



## Signing the Pledge: George B. Skinner and the Red Ribbon Club of Lincoln

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Photographs / Images: George B Skinner, Red Ribbon pledge card from Nebraska City, John B Finch, program for a Prohibition Party meeting in 1891 in Lincoln, Lincoln's Centennial Opera House, Twelfth Street looking south from O Street, Harvey Wesley Hardy, Andrew J Sawyer, Andrew G Wolfenbarger, advertisement for Skinner's Barn

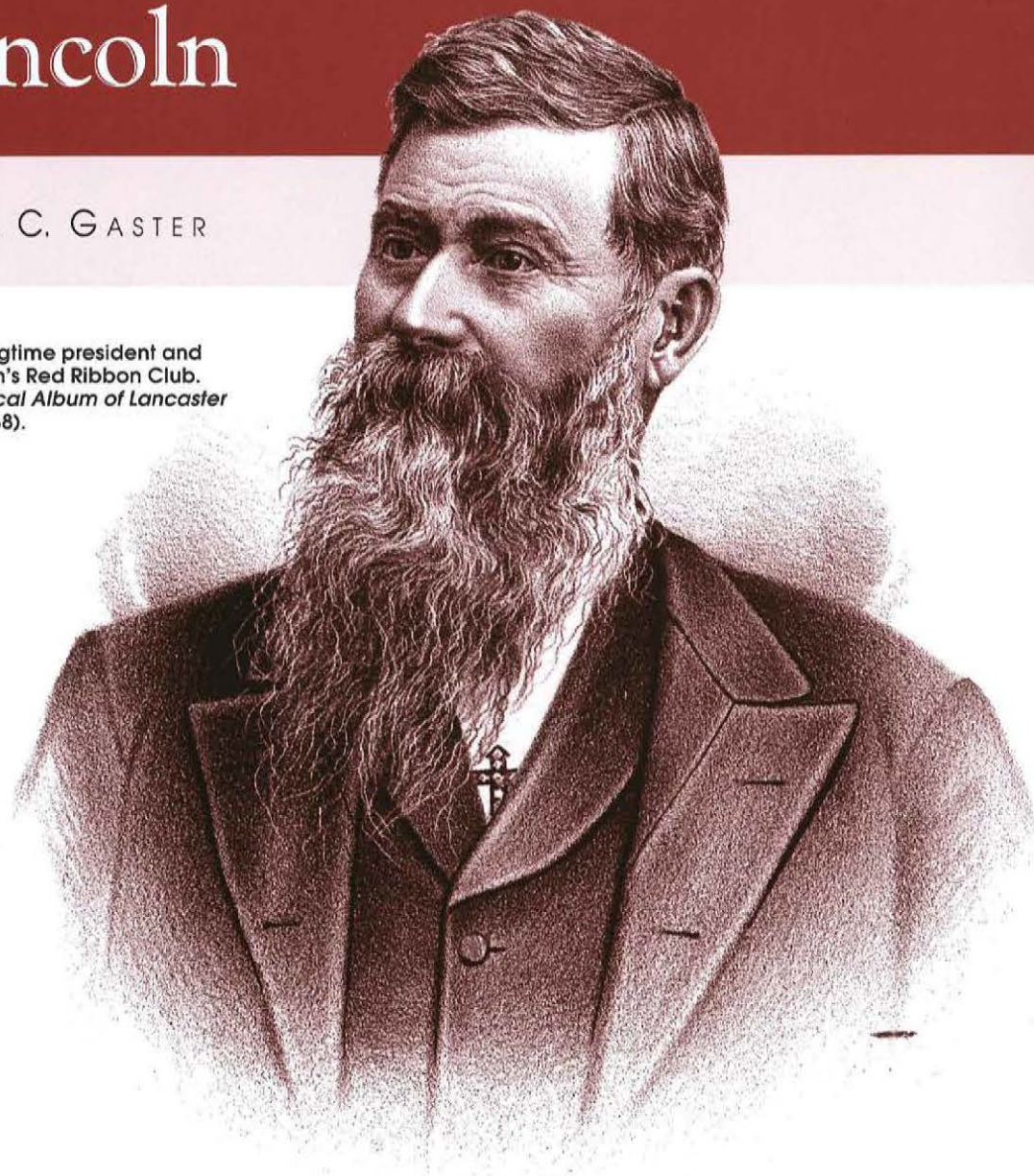
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SIGNING THE PLEDGE:

# George B. Skinner and the Red Ribbon Club of Lincoln

BY PATRICIA C. GASTER

George B. Skinner, longtime president and  
guiding spirit of Lincoln's Red Ribbon Club.  
*Portrait and Biographical Album of Lancaster  
County, Nebraska (1888).*



*George B. Skinner*





Nebraska City Red Ribbon Club!  
DARE TO BE TRUE.

*I, the undersigned, for my own good and the good of others, promise,*

**GOD HELPING ME,**

*Never to use, make, buy, sell, furnish or cause to be furnished to others as a beverage, any spirituous or malt liquors, wine or cider.*

*Beaumont S. Nuckolls*  
JOHN B. FINCH. Date \_\_\_\_\_

This Red Ribbon pledge card from Nebraska City included the name of club founder John B. Finch. 7619-66 Nebraska State Historical Society, Source: Lulu Nuckolls Wesner

From 1877 until well after 1900, Lincoln, Nebraska, was the home of a vigorous temperance reform club headed for much of its history by George B. Skinner, a local livery stable owner. Temperance advocate John B. Finch, who had organized many such clubs in Nebraska and in other states, noted in 1886 that the Lincoln group surpassed "in point of numbers, influence, and power any temperance club known in this country."<sup>1</sup>

Temperance reform clubs, with their colored ribbons worn as badges of membership and symbols of a promise to abstain from alcohol,

were a prominent part of the dry movement. However, the custom of wearing such ribbons did not originate with Red Ribboners. The Blue Ribbon temperance movement, named for the small piece of blue ribbon worn by its supporters, sprang from the work of J. K. Osgood of Gardiner, Maine, in 1872 and received a great impetus several years later from Francis Murphy, who like Osgood, was a reformed drinker. A leading campaigner against alcohol in both England and America, Murphy also established reform clubs, asking his followers to sign a pledge to abstain from intoxicating liquors and don a blue ribbon.<sup>2</sup>

John B. Finch, founder of Lincoln's Red Ribbon Club in 1877. *Nation's Anchor* (Lincoln), February 22, 1896.

## JOHN B. FINCH



### Chairman National Committee 1886-1887

Followers of Dr. Henry A. Reynolds, who founded a club in Bangor, Maine, in 1874 for reformed drinkers, signed a more restrictive pledge to abstain from all alcoholic beverages, including wine and cider. They took for their motto "Dare to do Right" and wore a red ribbon on the right coat lapel. Reynolds also suggested the use of white ribbons as badges for members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, which adopted the white ribbon at its national convention in 1877. Through education and example the WCTU hoped

to obtain pledges of total abstinence from alcohol, and later from tobacco and drugs.<sup>3</sup>

The Red Ribbon movement, as Reynolds's reform clubs were known, was brought to Lincoln in 1877 by temperance worker and lecturer John B. Finch, who afterward traveled through eastern Nebraska, speaking and organizing more clubs. The group at Lincoln grew rapidly. In 1888, eleven years after its founding, it was reported to have sixteen thousand members or pledge signers. Its numbers and longevity were due chiefly to its



perennial president, George B. "Bishop" Skinner, who presided over Red Ribbon Club meetings with all the dignity and fervor of a regular bishop, from his first election to that office in 1878 until shortly before his death in 1895.<sup>4</sup>

Undoubtedly Skinner derived a great deal of satisfaction from this leadership role in Lincoln's temperance community. He was well known in Lincoln, where he had participated in an 1869 lot sale to raise funds for the fledgling Nebraska state government. Born January 3, 1833, near Hartford, Connecticut, he came West at about age twenty, settling in St. Joseph, Missouri. In St. Joseph, Skinner engaged in pork packing and stock dealing, and in 1860 began freighting across the Plains. In 1861-62 during the Civil War he secured a beef contract with the Union Army and later served as an inspector of horses for the army.<sup>5</sup>

