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Home for the Friendless, Williamsport, Pa.



A History of the  
Home for the Friendless,  
Williamsport, Pennsylvania

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## Foreword

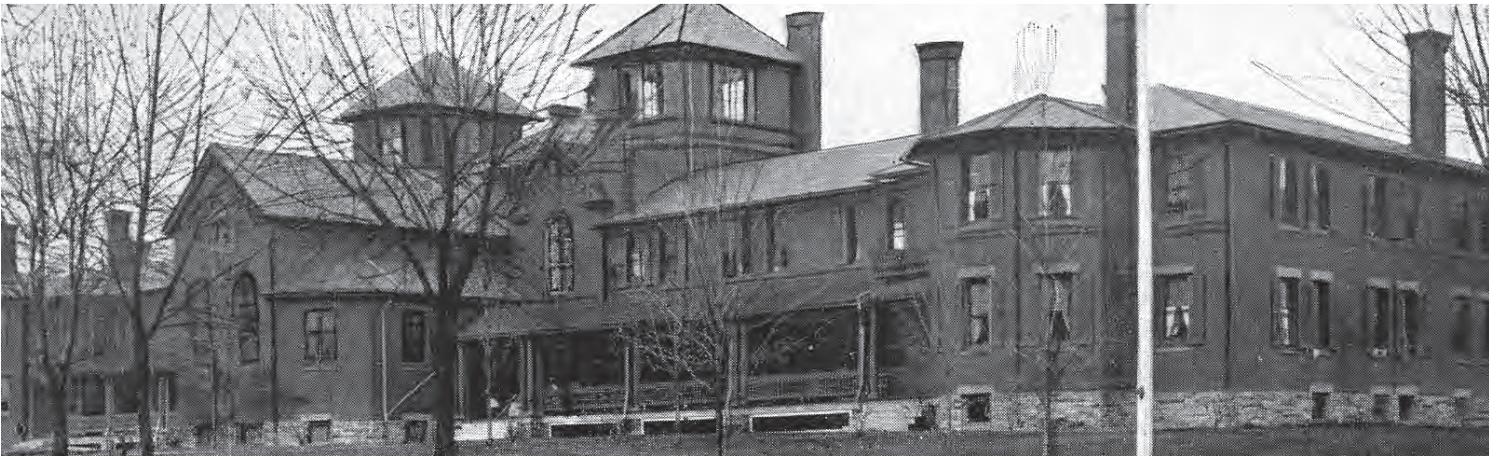
Welcome to the forty-ninth volume of the Journal of the Lycoming County Historical Society. This year, the Journal explores the beginnings and maturation of the Home for the Friendless in Williamsport. Begun in 1872 by a dedicated corps of Christian women, the Home provided a haven for women and children who needed the comfort of a homelike setting. And over the ensuing decades, the Home expanded to accommodate the elderly, the orphaned, and those that needed temporary shelter. As it evolved into the Williamsport Home, the organization continues to meet the needs of the community, characterizing themselves as “truly a neighborhood of people caring for people.”

During 2012, the transfer of the original records of the Home for the Friendless to LCHS was effected. This was facilitated with the gracious consent of Mr. Don Pote, Executive Director, and the Board of Managers of the Williamsport Home. The Minutes Books from 1878 forward, Annual Reports, newspaper clippings and photographs reveal the stalwart character of the organization and the women who led the way, substantially altering and adding to the richness of so many lives. The materials are now housed in archival-quality folders and boxes in our Archives, protected by temperature and humidity controls. To further preserve the collection, many of the items were digitized under the auspices of the Women’s History Project, spearheaded by Lycoming College. Janet Hurlbert and Mary Sieminski were instrumental in alerting us to this invaluable collection.

Lycoming County is privileged to have the scholarship of Dr. John F. Piper, Jr. and Dr. Amy Golahny within the teaching corps of Lycoming College. Their knowledge of local history, their dynamic research abilities, and their willingness to share their wisdom with us is commendable.

I sincerely hope you will read these latest writings, contributing to an understanding of the history of a place you call home.

*Gary W. Parks, Editor*



# THE HOME FOR THE FRIENDLESS

A Ministry by Christian Women in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, 1872-1939

by Dr. John F. Piper, Jr.

## Initial Decisions

The Home for the Friendless was a ministry founded by a group of Christian women in Williamsport, Pennsylvania in 1872. The original name of the ministry was the Woman's Christian Association, not related in any way to the Young Women's Christian Association. The women changed the name of their Association to the Home for the Friendless in 1876. Over the years there were occasional objections to the name on the grounds that it sounded unfriendly, if not heartless. Efforts to change it were not successful until 1939 when the Managers of the Home for the Friendless finally petitioned the Lycoming County Court to change the name to The Williamsport Home. The leaders of that home, which is currently located on Ravine Road in Loyalsock Township on the northern boundary of Williamsport, modified the mission, currently better defined as a program, but retained a significant part of the vision of the founders.

The primary inspiration for the Woman's Christian Association came from women who were active in several Protestant churches in Williamsport. The city was in the midst of a lumber boom, one of the greatest in the history of the nation, and was growing rapidly. A group of Christian women had been considering "for some time" the possibility of helping meet the physical and spiritual needs of young women who were moving to town from nearby rural communities in search of work.<sup>1</sup> They had not yet decided on a way to accomplish this when some of them attended a meeting at Pine Street Methodist Church on November 18, 1872, at the invitation of H. Howard Otto, one of the leaders of the recently organized Young Men's Christian Association. He had arranged for John Wanamaker, founder of John Wanamaker and Sons department store in Philadelphia, who was in town for a meeting of the YMCA, to speak to them. One of the women remembered that Wanamaker had made a "most touching appeal."<sup>2</sup>

The women's readiness to act combined with Wanamaker's appeal stimulated them to create the Association. They set about writing a Constitution, which was necessary to obtain

a Charter of Incorporation from the County, and By-Laws. The legal process took about a year and was completed on November 26, 1873, with the able assistance of "the legal gentleman who has served us so many times without charge."<sup>3</sup> He was most certainly attorney James M. Wood who signed his name to the legal document as the Solicitor for the Petitioner. His wife Lou was a charter member of the Association, and he was a prominent member of the Williamsport community having served as its first mayor in 1866.

The text of Wanamaker's speech has not been found but the substance of it can be inferred from the mission the women adopted for their Association. Its "Object" as defined in its Constitution, was to provide ways "of rendering aid, temporary, moral and religious, especially to young women, who are dependent on their own exertions for support."<sup>4</sup> Specifically, the members of the Board of Managers, "assisted by the members of the Association," were:

to seek out women, taking up their residence in Williamsport, and endeavor to bring them under moral and religious influence – by aiding them in the selection of suitable boarding houses and employment, by introducing them to the members and privileges of this Association. Encouraging their attendance at some place of worship and by every means in their power, surrounding them with Christian associates.<sup>5</sup>

The Association retained throughout its history its primary motivation, the gender of its leaders, and its organizational structure. The motivation was the Christian faith's imperative to help those in need. In their *First Annual Report*, published in 1874, the key leaders of the group identified the exact nature of their Christian inspiration.

We remember, with gratitude to Him whose love has dwelt in our hearts, the delightful fact that harmony and peace have been our

constant companions during the whole year. As an Association we have been educated up to a higher standard of faith, benevolence, charity and zeal. May God continue to teach us how to work in His vineyard. For all the good that has been accomplished, we thank Him who has established us, and opened the hearts of those who have come to our aid. The cause is the Lord's, and our faith abides that He will continue to direct our steps, we acknowledge Him in all our ways.<sup>6</sup>

Women were invited to membership if they were members of a Protestant church and paid dues of one dollar a year. They could become life members for a single payment of \$20.<sup>7</sup>

The ministry was founded by women and run by them. Changes in leadership came after 1939, but the Board of the Williamsport Home continues to be all female. Women were the leaders, raised funds for the work, made changes when new needs arose, and managed all the affairs of the ministry. They were Christians but not feminists, at least not as a group, in either the 19<sup>th</sup> century right to vote meaning of the term or the 20<sup>th</sup> century right to full equality translation of it. Occasionally some note in a report indicates that they thought they did some things better than men, as when the Secretary of the Annual Meeting in 1878 noted that the meeting moved to the election of officers, "without any of the unnecessary delay that so often occurs with the other sex."<sup>8</sup> However, such comments were the exception and not the rule. There were no men on the list of 134 founding members. That said, the Victorian style of identifying women in public affairs by the initials of their husbands' names meant that the women were almost always associated in the public eye with them and only rarely referred to by their given names. The first names in the various surviving documents, with one or two exceptions, are those of the single women, who were about one-fifth of the initial membership.<sup>9</sup>

The only men directly associated with the ministry throughout its history were those who provided various professional services, including attorneys, physicians, and clergy, representing professions which were or were almost exclusively male, and those who served with women on the building committees, and those on the Advisory Board. That Board consisted entirely of men. It may have been formed earlier than 1878, but the Minutes of the Annual Meeting that year identified the advisors as the Hon. James Gamble, the Hon. B. S. Bentley, Henry C. Parsons, Esq., Josiah Emery, Esq., and J. C. Hill, Esq.<sup>10</sup> These were very prominent citizens. Bentley had been President Judge of Lycoming County, and Gamble had succeeded him. Parsons was a distinguished veteran of the Civil War and an attorney, and the other two attorneys were highly visible in community activities. Shortly after the women organized the Board they invited Peter Herdic, the

leading lumberman of the region, to join it. Records suggest that the professionals typically donated their time and the Board members were always volunteers. The women hired men to do the janitorial and repair work on their buildings, and to keep the grounds in good condition.

The women organized their Association around an annual meeting. They elected a group of officers and standing committees. The primary action item at the annual meetings was the election of officers. The President, Treasurer, and Corresponding Secretary were the key officers and their reports were the main ones at the annual meetings. The founding members created in addition to these groups a Board of Managers, which included members chosen from Protestant churches. The first officers were: President, Adelia Swartz (Mrs. Rev. Joel); Vice Presidents, M. Alcesta Reiley (Mrs. Rev. J. McKendree) and Caroline Clapp (Mrs. T. L.); Recording Secretary, Miss Lizzie Updegraff; Corresponding Secretary, Frances Dayton (Mrs. John E.); Treasurer, Elizabeth Hepburn (Mrs. William); and Assistant Treasurer, Sarah McDowell (Mrs. Lewis).<sup>11</sup> Before the first year was over both vice presidents had left the city and were replaced by Cordelia Ayres (Mrs. J. J.) and Encie Herdic (Mrs. Peter). Mary Miller (Mrs. H. C.) took Lizzie Updegraff's place and Moriah Noble (Mrs. S. J.) stepped in for Frances Dayton. After these initial changes the leadership remained quite stable, with many officers serving for twenty or more years, sometimes in different roles, establishing a pattern which continued until 1939. When Adelia Swartz left the Association in 1875 to follow her Lutheran pastor husband to a new appointment in Harrisburg, Encie Herdic moved up from Vice President and remained President until 1881. On that occasion Elizabeth Hepburn moved from Treasurer to President. When she resigned because of poor health in 1905, Anne Perley (Mrs. Allen) succeeded her and was the leader of the Home until she died in 1934. Bessie Clapp (Mrs. H. Forest), who was serving as a vice president, took her place. There is no evidence of a contested election in the history of the Home.

The operation of the ministry was in the hands of the officers and the chairs of the standing committees, who constituted an executive committee which made the day to day decisions of the Association. The seven standing committees the first year included: Ways and Means; Home Wants; Employment; Social and Educational; Committee to Visit the Jail; Committee on Mission Work; and the Industrial School. Some of the committee members were also officers; Corresponding Secretary Noble was on the Committee to Visit the Jail; and others were Managers; Mrs. William Lyon of the Third Presbyterian Church was on Ways and Means. However, most committee members came from the general membership, which meant that a large number of the members had significant opportunities for leadership.<sup>12</sup> The Association generated widespread excitement about its ministry and drew in many volunteers, a substantial number of them from the leading families of Williamsport.

The members of the original Board of Managers were listed in the *First Annual Report* by their Protestant denominations and specific local churches. The eight denominations were: Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, Congregational, Episcopal, Lutheran, Reformed, and Evangelical. The seventeen local churches included four Methodist ones: Pine Street, Mulberry Street, Third Street, and Price Chapel; three Presbyterian ones: First, Second, and Third; two Episcopal ones: Christ and Trinity; two Baptist ones: First and Third Street; two Evangelical ones: Bennett Street and the German Church; two Lutheran ones: Fourth Street and Market Street; the Congregational Church; and the Reformed Church. The churches had from one to three members on the Board. For example, Mrs. George Sigafos, Miss Watson, and Mrs. George Barber were from Price Chapel; Encie Herdic and Mrs. B. S. Bentley Jr. were from Trinity Episcopal; and Mrs. Rev. J. Burrows, Mrs. M. H. Taylor, and Mrs. T. L. Case were from Third Presbyterian.<sup>13</sup> The list suggests that the Managers were representatives of their churches, but no evidence has surfaced that the churches or their women's groups elected them to their positions. They appear to have been volunteers, likely self-selected, brought together by their passion for the ministry. They participated in various aspects of the ministry, carried news of the programs back to their churches, and also solicited funds. This was a Christian social ministry, which in the 21<sup>st</sup> century would be described as ecumenical.

## The First Ministry – 1873-1876

The Association began its ministry in the winter of 1873, likely February. The three officers who wrote the *First Annual Report* said that the members of the Association began their work “with willing hearts, hardly knowing the nature or extent of the work before us...” Opportunities for “usefulness,” by which they meant ministry, were more abundant than they had anticipated. The physical center of their work from the outset was a building. It was part of the original plan to have a house.<sup>14</sup> The *Minutes* contain nothing to suggest that the women ever considered carrying out their ministry from one of the churches, likely because it would have been difficult to have housed residents in them.

The officers decided to begin the ministry in a rented house on Pine Street. The building was near the center of town but was small and the officers decided in just two months to move. The Association rented a larger house at 136 East Third Street. The location was several blocks east of Market Square in the middle of industries, the biggest of which was the Williamsport Woolen Mill, which was located across the street. The officers were committed to providing a safe and caring home for those they sought to help. They were volunteers, so they needed someone to live in and run their house. They hired a matron. She did not decide the admission of residents, which was in the hands of a standing committee. She was not expected to raise

money. The officers controlled all the finances of the Home. But aside from these two things, she ran the house. Mrs. Frank Ryan was the Matron at the Pine Street location. Miss Mary Adams began as the Matron with the opening of the house on East Third Street and remained two years. Miss Odell was the third Matron and was involved in the transition to the next house. Miss Sarah Adams was an assistant matron during two of the early years. She was a charter member and may well have volunteered her time. The Home Wants Committee, under the direction of Elizabeth Hepburn, Cordelia Ayres, and Sarah Bevan (Mrs. Joseph) directed this ministry. The work at the home involved welcoming girls who had found jobs or were in search of them, providing them counsel about their lives, including their spiritual ones, giving them a temporary place to stay, and often helping them find a good permanent place to live.

The Association established the Industrial School, led by Superintendent Miss Clara Taylor, assisted by Florence Herdic. The school taught children sewing “to win their affection and confidence so that we may improve their manners and impress their hearts with the love of Jesus.” The Committee on Mission had eight sections, one for each ward of the city, with a volunteer in charge of the work in each ward. Their task was to survey their areas and get a fuller view of the physical and moral needs of the people who lived there.

The leaders acknowledged that they had some anxious moments in the early days of their ministry, not unusual they thought for any new endeavor. They faced some new things to think about and ways of working not familiar to them, some prejudices, and the need to provide adequate financing.<sup>15</sup> The new things were important to the evolution of the ministry. The first of these was the needs of children in the community. Young children had not been part of the original plan, but the women who were involved in the Industrial School came in contact with many of them, as doubtless did those who were surveying the wards. The women found homeless children, true orphans, and many others who came from families in turmoil. A major social problem in the rapidly growing town occurred when a parent died (the mother in childbirth or from disease, the father in an industrial accident) and the family had no relatives in the area. The women discovered many children who needed someone to care for them, which in some cases involved a safe place to live, and so they provided it, “inasmuch as we have in our city no asylum for children who are destitute of home comforts.”<sup>16</sup>

The second new thing to consider was a ministry to those younger women who led immoral lives. The authors of the *First Annual Report* approached this topic very obliquely, introducing it with the following sentence: “This Association has extended counsel and sympathy to those of whom the wise man hath said: ‘Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold on hell.’”<sup>17</sup> Victorian Age readers, unlike modern ones, might have

recognized this as a quote from Proverbs in the King James Version of the Bible. But not even all those readers might have understood that the wise man was speaking of those who led sexually immoral lives. There is absolutely no indication that ministry to these women was part of the original plan for the Association.

To the credit of the leaders of the Association they decided the ministry included these persons. The women who worked with the “erring ones” discovered that some of them did not want help. However, they found nine who were willing to change their lives, despite the great difficulties associated with doing so. They offered some of these women places in the house, where they could counsel and protect them, but for others that was not a practical solution. The greatest difficulty they had was securing homes for these women in Christian families. A few of the women simply needed to be protected, to be placed in a refuge. That was the situation the officers faced with an orphan girl who had fallen into “bad hands” and had been “treading in this terrible path for several years.” The women found a Christian home, but quickly realized that they needed to keep the location secret because those who had been in charge of the girl, the modern language would be pimps, were determined to get her back. President Swartz took the lead in hiding and protecting her. She reported that those who wanted the woman back “visited her many times, trying by stratagem and threats to ascertain where they could find her.” Although Swartz refused to divulge the location, they managed to find her and stole her from the refuge. The Association rescued her and helped her reform her life, so that by the time the *First Annual Report* was written she was “living an honest and industrious life.” The story of this incident reads like a novella, with very prominent and proper women facing off very evil men. The Association judged itself to be successful helping reform six of the nine women, and concluded that was “ample reward for all the anxiety and labor we have bestowed upon this class.”<sup>18</sup>

Why did the women of the Association step into this dark world, leading them into contact with persons from a social class that rarely if ever intruded into their daily lives, and into life styles they found repugnant? They did so, they claimed, from their religious conviction. It was Christian work, “for our Divine Master recognized and forgave sinners in His day, and we know His love is unchangeable.” They had organized their Association “with a determination to follow wherever we believed the Lord was leading, and in so doing we have found some work from which we would naturally shrink,” but when the Lord opened the need to them, they tried to meet it. Moreover, they were not satisfied with rescuing individuals. They were determined to “hinder this terrible vice,” and “resolved to pursue our efforts until every den of iniquity in our city is banished.” In their second year they reported that they helped close two of the “dens” and had been able to find employment for some of the women, and had taken charge of others who were “truly homeless, friendless, and

discouraged.” They concluded that they intended to continue to “give strength to the weary, aid to the feeble, instruction to the ignorant, and a refuge to the homeless without charge....”<sup>19</sup> This was the first use of the term “friendless” in the Association documents.

