



# Radical Woman in a Classic Town: Frances Willard of Evanston

## Introduction to the Exhibit

Social reformer Frances Willard (1839-1898) earned a world-wide reputation for her charismatic speaking and for her leadership of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), the largest and most powerful woman's organization of its time. But Willard always maintained a bond with Evanston, her hometown from 1858 until her death. She also had a strong connection to



Northwestern University, where she was the first Dean of Women and a member of the Board of Trustees. Even when her involvement with the WCTU kept her on the road and away from Evanston, Willard always came home to Rest Cottage (now the Willard House Museum) on Chicago Avenue between trips. At the height of her fame and during her busiest years, she stopped to write *A Classic Town* (1891), a charming memoir of Evanston's, and Northwestern's, early days.

This exhibit examines the complex ties between Willard and the Classic Town that helped shape her vision of the world and her role in it. Historic photographs, documents, and artifacts from the Northwestern University Archives, along with items on loan from the Frances Willard House Museum and the Frances Willard Memorial Library & Archives, illustrate stages in Willard’s life from her student days at the North Western Female College to her growing career as an orator, a writer, and a leader of women, whose motto—“Do Everything”—reflected her advocacy not just of temperance but of women's rights, social justice, and world peace.

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