

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House)

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 62 Oak Road

Not for publication:

City/Town: Katonah

Vicinity:

State: NY County: Westchester Code: 119

Zip Code: 10536

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local: —

Public-State: —

Public-Federal: —

Category of Property

Building(s): —

District: X

Site: —

Structure: —

Object: —

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

6

—

—

—

6

Noncontributing

\_ buildings

\_ sites

\_ structures

\_ objects

\_ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 6

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

Designated a National Historic Landmark

OCT 16 2012

by the Secretary of the Interior

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**4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this \_\_\_ nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting or Other Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: Domestic Sub: single dwelling

Current: Recreation and Culture Sub: museum

**7. DESCRIPTION**

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19<sup>th</sup> and Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals: Dutch Colonial Revival

**MATERIALS:**

Foundation: stone  
Walls: wood  
Roof: asphalt  
Other:

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.****Introduction**

Stepping Stones is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with Alcoholics Anonymous, the recovery group whose mission is to assist alcoholics in finding and maintaining sobriety and under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with William Griffith (Bill) Wilson and Lois Burnham Wilson. Along with Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith, Bill Wilson was a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the author of four books, including the best seller, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). Wilson disseminated the idea of alcoholism as a disease among the general public and his Twelve Steps program became a model for the treatment of addiction. Through the Twelve Steps program, AA has enabled, and continues to enable, millions of people around the world to achieve and maintain permanent sobriety. Wilson and Smith also helped significantly alter the public's perception and understanding of alcoholism and alcoholics. Although AA promoted and continues to promote the idea of anonymity, Wilson---or Bill W. as he became known to AA members---became both the public face of AA and an inspiration for millions of struggling alcoholics. Lois Wilson, Bill Wilson's wife, was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for family members of alcoholics, and the founder of Alateen, a group for the children of alcoholics. Like AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen have also grown to include an international membership, with chapters in 115 countries.

**Historic and Present Physical Appearance<sup>1</sup>**

Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson from 1941 until 1988, is located at 62 Oak Road in the village of Katonah in the town of Bedford in northern Westchester County, New York. The property consists of five lots of land that total 8.1 acres. The suburban setting is hilly and wooded, and a small stream winds its way through a valley in the northeastern section of the property. Neighboring houses are widely spaced and the setting is one of privacy and quiet. The buildings are accessed by asphalt and gravel driveways and are connected by flagstone and gravel walkways.

The property contains six buildings, all contributing: the main residence, pump house, and 1920s garage, which were all extant when the Wilsons acquired the property in 1941; the studio and 1950s garage, which were constructed by Bill Wilson; and the early 1980s building that contains office space, the foundation archives, and an apartment. The main house is furnished and decorated exactly as Lois Wilson left it upon her death, with the Wilsons' belongings still in place. Areas of lawn and planted gardens remain around the main house, 1950s garage, and studio.

The buildings vary in size and construction; the original structures are wood-framed, whereas the Wilson additions are constructed of concrete masonry units. All are finished with similar materials and colors to create a unified appearance: shingle siding painted chocolate brown, white-painted casings and trim, and doors painted a bright blue. The office/archives/apartment was constructed of materials designed to match the main house. The property is virtually intact from the period of significance.

**Main House (contributing building)**

The main house was constructed ca. 1920 as a summer residence in the Dutch colonial style. It is set back from the road and accessed via a long asphalt drive. The one-and-a-half story house is rectangular in plan, with porches appended to the front (north) and rear (south) façades. It is built into a hillside, and a portion of the cellar is exposed on the north and east elevations. It has a fieldstone foundation and the front porch foundation

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret Gaertner, "Stepping Stones," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2003), Section 7.

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is constructed of concrete masonry units. The wood-framed walls are finished with wood shingles painted brown. The window openings have plain board casings, sills, and drip caps and six-over-six double-hung wood sash all painted white. Most of the windows have aluminum, triple-track storm, and screen units. The gambrel roof has flared eaves and is finished with asphalt shingles. The rake is finished with a plain fascia board and a simple shingle molding. The eaves are finished with plain fascia boards, and the rafter ends are visible underneath. All are white, as are the aluminum gutters and leaders. A large, off-center stucco-finished chimney penetrates the ridge.

The main, or north façade, has four bays. The flared eave of the gambrel roof extends to form a porch over the entrance door – a fifth bay – at the center of the façade. A second door at the east end leads to the kitchen. Four shed-roofed dormers with six-over-six double-hung sash are evenly spaced across the gambrel roof. The pitch of the upper roof extends and forms the dormer roofs; the faces of the dormers are recessed into the lower roof plane. The white dormer faces and cheeks contrast with the brown shingles on the roof. At the eave, white painted rafter ends and white aluminum gutters are visible.

The west elevation is dominated by the gambrel profile and flared eaves of the gable end. Fenestration consists of evenly spaced, six-over-six double-hung sash – four at the first story and two at the second story – and a four-light octagonal attic window.

A wood-framed, screened-in porch at grade dominates the south elevation. The gambrel roof has four recessed shed-roofed dormers with six-over-six sash on this side as well.

The east elevation has a large raised fieldstone foundation as this side is where the ground slopes away from the house. The main part of the house is wood-shingle siding with four six-over-six double-hung sash windows on the first floor and one six-over-six double-hung sash window centered in the middle of the elevation on the second floor. As on the west elevation there is a four-light octagonal attic window.

The first floor is divided into thirds. A large living room occupies the entire center portion. The entrance door in the north wall leads to the front porch and French doors in the south wall lead to the screened-in back porch. A large stone fireplace on an interior west wall dominates the room. The ceiling has wood beams. A winding stair in the east wall leads to the second floor. In the eastern third, a kitchen occupies the north corner and a bedroom the south corner. The kitchen contains a 1930s gas stove, a 1920s sink, a 1950s dishwasher, a ca. 1980 refrigerator, a Hoosier cabinet, open as well as closed cabinets, and a porcelain-topped table with three chrome chairs. The bedroom is known as Helen's Room, after Bill Wilson's half-sister, who lived in the house. It contains a small elevator, installed in the early 1980s to help Lois Wilson access the second floor. Between the two rooms is a bathroom. The western third of the house contains two bedrooms with a bathroom in the middle. These rooms are raised slightly from the living room, with two steps at their doors.

Most of the second floor is a large room that the Wilsons used as a library. A winding stair in the middle of the room is enclosed with a railing and leads down to the first floor. Lois's elevator stands to the south of the stair railing. A large stone fireplace occupies the interior west wall while dormer windows in the north and south wall provide daylight. At the west end of the second floor is Bill's and Lois's bedroom. The east wall is dominated by the rear of the central fireplace. The Wilsons added a small shower room under the eaves and later a small bathroom with a toilet and a small tub.

When the Wilsons acquired Stepping Stones in 1941, it was an unfinished summer house. There was no furnace and the second-floor rooms were not even painted. Bill Wilson installed a salvaged coal furnace in the cellar and a holding tank for water in the attic, because the pump provided inadequate pressure. Lois applied her

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decorating talents to refinishing floors, installing linoleum, painting walls, stitching window coverings and slip covers, and reupholstering furniture. Later work included adding a bathroom and a shower to the second-floor bedroom, and an elevator to assist Lois in reaching the second floor.

The entire interior of the house today is furnished exactly as it was upon the death of Lois Wilson in 1988. It includes many antiques acquired from both of their families, household items such as glassware and china, and various personal items including large collections of photographs and printed materials relating to their lives.