At some point during his years of freighting and stock dealing, Skinner became acquainted with David Butler, then a cattle shipper, and afterward the first governor of Nebraska. Governor Butler invited Skinner to Lincoln in 1869 to conduct a sale of publicly owned city lots, the proceeds of which were to be used for a state university building, insane asylum, and completion of the first State Capitol's dome. (Previous lot sales were held in 1867 and 1868.) Skinner recalled twenty years later, in 1889, that he had received \$1,500 for five days of work and "would not give that roll of bills for the whole town and the whole county of Lancaster." However, he shortly afterward changed his mind about the value of Nebraska land, left St. Joseph for good, and returned to Lincoln in 1870.<sup>6</sup>

Skinner speculated in lots in his new home city and entered its political life as well. Building upon his 1869-70 experience as St. Joseph's street commissioner, he served from 1873 to the end of 1875 as Lincoln's street commissioner and fire warden. These were years of economic hardship for the young city, which had its own small public works project in which Skinner set unemployed men to improving the streets around government square.<sup>7</sup>

In 1877 Skinner opened a livery stable on Twelfth Street between P and Q. The business was described by a contemporary city directory as a sale and feed stable, stockyards, and carriage and wagon repository with Skinner, its proprietor, identified as a dealer in horses, mules, and cattle. Three years later Skinner's business occupied one third of a city block, with eighty to one hundred horses available for delivery anywhere in Lincoln and telephone links with the leading hotels.<sup>8</sup>

Then in the fall of 1877, a dynamic figure arrived

## THE 1891 CAMPAIGN

**Will Open May 1st at Red Ribbon Hall, Lincoln, Nebraska.**

### LANCASTER COUNTY CONFERENCE.

Read the Program. Come and Take Part in the Discussions.  
First of a Series of Prohibition Conferences. Good Speakers and Good Music.

This conference will be held under the joint auspices of the State and County Committees. It will be held in Red Ribbon Hall beginning at 10:30 o'clock, on Friday May 1st.

### PROGRAM.

10:30 a. m. Calling to order by County Chairman; Music; Prayer; Selection of Chairman and Sec'y of conference.

11:00 a. m. Paper: The Constitutional Amendment campaign of 1890. The Prohibition Party's relation thereto. The result. **REV. C. E. BENTLEY.**  
Paper limited to twenty minutes. Discussions limited to five minutes, by Mrs. D. G. King, A. N. Wycoff and others.

12:00 Noon. Recess.

#### AFTERNOON.

1:30 p. m. How to enlist the co-operation of the 82,292 counted constitutional prohibitionists in Nebraska. **DR. A. H. DORRIS.**  
Paper limited to twenty minutes. Discussion by H. W. Hardy, Mrs. S. C. O. Upton and others.

3:00 p. m. Political or Party Prohibition—its Necessity. **R. W. MAXWELL.**  
Paper limited to twenty minutes. Discussion by G. B. Skinner, A. Roberts and others.

4:00 p. m. County Organization: The Key to the Field. How to secure it. **R. A. HAWLEY.**  
Paper limited to twenty minutes. Discussion on above by Mrs. Belle G. Bigelow, H. E. George and others.

5:00 p. m. Recess.

#### EVENING.

7:30 p. m. Our platform of principles.—Moral, Political and Economic reform. **PROF. LOWE.**

8:15 p. m. Address. **REV. GEO. SCOTT.**  
The evening meeting will be advertised as a general mass meeting.

The Prohibition Party met May 1, 1891, in Red Ribbon Hall, then located on T Street between Twelfth and Thirteenth. *The New Republic* (Lincoln), April 30, 1891.

in Nebraska who changed the course of Skinner's life. John B. Finch, born and educated in New York state, opened his Nebraska temperance campaign with an October 7, 1877, speech at Nebraska City. Finch, a former schoolteacher and a member of the Independent Order of Good Templars, a temperance-minded fraternal and social order dating in Nebraska to the late 1860s, came at the invitation of lodge officer Mrs. Ada Van Pelt.<sup>9</sup> He remained in Nebraska City for two weeks, speaking every night, inviting his hearers to sign an abstinence pledge based on that taken by Good Templars and to don a red ribbon. More than sixteen hundred persons signed the pledge during his lectures there.<sup>10</sup>

Lincoln's Centennial Opera House hosted many of John B. Finch's 1877 lectures on temperance. NSHS RG2158-181.



Finch was soon invited to Lincoln, where he gave a series of twenty-one speeches at the Centennial Opera House and the Methodist Episcopal Church. A strong anti-liquor element had manifested itself in the city several years earlier in 1874, when the Ladies Temperance Society entered local saloons in an effort to win the customers for temperance by song, prayer, and personal appeals. Hundreds of people were persuaded by Finch's eloquence and personal magnetism in 1877 to sign a pledge of total abstinence from alcohol and to wear a red ribbon as an outward symbol of the pledge.<sup>11</sup>

Skinner, reputed to be a hard drinker, attended one of the Finch lectures in Lincoln, signed the pledge, and obtained a red ribbon—although he confessed years later that he was careful to wear a coat over the emblem for some time afterward. The Red Ribbon Club of Lincoln was organized in November 1877 by Finch and a committee consisting of George V. Kent, R. N. Vedder, Charles Van Pelt, S. C. Elliott, and Skinner. With a beginning membership of "seventeen old soakers, who had sworn to live a sober life," the club's purpose was

the reclamation of drunkards; the protection of the weak from temptation, so far as lies in our power; the encouragement of temperance work, temperance meetings, and temperance lectures, and the inculcation of sound temperance opinions.<sup>12</sup>

According to its constitution, the Red Ribbon Club of Lincoln offered membership to anyone who had ever used intoxicating liquors, and who would sign the constitution and wear the Red Ribbon badge. All signers of the constitution pledged to

abstain from the use, manufacture or traffic in any kind of intoxicating liquors, wine beer or cider, and to use every honorable means to discountenance and discourage the use and manufacture thereof, or the traffic therein.<sup>13</sup>

By the end of Finch's speaking engagement in Lincoln, more than 2,100 persons had signed the pledge. During the concluding lecture of the three-week series, Finch urged Red Ribbon Club members to continue wearing the ribbon, to persuade others to do so, and to encourage backsliding members to re-sign the pledge. Other temperance lecturers—notably George W. Bain of



Kentucky in 1880 and J. B. Montague of Illinois in 1885—visited Lincoln in the following decade, but none had the impact of Finch's Red Ribbon meetings. Skinner, who helped organize the club and first served as vice president, replaced R. N. Vedder as president in January of 1878. He served as president for the next seventeen years, until his death on February 7, 1895.<sup>14</sup>

The Red Ribbon Club movement spread rapidly in Nebraska. Near the end of Finch's visit to Nebraska City, a meeting of all Red Ribboners in the state was called for November 8 in Fremont.<sup>15</sup> Finch's lectures in Seward prompted a party of Lincoln club members to visit that city on November 22, 1877, where they found "every man, woman and child in sight was wearing the red ribbon . . . Even the horses and dogs—that is, some of them—were be-decked with red ribbons." More than one thousand persons, including many from the surrounding countryside, signed the pledge there.<sup>16</sup>

In January of 1878 a Red Ribbon Club was established in Waverly, and a week of "hard work and earnest talk" by Finch gained the new Red Ribbon Club in Crete more than five hundred signers of the pledge. Historian Addison E. Sheldon, who heard Finch speak in Crete, noted, "In many towns the supply of red ribbons was exhausted before the Finch meetings closed."<sup>17</sup> Finch spent June and July in Wisconsin, but returned to Nebraska to give a record-breaking sixty lectures in Omaha between September 12 and November 17, while starting Red Ribbon groups in various parts of the city. During a subsequent forty-week speaking tour in Nebraska, he founded Good Templars lodges and Red Ribbon Clubs, traveling as far west as North Platte. During a visit to Columbus, beginning November 19, the opera house was filled to overflowing for twelve nights.<sup>18</sup>



Twelfth Street looking south from O Street. Red Ribboners once met near here on south Twelfth. NSHS RG2158-153.

