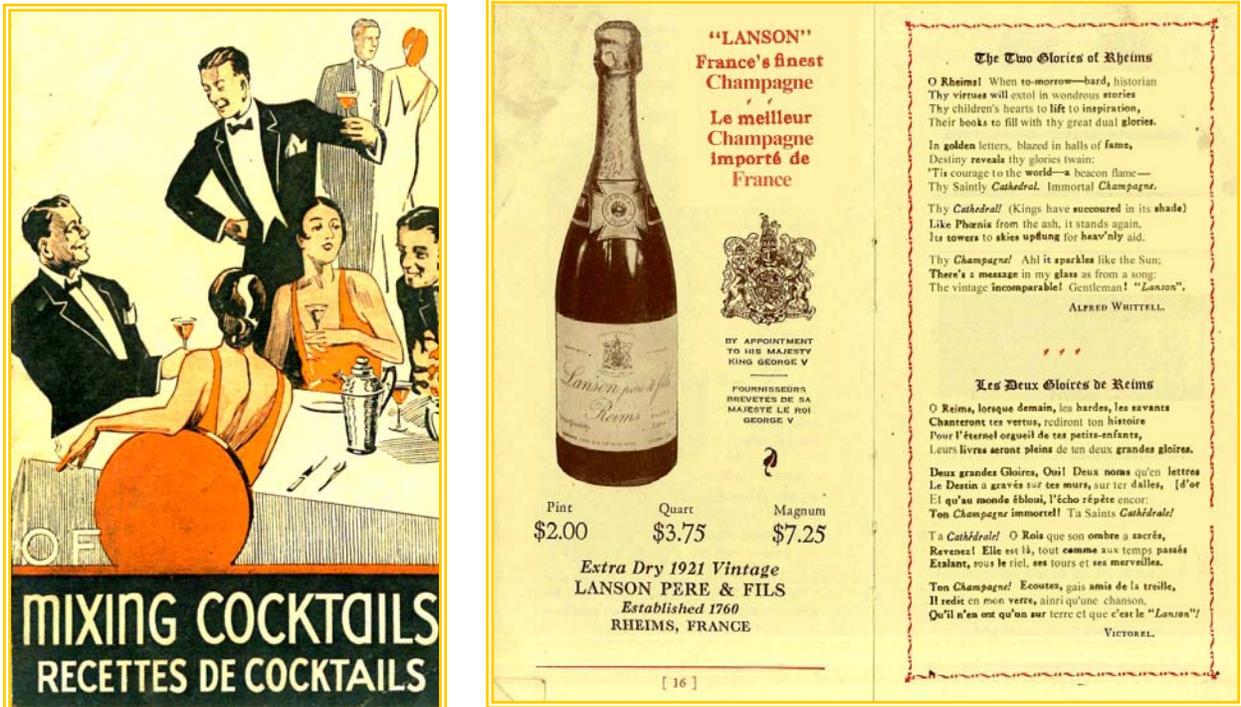


Champagne-running



Gooderham & Worts cocktail pamphlet, 1930: Cover & Page for Lanson vintage champagne

Prohibition America offered profits aplenty to creative distillers and wine merchants. Even before Ontario prohibition ended in 1927, Gooderham & Worts' new captain, [Harry C. Hatch](#), was plying his trade on both sides of the border. A small handful of shipping forms provides insight into the rum-running – or in this case, champagne-running – business during the late 1920s and early 1930s. Not surprisingly, records seem to be few and incomplete. But they hint at the connections and confirm the activities.

The tiny French islands of Saint-Pierre and Miquelon did a brisk business during Prohibition, both as receivers and transshippers of alcoholic goods. France did not share North Americans' strange attitudes to alcohol. *Non à la prohibition!* So Saint-Pierre and Miquelon offered safe havens for landing booze from mainland Canada and across the Atlantic. Their strategic location, just south of Newfoundland, within reasonable striking distance of major American ports such as Boston and New York rendered the two isles excellent transshipment points between various locations.



Strategic location

When the New Year is about to be rung-in, thoughts naturally turn to champagne. In Gooderham & Worts' case, thoughts were directed toward Lanson of Rheims, France. Lanson's champagne received brief mention in G&W's first [cocktail recipe pamphlet](#), as the essential component for the G&W Champagne Cup and Champagne Punch. By 1930, Lanson's 1921 vintage

champagne received star treatment in the [Art Deco recipe book](#). And so it should have. The 1921 is still trumpeted as one of [Lanson's Greatest Vintages](#) of the last century.

