Springfield's Washingtonians: The Triumph of Legal Sanctions to Save the Soul of the Drunkard

By

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On December 5, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed legislation bringing to an end the nation's fourteen-year experiment with prohibition. It is perhaps an irony of history that only eighteen months later, on June 10, 1935, the most successful organization ever to deal with the problem of alcoholism in the United States was established when Bill Wilson and Dr. Robert (Dr. Bob) Smith founded Alcoholics Anonymous.

The national preoccupation with intemperance, which resulted in the passing of the prohibition amendment in 1919, which went into effect in January of 1920, had roots going deep into the reform movements of the nineteenth century antebellum period. The founders of A.A. were well aware of these roots and the potential for politicization of any movement seeking reform or recovery of alcoholics. The preamble of the new organization stated their case quite clearly: "A.A. is not allied with any sect, denomination, politics, organization or institution; does not wish to engage in any controversy; neither endorses nor opposes any causes."[1]

One might conclude that the above statement was the direct result of the failure of the prohibition amendment to achieve its objectives, and the tremendous political divisions prohibition generated in the decade of the "roaring twenties." After all, presidential candidate Al Smith was labeled

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[1] *When and Where Meetings*. Pamphlet Copy by A. A. Grapevine, Inc. No date given.

preserve a work rule that they believed ensured that the pace of work was reasonable. Longshoremen in other North Atlantic ports worked without the sling load limitations that existed in Boston, and in light of this it would be understandable if Boston employers had regarded the dispute as simply the consequence of the longshoremen's effort to preserve a featherbed. But a careful look at what took place indicates that what was really at issue was the meaning of a fair or reasonable pace of work. Such differences can be a major cause of labor disputes, and a procedure for settling them is an important element of a rational industrial relations system.

"Alcohol" Smith by drys in the 1928 election over his open advocacy of the repeal of the prohibition amendment.

But this was not the case. The founders of A. A. were looking to the experience of the Washingtonian movement of the 1840s. The tenth tradition of A. A. states "The Washingtonian Society, a movement among alcoholics which started in Baltimore a century ago, almost discovered the answer to alcoholism. At first, the society was composed entirely of alcoholics trying to help one another. The early members foresaw that they should dedicate themselves to this sole aim." With a membership that reached the hundred thousand mark the Washingtonians might have succeeded "Had they been left to themselves." But, according to the founders of A. A., "the Washingtonians permitted politicians and reformers, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, to use the society for their own purposes." The Washingtonians became embroiled in the abolition controversy and more importantly "became temperance crusaders" and within a short time lost their effectiveness. It was one thing for drunks to reform other drunks, but quite another for them to advocate that everyone stop drinking.[2]

Recent historical research and writing focuses a considerable amount of attention on the Washingtonian movement. This work has produced a much more elaborate analysis of the demise of the organization that cited by the early A. A. literature. Historians have investigated the class antagonisms created by the working class origins of the movement and the middle class origins of the earlier temperance organizations. Also, the issues of deference associated with the orthodox religious establishment and the evangelical style of the Washingtonians; conflict of moral suasion versus legal sanctions which became the focus of the temperance movement; even the question of gender roles within the temperance movement and their application within the Washingtonian movement have been examined.

The early A. A. writers were wrong in stating that the Washingtonians lost their effectiveness when they became temperance crusaders. The Washingtonians were temperance crusaders from the very beginning and their experience meetings always concluded with a call to sign the pledge of abstinence. If anything, the Washingtonians

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[2] *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, (New York, 1952), p. 178.

rejuvenated the flagging temperance movement within the United States. The focus of the movement, the rehabilitation of drunkards, was a totally new idea. Their success caught earlier temperance organizations by surprise as they had written off the possibility of rehabilitating drunkards and focused their efforts on prevention. The Washingtonian experience meetings therefore provided the broader temperance movement with the dual possibility of reforming drunkards and providing testimony to the evils of Demon Rum which furthered the cause of prevention.

Massachusetts had taken the early lead in temperance reform. As early as 1813 the Massachusetts Society for the Suppression of Intemperance (M.S.S.I.) was formed. The early temperance movement was dominated by efforts to promote moral suasion, to recruit to the ranks of temperance the respectable elements within the community and thereby providing examples to youth of the benefits of temperance. Protestant ministers such as Lyman Beecher of Connecticut led this early phase of temperance reform. Beecher delivered his famous "Six Sermons on Intemperance" at Litchfield in 1826. However, the rising conflict between religious sects during this period resulted in a less unified effort. Orthodox Congregationalists and Unitarians were in virtual open warfare. Baptists and Methodists were increasing in numbers and influence. The M.S.S.I. was in fact a direct outgrowth of the General Association of Congregational Churches, which appointed a committee on intemperance in 1811, recommending the formation of an independent society.

