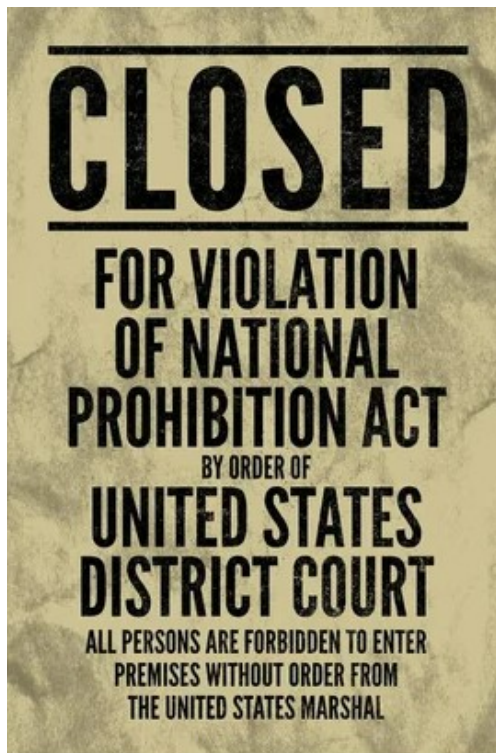


## Bootlegging in Garland 1920-1933 - The Prohibition Years - Part 1



Prohibition, the outlawing of the manufacture, sale and transportation of alcoholic beverages, was passed Jan. 16, 1919 in the United States. The law actually went into effect Jan. 17, 1920, giving alcohol-based businesses exactly one year to amend their endeavors to something legal. Quite a few breweries attempted a switch to 'near beer' or non-alcoholic beer. But there was only so much of a calling for it. Other breweries saw the limited future in 'near beer' and decided to get more creative to stay afloat. For instance, the Stroh's brewery in Detroit switched their manufacturing from beer to ice cream. They placed their bet on sweet treats seeing that ice cream parlors and soda fountains were going to be the new gathering places since taverns were out of business. Stroh's is long-since back to making beer, but their ice cream is still in demand.



Although there was wide-ranging support for the temperance movement (it passed with 68% approval), there were still plenty of people lured into making money via alcohol. The United States quickly saw the rise of illegal stills, bootlegging and speakeasies. Not everyone was appeased with a Coke float in place of whiskey. Providing alcohol became a profitable endeavor and in a lot of cities, it was run by organized crime. However, bootlegging was a much more local affair in Garland.

First and foremost, there was a gray area to be exploited, and that gray area was the local pharmacy. Pharmacists were allowed to prescribe 'medicinal' alcohol throughout Prohibition. Quite a few Garland residents developed a persistent cough or inability to sleep in January, 1920. Also by a stroke of good fortune, the Ball jar company began shipping squared-off Ball jars. These squared jars didn't jingle or roll around on the floor boards or in the trunks of cars. They could be packed very tightly into a box. Also,

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quite conveniently, Ball jars full of liquor, local pharmacies and soda fountains were all found in the same convenient location. Walgreen's expanded from 20 to 525 stores during the 1920s, most likely thanks to their 'prescription' alcohol sales.

Where there is 'medicinal alcohol' other pastimes are soon to follow. The following memories come from recent (late 2022) phone conversations between long-time Garlandites Mike Hayslip and Pete Nelson. Going back to at least the 1930s, there were a few local establishments that would provide several types of gambling.

For example, Payne's Drug Store, where proprietor, HT "Doc" Payne, wrote prescriptions for alcohol, was also the location of gaming machines. Ever hoping to ease a customer's day, these games of chance were located near where people waited for cabs and other rides. At one point, this back entrance might have also been a bus drop-off location.

The building still stands in the 800 block of present Main Street where there was a Whiteway Service Station. It is believed the gambling machines were placed near the men's restroom. Another place to gamble would be the cafes at the corner of Third Street and present Main Street. These cafes included Cecil's (Cecil Means, proprietor). There is a home standing on this lot today, but the café would have been on the northwest quadrant of Third and State Streets. Not one to stop at convenience, Cecil Means provided extremely attractive attendants to serve customers curbside. A common order was a Coke and a Snickers. That order would set you back 10 cents or \$2.17 in today's money. (That's not so bad considering that a Coke today is \$2.19 at the local convenience store.)

Another café in this general area was run by brothers Charlie and Robert Lyles. Their family home last stood on a plot of land next to the Landmark



**Handley's Drug Store ca. 1900-1920 on the Garland Square at the current address of 106 North Sixth Street (Rosalind Coffee). Donated by Dorothy Olinger Range**



The Bankhead Highway, as it was known at the time; Payne's Drugs can be seen on the left at what is now 609 Main Street, Garland.  
*Garland Landmark Society Archives*

Museum, behind the Garland public library. The house has been demolished.

Charlie was given many accolades for his bootlegging, although there is scant proof of his profession in this regard. According to the late Fred Harris, long-time Garland resident, who was a busboy at this café, there was not only much illicit alcohol, but also gambling. He was once sent to Payne's drug store, pronto, to obtain a fresh deck of cards as a gambler at the table was suspected of working with a marked deck.

