"But a Cog in the Underworld Machine"

Bootlegging, Corruption, and the Schumacher Family in Prohibition Era Fargo-Moorhead

By Daniel D. McCollum

At 2 p.m. on February 11, 1932, Judge Carroll A. Nye rose from his bench and announced the sentencing of Jacob "Jake" Schumacher. Schumacher had been tried and found guilty on February 6 for orchestrating the December 29, 1931, robbery of the Sabin State Bank in the small town of Sabin, Minnesota, less than ten miles from the border communities of Fargo, North Dakota, and Moorhead, Minnesota.

In announcing his decision, Judge Nye acknowledged that a plea deal had been arranged for a lesser sentence if Schumacher agreed to testify against his comrades, but the judge determined Schumacher's guilt was so plain that it would be impossible to follow through on the deal. As such, Nye chose to sentence Schumacher, a thirty-eight-year-old Moorhead resident, to life in prison, then the mandatory sentence for bank robbery in the state of Minnesota.

According to the *Moorhead Daily News*, Schumacher "turned away with a leering smile on his face as the sentence was pronounced."[1]

Jacob "Jake" Schumacher was sentenced to life in prison for planning the 1931 robbery of the Sabin (Minnesota) State Bank. This mug shot was taken in 1944, when he was paroled from the Minnesota State Prison in Stillwater. *Minnesota Historical Society*

The year 1931 had proven to be a difficult one in the life of Jake Schumacher. Once known as the dominant "beer baron" in Fargo-Moorhead and its surrounding communities, his position had eroded over the course of the year, following a series of run-ins with local law enforcement. The unraveling began in January 1931, when Schumacher was arrested by federal agents for his connections with "what prohibition agents declare to be the biggest US Canadian liquor smuggling conspiracy in the north-west in years," as well as being served by county officials in regard to a statutory rape charge filed against him by a young woman.[2] Then in March, just days after the death of his mother, it was reported that Schumacher had pulled a sawed-off shotgun on a former police officer during an argument that may have resulted from the infidelity of Schumacher's wife, Nanny. Finally, in the days leading up to the ill-fated robbery at Sabin, Schumacher was again arrested for firing five shots and beating Patrick McLeary with the butt of his gun, claiming that McLeary had stolen his car—a story that was heavily questioned in later months when it was revealed he had hired McLeary to be his personal driver. Rumors persisted that he had attacked the young man after the latter refused to follow through on a robbery Schumacher had planned. By the time of the Sabin robbery, the *Moorhead Daily News* reported that Schumacher had been "dethroned" as "the king pin in liquor running operations" in favor of W. E. McGavin. The report went on to say, "Schumacher since has become but a cog in the underworld machine."[3] Regardless of whether or not he had lost his leadership position, Jake Schumacher's life sentence effectively brought to an end his criminal career, and also ended the criminal enterprises of the Schumacher family that had begun under his father, Charles, in the early 1920s.[4]

National Prohibition had a tremendous impact upon the twin communities of Fargo-Moorhead. By exploiting weaknesses in local government—such as the patronage system of appointing police officers as detailed in David Danbom's *Going It Alone: Fargo Grapples with the Great Depression*—Prohibition undermined respect for local institutions and fostered a culture of widely accepted lawbreaking.[5] The Schumacher family took advantage of this vacuum of authority, supplying a thirsty public with the illicit goods they so desired. In doing so the family rose to a height of public prominence that became their boon and bane. While the local public and authorities were willing to tolerate the Schumachers and their criminal enterprises as long as those activities fulfilled a perceived need and did not disrupt the local communities, they were quick to turn against the family when their activities threatened the public (such as the Sabin bank robbery). The story of the Schumacher family is important, as it shines a light upon the structure of criminal organizations in smaller urban centers during the era and helps illuminate the economic ties of the Prohibition black market, which linked Fargo-Moorhead to the major urban centers of the Upper Midwest and the West.[6]

Charles "Charlie" Schumacher first came to public notice on August 8, 1920, when his Moorhead residence was raided by P. C. Darby, chief of the federal Bureau of Prohibition office in Fargo. The raid found 290 quarts of Canadian whisky located underneath the floorboards of Schumacher's home. He was thirty-seven years old at the time and patriarch of a family with seven children. Prior to his arrest, he worked as a meat seller in Moorhead; he listed his career as such throughout the remainder of the 1920s, as did his son Jake. An immigrant from Baden-Württemberg, Germany, Charles had first settled in Iowa, where he met and married his wife, Anna Widenbacher, and worked as a butcher before eventually relocating to Moorhead around 1906. Of the children, it would be his son Jake and daughter Celeste, known popularly as "Babe," who would follow their father and mother into the illegal liquor business. Jake, born in Iowa in 1893, moved with his family to Moorhead before relocating to St. Paul, Minnesota, in the late 1910s. A 1920 census records him as living in St. Paul with his wife, Nanny, an immigrant from Norway, and his six-year-old daughter, Eveline. Jake would relocate with his wife to Moorhead and take an active role in the family business, while his daughter disappeared from census records and presumably passed away. Besides Jake and Babe, the rest of the children had much less contact with the family business. One son, Charles Jr., served in the First World War before passing

away in 1926. His death was a result of complications from surgery received in Chicago that had been necessitated by a war condition. The other sons, George, Joseph, and Andrew, appear to have taken little part in the illegal activities of the family and had grown distant by the time of Jake's eventual release from prison in 1944.[7]

