

Temperance Movement

Overview:

Temperance refers to the movement to **reduce or completely eliminate the consumption of alcohol**. It was mainly led by women who had seen the negative effects of alcohol use, such as abusive husbands or fathers who spent their time and money drinking instead of supporting their families and who sometimes acted violently or destructively. 1000 local groups of the American Temperance Society sprang up in the country. Members of the temperance movement blamed alcohol for many of the world's ills, including poverty, violence, and immorality.

They asked drinkers to sign the temperance pledge, vowing not to drink alcohol and used pictures, pamphlets, and lecturers to convince people of the evils of alcohol.

Historical context:

The temperance movement grew out of a desire to protect women and children from abuse and general poverty associated with the working man spending his paycheck on alcohol. By the 1820s liquor was less expensive than tea and by 1830 **American adults drank an average of 7 gallons of alcohol a year**. It could be said that Americans drank from the crack of dawn to the crack of dawn. In the cities, workers who drank too much were unproductive or did not show up to work at all, hurting the economy and their families. The Second Great Awakening also helped encourage temperance because drinking was seen as unChristian and morally wrong.

Alcohol Consumption in the United States, 1800–1860

Year	Gallons Consumed Per Capita
1800	6.6
1810	7.1
1820	6.8
1830	7.1
1840	3.1
1850	1.8
1860	2.1

Source: *The Alcoholic Republic: An American Tradition*, by W. J. Rorabaugh

Alcohol consumption in the US, in gallons, per adult, per year (ex: in 1830, the average adult drank 7.1 gallons of alcohol a year. Today it is closer to 2 gallons/year)

Historical Significance

Temperance reformers wanted to fix many problems in society caused by drinking, but temperance was also an attempt to control the behavior of others, especially immigrants and lower class Americans, who were usually seen as "problem drinkers." If you look at the chart on the left, you can see that the movement had some success in reducing the amount of alcohol consumed each year.

The temperance movement continued into the 1900s, and in the 1920s, the sale of alcohol was officially banned in the US with the passage of the **18th Amendment. This period was called Prohibition, because alcohol was prohibited, and it mostly ended in failure.**

Key Organizations:

American Temperance Union: The first national temperance organization, it was created by evangelical Protestants. Created in 1826, they followed Lyman Beecher in demanding total abstinence from alcohol.

Women's Christian Temperance Union: Founded in 1874, this group used religion to spread its message and gain support for a law banning the manufacturing and selling of alcohol.

Key Leader: Carrie Nation

While there were many reformers involved in the temperance movement, including many preachers and women, Carrie Nation was perhaps the most famous. After her husband died from alcoholism, Nation became active in the temperance movement, claiming she had a calling from God to literally destroy alcohol. **She began riding from saloon to saloon (a saloon is a bar) smashing bottles of alcohol** with a special hatchet engraved with the words "Death to Rum." She was arrested over 32 times and became well known across the country, **leading temperance marches as well as women's rights marches.**



Carrie Nation, with her hatchet. Engraved on the handle was the phrase "Death to Rum."



The steps read--Steps: 1. A glass with a Friend 2. A glass to keep the cold out 3. A glass too much 4. Drunk and riotous 5. The Summit attained Jolly Companions A confirmed Drunkard 6. Poverty and Disease 7. Forsaken by Friends 8. Desperation and crime 9. Death by suicide

Some reformers were Teetotalism- total elimination

Some reformers were "Temperance" - moderation