

**Prohibition Reform in Postbellum Atlanta:
Understanding Black Gender Ideals in a Southern Progressive Context**

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Honors Prospectus
Academic Year 2017-2018

Introduction

“In this progress of which we are so proud, and of which we have a right to be, has woman had no share, or has she stood idly by as a looker on while man has done the work?” asked Atlanta University graduate Mattie F. Childs as she addressed a crowd of students on Emancipation Day at her alma mater in 1894.¹ The young black woman, merely a generation removed from slavery and yet claiming new authority as part of a select group of black Atlantan reformers, answered her own question firmly in the negative: “The colored woman of today takes a stand in the country which would have been an absurd idea to think of thirty years ago,” she declared confidently to the next generation of black Atlantan elite.² Childs’ declaration is worth historical attention: as the black community of Atlanta embraced a rhetoric of racial uplift and a politics of self-reliance, how did conceptions of gender shape the diverse movements they saw as key to their advancement? While the sheer fact of black involvement in the varied causes of the Progressive era in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is no historical revelation, much work remains to be done to unpack the way that the “colored woman of today” and her male counterparts navigated and renegotiated the intersections of their gender, racial and political identities. How did these black reformers, male and female, model the gendered rhetoric of their cause, and how did these evolving norms lead to both opportunity and restriction within the politics of racial respectability and moral regulation?

From raising funds for public education to lecturing on personal hygiene to lobbying for penal reform, black activists of both genders took an active role in the wave of progressive organizing that swept through the South at the turn of the century. Yet

¹ Mattie F. Childs, “The Progress of the Colored Woman Since 1863,” *The Bulletin of Atlanta University* no. 52 (1894): 5.

² *Ibid.*

within this broader sentiment of social improvement, one movement commands particular interest for its unprecedented national success: Prohibition. My research ultimately hopes to uncover the forgotten role of black reformers in the Atlantan temperance movement, from the early pushes for local prohibition in the 1880s to the eventual realization of state-wide legislation in 1907. Marginalized by some white temperance groups and co-opted by others, black men and women pushed the limits of social norms as they grappled with unique intersections of their identities – calling on issues of gender and race in particular – to take on new and significant roles as they pursued the prohibition cause for the improvement of their community. In highlighting the complex motives behind their work, I hope to advance a new gendered reading of this dynamic narrative and gain new insight into what black masculinity and femininity meant in the context of a developing black Atlanta.

Background

As the passage of the 18th amendment testifies, prohibition was truly a national movement. Yet decades before sobriety was the law of the land, battles over the barroom were playing out on a smaller scale. While the bulk of literature on American prohibition focuses either on national advocacy or else highlights movements in the urban Northeast, the south has its own stories to tell. Before the war, southern temperance leaders had largely focused on moral suasion rather than political legislation. However, the Civil War had put the agenda of these advocates on hold. It was not until growing social outrage over the prevalence of drinking amongst confederate soldiers coupled with the rising presence of evangelical churches that advocates began a cautious return to the issue in the 1870s and 1880s. It is important to note that this particular progressive movement had

long had an uneasy relationship with the region: in particular, northern prohibitionists' ties to abolition as well as the threat of a strong, centralized government did not appeal to their southern counterparts. Those hoping to advance the cause from the north therefore knew they needed to adapt their rhetoric in order to curry regional appeal.

It was Georgia where they finally succeeded, enacting the first state-wide prohibition legislation in the south in 1907. Georgia was soon followed by Alabama, Oklahoma, North Carolina, Mississippi and Tennessee. Understanding the unique phenomenon of southern prohibition therefore requires a return to its earliest grounds, as the narrative of the movement was tried and tested on the Georgian electorate. Atlanta offers an exceptionally useful example, particularly for understanding the relationship between the temperance movement and race relations. With the largest urban black population by the turn of the century, Atlanta could boast a unique black elite and powerful black religious and educational institutions. Therefore, issues of prohibition and debates over race relations were necessarily interconnected and must be historically considered for their parallel and overlapping aims.

