

MENOMINEE RANGE MEMORIES 28: THE ROARING TWENTIES – PRELUDE TO THE PROHIBITION ERA

By William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation Historian



Charles Tirschel operated a saloon at **101 West Hughitt Street**, west of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad tracks, in downtown Iron Mountain by 1902. By 1905 **Joseph Tirschel**, standing at the far left, was operating a saloon and serving as an agent for **Menominee's Leisen & Henes Brewing Company** at **101-103 West Hughitt Street**. Note that "Leisen & Henes Beer Always on Draught" was painted on the window at the right. In the 1892 Iron Mountain City directory **Come Trepanier** operated a bakery here and was a dealer in "groceries, provisions, flour, feed, canned goods, confectionery, glassware, chinaware, and baker's sundries." Trepanier also resided here, as did **J.O. Arnauld**. By 1902 **Charles Tirschel** operated a saloon at 101 West Hughitt Street. **Ginaro Vitilli** and **Tony Patrossia**, both miners, resided upstairs. By 1905 the address changed to 101-103 West Hughitt Street, and **Joseph J. (Josephine) Tirschel** operated the saloon, was an agent for the **Leisen & Henes Brewing Company** (1891-1919) and lived here, still being listed in the 1907 and 1913 city directories at this address. By 1925, during the Prohibition era, **Silas I. Lundquist** sold soft drinks at 101 West Hughitt Street, while **Vincent (Lucile) Kozenski** ran the **Popular Restaurant**, serving "Meals at All Hours, Special Sunday Dinners" at 103 West Hughitt Street. **Michael (Fannie) Solich** lived behind the restaurant. By 1935, with Prohibition over, **Luis Quilici** operated **La Taverna Hotel** at 101-103 West Hughitt Street. By 1939 **Joseph Boudreau** operated the **Boudreau Hotel** at the same address. In 1946 **Patty's Bargain Bar**

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*occupied the premises with **Patty Flaminio** serving as manager. **Barbara Peterson**, an employee at **Kresge's**, also resided here. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]*

[NOTE: Dates, placed chronologically, are highlighted in boldface red letters for easier reading, and names of individuals and places are highlighted in boldface black letters to facilitate finding information.]

The 28th installment of Menominee Range Memories, a series of articles by William J. Cummings, Menominee Range Historical Foundation historian, now available on the Dickinson County Library's website, is titled "The Roaring Twenties – Prelude to the Prohibition Era."

Most of the following background information was obtained from Wikipedia and other sources.

During the 19th century, alcoholism, family violence and saloon-based political corruption prompted activists to end the alcoholic beverage trade to cure the ill society and weaken the political opposition.

One result was that many communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries introduced alcohol prohibition, with the subsequent enforcement in law becoming a hotly debated issue. Prohibition supporters, called "drys", presented it as a victory for public morals and health.

Promoted by the "dry" crusaders, the movement was led by pietistic Protestants and social Progressives in the Prohibition, Democratic and Republican parties. It gained a national grass roots base through the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. After 1900 it was coordinated by the Anti-Saloon League.

Opposition from the beer industry mobilized "wet" supporters from the Catholic and German Lutheran communities. They had funding to fight back, but by 1917-18 the German community had been marginalized by the

nation's war against Germany [World War I], and the brewing industry was shut down in state after state by the legislatures.

Michigan passed a law for full prohibition on **May 1, 1918**. However, on **February 18, 1919**, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that law to be unenforceable.

Five weeks later – on **March 27, 1919** – another Michigan law was passed making criminals out of ordinary citizens who liked to drink. Before it could be overturned, the United States government passed nationwide prohibition, legalizing all alcohol-prohibiting states.

A resolution calling for a Constitutional amendment to accomplish nationwide Prohibition was introduced in Congress and passed by both houses in **December, 1917**. By **January 16, 1919**, the Amendment had been ratified by 36 of the 48 states, making it law. Eventually, only two states – Connecticut and Rhode Island – opted out of ratifying it.

On **October 28, 1919**, Congress passed enabling legislation, known as the Volstead Act, to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment when it went into effect on **January 16, 1920**. The Eighteenth Amendment banned the production, importation, transportation and sale of alcoholic beverages. A total of 1,520 Federal Prohibition agents (police) were originally tasked with enforcement.

Private ownership and consumption of alcohol were not made illegal under federal law, but local laws were stricter in many areas, with some states banning possession outright.

