

The Temperance Movement in Fredonia
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*[Editor's Note: Although the Fredonia Baptist Church is often credited as the birthplace of the W. C. T. U., there is conflicting evidence about the name and origins of the group. The following article by Dr. **Shepard**, summarizes the supporting and contrary documentation found in local records. Accounts generally seem to demonstrate that the events in Fredonia in late 1873 were as significant in their statement about women's rights as they were about temperance. W. Straight, Ed.]*

One of the more significant events in Fredonia's history is the founding of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) in December 1873. However, less well known is the sequence of earlier temperance movements and associations that culminated in the WCTU. What is probably even less clear are the conditions which helped foster those efforts and what became of them.

In his *History of Chautauqua County*, Andrew **Young** summarized what it was in those earliest years of our settlement that fostered the eventual rise of temperance groups of various kinds. From pp.142-144 of his *History*: "The use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage by all classes of the community, and the direful consequences of its use, prevailed throughout the country.

"Although the evils of intemperance are still lamentably prevalent, a material change in the custom of drinking has been wrought. Good men and bad indulged in it. The whisky jug was thought an indispensable help in the harvest field, and was ever present at house-raising, log-rollings, and corn-huskings; nor was the decanter with its exhilarating contents usually wanting at social gatherings. A man meeting a friend near a tavern, invited him to the bar to 'take a drink.' A man was deemed wanting in hospitality if he did not 'treat' his visitors. A traveler stopping at a tavern to warm himself, thought it 'mean' to leave without patronizing the bar to the amount of a sixpence or a shilling. The idea had not been conceived, that both parties would have been gainers if the money had been paid for the fire, and the liquor left in the decanter. Liquor bought by the gallon, and even by the barrel, was kept in families for daily use. Seated at the breakfast table, the glass was passed round to 'give an appetite.' Bittered with some herb or drug, it was used as a 'sovereign remedy' for many of the ailments 'flesh is heir to,' and often as a preventive. It was taken because the weather was hot, and because it was cold. Liquors being kept in country stores, some merchants were wont to treat their customers, especially when they made large bills, and sometimes beforehand, to sharpen their appetite for trading. Happily most of these customs have become obsolete among the better classes of society, and, it is hoped, never to be revived.

"In nearly every town was a distillery — in some towns a number — where farmers exchanged their rye and corn for whisky, which was a common article of traffic. Merchants exchanged for it the grain received from their customers, and, after supplying the demand at home, sent the surplus to the eastern markets, after the opening of the Erie canal. Having reached its destination, a large portion of it was, by some mystic process, suddenly converted into another article, and, under a different name, bought, perhaps by the same country merchants, to supply their customers with 'a pure brandy for medicinal purposes.'

“That drunkenness, and its natural concomitants — poverty, crime, and premature deaths — were the result of the practices we have mentioned, is not surprising. The marvel is, that the opinions and habits so long prevalent, should have had the sanction of good men. The evils of intemperance became at length intolerable, and remedial measure began to be suggested and discussed.

“Further evidence of the general prevalence of liquors as a beverage among all classes, is found in the by-laws adopted by the grand jury of Chautauqua county, in June 1827 — a body of men whose duty it was to indict men for crimes, the most of which were committed under the influence of the beverage which was the principal cause of crime, and to the popular use of which these inquisitors of crime contributed the weight of their example. The subject of by-laws was referred to a committee who reported seven rules, the first two of which were as follows:

“1. That the foreman of the jury pay one bottle of brandy for the honor of his seat. 2. That the secretary also pay one bottle.”

The accuracy of this account is supported by an article which appeared in *The Fredonia Censor* of 9 April 1884. The article was signed by “R,” probably Levi **Risley**, and in the course of describing how many distilleries there were in and around Fredonia (between 1813 and 1826 there were at least eight for a population of some 3,000) he took the opportunity to discuss some of the results of that plentiful supply of whiskey.

“Some persons took whisky in exchange (as no money could be had) and took it home to drink at their fireside. Others took it out in drinks at the distillery. Whisky was a panacea for every ill. It was used when they worked; it was used when they played. It was used to warm them in cold weather; it was used to cool them in hot weather. It was offered to a neighbor when he called. It was drunk as an appetizer before breakfast. It was drunk to make a bed for their dinner. It was drunk at supper, and finally with all meals.

“It was drunk by most of the ministers of the gospel. It was drunk by the judges on the bench. It was drawn with a cord to the windows of jury rooms and drunk there. It was drunk by everybody, both high and low, and yet they thought they were not ‘dram, draming, all the while.’

“Why were not all drunkards? Many were. But one or two simple rules favored that class, viz.: a man was not considered drunk if he could sit up on the ground or if he could get home with the help of a more favored friend. Persons who could not keep a cow and jug both, thought the jug of whisky best in a large family of small children. . . . In some of these years whisky was sold on contract for 16 cts. per gallon. But the idle hours that it made was what made it so dear and ruinous financially.”

Given these two accounts of the state of things in the county and specifically in and near Fredonia, it is no wonder, then, that temperance efforts began, continued and increased here as elsewhere in the county. [*Editor’s note: According to receipts of the Fredonia Baptist Church, Nathaniel Crosby was paid partially with whiskey when he built the first meeting house for the Fredonia Baptists in 1822.*]

It is an interesting coincidence that Levi **Risley** brought his account of local distilleries up to 1826, because that is the year which saw the first national temperance effort begin in Boston on 13 February. That was the formation of The American Temperance Society which was later renamed the American Temperance Union. Local chapters were formed throughout the United States and in 1829 the first temperance association on the state level in New York was formed. *The Fredonia Censor* of 29 April gave a full report of the formation on 2 April of the State Temperance Society based “on the principles of the American Temperance Society.”

Locally the national organization also had its effect. On 26 April 1829 the Rev. Mr. **Axtell** “an agent of the American Temperance Society, delivered a discourse upon the subject [temperance] at the Presbyterian meeting house.” In 1829 that would have been on the second floor of the Fredonia Academy building, where the Village Hall now stands.

On 27 April 1829 citizens of Pomfret inspired by the Rev. **Axtell's** lecture met “at the stone school house [about at today's *40 Temple Street*].” The Rev. Mr. **Axtell** described the form the group's constitution might take and it was “adopted with a slight alteration.” The Pomfret Temperance Society officers chosen were the Rev. E. **Tucker**, President; Rev. J. **Handy**, Vice President; Austin **Smith**, Secretary; Orris **Crosby**, Philip **Wells**, Henry **Bosworth** and Noah H. **Whitcomb**, Directors.

The Chautauqua County Temperance Society was also formed in 1829, according to Young's *History* (p.144), at the Court House in Mayville and the Rev. Joy **Handy** addressed the group there on 4 July 1829 as reported in full in *The Fredonia Censor* of 15 July 1829.

The Pomfret Temperance Society met on 22 September 1830 at the Fredonia Baptist Church and agreed to put their energies into organizing similar temperance societies in all the villages and towns in the county where none as yet had formed. They were to have their next annual meeting in January 1831 in Ellery. The Chautauqua County Temperance Society met then in Stockton on 4 January 1831.

On 8 January 1834 a new group, the Friends of Temperance, met at Stephen **May's** public house at the corner of East Main and Eagle streets, today's *33 East Main Street*. Little is known of this group. There were other Friends of Temperance groups formed elsewhere but, apparently, none others earlier than the 1860s.