This breakdown of religious homogeneity during the early decades of the nineteenth century spilled over into politics, particularly in Massachusetts which officially did not disestablish tax supported ministries until 1832. This relationship between religion and political culture had been detailed by Ronald Formisano in his work *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s.* Formisano formulates a political "core" and "periphery" in relationship to the development of political parties in Massachusetts. According to Formisano, core groups should be "considered as culturally or religiously dominant groups seeking to maintain or extend *their values* over out-groups or minorities which the paternalist core usually regard as subordinate or inferior." In like manner the "out-groups resisting the

political, economic, cultural hegemony of the Center/Core" groups were considered the periphery.[3]

More importantly, for purposes of this paper, Formisano attaches geographic significance to the struggle taking place between the core and periphery. The Connecticut River valley was "a 'land of steady habits,' Calvinist Orthodoxy, social hierarchy, and deference" and the "influence of Orthodox ministers was frequently powerful, their pastorates long," and "leading churchmen also tended to be elected selectmen or representatives," he argues. This was especially true of the market towns of Northampton and Springfield.[4]

This essay examines the activity of the Washingtonian movement in the market town of Springfield, which in the 1840s was emerging as the financial and cultural center of Western Massachusetts. By 1840 Springfield's population reached 11,000, and would increase to 18,000 by 1850. Springfield was overshadowed by its neighboring towns West Springfield and Northampton until the industrial surge following the War of 1812. The influx of skilled workers during the war left Springfield with a large pool of skilled craftsmen. When the war ended, local business leaders such as Edmund Dwight were quick to reorient this labor into small mills and factories. By the mid-1820s large-scale textile mills were operating in Springfield's Cabotville section along the Chicopee River. The town's growth was again stimulated in the 1830s with the completion of the Western Railroad which ran into Springfield from Worcester and then on to Albany, The railroad also brought the first significant Catholic population to Springfield with the arrival of Irish laborers. The Congregationalist hegemony had been broken in Springfield, as elsewhere in the state, early in the century with the establishment of the Unitarian Society. Baptist and Methodist congregations were also established early in the century. So the arrival of the Irish, and the resistance to the establishment of the first Catholic

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[3] Ronald P. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s - 1840s,* (New York, 1983), pp. 6-7.

[4] *Ibid.* p. 167.

Church in Springfield in 1847, only added another element to the core/periphery struggle outlined by Formisano.[5]

Temperance was a particularly divisive issue in Massachusetts politics in the latter part of the 1830s. The trend from moral suasion to legal sanctions was already far advanced. Massachusetts became the first state to attempt a statewide prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages with the passage of the fifteen-gallon law in 1838. This law made it illegal to sell alcoholic beverages in quantities less than fifteen gallons. Until its repeal in 1840 the fifteen-gallon law would become the focus of bitter debate both between the political parties of Massachusetts and within them as well. It resulted in the splintering of the Whig Party and the establishment of Whig Temperance tickets in many locations across the state. The Whigs were so split on the issue that the *Springfield Republican*, a Whig newspaper, proclaimed "Shall we lose Mr. Webster... by our bickering about a license law?" Clearly the Whigs feared the prospect of losing control of the state legislature and the ability to appoint the state's powerful U.S. Senators.[6]

The evidence seems to suggest that the Washingtonian movement in Springfield served as something of a common denominator bringing the core and periphery together in the cause of temperance. The repeal of the fifteen-gallon law in 1840 left the forces of legal sanctions temporarily in disarray. In that same year the first Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society was formed in Baltimore. Six drunkards meeting at Chase's Tavern began debating the merits of a temperance lecture delivered by Reverend Matthew Hale Smith. The original six would soon be joined by John Hawkins, who would become one of the most famous of Washingtonians and help spread the movement nationally.[7]

The success of this first small group rested primarily on personal recruitment. Each member was responsible for bringing a new recruit to

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[5] Robert L. Hampel, *Temperance and Prohibition in Massachusetts 1813-1852*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1982), p. 82.

[6] *Springfield Republican*, October 20, 1838, quoted in Hampel, *Temperance and Prohibition*, p. 82

[7] Reverend W. H. Daniels, *The Temperance Reform and Its Great Reformers* (New York, 1878), p. 95.

each meeting. The members related their own experiences to the prospective recruits and promised their help and support in overcoming the evils of drink. Their success in maintaining sobriety among former drunkards quickly gained the attention of the mainline temperance movement.

