

WINE, WOMEN, AND SONG

DISCOVERING THE ROARING TWENTIES

A Whole House Exhibit at Trail End State Historic Site, April 2020-December 2021

“Wine, Women and Song” was to the 1920s as “Sex, Drugs and Rock and Roll” was to the 1960s. It was a phrase that promoted a pleasure-pursuing, hedonistic lifestyle, and was adapted from the old adage, “Who loves not wine, women, and song remains a fool his whole life long.” 2020 marks the 100th anniversary of women obtaining the right the vote, the prohibition of alcohol, and the Jazz Age in America. This exhibit explores what those events meant for the Kendrick family, their staff, and the people of Sheridan.

Sheridan Before 1920

In the years leading up to Prohibition, Sheridan was quite the “wide open town.” Alcohol was such a problem that in June 1909, the Sheridan Ministerial Association, along with “sixty-seven heads of families in the vicinity of the district mentioned” filed a protest with Sheridan’s City Council. They were against the city granting two more saloon licenses in the “heart of the district devoted to lawlessness and vice, known as the ‘Red Light District.’” The group stated that the sale of liquor was an “acknowledged and prolific source of assault, murder, and all kindred vices.”

The heart of the Red Light District was on Grinnell Avenue, adjacent to Main Street downtown. This area thrived until 1917, when it was shut down by the U.S. Army. Too many soldiers from nearby Fort Mackenzie were getting in trouble in the bars and brothels. The Secretary of War authorized Congress to do what they “deemed necessary to suppress and prevent keeping or setting up houses of ill fame, brothels, or bawdy houses within [five miles] of any military camp, station, fort, post, cantonment, training or mobilization place.” While many women moved on, some stayed in Sheridan, and were still getting arrested in the 1920s, in brothels that had reopened.

After news of the order went out, many in Sheridan were concerned about the fate of the saloons. A July 26, 1917, *Sheridan Enterprise* article reported that it had received so many phone calls about whether the order applied to drinking establishments that it “made an inquiry by wire, and has been informed that ‘No saloons are to be established within five miles of any fort or military camp’ [... and] the saloons of Sheridan will, therefore, not be disturbed, so long as the troops are kept at Fort Mackenzie” and not permanently relocated into town.

Sheridan Post Newspaper
headline from July 27, 1917,
announcing the closure of
the Red Light District in
Sheridan.

Prohibition in Wyoming

Prohibition was a time in American History when it was illegal to make, sell, and distribute alcohol for the purpose of drinking. The 18th Amendment, which established Prohibition in America, was ratified in 1919 and took effect in January 1920. It was created from the organized efforts of the Temperance Movement and Anti-Saloon League, whose members, a majority of them women, believed that alcohol was the cause for most of society's ills and wanted it outlawed. However, before Prohibition took effect nation-wide, many states across the country, including Wyoming, had already gone "dry."

While John Kendrick was a known temperate, the rest of his family drank: in the 1920s, Mrs. Kendrick enjoyed a drink as soon as the ship she was sailing to Europe on crossed into international waters; Rosa-Maye drank "spiked punch" at parties; and there are bottles of moonshine, rum, and gin from the 1920s in the Liquor Cabinet, labeled by Manville himself. However, it's said that when John Kendrick was a young cowboy and the cattle drive would reach a town on the Texas Trail, he'd save his money and stay in camp reading while the rest of the cowboys headed to town to drink and carouse.

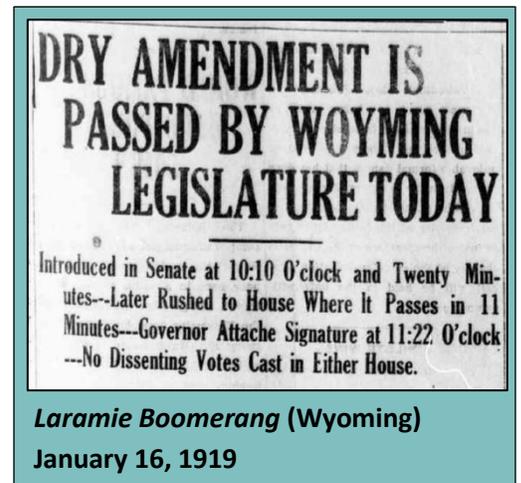
When Kendrick became Governor of Wyoming in 1914, ladies from the Women's Christian Temperance Union wrote asking him to speak to their groups on the evils of liquor, and to get prohibition legislation started for Wyoming. In a July 1916 reply to one such letter, Kendrick states, "It is hardly necessary for me to explain to you that I am in sympathy with this movement as I have gone on record to that effect more than once in a public way. I am for prohibition, State, National or both."

