

music

Hal Gorby:

A large touring car hits its engine after the driver spies an officer on the evening of December 11th, 1916. Crossing the river from Bridgeport, Ohio into downtown Wheeling the driver makes a mad dash chased by officers of the law. Speeding down the hill on main street, through downtown, across the bridge on Wheeling Creek, the driver attempts to make a breakneck turn at 27th and chaplain streets. Unable to maintain the turn he crashes, smashing the auto's front wheels, breaking the windshield and damaging the radiator. Inside the car officers find 25 baskets of beer. Eventually they catch a young man, arrest him, and put him in the Ohio county jail. He's charged with speeding and violating the Yost law. This law, which had been in effect for about two and a half years at the time is the state's version of prohibition. The young man was someone everyone would soon know, William "Big Bill" Lias. By 1916 residents were learning the many problems with trying to stop the flow of booze in Wheeling, a city whose history was fueled by the hoppy confections of its breweries. Figures like Bill Lias emerged during this period to fill a void and provide what brewers had legally been providing for decades.

Hal Gorby:

Prohibition would dramatically remake Wheeling and end its Victorian era. It culminated years of attempts to reform the city's infrastructure and police people's perceived immoral behaviors. Efforts to halt the thriving vice culture in Wheeling also coincided with the retirement and death of its leading brewer, Henry Schmulbach. This is Henry the life and legacy of Wheeling's most notorious brewer, a production of Wheeling heritage media. I'm your host, William Hal Gorby, a teaching assistant professor of history at West Virginia university, whose research has focused on West Virginia and Wheeling's working class and immigrant history during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As we heard in our last episode, by 1900, Wheeling was well-renowned as a wide-open town. With the unwillingness of city council to act, Sean Duffy notes one prominent outsider who visited Wheeling in dramatic fashion to chop at its abundant saloons.

Sean Duffy:

Wheeling was this destination for, uh, ruffians, let's say, and they enjoyed a drink. Uh, so that led this town to be full of drunkenness certain times of day and the night, and violence, frankly. And, um, you know, men who were married, who worked hard and went to drink, they were, it was hard on their wives and a person who noticed that and traveled the country. One of the leaders of what it was called, the temperance movement, which was the movement to end this sort of addiction on alcohol, Carrie Nation came to Wheeling. And I just liked this story. And I think it's sort of the start of the beginning of the end. Uh, Carrie Nation was a famous, uh, temperance leader who was famous for carrying a hatchet into pubs and just breaking them up because she said her primary reason was that she was defending the home. Schmulbach said his beer was the beer of the home.

Sean Duffy:

Well, Carrie Nation was defending the real home. That is the women and children who she saw as victims of alcoholism and drunkenness, which was pervasive here in Wheeling. So, she came to Wheeling 1901. So we're going back few years, but Schmulbach, of course, at his peak. And Wheeling was, uh, not a great place. Uh, you know, it wasn't a clean place. She in fact called it the quote, the wickedest city in the south, she said it was a rum soaked city. She never saw so much tobacco use and spitting. Uh, she said, ladies cannot walk along the streets on account of the spit. Shame, shame, shame. That's a direct

quote from Carrie Nation. She went into a pub here, a pub that was near the custom house. And, uh, she brought some 300 women with her, uh, women of Wheeling. They went into the pub and Carrie got arrested and there was a very public trial. The point of all this is that when, uh, the temperance movement got its legs, Wheeling being such a place of heavy drinking was heavily targeted. And there was a temperance movement here in town, opposed largely by the German community. Of course, who were very in, uh, entangled in, in the brewing industry, in the saloon industry,

Hal Gorby:

The local prohibition army or dries were led by the chapter of the anti-saloon league. Created in 1893 in Westerville, Ohio, the anti-saloon league reflected the values of small rural towns of the Midwest. They aggressively used public relations campaigns to attack the beer business. They also lobbied state legislatures to pass bans on alcohol sales, setting up an eventual amendment to the US constitution. Building off the committee of one hundred's efforts, the anti-saloon league lobbied city council, and threatened to oust them in the next election, if they didn't raise fees on saloons and taxes on brewers. However, the entire council still refuse to act. But 1913 would see a new city administration led by Republican mayor Harvey Kirk. Mayor Kirk would work closely with the anti-saloon league and Ohio county's prosecuting attorneys to ferret out the vice culture common in Wheeling during Henry Schmulbach's life. Efforts would be sweeping, starting with a campaign to close down the city's red-light district in the area of Wheeling known as the Tenderloin. On July 9th, police raided the region arresting 121 prostitutes in 27 houses.

Hal Gorby:

A few weeks later on July 20th, Mayor Kirk prohibited the sale of alcohol in speakeasies, illegal saloons without licenses that were already starting to proliferate. 30 out of the 50 speakeasies closed were in this red light district. With the intense focus on alcohol and prostitution, city government went a bit too far in trying to control people's behavior. One proposal in the summer of 1913 by city council would have barred African-Americans from attending theaters and motion picture houses, essentially condoning Jim Crow segregation. Thankfully this idea was tabled, but by far the weirdest reform effort was in trying to halt the terrible practice of dancing. Wait, what? Beginning that spring and continuing throughout the summer, the city cracked down on newfangled dancing deemed too scandalous for Wheeling's tastes, as noted by a reporter for the Wheeling daily news on May 2nd, 1913.

Actor:

Instead of it becoming an old chestnut, the Turkey trot and tango dances appear to be rapidly growing in popularity in all of Wheeling social sets. Everybody's doing it, even at the most exclusive affairs as a glance over the society columns almost any day of the week will prove. When the Turkey trot first became faddish, there were so many who predicted that its life would prove of short duration. Instead it is steadily and consistently making headway, battering down criticism from the pulpit and numerous other sources and becoming more and more of the thing. Today no dance would be complete without it. The tango is also meeting with marked success and promises to hold up well for some time to come. The grizzly bear is put on the program occasionally, but few have had the temerity to present it, especially in the more exaggerated form. But for that matter, the Turkey trot, as it is danced in Wheeling is a far tamer affair than a Turkey trot of the east when it first came out. Numerous others of the new dances are winning one place or more on the dance programs here, but only in more reserved and dignified forms. As for the banana slide, the latest dance sensation is on the taboo list so far as Wheeling is concerned and it is extremely doubtful whether it will be tolerated here.

