

Distilling Out Wets and Brewing Up Drys:  
The Anti-Saloon League's Interaction with Voting Rights in the Push for Prohibition

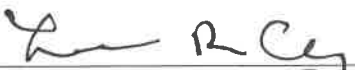
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## Introduction

On January 16, 1919, the state of Nebraska ratified the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. It was the 36<sup>th</sup> of the 48 states to ratify the amendment, providing the necessary three-fourths majority to make prohibition the law of the land the following year after its ratification. This marked the beginning of a period popularly known as the Roaring Twenties. This era's saga is a story that has been spun countless times. Movie directors, authors, and artists have capitalized on an intense fascination with this infamous decade. The term "prohibition" is well-established in the lexicon of American history and even more so, a topic that is constantly stylized, dramatized, and reinvented by popular culture. However, as time elapses since the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating beverages were outlawed by the Eighteenth Amendment, this period in our nation's history and the colossal reform movement behind it is less and less understood. Furthermore, the most important and influential dry organization behind this broader temperance movement, the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), is nearly forgotten. The ASL worked tirelessly at building what it truly believed would be a better nation, focusing on the organization's single-issue focus of prohibition. However, this thesis argues that the ASL also used a "dry" end to justify any means necessary. The League adopted an aggressive, win at all costs attitude towards its mission and seemingly viewed American voters, particularly Black people and women, as mere obstacles and assets to its goal of shutting down saloons.

President Hebert Hoover famously referred to national prohibition as a "noble experiment" in 1928, years before its repeal in 1933. This characterization is misleading for two basic reasons. First, temperance reformers, particularly those working during the twentieth century, ardently believed that prohibition legislation would solve many of the most pressing and complicated moral, social, and economic challenges of the United States. As we will see, the

Anti-Saloon League believed in its mission so deeply, it was willing to use the proposed benefits of prohibition to excuse the disenfranchisement of Black men, who the ASL, along with racist Americans, broadly characterized as wets. Women, on the other hand, were perceived as being naturally supportive of temperance and therefore the Anti-Saloon League cautiously increased its support of the women's suffrage movement, which developed concurrently to the temperance movement. Drys did not view prohibition as an opportunity to test out an unfounded hypothesis. They believed it to be a permanent solution to many forms of vice and crime. As ASL primary sources show, this supposed remedy was important enough to warrant the restructuring of America's electoral landscape.

Secondly, the term "experiment" fails to encapsulate the deeply rooted temperance movement behind prohibition in a temporal sense. Temperance agitation and even prohibition legislation had existed for nearly one hundred years prior to the Eighteenth Amendment and its enforcing Volstead Act took effect. Prohibition was not an improvised, on-the-fly experiment that drys had recently concocted. Of course, the strength of the temperance movement naturally ebbed and flowed over time, particularly during the nineteenth century. However, the movement was always present to a certain degree beginning in the mid-1800s and, as historian Mark Schrad's work demonstrates, part of a global trend.<sup>1</sup>

The historian K. Austin Kerr argues that three distinct waves of prohibition agitation occurred during the 1850s, the 1880s, and the early twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> In 1851, the state of Maine placed a complete ban on the manufacture and sale of liquor. During that decade, twelve other states enacted their own versions of the "Maine Law." However, temperance sentiment

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Lawrence Schrad, *Smashing the Liquor Machine: A Global History of Prohibition*, First Edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021).

<sup>2</sup> K. Austin Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (Yale University Press, 1985), Pg. 35.

waned and most of these were repealed during the Civil War. In 1869, the Prohibition Party was formed with the hopes of providing disillusioned Republican voters with a clearer path towards temperance action in the political arena. In 1873, the Woman's Crusade began which saw thousands of American women pray, march, and implore drinkers to give up the bottle and saloonkeepers to permanently shut their doors. The following year, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed, which soon ballooned into an impressive national organization.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, churches, fraternal organizations, and schools began espousing the importance of temperance across the nation during the 1800s.

The final wave of temperance was born with and led by the Anti-Saloon League (ASL), founded in the 1890s. The League soon became the nation's leader in the fight for prohibition. The political power it amassed, rivaled only by the two major political parties themselves, "made wet politicians wobble, uncertain politicians sprint for dry shelter, and dry politicians flex their biceps" according to journalist and author Daniel Okrent.<sup>4</sup> The ASL not only benefitted from the groundwork laid by several decades' worth of temperance agitation, it was able to learn from other dry organizations. According to Andrew Sinclair, most of the methods used by the Anti-Saloon League to create legislative pressure were originally developed, yet never fully mastered, by the WCTU.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, the League was also able to learn from temperance workers' earlier mistakes. With little success, the Prohibition Party had fully entrenched itself in the political system as a third-party platform, arguing that the future of temperance work was in

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<sup>3</sup> Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900* / Ruth Bordin. (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1990), Pg. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (Scribner, 2010), Pg. 78.

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Sinclair, *The Era of Excess*, First edition., HeinOnline Legal Classics Library (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1962), Pg. 107.

partisan politics. Under Frances Willard's leadership, the WCTU adopted a "do everything" policy which expanded the Union's reform work. Prohibition was one of several focal points of the WCTU's agenda which included child labor, anti-prostitution, and women's suffrage. Furthermore, the experience gained by the Anti-Saloon League during its early years operating as a local organization within the state of Ohio proved invaluable to the shaping of the League's national efforts. Not only did the Ohio Anti-Saloon League provide an organizational model which the League eventually advocated for in other states, Kerr argues that "It was in Ohio...that national leaders received their baptism of fire and faced and resolved the practical problems of building an organization."<sup>6</sup> The Ohio Anti-Saloon League was the "mother organization" from which the national Anti-Saloon League movement spawned, as well as where the political methods of this new, modern prohibition work were first created and deployed.<sup>7</sup> The national Anti-Saloon League became much more important as the movement progressed and expanded. However, in the early years, the national group's primary goal was to organize and coordinate prohibition agitation throughout the nation.<sup>8</sup> Kerr reports that initially, the ASL expanded to other states through opportunistic means. If some form of a nonpartisan interdenominational dry organization already existed, the League encouraged it to change its name and employ at least one full-time state superintendent, absorbing other existing groups as it grew.<sup>9</sup>

Similar to previous temperance groups, the ASL sought agitation, legislation, and enforcement for temperance legislation. However, from its inception, the ASL set out with a fundamentally different organizational structure. Unlike the Prohibition Party or even the

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<sup>6</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 90-91.

<sup>7</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 90-98.

<sup>8</sup> Kerr, Pg. 88.

<sup>9</sup> Kerr, Pg. 122-123. For instance, the Anti-Liquor League in Indiana became the Indiana Anti-Saloon League, and the initial organization's leader became a lifetime employee of the Anti-Saloon League.

national WCTU (which under Willard formally endorsed the Prohibition Party), the League was committed to a non-partisan approach. In reality, it was more of an omni-partisan method. Like the alliances it formed with churches, regardless of their denomination, the Anti-Saloon League commanded a broad group of supporters who could be counted upon to support ASL-backed candidates, regardless of their party-affiliation. In theory, local, state, and national politicians' stances on temperance would be the first – and often the only – criteria upon which ASL supporters should base their voting decision.<sup>10</sup>

Furthermore, unlike the WCTU or the Prohibition Party, the Anti-Saloon League was envisioned, as Kerr writes, “to be like a modern business firm, bureaucratic and not democratic.” While Prohibition Party candidates and WCTU officers were elected by supporting members, control over the Anti-Saloon League was retained by a self-perpetuating executive committee. At both the national and local levels, governing boards, officers, and superintendents were hired or elected by the executive committee.<sup>11</sup>

Operating as the self-proclaimed “Church in Action Against the Saloon,” the Anti-Saloon League brought together churches of all denominations as well as voters of all political parties. Practically the only requirement of supporters was to vote dry when the time came. Well before the Anti-Saloon League even began officially lobbying for national prohibition, the primary strategy was to dry up the nation through local option elections, which gave individual voters a voice in determining whether or not saloons would be permitted in their communities. As the movement gained momentum at local levels, temperance agitation could then be deployed to enact state-wide prohibition legislation. In Kerr’s words, “success would breed success, as

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<sup>10</sup> Ernest Hurst Cherrington, *History of the Anti-Saloon League*, by Ernest Hurst Cherrington. (Westerville, Ohio: American Issue Pub. Co., 1913), Pg. 44.

<sup>11</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 81.



Americans saw the social and human benefits of local dry laws and decided to support the larger campaigns.”<sup>12</sup> Unlike the WCTU’s moralistic-centered and broad reform agenda or the Prohibition Party’s early jump towards nationwide temperance agitation, the Anti-Saloon League zeroed in strictly on prohibition legislation, determined to dry up the nation town by town, city by city, county by county. Despite the monumental challenge of working within the unique complexities of local arenas, the League’s men were determined to see every saloon in the United States permanently close its doors. While the noble experiment turned out to not stand the test of time, in one sense, the ending of this war can be clearly marked as the moment Nebraskan legislators gaveled in its approval of the Eighteenth Amendment that day in January.

Most historians studying any aspect of the temperance movement or national prohibition give recognition to the early roots of dry agitation. Even Charles Merz, whose work only provides one chapter before launching into the Eighteenth Amendment’s adoption, writes, “The origin of the movement can be traced as far back as Colonial days and followed well down into the nineteenth century...This movement never died.”<sup>13</sup> Another set of historians primarily focus on these early days, particularly regarding the intersection of gender and temperance, most clearly seen through the work of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Okrent has provided an in-depth investigation and narratively rich account of prohibition, beginning with an 1839 English traveler’s observation that “...Americans can fix nothing without a drink” and ending with an investigation into the myth that the Kennedy fortune was amassed through bootlegging liquor.<sup>15</sup> In between are anecdotal histories, full of colorful

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<sup>12</sup> Kerr, Pg. 88.

<sup>13</sup> Charles Merz, *The Dry Decade* (Garden City, N. Y: Doubleday, Doran, 1931), Pg. 2.

<sup>14</sup> See Holly Berkley Fletcher, *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2008) and Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981).

<sup>15</sup> Okrent, *Last Call*, Pg. 7 & Pg. 369.

characters such as bootlegger Max “Boo Boo” Hoff, chief prosecutor of Volstead violators Mabel Willebrandt, and flagrantly racist Congressman “Cotton Tom” Heflin. It is almost no wonder that the significance of a dry organization, its power climaxing nearly one hundred years ago, could be nearly forgotten by contemporaries.

However, virtually all of these historians make one thing perfectly clear – national prohibition would not have been attained without the Anti-Saloon League. By 1917, 23 of the nation’s 48 states already had state-wide prohibition bills on the books, largely due to the League’s work.<sup>16</sup> Through steady agitation and a borderline obsession with closing saloons, this dry organization made temperance workers’ wildest dreams a reality. Eventually, the entire nation would go dry between 1920 and 1933. During that time, the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages was federally prohibited at the national level through the Eighteenth Amendment and its enforcement act, known as the Volstead Act. What could the right (or lack thereof) to move and sell booze have to do with the voting rights of American citizens? As it turns out, a whole lot.

Before it began officially campaigning for a national prohibition amendment in 1913, the Anti-Saloon League was slowly pushing along the temperance movement which it had, after taking command of it, harnessed to local option elections. The Anti-Saloon League did not hide their opinions. According to the League’s official newspaper, the *American Issue*, those who voted wet were “the scum and offscouring” of America, members of the “mass of human maggots.” On the other hand, dry voters were the “moral, intelligent, tax-paying, conservative elements of society.”<sup>17</sup> League publications such as the *American Issue* went well beyond merely

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<sup>16</sup> National Association of Distillers and Wholesale Dealers (U.S.). Publicity Dept, *The Anti-Prohibition Manual: A Summary Of Facts And Figures Dealing With Prohibition* (Cincinnati, Ohio: The Association, 1917), Pg. 8.

<sup>17</sup> *American Issue*, August 1, 1902, Pg. 4.

providing the oft-repeated moral, economic, and social arguments used by temperance supporters. The editorials, stories, and pamphlets flowing from the League's printing plant described two distinct sides formed by two distinct groups of Americans. According to the ASL, it appeared as if both sides would be unflinching in their stances on the drink question.

Concurrent with the temperance movement of the early twentieth century were other significant and ongoing changes across the United States. For my thesis, two distinct but related developments are particularly important – the disenfranchisement of Black voters and the women's suffrage movement. As we will see, temperance and voting rights became closely intertwined as the nation moved closer and closer towards national prohibition. Despite, or perhaps because of, the League's dedication to its "single-issue" focus, the ASL itself became involved in this inevitable intertwining of temperance and voting rights. Close analysis of just one of the Anti-Saloon League's publications, the *American Issue*, makes this quite evident.

Kerr argues that in one sense, the Anti-Saloon League relied on a circular strategy, "to persuade supporters that through proper organization and nonpartisan action they could collectively enjoy power sufficient to elect majorities of dry legislators, and to persuade legislators that if they failed to do the league's bidding they would feel the fate of the state's 'church vote.'" The ASL forcefully declared that it represented the desires of American evangelical Protestantism – specifically the wishes of churchgoers to impose sobriety on the rest of the nation and to strip away the drink traffic's power and influence on American life. Indeed, for the most part, this was entirely true. Although the League's process was in fact circular as Kerr suggests, the initial "cutting into the circle" required the ASL to foster support from everyday citizens. With this support, the League could then influence votes in the legislature and

enact more permanent, widespread prohibition bills.<sup>18</sup> Consequently, the American citizens living across the nation and, more specifically, the individual voters that the Anti-Saloon League could claim it commanded became invaluable to the League's mission and ambition of becoming the most powerful dry organization.<sup>19</sup>

Before the League's campaign for national prohibition began in 1913, the ASL attempted to dry up smaller sections of the nation through various legislative vehicles. The methods were largely determined on the unique conditions of specific areas, most importantly how strong the existing temperance sentiment was. However, the most typical process first involved the Anti-Saloon League coordinating efforts to secure local-option laws in states if they did not already have them on the books. After that, the voting citizens living within smaller sections of states such as wards, precincts, and municipalities would then have the power to determine whether their specific communities would allow saloons to operate. They would do so by initiating and then voting through these local option elections. Although this was the initial way to dry up towns, several loopholes to obtain alcohol such as ordering it through mail became prevalent. While local option elections were certainly the first step, they could not guarantee a locality would truly become dry and certainly not to the bone-dry level that the Anti-Saloon League desired. However, if enough dry victories were secured, the ASL could then set its eyes on lobbying for complete state-wide prohibition bills.

Of course, included in all of these steps were coordinated efforts by the various state Anti-Saloon Leagues to ensure strict opposition of wet politicians and to offer substantial support and resources to carefully selected dry politicians. In response to a claim by Anti-Saloon League

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<sup>18</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 92-93.

<sup>19</sup> Kerr, Pg. 92-93.

leader Wayne Wheeler that the goal of the League was to “make it safe for a candidate to be dry,” a letter to the editor of *The New York Times* stated that “He omits to state the much more important rule, skillfully employed by the Anti-Saloon League, to make it unsafe for a candidate to be wet.”<sup>20</sup> However, wet politicians were not the only people who came under fire through the Anti-Saloon League’s propaganda. In addition to uncooperative politicians, the ASL targeted Black Americans who voted wet or those who even merely appeared to be wets.

As the *American Issue* newspaper shows, the Anti-Saloon League utilized the period’s broader tradition of vilifying Black Americans and consequently accused them of being unsupportive of temperance. According to the League, these voters would naturally support the saloon system in local option and political elections. In fact, the ASL not only made allegations that Black Americans were naturally wets, it also frequently accused them of being corruptible voters, willing to sell their votes to wets for a few dollars or free drinks. At a time when the voting rights of Blacks were already being attacked by other groups throughout the nation, the Anti-Saloon League added dry fuel to the fire. Without any legitimate evidence, Black voters were systematically vilified by the Anti-Saloon League. To racist Americans, any additional excuse to remove political power from Blacks were welcomed. Okrent argues that racists formed one of the five distinct although sometimes overlapping groups of prohibition’s “unspoken coalition.” He suggests that “[a]dherents of each group may have been opposed to alcohol for its own sake, but each used the Prohibition impulse to advance ideologies and causes that had little to do with it.”<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> *The New York Times*, March 30, 1926, Pg. 24

<sup>21</sup> Okrent, *Last Call*, Pg. 42.

In addition to progressives, populists, and nativists, Okrent believes suffragists formed the remaining fourth group. Women were viewed as naturally being sympathetic to the dry cause and, consequently, ballots in the hands of women were seen as a positive asset to the broader temperance movement and the specific mission of the Anti-Saloon League. Like many other historians, Michael Lerner suggests that during the early years of the temperance movement, women were relegated to contributing as “moral guardians and reformers in service to the dry lobby.”<sup>22</sup> However, as the concurrent women’s suffrage movement strengthened, both suffragists and the Anti-Saloon League recognized the potential value their votes could bring to the dry cause.

Committed to its single-issue focus, the ASL began to offer only a cautious endorsement of both the suppression of Blacks’ voting rights as well as the formation of women’s voting rights. Truly convinced that prohibition would help all Americans, including both women and Blacks, the Anti-Saloon League believed the ends would justify any and all means of drying up the nation. Although never stated as an official goal of the League, the rearrangement of the electoral landscape of the United States of America was certainly viewed as a beneficial development in many instances, particularly evident in the disenfranchisement of Blacks in the South and the granting of voting rights, if only partial voting rights, to American women.

Although buried within countless other forms of temperance arguments and reporting, evidence for these claims are abundant throughout the publications of the Anti-Saloon League, whose official strategy included inundating Americans with temperance literature. The League’s printing plant in Westerville, Ohio, housed eight presses which ran constantly. By 1912, the plant

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<sup>22</sup> Michael A. Lerner, *Dry Manhattan* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), Pg. 171.

was printing over forty tons of prohibition propaganda each month.<sup>23</sup> Sounds like a lot, right? By 1916, it was printing ten tons every day.<sup>24</sup> Clearly, the ASL valued the ability to use frequent, almost constant channels of communication through which it could disburse its temperance messaging with the American public. Historian Andrew Sinclair writes that “[f]ew escaped the ubiquitous slogans of the dries, which filled the billboards and hoardings and newspapers of the time.”<sup>25</sup> The Eighteenth Amendment would not have been possible had it not been for the steady buildup of advanced temperance legislation at the state and local level. This, in turn, would have been impossible were it not for the rise of dry politicians elected to office. Dry candidates could not have been supported without dry votes. Dry votes were encouraged and amassed through temperance agitation. Temperance agitation, of all forms, was found in the *American Issue*. Somewhere along the way, the Anti-Saloon League determined that women were respectable temperance supporters who were worthy of the right to vote, if only regarding the drink question. Conversely, Black voters were accused of being corruptible, wet, and undeserving of the right to vote on any matter.