While both black and white reformers grappled with issue of prohibition, the Gate City had to deal with broader social, economic and political issues of a region in transition. Destroyed by the Civil War, Atlanta faced the turn of the century with an unusual dynamism. In the 1880s, these changes manifested in a modernizing impulse. Rebuilt within a Reconstruction, and then post-Reconstruction world, the city represented the height of what Emory College president Atticus G. Haygood championed as the "New South," the rejection of a glamorized antebellum past and confederate-era sectionalism and a turn to modernity in economic and social life. "Our provincialism, our

want of literature, our lack of educational facilities, and our manufactures, like our lack of population, is all explained by one fact and one word – slavery. But for slavery, Georgia would be as densely populated as Rhode Island,” proclaimed Haygood, locating Atlanta’s future successes in a new ethos of industrial development and social modernization rather than the traditional plantation model.³ A key component of the New South agenda was racial uplift, and Haygood in particular advocated investment in black education. Despite their inclusionary rhetoric, we must recognize that Haygood and his colleagues were merely cloaking existing white supremacist instincts with a hopeful paternalism. However, this dominant ideology offered real opportunities to black Atlantans. This was particularly true within the prohibitionist cause.

Notably, black reformers utilized such rhetoric to reach across the color line. The history of the early temperance movement in Atlanta is tantalizingly interracial. Reminiscent of what historian C. Vann Woodward would term a “forgotten alternative,” the prohibition movement leading up to the 1885 election seemed to offer a glimpse into a progressive world of greater equality made possible by a benevolent, if somewhat condescending, white attitude towards black Southerners, and the active leadership of a powerful, if somewhat conservative, black upper class.⁴ In the bloody history of southern race relations, the mid-1880s in Atlanta seemed to offer a glimpse into what might have been: a unique cooperation between white and black temperance advocates, a rhetoric of racial uplift championed by former confederates and black leaders alike. Joined in partnership – black and white organizers sharing stages and serving milk at the polls

³ Atticus G. Haygood, “A Thanksgiving Day Sermon: The New South, Gratitude, Amendment, Hope,” (sermon, 6-7, Oxford, GA, 1880), 14.

⁴ C. Vann Woodward, *Origin of the New South 1877—1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1971).

together – there was, for a moment, a hypothetical alternative to the reality we now think of as inevitable.

In the Atlantan context, these partnerships came to the test when the county first had the opportunity to rule on the alcohol issue. By the time Governor Henry McDaniel had officially authorized an electoral process by which counties could pass their own prohibitionist legislation with the General Local Option Law on September 18, 1885, both the Wets and Drys were already hard at work organizing the Atlanta campaign. With the election set for November 25th, the Prohibitionists organized more than nine rallies that drew crowds of up to 6,000 black and white voters.⁵ Recognizing their ability to swing the election, black Atlantan voters utilized the Local Option election to re-claim their already threatened suffrage. While the 1877 Georgian constitution had used a cumulative poll tax to prevent those citizens owing back taxes from exercising their right to vote, both Prohibitionists and anti-Prohibitionists clamoured at the chance to pay the debts of black Atlantans and therefore claim their support.⁶ Consequently, while the previous Fulton County election had seen only 4,947 registered voters, the issue of prohibition inspired 7,200 voters to register including a total of 3,600 black voters.⁷ In their attempts to appeal to this black voting bloc, reformers framed the contest in new racial terms: “You have an opportunity as you have never had before to gain their sympathy, their confidence, and co-operation,” asserted Reverend John Bryant at a predominantly black rally leading up to the election, arguing that a dry victory would cement the New South relationship between white and black progressives and initiate a

⁵ Harold Paul Thompson, “Race, Temperance, and Prohibition in the Postbellum South: Black Atlanta, 1865-1890,” (PhD diss., University of Emory, 2005), 226.

⁶ Thompson, “Race, Temperance, and Prohibition in the Postbellum South,” 260.

