

Shmanners 425: Prohibition, Part 1

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[theme music plays]

Travis: Hello internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

Teresa: And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

Travis: And you're listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: It's extraordinary etiquette.

Travis: For ordinary occasions. Hello my dove.

Teresa: Hello dear.

Travis: How are you?

Teresa: I think I'm okay.

Travis: Do you see what I'm wearing this morning?

Teresa: I do see what you're wearing this morning.

Travis: A sweatshirt!

Teresa: Yeah, it's supposed to get up to like 85 today. [chuckles]

Travis: I'm not saying I'm gonna wear— Not saying I'm gonna wear it all day. Not gonna wear it all day. But this morning it's like 50 degrees, I was so excited, I love sweatshirts. I love jackets, you know I love a jacket.

Teresa: I know you love a jacket.

Travis: I have so many jackets. And the last couple years, because of something that rhymes with, let's say, shmobar shwarming.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: To follow our pattern. It feels like I get to do jackets like two weeks. It's like two weeks of fall, two weeks—

Teresa: Okay. [sighs]

Travis: See, 'cause I have coats. I have coats that I can wear when it gets really cold. But I have jackets that I can wear by choice.

Teresa: And I want to make sure that it's clarified that we understand that extremes in temperature are caused by global warming, not just the heat.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Is it— Climate change, is that better?

Teresa: Climate change.

Travis: And I don't wanna make it sound like I don't believe in it by calling it "shmobal shwarming."

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Now let me handle that— Let me handle this different. Because of climate change, which is a very real thing, it feels like it can get super cold faster and super-hot faster.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: And in spring and fall, I only get to wear jackets for like two weeks at a time, and that's really the biggest problem with climate change.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Okay, great. But we're not talking about any of that this week.

Teresa: [chuckles] We're not talking about that.

Travis: None of that.

Teresa: Although we are talking about the climate around alcohol changing.

Travis: And extreme changes, yes, extreme changes.

Teresa: How's that for a segue?

Travis: It's okay.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: I— We've done better.

Teresa: Listen, real life doesn't have segues. So—

Travis: Well it does, mall cops ride around on 'em.

Teresa: [laughs] Okay. We are gonna embark on a multi-part series.

Travis: Oh, like Ken Burns.

Teresa: [sighs] What?

Travis: We're the Ken Burns of podcasts.

Teresa: What?

Travis: He does multi-part like documentary series, Ken Burns.

Teresa: Okay.

Travis: He does Civil War and baseball I think he did.

Teresa: Mm. We're doing prohibition.

Travis: I— He might've done that.

Teresa: You think so?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And we are going to get some cameos by some of our previous *Shmanners* guests, I suppose. Queen Victoria.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Is gonna make an appearance.

Travis: She's never been on the show.

Teresa: No no, but we talk about her a lot.

Travis: She would be an amazing get for a lot of reasons.

Teresa: [laughs] Carrie Nation we're also gonna talk a little bit about.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We've spoken a little bit about her before.

Travis: Uh-huh. Yeah.

Teresa: I'm just sayin' we're bringing up the—

Travis: Greatest hits.

Teresa: Greatest hits, that's right.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: That's right.

Travis: I'm just saying, if we could get Queen Victoria on the show, I think we would make maybe international news.

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: Maybe a séance is our best way to go about— I bet she loved sea— Did— I bet Queen Victoria did séances, right.

Teresa: And— Oh, did she? I—

Travis: I mean that was during that spiritualism right?

Teresa: I don't think that she did.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: I'm not sure. Now I'll need to look it up. I'll report back.

Travis: Okay, but we're talkin' about prohibition.

Teresa: And—

Travis: Which was an amendment.

Teresa: Now first, I would be remiss if I did not read this amazing sentence that Alex wrote for me.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: [coughs lightly] Over the course of this month, you'll meet wild women, crooked coppers, fanciful flappers, monstrous mobsters, and several other alliterative personalities [chuckles] in a wild cast of police outrunning gin-drinking partiers.

