

# Temperance Art

The downward slide “from the first glass to the grave”—this was a cautionary tale told often through hand-colored lithographs in temperance tracts and hand-painted glass slides in magic-lantern shows. As the images made clear, the danger was absolute: if you don’t abstain, you will lose your morals, your job, your family, your life, and your chance for salvation.

The standard narrative also appeared as *Ten Nights in a Bar-Room and What I Saw There*, a popular novel published in 1854, a long-running melodrama, and a film released in 1931.

The cover and the lithograph on page 86, titled “The Drunkard’s Progress,” are examples of temperance art, and here are a few others—two from national sources (above and right) and the others created and used by Iowans.

—Ginalie Swaim, editor



THE NEW YEAR:—HOW THEY BEGAN:

THE OLD YEAR:—HOW THEY CAME OUT.

These two vignettes, from a larger lithograph titled “The Down Hill Road,” are unusual because they show a woman as well as a man succumbing to alcohol. (Lithograph from a scriptural tract published in Boston, c.1878.)

Titled “The Bible and Temperance,” this mid-century lithograph was published by Nathaniel Currier. Still dressed in finery, the drunken husband sleeps while the despairing wife and their children seek hope in scripture.



LIVING HISTORY FARMS; PHOTO BY JOHN ZELLER

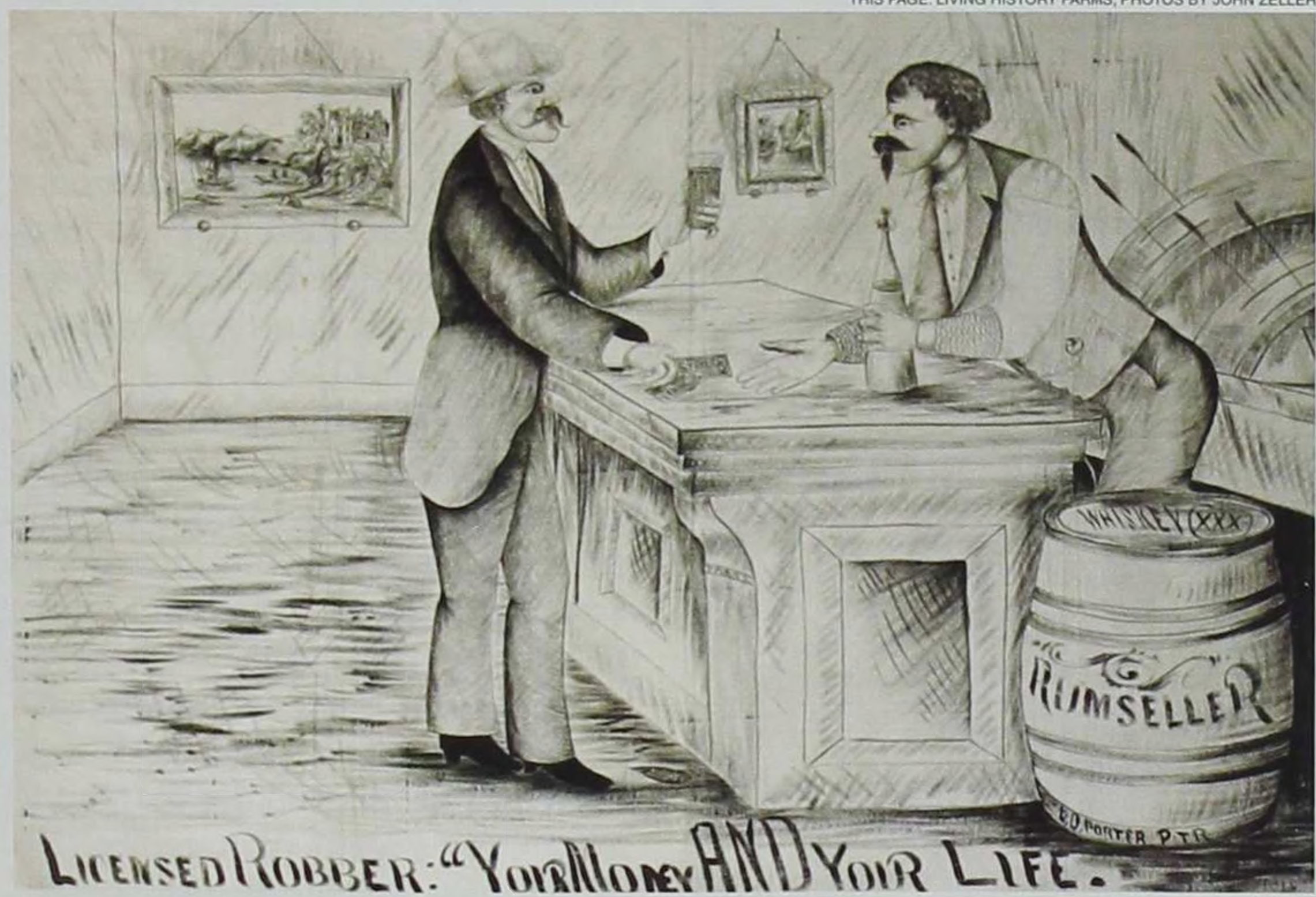


Left and opposite page: According to a hand-written note with these temperance banners, they were used by Samuel W. Heald, a young dentist in Iowa City in 1867, “when the Good Lord took hold of him.” As a Methodist minister he served 15 Iowa churches before his death at age 60 in 1903. The banners were drawn by L. D. Porter, a prisoner at the Anamosa State Penitentiary in the late 1860s. The muslin banners are in the collections of Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa.



THIS PAGE: LIVING HISTORY FARMS; PHOTOS BY JOHN ZELLER

Left: It's not known whether Samuel Heald the minister or L. D. Porter the prisoner came up with the specific message of these banners, but these may refer to Iowa's inconsistent and confusing liquor legislation. Under one particular law, a licensed saloon that paid a tax could still sell rum, whiskey, and other alcohol in a dry community. The banners imply that while an armed robber might demand "your money OR your life," saloons might well take your money and, eventually, your life.



Below: Porter and Heald's four-part banner cautions that a cigar leads to a pipe and a drink, and soon to dissipation.

