

## PITTSBURGH AND TEMPERANCE, 1830-1854

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Could all the forms of evil produced in the land by intemperance come upon us in one horrid array, it would appal the nation, and put an end to the traffic . . . What, if in every part of dwelling, from the cellar upwards, thro' all the halls and chambers — babbling contentions, and vice, and groans, and shrieks, and wailing were heard by day and by night? What, if the cold blood oozed out and stood upon the walls, and by preternatural art, all the skulls and bones of the victims destroyed by intemperance, were dimly seen haunting the distilleries and stores where they received the bane — following the track of the ship engaged in commerce — walking upon the waves — flitting athwart the deck — sitting upon the rigging and sending up from the hold within, and from the waves without, groans and loud laments and wailings! *who would attend such stores? who would labor in such distilleries? who would navigate such ships?*<sup>1</sup>

THESE remarks, made by the Reverend Lyman Beecher of Massachusetts, were quoted by a Pittsburgh editor some seven weeks before the residents of Allegheny County were to vote on the most important local question of the temperance movement — whether the state legislature should enact a Prohibitory Liquor Law. Such comments were typical of the temperance advocates of the day, for they realized that the outcome of this plebiscite of 1854 would in large measure determine the fate of temperance reform in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

There is much more to the story than a mere chronological reconstruction of events. Passions, prejudices, social and religious pressures, economic and political boycotts, lobbying — all are distinct threads which are noticeable in the fabric of this early temperance reform of which the plebiscite was the climax.

Pittsburgh's temperance reform was intimately connected with the state and national government. Our attention must be directed there to begin the narrative.

### *The Beginnings of Temperance*

It is difficult, if not impossible, to select an arbitrary date as the beginning of the temperance reform. Laws affecting alcoholic beverage

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1 *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, August 17, 1854.

ages were enacted in New England and in Pennsylvania as early as the middle of the seventeenth century; yet they can scarcely be seen as the beginning of a trend or movement. It was not until the latter quarter of the eighteenth century that certain events occurred which gave evidence of a concern over the abuse of alcohol.

The Continental Congress was probably the first group to focus attention on increasing intemperance when on February 27, 1774, it passed a resolution urging the state legislatures to enact laws stopping grain distillation "by which the most extensive evils are likely to be derived, if not quickly prevented."<sup>2</sup> At their General Conference in 1784 the Methodists adopted the rule of John Wesley which prohibited "drunkenness, buying or selling spirituous liquors, or drinking them, unless in cases of extreme necessity."<sup>3</sup> That same year the Quakers at their annual meeting approved a clause against the use of ardent spirits, and four years later made it binding on all members.<sup>4</sup>

This attitude of the church governing bodies, particularly on the part of the Presbyterians, began to filter down to the state and local levels. In 1797 the Synod of Pennsylvania enjoined its ministers to preach against intemperance and its causes. The Pittsburgh Synod resolved in 1816 that spirits were never to be used except as medicine, and recommended that its ministers and professors abstain from their unnecessary use. Twelve years later, on recommendation by the Committee on Sanctification of the Sabbath, the Synod passed four strong resolutions, including total abstinence, and went on record in favor of the founding of a temperance society.<sup>5</sup>

Among the first individuals to exert a strong influence on the formation of the temperance reform was Benjamin Rush. Three factors made him an early advocate for temperance: his observations as a physician of the effects of alcohol on the human body; his frequent associations with early itinerant Methodist ministers; and his Quaker background. In 1785-87 Dr. Rush published a study on "The Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Mind and Body," which was later reissued repeatedly as a temperance tract. He addressed the Methodist

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2 Quoted in Daniel Dorchester, *The Liquor Problem in All Ages* (New York: Phillips and Hunt, 1887), 162.

3 *Ibid.*, 164.

4 *Ibid.*, 165.

5 Prudence B. Trimble, "The Presbyterian Church and Temperance in the United States, 1811-1919, with Particular Reference to Western Pennsylvania" (Unpublished Master's Thesis, Department of History, University of Pittsburgh, 1929), 65-68.

Conference on this subject in 1788, and undoubtedly strengthened that body in its determination.<sup>6</sup>

There is little doubt that the fears of churchmen and others about the prevalence of the use of alcoholic beverages were well founded, particularly after the War of Independence. Ample testimony by contemporaries of the period shows the increasing consumption of ardent spirits at all social events, from house-raising to ordinations, and from christenings to funerals. If we are to believe the recollections of the childhood of many later temperance ministers, even members of that sacred profession drank immoderately without injuring their reputations.<sup>7</sup> Statistics seem to bear out this increased consumption. In 1792 there was an annual average of two and one-half gallons of alcoholic beverage consumed for every man, woman, child, and slave in the United States. In 1810 the per capita amount reached four and four-sevenths gallons, and by 1823 this figure nearly doubled, to seven and one-half gallons.<sup>8</sup>

Attempts to organize temperance societies did not make much progress until about 1825. A few were sporadically organized prior to this, but they were generally failures. The earliest recorded temperance association was formed in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1789. Over two hundred farmers in that area pledged not to use ardent spirits as refreshments for themselves or for their employees. They were thus the first to introduce the principle of a social covenant.<sup>9</sup> Nearly twenty years later a young physician named Billy Clark, impressed with Dr. Rush's essay on "The Effects of Ardent Spirits on the Human Mind and Body," conceived the idea of forming a temperance organization with both a social compact and a moral covenant. With the aid of his Congregationalist minister he organized the first real temperance society complete with constitution and by-laws in Moreau, Saratoga County, New York, in 1808. Some forty-three adults pledged to abstain from the use of alcohol except on the advice of a doctor, or in case of disease, and excluding wine at public dinners. Violators were fined twenty-five cents (fifty cents for drunkenness). Each member was obligated to accuse any offending member.<sup>10</sup> Although the society lasted only until 1822 nearly every later temperance organization incorporated these principles into its constitution.

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6 *Dorchester*, 170-76.

7 *Ibid.*, 133-38.

8 *Ibid.*, 129-31.

9 *Ibid.*, 165-66.

10 *Ibid.*, 181-83.

Temperance reform on a unified national scale was launched in 1826 with the formation of the American Society for the Promotion of Temperance in Boston. Within three years the American Temperance Union, as it was re-named, reported that some 222 societies had been formed, seven located in Pennsylvania. Temperance "missionaries" were sent throughout the country, and the press was utilized to promote the cause.<sup>11</sup>

The 1830's witnessed a tremendous expansion of this reform movement. In 1832 the Army and Navy refused to include whisky in the rations provided for the men. The following year the American Congressional Temperance Society was formed, with Secretary of War Lewis Cass as president and William Wilkins of Pennsylvania and Felix Grundy of Tennessee among the vice-presidents. By 1840 there were an estimated two million pledged teetotalers, of whom some fifteen thousand were former alcoholics.<sup>12</sup>

During this same decade, the principle of total abstinence was generally adopted. Prior to this time the objective had been one of moderation in the consumption of ardent spirits. The aim was for a general abandonment of the use of alcohol, except for medicinal or religious purposes. This principle was not accepted without a struggle, however. When total abstinence was suggested to the National Temperance Convention in 1833 it was voted down, and it was not adopted until 1836. Two years later the American Temperance Union followed suit.<sup>13</sup>

Several factors help explain this significant change. First, there seems to be a natural tendency for reformers, caught up in the emotionalism of a movement, to move from moderation to radicalism. Second, the medical profession gradually came to the conclusion that alcoholic beverages had no medicinal value; in fact, physicians began to emphasize the detrimental effects of ardent spirits. This was an important contribution, for it bolstered the arguments of the reformers. Third, ardent spirits soon became the scapegoat for all evils, including crime, poverty, and disrespect for religion. By eliminating this universal cause of evil mankind would be improved considerably.

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11 *Ibid.*, 219-36.

12 *Ibid.*, 237-40; Reverend Marcus E. Cross, *The Mirror of Intemperance and History of the Temperance Reform* (Philadelphia: John T. Lange, 1849), 81-100.