“Wit’s End (studio) (contributing building)

Bill Wilson’s studio, known as “Wit’s End,” was built in the late 1940s by Bill and an AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) friend. It is a small, one-story building constructed of concrete blocks, with a shed-roofed addition on the west elevation. Vents near the bottom of the walls suggest that it is built upon an inaccessible crawl space. The studio has a shallow-pitched, standing-seam metal roof and vertical board siding on the gable ends on the north and south elevations. The south elevation contains the entry door and a three-light steel casement window. Windows dominate the east elevation; a pair of steel casement sash flanks a large picture window. A chimney constructed of concrete blocks runs up the north elevation with a window on either side of the chimney. The colors of the studio – white, brown, and blue painted sash – mimic those of the main house.

The interior of the studio consists of two rooms: one in the main body of the structure and one in the addition. The main room has paneled walls and a carpeted floor. Bill Wilson’s desk, bookshelves, and a daybed are still in place.

Old Garage (contributing building)

The “old” garage (ca. 1920) is a small, wood-framed structure with a shallow-pitched gable roof. The structure has concrete masonry unit foundations, wood-shingled walls, and an asphalt shingle roof. Simple shingle moldings on plain fascia boards trim the gable ends and eaves. There is a large door in one gable end wall and a small window opening in the other; both openings have been filled in with plywood. The shingled walls are painted brown, the trim is white, and the concrete foundation is unfinished. The 1920s garage was standing when the Wilsons acquired the property in 1941 and relates to the old driveway. After the Wilsons acquired adjacent property, they rerouted the driveway and constructed the “new” garage.

New Garage (contributing building)

The “new” garage, built by Bill Wilson in 1951, was a two-bay, concrete block structure with wood-shingled gable ends. The roof is asymmetrically pitched and finished with asphalt shingles and plain fascia boards at the gable ends and eaves. The shingles and concrete blocks are painted brown, the trim and roll-up garage doors are white and the board and batten door is a bright blue. A small shed roof addition has been appended to the west wall; this space apparently was used to store tools. The addition has a dry-laid, fieldstone foundation, wood-shingled walls, and a shallow-pitched, asphalt-shingled shed roof. The front or north façade is dominated by the asymmetric gable end and contains a pair of roll-up, paneled garage doors with glazing and a small opening to access the loft attic. A large pair of board and batten doors occupies the north elevation of the addition. The east elevation has two window openings with three-light, steel casement sash. A chimney built of concrete masonry units runs up the south wall. The interior of the garage is now an open area which serves as an exhibit area and a gathering space.

Pump House (contributing building)

The pump house is a small, one-story structure with a shallow-pitched roof. The building is finished with wood shingles on its walls and roof, and plain fascia boards at the rakes and eaves. There is a board and batten door in one gable end and a window opening, which is boarded up, on the other. The wall shingles are painted brown,

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the wood trim is white, and the door is bright blue. The pump house was standing when the Wilsons bought Stepping Stones in 1941. It houses a pump that supplied water from a spring up to the main house.

Caretaker's House/Archives/Office (contributing building)

The 'Caretaker's House' structure was constructed with Lois Wilson's guidance in 1984. Its purpose was to accommodate office space, the archive, and a caretaker's residence—all of which it does today. The building has an L-shaped plan and stands on a concrete foundation. The gambrel roof, wood shingle siding, and exterior details complement the Main House.

The public entrance to the archives is on the north façade (which faces the road) at the basement level. To the right of the north facade is a front porch and private entrance into the living room of the apartment. The public entrance to the office is on the east side of the house. Immediately upon entering the hallway, visitors have the option of going to the right and downstairs to the archives, straight ahead to the caretaker's residence, or upstairs to the studio/attic office. The office is the hub of activity for the administration of Stepping Stones and currently contains two desks, computers, and a conference table as well as office supplies and five years of foundation files. The public restroom for staff, office visitors, and researchers is in the attic office.

The basement archive serves as the research headquarters for the institution and is designed to contain a room within a room. The inner room stores the Wilson's manuscript materials. It has no windows, is locked, alarmed, and temperature and humidity controlled. The main room of the archives has typical basement half windows as well as the entrance door leading out to the north facade.

The caretaker's apartment on the first floor of the building contains 2 bedrooms, 1.5 bathrooms, a kitchen, six closets, and a main room which serves as the dining room and living room. There is no second floor to the main room which has exposed beams where the ceiling would otherwise be and a two-story fireplace which is the room's centerpiece. This room and the kitchen have skylights which were intended to resemble the second floor windows of the main house at Stepping Stones. A sliding glass door on the south side of the living room looks out toward Wits End. There is a second private entrance to the caretaker's house which leads directly into the kitchen on the south side of the building.

The caretaker's house utilizes the same telephone utilities as the main house. Stepping Stones has even preserved the Wilson's telephone number, which rings today in the office.

The buildings and grounds are in very good repair and retain a high level of historic integrity; little has changed since Lois Wilson's death in 1988. The Wilsons themselves made many modifications to the grounds and buildings during their ownership. Their tenure at Stepping Stones brought major changes including the addition of three of the six buildings and expansion from 1.5 to 8.1 acres. As the Wilsons acquired additional land they rerouted the steep driveway, added stone walls and the 1950s garage. Later, Lois Wilson replaced the gravel driveway with cement. The area Bill Wilson had described as wooded became more of a typical lawn. The lawns, gardens, and some of the trees are the result of Lois's love of gardening. She ultimately added a potting shed to the garage.

Bill Wilson described the property in a letter to Robert H. Smith (co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous):

...So besides giving you the news and some other food for thought I want to make this letter the most urgent possible invitation for you and Annie [Smith's wife] to come down here right away, with the idea of staying at least one month. I won't listen to anything less.

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At first blush this program may not make sense to you – not until I have told you about our new house at Bedford Hills, a small village in beautiful rolling country about 40 miles north of New York in Westchester County.

This place is going to be a godsend for Lois and me and for you and Annie too if you will only have it so. To begin with it is a real retreat well away from all this AA business. Our house stands on a hill in the woods well back from the main road. The plot of ground is about two acres with no uncomfortably near neighbors. We can't get over the peace and quiet of the place. It is a rather large house the feature of which is a living room 30 by 35 with a nine foot fireplace at one end and a balcony overlooking the room at the other end. From anyplace in this living room you may look out over the treetops on a swell view of rolling wooded country. The side of the living room toward the view is made of glass French doors which open on to a porch affording a wonderful breeze through the place in the warmest weather. The other side of the house has for its yard a pretty little grove surrounded by a stonewall interspersed with flower beds. Still another side of the house looks down on a rock garden covering most of the steep slope of the hill up to that side of the house.

Besides the large living room the ground floor has a kitchen, 3 bedrooms and two complete baths. Upstairs there is a very large master bedroom with a swell view and next to it another very large room with a large fireplace in it. On this upper floor there is a shower bath and suitable plumbing.

Lois and I see now why we kept all of the contents of 182 Clinton St. for we have just moved the whole works to this Bedford Hills house. There is gas and electricity and three springs with a reservoir and pressure pump which supply fine water. Another thing which appeals to me is that the woods come almost up to the house so there is no lawn problem. In short, it is one of the choicest spots I have ever seen, and I've gone into all this description in order to lure you and Annie out here right away to live in it awhile. There is every convenience, everything is set to go, the stores will deliver you anything you want. Neither of you need move off the front porch. You can have all the company you please, or none at all. I can't picture a spot where you will recuperate better....