In the 1920's the laws were widely disregarded, and tax revenues were lost. Very well-organized criminal gangs took control of the beer and liquor supply for

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many cities, unleashing a crime wave that shocked the nation.

By the late 1920's a new opposition mobilized nationwide. Wets attacked prohibition as causing crime, lowering local revenues and imposing rural Protestant religious values on urban America.

Prohibition ended with the ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment, which repealed the Eighteenth Amendment on **December 5, 1933**. Some states continued statewide prohibition, marking one of the last stages of the Progressive Era.

Although popular opinion believes that Prohibition failed, it succeeded in cutting overall alcohol consumption in half during the 1920's, and consumption remained below pre-Prohibition levels until the 1940's, suggesting that Prohibition did socialize a significant proportion of the population in temperate habits, at least temporarily.

During prohibition in Michigan (1919-1933) 54,007 people were prosecuted in Michigan state courts for alcohol "crimes," with 36,327 convicted.

Originating in the United States in the nineteenth century, the term "**blind pig**" referred to an illicit establishment that sold alcoholic beverages and came into prominence in the United States during the Prohibition Era.

Originally, the operator of an establishment, such as a saloon or bar, would charge customers to see an attraction, such as an animal, and then serve a "complimentary" alcoholic beverage, thus circumventing the law.

The term "**blind tiger**" also referred to an illegal drinking establishment in which the seller's identity was concealed.

For example, a drawer ran into a wall of what appeared to be a billiard parlor. The customer pulled out the drawer, dropped in his change, shoved the drawer back, called

for what drink wanted and then pulled out the drawer again and there it was, "straight" or "spiked." Nobody was heard or seen, and the "blind tiger", apparently without any keeper, worked like a charm.

An early use of the term "blind pig" locally occurred in the headline **Alleged Piggers Arrested** published in the **May 20, 1915** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press*, as follows:

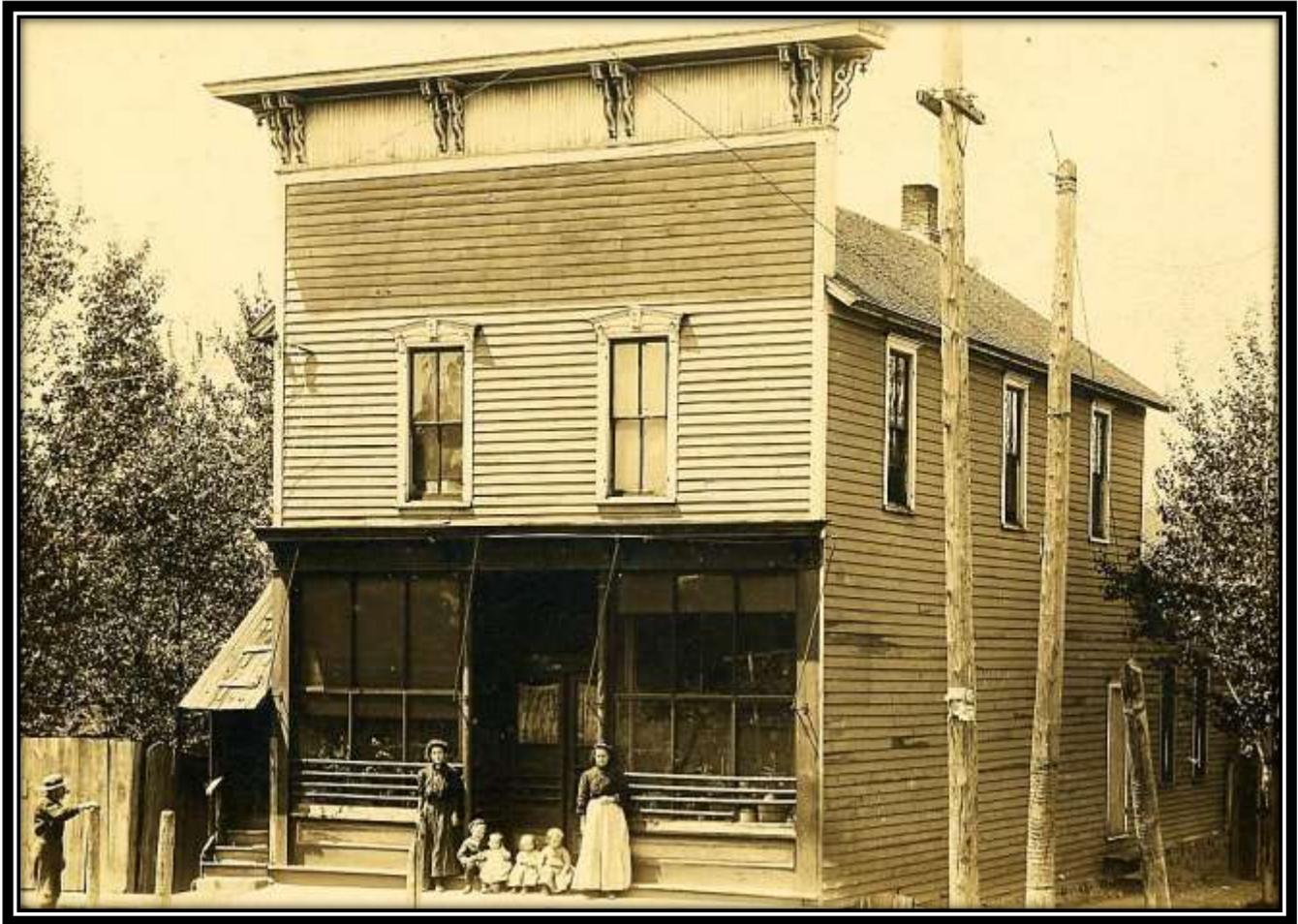
*As was intimated in the last issue of The Press, six residents of Iron Mountain have been arrested for selling liquor without a license – in other words, operating blind pigs. The victims of Mayor Cruse's drag net are: **Mary Longprey, Domenic Contarini, Ed Shea, Emma Miller, Robert Quillici and James Lambert.** The warrants were served by **Chief Andrews** last Tuesday and are based on information furnished by **Prosecuting Attorney Turner** by two Chicago detectives employed by Mayor Cruse. The detectives operated here under the guise of agents for a piano house. The arrests have caused a good deal of a sensation and were followed by much street talk equally sensational. The alleged violators will be arraigned before Justice Woodward next Wednesday.*

