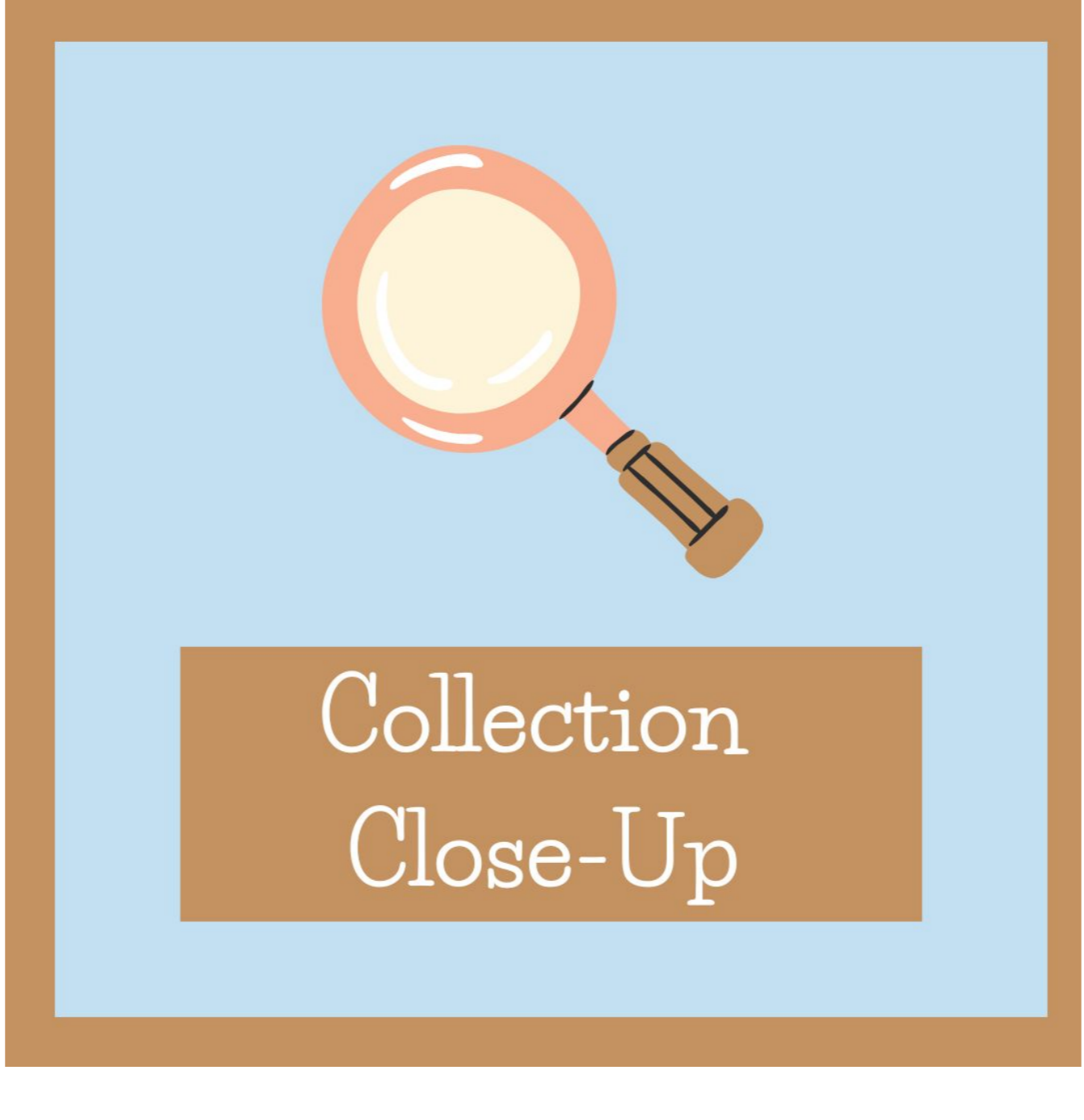




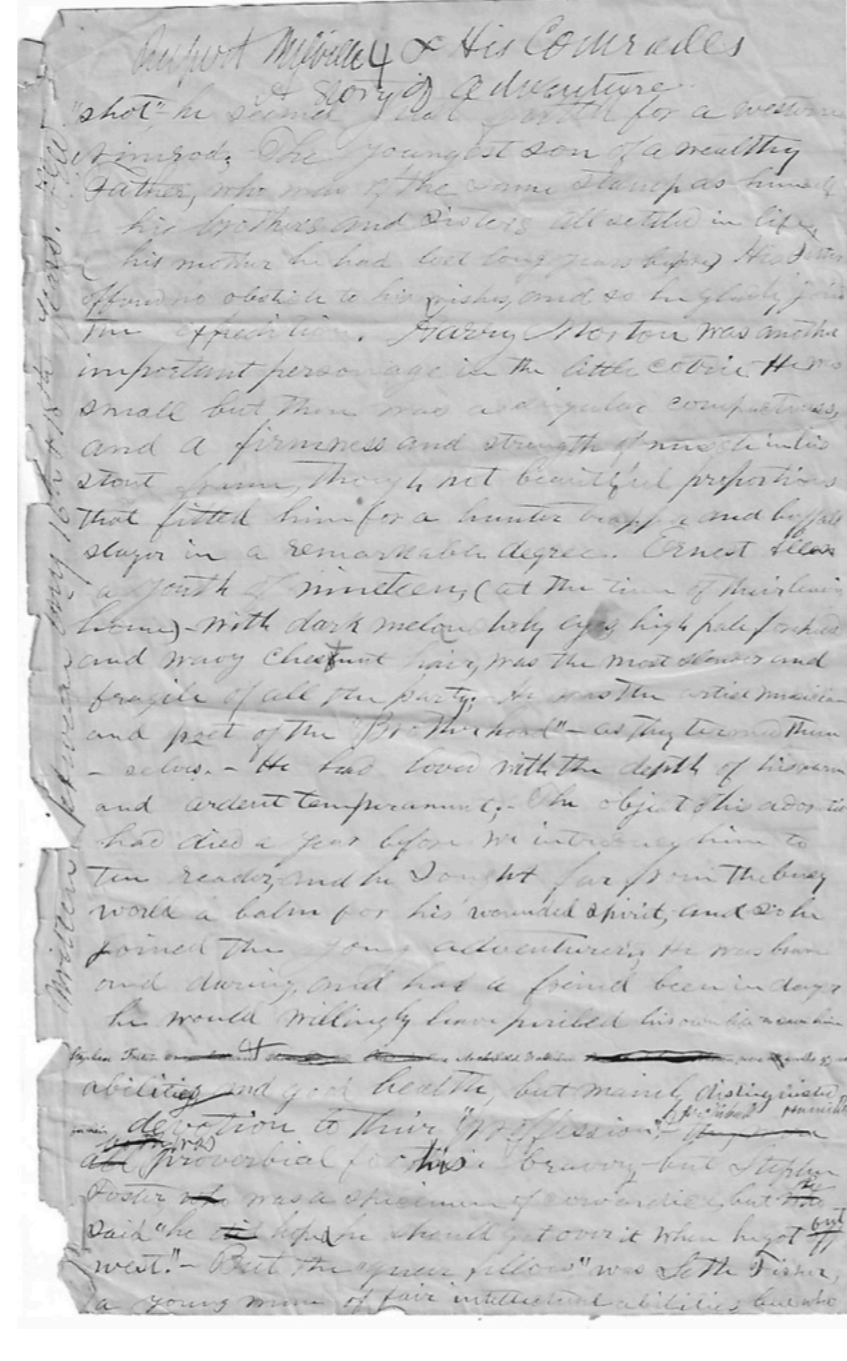
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Collection Close-Up: Frances Willard's Childhood Writing



Don't miss our first Collection Close-Up on Sunday, November 20 at 4pm Central Time! This free virtual 30-minute program will explore the story behind Frances Willard's first major writing endeavor – Rupert Melville and His Comrades: A Story of Adventure. Participants of all ages are encouraged to attend and join in the Q&A following the presentation.

Inspired by story books set on the Western prairies, as a young teen Willard worked on her novel every day and "read each chapter aloud" to her friends and family "as fast as it was written." The enjoyment Willard derived from narrating Rupert's adventures convinced her that "write I could and should and would." The Willard House's Archives houses the 165-page unfinished manuscript.



The first handwritten page of Rupert Melville.