⁷ Prohibition, Rousing Meetings Held during the Past Week,” *Atlanta Constitution*. Nov. 17, 1885.

new era of interracial cooperation.⁸ When the prohibitionists achieved victory with 51.5% of the vote, these reformers celebrated their success together.⁹

Yet when this triumph was overturned in a later 1887 contest revisiting the issue, disillusioned reformers turned on their black partners and rejected the previous conflation of racial equality and the prohibitionist cause. Blaming the disappointing result of 1887 on “thirsty” black voters, white prohibitionists pivoted their message to appeal to white supremacist values. Evoking what E.A. Pollard called the “Lost Cause,” white reformers looked pointedly backwards, drawing from the stereotypes of slavery to incite white anxiety about modernization and racial integration.¹⁰ As novel racial sciences gained traction amongst southern intellectuals, prohibitionist organizations argued that the physical and mental differences between the races disqualified former slaves from the vote. Re-appropriating the Sambo trope of antebellum literature, which claimed that blacks had “a child’s mind and heart,” the dry activists claimed that they could not count on such an electorate to make the moral choice for temperance.¹¹ The election of 1887 had proved that the failure of prohibition would continue until black Atlantans were fully disenfranchised, they argued. Ardent dry speaker and former New South advocate Sam Jones expressed these new views in 1900: “The Negro is to blame largely for this state of things, for if the Negro had realized that the best white people of the South were his best friends and he had quit hanging with the liquor crowd and let Yankee-doodle alone he would have been much better off today,” he declared to a crowd of white reformers.¹²

⁸ Thompson, “Race, Temperance, and Prohibition in the Postbellum South,” 236.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 218.

¹⁰ Joe Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 133.

¹¹ Coker, *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause*, 142.

¹² Quoted in William G. McLoughlin Jr., *Modern Revivalism: Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham* (New York: Ronald Press, 1959), 306.

Convinced that the liquor interest had bought the votes of the black electorate, prohibitionists sought to silence the political voices of their former allies. By 1900, they had scored their first success when the Georgia legislature ensured all-white primaries.

More dangerous than the neo-Sambo rhetoric that cost black men the vote was the narrative of the “black beast” that initiated an era of intense racial violence working in tandem with the prohibitionist cause. By the turn of the century, an increasing number of black men were accused of sexually assaulting white women; these allegations manifested in violent vigilante results. From 1882 to 1913, 402 Georgian men were lynched, 90% of whom were black.¹³ Drawing on Victorian gender norms of white female purity, southern men invoked a culture of honor to avenge what was perceived as a crisis of black rape. White reformers became complicit in these cruelties as they utilized the image of the drunk black rapist to evoke emotional support for their own cause. “Liquor, lust, and lynching all ran together,” explains historian James Morone.¹⁴ Arguing that the low-grade liquor marketed towards black audiences could incite a sexual savagery that was directed by obscene bottle labels featuring nude white women, prohibitionists connected these deep sexual anxieties with their call for a dry state.¹⁵ Far from the rhetoric of racial uplift that characterized the movement in the mid-1880s, the prohibitionist cause of the 1890s and early 1900s was deeply reliant on white supremacist rhetoric.

It is perhaps unsurprising that such a volatile and emotional strategy yielded violent responses. After several major Atlantan newspapers detailed four alleged liquor-

¹³ Walter White, *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (New York: Arno Press, 1969), 254-258.

¹⁴ James Morone, *Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 295.

¹⁵ Horace DuBose, “The Model Saloon License League,” *Nashville Tennessean* (Nashville, TN), Jun. 14, 1908.

fueled black-on-white assaults in a feature published September 22, 1906, these unsubstantiated claims inspired an unruly crowd of white men to gather in downtown Atlanta in protest. These young, mostly working class men proceeded to destroy black-owned businesses throughout Central Avenue and Decatur Street, killing at least 25 black men and injuring dozens more. While the state militia eventually controlled the mob, the sentiments spilled over into the political sphere. Senator Benjamin Tillman exploited this mass anger to solidify the prohibitionist push for statewide dry legislation and the disenfranchisement of the black electorate: “The white men of the South were never more united or more determined than they are now in the purpose to maintain white supremacy in each and every part of every Southern state,” he declared in the months following the riot.¹⁶ Less than a year later, prohibition was the law of the land in Georgia and the previously crucial black voting bloc had been completely eliminated through a constitutional amendment. While the New South had ultimately failed to cement prohibition legislation through a strategy of cooperation across the color line, the racialized strategies of white prohibitionists at the turn of century ultimately achieved their ‘progressive’ goals.