Under the headline **Sixty Saloons**, the following article appeared in the December 16, 1915 edition of the *Iron Mountain Press*:

According to the report of the county treasurer, there are sixty licensed retail liquor dealers in the county and nine wholesalers of beer. The revenue received totals \$34,500. Thirty-one retailers and five wholesalers are located in Iron Mountain and seventeen retailers and four wholesalers in Norway. There are five saloons in Sagola township, three in Waucedah, two in Norway and one each in Breitung and Breen. There are no saloons in Felch or West Branch townships.

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Probably taken between 1900 and 1910, this photograph shows **John Rubbo's Saloon**, located at **710 Millie Street at the intersection with Margaret Street on Iron Mountain's North Side**. **John (Mary) Rubbo's** saloon was listed in the city directories for 1892, 1902, 1905, 1907 and 1913, and the family also resided at this address. By 1925, during the prohibition era, **Samuel (Constantina) Dalfhonso** sold soft drinks and lived here. By then **Mary Rubbo**, **John Rubbo's** widow, was living at 424 East Margaret Street, but **John T. (Margaret) Rubbo** lived at 710 Millie Street. In the 1935 city directory **Joseph (Emma) Pennoni** operated a tavern here, which was called the **Northside Tavern** in the 1939 city directory. By 1946 the **Pennonis** still lived at this address, but **Joseph** was working for the **Ford Motor Company**. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]

The **April 12, 1917** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* recorded saloon license application filings under the headline **Want Saloon Licenses**, as follows:

Thirty-three have filed applications for retail liquor dealer licenses with **City Clerk Hallman**. The council is authorized by law

to grant only twenty-eight licenses. Following is a list of the applicants who will receive consideration at the hands of the aldermen tomorrow evening: **Domenik Sereno, Anton Michela, John Rubbo, Domenick Benso** [sic – Benzo], **Conrad Ahlstrand, Battista Contarini, Frank**

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Cavaiani, Louis Johnson, Frank M. Milliman, Louis Sjostrom, Anton Tomassoni, Oscar Sand, Baldrice & Carocci, Robert Quillici, Joseph Cordy, William Gothe, Frank Tomassoni, Peter Tomassoni, Angelo Flaminio, William J. Harding, Antonio J. Lefebvre, Felix Valenti, Frank Bollini, Joseph De Concini, Peter Calvi, Guiseppe Giachino, Nicola Pietrantonio, Fred Lambert, Joseph Bolognesi, Allen J. LaBrook, Christ Rigoni, John Feira, Joseph J. Tirschel.

