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## F. L. H. Willis Papers

Digital

1806-1974 (*Bulk:* 1856-1921)

13 boxes (7.5 linear foot)

Call no.: MS 1116



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Read collection overview

In 1857, Frederick L. H. Willis earned the singular distinction of being expelled from Harvard Divinity School for acting as a spirit medium. An important figure in the post-Civil War Spiritualist movement, Willis lived a long and eclectic life in which he was at turns an intimate of the family of Bronson Alcott, an ardent proponent of Spiritualism, a lecturer, preacher, homeopathic physician, and writer.

A wide-ranging intellect and steadfast opposition to orthodoxy suffuse the Willis Papers. The heart of the collection is an extensive collection of sermons, lectures, and essays by Frederick L. H. Willis dating from the late 1850s to the turn of the twentieth century. These works veer into commentary on ancient history, art and aesthetics, medicine, astrology, Eastern religion, and social reform, but are rooted firmly in the framework of a Spiritualist worldview. The collection also includes a large number of family photographs, some correspondence, and a few works by Willis's wife, Love, and daughter, Edith.

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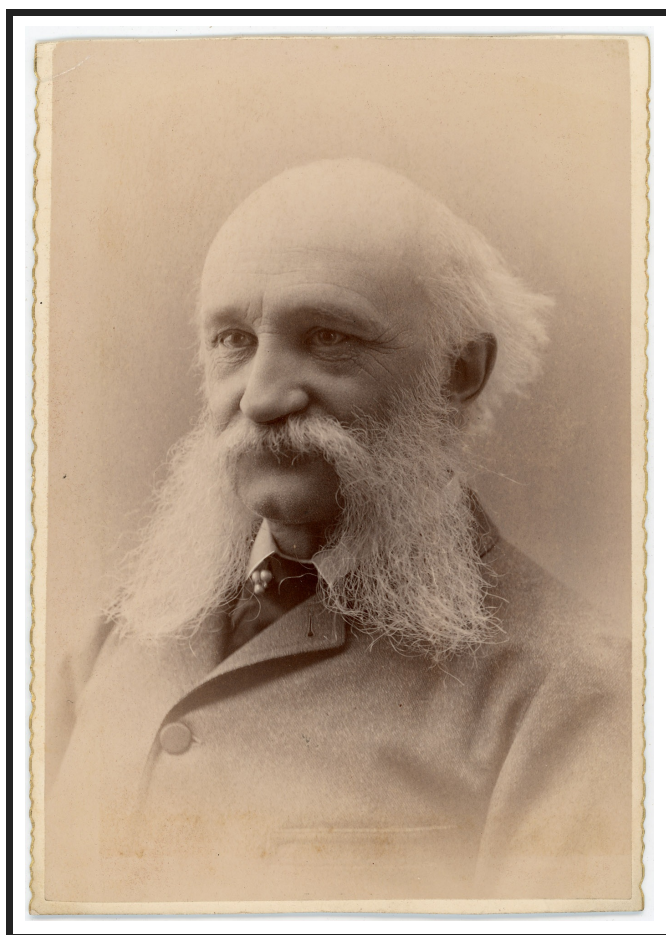
## Background on Frederick L. H. Willis

In 1857, Frederick L. H. Willis earned the singular distinction of being expelled from Harvard Divinity School for acting as a spirit medium. In a life marked by misfortune, he carved out a unique public role for himself as an ardent proponent of Spiritualism, a lecturer and preacher, homeopathic physician, and writer.

Born on January 29, 1830, Willis was the only child of Lorenzo Dow Willis, a merchant from Cambridge, Mass., who could boast of solid social connections and a rising place in the world. All that would change. The family's taste of prosperity ended suddenly when Lorenzo's business partner absconded with their company's fund, and even though Lorenzo won release from debtor's prison, the family's fortunes darkened further when Lorenzo's wife, Eleanor (Hovey), died three days after giving birth.

After four years of struggle with financial and emotional distress and failing health, Lorenzo called upon his wealthy in-laws to raise his son. Under their care, Fred received an education in the Cambridge public schools and he reportedly apprenticed with an apothecary. Yet from early in life, he found little intellectual kinship in his adoptive home. Willis's grandfather Hovey, an archconservative, was a founder of the Baptist Church in Cambridge and brought a stern edge to both his religion and life. Willis rebelled. After initially acceding to the faith, Willis soon developed a loathing for the Church, and by the age of twelve, he was said to have been expelled as a heretic for rejecting predestination. At thirteen, he was expelled from his grandparent's home.

Thrown out into the world, Willis experienced another surprising turn of fate. While traveling by stagecoach during the summer of 1844, hoping to spend a summer in the country with a relative, a kind woman helped care for him after he wounded his hand in the stage door. Abba May Alcott -- wife of Bronson Alcott -- took an immediate liking to the young man, and within a week, Willis earned an invitation to visit, which soon became a long-term arrangement. Off and on for ten or twelve years, he lived with the Alcotts, becoming a close companion of the daughters, Louisa May, Abigail, Elizabeth, and Anna. It was under their roof, that he met some of the great intellectual figures of the day, including Emerson, Thoreau, and Hawthorne, and he prepared there for Harvard Divinity School under the care of the eminent divine, Thomas Starr King. Willis explicitly denied claims in contemporary newspapers that he was the model for the character Laurie in Louisa's *Little Women*, but his intimate connections with the family



F. L. H. Willis, ca.1887

ran deep.

