

Frances Willard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union *A Time Line of Her Life*

Compiled from pamphlet: *Frances E. Willard, Yours for Home Protection*
by Norma Taylor Mitchell, Commission on Archives and History,
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- Born September 28, 1839 in Churchville NY
- 2 years old – Moved to Oberlin, OH. Father studied for ministry in Congregational Church
- 7 years old – Family moved to Janesville, WI where her father became a prominent farmer and devout Methodist
- Frances became a prairie “tom boy” and was called “Frank”
- 1859 - Attends Northwestern Female College in Evanston Illinois
- 1861 - Broke off engagement to Charles Henry Fowler who later became a prominent pastor, college president, and bishop
- Became a teacher – lived on very meager income
- 1862 – Younger sister, Mary, died at age 19 of tuberculosis. Frances wrote her first book, *Nineteen Wonderful Years* about her sister's life in 1864.
- 1866 - At a holiness revival led by Phoebe and Dr. Walter Palmer, Willard went to the altar and dedicated her life to God saying: “Kneeling in utter self abandonment, I consecrated myself anew to God.”
- 1866 – Asked to work with Melinda Hamline, wife of Bishop Leonidas Hamline, with the American Methodist Ladies' Centenary Association in raising \$30,000 to construct a new building at Garrett Biblical Institute which would be named for influential 18th century Methodist laywoman Barbara Heck.
- 1871 elected President of Evanston College for Ladies. Organized enormously successful fund raiser for college that brought 10,000 people to Evanston
- Made first public speeches for Women's Rights
- 1871 – Devastating Chicago fire undermined financial pledges to Evanston College. Board votes to merge college with Northwestern University. Willard becomes dean of women. President Northwestern is former fiancé Rev. Charles Fowler.
- 1873-74 – Clashes with President Fowler. University board sides with Fowler. Willard resigns.
- 1874 – National Woman's Christian Temperance Union organized at Hillsboro, Ohio and Washington Court House, Ohio. Willard elected: President of Chicago Union chapter, Secretary of Illinois Union, Corresponding Secretary of National Union.
- 1874-78 - Read Social Gospel activist Washington Gladden's book *On Being a Christian* and begins to push the WCTU to move from prayer and study to political engagement. Progressive philosophy leads to clash with older conservative President Annie Turner Wittenmyer.
- 1877 – Conflict with evangelist, Dwight L. Moody, who disapproved of her appearing on platform with Mary Livermore, president of the Massachusetts WCTU, because Livermore was Unitarian. Willard supports Livermore saying: “Brother Moody's Scripture interpretation concerning religious toleration were too literal for me! The jacket was too straight--I could not wear it.”
- 1879 Elected national President of WCTU

- Adopts “Do-Everything” philosophy as she leads the WCTU to organize itself on a number of social reform fronts with 40 different program departments organized by 1890. Issues included:
 1. Prohibition
 2. “Scientific temperance” instruction in schools
 3. Women’s Suffrage
 4. Jail and prison reform
 5. Sexual Crimes against women
 6. Labor rights
- Established “preference for racial inclusion” policy at national WCTU office
- Polyglot Petition endorsing prohibition signed by over 7 million nationwide
- Begins southern outreach strategy which climaxes with national meeting being hosted in Nashville in 1887.
- 1888 – writes book *Woman in the Pulpit*, making clear her conviction that sex discrimination should have no place in the Christian Church.
- 1888 – Elected to General Conference by her home conference
- 1888 - Bishops oppose seating Willard and four other women elected as delegates. Body of pastors and laypeople side with bishops and refuse seating of women
- 1890 – Supports merging Prohibition Party with Populist Party raising wrath of many of WCTU membership who were Republican.
- 1890 - Judith Horton Foster, WCTU president of Iowa Union, splits with WCTU to form “Non-Partisan WCTU”
- 1891 – Elected first president of newly organized World WCTU
- 1890’s - “Becomes increasingly socialistic, convinced that the forces of moral reform as expressed in the Union and the Prohibition Party must ally with the forces of economic reform expressed in the labor and agrarian movements.” (page 31)
- Favors:
 1. Nationalization of Transportation and Communication industries
 2. Eight-hour work day
 3. Labor’s right to organize
 4. Arbitration of labor disputes
 5. Arbitration of international disputes
- 1892 Visits Lady Henry Somerset, a wealthy British divorcee’ and leader in the world temperance movement. Comes to agree with Somerset’s view that “prohibition would be an ineffective weapon against intemperance and that only economic reconstruction and education for disciplined living would help.” (p. 32)
- 1894 – Joins Fabian Society, a distinguished group of evolutionary socialists. Argues that “poverty is a cause as well as an effect of intemperance”
- 1897 - Re-elected president of WCTU for 19th time
- Died February 17, 1898 at age of 58 with funeral at First Methodist Church, Evanston, Illinois and burial at Rosehill Cemetery in Chicago
- 1905 – Becomes the first woman honored with a statue in Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol