

# Major Laws, Crime and Consequences of the 1920s

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# ALCOHOL PROHIBITION- LAW

## WHAT?

In 1920 the Volstead Act (the 18th Amendment) was enforced. This banned the sale, transportation and production of alcohol but not the consumption. The ban lasted 13 years until 1933.

## WHY WAS THE LAW ENFORCED?

The alcohol ban was undertaken to reduce crime and corruption, solve social problems (people being more influenced by new media), reduce the tax burden and improve health and hygiene in America. Alcohol was seen as the cause of majority of social problems and crime, the ban was thought of as a solution for the corrupt economy. However it was considered a failure as the ban had many consequences.



# BLACKMARKET- CRIME

As alcohol was illegal to sell/buy and transport, there was a high demand of alcohol on the black market.

Speakeasies and bootlegging became common. Speakeasies were opened, around 30,000 in just New York (unlicensed bars), many of these were disguised as pharmacies- the drugstore chain Walgreens grew from 20 locations to 500 during the 1920s. Bootlegging was the transportation of illegal liquor. Many gangs and members arose during this time to protect and supply speakeasies and transport alcohol.



# BOOTLEGGING & SPEAKEASIES- CONSEQUENCES

The punishment of bootlegging (transportation of illegal alcohol) was **\$1000** or **6 months in prison** and the 2nd offence fine was upto **\$2000**.

The punishment of Speakeasies was **\$1000** or **1 year in prison**.

In relation to today's money worth \$1000 dollars in 1920 is worth around \$12,300 today.



# IMMIGRATION- LAW

## WHAT?

The Immigration Act of 1924 was a United States federal law that prevented immigration from Asia, set quotas on the number of immigrants from certain countries, provided funding and an enforcement system to carry out the longstanding ban on other immigrants.

## WHY WAS THE LAW ENFORCED?

Immigration levels between 1900-1920 had soared, reaching over 14 million new immigrants into America. The enforcement limited immigration visas to 2% of the total number of people of each nationality in the United States, according to the 1890 national census. All immigrants had to obtain a visa from an American consul in their country of origin.



# WALL STREET BOMBING- CRIME

The 1920 Wall Street bombing was a terrorist attack on New York that occurred outside the J. P. Morgan bank building. The bomb went off at 12:01 pm on Thursday, September 16, 1920 and brought terror and carnage to the streets of New York. The 1920 Wall Street bombing led to the deaths of 38 people and claimed hundreds of victims who were injured by the blast. The perpetrators of the Wall Street bombing were never discovered. There were no convictions for this early act of terrorism and this led to numerous conspiracy theories on who was to blame. The chief suspects were Italian anarchists (the followers of Luigi Galleani). Other Americans, gripped by the Red Scare, believed that communists were responsible.



# DEATH PENALTY- CONSEQUENCES

Capital punishment (death penalty) was in practice then and still is now in some parts of the United States. In the state of Nevada Gee Jon, a chinese national, was executed in 1924 by lethal gas- the first time used in the USA at that time. He was executed for the murder of a gang member.

