

"Gibraltar of the Wets"¹: Prohibition in the
City of Eau Claire, 1919-1933

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History 402

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19.93

Oh, fatal Friday!
Monumental Dry Day!
Ah, dreadful Sixteenth Day of January
That expurgates the Nation's commissary,
For all the years to come,
Of whiskey, brandy, gin and beer and rum,
The sparkling flow of Veuve Cliquot and Mumm
And all the wines-I cannot speak the worst;
Drought leaves me glum and dumb,
O Day accurst
Of Thirst!²

-Arthur Guiterman

January 16, 1920 was the day the doors to saloons closed and the ones to speakeasies opened. Prohibition made the sale, manufacturing, and transporting of intoxicating alcohol illicit, but, more importantly, changed the social order of the United States. Prohibition was a brand-new social experiment which was hailed by Progressives and reformers as the cure to all of America's ills. But as history later displayed, this great experiment would end only thirteen years later on December 5, 1933. While much has been written about Prohibition, the dry decade, and its reasons for failure by historians on the national level it is also instructive to assess it on a smaller scale. This paper will analyze Prohibition in the city of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

In examining Prohibition in Eau Claire this paper will try to answer a few questions. The first is, was Eau Claire "wet" or "dry"? This main question will be analyzed by breaking it down into two separate ones: what were the opinions of Eau Claire voters toward Prohibition, and how stringently was Prohibition enforced in Eau Claire?

Various sources were consulted to discover what ideas and opinions the citizens of Eau Claire held toward Prohibition.

Election results, editorials, and letters to the editor were extensively used. Oral histories offered details on attitudes not found elsewhere.

To gauge the level of enforcement of Prohibition, I looked at how local law enforcement and courts treated Prohibition to see if there were changes from the beginning to the end of Prohibition. Court records were used to find out the numbers of violators convicted, whether they were suppliers or users, and the sentences and fines imposed for each. In addition to examining Eau Claire during Prohibition, I also looked into the background of the Prohibition laws, Prohibition in Wisconsin as a whole, and Eau Claire before Prohibition.

The Law at the National Level

What exactly did the Eighteenth Amendment permit and prohibit? While it changed the social culture of the United States, the document proposed by the Senate and House of Representatives was very simple. The amendment prohibited the "manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes."³ It is interesting to notice that the purchase and therefore consumption of alcohol was not prohibited but the sale of intoxicating beverages was. Laws were aimed at saloon owners and the manufacturers of alcohol rather than consumers--drinking intoxicating alcohol in the home was not prohibited.⁴

The amendment also went on to state that "Congress and the several States shall have concurrent power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."⁵ This particular clause was important in giving rights to both the federal and state governments to enforce Prohibition. The Eighteenth Amendment had left two questions unanswered; it failed to specify how Prohibition should be enforced and failed to define an intoxicating beverage, creating problems of enforcement between state and federal governments. Both state and federal legislatures passed their own versions defining intoxicating beverages and specifying Prohibition enforcement.

The federal government acted first in enacting enforcement legislation. In 1919 Congress passed the Volstead Act as its national enforcement package. This act defined intoxicating beverages as any liquor which contained one-half of one percent alcohol by volume (.05%).⁶

The Volstead Act also provided for the enforcement of wartime prohibition. Wartime prohibition prohibited the sale and manufacture of intoxicating beverages more than 0.5% alcohol by volume. It was in effect until the end of WWI and demobilization, or until the Eighteenth Amendment took effect on January 16, 1920.⁷