Washingtonian speakers were asked to relate their experiences first in New York and then in Boston. In November of 1841 a Washingtonian Society was formed in Springfield. The *Springfield Republican* was effusive in its praise of the new "temperance reformation." In an editorial printed on November 27, 1841, the paper proclaimed "No person who is worthy to be called a man, can object to the reformation of the intemperate, and ought most heartily to rejoice in it." It went on to say that "The interest that is now manifested in this town by nearly all classes of our citizens in the wonderful and glorious reformation of the intemperate now going on here, far exceeds the most sanguine anticipations of the friends of the cause."[8]

The same editorial went on to demonstrate how the movement was affecting all the elements within the temperance movement: "The victim of intemperance is dashing the maddening cup from his lips, shaking off his fetters, and standing erect in all the original dignity of his manhood" while at the same time "the moderate drinker is abandoning the useless and dangerous practice," and most importantly "The man who has hitherto stood aloof from this enterprise, now feels that he has a duty to perform, as a member of the human family and of society, a patriot and a Christian." The new reformation was obviously appealing to a wide spectrum--drunkards, moderate drinkers and persons who had not previously been involved with the temperance movement.[9]

A week later the *Republican* gave the first indication of the success of the Washingtonians in Springfield. Stating that the "temperance reform continues" the paper cited a speech by a reformed drunkard from Boston named Mr. Collier. Some 700 signed pledges had been obtained in only two weeks and it was announced that a "Society by the Ladies" was also being formed.[10]

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[8] *Springfield Republican*, November 27, 1841.

[9] *Ibid.*

[10] *Ibid*, December 4, 1841.

By the end of January 1842 Washingtonianism was well established in Springfield and the surrounding communities comprising Hampden County. A Washingtonian newspaper, *The Hampden Washingtonian*, under the editorship of A. G. Tannatt, a local printer, was being published weekly. The reform movement was experiencing rapid growth and widespread support. At a local convention in early February, the following figures for signed pledges were given by representatives from area towns: Springfield, 2100; Chicopee Falls, 1000; Willimansett, 250; Chicopee Street, 275; North Wilbraham, 730; South Wilbraham, 320; Monson, 850; West Springfield, 1000; Chester, 250 and Westfield 1,000.[11]

The Hampden Washingtonian reported in January that the Ladies Washingtonian Society mentioned earlier had indeed been established. The paper reported widespread acceptance among women "belonging to the different religious denominations in which this village abounds." The breakdown of religious barriers to cooperation was accompanied by a similar breakdown of class-consciousness: "Great unanimity had prevailed, and *caste*, if it has been present at all, has been laid aside for the time being." The women of Springfield were seemingly willing to put aside religious as well as class considerations at least "for the time being" in the name of temperance reform.[12]

Perhaps even more startling than the putting aside of religious and class considerations was the method of operation of the early Ladies Washingtonian Society in Springfield. Historians have focused considerable attention on the role of companion women's organizations within the Washingtonian movement. They were often called Martha Washingtonians, and according to Ian Tyrrell "The growing involvement of women in temperance reform was one of the most striking developments of the era." However, as Tyrrell and others have pointed out, women were still expected to confine their participation within socially acceptable limits and "accepted the thesis of the cult of true womanhood that women had a special social function as preservers of the family and guardians of morality." While Washingtonian women couched

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[11] *Hampden Washingtonian*, February 10, 1842.

[12] Ibid, January 13, 1842.

their participation in the temperance movement in terms of the cult of true womanhood they did speak at meetings, form their own groups and in general take a more active role in temperance than any other reform movement to that time.[13]

"While women actively participated in the movement they did so "as subordinates or in separate auxiliaries" according to historian Teresa Murphy. In her examination of the Washingtonians of Lynn, Murphy points out that women were assigned such traditional female roles as collecting, making and selling clothing to the families of reformed drunks. They participated in sewing circles, made food for parties and parades, and in Marblehead took the "bold" step of soliciting pledges door to door. Murphy concludes that "in the numerous temperance publications issuing forth from New England virtually nothing was said about female drunkenness."[14]

The early movement in Springfield, however, seems to make a dramatic departure in this regard. The *Hampden Washingtonian* of January 27, 1842, describes the activities of the local "ladies": Visiting the lanes and bye ways *to seek out* the poor, degraded beings of their own sex; addressing them with the voice of kindness and commiseration; sympathizing with their troubles; bringing them to their homes; administering to their wants, aye, affectionately convincing them of the cause of their fallen state; and then with the cheering words of hope and comfort, showing them how they can be restored to themselves, to their families, to society and to God." This article suggests two significant developments taking place in the Washingtonian movement in Springfield: first, the recognition of a significant population of female drunkards in the "lanes and bye ways" of the city and, second, female Washingtonians playing an active role in their rehabilitation. The article does not indicate if the female Washingtonians making these trips to the lanes and bye ways of Springfield were reformed drunkards themselves in true Washingtonian fashion, or middle-class sympathizers with the movement. In either case

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[13] Ian R. Tyrrell, *Sobering Up: From Temperance to Prohibition in Antebellum America*, 1860, (Westport, CT, 1979), pp. 179-182.

