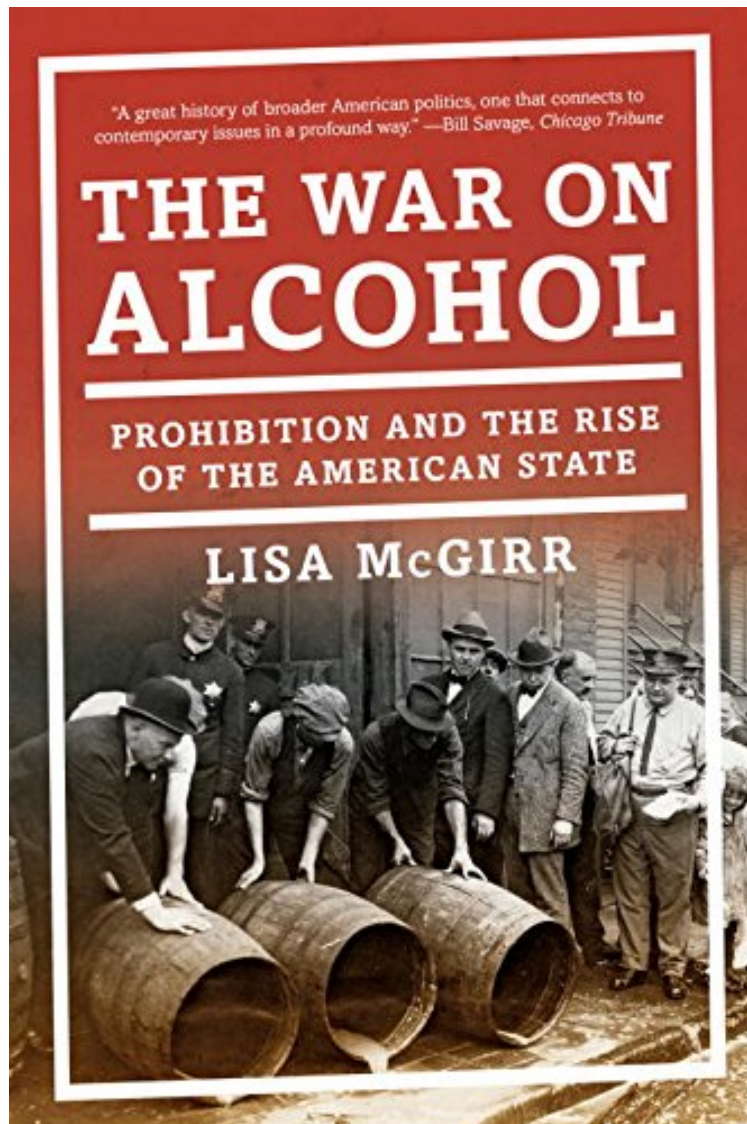


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The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State

Lisa McGirr

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Lisa McGirr : The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The War on Alcohol: Prohibition and the Rise of the American State:

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21 people found the following review helpful. The War on Alcohol ...alcohol won!By Carl RennhackI was in the fourth grade (in 1960) when I first heard about Prohibition. As soon as I did I made a beeline for Grandpa Rennhack's apartment (right above where Mom I lived) and asked the soon-to-retire Rheingold Brewery worker how did he (and his father) fare between January 1920 and December 1933. "Gramp me made near-beer, less than 0.5% alcohol. We drove it to flower stores, drug stores, pool halls. What happened to it after that didn't concern us." But Ms. McGirr reminds us it concerned a lot of people on both sides of one of the most unpopular laws in USofA history. Its effects are still felt in 2015. Most of the people who lived through Prohibition have passed on, ergo we need books like this one to tell the story of a seemingly unbelievable era...although I've no doubt Grandpa and Gramp could have added more to the story! Read this book as an introduction to the subject.

[This] fine history of Prohibition . . . could have a major impact on how we read American political history.James A. Morone, New York Times Book ReviewProhibition has long been portrayed as a noble experiment that failed, a newsreel story of glamorous gangsters, flappers, and speakeasies. Now at last Lisa McGirr dismantles this cherished myth to reveal a much more significant history. Prohibition was the seedbed for a pivotal expansion of the federal government, the genesis of our contemporary penal state. Her deeply researched, eye-opening account uncovers patterns of enforcement still familiar today: the war on alcohol was waged disproportionately in African American, immigrant, and poor white communities. Alongside Jim Crow and other discriminatory laws, Prohibition brought coercion into everyday life and even into private homes. Its targets coalesced into an electoral base of urban, working-class voters that propelled FDR to the White House.This outstanding history also reveals a new genome for the activist American state, one that shows the DNA of the right as well as the left. It was Herbert Hoover who built the extensive penal apparatus used by the federal government to combat the crime spawned by Prohibition. The subsequent federal wars on crime, on drugs, and on terror all display the inheritances of the war on alcohol. McGirr shows the powerful American state to be a bipartisan creation, a legacy not only of the New Deal and the Great Society but also of Prohibition and its progeny.The War on Alcohol is history at its bestoriginal, authoritative, and illuminating of our past and its continuing presence today. 8 pages of illustrations

McGirrs book pivots from being a very good, tightly focused history of Prohibition to a great history of broader American politics, one that connects to contemporary issues in a profound way. - Bill Savage, Chicago TribuneIn [McGirrs] view, Prohibition was not a farce but a tragedy, and one that has made a substantial contribution to our current miseries. Nearly a century later . . . the legacy of Prohibition can be seen in our prisons, teeming with people convicted of violating neo-Prohibitionary drug laws. Many at the time viewed Prohibition as an outrage, and, in McGirrs view, we are missing its true meaning if we are not outraged, tooand ready to resist its equally oppressive descendants. - Kelefa Sanneh, The New YorkerMcGirrs important new book . . . leaves us with a Prohibition that looks less like an anomaly than an eerily prescient rehearsal for the current national war on drugs. - John Fabian Witt, Wall Street JournalIn this remarkable book, Lisa McGirr transforms our understanding of Prohibition and its legacy. Moving beyond familiar tales of speakeasies and gangland violence, she shows how this episode contributed to the expansion of the authority of the modern American state and the origins of mass imprisonment. No history could be more timely. - Eric Foner, author of Gateway to FreedomMcGirrs book, fascinating and deeply researched, offers a startlingly fresh argument for why so many of our current problemsfrom the war on drugs to mass incarcerationgrow out of Prohibition. Anyone who wants to understand the 1920s, 1930s, and 2000s should read this book. - Jonathan Alter, author of The Defining MomentThis is not just the best book ever written about the era of Prohibition; it is a landmark history of modern America. With splendid insight and illuminating details, Lisa McGirr demonstrates that the war on alcohol was the health of the state. - Michael Kazin, author of American DreamersIn her revelatory new book, Lisa McGirr moves Prohibition from the gin-soaked edges of the Roaring Twenties to the heart of the American state. - Kevin Boyle, author of Arc of Justice[A] fascinating account of Prohibition and its consequences, written with verve, depth, and imagination. - Ira Katznelson, author of Fear ItselfLisa McGirr has given us an admirably fresh look at a supposedly shopworn subject. She convincingly demonstrates that the Prohibition era deserves to be taken seriously as the nursery of many stubbornly persistent practices, including a moralizing, meddlesome state that targets its punitive powers on the least-advantaged citizens. - David M. Kennedy, author of Freedom from FearAbout the AuthorLisa McGirr is professor of history at Harvard University. She is the author of The War on Alcohol and an award-winning history of the new right, Suburban Warriors. She and her family live in Cambridge, Massachusetts.