

Prohibition, Riverside, and the Mission Inn

Grade 11

Objectives:

This lesson is intended to compliment and expand existing lessons about the Prohibition era. Specifically, students will learn about how the temperance movements and Prohibition played out in the City of Riverside, and at the Mission Inn, a National Historic Landmark. Students will be asked to reflect on primary materials from the Mission Inn Museum and other collections at the end of the lesson in order to develop an opinion about Mission Inn owner Frank A. Miller's actions and stance on alcohol leading up to Prohibition.

Two-Part Introduction for Teachers and Students:

Part I: Foundations of the Temperance Movement and the Road to Prohibition

SLIDE 1: The roots of America's Temperance Movement can be traced back to the early 19th century. By the 1820s the average American consumed the equivalent of 7 gallons of pure alcohol per year. Exactly how much is 7 gallons of pure alcohol? Let's assume that only beer is being consumed, and that this beer has an alcohol content of 5%. The average drinker would have to consume 140 gallons of beer each year to reach this amount. That's nearly 2.7 gallons a week! These numbers continued to rise throughout the 19th century – by 1890, the amount of alcohol consumed in America had increased a further 23 times.

SLIDE 2: Why did Americans consume such a high quantity of alcohol, and why did numbers keep rising? One of the reasons was insufficient access to clean drinking water. Beer is brewed at high temperatures, which pasteurizes the drink and removes contaminants. Liquors (such as rum and whisky) are distilled and very strong, which also means that microbes cannot survive. Alcoholic beverages were known to be much safer to drink because they didn't contain microbes and bacteria. The fact that so many Americans viewed alcoholic drinks as safe alternatives to all-to-often dodgy water supplies was compounded by the high number of saloons that were established throughout the country. These saloons, which were often operated by first generation Americans and financed by large breweries, sold their drinks at very low prices. Alcoholic beverages were said to be safer than water and cheaper than tea!

SLIDE 3: Many Americans also took to brewing and fermenting their own alcohol; hard cider was especially popular. In fact, the story of Johnny Appleseed is actually the story of John Chapman (1774-1845), a man that traveled extensively throughout the Midwest, establishing nurseries and apple orchards that he later sold for profit. His apples, however, were not made for eating – they were intended to be crushed and turned into hard cider, and even distilled into a strong liquor known as *applejack*. It was common for rural Americans to keep a barrel of hard cider on their porch that they would drink and refill throughout the year.

SLIDE 4: What were some of the consequences of such widespread alcohol consumption, and what was the response? America's rising rates of alcohol abuse were directly linked to unemployment, debt, and domestic violence.

SLIDE 5: The first prominent group to arise in response to this problem was the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which was founded in 1874 from small groups of church-going women that were distraught over the state of their husbands and rising rates of physical violence. WCTU members viewed alcohol as a destroyer of families and marriages.

SLIDE 6: Another prominent organization, the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), was formed in 1893 by Reverend Howard Hyde Russell. The ASL was created for the purpose of political lobbying in favor of temperance reform. Members of the ASL pursued the single issue of alcohol temperance and reform, which allowed them to focus their efforts in order to achieve desired results. The ASL applied pressure to politicians and argued that stricter alcohol control laws, even the outright ban of alcohol, were the only way to bring about needed moral and social reform in the United States. Much of this political pressure was led by attorney Wayne Wheeler. In 1913 Wheeler and the ASL announced that they would push for a national prohibition of alcohol.

The political pressure applied by these organizations was sufficient to encourage several states across America to pass laws that limited the sale of alcoholic beverages, and even some laws that completely banned the manufacture and sale of alcohol within state lines.

SLIDE 7: By 1916, and through extensive political maneuvering, the ASL achieved a 2/3 majority in favor of prohibition in the United States House of Representatives. This majority was required in order to create and pass the legislation that eventually became the 18th Amendment to the Constitution.

Wayne Wheeler drafted the initial text of the National Prohibition Act. The act was sponsored in Congress (or, presented by) Missouri Congressman Andrew J. Volstead. Because of the ASL’s political maneuvering, the act easily passed in the House of Representatives, and was delivered to the states for ratification. The act received the minimum $\frac{3}{4}$ approval by states for ratification within 13 months of its introduction in 1917, and officially went into effect in January, 1920 as the 18th Amendment to the Constitution.

SLIDE 8: This enactment led to a “last call” mentality in parts of the country; many saloons and stores saw a rush of customers in the days leading up to Prohibition.

