

# Two Publics: The Willard Library and the Evansville-Vanderburgh County Library

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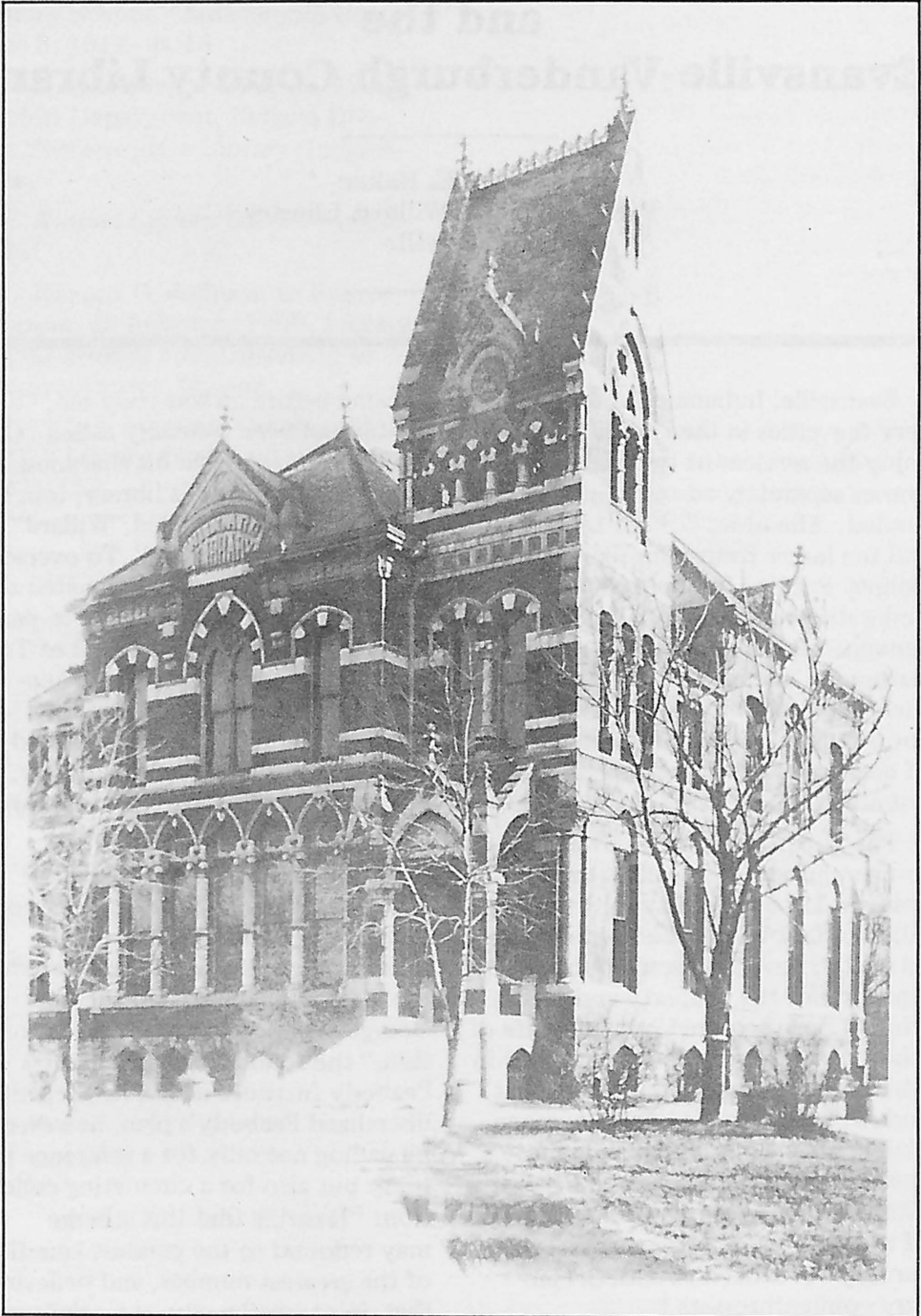
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Evansville, Indiana, is one of the very few cities in the United States to enjoy the services of two public libraries separately administered and funded. The older Willard Library and the larger Evansville-Vanderburgh County Public Library were founded under different auspices, by different generations, for somewhat different purposes. The relationship between them today is cordial, collegial, and cooperative, with just the slight dash of healthy competitiveness. It was not always so.

The Willard Library of Evansville, Indiana, properly so called, came into being in 1876 because wealthy Evansville resident Willard Carpenter wanted (a) "to devote to some public use, a portion of the property and means which I have acquired by a long life of labor . . . to benefit the community in which my life has been mostly spent" and (b) to justify his life of merchandizing, railroad building, and land speculating by leaving a memorial to himself. Neither impulse was atypical of the motives of other nineteenth century—or indeed twentieth century—philanthropists.<sup>1</sup>

Long before he was truly old, Carpenter had been generally called "Old Willard" in tribute to his sharpness in business dealings. His library, too, he decreed, should be called "Willard" rather than "Carpenter." To oversee the new institution, he designated six substantial Evansville citizens to participate with him on its Board of Trustees. They were privileged, or sentenced, to serve life terms on the Board. Whenever a vacancy should occur, hopefully very infrequently, the remaining trustees were empowered to choose someone to fill it.

On August 23, 1876, Carpenter sent the other six trustees a letter outlining his purposes. As he acknowledged, he availed himself "of the ideas and language of the late George Peabody, on a similar occasion," the founding of Baltimore's Peabody Institute in 1857. Carpenter liberalized Peabody's plan, however, by calling not only for a reference library but also for a circulating collection: "Desiring that this scheme may redound to the greatest benefit of the greatest number, and believing that, in so small a city, the privilege of



*The Willard Library of Evansville,  
within a decade or two after it opened in 1885.*

withdrawing books can be efficiently guarded from abuse, I direct that such portion of the books as the Trustees may designate may be withdrawn for perusal at home by any person, under proper rules and restriction."<sup>2</sup>

It was not as though Evansville did not already have library service. In 1855 a subscription library association had been formed, and although it was constantly beset with managerial and financial problems, it endured for almost two decades. In 1874 the association gave its collection of 4,400 books to the city, which then began operating a tax-supported "Public Library of Evansville" under school board control.