I'm sure this set up sounds fantastic and I guess that about describes it. An artist lady, a person of large means whose husband died of alcoholism some years ago, and whose best friend has been revived by our Jersey group, has let us have this place on unbelievably easy terms. I suppose she spent \$25,000 on it originally and we have bought it for \$6500. But the laugh comes when I tell you how we bought it. We are paying her \$40.00 a month, plus taxes and insurance which amount to only \$100, and our monthly payments apply on the purchase price. We do not even have to pay any interest this year. Next year interest will start on the unpaid balance of it. Since we have been paying the warehouse \$20.00 a month storage, we're not behind the eightball a great deal more than we were before we took the place...<sup>2</sup>

Today Stepping Stones continues to inspire great enthusiasm in its visitors:

In the house, with its mahogany antiques handed down from Mrs. Wilson's family, it seems as if the couple were still alive. In the master bedroom a can of PermaSoft hair spray still sits on Mrs. Wilson's vanity, along with a single bobby pin... While the desk in Mr. Wilson's office was the

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<sup>2</sup> Bill Wilson to Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith, 23 April 1941. Stepping Stones Foundation Archives.

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one on which he wrote the Big Book, it belonged to a friend who had lent him an office in Newark for the project. The desk was eventually moved to Stepping Stones, and Mr. Wilson wrote later works in the studio office here, including “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions.”

There was a faded copy of that book on the desk, along with a first edition of “Alcoholics Anonymous.” Jean Z.’s sponsor, Louise, touched the books as Jean took her picture. ‘What a gift,’ she said. ‘I could almost cry.’<sup>3</sup>

In 2007 Stepping Stones adopted a master preservation plan, which included plans to preserve and restore the historic site in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for historic house care. Stepping Stones has made no alterations to the house which would change its historic character since Lois Wilson’s death in 1988. The Stepping Stones Board of Trustees and its Conservation Treatment Planning Team determined that the best course of action was to bring the house up to the last period when one of the Wilsons was in control and currently, the historic home is interpreted based on its appearance upon Lois’s death.

Stepping Stones has recently restored two of the historic structures, the main house and the 1951 garage. For the main house, the foundation renovated the windows, the roof, replaced gutters with old-fashion copper gutters, painted and made other structural improvements, all in keeping with the house’s original look from the end of the period of significance. This work was performed as part of a grant from the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. Careful consideration and approvals were given for each choice of materials and colors. These restorations involve undoing period-inappropriate changes made between 1988 and 2007, including incorrect roof colors and materials.

In 2010, Stepping Stones turned the garage at the center of the site into a Welcome Center. The original garage building was retained, up to and including the very garage doors that Bill Wilson built himself. The front of the garage, the façade that the public sees when entering the property, has been left almost exactly as it looked originally; the alterations are barely noticeable. The inside of the Welcome Center now serves as an exhibit area and a gathering space, and offers handicap-accessible space and bathrooms. Through permanent and rotating exhibits offering information on the history of AA and its significance in social and cultural history, the visitors’ experiences are enriched. At the Welcome Center, visitors are able to view materials from the Stepping Stones archives consisting of the Bill and Lois Wilson collection which is filled with AA and Al-Anon historical materials as well as materials relating to the history of the Wilsons. Many of these archival materials have never before been presented to the public. Exhibits include personal memorabilia from Bill and Lois that illustrate how they lived and what AA meant to them. Stepping Stones also has plans to improve its existing parking, making a visit to Stepping Stones easier for the visitor and minimize the impact that visitors have on the neighborhood.

Stepping Stones offers guided tours, makes its archives accessible to researchers, and offers educational programming. The tours take visitors through the history of Bill and Lois’s life, including their role in the founding and nurturing of AA and Al-Anon.

The Stepping Stones Foundation maintains the historic home exactly as it was left at Lois Wilson’s death and continues to interpret the site based on its original intent. In addition, the foundation seeks to restore the landscape as closely as possible to its original layout, which included wooded areas and walking paths that reflected the Wilsons’ love of the outdoors and use of walking as a form of meditation. The Stepping Stones Foundation is committed to preserving the site in keeping with its period of historic significance, 1941–1988.

<sup>3</sup> *New York Times*, July 6, 2007, B1.



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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.****Summary**

Stepping Stones is nationally significant under NHL Criterion 1 for its association with Alcoholics Anonymous, the group whose mission is to assist alcoholics in finding and maintaining sobriety and under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with William Griffith (Bill) Wilson and Lois Burnham Wilson. Under the NHL Thematic Framework, Stepping Stones reflects NHL Theme 1, *Peopling Places* and NHL Theme 2, *Creating Social Institutions and Movements*. Along with Dr. Robert (Bob) Smith, Bill Wilson was a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the author of four books, including the best seller, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). Wilson disseminated the idea of alcoholism as a disease among the general public and his Twelve Steps program became a model for the treatment of addiction. Through the Twelve Steps program, AA has enabled, and continues to enable, millions of people around the world to achieve and sustain permanent sobriety. Wilson and Smith also helped significantly alter the public's perception and understanding of alcoholism and alcoholics. Although AA promoted and continues to promote the concept of the anonymous or faceless addict, Wilson---or Bill W. as he became known to AA members---became both the public face of AA and an inspiration for millions of struggling alcoholics.<sup>4</sup> Lois Wilson, Bill Wilson's wife, was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for family members of alcoholics, and the founder of Alateen, a group for the children of alcoholics. Like AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen have also grown to include an international membership with chapters in 115 countries.

Since its founding, AA's "philosophy and principles [have] heavily shaped most modern alcoholism treatments" but AA's impact on American society has not been limited to alcoholics and their families. The emergence of the halfway house movement evolved, in part, from the efforts of AA members. Additionally, the organization has played a significant role in shaping peer-based treatments for other forms of addiction and a variety of diseases.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, AA has not only been a driving force in the emergence of peer-assisted network organizations, it has also been viewed as the premier organization for addicts of all types. William L. White, a leading scholar of AA, has pointed out that while "many people in the early days of their recovery require a program that recognizes the distinctiveness or specialness of their drug choice," the need for such a narrowly defined program dissipates over time. As this need shifts, addicts, even those who have no history of alcohol addiction, often turn to AA, an organization which is seen as more mature and more capable of assisting addicts of any and all types. AA has, as a result, become not only an organization which has influenced other recovery organizations, it has also become an organization which often serves addicts of all types.<sup>6</sup>

As an organization, AA has always prioritized and promoted its history and AA members know and are encouraged to know this history.<sup>7</sup> In 1979, Lois Wilson created the Stepping Stones Foundation which has as its mission the preservation of materials related to this history. Five years later, in 1984, Lois built a separate building at Stepping Stones that houses an archive, office, and apartment.<sup>8</sup> Following her death in 1988, this property was turned over to the Stepping Stones Foundation which now operates it as a museum. Today,

<sup>4</sup> Susan Cheever, "Bill W: The Healer," *Time*, June 14, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> William L. White, *Pathways: From the Culture of Addiction to the Culture of Recovery* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1996), 230.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 448.

<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of the "widespread knowledge among members of Alcoholics Anonymous of many episodes in AA history," see Ernest Kurtz, *Not-God: A History of Alcoholics Anonymous* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1991), 18.

<sup>8</sup> In 1941, when the Wilsons moved to Stepping Stones, only the main house, the 1920s garage, and the pump house existed. By 1951, when Lois started Al-Anon, the Wilsons had bought most of the 8.1 acres included in the present property. They had also built a new garage and work studio.