The ministry received wide public support and also some opposition, which the women described as “prejudices,” and treated as “hindrances” to be overcome. One criticism was that the women had opened a “poor house” for those in need of charity. Why anyone would be against opening a house for the poor remains unclear, but the women chose to respond to the claim as a criticism of their work and declared that their intent was to provide “a Christian home for the respectable and industrious, who were willing and able to pay for accommodations.” Another criticism was that it was a “reformatory,” a charge likely stemming from their ministry to young women with questionable reputations, to which the women responded that they intended it to be “a home for the virtuous and good.” The women believed that those who objected simply misunderstood their ministry.<sup>20</sup> The prejudices appear to have been resolved quickly, or the critics chose to remain silent.

Financing the ministry was an immediate and continuing concern. The women began their work in what became a year of financial crisis, named the Panic of 1873. However, they had a strong religious faith that God would provide, and were also convinced that their ministry was “well calculated to excite an interest in every philanthropic breast.” At the end of the first year they announced that the “Lord has been better to us than our expectations.” Their money seemed at the outset to be “like a widow’s cruse of oil and measure of meal, though we felt the necessity of a strict economy in its use, it has not failed.”<sup>21</sup> Despite the national financial condition, perhaps because of their close attention to their money, but more likely because many of them came from prosperous families, their Treasurer’s first annual report showed a balance of over \$250. Donations amounted to \$115, funds received at the opening of their Third Street house came to \$185, and dues raised \$141. They sponsored an oyster supper at the home of Mrs. Jane Fulmer in November, 1873, which netted \$85. Boarders at the home paid \$165. The total received from these sources and from several minor donations totaled \$700, and expenses, most of which were for rent and salaries, were \$441. The favorable financial situation for operating income and expenses at the end of the first year established a pattern of similar positive reports that lasted for many years.<sup>22</sup>

Economic conditions in Williamsport were so difficult that the Association served soup at the house three times a week in the winter of 1873-74, becoming what would be called a soup kitchen today. In December, 1873, the Association requested that City Council come to the aid of the poor. The Mayor, Seth Starkweather, whose wife Cornelia was a member of

the Association, responded that the Council had no funds for such purpose, but offered his sympathy and “all the assistance in his power”. The following February the Mayor sent the Association \$100, as a contribution from several individual members of the Council.<sup>23</sup>

By the beginning of its second year, the ministry was in full swing providing aid to young women seeking work in the city and working with children and the erring young women. During this time the officers began to deal with two large challenges. The first was how to provide adequate space for their work, which was growing and needed more room. The second was how to define their ministry, since it was evolving in directions not envisioned by them.

Not long after the Association opened the Third Street house, the leaders concluded it was too far from the center of town, too inconveniently located for most of those they hoped to serve.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, as the ministry attracted more and more people, the building became too small. Members discovered that there was not enough space to do their counseling at the house and had begun to visit young women and children where they lived, which meant that the women providing this service were doing considerable traveling around the city. It is not clear when the first children became part of the ministry, or whether the need of the orphans among them for a home was another reason that prompted the decision to seek more space. There was also concern that the Association needed to own its building. The advantages of that would be flexibility in using the space and tax benefits as a benevolent institution.

Interest in a new house took a major step forward in the summer of 1874 when Peter Herdic donated a lot on the corner of Campbell Street and Erie Avenue (currently Memorial Avenue), worth an estimated \$5,000. It was almost as far west of the center of the city as the Third Street location was east, but it was in a less industrial area where the population was growing.<sup>25</sup> Herdic was the Andrew Carnegie of the lumber industry at the time, and his wife Encie had just become a vice president of the Association. Herdic was building the west end of the city. He had completed the Herdic House in 1865, a truly grand four story Victorian hotel just south of the Pennsylvania Railroad tracks. In 1871 he had donated land for the construction of an Episcopal church, which would become Trinity Church, just across the street to the west of his hotel. The land he donated to the Association occupied the block of Campbell Street just north of the Pennsylvania Railroad, on the east side of the street. Eber Culver, a local architect who had designed the Herdic House and was the supervising architect for the Trinity Church project, received the contract to design the house.

The plans for a new house moved along at a steady pace, indicating widespread support for the ministry. On November 29, 1874 many of the Protestant churches held a union

meeting at the Academy of Music. The large downtown hall seated more than 1,000 and filled quickly, creating a crowd that a newspaper reporter said surely pleased “the ladies who have inaugurated this movement.”<sup>26</sup> Col. James Corcoran chaired the meeting, and several clergy spoke. The Rev. J. A. Cruzan emphasized the need to organize charity in order to make it more effective. Two of the clergy spoke directly to the aims of the Association. One of them, the Rev. Joel Swartz, provided the most detail, which was probably expected since he was the husband of the Association President. The reporter titled his article, “Home For The Friendless,” and concluded it noting that the meeting showed progress in helping the Association succeed in its “noble efforts to establish a home for the friendless.”<sup>27</sup> This was an early public usage of the term “friendless,” and indicates that the leaders of the Association, less than two years into their ministry, called it the Home for the Friendless. The other very important consequence of the meeting was that the event raised about \$5,000, including \$1,000 from Peter Herdic.

The Association, some serious funds in hand and strong supporters at its side, proceeded in February, 1875, to select a building committee. They chose Mary Ransom (Mrs. G. S.), Jerusha McLane (Mrs. J.), Sarah McDowell, and Elizabeth Colton (Mrs. Henry) from their membership and the following men: Eber Culver, Amos Wagner, J. C. Hill, and the Rev. D. S. Monroe. Culver and Wagner were architects, Hill was a leader of the Sunday School movement in the city, and Monroe was Pastor of Pine Street Methodist Church. The officers of the Association directed the committee to get the best proposals for the building, and when they received the committee report they accepted it and chose Jacob Moore and Brother to erect the building. Meanwhile, the members worked to raise more funds, their efforts described as “unremitting” and the donors “generous.”<sup>28</sup> It was during this time that Encie Herdic succeeded Amelia Swartz as President.

It was a hot summer day on June 23, 1875. There was little shelter and few places to sit at the building site where a large crowd gathered to lay the Cornerstone of the new building, by this time commonly known as the Home of the Friendless. Rev. Monroe called those assembled to order and nominated Judge Gamble to be the presiding officer. The Judge presented the Rev. Irvin H. Torrence of Philadelphia who offered prayer. The Honorable William H. Armstrong, an attorney who had just served a term in the House of Representatives, spoke in support of the Association’s ministry and encouraged those present to give liberally. Advisory Board member Parsons was one of the speakers. Judge Gamble introduced Andrew Curtin, the Governor of Pennsylvania during the Civil War, who gave the major address. He used his time to praise the founders of the Association for their ministry. He said that having experienced “the ruder shocks of the world,” he was delighted to be present with the ladies on this occasion, and endorse their honorable mission “to take care of the unfortunate and

clothe the naked ...” Directing his attention to the men he told them that “The women are after you and will track you to your mansions. You may as well come down first as last with your subscriptions.”

The former Governor, accompanied by the other speakers and the Association officers, proceeded to the northeast corner of the building as the Repasz Band played. It was already famous for having performed at Appomattox when the South surrendered. The Cornerstone, a block of sandstone from Dauphin County, held a tin box which contained a copy of the *First Annual Report*, the architect’s card and his account of the ceremony, a list of the officers of the Association, and copies of local newspapers.<sup>29</sup> The inscription was “Erected A. D. 1875.” The Governor’s words on the occasion were: “In the name of God I lay this corner stone and dedicate this building to Charity and Benevolence.”<sup>30</sup>

The planners of this event left no record of what they expected, but what they achieved was a dramatic public celebration. The presence of distinguished political leaders helped spread the news of their ministry. The Association continued its work in the old house, but its members spent much of their time fundraising, or as one of them called it, “money getting.”<sup>31</sup> It was hardly a new task. They were church women who ran numerous organizations in their churches and were constantly raising money to support their efforts. They held a festival in October that brought in \$462. In February, 1876, the attorneys of the city donated \$150 for the new building. The Association received \$80 from a special offering taken at the consecration of Trinity Episcopal Church. On March 14, as the new home neared completion, the Association held its first “pound party.” That was the name given to a designated time when people donated food, presumably by the pound, and various other needed supplies. No dollar value was placed on the gifts, but they were very valuable because they offset operating costs.<sup>32</sup>

When the officers set the date for dedicating the new house, May 4, fundraising trumped another grand celebration. The “inspiring and interesting” exercises at the event included a speech by the Rev. Edward J. Gray, the President of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary. The supper that followed was very successful, because it netted almost \$500, and was the occasion for many donations, including furniture, china, bedding, and the always useful groceries.<sup>33</sup> One newspaper account of the event did not mention the name of a single speaker but focused on how surprised everyone was by the “bounty and variety of good and useful gifts.” The reporter emphasized the Association’s need for additional gifts if it was going to be able to avoid taking out a mortgage on the new building.<sup>34</sup> The distinctive architecture of the house was Second Empire Victorian, and featured a mansard roof [Figure 1].

The Association moved the residents, which the leaders sometimes called “inmates” and at other times the “home



Figure 1

family”, to the new house on May 8. There were many more rooms than residents which offered plenty of space for expansion. The building was not, however, large enough for the annual meetings, so the Association continued to hold them in the churches. As the residents surveyed the neighborhood they saw that they were in the only house on Campbell Street between the railroad and Park Avenue. The space between was open fields and farm land.<sup>35</sup> The Association soon erected a small barn.

The new house settled one of the two major issues before the Association. The need to provide adequate space for the expanding ministry was obvious, and once the leaders decided to resolve it with a new building they were able to persuade the public to support it. The Association records are full of the discussions and decisions that led to a new building. Those same records are absolutely silent on the second issue, the redefinition of the Association’s mission. Why they reached the conclusions they did remains, in part at least, a mystery. Resolving it led the Association to change its name, the way it chose the Managers, and its mission, and that meant amending the Charter.

The non-mysterious part of the change was the name for the Association. The women had begun to describe their work as providing a home for the friendless during their first year. The term “friendless” meant those who had no one to support them, and that was one of their important discoveries when they encountered orphans and those who were prostitutes. Nothing in the records explains why they settled on “friendless.” However, the term was in relatively common use for organizations with missions similar to theirs. Harrisburg had a Society for the Home for the Friendless, chartered in 1867 to shelter friendless women and children, and Scranton had a Home for the Friendless, chartered in 1871 to care for poor and friendless women and children. They did, however, explain why they dropped their original name. They decided that Woman’s Christian Association was too limiting

and wanted a new name to “throw off the idea of a religious denominational spirit.”<sup>36</sup> Their experiences encouraged them to become a Christian ministry with a name, the Home for the Friendless, legally the Home for the Friendless Association, which welcomed everyone, including those not identified with the Christian church.<sup>37</sup>

Related to this change was one that altered the way the Managers were chosen. The original Charter required them to be members of the Association, three to be selected from each of the churches. The amended Charter specified that they were to be members of the Home for the Friendless, but the three were to be chosen from each of the eight wards of the city.<sup>38</sup> The change may have enlarged the geographic representation of the Managers, and it removed the church names from the process, but it did not appear to affect the role of the churches. The women chosen by ward were still members of the Association and identified by their church membership. One change that was easy to grasp involved the new building. Although the possibility of owning property was not provided for in the original Charter, the amended one gave the Home the authority to mortgage its real estate.<sup>39</sup>

The name was important but the vital issue was the ministry and the Association changed it in truly dramatic ways. The change the officers explained was the embrace of children. Their needs, especially those who were orphans, led the women to take them into their house and to specify in the amended charter that children were henceforth a legal part of their ministry. The truly mysterious change was in their ministry to women, where they shifted the focus from young women to aged women, described as dependent women. In the language of the amended Charter the new ministry became to care for “the temporal, moral and religious welfare of homeless and friendless women and children – especially aged women.”<sup>40</sup> The newly defined duty of the members of the Board of Managers and all the members of the Home became “to seek out dependent women and children and endeavor to bring them under moral and religious influence.”<sup>41</sup> All these changes became official in an “Amendment to the Charter of the Home for the Friendless,” approved by the Lycoming County Court under the signature of Judge Gamble on December 18, 1876. The amended Charter left in place the governance sections of the original one.

Although the language of the new ministry did not exclude young women, it did turn attention away from them and to aged women. Did the criticisms of Association work with the young women, especially the wayward among them, lead them to a ministry that would exclude them? Did their work with them expose them to time commitments too great, and in the case of the wayward, lifestyles too revolting, that led them to seek another focus for their work? These questions remain unanswered, but that does not diminish the importance of what the Association did in 1876. The amended Charter

was and remains remarkable, for it established the Home for the Friendless as the first orphanage and the first home for the elderly, albeit limited to women, in the city.

During the year of these changes the Association faced the need to comply with the new Pennsylvania Constitution, and the provisions of a new law defining the rules for “the incorporation and regulation of certain corporations.” The officers voted to do this at a meeting on October 31, 1876. President Herdic wrote out the notice of this action and the Secretary sent it to the Secretary of the Commonwealth. This decision made it possible for the Home for the Friendless to be eligible for certain state funds.<sup>42</sup>

## **Ministry at the Campbell Street House - 1876-1899**

The new house on Campbell Street was the center of the ministry of the Home for the Friendless for what was essentially the final quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The leaders of the Home when it moved there had extensive experience working together.<sup>43</sup> The officers, led by Encie Herdic, were Cordelia Ayres, Charlotte Slate (Mrs. George), Mary Miller, Moriah Noble, Elizabeth Hepburn, and Sarah McDowell. They were all charter members and six of the seven were on the first team of officers. Shortly after the move Noble resigned due to ill health. The Home elected Mary Ransom to be the Corresponding Secretary. She was also a charter member and proved to be an excellent choice because she brought to her work considerable writing skills and an interest in the history of the Home. These women met weekly at the new house, typically on Tuesday. They visited with residents, consulted with the employees, heard committee reports, and took action on the business before them. The *Minutes* of their meetings are full of details on every aspect of the ministry. These were truly dedicated volunteers and the intense work suggests that one major reason the home succeeded was the close attention it received. The leaders absolutely knew what took place in the home, on almost a daily basis. In addition, they invited the members of the Home to attend their meetings. The officers continued the tradition of planning and running the annual meetings, typically held in January in these years.

When the officers explored their new building they discovered that it was both a functional and attractive place. They had seen and approved the plans, but they were pleased to find that what they had agreed to on paper had truly come to life. When a reporter for the *Gazette and Bulletin* visited in 1877 he described it as “A Beautiful Home.”<sup>44</sup> It had a basement and two stories. The reporter entered the front door and began his tour from the central hallway. The parlor on the right was a spacious place which was attractively furnished, and featured a cottage organ, used for entertainments and religious services. Behind it was the children’s play room with a hobby horse and many playthings. Adjacent to that

room was a children's bathroom and the matron's sitting room, connected to the matron's living quarters. The room to the left off the entry hall was the Home's business office, which served as the meeting place for the officers and committees. Large folding doors separated it from the dining room, and through it was the kitchen at the back of the house. The reporter found the decorations, which included steel engravings and oil paintings, to be very attractive. The second floor featured apartments for the adult residents, two of them particularly well appointed. They were room No. 6, filled with a complete chamber suite given by the ladies of First Baptist Church, and No. 7, furnished by the young people of the Second Presbyterian Church. Also on the second floor was a dormitory for the infant children, which included a sleeping and a play room. There were a number of additional rooms, some of them occupied by the older children.

The house fit the ministry well, but paying for it created a time of trial that lasted for over three years. Despite this the Home moved forward, increasing the number of persons it reached. The officers maintained their service over long periods of time providing remarkable continuity for the work. They established a system that provided excellent care for the children and the elderly women. The stories of these residents provide glimpses into the character and impact of the ministry. The Home was so successful that as the end of the century approached the officers were in the midst of another expansion.

The ministry in the new house was just getting underway when a financial crisis emerged that had the potential of destroying the entire venture. The women had been deeply engaged in fundraising since the Cornerstone event and did not stop when they occupied the building, since they still owed a considerable sum on it. One account of this debt described it as a "heavy load" for the officers, for whom it was a daily care and the cause of nightmares.<sup>45</sup> In August, the Home held a picnic and sold tickets which included a supper and raised \$90. The women held what they called a "fixed fact" dinner in late October to raise funds designated for the building. Although it was a success they were still short of paying for the full cost of the new building. Their money came to an end in November and they had nothing to pay the contractors, who in turn could not pay those who had given them credit. Liens were placed against the building and the Sheriff announced his intention to sell the property. The debt was about \$4,500.

