

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W. Latting • County Historian



Vol. XIV

TEMPERANCE

No. 11

Historians and researchers tell us that the highest consumption of hard liquor occurred in this country during the 1830's. Indeed, there were several distilleries located in our county at that time which were turning grain into whiskey. This was done because of inadequate transportation of bulky goods out of this area in very early times. And

Drunkedness was an ever-increasing problem in the 19th century. It is little wonder that the Womens Christian Temperance Union became an influential force in our American Society. Its political clout made paramount by Carrie Nation and her famous hatchet influenced our lawmakers with the XVIII Amendment of Prohibition which was ratified January 16, 1919 and with the XXI Amendment of Repeal which was ratified December 5, 1933.

Locally, we get a flavor of and sentiment for the W.C.T.U. through an article which appeared September 11, 1884 in the Holley Standard. It is as follows:

"The first annual convention of the Orleans County W.C.T.U. was held in the M. E. Church at Hulberton Thursday, Sept. 4 at 10 a.m. The meeting was called to order by the president, Mrs. J. H. Ruggles. Devotional exercises commenced with a Bible reading by Mrs. Curtis of Brockport. At the Officers' roll call, thirteen county officers responded to their names. Minutes of the meeting at Medina in 1883 were read and approved.

Miss Georgia Hulbert, in a few well-chosen and appropriate words, welcomed us to the hearts and homes of the temperance people of Hulberton and bade "God-speed" in our work. A response equally as good was given by Mrs. Martha Webster of East Gaines.

After singing, "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" the regular business of the convention was taken up. First came the report of the corresponding secretary, which was one of the most encouraging reports to which we have ever listened. The following is a brief summary: In one year from date of organization four county conventions have been held. There are nine Unions in the county with membership of 348. Five temperance schools with an attendance of 195 pupils, not counting the Band of Hope at Medina, which numbers 300 or more. Various petitions have been circulated in each Union and between 1500 and 2000 names secured. Scientific temperance instruction already introduced in several schools and soon to be in others. 12,000 pages of temperance literature have been distributed by the Hulberton Union alone, a work of which they may well be proud. 100 public meetings have been held under the auspices of the W.C.T.U. of Orleans County the past year and \$680 raised to carry on the work.

At Albion and Medina a Union gospel temperance meeting is held every Sabbath afternoon. The Medina Union, the last organized in the county (Nov. 1883) is the banner Union. They report a membership of 122 and have raised \$470 to carry on this temperance work, and they have become a terror to the liquor dealers of that town. Two towns reported no license and no liquor sold. At one of

Following this very excellent report was one by our county treasurer: Whole amount of money received during this year, \$57.01; amount paid out, \$53.55; cash in treasury at present, \$3.46.

A report by the superintendent of jail and prison work was also given and eyewitnesses testify that temperance literature is not only distributed among the inmates of our county jail but it is extensively read. Thanks are due to our present sheriff for opening doors to us in this county which have heretofore been closed.

The chairman of the committee on organization of local Unions reported much effort made in this direction, but with little success, owing to the great number of temperance organizations already established throughout the county....

After singing the convention adjourned to 1:30 p.m.

At the appointed time the meeting opened with a praise service conducted by Mrs. Ruggles.

The question how many county conventions shall we hold the coming year was then discussed and decided in favor of three. The question "shall delegates furnish their own entertainment in the war of excites" was discussed and also decided in the affirmative, against the better judgment of many of those present.

Next came the children's hour. The front pews were cleared and about 30 lads and lasses, members of the Juvenile Temperance School of Hulberton, came bearing beautiful banners and keeping step to a march played upon the organ by Miss Gertrude Smith.... Mrs. Parigo, of Brockport, with the aide of the blackboard, gave a lesson on the brain.... The song, "Open the Door for the Children" was then sung and was followed by songs and declamations by the children.

At 8 p.m. the church was filled to its utmost capacity, many being unable to gain entrance. The meeting opened with a coronet solo and a song by the Holley Glee Club. Scripture reading by president; and prayer by the Rev. John A. Copeland of Lancaster. A duet was then sung by Miss Marjorie Elsworth and Master Herbie Reed, entitled, "The Temperance Pledge" - a parody on "The Little Brown Jug". This quite brought down the house. Mrs. C. H. St. John, of Colorado, was then introduced by Rev. Mr. Copeland, and she held that large, closeley-packed audience for an hour and a half with the thermometer nearly 100, and everyone felt more than repaid for their sacrifice of personal comfort in listening to her very fine address..... At the close she sang, "If I Were a Voice".

Mrs. Hewitt, of Gaines, in a very pleasing rhyme, announced the want of a collection, which was responded to bountifully. A request being made for another song, Mrs. St. John sang again and the meeting closed with a song by the Glee Club and