A Movement Takes Root

The temperance movement in the United States began in the 1820s, growing out of the intense religious revivals that were sweeping the nation. Initially, the movement concentrated on reducing the use of hard spirits rather than on abstinence from all alcohol, and on moral reform rather than legal measures against alcohol. Over time the movement evolved from persuading people to drink in moderation to demanding that the government prohibit people from drinking any alcohol.

"Certificate of Membership for Temperance Societies," 1841

The Taneytown Total Abstinence Society was established in June 1841. The organization's constitution required members to agree to "not use intoxicating liquors as a beverage, nor traffic in them, that we will not provide them as an article of entertainment, or for persons in our employment, and that in all suitable ways we will discountenance their use throughout the community."

Women played leading roles in the temperance movement. This seemed natural since the movement targeted men's alcohol abuse and how it harmed women and children. Women had no means of supporting themselves and their children, were not the legal owners of their own household property, and were almost never granted divorces.

Temperance supporters also saw saloons as hosts to a range of other "immoral" behaviors such as gambling, profanity, and prostitution. Temperance became known as the "Woman's Crusade," and women staged peaceful demonstrations of prayer at businesses that served alcohol.

"Tree of Intemperance" lithograph, 1855. The tree is rooted in schnapps, whiskey, wine, beer, ale, gin, cider, brandy, and lager beer and produces branches of ignorance, vice, crime, and immorality.

The Women's Crusade

During the decades after the Civil War, the temperance movement grew steadily stronger. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), established in 1873, would grow to become the largest woman's group in the country.

Emily Buckingham Herr, c.1880

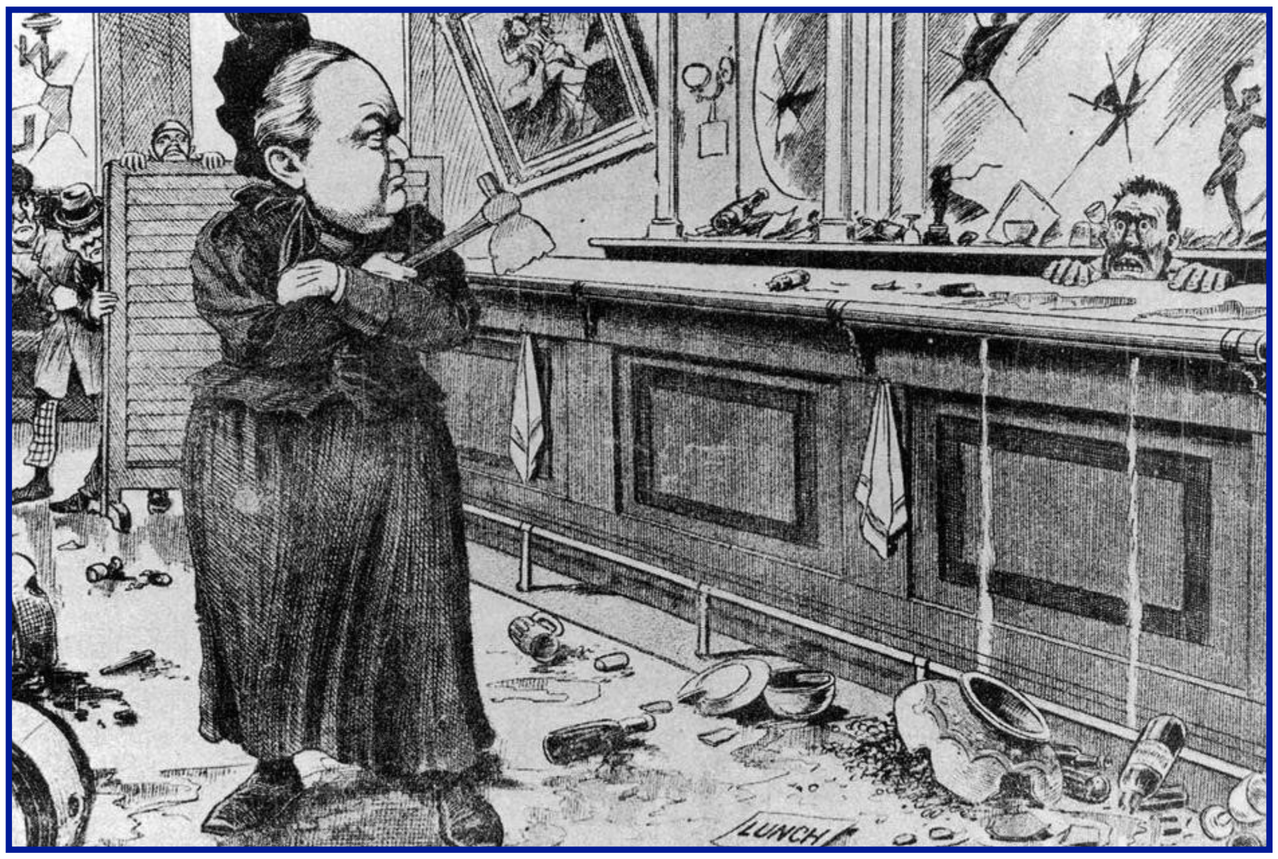
The WCTU branch in Westminster was established in December 1882. Among its leaders were Mary Shellman, Mrs. Emily Buckingham Herr, Mrs. Charles Billingslea, and Lizzie Herr. Another Carroll County branch, the WCTU of Deer Park Methodist Protestant Church, was established in 1899.