Although some historians such as Brittany Arsiniega have provided in-depth investigation into the ways in which temperance battles played out through local newspapers, a close analysis of the most important dry organization’s chief newspaper, the *American Issue*, has yet to be published.<sup>26</sup> Throughout my research, I utilized optical scanning to sift through over 3,500 pages and hundreds of *American Issue* editions. Specifically interested in the intersection between the Anti-Saloon League’s movement and the voting rights of Blacks and women, I searched for articles that contained keywords such as “Black,” “negro,” “colored,” “disenfranchisement,”

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<sup>23</sup> Okrent, *Last Call*, Pg. 59.

<sup>24</sup> Okrent, Pg. 78.

<sup>25</sup> Sinclair, *The Era of Excess*, Pg. 113.

<sup>26</sup> Brittany Arsiniega, “Race and Prohibition Movements,” *Tennessee Journal of Race, Gender, & Social Justice*.

“women’s suffrage,” and “franchise.” Through this, I uncovered that the Anti-Saloon League was so committed to its single-issue focus, a unique aspect of the pressure group frequently cited by both historians and the League itself, that it would take extraordinary steps to realize its goals. Praising, suggesting, and benefitting from a reshaping of America’s electoral landscape was certainly on the dry force’s table. A bottle of whiskey or a glass of beer was certainly not.

Leading the spread of dry territory through local option elections and eventually, a push for national prohibition through the Eighteenth Amendment, the Anti-Saloon League had to reconcile with the reality of the Fifteenth Amendment, which in 1870 granted Black American men the right to vote, as well as a concurrent and mounting national drive towards the future Nineteenth Amendment, which guaranteed American women the right to vote. The *American Issue* claimed that the “League cannot be killed” and that it would give citizens “the right to vote [on] whether the saloon shall settle down near them or not. They will have this right. There is no use for politicians to try to stifle so just a demand.”<sup>27</sup> However, this thesis shows that in a darker sense, the Anti-Saloon League merely viewed individual voters as pawns in a colossal political game. Through the pages of the *American Issue*, the expansion of female voting power was cautiously encouraged while the voting rights of Blacks were regularly attacked – all in the name of the Church in Action Against the Saloon.

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<sup>27</sup> *American Issue*, August 1900, Pg. 5.



## Chapter One: The Church in Action Against the Saloon

### *An Epoch in History*

In 1913, the same year in which the Anti-Saloon League began to officially campaign for a national prohibition amendment, the *History of the Anti-Saloon League* was published. Written by Ernest Cherrington, a prominent leader of the ASL who also controlled all League publications as manager of the American Issue Publishing Company, this historical study is the first formal work providing a glimpse into the rise of the most influential dry organization in American history, albeit from an incredibly biased viewpoint. The founding of the Anti-Saloon League in 1893 by Howard Hyde Russell certainly shifted the direction and increased the intensity of the long-lasting temperance movement. Like many others, historian Austin Kerr not only acknowledges this important organization in his 1985 work, he argues that its founding marked the third and final wave of prohibition agitation.<sup>28</sup> Cherrington's first words in his 1913 study boasted about his organization in a more dramatic fashion: "The year 1893 marked an epoch in the history of the temperance reform in the United States."<sup>29</sup> While the Anti-Saloon League's significance to the temperance movement and the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment is undisputed, its complicated history, particularly those early years of its existence, cannot be summarized so easily. The power, confidence, and influence that the Anti-Saloon League had amassed, culminating in this monumental strategy change in 1913, was gained through an arduous journey beginning in Oberlin, Ohio in 1893.

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<sup>28</sup> K. Austin Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League* (Yale University Press, 1985), Pg. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Ernest Hurst Cherrington, *History of the Anti-Saloon League, by Ernest Hurst Cherrington*. (Westerville, Ohio: American Issue Pub. Co., 1913), Pg. 7.

According to Cherrington, much of the Anti-Saloon League's long-term success was owed to the circumstances of its genesis. First, the League's "providentially called" leader, Howard Russell, was, a skilled lawyer, a gifted orator, incredibly well organized, and of course, held "a burning hatred of the saloon." Secondly, citing the region's "anti-slavery spirit, its patriotism and its prolonged and militant anti-saloon warfare," Cherrington argues that Oberlin provided a welcoming and supportive environment from which the League could grow outward. After all, the small town was "full of schools, thinkers and virile doers of deeds." Lastly, and most importantly, from its inception, the Anti-Saloon League deployed new organizational methods never before used by a reform movement.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Anti-Saloon League certainly evolved as it grew as an organization, responding to changing circumstances and expanding its mission as progress allowed, the most fundamental aspects of the organization remained constant throughout its history. The ASL was committed to attacking the drink traffic in the United States through a comprehensive approach, "which the good men of all parties might unite." The League focused its efforts on a three-pronged approach – "a propaganda of agitation, legislation, and law enforcement... to be done locally and statewide."<sup>31</sup> Not until 1913 would national prohibition evolve from merely a dream to a realistic goal.<sup>32</sup> Another constant of the organization was the determination of the self-proclaimed "Church in Action Against the Saloon" to unite all American churches for its cause, regardless of their "sect or creed." Most importantly, the Anti-Saloon League utilized what it believed to be the "wiser method" of bringing about dry victories in the form of temperance legislation. Unlike the Prohibition Party and the National Woman's Christian Temperance Union,

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<sup>30</sup> Cherrington, Pg. 41-45.

<sup>31</sup> Cherrington, Pg. 44.

<sup>32</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, 140.

which formally endorsed the Prohibition Party from 1884 until 1898, the League deployed a non-partisan (or omni-partisan) political strategy.<sup>33</sup> Playing on the margins, the ASL could determine the results of close elections and realize progress through its control over a small fraction of voters. Interpreting its political intimidation tactics, Daniel Okrent suggests that the ASL believed “democracy was a form of coercion.” Russell himself said the Anti-Saloon League was “formed for the purpose of administering political retribution.” The only way for politicians to avoid the powerful wrath of the League was to commit to the only issue the organization cared about – prohibition.<sup>34</sup> As this thesis shows, the ASL’s willingness to act as a punitive and intimidating reform organization did not merely apply to elected politicians. American citizens, particularly those at risk of either losing or obtaining the freedom to vote, were also closely scrutinized by the Anti-Saloon League.

### ***A Tight Grip***

The consistency of the League’s organization, strategy, and activities is due to its concentration of power. Throughout its existence, the Anti-Saloon League’s leaders retained nearly total control over the organization’s structure and direction. This was partly due to the largely futile efforts of previous temperance groups which were controlled democratically, including the WCTU and the Prohibition Party. In contrast, the ASL was a new type of organization that, as Kerr suggests, was “controlled from the top down by leaders who sought the support of followers but not control by followers.” Furthermore, the ASL operated similar to a modern business firm with a bureaucratic, rather than democratic, infrastructure. The

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<sup>33</sup> Cherrington, *History of the Anti-Saloon League*, by Ernest Hurst Cherrington, Pg. 44.

<sup>34</sup> Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, First Scribner hardcover ed. (New York: Scribner, 2010), Pg. 36.

organization was largely controlled by a self-perpetuating executive committee of ten members, the first of which were carefully chosen by Russell himself. These members held the power to form departments, hire state superintendents, and elect officers. Even at the local level, control remained with the leaders of the ASL. Committees and leaders in charge of local leagues were selected rather than elected. During the early years, this was accomplished as Russell traveled from community to community, meeting with sympathetic leaders and appointing “steering committees” of local leagues. This process of appointing officers and local leaders through selection, rather than election, allowed Russell and other ASL executives to ensure adequate representation among various temperance organizations, political parties, and denominations. Of course, in a more cynical view, it also enabled this small group of men to determine the entire organization’s direction. The Anti-Saloon League’s constitution underwent a major revision in 1913, partly in response to wet criticism that the League’s concentration of power allowed for a small percentage of its workers to enjoy high salaries at the expense of poorer members. Although it helped the League appear more democratic on paper, the new constitution did not change much. A small group of League men still retained power over the organization.<sup>35</sup>

Restricted from becoming involved in the shaping of the Anti-Saloon League in any tangible ways, local members were relegated to contributing funds, listening to temperance speakers, distributing propaganda, canvassing voters, and serving at the polls on election days.<sup>36</sup> This amassment and organization of sympathetic dry voters was the true source of the League’s well-guarded power. “I can dictate twenty letters to twenty men in twenty parts of the city and thereby set 50,000 men in action,” the ASL state superintendent of Pennsylvania said in 1908. “I

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<sup>35</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 36, 81-82, 118-119.

<sup>36</sup> Kerr, Pg. 82.

can name 100 churches that can marshal 20,000 men in Bible classes alone... They must surely hold the balance of power on any great moral issue.” The churches certainly formed the backbone of the organization. League men argued that without the ASL, the church would be powerless on the drink question. However, Protestant churchgoers were not the only assets of the ASL. Some voters who the League called upon or claimed under their control were not regular church observers or even donating members necessarily. In his influential 1928 study of the ASL, Peter Odegard suggested that by simply providing their names to the ASL, voters “indicated a certain degree of sympathy,” evidently giving the League enough reason to claim them as official supporters. In addition to mustering voters from churches and other temperance organizations, the ASL created committees of local voters. Salaried superintendents and managers were responsible for the voters in each district and county respectively. These were then distilled into even smaller units with volunteer captains and lieutenants responsible for organizing smaller branches of individual voters. Ideally, there was a “key-man” for every ten voters.<sup>37</sup>

Through this agitation, organization, and mobilization of every-day voters, the Anti-Saloon League began turning heads. The president of the New York State Brewers’ Association described the ASL as a “well-organized force, led by aggressive, experienced and untiring leaders,” transforming a movement which was perhaps once fueled by “the delusion of the fanatic alone.”<sup>38</sup> According to a temperance leader and friend of the organization, while the League had begun with “the personification of modesty, the personification of humility,” by 1908 it had grown into “the most autocratic, the most dictatorial” organization in the history of American politics. “I say without the slightest hesitation that the Anti-Saloon League is the most

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<sup>37</sup> Peter H. Odegard, “Pressure Politics” (New York, Columbia University Press, 1928), Pg. 17-22.

<sup>38</sup> *American Patriot*, May 1913. (Quoted in *Pressure Politics*, Pg. 23)

dangerous political movement that this country has ever known."<sup>39</sup> Dangerous, it most certainly was. However, the second chapter of this thesis shows that saloonkeepers, liquor men, and wet politicians were not the only groups of Americans who needed to be concerned with the Anti-Saloon League's mounting power and influence.

### ***Goodbye Herrick***

An early display of the League's danger to uncooperative politicians occurred in 1905 when it successfully campaigned against the reelection of Ohio Governor Myron T. Herrick. Kerr argues that this victory brought the ASL "national attention and firmly implanted the realization of league power."<sup>40</sup> In addition to mobilizing votes in support of enacting local option, political nominations and elections were also critical to the Anti-Saloon League's higher goals of enacting strict prohibition legislation at the state level. Again, fundamental to its success was the ASL's willingness to support a Republican one day and a Democrat the next, so long as they obeyed the League and advanced its platform.<sup>41</sup> At a midsummer conference in 1896, Russell told ASL trustees that unlike rural states, which can "win and hold state prohibition, and that without a permanent and expensive organization," states such as Ohio would require significant focus and energy from the League if they were ever to go dry.<sup>42</sup>

Attempting to mollify the wets, Governor Herrick had significantly weakened a League measure which aimed to provide districts the ability to hold local option elections. His actions created a significant enemy that he would then be forced to face. This enemy was the emerging Church in Action Against the Saloon. Herrick claimed he "took this stand in the interest of the

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<sup>39</sup> Odegard, Pg. 22-23.

<sup>40</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 103-104.

<sup>41</sup> Okrent, *Last Call*, Pg. 36.

<sup>42</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 100.

Republican party,” weary of disillusioning wet Republican voters who allegedly might jump ship to the Democrats. This was a common excuse of Republican politicians who were not fully cooperative with the ASL, however the League was not convinced.<sup>43</sup>

Despite most League staff members belonging to the Republican Party themselves, true to its nonpartisan strategy, the Anti-Saloon League decided to fight Herrick’s reelection. It endorsed Democrat John M. Pattison. If the League (through Pattison) could somehow defeat Herrick’s bid for reelection despite his personal wealth, support from Republican newspapers, and large control of the state’s party machinery, it would fully establish the organization as a major political force. Even if Herrick was reelected as governor, the ASL could claim itself victorious if it significantly reduced his total votes.<sup>44</sup>

The Anti-Saloon League was gambling significant resources on the Ohio battle. The *American Issue* even received complaints from Illinois readers that the League’s paper was devoting “an undue amount of attention to Governor Herrick.” The ASL responded by saying that “the *Issue* should be a strong, general paper which pays attention to particular matters that are of general importance,” and not merely “a patch-work of state bulletins...regardless of the value of the materials.” Furthermore, League editors declared that “the fight against Governor Herrick is of the most far reaching importance to the entire League movement.” After all, it was “the first instance in the history of the League movement that it has gone squarely against the chief executive of a great state who is backed by a highly organized machine in a party overwhelmingly in the majority.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 106.

<sup>44</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 107-108.

<sup>45</sup> *American Issue*, January 6, 1905, Pg. 2.

Like virtually all other aspects of the organization, what was important enough to go to print was determined by the leaders of the Anti-Saloon League. Naturally, in the early years of the Anti-Saloon League, before it had fully expanded into the rest of the nation, Ohio temperance news dominated the paper. As the League grew and created additional state leagues, the *American Issue* began to cover more and more diversified news. In fact, some state ASL's had their own state versions of the *American Issue*. Regardless of when these editions were printed, evidently what did end up being printed in the *American Issue* was what the Anti-Saloon League considered to be the most critical news or arguments that could assist in the crystallization of temperance sentiment and the expansion of dry territory. This newspaper was the ASL's most important channel of communication and persuasion. Focused analysis of its pages provides significant revelations of the organization and the broader temperance movement, particularly their intersection with race and gender as we will see.

Herrick, along with the Republican party's own literary bureau attempted to discredit the Anti-Saloon League during his reelection campaign in 1905. According to Kerr, "never before had the league been so bitterly attacked in the media of general circulation." Herrick and his supporters specifically went after the ASL's concentrated power structure. They accused the organization of sucking hard-earned wages from rural churchgoers and underpaid ministers so that a select few of well-paid League executives, including Russell, could live in lavish homes. They approximated the ASL as a group of select leaders who failed to allow the churches and their pledge-signing members to have a real voice or to determine the course of organizational affairs. Less accurately, they alleged that ASL leaders were simply prolonging the temperance



issue so they might retain their salaries, remain in the limelight, and damage the Grand Old Party.<sup>46</sup>

These attacks from a politician who was not fully dry, yet not fully wet, and a political party which claimed itself responsible for all Ohio temperance legislation provide valuable insight. They did not simply oppose the Anti-Saloon League and its endorsement of Pattison because it was opposed to saloons. Their attacks signal a contemporary understanding that, even in the early years of the twentieth century, the Anti-Saloon League had created a power-hungry, all-controlling, vindictive reputation for itself. Solely dedicated to its single-issue goal of drying up the nation, the Anti-Saloon League was willing to disrupt traditional political and social structures existing within the unique conditions of American communities. As the next chapter shows, embracing and perhaps even encouraging the removal of voting rights from a group of citizens already discriminated against and hated by many was seemingly just as natural to the ASL.

Despite an impressive effort by Herrick, aided by liquor firms and wet Democrats who opposed Pattison, the Anti-Saloon League defeated the incumbent governor. In 1905, the Ohio Anti-Saloon League raised and spent \$73,000, maintained five district offices, and employed over sixty full-time and part-time employees. Kerr suggests that this fight offered the nation a clear example that the Anti-Saloon League's unique approach of "a single-issue, popular reform organization" was the future of temperance agitation and progress. Furthermore, he writes that the "political wars over local option legislation in Ohio" provided the ASL with critical

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<sup>46</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 109.

experiences from which it could learn and which it could attempt to replicate in other areas of the nation.<sup>47</sup>

On November 17, 1905, the ASL printed a selection of congratulatory letters written directly to the *American Issue*. Included were messages such as “Congratulations! The Vermont Anti-Saloon League is hilarious over Ohio’s election,” “God reigns. Great victory. Glorious vindication. Congratulations!” and “Hearty congratulations on your splendid victory. The League has demonstrated its ability to deliver the goods.”<sup>48</sup> This election was not merely a personal victory for Pattison or even a success for the general temperance movement. It was seen as a triumph for the Anti-Saloon League. Furthermore, it was seen as a victory for the ASL’s *American Issue*, evident from the numerous congratulatory letters mailed in to the newspaper. Between January 6, 1905 and December 29, 1905, references to “Herrick” appeared over 2,400 times in the League’s newspaper. Clearly, the ASL’s mouthpiece was an integral part of its broader strategy to agitate sympathetic supporters, convert moderates, and attack wets.

Ultimately, the defeat of Herrick allowed for the district local option law, which the ASL had sought for years, to be enacted in 1906. In 1908, the League went further and achieved county local option measures.<sup>49</sup> However, this wave of agitation, the League’s mobilization of temperance voters, and the ultimate dry victory had not been easily achieved. Throughout its history, the Anti-Saloon League experienced many defeats even within areas of the nation it had built strongholds, including its home state of Ohio. In fact, Ohio would not go completely dry until the enactment of the Eighteenth Amendment. Despite instances in which the League displayed its power such as the defeat of Herrick, there were still countless Americans who

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<sup>47</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 109-111.

<sup>48</sup> *American Issue*, November 17, 1905, Pg. 1.

<sup>49</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 111.

opposed prohibition and the closing of saloons. In order for temperance progress to march forward, these wet voters would somehow need to be converted into temperance supporters or have their voting rights suppressed, a development that the *American Issue* appears to have reported favorably on in numerous instances.

