

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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<http://constitutioncenter.org/press-room/featured-exhibition-american-spirits>

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THE TWENTIES WILL ROAR AS THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER DEBUTS DAZZLING EXHIBITION ON PROHIBITION

*Traveling exhibition created by the Center,
curated by acclaimed author and Pulitzer finalist Daniel Okrent*

Philadelphia, PA – The era of flappers and suffragists, bootleggers and temperance lobbyists, and real-life legends like Al Capone and Carry Nation will come vividly to life in the National Constitution Center’s world-premiere exhibition ***American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition***. Spanning the dawn of the temperance movement in the early 1800s, through the Roaring ’20s, to the unprecedented repeal of a constitutional amendment during the Great Depression, this first comprehensive exhibition about Prohibition will explore America’s most colorful and complex constitutional hiccup. *American Spirits* will debut at the Center from **October 19, 2012 to April 28, 2013**, before embarking on a nationwide tour.

The tour will extend into 2016, bringing the exhibition to cities across the country, including Seattle, WA; St. Paul, MN; St. Louis, MO; and Grand Rapids, MI.

American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition is created by the National Constitution Center and curated by Daniel Okrent, Pulitzer Prize finalist and author of *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*. Okrent collaborated with filmmakers Ken Burns and Lynn Novick on the documentary *Prohibition*, which aired on PBS in fall 2011.

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ADD ONE/AMERICAN SPIRITS

“Prohibition left an indelible mark on America, redefining the role of the federal government and leaving its mark on everything from our personal habits to our tax policies,” said exhibition curator Daniel Okrent. “And though it may have been a wild card in our constitutional history, it came into being through the invention and deployment of political tactics and strategies still in play today.”

“*American Spirits* reveals the real stories behind hit dramas like HBO’s *Boardwalk Empire* and also provides timely perspectives on current constitutional debates about the government’s role in our lives,” said National Constitution Center President and CEO David Eisner. “From the ratification of the 18th Amendment to its repeal with the 21st Amendment, we can learn powerful lessons from this fascinating and politically charged story.”

The 5,000-square-foot exhibition features over 100 rare artifacts, including:

- Original ratification copies of the 18th and 21st Amendments
- A hatchet used by Carry Nation during one of her barroom-smashing raids
- A Prohibition Bureau Badge issued by the Department of Justice in 1931
- Temperance propaganda, including pamphlets, school lesson manuals, speeches, and hymnals
- The phone used by Roy Olmstead, the defendant in the landmark *Olmstead v. United States* wiretapping case, to run his bootlegging empire
- Flapper dresses, cocktail couture, and other women’s and men’s fashion accessories from the 1920s
- Original home manufacturing items used for making moonshine, homebrewed beer, and other illegal and highly potent liquor
- Prohibition agent Eliot Ness’ signed oath of office from 1926 in which he swore to “support and defend the Constitution”
- Al Capone’s guilty verdict from his conviction in Chicago in 1931
- One of the first crates of Budweiser produced after the “Beer Act,” which passed in April 1933 and changed the legal limit for “intoxicating” beverages to 3.2% per volume to allow for the return of beer production.

Interactive elements and immersive environments will bring to life the sights, sounds, and experiences of the time period. Wayne Wheeler’s Amazing Amendment Machine, a dazzling 20-foot-long, eight-foot-tall carnival-inspired contraption, will trace how the temperance movement culminated in the 18th Amendment.

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ADD TWO/AMERICAN SPIRITS

In addition, visitors can:

- Sit in a pew of a recreated early 1900s church to learn about the rise of the Anti-Saloon League and take a quiz to find out if you would have been a “wet” or a “dry”
- Test their knowledge of what could and could not be consumed under the rules of the 18th Amendment during the “Is it Legal?” interactive touchscreen game
- Explore a re-created speakeasy complete with a bar, dance floor, bandstand, and powder room and learn how to dance the Charleston
- Play the role of a federal Prohibition agent chasing rumrunners in a custom-built video game where you drive your own speedboat
- Join gangsters in a criminal lineup for a memorable photo opportunity.

Visitors will have an opportunity at the end of the exhibition to explore the legacy of Prohibition in today’s regulatory landscape. Displays will show why and how laws differ from state to state and how the idea of drinking responsibly has evolved since the 1930s to reflect what we know about alcohol today.

To complement the exhibition, the Center is developing a variety of engaging activities and resource materials for students, teachers, and families that illuminate the amendment process, the role of liquor in American history, and the cultural revolution of the 1920s. Daniel Okrent, Ken Burns, and Lynn Novick will lend their voices and commentary to a special iPod audio tour that will guide visitors through the exhibition.

A series of evening events and themed parties will further engage audiences in this colorful cultural moment. Guests ages 21+ can get a sneak peek of the exhibition prior to its public opening during the “Bootlegger’s Ball” on Thursday, October 18, 2012, when the Center’s Grand Hall Lobby will be transformed into a speakeasy complete with a live jazz band. Two additional parties are planned for Thursday, February 14, 2013 and Thursday, April 4, 2013.

The Center also is partnering with local businesses including Resorts Casino in Atlantic City, Sugar House Casino, Eastern State Penitentiary, and the Moshulu Restaurant on special themed packages for groups. Marketing and promotional support is provided by Philly Beer Week.

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ADD THREE/AMERICAN SPIRITS

Admission to *American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* is \$17.50 for adults, \$16 for seniors and students, and \$11 for children ages 4-12. Active military personnel and children ages 3 and under are free. Group rates also are available. Admission to the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, including the award-winning theatrical production *Freedom Rising*, is included. For ticket information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition has been made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor.

6abc, Fox 29, and Comcast Spotlight are the local media partners for the exhibition.

The National Constitution Center is the first and only nonprofit, nonpartisan institution devoted to the most powerful vision of freedom ever expressed: the U.S. Constitution. Located on Independence Mall in Historic Philadelphia, the birthplace of American freedom, the Center illuminates constitutional ideals and inspires active citizenship through a state-of-the-art museum experience, including hundreds of interactive exhibits, films and rare artifacts; must-see feature exhibitions; the internationally acclaimed, 360-degree theatrical production *Freedom Rising*; and the iconic *Signers' Hall*, where visitors can sign the Constitution alongside 42 life-size, bronze statues of the Founding Fathers. As America's forum for constitutional dialogue, the Center engages diverse, distinguished leaders of government, public policy, journalism and scholarship in timely public discussions and debates. The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, the national hub for constitutional education, which offers cutting-edge civic learning resources both onsite and online. Freedom is calling. Answer it at the National Constitution Center. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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