From the very beginning, Charles Schumacher showed a tendency for public spectacle and aplomb. In an August 11, 1922, editorial in the *Country Press* entitled "Is There a Big Liquor Ring in the County?," editor Archie Whaley recounts how the elder Schumacher had "sometime ago" been arrested for possessing 500 quarts of Canadian and American whiskey. After the charges were dismissed following the disappearance of the evidence, which amounted to $7,500 in liquor, Schumacher spoke to Whaley, stating that he had traded liquor to a group of bootleggers for a fast car. Playing the role of the honest criminal, Schumacher went on to say: "I know the three men who sold this liquor at $15 [a] bottle, and I am telling you right here that I have the goods on 'em, and I am going to bring this before the grand jury, and don't you forget it."[8]

Such open bravado was not a onetime occurrence for the elder Schumacher. In December of the same year Schumacher was again in the papers, this time for having purchased a confiscated roadster from the Fargo police. The auto in question had been seized from bootleggers, with bullet holes in its side as a mark of the vehicle's

By the time the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution came into effect in January 1920, North Dakota had been a dry state for thirty years, having entered into the Union in 1889 with prohibition enshrined in its state constitution.

occupation, and was known to be one of the fastest cars in the region. After the purchase, Charles Schumacher was quoted as stating he had bought the car to "preserve as a relic of the Whiskey Running days."[9] Whether or not that story was to be believed, the automobile in question was never mentioned again.

Jake Schumacher also possessed much of his father's bravado, but it was often brought out by acts of a much darker quality. Following his assault on George Gunderson, the younger Schumacher allegedly walked into the police station, trailing Gunderson, demanding that the chief of police order his opponent out of town. Later, during what culminated in his assault of Pat McLeary, Jake phoned the police and incorrectly reported his car stolen before attempting to shoot and beat the young man, later

North Dakota entered the Union in 1889 as a dry state. Reform and religious organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union spearheaded the state's prohibition effort. This march was in Devils Lake in 1885. *SHSND SA 00239-00134*

This “blind pig,” or speakeasy, was operated by Julius May in White Earth, Mountrail County, North Dakota. The photo is from 1902.
SHSND SA D0722-00001

North Dakota possessed many key features that drew the attention of smugglers, including its long border with Canada, its central location—which made for easy distribution throughout the West—and its small population.

admitting his involvement to police with no apparent remorse or belief he had been in the wrong. Perhaps the final word on the Schumacher family's attitude toward law enforcement and local authorities was summed up by Jake Schumacher while preparing for the robbery of the Sabin bank. According to Abe Redman, a member of the gang selected for the job, Schumacher stated, "Boys, I guess we're all set. Let's do the job. We've got to do the job. You don't have to worry about the law around here. I am the law."[10]

Despite the showmanship, guile, and aggression that came to mark Charles and Jake's dominance of the local liquor market, it is unlikely the Schumachers would have ever risen to prominence in the Fargo-Moorhead community without the stunning victories of the Prohibition movement, both locally and nationally. Beginning in the late nineteenth century and reaching the zenith of its power in the years directly following the First World War, Prohibition sought to remove what temperance proponents saw as the corrupting influence of alcohol by banning the importation, manufacture, and distribution of intoxicating beverages throughout the nation. The rationale differed from location to location and among the different wings of the movement, but generally temperance supporters held that outlawing liquor would uplift the working class by providing protection to women from drunken abusive husbands, as well as protect their wages and income from quenching a man's thirst for booze. Others felt that Prohibition would help Americanize new immigrants by helping them assimilate; this view was an attack on communities, such as the Irish and Germans to name but two, who held onto their distinct cultural identities for generations, and for whom alcohol was viewed as part of their identity.[11]

By the time the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution came into effect in January 1920, North Dakota had been a dry state for thirty years, having entered into the Union in 1889 with prohibition enshrined in its state constitution. Like in much of the nation, North Dakota's prohibition effort was spearheaded by reform and religious organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Lutheran Church, the latter of which was prominent in the state due to North Dakota's heavy Scandinavian population. In a pattern that would

repeat itself on state and national levels for decades to come, many dealers simply relocated across the border to Minnesota, opened illegal taverns known as "blind pigs," or blatantly refused to obey the law. Prohibition also antagonized the state's large German immigrant population, who viewed it as an attack on their cultural traditions by an alliance between Anglo-American settlers and the Scandinavian reformers of the Red River Valley. Enforcement of the law would prove difficult in the years prior to national Prohibition; with the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment and the passing of the Volstead Act, which codified Prohibition as federal law, enforcement became nearly impossible.[12]

Although reformers had hoped that the banning of alcohol would clean up cities and lead to rapid Americanization of large southern and eastern European immigrant communities in America's urban centers, they were only partially successful. While the amount of alcohol consumed by members of the poorer classes did drop, it also opened business opportunities for members of those same communities who had no problem flaunting the law. Sensing an opportunity, the first years of Prohibition saw the rise of large, organized criminal gangs that attempted to break into the new market and distribute alcohol to meet public demand. These gangs were often composed of members of first and second generation immigrants, most notably Italian and Jewish Americans. For many of these gang members, criminal life offered an opportunity to gain wealth and respect, which did not seem possible in mainstream American society. Most gangs had begun as smaller organizations that specialized in racketeering, robbery, and extortion before the liquor business offered them a chance to expand. Many organizations also developed close ties with local political organizations, such as in Kansas City, where local criminal leaders also operated as important figures in "Boss" Pendergast's political machine. Such alliances could be mutually beneficial, as they enriched local officials through bribes, and also allowed criminals to continue to run their businesses smoothly with few interruptions from police or rival organizations. Once these criminal organizations entered into the liquor trade, they had several ways to procure their supplies, including running illicit distilleries, paying entire communities to run private stills, and stealing or purchasing stockpiles of alcohol that had been legally collected prior to the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment. However, the most profitable business involved smuggling liquor from nations where it remained legal—usually Canada in the Northern states. At the height of Prohibition at least five million gallons of liquor were smuggled across the Canadian border, and each of those gallons could be watered down and doctored in order to supply even more product for sale.[13]

