

[E-BOOK] File size: 25.Mb

# Lawless: Originally published with the title 'The Wettest County in the World'



*Par Matt Bondurant*  
DOC / \*audiobook / ebooks / Download  
PDF / ePub

Dtails sur le produit Rang parmi les ventes : #339641 dans eBooksPubli le: 2012-08-16Sorti le: 2012-08-16Format: Ebook Kindle

[E-BOOK] Lawless: Originally published with the title 'The Wettest County in the World'

**Par Matt Bondurant : Lawless: Originally published with the title 'The Wettest County in the World'** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Lawless: Originally published with the title 'The Wettest County in the World':

 Download

 Read Online

## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurBased on the true account of Matt Bondurant's grandfather and two granduncles, Lawless is a gripping, white-knuckle fable of bootlegging, brotherhood and revenge. White mule, white lightning, firewater, popskull, wild cat, stump whiskey, rotgut - whatever you called it, 1920s Virginia was awash with moonshine. The Bondurant Boys were notorious gangsters who ran liquor though Franklin County during Prohibition and in the years that followed. Lawless is their story.ExtraitLawless Chapter 1 1934 SHERWOOD ANDERSON crossed the Franklin County line, threading his car over a one-lane bridge

that lay in a gentle saddle in the road. A few hundred yards beyond the bridge Anderson passed a filling station: a simple clapboard square and a steeply angled roof with an upper story that jugged out from the front, providing a covered pull-in spot in front of the narrow porch. A pair of petrol pumps stood in front, with hand cranks and glass spheres on top filled with fuel. Several things about the place held Andersons gaze: a porch, but unlike most rural filling stations this one had no chairs and no name on the building, or advertisements for anything. Four cars were in the lot, brand-new sedans with engines running, as if lined up for gas though nobody was pumping any. A group of men stood by the front door, men in long coats and hats who all turned and watched Anderson drive by. A storage shed was set slightly up the hill that rose behind the store, a squat cinder-block structure with an open door like a key slot and as Anderson passed a tall, gangly man in his shirtsleeves and hat emerged from the building with a wooden crate in his arms. It seemed like his eyes locked directly onto Andersons face. Then a blur of green-gold trees and the tires humming on the road and Anderson hunched over the wheel, humming up the backside of Grassy Hill and into Rocky Mount, the seat of Franklin County. Have to remember that spot, Anderson thought to himself, will have to run by on the way back to Roanoke and see what its all about. Though even at that moment he knew that the look on the faces of the men waiting at the station and the eyes of the tall man in the storage shed would make that difficult. Anderson had lived in rural Virginia long enough to know that look, the simple, insolent expression that said: Mind your own goddamn business. Anderson picked up speed down the empty road, blasting through whirling vortexes of leaves. Route 33 bisected Franklin County north-south in a jagged stroke, winding through the steep hillsides and deep hollows. It was the longest paved road in the county: Most roads were still hard-packed gravel, a soil-sand-clay mix, or merely weedy ruts that disappeared into field or forest. Driving through the hills of southern Virginia was reminiscent of some favorable sensations for Anderson, and he thought of the old restlessness. It was a good feeling to be on the move again.

THE TWO MEN Sherwood Anderson came to see lay in a crowded public ward in the Rocky Mount Hospital, a long windowless room with a dozen beds. Men of middling age, lined faces, stubble, indeterminate. The first of the two lay motionless, tucked into the sheets like a sewing needle. He stared up at the ceiling with open, swollen eyes, his skin blanched like boiled meat, the bedding stained with a yellowish fluid around his groin area. Next to him the other man had a deep crimson scar running between his eyes and across his forehead, as if hed been branded with a hot iron. A puffed goiter like a weathered leather bag hung under his chin. He was drenched with sweat, moaning and jerking his upper body from side to side, delirious with fever, the lower half of his body encased in thick plaster. The doctors told Anderson that a good piece of his tongue was also missing, likely due to an earlier injury. Anderson introduced himself and pulled up a chair between their beds. The man with the injured groin ran his eyes over Anderson for a moment before returning his gaze to the ceiling. His skin was tight like a sausage and he stunk of rot. The doctors told Anderson that neither man would say what happened to them, but it was clear that one mans legs had been meticulously shattered, from ankle to hip, and the second man had been badly mutilated in the groin area. The police didnt get a thing either; the two men hadnt said a word, and theyd had no visitors. There wasnt anything else to it, the doctor said, shrugging. The mutilated man was hanging on by a thread and the infection would take him soon. It was a miracle he survived this long. The blood loss was extensive, the doctor said. Clearly left for dead. Somebody anonymously notified us. Otherwise theyd be dead, easy.

