"I never want a picture taken of me without my Bible, my constant and heavenly companion," Carry Nation wrote in her 1904 autobiography. Here she shares her faith with a woman identified as Mrs. Sorgatz of Beloit.
Mrs. Nation

by Robert Smith Bader

In 1880 Kansas became the first state in the nation to write into her constitution a prohibition on alcoholic beverages. For the next twenty years the people struggled with the eternal questions of resubmission and law enforcement. Following a hectic initial period with its legal uncertainties and open defiance in the cities, the temperance position began to gain the ascendancy under the leadership of Gov. John A. Martin (1885–89). By the end of the first prohibitory decade the open saloon had been banished from Kansas soil, and resubmission of the question had been declared "as dead as slavery" as a public issue.

But 1890 brought a sharp reversal in the fortunes of the temperance advocates. An adverse U.S. Supreme Court decision permitted selling in "original packages," and "supreme court" saloons soon dotted the landscape. Harsh economic conditions within the state and a series of setbacks for prohibition across the nation contributed significantly to a marked reduction in liquor law enforcement. The joint (which replaced the saloon in the Kansas vernacular) reappeared in the cities and many of the moderate-sized towns. As the liquor issue slid down the scale of public priorities, temperance activity diminished perceptibly and the morale of the temperance forces plunged to an all-time low.

Near the end of the nineties, however, the state's two major temperance organizations, the Kansas State Temperance Union (KSTU) and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), began to show signs of renewed vigor. The temperance community experienced a revival sufficient to restore its self-respect, its enthusiasm, and its courage. But enforcement of the law continued in the relaxed mode which had characterized the decade. In the towns, at least, practice daily violated theory; King Alcohol ruled supreme.

By 1900 Kansas had become a hybrid caldron of frustration and hopefulness. Renaissance of the KSTU and the WCTU had raised expectations as well as morale. If the joints could be closed by the city fathers on Sundays, holidays, election days, and when the WCTU came to town, why couldn't they be closed permanently, as the law required? The milieu was reminiscent of the late 1870s just before the introduction of prohibition as a constitutional question, when temperance enthusiasm had left the state quaking with emotion and searching for the igniting spark. "All felt that the state was a seething, surging volcano of suppressed emotion," an observer said in 1899, "[and] that a mighty conflict was inevitable."

The catalyst for the "mighty conflict" came from a most unlikely quarter. Isolated outbreaks of violence against saloons had been part of the Kansas scene since 1855. They often involved women, alone or in groups, and not infrequently the weapon of choice was a hatchet or an axe. But nothing like a continuous sequence had ever been sustained.

In 1900 Carry Nation lived in Medicine Lodge, a sun-baked, little frontier town in southwestern Kansas. She had advanced to the proximate edge of old age after a lifetime of total obscurity spent laboring at the cookstove and the washboard. Like thousands upon thousands of other women she held a fervent, religion-anchored interest in temperance. A less likely candidate for leadership of a revolution and international fame would have been difficult to find.

Her biographers have speculated at length, often derisively, about the origins of her intense religious convictions and her hatred of alcohol. Whatever the genesis of her private religious experiences, she produced an absolutely unequalled impact upon the Kansas community. During her heyday Kansans responded to her actions and her supplications as to

---

Robert Smith Bader, author of The Great Kansas Bond Scandal (1992), holds a B.S. degree from Kansas State University and a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. He has taught at the University of Florida, the University of Illinois, and the University of Missouri-St. Louis, where he is currently research professor. He is also affiliated with the history department of the University of Kansas, Lawrence, as a research associate. This article is a modified version of a chapter in a book he is writing on the history of prohibition in Kansas.

none other in their history. Inspired by a deep religious faith and fueled by an extraordinary energy, she translated her formidable personality and raw courage into a direct-action campaign that carried beyond her local neighborhood into the larger Kansas world. The time and the person had been joined to produce events that would rock the state and the nation.

Carry Amelia Moore was born in 1846 in Kentucky of English, Irish, and Scotch-Irish descent. Her father was a stockman and farmer of some means whom she adored. ("If I ever had an angel on earth, it was my father.") Her mother, though "a very handsome woman," was mentally unstable and unavailable to her children much of the time. As a consequence, Carry was frequently mothered by black "mammies," and slave children became her most frequent playmates. She absorbed much of her spirituality and religious feeling, if not her theology, from these early childhood experiences.

During her childhood years she suffered several bouts of serious illness, at times becoming virtually an invalid. But by her teen years she had fully recovered to enjoy robust health throughout the remainder of her life. She underwent her first formal religious experience at the age of ten, when she was baptized into the Campbellite Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). By the onset of puberty most of her dominant personality traits had become firmly established: intelligence, dominance, competitiveness, drollness, generosity, an almost childlike candor, and a high-voltage energy which led to an insatiable fascination with the spiritual and moral values of humankind.2

When Carry was nine her restless father moved the family to Cass County in western Missouri. There, at age nineteen, she met a young physician, Charles Gloyd, and they married in 1867. Two years later the man "I loved more than my own life" was dead, a victim of alcoholism, evidently well advanced at the time they married. To support the family she had inherited from Gloyd (their infant daughter and his elderly mother), Carry attended the teachers' college at Warrensburg for a year and then began teaching in public grade school. Her four-year teaching career (1870–74) came to an abrupt end when a school board member alleged that he didn't care for the way she taught, word pronunciation to her pupils. His niece became her successor.

Shortly thereafter she married the "very good looking" David Nation, a newspaperman-lawyer and sometime Christian church minister eighteen years her senior. They moved to Texas in 1876, where they nearly became destitute trying to make a living from a rundown cotton plantation they had purchased. ("We were as helpless on the plantation as little children.") While David made desultory attempts to establish a law practice, his wife took over the management of a dilapidated local hotel. "Managing" the hotel included the backbreaking chores of cooking, washing, cleaning, and buying as she struggled to eke out a subsistence for the entire family.3

In 1890 the Nations moved to Medicine Lodge, where David found sufficient success as a lawyer to support them both and enable his wife to pursue her developing civic, religious, and temperance interests. "Mother Nation" (a sobriquet that the town soon bestowed on her for her benevolences) organized a sewing circle that made clothes for the poor; every fall she made certain that no child failed to attend school because of a lack of proper clothing. She invited the town's needy to her home on Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other special occasions. Mother Nation's generous impulses commingled with a fierce determination to have her own way. "Whatever she believes in she believes with her whole soul, and nothing except superior force can stay her," a contemporary noted; "she has done much good [for the poor], but when she sets out to get contributions she cannot be shaken off."

