

# The Bicycle in the Service of Reform

## Frances Willard's Social Entrepreneurship, Her "Do Everything" Policy, and the Temperance Temple Campaign

Kelly Payne & Janel Simons

### Abstract

This essay situates Frances Willard's temperance reform campaigns as entrepreneurial in nature, and claims Willard as a key nineteenth-century American social innovator. Much has been written on Willard's temperance policies and her leadership in the Woman's Christian Temperance Movement as well as her founding of the World Woman's Christian Temperance Organization. The writings Willard produced on women's access to and engagement with the bicycle as a reform technology has not been explored. In offering a narrative of the strategies and experiences Willard used to employ the bicycle as a tool or ally for temperance reform and woman's rights, this essay argues for the inclusion of women's voices in the public sphere and in publication around social and economic mobility. The bicycle offered Willard and her WCTU organization a key metonymic image—the wheel—around which to analyze the relationship of temperance to everyday lives. Willard's "Do Everything" campaign can be seen as the nineteenth-century equivalent of vast social entrepreneurship.

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# The Bicycle in the Service of Reform

## Frances Willard's Social Entrepreneurship, Her “Do Everything” Policy, and the Temperance Temple Campaign

Kelly Payne & Janel Simons

A true woman is womanly in whatever she chooses to do and wherever she chooses to live.

Frances Willard,  
*Occupations for Women* (Success Company, 1897)

When Frances Willard (1839–1898) welcomed the “bicycle as a reformer” in the 1890s, she not only actuated her “Do Everything” temperance reform policy but also challenged the tradition of American entrepreneurialism by introducing women to a social world in motion.<sup>1</sup> Considered by her contemporaries as the “Queen of Temperance” the world over and the president of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) from 1879 to 1898, Willard believed temperance reform should be approached as one element in a spectrum of interrelated social changes. Willard biographer Ruth Bordin accordingly notes that Willard “treated temperance reform as part of a complex of related social issues that should be dealt with simultaneously.”<sup>2</sup> Of nineteenth-century reform more broadly, Al Lyons identifies two paths toward solving growing social problems: “One was to increase the governmental social programs to meet these needs, the other was to mobilize private sources of charity and philanthropy.”<sup>3</sup> Willard recognized the power both of prohibition legislation and innovation through WCTU initiatives. Rather than opt for one path, she forged her own, connecting temperance to myriad other reform and social

movements, and organizing a cohort of white ribboners to advance creative solutions in the service of the temperance “crusade.”<sup>4</sup> Economic inequality, alcoholism, prostitution, educational injustice, and racial prejudice all were taken up by Willard’s WCTU as interrelated issues that only the most expansive social and legal innovations could combat and ameliorate. This network of women and the reform movements it engaged was imagined by Willard as a wheel within a wheel, both in the WCTU organ, the *Union Signal*, as well as in her 1895 memoir on learning to ride the bicycle.

Willard’s approach to temperance reform was intersectional and entrepreneurial; she was unafraid to take risks to benefit the “great mass of feminine humanity” often overlooked by the men who led businesses and policy.<sup>5</sup> Willard, working in an age in which “self-making was culturally defined as a white, male activity,” drew on consumer culture, business acumen, moral suasion, Christian progress, and social activism to advance temperance.<sup>6</sup>

Examining Willard’s temperance writings of the 1890s alongside her expansive “Do Everything” reform policy, this article positions Willard as a social entrepreneur whose temperance mission led to campaigns embracing controversial technologies and utilizing innovative commercial strategies to effect as much change as possible. Current scholarship on economics and social innovation characterizes social entrepreneurship as “a multidimensional construct involving the expression of entrepreneurially virtuous behaviour to achieve the social mission, a coherent unity of purpose and action in the face of moral complexity, the ability to recognise social value-creating opportunities, and key decision-making characteristics of innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking.”<sup>7</sup> As scholars have recognized, “social entrepreneurship and social innovation are both about identifying a problem-solving opportunity to meet a social need.”<sup>8</sup> The purpose, for Willard, was always the molding of a more perfect and just Christian society, one which necessitated women’s equity, co-equal participation in politics, and the sharing of economic power. In an 1891 presidential address, Willard identified a monopolizing work ethic in the entrepreneurship she witnessed of capitalists: “For combination is ‘a game that two can play at;’ the millionaires have taught us how, and the labor-tortoise is fast overtaking the capitalistic hare.”<sup>9</sup> The WCTU membership had no shortage of laboring women and by the 1890s, with the development of the World’s WCTU, their reach was global: the WCTU “gathered around in every part of the globe groups of women who remained loyal and devoted to international organization.” The enterprise represented “a great human mosaic,” making the wheel a fitting emblem.<sup>10</sup>

In endorsing the bicycle in her memoir *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle* (1895) and through the broader campaign promoted in the *Union Signal* to raise funds for the Temperance Temple building in Chicago, Willard expanded

the mission of the WCTU organization to include social innovation and female entrepreneurialism. One significant aspect of Willard's social entrepreneurship lies in her open endorsement of the safety bicycle as a vehicle for the prevention of alcohol abuse and women's public mobility.<sup>11</sup> In implementing the bicycle in the service of temperance, Willard provided a new perspective on the scope and geographic range of women's activism.

Willard's memoir espoused a powerful message of activism, one that embraced the innovation of the bicycle as metonymic not only for temperance reform but also for reform movements more broadly. The implications of the bicycle's appearance in the pages of the *Union Signal* signify, among other things, the eventual acceptance of the bicycle for WCTU members. Likewise, Willard's *Union Signal* articles on the topic of the Temperance Temple campaign shed light on how she rhetorically maneuvered the introduction of controversial technology by crafting reform-specific uses for material items; wheels took on philosophical and material significance. As one of the central metaphors through which Willard and her WCTU partners shifted the WCTU's focus from the home to the world, the Temperance Temple campaign bespoke a higher mission for the WCTU under Willard's watch. It signified the architecture of the temperance movement as much as the bicycle symbolized its movement forward.

