

Museum Notes

for the week of December 27, 2020 – January 2, 2021

by Kristen Parrott, curator

How will you be celebrating the New Year? Will it involve champagne, or something similar? A century ago, Prohibition was in its first year, and alcoholic drinks were sometimes hard to come by. The 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the Prohibition amendment, prohibited the making, moving, and selling of alcohol. It went into effect in January of 1920, and lasted until 1933.

You'll note that drinking alcohol wasn't actually prohibited, just "the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors". Wealthy people and businesses stockpiled alcohol before the new law went into effect, so they could continue to drink for years without having to acquire more. And lots of people illegally made it, sold it, and imported or exported it throughout the Prohibition period.

The 18th Amendment was the result of years of effort by temperance groups, including the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Temperance was especially strong in this part of Wisconsin, here in Vernon County and in nearby Richland County. A new mini-exhibit at the museum looks at the temperance movement and Prohibition here.

Featured in the new exhibit is a pamphlet entitled, *Constitution and By-Laws for the Cold Water Army*. This branch of the Cold Water Army was an auxiliary of the Coon Prairie Afholdsforening (Norwegian for "Temperance Society") in Westby. The purpose of the Cold Water Army was "to encourage young people to form the habit of total abstinence", presumably by drinking cold water instead of alcohol.

Books in the display include *The Temperance Songster* and *New Anti-Saloon Songs*. *The Temperance Songster* is a little book of temperance hymns written by Anna A. Gordon. Our copy of the songbook was acquired by the Esofea Temperance Society in 1910. The *New Anti-Saloon Songs* book is "a collection of Temperance and Moral Reform Songs prepared at the request of The National Anti-Saloon League", featuring songs such as "Prohibition is the Only Certain Way" and "Water Just Suits Me".

Hanging over the exhibit case is a certificate listing the charter members of the Clinton Center Lodge of the Independent Order of Good Templars, dated 1897. Clinton Center is located in the Town of Clinton, east of Westby. The I.O.G.T. was established in 1857 in Utica, NY, and chapters of this temperance society were also found in Viroqua and De Soto. Charter members of the Clinton Center Lodge included people from the Appleman, Hall, Lewis, Martin, Markee, Mossholder, Perkins, and Wakeman families.

This new exhibit is in the conference room on the museum's ground floor. The museum is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday afternoons, from 12 to 4, or by appointment. But we will be closed on December 31– happy New Year!