Hal Gorby:

Wait, there was a popular dance called the grizzly bear? High schoolers as is often the case hotly debated the new ban, especially when Wheeling high held its prom at the Elks club in late May.

Actor:

Gee, I wish I could do the tango. I'd rather do the Turkey trot. Wonder if anybody is watching? I think the faculty should be more liberal don't you? Well, I bet they thought themselves pretty smart when they stuck that notice up in the hall. But nevertheless, the tango and the Turkey trot were not danced at the high school prom held in the Elks club last evening. Notices to the effect that they would not be countenanced by the faculty were posted up in the halls of the building where all might read yesterday afternoon. And the fact that they would be prohibited was set forth so clearly as to leave no doubts in the minds of the students that they were destined to drag through the evening with the common old two step and waltz. The notice read this way, Turkey, trotting, or other like methods of dancing will not be tolerated. A warning was also issued to the members of the track team who are contesting for honors at the field meet in Barnesville this afternoon. They were requested to imbibe sparingly of the punch so as to be in first class form today.

Hal Gorby:

The city even tried to crack the whip on kids cutting a rug in public spaces like Wheeling park, which banned bizarre dancing in mid-July. Here's what the Wheeling daily news reported on July 15th, 1913.

Actor:

Bizarre dancing is under the ban at Wheeling park. All oddities, including the tango, the Turkey trot, the Texas tommy, the Bruin drag, the bunny hug, the chicken glide, and other fancy forms of the art divine have been placed on a taboo list by the management. The special officers about the dancing pavilion have been given their instructions to lead all couples from the floor who so far forget themselves when the music starts their senses to swirling as to break from the sober two step and the waltz, into the contortionist, physical rhapsodies of the newfangled hops. Dancers who attempt to get by with the 1913 steps find that it takes just about two minutes before they are down in the grounds, wondering how it happened, that they were chased. Only a few nights ago, a Wheeling young lady and her escort met with such an experience. They confined themselves to the regulation dances all night, but the girl had a pretty pair of ankles and must have known it. Anyway, she insisted on displaying a little more silk stocking than was deemed entirely proper. The dance threatened to break up for the males stopped stock still to watch. All that saved the day was the arrival of an officer who led the offending miss off the floor. She was angry, but it didn't do any good. All dancers to appear on this floor must conduct themselves as they would in their own homes. This isn't a Parisian dance home. Neither is it a stalking show, she was informed.

Hal Gorby:

The attempts to ban the newfangled hops like the tango and the banana slide and grizzly bear, whatever those were, seems utterly silly now, just like trying to tell people they can no longer buy a drink. Prohibition enforcement would go just about as well as you can probably imagine. But where was Henry Schmulbach during this time?

Hal Gorby:

Throughout his life Henry Schmulbach built a business empire while still living relatively close to the German cultural hub of the city. With a mansion along chaplain street in center Wheeling, his home was and remains a classic example of gilded age architecture. Jeanne Finstein is a longtime member of the friends of Wheeling, West Virginia's oldest historic preservation group. I spoke with her about the Victorian architecture of Schmulbach's mansion and what better place to do so than in another gem of Victorian architecture, the Robert W. Hayzlett house built in 1887 and located at 921 main street near the Wheeling suspension bridge. Is there anything unique about the mansion or this, that sort of style of architecture or the style of architecture we would have seen him Wheeling around, around that time?

Jeanne Finstein:

Uh, actually I found that Henry Schmulbach bought that property in 1873. So it's not a lot different than the age of this house, although it was already there. Uh, it had been built earlier by Mr. Delbrug. The typical Victorian houses have tall ceilings, a lot of ornate decorative pieces, interior and exterior. Decorations would have been to our taste very busy, but beautiful. And the, the care that was taken in the building of these, these homes was something that cannot be duplicated now without spending a huge fortune.

Hal Gorby:

Absolutely. Um, so he, he bought the property in 1873, obviously when he's sort of beginning to rise from the wholesale liquor business, uh, and move into eventually into brewing himself. Uh, how long, he basically lived at that structure for pretty much the rest of his life.

Jeanne Finstein:

Well, he lived there according to what I found in deed books until he sold it in 1913. That happens to coincide almost to the month with the death of one of his sisters who lived with him. So she probably was the lady of the house. Around that same time was when he married.

Hal Gorby:

His mansion, of course has its own unique features.

Jeanne Finstein:

His particular house is a bit unique in that it has a, um, an entry door that has his initials etched in the glass. His initials are also in the cast iron fence, that's in front in the gate and his initials being an H with an S superimposed on each other, look like a dollar sign. Sure. And as much as I've read about Henry Schmulbach, I'm sure that that was by design.

Hal Gorby:

Sure. Yes. Uh, as, as listeners, remember when, uh, we described being in the Schmulbach building in downtown Wheeling, the floor pattern of that office building is in an H pattern, which was not unusual for turn of the 20th century, but of course you can pick whatever pattern you want. And of course, why not pick an H since your first name starts with H.

Jeanne Finstein:

Absolutely.

Hal Gorby:

Do most of the houses in that area of chaplain street row, do they all date from the same period?