The bicycle was a consumer object rich in possibilities. From a vehicle for labor to a mechanism for hygienic exercise, the bicycle was widely recognized for its mental and physical benefits for men. Willard describes it as a vehicle for women conquering new worlds, an invention that enabled average citizens to enjoy "the swiftness of motion." The bicycle, in her eyes, was "the most fascinating feature of material life," the "steed that never tires."<sup>12</sup> Its significance to her temperance mission was immediate. Willard writes: "I had often mentioned in my temperance writings that the bicycle was perhaps our strongest ally in winning young men away from public-houses . . . So as a temperance reformer I always felt a strong attraction toward the bicycle, because it is the vehicle of so much harmless pleasure, and because the skills required in handling it requires those who mount to keep clear head and hands."<sup>13</sup>

That women laboring for social change should have access to such an invention was obvious. Willard imbued the bicycle with Christian credibility and social power, transforming a commercial object to a vehicle of Christian progress. In this way, Willard's bicycle narrative and the campaign she created around the wheel should be interpreted as evidence of her success as a social innovator and entrepreneur, a form of entrepreneurial activity that paralleled successes in business and other capitalist enterprises in the late nineteenth century.

Recently, economic historians and scholars in entrepreneurial studies are recog-

nizing more widely the accomplishments of women like Willard. As Susan M. Yohn has shown, female entrepreneurship in commercial markets was not publicly and widely celebrated. “If women’s business in this period remained small, undercapitalized, and limited in their reach and profit potential,” Yohn explains, “the parallel social reform organizations founded by women—among them the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, the Young Woman’s Christian Association, and the Protestant home and foreign mission associations—saw tremendous growth both in numbers of members as well as in dollars collected.”<sup>14</sup> Many female entrepreneurs aligned their projects or products with the household by showing how “their products enhanced the domestic arena by making their customers more attractive or led to the preparation of more nutritious meals.”<sup>15</sup> Willard took the home protection cause outdoors and argued that women should take up bicycle riding in American cities and communities across the globe. To be sure, Willard’s Wheel Within a Wheel campaign is entrepreneurial in nature, as it was defined by “the imperative to drive social change, and it is that potential payoff, with its lasting, transformational benefit to society that sets the field and its practitioners apart.”<sup>16</sup>

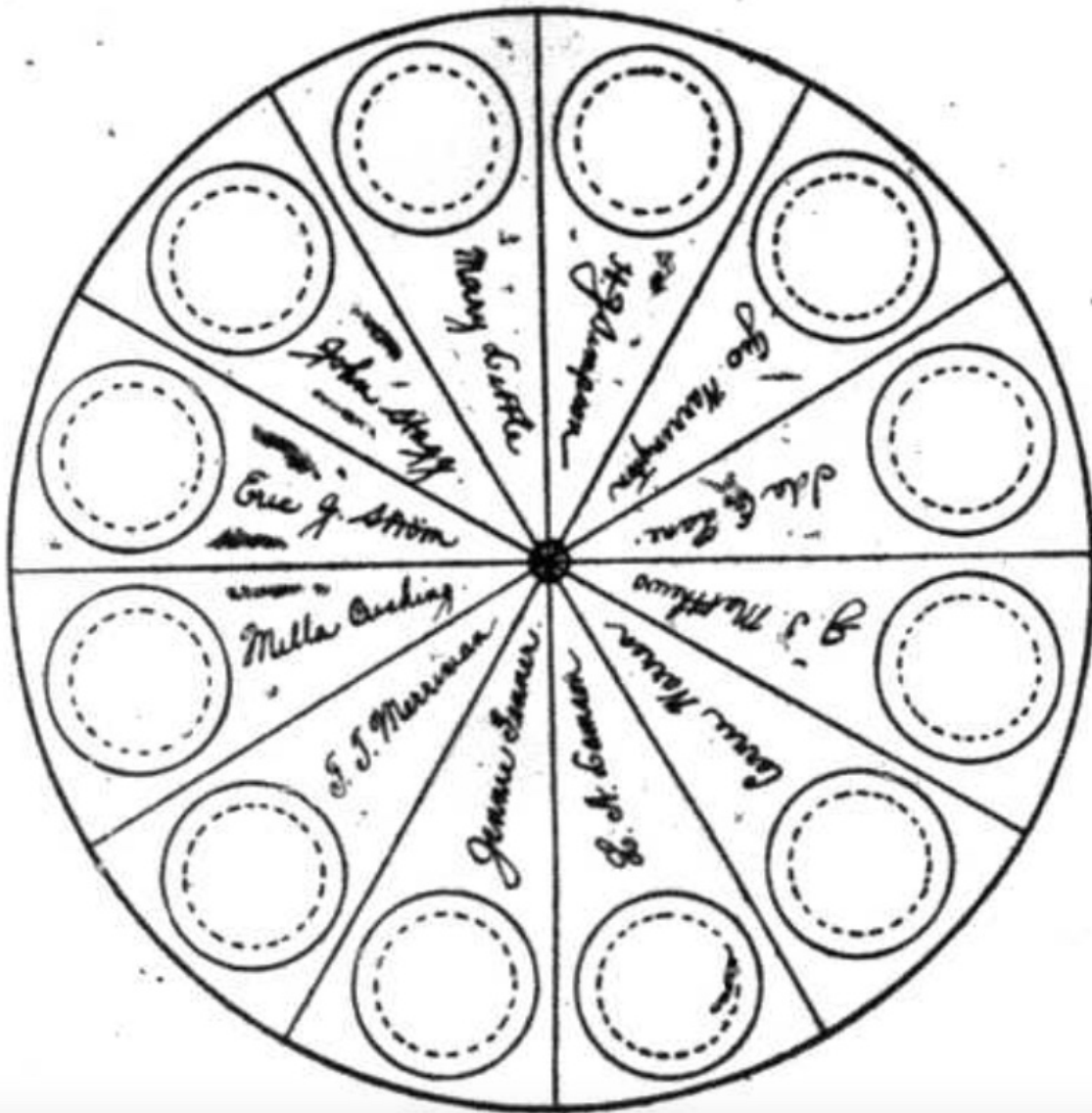
Willard’s interest in the bicycle responded to American cultural questioning of whether women should publicly pursue new technologies and become more visible and vocal in the body politic. As a Christian temperance spokesperson, Willard’s experience in learning to ride the bicycle was tantamount to approval and endorsement. Willard and the organization she led profited from her social capital. The bicycle and its concomitant possibilities for women’s mobility became an extension of Willard’s “Do Everything” reform motto. Described by Willard as “an evolution, as inevitable as any traced by any naturalist,” the “Do Everything Policy” consolidated the “blessed trinity of movements, Prohibition, Woman’s Liberation, and Labor’s Uplift.”<sup>17</sup> The imagery of the wheel encapsulated the interconnectedness of WCTU work with suffrage, civil rights, and healthy living away from realities that threatened families.