13 Dorchester, 258-66.

*Pittsburgh and Temperance, 1830-1840*

The year 1830 marked the beginning of the temperance movement in western Pennsylvania with the organization of at least two temperance societies. Scanty records indicate that Lawrenceville established one of the first of these societies on March 15, 1830, with an initial membership of twenty-five persons. An interesting feature of this society was a savings' association connected with it, and members had the opportunity to invest money which they would otherwise spend for liquor.<sup>14</sup>

Residents of Pittsburgh were concerned with a more immediate problem — that of a great number of taverns. This was a problem which plagued temperance advocates throughout the reform movement. In 1829 Pittsburgh was granted 129 tavern permits with 162 others scattered throughout the county. Thus there was one saloon for every 123 persons in Allegheny County. A petition signed by 1,116 was presented to the grand jury of the mayor's court requesting a decrease. The following year the number was reduced to 123. It was possibly over this very problem that a meeting of temperance friends was held at the First Presbyterian Church on March 26, 1830. Reverend Dr. Francis Herron, pastor of the congregation, presided. He was a prominent Pittsburgh clergyman and a central figure of the temperance reform throughout the period. Apparently the society had been formed before, but the exact date of origin is unknown.<sup>15</sup>

*Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania* showed a slight decline in the number of licensed taverns in 1831. In that year there were some 289 located in the "twin cities" of Pittsburgh and Allegheny — one for every 170 persons, or one per every thirty taxable inhabitants.<sup>16</sup>

The Pittsburgh Temperance Society was organized April 26, 1832. Its first president was Walter Forward, one of the city's ablest lawyers.<sup>17</sup>

Judge Charles Shaler, a prominent magistrate of the area, was an early and staunch supporter of temperance. He saw the excessive use of alcohol as responsible for some of the unethical political and judicial practices of his day. In a temperance address in Beaver in June, 1830, Judge Shaler recommended abstinence for all connected with the courts. He felt that nothing instills less confidence than an

14 John N. Boucher (ed.), *A Century and a Half of Pittsburgh and Her People*, 3 Vols. (Pittsburgh: Lewis Publishing Co., 1908), I, 525.

15 *Ibid.*

16 *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania (1828-36)*, VIII, quoted in Trimble, 159.

17 Boucher, I, 525.

intoxicated judge — “one who belches, rather than utters his judgments; who, in losing his sense of shame, loses all sense of justice.” His Honor also hammered away at the prevalent intoxication on the eve of elections. He denounced the practice of candidates buying drinks for their prospective constituents, and ruefully admitted that habitual drunkenness on the part of a candidate was seldom a barrier to his election.<sup>18</sup> Two years later Judge Shaler presided at a county temperance meeting, but apparently was not yet converted to the doctrine of total abstinence.<sup>19</sup>

The objectives of this early temperance reform wave were clearly stated by J. F. Halsey in an address delivered at the anniversary of the Allegheny County Temperance Society at the First Presbyterian Church on New Year's Day, 1830. (This is probably the same society which the Reverend Francis Herron was instrumental in organizing.)

Accordingly, the grand object of the Temperance Society is *not* the reformation of *drunkards*, but to *reform the habits of sober men*. Its appeal is to rational men, not brutes . . . The simple cause of drunkenness is, *sober, prudent, temperate, occasional drinking* . . . drunkenness is nothing more than a *habit*, and temperate drinking the series of acts *necessary* to form the habit; so necessary, that the habit cannot be formed without it . . .

Another object . . . is to *prove the falsity of the almost universal sayings of tipplers and temperance drinkers*, Viz: “A little is necessary — a little will hurt no man” &c.<sup>20</sup>

This attitude was in direct contrast to that of the reformers of the 1840's.

The temperance reform manifested itself in many ways. Neville Craig, editor of the *Pittsburgh Gazette* which supported the cause, spoke a good word for Mrs. Lusher's Temperance Hotel, opened in 1836 on Hand Street near Penn Avenue.<sup>21</sup> These hotels served no liquor to their guests, and enjoyed a great popularity during the reform era. About this time Craig advertised lots for sale in a “Temperance Village” at the mouth of Saw Mill Run opposite Pittsburgh.<sup>22</sup> This is probably the Temperanceville (which later became West End) referred to in other sources, for it was created about 1835 when a group of men headed by a John B. Warden bought some land from the

18 Quoted in *The Anniversary Report of the Managers of the Pennsylvania Society for Discouraging the Use of Ardent Spirits* (Philadelphia, 1831), 19-22.

19 Boucher, I, 526.

20 J. F. Halsey, *An Appeal to Patriots, Philanthropists and Christians, in Behalf of the Temperance Reform* (Pittsburgh: Harvey Newcomb, 1830), 10-13 (Carnegie Library).

21 Cutler J. Andrews, *Pittsburgh's Post-Gazette* (Pittsburgh [no publisher listed], 1936), 111.

22 *Ibid.*

estate of West Elliot and subdivided it into lots.<sup>23</sup>

Reformers of the area were slow to accept the principle of total abstinence. During the 1830's Pittsburgh was almost annually the site of a county or district temperance convention. The county convention in 1832 was not ready to accept this concept. Three years later the temperance societies of the area invited Thaddeus Stevens to address their Fourth of July celebration, and he, too, was unwilling to embrace this principle. However, forces were at work which eventually brought about its acceptance. The Presbytery of Old Redstone, of which Pittsburgh was then a part, adopted a resolution in 1828 which stated

that we, the members of the Presbytery, will not make use of spirituous liquids ourselves, nor have them used in our families, except as medicine — that we will not furnish them as an article of accommodation for our friends, that we will, in all suitable ways, discourage the use of them in the families, and among the people of our respective charges, and in the community generally . . .

Inasmuch as the experience of ages has proved that neither civil enactments, nor coercive measures have presented barriers sufficient to stem this torrent of iniquity . . . the only alternative is, . . . to endeavor, both by precept and example, so to revolutionize public opinion on this subject, that the common use of ardent spirits, either in public meetings or social intercourse, shall no longer be regarded as reputable.<sup>24</sup>

By 1834 the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Church organized as a temperance society on the principle of total abstinence. "It was the unanimous opinion of the Conference that it is sinful to buy or sell spirituous liquors, or use them," reported an observer, and added, "We pray the Almighty to hasten the time, when no distillers, temperate drinkers, or temperate sellers, of this liquid fire or perdition, will have any place among us."<sup>25</sup>

With such pressure it was not long until total abstinence gained official acceptance by the temperance societies. At the second county convention in 1836 its adoption was urged, and the plank was accepted in May of the following year.<sup>26</sup>

Fortunately there is a copy of the *Proceedings of the Temperance Convention* extant, which met in Pittsburgh in November, 1839. This permits a brief study of the nature, extent, and program of the movement at this time. Allegheny County was represented by forty-one temperance societies. Many of them had incorporated "Total Absti-

<sup>23</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, December 20, 1853.

<sup>24</sup> *Minutes of the Presbytery of Redstone of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America, 1781-1831* (Cincinnati: Elm Street Printing Co., 1878), 380-81.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Wallace G. Smeltzer, *Methodism on the Headwaters of the Ohio* (Nashville, Tennessee: Parthenon Press, 1951), 351.

<sup>26</sup> Boucher, 526.

nence" into their names, such as the "Young Gentlemen and Ladies' Total Abstinence Society of Pittsburgh and Vicinity." Women were present as apparently equal members in this movement, but later women usually participated in their own societies. Nearly twenty per cent of the 125 delegates present were women, attesting to the strength of this group. Another sixteen per cent can definitely be identified as representing the professional classes, composed of nine physicians and eleven ministers.

Their resolutions also indicate the scope of their thinking and activities. By this time it had been decided that "the traffic in intoxicating liquors . . . is *immoral* . . ." (italics my own). It was resolved that the license system of the Commonwealth regarding taverns actually legalized the liquor business and should be abolished. The legislature should therefore be petitioned to amend the system, and no votes would be given to any candidate who ignores such petitions. Prohibition was demanded for the employees of public conveyances such as steamships and stages, since alcohol was the cause of most accidents. It was also resolved to persuade insurance companies to lower their rates on vessels navigated by temperance crews as an economic inducement to win the support of ship owners. The delegates also urged that temperance houses be established.<sup>27</sup>

### *Temperance Widens Its Scope*

During the period of 1840-1854 citizens of Allegheny County saw the temperance reform extend its activities, broaden its appeal and incur opposition from within and without. One of the most significant developments, however, was the appearance of two different types of temperance organizations, each with its individual approach, appeal, and philosophy. Each, therefore, deserves closer examination.

