

# FWHA NEWS

## Re-Introducing Frances Willard: Reformer Extraordinaire

By Stella Ress

In honor of Willard’s upcoming 170<sup>th</sup> birthday, we at the Frances Willard Historical Association thought it was an appropriate time to revisit Willard and her legacy. Frances Willard was the founder of the World’s Women’s Christian Temperance Union and the charismatic and passionate president of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) from 1879 until her untimely death in 1898. Did you also know, however, that Willard was an activist in other areas of reform?

Often times when we do learn about Willard, we only learn about her timeless efforts to eradicate drink. Yet Willard’s true talent and passion were arguably, to organize and agitate for a broad spectrum of women’s rights and issues. Indeed, even Willard’s temperance work led her to advocate for female suffrage. She believed that if women were given the chance to vote, they would be able to use the ballot “as a weapon of protection to [their] home[s].”

In addition to her temperance and suffrage work, Willard was also interested in other family and humanitarian concerns. She wrote in her diary, “What can be done to make the world a wider place for women?” Through the WCTU, Willard carved an answer to her question. Adopting the policy, “Do Everything,” Frances allowed WCTU branches to move beyond temperance, should they choose to do so. For example, in 1889, the Chicago WCTU faction sponsored day nurseries, Sunday schools, an industrial school, a mission to house homeless women, and a low-cost restaurant. Clearly then, under her guidance, the WCTU transcended prohibition.



Portrait of a young Frances Willard.

Perhaps the best way to learn about Frances would be to attend one of the Willard House’s guided tours. No doubt walking around in her house, standing among her possessions, and looking at pictures of her loved ones, would inspire almost everyone to really think about Frances and what she meant to her family, her community, and the world.

### A Call for Volunteers

By Amy Tyson

**Volunteers Needed**

Volunteers help keep our Museum running. Currently, we need assistance in fundraising, community outreach, event planning, restoration, museum collections, gardens, and archives.



**Wanted: Board Members**

FWHA Board of Directors help preserve one of the oldest homes in Evanston, as well as one of the first house museums dedicated to the life of a woman! The FWHA is actively recruiting Board Members who have expertise in marketing, fundraising, community outreach, event planning, or legal matters.

If you are interested in **volunteering** your time or skills at the Museum or Archives, OR if you would like to nominate yourself or another as a **board member**, please contact us at (847) 328-7500 or [info@franceswillardhouse.org](mailto:info@franceswillardhouse.org)

The FWHA would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of **Ann Calhoun Dienner**, who has been a member at the Benefactor Level for two years running!



**EVANSTON WOMEN’S HISTORY PROJECT UPDATE:** With the reopening of the Evanston History Center (EHC), the Evanston Women’s History Project will now be headquartered at the EHC. As the project moves from its headquarters at the Willard House Museum, so does our part-time staffer, Stella Ress, who has been our able Office Assistant (and Newsletter writer) for the past two years. On behalf of everyone at the Frances Willard House and Memorial Archives, thank you Stella, for all you've done for the FWHA.

