

**Winter White Out's
Competition for St. Clair's
2018 Bootlegger Balladeer
And Poet Laureate**

Contest Rules & Regulations

www.StClairOnTheRiver.com

The competition is open to all amateur and professional song writers or poets. The competition is to determine who can write the best song or poem for the "2018 Legend".

The 2018 Legend
Frenchy, Blink and the Whiskey Train

For a long time, Frenchy and Blink went to bed early, especially in the winter. In mid-January of 1922, both men would stray from the warmth of their beds and embrace a cold and snowy night. A three-day winter white out had frozen the St. Clair River solid, more or less. The frozen river meant ice-skating for the town's kids and something completely different for the many amateur bootleggers – a fraternity, in which Frenchy and Blink proudly placed themselves. The frozen river meant access. In recent years, Canadian distillers had set up distributors, on the Canadian side of the river, to supply a U.S. market starved for product by prohibition.

Smuggling liquor was illegal and frowned upon by the local law. When it came to the local law in St. Clair, nobody wanted to tangle with Ed Swiss. Ed was a mountain of a man with hands hardened by years spent shaping planks for the shipyards at the base of the Pine River. Since the passage of the Volstead Act, Ed's business became catching bootleggers and business was good.

Frenchy and Blink spent the morning firming up orders from two blind pigs that ran along Sixth street. The pair got orders for four cases of Canadian whiskey. The prospect of pocketing \$13 per case had the duo excited to put their plan into action.

The plan, as Blink said in the days after, was "pure perfection." It was pitch black along both shores of the river at night and if you crossed without lanterns it was almost impossible for the law to see you. However, without lanterns, it was also easy to get disoriented and end up taking a late-night dip by falling through punky spots in the ice.

That is where the Whiskey train entered into the plan. The Whiskey train was actually the PH&D railroad, and it never, to anyone's knowledge, ever hauled any whiskey in its cars. The steam-powered locomotive's route ran east toward the river's shore and then turned north and ran parallel to the river every three days at midnight. So, if a bootlegger was loaded up ready to go when the train made its run, they could use the train's lights to guide them back across the river to the American side.

The plan was to walk across to Canada as the light of the day was fading, purchase the four cases of whiskey and use the light of the Whiskey train to guide them home at

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midnight. Blink's contribution to the plan was ice skates. By skating back, the return trip would be faster and reduce the chances that Ed Swiss or his men would catch them with the hooch.

The plan went well right up to the point it didn't. Blink and Frenchy made it to the distillery at dusk and secured the four cases of Canadian Club. Now, they just had to wait for the lights of the Whiskey train to guide them home. The fellas killed the time by imbibing a little of the local drink and enjoying cheese and crackers. It is possible they were over served.

At 11:30pm, the amateur bootleggers stood on the Canadian shore packed and ready to go. As Frenchy looked across he could see exactly 25 feet. Undeterred, Frenchy and Blink put on their skates and waited. At 11:35 the pair decided it would be best, given the weather, to go a little bit across so they would be sure to see the train's lights at midnight to guide them home.

The ice was very smooth on the Canadian side and both men being good skaters had no trouble carrying two cases of whiskey as they glided toward the American border.

The men headed into the pitch-black abyss for about a hundred yards. At 11:37pm, both men agree, they were lost. Attempting to use their faint and quickly evaporating trail they continued across hoping they were going the right way. Completely lost and yet fully committed, they skated faster and faster toward what they hoped was St. Clair. At 11:50pm, dressed in heavy clothing, ice skates and carrying four cases of whiskey, Blink and Frenchy went for a dip. By the time the men managed to get back on the ice, the whiskey they were carrying was floating in the middle of the hole they had gone through. The best they could do was retrieve two bottles. At exactly 12:01am, Blink and Frenchy, frozen, covered in ice and snow from head to toe – their skates literally formed as blocks of ice – heard the rumble of what was too loud to be thunder coming right at them.