A group of six alcoholics had organized an informal social club in Baltimore, and it was their custom to meet frequently at one of the local taverns. On the evening of April 2, 1840, they assembled at Chase's tavern in the city, and learned that a temperance speaker was to give an address that evening. A committee was delegated to hear him. They returned to the tavern, convinced of the folly of their habits and persuaded the others to abandon their intemperance. They formed a temperance society called the Washington Society with a written

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<sup>27</sup> *Proceedings of the Temperance Convention Which Met in Philo Hall, November 6, 1839* (Pittsburgh: Alexander Jaynes, 1839), 4-6. Herein-after cited as *Pittsburgh Temperance Proceedings*.



pledge prohibiting the use of intoxicants. So was born an organization which injected new life into the temperance reform, and had a profound effect on the movement in the early 1840's.<sup>28</sup>

The main objective of the Washingtonians was to rescue other alcoholics and return them to respectable positions in society. In this they made a unique and important contribution; heretofore, the emphasis had been directed toward the "moderate" drinker to the complete exclusion of the real victim of alcohol. Their chief method was to hold regular meetings at which some "convert" would relate his experiences, emphasizing (and often exaggerating) his miserable existence as an alcoholic, the tremendous struggle in breaking from the habit, and the glories of his renaissance as a human being. This had a tremendous emotional appeal, and the meetings were generally well attended, even by the sober element of the population. Within two years they obtained some 500,000 pledges from men, women and children to abstain from alcohol.<sup>29</sup>

Personal abstinence was the only requirement for membership, and moral persuasion was the only method employed. They stayed out of politics and avoided affiliation with any religious group in order to appeal to the widest possible audience. The personal confession was designed to appeal to other alcoholics and to discourage the reformed from "back sliding." "Professional" temperance speakers were avoided as they had never gone through the experience themselves and because their moral and economic arguments had no effect on the alcoholic.<sup>30</sup>

The Washingtonian wave swept the Pittsburgh area in 1841 and aroused great enthusiasm. In a two-week period in July, some 3,600 signed the pledge in Pittsburgh and Allegheny, and it was later reported that only two failed to keep it. On July 27 the *Pittsburgh Gazette* estimated that within a five-mile radius of the "twin cities" there were 10,000 Washingtonians of whom some 2,500 were Roman Catholics.<sup>31</sup> The peak of enthusiasm was reached October 20-21 with a large state convention in Pittsburgh. The Synod of Pittsburgh, meeting in Dr. Herron's church, adjourned to attend.<sup>32</sup> Shortly afterwards

<sup>28</sup> Cross, 101-02.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>30</sup> *The Foundation, Progress and Principles of the Washington Temperance Society of Baltimore, and the Influence It Has Had on the Temperance Movements in the United States* (Baltimore: John D. Troy, 1842), 13-46. Hereinafter cited as Washington Society.

<sup>31</sup> Boucher, 526.

<sup>32</sup> *Pittsburgh Gazette* (weekly), October 29, 1841.

Temperance Hall was erected in Allegheny for meetings. But by the end of the year, the enthusiasm had died out.<sup>33</sup>

It is well to pause and briefly assess the Washingtonian movement. The appeal was probably most effective among the working class, as opposed to the professional and upper classes. The occupations of the original six founders included a tailor, a carpenter, a blacksmith, a wheelwright, a coachmaker, and a silverplater.<sup>34</sup> Moreover, there was scarcely any reason for members of the professional and wealthy classes to associate with such social outcasts as drunkards (even if they were reformed) when there were more respectable temperance societies available, such as one associated with a wealthy or prominent congregation. In addition, they, as well as the more ardent temperance advocates, would have been repelled by the Washingtonians' open-door policy, which admitted everyone, including bartenders and distillers. "Why not exclude men unless they pledge themselves also to quit swearing, or gambling, or any thing else that is wrong, and that may have a connection with drinking?" was their liberal attitude.<sup>35</sup>

A real and unique contribution was made by the Washingtonians in recognizing alcoholism as a disease and not as an evil, and in making an attempt to save the forgotten man of the temperance reform. Even if many Pittsburghers returned to their former intemperate ways (one national estimate is that three-fourths of the Washingtonians did),<sup>36</sup> undoubtedly many stayed reformed and some good was accomplished.

On the other hand, the evaluation of Daniel Dorchester, a temperance historian, deserves attention. The Washington societies presented stiff competition to the older, more established societies already in existence. In general they attracted the more wealthy and certainly the more reliable element of the population. It is quite possible that many of these older societies, even in Pittsburgh, died out in the face of this competition. This would represent a permanent loss to the temperance cause, especially since the Washingtonian movement was of such short duration.<sup>37</sup>

A second type of temperance organization was that of fraternal societies. The earliest of them was the Sons of Temperance, organized in New York City in 1842. According to the Preamble to their constitution their objectives were threefold: "To shield us from the evils

33 Boucher, 526.

34 Cross, 101.

35 Washington Society, 53.

36 Dorchester, 271.

37 *Ibid.*, 271-72.

of Intemperance; afford mutual assistance in case of sickness; and elevate our characters as men." <sup>38</sup>

They adopted the principle of total abstinence, but their most unique feature was a plan including "hospitalization" and life insurance. Any male over eighteen years of age and of good moral character was eligible for membership. The initiation fee varied from three to four dollars and there were weekly dues of six and a quarter cents. Should any member become ill and be unable to work he would receive a minimum of four dollars per week (no time limit was mentioned). In case of his death the immediate family was paid thirty dollars, and fifteen dollars was paid to the member upon the death of his wife.<sup>39</sup>

The organization resembled a social lodge complete with a secret initiation and passwords. There was a definite organizational hierarchy composed of local or Subordinate Divisions, State Divisions, and a National Division. A typical Subordinate Division in Pittsburgh, for example, would meet weekly. The meeting would probably be opened with a prayer and a scripture reading by a chaplain. During the course of the meeting the question would be asked, "Has any brother violated his pledge?" This was the time to make your confessions if you had imbibed, or risk having someone do it for you, for members were fined a dollar for failure to report their erring brother. The officials of the "local" were elected quarterly and consisted of the Worthy Patriarch, Worthy Associate, Recording Scribe, Financial Scribe, Treasurer, Conductor, Assistant Conductor, and Sentinel.

The Grand Division of Pennsylvania (chartered April 22, 1844) met quarterly, and was composed of all past and acting Worthy Patriarchs of the Subordinate Divisions. Information regarding their duties is scanty, but each Grand Division decided disputes which might arise and exercised certain other powers over the chapters. The first officers of the State Division were called Grand Worthy Patriarchs.

Heading this hierarchy was the National Division which met annually and consisted of all the past and acting Grand Worthy Patriarchs. The National Division was the supreme power of the order. It established the rites and ceremonies, amended the constitution, set national policy, and acted as a final court of appeals for the Subordinate Divisions in the event that the decision of a State Division was unsatisfactory. The official colors were red, white, and blue to signify

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in Cross, 129-30.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 130-31; 143.

their motto : Love (to God and mankind) ; Purity (of purpose to carry out its objectives) ; and Fidelity (to all obligations).<sup>40</sup>

The Sons of Temperance tried to profit from the weaknesses of its predecessors and to make the organization as universally appealing as possible. They combined social organization with a cause, and added to it exclusive member benefits. An effort was made not to compete with existing temperance societies by admitting their indebtedness to the early temperance pioneers and to the Washingtonians. Some members in fact did belong to the Washingtonians or to other temperance groups. The National Division at its fourth annual session urged its members to take an active part in public efforts to curb intemperance.

The secrecy and ritual made the Sons especially vulnerable to criticism from religious groups. The Sons were quick to defend their position. It was not intended that the Sons be a substitute for religion ; on the contrary, the organization was a voluntary, charitable body whose principles were in complete harmony with the Bible. Secrecy was defended as being an innocent instrument to keep out unwelcome visitors, while the initiation had meaning "in good taste, and in harmony with the purest principles of morality and religion." In fact, if a brother violated the pledge, secrecy was entirely in keeping with Matthew 18:15: "Moreover, if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." The Sons of Temperance were against secret societies whose existence was hidden to all but the members, and whose designs were hostile to virtue and religion. Thus the organization could serve as a meeting ground for all who were opposed to intemperance — the Christian, the moralist, and the man of the world.<sup>41</sup>

The Sons of Temperance endeavored to involve the entire family in the cause by incorporating auxiliary societies. The Daughters of Temperance enlisted the growing influence of women. An appeal was soon directed to the youth with the formation of the Cadets of Temperance, whose aim was to spread temperance among young people, to form youthful missionaries to exhibit the cause by precept and example, and to serve as a training ground for future temperance leaders. The Cadets were organized in the latter part of 1846 by Wyndham H. Stokes of Germantown, Pennsylvania. Each section was under the

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-44.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-55.

guardianship of three Sons, one of whom (the Worthy Patron) was elected by the sponsoring Subordinate Division. He in turn appointed two assistants (Worthy Deputies). Ten such Subordinate Sections formed a Grand Section in each state. The Cadets elected ten officers, and paid a small membership fee and weekly dues. Girls under fifteen years of age were organized into the Juvenile Sisters of Temperance.<sup>42</sup>

Other temperance organizations were soon formed. The Independent Order of Rechabits was introduced from England in 1842. Three years later the Templars of Honor and Temperance was formed, followed in 1847 by the Order of Good Samaritans. In 1851 the Order of Good Templars organized in Utica, New York, and they eventually outnumbered the Sons in total national membership.<sup>43</sup> This national group was the first to admit women on equal basis, and granted them the right to hold office. Their objectives were very advanced for that time and included (1) total abstinence by perpetual obligation; (2) abolition of all tavern licensing; (3) the enactment of state and national prohibition laws; and (4) persistent efforts to save individuals until success was complete.<sup>44</sup>

Pittsburgh was host to a Sons of Temperance convention on September 15, 1848, which was probably one of the greatest local temperance demonstrations of the decade. Even newspapers indifferent or hostile to the temperance movement admitted that it was a fine, orderly display, despite the unfavorable weather. There were over 1,500 participating in the parade, including seventy-seven musicians in ten bands, twenty banners, and ninety-seven Cadets. The Indiana City society won the prize banner for having the greatest percentage of its members in attendance, and the Aliquippa Division from Birmingham was also awarded a medal.<sup>45</sup>

In 1851 the Sons published a newspaper called *The Temperance Gem*. It was published weekly in Allegheny City, and contained news and announcements from the various temperance societies, plus stories, poems, advice to children, and agricultural and home-making hints. Soon after their first issue, they solicited and received financial support from the Templars of the area, and their news items were included in their own column. This apparently led to joint operation

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>43</sup> Dorchester, 278.

