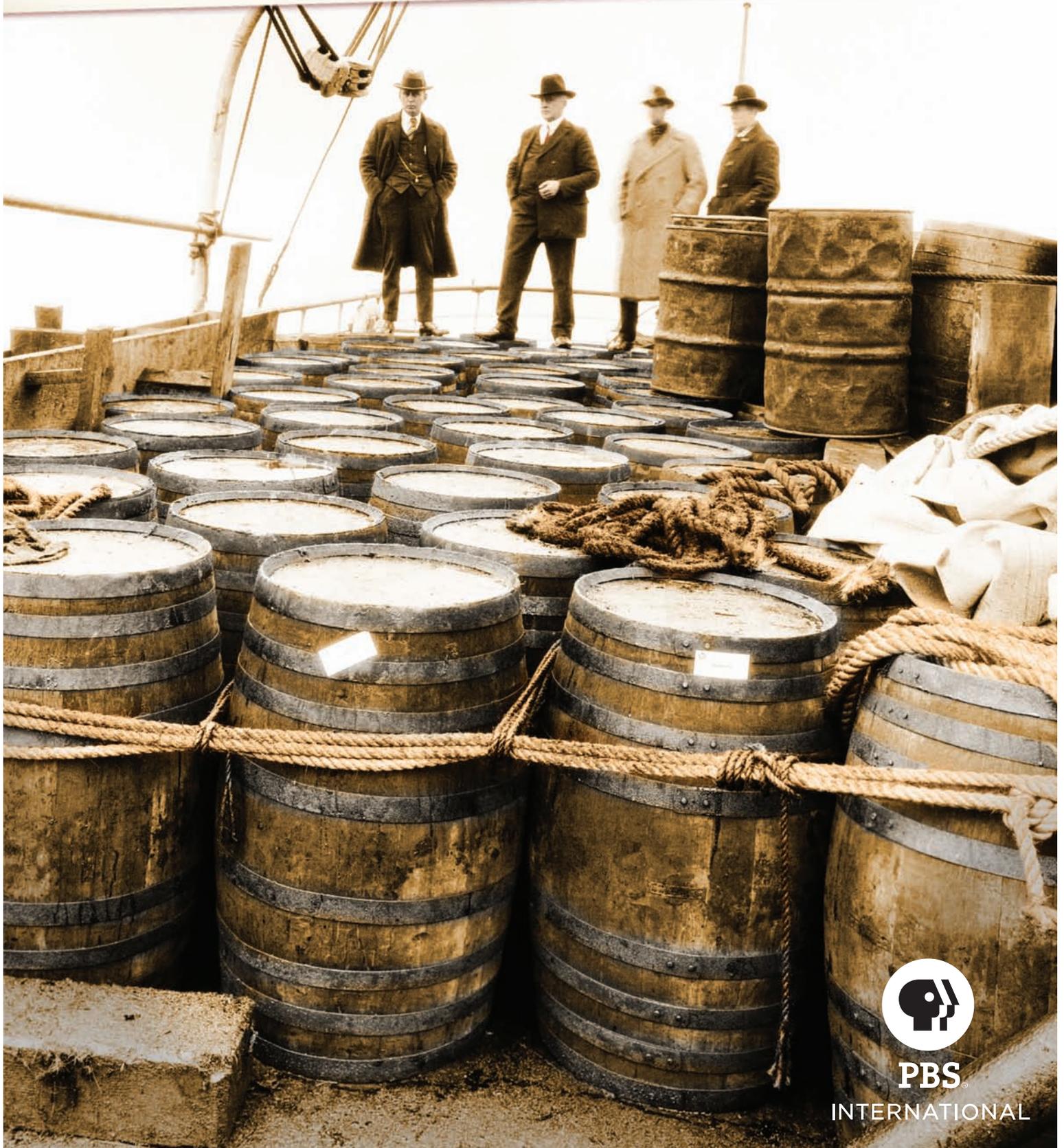


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From 1920-1933, America banned the sale, manufacture, and transportation of alcohol for consumption nationally. During this 13-year period simply referred to as “Prohibition,” millions of Americans reacted by turning away from the moralistic universe it apotheosized. Directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick, *Prohibition* explores the rise, rule, and fall of the Eighteenth Amendment.

Episode 1: Nation of Drunkards

Since the pilgrims loaded the hold of the Mayflower with beer, alcohol and its attendant rituals have been at least as American as apple pie. However, as a wave of ideological fervor sweeps the country, many begin to see alcohol as a scourge, an impediment to a Protestant utopia of clean and righteous living. From the church-based temperance campaigns to the xenophobic Anti-Saloon League lobby, Americans argue fiercely about alcohol, eventually outlawing it in the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, Prohibition.

Episode 2: Scofflaws

On January 17, 1920, Prohibition goes into effect. Enacted in part to promote a more orderly, law-abiding America, Prohibition has precisely the opposite effect. Doctors and pharmacists, federal agents and local lawmen, rabbis and funeral directors all figure out ways to make money by getting around the law, from “Satan’s Seat” in New York City to Seattle, Washington, where a former cop becomes the Good Bootlegger.

Episode 3: Murder and Mayhem

In the early 1920s, while some Americans attempt to honor the Prohibition law, millions more chafe at its unintended consequences. Savvy gangsters make unprecedented profits in the beer trade, resulting in violent territorial grabs for power in cities like Chicago and Detroit. A polarizing cultural difference divides America in two: the mostly “wet,” diverse cities and the “dry” Protestant countryside.

Episode 4: A Sea of Rum

In the Jazz Age of the mid-1920s, illegal bars called speakeasies become a symbol of glamorous city nightlife as reporters like Lois Long of *The New Yorker* chronicle their generation’s glittering debauchery. In Chicago, Al Capone becomes a celebrity, holding press conferences to promote his image while his murderous gang rises in power. To many, Prohibition looks more and more like a terrible mistake.

Episode 5: A Nation of Hypocrites

By the close of the 1920s, many blame the law for the rise of criminal syndicates, promiscuity, and a sense that the entire government is corrupted. Once the Great Depression sets in, Americans begin to re-examine their priorities. By December of 1933, Prohibition’s reign finally comes to an end under President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and for the first time in thirteen years, Americans can legally buy a drink.

CREDITS

Directors: Ken Burns & Lynn Novick

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Photo Credit: Courtesy Florentine Films

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