



# The Grey Lady

OF  
WILLARD LIBRARY

EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

*Enjoy this brief history of  
the ghostly Hostess  
of Indiana's most  
famous haunted  
library.*

*Feel free to  
roam about,  
snap photos,  
or ask questions.*



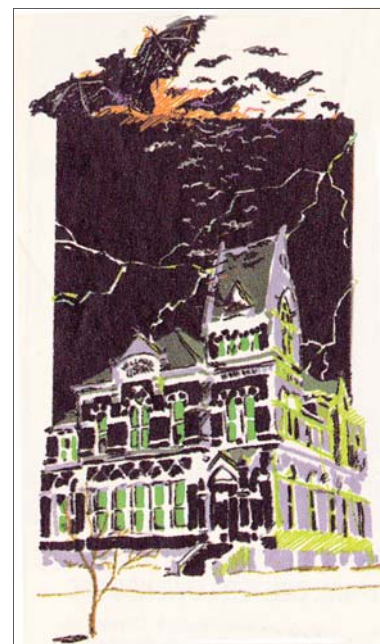


## History of Willard Library

Founded by local philanthropist Willard Carpenter in 1885, Willard Library is the oldest public library building in the state. Willard Carpenter wanted to leave a lasting legacy in Evansville, a town he had helped to build through his political and business involvement, and his dream was to build a Willard College for women. Because he had lost much of his fortune through some unfortunate business investments, he was encouraged instead to build this awesome library.

Designed by James and Merritt Reid, the Victorian Gothic library was intended “for the use of the people of all classes, races, and sexes, free of charge forever.” For more than 125 years it has served that purpose, and will continue to do so for many years to come.

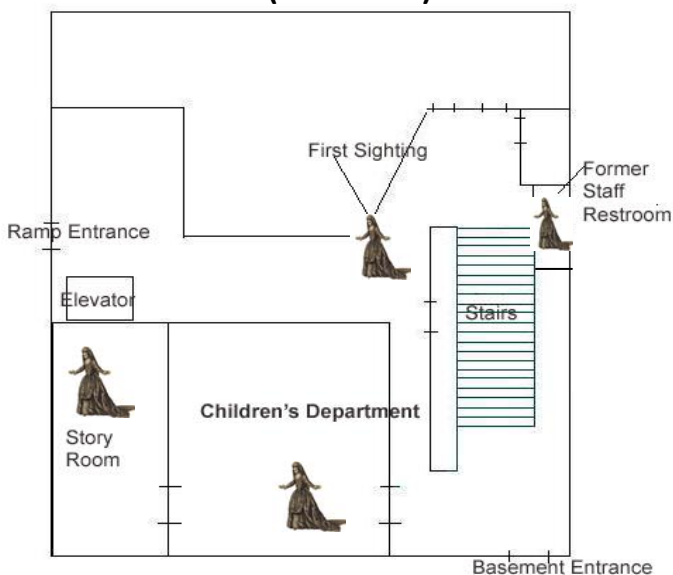
Illustration by Larry Fink. Courtesy Evansville Courier & Press.



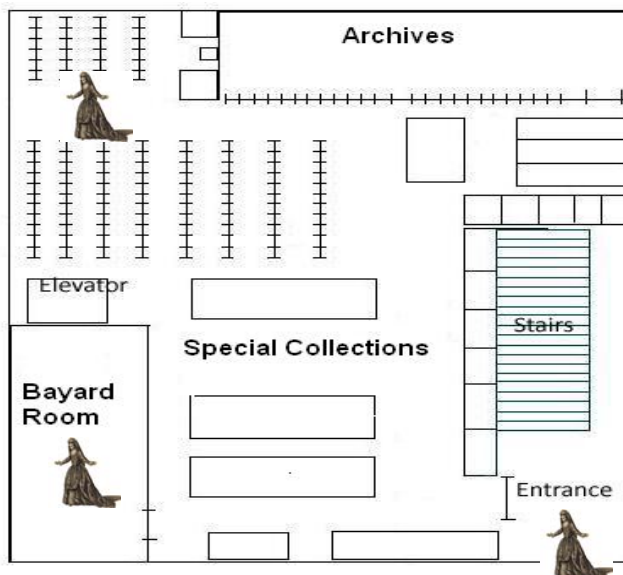
## Can You Find the Grey Lady?

The floor plans below show the areas where the Grey Lady has been sighted. If you look closely, you’ll see where the Grey Lady has made her presence known. The next page will tell you more about several run-ins with our favorite ghost.

### Children’s Department (Basement)



### Special Collections/Archives Departments (2nd Floor)



- Ladies will sometimes experience the feeling of someone touching their hair or earrings while in the library.
- The Grey Lady seems to like chairs. She likes to pull them out from under tables and a couple of people have even felt her cold presence while sitting in a chair.
- The Grey Lady has a very strong scent that some people describe as lilac or lavender.
- Many people have heard footsteps when no one is around, or books falling off the shelves when it seems impossible for them to fall.
- The Grey Lady is known by her chilly atmosphere.





## Children's Department (Basement)



The legend of the Grey Lady originated on a cold winter morning in 1937. The library's Custodian came in at 3 a.m. to fire up the furnace for the day, as was his custom. The furnace was located in the basement, near what is today the Children's Department. Using a flashlight and looking down to see where he was going, the Custodian headed for the furnace room. On his way he nearly bumped into a figure. When he looked up, he saw a female wearing a long dress and a grey shawl. As he stared at her, she seemed to fade into the darkness.