But Carpenter apparently felt that Evansville, and he himself, deserved more than a small library operating out of a converted church building. To set his more grandiose plan in motion he and, after some persuasion, his wife executed a deed transferring to the seven trustees twenty-one parcels of real estate valued at almost \$267,000. The property was to be sold and from the proceeds the trustees were to establish a permanent endowment fund and "to erect a suitable building, to improve, ornament and adorn [its] Park, and to purchase books, maps, and works of art for the use of the people of all classes, races and sexes, free of charge forever."<sup>3</sup>

Construction of the library was delayed by a national financial panic, which slowed land sales, and by a change of architects. Finally, on March 28, 1885, Willard Library opened with considerable ceremony in what is now the oldest public library building in Indiana. Costing \$64,000 to build and \$16,000 to furnish, Willard is a brick and stone masterpiece of the Italianate Gothic style, its interior extravagantly embellished with quarter-sawn golden oak.<sup>4</sup>

The building may have been brand new, but there were some old familiar books on the shelves and some old familiar faces behind the charge desk. The city was apparently more than happy to get out of the library business when a non-tax supported library was in view. The public library closed up shop and its bookstock—the nucleus of original subscription library collection had by now grown to about 9,600 volumes—was hauled over to Willard.

In a kind of bibliothecal serfdom, the two library assistants from the public library went along with their books. It was, in fact, the second change of institution and address for one of them, Miss Otilda Goslee, because she had also been the last librarian of the old subscription library. That organization, unable to pay any sort of reasonable stipend, had suffered through a succession of unsatisfied and unsatisfactory male librarians before, in its last year, resorting to hiring a female. Even so, she had demanded some concessions, in both senses of the word, to supplement her \$25 a month salary. She was allowed to act as an agent for a coal company, taking orders for it in the library. She also brought her sewing machine to work and picked up some extra money as a part-time seamstress.

Accompanying her books to the public library, Miss Goslee found herself with a male boss and an associate, Miss Lou Scantlin. The male librarian did not accompany the ladies to Willard, however, and there the two women were granted co-equal status while the Willard board discussed off and on for several years taking "steps to secure the services of a competent man, for the position of Librarian."<sup>5</sup> Their salaries were initially set at \$45 a month, soon raised to \$50 but dropped to \$35 during a period of hard times in 1888.



*"Little Brother," the Evansville Public Library's first bookmobile.  
The two-seater Ford went into service in 1923, replacing a borrowed laundry truck.*





*Ethel Farquhar McCollough, front row center, poses with the Evansville Public Library staff in 1922.*

On March 24, 1894, the Willard board unanimously voted "that the services of Miss Lou Scantlin as one of the librarians be dispensed with." No reason for Miss Scantlin's firing is given in the board minutes. The previous year she had been "granted a vacation of one month . . . , she to provide a substitute when needed."<sup>6</sup> Never before had a librarian asked for, let alone received; time off, and the trustees may have felt that a woman with the effrontery to request a vacation had the potential for making even more trouble in the future. It seems more likely that the board was finally ready to concede that no suitable man was likely to be found to run the library and to terminate the nine-year-old two-headed, or two non-headed, librarian arrangement.

After Miss Scantlin left, Miss Goslee was clearly in charge. She retained the title of librarian, and a specifically designated "assistant" librarian was hired at a lower salary. Affectionately known as "Aunt Tillie," Miss Goslee was a petite woman who dressed habitually in black. When she died in harness as Willard's head librarian in 1919, at age 76, her obituary in the *Evansville Courier*, headlined "Life's Volume Closed," mourned the loss of the "intimate touch" which had characterized her work at Willard. She embodied, the reporter wrote, all "the finer qualities of womanhood," and the library patrons would greatly miss "her kindly greeting to visitors and her intuitive knowledge of the books that had been her life-long companions."<sup>7</sup>

The librarians' intimate knowledge of their collection was essential at Willard. Not only was the cataloging somewhat amateurish but the librarians performed a sort of priestly intermediary function between the humble petitioning public and the gods of printed wisdom and knowl-

edge. The patrons were physically separated from the books by a charge desk reminiscent of a Victorian teller's cage, and they were further hedged about by a complex web of regulations. The librarians' duty to protect the books from the patrons, and their strict accountability to the board, were spelled out in rules promulgated by the trustees in the 1890s:

1. The Librarians . . . shall see that the building and books are kept in good condition, neat and clean, and shall enforce the Rules and Regulations made by the Trustees, and shall report all violations of same to the Trustees at their monthly meeting . . . .

5. The Librarians will carefully examine each book when returned, and note any injury to same, and will charge the same to the taker, in a book to be kept for that purpose. . . .

6. No book shall be reserved for or promised by the Librarians to any person in any case. When returned the books will be placed on the shelves and will be delivered to the first person applying, other than the person or family by whom they have been returned. No book will be exchanged on the day when issued. . . .

9. No person shall be allowed by the Librarians behind the counter, except upon the written order of one of the Trustees, and the doors admitting to the shelves shall at all times be kept locked.

12. The Librarians will keep a record of all books given out in such a manner as to enable the Examining Committee of the Trustees, to trace every book in the Library in the shortest possible time."<sup>8</sup>

Despite Willard Carpenter's liberal intentions, the board also insured that books would not be given to "just anyone." The month after the library opened, they provided that "every person desiring to take books from

the Library be requested to file with the Librarian a certificate signed by some responsible man or unmarried woman over 21 years of age, certifying that the person named . . . is a fit person to enjoy the privilege of the Library and agreeing to make good any loss occasioned by the person recommended and becoming responsible for the observation of the rules of the Library by such person."<sup>9</sup> In other words, one required a co-signer to establish "credit" for the loan of a book just as he might for the loan of money from one of the Evansville banks.

