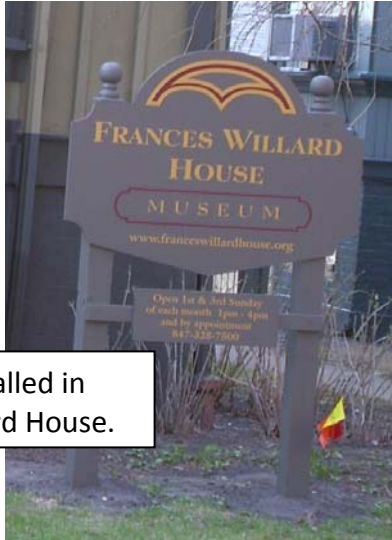


F W H A N E W S

Signs of Change: Willard House Updates Its Image

By Janet Olson



The new sign installed in front of the Willard House.

Even before spring flowers started to bloom in Evanston this year, a passerby on Chicago Avenue spotted a wonderful new flower blossoming in the front yard of Rest Cottage: A new sign. Replacing the simple notice-board on a pole that had formerly served to tell visitors about tour dates and special events, the new sign gives a much more attractive and suitable look to the front of the building. The selection and installation of the sign were overseen by FWHA Board members Barbara Geiger and Amy Tyson, and the sign itself was constructed by Sign One of Evanston. Barbara and Amy offered the Board numerous choices, showing examples used by other local museums, libraries, and organizations. The Board decided on a wooden sign with subtle Victorian details that complement the house's style and colors. Clearly visible from the street, the sign gives basic information: the name "Frances Willard House Museum" and the Web address. A detachable board underneath gives the regular tour days and times. This smaller sign can be changed as needed. But the process involved more than just the design decisions; it included seeking approval and a permit from the City of Evanston and checking with utility companies to make sure that no underground lines were obstructed. Our new sign proclaims not only our name and our hours; it represents a sign of the changes the FWHA is undertaking to make the museum more visible, more appealing to visitors, and more professionally managed.

Restoration wins Historic Preservation Award

By Peggy Veregin

It is with great excitement that we share with you the news that the FWHA has received a Preservation Award from the City of Evanston for the restoration of Frances Willard's Den and Bedroom.

The restoration was recognized for preservation excellence during a ceremony on June 23, 2008. Jurors were particularly impressed with the high level of documentation and finish detail that went in to the restoration, returning the rooms to their circa 1890 appearance.

Finishes for the restoration were chosen based on the results of an on-site investigation and include a combination of custom and period appropriate finishes.



Photographs of Willard's Bedroom (above) and Den (below) by Leslie Schwartz, Leslie Schwartz Photography.



In the Den, the original, beautiful blue color of the walls has been restored and ceiling paper, carpet, and ceiling light fixtures similar to the originals have been installed.

In the Bedroom, the original wallpaper was reproduced. This beautiful paper is complimented by a wallpaper border, carpet and floorcloth that closely resemble the patterns of the originals. The windows in both rooms now have clear UV film to protect the irreplaceable objects within.

The FWHA is honored to receive this important Preservation award. We urge you to visit, to see and experience these stunning rooms as Frances would have seen them.

Fated to Find Frances: FWHA Welcomes New Board Member

By Stella Ress



Mimi Peterson signs copies of her historical postcard book *Evanston at Borders* at Borders Bookstore in Evanston.

“It’s just so weird how these things happen,” Mary “Mimi” Peterson says as she starts to tell me the story of how she got involved in the Frances Willard Historical Association. Mimi is the FWHA’s newest board member. A self-described activist and native Evanstonian, Mimi has a rich and varied history in this community; the way she sees it, it was only a matter of time until she got involved at the Willard House. Not only did she cultivate a passion for history by growing up in the oldest house in Evanston, a home built by William Foster around 1841, but like her role model, Mimi has been organizing Evanstonians for years. “I’m in love with Frances!” she chirps. “I find her to be so inspiring...the strength that she had for organizing.”

She skims through one of the many books on Evanston’s history that she laid out on the table before our interview until she comes to the quote she was looking for: “Agitate, Educate, Organize. These are the deathless watchwords of success.” With the ups and downs that Mimi has faced a community leader in such grassroots organizations as To Rescue Evanston’s Elms, the Fair Share Action Committee and the General Dawes Returns Campaign, it’s no wonder that she marvels at Willard, her skill at organizing, and her overwhelming tenacity.

“I feel closer to her,” she says. “I wish I could have known her and met her.” Clearly Frances helped shape Mimi into the person that she is today. A short while after her conversation with former FWHA president, Lori Osborne about the organization and about their mutual love of Frances, the FWHA welcomed Mimi to the board. With her background, interests, and gregarious personality, Mimi heads up the Fundraising and Membership Committee. Moreover, she leads the Girls Scouts programs at the Willard House.

While learning the ropes of the FWHA, Mimi was also busy researching and then publicizing her own postcard book about Evanston’s history: *Evanston*. Thirsty for an updated history of their town, Evanstonians have responded to Mimi’s book enthusiastically. Mimi has attended book signings/shows throughout Evanston at places such as Antique Maps and Prints, Barnes and Nobles, Borders, and even the Art + Science Hair Salon. She’ll also be promoting her book at both the North Shore Retirement Hotel on July 9 from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. and at the Willard House on July 22 from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Perhaps Willard’s other famous quote, “Do Everything!” inspires Mimi these days.

Updated Membership Structure

As you learned from reading our Annual Appeal letter at the end of 2007, the FWHA’s accomplishments during the past year were many. Our goals for this year include continuing to improve systems and procedures in order to be able to focus even more effectively on our mission of telling the story of Frances Willard’s life through the House Museum.

For increased efficiency, we have decided to establish an annual membership, rather than a rolling membership based on date of renewal. Our membership year will run from July 1 to June 30. Your renewal now will cover your membership until June 30, 2009. This will make it easier for everyone to remember, and will make our bookkeeping simpler and more accurate. If you have already renewed earlier this year, your membership will also run until June 30, 2009.

We have also restructured our membership fees, making them more consistent with those offered by similar organizations. Our membership perks have been enhanced as well. All members will receive a membership card and the FWHA newsletter.

Newsletters News

Faithful readers of the *FWHA News* may have noticed that no issues were produced last year. Unfortunately the Board members who had worked on the newsletter had served their terms and were unable to produce the newsletter. But we know how important it is to keep our members and friends up to date on what’s happening at Rest Cottage.

As we move into 2009, we have determined to try out an e-newsletter format. Many museums, historical societies, and other non-profit organizations have moved to a newsletter distributed by e-mail as a way to better reach and serve their memberships. So many people have access to e-mail that this seems like a good time for the FWHA to make a change. E-mail distribution will save the FWHA postage money and will allow us to get news out to our members and friends more quickly. Be sure to include your e-mail address on your membership form so that you don’t miss future issues of the *FWHA News*! If you do not have access to e-mail, please let us know so that we can mail copies to you.

Giving Opportunities

In addition to your annual membership, there are many ways to help the Frances Willard Historical Association reach its goals. Volunteering, in-kind donations, and donations targeted for special projects are all very much appreciated.

For example, volunteer docents are always welcome. We are also looking for volunteers to help with fund-raising and web design. In-kind donations are currently being sought by our Garden Committee. Special projects include conservation of artworks and artifacts in the House, and restoration of Frances Willard’s bicycle, Gladys.

Contact FWHA Board member Mimi Peterson at (847) 328-7500 or willardhouse@earthlink.net for more information about any of these giving opportunities, and thank you.