Yet while white prohibitionists excluded black progressives from these later movements, the marginalized black reformers did not give up the cause. After the Atlanta Riot, prominent black physician and Yale graduate W.F. Penn spoke to an audience of white Atlantans about the frustrations of black temperance men as they faced this rising white supremacy: “If living a sober, industrious, upright life, accumulating property and educating his children as best as he knows how, is not the standard by which a coloured man can live and be protected in the South, what is to become of him?” he questioned,

¹⁶ “Sen. Tillman Discusses Recent Atlanta Riots,” *Atlanta Georgian* (Atlanta, GA), Oct. 8, 1906.

declaring that the black-led efforts for racial uplift and social respectability had failed to produce the New South vision of interracial harmony they had hoped for.¹⁷ At first, some conservative factions attempted to mend the rift that had grown between white and black progressives – in particular, the Atlanta Civic League and the Coloured Co-operative Civic League emerged to bring prominent white and black leaders together in conversations about progressive reform to prevent another riot. However, such talks soon faltered and some black reformers instead sought to create a parallel reform movement to the now exclusively white groups. For example, black women in Atlanta founded the Neighbourhood Union in 1908 to offer diverse social services and condemn the “Negro loafer, gambler and drunkard.”¹⁸ While future research is needed to understand the landscape of reform in post-riot Atlanta, it is clear that the black community of the city did not give up the prohibition cause despite its violent connections to white supremacy in mainstream movements.

Historiography

Key to understanding the meteoric rise of temperance is the recognition that the movement saw the banning of alcohol as a solution to perceived social, political, religious and racial defects in their world. Consequently, the emotional power of the prohibitionist cause was hardly invested in the actual closing of saloons but rather with what differences such a new world could promise beyond the distillery itself.

Consequently, the movement was necessarily ideologically flexible. The historiography of the American temperance movement therefore represents the constant struggle to

¹⁷ Ray Standard Baker, *Following the Color Line: American Negro Citizenship in the Progressive Era* (New York: Harper & Row, 1908), 19.

¹⁸ Mara L. Keire, *For Business & Pleasure: Red Light Districts and the Regulation of Vice in the United States, 1890-1933* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 58.

identify and weigh the diverse interests behind the temperance banners: Was a temperate world one of spiritual purity or evangelical power? Racial uplift or justifiable discrimination? A feminist victory or a reclamation of Victorian gender norms? A call for modernity or the retreat into an idealized past? The appeal of the prohibitionist future for its ardent believers is that it could be – and was – all of these; and the equal appeal of these distinct narratives for historians has resulted in a literature rich with lively interpretation and debate.

Consequently, the dramatic events of Atlantan prohibition have inspired engaging historical debates within the larger subfield of alcohol and temperance history. Before discussing the literature directly concerned with the Atlanta case, however, it is first helpful to sketch the broader themes of temperance historiography. For many decades, any historical attention paid to this particular reform movement was overshadowed by abolitionism in the antebellum period and feminism after the war. The earliest histories undertaken often took for granted the relationship between temperance and religious revivalism without looking for alternative motivation: for example, John Allen Krout's classic *The Origins of Prohibition* (1925) located the movement's roots in Puritan theology and examined its impact within Calvinistic, Quaker, Baptist and Methodist ideology.¹⁹ Krout's focus on prominent figures like John Winthrop and Dr. Benjamin Rush was later undermined by Alice Felt Tyler's *Freedom's Ferment* (1944), which placed temperance amongst rising spiritualism, Mormonism, Shakerism, and even the rise of major cults in a social history of antebellum religious zeal.²⁰ Despite these early challenges, the field remained largely static in its earliest decades: as Richard Hofstadter

¹⁹ John Allen Krout, *The Origins of Prohibition* (New York: Knopf, 1925).

²⁰ Alice Felt Tyler, *Freedom's Ferment: Phases of American Social History to 1860* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1944).

argued in *The Age of Reform* (1955) temperance was merely “a pseudo-reform, a pinched parochial substitute for reform” and consequently considered undeserving of major scholarly attention.²¹

The sub-field finally began to develop in earnest in the 1960s as academics of diverse disciplines took a new interest in grassroots protest and drug culture. Joseph R. Gusfield’s *Symbolic Crusade* (1963) made a splash when he rejected the long-held assumption that mere ideology – theological or otherwise- could motivate a reform movement as inherently political as prohibition. While acknowledging the significance of religion, Gusfield noted that these institutions did not act in a vacuum. Rather, he argued, the temperance cause had been utilized by certain social groups to claim new authority and thus higher social status. Therefore, at points at which dominant groups felt culturally under siege, they turned to alcohol abstinence as a means of expressing moral authority. Part of what differentiated his conclusions from those of his historical antecedents was his unique sociological approach, focusing on the “general process of moral reform” rather than a definitive retelling of events past.²²