The Red Ribbon Club's decentralized organizational structure allowed local clubs to adopt new strategies to fight liquor. In some towns, such as Brownville, Falls City, Crete, Fairbury, Sutton, Hastings, Plattsmouth, and York, local reading rooms were started by Red Ribbon Club members who hoped that such facilities would substitute for saloons as meeting places and leisure centers.<sup>19</sup>

During the first eight months of Finch's efforts in Nebraska, more than \$20,000 was collected for the establishment of reading rooms. The WCTU also sponsored public reading rooms in a number of towns, including Beatrice, Kearney, Tecumseh, and West Point. In Belvidere, a town of "strong temperance proclivities," a lodge of Good Templars became a library association. Lincoln mayor H. W. Hardy in 1877, partly as an outgrowth of his interest in temperance, persuaded the city to take charge of a struggling subscription library established several years before in 1875. In 1877 by legislative act Lincoln and other incorporated towns and cities were authorized to establish and maintain tax-supported public libraries.<sup>20</sup>

After they organized, Lincoln's Red Ribboners met at the local opera house but soon afterward rented meeting space with the WCTU on the east side of Tenth Street, about four doors north of Tenth and N. This location and subsequent meeting places on South Twelfth Street and at 1225 T, were all referred to by contemporaries as "Red Ribbon Hall."<sup>21</sup> The new quarters on Tenth Street were ready in time for a New Year's Day reception attended by more than five hundred persons, dispelling the fear that the group would be only a "mushroom organization that would soon collapse." The attendance was the more remarkable because a New Year's Day reception and ball for the Templars of Honor and Temperance, another fraternal group, was given at City Hall.<sup>22</sup>

At first none but reformed drinking men were admitted to membership in the Lincoln Red Ribbon Club, although it exhibited less concern about the social standing of new members than the more exclusive Templars of Honor and Temperance. Hardy, a temperance man of long standing, recalled in 1895 that it was a year or more before he was admitted to Skinner's meetings and two or three years before he was admitted to membership. Women were at first excluded from membership (although Finch had included them in Nebraska City, urging Red Ribboners there not to break "his or her pledge.") No Bible reading or praying at first was allowed, but soon religious observances were introduced. Every meeting included prayer and gospel hymns, of which Skinner was especially fond.<sup>23</sup>



Harvey Wesley Hardy, the temperance-minded mayor of Lincoln from 1877 to 1879, was a long-time member of the Red Ribbon Club and a personal friend of Skinner's. NSHS RG2411-2146.

In addition to the usual temperance pledge to abstain from alcohol, Skinner added a clause: "I will not for any reason whatever visit a saloon." He believed that any abstinence pledge that permitted the signer to visit a saloon was worthless and would rather require a pledge not to enter a saloon than a pledge not to drink. If Red Ribboners slipped off the wagon, Skinner or some other member of the club would "hunt them up" and have them sign the pledge a second time.<sup>24</sup>

The Red Ribbon Club's popularity and widespread support did not prevent other temperance leaders, Skinner's contemporaries, from attacking saloons as a social institution while they tried to cure individual drinkers. In 1877 Hardy, the temperance-minded mayor of Lincoln, had secured the passage of a city ordinance raising the saloon license fee in Lincoln to one thousand dollars, the highest figure then authorized by state law, reducing the number of saloons in Lincoln from twenty-two to five. He and Finch helped secure passage of a similar state-wide law, the Slocumb Act, in 1881. This act, which involved the repeal of several previous license acts, provided for a minimum license fee of five hundred dollars in cities of less than ten thousand in population; and a minimum fee of one thousand dollars for those of more than ten thousand. Proponents pointed with pride to the tax revenue yielded by this measure.<sup>25</sup>

Although Red Ribbon Club members in Lincoln concentrated on encouraging personal reform, they early became involved in politics. On March 22, 1878, they pledged themselves to support no man for local office in the upcoming municipal election who favored lowering Lincoln's one-thousand-dollar saloon license fee. Soon afterward Red Ribboners recommended that temperance advocates ignore Republican and Democratic nominations for city offices and support only temperance candidates, and established a central committee to nominate such candidates. Despite the best efforts of the "straight, sheet-iron, copper distilled, anti-whisky and strictly temperance ticket," the Republicans swept most of their candidates into office, while the temperance men elected only two city councilmen. Skinner ran unsuccessfully for city marshal, losing to Republican Thomas Carr.<sup>26</sup>

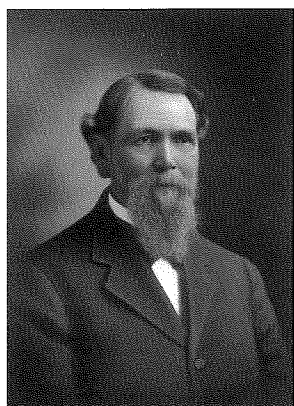
This foray into municipal politics apparently angered some Lincoln temperance advocates, for on May 10 the organization of a new dry society in the city, modeled on Francis Murphy's blue ribbon societies, was announced. This new group was to concentrate strictly on temperance and would

not be "used as a machine for nominating people to office." On May 17 the *Nebraska State Journal* noted that during the recent municipal election, the candidates nominated by the Red Ribbon Club as a separate temperance ticket, had served only to divert votes from Republican mayoral candidate Hardy, who was also known to have a strong interest in temperance.<sup>27</sup>

Red Ribbon Club members and other temperance advocates from throughout Nebraska met for a state temperance convention in Lincoln on May 15, 1878. As president of the host city's Red Ribbon Club, Skinner helped plan and publicize the convention. "Col. Skinner," reported the *Nebraska State Journal*, "showed us yesterday evening almost a bushel of letters from different parts of the state" indicating that more than one thousand were expected to attend—far more than the fifty persons at an August 4-6 convention in Lincoln four years earlier. Skinner introduced the 1878 program (with Finch himself giving the address of welcome) and served as president of the convention. The group formally organized as the State Temperance Society of Nebraska with Skinner elected the first president. A state Red Ribbon Club was formed, with Skinner elected president, and Lincoln attorney L. W. Billingsley elected secretary.<sup>28</sup>

Lincoln Club No. 1, as it was known after the state temperance convention, grew rapidly. Within its first year more than 2,500 people were reported to have signed the pledge in Lincoln. During this period the city's population of 2,500 in 1870 grew to 7,300 by 1875, and in 1880 to more than 13,000.<sup>29</sup> By 1880 the Lincoln Red Ribbon Club claimed between three and four thousand members. Meetings were every Friday evening and Sunday afternoon. In 1882 the membership figures and meeting times were the same, but the place of meeting had shifted to a new location on South Twelfth Street. Of course, many pledge signers did not attend meetings, and a substantial number abandoned temperance altogether, as Skinner admitted in 1887, while insisting that "hundreds are left who have kept the faith."<sup>30</sup>

Other temperance reform clubs were founded in the state by zealous opponents of liquor. Such reform clubs were active for a short time and then, either through the loss of the founder or the members' lack of interest, they disintegrated. Typical was the McKenzie Reform Club of Omaha, founded in January 1880 by Dr. D. Banks McKenzie, former head of the Appleton Temporary Home for Inebriates in Boston. The group at first met nightly, asking for contributions, registering new members at twenty-



Andrew J. Sawyer noted in his 1916 history of Lincoln and Lancaster County that the Red Ribbon Club was "one of the most successful and energetic of the clubs of early Lincoln." *Lincoln, the Capital City and Lancaster County, Nebraska* (1916).



five cents each, and persuading outsiders to sign a pledge to abstain from intoxicants. However, it did not long survive the departure of its founder for Salt Lake City, and by the middle of May, only an occasional lecture or social event was being held.<sup>31</sup>