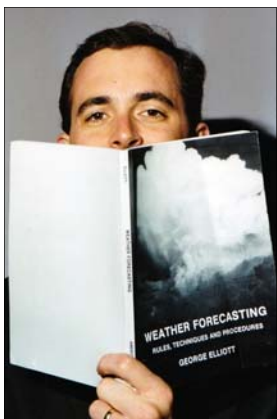
Longtime Children's Librarian Ms. Margaret Maier (left) had the most experiences with the Grey Lady, as she worked in the Children's Department. While the children's area was being remodeled, the Grey Lady even followed her home where she stayed until the renovation was completed. Ms. Margaret believed she and the ghost had formed a special bond, but she still didn't like the Grey Lady following her home.

A number of stories are told about books falling off of the shelves. A former Library Director once instructed employees to no longer tell patrons about the Grey Lady, or even that she existed. A few days later, a patron asked Assistant Children's Librarian Anita Glover about the Grey Lady, and she replied, "If she was here, she's not here anymore." Immediately a book called *Betsy's Wedding* fell off of the shelf.



Prior to the basement remodeling, Special Collections Librarian Joan Elliot Parker entered the basement restroom, locked the outer door and entered a stall. She then heard the two faucets running water into the sink. Parker went out and turned off the faucets—but no one else was in the restroom and the door was still locked.

## Special Collections/Archives Departments (2nd Floor)



Jeff Lyons (left), the popular Chief Meteorologist at WFIE in Evansville, has experienced an encounter with the Grey Lady. He came to Willard Library early one morning with his cameraman and a couple of librarians. They went up to the second floor and Lyons asked if they could "set up" a shot. As the librarians were telling him that they would not set up a pre-staged event, several books slid off of a shelf!

One night, when Don Baker was the Director of the library, a security alarm went off. Two policemen and Baker arrived at the library at the same time. One of the policemen and Baker went in to scope out the scene. Following normal procedure, one officer remained in his squad car to watch in case anyone exited the building. While he waited, he saw a woman in the upstairs window and what he believes was a man standing behind her. When Baker and the other officer came out, he asked them if they had caught the people. They insisted no one else was in the building. When Baker suggested that the officer may have seen the ghost, the officer said he had never heard of the Grey Lady before!

## Bayard Room (2nd Floor)

Our current Children's Librarian Rhonda Mort came to Willard Library for a meeting before she came to work here. The meeting took place in the Bayard Room and was standing room only. Rhonda noticed one empty chair and sat down. While she was sitting there, she became unbearably cold and also noticed that the people sitting on either side of her were leaning away from her. She decided to leave for a few moments and got warm again. When she returned, the chair was still empty, even though people were still standing. Later, after she came to work at Willard, she tried to explain the occurrence to Greg Hager, the Director of Willard Library. When she went to show him the chair, it was no longer there, and Hager said to his knowledge there had never been a chair in the Bayard Room like the one she described.





## Adult Services Department 1st Floor

### The Elevator

There haven't been any Grey Lady sightings on the 1st floor, but there have been a couple of very interesting unexplained experiences.

A former Custodian got on the elevator on the 1st floor early one morning and pushed the button to go down, but nothing happened. He tried a couple of more times, but nothing worked. Frustrated, he said out loud, "I want to go down." And that worked!

Also, before shelves blocked the view of the elevator from the Berry Plastics building, employees working night shift there would often report seeing Willard's elevator going up and down all night.



### Louise Carpenter

A picture of Willard Carpenter's daughter, Louise Carpenter, hangs on the 1st floor. Although we don't know who the ghost really is, some people suspect it might be her. One time, two young ghost hunters came in to seek out the Grey Lady. They stopped when they saw Louise's picture and one commented that she wasn't very attractive. Later, the same person said she felt quite unsettled during the rest of her visit to the library—possibly because she insulted Louise!

### The Grey Lady in the Media

#### Websites dedicated to Willard Library:

[www.willard.lib.in.us](http://www.willard.lib.in.us)

[www.facebook.com/pages/Willard-Library-of-Evansville-Indiana/116687743349](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Willard-Library-of-Evansville-Indiana/116687743349)

#### Friends of Willard Library (FOWL):

[www.willard.lib.in.us/friends\\_of\\_willard\\_library/index.php](http://www.willard.lib.in.us/friends_of_willard_library/index.php)

#### Online stories about the Library/Grey Lady:

<http://skivis.wordpress.com/2010/02/14/the-coolest-library-ever/>

#### Websites to view the Ghost Cam:

[www.libraryghost.com](http://www.libraryghost.com)

[www.willardghost.com](http://www.willardghost.com)

#### Books containing stories about the Grey Lady:

*Haunted Indiana* by Mark Marimen

*Haunted Travels of Indiana* by Mark Marimen

#### TV Appearances:

Discovery Channel's *Real Ghost Hunters*

Syfy Channel *Ghost Hunters*

Travel Channel *Ghost Adventures*

#### Book about Willard Library:

*Where There's A Willard* (on sale at Willard Library)



Written and designed by Erin Bowen, Hannah Ganote, Peggy Newton and Shawn Whiting.  
We extend our sincere thanks to Betty Palmer for her tireless research and dedication to Willard Library and the Grey Lady.

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