### ***The American Issue Publishing Company***

In 1909, the Anti-Saloon League experienced another significant milestone that not only signaled impressive growth within the organization, but also dramatically shaped the rest of its existence. After the people of Westerville, Ohio donated a tract of land costing roughly \$10,000 to the Anti-Saloon League in 1908, the League created the American Issue Publishing Company and began building a publishing plant in the spring of 1909.<sup>50</sup> The ASL also moved its national headquarters to Westerville. While construction of the plant was underway, the former leader of ASL publications, John Jackson, passed away. Ernest Cherrington was then promoted to editor-in-chief of all League publications, including the *American Issue*. The creation of this new publishing plant was extremely significant to the Anti-Saloon League's mission and future growth into other regions of the nation. It did not matter that, other than the property donation it had received, the Anti-Saloon League "did not have a single dollar to invest" in this new project. The construction of the publishing plant was evidently so important to the League that it commenced before the organization had officially secured its funding. However, according to Ernest Cherrington, the ASL leaders "had the faith to believe that the temperance public would not allow such an undertaking to fail." Indeed, their faith was well-placed. Several wealthy

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<sup>50</sup> Cherrington, *History of the Anti-Saloon League*, by Ernest Hurst Cherrington, Pg. 129-130.

donors rose to the occasion and by the end of 1912, nearly \$125,000 had been invested into the plant.<sup>51</sup>

Soon, the plant was printing thirty-one different state editions of the *American Issue* with a total circulation of over 500,000 papers each month. The plant's seventy-two employees and eight printing presses were flooding the nation with 700,000 pages of temperance propaganda every day. These presses were wholly dedicated to temperance literature; no commercial work was ever done by the American Issue Publishing Company.<sup>52</sup> The constant flow of propaganda from these presses intensified the ASL's fight against the drink traffic. Odegard suggested, "[i]f there be such a thing as black-washing, this is what the League did to the saloon," moreover, it "set itself the task of creating, through the instrumentality of a powerful propaganda, an emotional abhorrence of the saloon and the liquor traffic."<sup>53</sup> League men also believed this temperance propaganda could be used to appeal to and recruit new supporters. Purley A. Baker, a Columbus minister and powerful leader of the ASL, reported in 1909, "[i]f we simply continue to enter the churches we have been entering each year, we begin to move in a circle, with the circle growing steadily smaller."<sup>54</sup> While remaining dedicated to the issue of prohibition, the American Issue Publishing Company learned to connect the temperance movement with other historical developments, printing pieces that could attract many to the dry cause. As we will see, both suffragists and racists had plenty of reasons to keep a close eye on the stories and editorials of the *American Issue*.

Although the length of the *American Issue* varied at times, the paper was usually around sixteen pages long. Roughly half of the years between the paper's first edition in 1896 and the

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<sup>51</sup> Cherrington, Pg. 130-131.

<sup>52</sup> Cherrington, *History of the Anti-Saloon League*, by Ernest Hurst Cherrington, Pg. 130-134.

<sup>53</sup> Odegard, *Pressure Politics*, Pg. 39.

<sup>54</sup> Kerr, *Organized for Prohibition: A New History of the Anti-Saloon League*, Pg. 126.

passage of the Eighteenth Amendment, the *American Issue* was printed monthly. The other half of the time it was printed as a weekly newspaper. Until around 1909, the *American Issue* was a cause of financial concern. Advertisements of products such as pure honey, stain removers, and typewriters (but never alcohol) slightly defrayed the cost of operating the paper, but as Kerr writes, “the purpose of the paper was to promote prohibition, not turn a profit.”<sup>55</sup> The fact that the League was so committed to maintaining its propaganda machine, even when it was financially strapped, signals how important this distribution of printed materials to the American public was to the ASL’s work. Those who pledged donations to the League would receive a subscription to the paper.<sup>56</sup> However, during particularly important campaigns or elections, thousands of copies of the *American Issue* were distributed to the public for free.<sup>57</sup> In 1909 the *American Issue* was reaching one of every twenty-seven families in the nation, one in every three hundred persons. After the organization began focusing on a constitutional amendment in 1913, the printing plant became “the central league agency” for the national campaign. By 1916, the American Issue Publishing Company was printing literature in fifteen different languages for the increasingly diverse United States.<sup>58</sup> Newspapers, pamphlets, and temperance books were mailed directly to individuals as well as distributed within churches, corporations, and labor unions.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Moral and Unmoral Appeals***

Although many historians have acknowledged the importance of temperance literature and the well-cited, impressive statistics of the American Issue Publishing Company, a

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<sup>55</sup> Kerr, Pg. 125-126.

<sup>56</sup> Kerr, Pg. 149.

<sup>57</sup> Kerr, Pg. 125-126.

<sup>58</sup> Kerr, Pg. 151-155.

<sup>59</sup> Odegard, *Pressure Politics*, Pg. 76.

comprehensive study of the *American Issue*, the Anti-Saloon League's chief newspaper, has yet to be offered. Odegard's 1928 work provides a broad but important overview of the temperance arguments used by the League publications. In fact, even this early work acknowledges the League's use of racist propaganda. Odegard writes that, "In the South the Anti-Saloon League did not hesitate to use the menace of the drunken negro as propaganda."<sup>60</sup> Although this contemporary's recognition is significant, his analysis of this propaganda lacks nuance and is limited to only a few sentences. Far more important, I believe, is Odegard's opinion that "Had the Anti-Saloon League not demonstrated its ability to elect and defeat candidates for public office," the Eighteenth Amendment would have never come to fruition. Moreover, "Had the League been confined to moral appeals, it would have accomplished no more in the realm of practical legislation than Christian missionaries could accomplish in a well-fed heathen land." That is, without the crystallization of temperance sentiment and the connection of it to other topics such as women's suffrage and Black political power, the Anti-Saloon League would have been even less recognized than it is today. Significant attention of the League's "browbeating and intimidation" of politicians has been offered by historians. Odegard rightfully attributes this power to the League's "single weapon...its actual or assumed control of votes" coming from individual Americans.<sup>61</sup>

What has yet to be fully recognized is the Anti-Saloon League's intimidation of individual voters. The distillation of alleged wet votes out of the electoral system and the brewing up of new dry ones could only help the League's cause. As the next two chapters will show, through its own newspaper, the Anti-Saloon League cautiously signaled its approval of

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<sup>60</sup> Odegard, Pg. 62.

<sup>61</sup> Odegard, Pg. 105.

both the stripping and granting of the right to vote to certain groups of Americans. The Anti-Saloon League would determine individuals' worthiness of the right to vote solely based on the one question that mattered to this powerful, single-issue organization. Were they wets, or were they drys?

## Chapter Two: A Day of Calamity

### *A Convenient Link*

At the turn of the century, the *American Issue* declared that “the saloon exists because the preachers and churches and other friends of temperance will not come together and stay together and give and fight together.”<sup>62</sup> The Anti-Saloon League believed that “it is up to the church people to unite and popularize right...But it will take a vast deal more than the mere lip service that many are rendering.”<sup>63</sup> Kerr argues that prohibitionists’ brief optimism during the 1890s was followed “by concerns of popular indifference.”<sup>64</sup> The existing dry sentiment of American Christians needed to be converted into something more powerful if this new wave of temperance was to be remembered, and more importantly, if advanced temperance legislation would be achieved. As the Anti-Saloon League rose to power in the twentieth century, it gained support through repurposing and reinforcing a belief that was already prevalent in the South. According to Okrent, dries “conjured not an argument but an image: the waking nightmare of a black man with a bottle of whiskey in one hand and a ballot in the other.”<sup>65</sup> Consequently, the *American Issue* opportunistically hitched the League’s temperance campaign to the incredibly potent ideology of Southern racism.

The Anti-Saloon League seemingly viewed its appropriation of racist rhetoric, evident throughout the *American Issue*, as a legitimate strategy to achieve its true goal of drying up the nation. Through hitching its own arguments and news coverage to racist tropes, the Anti-Saloon League attempted to create three distinct but interconnected effects that would lead to more dry

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<sup>62</sup> *American Issue*, April 1900, Pg. 8.

<sup>63</sup> *American Issue*, January 4, 1907, Pg. 1.

<sup>64</sup> K. Austin Kerr, “Organizing for Reform: The Anti-Saloon League and Innovation in Politics,” *American Quarterly* 32, no. 1 (1980), Pg. 39.

<sup>65</sup> Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (Scribner, 2010), Pg. 43.



votes and fewer wet votes. First, the vilification of Blacks through prohibition arguments could attract many Americans to the dry cause. This could potentially convince even the most resistant Southerners who were wary of outside organizations advocating for what could be viewed as a restriction on personal liberty and furthermore, dangerously challenging the Democratic party and the political balance of the South. Pandering to the increasingly racist ideology of the South was a vehicle through which the Anti-Saloon League could approach the peculiarities of the South's political and social culture in a less threatening way. Furthermore, by closely associating the saloon system, corruption, and alcohol-fueled vice with Black Americans, the Anti-Saloon League effectively encouraged citizens to validate their "whiteness" through their votes and support for temperance legislation.

Secondly, dedicated to its single-issue focus, the Anti-Saloon League identified fearmongering in all forms as an incredibly effective way to permanently plant temperance under the nation's spotlight. By printing race baiting stories and editorials, the *American Issue* attempted to keep prohibition ever-present on Americans' minds. Already concerned over the growing political power and mobility of Blacks, dry arguments fit perfectly into the South's more general narrative calling for restrictions on Black Americans. According to the Anti-Saloon League, prohibition was the quickest way for paternalistic Southern whites to resolve racial conflicts and, more importantly, reestablish their superiority over Blacks.

Finally, holding firm to a general suspicion that Blacks naturally opposed temperance reform at the polls, the Anti-Saloon League exploited the South's concurrent movement to disenfranchise Black voters. The systematic removal of this specific group of votes would hopefully result in the spread of dry territory. Then, the Anti-Saloon League could report on these developments in a threatening manner. Through this, the *American Issue* seems to have tried and

convince the remaining enfranchised Blacks residing in other areas of the nation to support the dry cause, or risk having their own voting rights brought into question and potentially stripped from them as well. Genuine in their belief that prohibition would ultimately better the nation, ASL leaders evidently assumed that the end would justify even the most blatantly racist means. Or, perhaps more realistically, the Anti-Saloon League simply did not care if its activities and propaganda would negatively impact the lives of Black Americans. After all, the League's own officially declared single-issue purpose solely related to drying up the nation.

Pegram investigates the informal ties and cooperation that existed between the ASL and the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) during the 1920's, after national prohibition's enactment and during its concurrent local and federal enforcement. Despite some prohibition historians rejecting the suggestion of a natural relationship between the ASL and the KKK, Pegram argues that "No other public policy issue engaged as many Klansmen in direct action, combined the reform and coercive aspects of progressivism so clearly, and better highlighted the contradictions between moral language and repressive behavior in the Klan movement...than did the Invisible Empire's determination to enforce prohibition."<sup>66</sup> According to Klan historian Leonard Moore, "Support for Prohibition represented the single most important bond between Klansmen throughout the nation."<sup>67</sup> Contemporaries similarly recognized this peculiar connection between dry and white-hooded forces. In 1924 Clarence Darrow stated that "the father and mother of the Ku Klux Klan is the Anti-Saloon League. I would not say every Anti-Saloon Leaguer is a Ku Kluxer, but every Ku Kluxer is an Anti-Saloon Leaguer."<sup>68</sup> Although Pegram acknowledges that "ineffective

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<sup>66</sup> Thomas R. Pegram, "Hoodwinked: The Anti-Saloon League and the Ku Klux Klan in 1920s Prohibition Enforcement," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 1 (2008), Pg. 94-95.

<sup>67</sup> Leonard Joseph Moore, *Citizen Klansmen: The Ku Klux Klan in Indiana* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), Pg. 191.

<sup>68</sup> Pegram, "Hoodwinked," Pg. 91.

enforcement pushed some ASL officials into informal ties with local Klans,” he argues that “extensive and persistent cooperation was not apparent” between the KKK and the Anti-Saloon League at an official, organizational level.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, he concludes his work stating, “The significance of Prohibition to the contentious and uncertain politics of the 1920s recently has been rediscovered. To better comprehend that story, historians need a firmer grasp of the complex interplay between its two flawed defenders, the Anti-Saloon League and the Klan.”<sup>70</sup> This chapter responds to Pegram’s call by investigating early instances of the Anti-Saloon League appropriating racist sentiments, albeit sometimes quite awkwardly, to advance its own dry mission. Close analysis of the *American Issue* demonstrates that the ASL weaponized bigoted sentiments to attract dry supporters, much like the KKK did during its resurgence in the 1920’s. However, this peculiar relationship between racist and dry desires existed at the turn of the century, before the revitalization of the Ku Klux Klan.

### *A Most Fundamental Threat*

During the 1880s, Southerners optimistically bought into the notion of the New South and believed newly enfranchised Blacks could be educated and convinced to support the various reforms white Americans sought for their communities. According to Coker, Blacks were briefly viewed as “imminently capable of self-improvement and progress.” However, between 1880 and 1915, the attitudes of white Americans, including evangelicals, toward Blacks declined dramatically. By the mid-1890s, Southern whites had determined that Black voters were not nearly as “malleable” as they had once hoped. Soon, the ability and worthiness of Black men to

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<sup>69</sup> Pegram, Pg. 89.

<sup>70</sup> Pegram, Pg. 119.

vote was brought into question, particularly regarding prohibition measures like local option elections.<sup>71</sup>

Consequently, an important development occurred in the final decade of the nineteenth century of which Coker explains that “white evangelical prohibitionists embraced some of the darkest racial attitudes of the period, often to the advantage of their prohibition cause.”

Temperance supporters around the nation leaned into the South’s “racist stereotype of the black beast and the rape panic,” a strategic decision that “was essential to the ultimate success of prohibition in Georgia, as well as the subsequent domino effect of prohibition victories in the South after 1907.”<sup>72</sup> The perceived decline in the behavior and morals of Blacks became inextricably linked to liquor. As whites became more and more intimidated of these newly enfranchised citizens, they attempted to reign in Black political power through both official avenues such as Jim Crow laws and extralegal methods like lynchings.

Twentieth century dry forces, led by the Anti-Saloon League, argued that prohibition would put an end to the most egregious aspects of racial conflicts like Black on white assaults, as well as the lynchings that almost inevitably followed each wild accusation and unsubstantiated accusation of rape.<sup>73</sup> The ASL’s founder, Howard Hyde Russell, recognized early on that the nonpartisan nature of his organization created important opportunities. The League could attract both Northern prohibitionists, who often advocated for civil rights, as well as prohibitionists in the South, where dry sentiment was growing the fastest.<sup>74</sup> Without officially commenting on

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<sup>71</sup> Joe Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause : Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 2007, <https://web-p-ebsohost-com.proxy.library.vanderbilt.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook?sid=77ee2d7e-dc18-4f85-9ab0-8a067d91338b%40redis&vid=0&format=EB>, Pg. 172.

<sup>72</sup> Coker, Pg. 170-172.

<sup>73</sup> Joe Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 2007, Pg. 171-173.

<sup>74</sup> Kerr, “Organizing for Reform,” Pg. 44.

policy concerns besides temperance, the Anti-Saloon League could utilize regional beliefs to the advantage of its own organizational goals.

While the Anti-Saloon League highlighted any perceived evils of saloons, Southern racists continued to seek any justification for racial discrimination. Of course, the rise of Jim Crow was a re-establishment of white power in response to white fear of Black Americans' increasing power, not a genuine fight against crime.<sup>75</sup> Public discourse throughout the South "blurred the lines between anger over Black voters' ability to influence prohibition vote outcomes, fear of the implication that this vote had for the potential 'Black domination' of white people, and scientifically unfound assertions that Black people under the influence of alcohol were a menace to society."<sup>76</sup> Soon, a strong, if technically informal, relationship formed between the ASL and Southern Democrats. Despite the League's single-issue focus and belief that "The only solution of the saloon problem is no saloon", the pages of the *American Issue* show how complicated the ASL's push for prohibition truly was and how inextricably linked to Black voting rights it soon became.<sup>77</sup> Evangelicals, the foundation of the Anti-Saloon League, "incorporated the vilest of racial stereotypes into their quest to eradicate liquor."<sup>78</sup> There are rare cases of *American Issue* reports praising "respectable" Blacks who supported temperance progress.<sup>79</sup> However, the majority of its coverage vilified and blamed "bad Negroes" for frequenting saloons, committing drunken crimes, and worst of all, voting for liquor interests.<sup>80</sup> The stories and editorials of the *American Issue* make it abundantly clear that in its fight against

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<sup>75</sup> Coker, Pg. 136.

<sup>76</sup> Brittany Arsiniega, "Race and Prohibition Movements," Pg. 51.

<sup>77</sup> *American Issue*, January 1900, Pg. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Joe Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 2007, Pg. 172.

<sup>79</sup> *American Issue*, Jan. 5, 1906, Pg. 6.

<sup>80</sup> *American Issue*, Oct. 5, 1906, Pg. 14.

saloons, the Anti-Saloon League not only reaffirmed and intensified Southern whites' fear over Black Americans' political power, it was seemingly willing to join forces with blatant racists and report on the South's ongoing disenfranchisement efforts through intimidating editorials.

The League's primary newspaper suggested that "suffrage itself is a privilege and not a right."<sup>81</sup> As the twentieth century developed, the two options offered by the ASL became frighteningly clear to Blacks voters. If they would "let bad politics alone, vote against saloons, and get into the way of being something else than nuisances," Blacks could presumably remove the League's voice of support for ongoing disenfranchisement.<sup>82</sup> However, if they continued to vote wet or even be perceived as supporting the wets, Blacks would be placed under the intense spotlight of the *American Issue*, the first order of interrogation being to question the integrity and legitimacy of their newfound right to vote. The League's general punitive nature was no secret. In fact, it was praised by dry supporters. The Anti-Saloon League was "the most [potent] force ever organized in any land of any age in behalf of temperance," according to Indiana Governor J. Frank Hanly. "You have helped some. You have punished others. They are all learning to sit up and take notice and ask about you when the campaigns are on."<sup>83</sup>

Previous studies on racism and prohibition such as Arsiniega, Coker, and Walton and Taylor each come to roughly the same conclusion through differing methods. In her recent study, Arsiniega agrees with Coker and Walton and Taylor reiterating "that race did indeed play an important, if not crucial, role in the prohibition movements of Southern states recovering from the Civil War."<sup>84</sup> Although "the intersection of race and temperance movements pre-dates the civil war," both Arsiniega and my own chapter primarily focus on the first decade of the

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<sup>81</sup> *American Issue*, December 1914, Pg. 9.

<sup>82</sup> *American Issue*, August 29, 1902, Pg. 5.

<sup>83</sup> *American Issue*, November 23, 1906, Pg. 3.

<sup>84</sup> Arsiniega, "Race and Prohibition Movements," Pg. 51.

twentieth century, when the United States was “in turmoil debating the alcohol question.”<sup>85</sup> I too, agree with these previous scholars’ assertion that racial conflict became inextricably linked to temperance as early as the antebellum period. However, my own research is distinct. My chapter aims to add nuance to these important works by resituating the focus on the Anti-Saloon League by investigating this specific organization’s interaction with Black voting rights. This study reveals that the Christian-based and reform-oriented Anti-Saloon League deployed some of the same arguments for prohibition and disenfranchisement that Southern racists had been spouting for decades.

### *Make-Up of the Saloon Vote*

In 1902, the *American Issue* published an editorial under the headline “MAKE-UP OF THE SALOON VOTE. The Bulk of It the Dregs of Civilization.” Despite whatever reasoning “respectable men” (presumably white men) may have had for voting wet, the League was sure that these voters “would be ashamed of the company in which they find themselves.” If these men formed “comparatively few” of the wets’ voting bloc, then who were their companions they ought to be ashamed of? According to the League, the answer was long-winded yet straightforward – “the toughs and thugs,” “the gamblers, the frequenters of the houses of ill-fame,” “the low trash,” “the Sabbath-Breakers, the thieves, the loafers, the deadbeats and swindlers.” Essentially, anyone who entered a saloon was categorically unrespectable to begin with – the bellies of whiskey and beer they left with the first sign of their degeneracy.