[14] Theresa Anne Murphy, *Labor, Religion and Moral Reform in Antebellum New England*, unpublished manuscript, April 29, 1991, p. 164.

the fact they were doing so at any time seems to set the Springfield group off from other "Societies for the ladies."[15]

A letter signed "A Washingtonian" appeared in the March 24, 1842, issue of the *Hampden Washingtonian* which suggests the local ladies were quickly discouraged from scouring the streets of Springfield, and instructing them on "their proper sphere of action." The writer addressed both the issue of women's activity and the issue of legal sanctions. Concerned with reports the "ladies" of Cambridgeport were circulating a petition asking the Selectmen not to approbate any person for the sale of spirits "A Washingtonian" was concerned that a similar effort would be raised in Springfield. The writer stated it was his opinion "and I believe it is the opinion of the Washingtonian Society, that the Ladies will do more good to continue in the same course which they have hitherto pursued, that of signing the pledge themselves, soliciting of the pledges of others and or affording aid to the unfortunate and needy." It was the duty of the "Selectmen and Commissioners (to) act in reference to licenses according to their own judgment and consciences." The writer was obviously a firm adherent to the original Washingtonian concept of moral suasion and believed "the Washingtonians will keep their cause entirely aloof from the agitation and strife of political action." The only way to effectively limit the sale of spirits was "to induce people not to drink intoxicating liquors, then the sale will fall as a matter of course."[16]

A letter from "A Member" of the Ladies Washingtonian Society in December of the same year suggests the women were engaged in more traditional roles. She reports that the Society raised one hundred and ten dollars together with a large amount of second hand clothing which was distributed among the needy over the course of the year. She stated "the inebriate has been clothed; the wives have been assisted and the children clothed and every influence has been used to induce parents to send their children to the Sunday schools." The evidence seems to suggest that the women of Springfield took a rather radical step in the early months of Washingtonian reform in that city, by taking to the streets to seek out female drunkards. They also seem to have been engaged in what Murphy

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[15] *Hampden Washingtonian*, January 27, 1842.

[16] Ibid, March 24, 1842.

regarded as a "bold" move in Marblehead, soliciting pledges. However, by the end of the year they seem to be relegated to the more traditional roles suggested by Murphy of nurturer and supporter.[17]

The fear expressed by "A Washingtonian" that the cause would become bogged down in political strife seems not to have been misplaced. Indeed the rapid success of the movement was already beginning to produce criticism in some quarters. This criticism prompted a member of the original Baltimore Society to produce a small book published in 1842, the same year Springfield's Washingtonians were bursting into prominence. Entitled *The Foundation, Progress and Principles of the Washingtonian Temperance Society of Baltimore* the book found a ready audience. In setting forth the principles which led to the formation of the Society the writer states "Moral suasion was to be the *only means* by which they, as a body, were to induce others to adopt their principles." In addition, "they would place the temperance cause, so far as they were concerned, in the position of a unit: that the society, as such, was to recognize no creed or religion, nor party in politics; and that neither political nor religious action of any kind should ever be introduced into the society's operations." Sounds very similar to the preamble of *Alcoholics Anonymous* quoted earlier.[18]

That a member of the original Baltimore group felt the need to publish a booklet setting forth the principles of the Washingtonian movement so soon after the organization began to have a national reputation suggests influences were already at work contradicting the original intent of the group. The evidence from Massachusetts, and from Hampden County, clearly suggests both a religious and political underpinning to the Washingtonian movement there. As mentioned above, the religious homogeneity of Massachusetts was breaking down in the early years of the nineteenth century. However, the Washingtonian movement seems to have brought forth some measure of unified support for the temperance cause.

A Washingtonian celebration in Springfield, honoring the birthday of the organization's namesake in February of 1842, brought together a

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[17] *Hampden Washingtonian*, December 15, 1842.

[18] *By a Member, The Foundation, Progress and Principles of the Washingtonian Temperance Society of Baltimore*, (Baltimore: John D. Toy, 1842), pp. 13-14.

veritable who's who of Springfield's social and religious leaders. The procession formed at Franklin Square and proceeded to the Meeting House of the First Church, an Orthodox Congregational parish, on Court Square. The gathering proved too large for the First Church to accommodate, and the overflow was directed to go to the Third Unitarian Congregational Church on State Street. The Reverend Mr. Rogers of First Church opened the meeting with prayer and then the group was addressed by Reverend W. B. O. Peabody, minister of the Third Unitarian Congregational Church, where the overflow crowd was sent. While Reverend Peabody was speaking at the First Church, Reverend R. F. Ellis of the Second Baptist Church in Chicopee Falls was in the pulpit at Mr. Peabody's church, addressing the overflow. In addition, Reverend Mr. Humphrey, Reverend Mr. Hazen of Wilbraham and Reverend Mr. Clap, whose denominations were unidentified, also addressed the group in Mr. Peabody's church. This spirit of ecumenism in the name of temperance, more importantly in the name of Washingtonianism, was virtually unheard of in this period.[19]

The religious leaders of the Springfield community, representing elements of both core and periphery groups as described by Formisano, came together under the banner of Washingtonianism. If the core was attempting to "maintain or extend their values" over the out-groups in the cause of temperance in Hampden County then the out-groups were either going along or in this case shared the same or similar values. By late May the issue which concerned "A Washingtonian" in Springfield and the Baltimore author on Washingtonianism, moral suasion versus legal suasion, was joined in Massachusetts.