As the decade wore on she turned her active mind and boundless energy increasingly to temperance concerns. During 1899, together with a few zealous WCTU cohorts, she managed to close the town's seven illegal liquor outlets through the nonviolent avenues of song, prayer, and oral confrontation. In the spring of 1900 she made her first out-of-town foray, traveling in her buggy to Kiowa, twenty miles distant, where she smashed three joints with rocks and brickbats. Such immoderate behavior evoked a town consensus that she was of "unsound mind" and should be kept at home "by her people."

Six months later she had screwed up her courage

2. Carry was evidently christened "Carrie," but she and her family used "Carrie" until she began to attract public notice around 1900. She was estranged with the implication of "Carry A. Nation" and used that form thereafter, though not always consistently, Carry A. Nation. The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation (Topeka: F. M. Steves and Sons, 1904), 28, 31, 35–43, 129; Herbert Asbury, Carry Nation (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 3–6; Robert Lewis Taylor, Voice of Wrath: The Life and Times of Carry Nation (New York: New American Library, 1966), 28–36, 192; Carrie Nation Scrapbook, 101, Library, Kansas State Historical Society.


sufficiently to attack and demolish the handsome bar of the Hotel Carey, Wichita's finest. A few days after her release from jail, following a three-week incarceration based on a spurious smallpox quarantine, she set to smashing again in Wichita and was promptly rearrested. Her next logical move should have been Topeka, the capital city. But she detoured instead to Enterprise, a small community in Dickinson County, flattered that she had received an invitation from the wife of the town's leading citizen, C. B. Hoffman, the "millionaire socialist." After a hectic forty-eight hours of smashing, wrestling, and hair-pulling there, she entrained for Topeka.

The entrance of Carry Nation into the capital created a moral crisis of multiple dimensions. For the long-suffering temperance workers, gathering for the annual convention of the KSTU, her arrival threatened to split the ranks of the faithful. No longer would defiant resolutions, feverish denunciations, and a good heart suffice; one had to stand up and be counted. The harassed president of the state WCTU, Elizabeth P. Hutchinson, guardedly announced that the WCTU had only a legal interest in the Nation crusade but, she charitably added, "I do not believe Mrs. Nation to be insane." The president of the Topeka WCTU, Olive P. Bray, came more directly to the point. The local union, she said, "is not in accord with her methods." Bray's sister, temperance and suffrage leader Sarah A. Thurston, added succinctly: "I wouldn't do it." The veteran prohibitionist and former lieutenant governor, Jimmie Troutman, found her tactics "indefensible." The minister of the Atchison Christian Church said she was a "disgrace" and acting the fool. But many agreed with Bank Commissioner John Breidenthal, who said that "there comes a time with people when forbearance ceases to be a virtue and they take the law into their own hands." And with Agriculture Secretary F. D. Coburn, who noted that "people who persistently spit on the laws have mighty small claims on the law's protection."

Her appearance in Topeka focused attention on the growing tension between the sexes on the temperance issue. Her host at Enterprise, Catherine A. Hoffman, concerned herself with this often-hidden issue.

cultured woman of "refined and handsome appearance," she told the KSTU convention that she had helped smash a joint because "the men would not do it, [so] we women did it. . . . This conduct from us women means something . . . I do not believe in war, I did not believe in violence. But I tell you, this is a revolution that is coming on us in this state. . . . We have begun to act now, and we have put an end to uncertainties. That is what Mrs. Nation signifies to-day — action, revolution."

For the forty Topeka joints she posed a clear and present threat to their livelihood. Topeka had not licensed its saloons nor enjoyed the monthly fiscal benefits derived therefrom since the Supreme Court ordered the practice stopped in 1883. Since then, joints had become more or less numerous, depending upon the predilections of the particular city government in power. The latter, of course, was a function of the mercurial attitudes of the citizenry. The wets and the drys had struggled bitterly for dominance in the capital city, ever mindful of the symbolic significance to the state as a whole. A citizens' law-and-order group in the 1880s, the Committee of Fifty, had become the Committee of Two Hundred by the late 1890s, led by the Congregational minister, Charles M. Sheldon. Currently, the drys pinned their hopes on Frank M. Stahl, the colorful, no-nonsense chief of police, given to unorthodox methods of trapping an unsuspecting jointist. Paralleling the statewide trend of the nineties, Topeka's joints tended to operate with increasing openness, and handiness, during the decade. They came to maintain a much higher visibility than the secluded and puny operations uncovered by the police in the early 1890s. Still, they did not run as brazenly as in Leavenworth, Kansas City, or Wichita. They kept to the lower (northern) reaches of Kansas Avenue, largely out of sight of the female shoppers and office workers. They were always buffered by a front, or anteroom, occupied by a legitimate business frequented by male customers, typically a cigar store, poolroom, drugstore, or restaurant. Often they could be found on the second floor of a building, a circumstance that led to a wry observation by Sen. John J. Ingalls: "In some cities," he noted, "deferring to the majesty of the law, the saloons are banished . . . from the street floor to the second story, upon some occult theory that a nefarious transaction conducted fifteen feet above ground.


8. Carrie A. Nation to Topeka State Journal [ca. January 5, 1902], Undated Correspondence, Cecil Hayes Collection, Manuscripts Department, Kansas State Historical Society; Frank M. Stahl, One-Way Ticket to Kansas: The Autobiography of Frank M. Stahl, as told by Margaret Whitemore (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1959), 122–34.
women, which would soon rid the state of the offending establishments.

When Mrs. Nation appeared on the Topeka streets, in the early evening of January 26, 1901, the local citizens immediately recognized her. The chunky figure wore her now-familiar, old but clean “uniform”: a full-length, shiny black dress topped at the neck by a huge bow of white ribbon; black cotton stockings; square-toed, “pitifully thin and worn” shoes; and a fringed gray shawl. A black poke bonnet, tied firmly under the chin, covered her bun of gray hair coiled tightly at the crown of her head. On this occasion she also wore a veil, drawn tightly over the face, which hid from view her pleasant, motherly countenance and her bright, flashing eyes. But her determined stride and self-possessed manner affirmed the “iron purpose in her soul.”

She quickly became the hub for streams of animated males, young and old, drawn toward her as iron filings to a magnet, looking for some unusual excitement to brighten a Saturday evening. Within the hour she found herself surrounded by a spirited crowd of two thousand who hoped for a “hatchetation,” though she assured them that she had left her hatchet at home. “Incessant and boisterous yelling” so filled the air that she could not hear a few feet away though she talked “at the top of her voice.”