The ASL truly believed that “The great majority of the saloon crowd are the worthless members of the community.” It specifically identified the “poor, ignorant, half-civilized

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<sup>85</sup> Arsiniega, Pg. 43.

foreigners, just come to this country from the purlieus and cesspools of the rottenest corners of Europe, with no proper ideas of freedom or morality” and the “lazy, dirty, thieving negroes.” These minority groups “are found under the saloon banner to the last man.” The ASL suggested that if the nation could only “subtract the scum and offscouring of our towns,” the saloon “would have its miserable life choked out by the moral, intelligent, tax-paying, conservative elements of society. It lives only by breeding around it a mass of human maggots, which in turn sustain the saloon by their own corruption.” To avoid being considered a member of the “human maggots,” white wets need only to “be ashamed of their associates and make a change.”<sup>86</sup> The *American Issue* attempted to make a clear gulf between wets and dry without any possibility for a middle ground. White voters, in turn, had to decide which set of citizens they would like themselves to be associated with, at least from the League’s perspective.

The ASL cast the wet cause alongside all that was shady, corrupt, and un-American. A significant part of that package was Black voters. According to the League, dries were “business like – caring for property and safety” while “vagrant negroes – irresponsible, worthless – vote for [saloons]. Which will you stand with?”<sup>87</sup> The sober and prudish Anti-Saloon League depicted voting dry as fashionable while equating any wets with the nation’s most despised minorities – Blacks in the South and immigrants in the North. However, the *American Issue* also vilified Blacks in Union states such as Ohio, the ASL’s birthplace. The South’s early connection between racism and prohibition was borrowed, repurposed, and strongly reinforced by this national temperance group merely a few years after its founding. Regardless of which region they lived

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<sup>86</sup> *American Issue*, August 1, 1902, Pg. 4.

<sup>87</sup> *American Issue*, October 17, Pg. 5.



in, the only way for Black voters to escape the League's wrath was to support its ongoing temperance work, most importantly by voting dry.

### *Wet and Purchasable Black Votes*

The *American Issue* quickly revealed at the turn of the century that the Anti-Saloon League would respond to Blacks who allegedly supported saloons just as Southern racists would. These accusations were based on the belief that most Black Americans were wets. This assumption is unsupported by empirical evidence and its origin remains a mystery, and is perhaps merely an argument of racialized convenience.<sup>88</sup> Arsiniega suggests that prohibition may be the first instance in which Black voters, through ballot initiative, could determine outcomes in the South.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, many Southerners who once supported universal male suffrage in the 1870s and the 1880s reversed course and supported Black disenfranchisement given their unfounded assumption that Black votes would naturally be cast for the wet column.<sup>90</sup> Pegram goes as far as saying "educated white southerners...betrayed the paternalistic assumptions that infused southern Progressivism."<sup>91</sup>

The ASL was laser-focused on prohibition. However, the voting rights of Black Americans became collateral damage as the League increasingly accused the liquor traffic in general of corruption. The *American Issue* declared "that machine politics and political bosses fight for the saloon to protect it, just as the banker would protect his bank vault...They draw their supplies from the saloon system largely, just as the banker draws his from his vaults."<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Brittany Arsiniega, "Race and Prohibition Movements," Pg. 46.

<sup>89</sup> Arsiniega, Pg. 55.

<sup>90</sup> Joe Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 2007, Pg. 144.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas R. Pegram, "Temperance Politics and Regional Political Culture: The Anti-Saloon League in Maryland and the South, 1907-1915," *The Journal of Southern History*, 1997, Pg. 72.

<sup>92</sup> *American Issue*, December 29, 1905, Pg. 3.

However, the degree to which the *American Issue* accepted, reinforced, and double downed on accusations of Black voters constituting the foundation of wets' corrupt platform is shocking. My research investigates numerous stories making unfounded yet incredibly damaging accusations that Black Americans were not only unsupportive of temperance, they were also outright selling their votes to wet forces.

### ***Joe Miller and the Black and White Scoundrels***

In 1900, the *American Issue* began reporting that a temperance wave was underway in Lebanon, Ohio in which “the leading newspaper of the place has taken a strong stand for suppressing the saloons and the best element of the population is sympathetic and helpful.”<sup>93</sup> While the ASL routinely claimed that respectable citizens were naturally also temperance supporters, it seems more likely that the label of “respectable citizen,” in the eyes of the Anti-Saloon League, was reserved for a select group of voters, fully conditional on the fact that they voted dry. Lebanon, which had several saloons and drinking clubs, soon began experiencing “the new style of crusade, whereby all the inhabitants are informed whenever a person enters a saloon.”<sup>94</sup> Temperance supporters had enlisted amateur detectives to keep tabs on saloon patrons, club members, and even private dinner parties. Soon, the imbibers of this small town were scandalized and drinking, according to the League, had started to fall out of fashion.

In December, the *American Issue* reported that twenty-nine residents of Lebanon had contributed over \$2,000 to a law enforcement fund for the use of prosecuting bootleggers.<sup>95</sup> The last story on Lebanon in 1900 confidently reported that “the saloon influence seems to be

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<sup>93</sup> *American Issue*, November 1900, Pg. 3.

<sup>94</sup> *American Issue*, November 1900, Pg. 3.

<sup>95</sup> *American Issue*, December 7, 1900, Pg. 1.

weakening.”<sup>96</sup> The town was beginning to hold temperance meetings, one of which was addressed by Ohio Anti-Saloon League Superintendent Purley A. Baker. It was believed that 400 of the town’s 700 voters would vote dry when the time came.

Lebanon did in fact vote itself “dry” on December 18, 1900. The *American Issue* first reported this dry victory the following month on January 4, 1901. During that year, references to “Lebanon” appeared 123 times throughout dozens of stories providing coverage of the town’s already completed temperance battle. However, instead of merely highlighting the victory through positive coverage, the *American Issue* printed numerous stories that vilified an individual named Joe Miller, secretary of the State Brewers’ Alliance and editor of the *Ohio State Record*, as well as Black voters generally. According to the *American Issue*, “[Miller’s] most common and most successful method is to inaugurate a wholesale purchase of the vicious and ignorant voters who can be bought up for a few dollars per head.”<sup>97</sup> The ASL’s paper accused the State Brewer’s Alliance of creating a “corruption fund” with the sole purpose of purchasing votes for the wet ticket. It declared that Miller’s “tactics of corruption have been apparent and notorious.”<sup>98</sup> Furthermore, “In almost every place where the local option contest goes on the colored population is the stamping ground for Joe Miller and his gang to buy whisky votes.”<sup>99</sup> Joe Miller is mentioned by name 68 times throughout *American Issue* pages in 1901 and over a dozen separate stories provide accounts of his alleged corruption which relied on purchasable Black votes.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *American Issue*, December 7, 1900, Pg. 5.

<sup>97</sup> *American Issue*, April 12, 1901, Pg. 4.

<sup>98</sup> *American Issue*, April 12, 1901, Pg. 4.

<sup>99</sup> *American Issue*, December 20, 1901, Pg. 1.

<sup>100</sup> For other stories covering Joe Miller and his alleged purchase of Black votes see the following of the *American Issue*: April 5, 1901, Pg. 5; April 12, 1901, Pg. 4; April 21, 1901, Pg. 6; April 26, 1901, Pg. 5; April 26, 1901, Pg. 8; May 24, 1901, Pg. 4; May 24, 1901, Pg. 7; September 6, 1901, Pg. 4; October 4, 1901, Pg. 7; December 20, 1901, Pg. 1.

The *American Issue* reported that Miller met with Lebanon's saloonkeepers the Sunday before Lebanon's local option vote was held. After this meeting between Miller and white saloonkeepers concluded, "All the viler elements among the negro voters of the town were summoned to a secret meeting" which was to take place at Henderson's Hall. Some white men reportedly arrived at the meeting as well but were turned down and "rigidly excluded." During this alleged meeting, Miller presented a speech on the failure of local option prohibition to roughly fifty Black men. Following this, Miller was said to have passed around cigars and silver dollars to his audience members. Interestingly, the *American Issue* also reported that he offered the promise that, in exchange for their votes, Blacks in Lebanon would be awarded the right to "drink at the same bars alongside of white men." Ultimately, the dries won the local option election. However, the *American Issue* seemed to take greater pleasure in reporting that "the attempt of Miller to buy up enough negroes to carry the town for the 'wets,' wretchedly failed."<sup>101</sup>

Blacks became casualties in this dry war as the League waged its complicated, messy battles against the saloons and liquor interests of the nation. Even though dries had won the Lebanon election in 1900, the *American Issue* refused to let go of Miller's alleged corruption throughout 1901. The ASL's intense hatred for him is of course largely due to his position as a wet leader. However, this extensive coverage provides an early example of the wild and obsessive nature seen in the League's reporting and how Black voters could easily come under the League's fire as well. The relevance of notorious Joe Miller soon faded away. However, for years the *American Issue* continued its strategy of reinforcing the belief that Black voters were

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<sup>101</sup> *American Issue*, September 6, 1901, Pg. 4.

corrupt, closely associated with wet politicians, and a serious roadblock to temperance progress.<sup>102</sup>

### ***Boats of Votes***

Of course, instances of dry defeats were also followed by similarly mysterious and unverified accusations that Black voters were naturally corruptible and a serious threat to the ASL's dry campaign. However, blaming Blacks for local prohibition defeats was not a new tactic, nor was it devised by the Anti-Saloon League itself. The defeat of statewide prohibition in Tennessee in 1887 led the *Christian Advocate* to declare that "Wherever the Negro vote was strong prohibition was weak."<sup>103</sup> As the Anti-Saloon League became the premiere dry organization, it repurposed and redeployed these pre-packaged and widely accepted accusations against already marginalized and demonized Blacks to explain away its own organization's defeats.

Southern prohibitionists blamed Black voters for being the root of many of the racial problems plaguing the south, alleging they would use their votes to purposefully oppose any change proposed by whites. In 1889, a leading evangelical temperance advocate in Georgia had suggested that Black voters were not naturally wets, but they sought "to vote en masse against anything supported by whites...if the majority of whites supported something – prohibition, for example – that was enough to convince the black population to oppose it."<sup>104</sup> In March 1905,

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<sup>102</sup> For other stories accusing Blacks of voter fraud even after dry victories occur see the following of the *American Issue*: March 10, 1905, Pg. 8; April 10, 1903, Pg. 4.

<sup>103</sup> Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, Pg. 149.

<sup>104</sup> Coker, Pg. 145.

*American Issue* readers learned of three wet victories in Ohio. The towns of Rockford and Bainbridge voted to remain wet. Loveland residents, having been dry for two years, voted to make their city wet again. The story reported an unfortunate lack of organization among the dries leading up to Loveland's local option election. "But, worst of all," League editors relayed, "last year the whites and colored people of the town got into a quarrel about the nomination of a colored member of the school board, who was defeated by the whites." This non-alcohol-related racial conflict had allegedly caused enough frustration among Blacks to vote wet in this local option election, a full year after the fact. Even *American Issue* editors recognized the flimsiness of this drummed-up excuse writing, "At least, this is our information, which we believe to be true. It is reported, also, that a large number of votes were bought by the wets."<sup>105</sup> This desultory attempt of assuring readers of the report's validity certainly raises questions as to how accurate any of these accusations against Black voters truly were. However, given the single purpose of the League, reporting accurate facts was less important than the greater mission of increasing public sentiment regarding the evilness of saloons, as well as their specific connection to Blacks and general corruption.

An even more bizarre accusation was made in 1906 when the League's paper printed remarks made by a superintendent within the Ohio Anti-Saloon League. The ASL leader reported that nearly three-fourths of the citizens in Lawrence County supported the abolishment of saloons. However, to somehow explain the wets' victory by a margin of 190 votes, he claimed that dry supporters "were made to face a fleet of shanty boats loaded with voters and anchored at their shores and hoarded with the negro voters from Kentucky who voted in the bad precincts of

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<sup>105</sup> *American Issue*, March 17, 1905, Pg. 9.

the town.”<sup>106</sup> Not only were virtually all Blacks wets. Not only were their votes corruptible.<sup>107</sup> They were pouring in from entirely different states to swing elections in support of saloons, according to the Anti-Saloon League.<sup>108</sup>

### ***Primary Beneficiaries***

A reprinted story under the headline “Proposition to Disfranchise Drunkards” suggested that “No drunkard should be allowed to help rule a great country.” In response, *American Issue* editors wrote “And there is all the more reason for such a measure in the fact that Prof. Cook of Trinity, Hartford, found that of every 1000 steady drinkers who were voters, 540 were down in the ward heelers books as purchasable, and of every 1000 confirmed drunkards, 789 were recorded as purchasable.”<sup>109</sup>

The Anti-Saloon League began frequently applying this same reasoning to Black voters specifically. Rather than merely highlight the fact that wets often used corrupt practices in their attempts to curtail dry progress, the Anti-Saloon League reported favorably on the ongoing disfranchisement of Black voters. As early as 1901, ASL editors claimed:

One of the most serious obstacles we have in [Ohio] to the promotion of righteousness in civic government, is the fact that so many colored voters are amenable to evil influences. It is this liability...which has contributed to the disenfranchisement of the colored race in the South. The law-abiding element of society, in self-defense, felt that they were justified in taking illegal means to protect themselves. We know Northern communities where such a sentiment is growing, and we predict trouble for the colored vote in some parts of Ohio unless they are influenced to better things.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> *American Issue*, March 30, 1906, Pg. 9.

<sup>107</sup> For another story accusing Black voters of being purchasable and corruptible see the following of the *American Issue*: March 10, 1905, Pg. 8.

<sup>108</sup> For other stories accusing non-resident Black voters of corrupting temperance elections see the following of the *American Issue*: October 17, 1902.

<sup>109</sup> *American Issue*, October 11, 1901, Pg. 8.

<sup>110</sup> *American Issue*, December 20, 1901, Pg. 1.

Although acknowledging the illegality of stripping Blacks of their votes, the ASL also refers to these white citizens as law-abiding and seemingly approves of their tactics. Of course, this was fueled by the League's belief that Black voters were not an asset to the dry campaign.

Furthermore, the League threateningly suggested the possibility of disenfranchisement in other areas to force Blacks in states such as Ohio to think twice before voting wet. According to the *American Issue*, "where there is practically no negro population, where the percentage of foreign population is exceedingly small, and where there is more old-fashioned Americanism than there is anywhere on earth, prohibition is almost universal."<sup>111</sup>

The strategy of vilifying saloons in part by asserting their support was often sourced from Black Americans evidently did contribute to dry victories. According to Coker, Southern temperance supporters "believed that an open and productive debate on the issue of prohibition, free of racial demagoguery, could not take place until blacks were no longer allowed to vote." He argues that Northern whites began to excuse and enable this racist development in the South as early as the 1890s.<sup>112</sup> In 1901, Alabama imposed poll taxes, literacy tests, and residency requirements to disenfranchise Black voters almost entirely. After this new state constitution, Black voters in Alabama dropped from 181,000 to fewer than 3,000.<sup>113</sup> In 1887, Tennessee had roughly 60,000 Black voters. After the dries were defeated in a special election for a referendum which would have dried up the state, Blacks were accused of being influenced by liquor, money, and prejudiced appeals. Tennessee prohibitionists supported Black disenfranchisement in 1909.<sup>114</sup> These restrictions placed on Southern Blacks allegedly would help pave the way for

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<sup>111</sup> *American Issue*, July 6, 1906, Pg. 3.

<sup>112</sup> Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, Pg. 146-147.

<sup>113</sup> Coker, Pg. 145.

<sup>114</sup> Hanes Walton and James E. Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement," *Phylon* (1960-) 32, no. 3 (1971), Pg. 256-257.



more stringent prohibition. In 1902, one contemporary writing on prohibition in Alabama declared, “The stronghold of the whiskey power in the state has been eliminated by the disfranchisement of the Negro, and others like them, and now with a fair fight and a fair count we can carry the state.”<sup>115</sup>

The ASL enabled and benefited from Black disenfranchisement in the South, without having to outright claim it as part of its’ official strategy. In December 1903, the *American Issue* reported that the ASL had scored victories in eighteen cities and towns of North Carolina. J. William Bailey, leader of the North Carolina Anti-Saloon League, believed that “there is a great demand throughout the south for the restriction of liquor, this being one of the first fruits of negro disfranchisement and the new independence of the white people.”<sup>116</sup> A reprinted story from the *Kalamazoo* reported that “the Anti-Saloon League is at the front of the campaign” and that “the elimination of the negro vote made the temperance people strong. So long as the black man had power at the polls they were helpless, but the negro vote rendered nil they have been winning victories right and left.”<sup>117</sup> It is quite evident that Black voters were being directly affected through this linkage between racist beliefs and dry desires. As the ASL built credibility, it emerged as the nation’s dry leader during these same years. Instead of condemning or even distancing their organization from the racist practices of the South, leaders of the Anti-Saloon League hitched their own work to this concurrent movement and became primary beneficiaries of the deteriorating condition of Southern Blacks.

The threat of disenfranchisement was also applied directly to the Anti-Saloon League’s base in Ohio. In 1907, the *American Issue* reported on “the temperance standing of Columbus

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<sup>115</sup> Coker, Pg. 150.

<sup>116</sup> *American Issue*, December 18, 1903, Pg. 7.

<sup>117</sup> *American Issue*, November 6, 1903, Pg. 9.

Negroes” and claimed that Black citizens in the “bad land section of Columbus...have been largely affiliated with corrupt men, the promoters of bad politics and the reliance of evil projects in Columbus for support. We take no pleasure in writing these words. The error of these negroes is pointed out by their own best friends. If Ohio negroes are to improve their present standing, they can only do it by advances in temperance and morality.” According to the League, “the destinies of the colored people are very largely in their own hands.”<sup>118</sup> This warning, which can almost be seen as a direct threat made by the League, was not new. Five years earlier, in 1902, the *American Issue* printed that “The moral and patriotic people of Ohio are growing very tired of having to meet these saloon-purchased negro voters at every Beal law election. In view of the increasing disfranchisement of the negro, this is no time for black people to give white people an additional reason for stifling the colored vote.”<sup>119</sup> A similar piece from 1902 went further, suggesting that Black people in Ohio and other northern areas were, in part, responsible for increasing racial tensions in the South. Restating its usual charge that Black voters in Ohio were “a corruptible and purchasable quantity in the local option elections,” the *American Issue* claimed that “this sort of thing is leading in a dangerous direction for them and for the welfare of the negro. The very shortest path to the condition the negro race occupies in the South, is the conduct of many of its members in the North.”