Liquor smuggling truly earned North Dakota its position of notoriety during the Prohibition Era. The state possessed many key features that drew the attention of smugglers, including its long border with Canada, its central location—which made for easy distribution throughout the West—and its small population (approximately 647,000 in 1920). However, North Dakota might never have developed into a key conduit for liquor smuggling and distribution had it not been for the opening of a series of liquor export houses along the North Dakota–Saskatchewan border by Sam Bronfman, then owner of the Joseph E. Seagram and Sons liquor distribution company. These export houses would set the countryside of northeastern North Dakota awash in rumrunners and representatives of criminal organizations from throughout the West and as far east as Chicago. Local law enforcement was unequipped to deal with the sudden surge of criminals and was left struggling to keep up. As early as 1920, F. L. Watkins, the sheriff of Ward County in northwestern North Dakota, acquired military-issue machine guns for his officers in an attempt to stem the tide. However, all was for naught; the same sheriff would testify that corrupt officials in local government, as well as in the northwest division of the Bureau of Prohibition, were in league with the bootleggers and would work to undermine the efforts of the police and other local law enforcement agents.[14]

> It was not Jake's involvement in organized liquor smuggling that led to his life sentence, but his attempts to branch out into other forms of crime.

Was the law for sale in Fargo-Moorhead during the 1920s and '30s? There can be no doubt that such corruption occurred and may even have been commonplace. During national Prohibition several high-note cases occurred that spotlighted corruption in the Fargo-Moorhead community. On October 8, 1920, Robert B. Leady was arrested for smuggling liquor to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Leady claimed to have been serving as bureau chief of the Fargo Bureau of Prohibition office for two days, previously having served as an agent before receiving his assignment on October 6. Indicted along with him were Theodore Musjard, a former clerk in the local Prohibition office who had been caught smuggling 120 quarts of liquor (which appeared to have been stolen from the Prohibition Bureau office) from Fargo-Moorhead to Sioux Falls, and one E. O. Haugen, the proprietor of the Allen Hotel in Moorhead. The complaint stated that Musjard had been enticed to pick up a load of liquor from E. O. Haugen at the behest of Leady, and Musjard then traveled to Sioux Falls to sell it to Leady's contacts. It soon became evident, however, that Leady was not the permanent

Federal agents who raided a farm in Oliver County, seventeen miles north of Mandan, North Dakota, confiscated 22,500 gallons of mash used to make alcoholic drinks, 17,200 pounds of special distillery sugar, 12 barrels of molasses, and a $15,000 still. In 1928, the still and supplies were valued at $48,000. *SHSND C1710-00003*

bureau chief. Perry C. Darby, the true chief, had been on vacation during the time and claimed to have no knowledge of being replaced. Paul D. Keller, director of the Northwest Division of the Prohibition Bureau, confirmed he had named Leady as temporary head of the Fargo office until Darby's return. The ensuing court battle captivated the cities, and an eventual guilty verdict was administered. Leady was sentenced to a year and a day in federal prison in Leavenworth, Kansas; the decision made front-page news in the *Fargo Forum*. Responding to the charges of corruption, the Prohibition office in Fargo was closed until January of the next year, when a new staff was appointed.[15]

Ten years later, Fargo was rocked by another high-profile corruption case; a raid by Fargo police on the Fargo Storage and Transfer Company resulted in the seizing of six hundred gallons of alcohol stored on the premises by Arthur Barenson. However, in the midst of the raid, a truckload of alcohol was allowed to leave the city unmolested; rumors circulated that a direct order to ignore the truck had come from Chief of Police Ed Madison. Although Madison was able to survive an inquiry into his actions by the Fargo City Council, he would soon find himself facing charges brought against him by the federal government for his possible involvement in a statewide liquor ring. Forced to resign his position, Madison continued to plead his innocence and deny any wrongdoing. The jury agreed with him, or at least felt there was not enough evidence to directly link him to the crime. On September 20, 1930, Madison's case resulted in a hung jury, and on December 16, 1931, Ed Madison was officially found not guilty of aiding and abetting the rumrunners along with Lee Dillage, the accused truck driver.[16]

Although sensational cases such as these were rare in Fargo-Moorhead, low-level corruption was a common occurrence among law enforcement and city officials, which rarely elicited much public outcry or shock. David Danbom, in his book *Going It Alone*, records several cases of police corruption related to prohibition and vice. For example, in July 1929, M. W. Murphy, then Fargo city attorney, reported that criminal elements in the lower Front Street district openly stated that they received protection from the city police. In 1938, Mary Maid, a Fargo policewoman, brought a formal complaint against the chief of police and the police commissioner, alleging that they protected underage drinking, prostitution, gambling, and other vices. Maid was fired for her efforts and forced to retract her complaint.

Across the Red River in Moorhead, the situation was no more tolerable. Archie Whaley, editor of the *Country Press*, often lambasted the attempts of Cass County and City of Moorhead officials to crack down on the liquor trade. Alleging that the bootleggers were united in a union, he

accused leading figures in the community of condoning the illegal business, explaining the bootlegger–community leader alliance in a December 18, 1925, editorial by stating, "There is plenty of money in the alcohol business. And that is that." Three years earlier in another editorial he had called attention to the fact that liquor was being sold openly in prominent establishments with no efforts being made to prevent the sale. In Whaley's portrayal the local officials were incompetent, undedicated, or openly working with the bootleggers. Even the seizure of two hundred gallons of liquor heading to Moorhead from Minneapolis was not cause for celebration, as the arrest likely stemmed from internal rivalries between bootleggers and not from actual police work. These opinions were shared by many of Whaley's readers. In a letter to the editor that appeared in the October 8, 1926, edition of the *Country Press*, a writer criticized the local government for not closing down a single illegal establishment and accused the county sheriff of corruption, stating, "The blind pigs are said to be working for him in this election. Go to it, the people are getting wise to the game." Whaley's crusade against what he saw as the prevalent corruption in Moorhead and Clay County struck a nerve with local residents and led him to run for county sheriff, defeating the incumbent on November 5, 1926.[17]

