

**FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES, no. 66 – September 2020**  
***Prohibition, 1914-1933***  
**Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center**



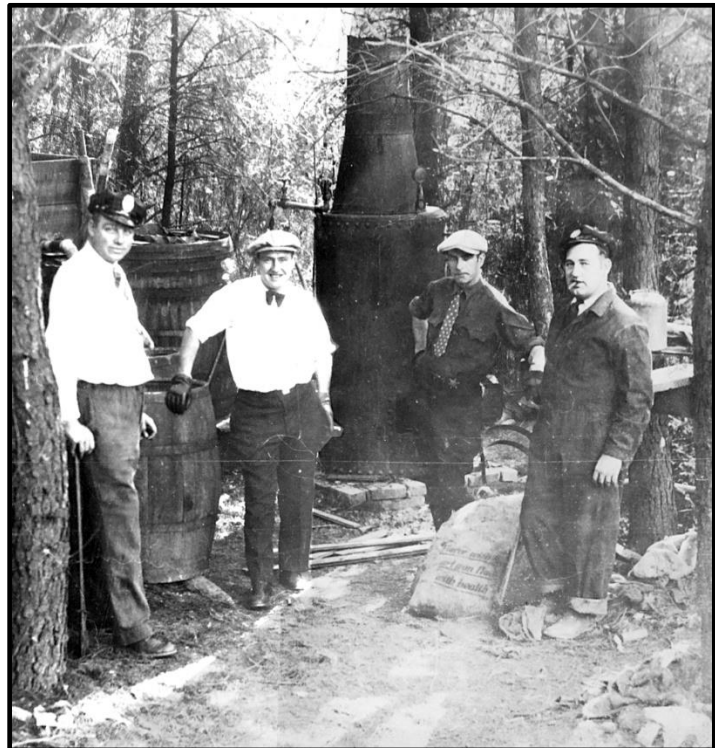
Greetings from the Historic Records Center! As with suffrage's recent centennial anniversary, the National Prohibition Act also has an anniversary this month. Archives staff have uncovered exciting evidence of this law as we continue processing the Court's Term Papers (Judgements) collection.

Although the Prohibition Amendment was not ratified until 1919, Virginia established a state-wide ban on the sale of alcohol in 1914, and many Virginia counties were "dry" even before then. Prohibition violations appear in Fairfax County arrest and jail records with the passing of the State ban, but once it was federalized, alcohol-related cases and violations filled the Court's criminal dockets and fee books.

### **New Laws and Procedures**

Fairfax County may not have had the likes of Al Capone or 'Lucky' Luciano running booze in Fairfax County, but several citizens faced repeat charges of the following crimes:

- Unlawful and felonious manufacture of distilled ardent spirits
- Unlawful sale of distilled ardent spirits
- Felonious possession of a still
- Selling ardent spirits without a license
- Unlawful possession, etc., of distilled ardent spirits



*McIntosh and Williams Still Raid, November 1, 1929. Image courtesy of Lee Hubbard.*

The Courts used a specific warrant to search for ardent spirits in residents' homes, which listed information about the places the inspector intended to search. One February 1927 raid of a repeat offender's home and outbuildings produced "3 ½ gallons fruit jars full of ardent spirits, and 1 ½ gallons fruit jar ½ full of ardent sprits in trap in house, under floor."

Form of Account for fees of Commonwealth's Attorneys, Clerks of Courts; Board and Guards for Juries; Clothing, Guards, Medicine and Medical Attention for Prisoners in Jail; Rewards for Capture of Stills; Coroner's Fees, &c., &c. (Sheriffs and Sergeants must not use this Form for Court Attendance Accounts or for Accounts for making Arrests, &c.)

OFFICIAL FORM NO. 4

The Commonwealth of Virginia,

To *Virgil Williams Prohibition Inspector* Dr.

§§ (Felonies, Misdemeanors and Prohibition Items must be grouped and added separately. This applies to accounts of Commonwealth's Attorneys and Clerks of Courts only.)

| Actual Date Service Rendered (Not Court Term) 1924 | Indicate below in proper column exact nature of service rendered—be explicit. Show date of each item—this is important. Name of defendant or person for whom service was performed must always be shown. (See other side for detailed instructions, etc.) | Nature of Offense (Indicate by ✓) |             |             |                           | Was Defendant Acquitted or Convicted? "A" or "C" | Have costs been paid to Clerk of Supts. or "NO." | Amount Allowed |
|--|---|-----------------------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|--|--|----------------|
|  |   | Felony                            | Misdemeanor | Prohibition | Misdemeanor - Prohibition |  |  |                |
| July 1924  | 1924 confiscated 1-100 gal copper still complete quarters unknown   |                                   |             | ✓           | ✓                         |  | \$20 21.00                                       |                |
| Aug-14   | " " " " 1-500 " " " " " " " "   |                                   |             | ✓           |                           |  | \$10 10.00                                       |                |
| " "  | " " " " 1-200 " " " " " " " "   |                                   |             | ✓           |                           |  | \$10 10.00                                       |                |
| " "  | " " " " 1-100 " " " " " " " "   |                                   |             | ✓           |                           |  | \$10 10.00                                       |                |
| Sept 11  | " " " " 1-150 " " " " " " " "   |                                   |             | ✓           |                           |  | \$10 10.00                                       |                |
|  |   |                                   |             |             |                           |  | \$50 50.00                                       |                |