In the same year, 1834, the New York Female Moral Reform Society was established primarily to eliminate prostitution and fight against their male clients and seducers and to some extent the drinking that lay behind much domestic abuse. The society was very active, sending speakers to many communities. Their efforts were successful enough that they were renamed the American Female Moral Reform Society.

By 1838 there was a local group in existence. The *Censor* of 28 August 1838 announced that there would be a meeting of the Female Moral Reform Society in the lecture room of the Presbyterian Church on Friday evening next, 31 August. Mr. **Murray**, “agent of the Parent Society” was to speak.

Another group, the Fredonia Total Abstinence Society was formed in 1842. The 1840s nationally saw a slightly different temperance group come into being. That was the so-called Washingtonians. **Young's History** (p.145) describes their origins. “About the year 1840, a fresh impulse was given to the temperance cause by the efforts of men called *Washingtonians*. A number of abandoned men in the city of Baltimore, who had been wont to spend their evenings at the taverns and other haunts of the vicious and dissipated, resolved to reform, and at once became ‘teetotalers.’ They traversed a large portion of the country, lecturing to large gatherings. Drunkards in large numbers and from great distances attended; and many of them signed the pledge. . . . Although there was nothing in their principles or mode of operation to distinguish them from other temperance men, they took the name of ‘Washingtonians.’”

Young goes on to point out that the benefits of this “temperance revival” fell short of expectations for an odd reason. All earlier efforts had been made by sober, non-drinking men, very often clergymen. The Washingtonians, however, argued for abstinence by describing their behavior and that of others before they took the pledge. These accounts were dramatic and often laughable so that the earlier advocates “were chiefly superseded as lecturers, by reformed

inebriates, many of whom, though for the time abstaining from the use of intoxicating drinks, were far from having attained the character of the true reformer. Often was the pulpit surrendered, on the Sabbath, to men whose mirth-provoking stories were wholly unbecoming the place and the occasion.”

A perfect example of what **Young** was describing can be found in the pages of the *Censor* in 1844. The issue of 21 February sedately announced “A Temperance Meeting will be held on the evening of Thursday, the 22d. . . in the Presbyterian Church. Addresses may be expected from several gentlemen. Citizens generally are invited to attend. Contrast that with the announcement in the issue of 28 February: “Temperance Theatricals. Dr. **Clark**, of Rochester, has been amusing and instructing the people of Buffalo and other places, with illustrations of the progress of intemperance, from the temperate drinker to the bar-room tippler and confirmed drunkard. He attracted large audiences where he has been, and will be here in a week or so.”

Which was followed up in the issue of 6 March 1844. “Temperance Exhibition. — It will be seen by reference to an advertisement, that Dr. **Clark** will give an exhibition representing the progress of Intemperance, at the **Johnson** house [today’s *1 Park Place*] in this village, on Thursday evening, and will probably continue through the week. We doubt not the exhibition will be entertaining and useful. Mr. C. has letters from clergymen and others, highly approving of the performance, and recommending it to the support of the public. From similar exhibitions which we have witnessed, in which the danger of the *first glass* was vividly represented, we should judge that it would give general satisfaction to the friends of temperance.”

In the next column is the lengthy advertisement headed “Moral & Temperance EXHIBITION!” The announcement begins “DR. **CLARK** & ASSOCIATES Having arrived in this place, will have the honor of appearing in a Dramatic representation of the REFORMED DRUNKARD, expressly written for this Exhibition, and designed by practical proofs to aid the cause of Washingtonian Temperance. The Exhibition is wholly devoid of objectionable language, and appeals directly to the feelings and sympathies of our fellow citizens, who desire the downfall of Alcohol. . . . The Exhibition blends amusement with valuable instruction. . . .” This is followed by testimonials signed by the Rev. Wm. H. **Beecher** and other worthies of Batavia, NY with an added reassuring note by Horace U. **Soper**, Esq. of Batavia “that Dr. **Clark’s** Company are practically all Teetotallers.”

Temperance activities of various kinds continued. Mr. R. **Crandall** was to deliver a lecture on the subject at the Methodist Chapel on 15 March 1846 according to the *Censor* of 10 March. And in the same issue was an advertisement by John M. **VanKleek**, who had his grocery at today’s *2 West Main Street*, pointing out that “by the side of his general stock of groceries, no RUM is to be found,” and that “his is the only Temperance Grocery in this village; is this not worth another consideration before purchasing your goods elsewhere?”

The *Censor* of 17 March announced that on the previous Wednesday, 11 March, a Sons of Temperance group was established in the village. This order had its beginnings in New York City in 1842. It was a secret, fraternal order, Masonic-like but dedicated to promoting temperance. It was aimed at working men and included insurance for the “brothers” and coverage of burial costs. On 11 March 1846 representatives of the Erie District and others from the Lake Erie Division of Buffalo met in Fredonia and organized the Chautauque Division, No.123. The original membership of this Division was 12 with 17 more initiated later.

For the quarter beginning in March, the officers chosen were:

Dr. A. **Hall**, P.W.P. [Past Worthy Patriarch] pro tem

A. F. **Taylor**, W.P.
 D. **Penfield**, W.A. [Worthy Associate]
 M. **Frisbee**, R.S. [Recording Scribe]
 Salmon **Clark**, A.R.S. [Associate Recording Scribe]
 H. N. **Marsh**, F.S. [[Financial Scribe]
 R. W. **Mason**, T. [Treasurer]
 D. **Tucker**, C. [Conductor]
 A. **Ward**, A.C. [Associate Conductor]
 Z. **Judd**, I.S. [Inside Sentinel]
 L. M. **Carlisle**, O.S. [Outside Sentinel]

Another aspect of the temperance issue arose at this time and would reappear later. That was the issue of “License” or “No License.” Local Boards of Excise were empowered to grant — or refuse — an annual license permitting the sale of alcohol in some form or other. For example, such a license, by the Commissioners of Excise of Pomfret was issued on 14 May 1822 to James E. **Holly**, grocer, “to sell by retail any strong or spirituous liquors under five gallons (provided the same be not drank in any house, outhouse yard or garden of the said James E. **Holly**). . . .” The Commissioners signing were Leverett **Barker**, Supervisor; John **Walker**, Thomas **Bull** and Joel **Brigham**, all J.P.s. (The original document is in the Benjamin **Walworth** papers in the Rare Book Room of the Buffalo and Erie Public Library.)

When the Village of Fredonia was incorporated in 1829, one of the sections of the charter vested the power to grant licenses in the Village Trustees who could act as a Board of Excise. (The cost of the license provided additional revenue to the village.) In April 1847, for example, licenses were granted to **Stevens & Cotton** (the **Johnson** House Hotel); Elias **Wheeler** (Pavilion Hotel); S. **White & Son** and C. **Burrill** (drugstores); and **Bard & Palmer** (grocery). This did not include grocer **VanKleek** of the no-Rum advertisement.

The Sons of Temperance held 4th of July celebrations in the village. However, because they were a secret society, little is known of their other activities. The *Censor* of 23 March 1852 reported that the “annual meeting of the Grand Division of the State of New York, will take place in this village on the 27th of April” so the local group must have been significant enough to host this state-wide event. The *Censor* added “we understand the order is quite prosperous here at present” and that “A Division of Cadets of Temperance is soon to be organized in this village.”