A police chief and a deputy pose with confiscated alcohol and equipment that led to the arrest of a bootlegger in Grafton, North Dakota, sometime between 1929 and 1931. *Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo*

Although no overt evidence of the Schumachers' involvement in city corruption exists, it would be surprising if they did not engage in the practice, and their very success makes it almost certain. Despite the many times members of the family came up against the law, they often were released with minimum penalties. As late as 1929, Charles Schumacher received a fine of only $100 after being found guilty of violating liquor laws, although he was warned that another violation would see him turned over to federal officials. Members of the family also showed a peculiar knack for escaping with no punishment at all, such as the incident in 1921, when Charles Schumacher was released after the disappearance of the evidence. The Schumachers failed to escape harsh punishment only when they were involved in crimes that did not actively involve the sale of liquor, or when they attempted to flee even the most minimal of punishments. Babe Schumacher's arrest and sentencing of one to two years in prison was brought about not by her being caught selling liquor. Instead, it was her fleeing the scene of the crime and attempting to escape punishment that brought about the sentence. Likewise, it was not Jake's involvement in organized liquor smuggling that led to his life sentence, but his attempts to branch out into other forms of crime. Although this does not point to active corruption on the part of the family, it does, at the very least, speak to a certain acceptance of their place in the community by city leaders.[18]

What cannot be denied is that the Schumachers had connections to organized crime in Minneapolis and St. Paul. On September 9, 1924, David Pleason and R. M. Miller of St. Paul were arrested while unloading a truckload of alcohol at the Schumacher home in Moorhead. The next day the police raided a Fargo warehouse following a tip from a prominent Moorhead bootlegger that a robbery was underway. Although the robbers made off with over nine hundred gallons of liquor, more than sixteen hundred gallons were recovered. David Pleason was arrested as the owner of the liquor and found guilty on December 16, 1924. It seems probable that Charles Schumacher was the prominent Moorhead bootlegger who notified the police of the robbery, likely to prevent the liquor from falling into the hands of rivals. He already had been shown to have connections with Pleason only the day before; during the trial of Jake Schumacher, it was revealed by Deputy John Whaley that Jake had acted as an informant for the police in times past, possibly carrying on the tradition of his father.[19]

Connections between organized crime in Fargo-Moorhead and the Minneapolis–St. Paul area were vibrant during the entirety of the Prohibition Era. As early as 1920, Fred Rist, an agent of the local Prohibition Bureau, was involved in the arrest of E. A. Stevenson and F. Arnold. These two men were attempting to sell whiskey in Fargo and had been involved in the fall of disgraced Hennepin County Sheriff Oscar Martinson. Martinson had been elected as the sheriff of Hennepin County in 1919, but saw his term cut short when he was arrested along with five

> The environment that had allowed the Schumachers to make a living by flaunting the law ended with the dismantling of Prohibition in 1933.

others for attempting to smuggle Canadian whisky into Minneapolis by train. His guilty plea and testimony about corruption in the government of both Hennepin County and the City of Minneapolis had become a large regional news story in 1920.

Sometimes the criminal influence came from further afield, such as the disclosure in February 1921 that criminal figures in Chicago were attempting to smuggle alcohol into the region from Canada by use of airplanes. Occasionally the rivalries of organizations in the Twin Cities came to involve Fargo-Moorhead, such as the December 1922 raid—which stemmed from a tip received from Minneapolis—of Schranz's Garage in Moorhead. The most celebrated case of Prohibition in the 1920s occurred on May 18, 1923, when a shipment of twenty-four hundred pints of red-colored liquor, labeled as hair tonic, was seized at the Moorhead rail depot by police. The supposed hair tonic, which had an estimated street value of $11,000, was addressed to the Franklin Drug Company, which did not exist, and originated from R. Weiler and Co., a Chicago-based company that also did not exist. Despite the value of the capture, the liquor was eventually returned to its owner by the order of Judge Booth of Minneapolis, and no arrests were ever made. Although no other similar case occurred in the Fargo-Moorhead region, large rail shipments from fictitious distributors to nonexistent receivers were a common tactic for distributing alcohol during the era, and were commonly used by the Purple Gang to move large quantities of alcohol from Detroit to Capone's Chicago.[20]

The hair tonic case must have been highly disconcerting to the residents of Fargo-Moorhead, as it clearly illustrated that criminal elements from the large cities had infiltrated their community, and that local law enforcement was often unable, or unwilling, to effectively deal with them. However, these facts should have come as no surprise to readers of the local newspapers. In December 1920, the *Fargo Forum* ran an exposé detailing the infiltration of North Dakota by criminals for the express purpose of smuggling liquor across the Canadian border. While blaming the increase in smuggling on criminal elements from the Twin Cities, Omaha, and Sioux Falls, the *Forum* crowed at the ingenuity of local liquor buyers, who had begun to buy in groups and were driving the price of a pint of Canadian whisky down from $20–25 to only $14–15. The importance of Fargo to smuggling operations was not lost on the *Country Press*, which reported that Fargo-Moorhead was a dividing line between the Omaha and Twin Cities smuggling organizations. Smuggling increased throughout the 1920s; in a three-month period in 1925, it was estimated that $1,620,000 was smuggled into the state from north of Grand Forks alone, signifying Fargo-Moorhead would continue to act as a distribution point and crossroads for national liquor trafficking.[21]