She did manage to visit a few joints on lower Kansas Avenue to warn them to close their “murder shops” or else. Her most embarrassing moment came after a jointkeeper’s wife had whacked her on the head with a broom, knocking her bonnet off. When she stooped over to retrieve it, the incensed woman “smote her upon that portion of the anatomy which chanced to be uppermost.” The crowd, which had been amiable enough initially, grew steadily more rowdy as the evening wore on and its size increased apace. When it had degenerated into “a wild, howling mob” which threatened lynching, her armed escorts guided her into the Columbian building for safety. Soon thereafter they spirited her out a rear door into the night, while remnants of the mob milled restlessly in front, setting off yowls like so many frenzied coyotes at full moon. Topeka had been introduced to her new resident and vice versa.

On Monday next Mrs. Nation paid her respects to the state’s chief executive, the Honorable William

---


Eugene Stanley (1899–1903). The governor's prohibition enforcement policy had been the acme of perfection and simplicity; leave the thirsty matter entirely in the hands of the local communities. For this posture his administration had been labeled "miserably weak" by the disappointed drays who had expected so much from the former Methodist Sunday school superintendent and had received so little. Stanley typified the Kansas politician who could adroitly "carry a Sunday school on one shoulder and a joint on the other." Even before Mrs. Nation made her appearance he had no doubt how he stood with her. While in the Wichita jail she had declared that "Stanley, the head of prohibition, is only a synonym for hypocrisy." 13

She made an appointment with his secretary and returned shortly thereafter with an entourage that included her husband, David; Annie Diggs, the famed Populist, currently the state librarian; and enough reporters and legislators virtually to fill the room. Stanley lost control from the first moment when she firmly commanded him to "sit around where the light strikes you, I can't see your face."

In her soft Kentucky accent and her unassuming, "perfectly natural" manner she pleaded, she scolded, she threatened. To his every defense she gave a sharp, pithy, and logical reply. She said that she didn't smash on impulse but only as a last resort. "I've prayed and cried and laid down on the floor and wept. Something must be done." As her vigorous chastisement continued unabated the rattled governor lost what little composure he had left. "You are a woman," he said. "But a woman must know a woman's place. They can't come in here and raise this kind of disturbance." As the meeting wound down, he assured her once again that he was powerless to act and palmed her off on the attorney general with an audible sigh of relief. 14

In an editorial following the interview the Kansas City Star, no friend of prohibition, wondered aloud how a public man with fiber enough to be elected governor could be so intimidated at the approach of "this avenging lady." To see the head of the commonwealth lose all presence of mind in such a public forum was a pitiful sight. "It would have been better — much better — had the fear which seized upon him as he contemplated the steady and resolute advance of his accuser caused him to flee and leave Mrs. Nation in possession of the field. The Governor is not to be cen-

Noted artist and political cartoonist Albert T. Reid sketched this portrait of Carry Nation just after she came to Topeka, still suffering from a badly bruised eye she had received a few days earlier in a melee in Emporia.

15 Kansas City Star, January 30, 1901.
delegates passed resolutions praising her and scoring Governor Stanley for his laxity in enforcement.

So long as she remained in the hall Nation was “the orbit around which the convention revolved.” She “charmed everyone by her good humor and wit combined with [a] fiery earnestness.” One captivated woman came up the aisle with a bouquet of flowers and lovingly presented it to her. Messenger boys brought her telegrams and letters “by the dozen.” The grateful delegates took up a collection of $117.50 for a gold medal to be inscribed “To the Bravest Woman in Kansas.” With an irony that Nation must have enjoyed, the WCTU president was appointed to chair the committee to design and purchase the medal. Shortly thereafter, the jointists presented a miniature golden broom to their heroine, the jointkeeper’s wife who had applied the solid whack to the crusader’s posterior on Saturday night.15

While the town and the state waited expectantly for the next hatchet to fall, Nation reconnoitered the new territory and attempted to organize the women into an “army” of Home Defenders. She accepted as many of the dozens of speaking invitations as she could and planned some meetings of her own. Brimming to overflowing with the “inexhaustible subject,” she told her audiences that what Kansas needed most was agitation. “You agitate water,” she said, “and it will run up hill.” To apprehensive women she tried to impart some of the exhilaration that could come from wrecking a joint: “I tell you, ladies, you don’t know how much joy you will have until you begin to smash, smash, smash. It is wonderful.”16 She reserved her most righteous scorn for those who suggested that a moral suasion

16. Ibid., January 29, 1901; Topeka Daily Capital, January 29, 30, 1901; Carrie Nation Scrapbook, 57.
(educational) campaign to increase public support for prohibition might be more appropriate than her hatchet-and-rocks method. "Moral suasion!" she cried. "If there's anything that's weak and worse than useless it's this moral suasion. I despise it. These hell traps of Kansas have fattened for twenty years on moral suasion."

For decades the living, breathing, flesh-and-blood relationship between Mrs. Nation and the Kansas people has been buried beneath gallons of printer's ink, immersed in equal parts of derision and disparagement. She has been called variously a crank, a freak, a lunatic, a bizarre clown, a sinister bigot, a demented creature, the Hitler of morals, and the Joe McCarthy of personal conduct. From these vitriolic depths has emerged a one-dimensional cardboard doll with a wild-eyed look that produces, upon squeezing, an instant hatchetization.

What has been submerged has been her wit, her warmth, her joyfulness, and her intelligence — the vibrant humanity that so impressed her contemporaries. Her regard for and sensitivity to blacks, Jews, and Catholics, for example, far exceeded that of the average WASP of the period. Her sans-hatchet personality was powerful, unforgettable, unique. Very few human beings of whatever walk or station or education ever bested her in a one-on-one parley. Governor Stanley was not the sole beneficiary of her "charming unconventionality," as the jointists of Topeka were soon to discover. On January 31 Nation decided to pay a social call on the jointists of lower Kansas Avenue, leaving her weapons safely at home. Forewarned of her impending visit, the owners feverishly barricaded their businesses and themselves behind mounds of furniture and every other conceivable bulky object. They peeked nervously through the cracks in the ramparts awaiting the imminent arrival of the gray-haired grandmother. When she appeared on the scene with five hundred men and boys at her heels and saw the ridiculous configurations, she gave a hearty laugh and called to the anxious men: "Aren't you going to let your mother in, boys? She wants to talk to you."

With a face "full of amusement and kindliness" and in a "soft deep" voice she told them that she loved them and would help them if they were ever in trouble. Her voice, her manner, and her obvious sincerity began to weave their magic spell on the hidden jointists. They peered out from their lairs like apprehensive prairie dogs from their burrows, and soon the barricades began to come down. The Pied Piper of Hame lin could not have charmed them from behind their ramparts more skillfully or more quickly.

A reporter for the hard-nosed Kansas City Star tells what happened next:

Astonishing as it may seem, incredible as it may appear, these saloon men were strongly moved by the talk Mrs. Nation gave them. She meant what she said — they understood that. They knew she was not resentful and did not despise them just as they understood how resolved she was to make them close their joints.