A statewide convention of Washingtonians was held in Boston and the Massachusetts Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society was formed. The issue of moral suasion as "the only true and proper basis for action" drew speakers on both sides, and ultimately the word "only" was dropped. Not only was moral suasion dropped as the only method of action permitted to Massachusetts Washingtonians but the pledge of abstinence adopted by the convention varied widely from the original Baltimore pledge. The original pledge required signers "not to drink any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider." The Massachusetts version excepted

[19] *Hampden Washingtonian*, February 17, 1842.

liquors "when prescribed by a medical attendant, or in a case of wine at communion." Clearly the movement now contained influences beyond the small group of reformed drunkards meeting in a Baltimore tavern. Finally, Massachusetts Washingtonians pledged that "they will in all suitable ways discountenance the use of them [alcoholic beverages] in the community." Each Washingtonian group was left to decide for itself what constituted the "suitable ways" to be employed in discountenancing the use of intoxicating liquors in their community, but the door was left widely ajar for the use of legal sanctions.[20]

The Massachusetts convention elected a vice-president for each of the counties in the state. Charles Steans of Springfield was elected vice-president for Hampden County. The selection of Steans demonstrated the increasing grip of the core on the movement in Springfield. Steans owned a prosperous lumberyard on Bridge Street and had been one of the lay speakers at the February Washingtonian celebration. He would become a "contentious figure" in Springfield politics later in the decade when he formed an aqueduct company to provide water to downtown Springfield. He would also challenge the powerful Dwight family over the issue of civilian control of the Springfield Armory. By 1845 Stearns had moved away from Washingtonianism, and became president of the Hampden County Total Abstinence Society.[21]

In late June, Steans was named Marshal for the upcoming Washingtonian July Fourth celebration. The committee of arrangements, headed by Steans, was dominated by Springfield's social and economic elite: George Dwight, a prominent merchant and member of the powerful Dwight family; Samuel Bowles, founder and editor of the *Springfield Republican* newspaper; Edmund Ingersoll, paymaster of the U.S. Armory: Eliphalet Trask, owner of Trask Foundry who would later serve as Mayor of Springfield and Know-Nothing Lt. Governor of Massachusetts, Dr. James Swan, politically active physician who would later serve on Springfield's School Committee. The presence of these men and other prominent Springfield citizens such as William Dwight, owner of Dwight

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[20] Hampel, *Temperance and Prohibition*, p. 124, and *Hampden Washingtonian*, June 2, 1842.

[21] Michael H. Frisch, *Town into City: Springfield Massachusetts, and the Meaning of Community, 1840-1880* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 102-103.

Manufacturing, and Charles Howard, vice-president of Springfield Institution for Savings, among the Hampden County Washingtonians supports the contention of historian Robert Hampel and others that reformed drunkards rarely played a role in either the membership or the leadership of Massachusetts Washingtonian societies.[22]

Hampel argues "that drunkards accounted for only a fraction of the membership" and those fractions were sometimes exceedingly small: 3.4% in Hampshire County, 7.8% in Franklin County, 9.7% in the town of Newburyport, 10.5% in Watertown and only 12.2% in Massachusetts as a whole. Leadership roles within the societies were even more rare for ex-drunkards. In Hampel's examination of Taunton only one ex-drunkard, Elias Fisher, a 64-year-old hatter, arrested as a common drunkard in 1835, 1840 and 1841, became president of the Washingtonians. Membership lists of Springfield's Washingtonians are lacking, but the number of signed pledges, 2000 by February of 1842, gives Springfield a much larger membership than Taunton's 335. But the newspaper listings of the men active in the Springfield group, both among the local clergy and the city's economic elite, suggest an involvement in Springfield which went beyond the experience of other Massachusetts towns.

Hampel argues that the early Washingtonian movement was "small-d democratic" with its emphasis on "egalitarianism of lectures by ex-drunks, the less decorous atmosphere of Washingtonian meetings, members' optimistic faith in the ability of the individual to reshape himself, and the society's unwillingness to legislate morality." Gentlemen of standing in most communities were not found in Washingtonian ranks, "but the new society did value men of position and power." Aware of the "modest social composition of their movement," Washingtonians "occasionally pleaded for the endorsement of such men." This does not appear to have been the case in Springfield where the most prominent men in the community such as the Dwights, Stebbins and Bowles played important roles right from the beginning.[23]

By mid-July, a writer to the *Hampden Washingtonian* was clearly coming down on the side of legal sanctions. Signing his letter simply "D,"

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[22] *Hampden Washingtonian*, June 30, 1842.

