Booze, ballots, and wild women: coverage of suffrage and temperance by three Iowa newspapers, 1870-75

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Booze, ballots, and wild women:
Coverage of suffrage and temperance by three Iowa newspapers, 1870-75

by

Diana Pounds

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
MASTER OF SCIENCE
Major: Journalism and Mass Communication

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

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I. OUT OF THE HOME, INTO THE HEADLINES

"...there is something revolting and unwomanly in this uproar and clamor for the ballot, and demanding all of men's so-called privileges..."

-- Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register, Oct. 16, 1871

In the pages of the newspapers of the 1870s, they were cheered as Christian ladies on a holy crusade. They were jeered as ugly old maids and floozies. And they were feared as emasculating radicals out to destroy the happy American home. They were women reformers and they burst into the limelight and the headlines in the early part of the seventies.

It was news when proper Victorian ladies, quiet homebodies for so long, began noisily to demand the vote. It was news when women tried to be preachers, doctors, and lawyers. It was news when they stormed barrooms throughout the Midwest and prayed dozens, if not hundreds, of saloonkeepers out of business.

The 1870s were a time of change for women in Iowa and the nation. Women, who were supposed to be home creating domestic paradises for their families, began to take their first steps into the public arena in search of reform. Some wanted to vote. Others sought more rights for women—the right to a good education, jobs outside the home, even sensible clothing. Still others fought to rid society of what they considered one of its greatest evils—alcohol.

Newspapers throughout the country closely followed the activities of the women reformers. Wherever a woman attended a rally, lobbied a
lawmaker or badgered a barkeep, it seemed a newspaper reporter or correspondent was not far away. In Cedar Rapids, Iowa, one male reporter went undercover in skirt, wig and feathered hat to get the scoop on a women-only temperance meeting.  

Newspapers, with their heavy coverage of women's reform issues, most certainly contributed to, as well as reflected, the popular images of these early female reformers. This study explores the image of those reformers as seen through the pages of the Iowa media. The focus is on three large Iowa newspapers and how they treated two types of women reformers--suffragists, who sought the vote, and temperance crusaders, who tried to dry up saloons.  

There has been considerable scholarly research on the suffragists and the temperance crusaders in Iowa in the 1870s. But little attention has been focused on how the two groups of women reformers were portrayed, comparatively and simultaneously, in the press. Did the press treat both suffragists and temperance crusaders alike? Or did one group get better press treatment than another?  

The hypothesis for this study is that there were indeed differences in press treatment of the reformers, and that the temperance crusader got more favorable press than the suffragist because the crusader was perceived as less of a threat to the values and traditions of the times. The temperance crusade tied in nicely with the 19th century notion that a woman's place was at home, taking care of her family. It seems likely that the temperance crusader was viewed quite sympathetically as a woman.
doing her duty—protecting her family from the threat of alcoholism. The suffragist, on the other hand, was more likely to be viewed as a woman running away from her duty. Her quest for the vote was an attempt to expand her horizons beyond the home. Because she appeared to be flying in the face of tradition, the suffragist probably received considerably less support from the public and press than her "home-loving" sister reformer, the temperance crusader.

Newspapers selected for the study were the Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register, the Burlington Hawk-Eye, and the Dubuque Herald. Of the approximately 400 newspapers in the state during the 1870s, these three newspapers were among the largest. Estimates of daily circulation put the Register at more than 3,000, the Hawk-Eye at more than 2,000 and the Herald at more than 1,000.5

In addition to their large circulations, other factors make these three newspapers attractive for this study. The Register was perhaps the most prestigious newspaper in the state during this period. Located in the state capital, it was close to the legislative action. And it was the largest Republican newspaper in a strongly Republican state. The Republican Party, begun in Iowa in 1856, was an almost overnight success and was firmly in control of the state after the Civil War. Those nominated in Republican caucuses and conventions were almost certain to be elected with the Democrats mustering only feeble resistance.6

The Burlington Hawk-Eye, also a well-known Republican newspaper, appeared to have a large following in the state. Circulation figures
during the 1870s are somewhat unreliable because of editors' penchant for exaggerating their readership. But even allowing for exaggeration, the circulation of the Hawk-Eye's weekly edition, which was reported "in excess of 10,000," is impressive. Editor Charles Beardsley also makes the Hawk-Eye an interesting subject for a study of news coverage of women's issues. A state senator and vocal suffrage sympathizer, Beardsley helped found the Burlington Woman Suffrage Society. The Hawk-Eye was located in a city with a large foreign population. Census figures show nearly a third of the voters living in the Burlington area in the 1870s were foreign-born, and most of those immigrants were Germans, a beer-loving people who would soon find their cherished brew under attack from temperance crusaders.

In contrast to the two Republican newspapers, the Dubuque Herald was one of the largest Democratic newspapers in the state. It served a large, diverse city that provided a unique backdrop for women's reforms. Dubuque was home to an even greater number of immigrants than Burlington. Nearly 40 percent of Dubuque's voters in the 1870s were born in Germany or Ireland. In addition, a large number of Catholics, many of them German and Irish immigrants, lived in Dubuque. Census figures show the 20 Roman Catholic churches in Dubuque County outnumbered all other denominations, with every third church in the county being Catholic.

All three cities—Des Moines, Burlington and Dubuque—were touched by the women's reform movements in the 1870s. The Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye kept readers well informed about
the activities of reformers in their own towns and throughout the nation. Two periods are the focal point of the three newspapers' coverage of women's reforms during the early 1870s. Suffrage was the key political issue in Iowa from October 1871 through January 1872. Iowa suffragists were mounting a strong campaign which they hoped would culminate in a successful vote on suffrage by the state General Assembly. During this four-month period, the Register, Herald, and Hawk-Eye printed more than 200 stories about women's suffrage or other issues related to women's rights.

During the second period, January through March of 1874, temperance commanded the front pages of the Iowa newspapers. The "women's crusade" or "women's war," as it came to be known, began in December of 1873 when bands of exasperated women in Ohio and Indiana began closing saloons by holding prayer meetings in them. Within a few months the crusade had spread west to Iowa and numerous other states. Temperance news appeared on the front pages of the three large Iowa newspapers almost daily during this period. During the three-month period, the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawkeye combined for more than 900 stories on temperance.

To understand press coverage of suffragists and temperance crusaders, it is necessary to understand both the women who lived in the straitlaced era of England's influential Queen Victoria and the journalists who shaped the news in the late 19th century. The 1870s were a time of change not only for women, but for the newspapers that carried the story of women to
Iowa homes. While women found themselves at a crossroads between Victorian America and 20th century America, newspaper editors faced a crossroads of their own. The political press of earlier days was giving way to a new kind of newspaper.
Notes to Chapter I.

1 More detailed information on women's leap into public reform movements such as suffrage and temperance in the 1870s and the very substantial social changes that these early activists set in motion can be found in the following: Woman and Temperance by Ruth Bordin (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981); Symbolic Crusade by Joseph R. Gusfield (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963); The Politics of Domesticity by Barbara Leslie Epstein (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981); and Jill Conway's "Women Reformers and American Culture, 1870-1930," in the Journal of Social History 5 (Winter 1971-72): 164-77.

2 The Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register, the Burlington Hawk-Eye and the Dubuque Herald carried numerous stories about women suffragists and temperance crusaders that were reprinted from various newspapers throughout the country. Reprints carried in the newspapers from October 1871 through January 1872 and January through March of 1874 came from such newspapers as the St. Louis Journal, New York World, Chicago Post, St. Joseph Herald, and the Cincinnati Times.

3 Burlington (Iowa) Hawk-Eye, 28 March 1874.


7 Foreward to American Newspaper Directory.

8 American Newspaper Directory, p. 103.


II. NEWSPAPERING IN THE 1870S

"The days of the lickspittle political press of this country are numbered."
-- St. Louis Democrat, reprinted in the Burlington Hawk-Eye, Jan. 22, 1874

On Sept. 24, 1871, famous New York newsman Horace Greeley, while visiting a friend in Dubuque, wrote a column about Iowa that would later appear in his New York Tribune. Woman suffrage, a topic that would soon command much attention and news space in the state, received not a mention in Greeley's Iowa piece. The legendary editor was interested, for the moment at least, in Iowa's agriculture and industry—not its women. Yet, the nation's most influential, if somewhat eccentric, old editor from New York had already played a part in the coming controversy over women's rights. Perhaps more than any editor of the era, Greeley had given 19th century journalists their interest in public affairs, ideas, and social causes. Greeley launched the New York Tribune in 1841 and used it to push temperance, women's rights, abolition, scientific agriculture, international peace and many other ideas. He felt it was the editor's duty to try to influence public opinion and he devoted much space to editorials, discussions and analyses of events. Greeley's ideas were a popular success not only in the East, but throughout the country. The weekly edition of the Tribune was widely read both in the Midwest and New England.

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In the Greeley tradition, the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye would become public forums for vigorous discussions of women's issues in Iowa. With the woman suffrage and temperance issues came a host of side issues: Should women work outside the home? Should they be educated as well as men? Were they as smart as men? What would happen to family life if women should get the vote? Were temperance crusaders trampling on personal rights? Were men driven to drink by nagging women? Such issues were raised and discussed frequently in the three Iowa newspapers in the early part of the 1870s.

The Iowa newspapers had inherited more than a social conscience from Greeley. As Greeley sat in the Dubuque home in the fall of 1871, penning his latest story, he could look back with satisfaction on many years of progress and promise for American journalism. During the three decades before the Civil War, Greeley and his rivals, most of them editors of big city newspapers in New York, supervised a colorful era in newspapering in the United States. It was an era when newspaper editors began to feel the power of the press and flex their muscles, when newspapers moved away from the heavily political press of earlier times, when reporters began to shape their profession, acquiring a taste for facts and a terse, unbiased writing style.5

Improvements in printing presses had set the stage for a rapidly growing news industry. Napier presses, manufactured by Richard M. Hoe and Company, New York, in the 1830s could produce 2,000 four-page papers per hour. Man power soon gave way to steam power, presses were redesigned,
and by the late 1840s, the state of the art in the largest U.S. newspapers was Hoe's "lightning press" which could turn out 20,000 newspapers an hour. With the means to print large numbers of newspapers, entrepreneurs had only to attract an audience to read them.

Journalism for the masses rolled off the presses in 1833 in the form of The Sun, Benjamin Day's one-cent newspaper aimed at the common man and woman in New York. Other New York editors quickly joined the race for tens of thousands of previously overlooked readers and in the process, pushed the newspaper toward its modern form. James Gordon Bennett, founder of the New York Herald in 1835, reached popular audiences with an assortment of local news, trivia, political essays, foreign intelligence, and commercial and financial news. Henry J. Raymond's New York Times added good reporting and an objective tone to the evolving newspaper.

Where large, urban papers went, smaller newspapers followed. By the 1870s, the big-city formula of offering a little bit of everything—entertainment, humor, sensation, local tidbits, national and international news, and opinion—was common in smaller newspapers throughout the country. The pattern was evident in the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald and Burlington Hawk-Eye of the 1870s.

During a typical week in January of 1874, the newspapers included stories about the Spanish government seizing newspapers, a controversy between the U.S. and Cuba over a sunken ship, a speech by a "colored" U.S. Congressman, a Chicago sleet storm, New York labor demonstrations, the near extinction of the U.S. buffalo and a New York execution delayed by a
loose noose. State and local news included articles about an Ackley man who attacked his wife with shears, the failure of an Atlantic pharmacy, a haunted farm house near Ottumwa, a Sioux City con man, bungling burglars in Fairfield, the organization of an orphan society, and a man who committed suicide by opium overdose. The newspapers also chronicled births, deaths, arrests, court news, marriages, comings and goings of local residents and visitors, and other bits of local gossip.10

Editorially, the newspapers praised the Iowa Agricultural College for "harmonizing mind and muscle," supported aid to northwest Iowa farmers whose crops were eaten by grasshoppers, lauded Burlington's new street railway, complained about reckless driving on local streets and accused the Mexicans of lying in a border dispute.11

Like most journals of the times, the three newspapers carried considerable amounts of "exchange news"—news reprinted from other newspapers. Sometimes, the original source got credit for its news. The Jan. 9, 1874, issue of the Register, includes duly credited excerpts from the Albia Union, Monona County Gazette, Davenport Democrat, Dubuque Herald, New York Times, and Chicago Tribune.12 Often, exchange items were simply lifted from other newspapers with no acknowledgement given to the original source. A newspaper analyst of the times endorsed exchange news, pointing out that news men could "steal better articles than they can buy." Editors who bought articles tended to use them in total, dull parts and all, the analyst pointed out. On the other hand, editors tended to liberally edit the stories they lifted from other papers. "The good
points are saved and the verbiage rejected," the analyst added approvingly.  

With the editors of large newspapers leading the way, news men had begun, in the 1830s and 1840s, to tone down their personal, often bitter, attacks on other editors, political opponents or anyone else who happened to be on the "wrong" side of an issue. "You lie, you villain," Greeley once ranted in a Tribune column directed at William Cullen Bryant of The New York Evening Post, "you sinfully, wickedly, basely lie."  

Suffragist Susan B. Anthony's brother, Col. Daniel Read Anthony, used the pages of his Leavenworth, Kan., Conservative to describe competing editors as "three of the lowest, dirtiest, filthiest scoundrels that ever infested any place on earth." One of the scoundrels replied that Col. Anthony would be passed up even by "dogs writhing with agony in search of a cleaner post."  

Favorite targets of such editorial outbursts were political opponents, as editors dutifully mouthing the party line. Such press partisanship began to decline, albeit slowly, in the 1830s and 1840s as editors of the large newspapers became increasingly inclined to speak their own minds, opining from their comfortable positions as leaders of large, successful businesses. Businessmen that they were, the editors had another reason for muting their political hues--circulation. More readers meant more revenue, and many editors soft-pedaled the political puffery in attempts to appeal to wider audiences.
Despite the moves toward independence, many newspapers of the 1870s continued to be tied to their political party apron strings. In 1871, the Burlington Hawk-Eye proudly flew its party colors with a heavy-handed editorial exhorting readers to vote Republican in a coming election:

The people of Iowa take as naturally to the pure and lofty principles of Republicanism--its generous, just, and humane sentiments, its scrupulous fidelity to all public trusts--as the ignorant and degraded masses...do to the corrupt and decaying Democracy of our great cities.

But there were signs, even at the Burlington Hawk-Eye that those ties were loosening. In January of 1874, the Hawk-Eye endorsed and reprinted an article in the St. Louis Democrat which applauded the decline of the political press.

Newspapers used to draw the breath of life through the nostrils of small politicians...They now rely upon the public for patronage and support, and these are accorded in the most liberal measure to the journals which best serve the public.

Another nudge in the direction of more objective news stories resulted from newspaper coverage of the Civil War. Sending news reports from battlefields to newspapers by telegraph was expensive. To shorten stories and thus save on telegraph tolls, news correspondents put more emphasis on facts, cutting out opinions and color. The Civil War became a training ground for a new breed of journalist--the reporter. More than a hundred correspondents covered the war for the larger newspapers. During the four-year war, they began their transformation from
correspondents to reporters, developing professional standards of digging for facts and providing accurate stories.  

Opinion and fact had mingled freely in earlier newspapers, but gradually, news men began to distinguish between the two. Editorial pages, pioneered largely by Greeley, began to appear in many newspapers. The beginnings of the editorial page were evident in the three Iowa newspapers in the early 1870s. Editorials, letters from readers, book reviews and other opinion pieces were often grouped together on an inside page. The line between opinion and news was being drawn in the 1870s, but it remained a somewhat hazy distinction. Although many news stories of the era appeared to be quite objective, some still showed the kind of political and social bias that had been a hallmark of the political press in the antebellum days of journalism.

Sometimes, readers needed look no further than the headline to discover where an editor stood on an issue. When women's rights radical Victoria Woodhull visited Des Moines in January of 1874, the headline writer titled the subsequent news story "Wicked Woodhull." A few weeks later, a Register editor let his biases show when he headlined a temperance story, "Iowa Women Doing Their Duty."  