As a student at Harvard during the fall of 1855, Willis experienced a series of profound visions, trances, and spirit manifestations that confirmed his gifts as a powerful Spiritualist medium. The phenomena he exhibited were remarkable, including raps and spirit voices, mental telepathy and apports, levitation, and accordion serenades by spirit musicians. Although reportedly reluctant to take part in public displays, he was persuaded by a woman acquaintance to try to convince a skeptical Harvard faculty member, Henry L. Eustis, of the veracity of spiritual claims. Willis's decision proved to be his undoing. While responding to mental questions during a dark seance with Eustis, the professor grabbed Willis under the table and denounced him on the spot as an impostor. According to Spiritualist writer and medium, Emma Hardinge Britten, it became clear that Eustis, the woman who encouraged Willis, and the members of the circle had all made "preconcerted arrangements" to trap the young student. Despite receiving letters attesting to his honesty from Thomas Wentworth Higginson and others, Willis was suspended from Harvard in April 1857 on the grounds of "imposture." The Willis case fed directly into a trial of Spiritualist mediums held at Harvard later that year, adjudicated by Professors Louis Agassiz, Benjamin Pierce, Eben Horsford, and N. B. Gould.

Although he failed to complete his degree, Willis landed a pulpit in relatively short order, accepted an offer from a fellow Spiritualist, Henry C. Gilbert, to settle in Coldwater, Michigan. For a time, he lived in the Gilbert home. On October 8, 1858, Willis married Love Maria Whitcomb of Hancock, N.H. -- daughter of Love Foster Whitcomb (1789-1873) and Henry Whitcomb (1787-1831). An aspiring writer, Love had overcome a protracted illness as a young woman through a mesmeric healer, and by the mid-1850s, she was herself displaying mediumistic skills. While tending to the small congregation in Coldwater, both Willis and his wife were contributors to Spiritualist publications such as *Tiffany's Monthly* and *The Banner of Light*, writing on Spiritualism, healing, and reform, and they published in the mainstream press as well. Spiritualism connected their whole family. Love's mother took up the cause despite having no mediumistic talent of her own, and her mother's cousin, Sarah Bartlett, married a major Spiritualist writer, Allen Putnam.

Preaching in Coldwater was a constant challenge for Willis. His Society there was small, but avid, but he expanded his base by speaking in towns as far away as Toledo, Ohio, and he branched out to give public lectures and courses on men of modern theology and other topics. The audiences for these inspired lectures, he reported, were often large and enthusiastic, and Coldwater played host to major figures in the Spiritualist world such as Emma Hardinge Britten (a medium and writer) and the Davenport Brothers (stage performers). But for all the successes, Coldwater proved to be less than inviting for a preacher with liberal sentiments. A deep-seated and sometimes bitter animosity toward Spiritualists within the community affected him deeply, compounded during the winter of 1860-1861, by a falling out with the Gilbert family over the "intolerable" behavior of Gilbert's new wife.

During the spring or summer of 1863, the tensions grew to such a degree that Willis decided to leave Coldwater and change course in life. Taking a degree from the New York Homeopathic Medical College in 1865, he accepted a position as Professor of Materia Medica at the Women's Medical College, and by the late 1860s, he went about building a practice in Boston, Willimantic, Conn., and Rochester, New York. Despite his unpromising start in Michigan, he gradually built a successful practice that won him a degree of financial stability. In 1868, he purchased a property that would become his family's seat for the better part of a hundred years. Situated on the west shore of Seneca Lake, his estate, Glen Eden, started as a summer home in 1874 and remained in family hands for a century.

Toward the end of his life, Willis maintained that he practiced two professions, medicine and preaching. While tending to patients, he continued to preach, usually from the Unitarian pulpit, and lectured and published regularly on religion, history, the occult sciences, healing, and other topics influenced by his Spiritualist faith and heterodox inclinations. He reached a culmination of sorts when he was asked to deliver a speech at the Fiftieth Anniversary celebration of the Spiritualist movement in 1898, "Can Spiritualism claim to be a religion?" Love Willis died at home in 1908, followed by Fred's death to "myocardial insufficiency" on April 12, 1914. They are buried together in the Mount Hope Cemetery in Rochester, N.Y.

The Willises had two children. The first, a daughter, died at the age of fourteen months, while the second, Edith Lenora Willis (b. 1865), became a prolific poet and writer who helped to co-edit and complete her father's memoir of the Alcott family (1915). In 1886, Edith married Dr. Samuel H. Linn, a Civil War Navy veteran who served for many years as the official dentist to the court of Czar Nicholas II of Russia. The Linns had two sons, Willis (who married Ethel G. Hamilton) and Benjamin F. Linn. After Samuel's death in 1916, Edith married a second time to George Mather Forbes, a member of the faculty at the University of Rochester.

## Scope of collection

A wide-ranging intellect and steadfast opposition to orthodoxy suffuse the Willis Papers, which include an extensive collection of sermons, lectures, and essays by Frederick L. H. Willis. Dating from the late 1850s to the turn of the twentieth century, these works veer into commentary on ancient history, art and aesthetics, medicine, astrology, Eastern religion, and social reform, but are rooted firmly in the framework of a Spiritualist worldview.