Just a month and a half before Michigan's first full prohibition law was passed, the following article appeared in the **March 14, 1918** edition of the Iron Mountain Press under the headline **A HOUSE CLEANING: Results of Campaign Engineered By Sheriff and County Attorney:**

An unostentious [sic – unostentatious] campaign conducted for several weeks under the direction of Sheriff Lundgren and Prosecuting Attorney Brackett culminated last Friday and Saturday and resulted in ridding the city of a number of undesirable citizens and the arrest of a dozen or more other violators of state laws.

In order to secure the necessary evidence, the officials employed a couple of detectives. That these detectives were "worthy of their hire" is best evidenced by the fact that the violators, when arraigned in justice court, with only two exception [sic – exceptions] entered pleas of guilty as charged. It is also intimated that the detectives were successful in gathering a large volume of other evidence that the sheriff and county prosecutor have filed away for future reference.

Among the persons arraigned in justice court as a result of the campaign, together with the disposition of the several cases, follows:

George Meehan, [charged with] keeping a disorderly house, entered plea of not guilty, preliminary examination to-day [sic – today].

Mary Lomphrey, charged with keeping a disorderly house, plea of not guilty, preliminary examination next Wednesday.

Fred Lambert, charged with keeping a disorderly house, entered a plea of guilty and was bound over to the circuit court for trial.

Frances Hough, [charged with] keeping disorderly house, plea of guilty, bound over to the circuit court for trial.

Jessie Reed, disorderly women [sic – woman], plea of guilty, fined \$50.00 and costs and sentenced to thirty days in county jail; released from jail and has left the county.

Mary Swanson, disorderly women [sic – woman], plea of guilty, fined \$50.00 and costs with a jail sentence of thirty days; released from jail and has left the county.

Vera Saunders, disorderly women [sic – woman], plea of guilty, fined \$50.00 and costs with a thirty days' jail sentence; latter punishment suspended and prisoner has departed hence.

Alice Wood, disorderly woman, plea of guilty, second offense, fined \$75.00 and given thirty days in county; latter sentenced suspended and prisoner has left the county.

Dominic Contarini, selling liquor without a license, entered a plea of guilty and bound over to circuit court.

Fred Lambert, selling liquor on Sunday, entered a plea of guilty and bound over to the circuit court.

Frances Hough, selling liquor without a license, entered a plea of not [sic] guilty and bound over to the circuit court.

Joseph Bolognesi, selling liquor on Sunday, entered a plea of guilty and bound over to the circuit court.

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Hugo Aronson, bar-tender [sic – bartender], charged with keeping the saloon of Oscar Sand open after hours, entered a plea of guilty and the case goes to the circuit court.

Joseph Tirschell [sic – Tirschel], [charged with] selling liquor without a license, entered a plea of guilty and bound over to the circuit court.

John Rubbo, charged with selling liquor without a license, entered a plea of guilty and case goes to Judge Flannigan.

Biagio Franco, charged with selling liquor without a license, entered a plea of not guilty, examination in justice court yesterday and was bound over to Judge Flannigan's court for trial.

Norman Miller and Emma Miller, his wife, disorderly characters, entered pleas of guilty, fined \$50.00 each and costs with ninety days in county jail; imprisonment sentence suspended.

Ray Hutchinson, a vagrant and general nuisance, given sixty days, but sentence was suspended and he has left the state.

Prosecutor Brackett and Sheriff Lundgren wish The Press to state that the campaign against vice is not an aftermath of the charges hurled back and forth by the candidates during the recent primary election. The campaign was in progress long before the primary eruption and the arrests would have been made regardless of the election. The officers are not pulling chestnuts out of the fire for any one [sic – anyone], but they are determined to enforce the laws not only in Iron Mountain but throughout the county. Prosecutor Brackett wants it understood that, as long as he holds his present office, there will be no room in Dickinson county for disorderly houses, blind pigs, and kindred joints. And in this decision Sheriff Lundgren has assured the prosecuting attorney of his hearty co-operation.

Under the headline **House-Cleaning Bill** regarding the above raid, the **April 4, 1918** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* reported the following:

The account of the Burns Detective company for \$880.36 was audited and allowed at the last meeting of the board of supervisors. In addition, deputy sheriff bills in the amount of nearly \$200 were audited and allowed. That's what it cost to clean house in Iron Mountain recently.