The man with the shattered legs might pull through, but it was sure he would never stand or walk again. SHERWOOD ANDERSON originally came to Rocky Mount to write a story for Liberty magazine about a woman named Willie Carter Sharpe. Moonshine, said the editors, the snoops up north; these hill people were living off mountain whiskey, bootlegging; it was still the cash crop. The Volstead Act of 1919, the legal enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment, had created a many-headed hydra of illicit manufacture and trade in these mountains. Production didnt end in 1933 with the repeal of Prohibition: To avoid the heavy taxes on legal distillation, people still made their own or brought it in on rumrunners off the coast, but now that Prohibition was over people wanted to hear more about that supposed frontier period. These people weaned their children on the stuff, they said. They cooked their eggs in it, put it in their morning coffee. Everyone wanted it to go on, Anderson thought, the swells making piles of money and the consumers who savored that rancid sip of illegal bathtub gin in some dirty hole in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. They wanted that added flavor of illegality, and they wanted the dangerous myth, the wild notion of gunplay and desperation. Get close, they said. The people, the characters, their desires, the inner lives and passions: Thats what you do best after all. There was a big trial gearing up in Franklin County, a trial that was going to clean up the remnants of a messy, long-running battle between bootlegging syndicates including the

commonwealths attorney, who it was rumored would be accused of racketeering and conspiracy. All the major bootleggers in the county, including Willie Carter Sharpe, if they could catch her, were being called in for grand-jury testimony. Sharpe had originally married a big-shot bootlegger and soon became the principal driver for the operation, driving pilot cars as the caravans of booze careened and smashed their way through the hills of rural towns and into the conduits of the major cities, becoming a celebrity in the process. They said Sharpe had movie-star looks and diamonds set in her teeth. New York City society women sent her passionate love letters, desperate to be with her. Liberty wanted Anderson to bring the story to a national audience. Sherwood Anderson had been in the southwestern part of Virginia for most of nine years by 1934. He built a house in Marion, the seat of Smyth County, to the west of Franklin, higher up in the mountains. He purchased two local newspapers and set about life as a small-town editor. Anderson was aware that more than one literary wag had suggested he was reverting to his former life, trying to go back to some lost place of youth. But he knew he wasnt trying to revert to George Willard and the town of Winesburg: In fact it was the thing he hoped to distance himself from. While his house was being built, Anderson squatted in a rude shack on the hillside above. He spent his days watching the score of mountain men crawling over the frame of his house, working in their methodical, efficient way. He had a deal with his publisher, Liverwright, who would send him one hundred dollars a week plus a percentage of his sales, including those for the Modern Library reprints of *Poor White* and *Winesburg, Ohio*. Liverwright would publish whatever Anderson sent him. In those days Andersons writing desk was neat as a pin, and he eventually went up to New York and begged Liverwright to let him out of the deal. The house he built was called Ripshin. ANDERSON CAME FROM Ripshin the day before and stayed over at a hotel in Roanoke, then met with the editor of *The Roanoke Times* in the morning. It was still early when he left, the sky moving from purple to lavender and the trees along the road dropped their leaves, and he was glad to be out on such a morning and away from his house. Anderson ground his teeth and gripped the wheel when he thought of his nave hope that Ripshin would become a rustic literary salon. A place where the intelligentsia would gather about him in his bucolic paradise. Perhaps even his friend Gertrude Stein would come and pace the floor of his study with him, talking painters and semantics. Instead the two newspapers were holding him hostage; he was at the offices nearly every week, working with the printers and writing nearly the entire thing himself. To let off steam Anderson developed a character named Buck Fever in a column that dispensed humor and folksy wisdom, a sort of Will Rogers meets Mark Twain. By 1934 Ripshin was filled with noisy, bothersome people, people who overstayed their welcome, people whom Anderson once felt were true peers and comrades but now seemed more like chattering urbanites out for a turn in the country, and he was merely the innkeeper. His only solace was Eleanor, the young woman he met in Marion during the final years of his last marriage. They were married the year before, and during his travels he wrote her long, passionate letters that shocked himself and that seemed to contain the vitality that he usually was able to produce only in his fiction. In fact the letters, the words and phrases, the sentiments and ideas, seemed to come from some shadowy character, not fully formed, that lay deep inside him. THE EDITOR OF *The Roanoke Times* said it was likely some kind of payback. Sitting in his office that morning before visiting the hospital, cheap cigars in the cluttered, paper-filled room; Anderson felt sleepy and despondent. Likely the trade, the editor said. He had eyes like holes in a meat pie and an annoying snarl to his speech, talking out of one side of his mouth. Those boys did something to somebody, he said. And when nobody talks, you can bet there is liquor involved. The editor confirmed the rumors of the coming trial. Closed grand jury. Well, the editor said, you wont find much of a story down in Franklin County. Unless you manage to pry it out of a dead mans jaws. Such wit, Anderson thought. What a clod. Sir, Anderson said, I am no greenhorn. I know these people and their plight well. I know something about moonshine liquor. Pieface nodded, giggling, his broad frame shivering. You spend enough time in Franklin, the editor said, youll start tripping over it. The editor waved his cigar in the smoky air in front of him. Andersons stomach let out a whine of discomfort and he wished hed had breakfast. Theres a fella, the editor said, down at the Rocky Mount jail right now. A fella named Tom C. Cundiff. But you wont get spit from him. The mans crazy as a coon. Couple fellas in there with him, all steady shiners. I wouldnt talk to any of them unless they was behind bars and would be there for a while. Actually I ought to tell you who not to try and talk to. Thatd be fine, Anderson said. The editor dug through a file drawer next to his desk, pulled out a thick sheaf of papers. He licked a thumb and selecting a few pages of proof copy tossed it onto Andersons lap. Maybe you seen this, he said, from a few years back. December 20, 1930: DEPUTIES GUN DOWN BROTHERS AT MAGGODEE CREEK Bondurant Brothers Shot Trying to Run Blockade Near Burnt Chimney I wouldnt seek those boys out if I were you, the editor said. Im not planning