<sup>44</sup> Asa E. Martin, "The Temperance Movement in Pennsylvania Prior to the Civil War," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, XLIX (1925), 210.

<sup>45</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, September 16, 1848; *Pittsburgh Daily Commercial Journal*, September 16, 1848.

of the newspaper, judging from the vague references to reorganization meetings, from appeals to all organizations to purchase stock in the enterprise, and from the disappearance of separate columns for the Sons and for the Templars. This cooperation may have extended into the organizations themselves, judging from the following vague statement:

We speak of the Temple as an advanced portion of the Sons of Temperance . . . . Although it is not absolutely necessary, under the new ritual, still we think he will more likely appreciate either, by being a member of both.<sup>46</sup>

Whatever the internal arrangement of the Orders, editor Thornton A. Shinn was clear as to the purpose of the *Gem*:

The great object shall be the furtherance of the cause of Temperance, and the good of the Order of the Sons of Temperance. In Religion and Politics we must necessarily occupy neutral ground . . . . But we hold it as a right to express our convictions, either against or in favor of church measures, where they conflict or agree with the strict rule of Temperance and sound morals.<sup>47</sup>

Statistics as to the strength of the temperance movement are rare, particularly on the local level. One student of the subject found that by 1849 the National Division of the Sons of Temperance embraced thirty-five Grand Divisions and over four hundred Subordinate Divisions with a total of some 220,000 members. Pennsylvania had 385 local divisions with a membership of 27,241. There were 125 local divisions of the Cadets in the Commonwealth.<sup>48</sup> Two years later the editor of *The Temperance Gem* indicated that there were 2,500 temperance men in Allegheny County.<sup>49</sup> He offered the following statistics for the United States in 1850: 5,653 divisions, 109,401 new members admitted, 6,130 members expelled for violation of the pledge, and a total national membership of 232,233. Money taken in for the year amounted to \$739,175.47, and \$208,785.65 was paid to members for benefits.<sup>50</sup>

Leadership in the reform seemed to reside in the more respectable section of society. Presbyterian ministers Reverend Mr. Herron and Reverend Mr. Swift frequently contributed to the newspapers. Whig editors such as J. S. Riddle of the *Daily Commercial Journal* and David N. White of the *Gazette* propagandized the reform whenever

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46 *The Temperance Gem*, February 26, 1851, 71. The *Gem* numbered their pages consecutively through April, and then stopped publication for about a month. When they resumed in June they began with "1" and numbered consecutively throughout the remainder of the year.

47 *Ibid.*, January 1, 1851, 4.

48 Martin, 206.

49 *The Temperance Gem*, October 1, 1851, 246.

50 *Ibid.*, January 1, 1851, 4.

possible. In the legal profession there was Thornton A. Shinn, an able lawyer who served as editor of *The Temperance Gem*. Judge McClure and Pittsburgh's Alderman Steele were avowed advocates of temperance.

Perhaps the greatest unsung hero of the temperance workers locally was Isaac Harris, a Pittsburgh businessman who became an enthusiast for the reform during the Washingtonian movement in the early 1840's. Harris devoted much time and money to the reform by distributing temperance pamphlets, song books, and other literature. A correspondent informed the editor of the *Pittsburgh Post* that Mr. Harris furnished temperance literature to two entire regiments of Pennsylvania Volunteers bound for Mexico, and that in Pittsburgh and Allegheny he had circulated some 250,000 such publications. The writer asked for community assistance, for Harris took a \$500 loss on the distribution of this literature, although some citizens had collected about \$250 to reimburse him. Whether he was finally repaid is not known, but he apparently sacrificed his business to temperance.<sup>51</sup>

Occasionally a famous temperance lecturer paid a brief visit to Pittsburgh to rekindle the flame against alcohol. One of these was Father Mathew, an Irish Catholic priest who was induced to join the temperance movement by a Quaker. He traveled widely over the British Isles and paid several visits to the United States in the 1840's and 1850's. He is generally credited with obtaining some five million signatures in his pledge book calling for total abstinence. Father Mathew visited Pittsburgh in 1851 and obtained over 3,800 signatures in the cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny.<sup>52</sup>

Neal Dow, the man most responsible for the passage of a Prohibitory Liquor Law in Maine in 1851, traveled widely to assist in getting other states to adopt similar laws. He, too, made one or two visits to the city and was well received.

Another famous temperance lecturer to visit Pittsburgh was John B. Gough. Born in England of poor parents, Gough emigrated to the United States when he was about thirteen years old. He soon fell in with the wrong crowd and became an alcoholic. After several attempts at reform he was finally successful and devoted the rest of his life to lecturing in this country and in England, collecting pledges for total abstinence. Gough stopped off in the city in February, 1851, on his way to Cincinnati. In two weeks' time he delivered sixteen

51 *Pittsburgh Post*, February 8, 1846; Boucher, 527.

52 *The Temperance Gem*, July 30, 1851, 119.

lectures in the "twin cities," obtaining over 1,200 pledges. During one of his lectures in Dr. Herron's church he had an experience that made his visit to Pittsburgh a memorable one. The church was densely packed, and in the midst of his lecture a loud crash was heard in the gallery which caused a panic throughout the assembly.

Women screamed, the men shouted, and in the midst of the swaying and surging of the crowd, the stove was overturned, adding new terrors to the almost frantic multitude.

The fire was soon put out, but the panic continued.

One frantic lady rushed up the pulpit stairs, and throwing her arms round me, begged me to save her: "Oh! Mr. Gough, save me! save me!" The people in the front gallery, knowing the cause of the confusion — that someone had stepped on the big fiddle, which had been left in the singers' seats, causing the crash that had started the people into a panic — were shouting: "It's a fiddle!" and amid the shrieks and cries, the ohs! and ahs! we could distinctly hear, "Fiddle! Fiddle!" — but had no conception what the fiddle had to do with the turmoil. Men stood on the seats, gesticulating violently, and, in their attempts to calm the people, only made matters worse.

One man began singing "From Greenland's Icy Mountains," and when all joined in order was restored.<sup>53</sup> Undaunted by the experience, he returned in May of the following year for two weeks and obtained another 3,000 signatures.<sup>54</sup>

### *Temperance Propaganda*

How did the temperance reformers appeal to people? What techniques and arguments were used to persuade the average resident of Pittsburgh to abandon his former indifference or opposition to the war against alcohol and sign the pledge?

Statistics were widely used to bolster the temperance program. J. F. Halsey informed Pittsburghers as early as 1830 that some sixty million gallons of ardent spirits were consumed annually in the United States — a per capita consumption of six gallons. There were some 480,000 occasional or habitual drinkers, and if every intemperate person were connected with one family, 2,400,000 felt "the scorpion lash of this terrific evil." Hospitals and almshouses were crowded with 200,000 paupers at an annual cost of \$9,100,000.

Of the 60,000 in the nation who were in prison or who lived in vice and crime, 45,000 were victims of intemperance, adding tremendously to the cost of crime to the nation. The amount of alcohol

53 John B. Gough, *Autobiography and Personal Recollections* (Philadelphia: H. C. Johnson, 1870), 267-70.

54 Boucher, 528.



consumed over the previous forty years equaled the sum total of the property of the entire nation. Moreover, an estimated 30,000 were killed every year by alcohol. Had they been sober, they probably would have lived ten years longer — a loss of 300,000 years. If their worth to the community were only seventy-five cents per day, this represented an annual loss to the nation of \$79,200,000.

