

Backstory: A Wet or Dry Town

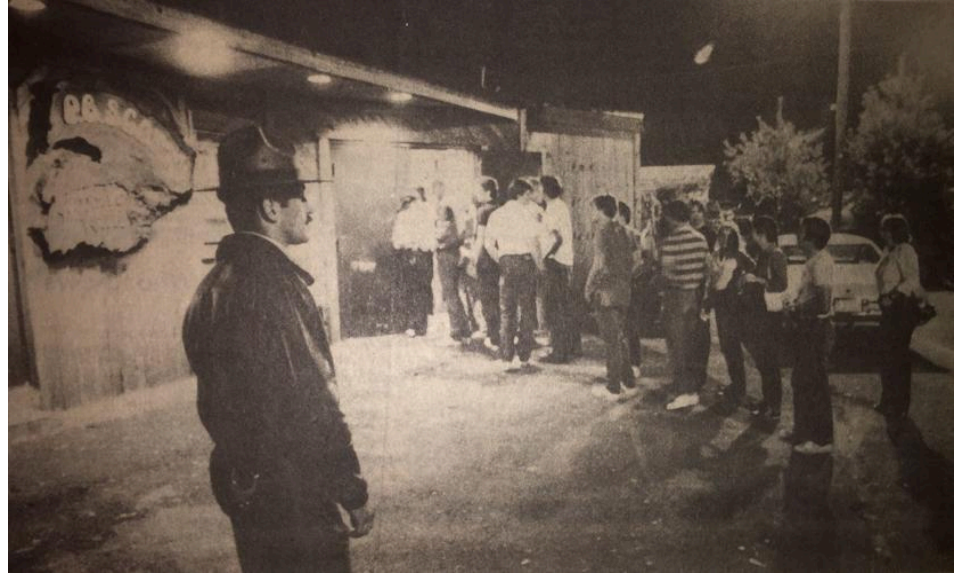
Like much of North Carolina, Blowing Rock has an interesting history when it comes to alcohol. Blowing Rock's town charter was approved by the State Legislature in 1889 and with it, beer and wine sales could legally take place. The town's first mayor, Joe Clark, allowed resident Thornton Ingle to open the village's first official tavern. However, in 1892 Filmore Coffey (who was strongly opposed to Blowing Rock being a wet town) won the mayoral election. Coffey soon moved away and appointed W.H. Weedon to serve as mayor for the remainder of his term. Weedon quickly derailed not only the state of alcohol sales in Blowing Rock but also the village's status as a town. Weedon deemed that the Legislature's charter for the Skyland Institute (a girl's academy located nearby) which prohibited all alcohol sales within two miles of the school, made licensing a tavern illegal and nullified the village's status as a town since Blowing Rock was within the two mile area. Thankfully former mayor Joe Clark was able to persuade the Sheriff to hold new elections due to Weedon's disastrous moves. Clark was re-elected mayor, alcohol sales were once again allowed, and Blowing Rock's status as a town was no longer in jeopardy.



The oldest continuously serving bar in all of North Carolina can be found in Blowing Rock. Antler's Bar of Bistro Roca has been serving patrons since it first opened its doors in 1932. The owners of Anter's note that the bar has been selling beer and liquor "more or less legally" since it first opened, a humorous nod to the fact that the bar opened during a time of national prohibition. Prohibition of alcohol in the United States began with the Eighteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution on January 16, 1919 and did not end until the Twenty-first Amendment which repealed the Eighteenth on December 5, 1933. This era of national prohibition is historically notorious for the rise in speakeasies (bars and clubs which secretly sold alcohol and spirits) and bootleggers. Prohibition did lead to one sport which remains popular in North Carolina, stock car racing. NASCAR can trace its early roots back to bootleggers running whiskey in the

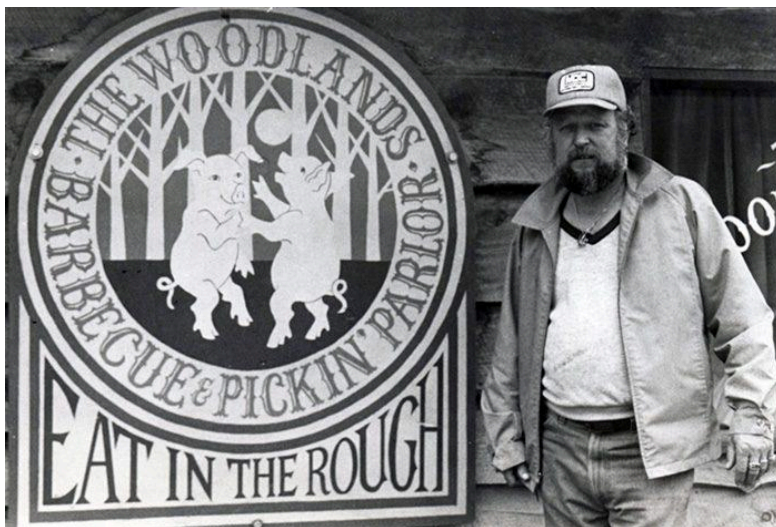
Appalachian mountains. These bootleggers had to continuously modify their cars to evade law enforcement and after prohibition's repeal in 1933 the sport truly began to evolve. Following the end of prohibition, Blowing Rock was once again a wet town. (Above image: Antler's Bar in Bistro Roca)

The Blowing Rock ABC Store was the first of its kind to open in the area back in 1965. P.B. Scott's Music Hall was an enormously popular venue for musicians largely thanks to Blowing Rock's wet status. P.B.'s was open from 1976 to 1983, a time when Blowing Rock was the only wet town in the area (other towns in Watauga were dry and all of Avery, Ashe, and Caldwell were dry when P.B.'s first opened).



Musicians such as B.B. King, Bonnie Raitt, Leon Russell, and Greg Allmann performed at P.B.'s. Students from Boone's nearby Appalachian State University were known for coming over to Blowing Rock for drinks and P.B.'s was a popular college hangout. The venue eventually closed in 1983 when the town of Blowing Rock and the NC ABC Commission deemed it was not eligible for ABC privileges. This was due

to a law that many may be unaware of (even those who have lived in North Carolina their entire life) but all bars are required to sell food in the state of North Carolina. Some Blowing Rock eateries sprang up as a direct effect of this law such as Woodlands Barbecue. Woodlands former owners Butch Triplett and Jim Houston contend that their restaurant came to be since in order for them to sell beer and wine they also had to sell food. (Above image: A law enforcement officer watches as folks line up to



get inside P.B. Scott's Music Hall. Image via the Blowing Rocket archives. Left image: Butch Triplett stands next to a sign for Woodlands Barbeque. Image via the High Country Press)

While alcohol can be found all over Watauga County today, there are still laws in North Carolina that limit the sales on certain days. In 2017 the "Brunch Bill" was signed into state law by Governor Roy Cooper. This bill allows for restaurants to serve alcohol as early as 10 a.m. on Sundays (alcohol could not be purchased before noon prior to this bill). Blowing Rock was among the first few towns in the area to pass ordinances that allow for alcohol sales starting at

10 a.m. on Sundays. Despite the many ups and downs, transitions from wet to dry to wet, Blowing Rock is now home to numerous taprooms, taverns, breweries, and nice spots to grab a drink and take in the view. (Right image: Toasting at the Blowing Rock Brewery. Image via Blowing Rock Brewery)

