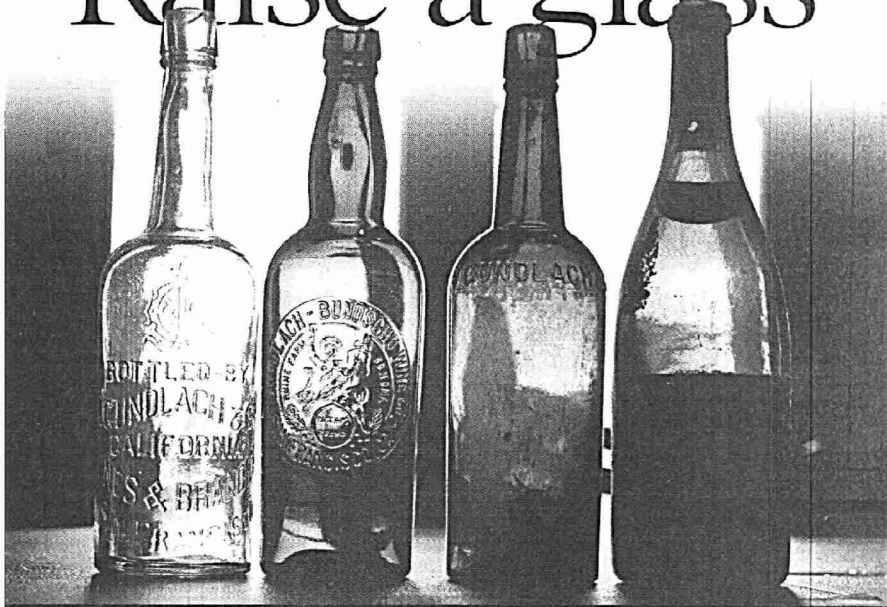


PROHIBITION REPEAL TURNS 75

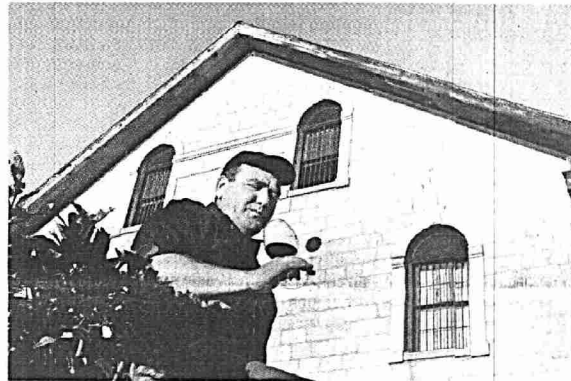
# Raise a glass



Shown are a selection of empty pre-Prohibition wine bottles dating from the 1890s to 1900s at the Gundlach-Bundschu winery in Sonoma. The winery maintained business during Prohibition by growing and selling grapes.

PHOTOS BY ERIC RISBERG THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

## Bars plan to mark date with specials, celebrations



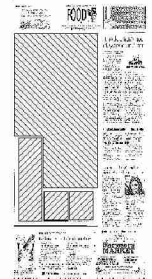
Jim Regusci drinks a glass of estate Merlot wine while standing outside the Regusci winery in Napa. The winery was built in 1878 and is considered one of the Napa Valley's best-preserved "ghost" wineries, the name given to the handful of surviving wineries built before Prohibition.



A pre-Prohibition bottle of riesling wine from the 1890s sits packed with reeds at the Gundlach-Bundschu winery in Sonoma.



Jim Bundschu holds a medicinal label placed on wine bottles made during Prohibition. Alcohol could be prescribed for medicinal purposes during Prohibition.



**BY MICHELLE LOCKE**

The Associated Press

NAPA — Here's a word that can still send chills through wine country: Prohibition.

The great temperance tryout, which ended 75 years ago this December, may not have done much to stop drinking, but it did succeed in putting a cork in America's burgeoning wine industry — and ushering in an era of plonk that lasted decades.

"There was a lot of wine made and drunk during Prohibition, but the standards were poor. It set things back very seriously," said Thomas C. Pinney, author of "A History of Wine in America."

With wraiths of the 1930s seemingly lurking around every corner — Stock panic! Bank failures! Cloche hats! — the appeal of repeal is particularly strong this year, with a number of bars and restaurants planning to mark the milestone.

"It's a great day of the year," said Jackson Cannon, bar manager of Boston-based Eastern Standard Kitchen & Drinks, which has been serving Prohibition-inspired cocktails all year and arranged a party to begin Thursday and carry through to Friday — the official anniversary of repeal.

Even all these years later, there still are a few hangovers from the days when (officially) no liquor or wine was served at any time.

"Its lasting legacy has been a fundamental misunderstanding between use and abuse by the American public," said Eileen Fredrikson, a wine analyst with Woodside-based Gomberg, Fredrikson & Associates. "There are still places where wine on the table is just not part of the culture. People grow up with iced tea. They don't even think about wine as possibly an enhancement to a family meal."

The temperance movement built up over decades, spearheaded by people who argued that alcohol was ruining lives, especially of the working classes.

They succeeded in 1919, with Prohibition taking effect a year later.

From the start there were loop-

holes. Individuals could make up to 200 gallons a year of "fruit juices" for personal use. Sacramental wine also was allowed and alcohol could be prescribed for medicinal purposes.

Napa vintner Jim Regusci remembers hearing stories from old timers about the "milk" company, which didn't see so much as the flick of a cow's tail, but regularly sent a truck to the Napa Valley to pick up batches of bootleg alcohol for delivery to San Francisco.

For legitimate operations, Prohibition descended swiftly.

Jim Bundschu of the Gundlach-Bundschu winery in Sonoma County, which celebrates its 150th anniversary this year, recalls hearing how the winery "just was literally padlocked up. They were bottling apricot brandy one day and the next day no one came back to the winery."

Like some other wineries, Gundlach-Bundschu kept afloat growing and selling grapes. (Bundschu and his father revived the winery in the '70s, part of the renaissance of American wine.)

But many shut up shop.

At the start of Prohibition there were about 700 wineries operating in California. By its end there were about 40, said Fredrikson.

In the end, the Depression helped hasten the end of Prohibition.

"It was a sort of no-brainer. 'Of course, we'd better get back to producing legal alcoholic drink instead of letting bootleggers make all the money,'" said Pinney.

Unfortunately, a depression is no time to start up a capital-intensive industry like the fine wine business.

Wineries that had survived the dry years by selling grapes already had switched to tougher-skinned fruit that traveled better, but made inferior wines.

Meanwhile, all that Chateau de Basement cooked up at home hadn't exactly stoked appetites for refined wines.

So what poured out from California after repeal were sweet, fortified wines that went by the labels "port" and "sherry," though they had little in common with the fine vintages produced by Portugal and Jerez, Spain.

"Table wine almost disappeared for the first decade after repeal," Pinney said. "It took a long, long time to alter that."

For today's wine country visitors, Prohibition is just a memory to be glimpsed in the crumbling ruins of "ghost wineries," that folded under the triple threat of a late-19th century outbreak of vine disease, Prohibition and the Depression.

But the past is much more concrete at the Regusci Winery where the 1878 Occidental-Grigsby winery that went bust in the Depression still stands. This is a sturdy "ghost" made of walls two feet thick and still in use for barrel storage.

At dusk, the setting sun gilds the building's elegant facade, picking out the lettering of the old winery name etched in the hand-cut lava stone.

Regusci likes the idea that winemaking is still going on here.

"It's kind of taking this piece of property back to where it originally was," he said, "except it's legal."