It was a curious scene to observe. It was interesting to see the countenances of the saloon men. They showed little bravado. Those who had been blustering about what they would do if the saloon wrecker came around became as meek as lambs and looked very much ashamed of themselves. Mrs. Nation enjoyed their discomfort. Her eyes were laughing all the time.

Gaining recruits in the agitated capital city for her upcoming war proved to be easy for the chief recruiter. Within a few days the Topeka Brigade, Kansas Division, of General Carry's Home Defenders' Army numbered several hundred, mostly but not exclusively, women. A mass meeting for last-minute inspiration and final instructions was held on the evening of February 2 in the Topeka auditorium. Some of the women had had difficulty obtaining hatchets, but the general assured them that "pokers will do as well." Most of the men left the meeting early, but the enthralled women stayed on. "It's always the women who have to stand in the breach," the leader said scornfully as the men drifted out. "There is only one place worse than a saloon, and that's a church full of hypocrites."

On February 4 Mrs. Nation and a detail of her female followers attempted to rush a joint, but a large crowd repulsed them, many of whom had been hired by the jointists for the purpose. The pushing and shoving exercise resembled a rugby match with several hundred players on each side. The general and three of her followers were arrested but soon released. The next dawn, in the bitter cold of a blizzard, they had better luck. They completely demolished one of Topeka's finest, the Senate Saloon.

This incident featured two shots fired in the air by the guard and the usual smashed furnishings; but the

21. Ibid.
disabled list also included slot machines and a heavy cash register which Nation held aloft before ceremoniously hurling it to the ground. She received an “ugly wound” in the melee but she took no sick leave. At the jail she implored her keepers for help: “Oh men, don’t be nice. Stand up for us, for God’s sake!” The Senate reopened within hours to a rush business in booze and beer and souvenirs of broken glass and splintered wood. The next day the State Journal carried a front-page sketch of the revelers at the Senate bar, including a fourteen-year-old boy.

The continuing presence of one of the world’s greatest agitators inevitably produced an atmosphere of mounting tension. The situation passed beyond that of good-humored concern about smashing into something much more serious and ugly, bordering on insurrection and revolution. The pent-up passions of the drys could no longer be denied. An anonymous “prominent Topekan” warned that “the people mean business. The situation in Topeka at present is desperate. The feeling of anger against the jointists is most intense. It only needs a spark to kindle this feeling into riotous flame.”

The attack on the Senate Saloon increased the intensity still further. Within twenty-four hours many men “who count in the business and social life of Topeka” rallied to the radical temperance standard. “Fearing for the peace of the city,” Police Chief Frank Stahl ordered all the joints closed on February 6. On February 7, seventy of the “best” professional and business men called a mass meeting of male citizens for Sunday, February 10.

The coming of Carry Nation to the Kansas scene cast into bold relief the long-standing differences between the two factions within the “law and order” community, but paradoxically it also narrowed those differences. Both factions profoundly wanted all the joints in the state closed tight and stricter enforcement of the prohibition law. But they differed in the tactics deemed appropriate to obtain these goals.

The radicals, much the smaller numerically but considerably more vocal, often Prohibitionist in politics, wanted to take direct action against the joints at once. Their aggressive position had been strengthened immeasurably by the advent of Mrs. Nation. The more conservative-minded, who dominated the KSTU and the WCTU, usually Republican or Populist politically, wanted only to step up the pressure on law enforcement officers to do their duty. They felt uneasy in sponsoring lawlessness in the name of the law. But as a concession to the headstrong radicals, they were inclined to put a short-term “or else” on their proposed injunction to the law officers. Some even envisioned the forces of a “citizen soldiery, drilled and officered,” which would sweep the jointists from the state and bring the millennium to Kansas. Indeed, the core of such a unit, which included some one thousand male citizens, had already begun to drill in the capital city.

The leadership that emerged among the temperance forces at this distressed hour represented the broad spectrum of public opinion, except for antiprohibition, whose partisans grimly maintained a stony silence. The leading spokesperson for the most radical position was Dr. Evieela Harding, a forty-five-year-old Ohio native who was one of the few trained female physicians in Kansas. Simple, unpretentious, with a strong will and a “good natured” face, she devoted much of her Kansas life to social, political, educational, and philanthropic causes. An outspoken suffragist, she became successively a Populist, a Democrat, and a Socialist. As a Democrat in 1916 she was the first woman in Kansas to run for the congressional nomination of a major party. Her home in Topeka had become a bustling nerve center for the Home Defenders. She was the principal aide-de-camp for General Carry, though the combative physician did not hesitate in the least to disagree with her leader over tactics.

Only slightly to the right of Dr. Harding was the tempestuous Reverend Frank W. Emerson, pastor of the First Christian Church and editor of the Kansas Endeavorer. Active in the Prohibition party, Emerson accepted its nomination for governor in 1902 but polled only 6,065 votes. Though a man of the cloth and of peace, Emerson had a reputation for masculine pugnacity which made him uneasy about an aggressive feminine presence in temperance matters. “The world needs men,” he said. “Men to work and watch and pray, yes, and men to fight — to fight against the wrongs and abuse inherited from another age, that have fastened themselves like festering, cankerous sores upon the body politic and social.”

The scholarly Reverend John Thomas McFarland, pastor of the First Methodist Church, played the role of the citizen-philosopher during the emergency. He

24. Topeka Daily Capital, February 5, 6, 1901; Topeka State Journal, February 5, 6, 1901.
25. Topeka Daily Capital, February 6, 9, 1901; Kansas City Star, February 6, 1901.
26. Topeka Daily Capital, February 8, 9, 1901.
brided the ideological gap between the two factions and, respected by both, acted as a liaison between them. The fifty-year-old Indiana native had served as president of Iowa Wesleyan University and had come to Topeka in 1899 from a pastorate at the New York Avenue Church, Brooklyn, New York. Within a few years he became the “biggest man” in the Methodist church in Kansas.

A temperance leader since his arrival in Topeka, the “intellectually massive” McFarland delighted in the discomfort felt by the jointists at the hands of Mrs. Nation. He saw that she had placed them in their most difficult position in years and had aroused public enmity to unprecedented heights. Still, he felt mob action was not the answer, especially if it were led by a woman. Like his colleague Emerson, he felt that the men should take the lead. If all legal remedies failed, then “let the men of the city, from the highest to the humblest . . . step out into the light, and sweep the unendurable nuisance from our streets.” Exactly how such an august assemblage would differ from a Nation-led “mob,” except in gender, remains unclear.