Despite this clear attempt to guilt-trip Black voters, the paper claimed itself to be “an enthusiastic friend of the black man, defending his full enjoyment of every political and industrial right that the white man has. The only times when we begin to feel somewhat shaken in this position is when we find the saloon agents...buying up negro votes and arraying them

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<sup>118</sup> *American Issue*, March 29, 1907, Pg. 14.

<sup>119</sup> *American Issue*, July 11, 1902, Pg. 5.

solidly against the morality and decency of the community.” According to the Anti-Saloon League, “there will come a day of calamity unless the negro leaders call a halt on this sort of thing.”<sup>120</sup>

### ***Riots, Lynching, and Journalism***

The Anti-Saloon League rose to power as lynching, particularly in the South, was becoming increasingly prevalent. In the 1880s, 82 percent of the nations’ total lynchings occurred in the South. This figure would continue to rise through the following three decades. Previously, daily newspapers allocated space in their pages “to lynchings on the basis either of geographical proximity of the events or the degree to which the lynchings were sensational.” However, the “newsworthiness of lynchings changed substantially” going into the twentieth century.<sup>121</sup> The timeliness of lynching reports improved with the rise of trains, wire services, and telegraphs. A media cycle was constructed for reporting alleged Black crimes and subsequent lynchings. This new wave of lynching coverage was, in part, due to newspapers’ growing reliance on large circulations and advertising revenue.<sup>122</sup> The Anti-Saloon League’s own newspaper responded to this development by printing race baiting editorials and stories of rapes, lynchings and riots, carefully framing prohibition as the most effective remedy to racial conflict.

### ***Akron Riot of 1900***

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<sup>120</sup> *American Issue*, September 19, 1902, Pg. 4.

<sup>121</sup> Kathy Roberts Forde et al., *Journalism and Jim Crow: White Supremacy and the Black Struggle for a New America* / Edited by Kathy Roberts Forde and Sid Bedingfield ; Foreword by Alex Lichtenstein., The History of Communication (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2021), Pg. 85.

<sup>122</sup> Forde et al, Pg. 86.

In 1902, the *Texas Searchlight* reported that “high grade negroes” supported dry reform while the “low-grade ‘nigger’ and the ‘poor white trash’” opposed temperance. The *American Issue* reprinted and responded to this stating, “Same way in Ohio and Indiana and all over the North. The saloon line is substantially the division between worth and worthlessness.”<sup>123</sup> Instances of Black crime and race riots provided low-hanging fruit for the *American Issue* to editorialize and shame communities with saloons, inside of which the “worthlessness” could freely imbibe. In August 1900, the same year a local option bill was defeated in the Ohio senate causing “much weeping and regrets,” a Black man named Louis Peck was accused of assaulting a 6-year-old white girl in Akron, Ohio.<sup>124</sup> After reports of the alleged attack were released, a mob stormed the city’s jail with hopes of lynching Peck, unaware he had already been transported to Cleveland for his own safety. Akron authorities fired into the crowd, killing two and setting off a full-scale riot. It was later shown that the accusation against Peck was false and in 1913, he was pardoned.<sup>125</sup>

Despite the reported attack being unverified, the *American Issue* jumped on the story and began its reporting in October 1900. “We distinctly charge the saloon at Akron as being the exciting and procuring cause of the riot in that place, with all its attendant destruction of life and property,” proclaimed the *American Issue*. “According to the confession of Peck, the negro in the case, to prison keeper Washer, the fire for his evil impulses was whisky.” The ASL believed that “It is the liability to such crimes as this by negroes that has been one of the main factors in bringing about prohibition over so large a part of the territory of the south.” To put it more bluntly, race riots and alleged Black on white assaults were self-servingly exploited by the dry

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<sup>123</sup> *American Issue*, October 24, 1902, Pg. 5.

<sup>124</sup> *American Issue*, May 1900, Pg. 7.

<sup>125</sup> Mark Price, “Local History: Akron Landmarks in Black History,” Akron Beacon Journal, February 28, 2022.

force. Harnessing their push for prohibition to Southern racism and hysteria was seen as incredibly effective and consequently a justifiable, perhaps even necessary step taken by the ASL. While League reporters admitted that the abolishment of formal saloons would not necessarily end all access to alcohol, the rumored confession of Peck was enough for the *American Issue* to declare that “It is almost safe to say that if there had been no saloons whatever in the place, this horrible tragedy would not have occurred.”<sup>126</sup>

It is interesting to note that the League’s coverage glosses over the alleged crime committed by Peck, merely saying, “Then came the unprintable story of the assault.” For the League’s purposes, the alleged attack of a six-year-old girl was not the primary focus, the furious whites of Akron were already convinced of Peck’s guilt. Instead, the League’s narrative focused on where Peck had been right before the crime was committed. According to the *American Issue*, “All the evidence in the case seems to show that ordinarily Peck was not a dangerous man to be at large. But whisky acting on his negro animal nature turned him into a raging demon of lust, and the results we know.”

Moreover, the *American Issue* claimed “that whisky was also the inspiring agent” of the white mob. In this sense, riots offered the ASL a cache of dry ammunition. It argued that alcohol was the root cause of both Black on white assaults and the subsequent destruction and lynching at the hands of enraged white mobs. “Every citizen of Akron who has consented to the presence of saloons,” charged League editors, “is probably an accessory before the [f]act of this black man to all that followed.”<sup>127</sup> The widespread blame given to anyone supporting saloons was not unique to the riot in Akron. In 1903, The *Epworth Herald*, a religious newspaper, reported that a

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<sup>126</sup> *American Issue*, October 1900, Pg. 8.

<sup>127</sup> *American Issue*, October 1900, Pg. 8.

Black schoolteacher shot a county school inspector after being refused a teacher's certificate. An infuriated mob then "lynched the negro, mutilated his body, and then burned it to a crisp. How could such a thing possibly occur in a city like Belleville?" To League editors, "Perfectly easily" was the answer. "We are informed that Belleville is one of the worst, wide-open, lawless, whisky-possessed, beer-driven towns in Illinois."<sup>128</sup>

### ***Springfield Riot of 1906***

The few references made to Springfield, Ohio by the *American Issue* in early 1906 seemed to be favorable. In January, the paper reported that, among other small dry victories occurring throughout the state, "Springfield is becoming more strenuous regarding the suppression of vice."<sup>129</sup> However, two months later a race riot rocked Springfield. Just two years earlier, the city had experienced a similar race riot which the *American Issue* reported on extensively. Unlike the 1904 riot, the nature of which required the ASL to make stretched, almost artificial connections to temperance, there was no question that the riot of 1906 was in response to a saloon incident. Two Black men, Edward Dean and Preston Ladd, had gotten into a fight with three white saloon patrons. One of the white men was suspected of involvement, but never prosecuted, in the lynching that occurred during the 1904 riot. Two of the white men were allegedly cut by Dean and Ladd. Shortly after, the two Black men were arrested and transported out of Springfield for their own safety. Soon, a full-scale riot erupted, and whites began attacking Blacks and destroying their homes. Both Black and white saloons were targeted and destroyed.

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<sup>128</sup> *American Issue*, June 26, 1903, Pg. 3.

<sup>129</sup> *American Issue*, January 26, 1906, Pg. 10.

The violence continued for two more nights as local white militiamen sympathized with the mob, ending only after the Ohio National Guard was deployed.<sup>130</sup>

Due to the initial drunken brawl, League editors were able to link this riot to saloons more directly than in 1904. One *American Issue* piece declared that the Springfield riot was caused by two sources: “First, there is a large negro population in the place which holds the balance of political power. The bad element of this population has been handled with gloves by the small politicians of both parties, each side figuring for its support at elections. The disorderly negroes, intrenched in dives and saloons, have, therefore, become unruly, defiant, and in some cases desperate.” The report secondarily blamed whites saying, “Much the same remark might be made about the low white element of the city. It has run things with a high hand, to suit its own pleasure, because weak officers of the law connived at its misdemeanors and failed to properly punish the mob of two years ago, for fear of the effect of a courageous course upon their own political fortunes.” Within the racial “thunder-clouds approaching each other” in Springfield, whites are seen as being problematic for believing they could act violently without fear of punishment. Blacks, however, are charged with the offence of holding “the balance of political power.” Consequently, the League believed that “Springfield is reaping as she sows. It is a pity, however, that the rest of Ohio has to share in the same harvest of trouble, expense and disgrace.”<sup>131</sup>

The *American Issue* challenged wet communities to rectify drunkenness, violence, and racial tension through the abolishment of saloons. “Why is there not a law to fit such conditions as have arisen at Springfield twice in the last two years,” asked the *American Issue*, “The subject

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<sup>130</sup> Jack Blocker, “Race, Sex, and Riot: The Springfield, Ohio, Race Riots of 1904 and 1906 and the Sources of Antiblack Violence in the Lower Midwest,” in *Lynching Beyond Dixie* (University of Illinois Press, 2013), Pg. 190-191.

<sup>131</sup> *American Issue*, March 16, 1906, Pg. 15.

is worthy of attention.”<sup>132</sup> Without directly advocating for this intermediary step towards stricter prohibition, the *American Issue* appears to insinuate that Springfield’s complicated “conditions” could not be easily solved by merely pushing for prohibition in the continued presence of Black political power in that city.

### ***The Noose of Southern Journalism***

At the turn of the century, Black journalist and civil rights leader Ida B. Wells published *Lynch Law in Georgia*, an investigation into local newspapers’ coverage of a dozen lynchings, burnings, and murders of Blacks in Georgia over a six-week period. By examining the *Atlanta Journal* and the *Atlanta Constitution*, she highlighted their pattern of heavily biased coverage of alleged Black crimes, their persistent and graphic suggestions for how the accused should be punished, and their sensational reports covering the punitive murders of the Black men. Included in her work is a report from white private detective Louis Le Vin who investigated Atlanta’s racial violence. The work of Wells and Le Vin prove that the dishonest and unreliable nature of Southern journalism was evident to many contemporaries.

Wells asserts that “The real purpose of these savage demonstrations is to teach the Negro that in the South he has no rights that the law will enforce.” Both Wells and Le Vins make blatant and direct attacks on journalism, clearly indicating them as part of the complex problem surrounding these murders. Wells ends her introduction of *Lynch Law in Georgia* by stating, “We submit all to the sober judgment of the Nation, confident that, in this cause, as well as all others, ‘Truth is mighty and will prevail.’” Sadly, Wells’ call for newspapers to clean up their reporting fell on deaf ears. In 1906, seven years after her investigation, these same patterns of sensational

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<sup>132</sup> *American Issue*, April 13, 1905, Pg. 6.



journalism fueled the Atlanta Race Massacre.<sup>133</sup> In turn, the Anti-Saloon League's *American Issue* utilized the Atlanta Race Massacre for its own organizational goals, editorializing the event in support of its belief that racial tensions could only be alleviated through the closing of saloons.

### ***Political Expediency***

A hotly contentious Democratic primary for governor between Hoke Smith and Clark Howell was underway in Atlanta during 1906. In the 1880s, Smith opposed disenfranchisement, supported the employment of Black teachers in Atlanta's Black schools, and condemned lynching. According to Walton and Taylor, Smith "subscribed to a philosophy of tolerant white paternalism as being the best hope for progress for Blacks" and supported Booker T. Washington's opinions. However, Smith "forgot about Blacks in his struggle to obtain this position" and began ardently pushing for further disenfranchisement, "which became a matter of political expediency."<sup>134</sup> Both candidates' campaigns were well-armed with mouthpieces, Smith was the former publisher of *The Atlanta Journal* and Howell was the editorial executive and owner of *The Atlanta Constitution*. In addition to blasting the other candidate, both papers printed salacious stories of Black men assaulting white women throughout the summer. Many of these stories were exaggerated or entirely fabricated to drive public hysteria and further demonize Blacks. Hoke Smith ultimately won the primary in August.<sup>135</sup> He was a long-time "local optionist" and, like the Anti-Saloon League, believed that Black voters were corrupt and purchasable by the wets.<sup>136</sup> Ultimately, the Atlanta Race Massacre, largely fomented by both

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<sup>133</sup> Ida B. Wells-Barnett, *Lynch Law in Georgia* (Project Gutenberg), accessed September 18, 2022, <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/64426>.

<sup>134</sup> Hanes Walton and James E. Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement," *Phylon* (1960-) 32, no. 3 (1971), Pg. 253.

<sup>135</sup> *The Atlanta Race Massacre of 1906: A Brief History* (National Center for Civil and Human Rights, n.d.).

<sup>136</sup> Walton and Taylor, "Blacks and the Southern Prohibition Movement," Pg. 253.

candidates' newspapers, greatly assisted Smith in achieving his two major political goals of disenfranchising Blacks and strengthening prohibition in Georgia.

### ***Atlanta's Whisky-Produced Negro Trouble***

According to Arsiniega, "there is overwhelming evidence in Georgia of an important nexus between race and that state's movement for prohibition."<sup>137</sup> Indeed, the Atlanta Race Massacre, which left dozens of Black people dead, propelled Governor Smith closer to his campaign promises and proved to be a gold-mine for the Anti-Saloon League's propaganda machine. The riot received significantly more coverage in the *American Issue* than any other riots, even those occurring in the League's home state of Ohio. ASL editorials used all aspects of the riots and the alleged Black crimes that precipitated them to highlight the evils of saloons. After a week had passed since the rioting first began, the *American Issue* published its first story covering the massacre and quickly came to its natural conclusion that, "[t]he saloon, as usual, [was] at bottom of the difficulty." The ASL charged that "Negroes of the lowest classes fill up with liquor in the low Negro dives of the place, and then go forth to the deeds of violence which have aroused the entire population and precipitated almost a reign of terror."<sup>138</sup>

While alcohol was blamed as the inspiring agent for these alleged Black assaults, the ASL also blamed Blacks for voting saloons back into Atlanta. "The city enjoyed unexampled peace and prosperity for many years under prohibition," the *American Issue* claimed without citing any evidence. "But, in an evil day, the liquor element made a coalition with the ignorant Negro classes, the respectable whites were outvoted, saloons were reinstalled, and the present condition

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<sup>137</sup> Arsiniega, "Race and Prohibition Movements," Pg. 46.

<sup>138</sup> *American Issue*, October 6, 1906, Pg. 14.

of affairs was the result.”<sup>139</sup> The League attempted to use the massacre as a scare tactic for other communities writing, “Whoever has been in the south in sections where the colored people exist in great numbers is aware of the terror that prevails among the white population when liquor gets out among the negroes.”<sup>140</sup>

According to the Anti-Saloon League, this violent episode was not unique to Atlanta’s specific environment. This was an inevitable outcome that would occur anywhere Blacks and other demonized groups could easily obtain liquor and anyplace where saloon corruption was allowed to permeate. The *American Issue* claimed that “so large a section of the South has put the saloon out in self-defense. As we have looked at the great Negro section of Atlanta, within the last few months, we have realized as never before the elements of disorder that might easily be let loose if they were sufficiently fired with liquor.” Consequently, the League was confident that Atlanta’s people “will go to the root of the matter by utterly driving out all negro saloons, and, in fact, all saloons whatever, whether frequented by whites or blacks.”<sup>141</sup> Unlike Ohio’s towns where racist sentiments was less prevalent, Atlanta’s officials quickly responded to the violence by advocating for both stricter prohibition and the disenfranchisement of Black voters.

The *American Issue* congratulated the Georgia Anti-Saloon League for “preaching the right doctrine to the people of that state in connection with the troubles at Atlanta.”<sup>142</sup> According to the League, the “right doctrine” in response to Atlanta’s riots was the same as it had been in Akron and Springfield. “The League takes as its text the everywhere granted fact,” the *American Issue* printed, “that the bottom of the difficulty was the Negro dives of Atlanta, which dives were brought in by a coalition between the liquor people and the bad Negroes voting prohibition

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<sup>139</sup> *American Issue*, October 5, 1906, Pg. 14.

<sup>140</sup> *American Issue*, October 5, 1906, Pg. 14.

<sup>141</sup> *American Issue*, October 5, 1906, Pg. 14.

<sup>142</sup> *American Issue*, October 12, 1906, Pg. 2.

out.”<sup>143</sup> Despite the white mobs causing the destruction, the League simultaneously blames Blacks for the violence and the liquor interests for giving Blacks the bottle. “We of the North are irritated, annoyed and cursed already badly enough by our saloons, without having the element of bad Negroes in addition thrown into the wretched business.” Because of Atlanta’s large number of Black residents, the League claimed, “[t]hat portion of our country therefore needs to exercise special preventives and safeguards against the liquor traffic.”<sup>144</sup> The League does not clearly explain what it means by “special preventives and safeguards” but perhaps that was the intention. By blaming the riots on saloon-fueled assaults while also consistently reminding readers that a formidable Black population, allegedly unsupportive of prohibition, resided in Atlanta, it is not difficult to see how race, voting rights, and prohibition became inextricably linked together in the *American Issue*’s narrative of this violent event.

The ASL continued publishing content that hinged on the Atlanta Race Massacre over a month after it occurred. One report claimed that “a strong element of the city now favors, not simply the abolition of the Negro saloons, – a matter which seems to be pretty well agreed upon by everybody, – but the movement for another prohibition vote seems well under way, according to the press reports.”<sup>145</sup> Despite the extreme violence that had recently occurred, “it will be indeed a happy outcome,” suggested the *American Issue*, “if the allegiance which was formed between the bad Negroes of Atlanta, and the liquor interests, which brought back saloons...should be dissolved, and an entirely dry condition result for the Gate City of the South.”<sup>146</sup> Once again, the story describes a mysterious yet powerful alliance between “bad Negroes” and the liquor men in the city. Without this coalition between Black voters and wet

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<sup>143</sup> *American Issue*, October 12, 1906, Pg. 2.

<sup>144</sup> *American Issue*, October 12, 1906, Pg. 2.

<sup>145</sup> *American Issue*, October 26, 1906, Pg. 15.

<sup>146</sup> *American Issue*, October 26, 1906, Pg. 15.

leaders, allegedly the only people who voted the city wet again, the League believed that Atlanta's saloons would have merely remained a memory. Consequently, the League suggested that the Black on white assaults and the destructive riot which brought shame upon the city would have never occurred.

The League also called for new laws which would completely prohibit Blacks from purchasing liquor. Interestingly, the League seemingly believed that, from a legal standpoint, preventing certain Americans from purchasing alcohol based on their race was more problematic than eliminating their right to vote. The *American Issue* admitted, “[i]t is rather hard to understand how this could be done in consonance with their rights as citizens; nevertheless, the South has found a way to make the rights of any class lie on the table when the greater rights of the greater number seem to have paramount importance.”<sup>147</sup> This reference to the “greater number” might as well have said the “greater race.”

