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During the years of Prohibition, police enforced the ban on making, transporting and selling alcoholic beverages. In this image, we see a police raid at Elk Lake, Canada, during 1925. Online via [Archives of Ontario](#). Johnny Torrio was right when he saw Prohibition as a lucrative opportunity for organized crime.

Before the "Noble Experiment" (so called by President Hoover) failed miserably, after just thirteen years, organized crime made staggering amounts of money from the liquor business.

A monologue of the time illustrates, in part, how the twenties became "the lawless years." Performing "Donnie Donahue, on Prohibition," William Cahill expressed the mood of many in 1921:

When we need a bottle they take it away from us!

Because the perceived need was great, the bootlegging trade flourished and led directly to "the lawless decade" of the 1920s. It wasn't just homemade alcohol, made with a moonshine still, that police tried shut down.

Smugglers, called "rumrunners," worked both coasts, illegally importing the banned substance from Canada and Mexico, among other places. The Chesapeake Bay was a "smuggler's paradise."

Bootlegging operations went on everywhere, but many who took the risks were forced to give their profits to city officials. After a new Bureau of Prohibition was created in 1927, the feds conducted sting operations.

Their investigation of a case in Washington state was lengthy, and thorough, designed to catch as many people as possible. When the net was finally set, many people were caught in it - including police officials and the mayor of Tacoma.

In addition to shipments by sea, bootleggers sent/received shipments by rail. A typical operation in Cleveland would list bogus products and companies on a freight bill as the real product traveled from transporters to users.

The "drag net" of Uncle Sam would often catch the moonshiner, the bootlegger, the speak easy and the runner. After years of investigation, the feds could hardly contain their glee as a press release, sent to the media just before arrests were made, attests.

It was actually easy to get around Prohibition. People ignored the laws that were designed to keep them from making, transporting, selling and consuming alcohol. Even athletic clubs became "rum dives."

Throughout the country, police often protected the illegal buying and selling of liquor.

In Atlantic City, home of the famous Boardwalk - where Enoch L. Johnson, better known as "Nucky Johnson" (or "Nucky Thompson," in "Boardwalk Empire") was "The Boss," Babette's was a favorite hangout and African-Americans (like the fictional Chalky White) were an integral part of the city's life - law enforcement officials

routinely "looked the other way."

New York gangsters, like Lucky Luciano, felt at home in a place like Atlantic City.

Wives wrote letters to federal agents, or police officers, stating their husbands bought liquor from bootleggers and spent money that was "needed for household expenses."

One woman wrote a letter to complain that her husband was buying a quart every other day. Another came to see "The Boss" himself, whereupon Nucky Johnson gave her more back than her husband had lost.

During the 1920s more than a half million people were arrested for violating prohibition, but people still drank their liquor. During the year of the stock market crash (1929), more than 66,000 Volstead Act arrests were made.

Al Capone, meanwhile, was raking in the profits.

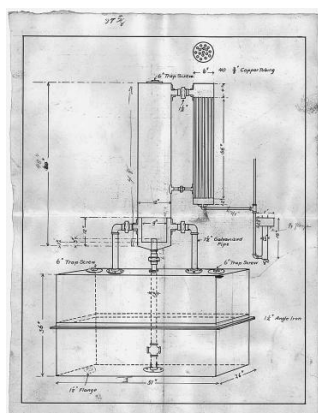
See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/MOONSHINE-AND-BOOTLEGGERS-Road-to-Perdition>

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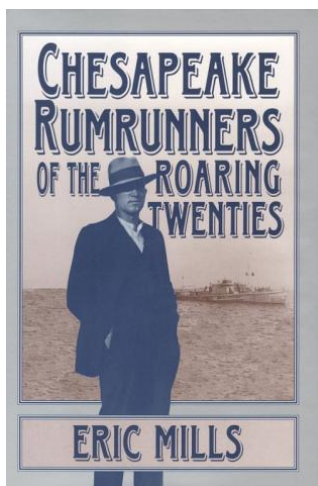
Media Stream



Moonshine Still - Drawing Detail

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. ARC Identifier: 298446, Title: "Drawing of a still."
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Chesapeake Rumrunners of the Roaring Twenties - by Eric Mills

Book-cover image online, courtesy Amazon.

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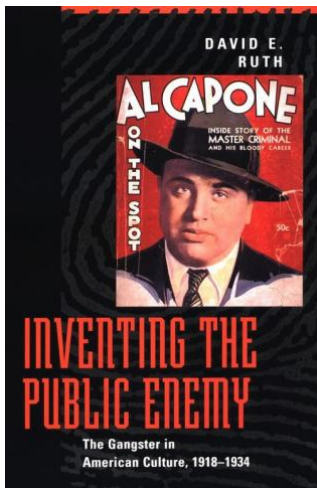
Illegal Liquor Shipped by Rail - Police Corruption

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives. ARC Identifier: 298485

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Inventing the Public Enemy - by David E. Ruth

Book-cover image available, courtesy University of Chicago Press and Google Books.

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Enoch L. ("Nucky") Johnson - Nucky Thompson

Image of Enoch L. ("Nucky") Johnson, online courtesy U.S. National Archives and the Atlantic County Historical Society.

Quoted passages from *The Last Good Time*, by Jonathan Van Meter, online courtesy Google Books.

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Babette's - Atlantic City

Image from the Collection of Vicki Gold Levi, online via *Atlantic City, 125 Years of Ocean Madness*, by Vicki Gold Levi and Lee Eisenberg, via Google Books.

Quoted passages from *Atlantic City, 125 Years of Ocean Madness*, by Vicki Gold Levi and Lee Eisenberg, online courtesy Google Books.

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Chalky White - "Boardwalk Empire"

Photo of Chalky Wright, online courtesy the International Boxing Hall of Fame.

Quoted passages, from various books and "Jet" magazine, as noted above.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Chalky-White-Boardwalk-Empire->



Lucky Luciano - Boardwalk Empire

Photo online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

Quoted passages, from various sources, as noted above.

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MOONSHINE AND BOOTLEGGERS

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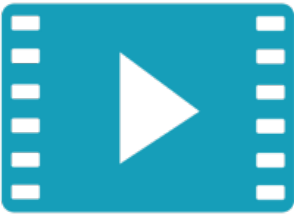
Nucky Thompson - "Boss of the Boardwalk"

Clip from "The Boss of the Town," a documentary about Nucky Johnson, is online courtesy the *Press of Atlantic City's* YouTube channel. There, we read the following description of the film:

Nucky Johnson served as Atlantic City's political boss for 30 years - and his story is the inspiration for the HBO series "Boardwalk Empire." Learn about Nucky Johnson's life - the highlights, downfall and legacy - with the documentary "Boss of the Boardwalk," produced by the Press of Atlantic City.

Quoted passages from Boardwalk Empire: The Birth, High Times, and Corruption of Atlantic City, by Nelson Johnson, pages xiii-xiv.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nucky-Thompson-Boss-of-the-Boardwalk->



Nights in Ballygran - Boardwalk Empire - Carrickfergus

From "Celtic Woman - A New Journey: Live at Slane Castle, Ireland 2006."

Click here for information on [Celtic Woman](#) and the group's tour schedule.

Click here for information about [Órla Fallon](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Nights-in-Ballygran-Boardwalk-Empire-Carrickfergus>