on starting trouble, Anderson said. The editor put his hands together on the desk and craned his pie-face closer to Anderson, who could not help but lean away. Ill tell you what, the editor said. Theres only two things up in them Franklin County hills for those who are looking: stump whiskey and free ass whippins. BEFORE GOING TO the hospital Anderson pulled into a filling station just outside Rocky Mount to get something to eat. Three men and a young boy sat, chairs leaning back, against the clapboard station wall that was peppered with metal signs advertising Granger Rough Cut Tobacco, Mineraltone Hogs, Harrods Medicinal Powders. They stared at him brazenly as he came up: blank, open faces that disclosed nothing but slight contempt. Anderson said hello and received a nod from each in return, even the small boy, who, Anderson noticed, was shifting around a quid of tobacco in his tanned cheek. Inside a woman stood behind a counter in a calico-print dress. A potbellied stove stood in the middle of the store, surrounded by a moat of wood chips. Anderson walked through the few aisles of scant merchandise. Two dirty-faced young girls eyed him from where they squatted against boxes and played with dolls made of burlap. He bought a couple packs of crackersnabs, they called them in this part of the state and a bottle of birch beer. At the counter, receiving his change, Anderson could hear the faint wind singing against the metal roof, the creaking chairs on the porch. Anderson pulled out of the lot and onto a muddy road that spooled out before him into the dark trees. He rubbed the steamed windshield with his bare hand and stamped the chill out of his boots on the floorboards. Sure, he thought, its everywhere; the streams are running thick with alcohol, the sky raining whiskey. He beat the steering wheel with his fists and screamed at the road. AT THE Rocky Mount Hospital Anderson produced a bottle of whiskey from his coat and offered it to the man with the mutilated groin. A foolish gesture perhaps but he didnt know what else to do. The mans eyes flickered on the bottle and his lip curled in a sneer of contempt. Is it money? Anderson asked. Why dont you just tell me what happened? He sat at their bedside for almost an hour. The moaning man with the broken legs lapsed into unconsciousness and slept fitfully, his hands twitching under the sheets. Nurses came into the ward to tend to other patients and Anderson watched them squeaking down the row of beds, their crisp uniforms crackling like paper. After a while Anderson unscrewed the bottle of Canadian and had a bolt himself, the hot whiskey catching him by surprise and he coughed sharply, drawing looks from others in the ward. Later Anderson walked the corridors and asked some nurses and doctors about what was reported in the papers and got nothing but shrugs and nervous smiles. Nobody at the hospital wanted to say anything. He sat beside the two men for another hour and read The Roanoke Times, sipping a paper cup of whiskey. When he finished the paper Anderson stood in the door to the ward with a cigarette and watched the two men, both of them now unconscious, their sheets soaked with sweat. Anderson felt his own damp jacket, his mouth dry as ash. He had drunk nearly a third of the bottle and yet felt completely sober. His trouser cuffs were stained with red clay, and he could feel the grit of it on his hands. AS HE TRAVELED through Franklin County over the previous few months on his long, meandering drives, Sherwood Anderson habitually stopped at farms, pulling onto rutted roads wherever he spotted men working in the fields. He walked with lean farm boys through the wide rows of tobacco in the dead of July, the sharp green of the drooping leaves, waist high and spreading wide in the sun. The boys and men said little, unwrapping their dinner, sandwiches of cold pork and biscuit, gulping at their food as they sat in a shady spot under the withered elms. Their eyes flitted across Anderson from time to time but mostly they seemed to be staring at something far, far off, their faces, necks, and arms burned deep from the sun. The earth cracked like a puzzle, the fine dust of that clay getting into everything, and by the days end, standing on the sloped floor of his rented room in Rocky Mount, or back at Ripshin, he invariably found the red grains inside his shoes, in his socks, his pockets, in the corners of his eyes. Along the roads large swaths of clay on road cuts exposed like open wounds. When families sat down to eat supper freshly scrubbed from the fields they still carried the grit in the fine lines of their eyes and wrists, and it clung to the vegetables, it was baked deep into the hoecakes and corn bread, it lived in the crispy skin of the chicken, the blood of the pork. Anderson marveled at the stoic endurance of these people, their masterful silence and complete allegiance to utility in all things. Barns were constructed from castoffs, old signboards and discarded pulpwood. Ax handles were filled with half a dozen tightening wedges; rusted plows hammered back into shape until they snapped, then to be reheated at the makeshift forge and hammered again; the pump handle a length of copper pipe; vehicles cannibalized and rebuilt, each permutation carrying the original further from the initial purpose and appearance. The detritus of their efforts lay rotting in the hollow below the house, a ravine of rusted muck. Even then, in the evening the old farmer would peruse his personal junkyard and wonder if he could get that old tie-rod to fit his thresher hub. It was a never-ending battle to make do with what you already had, and when things gave out they literally