We say nothing here of the broken-hearted wives, and naked, starving children of drunkards, who are doomed all over the land, to be murdered by inches, (notwithstanding the humane laws in our statute books,) doomed to the torture of a slow and living death, worse than Indian immolation, or savage roasting.<sup>55</sup>

A second strong reason advanced by the temperance advocates was a medical one. Dr. Rush had become convinced of the ill effects of alcohol on the human body before the turn of the nineteenth century, and his essay was widely read. By the late 1820's physicians and medical societies either joined the movement or gave testimonials to be used in speeches and in pamphlets. Dr. Trotter, a British physician, was one of these. Mr. Halsey quoted him in referring to those diseases which were induced by chronic drinking :

inflammation of the brain, pleurisy, inflammation of the eyes, carbuncles, diseased liver, gout, schirrus of the lower viscera of the chest, jaundice, dyspepsia or indigestion, dropsy, atrophy or emaciation of the body, fainting, palpitation of the heart, locked-jaw, palsy, ulcers, madness, idiocy, melancholy, and premature old age.<sup>56</sup>

Those who remained impervious to the pecuniary approach could scarcely have remained untouched by these fearful possibilities.

Perhaps the most famous physician in the temperance cause was Dr. Thomas Sewall, a Methodist from Washington, D. C., who conducted a pathological study of the effects of alcohol on the human stomach and sketched his findings. These drawings included the confirmed drunkard's stomach, the drunkard's stomach in an ulcerous state, the drunkard's stomach after a debauch, and his stomach in a cancerous state. Dr. Sewall lectured extensively, and his sketches were widely circulated.<sup>57</sup>

Closely connected with the physical evils were the debilitating effects on the mind and intellect. Dr. Sewall noted this :

[The alcoholic's] judgment becomes clouded . . . the memory also enfeebled . . . . The mind is wandering and vacant . . . . The will, too, acquires an omnipotent ascendancy over him, and is the only monitor to which he yields obedience . . . . On the other hand, we shall find, by looking over the biography of the great

<sup>55</sup> Halsey, 2-9.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>57</sup> Dorchester, 278-79.

men of every age, that those who have possessed the clearest and most powerful minds, neither drank spirits nor indulged in the pleasure of the table. Sir Isaac Newton, John Locke, Dr. Franklin, John Wesley, Sir William Jones, John Fletcher, and President Edwards, furnish striking illustration of this truth.<sup>58</sup>

One of the most frequently used arguments was the moral one. Dr. Sewall also traced this decline upon the inebriate :

He loses, by degrees, his regard to truth and to the fulfillment of his engagements — he forgets the Sabbath and the house of worship, and lounges upon his bed, or lingers at the tavern. He lays aside his Bible — his family devotion is not heard . . . He at length becomes irritable, peevish and profane; and is finally lost to everything that respects decorum in appearance, or virtue in principle . . .<sup>59</sup>

There seemed to be a direct correlation between the growing acceptance of total abstinence and the conviction that alcoholic consumption and traffic were normally unrighteous. The Temperance Convention held in Pittsburgh in 1839 was undoubtedly following religious precedence when it resolved "That the traffic in intoxicating liquors . . . is immoral."<sup>60</sup> Once this was accepted, it was but one step to make of the temperance movement a religious crusade. Reverend J. Grier, a critic of the reform, quoted the *Journal of the American Temperance Union* as stating: "The cause is the cause of God. It emanated from the cross."<sup>61</sup> "Whence came this Temperance reformation?" asked Reverend Dr. Bacon of New Haven, Connecticut. "It came . . . out of the bosom of christianity; from the church of God . . . The first movement in it was made by ministers of the gospel . . . It is the work of almighty power, and . . . satan . . . could not subdue it."<sup>62</sup>

This crusading attitude is further shown in some of the temperance songs of the day.

Friends of freedom! swell the song;  
Young and old, the strain prolong,  
Make the temp'rance army strong  
And on to victory.

God of mercy! hear us plead,  
For thy help we intercede!  
See how many bosoms bleed!  
And heal them speedily.

58 Thomas Sewall, *Address on the Effects of Intemperance on the Intellectual, Moral, and Physical Powers*, 3-4.

59 *Ibid.*, 3.

60 *Pittsburgh Temperance Proceedings*, 4.

61 Reverend J. Grier, *A Lecture on the Subject of the Use of Intoxicating Liquors* (Pittsburgh, 1844), 94.

62 Quoted in *Ibid.*, 94-95.

Hasten, Lord, the happy day,  
 When, beneath thy gentle ray,  
 Temp'rance all the world shall sway,  
 And reign triumphantly.

Lord of heaven and earth assist us,  
 While the temp'rance cause we plead,  
 Though both earth and hell resist us,  
 If thou bless, we shall succeed,  
 From intemp'rance  
 May our country soon be freed.  
 Let the temp'rance reformation  
 Still go forward and increase,  
 Checking vice and dissipation  
 Filling hearts and homes with peace,  
 Till intemp'rance  
 Shall on earth, forever cease.<sup>63</sup>

Although emotionalism is evident in the above songs, apparently it was felt that those who were engaged in the liquor trade as distillers or retailers were immune from moral arguments; consequently the utmost in oratorical persuasion was reserved for them:

Do you profess to be a Christian? . . . And can you, after all the light God has thrown upon your holy vision, still continue in this unhallowed traffic? . . . What do you think of your petty profits on a few barrels of rum . . . when you take your place at the sacramental table of your Lord, and perchance your eye . . . lights upon the wan and haggard visage of some sister in Christ, whose husband lies at home drunk, from the bottle which your hands may have filled? And as you . . . turn away your eye, it catches the streaming eye of another, whose pale face is paler still, contrasted with the sable habiliments of mourning, which the poison from your store may have virtually thrown around her, by destroying the life of her husband, son or brother? What will you think . . . when you carry forward your thoughts up to the portals of heaven, and see inscribed in letters of lightning these words, — "drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God," and then think, how *your* trade has depopulated that rich, that magnificent, that blood bought kingdom; and again, cast your eagle eye down — down — down — the dark and dismal gulf, and fix one horrid gaze upon the deathless worm, as he fixes his unrelaxing tooth upon the soul of the last drunkard which enters hell — and oh! if you *can* bear it, unstop your ear, and listen to the hollow groans, and infernal blasphemies, and unearthly yells, of drunkards, echoing through the capacious caverns of the damned!!!<sup>64</sup>

The appeals cited thus far have had a definite male orientation. Temperance leaders were keenly aware, however, of the desirability of the support of women and cultivated their endorsement and aid. The approach was of a quite different nature, for several reasons. In the first place, the rate of public drunkenness among women was considerably lower than that of men, primarily because they were generally barred from taverns by social custom and it was thus more difficult for them to procure liquor. Secondly, active participation in the

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, 154-55.

<sup>64</sup> Halsey, 16.

temperance movement was largely reserved to men; women's place was still regarded as being in the home. Thirdly, to make an appeal to women only in such violent tones may have been regarded as too indelicate in an age of romanticism.

Women had considerable influence in the home among the male members of the family, especially on the children. It was to this aspect that temperance leaders appealed.

#### FEMALE AID REQUIRED

Come forth ye lovely train,  
Your nobler powers display;  
Nor shall you plead in vain;  
But win the well-fought day.  
Mothers and maidens then shall sing,  
And the earth with hallelujahs ring.  
Each house shall then become  
A paradise below;  
And all enjoy a home,  
Where sweetest pleasures flow.<sup>65</sup>

One editor urged all mothers to emphasize the importance of total abstinence upon the minds of their children:

Talk to your children about the horrors of intemperance. Let not a day pass, if possible, without some familiar illustration, some wholesome advice or gentle warning. Carry them where the drunkard bides, for unless familiar with sin by knowledge of its existence, we may be by sore and bitter experience. Never allow them to despise the children of the sot, or laugh at the wild antics of the poor inebriate.<sup>66</sup>

Youth were a special objective, as can be seen from the Cadets of Temperance and the Juvenile Sisters of Temperance. A good portion of temperance literature was aimed at their indoctrination, including a magazine, *Youth's Temperance Advocate*. One issue contained a "Little Catechism between a Master and His Scholars," dealing with the Temperance Declaration of Independence. It was clearly an analogy to their studies in American history, with King Alcohol assuming the role of the "villainous" George III enslaving and impoverishing tens of thousands until 1826 when the formation of the American Temperance Union declared freedom from Alcohol's oppression.<sup>67</sup>

The crusading spirit was also engendered in the temperance youth:

So here we pledge perpetual hate  
To all that can intoxicate.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Grier, 206.

<sup>66</sup> *The Temperance Gem*, February 5, 1851, 43.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, August 27, 1851, 165.

We will save your sister, brothers —  
And our fathers, sons and mothers —  
With our neighbors and all others,  
By the Cold Water Pledge.<sup>68</sup>

It should not be assumed that the temperance movement went unchallenged. Although the records are unfortunately rather scanty it is possible to detect some dissension, particularly in theological circles.