Jeanne Finstein:

Pretty much. The second house, which is the Moore house if you, if you stand back and look at that row of houses, you'll notice that that house is shorter. It's only two stories. The others are at least three and it's a different design. It's probably from the 1860s. Uh, the others would have been 1870s, 1880s, more of the high style Victorian. Um, the, the first house in the block was designed and built by an architect. Um, Edgar W. Wells, who was known to have designed others in that row. And we believe he designed the house that we're in right now. Wow. If you look at two of the houses in the row that are kind of twin houses were owned by brothers, the Cleavus brothers. And if you look at the exterior design of that house and the exterior design of this house, they're very, very similar, of course, back in the day, you didn't have to go through the, the review process with the city. Didn't have to get building permits and things like that. So quite often there's no real record of who an architect was on a particular building.

Hal Gorby:

You can just kinda tell by looking at this sort of approach and how it was built the sort of material.

Jeanne Finstein:

It looks like the same style.

Hal Gorby:

Yeah. I would imagine architects at this time in Wheeling, they have a lot of projects. So it saves a little bit of time if you kind of designed them to be somewhat similar in approach, obviously. Just for our listeners' purposes, we're talking if you have, you've never been to Wheeling. We were talking about this row of Victorian era homes that is a block and to the east and south, south of the center market house, right.

Jeanne Finstein:

It's the 2300 Block of chaplain street. And it's a row of, I want to say eight houses. Uh, if you stand there, look up, make sure you look up because the detail on the upper floors is incredible. And quite often we just look at eye level because that's where we're standing. Yeah. So if you are, the listeners are visiting that area, take the time to look up, see the brackets, the lentils, the incredible detail that was put into those buildings.

Hal Gorby:

Not only Henry's home, the entire row of homes has rather unique architecture as well.

Jeanne Finstein:

Well, as I mentioned, the chaplain street row is an actual historic district. It's on the national register of historic places. And so there are descriptions of the houses and the neighborhoods that anyone can find online. This district was named a historic district back in 1983. So it's been quite a while, but for example, the Schmulbach house, uh, says that it was built around 1868 with additions in 1883. And it describes the style as romantic revival with French and classical precedent. And I don't think I could do that. Others might have slightly different overall design descriptions, but this goes on to describe the front elevation,

the framing, the bay window, the windows in general, even the basement windows are described in this document.

Hal Gorby:

If you are in center market today, take some time to visit the chaplain street row. Especially look for Henry Schmulbach's home and the trademark dollar sign in the gate. This podcast is brought to you by Clientele Art Studio, an art gallery and studio space in East Wheeling. From art shows to concerts, Clientele has event space as well as multiple studios for rent. Learn more at clientelestudio.com. While chaplain street remained his home for most of his adult life, upon his retirement, Schmulbach decided to develop some property he owned east of Wheeling at Roney's point. If you travel east along national road, you have probably seen the old stone Tavern built back in 1818. A stop for travelers along the road by the 1910s, the region up the hill would be the site of a mysterious mansion.

Hal Gorby:

All right, well, we are out here in Roney's point, uh, out near the site or at the site of Schmulbach's mansion that he lived in at the latter stages of his life. And again, here's Ryan Stanton out here with me. He drove me out here because I would've gotten lost myself. So, uh, Ryan, uh, for, for those listening, can we maybe start off with, where are we located more specifically?

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah, this is a, this is a very rural part of Ohio county. So if you were to travel, uh, east on route 40 and take a left at the old stone house at Roney's point, you would be on point run road. You would just follow that for a short distance. And then you would run into a county farm road, which cuts up a hillside. And that takes you, uh, to, uh, to the site of what is, uh, you know, left of the, uh, the Roney's point mansion or Schmulbach's mansion. So, um, he actually acquired this property, uh, originally just to, uh, build a barn where he stored some of his race horses and, you know, had a small farm out here, but he later got the idea that this would be a nice place to retire and build a very lavish mansion. So, uh, of course he was living in town at 2311 Chaplain street. Um, but again, he wanted to, uh, you know, kind of retire to a quieter lifestyle and, uh, one of his hobbies too became plants. And so he wanted to build a very lavish greenhouse, which he would also, uh, build on the property too.

Hal Gorby:

And we're standing at what would have been sort of the entrance sort of main entrance of the mansion or what's left of it.

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah. So, uh, yeah, what we're looking at is, uh, the front steps that would have taken you across the walkway, uh, to the mansion, but actually all that remains is just basically the ruins, uh, the shell, uh, the brick shell of the mansion, and from where we're standing, you can, uh, you can kind of see just remnants of walkways. Uh, you can also see like across the road, there would have been an overlook, uh, and a fountain and there would have been orchards in the field below us, but today we can barely see, uh, you know, 20 feet ahead of us because there's so much brush that has grown up.

Hal Gorby:

And just for listeners, we are basically, if we were, if we could somehow look through all of these trees, we would see basically the Highlands.

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah, we could see the Highlands and, uh, and see that area over there pretty clearly if Schmulbach, uh, had his wish of having this property still maintained.

Hal Gorby:

Cool. Uh, so when we, uh, when did he build this mansion out here? Uh, sort of, how long did he live here? What, what do you know sort of about the property while he was still alive?

Ryan Stanton:

So he took a year's constructing the mansion, uh, when finished, it was about 20 rooms. Of course it was done, you know, with the best craftsmanship, the best materials, a lot of the wallpaper fireplace mantles and things like that were imported. Uh, he would officially move in, in 1913, and originally he was constructing the house for his two sisters. Schmulbach had never married. And so his plan was to move out here with his two sisters. They would have this lavish estate, the house, to manage, but they would both pass away, uh, before its completion. So in 1913, Schmulbach married, uh, uh, Eva Pauline Bertschy and she was much younger. She was in her early forties, Schmulbach at that time was 69 years old. So it was definitely rumored as to why is he getting married to a much younger woman? Is she in this for, you know, a future inheritance? They probably met at church, uh, the Bertschys um, you know, were a prominent family in Wheeling. They, you know, they both attended the same church, so how they, or why they got married is I think a little bit of a mystery, but it was said that he wanted a hostess of his, you know, majestic Roney's point mansion. And she was going to be the one to do that. So they move in in 1913. Um, of course, uh, prohibition was looming and the passage of that had to be devastating for Schmulbach. Uh, in his later years, knowing that his brewery was going to be closing and, uh, but he was still president of the German bank. So, he would go back and forth between Roney's point and the German bank, where he had an office and, um, he had a Stutz bearcat car, and, uh, stories have been told that, uh, that's how he would, you know, go into Wheeling.