The Lincoln Red Ribbon Club, however, benefited from the stability and continuity provided by Skinner, who served as club president year after year, an arrangement that enabled him to have what fellow temperance advocate, A. G. Wolfenbarger called “a sort of church of his own.”<sup>32</sup> He ruled the meetings with a rod of iron and forced the proceedings to suit him, calling down speakers or drowning speeches that displeased him with the strains of “Rescue the Perishing” or some other favorite hymn. He never allowed long speeches to weary those in attendance and often urged the garrulous to “cut it short.” Hardy in 1895 recalled:

I have sometimes been a little bit annoyed to notice on the platform at the Red Ribbon club orators and statesmen, brilliant men, men who stood in the very highest places and had audiences hang upon their words, with their lips sealed in silence, while Skinner would select some poor besotted fellow and tell how he came to sign the pledge and why he “joined the meeting.”<sup>33</sup>

Longtime Lincoln resident Minnie Latta Ladd in 1940 recalled Skinner as “tall, slender, with burnished red hair and long red beard,” who “had a great influence and a great following.”<sup>34</sup>

Not even the unexpected death of John B. Finch, then a resident of Evanston, Illinois, in the fall of 1887 adversely affected the Lincoln club that he had helped found.<sup>35</sup> As a Christmas gift that year Skinner was presented with a crayon portrait of himself, created by artist Nellie Mitchell, in appreciation of his work for the Lincoln Red Ribbon Club and for temperance. Presenter Ada C. Bittenbender praised Skinner’s career in Lincoln and attributed the remarkable growth of the club (from a start of seventeen members in 1877 to over ten thousand pledge signers in 1887) to his efforts. The Sunday afternoon meeting of the club fell on December 25 in 1887, and Red Ribboners met as usual on Christmas Day, with a subsequent meeting on New Year’s night.<sup>36</sup>

Skinner was probably at the peak of his business and temperance career during the late 1880s. Besides the livery stable, which maintained fifty or more buggies and more than sixty horses, he owned a three-story business building in Lincoln, a number of houses, and two farms, one near Cushman Park and another near the Lincoln city limits. Always convivial, he entertained a wide circle of



Andrew G. Wolfenbarger, an attorney, served as president of Lincoln’s Red Ribbon Club for several years during the latter 1890s. NSHS RG2411-6171b

friends and associates with a fund of humorous anecdotes in language that was “at all times brisk and breezy and often too warm for publication.”<sup>37</sup>

The extent to which Skinner was identified in the public mind with temperance was evident in his unsuccessful run on the Prohibition Party ticket for the Nebraska House of Representatives in 1884 and his enthusiastic support of temperance candidates in succeeding elections. During the Lincoln municipal election of 1888 he escorted the Knights of Pythias band to polling places around the city “cheering the workers and striking terror to the hearts of the rum suckers,” one of whom offered Skinner and the band \$100 to leave the field.<sup>38</sup>

Skinner, nominated for mayor of Lincoln by acclamation at the 1889 Prohibition Party’s city convention as a candidate whose name rhymed with “winner,” promised if elected that he “would close all the rum shops on Sunday or ‘bust his machinery.’” He polled 932 votes against winner Robert B. Graham’s total of 2,996, in an election which saw a Republican sweep of municipal offices except for the election of two Democratic councilmen.<sup>39</sup>

Several months later Skinner gave a crowd-pleasing performance at the 1889 outdoor reunion and picnic of the Lancaster County Pioneers Association in Lincoln. Skinner, distinguished by an immense gold chain he wore as a souvenir of his freighting days, was called on for a few reminiscences of the 1869 lot sales. He complied—but

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Skinner ruled the meetings with a rod of iron, calling down speakers or drowning speeches that displeased him with the strains of “Rescue the Perishing” or some other favorite hymn.

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# G. B. SKINNER

Owner of SKINNER'S BARN.

## Livery, Feed, and Boarding Stables.

### DEALER IN FANCY HORSES.

*Turns out the Most Stylish Single or Double Rigs  
in the West. The Prices are made so Reasonable  
that it is cheaper to hire of Skinner than to keep a Rig of  
your own.*



Skinner's Barn was advertised in 1889 as the home of the "Most Stylish Single or Double Rigs in the West." A. B. Hayes and Sam D. Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska* (1889).

soon launched into one of his characteristic temperance exhortations.<sup>40</sup>

While the Red Ribbon Club grew during the 1880s, temperance forces were also working to get a statewide prohibitory amendment on the ballot, with an extraordinary effort made to vote a ban on liquor into the state constitution in 1890. Although women could not vote in 1890, as members of the WCTU, whose Nebraska organization dated to 1875, they provided enthusiastic support for the largely male reform clubs, fraternal orders, and political groups (often with overlapping memberships) working for the amendment. There were two temperance political groups: the Nebraska Non-Partisan Amendment League, formed in June 1889 specifically to work for a prohibition amendment, and the regular state Prohibition Party, especially attractive to women because of its woman suffrage plank.<sup>41</sup>

The Prohibition Party, which first nominated a state ticket in Nebraska in 1874, sought to draw members from the two established parties. Hardy ran unsuccessfully on the Prohibition Party ticket for the Nebraska State Senate in 1884 and for governor in 1886, when the platform called for woman suffrage and absolute prohibition and opposed fusion with any other political party. Large sums of money were pledged for the prohibition campaign and for the *New Republic* newspaper, edited by Wolfenbarger. In 1890 the party nominated Lincoln merchant B. L. Paine for governor and mounted a vigorous campaign in support of the prohibitory amendment.<sup>42</sup>

The Lincoln Red Ribbon Club, while still advertising itself as "Non-partisan and Non-denominational," urged its members to support the amendment. A September 22-23, 1890, attempt by

"dastardly and cowardly . . . incendiaries" to burn Red Ribbon Hall resulted in only light damage to the building, but prompted the club to issue a press release detailing its history and accomplishments. Red Ribbon Hall by 1891 was located on the south side of T Street between Twelfth and Thirteenth. Skinner, the builder and owner, had planned the new larger quarters after the older meeting place on South Twelfth became too crowded. Regular features of the weekly Sunday afternoon meetings were an opening prayer, an organ choir singing gospel songs, remarks by reformed men, recitations by some boy or girl, and at the close, the signing of the pledge.<sup>43</sup>

Despite all the effort the temperance forces could muster, the amendment drive failed. The statewide vote on prohibition was 82,292 for the amendment and 111,728 against it. Regulation or prohibition of the liquor traffic, which had been a leading state issue up to 1890, had been sidetracked by the defeat of the prohibitory amendment and largely superseded in the public mind by other concerns until the rise of a new organization—the Anti-Saloon League—with a new plan of attack on the liquor interests.<sup>44</sup>

Lincoln's Red Ribbon Club, however, retained its vigor even after the defeat of temperance forces at the ballot box in 1890. Reformers lecturing on a variety of topics found an attentive audience at Red Ribbon Hall, making the weekly gatherings a strong force for social reform in Nebraska.<sup>45</sup> Women, many as members of the WCTU, frequently attended, and women's concerns were discussed. A series of Sunday afternoon meetings in February 1891, for example, featured short addresses by several members of the Nebraska Legislature on woman suffrage. "Allow woman to vote," Representative O. Horne of Syracuse told the audience on February 1, "and the saloon will soon be forgotten." On February 15 a surprise anti-suffrage speech was delivered from the platform by Representative Fred Newberry. Amid cheers and hisses, he was subsequently "buried beneath hundreds of feet of arguments and facts and every argument he used was refuted and turned against him with ten-fold power. Newberry was aroused and promised to come loaded for bear next Sunday."<sup>46</sup>

Through these tumultuous meetings Skinner retained his unruffled demeanor, apologizing if he felt it necessary to those who were roughly treated by the audience. "[W]e may sometimes tread on your toes," he said,

but you must take it. . . . We invite you to come here and talk, and it don't make any difference



whether you agree with us or not. If you don't agree with us, perhaps we will convert you if you will come three or four Sundays in succession. At any rate, you will be interested here for we always "whoop it up."