On 5 April 1852 the Canadawa Division No.416 of the Sons of Temperance was instituted in the village. The officers were E. W. **Tracy**, W.P.; G. C. **Lester**, W.A.; J. A. **McNall**, R.S.; J. R. **Madison**, A.R.S.; C. P. **Adams**, F.S.; L. E. **Whitcomb**, Treas.; H. **Bosworth**, Jr., C.; H.T. **Havens**, A.C.; G. **Shelley**, I.S.; T. **Marshall**, O.S.; and A. E. **Cherry**, P.W.P. They were to meet every Saturday evening at the Hall of “Chautauque Division No.123,” third floor of the Woleben Block, about at 45-47 *West Main Street*.

The Cadets of Temperance, constituting a “Fredonia Section,” met every Tuesday evening at the same place. It was made up of some 40 members, young men between 12 and 18 years of age who pledged to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and profanity. Their officers were L. A. **Barmore**, W.A.; C. T. **Crane**, W.A.; G. E. **Barden**, Sec.; C. N. **Perkins**, Ass’t Sec.; D. **Bebee**, Treas.; M. D. **Woodford**, Ass’t. Treas.; D. P. **Clark**, A. Guide; J. C. **Lester**, Usher; D. **Green**, Watchman; G. **Wheeler**, Jr. Watchman; C. B. **Woodruff**, Past W.A.; A. S. **Moss**, W.P.;

and J. W. **Lowe**, W.C. All of this was reported in the *Censor* of 20 April 1852 copied from the *Fredonia Advertiser*.

On 27 and 28 April the “Quarterly Session of the Grand Division of Sons of Temperance of Western New-York” met at their hall and the events were reported in some detail in the *Censor* of 4 May 1852. About 175 members and Past Worthy Patriarchs attended. Ninety-nine of them were initiated into the Grand Division. That was on Tuesday. On Wednesday all members of the Grand Division, the local groups (“subordinate divisions”) and two sections of Cadets formed a procession of between 500 and 600 men and boys “in full regalia” and marched to the Academy building, escorted by the Fredonia Brass Band. The local marshals were Col. P. **Crosby** and O. **Doolittle**.

Past Grand Worthy Patriarch G. W. **Jermain** of Lockport spoke about the brief history of the organization. “But a few years since the whole number of the Order consisted of sixteen individuals in the city of New-York, who banded themselves together from motives of benevolence and self-protection. Now the Order numbers over three hundred thousand.” Apparently much of their efforts were political. “The large number of Petitions presented to the Legislature last winter, was evidence of the powerful demonstration of public sentiment in the cause.” After a number of speeches, the procession returned to the Hall of the Division which was a newly built one. It was 65 feet long by 20 wide with a spacious ante-room. The two Divisions meeting there numbered some two hundred members.

During the 1850s and into the 1860s fewer temperance articles are found in the newspapers. A major effort had been made in 1846 to pass a liquor License bill but it failed in a statewide vote. In 1851 an attempt was made to pass the “Maine Law,” *i.e.* prohibition. It went through several sessions of the legislature, passed, but was declared unconstitutional. Finally, in 1857, a law simply regulating the sale of liquor went into effect.

There is a very useful recapitulation and a summing up of temperance matters as of 1860 in the *New York Gazetteer* in a list of “Religious, Literary, and Benevolent Societies.” It includes an account of the *New York State Temperance Society* which “was formed April 2, 1829. Its objects were to suppress intemperance and limit the traffic in intoxicating liquors. It received the support of a large number of the best and most philanthropic citizens, and its influence spread rapidly throughout the State. Since the formation of the first society, efforts to suppress intemperance have been made upon an extended scale, and the strong arm of the law has been invoked to prohibit the traffic in alcoholic liquors.”

This is supplemented by an extensive footnote: “The fourth report of the State Society, in 1838, gave 1,538 societies and 231,074 members. Its principal organ, the Temperance Recorder, was begun March 6, 1832, at Albany, and issued many years. It also published almanacs, tracts, and circulars to a large extent. The American Society for the Promotion of Temperance, formed in 1827, was in 1836 succeeded by the ‘American Temperance Union.’ The latter, in the year ending in 1858, received \$1,987.20. Its principal organ is the Journal of the American Temperance Union, at New York. Both this and the State Society are still in operation. About 1841-45 the ‘Washingtonian’ temperance movement, originating among reformed inebriates, spread over the State, and several thousand independent societies were formed under it, — most of which, however, died out with the enthusiasm under which they were created. The secret order of ‘Rechabites’ and ‘Sons of Temperance’ originated in New York, about 1842, and subsequently those of ‘Cadets of Temperance,’ ‘Daughters of Temperance,’ ‘Good Samaritans,’ ‘Daughters of Samaria,’ ‘Knights Templar,’ ‘Social Circles,’ and other associations of a similar class were formed for the avowed purpose of promoting temperance reform. Numerous lodges or

encampments were formed, and these societies at one time embraced large numbers of members. Several of them have been given up entirely; and it is believed none of them are increasing. They required a form of initiation and pledge of secrecy, had fixed dues payable at regular intervals, provided money to assist the sick and bury the dead, and gave certificates of membership, which, with passwords and other tokens of recognition, might enable a person to claim assistance among strangers belonging to the order.

“The License question was submitted to the popular vote May 5, 1846, with the result of 111,884 *for*, and 177,683 *against*, license. The operation of the law was deemed by many to be unequal; and its effect upon the temperance cause was unquestionably adverse. In 1847 the majorities *for* license were large in most of the towns. The ‘Maine Law,’ or prohibition movement, began in 1851, and was urged by its friends with great force during several sessions of the Legislature. A prohibitory law was passed but was declared unconstitutional by the Court of Appeals. The present law regulating the sale of intoxicating liquors, passed April 16, 1857, provides a Board of Excise Commissioners in each county for granting licenses and prosecuting violations of the law.”

That same Gazetteer list included groups that suggest where the focus of the 1860s would be put. “The American Colonization Society was formed at Washington, Jan. 1817, for the colonization of free colored persons in Africa. The New York State Colonization Society was formed at Albany, April 9, 1829, and has had numerous auxiliaries in the State; The American Anti Slavery Society was organized Dec.4, 1833; and The National Compensating Emancipation Society, formed in 1857, has for its object the purchasing of slaves for the purpose of giving them freedom.”

Slavery, Free Soil and, finally, secession itself took up much of the newspaper space and it was not until the Civil War ended that temperance matters once again began to get fuller coverage. The *Censor* of 12 June 1867 reported the establishment of a Sons of Temperance Order, Fredonia Division No.6 on the preceding Friday, so it is clear the earlier local organization had lapsed. This new group included women officers so it is sometimes referred to as the Sons and Daughters of Temperance. The same issue of the *Censor* carried “An appeal” from the group for others in the village to join the fight against intemperance.