Ryan Stanton:

And there's also stories of the, how the legend of Schmulbach has grown, that he would actually race, uh, the police throughout the Triadelphia area in a Stutz Bearcat. Uh, so he went from horses to cars, but he was definitely a big fan of transportation.

Hal Gorby:

And I believe you said that he had owned this property initially for a significant period of time. What was he using the property for before he had the mansion built?

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah, so before he had the mansion built, it was basically just a farm. He had a, what was called a long barn, uh, just, uh, below where the mansion would sit, uh, that he used the stables for the horses.

Hal Gorby:

Cool, cool. Um, so it has this built in 1913. I mean, did he ever get to host, anything sort of lavishly here?

Ryan Stanton:

Uh, their wedding actually took place here. It was, uh, um, it was actually, it was announced that they were going to be married, but the date was actually kept a secret. Uh, so when they were married here, uh, just, you know, a few friends, you know, were invited for the ceremony. Um, and then it was announced in the newspaper. And then shortly after that, uh, you know, friends, acquaintances of Schmulbach's sent telegrams to the mansion and then presents and flowers to the mansion. And then they went, uh, on a, about a month long honeymoon, uh, that would, uh, start in New York and go all over the east coast. So they were married here. You know, other than that, not a lot really turns up with the mansion, uh, other than the fact that I always describe this as kind of like another Oglebay Park, uh, with the way that it was maintained and manicured, um, you know, it was truly, you know, a sight to see, there's a handful of pictures that have survived. There's one of, uh, Pauline and Henry Schmulbach, um, leaning up against the balustrade that would have run all along the front of the mansion, which some of it's still there crumbling. Um, and then of course, Pauline would have entertained, you know, some of her family members and, and things along those lines up here. Um, but no, uh, he actually, you know, he would live here for two years, but, um, what would happen in, uh, in June of 1915, Henry Schmulbach becomes ill. And story goes is that he came back to the mansion one evening and he told his wife, I've been to the German bank for the last time. And, uh, you know, he appeared to be, you know, in great distress and he would be basically bedridden the summer of 1915. And he would pass away on August 12th, 1915 here at the Roney's point mansion. And the funeral would actually take place here. And, uh, you could have actually taken a special trolley car, uh, and the, and the funeral took place on a Sunday, but you could have taken a special trolley car from Wheeling to Roney's point. And they actually had wagons that would then take people, um, up to the estate, uh, for the funeral. And then he had the first funeral procession in Wheeling to ever be led by automobiles. So his body was then taken into Greenwood cemetery where the Schmulbach plot is.

Hal Gorby:

Interesting. The site is not heavily traveled today, but if you look carefully, you can make out some elements of the structure. The site was used after Schmulbach's death in 1915. Ryan Stanton and I walked a bit further to try and get a closer look.

Hal Gorby:

Well, if you come up to the site during the summer, uh, it is now very overgrown with trees, grass. Um, you can just barely make out sort of the top and some of the other elements of where the mansion structure would have been, uh, from the front gate or where the front gate would have been off to the right. We can see the remnants of a, another site. What would have been over in this area?

Ryan Stanton:

So this would have been a walkways and another fountain that would have, uh, led you to Schmulbach's greenhouse. And, um, one of his hobbies later in life was just, you know, plants, growing exotic plants. And so he had the largest greenhouse really in the tri-state area. Um, there's actually a few photographs that exist of the greenhouse. And what I find fascinating is that in the photo, they don't have the entire greenhouse. You can't see it in one photo. That's how big it is. So, um, you know, if you were to walk through that area today, you're going to see, uh, all sorts of, uh, of the frame, you know, still existing from the greenhouse, uh, doors from the greenhouse are still there. And all sorts of pipes, uh, for irrigation for the greenhouse are still there. And this is not a place where you probably really want to walk around too much because crunching glass is everywhere from the, you know, the, the glass breaking from the greenhouse. So, uh, it's a very dangerous site to, to walk around. But, but yeah, so, uh, that was one of his hobbies later in life. And, uh, he had a crew of servants that would work here and

maintain things like, uh, there was a dairy barn on the property, the greenhouse, uh, you know, landscaping of course, maintaining the inside of the house that was done by a very large staff of servants.

Ryan Stanton:

One other interesting thing about this house is it was said to have been the first house in Ohio county to have air conditioning. And so, behind the house, there's a building structure that's still there that was the icehouse. And what they would do is take blocks of ice from the icehouse, carry them into the basement and spread them out there. And they had a ventilation system set up throughout the house where they would basically blow the cool air from the ice up into the house. And that would at least cool the house a little bit more, but, um, when guests did come to Schmulbach's house, that was one of the remarks that they talked about that had had air conditioning.

Hal Gorby:

Hmm. And it would get some natural air conditioning. I would imagine up here we're on a pretty high elevation.

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah, there's always a, there's always a breeze, uh, in this area of Ohio county.

Hal Gorby:

Which I of course appreciate right now. So, um, so maybe let's walk this way and just kinda, uh, talk a little bit more about the site. So, what, what did it become after, after he died in 1915?