The Law at the State Level

After passage of Volstead Act in Congress, states began exercising their own power to legislate the enforcement of Prohibition. The Mulberger Act of November 1920 was Wisconsin's

version of a state law enforcing Prohibition. It changed the definition of intoxicating alcohol, legalizing beverages containing two and one-half percent or less of alcohol by volume. This act also allowed citizens to drink intoxicating liquor in private homes and clubs stored before Prohibition. This clause appealed to the middle class who thought that drinking and the saloons was primarily a working man's problem. This act also established a state Prohibition commissioner to enforce the provisions of the Mulberger Act. One article different from the national enforcement act (Volstead Act) established the possession of liquor by anyone without a permit, unless in private home, as evidence of unlawful possession. Most importantly, the Mulberger Act provided enforcement by district attorneys, sheriffs, and police officers to aid federal enforcement officials.⁸ The Eau Claire Leader favored the act and summed up the significance in voting for the Mulberger Act saying "in voting for the Mulberger bill one really is voting for the state enforcement law."⁹

But by mid-1921 a new piece of legislation was needed. The Wisconsin legislature felt violators of the existing law were escaping through loopholes in the differing definitions of "intoxicating beverages" in state and federal legislation. The Severson Act of July 1, 1921, which replaced the Mulberger Act, changed the state definition of intoxicating alcohol to that of the national Volstead Act (0.5% alcohol by volume).¹⁰

On May 28, 1929, with approval from the voters, the Wisconsin legislature repealed the Severson Act. This action

abolished the office of state Prohibition commissioner and gave "towns, villages and cities power to license and regulate the sale of nonintoxicating liquors, and providing penalties."¹¹ After the repeal of the Severson Act in Wisconsin, Prohibition enforcement relied on federal officials alone. Besides federal agents, cities had the power to establish their own enforcement of city ordinances.

The Law at the Municipal Level

Many city, town, and village ordinances more directly affected the daily life of Wisconsin residents than the federal and state laws. Drunkenness, drunk and disorderly behavior, driving while intoxicated, licensing of nonintoxicating beverages, and the enforcement of Prohibition were all regulated by ordinances passed and enforced on a city and county level. Each ordinance provided its own separate fines and sentences, which were not the same as provided for in state and federal statutes. Eau Claire is a good example. The city of Eau Claire passed two ordinances in 1920 in addition to the ones listed above which affected individual private citizens. Ordinance 579 prohibited the possession of intoxicating alcohol without a permit. The manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating beverages of more than 0.5% were prohibited in Ordinance 945. These two ordinances along with the others established local sentences and fines along with state and federal ones.¹²

In the long term, prosecutorial jurisdiction was crucial.

Federal judges were the most severe, followed by state, and then county courts in convicting and sentencing people who violated Prohibition laws. This multilevel system of laws and jurisdictions meant that a person theoretically could be convicted twice for the sale, manufacture, and possession of intoxicating alcohol. The Supreme Court in 1922 upheld this concept of double jeopardy in the case of United States versus Lanza in which the court ruled that since federal and state courts were separate and sovereign a person could be convicted and tried for the same crime in both courts.¹³ While most cases never went this far, violators always wished for the less severe court system which usually happened to be state and county courts.

Legally Prohibition ended on December 5, 1933 when the Twenty-first Amendment to the Constitution was ratified by three-fourths of states, including Wisconsin. The amendment repealed the Eighteenth Amendment and therefore the prohibition against the "transportation and importation into any State, Territory, or possession of the United States for delivery or use therein of intoxicating liquors,"¹⁴

Prohibition in Wisconsin

Before examining the case of Eau Claire, let us look at prohibition in Wisconsin. Before the national Prohibition act went into effect, Wisconsin regulated intoxicating beverages by giving cities, towns, and villages the opportunity to vote upon

the question of Prohibition, known as local option. Every year citizens of each city would vote for or against licensing saloons and breweries to sell liquor. Some cities which were strongly in favor of Prohibition thus become dry before national Prohibition. Statistics show that by 1914 thirty-three incorporated cities had voted to be dry and one year later thirty-five cities again voted to be dry.¹⁵

