The Rise and Fall of Prohibition: History Center’s New Exhibit Brings the Roaring ’20s to Life

-Traveling exhibit from the National Constitution Center explores America’s colorful constitutional hiccup with rare artifacts, immersive displays, and interactive activities-

PITTSBURGH, Feb. 8, 2018 – The Senator John Heinz History Center, the “Smithsonian’s home in Pittsburgh,” invites visitors to explore an exhilarating era of bootleggers, flappers, gangsters, speakeasies, and suffragists as part of a new traveling exhibition, American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition, which makes its final stop on a nationwide tour beginning Saturday, Feb. 10.

Created in partnership with the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, American Spirits is the first comprehensive exhibit about America’s most colorful and complex constitutional hiccup.

The 9,000-square-foot exhibit brings the story of Prohibition vividly to life – from the dawn of the temperance movement, through the Roaring ’20s, and up to the unprecedented repeal of a constitutional amendment.

Highlights include:

- More than 180 rare artifacts, including Pittsburgh’s first “Tommy Gun,” flapper dresses, temperance propaganda, flasks used for bootleg liquor during Prohibition, and a hatchet famously flaunted by temperance advocate Carry Nation;
- Immersive areas like a re-created speakeasy – a term purportedly coined by saloon owner Kate Hester in the 1880s, just outside of Pittsburgh in McKeesport;
- Two classic Prohibition-era vehicles, a 1922 Studebaker and a 1932 Model 18 Ford V-8 (the favorite of Clyde Barrow and John Dillinger); and
- The dazzling Wayne Wheeler’s Amazing Amendment Machine – a 20-foot-long, carnival-inspired contraption that traces how the temperance movement culminated in the passage of the 18th Amendment.

Visitors can learn to dance the Charleston (a popular Prohibition-era dance craze), track down rumrunners in a custom-built video game, and pose for a mugshot beside a lineup of some of the era’s most notorious gangsters like Al Capone and Meyer Lansky.

The Smithsonian-affiliated History Center will also display a model of a Prohibition-era “rum runner” motorboat, on loan from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

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**Exploring Pittsburgh’s Spirited History**

The *American Spirits* exhibit at the History Center will examine Pittsburgh’s deep connections with the regulation of alcohol, which has been a catalyst for civic dissent since the Whiskey Rebellion in 1791-1794. During the Prohibition era, Pittsburgh – with its immigrant population heavily involved in the liquor business – earned a reputation as one of the “wettest” cities in America.

The exhibit will include several local artifacts that showcase Western Pennsylvania’s long history with alcohol, including items from the region’s new wave of spirits distributors like Wigle Whiskey, Maggie’s Farm Rum, and more.

**Free Whiskey Samples on Opening Day – Saturday, Feb. 10**

As part of the Opening Day celebration for *American Spirits*, Wigle Whiskey – the first distillery in Pittsburgh since the Prohibition era – will offer FREE whiskey and cider samples to all guests age 21 and over, beginning at 11 a.m. Stop by the Wigle Whiskey sampling table and receive complimentary tickets for a cider pour at its new Threadbare Cider House, while supplies last. At 1 p.m., don’t miss an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of *American Spirits* with senior curator Leslie Przybylek, who will discuss Pittsburgh’s long history with alcohol regulation.

The *American Spirits* exhibit, which will be on display through June 10, 2018, is included with regular museum admission: $16 for adults; $14 for seniors (62+) and active duty and retired military; $6.50 for students and children ages 6-17; and free for children 5 and under and History Center members.

The *American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* exhibition is presented by The Bognar Family and sponsored by Robert J. & Bonnie Cindrich and Latasha Wilson Batch; with support from the Allegheny Regional Asset District, The Heinz Endowments, and Richard King Mellon Foundation.

For more information, including behind-the-scenes photos and a full lineup of public programs, please visit www.heinzhistorycenter.org.

**The Senator John Heinz History Center**, an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution and the largest history museum in Pennsylvania, presents American history with a Western Pennsylvania connection. The Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum is a museum within a museum, comprehensively presenting the region’s remarkable sports story through hundreds of artifacts and interactive experiences for visitors of all ages. The History Center and Sports Museum are located at 1212 Smallman Street in the city’s Strip District, and are open every day from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The History Center’s museum system includes the Sports Museum; the Fort Pitt Museum in historic Point State Park; and Meadowcroft Rockshelter and Historic Village, a National Historic Landmark located in Avella, Pa. in Washington County. More information is available at www.heinzhistorycenter.org.
The *American Spirits* exhibition is part of the History Center’s *America 101* initiative, which engages and inspires the public to learn American history through public programs, educational outreach, and special exhibitions.

*American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* is created by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, Pa. (www.constitutioncenter.org). The exhibit is made possible in part by a major grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities (NEH): Exploring the human endeavor.
The Heinz History Center’s new *American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* exhibition brings the story of Prohibition vividly to life – from the dawn of the temperance movement, through the Roaring ’20s, and up to the unprecedented repeal of a constitutional amendment. In this photo, Prohibition agents pour confiscated liquor into a sewer in New York City following a raid, about 1921 (courtesy of the Library of Congress).
Visitors will explore an exhilarating era of bootleggers, flappers, gangsters, speakeasies, and suffragists as part of the History Center’s *American Spirits* exhibition (photo: Bee Jackson, the World Champion of the 1920s dance craze “The Charleston”).

Visitors to the *American Spirits* exhibit can pose for a mugshot beside Al Capone and Meyer Lansky in a lineup of some of the era’s most notorious gangsters.