Peter: Please give this to Clarence Walker after you have finished with it.

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MIDDLETOWN TEMPERANCE 1816-1846
In the fall of 1812, Congregationalist ministers and influential laity from all the settled areas of the State of Connecticut met in New Haven to discuss the problems facing the political, social and religious orders -- in short -- the challenge to the moral order. Among the group were Calvin Chapin of Hartford, Heman Humphrey of Fairfield, Asahel Hooker of New London and Timothy Dwight of New Haven, representing the clergy, and laymen John Treadwell and Theodore Dwight of Hartford, Sylvester Gilbert of Tolland, Calvin Goddard of Middlesex, Tapping Reeve of Litchfield and Roger Minot Sherman of Fairfield. The product of this meeting was the formation of the Connecticut Moral Reform Society, an organization dedicated to holding the line against creeping vice, immorality and disrespect for authority. While there is no doubt that the Moral Reform Society was Federalist to the bone, a deeply political group whose anti-Jeffersonian objectives were inseparable from its Puritanical social vision -- the overtly hierarchical and deferential community structure of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries -- much of their activity was inspired by a genuine fear that once-pure values were becoming corrupted:

the members of the Moral Reform Society were in earnest about the suppression of drunkenness, gambling and general lawlessness. All had agreed that they would use their influence in every way possible to end those vices which were lowering the moral standards of former days.

Connecticut clergymen, then, took much of the responsibility for suppressing intemperance upon themselves in the second decade
of the nineteenth century. Aided by the revivals of the "Second Great Awakening," Protestant ministers lectured to their flocks on immorality in general and drunkenness in particular: "scores of clergymen, in the East as well as West, were associating temperance work with their pastoral ministrations." One such minister was David Dudley Field, of Haddam in Middlesex County. Field delivered a "Warning against Drunkenness," on June 20th, 1816, the day of the execution of Peter Lung, a Middletown resident convicted of killing his wife in a drunken rage. The content of Field's sermon reveals a good deal about the social expectations of the leaders of a society in transition. The religious rhetoric is that of Calvinism:

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\text{The text is addressed to the temperate (for the state of others is all but hopeless) and it sounds an alarm in their ears. Calamities are coming upon the earth, and they may indulge their lusts and be overtaken and ruined. Let your moderation be known unto all men: the Lord is at hand. . . The best are encompassed with infirmity. A law in their members wars against the law of their minds, and brings them into captivity to the law of sin, which is in their members.}^4
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But Field is concerned with saving the community as a whole, not merely the few strong-willed individuals who manage to keep their lamps trimmed despite surrounding temptation. He calls upon community leaders to effect this salvation:

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\text{may not the temperate and serious part of community adopt some measures to check their career of iniquity, and save some part of}
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those immense sacrifices they make for that which is not bread and which satisfieth not, for useful and important purposes? .. Too long have the virtuous slept. It is high time for them to awake...5

Since virtue is a result of God's favor and reveals itself in temporal prosperity and pre-eminence, Field's words are intended specifically for those who have been so favored: the wealthy and powerful of the community, who have perhaps shirked their responsibility. His sermon ends with a chilling parable of social control:

It was a law in Israel if parents had a stubborn and rebellious son, who would not obey their voice, and became a glutton and a drunkard, that they should report him to the elders of his city, and that all the men of the city should stone him to death. ..6

In spite of the attempts of D.D. Field and his colleagues, Middletown's liquor industry remained strong in the 1810's and 1820's. Certainly the legacy of the molasses trade with the West Indies exerted an influence on Middletown's habits and tastes; the merchant families of the late eighteenth century brought home foreign customs, and foreign beverages, and the community kept the tastes it had acquired. Our first indication of the scope of Middletown's liquor consumption is from 1814, the first year that liquor licenses are preserved. It is likely that 1814 was the first year that such licenses were issued, since the work of the ministers and the Federalist political structure had the effect of stimulating regulation for the first time in many communities. Middletown, in 1814, had 27 establishments licensed
to sell liquor, including those in the outlying communities of South Farms, North Society, Staddle Hill and Westfield. Middletown city had 21 shops. There were about 1430 adult males (over 20) in Middletown in 1820, resulting in a ratio of one store for every 53 potential drinkers. No figures are available for the volume of liquor, beer and cider actually consumed. The number of licensed establishments fluctuated for no apparent reason between 1814 and 1829, reaching a high of 37 (27 in the city) in 1820, and a low of 20 in 1824 (19 in the city). We might speculate that the number of licenses could be correlated to economic conditions, as the fee of five dollars each year might have deterred borderline dealers in hard times. Many dealers had licenses only once, or sporadically. While most selling was done from stores on Main Street or Court Street, several dealers operated from their homes in 1820. By 1830 all liquor — assuming it was sold legally — was sold in stores. Of course, many farmers made their own beer and cider for personal use; this fact may explain the disproportionate number of liquor stores in the city.