In May 1868 a Good Templars’ Lodge was organized with Eli **Harrison** as Worthy Chief. In addition the *Censor* of 27 May 1868 reported that Mr. S. M. **Weaver**, Worthy Patriarch of the Division of Sons and Daughters of Temperance here, in behalf of that organization and many other citizens, delivered a petition to the Board of Excise praying for a restriction of the number of licenses. . . . He had the satisfaction of seeing a diminished number of licenses granted in this place. A July 29th item referred to the “next regular meeting of Fredonia Division No.6 Sons of Temperance to be held the next Monday. However the group disbanded on 15 December 1868 due to a lack of funds, leaving only the Good Templars to carry on the temperance efforts. The *Advertiser and Union* of 5 March 1869 reported on the establishment of a Good Templars Canadawa Lodge recently organized at Laona, and in its 24 September 1869 issue reported on a “Good Templars’ Restaurant.” “The Ladies of Champion Lodge No. 601, will have a Restaurant upon the Fair ground during the Fair. Patronage is solicited.”

A parallel effort was noted in the 29 October 1869 issue, that the YMCU (A Young Men’s Christian Union was begun at Harvard in 1836 and a YMCU of New York some years later.) had met “Wednesday evening and adopted the new Constitution, which organized themselves into a Library Association. A committee was appointed on rooms, and a room will be procured at once and fitted up for a Reading room. A Lecture Committee was also named.” This

was one of the standard devices used by some temperance advocates, providing a reading room to give young men a non-alcoholic meeting place. This one did not last too long.

There were other attractions offered. The Good Templars, for example, sponsored picnic excursions. Clarence S. **Lewis** kept a diary [*transcribed by Marsi Painter in 2008 and available in the Fredonia Baptist Church records at Chautauqua Gen Web*] in which he noted he and his young wife went on a Good Templars picnic on Thursday 8 June 1871 and on the 29th as well. Another front in the war was discussed in the *Censor* of 5 June 1872. On Saturday 1 June the Village Excise Board met to hear applications and ended up refusing to grant licenses to the druggists who had applied. Other druggists, who had already been denied licenses, joined their colleagues in closing their stores to any commerce. "From that time to Monday noon, parties who wanted anything in the line of paints or pills had to go to Dunkirk or go without. Monday, after the Town Board had refused to interfere, drugs were again to be had in Fredonia. . . ." The license issue "was thoroughly discussed. . . . Judging from the expression of sentiment, we should say that a majority of the voters are in favor of granting these licenses as stipulated in the platform on which the Trustees were elected."

The No-License effort may have failed this time, but temperance activities did not abate. The *Censor* of 19 February 1873 reported that "The Good Templars of Fredonia are still alive. Lodge room scarcely large enough to hold them. . . ." and added "A temperance dance was given at Samuel **Cranston's** house Friday eve. Feb. 14, — There were about 65 couples present, and a general good time was enjoyed. There being no liquors served, all went home happy and right side up." At the same time the local YMCA, following the path the earlier YMCU had taken, reconstituted itself as the Fredonia Library Association, set up a reading room on the third floor of 1-3 East Main Street, and continued a lecture series which included Mark **Twain's** first visit to the village. It was as part of this lecture series that they invited "Dr. Dio **Lewis** of Boston."

What happened next needs clarification, because some early accounts seem to have the dates confused. The confusion began with the official history of the founding of the WCTU. At their meeting in Syracuse in October 1893 it was agreed that a history of the group's first twenty years be compiled. *Two Decades: A History of the First Twenty Years' Work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of the State of New York* was published in 1894. It contained an unsigned "Prologue" which summed up the events of December 1873 in Fredonia. "On Saturday evening, December 13, Dr. Dio **Lewis**, of Boston, had delivered a popular lecture in Fredonia, and upon invitation of the Good Templars remained to deliver a temperance lecture at a union [*interdenominational*] service Sunday night."

In fact, Dr. **Lewis** was scheduled to speak not on Saturday the 13th but on Friday the 12th and, the *Censor* of 17 December 1873 records that he did so. When the *Centennial History of Chautauqua County* appeared in 1902 it included a chapter, "The Woman's Christian Temperance Union" by Martha S. **Meade**. The same schedule as in the *Two Decades* history is given in a paraphrase of the earlier account. Dr. Dio **Lewis** "came to Fredonia to deliver a popular lecture, Saturday, December 13, 1873, and remained at the request of the Good Templars to give a temperance lecture at a union meeting of the churches on Sunday evening." The *History of Chautauqua County and its People* (1921) includes an account in Vol. I "taken from [the] article by Martha S. **Meade**." It is no surprise, then, to find in Miss Elizabeth **Crocker's** account of the events in her *Yesterdays* III (1962): "The movement was inspired by a lecture delivered in Fredonia by Dr. Dio **Lewis** of Boston on Dec, 13, 1873 and which was received with great enthusiasm. Upon an invitation of the Good Templars the speaker remained over to give another address on the following Saturday evening at a union service."

This is doubly confusing because he did not speak on 13 December as far as is known and his first speech, on whichever day, was not the one that inspired the movement. **Lewis** had been asked to lecture on 12 December on one of his favorite topics, healthy living for young ladies. As the *Censor* of 17 December 1873 reported, on Friday the 12th “the lecture was on Our Girls, but having heard some complaint from one of that sex that they received all the lecturing while the failings and vices of young men were seldom mentioned, he proposed to clear himself of that charge and ease his conscience entirely on that score by devoting the first ten minutes of his discourse to lecturing the men.” Those ten minutes were given over to an explanation of the dire consequences of using tobacco after which he went on to Our Girls and how they should do healthful exercise, wear loose clothing and sensible shoes, and get out in the fresh air as much as possible.

What followed on Saturday the 13th is unknown. He may have met with the Good Templars at one of their secret sessions or some of them may have approached him to see if he would give a talk on the other topic he was famous for, temperance; in particular the role women might play in forwarding temperance values, something he had been involved in with his mother who could boast of success in persuading a number of communities to go ‘dry’ through the efforts of a force of temperance women.

All the accounts agree that the talk he gave on Sunday evening was announced from the pulpits of the local churches on Sunday morning. It is hardly likely that the ministers had been approached and the plan coordinated all on the Sunday morning before services began. The Good Templars’ discussion with **Lewis** and their negotiations with the various churches had to have taken place no later than Saturday 13 December, which may be where the original confusion of dates began. At any rate, Dr. **Lewis** spoke at some length at the union meeting at the Fredonia Baptist church on 14 December, giving a rousing account.

What is notable here is not so much that he inspired his listeners to support the cause, but that for the first time — at least in this community — the crusade was mounted by women. Up until this point, other than some “Daughters of Temperance” and auxiliary members, the battle had been carried on exclusively by men. This time was to be different and it is surely related to the contemporary efforts of women to have their voices heard in many formerly male-dominated spheres such as legal rights, voting rights, and entry into many professions.

The story has often been told of the W.C.T.U. being organized on Monday — the same day Dr. **Lewis** spoke to some Normal School girls about physical fitness and good health, before going on to Jamestown — and marching on a local hotel. Although they had little success at first, they were not to be daunted. The movement that arose as a kind of culmination of years of male-dominated temperance efforts was on its way. The events that led up to, and then followed, the founding of the W.C.T.U. are dramatic enough to warrant a detailed examination. Luckily, *The Fredonia Censor* provided extensive coverage.

