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# Enforcing prohibition in ALX

This month marks the 11th anniversary of the celebration of Dry January, first promoted by Alcohol Change UK, a charity calling attention to the social and medical effects of alcohol. Between 1919 and 1933, every January in the United States was supposed to be Dry January, as the 18th Amendment, often called Prohibition, was the law of the land. Not all Alexandrians willingly participated.

Prohibition in Virginia started even earlier than the national ban on manufacturing, selling and transporting alcohol. Virginia's statewide ban went into effect on Nov. 1, 1916, despite Alexandria voters voting against a 1914 referendum on the prohibition of alcohol by a three-to-one ratio.

The ban hurt a large part of the city's economy, as nearly 40 businesses in Alexandria were registered as alcohol producers or vendors when the law went into effect. One of the largest employers in the city at the time

was Partner's Brewery.

The Virginia alcohol ban created a demand for liquor imported from Washington, D.C. and Maryland. Alexandria's proximity to the state line made its shores a hive of police activity enforcing the ban. A city whose history and economy were so intertwined with the sale and production of alcohol never relinquished its demand for liquor.

After the national ban, police and prohibition agents, often known as "still busters"

found their services demanded both in Alexandria and Fairfax County. One prominent raid in October 1921 discovered a 20-gallon still in a home across the street from Alexandria City Jail. That December, Alexandria police officers Patrick Magner and Haywood Durrer, federal prohibition agent J.J. Hudgins and Fairfax County Constable Frederick Wease showed off 11 stills seized in one week.

Legally enforced Dry January ended before January 1934, as the 21st Amendment re-

pealed the 18th Amendment after its passage in February 1933 and ratification by the required number of states in December of that year.

Virginia ratified the Amendment in October of that year and ended its own prohibition on the manufacture, sale and transportation of alcohol that same month. The need for still busters suddenly vanished.

*Out of the Attic is provided by the Office of Historic Alexandria.*



PHOTO/DAYLE  
 DURRER DOOLEY  
 Still  
 busters in  
 Alexandria  
 in 1921.