Middletown city liquor dealers in 1820 enjoyed varying degrees of affluence. There were prosperous stores like that of David Allen on Water Street, Charles Dyer and Company and Joseph and Stephen Taylor on Main Street that dealt in a variety of goods, among which liquor was important but not the exclusive item for sale. Other individual dealers were wealthy: Randolph Pease was assessed...
$201 on the 1820 tax list; Stephen Shaddick for $184; Samuel Williams for $111. Some were less prosperous: Julius Francis, who sold from his house, was assessed $20.60; Josiah Tryon who also operated from his home, was assessed $24.90.

Newspapers from the 1820's shed light on Middletown drinking habits. The American Sentinel, the upstart competitor to the older and more stolid Middlesex Gazette, published in its agricultural section a number of different methods and hints for making cider, for the "Thinking Farmer." The Sentinel also carried a number of advertisements for alcoholic products: on July 20, 1825, Samuel Spalding advertised cider brandy; William Southmayd Jr., operating from J & S Taylor's, advertised ale; Southmayd and Boardman, whose ads appeared in nearly every issue, advertised teas and liquors, specifically imported gin, rum, brandy and wines. The Gazette's advertising was essentially identical; most dealers used both papers. What is of particular interest to the social historian, however, is the transition that occurs in liquor advertising between 1823 and 1830. In the Sentinel, ads for the coarser, domestic products -- ale, beer, porter, cider brandy -- begin to disappear about 1826. The ads of the druggists and groceries, like Southmayd and Boardman and Charles Dyer, undergo a subtle change: Dyer's ad for port, madeira etc. is followed by the line, "selected particularly for medicinal purposes," in 1825. At all times there appears to be a sort of elitism in the ads; domestic products never make the front page, while imported products appear throughout the paper. Even
this changes toward the close of the 1820's: if Southmayd and Boardman advertise on the front page, wine and liquor are not included in their list of medicines and potions. The Gazette changes more slowly than the Sentinel; as late as 1829, Charles Dyer & Company's ad includes wines in the fine print at the bottom; on August 22, 1827, the Gazette carries three front-page ads for liquor.

As the liquor ads diminish in number and size, hints of temperance sentiment become more frequent. The Sentinel leads the way: on May 31, 1826, "The Moralist" discusses the evils of drink at length in the first article. In the same issue a long temperance poem appears. Previously the Sentinel had run articles about a drunken rape in a noble Italian family, one of the flowery literary selections that were apparently popular, and short, non-committal notes about how intemperate men shouldn't be. The Gazette was far behind, failing to take a stand in favor of temperance until 1829. All previous mentions of the temperance movement or sentiment had been credited to letter-writers or other papers, like the Hartford Observer. The editors of the Gazette made a telling admission on May 20, 1829, following a review (by a correspondent) of a temperance address by R.E. Selden:

We were hardly aware, 'till lately, that this important subject admitted of so many different and interesting modes of discussion. Orators, poets and statesmen may gain an honest and enviable fame in the cause of moral order.

It is as if the editor of the Gazette was entirely ignorant of the national temperance movement until this point.
On the strength of a new revivalism and reform impulse in the nation as a whole, the American Temperance Society was formed in Boston in 1826. The movement gained momentum in Connecticut: the Middlesex Association for the Promotion of Temperance was formed in September 1828, the Connecticut Temperance Society (of which the Middlesex group became an auxiliary) in May 1829. The real explosion of temperance sentiment nationwide and in Connecticut occurred in 1830, and the signs were everywhere. Between 1828 and 1831 the Middlesex Temperance Association published four expositions of arguments against alcohol, by Reverend Joseph Harvey, Charles Griswold, Linus Parmelee and R.E. Selden. While the enemy is the same, the social perspective of these four -- they are virtually identical -- differs significantly from D.D. Field's. Only Harvey among the four is a clergyman and the tone of his "Appeal to Christians on the Immorality of Using or Vending Distilled Liquors" is argumentative rather than preachy. He is trying to persuade rather than frighten his audience. Griswold, Parmelee and Selden have a vision of society that is more forward-looking than Field's desire for renewed authority; most importantly, failure in 1830 is couched in economic and social terms, rather than those of religious intemperance is "a monster...whose errand is destruction -- the destruction of the body and of the soul -- in whose train follow poverty and disgrace, widowhood and orphanage." There is a broadened idea of responsibility, outside the community to the less tangible nation; intemperance is not only a personal but a "national vice." In
the era of westward expansion and Manifest Destiny this should be a powerful call. These pamphlets endorse total abstinence and ignore the drunkard, considering him a lost cause; they want to preserve the purity of the new generations by discouraging the inheritance of drinking habits. They call for social change, for a change in attitudes, opinions and habits rather than laws.15