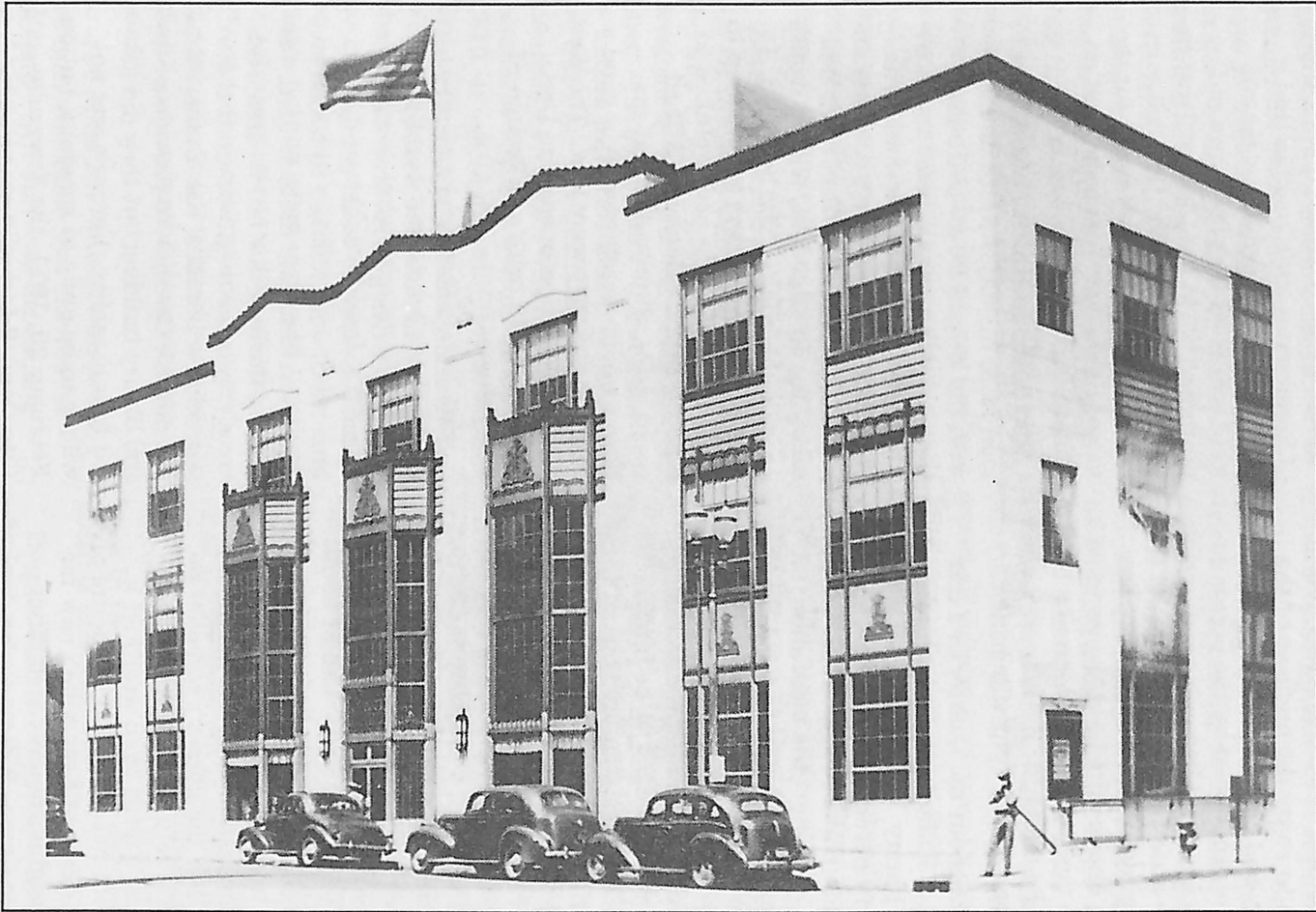
Throughout the quarter of a century that Willard was Evansville's only public library, sales of its endowment property never proceeded fast enough to build up a fund that would adequately support the institution, let alone expand services to meet the needs of a rapidly growing city. Finally the board decided that another source of income was essential. They prepared a bill to be introduced in the General Assembly—one of those acts written in general terms that applies only to one case—and in early 1905 it passed. The new law permitted the City of Evansville to levy, on Willard's behalf, a property tax of not less than 5 mills nor more than 10 mills per \$100 assessed evaluation. The small income realized was to be spent only for the purchase of books.

The city fathers, naturally, were inclined to set Willard's tax rate at the minimum rather than the maximum figure, and the library's revenues remained woefully insufficient. But even had Willard been wealthier it could not have satisfied the desire of the residents of Evansville's new far-flung neighborhoods for libraries closer to home. Willard Carpenter had assumed that if the community of the future demanded increased services they would also provide increased support, and he wished that support to be

concentrated on enlarging his monument, not adulterated by spreading it all over town. The library building, he wrote in his letter to the first trustees, "should be so constructed as to admit of harmonious additions" so that it could "be developed into a magnificent edifice as the city grows and prospers."<sup>10</sup> In the Deed of Trust he went further, requiring that "all such buildings as shall be necessary for the use of the Library" must be built on Willard Park.<sup>11</sup>

In 1909 a committee of businessmen from the city's west side met with the Willard Board and among them they devised a scheme to get around Carpenter's restrictions. The West Side Business Men's Association would furnish a storefront room and salary for an attendant, Willard would provide the books. The board authorized the westsiders to spend up to \$300 for new books and promised to send over such volumes as Willard could spare, all provided that the books would be returned in as good a condition as they were lent. The West Side book station opened on December 6, 1909, with a collection of 500 volumes.<sup>12</sup>

This arrangement was meant to be temporary, because the westsiders were also writing to Andrew Carnegie to see if Evansville could get on the long list of communities to which he had given libraries. Since Willard was serving the near downtown area, and since it was the neighborhoods that wished new libraries, the Evansvillians did not ask Carnegie to provide a central library building but they did ask for four branches. Carnegie was not willing to be quite so generous, but on February 20, 1911, the Evansville City Council formally accepted his offer of \$50,000 for two branches and his condition that the city provide the land and annual support of at least \$5,000 a year. On October 31, 1911,



*Central Libray of the Evansville-Vanderburgh County Public Library System, shortly after it opened in 1932.*



*Gray Davis Williams,  
Willard Library's first  
academically trained librarian,  
who served as Head Librarian  
from 1941 to 1956.*



the new Public Library Board of Trustees, a group totally unrelated to and separate from the Willard Board, met for the first time.<sup>13</sup>

The public library board set about constructing the new East and West branches and hiring a librarian. There was no dithering search for a "suitable man." Instead, they followed the advice of the secretary of the state public library commission, which was, as between "an excellent woman or a fairly good man, by all means take the excellent woman." The excellent woman they found was Ethel Farquhar McCollough, who was destined to remain at Evansville Public Library for 35 years, to become, in the words of one of her successors, "the single most important person ever connected with it," and to be remembered as one of the great "characters" of Indiana librarianship.<sup>14</sup>

Miss McCollough was 36 years old when she arrived in Evansville. She had been born in Franklin, Indiana, had graduated from the New York

State Library School, had been librarian at Elwood, Indiana, and Superior, Wisconsin, and had taught at the University of Wisconsin Library School. In physical stature she was apparently even tinier than Willard's Miss Goslee. Standing, Miss McCollough could speak eye-to-eye with seated staff members. In a picture of the 1922 library staff on the steps of the Evansville Coliseum, where the library offices then were, Miss McCollough is strategically placed one step higher than the other four ladies on the front row. But such was the towering force of her personality that, in the words of one who worked for her, "nobody ever felt taller than she was."

