

# Bootlegging, Prohibition, Al Capone (1920)

During the time period of 1920 to 1933, the governments of the United States of America and Canada made the manufacture, distribution and sale of alcoholic beverages illegal. This was meant to decrease crime rates in both countries. Instead, of their dream of a crime free society, the both governments got more than they could handle. This prohibition of liquor, created the business of bootlegging. Many gangs were formed, and along with gangster rivalry, mobs grew very popular.

Bootlegging by definition is the illegal production or distribution of liquor. This came in affect after the prohibition of liquor. People began to smuggle alcohol into Canada from overseas or from our southern neighbour, USA. Soon enough people discovered their own way of producing alcohol. They made their own "liquor stills" and eventually started "bootlegging"; they supplied illegal alcohol to anyone who had the money to pay for it. By the 1930's these activities had become one of the largest illegitimate industries in America.



Police had little or no idea of all the illegal acts occurring at this time. One of the most popular illegal acts that Canada faced was the bootlegging that was occurring in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan at that time. It was conducted through the famous Moose Jaw tunnels. This underground hide away was unknown to the officers of the law; therefore everyone was using the tunnels as their way of consuming alcohol. This illegal act was of great entertainment to society.

The Chicago Connection of the tunnels of Moose Jaw dates back to the 1920's, when American gangsters would ride the "Soo-Line" railroad north to Moose Jaw to beat the "heat" of prohibition in USA. It was a 'seedy' era of prohibition in Moose Jaw. This city was thriving with bootlegging, gambling and prostitution, even though it was prohibited during this time. This whole operation was literally underground.

One use the tunnels were for the city prostitutes. Whenever the police would round up prostitutes, they would send them out on the east bound train, to get them out of the city. The prostitutes would then get off 10 kilometers out of the city at a small town, Pasqua. From there they would catch the next train back to Moose Jaw to resume their profession.



US agents enforcing the law against bootleg liquor in the 1930s

A boy in 1920 once witnessed a cluster of people flowing out of the tunnels. He was quoted to say " There were so many coming out, we lost track of ( the count ) " .

Another legend about the tunnels was that it was a refuge for the Chicago mob boss, Al Capone.

He thrived on bootlegging. He was wanted by federal agents for charges of 2/3 arranged criminal acts and in murder investigations. He was said to have come up to Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan to hide out in the tunnels when things got to intense back home. Al Capone before he was ever on trial.

This would be around the same time that he was reported to be in Moose Jaw.