Gusfield’s turn to the secular was soon advanced by the temperance scholars of the 1980s. Ian Tyrell’s *Sobering Up* (1980) identified the temperance movement as part of larger turn towards modernity made necessary by the growing market economy. Extending Gusfield’s frameworks, his narrative ignored ideological difference and instead relied on social distinctions and economic forces to justify diverse reactions to the temperance cause. Similarly, John J. Rumberger’s *Profits, Power and Prohibition* (1989)

²¹ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to FDR* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 289-90.

²² Gusfield, Joseph R. *Symbolic Crusade: Status Politics and the American Temperance Movement*, 2nd ed (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986), 2.

went even further with Tyrell's economic claims, highlighting the role of corporate capitalists within prohibition's political organization and arguing that pure material interest rather than religion or class was the true motive behind temperance banners.²³

Reacting to these secular models, the 1990s and 2000s have seen modern scholars return to theological interpretations as part of the neo-religious school. Arguing that the spiritual rhetoric of temperance reformers must be taken seriously and not as a front for hidden social, economic or political issues, scholars such as Douglas Carlson, Robert Abzug, Michael P. Young, and James Rohrer have advanced arguments complicating the secular trend within temperance history.²⁴ However, the field has yet to coalesce around any one motivation and seems unlikely to reach consensus.

Beyond debates over motivation, recent literature has sought to expand the field beyond the white middle class perspective that has long dominated prohibition narratives. Most significantly, the role of women has earned renewed historical attention. Primarily focusing on the activity of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, most scholars agree that the WCTU allowed (white) women to claim new public authority and in some cases, extend their activism to suffrage. Yet while some historians – most notably, Ruth Bordin and Barbara Epstein – see the WCTU as an essentially feminist project, others – like Lori Ginzberg and Louise Newman – have argued that the conservative gender norms strengthened by the organization were hardly subversive but instead gained their

²³ John J. Rumberger. *Profits, Power and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America 1800-1930*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

²⁴ Douglas W. Carlson, "'Drinks He to His Own Undoing': Temperance Ideology in the Deep South." *Journal of the Early Republic* 18 (winter 1998): 659–91; Abzug, Robert. *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Michael P. Young, *Bearing Witness against Sin: The Evangelical Birth of the Social Reform Movement* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006); Rohrer, James. "The origins of the Temperance Movement: A Reinterpretation," *Journal of American Studies* 24 (Aug 1990): 228-35.

power by reinforcing patriarchal structures.²⁵ Beyond this dominant debate, however, much remains to be done to understand the relationship between prohibition and gender. Much less has been written about the relationship between masculinity and prohibition, for example, and even less beyond the domain of white middle class femininity. Research frameworks utilized to great advantage in other topics of gender history have yet to permeate the subfield: Elaine Frantz Parson's *Manhood Lost*, for example, convincingly traces the gender politics of the drunkard figure within patriarchal structures and yet fails to talk about gender, race and class identities holistically as most 21st century gender historians have come to expect.²⁶

Attempts to include non-white Americans in the temperance narrative have been even scarcer. Several works have discussed white prohibitionist's perception and utilization of their black peers, particularly within the south. Joe Coker's *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause* (2007) dedicates a chapter to the local option elections in Atlanta, discussing how white organizations at first encouraged black participation in the polls for strategic value before eventually turning to the "Sambo" and "black beast" narratives.²⁷ However, Coker's entire history of racial elements in Atlantan prohibition is told through the perspective of white activists. His sources - mostly denominational papers and white-run newspapers- allow him to construct a narrative with black prohibitionists as a voiceless object relevant only in their proximity to their white peers.

