

Town of Greenburgh  
**ASSISTANT  
TOWN HISTORIANS**



———— felicia barber + riley wentzler ————

*When Greenburgh Went “East Bound  
and Down” Greenburgh During  
Prohibition*

*By: Riley Wentzler & Felicia Barber*

GREENBURGH IS



DRY

“East bound and down, loaded up and truckin’,  
We’re gonna do what they say can’t be done.  
We’ve got a long way to go and a short time to get there.....  
Keep your foot hard on the pedal. Son, never mind them brakes....  
The boys are thirsty in Atlanta and there’s beer in Texarcana.  
And we’ll bring it back no matter what it takes...

Ol’ Smokey’s got them ears on and he’s hot on your trail.  
He ain’t gonna rest ‘til you’re in jail.  
So you got to dodge ‘im and you got to duck ‘im,

You got to keep that diesel truckin'.

East bound and down!" Jerry Reed in *Eastbound and Down* (1977). The song *Eastbound and Down* was the theme song to a popular movie *Smokey and the Bandit* starring Burt Reynolds and Jackie T. Gleason.

### **An overview of Prohibition:**

Prohibition in America began unofficially in 1873 with the foundation of The Anti-Saloon League of America or (ASL). This organization was so influential in American politics that its lobbyists convinced many state legislatures to completely outlaw alcohol. In fact, in 1916, twenty-three of the then forty-eight states had adopted anti-saloon laws. On December 22, 1917, Congress submitted to the states the 18th Amendment to the Constitution, which prohibited "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors." The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1919 (Clark in Microsoft Encarta, 1993-2003). Prohibition officially ended in 1933. During this era, annual consumption of alcohol fell from 9.8 liters a year to 3.7 liters a year (Clark in Microsoft Encarta, 1993-2003). However, the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment didn't stop people from making or consuming alcohol entirely. Rather, as the introductory song lyrics demonstrate, what it did instead was create a highly dangerous, yet highly profitable, black-market trade in alcohol.

Prohibition was a very tense and colorful time in Greenburgh. While Greenburgh didn't have *Smokey and the Bandit's* "Bandit" (played by Burt Reynolds) being chased by "Sheriff Buford T. Justice" (played by Jackie T. Gleason), prohibition in Greenburgh was still dominated by two larger than life characters. These people were so powerful and so well known that they were almost like the titans of Greek Mythology.

### **Prohibition in Greenburgh- Clash of the Titans: William Ward VS. Louis Pope:**

These titans were, Westchester County Republican Party Chairman William Ward and the legendary bootlegger Louis Pope (Marchant 2019 p. 82-95). The battle between them defined Greenburgh, and in fact all of Westchester County during the prohibition years.

William Ward was born in Greenwich Connecticut in 1856. He was born into a wealthy family who made their fortune in the manufacture of dyes (Marchant 2019 p. 83). He however became an architect (Marchant 2019 p. 82). He had a grand vision to transform the farmland in Westchester into many rows of single-family homes (Marchant 2019 p. 82). He saw the burgeoning liquor trade as a major threat to this ambition. How could families be expected to move in if the neighborhoods of the county were full of dangerous drunks?

In 1897, he became the Westchester County Republican Party Chairman (Marchant 2019 p.83). From this position he became the Republican equivalent of Boss Tweed. He was even referred to in the press as “Boss Ward”. For the next 37 years, he had a hand in every major business and every major land deal in the county (Marchant 2019 p. 83). While he was eventually able to turn Westchester from the farmland it was in the 1800s to the sprawling suburb it is today, and was also instrumental in constructing the Bronx River Parkway (Marchant 2019 p. 82), he was never able to completely vanquish the liquor trade. He may have thought that the passage of the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment would make this thorny little problem go away, but much to Ward’s dismay, there were numerous speak-easies, illegal saloons, in Greenburgh. When Ward died of pneumonia in 1933, (Marchant 2019 p. 85), alcohol was still as big of a problem as ever.

Most of these speak-easies in Greenburgh were supplied by one man, Louis Pope. He was born in 1884 (Marchant 2019 p. 85). Officially, Louis Pope was a real-estate agent. However while he was reasonably successful as a realtor, successful enough in fact, that he was able to purchase a sprawling estate in White Plains, everyone knew that this wasn’t Pope’s primary source of income. There was just no way he could afford all the jewelry, silk, fine clothing, and the yacht which he possessed on a realtor’s salary! Real estate may not have been Pope’s only source of income, although it was his only legal one. He was able to afford the: jewelry, silk, fine clothing, and the yacht because, he was a career criminal.

