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Demon rum in the City of Churches: A spirited fight for alcohol reform in Danville, Virginia, 1883-1933

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Demon Rum in the City of Churches:
A Spirited Fight for Alcohol Reform in Danville, Virginia, 1883-1933

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A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

JAMES MADISON UNIVERSITY

In

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Abstract

Utilizing previous research of American alcohol reform movements, and specifically studies of alcohol in Virginia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this thesis explores the multi-faceted story of Danville, Virginia and its alcohol reform from 1883-1933. Contained within these dates are critical events and stories chronicling the complex history of conflict, and occasional cooperation, regarding alcohol in a southern town. The goal of the thesis, comprised of two parts--a context paper and an accompanying digital exhibit--was to explore how Danville's community structure and public discourse affected the way alcohol reform was experienced and discussed in the city. Findings indicated that there were three crucial spheres of public discourse which reflected Danville's experience most during this time-frame, these being religion, politics, and labor.

The framework of discussion around alcohol created by Danville's citizens during this period is particularly illuminating. These arguments which centered on politics, religion, or labor aspects were the most common and the most successful as demonstrated by their constant presence. Drawing upon various primary sources, including newspapers, maps, publications, personal diaries, and city records, the rhetoric of alcohol and alcohol reform is traced through Danville's past. These three pervasive frameworks demonstrate perceptible shifts in both attitudes of Danville's citizens and levels of acceptance in regards to alcohol reform, tracing its evolution from a fringe effort to its rise and eventual fall after the repeal of National Prohibition.

Section I: Scope and Methodology of Project

The goal of this project was to explore an alternate method of museum presentation and education. The final result of this thesis project was the creation of an informative and interactive presentation of history in the form of an online exhibit submitted towards the fulfillment of a Master's of Arts in History from James Madison University. This exhibit focused on telling a multi-faceted story of Danville, Virginia and alcohol reform from 1883-1933. In order to form a cohesive exhibit, the information was divided thematically: Religion, Politics, and Labor.

The author utilized her previous research of American alcohol reform movements and specifically alcohol in Virginia during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a basis for this project. After primarily studying alcohol in the Shenandoah Valley, an internship in Danville during the summer of 2013 piqued the author's interest in the history of that city. Fascinated by the stories she found, the author felt like Danville's alcohol history could be enhanced by introducing a technological element. The online exhibit should be viewable on both traditional computers and portable media devices, like tablets. However, the full experience is better viewed from a traditional computer. The site utilizes the fairly new HTML5 technology, and as of March 2013 is best viewed on the latest version of the Google Chrome web browser. Interactive components such as photo slideshows, audio, video, and a Flash enabled game supplement the site.

This particular web exhibit could be incorporated into a larger museum entity that would already have an established website or could stand alone. Its method, as opposed to a traditional exhibit, will be useful to present the information about Danville since both space and funds are issues for most museums. The site is located at:

<http://rileyed.wix.com/thesis>. The author recommends that readers peruse the contextual paper included in the following pages prior to exploring the exhibit. The digital aspect of this project will be revisited at the end of the paper.

Section II: Context Paper Introduction

Warned with the threat of being “shot down like the dogs and driven off like the Indians,” African-American community members of Danville, Virginia faced resentment from their white neighbors in 1883.¹ Danville blacks had risen to a time of prominence in the city’s government, powered by a shrewd political party and a majority black population that was accused of tainting Danville with drunkenness and being oppressive and offensive to the whites.² A race riot between the city’s two factions broke out in November of that same year where both whites and blacks were murdered in the streets. The mayor of Danville, J. H. Johnston, frantically requested troops from the Governor of Virginia, W. E. Cameron, stating that “the citizens here are terrorizing,” the town and that “the majority of the troops here will fraternize with the riot.”³ With an upcoming election, which was an initial factor in the outbreak of the scuffle, the mayor knew that blacks would fear showing up to the voting polls in light of the violent riot. He was correct, and thus the white Democrats of Danville won their election by defamation and oppression.

Politics and race relations remained a constant struggle for the city, but the race riot of 1883 demonstrates underlying tensions about what some might consider an unlikely factor: alcohol. Equated with “negro rule,” alleged rampant drunkenness was

¹ U. S. Congress, Senate, Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Alleged Outrages in Virginia*, 48th Cong., 1st sess., Report No. 579 (Library of Congress: 1884), XXXIII. Accessed online 03/15/2014: http://docs.newsbank.com/openurl?ctx_ver=z39.88-2004&rft_id=info:sid/iw.newsbank.com:SERIAL&rft_val_format=info:ofi/fmt:kev:mtx:ctx&rft_dat=10EA7522DA423AA0&svc_dat=Digital:ssetdoc&req_dat=0FA01CB257ABD8C6.

² The 1880 census records the population of Danville as 7,526 total residents, of whom 3,129 were white and 4,397 were black. The large number of African-Americans in the area was mainly due to the large concentration of slaves in Pittsylvania County, where tobacco was heavily cultivated, before emancipation. Edward Pollock, *Pollock’s Sketchbook of Danville, Virginia* (Danville: E. R. Waddill & Bro., 1885), 6.

³ U. S. Congress, *Alleged Outrages*, XL.

cited as a justification to rid Danville of its black overseers within the city government. The conflict present in Danville over the use of alcohol rose to the forefront of public thought in the late nineteenth century with the aid of temperance organizations and culminated in the early part of the twentieth century during Prohibition.⁴ In a small southern town, proponents and defenders of strong drink stood toe to toe with staunch teetotalers, and numerous factions of the city butted heads over the alcohol question.⁵

Alcohol and its connected reform movements became most significant in Danville between 1883 and 1933. Bookending this range are pivotal moments in Danville history. Firstly, significant political action and city reactions were intertwined with alcohol in an event that garnered national attention, the Danville Riot of 1883. Secondly, the date of 1933 represents an end to national Prohibition, and essentially the end of the extreme alcohol reform era. Contained within these dates are critical events and stories chronicling the complex history of conflict, and occasional cooperation, regarding alcohol in a southern town.

Several cultural lenses are integral in Danville's story of alcohol and its reform: politics, religion, and labor. Firstly, the political lens, connected with race relations and power, allows researchers to study alcohol at institutional levels in city government. It also allows for a more detailed narrative about location and the divisionary lines within municipal boundaries between neighborhoods like North and South Danville and the textile worker village of Schoolfield, all of which influenced the way that Danville

⁴ Essentially, temperance is the abstinence from all, or most, alcoholic drinks. The Constitution's Eighteenth Amendment enacted in 1919 banned alcohol for the general American public. This caused a spike in illicit distilling (rum runners, bootleggers, etc.). The amendment was repealed in 1933 with the Twenty-first Amendment.

⁵ A teetotaler refers to a person who completely abstains from alcohol.

residents interacted with alcohol in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶ Secondly, religion must be considered when discussing alcohol reform during this time. Popularly known as the “City of Churches,” since it possesses more churches in a square mile than any other city in the entire state of Virginia, Danville’s relationship with alcohol was largely shaped by the city’s religious institutions. Many arguments against alcohol were tied into religious ideas and ideals which often emphasized that consuming alcohol was considered a moral and ethical problem. Thirdly, work and labor considerations factored heavily into this as well, whether it was the textile millworkers, druggists, saloon owners, bottling companies, or the moonshiners themselves trying to make a living on an illegal product. The disagreements between factions in each of these three groups and the approaches each utilized to further their respective causes allow researchers to investigate the complex webs of conflict that Danville experienced from 1883 to 1933.

The framework of discussion around alcohol created by Danville’s citizens during this period is particularly illuminating. These arguments which centered on politics, religion, or labor aspects were the most common and the most successful as demonstrated by their constant presence. These three pervasive frameworks demonstrate perceptible shifts in both attitudes of Danville’s citizens and levels of acceptance in regards to alcohol reform.

⁶ Danville, Virginia is located in Pittsylvania County, which was formed out of Halifax County in 1767. The initial town of Danville, named after the Dan River, was founded in 1793 out of the area previously termed Wynne’s Falls. Like most boundaries decided by man, city limits for Danville have shifted periodically. Over the years, the city of Danville has expanded by incorporating Neapolis in 1896, termed North Danville because of its position north of the Dan River, and the former Schoolfield Village in 1951. These entities were technically independent, but always had a very strong connection to the main city and were a part of its civic fabric even before official annexation. Occasional references to Pittsylvania County will also be utilized as their connection to the citizens of Danville, such as through furnishing city residents with illegal liquor made out in county stills, is considered significant and the territories are not culturally mutually exclusive. See Appendix A: Figures, Fig. 1 for map of the area in 1920.

Section III: Damming the Great American River of Alcohol

Before Danville, before America, there was alcohol. The discovery and creation of alcohol preceded numerous milestone inventions, and it has stood the test of time. Distillation technology and methods were discovered somewhere between the first and seventh century A.D., yet alcohols not dependent on the distillation process--like beer and wine--had been around much longer. Over these many years, the uses and perceptions of alcohol have been multifaceted and contradictory. Alcohol was used to heal and treat people of all ages suffering various maladies, and yet it also has the power to make people sick. It has been praised, and it has been derided.⁷

American society proved to be no different; containing its own contradictory views on the benefits and detriments of alcohol. From the time of colonization, alcohol, more specifically strong liquor, had both medicinal purposes and its own role in diverse societies throughout the American landscape. Alcoholic libations were an integral part of many colonial diets. Eric Burns, author of *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol*, argued that alcohol such as wine, beer, and distilled liquors also provided another type of fodder for colonial diets that fed the colonists' desire for independence. Burns asserted that freedom was "an engine and spirits the fuel of highest octane."⁸ The discussions and debates that shaped America's future, such as the organization of the Boston tea party, were often situated at taverns and inns.⁹ When the Constitution was ratified, a three-hundred-gallon cask of ale was paraded through the streets of New York.

⁷ Eric Burns, *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol* (Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press, 2004), 1-5.

⁸ Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 5.

⁹ In this case, the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston.