[23] Hampel, *Temperance and Prohibition*, p. 105.

he hoped his letter would be published "as the feelings of a true Washingtonian." Describing a recent incident where a fellow townsman had fallen dead as the result of delirium tremens, "D" was aghast that this man "was sent to the drunkards grave... by the Rum Seller." He asked "How long will the public good require that Rum shall be sold in this town, to make our neighbors drunkards, and to fill our poor-houses and jails, and that too without license." "D" exhorted his fellow Washingtonians to "in the name of God, put on the whole armor of Temperance!" And what was that armor? "Let us withdraw all our custom from the Rumseller... and not even buy medicine where the red eyed and bloated face are supplied under a druggists license."[24]

The rum seller must be the object of Washingtonian scorn, even to the point of boycotting legitimately licensed establishments. This was precisely the opposite of advice being given by the member of the original Baltimore society writing the same year. The Baltimore writer may have had Massachusetts in mind when writing about Washingtonian pledges that went beyond the original groups: "And then again, the same pledge, which was to reform a man from drunkenness, required him not only to have no connection with the manufacture or sale of intoxicating liquors, but frequently also to proscribe those who had this connection, by refusing a business intercourse with them." Clearly, the original Washingtonian group frowned on any type of boycott aimed at legitimate business.[25]

By September, the Springfield Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society had a formal constitution, including a pledge and bylaws. Interestingly, the Springfield group adopted the original Washingtonian pledge from Baltimore, with the singular exception that Springfield signers were not pledging themselves "as gentlemen." Article Six of the bye laws, however, more clearly defined the tenor of the new organization: "It shall be the duty of all the members, so far as practicable, to obtain names to the pledge, to attend all meetings of the society, to encourage one another, and to use their utmost endeavors to *banish intoxicating drinks from Society."* The Springfield group was thus in step with the legal sanctions position of the Massachusetts society.[26]

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[24] *Hampden Washingtonian,* July 19, 1842.

[25] A Member, *Foundation, Progress and Principles,* p. 31.

[26] *Hampden Washingtonian,* September 6, 1842.

If any doubt remained where the Springfield Washingtonians stood on the question of legal sanctions the editor of the *Hampden Washingtonian* cleared the air in an editorial of September 27, 1842. "It is folly to attempt to disguise the fact," he wrote, "that Washingtonianism and grog-selling are antagonistical; the one or the other must cease." While it would be "neither pleasant nor profitable" for the paper his course must be "straightforward" as he had a responsibility and duty to "fearlessly and zealously advance the interests of Washingtonian principles... without fear of, or favor to, him or them who will continue the sale of that murderous poison."[27]

"Why not use moral suasion?" the editorial continues, "We reply that it has been fully tried without any good effect, every entreaty has been made to the rumseller, every possible argument has been urged and every appeal to his feelings as a parent, a professed Christian, and a citizen has been made." And what effect had all these efforts had? "None: the trade is still pursued for its miserable profits." The editor concluded that "nothing but the strong arm of the law will be effectual to crush it," and he pledged to "hold up to the public gaze and scorn every instance of a deliberate violation of the law which may come to our knowledge."[28]

The editor did not have to wait long for an opportunity to "hold up to the public gaze and scorn" a member of the Springfield board of selectmen. An anonymous letter appeared in the October 6 issue alleging that a Springfield selectman in possession of a license to sell spirits "for medicinal and mechanical purposes only" had broken the law. "I have been credibly informed" the writer said, "that a poor miserable victim of rum came to this selectman's shop from Longmeadow, and got a pint of rum and *pawned his boots to pay for it!"* The writer sarcastically remarked it "kind of this father of the town of Springfield thus to supply the drunkards of other towns with *medicines."* He then went on to express the desire that the county commissioners "could stand in some of the shops which they license to sell rum for medicine only, and see what a company of poor miserable beings come in, with jugs and pails to get the medicine." The letter resulted in denials and countercharges from the

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[27] *Hampden Washingtonian*, September 27, 1842.

