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The Anti-Alcohol City: Social, Economic, and Political Aspects of Knoxville, Tennessee, 1870-1907

Roger Dale Posey
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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Roger Dale Posey entitled "The Anti-Alcohol City: Social, Economic, and Political Aspects of Knoxville, Tennessee, 1870-1907." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

W. Bruce Wheeler, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and recommend its acceptance:

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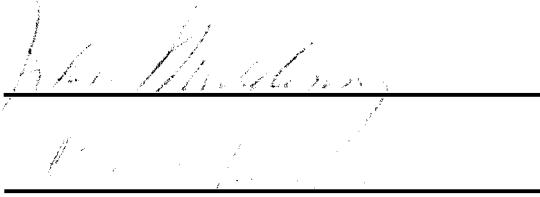
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Accepted for the Council:



L. Evans Cobb
Vice Chancellor
Graduate Studies and Research

THE ANTI-ALCOHOL CITY: SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL
ASPECTS OF KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE, 1870-1907

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Arts

Degree

The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Roger Dale Posey

December 1982

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if the experiences of Knoxville, Tennessee in dealing with prohibition during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were significantly different from those of the state, the South, or the nation. Knoxville was selected because of the lack of research conducted on prohibition in the city, the first of the state's large cities to close its open saloons.

Data from Knoxville newspapers between 1870 and 1907 were relied upon heavily, as well as information from the United States census, and Knoxville voter registration records and city directories. A ward-by-ward analysis of the 1907 prohibition referendum proved essential to the findings and conclusions.

The major findings of the research were that the prohibition experiences of Knoxville were far less important than what the evolutionary process revealed about the social, economic, and political development of the city. The three-phase prohibition campaign which lasted approximately four decades was, with certain minor variations, the same across Tennessee, the South, and the United States. Knoxvilleans accepted the concept as early as 1887, but had to wait until political conditions in the state were conducive to bring about the desired reform. Businessmen, clergymen, and women were important to the campaign effort, but the pivotal role in the battle for prohibition was played by the city's

proportionately high Black population.

The makeup of these factions was not only important to the prohibition campaign, but to development of the city as well. The Knoxville business elite had its roots in those former Union soldiers who, after spending time in the city during the Civil War, tied their futures to that of Knoxville. Clashing with the city's nouveau riche were migrants from the nearby rural areas of East Tennessee. These two groups battled each other for control of the city's growth and development, uniting most often in opposition to Blacks.

The conclusions of the study were that Blacks played a very significant part in the social, economic, and political development of Knoxville. The city's Black population was continually made powerless by the steady encroachments of the white labor force and political leaders. The prohibition campaign was a microcosm of the city's social, economic, and political development.

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INTRODUCTION

Controlling the liquor traffic in Tennessee was a "persistent source of controversy"¹ throughout much of the state's history, and was no less true in Knoxville, one of its more important cities. Between the 1870's and 1907 Knoxville churches, men's and women's clubs, and politicians debated the pros and cons of the temperance issue. Initially Knoxvillians favored the temperate use of alcoholic beverages, gradually shifting to total abstinence. Consequently, temperance leaders began to use the terms temperance and prohibition interchangeably. The thirty-seven year battle for prohibition, conducted in three phases, led to the closing of the city's 113 saloons on November 1, 1907.

The first phase of the prohibition campaign, from 1870 to 1886, was a local option strategy which would have allowed cities, towns, or counties to determine if the sale of intoxicating beverages would be allowed in their respective areas. Promoted as early as the late 1860's, local option became the most popular prohibition measure, but questions about its constitutionality prevented this type of legislation from being enacted. Despite its questionable legality, Knoxville prohibition leaders, nonetheless, continued to seek passage of local option measures.

¹Paul E. Isaac, Prohibition and Politics: Turbulent Decades in Tennessee, 1885-1920 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press), p. 1.

The crusade for prohibition entered its second phase in the mid-1880's when a constitutional amendment was proposed which would have abolished the open saloon in Tennessee. The amendment was defeated overwhelmingly in 1887, but was strongly favored in Knoxville and the rest of East Tennessee. Voters in Middle and West Tennessee did not support the proposed amendment, bringing about the defeat of the measure. The vote in Knoxville proved to be a harbinger of the future because the margin of approval of the amendment in 1887 was nearly the same as the margin in the special referendum in 1907 which closed the city's saloons.

The third and final phase of the prohibition campaign was a special referendum in Knoxville in 1907. By that year legislation had been modified to apply to cities with populations of 150,000 or less, thereby allowing all Tennessee cities to come under prohibition if they so desired. On March 11, 1907, Knoxville held the referendum which rechartered the city without the open saloon.

The roles of various groups in the prohibition movement in Knoxville were of importance to the three phase strategy. Conflicts constantly arose between immediatists, who favored political prohibition, and gradualists, who supported prohibition through moral suasion. Moral suasionists did not believe prohibition could be achieved by merely making alcoholic beverages illegal. On the other hand, political prohibitionists did not believe that

intemperance had been significantly reduced by the moral suasion of churches and other groups.

Roles of women, businessmen, and Blacks were also significant. Woman played important roles throughout the campaign, especially in the area of moral suasion. Businessmen played no major role in the local option or constitutional amendment phases, but business leaders firmly opposed the 1907 referendum. Blacks were less prominent in the overall campaign, but had an important role in the social, economic, and political development of Knoxville--a role revealed by the prohibition campaign. Conflicts between Blacks and whites began surfacing in the early 1900's and were more important than the supposed manipulation of Black voters by whites.

Finally, Knoxville and East Tennessee were in contrast to Middle and West Tennessee on prohibition. Less conservative than their East Tennessee neighbors, Middle and West Tennesseans, especially those of Middle Tennessee, strongly opposed prohibition. Opposition to prohibition in Middle and West Tennessee prevented Knoxville from achieving the prohibition reform it sought. The more conservative nature of Knoxville and East Tennessee made prohibition more popular than in the other regions of the state, so popular in fact that Knoxville had accepted prohibition, rather than temperance, by 1887. Knoxville, therefore, had to wait until conditions were conducive in Middle and West Tennessee to bring about prohibition in the city, because

without support from those regions, legislation providing for the 1907 referendum would not have been possible.

Thus the struggle over prohibition in Knoxville can be used as a window through which one can study the economic, political, and social structures as well as the culture of the East Tennessee city. It was a city which reflected the general attitudes, beliefs, and goals of the entire region. According to Charles F. Bryan, Jr. "divergent patterns of growth, society, politics, and economics" had caused East Tennessee to become distinctly different from the state's other two divisions. In fact the region had "evolved into a unique Southern region." During the Civil War most East Tennesseans had been pro-Union and after the conflict supported the Republican party, indicating further differences with the rest of the South. Geographic isolation and decreasing population, political power, and economic influence further separated East Tennessee from the rest of the state and the South. A prime example of the split between East Tennessee and the rest of the state was the railroad boom in the state during the 1850's. Rather than developing connections with Middle and West Tennessee, railroads in East Tennessee joined with those in Virginia, the lower South, and Ohio.²

²Charles F. Bryan, Jr. "The Civil War in East Tennessee: A Social, Political, and Economic Study" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tennessee, 1978), pp. iii, v, 6-8, and 12-13.

As the center of activity in East Tennessee, Knoxville reflected the uniqueness of the region. The Civil War had tremendous effects on the city, most important of which were rapid growth and economic expansion. Recent historians have attempted to divide the new population, which consisted of long-time residents, farmers from outlying areas, and former Union soldiers, into two main factions: the conservative rural-oriented majority and the conservative business elite. The business leaders tended to dominate the city's economic and political development, while the rural majority challenged the businessmen for control of the city's social and cultural development. During the latter part of the nineteenth century the two conservative groups began dividing on several issues, prohibition being one of the most important, and the subject of this study.

CHAPTER I

LOCAL OPTION: THE UNATTAINABLE GOAL

The local option phase of the prohibition campaign in Tennessee during the 1870's and 1880's was aimed at bringing about legislation which would allow the citizens of small political divisions, be they cities, towns, or counties, to determine for themselves whether or not they would allow the sale of alcoholic beverages in their respective areas.¹ Support for local option first arose in 1870 when several groups in the state petitioned the constitutional convention to make the principle of local option a part of the new constitution. An amendment was introduced which would have enabled the legislature to allow the smaller governmental units to decide the liquor issue for themselves, but was defeated on February 12, 1870, by one vote, twenty-nine to twenty-eight. The convention refused to reconsider the

¹The popularity of local option varied from state to state. Local option had only lukewarm support in Georgia and Virginia, while Mississippi passed legislation, but had difficulties enforcing it. On the other hand, Kentucky and Alabama had quite successful local option laws. E. Merton Coulter, Georgia: A Short History (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 417-420; Virginius Dabney, Virginia: The New Dominion (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), p. 455; Richard Aubrey McLemore, ed., A History of Mississippi, Vol. II (Hattiesburg: University and College Press of Mississippi, 1973), p. 45; Ruby Dell Baughen and Sarah Hendrick Claypool, Kentucky: Yesterday and Today (Evansville: Kincaid Publishing Company, 1962), pp. 321-322; and Sheldon Hackney, Populism to Progressivism in Alabama (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), pp. 302-305.

proposal, leading future lawmakers to question the constitutionality of the measure when it arose on subsequent occasions.²

The local option movement in Tennessee did not die in the constitutional convention. Early in 1871 two more unsuccessful attempts at local option were made, and ironically these failures seemed to galvanize the movement. Petitions favoring local option, for example, poured into the General Assembly in 1873 asking for a variety of prohibition laws. Several proposals made it to the Senate Committee on Tippling and Tippling Houses and were formulated into one bill called "an act to provide against evils resulting from the sale of intoxicating liquors in the state." The bill addressed a number of areas, primarily licensing and the sale of intoxicating beverages. All individuals desiring a tippling license would be required to apply to their county clerk and within twenty days a referendum by the people would determine the fate of the saloonist's license. The proposal further made illegal sales to minors without written permission of parents or guardians, to intoxicated persons, and to habitual alcoholics whose wives or dependents had forbidden them to drink. Additionally, druggists could only sell alcohol for sacramental and medicinal purposes. The bill cleared the Senate

²Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, p. 9; Grace Leab, "The Temperance Movement in Tennessee" (M.A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1938), pp. 22-25.

by a vote of fifteen to five and the House by forty-six to eighteen. Five days after leaving the House the bill was vetoed by Governor John C. Brown, who claimed it gave to the people the power of legislation, a power not granted to them in the state constitution. Brown further argued that the bill had not been passed through correct constitutional procedures, for the Senate version had been presented to the House, but then had not been read the required three times in the House before being passed on for his approval. Supporters of the bill argued that the measure was not absolutely legislative in nature, but fell more into the realm of police regulation, and in that respect the people had a clear constitutional voice. Some local option supporters went so far as to accuse the governor's son-in-law, Colonel John C. Burch, of influencing Brown in favor of the liquor interests. However, no substantial proof was offered.³

After the veto of the local option bill, efforts were continued to bring about similar legislation between 1873 and 1879. Good Templars across the state campaigned for local option, stating it was "democratic and anti-coercive in principle." In 1875 local option legislation passed in the Senate, but failed in the House. The legislature was petitioned several times in 1877 and 1879, but despite efforts to arouse the public to support local option, a

³Ibid.

a bill was defeated in the House in 1879, thirty-three to twenty-seven.⁴

Continual defeats of local option measures and the questions about its constitutionality forced temperance leaders to seek other solutions. In the late 1860's William G. "Parson" Brownlow of Knoxville, a Methodist preacher, newspaper editor, and Tennessee governor (1865-1869), proposed legislation that would prohibit the sale of alcoholic beverages near any school or college. Although his proposal was not adopted during his administration, it would lay the foundation for one of the most important pieces of temperance legislation, The Four Mile Law.⁵ In 1873 and 1875 legislators tried unsuccessfully to pass bills that would make saloons illegal near the University of the South in Sewanee. The state constitution made these proposals illegal, since these bills were clearly class or special interest legislation. Rewording the measure in 1877 to prohibit retail sales of alcoholic beverages within four miles of any chartered school outside incorporated towns provided Tennesseans with the necessary vehicle to bring about prohibition gradually.⁶

⁴Leab, "The Temperance Movement in Tennessee," pp. 22-25.

⁵Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, pp. 8-9. Georgia had legislation similar to the Four Mile Law which was considered to be the only viable method for local option. Coulter, Georgia, p. 417.

⁶Ibid., pp. 10-11.

Despite the problems associated with local option and the alternative of the Four Mile Law, Knoxville still favored local option measures. Temperance forces in Knoxville openly supported local option as early as 1872. In December petitions were circulated in the city favoring a law that would restrict the sale of "spiritous and vinous liquors," and reportedly received a high number of signers.⁷ L. C. Shepard, of the Sons of Temperance, urged fellow members to do everything in their power to secure passage of the measure.⁸ Petitioning efforts were successful in the spring of 1873 with the passage of a local option bill by the state legislature. The Knoxville Daily Chronicle said the new law would revolutionize the law of licensing and the sale of alcoholic beverages. Under the law citizens of each civil district would be responsible for determining the status of the liquor business in their respective areas by popular vote.⁹ As noted earlier, the constitutionality of the measure had been questioned by opponents of local option, and Governor Brown quickly vetoed the bill, claiming that it delegated to the people power not granted to them. The Daily Chronicle disagreed, citing a decision by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania which declared that delegating regulatory powers to the people was not violating legislative

⁷Knoxville Daily Chronicle, December 22, 1872.

⁸Ibid., January 25, 1873.

⁹Ibid., January 25, 1873.

powers since the regulation, specifically of alcohol, directly touched the people. The Knoxville paper further attacked Brown by stating that the governor's legal abilities were "notoriously not of a superior character" and bemoaned the fact that the Tennessee Supreme Court had not had the chance to decide the issue. Questions were also raised about the possible influence of the state's "wealthy and powerful tippling business" on Brown's veto decision, but no substantial charges were produced by the paper.¹⁰

Support for local option measures waned during the latter half of the 1870's as a consequence of the defeat of the bill in 1873. Yet another petition calling for local option legislation was circulated through the city and county in the fall of 1878. The petition regarded intoxicating beverages as a "fruitful source of thriftlessness, poverty, and taxation," and the chief source of crime in the state. The sale of "distilled, vinous, and malt liquors" was to be controlled by all current regulations and restrictions, and was considered a privilege subject to the whim of the local voter. If the voters decided not to allow the sale of said beverages, then the open saloon would finally be closed in the state.¹¹ The measure met with little success, as did a similar one which made it to the General Assembly a year later, only to be defeated.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., March 27, 1873.

¹¹ Ibid., November 14, 1878.

¹² Ibid., April 1, 1879.

In order to agitate the temperance issue, especially local option measures, Knoxville temperance leaders organized several local and nationally affiliated temperance organizations. National organizations, such as the Sons of Temperance, the International Order of Good Templars, the United Order of the Golden Cross, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, and numerous local groups were organized in Knoxville during the 1870's, with local option as their chief goal.

