A DOMESTIC PROBLEM

In 1874, as depicted by this illustration in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, a group of women were able to convince a saloon keeper to destroy his liquor barrels. Online via Library of Congress (image LC-USZ62-121647).

American women had few political rights in the 19th and early 20th century.

Today it is hard to imagine that a female adult could be without legal rights to property, wages and her own children. But during those times, women depended on husbands for economic livelihood.

An 1872 quote from the Supreme Court of the United States, refusing Myra Bradwell the right to be a practicing lawyer in Illinois, summarizes the situation for American women at the time:

> *It is true that many women are unmarried and not affected by any of the duties, complications, and incapacities arising out of the married state, but these are exceptions to the general rule. The paramount destiny and mission of woman are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator. And the rules of civil society must be adapted to the general constitution of things, and cannot be based upon exceptional cases.*

Men, spending household income on liquor, created severe domestic problems. Not surprisingly, the husbands of several leading female abolitionists were either alcoholics or had already died from alcohol-related diseases.

Why not get rid of the substance that devastated lives when men "took to the drink?"

Long before the 18th Amendment went into effect in 1920, women attempted to use non-political means to address the alcohol problem. People like Frances Willard (one of the most famous women of the 19th century) dedicated their careers to the "temperance" cause.

Some of those abolitionists employed drastic means to make their points.

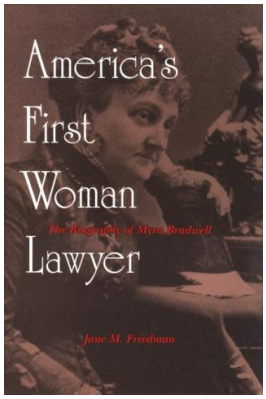
Carry Nation took a hatchet to saloons. Since the Kansas State Constitution was the first in America to prohibit alcohol (in 1880), Nation said her actions were legal.

On the 27th of December, 1900, she smashed the bar at Wichita's best hotel - the *Carey*. She spent three weeks in jail for that escapade. Soon she was known as the "Bar Room Smasher."

Although women didn't have the right to vote, they were clearly making their points. Popular songs helped to spread the word that liquor was ruining lives and harming families.

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:
http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-DOMESTIC-PROBLEM-Road-to-Perdition

Media Stream



Myra Bradwell - America's First Woman Lawyer
Image online, courtesy amazon.com website.
View this asset at: http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Myra-Bradwell-America-s-First-Woman-Lawyer

Black Valley Railroad and Its Path to Destruction

This broadside, produced in the 1860s and printed in Boston, was issued by the Massachusetts Temperance Alliance. The original illustration, used in the broadside, was created to impress upon people the dangers of drinking too many alcoholic beverages.
What do we see in this lithograph made by J.H. Bufford and Sons, circa 1860? A train, whose engine is called “Alcohol,” stopping at a station called “Drunkard’s Curve.”
Leaving behind a tranquil valley, the train and its engine are heading for a place with snakes and skeletons in the background.
Along the right and left borders, of this allegorical print, are fictional station names, such as:

- Horrorland
- Maniacville
- Idiot Flats
- Tornado Gorge
- Prisonton
- Fightington
- Beggars Town
- Rowdyville
- Woeland