Such meetings were punctuated with the usual hymns, with nonsingers invited to whistle. A March 1891 meeting of the club, reported by the *Lincoln Daily Call* under the title "Shook the Rafters," was attended by a standing-room-only crowd numbered in the hundreds.<sup>47</sup>

In 1893 the new Democratic administration of Grover Cleveland began replacing Republican with Democratic appointees. Skinner had been a Democrat prior to his embrace of the temperance cause in 1877, and now made unsuccessful tries for several federal jobs—that of U.S. Marshal in the spring and the Lincoln postmastership in December. The financial panic and resulting hard times in 1893 (as well as his late-in-life divorce the year before) had caused Skinner financial loss, and he undoubtedly needed the income from a federal job. He went to Washington in April and called on Nebraska congressman William Jennings Bryan to ask for his help in getting the U.S. marshal's position for Nebraska, but Bryan refused to endorse him. In December Skinner made a bid for the Lincoln Post Office, trying to have his local Democratic endorsements for the U.S. marshal's job counted as endorsements for the job of postmaster.<sup>48</sup>

In asking the help of J. Sterling Morton, secretary of agriculture in Cleveland's Cabinet, Skinner on December 6, 1893, stressed his Democratic credentials and his past efforts on the party's behalf:

I have been nominated by the Democratic Party for Police judge of this city and was beaten by only 35 votes. I have run for city marshall and been beaten by less than 100 votes [and] have ran for the Legislature and for mayor—always beaten.

Skinner stressed that he would not be seeking a federal office "if the sheriff had not sold all of my horses and the U.S. Marshall my barn & lots." In a later letter he denied that Red Ribboners as a group were Prohibitionists. "We are Democrats in principle," he told Morton, and noted, "The Democratic Church is not yet triumphant but I hope to see it."<sup>49</sup>

Skinner was not a strong candidate for the postmastership. A major obstacle to his appointment was the perception that in 1893 he was more Prohibitionist than Democratic. Skinner's picture and biography had appeared in an August 23, 1888, article in the Prohibition Party's *New Republic*, as one of Lincoln's "Prominent Prohibitionists," and

## A Woman

Thomas J. Merryman's poem, "A Woman," dedicated to Carry A. Nation, appeared in the *New Republic-Patriot (Lincoln)* on March 14, 1901, and was later included in Nation's autobiography.

When Kansas joints are open wide  
To ruin men on every side,  
What power can stem their lawless tide?  
A woman.

When many mother's hearts have bled  
And floods of sorrow's tears are shed,  
Who strikes the serpent on the head?  
A woman.

When boys are ruined every day  
And older ones are led astray,  
Who boldly strikes and wins the fray?  
A woman.

When drunkenness broods o'er the home,  
For bidding pleasure there to come,  
Whose hatchet spills the jointist['s] rum?  
A woman's.

When rum's slain victims fall around,  
And vice and poverty abound,  
Who cuts this up as to the ground?  
A woman.

When those who should enforce the law  
Are useless as [are] men of straw,  
What force can make saloons withdraw?  
A woman.

When public sentiment runs low  
And no one dares to make them go,  
Whose hatchet lays their fixtures low?  
A woman's.

Who sways this mighty rising tide  
That daily grows more deep and wide,  
Until no rum shall it outride?  
A woman's.

Who then can raise her fearless hand,  
And say twas "Home Defender's" band  
Who drove this monster from the land!  
A woman.

— Dr. T. J. Merryman

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Skinner was not  
a member of  
any established  
church except  
what he once  
called the  
“Red Ribbon  
church militant.”

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his try for the Legislature in 1884 and for Lincoln mayor in 1889 had been on the Prohibition Party ticket. Leading party members were conspicuous at Red Ribbon meetings. It was also feared that Skinner's crusty personality and background might embarrass the Democrats if he served as postmaster. However, he pursued the office and appealed for Morton's help with energy and passion.

Dr. A. R. Mitchell of Bankers Life Insurance Company, one of his supporters, wrote Morton on December 5 that Skinner was “of all men in the field, the one most deserving recognition. He is liberal in campaign work, and I believe controls many of that necessary article—votes. He is competent and on the right side.” A. J. Sawyer wrote Morton that he considered Skinner more responsible for Cleveland's strong presidential showing in Nebraska in 1884 than any other man in the state; and Skinner brought to Morton's attention on December 6 that he had “fired 200 rounds upon post office square in honor of Mr. Cleveland's first election and paid the most of the bill myself.”<sup>50</sup>

The postmastership, however, went to Lincoln druggist J. H. Harley, leaving not only Skinner but a host of other disappointed applicants. Skinner's failure prompted Walt Mason, then a columnist for the *Lincoln Daily Call*, to praise him as “a grand old man in every sense of the word.” Mason, who had had his own problems with liquor, said Skinner had “given the Rum Fiend more hard licks than has the gold cure.” A. L. Bixby, columnist for the *Nebraska State Journal*, also expressed sympathy:

The *Journal* is glad to learn that Bishop Skinner is not cast down by recent events, but is chasing the federal pie wagon with as much industry and cheerfulness as if he had not been missed in the recent distribution. We all hope the bishop will eventually fall heir to one of the fattest of all the pies that are left in the wagon.<sup>51</sup>

But Skinner never managed to repair his fortunes. He died at the age of sixty-two on February 7, 1895, after suffering for more than a year with a heart condition. His former wife nursed him during his final days. Shortly before his death, Skinner confided to Hardy that during the seventeen years he had been president of the Red Ribbon Club, more than twelve thousand men had signed the pledge. This is a more modest figure than his estimate of sixteen thousand at the time of Finch's death in 1887 or his claim in January 1894 to Morton that there were more than eighteen thousand members.<sup>52</sup> (Some re-signers of the pledge may have been counted more than once, partly accounting for the discrepancy.) Obituaries noted that Skinner's estate was impaired by bad

investments and hard times and that he died as he started, practically penniless.<sup>53</sup>

Skinner, not a member of any established church except what he once called in a letter to Morton the “Red Ribbon church militant,” was given a funeral arranged by the Knights of Pythias. A public memorial service on February 17 at St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church in Lincoln was arranged to resemble a Red Ribbon Club meeting. The bishop's favorite hymns were sung, and stories of the man were recounted by his fellow club members and others who had known him best. Hardy presided and gave a brief talk on the origin and history of Lincoln's Red Ribbon Club under Skinner, excerpts from which were published in the *New Republic*. He was eulogized by the *Nebraska State Journal* on February 8, 1895, as

a quaint, forcible and original character. His heart was big, his impulses were always in the right direction, and he wielded a marked influence on the side of temperance. He was a diamond in the rough perhaps, but he was a diamond without a doubt.<sup>54</sup>

Although Skinner tried for political office after his embrace of Finch and the temperance philosophy, he took no major part in formulating a political solution to the liquor question. Wolfenbarger, who knew him well, said, “He [Skinner] didn't care half as much about the political phase of the temperance question as he did about the personal salvation side.” Red Ribbon Club members were urged to elect temperance men to office and to support temperance legislation. If members such as Hardy, Finch, and Wolfenbarger, sought political ends, they did so as members of other organizations, notably the Prohibition Party.<sup>55</sup>

After a brief hiatus caused by Skinner's final illness and death, Lincoln's Red Ribbon Club, considered one of the strongest temperance organizations in the state, continued its regular Sunday afternoon meetings, still a forum for topics of public concern. For example, a December 1895 gathering attacked not only alcohol, but the court system and football (because of “drunkenness and debauch” among the players).<sup>56</sup>

In 1897 and 1898 Wolfenbarger served as president, presiding over meetings that (according to the *New Republic*) were “becoming rousers.” During Wolfenbarger's presidency, the club again met in its former quarters on South Twelfth Street, and a fund drive was launched to buy an appropriate marker for Skinner's grave, then unmarked, in Lincoln's Wyuka Cemetery. Hardy, who spearheaded the Skinner Monument Fund campaign, appealed for donations from Red Ribboners and the bishop's former friends and associates.<sup>57</sup>