Travis: Love it.

Teresa: I know.

Travis: Listen, that's poetry.

Teresa: This—

Travis: That's modern American poetry.

Teresa: — is beautiful. [giggles]

Travis: This... Okay, so prohibition.

Teresa: Yes, prohibition.

Travis: Can I tell you everything— Well, not everything I did, but here's what— my basics, right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: There's a time in American history.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: When there are people who are like, "The worst thing that ever happened to humanity and morality is alcohol."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Now, I also know that there are other people who are like, "Sure, whatever. This is a great time to one, capitalize on public opinion and get elected into office while appearing to be against alcohol, while continuing to drink alcohol in my private life."

And also an opportunity for people to make it illegal so that they can sell it for more money. But then they passed an amendment to the Constitution that made alcohol illegal. And then crime was rampant.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And then from what In my memory, and I know this isn't right, like three days later they were like, "Well."

Teresa: No. [chuckles]

Travis: "That didn't work. Let's undo it."

Teresa: Let me give you some numbers to that. You are correct.

Travis: Eight, 22.

Teresa: No.

Travis: No, okay.

Teresa: January 16th, 1919. Prohibition was formerly ratified under the 18th amendment to the United States Constitution. And that clause goes "After one year from the ratification of this article, the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereto of, or the exportation thereto of from the United States and all territory, subject to the jurisdiction thereof, for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited."

Travis: That's wild. I mean, of course it's wild, it's wild for a lot of reasons. But it's wild now to think of an amendment to the Constitution.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: About the sales of alcohol. Not a changing of laws, right? Not like, "We've made a federal law," right? Or we've— States have made a bunch of laws. An amendment to the Constitution about it.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: That's wild.

Teresa: It didn't start there. So...

Travis: I should hope not.

Teresa: No. Let's— Let's build some background.

Travis: It's also wild though to look into that be like, "Hey, over the course of the next year, go crazy. Buy as much alcohol as you can."

Teresa: [giggles]

Travis: I bet that was—

Teresa: They gave you a year.

Travis: There must've been just such a run on alcohol, or like alcohol manufacturers and seller being like, "Well, we need to get as much out as we can in the next year," and then I guess retire.

Teresa: Let's back this up a little bit. So, in the 1800s, it was becoming clear, not only to America but also to Britain, that the overconsumption of alcohol was a problem. For several reasons. The first one, there was no information about treating addiction like a disease, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And there was very little information of the effects of long-term consumption of alcohol, right?

Travis: Also not a lot of understanding of how to go through like withdrawal.

Teresa: Oh absolutely.

Travis: And how to treat symptoms and stuff like that, and yeah.

Teresa: Yeah, and there is a reason why there is a stock character of the town drunk or the tavern fool, right? It was prevalent.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: There were people who were continually inebriated.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And—

Travis: Well especially considering— I mean, we've talked about this before, but for a long time, I was not safe to drink the water—

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: — in the places that you were.

Teresa: We will definitely get to that.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Yes. And the second thing that fueled this flame, right? Was the Protestant faith. There were several prominent Protestant figures, let's

say, that were particularly disturbed about the excess and the indulgent nature of drinking.

Travis: So I—

Teresa: They considered it an affront to God.

Travis: Okay, so here's what I said, and I just rolled my eyes so hard, I can see my own brain.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: Here's the thing about it. And I think it's hard to separate, and there's echoes of lots of— In fact, it just happens over and over again throughout history, it just repeats itself, of people in positions where they need people to follow them.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Be that in politicians or be that in like religious leaders and that kinda thing. Any time there's an idea of like, "We're defining what's right and wrong," right?

They need a cause to say, "There's so— I mean, there's trouble, right here in River City, with a capital T, and that rhymes with P, and that stands for pool." Right? They need to sell people on the idea of "We need to save you, and we need to save other, and there's a reason everything's going wrong."