²⁵ Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873-1900*; New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990); Barbara Leslie Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America*. (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); Lori D. Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics and Class in the Nineteenth Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Louise Michelle Newman, *White Women's Rights: Racial Origins of Feminism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

²⁶ Elaine Frantz Parson, *Manhood Lost: Fallen Drunkards and Redeeming Women in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

²⁷ Joe L. Coker. *Liquor in the Land of the Lost Cause: Southern White Evangelicals and the Prohibition Movement*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2007

H. Paul Thompson Jr.'s *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode* (2013) represents an important contribution to the historiography of black Atlantan temperance in particular.²⁸ Thompson locates the origins of black Southern temperance within the “Evangelical reform nexus” of the antebellum Northeast (7). Utilizing a neo-religious perspective, his work centers on this evolving theology in the Atlantan context, and his discussion of black institutions and leadership will certainly prove helpful to my own work. His emphasis on the structural-functional role of the church is a helpful model for understanding black activism. Thompson also advances a unique thesis that argues that African religious elements potentially explain the appeal of temperance within the black community, at odds with the recent focus on the social interests or commercial motives that his more secular colleagues described. Yet Thompson does not fully acknowledge the role of women in this temperance struggle, and underutilizes the category of gender as a means of understanding this world of progressive thought. Leaving black women as a mere footnote, Thompson’s work is therefore merely an important start in the broader task of understanding this world.

The interpretative frameworks of existing literature – particularly amongst gender historians – will be crucial as I tackle some of the same source material as well as other primary sources with a gendered lens. Did the Victorian gender norms that guided the white WCTU reformers also influence the aspirations and activities of their black counterparts? How can we understand the nature of black masculinity within these progressive battles? This historiographical gap is an exciting opportunity to further

²⁸ Paul H. Thompson, Jr. *A Most Stirring and Significant Episode: Religion and the Rise and Fall of Prohibition in Black Atlanta, 1865-1887*. DeKalb: NIU, 2013.

understand the complex intersectional identities of these historical agents and ultimately gain a clearer understanding of the world in which they operated.

Vision for Research

Of course, the reason that white middle class narratives have dominated mainstream temperance literature is because such sources are the most prominent and accessible. Yet while the relative paucity of sources certainly presents a challenge, I believe that utilizing a creative research methodology will allow me to locate these silenced voices. First, the use of black-run Georgian newspapers will be particularly helpful, and many are digitized to some extent. *The Weekly Defiance*, *Augusta Georgia Baptist*, *Athens Blade*, *The Age*, *Colored Tribune* (later *Savannah Tribune*), *Atlanta Independent*, *The Voice of the Negro*, and *Atlanta Southern Appeal* can provide a black perspective on the events of the prohibition movement in Atlanta and the region more broadly. In addition, careful reading of white-run newspapers, particularly the *Atlanta Constitution*, will certainly be valuable for understanding how black involvement in prohibition was perceived. Fortunately, several major Atlantan newspapers are completely digitized and searchable in the Atlanta Historic Newspaper Archives. In addition, many of both black and white run newspapers are available on microfilm at the Library of Congress. As I'll be interning at the National Museum of American History over the summer, I hope to take advantage of my proximity to these resources to begin my research before the school year begins – and if additional trips are needed, Dickinson is only a two-hour drive away.

Moreover, the leaders (both black and white, male and female) of the prohibition movement left behind a publication paper trail that will be vital to my work. Quite a few

of these works are available online (as linked in my bibliography), including the publications of major Atlantan figures. In particular, the works of prominent black reformer Edward R. Carter, the sociological findings of Atlanta University Professor W.E.B. DuBois, and the more religious writings of AME Bishop and prohibitionist Wesley J. Gaines will be crucial. These larger tomes provide insight into the theological and political motivations of black temperance advocates as well as provide much needed context and background on their colleague throughout the broader movement.

I'm also interested in getting access to the papers of black fraternal organizations – in particular, the Independent Order of the Good Templars, the Free Masons/Prince Hall Masonry, the Knights of Pythias, The Odd Fellows, and the Elks who were involved to some extent in temperance causes. The records of these groups would provide useful insight into the conceptualization black masculinity. Some of these organizations have also published newspapers, such as the *Atlanta Independent*, the official paper of the Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias (available on microfilm at the Library of Congress).

To tell the story of black female prohibitionists, a focus on the West Atlanta WCTU, run by Black Atlantan women and supported by local white chapters might yield further primary source material. The club is written about in Carter's *The Black Side*, and mentioned in the records of the Convention of Colored Women and National Federation of Afro-American Women in 1895 (both of which are available online).