In addition to leading headlines, an editorial comment or two thrown into the body of a news story was not uncommon in the 1870s. "Boone is worried because she has no Woman Suffrage Association," a Register news man wrote. "Most of our towns worry chiefly because they are so blessed."
A Dubuque Herald story about a widow's lawsuit against a saloonkeeper who had supplied liquor to her drunkard of a husband is peppered with opinion: "As a precious legacy to a faithful wife he left two sons, nearly as worthless as himself, who have been shifting in disgrace between poverty and whisky these many years, to her unspeakable sorrow, and it is on the score of their burning appetites at Stangle's saloon that she brings suit."28

The three newspapers also offered a forum for readers by printing letters to the editors. The women's rights movement and the temperance crusade of the early 1870s prompted a number of letters from both men and women. "The woman is equal to the man and should have the same rights," one writer pointed out in a Des Moines Register letter. "The influence of female suffrage upon the whole fabric of our government would be ... very deleterious," wrote another.29 A Burlington Hawk-Eye letter writer praised the temperance crusade and hoped it would "continue until every drinking hole in the city is closed." A less enthused Dubuque Herald letter writer could not "see why the milder drinks, such as beer and wine, should be proscribed."30

While many letter writers identified themselves, others preferred to express themselves anonymously, signing their letters with initials or such pen names as "Looker-On," "A Woman," or "Citizen."31 All three newspapers printed anonymous letters. But an item in the Burlington Hawk-Eye indicates that newspaper editors treated such letters with caution, requiring all letter writers to at least reveal themselves to the
newspaper management. "The communication from 'Suffering Woman' would have appeared this morning had the writer sent us her name and address— not for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith," the Hawk-Eye management pointed out in an 1874 news item. "We do not publish communications which come to us anonymously, no matter how meritorious they may be in themselves. Everybody who reads a paper ought to be aware of this rule by this time." 32

The Register, Herald and Hawk-Eye were similar in many ways. By Iowa standards, they were large newspapers, each with a circulation of several thousand. Each newspaper published daily morning editions as well as weekly editions. 33 Each had a printing business on the side, doing books, invitations and other printing jobs on power presses. 34

The newspapers also had a similar look. For approximately four cents a day, readers of the three Iowa newspapers got as much news and advertising as could be crammed into four pages. Photographs, inviting layouts and large, easy-to-read typefaces were luxuries awaiting future newspaper readers. In the no-frills approach to newspaper layout in the mid-19th century, as much news as possible was squeezed into tiny type lined up in narrow, ruled columns.

The front pages of the newspapers typically included "telegraphic" sections-state, national and international news received through wire services, such as the Associated Press. Much of this news was political, describing activities in Congress and various state legislatures. Inside pages usually consisted of editorial columns, letters to the editor and
stories reprinted from other newspapers throughout the country. The third and fourth pages of the newspapers often were devoted to local items—fires, arrests, minutes from community club meetings and gossip about parties, illnesses, accidents, visitors in town and courting couples.

With their daily dose of news, Iowa readers got a heavy dose of advertising. Ads filled approximately 55 to 75 percent of the space in the three newspapers. Although publishers of some leading newspapers had begun to ban advertisements from their front pages, the Register, Hawk-Eye, and Herald continued the popular practice of putting ads in this premium space. Typically, one-third to one-half the front pages contained advertising. The newspapers carried ads for such items as groceries, hotels, insurance, coal and wood, liquors and Iowa wines, tailors, steamer lines, stoves, pianos, false teeth, hair pieces, Baltimore oysters, and out-of-state lotteries.

Health ads were plentiful in the three newspapers and full of optimism. While Drs. Stamper and Son in Burlington offered to cure malignant cancer within three to 24 hours, Mrs. Sarah Holton, an "unconscious trance medium" in the same town advertised that no patient was "too far gone to be restored" in her healing room. In addition to local healers, Iowa readers were offered sure cures for practically anything that could ail them through numerous newspaper ads for potions with names like Kearney's Extract Buchu, McGuire's Cundurango Liver and Blood Bitters, and Masta's Pulmonic Balsam.
There were similarities not only in the pages of the three newspapers, but in the men behind the pages. The owners of the newspapers were young men, with the Des Moines Register's Clarkson brothers being the youngest. In 1872, Richard Clarkson was 32 and James S. Clarkson was 30. The Dubuque Herald was owned by 39-year-old Moses M. Ham and 38-year-old D. D. W. Carver. The Burlington Hawk-Eye owners were 42-year-old Charles Beardsley and 39-year-old George Edwards.

They were experienced news men. The Clarksons learned the printer's trade in their father's newspaper in Indiana. Carver ran the Charles City (Iowa) Intelligencer and Ham was assistant editor of the Detroit Free Press before they combined forces and bought the Dubuque Herald. Beardsley edited the Oskaloosa (Iowa) Herald and Edwards published the Mt. Pleasant (Iowa) Home Journal before they jointly purchased the Burlington Hawk-Eye.

And they were political. Although the bonds between political parties and newspapers were loosening, most newspaper editors in the 1870s remained loyal partisans. The men who owned the three Iowa newspapers actively supported their parties in their newspapers and in their personal lives. Both Beardsley, a Republican, and Ham, a Democrat, served in the Iowa Senate while operating their newspapers. Dubuque's Ham also was a member of the National Democratic Committee for 16 years and Des Moines' Clarkson spent 16 years on the Republican National Committee.

In one way or another, in large measure or small, all the news men would reap rewards for their political loyalties. Edwards and Richard
Clarkson both served terms as state printer, a lucrative position that brought newspapers considerable business, printing laws, journals, forms and other state publications.\(^{44}\) When he retired from the Register, Richard Clarkson was rewarded by President Theodore Roosevelt with an appointment as a pension agent for Iowa and Nebraska.\(^{45}\)

Three of the six news men held postmaster positions, one of the principal perks bestowed on the loyal by the party in power.\(^{46}\) Democrats Ham and Carver and Republican James Clarkson each received postmaster appointments when their parties held the presidency.\(^{47}\) James Clarkson raked in the greatest political spoils. The young editor made his name in 1872 in a bitterly fought senatorial fight between then-Senator James Harlan and William B. Allison. Clarkson threw the Register wholeheartedly behind Allison in a battle which left Allison a senator and Clarkson the undisputed power in state politics for the next quarter of a century.\(^{48}\)

Through presidential appointments, Clarkson would later hold positions of first postmaster general, the second most powerful postal post in the country, and surveyor of customs for the port of New York.\(^{49}\)

A Burlington Hawk-Eye news story reveals that as early as 1874, some were finding the Clarkson family's various political appointments irksome. The article criticized the Register for editorially complaining that taxpayers were footing the bill for increasingly greedy office holders. Pointing out that both Clarkson brothers as well as their father Coker F. Clarkson held political appointments, the Hawk-Eye journalist concluded, "When the Register tells the world that 'corruption to obtain office is
rapidly increasing,' it may be safely concluded it speaks from experience."50

Of the six news men, Burlington Hawk-Eye editor Charles Beardsley perhaps traveled the most unusual occupational path to Iowa journalist. Beardsley practiced medicine in Muscatine and Oskaloosa before becoming editor of the Oskaloosa Herald, and later, the Hawk-Eye.51 Beardsley's strong public support for woman suffrage also set him apart from his fellow editors.

It is likely that the news staff of the three Iowa newspapers were all-male. The newspapers contain no references to women journalists, who were a rarity in the 1870s. Census figures indicate that only 35 of more than 5,000 journalists in the U.S. in 1870 were women.52 That figure likely does not take into account the female contribution to the husband-wife teams on country weeklies throughout the nation.53 Nevertheless, the newspaper profession in the 1870s was dominated by males, with only a few women journalists working, mostly on the larger dailies.54

Although newspaper editors may have influenced opinions in their communities, it also likely that editors were influenced by the communities in which they lived, worked, and sold newspapers. A successful newspaper needed the support of the community and that support was more likely to be forthcoming if the newspaper reflected the tastes, interests and attitudes of the community. Thus, newspaper coverage of suffrage, temperance and other women's issues in Des Moines, Dubuque and
Burlington probably was influenced to some degree by the character of the towns.

In the early 1870s, Des Moines was a city on the move; Dubuque, a city of foreigners and Catholics; and Burlington, a rough river town.

With a population of 14,000, Des Moines was the smallest of the three cities during the early part of the 1870s. Dubuque claimed nearly 22,000 residents and Burlington, 20,000. But Des Moines, the capital city, was in the midst of a growing spurt that would soon change the statistics. Between 1865 and 1870, the population of Des Moines more than doubled. During the decade of the 1870s, the population would nearly double again, catapulting Des Moines from the fourth-largest city in the state to the largest by the end of the decade. Register editor James Clarkson would prove to be an important factor in Des Moines' growth, using his considerable political and business skills to promote the city. He would spend considerable time in the East drumming up industry for his home city and would be credited with securing four railroads to Des Moines.

Dubuque had a strong Catholic heritage. Under the guidance of the Rev. Mathias Loras, Catholic settlers streamed into the Dubuque area during the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s. In 1837, Loras was named the first Bishop of Dubuque and he spent the next 20 years helping Catholic immigrants set up communities in the Dubuque area as well as other parts of Iowa. Through letters and articles in the Eastern Catholic press, Bishop Loras invited Catholic farmers, mechanics and laborers to the state. Thousands of Catholics, many of them German and Irish immigrants,
accepted the Bishop's invitation to settle in Iowa. By the 1870s, Dubuque was heavily populated with immigrants, many of them from Germany and Ireland.

Burlington was a river town, a town of transients and rough living. It was not uncommon for corpses to turn up in the Mississippi nearby. Gunboats, floating houses of prostitution and cheap booze, cruised the river, often anchoring in Burlington to the irritation of many local folks. When things got hot, the gunboats pulled up anchors and moved downstream.

Burlington also was a stopover for thousands of pioneers and adventurers heading west. Travelers, sometimes hundreds a day, poured into town during the 1870s. They came on foot, by covered wagon, steamboat and train. There were so many immigrants passing through town that a special train depot was built in 1869 to service immigrants as well as U.S. natives heading west. In the 1870s, Emigrant Depot was a popular spot for local gawkers who could gaze on train loads of Germans, Danes, Swedes, Italians, Chinese, Russians, Norwegians, Spaniards, Greeks, Scots, French and English. Although most passed on through Burlington, a considerable number of immigrants, most of them Germans, remained in Burlington.

Des Moines, Dubuque and Burlington all were large cities by Iowa standards—10 to 20 times the size of the typical Iowa town. Residents of these larger cities were quite likely to be exposed to a variety of opinions on woman suffrage, temperance and other topics through the many
lecturers who traveled from city to city in the 19th century. For 25 to 50 cents a ticket, the listener could buy enlightenment on a variety of topics such as moral virtue, travel, Indians, health, dreams, penal reform and religion. Woman suffrage and temperance were popular topics on the lecture circuit. In the case of suffrage, residents of Des Moines, Dubuque and Burlington had the opportunity to hear from some prominent speakers—national suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Lucy Stone. All three of the well-known suffragists visited Des Moines between 1869 and 1871. During the same period, Burlington hosted visits from Stanton and Anthony, and Dubuque, from Stanton.

The extent of local support for suffrage and temperance cannot be determined. But each city had at least a small group of activists supporting each cause. The first woman suffrage organization in Iowa was formed in Dubuque in 1869. A year later, suffrage supporters in Burlington and Des Moines organized. Temperance organizations also were operating in each city.

There was certainly opposition to the two movements in all three cities. Although suffragists seemed to face the most opposition, temperance crusaders were not without detractors. The temperance advocates were sure to find the going a bit rougher in Burlington and Dubuque because of the large numbers of German immigrants living in those cities. These immigrants jealously guarded the customs of the Old Country, customs that included beer drinking and beer making. Many German Americans viewed the temperance crusade as an attack on their
culture and a sign of American's prejudice against foreigners. German language newspapers, like the Anzeiger in Des Moines were among the most outspoken opponents of the temperance crusade. Although they probably loved drink as much as the Germans, Irish immigrants in Burlington and Dubuque seemed less antagonistic to the temperance crusade. Some historians suggest the Irish were more eager to adapt to the ways of the New World and to become Americanized, while the Germans preferred to preserve their heritage. The cultural difference between the Irish and German immigrants created some problems in the American Catholic Church, home to many of those immigrants. To the annoyance of the Germans, the American Catholic church was active in the temperance cause. Dubuque's Bishop Loras was among the many Catholic officials and priests to support temperance.

Other opposition to suffrage and temperance surfaced as women reformers pushed issues into the public forum in the 1870s. "Every woman should do all in her power to oppose the enfranchisement of the sex," an anonymous suffrage critic wrote in a letter to the editor of the Des Moines Register in 1871. A Dubuque Herald news article advised women who would join the local temperance crusade to instead "remain at home and darn stockings." There was plenty more advice where that came from. Many people had advice for women in the 1870s. Nineteenth century women were expected to adhere to a certain code of behavior and lifestyle. In the parlance of the era, woman was supposed to stay in her sphere—the "woman's sphere."
Some women seemed to be trying to move out of that sphere. Many worried about what would happen if they succeeded.
Notes to Chapter II.

1 Horace Greeley's article about Iowa, was written in the home of R.S. Harris, Dubuque, Iowa. It appeared in the New York Tribune and was reprinted in the Oct. 1, 1871, Dubuque Herald. In the article, Greeley discussed Iowa's agricultural prowess, praised the city of Grinnell for prohibiting saloons, and pointed out the state needed more industry to provide a "broader base for prosperity."


7 Weisberger, The American Newspaperman, p. 97.


9 Weisberger, The American Newspaperman, p. 112.

10 Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register, 9 January 1874 (hereafter cited as Register); Dubuque (Iowa) Herald, 13 January 1874 (hereafter cited as Herald); Burlington (Iowa) Hawk-Eye, 10 January 1874 (hereafter cited as Hawk-Eye).

11 Register, 9 January 1874; Herald, 13 January 1874; Hawk-Eye, 10 January 1874.

12 Register, 9 January 1874.


20 *Hawk-Eye*, 4 October 1871.

21 *Hawk-Eye*, 22 January 1874.


25 *Register*, 20 January 1874.

26 *Register*, 28 February 1874.

27 *Register*, 15 November 1871.

28 *Herald*, 4 March 1874.


30 *Hawk-Eye*, 15 March 1874.

31 *Herald*, 24 February 1874, 25 March 1874; *Hawk-Eye*, 21 February 1874.

32 *Hawk-Eye*, 1 March 1874.

Advertisement for the Hawk-Eye Steam Job Printing House in the Hawk-Eye, 3 October 1871.; The History of Dubuque County (Chicago: Western Historical Co., 1880), p. 589; Rowell, Centennial Newspaper Exhibition, 1876, p. 249.

Mott, American Journalism, p. 298.

Hawk-Eye, 10 January 1874.


Brigham, Des Moines, p. 318.

The History of Dubuque County (1880), p. 774; Oldt, History of Dubuque County, Iowa (1911), p. 673.


Mott, American Journalism, p. 414.


Andrews, Pioneers of Polk County, p. 331; Oldt, History of Dubuque County (1911), p. 674.

John Carl Parish, The Administrative Departments, Offices, Boards, Commissions and Public Institutions of Iowa from 1838 to 1897 (Iowa City: Historical Department of Iowa, 1908), p. 96.

Brigham, Des Moines, p. 320.


50 Hawk-Eye, 12 February 1874.


60 *Thirteenth State Census*, pp. 352-53.

70. *Hawk-Eye*, 19 March 1874.
75. *Register*, 26 October 1871.
76. *Herald*, 8 March 1874.
III. THE WOMAN QUESTION

"Nobody would object to any of the demands of this restless virgin if they had any beneficent influence on her mind and morals, but . . . they only make her conspicuous for a loss of the true, sweet female qualities . . .

-- St. Louis Journal of Commerce, reprinted in the Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register Oct. 15, 1871

They called it the "woman question." It referred to the question of whether women would be allowed to vote. But for many 19th century men and women, there was considerably more to the woman question than casting ballots. In addition to the ballot, some women were pushing for other rights--better educations, jobs outside the home, wages comparable to men's, more liberal divorce laws. While some Victorian men and women favored giving women more freedom and opportunities, others worried that such actions would destroy the family. They feared that women with the political clout of the ballot, good educations and a chance at well-paying jobs would no longer be willing to stay home and be good mothers and wives.