The women, according to a newspaper account, had too much faith in Providence "to believe that their beautiful building, the result of so many prayers and so much labor, will be sacrificed."<sup>46</sup> To organize the fundraising the officers divided the city into 19 areas or districts, and appointed a leader and a team of persons for each of them. Some of the districts and their leaders were: Newberry, the responsibility of Jennie Sutton (Mrs. H. E.); Campbell to Walnut Street, led

by Encie Herdic; Centre to Elmira Streets, led by Alva Hart (Mrs. A. O.); Pine to Market Street, led by Sarah McDowell; and Washington Street, below Franklin to Lloyd's addition, led by Henrietta Tillman (Mrs. H. B.). The women announced the day of their visitation and at the appointed time went door to door seeking contributions, beginning at \$.05 for a brick.<sup>47</sup> The intriguing image is that of a small army of determined well-dressed women walking the streets, many of them unpaved, knocking on the doors of strangers and asking for money. They raised \$2,167 which helped cover immediate needs and postponed the Sheriff's sale, but left a debt of \$2,457.<sup>48</sup>

Half way to paying off the debt the women persisted in their efforts in the hopes of avoiding a mortgage. They sponsored a lecture in January, 1877, by Dr. Samuel Pollock on "Gypsies," and raised \$64. They tried something new when they asked their state representative to try to get an appropriation for the debt through the Legislature. The bill to authorize payment passed the House but failed in the Senate in March. That defeat led the leaders of the Home to surrender to a mortgage. In April, they borrowed \$2,600 from John K. Hays, Sr. for a period of one year. They paid the contractors in full and in effect transferred the debt "from several creditors to one."<sup>49</sup> The women continued to sponsor fundraising events, but the yearly combined income from them rarely met the annual interest cost, which was \$234, much less provided enough to pay anything on the principal. In the fall of 1879 the Home sought legislative help again and this time the Legislature appropriated \$5,000. At the Annual Meeting on January 27, 1880, President Herdic reported that the Home was debt free, but that the amount that remained after paying the debt was not very great in light of the cost of maintaining the ministry. She said in effect, paying off the debt was not the occasion to relax fundraising. The total cost of the Campbell Street building was \$10,322.<sup>50</sup>

In what proved to be the final year of the financial crisis, the Home received a major shock. In January, 1879, President Herdic, at the point in the Annual Meeting set aside for the election of officers, surprised her audience by resigning. She said that in doing so she was not losing interest in the work, for "the Home will ever be my first love in all charitable work, as it has been for many years." The years working together, she said, had been very peaceful, without strife and discord, and "Whatever may have been our darkest day *without*, no clouds have obscured the inner life within." It turned out that she underestimated the depth of her support. Someone moved to refuse to accept the resignation and when the motion received a second, the members voted unanimously to keep their president. She agreed to continue. At the Annual Meeting in January, 1881, she resigned again. The language of the report of the meeting strongly suggests that she had given advance notice this time. She felt some pain taking leave, she said, and added that she "knew in many respects my work has seemed very unsatisfactory and been subject to many interruptions

which could not be avoided....” This may have been an oblique reference to her husband’s bankruptcy in 1878, which may have precipitated her first resignation. She concluded her parting speech with a statement of the motivation for her charitable work, one which many present very likely shared. Some of them wept as she spoke.

Let us guard with great care and watchfulness that sweet spirit of charity and peace which has made our work so pleasant and effective hitherto, keeping far away from us all anger, wrath and bitterness, and with the blessing of God each succeeding year shall bring us to a larger field of usefulness, and that contentment which always springs from an honest endeavor to lead a useful life, which is a satisfaction that the world cannot give us, and a sweet peace that it can never take away.<sup>51</sup>

The Home elected Elizabeth Hepburn to take her place. The widow of a physician, and a charter member and first Treasurer, she proved to be an inspired choice. She served for twenty-four years. Louise Logan (Dr. William F.), also a charter member, became the new treasurer, and served for over thirty years. Her husband had been the second Mayor of Williamsport and the Postmaster. This continuity of leadership gave the Home, not yet ten years old, an aura of permanence. In 1899, when the Home moved into a new building, five of the seven officers from 1881 remained in place. The other two were Appolonia Mussina (Mrs. Sylvester), elected in 1887 to fill a new third vice president position, and Milicent Coleman (Mrs. Fletcher), elected a vice president in 1894 when Cordelia Ayres died.

The officers did a very wise thing with the money left from the state appropriation: they saved it and used it from time to time to repair and enhance the building and extend the grounds. They spent \$509 of this money to paint the building in 1883. At the same time they improved the walks. They remarked that in all things they had “endeavored conscientiously to follow the God of the widow and the Father of the fatherless, and have left the result in His hands.”<sup>52</sup> The next year they added porches to the east and south sides of the first floor, giving the senior residents in particular useful additional space. That same year they put in a telephone.<sup>53</sup> In 1885 they had the floors in several rooms on the first floor replaced. The major development in 1886 was the purchase of part of the adjacent land east of the house to be used as a playground for the children. Emily White (Mrs. John) led this effort and successfully solicited the \$1,100 from donors, among them her husband, and Fletcher Coleman, H. C. McCormick, A. D. Lundy, Caroline Otto (Mrs. John A.), E. Deemer and Co., and Catherine Packer (Mrs. C. J.).<sup>54</sup> The officers subsequently purchased the rest of the land adjacent to the east, and erected a fence around the property and removed some out buildings,

including the barn. They also added a balcony onto a part of the second floor where the elderly lived, giving those with little mobility a chance to be outside.<sup>55</sup> These were the major additions at the Campbell Street location.

Presidents Herdic and then Hepburn, and their very experienced team of officers, in spite of the time they spent attending to the financial and physical needs of the building, devoted most of their attention to the ministry. When they needed a new matron in 1877, they hired Mrs. E. B. Mooney. She was a charter member, but was an employee of the Home. She continued until October, 1881, and became the first long term matron in the history of the Home. The officers praised her for the most “excellent and efficient” quality of her work and said: “The quiet and orderly air of neatness and thrift throughout the entire building would do credit to any institution in the country.”<sup>56</sup> Phoebe Trainer (Mrs. Abram) succeeded Mooney and held the position for three years. President Hepburn praised her as “a woman thoroughly imbued with Christian principles, upon whom we can rely for a faithful discharge of all her duties, one with motherly instincts, who cares, not only for the physical wants, but also the moral and spiritual ones of her household.”<sup>57</sup> There were several matrons between 1884-88, and at least one assistant. In August, 1888, the officers hired Miss Sarah Wilson. She gave remarkable service and won the hearts of the residents and the members of the Home. She served for twelve years, the longest service of any matron to that time. President Hepburn described her as a judicious manager, able to meet both the head and heart requirements of the position.<sup>58</sup>

The Presidents and other members of the Home were consistent in their praise of the matrons for good reason. They realized, as President Hepburn said on one occasion, how “difficult and arduous” the job was. She could have used stronger language because one of the matron’s primary jobs was to enforce the Home’s policies for running the house, called “The Rules.” The officers, perhaps with help from the Managers, had created them at least as early as the move to the Campbell Street location. In 1877 they were:

The inmates of the Home are required to observe the following rules:

1. Implicit obedience to the matron.
2. The matron shall preside at the table and ask a blessing before each meal.
3. All inmates shall attend family worship, except in the case of sickness.
4. All must perform cheerfully duties required by the matron, and at all times deport themselves with obedient respect.
5. No one shall be permitted to leave the Home, unless in case of urgent necessity, when permission may be given by the matron for a limited absence; nor to be absent after dark.

6. Neatness in dress and person; also, perfect order in their rooms.
7. Perfect courtesy, in word and action, toward each other; no tale-bearing or mischief-making; any infringement of this regulation shall be reported to the managers.
8. Doors shall be locked at eight o'clock, and inmates retire at nine o'clock.
9. The children shall be subject to the control of the matron, only.
10. Parents and others coming to the Home as visitors, or inmates, shall not interfere with the management of the children in *any respect*, neither shall they give them candies, fruits, nuts or cakes, without the consent or knowledge of the matron; furthermore they must stay in the rooms assigned to them.
11. The matron shall be required to read these rules to each person upon entering the Home, and see that they are enforced.
12. Visitors shall be received on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday of each week between the hours of three and five p.m.<sup>59</sup>

These remained the Rules for years. A list of them in 1893 was identical except for no. 12. It is likely that specifying the visiting days became too hard to enforce as the number of residents increased, more of them coming from outside the Williamsport area.

The Rules were not unusual for the Victorian Era, similar to those for schools, especially residential ones. That did not make enforcing them any less daunting. Teachers in schools had students of roughly the same age. The matrons during the Campbell Street years had as many as 40 residents, especially in the years after 1889, always more than half of them under 14 years old and the others over 65. The matron's job was a combination house mother and director, and in modern terms, was 24/7. In general, she spent her time assigning rooms, caring for the residents, offering them comfort and counsel, getting the school aged ones off to school and to worship services, consulting with the officers when she had problems, and reporting to them when the house needed repaired. Specifically, she had to make sure the residents followed the Rules, some of which required the matron to try to modify behavior. Older persons did not necessarily do assigned duties cheerfully, keep their rooms neat, or practice perfect courtesy. Younger persons obviously needed help achieving these goals. Applying the Rules required great interpersonal skill and energy; achieving them pushed life in the house to the borders of utopia. The pressures of the work occasionally overwhelmed the matrons. Both of the long term ones, Mooney and Wilson, became ill and the officers granted them leaves of absence to recover.

One Rule, #9, had a specific source. Someone realized early in the ministry that some of the older residents tried to use their motherly instincts and experiences and took charge of one or more of the younger residents. There was room for only one mother and the rule made it clear that she was the matron. One exception to this was that older ladies who were willing and able were welcome to lend a hand in the nursery. The Home hired domestics for various tasks, including preparing and serving the food. In 1892, for example, the Home employed in addition to the matron, a cook, two nurses, one for the elderly and one for the children, a woman in the laundry two days a week, and a fireman for the coal furnace seven months of the year.<sup>60</sup>

Although the officers worked to find the right persons to be their matrons, they spent most of their weekly meeting time on admissions, and various questions relating to residents. During the Campbell Street years and in those that followed the committee in charge of admissions investigated every prospective resident, and made recommendations to the officers. In its simplest form that meant asking the older persons if they had any means of support, or if they were truly friendless, which meant had no place to stay and no one to care for them. Very few children arrived alone. They were brought by parents, relatives or friends, or in the case of orphans, persons interested to see what care might be available for them. Persons in both age groups were often referred by churches or clergy. Many of the elderly and persons responsible for the young were able to pay something, but from the beginning of the ministry some of them could not. In its more complex form, admissions involved working with public officials in charge of the poor.

The admissions process did not appear to be based on ability to pay, but on the needs of those admitted. The Home always had a substantial percentage of residents who could not pay anything. In 1877 the number of residents was 42, although not all of them lived there the entire year. The income from them totaled \$501, but of that \$243 was from Overseers for the Poor for the care of poor children. Individuals paid just \$258. Room and Board for a week was \$1. In this instance the Home revealed that 18 of the residents paid nothing, either directly nor were they covered by funds from Overseers. The cost of "table and household" was \$691, and the total expenses were \$1,352.<sup>61</sup> The income from those able to pay gradually increased but it never matched the table expenses. In 1894 the permanent family was 40, and in this case the Home did not reveal how many paid nothing. The total income from residents was \$2,025, but of that Overseers for the Poor paid \$1,183. Individuals paid \$842. Table expenses that year were \$1,403 and the total expenses were \$4,583.<sup>62</sup> In each of these widely separated years those who had the true ability to pay covered about one-fifth of the total expenses of the Home. The Overseers for the Poor were public officials responsible to provide care for the poor, especially children. The Overseers

in Williamsport and many surrounding municipalities turned to the Home for help with their charges as soon as it welcomed children. In 1894 Overseers from Williamsport and South Side (South Williamsport) supported residents. Many other local municipalities sent persons to the Home over the years, and some of the churches supported individuals.

It was in the context of admissions that the Home became involved in a most dramatic and tragic event. In early April, 1890, someone discovered the body of a two or three week old girl on the bank of the Susquehanna River near Academy Street. The Sheriff launched an investigation which led to a Mrs. Beck, who had “given birth at the Williamsport Hospital in March.”<sup>63</sup> At first she denied the child was hers, but later acknowledged it and revealed that her real name was Hattie (Harriet) Aderhold. She confessed she had thrown her baby in the river in a moment of despair, and had then tried to save it but failed. The Sheriff arrested her for murder, and she was held for trial in December.

The story she told at the trial was confirmed by the testimony of others. She was from nearby Warrensville, where her father was a miller and successful farmer. She had gone to visit her grandmother in Ohio where the father of the child had “forced himself on her.” When she returned home her father refused to let her live there in her condition. After she had the child, under an assumed name, she and her mother went in search of help. One place they visited was the Home for the Friendless, which had turned her away despite her offer to pay for her child’s care. Her father, despite his earlier rejection of his daughter, hired an attorney. Witness after witness, teachers, relatives and friends, described Hattie as not of normal intelligence or dimwitted. The jury acquitted her, deciding that she was not capable of distinguishing right from wrong.

At the time of the trial the editor of *The Grit* wrote a stinging rebuke of the decision of the Home for the Friendless to turn Hattie away. Does this mean, he questioned, that rumors about the Home were true, “that it is only the moneyed friendless who could expect to be cared for in that institution?” Indeed, it seemed to the author that the Home had a “code of requirements that closes the doors of the home to many deserving persons.” Hattie Aderhold “is a striking example of the inhumanity that governs at the Home for the Friendless.” The author rolled on, claiming that after the Home denied her child care, Hattie left “*friendless* and alone,” and in her frenzy she sacrificed her innocent child “simply because of the regulations of the *Home for the Friendless*.” “Ye gods,” the editor concluded, “was there ever such a mockery? Was any charitable institution ever so misnamed?”<sup>64</sup>

The officers responded quickly, without question stunned by the intensity of the attack. Their account of the event revealed that they saw the situation in terms of their admission policies.

They wrote a Card of Explanation which they sent to all the newspapers, in which they explained their view of the event. The previous spring, they said, two women brought a baby girl to the Campbell Street house and sought admission for the child. They apparently did not introduce themselves. The matron met them and after listening to their request said that she had no authority to admit the child. She referred them to the committee on admissions, and gave them the name and address of the person to contact. The officers of the Home had no record of contact from the two women and the committee on admissions never received a request to care for the child. They defended the matron and cited their admission procedures. It was unfortunate that the officers did not stop there. The testimony at the trial, they continued, revealed that Hattie’s father “showed a nature devoid of the parental instinct of the lowest of the brute creation.” They also pointed out that the Home had never been “either a lying-in, foundling, or Magdalen hospital,” but that it had helped find homes for such infants “and to place the mothers in a self-supporting situation,” and had also sought to “bring to justice the guilty fathers, as some have found to their sorrow.”<sup>65</sup>

The editor of *The Grit* took exception to the response of the officers. Feeling he had been accused of “sensationalism”, he went on the attack. Fresh in the minds of many people, he claimed, was a recent incident at the Home, similar enough to the Aderhold case to warrant comparison to it. One night someone left a baby at the Home with a fifty dollar bill attached. Within two days, the editor claimed, surely exaggerating the incident, everyone knew who the mother and the “putative” father were. Both were members of “the aristocracy of Williamsport,” and perfectly able to pay for the child’s care. The editor continued, “Was this woman’s child refused admittance to the home? Was the ‘guilty father’ in this instance brought to justice, or was any attempt made to bring him to justice?” Did, in fact, the officers of the Home investigate this case before they accepted the child? As he closed his argument the editor softened his tone, suggesting that all the Home needed to do was show a little more charity and use a little less red tape in emergency situations.<sup>66</sup> There is no evidence that this event harmed the reputation of the Home; however, in their response the officials had failed to live up to the Christian admonition to turn the other cheek. This stands as the major instance of negative public controversy in the Home’s entire history.

Among the important services the officers had to provide the residents was medical care. The Home had no staff physician and it appears that all of the doctors who came to the house did so as volunteers. The Home offered special thanks to them frequently but rarely by name. One exception was their gratitude to “Drs. Baker, DuFour and Detwiler” in 1891 for their “medical attendance,” and another was to Dr. Baker in 1893 “who was unremitting during seasons of diphtheria.”<sup>67</sup> The leaders of the Home welcomed the opening of the City

Hospital in 1878, technically founded in 1873, as a facility much needed in the community. They might have noted, but did not, that among the physicians running the hospital two were women, Doctors Jean Saylor and Rita B. Church, and that in addition to their tasks, they soon founded one of the first nursing schools in the state. The Home arranged for a nurse for the small children, Mrs. Van Horn, when it moved to Campbell Street, and she served eleven years. When she left in 1888, the Home hired a nurse in her place, and a nurse for the elderly.

The volunteer physicians were joined by what can best be described as an army of volunteers offering a wide variety of services. It is not clear who arranged for these people and scheduled them. Suspicion is the overworked matron was involved and perhaps one of the Home committees. The officers were at least kept informed. The largest group, although no count of them has been discovered, appears to have been the Home members who visited frequently and offered companionship for the residents. Women's groups from many of the churches visited often and helped with needed tasks. Students from Williamsport Dickinson Seminary (Lycoming College), the Methodist preparatory school in town, began to come weekly in 1892 and sustained their interest for many years. The female students, known as the King's Daughters, spent time with the older ladies on Saturdays and the male students, most of them pre-ministerial, led worship on Sunday afternoons. They often brought musical instruments to accompany their services.<sup>68</sup> The big occasions of the year for the residents were Thanksgiving and Christmas. The Home provided traditional meals and the members made certain there was a Christmas tree and gifts for everyone.

The Rev. William H. Graff, Rector of Christ Episcopal Church, created a special treat for the senior residents in 1891. He announced a plan to take them on an outing. He arrived on a summer day with carriages, helpers and plentiful supplies, and took them on a day long ride and picnic in Vallamont.<sup>69</sup> A little later in the year he took the children on an outing too, very likely in response to appeals from them. He repeated his outings for the seniors for several years, alternating between Vallamont, Nippenose Valley and a cottage in Loyalsock Township. Many of them rarely left the house, so this became a highly anticipated event. As he was preparing to leave the area in 1896 he came to say goodbye to the family and "the old ladies wept, and the children clung to him unwilling to let him go."<sup>70</sup> Emily White provided the outing that year. One special group of visitors was the newspaper reporters who gave the Home considerable space in their papers. The officers were very grateful for all these visitors and often used their annual reports as an opportunity to thank them publicly.