After the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect in January of 1920, the Wisconsin legislature put the matter to citizens in a statewide referendum the same November concerning the enforcement of Prohibition. The final tally was 419,309 for the Volstead act and 199,876 against, more than a two-to-one ratio in support of Prohibition.¹⁶ While the act was strongly supported by the state's voters, it was a partial defeat for the drys. In 1919 when the state senate voted on the bill, wets succeeded in defining intoxicating alcohol as 2.5% or less alcohol by volume. One dry representative, Rep. Kanep, strongly opposed this bill, calling it "one of the most damnable pieces of legislation ever put into the legislature." He went on to say, "I am going to vote against it so I will be able to look into the faces of the men who have asked me to vote for the bill and tell them to 'go to hell.'"¹⁷

Six years later, in November of 1926, the Wisconsin legislature submitted the following question to the public:

Shall the Congress of the United States amend the 'Volstead Act' so as to authorize the manufacture and sale of beer for beverage purposes, of an alcoholic percentage of 2.75 per

cent by weight, under government supervision but with the provision that no beverages so purchased shall be drunk on the premises where obtained?¹⁸

The act passed overwhelmingly, 349,443 to 177,602.¹⁹

But for all the electoral support, Prohibition enforcement was difficult. There were too many bootleggers and private citizens making "homebrew" and "shine" and enforcement officials could not arrest everyone. For the most part, federal and state law enforcement agencies depended on county and municipal sheriffs and police officers to search for bootleggers. U.S. Representative Ed Voigt of Sheboygan said he believed that "there is more bad whiskey consumed in the country today than there was good whiskey before we had prohibition."²⁰

Finally, in 1929, two measures were put to a referendum of the state's voters. One asked whether to amend the Severson Act to define intoxicating beverages as 2.75% or less by volume and the other asked whether to repeal the Severson Act altogether. The results of the 1929 election itself were mixed. On a statewide basis, both measures passed overwhelmingly. Voters passed repeal by a vote of 350,337 to 153,935 and modification by a vote of 321,688 to 200,545. Clearly, Wisconsin was not satisfied with the current laws and enforcement of Prohibition. The state legislature subsequently formally repealed the Severson Act. As noted earlier, this left enforcement of Prohibition to federal authorities alone.

A further indication of the attitudes of Wisconsin residents toward Prohibition and enforcement is found in the report of the

Commission on Law Enforcement and Observance appointed by President Herbert Hoover in 1929 to evaluate the enforcement of federal laws. Frank Buckley, who investigated Prohibition in Wisconsin, referred to the state as the "Gibraltar of the wets" and the "wet Commonwealth." He went on, "Most towns and cities throughout the State contain their allotment of soft-drink parlors, duly licensed as such by local authorities. Beer, whiskey, or "shine" may be obtained in practically any of such resorts."²¹ He reported that out of seventy-one counties only about twenty could be called dry and noted that the enforcement of Prohibition was ineffective since the state's repeal of the Prohibition enforcement act in 1929 resulted in little help by state and local agencies to federal Prohibition investigators.²² Thus, though parts of Wisconsin became dry before Prohibition and stayed dry during most of Prohibition, by 1929 Wisconsin as a whole was classified as wet by the Commission. In Wisconsin on April 4, 1933 in a statewide election voters elected representatives to the state convention to ratify repeal of Eighteenth Amendment. Statewide, Wisconsin overwhelmingly voted to repeal Prohibition, 647,968 to 141,043.²³ National Prohibition as of mid-1933 was coming to a close.

Eau Claire Before Prohibition

During consideration of the local option question in 1918-- whether or not to license saloons-- dry forces launched a heated attack against Eau Claire's numerous saloons and breweries. Andrew Skolas, an Eau Claire lawyer, was the chairman of the City

