrictions are in the best interest of our citizens.”¹²⁵

As the petition was being circulated to garner signatures for the special election, a local pastor was on the phone informing members of the community that he did not agree with the petition. Those gathering signatures noted that voters feared the consequence of publicly adding their name to the list.¹²⁶ One man, who requested that his name not be published in the newspaper along with his quotation, simply stated, “People should have the opportunity to vote on it.” Even those who supported a vote, but did not necessarily

¹²³ *Undue Burden*, prod. and dir. James Gould and Paul Glover, Dawkin’s Bulldog Productions, 2007, dvd.

¹²⁴ Bill Viser, interview in *Undue Burden*, prod. and dir. Paul Glover and James Gould, Dawkin’s Bulldog Productions, 2007, dvd.

¹²⁵ Donna Hilton, “A ‘Wet’ Clark County?” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 16 February 2007, dvd.

¹²⁶ Rhonda Cole, interview in *Undue Burden*, pro. and dir. Paul Glover and James Gould, Dawkin’s Bulldog Productions, 2007, dvd.

support the measure, avoided doing so publicly.¹²⁷

Prohibition has also persisted in Clark County due to misinformation. For those that do not cite religious opposition to alcohol, the most commonly referenced reason in favor of prohibition is safety.¹²⁸ Due to the large number of college students that inhabit Arkadelphia, community members have advocated special precautions against alcohol. Underage drinking and binge drinking are major concerns among many residents.

In a review of underage drinking and alcohol access, professors at the University of Arkansas concluded that there is a correlation between the number of retail outlets that sell alcohol in an area and the level of underage drinking. Outlet density was correlated with heavy drinking, frequent drinking, and drinking related problems. These correlations were especially strong among women, underage students, and students who picked up drinking habits in college.¹²⁹

While alcohol abuse is certainly a health and safety concern, outlawing the sale of alcohol in a county does not eliminate those concerns. According to the Clark County sheriff, bootlegging is still commonly practiced in the region. Large supplies of alcohol are routinely purchased in surrounding wet counties and sold in Clark County for a profit.¹³⁰ Arkadelphia Police Chief Al Harris suggested that legal alcohol sales would allow officers to control sales more efficiently. “The way it is now, we can’t control that [alcohol] sale because it’s somewhere else. A local restaurant can ask for ID and refuse

¹²⁷ Donna Hilton, “Gathering Talks about Alcohol Petition Drive,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 11 August 2006.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ Jeffrey T. Collins and Kathy Deck, “Reviewing the Academic Literature on Underage Drinking Alcohol Access,” June 2005.

¹³⁰ James Al Harris, interview in *Undue Burden*, pro. and dir. Paul Glover and James Gould, Dawkin’s Bulldog Productions, 2007, dvd.

the sale if the person is under twenty-one.”¹³¹

Another safety concern that accompanies prohibition is drunk driving. Since those who wish to drink are forced to travel to neighboring counties to purchase alcohol, the risk of drunk driving actually increases. A study conducted of dry counties in Kentucky found that there is a correlation between the distance one must drive to purchase alcohol and the incidents of alcohol-related car accidents.¹³² Alcohol-related fatalities are rare in Arkansas, but drivers in a dry county are five times more likely to die in an alcohol-related accident than motorists in a wet county.¹³³ Similarly, completely dry counties in Texas have over three and one-half times the number of alcohol-related traffic fatalities per capita than completely wet counties. Dry counties averaged 6.8 alcohol-related traffic deaths per 10,000 people, whereas wet counties had 1.9 deaths per 10,000 people.¹³⁴

Clark County already has a large number of alcohol-related arrests each year. Proponents of remaining dry argue that allowing alcohol sales would only increase those numbers, while advocates of becoming dry argue that those numbers would decrease as people are offered a legal, safer drinking environment within their own county.

An online poll conducted by the Siftings Herald showed that 76% of those polled would have voted for Clark County to become wet if the issue had been on the ballot.¹³⁵ While those results indicate that a portion of the population would presumably support

¹³¹ “A ‘Wet Clark County?’”

¹³² Gary Schulte, et al, “Consideration of Drive Home County Prohibition and Alcohol-Related Vehicle Crashes,” *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, 2003, 35.

¹³³ *Arkansas State Police*, “Total Fatalities vs. Alcohol/Drug Related Fatalities by County,” 2005.

¹³⁴ Hina Alam, “Statistics show alcohol-related deaths don’t play favorites with wet/dry issue,” *Lufkin Daily News*, 29 October 2006.

¹³⁵ “Online Poll,” *Daily Siftings Herald*, 17 September 2006.

businesses that sold alcohol, they are not representative of the overall population. A segment of the population feared simply adding their signature to a petition. If citizens were hesitant to record their name on a public list, they would presumably be equally hesitant to park their cars outside a liquor store or bar.

The economic issues and safety concerns that have been at the center of the debate are relatively unpredictable factors. The effect that alcohol would have on those issues can only be truly tested on the local level if Clark County became wet. Alcohol alone will not bring economic revival, but it could potentially play a role in economic growth. Alcohol will also not be the sole cause of crime or lawlessness in the county, but it could play a role in increasing such incidents.

In recent years, dry counties across the nation have reexamined their outdated liquor laws and opted to become wet. In Texas, the number of dry counties fell from 51 to 39 between 2003-2007.¹³⁶ In Arkansas, dry counties are increasingly becoming “damp” by retaining the dry status, but also allowing more alcohol licenses to be disbursed to private clubs.

Seventy-five years after Congress repealed prohibition, alcohol-related debates still flare up across the nation. Colorado legislators recently contemplated a limitation on the alcohol content of wine, Virginia lawmakers continue to wrestle with the state’s sangria ban, and a current bill in the Alabama Legislature proposes loosening Alabama’s restrictive laws regarding the alcohol content of beer.¹³⁷

Neo-prohibition groups continue to spread the anti-alcohol message. In the wake

¹³⁶ “Fewer Dry Counties in Bible Belt,” *Join Together*, 18 April 2007.

¹³⁷ Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1981).

of national prohibition's failure, modern prohibitions use different approaches to reach their goal. Rather than advocate strict legal prohibition, Neo-prohibitionists encourage cultural prohibition by making alcohol less socially acceptable. The Anti-Saloon League, which played a huge role in the adoption of national prohibition, still exists today as the American Council on Alcohol Problems.¹³⁸ The Women's Christian Temperance Union currently boasts 8,000 members. Members of the WCTU are required to sign a pledge of abstinence, and the group still works to promote its temperance agenda.¹³⁹

Although Neo-prohibitionists continue to nationally spread the anti-alcohol message and legislatures occasionally wrestle with state alcohol-related issues, current tension over alcohol is most acutely felt in the counties where prohibition remains. In these counties, several of which are located in Arkansas, the alcohol debate may surface annually, monthly, or even daily. Settling the longstanding issue of prohibition within these dry counties proves to be a daunting task.

Clark County, Arkansas, has been caught in the middle of the alcohol debate since the late 1800s. Even today, as the county moves forward with its new development plan, the alcohol question continues to create division. The debate will rage on with little compromise until both factions realize that alcohol will not be the saving grace of the local economy nor the destroying factor of local law and moral order. The days of Carry Nation may be long gone, but Clark County still wrestles with raising the hatchet or raising the glass.

¹³⁸ Austin K. Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹³⁹ Tanya Ott, "Alabama Beer Drinkers Fight for Stronger Brews" *All Things Considered*, 19 March 2008.