Wyoming was one of the few states in the West that had not adopted a state-wide prohibition yet. In 1917, the Wyoming State Legislature, at Kendrick's encouragement, passed a bill allowing voters to decide the issue for themselves. After it was passed and Kendrick signed the legislation, his wife reacted rather passionately: "A resounding kiss, implanted on the executive lips in full view of a number of persons assembled to witness the governor's action, was the reward Mrs. Kendrick gave Governor Kendrick." It was their twenty-sixth wedding anniversary, and Eula said John's support of the bill was the perfect anniversary gift.

The issue was voted on by the people of Wyoming in the fall of 1918; legislation was passed in February 1919; and the law took effect on June 30, 1919, making Wyoming a dry state six months before nation-wide prohibition took effect.

The Sheridan Brewery

Prohibition meant big changes for Sheridan's own brewery. Incorporated in 1889, the Sheridan Brewing Company was located in what is now the Whitney Commons Park, west of downtown Sheridan. It bottled and sold Sheridan Export beer until Wyoming enacted its state-wide prohibition. To comply with the new law and



still remain in business, the brewery announced in February 1919 that it would not “manufacture drinks with a ‘kick’” after June 30, when Wyoming was to go dry.

Instead, the brewery started making soft drinks “which the most ardent prohibitionist can serve on his table on Sundays, with no questions asked.” Flavors included Ward’s Orange Crush, Lemon Crush, and “tame cherry products known as Cherry Blossoms.” The company also tried its hand at making “near beer,” a non-intoxicating cereal beverage labeled Sherex.

After Prohibition ended, the Sheridan Brewing Company resumed beer brewing until the 1950s, when it returned to soft drink production with its “can-o-pop” beverages. As an aside, the brewery was the first plant in the U.S. to introduce a flat top soft drink canned beverage.

Prohibition, and How To Get Around It

When the 18th Amendment was passed, it called for the creation of enforcement legislation to help uphold the new law. Thus, the National Prohibition Act, or The Volstead Act, was created. If caught and convicted, a person could be fined up to \$5000, serve up to a year in jail, or both, for each offense. (That’s almost \$78,000 in today’s money.)

Speakeasies and Cocktails Parties

The fear of being caught wasn’t enough to stop some Americans though, and they continued to find ways to enjoy their drinks. Speakeasies, secret locations in which people could drink, sprang up across the country. But if everyone stumbled out of them at the end of the night, it would draw unwanted attention to the establishments. So, proprietors began offering small bites of food that patrons could eat throughout the night to help soak up the booze. Guests could continue socializing with a drink in one hand, and hors d’oeuvres such as finger sandwiches, canapes, and stuffed mushrooms in their other hand.

Americans also continued hosting cocktail parties in their homes as another way to deal with Prohibition, and also frequently served finger foods. Even the Kendrick’s daughter Rosa-Maye notes having friends over for cocktails in a 1926 diary entry.

Harvard’s Drinking Culture

Universities are known for their drinking cultures, and Harvard during the 1920s was no exception. While away at school, the Kendrick’s son Manville did not participate in Prohibition, if the letters from his friend are to be believed. Graduating from Harvard in 1922, Manville was kept apprised of the happenings in his old stomping grounds by his friend Elliot Perkins, who was still there pursuing a law degree. Perkins, or “Perk,” makes mention of alcohol in every letter we have from him in our collection.

Perk, who was from Massachusetts, had previously come West in the summer to work on the Kendricks OW Ranch with “Ken,” as Manville was known in college. Perk loved it and wanted to come back in the summer of 1924. In an April 1924 letter to Manville he reports,

“Life at dear old Harvard continues much the same. Liquor is reasonable and good. Down in Connecticut & Rhode Island it is cheaper and as good or better. How about your part of the world? (Place your order for a bottle now & remember, champagne will cost you \$6.25 for a bottle, C.O.D. Trail End, Sheridan Wyo., Whisky, gin & rum up to \$8.25.)”