Within this web of rival criminal organizations, law enforcement, and a thirsty public, the Schumachers were happy to play the part of local distributors of illicit goods. The community was so desperate for liquor that, between July 1 and December 31, 1920, federal officials confiscated $114,800 worth of alcohol in North Dakota alone. Rarely associated with moonshining, the Schumachers instead focused on illicit liquor smuggled in from Canada—although as the Pearson case demonstrates, they were not above importing liquor from the Twin Cities in spite of the goods' inferior quality. The family appears to have rarely operated their home as a blind pig, instead using the Moorhead house as one place to store liquor before selling it to interested buyers. Even though the home was raided by police several times over the course of the 1920s,

Charles Schumacher was convicted in federal court at Fergus Falls, Minnesota, for liquor law violations and sentenced June 7, 1935. *National Archives at Kansas City*

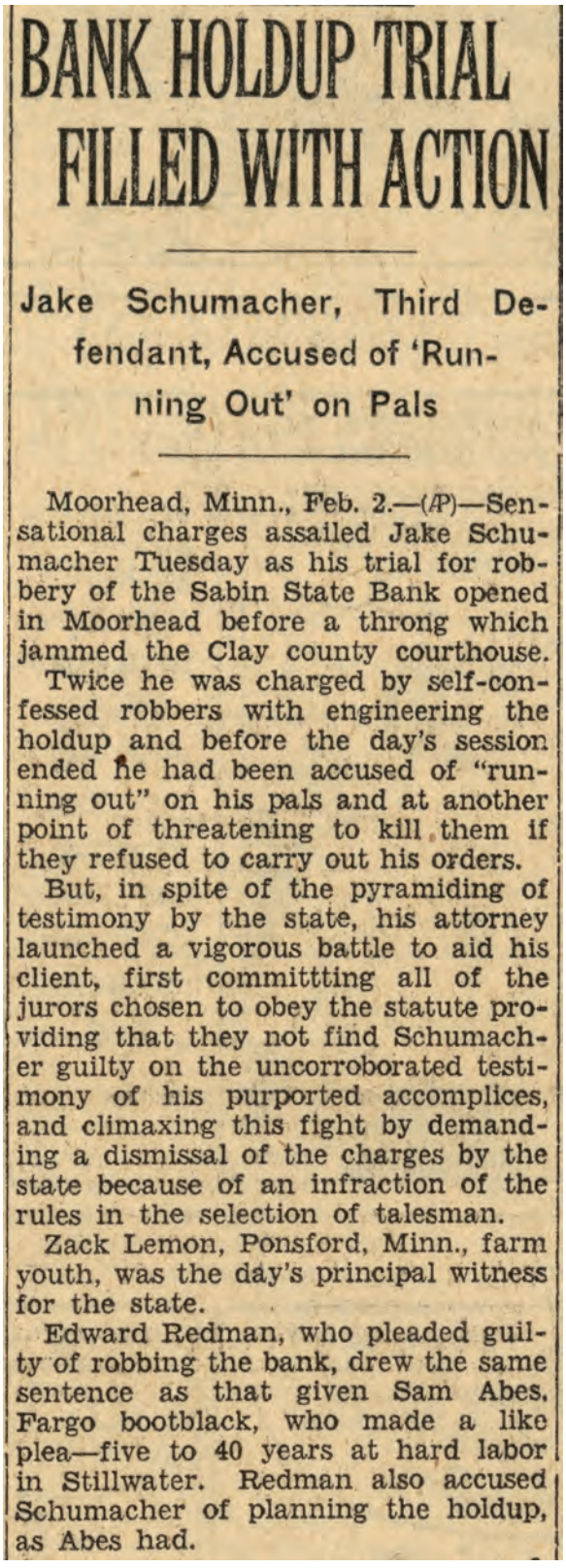
the only arrests made were members of the Schumacher family themselves and relatively small quantities of liquor were recovered, indicating that patrons were rarely invited into the home to indulge. Instead, the family worked to deliver alcohol to buyers not only within Fargo-Moorhead but throughout the rural communities within range. These activities are best illustrated by a series of arrests of Schumacher family members that occurred between 1924 and 1929.[22]

In April 1924, Charles Schumacher was caught behind the closed Chicken Shop in Moorhead with a gallon of alcohol under each arm on his way to make a sale. In September of the same year, Charles was again under arrest after attempting to make a sale to an undercover federal agent on a dirt road two miles west of West Fargo. In August 1926, a group of nine individuals was caught during the

sale of illegal alcohol, including Babe Schumacher, who fled across the river to Moorhead before being arrested at the Schumacher home. Finally, in 1929, Jake Schumacher was arrested after a complaint was filed stating that he had attempted to sell a load of liquor in a back alley in the small town of Hitterdal, Minnesota. In each of these cases the arrests were made during the course of a sale where members of the Schumacher family traveled to meet prospective buyers, not only in Fargo-Moorhead but in surrounding communities.[23]

The Schumachers' criminal enterprises were likely supplied through a number of different channels. As the Pleason episode illustrates, the family maintained connections to organized crime in both Minneapolis and St. Paul and relied upon these to sell liquor in the Fargo-Moorhead region. It is almost a certainty that the Schumachers procured most of their wares through rumrunners coming south from Minot and Grand Forks. As mentioned prior, by 1925, $1,620,000 worth of illicit liquor was crossing the border near Grand Forks over a three month period, and more was likely being run near Minot. These rumrunners, hired by the Schumachers directly, would have supplied the majority of the liquor the family sold. Another source would have arrived by air; Jake Schumacher's 1931 arrest by federal agents was directly related to his involvement in a conspiracy to smuggle liquor across the Canadian border by airplane. Smuggling operations of such a type were not new to the region; as early as 1921, an effort by organized crime figures from Chicago to begin smuggling liquor into the country by airplane was uncovered by local law enforcement. By using these connections, the Schumacher family was able to continue to supply the Fargo-Moorhead region with the illicit liquor the local population demanded.[24]