The officers ran the ministry, which included being responsible for financing it. There were two aspects to the finances. First was fundraising, which was essential to the

second, which was maintaining and balancing the budget. The patterns for fundraising were set in the early days of the ministry while it was still located at East Third Street, and included suppers, lectures, occasional events sponsored by others, and Donation Days. The cash from suppers was always welcome. The amount varied over the years, for example, \$100 in 1879, \$96 in 1886, and \$263 in 1893. The Herdicks owned a hotel, the Minnequa, in Canton, PA. They sponsored plays there in the summers, for example, "Little Barefoot" in 1877, which raised \$105 for the Home. However, the truly major fundraising event was Donation Day, a version of pounding. There were often several each year, the one in the fall accompanied by a supper. The amount of goods, their value in dollars, dwarfed all other contributions to the Home combined. Year after year friends of the Home donated mountains of gifts, most of them food. Many of the members were involved in the process of receiving the gifts, noting who had donated them, and sorting and storing them. It was an immense task.<sup>71</sup> In the months of November and December, 1895, the report of the gifts ran some seven newspaper columns. Some gifts were quite small: Mrs. C. R. Fisher donated one dozen eggs and Mrs. James Daily gave two loaves of bread, two dozen biscuits, and some grapes; but others were large: James Rook gave 100 pounds of squash, Mary Emery (Mrs. William) gave half a case of olive oil, and Susan Hyman (Mrs. S. K.) donated 25 pounds of buckwheat. The most common gifts were sugar, flour, eggs, chickens, various baked goods, and a wide assortment of fresh and home canned vegetables. The gifts from Newberry, South Williamsport, and DuBoistown arrived by the wagon loads with a list of the names of the donors, more than 360 of them.

Fundraising also yielded a useful variety of non-food gifts. The Philadelphia and Reading Railroad donated coal and gave a liberal deduction in freight costs in 1877. Sewing groups in the city and around the county prepared garments to fit the residents. The St. Agnes Guild of Trinity Church contributed 18 garments, dresses and underclothes for the children in 1893, and the Hebrew Ladies' Aid Society donated 8 new aprons that year. The Pennsdale branch of the Needlework Guild of America contributed 81 new clothing garments in 1895. The Belles Lettres Society of Dickinson Seminary gave 10 hymnals one year. In 1890 the Lycoming Rubber Company raised funds for a rolling chair to be used for several elderly residents who were unable to walk.<sup>72</sup> The list of non-food donors during the Campbell Street years was long but never approached the number who gave food.

The large number of contributions explains why the annual budgets were more modest than anticipated for such a substantial ministry. The budget the first full year the Home was on Campbell Street was \$1,352, almost half of it spent for room and board. The last full year at this site, 1898, the budget was \$5,181, but the room and board were not calculated the same way and so the figure for that expenditure is not comparable. The key components of the income throughout

these years were membership dues, fees from Overseers for the Poor, donations from residents, and from the friends of residents for their care. The one new source in 1898 was from the state, which had begun to help fund the Home through its Board of Charities.<sup>73</sup> The home had a member who served as collector. Her job was to visit members who had not paid their dues and solicit new members. Sarah Bevan, a member of the original Home Wants Committee, was the first of several collectors, and their success was an important reason for the balanced budgets. The Home Treasurer throughout the Campbell Street years was Louisa Logan and her weekly reports to the officers, recorded in the *Minutes*, were very thorough, as were her annual reports. By the mid-1890s the Home began to receive bequests, a sign that its ministry had become recognized as a permanent part of the community.

One potential major threat to the budget emerged in 1880. The Overseers for the Poor in the city notified the officers of the Home that they needed to reduce the amount they paid for each child or they would be compelled to remove the children and send them to the poor house. There was a move in the state, strongly supported by Governor Henry Hoyt, to get a bill through the legislature forbidding placing poor children between the ages of two and sixteen in the poor houses. Unfortunately, the bill was still in process. This was a serious issue because the income from the city Overseers was almost 30% of the budget. The officers promptly negotiated with the city and reduced the charge of keeping the children from \$1.50 to \$1 a week. The Home provided all the clothing for the children, as well as room and board. Mary Ransom, surely speaking for the officers, said that had the negotiations failed the Home would have kept the children without charge and appealed to the public for aid. Anyone, she added, who had seen the Home children “and know how carefully they are trained, can easily understand why we could not have permitted the change.”<sup>74</sup>

The organization, the fundraising, the careful budgeting, and the large number of volunteer hours spent by officers and members of the Home had one goal, the best possible care for those who resided in their house. That was the primary ministry. No one took a poll to discover what the public thought about the ministry or whether or not the residents were satisfied, so it is difficult to offer a judgment about the success or failure of this grand social experiment. One way to approach an evaluation of it, however, is through the lives of the residents. Their stories provide glimpses of why they came to the Home and their experiences once there. They came, or were brought for at least the following four reasons: they were orphans; they were children from families having difficulty caring for them; they were adult women who were alone and unable to care for themselves; they were children and women who were seriously ill who needed a place for the rest of their lives. In addition, many transients stopped at the house, some for immediate help and some for a short respite

on their journeys. At Campbell Street there were always more children than adults, the majority of the residents were at the house less than six months, and the longer term residents were almost always the senior ones. In modern terms the Home was running at one location an orphanage, a short term child care center, a referral service, a home for the elderly, a nursing home, and a way station for transients in need.

The number of orphans at the house varied from year to year, but there were always some. The Home made an effort to place them “where they shall receive the affection and care of the family circle.”<sup>75</sup> The details of the adoption process have not been found, but members of a committee did all the investigation of the adopting family before they recommended that the Home release the child. The Home placed three children for adoption in 1877. The officers found homes for three children in 1878, but two of them were adopted and the third went to live with a family. The reports never used the term “foster care”, but some of the placements were the equivalent of that modern process.<sup>76</sup> In 1882 homes were found for eight children, without reference to the number adopted. Of the four children placed in 1890, the two infants among them were adopted. The officers arranged for three adoptions in 1891, and placed several other children.

The children who were not available for adoption belonged to someone. They were in the house for a variety of reasons, but their stories were alike in one respect: some sadness brought them to the Home. The mother of three children left them in 1884 “because her husband’s intemperate habits did not give them support and protection.” She put them in the Home so she could work and the Home charged her for their care.<sup>77</sup> The next year another mother of three placed her children in the Home. She was “worse than widowed for she could not live with her husband on account of abuse and non-support caused by intemperance.” This case ended tragically when the four year old girl, who had not been well when she arrived, died. The mother had taken a job some distance from Williamsport and although notified of the child’s serious illness could not reach the city until after her daughter’s death.<sup>78</sup> In 1888 a mother, identified as a “stranger in a strange land – well educated and refined,” died leaving a husband and several children. He brought them to the Home “for care and shelter, and it was indeed an asylum for them.”<sup>79</sup>

In 1889 President Hepburn visited with two small girls at the house, one almost blind, whose father had brought them when their mother died. “As I looked with feelings of compassion and sympathy,” on them Hepburn said, she was “thankful that it was not the wherewithal to clothe and feed these little ones that was the most essential element of the Home, but they are trained in Christian principles, and the surrounding circumstances of their young lives tend to shape their future life.”<sup>80</sup> A woman who lost her husband in the flood of 1889 worked in a factory during the week. The Home kept

her two boys free of charge and they went to be with her on weekends.<sup>81</sup> One man left his daughter in the house for some time, took her away for a visit and when he returned commented: “Mary’s manners have been very much improved by being with you.”<sup>82</sup> In 1895 a father brought his two small children to the Home after their mother had died. When he left the children he asked the nurse if she would continue to teach them the song their mother had sung to them: “Now I lay me down to sleep.”<sup>83</sup> Brothers and sisters were frequently in the Home, but the four Harrison girls in the mid-1890s, ages 4-12 were a large number from one family. They came to the Campbell Street house when their mother died.

The house always seemed to have some children in the nursery and a few in their early teens but most of the children were elementary school aged. All the school aged ones attended school. The children in the late 1870s may have walked to the Market Street School which was built at the corner of Market and Packer Streets in 1874. The Home moved them to the closer Emery School on Park Avenue after it opened in 1882.

Some children who came to the Home were in need of more than it could give them and in several cases it became a placement service. Mary Lemon was an orphan and a young woman who had been injured in a fall and was unable to walk. Her sister arranged to pay her fee, which amounted to half her weekly wage of \$2. Mary said that “the matron and all the ladies do everything possible to lighten her suffering ...”<sup>84</sup> The officers realized she needed special help and secured for her, free of charge, admission to the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia where she could get more extensive care.<sup>85</sup> The Home played the same role for another girl named Mary, described as an “unfortunate little girl.” After many efforts to place her in an appropriate setting, “the Pennsylvania training school for feeble-minded children, located at Media,” accepted her. She would be there seven years, and the only expense for the Home would be her clothing. Ransom took the child to her new home and reported it was a very fine institution.<sup>86</sup> Daisy Carlson, the near blind child Hepburn visited in 1889, needed more attention as she grew older. The Home found a place for her in a blind asylum in Philadelphia and Matron Wilson accompanied her to her new home. It was a difficult transition for Daisy because she had just lost her younger sister to diphtheria.<sup>87</sup> Twenty years later the Home received word that Daisy had done well in school and was teaching in a school for the blind in Pittsburgh.<sup>88</sup>

The elderly who lived at the Home appear to have done so on their own volition. There are no references to anyone forcibly placing their relative in the Home, although it is unlikely that such information would be in the Home’s records. A number of adult children paid the fees for their parents. Most of those who moved to the house in the early Campbell Street years appear to have been in good health, but gradually some of them became ill. The aging of the residents eventually created

two groups of elderly, those who remained relatively healthy and those who became seriously ill. The annual reports began to refer to the very sick as invalids. The Home had always had a nurse for the children and had to hire one for the elderly. In the 1880s the Home had few elderly residents die, none during several of those years. That changed dramatically in the 1890s. President Hepburn reported to the Annual Meeting of 1891 that the Home had experienced three deaths among its elderly residents the previous year, the greatest death toll among them in its history. Three more elderly died in 1895.<sup>89</sup> Whether those who died were short or long term residents, the officers considered them members of the family and mourned them. A few had no family and no place to be buried, and the Home laid them to rest in lots it secured in Wildwood Cemetery. It is reasonable to assume that the Cemetery or some individual donated the lots.

Death visited the young of the house more than it did the elderly. That may sound counter-intuitive, but disease took the lives of the young at an alarming rate, not just among those for whom the Home was responsible, but in society. Some children in the Home family died of physical conditions they had from birth, but the biggest killers were various childhood diseases. Diphtheria struck with devastating affect several times in the 1890s. Seventeen of the nineteen children in the house were stricken in the winter of 1891/1892 and four of the youngest died, Willie James, Dannie Bloom, Adam Pfeifer, and Nancy Carlson. The little girl’s father did not arrive in time to see her alive. One of the boys was the only child of his father and another was the only child of his widowed mother. President Hepburn reported to the members that “Of all the sad messages we were obliged to send out, the most painful have been to these parents of the little ones this winter, to come to the deathbed of their children.”<sup>90</sup> The Home buried three of them in its lot in Wildwood Cemetery [Figure 2]. Ransom said: “The little chairs and cribs are vacant and as we go to the nursery every Tuesday, we can almost hear the echo



Figure 2. Willie James’ Tombstone.

of the greeting of Willie, Dannie, and Nancy.”<sup>91</sup> Five children died in 1892, four of them from complications from their births and only one from diphtheria. Four more died in 1893, three of them from cholera infantum and one little boy from croup.<sup>92</sup> The Annual Reports mentioned, often by name, the old and young who had died the previous year. What has not survived is any record of the impact the deaths, particularly those of the children, had on the matron and the others who worked at the house and were the virtual parents.

One of the largest groups of people the Home counted in its family, even though most stayed but a few days or weeks were the transients. They may have knocked on the door of the East Third Street house, but they appeared in substantial numbers in the year the ministry moved to Campbell Street. The house was but a block and across the tracks from the Pennsylvania Railroad station. In 1877 the Home gave 84 meals and 48 lodgings to transients.<sup>93</sup> Benny Roth was in the house that year with an injured foot. He could not work and the members of Christ Episcopal Church had arranged for him to become a short term resident until he recovered.<sup>94</sup> The startling thing about Benny’s presence was that the Home did not admit men, and may have accepted him only because they considered him a transient. The number of meals given to such visitors in 1880 was 53 and the lodgings 22. A poor and sick girl appeared at the door in the summer of 1884. They gave her clothing and a railroad ticket so she could get home to her family.<sup>95</sup> The Home offered significant help to an immigrant family from Ireland in 1891. The man found work in the city shortly after he arrived but a little while later his wife died of consumption. Friends encouraged him to take his three small children to the Home. The Home cared for the children but the father soon decided to reclaim them and return to his native land. Ransom reported that she would “never forget his grateful thanks and the benedictions he invoked on the Home for the Friendless.”<sup>96</sup>

The summer of 1889 was a memorable one in Williamsport. The great flood poured into town in June. Known as the Johnstown Flood because of the great number of deaths it caused there, it nonetheless devastated the lumber industry of Williamsport, to say nothing of the dislocation of the lives of everyone who lived on the floodplain, which was just about every citizen. It poured into the cellar of the house, causing about \$100 in damage, but the building had been erected on slightly elevated ground and the water did not rise to the living space. Twenty-five people showed up seeking refuge and the matron housed and fed them, making up beds on the floor since the home was at capacity.<sup>97</sup> The next major flood was in 1894 and the house had about the same kind and amount of damage as it had five years earlier, but the officers did not record the number of transients.

The year of the great flood was also the year the house reached capacity. The full beds, not the flood, generated a discussion among the officers about the possibility of more

space, perhaps by adding to the building. One idea was to build as many as twenty new rooms, all for the elderly. The Annual Report for 1892 included the following sentiment from the pen of Mary Ransom: “The question of more room stares us in the face. We have been obliged to turn a deaf ear to many for whom our deepest sympathies have been aroused. We have plenty of ground, applicants enough to fill many rooms, plans on paper, the building in imagination, faith that it will be built sometime; strong hope that we shall live to see it, but at present no money.”<sup>98</sup> In 1893 the Home secured from the Legislature an appropriation of \$5,000 for an addition to the building. Subsequent reviews of this possibility by a committee from the State Board of Charities and by the Home’s Advisory Board resulted in a concurring opinion that the Home should “Put not another dollar on the building, the location has become wholly unfit for the purpose designed.”<sup>99</sup> The area was becoming increasingly industrial, with a new electric plant nearby, and the railroad traffic had increased substantially.<sup>100</sup> The Home never requested the appropriated money and began to look for another location for its ministry.

The way forward cleared in January, 1895. The Home purchased a lot from the Vallamont Land Company on the corner of Campbell Street and Rural Avenue for \$6,000. The Company was developing a large tract of land north of Rural Avenue across a considerable east-west expanse of the city. Vallamont was emerging as the first suburb of the city. James Krause presented the proposal for the Company, the offer at approximately \$10 a foot compared to the usual price of \$16 a foot. The officers held a special meeting at the YMCA to consider it. Mary Ransom made the motion to accept the offer, seconded by Mary Miller, and the women voted unanimously to buy it.<sup>101</sup> The lot had 318 feet of frontage on Campbell Street and 250 feet on Rural Avenue. It was bounded on the north by Brandon Avenue and on the east by an alley. The land was on a hill far above possible flooding, large enough for a generous sized house and future expansion, and directly on a street car route.<sup>102</sup> Fundraising began in earnest. Just prior to the purchase, Mrs. Harriet Piper had left a \$500 bequest to the Home which the officers put toward the new building. They also decided that from the date of the purchase of the land all gifts of money, including bequests, would be for the new house. Right after the announcement former matron Phoebe Trainer gave a gift of \$1, the first gift received during the active fundraising. The Home, through the Board of Charities, requested \$15,000 from the state, but received just \$5,000. The women were not deterred.

The Home invited Thomas P. Lonsdale, an architect of Philadelphia to draw house plans which he had ready for the Annual Meeting in January, 1897. He had prepared the architectural plans for the recently completed Bradley Hall on the campus of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary. He generously contributed his work. The officers reviewed them and passed them to its Advisory Board for its advice. The Board



Figure 3

quickly concurred. In April the officers appointed a Building Committee consisting of Ransom, Chair, Ida McCormick (Mrs. H. C.), Fletcher Coleman, and John G. Reading, Esq., to oversee the project. The Committee requested proposals for excavation and laying the foundation and subsequently recommend awarding the contract to Bennett and Rothrock of Williamsport, and the officers agreed.<sup>103</sup> A group of officers and members gathered at the site on May 11 and President Hepburn turned the first shovel of dirt, followed by many of those present. Several charter members attended. The contractor completed the foundation in July and the officers and the architect accepted his work. Discussions about when to proceed led to the decision to cover the foundation in order to protect it through the winter. News arrived in the summer that the Legislature had approved an appropriation of \$8,000, payable in two annual installments.

In May, 1898, the Home hired local contractor W. H. C. Huffman and Sons. The officers and many members of the Home gathered at the site on July 12 to lay the Cornerstone. The event was “under the auspices of the Masonic Lodges of our city,” and Henry C. Parsons was the speaker. He had spoken at the Cornerstone ceremony of the Campbell Street house in 1875 and had since become a major figure in Williamsport, serving a term as mayor. He was also the son-in-law of President Hepburn. The builder had the house ready for occupancy in late December. The architecture was distinctive and represented late nineteenth century brick Queen Anne style. It was a physical testimony to the spiritual success of the ministry [Figure 3].

### A Larger Ministry – 1899-1922

The Home completed its move to Vallamont, specifically to its new house at 904 Campbell Street, on January 4, 1899 when

it transferred the residents. The location became the center of its service for the forty years it remained the Home for the Friendless. The four decades fall easily into two periods. The twenty-three years from 1899 to 1922, its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, featured efforts to develop a far larger ministry. In the years 1922 to 1939 the officers of the Home worked to sustain the ministry and then enhanced it with important changes to the building. The Home moved to a larger ministry while maintaining the primary motive of the founders: the Christian imperative to care for those in need, especially the least and the lost and the lonely. Weekly meetings began with prayer and the annual meetings always began with “appropriate religious exercises,” which often included a scripture reading and always a prayer, typically by a clergyman, and singing by the children.<sup>104</sup>

The residents have left no record of what they thought about the new house as they stepped over the threshold. Some of the adults among them and a few of the children had lived at the Campbell Street house for many years, so there may have been some sadness at leaving that familiar place. More certain was the mood of the officers and members of the Home. They were thrilled with the new house and the prospects it offered for their ministry. President Hepburn said at the Annual Meeting held one month after the move:

And surely we have been the child of a kind Providence, as we view our situation today. This work was laid in sacrifice and prayers, and has been kept free from all sectarian rule and bias. May this new Home which we have just taken possession of ever stand an imposing land mark in our beautiful city for many generations! ... We have had many words of

kind encouragement about our new home. “Beautiful for situation” is this new Home, the joy of us all. May it ever be as a “great rock in a weary land” to all who sit beneath its shadow, may it open wide its arms to all those who have had home ties broken, and life made sorry and helpless, here may many a saddened heart find rest and quietude and home!<sup>105</sup>

The house was really a mansion. It was and remains a sturdy two-story brick structure with identical north and south sides facing Campbell Street. The sides are joined in the center by an extended section, which has windows on the first floor and the statue of a woman holding a small child on the second floor. The statue bears a striking resemblance to the traditional image of the Madonna and Child. The original ends of the two wings were square, one parallel to Rural Avenue and the other to Brandon Avenue. The women were housed in rooms on the south side and the children in dormitories on the north side. The house had 40 rooms, 20 on each floor. The first floor featured a large assembly room in the center, which the Home began to use for its annual meetings, moving them from the churches. Also on the first floor was the Home’s office, the matron’s parlor, sitting room and dining room, the women’s literary room, and the dining rooms for women and children. The boy’s dormitory was also on this floor. The second floor had the matron’s bed room, a guest room, a day nursery, and the girl’s dormitory. The building also had an unfinished basement.