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thousands of people associated with AA and other Twelve Steps programs from all over the world make pilgrimages to Stepping Stones both to commemorate and study the work of the Wilsons and AA each year.<sup>9</sup>

The period of significance for this property is from 1941 when the Wilsons moved into Stepping Stones until 1988 when Lois Wilson died. During the forty-seven years that Bill and/or Lois Wilson lived on the property, AA grew exponentially, spreading within and outside of the United States, with Bill Wilson serving as the unofficial leader of the movement. After Wilson's death, Lois became the custodian of both Wilson's memory and the organization itself.

Because AA has had an extraordinarily significant impact on American society as well as the treatment and understanding of alcoholism and addiction, the property qualifies under Criterion Exception 8 as a property whose period of significance is less than fifty years that possess extraordinary national significance.

### **Alcoholics Anonymous and its Significance**

The twentieth century saw the rise of innumerable self-help groups. Defined as "voluntary organization[s], usually of peers, who have come together for mutual help and support, in satisfying common need[s] [and] overcoming a common handicap or life-disrupting problem," these groups have flourished, with the majority of these organizations emerging after World War II.<sup>10</sup> Requiring a sophisticated and educated public, these groups were, in some sense, a reaction against the growing power of the medical profession and scientific authority.<sup>11</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, which dates its founding to Bill Wilson and Bob Smith's first encounter in 1935, is widely viewed as the prototype for many of these self-help groups and the organization has served as an inspiration for groups which specifically address addiction, such as Overeaters Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Smokers Anonymous, Bulimics Anonymous, Sexaholics Anonymous, and Narcotics Anonymous.<sup>12</sup> The Twelve Steps program, which was developed and disseminated by Bill Wilson, has become such a staple of American culture that it is no longer confined to organizations which assist people with addiction; in fact, the concept of Twelve Steps has become so widespread that it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace its dissemination across not only America but across the world precisely because it is so ubiquitous.<sup>13</sup> In the more than seventy-five years since AA's founding, stock phrases associated with the organization such as "one day at a time" "a higher power" and "My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I'm an alcoholic" have entered into and become a part of mainstream culture.

<sup>9</sup> Approximately three thousand people visit Stepping Stones annually.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen Lock, "Self-Help Groups: The Fourth Estate in Medicine?" *British Medical Journal* 293 (December 20-27, 1986): 1596.

<sup>11</sup> The twentieth century saw the emergence and growth of medical authority. See for example, Paul Starr, *The Social Transformation of American Medicine* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 137.

<sup>12</sup> Lock, "Self-Help Groups", 1596. See also Stephen Miasto, Mark Galizo, and Gerard Joseph Connors, *Drug Use and Abuse*, (Cengage Learning, 2007), 366. Wilson and others have cited a variety of different experiences and encounters as being central to the founding of AA, making it difficult to provide a definitive date for the founding of the organization. Ernest Kurtz argues that there were four founding moments of AA. However, Kurtz argues that "until Wilson arrived at the explicit realization that whether or not he wanted to, he needed to work with other alcoholics to maintain his own sobriety, Alcoholics Anonymous was yet only coming into being." The latest date for these founding dates is 1935. This was the year when Smith and Wilson first met and it is the date of Smith's final drink. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 21, 33, 35.

<sup>13</sup> John Samuel Tieman, "The Origins of Twelve Step Spirituality: Bill W. and Edward Dowling, S. J.," in "Social Activism," special issue, *U.S. Catholic Historian* 3, no. 13 (Summer 1995): 122. By 1948, Alcoholics Anonymous had already grown to include non-American members. See for example, "Alcoholics Anonymous," *The British Medical Journal* 1, no. 4552 (April 3, 1948): 664. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 192.

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Even as Alcoholics Anonymous has spread across the globe, the organization is, in the words of Ernest Kurtz, a historian of AA, “as American as baseball, apple pie, hot dogs and the Fourth of July.”<sup>14</sup> As a self-help organization, AA is very much a reflection of twentieth-century American popular culture which has prioritized the power of the individual and the ideas of rationalism and control.<sup>15</sup>

Yet AA is more than a self-help organization. AA grew, in part, out of the Oxford Group, a non-denominational Christian group which emphasized the idea of confession and conversion, and surrendering to God. While Wilson split from the Oxford Group in 1937, AA retained the idea of confession and conversion, replacing the idea of surrendering to God with the vaguer and more palatable idea of an alcoholic surrendering simply to a “higher power.” “Religious and spiritual experiences ha[d] been the genesis of sobriety long before the founding of AA and modern addiction treatment” but widespread use of AA as a method of treatment for addiction, along with its clear emphasis on spirituality and its historic ties to a Christian group, have meant that the organization occupies an uneasy place at the intersection of religion and secularism.<sup>16</sup> Recent court rulings have held that while AA is not a religious organization, its use of terms such as “prayer” and “God” “are so imbued with religious meaning that they undeniably favor a religious interpretation.” AA does not, however, advocate or promote any specific religious belief and the group has traditionally been welcoming to agnostics, atheists, and members of an array of different organized religions.<sup>17</sup>

Both the history and current mission of AA have sparked ongoing debates and discussions among medical professionals, historians, sociologists, psychologists, addicts, and laypeople as to the nature of addiction, the power of self-help organizations, and the most effective methods of treating addiction. For scholars, AA has raised questions regarding the relationship between socially constructed definitions of disease and the overall nature of substance abuse and addiction as well as the broader applicability of therapies for alcohol addiction to other forms of substance abuse. The organization’s peculiar position as a secular organization with a religious tinge has also put it at the nexus of debates and discussions about the nature of the organization, the roots of its success, and the ways in which government or public institutions can collaborate with quasi-religious groups.<sup>18</sup>

## The Public Face of AA

Bill Wilson and Bob Smith, the co-founders of AA, saw the organization as a community in which members, as exemplified by Wilson and Smith, seek to control their addictions through religious and spiritual principles, specifically, morality, service, and a reliance on a power greater than oneself (a “higher power”). Wilson and

<sup>14</sup> Kurtz, *Not-God*, 37, 187.

<sup>15</sup> See for example, Stephen J. Whitfield, “Characterizing America,” *The History Teacher* 21, no. 4 (August 1988). This trait is most commonly associated with the idea of improving one’s socio-economic status but as Whitfield points out through discussions of Emerson, Franklin and others, the idea of self-help or self-reliance was and has had a broad appeal in American culture and has often been a characteristic that foreigners, whether correctly or not, equate as uniquely American. In his study of temperance in the Deep South, Douglas Carlson has discussed the connections between this emphasis on self-help, entrepreneurship, alcohol, alcoholism, and temperance. Douglas Carlson, “Drinks He to His Own Undoing: Temperance Ideology in the Deep South,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1998): 675.

<sup>16</sup> William L. White, *Pathways: From the Culture of Addiction to the Culture of Recovery* (Center City, MN: Hazelden, 1996), 166.

<sup>17</sup> *Griffin v. Coughlin*, 88 N.Y.2d 674, June 11, 1996.