Proudly displayed on the side was a banner that read: “Ale, proper drink for Americans.”¹⁰

Alcohol in early America served as a valued item in the barter and trade system that many members of the community participated in. Liquor could be exchanged in order to pay off debts for the purchase of goods or a rendered service. It also often held an elevated role in the family and community as a supplement or substitute for medicine.¹¹ Using alcohol as medicine was not new, and numerous folk remedies of Virginia and the Appalachian regions included it in their concoctions. This type of use dates back at least to the ancient Greeks; similar practice is also seen in the Bible on several occasions. Americans followed these precedents and thus turned to alcohol as an addition to their own medicine cabinets. Traditional folk medicine advocated for the use of liquor for anything from toothaches to snake bites.¹²

¹⁰ Willard S. Randall, *Alexander Hamilton: A Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 2003), 353; as quoted in Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 19.

¹¹ Mark Rose and Cheryl Cherpitel’s work in *Alcohol: Its History, Pharmacology, and Treatment* (Center City: Hazelden, 2011) offers useful information on alcohol’s worldwide and American history, the temperance societies, alcoholism’s scientific and cultural aspects, and treatment methods. For a general overview of the many-faceted roles alcohol has played in the American past see Eric Burns’ *The Spirits of America: A Social History of Alcohol* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), W. J. Rorabaugh’s *The Alcoholic Republic, an American Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), and also Jess Carr’s work *The Second Oldest Profession: An Informal History of Moonshining in America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972). Good sources for background information on the temperance and prohibition movements can be found in John J. Rumbarger’s *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800-1930* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989) and Richard McGowan’s *Government Regulation of the Alcohol Industry: The Search for Revenue and the Common Good* (Westport: Quorum Books, 1997). Virginia experiences with the movements are contained within Leonard S. Blakey’s *The Sale of Liquor in the South: The History of the Development of a Normal Social Restraint in Southern Commonwealths* (New York, Columbian University: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912) as well as in Charles C. Pearson and J. Edwin Hendricks’s *Liquor and Anti-liquor in Virginia, 1619-1919* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967). There is only one book that focuses significantly on Danville’s liquor experience and that is Frankie Bailey and Alice Green’s recent work *Wicked Danville: Liquor and Lawlessness in a Southside Virginia City* (Charleston: The History Press, 2011).

¹² Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 30.

While alcohol's existence in American society has been omnipresent, the temperance movement also had deep American roots. Early advocates for American temperance are seen near the beginning of the nineteenth century; and over five thousand temperance or prohibition groups existed in America by 1840.¹³ A major difference between many of these early activists and Gilded Age or Progressive Era prohibitionists is the extent to which they prosecuted different types of alcohols. For example, most early temperance supporters, like Benjamin Rush, concentrated their efforts on hindering "ardent sprits" such as rum, whiskey, and brandy.¹⁴ Less potent drinks like beer, cider, and wine were generally accepted. In sum, early temperance supporters maintained the opinion that moderation, not complete prohibition, was acceptable.¹⁵ As history shows, the movement primarily intensified over time. With the exception of the years directly before, during, and after the Civil War--where efforts were concentrated elsewhere--the temperance movement steadily gained followers.

The first license tax for distilling alcohol in Virginia was not enacted until 1840, which meant that the government began charging fees for the license that gave owners the permission to distill.¹⁶ Excise taxes, or taxes on each sale of alcohol, were reinstated

¹³ Burns, *The Spirits of America*, 64.

¹⁴ Benjamin Rush was a prominent physician in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, commonly known as 'The Father of American Psychiatry.' Rush termed the stronger alcoholic beverages (essentially anything except beer, wine, or cider) as 'ardent liquors' which were much more disastrous for the alcoholic than the weaker beverages.

¹⁵ Alice Fleming, *Alcohol: The Delightful Poison* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1979), 63.

¹⁶ Leonard S. Blakey, *The Sale of Liquor in the South: The History of the Development of a Normal Social Restraint in Southern Commonwealths* (New York, Columbian University: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912), 39.

once more in 1862.¹⁷ More taxes were imposed by 1868, and the rate of the excise tax per gallon had increased steadily. The movements to limit alcohol consumption grew in power and influence after the Civil War, foreshadowing the eventual total prohibition set in place by the Eighteenth Amendment. Even before complete prohibition, people without the proper permits had had their operations confiscated. By 1894, still seizures numbered over a thousand and “by 1898, successful raids numbered close to twenty-five hundred.”¹⁸ The 1897 United States Annual Report reflected these developments, stating that there was a decrease in “all kinds of distilleries registered,” in the mid-1890s.¹⁹ The increasing strength of the prohibition movement, and the introduction of the Eighteenth Amendment in the first part of the twentieth century, eventually led to rising numbers of stills operating under the cloak of darkness--the ubiquitous moonshine stills.²⁰

¹⁷ Joseph E. Dabney, *Mountain Spirits: A Chronicle of Corn Whiskey from King James' Ulster Plantation to America's Appalachians and the Moonshine Life* (New York: Scribner, 1974), 74. This issue was not only tied to the temperance movement, but was also instated in order to pay for the cost of the Civil War, much like the Whiskey Tax had been intended to offset the cost of the Revolutionary War and repay national debt. The Whiskey Tax was eventually removed after the Whiskey Rebellion occurred in Pennsylvania in 1794 as a reaction to the tax. This rebellion was squashed by George Washington, with the help of a militia.

¹⁸ Charles D. Thompson, *Spirits of Just Men: Mountaineers, Liquor Bosses, and Lawmen in the Moonshine Capital of the World* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 166.

¹⁹ United States, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Internal Revenue for the Fiscal Year Ended*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O., 1897), 73. Accessed online 03/15/2014: http://books.google.com/books?id=VNg_AAAAYAAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

²⁰ A still is the apparatus used to extract alcohol during the distilling process. Fundamentally, distilling is the simple collection of ethanol (alcohol) from a fermentation process. The ethanol is the type of alcohol safe to drink; methanol is the poisonous alcohol that would quickly either kill off a moonshiner's customers or make them blind. Stills often varied in design and size based on region and designated use. While there are many different types of stills, the oldest design is the pot still, which was very popular in Southern Virginia. Pot stills are sometimes called a “mountain teapot,” since this particular type of still was vastly used in the mountainous areas of the country, or “turnip still,” if the pot base is round. The term “moonshine” comes from the covert nature that alcohol stills were operated in. Moonshiners would create their product, be it whiskey, brandy, gin, etc., under the cover of darkness and by the light of the moon. The smoke from wood fires used to heat the still was also conveniently more hidden during the dark. Other names commonly used to refer to moonshine include: firewater, mountain dew, hooch, and white lightning.

The Eighteenth Amendment, ratified in 1919 but not enforced until 1920, was the ultimate culmination of the prohibition movements. During the Wilson administration, the Eighteenth Amendment resulted in the advent of a dry nation strongly endorsed by groups like the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Anti-Saloon League.²¹ Of note, however, is that the state of Virginia had elected to go "dry," or alcohol-free, in 1916--four years before enforcement of national prohibition. The national law made it illegal to produce, sell, import, or transport alcohol but Virginia's law was even stricter. The state had also deemed it illegal to own and consume alcohol, even if purchased before the ban.²² Under both federal and state laws, the government designated agents, inspectors, and revenue men to implement the regulations. These enforcers would often raid moonshine distilling camps, where stills would be either systematically destroyed or seized. In 1920, the first year of enforced nationwide prohibition, "a huge number of stills--over fifty-four thousand-- were destroyed, and the number of seizures continued to stay up in the tens of thousands annually for the Prohibition years," as the government hired "hundreds more officers and sent them to the hinterlands with arms."²³ As Prohibition settled across the nation and in communities like Danville, many locals whose way of life had depended upon or incorporated alcohol protested these

Jess Carr, *The Second Oldest Profession: An Informal History of Moonshining in America* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 184.

²¹ For further information about the WCTU or the Anti-Saloon League, among other groups, readers can consult Daniel Okrent's work *Last Call: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition* (New York: Scribner, 2010) as well as Thomas R. Pegram's *Battling Demon Rum: The Struggle for a Dry America, 1800-1933* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998).

²² Charles C. Pearson and J. Edwin Hendricks, *Liquor and Anti-liquor in Virginia, 1619-1919* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967), 292-293.

²³ Thompson, *Spirits of Just Men*, 167.

developments. Thus, Prohibition remained a continuous point of contention within society until the Twenty-first Amendment repealed it in 1933.

Section IV: “This man of God must die.”²⁴

Virginia’s modern day society still demonstrates the lasting impacts of the temperance movements and of official Prohibition--more than seventy-five years after the ratification of Twenty-first Amendment. Danville’s surrounding county of Pittsylvania was still technically dry until 2011.²⁵ In modern-day context, that meant that selling liquor by the drink was illegal. Currently, by that same standard, all independent cities in Virginia are wet, yet there are still ten counties that are considered dry as of 2013.²⁶ These societal and governmental remnants echo the former movements and for Danville, its early beginnings with alcohol restriction were inextricably tied with politics and related events in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Through this lens, it is observed that local political parties who once condemned temperance or prohibition became their staunchest advocates.

The Danville Riot of 1883, as mentioned, was a major event that brought racial tensions to the forefront. Race relations were strained, to say the least, and white hegemonic power saw a threat to the status quo in the form of a new political party--with new political power. Seeing an opportunity to change their status and influence, many blacks aligned with the Readjuster Party, led by ex-Confederate General William Mahone, in the 1880s. Blacks consequently gained significant political power in Virginia,

²⁴ W. E. Nichols, Poem entitled “Rev. John R. Moffett,” quoted in S. H. Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett* (Salem: McClung & White, 1895), 267.

²⁵ Justin Ward, “Voters allow alcohol sales in Pittsylvania County,” (WDBJ Television, Inc., November 09, 2011). Accessed online 03/15/2014: http://articles.wdbj7.com/2011-11-09/alcohol-sales_30380210.