[28] *Ibid.*

selectman in question, Mr. Engraham. Perhaps it was not a coincidence that Engraham was a selectman elected on the Democratic ticket in this overwhelmingly Whig political era.[29]

Moral suasion came under attack again in the November 24 issue of the *Hampden Washingtonian.* Reporting on "a large and enthusiastic" Washingtonian meeting held at Faneuil Hall in Boston it reported the gathering resolved to "pledge ourselves to sustain, in all suitable ways, the due execution of the laws against the traffic in intoxicating drinks." The Washingtonians believed the sale of intoxicating drinks was "calculated to increase the number of moderate drinkers, many of whom will become drunkards." While "persuasion or moral suasion, as it is called," had been used with the rumsellers it had proven to be "of no earthly purpose." Moral suasion had only resulted in insults and continued violations of the law. The article concluded by stating that "Moral suasion has been used to its utmost extent -- it has been used without effect, and the strong arm of the law must and will be resorted to."[30]

It seems clear that by the end of 1842 Massachusetts Washingtonianism had taken a decidedly different course than the one suggested by the original Baltimore society. Moral suasion was rejected in favor of legal sanctions, both in Springfield and the state in general. In Springfield, the movement departed still further from the original group by virtue of the nature of its meetings, which took on a decidedly religious character. According to the author of the tract on Washingtonian principles *experience* was to be the focus of all Washingtonian meetings. "Thousands of unfortunate drunkards have been saved by hearing the experience of others," and they "never would have been saved by a mere sermon or address on Temperance, however eloquent."[31]

The Baltimore writer went to great lengths to express the Washingtonian position on the question of religion, which he stated "is of more importance, and less understood" than their position on politics. "We have been represented as being adverse to religion," he claimed, "as arraying ourselves against the church - as declaring our labors to be

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[29] *Hampden Washingtonian,* October 6, 1842.

[30] *Hampden Washingtonian,* November 24, 1842.

[31] A Member, *Foundations, Progress and Principles,* p. 47.

higher and holier than those of the Christian ministry - as substituting Temperance for religion." All these charges were "wholly and entirely misrepresented or misunderstood." In spite of this injunction against bringing religion into Washingtonian meetings the Springfield society had voted the "meetings of the Society on Sunday evenings are Religious meetings - are to be so considered and so conducted."[32]

By late December of 1842 the Springfield Washingtonians were about to add an unusual twist to the principle of legal sanctions. The *Hampden Washingtonian* reported that the Sunday night meetings of the society, held in the Town Hall, had been filled to overflowing. The speakers at these meetings "have been among our most respectable and respected citizens," according to the editor. The most recent meeting, however, had proved a "disgraceful exception." When the choir began singing "a sprightly and favorite tune to Temperance words" they were drowned out by the "stamping of a portion of the boys, and soap lock rowdies who filled the back of the hall." The "rioters were requested to refrain from such noisy conduct," but when the choir attempted to resume, so did the stamping. When the choir then left their seats the "overgrown boyish rowdies" began hissing.[33]

Such conduct was an insult to the Washingtonians, to the choir, and to "a very large and respectable portion of our citizens." The Springfield Washingtonians would therefore appeal to the law "for protection in the exercise of their meetings." As the Sunday meetings were considered religious the paper quoted the law for the "disgraced rioters": "Every person, who, on the Lord's day, or at any other time, shall willfully interrupt or disturb any assembly of people, met for the worship of God, within the place of such meeting, or out of it, shall be punished by imprisonment in the county jail, not more than thirty days, or by fine not exceeding fifty dollars." If legal sanctions could be employed in the battle against rumsellers they could also be employed in the battle against disrespectful behavior.[34]

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 59, and *Hampden Washingtonian*, December 29, 1842.

[33] *Hampden Washingtonian*, December 29, 1842.

[34] *Ibid.*

Unfortunately, it becomes very difficult to follow the course of Springfield's Washingtonians after 1842. While the *Hampden Washingtonian* was published weekly through 1848 extant issues beyond 1842 are rare, and difficult to view. It is possible, however, to track some of their activity through other local papers. We know that Samuel Bowles, founder and editor of the *Springfield Republican,* was an early supporter of the Washingtonian movement. The temperance reform movement, however, while remaining an important aspect of social reform throughout the 1840s and beyond, was not receiving widespread attention in the local Springfield press. The reason for this may have been the presence of local papers such as the *Hampden Washingtonian,* devoted to the temperance cause. At the same time other great national issues were emerging and dominating the pages of the *Springfield Republican*, which became a daily paper in 1844. The annexation of Texas, war with Mexico, national tariff debates, national elections, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay and John C. Calhoun were dominating the pages of Springfield's local press.

The nature of the legal sanction movement in Massachusetts also contributed to the lack of temperance news in the local press. Prohibition was not yet a national issue. While Washingtonianism was a national phenomenon it did not have a national direction or leadership. Local groups such as Springfield's were left to their own devices, and local-licensing practices became the focus of the legal sanctions movement.