Teresa: Certainly.

Travis: Because if you're a religious leader or a politician or a salesperson, right? And what you're telling people is "Actually, everything's fine and we have nothing to worry about," how do you raise money?

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Right?

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Whereas if you say, "We're fighting the fight to save human souls, and to save people, and to give people what they need, and you need this product to be happy," that's how you make money.

Teresa: Right.

Travis: So it's hard to separate out who in this push honestly believed that alcohol was bad for people and was a thing that needed to be fought, versus "Ah, this'll rile 'em up. Yeah, this'll get 'em to my cause," that kinda.

Teresa: One of those such people who we— I suppose history has said that they fervently believed this was Reverend Lyman Beecher, father of Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Travis: Oh, I see.

Teresa: He was one of the first to proclaim the evils of alcohol, and the story goes that he visited the home of a woman in peril. According to the story, the woman called on the help of the church because she felt that her husband, who was often drunk.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And this time on the floor, passed out, loved liquor more than her, and more than God.

Travis: Oh no.

Teresa: And so, from that day forward, Beecher regularly pontificated about the evils of the alcoholic drink.

Travis: "We need to find a way to get people to love alcohol only as much as they love God."

Teresa: [chuckles] Somethin' like that.

Travis: "Not more." Do you think that there's a town somewhere in the world called Peril?

Teresa: Hmm.

Travis: And you could be like, “Yes, I’m living in Peril.”

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: “I’m in Peril. Oh where am I right— I’ll tell you, I’m in Peril right now.”

Teresa: I love how your mind works.

Travis: I have a truly beautiful mind.

Teresa: [laughs] There was also, at this time, stirrings of similar sentiments across the pond. Joseph Livesey founded the Preston Temperance Society in 1833.

Travis: Mm-hmm.

Teresa: In Presington, England. And he was the author of the book *The Pledge*, because that’s what— was all about his anti-alcohol writings.

Travis: Ah.

Teresa: And so the pledge goes, “We agree to abstain from liquors of an intoxicating quality, whether ale, porter, wine, or ardent spirits, except as medicine.”

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: But he started not necessarily the teetotaling movement, but like I said, the seed was planted there. The person who actually started that is named Richard Turner.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: Because he coined the phrase “teetotaling.”

Travis: Ohhhh. Can I tell you one of my favorite— This is a little *Wonderful!* crossover. One of my favorite clips from *Wonderful!* when I

believe Rachel is talking about I think it's an author or somebody from history.

And she says the word "T-toe-tailer," and Griffin's like, "What?" and she's like, "He was a T-toe-tailer." And Griffin's like, "Do you mean teetotaler?" and she— Like it's one of those where it's like a circumstance of like only ever having read the word.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: And never heard to said out loud, and "T-toe-tailer," I think about it all the time. T-toe-tailer, and it's great. 'Cause Rachel is maybe one of the smartest people I know, right? Both well-learned, well-read, and just hearing her say the word "T-toe-tailer" made me so happy.

Teresa: It just goes to show that sometimes it's better in your brain.

Travis: This is— But listen.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: I'm not better, right? I was— I think I was 24 with Griffin, and I was like, "Should we be— buy some—" What did I say? "Quinoaye," or something?

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Instead of "quinoa."

Teresa: That's good.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: I think I did the same thing with "misogynistic," I said, "meesoguynick."

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: I know.

Travis: I love that.

Teresa: I know, right?

Travis: It either sounds like a weird spice, or like—

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: — some kind of like medical study you would go into, like, “I’m studying meesoguynickology,” you know?

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. So he coined the phrase, we’re back to Richard Turner.

Travis: Okay, great.

Teresa: What he said was, at a meeting of the Temperance Society, he gave a speech in which he said— No wait, sorry, this is a... You know how preachers can sometimes have their own kinda like rhythm in the way that they do things?