The first of the national groups to promote local option efforts in the city was the Sons of Temperance, active in the state since 1848. Activities of the Sons had waned greatly by the Civil War, but by 1871 there were seven divisions operating in Knoxville, with approximately 400 members.¹³ The popularity and success of the temperance movement caused the strength of these and additional divisions to fluctuate erratically. By 1873 the number of active divisions in the area had almost doubled, and the enthusiasm and spirit of their members were clear. The Sons felt that the interest in this "great cause" would "continue until all addicted to the use of ardent spirits" would be "turned from the error of their ways." The members predicted that the "temperance barrier" would "float over a people disenthralled from the dominion of alcohol." A brighter future was seen by the divisions, since they

¹³Ibid. This figure includes two small divisions from Blount County.

believed that the "better class of citizens" was "becoming aroused" on the temperance question.¹⁴

Yet, despite this optimism, the Sons of Temperance offered hardly more than rhetoric to the cause of temperance in Knoxville. As an organization, it afforded the white men of the city the opportunity to associate with others who held temperance as the ideal, but it contributed little to the overall temperance effort. During the late seventies and early eighties the membership of the city's various divisions declined, and by the mid-1880's they had all but disappeared.

The next national temperance organization of importance in the city was the International Order of Good Templars, organized in Knoxville in the fall of 1872. "Though recently organized in our city, the order [Holston No. 36] is wielding an influence and waging a vigorous warfare against the demon, intemperance."¹⁵ The Good Templars exuded an enthusiasm and positive attitude, similar to the city's Sons of Temperance. The Good Templars "confidently predict[ed] a new impetus to their order" and felt that if only one man were saved from the evils of alcohol, then their efforts were worthwhile.¹⁶ Although somewhat smaller in numbers than the Sons of Temperance--264 members versus

¹⁴Ibid., February 23, 1873.

¹⁵Ibid., December 16, 1873.

¹⁶Ibid., December 1, 1872.

400--the Good Templars appear to have been better organized and to have had better leadership. Knoxville's Good Templars urged local churches to unite with the organizations and to "make war upon this powerful enemy of society, peace, and happiness" by not standing "by with their arms folded while all around them the noblest youths of the land" perished.¹⁷ While the Good Templars urged cooperation with other temperance-minded groups, they resolved that it was the duty of each member to minister to drunks as if they were sick.¹⁸ The organization viewed drunkenness as a "growing evil," and it pitied the man who fell under the "baneful influence of the intoxicating cup."¹⁹ The city's Good Templars criticized those who did not help the drunkard, comparing the "inactive Christian to Pilot [Pontius Pilate] washing his hands of the drunkard's blood" by making no effort to save the drunkard from the evil influence of ardent spirits.²⁰

The Good Templars fell victim to the same forces that brought about the demise of the city's Sons of Temperance, namely the lack of a positive program. Like the Sons, the Good Templars offered little but rhetoric, relying upon an undefined "social feature" to continue attracting younger

¹⁷Ibid., July 18, 1874.

¹⁸Ibid., July 22, 1874.

¹⁹Ibid., September 25, 1874 and January 27, 1875.

²⁰Ibid., November 18, 1874.

men and women to their organization.²¹ By the late 1880's the organization had ceased to function in Knoxville.

The third temperance organization was the United Order of the Golden Cross, with its Supreme Commandary founded in Knoxville by fourteen men and women on May 9, 1876. The U.O.G.C., later to become more prominent in the Northeast, was chartered by the State of Tennessee on July 4, 1876, to "embody in their tenets Temperance and Christianity" while providing for the "pecuniary relief of sick and distressed members." A reserve fund was established "for the benefit of the friends and family" when they died. Furthermore, the society was established as a "national, social, beneficial order based on Christian temperance principles." Clearly the U.O.G.C. was much more than simply a temperance organization. Its members, including doctors and ministers, supported temperance, but banded together as more of a mutual aid society than as a strictly temperance organization.²² Temperance agitation was merely one of the U.O.G.C.'s many interests, an interest that was tied directly into its other concerns. For instance, as a benevolent society, the U.O.G.C. promoted orphans' and widows' societies, believing temperance reform as one of the best ways to assist both groups. Golden Cross members resolved to "use every proper effort" to have legislation

²¹Ibid., December 15, 1874.

²²Ibid., November 21, 1883.

passed that would "secure better protection to widows and orphans caused by the use of intoxicating liquors."²³

Members of the order were expected to be "of sound bodily health, possess a good moral character, [be] socially acceptable," and be between the ages of sixteen and seventy. The Golden Cross expected its brethren to give "all the moral and material aid" to its members by "holding instructive and scientific lectures" and encouraging one another in business and assist others in gaining employment. U.O.G.C. members pledged not to use any "spiritous, malt, or fermented liquors." The Golden Cross differed uniquely from the Sons of Temperance and Good Templars, because it not only allowed women to be active members of their society, but also allowed women the "privilege to attain any rank of honor and trust in the order."²⁴

The Golden Cross spread rapidly throughout the United States, having its greatest success and strength in the New England states, especially Maine and Massachusetts. By 1889 the order had instituted a total of 299 commandaries in ten states and the District of Columbia, with a membership in excess of 14,000.²⁵ But the U.O.G.C., while clearly an active, growing order, contributed little of significance to Knoxville's prohibition efforts. The

²³Ibid., March 22 and May 15, 1883.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Knoxville Journal, May 21-22, 1889.

apparent failure of the Golden Cross to achieve any notable success in the prohibition movement in the city can partially be explained by analyzing its stated goals. The U.O.G.C. from its earliest beginnings was primarily a social, benevolent society of the "better sorts," which had an interest in temperance as it related to broader interests. The order also failed because, like the Sons of Temperance and Good Templars, it offered rhetoric and few solutions. These orders and other local special interest groups did discuss bringing about reform through a variety of methods, local option, as noted, being the favorite of temperance leaders in the city, but none achieved success.

The final national temperance group to organize in Knoxville was the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, established in the city on June 24, 1881.²⁶ Organizational efforts began as early as April of the year when Mrs. H. O. Farrell of the national W.C.T.U. arrived in the city for just that purpose. Mrs. Farrell expressed disappointment with the Christian community for not extending a helping hand to the "struggling ones" who were trying desperately to "break loose from the iron grasp of that soul destroying monster," intemperance. Farrell disagreed with those who argued that women were "stepping aside from their sphere of modesty" by entering the temperance battle and called upon the women of Knoxville to "enlist in the

²⁶Knoxville Daily Chronicle, June 26, 1881.

pleasant army," urging the "cooperation of the true and tried," who would "stand by their colors."²⁷ Mrs. Farrell believed that many Knoxvilleians supported the W.C.T.U., wanting to establish a "temperance temple" to hold gospel temperance meetings in the city, in order to offer assistance to those suffering from the evils of intoxicating beverages. She reiterated that the opposition to women taking an active part in the temperance effort should not discourage Knoxville's proud ladies from participating in the movement, arguing that God, through Jesus, had granted women the power, right, and influence as disciples--a role they could use most appropriately in fighting intemperance.²⁸

A moderate growth rate and activity level characterized Knoxville W.C.T.U. chapters throughout their history. Like the other temperance organizations in the city, the W.C.T.U. experienced sporadic popularity, peaking during the mid to late 1880's, but outlasting the other groups, and in fact surviving until prohibition was achieved in Knoxville and beyond. In November 1883 Miss Frances E. Willard, W.C.T.U. national president, visited the Knoxville chapters, offering praise and encouragement to the local sisters. While in the city Miss Willard and her private secretary, Miss Anne Gordon, spoke to a large group of young people on the evils

²⁷Ibid., April 28 and May 13, 1881.

²⁸Ibid.

of intemperance. Willard and Gordon demonstrated "clearly to the little folks the deleterious effects of alcohol upon the human system."²⁹ But despite the efforts of Willard and Gordon and local ladies, interest continued to fluctuate. A January, 1884, meeting at which only eleven of sixty members were present, characterized the popularity of the Knoxville W.C.T.U. The city's ladies, nonetheless, remained encouraged by their temperance work. One chapter officer urged better attendance, asking for the "manifestation of greater interest in the temperance work," believing it to be the duty and pride of every woman to instill the "correct principles" of temperance in the minds of her children.³⁰

One problem affecting the popularity of the W.C.T.U. and other temperance groups was that they were not of one mind on the issue of how to achieve prohibition. Local opinion was clearly supported by most temperance organizations, including the W.C.T.U., but the ladies did not think prohibition legislation had, would, or could achieve temperance. If not by law, then how was temperance to be accomplished? The ladies feared that alcohol would always "claim its victims," but argued that intemperance could be and was being squelched by moral suasion, showing that it was no longer acceptable to become intoxicated, that it was

²⁹Ibid., November 21-22, 24-25, and 27, 1883.

³⁰Ibid., January 31, 1884.

"absolutely disreputable, in the opinion of even those who sell strong drink." The ladies pointed out that no longer would one find alcoholics in an "official station," for excessive drinking proved detrimental to a man's "public ambitions." "Energetic and intelligent moral effort" was recognized by the W.C.T.U. as being the best method to achieve temperance and that legal prohibition, where attempted and accomplished, was the direct result of the persuasive influences of temperance efforts. The ladies of Knoxville's W.C.T.U. believed, as did national president Willard, that the "most law can [could] accomplish is to punish, and to a certain degree intimidate crime and vice."³¹

Abstinence, brought about through moral suasion, was the immediate goal of the local and national W.C.T.U. Educating the people in the desirability of temperance, through lectures and public and Sabbath schools, was seen as the wisest method. Proper education, especially of the young, would fill souls "with repugnance for the frightful spiritual ruin" caused by intemperance, and if the education was received at an early age, it would be possible to reduce alcoholism "to almost zero." It was doubted that those who were alcoholics could ever be "reclaimed to sobriety," and that if the state or national government ever passed a prohibition law, it would be a direct result of the education of the young.³²

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., April 10, 1884.

Declining interest experienced by all Knoxville temperance organizations soon befell the ladies of the city's W.C.T.U. chapters. Despite declining or fluctuating membership rolls, the ladies of the Knoxville W.C.T.U. continued to campaign actively for temperance, ultimately assisting in the local option measures they had not previously supported.³³

Lack of significant success by temperance groups with national affiliation did not discourage Knoxvillians from organizing a variety of purely local temperance organizations. In August, 1871, a "public temperance society" organized at Brown's School House in Knox County, admitted both men and women to membership. The society's chief activities were the delivery of speeches and essays, viewed as the best way to preach temperance in the rural districts.³⁴ Another group, the Beaver Creek Temperance Union of Knox County, supported this approach by offering lectures and essays, described as "mature thought well arranged, well studied, and creditable to the society."³⁵ Almost a decade passed before another local group was formed, organized by thirty-seven ladies, as the Second Presbyterian Church Ladies Temperance Society in April, 1880, with the purpose of developing and crystallizing

³³Ibid., November 15-17, 1887; January 15 and March 11, 1889.

³⁴Ibid., August 4 and 12, 1871.

³⁵Ibid., August 29, 1871.

temperance sentiment and to "awaken in each other a deeper sense of responsibility and to strengthen and encourage each other in the good cause." A month later the ladies would participate in a revival of local option in the city.³⁶

Another ambitious organization, the Knoxville Prohibition Society, formed in 1883, favored the total abolition of the liquor trade from the city by high licensing of saloons. This society thought that expensive enough licenses would "drive the rum traffic from the country to the cities, and then such licenses would totally expel it from the cities." Society members viewed intemperance as a "gigantic moral evil and great social curse" which was "not only dangerous, but absolutely ruinous to health, morality, and every principle of good." A year later the St. John and David Club organized for the purpose of more effectively cooperating in the temperance movement and to coordinate support for candidates for public office who would advance their special cause. Apparently the Knoxville Prohibition Club either folded or merged with the St. John Club, because the Knoxville society disappeared and several of its key officers assumed similar positions in the St. John organization. Typically, Knoxville prohibitionists, such as J. A. Rayl, L. C. Shephard, and Judge J. F. J. Lewis, were members of several of the city's national and local temperance groups, moving from society to society as each organization's

³⁶Ibid., April 25, 1880.

popularity rose and fell.³⁷

Even with steady and continued defeats, local option did not lose popular support, especially in Knoxville. From 1880 to 1882 local option experienced a revival, apparently centered in Knoxville. In May, 1880, the Reverend F. E. Sturgis of the Second Presbyterian Church, and others, including the women's society mentioned earlier, held a meeting to plan a local option movement, with the hopes of persuading the General Assembly to adopt such a measure. The Reverend Sturgis was the city's leading proponent of local option and one of the most forceful temperance spokesmen. Sturgis declared Knoxville to be the most religious city he had ever seen, but at the same time it was also "literally and thoroughly a liquor city," a result of the "iniquitous blot of the liquor traffic." Attempting to organize a local option society in Knoxville, Sturgis and his cohorts used the city's churches as a base for recruiting members. Local churches agreed to "generally suspend services" during the planned meeting held on July 3, and preparations were made for "excellent musical entertainment" by the various church choirs. Resolutions were unanimously adopted favoring prohibition laws, but accepting local option measures if the former were not feasible.³⁸

A committee was formed to canvass the county to obtain

³⁷Ibid., September 15 and 18, 1883; September 16-17 and October 5, 1884.

