

## St. Bridget's Temperance Society

In order to get the facts concerning the year St. Bridget's Temperance society was organized, together with a list of its first set of officers, I must admit I encountered several obstacles. I phoned two of the surviving members and to my surprise and disappointed<sup>ment</sup>, they were unable to give me the information that I was seeking. Although this society was very active socially, we have no account of its activities until the year 1899 when it held its 9th anniversary so with my genius for higher mathematics, I am now able to state that the society was organized in the year 1890. As to the first president, it is generally agreed that the late William Connolly received that honor. It seems to me that there must have been an extended period of drought during this era as temperance and total abstinence societies sprang up all over our little town. There was Saint Bridget's, two Finnish Temperance societies, the Good Templars, and others. I didn't join either one as I must confess I was a heavy Moxie drinker. I must admit I was envious of those members who sported a solid gold octagon pin on their lapel. There was one period when I had every intention of joining up, until alas, one stormy night Mr. Coughlan who owned the Summer street livery stable asked me to drive the temperance lecturer over to So. Acton, where he would catch the Boston train. When we had passed Larmerter's Crossing, you can imagine my surprise when the lecturer withdrew a whisky flask from his hip pocket and drank the entire contents. After I regained my equilibrium I said "for a guy that preaches down with whiskey, you sure can down it with the best of them." He explained that whiskey was the only thing that cured his hoarseness. I replied "you should try Dr. John's. Quiet prevailed for the rest of the trip.



The original headquarters of St. Bridget's society was located in the old Riverside Coop building, corner of Nason and Summer St, the present site of the Knights of Columbus building. It was quite an elaborate meeting room. It consisted of a stage with several drops and curtains, a combined parlor and library in the rear, with an auditorium that had a capacity <sup>for</sup> of 150 people. The club went in to athletics on a grand scale. The members organized a baseball team and its first encounter was with the Rice and Hutchins team of Marlboro. The score resulted in a sixteen to four victory for Marlboro - a real pitchers battle.- The club room was a veritable gymnasium furnished with weight lifting machines, punching bag, boxing gloves etc. . Ah yes, how well I remember the boxing gloves. On a certain afternoon I was invited to put on the gloves with one of the members. It was the first and last time I ever donned the gloves. I hate the sight of blood, particularly when its my own. On July 4th 1902 , a new set of officers took over, including the re-election of William Connolly as president, other officers included James Carney, Allie Bourke, John Murray, Michael Maley, John Wall, Henry McCormack, Pat Murphy, Daniel Colbert, and Pat Sherry. The membership had grown to 150 members and more spacious quarters were sought, accordingly , a five year lease was taken on Music Hall. It was completely renovated and it soon became a focal point for all indoor activities, including basket ball, roller skating, dancing, and dramatics. Most of the music for dancing was supplied by the following orchestras. The Union, Brighams, Cartwrights, and McEnnelly's. A course of lectures were given in 1904. Several lectures were given by the Hon. Arthur Peck of Boston. I wonder if Peck was the guy that drank the pint? On Jan. 8th the society held its 13th anniversary <sup>concert</sup> and ball. Those taking part in the concert were Rose Hannon, Mattie Owens, Geo. Jamieson in vocal solos, May Morgan, reading; Joe Devine, club swinging; and E.F. McEnnelly, violin solo.. Jan. 6th 1911, the entire membership renewed their pledge at St Bridgets church. a most imposing spectacle.



A few of my listeners may recall that our town held its annual elections in the old Cooperative Hall and I can remember how the members of St. Bridget's Temperance Society <sup>whose</sup> ~~who~~ quarters were directly beneath the hall would congregate in their rooms and await with baited breath the results of the license issue, which by the way, was usually in the affirmative. Then came the weeping and gnashing of teeth and the impromptu meeting took on the appearances of a wake.-----  
 No society activities were mentioned after 1911, therefore we can assume the demise of the organization soon after.-- In summing up my remarks, let me state emphatically, that while I used a slight degree of levity throughout my monograph, it was not my intention to belittle the several local temperance societies and the impact they had on our town. The members were dedicated to the cause of temperance and the example set by them resulted in less crime and drunkenness <sup>S</sup>~~when~~ during the period when these vices were noticeably <sup>E</sup><sub>A</sub> rampant.

-----  
 J.B.F.

JAMES B. FARRELL

READ AT THE MEETING  
 OF THE MAY. HIST. SOCIETY