The officers planned the dedication service for January 19. The event replicated the one which it had held to dedicate the Campbell Street house in 1876, and for good reason, for many of those officers were still in place. It included a supper and a Donation Day and a series of speakers. The crowd was “very large” and the donations “generous.” Architect Lonsdale presented the building to the Building Committee and John Reading, on behalf of the Committee, presented it to the officers of the Home. President Hepburn offered the prayer of dedication and, as he did in 1876, President Gray of Williamsport Dickinson Seminary gave the dedicatory address.<sup>106</sup>

The dominant theme for the next twenty-three years was “larger,” in every aspect of the ministry. The growth began with the Home’s decision to build a much larger building because its officers and members had become tired and frustrated turning needy people away. Those in leadership positions were well aware of the magnitude of their tasks, but knowing what they were did nothing to diminish the challenges they faced. The residential capacity of the new house was 100, 40 women and 60 children, two and one half times the capacity of the former house. It took time for the officers to admit more people so they did not have a full house

the first two years. The total head count by January, 1902 was 94, with 55 children.<sup>107</sup> One sign of the success of the ministry was that the new house remained full year after year. There were 99 residents in 1910, with a maximum of 60 children; 96 residents in 1915 with 59 children; and in the anniversary year of 1922 there were 100 residents, the maximum for both women and children. The pressure for space, especially for the women, which eased right after the move, quickly returned. A waiting list developed. In 1902 the officers reaffirmed their rules for admitting women, which was no one under 65, and those who entered then were asked to pay or provide a life membership of \$300.<sup>108</sup> However, the pressure on admissions led them to say that they would accept a few women under the age of 65 if they were willing to pay \$2 a week. The waiting list did not disappear, and often had 30 to 40 names on it.<sup>109</sup>

There was obviously substantial need for the services of the Home, strong enough that there were requests from men in 1909, a request not granted.<sup>110</sup> The death of residents created most of the openings for the women and there were from three to five a year. The death of children was rare and there were no tragic cases of multiple deaths from disease like those of the past. There was not a single death in the Home family from the great influenza epidemic in 1918. There had never been a waiting list for children, and the officers did not create one for the new house. The number of children fluctuated from month to month as the Home placed some orphans in homes, and parents or relatives, in improved financial condition, came to take back their children. There were rarely more than 40 women in the house, but because of the changes in the circumstances of the children there were occasionally more than 60.

The officers who took on the responsibility and launched this larger ministry had been in place for many years, led by President Hepburn. Ten years had passed since they had proposed a larger space and an expanded ministry and they were now older and several of them were not well. Unfortunately, they left no record of why they made two important decisions that helped them and the Home meet the challenges. Sometime after the Annual Meeting of 1902 they created the Home for the Friendless Auxiliary. Clara Reading (Mrs. John C.), was the senior member and initial leader, although her title if any has not been found in the records. The rest, twenty-one of them, were all single women, some bearing the family names of former or current officers, including Lizzie Logan, Cora Ayres, Ellen Ransom, Josephine Coleman, Martha McCormick, Martha Perley and Florence Slate.<sup>111</sup> The purpose of this group, not stated explicitly but inferred from the *Minutes*, was to bring younger women into the ministry, surely with the anticipation that their numbers and enthusiasm would bring needed help. The Auxiliary developed a small budget and its members were often at the house spending time with the children.

The leadership of the Home suffered two major losses in the initial years of expansion. Mary Ransom died before the Annual Meeting of 1903. She was a charter member of the Association, Corresponding Secretary for twenty-six years, and had served on both the building committees. The President described her as a “woman of rare ability ... She had remarkable power for influencing workers and givers, and had many qualities which fitted her for what she felt was her life work.”<sup>112</sup> Mary’s sister, Elizabeth Knapp, stepped forward and the officers accepted her offer to be the new Corresponding Secretary. President Hepburn resigned in 1905. She had been in ill health. She shared some reminiscences, noting that only three of the earliest officers remained, herself, Mary Miller, and Charlotte Slate. “Thirty-two years is a long time to walk side by side, hand in hand, heart to heart, thought to thought,” with her fellow workers in the ministry, she said, and she thanked them “for their loving thoughtfulness of me always.” Then she made a significant suggestion, which became the basis for the second decision the officers made to accommodate the larger ministry. She said: “I feel that an addition to the force of officers would be advantageous.” She did not recommend how to do this legally, nor when to do it, but what followed suggests that she had shared her idea with her fellow officers. When the elections were held the membership increased the number of vice presidents from three to seven.<sup>113</sup> There is no indication that the Home ever changed its Charter to fit this new reality.

The election of officers in 1905 became one of the most significant in the Home’s history because of the large number of changes in the leadership team. Chosen to follow Elizabeth Hepburn was Anne Perley [Figure 4]. An active member of Christ Episcopal Church, she had been on the Home’s Board of Managers, and had shown a special interest in the older residents. Her husband was Allen Perley, lumberman and major business leader (the Peter Herdic of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). Anne brought relative youth and great enthusiasm to the position. The new vice presidents were Mrs. Mary Brown, Mary Tinsman (Mrs. Garrett D.), Martha Clark (Mrs. Timothy S.), and Emma Way (Mrs. J. Roman). The choice of Tinsman, who was President Hepburn’s daughter, brought a special continuity between the past and future to the team of officers. The effect of the additional vice presidents was to almost double the executive committee, and introduce to the leadership a number of new people. The officers at this turning point who were continuing their service, balancing the officer team with extensive experience, were: vice presidents Charlotte Slate, Appolonia Mussina, and Milicent Coleman; Treasurer Louisa Logan; Corresponding Secretary Elizabeth Knapp; and Recording Secretary Mary Miller.<sup>114</sup>

President Perley’s leadership style was to proceed along the course her predecessors had established. Continuity remained the primary theme. Changes in the officer team came slowly,

typically when an officer died or decided to resign, almost always due to illness. The team she began with in 1905 was still in place five years later except for one: Alice Hicks (Mrs. T. M. B.) had replaced Milicent Coleman.<sup>115</sup> In 1915 the vice presidents, including Hicks, were still in place. Editha Howard had become the Treasurer in 1911 in place of Louisa Logan, and Marion Payne had taken Elizabeth Knapp’s place as the Corresponding Secretary in 1914. Sarah Canfield (Mrs. Ezra), in several assistant roles on the executive committee since 1911 and the Assistant Treasurer in 1916, also became the Recording Secretary in 1917 after Mary Miller, a charter member, passed away. She retained these dual positions until 1920, when Emma Gibson (Mrs. James J.) became the Recording Secretary and Sarah became the Treasurer. Through the years the officers appointed new volunteers to the Board of Managers as vacancies occurred, creating an ever revolving group with experience in the ministry from which new officers could be chosen. The Board continued to be what it had been from its beginning, the primary training ground for new officers.



Figure 4

One group President Perley highlighted often and thanked profusely at the annual meetings was the Auxiliary, also called the Ladies’ Auxiliary or the Home Auxiliary. In 1910, for example, she thanked them for “their cheerful and faithful work,” in 1911 she praised them for preparing and equipping the children’s playground, and in 1918 she expressed her gratitude for their special attention to the children at Christmas. She was also careful to recognize and offer special words of thanks for the work of those officers who had passed away during the previous year, and the most significant in her years of service, was Elizabeth Hepburn. In what amounted to a eulogy, Perley said Hepburn had used her energies and abilities for “the constructive work of the enlargement of the Home and its field of usefulness ...,” for during her leadership it had “secured and paid for its present location and commodious building, and in every way enlarged its borders.”<sup>116</sup>

The officers continued to fulfill the duties they had performed in the old house. First in importance was having a strong person as matron, and the officers in January, 1899, were very happy that Sarah Wilson was continuing with them, helping ease the residents into their new house and providing for the large number of new ones. At the Annual Meeting in January, 1900, Hepburn praised her for the excellent way she handled the move and noted that she operated the house like clockwork. She described her as the “presiding genius.”<sup>117</sup> It

was a great loss for the Home when Wilson passed away just five months later, becoming the only matron to die in office. The Home held a service in her memory in the Assembly Room, during which the children sang. She had given her life to the Home and its residents and had won their respect and affection.

Wilson's death led to a serious effort to find a new matron, not an easy task in light of her exemplary service. The first replacement resigned after about a year and the officers hired Mrs. Emily K. Chrysler, who President Hepburn said returned a "home spirit" to the building. That was polite criticism of the former matron as well as a compliment to the new one.<sup>118</sup> The officers were full of praise for Chrysler, but she resigned after three years to move nearer to her family in another state. Fortunately, the officers quickly found the highly recommended Miss Hemperley and she proved an immediate success. President Perley praised her work many times over the years. She resigned in October, 1916 for health reasons, matching Sarah Wilson's years of service in the position. Miss Mary Loeb replaced her and had a very difficult first three months when the house was under quarantine for an epidemic of diphtheria, measles, and chickenpox, an unfortunate trifecta of lethal childhood diseases. Undaunted, she established herself as a good matron and worked well for three years. Illness in her immediate family led her to resign in 1919 and the Home was without a matron for almost a year.

The matron was the key to the operation of the ministry at the house and the officers intensified their search. They employed several part-time persons and then hired Miss Sarah Theonita Bierly, a person with considerable nursing experience, who had been involved with her sister Katherine in the early stages of the founding of the nearby Jersey Shore Hospital. Miss Bierly was in the position less than a year when the officers became convinced they had found the right person. Corresponding Secretary Payne in her report in 1920, likely reflecting the opinion of the other officers, said that Bierly was "most efficient, reliable and loved by all in the institution. Too much cannot be said in her praise and our feeling is one of security that all is well with those in her care. We hope that she will be with us for many years."<sup>119</sup> One year later they praised her and told the following story: "During the days when we suffered a visitation of contagious diseases she practiced self-inflicted quarantine, going into retirement with the little sufferers and devoting days and nights to their care and entertainment."<sup>120</sup>

The officers, frequently working with the matron, set about employing a staff to serve the expanding Home family. By 1900 the house had two nurses for the women, one for the smallest children and a woman who took care of the young boys, who then numbered 20. The maximum age for male children was 12, which the officers later reduced to 10. There was never an age limit for girls. The officers employed many

different nurses over the years, and there were occasional private duty ones attending one or more of the senior residents. The staff of the house also needed to be increased, including more people in the kitchen, a janitor for house and yard maintenance, others doing the cleaning and attending to the laundry. The officers occasionally publicly thanked these people in their annual reports, at times by name, fully aware that they were essential to the success of the ministry. The matron, some of the nurses and some of the other employees lived at the house, meaning that in a typical year there were as many as 110 permanent residents.

The residents were one group of workers the officers never had to hire, but they contributed a great deal to the upkeep of the house. Rarely mentioned in reports, the dollar value of their work never calculated or entered into the budget, they were nevertheless very important. The women who were inclined and able helped in the nursery with the youngest children, as they had in the past. They also continued to be responsible for their rooms. The children were charged with keeping their individual places in the dormitory in order, and were taught as soon as they were old enough to be helpers in the kitchen, dining rooms, dormitories, and laundry. Some of the older children were welcome to share in the care of the smaller children, and were on one occasion described as "model little mothers and fathers."<sup>121</sup> These were not new tasks added after the move. However, the number of children increased threefold. One of the matron's jobs was to maintain strict standards for all this work and the new size of her younger family made that task more difficult. In addition, about 20 children moved out to homes or were reclaimed by their families each year, and as many new ones moved in. This part of the matron's job never ended. All school aged children continued, as in the past, to attend school.

The Home had never employed physicians because they provided their services free, a tradition that had begun with the opening of the first residence. The physicians continued to donate their time and talents, but beginning in 1903, reflecting the more complex living setting, the Home began to refer to the "medical staff." Dr. H. J. Donaldson reported that the physicians had issued 900 prescriptions for residents the previous year, and had reduced the bills for them to a total of \$100. He added that the sanitary conditions of the house were excellent.<sup>122</sup> The medical staff in 1913 included Donaldson as chief, and Drs. G. R. Drick, C. J. Cummings, C. A. Lehman, C. E. Shaw, Edward Lyon, and Fred W. Meddaugh.<sup>123</sup> The physicians were attentive, never more so than during the epidemics that periodically struck the children. In 1915, Dr. W. W. Moyer, a dentist, began to visit the house and provide free dental work.<sup>124</sup>

The officers had a special opportunity in May, 1915. Ten state senators who were members of the Legislative and Appropriations Committee visited Williamsport and included

the Home in its tour of several charitable institutions which the state was helping to fund. There is no record that the officers were anxious about this, but the state had become a major source of funding and a negative report could have had a major impact on their finances. Fortunately, the senators reported they were pleased with the conditions they found in all the institutions.<sup>125</sup>

Finding the right staff was one of the two major tasks the officers faced for the larger ministry; the other one was finding enough money to support it. The financial challenge had always been part of the officers' responsibility, but it was different than it had been in the past for two reasons. The obvious one was the large increases needed to support a vastly larger building and residential population. The less visible one was that by 1899 the Home was not the only charitable game in town. At least five new organizations emerged in the 1890s, the local response to the national search for progress, known as the Progressive Movement. They included: the Young Women's Christian Association in 1893; the Girl's Training School in 1895; the Florence Crittenden Home in 1895, the Boy's Industrial School in 1898; and the Home for Aged Colored Women, also in 1898. The issue was not competition between the Home and any of these groups for the services they provided, but the reality that a variety of useful social service agencies were reaching out for financial support to the audience that in former years the Home had virtually to itself.

Two immediate needs faced the officers and they believed they had to resolve them at the same time: how to pay for the new building; how to increase the budget to cover the costs of the larger ministry. Hepburn and the officers had good memories. They had paid off the mortgage on the old building and they were determined to pay off the one on the new one. It had cost \$25,422. The debt included three items: \$8,000 on the house mortgage, \$6,000 on the land mortgage, and \$1,878 for unpaid bills related to the construction. Discussion of the debt was a major item in the annual reports until it was paid in full. Ransom, chair of the Building Committee, told the members in 1899 that the members of the Home needed to appeal to "our friends who have not aided us and those who are willing to do more, to lend a helping hand."<sup>126</sup> By the Annual Meeting in January, 1902 the Home had covered the unpaid bills but still owed over \$14,000 for the mortgages, plus some interest. Ransom announced a \$10 a person fund, called the \$10 Fund, in hopes of raising \$3,000 within a year.<sup>127</sup>

President Hepburn was not able to attend the Annual Meeting in 1903 because of illness; however, she was most assuredly involved in the events she included in her report. She told the members that the officers decided that four years of mortgage payments with little prospect of actually reducing the mortgages was too heavy a financial burden for the Home, so they went to the Advisory Board and asked how they might have the debt "cancelled." "The gentlemen," she said,

"received us graciously and at once responded to our call." She concluded: "I rejoice to tell you today that the \$8,000 mortgage resting upon the building has all been paid, while some principal, and also some years of interest have been paid upon the land, with the prospect of still paying more upon it. The Lord has rebuked our want of faith by providing for this work more liberally than our fears led us to expect." It is not precisely clear what the Advisory Board did aside from give money. One likely possibility is that it arranged for the sale of the Campbell Street house that had been on the market since 1899. It sold in 1902 for \$5,000 which the Home put toward the mortgage. At the conclusion of the meeting the Treasurer burned the mortgage and subsequently sent the ashes to Hepburn, "neatly done up in a box."<sup>128</sup>

One debt remained to be paid, that on the land. The officers, encouraged by their success, sent a letter to the citizens of Williamsport which was published as an article in the *Gazette and Bulletin* titled: "Won't You Help Clear the Debt?"<sup>129</sup> The officers shared the news that the debt had been reduced to just \$3,000 by designated gifts. In addition, someone had pledged the final \$1,000 if the Home could raise \$2,000. Please, the officers appealed, do not wait to be personally solicited, but send your gifts immediately, and then listed the names of the persons to contact. The ploy, the first of its kind recorded in the history of the Home, was successful. Money arrived from many sources. Three prominent men, J. Roman Way, T. S. Clark, and A. D. Hermance each gave \$100. The Auxiliary contributed \$350. Two young boys raised \$10 in pennies and nickels, 545 by the Treasurer's count. A man from a nearby town saw the appeal and gave \$10, a dollar at a time until he met his pledge. His story was that his little boy had died at the Home and "I felt so bad, but Miss Wilson was so good, she handled me like a mother." At the end of the report on the debt Hepburn burned the mortgage and the Home was debt free. Those present on the occasion joined in singing the Doxology.<sup>130</sup>

A significant cost of the new building was its furnishings and the Home invited those who supported their work to donate funds to purchase them. By almost any standard this plan turned out spectacularly. When the residents moved into their new building memorial gifts had furnished 37 of the 40 rooms for the women, including Room #1 by Elizabeth Hepburn and her daughter, #6 by the builder Huffman, #28 by Mrs. Ransom's Bible Class, and #35 by Emma Way. Appolonia Mussina purchased chairs for the Assembly Room, the Ladies of the Third Presbyterian Church furnished the Matron's Dining Room, several families furnished the main Dining Room, and a number of families took care of the Boys' and Girls' Dormitories. Moreover, several of the donors left legacies to maintain, and when needed, replace the furnishing in their rooms.<sup>131</sup> The officers of the Home spent little time or energy over the years on the furnishings of the house. When new or additional furnishings were needed which were not

provided for in an endowment, individual donors typically stepped forward to purchase them.