Despite such fears, prospects for woman suffrage in Iowa looked good in the early 1870s. Suffrage was not a new idea to Iowans. Woman's rights advocates had been pushing for woman suffrage in the state for a number of years. In 1854, Frances Dana Gage, a woman writer from Ohio, had spent several weeks in Iowa, lecturing on women's rights.¹ The following year, Amelia Bloomer stepped off the stagecoach in her new hometown of Council Bluffs wearing the famous baggy-legged "Bloomers" and
bearing the latest feminist ideology from the East. Bloomer and her
husband had moved west from Seneca Falls, N.Y., home of suffragist
Elizabeth Cady Stanton and site of the first woman's rights convention in
the U.S. In Seneca Falls, Bloomer had rubbed elbows with leading women
reformers, published her own newspaper advocating temperance and women's
rights and lobbied for a new, sensible kind of women's clothing--the short
dress and trousers ensemble to which she would give her name. Soon after
her arrival in Council Bluffs, Bloomer set out on a one-woman campaign,
delivering lectures on temperance and women's rights. Her efforts on
behalf of Iowa women would span four decades.²

Although the Civil War brought a four-year moratorium to the women's
rights movement throughout the nation, the Iowa suffrage movement gained
momentum soon after peace was signed in 1865 at Appomattox. In the
aftermath of the war, Iowa suffragists pressed their case in hopes of
gaining the ballot simultaneously with Negro males. In 1868, Iowa's white
males cast their votes in favor of Negro suffrage. The state's women,
however, were still waiting for their chance at the ballot box.³

Yet, things looked promising for women suffragists in Iowa. In
October of 1871, the Des Moines Register reprinted a Boston Journal
assertion that Iowa was "one of the most hopeful states for the early
enfranchisement of its women of any of the states in the Union."⁴ The
Globe referred to an attempt to get the state's Supreme Court to
enfranchise women on constitutional grounds.⁵ But Iowa suffragists also
were pressing their fight for the vote on the legislative front and they
were a third of the way toward their goal. The previous year, the Iowa General Assembly had passed a resolution to amend the state constitution, giving women the right to vote. Two hurdles remained. The same resolution had to be passed by the 1872 General Assembly. Then it needed the approval of voters in a general election. Their chances in an election must have looked good to many suffragists. With their vote for Negro suffrage a few years earlier, Iowa males had set themselves apart as some of the most liberal voters in the nation.

No state in the Union had yet granted its women the right to vote. But Iowa suffragists, sensing a good opportunity to lead the way to the ballot box, mounted a heavy campaign to persuade both lawmakers and the public that woman should have the vote. Nationally known suffragists lent a hand. During the summer of 1871, Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, on a cross-country speaking tour, spent three days in Des Moines. Iowa suffragists hoped to further their cause at the first state convention of the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association in Des Moines in October.

Much of the debate between those on both sides of the suffrage issue was carried on in the newspapers. The Iowa Woman Suffrage Association acknowledged the importance of the press, adopting a resolution praising "our editorial friends... who have so nobly advocated the great principle of equal rights for all...". Readers of the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye had good exposure to arguments of both suffragists and their opponents. During the four-month
period from October 1871 through January 1872, the newspapers combined for more than 200 stories on suffrage or suffrage-related issues such as women's rights. The Register carried the bulk of those stories, printing 112 suffrage-related stories while the Herald printed 63 and the Hawk-Eye, 42.

Press coverage of suffrage and other women's rights issues was produced against a backdrop of Victorian traditions that tended to subjugate women to men. Women seeking the vote were attempting to change a legal system that had been stacked against them. The married Iowa woman of the 1870s legally belonged to her husband. The law considered her services, her earnings, and her belongings his property, not hers. The only way she could acquire property that was absolutely her own was to get the written consent of her husband or prove he was incompetent or improvident. To claim title to articles purchased with her own earnings, she had to file a certified inventory of her personal property. And she had no legal right to her own children. Her husband was legally considered their sole guardian.10

Such laws reflected Victorian society's attitudes about the sexes. Preachers pointed to passages in the Bible, telling women to obey their husbands. Scientists maintained women were both physically and intellectually inferior to men. Doctors claimed women were creatures of passion rather than reason because they had smaller brains and more finely developed nervous systems.11
There was a special place for these creature of passion in 19th century America. It was called the "woman's sphere." The woman's sphere defined the kind of education woman got, the kind of work she did and the way she conducted herself. A proper Victorian woman operating within the confines of the woman's sphere went to school to learn to be a good wife and mother, worked within the home and conducted herself purely and demurely at all times.

Nineteenth century men expected women to provide them with serene, orderly homes. Home was supposed to be a quiet haven where man could recuperate from the stresses and chaos of the outside working world. New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley summed up the woman's sphere this way: "It is a woman's business to obey her husband, keep his home tidy and nourish and train his children." How much education woman should have was a much-debated facet of the woman question. Margaret Fuller Ossoli, 19th century champion of woman's rights, lamented that a typical girl's education consisted of learning how to keep house, sew, handle herself socially and find a husband. A mother was expected to know enough to oversee her young children's education, but she certainly was not expected to be able to understand her more intelligent husband.

Some Victorians believed too much studying damaged the health of young women, and many doctors advised girls against heavy studying, particularly during their menstrual periods. Education, it seemed, affected a woman's sexuality. Some claimed female reproductive organs
were damaged by too much studying. Author and physician Edward H. Clark warned that many women "graduated from school or college excellent scholars but with undeveloped ovaries." Dr. William Goodell, a gynecology professor at the University of Pennsylvania, maintained that in over-educated girls, "energy is withdrawn from the trophic and reproductive centres, and physical development is arrested."

One recurring theme in news articles during the 1870s was the notion that educated women were masculine, unattractive or both. For example, one Register article offered the opinion that "very intellectual women are seldom beautiful. The formation of their features, and particularly the forehead, is more or less masculine." When a well-known woman speaker visited Dubuque, a Herald reporter noted the "masculine vigor of mind" evident in her face and particularly, her forehead—"high, broad and jutting at the brows." Another Register story carried a university president's denial that he ever said only the "unlovely class" of women want to be educated in male universities.

One of the more curious theories on women's intellectual abilities came from a New York Mail columnist whose article, "Why Women of Ideas Fail," was reprinted in the Register. The columnist pointed out that "once a woman gets an idea into her head, she hasn't room for any other beside it." While the intellectual man has the common sense to occasionally rest his mind, the intellectual woman "puts all the wine of her life into one hasty beaker and empties it in sacrifice at the feet of her destiny, and has never thereafter anything more so good to give; the
rest is all dregs, made up of broken spirits, impaired nerves, fretful complainings, and fruitless aspirations." 21

Not all Victorians believed education was hazardous to a woman's health, appearance or vitality. "... the average American girl can endure as much hard study as her big brother, if she will only take as much outdoor exercise, go to bed in proper season, and not ruin her digestion at boarding school with frosted cake and sweetmeats," one writer commented in a Herald reprint. 22

"If it is highly honorable in a man to become a scholar, why is it not equally honorable in a woman?" a reader asked in a letter to the Register. 23

Newspapers regularly reported on women's attempts, some successful and some not, to attend colleges and universities. A Michigan State professor pointed out that the 70 women there had "personal beauty, and attractiveness ... the observations of strangers who visit us is astonishment at seeing so many beautiful girls who are immensely interested in the robuster studies of the college curriculum. 24 In a similar vein, the president of Cornell University pointed out women students did better on exams than men. 25

Many considered the 19th century woman somewhat frail physically as well as intellectually. Books of the era depicted delicate, wan heroines, low on energy and prone to fainting. 26 Aiding and abetting this fashionable lethargy was the 19th century woman's dress. Even the hardiest physical specimen of a woman was apt to become a feminine
weakling when decked out in the customary apparel. Woman's clothes in the early 1870s made work, exercise and probably even walking difficult. The chic Victorian woman dressed in high heels, long-sleeved gowns with high round necks and wide hoop skirts buoyed by bustles and one or more petticoats. Heavy-duty corsets strengthened with whalebone, steel or cane cinched her female form into a fashionable hourglass shape and helped counteract the considerable weight of heavy skirts. Delicate as she may have appeared, the fashionable Victorian woman wore dresses requiring 18 to 25 yards of fabric. A Register story of the times estimated that a woman in full dress wore about 12 pounds of clothing.

While life on the Midwestern prairie may have been rougher around the edges than life in the East, Iowa women apparently were determined not to fall out of fashion. They kept up with the latest styles through fashion magazines and clothing patterns from the East. Since most sewed their own clothes or hired dressmakers, it was easy for them to imitate the latest styles while making minor modifications to reduce costs or suit their own tastes. The restrictive styles of well-dressed Victorian ladies were perhaps meant to show the world that they didn't have to do vulgar physical labor. In the 19th century, it was a status symbol for a man to have a wife who didn't have to work. Upper and middle class women were expected to be ladies of leisure and they dressed the part.

Yet, try as she might to dress like a genteel Victorian lady of leisure, reality was considerably different for most Iowa women in the 1870s. In their roles as helpmates, many Iowa women worked on farms and
in family businesses. They tended farm animals, helped plant and harvest crops, cooked for farm hands, and cleaned stores and offices. For daily chores, Iowa women and other women throughout the United States wore more practical clothing. Long-sleeved housedresses, apparently worn without bustles or corsets, must have considerably eased the strain for working women.

Whatever other kind of work she did, 19th century woman's first responsibility was always considered the home. It was a responsibility that crossed all social classes. The poor woman eking out a living on the farm and the wealthy woman bossing her servants had, in society's eyes, one common, all-important duty—to take good care of her home and family.

In addition to their domestic chores, some women worked outside their homes or earned wages through in-home businesses. Census figures show that approximately 7 percent of the Iowans earning wages in 1870 were women. Although most of these women earned their pay in acceptable "womanly" pursuits, such as teaching, sewing and selling dry goods, a number of women were trying their hands in positions that had traditionally been considered male jobs. The three Iowa newspapers carried numerous stories about women stepping into the male working world to become clerks, school principals, doctors, lawyers, farmers, mail carriers, even lighthouse keepers.
In one story a woman writer asked:

How much more muscle is needed for lifting ladders and adjusting joists and striking nails, than for wringing blankets and scrubbing overalls? ... Is a woman who can take a large family through the scarlet fever without assistance likely to find herself too weak in body to bear the physical burdens incumbent upon the profession of a lawyer? Ought not any woman who is able to be her own nursery maid be able to harness a horse?

A like-minded speaker quoted in the Register lobbied for women law officers, stating, "There are women in the world better fitted for public than parlour duty. Let them do it." 40

In a resolution printed in the Register, the Polk County Suffrage Association suggested the ballot would break down prejudices, allowing women to pursue vocations "best suited to their capacities." The suffrage association was quick to add, however, that women with the ballot would "not be excluded from domestic cares nor from any other duties for which they are by nature fitted." 41

There were those who worried that the vote might somehow lessen women's interest in domestic duties. A Des Moines Register letter writer fretted that voting women might give up not only housework but motherhood as well. "... carry out the idea that housework is the poorest of all trades for a girl to learn, and may heaven pity the coming generations, if there should happen to be any," the anti-suffragist wrote. 42

While Victorians were unsure about woman's ability to compete with men physically or mentally, most agreed she bested the male species in spirituality. Victorians believed woman was naturally pure and pious. It
was easy for her to be good, because she was simply built that way. Because of her innate righteousness, woman was put in charge of her family's morality. Just as it was her duty to keep a nice home, it was her duty to raise upstanding children and set a good example for the rest of the family.  

Thought to be naturally prone to religion, women were expected to be pure and modest in thoughts and actions . . . and words. Some Victorian females were so modest they euphemistically referred to a table's "limbs" rather than utter the coarser term "legs."  
Purity and passion did not mix in 19th century America. It was commonly believed that normal women did not have sex drives. The passionate woman was a disgrace to her sex, and if she once lost her reputation through sexual misconduct, it was lost forever.

Men, on the other hand, were permitted not only sexual appetites, but occasional moral indiscretions to satisfy those appetites. The man who had tarnished his reputation could regain his good name, but not so, the woman. The fallen woman "can never cross that dead line which separates her from society itself," a Register editorialist wrote in February of 1874. "The man who fell with her can; to him, the returning way never closes."  
The image of the ideal Victorian lady was a powerful one for 19th century Americans. Magazines, books and newspapers reinforced the tender picture of the genteel lady, happy in her proper sphere, making a warm home for her husband and children.  

Many who opposed woman suffrage
feared the vote would destroy this Victorian ideal, dragging her down into the dirty world of politics and somehow causing her to lose interest in taking care of her home and her children. Suffragists attempted to refute such arguments, maintaining their allegiance to home, family and traditional 19th century morality. But it was difficult business. When compared with the sweet, Cinderella-like Victorian lady, suffragists often came out looking something like the ugly stepsisters. While the Victorian lady was portrayed as pure, feminine and submissive, suffragists were sometimes tagged as masculine, ugly and domineering—or at least, likely to become so if they got the vote.

News articles during the 1870s reveal a recurring debate about whether women would be soiled by contact with the dirty world of politics. "Throw women into the political arena and some of the fairest features of their moral superiority will be exposed to a rude and perilous test," a Register article quoted one male speaker as saying.48

Suffrage supporters countered, pointing out that if politics were so corrupting, men were in danger too. "Wouldn't it be as well then," asked a male correspondent in the Register, "to disfranchise as many men as possible, so as to keep the masses of them pure and set aside a few to be corrupted and sacrificed by voting and office holding for the good of the whole?"49

Fears that politics would somehow turn women into men were common. Typical is this Des Moines Register item: "A writer in the Woman's Journal
'hopes we may never get over the feeling that a woman is made to be
gentler than man.'"50

In another Register reprint, the St. Louis Christian worried about
women who seemed to want to be men:

"They have not decided what to be, but they will not be
women. . . . They will be feminine men, husbandly wives,
paternal mothers, matronly lawyers, delicate doctors,
dowager divines, statesladies, city mothers, alderwomen,
bearesses and bullesses in Wall street. They are
determined to see the universal petticoat wave triumphantly
over a subjugated world . . . ."51

It was but a short step from the macho female voter to the macho
female voter lording it over her husband. Such imagery is evident in a
Register account of a woman who pressured a poll clerk into taking her
vote during a New York election.

"Mrs. Muller, being no joke in physique, the clerk didn't
care about telling her that he could not take her vote.
The policemen around giggled. . . . She went home and
informed her weaker half, who, in turn, went to the polling
place and deposited his vote, no doubt on the same
ticket."52

In addition to overbearing wives, suffragists were sometimes
portrayed by their detractors as "old maids." An example of such sniping
is this Register account of a Connecticut suffrage meeting: "At the late
woman suffrage meeting at Trumbull, Connecticut, all ladies in favor of
the movement were requested to rise, whereupon one old maid responded— the
last rose of summer."53
"An unmarried woman of the strong-minded element is lecturing on, 'Whom to Marry,'" a Dubuque Herald writer reported. "A more rational conundrum in her case would be, 'Who Will Marry Me?'" 54

Suffragists and their supporters fought back. Some pointed proudly to the frontier territory of Wyoming, the only place in the United States where women could legally vote. One Des Moines Register article pointed out: "The friends of equal suffrage in Wyoming claim that since women have had a vote there, crime has been punished, reforms established, courts have ceased to be a mockery, and lechery is no longer at a premium." 55

A Burlington Hawk-Eye article quoted Philadelphia suffragists who maintained that woman suffrage would bring "greater purity, constancy and permanence in marriage." 56

Ohio suffragists proclaimed, "Women want the ballot because they need it to enable them to realize that they are individuals with individual responsibilities—not toys, or playthings, or slaves." 57

The Iowa Woman Suffrage Association took a more aggressive stance in a list of resolutions published in the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye. Women have a right "to a direct voice in the enactment of those laws by which they are taxed and the formation of that government by which they are governed," the Iowa suffragists wrote. Denying women the vote "is unjust, unconstitutional and a direct insult and wrong to more than one-half the entire population of the United States." 58
All three Iowa newspapers gave considerable news space to those on both sides of suffrage and women's rights issues during the fall and winter of 1871-82. Although there were some instances of bias in the news coverage of these issues, none of the editors appeared to be making a heavy-handed effort to force their own viewpoints on their readers. Biased news coverage can result not only from opinionated writing, but from the kinds of stories that are selected for use on the news pages.

There is no clear evidence that editors of the three newspapers intentionally selected stories that reinforced their own biases about women's rights. If suffragists and their opponents had been counting their press clippings during the fall and winter of 1871-72, they would have discovered the Des Moines Register and Dubuque Herald gave slightly more coverage to those opposing suffrage and other rights for women while the Burlington Hawk-Eye gave the edge to those favoring suffrage and expanded rights for women.59

Although the majority of the news stories on these topics appeared to be objectively reported, the stories were not necessarily objective in viewpoint. Such stories conveyed to readers a variety of opinions about women's rights, opinions expressed by suffragists, anti-suffragists, lecturers, politicians, and many others. On the topic of women's work, for example, the Des Moines Register quoted a famous minister as saying he liked a woman who could do "man's work," the Dubuque Herald featured a colonel who thought mothers should refrain from outside work and
concentrate on child care, and the Burlington Hawk-Eye told the story of a woman-farmer who was honored for running the best farm in England. 60

On the topic of suffrage, the Iowa newspapers featured a diversity of ideas from those who felt that woman's suffrage was working well in Wyoming, that woman's suffrage was working poorly in Wyoming, that suffrage would be good for the family, that suffrage would be bad for the family, that suffrage would uplift women, and that suffrage would make women miserable. 61

The journalists who dutifully reported other people's opinions about woman suffrage and woman's rights occasionally could not resist adding their own opinions on the woman question. While 19th century newsmen were steadily moving toward more objective reporting, they apparently were not yet willing to confine all their opinions to the editorial columns of their newspapers. The three Iowa newspapers each contained a small number of stories in which writers or editors had freely mixed facts with feelings. "The people of Wyoming territory, through their representatives in the legislature, have repudiated the fallacy of woman's suffrage," one newsman wrote, leaving Herald readers in little doubt about just where he stood on the issue of women voting. 62 On the same day, halfway across the state, the biases of another newsman were showing in a Register story about a woman school principal who protested that men in similar positions were paid more. "The school committee was composed of sensible men, however, and the young woman's salary was at once raised to the proper amount," the writer concluded. 63
Of the news stories about woman suffrage and woman's rights printed in three newspapers from October 1871 through January 1872, there was evidence of editorial bias in 13 percent of the Des Moines Register stories, 16 percent of the Dubuque Herald stories and 6 percent of the Burlington Hawk-Eye stories. The bias was mostly anti-suffrage or anti-rights in the Register and Herald. Ten percent of the Register stories and 13 percent of the Herald stories had an anti-rights tone while 3 percent of the stories in both papers had a pro-rights tone. Biased stories about women's rights in the Hawk-Eye were evenly split with 3 percent reflecting an anti-rights bias and 3 percent reflecting a pro-rights bias.