Throughout her long tenure, the Evansville Public Library marched, in lockstep, to the compelling beat of Miss McCollough's drum. The board was in awe of her intellect and the staff was in terror of her sharp tongue and her unannounced agency inspection visits. Her prejudices were issued as policy. No cola drinks or coffee

were allowed in the library; tea was the acceptable staffroom drink. Staff members were not allowed to wear such frivolous garments as nylon stockings or silk underwear. She advised her "dollinks" to wear their "snuggies" in winter lest they catch cold, and warned that if they did not follow her advice, and if they did catch cold as a result, they could not take the time off as paid sick leave. Small wonder that one staff member referred to her as "hell on wheels."

Miss McCollough is said to have "mellowed" by the 1940s, but a letter of hers to a branch librarian shows the importance that the Chief Librarian still placed on small infractions, and also demonstrates the quality of her scathing criticism. The concept of participatory management was totally alien to her:  
May 11, 1944

Dear Miss Lockhart:

This is to say that I was much surprised by your including [your assistant] Miss Espenlaub's "Adult Report" in your April report to me. This is the first time in long years of experience that an assistant . . . has presumed to write an "Adult Report." Why you should have sent it to me is beyond my comprehension.

It seems curious that one who has managed her own "Certification" business so badly should consider herself qualified to attempt to interfere in the Management of the library.

Tell Miss Espenlaub our Sunday and Holiday procedure was established along before we ever heard of her . . .

As for criticism of our bookselection, that . . . is not open to discussion with any assistants of Miss Espenlaub's experience. Certain titles are not acceptable in his library. . . .

Tell Miss Espenlaub that if she is to remain a member of this staff it will be necessary that she give her undivided loyalty and support to the library, not as she would have it but as it is . . .

Now as for your part in this episode. . . . Assistants should be given a certain amount of liberty in action and expression but there comes a point where the first becomes bad administration and the second impudence. . . . Pull yourself up on this, and let us have no more pussy-footing with those whose work you are employed to direct.

I am sorry it has been necessary to write so plainly, but I have always considered a surgical operation preferable to permitting any one who works under me to fall over the precipice.

Yours,

Ethel F. McCollough<sup>16</sup>

If Miss McCollough's maternal autocracy inspired fear, it also promoted the unswerving loyalty she sought and molded her workers into a single-purposed force that could accomplish substantial achievements. When she came to Evansville, the public library consisted of two small Carnegie buildings still under construction. There were no books, no staff, not even a place for her to work. Only nine years later, in 1921, the library could boast of its seven branches and, as the 1920s went on, of its 26 book stations in schools, 90 classroom collections, and six stations in factories. (One of those seven branches, erected on Miss McCollough's recommendation and with a supplementary gift from Carnegie, was Cherry Branch, the only branch public library exclusively for Blacks, north of the Ohio River. The Willard librarians went out of their way on state library report forms to

note that Willard was open to all races.)

Early in Miss McCollough's tenure the public library also extended book service to five hospitals and to nursing homes. For four years immediately after Evansville College (now the University of Evansville) was established in 1919, the public library operated the college library under contract, as they also did the county law library for several years. Bookmobile service to residents in the outlying townships began in 1923.

In 1925 a central library was finally established in a converted business block just off Main Street. Seven years later service began in the present Central Library, a coolly elegant new building designed by the architectural firm of Walker and Weeks, who had planned the Cleveland Public Library's main building. To build the new building the library razed a lecture hall originally dedicated to the cause of temperance. One of the many provisos of the long-term lease of the ground is that the Evansville Chapter of the Women's Christian Temperance Union be allowed access to an area in the library in which to hold their meeting.<sup>17</sup>

In all this swirl of library activity, Willard Library was left quite alone in the middle of its park until the inevitable happened. The Trustees' minute book notes that "on this 17th day of December 1915, it is hereby ordered . . . that the secretary be and he is hereby directed to write a letter to Edmund L. Craig, President of the Public Library Board of Evansville, in the matter of the resolutions adapted by the Public Library Board suggesting that all the Libraries of the City be brought under one supervision, and to suggest in such letter that the proposals made by the Public Library Board in that connection cannot be considered by this Board."<sup>18</sup>

Because Willard's organization and governance are specifically and minutely spelled out in the Carpenter Deed of Trust, the Willard Trustees no doubt felt quite literally that they would not consider arrangements that might violate that trust. There is also, however, an unmistakable sense of betrayal in their response to the public library's overtures. The city's setting up a second public library was certainly not what Willard Carpenter or the succeeding generation of trustees had ever contemplated.