One of the ablest Biblical analyses of the temperance question was put forth by Reverend J. Grier in a six-hour lecture delivered at Robinson's Run Church in April, 1844. He found the use of liquor Scriptural and not sinful. It was the *abuse* of alcohol that the Bible condemned. However, rational usage required temperate, moderate consumption, and he recommended that alcoholic beverages be available in respectable places. Liquor had definite purposes: it refreshed and nourished the body; it promoted health, as Paul recommended its use to Timothy; and it had certain sacred purposes. Under some circumstances Grier felt that total abstinence was absolutely necessary: high and responsible officials should *properly* abstain, as well as those who were employed in the direct and immediate service of God, those who were unable to exercise moderation, and in certain situations for the sake of others, such as giving offense, or tempting a weaker brother. "I utterly condemn, under all circumstances," Grier affirmed, "the general practise of *retailing* them for *common tipping* purposes, in connexion with *all that* manufacture of them, and *wholesale* traffic in them, on which it is dependent."<sup>69</sup>

Temperance societies, Grier believed, were not the best means of securing universal adoption of total abstinence: (1) it was a censorious reflection on God's people and power; (2) it equated tradition with God's word; (3) total abstinence was an ordinary and permanent duty; and (4) enforced abstinence infringed upon individual liberty ("Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink . . .").

Grier called for the formation of a voluntary society to suppress intemperance "just as far as its members are individually bound by the word of God to proceed . . ." The advantages were that temperance would be performed beyond the strict demands of duty, it would not corrupt public opinion, and it would not break down all opposition. Furthermore, the emphasis would not be on the pledge, which was one of the objectionable features of existing temperance organizations.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>68</sup> From *Youth's Temperance Advocate*, quoted in Grier, 149-50.

<sup>69</sup> Grier, 8-126.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 127-205.

The Reverend William Galbraith, pastor of the Bethel Associate Reformed (later United Presbyterian) Church in Plum Township, went a little farther in his opposition. One irate listener later reported that the Reverend Mr. Galbraith

said he had proved to demonstration that Christ drank wine and we take him for our example. He said that Scripture was a permission to drink wine and consequently not to drink it as a common beverage was sin . . . . He said that the Temperance Reform was a humbug and Satan transformed into an Angel of Light . . . . In conclusion he read some extracts from a periodical of the improper conduct of a temperance speaker who addressed the people at the door of the church while the pastor was preaching in the house, evidently with the design to induce his hearers to believe we were all fanatics, fools, and madmen.<sup>71</sup>

Still another expression of opinion was given in the *Princeton Review*, a religious periodical available locally. It objected to the correlation of temperance with morality, and pointed out that God did not prohibit the use of such drinks. The editor complained that the movement had led to a disregard of God's word, to a perversion of its meaning, and to an irreverent attitude toward God. Furthermore, it had led to coercive measures in the promotion of their objectives, and had invoked the aid of church courts and church censures, producing a spirit of denunciation. Many good men had been maligned for denying the morality of temperance.<sup>72</sup>

Even among that large segment of the religious population which favored temperance there was dissension, particularly toward the secrecy of the fraternal societies. The editor of *The Temperance Gem* took note of the antagonism of some parts of the religious community to the Sons of Temperance in 1851. He attributed this to "misunderstanding or prejudice on the part of the Christian people" which led many ministers to believe that the Sons had a sinister purpose. Editor Shinn called for mutual cooperation in the fight against intemperance, but his conclusion that in their hostility the ministers became virtual auxiliaries of the rum powers was not the most diplomatic approach to secure that cooperation.<sup>73</sup>

### *Temperance and Politics*

#### OUR TEETOTAL CREED

*Total abstinence from the manufacture, sale, and use of all intoxicating drinks, and no letting of buildings to others, either for making, selling such beverages; — moral suasion alone for the drunkard, but moral and legal suasion combined for the drunkard-maker: — no voting for rumocratic candidates, either for state, county, town or city officers: — a transfer of all business*

<sup>71</sup> Letter to *Pittsburgh Advocate* (n.d.), quoted in Elizabeth M. Davison, *Annals of Old Wilkinsburg and Vicinity* (Wilkinsburg, Pennsylvania), 94.

<sup>72</sup> Grier, 157-58.

<sup>73</sup> *The Temperance Gem*, June 18, 1851, 22.

*patronage* from places where *intoxicating drinks* are either made, sold, or drank, to other establishments of a moral, and *teetotal* character: — and a harmonious and constant co-operation, among *all* teetotal organizations, for the suppression of the *manufacture*, the *traffic*, and the *use*, of all *alcoholic beverage*.<sup>74</sup>

This statement summarizes the program of the organized temperance movement. Some of these tenets have already been examined. The spotlight must now be turned on the legal and political aspects of the reform.

The most immediate object of temperance attack was the tavern. Dr. Sewall sounded the call to arms in his address of 1830:

Let us lessen the number, and, if possible, utterly exterminate from among us those establishments which are the chief agents in propagating the evils of intemperance . . . those shops which are licensed for retailing ardent spirit . . .<sup>75</sup>

The license laws of the various states came under attack by temperance advocates during the 1830's and 1840's. Massachusetts passed a law in 1838 which set the minimum amount that could legally be purchased at fifteen gallons, but the liquor interests secured its repeal two years later. Tennessee repealed all laws licensing tippling houses in 1838 and set the minimum purchase at one quart. The following year Mississippi established a one-gallon minimum purchase law. Connecticut abolished her license laws in 1838, while New York abolished licensing by plebiscite in 1846.<sup>76</sup>

The 1830's also saw Pennsylvania pass some laws which bore the mark of mild temperance endorsement. In March, 1834, legislation was passed which prohibited an innkeeper from extending credit for liquor and from legally bringing suit for a liquor bill (he was permitted to sue only for board and other charges). Two years later it became illegal to furnish liquor to a habitual drunkard after having received notice from a committee.<sup>77</sup>

The state temperance society tried unsuccessfully to secure the adoption of prohibition at the state constitutional convention in 1838. It was then decided to concentrate on securing the passage of a local option law.<sup>78</sup> Success was finally achieved in 1846 with the enactment of a law authorizing some eighteen counties to decide by ballot "whether the sale of vinous and spirituous liquors shall be con-

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, July 30, 1851, 123.

<sup>75</sup> Sewall, 15.

<sup>76</sup> Dorchester, 289-93.

<sup>77</sup> R. A. B. Housman, *The Liquor Laws of Pennsylvania with Annotations to January 1, 1907*, 40-41; 54.

<sup>78</sup> Harry M. Chalfant, *Father Penn and John Barleycorn* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; The Evangelical Press, 1920), 73.

tinued.' " <sup>79</sup> Included among these eighteen counties were Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, and Washington. The voting took place in 1847, and the cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny voted against the sale of liquor by a majority of over 2,000 votes. The following year the state Supreme Court declared the law unconstitutional by a three-to-two vote on the grounds that the legislature had not authority to delegate law-making powers to the people.<sup>80</sup>

This local option law did not meet with universal acclaim. The *Pittsburgh Post* noted that about one hundred business firms and individuals petitioned the legislature in Harrisburg to change the act to permit wholesalers and large hotels to deal in liquors. (Judge McClure had interpreted the license law to mean that licenses could be granted only to houses prepared to entertain guests, and not to such establishments as restaurants and coffee houses.)<sup>81</sup> The petition stated that if the law were not amended it would force the large number of whisky distilleries which had sold in Pittsburgh to seek other markets. In addition, it "will have the effect to drive to another State, many of our most estimable citizens to conduct a business which embraces near one-fourth of the whole commerce of the city." <sup>82</sup>

The problems of tavern licenses remained to plague local temperance leaders. In the Report of the Grand Inquest for the June term, 1848, it was noted that a large number of tippling houses had been returned for selling liquor without a license, while hundreds more had escaped due to lax enforcement. Only four of the nine Pittsburgh wards reported those who had sold liquor in quantities less than one quart. "The Report" also complained of the increase in the number of houses not designed for travelers which sold alcoholic beverages in direct violation of the law.

Drunkenness, gambling, rioting, and other crimes, are engendered in these dens of infamy, and the sooner the public are rid of them the better . . . . Nearly, if not all, the cases tried at this Term, grew out of the free use of ardent spirits, obtained at these houses . . . .<sup>83</sup>

One solution of the temperance leaders was to take advantage of every opportunity afforded by the law. According to the Act of April 21, 1846, the Court of Quarter Sessions had to set aside certain times

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<sup>79</sup> Quoted in Martin, 211.

<sup>80</sup> Chalfant, 74-75.

<sup>81</sup> Boucher, 528.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in *Pittsburgh Morning Post*, January 28, 1846.

<sup>83</sup> Report of the Grand Inquest, June term, 1848, quoted in *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, July 7, 1848.



each year to hold public hearings regarding applications for tavern licenses. The Court was also obliged to receive remonstrances and to consider them in deciding on an application. In order to be licensed a tavern had to "be necessary to accommodate the public and entertain strangers and travelers," and a certificate had to be presented signed by twelve reputable citizens of the area testifying to its need and the good reputation of the applicant.<sup>84</sup> Wherever possible, temperance men questioned these applications on the basis of these requirements.