³⁸Ibid., May 4-5 and 11, 1880.

the needed signatures for a petition favoring local option legislation to be sent to the General Assembly. The petition received widespread support, winning the approval of every Knoxville newspaper, the Chronicle, Tribune, Dispatch, Republican, Methodist, Beacon (Baptist), and Golden Cross. Knoxville's clergymen "without exception" wholeheartedly came out in favor of the movement. A slight shift in the emphasis of moral suasion, especially by the W.C.T.U. was noted:

The people that represent the Christianity and moral and social welfare, and the character and leadership of the city are almost a unit in its [local option] behalf. They believe moral suasion must be supplemented and supported by law.³⁹

Local option petitioners argued that intemperance cost Tennessee at least thirteen million dollars annually in expenditures, and another thirteen million dollars was wasted indirectly. The committee asserted that intemperance produced fully two-thirds of the state's crime and pauperism and a "large per cent of our vice, ignorance, and insanity." They claimed that intemperance spread "disease, suffering, and woe and general demoralization" and that it had "broken hearts and blighted homes" with its history of "ruin and poverty and sorrow," leaving "hopeless

³⁹Ibid. In addition to Sturgis there were several prominent citizens in the local option society, including W. W. Woodruff and J. A. Rayl, businessmen; Dr. T. A. Humes, President of the University of Tennessee and Dr. J. S. McCullough, President of Knoxville College; L. C. Shephard, local undertaker; and numerous ministers from the area.

graves" in its wake.⁴⁰

State legislators were chastised for allowing the liquor traffic, the root of the problem, to exist. The liquor traffic was seen as being "diametrically opposed to morality and religion, and the greatest enemy on earth" of "good government, education, public order, peaceful and happy homes, and progress and civilization." Opponents of the liquor traffic believed it added nothing to the political economy; in fact the traffic was "unjustifiable" as a business. Liquor interests were "so destructive, wicked, and cruel in all its operations and results" that if it were not legal under state law, it would be "indictable at common law." Sturgis and his followers feared that they could accomplish very little as long as the liquor traffic was "entrenched in law." Committee members felt that advocacy and employment of moral suasion would have only limited effects as long as the saloon business continued to exist and thrive. Local option supporters urged the citizens of Knoxville to unite "against a common enemy" and bring about the end of the "evils of intemperance and the sin and disgrace of the liquor trade."⁴¹

Although the committee met with no immediate success, supporters believed they would ultimately achieve their goal of having a local option law passed by the state legislature. The committee believed the measure had

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

"attained a prominence" it had never before achieved in Tennessee, but that the "moral force of every social circle, in every community, every hamlet, every town, and city in the state" would be necessary to ensure their victory over the evils of intemperance.⁴² Sturgis, in a letter to the editor of the Knoxville Daily Chronicle, expressed optimism characteristic of local option supporters:

No year has ever opened in the history of our country when the cause of temperance stood so well, and was making such marked progress as at this time. The whole nation seems stirred as never before. Several states are increasing their liquor penalties and a good number, including Tennessee, are endeavoring to secure the passage of local option laws. The Christian church of every denomination is waking up to the perils and evils of intemperance as at no previous time. The signs of the times are everywhere suspicious. The morning light is breaking. In due time victory is certain. The temperance hosts are marshalling in solemn earnestness, and are on the winning side.⁴³

By late January, 1881, it seemed positive action was once again being taken. The canvass to gain signatures for a local option petition, initiated in 1880, began to show results. "Thousands of appeals, pamphlets, letters, tracts, and blank memorials" sent out across the state, stirred up sentiment, secured cooperation, and obtained signatures for the local option petition. Several memorials came in from across Tennessee, including seven ecclesiastical, twenty-two from universities and colleges, thirty-two from the press, and over one hundred from clergymen, high officials, lesser

⁴² Ibid., January 1, 1881.

⁴³ Ibid., January 18, 1881.

officials, counties, and special memorials. The ecclesiastical memorials represented 100,000 and 200,000 church members; the university and college memorials represented one hundred chancellors, presidents, professors, and teachers, as well as over 14,000 students; the press memorials represented seven editors of church papers and twenty-five editors of secular papers; the high official memorials were signed by judges, attorneys general, representatives to Congress, and others from across the state; the lesser official memorials were signed by twenty-six chancery court clerks, nineteen school superintendents, and nineteen sheriffs; the special memorials came from the colony of Rugby and officers of the Knoxville Deaf and Dumb Asylum; and county memorials represented 15,000 signatures, of which one-third were from Knox County.⁴⁴

By March 1881, the chairman of the House Committee on Tippling Houses had received 21,067 petitions demanding local option legislation. A bill which would allow cities and towns with populations over 5,000 to decide the liquor question by popular vote every two years was introduced in the House, but despite obvious public sentiment favoring the bill, it was defeated thirty-five to twenty-eight.

⁴⁴Ibid., January 29, 1881. The ecclesiastical memorials came from the Northern Presbyterian, Cumberland Presbyterian, and Lutheran Synods; Northern and Southern Methodist Episcopal Conferences. Also, Vanderbilt University did not receive the petitions in time to sign them.

With this defeat, enthusiasm for local option measures declined until 1895, when a local option society surfaced in Nashville.⁴⁵ Knoxvilleians, however, seemed to have lost interest in local option as a solution to the liquor problem. The numerous defeats of these measures discouraged the city's temperance forces, many of whom held ambivalent feelings towards legal prohibition efforts, whether local option or otherwise.

Most of Knoxville's temperance leaders appear to have believed that moral suasion was the key to success in winning the battle against the evils of alcohol. Legal prohibition, it was argued, would simply not work, until the whole of society had been educated to the benefits of temperance. The Knoxville Daily Chronicle, a leading proponent of moral suasion, disagreed with political prohibitionists who asserted that "moral forces" had contributed only very little to the temperance effort. The Chronicle held the opinion that the temperance crusade had been "wonderfully advanced through the work of religionists and moralists" during the previous twenty-five year period. The paper further believed that drunkenness was "either the result of moral depravity or physical infirmity" and could only be cured by moral suasion or through some sort of medication. Strong drink, the paper claimed, had once been in every household in the city and had resulted in increased

⁴⁵ Leab, "The Temperance Movement in Tennessee," pp. 52-

neighborhood strife, but that increased moral influences had sharply decreased the acceptance of demon rum. The Chronicle, and its supporters, concluded that "all religious and moral questions should be acted upon by the people free from partisan bias," and declared that political prohibition would never work, because of its inherent partisan nature.⁴⁶ Ironically, the next major move by the temperance leaders in state and city was a political one, a constitutional amendment for prohibition.

⁴⁶Knoxville Daily Chronicle, August 2, 1885.

CHAPTER II

CONSTITUTIONAL PROHIBITION: KNOXVILLE'S HARBINGER OF THE FUTURE?

During the 1880's temperance activities in Tennessee shifted from local option and moral suasion measures to prohibition by amendment to the state constitution, a movement popular throughout the nation.¹ Constitutional prohibition in the state surfaced in 1882, when state temperance forces unsuccessfully attempted to call a constitutional convention with the hopes of passing a prohibition amendment. In 1883 temperance agitation resulted in a prohibition amendment being brought before the House, but it failed, and supporters would have to wait until the next year before any significant action could be taken. A state temperance convention, held in Nashville in 1884, began to coordinate pro-amendment efforts throughout the state, uniting secular and religious groups behind the proposed amendment. The Tennessee Temperance Alliance, a coordinating organization formed at the Nashville convention, and the state W.C.T.U., presented the General Assembly with petitions containing over 18,000 signatures from fifty of the state's ninety-five counties. State Senator J. H.

¹Although constitutional prohibition was reported to be popular across the United States, it appears that Tennessee was the only Southern state to try that method to achieve prohibition.

McDowell of Obion County directed the amendment through the state legislation and introduced a bill calling for local option through a constitutional amendment. The proposed amendment, which passed in 1885, had to pass through the General Assembly a second time in 1887 and then be approved by a referendum of the people.²

Prohibitionist forces began the year 1887 confident that the constitutional amendment would pass the legislature the required second time and be submitted quickly to the people for their decision.³ Advocates of the amendment believed that a proposal offered by the liquor interests, which would compensate liquor dealers if the amendment should be approved by the people, was a "shrewd, but patent attempt to prejudice the cause of the amendment before the people."⁴ Despite efforts by the liquor interests to defeat the amendment, it was approved by thirty to two in the Senate and ninety-one to four in the House. Debates over the date for submission to the people followed. Some favored waiting until the general election of 1888, while others, mainly the prohibitionists, favored a special

²Issac, Prohibition and Politics, pp. 12-15; Andrew M. Ambrose, "Sister Reforms: An Examination of the Relationship Between the Tennessee Woman's Temperance Union and the State Woman's Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920" (M. A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1979), p. 22; and Roger L. Hart, Re-deemers, Bourbons, and Populists: Tennessee, 1870-1896 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), pp. 67-68.

³Knoxville Journal, January 1 and 4, 1887.

⁴Ibid., February 5, 1887.

election as soon as possible. The Knoxville Journal, which favored the amendment, urged caution:

This is a serious question and our temperance friends should not be too fast and there should be no mistake made about this matter, as it involves the question of the destruction of a large amount of property, as well as a great moral question--the suppression of making and selling liquors.⁵

Ultimately prohibitionist forces won the debate, as a special election for the amendment was set for September 29, 1887.⁶

Pro-amendment forces geared up for an intense campaign throughout the state. Prominent temperance speakers were to be involved in supporting the amendment, including the Reverends Sam Jones and Sam Small, both of Georgia; Frances E. Willard, national president of the W.C.T.U.; and the leading clergymen of the state. Despite involvement of such prominent individuals, criticism arose over the organization of the pro-amendment campaign. Critics did not believe that the state's churches had been enlisted in the campaign to the degree they should be. The majority of Tennessee churches supported the amendment, but a few

⁵Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, p. 29; Knoxville Journal, February 20, 1887. According to Isaac, Governor Robert L. Taylor did not take a significant stand on the prohibition amendment. See also Robert Love Taylor, Jr., "An Inquiry into the Background and Personalities of Governors Alf and Bob Taylor, 1848-1886" (M. A. thesis, University of Tennessee, 1964), pp. 64-66, who indicates Bob Taylor chose not to address prohibition. Both candidates apparently felt education was the hot issue.

⁶Knoxville Journal, March 4, 1887.

were either split on the issue or chose to remain neutral on the amendment. Some churchmen did not object to the proposed amendment, but, as in previous prohibition campaigns, they clung to the hope that moral suasion would bring about prohibition.⁷

Knoxville temperance forces were at first slow or hesitant to support the proposed constitutional amendment, preferring local option and moral suasion tactics. In February, 1885, the Knox County Prohibition Convention met and endorsed the action by the General Assembly in adopting the prohibition amendment. The convention instructed the county legislative delegation to "use all diligence in advancing the cause and pressing to its consumation [sic] the submission of the amendment to the people." Convention delegates pledged to advance the activity in any and every way they could and would assist all those trying to do the same.⁸

More significant action was taken a year later with the formation of the Young Men's Amendment Club in Knoxville. The club organized because "people were being stirred up on the question of intemperance," which the young men blamed on the Democratic party which had "made hard times, and hard times brought intemperance." The

⁷Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, pp. 35-36; Knoxville Journal, April 5, 1887.

⁸Knoxville Daily Chronicle, February 22, 1885.

members bemoaned the fact that for every dollar spent for education, "sixteen dollars was employed in the saloons to educate our young men for the prisons, the scaffolds, the grave, and hell."⁹ Believing that the question of constitutional prohibition of alcoholic beverages had to be placed above partisan politics if it were to succeed, the club felt the only way to remove it from partisan politics was to persuade both political parties in the state to adopt a platform supporting the proposed amendment.¹⁰

The Young Men's Amendment Club departed from the traditional non-political strategies adopted by most of the city's other temperance organizations, and attempted to unite with the embryonic prohibition party forming in Knox County. The club resolved to cooperate with the party's executive committee and insure that the city and county were "thoroughly canvassed" in support of the proposed prohibition amendment. A split developed within the amendment club over a resolution in which the club stated that "many of our purest and best citizens have been practically disenfranchised" because both the Republican and Democratic parties in the state had "so frequently run candidates whose character precludes the possibility" of the pure and best citizens supporting them, thus excluding them from the electoral process.¹¹

⁹Ibid., June 1, 1886.

¹⁰Ibid., June 12, 1886.

¹¹Knoxville Journal, July 27, 1886.

Opponents of the resolution argued that the club was straying from its original mission of "using every legitimate means to secure the submission of the prohibition amendment" to a vote of the people. It was believed that in order to reach their goal successfully, it would be necessary to divorce the prohibition question from other political issues entirely, especially from third party politics. A prohibition party formed in the state in 1883, whose chief strength was in Middle and West Tennessee, failed to gain any significant support in the Knoxville area. Club members believed they should support only those candidates who favored the prohibition amendment. In addition, club members did not think that the question should become embroiled in the mediocrity of politics and political parties. Partisan politics, or even worse, third party politics, would cloud the issue, divide prohibition forces, wasting time and energy that would dilute "elements of power" which could bring about a successful conclusion to the submission question.

Proponents of the prohibition party favored filling every office, regardless of whether its holder had a role in submitting the question to the people, while opponents argued that this new direction would only confuse the issue, leading ultimately to the "weakening, if not the overthrow" of the amendment club in Knoxville. Anti-prohibition party members believed that each temperance organization could best accomplish its goal if it kept the

"specific end in view," and avoided petty politics and kept the amendment separated from other political issues.¹² The Young Men's Amendment Club declined during the remainder of the year, but reactivated just prior to the referendum of 1887.

The thought that many voters might not take a stand on the issue, or perhaps not even vote, troubled the city's prohibition forces. It was feared that since the proposed amendment would not apply to incorporated areas, the rural districts, many already having prohibition, would not turn out in sufficient enough numbers to win approval for the amendment. A light voter turnout, it was predicted, would result in the defeat of the measure. The most vigorous campaign efforts would be conducted in the cities and towns, and proponents of the amendment were concerned that the rural districts, if neglected, might not see the necessity of approving such an amendment, and fail to vote.¹³

Knoxvillians began to become actively involved, holding a series of mass meetings from May through the special election in September. The first such meeting, attended by over 100 persons, adopted resolutions strongly praising the proposed amendment, declaring it was the clear and "bounden duty of every patriotic and philanthropic citizen" to do all that could be done to have the amendment adopted.

¹²Ibid., August 3, 1886.

¹³Ibid., June 5, 1887.

Those attending the meeting further declared that the time had passed for either high licensing or local option measures, believing that these solutions could only prove to be a hindrance to the "cause of the Home against the Saloon," and would favor the liquor interests. Those in attendance commended the work of the churches and newspapers in the state which supported the amendment, while condemning those remaining silent, arguing that their silence benefitted the liquor interests and that neutrality on the issue was the same as, or worse than, opposition to it.¹⁴

Mass meetings continued to be held in Knoxville throughout the summer. Prospects for the prohibition amendment were reported to be good in the city's Ninth Ward after a "large and enthusiastic" mass meeting was held at Mr. Johns' Coal Yard on Asylum Street on July 4. Mrs. Lide Meriwether, president of the Tennessee W.C.T.U., spoke on the city favoring high licensing, and "generalized in a lucid manner upon the amount of money" spent on alcoholic beverages in the United States.¹⁵ J. H. Fussell, president of the Tennessee Temperance Alliance, claimed in a speech at the Knox County House that only the people of the state could effectively prohibit the manufacture and sale of intoxicating beverages, since each legislature could

¹⁴Ibid., May 4-5, 1887.

¹⁵Ambrose, "Sister Reforms," pp. 21-23.

overturn any measures a previous legislature had made but could not overturn the proposed amendment if passed by the people.¹⁶

Knoxville's churches were influential in the mass meetings, as were prominent ministers from across Tennessee. The Reverend T. J. Duncan of Kingsport "dissected" the church and its position on the proposed amendment, stating that money churches might receive from the liquor interests was tainted by whiskey, and encouraged church members not to "swallow it." Duncan criticized the "lukewarm" voter because there was no "middle ground" in the fight for prohibition, and "all must act one way or the other."¹⁷

Sam Small, a Georgia minister, spoke to one of the city's largest prohibition meetings on the evils of the liquor traffic, declaring the liquor interests were the "greatest burden" on the workingman. Claiming that no man had a right to drink intoxicating beverages, Small reaffirmed the prohibitionist view on voting, saying that no man could remain neutral on the issue "without compromising his integrity." For those Knoxvilleians unsure of what stand to take on the amendment, Small offered clear advice:

Bring all the sots made beastly by liquor, all the women and children with wretched features and clothed in tattered garments, go to the cemeteries in and around your city and get all the dead who have been buried beneath a liquor stroke and ask them what

¹⁶Knoxville Journal, June 7, 12, and 19, 1887; and July 3, 5-6, and 29, 1887.