Many temperance advocates would play a role in the fight for women's suffrage. In 1852, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony were key players in the founding of the Woman's New York State Temperance Society, the first women's temperance society in the country. Both women would become better known for their roles in the suffrage struggle.

Mary Bostwick Shellman, 1886

The Anti-Saloon League, founded in 1893, developed a national organization that lobbied for prohibition at the state level. Through speeches, advertisements and public demonstrations at saloons and bars, prohibition advocates attempted to convince people that eliminating alcohol from society would eliminate poverty and social vices, such as immoral behavior and physical violence.

Some temperance advocates took an even more drastic approach. Carrie Amelia Moore Nation (she called herself "Carry A. Nation") was known for breaking saloon windows and mirrors and destroying kegs of beer or whiskey with a hatchet. She was arrested numerous times, and became a household name across the country for her "saloon-smashing" campaign.



Political cartoon depicting "Carry" Nation glaring at a terrified bartender after destroying his saloon with her hatchet, 1895. The cartoon ran in the *St. Paul Globe* in 1901.

No Booze for Carroll

In general, temperance was not considered an issue to be dealt with on a national level. “Local Option” allowed communities to decide whether or not to ban alcohol, and to what degree.

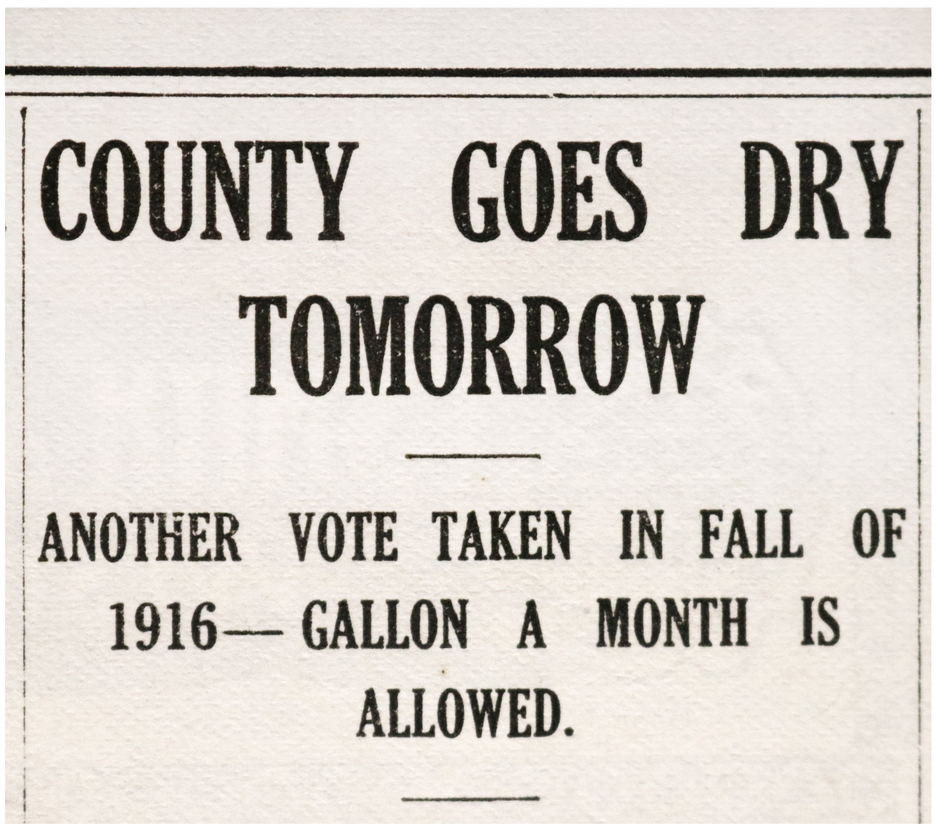
In 1914, Carroll County voters faced a decision on a ballot proposition to close all the saloons in the county. For months the debate over the Anti-Saloon law raged in the local newspapers. The “Wets” (those in favor of keeping the saloons open) most often pointed to the loss of tax revenue generated by the saloon licenses as a reason to keep them open. The “Drys” (those opposed to the saloons) voiced a moral opposition to drinking.