Although only a single box of correspondence survives, there is some important Spiritualist content. The correspondence

between Willis and his wife is particularly interesting and is accompanied by a handful of letters from her parents, Henry and Love Foster Whitcomb. Unfortunately, nothing has survived from his expulsion from Harvard and his letters to and from Louisa May Alcott were apparently lost long ago.

Although Willis's writings dominate the collection volumetrically, his wife and daughter are well represented as writers. Love Willis was less prolific than her husband, but the collection includes dozens of newspaper articles by her and one year of a diary, mostly reflecting the interests she and Frederick held in common. Their daughter Edith is represented by some of her poetry, selections from *Alcott Memoirs* (filed under F.L.H. Willis), and a lengthy typescript for a book. There is an intriguing manuscript transcription by Willis of the book *Personified Unthinkables* (1884), a work on esoteric healing by Sarah Stanley Grimke, a white mid-westerner who married Archibald Grimke, an African American relative of the abolitionist Grimke sisters.

The collection includes a significant number of photographs, five photograph albums, and three scrapbooks, mostly from the Willis and Linn families. Also of note is a rich and intriguing journal of Willis's voyage to Brazil in 1854, via Virginia, in which he records his impressions of Slavery and interactions with African American slaves.

## Series descriptions

### Series 1: Correspondence

1806-1959

1 box (0.5 linear feet)

Although the correspondence is not voluminous, there are some remarkable letters recording the excitement and emotion of spirit communion during the early years of the Spiritualist movement. Letters from Willis, his wife, and mother in law, particularly during the family's years in Coldwater, are animated by both the promise of Spiritualism for social connection and the fierce conservative resistance to the movement. Among the highlights are accounts of a visit by the charismatic medium Emma Hardinge Britten, the arrest of the Davenport Brothers (stage magicians and "Spiritualists"), and an extraordinary account of lecturing on the theology of John Murray in the presence of the spirit of Murray himself. Love Whitcomb's discussions of her faith in the movement, despite lacking in mediumistic talent, offer a revealing commentary.

The Willis's's Spiritualist correspondents include E. Davis, Flora C. Pierson, H. C. Robertson, Joseph G. Waters, and the spirit of Sara Payson, as well as a wonderful letter from Love Foster Whitcomb describing Love Maria Whitcomb Willis's healing through Mesmerism (Feb. 3, 1846). Equally interesting are letters from Mary Davis (wife of Andrew Jackson Davis), Luther Colby (publisher and purveyor of the *Banner of Light*), Harrison Gray Otis Blake and Theophilus Brown (correspondents of Henry David Thoreau), and the woman suffragist, Isabella Hooker. Much of the correspondence was addressed to Love Maria Whitcomb Willis or comes through the Whitcomb family.

Family correspondence extends back a generation for Love Willis (whose father died at a young age), with a nice series of letters written by Love's mother, Love Foster Whitcomb. Interestingly, it appears that a relative, Sarah Bartlett, became the wife of the noted Spiritualist writer Allen Putnam.

### Series 2: F. L. H. Willis Writings

1859-1915

6 boxes (3 linear feet)

Willis was a prolific writer, lecturer, and preacher, and his writings reflect his long commitment to Spiritualist ideas and practice his later-life writing about the Alcott family, historical topics, and current affairs, mostly centering on social reform. The series contains a few examples, not always complete, of entire lecture series or courses offered by Willis.

Willis's writings are diverse, but most are imbued with a deeply held Spiritualist philosophy and theories of health and healing. Of particular importance are nine (of twelve) lectures on the Philosophy of the inner life and a series of four lectures on the "Triplicities," structured on the quartet of air, earth, fire, and water. Two or three works address William and Elizabeth Denton's seminal Spiritualist text *The Soul of Things*.

Given that Willis was inconsistent (at best) in recording dates for his writings, when necessary, we have supplied estimates based on the handwriting and type of paper used. Some of these manuscripts were wrapped in folders clearly labeled "sermons" -- and a subset of these includes dates when and where the sermon was written and delivered. In many cases, however, it is not abundantly clear which pieces were lectures, which sermons, and which essays. The collection includes a significant number of "fragments": incomplete bits of essays or lectures, sometimes fairly extensive, that have been severed from their original context.

### Series 3: Family Materials

1861-1927

2.5 boxes (1.25 linear feet)

Surrounded throughout life by writers, Willis, his wife, and daughter were all published authors. This series contains writings by all of them, along with newspaper clippings containing articles by Fred and Love Willis, ephemera, and miscellaneous materials

relating the family. Also of note in the series are typed materials accompanying a course in Electrical health and lessons on "the will." These may have involved Fred Willis, however the connection is unclear.

Please note that Edith Willis is identified in the finding aid by the name authorized for her in the Library of Congress, Edith Willis Linn Forbes.

#### **Series 4: Photographs and Scrapbooks**

1863-1974

2.5 boxes (2.5 linear feet)

Although there are numerous images of the Willis family taken between the 1860s and turn of the twentieth century, most of the images are unidentified. Most of the images are studio portraits, primarily cabinet cards and cartes de visite, including images of a handful of Spiritualist associates, such as Luther Colby and Isaac B. Rich (proprietors of the Colby and Rich publishing house) and Mrs. Wells, the spirit medium.