While the officers were paying down the debt they were just as immediately faced with the responsibility to cover the day to day costs of the larger ministry. The budget the last year in the Campbell Street house was \$5,181. The State Board of Charities contributed \$4,101, the Overseers for the Poor paid \$498, and private individuals only \$391. Budget data for 1899-1901 is not comparable for it took a while for the new house to fill. The budget for the ministry in the new house three years later when the house reached capacity, 1902, had almost doubled to \$9,104. The state still contributed \$4,000, but income from individuals rose to \$1,924, almost a four-fold increase, and donations from the annual dinner and supper reached \$812.<sup>132</sup> When the Home burned its final mortgage the operating budget was balanced, with income and expenses at \$10,683.<sup>133</sup> The next year Home leadership passed to Anne Perley.

The first twelve years under Perley's leadership, the finances remained on the positive side of the ledger. Mortgages had been paid and repairs to the house were able to be covered by the budget. The Home purchased the vacant lot directly east of the house in 1908, which was an orchard, and eventually built a playground on it for the children and a walking space for the women. It purchased new laundry equipment in 1915, and installed a new heating plant in 1916. Handrails were added to stairs with three or more steps the same year. The operating budget began a downward spiral in 1917 when the Treasurer reported a deficit of \$3,422. The Home negotiated a loan to pay its bills. World War I interrupted normal life and the Home stopped all maintenance work except that which was essential for operation. The budget losses continued to build until they reached almost \$10,000 in 1921. The headline for the report of the Annual Meeting that year read in part: "Deficit Now Amounts to Nearly \$10,000," surely not a welcome public reminder for Home members.<sup>134</sup> The most understandable explanation for the losses was the steadily rising costs to care for the residents. The Treasurer began to report the average weekly cost per resident in 1915. That year it was \$2.88. It climbed to \$3.57 the next year, and reached \$4.34 in 1919, and continued to rise.<sup>135</sup> In addition, repairs to the house, postponed during the war, required additional expense and added to the deficit.

Through the years of the larger ministry the officers and members of the Home sustained their traditional fundraising efforts. Suppers, Donation Days, sewing parties, card parties, and an endless variety of similar events brought cash to the budget and needed goods, especially food, to the house. Proceeds from the annual dinner and supper were, for example, \$555 in 1903, \$1,030 in 1907, \$1,099 in 1910, and \$1,377 in 1921. Preparations for the dinners and suppers were not for the faint of heart. In 1915 volunteers roasted

375 turkeys for dinner, which also included the traditional sides. The volunteers for the supper, presumably they were another group than the ones who prepared the dinner, cooked 300 chickens for the chicken salad and prepared fried oysters. The net receipts were \$635.<sup>136</sup> The Home cancelled the annual dinner in 1917 because of a quarantine and in 1918-19 because of the war. The Donation Days were reported to be very successful but the detailed accounts of the donations and donors common in the Campbell Street house days do not appear in the records. One special fund raising event occurred in 1899 when the local firemen and policemen held a baseball game and donated the proceeds to the Home, which it used to pave a walk from the house to the sidewalk.<sup>137</sup> Bequests became a significant area of financial growth in the early 20th century. The Home used some of them for current expenses and invested others, and interest from the invested funds began to appear in the budgets, albeit in small amounts. One serious question is what the operating deficits would have been had the members of the Home not sustained their extensive fundraising activities.

The ministry continued to be about the residents. The officers sustained the myriad activities and events for them that they had held in the past. This included outings for residents, some for all the residents and some special to the age groups. There were annual picnics, and the traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations. Special events occurred every year. In 1903, for example, Mrs. Barbara Kahler and Lulu Arms (Mrs. A. N.) gave a cabin picnic for the women, and the Vallamont Stock Company took the children on a street car ride and to a play.<sup>138</sup> In 1904, Mrs. Perley took the women on a street car ride to Christ Church for a supper, a treat she repeated often. The Welsh Singers visited the house in 1909 and gave a concert to all the residents.<sup>139</sup> The Stopper and Fisk Orchestra played at the home on Thanksgiving Day in 1912.<sup>140</sup> For many years Elisabeth Gaus ran a kindergarten one day a week for the younger children, helping get them ready for school. Motor cars took the women to Trinity House for a supper in 1920.<sup>141</sup> The children were treated to the Indoor Circus sponsored by the Williamsport Labor Temple in 1922. The outings in various vehicles, from wagons to street cars and finally to automobiles, were a particular treat for the senior women, some of whom rarely left the house. Older residents who were able frequently attended their churches for worship. Ministerial students at Williamsport Dickinson Seminary continued to lead Sunday afternoon worship services.

The life stories of those who became part of the ministry in the new house were very similar to those who had lived in the old one. None of the residents were really friendless, but they were alone and needed companionship and a place to live. All but the orphans belonged to someone. Some of the oldest women were quite well. One 92 year old, for example, walked outside every pleasant day and cut and sewed for herself a cape to wear. Those who knew her marveled that her

mind was very clear.<sup>142</sup> A few of the senior residents were not mobile at all. Lottie Lighton, who died in 1909 after living at the home twenty-seven years, had been an invalid since 1891. Most of the women were able to do some work in the home. Many of them participated in the sewing and card parties.

The stories of the children in the new house, like those in the old one, virtually all began with some sadness. Esther Elizabeth Olsen [Figure 5] became part of the family in June, 1904 at the age of seven with her sister Edith, who was five. Their father, a Swedish coal miner, brought them to the Home when his wife died, and paid \$1 a week for each of them. She lived there seven years and later told her granddaughter that she never had a heart ache during her stay, and shared with her the routines of her life.

We got up at 6:30 or 7 o'clock in the morning and ate breakfast and then we had prayers every day. We'd have to go to the assembly room and they'd sing and have prayer. It only lasted five or 10 minutes, but it was prayer. And then we'd go up and do our work. We had a paper in the hall that told us what our work was, and nobody argued, you just went ahead and did it. We had to make our own beds, but the older girls had to make the beds where the younger kids slept. And one week we had to clean the bathrooms, and the next week maybe we'd clean the hallway. We all had certain work to do, before we could dress for school. And you should have seen that house, when we went out to school, there wasn't a thing left for any housemaid or anybody to do.

The children did not wear uniforms to school, thanks to the "sewing ladies" who made them clothes. When they came home from school they had to change to everyday dresses because they wore the school ones for an entire week. Esther remembers that the food was excellent, with fresh baked bread every day and roast meat every Sunday. When she got older she helped with the fundraising dinner. Sunday morning she and her sister and some of the other children went to Bethany Lutheran Church. She looked forward to Sunday afternoon when the Dickinson Seminary students came to lead services. She remembered that involved saying Bible verses and singing. Esther grew up and married and lived in Newberry. Her life made a full circle for after 50 years away from the Home she moved back as a senior, one of the first residents of the Williamsport Home at the Ravine Road location.<sup>143</sup>

The same year Esther arrived a man from Danville visited and asked if the Home would take his five children. His wife had died and he had secured a good job but it was in Pittsburgh. There were no relatives who could take care of his sizable family and the officers agreed to accept them. The understanding in all such cases was that once those who had left the child or children had re-established themselves



Figure 5. Esther Elizabeth Olsen is in the second row, third from left. The man hidden by the hydrangea bush is John Warner, the janitor.

financially, or created a stable home situation, they would reclaim them.<sup>144</sup> Sometimes families recovered quickly. In 1906 a husband and wife visited President Perley and asked for admission for their three little children, ages 2 ½, 5, and 7. The wife had tuberculosis and hoped to enter the sanitarium at White Haven and take advantage of its fresh air cures. The officers accepted them. Within weeks news arrived that the mother was gaining strength, giving the officers reason to be optimistic that the children would soon return to their family. There were, of course, a number of cases where there was little cause for optimism. The Home had two families of children whose mothers were in the insane hospital in Danville.<sup>145</sup> In 1912 at least two mothers who had placed their children with the Home because of failed marriages had remarried and taken their children to their new homes. The same year five children went to live with relatives whose financial situation had improved, and five of the boys were sent away because they had reached the age limit. The boys who had no family to go to were sent to the Boy's Industrial School. One of the older girls had moved to the YWCA and was attending the Commercial College in town, and two other older girls had been hired by the officers to work at the house.<sup>146</sup>

The leaders of the Home welcomed the arrival of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their ministry in 1922. They highlighted it at the Annual Meeting which President Perley convened in the Assembly Room on the afternoon of July 27. The Rev. Charles Noyes Tyndell offered the opening prayer. The female children wore white dresses and sang several songs, followed by a quartet of boys. The President presided over a brief business session, which included a substantial report from Corresponding Secretary Edith Gaus. She offered a stunning summary of the ministry:

Full 50 years have the doors of this home swung open to receive the needy little ones. They have been mothered, educated and nursed thru childhood illnesses – given all the pleasures possible until they have learned to look upon this as home indeed – and themselves as members of one big family.

For 50 years, also, this house has stood as a haven of peace and comfort to the aged. Many women, who have been left alone and burdened with the sorrows of this world have found happiness within these walls. Here, by social intercourse and the constant pressure of young lives about them – they too, feel themselves the useful members of a family. ...

In these days of over organization it is with great pride that we feel that the personal touch is maintained here.<sup>147</sup>

The main celebration was scheduled to take place in November, the anniversary month. However, the Home was forced to postpone that meeting and held it instead after the Annual Meeting in 1923. Members of the Home had decorated the Assembly Room with roses and delphinium for the evening event. David Gerry's orchestra gave a concert that lasted an hour, which a reporter said delighted young and old alike. Emerson Collins, an attorney who had studied law with Harry C. Parsons and had served in the Pennsylvania Legislature in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, gave the anniversary address. He began by asserting that the founders had acted on a "unique idea ... that of founding a home for those who are living in the shadows of life, and the little ones, with life before them." He praised the work of the presidents of the Home, especially President Perley. Whatever it had cost in dollars, the real cost was in "love, labor and sacrifice" which could not be computed. He praised the women for calling their organization a "home," which was, he asserted, the greatest institution in America. He concluded with a challenge that it was important for the community to support such institutions because they were doing an important work which was growing all the time.<sup>148</sup>

## **Sustaining and Enhancing the Ministry, 1922-1939**

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was a threshold, marking years of success and leading the way toward the future. The seventeen years to the end of the Home as the Home for the Friendless were a time of sustaining and enhancing the ministry. As the members of the Home looked to the future they did so from the lofty height of one of the oldest and most honored charitable organizations in the city and the surrounding region. An experienced group of officers was in place. The executive committee continued to direct the ministry with the support of an active Board of Managers. The Advisory Board remained ready to respond to requests. The Home had a matron who in a very short time had proven to be a successful manager and a loving shepherd of the residents. The house in Vallamont was completely full and there was a substantial waiting list for women. The building was over twenty years old and showing signs of wear, and although the executive committee frequently discussed needed repairs there were no building problems large enough to threaten the continuation

of the ministry. The major issue, and there is considerable evidence that the women understood it to be very significant, was the growing operating deficit.

The officers were, as they had always been, a group that featured persons with long years of experience, joined by a few new ones, most of them with service on the Board of Managers. Anne Perley had been the President for seventeen years, and three of those who had become vice presidents when she became president were still on the executive committee, Tinsman, Clark, and Way. Alice Hicks had been a vice president since 1910. The two new vice presidents were Permelia Gaus (Mrs. John) and Louisa Niemeyer (Mrs. Adolph), both of whom became officers in 1921. Gaus had been a Manager since 1906 and Niemeyer since 1917. The Recording Secretary was Emma Gibson (Mrs. James), in office only since 1920, but she had been an assistant to the former Recording Secretary, and prior to that the Corresponding Secretary. Edith Gaus was the new Corresponding Secretary. Sarah Canfield was the Treasurer, with six years of experience on the executive committee working with the budget.

The changes in the executive committee during these years occurred at a gradual pace. In 1928 it had almost the same membership it had six years earlier. The two new officers were Cornelia Lehman (Mrs. Charles A.), who had become Recording Secretary, and Martha Marston (Mrs. Oliver S.), who had taken the assignment of Assistant Treasurer.<sup>149</sup> Martha was President Perley's daughter, technically her step-daughter, born to Allen Perley and his first wife, but raised by Anne as her daughter. Six years later the executive committee had two new vice presidents, Bessie Clapp and Miss M. Anne Doebler, both elected from the Board of Managers, and Martha Marston had become the Treasurer.<sup>150</sup>

The major change in the leadership came when President Perley died at her home, Greystone in Vallamont, in January, 1934. She was 89 and had served the Home for twenty-nine years, almost a full third of her lifetime. She was the longest serving president in the Home's history. She had been involved in leadership roles in many local organizations but as she grew older she withdrew from all but three of them. The Daughters of the American Revolution held her attention to the end of her life. She had been Regent of the local DAR chapter from 1902-1906 and Pennsylvania State Society Regent from 1907-1911. The local DAR chapter has kept the memory of her alive by giving an annual Anne Higgins Perley Award to the Williamsport High School graduate who has achieved the highest scholastic average in American history. She never stepped away from her commitment to the ministry of Christ Episcopal Church. She was very active in St. Mary's Guild, a charter member and its first and only president, still in office when she died. But it was the Home that received her most intense attention in the final years of her life. She was deeply involved in the building programs in the ten years after

the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, convinced of the need to enhance the ministry by providing more space. Her funeral service was in her home conducted by her pastor, the Rev. Hiram R. Bennett, and she was buried in Wildwood Cemetery.

The officers passed a resolution celebrating her contributions to the ministry. They recognized her leadership in the “growth and improvement of the physical property of the institution,” and “the wise and efficient manner in which the affairs of the institution have been conducted.” They described her as a “wise counselor and friend,” and acknowledged “her guiding hand, her keen judgment, her faith and insight.”<sup>151</sup> In November, 1935 her daughter Martha presented the Home with an oil painting in her memory [Figure 6]. It was from the family collection and featured a woman surrounded by clouds looking up and holding a cross in one hand and a palm frond in the other. The Secretary reported that the title of the painting was, “My Faith Looks Up to Thee,” a phrase from a well-known Protestant hymn. The officers of the Home accepted the gift and hung it in their house, a reminder of their faithful leader and beyond that of the motive that inspired their ministry.<sup>152</sup>



Figure 6

Bessie Clapp became the new President, serving from 1934 until the Home changed its name. She had been on the Board of Managers since 1926 and was serving as a vice president when President Perley died. The officers had selected her to be acting president when Perley had become seriously ill in 1933. A year later it was an easy decision for the members to choose her to be their next president. Clapp had many things in common with Perley. Both were very active in the community, focusing on ways to serve persons in need. Both had selected the Home for the Friendless as the centerpiece of their volunteer work. Clapp had also served on the Board of Directors of the Lycoming County Community Chest and on the Board of the Children’s Aid Society. She also gave time to the Lycoming County Crippled Children’s Society.

President Clapp’s leadership style, like that of her predecessors, was to work from within the organizational structure. The new vice presidents during her leadership had served in other capacities when elected to the executive committee. Mrs. William Gibson, Jr., and Miss Elizabeth Logan became vice presidents in 1936, both after service as

Managers. In 1938, Mary Laird (Mrs. Herbert R.) became a vice president in place of Mary Tinsman who had passed away. That broke the tradition of a Hepburn on the executive committee that dated from the founding of the Home, but not for long. Mary’s daughter, Margaretta Steele (Mrs. Thomas S.) had been volunteering with the Home for years. She had been a member of the Board of Managers since 1920 and was very active in the Auxiliary, and had become its President in 1932. In 1939, the Home elected Margaretta a vice president, returning a member of the Hepburn family to an executive leadership position. Grace Brown (Mrs. Henry D.) joined her as a new vice president. The other officers remained in place through the final years of the Home.

The executive committee continued to appoint persons to the Advisory Board, which had been very helpful over the years, adopting a passive role, acting when called upon and responding with significant help when asked. The Board that faced forward from the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary was likely as strong and as representative of the leadership of the community as the first one had been. It included President Perley’s husband Allen, and John G. Reading, John B. Emery, James J. Gibson, J. Roman Way, John L. Hall, Ernest H. Davis, Dietrick Lamade, C. W. Sones, Joseph Cochran, Thomas Hammond, N. M. Edwards and Irvin W. Gleason.<sup>153</sup>

The primary task of the executive committee was to sustain the ministry and one of the most important ways it had achieved that in the past had been to find the right person to serve as matron. That had occasionally been difficult, but it was not one the committee had to face in the years after the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Sarah Bierly was in place for that occasion and remained the head of the household through 1939 and beyond, becoming the longest serving matron in the Home’s history. The officers rarely left an annual meeting without offering a word of thanks and support for her work, and almost always highlighted either her management abilities or her qualities as a sensitive and caring person. Whatever the officers said their words typically carried an overtone of amazement over her accomplishments. In 1926 Corresponding Secretary Gaus reported that Bierly was managing the house well, including “the four nurses, two laundresses, one cook, two women in the pantry, one woman in the sewing room and Mr. Oden working as janitor, together with the older girls and boys ...”<sup>154</sup> In 1933 Gaus said that Bierly, “as superintendent of the Home, has proved her worth again during these days of stress and has co-operated with the board in keeping down expenses in every way possible. She gives much credit to her helpers in the Home for their part of the work.”<sup>155</sup>

As important as management was, it was not the heart of the ministry. That was the personal side of Bierly’s work, and in that part of her role the officers made clear to her and all those involved in the Home that she excelled beyond all expectations. In 1923 Gaus called her their “good matron,”

and said many of the positive things that had happened at the house the past year were the result of “her untiring interest for the good of all.”<sup>156</sup> Two years later Gaus praised Bierly for her ability to make the house feel like a real home and not an institution.<sup>157</sup> At the Annual Meeting in 1927 the officers described Bierly as “the mother of all ...” and claimed that they believed that the key to her success was “Her interest in each individual, her economy in managing the home and her love for her work ....”<sup>158</sup> Following up on this theme the next year and linking it with the management one the officers reported: “We have not forgotten the one who keeps everything moving so smoothly and with so much system, our good superintendent, Miss Sarah Bierly, who not only is an excellent manager but a mother to sixty-four children and daughter to forty aged women. It would be impossible to give an accurate account of what she does in the Home – as much of her work is done so quietly, we only know by the results.”<sup>159</sup>

Attached to the tribute to Bierly in the Annual Report of 1928 was an intriguing comment, suggesting that the matron and the officers of the Home had been in conversation about the long term future. Edith Gaus wrote:

It has been the hope of Miss Bierly and the board that our entire building be used for women and a new building erected on the grounds to house the children. The waiting list always numbers at least fifty names of women, who have to wait so long to enter and the vacancies are few. We know not how this need will be met, but we believe the prayers will be answered and the hope realized.