<sup>18</sup> See for example, *Griffin v. Coughlin*, 1996. This court case occurred when an inmate in a New York State correctional institution “was informed that his eligibility to participate in an expanded family visitation program (the Family Reunion Program) was contingent on his attendance at the facility’s Alcohol and Substance Abuse Treatment Program (ASAT Program). This was the sole substance abuse program available at Petitioner’s correctional facility. The curriculum of the ASAT Program drew many of its principles, including a significant amount of religious-oriented principles, from Alcoholics Anonymous (A.A.)” The prisoner, an atheist, argued that his forced participation in the ASAT Program violated the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. The prisoner prevailed. Summary, *Griffin v. Coughlin*, 88 N.Y.2d 674. See too, works such as Charles Bufe, *Alcoholics Anonymous: Cult or Cure?* (Florence, KY: Sharp Press, 1998).

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Smith reworked these basic principles into twelve simple statements and then developed a program in which those suffering from addiction partner with and assist others suffering from the same addiction. Since its founding, AA has grown to include millions, many of whom publicly identify themselves as members of AA, Al-Anon, and other Twelve Steps programs. Today AA's success and Bill Wilson's connection to AA are so well-known that the popular magazine, *Time*, named Wilson as one of the most influential people of the twentieth century. *Life* also characterized Wilson as one of the most significant people of the twentieth century.<sup>19</sup>

"We are average Americans," Bill Wilson wrote in reference to AA members.

All sections of this country and its many occupations are represented, as well as many political, social and religious backgrounds. We are people who normally would not mix. But there exists among us friendliness, and an understanding which is incredibly wonderful. We are like passengers of a great liner the moment after rescue from shipwreck when camaraderie, joyousness and democracy pervade the vessel from steerage to Captain's table. The tremendous fact for every one of us is that we have discovered a common solution. We have a way on which we can absolutely agree, and upon which we can join in harmonious and brotherly action...Of necessity there will have to be a discussion of matters medical, psychiatric, social and religious. We are aware that these matters are, from their very nature, controversial. Nothing would please us more as to write a book which would contain no basis for contention or argument. We shall do our utmost to achieve that ideal.<sup>20</sup>

Bob Smith described Bill Wilson as "the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience...he talked my language."<sup>21</sup> Like Smith, Wilson believed that only another alcoholic could truly understand the tangled emotions evoked by the power of an addiction. This idea---that addicts shared a common language and understanding---is central to AA's philosophy of having addicts help each other. In AA meetings, the sharing of one's personal triumphs and setbacks with alcohol and addiction during and outside of group meetings is intended to ensure that alcoholics understand that they are not alone and recovery is possible. By offering understanding and inspiration to one another, rather than the judgment and guilt that can drive alcoholics to seek comfort in alcohol, AA encourages members who lapse and have a drink to see their actions as a temporary setback rather than a failure. Proponents are also taught that their struggle with alcohol will be a life-long one and they typically attend meetings long after they have stopped drinking.

Although Wilson and Smith emphasized the idea of the faceless or anonymous alcoholic and although the group's name would seem to imply that anonymity is a cornerstone of the organization, many members of AA have publicly identified themselves. Wilson himself attempted, at least on the surface, to remain anonymous, even going so far as to refuse to appear on the cover of *Time* with his back turned toward the camera. However, Wilson and his story quickly became well-known and today many members of AA have become comfortable identifying themselves publicly.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>19</sup> "100 Persons of the Century," *Time*, June 14, 1999.

<sup>20</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, 2001), 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 180.

<sup>22</sup> Cheever, "Bill W: The Healer." See also, David Colman, "Challenging the Second A in AA," *New York Times*, May 6, 2011.

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## Understanding Alcoholism as a Disease

In eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, many people viewed alcoholism as a moral weakness and alcoholics were typically seen as lacking willpower. While the idea of alcoholism as a disease was not unknown, late nineteenth-century physicians often maintained that “the will of the individual was...the central component in treatment.” Even those who espoused treatments such as gold cures, strychnine injections, opium, and cold water baths admitted that affecting a cure also required “a change in the alcoholic’s character.”<sup>23</sup> Wealthy alcoholics might retire to a private sanitarium for “drying out,” while their poorer counterparts might be confined to either jail or a state hospital for the same purpose. Fundamentally, responsibility for a cure rested not with physicians but rather with the addict himself or herself. For Bill Wilson, this failure of the medical profession would prove to be the impetus for changing both perceptions of and treatment for alcoholism.<sup>24</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century, drinking had a strong association with the saloon. Because “respectable” men and women typically steered clear of the saloon, serious concerns were raised about the drinking habits of working-class Americans who visited these places. To address this problem well-organized temperance groups dominated by middle- and upper-class reformers began to agitate for reform. Most of these organizations, most notably the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), called for total abstinence. Many of these organizations also encouraged alcoholics who had found sobriety or were seeking sobriety to take a pledge to abstain from alcohol. The first of these organizations to focus primarily on the idea of the individual alcoholic turning away from alcohol as opposed to advocating for public education about the dangers of alcohol and political reform was the Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society. Founded in 1840, the group was actually located in Baltimore.<sup>25</sup> In the wake of the Washingtonian Total Abstinence Society, other similar mutual aid organizations also emerged but none of them had the impact that the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment had, at least initially, on Americans’ drinking habits. Between 1919 and 1922, Prohibition was actually fairly effective but by 1925, widespread violations of the law had become common.<sup>26</sup> By the 1930s, the demise of Prohibition had “left most people bored with the topic of alcohol.” Organizations such as the Research Council on the Problems of Alcohol (created in 1937) were an anomaly, with even social workers expressing a lack of interest in the problem of alcoholism.<sup>27</sup> Despite Prohibition, there were few resources and few options for alcoholics during the late 1920s and 1930s.

Born in Vermont in 1895, Wilson was raised by his maternal grandparents. In 1917, following his commissioning as a Second Lieutenant, Wilson encountered alcohol in what he later came to describe as one of his most seminal experiences. When he and his fellow officers were invited into an upper-class home, Wilson relieved his awkwardness by accepting a cocktail from a “haughty...socialite.” Freed from his social inhibitions, Wilson felt an “overwhelming joy.” In the years that followed, Wilson found himself seeking, again and again, that “elusive---and ultimately illusive---sensation of freedom” that he had found in his first drink.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Mariana Valverde, “Slavery from Within: The Invention of Alcoholism and the Question of Free Will,” *Social History* 22, no. 3 (1997): 252.

<sup>24</sup> Lock, “Self-Help Groups, 1596. Lock provides several factors, among them the failure of the medical profession, as the impetus for self-help organizations. Alcoholics Anonymous is cited as the first group of this type.

<sup>25</sup> For a full discussion of these groups, see Jack S. Blocker, David M. Fahey, and Ian R. Tyrell, eds. “Alcoholic Mutual Aid Groups,” *Alcohol and Temperance in Modern History: An International Encyclopedia* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2003): 25.

<sup>26</sup> J. C. Burnham, “New Perspectives on the Prohibition Experiment of the 1920s,” *Journal of Social History* 2, no. 1 (1968): 58.

<sup>27</sup> Ernest Kurtz, “Alcoholics Anonymous and the Disease Concept,” in *Alcohol Problems in the United States: Twenty Years of Treatment Perspective*, ed. Thomas F. McGovern and William L. White (New York: Routledge, 2003), 8.

<sup>28</sup> It is unclear whether this truly was a turning point or a story Wilson used to illustrate the dangers of drinking. The idea of drink being presented to him in the form of an attractive upper-class woman may simply have been used as a means of underscoring the element of danger associated with drinking. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 25-27.