That’s over \$90 and \$120, respectively, in today’s money. But instead of visiting the OW, Perk spent that summer in Europe with his parents, where he states,

“It won’t be so bad (as you know) to be in a land where you can mention your thirst without being afraid of arrest.” In October, Perk wrote again to say: “Wish that I had not mixed my drinks so carelessly [overseas]. You may have encountered the same situation once or twice in your career. If you haven’t, you sure did waste four years in this town. [In Cambridge] liquor is at present plenty enough, as far as I can see. [...] police raided the Toby Club before college opened; they didn’t get anything there, but they got 50 cases or so at the Steward’s residence, but it was all his, you know he was a sort of general bootlegger, and the Toby by itself got off clean.”

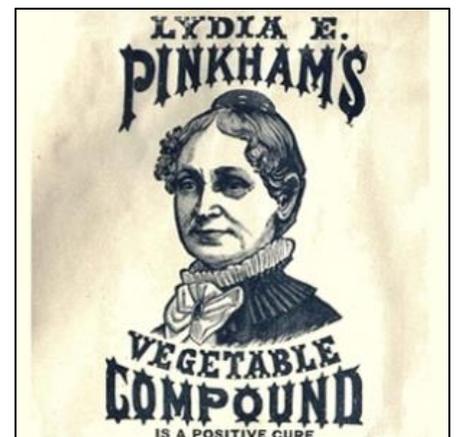
Medicinal Alcohol

In the 1920s, medicinal alcohol was yet another way to circumvent Prohibition. Lydia Pinkham began making her vegetable compound in the 1870s as a homemade remedy to alleviate “female complaints.” The ingredients included unicorn root and black cohosh, along with 18% alcohol used “solely as a solvent and preservative.” However, by the 1920s (and well after Pinkham’s death), the alcohol content had increased to 40%, and the clientele of the “medicine” had expanded to include men.

You could also visit your doctor and buy a “prescription” for alcohol. The Volstead Act contained two exemptions to its ban on the sale of alcohol: liquor could be dispensed by doctors as prescription medicine; and it could

be produced and used for religious sacraments. While some physicians believed alcohol could help with a variety of ailments, Prohibition era prescriptions were mostly a way for doctors and pharmacists to make some extra money.

Once doctors had obtained a permit from the U.S. Treasury, they would be issued watermarked forms to prescribe alcohol that was manufactured for pharmacies in government approved distilleries. Patients were allowed one pint of liquor every ten days. While refills were prohibited, separate prescriptions were not. It cost \$3 for a diagnosis (almost \$40 in today’s money), and another \$3 for the prescription.

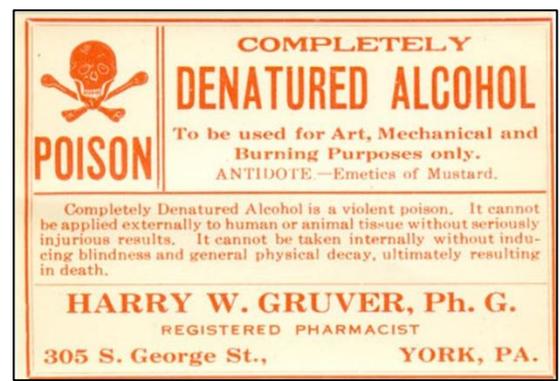


Bootleggers

Not all alcohol being sold was safe to drink though, and you had to be careful about who you bought it from. As the twenties wore on it became harder and harder to find a supplier, so bootleggers — people who made or sold alcohol and liquor illegally — started getting creative.

Except bootlegged alcohol could kill you. Even before Prohibition, industrial grade (undrinkable) alcohol was used as a solvent, cleaning fluid, and for commercial use in manufacturing facilities. This alcohol was denatured, which meant that it had toxic chemicals added to it as a deterrent for its use as a beverage. The thought was if it tasted horrible, smelled bad, and contained a substance known to be dangerous, people wouldn't drink it. Wood (methyl) alcohol was the denaturant of choice, and if consumed, could cause blindness and even death.

Bootleggers began stealing denatured alcohol with the intent of turning it into cheap booze for unsuspecting buyers: after redistilling it and boiling out the wood alcohol, they disguised it as whisky and sold it for human consumption. While small amounts of the wood alcohol did evaporate during the distilling process, much of it still remained — and even ingesting a small amount was dangerous. Thousands across the country died from drinking this poisoned alcohol, and those who did survive were left with neurological and gastrointestinal issues.