¹⁷Ibid., July 15, 1887.

to do. The only answer would be, vote for prohibition in September.¹⁸

A Chattanooga minister, G. C. Rankin, offered Knoxville a clear picture of what the proposed amendment would do for the city and state:

Laws have been passed in measure protective to society, churches and school houses, the ballot box, children, debauched manhood, and the Christian Sabbath. Now the proper step to take after this monster's limbs have been fastened by all these laws, is to cut its throat with the amendment knife and let it bleed to death.

Rankin showed that the costs of the liquor traffic in Knox County in 1886 had been \$13,208.55 for prosecution, significantly higher than the \$8,725 in revenue collected from the trade. The passage of the proposed amendment, Rankin declared, would "greatly lessen the non-producing" class and employ them "for the good of morals and society."¹⁹

Recognizing the importance of the estimated 60,000 Negro voters, temperance leaders throughout the state brought Blacks gradually into the campaign effort. Across the state, Black W.C.T.U.s were joined by faculties and students of Knoxville College, Fisk, Central Tennessee, and Roger William Universities of Nashville, in the prohibition campaign. In addition, Blacks offered petitions to the General Assembly, organized temperance societies, and wrote letters to newspapers supporting the amendment.²⁰

¹⁸Ibid., July 22, 1887.

¹⁹Ibid., September 29, 1887.

²⁰Joseph H. Cartwright, The Triumph of Jim Crow:

In late September 4,000 amendment supporters turned out in Knoxville to hear Henry M. Turner of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Atlanta. Turner, a "colored man of fine physique and commanding voice" encouraged the city's Black population to vote for the amendment out of their own interests and not just because whites asked them to. The minister "urged Blacks to purify themselves of sins prevalent among whites," specifically, intemperance, "thereby demonstrating their virtue."²¹

Perhaps the most significant Black activity in the city came with the arrival of Professor Joseph C. Price, a "renowned, colored brother" from North Carolina. Price, president of Livingstone College in North Carolina, spoke to large crowds of Blacks and whites at Coker's Pond and Staub's Theater, and revealed why the anti-prohibitionists so eagerly courted the Black man's vote. Professor Price believed the liquor interests were more concerned about their own economic welfare than with that of the Black, and that the country would be "as restless as the sea" until the liquor trade was shut down. The open saloon would upset the Negroes' new homes, homes they had been without for over 250 years, and now that Blacks were beginning to own

Tennessee Race Relations in the 1880's (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1976), pp. 206-207; Ambrose, "Sister Reforms," pp. 23-24; Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, p. 36; and Knoxville Journal, September 22, 1887.

²¹ Cartwright, The Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 206.

property, pay taxes, and become useful citizens, Price thought his race should do everything within its power to stop evil, especially that of the open saloon. Furthermore, Price argued that the open saloon threatened the new and increasingly important educational and religious opportunities Blacks had gained. In closing, Price expressed his belief that, as in the past, Blacks would do their duty in the battle over the amendment. Knoxvilleians overwhelmingly approved of Price's speeches, with several of the city's leading churches cancelling Sunday services in order that their members might hear the "able colored man."²²

Another important element in the prohibition battle was the stand the city's leading newspaper, the Journal, took in the fight over the amendment. The Journal believed that intemperance was one of the "greatest evils with which the human race" had ever suffered. Intemperance had "filled thousands of homes with poverty and wretchedness," and the dreaded disease had "sent thousands of men to premature graves." The paper did not feel that intemperance attacked any particular class, as both rich and poor yielded to its "seductive influence" and "had fallen before its terrible shafts." Regarding the proposed amendment, the Journal declared that "no one should ever allow an opportunity to pass to strike the monster of intemperance" a blow whenever

²²Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, p. 36; Cartwright, The Triumph of Jim Crow, p. 206; and Knoxville Journal, September 13, 1887.

possible, but the paper favored another policy, that of moral suasion. The amendment was certainly a step in the right direction, but the Journal feared that some of the amendment's supporters were perhaps too zealous, sometimes "given to intemperate denuncification" of anyone who did not agree with their position on the amendment, and the paper did not believe these men did the cause of prohibition any good.²³

Although the Journal still held the opinion that prohibition could best be achieved through moral suasion, the paper offered its complete and unqualified support to the prohibition amendment movement. Nonetheless, the Journal was not entirely satisfied with the way the campaign was going. Asserting that while the "long and eloquent" speeches of the temperance leaders correctly "portrayed the baneful effects" of intoxicating beverages, the newspaper offered little that was new, and encouraged the leadership to concentrate their efforts on getting the vote out, rather than stirring up more emotions on the subject. Declaring that prohibition was a moral and a legal issue, an issue that "no man who has proper self-respect" could decide upon based on purely "mercenary considerations," the paper urged voters to give the measure the serious and careful consideration it warranted. Chastising those individuals who would consider making "merchandise" of

²³ Knoxville Journal, June 11, 1887.

their principles, the Journal considered them to be as "reprehensible as the man who receives pay from the saloons," and the man who "bribes his conscience with gold is a moral monster."²⁴

The Journal criticized both sides for using inflammatory language. As the paper saw it, the anti-prohibitionists were going "beyond the bounds of propriety" and over-indulging in "very intemperate language." Reasserting its position that prohibition was a moral question, the Journal claimed that a local option law would have had better results, but that since temperance leaders in the state and city had determined otherwise, the proposed amendment deserved a fair hearing before the people. Clearly favoring the amendment, the paper accused its opponents of corrupt campaign practices, specifically of vote buying. Emphasizing that the "purity of the ballot box" had to be preserved, the Journal claimed that anti-prohibition forces had collected a large fund for buying votes, and in at least one case had attempted to buy the influence of a powerful politician.²⁵

The anti-prohibitionists, chiefly the state's liquor interests, had amassed a large campaign fund well in advance of the September amendment election. The state liquor traffic, fearing the strength of the pro-amendment

²⁴ Ibid., June 12 and August 26, 1887.

²⁵ Ibid., September 8, 1887.

forces, established the State Protective Association of Tennessee, with George S. Kinney of Nashville as president. Officially the association was to protect liquor interests against the "aggressions of the prohibition movement," and it criticized the proposed amendment for not providing for compensation to liquor dealers.²⁶ In order to gather the needed money for the campaign fund, anti-prohibitionists, led by the Protective Association, assessed wholesale and retail dealers across the state, as well as their employees at all levels. "Liberal contributions" of more than \$30,000 were reported to have been made by the liquor interests in Nashville, Knoxville, and Memphis. Thousands of dollars more had also been contributed or promised from sources outside the state, making the total fund a quarter of a million dollars or more.²⁷ The Journal noted that the managers of the campaign fund were skilled in its use, knowing that the "sin of avarice" was as prevalent as intemperance itself, and they would appeal directly to the avarice of the common voter and political leaders alike.

One such case of political corruption discovered by the Journal involved First District Congressman, Roderick Random Butler.²⁸ Butler, while running for his seat in Congress in 1872, was described as never having drunk "a quart

²⁶ Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, pp. 28-29.

²⁷ Knoxville Journal, September 8, 1887.

²⁸ Ibid., September 1, 1887.

of brandy or whiskey in his life."²⁹ It was no surprise that in 1887 "thousands of people were dumbfounded" to learn that Butler had come out "publicly against the prohibition amendment." The Journal and its readers were astonished by Butler's actions, considering his past history as a "lifelong and outspoken temperance man," and he had a few weeks before stated he was in favor of the amendment. Suspicion quickly arose over the sudden switch in Butler's position, and the paper discovered facts "displaying wickedness so appalling," that the Journal had to present them to the people. As the newspaper saw it, Butler met in private with George S. Kinney, president of the State Protective Association, and Charles Nelson, wealthy liquor dealer from Nashville, and closed a deal which gave Butler's influence and support to the anti-prohibitionists. In return for influence over his constituents on the constitutional amendment, the congressman would receive \$5,000. Bristol newspapers carried denials of the deal. In fact, the papers stated upon the word of Butler himself, that he still favored the amendment. At the same time, the representative began circulating 500 copies of an address by Kinney opposing the legislation. Meanwhile, the liquor men were becoming concerned that Butler, under the public pressure of the Journal and other newspapers, might not carry out his end of the alleged deal, so George Kinney and

²⁹Knoxville Daily Chronicle, October 16, 1872.

William Greene, a Hawkins County distiller, visited Butler and requested the congressman to make a speech opposing the amendment. Too ill at that time to make a speech, Butler wrote a letter in which he stated his opposition to the proposed amendment, and encouraged his constituents to oppose it as well.

The Knoxville Journal abhorred Butler's actions, arguing that the congressman had not only "blackened his own name" by accepting the bribe, but had "undertaken to sell out his constituents." The newspaper seemed to be greatly concerned with the effect this type of campaign strategy would have on the amendment referendum, as well as any future elections. The Journal maintained that all who were interested in honest elections could learn a valuable lesson from the Butler intrigue, namely that avarice had become a deadly factor in influencing the outcome of popular elections. Furthermore, the Journal feared that the question went far beyond the issue of prohibition: more importantly it dealt with whether or not public morals had reached the bottom, so that the will of the people could be negated by the corrupt use of the dollar.³⁰

The large anti-prohibitionist fund which began to grow in 1886, continued to expand through the campaign. Many of the state's smaller liquor dealers had been called to make "numerous and liberal contributions." Pro-amendment forces

³⁰Knoxville Journal, September 1, 1887.

feared that by election day every voter who could be bought would be, and that they would vote against the amendment.³¹

The city's pro-amendment leaders did not remain idle against the alleged corrupt campaign practices of the anti-prohibitionists. A new amendment club surfaced in Knoxville prior to the election, the Young Men's Prohibition and Self-Protection Club, which replaced the Young Men's Amendment Club. This new club took guarding the polls against vote buying as one of its purposes and appointed ten men to stand watch against this corrupt practice at each of the polling places. In addition, the club requested all church members to vote an open ticket and to report any member voting against the amendment. At least one Knoxville villian opposed the club's proposals, declaring that the issue had to be decided freely without threat of guards or pressure from fellow church members.³²

Knoxville was not without opposition to the amendment, possessing a small minority which was honestly and openly against the measure. The first major anti-amendment activity in the city occurred about two weeks before the election when the Reverend G. W. Bryant, a Negro orator, gave an "amphitheater style" speech to a crowd estimated at between 2,000 and 3,000.³³ Some opponents believed the proposed

³¹Ibid., September 13 and 16, 1887.

³²Ibid., September 4 and 6, 1887.

³³Ibid., September 14, 1887.

amendment would significantly reduce city revenues. General George Maney of Nashville spoke to a "fair-sized audience" at Staub's Theater in Knoxville, opposing the amendment on the grounds that it was "detrimental to the people's morals and financial conditions," and criticized ministers who attempted to influence law-making by misquoting the Bible to support their positions. Maney was not well received and many of those in attendance left before he finished speaking. Two speeches by Captain W. L. Legerwood, a Knoxville businessman, received little support or attention, reflecting the city's strong support for the amendment.³⁴

As the election approached, optimism characterized the city's pro-amendment forces, who believed that the vote for the amendment would be "much fatter than was once expected." Supporters claimed that many men would vote in favor of the measure, despite misgivings about its practicality, because they were so "thoroughly disgusted" with the tactics of the anti-amendment groups. Hundreds of men who thought the amendment to be premature would vote for the measure as a "rebuke to the corrupt practices of purchasing political leaders" and attempting to corrupt the electorate through vote buying.³⁵

The night before the election all of the city's saloons were closed with two explanations being offered.

³⁴Ibid., September 15, 1887.

³⁵Ibid., September 17, 1887.

Some believed the saloons remained closed to prevent voters from getting drunk and "with a big head" on election day, cast a vote for the amendment. Others believed the establishments closed in order to increase the thirst of those who indulged in intoxicating beverages, thereby causing them to vote against prohibition.³⁶

Election day in the city portended the outcome early:

There was nothing unusual to be seen, except that at every voting place a number of ladies were to be seen. They were quiet, but it was easy to be seen that they were there to stay, and handled ballots as if they had been used to it all their lives. They were, of course, for the dry ticket, and the anti did not seem to relish their presence. The anti workers weakened early in the day, and before the polls had been opened an hour, one could feel it in the air that the tide was decidedly dry. It seemed to gather strength as the day advanced, and before the middle of the afternoon it was freely predicted that the city would go dry by a five hundred majority. An hour later a cool thousand was confidently claimed. At four o'clock, when the polls closed and it was known that the city had given a large majority for the amendment, the church bells rang out the glad tidings and for fifteen minutes made the air musical with their melody.³⁷

The city's nine wards cast a total of 3,429 votes, approving the amendment by an overwhelming majority of 2,310 to 1,119. The Fifth Ward was the only "wet" ward in the city, voting against the amendment 234 to 217, while the remaining eight wards clearly favored the measure.³⁸

Enthusiasm over the outcome of the referendum in the

³⁶Ibid., September 29, 1887.

³⁷Ibid., September 30, 1887.

³⁸Ibid.

city was quickly dashed when results from across Tennessee became known. The proposed amendment was defeated by a sizeable 27,000 vote margin, 145,000 to 118,000. Knoxville's majority reflected that of East Tennessee, which favored the measure 42,000 to 31,000, carrying twenty-three of thirty-five counties, fourteen of which supported it by a sixty-one percent margin or better. West Tennessee opposed the amendment by an 8,000 vote margin, while Middle Tennessee, the strongest center of anti-prohibition, voted it down, 71,000 to 41,000.³⁹

With the overwhelming defeat of constitutional prohibition in Tennessee, prohibition forces in Knoxville began to regroup and plan for future action. The clear margin of victory for prohibition in the late election was merely the culmination of the subtle shift in the emphasis of the city's drive for control of the liquor traffic. During the 1870's and early 1880's temperance was the goal sought, with moral suasion as the method to control the abuse of intoxicating beverages. Temperance leaders gradually shifted from the temperate use of these beverages to total abstinence by 1887. For the next twenty years Knoxville would bide their time until prohibition could be achieved in the city in 1907, and during that interim the city's prohibition forces would support two measures, one the traditionally popular local option, and the other, the

³⁹Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, pp. 55-56.

enforcement of existing laws.

Even though local option efforts had largely failed in Tennessee before, Knoxvilleians believed this type of approach could still work well in the state. Prohibition advocates claimed that while the proposed constitutional amendment had failed to bring about prohibition in Tennessee, there was now a recognizable and formidable opponent to the liquor traffic in the state and this force would not be ignored in the future. Local option supporters felt there would be "such a universal demand" for that measure, that the next General Assembly could not refuse to take action in that area. A combination of local option, for incorporated towns, and the Four Mile Law, for rural areas was seen as the best method of removing "King Alcohol's" foothold from the state.⁴⁰

Actually the state legislature had already begun taking action. Modifications to the Four Mile Law were made in 1887 amidst the defeat of the constitutional amendment. The law as amended prohibited the sale of intoxicating beverages within four miles of any "county school, public or private, chartered or unchartered," thus effectively ending the retail liquor traffic in nearly all rural areas of the state.⁴¹ Additional amendments were introduced in the General Assembly in 1889, 1891, 1893, and 1895, but

⁴⁰Knoxville Journal, October 1, 4-5, 1887.

