

Record booze haul

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“After one year from the ratification of this article the manufacture, sale or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes is hereby prohibited.” - The 18th Amendment was ratified Jan. 16, 1919

It was on Oct. 13, 1927 that one of the biggest illicit distilleries in New York State was seized by authorities in Albion. The photo shown here is by the late Fred Holt and was used at the time the story broke in the local and Rochester newspapers.

Credit for the capture went to those pictured herein. From left to right: State Trooper J.P. Fisher, Under Sheriff L.S. Highley, Orleans County Sheriff Ross Hollenbeck, Deputy Matt McGlen and State Trooper H.L. DeBrien.

The distillery was located in an unused canning factory off West

Avenue in Albion.

It was thought that the building was only used for storage or warehouse purposes as the windows were either boarded up or camouflaged with stacks of canned fruit on the inside. Deliveries to and from this building only occurred at night under the cover of darkness.

Thus, no one suspected any activity within the walls for several years.

On the night of the seizure the five authorities afore mentioned, surrounded the factory about midnight. When the doors opened and a loaded truck in route to Rochester drove out, the Sheriff and his companions quickly captured it, the driver, four accomplices working there as well as the building, all its equipment and fermenting liquor amounting to over 10,000 gallons.

The truck was loaded

with forty-one five gallon tins of alcohol. The men who were arrested told the authorities they never saw daylight as they slept during the day and worked at night. Meals were brought to them by “the boss” in his sedan.

Two stills were being used, one of 1,500 gallons and one of 1,000 gallons capacity plus ten large fermenting vats. These were full, amounting to 1,300 gallons each. There were also five tons of corn sugar in sacks and a quantity of yeast as well as malt.

John A. Johnson, Chief Enforcement Officer of the Rochester Prohibition Office arrived later in the day to take charge of dismantling the plant. He also took the prisoners to Rochester where they were arraigned the next day before U.S. Commissioner Cyrus W. Phillips. It was believed that the operation was out of Rochester as four of the five arrested were from that city.

“The 18th article of amendment to the Constitution of the United States is hereby repealed.” - The 21st article of amendment was ratified Dec. 5, 1933.



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