Dry League. By March 23, 1918, 380 dry supporters signed a petition to hold an election to vote on local option in April of 1918.²⁴ Previously, in 1917, Eau Claire had voted for licensing saloons by a vote of 2,015 to 1,846.²⁵ In the City Directory for 1918, forty-three saloons were listed along with two breweries, Walter Brewing Company and J. Leinenkugel Brewing Co. There were numerous hotels and restaurants that offered alcohol.²⁶ In 1918 the dry forces in Eau Claire fought to overturn licensing. Their main argument against licensing was that to remain wet was unpatriotic. In a letter to the Eau Claire Leader, Frederick L. Tronsdal, a salesman and dry supporter, passionately argued that Eau Claire needed:

a house-cleaning before the soldier boys come home again. When we expect a visit from dear friends we want to get our beautiful home city of Eau Claire clean by ousting the stinking, dirty saloon. We are advised by Uncle Sam's food administrator to save food even by the spoonful, but we waste by the scoop-shovel through the liquor and food stuffs but lessen efficiency and manhood. When our boys are dying on the battlefield it is no time for frivolity at the saloon-bar. Our nation is called to the bar of judgement and it is time for serious though[t] and serious action.²⁷

In a subsequent letter, Tronsdal appealed to the voters of Eau Claire to remember "our Clear Water City" and to be "true to its name on election day and vote "dry."²⁸

In Eau Claire patriotic fervor inspired questioning of loyalty. Patriots argued that the food, time, and manpower saved

from a dry America would help win the war and questioned the loyalty of all Americans who drank alcohol, alleging that saloons gave "aid and comfort to the enemy," and invoked slogans like "every 100 percent American thinks in terms of patriotism today."²⁹

The dry forces also played upon moral concerns. In a paid advertisement in January of 1918, they asserted that alcohol was easily accessible to young adults--it was "no trouble to buy booze in Eau Claire." They tried to appeal to the workingman, claiming that jobs would not be lost with Prohibition and stated that the saloon (or "poor man's club") was "very often a club used to sandbag his brains and influence him to part with money."³⁰

In the end, the April 1918 election was a victory for the wets. The city of Eau Claire voted to remain wet 1,758 to 1,473, a majority of 285 votes, in striking contrast to other cities in the area. Rice Lake, Menomonie, Ashland, Superior, and Augusta all voted to become dry. In regional city elections only Altoona voted along with Eau Claire to remain wet. In reality the vote was a significant blow to the dry forces of Eau Claire, who had thought that the absence of men at war would increase their chances for victory. The Eau Claire Leader even remarked upon the wet campaign that "almost nothing of a spectacular nature was undertaken by the wets."

In contrast to city-controlled local option, wartime prohibition was administered by the federal government but was enacted by cities and its citizens as a patriotic gesture

pursuant to the patriotic ideal that every man, woman, and child would do everything in their power to be loyal to America. Wartime prohibition at first amounted to the closing of bars on Mondays and during the winter months to conserve coal.³¹ The Volstead Act of 1919 changed wartime prohibition. Wartime prohibition, as stated in the Volstead Act, put an end to tavern operations on June 30, 1919, half a year before the Eighteenth Amendment took effect. Before this, January 1919 to June 1919, violations for breaking the law were not enforceable. The citizens of Eau Claire were preparing for the beginning of "official" wartime prohibition. In Wisconsin it took effect at midnight on June 30, 1919.

The Eau Claire Leader reported on the chaotic conditions in the bars as the hours before Prohibition counted down. Saloon owners reported that:

whiskey and brandy stocks were going down fast as hundreds poured into the thirst parlors to take advantage of the opportunity to stock their cellars or caches before the dreaded dry-ban descended at midnight. By night the 80 odd saloons were doing the biggest business in their individual or collective history as the zero-hour approached.³²

The article also goes on to talk about the unique and innovative ways that the citizens of Eau Claire went about stocking their supply of alcohol for the coming dry period:

All sorts of containers were employed to transfer liquor yesterday from suitcases to perambulators. Across the Dewey

street bridge at 5 o'clock two friends carried a tin washboiler with a jingling load. A prosperous farmer emerged from Bruce Brown's with a jug in either hand. Depositing them in his automobile he started back, pondered, hailed a man lounging in front of Burley's, bade him guard the treasure, while he made four more trips to the saloon and brought out each time a similar burden. A reliable authority states that a farmer bought a barrel of the crater and paid \$700 in coin of the realm for it.³³

Two days after wartime prohibition took effect, the Eau Claire Leader reported that three saloons sold "near beer" and "near lager," which were defined as non-intoxicating according to law. All other establishments which had sold alcohol, now had their doors locked and curtains drawn. It was what one saloon owner called, "the end of a perfect day."³⁴ The approximately forty saloon owners not selling near beer waited to see how the state would license non-intoxicating beverages.