At 12:15 am, Ed Swiss took a call from Irene Smith, who he would later describe as sober, articulate and in a full panic. Irene told Ed, that she, by the light of the locomotive of PH&D railroad, had seen not one but two abominable snowmen walking up her lawn. What was not mentioned to Chief Swiss at the time – but, later came out during a radio interview with Irene by a Detroit radio station – Irene was convinced that abominable snowmen drank Canadian Whiskey when they get cold in the winter. She was certain of it because both snowmen had a bottle when they climbed over her seawall. In an unrelated matter, reported that same day, two St. Clair men were treated for extreme frostbite incurred while trapping.

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*Later that winter, others would claim to have seen snowmen light up by the headlamp
on the Whiskey train's locomotive, as it shown its light out across the ice.*

Contestants for this year's event are encouraged to do their own independent research on the Whiskey Train. In the past, some contestants have uncovered unknown facts by doing research in the Port Huron Library's Michigan Room. One contestant consulted a gypsy fortune teller who used her powers to communicate with the dead revealing interesting and uncontested facts.

How a contestant obtains the facts for his or her poem or song is not relevant for this contest. Contestants will be judged on the best story of the "*Frenchy, Blink and the Whiskey Train*" legend and its delivery.

1. Songs will be judged based on melody, composition, originality and lyrics (*must be based on the "2018 Legend"*). Poems will stand-on their own. The decision of the judges is final.
2. Poets are competing for the title, **St. Clair's 2018 Poet Laureate**. Song writers are competing for the title, **St. Clair's 2018 Bootlegger Balladeer**. Winner will receive a proclamation from the mayor at the St. Clair City Council's February 5, 2018 meeting.
3. In addition to winning the title of Poet Laureate or Bootlegger Balladeer, the St. Clair Rotary Club will award cash prizes in each category: \$250 for 1st place, \$150 for 2nd place and \$100 for 3rd place.
4. Each entry shall be wholly original and shall not infringe on any copyrights or any other rights of any third parties. Each entrant shall, by entering, indemnify and hold the City of St. Clair, St. Clair DDA, the St. Clair Rotary Club and the St. Clair Events Company harmless from and against any claims inconsistent with the foregoing.
5. The entrant grants the City of St. Clair, St. Clair DDA, the St. Clair Rotary Club and the St. Clair Events Company an unlimited license to use the song or poem submitted.
6. We are requesting that an "*Entry Form*" be completed by noon, Friday, January 19, 2018 with a copy of entrant's song or poem. Entry forms may be dropped off at LaCroix's Riverside Pub (314 Clinton Ave.), St. Clair City Building (547 N. Carney Dr.) or e-mailed to info@StClairOnTheRiver.com (*preferred method of receiving entry.*)
7. Entry forms, poems and songs will be accepted on the day of the event.

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Entering contest Entrant agrees to perform at these times and locations at no-charge to the City of St. Clair, St. Clair DDA and St. Clair Events Company.

Date	Time	Location	Other
Wednesday, Jan 24	7:00 pm	LaCroix's Riverside Pub	Competition
Monday, Feb 5 (1)	7:00 pm	St. Clair City Building, Council Chambers	City Council meeting

Note 1 – The winner of the songwriting and poetry contests will receive their proclamation from the Mayor at the Council meeting after performing their winning poem or song.

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Songwriting and Poetry Contest for the "Legend"

(A copy of entrant's song/poem needs to be attached.)

Entry Form

The Song/Poem

Song/Poem Title: _____

Length: _____

Genre: _____

The Entrant:

Name: _____ **Phone:** _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip _____

E-mail Address: _____

Lyricist(s): _____

Composer(s): _____

The entrant acknowledges that the song/poem is an original work and does not infringe on any copyrights or other rights of any third parties. The entrant shall indemnify and hold the City of St. Clair, St. Clair DDA and the St. Clair Events Company harmless from and against any claims inconsistent with the foregoing.

The entrant grants the City of St. Clair, St. Clair DDA and the St. Clair Events LLC an unlimited license to use the song/poem submitted.

Signature

Date

Parent or Guardian if entrant is under 18