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Following his release from the army and his marriage to Lois Burnham, Wilson became a stockbroker. Despite Prohibition, Wilson, like many Americans, continued to have access to alcohol and throughout the 1920s, drinking became a way of life for him. For Wilson, drinking remained a positive and liberating experience throughout much of the 1920s but by 1929, when the stock market crashed, his approach to alcohol shifted. Now he was “drinking to numb the pain, to forget.” Between 1929 and 1934, Wilson entered into an “alcoholic hell” as he lost control of his alcoholism. Between 1933 and 1934, he entered the Charles B. Towns Hospital, a facility specifically designed to treat addicts, four times.<sup>29</sup>

There, Wilson met William Duncan Silkworth, a physician who argued that alcoholism was a somatic illness, basically similar to an allergy. Despite his strong views about the nature of alcoholism, Silkworth, like many doctors, had had only marginal success in treating alcoholics; he admitted to a success rate of two percent. Ultimately, Wilson’s repeated lapses and his multiple return trips to Town Hospital led Silkworth to tell Lois that she had three choices: she could lock Wilson up, watch him descend into insanity, or watch him die. Wilson’s case was, Silkworth believed, a hopeless one and the possibility of a cure was unlikely given Wilson’s history.

In late November 1934, Wilson met a friend who had been, like him, a hard drinker. When the friend—Ebby Thacher or Ebby T. as he became known in AA circles---declined a drink, Wilson was dumbfounded. Thacher explained that he had found sobriety through the Oxford Group, a non-denominational religious group which emphasized the importance of self-assessment and confession of one’s sins. An agnostic, Wilson was skeptical of Thacher’s experience and purported cure but after a drinking binge brought him, once again, to Towns Hospital, he experienced a conversion experience or what Silkworth called a “psychic upheaval.” For Wilson, this became a pivotal moment, causing him to recognize that he had hit rock bottom. Hitting bottom was, he came to believe, the first step required to ultimately lead him away from alcohol. Reflecting back on this experience in the weeks that followed, Wilson became convinced that the root of this change rested on his encounter with Ebby Thacher, that moment “when one alcoholic began to talk to another” and he “envisioned a chain reaction among alcoholics, one carrying this message and these principles to [the] next.”<sup>30</sup> Wilson also became convinced that his role in life was to serve and assist his fellow alcoholics in turning away from alcoholism.

### **Founding of Alcoholics Anonymous**

While the early years of Wilson’s life served as a warning note of the dangers of alcoholism, his conversion moment and meeting with Dr. Bob Smith signaled his transformation. Told and re-told in countless places, the story of the meeting between Smith and Wilson became a central trope in the founding of AA, taking on a symbolic importance on a par with Wilson’s encounter with Thacher.

Because the story of this first meeting has played a significant role in the history of AA and because recounting personal stories is a central component of AA culture, it is, perhaps, best to relate the story of this encounter as it was told in an AA newsletter intended for members. The following version was written in 1971, some thirty-five years after the events described occurred. As was typical with AA’s “personal stories,” this version provided a nod to AA’s practice of anonymity by referring to Wilson and Smith by their first names alone (although most AA members knew who Wilson and Smith were). It was circulated in the AA newsletter *The AA Grapevine* and the story became, and remains, well-known among AA members:

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<sup>29</sup> Kurtz, *Not-God*, 25-27.

<sup>30</sup> *Alcoholic Anonymous Comes of Age*, 64.

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An unsuccessful business deal took Bill to Akron, Ohio, in the spring of 1935. Another Wall Street bubble had burst and on a Saturday evening Bill found himself in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, depressed, discouraged, filled with self-pity, and weighing the possibility of a trip to the hotel bar for “some ginger ale.” Unaccountably, he panicked. Instead of heading for a first drink, he found a pay telephone, thus initiating what was soon to become one of AA’s most important and effective devices: telephone therapy.

Knowing of no alcoholics to call, Bill chose, at random, the name of a clergyman from the Akron telephone book, explained his problem, and asked for his names of some local drunks he might talk to. One can imagine what was going through the pastor’s mind while he listened to Bill! But he came up with a list of ten people who, he thought, might either be drunk themselves or know someone who was. Bill tried calling them all. The last person on the list – reached on Bill’s tenth call – was a nonalcoholic lady known for her good works and words, Henrietta Seiberling. Like the clergyman, she seemed to understand what Bill wanted. She invited Bill to her house, where she informed him that she had found “just the man” for him: one Dr. Bob, an Akron surgeon. The good physician, she reported, had been none too secretly drinking away his life and his career and had in recent years made many futile attempts to sober up, using both medical and religious means, with little success.

Henrietta called Dr. Bob’s wife, Anne, on the telephone, only to be discouraged with the news that Bob was celebrating Mother’s Day and had just brought home a potted plant that required his attention. As Bill subsequently explained, “what Anne didn’t say was that the plant was on the table and that Bob was under it, so potted he couldn’t get up.” The meeting was deferred until the next day.

Late in the afternoon, the shaky Akron surgeon met the Wall Street broker at Mrs. Seiberling’s house. They talked late into the night. The unseen catalytic agents that had brought about this first fully successful ‘AA meeting’ were few but powerful. Both men were ‘hopeless’ alcoholics who had tried ‘everything’ to stop drinking. Both were middle-aged (although Dr. Bob was fifteen years older than Bill) and respectably married. Neither was the stereotyped skid-row caricature of the town drunk generally accepted at the time. Both were professional men with intelligence, skill, and drive. Both were also individuals with enormous potential spiritual resources. Both – here coincidence merges into fate-were from the state of Vermont, and therefore the empathy they achieved was rooted in the soil of their birthplaces and the idioms they spoke.

Bill moved into Dr. Bob’s home for the time being, and the latter miraculously stayed sober—for nearly a month. Dr. Bob had one more drunk left in him. He started at a medical convention in Atlantic City and ended back in Akron. Then came the news that the surgeon was needed at his hospital in three days to perform a difficult operation. Under the ministrations of his wife and Bill, Dr. Bob was brought to the edge of sobriety by the familiar process of tapering off.

On June 10, 1935, Bill and Anne drove Dr. Bob to the hospital where the operation was to take place. In an act of charity, understood best by any alcoholic coming off a drunk, Bill handed Bob a bottle of beer “to steady his nerves so that he could hold the knife.” Dr. Bob drank the beer, performed the operation, and did not take another drink throughout the remaining fifteen years of his life.

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With that gesture, Bill turned the personal misfortune of two broken and miserable alcoholics into the beginning of the organizational history of Alcoholics Anonymous. The Fellowship was born that day in kindness—the special sympathy of one alcoholic for another. And it grew from one tiny incident in Akron to a continuing process of near-global proportions, but always in the same spirit. How ironic that this kindness was first sanctified by, of all things, a bottle of beer!<sup>31</sup>

During Wilson's time with Smith, there was, Smith said, "hardly a night that we didn't sit up until two or three o'clock talking." These conversations led the two to explore what Smith came to describe as "the basic ideas [for AA] though not in terse and tangible form."<sup>32</sup> The Twelve Steps were not developed during these conversations but Smith later maintained that these early discussions laid part of the foundation for what would ultimately become the Twelve Steps.

Speaking about Smith, Wilson said,

As he often put it, 'I just loved my grog.' By the time I met him, this compelling love had almost done him in. His surgical skill was still recognized, but few colleagues or patients dared to trust him. He had lost his post on the staff of Akron's City Hospital and barely existed through a precarious and dwindling general practice. In debt up to his ears, he was only one jump ahead of the sheriff and his mortgage payments. Anne verged on a nervous crack-up and their two children of course were greatly upset. Such was the payoff of twenty-five years of alcoholism. Hope was a word they had come to avoid.