I’m not gonna be able to do it because I’m not well-versed in this, but the— “I’ll be reet down out and out, tee-tee-total forever and ever.” So he said it better, because he had the whole like...

Travis: Fire and brimstone?

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But the play on words of “tee-tee-total” to “teetotal” became “teetotaler.”

Travis: Isn’t it interesting to think about that in the Christian faith, so much of it is based on the idea of God gave us free will, right? To make our own decisions.

And it is, in the Christian faith’s concept, your job to make the right decision, right? To turn towards God, to ask for forgiveness, all this stuff, right? And then there are so many people wrongly in the Christian faith

who are like, "And so, what I'm gonna do is make it so you don't get a choice."

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: And in fact just remove the option altogether, and we're going to make legal movements, to make it so you don't have a choice, you have to do what I consider to be the right thing.

Teresa: Interesting, yes.

Travis: Isn't that interesting?

Teresa: It's very interesting. Okay. So, that really... started off the British teetotalinism. Tee-teetotalism. There it is. [laughs]

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: We talked about the word and now I'm nervous.

Travis: Now you're in your head about it.

Teresa: And it... It spread all over, okay? For example, there was a group in 1847 called Band of Hope, whose sole purpose was to dissuade children against beginning to drink.

Travis: Well sure. Until they're old enough, yeah. I'm all for that, I don't want drunk eight-year-olds running around. I have a hard enough time dealing with sober eight-year-olds. [chuckles]

Teresa: Yeah, yeah. One person who was not really into it though was Queen Victoria. I don't know how she felt personally about drink.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: But within the bounds of her queendom, she said that total abstinence is an impossibility.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And it will not do to insist on it as a general practice.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Yeah. So like I said, I don't know what she felt about that. I know that she did like scotch, you know, Balmoral and all that.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But she was pretty sure it wasn't gonna work.

Travis: I think in general, especially enforced abstinence.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: Does not work.

Teresa: And so, the illegality has never really been like been express in England, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: They were just like, "Ehhhh."

Travis: "No thank you."

Teresa: "Let's do things about like age restrictions."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: "And driving laws."

Travis: Guidance. Guidance works, right?

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: I think it— Yeah, in a perfect world in which morality was universal and objective, right? Then you could be like, "Okay, we trust you to make the right decisions."

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: Except morality is not universal, and not objective.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And so instead what you have to do is say, "We live in a society, so we're gonna have some regulation, so that everybody's kind of starting from the same place."

Now I don't know— I'm not a scholar, I can't speak to that regulation. But the idea of saying "Instead, I'm going to make morality universal and objective by deciding what that morality should be for everybody," that has never worked.

Teresa: Never worked.

Travis: And will never work.

Teresa: So just a little bit more background in America, we're going to over across to the United States.

Travis: Oh, I can't wait to hear it, but first... We have a very special Jumbotron.

[transition theme music plays]

Travis: This message is from Amber. And it's for James. "Me, Travis McElroy, wants you to know that you are an incredible father. You do so much for your family and we appreciate you. When you doubt your worthiness, please know that your wife and son are lucky to have you, and you are enough."

And do you know how I know that that's true? Do you know how I know that that's true, James? Because Amber wrote it. Right? This isn't you saying "Travis, tell me I'm a good father."

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: No no no. But the fact that Amber says it, sometimes there are people in your life whose opinion you have to trust. And if they tell you that you're enough, and they tell you that you are doing a good job, they are a better judge of it than you are.

Because they are the one for whom you are doing the job, you know what I mean? So when Teresa tells me I'm a good father, when Teresa tells me I'm a good husband, when Teresa tells me I'm enough, I should listen to her instead of myself. 'Cause she has far better judge of it than I am.

So there you go, James. Know that Amber and me and your son think that they are lucky to have you, and that you are enough. So, have a great day, a great week, a great year, and a great forever.