⁴¹Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, p. 74.

failed to win approval.⁴² The second successful amendment, which passed in 1899, prohibited the sale of alcoholic beverages within four miles of schools in towns with populations of 2,000 or less, providing they incorporated after passage of the amendment. The manufacturing and wholesaling end of the liquor trade was not affected by the new amendment.⁴³

The other goal of the city's prohibition forces following the defeat of the constitutional amendment was ensuring enforcement of existing laws dealing with the liquor trade. This was true in many areas of the state and continual violations of liquor laws helped keep the temperance movement popular despite its numerous failures. Knoxville apparently adhered to established liquor laws for some time after the 1887 referendum, yet by 1889, prohibitionists had to have a Sunday closing law passed in the city, closing practically every business.

A subdued air of sadness pervaded the drug stores and they seemed arrayed in half mourning. The fizz of the soda fountain was hushed in the land and a cigar could not be had for love or money. The only luxury dispensed was harmless mineral water. Truly Knoxville is the most moral town in the country.⁴⁴

Knoxvillians believed that their Sabbaths were quiet, not because so many of its people attended church, but rather

⁴²Ibid., p. 75.

⁴³Ibid., p. 79.

⁴⁴Knoxville Journal, June 10, 1889.

because the city's laws were strictly enforced. Laws against the sale of intoxicants on Sundays existed in most Southern cities, but Knoxvilleians claimed that no other city enforced them as effectively as Knoxville. Public sentiment, it was declared, guaranteed enforcement of these laws, and city officials ensured compliance by local businesses.⁴⁵

The pleasing atmosphere of closed bars on Sundays did not last, however, as prohibitionists in the city soon began complaining about repeated violations. Persistent violations by the city's saloon keepers made "their business more obnoxious than it otherwise would be" to prohibition leaders. It was feared that allowing bars to remain open on Sundays only increased intemperance by providing men the opportunity to waste time and squander away their families' sources of support. Proponents of Sunday closing laws considered Knoxville to be law-abiding, rather than Puritanical, as some people described it.⁴⁶

Concern over violations of Sunday laws surfaced once again around the turn of the century. In 1899 the Knoxville city council passed a law prohibiting card playing in saloons for "drinks or amusement" primarily to prevent barroom fights. The measure aimed at Negroes and whites that congregated in the Cripple Creek saloons, was criticized by

⁴⁵Ibid., July 8, 1889.

⁴⁶Ibid., September 25, 1889.

saloon keepers as class legislation and a "great detriment to their business."⁴⁷ In October, 1899, 500 Knoxvilleians attended the organization of the Law and Order League, with the "leading business and professional" men of the city among the organizers. The league's purpose was to secure the enforcement of the laws and ordinances of the city and state in all matters of the "physical and moral welfare" of the citizens of Knoxville. Repeated violations of Sunday closing laws were of major concern to the league, which claimed that many saloons evaded the laws by closing their front doors as required by law, but leaving a side or rear door open and pulling the shades down in front to prevent law enforcement officials from observing violations. The league accomplished little, only stirring up occasional enthusiasm and slightly improving enforcement which died down, as did the league itself.⁴⁸

Thus, by 1887 most Knoxvilleians had clearly accepted the idea of prohibition, but until conditions in other parts of the state could arise to bring about that end, prohibition leaders in the city were forced to bide their time by attempting to enforce existing laws and regulations in the control of the liquor traffic. By late 1906 conditions became so favorable towards prohibition measures that within a year's time Knoxville would no longer have an

⁴⁷Ibid., August 5 and 9, 1889.

⁴⁸Ibid., October 24 and November 26, 1899.

open saloon in its midst. The culmination of thirty-seven years of temperance and prohibition agitation would finally be achieved through modifications of the Four Mile Law.

CHAPTER III

MORALITY, PROFIT, OR RACIAL CONTROL: KNOXVILLE'S PROHIBITION REFERENDUM, 1907

As mentioned earlier, modifications to the Four Mile Law would enable Knoxvilleians to conclude successfully the campaign for prohibition in 1907. In 1903 a bill sponsored by A. A. Adams extended the Four Mile Law to towns with populations of 5,000 or less, but applied only to those reincorporating after passage of the measure. Reincorporation would require these towns to call for a referendum to obtain a new charter. Two unsuccessful proposals, the first in 1903, attempted to extend the Adams Law to towns with populations of 150,000 or less; the second in 1905, attempted to extend the measure to towns with populations of 140,000 or less. Both proposals would have applied to the entire state since no city in Tennessee had a population of 140,000 or more at the time.¹

By the fall of 1906 prohibition forces in Knoxville decided the time had finally arrived for prohibition to be achieved. Prohibitionists made the liquor traffic in the city the major issue in that year's general election. The city's Anti-Saloon League, active since the early 1900's, resolved not to support any candidate for governor or state legislator who did not "come out in plain favor of extending

¹Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, pp. 91 and 104.

the Adams Law" to the whole state, and the candidates had to have a "clear temperance record" behind them. The league, expecting to be an active force in the election, was convinced that "concerted action" would be necessary to elect temperance candidates and overcome the united liquor interests.²

Prohibition leaders declared that a person desiring to be elected to public office had to be "in accord with the people on the liquor question," and that any promises they might make had to be in accord with public sentiment. Furthermore, the character of the prospective candidate had to be such "as to give assurance" that his promises would be "remembered and fulfilled." The city's prohibition groups believed that voters would support candidates of the Republican party in the upcoming election, because of the party's strong support of temperance measures, such as the Adams Law.³ The Democratic organ in the city, the Sentinel, represented the party's view on the prohibition question by initially opposing extension of the Adams Law, claiming it could not be enforced, even if passed. The Democratic party in Knoxville believed that the continuation of the liquor traffic could be possible if the saloon men would "consent to effective regulation, get out of politics, and unite with good citizens for law enforcement." The Sentinel

²Knoxville Journal and Tribune, September 16, 1906.

³Ibid., September 21, 1906.

agreed with the Democratic platform, declaring it to be "eminently wise on temperance."⁴

Eventually both parties stated more clearly their positions on prohibition. The Republican party strongly advocated extension of the Adams Law to the rest of the state, more specifically to Knoxville. Knoxville Democrats, more or less, supported the state party platform, which encouraged high licensing and segregation of saloons in certain areas of cities. In late September 1906, the Republican convention of Knox County passed one of the strongest anti-saloon resolutions ever passed by a political party in the county. Each candidate supported the resolution and "publicly pledged himself to stand flatfooted on the platform, and to use his vote and influence in favor of the principles proclaimed in it." The Republican resolution urged that:

The General Assembly should enact such legislation as will abolish the saloon and the sale of liquors from the state in general and from Knox County in particular, and will stop, within the state, what is known as the jug trade, and we hereby instruct the candidates nominated by this convention, if elected to use every honorable means to secure the same.⁵

Eugene H. Webb, T. A. Rambo, and John Drummond, candidates for the House, and Von A. Huffaker, candidate for the state Senate, wholeheartedly agreed to support the party's platform.⁶

⁴Knoxville Sentinel, September 17, 1906.

⁵Knoxville Journal and Tribune, September 23, 1906.

⁶Ibid.

The Knoxville Sentinel continued to urge a "moderate, conservative course" on prohibition, stating that it would be "an ideal condition if sentiment could be aroused to support the elimination" of the liquor traffic, and the "importance of getting rid of the Negro dive" would do much to promote that sentiment. However, the paper believed that for the time being it would be preferable to have "well regulated saloons," rather than "unregulated blind tigers." Parting company with the Democratic party, the Sentinel strongly supported extension of the Adams Law, arguing that some sort of referendum had to be held since local option had been declared unconstitutional.⁷

Democrats, in relatively small numbers in Knoxville and Knox County, conceived of a strategy they hoped would lure voters away from Republican candidates. The strategy, as proposed by Knoxville Democrat Jerome Templeton, favored temperance legislation, and called for all Republicans who supported prohibition legislation to support Democratic candidates, since that party held a majority in the state legislature, and only that party could bring about the desired results.⁸ Gradually, local Democratic candidates began to shift from a moderate prohibition stand to one similar to the Republican platform. Colonel W. L. Legerwood, Knoxville Democratic legislative candidate and former

⁷Knoxville Sentinel, October 2, 1906.

⁸Knoxville Journal and Tribune, October 26, 1906.

anti-prohibitionist, states that if he were elected and communities voted to do away with their liquor traffic, he would "urge with all his might" passage of legislation which would accomplish that end.⁹ One Democratic candidate for Knox County's senate seat, Sam E. Hill, declared that if he were elected, he would give his support to "sound, progressive temperance legislation" that was certain to "become effective in its intended operation."¹⁰ Despite shifts in position by area Democratic candidates, Republican candidates continued to reflect local opinion on the prohibition question, by favoring extension of the Adams Law.

The November election, described as the "quietest in years," sent a Republican delegation to the General Assembly from Knox County. The Democrats polled a majority in the city, but this was offset by the overwhelming Republican victory in the county.¹¹ The four-man Republican legislative delegation declared that getting rid of the liquor traffic in the city would be one of the first legislative efforts attempted when the General Assembly convened in 1907. The delegation favored extension of the Four Mile Law and was determined to "carry out pre-election promises," as far as was possible being a minority party.¹²

⁹Ibid., November 2 and 6, 1906.

¹⁰Ibid., November 2, 1906.

¹¹Ibid., November 6-7, 1906.

¹²Ibid., November 12, 1906.

With the election of a favorable legislative delegation, Knoxville's prohibition forces began to organize support for legislation that would bring prohibition to the city. An alternative to prohibition supported by Democrats, especially the Knoxville business leaders, was high licensing and segregation of saloons, which was quickly and adamantly opposed by the city's Anti-Saloon League. League members believed high licensing would only make the liquor business more respectable, and in turn make the traffic more dangerous as well. The league did not oppose segregation, if the city could not get rid of the trade, and implied that restricting the traffic to certain areas might eventually lead to its ultimate demise.¹³ The goal of the league was to secure an extension of the Four Mile Law, altering it to apply to towns with populations of 150,000 or less. In addition, league members desired legislation that would remove saloons from grocery stores and other businesses, as well as removing blinds and other obstructions from saloon windows.¹⁴ Passage of legislation acceptable to the Anti-Saloon League looked favorable, as one of its officials found that sixty-nine of ninety-nine legislators canvassed in the lower house could be relied upon to enact temperance legislation. The Knox County legislative delegation resolved to wait and see if general

¹³Ibid., December 1, 1906.

¹⁴Ibid., December 9, 1906.

legislation would cover the city's demand for prohibition measures before introducing a prepared bill.¹⁵

Pressure from various sources favoring prohibition measures soon began to be applied on the county's legislators. The Knoxville city council, for example, passed a resolution favoring extension of the Adams Law making it applicable to Knoxville and encouraged the area's lawmakers to bring that end about as soon as possible. Alderman James L. Lowe, author of the resolution, declared that the liquor traffic was a public evil, "inimical to the public welfare" of the people of Knoxville, as well as an economic waste, and "indefensible from every point of view." Lowe urged passage of legislation which would extend the Adams Law to the city, abolish the city charter, and reincorporate Knoxville without saloons. The resolution, which passed five to three, caused more controversy than the margin of the vote might indicate. Alderman John P. Murphy opposed the resolution, claiming that its implications would interfere with business, an argument that would become the main thrust of the opposition from the city's business elite. Alderman J. Wiley Brownlee, "hearty supporter of the temperance cause," thought that the resolution was a "grandstand play," but voted for it anyway. Alderman Jacob J. Nelson felt that the resolution was a step in the right direction, but voted against it because prohibition was "out of the

¹⁵ Ibid., January 15, 1907.

council's path of duty," asserting that it was the business of the state, not the city.¹⁶ Other groups in the city were quick to follow the lead of its city council, with the Southern Methodist Minister's Union and the Broad Street Methodist Sunday School voicing strong approval of the board's action.¹⁷

The city was not free from opponents to extension of the Adams Law, however. As suggested, businessmen in Knoxville did not support ending the liquor traffic in the city, whether they were involved in the trade themselves or not. Some of the city's business elite opposed prohibition, claiming the Adams Law would adversely affect all city business, while others were concerned with the possible unfavorable effects prohibition might have on city tax revenues. Business leaders primarily supported a combination of high licensing and segregation of the bars into a special area or areas of the city. Simply stated, the businessmen would allow strict regulation and restriction but not wholesale destruction of the liquor trade. Abolition of the liquor traffic was unfair, they reasoned, especially if the trade was allowed to continue in Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga.¹⁸

Knoxville's 113 saloons in 1907, concentrated mainly

¹⁶Ibid., January 19, 1907.

¹⁷Ibid., January 22, 1907.

¹⁸Ibid., February 7, 1907.

on Central, Gay, and Market Square, each paid \$250 annually to the city comptroller and another \$500 to the county clerk for city, county, and state licenses. This would mean a loss of \$28,250 in revenues to the city if the liquor traffic were abolished. Furthermore, a total of thirty-three percent of the sum paid to the county went to the school fund, for a potential loss of \$18,645 to education.¹⁹ The business elite feared this loss of revenue would be replaced by higher business or property taxes and immediately organized to avert that possibility.

The business elite united behind the idea of removing saloons from residential areas of the city and segregating them elsewhere. Segregation of the saloons into small areas would allow the police to observe their activities more closely, and would lead to the elimination of the "low dives" in the slums and the smaller bars in the residential and industrial areas. At the same time it was proposed to double the city license fee, from \$250 to \$500 per year.²⁰

Sentiment for proper regulation through segregation and high license continued to grow, spreading even to the county legislative delegation, which was repeatedly split on this point. But it was noted that they were "not anxious to act" without some expression of opinion by the citizens of Knoxville. State Senator Von Huffaker, of Knoxville,

¹⁹ Ibid., January 31, 1907.

²⁰ Knoxville Sentinel, February 4, 1907.

considered offering a bill to have a referendum in the city on the prohibition question, as well as an alternative amendment to prohibition which would call for segregation and high licensing.²¹ As far as the legislators were concerned, the question was settled with the passage by the General Assembly of the Pendleton Bill, which extended the Adams Law to cities with populations of 150,000 or less, if they reincorporated after its passage. Sponsored by I. L. Pendleton of Davidson County, the bill received the unanimous support of the Knox County legislative delegation, and set the stage for the final prohibition battle scheduled for March 11, 1907.²²

The Pendleton Bill finally gave Knoxville the opportunity to accomplish what it had sought for at least twenty years--abolition of the open saloon. This extension of the Adams Law to cities with populations of 150,000 or less would allow each city in the state to bring about prohibition if it so desired, but Knoxville was the only city to take advantage of the legislation. The battle for prohibition in Memphis, Nashville, and Chattanooga, cities with strong anti-prohibition factions, would require more work than was needed in prohibitionist Knoxville.²³

The Knoxville Journal and Tribune, a staunch supporter

²¹Ibid., February 8, 1907.