On Sunday evening, 14 December 1873, at a union meeting at the Fredonia Baptist Church, Dr. Dio **Lewis** “opened with rather a severe sketch of the change taking place in a truly converted Christian, in his bodily diet and habits, as well as his intellectual, social, moral and religious practices. This was temperance in a broad sense, and what he called temperance, but they had met to discuss it in a special sense, namely, as relating to the use of alcoholic drinks.” From that intemperance arose 99% of “the crime and poverty in this country.” The question then was “who’s to blame?” and his answer was “the people of respectable position who indulge in drink.” Having decided who’s to blame, now what’s to be done? “The lecturer did not answer directly, but proceeded to tell what was done in a town in the central part of this state, where he

was brought up. There were four rum-holes in the town, or stores where liquors were sold. It was a manufacturing town and the women and children worked and supported the families while the men laid around drunk. He worked in a cotton mill and his sister in a paper mill, and as he spoke of the blight which intemperance had put upon a portion of his life it was evident how he suffered. Finally one of the rumsellers had thirteen boys in his store one night and gave them liquor till they were all drunk. Then the women had an indignation meeting and determined to do something, and not knowing what else to do, they did this: There were 84 of them and they marched down to the first rum hole, kept by one **Weed**. — He warned them not to come in there, and talked so savage that they passed to the next. This one listened and finally said he would stop if the rest did. Two more did the same. The next day they got into **Weed's** before he came out, and repeated their programme of the day before, namely, read an appeal to him to stop the traffic, sang a hymn, had a prayer, then more singing and supplication. **Weed** still resisted but said he would be happy to have them call again. They assured him they should call next day. They were on hand and again appealed and sang and prayed. **Weed** had provided himself with chairs and pillows and laid down to snooze, saying he could lie as long as they could stand; but he did not sleep, was never so wide awake in his life, and when he heard a paper rustle and peeping out saw them produce luncheon from their pockets, he jumped up and asked how long this thing was going to last. They assured him they had taken a vow to come every day till he stopped selling liquor, and when, in answer to his statement that he must support his family, an old lady said, "We'll support your family with the needle if you will only stop," he consented and the next morning turned his whole stock of spirits into the gutter whence it ran into Owasco creek. That was 39 years ago, and there has never been a groggery allowed in that town since. Poverty has given place to thrift, misery has been supplanted by happiness, virtue reigns instead of vice. He believed the same thing could be done in any town."

And with that, the battle plans were clear. But first, the men had to talk. Orson **Stiles** said "what's to be done" was clear. His wife and other ladies he mentioned would go. "He did not see a woman but would join in the work." The *Censor* reported, "L. A. **Barmore** was not ashamed to stand up in this cause. His wife and mother would go in this army.... He would like to see the man who could resist an appeal from fifty such women, and he would not give a cent for the piety of any man who would not stand by them and say 'God be with you.'"

Stiles again. "He thought the great trouble was our business men fear loss of trade and do not sympathize with these movements. If the women could vote it would have been done long ago." The chairman, Dr. **Lewis**, then asked the men to stand and pledge monetary support for the women's efforts. In the meantime the committee of women "reported the list of fifty names and the report was adopted." The next step was to form a committee to draft an appeal to those selling alcohol in the village. The committee consisted of Mrs. A. L. **Benton**, Mrs. L. **Williams**, Jr., Mrs. Dr. **Fuller** and Mrs. J. W. **Armstrong**.

The head of the full committee then called for a meeting on Monday, the 15th, at 10:00 a.m. Monday morning found some three hundred men and women at the Baptist Church. After prayers and speeches, the women moved to a basement room. Around 12:30 they emerged and marched across the Common stopping first at the **Taylor** House hotel (*1 Park Place*), then **Smeizer & Hewes** (saloon on Center Street), Willard **Lewis's** and **Maynard's** drug stores (West Main Street), O. D. **Baldwin's** drug store (Water Street), I. F. **Harrison's** hotel (**Harrison** House, Water Street), Duane **Beebe's** saloon (Water Street), and Don A. **Clark's** drug store (Woleben Block, West Main Street).

The appeals did not meet with success, but on Tuesday the visitations were repeated and again on Wednesday. With no pledges being obtained, the women had a group of men try to persuade the alcohol sellers. The only positive result was that the **Harrison** House bar was to be closed, probably, the *Censor* noted, because **Harrison** wanted to be a deputy sheriff and Sheriff **Hitchcock** told him “that he should appoint no man deputy who had anything to do with the sale of intoxicating drinks.”

On Friday the women tried again after which they decided to adjourn until the following Monday “and organize a permanent association.” On Monday they met and adopted a formal pledge to continue their efforts to “suppress the traffic in intoxicating liquors in our village *until this work be accomplished.*”

“This society shall be known as ‘The Women’s Temperance Union of Fredonia’,” which brings us to the contentious matter of the organization’s name. Years later, Mrs. **McNeill**, who was involved from the beginning, claimed that “Christian” had always been a part of their name. The 18 June 1913 issue of the *Censor* reported on the dedication of the **McNeill** Memorial Fountain in Barker Common, at which the paper’s editor, Louis **McKinstry**, gave some “historical remarks.” In that talk he said, “It is true that when our women formally organized the name published was Women’s Temperance Union, without the word Christian, but I am sure the word Christian was adopted originally for when Dr. **Lewis** came up from the women’s meeting in the Baptist basement he reported to the men in conference in the auditorium of the church and I remember as well as yesterday that report, in which he said ‘Gentlemen, the ladies are in a state of awful religious earnestness. They have formed an organization and named it the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. Under that name they will conquer. I like that word Christian in the name they have chosen’.”

McKinstry seems to have confused two separate occasions. Dr. Dio **Lewis** spoke on Sunday 14 December, after which the women formed a committee, met again on Monday the 15th and began their visitations in the village. Dr. **Lewis** spoke to the Normal School girls that Monday morning and then left for a speaking engagement in Jamestown. He was not here when the Women’s Temperance Union was organized on 22 December 1873. In addition, the title was used consistently in the *Censor* in news items as well as in material submitted by the group itself. The *Censor* of 23 December 1874 reported on the meeting “to commemorate the organization of the Women’s Temperance Union of Fredonia . . .” By 25 January 1875 the paper began carrying a “Temperance Column” with the headnote, “Edited by the Women’s Temperance Union.” The paper frequently ran a “Directory” of local groups which included the “Women’s Temperance Union. Meetings every Thursday at 3 o’clock P.M. at the parlors of the Baptist church. Mrs. D. R. **Barker**, Pres’t. Mrs. L. A. **Barmore**, Sec’y.” This was not the paper’s version of the name but an official announcement submitted by the officers. When the venue was moved, the notice in the *Censor* of 10 January 1877 read, “Women’s Temperance Union. Meetings every Friday at 3 o’clock P.M. at Temperance Hall in American Block. Mrs. D. R. **Barker**, Pres’t. Mrs. L. B. **Greene**, Cor. Sec’y, Mrs. L. A. **Barmore**, Rec. Sec’y.” It must have been with the change of officers in 1877 that the name change came about. The *Censor* of 31 January 1877 carried the usual Temperance Column on its front page with the headnote, “At the recent election of the W.C.T.U. the following officers were chosen for 1877,” beginning with the President, Mrs. H. C. **Lake**. The slate did not include any of the women who had led the group since its beginning four years earlier, so it appears that the new slate of officers brought in with them the new name for the group.