The following item regarding Sheriff Lundgren "cleaning house" also appeared in the **April 4, 1918** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* reported:

It has been intimated to The Press that, [sic] because Sheriff Lundgren was active in cleaning house for Iron Mountain, and has been persistent in rounding up undesirables, he would meet with considerable opposition in securing a re-nomination and re-election. Such talk is a reflection upon the people of the city. Sheriff Lundgren has, and is, making a fine record. His record entitles him to a second term, and unless The Press mistakes the temper of the people, he will have no great amount of trouble in succeeding himself.

On Friday, **April 5, 1918** Judge Flannigan passed sentence upon those saloonkeepers who violated the liquor laws, as reported in the *Iron Mountain Press* in its **April 11, 1918** edition under the headline **A DAY OF JUDGMENT: Judge Flannigan Collects Nearly \$2,000 from Delinquent Saloonists**, as follows:

Judge Flannigan devoted last Friday morning to reviewing the delinquencies of saloon-keepers [sic – saloonkeepers]. When the session closed the liberary [sic – library] fund of the county had been enriched to the extent of nearly \$2,000. In dealing out the fines, Judge Flannigan, in each case, warned the delinquent of what would be the result after May 1st, when the

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prohibitory law becomes operative. The judge, in one case, said: [“]This selling of liquor without a license is bad business. No more of it in this county. You may as well understand it one time as another. We will not permit blind-pigging after May 1st. Everything in the line of liquor selling must stop in this county. If the jail is not large enough to accommodate the crowd, we will enlarge the jail. That is all there is about it.”

Following are the fines and sentences handed out by the court:

The People vs. **Clinton W. Turner**, violation of the liquor law. Fined \$200, costs \$32.35.

The People vs. **James Vezzetti**, violation of the liquor law. Fined \$200, costs \$15.60.

The People vs. **John Nora**, violation of the liquor law. Costs assessed at \$15.25. It appeared in the evidence that Nora, after closing his saloon at the legal hour, had returned to get his money and was caught in the saloon.

The People vs. **Fred Beard**, larceny. Convicted of assault. Sentenced to ninety days at hard labor in the county jail.

The People vs. **Joseph Bolognesi**, selling liquor in his restaurant on Sunday. Fined \$100, costs \$31.30.

The People vs. **Biago Franco**, selling liquor without a license. Sentence suspended.

The People vs. **Domenic Contarini**, selling liquor without a license. In the opinion of the court this was a case of “dog tray,” and the defendant agreeing to reform his household, he was released on suspended sentence.

The People vs. **Joseph J. Tirschell** [sic – **Tirschel**], selling liquor without a license. Fined \$200, costs \$27.00.

The People vs. **Fred Lambert**, violation of the liquor law. Fined \$200, costs \$32.75.

The People vs. **Hugo Aronson**, violation of the liquor law. Sentence suspended.

The People vs. **John Rubbo**, selling home-made wines without a license. Says he didn’t know it was contrary to law. Costs assessed at \$27.37.

The People vs. **Thomas Carney**, convicted by a jury of keeping his saloon open on Sunday. Fined \$200, cost [sic – costs] \$30.00.

As the **May 1, 1918** date for Michigan’s prohibition law to go into effect neared, concern grew regarding smuggling liquor into Michigan from Wisconsin.

An article in the **April 18, 1918** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* under the headline **No Smuggling of Liquors** verified this concern, as follows:

The local joy riders who are expecting to buy beer and liquor supplies at Florence and Spread-Eagle [sic – Spread Eagle] when the state prohibition law becomes operative, will learn with sorrow that our state authorities have anticipated just such a movement. In order to head off the smugglers of wet goods the state is prepared to station a corps of the constabulary forces at Twin Falls and Homestead bridges. The men will have full authority to halt and examine the carriers of grips [suitcases] and suspicious packages. Some one [sic – Someone] is always taking the joy out of life!

The next week the following article appeared in the **April 25, 1918** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* under the headline **FIVE MORE DAYS: And Then the State Prohibition Law Will Become Effective:**

At midnight next Tuesday, fifty-seven retail liquor dealers, a half dozen beer warehouses and one manufacturer of lager beer in Dickinson county will go out of business in compliance with the state prohibition law, which goes into operation at

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midnight on the day named. Twenty-eight of the saloons are located in Iron Mountain, seventeen in Norway city, five in Sagola

township, three in Norway township, two in Waucesaw and one each in Breen and Breitung.