We want to leave this thought with our friends and hope they too, will see the need and help us find a way to carry out such a plan.<sup>160</sup>

The officers of the Home had expressed concern about the long waiting list for seniors so this reflection could not have been surprising. But reference to a plan, as early as 1928, should have led to some action. None emerged in the immediate future, nor was such a plan linked to the change in the name of the Home more than ten years later. However, the acknowledgement of serious conversation about such a plan to separate the seniors and the children suggests a rethinking of the original vision of a caring place that would bring the two age groups together, in part so that they could, formally and informally, minister to one another.

The primary concern the officers of the Home faced as they moved forward was financial. They had an excellent matron, but also had to be sure they had the money to sustain the ministry. The deficits in the operating budget had waxed and waned over the previous five years but had refused to go away and had climbed to \$11,450 in the anniversary year.<sup>161</sup> They were exacerbated by the continuing decline in appropriations

from the state. As the Home leaders struggled with budget issues in 1922, projecting forward to 1923, they were aware that financial help might be on the way, but they were uncertain enough about it that they made no mention of it in the annual report. Silence was likely the prudent course since the year of the anniversary was the year of the first community fundraising effort for charitable organizations, and like many new things, the outcome was uncertain.

The idea for a united community fundraising campaign to support charitable organizations began in Cleveland, Ohio in 1913. It was called the Community Fund. By 1919 there were 39 similar fundraising efforts across the United States, some called Community Chests. The Board of Directors of the Williamsport Board of Trade (Williamsport-Lycoming Chamber of Commerce) took the initiative and created a small committee of inquiry in the summer of 1921 to find out if such a unified campaign might work in their city.<sup>162</sup> The results of the initial investigation were positive and Frederick K. Lundy led a committee which sponsored a dinner meeting on the topic at Pine Street Methodist Church on November 11, 1921. About 150 persons attended, representing “contributors to, and workers in, the several charitable and social welfare agencies of the City.”<sup>163</sup> Wilbur Maxwell, Secretary of the Harrisburg Welfare Federation, explained the united fundraising plan in detail. In essence, cooperating agencies would join a fundraising organization, submit their budgets to it, participate in a united fundraising campaign, and share the gifts received on a percentage basis. After a substantial question and answer period, Dr. J. K. Rishel moved a “sense of the meeting” resolution that those present were in agreement to form a Community Chest or a Community Welfare Corporation. The large crowd voted unanimously in favor of this motion. Lundy and his committee, hoping for a positive result, had a draft constitution ready and distributed it. The assembly voted for it, and thereby established in a temporary form, the Community Welfare Corporation of Williamsport, Pa. Dr. Rishel became the temporary chairman and the Secretary of the Board, W. S. Millener, became the temporary secretary. They were charged with calling a meeting to select 50 trustees, representatives of the various charitable organizations.<sup>164</sup>

The Home was not directly involved in the earliest stages of this project. However, when the Trustees were elected, three members of the executive committee, including President Perley, became trustees. In addition, Louise Munson (Mrs. Edgar), who was active in the Auxiliary became a trustee.<sup>165</sup> It turned out that getting started was the easy part. After several frustrating meetings during which no one stepped forward to lead the group, Edgar Munson, an attorney and the son of Cyrus LaRue Munson who had been one of the founders of the Board of Trade, agreed to be the President. Munson called a meeting on April 14, 1922, to decide the future. This turned out to be the crucial meeting of the nascent organization, for the question posed was whether or not to proceed. One of the

debated issues was whether to hire a campaign director from outside the area and what that person's costs would be. There were speeches against moving forward, but the executives of the charitable agencies spoke in favor of a campaign, and the Trustees voted for one.<sup>166</sup> It is not clear at what point in the process Munson stepped forward to accept the role of campaign leader, but he led the first campaign in the fall of 1922. Twelve organizations participated in an effort which raised \$90,265. Before the Welfare Corporation began about 1,800 people participated in all the organizations' appeals; the year after the first united effort over 4,000 people contributed.<sup>167</sup> Munson led the campaign the following year and then turned that work over to attorney Robert H. Thorne, who led it from 1924-27. The Community Welfare Corporation soon became the Williamsport Community Chest (The Lycoming County United Way).

The share of the first campaign gifts the Home received was \$8,900. The amount was 38% of the total receipts for the budget year 1922-23, and paid almost the same percentage of the expenses. It was enough to eat away at the deficit. Edith Gaus reported to the annual meeting that it has been an "important factor in making it possible for us to continue our work as before. When our state appropriation was cut \$6,500 a year ago we were doubtful as to whether we would be able to care for as many people as in previous years under same conditions. But the people of Williamsport, by contributing so generously to the Chest have made this possible." Gaus described the funds from the united campaign as "important," but they were really crucial to sustaining the operation of the Home. What she revealed in her report was that the executive committee had begun to think of ways to cut back on the ministry.<sup>168</sup> In 1925, the Home's share of the unified campaign was \$8,600, about 34% of the income for the operating budget. The officers reported that without this money they "hardly know what would happen to our Home."<sup>169</sup> In 1926, the Home received its largest amount to date, \$10,480, over 40% of its total receipts. It is difficult to imagine that it could have sustained its ministry without such substantial annual gifts.

The entire nation moved into a new economic reality in the fall of 1929 when the Stock Market crashed. The Community Chest drive for 1929-30 was, perhaps unexpectedly, very successful. The Home received \$11,872, still over 40% of its receipts. The economic collapse may have been too new to have much local impact, but that was not the case by 1932. Surprisingly, the drive that year was also successful. The Home received \$10,520, which was 37% of its receipts. The year 1932-33 had been, the officers reported to the membership, "a trying year for those in charge of the work of the Home, but we have been able to provide the things necessary for the health and comfort of those for whom we are responsible. We would not have been able to do this, but for the Community Chest, which has been prompt in its payments

of the share we are entitled to ...."<sup>170</sup> The contributions from the Community Chest and their percentage of the Home's income continued relatively stable through 1937, and did not slip below 30% until 1938. The leaders of the Home had a very clear perception about the primary source of their ability to sustain their ministry through the Great Depression: without the Community Chest the Home would have likely had to alter its ministry dramatically, shrinking it in ways that would have weakened it. It is very possible that the Community Chest played the same role in many of the other charitable organizations. The continuity of the work of these organizations was testimony to the foresight of the leaders of the Board of Trade in initiating the united financial campaign. It may be that no one at the Home remembered the final prophetic words of Emerson Collins, their anniversary speaker, but by 1939 they had come true: more and more the community would have to take up the burden of supporting its charitable institutions.

Managing the budget was more than participating in the Community Chest campaign and counting the receipts. The officers employed several common strategies to achieve their financial goals and were helped immensely by some unexpected events. The most common strategy was to keep expenses under control. One way they had done that in the past was to hold Donation Days, gathering in great quantities of food which offered budget relief, and they continued that tradition, especially in the Thanksgiving and Christmas seasons. There are indications that the level of giving diminished when compared to the past, possibly the result of the emergence of a number of other institutions calling for help. They also carefully monitored the funds they spent on building maintenance, seeking donors when one or another particular need arose. The budget in 1933 included an amount in a frozen bank account for maintenance, so that funds would be available for an emergency.<sup>171</sup> The officers were especially successful in getting gifts to refurbish rooms, in many cases using endowed funds left for that purpose. Medical care had never been a budget expense and physicians and the Williamsport Hospital continued to provide it free of charge.

The officers had periodically raised rates but had done so reluctantly, however common such a practice was to help balance a budget. The state had been reducing its appropriation to the Home over the years and when it made another cut in 1935 the officers decided they had little choice but to increase their income. They announced that effective January 1, 1936 the life entrance fee which had increased over the years would go from \$500 to \$600, and the boarding rate for those on old age pensions would advance from \$3 to \$4 a week.<sup>172</sup> Clothing was a significant expense, particularly for the children, most of whom were attending school, and the Home continued its traditional Sewing Day every March. Women poured into the house, sometimes as many as seventy-five of them, and made clothing for the residents. That was the tip of an iceberg since

many of the seamstresses kept making clothing through the year working in groups at their home churches. The Home Auxiliary had raised money since its founding for special projects and it continued that tradition, as well as providing gifts for the residents, especially at Christmas.

There were some important unexpected gifts that provided budget relief, or that filled a need that the Home could not have otherwise afforded. Among them was new playground equipment which arrived during the 1922-23 year, donated by A. C. Everhard and the Knights Templar.<sup>173</sup> Enhancing the playground had been on the Home's want list but there had been no funds for it. A remarkable surprise gift arrived in the spring of 1927, an Otis elevator. It was the gift of Nancy A. Howe (Mrs. David). The officers held the dedication on the Sewing Day in March. The house had needed an elevator for many years, especially to help the women living upstairs more easily become part of the group that lived downstairs. It also was a boon to the staff as they moved from one floor to the other.<sup>174</sup> The same year a generous group of citizens donated a new fire alarm system. Another surprise gift arrived in 1928 in the form of cash, a settlement from the closing of the Boys' Industrial Home which had been run for years by Mr. T. P. S. Wilson, the City Missionary, and his wife. The Home's share of the funds was \$8,174. It used the bulk of the money to build porches on the front of the house, providing more outdoor space for those living on the second floor. While this construction was underway the city was installing curbs on the streets surrounding the house in preparation for paving Campbell Street.<sup>175</sup> Bequests were always unexpected and they began to arrive in larger numbers and in much larger amounts. One of the most significant in the 1930s was \$50,000 from the estate of J. Roman Way.

Keeping the budget under control was necessary to sustain the ministry at the level it had always enjoyed. The officers were of one mind that they had accomplished that by 1933, or at least that was the year they informed the membership that "Although the Home has felt the depression, our faith is strong and we know things will soon be better and in some way we will be able to get through without depriving those in our care of the comforts they need."<sup>176</sup>

As the leaders worked to sustain the operating budget, donors stepped forward in the next ten years and enabled the Home to enhance its ministry. There were three significant gifts, each focused on expanding the space in the house, making possible a substantial improvement in the ministry. The first of these

arrived in 1922 from the estate of Miss Rosetta M. Ulman [Figure 7]. She was the daughter of Moses and Caroline Strasburger Ulman. Moses was from one of the oldest Jewish families in Williamsport. He had been a charter member of the first Hebrew congregation when it organized in 1866, the Congregation of Beth Ha-Sholom, The House of Peace. Moses became a successful businessman and in later life devoted himself to Temple affairs. His wife was one of the organizers of the Ladies' Aid Group.<sup>177</sup> That group had made contributions to the Home, and Rosetta periodically sent gifts. In 1916, for example, she sent ice cream, flowers and a cake to the Home on the anniversary of her parents' wedding.<sup>178</sup> Her interest in the Home was the source of her gift of \$25,000 for the erection of a solarium for the women in memory of her parents. Architects Fisher and Scholl designed a two story octagon shaped structure



Figure 7

which would be attached to the southwest corner of the main building, the side of the building the women occupied, and would face both Rural Avenue and Campbell Street. It would be a brick structure, matching the brick of the main building, and would feature many large windows, letting in maximum sunlight. There would be a fireplace and drinking fountain on each floor. The ceilings would have wood beams and the walls were to be finished in pale green.

President Perley chaired the building committee, with assistance from Sarah Canfield and Emma Gibson. When the Home held the groundbreaking ceremonies for the new addition the President broke the ground first and handed the shovel to Mrs. Adelaide Wheeler, at age 95 the most senior resident. After she turned some earth she passed the shovel on and other seniors took their turns. Jacob Dauber of G. V. Bennett and Company, the builder, was present to mark off the site for the new structure.<sup>179</sup> Construction took about a year. The Home held the dedication ceremony in the new solarium [Figure 8] late in the afternoon after the adjournment of the Annual Meeting in 1924. Many of Rosetta's family and friends were present. The President presided and invited her pastor to open the event with prayer. After the formal presentation of the new building by N. M. Edwards on behalf of the donor to President Perley, Rabbi Bernard H. Rosengard closed the ceremony with prayer.



Figure 8

No report of the interfaith character of the meeting has been discovered. Refreshments were served in the Assembly Room with the sounds of an orchestra in the background. Edith Gaus said in her report to the Annual Meeting that the solarium “has added to the beauty of the building as well as to the comfort and pleasure of the women now living there, and will be a joy to others making this their home in future years.”<sup>180</sup> The Home erected a plaque in recognition of the bequest. The financial arrangements were every treasurer’s dream. The gift was \$25,000 and the solarium cost \$14,594. The substantial remainder covered the cost of furnishing the parlors and the balance became an endowment for their upkeep.<sup>181</sup>

The second gift arrived the same year the first one did, a bequest from the Hannah Ulman Rosenbaum estate in the amount of \$9,050. At first there was no specific use for this gift. It remains unclear who proposed that it be used for a solarium for the children, which would match the one for the women. It would be erected on the northwest corner of the building, connecting to the children’s side. Whoever was responsible for the suggestion, once it was made it became the plan. Aside from providing substantial additional space for the ministry for the children it had the attraction that it would balance the building architecturally. The problem was that the money was well short of the cost of construction. In the spring of 1924 Lemuel Ulman, one of Moses’ sons, offered to complete the funding if the Home would accept his conditions, which were that the solarium be named the Ulman-Rosenbaum Children’s Solarium and that bronze tablets [Figures 9-10] be erected as follows: Lemuel M. Ulman in Memory of His Wife Fanny W. Ulman; Hannah U. Rosenbaum in Memory of Her Brother Ansel Ulman. The executive committee met in a special meeting the day after receiving the proposal and voted unanimously to accept it. It was an easy decision. Lemuel Ulman offered to pay \$6,500 to raise the Rosenbaum gift to the level to pay for the addition, to pay \$300 a year for his lifetime for its maintenance, and to will the Home \$10,000 to be held in trust to provide perpetual maintenance of the building.<sup>182</sup> The officers, especially Treasurer Canfield, were surely pleased. A few years later the officers welcomed Lemuel to the Advisory Board.

The Home immediately formed a building committee, chaired by President Perley. There was much less to consider this time since the plan was to copy the first solarium.

Construction took about six months and cost the exact amount of the first solarium. The children had moved in before Christmas, the boys on the first floor and the girls on the second. The parlors were bright airy rooms, like those for the women. The furnishings included tables and chairs, but the chairs were not upholstered as they were for the women.<sup>183</sup> The Home held the dedication ceremony on February 20, 1925 [Figure 11]. It began in the boys’ parlor with a prayer by Rabbi David Alpert of Temple Beth Ha-Sholom, after which, in “a beautiful manner,” he spoke of those who had made the building possible and “expressed the hope that every hour spent in the solarium might bring happiness to the children, as well as cheer and sympathy,” and then he turned the building over to President Perley. She gave a moving talk, which included the following personal response:

We thank kind providence for putting into the hearts and minds of these generous donors to make this building possible, which will add so much to the health and pleasure of our children. The gift of the first solarium was the fulfilling of my greatest desires for many, many years, and the completion of this building is the fulfilling of my wildest dreams.<sup>184</sup>

She thanked Lemuel Ulman for giving a gift during his lifetime so that he could see its benefits, and in response the children rose and thanked him. The assembled group moved to the second floor and found that the smallest children had “placed their best dollies in the room,” and some of the infants were in their cradles sleeping. One reporter’s account said that the eyes of many of the adults filled with tears.<sup>185</sup>



Figure 9



Figure 10

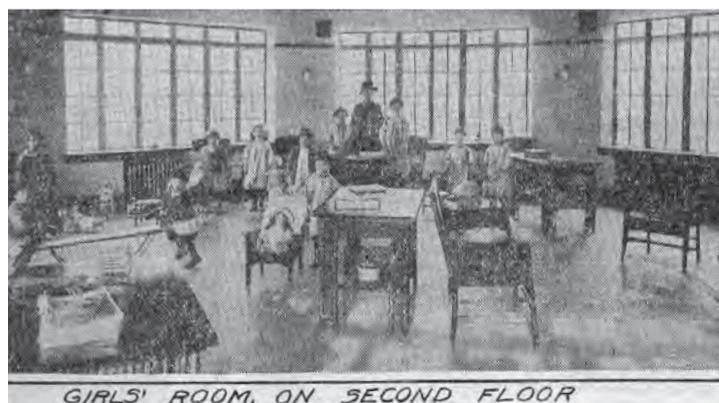


Figure 11

The solariums were a definite enhancement to the Home’s ministry. They added significant new space, important to both the young and the old. The addition of the elevator in 1927 was another enhancement, especially for the women and employees. However, none of these gifts provided for an increase in the number of residents in the house at 904 Campbell Street, which had been a constant concern of

the officers who had faced a persistent waiting list. Martha (Mattie) E. Clark stepped forward to do that, with an idea and plentiful cash. Clark had become a vice president in 1905, when Perley became president. In 1925 she wrote her will, leaving the Home \$50,000 for “the purpose of adding a wing to the northern end of the present building to provide for the future needs of the Home...”<sup>186</sup> Sometime between preparing her will and her death in 1930 she came up with another location to meet the space needs, one that did not require exterior construction. She proposed and her fellow officers concurred to use the wasted space over the Assembly Room for a new apartment for the matron, and to create ten new rooms from the matron’s former apartment and from some space available over the main dining room. The new rooms would permit the Home to admit nine new residents and hold a room in reserve for guests.

Construction of the Clark changes took place during the winter of 1931-32 and the rooms became available by the Annual Meeting of 1932. There was sufficient money to add to the living space for those who worked at the house, to increase the size of the dining room to accommodate more residents, to build new pantries, and to put money aside for the upkeep of the new rooms. The Home Auxiliary under the leadership of Margaretta Steele, with help from Agnes Rhoads (Mrs. Joseph G.), redecorated the Assembly Room.<sup>187</sup> The Home erected a plaque in Memory of Clark’s gift [Figure 12]. Her entire estate was over \$300,000, part of which she left to the Williamsport Foundation (First Community Foundation Partnership of Pennsylvania), where it continues to provide funds for community projects as the Mattie E. Clark Trust Fund.