Even among Westchester's criminal element Pope's influence was tremendously oversized, though perhaps not as large as his own gut, as various portrayals of him in the press at the time, could attest to (Marchant 2019 p. 85). Though he had a hand in all kinds of criminal activity, bootlegging was the centerpiece of his criminal empire. (Marchant 2019 p. 85). Despite the fact that most citizens gossiped about his bootlegging, and the authorities knew about it, from 1920-1930, they couldn't catch him doing it.

How exactly, did he manage to escape?

He had an elaborate secret underground tunnel leading out of the estate (Marchant 2019 p. 85-86).

Pope's luck finally ran out in March of 1932. Police in Greenwich Connecticut, William Ward's hometown, arrested him carrying: whiskey, brandy, champagne and gin (Marchant 2019 p 86). However even after being arrested Pope managed to stay out of jail, because he had an excellent team of lawyers (Marchant 2019 p 86).

### **Conclusion:**

With the onset of the Great Depression in 1930, people began to argue that prohibition deprived people of jobs and governments of revenue and generally contributed to economic stagnation (Clark in Microsoft Encarta, 1993-2003). This is ironic because the end of prohibition brought an end to Louis Pope's considerable wealth. When he died in 1950 of a heart attack, he was broke (Marchant 2019 p 86).

In any case, as a result of economic trouble for law-abiding citizens, prohibition ended in 1933, with the passage of the 21<sup>st</sup> Amendment which repealed the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment (Clark in Microsoft Encarta, 1993-2003).



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## About the Authors:

We are both Assistant Town Historians at Greenburgh Town Hall and we are engaged to be married and are currently looking for permanent employment.

### **Riley Wentzler:**

I was born and raised in a small rural town in central Pennsylvania. In high school, I took every honors course available including four years of Spanish. I received A's in all of them. I graduated third in my class of 146 students. This brought me to Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. Once there, I continued my trend of academic excellence. I graduated summa cum laude in Political Science with a minor in Spanish and a Master's in Communication Studies, with a G.P.A of 3.94. It was also there that I met my lovely fiancée, Felicia Barber. My Master's in Communication has promoted public speaking, teamwork, and customer service. My Political Science degree has developed my research skills using computer-based tools and provided me with experience using the Microsoft Office products. My minor in Spanish has facilitated my bilingual capabilities. During my internship at Greenburgh, I created the petition for the State Roads project using website tools. My diverse education and areas of interest have provided me with a wide range of skills. I look forward to finding a career opportunity in business or government. **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at [assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com](mailto:assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com), or to help me find employment, you can contact me at [rjwentzler413@gmail.com](mailto:rjwentzler413@gmail.com)**

### **Felicia Barber:**

I was born in New York City and raised in Hartsdale, New York. I graduated from Ardsley High School. I recently earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design at Edinboro University of Pennsylvania. It was here that I met my fiancé, Riley Wentzler. As a result of my academic excellence, I won a scholarship every year. I learned and applied many graphic design skills to projects during my summer internships and at school. I am proficient in using Adobe graphic design applications including Photoshop, Illustrator and InDesign. For my Identity/branding course at Edinboro, I created logos to appear on the tee-shirts of Physical Education majors. For a veteran's upcoming event, I used a typeface to focus the reader to the soldier in the poster. For the State Roads Legislative Campaign project, I created the embedded graphic-photo that accompanied the petition I am looking for a job to utilize my skills as a Graphic Designer in an agency, print shop, company or government **To suggest a topic for next week's article, you can contact me at [assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com](mailto:assistanthistorian@greenburghny.com). To learn more about my artwork or to help me find employment you can contact me at [feliciadbarber@gmail.com](mailto:feliciadbarber@gmail.com).**

## **Two Interviews with the authors:**

<https://riverjournalonline.com/around-town/a-love-of-history-and-each-other/13708/>

<https://wchs880.radio.com/articles/news/stories-main-street-couple-cerebral-palsy-brings-manytalents-town-greenburgh>

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