²²Isaac, Prohibition and Politics, p. 116.

²³Ibid. Chapters IX-XI offer a comprehensive study of statewide prohibition in Tennessee.

of prohibition legislation, urged the proponents of the Pendleton Bill to act with discretion in the forthcoming referendum battle.

But one thing may be kept in mind by those who are about to embark in a campaign against the saloons, and that is that they have had the authority of the state for engaging in the business. We may have believed it was wrong for the state to have given such authority, to have legalized a traffic of that kind; but it was done and it has been legal ever since Tennessee has been a state. The people as a people have been responsible.²⁴

The newspaper believed that a vindictive course would only hamper pro-Pendleton efforts, arguing that if the saloonists had not continually broken the laws, the citizens of Knoxville would not already be so opposed to the traffic.

The business leadership quickly mobilized against the Pendleton Bill, holding a mass meeting in the Market Hall to discuss "dispassionately a question of vital importance" to the city. The meeting, organized by Colonel Cary F. Spence, president of the city Board of Trade, also had the purpose of "framing some definite action" to propose to the county legislative delegation. The composition of the meeting was described as being "heterogeneous" and the "views of the members were likewise." Although not totally of one mind, proponents of high licensing and segregation were clearly in the majority. The first speaker was Mayor Samuel G. Heiskell, who declared that high licensing was the "surest and safest means of meeting the issue."

²⁴Knoxville Journal and Tribune, February 11, 1907.

Furthermore, the mayor reiterated that the Fendleton Bill unfairly singled out Knoxville, ignoring the other large cities in the state. Mayor Heiskell feared the city could lose as much as \$33,500 in revenues, and that in order to recoup the loss, the city tax rate would increase from \$1.45 to \$1.85. Businessman R. E. L. Mountcastle stated that it was "not practicable to take away from the people at one blow that for which an appetite had been created for years." Mountcastle preferred some sort of "middle ground solution," believing that businessmen could handle the problem through "proper regulation."²⁵

A committee of Knoxville's business elite, A. J. Price, J. Cal Sterchi, Eli Leiber, Spence, and Mountcastle, drew up resolutions which they felt expressed a way to meet the issue through "efficient and thorough regulation rather than by absolute prohibition." The committee urged high licensing and approved bond to compel saloonists to operate according to the law. Violations would result in loss of license, criminal punishment, and ineligibility to obtain new licenses. Finally, segregation of the city's saloons into a specified area would enhance the policing of the establishments.²⁶

The threatened loss of revenue to the city and county

²⁵Knoxville Sentinel and Knoxville Journal and Tribune, February 9, 1907.

²⁶Ibid.

continued to surface in the arguments of the business elite. Mayor Heiskell claimed that the privilege tax on the city's five breweries, 113 saloons, pool tables and slot machines, and ad valorem tax would be a loss of a least \$33,500 to the city. In addition to the loss of revenue to the city in licenses and other fees, anti-prohibition propoganda detailed the total loss of revenue to the city if the saloons were abolished. Purportedly the city's 113 saloons paid \$8,475 a month in rents or \$101,700 per year; the 113 bartenders were paid an average of \$75 per month, or another \$101,700 per year; the 113 proprietors were paid an average of \$1,000 each per year; proprietors and bartenders paid an average yearly rent of \$5,650; the wages of porters and waiters would be an average loss of \$35,000 per year; and the loss to utilities and suppliers would be a yearly average of \$5,500 for telephone service, \$8,000 for electricity, \$20,000 for ice, and \$4,000 for coal; for a grand total of lost income to Knoxville of \$394,550 per year.²⁷

Prohibitionists in Knoxville were appalled by the position of the city's business leaders. The first and most adamant opposition to high licensing and segregation as well as to the loss of revenue argument came from the city's ministers. The Reverend R. L. Bachman, pastor of the Second Presbyterian Church, in an anti-saloon sermon,

²⁷ Knoxville Journal and Tribune, March 11, 1907.

declared that the city would not "be laid waste" if the liquor trade were abolished, claiming that the city's "legitimate business" would not suffer. Bachman believed the saloons were the "most prolific source of crime" and that the "almighty dollar has a tremendous eclipsing power" which in this case caused the business elite to "hold the dollar too close to their eye," preventing them from seeing the "poor, ragged children, made so by the saloon."²⁸

The Reverend J. W. Perry, of the Church Street Methodist Church, further chastised the business elite's revenue position.

They say that Knoxville needs the revenue from the saloons in order to maintain her city government. Poor old Knoxville, if it has come to pass that we must support our institutions with the price of debauchery, and the sacrifice of manhood, we are in a deplorable condition.

Perry did not believe that maintaining the saloons as a source of revenue was worth it. The pastor challenged Knoxvilleans to educate their children, pay public officials, and provide for revenue from sources which did not "represent the price of manhood and virtue and blood."²⁹

Other ministers and certain businessmen, in a mass meeting for women in the Market Hall, continued to question the profit motives of the business elite. The Reverend G. W. Perryman, pastor of the Deaderick Avenue Baptist Church,

²⁸Ibid., February 11, 1907.

²⁹Ibid.

urged the women to "fix" their husbands, if they were opposed to prohibition, so they would be unable to vote against the referendum. In other words, women were encouraged to use whatever methods necessary to persuade their husbands to support the referendum, and if they were unable to do so, then the women should prevent their husbands from voting against it in the best way they could. The Reverend R. L. Bachman believed that nine out of ten mothers in the city wanted the saloons abolished, and that thousands of businessmen were with them. J. O. Lotspeich, a wholesale merchant, opposed high licensing and segregation of saloons, believing that abolition of the liquor traffic would actually help, not hinder, the city's business community. Another businessman, J. D. East, claimed that the segregation of the city's taverns was a brazen attempt by "one-third of the saloon men to destroy two-thirds of their fellow saloon men," and that this would result in increasingly higher rents, driving the smaller bars out of business. Furthermore, East considered the larger, more respectable saloons to be worse than the lowest dive because of their attempt to strangle their competition.³⁰

The women's meeting offered a difference of opinion on the question of revenue loss. J. G. Johnson, attorney for the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and vice-president of the Knoxville Anti-Saloon League, challenged the business

³⁰ Ibid.

elite's claim that absolute prohibition would cost the city better than \$30,000. Johnson, using figures from the city comptroller's records, pointed out that the liquor business cost Knoxville \$14,000 in criminal court costs; \$11,000 in justice of the peace costs; \$9,000 in juror's expenses; and \$35,000 in pauper burials and allowances, and poor asylum and work house expenses; for a total of \$69,000 per year.³¹

Opposition to high licensing and segregation received increasingly more agitation as the March 11 referendum neared. Nearly 2,000 Knoxvilleians attended yet another Market Hall mass meeting just a month before the election, and "without a dissenting vote, went on record" favoring the Pendleton Bill. During the course of the meeting, "hundreds of voices and hands vented vociferous approval to the speakers in their uncompromising attitudes against the licensed saloon." One result of the meeting was the "most profound and uncompromising set of temperance resolutions ever drafted and presented a public assemblage," sharply protesting against the saloon and the "latest departure," high licensing and segregation of saloons. No compromise was acceptable to those at the meeting because as a body they in general viewed both high licensing and segregation as deplorable as the "free and unlimited sale of whiskey." The Reverend Perryman asserted that the meeting was not to talk about "a little revenue," but to

³¹ Ibid.

talk about how to "bring back the smile to the mother's pallid cheeks and to teach the joy of living." James Weicker, unsuccessful Democratic candidate for state senator, urged the women of Knoxville to "lock shields" with the men and defeat the "insidious foe," the open saloon. Weicker further claimed that segregation offered a "city of refuge," and that if abolished, liquor businesses would be replaced by establishments of "legitimate character."³²

The Knoxville Sentinel summed up the opinion of those favoring prohibition in the city:

If it injures the businessman it will certainly injure the workingman. It follows that if one class is injured all classes are injured financially. Whatever will raise the average of efficiency of morality, of education, or of temperance of the Knoxville family or individual, is good for Knoxville business and will promote Knoxville's growth and prosperity. All influences for the uplifting of Knoxville make its men better. Knoxville's growth will be hastened, rather than retarded by the proposed vote on March 11.

The paper did not believe any "serious injustice" would be done to any class, and claimed that the 400 employees of the saloons would have more than adequate time to find new jobs.³³

With both of the city's newspapers in favor of prohibition, the business elite faced an interesting problem in making public their sentiments on the issue. In order to win support for strict regulation and restriction, business

³²Ibid., February 12, 1907.

³³Knoxville Sentinel, March 6, 1907.

leaders had to take out advertisements in both the Sentinel and Journal and Tribune. These were designed to gain support for their position by giving the views of great or respected Americans; showing the lack of success of prohibition in cities and states; demonstrating the adverse effects of prohibition on the business community in other locales, the favorable effects of strict regulation and restriction, and the cost to Knoxville in taxes and business income.

The earliest of these anti-prohibition messages quoted great or respected Americans, such as Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, John Quincy Adams, and others who opposed prohibition as unenforceable and as limiting individual rights and liberties. These men, while favoring the temperate consumption of alcoholic beverages, believed that prohibition was a greater threat to the peace and stability of the nation than was the intemperate use of "demon rum."³⁴

The most prevalent type of advertisement used by the business elite was that which depicted unsuccessful attempts at prohibition in other areas. One advertisement argued that prohibition did not reduce drinking and that it had failed in Maine and Iowa; in fact, the number of drunks in Maine had actually increased under prohibition.³⁵ Another

³⁴Knoxville Sentinel, February 25, 1907; and Knoxville Journal and Tribune, February 27, 1907.

³⁵Ibid., February 28, 1907.

had prominent Atlantans proclaiming how prohibition had hurt the city, with dramatic increases in property taxes, sharp decreases in rents received, an additional \$12,000 spent on law enforcement, and large numbers of workingmen left due to loss of jobs.³⁶ Other advertisements boldly depicted the pathetic effects of prohibition declaring:

PROHIBITION IS NOT PRACTICABLE, STATEMENT PROVEN BY STATISTICS; ACTUAL RESULTS OF PROHIBITION SHOW IT TO BE A POSITIVE FAILURE: AND UTTER FAILURE OF PROHIBITION IN ATLANTA, MAINE, AND IOWA.

It was shown that in Des Moines, Iowa, prohibition had resulted in ten times as many business failures, with an annual loss of \$60,000, building in the city practically ceased, taxes increased significantly, criminal costs rose in excess of \$15,000, and as in Atlanta, workingmen were forced to leave the city.³⁷

Messages predicting the effects prohibition would have on Knoxville were also carried. One suggested that liquor by "EXPRESS" would result in "C.O.D." alcohol coming in from areas outside the city, similar to what happened in Texas following prohibition in that state. Addressed to Knoxville businessmen, an advertisement predicted that a revolution would occur in the city, if saloons were abolished, because the liquor trade for better than seventy-five years had "largely helped to make it the great,

³⁶Ibid., March 3 and 7-8, 1907.

³⁷Ibid., March 5 and 7-8, 1907.

wealthy, conservative city that it is."³⁸ Finally as previously stated, a major advertisement claimed that the city would experience financial ruin losing a total of \$394,550 in revenue from the saloons.³⁹

But the business elite faced an uphill battle in opposing prohibition in Knoxville. Not only did it confront a well-organized, enthusiastic opponent, but challenges to and from groups traditionally against prohibition, or manipulated against it, such as labor and Blacks, sapped the strength of the business leaders' efforts. The first, organized labor, supported prohibition for Knoxville; and the second group, Blacks, were manipulated by both businessmen and the conservative prohibition majority. Ultimately neither the Central Labor Union nor the city's Blacks would play a major role in the final outcome, but both were significant in the overall drama that unfolded prior to the March referendum.

The Central Labor Union representing primarily skilled and semiskilled workers, such as machinists and railway workers, firmly offered its support to the city's prohibition movement. The union believed the liquor traffic existed because of the demand for alcoholic beverages and for the profit of a very limited class of people. Creating the demand for intoxicating beverages depended on whether

³⁸ Knoxville Sentinel, February 27 and March 9, 1907.

³⁹ Knoxville Journal and Tribune, March 11, 1907.

one was rich or poor. "Idle, listless, parasitic lives" led the upper classes to drink, while the poor were forced to drink because of their "enforced idleness and poverty, impure and adulterated food and drink, insufficient clothing, inadequate shelter, and lack of intellectual and social entertainment." Critical of the profit motives of the saloon owners, the union nonetheless understood why the owners, as well as the bartenders, porters, and waiters opposed the Pendleton Bill. These individuals relied upon the liquor traffic to provide themselves and their families with the basic necessities of food, clothing, and shelter, and the union pointed out that dealers in dry goods and groceries would be no less opposed to abolition of their livelihoods than those selling intoxicants.⁴⁰

The Central Labor Union warned temperance and church groups that they would meet with disappointment

unless the axe is laid at the root of this evil tree, and in place of competition, war, and strife, they substitute cooperation, brotherhood and peace, so that every man and woman may work and receive the full product of his or her labor and thereby live decently and make a decent living for his family. When this is done there will be no need of a Pendleton Bill, an impure food bill and so on, *ad infinitum*, for then no one will be found who would be so as to want to sell a thing that ruins and injures his neighbor and friend just for the sake of doing so.

Interestingly, it appears that while the labor union supported prohibition, it did not support the entire spectrum of progressive reforms, such as the Pure Food and Drug

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, February 22, 1907.

Act. The C.L.U. favored the removal of saloons, but it hoped that the long-cherished strategy of moral suasion would bring about that end, rather than having prohibition by law.⁴¹

Discussing the role of Blacks in the prohibition referendum proves to be a multifaceted problem. In 1900 Blacks made up 22.2 percent of the city's population, a percentage that had gradually decreased over the past thirty years and would continue to do so in the coming years. Blacks were primarily concentrated in two wards in the city, the Fifth and Seventh South, but were rarely a political force in city politics despite the sizable portion of the population they represented. A partial explanation for their low level of participation was the nature of Knoxville's political system itself. Following the Civil War, Knoxville's, both the more conservative rural-oriented majority and the conservative business elite, welcomed Blacks into the city, but only as long as they would defer political control to whites.