## **Inventory**

### **Series 1: Correspondence**

1806-1959

1 box

**Alcott, John Sewell Pratt**

1913-1914

Box 1: 1

**Bass, Lettie**

1856-1857

Box 1: 2

**Bates, Morgan**

1901

Box 1: 3

**Blake, Harrison Gray Otis**

1856

Box 1: 4

**Briggs, John S.**

1907

Box 1: 5

**Brown, Theophilus**

1856-1857

Box 1: 6

**Butler, Jessie**

ca.1915

Box 1: 7

**Champney, R.**

1887

Box 1: 8

**Colby, Luther**

ca.1865

Box 1: 9

**Colledge, William A.**

1915

Box 1: 10

**Dake, Della E.**

ca.1875

Box 1: 11

**Davis, E.**

1856

Box 1: 12

**Davis, Mary F.**

1877

Box 1: 13

First wife of A.J. Davis

Dustin, Sophie

1807-1862

Box 1: 14

Edgerton, Sarah C.

1837

Box 1: 15

Fletcher, Alice C.

1871

Box 1: 16

Foster, A. Lawrence

1871

Box 1: 17

Gibson, W. Hamilton

1882

Box 1: 18

Gowring, Clara

1913-1915

Box 1: 19

Hooker, Isabella Beecher

1873-1877

Box 1: 20

American Suffragist

Johnston, Jack W.

1914-1915

Box 1: 21

Lincoln, Jennie

1874

Box 1: 22

Linn, Samuel H.

1895

Box 1: 23

Linn, Willis

1914

Box 1: 24

Payson, Sara (spirit)

ca.1865

Box 1: 25

Perkins, Caroline E.

1913

Box 1: 26

Phelps, S. M.

1873

Box 1: 27

Pierson, Flora C.(?)

1869

Box 1: 28

Richardson, Edward A.

1905-1915

Box 1: 29

Robertson, H. C.

1869

Box 1: 30

Scofield, Anna B.

1914

Box 1: 31

Sears, Sarah Endicott

1913

Box 1: 32

Stone, Charles N. L.

1913

Box 1: 33

Upham, Thomas C.

1871

Box 1: 34

Waters, Joseph G.

1856

Box 1: 35

Wesson, Miley B.

1959

Box 1: 36

Whitcomb, Henry

1827-1828

Box 1: 37

Whitcomb, Love Foster

1809-1862

Box 1: 38

Whitcomb, Love Foster: Letters to Sarah Bartlett

1806-1807

Box 1: 39

Sarah Bartlett (wife of Enoch Bartlett) was a cousin of Love Foster Whitcomb and mother of the Sarah.

Whitcomb, Love Foster: Letters to Sarah B. Putnam

1842-1870

Box 1: 40

Whitcomb, Love Foster: to Henry Whitcomb

1827

Box 1: 41

Whitcomb, Love Foster: to Love M. Whitcomb Willis

1869-1871

Box 1: 42

Whitcomb, Love Foster: to Love M. Whitcomb Willis

1872-1887

Box 1: 43

Willis, Edith L.

1868-1901

Box 1: 44

Willis, F. L. H.

1872

Box 1: 45

Willis, F. L. H.: Letter to the Editor of the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle

ca.1913

Box 1: 46

On woman suffrage

Willis, F. L. H.: Letters to Love Foster Whitcomb

1860-1861

Box 1: 47

Willis, Love M. Whitcomb

1867, undated

Box 1: 48

Willis, Love M. Whitcomb: Letters to Love Foster Whitcomb

1858-1861

Box 1: 49

Wyman, John

1871-1877

Box 1: 50

Unidentified correspondents

1868-1891

Box 1: 51

Series 2: F. L. H. Willis Writings

1859-1915

6 boxes

Sermons and lectures

1861-1900

Willis, F. L. H.: Axiomatic principles

1867

Sermon

Box 2: 1

Willis, F. L. H.: Can Spiritualism claim to be a religion?

1898

Box 2: 2

Willis, F. L. H.: Christmas or The true significance of Christmas

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 2: 3

Willis, F. L. H.: The discipline of sorrow

ca.1860

Sermon

Box 2: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Evil and good, or God in all

1860

Box 2: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Has man any control over his destiny?

ca.1895

Box 2: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: Healing

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 2: 7

Willis, F. L. H.: Hidden springs of our life (untitled lecture)

ca.1865

Lecture

Box 2: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: The immortal power of love

1889

Sermon

Box 2: 9

Willis, F. L. H.: The law of spiritual progress

1863

Sermon

Box 2: 10

Willis, F. L. H.: The law of vibrations in its relations to the perfect development of the human soul

ca.1870

Sermon

Box 2: 11

Willis, F. L. H.: The law of vibrations on the material plane

ca.1870

Sermon

Box 2: 12

Willis, F. L. H.: Magnetism, or the higher magnetism

ca.1880

Sermon

Box 2: 13

Willis, F. L. H.: Mystical functions of the solar plexus

ca.1880



Sermon

Box 2: 14

Willis, F. L. H.: Occult meaning of gems

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 2: 15

Willis, F. L. H.: On the office and condition of little children in the spirit world

1861

Sermon

Box 2: 16

Willis, F. L. H.: On the proper adjustment of our relations to life

ca.1895

Sermon

Box 2: 17

Willis, F. L. H.: The personal influence of every human soul

1862

Sermon

Box 2: 18

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 1: Introductory

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 1

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 3: The law of attraction

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 2

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 4: Discoveries of Reichenbach demonstrating the human aura

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 3

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 5: The astral light

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 6: Correspondence between the light of nature and the light of the soul