The Barker Historical Museum has a document donated by Mrs. Truman C. **Bradley** of Dunkirk. It is a printed charter, unfortunately undated, for “The Women’s Christian Temperance Union of Fredonia, N.Y.,” listing its officers and the members, in roughly alphabetical order. However, comparing it with the original list as given in the *Censor* of 24 December 1873 reveals some odd discrepancies. The original list has 139 married women listed (three of them had their names entered twice in the *Censor*) and 64 single women. After that the officers’ names are listed: followed by a list of the twelve “Directors.” However, there are three names on the Directors list that do not appear in the original members list: Mrs. A. **Bradish**, Mrs. C. L. **Mark** and Mrs. Alex **Morian**. If we add their names to the list, we have a total of 206 “charter members.”

The printed charter has 208 names but it omits the names of several women in the original list: Mrs. Jonathan **Hamilton**, Jr., Mrs. Louis **McKinstry**, Mrs. S. **Hart**, Mrs. F. **Burritt**, Mrs. H. C. **Frisbee**, Mrs. A. **James**, Mrs. Jarius **Porter** and Mrs. Ida **Noble**. On the other hand, it adds some names not in the original: Mrs. G. **Hart**, Mrs. John **Jackson**, Mrs. N. **James**, Mrs. F. **Merritt**, Mrs. Julius **Parten**, Mrs. Nellie **Pemberton** and Mrs. Lucina **Todd**.

There are other problems with the charter list. It misspells Mrs. Jane **Clemens** as “**Clemons**,” Miss Emily **Davy** as “Davie,” Mrs. J. **Frisbee** as “Erisbee,” Mrs. Carrie **Ferrin** as “Ferris,” Mrs. Alice **Goff** as “Gloff,” Mrs. S. **Hart** as “G. **Hart**,” Mrs. Allen **Hinckley** as “Hinkley,” Mrs. T. **Hodgkins** as “Hidgins,” Mrs. A. **James** as “Mrs. N. **James**,” Mrs. Jennie **Losee** as “Losie,” Mrs. H. **Newman** as “**Neuman**,” Miss E. **Richardson** as “Richard,” Mrs. Dolly **Stiles** as “Dollie,” Mrs. R.T. **Tunstall** as “Turnstall,” Mrs. Frank **Thomas** as “Franc,” and Miss L. **Woodward** as “Woodard.” All of this suggests that whoever made up this Charter did not know the individuals involved. And, unfortunately, it is not clear how this Charter and the members listed relate to the new slate of officers of January 1877.

What is clear is that the new officers of the W.C.T.U. represented not just a change in the group’s name but a change in leadership, an abandonment of the category of twelve “Directors,” replaced by four “Councilors” [*sic*]: Mrs. Rev. A. L. **Benton**, Mrs. Rev. L. **Williams**, Jr., Mrs. Esther **McNeil**, and Mrs. D. R. **Barker**, none of whom was a “Director” although Mrs. **Barker** had been President since 1874. Included in the list of officers is Miss Christine **Gilbert**. Her name does not appear on the original list in the *Censor* of 24 December 1873 nor in the printed Charter. Christine **Gilbert**, born in 1838, was a daughter of Dr. John and Susan (**Ames**) **Gilbert** who had come to Fredonia in 1833. When her mother died in 1892 the obituary included a mention of “Miss Christine, who cared for her mother in her declining years.”

All of these changes in personnel suggest that there was to be a change as well in tactics and direction. One clue as to a new direction is what happened in 1878. The new officers of the W.C.T.U. invited O. D. **Bacon**, described by A. Z. **Madison**, Clerk of the Fredonia Baptist Church, as a “gospel Temperance lecturer” to speak at a union meeting at the church. **Bacon** had been lecturing in Wayne County where he claimed 40,000 signed a pledge to abstain and 3,500 “were converted to Christ.” **Bacon** was himself a reformed alcoholic and he filled many of his presentations with lurid descriptions of his own and others dissipation and ruin.

We have a fairly clear picture of what happened during the tumultuous ten weeks he was here from the inside — the notes of A.Z. **Madison** [*transcribed in 2008 by Marsia Painter and posted in the Fredonia Baptist Church records by Nathan Towne at Chautauqua Gen Web*] — and the outside — the news items and editorializing in the *Fredonia Advertiser and Union* and particularly in *The Fredonia Censor*. Excerpts from each will give a sense of what went on and

the consequent disruptions and disharmony that arose in the village, especially among the various congregations and the temperance activists, including his sponsors, the W.C.T.U.

At their request, **Bacon** lectured first to a union meeting on 10 February 1878. Also on the platform were the pastors of the Baptist, Presbyterian and Methodist churches. **Madison** noted “Few, if any, in the audience, but what were shocked from the first, with the harsh declamatory & denunciatory manner of the speaker. **Bacon** then went on to an afternoon prayer meeting and an evening lecture each day of the following week, February 11th through the 15th.

Madison attended a number of them and was struck by **Bacon’s** “claims to be under the immediate control and guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ & to speak as and whatever He directs him to speak.” In addition “The style of the Braggadocio and the Denunciator, and the too evident ebullitions of temper, often repeated by the lecturer, not only grieved the hearts of many Christian men & women, but aroused a feeling in the outside community, urging to deeds of violence, right and mobocracy.” **Madison** continued, “At the prayer meeting in P.M. of same day [15 February], about 60 in all were present, mostly women & of the three Churches a few others. Each Minister in order **Wms., Benton & Merchant**, spoke plainly of the good & of the faults of Dr. **Bacon** & he contended against them, & most of the women by standing vote, at request, took sides with him. A scene was the result that no Christian can desire to have repeated.”

Some of this can be explained by an article in the *Censor* of 27 March 1878. The paper’s editor had been visited earlier in the crusade by N. P. **Munger** and Dr. **Bacon**. “After **Bacon** retired **Munger** unfolded to us ‘Doc’s’ method which had worked so well at Clyde but which he (**Munger**) had warned **Bacon** was not adapted to this locality. “The method in brief is to begin by denouncing all the ministers and church members as hypocrites and liars, and thus gain the sympathy of the lower and irreligious classes, get them converted by the **Bacon** method, and then call in the churches to absorb the converts.”

On Sunday 10 March, the Sons of Temperance were holding a prayer meeting when, with what the *Censor* called “ruffianly conduct,” **Bacon** “invaded the young people’s temperance prayer meeting room. . . he gave great provocation.” As a consequence, on the following evening at Union Hall as **Bacon** was speaking, some representatives of the Sons of Temperance, including Samuel **Moffett**, Mark **Twain’s** nephew, requested permission to read a petition they had drawn up, signed by 50 young men.

The *Censor* of 20 March 1878 suggested some what then occurred. **Bacon** had gone on to sue them and they had countersued. At a hearing on the matter “It was soon evident that no proof could be brought against **Moffett** of having done anything except to respectfully ask the privilege of presenting the petition, and **Woodward** [another of the Sons of Temperance] did not shed his coat till after **Bacon** jumped off the stage and rushed toward him vomiting rage and brandishing the bible.” The *Censor’s* comments on **Bacon’s** Thursday 14 March meeting at Union Hall included the fact that “all the ministers had deserted, and the Cayenne pepper with which the stage had been sown by some reckless boys, soon rose and filled the air wherever the speaker was prancing. The result was a terrible eruption of venom. Not everyone saw these incidents as negative. Frank **Howard** with a shop at *1 East Main Street* advertised, “We understand Dr. **Bacon** offered \$50 reward for the conviction of the persons who ‘peppered’ Union Hall floor last Friday and Saturday nights. We cannot tell who these parties were, but we can that F. W. **Howard** has an immense stock of Wall Paper.”