Again, we see these types of stories trying to convince readers through multiple arguments, with this story ultimately ending on a paternalistic angle. League editors wrote, “We have not much of an idea that they would be hurt a great deal if they were thus discriminated against. They are largely, practically, irresponsible wards, and often need to be dealt with as children, and it is a real kindness to shut off whisky.”<sup>148</sup> Soon, reports came in that “various discussions and meetings favorable and unfavorable to a prohibition campaign in Georgia, as the result of the bad business at Atlanta” were taking place.<sup>149</sup> Predictions were made that the following spring would see an organized state prohibition campaign led by Methodist ministers in Atlanta and the Anti-Saloon League, “which will seek to gather to their aid all the ministers of

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<sup>147</sup> *American Issue*, October 26, 1906, Pg. 15.

<sup>148</sup> *American Issue*, October 26, 1906, Pg. 15.

<sup>149</sup> *American Issue*, October 26, 1906, Pg. 3.

other denominations.”<sup>150</sup> Clearly, the ASL was directly benefitting from unsubstantiated reports vilifying Blacks, race riots, and ongoing disenfranchisement. These were all assets in the dry forces’ prohibition toolbox, particularly in Southern states.

### *All-American Racism*

According to historian Thomas Pegram, who compares the Anti-Saloon League’s activities in the South with those in Maryland, the success of the League was largely determined by local political conditions. Furthermore, the ASL “was most effective when it blended into the mainstream of southern politics...crafting racist arguments that dovetailed with the formal resurgence of white supremacy in the early twentieth century.”<sup>151</sup> ASL leaders on the ground in Maryland, a state teetering on the Mason-Dixon line, were surprised by the obvious intersection of racism and temperance that existed there and botched their own attempts of appropriating racist sentiment.<sup>152</sup> In 1907, the new superintendent of the Maryland Anti-Saloon League arrived on the scene. William H. Anderson soon attempted to adjust his own personal messaging, as well as the entire League’s messaging, to better suit the expanding racist sentiments of the nation. In 1908, Anderson wrote to the editor of the *American Issue* after it had published a piece which equated the secession of Southern states to a serpent hissing calls for disunion. “The fact that our greatest strength in this country is in the South and the Issue is becoming more and more of a national paper makes it important...that everything of this sort shall fall in front of the editorial blue pencil.”<sup>153</sup> Pegram suggests that from the borderland view of Maryland, it became evident

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<sup>150</sup> *American Issue*, October 26, 1906, Pg. 3.

<sup>151</sup> Pegram, “Temperance Politics and Regional Political Culture: The Anti-Saloon League in Maryland and the South, 1907-1915, Pg. 60”

<sup>152</sup> Pegram, Pg. 63.

<sup>153</sup> Pegram, Pg. 62.

that the Anti-Saloon League altered its propaganda messaging to better resonate with the stronghold of temperance sentiment in the South.<sup>154</sup>

However, these racist sentiments were evidently expanding to more northern areas of the nation. In 1916, the *American Issue* reported that a Senator in Washington, D.C. had “proposed to exclude the 30,000 negro voters of the District from taking part” in a temperance referendum.<sup>155</sup> That same year, the *American Issue* alleged that Washington’s Mayor William Hale Thompson, who had recently restored the license of a saloon, was a “colored politician who for years has been used by white politicians to line up colored votes; is thoroughly self-seeking.”<sup>156</sup> The Anti-Saloon League had evidently determined that utilizing racist rhetoric could ultimately help its temperance mission, and not merely in the Southern states. By 1916, nearly all of the Southern states had enacted state-wide prohibition. However, the Anti-Saloon League continued to apply racist sentiments and pressure to other wet areas of the nation.

Clearly, the Anti-Saloon League did not formerly oppose the disenfranchisement of Black voters in the South. The dry organization had bought into and reinforced the racist stereotype that virtually all Black Americans were either wets themselves or simply too easily corruptible to make choices of their own at the polls. It is difficult to determine what exactly the Anti-Saloon League’s official stance regarding the voter suppression of these Americans truly was. Of course, the single-issue focus of the ASL is precisely the sort of disguise that allowed the organization to walk this dangerous tightrope in the first place. However, the disenfranchisement of Black Americans was not the only issue of voting rights that the Anti-Saloon League became entangled with, primarily through its own pages of the *American Issue*. During this same period a group of

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<sup>154</sup> Pegram, Pg. 89.

<sup>155</sup> *American Issue*, March 11, 1916, Pg. 2.

<sup>156</sup> *American Issue*, January 22, 1916, Pg. 2.

Americans, many of whom had never cast a ballot for any type of election, were fighting for their own rights to vote. As we will see, women in the United States were viewed quite differently by the League than Black Americans were – simply because it was believed they would provide the dry movement with dry votes.



## Chapter Three: Back to the Path of Sobriety

### *Introduction: An Inevitable Intertwinement*

The intertwining of temperance and women's suffrage was all but inevitable from the outset. Women were at the forefront of the temperance fight since the movement's birth during the antebellum period. However, societal expectations in the United States ensured that many women, particularly those who had the time and resources to significantly invest in reform movements, relied significantly upon men. Accordingly, men often held significant control over their finances. If men wanted to squander their paychecks at saloons, they could do so freely. Wives had little recourse.

During this period, it was commonly held that men, unlike women, would not naturally hold themselves to high standards. Women, despite their "feminine weakness," were viewed as the nations' moral authorities and the only hope for turning men "back to the paths of sobriety and virtue."<sup>157</sup> On August 15, 1874, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was formed. While male guests and onlookers were present, it was a "woman's convention" and only women were accepted as official members. Declaring that they had been "set apart as the apostles of the Temperance Gospel," the convention's women accepted their roles as moral authorities that day in New York.<sup>158</sup>

This new organization was one of the first major avenues in which women could begin participating in moral reforms outside of their usual spheres of influence, the home. In addition to advocating for temperance reforms, these women preached women's equality. Once Frances Willard became president in 1879, the WCTU began increasingly advocating for women's

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<sup>157</sup> Holly Berkley Fletcher, *Gender and the American Temperance Movement of the Nineteenth Century*, Studies in American Popular History and Culture (New York: Routledge, 2008) Pg. 34-39.

<sup>158</sup> Fletcher Pg. 103.

suffrage.<sup>159</sup> In 1881, the organization officially endorsed women’s voting rights.<sup>160</sup> The Anti-Saloon League worked alongside the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union for over two decades before doing the same. This significant step marked the only official instance of the Anti-Saloon League violating its single-issue focus.<sup>161</sup> This chapter investigates how the ASL cautiously approached women’s suffrage in the pages of its official organ.

### *The WCTU’s “Younger Brother”*

Reports from the *American Issue* indicate that as early as 1900, the ASL shared a close relationship with members of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. This was in stark contrast to its ties with other temperance organizations, of which there were many.<sup>162</sup> The League frequently sought to distinguish itself from other dry forces in its stories and editorials in its early years. These expose the reality that despite quickly amassing a following, the nascent ASL was still a self-conscious organization, anxious to receive credit for its own contributions to the broader temperance movement. It seemed to largely view other temperance organizations, apart from the WCTU, as threats to its own power, reputation, and hopes of becoming the leader of this new temperance wave. In February 1900, the *American Issue* said of the “incessantly active” Anti-Saloon League:

From Vermont and Rhode Island to California throughout the Northern States, with the exception of the WCTU which often appears as its helper, we see scarcely any other temperance organization doing anything but making speeches... For a practical, red hot, every day, free for all method of getting at the saloons, so far as we can judge from the press of the country, the Anti-Saloon League beats everything else in America. Whatever

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<sup>159</sup> May 13, 1916, Pg. 16 – The *American Issue* published a piece on Willard in which it said “Her work for temperance and social purity – and she probably did more than any other woman of her time – will live in the history of the country.”

<sup>160</sup> Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance*, Pg. 118.

<sup>161</sup> Daniel Okrent, *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (Scribner, 2010), Pg. 65.

<sup>162</sup> Some of the most notable temperance groups existing during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century include: the Prohibition Party, Good Templars, the Salvation Army, the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of America,

aggressive activity against grog shops in any Northern State we read of anywhere seems almost invariably to be related to the Anti-Saloon League in some of its many state forms.<sup>163</sup>

Perhaps part of the reason the ASL viewed the WCTU favorably was in respect of the work it had previously accomplished. It also didn't hurt when the WCTU helped fund the creation of local Anti-Saloon Leagues.<sup>164</sup>

Throughout its existence, the League was delighted to reprint endless instances of wet newspapers attacking temperance work. To a certain extent, the ASL measured the dry movement's progress by the intensity of liquor interests' hatred and outcry in their own publications. In later years, the *American Issue* increasingly reprinted these pieces, responding in kind with biting sarcasm, scorn, and even humor. However, despite the League's ambitions, early reports indicate that the ASL had not yet earned the brunt of wets' attacks. The WCTU was much more than a mere "helper" to the ASL. In November 1900, the League's own paper reprinted a piece from the *Wine and Spirit News* which mocked the "spinsters and flat-chested old ladies labeled the WCTU" for holding a prayer meeting as New York liquor dealers were in session.<sup>165</sup> The inability of women to conduct temperance work through political avenues did not hamper the WCTU sisters. Their religious piety and dramatic protests had earned them the respect of dries and the annoyance of wets. Some attacks made their intended targets clear without even mentioning the WCTU by name. A reprint from *The South West* (which the *American Issue* made clear to denote as a "liquor organ") stated, "We denounce as grannies and old women all people who want to make the laws take cognizance of personal habits with which the law in its very nature has no concern."<sup>166</sup> The WCTU had clearly made a name for itself in the couple decades'

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<sup>163</sup> *The American Issue*, February 1900, Pg. 13.

<sup>164</sup> *American Issue*, September 11, 1903, Pg. 12.

<sup>165</sup> *American Issue*, November 1900, Pg. 12.

<sup>166</sup> *American Issue*, November 16, 1900, Pg. 5.

head start it had on the ASL. Furthermore, it appears that even during the first few years of the twentieth century, the WCTU was viewed as the most recognized temperance leader. Having only recently arrived on the scene in 1893, the ASL had not yet earned the respect or created the recognizable brand it eventually would. The wet *National Advocate* charged WCTU members, church-going people, and nosey ministers as being hypocrites. The League received this insult as well, but the report merely refers to them casually as the “anti-saloon league people,” evidently not even worthy of capitalization.<sup>167</sup>

The WCTU faced criticism from within temperance ranks as well, particularly in Southern states. Between the late 1880s and 1905, Southern churches pulled back support of the WCTU or began outright attacking it. Although the WCTU had previously received broad support from Southern evangelicals, the south was largely opposed to the WCTU’s more radical approach under Frances Willard’s leadership. According to Coker, Southern men were not only disconcerted with the idea of women seeking ballots, they resented the WCTU’s support for third-party political movements in the 1890s, such as the Prohibition Party. Both enfranchised women and political challenges to the dominant Democratic party were seen as threats to the South’s culture.<sup>168</sup> In fact, Southern evangelical leaders vehemently and nearly universally opposed the enfranchisement of women. Anti-suffragists argued that women would become less womanly if they were given the right to vote. Furthermore, they feared that if white women were enfranchised, Black women would be as well. The *Alabama Christian Advocate* argued that if women’s suffrage was an unavoidable aspect of prohibition, then “surely the remedy is worse than the malady.”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> *American Issue*, November 1900, Pg. 9.

<sup>168</sup> Joe Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*, 2007, Pg. 213-214.

<sup>169</sup> Coker, Pg. 222-225.

Some of the skepticism and criticism for the WCTU's new direction came from women themselves. They feared that if WCTU ties with temperance men were broken, the influence they had recently acquired would be significantly weakened. In 1888, WCTU leader Esther Pugh of Chicago attended the Alabama WCTU's annual meeting at which she was asked, "Should it be regarded as an evidence of disloyalty if a state or local Union should not endorse every position taken by the National WCTU?" Pugh responded by saying "No, emphatically – No" and explained that the only requirements of the national WCTU were that members signed total abstinence pledges and paid their dues. State and local WCTUs could and should "take the lines of work suited to its environment." This was in stark contrast to the tightly controlled Anti-Saloon League. Consequently, Southern WCTUs began distancing themselves from the national WCTU's agenda. While these women were fully committed to bringing about moral reform in their communities, particularly regarding temperance, they would not publicly support women's suffrage and equality.<sup>170</sup>

Coker believes that this tense period, when Southern men feared that even conservative WCTU chapters were fronts for the more radical agenda of the national WCTU, led to the emergence of the Anti-Saloon League in the South, which "captivated the attention and backing of the southern evangelical denominations."<sup>171</sup> Indeed, unlike the WCTU, the Anti-Saloon League pursued an omni-party strategy and refused to officially endorse any political party or objective other than prohibition, at least early on. However, attempting to build clout around its own name, the Anti-Saloon League did support ongoing WCTU campaigns at the turn of the

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<sup>170</sup> Coker, Pg. 215-216.

<sup>171</sup> Coker, Pg. 229.

century. Two notable examples are League and Union cooperation regarding the “WCTU temperance education bill”<sup>172</sup> and the removal of army canteens.

However, in early fights such as these, the ASL is clearly seen as an assistant to the WCTU. In June of 1900, the League’s own reporters stated that temperance workers should be encouraged, despite the ASL’s recent defeat in its push for a local option bill in Ohio. The report brought news that the scientific temperance bill had become a law of the state:

While it was especially the measure of the WCTU and was managed by Mrs. Fanny Leiter of their legislative department, Mrs. Leiter was frequently in our office in consultation with Mr. Wheeler, head of our law department, and we have reason to believe he was of material assistance in the preparation and passage of the bill.<sup>173</sup>

This provision mandated scientific temperance instruction in all schools supported wholly or partly by the state of Ohio. Furthermore, it required teachers’ institutes to dedicate adequate time in instructing teachers the best methods of teaching “the nature of alcoholic drinks and other narcotics, and their effects upon the human system.”<sup>174</sup>

In 1901, the Senate voted to remove army saloons, despite the Senate Military Committee recommending that beer continue to be sold in these canteens.<sup>175</sup> One story reported that “The WCTU went to Washington, saw and conquered”.<sup>176</sup> The *Washington Star* said the bill’s success had brought the WCTU “to the front as an organization worthy to cope with the U.S.A.”<sup>177</sup> The ASL made sure its own contributions were recorded. In February 1901, the *American Issue* reprinted a piece from the WCTU’s *Union Signal*, which described the League as an “important ally” in the anti-canteen fight and thanked ASL representative Rev. E.C. Dinwiddie for preparing

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<sup>172</sup> *American Issue*, November 29, 1901, Pg. 5.

<sup>173</sup> *American Issue*, June 1900, Pg. 6.

<sup>174</sup> *American Issue*, August 1900, Pg. 14.

<sup>175</sup> *American Issue*, January 18, 1901, Pg. 5.

<sup>176</sup> *American Issue*, January 25, 1901, Pg. 4.

<sup>177</sup> *American Issue*, February 1, 1901, Pg. 1.

the bill's legislation.<sup>178</sup> The ability to draft legislation appeared to be the chief resource brought by the League, a skill that would become increasingly important as the fight against saloons waged on. The *St. Louis Christian Advocate* wrote "Undoubtedly no institution with the exception of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, deserves more credit for the enactment of the anti-canteen law by the fifty-sixth congress than the Anti-Saloon League." In response to this reprinted story, League editors humorously penned "This must be a mistake, for, according to high authority, the League's an impediment to true temperance."<sup>179</sup>

In February of 1901, the *American Issue* reported on the WCTU's national convention and the ongoing work of their thirty-six departments. The *American Issue* summarized an array of reforms the Union had successfully brought during the year including the national prohibition of army canteens, Ohio's scientific temperance bill, and age of consent laws enacted by several states. *American Issue* editors concluded by saying, "This is a magnificent report. The American Anti-Saloon League, the younger brother of the WCTU, reaches out the hand of congratulation, and thanks God and takes courage from the victories of this great army of good women."<sup>180</sup>

### ***Free Ice Cream and Bodyguards***

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union was largely restricted to "mitigating the ugly effects of drunkenness, to attempts to reform the drunkard, to clothing his wife and children, and to attacking drunkenness in general."<sup>181</sup> Unlike the ASL which could more directly pursue political and legal avenues, the influence of WCTU members was naturally limited by the restricted power of American women during this time. Numerous *American Issue* reports

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<sup>178</sup> *American Issue*, February 1, 1901, Pg. 1.

<sup>179</sup> *American Issue*, December 27, 1901, Pg. 5.

<sup>180</sup> *American Issue*, February 22, 1901, Pg. 2.

<sup>181</sup> *American Issue*, November 23, 1900, Pg. 4.

indicate petition and pledge signing as a primary activity of temperance women throughout the nation.<sup>182</sup> While these efforts certainly contributed to many of the WCTU's successes, some even on the national level such as the anti-canteen bill, they were not enough to systematically remove saloons across the United States.

WCTU members were quite cognizant of the limitations society placed on them. Nevertheless, the *Union Signal* declared that "While the WCTU stands for nothing short of total prohibition, we rejoice in every movement intended to give the people an opportunity to crush out the liquor business."<sup>183</sup> In this spirit, the WCTU pursued creative strategies to support the temperance cause, such as creating "temperance saloons" in which WCTU sisters provided non-alcoholic refreshments.<sup>184</sup> In April 1901, ASL reporters relayed a story of WCTU women organizing a protest against the use of wine to christen and launch the battleship *Ohio*.<sup>185</sup> At times, the WCTU made its presence known through more dramatic acts. In Nebraska, temperance leader and pastor Dr. C. M. Shepherd was reportedly attacked by a mob between one and two thousand men after attempts were made to close saloons and abolish baseball on Sunday. "With his heart full of love to God and man and inspired by the consciousness of standing for the right, he refused to be curtailed in his movements and his plucky wife bade him go where duty called." WCTU women offered him protection with their own bodies, surrounding Shepherd as he walked to and from revival meetings. The *American Issue* celebrated the women saying, "True courage and bravery are not dead yet, for it has taken less courage to face a cannon's

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<sup>182</sup> For other stories covering women's pledges and petitions see the following of the *American Issue*: October 1900, Pg. 3; October 1900, Pg. 13; October 1900, Pg. 14; February 28, 1902, Pg. 6.

<sup>183</sup> *American Issue*, May 3, 1901, Pg. 5.