Figure 12

These enhancements to the house, especially the substantial interior ones, caused some disruption to the life of the residents. However, the main theme in their lives was continuity with the past. This was especially true for the women, almost all of whom were 65 or over when they entered and typically in good health. Many of them lived in the house for years. The children, like those in the past, entered the house because of some sadness in the life of their families. Many were in the home because of poverty. In 1938, for example, 20 of the 44 children came from families too poor to care for them. They continued to come and go as they were adopted, left to rejoin their families, or in the case of many of the boys, aged out.

The fundamental basis for this continuity was Matron Bierly [Figure 13] and what she called her “system”. By 1925 many of the welfare agencies of the city were working together and their leaders were holding meetings to share program ideas. At one of these Bierly described her arrival at the Home five years earlier and confessed it was quite a step from nursing in a private home to a house with a total population of 118. She added that



Figure 13

“After being here a short time I formulated a system which we have followed with a few variations and consequently, I am always glad to show visitors our home at any time.”<sup>188</sup> She did not describe her system, but the key elements of it emerge from the records of the Home: careful attention to the needs and concerns of individual residents; planning and scheduling a variety of activities of interest to the members of the two age groups; sharing a sense of community by maintaining a clean and secure house; and working with the officers of the Home to resolve problems quickly. She managed to wrap all of these parts of her system with a genuine love for all those in her care. And of course, she had at her side throughout her years of service a multitude of caring volunteers, many of whom spent time with the residents on a weekly basis.

The residents experienced this system in many ways. Bierly noted that when problems arose as they often did given the mixed family of young and old, she would meet with those involved and “with the help of prayers” the issues were often resolved. The women surely responded well to her belief that their rooms, although small were “all their own until the final summons.”<sup>189</sup> Some of the women continued to help with the smallest children. As for the older children, they were in school for a major part of each year and they had household duties throughout the year. Edith Gaus continued her kindergarten class for the pre-school children in the 1920s.

An important part of Bierly’s job was to manage the calendar. Many of the activities that the residents had enjoyed in the past were continued, and new opportunities emerged over the years. Automobile rides were very popular, some of them furnished by the Kiwanis club. The Majestic Theater arranged for free admission to shows for both age groups, often many times a year for the children. By the 1930s, other theaters were also providing tickets to their shows. The Elks provided band concerts. The King’s Daughters and the ministerial students from Dickinson Seminary continued to come weekly to spend time with the residents and to hold Sunday afternoon worship services. Women’s groups from the churches were frequent visitors as they had been from the beginning of the Home, sometimes holding card parties. President Perley often

arranged for the women to visit her home, not many blocks north of the house, for afternoon entertainments. In 1932-33 the YMCA invited the boys to use their swimming pool and the YWCA invited the girls to use theirs. The Community Theater offered the Home 20 tickets for the girls to see the play "Little Women." Mildred Van Zandt (Mrs. Earl) and Mrs. Lulu Cole sponsored a Girl Reserves group and arranged for several outings and hikes. The women could participate in the weekly religious meetings sponsored by the Billy Sunday Brotherhood and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.<sup>190</sup> The economic depression seemed to have little or no impact on the activities available to the residents.

A few of the personal stories of the residents have survived. They provide interesting glimpses of life in the house in the years after the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Bailey was four and his younger brother three when their father placed them with the Home after their mother died. In 1923, Bailey had an unforgettable journey. It began when he swallowed a quarter he found on the playground and it lodged in his throat. Other children called Matron Bierly who rushed him to the hospital, which fortunately was just across the street. After physicians failed to dislodge the coin, they encouraged the Home to take him to Jefferson Hospital in Philadelphia. Bailey also had a cleft palate and Dr. Klump suggested that while Bailey was at Jefferson the Home arrange to have that corrected. Bailey had not been able to speak plainly. The adventure continued when Bierly rushed Bailey to the Park Hotel train station only to discover that the afternoon train was pulling out. A railroad official called ahead and had the train held at the Market Street station, about a mile to the east, until Bierly and Bailey could reach it. A similar thing happened in Harrisburg. The express for Philadelphia was due to leave ten minutes before the travelers were due to arrive but the railroad held up the train so they could make it. The two operations were very successful, the coin removed and the palate repaired, both gifts of the hospital and the physicians. Allowing several weeks for recovery Bierly went to Philadelphia to get Bailey. She took him a new blue suit and on the way home discovered that he spoke quite clearly. The Home had a welcome back dinner followed by ice cream. Bailey was very restless his first night and Bierly understood that he was missing his friends at the hospital. She asked how she might help and he wondered if one of the older girls, Dorothy, might watch over him. Bailey's journey over, he became a normal, talkative boy.<sup>191</sup>

Betty Johnson's family broke up when she was 4 and no one in the larger family wanted her. She remembered that she "rolled with the flow" for a couple of years when two women, apparently volunteers with the Home, took her there, sometime in 1932 [Figure 14]. Rejected at first because she did not live in Lycoming County, a search of her records proved that she had been born in the county and the Home accepted her. There were no children at the house the day she arrived, a Saturday, but she quickly discovered they were

all at the movies, a weekly event. She lived upstairs with the girls and learned various domestic skills, including cooking, cleaning, and ironing. The house, she discovered, was really a home to all the residents. The rules were few: "be on time for meals, help in the pantry and to clear tables, darn socks, help with the smaller children and take your troubles to Miss Bierly after supper." Bedtime was at 9 o'clock and some of the older girls who had a nickel would occasionally sneak out to buy sweets at a store just down the street. Saturday mornings were the time when three girls were chosen to change the beds and help hang the wash. The dorms had between 14 and 20 beds and each child had a drawer for personal underwear and nightclothes. She remembered that the "outer clothes were kept in a big closet and the quicker you got to the closet in the morning the better dressed you could be." Also on Saturdays the matron steeled herself for "a battle royal when it was time for each child to take two tablespoons of cod liver oil."

The children went to church on Sundays, attending the denominations their families belonged to, walking to the churches which were close. Members of Grace Methodist Church on Campbell Street below West 4<sup>th</sup> Street remember a group of children coming every Sunday. After church the children returned to a big dinner topped off with dumplings and sticky buns. Betty remembered that she enjoyed many entertainments. She was very fond of her roller skates, which carried her many places around the city. She began to work when she was about 11, taking care of the children in the Lehman family, and she later did pantry work at the house. She moved out of the house to live with a family for a couple of years and then moved back. She was the oldest girl and had a room of her own. One rule was that the girls could not talk to their boyfriends. She recalled that the girls often broke the rule by meeting the boyfriends under a large tree in the yard, dispersing quickly if the matron approached. She graduated from high school and soon left the area for a civil service job in Washington, D. C. She married and is now Betty Johnson Harwell. She formed a strong bond with Matron Bierly, and felt she was very important in her life. Betty once asked her why she had never married and she said "that she had never met a man with a name she liked better than her own."<sup>192</sup>



Figure 14. Betty Johnson appears fourth from left.

The Home served its residents well in the years since the anniversary, moving along the pathways that had succeeded in the past. Once the officers brought the budget under control with help from the Community Chest and bequests, and the house had space for more women, the management of the Home flowed along with little disruption. When Bessie Clapp became President she did not announce any special initiative. However, within a short time she decided to take the lead in dealing with a long standing issue: the name of the Home. The women who named it the Home for the Friendless did so with every good intention, using a term in use at the time. However, by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the name seemed not only dated, but misleading. Newspaper editors and members of the home alike recognized that the residents were not only not friendless, but that they were members of a loving extended family. Advocates for changing the name, including President Perley in the late 1920s, ran into what appeared to be serious legal barriers. Concern about the name persisted. Inquiries which the officers made in the mid-1930s indicated that the process of changing the name, while difficult, was not impossible.

Persuaded to proceed by this news, President Clapp appointed a committee of three, Lenna Person (Mrs. John E.), Ann Doebler, and Elizabeth Klump (Mrs. George), in September, 1938, to propose a new name and recommend it to the Board. She explained this action to a newspaper reporter.

The board has felt, as Williamsporters of the past and of the present have felt, that the name 'Home for the Friendless' has been unsuited to the institution.... Certainly those who have been ministered unto by this splendid institution in the 64 years since it was founded by the women of Williamsport have not been 'friendless.' The very existence of such a home for the shelter of the young and the old has been an expression of friendliness. The board is pleased that it is able to announce that, after all these years, a happier, more befitting name is to be substituted.<sup>193</sup>

The "happier" name the members chose was The Williamsport Home. The legal process took about a year. The Home for the Friendless became The Williamsport Home at the very end of 1939 and the new name began to be used at the beginning of 1940.

The Home for the Friendless received a remarkable present the year the officers changed its name. The *Grit* Publishing Company had established the *Grit* Merit Award in 1933, to recognize persons who had made "extraordinary and unselfish" contributions to the "welfare of Williamsport and its citizens." It was the ultimate local service award, given to the community's most distinguished citizens. William R.

Waldeisen and R. Ralph Lehman were the first recipients. Two women had received the award, Ida Hays McCormick in 1935 and Emma Way in 1937, both active in the Home's ministry. In 1939 *The Grit* recognized John E. Person and Bessie Clapp. [Figure 15] She had been involved in many organizations which cared for people in need and had been a "quiet philanthropist" in her donations to many organizations. However, *The Grit* recognized her for her service to the Home for the Friendless. The formal citation called it by its new name: "For Her Generosity of Time and Self in Philanthropic Activities, And Her Sympathetic Understanding of the Problems of Others, Especially Those of the Williamsport Home."<sup>194</sup> *The Grit* did not recognize organizations, but without detracting from President Clapp's personal accomplishments, it is not a far reach to understand this award as confirmation of the Home's success and standing in the community. It had been the first orphanage and the first home for the elderly in the city and it had not only survived but had thrived, providing a place for young and old who faced difficult circumstances in their lives to find shelter, a quality life, and hope.



Figure 15

## Into the Future

The change of the name of the Home for the Friendless did not mean the end of its ministry, but it marked the beginning of what became a new organization. The Williamsport Home was led by President Clapp until 1945. Matron Bierly remained in place until she retired in 1952, setting a remarkable record of service. The number of children in the Home gradually decreased and reached 10 in 1953. The Home closed out its ministry to children in 1958. There were other organizations in place to care for needy children. The Home remodeled its house to care for more women as the children were leaving. As the number of residents in the Home increased the officers realized the need for more space. They broke ground for a new building at the north end of the city in 1974. On the occasion of the dedication of the building on November 1, 1975, Mary McGovern (Mrs. Peter J.) a past president and the Chair of the Building Committee, chose to unite the present ministry with the past when she quoted President Hepburn's words on the occasion of the 25th anniversary: "We would like to record with feelings of unfeigned gratitude to our Heavenly Father our thanks in being permitted to arrive successfully at this point in our existence."<sup>195</sup>

## End Notes:

1. "Their Silver Jubilee," Annual Report, 1898, Box 1, Folder 9, 359, in The Home for the Friendless Manuscript Collection, The Lycoming County Historical Society Archives. Williamsport, PA. Hereafter cited: HF.
2. Ibid.
3. *The First Annual Report of the Woman's Christian Association of Williamsport, PA* (1874), 11-12, HF Box 4, Folder 1. Hereafter cited as *First Annual Report*.
4. Ibid., 14-15.
5. Ibid., 15.
6. Ibid., 12.
7. Ibid., 15.
8. Annual Report, 1878, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 310.
9. The decision to find the given names of the women involved has led to extensive searches, undertaken primarily by Mary Sieminski, with help from the Lycoming County Genealogical Society.
10. Annual Report, 1878, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 310.
11. *First Annual Report*, HF Box 4, Folder 1, 4.
12. Ibid., 4-8.
13. Ibid., 6.
14. See the reminiscences of Elizabeth Hepburn and Mary Ransom. Annual Report, 1898, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 359; Annual Report, 1905, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 381.
15. *First Annual Report*, HF Box 4, Folder 1, 9.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 10.
18. Ibid., 11.
19. Ibid., 12.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid., 11.
22. Ibid., 13.
23. Annual Report, 1898, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 359.
24. *First Annual Report*, HF Box 4, Folder 1, 9.
25. "Home of the Friendless," *Gazette and Bulletin*, June 24, 1875.
26. "Home for the Friendless," Ibid., November 30, 1874.
27. Ibid.
28. Annual Report, 1898, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 359.
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39. Charter, 1873, Amended Charter, 1876, 6th, HF Box 4, Folder 40.
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41. Ibid., 5th.
42. HF Box 3, Folder 36.
43. The members of the Home for the Friendless often referred to the "Home" in two contexts: the house where their ministry was located; the name of their organization. "Home" is used in this study to refer to the organization, and "house" to the building, unless such use might cause confusion. The use of "Home" in quotations has not been changed.
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58. Annual Report, 1899, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 361.
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75. Annual Report, 1879, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 314.
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84. Annual Report, 1877, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 306.
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87. Annual Report, 1892, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 340.
88. Annual Report, 1908, HF Box 1, Folder 6, 57.
89. Annual Report, 1891, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 339; Annual Report, 1896, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 349.
90. Annual Report, 1892, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 340.
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98. Annual Report, 1892, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 340.
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120. Annual Report, 1921, HF Box 2, Folder 1, 230.
121. Annual Report, 1909, HF Box 1, Folder 6, 115.
122. Annual Report, 1903, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 366.

123. Annual Report, 1913, HF Box 1, Folder 7, 158.
124. Annual Report, 1915, HF Box 1, Folder 11, 139.
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129. "Won't You Help Clear The Debt?" *Gazette and Bulletin*, July 31, 1903 attached to Annual Report, 1903, HF Box 1, Folder 9, 372.
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# A Glimpse into *Art Collecting* in Williamsport

by *Dr. Amy Golahny*



**Anonymous, Italian, ca. 1850: 'My Faith Looks Up to Thee', oil on canvas, measurements: 52 by 36, approximately.**

THE OIL PAINTING *FAITH*, A RECENT LONG-TERM LOAN TO THE TABER MUSEUM, LYCOMING COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, from the Williamsport Home offers a glimpse into art collecting in Williamsport by its prominent residents, and their business and philanthropic interests. Although we do not have specific information about its artist and date, we may suppose that the painting is a copy created in Italy from an Italian original, made for the tourist market during the nineteenth century.

A robed woman stands amidst the clouds. She holds a large cross held in her right hand, and a palm frond in her left. These identify her as the personification of Christian Faith, and further with martyred saints. She gazes upward, toward the heavens for the source of her own faith in a higher divinity. The luminous clouds open behind the cross to reveal a golden light.

Piecing together the little information we have, we surmise that this oil painting was a souvenir from Italy, acquired by Mr. Allan Putnam Perley and his second wife on a trip to Florence, before 1896. In that year, Laura VanNess Stuart (1834–1926), who taught art for a time at Dickinson Seminary in Williamsport, Pennsylvania (now Lycoming College), published a list of the notable works of art in local collections.<sup>1</sup> After mentioning several Madonnas, she wrote, “At Mr. A.P. Perley’s is an exquisite painting from Florence FAITH...” Such paintings, displayed in private houses, reinforced Christian values and church teachings.

The Perley family resided at 820 Vallamont from about 1893 on; the residence was rebuilt by Eber Culver as a grand stone mansion in 1901, called Greystone. The painting hung there until given to the Williamsport Home in 1935 and the house was sold at about the same time.

The minutes for the Williamsport Home, then known as the Home for the Friendless, of November 12, 1935 (page 70) acknowledge this gift: “A Large picture 'My Faith Looks Up to Thee' was given to the home by Mrs. Marston in memory of her mother Mrs. Perley our late President—This will be hung on the East Wall.” An additional notation indicates the painting was donated November 9. The brass nameplate is inscribed: “In memory of Anne Higgins Perley President 1905-1934.”

Anne Higgins Stowell Perley (1844-1934) was the second wife of Allen Putnam Perley (Maine, 1845-Williamsport 1926). He was a major business leader in the community; he had a thriving lumber business and served as director of the West Branch National Bank. His first wife Clara Scott Lovejoy Perley (1845-1886) was the mother of his five children. These include Martha Caffey Perley Marston (1879-1956), who bequeathed the painting *Faith* to the Williamsport Home in memory of her stepmother, who had been actively involved in its governance and served as its president from 1905 until her death in 1934. The Perleys belonged to Christ Episcopal Church, and would have been close friends with James Vanduzee Brown. The importance of this connection is both familial and artistic. Anne, the second wife of Allan



Perley mansion, 820 Vallamont, 1901, postcard.

Perley, was a sister of Carile Cone Higgins Brown, the wife of James V. Brown. The Browns collected art to furnish their large mansion on East Third Street; displayed in their house were the two neoclassical marbles of Ruth and Beatrice Portinari, now in the foyer of the James V. Brown Library, Williamsport.<sup>2</sup> The Perleys acquired *Faith* in Italy, just as the Browns acquired their marbles there, and adorned their house with their souvenirs.

In Williamsport, certain religious images in churches were favored. Along Mulberry Street, the Perleys' church, Christ Episcopal, was a short block away from First Presbyterian Church. Both churches were among the older and wealthier houses of worship in the city. Among its large stained glass windows was the triad, Faith, Hope and Charity. Each virtue is represented by a traditional attribute: Faith, the cross; Hope, the anchor; and Charity, two children. Each represents a fundamental aspect of Christianity: faith in salvation, steadfast hope that it is possible, and charitable kindness to others. These theological virtues would have been among the city's comforting images.



Anonymous, Faith, Hope and Charity, Stained Glass Window, First Presbyterian Church, ca. 1894, west wall.

The Perley *Faith* belongs to the tradition of representing allegorical concepts in human form. Although this tradition dates back to the ancient Greeks, it flourished from the Medieval and Renaissance eras, with series of

virtues and vices. The cross identifies the stately woman clearly as embodying the virtue Faith, but her palm frond lends a secondary meaning of martyrdom. During the nineteenth century, haloes became somewhat optional, so, for example, the window in First Presbyterian includes haloes, but our painting does not. For the Perley family, however, the painting held personal significance, and, after it was donated to the Williamsport Home, the image held meaning for those who lived and worked there.

#### NOTES

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