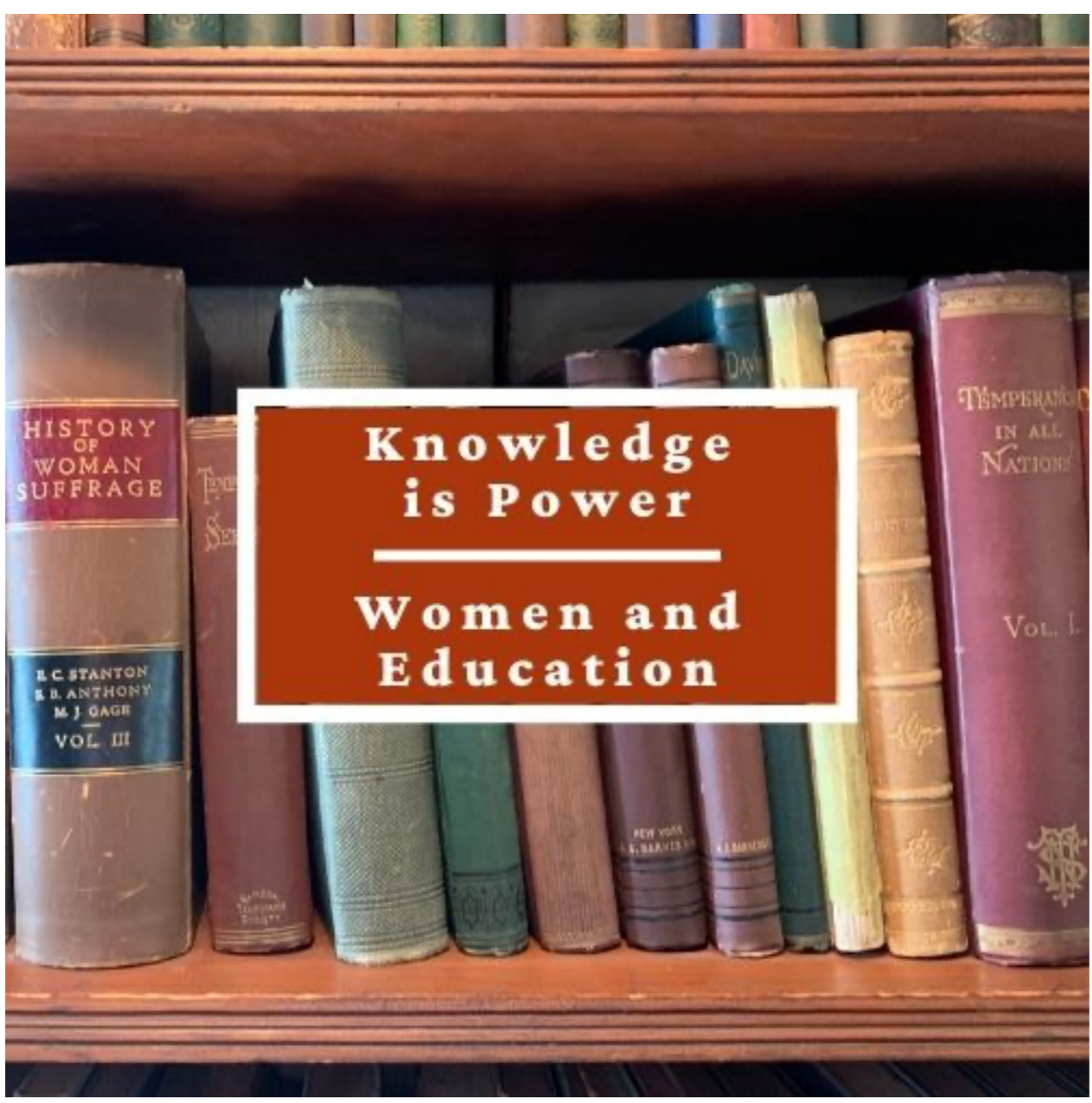
RSVP here. A Zoom link will be sent shortly before the event to everyone who registers.

This Collection Close-Up is part of our Knowledge is Power: Women and Education program series. In recognition of the 150th anniversary of Frances Willard's role as Dean of Women at Northwestern University (1873-1874), we are exploring the history – and prehistory – of women's higher education in Evanston and the United States. You can learn more about Willard's early growth as a writer on our blog.

Our free public programs cannot happen without your support. We hope you will consider making a donation here. Thank you!

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Opening the Door to Knowledge



For Frances Willard, as for other women of her time, education was a fundamental need, but access was limited. As doors to schoolhouses and colleges slowly began to open, women's lives changed significantly and their options multiplied. This enabled them to take on broader and more influential public roles in their communities and country. But it all started with education – and thus we are returning to the story of women and education to ask questions and learn more.

In our newest blogpost, "Opening the Door to Knowledge: Frances Willard's College Days," Fiona Maxwell (Willard House Director of Museum Operations and Communications, University of Chicago History PhD candidate) details Willard's formative experiences as a student at the Northwestern Female College. During her college years, Willard joined a community of women faculty and students who, like her, possessed "literary ambition." She rehearsed skills in public speaking, writing, and leadership that she would eventually use to mentor other women and advocate for reform on the world stage.



Students on the lawn of the Northwestern Female College.

You can catch up on our earlier Knowledge is Power installments here:

- Museum Director Lori Osborne set the stage in a blogpost situating Evanston's educational experiments in historical context and detailing the establishment of the Northwestern Female College.
Fiona Maxwell began Willard's side of the story with a blogpost tracing how, as a young girl, she connected writing and speaking to social reform.

Although we will be investigating and sharing our site's connection to women's education in special detail this year, it has always been a key theme in our storytelling. Check out our existing digital resources below, and stay tuned for more content and programs!

- Frances Willard's Digital Journals: This website provides access to searchable transcriptions of Frances Willard's journals, which contain entries pertaining to her educational experiences starting at the age of 16.
Frances Willard Biographical Timeline: This timeline uses images and documents to illustrate stages in Willard's life, including her time as a student, schoolteacher, and higher education leader.
Frances Willard and Women's Oratory: Focusing on Willard's contributions to oratory, this blogpost explores the ways in which she served as a role model for Northwestern students and other women who aspired to make their voices heard in public.
Mary Thompson Hill Willard: This blogpost highlights the ways in which Mary Willard, Frances Willard's mother, drew on her years of experience working as a schoolteacher to mentor and inspire her daughter.

Request a Group Tour!



Thank you to everyone who came on a tour of the Frances Willard House Museum this spring, summer, and fall! Our regular tour schedule will resume in March for Women's History Month. Until then, special group tours are available upon request by emailing info@franceswillardhouse.org or calling (847) 328-7500.

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