A leading representative of the “conservative” temperance faction was the renowned Reverend Charles M. Sheldon, minister of the Central Congregational Church. Educated in the best eastern schools, the forty-four-year-old New York State native had been called to the Topeka church in 1889. He had soon become a prominent social gospeler and a leader of the temperance forces in their perennial effort to sweep the joints from Topeka. No Kansas of the day was held in wider or deeper respect.

In his autobiography, published in 1925, Sheldon declared his fond admiration for Mrs. Nation and her campaign. But on Sunday, February 10, at the hour of decision, Sheldon, along with the majority of his fellow ministers, preached caution. He did not approve of citizens taking the law into their own hands, for even if all the joints in Topeka were smashed, the relief would only be temporary. It was the far better part of wisdom to insist that law officers do their duty, and to elect ones that would. The vast majority of Topekans, and Kansans, would have agreed. Revolutions always begin with a minority.

The mass meeting of Sunday, February 10, was one of the most remarkable in Kansas history. Nearly three thousand aroused citizens tramped to the auditorium with a “conviction and determination that showed itself on every face.” The all-male meeting had been called three days earlier, immediately after the leaders of the conservative faction learned that Nation would be on a one-week lecture tour in Iowa and Illinois beginning February 8. The written agenda featured confrontation of the jointists; the unwritten addendum called for recapturing the initiative from the women. Open joints in the capital city brought embarrassment enough to the temperance enthusiasts, but to have women take the lead in doing something about them was intolerable. Though only men were present, the spirit of Mrs. Nation seemed to pervade the entire audience.

The audience heard stirring speeches from Stahl, Troutman, Emerson, and McFarland. The latter explained reassuringly that the “Anglo-Saxon vigor which has gone from Runnymede [sic] to John Brown is still present.” In its chief business, the meeting organized itself into a “Committee of Public Order” and issued an ultimatum. It gave the jointists until noon Monday to close their doors and until Friday to remove their fixtures from the premises. The group had not assembled to debate the finer points of jurisprudence; when one poor soul dissented on a resolution, the crowd angrily cried, “Put him out!” After the last irate resolution had been passed, the assemblage rose, lustily sang “America,” and happily filed out, content that they had at long last found the final solution to the joint problem. The cerebral McFarland said that the meeting represented “the public speaking in the imperative mood.” Evidently even the conservatives had had enough.

Nation returned from her out-of-state speaking tour on February 14 to a bevy of irate women. The Home Defenders were upset that they had been given no representation on the Committee of Five to whom the mass meeting had delegated its authority. Nation herself was disturbed that the men had permitted the jointists to retain their bar equipment which could subsequently be used for a “hellish purpose.” Although the beleaguered joints, with few exceptions, had closed up tight and the drugstores had adopted a much more cautious policy as a result of the ultimatum, the women decided to act.

A crowd of five hundred women and men gathered

32. Ibid., 245–46; *Topeka Daily Capital*, February 10, 11, 1901.
stealthily at the east steps of the statehouse before
dawn on Sunday, February 17. Everyone had wrapped
a white handkerchief around his or her neck, a mark
of the Home Defenders. The group quietly assembled
on the lawn in military fashion: “Company C, we meet
at the southwest corner . . . .” The day before, Nation
had issued a democratic call for “all men and women
of any color or clime to be of us.” Many members of
the all-male “Law Enforcement Army” accompanied
the women, but Commander McFarland, who was con-
spicuously absent, later insisted that his group took no
“official” part in the proceedings. After several Wash-
burn students belatedly arrived carrying a seven-foot,
cement-headed battering ram, General Nation gave
her well-armed troops a few brief words of encour-
gement and then ordered them toward lower Kansas
Avenue.76 What followed made February 17 forever af-
aer a red-letter day in the annals of organized violence
in Kansas. Before the hectic day had done, a promi-
nent joint, a barn in which were stored bar fixtures,
and a cold-storage warehouse thought to hold beer
had been smashed. The police station bulged with
first-time visitors; General Nation herself was arrested
no less than four times.

Between smash number one and smash number
two the crowd struggled back to the statehouse to plan
its next move. A “warm argument” broke out between
the exhilarated, Nation-filled women who wanted to
proceed posthaste to the next joint and the disquieted,
apprehensive men who argued that having made their
violent point, they should disband and go home. The
philosophical dispute came to center in the personages
of Dr. Evilela Harding and Rev. Frank Emerson.

The two chief assistant generals stood nose-to-nose
and screamed somewhat uncomplimentary epithets at
one another. When she called him a coward, his face
turned “white with wrath.” But he couldn’t stop her or
the other women who were learning first-hand that
Mrs. Nation was right when she called smashing “won-
derful.” The women marched off joyously to their
newly discovered work, with the overruled men “plod-
ing sullenly” in the rear.77

In the last outbreak of this type in Topeka, a week
later an all-male band of fifty to seventy-five raiders,
armed and masked, smashed a liquor warehouse in
North Topeka. One man suffered a severe gunshot
wound in the foray, which was led by a local physician
and the revolver-toting Emerson. “That preacher was
like a tiger cat,” admired the police officer who ar-
rested him, “the fiercest man in the crowd.”78 Evidently
Dr. Harding’s accusation had struck home more pro-
foundly than she could have imagined.

The reactions to the controversial acts encouraged
and perpetuated by Mrs. Nation were as varied as the
human imagination and as profound as the human
spirit. The Kansas countryside reacted explosively in a
series of extralegal acts against illegal institutions that
has gone unduplicated to this day. During the month
of February, which framed the violent activity, over
one hundred saloons in at least fifty towns felt the
wrath of the crusaders, male and female.

36. Topeka Daily Capital, February 17, 1901; Kansas City Star, Feb-
uary 18, 1901.
37. Topeka Daily Capital, February 17, 1901; Kansas City Star, Feb-
uary 18, 1901.
At Anthony (Harper County), a group of fourteen WCTU women from the town’s “best families” wrecked three joints and a drugstore with their hatchets. Fifteen “prominent” women, led by the wife of a Methodist minister and the wife of a bank cashier, duplicated the feat at Perry (Jefferson County). When twenty masked women broke into the Missouri Pacific depot at Goff (Nemaha County) and destroyed the liquor therein, Balie P. Waggener, the general attorney for the company and a former member of the Prohibition party, decided in his mature wisdom that things had gone too far. He advised the company to instruct its agents to deal with the temperance crusaders as “common burglars” and to prosecute “to the fullest extent of the law.” The most violent events occurred at Winfield, where the uprising featured an ultimatum to the jointists by a mass meeting of 2,000, two menacing cannons drawn into the town square, a desecration of one church, and an attack on 300 women and children who had sought sanctuary in another. When the ultimatum went unheeded, a group of 150, which included ten “determined, resolute” women and numerous businessmen, ministers, and college students, marched doublefile to one of the most offensive joints. In twenty minutes of mayhem, during which both attackers and defenders were seriously injured, they destroyed all semblance of a saloon “except the smell.” The gratified crusaders then marched in an orderly fashion back to a church, where the Christian church minister rendered “one of the finest prayers ever delivered in Winfield.”