²⁶ Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control identifies the ten dry counties in their most recent report from 2013 as Bland, Buchanan, Charlotte, Craig, Floyd, Grayson, Highland, Lee, Patrick, Russell. Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, “2013 Annual Report,” 25. Accessed online 03/15/2014: <http://www.abc.state.va.us/admin/annual/docs/2013ar.pdf>.

and in Danville. This was met with resistance by much of the white population who had become accustomed to power. However, another major observation that caused extreme disgruntlement among the whites in Danville was the fact that even though the black population of Danville outnumbered the white population by over 15%, whites paid 97% of the town's taxes. In order to oust blacks out of leadership positions and restore a society where whites prospered and profited the most, conservative white Democrats began utilizing propaganda to defame the character of the black population, including aligning them with the moral sin of drunkenness.

A broadside, termed the "Danville Circular," was printed as a supplement to the *Staunton Vindicator* newspaper in 1882. This outlined white citizen grievances about their situation in Danville. Circulated to readers in the Shenandoah Valley and southwest Virginia, blacks in Danville were accused of tainting the community market which was "once occupied in all its stalls by polite white gentlemen, with their clean white aprons, and the most inticing [sic] meats and vegetables upon their boards," but under negro rule had morphed into "the scene of filth, stench, crowds of loitering and idle negroes, drunkenness, obscene language, and pettit [sic] thieves." The writers further complained that the state in Danville was notorious that it had even "attracted to the town large numbers of idle and filthy negros [sic], from the border counties of North Carolina, and from Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Charlotte, Va....[and] although there is a law against vagrants, they are never disturbed." These vagrants and local blacks were said to "infest the streets and sidewalks in squads, hover about public houses, and sleep on the doorsteps of storehouses and the benches of the market place."²⁷

²⁷ "Coalition Rule in Danville," Broadside 1882 .S89FF, (Special Collections Library, Library of Virginia). Public houses were drinking establishments commonly referred to as pubs.

These attitudes towards blacks were often mirrored across the state, and came to a head during the campaign for the election of the state legislature. A candidate for State senator, William E. Simms, was running with the Readjusters when he made a stop in Danville on November 2 of 1883. The very next day saw a culmination of the racial antagonism and tension between Danville's black and white populations. Started by a street brawl, the race riot eventually embroiled the entire city. The death and injury tolls from this event range widely.²⁸

In the aftermath of the riot, city blacks, a large constituent for the Readjuster Party, were then afraid to frequent the voting polls for fear of white retaliation. The city's mayor urged the state governor to provide support as he thought that the "election on Tuesday will be a mere farce unless the voters be assured of protection at the polls by foreign troops."²⁹ Despite the reassuring presence of some extra enforcement, only around thirty blacks risked voting in the election. The white Democratic candidate won the Senate position and marked the beginning of the end for the Readjuster Party. Consequently, blacks in Danville resigned from offices in the city government and from the municipal police force.³⁰

However, the Danville Riot did not die in 1883. With the relative threat of African-American political domination pushed to the side, anti-liquor proponents such as many of Danville's prominent religious, social, and business leaders now fought full force to make temperance the new political question in a new Danville. In the wake of the

²⁸ For more detailed political and social context and information on the Danville Riot of 1883 see Charmion Woody Higginbotham, "The Danville Riot of Nov. 3, 1883." (MA thesis, Virginia State, 1955), 6-35.

²⁹ Telegram from Danville Mayor J. H. Johnston to Virginia Governor William E. Cameron quoted in U.S. Congress, *Alleged Outrages in Virginia*, XL.

³⁰ Higginbotham, "The Danville Riot of Nov. 3, 1883," 40.

riot, the city grew. North Danville, formerly Neapolis, saw a population boom from around 800 in 1877 to 2,752 in 1886. By 1896, the date of its official incorporation with Danville, the population of the northern entity had reached nearly 5,000. Danville proper, on the south side of the Dan River, mirrored those population booms and saw large growth as well. The city retained a consistent African-American majority.³¹

A major part of this civic growth was the development of Danville's textile industry. The Riverside Cotton Mills opened in 1882, and became an omnipresent force in the city for over one hundred years.³² Like most other mill towns and urban environments, Danville had a fair number of saloons as well as a liquor wholesaler, liquor-selling dry goods stores, and at least one brewery which all contributed to the town's flourishing alcohol trade. However, the community was divided. North Danville had no saloons. Danville was the wet southern counterpart to its dry sister across the river.³³ Ever diligent, the fighters for temperance did not let a river divide their ranks.

However, the same cannot be said for Danville's leading political party. The powerful Democrats, once a united front against black political power, became divided over the alcohol question once the racial threat was deemed controlled. In order to avoid a decisive statement on the party's alcohol position, state party leaders enacted a new law that essentially made alcohol control a community issue rather than a state one. With the introduction of this local-option law in 1886, cities like Danville became the main stages for conflict. Essentially this law meant that individual communities in Virginia could

³¹ Robert King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield (1853-1931): A Biographical History of the Leader of Danville, Virginia's Textile Mills During Their First 50 Years* (Richmond: William Byrd Press, 1979), 30.

³² King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 33.

³³ Richard F. Hamm, "The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark: Race, Prohibition, and Politics in Danville, 1887-1893," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, (Volume 101, no. 3, 1993), 378.

determine if they were going to grant liquor licenses or not. If the area went ‘no license,’ then the legal sale of alcohol would be halted.³⁴

At this pivotal moment, religious leaders saw their chance and took up the crusade for the dethroning of King Alcohol. Utilizing religion as a method to push temperance or prohibition into politics was frowned upon in Danville during the late 1800s. Until the cause was adopted by the local Democrats, political factions advised religious leaders advocating alcohol reform to mind their place in society and remain out of the political realm and stick to the pulpit. However, Danville was not prepared for Reverend John R. Moffett. Within the ranks of temperance supporters, Reverend Moffett stood at the helm. Moffett was a Baptist minister for a North Danville Baptist church. As a community leader, he preached his platform and condemned liquor in Danville’s society. Starting his temperance advocacy at a young age, a teenage Moffett “prepared a temperance pledge and called on all the boys in our church and community to join him in signing it,” as a childhood friend recalled.³⁵

Moffett grew into a man with a commanding appearance and strong personality. Described as tall and “broad of shoulder, stout of limb, erect, muscular,” and with a “broad, high forehead, blue eyes and open countenance,” Moffett was a force to be reckoned with when he arrived in Danville to preach in 1887.³⁶ His stance on alcohol was

³⁴ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 377.

³⁵ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 82. Written as a memorializing biography of Moffett, this work is inherently biased when presenting the account of his life. However, it does offer insight into contemporary reactions to Moffett’s actions and to those of his opponents. Further, the account has largely been proven to present accurate information by correlation with other accounts and documents, and has been utilized in scholarly works on the subject since. It is especially relevant when considering that many of Danville’s newspaper records for the time period were destroyed in a fire and only sporadic copies remain for research purposes.

³⁶ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 65.

that it was a sin, like any other sin. In order to fight this sin, Moffett reportedly would “follow the poor weak young man into the saloon and persuade him to desist from taking the glass of grog for which he went,” as well as “helping with his own hands the poor drunkard from the gutter.”³⁷ These actions he did in conjunction with his stirring sermons. However, these small actions against demon rum were not enough for Moffett. He saw the liquor issue as a large beast fueled by politics and dirty money. His preaching to his congregation and the actions he used to help people at an individual level, while earnest, often made him feel like he was “nursing the wounded in the hospital, while the battle raged without, unhindered.”³⁸

Thus, the Reverend decided to enter the political sphere to continue the fight. This then pitted him against Danville’s established Democratic regime. By entering the fray and condemning current political action, or inaction, to counter liquor’s negative influence, Moffett attracted a wealth of negative attention. After the ousting of African-American authorities in the city government, the Democrats had promoted their own power by ensuring that the city whites supported their candidates and simultaneously dissuading blacks to even show up to the polls. Thus, control of the white vote was paramount. It needed to be strong and unified, because the risk of being overtaken by black voters was still a recent, sore memory. So, the “Democrats built a tight political machine that reached from the counting rooms of major businesses, including railroads,

³⁷ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 84.

³⁸ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 91.

through the small respectable stores, down to groceries that were part store, part hangout, and part saloon.”³⁹

The Democrats also made sure to control the press, and Danville newspapers like *The Danville Daily Register* and *The Danville Times* were the mouthpieces of party interests. Moffett realized this and determined that he needed a better way of communicating temperance views to a larger populace. He went so far as to state that the editor of *The Times* “has a paper which is literally supported by the liquor men of Danville,” and that “his rent has been paid by subscriptions from liquor men.”⁴⁰ After attempting, and failing, to get Danville to participate in local-option prohibition in 1889, Moffett decided to circumvent these partisan outlets. So it was, in May of 1890, that Moffett began editing *Anti-Liquor*, a newspaper that circulated monthly at first and then weekly in Danville and the rest of southwest and central Virginia as readership grew.⁴¹

In his paper, Moffett and a few other staunch temperance supporters wrote columns on the negative impacts of alcohol. They also featured speeches and writings by other well-known temperance workers across the nation, like the famed Presbyterian preacher Reverend Talmage.⁴² The paper included advertisements, such as the one for Wheatley & Tyree Insurance in North Danville, that warned people, “Prohibition does

³⁹ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 380.

⁴⁰ John R. Moffett, *Personal Diary*, 174; quoted in Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 384.

⁴¹ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 380 & 385.

⁴² Reverend T. De Witt Talmage was a Presbyterian preacher who lived from 1832 to 1902. He gave sermons around the country, and his sermons were often reprinted in community newspapers. For further information on Talmage, consult John Rusk, *The Authentic Life of T. De Witt Talmage, the Greatly Beloved Divine* (Chicago: Monarch Book Co, 1902).

not prohibit! Deaths, fires or accidents.”⁴³ Using a catchphrase from the anti-prohibition faction, referring to the belief that alcohol would be present regardless of legislature, this ad turned the phrase into a satirical saying that cautioned people to buy insurance.

