



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 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a world-wide presence. With a focus on the WCTU's work for temperance and the prohibition and woman suffrage amendments, the Willard Archives is a resource for Chicago stories, national and international stories, stories of women's empowerment, and stories of innovation, change, and conflict.

## “Speaking Out” for Reform: The WCTU Communicates with the World of Women

To illustrate this year's theme, **Communication in History**, the primary source collections in the Willard Archive show how the women of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, starting in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, quickly became **active and innovative communicators**. They informed and persuaded people about the need to combat alcoholism and other social problems. The WCTU pushed the boundaries of the domestic sphere that kept women from speaking in public or engaging in political action. Their motto was “**Do everything,**” and their strongest weapon was the **power of communication**. They employed all available means of communication to get their message of reform out to a national and international audience—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, petitions, and exhibits.

As part of the WCTU's mission to empower women to speak out, it was also active in communicating about **how to communicate**—producing guides on how to run a meeting, how to work with journalists, how to manage a publicity campaign—what we would call social media today.

And their story also shows how conflicts within their own group and with others about race and suffrage were widely communicated. For example, our comprehensive digital exhibit, “**Truth-Telling,**” documents the conflict between Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells in the 1890s. The exhibit demonstrates how the arguments took place through newspaper articles and speeches in the U.S. and England—and these primary sources are included in the site.

### How we can help History Fair students “Do Everything,” whatever topic they choose

- This handout offers possible **research topics and recommended resources**, both physical and digital.
- For students who are comfortable **visiting in person**, we are open by appointment for individuals or teams of 2-3. Guidelines: <https://franceswillardhouse.org/research/library-and-archives/>. The House Museum remains closed.
- We are readily available for **virtual interviews**, and **consultation** by phone and email
- We can supply **scans of photos and documents** from our collection

*Pictured above: Examples of primary sources documenting how the WCTU communicated its messages. Clockwise from top left: Home page to “Truth Telling” digital exhibit; WCTU Publicity Dept handbook, circa 1960; Postcard: Temperance Parade in Chicago, 1910s; photo: WCTU worker in Willard House office, early 1900s; front page, Union Signal (WCTU national weekly newspaper), Sept 1920; flier: the work of the Radio Dept, 1940; Frances Willard speech “Everybody’s War,” 1874; photo: WCTU women holding petitions, 1924; photo: Frances Willard speaking, 1896; pamphlet “How to Run a Meeting,” 1880s; WCTU printing office, WCTU Admin Bldg., 1940s.*

**Frances Willard House Museum and Archives** 1730 Chicago Avenue, Evanston IL  
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## Potential “Communication in History” topics (contact us for details and more resources)

*Oratory: The Art of Speaking in Public*

*The WCTU and the 1918 Flu Pandemic*

*The Frances Willard/Ida B. Wells conflict*

*The WCTU and Suffrage*

*The WCTU at the World’s Columbian Exposition*

*Performing Temperance: Contests and Performance for Children*

*Promoting the WCTU’s Work in the Public Eye: Plays, Fairs, Parades*

*The Power of the Press*

*Teaching the Children: Scientific Temperance Education in the Schools*

*African American Leaders in the WCTU*

*The Power of the Petition: The Home Protection Campaign and the Polyglot Petition*

*Women in Publishing: The Woman’s Temperance Publishing Association and the Union Signal*

*Communicating in Many Languages: The International WCTU*

## Resources online through the Frances Willard House Museum and Archives

- [Truth-telling: Frances Willard and Ida B. Wells: https://scalar.usc.edu/works/willard-and-wells/index](https://scalar.usc.edu/works/willard-and-wells/index)
  - Primary sources and annotated commentary documenting the well-publicized conflict between two powerful women, including newspaper articles, correspondence, speeches, reports, and images.
- Three-part blog series about “Performing Temperance”:
  - Performing Temperance, Part 1: Temperance Reciters: <https://franceswillardhouse.org/performing-temperance-part-i-temperance-reciters/>
  - Performing Temperance, Part 2: Oratorical Contests <https://franceswillardhouse.org/performing-temperance-part-ii-wctu-oratorical-contests/>
  - Performing Temperance, Part 3: Children’s Drama <https://franceswillardhouse.org/performing-temperance-part-iii-the-wctu-and-childrens-drama/>
- [Digitized journals of Frances Willard: http://www.franceswillardjournals.org/](http://www.franceswillardjournals.org/)
  - Willard kept journals continuously from the age of 16 to 31, and then from age 54 to 57. This online resource provides access to Willard’s complete, transcribed journals.

## Digitized books by Frances Willard (through the Internet Archive or HathiTrust)

- *Glimpses of 50 years* <https://archive.org/details/glimpsesoffifty00will>
  - 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, transcribed speeches (Frances Willard and other temperance leaders)

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

***Additional resources will be available on our website soon.***

## Frances Willard House Museum and Archives

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