Some degree of success is indicated by the very large meeting held by temperance opponents in June, 1851, in Splain's Room at the corner of Fifth and Smithfield, Pittsburgh, to consider the course of action due to the "recent stringent action of the Court of Quarter Sessions, in the granting of licenses." Five resolutions were passed: (1) "Every citizen should be his own guardian in the use of drinks, as well as food and raiments"; (2) they held those laws unconstitutional which prohibited the sale of any commodity imported into the United States on which import duties had been paid, or that prohibited articles manufactured domestically; (3) they pledged united effort "to cast off the insolent spirit of proscription" evidenced in the Court of Quarter Sessions; (4) they refused to vote for any candidate "unless a written pledge be given to use every honorable effort to repeal the present license laws . . ."; (5) they believed "a miserable minority called Temperance men, should not have power to act as censors or dictators in this commonwealth"; and they appointed a five-man executive committee to draft a memorial to the next legislature.<sup>85</sup>

From this it is possible to make some observations. First, the chief approach of those opposed to the license laws was to claim an infringement of individual liberties. Second, they were going to use the same techniques as the reformers: lobby in the state legislature and not vote for any candidate who hadn't committed himself to their views.

The reformers also urged their followers to encourage the utilization of a law passed in 1836 which permitted a relative of an alcoholic to apply to the Court of Common Pleas for a writ of lunacy, whereby the entire estate of the alcoholic passed to the custody of a committee of trustees for safekeeping. An editor noted with satisfaction that several applications were about to be made.<sup>86</sup>

Temperance leaders were busy with memorials of their own. In a

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<sup>84</sup> *The Temperance Gem*, February 26, 1851, 70.

<sup>85</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, June 11, 1851, 26.

<sup>86</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Dispatch*, September 1, 1848.

petition to the state legislature in 1851 the reformers complained that there were 366 licensed taverns in Allegheny County, 219 of which were in Pittsburgh and Allegheny City. They requested a law to estimate annually the total expenses of the Court of Quarter Sessions (including the costs of jurors and witnesses) and to assess each licensed tavern to meet this expense. In default of payment, the Sheriff was to be empowered to sell the tavern to meet this assessment.<sup>87</sup>

The campaign promises of the major political parties' candidates were not always satisfactory to the reformers, particularly when neither would take a stand on the temperance question. On one occasion the Pittsburgh temperance leaders seriously considered forming a separate political party. The idea was discarded as being too hazardous, but they suggested a compromise plan. After the political parties had made their nominations, a temperance convention would be called. The candidates for each office would be evaluated, and one person would be endorsed for every office who was an acknowledged friend of temperance in action as well as by profession; his name would then be placed in nomination as a temperance candidate. If all positions could not be filled in this way, a candidate should be chosen from among the temperance ranks.<sup>88</sup> In the end they relied on their regular procedure — that of inducing the existing political parties to nominate men acceptable to the temperance cause.<sup>89</sup>

In May of 1854 the legislature passed a law which made it a misdemeanor willfully to sell, give, or furnish intoxicating drinks to any person of known intemperate habits, to a minor, or to an insane person.<sup>90</sup> This act, however, received scant attention, for at this time the temperance forces were engaged in the most ambitious endeavor of their career, the outcome of which would crown their list of successes or retard the movement for years.

By 1850 the temperance leaders decided to put their strength to the test by attempting to secure passage of prohibition laws in the various states. Maine became the first state to outlaw intoxicating beverages in 1851, and her law became the model of temperance reformers throughout the nation. Massachusetts followed suit the following year, and by 1854 prohibition laws had been passed by the legislatures of Rhode Island, Vermont, Michigan, Connecticut, Ohio and

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<sup>87</sup> *The Temperance Gem*, January 22, 1851, 28.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, February 5, 1851, 44.

<sup>89</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, July 8, 1851.

<sup>90</sup> Housman, 52.

Michigan.<sup>91</sup> All eyes turned toward Pennsylvania to see if she would stand up and be counted for temperance.

After 1838 when the state temperance organization failed to secure prohibition the issue apparently lay dormant in favor of more immediate projects. But by the early 1850's the state reformers saw the successes of their compatriots in other states and were encouraged to try for a prohibitory law once more.

In Pittsburgh agitation for such a law went back as early as 1852, when a large and cheering meeting of Allegheny City women met in Dr. Swift's church to organize for petitioning the legislature for prohibition. Reverend John T. Pressly of the Allegheny Associate Reformed Church contributed between five and six hundred women's names signed within the bounds of his congregation. About 350 additional signatures were obtained at the meeting, and arrangements were made to carry the petition to every house in the city.<sup>92</sup>

By 1854 the struggle was in full swing, and the outlook for success was bright. An editor hostile to prohibition noted that temperance delegates were leaving Pittsburgh to lobby through the Maine Law, and added, "The liquor men, we understand, are giving up without a struggle — they say if the people want sumptuary laws they should have them, and so say we."<sup>93</sup> The day previous he had predicted ominously, "The Maine law is coming."<sup>94</sup>

There was much bitter debate and parliamentary maneuvering in Harrisburg. On April 28 the opponents of prohibition, in order to forestall passage of the Maine Law at that session, were successful in passing a law providing for a state-wide plebiscite on the question of prohibition to be held at the time of the general election on the second Tuesday of the following October.<sup>95</sup> The result of this was one of the most bitterly contested elections in Pennsylvania's history.

The temperance advocates quickly organized for the coming election. Numerous conventions were held and resolutions passed endorsing passage of the Maine Law. Following their customary procedure, they asked the major candidates to take a stand on the Prohibitory Law. James Pollock, the Whig nominee for Governor, endorsed it. His Democratic opponent, Governor Bigler, failed to express

<sup>91</sup> Dorchester, 299-301.

<sup>92</sup> George F. Swetnam, "The Growing Edge of Conscience," *The Presbyterian Valley*, ed. William W. McKinney (Pittsburgh: Davis & Warde, Inc., 1958), 275-76.

<sup>93</sup> *Pittsburgh Evening Chronicle*, February 28, 1854.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, February 27, 1854.

<sup>95</sup> Martin, 219.

himself definitely on the issue; consequently Pollock received temperance support. When the State Temperance Committee asked Jeremiah S. Black, candidate for re-election to the state Supreme Court, to take a stand on the Maine Law, the Judge replied, "I cannot answer your question consistently with my sense of propriety . . . ." His reasons were that a judge could not render a decision before hearing the arguments from both sides or before seeing the law. If a candidate for judge took stands before being elected, "courts would cease to be places where justice is judicially administered," and would become mere rubber stamps for the foregone policies and decrees of political conventions.<sup>96</sup> The radical temperance men simply brushed this aside as an evasive answer.

Temperance leaders constantly kept the problems of taverns and licensing before the people. Judge McClure reported at a temperance convention that there were 1,750 "grogeries" in the county.<sup>97</sup> In his charge to the Grand Jury regarding the Prohibitory Law his Honor strongly defended it. Liquor, he said, was the parent of crimes, misdemeanors, pauperism, taxes, and misery. The Prohibition Law was the great moral question of the century. He warned that the state which didn't adopt prohibition while its neighboring states had accepted it would be hurt. "Self-protection, independent of all higher motive; reasons purely political, would prompt and apply prohibition under such circumstances." Such laws promoted the "General Welfare" clause of the Preamble to the Constitution. As to the license laws, they "lead men into temptation, and then punish them for yielding to it . . . The traffic may be abolished, the habit restrained, but neither can be regulated."<sup>98</sup>

The Grand Jury also cooperated with the temperance campaign in their report:

The great demoralizing agency at work in our community seems to be the traffic in intoxicating drinks. From this prolific source seems to emanate much, if not most of the disorders and vices of the times. How can any community be safe, or virtuous, or happy, with some five hundred drinking houses in our midst? . . . Until our lawgivers shall deliver us from this deplorable condition, we recommend your Honor to impose extreme penalties on all persons offending against the already too lax and temporizing laws on this subject.<sup>99</sup>

As the heat of the campaign began to equal the heat of that summer, the arguments for both sides gradually emerged. The argu-

<sup>96</sup> Quoted in *Pittsburgh Post*, August 21, 1854.

<sup>97</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, July 6, 1854.

<sup>98</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, October 3, 1854.