While possessing only minimal political influence in city politics, Knoxville's Black population nevertheless had a small but significant role in the prohibition battle. But it was ultimately a role that would in no way prove beneficial to them. Anti-prohibition leaders, especially the saloonists, attempted to manipulate Blacks into opposing

⁴¹ Ibid.

the Pendleton Bill by providing voter certificates and poll tax receipts to Blacks in return for their support on the referendum. Fraudulent registration of Black and white voters was of major concern to both prohibition and anti-prohibition leaders. In late February 1907, several Blacks were charged with illegally registering to vote in warrants sworn out by two prominent prohibitionists, Thomas L. Carty and the Reverend G. W. Perryman.⁴²

Believing that a significant number of Black votes would be cast in favor of the Pendleton Bill, prohibition leaders cautiously observed the supplemental registration, especially of Blacks and poor whites. Problems with the additional registration of voters before the referendum were numerous, with voters registering with vacant lots as residences and others from homes that were "totally inadequate to shelter so many."⁴³ Voters merely had to have a legal residence to vote in Knoxville. Five days prior to the election at least thirty cases of voter fraud had been reported, many of which were centered around employees of the Knoxville Woolen Mills. Will Campbell, a mill employee caught attempting to register illegally to vote, stated he knew of an additional twenty-five to thirty persons, most of whom were under age twenty-one, who had fraudulently registered to vote.⁴⁴ Concern over the supplemental

⁴²Ibid., February 28, 1907.

⁴³Ibid., March 5, 1907.

⁴⁴Ibid., March 6, 1907.

registration would at first appear justifiable because an additional 3,805 persons were supposedly registered to vote; but in the final analysis the additional voters probably did not significantly alter the outcome.⁴⁵

Attempts to influence or manipulate the Black voter were also made by the city's prohibitionists who argued that prohibition or, at a minimum, strict regulation would help ease the race problem. It was believed the low "dives" Blacks frequented were directly related to the city's racial difficulties, and that it would be a "God-send" to the city's Black population if they were "denied whiskey and drugs" which were "more and more breaking down morality and instigating crime" among their people. Prohibitionists further claimed that if Southern states adopted prohibition it would be due to the necessity of keeping alcoholic beverages from Blacks.⁴⁶ Some of Knoxville's Black population realized the possible benefits prohibition could bring to their race, as well as the debilitating effects of intemperance. The Reverend S. J. Hargrove, a Black Knoxville minister, characterized the city's bowery as a "living hell," blaming the open saloon for the "ruin of his race."⁴⁷

The chief spokesman for Knoxville Blacks on the prohibition issue was, as in 1887, a Black minister from outside

⁴⁵Knoxville Sentinel, March 1, 1907.

⁴⁶Ibid., February 6, 1907.

⁴⁷Knoxville Journal and Tribune, February 20, 1907.

the city. Less than a week before the election A. W. Dodson, a Georgetown, Kentucky minister, arrived in Knoxville to give a series of temperance lectures to both Blacks and whites. Dodson, known as the "Black Spurgeon of Kentucky," gave "ardent and eloquent pleas for the negroes to rise to the emergency" and vote against the saloon. Characterizing the liquor traffic as the "most damnable influence that ever worked [for] the degeneration of the colored race," Dodson "held the unabated interest of both whites and blacks," and declared that the best solution to the race issue would be for the Blacks to let go of the bottle and "drop the jug." Blacks, Dodson declared, had "as high a sense of knowledge of right and wrong" as did whites, and offered no apologies for, or sympathies to the Negro who would lower himself by selling his vote for "money, whiskey, and cigars." Furthermore, he warned whites who were buying Black votes that they might be fooled, because on election day the Negro would enter the "darkness of the security of the voting booth" and vote as he wanted. Comparing the buying of Black votes by the liquor interests to "slopping hogs until they are fattened for the slaughter," Dodson blamed the "shiftless, besotted, ignorant" Negroes for the crime and race problems. According to Dodson, Blacks could not use the excuse that prohibition would hurt business, because most Negroes did not "even own a wheelbarrow," and if they cried out against increased taxes, the minister claimed that most Blacks did

not own the "dirt beneath his fingernails."⁴⁸

As the election rapidly approached, both sides predicted victory, with prohibition forces declaring that in order to be victorious, at least 6,000 votes would have to be cast.⁴⁹ The final week prior to the election was seen as a "mustering week" and prohibition leaders urged their comrades to organize against the saloons, which were armed with the "sinews of war" in their large campaign fund. Prohibitionists pleaded with their supporters to prevent the liquor traffic from using money for "illegitimate and unlawful purposes," and to guard the ballot box against the "filth of bribery."⁵⁰

March 11, 1907, was described as one of the prettiest days in the history of Knoxville. Church bells rang "regularly every hour" beckoning voters to rush to the polls and do their duty and abolish the evils of the open saloon. A grand parade was held on election day which proved to be a foreboding of the result of the referendum. Described as "unprecedented, incomparable, immense, and awe-inspiring," the parade was a "blending of the classes with the masses." The "rich, the poor, the halt and maimed and

⁴⁸Knoxville Journal and Tribune, March 6, 1907 and Knoxville Sentinel, March 8, 1907. The Journal and Tribune listed the minister's name as Dodson, while the Sentinel used the name Davis. Dodson is here used because of the more thorough coverage of the Journal and Tribune.

⁴⁹Knoxville Journal and Tribune, March 9, 1907.

⁵⁰Ibid., March 4, 1907.

and the blind" joined together to make clear their support for the referendum. The parade was a

medley of humanity from the highest to the lowest, an animated breathing and pathetic appeal to the freemen of Knoxville to rise in their might and wipe liquor from the proud queen city of the East Tennessee mountains.

Witnessed by 15,000 to 25,000 people, the parade had an estimated 10,000 to 25,000 participants, and was apparently designed to demonstrate the unity and strength of the prohibitionists in the city.⁵¹

Interested visitors from outside Knoxville poured into the city to witness the "awe-inspiring spectacle."

It moved hundreds to tears; it made strong men turn away to hide their emotions; it caused women to utter fervent prayers to heaven that their appeal might be granted, and better than all, it no doubt caused hundreds to go and vote to abolish the saloons, for as one businessman said as he witnessed the passing of half the pathetic spectacle and turning away with suppressed emotions: "I have seen enough, I'll vote dry, no matter what it costs."⁵²

The "monster procession" was led by a half-dozen policemen who stepped "lively to the inspiring tunes" of two brass bands who were "apparently possessed with a zeal and determination that gave forebodings." The procession included the Third Regiment Band; nearly 100 boys from the Baker-Himel School carrying their institute colors and banners proclaiming, "Saloons Must Go"; several hundred women and children from the city's Fifth Ward; "one thousand

⁵¹Knoxville Journal and Tribune, March 12, 1907.

⁵²Ibid.

strong" from South Knoxville, age "six to sixty"; 500 from the Lonsdale suburb; the Brotherhood of Old Time Fiddlers, who played "Where Is My Wandering Boy Tonight"; the American Band which had with it a large banner cartoon, "Waiting for the Returns," by G. D. Jones; 500 persons of "all ages and sizes from the Fifth Ward carrying banners proclaiming, "Vote For Me Papa," and "Home, Sweet Home," while they sang "Glory, Glory Hallelujah"; Mrs. D. M. Rose of the Second Ward in an open carriage; John McCoy of the Sixth Ward leading an unusually large number of little girls from six to twelve years of age singing hymns; "one thousand strong for temperance" from the Ninth Ward, singing "We'll Hang Mayor Heiskell to the Sour Apple Tree" as a chorus to "Glory, Glory Hallelujah"; a group of students from the University of Tennessee on a "real, rolling water wagon, an omen of the future"; a wagon from the Eleventh Ward with a banner declaring, "Knoxville Expects Every Man to do His Duty"; and bringing up the rear of the parade were 300 Negro men "well dressed and as intelligent" as could be found, and a long line of Black women and children singing "America." The parade was a challenge to the voters of the city to listen to the "general cry" of those women and children who represented "four-fifths of the populace" that had no other voice in the political process, to bring an end to the liquor traffic. The city's women and children carried banners inscribed with such phrases as, "Skidoo Saloons," "Get Away Saloons," "Save Our Children," "Save Our Boys and

Girls," and many others. "It was a parade unique, unusual, remarkable and never to be forgotten, and it bore its fruit" with the demise of the open saloon.⁵³

The polls were electric with activity throughout the day. Temperance forces, backed up by large numbers of citizens from surrounding towns made victory apparent from the beginning. The "supposedly well-organized and equipped" liquor interests were nearly "stampeded" by temperance workers in most wards. The women of Knoxville played a key role in the prohibition strategy at the polls. During the day Miss Vera Smith, accompanied by Miss Amelia Burns on the violin, entertained at each of the city's wards, by singing a "temperance solo." Miss Nannie Curtis, noted temperance worker from Texas, spoke to large crowds at every polling place. Women at one ward followed a group of "wets" who attempted to hand out two-dollar bills. Many Negro women were also active in supporting efforts at the polls.⁵⁴

Finally, the results began to pour in, and the outcome was soon clear. The total vote cast in the referendum was 6,405 with 4,150 favoring prohibition and 2,255 against it.⁵⁵ As noted earlier, Knoxvilleians had wanted prohibition for at least twenty or more years. In 1907, 1,840 more

⁵³Ibid.

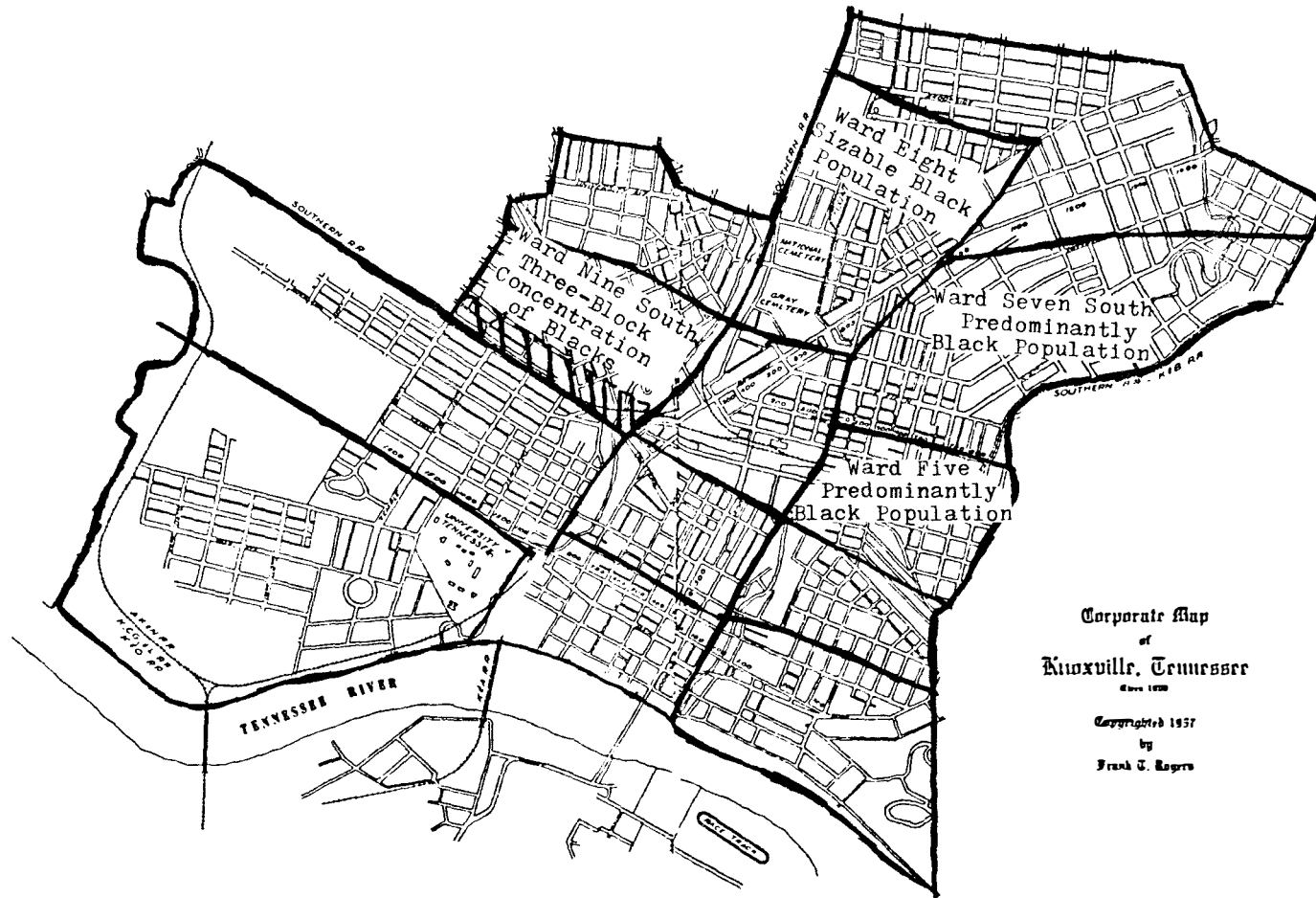
⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Knoxville Sentinel, March 12, 1907.

votes were cast for prohibition than in 1887, or an increase of 55.7 percent; while in 1907 an additional 1,136 voted "wet," or a 49.6 percent increase over 1887.

Although prohibition was the apparent issue decided upon by the referendum in 1907, a ward-by-ward analysis reveals that the role Blacks were to have in the social, economic, and political development of Knoxville was by far more important. As shown in Figures 1-4 and Table 1, wards with sizable Black populations--Wards Three, Five, Seven South, and Eight--either voted against the measure or approved it by margins far below the city-wide average of 64.8 percent. On the other hand, most of the predominantly white wards strongly supported the referendum. Wards One, Seven North, Nine North and South, Ten, and Eleven voted for prohibition by margins ranging from 65.6 to 80.6 percent. The remaining wards, Two, Four, and Six, also supported the measure, but by varying degrees, and very likely for different reasons.

As indicated, both prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists attempted to manipulate the city's Black voters. On the surface it would appear that Blacks were successfully influenced to support the anti-prohibitionist position of the city's business elite. Closer examination shows that the reported manipulation of the Black voter may not have been manipulation as much as it was deception of the business leaders by Blacks. Blacks may have



*Figure 1. Wards with Significant Black Populations.

*Figures adapted from Knoxville Cook Book. Compiled and edited by the Directors of the Knoxville Women's Building Association. Knoxville: n.p., 1901; reprinted Nashville: n.p., 1957.