In our first conversation I bore down heavily on the medical hopelessness of Dr. Bob's case... Though Bob was a doctor this was news to him, bad news... What really hit him hard was the medical business, the verdict of eventual annihilation. And the fact that I was an alcoholic and knew what I was talking about from personal experience made the blow a shattering one... You see, our talk was a completely mutual thinking. I had quit preaching. I knew that I needed this alcoholic as much as he needed me. This was it. And this mutual give-and-take is at the very heart of all of AA's Twelfth Step work today. This is how to carry the message. The final missing link was located right there in my first talk with Dr. Bob...

Still worried about Dr. Bob, Anne invited me to come over and live with them at their home at 855 Ardmore Avenue. How well I remember our morning meditation, when Anne would sit in the corner by the fireplace and read from the Bible, and then we would huddle together in stillness, awaiting inspiration and guidance.<sup>33</sup>

Wilson and Smith decided to develop and continue the practice of one alcoholic talking to another. This was a method that Wilson had found effective in talks with Dr. William D. Silkworth, the physician who had treated Bill for alcoholism at Towns Hospital; it had also been central to his experiences with the Oxford Group. Wilson and Smith began visiting hospitals in Akron, looking for patients who had entered the hospital in an attempt "to sober up." Reflecting the biases of the day, they spoke only to male patients, telling each man who agreed to talk to them that he had a fatal disease of the mind and body and that he had little chance to recover on his own. They also recounted their own stories of drinking and recovery. They then invited those who were interested to join them at the Akron Oxford Group meetings; these were informal meetings that occurred at Smith's house.

<sup>31</sup> Bill W., "AA Grapevine," March 1971, 24-26.

<sup>32</sup> Smith quoted in *The Oxford Group and Alcoholics Anonymous: A Design for Living*, 10.

<sup>33</sup> *Alcoholic Anonymous Comes of Age*, 70.

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By the time Wilson was ready to go back to New York in late August of 1935, a few recovering and sober alcoholics were meeting regularly at Smith's house where Wilson was still staying. Smith's wife, Anne, made coffee for each meeting and members of the group spoke informally about their own struggles with drinking and recovery.

Upon his return to New York and his wife, a now sober Wilson hoped to spread word of his experiences and the success he and Smith had had in controlling their alcoholism. He planned to do this through a book which would be a narrative which highlighted the stories of one hundred alcoholics who had used the six simple steps for recovery that he and Smith had developed in Akron. But while working on the book in 1938, Wilson became convinced that the six steps should be expanded to twelve.

While writing this book, Wilson gained the support of the nation's wealthiest and most prominent teetotaler: John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Wilson had used family connections to contact the director of Rockefeller's charitable foundation and he and Smith originally hoped that Rockefeller would provide their organization with \$50,000 seed money. Rockefeller, however, had refused to provide the sum, believing that the organization would be best served by a smaller fund which would force it to be creative in establishing itself. Rockefeller did, however, provide \$5,000, a not inconsiderable sum at the time, to assist Wilson and Smith. This money allowed Wilson to focus on writing as did an advance from his publisher.<sup>34</sup> After months of writing and circulating the manuscript among early members of Wilson's and Smith's groups, Wilson's book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, was finally published in 1939. Among AA members it came to be known simply as "The Big Book."

By the fall of 1939, "Alcoholics Anonymous had come into a clear existence of its own." The fledgling organization, which Smith and Wilson had created and which now had strong roots in Akron and New York, formally adopted the title Alcoholics Anonymous as its official name. It split from the Oxford Group and when a new group was established in a new city without the direct action of either Wilson or Smith, it became evident that the organization was self-sustaining.<sup>35</sup>

### **Spreading the Gospel from Stepping Stones**

During the twenty-three years that followed their marriage in 1918, the Wilsons had moved numerous times. Part of Lois's valiant efforts to keep Wilson away from alcohol entailed traveling. This, combined with their precarious finances, meant that they lived in a series of apartments in New York and Canada. When Wilson's drinking during the 1930s and the Great Depression left him unable to find regular employment, the couple moved into Lois's girlhood home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights. In 1939, following a foreclosure on the Clinton Street house, the Wilsons were evicted. The couple then spent 1939 and 1940 as guests of relatives and AA friends, or living in the AA Clubhouse. During that period they relocated, by Lois's count, fifty-one times.<sup>36</sup>

Through the help of an acquaintance, Bill and Lois purchased and moved into the house in Bedford Hills that became known as Stepping Stones on April 23, 1941.<sup>37</sup> The Wilsons moved into Stepping Stone with the contents of their former home at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn, New York. Included with the move was the kitchen table from their Clinton Street home; this was the table at which Wilson developed the Twelve Steps.

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<sup>34</sup> "Medicine: Alcoholics Anonymous," *Time*, February 19, 1940. Kurtz, *Not-God*, 84.

<sup>35</sup> Kurtz, *Not-God*, 101.

<sup>36</sup> Lois Wilson, *Lois Remembers: Memoirs of the Co-founder of Al-Anon and the Wife of Co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, 1979), 126.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 134.

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The couple lived at Stepping Stones for the rest of their lives, Bill until his death in 1971 and Lois until her death in 1988.

Stepping Stones was the Wilsons' first permanent home and it was from this location that they made many of their important contributions to the recovery movement.<sup>38</sup> Lois founded Al-Anon Family Groups in the library of the Main House in 1951. Many of the Wilsons' friends and acquaintances through their work with AA and Al-Anon visited or stayed with them at Stepping Stones. Their thousands of visitors over the years included royalty, politicians, actors, and prominent business people.

Although Wilson often steered clear of using the term "disease" to explain alcoholism "because he wished to avoid the medical controversy over the existence or non-existence of a specific 'disease-entity'," his frequent use of terms like "illness" and malady reinforced the idea of alcoholism as a disease, a view many Americans now hold. "The widespread diffusion of the 'the disease concept of alcoholism' was," Ernest Kurtz has argued, "largely due to Alcoholics Anonymous."<sup>39</sup>

This shift---toward seeing alcoholism as a disease with a very real cause and effect---reflected a broader change in American culture. During the late nineteenth century, as more and more Americans came to embrace germ theory, laypeople's understanding of disease and its causes had shifted. Pointing out that this shift "offered at least the possibility of disconnecting disease from its historic associations with sin, moral turpitude, and idleness," Allan Brandt and others have argued that this new understanding of disease was behind the eagerness with which "the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous...seized upon the notion that alcoholism was a disease. It was not so much a desire to medicalize the phenomenon of habitual alcohol consumption as it was to free those with the habit from moral stigma, to 'remoralize' the behavior."<sup>40</sup>

To promote these ideas, Bill Wilson anonymously authored four books on alcoholism: *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1953), *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (1957) and *As Bill Sees It: The AA Way of Life* (1967).<sup>41</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*, known as the Big Book, included the Twelve Steps and numerous autobiographical stories contributed anonymously by recovering alcoholics. Wilson wrote the first eleven chapters and edited the autobiographical chapters, including the chapter famously titled "To Wives." *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* established the guidelines for AA that ensured its long-term success; these principles are still used by AA groups and the General Service Organization.