<sup>184</sup> *American Issue*, January 25, 1902, Pg. 1. Other instances of female temperance workers providing substitutes for saloons can be found in the following issues of the *American Issue*: December 20, 1901, Pg. 6; July 31, 1903, Pg. 6;

<sup>185</sup> *American Issue*, April 12, 1901, Pg. 4.



mouth on the field of battle than to face these howling mobs of saloonatics in this intensely foreign-populated city.”<sup>186</sup>

However, other stories by the *American Issue*, perhaps not entirely accidentally, portray female temperance workers in more servient positions. In July 1901, the *American Issue* thanked the Columbus WCTU for providing a “hoghead of clear, cold water” at the Republican State convention with the hope that delegates would then abstain from imbibing in nearby rum holes. “The thoughtfulness of these women is worthy of all praise.”<sup>187</sup> The following month, the League’s paper reported that in support of an ongoing temperance revival in Litchfield, Illinois, WCTU women had begun to serve ice-cream and lemonade at a park to attract people away from saloons.<sup>188</sup> Some of the most notable instances of WCTU members serving food in support of temperance occur during local option elections, in which they themselves could not vote in most states.<sup>189</sup> In fact, the sixth and final step reported under a 1902 headline “How to Vote Out Saloons” stated, “...bring the infirm and indifferent to the polls in conveyances, and let the WCTU have free lunch at the polls, and endeavor to persuade all to vote against saloons.”<sup>190</sup> To a certain degree, female temperance workers were relegated to the grunt work of the movement. One *American Issue* story reported that Methodist pastor Rev. E.E. McLaughlin of Mt. Blanchard had been targeted by frustrated rascallions after the town voted to go dry. “The

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<sup>186</sup> *American Issue*, October 31, 19102, Pg. 6.

<sup>187</sup> *American Issue*, July 12, 1901, Pg. 2.

<sup>188</sup> *American Issue*, August 23, 1901, Pg. 7; other instances of female temperance workers serving food during temperance gatherings can be found in the following issues of the *American Issue*: August 22, 1902, Pg. 5; August 21, 1903, Pg. 9;

<sup>189</sup> For another story highlighting WCTU women serving food during election days see the following of the *American Issue*: May 1900, Pg. 10.

<sup>190</sup> *American Issue*, July 4, 1902, Pg. 7.

WCTU and temperance women proceeded in a body to the parsonage with brooms and buckets and removed the egg stains from the building.”<sup>191</sup>

### *Little Brother’s All Grown Up*

Another pattern of stories from the *American Issue* started to reveal changing dynamics within the temperance landscape. In a temporal sense, the Anti-Saloon League would always be the “younger brother” of the WCTU, but it was quickly growing up. As it expanded and gained experiences, the ASL was increasingly looked to for support by the WCTU. This is particularly evident when examining the Union’s distribution of temperance literature in communities, one of its primary missions. The *American Issue*’s coverage on this work often pointed out that the literature being distributed by the WCTU was originally printed and supplied by the ASL. One report claimed that “many of the WCTU’s desire to circulate literature, but are too poor to purchase.”<sup>192</sup>

However, the ASL was much more than a leaflet supplier. In May 1901, the *American Issue* released a statement describing the purpose of state-level Anti-Saloon Leagues which included aiding in local option contests, furnishing literature to the WCTU, coordinating private detective services to gather evidence against illegal liquor sellers, supplying and paying for League attorneys to prosecute local cases, and campaigning for dry legislators.<sup>193</sup> By focusing on these more practical and direct methods of attacking saloons, the Anti-Saloon League began to distinguish itself from the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. WCTU members recognized the fundamental differences that were becoming more apparent between these two

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<sup>191</sup> *American Issue*, May 23, 1902, Pg. 1.

<sup>192</sup> *American Issue*, June 1900, Pg. 15. For other stories covering the WCTU’s distribution of temperance literature, furnished by the ASL, see the following of the *American Issue*: July 1900, Pg. 2; September 6, 1901, Pg. 1; May 31, 1901, Pg. 1.

<sup>193</sup> *American Issue*, May 31, 1901, Pg. 1

dry armies – one formed entirely by males, the other by females. The *American Issue* summarized a speech given by Ellen J. Phinney, Secretary of the national WCTU, in which she said, “The Anti-Saloon League have taken up legislative work, which has been relinquished into their hands by the women.”<sup>194</sup> An *American Issue* editorial from 1900 put it more bluntly: “Let the WCTU go on with their instruction of the children, and the various branches of the Anti-Saloon League move ahead with local option and law enforcement work.”<sup>195</sup> The ASL had amassed enough experience in the first decade of the organizations’ existence to be bolder and more confident of its strategies. According to the *Christian Advocate*, “If the Church is to conquer the foe in the fight – and be assured, as God is God, it will – it will be by substantially the organization and methods of the Anti-Saloon League.”<sup>196</sup>

### *All Work, No Play, and Few Votes*

Although they continued to work without it, temperance women had long ached for the right to vote. In the eyes of many, women were seen as the chief underserving victims of the saloons. Domestic violence as well as poverty were largely attributed to drunkenness. Many temperance supporters, particularly those in the Anti-Saloon League, believed this was irremediable so long as saloons existed and ate up men’s paychecks. Drying communities through local option elections, the League’s preferred strategy, required dry votes. However, prior to the twentieth century, full suffrage for women only existed in the states of Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho. This score went unchanged for another decade until, in 1910, Washington gave its women the right to vote. The linkage between questions surrounding

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<sup>194</sup> *American Issue*, December 9, 1902, Pg. 11.

<sup>195</sup> *American Issue*, July 1900, Pg. 13.

<sup>196</sup> *American Issue*, April 1900, Pg. 15.

saloons and women's suffrage had existed for quite some time. In 1852, Susan B. Anthony asserted at a temperance meeting that "woman's temperance sentiments were not truthfully represented by man at the Ballot Box."<sup>197</sup> In 1881, the WCTU officially endorsed women's suffrage. While some exceptions existed, most of the WCTU members supported this favorably.<sup>198</sup> Entering the twentieth century, in addition to speaking out against saloons, more and more women began speaking out in want of their suffrage. Connections between the two fights only intensified as time dragged on and progress across both fronts accumulated.

### *The First Officially Unofficial Endorsement*

One of the first instances that the *American Issue* even touched the topic of women's voting rights, or lack thereof, was quite peculiar. In 1902, an editorial stated that "while the women reformers have not yet secured the suffrage, they have more than made up for it by their success in temperance reform work." A later part of the piece said:

It may be a question whether woman is not more influential by means of indirect than by direct agencies. But, personally, we favor giving women the ballot, and especially should she have it regarding the liquor question. However, the Anti-Saloon League never has made – and probably, from its organization, never will make – a pronouncement upon the matter.<sup>199</sup>

Then, as quickly as the topic had surfaced, it was dropped. The *American Issue* continued to report on WCTU activities in 1903 such as "giving commendable attention to temperance work among colored people" and its petition for an Anti-Cigarette Bill.<sup>200</sup> However, no further explicit references to the women's suffrage question would occur. *American Issue* readers, temperance

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<sup>197</sup> Fletcher. Pg. 40.

<sup>198</sup> In 1889, a small group of members left the WCTU and formed an alternative organization focused on non-political temperance work. Many of these women were southerners, living in a region where, according to Tennessean woman, "the prejudices of the Southern people are all against women doing anything in public."

<sup>199</sup> *American Issue*, July 11, 1902, Pg. 2.

<sup>200</sup> *American Issue*, March 27, 1903, Pg. 8 and May 1, 1903, Pg. 4.

workers, and suffragists alike were left in the dark. The newsroom of the Anti-Saloon League had cautiously given their personal endorsement, but the silence from the organization's headquarters remained deafening.

### ***The Bright Side of 1904***

The term "suffrage" appeared roughly a dozen times in the pages of the *American Issue* between 1900 and 1903. Except for the editors' officially unofficial endorsement appearing in 1902, virtually all of these were used to describe votes in a general sense and in no way regarding women.<sup>201</sup> In 1904 alone, "suffrage" appeared 17 times, almost all referring specifically to women's suffrage. As if they had suddenly learned of the women's suffrage movement, *American Issue* editors began to print more forceful stories that painted the League as a supportive friend of women while also consistently reminding readers that wet forces were oftentimes the most vocal opponents of female suffrage.

An August report on the state of Idaho indicated growing temperance sentiment and, consequently, the entrance of the Anti-Saloon League there. It also described the enfranchised women of Idaho as particular assets of the dry cause. The League had lined up a legislative fight to secure the nomination and election of candidates who would support a local option bill in the following legislature. "With the advantage of woman's suffrage it is hoped that victory will be

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<sup>201</sup> One such instance occurred in the *American Issue* in July 1900, Pg. 6, when a story printed "suffrages of the Christian men."

achieved.”<sup>202</sup> In December, the *American Issue* reiterated this sentiment claiming that “with the help of woman suffrage, victory is anticipated.”<sup>203</sup>

In 1904 the *American Issue* began providing coverage on women’s suffrage movements occurring overseas, a topic that would only increase in following years. In July, readers learned from a reprint that New Zealand had successfully ridded itself of saloons in one-third of its counties through local option elections. They also learned that New Zealand women had equal voting privileges with those of men. The story concluded with a section titled “Comments by The Issue Editor” part of which said “That women vote, at least on this question, is another valuable aid in solving the saloon problem. Why should they not, here in America, as guardians of family life? It needs not that we commit ourselves wholly to universal female suffrage when we advocate that women vote on the drink question.”<sup>204</sup> It appears that 1904 also marked the first time in which the *American Issue* reported on official American suffragists activities. In September, a brief was printed that brought news of the dates, location, and speakers of the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Convention of the Ohio Woman Suffrage Association.<sup>205</sup>

### ***The Dark Side of 1904***

Although 1904 marked a clear turning point in which the *American Issue* began providing more focused coverage on women’s suffrage, particularly in ways that favorably distinguished the Anti-Saloon League from the saloon interests, it also revealed the reality that the League was not a perfect supporter of the opposite sex and perhaps merely supported the

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<sup>202</sup> *American Issue*, August 12, 1904, Pg. 3.

<sup>203</sup> *American Issue*, December 9, 1904, Pg. 3.

<sup>204</sup> *American Issue*, July 29, 1904, Pg. 7.

<sup>205</sup> *American Issue*, September 23, 1903, Pg. 10.

movement cautiously through a self-serving view. Hints of residual organizational self-consciousness and envy remained which caused the League to discredit the WCTU.

Despite previously praising the WCTU's leadership in the fight to remove army canteens, the ASL forcefully backtracked when it objected to wets' assessment of the bill's success. In January, the *American Issue* reprinted and responded to two different pieces from *The South West*, a Cincinnati liquor organ, airing complaints of the canteen bill's passage. The first described the WCTU as being "misguided women" who had "accomplished more evil and brought about more distress than any band of fanatics ever corralled." Instead of standing with the WCTU and merely using this as an example of wets' opposition to female temperance work, the *American Issue* responded by saying:

It is a common liquor trick to credit the anti-beer canteen to the WCTU. The facts are that the Anti-Saloon League, the Reform Bureau, the Prohibition party, and tens of thousands of temperance voters aided, without whom the women would have been powerless. It is supposed to belittle the act by charging it to women.<sup>206</sup>

In response to the second piece from *The South West*, which gifted similar insults to WCTU women, the *American Issue* wrote, "The women did not lead the anti-beer canteen battle: they did not furnish the votes that back up the leadership. They co-operated to the extent of their power, for which, honor to them. It is simply an attempt to discredit the work to attribute it to the WCTU alone."<sup>207</sup> Both editorial remarks by the *American Issue* highlight the reality that, despite attempts to appear in complete harmony with the WCTU and as champions of women, the ASL viewed its own members as superior, largely due to their ability of casting votes for the dry column.

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<sup>206</sup> *American Issue*, January 1, 1904, Pg. 9.

<sup>207</sup> *American Issue*, January 15, 1904, Pg. 9.

In June, the *American Issue* revealed even more misogynistic views through its review of a new book. The book's main argument was that women should have free access to all types of employment and that the "economic dependence of women is the bottom cause of the exaggeration and perversion of sex, and of the social evil in its various aspects." Given the ASL's hopes of characterizing itself not only as being reform-oriented but as an ally of women in general, the *American Issue*'s review is rather surprising. "With the main proposition of the book we are not at all in accord. Women are already admitted to all forms of work and business freely." It went further, "Some of the most enlightened female leaders in thought at the present day are sounding the note of alarm to the effect that the entrance of women upon business, as a rule, has demonstrated itself to be an almost unmixed calamity." This sheds light on other statements of the *American Issue*, such as "We are glad to say that the WCTU everywhere is one of the main aids of the Anti-Saloon League, doing a great amount of detail temperance work that men will not do."<sup>208</sup> ASL men seemed to be quite willing to deny women the more formal, business-like aspects of temperance work while also posturing as allies of them and benefitting from their general temperance support. Of course, the ASL was also perfectly willing to utilize well-established tropes in their own arguments for prohibition. According to Okrent, "The images Home Protection evoked (and that its propagandists used shamelessly) were the weeping mother, the children in threadbare clothes, the banker at the door with repossession papers."<sup>209</sup> This conflicting pattern of interaction with women continued in following years. It was made even further evident as the ASL continued to double down and insist on offering only the approval of women's suffrage to fight the liquor interests.

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<sup>208</sup> *American Issue*, April 18, 1902, Pg. 1.

<sup>209</sup> Okrent, *Last Call*, Pg. 18.



### *An Unpolitical Vote*

Could Christians vote in support of saloons? According to the *American Issue* – absolutely not. That is, not unless churches were “utterly astray in the interpretation of Christian duty.”<sup>210</sup> Should women be allowed to vote? According to the *American Issue* – it depends. In 1902, *American Issue* editors had questioned “whether woman is not more influential by means of indirect than by direct agencies” and claimed readers should expect an indefinite silence from the official organization on the topic.<sup>211</sup> In 1904, the League’s paper had broadly declared itself “on the side of the women. We vote for the women.”<sup>212</sup>

The following year, readers were given an update on the continuing temperance fight in Idaho. Again, it highlighted the League’s hopeful anticipation that not only would a local option bill be successfully introduced in the upcoming legislature, but that it would predominantly be due to Idaho’s enfranchised women. “Women suffrage being the law of the state, the strong endorsements of the WCTU wherever the work has been presented means more than a mere sentiment. The women of Idaho...will wield a mighty influence in the legislature.”<sup>213</sup>

Another story at the end of the year brought news of “beneficial results of woman’s suffrage” in Colorado. The *American Issue* credited the election of dry officials there to women’s suffrage. “It may be noted that one result of woman suffrage, which has now obtained in Colorado for twelve years is to put into municipal office in the cities generally men of decidedly better moral quality.” It continued by claiming that “in the ten years since women have voted, there had not been one saloon-keeper on the council in Colorado City, and that the same thing

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<sup>210</sup> *American Issue*, March 17, 1905, Pg. 15.

<sup>211</sup> *American Issue*, July 11, 1902, Pg. 2.

<sup>212</sup> *American Issue*, April 8, 1904, Pg. 14.

<sup>213</sup> *American Issue*, January 6, 1905, Pg. 14.

was true of Pueblo, a city of 40,000 people.”<sup>214</sup> The League was convinced that, at least from this early anecdotal evidence, women who received the right to vote would largely use it further support the temperance movement.

However, two small pieces of the *American Issue* that same year indicated that the League was still far from endorsing a total suffrage for women like that already enjoyed by the female citizens in Idaho and Colorado. Instead, the ASL cleverly supported giving women just enough rights to transform them into more effective assets in the fight against saloons. The *American Issue* declared that “While the League is not conducting a woman’s suffrage campaign,” it was the belief of the newspaper that “in such a question as that of local option the women are sufficiently interested and sufficiently affected by the result, so that they might with propriety be granted a voice.”<sup>215</sup> In July, *American Issue* editors reiterated their own stance by reprinting a story from Ohio’s *Cumberland Echo* under the headline “Women Ought to Be Able to Vote Against Saloons.” This original piece gave early reports that the next legislature in Ohio would “in all probability have to deal with the woman’s suffrage question.” This was due to a “movement throughout the state in that direction, especially in WCTU circles.” *Cumberland Echo* editors concluded the story by saying “We believe the women should have this privilege, for not interest suffers so greatly from the saloon as does the home. Further than that, we believe they will get it, providing Ohio does not have a Governor who ‘stands pat’ with the saloon...”<sup>216</sup>

If the League and other dries can be seen as clever in their desultory endorsement of women’s suffrage solely for local option elections, the WCTU should be described as genius for its willingness to restrict early discussions of their suffrage to temperance issues. This provided a

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<sup>214</sup> *American Issue*, December 22, 1905, Pg. 5

<sup>215</sup> *American Issue*, May 5, 1905, Pg. 13.

<sup>216</sup> *American Issue*, July 7, 1905, Pg. 15.

“foot in the door” which could only open wider as both movements progressed in tandem. On December 22, 1905, the *American Issue* reprinted a letter to its editor signed by Viola D.

Romans, Superintendent of the Legislative Department of the WCTU:

We beg to call your attention and the attention of your readers, through your columns, to “A Bill to Secure to Woman the Right to Vote at Local Option Elections,” which will be presented to the Ohio Legislature this winter. It seems to us that no more reasonable request could be made a Legislature than that it should give to its adult womanhood the right to be heard at the ballot box upon the great question that so closely concerns her – as to whether saloons shall exist in her community or not...Please call attention to the importance of this measure as a temperance one...We ask the earnest and active co-operation of all temperance societies and organs throughout the state.<sup>217</sup>

The *American Issue* followed by providing a formal response to the letter with an even more forceful endorsement than had previously been given. It also offered the first glimpse into the beliefs of Anti-Saloon League men more generally:

It is now to be clearly marked that this is not a bill for woman’s suffrage in the ordinary sense of that term. It does not invade the field of political action in the accepted partisan sense of the word – it is not politics at all... While the official endorsement of the Anti-Saloon League is not given to this bill, yet, a very large per cent of the constituency of the League believe most heartily, that the demand made by the women is just and reasonable and should be granted. This is very decidedly the sentiment of the editor of the Issue.<sup>218</sup>

While these remarks are, again, clearly denoted as belonging to the *American Issue* editor, it is important to reemphasize this paper was the official organ of the Anti-Saloon League.

Furthermore, the editor’s response indicates an agreement by the broader constituency of the League. It is with this continued murky and unofficial endorsement of a restricted woman’s suffrage that both the WCTU and the ASL continued the dry fight in 1906.

### ***A Most Anticipated Bill***

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<sup>217</sup> *American Issue*, December 22, 1905, Pg. 10.

<sup>218</sup> *American Issue*, December 22, 1905, Pg. 10-11.