Prohibition Inspector's Form of Account for Fees, September 24, 1924

Prohibition inspectors were paid a \$10 reward for the capture of each still (see image left) while the Sheriff's Deputies were paid to destroy them. Those charged with violating prohibition laws paid the corresponding fines imposed by the Judge.

County Judges also ordered all seized alcohol, and its manufacturing instruments destroyed (see image right).

### Prohibition and the Automobile

The National ban on "the production, sale, and transport of intoxicating liquors" coincided with the rise of the automobile, and violations pertaining to both spirits and car accidents fill Court Order Books, often present together. Not only did the Court hear more prohibition cases, but there was a rise in the charge of "unlawfully operating a car under the influence of intoxicants."

Pursuant to an order of the Judge of the Circuit Court of Fairfax County, Virginia, entered at the November Term of said Court, that certain liquor should be destroyed as follows:

Chas. E. Beans..... 1 Quart

John Hill & Bernard Cleveland... 1 Ga. mash

Edward Harris, Max Cave & A. E. Breeden... 2-2/3 pints liquor

John Brown, Joe Mills Sr., Joe Mills Jr., John Mills.. 1 gal & 1 qt.

Frank Clayton... 1 pint.

A. G. Condrey... 11 ½ Gallons

Edward Ebner.... 1 pint.

Tommy Tedore & Wm. Vanhorn... 1/2 pint

J. D. Hens... 4 gallons

Everett Mock.. no liquor.