Writing was one of Willard’s widely used tactics in temperance reform, directing her “pen-work for temperance” in part to recruit new members to the WCTU and in part to chronicle her “uppermost thought” about temperance.<sup>18</sup> Willard’s writings on the bicycle began appearing in the columns of the *Union Signal* in 1895. In an article from the February 28, 1895, issue, Willard announced her endorsement of the “Wheel within Wheels” Temperance Temple fundraising campaign, which was initiated by white-ribboner Matilda B. Carse.<sup>19</sup> With the building of the Temple came risks that not all members of the WCTU were ready to take on—specifically troubling for WCTU members were the financial and personal risks involved in women stepping beyond the perceived boundaries of their gender.<sup>20</sup> In the pages of the *Union Signal*, Willard confirmed the importance of collective responsibility for funding WCTU headquarters, affirming that the Temperance Temple (to which she assigned the appellation,

“Our House Beautiful”) was a cause worthy of widespread WCTU support.<sup>21</sup> Although this article initially served to sanction Carse’s fundraising campaign for the Temperance Temple, Willard took the opportunity to link the campaign with her upcoming memoir. In March, the WCTU publishing organization printed *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, in which Willard proposes using the bicycle as a vehicle for temperance work and as a metaphor for learning to be “an active and diligent worker in the world.”<sup>22</sup>

In the March 14, 1895, issue of *The Union Signal*, less than one month after Willard espoused her philosophy of the wheel as a reform tool and its connection to the Temple campaign in her article “Wheels Within Wheels,” Carse’s regular column, “Temperance Temple Items,” echoed similar sentiments. Entreating WCTU members to join in the Temple Wheel campaign Carse begins: “We love life and motion. We get impatient even if a train is detained a little over schedule time on account of an overheated wheel. This brings me back again to the subject of Wheels and the impossibility of doing anything in a civilized land without them. This long, heavily laden train could not move a peg if it was not for the great wheels that glide under it so smooth and swift.”<sup>23</sup> Carse no doubt drew from the possibility found in Willard’s enlistment of the wheel for reform—all that was needed were “willing hands to give [the Temperance Wheels] a whirl among a dozen of their friends” wasting not a dime in the process.<sup>24</sup> Evoking Willard’s *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, Carse goes on: “Although I admit to having a *Wheel* in my head, yet I desire to be fair to the matter and not give too much credit to them.”<sup>25</sup> Carse’s use of italics implies that Willard’s *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, or at least a version of it, was instrumental in forming the Temple Wheel campaign.

Equally as important to her readers were the rules of the Temperance Temple wheel campaign that Willard described in her endorsement, including how Willard and Carse planned to use little cardboard wheels for collecting donations. The wheels featured an outer ring of open spaces in which contributors were to affix a coin (see **Illustration 1**). Along the inside of the wheels, room was provided to scrawl each benefactor’s name along the spokes. Another key feature of the wheel campaign were the prizes awarded for completed Temperance Temple wheels that Willard described: “every person who slips a dime under the little red cover, of which there are twelve on each wheel, will receive a handsome picture of the Woman’s Temperance Temple, and every person who wins a dozen others thus to put in a dime receives any one of a variety of prizes.”<sup>26</sup> The power of the campaign and the democratic possibilities lay in commemorating each contributor, not in memorializing Willard. The cardboard Temperance Temple wheels and the prizes associated with broad participation support Willard’s opinion that the WCTU members “strongly feel that the actual vitality of money is in proportion to the number of people back of it, in it and engaged in dispensing it for noble purposes.”<sup>27</sup> The contributors would see their money come to fruition in the building and in the programs run out of its offices. The Temperance



**Illustration 1:** Temperance Temple Wheel.

From *Union Signal*, March 28, 1895.

Temple was an entrepreneurial enterprise, empowering women to see the “vitality” of economic investment. Urging support from her WCTU sisters, Willard ends the article with a call for communal support: “We want to see the wheels go round.” Willard thereby enlists the wheels of the Temperance Temple campaign for the greater “weal of the human family.”<sup>28</sup>


It did not take long for Willard and Carse’s Temple Wheel campaign to gain momentum. By June 4, 1895, Carse was reporting that the WCTU “was receiving on an average fifty filled Wheels daily.”<sup>29</sup> This level of participation in the Temple Wheel campaign was promising, but not as enthusiastic as Willard and Carse would have hoped.

The fact that they had “placed [their] mark at a thousand [filled wheels] per day,” and the discrepancy between this hope and reality speaks to the enormity of the Temperance Temple enterprise. Despite the popularity of the Temple Wheel campaign and both Willard and Carse’s fundraising efforts, the WCTU could not raise enough money to buy the Temperance Temple. After Willard’s death in February of 1898, WCTU leaders voted to abandon the Temple project and, despite member response to continue with the ill-fated venture, the WCTU severed ties with the Temple suffering a financial loss of roughly half a million dollars in the process.<sup>30</sup>

On March 28, 1895, one month after Willard’s “Wheels Within Wheels” appeared, and merely two weeks after Carse’s column adopting Willard’s wheel metaphor appeared in the *Union Signal*, an advertisement announced that Willard’s memoir on her experience with the bicycle, titled *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, was available through the Woman’s Temperance Publishing Association (see **Illustration 2** and **Illustration 3**). Part bicycle manual, part personal memoir, and part recruiting tool, the “fascinating little volume” came to life in the pages of the *Union Signal* alongside the first WCTU printed bicycle ads and the Temperance Temple campaign. Indeed, the history of Willard’s *A Wheel Within a Wheel* is the history of how she sought, as she herself explained, to take a “pre-emption claim upon the press to spread the temperance propaganda.”<sup>31</sup> Although *A Wheel Within a Wheel* chronicles Willard’s adventures learning to master the new safety bicycle, this memoir also offered her WCTU comrades realistic insights on reform and technology. The bicycle offered a connection between the foundation of Christian spirituality and the futurism born of technological advancements. Willard connected them in a journal entry in February of 1896: “I woke thinking: Is it possible that after all, I am to be living on the planet Earth not only when the sources of the Nile, the heart of Africa and the secrets of

