

MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS: CREATING THE EVANSTON WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

by Stella Ress

For years community members kicked around the idea of creating a nationally recognized historic district in Evanston based around the theme of women's history. Last year, the stars aligned: the Evanston Women's History Project (EWHP) was born, thanks to the generous contributions of several donors through the Evanston Community Foundation (ECF)'s Fund for Women and Girls.

The Frances Willard Historical Association has been both a helpful visionary in the planning stages and ultimately, a beneficiary of this project as a whole. In addition to providing the EWHP with fodder for the historic district nomination, FWHA former and current board members are active in the planning and research phases of the Project, and the Project's headquarters is located at the Willard House.

EVANSTON WOMEN'S HISTORY PROJECT

The EWHP is a three-year collaborative effort to document and celebrate Evanston women who were significant in the local, regional, and/or national arenas. In addition to the historic district, EWHP will build a searchable database of these significant women and will craft educational and tourism materials to assist people of all ages in learning these stories and visiting the historical sites associated with women's history in Evanston.

Naturally the Frances Willard House will benefit from the project in many ways. EWHP funds have provided the FWHA with a fully functioning office in the Willard House, and with a part-time staff person, Stella Ress. Ress is a doctoral student in the Public History Program at Loyola University Chicago, where she recently completed a project to list a Chicago neighborhood on the National Register of Historic Places.

We look forward to the bright future that our partnership with the EWHP is sure to usher in AND we'll keep you posted on all updates! For more information about the EWHP, see our website at www.evcommfdn.org or our blog at <http://evanstonwomen.wordpress.com/>.

Prohibition: The Movie

By Janet Olson



Photo: left to right: Hans, Roger, Mary, Viktor, Janet (note archivally appropriate white gloves). Photo by Zoe Shalom

In August, a German film director contacted the FWHA about filming a segment for a documentary about the 18th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution (enacting Prohibition) at the Willard House. The documentary will be shown on the French/German public television station ARTE. After many emails back and forth, the three-man German film crew appeared on our doorstep on October 27 for eleven hours of work!

The crew filmed exterior and interior shots, and conducted interviews with WCTU expert and site manager Mary McWilliams and with historian Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford, who has written extensively about Frances Willard. The crew spent much time filming historic photographs, documents, and artifacts from the House and the Willard Archives. They even recorded the ambient sound (which included sirens and the rumbling of buses) to fill any gaps in the film. All this for what they estimate will fill less than ten minutes in the finished 90-minute documentary!

The three men enjoyed their time at the Willard House, and were very interested in the history of the WCTU. The documentary will be finished in the spring, and we will get a copy (with subtitles, we hope!).

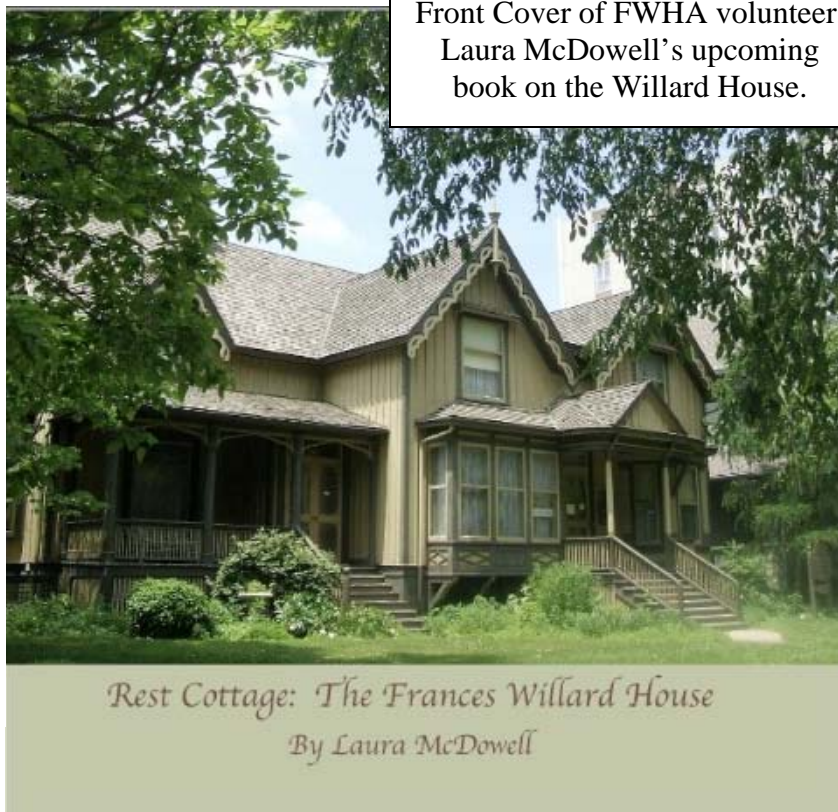
Maybe we'll plan a members' movie night at the Willard House. . .