It was, however, the weight of attitudes, opinions and habits—and the financial and political structure that they supported—that determined the fate of Temperance in the City of Middletown. As the "Philanthropist" asked in the Gazette of January 6, 1830, "why, now, are the people in Middletown so much behind other places in systematic efforts to promote the glorious cause of Temperance? One bit of evidence would lead us to think that temperance had stirred Middletown to pursue reform: the number of liquor licenses granted in 1830 was 15, a sharp drop from 27 in 1828 and 22 in 1829. In 1831, the number dipped to 10. Paul Johnson, in his study of Rochester in this period, shows that the impetus for temperance came from the middle-and-upper class centers of power and wealth, in an attempt to discourage working men from drinking freely. In spite of the efforts of the leaders of the community, abstinence on all levels of society remained out of reach:

By 1830 the Temperance Crusade was, on its own terms, a success: society's leading men were encouraging abstinence. But even as they preached, they withdrew from the social relationships in which their ability to command obedience was embedded. Wage earners continued to drink. But now they drank only in their own neighborhoods and only with each other, and in direct defiance of their employers.16
In Middletown, Nehemiah Hubbard was the President of the Middletown city branch of the Middlesex Temperance Association. That apparently conforms to Johnson's observations in Rochester. In all other respects, however, Middletown temperance had a different character.

In 1831 William Southmayd Jr., Joseph and Stephen Taylor, Reuben Chaffee, Aaron Pease and Jonathan Kilborn all remained open for business, accounting for over half of the licenses issued in the city of Middletown in that year. All except Southmayd, a young scion of an important Middletown family, earned significantly above the median income for Middletown residents in 1835. Pease and J & S Taylor were taxed for over $200. David Allen had a license in 1835 and 1836, and was taxed at over $300. These men were by no means denied political power because of their business: Allen, both Joseph and Stephen Taylor and Timothy Savage, a former liquor dealer, served on the 1830 town council.

The relative weakness of the temperance movement in Middletown city can be seen with regard to the Middlesex Temperance Society. The largest city in the county, Middletown, provided only 240 of the 3,593 members of the Society. None of the officers of the Society in 1828 were from Middletown; none of the pamphleteers mentioned earlier were from Middletown, although the speeches were printed on the Gazette press. In other communities, religious groups and young men's groups, fraternal orders, stimulated the reform impulse; in other communities, however, the basis of community
wealth and influence were not threatened by an attack on liquor dealers.

The Baptist Church was in the vanguard of temperance elsewhere in the country; revivals were a central part of Baptist practice, and revivals frequently went hand-in-hand with pledges to abandon drink. In Middletown, Baptist records show no significant increase in conversions or internal activity against intemperance. The Baptists had a long-standing commitment to sobriety, evidenced by their willingness to dismiss one of their number who repeatedly violated their code of conduct and became drunk and disorderly. They were willing to forgive transgressors if they were truly repentant: Amos Beckwith, for instance, endured a long period of discipline by the Church before eventually becoming entirely dry, taking a place among the leaders of the Church.\textsuperscript{19} Internally, the moral scrutiny that the Baptists performed reminds us of D.D. Field's ideal of community. The Baptists did not turn their reforming zeal outward and attempt to change and convert the city as a whole, as far as their own records indicate; thus, a powerful and well-organized voice for temperance was not raised. The Congregational Church of Middletown, the "First Society," showed no interest in temperance reform; as the church of the community's leaders, among whom were influential liquor merchants, such involvement would have made little sense.\textsuperscript{20}

Fraternal societies like the Franklin Society, the Mechanics and Manufacturers Society and the Young Men's Lyceum exerted little influence on behalf of temperance. Although the Franklin Society at least
took a public position in favor of the movement, its short life-span and weakness rendered its message powerless. This society was an organization for young men between 15-25 desirous of improving their minds through intellectual and moral exercise: debating, composition, speeches, a lending library were its major activities. It existed from 1829-1831, and had 122 members over that three year span, among them such names as Russell, Hubbard, Southmayd and Boardman. The Young Men's Lyceum, although longer lived, suffered from the same weakness; the by-laws of this society called for a quorum to be only one-third of its members, but even this small number failed to show up at meetings with any great regularity, with the natural result of frequent cancellations. Leadership of these groups was in a constant state of flux; no dominant individual chose to use either society to promulgate a consistent policy. The Mechanics and Manufacturers society existed from 1832-1836, and had 53 members over that period. This group had a stricture against the discussion of local politics and religion which may have prevented the temperance issue from even arising in debate.

