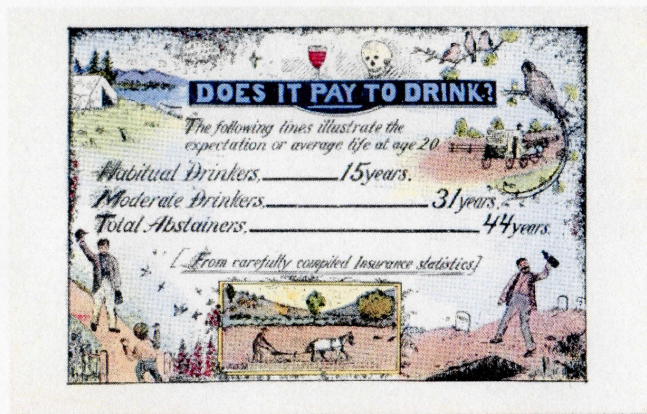


FRANCES WILLARD, THE W.C.T.U., AND THE PRELUDE TO PROHIBITION

Items from the Distilling, Fermenting and Brewing Collection at Middle Tennessee State University

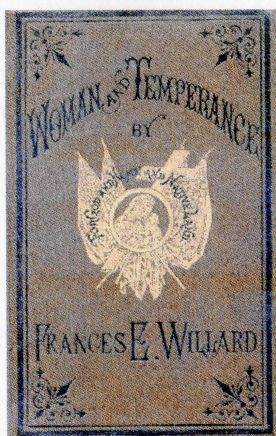
Susan J. Martin and Dr. Alan Boehm

DRINKING flourished in nineteenth-century America. By 1830, there were approximately 14,000 distilleries in the United States and whiskey made from corn was cheap and plentiful. Historian W. J. Rorabaugh estimates that the average consumption of whiskey was seven gallons a year per individual over the age of 15. And as another historian, Daniel Okrent, points out, "In modern terms, those seven gallons are the equivalent of 1.7 bottles of a standard 80-proof liquor per person, per week—nearly 90 bottles a year for every adult in the nation."



Drunkness was perceived as a major problem by contemporaries. Spousal and child abuse, poverty, prostitution, gambling, crime, disease, suicide, and a host of other social ills were pointedly attributed to drink. In response, civic and religious leaders organized, launching the temperance movement

Does it pay to drink? A.T. Cook, illustrator. Postcard, ca1915

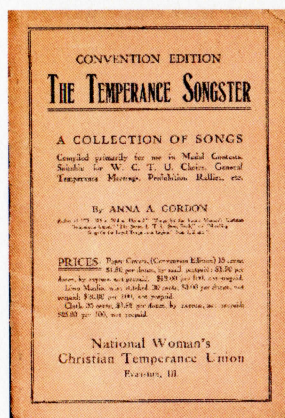


Although famous as a leader in women's suffrage, Frances Willard (1839-1898) was also a key figure in this movement. Her influence shaped late nineteenth-century views of alcohol consumption, and these, in turn, contributed to passage of the 18th Amendment and the Prohibition Era.

Willard helped establish the Women's Christian Temperance Union in 1874. Serving first as Corresponding Secretary, she gave speeches, wrote letters and pamphlets, and generally organized American women into a powerful political force against the use and abuse of alcohol.

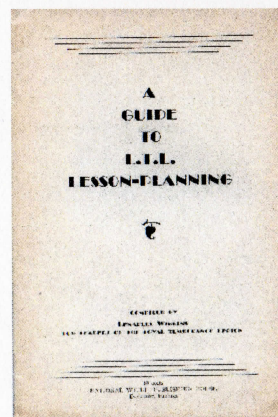
Woman and Temperance: Or, the Work and Workers of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Francis E. Willard. Hartford, CT. 1883

Click on the QR code and enjoy the Library of Congress recording of J.M. Barringer's song, "Little Bessie" dedicated to the W.C.T.U.



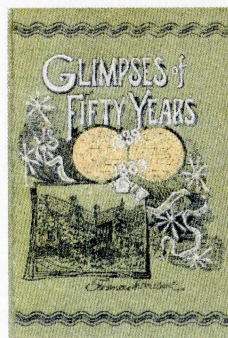
Elected President of the WCTU in 1879—a position she held until her death 20 years later—Willard transformed it into the largest contemporary women's organization in the United States, with a membership of 27,000 adults and 25,000 youths divided into state chapters. She worked tirelessly, at times traveling 30,000 miles in a year and, in one ten-year period, giving an average 400 speeches a year.

The Temperance Songster. National Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Evanston, IL, n.d. Cover notes that our copy is a "convention edition."



The L.T.L. or Loyal Temperance Leader was the W.C.T.U.'s organization for young children ages six to twelve. It was founded in the 1890s. This publication offered anti-alcohol lesson plans for elementary schools. The L.T.L.'s motto was "Tremble, King Alcohol, We Shall Grow Up."

A Guide to L.T.L. Lesson-Planning. Compiled by Lenadell Wiggins. Evanston, IL. n.d.



In the years before her death, Willard traveled and lectured in Europe, strenuously promoted women's rights and suffrage, supported labor reform, and wrote her memoir, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman.* At the age of 58, while waiting to sail to England and France from New York City, she contracted influenza and died. She was laid to rest at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago.

Glimpses of 50 Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman. Francis E. Willard. Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Chicago. 1889



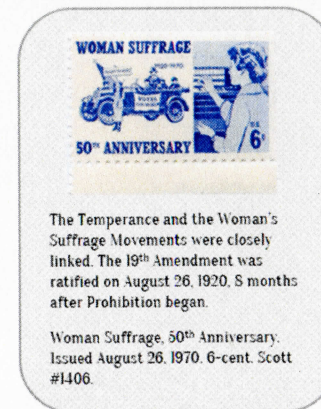
Willard's influence was quickly established. Located in the National Statuary Hall, U.S. Capitol, Willard's statue was the first honoring a woman to be chosen for the National Statuary Hall Collection.

Frances E. Willard. Helen Farnsworth Mears, artist. 1905. Image in the public domain at

<https://www.aoc.gov/explore-capitol-campus/art/frances-e-willard-statue>



Commemorated as part of the *Famous Americans* postage stamp series on March 28, 1940, Willard was one of only two women honored as part of that series. *First Day Cover. Famous Americans: Frances E. Willard. 5-cent. Scott #872.*



The Temperance and the Woman's Suffrage Movements were closely linked. The 19th Amendment was ratified on August 26, 1920, 8 months after Prohibition began.

Woman Suffrage, 50th Anniversary. Issued August 26, 1970. 6-cent. Scott #1406.