**A Wheel Within a Wheel**

**HOW I  
LEARNED  
TO RIDE  
THE BICYCLE**



BY  
*Frances Willard*

In her inimitable style Miss Willard tells in this dainty little volume her experience in learning to master a “steel steed,” and as she graphically portrays the various situations leading from many failures to ultimate success, she has interwoven in delightful “side-talks” some exceedingly helpful and practical suggestions as to how failures and discouragements may be turned to success in life, never losing opportunity, as is her wont, to say that which ennobles and uplifts. It is really a fascinating little volume, appealing strongly to all that is best in physical and moral development.

**SEVEN FULL-PAGE HALF-TONE ILLUSTRATIONS....**

**PRICE BEAUTIFULLY BOUND IN BUCKRAM CLOTH 50 cents**

Tastefully designed cover in ink and silver.

**WOMAN'S TEMPERANCE PUBLISHING ASS'N,  
The Temple, Chicago.**

**Illustration 2:** Advertisement for *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*. From *Union Signal*, April 4, 1895.



Do You Possess Miss Willard's  
Bicycle Book?  
IF NOT, PURCHASE ONE IMMEDIATELY



**HOW I LEARNED  
TO RIDE THE  
BICYCLE**

شور شور شور

Written in Miss Willard's own inimitable style, with six full-page illustrations of the author learning to ride.

The illustrations alone are worth the price of the book.

**PRICE, POSTPAID, 50c.**  
W. T. P. A., The Temple, CHICAGO.

Advertisers like to know what paper pay them best. Always mention *The Union Signal* when writing.

**Illustration 3:** Advertisement for *A Wheel Within A Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle*.

From *Union Signal*, September 2, 1895.

with balance and posture this time by two “well-disposed young women,” Willard steadies herself atop the machine.<sup>35</sup> Third, with one assistant walking alongside her holding the center-bar, Willard slowly begins her ride. In the final stage, Willard pedals at last unassisted, turning and dismounting by herself. Connecting her own experience of learning to ride the bicycle to reform efforts, Willard writes: “It is the same with all reforms: sometimes they seem to lag, then they barely balance, then they track and tumble to one side; but all they need is a new impetus at the right moment on the right angle, and away they go again as merrily as if they had never

the poles are hunted out, but when electricity is harnessed, printing is done by steam, the flying machine is invented (as a sequel to the bicycle where we will ... take our leave of Earth) and that by phonograph or telephone or cathode ray or spectroscope we are to hear the sounds & see the sights that make the Life Immortal sure?”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, in the *Union Signal*, Willard wrote publicly of the possibilities of the bicycle as a means of advancing temperance. Side by side, readers encountered instructions on mechanical bicycle function, dress suggestions, resolution of the medical debate over women’s riding postures, and an explicit call for the bicycle as an agent of reform. In her convincing and didactic tone, she illuminates for her readers the lesson that success in life and in temperance reform may be achieved by “decision and precision.”<sup>33</sup>

Believing that science and technology “improves upon old ways just as reforms improve society,” Willard advertised the bicycle as a tool for WCTU-sponsored activity. Two principles must first be realized before the riding process begins, she asserted: first, the goal; second, the drive requisite to reach such a goal. These principles lead into the four-staged evolution of Willard’s riding history. First, aided by three Englishmen who hold the bicycle in place, Willard climbs aboard the saddle in a “feminine bicycler’s first position,” namely one with a noticeable “lack of balance.”<sup>34</sup> Second, assisted

threatened to stop at all.” The bicycle is the “new impetus” that the temperance movement needed to “go again as merrily as if they had never threatened to stop.”<sup>36</sup>

Accepting wholeheartedly that the bicycle “meets all the conditions and will ere long come within reach of all,” Willard invests the bicycle with a special value to her “comrades in the white-ribbon army of temperance workers.”<sup>37</sup> The reasons for this are plenty, among them: the bicycle provides natural pleasure, the bicycle offers a “new implement of power,” the bicycle is accessible to most ages and to both men and women.<sup>38</sup> Astride her bicycle, Willard breathed in new possibilities “amid the delightful surroundings of the great outdoors, and inspired by the bird-songs, the color and fragrance of an English posy-garden, in the company of devoted and pleasant comrades,” she made herself “master of the most remarkable, ingenious, and inspiring motor ever yet devised upon this planet.”<sup>39</sup>

Willard was confident that the “reason” behind women riding bicycles would increase upon the outmoded, conservative “precedent” that women should remain in the domestic sphere.<sup>40</sup> Significantly, Willard connected the bicycle with domestic ideology and reform in a way that embraced women’s use of transportation technology, rather than castigating women’s interest in a realm of experience (technology) that was valued primarily for its contributions to male, public, and commercial culture. In contrast to popular romantic bicycle narratives in which the freedom of the bicycle encourages women to get out of the house into which their marriage vows shut them,<sup>41</sup> Willard extolled the virtues of riding for the family and with the additive motivation of recruiting others to the temperance mission. The “good fellowship and mutual understanding between men and women who take the road together,” Willard suggested, would greatly advantage humanity, who could share life’s “hardships and [rejoice] in the poetry of motion through landscapes breathing nature’s inexhaustible charm and skyscapes lifting the heart from what is to what shall be hereafter.”<sup>42</sup>

The bicycle was perfectly matched, in Willard’s mind, to “the capital of humanity.”<sup>43</sup> After realizing the mobility that the bicycle offered herself, Willard extolled the fact that “the physical development of humanity’s mother-half would be wonderfully advanced by that universal introduction of the bicycle sure to come within the next few years” when the safety bicycle would become affordable to the majority.<sup>44</sup> She even went so far as invoking commerce as a unifying force: “It is for the interest of great commercial monopolies that this should be so, since if women patronize the wheel the number of buyers will be twice as large.”<sup>45</sup> In this assertion, Willard alludes to the potential economic and social profit in bicycles that was harnessed in the advertising campaigns of the 1890s. As Ellen Gruber Garvey reports, by the end of the bicycle craze in the late 1890s, between one quarter and one third of the bicycle

market belonged to women.<sup>46</sup> Within the commerce of the bicycle, Willard identifies a unifying force for women that went beyond the act of consumption and into acts of reform, specifically rational dress reform. For, as Willard noted, “If women ride they must, when riding, dress more rationally . . . . If they do this many prejudices as to what they may be allowed to wear will melt away.”<sup>47</sup> Likewise, advertisers used the cache of WCTU reformers in their *Union Signal* marketing campaigns, as evident in an ad for the “Lady Somerset” model.