SLIDE 9: Acceptance of the 18th Amendment varied throughout the country. In some areas, such as Detroit, speakeasies and the consumption of illegal alcohol were so rampant that it was deemed nearly impossible to enforce Prohibition. Although it can be difficult to track exact numbers of establishments (primarily because serving alcohol was illegal, and there are no licenses/tax records to count), it has been estimated that Detroit had over 15,000 speakeasies at the height of Prohibition! However, in some “dry towns,” areas that voluntarily banned alcohol before Prohibition, officials were seldom called out in response to complaints. Riverside, California, was one of these cities that voluntarily went “dry” long before national prohibition went into effect.

Part II: Temperance and Prohibition in the City of Riverside

Slides 1-2: When they arrived in southern California in 1870, the founders of the City of Riverside had envisioned a utopia, free from the vices and problems of other large cities. Early Riverside residents and

city officials were pro-temperance, and viewed saloons as the root of many of their problems. During this early period, however, city officials were bound to obey the laws set forth by San Bernardino County, and thus were limited in the laws and ordinances they could pass within their city limits. Their response was to separate from San Bernardino County and establish Riverside County, with the City of Riverside as the County Seat.

Side 3: A small group of Riverside residents succeeded in their petition to form Riverside County in 1893. Shortly after it was incorporated, the City of Riverside passed strict laws regarding alcohol and public intoxication. Individuals caught drinking in public faced fines of up to \$300 for violations – that’s equal to over \$7,000 in 2013.

San Bernardino had previously charged saloons an annual license fee of \$50. Riverside, with their staunch views against alcohol, charged saloons \$150 per quarter, or \$600 annually in 1883. In 1886, Riverside raised the license fees to \$500 per quarter, or \$2,000 per year (over \$50,000 today), forty times higher than San Bernardino’s license fees. Further ordinances were passed to make saloons as undesirable a location as possible.

These ordinances were similar to other temperance cities in the United States: chairs were banned, which forced customers to stand for the duration of their visit, and saloons were ordered to close at 10pm, and all day on Sundays. Despite the regulations and expensive license fees, a few saloons survived until Riverside completely outlawed the sale of alcoholic beverages circa 1890.

Slide 4: The WCTU was very active in Riverside during the late 19th and early 20th century. Their presence can still be seen at the corner of Mission Inn Avenue and Orange Street, next to the Riverside Metropolitan Museum, where they constructed a *temperance fountain*. These fountains were constructed so residents could get a drink of clean water without entering a saloon that may have tempted them to order alcohol.

Slide 5: Even though Riverside was dry long before Prohibition went into effect, there was a single establishment where alcohol was legally sold up until Prohibition – Frank A. Miller’s Mission Inn Hotel. Although not a politician, Miller was involved with local government and lobbying efforts. Along with a small group of Riverside residents, Miller successfully petitioned Governor Markham and the State of California in 1883 to separate Riverside from San Bernardino County and establish a new County of Riverside. He also helped bring March Field (March AFB/ARB) and the Sherman Institute, which represented a vast improvement over the Indian Boarding School’s previous facilities, to the city.

As a young man, Frank Miller promised his parents to never consume alcohol. Indeed, he upheld this promise, and as an extension of that promise the Mission Inn hotel never had a bar as long as he was alive – only a dining room that served limited beverages. Despite his personal views against alcohol, Miller argued that in order for his hotel to be competitive with other major destination hotels, he had to be allowed to serve alcohol to his guests. As a result, a city ordinance was passed that allowed low-alcohol content beverages (lite beer and wine) to be served at Riverside establishments with more than 40 guest rooms. Of course, the only establishment with over 40 guest rooms in Riverside at the time was the Mission Inn Hotel.

Slide 6: Miller's interest in the temperance movement led to relations with other like-minded people, at home and abroad. One of these acquaintances was Shozo Awoki, the head of *Awoki Kyōsai Zaidan*, a Japanese temperance organization. Mr. Awoki wrote to Frank Miller in 1925, after Miller had visited Japan, and spoke of high hopes for the election of President Herbert Hoover, due to his stance on alcohol and support of prohibition. Unfortunately, no other records of this Japanese organization have been found, and the extent of their impact on the temperance movement is not known.

Slide 7: Throughout his entire life Miller never took a drink and refused to personally serve alcohol to hotel guests. His stance against alcohol, despite his push to have it served in his hotel, is supported by numerous accounts of "cold water banquets," particularly for notable visitors such as Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and William Howard Taft. In a 1903 journal entry, Miller recalled the stress of deciding whether or not to serve wine to President Roosevelt during his overnight stay, and was happy that the President declined drinks, as Riverside was "a prohibition town" and the President's actions made the citizens of Riverside much happier.

Slide 8: The Mission Inn Hotel once hosted Carrie Nation, a radical member of the temperance movement and the WCTU. Ms. Nation was best known for her antics, which included carrying a hatchet into saloons and trying her best to tear them down from the inside. At 6ft tall, 175lbs, and armed with a hatchet, Carrie Nation was an intimidating figure. She was arrested 30 times for her actions.