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah. So, when he passes away, uh, his wife actually was very miserable out here. She had lived in, you know, Wheeling, downtown Wheeling for most of her life. So, she felt very secluded. So, uh, what she would do is sell the property to Ohio County for \$125,000. And what they did was they then turned the property into a poor farm. And so, um, you know, this was a place for the elderly or the poor to come, have a place to stay. They could work on the farm and, uh, it would stay that way up until the 1930s. And then they added the structure that we're approaching right now, which, uh, would be used for a, uh, tuberculosis hospital.

Ryan Stanton:

And so, um, again, all that remains of this is basically the shell, but for a time period, it was a poor farm, a tuberculosis hospital.

Hal Gorby:

Yeah. It looks like it, what's several floors tall.

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah. You're looking at about, uh, about three stories.

Hal Gorby:

Sort of a light brownish sort of tan brick it looks like, and this would have been built onto sort of the, the sort of, uh, I don't know what side, the left side of the sort of front of the mansion there.

Ryan Stanton:

Yeah, that's correct. And, uh, this was also destroyed by fire, but much of this is actually still intact from, you know, the, the walls of it, but also the inside, the floors, of course, the plaster and stuff is of course, uh, all fallen out and it's also a mess inside, but, um, it's, it's actually pretty well intact compared to the mansion. The mansion took the brunt of the fire, but with that said, there's still trees growing through every part of the building that you can imagine.

Hal Gorby:

Yeah, absolutely. And you've mentioned the fire that happened. When was this fire? Was it still actively being used as a sort of poor farm, tuberculosis?

Ryan Stanton:

So, what would happen in the, um, in the 1960s, they would build a mental hospital out the road from here. Okay. That was run by the state. Um, and they would actually just basically abandon this part. Okay. And, um, which seems sort of strange because at that time, I'm sure it had fallen into some disrepair, but everything was still here. It was still intact, but they would, uh, abandon this site for the most part. And then, uh, they built a nurses' residence and then, uh, a mental hospital out the road from here.

Hal Gorby:

The site of the mansion is a sad conclusion to Schmulbach's life. We'll return to the site in our final episode as we look back at his legacy and how he still influences Wheeling today. Henry Schmulbach's retirement to his mansion at Roney's point virtually coincided with the onset of statewide prohibition in West Virginia. As Ryan Stanton notes, brewers and saloon keepers were not prepared.

Ryan Stanton:

I don't know if they realized, uh, that it would actually happen. Uh, I, I kind of imagine them thinking it was just kind of on the back burner, there's the talk of prohibition, but I don't know if they ever for, for us, uh, could foresee it actually happening. Um, so, you know, he's president of the Schmulbach brewing company, one of Schmulbach's other, uh, really proudest accomplishments too, as far as, uh, in the business world would be president of the German bank. And, uh, I'm actually sitting here right now with a bank book, uh, from the German bank that was actually owned by Henry Schmulbach. Um, and so in this, you can flip through and see, uh, all the different deposits that he was making and, um, the balance of that, uh, account at different times, which is pretty cool as a primary resource. But, you know, just in this account, you know, he had, you know, a couple of hundred thousand dollars. Um, so when you talk about measuring how much this man was worth, uh, it's quite a chore, um, to, to really calculate everything that he had his, uh, his interest in. Yeah.

Hal Gorby:

And, and just for everybody that's listening, the German bank would have been located where in downtown?

Ryan Stanton:

Actually, right beside the Schmulbach building. So, uh, right on the corner there. And that's actually one of the things that they mentioned in the brochure for the Schmulbach building, um, it's conveniently located next to the German bank of Wheeling.

Hal Gorby:

Uh so, the German bank, uh, for those visually looking at Wheeling today would be, uh, in the present-day Laconia building, correct.

Hal Gorby:

The brewer should have been more prepared though, as dozens of counties had already gone dry in the state. Eventually the state legislature got a prohibition law on the ballot for voters in the fall of 1912. West Virginia went fully dry when voters approved the measure by over 92,000 votes. 52 out of the state's 55 counties approved it. If you had to guess, Ohio county was one that voted against by an almost two to one margin, but that didn't matter. After passage, the legislature approved the Yost law named for its author and prohibition began in West Virginia. The Yost law predicted all the problems the federal government would eventually have in trying to prevent the sale of alcohol in the 1920s. One obvious issue - West Virginia had wet neighbors, including Pennsylvania and Ohio. So, state enforcement focused on the Northern panhandle and Wheeling specifically, where route 40 would serve as a booze highway so to speak. The law would take effect on July 1st, 1914. The evening of June 30th was raucous with drinking, lasting right up to the end. The next day, the Wheeling intelligencer published a front-page story, noting the dry veil that had now fallen over the city.

Actor:

After having enjoyed the widest progress for the past century, the saloons of the city of Wheeling yielded to the power of the voter last night at midnight, and closed their doors, for what is expected to be forever. Nothing extraordinary marked the closing. During the early evening, the greater number of the wet dispensaries had closed their doors, not from a get through quick feeling, but from the fact that they had disposed of their last drop of the toxicants. At the same time that the police of the city were visiting the saloons to see that all were closed, police and peace officers were in every city of the state were doing the same thing. By reason of an overwhelming dry majority in the election of 1912, 500 saloons were wiped out of existence in the state, 107 of which were in this city. This fight stretches over a wide period of years during which both the dry and wet factions expended every effort for victory. No demonstration marked the closing by the dry force. No requiems were celebrated over the body of John Barleycorn, deceased. While it remains without saying that there were rejoicing among the dry forces when they witnessed the object of their fight close its doors, yet they controlled their feelings and did nothing to excite the anger of their brethren. From early morn until late last night, wagons moved back and forth over the streets, carting away fixtures and other articles of the business, which was made defunct by the law.