Possibly in an effort to rally public opinion against any move to force a merger, the trustees had a pamphlet printed to familiarize the community with Willard's history of service. They may also have contemplated changing the library's emphasis. Miss Goslee, in a historical blurb written in 1918, admitted that "now when we have in our City these splendid new Libraries that will carry your books to your very door, while we expect people to come and get them and be perfectly delighted for the opportunity, it does look like we are behind the times but it is worth it all. We are building for the future a grand reference library and by the time we are ready, Miss McCollough, with her rare pluck and executive ability will be at the front with books, prints and pictures to satisfy the town."<sup>19</sup>

This idea of "a grand reference library" seems to have died with Miss Goslee the next year. Ultimately Willard's response to the establishment of the public library was to go on doing what it had been doing, pretty much as it had been doing it. Miss Goslee's successor as head librarian, Miss Katherine Imbusch, continued Willard's tradition of providing caring, personal service to young and old. Her biographical sketch in the 1923 history of Vanderburgh County commends her "courteous and gracious treatment" of the li-



brary's patrons, and she is included, with Miss Goslee and one of the long-time assistant librarians, Mary Olive Flower, in a tribute that a book donor of the 1950s asked be placed in each of his volumes' "Presented in memory of: Three Grand Ladies: Librarians: Olive Flower, Otilda Goslee, Kathryn Imbush [*sic*]. Whose untiring and devoted service, to the eager inquiring minds of the childhood of the early 1900's was always of the most loving character."<sup>20</sup>

Miss Imbusch also continued the tradition of having learned librarianship "on the job," rather than at a library school. She had, in fact, been "discovered" in 1896 working in a candy store. One of the Willard trustees noticed that she could heft the large, heavy jars of candy with the greatest of ease and decided that such talent was greatly needed at Willard, where the books were also large and heavy but where the staff was stronger mentally than physically. She was hired on the spot as an assistant librarian. When she became head librarian, twenty-three years later, she retired from what one of her successors called "the strong arm stuff" and let her younger assistants, frail though they might be, do it.<sup>21</sup>

From a technical standpoint, Willard undoubtedly suffered from inadequate monetary support and the librarians' lack of formal training. Professional librarians found the situation there appalling. In 1922 the president of the board invited William J. Hamilton, secretary of the state public library commission, to visit Willard and offer suggestions. Mr. Hamilton's follow-up letter, in a summary in the Willard files, "finds all to condemn and nothing to praise. There was a haphazard system of ordering books—no use made of book reviews and book lists. . . . The books on the shelves were found in many

cases to be in bad condition and in need of binding. The newspapers and magazines had been neglected and should at once be put into good condition, bound and saved for the future. The catalog had no subject headings—a thing unheard of in any City Library. In short the Library was twenty years behind the times. He said that no patching or readjustment would do. A complete overhaul was needed. Miss Imbusch, fine though she might be, he found had neither the knowledge or experience to bring order out of the chaos. He recommended a capable, experienced Librarian with skill and vision be employed. Only so could the crying need of Willard Library be answered."<sup>22</sup>

The trustees' response was to raise Miss Imbusch's salary \$10 a month. This action may have represented a show of Willard's independence from state supervision. It may also indicate that a librarian's lack of proficiency in the fine point of technical librarianship was less important to them than her skill in providing the "personal touch." And the tradition of non-librarian librarians continued. In 1926 one of the trustees, Sara Chick Denton, the wife of a former congressman and recently widowed, was appointed assistant librarian. Miss Imbusch must have found it awkward, supervising a person who was also one of her employers, but the arrangement continued until her death in 1930. At that time Mrs. Denton, still remaining a trustee, became head librarian.

Finally, upon Mrs. Denton's retirement as librarian (but not as trustee) in 1941, the Willard board followed Mr. Hamilton's nineteen-year-old recommendation and hired "a capable, experienced Librarian with skill and vision." She was Gray Davis Williams, a native of Noblesville, Indiana. She had graduated from Indiana University in 1907, and, upon being wid-



owed, returned to school and received her library science degree from Western Reserve University in 1924.<sup>23</sup>

Mrs. Williams turned energetically to the task of answering Willard's crying needs. She held regular training sessions to improve the skills of her paraprofessional staff. She demanded from the board and got a thing theretofore unheard of, a formal book budget. A new children's room was built. Books, periodicals, and newspapers were bound. The entire collection was converted from Poole Classification to the Dewey Decimal System. Books of research value were culled from the circulating collection and the foundations for the present Special Collections department were laid. And withal, Mrs. Williams supervised, and participated in up to her elbows, a total program of cleaning, painting, straightening, rearranging, and reorganizing. She shoveled out the clutter, banished the dust of the decades, and imposed system on casual practice. It was as though Mary Poppins had come to stay, and she endeared herself to patrons, staff, and board.

Mrs. Williams was only nine years younger than Miss McCollough, and both were raised in central Indiana, but temperamentally the two women were from different worlds. Mrs. Williams was tall and fashionable. She had high standards for herself—she would never cross the street to the market without hat and gloves, for example—but she would never have dreamed of imposing her standards on others. Like many sophisticated women of her day, she smoked cigarettes and did not turn up her nose at a cocktail. It was no secret that she thought Miss McCollough's code of behavior for the public librarian was silly.

One evening, the Willard Librarians were on their way to a dinner that

would be attended by their colleagues from area institutions, including the Evansville Public Library. On the way Mrs. Williams had them stop at a tavern, where she bought them each a drink. Later, outside the banquet room, she distributed cigarettes to her ladies, even to those who did not smoke. The Willard staff then paraded into the room, ostentatiously exhaling smoke and the obvious smell of booze, all for the purpose of tweaking their noses at the public library's "iron maiden."<sup>24</sup>

Over the years the Public Library and Willard had come to exemplify both sides of the ongoing debate among librarians about the basis upon which books should be selected. Miss McCollough put Evansville Public solidly on the side which maintained that the taxpayer's money should be spent only on items of recognizable quality. As she wrote in the letter quoted above, "certain titles are not acceptable in this library." Those included books that exhibited, to her, little literary merit. The works of best-selling author Gene Stratton Porter, for example, were barred from the public library's shelves as were children's series book (Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, the Oz books) and the whole vast realm of light romance. While her successors proved less dogmatic than Miss McCollough, they were certainly sympathetic with her philosophy.

Far from "give the public what they ought to read," the Willard philosophy was always "give the public what they want to read." That meant welcoming into the collection Mrs. Stratton Porter, Nancy Drew, and denizens of the Emerald City, and the light romances that one former Willard employee affectionately referred to as "bosom heavers." By Miss McCollough's standards, therefore, Willard had no standards at all, and the saying became, "for sex and history send them to Willard."