One week after the effective date of wartime prohibition the Eau Claire Leader reported that fourteen saloons were selling near beer and other beverages, four owners retired from the business, two were selling soft drinks, and one died the day after the law took effect. The Walter Brewing company remained open but the its future status was unknown. In addition to saloons selling near beer the paper reported liquor dealer's estimate that whiskey stored in houses and private clubs in Eau Claire amounted to around 1,000 gallons. One saloon owner was

reported to have fifteen kegs of whiskey in his basement. Another citizen failed to receive a case of liquor labeled "Dry Goods" after one bottle broke and the lot was confiscated by local enforcement officials.³⁵

Eau Claire During Prohibition

Enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment began on January 16, 1920. Generally, this date is thought of as the beginning of national enforcement of Prohibition. Saloons in the city of Eau Claire were already closed down due to wartime prohibition but no state enforcement law existed yet. In November of 1920 the whole state voted to approve the Mulberger Act. According to the Wisconsin Blue Book of 1921, Eau Claire County voted in 1920 against the referendum on the Mulberger Act, 3,246-3,051. By a slight 195 vote majority, Eau Claire County thus became the only county in the state to oppose the act.³⁶ However, unofficial reports in the Eau Claire Leader disputed the results. The paper reported on November 5, 1920 (the day after the election) that by a 1,810 vote majority (5,056 to 3,246) the act passed in the county of Eau Claire.³⁷ The newspaper printed unofficial results and may have made an error; for the purposes of this paper I am using the results from the Wisconsin Blue Book. Even had the Mulberger Act passed in Eau Claire County, it would not necessarily have meant a victory for the drys. The wets fought long and hard to keep the definition of alcohol at 2.5% or less by volume and drys found a less restrictive "intoxicating alcohol" definition hard to accept.

The next chance Eau Claire voters had to express their attitudes toward Prohibition was in the November 1926 election. In this election held statewide, voters had the chance to vote on a modification of the Volstead Act to raise the permissible alcoholic content of beer to 2.75%. In Eau Claire county the vote followed the state pattern in supporting the measure, 4,510 to 3,018.³⁸ This vote however, did not change the definition of intoxicating alcohol since because the Volstead Act was a federal law and only Congress could modify the law.

But Eau Claire citizens found ways to obtain intoxicating alcohol and get around the federal Volstead Act. "Homebrew" was one way. Many people made it themselves. All a person needed was a still, mash, barley, and yeast. William Culbert, long-time resident of Eau Claire and director of the Chippewa Valley Museum from 1984-85, recalls that his grandmother, Georgiana Jackson, sold homebrew beer for twenty-five cents a quart. She lived at 413 1/2 South Barstow, which today is over Houlligan's Restaurant. Jackson combined homebrew with fortunetelling: she read tea leaves and cards and worked the Ouija board.³⁹

William Culbert's childhood recollections of Prohibition are quite interesting. His parents ran a speakeasy which they started during the late 1920s. This nightclub served food and offered dancing on weekends to live big band and jazz music. Strong beer was available. He remembers that his parents' speakeasy was one of about eight around the city of Eau Claire, which also included Gordon Gullickson's Hobart House and one managed by the Fisher brothers. He also recalls that in ten

years of Prohibition his parents moved ten or eleven times to keep one step ahead of the law.⁴⁰