<sup>99</sup> Quoted in *Ibid.*, July 10, 1854.

ments for a prohibitory law boiled down to the following: (1) it was the duty of the government to protect the nation's industry and to guard the property rights of its citizens; (2) it was the duty of the government to provide for the public health and to protect it by all necessary legislation; (3) the government was responsible for the personal safety of its citizens; (4) during the entire 150 years of its existence the license system had proved to be a failure; (5) the grog shops were demoralizing; (6) the tremendous cost of supporting by public charity those whose health or economy was impaired directly or indirectly by liquor was borne by the temperate people of the state; (7) liquor destroyed the peace and happiness of thousands of homes; and (8) the license liquor traffic burdened the state with an enormous debt.<sup>100</sup>

Those who opposed the Maine Law cited the following reasons: (1) the law was unconstitutional; (2) it was a violation of personal liberty; (3) it was morally wrong to deprive a man of his property and to destroy it; (4) the law would be injurious to the farming interests by diminishing the demand for corn; (5) it would do a great injustice to the manufacturers and sellers of liquor since their capital could not have been withdrawn and reinvested without loss; and (6) the law could not be enforced, and it would have resulted in large-scale smuggling and bootlegging of inferior and dangerous liquor.<sup>101</sup>

Generally speaking, the Whig party took up the prohibition cause, while the Democrats avoided it. The Democratic *Pittsburgh Post* said very little about the Maine Law during the campaign. The editor remarked in passing that the late summer drought would probably be an unexpected help to the temperance men, since the resulting rise in food prices would prevent many from spending money on alcohol. He seemed to take satisfaction in the fact that "our party . . . refused to drag the temperance cause into the political arena. Democrats vote as they please on that subject, and abide by their long cherished political principles."<sup>102</sup>

Among the Whig newspapers, the *Pittsburgh Gazette* was the strongest local advocate for the Maine Law. "There never was a more favorable time to pass the measure, nor a more critical time for the cause of reformation." The editor then added prophetically, "If the measure fails at this time, it may be put back for years."<sup>103</sup>

100 Martin, 218-19.

101 *Ibid.*, 219-26.

102 *Pittsburgh Post*, August 30; September 8, 1854.

103 *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, September 18, 1854.

The Committee on Vigilance of the Friends of Prohibition used the pages of the *Gazette* to make their final plea in the closing days of the campaign. "FELLOW CITIZENS: On Tuesday you will decide whether poison shall continue to be admitted, under sanction of LAW, to your neighbors, your friends, your brethren and your children . . ." It was then proved that alcohol was a killer by listing some of the local violent deaths which were directly attributed to liquor. The document closed with a final appeal that wives and women were to remove this threat to their homes by using their influence; fathers should save their sons from temptation, and *vice versa*; moderate drinkers were asked to forego this pleasure to save thousands of their brothers; and drunkards were reminded that their only salvation was to remove this temptation.<sup>104</sup>

Temperance won a battle but lost the war. James Pollock was elected Governor, but the Prohibitory Law was defeated in a close vote: 158,318 for; 163,457 against — a majority for the opposition of about 6,000 votes out of a total ballot of over 320,000. Thirty-six counties favored the Maine Law, while twenty-eight opposed it. Except for Greene and Cambria counties, the entire western section of Pennsylvania voted for prohibition. Allegheny County gave the Maine Law roughly a 10,000 to 4,000-vote majority and it gave Pollock a two-to-one margin.<sup>105</sup> The election of a Prohibitionist Whig governor was small consolation, however.

The failure of the Prohibitory Law did not mark the end of state-wide temperance reform. In 1855 the state legislature outlawed the sale of liquor on Sundays, punishable by a fifty-dollar fine. One-half of this amount went to the prosecution and the other half was designated for the guardians of the poor, indicating that traffic in alcohol was still regarded as immoral.<sup>106</sup> Three years later the so-called "Jug Law" was enacted, prohibiting the sale of liquor in taverns or groceries in quantities less than a quart.<sup>107</sup>

The days of the reform were definitely numbered, however, and the results of 1854 marked a significant step in its decline. Only one year after the sale of liquor on Sunday was outlawed, the liquor interests succeeded in securing the repeal of its main prohibitive features.<sup>108</sup>

104 *Ibid.*, October 9, 1854.

105 Martin, 227; *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, October 14, 1854.

106 Housman, 49.

107 *Ibid.*, 11.

108 Martin, 228.

Why was prohibition defeated after the temperance movement had enjoyed such success heretofore? A number of possibilities suggest themselves. The fact that the opposition succeeded in repealing a law which to them was obnoxious indicates that they had made significant strides in organization and pressure techniques. An indication of their strength came in the boast made by the local liquor dealers in July, 1855, when they announced that they had organized a secret, oath-bound organization pledged to secure repeal of unfavorable liquor laws. Membership amounted to 2,500. Five thousand dollars had been contributed in cash and an additional fifteen thousand dollars had been subscribed.<sup>109</sup> This opposition was a far cry from the mob which started a riot at the Temperance Ark in Allegheny in 1843 and which attacked a Negro band that was giving a concert for the Washingtonians.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, in many cases their motivation was not some abstract ideology but cold economics; their livelihood was at stake.

Many were alienated by the radical bent which the temperance movement had taken. The term "temperance" had been distorted by the radicals to mean "the proper and moderate use of whatever is adapted to the physical, intellectual, and moral nature of man: and entire abstinence from whatever is injurious to the above."<sup>111</sup> Acting on this definition, *all* alcoholic beverages, including beer and wine, were prohibited. A few of the more extreme radicals were questioning the use of wine in Holy Communion, which would estrange most religious groups. Even apple cider was officially outlawed by the Templars and the Sons of Temperance since it was difficult if not impossible to determine at what point fermentation occurred.<sup>112</sup>

Other issues occupied the minds of many Pennsylvanians during this period, relegating prohibition to a secondary position. Slavery in general and the Kansas-Nebraska question in particular were uppermost in the minds of everyone.

The Whigs seemed more receptive to the temperance cause than were the Democrats. Despite the election of a Whig governor in 1854, the Whig Party was dying out in Pennsylvania, and it is possible that they pulled the temperance movement in the state down with them.

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109 Erasmus Wilson (ed.), *Standard History of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania* (Chicago: H. R. Cornell and Co., 1898), 908.

110 John E. Parke, *Recollections of Seventy Years and Historical Gleanings of Allegheny, Pennsylvania* (Boston: Rand, Avery, and Co., 1886), 76-77.

111 Cross, 66.

112 *The Temperance Gem*, September 24, 1851, 236.

From the foregoing study several conclusions and hypotheses may be drawn. The temperance movement locally received strong impetus and support from the religious segment of the population, particularly the Presbyterians and Methodists, with evidence of Roman Catholic support. Two newspaper reports of temperance conventions held in Lutheran congregations in the district indicate at least some backing from that body.<sup>113</sup> Secondly, there was a strong secular support from such fraternal societies as the Sons of Temperance, who apparently were quite active in this area. It has been shown that women played a definite role in the movement, with suggestions that at times this role was on an equalitarian basis with men. The leadership of the reform was concentrated in the hands of the journalists and professional classes. Temperance appeal and techniques would do credit to any modern organization. The election of 1854 showed a much stronger sentiment for prohibition here than in the eastern part of the state.

On the negative side, so far as the movement is concerned, there was a sharp division between the religious and secular advocates of temperance. This was based partly on theological grounds, and the reaction to the Masonic and Know-Nothing movements heightened the suspicions of church leaders toward the secrecy of such organizations as the Sons and the Templars. Secondly, opponents of temperance were slow to organize, but once they did they became powerful enough to counteract some of the temperance advances. They were, however, unable to stem the strong local tide in favor of the Prohibitory Law.

The election results of 1854 raise some questions in themselves. In the first place there was obviously strong sentiment for temperance in the grass-roots. This sentiment was guided by some of the most influential individuals of the community. Yet they were never able to solve the problem of alcohol locally. The newspapers of the period constantly complained of drunkenness, of the great number of licensed taverns, of the prevalence of unlicensed (and therefore illegal) establishments, and of the problem of "adulterated" liquor. True, during part of this period Pittsburgh evidently had difficulty with their law enforcement, but it seems to go beyond this.

Secondly, the local election figures for state offices show quite a similarity between the votes for the Whigs and the votes for prohibition. Pollock, the Whig candidate for governor, received only 500 more votes in the county than did prohibition. This similarity is borne out

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<sup>113</sup> *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, June 6, 1834; *The Temperance Gem*, September 17, 1851.



in an analysis of the ward votes. The ratio of votes for Pollock over Bigler is similar to the ratio of those for prohibition to the votes against it.<sup>114</sup> This lends strength to the possibility that the Whig party became associated with the temperance cause. Whatever the effect in other parts of the state, this relationship proved mutually beneficial locally.

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114 *Pittsburgh Daily Gazette*, October 16, 1854, contained the following official election returns:

	GOVERNOR		PROHIBITION	
	Bigler (Democrat)	Pollock (Whig)	For	Against
Pgh. Wards				
1	98	308	279	93
2	149	343	379	85
3	351	499	471	202
4	161	383	365	103
5	354	348	359	298
6	146	416	417	96
7	75	128	154	28
8	100	178	164	72
9	71	183	209	33
Allegh. Wards				
1	65	401	441	21
2	89	322	371	43
3	258	343	380	222
4	245	440	467	217