

James D. Ivy, *No Saloon in the Valley: The Southern Strategy of Texas Prohibitionists in the 1880s*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 2003.

The meeting place of western and southern history, not to mention United States and Mexican history, Texas has emerged in recent years as a landscape particularly fascinating to scholars interested in frontiers, borderlands, and racial formation. In the wake of such important studies as Neil Foley's *The White Scourge* (1997), Rebecca Sharpless's *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices* (1999), and Mark M. Carroll's *Homesteads Ungovernable* (2001) comes James D. Ivy's *No Saloon in the Valley*, a close examination of the Texas temperance movement of the 1880s. Ivy keeps the focus of his work tight but crafts a study rich with wider meanings, even if he leaves some of them unexplored. In post-Reconstruction Texas, struggles over prohibition intersected changing notions of race, masculinity, honor, class, Christian duty, and regional identity, providing an intriguing case study that rewards Ivy's careful analysis.

Ivy identifies the 1880s as a decade of tremendous change for Texans due to immigration, economic modernization, and the reestablishment of white Home Rule. Political battles over drinking turned into heated contests between factions over control of the state's future. Ivy chronicles the rise of a statewide movement that strove to ban the sale and manufacture of alcohol, first through counties' local option laws and eventually through state referendum in 1887. The movement originated a decade earlier with the efforts of the United Friends of Temperance but did not emerge as an organized campaign until WCTU President Frances Willard toured the state in 1882. However, Ivy argues that the Texas prohibitionist movement – though supported by WCTU chapters across the state – would be led by white Protestant men who minimized their ties to national organizations such as the WCTU to avoid taint-by-association with feminism, racial equality, and religious radicalism. Texas prohibitionists instead fashioned

a “southern strategy” that portrayed their cause as distinctly southern, uniquely Texan, and “no threat to the white male’s dominance of the social order” (25).

To trace the development of this “southern strategy,” Ivy looks up-close at two prohibition elections, a local option vote in McLennan County in 1885 and the statewide referendum of 1887. Using speeches, newspaper editorials, pamphlets, letters, and election returns, Ivy parses the issues that swirled around the two campaigns. Prohibition threatened to divide the Democratic Party, so supporters insisted it was a non-partisan matter and rejected any association with the Republican or Prohibitionist parties. They denied they were a “crusade of preachers and petticoats,” attempting to minimize the public role played by clerics and women (50). They wooed white, native-born male voters by framing the issue as a struggle between honorable Southern gentlemen and – in the words of one Waco editorialist – “negroes and low-bred foreigners” (62). Conjuring up the specter of the black rapist, temperance activists claimed that prohibition would reduce the “rape and outrage” of white women by black men (81).

*No Saloon in the Valley* shows how reformers’ “southern strategy” arose in response to the often vicious attacks launched by opponents of prohibition. Temperance histories tend to focus on activists rather than their adversaries, but Ivy gives almost equal time to the “antis” who were just as organized as the “pros.” Enemies of prohibition held rallies, printed pamphlets, published editorials, and drummed up votes. They dismissed prohibitionists as “long-haired men and short-haired women,” allying themselves with traditional gender roles (4). They insisted that prohibition threatened the “personal liberty” of Texans, an argument especially potent in the aftermath of Reconstruction. Both supporters and opponents of prohibition turned the elections into referendums on Texas identity, with both sides laying claim to “authentic” southern values of honor, tradition, nativism, and white supremacy. In the end, the “antis” won the

day, defeating prohibition in McLennan County in 1885 and at the state level in 1887, although several other counties did pass local option laws. Ivy dissects the 1887 returns, finding that every group rejected prohibition: native-born white men, foreign-born white men, Tejano men, and African American men. Ironically, the only subgroup that voted a majority in favor of prohibition (57.4 percent) was white emigrants from other parts of the south, suggesting that the “southern strategy” worked but not on native Texans. The strategy was southern but not sufficiently Texan.

Ivy writes with a smooth style but *No Room in the Valley* is a frequently frustrating read. Like many monographs adapted from dissertations, the book suffers at times from the inclusion of unnecessary details; for example, who cares – except meteorologists – that “more than three inches of rain had fallen on Galveston in the four days before Willard’s arrival” (16)? More problematic is Ivy’s reluctance to explicate the broader historiographical, theoretical, and national significance of his research. After sweeping aside a half-century of prohibition historiography in a single paragraph in the introduction, he refuses to engage the question that lurks somewhere near the center of all temperance studies: Why? Why did these activists at this time in this place wage war on alcohol? Ivy rejects the idea that industrialization, urbanization, immigration, or evangelical religion played much of a role in Texas, but offers only that prohibition was “in part” a response to “change, uncertainty, and anxiety” and that prohibitionists were also “genuine reformers” who “wanted to change the society around them” (71, 4).

This thin explanation leaves a hole at the heart of the book, forcing readers to draw their own conclusions from Ivy’s data. Surely immigration and urbanization had something to do with this movement, given the virulent nativism of the campaign and its targeting of urban saloons. But then again the opposition was equally nativist—and equally anti-clerical, anti-feminist, and racist. Yet both sides did at times attempt to attract African American voters, who had not yet been disenfranchised

through the poll taxes and literacy tests that would accompany Jim Crow. Ivy emphasizes the prohibitionists' racism but I was surprised by how often black and white reformers shared the same podiums, worked together on organizing committees, and sat alongside one another at rallies. White women appear to have played a much smaller role than African American men in the campaigns, demonstrating that reform could create space for cross-racial collaboration in the post-Reconstruction south, while white women's opportunity for political involvement remained severely limited. Meanwhile, Tejanos remained outside the movement, dismissed by prohibitionists as too culturally disposed to drink and too easily bribed by saloonkeepers. Ivy could have expanded the usefulness of his study by comparing the racial politics and voting patterns of the 1887 Texas campaign to those of other prohibition referendums in the south or west. The 1855 vote in California, for example, similarly involved Anglo factions competing for political control in a multi-racial frontier environment, begging the question: To what extent is Ivy's "southern strategy" really a frontier strategy?

Ivy ends with a fascinating coda discussing the reemergence of prohibition in Texas during the Progressive Era, culminating in another statewide referendum in 1911. The Anti-Saloon League now guided the movement; rather than being uniquely Texan, the campaign was envisioned as part of a national assault on alcohol. Women remained at the periphery. The "southern strategy" had been abandoned, but the new national strategy contained plenty of xenophobia, anti-Catholicism, and race baiting. Texans rejected prohibition once again, but with African Americans and Tejanos largely disenfranchised, the margin was smaller. In this and earlier chapters, *No Room in the Valley* reveals how prohibition was inextricably intertwined with crucial questions of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, and sexuality. These are questions that transcend even Texas.

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