*Patrons of the **Pipp & Tondini Saloon**, located at **622 Millie Street**, North Side, Iron Mountain, posed for the photographer in about 1907. There was no listing for this address in*

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the 1892 Iron Mountain city directory, although there were 59 saloons in the business directory. In the 1902 Dickinson County directory **Catherine Moletta** ran a grocery store at this address, and was one of 59 persons listed as running a saloon. In the 1905 Iron Mountain city directory **Catherine Moletta** ran a general merchandise store and saloon at 620-622 Millie Street. By 1907 **Pipp & Tondini** operated the saloon at this address. **Jacob Pipp** and his wife **Mary** lived at 515 Blaine Street, and **Enrico and Henry Tondini** boarded at 412 Quinnesec Street. By 1913 **Joseph Giachino** and his wife **Elizabeth** were running the saloon here. By 1925 **Anton DeMuri** and his wife **Angeline** sold soft drinks at this location. With Prohibition over, **Anton and Angela DeMuri** again operated a tavern at this address in 1935. By 1939 the **DeMuri** saloon, known as the **Venetian Tavern**, was still owned and operated by **Anton and Angeline DeMuri**. By 1946 **Anton DeMuri** was listed as retired and living at this address. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]

In Iron Mountain a considerable number of the liquor dealers will retain their places of business and it is stated will buy pool and billiard tables and will handle soft drinks. Others will engage in other lines of business. The Henze-Tollen company, owners of the only brewery in the county[,] will employ the plant in the manufacture of a high-grade line of soft drinks. A company called the Arbutus Beverage company was organized several months ago to handle the business and already has a large trade.

In the state 3,285 saloons will be closed and sixty-two breweries will be put out of business of manufacturing beer. Some of the breweries will manufacture “soft” drinks and others, it is understood, will turn out distilled products not prohibited by law. A few beer plants, [sic] will be converted into ice factories.

In the same edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* in the “News in Paragraphs” column the following announcement appeared:

The Swedish Mission congregation will hold a supper and entertainment next Tuesday evening to observe the departing of the saloons.

In the **May 2, 1918** edition of the *Iron Mountain Press* the headline **WITHOUT A RIPPLE: Saloons Close Their Doors With No Unusual Business Methods**

summarized the local “wet” to “dry” transition with the following details:

The saloons have departed hence and in going did not make nearly as much “noise” as had been anticipated. Considering conditions, and the number of “floaters” in town, there was not very much drunkenness in evidence.

The liquor dealers made no attempt to conduct bargain sales of intoxicants and there was no unusual movement of people at their places of business. There was nothing to indicate that dealers were about to suspend business for an indefinite term in compliance with the state law.

The police authorities – city and county – do not anticipate any extra amount of trouble from the festive blind pig. A considerable number of illegal dealers were taught a severe lesson by **Judge Flannigan** at the last session of the circuit court. Judge Flannigan told all concerned what would happen to them if a conviction followed after the prohibition law became operative. Piggers and boot-leggers are to be given short shrift. It is only from these classes of gentry that any possible trouble is expected in the enforcement of the law.

For those who may be inclined to import and sell alcoholic liquors in defiance of the new law, the authorities have mapped out a plan of campaign that will make it

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exceedingly uncomfortable for the violators and a practical certainty that they will be caught. If necessary, state constabulary will be employed to patrol the borders to prevent the importation of liquor. The mayors of Michigan cities where state

troops have been guarding docks, tunnels and munition plants have been notified to organize local forces to replace the state guards, should the services of the latter be required to enforce the liquor prohibition laws.



Patrons of **Louis “Luigi” Tramontin’s Saloon**, located at **118 East Main Street on Iron Mountain’s North Side**, posed for the photographer in about 1910-1913. In 1892 in Iron Mountain’s first city directory Louis Tramontin was listed as operating a saloon and residing at

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this address. By 1902 Angelo Sylvestro was listed as operating a saloon here. However, by 1905 “Luigi Tremontini” was listed as the proprietor of the saloon, living on the premises. In the 1907 city directory “Hugo” (Marie) Tremontin were at this location. Hugo worked as an agent for the Pabst Brewing Company. In 1913 “Luigi” (Anna) Tremontin/Tramontin sold soft drinks and also lived here. Louis “Traimtion” [sic – Tramontin] was living here, probably with his wife and children, in 1925. In the 1935 and 1939 city directories Louis and Anna Tramontin lived here. By 1946 Anna Tramontin, a widow, resided here. [Menominee Range Historical Museum]

With the advent of prohibition era (1920-1933 and longer in some states), other terms came into prominence – the **speakeasy**, **rum-running** and **bootlegging**.