Hal Gorby:

The dry forces were jubilant, but state commissioner of prohibition Fred Blue would face a tall order seen in the flagrant violations of the law in Ohio county. Awakening the next morning, a New York times reporter saw big signs on the hills of Belmont county quote "in plain view of everybody advertising intoxicating drinks." The Yost law was extremely bone dry. It banned all intoxicants over 0.5% alcohol, and it enforced very stiff penalties. Conviction started at a 100 to \$500 fine, and two to six months in the county jail for a first offense. A third offense's maximum penalty was life in the Moundsville state

penitentiary. While this was harsh, the law was full of obvious holes. The Yost law also permitted medicinal and sacramental wine for religious purposes of course. You can just imagine how church attendance all of a sudden spiked across the city. Early on under statewide permission, dry agents or fizz ferrets, as they were known, tended to focus their attention on the heavily immigrant and African American neighborhoods. There was an assumption that these populations were the most likely to try to make illegal hooch.

Hal Gorby:

It's sort of interesting to just, when you look at this sort of transition with prohibition, the drinking culture goes from being something that's mainly associated with German brewing and saloons under prohibition to becoming a much more multi-ethnic sort of practice sort of, you know, brewing in some ways, but, uh, home produced moonshine, wine, uh, other, uh, drinks that you know, were being produced and consumed by a much wider sort of diverse immigrant population by that time,

Sean Duffy:

You know, Hal, that's a good point. I never really thought about that, but yeah, the fall of the German breweries opened it up for everyone else so, and diversified production.

Hal Gorby:

And so, by prohibition, you know, the sort of the association shifts from being this, the drinking culture is something of the German population to rightfully or wrongly associated with Bill Lias, Greek coffee houses, uh, you know, Polish speakeasies or Italian wine. Uh, you know, it becomes much more diverse. Whereas I think, you know, those like Carrie Nation and some of these other temperance activists, they really are painting this as this is a bad effect on the home, but it's also something that is particularly German, particularly tied to one specific, absolutely, culture. There was a stigma attached.

Hal Gorby:

With the start of world war one in August 1914, fears of the foreign born led to increasing surveillance. Bootlegging was on the rise. Angry over their excessive caseload deputy sheriffs testified in court against those with quote "almost unpronounceable names. The majority in the speakeasy cases are foreigners" end quote. Local prohibition officials relied on the work of undercover agents. Some were in law enforcement and others were members of the local anti-saloon league. Tony Mainford was a top undercover man. He often had his men stationed in center and south Wheeling. The neighborhoods dominated by Greek, German, Lebanese, Italian, and Polish immigrants. Undercover agents often disguised as workers walked into known speakeasies, purchased a drink, and then returned with officers to raid the joint. Tony Mainford's reports to the anti-saloon league provide a detailed laundry list of where someone in Wheeling could still buy a drink. And there were a slew operating. The following is a letter sent by Charles M Earhart, an attorney for the anti-saloon league to Ohio county prosecuting attorney D.A. McKee on September 2nd, 1915. In it, Earhart details insights gleaned from the undercover operatives.

Actor:

To the Honorable D.A. McKee prosecuting attorney of Ohio county Wheeling West Virginia, September the third, 1915. Dear Mr. McKee, permit me to suggest the following information, which may be of value to you before the grand jury. Officer Nighter, in a party by the name of Ross who I'm told works at Swifton company can give information in reference to the place at 41 17th street. This place is run by a

colored woman, I believe, by the name of Mrs. Gillespie, who at one time was obliged to leave the city but came back again sometime ago. A fellow by the name of Ermine is said to have delivered booze at this place. But what his given name is, I'm not able to state, there are three Ermines, namely Elmer, Lewis and Melchior who live or did live at 42nd 17th street. Harry Smith saw Bob Driscoll deliver a basket of beer on or about the sixth day of August.

Actor:

Tony Mainford also saw the wagon usually driven by Bob Driscoll, having what appeared to be a barrel of beer come off the bridge on the 10th street and go down the street to market on August 13th. Later in the day, Tony saw the same party deliver beer at or near 1068 McCulloch street. A man by the name of Henry who has his stable in the rear of 2901 chaplain street is said to haul booze from Ohio, for Gus Schultz, who runs the cozy corner restaurant at the corner of 33rd and chaplain streets. He is said to go across the river between 10 and 11 o'clock at night and return in the early hours of the morning. HC Duckworth, Howard St. Kirkwood, is said to have bought beer and whiskey at a number of places in Wheeling.

Hal Gorby:

This report involves several others, including someone who worked for Henry Schmulbach and whose son would later be a famous labor leader with the UAW.

Actor:

Valentine Ruther who lives or did live at 3640 Wetzel street and who formerly drove for the Schmulbach brewing company is said to haul beer into Wheeling for various parties in an old Cloth ice cream company wagon. This wagon is said to deliver booze at the triangle poolroom at 3301 Jacobs street and at Foughner's place at 3305 Jacob. On August 13th, Tony Mainford saw the cloth ice cream wagon come across the 24th street ferry with what appeared to be a load of beer. On August 6th, Harry Smith saw the cloth ice cream wagon go over to Bridgeport with a load of empties. He then saw loaded on this wagon at Marcher's place in Bridgeport, a dozen or more baskets of beer. The wagons so loaded he followed across the back river bridge. Very cordially yours, Charles Earhart, West Virginia, anti-saloon league.

Hal Gorby:

Valentine Ruther eventually got caught. On November 19th, 1915, prohibition agent Bert Phillips arrested Ruther after he came across the river on the 24th street ferry. Phillips watched Ruther stop his wagon at the rear of Harry Vogler's restaurant at 2516 main street. Inside he discovered 15 baskets of beer, 10 dozen pints, and two gallons of whiskey. The following year, Tony Mainford filed another undercover report of his travels through Wheeling speakeasies. He spared no details of his successful undercover operations. He bought a half pint from Luke dining at Walker's pool room on market street. And again, from him in the alley next to 1030 market street. Mainford also bought beer from George McConaughy at 16th and market street and from Charlie Hickman in the doorway of 1421 market. Fred Bischoff sold him nine pints of beer at 4143 Jacobs street. Many speakeasies opened in what were former saloons. Owners used a loophole in the law that allowed them to sell for medicinal purposes.