As a result of the direct action taken by the aroused populace, the legal process began to make itself more visible in the stationhouse, the courthouse, and the statehouse. The rejuvenated KSTU demanded “the immediate, the absolute, the uncompromising enforcement of the prohibitory law.” Jointists were arrested and enjoined from operating a nuisance; many closed their doors before either the law or an irate temperance mob could work its will. Often a warning was sufficient, and even the rumor of a prospective visit by Nation could work wonders. At Emporia, only minutes after a prankster had signed her name on the hotel register, all the town’s joints closed.

The 1901 legislature reacted by passing the first significant temperance legislation since 1887. It had been anticipated that a strong bid for resubmission would be made at the session. But the legislators had been duly impressed by the outpouring of temperance sentiment which they had heard about from their hometowns and witnessed directly in the capital city. In addition, they had an opportunity to hear from Nation herself when she visited the statehouse early in February.

She made informal remarks (she was incapable of making any other kind) to each body, at its invitation, receiving a somewhat warmer welcome in the rural-dominated house. In the senate she pleaded for help in putting down the liquor traffic. “If you don’t do it,” she said, “then the women of this state will do it.” To the house she said, “You refused me the vote and I had to use a rock.”

The legislature responded to her both directly and indirectly by burying efforts in behalf of resubmission and constitutional convention bills, passing instead the Hurrel Act, which more appropriately could have been called the Nation Act. Drafted by the KSTU and lobbied by the WCTU, the act tightened the injunction and the search-and-seizure provisions of the liquor law. It made the presence of bar fixtures or a federal liquor stamp prima facie evidence that a public nuisance was being maintained. A companion bill gave the county attorney virtually “inquisitorial” powers to subpoena witnesses with knowledge of liquor law infractions and require their testimony under penalty of a misdemeanor upon refusal to cooperate. The WCTU at both the state and the national levels had considerable difficulty in adjusting to the unorthodoxies of its former county president. Early in February the national office cautiously declared that it had “no unkind words for Mrs. Nation.” On her eastern tour Nation spoke in Willard Hall, Evanston, Illinois, the national headquarters. She no longer had much use for the WCTU, she said; it usually wouldn’t help and was far too slow when it did. But the next day the president, smiling through clenched teeth, announced that henceforth the national publication would print only favorable items about Nation.

The state organization could not escape the dilemma so readily. As Nation moved to the front pages on a daily basis, state headquarters began to be bombarded with inquiries, from members and nonmembers alike, about the official posture of the organiz-

39. Ibid., February 17, 1901; Topeka Daily Capital, January 31, February 14, 18, 1901; Topeka State Journal, February 15, 16, 1901; Our Messenger, April 1, 1901; Ashbury, Carry Nation, 202–8.
40. Topeka Mail and Breeze, February 15, 1901; Topeka Daily Capital, January 26, 1901; Topeka State Journal, February 16, 1901.
41. Kansas City Star, February 8, 1901; Topeka Daily Capital, February 8, 1901.
42. Kansas, Session Laws, 1901, 416–22; Our Messenger, March 1901; Topeka Daily Capital, February 7, 14, 21, 1901.
43. Topeka Daily Capital, February 6, 1901; Topeka State Journal, February 15, 1901.
tion. Some of the “most earnest” women pressed the leadership hard to take a more aggressive stance. The latter reaffirmed its permissive position, pointing out that individuals and local unions could act as they deemed advisable so long as they did not fly directly in the face of state or national policy. “If they saw fit to raid,” President Hutchinson said, “there was none to say them nay.” She stressed that the KSTU and WCTU, through their educational efforts over the years, had developed the climate that permitted such an explosive response. “Mrs. Nation . . . threw the bomb, but the combustible material igniting here and there over the state was but an outraged and long suffering people that had borne defiance of law . . . so long that ‘patience had ceased to be a virtue . . . .’”

Three years later Nation proposed to deed some Topeka property to the WCTU to be used as a “Prohibition College” for “healthy Christian girls.” She met with the state executive committee, most of whom had never seen her before. A “deep impression” was made on the curious members, who were relieved to discover for themselves that the “masculine and unworthy” press image was untrue. Later that year she made a presentation before the state convention to explain her proposal. Though grateful for her “unsleeping and generous” offer, the convention rejected it because she insisted that the governing board be composed of women who were members of the Prohibition party. After the vote, she rose to say, more sadly than bitterly, that she felt the Union had made a mistake. To relieve the tension the convention rose in a body and sang “Some Glad Day.” No lasting animosity resulted, for in her will she bequeathed the rights to her autobiography to the Kansas WCTU. After she had been safely secured in her grave, WCTU esteem for her earthly activities rose measurably and solidly. In 1918 it dedicated a drinking fountain to her memory at the union station plaza in Wichita.

Newspaper reaction to Nation varied from admiring endorsement through mild rebuke to sputtering hatred. Although the organ of the national Prohibition party waffled on the wisdom of her actions, the organ of the state Prohibition party, the Fulcrum, found her a “pleasant faced old lady” full of conversation “as sensible as any person you will find.” It strongly supported her methods, finding it ironic that her activities had caused a “strange sensitiveness” to law and order in quarters that had heretofore remained indifferent to the illegal joint. The paper published many letters from lively correspondents who often pointed out the limited options available to women as the common victims of alcohol abusers. “She can’t vote it out,” one said, “but she can spill it out.” Some correspondents, however, did not support women uncritically. A Topeka woman thought that men should come to the aid of the long-suffering women but, she admitted, there were “impure women enough . . . in Topeka, to dam up the Kaw river in its widest place.”

The Topeka Daily Capital, which had become virtually the official organ of the “conservative” temperance forces, took a strong anticrusade position. It called for an end to the “sporadic anarchy” that blazed across the state and for increased pressure on officers of the law, rather than violence. Nation, it said, was a “ridiculous person,” a feeling that had become mutual. The Topeka State Journal saw much merit in the outbreaks. The people had become increasingly frustrated during the nineties, it said, as they watched “the jug, the tin cup and the ‘bootlegger’” give way to “French plate mirrors, mint juleps and lavish fixtures.” Above all, Kansas had no reason to apologize for the uprising to the smirking eastern cities that had been derisively asking of late “What’s the Matter with Kansas?”