In addition to the reform message of *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, the form and content of the book also supports reading it alongside the Temperance Temple campaign. Willard drew upon a collage-style that incorporated several of the topics under discussion in the *Union Signal* dating from the late 1880s through the beginning of 1895. Admixed with her commentary on learning to ride the bicycle, for instance, are Willard’s personal reflections and a poem in response to the announcement of Ulysses S. Grant’s death on July 23, 1885. The collage effect is carried further in the penultimate chapter, titled “Ethereal Episode,” in which Willard details an 1886 tricycle accident. As a result of this accident, Willard was prescribed ether while the doctors reset her broken arm. In her reflections, she deplores human cruelty and exults in principles of Christian belonging. She wrote, “Then there settled down upon me the most vivid and pervading sense of the love of God that I have ever known . . . in Him we live, and move, and have our being.”<sup>48</sup> While this episode and Grant’s death occurred years earlier, Willard provided a vision in which God confirms that her movement and actions are spiritually sanctioned.

Coupled with this spiritual vision, Willard’s reform philosophy was imbued with a forward and upward motion: “It is the curse of life that nearly everyone looks down. But the microscope will never set you free; you must glue your eyes to the telescope for ever and a day. Look up and off and on and out.”<sup>49</sup> With her eyes on the broader picture and her goals propelling her through the last decade of the nineteenth century, Willard embraced the potentials of technology in creating a community of reform-minded young women. Of the significance of the bicycle Willard wrote, “I began to feel that myself plus the bicycle equaled myself plus the world, upon whose spinning wheel we must all learn to ride, or fall into the sluiceways of oblivion and despair.”<sup>50</sup> Through her own experience of diligently learning to ride the bicycle, Willard found a new form of power and opened up a wider world for women all the while beseeching others to join her, to “go thou and do likewise.”<sup>51</sup> As Edith Mayo attests in her introduction of a recent edition of *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, the book “quickly became a bestseller and no doubt encouraged other women to take up the bicycle” if not to join the temperance cause.<sup>52</sup>

In “Wheels Within Wheels,” Willard draws on the innovation and durability of the

wheel technology, connecting these qualities to the temperance movement. “The wheel has always been an institution,” Willard remarks, “whether attached to the market cart, the swift express train or the silently gliding bicycle, it is a ‘thing of beauty and a joy forever.’”<sup>53</sup> A wheel alone may move, but “for real execution nothing succeeds like ‘wheels within wheels.’”<sup>54</sup> This Biblical reference, derived from Ezekiel 1:16, perfectly expresses Willard’s methodology of connecting temperance to many other areas of social improvement as well as her approach to the WCTU. Precisely as humanity is linked to all of God’s creatures in Ezekiel’s testament, Willard’s use of this Biblical reference asserts that in some fundamental way the temperance movement permeates all aspects of life: “Everything is not in the Temperance Reform, but the Temperance Reform should be in everything.”<sup>55</sup> Significantly, Willard assigns the wheel with dual functions. First, “wheels are what move things.” Second, the temperance movement “cannot get along without wheels” because the WCTU has “a boundless crop of goodwill to convey back and forth from the Headquarters of the WCTU to every home that loves the white ribbon and what it represents.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, Willard’s deployment of Temperance Temple wheels not only propelled the fundraising movement, but also connected each white ribboner to the larger membership of the WCTU. Connecting women to the WCTU mission in their daily lives was one way that Willard succeeded in making strong involvement possible for women across socio-economic classes. Every woman could do their part, contributing what they could afford given their family circumstances.

In support of the Temperance Temple campaign unfolding in the *Union Signal*’s weekly column, Willard wrote “Silver wheels are now in motion as symbols of our heart’s devotion, and will roll fast and far without commotion to make our House Beautiful our very own forever and a day.”<sup>57</sup> The more wheels, the more motion; the more motion, the more WCTU members to help contribute to the Temperance Temple, according to Willard’s growth mindset. As the spokesperson behind the WCTU campaign to solicit subscriptions to pay off the debt of the “Temperance Temple” (nicknamed “Willard Hall”), Willard’s article offers a memorable slogan to unite WCTU members: each member is a wheel in her own local WCTU union; each local union is a wheel within the national WCTU.<sup>58</sup> For Willard, the metaphor of wheels within wheels provides a tangible and emotional linkage between WCTU members and the temperance movement more broadly.

The connections between the Temperance Temple campaign and American business spirit abounded. Willard acknowledged that the wheel had long been the driving force behind capitalist institutions. Certainly, Willard’s Temperance Temple campaign very literally could not get along without the members’ participation in filling the cardboard Temple Wheels, however, Willard’s assertion carried with it more significance. Indeed, for Willard, the “wheels,” which she foresaw powering her reform

work, and that of the WCTU, referred not only to the Temple Wheels, but also to the ever-growing army of activists she imagined riding atop the bicycle, Willard's reformers in motion pursuing radical changes in society and in politics.