As varied and well connected as the Shumacher organization was, it remained at heart a family business, with individual members of the clan expected to do their part. Although Jake Schumacher's eventual rise to prominence as the leader of the organization obscured the contributions of other members, he was far from the only Schumacher in the public eye as a result of illegal activities. Of the members of Charles's immediate family, perhaps the most active in his criminal enterprises were his wife, Anna, and daughter Babe. Both women were likely employed by Charles under the assumption that the police would be less likely to suspect the activities of, or arrest, women for liquor violations. However, both women continued to have run-ins with the law throughout Prohibition. Between the years 1920 to 1933, both Anna and Babe were arrested no less than three times each by local police, although they did not serve as severe of sentences as the men of the family. In a questionnaire filled out at the time of his imprisonment, Jake lists only his father as having served significant jail sentences in relation to liquor crimes. This trend would continue, at least briefly, into the next generation as Jake employed his own wife in a similar capacity, leading to her arrest in January 1925. Being involved, willingly or not, in Charles's criminal activities must have had a strong impact upon the relationships between family members; it is interesting to note that at the time her death on



BANK HOLDUP TRIAL FILLED WITH ACTION

Jake Schumacher, Third Defendant, Accused of 'Running Out' on Pals

Moorhead, Minn., Feb. 2.—(AP)—Sensational charges assailed Jake Schumacher Tuesday as his trial for robbery of the Sabin State Bank opened in Moorhead before a throng which jammed the Clay county courthouse.

Twice he was charged by self-confessed robbers with engineering the holdup and before the day's session ended he had been accused of "running out" on his pals and at another point of threatening to kill them if they refused to carry out his orders.

But, in spite of the pyramiding of testimony by the state, his attorney launched a vigorous battle to aid his client, first committting all of the jurors chosen to obey the statute providing that they not find Schumacher guilty on the uncorroborated testimony of his purported accomplices, and climaxing this fight by demanding a dismissal of the charges by the state because of an infraction of the rules in the selection of talesman.

Zack Lemon, Ponsford, Minn., farm youth, was the day's principal witness for the state.

Edward Redman, who pleaded guilty of robbing the bank, drew the same sentence as that given Sam Abes, Fargo bootblack, who made a like plea—five to 40 years at hard labor in Stillwater. Redman also accused Schumacher of planning the holdup, as Abes had.

Bismarck Tribune, Feb. 3, 1932, p. 7.

March 3, 1931, Anna appears to have no longer been living with her husband and specifically requested that she be buried with her own family in Iowa and not at the Schumacher family plot in Moorhead.[25]

By 1930, the family business appears to have been turned over to the younger generation. In September 1929, Charles Schumacher was found guilty for liquor violations, fined $1,000, and told that he would be turned over to federal prosecutors if he was caught again. Less than two months later, on November 10, Charles was involved in a serious automobile accident and injured while his wife and daughter were both on trial for violating liquor laws. The only significant reference to Charles in local newspapers following these events was his appointment as the administrator of his deceased wife's estate in May 1931. Although he would continue to appear sporadically in the papers for liquor-related violations, these decreased in number, so Charles appears to have decided to keep his head down.[26]

This left the door open for Jake to become the predominant liquor dealer in the Fargo-Moorhead area, but in many ways his behaviors were markedly different from those of his father. Jake was less able than his father to rely on the support of his family members, as relations between himself and the other members of the clan remained strained. In April 1926, Jake was arrested and fined $100 for assault after a formal complaint was made by one of his sisters, and strained relations with his own wife, Nanny, would cause them to separate. His assault on George Gunderson was inspired by his belief that Gunderson was carrying on an affair with his wife. Even following Jake Schumacher's release from prison in 1944, only one sister would maintain contact with him; this was likely the result of Jake sending a series of threatening letters to family members, accusing them of stealing from him during the first months of his imprisonment. Due to the lack of family support even before his arrest, Jake often relied on a series of small-time criminals to carry out the duties of maintaining liquor distribution business in Fargo-Moorhead. Despite this, he continued to rely upon many of the same connections as his father, including his involvement in smuggling liquor from Canada by airplane.[27]

Although initially meeting the same success as his father, Jake's criminal enterprises would draw more attention from authorities than those of Charles. This was partially the result of the efforts of Clay County Sheriff Archie Whaley and his son Deputy John Whaley. The former *Country Press* editor had run for sheriff in 1926 on a reformist platform, promising to fight corruption and put pressure on bootleggers in the county who flaunted the law. After 1926, the Schumachers came under increased scrutiny from county officials, and in 1929, Jake found himself in frequent conflict with the Whaleys. In addition to facing outside pressure from the authorities, spurred on by a sheriff's department that felt it had a mandate from voters to root out corruption, the Schumacher organization began to be undermined by Jake's more volatile personality and actions. In addition to his arrest for his assault on Gunderson and the beating of Pat McLeary, Schumacher's criminal empire would finally collapse under the weight of his efforts to branch out to bank robbery. Finally, Jake operated under a reputation that made business difficult, as he was viewed with suspicion by fellow criminals in Fargo-Moorhead and the surrounding environments. For example, an effort to rob a bank in the town of Hawley was called off because other members of his gang did not trust Schumacher to follow through with his duty of cutting the alarm wire and feared he was trying to set them up. Their fears were at least partially grounded, as it was revealed during his trial for the bank robbery in Sabin that Jake Schumacher had been acting as an informant for the local police for some time. In fact, due to the convoluted circumstances surrounding the bank robbery, as well as Schumacher's

Three men drink beer in a Bismarck-Mandan area park in 1930. *SHSND SA 00032-BL-47-00004*

rivalry with McGavin for control of bootlegging in the Fargo-Moorhead territory, it is likely that the initial robbery was staged in an effort to discredit and frame McGavin and those associated with him.[28]