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 7: The law of influence

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 8: Transfiguration

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 7

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 9: Conscious or unconscious influence from the unseen

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: Philosophy of the inner life, no. 12: Are they not all ministering spirits?

ca.1900

Lecture

Box 3: 9

Willis, F. L. H.: Power of will

ca.1875

Sermon

Box 3: 10

Willis, F. L. H.: Problem of evil from a physiological standpoint

1873

Sermon

Box 3: 11

Willis, F. L. H.: Psychical facts of the ages: Ancient India

ca.1865

Box 3: 12

Willis, F. L. H.: Relations of God to man, or the divine to the human

1858

Box 3: 13

Willis, F. L. H.: Relations we sustain to the world above and about us

1862

Sermon

Box 3: 14

Willis, F. L. H.: Rome

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 3: 15

Willis, F. L. H.: Sacred to the truth

1856

Box 4: 1

Willis, F. L. H.: Sermons

ca.1865

Box 4: 2

Willis, F. L. H.: Soul of things

1863

Sermon

Box 4: 3

Sermon responding to book of the same name by William Denton.

Willis, F. L. H.: Spiritual correspondence between the light of nature and the light of the soul

1859

Box 4: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Spiritual lecture

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Spiritualistic lectures (incomplete)

ca.1865-1890

Box 4: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: Spiritualism in all the ages, no. 1: India

1862

Box 4: 7

Willis, F. L. H.: Steps to spiritual growth

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: Triplicities: The airy trigon

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 9

Willis, F. L. H.: Triplicities: The earthly trigon

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 10

Willis, F. L. H.: Triplicities: The fiery trigon

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 11

Willis, F. L. H.: Triplicities: The watery trigon

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 12

Willis, F. L. H.: Triune nature of man

ca.1875

Sermon

Box 4: 13

Willis, F. L. H.: True value and use of life

1862

Sermon

Box 4: 14

Willis, F. L. H.: Universal and eternal life

1861

Sermon

Box 4: 15

Willis, F. L. H.: What relations have these phenomena to the living present, no. 12

ca.1865

Box 4: 16

Willis, F. L. H.: Zodiacal gems, no. 2

ca.1865

Sermon

Box 4: 17

Essays and articles

1860-1915

Willis, F. L. H.: Aesthetic analysis

ca.1900

Box 5: 1

Willis, F. L. H.: Aesthetic analysis, part 2

ca.1900

Box 5: 2

Willis, F. L. H.: Alcott as an abolitionist

ca.1915

Box 5: 3

Willis, F. L. H.: Alcott Memoirs (typescript)

ca.1915

Box 5: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Alcott notes

ca.1915

Box 5: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Ancient Egypt, no. 2

ca.1865

Box 5: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: Ancient Jews, no. 6

ca.1865

Box 5: 7

Willis, F. L. H.: Ancient Greece and Rome, no. 4

ca.1865

Box 5: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: Ancient Northmen, no. 5

ca.1865

Box 5: 9

Willis, F. L. H.: Apostolic phenomena, no. 8

ca.1865

Box 5: 10

Willis, F. L. H.: Causes of national decay

ca.1900

Box 5: 11

Willis, F. L. H.: City of Florence, Venice, Pisa, etc.

ca.1860

Box 5: 12

Willis, F. L. H.: Classification of satwas and essays  
ca.1895  
Bound vol.  
Box 10: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Constantine and the Early Catholic Church, no. 9  
ca.1865  
Box 5: 13

Willis, F. L. H.: Discipline of earth:a benefit to the spirit and its means of usefulness and growth  
ca.1885  
Box 5: 14

Willis, F. L. H.: Dream of Christmas (poem)  
1915  
Box 5: 15

Willis, F. L. H.: Early Christianity, no. 7  
ca.1865  
Box 5: 16

Willis, F. L. H.: Educational power of music  
ca.1875  
Box 5: 17

Willis, F. L. H.: Four little women: Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy  
ca.1915  
Box 6: 1

Willis, F. L. H.: Four representative types of womanhood  
ca.1910  
Box 6: 2

Willis, F. L. H.: Fragment (writing): The planets  
ca.1880  
Box 6: 3

Willis, F. L. H.: Fragments (writing)  
ca.1870-1900  
Box 6: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Fragments (writing): Light and color  
ca.1880  
Box 6: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Fragments (writing): On art  
ca.1900  
Box 6: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: Fragments (writing): On religion  
ca.1880  
Box 6: 7

Willis, F. L. H.: Fragments (writing): On spiritual matters  
ca.1880  
Box 6: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: Fruitlands  
ca.1915  
Box 6: 9

Willis, F. L. H.: Glad gospel of nature  
ca.1910  
Box 6: 10

Willis, F. L. H.: If a man die, shall he live again?  
ca.1900  
Box 6: 11

Willis, F. L. H.: In memoriamL Mrs. Sophia Davis  
1868  
Box 6: 12

Willis, F. L. H.: Is there anything in Spiritualism worthy to call forth the true spirit of sacrifice [printed]  
1898  
Box 6: 13

Willis, F. L. H.: John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, no. 11

ca.1865

Box 6: 14

Willis, F. L. H.: Journal of a voyage in the Barque May Queen. . . From Boston, Massachusetts, to Rio Grande, South America, via Richmond, Virginia

1854

Bound vol.