Perhaps the creator of this illustration is trying to depict what could happen if we leave behind a life of temperance in favor of a life filled with too much alcohol. The graphics seem to say that we risk destruction and misery if we follow the path of intemperance.
About a decade later, in 1870, this image - and others like it - were included in a book which started as a tract. Called *The Crystal River Turned Upon the Black Valley Railroad and Black Valley Country - A Temperance Allegory*, by Stedman Wright Hanks, the book is intended (among other things) to help young people avoid the drinking path of life.
Among the book's numerous endorsements, of the “Black Valley Railroad” illustration, is this one:
Probably the most successful temperance lecture in the country is the picture of the Black Valley Railroad. Not a few young men who have been coquetting with the intoxicating cup have shuddered and drawn back as they looked upon this representation of the drunkard’s course. . . If a copy of it had a place in every household, it would do much to keep young men from the first step in the drunkard’s career. (See comment, from the “Free Press,” Northampton, Massachusetts, at page 219 of The Crystal River.)
Click on the image for a greatly expanded view of the still-famous drawing.
The full text of this engraving follows:
BLACK VALLEY RAILROAD!
GREAT CENTRAL, BROAD GAUGE, FAST ROUTE, From Sippington, through Tippleton and Topersville, VIA BEGGARSTOWN, DEMONLAND AND BLACK VALLEY, TO DESTRUCTION!
ACCIDENTS BY COLLISIONS ENTIRELY AVOIDED AS NO UP TRAINS ARE RUN OVER THE ROAD.
TICKETS SOLD AT ALL LIQUOR SHOPS.
From Drunkards' Curve the Train is an Express--all TAKING IN being done above that station, and principally of respectable people.
Passengers for all the places beyond are THROWN OUT without stopping the Train.
Passengers not allowed to stand on the platform, or to put their heads out of the windows below Rowdyville--the Corporation not wishing to alarm persons who are not patrons of the Road.
Persons desiring to leave the Train will find the stages of the Temperance Alliance at Drunkards' Curve, and all the Stations above, ready to convey them free to any of the villages upon Cold Stream River. Below Drunkards' Curve, AMBULANCES will be used.
LOOK OUT FOR PICKPOCKETS! WHILE PURCHASING TICKETS.
Persons living in the vicinity of this Road must "look out for the engine," as no bell is rung or brakemen employed below Drunkards' Curve, and the Company disclaim all responsibility for damages.
All Baggage at the risk of the owners. Widows and orphans in pursuit of baggage lost by friends on this Road are informed that the Corporation will adhere strictly to the usages of the Road, and positively will not restore lost baggage.
Passengers in the sleeping cars, especially Stockholders, will be waked up at Screech Owl Forest, Thunderland, and at the end of the Road.
Stages from Tobaccoland connect with all the Trains.
In the background, on the left, a train is seen leaving the region of fountains, churches and ministering angels, for the Black Valley Country; further down, faster trains are seen.
In the foreground a train is leaving Drunkard's Curve, the last stopping place.
In the saloon one conductor is emptying the pockets of travelers, while another is ejecting them from the train.
Forward of the saloon is on the right philanthropists are helping into Ambulances the disabled and dying, who have been thrown out along the Track of the Road.
Beyond is seen a part of the Black Valley Forest, whose leafless and fruitless trees are leaning and breaking in the coils of huge serpents.
Further on is Beggarstown and Prisontown, beyond which a train is seen disappearing into Delibiumtown and Demonland and the stormy regions toward the lower terminus of the Road, from which the only telegram that ever comes is:
"At the last it biteth like a Serpent and stingeth like an Adder."
Entered to Act of Congress, in the year 1863, by S. W. Hanks, in the Clerk's Office of the District of Massachusetts.
BUSINESS STATEMENT.
1. It is constantly carrying over 600,000 persons toward the doom that awaits the Common Drunkard.

2. It carries untold misery and wretchedness directly to more than 2,500,000 persons, a large proportion of whom are women and children.

3. It carries down to poverty and beggary enough to keep over 400,000 persons in the Alms House.

4. It carries down to the condition of criminals enough to keep 75,000 in Prison.

5. It is carrying toward destruction multitudes of the brave and noble young men in our army.
MASSACHUSETTS TEMPERANCE ALLIANCE, 49 Washington Street, Boston.
Charles H. Crosby, Printer and Lithographer, 13 and 46 Water Street, Boston.
STATEMENT CONTINUED.
6. It has carried victory to our enemies and slaughter to our friends in several important battles during the war, by disqualifying officers and men for duty.
7. It has carried down to disgrace and destruction many of the most talented men of the country from every profession in life.
8. It carries more than 400,000,000 of dollars to Destruction annually.
9. It carries annually over 60,000,000 of bushels of grain to the Distillery.
10. It carries more than 50,000 into Eternity annually.
Creator of the illustration, circa 1860: J.H. Bufford and Sons, Boston, MA.
Image of 1863 broadside - incorporating the Bufford illustration - online courtesy Library of Congress. Published by the MASSACHUSETTS TEMPERANCE ALLIANCE, 49 Washington Street, Boston, circa 1863. Charles H. Crosby, Printer and Lithographer, 13 and 46 Water Street, Boston.
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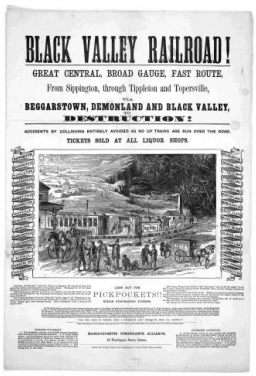

Frances Willard
Image online, courtesy the U.S. Library of Congress.
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