Ostensibly, the drive to raise money to finally own the WCTU's "House Beautiful" was at the heart of the Temperance Temple campaign. In her weekly column, titled "Temperance Temple Items," which was devoted to the campaign, Willard's sister reformer, Carse, implored WCTU members to give to the cause by appealing to a sense of collective ownership among those who participated in the fundraising drive: "Think how inspiring it would be if we would all take hold and help to pay for our own House Beautiful. We can never feel that it is ours until we own some little part in it by right of paying towards it."<sup>59</sup> The push to make good on the WCTU investment of the Temperance Temple was, indeed, a significant aspect of the Temperance Temple campaign; however, Willard's description of the rules for filling the Temple Wheels implicitly outlined a plan for further WCTU recruitment. Willard subtly aligned the pecuniary importance of the campaign with the importance of spreading the spirit of temperance: "We would a thousand times rather have one of the Temple wheels in the sacred hand of every little child that has taken the Loyal Temperance Legion pledge than to have a million dollars in the bank."<sup>60</sup> Temperate and participatory citizens held more value than the dollar. Willard redefined profit itself. The passing of Temple Wheels from "hand to hand with the greatest readiness" served as a way to yield a high collective return with low individual investment at the same time that it spread the temperance message much farther than if Willard had limited her call for donations to WCTU members alone.<sup>61</sup>

In "Wheels Within Wheels," Willard extended her spiritual philosophy of the wheel within a wheel to her entrepreneurial visions of future reform. For Willard, the "wheels" of the temperance movement and other nineteenth-century causes were inevitably linked to the "wheels" of future progressive reform movements. Within Willard's rhetoric of association is the assumption that reform movements both depend on and build upon previous movements. The fact that Willard saw, as part of her mission, the importance of establishing a strong foundation for future reform movements suggests that she understood her position as a figure of prominence in nineteenth-century America, a figure whose life and work could be used as a model. In an interview with Christian writer and journalist George T.B. Davis near the end of her life, Willard communicates a sense of the reformer as eternally active, striving to help those in need even in the afterlife. Willard looks to the future and sees a series of reform movements not unlike those of her day: "There will be other reforms and reformers when we are gone," reforms that are "as vital as any I have mentioned."<sup>62</sup> Willard's widespread employment of the concept of a wheel within a wheel served to place herself and the WCTU within the "world of tempted humanity [whose mission

was] to organize the motherhood . . . for the peace and purity, the protection and exaltation of its homes."<sup>63</sup> This conception was the basis for Willard's proposals for future WCTU reform measures.

Willard connected her vision for the future of temperance reform work to the wheels of the bicycle and WCTU recruitment in concrete ways. First, she identified a popular and novel substitute—the bicycle—for the harmful saloon that lured so many young men from their domestic sanctuaries. She urged her fellow white-ribboners to “proceed upon the principle that we are not organizing groups of men by themselves; we wish to let the home people go together to their amusements. The bicycle is proving that this can already be done.”<sup>64</sup>

Husbands and wives should cultivate similar “pleasures,” but the environment of the saloon is the “enemy of the home.”<sup>65</sup> Who better to expel the temptation of such an enemy than experienced white-ribboners? Willard called attention to “the constantly growing participation of women” in reform efforts that she deemed “municipal housekeeping.”<sup>66</sup> Willard defended women's right to ride the bicycle, couching her defense in the language of home protection and envisioning the bicycle as a substitute for the saloon. The logic of Willard's “Wheel Within Wheels” philosophy built on women's traditional roles in the home: “Women can ‘housekeep’ out of doors as well as within, and they will help to furnish many of the public comforts of life that men have overlooked.”<sup>67</sup> Indeed, one aspect of this public cleansing included injecting the WCTU's purifying message into nineteenth-century print culture.

Taking into consideration the extensive attention paid to Willard as an innovative reformer, it is unfortunate that the significance of her *A Wheel Within a Wheel* writings and campaign have been overlooked, and that no attention is paid to Willard as an exemplar of American women's social entrepreneurship.<sup>68</sup> Willard's contributions to suffrage and the women's rights movement has been examined by scholars, most recently by Alison M. Parker in *Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-Century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State* (2010). Parker describes Willard as a “pragmatic political strategist” who “provided an alternative rationale for woman suffrage and women's citizenship by focusing on the needs of civil society.”<sup>69</sup> Parker, Bordin, and others rightly have been critical of Willard for not moving far enough to include and support black WCTU members. This has contributed to a reading of Willard's ideas on individual liberty as comprehensively restrictive in nature. Around the concept of leisure and personal recreation specifically, Parker argues that “Willard's political theory explicitly addressed the necessity of passing laws to protect people by regulating and limiting their individual liberties.”<sup>70</sup> While it is true that Willard found saloons and intemperate recreation hazardous individually and politically, her sanctioning of the bicycle for women was tantamount to accepting women's public

activity, an expansion of the roles Willard saw fit for women in society. The notion of women utilizing a new technology to move more and travel further individually amplified women's social liberties. Because Willard envisioned women's activism as penetrating all aspects of life, especially the protection of the home and family, individual health and physical wellness, and above all civic participation were necessary to furthering the WCTU agenda. She wanted women to do everything they could to participate in bettering their world.

A significant aspect of her vision thus involved putting ideas into social action. Willard's *A Wheel Within a Wheel* book and related Union Signal print materials are evidence of how Willard put her ideas into action during her WCTU presidency. As Richard W. Leeman puts it in *"Do Everything Reform": The Oratory of Frances E. Willard* (1992), "For Willard, as for many late nineteenth century millennialists, the signs of a 'new day' were all around her" and she used them to her utmost advantage.<sup>71</sup> Willard's memoir, newspaper articles, and her presence in the Temperance Temple marketing campaign are evidence of her widespread use of bicycle (wheel) imagery for temperance reform and her ability to create new roles for women activists in the service of eradicating intemperance. Marketing the bicycle, peppering the *Union Signal* and other newspapers with *Wheel Within a Wheel* ads targeting women and their families, and other business strategies were signs of the WCTU's way forward.