Box 10: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Louisa May Alcott

ca.1915

Box 6: 15

Willis, F. L. H.: Lucy Stone

ca.1900

Box 6: 16

Willis, F. L. H.: Man's relation to woman

ca.1900

Box 6: 17

Willis, F. L. H.: Materia medica notes, no. 1, Introductory; no. 2, General principles

ca.1870

Box 6: 18

Willis, F. L. H.: Memorial Day and what it implies

ca.1890

Box 6: 19

Willis, F. L. H.: Memory (notes)

ca.1900

Box 6: 20

Willis, F. L. H.: Miscellanea: An almost forgotten poet (McDonald Clarke)

ca.1900

Box 6: 21

Willis, F. L. H.: Mission of art

ca.1900

Box 6: 22

Willis, F. L. H.: Mr. Alcott as a prophet

ca.1915

Box 6: 23

Willis, F. L. H.: Mr. Alcott 's table talks

ca.1915

Box 6: 24

Willis, F. L. H.: My sketch of William and Mary Howitt

ca.1900

Bound vol.

Box 10: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: New Year's discourse

1859

Pamphlet

Box 6: 25

Willis, F. L. H.: On the true value of life

ca.1865

Box 6: 26

Willis, F. L. H.: On the woman question

1891

Box 6: 27

Willis, F. L. H.: Personified unthinkables and other works

ca.1884

Bound manuscript

Box 10: 7

Bound manuscript: the first section of the volume includes a transcription in Willis's hand of a book on esoteric medicine by Sarah Stanley Grimke (1884), followed by notes or drafts of other works, presumably by Willis himself.

Willis, F. L. H.: Phenix, or Wingham Herald

ca.1900

Box 6: 28

Willis, F. L. H.: Physical and social revolutions

ca.1890

Box 6: 29

Willis, F. L. H.: Power of love (incomplete)

ca.1865

Box 6: 30

Willis, F. L. H.: Prayers

ca.1870

Box 6: 31

Willis, F. L. H.: Psychometry of the Soul of Things

ca.1863

Box 6: 32

Willis, F. L. H.: Recollections of Henry Ward Beecher, Elias Howe

ca.1900

Box 6: 33

Willis, F. L. H.: Relations of the divine to the human

ca.1870

Box 7: 1

Willis, F. L. H.: Remarks at the burial service o Mrs. Mary C. Lewis

1900

Box 7: 2

Willis, F. L. H.: Reply to Rev. Dr. Snyder's comments on Spiritualism. Boston : Colby and Rich

1894

Pamphlet

Box 7: 3

Willis, F. L. H.: Representative men of modern theology, no. 7, Theodore Parker, the independent

1861

Box 7: 4

Willis, F. L. H.: Representative women, no. 5: Margaret Fuller, the Transendentalist

1861

Box 7: 5

Willis, F. L. H.: Saturday thoughts for Sunday consideration

ca.1910

Box 7: 6

Willis, F. L. H.: Serene, I hold my hands and wait

ca.1900

Box 7: 7

Willis, F. L. H.: Some practical thoughts for the Lenten season, no. 1: The true significance of life

ca.1910

Box 7: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: Some practical thoughts for the Lenten season, no. 2: By the octogenarian

ca.1910

Box 7: 9

Willis, F. L. H.: Some practical thoughts for the Lenten season, no. 3: The divine significance of life

ca.1910

Box 7: 10

Willis, F. L. H.: Some practical thoughts for the Lenten season, no. 4: What do we owe the world about us?

ca.1910

Box 7: 11

Willis, F. L. H.: Sound

ca.1865

Box 7: 12

Willis, F. L. H.: Theodore Parker in spirit life. Boston : Colby and Rich

1868

Pamphlet

Box 7: 13

Willis, F. L. H.: This wonderful soul-power

ca.1880

Incomplete

Box 7: 14

Willis, F. L. H.: Thomas Starr King

ca.1910

Bound vol.

Box 10: 8

Willis, F. L. H.: Truth is stranger than fiction

ca.1870

Box 7: 15

Willis, F. L. H.: Two discourses. . . delivered before the First Society of Spiritualists of New York. New York : s.n.

1865

Pamphlet

Box 7: 16

Willis, F. L. H.: Untitled

ca.1865

Box 7: 17

Willis, F. L. H.: Untitled

ca.1880

Incomplete

Box 7: 18

Willis, F. L. H.: Very marked possibilities of human nature

ca.1890

Box 7: 19

Willis, F. L. H.: Voice of the new year

1894

Pamphlet

Box 7: 20

Willis, F. L. H.: Voice of the old year

ca.1894

Box 7: 21

Willis, F. L. H.: What is the matter with the methods of reform?

ca.1900

Box 7: 22

Willis, F. L. H.: Worldliness

ca.1890

Box 7: 23

Series 3: Family Materials

1861-1927

3 boxes

Astronomical Ephemeris

1861-1893

Box 7: 24

Balkam, J. D., Stellar reading for F. L. H. Willis

ca.1865

Box 7: 25

Banner of Light

1891-05-16

Newspaper

Box 7: 26

Calling cards

ca.1870-1900

Box 7: 27

Dr. Willis and his experience as a medium

undated

Extracted article

Box 7: 28

Electrical health course notes

ca.1900

Box 7: 29

Envelopes and postcards

ca.1860-1902

Box 7: 30

Ephemera: trade cards of birds (Arm and Hammer)

ca.1900

Box 7: 31

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Beside Deborah's grave

ca.1910

Box 7: 32

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Chapter 2: Blossoming boughs

ca.1910

Box 7: 33

Attribution uncertain

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Chapter 4: For the healing of the nations

ca.1910

Box 7: 34

Attribution uncertain

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Chapter 5: The gray stone cliffs

ca.1910

Box 7: 35

Attribution uncertain

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Dream child

ca.1910

Box 7: 36

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Dwellers of highway and byway

ca.1910

Box 8: 1

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Notebooks

1878-1885

Box 8: 2

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Odds and ends from here and there

1883

Bound vol.