If Jake Schumacher had hoped to set up his rivals by orchestrating the bank robbery at Sabin while remaining untouchable by the law, he must have been bitterly disappointed. Although Jake would eventually be granted parole in 1944, his criminal activities, as well as those of his family, were effectively over with his conviction in 1932. A year later, on December 15, 1933, Prohibition came to an official end, although it would linger at the local level in North Dakota as well as Minnesota in watered-down fashion for several years. The environment that had allowed the Schumachers to make a living by flaunting the law ended with the dismantling of Prohibition. Locally, perhaps the most symbolic event occurred on April 24, 1934, when Charles Schumacher received one of the first liquor licenses in Fargo-Moorhead that allowed for the sale of beer, after applying directly to the city government; the license allowed him to

open and manage a tavern, The House of Lords. Old habits die hard, however, for the veteran bootlegger would continue to stretch the law, later being arrested for the sale of hard liquor and sentenced to one year and one day in the US Penitentiary in Leavenworth, Kansas.[29]

The Schumacher criminal organization was one of the most well connected criminal enterprises in the region, possessing connections to organized crime in Minneapolis and St. Paul. Operating as a family business, they acted as local distributors for illicit alcohol in the Fargo-Moorhead region and smuggled liquor from the Canadian border using a variety of methods such as rumrunners or airplanes. The Schumachers were able to operate so openly by taking part in a culture of corruption and disregard for the law that had been fostered by the advent of national Prohibition. However, their activities were closely watched and judged by a public unwilling to allow the family to endanger the public well-being; a public that expressed itself by electing men such as Sheriff Whaley, who viewed it as his duty to root out the most flagrant violators of the law. By expanding activities past basic bootlegging into crimes such as bank robbery, and alienating members of his own family, Jake Schumacher made the organization a threat to the public and opened himself to the full brunt of the public's disgust.

The author thanks Jen Raveling, Matt Schaible, and Daniel R. McCollum for their assistance.

Daniel D. McCollum is an adjunct instructor at Concordia University Wisconsin in Milwaukee and a freelance researcher with a genealogical company. He holds a master of science degree in history from North Dakota State University. His research interests focus primarily upon the political and ethnic history of the Upper Midwest.

ENDNOTES

1. "Jake Schumacher Is Found Guilty," *Moorhead (MN) Daily News* (hereafter *MDN*), February 6, 1932; "Jake Schumacher Gets Life Sentence," *MDN*, February 11, 1932.
2. "Jake Schumacher Arrested on Federal Warrant," *MDN*, January 28, 1931.
3. "Schumacher Now in Hands of U.S.," *MDN*, January 29, 1931; "Jake Schumacher Said Dethroned as Local Beer Baron," *MDN*, December 32, 1931; "Schumacher Arraigned on Statutory Charge," *MDN*, January 30, 1931; "'Jake' Schumacher Pulls Gun in Heated Argument with Former 'Speed Cop,'" *MDN*, March 28, 1931; "Schumacher Rites Take Place Today," *MDN*, March 5, 1931.
4. Jacob Schumacher prison record, February 19, 1932–October 18, 1946, file 11063, Minnesota State Prison (Stillwater, Minn.), Case Files (Discharged Inmate Files), State Archives, Minnesota Historical Society.
5. David B. Danbom, *Going It Alone: Fargo Grapples with the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: Minnesota Historical Society, 2005).
6. Previous studies of Prohibition and the illegal liquor trade have generally favored larger cities, such as Chicago, New York, Detroit, or San Francisco. Despite this, there have been a number of studies focusing on smaller communities; see Mary Murphy's essay "Bootlegging Mothers and Drinking Daughters: Gender and Prohibition in Butte, Montana," in *Montana Legacy: Essays on People, History, and Place*, ed. Harry W. Fritz, Mary Murphy, and Robert R. Swartout Jr. (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2002), or Timothy Olewniczak, "Giggle Water on the Mighty Niagara: Rum-Runners, Homebrewers, Redistillers, and the Changing Social Fabric of Drinking Culture during Alcohol Prohibition in Buffalo, N.Y., 1920–1933," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 78, no. 1 (Winter 2011). *Rum across the Border: The Prohibition Era in Northern New York* by Allan Seymour Everest (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1991) is another notable work that sought to capture the experiences of rum-running and enforcement in the US-Canada border region by utilizing oral interviews with those who were involved in either criminal or police activities. However, few studies have analyzed the actual organizations of criminal groups in smaller communities, and even less has been written about the experiences of Prohibition in North Dakota.
7. "Arrested for Bootlegging," *The Country Press* (Moorhead, MN; hereafter *CP*), August 18, 1920; Jacob Schumacher prison record, Minnesota State Prison; US Census, 1920, *FamilySearch* (for Jacob Schumacher, St. Paul Ward 8, Ramsey, MN; accessed August 21, 2015), https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MW17-623; US Census, 1920, *FamilySearch* (for Charles Shoemacher, Moorhead, Clay, MN; accessed August 21, 2015), https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MWYS-YYQ; "Charles Schumacher, Jr. dies in Chicago Tuesday," *CP*, November 26, 1926.
8. "Is There a Big Liquor Ring in This County?," *CP*, August 11, 1922; "Charles Schumacher, Jr. Dies in Chicago Tuesday," *CP*, November 26, 1926.
9. "Prohibition Agent: People Will Drink 'Old Style Alcohol' on Christmas," *CP*, December 22, 1922.
10. Ibid.; "Schumacher Called 'Head Man' of Bandits," *MDN*, February 2, 1932; "'Jake' Schumacher Pulls Gun in Heated Argument with Former 'Speed Cop,'" *MDN*, March 28, 1931; "Jake Schumacher Fires Five Shots at Alleged Thief," *MDN*, December 22, 1931.
11. Larry Engelmann, *Intemperance: The Lost War against Liquor* (New York: Free Press, 1979), 10–22; Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York:

Scribner, 2011), 35–52.