Teresa: [chuckles]

[pause]

[guitar music plays]

Speaker One: One thing we all have in common, we all have a mind.

Speaker Two: It makes me so scared. [chuckles] 'Cause I'm like, "When is the bad thing gonna happen?"

Speaker One: And minds can be kind of unpredictable an eccentric.

Speaker Three: Everybody wants to hear that they're not alone.

Everybody wants to hear that someone else has those same thoughts.

Speaker One: *Despres Mode with John Moe* is about how interesting minds intersect with the lives and work of the people who have them. Comedians, authors, experts, all sorts of folks trying to make sense of their world.

Speaker Four: It's not admitting something bad if you say, "This is scary."

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[guitar music fades out]

[acoustic music plays]

Speaker Five: *Sound Heap with John Luke Roberts* is a real podcast, made up of fake podcasts, like *If You Had a Cupboard in Your Lower Back, What Would You Keep In It?*

Speaker Six: So I'm gonna say mugs.

Speaker Seven: A little yogurt and a spoon.

Speaker Eight: A small handkerchief that was given to me by my grandmother on her deathbed.

Speaker Nine: Maybe some spare honey?

Speaker 10: I'd keep batteries in it, I'd pretend to be a toy.

Speaker 11: If I had a cupboard in my lower back, I'd probably fill it with spines.

Speaker Five: *If You Had a Cupboard in Your Lower Back, What Would You Keep In It?* doesn't exist. We made it up for *Sound Heap with John Luke Roberts*. An award-winning comedy podcast from Maximum Fun, made up of hundreds of stupid podcasts. Listen and subscribe to *Sound Heap with John Luke Roberts* now!

[music ends]

Travis: Okay, so we're back, we're back in the Americas.

Teresa: We are back.

Travis: No, I guess in just the one America.

Teresa: Just the one here. So drinking in America, in the United States, is older than the actual United States.

Travis: The country.

Teresa: The country, yes.

Travis: You mean the country and the colonies.

Teresa: The country and the colonies.

Travis: But not the land, I assume.

Teresa: No.

Travis: That would be wild.

Teresa: That would be wild. Because we have records that in the hull of the Mayflower, they brought over several barrels of beer.

Travis: And I'm gonna bet, just based on my limited patchwork of memory and history and whatnot, even beyond that, some sort of influence or intoxication of sorts probably even predated them, right? Of like finding plants and stuff like that, right?

Teresa: Oh, certainly.

Travis: Yeah, so even beyond that. I'm not sure what indigenous people did to relax or whatever, or did for practices and things or whatever, but I'm betting intoxication even predates the pilgrims.

Teresa: It was no stranger to the land.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's true. Okay. And so, like you said earlier, it was often advised by doctors to have alcohol instead of water. Especially if it was like, you know, a muddy stream or a standing pool near your settlement. But here's the thing.

Travis: Also, in a long ship voyage?

Teresa: Yes. Yeah.

Travis: Yeah, man.

Teresa: Yeah, you need it for that. Here's the thing. People would make cider, right? From like— Or other fruit wines.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Right, for home consumption. Or they would make ale, right? And it was safer to drink, because of the alcohol, but the alcohol was way lower.

Travis: Yeah, it's called small beer.

Teresa: Than anything that we have today. Right, small beer, around 2%.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: That's really—

Travis: Almost like kombucha.

Teresa: Yeah. It's really just enough to kill off the pathogens, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so drinking that was... wasn't the— didn't have the intoxicating effects, right?

Travis: You would have to drink a lot of it really quick.

Teresa: You really would, because you would metabolize it through your body, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Then we start getting things like rum, right?

Travis: Yeah. Sure.

Teresa: And whiskey.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: And things like that. So like... all of these kind of like rituals of like the human experience, where you'd have like a beer with breakfast

and a beer with lunch, and a beer for your afternoon break, and a beer for dinner, like...