This essay has emphasized Willard's *A Wheel Within a Wheel* and the Temperance Temple campaign in the context of social entrepreneurship, despite scholarly readings that relegate *A Wheel Within a Wheel* to the insignificance of a quaint personal account of one woman's "joys of cycling."<sup>72</sup> By 1897, Willard's passion for the bicycle was firmly connected to the WCTU mission. In her presidential address that year, Willard declared, "Every level headed bicyclist and every wheeling woman is the drinker's natural foe."<sup>73</sup> For Willard and other WCTU reformers, 1897 was a red-letter year. Quoting the *American Gazette*, Willard announced a decline in liquor consumption, attributing the temperance victory to "hard times and the bicycle."<sup>74</sup> For Willard, the bicycle provided a perfect lesson on the incompatibility of the progress of civilization and alcohol usage, for "no bicyclist would permit a man under the influence of liquor, let alone a drunkard, in his company."<sup>75</sup> Temperance was one of the nineteenth-century's great reform movements, and Frances Willard was its primary entrepreneur. Willard rose to her highest status during the 1890s with her support of the Temperance Temple office building, her multiple WCTU commissioned publications, and her ongoing efforts to connect temperance reform to other political and social justice projects, including supporting women's right to exercise and ride the bicycle. Willard was remembered for her enterprising, entrepreneurial spirit. As one person recalled her impact: "It is not often that rare talent given to one woman by which she can bring so much to pass . . . She knew no days of leisure; on the cars, out walking or driving, her

hand was always busy making notes, or her brain planning, thinking, devising some new method to help forward the welfare of all the various enterprises with which she was connected.”<sup>76</sup> Willard's writing impacted women's daily lives by defending their use of a vehicle that required no chaperone, and by educating women on the spiritual and familial significance of outdoor activities. Willard used the bicycle in the service of temperance, and turned an outdoor activity into a spiritual act.

## Notes

- 1 “The Bicycle as a Reformer,” *The Union Signal*, June 13, 1895.
- 2 Ruth Bordin, *Frances Willard: A Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 115.
- 3 Al Lyons, “GBS as Philanthropist and Social Entrepreneur: Bridging Nineteenth-Century Charity and Twenty-First-Century Social Innovation,” *Shaw* 36 no. 1 (2016): 111, DOI: [10.5325/shaw.36.1.0107](https://doi.org/10.5325/shaw.36.1.0107).
- 4 In her explanation of the founding of the WCTU, Willard discusses the 1877 decision to name the white ribbon as the official badge of the organization. After some debate, Willard dubbed the temperance cause the White Ribbon movement and members of the WCTU became known affectionately as “white ribboners.” See Frances E. Willard, *Do Everything: A Handbook for the World's White Ribboners* (Chicago: The Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1895), 21.
- 5 Frances E. Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel: How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle with Some Reflections by the Way* (1895; Bedford: Applewood Books, 1997), 14.
- 6 Sylvia D. Hoffert, “Female Self-Making in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America,” *Journal of Women's History* 20 no. 3 (2008): 36, DOI: [10.1353/jowh.0.0027](https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.0.0027).
- 7 Gillian Sullivan Mort, Jay Weerawardena, and Kashonia Carnegia, “Social Entrepreneurship: Towards Conceptualisation,” *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* 8 no. 1 (2003): 76, DOI: [10.1002/nvsm.202](https://doi.org/10.1002/nvsm.202).
- 8 Wendy Phillips, Hazel Lee, Abby Ghobadian, Nicholas O'Regan, and Peter James, “Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship: A Systematic Review,” *Group & Organization Management* 40, no. 3 (2015): 442, DOI: [10.1177/105960114560063](https://doi.org/10.1177/105960114560063).
- 9 Frances E. Willard, “Address at the Woman's National Council of the United States” (speech, Washington, D.C., February 22–25, 1891), *Library of Congress*, accessed September 10, 2021, <https://loc.gov/item/ca00003105/>.
- 10 Anna A. Gordon, *The Beautiful Life of Frances E. Willard: A Memorial Volume* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publishing Association, 1898), 344.
- 11 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 12.
- 12 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 11.
- 13 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 12–13.
- 14 Susan M. Yohn, “Crippled Capitalists: The Inscription of Economic Dependence and the Challenge of Female Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Feminist Economics* 12, nos. 1–2 (2006): 102, DOI: [10.1080/13545700500508270](https://doi.org/10.1080/13545700500508270).
- 15 Yohn, “Crippled Capitalists,” 102.



- 16 Roger L. Martin and Sally Osberg, "Social Entrepreneurship: The Case for Definition," *Stanford Social Innovation Review* 5, no. 2 (2007): 30.
- 17 Frances E. Willard, "Fourteenth Presidential Address (1893)," in *Let Something Good Be Said: Speeches and Writings of Frances E. Willard*, ed. Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford and Amy R. Slagell (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 180.
- 18 Frances E. Willard, *Glimpses of Fifty Years: The Autobiography of an American Woman* (Chicago: Woman's Temperance Publication Association, 1889), 503.
- 19 The Temperance Temple campaign was first introduced by Carse in the January 17, 1895, issue of the *Union Signal*. In it, Carse encouraged WCTU members "young and old" to "have a part in paying for the 'House Beautiful': "We have devised a plan whereby during 1895 . . . especially those who are too poor to give anything themselves, can by loving service become owners of a few bricks in the building." See Matilda B. Carse, "Temperance Temple Items," *Union Signal*, January 17, 1895.
- 20 Rachel Bohlmann, "Our House Beautiful: The Woman's Temple and the WCTU Effort to Establish Place in Downtown Chicago, 1887–1898," *Journal of Women's History* 11, no. 2 (1999): 111, DOI: [10.1353/jowh.1999.0001](https://doi.org/10.1353/jowh.1999.0001).
- 21 "Our House Beautiful," *The Union Signal*, July 4, 1895. When Willard called the Temperance Temple "Our House Beautiful," she purposively encouraged each WCTU member to become part of a plan in which "no one person is heavily encumbered" by the duty to seek donations to pay for this ambitious enterprise, but rather "all" members would be "better for giving a dime and inducing twelve others to do the same."
- 22 Willard, *A Wheel Within Wheel*, 9.
- 23 Matilda B. Carse, "Temperance Temple Items," *The Union Signal*, March 14, 1895, 5.
- 24 Carse, "Temperance Temple Items," March 14, 1895, 5.
- 25 Carse, "Temperance Temple Items," March 14, 1895, 5.
- 26 Frances Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," *The Union Signal*, February 28, 1895, 8.
- 27 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 28 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 29 Matilda B. Carse, "Temperance Temple Items," *The Union Signal*, June 4, 1895, 5.
- 30 See "Carse, Matilda Bradley (Nov. 19, 1835–June 3, 1917)," in *Notable American Women: 1607–1950* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), *Credo Reference*, March 24, 2010.
- 31 Frances E. Willard, "Fifteenth Presidential Address (1894)," in *Let Something Good Be Said: Speeches and Writings of Frances E. Willard*, ed. Carolyn DeSwarte Gifford and Amy R. Slagell (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 217.
- 32 Frances E. Willard, "February 25, 1896, Mobile Ala.," *Frances Willard Digital Journals*, <http://www.franceswillardjournals.org/browse-page.php?pageid=664027>.
- 33 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 74.
- 34 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 20.
- 35 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 21.
- 36 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 28–29.
- 37 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 72–73.
- 38 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 73.