Culbert's recollections tie into local enforcement of Prohibition. Local enforcement at the beginning of Prohibition targeted the manufacture and sales of liquor, like the Culberts' speakeasy. More manufacturers and sellers of liquor were arrested and convicted than people who only possessed liquor.⁴¹ Table 1 shows the numbers of conviction for drunkenness in the city of Eau Claire, 1918-1933. Most striking are the decrease in the numbers of convictions from 1918 to 1919 and the few numbers of conviction for drunkenness up till 1927 or 1928. The decrease from 1918 to 1919 is probably due to the fact that municipal governments did not know how to prosecute wartime prohibition and citizens may have been drinking less during this time. The few numbers of conviction up till 1927 or 1928 can be attributed to the success of early Prohibition. Liquor at the beginning of Prohibition was scarce and most people thought Prohibition was a good idea. Evidence shows that Americans per capita consumption of alcohol decreased after Prohibition.⁴² Another study shows that arrests for drunkenness decreased during Prohibition. Clark in his book, *Deliver Us From Evil: An Interpretation of American Prohibition*, writes that the abolition of the saloon in effect made public drunkenness less common at the beginning of Prohibition. After the crash of 1929 drunkenness became more prevalent as economic hardships turned people toward intoxicating alcohol.⁴³ Clark writes about changing attitudes even before repeal. "The defiant rebel with his pocket flask had become an

almost irresistible symbol of dignity, courage, manhood, and liberation from hypocrisy and pigheaded repression."⁴⁴

Table 2 shows convictions for the manufacture, sale, transport, and possession of alcohol without a license in the Municipal Court from 1919-1928 and in the Circuit Court from 1928-1933 (the Circuit Court took over jurisdiction from the Municipal Court in 1928.) There were no convictions in 1919-1920, for there were no ordinances passed concerning violations of Prohibition laws. Cities and counties had to wait until federal and state laws governing Prohibition were passed before they could pass ordinances. Convictions continued up to 1933, even though state enforcement had been repealed since 1929. One reason for the increase after 1929 may tie into the number of convictions for drunkenness. The numbers of conviction increased in this category after 1929 so the numbers of conviction for the sale, manufacture, transportation, and possession of intoxicating alcohol would also increase because of larger numbers. Manufacturers and sellers may have found the distribution of intoxicating alcohol more profitable as sentences decreased over Prohibition. The sentencing and fines of violators during Prohibition showed a decline in severity as time wore on. From June of 1920 to about 1926-27, violators convicted of selling, possessing, or manufacturing liquor were fined between \$500-\$1000, while from the late 1920s to December of 1933 violators were being fined between \$100-\$200. Violators for drunkenness were also fined less severely by the end of Prohibition. In the beginning fines would be between \$10-\$25 and by the end many

sentences would be suspended or violators would spend one night in jail.⁴⁵

Another insight into Eau Claire county's attitude is the report from the Prohibition Commission's investigator, Frank Buckley, who characterized Eau Claire county in 1929 as wet, though he acknowledged that the sheriff cooperated with federal agencies and pursued arrests and convictions.⁴⁶ As shown previously, Eau Claire county and a majority of other Wisconsin counties appeared wet by 1929. Voters in these counties worked to change and modify the Prohibition laws.

The first chance voters in Wisconsin had to change the state enforcement of Prohibition was in the Wisconsin referendum of 1929. In this referendum two measures were voted on: whether to amend the Severson Act to define intoxicating beverages as 2.75% or less by volume and whether to repeal the Severson Act altogether. Both dry and wet forces campaigned heavily for voter support. Senator Thomas M. Duncan, author of the referendum proposals, led Wisconsin's campaign for support. The wets emphasized two themes: double jeopardy, and voting as you drink. Duncan argued that voters should vote yes so that double jeopardy would not exist with both a state and federal enforcement law, and of the "hypocrisy of voting dry by persons who consistently violate the dry law."⁴⁷

