



The Frances Willard House Museum and Archives in Evanston document the life of social reformer Frances Willard (who lived in Evanston most of her life) and the history of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the largest U.S. women's organization of the 19th century, with a world-wide presence. In addition to the history of the WCTU's work for temperance and woman's suffrage, the WCTU Archives is an unexpected resource for Chicago stories, national and international stories of women's empowerment, and stories of innovation, change, and conflict.

“Do Everything”: How WCTU Women Used Debate and Diplomacy to Transform the World

The history of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union shows that **debates** don't always involve men and **diplomacy** doesn't always occur in governments. In fact, before women achieved the right to vote in 1920, they relied on debate and diplomacy to effect change. You will find many primary sources in the WCTU Archives to inspire a project based on the theme of [Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences](#) –or on another theme you choose.

In the late 19th century, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union quickly plunged into **debates** about how to combat alcoholism, and soon began to work for such reform efforts as woman suffrage, prison reform, labor and child welfare laws, pure foods, and raising the age of consent for sex. Their motto was “**Do everything,**” and their strongest weapon was **communication** – from the spoken word in speeches and plays to the written word in pamphlets, newspapers, books, letters, and education plans, to the public world of parades and petitions.

For example, our comprehensive digital resource, [“Truth-Telling,”](#) uses primary sources to document the conflict between Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells in the 1890s, and shows how **their debate** took place through newspaper articles and speeches.

The world-wide WCTU pushed the boundaries of the domestic sphere that kept women from speaking in public or engaging in political action. Members **used diplomatic skills** to solve political, social, and economic problems they perceived in the world. They empowered women to learn leadership, strategy, and advocacy techniques to achieve their goals. When faced with challenges, they **negotiated** their way to success and **regrouped** after failures.

How We Can Help You “Do Everything,” whatever topic you choose

- See the second page for **possible research topics** and **recommended resources**.
- For students who are comfortable **visiting in person**, we are open by appointment for individuals or teams of 2-3. See our Guidelines: <https://franceswillardhouse.org/research/library-and-archives/>.
- We are happy to provide **virtual interviews**, and **consultation** by phone and email.
- We can supply **scans of photos and documents** from our collection.

Frances Willard House Museum & Archives 1730 Chicago Ave., Evanston IL
archives@franceswillardhouse.org <https://franceswillardhouse.org/research/history-day/>

Some Ideas for History Fair/History Day Projects

- *The Frances Willard/Ida B. Wells Debate*
 - *The Diplomatic Skills that Helped Win Prohibition*
 - *Conflict and Compromise in the WCTU Fight for Woman Suffrage*
 - *Oratory for Women: Skills for Debate and Public Speaking*
 - *Should Women Preach?*
 - *Informational Strategy: Plays, Fairs, Parades*
 - *Debate and Diplomacy Abroad in the World WCTU: Peace and Arbitration*
 - *The Power of the Press: Debating Through the Written Word*
 - *A Place at the Table: The African American Struggle to be Recognized in the WCTU*
 - *The Power of the Petition: The Home Protection Campaign and the Polyglot Petition*
 - *Prohibition and Repeal: Success and Failure*
 - *Alcohol and Drugs Education in the Schools: Scientific Temperance Instruction*
 - *Achieving Social Change: [prison reform, dress reform, raising the age of consent for sex]*
- And take a look through our [blog posts](#) for even more ideas**

Resources available online

Digital Exhibits on the Frances Willard House Museum and Archives website

- *Truth-telling: Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells:*
<https://scalar.usc.edu/works/willard-and-wells/index>
- *“Womanly Liberty” or “Home Protection”: Frances Willard and Woman Suffrage*
<https://tinyurl.com/xn7fhfy>
- *From “Teaching the Children” to “Just Say No”: How the WCTU and Scientific Temperance Instruction Influenced Health Education in the Public Schools* <https://tinyurl.com/hawtw35n>
- *Performing Temperance:* <https://franceswillardhouseperformingtemperance.omeka.net>
 - *Performing Temperance, Part 2: Oratorical Contests:*
<https://franceswillardhouse.org/performing-temperance-part-ii-wctu-oratorical-contests/>
- *Digitized journals of Frances Willard:* <http://www.franceswillardjournals.org/>

Books by Frances Willard: Digitized

- *Glimpses of 50 years* <https://archive.org/details/glimpsesofoffifty00will>
 - *Willard’s autobiography, written when she was 50, contains images and copies of documents*
- *How to Win: A Book for Girls* <https://archive.org/details/howtowinabookfo00willgoog>
 - *Willard communicates the importance of being independent starting at a young age*
- *Do Everything* <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001744118>
 - *An overview of all aspects of WCTU work according to Willard’s “Do Everything” plan*
- *Hints and Helps in our Temperance Work* <https://archive.org/details/9605531.nlm.nih.gov>
 - *1879 handbook to help women organize and administer a WCTU, hold meetings, publicize the WCTU’s mission, and learn the fine art of lobbying.*

Digitized speeches (Frances Willard and other temperance leaders)

- *Speaking While Female Data Bank* <https://speakingwhilefemale.co/temperance/>

We look forward to working with you!

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