Jamaica Ginger, or Ginger Jake, was an alcoholic remedy that had been found in small quantities in drug stores since the 1860s. However, during the 1920s, only the extract of ginger was still legal to sell as a medicine: it had such a potent taste that it was classified as an undesirable drink. Bootleggers began taking the ginger extract and mixing it into a beverage, but replacing most of the ginger with a cheaper additive known as triorthocresyl phosphate (TOCP). The taste was less bitter, but the TOCP was a neuro toxin that caused people's legs to become paralyzed. This phenomenon was immortalized in songs such as the Jake Walk Blues.

Prohibition was eventually repealed in 1933 with the 21st Amendment. This makes the 18th Amendment the only one to have secured ratification and then to have been repealed.

By the way... Trail End's liquor cabinet, the door of which blends seamlessly into the paneled wall of the Foyer, wasn't designed to hide alcohol because Trail End was built before Prohibition. However, Kendrick family legend has it that during Prohibition, the family kept a stock of fine wines stored in the basement... in a pit located under a false bottom in the elevator shaft.

The 19th Amendment and Women's Suffrage

Women in American weren't granted the right to vote until August 1920, when the 19th Amendment was passed. This meant that three-fourths of all the states had to ratify the amendment (that's 36 states out of the 48 at the time). However, women over the age of 21 had been granted full suffrage in Wyoming since 1869 -- before it was even a state. So when enough states had not ratified the amendment by January 1920, Wyoming Governor Robert Carey called state senators and representatives from across Wyoming to the capitol in Cheyenne for its first ever special session of the Legislature.

He convened this special session with reluctance: both because of the cost it would incur and the precedent it would set. However, as Carey said in his remarks to both houses, he felt it quite necessary — not only so that a “sufficient number of states” ratified it, but because Wyoming's reputation was on the line.

“Recently it has become apparent that in order to obtain the requisite number of states that action on the part of this state may be absolutely necessary. Further, the opponents of suffrage have been using as an argument against granting equal rights to women that Wyoming had not ratified for the reason that suffrage had proved a failure in this state. Considering the fact that women in Wyoming were granted the franchise in territorial days in 1869, that we were the first state to be admitted into the Union with the rights of women guaranteed in our Constitution, we could not allow such a charge to go unchallenged.”

It was unanimously ratified by Wyoming's 15th State Legislature, and the 19th Amendment was certified by the United States Secretary of State on August 16, 1920.

Rosa-Maye in the Voting Booth

Because women in Wyoming had been able to vote since 1869, this meant that daughter Rosa-Maye Kendrick was able to vote in elections as soon as she turned 21 in 1918, a duty she took seriously.

In her diaries, Rosa-Maye always made note of “Election Day” -- especially if her dad was up for re-election. On November 7, 1922, when John Kendrick was running for his second term as U.S. Senator, she wrote: “Mother and I voted right after breakfast & then spent a long day of suspense.” Later, she and “Aunty” (her mother's sister, Mattie Williams), waited in Kendrick's office until 2:30 a.m. to hear the election results: he won and kept his Senate seat.

On November 4, 1924, she wrote: “Took my family down early to vote [...] joined Aunty at the *Post Enterprise* [a Democrat newspaper owned in part by John Kendrick] where we listened to the over-whelming Republican Majorities from all over the country. Ross apparently elected.” A friend of the Kendrick family, Nellie Tayloe Ross became the first female governor in the country when she was elected to complete the term of her husband, William Bradford Ross, who had died in office one month prior.

During the 1926 election, Rosa-Maye took an even more active role: “November 2, 1926. Trail End. Election Day -- Given over to voting to transporting people to & from the Poles [sic] to checking off names of people as they voted. Mrs. Scheide & I worked at Central School.”

Eula Kendrick’s Role as the Perfect Political Partner

Eula Kendrick was the perfect partner for her political husband: she was intelligent, social, and popular. She was an educated woman who kept up to date on current events, preferring to read the latest bills passed by Congress and government treaties over the popular fiction of the time.

Eula also understood the importance of small talk and networking. During a 1920s interview, she explained that “The successful hostess, in order to lead the conversation and keep it flowing without constraint, must cultivate a line of light talk, carefully avoiding subjects of a personal nature, or that might offend those holding opposite opinions. In fact, she must be as diplomatic as her husband, and by her tact protect his interests.”