Mrs. Williams was an enthusiastic partisan of the Willard tradition. In 1949 she delighted in reporting to the Willard Board a story relayed by the volunteer in charge of book distribution at Welborn Hospital: "It was a happy day for us when we found that one of our books had saved a patient's life. The book was *Where Two Ways Met* by Grace Livingston Hill. It came into the hands of the patient when she was at low ebb and determined that life was not worth fighting for. She . . . was quite emphatic in saying, 'That book saved my life.' Only a librarian who buys Mrs. Hill's books in the face of the grave disapproval of most librarians can appreciate this story."<sup>25</sup>

Willard was also more tolerant of books that in their day were considered racy. "We are proud to serve the public," Mrs. Williams wrote in her annual report for 1951, "and are likewise amazed to learn of the many books kept out of the Central Library collection. The books by William Faulkner, Nobel Prize winner, are not on their shelves. Neither is Jones' *From Here to Eternity*, and they say it never will be. . . . We have had a dozen and have furnished the reading of it for the town. It has been highly praised by some and criticized by others. That is the way of all books. If we disposed of everything that someone did not like I do not believe that even the Bible would be left. . . . 'To everyone his choice,' is our motto and experience has shown us that there is no GOOD BOOK. Every book is good for someone. Many very queer books have done wonderful things for various people."<sup>26</sup>

The next year, Mrs. Williams again claimed, "Temporarily we are first in the hearts of Evansville. 'Willard has the Books' is the phrase most frequently heard. Of course, this fame could easily be taken from us. Central

would only have to buy more books and fewer gadgets."<sup>27</sup>

That last remark may have been Mrs. Williams's way of getting in a "dig" at Dr. Herbert Goldhor, who by then was the public library's chief librarian. The McCollough era had ended after the public library joined the state Public Employees Retirement Fund in 1946. Miss McCollough, along with four other staff members over 70 years of age, had had to retire the next year. She was replaced by Arnold Rosaaen, former head of the Scranton, Pennsylvania, public library.<sup>28</sup>

If Miss McCollough treated her staff as a stern mother would, Mr. Rosaaen is fondly remembered as a kind father figure.<sup>29</sup> Much of what he accomplished during his four years was by way of improving his employees' lot. He won for them a major salary increase and introduced a formal salary schedule. Previously staff members were paid according to what Miss McCollough thought them worth, and her "pets" enjoyed the fatter paychecks. Mr. Rosaaen also got board approval for a 40-hour week and remodeled the staff room. He also embarked on a vigorous weeding program, which was greatly needed since one of Miss McCollough's beliefs was that no book should be discarded if it had any possible use.

Dr. Goldhor became chief librarian in 1952, after Mr. Rosaaen's death from a heart attack. He was a once and future professor at the University of Illinois, who came to Evansville intending to get ten years' practical experience in directing a public library. That he did exactly. During his tenure, services for city and county residents were consolidated, service to and in schools was revamped, and Cherry Branch was at last disposed of. He did install a few gadgets, most notably a state-of-the-art transaction

card charging system, and he conducted time-and-motion studies that streamlined many staff procedures.

Dr. Goldhor's forceful personality and intellectual approach to librarianship did not impress Mrs. Williams at Willard. At the end of 1955 she wrote, "The quarterly conferences which Mr. Goldhor of E.P.L. and Mrs. [Thomas] Harding of the College have together are helpful only for the contact it gives me with these important executives. They want to make a unit of the three libraries—though they do not come right out and say—and I do not conform. Mr. Goldhor wants to be the big boss but up to this time has found me resistant. In only one way do I cooperate. We give him the use of the Bayard [Board] Room one morning a week. There he is quiet and undisturbed and can work on his big ideas. He says that he can find no quiet spot at Central."<sup>30</sup>

It was Dr. Goldhor, however, who gave Willard the decisive shove in the direction of fulfilling Miss Goslee's, and apparently Mrs. Williams's, dream of Willard as a "grand research library." In 1953 the son of John E. Iglehart, author of the 1923 history of Vanderburgh County and the leading spirit of the Southwestern Indiana Historical Society, gave nine boxes of his father's historical papers and manuscripts to the public library. As Mrs. Williams later wrote, "They looked them over, sorted and pondered, and decided that they would like to pass them on to us. One reason given me—that it would take too much time and money to put them in order. . . . It has interested us to know that our staff of five can and will do what a staff of 75 seemed too busy to undertake."<sup>31</sup>

No doubt Dr. Goldhor had a bit more realistic idea of what developing a manuscript department actually would involve. Nevertheless, the Wil-

lard staff plunged in. The cataloger, Anna Louise Thrall, former Evansville College librarian, was assigned to spend two days a week on Willard's previously closed second floor arranging and inventorying the Iglehart collection. She also acted as "hostess" to researchers and sightseers.<sup>32</sup>

In 1962 Dr. Goldhor returned to the University and his book, *Practical Administration of Public Libraries*, which he wrote with Joseph L. Wheeler, was published the same year. He was replaced by Edward A. Howard, formerly head librarian at Lawrence, Kansas. Meanwhile, at Willard, Mrs. Williams had retired in 1956. Her successor was Miss Marcia Wheeler, who had been hired by Willard in 1948 to reclassify the collection and had stayed on as assistant librarian. Miss Wheeler, in turn, retired in 1972 and was replaced by Miss Bettye Miller, "stolen" by the Willard board from the public library staff.

Despite the best efforts of Mrs. Williams and her successors, the 1950s and 1960s were perceived by the community, when it took notice at all, as a period of genteel decline for Willard Library. A quiescent board was content to accept what little tax support the city was content to give, and was not inclined to ask too much of the five ladies "of a certain age" who made up the staff. After all, they were not being paid very much. The staff themselves joked that one had to be able to afford to work at Willard Library.

In the seventies, Willard awoke. Several factors contributed to what can be seen now as a renaissance. First, in 1968 the board acquired an activist trustee, Diane Foster Igleheart. She was determined that the library should assume its rightful place in the forefront of Evansville's cultural institutions, and she was able to



convince her fellow trustees to follow her lead. In 1972 she called into being a Friends of Willard Library organization to raise community awareness and increase support. She also saw that the library and park were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. She worked with sympathetic city councilmen to have Willard's historic runs of English and German-language local newspapers microfilmed and to obtain the grants of federal revenue sharing funds that made possible needed renovations to the building's antiquated lighting, heating, and air conditioning systems.