In the December issue of *Anti-Liquor* from 1890, Moffett laid out his justifications for entering the political realm to fight liquor, rather than staying within the confines of his church:

The period of sentimentalism, of doggerel poetry and of emotional moonshine has gone by, and the period of action, concerted, remorseless, aggressive, action has come. The question is, which shall survive for the next quarter of a century, the liquor traffic or our civilization? Our duty is:

1. To act along religious lines. The movement is profoundly religious. Some say religion should have nothing to do with it. But if such an evil can grow up in our midst, slaying the weak and helpless and laying its impious hand on all that is beneficent in our civilizaion [sic], and the church can have nothing to do with it, in God's name what are we here for?
2. To act along the line of social movements. In particular the educational forces must be trained in this work. The time has gone by for mere apologetics. We have reached the time of eternal axioms. Intemperance is not a jolly weakness. It is not a disease to be doctored, but a crime. God's word pronounces it a crime. 'No drunkard shall inherit the kingdom of God.' Medical science pronounces it a crime against the body. All the inebriate asyums [sic] that have undertaken to treat intemperance merely as a physical disease are conspicuous for only one thing, and that is failure.

I arraign the saloon as the wild beast of our civilization [sic], with blood-stained teeth and claws, still ranging unchecked through our land.⁴⁴

Moffett echoed these sentiments in his sermons, once stating that although “public prejudice is against pulpit utterance on political questions, (especially when they disagree with the prejudices),” he had “never read in Holy Writ where it was a proper thing to denounce sin in the home, sin in the church, sin in society, but a crime of crimes to

⁴³ *Anti-Liquor*, December 1890, (Vol. I, No. 8).

⁴⁴ *Anti-Liquor*, December, 1890, (Vol. I, No. 8).

denounce the sin of a political part or parties.”⁴⁵ Moffett lamented that the general atmosphere in Danville considered sin as “wrong everywhere until you dub it Democratic or Republican, and then it becomes an Angel of Light, and must be pressed to our bosoms without hesitation or question.”⁴⁶ Statements like these drew the attention of area Democrats to Moffett’s actions. Thus, it was common to see the local newspapers littered with reactionary pieces to Moffett’s addresses as well as his views in *Anti-Liquor*.

Through the *Anti-Liquor* newspaper and through speeches, Moffett began urging public dissention and openly supported Prohibition Party candidates over Democratic counterparts for elections. The Prohibition Party, formed in 1869, was organized around the tenet that only through legislation would America be free from alcohol’s wretched clutches. Initially focused on the Northeast part of the country, the Prohibition Party’s influence had spread to South by the late 1880s.⁴⁷ The Democrats, understandably, did not take kindly to such public condemnation.

Moffett would oppose various Democratic election nominees if he deemed them immoral. He combated immorality in Danville’s institutions as well, and managed to expose some corruption in the operation of the Danville jail.⁴⁸ Although, since the city was so polarized in favor of the Democrats, when Moffett dissented he faced

⁴⁵ John R. Moffett Sermon, October 2, 1892; reprinted in Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 254.

⁴⁶ John R. Moffett Sermon, October 2, 1892; reprinted in Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 255.

⁴⁷ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 382. For more on the history of the Prohibition Party see David Leigh Colvin, *Prohibition in the United States: A History of the Prohibition Party, and of the Prohibition Movement* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1926) and Lisa Andersen’s *The Politics of Prohibition: American Governance and the Prohibition Party, 1869-1933* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 385.

considerable backlash and was “to a very great extent, if not wholly, cut off or hemmed in, and his prosperity and usefulness reduced to the lowest limit...[for] he must be a Democrat or nothing.”⁴⁹ The Democrats were not the only group singled out by Moffett; he also recognized that while the Republican Party managed to pass as a tolerant friend of temperance in the early 1880s, it also had dropped the ball in promoting anti-liquor interests.⁵⁰ After losing support from some, including other Baptist leaders, Moffett chastised his brethren by stating that he was “constrained to believe that in some cases there is too much minister and too little manhood in the pulpit.”⁵¹ He again called out Talmage as being one of the few who had joined with the Prohibitionist ranks against the Democratic political machine.⁵² In a poignant stab against anti-Prohibitionists, and namely those who opposed on grounds of individual rights, *Anti-Liquor* included a passage stating, “Let it be hoped now, that the brother who thinketh he is something and goeth around prating about ‘personal liberty,’ and who knoweth not that as a fool he doth manifest folly continually, should subside, and that his voice should be heard no more in the land.”⁵³

However, Moffett crossed a line for many when he stated that he “would rather be governed by a good negro than by a drunken white man.”⁵⁴ The reaction was immediate. *The Danville Register* wrote that “the people of Danville and North Danville,

⁴⁹ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 98-99.

⁵⁰ John R. Moffett Sermon, October 2, 1892; reprinted in Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 258.

⁵¹ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 265.

⁵² Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 265.

⁵³ *Anti-Liquor*, December 1890, (Vol. I, No. 8).

⁵⁴ John R. Moffett, Personal Diary, 175; quoted in Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 385.

who have tasted the bitter fruits of negro rule,” had every right to “fear it and fight it as they do small-pox, yellow fever, or leprosy.”⁵⁵ The overall sentiment was that Moffett had harmed his temperance cause by aligning it with black supremacy.

While Moffett’s words were inflammatory, one must not think that Moffett was promoting black equality. He held the conviction that black political power was slightly above the reign of evil liquor; however, this was radical enough to paint him as a political enemy. As an addendum to his earlier statements about preference for moral black rule over drunk white rule Moffett stated in a sermon that:

I know that a great many persons are scared by the race problem. I want to say right here that I have as much horror as any one of a government ruled by a semi-civilized, superstitious, improvident, uneducated, often brutal, recently liberated set of slaves. But even if there were danger of that, I could be content to take God’s way instead of man’s.⁵⁶

Yet Moffett still had to criticize his political opponents. He continued the sermon by asserting that the Democratic “plan for controlling the colored man has been contrary to God’s plan,” and that:

It has been founded on hate, and in too many cases, on corruption and dishonesty at the ballot box. God’s plan is love, purity and justice to all and for all. Then, too, while we have been going into convulsions over the negro scare, we have been paying no attention to the serpent, who wiser than all the beasts of the field, has been poisoning, alike, their lives against us and ours against them. Kill the liquor serpent and you settle the negro question.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Clipping from *The Danville Daily Register*, n.d., pasted in John R. Moffett, Personal Diary, 151; quoted in Hamm, 384.

⁵⁶ John R. Moffett Sermon, October 2, 1892; reprinted in Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 261.

⁵⁷ John R. Moffett Sermon, October 2, 1892; reprinted in Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 262.

His conviction was that “nine-tenths of the difficulties between white and black spring from liquor.”⁵⁸ Thus, it seemed reasonable to him to argue that the true source of societal unrest was not in race relations, but in regulation of drink.

Rhetoric presented by Moffett in his *Anti-Liquor* paper and in his orations ensured that the reverend had a political target on his back. During a local-option election in 1891, Moffett had been subject to an attempted assassination while attending a political rally in North Danville. Reportedly, a man opposed to the local-option campaign that Moffett promoted approached the reverend and shot him square in the chest. However, the weapon misfired and the reverend was spared his life. Ultimately, the election that year was won by the Democrats and Danville remained wet.⁵⁹

Calls for Moffett’s removal from the town were bandied about, and reportedly a “petition was circulated among the liquor men to buy a lot and build a house for a negro by Moffett’s home, as retaliation for his work” in local elections.⁶⁰ Essentially, this was a statement that parodied Moffett’s earlier statements about sober black rule being more moral and nobler than current white leaders led by liquor. If he thought so highly of blacks, some thought, why not be forced to live among them?

However, violence like the earlier attempt on Moffett’s life in 1891 was to be repeated. An election in 1892 riled up local Democrats once more. On the day of the election, J. T. Clark, a Democratic storeowner and lawyer, falsely accused Moffett of

⁵⁸ John R. Moffett Sermon, October 2, 1892; reprinted in Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 262.

⁵⁹ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 386.

⁶⁰ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 113.

trying to rig the election.⁶¹ The heart of the accusation was that Clark, and other Democrats, believed that Moffett had been using bogus voting tickets to block the Democratic vote. The Democrats had been using passive intimidation at the polls by only distributing the ticket necessary to vote for the Democratic candidate at the ballot box. Thus, if the voter did not use that particular ticket just handed to him at the box, then everyone knew he did not vote Democratic. The Danville elections were not confidential as they should have been; therefore Moffett had decided that distributing tickets prior to the election instead of at the ballot box would circumvent the need for citizens to feel pressured to vote a certain way.⁶²

When faced with accusations of fraud by Clark, Moffett retaliated by dealing “his accuser a stunning blow.”⁶³ After the scuffle had settled down, Moffett tried to explain his intent in the ticket fiasco. When Clark jumped in with questions of his own, Moffett shot him down with a mocking response of “I don’t propose to answer any questions you ask, I only converse with gentlemen.”⁶⁴ Following the election, Moffett took to his newspaper and defamed Clark, writing that Clark was “the same one-horse lawyer that has been doing the dirty work of the liquorites for about two years, who had a subscription circulated among the liquor men during a wet and dry campaign to buy a lot and settle a ‘nigger’ on it next to Mr. Moffett.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Clark is spelled as Clarke in some accounts. The spelling of ‘Clark’ will be utilized in this paper.

⁶² Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 122-123.

⁶³ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 116.

⁶⁴ Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 388.

⁶⁵ *Anti-Liquor*, November 10, 1893; quoted in Hamm, “The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark,” 389.

Clark, incensed by Moffett's actions, decided to take matters into his own hands. On November 11, 1892, Moffett traveled from North Danville to the newspaper offices in Danville to give them a piece he had written up defending himself against further Democratic criticism about the supposed election fraud. His piece was published the next day, November 12, 1892--but by then Moffett was dead.

After exiting the newspaper offices on the 11th, Clark shot at Moffett multiple times in the street and one bullet hit home. On his death bed, after attempts at surgery had failed, Moffett wryly noted that "the Danville mob has lost its opportunity, and will not now drive me from my home because of the ticket matter."⁶⁶ To the tune of "Sweet Bye and Bye," Moffett was interned at North Danville Cemetery.⁶⁷ His church, quickly renamed to Moffett Memorial Baptist Church by Moffett's congregation, is still standing today.