The Wichita Beacon applauded her without flatly endorsing her methods. But the Wichita Eagle had become her implacable foe from the time of the Carey bar smash. Following that incident it defiantly proclaimed that the “Medicine Lodge woman” would not run Wichita. Among the many slings and arrows which the crusader had to suffer during her eventful career, it remained for the Eagle to give in a word, the unkindest cut of all. Nation, the paper declared, was “unkissable.”

Down in Emporia, young Will White gave his wide and appreciative audiences the benefit of his several views on temperance in the pages of the Emporia Gazette and such widely read national magazines as the Saturday Evening Post. White had just begun his formal temperance career as a member of the Executive Committee of the KSTU and would later become a vice-president. Bursting with fictional plots at this

44. Our Messenger, March, November 1901.
47. Topeka Daily Capital, February 19, 1901.
49. Wichita Eagle, December 29, 1900, Topeka Daily Capital, February 19, 1901.
stage in his writing career, he also contributed short morality pieces about fast-living young men who fall victim to the Demon Rum to the pages of the Kansas Issue, the official organ of the KSTU.\textsuperscript{50}

On January 28, 1901, White told his Gazette readers that “Carrie Nation is wrong — dead wrong . . . . She is crazy as a bedbug. There is no doubt about that. And she won’t stop the sale of beer by her foolish crusade . . . . She has, by her unwomanly conduct, forfeited every claim she may have had to respect as a woman . . . .” Just two weeks later they received his more enduring opinion: “She is all right. She is not crazy. She is doing a good, sensible work, and is doing it effectively . . . . She is a brave, fat old heroine, and the Gazette hereby apologizes that it didn’t discover her worth sooner . . . . Drive the jointists from Kansas. They have no rights that a white man is bound to respect. Hurrah for Carrie Nation! She’s all right!”\textsuperscript{51}

From among the innumerable personal views of the crusade, two have been selected as forceful examples of the polar positions, each of which was held by many. A Wisconsin man wrote to a Topeka friend that “the woman is clearly . . . . looking for cheap advertisement and the money there is in it. Her sympathizers . . . . can never convince me that any lady would do what she has done . . . . she is unsexed, and of all things on gods green footstool which are hateful to man, an unsexed woman ought to be most hateful.” A woman writing to Our Messenger, the WCTU publication, took the opposite position: “What if a few people do get killed[?] . . . . I’m tired of this sentimental gush about ‘stopping before it comes to bloodshed . . . .’ I for one, hope a thousand more of them will be smashed in Kansas before she stops.”\textsuperscript{52}

The state’s Nation-fever subsided as rapidly as it had developed; near normalcy had returned everywhere by early March. The intensive period lasted less than two months, only fifty-two days (including seven

\textsuperscript{50} Kansas Issue, May–June, July 1900, April 1901, May 1901, July 1903, March, May 1904.

\textsuperscript{51} Emporia Gazette, January 28, February 11, 1901.

\textsuperscript{52} Alexius H. Baas to John Stewart, April 14, 1901. Alexius H. Baas Miscellaneous Collection, Manuscripts Department, Kansas State Historical Society; Our Messenger, March 1901.

During the latter part of 1901 Mrs. Nation embarked on an eastern lecture tour, where supporters such as these in Rochester, New York, gathered to hear her message.
days of smashing) having elapsed between the Carey Hotel and the Topeka uprising of February 17. Thereafter her outbursts in Kansas included chiefly two minor Topeka incidents, acting alone, in the winter of 1902–3 and a last fling with three old friends in Wichita in 1904. Although she traveled extensively during this period, Topeka remained her home base until 1905. At that time she moved to Oklahoma Territory, where she helped to bring the new state into the union with a dry constitution. She took an extensive European trip in 1908–9 and lived briefly in Washington, D.C., before she settled in a rural area of northern Arkansas in 1909. She died on June 9, 1911, in her sixty-fifth year in a Leavenworth hospital after an illness of five months.\(^\text{53}\)

The significance of the Nation crusade to Kansas history has been grossly distorted by her biographers. Thousands of Kansans, including many of the most intelligent and best educated, flocked with enthusiasm to her standard. How could this “crazy old woman” have commanded such power over events, yet have been utterly innocent of authority of any sort? The answer, of course, is that her perception was their perception; her concern, their concern; her moral agenda, their moral agenda. She had struck a responsive chord deep in the Kansas psyche, a chord that vibrated all the way back to the direct-action days of the territorial period. As a revealing reflection of the Kansas mind of the period, her crusade amounted to much more than the destruction of a few joints.

The predominant image of the demented freak which has so endeared itself to the popular media has come mainly from three sources. Nation herself contributed significantly to the image in her increasingly bizarre behavior outside Kansas after mid-1901. She began to act the caricature of herself in appearances at carnivals and flea circuses, on the vaudeville and burlesque circuits, and as a truly “freak” attraction at New York’s Coney Island. Who could be expected to take such demeaning behavior or its eccentric perpetrator seriously or respectfully? And it made a world of difference in the quality of the ensuing publicity whether she smashed an illegal joint in her home state, which had had a prohibition law for twenty years, or a perfectly legal saloon in Kansas City, St. Louis, or Chicago.\(^\text{54}\)

The contemporary eastern press made a major contribution to the popular image. Thirsting for new western objects of ridicule after the demise of Populism and inherently hostile to prohibition, it found an easy target in Nation as a prohibitionist, a woman, and a Kansan. Pouncing derisively upon her often-inflated words and actions, it denounced her as the “irresponsible victim of her own violent fanaticism.” The most significant source for the modern view has been the product of journalists, biographers, and historians writing principally about her in relation to national prohibition. This derisive outpouring has perpetuated the attitude institutionalized by the press. A long-overdue revision has recently appeared in the more balanced, scholarly treatments of temperance as a serious reform.\(^\text{55}\)

In many respects, Nation was far too candid with the world, shared far too much of her inner spiritual life in person and in her autobiography, for her own good and that of her enduring reputation. Early in her public career she worried that full disclosure of her God-directedness might bring charges of insanity, and she was right. The issue continued to plague and worry her throughout the remainder of her life. When her short-lived newspaper, the Smasher’s Mail, folded, she declared that at least “the public could see by my editorials that I was not insane.” After a tour of several Ivy League colleges in 1902, she wrote perceptively that “the great controversy between Yale and Harvard now, is, which shall excel in brute force, and foot-ball seems to be the test. Colleges were founded for the purpose of educating the young, on moral, intellectual, and spiritual lines . . . It used to be conceded, that the mind made the man, now the forces of the mule and ox are preferred.”\(^\text{56}\) If that be insanity, we need much more of it.