Hal Gorby:

They had to file a retail liquor permit and pay a tax to the state. Tony Mainford of course, investigated. HW Bosh had paid the tax for his restaurant at 6130 first street. Two agents made purchases of beer here, which was quote, kept in a little shed in the yard end quote. Those who opposed alcohol believed

they were patriotic Americans but working-class immigrants who wanted to continue drinking saw prohibition as an attack on their cultural, ethnic, and religious way of life. Both sides tried to draw public opinion to their side. For the dries, on October 12th and 13th 1915, they organized a law enforcement conference held at the market auditorium in downtown Wheeling. Several thousand supporters, ministers, public officials, and even Governor Henry Hatfield, enthusiastically praises their successes in halting the liquor trade. As the evening session of the dry conference was ending on the 13th, the wets had their own pageant prepared. There's would be a wet parade. Coming almost one month after Henry Schmulbach's death, the event was led by the German American Alliance, which called on all German Americans and immigrants to participate. Reporters for the Wheeling intelligencer described the grand scene in the October 14th, 1915, edition.

Actor:

A wet parade in a dry town. Sounds funny, doesn't it? But nevertheless, it was held. That is just what happened and it happened in Wheeling and it happened last night. Upwards of 3000 persons, men, and boys, and a few women marched either on foot or rode in automobiles in coats to show that they were not in favor of the enforcement of the prohibition amendment. Long before eight o'clock the time to move the streets were crowded with people. It is roughly estimated that 30,000 were witnesses of the parade. Slighting remarks were to be heard from the persons on the streets against the dries as they called them. Although no such remarks were heard coming from the marchers. The marchers assembled by wards each had its own flag. Each ward, its individual leader. The fifth ward had a large American flag, probably 18 by 20 feet and was carried by about 20 men. Don't forget that there were umbrellas. To many of these were attached empty beer bottles, liquor bottles, pretzels, beer glasses, labeled baskets, and other evidence of a dry state.

Hal Gorby:

To speak to their frustration over the law and also to poke fun at the dries, marchers held signs with a variety of humorous phrases.

Actors:

Why are workmen leaving Wheeling? They never did it before. We couldn't help it. We just had to parade. Don't get angry. We're only teasing.

Hal Gorby:

While a somewhat silly display, imagine the largely German American community of Wheeling scheduling a protest parade in October of 1915. The distrust of Germans was growing. They did not just put their heads down when the war started. Unfortunately, anti-German feelings would only continue to grow in Wheeling. While the dry forces would win the day, Wheeling would never truly be the same. The city had remade itself after losing the state Capitol in 1885, but somehow this new change seemed more permanent. The immediate economic effects were obvious.

Ryan Stanton:

We have to think about the breweries and how many people they employed, you know, from the coopers that were making the kegs, uh, to the bottling, to, you know, uh, the, the wagon drivers, you know, uh, this had a major effect on Wheeling. A lot of people will lose their jobs and become unemployed because of prohibition. Um, there were some talks of actually relocating the Schmulbach brewing company to Steubenville and purchasing property there, that never materialized. Um, but yeah,

this was, this was a rough time, uh, for the breweries of Wheeling when it actually comes to reality that it's over. Um, and remember, as you, as you mentioned, it's not nationwide, it's just in West Virginia. So, um, yeah, that's a, that's a tough one. And then when you factor in, Schmulbach will die in 1915 and then shortly after that, uh, world war one comes along and then, you know, German heritage isn't quite as popular as it once was.

Ryan Stanton:

So, a lot of that probably tied in, um, to, to what's happening, but I can't imagine what it would have been like to be employed, you know, and have a lot of pride in working for Henry Schmulbach or Anton Reymann and losing your job as a wagon driver, you know, or as a bookkeeper, you know. Uh, so that was a very rough time for Wheeling and it, it's kind of like one of our very first declines, I think, or one of our first stages of the decline when we lose this industry. There were actually talks too, of, uh, because our breweries were so successful, of larger breweries, like for example, an Anheuser Busch coming in and buying Schmulbach or Reymann, but both men were quoted in the papers as saying not for sale. You know, that's how much pride they had in what they had started here.

Hal Gorby:

Well, I mean the property of the brewery, this, this is interesting. I mean, what, what was it ever used for after prohibition? Were there any uses of it?

Ryan Stanton:

Uh, well, that's a, that's a good question because a lot of other breweries throughout the U S when prohibition, you know, came to their state or became nationwide, they converted to other uses. In Wheeling that didn't really happen. Um, the Unita brewing company, for example, uh, had a very short existence, but that eventually became the Wheeling tile company. Uh, the Schmulbach property, for example, uh, basically sat kind of vacant for a while and then was eventually turned into Kennedy's hardware, which it still mostly is today. Uh, the Cooper shop is today tri-state machine. The brew house, uh, was actually used by grub construction for a long time. And one of the things that actually took out part of the Schmulbach brewing company was route two. Uh, when you drive on route two today, you're actually driving through, uh, where the caves actually used to go into the hillside where they could store the beer.

Ryan Stanton:

Um, but, uh, with that said, uh, even though the Schmulbach brewing company, wasn't immediately repurposed, most of its buildings are actually still intact. Uh, the brew master actually lived on site, had a house that has since been demolished, but Kennedy's hardware uh, you know, for example, uh, the showroom for Kennedy's hardware was actually the stables, um, uh, which was a major part of the brewery in of course distributing the beer. Um, the Reymann brewing company, uh, throughout the years became a lot of different businesses. Uh, there was a glass company, there was a paint shop there, uh, but there was also at one time the Manchester bridge that would take you across Big Wheeling Creek to that structure. When that bridge was taken out a lot of that was just basically kind of seemed to fall by the wayside. So, some of the buildings are still there, mainly the brew house, uh, but it is in, uh, disrepair.