Questions began to circulate, as is the case with any murder. Primarily, was this the work of one insulted man, or was it a conspiracy on the part of powerful liquor men? Either way, it appeared that Clark believed his actions would be supported by the influential population in Danville. Therefore, in order to ensure a more fair trial, it was deemed necessary to have all but one citizen from Danville excluded from Clark's jury. All the members of the jury, minus one, were from Lynchburg. Their ranks were narrowed down by excluding anyone who identified as a Prohibitionist or was pro local-option. All Baptists, except one, were also nixed. However, a brewer and a saloon keeper,

⁶⁶ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 127.

⁶⁷ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 137.

both of whom Moffett had tarnished in *Anti-Liquor* were allowed to serve. With twelve people converging to judge Clark, Danville became split by the trial.⁶⁸

Recognizing that the Democrats had their fingers in just about every aspect of Danville governance, the prosecution decided to not call certain key witnesses to the stand due to their political affiliation, including Chief of Police Green Williams. Eventually, despite efforts by the defense, J. T. Clark was convicted of voluntary manslaughter. Unlike the heavier sentence of second-degree murder, the voluntary manslaughter charge meant that his punishment was more lenient. Clark was sentenced to five years in prison, the maximum allowed for his offense at the time.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 148-148; Hamm, "The Killing of John Moffett and the Trial of J.T. Clark," 394-396.

⁶⁹ Thompson, *The Life of John R. Moffett*, 146.

Section V: Out of the “Jaws of Death”⁷⁰

Reverend Moffett had scoffed when he was “told any man can get drunk under Prohibition,” and responded with “Well, any fool knows that.”⁷¹ His desire had been to remove the saloons and the retail sale of liquor using the local-option, no-license route. This, he believed, would at least save those weak-willed citizens lured by the ease of obtaining drink. Resolute drunkards would still find illegal ways to get their hands on alcohol, but the allure would be drastically reduced.

After his death, community members continued the temperance fight. Similar to the *Anti-Liquor* newspaper published by Moffett, the *No-License Advocate* was a monthly newspaper out of Danville published by the Local Option Committee. This committee, like Moffett, was pushing Danville to elect to go no-license to help end the rule of liquor. The *Advocate* also utilized religion and religious based language to impress their views upon readers. Authors viewed the political landscape as consisting of two mutually exclusive groups noting that “God is slowly but surely sifting the American people into two classes – home defenders and saloon defenders. There are but two classes. To which do you belong?”⁷²

Where Moffett’s paper had been rabble-rousing in nature, the *Advocate* was tamer. This shift demonstrates the changing nature of the very fight of alcohol reform. The strength of the Prohibition Party, and even more so of the growing Anti-Saloon League, by the late 1890s meant that the climate of Danville was on the cusp of upheaval

⁷⁰ Quote: “This stuff called alcohol does harm every step of its way from the worm in the still to its entrance into the jaws of death.” *Anti-Liquor*, December, 1890, (Vol. I, No. 8).

⁷¹ *Anti-Liquor*, December, 1890, (Vol. I, No. 8).

⁷² *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

and the reigning Democrats felt the push. While inherently biased, the *Advocate* reported advances for the temperance cause both locally and around the nation more often than they called out particular locals. However, this did not mean that they faced no opposition. They responded to this opposition by saying, “We have had a good deal to say about the saloon business, and saloonkeepers...yet we have been very careful not to misrepresent either the business or the men engaged in it. The fact is, we don’t have to. The truth is bad enough, and we will tell it if we know how.” Continuing, the newspaper admitted that if they misrepresented “the barkeeper, or any one else, he has the right to ask, or even demand an apology. But until this is done we demand the right to be let alone. The man who meddles with our affairs stands a good chance to get a little free advertising.” This was a fairly tame response compared to some in Moffett’s paper, and the *Advocate* managed to incorporate a reiteration of its power as a source of information for the public.⁷³ Victories for their cause are noted in the text, such as in their April issue where authors commended Danville’s young men for registering to vote so that “they might cast their vote against the saloon.”⁷⁴

While still often religious in nature, the *Advocate* regularly preferred use of simple logic to bolster its argument. As Moffett declared, prohibition does not prevent drunkenness. The *Advocate* acknowledged this caveat and added that prohibition would not stop theft, burglary, or murder either, but pertinently asked “shall we repeal the laws against those offenses for that reason?”⁷⁵ Another example of the *Advocate*’s shrewd method of persuasion:

⁷³ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1899, (Vol. II, No. 2).

⁷⁴ *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

Danville requires saloons to close at 10 p. m. They are required to close on Sundays and on election days. If it is wise to compel saloons to close at 10 p. m. and on election days, why is it not wise and right to refuse to license them at all? That the business has to be thus regulated is a confession that it is a dangerous evil. Why expose ourselves and our dear ones to the constant menace of this dangerous evil. In every crime attributed to liquor (and the bulk of them are) the man who votes to license saloons is *particeps criminis*.⁷⁶

The use of more rational argument shows that editors of the *Advocate* wanted to appeal to the highest amount of voters possible by making clear points rather than alienating large factions of their readership.

Posthumously supporting Moffett, the editors encouraged religious activity furthering their cause. They said their opponents believed that “a preacher should keep out of politics,” and they conceded that he should certainly “keep out of the kind that belies his moral and religious profession,” but that unequivocally “the preacher’s business in politics is to denounce political sin with a unspairing [sic] hand.”⁷⁷ Condemning inaction from behind the pulpit, as Moffett had similarly disparaged, the editors of the *Advocate* felt that “a churchly resolution against the saloon is a pop-gun, the report of which makes the saloonist laugh hilariously.”⁷⁸ However, they did not dismiss the power of a unified religious front, because “without the patronage of church members the liquor business would be unprofitable, and there would be few bar-rooms. Without the votes of church members they would never be licensed.”⁷⁹ So they conceded

⁷⁵ *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

⁷⁶ *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898. The Latin, *particeps criminis*, essentially translates to ‘partner in crime.’

⁷⁷ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1899, (Vol. II, No. 2).

⁷⁸ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1899, (Vol. II, No. 2).

⁷⁹ *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

the power that religion had in Danville, the City of Churches, and deemed that “a Christian vote is a big Krupp gun, which, when aimed at the center of diabolism, makes even the devil to tremble.”⁸⁰

The *Advocate* also attempted to grow the ranks of its African-American constituents; something that Moffett and the Democrats had notorious issues with. The urgency of getting voters on board, regardless of race, became the eminent concern for the prohibitionists when realizing the extent of Democratic control over many white voters. The authors expressed these sentiments by appealing to blacks and arguing that “the liquor traffic counts upon the support of the colored voter,” and that the liquor kings “confidently claim” those votes. Calling out to all black voters to correct the liquor men of their assumptions, the *Advocate* assured blacks that without their votes, the prohibition cause was hopeless. They then posited, “Will the intelligent colored men of Danville assume this terrible responsibility?”⁸¹

Also, unlike Moffett, the *Advocate* tried not to align itself with or against any particular party outright. The editors assured readers that “you are not asked to make any speeches, or join a party, or to sign a pledge, or to unite with any lodge or band.” Instead, the *Advocate* focused on the uncomplicated request: “Simply go to the polls...and vote your sincere and simple desire as touching ‘license’ or ‘no license.’”⁸² However, that is not to say that the newspaper did not prefer certain party stances. Especially in their later issue that is extant, the *Advocate* praised the Prohibition Party stating that it was

⁸⁰ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1899, (Vol. II, No. 2).

⁸¹ *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

⁸² *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

“composed of the most heroic body of men that ever championed the cause of political righteousness since the world began.”⁸³

Following the precedent of logical argument rather than aggressively extolling religious justification for the prohibition cause, the *Advocate* preferred explaining financial and practical aspects of going ‘no-license.’ After outlining their request for voters to mark ‘no license,’ on their ballot, the paper addressed various concerns citizens might have with the article, “Whom Will it Hurt?”:

If we have local option will anybody be seriously hurt? We confidently believe no one, not even financially, in the long run. The men that have allowed themselves to become sellers of whiskey will be, in our humble judgment, most benefitted. No kinder thing could be done for them than to force them out of the business...The same energy, time and attention devoted to some reputable pursuit would give a more satisfactory and permanent success. But if these men became losers financially, they would be gainers immeasurably in many others ways. Socially and morally their surroundings for themselves and their families would be infinitely improved.⁸⁴

A later issue focused on economics and assuaged concerns over loss of city revenue stating that “all this talk about the extravagance and immorality under the reign of “no license” is the sheerest moonshine.” They ensured readers that there would be “large and inevitable saving in police court,” and that “jail expenses will more than offset the decrease in income caused by loss of cost of license.” In the spirit of the recent growth of Danville, which had incorporated with North Danville in 1896 to become one municipality, the editors commented on the community’s attractiveness for tourism or for “people seeking homes.” They adamantly stated that they thought going dry would make

⁸³ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1899, (Vol. II, No. 2).

⁸⁴ *No-License Advocate*, April 13, 1898.

the area more peaceful and “wholesome and thrifty to those who reared families and conducted business enterprises within its limits.”⁸⁵

Thus, the end of the nineteenth century saw prohibition as a very real possibility for the city’s community. With the *Advocate* and its calm, persuasive arguments, and in conjunction with changing sentiments in Danville and across the nation, one can see how temperance and prohibition supporters were no longer fringe advocates. Their cause was validated now, and people were listening.

⁸⁵ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1899, (Vol. II, No. 2).