The upcoming suffrage bill in Ohio was greatly anticipated. Perhaps the *American Issue* would have provided ongoing coverage regardless of any previous statements. However, given that it had already breached the topic, if only superficially, it had no option but to provide substantial reporting on the bill's developments. The term "suffrage" appeared in the League's paper over 100 times between January and August of 1906. In January, the *American Issue* continued to indicate cautious approval. However, most pieces which discussed women's suffrage, particularly as it related to the upcoming bill in Ohio, were reprinted from other sources.<sup>219</sup> This had the effect of downplaying total commitment while also creating further confusion as to whether the Anti-Saloon League had an official stance of its own. On January 12, the *American Issue* reprinted a piece published by the *Franklin News* on December 29, 1905:

Joe Miller will be after legislation for his clients, the brewers...In the opinion of many, nothing could be done that would help like giving the women of Ohio the right to petition for and vote at all elections held for the purpose of regulating the liquor traffic. This is a proposition that needs no argument to establish its righteousness; it is only a step in the right direction, breaking the way for the general enfranchisement of the women of the old Buckeye State...Place the ballot in the hands of the women and cleaner methods will prevail, as their well known tenderness for cleaning things need not be mentioned.<sup>220</sup>

A reprint from the *Western Christian Advocate*, originally published on December 27, 1905, in part stated:

What, then, is that next important step? We answer unhesitatingly, arm women with a specific ballot! Women are now entitled to vote at school elections, and they have exercised this privilege with credit to themselves and for the good of the state... We are not advocating here and now general and unlimited suffrage for women. We do not commit ourselves to any opposition to any possible Sixteenth Amendment of the future. But we recognize that that is a more complicated proposition, and that serious and valid arguments can be presented against as well as for it.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> A selection of these can be found in the following issues of the *American Issue*: February 2, 1906, Pg. 16; February 9, 1906, Pg. 12.

<sup>220</sup> *American Issue*, January 12, 1906, Pg. 4.

<sup>221</sup> *American Issue*, January 26, 1906, Pg. 6.

This reprint featured in the *American Issue* was uniquely significant. At the end of the original piece, *Western Christian Advocate* editors included a petition, encouraging church societies, missionary organizations, and women's clubs to sign and mail it to the General Assembly of Ohio. Given that this entire piece was reprinted in the *American Issue* newspaper, it appears that the League was once again hinting at a desire for individual members of the ASL to lend their support this suffrage bill, even if the organization would not officially do so itself.

Even without a formal endorsement, the League was determined to contrast itself with wets on this subject. On February 9, the *American Issue* published an original piece denouncing Harry Thompson, an attorney "for the liquor people," for attacking the bill before the House Committee of the General Assembly. It reported him arguing that "the chivalry of men was sufficient to take care of women properly," as well as accusing the bill of being unconstitutional and its true purpose of being to "undermine the home and break down social institutions founded upon the home." Thompson's "flimsy arguments" were refuted by representatives of the WCTU who were present, and the Committee voted in favor of the bill's passage.<sup>222</sup>

Four days later, the hopeful optimism of many Ohio citizens was flattened. On February 13, 1906, the Woman's Local Option Suffrage bill was defeated in the Ohio House of Representatives by a vote of 50 to 65. The *American Issue* reported this on February 23, in which it claimed, "The Issue has done what it could editorially to promote the passage of this bill." It maintained that many of the League's members, as well as many temperance members of the Legislature, had supported it. However, even some members of the Legislature who were favorable to temperance could not disassociate the idea of woman's local option suffrage with that of a complete woman's suffrage. "Their convictions against the latter carried them into a

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<sup>222</sup> *American Issue*, February 9, 1906, Pg. 2.

vote against the former. We think that the distinction between the two is broad and clear, and if the people of the state generally can be convinced that it is, legislators will accede to this preponderance of popular opinion and enact such as law at a future date.”<sup>223</sup>

### ***Sobering Realizations***

Evidence shows that many contemporaries remained confused as to whether the League had supported the bill officially. In fact, with the month of March came several reports that the defeat of the Woman’s Local Option Suffrage bill was caused by “treachery on the part of the Anti-Saloon League.” The *American Issue* reprinted these claims and forcefully refuted them stating, “We brand them as unqualifiedly and malignantly false.”<sup>224</sup> Bold accusations claiming that the ASL had not supported the bill for fear that by “closing all the saloons the League would be put out of business” were by the *American Issue* with its typical sneering sarcasm and conveniently used as evidence that wets in general were “falsifiers.”<sup>225</sup>

The ASL charged these criticisms as being fomented by the wet “enemies of both the League and the WCTU” It countered with the evidence of its own prior pages claiming, “The Issue printed everything in favor of the bill offered us, and wrote for it editorially. The officers of the League personally aided the bill all they could. No responsible officer of the WCTU will say that the League was unfriendly to it.”<sup>226</sup> This not only signals a suspicion by some over what truly occurred behind closed doors, but by referencing the women’s organization by name in its

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<sup>223</sup> *American Issue*, February 23, 1906, Pg. 9.

<sup>224</sup> *American Issue*, March 2, 1906, Pg. 8.

<sup>225</sup> *American Issue*, March 16, 1906, Pgs. 5-8. Similar piece can be found in the following: March 23, 1906, Pgs. 6-7; March 30, 1906, Pg. 5;

<sup>226</sup> *American Issue*, March 2, 1906, Pg. 8.

response, it seems to suggest that even some members of the WCTU may have had doubts as to whether League men were genuine allies.

Official reporting from other dry newspapers confirmed ongoing confusion and the plausible reality that the ASL had not done enough. On March 16, under the headline “Partly Truth and Partly Error,” the *American Issue* reprinted a piece from a dry ally and “esteemed contemporary” newspaper, the *Religious Telescope*. The original piece offered its own report of the bill’s defeat and said, “Of course, the fact that the bill was not endorsed by the Anti-Saloon League may have seemed to them a sufficient reason why they should not support it with their votes; but it was no reason why they should vote against it.” It continued by stating the bill had been brought forth by the WCTU and that the ASL “did not endorse the bill because they held that it would be futile to give the women the power to vote down the saloon business, so long as they have not the power to help elect officers who will enforce the law.”<sup>227</sup>

The *American Issue* responded by saying “We hold no such doctrine... Upon the contrary, so far as we know, every officer of the League personally favors women voting on the elections and we withheld an official support of it only because of the evident differences among temperance people themselves upon the proposition.”<sup>228</sup> Of course, this awkward situation was in part due to the ASL’s nonpartisan approach. Building temperance support across party lines required the League to be wary of offending the more conservative members of its base. The newspaper continued its damage control a few pages later by reprinting a statement from officers of Ohio’s WCTU:

In view of the persistent efforts to make it appear that the relations of the Anti-Saloon League and the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union of Ohio are unfriendly, we desire to say that the officers of the Anti-Saloon League gave valuable assistance to the

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<sup>227</sup> *American Issue*, March 16, 1906, Pg. 4.

<sup>228</sup> *American Issue*, March 16, 1906, Pg. 4.

Woman's Local Option Suffrage bill, and the *American Issue*, organ of the League, gave the bill, and favorable comments on the bill, much space, and we do not hold them responsible for its defeat; on the contrary, our relations with them are entirely friendly and satisfactory.<sup>229</sup>

Despite the rain of accusations, the Anti-Saloon League walked away relatively unscathed. It evidently had not lost the support of its chief ally, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which had been devastated by the bill's defeat. Sticking to its usual playbook, the *American Issue* chalked up any negative publicity to merely the attempts of wet to "get the divisions of a great temperance army to cross firing."<sup>230</sup> Amidst the widespread confusion of this episode, the Anti-Saloon League made three sobering realizations. The women's suffrage "question" was here to stay, the *American Issue* itself reporting that "agitation on this subject will go on, notwithstanding the temporary defeat."<sup>231</sup> A strategic linkage between the fight for woman's suffrage and the fight against saloons had been undeniably forged, in part through the League's own publications. In the future, the Anti-Saloon League could not afford to "straddle" the issue so delicately as it had in this instance. More coverage, clearer endorsements, and stronger support would be expected of and advantageous to the Anti-Saloon League's goal of abolishing America's saloons.

### ***Resolved***

Following the defeat of the Woman's Local Option Suffrage bill in Ohio, three notable pieces occurred in the League's paper during the remaining months of 1906. The fifth page of the July 20, 1906, edition of the *American Issue* provided a comprehensive analysis of women's suffrage around the entire world, including the United States. In the reports' introduction, League

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<sup>229</sup> *American Issue*, March 16, 1906, Pg. 8.

<sup>230</sup> *American Issue*, April 13, 1906, Pg. 5.

<sup>231</sup> *American Issue*, March 9, 1906, Pg. 4.



editors reemphasized that the Ohio bill's defeat was "greatly to the regret of the Anti-Saloon League officers, who did what they could to promote it," and again stressed the importance of giving women the "right to protect [their] family." Notwithstanding the few, brief references it had made previously, the *American Issue* had yet to cover women's suffrage as a movement in the way it did in this piece. "It is worth while in this connection to give some record of the progress of woman's suffrage ideas in the world at large. It has seemed that the enfranchisement of woman is a rising tide in society."<sup>232</sup>

It followed by listing an index of women's suffrage milestones occurring in 32 distinct years beginning in 1838, when Kentucky gave widows with schoolchildren the "school suffrage" and ending in 1905, when the territory of Oklahoma gave women in cities the school suffrage and the Australian states of Queensland and Victoria gave women full suffrage. In between these years, suffrage victories in places such as Iceland, Nova Scotia, and Ireland were listed. The monumental suffrage milestones of American states were recorded as well. Besides its brief introduction, the *American Issue* offered no further remarks, but the gesture was significant. Women around the world, not just in the United States, were successfully fighting for their right to vote. Furthermore, it highlighted the encouraging fact that once women were granted the right to vote in municipal or school board elections, full suffrage often followed in later years.<sup>233</sup>

The fifth and sixth pages of the November 23, 1906, edition of the *American Issue* were dedicated to reprinting an address given by Mrs. Lillian Burt of the Ohio WCTU at the Ohio Anti-Saloon League Convention. In it, she unleashed a decades' worth of frustration over

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<sup>232</sup> *American Issue*, July 20, 1906, Pg. 8.

<sup>233</sup> *American Issue*, July 20, 1906, Pg. 8.

women's limited abilities to support the temperance cause and demanded firmer support from the Anti-Saloon League:

...Let us look it squarely in the face. We have a great foreign population – men who are born with generations of alcoholic appetite, who have come to us from old continental countries to work here...Men, you have done your best in many localities to convince the majority of voters that we are right. In many places you have succeeded; in many places you have failed. You need the help of the women...I have come to offer to you, to-day, the support of 17,000 women... I do not think we ever gained very much by serving coffee and wearing buttons... We hope and pray most earnestly one thing more. We are not asking for this measure as a suffrage measure. It is not for full suffrage we are asking; that is another question...It is useless for you to think you can win this victory alone against saloon votes...You have got to have the full church membership vote. That means the women's vote as well as the men's vote...I want you to go home and tell everyone that this Convention has endorsed the woman's local option bill. And, then, I want the Anti-Saloon League and Woman's Christian Temperance Union to come closer together than ever before, and we will go solidly against the liquor traffic and against the representative who dares to say that woman has no right to vote to protect her home and children.

Seven pages later, *American Issue* readers learned of the results from the Ohio Anti-Saloon League Convention held in Columbus, Ohio on November 13, 1906. Indeed, one of the eleven declarations made by the Committee on Resolutions had finally provided an official endorsement of women's right to vote in local option elections. In it, the committee said:

We recognize the merit and value of the measures championed by the Woman's Christian Temperance Union to give women the right to vote at local option elections. Without committing the League to the general proposition of Woman's Suffrage, we deem it just that the wives and mothers should have equal opportunities with the husbands and fathers to protect their homes and families against the peril of the liquor traffic, and we pledge to the WCTU our hearty co-operation in securing the passage of their measure.

As the years went on, the *American Issue* increasingly printed stories and editorials that offered support for the women's suffrage movement. Virtually all endorsements remained linked to the issue of temperance, highlighting the alleged fact that women would unquestionably support temperance legislation and the Anti-Saloon League's agenda. However, although the *American Issue's* coverage of the subject increased and intensified, this was most likely simply because the concurrent women's suffrage movement itself was gaining momentum at the

national level and demanded more vocal support. I believe that the Anti-Saloon League merely viewed the dry votes it could obtain through an expanded women's suffrage as part of its broader voting "score," from which the League's true power and influence in American politics originated from. Particularly when one considers the flippant ways in which the ASL and its publications interacted with the ongoing destruction of Black Americans' voting rights, it seems unlikely that the League, at least at an organizational level, was truly in support of women's suffrage for its own merits. Rather, the League walked a tightrope, attempting to balance its nonpartisan methods and the diverse base of supporters it had amassed while also aiming to increase the margins of dry votes. Almost certainly, alienating conservative Evangelical supporters would have been a concern for the Anti-Saloon League. The League's self-declared single-issue focus, its nonpartisan strategy, and its nationwide base of supporters explains why the ASL was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to take a firmer stance on the issue of women's suffrage.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, the once massive tidal wave of prohibition sentiment which led to the ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment dried up itself. Statistical research has shown that national prohibition did in fact decrease the consumption of alcohol in the United States. At the beginning of the “noble experiment,” consumption decreased nearly 70%. However, Americans soon found plenty of ways to quench their thirst and consumption rebounded roughly 60% to 70% of the original, pre-prohibition level. According to economists Dr. Jeffrey Miron and Dr. Jeffrey Zwiebel, “Claims either that consumption during Prohibition increased significantly or that it fell to a small fraction of previous usage can be patently rejected.”<sup>234</sup> In other words, prohibition did not change much in terms of dramatically reshaping American consumption of intoxicating beverages. Although the original goal of abolishing saloons was realized, national prohibition turned out to be impossible despite the ongoing work of the Anti-Saloon League and its involvement with national enforcement efforts.

Just why prohibition fell short of dries expectations, or in the eyes of some historians proved to be a complete failure, entails further analysis of complicated historical developments. Historians such as Daniel Okrent and Lisa McGirr provide important works for understanding the downfall of prohibition and ultimately, the only instance in American history in which a Constitutional Amendment was repealed. One factor that drove many of the same Americans who originally supported the Eighteenth Amendment to become disillusioned with prohibition was the reality that violence, crime, and vice did not decrease, but flourished during the Prohibition Era with the incredibly profitable bootleg liquor industry leading organized crime.

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<sup>234</sup> Jeffrey A. Miron and Jeffrey Zwiebel, *Alcohol Consumption During Prohibition*, NBER Working Paper Series, no. w3675 (Cambridge, Mass: National Bureau of Economic Research, 1991), Pg. 8.

The National Prohibition Act, or Volstead Act, which intended to carry out the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment proved disastrous. Despite the Anti-Saloon League continuing to grow and seize political power under prohibition, the Volstead's mandate for concurrent enforcement from both federal and local agencies significantly weakened the effectiveness of this new law. However, that is not to say violators were safe from prosecution. In fact, an explosion of prohibition arrests led to an overwhelmed American judicial system, an entirely different aspect of prohibition which led to more Americans becoming disillusioned with prohibition.

On December 5, 1933, just fourteen years after Nebraska ratified the Eighteenth Amendment, the Twenty-First Amendment was ratified and repealed the Eighteenth Amendment. As previously mentioned, this marks the only instance in which an amendment to the United States Constitution was repealed. All other amendments, including the Fifteenth Amendment and the Nineteenth Amendment remained intact and effective. However, by merely examining the publications of the Anti-Saloon League, this thesis shows that single-issue pressure groups have the power to alter even those rights protected by the Constitution. Unfortunately, this is still a reality in our nation today.

Although the Anti-Saloon League is considered by many historians to be the first official "pressure group" in the United States, this form of organization is now extensively present in American politics. There are thousands of such groups now and they are referred to by several labels – lobbyists, special interest groups, political action committees. Furthermore, for certain issues such as abortion rights, an innumerable number of organizations exist to engage in lobbying, political action, and advocacy on either side of the debate. Regarding gun rights, another polarizing issue in modern America, the National Rifle Association (NRA) has

established itself as the leading gun rights advocacy group. During 2022, the NRA spent over \$620,000 in lobbying efforts in just one quarter.<sup>235</sup> Pro-choice, pro-life, pro-gun, pro-gun control. The labels used to describe competing interest groups in these modern issues are eerily similar to the simple, binary buckets used regarding the liquor question. Voters and politicians alike were viewed as either dry or wet. The Anti-Saloon League made it incredibly clear that a less polarizing and less extreme middle-ground existed for the nation, just like many politicians, pundits, and organizations do with the most alarming issues facing our country today.

Even worse, the reshaping of the electoral landscape, once allegedly to serve the drive towards prohibition, is still ongoing. Donald Trump's loss in the 2020 presidential election and his subsequent unconfirmed accusations of voter fraud revitalized the use of voter suppression bills throughout the nation. According to the Brennan Center for Justice, a nonpartisan law and policy organization, within the first month of 2023, 150 restrictive voting bills have been pre-filed or introduced in at least 32 states.<sup>236</sup> These types of bills contain at least one provision which would make it more difficult for eligible American citizens to register to vote, remain on voting rolls, or cast their vote compared to existing state laws. Numerous studies suggest that these forms of restrictive legislation disproportionately impact voters of color.<sup>237</sup> I believe these are not unlike the wave of Southern legislation which disenfranchised Americans during the crystallization of prohibition sentiment and the rise of the Anti-Saloon League.

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<sup>235</sup> Brian Schwartz, "The National Rifle Association's Lobbying Machine Is Still Potent despite Financial Woes That Reduced Its Clout," CNBC, May 27, 2022, <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/05/27/nra-holds-convention-has-lobbying-cash-after-texas-school-shooting.html>.

<sup>236</sup> "Voting Laws Roundup: February 2023," February 22, 2023, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/voting-laws-roundup-february-2023>.

<sup>237</sup> "The Impact of Voter Suppression on Communities of Color | Brennan Center for Justice," January 10, 2022, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/impact-voter-suppression-communities-color>.

When one considers the ever-growing presence of modern media in all of its various forms, the impact that the Anti-Saloon League had on America through merely printed newspapers, books, and pamphlets becomes startling. The same types of fearmongering and polarizing tactics used by the Anti-Saloon League in the years building up to and during prohibition appear to be increasing in modern decades. The *American Issue* was merely one newspaper printed by one organization fighting for a single-issue purpose. However, its articles and editorials hold significant implications for our modern nation. The Anti-Saloon League worked to make all politics the politics of alcohol. It believed that most societal problems stemmed from the unchecked saloon industry and viewed anyone who opposed prohibition as part of the problem. Gesturing towards the disenfranchisement of certain voters and the expanding suffrage of others signals toward the ASL's belief that the ends would justify the means.

While the issue of alcohol no longer causes polarizing arguments in the United States today, similar tactics as those deployed by the Anti-Saloon League can clearly be seen in other realms such as guns and abortion rights. Unfortunately, forms of voter restriction are also still pursued and advocated for by certain interest groups and politicians. Well after America's liquor stores, saloons, and bars reopened, the same cycle of polarizing topics, single-issue groups, and attempted voter suppression remain. By better understanding the nature of powerful, single-issue pressure groups such as the Anti-Saloon League, the first of such an organization in our nation's history, we can be more alert and prepared to combat the same unfortunate developments we see in our nation today, over one hundred years after the League printed its belief that the South would need to enact "special preventives and safeguards."<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> *American Issue*, October 12, 1906, Pg. 2.





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