The peppering escapade may have been humorous, but most of the reactions to **Bacon** were not. In a kind of summing up article in the issue of 3 April, the *Censor* explained that “We

recommended Dr. **Bacon** when he came, and desisted from saying a discouraging word of his work for weeks, until we were satisfied that his presence here was an unmitigated curse.” That the *Censor* was not alone in denouncing was demonstrated by the approval of several “rigid temperance people,” “all the clergymen with possibly one exception, all the school teachers and the original officers of the Woman’s Temperance Union.” That comment explains why the schedule for the W.T.U meetings were announced in the *Censor* of 2 January over the signature of “Mrs. H. C. **Lake**, Pres’t.” and “Miss Christine **Gilbert**, Sec’y.” but when the Trustees of the Baptist Church were approached by some women about opening the church to **Bacon**, it was after “consultation with Mrs. **McNeil**, Pres.” According to A. Z. **Madison’s** 7 March 1878 notes.

The *Censor* of 10 April stated that “Last week some forty of the original and most influential members [of the W.T.U.], comprising nearly all who have been officers from the beginning till now, formally withdrew from the organization. They would not compromise themselves with any society, the present officers of which uphold Baconism.” And on 1 May added “Fredonia has never been disgraced in this way before, and never will be again. The people are thoroughly aroused, and our churches which unwittingly nursed this viper of fanaticism into life, much to their regret, will never be caught that way again. Many staunch and hitherto most vigorous temperance workers, say they don’t want to hear the word temperance again for ten years.”

In the midst of all this turmoil some Laona residents took the opportunity to tease Fredonia about its vaunted reputation for piety and superiority to other less perfect communities. It may have been this lengthy piece in the *Censor* of 27 March 1878 that led the late Canon **Chard** and later researcher Sean **Kirst** to suggest that Fredonia had been Mark **Twain’s** model for “The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg.”

After the traumatic ten weeks of 1878, it is no surprise that local temperance activities diminished for a time. Of course the W.C.T.U. and others continued to function, but the emphasis began to shift from crusade to alternative tactics. There had always been discussion and disagreement, not on the goal but on how to get there: exhorting youth to abstain, shaming liquor sellers into abandoning their trade, closing down bars and grog shops, and providing alternatives for young people. One tactic that was frequently applied had to do with the license to sell alcohol. This was much more a matter of politics and, therefore, at the time a matter more for the men than the women of a community.

As always, economics tended to trump virtue. License or No-License were the slogans. Candidates for Village or Town Trustee or the Excise Board itself stood for one or the other. “License” meant granting an annual license to someone to sell alcohol in some form for the ensuing year. “No License” meant denying that license to one, some, or all applicants. That is where most of the ensuing battles were fought. As early as 2 April 1874 the Minutes of the Fredonia Board of Trustees record that “A delegation of Ladies from the Ladies Temperance Union appeared before the Board and presented petitions numerously signed asking that the Board withhold Licenses for the sale of intoxicating Liquors for the ensuing year. Petitions were received with assurances that they would receive respectful consideration.” At the gathering to honor the one-year anniversary of the Union, Mrs. O. R. **Burchard** summarized its history. The article in the *Censor* of 23 December 1874 paraphrasing her said, “Mentioning the remark sometimes made that the women were impelled by curiosity to see the interior of the liquor shops, she said such men little knew the inward conflict which every lady had before she could resolve to march in the crusade. Since that plan had been abandoned the regular Thursday meetings had been maintained, and they felt that although they persuaded only one dealer to

accede to their request, and election went against them, yet they had accomplished much good.” In other words, the visitations Dr. Dio **Lewis** had urged hadn’t worked. After summarizing what she thought they *had* accomplished, their guest speaker, Dr. G. W. **Heacock** of Buffalo gave his talk. “Dr. **Heathcock** does not believe in local option on this subject. . . . The great mistake in the temperance movement heretofore, Dr. **Heacock** thinks, is that they have attempted absolute prohibition. The whole aim should be to prohibit dram selling, and in that work there are thousands, including wholesale liquor dealers, who would join them.” “*We want a law that shall simply prohibit the sale of liquor in any quantity, great or small, to be drank on the premises!*”

The W.C.T.U. does not seem to have been persuaded by this argument. In their Temperance Column of 25 January 1875 they proposed that, since drinking alcohol led to dissolute behavior and crime, licensing to allow liquor to be sold became itself a crime and should be banned. No licenses should be allowed. The column of 3 February 1875 had a guest writer, the Hon. Neal **Dow**, who argued for total prohibition for economic as well social reasons. It was in the column of the following week that the upcoming election on Tuesday 17 February was discussed. “Tuesday next will be held an election, at which time in accordance with the new law a separate ballot box will be provided for depositing ballots for or against license. Three excise commissioners will be chosen on this issue alone. They cannot hold any other office, and so will have nothing whatever to do with politics.

“Now it is for you to say, whether for the next two years, temperance with all its blessings of peace, order, and morality, shall prevail in our town, or the saloons with all their enticements be kept open, luring our loved ones to degradation, crime, misery, and eternal ruin. We, women of Pomfret, have no voice in the election. You claim to represent us at the polls. We are helpless in this matter except to beseech you to represent us fairly for once, remembering that you hold our dearest interests in your hands.” The plea was not heeded and the situation remained about the same for the next two years. Perhaps it was the upcoming election in 1877 that led to the change in leadership of the W.C.T.U. and to the 10-week **Bacon** Crusade that took up so much of the *Censor’s* attention.

It is an ironic indication of the frustrations the temperance movement faced to find an item in the *Censor* of 27 March 1878 reporting that “D. A. **Clark**, druggist, has fitted up in a very neat and elegant manner the store known as the Holly Tree Inn, No. 77 Main St. [today’s *13 East Main Street*], and has moved his extensive stock of Drugs, Medicines and Chemicals, Paints, Oils, &c. The full irony of this move takes a little explaining. When the W.T.U. was formed in December 1873, their pledge included opening a “public Parlor, Reading Room and Restaurant,” explaining that they were establishing a Reading Room “to lay the foundation for a public Library.” They leased a vacant store at today’s *13 East Main Street* with a grand opening in April 1874. Late in 1874 Mrs. George **Barker** resigned as President of the W.T.U. and was replaced by her Vice-President, Mrs. D. R. **Barker**. In a series of complicated moves, the Reading Room Committee of the W.T.U. ultimately turned their treasury and book collection over to the Directors of the Library Association and on 1 November 1876 *13 East Main Street* opened as the Fredonia Public Library. Funding continued to be a problem and on 4 April 1877 the Library opened again at 21 East Main Street, less expensive quarters.

On 29 April 1877 a group of local men formed the Pomfret National Christian Temperance Union and by 16 May announced they would have a Holly Tree Inn (another temperance movement to provide alcohol-free venues) in **Lake’s** Block, 13 East Main Street, where the W.T.U. had had its Reading Room. The women, meanwhile, decided to merge their efforts with the Holly Tree Inn and the books were moved back to their original home. However,

once again, not enough young men were attracted to use the facilities and, early in 1878, the rooms were closed. It was then that Don A. **Clark**, the same man who in December 1873 told the ladies he had no intention of signing any pledge about alcohol and requested them to not enter his store, moved his successful drug store into the rooms the temperance people had had to abandon.