Section VI: Good Help is Hard to Find

The liquor issue infiltrated more than just the political realm; it also managed to penetrate the labor sphere in Danville. By using the three frameworks of politics, religion and labor, it is evident how much the anti-liquor cause had burrowed into Danville's society by the turn of the twentieth century. Liquor reformers now included more mainstream members of Danville's civic elite, like those running the area's largest industry--the textile mills. During this time, discussions of labor as it related to alcohol reform were common. The Anti-Saloon League, and many other liquor reformers, decided to target the industry of alcohol. The saloon owner and barkeep were criticized for engaging in what some considered dishonest forms of work. With a resentful tone, editors at the *No-License Advocate* asked, "You toil not, neither do you spin, yet you make more money with less capital than any other tradesman. Few workmen can wear such clothes as you do. What are you giving in return for what you get?" They then urged the bar workers to "bring a finished specimen of your work...and show us its fine points." The argument was that the saloons did not produce anything worthwhile to society. A good distiller at least produced pure liquor with medicinal value. Saloons merely mixed the liquor and provided it as a recreational libation with no productive result. Prohibitionists posited, "What does the dram-shop manufacture? What has it always manufactured? It has manufactured drunkards first, last and all the time. A dram-shop keeper is as distinctly a drunkard maker as a man that makes shoes a shoe maker. That is all he ever did make, that is all he ever will make."⁸⁶

Not only was the job of saloon owner or barkeep itself not worthy of any praise, it was actually a source of tension and conflict for other professions as well. The money

⁸⁶ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1898.

used to purchase liquor was money that had been removed from the pockets of potential customers at other local stores. Plus, drunkards would be unable to work, thus unable to earn their living. These people would also spend less in the community. The *Advocate* argued that the saloons in Danville were “detrimental to true business prosperity,” and that the liquor traffic had impacted various different vocations including that of “soil tillage,” “manufacturing,” as well as “the sale of dry goods and sundries.”⁸⁷

These claims were not without substantiation. By the turn of the century, the Riverside Cotton Mills had expanded since their opening in 1882. They had merged with the Morotock Mills in 1890 and had acquired the Gerst Brother’s Company as well, which further enlarged their sphere of influence.⁸⁸ In 1895, the owners of the mills began Dan River Power and Manufacturing Company in order to develop water power. This was the beginning of a long reign as the largest employer in Danville.

The mills primarily offered job opportunities for white workers, and the employee total was in the thousands.⁸⁹ Among the founders of the mills, the Schoolfield brothers had considerable power in Danville.⁹⁰ At the turn of the century, Democrats adopted the

⁸⁷ *No-License Advocate*, October, 1898.

⁸⁸ “Wade’s Fibre & Fabric: A Record of New Industries in the Cotton and Woolen Trades,” Volume 12, No. 306 (Acton: Fibre & Fabric, January 10, 1891), 154. Accessed online 03/04/2014: <http://books.google.com/books?id=cAwAAAAAMAAJ&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

⁸⁹ Frankie Y. Bailey and Alice P. Green, *Wicked Danville: Liquor and Lawlessness in a Southside Virginia City* (Charleston: History Press, 2011), 25.

⁹⁰ The three brothers were John, James, and Robert Addison Schoolfield. They co-founded the Riverside Cotton Mills with Thomas B. Fitzgerald, Dr. H. W. Cole, and Benjamin F. Jefferson. Bailey and Green, *Wicked Danville*, 23-25.

prohibitionist cause as their own. During the Progressive Era, it had become politically practical to support the cause.⁹¹

The Riverside Mills had liquor issues early in its career. S. I. Roberts, the mill superintendant, attempted to address these and reportedly saw some success. An excerpt from the 1892 Directors' Minutes stated that moral improvement of the millworkers was due to "our efficient Superintendent, whose views on the liquor question has done much good."⁹² However, issues with unreliable, drunk workers still plagued the mills for years to come.

By 1905, two important developments had occurred: Schoolfield Village was established and Danville was dry. Utilizing the local option system, Danville had banned liquor by the drink and did not sell licenses to saloons or bars. Schoolfield Village was meant to solve some of the issues the mills had with keeping a consistent labor force. Owners thought that if there was company housing available to employees, then they could ensure a longer work commitment out of them.

Schoolfield Village had always been dry since its opening in 1903. Due to its technical independence, the Village did not have to abide by all the same laws as Danville to its south. However, as an account from 1913 iterates, the two entities were inextricably tied together:

One must not imagine, however, that Schoolfield or the Dan River Mills are in the least isolated from the general welfare of Danville. The reverse is the case. Schoolfield and Danville are practically one. The village is but a few yards beyond the city limits, and an excellent service of street cars is

⁹¹ Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1968), 311-312

⁹² Directors' Minutes, January 8, 1892, quoted in Robert S. Smith, "Mill on the Dan: Riverside Cotton Mills, 1882-1901," *The Journal of Southern History* (Vol. 21, No. 1, Feb., 1955), 61. Accessed online 03/14/2014: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2954826>.

in constant operation. The inhabitants of Schoolfield equally with the management of the mills share in the civic pride of Danville and are identified with its general welfare.⁹³

The three Schoolfield brothers were all involved in the temperance cause, having been raised in the household of a Methodist minister.⁹⁴ John had joined the Anti-Saloon League and was even a delegate to the League's state convention in 1905.⁹⁵ Thus, these owners of the mill, as members of Danville's civic elite, were poised to push their views on liquor into the public sphere for the labor cause. Despite the moral regulation and expectations for millworkers living in Schoolfield Village, where alcohol consumption was banned, they still imbibed. Reportedly, the workers "engaged in drunken fights and brawls, which created law enforcement problems for the Danville police." Thus, the fight to keep Schoolfield Village and Danville on the same side of the liquor issues was of utmost importance for the mill administration.⁹⁶

A hiccup in their operations came shortly after 1905, when thirty-five saloon owners in Danville acquired federal licenses to distill liquor. After discussion and investigation by the city, these saloons were allowed to sell liquor in Danville, until they eventually became illegal again after another election in 1908.⁹⁷ During this period of the

⁹³ 1913 Industry Booklet, quoted in King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 69.

⁹⁴ Bailey & Green, *Wicked Danville*, 25.

⁹⁵ Other longstanding labor factions in Danville were not immune to liquor concerns either. Danville was known nationwide for its tobacco market and E. G. Moseley, the president of the Danville Tobacco Association and city council member, also pushed for prohibition. Like John Schoolfield, he too was a delegate to the state convention held in Lynchburg of 1905. Moseley supported harsher liquor legislation in Danville prior to statewide prohibition and he eventually joined the Law and Order League in 1922, a prohibition enforcement group. Bailey & Green, *Wicked Danville*, 23.

⁹⁶ Bailey & Green, *Wicked Danville*, 28.

⁹⁷ Danville City Minutes, quoted in Bailey & Green, *Wicked Danville*, 46-45.

legalized saloon, mill owners became concerned. A 1907 letter to the stockholders of the Riverside Cotton Mills lamented that,

During the eleven months period [unintelligible] there have been many discouraging factors to contend with, and in some respects we have had more than the usual number of obstacles, prominent occurring which has been the unprecedented shortage of labor and its attendant demoralization which latter has been greatly aggravated during the past year on the accord of the reopening of saloons in our city, causing a much larger percentage of drinking & rowdyism among our operations. The good people of Danville surely do not realize the widespread evils resulting from these institutions in our midst, otherwise they would not have been permitted to return.⁹⁸

Robert Addison Schoolfield acknowledged that the members of the mill administration “were placed at a disadvantage on account of the unfriendly attitude of a very large number of Danville citizens because our position against alcohol conflicted with their mercenary interests.” He continued to recount an incident where, when riding with Superintendent Roberts in a buggy on the streets of Danville, a man struck their buggy with a stick. Due to Roberts being “very much disliked by the whiskey people on account of his constant fights against the use of it,” a man who had “previously had some quarrel with Mr. Roberts,” attacked the buggy he was riding in with Robert Schoolfield. It was at this point that Schoolfield took up Mr. Roberts’s cane and pursued the assailant to the nearest bar. There Schoolfield met “a policeman close by, who was more or less in sympathy with the whiskey people,” who “was kind enough to have me summoned to Police Court for assault.” Schoolfield was indignant at this since he stated that “the man

⁹⁸ Riverside Cotton Mills, “Annual Statement to Stockholders,” January 8, 1907. MS. “Virginia Dept. of the Treasury, Unclaimed Property: Papers of J.M. Robertson, 1889-1907,” Archives of the Library of Virginia, Richmond, VA.

hit the buggy in which I was riding,” and bemoaned the fact the he and Mr. Roberts’s cane “did not get near enough to hit him.”⁹⁹

Shortly after, Superintendent Roberts made an address that condemned local drunkards. He especially mourned their impact on the families and children of Danville, deeming it “incredibly sad.” Having child workers come into the mills, Roberts saw the hungry, ill-fed sons and daughters whose fathers had spent their paycheck on booze. In the address, Roberts told a story of a brother and sister who “looked thin and pale,” and could not complete their duties due to hunger. Roberts called the parents of the two children into his office and told them that he would no longer employ the children unless the father promised to allow the mother to handle the children’s paycheck. Roberts specified that the father, a known drunk, “must not touch the money or have anything to do with the purchases.” The man conceded and agreed to Roberts’s terms. Later, Roberts was stopped by an angry barkeep who insisted that Roberts was interfering with his business. Roberts scathingly responded, “I [am] interfering with your business? Your business is to take food from the mouths of women and children, and clothes off their backs. My business is to put them on.”¹⁰⁰

However, the prohibition cause did limit labor options for some local businesses. Distilling companies, such as the county Dry Fork Distilling Company owned by Edward and Sidney Jones, was renamed as Dry Fork Milling Company to reflect changing liquor

⁹⁹ Papers of Robert Addison Schoolfield, quoted in King, *Robert Addison Schoolfield*, 50-51.

¹⁰⁰ Elton Raymond Shaw, ed., *Stories of Hell’s Commerce: Or, The Liquor Traffic in Its True Light. A Compilation of Interesting Stories, True Incidents, Striking Illustrations, Pointed Paragraphs, Poetry and Song, Portraying the Evils of the Rum Curse as Related by John G. Wooley, John P. St. John, Eli Perkins...and Many Others*, (Grand Rapids: Shaw Publishing Company, 1909), 424-425.

sentiments.¹⁰¹ Danville's physical space was also transformed. For example, C. T. Brown Brewing Company stood on Danville's Craghead Street in the 1880s and brewed whiskey. By 1894, Robert Portner Brewing Company had taken its place. Portner Brewing dealt in beer. However, sometime between 1916 and 1920, due to statewide prohibition and eventual nationwide prohibition, the company closed. Instead, J. W. Gibson Bottling Company took over; citizens could buy celery cola, cherry cola, grape and orange sodas among other things that were all temperance approved.¹⁰² A write-up on Gibson in the Danville newspaper *The Bee* from 1925, stated that Gibson "believes in hard work," echoing sentiments that validated his bottling business and honest work, rather than businesses based on brewing or bottling alcohol.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Larry G. Aaron, *Pittsylvania County, Virginia: A Brief History* (Charleston: History Press, 2009), 137.