Another important source are the archives of Atlanta University. Prohibition speeches (such as Childs') were reprinted in the *Bulletin*, *Scroll*, and *Catalogue*, some of which are available digitally through the Atlanta University Robert W. Woodruff Library. The papers of prominent figures in the temperance movement and contemporary Atlantan

politics could also potentially be valuable – particularly those of prominent black Republican William Anderson Pledger at Duke University and those of Carter at the Atlanta Fulton Public Library. Finally, the records of black religious institutions, such as the Friendship Baptist Church Records and First Congregational Church of Atlanta Records are held at Emory University and Atlanta University, respectively. As is obvious, this research project would certainly benefit from but would not be reliant on funding for such archival research. While travelling to Atlanta would be an incredible opportunity if funding is available, I am confident that I will be able to curate a diverse and useful source base if financial support is not attainable. In addition, I’m hoping to work with the archivists of these major archives (see bibliography) to obtain scans of significant documents if possible as well.

Closing

When AME Bishop Gaines invoked the temperance cause, lecturing his male congregants in 1890 that “the spiritual and intellectual man must be adorned, rather than the case, the human body,” and Atlanta University graduate and outspoken prohibitionist leader Georgia Swift King addressed her female followers, claiming that “the destiny of the Negro race is largely in the hands of its mothers,” they were appealing to gender norms that we as historians do not yet fully understand.²⁹ The story of Atlantan prohibition offers a promising lens into this domain; by extending recent historiographical contributions to include a new intersectional perspective, this is a gap finally able to be addressed. I hope that my research will provide a novel way of looking

²⁹ Wesley J. Gaines. *African Methodism in the South: Or Twenty Five Years of Freedom* (Atlanta: Franklin Publishing House, 1890), 286; Georgia Swift King, “Mothers’ Meetings” in *The American Negro: His History and Literature*, ed. William Hooper Councill (New York: Arno Press, 1968), 61.

at the Atlanta narrative and ultimately provide new insight into the complex world of black progressivism.

At the end of her speech on Emancipation Day, Childs turned to the women in her audience and noted with a tone of resignation that the praise she gave that day for black female reformers would serve only to “speak of a class whose names will never go down in history, will probably never be known outside of the circle in which they move.”³⁰ It would be a worthwhile project to prove her wrong.

³⁰ Childs, “The Progress of the Colored Woman Since 1863,” 6.

Appendix 1

Timeline of Prohibition in Atlanta

- 1828- First Meeting of the Georgia State Temperance Society
- 1836- Georgia State Temperance Society shifts to tee-total pledge
- 1851- Maine passes statewide prohibition law
- 1855- Methodist minister B.H. Overby launches campaign for governor on prohibition platform
- 1861-1865- Civil War
- 1869- First Order of Good Templars lodge in the state
- 1870- First Odd Fellows Lodge organized in Atlanta
- 1871- First Prince Hall Masonic Lodge organized in Atlanta
- 1873- First True Reformer Fountain organized in Black Atlanta
- 1874- Woman's Christian Temperance Union founded
- 1875- First Good Samaritans lodge organized in Atlanta
- 1880- First WCTU society established in Georgia
- 1880- South's first Colored WCTU chapter established in Atlanta
- 1881- Frances Willard's Southern Tour
- 1883- Georgia statewide WCTU organized
- 1885- Passage of Georgia' General Local Option Law
- 1885, Nov. 25- Fulton County's first local option election – prohibitionist victory
- 1887, Nov 26- Fulton County's second local option election- anti-prohibitionist victory
- 1888- Consultation Convention of Leading Colored Men of Georgia held in Macon
- 1888- Benjamin Harrison wins the presidency; Republicans recapture both houses of Congress
- 1890- Force Bill inspires Southern fear of black dominated Reconstruction government
- 1896- *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- 1900- Georgia legislature requires all-white Primaries
- 1902- Sledd Affair sparks public outrage when Emory professor publishes anti-lynching editorial
- 1906, Summer- reports of black sexual assaults of white women fill Atlantan papers
- 1906, September 22-24- Atlanta Race Riot
- 1907, July 30- State prohibition passes in Georgia
- 1908- Georgia disenfranchises black voters by constitutional amendment
- 1918- Georgia ratifies Eighteenth Amendment
- 1935- Georgia repeals statewide prohibition