Gambling was strictly prohibited in Texas in the 1920s. Even horseracing had been banned in the early 1900s, posing a crushing blow to the State Fair of Texas' rodeo which centered around horse racing and betting. But the 1930s saw the advent of the Great Depression which meant that states were looking to fill their coffers by any means necessary. One concession around gambling was then allowed and that was pari-mutuel horse betting. According to an article in Fort Worth Weekly from May, 2022, pari-mutuel betting is 'mutual betting.' In short, all of the bets are pooled together, taxes and fees are taken off the top, and the payoffs were then divvied up. This type of betting was the only gambling action that could be had legally in the 1930s. It wasn't until World War II that other types of betting restrictions were loosened.

Outside of Garland proper, quite a bit of underground activity could be found to the immediate north of Mills Cemetery, on the border of

Garland and Rowlett. Long since dammed up, there were numerous deep creeks and river bottoms in this area. These bits of geography were key to providing cover and water for illicit stills. Standing on the road running through Mills Cemetery, looking north, just across Bankhead Highway, you will see a tree-filled plot of land. Beginning in the 1920s, this plot of land housed the Anderson Park Tourist Camp which invited drivers to park for the night. It was a place where you could get some rest, a bath and do a little bit of laundry. The park also hosted family events like picnics and rodeos.

The owners of Anderson Park, the Killions, expanded their business during Prohibition with a number of illegal activities. In addition to hosting gambling via cards, a 'drinks stand' was opened. This 'drinks stand' appears to have been informally called the Green Lantern and included a water dispenser complete with a floor-mounted button. When the button was pushed, the 'water dispenser' shot out whiskey instead. As the property was bought from bootleggers, one imagines that not much retrofitting was needed to support the prosperous speakeasy. The Anderson Park Tourist Camp employees were almost inevitably given a heads up when the sheriff was headed their way so they could get things in



Mills Cemetery in the southwest corner of Commerce Street and Centerville Road. Previously, the cemetery was directly on the Bankhead Highway which is now known as Commerce Street in this area. Commerce Street runs parallel to Highway 66 at this point. Photo taken by the author in 2022, looking east at Centerville Road in the far distance. *Garland Landmark Society Archives*



Anderson Park Tourist Camp, c. 1920 – 1933. This plot of land is located north of Mills Cemetery between what is now Commerce Street and State Highway 66. *Donated by the Killion Family.*

order – including switching the free-flowing whiskey to water.

Outlawed beverages, gambling and clandestine meetings often meant that things got fiery. A single example of how violent things could get at the Green Lantern happened in November, 1926. Two women, Juanita Overly and her friend Gladys Marie Redding, were enjoying beverages at the drinks stand when a car carrying Ira Crosby, being driven by Douglas Scroggins, pulled up. Scroggins, according to newspaper reports at the time, had the much-desired car that Ira Crosby needed to get from downtown Dallas to the Garland/Rowlett area. Poor Scroggins was lured into this adventure with promises of a fun night at the speakeasy.

Once at the Green Lantern, Crosby jumped out of Scroggins' car and demanded that Juanita Overly come

outside immediately. When she failed to comply, he went in after her, leaving her covered in cuts and bruises from attempting to drag her out forcibly. What Crosby didn't factor in was the gun the women were carrying – the gun was unloaded on him. Scroggins sustained minor injuries when a bullet grazed his knuckles, but Crosby lost his life after one bullet entered under his shoulder blade, piercing his heart, and another bullet entered his side. Yet another bullet was found lodged in the side of Scroggins' car.

Scroggins panicked, threw Crosby in the backseat and drove them both to the MD Williams building – not because he suspected that Crosby was dead and needed an undertaker, but because the Williams were the only people with an ambulance at the time. Scroggins' prognostications were much

too optimistic as Crosby was long-since dead by the time they made it to the MD Williams building on the square.

Local law enforcement was dispatched to the Green Lantern. Overly and Redding were quickly taken into custody. It was noted that Redding wore a holster for the gun that shot Crosby. The women were separated and interrogated. Both stuck to their stories. Overly and Redding emphatically took responsibility for shooting Crosby, explaining that the other was too sweet to have shot Crosby. This was further complicated by the fact that everyone in the very packed Green Lantern saw Crosby's entrance and his subsequent mishandling of Overly. However, not a single person admitted to having witnessed the actual shooting or even the gun.

Exactly one month later, all charges against the

women were dropped. Local law enforcement had no idea what to do with the lack of witnesses, utter lack of evidence plus dueling, plausible confessions. And, as Crosby was not a local, they rapidly dropped the charges against both women.

For the moment, we suspend our wild 1920s Garland tales. *OnTrack* will be back with a second installation about the Killion family and their Green Lantern operation right up to the end of Prohibition. After that, we have a final installation of much-beloved local bootlegger, J Sydney "Pete" Welk, the first white man in Texas to be executed in the electric chair.

— *Written by Holly Stevens*



Interior of the "Green Lantern" speakeasy, January 1932. *Donated by the Killion family.*



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