¹⁰² Sanborn Maps, 1886, 1894, 1915, 1920. Accessed online 03/14/2014: <http://sanborn.umi.com/>; "John W. Gibson, of Celery Cola Fame," *The Bee*, September 19, 1925.

¹⁰³ "John W. Gibson, of Celery Cola Fame," *The Bee*, September 19, 1925.

Section VII: An Axe to Grind

Although the political climate and the community's general attitude towards alcohol reform appears to have shifted when local Democrats adopted the temperance cause, Danville's mayor was not so convinced. Mayor Harry Wooding, while not an avid drinker himself, did not believe that laws would reform any drunkard. Legislation proposed in 1905 by Danville powerhouses, including John Schoolfield of the textile mills and E. G. Moseley of the Danville Tobacco Association, which would have made harsher liquor laws was nixed by Wooding.¹⁰⁴ Wooding countered that "in all his long life he had never known a reformed drunkard except through the grace of God," and that no success would come to anyone who tried to "legislate goodness and morality into a man's heart."¹⁰⁵

Thus, Wooding received the backing of the town's wet supporters. Wooding served Danville as its mayor from 1892 to his death in 1938. While the city's dries did not necessarily agree with Wooding's nonaggressive approach to dealing with liquor men, he still managed to hold onto his electorate and ensure his place in Danville politics. This is not to say that Wooding always won with a landslide vote. In 1924, during the heart of national prohibition, Wooding won the mayorship by only one single vote.¹⁰⁶

Temperance won its fight for a liquor-free Virginia in 1916, and the nation soon followed. The Virginia Prohibition Commission was created when Virginia essentially

¹⁰⁴ Bailey & Green, *Wicked Danville*, 28.

¹⁰⁵ "Local Option Danville," March 1, 1905, *Danville Register*; quoted in Bailey & Green, *Wicked Danville*, 28-29.

¹⁰⁶ Bailey & Greene, *Wicked Danville*, 31.

went dry.¹⁰⁷ It was established by an Act of Assembly on March 10, 1916, which set forth that the Commission could “exercise of the police power of the State for the protection of the State, for the protection of the public health, peace and morals, and the prevention of the sale and use of ardent spirits.”¹⁰⁸ The Commission then went about hiring inspectors and deputies who had the power to enter buildings without warrants and eventually even “freight yards, passenger depots, baggage and storage rooms of any common carrier...any train, baggage express, Pullman, or freight car and any boat, automobile, or other conveyance, whether of like kind or not, where there is reason to believe that the law relating to ardent spirits is being violated.”¹⁰⁹

One of these agents assigned to Danville was W. C. Hall, and Hall was very enthusiastic about his job. As someone vested with outside power from the Commission in Richmond, Hall was seen as separate from the local Danville police force. He no doubt gained enemies throughout the town, and Schoolfield, as he wrote reports for violations of the liquor law. For example, on January 3, 1919, Hall recorded that he had “searched J. E. Shelton white house on College Ave and found in his front room 1 20 gallon still and 1 lot meal and hops and about 50 gallons of beer ready to run destroyed the beer and tub and left still at courthouse in Danville.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ There were some exceptions to the law that stated who could possess alcohol, such as hospitals, and in what amount.

¹⁰⁸ Virginia, *Acts of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Virginia*, (1916), 244. Accessed online 03/14/2014: <http://books.google.com/books?id=Cr9OAQAAIAAJ&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

¹⁰⁹ Library of Virginia, “Records of the Virginia Prohibition Commission, 1916-1934.” Finding aid at the Archives of the Library of Virginia, Richmond, Va. Accessed online 03/14/2014: <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaxtf/view?docId=lva/vi01055.xml>.

¹¹⁰ W. C. Hall, “W. C. Hall Inspector’s Reports; Records of the Virginia Prohibition Commission, 1916-1934,” MS. Archives of the State Records Office, Richmond, Va. Text is quoted as written, with no attempt to correct for grammar.

The story about Hall and his conflict with the local police force gets quite interesting come July of 1919. Out-of-state visitors, and suspected bootleggers, passing through Danville had been caught travelling with a large load of liquor.¹¹¹ The *Evening Journal*, a paper based in Richmond, reported that the court in Danville had decided that, since the bootleggers were from out of state, the liquor “should be repacked in the automobiles which took it to Danville and the two cars escorted to the state line.” However, “both owners said that they did not want the liquor and preferred to take the cars and surrender their hold on the bottled goods. This left the ownership of the large supply uncertain, for the city had no claim on it and the state made none at the time.”¹¹² Thus, the liquor stayed in Danville.

However, Hall decided that the liquor was under his and Commissioner J. Sidney Peters’ jurisdiction and that it should be confiscated from the courts of Danville. After laying claim to the liquor, Hall determined that he should get that liquor at any cost. To get at the whiskey he desired, Hall armed himself with an axe taken off a fire wagon, walked into the Danville courthouse and subsequently smashed in the storeroom door.¹¹³

Reportedly, “Hall met no police interference; in fact, no one seemed to want to have anything to do with the act. Hall snapped off the locks with ease and walked into a veritable palace of liquor.” The police even claimed to be “powerless,” against Hall.¹¹⁴ Mayor Wooding condemned Hall’s actions with a \$100 fine and protested, “As long as I

¹¹¹ Newspaper accounts for the amount of liquor confiscated ranges from 230 quarts and 160 pints to 360 quarts.

¹¹² “State Dry Officer Fined in Danville,” July 25, 1919, *Evening Journal*.

¹¹³ “State Dry Officer Fined in Danville,” July 25, 1919, *Evening Journal*.

¹¹⁴ “Dry Inspector Breaks Into Police Cupboard,” July 25, 1919, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

am around you can't do a thing like that," to which Hall replied, "Didn't I tell you I was going to do it?"¹¹⁵

This appears to be a jurisdictional dispute over power between local government and police versus a state apparatus. Hall recognized this and "said that he had a logical reason for not asking for the keys to the building, asserting that this would have put Chief Bell in the light of possessor of the liquor and a sequence of legal technicalities."¹¹⁶ At the end of the fiasco, the liquor did remain in the hands of the Prohibition Commission to be "dealt with accordingly."¹¹⁷

With Prohibition in full swing in Danville, inspectors like Hall and local Danville police had more to deal with than just jurisdictional squabbles. After all, still and liquor confiscations were more commonplace than hacking up the city courthouse. A 1922 report from *The Bee* notes a particularly interesting still bust by both federal and state agents located in Danville. The agents captured a car load of liquor right outside of city limits and then determined that this was part of a large operation supplying Danville's citizens with most of their illegal liquor. A little investigation led the agents to the source of the flowing alcoholic river: adjacent Franklin County, often referred to as 'Moonshine Capital of the World.'¹¹⁸

What was noteworthy about this still was the setup of the site. "Four hogs, one sow and a litter of pigs," were a part of the still's design. The "feeding trough for the swine ran into the

¹¹⁵ Unidentified newspaper clipping, "W. C. Hall Inspector's Reports; Records of the Virginia Prohibition Commission, 1916-1934," MS. Archives of the State Records Office, Richmond, Va.

¹¹⁶ "Dry Inspector Breaks Into Police Cupboard," July 25, 1919, *Richmond Times-Dispatch*.

¹¹⁷ "State Dry Officer Fined in Danville," July 25, 1919, *Evening Journal*.

¹¹⁸ "Three Stills and Hogs, Sow and Litter are Taken," May 01, 1922, *The Bee*.

moonshining end of the enclosure and the swill from the mash was fed to the hogs after each run.” This was an example of moonshining thriftiness. Utilizing all the by-products of their still, the moonshiners capitalized even more and maximized the product of their corn as whiskey and food for their livestock.¹¹⁹

The prohibition agents wryly noted that the still “had evidently been in continuous operation for a long time, as evidenced by the settled nature of things, with the additional fact that the swine were in prime condition.” At first, officers did not know how to treat the animals; but, as they were considered part and parcel of the moonshine operation, the agents decided to consider them evidence as well. Thus, the pigs needed to be confiscated just as the still and liquor did. Unequipped to haul multiple pigs, who were quite ample due to their nutritious diet of mash remnants, the officers devised a strategy. The swine were to be delivered to the Danville courthouse as evidence in the trial of their owners. In order to later identify the pigs, the officers cut off all their tails, “despite the loudly voiced protests of hogs, sows and pigs.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁹ “Three Stills and Hogs, Sow and Litter are Taken,” May 01, 1922, *The Bee*. Mash is a mixture made of water, yeast, sugar, and either grain meal or a fruit mixture placed in the bottom of a still and heated. The vapors caused by this heating are condensed during the process of distilling into alcohol.

¹²⁰ “Three Stills and Hogs, Sow and Litter are Taken,” May 01, 1922, *The Bee*.

Section VIII: Finishing the Way We Started

Religion, labor, and politics played just as important roles towards the end of Danville's Prohibition era as they did during its temperance beginnings. In a plea to Danville's voters, S. E. Hughes, Chairman of the Anti-Smith Democratic Club, emphatically stated that Herbert Hoover should be who the American people vote into the Presidential office rather than Alfred E. Smith which would, "set the nation back fifty years."¹²¹ Hughes addressed labor issues outright in his article quoting both Democratic ex-Congressman Eugene N. Foss and Henry Ford. Foss is quoted as stating:

I take my stand as a manufacturer and employer of hundreds of men, liquor has no place in this era of mass production, which almost alone has maintained the industrial prosperity of the United States. I could produce from the efficiency sheets of my own industries the records showing the difference between conditions before and after prohibition. The advantages are all with prohibition, but aside from that I am personally convinced that the cause of temperance never made any real headway until the present law was enacted under the Constitution, which places every State and community in the United States on the same basis with respect to the manufacture, sale and transportation of intoxicating liquors. I believe that national prohibition is proving such a success from an economic standpoint that every civilized nation in the world which seeks world markets will be compelled to follow in our footsteps.¹²²

Appealing to those concerned with labor balance between the states, Foss noted that he considered national prohibition an equalizing factor. Ford, who Hughes praises as an automobile industry tycoon who had "employed as many, if not more, men than any other individual, and a man who has done as much if not more to raise to daily wage of the laboring man than any other man in our country," concurs with Foss's statement. Hughes quotes Ford as saying, "The worst thing that could happen to the country would be a step backward in our fight against liquor...if the laws were changed we would have to shut

¹²¹ "To the Voters of Danville," November 3, 1928, *The Bee*.