Just as her most important successes stemmed from her steel-willed determination and dominant personality, so, too, did her most conspicuous failures. With temperance sentiment fanned into a white heat, she had an unparalleled opportunity to effect an organization that could maintain a continuing political presence in the state. She recognized this need herself, as did some of her lieutenants, by encouraging Kansas women to organize and by recruiting the Home Defenders in Topeka. But she was too much the loner and the individualist, too taken by her own God-inspired course of action, to make the painful compromises and


\(^{56}\) Nation, *Use and Need*, 140, 167, 253.
adjustments necessary to perfect and manage an effective organization. Administratively she was no Frances Willard.

A diagrammatic example of her inability to work with others in a quasi-democratic setting occurred shortly after the smashing had ended. The temperance forces were making a determined effort to elect J. W. F. Hughes as mayor of Topeka against an acknowledged wet. Three weeks before the election, Nation abruptly announced that she planned to launch a write-in campaign for Frank Emerson, a wholly impractical suggestion that could only have split the temperance vote. She strode imperiously into a meeting of a dozen of her most devoted disciples and with her eyes “snapping” announced that she didn’t want anyone "to come to this meeting and talk for Hughes . . . We don’t want dissenters here; we want workers." Glaring at her intimate associates "over and under her glasses," she began quoting rapidly from the Bible, much as the less holy might in similar circumstances use profanity. When only one of the disciples showed any sympathy to her proposal, she branded them all "a pack of traitors and hypocrites" and stomped angrily from the room.57

One of the least-commented-upon aspects of her influence may have been one of the most far-reaching. Nation had an especially profound effect upon the women of the state. At a time when women were rarely seen in a public advocacy role, she stomped fearlessly up and down the commonwealth, demanding a new social order in temperance affairs and a greater sensitivity to the plight of women as victims of male alcohol abusers. Whatever their individual temperance views, Kansas women could not help but experience a vicarious thrill in seeing the old lady so befuddle and discomfit the authorities. Cries from her detractors that she was illegal or insane or both could not erase the delectable image of her tweaking the nose of the distraught governor, before God Almighty and a room-full of pitiless newspaper reporters.

Nation’s views on the role of women in society can best be described as protofeminist. Although the first item on her agenda was alcohol, she possessed and conveyed a basic, almost primitive, instinct for the rights and dignity of women. She did not directly attack the sexual mores of the day, though she felt their sting, as few women did. She was constantly reminded that she had passed beyond the pale so far as “ladylike” behavior was concerned. “Unsexed” and "unkissable" were only two of the many cruel epithets that she had to absorb. When Governor Stanley did manage to get a word in during the famous interview, he appeared less upset at what she had been saying than at the fact that it was a woman who had been saying it.

Throughout her public career she remained sensitive to women’s issues. One evening in Ottawa she declined to see a reporter, pleading exhaustion; but when she learned that the reporter was a young woman, she quickly changed her mind and granted her a cheerful and lengthy interview. She often linked her violence against saloons to her lack of authority in matters political, as when she told the Kansas house that she had resorted to rocks only after “you refused me the vote.” She established a home in Kansas City, Kansas, for the female victims of male alcohol abuse. On the board of her proposed “Prohibition College” she would have permitted only women. As time passed she placed a greater emphasis on suffrage and less on violence. The masthead of her 1905 Oklahoma paper, the Hatchet, carried the motto “Your ballot is your hatchet.” A few years earlier she had been telling Kansas women just the reverse.58

The impact of Nation on prohibition enforcement was heatedly debated by her contemporaries within the temperance movement. Her rough-and-tumble, populist manner proved at least as critical as the legality of her methods in determining the individual reaction. Those who felt comfortable with her intense, boisterous style tended to find her behavior and its results more than acceptable. “The Kansas band wagon’s again leading the national procession,” enthused a KSTU lecturer, “this time with Mother Nation in the driver’s seat, wielding her beer-stained hatchet for a whip, while the wheels are crushing the life out of the whisky rebellion against the constitution of Kansas.” But drys who identified with the more prim and proper, “Lyman Beecher” temperance tradition found her conduct repugnant. A Topeka Brahmin curtly stated that “the law was adopted without her or her methods; it has been retained and improved without her or her methods; . . . and its future will not be perceptibly affected by her or her methods.”59

As the temperance tide receded in the spring the joints began cautiously to reestablish themselves. By the year’s end little outward manifestation of the cru-

sade could be seen. Another five years of relaxed enforcement passed before the authorities moved systematically against illegal selling. When they did, they ushered in a second golden era of Kansas prohibition, much more stringent and longer lasting than that of the late eighties. At about the same time a distinct movement culminating in national prohibition could be discerned. Some of her biographers have claimed that she was the "chief architect" of that movement, but that surely reaches too far.  

How much of the delayed reaction in Kansas can be attributed to her efforts is not easy to assess. She gave a tremendous morale boost to the movement at a time when it desperately needed it. She helped to thwart resubmissionist efforts and certainly influenced the 1901 legislature to enact more stringent enforcement provisions. Thus she assured the survival of the law during one of its darkest hours, until the subsequent day when enforcement became more popular, and therefore more effective.

It would be a serious mistake, however, to judge her influence solely from a count of the joints she wrecked or from the impact of the legislation she influenced. For thousands of Kansans, and subsequently millions of Americans, she became an all-pervasive and eternal symbol of opposition to the liquor traffic and protection of the home. By molding herself into an almost perfect temperance instrument, she became a legendary standard against which future sentiment and action could be measured. In her monomania, her fearlessness, and her God-driven determination she became the fleshly embodiment of the geometric theorem that the shortest distance between two points is the straight line.

Nation played a powerful role as an educator of both the Kansas and the national publics. She brought the harsh glare of adverse publicity to bear on the outlawed joint and the discredited saloon, both of which would be fighting a losing battle for their lives within a few years. Sometimes her discreditors became unwitting allies in her antisaloon campaign. Even the august and hostile New York Times gave her crusade an inadvertent boost. After expounding at length about the pitiful spectacle that the crazy old woman had made of herself, the Times contemptuously charged that she didn’t have "the slightest conception of the magnitude of the liquor evil in large cities."

Annie Diggs, who became a Nation convert, once said that Mrs. Nation was a throwback not only to the Puritan days but to the biblical ages. She makes one feel, Diggs said, that "an old Hebraic personage has stepped into our own lax and nerveless time." William Allen White placed her in a long lineage of Kansans, beginning with John Brown (which would have pleased her immensely), who had taken "a very short and absolutely direct cut from [their] ideals to the realization of them." Like the Puritans who strove to make their community the object of universal emulation, Mrs. Nation attempted to set Kansas on a hill "that her light may go to every dark corner of the earth." She deserves an honored place in the pantheon of Kansas saints for her dauntless courage, her artless integrity, and the insight that her crusade brought to concerns of the human heart.

60. Beals, Cyclone Carry, 344; Topeka Daily Capital, April 27, 1901.