James E. Dodson.. no liquor

Wm. R. Draper... 1/2 gallon

Lewis Fones.... No liquor

Harry Krause... No Liquor

Dewey Mock..... No liquor

Tilman Neal.... No liquor

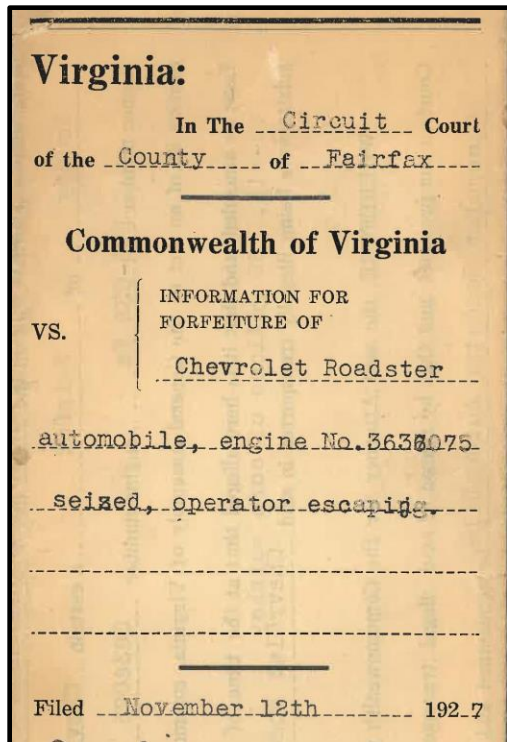
John Fry..... ½ gallon

D. C. Davis & Herbert Shepherd, was destroyed by Wilson M. Farr

Peyton Ballenger... 27 gallons in kegs 4 ½ cases

*E. P. Kirby*

Liquor Destruction Order, Fairfax Minute Book 13, page 181. November 27, 1929

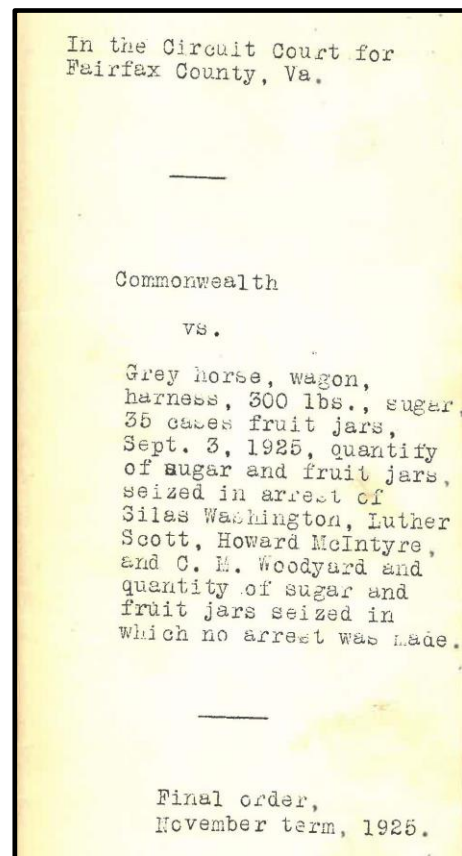


Automobiles (and sometimes horses and wagons) found with alcohol were seized and condemned by the Court, due to the illegal nature of the transportation of ardent spirits. In doing so, these cases were styled as the *Commonwealth of Virginia versus [the vehicle]*, for the seizure/impound of the car, and not necessarily the operator. Often those arrested for the transport of alcohol were not the actual owners of the vehicles, and later, the true owner would petition to have their vehicle returned, claiming ignorance of the activities that led to its condemnation. In the 1927 condemnation case of the Chevrolet Roadster on the left (found with 60 gallons of corn whisky), the escaped operator's mother petitioned to have her car returned two months later.

The immense stacks of vehicle condemnation cases found in our Term Papers can even be a study of Prohibition-era automobile manufacture. Frequently condemned cars at this time include:

- Chrysler Sedan
- Studebaker Touring Car
- Dodge Roadster
- Overland Touring Car
- Essex Sedan
- Hupmobile Roadster
- Packard Touring Car
- Hudson Coach
- Buick Motor Car
- Chandler Touring Car
- Cadillac Automobile

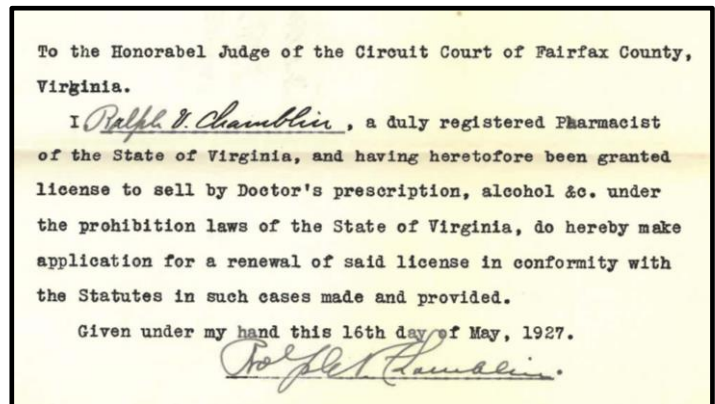
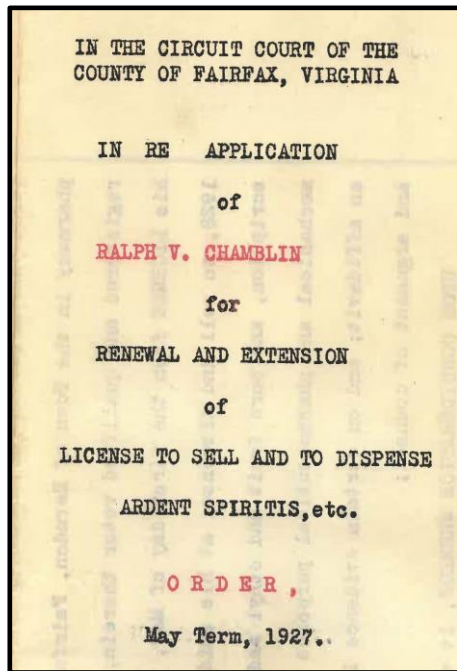
Plenty of Ford Trucks, Coupes, and even trusty grey mares (with their wagons) were taken as well!





## Lawful Distribution of Alcohol

Two circumstances permitted the legal distribution of alcohol during Prohibition – as prescription for scientific and mechanical and pharmaceutical purposes, and as wine for sacramental purposes. Although citizens of Fairfax County had obtained liquor licenses through the Court for years, during Prohibition only pharmacists, priests, and rabbis were granted a “License to Sell and to Dispense Ardent Spirits.” The images below show the renewal of Pharmacist Ralph V. Chamblin’s license, who operated in Clifton.



The Nation’s experiment with Prohibition, and Virginia’s own take on the ban, comes to life in the Court’s Archives. As we continue to process the Term Papers and update some of our collections, we will keep you apprised of any other exciting discoveries!

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If you have questions about these or other records found at the Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records Center, please email [CCRHistoricRecords@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:CCRHistoricRecords@fairfaxcounty.gov) or call 703-246-4168.

*Fairfax Circuit Court Historic Records has reopened **by appointment only**. To schedule an appointment, please call 703-246-4168. We can also assist with research requests over the phone or via email!*