Another factor of Willard's re-awakening was an awareness that there were those who saw the library as an anachronism which ought to be dismantled. In 1970 the University of Evansville suggested to the Willard trustees that Willard's valuable research materials—4,000 books and all runs of historic newspapers—be transferred to the university library. This idea the trustees spurned, albeit with protestations of willingness to cooperate with the university in any way short of such a transfer. Then in 1971, while some community leaders were calling for government consolidation in Vanderburgh County similar to that in Marion County, the president of the public library board issued a statement calling for incorporation of Willard into the public library system. Nothing came of this, just as nothing would come of other "Vand-Gov" proposals at the time, but it gave the Willard trustees much food for thought.<sup>33</sup>

Finally in June, 1974, Mrs. Igleheart, now president of the Willard trustees, "brought up the idea of bringing a library consultant here to help us organize our daily work and long range plans in preparation for the increased use of the [research collections on] the second floor." The

board chose to hire David Bucove, director of the Anderson, Indiana, Public Library. The question they ultimately asked him to address, although their minutes do not say so, was the question of what unique or special services Willard could provide to the community, given the existence of the public library system and the, by now, two university libraries.

After due deliberation and assessment, Mr. Bucove's answer was that, while Willard could continue to provide general adult and children's library services for the community at large and especially to Willard's immediate neighborhood, it should put greater emphasis on the areas in which it had already carved out a niche for itself. One of these was the arts. Willard had received significant gifts from a generous supporter over a period of years which built up a separate endowment specifically for the purchase of books in that field. The other area was history, particularly local history, which Willard had been collecting more or less passively for almost a hundred years. He also advocated Willard's developing a genealogy collection, to complement the local history interest.

As often happens, the consultant's report told the trustees little they did not already suspect. The proposal was basically "build on strength," but having heard it from an outsider the board was willing to take the necessary steps. In October, 1974, trustee Richard E. Meier proposed, and the board accepted, a resolution establishing within Willard an Archives and Research Center "as the repository for the receipt, care and prescribed access and use of books; publications; documents; official and private letters and correspondence; artwork; artifacts; etc. of permanent value and significance to the cultural, economic, social and political history and traditions of the Tri-State area,



of which the City of Evansville is the center. As such repository, Willard Library shall solicit, accept and undertake the proper care of contributions of qualified materials . . . . These unique and distinctive purposes are established for the special benefit and use of scholars, authors, artists, genealogists, historians, archivists, scientists, students and all citizens who delight in inquiry of the past."<sup>34</sup>

What had been done passively would now be done actively, and the resolution implied that the necessary resources would be found and allocated. This was a pivotal document in Willard's history, the most important, perhaps, since Willard Carpenter's Deed of Trust. The first step forward, however, was a step backward. In December, 1974, the staff was reorganized. Head Librarian Bettye Miller was named Director of Regional History and Genealogy, to spend full time setting up the "Archives and Research Center." Assistant Librarian Martha Rogers was elevated to Director of Public Services. Since both reported to the board, Willard was back to a two-headed librarian arrangement reminiscent of 1885.

This misstep was remedied after the resignation of Miss Miller at the end of 1975. Donald E. Baker, fresh out of the Indiana University library school but with a second master's degree in history and experience as assistant editor of the *Indiana Magazine of History*, was subsequently hired as overall director of the library. Building on the groundwork already laid by Miss Miller, Mr. Baker spent most of his first year getting the Archives and Research Center (renamed the Regional and Family History Center) organized, furnished, and staffed. The facility was opened to public in December, 1976. In the decade since, it has developed the third largest genealogy collection in the state and has re-

ceived major additions of historic manuscripts, photographs, and documents. Special Collections is recognized as a co-equal part, along with Children's and Adult Services, of Willard's mission to the community.<sup>35</sup>

With the long-promised research area established, the trustees and Mr. Baker turned their attention to needed capital improvements in Willard's century-old building. Calling on the community repeatedly for private donations, which were combined with monies from a variety of government and foundation sources, Willard has spent approximately \$750,000 over the last ten years to enlarge and remodel the children's room; modernize ancient restrooms that gave a whole new meaning to the phrase "gothic architecture"; replace the roof, the windows, the furnace; install an elevator and a handicap access ramp; install a fire alarm system and upgrade the burglar alarms; build a staff room; reactivate abandoned light fixtures in the park; rebuild the limestone steps; and do a host of other things to prepare the building for its second hundred years without violating the integrity it had known throughout its first hundred.

Most of this work was completed by March 28, 1985, when Willard and its friends reenacted the opening ceremonies of a century before. Now the administration is doing the spadework—figuratively—preparatory to renovating Willard Park. They have also inaugurated an ongoing endowment development process that, along with ever increasing interest and support on the part of the city government, should keep Willard on a sound financial footing.<sup>36</sup>

Meanwhile, at the public library Mr. Howard has continued to build a system which has an enviable record of community service, breadth of col-

lection, and depth of staff expertise. In 1985 Evansville-Vanderburgh Public Library operated its central library and seven branches (one more is planned) on a budget of \$3,342,457. They circulated a total of 1,355,350 items.<sup>37</sup> Willard, by contrast, may be senior in age but is very much junior in size, smaller, in fact, than two of the public library's branches in terms of circulation. It had 1985 expenditures of \$246,549 and circulated 179,744 items.<sup>38</sup>

The impulse to cooperate is very strong. Both libraries are part of the OCLC network and are members of the Four Rivers Library Services Authority. Willard's Tuesday through Sunday operating schedule complements the public library's Monday through Saturday schedule so as to give Evansville public library service seven days a week. The public library courier system is made available to Willard so that patrons can leave either institution's books at the other. In Miss McCollough's time the public library began publishing a union list of periodical holdings that included Willard as well as the universities. Under Dr. Goldhor central library began to include Willard's and the University of Evansville's non-fiction main entry cards in its catalog, so that there would be a point of access to all three collections. The union list and the cooperative catalog will be superceded, and such resource sharing raised to a higher level, when both public libraries, along with others, put their catalogs online through the machinery of the Southwest Indiana Automated Circulation Cluster.

In collection development, too, there is cooperation, in the form of an informal gentlemen's agreement to respect one another's turf. Willard, even if it could afford to, would not attempt to follow the public library into areas such as business, tax, and

law reference where the public library has the budget and the staff to be effective. On the other hand, the public library leaves genealogy completely to Willard and soft-pedals purchasing in regional history and the arts, where Willard also has demonstrated strengths. There is much referral of patrons from one library to the other.

