**The Temperance Movement**

In the 1800’s many people took the pledge to never drink alcohol. These people were a part of an early reform movement called the Temperance movement. In early America, many people began drinking at a young age (there was no age limit) and, as adults, drank in excess. Drinking was a part of daily life. Physical laborers often drank while working or were commonly paid with alcohol rather than money. It wasn’t uncommon for men to spend their entire paychecks at the local bar. Drinking was also an important part of most social gatherings – weddings, elections, and other celebrations wouldn’t be complete without the presence of alcohol. In fact, most people considered alcoholic beverages the safest way to quench one’s thirst due to the fact that much well water was contaminated.

 After the Second Great Awakening, new Christians, looking for a way to make a difference in society, began to examine the negative impact that alcohol had on society. They looked at the relationship between drunkenness and domestic violence. They looked at drunken, dirty, and disheveled people laying in gutters or passed out in stables. They looked at the violent behavior (fights, duels, etc.) that spilled out into the streets from saloons. At first, those behind the temperance movement felt that that the best way to redress these problems was to advocate that people be “temperate” in their drinking. In the end, most agreed that the only solution was for people to abstain completely from drinking alcoholic beverages.

 The temperance movement was important for a number of reasons. It was connected to many other social reform movements of the time; temperance reformers attending anti-drinking rallies would often meet people who were involved in other reform movements. It also stressed the idea that people were, themselves, responsible to make individual choices to better themselves (and, in turn, to better society as a whole). Finally, the temperance movement represented a general trend of the 19th century: individuals could make a difference in society.

**Questions**

1. List three ways that drinking was a part of life in early America:
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1. Which is the most surprising? Why?
2. List three ways that drinking had a negative impact in society:
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1. Which is the most surprising? Why?
2. Where did the name, “temperance movement”, come from?
3. What was the ultimate goal of temperance reformers?
4. List three ways that the temperance movement was important:
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