During their time in Washington, Eula frequently helped with events at the White House, was the first treasurer of the Women’s Democratic Club, and was elected vice-president and interim president of the Ladies of the Senate -- an organization for congressional wives.

John Kendrick valued his wife, and made sure he told her. In a 1920 letter to Eula, written just after their 29th wedding anniversary, John said:

“you have made me happier through all the years and contributed more to my success than any other woman on Earth would or could have done. Also I have loved you more consistently and continuously than I would have loved any other woman.”

Others around them took notice of the pair as well. In the opening line of a 1931 *Delineator* article, Francis Parkinson Keyes writes that John and Eula were

“[...] a Senatorial Couple, both of whom were regarded with respect and admiration, and both of whom were outstanding because of their character, ability, and agreeable personality.”



1927 newspaper clipping of Eula Kendrick

Wyoming Women's Firsts

Wyoming is known as the Equality State, and women in Wyoming had a lot of firsts:

1869: Wyoming was the first state to grant women the right to vote.

1870: The first woman Justice of the Peace, Esther Hobart Morris, was appointed in February 17, 1870 in South Pass City.

1870: The first all-woman jury was sworn in on March 7, 1870 in Laramie.

1870: The first woman bailiff in the world was Martha Symons-Boies-Atkinson of Albany County.

1920-1921: The first town in America to be governed entirely by women was the city of Jackson. It had a woman mayor, town council and town marshal. One of the councilwomen even defeated her husband for her council seat.

1925: The first woman governor in the U.S., Nellie Tayloe Ross, was elected to complete the term of her husband who died in office. She served from 1925 to 1927. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed her the first woman to head the U.S. Mint, a position she held until 1953.

The Modern Woman

The 1920s was an era of rapid social change, and a good amount of that change affected young women. During this time, the flapper was born: stylish young women who embraced freedom and rejected previous social norms. They smoked and drank in public, wore short dresses, and danced in jazz clubs. Even if women didn't identify as flappers, hemlines in general became shorter, and dresses became less restrictive. It was also now acceptable to wear makeup in a more obvious way. Even hair styles dramatically changed, with more and more women forgoing long locks and choosing to bob their hair.

On top of this, many women who had gone to work outside of the home during World War I -- and made good wages -- did not necessarily want to give up the freedom that having a job gave them. The U.S. Women's Bureau found that in 1920, women continued to make up 20% of the work force.

In the fall of 1920, women across the entire country celebrated as they were now all able to vote with the passage of the 19th Amendment. The fall of 1921 saw another kind of first for women as well. "Atlantic City's Fall Event" invited ladies from across the country to compete in a bathing suit beauty pageant, and 200 competitors showed up. This contest is still happening today under a new name, and it's one you've heard of: The Miss America Pageant.

The Jazz Age

When thinking of the Jazz Age and the Roaring Twenties, F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1925 novel, *The Great Gatsby*, easily comes to mind. It's fun to imagine the described excessive wealth and fabulous parties at which there seemed to be an endless supply of alcohol ... never mind that the book is also about despair, betrayal, and murder.

Another popular author of the 1920s writing about the time period was Ernest Hemingway. In 1926 he published *The Sun Also Rises*, which was a look at the disillusionment and angst of the post-World War I generation. He finished his next novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, right here in Sheridan in 1928. He was staying at the Sheridan Inn, which you can still visit today.

Music was a defining feature of this era, and Jazz burst onto the scene in a big way. It influenced everything from dance and fashion to moral standards and popular culture.

The Kendrick family loved music, evidenced by their possession of the Regina music box in the Library, the piano in the Drawing Room, the record players in the Foyer and Manville's room, as well as the organ they always wanted to install in the Foyer.

Records made it possible to hear your favorite bands so you could dance to them all night. Gathering around the piano and singing the popular songs of the day was another party pastime. If live musicians were hired for an event, they could safely stay out of the way of enthusiastic dancers by playing from the Musicians Loft in the mansion's Ballroom.

The Jazz Age is remembered for several popular dances. While the Tango, Slow Waltz, and an updated version of the Fox Trot were familiar and more structured, the new Charleston, Lindy-Hop, and Black Bottom dances were wild, leg kicking dances with big movements. These were the kind of dances that weren't taught in any class: you had to learn them from the others on the dance floor!



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