There is still, of course, that "dash of healthy competitiveness." Neither library is as ideological as it once seemed concerning selection policy. Willard can no longer, if it ever could, buy every book a patron asks for, and in the public library can be found, *pace* Miss McCollough, Harlequin romances. Willard does still enjoy a reputation for making best sellers available more quickly, but this is merely a matter of size. Willard's one professional adult librarian has the authority to purchase on the basis of advertisements. The public library, to impose order on the acquisition process, uses a book selection committee, which must wait for favorable reviews, and then coordinates purchases from all agencies to effect savings and achieve efficiencies. Under those circumstances it is no trick for David to get a book on the shelf before Goliath's committee can read the reviews.

The people of Evansville use both Willard Library and the Evansville Public Library interchangeably, according to their needs and, often, according to their mood. The two libraries have been likened to a large and a small bank, one of them efficiently offering a full line of up-to-date services, the other specializing in slower-paced personalized interaction in a quaint, old fashioned atmosphere. There is a public for both kinds of library. And in Evansville there is a library for both kinds of public.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The most comprehensive history of Willard Library is Friends of Willard Library, Inc., *Where There's a Willard: The First 100 Years of Evansville, Indiana* (Evansville: Friends of Willard Library Press, 1986), published in honor of the library's 1985 centennial. Willard Carpenter's letter to the library's first board of trustees, August 23, 1876, is printed on pages 155-57 of *Where There's a Willard*; the quote reprinted in this paragraph may be found on page 155. For an account of Carpenter's life, see Donald E. Baker, "Willard Carpenter, Eccentric Philanthropist," in *Where There's a Willard*, pp. 1-145.

<sup>2</sup>*Where There's a Willard*, p. 156-157.

<sup>3</sup>*Where There's a Willard*, p. 156.

<sup>4</sup>Much of the rest of this article, as it pertains to Willard Library, is a condensation of material presented in Kenneth P. McCutchan, "I Leave Very Much to Your Wisdom and Judgment: A Chronicle of Willard Library and Its Board of Trustees," *Where There's a Willard*, pp.161-216.

<sup>5</sup>See, for example, Willard Library Board of Trustees Minutes, July 5, 1887, and February, 1888, Willard Library Archives.

<sup>6</sup>Willard Library Board of Trustees Minutes, June, 20, 1893; March 24, 1894.

<sup>7</sup>Quoted in *Where There's a Willard*, p. 181.

<sup>8</sup>"Rules of Willard Library," Willard Library Archives.

<sup>9</sup>Willard Library Board of Trustees Minutes, April 10, 1885.

<sup>10</sup>*Where There's a Willard*, p. 156.

<sup>11</sup>Deed of Trust, typescript copy, Willard Library Archives.

<sup>12</sup>*Where There's a Willard*, p. 178; Willard Library Board of Trustees Minutes, October 8, 22, December 8, 1909.

<sup>13</sup>Herbert Goldhor, *The First Fifty Years: The Evansville Public Library and the Vanderburgh County Public Library* ([Evansville: Evansville Public Library, 1962]), pp.1-2. Unless otherwise noted, historical facts concerning the Evansville Public Library and biographical facts concerning its directors are taken from this source. Dr. Herbert Goldhor was Chief Librarian of the Evansville Public Library from 1952 to 1962.

<sup>14</sup>Goldhor, *First Fifty Years*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Evangeline Herr, October 20, 1986. Miss Herr began working for the Evansville Public Library in March, 1945, and is now Administrative Assistant to Director Edward A. Howard. The author is indebted to Miss Herr and Mr. Howard for the McCollough anecdotes in this and the following paragraph. The picture mentioned is reproduced in Goldhor, *First Fifty Years*, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup>Ethel F. McCollough Files, Business Office, Evansville-Vanderburgh County Public Library.

<sup>17</sup>Goldhor, *First Fifty Years*, pp. 3-7; Annual Reports, Willard Library Archives.

<sup>18</sup>Willard Library Board of Trustees Minutes, December 17, 1915.

<sup>19</sup>Otilda Goslee File, Willard Library Archives.

<sup>20</sup>John E. Iglehart, ed., *An Account of Vanderburgh County from Its Organization, v. III of Logan Esarey, History of Indiana from Its Exploration to 1922* (Dayton: Dayton Historical Publishing Company), p. 357-58; *Where There's a Willard*, p. 300.

<sup>21</sup> Recounted in Gray D. Williams, Annual Report for 1951, Willard Library Archives.

<sup>22</sup> [Gray D. Williams], Brief Notes from the Old Minute Book, parenthetical note under February 13, 1922.

<sup>23</sup> Biographical note by Mrs. Williams's daughter, Jane Gray Williams Cameron, in "The Life and Willard Times of Gray Davis Williams", Gray D. Williams File, Willard Library Archives. This typescript item is a compilation of Mrs. Williams's witty and informative reports to the Willard Library Board of Trustees and is the best source of information on her accomplishments and activities as Willard's head librarian, 1941-56.

<sup>24</sup> Anecdote by long-time Willard Children's Librarian Margaret Maier, recounted in *Where There's a Willard*, p. 190.

<sup>25</sup> Williams, Annual Report for 1949.

<sup>26</sup> Williams, Annual Report for 1951.

<sup>27</sup> Williams, Annual Report for 1952.

<sup>28</sup> The history of Miss McCollough's retirement and that of the Rosaaen and Goldhor administrations of the Evansville Public Library may be found in Goldhor, *First Fifty Years*, pp. 19-23.

<sup>29</sup> Characterizations of Miss McCollough and Mr. Rosaaen by Evangeline Herr, Interview, October 20, 1986.

<sup>30</sup> Williams, Annual Report for 1955.

<sup>31</sup> Williams, Annual Report for 1953.

<sup>32</sup> Williams, Report for December 22, 1954.

<sup>33</sup> *Where There's a Willard*, pp. 198-200.

<sup>34</sup> *Where There's a Willard*, pp. 203-2-4.

<sup>35</sup> *Where There's a Willard*, p. 204.

<sup>36</sup> *Where There's a Willard*, pp. 204-15, 345-49.

<sup>37</sup> Evansville-Vanderburgh County Annual Report 1985, in *The River City Library Times*, the newsletter of the Evansville-Vanderburgh County Public Library, May 1986.

<sup>38</sup> Willard Library Annual Report for 1985.