Box 10: 1

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Poetry and printed miscellany

ca.1910

Box 8: 3

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Untitled

undated

Box 8: 4

Attribution uncertain

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Untitled manuscript (incomplete)

undated

Box 8: 5

Attribution uncertain

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn: Wedding invitation

1886

Box 8: 6

Hussey, R. G.: Pathology notes, University of Maryland

1911

Bound vol.

Box 10: 2

Invitations, cards, and ephemera

1869-1971

Box 8: 7

Linn, S. Henry: The sigmoid flexure, constipation, and its relation to pelvic disease



1895  
Box 8: 8  
Linn, Willis: Pathology notes  
1909-1910  
Bound vol.  
Box 10: 3  
Miscellaneous  
ca.1865-1912  
Box 8: 9  
Newspaper clippings  
1868-1879  
Box 8: 10  
Newspaper clippings: articles by F. L. H. and Love M. Whitcomb Willis  
1864-1880  
Box 8: 11  
Newspaper clippings: articles by F. L. H. and Love M. Whitcomb Willis  
1864-1880  
Box 8: 12  
Newspaper clippings: articles by F. L. H. and Love M. Whitcomb Willis  
1864-1880  
Box 9: 1  
Newspaper clippings: Aunt Zera's stories  
undated  
Box 9: 2  
Occult philosophy: Attainment course  
ca.1900  
Box 9: 3  
Notes to Taine's Italy  
ca.1865  
Box 9: 4  
Pocket diary  
1871  
Box 9: 5  
Poetry  
ca.1864-1910  
Box 9: 6  
Receipts  
1865-1896  
Box 9: 7  
Will and its training, lessons 1-6  
ca.1900  
Box 9: 8  
Willis, F. L. H.: Program for lecture series, Philosophy of the inner life  
1901  
Box 9: 9  
Willis, Love M. Whitcomb: Carrier boy's New Year Address. . . Branch County Gazette  
1862  
Broadside  
Box 9: 10  
Willis, Love M. Whitcomb: Centennial Poem  
1879  
Box 9: 11  
Willis, Love M. Whitcomb: Diary  
1856  
Box 9: 12  
Willis, Love M. Whitcomb: Essays on H.H., Molly Pitcher, Battle of Yorktown, Battle of Monmouth, Antislavery leaders, William Ellery, Abby Kelly Foster  
1900  
Bound vol.

Box 9: 13

Although the volume is not signed, the handwriting and content appear to be the work of Love Willis.

Willis, Love M. Whitcomb: Welcome home

1901

Box 9: 14

Guest book

1907-1927

Box 13: 2

Limp Roycroft leather covers (deteriorating), with tipped in photographs

Series 4. Photographs and Scrapbooks

1863-1974

2.5 boxes

Photograph album: cartes de visite

ca.1863-1880

Cartes de visite, Tintypes

Box 12: 1

Album of cartes and tintypes, mostly, unidentified, with some taken in studios in Willimantic, Conn.

Photograph album: Cabinet cards ([View selected images](#))

ca.1875-1890

Cabinet cards

Box 12: 2

Brown leather covers with brass clasp. Linn family, Edith, F.L.H. Willis, Love Willis, and other relatives; cartes de visite section in center and end.

Photograph album: Cabinet cards

ca.1880-1895

Cabinet cards

Box 12: 3

Worn red velvet covers. Mostly unidentified. Mourning cards for Alexander J. Stults, Martha Stults, Ellen Johnson, Mary S. Johnson, Mary Stults. Some cartes de visite at the end of the album

Photograph album: Cabinet cards

ca.1885-1895

Cabinet cards

Box 12: 4

Brown textured leather covers blindstamped in gilt "Photographs." Willis and Linn family photographs.

Photograph album: Cabinet cards ([View selected images](#))

ca.1890-1895

Cabinet cards

Box 12: 5

Worn red velvet covers inlaid with metal "Souvenir." Mostly unidentified

Photographs: Cobb, Cornelia Willis

ca.1865

Carte de visite

Box 9: 15

Photographs: Dogs

ca.1870-1909

Carte de visite and Real photo postcard

Box 9: 16

**Photographs: Eden Glen, the summer residence of Dr. F. L. H. Willis**

ca.1875

Stereocard

Box 9: 17

**Photographs: Forbes, Edith Willis Linn**

ca.1883

Cartes de visite

Box 9: 18

Embossed oval cartes de visite with wrapping case from Barber's Studio, Willimantic, Conn.

**Photographs: Forbes, Edith Willis Linn, with son Willis**

ca.1887

Cabinet card

Box 9: 19

Cabinet card with scalloped edges. Willis Linn was born Aug. 1887

**Photographs: Linn, Bill**

1921-1935

Box 9: 20

**Photographs: Linn, Ethel H. Album (disbound)**

1907-1974

Box 9: 21

**Photographs: Linn, Samuel H.**

ca.1890-1900

Albumen print

Box 9: 22

Family in carriage in front of house; Carriage driver with horse in front of house; Studio portrait.