Weikert’s Saloon, Westminster, c.1900

Anti-Saloon League poster, c.1917

On election day, 4,233 Carroll Countians voted in favor of the measure and 3,017 voted against it. Though women in Maryland did not yet have the right to vote and thus had not directly affected the outcome, it is clear that their work on this issue had borne fruit.

Thus, on May 1, 1915, Carroll County went dry. All retail liquor dealers in Carroll County, were to dispose of all intoxicating alcohol within the first ten days of May. Exceptions were made for doctors issuing written prescriptions and churches for sacramental use.


COUNTY GOES DRY TOMORROW

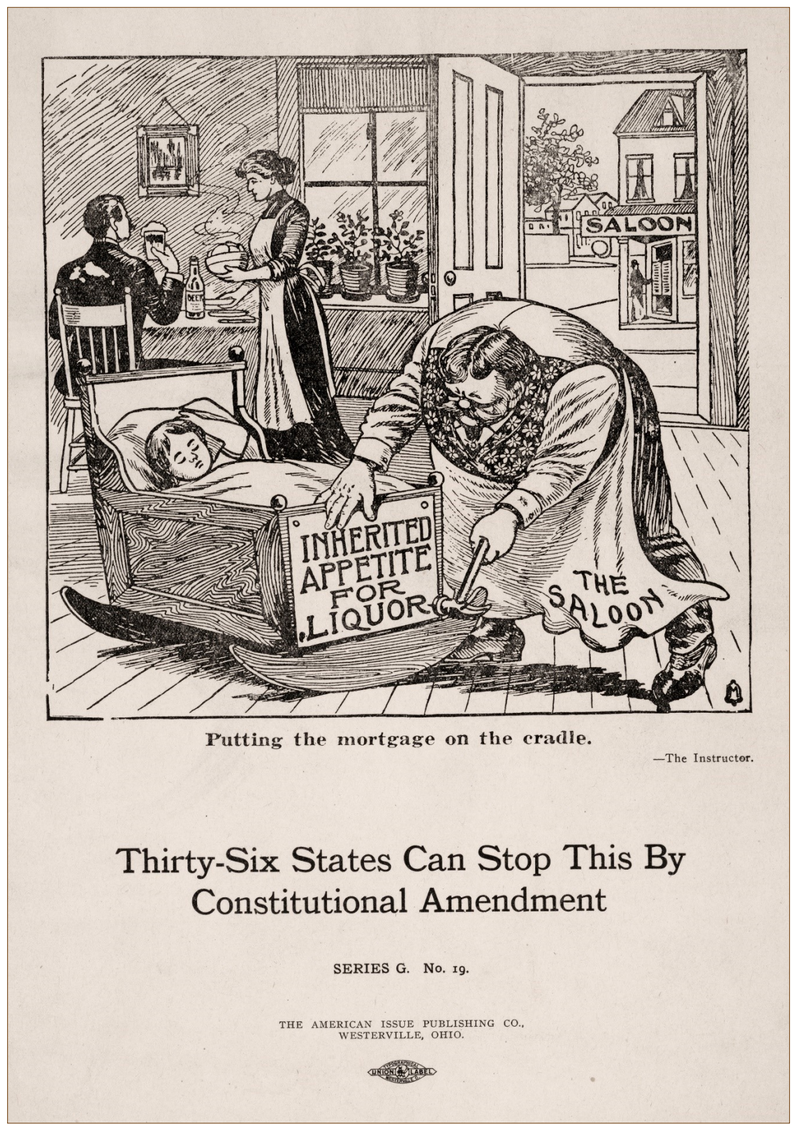
ANOTHER VOTE TAKEN IN FALL OF 1916— GALLON A MONTH IS ALLOWED.

Democratic Advocate, 30 April 1915

The issue appeared on the ballot again in 1916. The Drys marshalled their forces for a series of large public events. In October, 200 cars and a crowd estimated at 1,000 toured Carroll County. The *Times* deemed it the “most imposing demonstration ever held in the interest of any moral, political or public question in Carroll county.”

Once again the Drys won the day but this time by a much narrower margin. The 1216 margin of victory in 1914 was reduced to 680 in 1916. This seemed to settle the question in Carroll County. But, soon the federal government would step into the issue.

The Noble Experiment



"Putting the Mortgage on the Cradle," American Issue Publishing Company, 1917

By 1916, 23 states had passed anti-saloon legislation. Many went further, prohibiting the manufacture of alcoholic beverages as well. In that year's congressional elections, "drys" won a two-thirds majority over "wets."