Volunteering, It's a Win-Win Situation: An Interview with Laura McDowell

by Stella Ress

FWHA intern, Laura McDowell is quick to point out that volunteering at the Willard House helps her out as much as it aids the organization. "The benefits I've gained through my volunteer work at the Willard House are great!" she exclaims. While volunteering at the Willard House, Laura has been able to craft her skills as an emerging public historian. She is in her second year of study at Loyola University's Public History Master's Degree Program and plans on getting a job in the museum or archives world when she graduates in the spring. "Having experience as a docent will help me when looking for museum jobs," she states.

In addition to her work as a docent, which she asserts has helped her become more comfortable with public speaking, Laura is currently working on a Willard House "coffee-table" book. The book, on sale at the Willard House soon, is arranged room-by-room and provides interesting information about the House as well as high quality images.



Front Cover of FWHA volunteer, Laura McDowell's upcoming book on the Willard House.

The book will be a great gift to give to friends and family members unable to come to Evanston to tour the house themselves or for those who want to bring a bit of the Willard House home with them after they leave. Laura and FWHA and WCTU board members are in the final stages of editing, but anticipate publishing the book before the winter holidays.

The FWHA Annual Meeting was held on November 9, 2008. After a presentation on the progress of the Evanston Women's History Project by research assistant Stella Ress, and reports from committee chairs, the slate of officers was voted on, and passed unanimously.

Please welcome our new officers:

President: Mimi Peterson, long-time Evanston resident and recent author of book of historic Evanston postcards; Vice President: Amy Tyson, assistant professor of history at DePaul University, Chicago. Two officers are continuing their terms: Treasurer Pam Rolfes, and Secretary Prudence Moylan (history professor at Loyola University), both of whom are also long-time Evanstonians. We also welcome a new Board member, Zoe Shalom, who has recently moved to the area. We look forward to an exciting year ahead!

FWHA Committees: Restoration Collections Archives Membership/Fundraising Tours and Programs

Welcome NEW Board Officers and Members!

by Janet Olson

From the Archives: Focus on History Fair

The annual National History Fair is an important way to teach middle- and high-school students about using historical resources. This October, for the second year, the FWHA was represented at a History Fair event in Chicago. Last year, students from a suburban high school used the Willard Archives to research Lucy Page Gaston, an early 20th-century WCTU member who campaigned against smoking, for their History Fair project. This year's History Fair theme, "Individuals and their Legacies," seems tailor-made for projects on Frances Willard and other Evanston/WCTU women, and we expect many inquiries from young scholars both local and nation-wide.



Chicago History Fair finalists pose in front of their final project on WCTU member, Lucy Page Gaston.

Back to our Roots: Willard House Garden goes Back in Time

by Barbara Geiger

During the past year, we've begun to return the gardens to the simpler look they had during Frances's lifetime. Eleno Flores, the site's gardener, removed overgrown shrubs and board members thinned out the overcrowded perennial beds. Next we need to replant these areas with a few species similar to the plants used in Frances's yard and in Evanston in the 1890s. In the meantime, we've planted three Frances Willard peonies in the semi-circle in the front of the house.



Our wonderful supplier, Full Bloom Farm, will be growing more peony roots for the FWHA for next year, and as the supply increases, they will be available for members to purchase. Take a look! www.fullbloomfarmpeonies.co

If, like Laura, you're interested in volunteering, or if you are interested in serving on the board or on a committee, contact us at willardhouse@earthlink.net or call (847) 328-7500.