Outside Middletown city the temperance movement in Connecticut remained powerful throughout the 1830's. At the National Convention of the American Temperance Society in Philadelphia in 1833, the advocates of non-legal moral reform and those who favored legislation against alcohol became divided. Connecticut succeeded in passing a law in 1839 "making it a penal offense for any person to sell wines
and spirituous liquors without a license granted by a majority vote of the town meeting." This is probably the reason for the absence of liquor licenses after 1838 in Middletown; the records of the town votes are not available. In 1845 three-quarters of Connecticut towns voted for no licenses in their city -- the temperance movement had done its work.

In 1846 Middletown issued 22 licenses. In an effort to prevent liquor sales, citizens from Middletown city and Westfield circulated petitions:

The undersigned inhabitants of the Town of Middletown believing that the traffic in intoxicating drinks to be used as a beverage is a great obstacle to the reformation of all who have fallen into habits of intemperance; a means of leading others to imbibe similar habits; and the prolific source of multiplied evils in the community; respectfully petition the Special Commissioners for said town to withhold licenses for this purpose; and to take measures effectually to suppress the aforesaid traffic.

The Middletown city petition had 79 signatures, that of Westfield 91. In Middletown city, 419 men paid the poll tax, while in Westfield only 112 paid the tax. Yet more signatures were collected in a community one-third the size of Middletown. Temperance is once again shown to be weak in the city, more powerful in the outlying districts; it was from these, rather than the population center, that the Middletown Temperance Society drew its strength.

The signers of the petition in the city were from the less prosperous segments of society, by and large. The solid support for
temperance among community leaders apparent in Rochester was the exception rather than the rule in Middletown. Three signers were taxed over $100 in 1845, of the 39 males examined: Thomas Mather, Alfred Southmayd and Wm. S. Camp. Twelve of the signers do not appear on the 1845 tax list, perhaps because they were recent arrivals; five paid no tax at all; five paid just the poll tax of $10.00; and one paid between 0-$10. The average assessment for this group is about $35. Not including the top three signers, the average is about $18.50. Among the licensees, however, are some of the wealthiest men in Middletown: the familiar names of Joseph and Stephen Taylor, Jonathan Kilborn, Aaron Pease, Reuben Chaffee, Wm. Southmayd Jr. and Charles Dyer and Co. are prominent. While I do not have any figures on the wealth of this group, it is clear that they occupy a place of financial and political importance while the signers of the petitions are almost uniformly poor. We might speculate that the message of temperance advocates and self-denial were the best ways to succeed in society. Ironically, such a belief would pit them against the entrenched interests of Middletown merchants with manufacturers, the most avid class of temperance men in a city like Rochester.

To conclude, then, Middletown appears to be something of an anomaly in nineteenth century temperance. The persistence of a mercantile rather than a manufacturing economy, with strong foreign ties, may account for the lack of enthusiasm shown by the city's leaders for reform. Community leaders were willing to pay lip
service to temperance ideals and to exploit the movement for prestige.
Nehemiah Hubbard was president of the Middletown chapter of the
American Bible Society as well as the Temperance Society — but no
serious steps were taken by them to reduce the traffic. In a city
like Rochester where working class culture was visible and obnoxious,
community leaders had a different set of concerns, those of order
and stability. The cautious attitude of the Middlesex Gazette toward
temperance reflects the policy of the Middletown merchants to lay
low and let the storm blow over. In the largely rural communities
directly adjacent to Middletown city, farmers and artisans burned
with the fire of revivals and temperance reform, but Middletown
protected her vested interests.
FOOTNOTES

2. Ibid., pp. 88-89.
3. Ibid., pp. 103-105.
5. Ibid., p.16.
6. Ibid., p. 17.
7. Steven Peretz, "A Demographic Profile of 19th Century Middletown."
8. Liquor Licenses, 1814-1838, City of Middletown.
9. Tax Lists and Liquor Licenses, City of Middletown.
11. Ibid., January 5, 1825.
15. Ibid., pp. 8-9.
19. Records of the First Baptist Church, Middletown.
20. Records of the Congregational Church, First Society, Middletown.
22. Records of the Young Men's Lyceum, Middletown.
25. Ibid., p. 275.
26. Ibid., p. 275.
27. Temperance petitions (1846), City of Middletown.
28. Tap Lists and Liquor Licenses, City of Middletown.