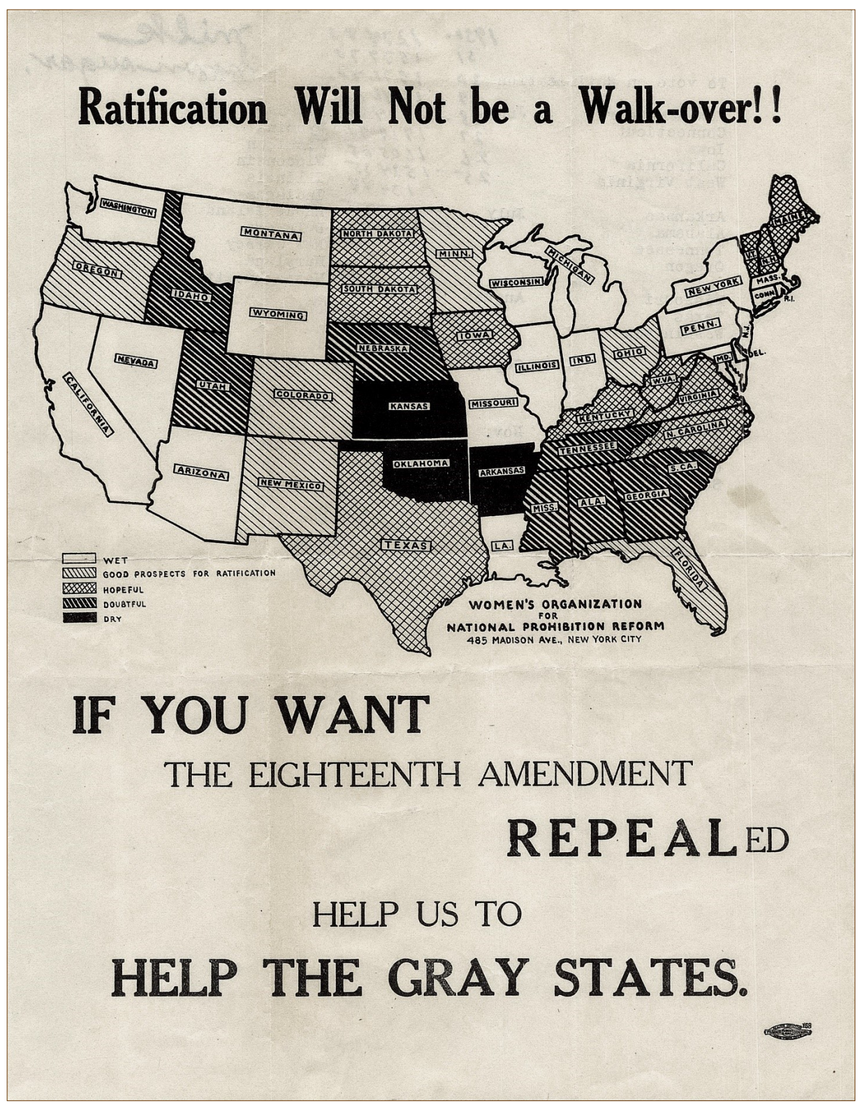
Many Senators were against Prohibition but were also reluctant to vote against what appeared to be the public's wishes. On August 1, 1917, the Senate passed a resolution containing language of a prohibition amendment. In December, the House of Representatives passed a revised version. This was sent back to the Senate which passed the resolution on December 18 and the Amendment was sent to the states for ratification.

The proposed 18th Amendment prohibited "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors within, the importation thereof into, or the exportation thereof from the United States and all territory subject to the jurisdiction thereof for beverage purposes."

In an unusual move, a deadline was included in the proposal: if ratification was not completed within seven years the amendment would be dead. However, 44 states approved the 18th Amendment in just over a year. On January 13, 1918, Maryland became the sixth state to ratify. A year later Nebraska became the 36th state to ratify, making the Amendment official.

In the end, national prohibition failed. Some voters were surprised to find wine and beer included in the ban, believing that it would only prohibit hard liquor. Since the amendment did not ban consumption of alcohol, it was almost impossible to enforce and led to the growth of bootlegging, speakeasies, and organized crime.

Prohibition ended in 1933 with the passage of the 21st Amendment. It remains the only amendment to be repealed. Despite this, the temperance movement demonstrated that women could be an organized political force, even if they could not yet vote.



Handbill promoting the 21st Amendment issued by the Women's Organization for National Prohibition Reform. The organization was founded in 1929 to "rescue" America's families and communities from the ravages of ten years of alcohol prohibition. Many of its members had been active in bringing about prohibition, but once they saw the effect it was having on their homes, families, and communities, they united to bring it to an end.