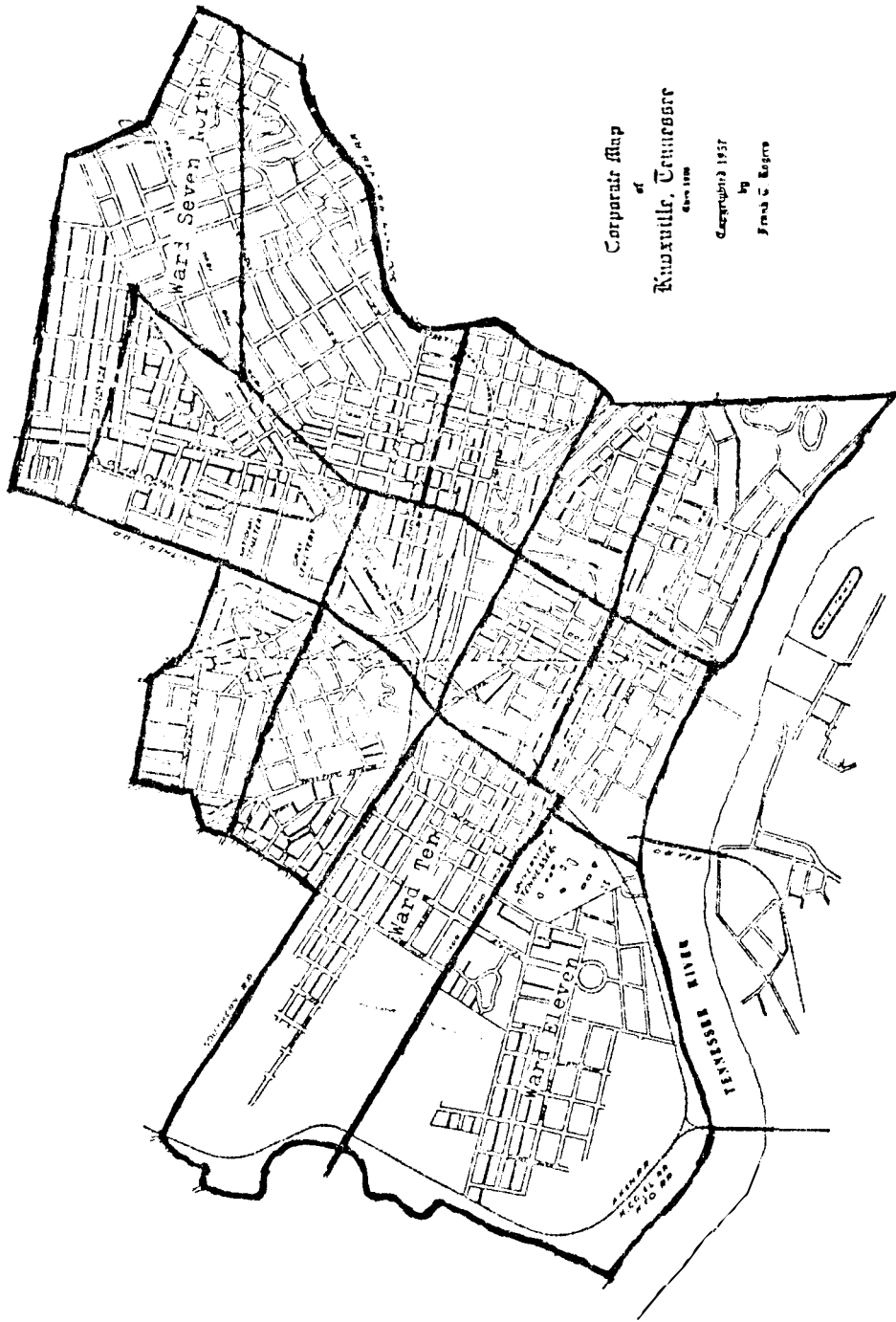


Figure 2. Wards Annexed in 1897.



Figure 3. Percentage Below 64.8% (1907).

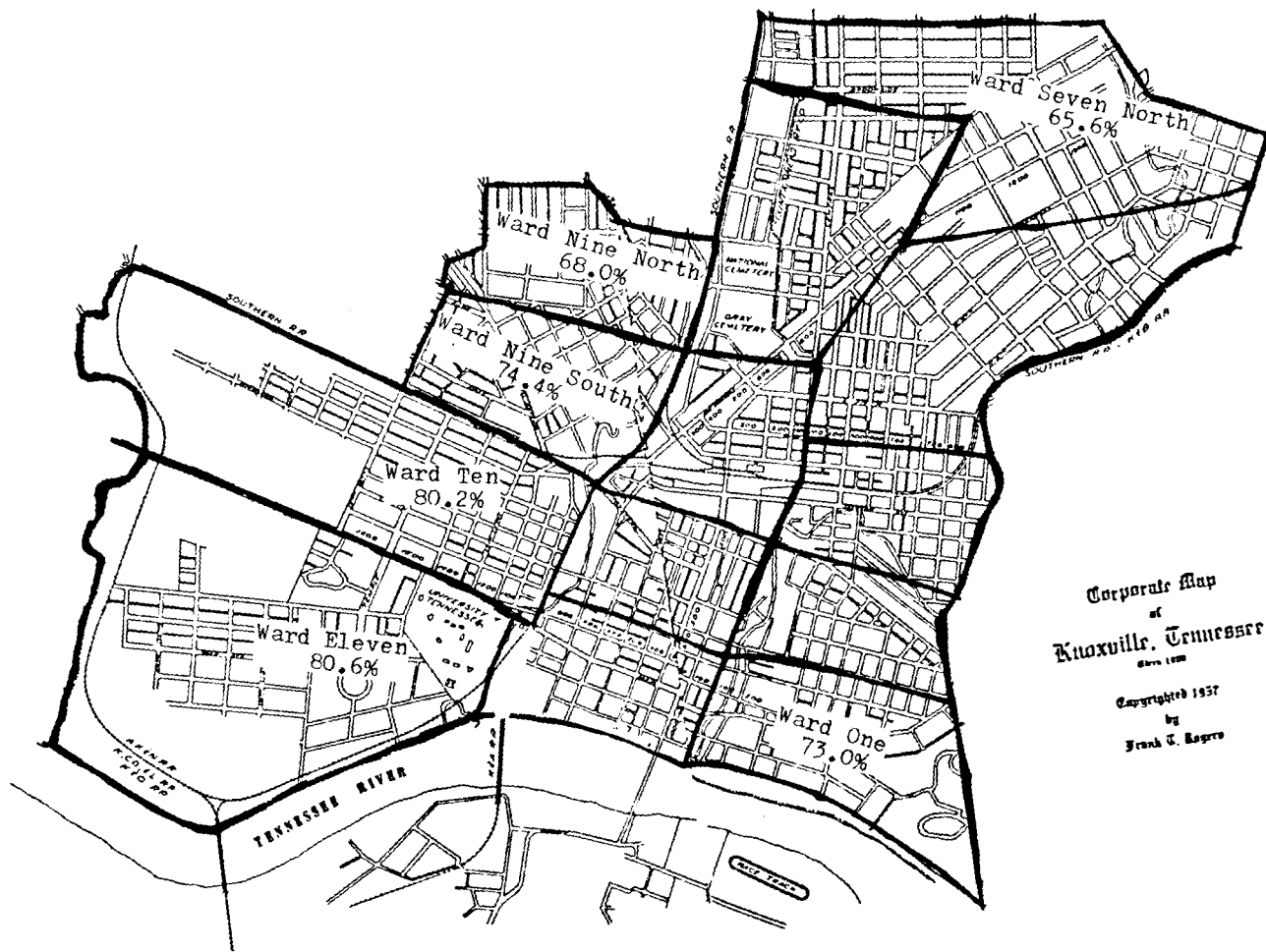


Figure 4. Percentage Above 64.8% (1907).

TABLE 1. Knoxville Prohibition Vote Results, 1887 and 1907

| Ward | Prohibition | | Anti-Prohibition | | Percent Favoring Prohibition | |
|-------------|-------------|------|------------------|------|------------------------------|------|
| | 1887 | 1907 | 1887 | 1907 | 1887 | 1907 |
| One | 212 | 357 | 71 | 133 | 75.0 | 73.0 |
| Two | 140 | 120 | 65 | 97 | 68.3 | 55.3 |
| Three | 131 | 194 | 69 | 138 | 65.5 | 58.4 |
| Four | 107 | 126 | 35 | 80 | 75.4 | 61.7 |
| Five | 217 | 234 | 195 | 239 | 48.1 | 44.9 |
| Six | 274 | 301 | 72 | 182 | 79.9 | 62.3 |
| Seven | 436 | * | 307 | * | 58.7 | * |
| Seven North | * | 318 | * | 167 | * | 65.6 |
| Seven South | * | 197 | * | 379 | * | 34.2 |
| Eight | 255 | 213 | 164 | 198 | 60.9 | 51.8 |
| Nine | 538 | * | 102 | * | 84.1 | * |
| Nine North | * | 384 | * | 181 | * | 68.0 |
| Nine South | * | 367 | * | 126 | * | 74.4 |
| Ten | * | 537 | * | 133 | * | 80.2 |
| Eleven | * | 841 | * | 202 | * | 80.6 |

*Indicates wards did not exist that year.

accepted bribes of money and whiskey, but certainly whites did likewise. Attempts to register fraudulently Black voters did take place, but attempts to do the same with white voters were also made. Therefore, another explanation must be offered to reveal why Blacks opposed prohibition and in turn what effect this had upon the referendum and future political developments in Knoxville.

While Blacks may not have played a key role in the prohibition campaign in Knoxville, they did have a direct effect on the way whites voted on the issue. White wards in close proximity to Blacks--Wards Seven North, Nine North and South, and Ten (see Figure 1) voted overwhelmingly in favor of prohibition. In addition, wards annexed by the city in 1897--Wards Seven North, Ten, and Eleven (see Figure 2)--also offered strong support to the prohibition effort. Conversely, the predominantly white Third and Eighth Wards approved the measure by margins of only 58.4 and 51.8 percent respectively, indicating Black voters may have kept the margin of approval in these wards significantly lower than in other white wards. Ward Two had no large Black population,⁵⁶ yet voters approved the measure

⁵⁶Sources on voter registration and Black population densities are somewhat scarce. Knoxville, Tenn., Knoxville-Knox County Archives, Voter Registration Records, 1907 and 1909; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900: Population, Schedule 1; and Gordon B. McKinney's "Southern Mountain Republicans and the Negro, 1865-1900," cited in W. Bruce

narrowly, by a 55.3 percent margin. Here the results were due to the influence of the city's business elite, which was concentrated in the Second Ward. Wards Four and Six favored prohibition just below the city-wide average. The commercial corridor in Knoxville was growing roughly along the boundaries of the Second, Fourth, and Sixth Wards, and the influence of the city's businessmen helps explain why the margin of approval was slightly below the city-wide average. On the other hand, proximity to Blacks and the existence of small numbers of Blacks in these wards offers an explanation as to why the margins were not significantly lower. Finally, the First Ward approved the referendum by 73 percent. Voters in Ward One were quite similar to those in Ward Ten, mostly upper-middle class whites, and their attitudes were more like those of the annexed suburban neighborhoods as well.

Race, therefore, did have an impact on the outcome of the referendum. High concentrations of Blacks in a given ward reflected either defeat or near defeat of the measure. White wards in close proximity to Blacks overwhelmingly voted for prohibition, especially in wards recently annexed to the city. Those wards approving the measure near or just below the city-wide average reflected the dual

Wheeler and Michael McDonald's, "Urban Blacks in the New South: Knoxville, Tennessee, As a Test Case," delivered at the Southwestern Social Science Association, Dallas, Texas, Spring 1976, offer insight into this area.

pressures of proximity to Blacks and the city's business elite.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Closure of the open saloon was achieved in Knoxville in 1907 and would endure until it made its return to the city in 1972. Bootleggers and private clubs conducted a flourishing trade during the interim period, causing some people to raise questions about the effectiveness of prohibition in the city. Were Knoxvillians simply naive in assuming they had, or could, effectively rid the city of "demon rum?" Or was it merely, "Out of sight, out of mind?" Finally, was prohibition a success or failure, and what did it mean to Knoxville?

Questions like these have and will continue to be asked by historians and others for years to come. Many people argue that prohibition in the United States was a failure because of the lack of enforcement. Others state that prohibition was never really tried in this country, again claiming that lack of enforcement was the reason. Some claim it was successful, if only to a small degree, because it did at least close the open saloon temporarily. Critics may argue that prohibition should never have been the goal and declare that temperance should have been the end sought.

Prohibition in Knoxville, in and of itself, was not really of key importance. Of course the thirty-seven-year campaign was interesting and of some significance to the

city, but the city's experiences were not really unique to Tennessee, or the South. Prohibition was achieved in other Southern cities before it was in Knoxville, and in other Southern states before Tennessee. The three-stage evolution of the prohibition campaign in Knoxville was only slightly unique to the city. Local option and constitutional prohibition were more popular in Knoxville than in other Tennessee cities, but the process was basically the same. Even the special referendum was unique only because it was held in Knoxville alone. Therefore, the significance of the prohibition campaign lies elsewhere.

The true importance of the battle for prohibition was in what it revealed about the character of the city. Prior to the Civil War, the city was little more than a way-station with only dim prospects for future prosperity. Commerce and industry began to flourish during the last three decades of the nineteenth century, with both Blacks and whites initially enjoying its fruits. By the 1890's, Blacks were being increasingly replaced in Knoxville's growing iron and textile industries by immigrating rural whites. Friction between the new white labor force and the city's sizable Black population gradually began to mount up, and finally erupted in a lynching in 1890 and a race riot in 1919.

The prohibition campaign revealed a shift in Knoxville's social, economic, and political mood and character. During the early years of the campaign, prior to the

constitutional amendment of 1887, prohibition was not as clearly used as a method to control the city's or state's Black population. Removing the "low dive" from Black or poor white neighborhoods was rarely used as propaganda to support prohibition. By 1887 a shift can be noticed in the strategy used by prohibitionists. Not only was it important to remove the saloon for the sake of whites, but it was also argued that Blacks would never attain their full rights until prohibition was achieved, and that the measure would solve the race problem. Blacks, however, did not view prohibition as being in their best interests, and voted consistently against it, probably to demonstrate to whites that their race would not accept the white dominance prohibition might bring, and that whites were not the only ones with answers to their economic, social, and political problems.

Knoxville whites began to realize that measures had to be taken to restrict and control further the city's Black population. Prohibitionists increased their propaganda against the "low dives" frequented by both Blacks and poor whites. Lower class whites, who were gradually replacing Blacks in the iron and textile industries, also began to support prohibition in larger, more vocal numbers. City leaders began to take steps to isolate politically Knoxville Blacks, using gerrymandering of wards in 1894 and annexations of predominantly white wards in 1897.

Prohibitionists and anti-prohibitionists gave the

impression that they were influencing or manipulating Black voters to support their positions. Prohibitionists did attempt to organize Blacks behind prohibition, and did support Black speakers and rallies. Anti-prohibitionists, chiefly the city's business elite, attempted to persuade Blacks to vote against prohibition, claiming it would prove detrimental to the economic prosperity of both Blacks and whites. Blacks were probably not swayed by either argument. A few Blacks did genuinely support prohibition, hoping to gain the same benefits as whites. Most Blacks voted against prohibition, some for the same reasons as the business leaders. The majority of Knoxville Blacks probably opposed prohibition because they realized that continually allowing whites to decide the social, economic, and political direction of the city would only further weaken their influence in Knoxville.

In sum, the prohibition campaign in Knoxville serves as one of many windows through which one can view the social, economic, and political development of the city. The prohibition battle allows one to observe the growth and solidification of a class system based upon race, wealth, and family ties. The former Union soldiers and others who came to Knoxville following the Civil War and built up the city's commerce and industry gradually became the city's social, economic, and political elite. In opposition to the new elite was the city's middle class, rural-oriented majority, with Blacks and poor whites at the bottom. The struggle

for prohibition is only one example of the roles played by each of these groups.

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