Appendix 2

Cast of Characters

White Reformers:

- Warren A. Candler- President of Emory College (1888-1898), chairman of North Georgia Conference's Temperance committee, came into conflict with WCTU over suffrage issues

Charles Carroll- Published *The Negro a Beast*, which portrayed African Americans as subhuman and caused a sensation linking black intemperance with sexual assault

Jabez Lamar Monroe Curry- politician and diplomat, former Confederate officer, preacher who promoted black education and temperance in African American communities

John E. White- Baptist Minister in Atlanta who utilized anti-black rhetoric for the prohibitionist cause

Henry Grady- Publisher of the *Atlanta Constitution*, promoter of the New South ideology, prohibitionist activist

Atticus Green Haygood- Methodist Bishop and president of Emory College (1875-1884), promoter of “New South” ideology and racial uplift, prohibition activist and president of Emory General Agent of the Slater Fund

Thornwell Jacobs- Presbyterian clergyman and president of Oglethorpe University who wrote *The Law of the White Circle*, inspired by the 1906 riots that advocates temperance as an alternative solution to lynching for the ‘race problem’

Sam Jones- Popular travelling Methodist preacher who promoted the New South and temperance vision in white and African American communities throughout the South

Henry A. Scomp- prominent evangelical prohibition in Georgia who connected black suffrage with the defeat of the temperance cause in Atlanta

Andrew Sledd- Methodist minister and professor at Emory College who came under fire from WCTU’s Rebecca Latimer Felton for an anti-lynching editorial

Sam Small- Convert of Sam Jones, reporter for *Atlanta Constitution* and prohibition preacher, eventually ran for governor on a prohibition platform

Hoke Smith- Governor of Georgia (1907-1909) and US Senator from Georgia (1911-1920), prohibitionist leader who utilized racial rhetoric in campaigns

WCTU

Lula Ansley- leader in Georgia WCTU movement, wrote *History of Georgia Women’s Christian Temperance Union*

Sallie Chapin- leader in Georgia WCTU movement who encouraged close work with African Americans

Rebecca Latimer Felton- first woman to serve in the United States senate, wife of Populist William Felton, prominent advocate of women’s suffrage and prohibition; also a white supremacist and former slave owner who spoke in favor of lynching

Lillian Stevens- President of National WCTU after 1898, redirected organization along more conservative lines

Frances Willard- President of National WCTU (1879-1898), lead a Southern tour in 1881 that helped defined narrative of postbellum prohibition

E.E. Harper- leader in Georgia WCTU, worked closely with West Atlanta chapter

Antebellum

Aidel Sherwood- Baptist minister who organized Georgia State Temperance Society in 1828

Southern (But Not Georgian)

William Bryan Crumpton – prominent leader of Baptist prohibition movement in Alabama

Black Reformers:

E.R. Carter- Noted Baptist leader, author, president of the First Ward Club, and involved with WCTU and Young Men's Prohibition Club, wrote *The Black Side*

W.E.B. DuBois- Professor at Atlanta University whose research and publications informed black progressive movement

Wesley J. Gaines- Bishop in the AME Church, founder of Morris Brown College and Vice president of Payne Theological Seminary

William Anderson Pledger- former slave who became one of the leading black Republicans in Georgia

WCTU

Mattie Childs- graduate of Atlanta University, teacher

Mattie Upshaw Ford – president of West Atlanta WCTU, gave 23 talks in 1890 on purity to young women at Atlanta University

Georgia Swift King- 1874 Graduate of Atlanta University, frequent participant in May Atlanta University Conferences, organized the Sociological Club of Atlanta, worked with the WCTU and advocated for temperance

M.F. Pullen- chairman of First Ward sewing circle and prominent progressive figure

Southern (But Not Georgian)

Benjamin Franklin Riley - Pastor in the 1870s, 1880s, President of Howard College (later, Samford) and professor at the University of Georgia; prominent in Alabama prohibition movement and outspoken on racial issues; organized Southern Negro Anti-Saloon Federation

Joseph C. Price – President of Livingston College in North Carolina who travelled throughout the south promoting prohibition using racial justifications

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