The club continued well past 1900 into a new century of anti-alcohol activity. In 1901 it was led by Dr. Thomas J. Merryman, a seasoned temperance lecturer and verse maker as well as a physician. He penned lyrics for a number of temperance songs, and his poem, "A Woman," dedicated to Carry Nation, appeared in her autobiographical *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation*. Nation visited Lincoln in the spring of 1902 during a local option fight and lectured for and with the "Red Ribbon Alliance," touring local saloons and debating with *State Journal* columnist Bixby.<sup>58</sup>

Merryman remained as club president at least through 1906, when the Red Ribbon Club called for a series of "Oratorical Contests and Medal Recitals" for Lincoln high school and college students to promote temperance awareness among young people. The group ended the year with a meeting at the Oliver Theatre, during which a memorial resolution was adopted on behalf of Sam D. Cox. Cox, the dry editor of the *Minutaire Sentinel*, had been shot and killed December 29 in Minutaire by a local hotel keeper, allegedly because of his anti-alcohol editorials. During this emotional meeting hundreds of people signed an abstinence pledge circulated through the crowded audience by twenty young women volunteers.<sup>59</sup>

Despite its burst of energy at the end of 1906, the club was unable to maintain its membership in the following decade. The group moved from the hall on South Twelfth Street and by March 1901, under Dr. Merryman's presidency, met at 1034 O. During its last several years in 1907 and 1908, the club convened in local churches or fraternal halls. A meeting on November 29, 1908, at which Merryman and F. E. Lynch spoke, convened in the Salvation Army Hall at 1936 O Street. A Sunday afternoon temperance gathering at the same hall on January 3, 1909, again included Merryman and Lynch as speakers but was not identified by the *Nebraska State Journal* as a Red Ribbon meeting.<sup>60</sup>

Nebraska temperance forces poured their energy into politics, not personal reform, in the spring of 1909. The passage of a statewide saloon restriction bill on April 3 brought enormous pressure on Governor Ashton C. Shallenberger by both pro- and anti-liquor forces. Dr. Merryman accompanied a temperance delegation, including ex-Governor William A. Poynter, to Shallenberger's office on April 5 to urge him to sign the bill. After finishing his presentation, Poynter collapsed and died of heart failure. Merryman and another physician on the scene were unable to revive him.<sup>61</sup>

On May 4, 1909, the citizens of Lincoln voted the city dry by a bare fifty-one percent majority. Un-

aware that the city would be voted wet again in 1911, temperance forces celebrated and remembered "with gratitude those who began the struggle, as far as Lincoln is concerned, in 'Bishop Skinner's church.'" After the victory at the polls in 1909, the nonpolitical work of early Red Ribboners in the field of moral suasion seemed to be "good, but not permanent, promising, but not broadly successful." Merryman, the club's president during the early years of the 1910s, was increasingly active in Prohibition Party politics throughout the decade as the Red Ribbon Club declined. He left Lincoln for California in the summer of 1912. Hardy, a longtime influential member of the club, died in January of 1913.<sup>62</sup>

Like other temperance reform clubs, Lincoln's Red Ribbon Club eventually found its work overlapped and superceded by that of the Prohibition Party, and after 1898 in Nebraska, the Anti-Saloon League. Its longtime president and patron, "Bishop" Skinner, enabled it to survive long after similar clubs elsewhere lost their appeal and disappeared. But by the time Nebraska voters approved a statewide prohibition amendment in 1916, the group was gone. Andrew J. Sawyer's 1916 history of Lincoln noted in what was surely an obituary for the Red Ribbon temperance reform club, that it was "one of the most successful and energetic of the clubs of early Lincoln," whose broader purpose—"to help the moral condition of the city and to do charity and rescue work in general"—was amply fulfilled.<sup>63</sup> ■

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Frances E. Finch and Frank J. Sibley, *John B. Finch, His Life and Work* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Publishers, 1888), 63, 451.

<sup>2</sup> Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 48-49; Ernest Hurst Cherrington et al., eds., *Standard Encyclopedia of the Alcohol Problem* (Westerville, Ohio: American Issue Publishing Company, 1925-30), 1:359-60, 4:1838-40, 5:2258.

<sup>3</sup> *Standard Encyclopedia*, 5:2258, 2268-69; Michael Kuzma, "Kicking the Habit: Nebraska's 1905 Anti-Cigarette Law," *Nebraska History* 86 (Lincoln: Summer/Fall 2005): 92-95; "A New Crusade," *Nebraska State Journal* (hereafter *NSJ*), Mar. 12, 1894.

<sup>4</sup> Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 451.

<sup>5</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; *Portrait and Biographical Album of Lancaster County, Nebraska* (Chicago: Chapman Brothers, 1888), 785-87; A. T. Andreas, comp., *History of the State of Nebraska* (Chicago: The Western Historical Co., 1882), 1079; William E. Lass, *From the Missouri to the Great Salt Lake: An Account of Overland Freighting* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1972), 142.

<sup>6</sup> "Sketch of the City of Lincoln," *Daily State Journal*, Mar. 17, 1876; "Ye Old Settlers Meet," *Daily Nebraska State Journal*, June 20, 1889; "George B. Skinner is Dead"; A. B. Hayes and Sam D. Cox, *History of the City of Lincoln, Nebraska* (Lincoln: State Journal

Company, 1889), 349; Albert Watkins, *Illustrated History of Nebraska from the Earliest Explorations to the Present Time* (Lincoln: Western Publishing and Engraving Company, 1913), 3C:28-30; Andreas, *History*, 1042.

<sup>7</sup> "Ye Old Settlers Meet"; *The Daily News' History of Buchanan County and St. Joseph, Mo.* (St. Joseph: St. Joseph Publishing Company, 1898), 137; Hayes and Cox, *Lincoln, Nebraska*, 168, 178; Ruth T. Dodge, *A History of the Municipal Organization of Lincoln, 1867-1887* (master's thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, August 1934).

<sup>8</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; mention in *Lincoln Evening News*, Feb. 8, 1895; George Lee Brown, comp., *Brown's Directory to the Inhabitants, Business Firms, Manufactories, Educational and Social Institutions of the City of Lincoln for 1878-79* (Lincoln: Journal Company, State Printers, 1878), 118; J. M. Wolfe, comp., *Nebraska State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1882-1883* (Omaha: Herald Book Printing House, 1882), 188.

<sup>9</sup> Addison E. Sheldon, *Nebraska the Land and the People* (Chicago/New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1931), 1:475, 579; "Good Templars in Nebraska," *Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days*, 3 (Lincoln: Oct.-Dec. 1920): 4; Andreas, *History*, 210, 213; *Standard Encyclopedia*, 4:1876-77.

<sup>10</sup> George Talbot Hunt, *Control of the Liquor Traffic in Nebraska, 1855-1890* (master's thesis, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1932), 75; "Talking Temperance," *Nebraska City News*, Oct. 13, 1877; Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 49-50, 55-60; "Good Templars in Nebraska," *Nebraska History and Record of Pioneer Days*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> "Water Will Win," Oct. 28, 1877, "The Glorious Work," Oct. 31, 1877, "Moderate Drinkers," Nov. 7, 1877, "The Temperance Work," Nov. 8, 1877, "Temperance," Nov. 10, 1877, "The Temperance Movement," Nov. 11, 1877, "Sunday Night's Meeting," Nov. 13, 1877, "The Last Blow," Nov. 21, 1877, all *Daily State Journal*; "George B. Skinner is Dead"; Mrs. Harriet W. Leighton, "Reminiscences of the Crusade in Nebraska," *Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society* (Lincoln: Jacob North and Co., 1902), 165-71; John Anderson, "Lincoln, Nebraska, and Prohibition: The Election of May 4, 1909," *Nebraska History* 70 (Lincoln: Summer, 1889): 184-85.

<sup>12</sup> "The Temperance Work," Nov. 8, 1877, "Temperance," Nov. 10, 1877, both *Daily State Journal*; "Finch Memorial," *Living Issue and the New Republic*, Oct. 13, 1887, quoted in Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 450; "Skinner Memorial," *New Republic* (Lincoln), Feb. 23, 1895.

<sup>13</sup> "Temperance," *Daily State Journal*, Nov. 10, 1877.

<sup>14</sup> "The Temperance Work," Nov. 8, 1877, "The Temperance Movement," Nov. 11, 1877, "The Last Blow," Nov. 14, 1877, mention on Jan. 27, 1878, all *Daily State Journal*; "The Red Ribbon Movement," Mar. 31, 1885, mention on Feb. 3, 1880, both *Daily Nebraska State Journal*; "George B. Skinner is Dead"; Hunt, *Liquor Traffic*, 75; Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 63; "The Workers," April 1885, "Montague the Evangelist," August 1885, both *Nebraska Good Templar and Register* (Lincoln); *Brown's Directory for 1878-79*, 170; *Kent's Directory to the City of Lincoln, 1880-1881* (Lincoln: Journal Company, State Printers, 1880), 178.

<sup>15</sup> Mentions in *Daily State Journal*, Nov. 8, 1877; in *Fremont Daily Herald*, Nov. 9, 10, 1877. Notice of the convention appeared in the *Nebraska City News* on October 27, 1877, along with "Finch's Farewell."

<sup>16</sup> "On to Seward," *Daily State Journal*, Nov. 24, 1877; Hunt, *Liquor Traffic*, 75; Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 63-64.

<sup>17</sup> Annadora F. Gregory, *Facts Concerning the Industrial and Social History of Crete, Nebraska, 1858-1890* (master's thesis, University of Nebraska, 1918), 51; *ibid.*, "The Reverend Harmon Bross and Nebraska Congregationalism, 1873-1928," *Nebraska History* 54 (Lincoln: Fall 1973): 450; "Water Wins," Jan. 30, 1878, "Wise Work," Jan. 30, 1878, both *Daily State Journal*; Sheldon, *Nebraska*, 1:580.

<sup>18</sup> G. W. Phillips, *Past and Present of Platte County, Nebraska* (Chicago: Clarke, 1915), 63-67, 392; Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 67, 71-72, 209, 213. Finch was elected to a two-year term as Grand Chief Templar of Nebraska in January 1880.

<sup>19</sup> Sheldon, *Nebraska*, 1:544, 579-81; Andreas, *History*, 426, 643, 903, 998, 1011, 1314, 1453; "Falls City Redeemed," *Daily State Journal*, Dec. 13, 1877; Gregory, "History of Crete," 52; Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 78, 208.

<sup>20</sup> Andreas, *History*, 213; Mrs. S. B. Pound, "The Lincoln Public Library, 1875-1892," *Transactions and Reports of the Nebraska State Historical Society* 5 (Lincoln: Lincoln Printing Co., Printers, 1893): 29; H. W. Hardy, "Reminiscences," *Proceedings and Collections of the Nebraska State Historical Society*, 5 (Lincoln: Jacob North and Co., Printers, 1902): 211; Minnie Latta Ladd, "Memories of Early Day Nebraska and Lincoln," typescript at Nebraska State Historical Society, 25.

<sup>21</sup> "The Red Ribbon Club," Nov. 24, 1877, mention in Jan. 3, 1878, both *Daily State Journal*; "Crusade Reminiscences," *Nebraska News* (University Place), Dec. 13, 1906; Hayes and Cox, *Lincoln, Nebraska*, 158, 185; *Hoye's City Directory of Lincoln for 1892* (Lincoln: State Journal Co., Printers), 624.

<sup>22</sup> "Red Ribbon Reception," "Temple of Honor Reception and Ball," Jan. 3, 1878, both *Daily State Journal*.

<sup>23</sup> Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 448, 450; "Hardy's Hits," *New Republic* (Lincoln), Feb. 16, 1895; "Finch's Farewell," *Nebraska City News*, Oct. 27, 1877. Women were later admitted to membership. Josephine Dawden was the organization's treasurer in 1891. *Hoye's Directory* for 1891, 543.

<sup>24</sup> "Hardy's Hits," Feb. 16, 1895, "Skinner Memorial," Feb. 23, 1895, both *New Republic*; "Red Ribbon Club," *Lincoln Weekly News*, Dec. 29, 1887; "Red Ribbon Hall," *Lincoln Daily Call*, Oct. 4, 1890.

<sup>25</sup> Hayes and Cox, *Lincoln, Nebraska*, 78; *Standard Encyclopedia*, 3:1181-82, 4:870; "Will Be Laid at Rest Today," *NSJ*, Jan. 12, 1913.

<sup>26</sup> "The Red Ribbons in Conclave, They Will Nominate a Straight Temperance Ticket," Mar. 27, 1878; "The Temperance Mass Convention," Mar. 30, 1878; "At the City Hall," Apr. 2, 1878; "The Vote of Lincoln," "The Election," Apr. 3, 1878, mention in Mar. 23, 1878, all *Daily State Journal*.

<sup>27</sup> "The Temperance Convention," May 17, 1878, mention in May 10, 1878, both *Daily Nebraska State Journal*. Francis Murphy's blue ribbon societies encouraged personal reform but did not demand legal prohibition. "Francis Murphy," *Omaha Republican*, Mar. 15, 1890.

<sup>28</sup> *Kent's Directory for 1880-1881*, 178; "Red Ribbons," *Daily State Journal*, May 1, 1878; "State Temperance Convention," May 14, 1878, "Our City in Colors," May 16, 1878, "The Temperance Convention," May 17, 1878, mention on May 14, 1878, all *Daily Nebraska State Journal*; A. E. Sheldon, "Long Fight on the Saloon," *Sunday State Journal*, Apr. 10, 1910.

<sup>29</sup> *Brown's Directory for 1878-79*, 170; Andreas, *History*, 1043; Everett N. Dick, "Problems of the Post Frontier Prairie City, as Portrayed by Lincoln, Nebraska, 1880-1890," *Nebraska History* 28 (Lincoln: April-June 1947): 133.

<sup>30</sup> Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 451; *Kent's Directory for 1880-1881*, 178; *Lincoln City and Lancaster County Directory for 1882-3* (Lincoln: Journal Company, State Printers, 1882), 192; Hayes and Cox, *Lincoln, Nebraska*, 185.

<sup>31</sup> Joe A. Fisher, *The Liquor Question in Nebraska, 1880-1890* (master's thesis, Municipal University of Omaha, April 1952), 9-11.

<sup>32</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; Andrew G. Wolfenbarger (1856-1923), a Lincoln attorney, joined the Independent Order of Good Templars in 1883, and in 1885 helped found the *New Republic*, a prohibition newspaper, serving as managing editor until 1890.



He served in both the state and national Prohibition Party, and later as a lawyer for the Anti-Saloon League.

<sup>33</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; "Bishop Skinner Dead," *Lincoln Evening Call*, Feb. 8, 1895; "Skinner Memorial," *New Republic*, Feb. 23, 1895.

<sup>34</sup> Ladd, "Memories," 20.

<sup>35</sup> "In Mourning," *Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Oct. 5, 1887; mention in *Lincoln Weekly News*, Oct. 20, 1887.

<sup>36</sup> "Red Ribbon Club," *Lincoln Weekly News*, Dec. 22, Dec. 29, 1887; Ada Cole (Mrs. Henry) Bittenbender (1848-1925), a leader in the woman suffrage and temperance movements, was also one of Nebraska's first woman lawyers. In 1891 she ran on the Prohibition Party ticket for Nebraska Supreme Court judge and received nearly five percent of the (male) vote.

<sup>37</sup> *Portrait and Biographical Album*, 786; "George B. Skinner is Dead." Typically more blunt, the *Lincoln Evening Call* ("Bishop Skinner Dead," Feb. 8, 1895) said that Skinner was "addicted to the use of profanity and he had no successful competitors in this direction."

<sup>38</sup> "Prohibition Ticket," *Nebraska Good Templar and Register*, October 1884; "Election News and Notes," *NSJ*, Nov. 6, 1884; mention in *New Republic*, Apr. 4, 1888.