Most of the following background information was adapted from Wikipedia and other sources.

A **speakeasy** was an illicit establishment that sold alcoholic beverages. During the prohibition era, the sale, manufacture and transportation (bootlegging) of alcoholic beverages was illegal throughout the United States.

According to an 1889 newspaper, “Unlicensed saloons in Pennsylvania are known as 'speak-easies’.” They were “so called because of the practice of speaking quietly about such a place in public, or when inside it, so as not to alert the police or neighbors.”

The term reportedly originated with saloon owner Kate Hester, who ran an unlicensed bar in the 1880’s in the Pittsburgh area town of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, often telling her rowdy customers to “speak easy.”

Although the phrase may have first come to prominence in the United States because of raids on unlicensed saloons in the Pittsburgh area, the phrase “speak easy shop”, denoting a place where unlicensed liquor sales were made, appeared in a British naval memoir written in 1844. The phrase, “speak softly shop”, meaning a

“smuggler's house”, appeared in a British slang dictionary published in 1823.

Speakeasies, though illegal, were numerous and popular during the Prohibition years. Some were operated by people who were part of organized crime.

Even though police and agents of the Bureau of Prohibition would often raid them and arrest their owners and patrons, they were so profitable that they continued to flourish.

The speakeasy soon became one of the biggest parts of American culture during the prohibition era. Several American cultural changes occurred as speakeasies began to appear.

One concerned racial integration. With “black and tans”, people of all races, black or white, would gather together and even mingle. People would mix together and have few or no problems.

Another change that occurred was the presence of more women where alcohol was served. Many businesses would set up their speakeasies to attract women to increase their profit margin.

Movie studios were restricted from depicting alcohol on screen during the prohibition era, but some continued to do so because they felt it showed an accurate picture of contemporary life in the United States. An example of how illegal scenes were included was when actress Joan Crawford danced on a table in a speakeasy in *Our Dancing Daughters*.

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The poor quality bootleg liquor sold in some speakeasies was responsible for a shift away from 19th-century “classic” cocktails, that celebrated the raw taste of the liquor (such as the gin cocktail, made with Genever (sweet) gin), to new cocktails aimed at masking the taste of rough moonshine. These masking drinks were termed “pansies” at the time, although some, such as the Brandy Alexander, would now be termed “classic”.

The quality of the alcohol sold in a speakeasy ranged from very poor to very good, all dependent on where and how the owner got the product.

Cheap liquor was generally used because it helped with profits. But in other cases, brand names were used to specify the type of alcohol people wanted. Sometimes, however, when brand names were used, some speakeasies cheated, lying to their customers by giving them poor quality liquor instead of the higher-quality liquor the customer ordered. Prices ranged from four to five dollars a bottle.

Speakeasies largely disappeared after Prohibition was ended in 1933.

Rum-running, or **bootlegging**, was the illegal business of transporting (smuggling) alcoholic beverages where such transportation was forbidden by law. Smuggling was usually done to circumvent taxation or prohibition laws within a particular jurisdiction. The term rum-running was more commonly applied to smuggling over water, while bootlegging was applied to smuggling over land.

The term “**rum-running**” most likely originated at the start of Prohibition in the United States (1920–1933), when ships from Bimini in the western Bahamas transported cheap Caribbean rum to Florida speakeasies. But rum’s cheapness made it a low-profit item for the rum-runners, and they soon moved on to smuggling

Canadian whisky, French champagne and English gin to major cities like New York, Boston and Chicago, where prices ran high. Supposedly some ships carried \$200,000 in contraband in a single run.

The term “**boot-legging**” probably originated during the American Civil War, when soldiers would sneak liquor into army camps by concealing pint bottles within their boots or beneath their trouser legs.

Also, according to the PBS documentary *Prohibition*, the term “bootlegging” was popularized when thousands of city dwellers would sell liquor from flasks they kept in their boot leg all across major cities and rural areas.