There Has Always Been Drinking in America

Alcohol, History, Culture, and What it all Means for Prevention

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Promoting A Healthier Wyoming!
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Colonial America

“It was an age that considered alcohol safer than water.”

-Historians, Mark Edward Lender and James Kirby Martin
“Prohibition, Episode 1, A Nation of Drunkards” (2011)
Native Americans and the “Firewater Myth”

Local governments openly told their licensed trading agents to get the Indians as drunk as possible in order to wring the most out of them.

Drawing of the 1626 purchase of Manhattan from the Lenape (Popular Science Magazine, 1909)
Slaves, the Exception

“So, when the holidays ended, we staggered up from the filth of our wallowing, took a long breath, and marched to the field, - feeling upon the whole, rather glad to go, from what our master had deceived us into believing was freedom, back to the arms of slavery.”

- Frederick Douglass
Frontier America

“A house could not be raised, a field of wheat cut down, nor could there be a log rolling, a husking, a quilting, a wedding, or a funeral without the aid of alcohol.”

- Unknown Traveling Evangelist
Social Standards vs. Individualism

“Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

- Ralph Waldo Emerson
From Beer to Spirits

By 1830…

The average American over the age of 15 drank the equivalent of 88 bottles of whiskey a year.

Americans spent more money on alcohol each year than the total expenditures of the federal government.
Temperance

“Mothers and schools plant the seeds of nearly all the good and evil which exists in the world.”

- Dr. Benjamin Rush
A Moral and Physical Thermometer

An Inquiry into the Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Mind and Body

- by Dr. Benjamin Rush (1784)
The Dry Offensive

Woman’s Christian Temperance Union

Anti-Saloon League

Carry Nation
Scientific Temperance Instruction

“A thorough text-book study of Scientific Temperance in public schools as a preventive against intemperance.”

- Mary Hunt
Immigration and Industrialization

“Steadiness, thrift, and clear thinking were essential in an industrial world.”

- Historian, Richard D. Brown
The Irish and Germans
In 1890, eleven of New York’s aldermen ran bars.

Saloons were where people sang and laughed. It was their living room and social club. A man could pick up a paycheck or his mail, and read the newspaper. He could play billiards or even find a job.

But the saloon was also the face of alcohol consumption and corruption.
Prohibition

“Once, during prohibition, I was forced to live for days on nothing but food and water.”

- W.C. Fields
What if…?

- Alcohol-related death rates decreased from 14.8 to 7.1 per 100,000 people
- Urban wage earners spent $2 billion less on alcohol
- Alcohol consumption rates dropped from 2.6 gallons to less than 1 gallon a year
- Hospital admissions for alcoholism and for alcohol-related psychoses declined
- Less urban poverty and fewer broken homes
- Drunkenness arrests and national cost for incarcerating public inebriates declined
- More wages flowed into savings accounts and spent on family necessities
The Volstead Act

The 36th state ratifies the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in January 1919, and Congress passes the National Prohibition Act (the Volstead Act), which begins implementation on January 20, 1920.
Unintended Consequences

“Because to pass a law in a real world means nothing, to enforce the law means everything.”

- Historian, Noah Feldman

“Flaming Youth” (1923)

1,500 Prohibition Agents

Al Capone
The Return of the “Demon”

On December 5, 1933, Utah voted to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution and FDR signed an official proclamation of repeal.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s Acceptance of the Democratic Presidential Nomination (1932)
Modern America

“Of course you are a rummy, but no more than most good writers are.”

- Ernest Hemingway to F. Scott Fitzgerald
The New Consumer

Advertisements from the 1940s and 1950s
The Rise of Movies, Radio, and Television

First on Screen Advertisement (1898)

Lucky Beer (1940’s)

Angels with Dirty Faces (1938)
Is Alcohol Funny or Tragic?

American Archetypes

An ideal or very typical example of a certain person or thing.

“Animal House” (1978)
Postmodern America

“Red solo cup, I fill you up, Let’s have a party.”

- Toby Keith
What is Postmodernism?

A broad movement in reaction to modernism that encompasses the arts, architecture, philosophy, and criticism. Postmodernism rejects meta-narratives and the assumptions of enlightenment rationality.
Pop Culture

“Flip Cup” with Margot Robbie
The Tonight Show (2015)

“The Bachelor in Paradise” (2016)
Women

The most expensive part of having kids is all the wine you have to drink.
The Digital Age

“Drunk Makeup Tutorial”
Jenna Marbles (2013)
More than 23 million views
Conclusion
Culture Matters

“Different societies not only have different sets of beliefs and rules about drinking, but they also show very different outcomes when people do drink…”

- D.B. Heath, Sociocultural Variants in Alcoholism
Culture Can and Will Change

“Dazed and Confused” (1993)
Thank You!

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