That was the norm, but when you replace it with something like whiskey, you quickly become very entrenched in alcoholism as a like as a nation, right?

Travis: Well, you also have to remember, keep in mind that this was pre-regulation of alcohol content.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: Right, so now we are used to, when you go to the store to buy any kind of alcohol, there are regulations, at least here in the United States, as like, "This is how much alcohol can be in this kind of liquor and like this kind of beer."

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: "And like this is the top," and they have to like list it on there, right? But one of the things about whiskey was like it used to be when you would like make it, right? The alcohol content was not even across batches, and sometimes even like within the barrel itself, right?

Teresa: Oh definitely within the barrel, 'cause you'd talk about the head and the heart, and the— Yeah.

Travis: And the hind, yeah.

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: And so then you'd run the risk of, of course, if somebody like consumes super high alcohol content stuff, it's incredibly dangerous. And like can be poisonous at like too high of a content.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: And so like I can see it very easily being like, "Wow, alcohol is so dangerous. It killed Fred" or whatever, and it's like, "No no no no, poorly made alcohol, poorly regulated, like yeah man, this is bad." Anyways,

once again a reason why regulation isn't always a bad thing in comparison to straight up abstinence.

Teresa: So by 1833, the average American over the age of 15 drank around 88 bottles of whiskey a year. That is three times as much as we drink today.

Travis: Wow. [sighs]

Teresa: And Americans spent more money on alcohol each year than the total expenditure of the Federal Government.

Travis: Wow. Okay. Okay. Okay.

Teresa: Yeah, and so people suffering from alcoholism filled up the prisons and the workhouses, and the refuges for the poor. It was an epidemic, right?

Travis: I'm gonna say once again though, just 'cause I'm gonna keep voicing my own opinions, and Teresa you can't stop me.

Teresa: Oh, okay.

Travis: Yeah. But I also think that this is another example of not treating an underlying problem—

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: — but treating a symptom, where you had a lot of issues with huge gaps in income inequality. Issues in like mental health not being addressed in any way. So much going on of like not taking care of people, not making sure that people are housed and employed, and that kind of thing.

And so that would lead to depression and anxiety and all of these things, and then self-medicating with stuff like alcohol, and then saying, "Well the problem is alcohol."

Teresa: Right.

Travis: And you also— Another important thing to remember is that this time period, alcohol was very medicinally used, right?

Teresa: Indeed. Yes, it was used as a treatment for that which ails you.

Travis: Yeah. It's hard to find a murder mystery period piece written, like an Agatha Christie or I mean even like a Sherlock Holmes or something, where there's not like, "Get this woman some brandy. Can't you see she's suffered a shock?"

Teresa: [chuckles] Exactly. And so... one of the kind of noble pursuits of prohibition was to help protect people. And the idea was— So, men are the kind of like...

Travis: Spiritually weak ones, morally weak.

Teresa: [chuckles] No, the poster child for this.

Travis: Oh.

Teresa: Where it's like they would come home from work, they would go to the saloon, they would get drunk, they would come home and be terrible to their families, right? That's the idea.

Travis: I stand by though what I said.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: 'Cause the idea of once again "Women, it is your job to protect your husband from temptation. And mothers, it's your job to protect your sons from temptation. Because they are inherently the ones pressured by the temptations of the world. Of course they're morally weak, think about everything they go through. It's your job to be—"

Teresa: Are you saying that's what they said?

Travis: Yes.

Teresa: Or that's what you believe?

Travis: No, God no.

Teresa: Okay, okay.

Travis: No, what?! No, don't put that evil on me!

Teresa: [chuckles] I was—

Travis: How dare you, madam?

Teresa: — looking at you incredulously, 'cause I wasn't sure where you were going.

Travis: No, I'm saying that was the push back then.

Teresa: Yes. Yes.