**Photographs: Whitcomb, Love Foster**

ca.1863

Carte de visite

Box 9: 23

**Photographs: Willis, F. L. H.**

1887-1900

Cabinet card

Box 9: 24

Studio portrait of Willis with grandson; also later silver print portrait.

**Photographs: Willis, F. L. H.**

ca.1868-1880

Cartes de visite

Box 9: 25

Portraits by Gurney and Barber, respectively, with wrapping case from Barber's Studio, Willimantic, Conn.

**Photographs: Willis, Love M. Whitcomb**

ca.1910

Box 9: 26

**Photographs: Unidentified**

ca.1865-1930

Box 9: 27

**Scrapbook ([View selected items](#))**

ca.1880

Box 11: 1

Cover: The Universal Scrapbook. Includes pasted in engravings; laid in valentines and other cards, ephemers

**Scrapbook([View selected items](#))**

ca.1892

Box 11: 2

Cover: Three inset chromos. Laid in chromolithographs, valentines and cards.

**Scrapbook**

ca.1903-1905

Box 11: 3

Cover: Three inset chromos. Laid in newspaper images and articles.

**Scrapbook and notebook**

1857-1865

Box 13: 3

Half leather over cloth with gilt ruling. Newspaper clippings by Love M. Whitcomb Willis.

Painting: Flowers  
undated  
Oil on wood  
Box 13: 1

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## Administrative information

### Access

The collection is open for research.

### Provenance

Acquired from Michael Brown, Feb. 2020 (2020-026).

### Bibliography

Willis's account of his life with the Alcott family is included in his book *Alcott Memoirs*. Boston : Richard G. Badger, 1915.

Willis's expulsion from Harvard is discussed at length from a Spiritualist's perspective in Emma Britten Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism*. New York : the author, 1870.

Willis's obituary appeared in the *Unitarian Register*, vol. 93 (May 14, 1914): 477.

### Digitized content

Selected materials from the Willis Papers have been digitized and may be viewed online through SCUA's digital repository, Credo.

### Processing Information

Processed by I. Eliot Wentworth, Feb. 2020.

### Separated Material

A number of books owned by Willis were received with the collection and have been cataloged separately.

*Academian*. Lakemont, N.Y. : Lakemont Academy, 1952

*Course of Time: A Poem*. Portland, Me. : , Sanborn and Carter, 1844

*Cynosure*. Baltimore : Gilman Country School, 1938

Gannett, W. C., *Year of Miracle*. Boston : Geo. H. Ellis, 1882

*Gertrude: The Story of a Beautiful Life*. New York : Privately printed, 1900

*Grahams Magazine*, vol. 22, 1843

*Holy Bible*. King James Bible lacking title page

*Holy Bible*. New York : Collins and Hanay, 1818

*Holy Bible*. Boston : Lincoln and Edmands, 1825

*Holy Bible*. New York : Oxford, 1869

*Hours of Communion*. Boston : A. Tompkins, 1855

*In Memory of Nathaniel White*. Concord, N.H. : Republican Press Association, 1881

Linn, Edith Willis, *Cycle of Sonnets*. New York : James T. White, 1918

Linn, Edith Willis, *From Dream to Dream: Poems*. New York : James T. White, 1918

Linn, Edith Willis, *Poems*. Buffalo : Charles Wells Moulton, 1892

Parker, Theodore, *Sermon, Preached in New York, June 10, 1860*. Boston : Walker, Wise, and Co., 1860

Sears, Clara Endicott, *Catalog of Fruitlands, at Harvard, Mass.*. S.l. : s.n., ca.1914

*Self-Pronouncing New Testament*. Philadelphia : A. J. Holman,

*Story of the Alcotts*. Concord, Mass : Orchard House, ca.1946

*Taps*. Waynesboro, Va. : Fishburne Military School, 1928

*Taps*. Waynesboro, Va. : Fishburne Military School, 1929

Willis, Frederick L. H., *Alcott Memoirs*. Boston : Richard G. Badger, 1915

Willis, N. P., *Poems: Sacred, passionate, and Humorous*. New York : Clark, Austin, and Smith, 1852

Woolard, Samuel Francis, *Beauties of Friendship*. Wichita, Kans. : Goldsmith, 1906

*Young Gentleman's Library*. Philadelphia : Crissy, Waldie, and Co., 1835 (presented to William L. Whitcomb, with laid-in sketch and note)

### Language:

English

### Copyright and Use (More information )

*Cite as*: F. L. H. Willis Papers (MS 1116). Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries.

## Search terms

### Subjects

Alcott, Amos Bronson, 1799-1888

Alcott, Louisa May, 1832-1888

Astrology

Coldwater (Mich.)--Religious life

Homeopathic physicians--New York (State)

Spiritualism--Massachusetts

Unitarian churches--Clergy

### Contributors

Willis, F. L. H. (Frederick Llewellyn Hovey), 1830-1914 **[main entry]**

Forbes, Edith Willis Linn, 1865-1945

Whitcomb, Love Foster

Willis, Love M. Whitcomb

### Genres and formats

Lectures

Photographs

Sermons

### Link to similar SCUA collections

Metaphysical religion

Prose writing

Reform

Spiritual change

Women & feminism



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