## Changing the Guard: Long-time Board Member, Pam Rolfes, Leaves Her Post

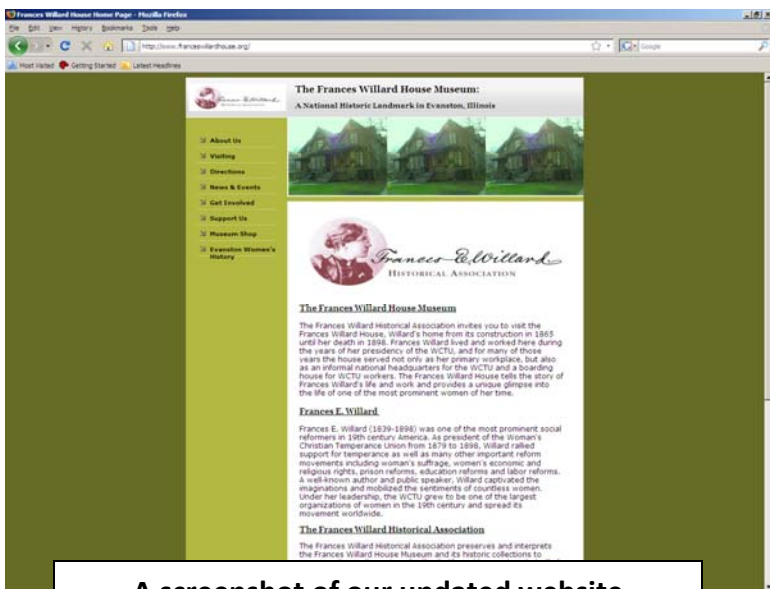
By Stella Ress

“I honestly think [that] if we can get the word out...people would embrace this little house,” FWHA Treasurer, Pam Rolfes says. In fact, she knows it will happen to others, because she has seen it. When the World’s Women’s Christian Temperance Union came to the Willard House in September of last year, Pam interacted with the cosmopolitan tourists. “They were so excited about being here,” she remembers, “I think you can equate it to how others might act around a rock band or something.”

For Pam, that is why volunteering at the Willard House has been so rewarding. “That sort of thing really makes volunteering here worth it...it means so much to people,” she continues. And volunteering at the Willard House has been rewarding, both for Pam and for the organization. Pam has been on the board for the past six years. For the last three, she has been treasurer. Now, however, her tenure on the board, is up. She’ll be leaving her posts, both as the treasurer and as a board member, at the end of the summer.

Though the FWHA will miss her enthusiasm, her friendliness, and her gift for numbers, Pam good-naturedly downplays her achievements as a treasurer saying, “No volunteer job that I have ever done is something that can’t be done by someone else. Anybody that keeps her own checkbook at home can do it!” Ever the optimist, she continues, “You need turnover. You need new ideas. You need new ways of doing things and a lot of times, the new way is the better way.”

Volunteering at the Willard House provided Pam with a way to give back, to meet new people, and to feel connected to a cause. Now that she will be leaving the board, Pam looks forward to other challenges. She states, “I always seem to find things to do...There’s so much out there that [I] can do.” Indeed, she already has plans to get more involved with her church. She is also looking forward to traveling more, especially with friends. “Getting people together is something I like to do,” she declares with a smile. No doubt wherever she goes, or whatever she does, Pam will continue to make lasting connections and meaningful moments for all involved.



**A screenshot of our updated website**

### FWHA Website Renovated

By Janet Olson

The Den and Bedroom at the Willard House aren’t the only sites that have recently undergone extensive work. Our web address hasn’t changed—it’s still [www.franceswillardhouse.org](http://www.franceswillardhouse.org) – but the look of our website is all new! We are in the process of making big changes to both the content and the design of the site, so that it will be a more useful resource for members and visitors.

A new web-hosting program makes it easier for us to update the site and keep you informed about upcoming events.

The redesign includes directions for visiting the House; links to our CafePress store, recent past issues of the *FWHA Newsletter*, and our membership/volunteer/donation forms; and a page about the Evanston Women’s History Project. Still on the virtual drawing board, to be added soon: a photo gallery, links to related resources; information for researchers—and more.

Your feedback is important! Let us know what you think of the new site, and what you would like to see added. Send your comments and suggestions to [info@franceswillardhouse.org](mailto:info@franceswillardhouse.org).

### Upcoming Events By Amy Tyson

#### August

Wondering what to do with your out-of-town visitors this summer? Why not introduce them to some Evanston History! **For August only, the Willard House will be open every Sunday from 1-4.** (Remember, members get in free; renew your membership (online!) today.)

#### September

Join us for Frances Willard's 170th Birthday Party on **Saturday, September 26**. From 1-4 PM the Willard House will be bustling with 19th century games, fun outdoor activities, lemonade, birthday cake and a raffle. Fun for the whole family for only \$5 a person. Mark your calendars!

#### October

Come see "what lies beneath" the Willard House. This special event tour focuses on preservation issues, and takes you into parts of the Willard House that regular tour-goers never see. Wear sturdy shoes & bring a flashlight. \$25 donation. Space is limited, so reserve your spot today. RSVP at [info@franceswillardhouse.org](mailto:info@franceswillardhouse.org), include "Basement Tours" as your subject heading.