¹²² "To the Voters of Danville," November 3, 1928, *The Bee*.

down our plants.” Ford concluded that, “Everything in the United States is keyed up to a new pace, the speed with which we operate our motor cars and with which we operate our intricate machinery in general, life would be impossible with liquor.”¹²³

Equating the repeal of Prohibition with the end of production in America, Ford’s words would have struck fear into factory owners and laborers, such as those in Danville’s textile market. Hughes called on Danville voters to disregard party loyalty and vote morally instead. He assured readers that Smith would not help any of America’s churches or any of their religious organizations. Instead, Hughes believed that Smith was supported by an army of decidedly un-Christian and “un-American voting class[es] of the greater centers of the population of our country.” Tying into fear of immigrants and a sense of Christian duty, Hughes advised Danville voters to “fall in line with the sober thinking, Christian citizenship of America and save your country from this great evil,” rather than destroying “American institutions, American freedom, and American homes, manhood and womanhood.”¹²⁴

Throughout Hughes’s write-up he also addressed voter doubts that Prohibition had even been useful. Many claimed that there was more drinking after the Eighteenth Amendment went into effect, but Hughes countered this with examples from the local community. He told readers, “You forget the day and the conditions that existed in Danville when we had fifteen or eighteen saloons in our city.”¹²⁵ Using economics and the law of supply and demand Hughes then argued why it simply was not possible for there to be more liquor today than there was before 1920. Today, most research agrees

¹²³ “To the Voters of Danville,” November 3, 1928, *The Bee*.

¹²⁴ “To the Voters of Danville,” November 3, 1928, *The Bee*.

¹²⁵ “To the Voters of Danville,” November 3, 1928, *The Bee*.

with Hughes and holds that there was less drinking overall during Prohibition, but that there were considerably more organized crime, law breakers, and poisonous alcohol in American cities.¹²⁶

Hoover supporters, like Hughes and those Democrats who deemed Prohibition an important enough issue to warrant voting outside of the party, once more demonstrated a shift in Danville's political realm. A pro-Smith article from the same newspaper issue as the Hughes write-up challenged the area's Hoover supporters outright by stating that it had "been customary for years for a national campaign to end with a rally of democrats," in Danville and that the 1928 Presidential election would be no different. However, these Democrats qualified their statement by continuing that the "members of the democratic party who at one time were tempted to stray away but who of recent week have made up their minds to stay with the party to which they belong will be given a welcome," while Democratic Party traitors were resolutely not invited. The article ceded that "the campaign this year has been unusual for it is the first time in the memory of this generation that the 'regular democratic majority' has been challenged in Danville."¹²⁷ While Hughes's pro-Hoover and pro-Prohibition entry garnered a spot on the thirteenth page of the newspaper, the pro-Smith Democratic article was deemed important enough for the front-page. This demonstrated that the Prohibition issue was now essentially dismissed as a non-issue quickly becoming irrelevant. Party loyalty and solidarity

¹²⁶ In particular, see Andrew Sinclair's *Era of Excess: A Social History of the Prohibition Movement* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) and Daniel Kyvig's edited work *Law, Alcohol, and Order: Perspectives on National Prohibition* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1985).

¹²⁷ "Big Smith Rally is to Bring Campaign to a Close Monday Night," November 3, 1928, *The Bee*.

prevailed and Danville's Democratic position on alcohol mirrored much of the general population where support for Prohibition was declining rapidly.

In an almost last ditch effort to stem the flow of voter opinion on Prohibition, which was tending towards the negative, religious leaders in Danville called upon a national figure to rally support. The Danville Ministerial Association arranged for W. E. Johnson, better known as "Pussyfoot" Johnson to speak at both the Main Street Methodist church and at the local Averett College where he drew hundreds of listeners in December of 1931. Pussyfoot Johnson got his name while working in the West. Johnson got his moniker in the first decade of the twentieth century when he received a death threat from a saloon owner who said if he ever saw Johnson he "would shoot him on sight;" and so Johnson did what every man of the great West worth his salt would do: answer the challenge. Johnson "altered his make-up, mounted his horse" and rode to the bar. Upon reaching the saloon he "walked in, pretending to be drunk," and requested "hell fire" to drink. When the man turned around to his cupboards, Johnson "whipped the revolvers out of his pockets and placed their cold barrels on the ears of the bravo. He had his man disarmed and led out a prisoner in no time. The West then named him 'Pussyfoot.'"¹²⁸

Several other speakers had their chance to defend Prohibition with Johnson, including Edward J. Richardson, secretary of the Anti-Saloon League of Virginia, and Mrs. Howard Hoge, state president of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. These two presented more on the political atmosphere of the day and the importance of continued temperance support in the face of anarchist wets. In Johnson's address, he conceded that "prohibition has not been a complete success," but he continued to support

¹²⁸ F. A. McKenzie, *"Pussyfoot" Johnson: Crusader – Reformer – A Man Among Men* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 87-88. Accessed online 03/04/2014: <https://archive.org/stream/pussyfootjohnson00mcke#page/n5/mode/2up>.

the measure because “it has been sufficiently successful to indicate that it is the best form of liquor control America has ever known.” He concluded his Danville speech by asserting that Prohibition “will remain on the statute books as long as the American flag floats over our land.”¹²⁹

¹²⁹ “Pussyfoot Johnson Says Dry Law Here to Stay as Long as Old Glory Waves,” December 15, 1931, *The Bee*.

Section IX: The Liquor Flag Flies On

Pussyfoot Johnson was wrong. The Eighteenth Amendment was repealed when the Twenty-first Amendment to the U. S. Constitution was ratified on December 5, 1933. However, Danville's legacy of alcohol and liquor did not trickle away. Headlines still make the news about still busts for illegally brewed liquor, done without the proper permits and untaxed, in Pittsylvania County where the rural aspect of the land allows moonshiners to hide their operation.

Regional popular music has been strongly influenced by moonshine stories or folk music once played around a cooking still to pass the time. Pittsylvania also hosts the Moonshiner's Jamboree, an annual three-or-four day event celebrating moonshine heritage with various bands and events like car shows. The Discovery Channel even picked the area to star in their show *Moonshiners* that covers Pittsylvania County residents and law enforcement.¹³⁰

Landscapes in the area, such as mountains, roads, bridges, and streams have been named after stills. For example the name of Stillhouse Branch creek located in Danville reminds people of the region's liquor history. Even the American pastime of NASCAR, National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing, had its roots in Prohibition and moonshine when it was necessary to escape from the law quickly with one's still products intact. It was a valuable skill to have so bootleggers did not end up in jail or in a ditch. Famous NASCAR heavy hitters like Junior Johnson from North Carolina and Wendell

¹³⁰ See the show's website for information and videos with the local stars, accessed online 03/14/2014: <http://www.discovery.com/tv-shows/moonshiners>

Scott, a Danville native, started racing while hauling moonshine and contraband liquor in the region.¹³¹

The rhetoric people used to discuss liquor is just as important as researching actual historical events. Framing alcohol arguments around politics, religion, or discussion of labor were the most utilized and the most effective form of discourse in Danville. The analysis shows shifts over time in acceptance and attitudes. Most importantly, it demonstrates how a single community experienced the events most historians only research at a national or state level. Whether it was literal or in the form of spoken word, demon rum was on the lips of everyone in Danville, Virginia.

¹³¹ Aaron, *Pittsylvania County, Virginia*, 136. There are movies about both Johnson and Scott's lives, those being *The Last American Hero* and *Greased Lightning*.

Section X: Digitizing Danville

As detailed, this contextual paper was written in conjunction with the creation of a digital exhibit on the same topic. Essentially, the goal of the project was to design and develop a functional and educational online exhibit. The use of technological media has infiltrated its way into the public history field and many museums and other organizations have utilized podcasts, online exhibits, and interactive games as educational tools in order to present information to the public. This online exhibit will reach a broader audience for this scholarship than a paper alone would.

For researchers interested in digital presentations of history, Daniel Cohen and Roy Rosenzweig's work *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) discusses best ways to incorporate materials and sources in a digital format. They also discuss choosing appropriate technologies and information on copyright laws. Martin Kalfatovic's *Creating a Winning Online Exhibition: A Guide for Libraries, Archives, and Museums* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2002) contains a useful sample exhibit script for reference. In the same vein, *Build It Once: A Basic Primer for the Creation of Online Exhibitions* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2007) by Sarah Thiel looks at the formatting of websites, and the flow of the site. She discusses the role of the pages for the website (such as the home pages or the narrative pages) and also covers basic HTML. Barry and Gail Lord's *The Manual of Museum Exhibits* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 2002) should be consulted for general exhibit theory, methodology, and practices.

Instead of a traditional physical display, which many museums do not have space to display, a web-based exhibition ideally conveys the information in a cost effective

way. In order to accomplish this, the web-building platform of Wix was used. Wix was founded in 2006, and is a website targeted to novice web developers.¹³² The online exhibit is viewable on traditional desktop and laptop computers and has the option of compatibility configuration in order to work with portable media devices, like phones and tablets. Various media elements were utilized, including images, video, and audio. The site also incorporates an interactive component as well. Visitors can engage with a flash enabled game where they can mix their own bar drinks using various ingredients common in a speakeasy lounge. Their concoctions are put to the test when the discerning bartender samples their creation--with amusing results. Explore the project here:

<http://rileyed.wix.com/thesis>

¹³² Company website accessed online, 3/14/2014: <http://www.wix.com/about/us>

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