The double-page spread devoted to “France’s finest Champagne” featured a bottle of champagne, royal appointment information, prices and a four-stanza celebration of *The Two Glories of Rheims: Thy saintly Cathedral. Immortal Champagne:*

Thy *Champagne!* Ah! It sparkles like the Sun;
There’s message in my glass as from a song:
The vintage incomparable! Gentlemen! “*Lanson*”.

Not great poetry ... but definitely great poetry in a glass. And, by 2008 standards, affordable poetry: \$2.00 per pint ... \$3.75 per quart ... \$7.25 per magnum.

How did Lanson champagne find its way into the glasses of North America during Prohibition? Circuitously. And profitably.

On September 4 and 9, 1929, a total of 7,000 cases (84,000 bottles) of Lanson “1921” Vintage champagne was shipped aboard the *SS Steingram* from Antwerp and Glasgow to Saint-Pierre. The two existing shipping forms on champagne-tinted Gooderham & Worts letterhead indicate that the champagne was sold to Consolidated Distilleries of Montreal (one of Hatch’s other links) and paid for through the Bank of Bermuda (a British territory). Each case cost \$16.00, for a total of \$112,000.

Several shipping forms made out by United Traders Limited of Nassau, Bahama Islands document the subsequent distribution of smaller quantities of the Lanson extra dry 1921 champagne, from Saint-Pierre to unspecified destinations. These smaller lots of 50 or 75 or 100 cases travelled aboard a variety of schooners – *Bambi, Irene C., Ocean Maid, and Doctor* – that likely dodged the authorities along the Atlantic seaboard. At this stage, a case of quart bottles cost about \$18.50.

No information about costs to customers in New York speakeasies or other points-of-sale south of the border is contained in these documents. But the (legal) price of a quart of champagne established in the 1930 pamphlet was \$3.75 per quart or \$45.00 per case north of the 49th parallel.

If such prices persisted until New Year’s Eve 2009 ... our champagne cups would runneth over. (A *modest* Lanson champagne now costs about \$50 per bottle.) As it is, raise a glass and toast the end of Prohibition when champagne running is no longer essential to celebrating the birth of a new year. Cheers!

ESTABLISHED 1832.

Gooderham & Worts (Limited)

Toronto
Distillers

ETHYL ALCOHOL
65 O.P.
COGNAC SPIRITS
65 O.P.
DENATURED ALCOHOL
(all formulas)

G&W Special
CORN RYE WHISKY
ARCYLLE
The Scotch Whisky
HYDE PARK
LONDON DRY GIN

September 9th, 1929

ORDER NO. *Sold to*
Terms The Consolidated Distilleries, Limited,
Montreal, Quebec

PHONE ELGIN 6363

5,000 Cases Lanson "1921" Vintage Champagne 16.00 \$ 80,000.00

Shipped per S.S. "STEINORAN" From Antwerp 26th August
consigned to St. Pierre, as per your order and in-
structions.

THESE BOTTES SONT PROPREMENT FERMEEES ET DROPPES EN BOITE ORIGINE. POUR GARANTIE DE VERTU LE CONSOMMATEUR DOIT S'ADRESSER A LA MARQUE.

G&W form for vintage champagne, 1929

UNITED TRADERS LIMITED
NASSAU, BAHAMA ISLANDS

Montreal, December 14, 1930

SOLD TO The Great West Wine Company - Account No. 5
St. Pierre

TERMS By St. Pierre "Schooner 'IRONS O.'"

QUANTITY	DESCRIPTION	PRICE	AMOUNT	TOTAL
100 c/s	Lanson Champagne quarts	16.50	1,650 00	1,650 00
	Less \$1.00 Allowance on above			100 00
				1,750 00

Sales report No. 61

Trans-shipment from St. Pierre, 1930

Many thanks to Art Jahns for discovering and sharing prohibition-era shipping forms for champagne and other products. The originals are in Walkerville. Thanks also to Doug Worts for the 1930 Gooderham & Worts cocktail pamphlet.

Please send your comments or questions to Manager of Heritage Services, Sally Gibson, sg@thedistillerydistrict.com.

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