The success of legal sanctions in Springfield during the 1840s can be tracked and the continued involvement of the Washingtonian Society is evident. *The Springfield Republican* in April of 1843 reported on the results of the Town Meeting by announcing "The town voted by a very large majority to instruct the selectmen not to approbate any person or persons for licenses to sell any intoxicating liquors of any kind, as a beverage." Legal sanction was at work, and the rumsellers that had become the scorn of the local Washingtonian movement in 1842 were going to have a difficult time.[35]

The influence of Washingtonianism in Springfield remained high throughout the mid-1840s when the *Republican* reported "The temperance men succeeded to their utmost wishes," at the town meeting. On the

[35] *Springfield Republican,* April 8, 1843.

question "Shall the selectmen be instructed by the town to give a general approbation for licenses to sell liquor, or not," the vote by ballot was 655 no to 267 yes, a majority of 388 against approval. The town's first Directory was published in 1845 and included an article on the Washingtonians reporting their membership at 4000, a large number for that time when Washingtonianism elsewhere was beginning to suffer the effects of internal dissension over religious and political questions.[36]

In April of 1846, the *Republican* reported that both the West Springfield and Springfield town meetings unanimously instructed their selectmen not to approbate licenses to sell intoxicating drinks. The motion in Springfield had been made by William Dwight and seconded by Dr. Swan, both active in Washingtonian affairs. Dr. Swan, who served two terms as president of the Springfield Washingtonian Society, was quoted as saying he "did not suppose it would make any difference in the practical operation of things; but the object of passing the vote, the same as last year, was that the town authorities may not sanction or be responsible for the wicked traffic".[37]

Dr. Swan's remarks seem to imply that the "wicked traffic" was continuing despite the best efforts of the temperance men to eliminate the granting of licenses. There seems to be a measure of resignation in Swan's comment that voting to restrict licenses would not "make any difference in the practical operation of things," but would merely absolve the town fathers' consciences. The legal sanction tactic was having little success in stemming the flow of intoxicating beverages in Springfield through licensing restrictions. And the second leg of the legal sanction effort -- enforcement -- was also in trouble.

The Daily Republican reported on May 25 that "Sixteen taverns and grog-shops in Springfield were indicted at this Court for selling liquor contrary to law," and "at the head of the list is Warriner's Hotel." The paper reported on the results of the "License Cases" in its May 27 and 28 editions. *The Republican* reported that "John Maha [or Meagha], an Irishman, who keeps in the Hibernian precincts, was the second person tried for breach of the license law. The jury acquitted him on seven

[36] *Springfield Republican*, May 14, 1844.

[37] *Springfield Daily Republican*, April 21, 1846.

counts of the indictment and could not agree on the remaining ones." Thirteen other cases were settled by pleas of *nolo contendre*, and twenty dollar fines were imposed. The following day Garret Barry, indicted on eight counts of "selling ardent spirits at specified times, and in quantities contrary to the law, without a license, from his 'grocery' in the Hibernian building," was found guilty on one count, not guilty on three counts and the jury disagreed on the others. Juries seemingly were reluctant to convict, even when Irishmen were involved, while other dealers were willing to plead no-contest, pay a twenty dollar fine, and presumably resume collecting their profits from the "wicked traffic" condemned by Dr. Swan.[38]

While Washingtonianism was in decline elsewhere in Massachusetts it remained influential in Springfield. This seems to be the result of the fact that the core elements of Springfield society were more receptive to Washingtonianism and came to dominate the movement there. The rowdiness of Washingtonian meetings elsewhere would not be brooked in Springfield, and they would resort to legal remedies if need be to ensure their avowedly religious meetings would not be interrupted. The Springfield group's strong attachment to "respect" and "respectability" suggests a strong element of deference continued to hold sway in Springfield, as Formisano claimed.

At the same time the Springfield experience, at least in the beginning, seems to have brought together elements of the core and periphery in a manner not evident elsewhere. The unified support of the local clergy at the beginning of the movement occurred at a time when Washingtonianism was already coming under fire as "being adverse to religion." Also, Springfield's "ladies" seem to have taken a very radical approach to the problem of female drunkenness early in the movement, before resorting to a more traditional role. The very idea of Martha Washingtonians scouring the streets in search of female drunkards in an era when women seeking pledges was considered a 'bold" step adds a different dimension to Washingtonianism in Springfield. In summary, the evidence seems to suggest that Washingtonianism in Springfield took a somewhat different path than in the rest of the state. It achieved more core support, assumed a religious nature not found elsewhere, remained deferential, and sought

[38] *Springfield Daily Republican*, May 25, 27, 28, 1846.

middle-class respectability. While these issues would eventually result in the collapse of Washingtonian societies around the country Springfield's seemed to thrive. The Springfield society seems to have remained active and influential long after Washingtonianism went into decline nationally.

More importantly, there is virtually no mention of experience meetings in the pages of the 1842 editions of the *Hampden Washingtonian*. In fact the only mention of active attempts at reforming drunkards in Springfield in the first full year comes from the unexpected source of the "ladies." There are ample reports of large numbers of pledges being signed at Washingtonian meetings but no mention is made of conversions or reformations of drunkards. The only time reformed drunkards are mentioned they were guest speakers from out of town, usually from Boston. Springfield Washingtonianism, while challenging the cultural conformity of the era in some respects, remained socially hierarchical and deferential.