<sup>39</sup> "Prohibition City Convention," Mar. 21, 1889, "Lincoln City Election," Apr. 11, 1889, both *New Republic*; "The City Tickets," *Lincoln Daily Call*, Apr. 1, 1889; Andrew J. Sawyer, *Lincoln, the Capital City and Lancaster County, Nebraska* (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916), 1:157.

<sup>40</sup> "Ye Old Settlers Meet."

<sup>41</sup> *Standard Encyclopedia*, 4:1876; Patricia C. Gaster, "Bad Grammar and Sensation Style, The *Daily Bumble Bee* and the Fight for Prohibition in 1890," *Nebraska History* 88 (Lincoln: Spring/Summer 2007): 28-41.

<sup>42</sup> Watkins, *Illustrated History*, 3C:141-42; *Standard Encyclopedia*, 3:1181-82. At first a Whig, Hardy (1825-1913) was elected mayor of Lincoln on the Republican ticket in 1877 and again in 1878. In 1884 he joined the Prohibition Party, and in 1896 became a supporter of William Jennings Bryan and free silver. "H. W. Hardy Dies Suddenly; Aged 87," *Lincoln Daily Star*, Jan. 10, 1913, in Harvey Wesley Hardy Papers, RG1999, Nebraska State Historical Society; Gaster, "Bad Grammar and Sensation Style," 32-38.

<sup>43</sup> "Red Ribbon Hall. History of the Noble Work Performed," "Circular," *Lincoln Daily Call*, Oct. 4, 1890; "Midnight Blaze," *Daily Nebraska State Journal*, Sept. 23, 1890; *Hoye's Directory* for 1891, 357, 538; Hayes and Cox, *Lincoln, Nebraska*, 185; "Red Ribbon Club," *New Republic*, Mar. 7, 1889.

<sup>44</sup> Watkins, *Illustrated History*, 3C:230-31; Sheldon, *Nebraska*, 1:842; Robert E. Wenger, "The Anti-Saloon League in Nebraska Politics, 1898-1910," *Nebraska History*, 52 (Lincoln: Fall, 1971): 270.

<sup>45</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; Federal Writers' Project, Works Progress Administration, State of Nebraska, comp., *Lincoln City Guide* (Woodruff Printing Co., Lincoln, 1937), 19.

<sup>46</sup> "Red Ribbon Hall," Feb. 5, 19, 1891, both *New Republic*.

<sup>47</sup> "Red Ribbon Hall," Feb. 5, 1891; "Red Ribbon Club," Feb. 12, 1891, both *New Republic*; "Shook the Rafters," *Lincoln Daily Call*, Mar. 16, 1891.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew J. Sawyer to J. Sterling Morton, Mar. 18, 1893, George B. Skinner to Morton, Jan. 12, 1894, both J. Sterling Morton Papers, RG1013; "Divorced in Eighteen Minutes," Dec. 7, 1892; "George B. Skinner is Dead," "Skinner at the Capital," Mar. 19, 1893, all *NSJ*; Patricia C. Gaster, "Straight Politics Pays After All": Political Patronage and the Lincoln Post-office Fight, 1893-1894," *Nebraska History* 84 (Lincoln: Winter 2003): 200.

<sup>49</sup> Skinner to Morton, Dec. 6, 1893, Jan. 12, 1894, both Morton Papers.

<sup>50</sup> Dr. A. R. Mitchell to Morton, Dec. 5, 1893, A. J. Sawyer to Morton, Mar. 18, 1893, Skinner to Morton, Dec. 6, 1893, all Morton Papers.

<sup>51</sup> Gaster, "Straight Politics," 202-4; "Mason's Mosaics," *Lincoln Daily Call*, Jan. 31, 1894; "Daily Drift," *NSJ*, Feb. 13, 1894. Dr. Leslie E. Keeley opened the first Keeley Institute in Dwight, Illinois, in 1879, relying heavily on injections of "bichloride" or "double chloride" of gold, from which his treatment for alcoholism became known as the "Gold Cure."

<sup>52</sup> "Skinner Memorial," *New Republic*, Feb. 23, 1895; Finch and Sibley, *John B. Finch*, 451; Skinner to Morton, Jan. 12, 1894, Morton Papers. Wolfenbarger's 1901 tally of Red Ribbon Club members, about 2,500, was far lower than Skinner's. "The Red Ribboners," *New Republic-Patriot* (Lincoln), Mar. 21, 1901.

<sup>53</sup> "Hardy's Hits," Nov. 21, 1895, "Skinner Memorial," Feb. 23, 1895, both *New Republic*. "Bishop Skinner Dead," *Lincoln Evening News*, Feb. 8, 1895; "George B. Skinner is Dead."

<sup>54</sup> Skinner to Morton, Jan. 12, 1894, Morton Papers; "Editorial," Feb. 8, 1895, "Funeral of George B. Skinner," Feb. 11, 1895, "Skinner Memorial Service," Feb. 16, 1895, all *NSJ*; "Bishop Skinner Honored," *Lincoln Evening News*, Feb. 17, 1895; "Skinner Memorial," *New Republic*, Feb. 23, 1895.

<sup>55</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; *Standard Encyclopedia*, 3:989, 3:1181-82.

<sup>56</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; "Hardy's Hits," in both *New Republic*, Dec. 14, 1895, and *Our Nation's Anchor* (Lincoln), Dec. 14, 1895. *Our Nation's Anchor*, edited by Henry C. Bittenbender, was merged into the *New Republic-Patriot* in March 1901.

<sup>57</sup> "George B. Skinner is Dead"; "The Skinner Monument," in both *New Republic*, Dec. 9, 1897 and *Our Nation's Anchor*, Dec. 11, 1897; mentions on Jan. 6, Mar. 24, 1898, both *New Republic*; *Hoye's Directory* for 1896, 493; for 1897, 489.

<sup>58</sup> *Hoye's Directory* for 1902, 728; mention in *New Republic-Patriot* (Lincoln), Mar. 14, 1901; mention in *NSJ*, Mar. 7, 1902; *Western Horizon of Health and Temperance* (Lincoln), June 1905; S. D. Fitchie, "The Fight for Prohibition in Nebraska," *Nebraska History*, 6 (Lincoln: July-September 1921): 86; Carry A. Nation, *The Use and Need of the Life of Carry A. Nation* (Topeka: F. M. Steves and Sons, 1909), 406-7, 233-34.

<sup>59</sup> *Hoye's Directory* for 1904, 924; for 1905, 670; "Red Ribbon Club," *Nebraska News*, Nov. 30, 1905; "Red Ribbon Club," Dec. 13, 1906, "Pledge Signing at Lincoln," Jan. 8, 1907, both *Nebraska News*; "Big Temperance Meeting," *NSJ*, Dec. 31, 1906; Patricia C. Gaster, "A Fallen Victim to 'the Liquor Curse': The Life and Tragic Death of Samuel D. Cox," *Nebraska History* 89 (Lincoln: Summer 2008): 84-93.

<sup>60</sup> "What It Costs," Nov. 1, 1906, both *Nebraska News*; "Mere Mention," Nov. 29, 1908, Jan. 4, 1909, both *NSJ*; *Hoye's Directory* for 1902, 728. "The Red Ribboners," *New Republic-Patriot*, Mar. 21, 1901.

<sup>61</sup> Anderson, "Lincoln, Nebraska," 187; "Governor Poynter Dies," *NSJ*, Apr. 6, 1909.

<sup>62</sup> "Executive Board," *Nebraska Patriot* (Lincoln), July 1900; "Celebrated the Victory," May 8, 1909, "Bishop Skinner's Church," May 9, 1909, "Just As a Stepping Stone," July 26, 1910, "Will be Laid to Rest Today," Jan. 12, 1913, "Obituary, Dr. Thomas J. Merymann," Sept. 9, 1922, all *NSJ*.

<sup>63</sup> Sawyer, *Lincoln, The Capital City*, 1:326.