Dr. J. J. Seelman, head of the Wisconsin Division of the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, mapped out four reasons why Wisconsin's Severson act should be repealed. He argued that Prohibition enforcement would be stricter only if one

level of government controlled it, double jeopardy violated the Constitution, law enforcement officials could concentrate more on prevention of crime, and violators of the Severson Act could not escape from the Jones Act.⁴⁸ The Jones Act, more commonly known as the "Jones Five and Ten Law" which went into effect in March 1929, modified the Volstead Act by increasing maximum sentences for first time liquor violators, at first six months in jail or a fine of a \$1000, to five years in jail and/or a \$10,000 fine⁴⁹. Duncan in turn argued, "Why should Wisconsin maintain a law which forces upon itself that from which it has thrice petitioned Congress for relief, and to which petition Congress has paid not the slightest heed?"⁵⁰

Dry forces, on the other hand, were very active. The two local chapters of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (W. C. T. U.) brought to Eau Claire Mrs. Jeannette Haslam Mann, national lecturer and organizer of the W. C. T. U., to speak on the upcoming referendum. In her speech Mann focused on the lack of information to the public about the effects of alcohol consumption, and voter indifference. She called for an organized effort to campaign against the two referendum measures. She concluded, "it is not a wet and dry issue but a question of law enforcement. It is law or lawlessness."⁵¹

W. C. Crocker, district attorney for Eau Claire County, stated that he believed that the repeal or modification of the Severson Act would not help solve the liquor question in Eau Claire. "Eau Claire county is now one of the leading counties of the state with reference to the successful enforcement of the

Severson law. Conditions would be much worse locally if that law were repealed."⁵² Former District Attorney for Eau Claire county, H. E. Stafford, expressed similar views, stating that "the hellholes in the immediate Eau Claire-Chippewa Falls territory are now pretty well cleaned up," and that the result of the repeal of the amendment would be "chaos."⁵³

Sentiments expressed in the Eau Claire Leader tended to support the dry side. Letters to the editor focused on economic or constitutional arguments. A. H. Wilk argued that the liquor business hurt dairy farmers because less milk would be consumed if beer was legal.⁵⁴ A. L. M. wrote in to argue that a "yes" vote would constitute nullification of the Constitution and obstruction of justice. He went on to say it wasn't a question of whether the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead Act were desirable or undesirable, but whether "Wisconsin is to secede, in so far as repudiating a part of the federal constitution and a federal law constitutes succession."⁵⁵ A more important endorsement for dries came from P. C. Atkinson, editor of the Eau Claire Leader. He opposed both measures of the referendum, arguing that law enforcement and courts at the local level would protect Eau Claire better than at the federal level. He supported a "no" vote so that Wisconsin would not be nullifying a federal law. He opposed modification or repeal for it would bring, "an onslaught of bootleggers, and above all still less respect for law enforcement."⁵⁶

The city of Eau Claire voted against repeal of the act by a vote of 2,051 to 1,684, and against modification by a 2,054 to

1,515 vote. From Table 3 it can be seen that the third, sixth, and seventh, and wards showed greatest dry strength while the first, fourth, eighth, and tenth voted with the wets.

The county likewise voted against the two proposals, but by somewhat smaller margins. The vote against repealing the Severson Act was 3,260 to 3,062 and against modification, 3,328 to 2,718. Interestingly, the out-of-town vote in the county was wet by a 169 vote majority in support of repeal. The townships of Bridge Creek, Clear Creek, Lincoln, Ludington, Pleasant Valley, Seymour, and Washington, the first and second wards of Altoona, and the villages of Fall Creek and Fairchild all voted for repeal.⁵⁷ In addition, both the city of Chippewa Falls and Chippewa County voted in favor of repealing the Severson Act. The city voted 1,324 to 1,034 for repeal, while the county barely passed the measure 1,973 to 1,951.⁵⁸

The 1929 election surprised many, since in the 1926 election Eau Claire County had voted wet by a 1,500 votes. Even though dry forces surprisingly had won the battle in the city and county of Eau Claire, they lost the fight statewide. Many blamed bad weather on the dry loss. Rev. Warren G. Brown, leader of the drys, expressed his disappointment at the state vote but stressed that he was not determined to set out to "repeal the repealers." Wet forces led by Senator Duncan proclaimed that this was a "tremendous victory"⁵⁹

Eau Claire waited four years after the repeal of the Severson Act for the federal government to end Prohibition in December of 1933. Eau Claire County voted 6,782 to 2,205 to send

representatives in favor of repeal to the state convention to ratify the Twenty-first Amendment. The end of federal Prohibition laws in Wisconsin now meant cities had the power once again to license establishments selling.