Hal Gorby:

The sense of decline was palpable at the time. The city dealt with a minor recession in 1914 and 1915. At the onset of prohibition, it was noted that the city would immediately lose about \$105,000 in tax

revenues and somewhere between 800 and 900 jobs in brewing and related small businesses. But a large portion of the city's population would soon feel the brunt of other outside forces at work in Wheeling.

Actor:

Today's celebration by the German Americans of Wheeling carries the mind back to the beginning of that stream of immigration from Germany, which increased by degrees until it became a powerful element in the diverse currents which converged in the new world. The beginning was small, but it was backed by intelligence, earnestness, industry and thrift qualities whichever else have characterized the Germans in America. In our own state of West Virginia, their influence has long been felt. In our own city of Wheeling, they represent a solidity of character, a degree of good citizenship and an amount of wealth, not surpassed by any other equal number of people. They are also to be found in every branch of activity, working hard, prospering, laying by something for a rainy day. If the German Americans of Wheeling were suddenly taken out of it, there would be a big hole in the capital and business life of the community. The celebration today is not only worthy by reason of what it commemorates, but because of what it will, to some extent being an exploration of the German side of Wheeling.

Hal Gorby:

It is so interesting to hear praise for our culture we don't hear that much about in today's Wheeling. As noted by the Wheeling daily intelligencer on October 6th, 1890. Unfortunately, this positive sentiment from 1890 would be out of favor by 1918. Many of the people targeted for prohibition enforcement tended to be immigrants. Beer-making was seen as a distinctively German cultural element. Thus, once the war started, Wheelingites grew suspicious. As we noted at the start of this podcast, Wheeling was a very, very German city. Once America entered the war in April 1917, pro German events ceased. All Germans had to register as enemy aliens with their local draft boards. There were local fears of German espionage and sabotage of factories. The effects were drastic as Sean Duffy recalls.

Sean Duffy:

Obviously the first world war involved um, first of all, uh, England and France against Germany, and then eventually the United States joined the fray. So, this European war, uh, you know, in the European war, we saw Germany as the enemy before we were involved. They were the Huns, right? Uh, a propaganda campaign started early. Uh, by the time the US entered the war, let's say, uh, when we get to spring 1918, things started to happen in Wheeling in reaction to that. So now this Hun is not only an enemy it's someone, our boys, our doughboys have to go over and fight hand to hand in the trenches of Europe. So, uh, men, as you mentioned earlier, many of the schools had German language instruction, and Linsly was one of those schools and they were the first to discontinue teaching German language at their school in reaction to, uh, what was happening overseas.

Sean Duffy:

And, uh, the board of education followed their lead and ended all German language instruction, uh, just a little bit later. And the businesses of Wheeling, many of which were founded by Germans and had German in their name, for example, Germania half dollar bank they dropped that word. They were just half dollar bank and they, uh, the German bank had been changed to Wheeling bank. The German fire insurance company would become the Wheeling fire insurance company. Bayer aspirin, which was a German corporation, um, run by Sterling drug company, uh, started running ads to assure people that there would be no tampering because they were German. They were, uh, not a pro German company.

They were an American company. So, they weren't going to poison people. You had, you were safe to buy Bayer aspirin. The singing societies that we talked about, suddenly they weren't popular anymore.

Sean Duffy:

People didn't want to attend concerts, uh, with singers, choral singers in German language. So, they, one by one just fell out of favor and became extinct. I told you the Beethoven did survive. They were the only one. You know, there was a report I read that, and I almost hate to mention this, but I think I feel obligated and there's no documentation to support this, but there, there is oral history, that the place where I work, the Ohio county public library, a Wheeling library, actually started to burn its German materials in reaction to this, which is shameful for a library. Now, I hope that isn't true, but I feel obligated to mention it. So Wheeling was, uh, before the war a German town, uh, during, and after the war, you, you could barely find anything German in any name of any business and it just changed dramatically.

Sean Duffy:

And pretty much overnight, barely a trace of what we called little Germany, uh, was left after the war. I found a quote online on a German, I think it's a German travel site. Uh, it says thus, a process was set in motion, which made German immigrants unique among all the major immigrant groups and which was further fueled by the second world war, the almost complete erosion of their original identity. No other group lost its public visibility to quite the extent of German Americans during the course of the 20th century. You know, the Germans who lived here in Wheeling, and it's important to say this. They were patriotic. They wanted nothing more than to be Americans. So, it was sad what happened to them because of their unfair association with, uh, the German enemy overseas.

Hal Gorby:

It's fascinating to hear about this anti German backlash in a city that was so influenced by German culture. Henry Schmulbach had helped encourage the teaching of German when he was on the board of education. If he had lived, he would have seen it removed in a tragic fashion in a climate of fear. Henry Schmulbach rose with the city's industrial and cultural diversification, but he metaphorically left the stage just as prohibition and anti-German tensions began to develop. But even in death, Henry left monuments, both physical and cultural to his larger-than-life personality. But what was his legacy for the city of Wheeling? What lessons can we learn from his life and how might these play into efforts at historic preservation and entrepreneurship at a time when Wheeling tries to remake itself once again. We will examine these subjects in our final episode next time. This has been Henry the life and legacy of Wheeling's most notorious brewer. This episode was written, researched and narrated by me, William Hal Gorby. We had help in producing this episode from Wheeling heritage editing done by Alex Weld. Production, music and recording done by Dillon Richardson and Johnathon Porter. Audio interviews were done with Ryan Stanton, Sean Duffy and Jeanne Finstein. Additional onsite recordings done by me, with voice acting done by Ryan Hudack hill, TJ Hudack hill, Alex Weld, Betsy Sweeny, Travis Henline and Reese Kefauver. This podcast is a production of Wheeling Heritage Media.