- 39 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 75.
- 40 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 39.
- 41 For a critique of riding romance narratives, see Sarah Wintle, "Horses, Bikes and Automobiles: New Woman on the Move," in *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact*, ed. Angelique Richardson and Chris Willis (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 66–78.
- 42 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 40.
- 43 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 38.
- 44 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 38.
- 45 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 38–39.
- 46 Ellen Gruber Garvey, "Reframing the Bicycle: Advertising-Supported Magazines and Scorching Women," *American Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (1995): 95, DOI: [10.2307/2713325](https://doi.org/10.2307/2713325).
- 47 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 39.
- 48 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 67–68.
- 49 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 17.
- 50 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 27.
- 51 Willard, *A Wheel Within a Wheel*, 75.
- 52 Edith Mayo, "Do Everything': The Life and Work of Frances Willard," in *How I Learned to Ride the Bicycle: Reflections of an Influential 19<sup>th</sup> Century Woman*, ed. Carol O'Hare (Sunnyvale: Fair Oaks Publishing Company, 1991), 12.
- 53 Frances Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 54 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 55 Willard, *Do Everything*, 20.
- 56 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 57 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 58 In 1890, the WCTU began construction on a skyscraper in downtown Chicago that would be known officially as the Woman's Temple (although the *Union Signal* referred to it both as the Temperance Temple and Willard Hall). Matilda Bradley Carse, founder and president of the local Chicago WCTU, ran the construction project and oversaw the financial plan, including her vision of how the revenue expected from the Temple tenants could help fund WCTU projects, keeping the WCTU self-sufficient. Formerly, the WCTU rented from the WMCA, which terminated its agreement in 1883. See Bohlmann, "Our House Beautiful," 110–16, 128n2.
- 59 Matilda B. Carse, "Temperance Temple Items," *Union Signal*, November 28, 1895, 5.
- 60 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 61 Willard, "Wheels Within Wheels," 8.
- 62 George T.B. Davis, "The Greatest American Woman," *Our Day*, no. 18 (1898): 107–116, *Temperance and Prohibition*, March 3, 2010, <https://prohibition.osu.edu/willard/last-interview>.
- 63 Frances Willard, "Extract from Miss Willard's Address at the Twentieth Annual Meeting of the B.W.T.W., June 1, 1896," *Union Signal*, June 11, 1896, 9.
- 64 Willard, "President's Address, 1897," 101.
- 65 Willard, "President's Address, 1897," 102.

- 66 Willard, “President’s Address, 1897,” 102.
- 67 Willard, “President’s Address, 1897,” 102.
- 68 See Ruth Bordin, *Woman and Temperance: The Quest for Power and Liberty, 1873–1900* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1981), for a study of Willard’s involvement in the WCTU and temperance reform; see Gruber Garvey, “Reframing the Bicycle,” and Lisa S. Strange, “The Bicycle, Women’s Rights, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton,” *Women’s Studies* 31, no. 5 (2002): 609–626, DOI: [10.1080/00497870214048](https://doi.org/10.1080/00497870214048), for examinations of the bicycle as a tool for reform. Both studies mention Willard’s memoir and use of the bicycle for temperance reform merely in passing.
- 69 Alison M. Parker, *Articulating Rights: Nineteenth-Century American Women on Race, Reform, and the State* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 176.
- 70 Parker, *Articulating Rights*, 152.
- 71 Richard W. Leeman, “Do Everything Reform”: *The Oratory of Frances E. Willard* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 81.
- 72 See Strange, “The Bicycle.” Strange situates Willard’s book as an insignificant tangent to the history of the bicycle’s liberating power arguing that Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s vision of the bicycle as a means for reform plays a much more central role in that history.
- 73 Willard, “President’s Address, 1897,” 83.
- 74 Willard, “President’s Address, 1897,” 82.
- 75 Willard, “President’s Address, 1897,” 82.
- 76 Gordon, *The Beautiful Life*, 338.

## About the Authors

Kelly Payne is an Assistant Dean of William Smith College at Hobart and William Smith Colleges (Geneva, NY). She holds a Ph.D. in English Literature and Nineteenth-Century Studies from the University of Nebraska Lincoln. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century U.S. literature, social reform, political literature, and the transatlantic network connecting abolitionist writers. She also works on topics related to university studies and contemporary theory. Her most recent projects include “Advising for Social Justice: The Legacy and Lessons of bell hooks in Contemporary Academic Advising” (NACADA 2023) and “Academic Advising and the Lessons of Civil Rights and Social Justice Campus Movements” (*Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 2022).

**Contact:** Kelly Payne; Hobart and William Smith Colleges; [payne@hws.edu](mailto:payne@hws.edu).

Janel Simons is an Assistant Professor of Practice and Humanities Librarian at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). She holds a Ph.D. in U.S. Literature and Nineteenth-Century Studies from UNL. Her research focuses on nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture. She also works on topics related to pedagogy and teaching in academic libraries. Recent projects include “Reading Like a Radical: Frances Willard’s Rochester Roots and an Upbringing in Reform” (NCSA 2022) and “‘It might be us speaking instead of him:’ Individuality, Collaboration and the Networked Forces Contributing to ‘Whitman’” (*Walt Whitman Quarterly Review*, 2015).

**Contact:** Janel Simons; University of Nebraska-Lincoln; [janel.simons@unl.edu](mailto:janel.simons@unl.edu).