Prohibition in Eau Claire ended much like it began; the taverns filled up once again. Celebrators of the end of Prohibition drank the same bootlegged liquor which was consumed during Prohibition because no new liquor shipments had arrived. One fast-thinking saloon owner bought out the entire supply of medicinal whiskey from a local drug store so he could sell the "real stuff." Twenty-one taverns applied for a \$100 city license to sell 3.2 liquor in the first week Prohibition ended.⁶⁰

But what conclusions can we draw from the information presented? First of all, it is important to notice the impact the sequence of laws had on Prohibition enforcement. The multiplicity of federal, state, and city ordinances affected the citizens of the city of Eau Claire. From 1919 to 1920 there were no convictions for the sale, manufacture, or transportation of intoxicating alcohol because state laws and city ordinances were not in place yet.

Also, the attitudes of Eau Claire citizens were mixed, in particular when looking at election results. Eau Claire County voted as a maverick within Wisconsin, sometimes voting with the state but often out of sync. However, the majority of votes for winners, either wets or drys were often small. I believe that this split between the city of Eau Claire and the state shows the controversial nature of the issue and that the attitudes of Eau

Claire citizens were varied depending on their own experiences.

Finally, the level of enforcement for the city of Eau Claire closely followed the national pattern. At the beginning of Prohibition there were few numbers of convictions because intoxicating alcohol was scarce, expensive, and many people supported Prohibition at this time. Then as many Eau Claire citizens became disenchanted with Prohibition people used the symbol of drinking intoxicating as a symbol of their rebellion.

Table 1

Numbers of Conviction for Drunkenness
from 1918-1933 in the
City of Eau Claire

Year	Drunkenness No.
1918	22
1919	4
1920	0
1921	0
1922	1
1923	0
1924	0
1925	2
1926	3
1927	56
1928	90
1929	131
1930	121
1932	127
1933	85
TOTAL	620

Source: City of Eau Claire, Municipal Court, Municipal Court Dockets 1918-1937, Eau Claire Series 85; and County of Eau Claire, Circuit Court, Circuit Court Cases 1928-1933, Eau Claire Series 62.

Table 2
 Number of Convictions for the
 Sale, Manufacture, Transportation, and
 Possession without a Permit of Intoxicating Alcohol
 in the City of Eau Claire, 1919-1933

	No. of Convictions
1919	0
1920	0
1921	4
1922	14
1923	22
1924	13
1925	3
1926	11
1927	22
1928	6
1929	3
1930	17
1931	13
1932	5
1933	7

Source: City of Eau Claire, Municipal Court, Municipal Court Dockets 1919-1927, Eau Claire Series 85; and County of Eau Claire, Circuit Court, Circuit Court Cases 1929-1933, Eau Claire Series 62.

Table 3
 Votes by Eau Claire City
 Wards in the 1929 Election

	Repeal Severson Act		Amend Severson Act	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1st ward	147	63	129	62
2nd ward	157	166	152	169
3rd ward	270	492	246	483
4th ward	71	70	70	66
5th ward	131	245	141	229
6th ward	195	319	162	328
7th ward	130	235	115	234
8th ward	182	85	192	92
9th ward	254	313	179	319
10th ward	147	63	129	72
TOTALS	<u>1684</u>	<u>2051</u>	<u>1515</u>	<u>2054</u>

Source: "City Votes Down Dry Law Repeal or Modification," Eau Claire Leader (Eau Claire, WI), 3 April 1929, p. 1.

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