On February 19, 1903, Carrie Nation spoke at Riverside's Loring Opera house. A relatively small audience of 50 people listened to her speak about the temperance movement, at a cost of .25 cents each. She explained to the Riverside Press that she was thrilled to be in Riverside, a town of 21 churches and no saloons. However, she was dismayed at the low turnout for her lecture, and was convinced that most of the audience simply wanted to *see* her instead of listen to her message. As a result, she only left her suite at the Mission Inn to give her speech, and otherwise stayed out of public view.

Slide 9: Although the 18th Amendment may have been loosely enforced or outright ignored in some areas of the country, the already dry Riverside residents obeyed Prohibition, as evidenced through a January 15, 1931 article from the Riverside Press. The press article explained that visitors to Riverside (members of a party that had been traveling with Albert Einstein and his wife) marveled at the lack of hip flasks, which were common place in New York. They commented that Riverside was one of the only towns in the United States where the 18th Amendment was being observed.

Slide 10: Another article from December 4, 1930 highlights Riverside's stance during Prohibition. The Riverside Press interviewed Federal Prohibition Agent Paul Mathias to get an inside look at how Prohibition was being enforced and obeyed throughout Riverside. Agent Mathis explained in the full length article that the bootleggers in Riverside had been cleared out, thanks to cooperation between law enforcement agencies and citizens that led to bootleggers living in "mortal terror" of the Police and Sheriff's department.

However, it should be noted that there are numerous accounts of bootleggers that still attempted on to deliver liquor to Riverside. They were frequently caught and arrested before they could make their deliveries within the City of Riverside.

Required Materials and Time:

Computer with internet access, printer, and projector for Power Point presentation

Required Time:

Day 1: Background and Context on Temperance and Prohibition

Day 2: Temperance, Prohibition, and Riverside and the Mission Inn

Day 3: Classroom Essay Prompt

Instructional Process:

1. Review materials and familiarize yourself with the content of the lesson.
2. Present the Part I of the lesson (Foundations of the Temperance Movement and the Road to Prohibition) to review materials from the temperance era, and introduce students to National Prohibition and the 18th Amendment. PDF versions of the materials are available [here](#).
3. Deliver Part II of the lesson (Prohibition, Riverside, and the Mission Inn) to teach students about how the temperance movement and Prohibition played out in their own city. PDF versions of the materials are available [here](#).
 - a. If copies of the introduction and sources are not distributed to students, ensure that they take notes – this information will be needed for the assignment.
4. After the presentations, have students create an in-class essay:
 - a. Distribute copies of the primary materials and have students reflect on what they just learned about early Riverside, the temperance movement, and Prohibition. Copies of the Mission Inn primary sources are available [here](#). These sources include a letter written to Frank Miller by a Japanese temperance supporter, an entry from Frank Miller’s blotter, and a Riverside Enterprise news article.
 - b. Since Riverside was a dry town in favor of Prohibition, what do you think of Frank A. Miller’s decision to sell alcohol at his hotel up until Prohibition was passed? Consider his personal stance on alcohol: Do you think he acted hypocritically, or was it just a good business decision? Do you think he received special treatment that was unfair to other businesses? Why or why not? Explain your reasoning and cite specific examples from the lesson and the primary sources.
5. After all students have completed their essays, select students to report out and explain their reasoning to the class.
6. Have students submit essays for grading and evaluation.

Supplemental Activity:

Have students perform research on their own time to expand on what they learned through this lesson: Were there many towns and cities in the United States that were in favor of the temperance movement and voted to go “dry” before the 18th Amendment was passed? Was this common or uncommon? Why or why not? Locate at least 2 reliable sources to defend your answer.

Additional Online and Interactive Resources:

[National Archives, The Constitution, Amendments 11-27](#)
[Ohio State University, Temperance and Prohibition: Why Prohibition?](#)
[PBS, Ken Burns Prohibition Special](#)

[Smithsonian Magazine, Wayne B. Wheeler](#)
[NPR, Prohibition Life: Politics, Loopholes, and Bathtub Gin](#)
[Biography, Johnny Appleseed](#)

CA History/Social Science Content Standards, Grade 11:

8.3, Students understand the foundation of the American political system and the ways in which citizens participate in it.

8.3.6, Describe the basic law-making process and how the Constitution provides numerous opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and to monitor and influence government.

11.5, Students analyze the major political, social, economic, technological, and cultural development of the 1920s.

11.5.3, Examine the passage of the 18th Amendment to the Constitution and the Volstead Act (Prohibition).

CCR Anchor Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Grade 11:

- **Reading**
 - Key Ideas and Details #1, #2, #3
 - Craft and Structure #5
- **Writing**
 - Text Types and Purposes #1 (discipline-specific argument)