No wonder, then, that “No License” seemed the only reachable goal. Towards that end the W.C.T.U. through its Temperance Column exhorted the men who had the vote. The exhorting, praying and politicking that ensued can be illustrated with a few excerpts from the columns of *The Fredonia Censor* early in 1880 as the next election approached. The No-License Caucus met at the Fredonia Academy building on 14 February to nominate a No-License candidate to be the Excise Commissioner. At the same time the Democratic Caucus nominated Charles **Herman** to be Excise Commissioner “favorable to the granting of licenses.” In the same issue there was an announcement that “The Cold Water Army will hold its next regular meeting next Sunday afternoon at 3:30 o’clock in the parlors of the Baptist church.” A long article from B. W. **Thompson** thanked supporters for nominating him to be Supervisor of the Town of Pomfret. Those supporters agreed “upon the broad and equitable platform of prohibition.”

Mr. J. R. **McKelvey**, of Utica, was to address the citizens of Pomfret in Union Hall Friday evening, Feb. 13th on the subject of prohibition. R. H. **Hall** wrote that he was “a true temperance man, and a friend to the cause of humanity” differing from some only “in the manner of using the means for the accomplishment of the desired object.” This was followed by a long letter arguing for the support of prohibition from “both republican and democratic parties.” In another column was a long warning that a Justice of the New York Supreme Court had found two excise commissioners in Kingston guilty of licensing establishments that did not conform to the law. The writer explained he was not talking about “the two very respectable hotels in this village” but to two other “mere drinking places, neither of which has the first qualification which the law requires.”

All this furor had an unexpected outcome. Because there were three slates put forth, the votes for Henry W. **Thompson** to be Town Supervisor running on the Prohibition Ticket siphoned off enough votes from the Republican ticket, led by Enoch A. **Curtis**, leaving George S. **Josselyn** on the Democratic Ticket as the winner. The *Censor* remarked that “The election of a Democratic Supervisor and other prominent officers as indicated above, is not pleasant to contemplate.” However, there was a bright spot. The *Censor* of 18 February 1880 explained: “The nomination of Henry B. **Benjamin** for Excise Commissioner proved to be a fortunate selection by the Temperance caucus. He is well known through the town as one of the most reliable of our older citizens, and being outside of *all the dissensions that have occurred in the Temperance ranks* [Italics added] he received a most hearty support. [He was elected.] . . . The recent increase in saloons and the flagrant violation of law by the present Excise Board in granting hotel license to common saloons have much to do with this result. This makes a majority of temperance men on the Board and if their administration is wise and the laws thoroughly executed, there need be no difficulty in continuing the temperance majority indefinitely.”

It was **Benjamin’s** election as Excise Commissioner in 1880 that allowed S. S. **Crisey** of the No-License Committee to remark in the *Censor* of 1 February 1893 that “for the past thirteen years, there has been no legalized sale of intoxicating liquors in the town of Pomfret.” He added, at great length, that the result was a healthy thriving community. However, in the adjacent column was a long discussion of the italicized fact that “*Fredonia has no hotel.*” “The

old ‘**Johnson** House,’ a royal hostelry in its day, had long since fallen into decay, and was unfit longer to offer the traveler a home or even a temporary lodging.” He continued, “Its hoary walls and sunken roof still continued like a specter, to deface our beautiful parks. The dread of an evening entertainment in our beautiful new Opera House, to those who were so compelled, was the passing of this hideous empty castle.” The eventual response to this disgrace was that E. A. **Curtis**, a local architect, with the financial backing of Dr. M. M. **Fenner** (who happened to be the author of the piece just quoted from) bought the **Johnson** House/**Taylor** House property, refurbished and added to it, creating the Columbia Hotel. They were then in the process of trying to get a liquor license so that the new hotel could survive and, perhaps, prosper.

The details may have differed, but the basic pattern remained the same. Moral ruin under License, economic ruin under No-License. The voters of 1893 chose economic ruin. The Pomfret Board of Excise denied the license application of the Hotel Columbia which resulted, inevitably, in a series of legal hearings. Although the struggle to control or ban the use of alcohol continued, there seemed to be a diminution at least in the publicity it received. Part of the reason may have been a sense of discouragement that the fight was still not over after so many troublesome years. Another reason must have been the change in population. The Protestant, New England majority was being diluted. German, Irish, Polish and Italian immigrants brought with them different value systems on a variety of issues including drinking alcohol.

Another reason was probably that, in this period, a great deal of energy by activist women was going into the suffrage movement, partly to reach prohibition via the ballot box. In fact prohibition was secured first. There was, and is, no end to the seesaw battle between economic self-interest and temperance values. Various local and state efforts culminated, finally, in the passage of the 18th Amendment allowing for national prohibition, and the Volstead Act which provided specific penalties for violations. This must have seemed a triumph, if delayed, for the temperance forces, particularly the women who worked under the handicap of not having the vote. Ultimately, however, it turned out to be a disaster. What happened locally was a microcosm of the national scene: screaming headlines, raids, confiscations, gun battles, fines and jail sentences. It is a significant statistic that the 18th Amendment went into effect in 1920, and a year later, John P. **Downs**, *History of Chautauqua County* Vol I.,p.352, noted that the Fredonia W.C.T.U. membership was 100, out of a population of some 6,000, less than half the number of members in 1873 when the population was about 3,000.

Today the efforts to control the use of alcohol have emphasized restricting where and how it can be sold, who may buy and consume it, and punishment for actions arising out of its abuse. However, the dramatic and earnest efforts of so many over the years with its high point, locally, in the formation of the W.T.U. should be remembered, recognized and applauded. Those women were, in a sense, pioneers who stood up for what they believed in and fought valiantly to bring it about.

Temperance Movement References

(All citations are to the *Fredonia Censor* [month-day-year] unless otherwise noted.)

7-15-1829: Chaut. Cty. Temp. Soc. meeting

4-29-1829: Pomfret Soc. formed

1-30-1830: Temp. Soc.

1-22-1830: Pomfret Temp. Soc to meet

9-22-1830: Pomfret Temp. Soc.

1-19-1831: Chaut. Cty. Temp.

11-20-1833: Fredonia Temp.
1-22-1834: Friends of Temp.
4-17-1835: Fredonia Temp.
8-10-1836: Chaut. Cty. Temp.
11-16-1836: Fred. Temp.
12-7-1836, 2:4 and 2:6: Temp.
12-1-28-1836,3:1 Temp.
2-22 (27?)-1837: Fredonia Temp.
2-21-1838: Fredonia Temp.
8-1-1838: Temp.
8-28-1838: Female Moral Reform (Temp.?)
1-10-1839: Chaut. Cty. Temp.
3-20-1839: Fre. Temp.
9-4-1839: Caut. Cty. Temp.
2-9-1842: Fred. Total Abstinence Soc.
6-21-1843: Hist of Chaut. Cty. by Samuel A. Brown, also in printed form
2-21-1844: Temp.
1851 Map: Tuttle's Temp. House , West Main just above corp. limits
1883 Directory: Fred.Christian Reform Club Temp. Hall, advertisement
Fredonia W.C.T.U. Temperance Hall advertisement
10-12-1887, 3:2: Temp. Hall
1-25-1899, 5:3: Obit. of Dana F. Case, Academy student 1837-1841. Boarded at Tuttle's Temperance Hotel
10-31-1917: Temp. in Laona