On the basis of story selection, it appears the Des Moines Register and Dubuque Herald staffs were less supportive of women's rights issues than the Burlington Hawk-Eye staff. However, it is difficult to determine the Herald and Hawk-Eye stances on women's rights because of the lack of editorials on the subject. Women's rights issues prompted many editorials and letters to the editor in the Des Moines Register, very little editorial comment in the Burlington Hawk-Eye and no comment at all in the Dubuque Herald. From October 1871 through January 1872, the Register carried 12 editorials and 13 letters to the editor on women's rights issues while the Hawk-Eye carried one editorial and two letters.

More editorial lobbying for woman suffrage might have been expected from the Hawk-Eye, considering editor Charles Beardsley's strong public support for the issue. Beardsley had helped organize the Burlington Woman
Suffrage Society in 1870 and was a leading spokesman for woman suffrage during his 1872 term in the Iowa Senate. Another Burlington newspaper, the Burlington Argus, belittled Beardsley for his efforts on behalf of women, calling him an "eminent old female" and lampooning him in a newspaper poem titled "Sister Beardsley." Despite Beardsley's active woman's rights stance, the Hawk-Eye supported suffrage in only a single editorial from October 1871 through January 1872. The editorial derided a Chicago judge who had ruled that women have no natural right to vote. "... the only logical reason that sustains the right of man to vote is equally applicable to woman," a Hawk-Eye editorialist wrote in rebuttal.

Hawk-Eye letter writers split on the suffrage issue. A Wyoming correspondent called for the repeal of woman suffrage in Wyoming territory in one letter while well-known Iowa suffragists urged their cause on Burlington readers in the other.

Des Moines Register editorialist James Clarkson, seemingly could not quite make up his mind about the issue of women's suffrage. Of 12 editorials, four were pro-suffrage and women's rights, three were anti-suffrage and women's rights, and the remaining five conveyed mixed messages on those issues. On October 18, 1871, the first day of Iowa's first statewide suffrage convention, Clarkson asked Iowans to "give serious consideration to the importance" of the convention and praised Iowa suffragists as some of "our best educated and better class of people" who "seek to give to women, as to men, the right to vote, securing for all citizens alike that equality of rights which all citizens should have."
In a follow-up a few days later, Clarkson praised the woman at the convention for their good sense, dignity and intelligence. "We have never seen a Convention conducted with more decorum or a greater degree of intelligent accord," he pointed out in an editorial. "All who attended it were impressed with the conviction that its members were earnest and honest, and could see that they were intelligent and well armed." 70

For suffragists, the October editorials were perhaps the high point of Register coverage of their winter campaign for the vote. Shortly after this initial show of support for the suffragists, Clarkson apparently began to have second thoughts. In a Jan. 21, 1872, editorial, Clarkson opened with a declaration of support for suffrage, then followed up with several lengthy arguments against woman suffrage.

The suffrage and women's rights issue generated a battery of lively letters to the editor of the Register. Suffrage supporters overwhelmed their opponents in the Register's letters columns. Ten of the 13 letters printed during the winter of 1871-72 supported suffrage and more rights for women. 71 Nine of the 10 pro-suffrage letters came from women, most of them organizers of the state suffrage convention. 72 The sex of the anti-suffrage letter writers is less clear. "R.W.T of Four-Mile Township," the letter-writing nemesis of local suffragists, claimed to be a woman although one local suffragist cast some doubt on that claim. 73 Another anti-suffrage letter came from one "H. R. Claussen," who probably was State Senator Hans R. Claussen, a Davenport Republican who was a leading
spokesman for lawmakers opposing woman suffrage. The sex of a third anti-suffrage sex writer could not be determined.

The letters—eloquent and rambling, amusing and heavyhanded, sincere and sarcastic—livened up the suffrage campaign for Register readers.

"Let us ... speed the day when America shall become the first Republic, i.e., a government of the people, for the people, by the people," wrote well-known suffragist Lizzie Boynton Harbert in letter urging Iowans to attend the state suffrage convention.

Another letter writer felt suffrage would merely speed the day when Democrats would rule the nation. Woman suffrage would swell the ranks of the Democrats with "large additions of German, Irish, Swedish, Bohemian, Norwegian and Hollandish servant girls," the letter writer opined, adding such working class women would be more inclined to vote than "refined ladies," who presumably were of the Republican persuasion.

Those of the religious persuasion often attempted to interpret God's position on women's rights, and several Des Moines Register letter writers brought the Almighty into the woman question.

"God made man, and woman also, to be active and useful, and it was never meant that there should be any line drawn as to their privileges and rights— the woman is equal to the man and should have the same rights—social and legal," letter writer James Ellis wrote.

"You may look at this matter in whatever light you will, but simmer it down, and it is but a quarrel with the Almighty that we are not all men," wrote R.W.T. of Four-Mile Township.
R.W.T. had more to say and in a lengthy letter, put forth a number of anti-suffrage arguments, including the argument that women were not physically strong enough to vote. "... in most instances, women are the equals of men, physical ability excepted, and being not his equal in this, she is therefore ineligible to the ballot," R.W.T. wrote. "Let us suppose that by voting, women would make better laws than we now have, of what practical advantage would it be so long as we must rely on the strong arm of man to execute them?" 

Leading the letter-writing charge on the other side of the suffrage question was Annie Savery, a prominent Des Moines businesswoman in her late thirties and one of the most eloquent advocates of the suffragists' cause. She and her husband James Savery had moved from New York to Des Moines in the early 1850s. They started a hotel, largely managed by Annie Savery, while James Savery took on a variety of other business ventures. Annie Savery's interest in woman's rights would prompt her to enroll at the University of Iowa where she would obtain a law degree in 1875. But in the early part of the decade, Savery was pushing the women's cause by lecturing throughout the state. She also helped organize both the Polk County Woman Suffrage Association and the 1871 statewide suffrage convention in Des Moines.

Savery was a familiar figure in the pages of the Des Moines Register during the winter of 1871-72, taking on anti-suffragist R.W.T. and finally, Register editor Clarkson himself in a lively exchange of opinions on women's rights. When R.W.T. suggested that women should not be allowed
to vote because they could not be soldiers, she drew fire from Savery, who
had put much effort into inducing men to enlist during the Civil War,
Savery wrote.

This old objection based upon the supremacy of muscle, used
to be brought forward by men . . . but it is the first
instance where I have ever seen it used by a woman . . . .
The men were shamed out of its use by women suffragists who
called their attention to the numberless scrawny, sickly,
non-draftable, popinjay voters, which any able-bodied woman
might pick up—-one under each arm—-as she would a pair of
poodles and carry to the front. If 'R.W.T.' insists upon
going back to the muscle question, she must disfranchise
one half the men and enfranchise one half the women.

The "woman warrior question," as it came to be known, was hotly
debated in the pages of the Register. Editor Clarkson took up where
R.W.T. left off and soon, he and Annie Savery were engaged in their own
battle on the Register's editorial pages. " . . . women, while they could
and perhaps would use the ballot, in bringing war on, could not and would
not use the sword after war had come," Clarkson pointed out in one
editorial.

Savery shot back a lengthy reply, printed in the Register four days
later. Taking another swipe at Civil War draft dodgers, Savery wrote:
"If the laws compelled all who vote, to perform what is voted for, voting,
I imagine, would soon be at a discount, and all those who now claim that
special privilege, would doubtless avoid the polls, as they did the draft
office during the war!" Savery added that, if necessary, "there could
doubtless be found" women "willing to carry the musket . . . ."
Register editor Clarkson objected in another editorial printed alongside Savery's letter.

... we know of not a single one [woman] who would either be qualified or willing to undergo the service of a soldier nor do we think that Mrs. Savery knows such a one. We judge this is so since the peculiar organization of woman makes it impossible for her to be a soldier, and since the world's several thousand years of history proves it.

Less than a week later, Savery and Clarkson went at it again with two more lengthy pieces juxtaposed on the Register editorial page. Savery closed her letter with a verse an exasperated mother reportedly had flung at New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley.

H. Greeley says:
"What right has woman, safe from war's alarms,
To cast a ballot when she don't bear arms?"
"For shame," shouts Mrs. Huff in lofty dudgeon,
"For shame! Go to! Get out, you old curmudgeon!
What right have you, with all your talk bewilderin',
To cast a ballot when you don't bear children."

Clarkson rebutted once again, restating his view that women could not be soldiers, then took a sly swipe at suffragists' femininity in his closing.

As to the retort that Mrs. Huff, in homely, yet pungent rhyme, made on good Horace Greeley, we say bravo for Mrs. Huff! We hope Mrs. Huff had a dozen children—for the more she had the better her joke on the untamed and untamable old dissenter. But since she was such a fiery and yet so frosty soldier after suffrage, we fear she hadn't one-twelfth that number.

Clarkson and Savery also crossed pens on the issue of women office holders. Clarkson maintained that once they got the vote, women naturally
would want to hold office. The editor worried that women could not hold office and properly care for their families. "... from our observation, very few women, married and raising families, could ... meet, to the satisfaction at once of themselves, their families, and the public, the duties of office and the duties of maternity."88

Savery replied in a letter to the editor:

... she will not seek office under such circumstances, if at all. ... But if she should find herself in office in exceptional cases under exceptional conditions, will you make a new rule for her not now applied to men, for is it not quite common for incompetent men to hold office ... ?89

Clarkson's editorial battle with Savery came just three months after he had kicked off the statewide suffrage convention with glowing reports about the suffragists and their convention. Almost overnight, Iowa suffragists found themselves on the defensive, fighting with Clarkson and others they had counted as friends. What happened in those ninety days to so turn things around? Some blamed a public relations disaster that hit the suffrage movement hard in the late 1870s. The disaster came in the form of an attractive, eloquent woman reformer with a flair for bad publicity. Before the year was over, Victoria Woodhull would be a national household word—and a naughty word at that.
Notes to Chapter III.


3 Noun, *Strong-Minded Women*, p. 84.

4 *Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register*, 20 October 1871 (hereafter cited as *Register*).


9 *Register*, 21 October 1871; *Dubuque (Iowa) Herald* 26 October 1871 (hereafter cited as *Herald*); *Burlington (Iowa) Hawk-Eye*, 22 October 1871 (hereafter cited as *Hawk-Eye*).


18 Register, 5 November 1871.
19 Herald, 3 February 1874.
20 Register, 31 December 1871.
21 Register, 8 March 1875.
22 Herald, 15 March 1874.
23 Register, 24 December 1871.
24 Hawk-Eye, 17 December 1871.
25 Herald, 10 March 1874.
29 Register 22 March 1874.
33 Riley, The Female Frontier, pp. 62, 195.
35 Riley, The Female Frontier, p. 196.
37 Riley, The Female Frontier, pp. 102-114.
Register, 11 November 1871, 22 December 1871, 7 February 1874; Herald, 26 October 1871, 29 October 1871, 17 January 1872, 26 February 1874; Hawk-Eye, 14 November 1871, 21 January 1872, 20 January 1874, 23 January 1874.

Register, 19 October 1871.

Register, 10 December 1871.

Register, 4 November 1871.

Register, 26 October 1871.


Berg, The Remembered Gate: Origins of American Feminism, p. 79.


Register, 1 February 1874.


Register, 29 October 1871.

Register, 8 October 1871.

Register, 5 November 1871.

Register, 6 October 1871.

Register, 15 November 1871.

Register, 17 December 1871.

Herald, 18 December 1871.

Register, 17 December 1871.

Hawk-Eye, 23 November 1871.

Register, 26 November 1871.
From October 1871 through January 1872, the Des Moines Register carried 86 news stories (excluding editorials and letters to the editor) about woman's suffrage and expanding rights for women in other areas such as work and education. The Dubuque Herald carried 62 such stories and the Burlington Hawk-Eye, 39. Of the Des Moines Register stories, 41 percent contained anti-suffrage or anti-rights sentiments, 35 percent contained pro-suffrage or pro-rights sentiments and 24 percent were neutral, containing neither negative nor positive viewpoints on suffrage or woman's rights. Of the Dubuque Herald stories, 34 percent contained anti-suffrage or anti-rights sentiments, 16 percent contained pro-suffrage or pro-rights sentiments and 50 percent were neutral. Of the Burlington Hawk-Eye, 15 percent contained anti-suffrage or anti-rights sentiments, 21 percent contained pro-suffrage or pro-rights sentiments and 64 percent were neutral.

These percentages are based on news stories about woman suffrage and woman's rights which were carried in the three Iowa newspapers from October 1871 through January 1872. (Editorials and letters to the editors of the newspapers are not included.) The Des Moines Register carried 86 such stories, the Dubuque Herald, 62, and the Burlington Hawk-Eye, 39.
Letters about suffrage and women's rights appeared in the following issues of the Des Moines Register: Oct. 18 and 26, 1871; Nov. 1, 5, 8, 10, and 19, 1871; Dec. 14 and 24, 1871; Jan. 23, 24, and 30, 1872.

At least one male, C. E. Fuller, was among signers of a pro-suffrage letter printed in the Register Jan. 23, 1872, and signed by several members of the Executive Committee of the Woman Suffrage Society of Iowa. Corydon E. Fuller, lauded by suffragists as one of their early male supporters, would found Drake University in Des Moines in 1881. (Noun, Strong-Minded Women, p. 156).


The letter signed "Nous Verrons" appeared in the Dec. 14, 1871, Register.


Noun, Strong-Minded Women, p. 145.
Register, 30 January 1872.
Register, 30 January 1872.
Register, 21 January 1872.
Register, 30 January 1872.
IV. THE WOODHULL

"... this bawd, this sorceress, this Circe, whose foul doctrines would transmute men and women into worse than groveling swine."

-- Des Moines Daily Iowa State Register, Dec. 31, 1871

When Victoria Woodhull joined the national suffrage movement in the early part of 1871, she brought publicity, fire and money to the cause. She also brought an unsavory reputation that would haunt the movement for years. For Iowa suffragists, the haunting began in the winter of 1871-72, when news of Woodhull's "wild" lifestyle began to appear in Iowa newspapers.¹ In light of her upbringing, it is little surprise that Woodhull had some problems fitting into the mold of the modest and demure Victorian lady.

Born Victoria Claflin in 1838 in Homer, Ohio, she spent her youth wandering the Midwest with her family, a shiftless group that told fortunes, held seances, sold alcohol-laced "cure-all" potions, and it was rumored, ran an itinerant house of prostitution.² From the time she was a young child, Woodhull claimed frequent visits from spirits, particularly an ancient Greek named Demosthenes who continually told her that she was destined for greatness.³

In 1853, at age 15, Victoria Claflin became Mrs. Woodhull when she married Dr. Canning Woodhull.⁴ She divorced him 11 years later, further setting herself apart from the typical 19th century woman. At the time, there were only about three divorces for every 2,000 U.S. marriages.⁵
After her divorce, Woodhull teamed up with Colonel James Harvey Blood, a Civil War veteran, spiritualist—and a married man. The pair wandered the Midwest for a time, while Woodhull told fortunes under the name of Madam Harvey. When Blood's wife caught up with her wandering husband, the Bloods were divorced. Records show that James Blood and Victoria Woodhull were issued a marriage license in 1866 in Dayton, Ohio, but there is no subsequent record of a legal marriage. Whether the law considered them married, Woodhull and Blood apparently considered themselves so. They lived together for a number of years, and when the relationship soured, they claimed to have gotten a divorce.6

In 1868, upon instructions from spirit Demosthenes, Woodhull headed for New York City. She was followed by Blood, her former husband Canning Woodhull and several family members, including her younger sister Tennessee, who had begun earning her Claflin keep as child clairvoyant in her early teens and had later branched out into magnetic healing.7 Magnetic healers claimed they could cure diseases by laying their hands on patients, thereby creating a healthy electricity.8 Magnetic healing did not prove to be all it was hyped up to be for a group of patients who, in 1864, checked into a cancer clinic, run by Buck Claflin, patriarch of the enterprising Claflins, and Tennessee. When local doctors and police began nosing around their makeshift hotel clinic, the two abandoned their ailing and, in at least one case, dying, patients, managing to get out of town one step ahead of a manslaughter charge against Tennessee.8
Four years later, in New York with sister Victoria, Tennessee got her magnetic hands on the wealthy and aging Cornelius Vanderbilt. The 75-year-old financier was pleased by the hands-on ministerings of the pretty 24-year-old "Tennie," as she was called. Tennie provided a little bit of everything for Vanderbilt, including massages, other-world conversation with dead relatives, and bedtime companionship, which Tennie characterized as mostly snuggling. Vanderbilt repaid her favors by giving Tennessee and Victoria Woodhull stock tips and backing their entry into the business world as the first lady stock brokers on Wall Street.  

The year 1870 was a heady one for the two sisters. As New York City newspapers raved over their charm and beauty, the two set out to conquer new horizons. Out of the blue, Stephen Pearl Andrews, a well-known reformer who had become a Woodhull admirer, suggested that Woodhull run for President of the United States. Woodhull quickly accepted the suggestion, announcing her candidacy. To support her presidential run, Woodhull teamed up with Tennessee Claflin to launch a daring weekly journal—Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly. The journal, which advocated numerous reforms, such as socialism, licensing of prostitutes, and sexual freedom, quickly found a receptive audience. The publishing sisters soon were selling 20,000 copies of the weekly, mostly to social reformers scattered throughout the country.

At age 32, Victoria Woodhull was riding high in Victorian America, and yet, she was almost the antithesis of the ideal 19th century lady. The ideal Victorian lady was reserved; Woodhull was brash and outspoken.
The ideal Victorian lady stayed at home and did womanly work; Woodhull tried her hand at "man's work." The ideal Victorian lady shrank from a public display; Woodhull enjoyed center stage. But perhaps the most dramatic difference between Woodhull and the ideal Victorian lady came in matters sexual. The ideal Victorian lady was chaste and monogamous. Woodhull, on the other hand, preferred a variety of sexual partners, in and out of the marriage relationship.13

Sexual freedom, a topic of great interest to both Woodhull and sister Tennessee, was often referred to in the 1870s as "free love." Nineteenth century free lovers favored open sexual encounters between willing partners and felt the state had no jurisdiction over marriage laws.14 Although many free lovers in the 1870s led monogamous, legally married lives, Victoria Woodhull practiced what she preached.15 Among the live-ins at her New York mansion were fellow free lovers Colonel Blood and Stephen Pearl Andrews.16 Andrews was 60 years old when he moved in with the Woodhull crowd. Andrews wrote for Woodhull and Claflin's Weekly, helped Woodhull open a club for dues-paying free lovers, and expounded rather tediously on his master plan to reorganize society to "give full scope to the harmonious evolution of human nature" through "unrestrained indulgence of human passion."17

"Screw yourself to paradise!" was Tennessee Claflin's earthy translation of Andrews' program.18

In characteristic fashion, Woodhull burst onto the national suffrage scene with a bang. In December of 1870, leaders of the movement, in
Washington, D.C., for a convention, were surprised to open their newspapers and discover Woodhull would appear before a Congressional committee to present her arguments for suffrage. With the help of a friendly Congressman, Woodhull had achieved an official recognition thus far denied leading suffragists. The leaders of the women's movement had a problem—to appear or not to appear at the hearing for the notorious Mrs. Woodhull. Somewhat hesitantly, Susan B. Anthony, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and a dozen other suffragists decided to attend.

Despite their initial reluctance, the suffragists were won over by Woodhull's eloquence at the hearing. The welcomed her into their ranks, invited her to speak at their national convention, brushing aside those who expressed misgivings about her reputation. "We have had women enough sacrificed to this sentimental, hypocritical prating about purity," Stanton said during a lecture tour. "This is one of man's most effective engines for our division and subjugation."

For a few short months, Woodhull was the darling of the suffrage movement. She hobnobbed with its leaders, made fiery speeches, and got plenty of press. But the honeymoon with the suffragists was short-lived. In May of 1871, Woodhull's mother Anna, who was not adverse to a little press coverage herself, appeared in police court, claiming Colonel Blood had threatened her life. While she was at it, Anna Claflin had a few other things to get off her chest and into the newspapers. "So help me God, Judge," Anna Claflin testified, "I say here and I call heaven to witness there's the worst gang of free lovers in that house that ever
lived. Stephen Pearl Andrews and Dr. Woodhull and lots more of such trash. 24

The subsequent police court hearing brought Woodhull's live-in husbands and eccentric family into a disapproving public's eye. 25 While the press and the public reacted harshly to details about Woodhull's lifestyle, Susan B. Anthony and others who had supported Woodhull found themselves in hot water with their sister suffragists. As the scandal created shock waves in the Eastern press, Iowa suffragists must have wondered if the Woodhull mess would hit home. 26 It would, and at the worst possible time. To the Iowa suffragists trying to focus attention on their state convention and the ballot during the winter of 1871-72, it must have seemed at times that the Des Moines press was interested in nothing but "the notorious Mrs. Woodhull." 27 From October 1871 through January 1872, Woodhull or the free love movement she espoused appeared in nearly 50 Des Moines Register articles, including news stories, letters to the editor and editorials. The Dubuque Herald carried approximately 15 articles mentioning Woodhull or free love. The Burlington Hawk-Eye, in a conspicuous display of disinterest, printed only a couple of news stories and one letter to the editor mentioning Woodhull.

Woodhull, a lively combination of sex, scandal and suffrage, would have been hard for an editor to resist. The dull, gray columns of the Des Moines Register fairly sizzled with Woodhull's fire in a November account of a boisterous speech she gave in New York. In one notable passage, the
Register printed Woodhull's defiant reply when a heckler at one of her speeches shouted the question: "Are you a free lover?"

"Yes, I am a free lover. [Loud hisses] I have an inevitable, constitutional and natural right to love whom I may, to love as long or as short a period as I can, to change that love every day, if I prefer, [renewed hisses] and with that right neither you nor any law . . . have any right to interfere. . . ." 28

The Burlington Hawk-Eye apparently was less susceptible to Woodhull's news-making charms than the Des Moines Register and Dubuque Herald. While the Register was entertaining readers with stories of "Mrs. Woodhull's lust" and the Herald was warning that Iowa suffragists were drifting toward free love, the Hawk-Eye buried the colorful Woodhull in a few column inches of colorless news. 29

"Victoria C. Woodhull, Tennie Claflin and Mary A. Leland registered their names in the hope of being allowed to vote on Tuesday," the Hawk-Eye reported blandly in one of its few mentions of Woodhull during the winter of 1871-72. 30

The Hawk-Eye's lack of interest in the most interesting Woodhull is evidence of a strong editorial hand at work—perhaps that of Hawk-Eye editor Charles Beardsley. Beardsley's firm commitment to the suffrage movement suggests one possible reason for the Hawk-Eye's near news blackout of Woodhull in the winter of 1871-72. Woodhull, as she fell out of public favor, was fast becoming an embarrassment to the women's movement. It is possible Beardsley attempted to keep coverage of the provocative Woodhull to a low, noncontroversial level.
That task became even more difficult during the Iowa Woman Suffrage Association convention in October when a Marshalltown suffragist gave the Woodhull-free love issue just what every good news story needs—a local angle. Suffragist Nettie Sanford asked the suffrage conventioneers to denounce in a resolution "the doctrine of free love, believing that marriage is sacred and binding on all good men and women of Iowa." 31

Sanford's resolution was opposed by leaders of the convention. According to accounts in the three Iowa newspapers, Des Moines suffragist Annie Savery argued that it was "letting down the dignity of the association to denounce a thing which nobody suspects its members of believing in." 32 Suffrage association president Amelia Bloomer agreed, calling Sanford's resolution an "insult to the convention" because the convention was not organized to debate the free love question. 33

The resolution denouncing free love was tabled by the suffragists, but the free love debate was far from over. In a convention speech, Savery criticized those who tried to link suffrage and free love.

The husband reads to his wife the false doctrines of such fanatics as Stephen Pearl Andrews and with great complacency looks over his specs and says, "There! Don't you see what the woman's rights party want to do with the ballot?" And the poor woman who has been in the habit of taking all her mental as well as physical food from this Solomon, just as birds in a nest open their bills and take in the worm, so she swallows this insult to her womanhood and tells her next neighbor (sic) woman that if that's the way women are going to act, become free lovers and all that sort of thing, she hopes they'll never get the ballot. 34
The free love issue unleashed a storm of controversy about the wisdom of giving women the vote. One of the first shots in the press was fired by letter writer R.W.T. of Four Mile Township. In a lengthy letter to the editor of the Register, R.W.T. pointed out Woodhull's "poisonous sentiments" were fast "being imbibed by suffragists" and that if women were allowed to vote, the suffragists would join forces with male spiritualists to elect Victoria Woodhull president of the U.S. "There is something revolting and unwomanly in this uproar and clamor for the ballot, and demanding all of men's so called privileges--free love not excepted," R.W.T. wrote.

Annie Savery whipped back a reply, printed in the Register a few days later.

Free love is her first and free love is her last paragraph. . . . R.W.T. has made it quite clear that this was the intention which took her to the convention. She was not disappointed in finding there, some timid women, who had heard that the men had said that we all wanted the ballot so as to become free-lovers, and these same timid women wanted to promise in a resolution, that we wouldn't use it for any such purpose, but would continue to be faithful women and not abandon our homes, and run off to rule all the men.

The free love issue also provoked an amusing skirmish between the Des Moines Register and Nettie Sanford, who was still smarting over the defeat of the anti-free-love resolution she introduced at the convention. The Marshalltown Times quoted Sanford as saying the Register's coverage of the convention was slanted toward the "free-love ring," that the Register's convention reporter was "completely under the thumb of the ring, and that
a dish of oysters, a smile from painted lips, or an ogle of the eye from a bedizened beauty of three score years will secure his services."³⁷

The Register editorially retorted that it had covered the convention objectively and that the only person who tried to persuade the reporter to compromise that coverage was Sanford herself. "... if anybody tried to 'thumb,' 'dish-of-oyster,' 'ogle,' or 'smile'-capture us, it was Netty (sic) herself, and Netty only." Gathering self-righteous steam, the Register added:

"The lady impeaches us as being one of those fellows who are susceptible to the charms and blandishments of beauty three score years old. We own it up. As a reporter, we know no difference between the gray-haired and graceful matron of sixty, and the friskier females of the younger and more voluptuous years of Mrs. Sanford."³⁸

Both the Des Moines Register and Dubuque Herald, however, took the editorial position that Iowa suffragists should have adopted the resolution condemning free love and that their failure to do so left the impression that they supported Woodhull's free love theories.

"Are we to infer ... that the women's suffrage convention of Iowa is to be run as a kind of branch of Mrs. Woodhull's?" sniped the Herald in one article.³⁹

The Des Moines Register agreed with Iowa suffrage convention leaders that the free love resolution introduced at the convention was unnecessary, but maintained that once introduced, it should have been adopted. By refusing to act, suffragists had turned down the chance to place themselves "squarely on the record against free love and in favor of
the Bible idea of marriage. It has given people who wanted something to pounce upon and pick at and criticize, a good opportunity," a Register editorial indicated.  

The Des Moines Register prediction that the free love issue would overshadow the real business of the suffrage convention proved to be true. Free love—not suffrage—had suddenly become the issue in the Iowa press. Iowa suffragists found themselves on the defensive, trying to allay fears that the ballot would turn women into promiscuous, marriage-scoffing free lovers. Some local woman suffrage organizations scrambled to pass resolutions disavowing free love.

The Des Moines Register carried a lengthy list of resolutions in which the Polk County association condemned free love and divorce and pointed out the ballot would make marriage "more pure and more sacred." The Register also carried a resolution from the Marshall County association calling for the resignation of current state officers who favor "free love and free lust and easy divorce laws."

Annie Savery, Amelia Bloomer and other members of the Woman Suffrage Society's executive committee restated their position that there was no connection between free love and the ballot in a letter that was printed in the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald and Burlington Hawk-Eye. Despite their contention that the ballot was the one and only issue, the suffrage leaders felt compelled to publicly denounce "lewdness and licentiousness and every form of impurity, whether practiced by man or woman" and affirm their conviction that "the ballot in the hands of woman
will lead to greater happiness in the married state, greater purity of life and more elevated morality."  

Marriage and morality was of considerable concern to free-love critics. In a Dubuque Herald article, one writer sarcastically suggested Woodhull's favored method of selecting the father of her children was to choose from a "dozen suspicious characters" long after the child had been born.  

Free love, according to the disapproving Des Moines Register, was "such a love as the flies have that cross in the air, love that is no more a love than is the sexual passion of the beasts."  The Register also proposed that "Woodhullism" be the name given to a new kind of marriage that lasts "only while fancy shall bind or lust incline."  

Woodhull was criticized or ridiculed in the bulk of the news stories about her. If she was not being soundly condemned as the potential destroyer of the "foundation of society" or the proponent of "monstrous doctrines," she was being sniped at as "Mrs. Demosthenes" or "the notorious and miscellaneously married."  

Not everyone, however, was so quick to judge Woodhull. In a letter to the Des Moines Register, one writer suggested that those who were "smoking out" free lovers ought to include such Biblical characters as Solomon, David, Moses, and Abraham as well as some current "patrons of the thousands of assignation houses in our Bible loving land."  

Another female letter writer whimsically asked the Register to enlighten her on the free love issue:
... I notice the gentlemen continuously insinuate that the ladies need nothing more than the ballot to make them all violently opposed to all marriage restrictions. Don't think, dear Register, that I am an advocate of woman's rights—far be it from me, I am one of the "Woman's Sphere" people, but I can't help wondering why the gentlemen should think the effects of the ballot would be so vicious; they have it and I don't suppose they ever stray from the path of rectitude, do they?49

As the free love-suffrage controversy raged on, Iowa suffrage leaders struggled, through the newspapers, to put the issue to rest. In a letter to the editor of the Register, Annie Savery wrote:

The Woman Suffrage party is made up of the mothers, wives, and daughters, who believe that the marriage bond is to the social what the Constitution is to the political union. . . . the woman suffrage cause because of its inherent justice can well afford the company of Victoria Woodhull. But from carping friends, who in the name of Christianity offer us a menace with their friendship, we shall ask to be delivered. Such friends of woman's cause have yet to learn the first rudiments of Christian charity. . . .

Amelia Bloomer, in another Register letter, took a more conciliatory tack:

... as men of all political parties gladly welcome all to their ranks, and accept their aid, without questioning their religious or spiritual beliefs, or the doings of their private lives, so we cannot deny the right of any woman to labor in woman's cause, or withhold our own hands from the work because she happens on other subjects to entertain views with which we have no sympathy. . . . It is said that our prospect of success is injured in this State on account of the asserted wrong doing of this one woman. We cannot believe this to be true.51

Believe it, the Des Moines Register declared. In a December 1871 editorial, the Register claimed that "Woodhullism," with its "free love,
free divorce, free lust and other disgusting devilries" had crippled the suffrage movement and set it back years. ". . . utterly unjust though it may be, the women who shall this winter ask the Iowa legislature to submit the question to the people, will be held as responsible for, and as a party to, all the wild, unwomanly and indecent actions of this female and her free-love gang at Washington." The Register declared submitting suffrage to a vote of Iowans would result in its "utter and overwhelming defeat."

Iowans would not get their chance to prove or disprove the Register's prediction on their voting behavior. In March 1872, the Iowa Senate, on a 22-24 vote, turned down the proposed suffrage amendment, thus denying Iowa voters the chance to vote on woman suffrage. Among the suffragists' most vocal supporters in the losing battle in the Senate Chambers was Iowa Senator and Burlington Hawk-Eye editor Charles Beardsley.

Press coverage of Victoria Woodhull and the free love issue undoubtedly hurt the suffrage cause in Iowa. But the Des Moines Register's claim that Woodhull killed the movement seems an exaggeration. It appears likely that Woodhull and her free-loving lifestyle did not sway suffrage supporters in Iowa, but simply gave suffrage opponents a good excuse for denying women the ballot. It is likely the suffrage movement did not have the support to succeed in Iowa or any other state. Despite suffrage activities throughout the country during this time, women did not have the ballot in any of the nation's 37 states, and as it turned out, they weren't even close to getting it. In 1869, Wyoming territory became
the only place in the United States to grant women the right to vote. It would remain thus for many years. In 1890, when Wyoming became a state, it became the first state in the U.S. in which women had equal suffrage. Women in the rest of the country were still waiting to get into the polls.55

Iowa suffragists had a particularly long wait. It would be 50 years before they would cast the ballot which had seemed so near at hand in 1872. Although their quest for suffrage was unsuccessful in the early 1870s, Iowa women had stepped out of the woman's sphere, at least temporarily, and gotten their first taste of activism. Within a couple years, 19th century women activists would leave their domestic confines for another cause. Only next time around, the issue would be not ballots, but booze. And while the temperance crusaders would come up short in their efforts to eradicate the demon rum, they would not have to endure quite the thrashing the suffragists endured in the Iowa press.
Notes to Chapter IV.

1 From October 1871 through January 1872, Woodhull or the ideas she espoused appeared in dozens of news articles in the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald and Burlington Hawk-Eye.


3 Brough, The Vixens, pp. 54-55; Sachs, The Terrible Siren, pp. 10-11.

4 Sachs, The Terrible Siren, p. 4.

5 Census statistics show there were 1.6 divorces for every 1,000 marriages in 1870. U.S., Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Marriage and Divorce 1867-1906, part 1, pp. 12-13.


8 Brough, The Vixens, pp. 64-65; Sachs, The Terrible Siren, 47-48.

9 Brough, The Vixens, pp. 84-88.


11 Sachs, The Terrible Siren, pp. 52.

12 Brough, The Vixens, pp. 137-44; Sachs, The Terrible Siren, pp. 60, 90.


14 Noun, Strong-Minded Women, p. 177.


Brough, The Vixens, p. 131.

Sachs, The Terrible Siren, pp. 75-76.

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35 Register, 26 October 1871.

36 Register, 1 November 1871.

37 Register, 2 November 1871.

38 Register, 2 November 1871.

39 Herald, 7 November 1871.

40 Register, 3 November 1871.

41 Register, 4 November 1871.

42 Register, 16 November 1871.


44 Herald, 3 February 1872.

45 Register, 14 November 1871.

46 Register, 29 October 1871.

47 Register, 16 November 1871, 28 November 1871, 31 December 1871.

48 Register, 5 November 1871.

49 Register, 10 November 1871.

50 Register, 19 November 1871.

51 Register, 8 November 1871.

52 Register, 3 December 1871.

53 The vote on the Iowa woman suffrage amendment was 22 "ayes", 24 "nays" and 4 "absent or not voting." Noun, Strong-Minded Women, pp. 217-18.

V. THE DEMON RUM

"But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet—not into somebody else's rum shop." (Sign over the door of a Des Moines saloon, 1874.)
-- Dubuque Herald, March 23, 1874

As ruler of the domestic sphere, 19th century woman was in charge of making the home a pleasant place full of morally upright people. Perhaps nothing was as threatening to that happy home as an alcoholic husband. Alcoholism was blamed for many family ills, including wife beating, child abuse and poverty.\(^1\) A drunken husband was often a poor provider. If his wife happened to work, as did one in seven Iowa women in the 1870s, he was legally entitled to drink up her earnings as well.\(^2\) The only way Iowa women could protect their own earnings from their husbands' debts was by getting written consent from their husbands or proving their spouses were incompetent or improvident.\(^3\) It appears unlikely that many 19th century women, conditioned as they were to playing second fiddle to the man of the house, were willing to take such drastic measures. Faced with an alcoholic assault on their homefronts and given their legal and financial vulnerability, it is little wonder that women were drawn to the temperance movement.

The movement was started in the early 1800s by groups of Protestant men who viewed the widespread drinking in the United States as a social evil.\(^4\) Nineteenth century Americans liked to drink and found wine, beer, rum, and whiskey readily available. Whiskey not only helped quench the
nation's thirst, it bolstered the economy, providing an easy way to market crops. Corn and other grains could be distilled into spirits that were easily shipped and turned a nice profit in the bargain. Many Americans believed alcohol, in moderation at least, was good for them. They considered it an inexpensive, safe alternative to milk and water, which could be costly, scarce or diseased. They thought it provided energy for hard work and helped warm the body during the winter. And even doctors generally agreed that alcohol, often used as an anesthetic and analgesic, had medicinal value.

Drinking was not anything new in the 19th century. Colonial Americans had enjoyed alcohol, regarding it as part of God's bounty. After the American Revolution, it is likely consumption of alcohol increased as navigation restrictions were lifted and more imported liquor flowed into the American states. What was new and different about drinking in the mid-19th century—what caused concern among many—was the kind of drinking that had become the norm. In earlier times, Americans tended to drink at home, at community celebrations, and in family-style taverns. By the 19th century, drinking had moved from home to saloon and from family to drinking buddies. Unlike the old-time tavern, the saloon became a hangout for males and sometimes, prostitutes. Some historians suggest drinking got its bad reputation from this saloon boozing, which led to destructive drinking binges. Adding to the unsavory reputation of the liquor business was the corruption that followed attempts to regulate
the trade. Liquor men were quite successful in bribing law officers, the courts and politicians.\footnote{9}

As concerns about the effects of drinking grew, many 19th century men and women set their sights on reform. Numerous temperance organizations were flourishing early in the century, including the popular Sons of Temperance. Although women could belong to the female auxiliary, Daughters of Temperance, they were mainly encouraged to confine their temperance work to the home, exerting moral influence on their husbands and sons.\footnote{10}

When suffragist Susan B. Anthony attempted to speak at a temperance meeting in Albany, N.Y., in 1852, she was informed that ladies were there to listen, not participate.\footnote{11} A few months later, Anthony and Amelia Bloomer shocked several male clergymen by attending the Men's State Temperance Society meeting in Syracuse, N.Y. One irate reverend denounced women who would leave their homes to attend a temperance convention, describing them as a "hybrid species, half man and half woman, belonging to neither sex."\footnote{12}

Woman's behind-the-scenes role in the temperance movement ended abruptly in the winter of 1873-74. The "women's crusade" or "women's war," as it came to be known, started in December of 1873 when bands of women in Ohio and Indiana, inspired by male lecturer Dio Lewis, began closing saloons by holding prayer meetings in them. The crusade soon spread to Illinois, Iowa and numerous other states, and by April of 1874, more than a thousand saloons had been shut down throughout the country.
The closings were, for the most part, temporary. Within a year, most saloons closed by crusaders would reopen. Nevertheless, the crusade, while it lasted, was a spectacular news event and the newspapers treated it as such.

News of the crusade dominated the front pages of the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye. The three newspapers combined for 956 articles about temperance from January through March of 1874. The Hawk-Eye carried 456 temperance-related articles while the Register carried 274 and the Herald, 226. Temperance news was so abundant that editors of the three newspapers often strung numerous stories from throughout the country together under such headlines as "Chronicles of the Crusade," "The Whiskey War," "The Temperance Crusade," or simply, "Temperance."

The woman's crusade was colorful and newsworthy. In a typical local campaign, bands of women would attempt to persuade barkeeps to quit the business by praying inside their saloons. If they were barred from the saloons, the women might set up praying booths outside the barroom doors or post sentinels to take the names of those entering. Such activities attracted crowds and saloonkeepers often picked up considerable business serving thirsty onlookers.

Early temperance crusaders met little resistance. Saloonkeepers, who would later organize to fight the crusade in the courts and at the ballot box, seemingly were confused about just how they should react to "the ladies." Many allowed women into their saloons and treated them
courteously. Others responded more strangely. One Ohio saloonkeeper hired a brass band to play while women prayed at his saloon. Another chased crusaders out of his saloon by announcing he was going to bathe and beginning to undress.

Not surprisingly, encounters between those who liked liquor and those who didn't resulted in unpleasantness and occasionally, violence. The praying women were sometimes doused with beer or the contents of slop buckets. In Illinois, a woman flung a beer mug into a bartender's face. And in Indiana, a crusader was choked, although not fatally, when a saloonkeeper's wife grabbed one end of her scarf and fellow crusaders seized the other.

In a number of cases, the crusaders were successful. Some saloonkeepers obliged the praying women by quitting their businesses. It is difficult to ascertain whether such saloonkeepers had actually been swayed by the women's arguments, or whether they closed temporarily to wait for the women to direct their attentions elsewhere. Whatever their real reasons for surrendering, some publicly claimed the women had won them over. Such occasions often sparked jubilant celebrations, complete with ringing of church bells, theatrical dumping of whiskey into the streets and emotional speeches by repentant liquor sellers. A widely publicized story of the time described the surrender of a Vienna, Ohio, saloonkeeper Charles Van Pelt, who had sworn never to give in to the praying women and had subsequently been dubbed by crusaders as "The Wickedest Man in Ohio."
After singing and prayer by the ladies, Van Pelt came to the door and said that he was ready to give up his entire stock in trade for the good of the cause of Temperance. In a few remarks, full of emotion, he expressed his determination to make a full surrender, not because of law or of force, but he said he yielded to the simple labors of love of the women. . . . Van Pelt then took an axe and stepping forward, held it up crying: "This is the same weapon I use to terrify the ladies. I now use it to sacrifice that which I fear has ruined many souls." So saying, he knocked the heads out of the barrels, and the bung out of the keg; and emptied the entire contents on the ground.23

Van Pelt proved to be a versatile fellow, hitting the temperance lecture circuit shortly after quitting the liquor business. Just four days after it carried the news of Van Pelt's surrender as a saloonkeeper, the Des Moines Register printed one of the former barkeep's temperance lectures in which he lauded "the dear sisters who are laboring in the cause."24

The women's temperance crusade began to spread into Iowa in January 1874. Women in Winterset and Nevada petitioned local officials to deny liquor licenses in their towns.25 A Clinton County woman successfully sued a saloonkeeper who had sold liquor to her husband.26 And two "prominent ladies of Boonsboro" visited saloonkeepers to ask them to quit the business.27

As temperance activity quickened in the following months, the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye chronicled the action around the state. In many Iowa towns, small bands of praying women visited saloons.28 In addition to saloon visits, women were getting
involved politically. Women in Burlington, Maquoketa and Cedar Rapids petitioned officials for stricter laws on liquor sales. Women in Atlantic and Oskaloosa, who could not vote themselves, nevertheless were successful in getting male temperance candidates elected in local elections. Large temperance rallies were held in Des Moines, Dubuque and Burlington, as well as Marshalltown, Ottumwa, Davenport and Keokuk.

The big liquor question in Iowa and elsewhere in the 1870s was whether government should prohibit the manufacture and sale of liquors altogether or regulate liquor trade through license laws. People calling themselves temperance advocates could be found on opposite sides of that question and in a lot of middle ground between. Many of those involved in the women's crusade appeared to define temperance as abstinence. Their goal was prohibition—forbidding any liquor sales under any circumstances. Other temperance advocates simply advocated drinking in moderation. They focused their efforts on "moral suasion" (persuading drinkers to do the right thing) and legal measures to control drinking.

In 1874, local Iowa authorities could decide whether liquor sales would be allowed or prohibited in their cities. If allowed, liquor sales were subject to state regulations. For example, would-be liquor sellers had to prove they were of good moral character by getting a majority of local voters to sign a document to that effect. They also had to post $3,000 bonds to guarantee they would observe liquor laws and were forbidden to make more than 33 percent profit on liquor sales.
Liquor sales were permitted in Des Moines, Dubuque and Burlington in 1874. According to news stories, Des Moines had 30 saloons, Burlington, 100 and Dubuque, 300. Although there were no reported pray-ins at saloons in these cities, there was considerable temperance agitation. Large temperance rallies, rumors of coming crusades and political actions by local women kept the temperance issue on the front pages of the newspapers.

Local preachers, city officials and lawmakers led large temperance rallies held in all three cities. "The question of the hour is the power of the women in this cause," one Des Moines man announced in typical temperance rally rhetoric. "The march of this women's movement is irresistible. Where men have failed, they succeed."36

The three newspapers carried numerous accounts of pray-ins held at saloons elsewhere in the state and the Midwest, as well as rumors "the ladies" would soon visit saloons in Des Moines, Dubuque, and Burlington. "One of the Des Moines saloon keepers has had placards printed bearing the word 'closed,' and says he will quit business when the prayer raid is made," a Des Moines Register reporter wrote. Another Register story indicated saloonkeepers had spent a nervous day "watching up and down the street, but no praying band appeared."

While Des Moines Register rumors of impending pray-ins sounded almost hopeful, Dubuque Herald articles took a different tone. "A woman's crusade is not proposed," a Herald editor commented in one article. "... we are glad to be able to state that none can be found as yet among the
ladies of Dubuque to take the lead in so disagreeable and repugnant a piece of business."³⁹

The women of Des Moines, Dubuque and Burlington went about the business of promoting temperance not in saloons, but in city halls and courthouses. Des Moines and Burlington women tackled their city councils. In what was regarded as a large temperance victory in March of 1874, Des Moines women persuaded the city council to prohibit the sale of wine and beer in the city.⁴⁰ While Burlington women were unsuccessful in their efforts to persuade local councilmen to raise the saloon license fee, they received strong backing from a Hawk-Eye reporter who exhorted "the ladies" in print to "redouble their efforts to curtail and ultimately destroy the monster sin of intemperance."⁴¹

The lawsuit was the weapon of choice for other Iowa temperance crusaders. One exasperated wife printed a notice in the Dubuque Herald, threatening to prosecute anyone who sold or gave liquor to her husband.⁴² "Tom McDonald will have to go dry hereafter," a Herald writer commented in a news article accompanying the paid notice. "His wife has taken measures to cut off his rations and warns all persons under penalty of the law not to give or sell him any malt or spirituous liquors. Now Tom will have to quench his thirst with a strange liquid to his lips called water."⁴³

A Burlington woman who claimed she lost property and support because of her husband's intoxication sued the saloonkeepers and won $500.⁴⁴ Another Burlington woman filed charges against a wholesale liquor dealer, claiming the firm violated the law by selling liquor to her husband. When
a judge ordered the firm’s liquor seized, saloon men and liquor dealers throughout the city panicked and began shipping their wares out of town. Both the Des Moines Register and Burlington Hawk-Eye supported the temperance movement, with the Register carrying nine pro-temperance editorials and the Hawk-Eye carrying five. The Herald, cohabiting in a city with 300 saloons, was considerably less enthused about the temperance movement. Only one of the 10 Herald editorials was pro-temperance, another three were neutral on the issue and the remaining six expressed opposition to the movement.

The Des Moines Register kicked off its editorial coverage of the temperance crusade by praising women for the "grand crusade" against "King Whisky and Baron Beer. . . . Now that the ladies have taken hold of this matter, the venders of poison drunkenness and misery may as well roll their filthy kegs to other climes at once, for sooner or later they will be compelled to desist their infamous traffic in our midst," the Register declared.

A few weeks later, the Register accused its wire service, the Associated Press, of trying to suppress the crusade by deliberately withholding news from Ohio and Indiana. "But we have still the mail," the Register added, "and from that we get full accounts of the plucky and fearless war the women are waging." Subsequent editorials kept up support for the crusade. The Des Moines Register printed what it termed "stunning figures" about the cost of intemperance in lives and money. It compared the women's crusade to
great religious movements, such as Methodism and Islam, and announced the
time had come to get wine out of church ceremonies.\textsuperscript{49}

The \textit{Burlington Hawk-Eye} also gave the temperance movement whole-
hearted support, almost certainly to the irritation of Burlington's large
population of beer-drinking Germans. "The evils of intemperance are so
wide-spread, so apparent and so disastrous, that any movement which
promises to diminish them, ever so slightly even, should be hailed with
approval and bidden a hearty God-speed by all right-thinking persons," a
\textit{Hawk-Eye} editorial declared.\textsuperscript{50}

Like the \textit{Register}, the \textit{Hawk-Eye} called the temperance movement one of
the greatest reformation\textsuperscript{s} of the time, praising the crusading women for
"staying the tide of intemperance, which is desolating so many homes,
sapping the foundations of wealth, as well as morality and religion, and
literally strewing the earth with poverty, wretchedness and crime."\textsuperscript{51}

The \textit{Dubuque Herald} opened its editorializing on the women's crusade
by pointing out that the temperance movement, "though absurd in itself and
ephemeral in character," may do much good.\textsuperscript{52} Subsequent editorials
indicate the \textit{Herald} apparently was unable to find much good in the
movement. Depicting the crusaders as publicity-seeking fanatics, the
\textit{Herald} called for a more temperant approach to temperance, including
strictier liquor licensing fees. ". . . a meeting made up of talk will not
do it, nor will threats of enforcing the prohibitory law, for it cannot be
done, nor will crusades, nor praying, nor psalm-singing, nor raids on
saloons by ladies."\textsuperscript{53}
In a stand that surely pleased Dubuque's German population, the Herald lobbied against proposals to prohibit the sale of wine and beer in Iowa. "The drinking of more wine and beer, if people must drink at all, and less whisky and rum and rot-gut, will largely conduce to the promotion of temperance, sobriety and virtue," one Herald editorialist maintained.

Despite strong editorial views on the temperance crusade, news coverage of the temperance movement appeared reasonably objective for the times in the three newspapers. Although all three newspapers carried many more stories about pro-temperance activities than anti-temperance activities, it is unlikely that editors were purposely loading their pages with pro-temperance news. Even the Dubuque Herald, editorially critical of the women's crusade, carried more news about the crusaders than their opponents. A probable explanation is that the colorful crusaders inspired considerably more news stories than their opposition. Editors simply had more articles about crusaders from which to choose.

Most of the temperance news stories in the papers appeared to be objectively reported, although there were occasional lapses. In various articles carried by the three newspapers, saloon-goers were called "vile minded," "plug-uglies," "sad, pitiable wrecks of alcoholic poison," "beer-bloated men and boys," and "outspew of the slums and groggeries and brothels." A Des Moines Register story about temperance activities around the state was headlined "Iowa Women Doing Their Duty," while the Dubuque Herald reported a local senator's vote was recorded against a prohibition bill "as it should be." And a Burlington Hawk-Eye
reporter's delight at the closing of a saloon at a Burlington boarding
home was only too obvious:

They proceeded to roll out beer and wine casks amidst the
protestations of the boarders, who begged for a parting
drink. The request was refused, the bungs knocked out of
the kegs, and the liquid streams of intoxication
immediately dashed down the gutter towards the river. The
act was consummated quietly, with no parade of its
virtuousness... The ball has commenced to roll and it
should be urged forward to such a velocity that the speed
would become infectious and the contents of scores of other
saloons follow..."38

Although there were occasional instances of biased reporting, the
three newspapers presented most news stories about temperance in a
straight-news style. Opinions were expressed in the stories, but for the
most part, they were the opinions of others. Politicians, temperance
crusaders, saloon men, celebrities, preachers—all had something to say
about the temperance crusade and particularly, the crusading women. What
emerged from these many voices in the newspaper was a public image of the
temperance crusader that was a far cry from the public image of the
suffragist a couple of years earlier. Suffragists in the newspapers were
often portrayed as unfulfilled, unfeminine or unclean. Temperance
crusaders, on the other hand, seemed to be able to retain their femininity
and purity, despite forays into dirty saloons and the even dirtier world
of politics.

In a Des Moines Register article about women crusaders in Muscatine,
the reporter wrote: "They are ladies of the highest standing and
respectability, who have entered into the work from a sincere and laudable
desire to crush out the monster Intemperance. . . . "59 "Ladies" was the key word in many news accounts of the temperance crusaders. "The ladies--Heaven bless them--have been busy" . . . the "ladies organized a praying band" . . . "the ladies have been upon the streets. . . ."60

Males who mistreated or insulted the ladies were sometimes referred as "roughs," "rowdies," "vile wretches" or by other unsavory labels.61 The newspapers carried several stories about men, gentlemen presumably, punishing those who failed to treat the lady crusaders with the proper respect. Even a saloonkeeper rose to the ladies' aid, in an incident recounted in the Register. The Muscatine saloonkeeper reportedly became enraged when he discovered the "praying ladies" in his saloon had been "grossly insulted" in his absence.

He denounced in toto the conduct of the rabble of the saloon, and when he ascertained who was the principal actor in the disgraceful scene, (one Pat Ryan), he gave him a sound drubbing or chastisement or whaling, or something to that summary and whalloping effect.62

In an incident in Ohio, a mob surrounded the saloon of a barkeep who had shed his clothes in an effort to clear his establishment of crusaders. The mob, determined "to avenge the insult to the ladies," sent a committee into the saloon to order the saloonkeeper to leave town within an hour."63

The crusaders occasionally encountered rough treatment from other females, particularly saloonkeepers' wives. Not to be confused with ladies, these anti-crusading females were usually labelled in news stories as just plain women, or worse. The Burlington Hawk-Eye carried an account
of the "Amazonion spouse" of a saloonkeeper who insulted Iowa crusaders "in a most outrageous manner, deluging them with pails of dirty water." Shortly after the incident, the Hawk-Eye reported, "another praying band invaded the sanctum of this she-bear, accompanied by some of the husbands of the ladies, who protected them from further outrages and awed the tigress into sullen silence." 64

Not everyone was enamored with the women crusaders. Critics included an Ohio judge who ordered the temperance women to quit praying for the repentance of one liquor seller. "It seems that rumsellers have some rights which women are bound to respect, and that even the fair ones' prayers in the cause of temperance may be enjoined by the courts," a Dubuque Herald news writer quipped. 65

Suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony also opposed the prayer crusade and caught hell for it in the press. 66 The two suffragists took the position that women could better combat intemperance on their feet at the ballot box than on their knees in the saloons. A story carried in the Des Moines Register criticized Stanton for directing her lance against the "bustles of her sex for this time she is in the rear." 67

There were other crusade detractors, and although they did not get the ink of the crusade proponents, they managed to get their views aired in the three Iowa newspapers. Opponents of temperance accused crusaders of prostituting prayer, breaking the law, and forgetting their place. On a more personal front, some critics claimed women drove men to drink. 68
Saloonkeepers and brewers were among the crusaders' most vocal critics. A Dubuque saloonkeeper turned the tables on the praying women, circulating a melodramatic prayer that was reprinted in the Des Moines Register.

... look at these women who are not thankful for your gifts; they want to level your children with the beasts and force them to drink water like the ox. While these women keep up style in overdress and other extravagances not necessary to our welfare, forcing their husbands into bankruptcy, leaving them in despair of all the loveliness of your world, quite often forcing them to suicide, oh Lord look at these ladies...

In Dubuque, anti-temperance forces, described by the Dubuque Herald as the "laboring class and the liquor men," held their own rally. A lively line-up of speakers, several of them speaking in German, sharply attacked local ministers and women involved in temperance activities. One speaker pointed out it was more honorable to purchase liquor than "buy 25 yards of satin to plaster on a woman's back for a dress" while another thought a pro-temperance minister could more wisely spend his time instructing "his congregation to take less opium and procure less abortions."

Suffragists would have found some of the arguments used against the temperance crusaders familiar. "The women had better remain at home and darn stockings," one news writer advised crusaders in a Dubuque Herald article. "Woman has her place and so has man--neither should make fools of themselves."
Some suggested drunken males were the result of women who had failed in their domestic duties. One critic quoted in a Des Moines Register story maintained bad-tempered women "drove their husbands out of their homes to get drunk on the outside. . . . if wives would show more affection and gentleness towards their husbands, there would be far less drunkenness." 72

A Chicago newspaper story reprinted in the Des Moines Register furthered the argument:

In plain English, too many women make their homes a domestic hell, and for a relief from continual broils or domestic dissensions, the husband and son seek comparative quiet and enjoyment in the saloons. It lies within the peculiar domain of women to make home attractive and enjoyable to men. . . .

And like the suffragist who would exercise the vote or the woman scholar who would exercise her brain, the crusader who would engage in a public debate on temperance was felt to be handicapped by her overactive female nervous system. At least, that was the theory put forth by The Brewers Gazette in an article reprinted in the Des Moines Register:

Nervous and excitable to a degree—especially upon this continent; impulsive and unreasonable when occasion serves. And here we come to the point: whilst man is more or less amenable to reason, a woman relies more or less upon instinct. A man may be convinced, but a woman never. . . . With reasonable guidance they achieve much good, but under their own guidance only confusion ensues." 73

Although the temperance crusader was thought to be a superior moral being in the eyes of many, there were those who felt she debased herself.
The *Dubuque Herald*, in one editorial, maintained woman could lose her “divinity” through the “vulgar associations” of the temperance crusade. The *Herald* subsequently protested against “any lowering of the ideal excellence of the sex, which in all ages and lands has been the fruitful source of chivalry and resulted in an elevation of American women.”

In a letter to the *Herald*, one “C.H.F.” complained of “women unsexing and degrading themselves and prostituting that holiest and most sacred refuge of the Christian—prayer.”

Some of the most heated attacks on the crusaders came from German immigrants, whose Old World customs included everyday use of beer and whiskey. The *Des Moines Register* reprinted several critical stories from German-American newspapers. In one such story, a Cleveland newspaper called the crusaders “a horde of toothless, scolding shrews” and added their American husbands “should be compelled to wear a petticoat, or perhaps the poor fools are sufficiently punished by having such wives.”

Another German newspaper in Ohio called upon all Germans capable of bearing arms to organize a regiment to protect their freedoms. Just who the regiment would fight wasn’t specified, but the news article pointed out, “This is interpreted as an attempt to scare the women.”

In a counterattack on the crusaders, the *Anzeiger*, a Des Moines' German newspaper, pointed out there were much greater evils than intemperance, including abortion. The German paper called it “the heinous crime of foeticide—child murder—which is practiced by the women of this
country, sending its millions of living souls in the maternal womb into the sewers and the grave." 80

Both the Dubuque Herald and Burlington Hawk-Eye reprinted accounts of an anti-temperance meeting in Cincinnati in which German-Americans maintained the temperance movement was instigated by men who wanted to rekindle hatred against foreigners. 81 True or no, at least some among the American press were not above tweaking the foreigners. A story reprinted in the Des Moines Register reveals a press looking on in humorous approval as Ohio crusaders waylaid a "timorous German" driving a beer wagon:

At once they surrounded him, caught his horses by the bridle, and began to sing. The frightened occupant of the wagon had never seen things done after that fashion. He was delirious with fright. His first move was to partly unhitch his horses. He then hitched them again, and reached for the horse blanket, threw it first onto one horse, then onto the other, then back into the wagon. . . . When, finally, he was released, he put whip to his horses and went out of town on double quick, tossing his hat in the air, complete victor of the scene. 82

Despite occasional criticism of the women's crusade, news about the crusaders in the three Iowa newspapers was mostly good. There seemed to be a general feeling that the women were doing God's work. "Under the providence of God, there has arisen a moral cyclone," well-known Rev. Henry Ward Beecher proclaimed in a widely quoted speech. 83 "Holy it must be and good it could not help but accomplish," an Iowa lawmaker grandly announced during a Des Moines temperance meeting. 84 God has "chosen weak and defenceless woman to be the power which shall yet liberate us from the
most colossal giant of evil that has ever reigned," another news writer proclaimed in an article, reprinted in the Hawk-Eye.

Organized religion's view of the holy crusade was well covered in the three Iowa newspapers. There were numerous news accounts of ministers in Des Moines, Dubuque and Burlington jumping on the temperance band wagon by preaching sermons and hosting rallies at their churches. Some local ministers gave whole-hearted support to the women's crusade while others took a more cautious approach, calling for higher moral standards or stricter law enforcement. While a Des Moines minister urged local women to "inaugurate the woman's movement immediately," a Dubuque minister pointed out he would put his faith in moral convictions rather than crusades or offensive measures of any sort. One of the more outspoken local ministers was Dubuque's J.H. Rhea. In a letter to the Dubuque Herald, the Methodist preacher complained that Dubuque was "cursed to a degree with drunkenness and debauchery not equalled perhaps by any other place in the state." It was zealous Methodists like Rhea, perhaps, who inspired the Herald to describe certain clergy as temperance fashion-seekers of the "I-am-holier-than-thou order." "There is nothing that the human heart dotes upon so fondly as to be in fashion," a Herald editorialist remarked in one sarcastic column. "The dull monotony of preaching Christ crucified is becoming too wearing on the souls and consciences of our ministerial fraternity."

The Catholic response to the women's crusade got considerable coverage in the Iowa newspapers, particularly in heavily Catholic Dubuque.
News stories indicated Catholic leaders liked the philosophy, if not the tactics, of the crusaders. "The indications are that the Catholics will do their share of the great work," one writer pointed out in an article, reprinted in both the Dubuque Herald and Burlington Hawk-Eye. "Though not laboring directly with the praying bands . . . they are holding immense temperance meetings, strengthening their temperance organizations, and increasing rapidly the number of signers to the total abstinence pledge."91

A number of Catholic leaders supported a temperance policy that left room for moderate drinking. Certainly, beer-loving German and Irish Catholics living in Dubuque and Burlington could sip their brews with clear consciences as they read in their newspapers that the Cincinnati archbishop just could not call it a sin "for a day laborer . . . to restore his exhausted strength by a glass or two of beer."92

There were most certainly clergy who disagreed with the woman's crusade, but in the main, they appeared to soft-pedal their criticism. The clergy and the public at large were generally indulgent and forgiving, even of those crusaders who committed the sin of engaging in unladylike behavior. When a Red Rock woman dragged a man out of a saloon, the Des Moines Register registered its approval:

A female voice was heard on our streets one night last week exclaiming not exactly "Dear father come home," but "come out of that infernal place, or I will smash in the window!" Smash went sash and glass. It is said that very soon thereafter a fellow accompanied a lady to her home from a so-called drugstore. We need more women of this sort in Red Rock.93
The same tone of amused indulgence is evident in another Register reprint about a crusader who assaulted a saloonkeeper and his bar in Atkinson, Ill.

A lady did good work at a billiard hall in this place last night and made it lively for a while, smashing glasses and bottles, etc. . . . Besides this playfulness she caused a beer mug to carom on the eye of the bartender, which gives a sinister expression to his face.

Temperance crusaders knelt in the streets, they gate-crashed saloons, they threw beer mugs, and for all that, they received the thanks of a grateful nation. Had Susan B. Anthony tossed a beer mug or Annie Savery burst into a saloon, there seems little doubt public response would have been considerably different. It was all too much for at least one Iowa suffragist, "J.B.S." from Mitchellville, who remembered a time a few years back when woman was supposed to be "modest, and stay at home, and not lift up her voice on the streets or in public places." In a letter to the Des Moines Register, J.B.S. recalled when it was unseemly for woman "to be seen pleading at the bar, or elbowing her way to the polls among the roughs." Times apparently had changed, J.B.S. pointed out, since woman was expected "to forsake home and fireside joys and go down into the worst hells upon earth, and labor, day and night for the public weal." But who, she asked pointedly, "is to care for babies at home, and get the dear hubby's dinner, and bring on his toast and slippers when he comes in from a weary day's work?"
J.B.S.'s bitterness is perhaps understandable. In two short years, the rules about proper female behavior seemed to have changed. Many of those who had encouraged suffragists to stay home were encouraging crusaders to hit the streets. It was enough to make a suffragist from Mitchellville vent her frustrations in a public letter and inquire with a sarcasm rather unbecoming a proper 19th century lady: "But how about woman's 'sphere' just now? Has it suddenly enlarged?"
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VI. HOME BUSTERS, HOME LOVERS

"These pure and delicate women who must not mingle with the "riff-raff" at the polls . . . enter vile dens where the air is heavy with impurity . . . to prevail on saloonkeepers to cease business . . . ."

-- Burlington Hawk-Eye, Feb. 27, 1874

The notion of a woman's sphere was surely a comforting one to many 19th century Americans, both male and female. There was a reassuring orderliness to a world in which man had his sphere—making a living, politicking, intellectualizing. And woman had hers—running the home, raising the children, tending to the family morals. News articles of the times encouraged this division of labor, praising those women who did good work in their spheres. "What nobler ambition can a woman have in this world than to fill the sphere at home?" one unidentified letter writer asked readers of the Dubuque Herald.¹

"A neat, clean, fresh-aired, sweet, cheerful, well-arranged house exerts a moral influence over its inmates," the Herald enthused in a news story.² It was a cozy picture—gentle and pure-hearted ladies gracefully and efficiently turning their homes into warm comfortable havens for their families. Into this picture of the happy helpmate at home stepped the suffragists and the temperance crusaders. And there was something about women who wanted to vote and who prayed on the floors of saloons that didn't quite square with the idealized version of what 19th century ladies should be. Dedicated homebodies did not make speeches in public, get involved in the dirty world of politics or stage demonstrations in bars.
Both the suffragists and the crusaders were guilty of exceeding the limits of the woman's sphere. And yet, in the eyes of the public and the press, they apparently were not judged equally guilty of this crime against tradition. While suffragists encountered considerable criticism, even ridicule, from both the public and the press, temperance crusaders mostly met with encouragement and hearty approval. Suffragists were portrayed more negatively than temperance crusaders in each of the three newspapers included in this study. Suffragists and temperance crusaders' news images were shaped by newspaper editorials, letters to the editor, and regular news stories, written by local reporters, or in many cases, gleaned from other newspapers throughout the country.

The editorials, letters and news stories in the three newspapers indicated considerable uncertainty about the suffrage issue during the winter of 1871-72. For example, Des Moines Register Editor James Clarkson apparently could not make up his mind about suffrage, moving from a pro-suffrage stance to an anti-suffrage one in a few short weeks. Letters to the editor of the Register also revealed public indecision about suffrage, with writers split about half and half on the issue. All three newspapers carried a plentiful assortment of news stories about suffrage and other women's rights. The variety of viewpoints expressed in these news stories also indicate a good deal of uncertainty about suffragists.

There was little uncertainty expressed about the women who fought the temperance battle from January through March of 1874. With the exception of some editorials and letters in the Dubuque Herald, the temperance
crusaders appeared to have won the hearts of the public and press. Both the Des Moines Register and Burlington Hawk-Eye editorially supported the temperance crusade as did their letter writers. Even the Dubuque Herald carried twice as many pro-temperance letters to the editor as anti-temperance letters. And all three newspapers carried numerous news stories heralding the good works of the temperance crusaders. Of the hundreds of stories about crusaders in the newspapers, only a few contained negative comments about the crusaders.

It is perhaps not surprising that the suffragists lost the popularity contest to temperance crusaders in the pages of the Des Moines Register. Editor James Clarkson's ambivalent feelings about suffragists were evident in his editorials. It is surprising, however, that suffragists lost out to temperance crusaders in the pages of suffrage sympathizer Charles Beardsley's own newspaper, the Burlington Hawk-Eye, and in the temperance-bashing Dubuque Herald.

It is curious that the Hawk-Eye and Herald editors did not fill their news pages with more stories that backed their own editorial biases. Certainly, the Hawk-Eye's near news blackout of the sensational antics of Victoria Woodhull suggests that Charles Beardsley was not above exercising a little editorial control over his news pages. Why didn't Beardsley put more pro-suffrage news in his paper and why didn't Herald editors Ham and Carver give their readers a heavier dose of anti-temperance news?

A likely explanation is that the editors simply could not find much news to back their own opinions about suffragists and temperance
crusaders. Editors of the 1870s reprinted considerable material from other newspapers around the state and the country. The assortment of news stories on the pages of the Des Moines Register, the Dubuque Herald and the Burlington Hawk-Eye, may not have reflected the biases of their respective editors as much as it reflected what news was available elsewhere. And it appears that what was available in the early 1870s was an abundance of stories about lecturers, politicians, officials and other quotable people who liked the temperance crusaders, but were considerably less enthused about suffragists.

It is interesting that the suffragists and temperance crusaders, alike in so many ways, could provoke such differing reactions from the public. Both suffragists and temperance crusaders were pioneering reformers, both believed women should be involved in the political process, and both had stepped out of the centuries-old traditional woman's sphere to work for a cause. Yet, the public and press drew a real distinction between the two kinds of reformers. News stories of the times support the thesis of this paper—that the temperance crusaders got more favorable press than the suffragists because crusaders were perceived as less of a threat to the values and traditions of the times. News stories about women's reforms were not merely about suffrage or temperance. They also were about the woman's sphere. For it was on the important issue of the woman's sphere that many people separated the ladies—the real, pious, home-loving ladies—from the women. While the public and press seemed to regard the temperance crusader as a woman's sphere kind of woman, one who
was mostly interested in taking care of her home, they had their doubts about the homing instincts of the suffragist.

News articles, editorials and letters to editors reveal considerable fear that the ballot would inevitably lead to the demise of the woman's sphere, that the vote would lead women into the masculine world beyond the home. There were few, if any, such fears about the temperance crusaders. Public consensus seemed to be that crusaders, homebodies at heart, were doing what had to be done to protect their homes and families. As guardians of their homes, women were expected to do whatever was necessary to ensure their families' well-being, both physically and morally. If that meant stepping out of the woman's sphere into the dirty, world of saloons and politics, so be it. Virtue was on the temperance crusaders' side, as was the famous Rev. Henry Ward Beecher.

In a Des Moines Register story, Beecher was quoted as saying that although the "first sphere" of woman was certainly the household, she had every right to "step out and become public" to protect her home.\textsuperscript{3} Similar sentiments were echoed by others and printed in Iowa newspapers. A speaker at a Des Moines rally said he would not question "the propriety of anything that good women would dare to do in a good cause."\textsuperscript{4} Hawk-Eye news stories referred to crusaders "aroused in defense of their own firesides" or "trying to rescue their own households."\textsuperscript{5}

The temperance crusader must have seemed considerably less threatening to 19th century traditionalists than the suffragist. Once she had cleaned up the saloons and saved her family from the evils of the
demon rum, the crusader was expected to return happily home to her own appointed sphere. There appeared to be little confidence the suffragist would do the same. Newspapers were full of opinions about what the ballot might do to women. Anti-suffragists feared that voting women would develop a taste for political office and a distaste for housework, that they would become more masculine and less virtuous, that they would embrace a promiscuous lifestyle and abandon their families.⁶ Those who saw the ballot as the beginning of the end for the woman's sphere, worried about what lurked beyond that sphere.

A physician quoted in a Des Moines Register story claimed he never knew a woman out of her sphere who "was not deranged in some way or other."⁷ Register letter writer R.W.T. opined that if they got the vote, it would be hard to "hold in check many of the women of the period."⁸

The idea of women out of their sphere and on the loose must have been a frightening one to many, and those who feared the worst, found it, in the notorious, free-wheeling, free-loving Victoria Woodhull. For many, Woodhull must have seemed the evolutionary end-product of the future woman, emboldened by the ballot and freed from her sphere. Woodhull was aggressive, intelligent, promiscuous, mouthy, and outrageous. In speeches to Iowa audiences, Woodhull called marriages "legalized prostitution" and denounced Christianity as a fraud "damnable in its works."⁹

If Woodhull was no lady (and she certainly wasn't by 19th century standards), the press was no gentleman. When Woodhull toured the state in 1874, the Dubuque Herald warned readers that she was in the state "sowing
broadcast her seeds of infidelity and nastiness.\textsuperscript{10} The \textit{Register} greeted her arrival with the headline: "Wicked Woodhull . . . Second Appearance of the Affliction."\textsuperscript{11} And the \textit{Burlington Hawk-Eye} let loose with five decks of venomous alliteration:

- Noxious Nastiness
- Wanton Woodhull's Wickedness
- Vicious Vic's Vindictive Vaporings
- Sacred Social Systems Scourged and Scoffed
- Torrents of Talk and Termagant Twattle\textsuperscript{12}

The bitter attacks on Woodhull reveal the depth of concern among media and others about the threat she presented to marriage, to family, to life as 19th century Americans knew it. Many of those who feared Woodhull also feared the suffragists, with whom she had so closely aligned herself. Woodhull's unpopularity was particularly damaging to Iowa suffragists, who, in the midst of what appeared to be a promising campaign for the vote, suddenly found themselves guilty by association with a free-lover. In a Des Moines \textit{Register} editorial, James Clarkson pointed out that it was unjust to imply that thousands of pure woman suffragists were followers of "that notorious female," but "five out of six of the people think so and cannot be led to think anything else."\textsuperscript{13} With her wild social theories and wild social behavior, Woodhull fueled the fire of public opinion already singeing the Iowa suffragists in the early 1870s.

Woodhull, however, was only part of the Iowa suffragists' public image problem. Other circumstances put suffragists at a disadvantage to the temperance crusaders and perhaps contributed to suffragists'
unfavorable press coverage. The suffrage movement had a narrower base of support than the temperance movement. It was started by women, led by women, and for the benefit of women. The temperance movement, on the other hand, had originated with men several generations earlier. It enjoyed leadership from men as well as women and was widely perceived as benefiting home, hearth and family. It is little wonder that temperance crusaders, following in the footsteps of men, promoting a cause men had already begun, and doing their womanly duties for their families as well, found more public acceptance than the suffragists, who were perhaps perceived to be on a more self-centered mission. Some news stories reinforced the image of suffragists as selfish, crusaders selfless. Crusaders were often referred to as noble, inspired women working to save society.14 A Burlington Hawk-Eye reprint from a Methodist publication supported this common view of the crusaders: God "has chosen weak and defenceless woman to be the power which shall yet liberate us from the most colossal giant of evil that has ever reigned over the human race."15

Suffragists were not portrayed in the Iowa newspapers as noble women doing battle with colossal evils. At best, they were sensible, intelligent women of the "better class of people."16 At worst, they were portrayed as bullies seeking dominance over men.17 The failure of suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to support the temperance crusade irritated many, confirming the opinions of those who felt the suffragists only were out for themselves. A Register story
proclaimed Stanton “so bigoted” that nothing but woman suffrage was “visible to the iron-rimmed pupil of her eye.”

Suffragists also may have been judged more harshly by both public and press because their big crusade for the vote preceded the temperance advocates' big crusade against booze. Although both suffragists and temperance crusaders had been working Iowa for many years, public activity by the reformers appeared to increase several notches in the 1870s. The Iowa suffragists fought their landmark battle of the decade in 1871 and 1872, a couple of years before the temperance crusaders flamboyantly took to the streets. When Iowa suffragists started their own crusade for the vote, the public was not accustomed to women lecturing, organizing, and politicking. Suffragists engaging in these unusual behaviors must have seemed strange and radical. By the time temperance crusaders went after the saloons, the public, somewhat innoculated by suffragists, may have become more accustomed to women reformers. In a Des Moines Register article, the Rev. Beecher suggested suffragists had paved the way for the temperance crusaders. Without the suffrage movement, the crusaders "would never have dared to act as they are doing," Beecher said.

Iowa's women reformers of the early 1870s, suffragists and crusaders alike, probably considered themselves unsuccessful. They were unable to open the ballot box or close the saloons. But these outspoken women of Iowa left their mark on the state and very likely helped sensitize women and men, newspaper editors included, to a greater understanding of women's issues to come. As the middle of the decade approached, Iowa newspapers
provided evidence that times were changing and with them, some of the traditional attitudes about women. For example, in 1874, the Des Moines Register called a group of male doctors "asses" for failing to admit a woman to their medical organization. Only two years earlier, the Register had fretted that working women would neglect their homes.20

Perhaps more revealing of the changes taking place was the three newspapers' coverage of Victoria Woodhull during her lecture swing through Iowa in January 1874. Although Woodhull provoked her usual bad press, there were signs that some editors and reporters were willing to consider at least a few of her ideas about women. In a lengthy editorial, the Des Moines Register pointed out that the press and society in general had treated Woodhull, an "immoral woman," more harshly than it had treated immoral men. "What is it in society that leads it to stone to death the guilty woman and spare the guilty man?" asked a Register editorialist, who went on to chastize a local minister who had supported a male "adulterer" for political office, but dubbed Woodhull a "hag of hell." The editorialist concluded both preachers and the press were guilty of perpetuating the "current popular idea that social crime is only a crime when it is in the feminine gender."21

Woodhull got an even friendlier reception from the Dubuque Herald. In a speech that surely would have shocked a few years earlier, Woodhull told a Dubuque audience that women who had no sexual desires were "sexual idiots" and proclaimed many marriages were indecent because the bride enters into "sexual relations with a man whom she marries for a certain
sum of money." The Herald reporter covering the speech praised Woodhull for her "well timed monitions of the great need of reform in the social element of the day." In another Herald story, Woodhull was a "woman of brains, of eloquence, of elegance," who spoke "the nakedest and most unadorned truth we have ever listened to from a public speaker."23

Ironically, the Burlington Hawk-Eye, which spoke nary a discouraging word against Woodhull when other newspapers were damning her daily in 1872, made up for lost time in 1874. "No logic, no eloquence, no decency, no ideas, no truth," the reporter covering Woodhull's Burlington speech wrote. "It is a disgrace, a deep and damning disgrace on the civilization of this century that this woman should be permitted to violate law, decency and good order in a manner so shameless. . . . 24

Iowa newspapers of 1874 showed other signs that Iowa's women reformers were sparking change. It appeared the suffrage movement, which had fizzled at the hands of lawmakers in 1872, might get a boost from the temperance crusade. News articles in the Des Moines Register, Dubuque Herald, and Burlington Hawk-Eye indicated some temperance advocates were concluding the only way to accomplish their goal was at the ballot box. Several male speakers at Des Moines temperance rallies in March of 1874 advocated suffrage for women. "... if women had the ballot, intemperance would be banished . . . ," one speaker announced.25

Similar sentiments were expressed in editorials carried in the Montezuma Republican and Nashua Post, and reprinted in the Burlington Hawk-Eye. Because women were more moral than men, they would soon take
care of the "whiskey bloat" as well as unscrupulous politicians, one newspaper editorialist claimed. Women "possess higher traits of morality and would wield a moral influence that would greatly elevate the ballot box," wrote the other.

A like-minded Burlington minister announced during a temperance rally that voting women would kill the liquor traffic "dead as a door nail."

The Burlington Hawk-Eye editorially supported suffrage, pointing out it would greatly aid the cause of temperance. "Earnest temperance men everywhere will very soon recognize the importance of clothing the ladies with every element of strength," the editorialist wrote. And after the women have spent months in saloons, "fearlessly facing the jibes and jeers of the mob, and the fumes of rum and garlic, and coming off unscathed, stronger, better and purer than ever before, we shall probably hear no more of the defilement they would suffer in going to the polls two or three times a year and putting a bit of paper in the ballot box."

Times were changing, but perhaps not as quickly as the Burlington Hawk-Eye and, most certainly, the suffragists expected. Despite the heavy public debate about suffrage and women's rights during the 1870s, it appears the suffrage movement simply did not have enough support to succeed in Iowa or any other state. Although suffragists were active throughout the nation, women did not win the vote in any state in the nation in the seventies. As it turned out, they were not even close to getting the ballot. In 1890, when the territory of Wyoming was granted
statehood, it became the first state in the nation to allow its women equal suffrage with men.\(^{30}\)

Far apart as they may have seemed in the public's eye in the 1870s, suffragists and temperance crusaders had been linked in spirit almost from their beginnings. National suffrage leaders Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Amelia Bloomer all were early temperance workers.\(^{31}\) Although the suffragists and crusaders went about their business separately in the early seventies, it would not be long before they joined forces. During the women's crusade of 1874, Stanton, Anthony, and other suffragists suggested the ballot might be a more effective weapon than prayer for anti-liquor women. The Women's Christian Temperance Union came to agree.\(^{32}\) In the latter quarter of the 19th century, the WCTU concluded legislation was the solution to the alcohol problem and threw support behind woman suffrage.\(^{33}\)

Suffragists needed all the support they could get, particularly in Iowa. The 1872 Iowa legislature turned down the woman suffrage amendment, but the suffrage question continued to surface in the Iowa legislature for the next four decades. When the legislature finally allowed a suffrage amendment to be put before the Iowa voters in 1916, Iowa's male voters rejected the ballot for women.\(^{34}\) There is evidence liquor interests, fearing the female vote on prohibition, played a part in the defeat of woman suffrage in Iowa. Eastern Iowa voters in a four-county area, which included the cities of Dubuque and Burlington voted so overwhelmingly against the woman suffrage amendment that they outpolled favorable
suffrage votes in every other county in the state. The four anti-suffrage counties—Dubuque, Des Moines, Clinton and Scott—contained a large number of German anti-prohibition voters. 35

The liquor question, like the suffrage question, continued to plague the state for years. As the 19th century neared its end, lawmakers tried numerous legal solutions, including licensing of saloons, local options, prohibition and various combinations of these measures. 36 The work begun by the women suffragists and temperance crusaders in the seventies culminated nearly 50 years later with two consecutive amendments to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.

The 18th Amendment, which prohibited the manufacture or sale of intoxicants within the United States, became law Jan. 16, 1920. The U.S. experiment with prohibition failed and 13 years later, the 18th Amendment was repealed. 37 A more enduring amendment, the 19th, took effect Aug. 26, 1920. One day later, Mrs. Jens G. Thuesen, voting in a Cedar Falls school election, became the first woman in Iowa and probably the first in the nation to vote under the 19th Amendment. 38

At the time, Victoria Woodhull, now the wealthy widow of an Englishman, was living on her estate in the English countryside. 39 Many of her fellow suffragists—Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony and Annie Savery—had not lived to see women armed with "that little piece of paper . . . that sacred gift of liberty," as Savery once called it. 40

The reformers of the seventies called themselves suffragists or crusaders. Their granddaughters would call themselves "voters." And
their granddaughters' granddaughters would call themselves "feminists."
Whatever their labels or their causes, the women of the 20th and 21st
centuries owe something to those rather unladylike females, many of them
Iowans, who dared to break out of their traditional sphere in the early
1870s. They may not have been immediately successful. Those who left
their home chores to lobby lawmakers or march into saloons one month most
likely were back home picking up where they left off the next. But, with
the help of the newspaper press in the state, they made some headlines and
they set some people to thinking. And if they didn't exactly break it
wide open, they at least had made a crack or two in the woman's sphere.
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