Travis: Of like, "The problem is if your husband is doing these things, it is a failing on your part for not protecting them from the temptations of the world, and not—"

Teresa: And so prohibition was like, "Let's help these women, let's help people."

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: "Let's say—"

Travis: How dare you ask if that's how I feel!

Teresa: "Save themselves from themselves."

Travis: I wanna go back to that real quick! Okay. Alright.

Teresa: I was just confused.

Travis: Ho— You should not be confused.

Teresa: [chuckles] Sorry.

Travis: You know me. You've known me for 37 years.

Teresa: Anyway. So this is where temperance starts ramping up, and so lots of groups begin form to educate communities about the dangers of overconsumption, right?

And these Temperance Societies became hubs of not just female empowerment, right. Like you were saying. The idea was the women would save the men from themselves, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: But also Black empowerment. Fredrick Douglas was a big believer in temperance, and it was part of like— It was considered the way to heal all of society's ills, right? Was to just get rid of the drink. Everyone will be better, people will be more equal, people will be nicer if we just don't drink.

Travis: Uh-huh.

Teresa: And this goes back to your also like the kind of religious point of view that people are perfectible, right? That you can make them perfect, make them be perfect, only give them the right choice.

Travis: I wanna draw back to I believe last week, you can lead a horse to water.

Teresa: Mm.

Travis: But you can't make them drink. But instead what they said is "Oh, but what if we led the horse to water, and stopped them from drinking!" And this was the idea of "Listen, what we can't do is make the choice for you, so we're gonna remove the choice."

Teresa: Yeah. Here is the very first big legal step that happens. Neil Dow, who is the mayor of Portland, Maine, gathers thousands of signatures in support of banning the sale of alcohol.

In 1851, it was the very first state to make the sale of alcohol illegal. And 12 more states would follow suit, but they all had like varying degrees of problematic language within the law. Where they— [chuckles]

They almost made it where they were like, "Okay, you can't sell alcohol," but they didn't like innumerate how they were going to do that, and like how like people can't get around it. And like there were definitely ways to get around it, right?

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: And so like once the Maine law was passed, right? That's from Maine. People would do things like they would make like floating tavern barges, right? So far out from the shore.

Travis: Ehrrrrh!

Teresa: Where like, "We're not technically in Maine."

Travis: "I'm not touching you."

Teresa: "I'm not touching you," right? And people started doing the thing where like you can't sell alcohol, but if you buy this really like expensive box of crackers, we'll give you a drink for free.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Right? That kind of thing. And there were lots of different ways that people got around it, and those ways that people got around it would continue through the federal law, right? We hear about physicians writing prescriptions for whiskey, right?

Travis: And for beer, yeah.

Teresa: Because medically, it was still okay. And so all you had to do was kinda be like, "Eh, I got the spins, I need somethin' for this," and they're like, "Oh, here you go, this'll take care of it," right? And so in order to kind of like... get around this stuff.

Travis: To get around the getting around stuff?

Teresa: To get around the getting around stuff.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: After the Civil War, because...

Travis: They were distracted.

Teresa: They were distracted, right, yeah.

Travis: They were busy, yeah.

Teresa: So like around 1860, right, they kind of like fell away and then Civil War happened.

Travis: "Let's put a pin in this."

Teresa: People were distraught, obviously. That's afterwards, they started doing— They started ramping back up for the federal prohibition.

Travis: Wait, hold on. But it passed in 1919.

Teresa: Yes.

Travis: So this is like a 50 plu— Not even counting like the stuff before the Civil War.

Teresa: Mm-hmm.

Travis: Just post-Civil War, 50 years that they spent like, "Come oooooon."

Teresa: Yeah. Well the States, you know, they started trying to do it themselves. And the—

Travis: Then again, I say that.

Teresa: The Federal Government kinda dragged their feet on it, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: Because... there was heavy taxation on alcohol, right?

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: One third of the nation's budget came exclusively from taxing alcohol.