exploded into red dust. ANDERSON WAS LEAVING the hospital when an orderly in the hall motioned for him to follow. Now what? Anderson thought. He was tired and the slight tang of a daytime hangover was coming on. The orderly led Anderson down another hall and eventually stopped at a door, holding out his hand, his oily face impassive and dead-eyed, and when Anderson gave him the whiskey he swirled the bottle around, eyeing the level, shrugged, and tucked it into his back pocket and extended his hand again. Anderson

laid a dollar on his horny palm, and the orderly led him into a dim storeroom filled floor to ceiling with shelves stacked with shimmering jars of various sizes. The orderly pulled a cord for the light. This were delivered to those boys the day after they was admitted, the orderly said, pulling a cloth off a half-gallon mason jar. Just in a paper sack, he said, no note or nothin. Anderson looked and tried to understand what he was seeing. That there is what you call white lightnin, the orderly said. Mountain licka. The jar full of clear liquid and a grayish mass with loose tendrils, bulbous, mottled, a slight tincture of blood like a phantasm. A pair of irregular spheres, suspended like dead eyes. And thatd be that boys tackle floatin in there, the orderly said, the mans gonads. Anderson blanched, the sour whiskey rising in his throat.

From Publishers WeeklyStarred . This fictionalized tale of Depression-era bootlegging from Bondurant (The Third Translation) enlists the help of Winesburg, Ohio author Sherwood Anderson to investigate Bondurant family lore. In 1928, a pair of thieves accost Bondurant's real life great-uncle Forrest at his Franklin County, Va., restaurant. They're after a large cache of bootlegging money and end up cutting Forrest's throat. The story of his survival and his trek to a hospital 12 miles away has taken on mythical proportions by the time Sherwood

Anderson arrives in Franklin County in 1934 to research a magazine piece on the area's prolific moonshiners. Soon after Anderson's arrival, two anonymous men appear at the same hospital, one with legs meticulously shattered from ankle to hip, the other one castrated, with the by-products of the deed deposited in a jar of moonshine. The arc of the story lies between the attack on Forrest and that on the two men.

Bondurant endows his gritty story with all the puzzle-solving satisfactions of a mystery. It's a gripping, relentless tale, delivered in no-nonsense prose. (Oct.) ""Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved."