



We Are What We Drink: The Temperance Battle in Minnesota

Sabine N. Meyer

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Sabine N. Meyer eschews the generalities of other temperance histories to provide a close-grained story about the connections between alcohol consumption and identity in the upper Midwest.

Meyer examines the ever-shifting ways that ethnicity, gender, class, religion, and place interacted with each other during the long temperance battle in Minnesota. Her deconstruction of Irish and German ethnic positioning with respect to temperance activism provides a rare interethnic history of the movement. At the same time, she shows how women engaged in temperance work as a way to form public identities and reforges the largely neglected, yet vital link between female temperance and suffrage activism. Relatedly, Meyer reflects on the continuities and changes between how the movement functioned to construct identity in the heartland versus the movement's more often studied roles in the East. She also gives a nuanced portrait of the culture clash between a comparatively reform-minded Minneapolis and dynamic anti-temperance forces in whiskey-soaked St. Paul--forces supported by government, community, and business institutions heavily invested in keeping the city wet.

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