Travis: Yeah.

Teresa: And so they were kind of like, "Mm, well we know it's bad, right?

But we also need money. We just had this war, and we gotta pay for it.

And so we're just gonna say it's bad, but keep taking your money."

Travis: It's like the reverse— It's the reverse of THC, right? Of like for like 60 years or more, probably. I don't know about the "or more," but for at least— there have been people who have been like, "Come on. Let us do it, you can tax it," right. And the government's like, "I don't know."

Teresa: Yeah.

Travis: So I guess the idea of it taking that long to outlaw a thing that, as you said, was like funding the country. [chuckles]

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: I guess that makes more sense.

Teresa: Yeah, and also after the Civil War, there was another huge influx of— Well, during the Civil War basically. A huge influx of immigration, and you know, there were more kind of like alcoholic kind of scapegoats, right?

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: So like the Germans brought the beer over that they were making, and the Italians brought the wine.

Travis: And the Scots and the Irish.

Teresa: Exactly.

Travis: Bringing scotch and whiskey, yeah.

Teresa: So there were— there was more kind of like escalation as people found more people to blame for alcohol, right?

Travis: Yeah. Can you imagine you're like an immigrant during that time, and you're like, "I've heard such great things about America, and it's like the Promised Land, and it's gonna be great."

And then you get there and everybody's like, "Okay, cool man, welcome. Just so you know, we're like in the middle of trying to outlaw alcohol," and they're like, "What? Aw man, come on. That sucks." [chuckles]

Teresa: Yeah. And so this is when we start to get stories of communities banding together, like usually the women in the communities, like making human chains in front of saloons, and—

Travis: Or if you're Carrie Nation, goin' in with like a hatchet and smashin' up barrels.

Teresa: Exactly. People kneeling in a line of prayers, trying to keep people from going. There's one— [chuckles] There's one story about how an owner of a German beer garden lugged down an old-fashioned cannon to his entrance, and announced that anybody protesting, or trying to move past it, would be shot with a cannon, with cannon fire.

Travis: Mm.

Teresa: And one of the women protesters climbed on top of the cannon, and started like a singing marathon [chuckles] with everyone there.

Travis: Sure.

Teresa: Yeah, so like this is just the beginning of all of those things. But we thought we'd give you a little background.

Travis: A littler primer.

Teresa: A little primer. And we—

Travis: Primmer?

Teresa: No, primer.

Travis: Okay.

Teresa: We'll be back next time with more prohibition.

Travis: But first we wanna say thank you to our editor Rachel, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to our researcher Alex, without whom we could not make this show. Thank you to you for listening. I don't wanna make this show without you. I don't wanna prohibit you from listening.

Teresa: [chuckles]

Travis: I want you to be able to make the choice to listen, and the choice to tell other people to listen, and to make them listen.

Teresa: What?

Travis: I want you to make peo— I want you to prohibit not listening.

Teresa: [laughs]

Travis: Also make sure you check out mcelroymerch.com for all the great merch this month, and you can go to mcelroy.family, or bit.ly/mcelroytours to see all the places that me and my brothers and my dad are gonna be, including me and Dad are coming to London for the London MCM in October, I believe 24th through 27th, somethin' like that. You can go check that out at bit.ly/mcelroytours. What else, Teresa? What am I forgetting?

Teresa: We always thank Brent "Brentalfloss" Black for writing out theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Also thank you to Bruja Betty Pin Up Photography for the cover picture of our fan-run Facebook group, Shmanners Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, go ahead and join that group today.

And as always, we are taking topic submissions and questions and idioms and, you know, just send all that stuff to shmannerscast@gmail.com. Make sure that you say hi to Alex, 'cause she reads every single one.

Travis: And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week.

Teresa: No RSVP required.

Travis: You've been listening to *Shmanners*.

Teresa: Manners, shmanners, get it?

[outro theme music plays]

[ukulele chord]

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