12. Elwyn B. Robinson, *History of North Dakota* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 219, 258–59, 287.
13. Humbert S. Nelli, *The Business of Crime: Italians and Syndicate Crime in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 144–54, 174–76.
14. Robinson, *History*, 370; Okrent, *Last Call*, 149–51; "Minot's Undeserved Name," *Fargo Forum* (hereafter *FF*), December 20, 1920; "Machine Guns to Be Employed by Sheriff to Stay Whiskey Running," *FF,* November 1, 1920; "Government Fails to Enforce Law," *FF*, December 7, 1920; "Watkins Blames U.S. Men and NOT N.D. Democrats in New Charges," *FF*, December 10, 1920.
15. "Federal Chief Is Arrested on Conspiracy and Liquor Charges," *FF*, October 9, 1920; "Federal Men in Fargo to Probe into Affairs of Leady's Office," *FF*, October 14, 1920; "Wife Offers to Sacrifice Her Valuables for Husband," *FF*, October 16, 1920; "Fargo Federal Dry Office Is Reopened: New Man in Charge," *FF*, January 22, 1921; "Court Imposed Sentence on Three Conspirators in Liquor Frameup," *FF*, March 12, 1921.
16. "600 Gallons of Alcohol Are Seized," *MDN*, April 3, 1930; "Fargo Police Chief Freed of Charges," *MDN*, April 7, 1930; "Madison Faced Liquor Charges," *MDN*, September 13, 1930; "Fargo Garage Man Convicted," *MDN*, December 16, 1931.
17. "Rolag," *CP*, November 8, 1926; Editorial, *CP*, December 18, 1925; "Bootleggers Exterminators," *CP*, December 29, 1922; Danbom, *Going It Alone*, 201.
18. "Is There a Big Liquor Ring in the County?," *CP,* August 11, 1921; "Nine Alleged Salesmen of Liquor Held," *MDN*, August 9, 1926; "Babe Schumacher Starts Year Term," *CP*, October 7, 1927.
19. "Much Liquor," *MDN*, September 9, 1924; "Much Alcohol Found in Fargo," *MDN*, September 10, 1924; "Pleason Guilty," *MDN*, December 16, 1924; "Jake Schumacher 'Double-Crossed' Gang Says Whaley," *MDN*, July 7, 1932.
20. "Sheriff Charged with Plot to Violate Dry Amendment," *El Paso (TX) Herald*, March 24, 1920; "Booze Conspirator Gave Nash $11,000," *Duluth (MN) Herald*, May 31, 2920; "Alleged Plot to Smuggle Booze by Air Is Disclosed," *FF*, February 3, 1921; "Regular Movie Thriller Lands Two Alleged Booze Importers," *FF*, April 6, 1920; "No Arrests in Big Alcohol Case," *CP*, December 5, 1922; "Police Seize Much Liquor," *MDN*, May 11, 1923; "More Tonic," *MDN*, May 12, 1923; "Moorhead Hair Tonic on Trial," *CP*, August 10, 1923; Robert A. Rockaway, "The Notorious Purple Gang: Detroit's All-Jewish Prohibition Era Mob," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 20 (2001): 113–30.
21. "Booze Smuggling Grows as Enforcement Weakens," *FF*, December 11, 1920; "Is There a Big Liquor Ring in This County?," *CP*, August 11, 1921.
22. "Booze Smuggling Grows as Enforcement Weakens," *FF*, December 11, 1920; "New Barriers for Rum Dealers," *FF*, January 12, 1921.
23. "Pleads Not Guilty," *MDN*, April 30, 1924; "US Officers Get Schumacher," *MDN*, September 18, 1924; "Police Hold Schumacher," *MDN*, July 23, 1925; "9 Alleged Salesmen of Liquor Held," *MDN*, August 9, 1926; "Mr. Schumacher Again," *CP*, April 3, 1923; "Schumacher Is Charged with Booze Peddling," *CP*, September 13, 1929.
24. "Jake Schumacher Arrested on Federal Warrant," *MDN*, January 28, 1931; "Police Make Big Haul," *CP*, September 12, 1924; "Alleged Plot to Smuggle Booze by Air Is Disclosed," *FF*, February 3, 1921.
25. "Mrs. Schumacher Is Given Jail, Fine," *CP*, January 1, 1924; "12 Arrests Result of Booze Raid," *MDN*, January 20, 1925; "Schumacher's Place Raided Once More," *CP*, July 4, 1925; "9 Alleged Salesmen of Liquor Held," *MDN*, August 9 1926; "Fargo Man Bound Over," *CP*, November 15, 1929; "Schumacher Rites Take Place Today," *MDN*, March 5, 1931; Jacob Schumacher prison record, Minnesota State Prison.
26. "Booze Peddler Is Fined $100.00," *CP,* September 27, 1929; "Fargo Man Bound Over," *CP*, November 15, 1929; "Schumacher Appointed Estate Administrator," *MDN*, May 2, 1931.
27. "Jake Schumacher Is Fined $100 in Court," *CP*, April 2, 1926; Jacob Schumacher prison record, Minnesota State Prison; "Jake Schumacher Arrested on Federal Warrant," *MDN*, January 28, 1931.
28. "Rolag," *CP*, November 8, 1926; "Schumacher Now Faces Another in String of Counts," *MDN*, December 24, 1931; "Jake Schumacher 'Double Crossed' Gang Says Whaley," *MDN*, July 14, 1932; "Jake Schumacher Said Dethroned as Local Beer Baron," *MDN*, December 31, 1931.
29. "Liquor Dealers in Clay Pay Fines over $2,300," *MDN*, January 26, 1935.