In 1949, Wilson built a small shack on a hill within the boundaries of Stepping Stones. Called "The Shack" by Wilson and "Wit's End" by Lois Wilson, this small space was meant to serve as a private writing studio. There, Wilson told his mother, he planned to spend the rest of his life writing about the AA way of life. Much of Bill's writing, including three of his four books, took place in his studio, nicknamed "Wit's End" or The Shack" by Bill and Lois Wilson, behind the main house. (Bill Wilson had devised the 12 Steps and written *Alcoholics Anonymous* at the home on Clinton Street in Brooklyn.) He devised and wrote the Twelve Traditions – the framework that ensured AA's long-term success – in the library at Stepping Stones. He wrote *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, a series of essays and the second most popular AA text, in the studio. Wilson also wrote hundreds of articles for "The Grapevine", the monthly magazine for AA, many of which became the basis for other books such as *The Language of the Heart* and *As Bill Sees It*.

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Thomsen, *Bill W.* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 284.

<sup>39</sup> Kurtz, *Not-God*, 35

<sup>40</sup> Allan Brandt, "Just Say No: Risk, Behavior, and Disease in Twentieth-Century America," in *Scientific Authority and Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Ronald G. Walter (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 85.

<sup>41</sup> "Bill W. of Alcoholics Anonymous Dies," *New York Times*, February 15, 1971.

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During this period, Wilson found, somewhat to his chagrin, that much of his time was occupied not with writing about the “AA way of life,” but rather responding to letters from grateful and suffering alcoholics and their family members. Between 1941 and 1971, Bill and Lois Wilson sacrificed their personal comfort and well-being to follow and promote the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous. This included their reaching out to help other alcoholics and being available whenever anyone, anywhere, called upon them for help.

*Alcoholics Anonymous*, Wilson’s first and most famous book, sought to explain why alcoholics drink through an unbiased scientific investigation as opposed to facile character judgments. The book also provided a practical treatment program and a community of support that has helped millions attain and maintain lasting sobriety. In recognition of this, the American Public Health Association presented the Lasker Award to Alcoholics Anonymous in 1951 “in recognition of its unique and highly successful approach to that age-old public health and social problem, alcoholism... In emphasizing alcoholism as an illness, the social stigma associated with this condition is being blotted out.”<sup>42</sup> As of 2009, an estimated 30 million copies of the book have been sold, ranking it among the one hundred bestselling books of all time.<sup>43</sup>

Obviously, without Bill Wilson, there would be no AA as we know it today but Lois Wilson also played a central role in both the shaping of Bill Wilson and the organization of AA. Evidence from both their childhoods reveals patterns of alcoholism and co-dependency which are familiar to AA members. Moreover, both Wilsons wrote extensively while at Stepping Stones; their writings offer a compelling example of Wilson as a model alcoholic who finds hope for sobriety and goes on to live a successful and productive life by practicing the principles of AA.

### **The Growth of Alcoholics Anonymous**

In its early years, Alcoholics Anonymous was a word-of-mouth program. From 1935 to 1939, it grew modestly, with groups meeting in Akron and New York and, soon after, in Cleveland. Although the group remained very much a grassroots organization---in fact, its origin and success were based on the belief that Alcoholics Anonymous *needed* to be a grassroots organization if it were to succeed---the organization had received the support of John D. Rockefeller Jr. very early on when Rockefeller assisted in the publication of Wilson’s ground-breaking book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*.

Rockefeller, a famous life-long teetotaler himself, also promoted Alcoholics Anonymous in other ways; in 1940, for example, a dinner which Rockefeller hosted received attention in the press because “several of Mr. Rockefeller’s guests were members of ‘Alcoholics Anonymous,’ a widespread publicity-shy group of one-time guzzlers who have cured themselves.”<sup>44</sup> Wilson and Smith were in attendance at the dinner but publicity for the organization remained limited and Rockefeller still remained reluctant to provide the organization with any real money. He did, however, put them in touch with his publicist. Throughout 1940, the group grew slowly, with its message being carried to a variety of cities including Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Boston, and Miami.<sup>45</sup> Scattered articles in the press, ranging from pieces in *The Plain Dealer* (Cleveland) to *The Chicago Daily Times* led directly to the creation of AA groups in a range of cities but word of mouth, “the chain” of alcoholics speaking to one another which Wilson had first envisioned while at Towns Hospital, remained crucial to the organization’s growth.

<sup>42</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*, 571.

<sup>43</sup> While the title of the book is actually *Alcoholics Anonymous*, the members of AA refer to it as the Big Book. This is the basic text of Alcoholics Anonymous, AA’s text on how to stay sober. “And this year is also the 70th anniversary of the publication of A.A.’s Big Book, which has sold nearly 30 million copies since 1939.” “AA’s Big Book Celebrates 70 Years,” *Akron Beacon Journal*, June 11, 2009.

<sup>44</sup> “Medicine: Alcoholics Anonymous,” *Time*, February 19, 1940.

<sup>45</sup> Kurtz, *Not-God*, 109, 113.

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Medical practitioners and institutions as well as the police, who were often tasked with dealing with alcoholics, also provided the fledgling organization with crucial support. In 1940, for example, *The Illinois Medical Journal* had also characterized the organization as “a miracle.” At Philadelphia General Hospital, John F. Stouffer, the chief psychiatrist, also waxed enthusiastic, noting that Alcoholics Anonymous was “the greatest thing we have been able to offer” alcoholic patients. As groups sprang up in various places, these endorsements often meant there was enthusiastic cooperation between the medical profession, the police, and AA, with the police and physicians steering alcoholics directly to AA. Still, growth remained slow during these early years, in part because Wilson and Smith primarily saw the organization in terms of its identity as a self-help organization; funding and organizing needed to be self-generated if the organization was to succeed. Physicians and the police might, in other words, promote the organization but if AA were to flourish and survive, local chapters would need to be organized by alcoholics themselves, as opposed to members of the medical profession or the police.<sup>46</sup>

In 1941, AA received a dramatic boost when *The Saturday Evening Post* did a cover story on the fledgling organization. Titled “Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others,” the article was written by Jack Alexander. Both Alexander and Judge Curtis Bok, the owner and publisher of the *Post*, had originally been skeptical of the organization but after meeting with Wilson and Smith, traveling to Akron, and visiting both the new alcoholic ward at St. Thomas Hospital (in Akron) and Towns Hospital (in New York), the reporter became a convert. Alexander was especially impressed by the diversity of the group’s members which ranged from bartenders, vagrants and manual laborers to executives.<sup>47</sup> The article, which was published a month before the Wilsons’ move into Stepping Stones, triggered an explosion of growth for AA, with membership quadrupling in the last ten months of 1941.<sup>48</sup>

The Wilsons’ move to Stepping Stones became possible in part because AA was now on a firm footing as an organization and because Bill Wilson had his alcoholism under control. Although the organization’s headquarters was in New York, the nature of alcoholism meant that the Wilsons’ daily and personal lives were, even after he had become sober, colored by Bill’s alcoholism. As AA grew and Wilson’s story became known to millions of AA members, Stepping Stones became not only a retreat for Wilson where he could focus on his writing but also a very real symbol of the sober alcoholic.

While the media conceded that “professional opinion on the usefulness of Alcoholics Anonymous is divided,” membership in the organization had already climbed to “about 400 in towns all over the U.S.” by 1940. The explosion of growth which followed the 1941 publication of the *Saturday Evening Post*’s cover story caused immediate difficulties for the organization as demands for assistance in setting up meetings and providing information to alcoholics poured in but AA’s loose structure and informal nature allowed the organization to grow rapidly. Ultimately, AA would come to number its membership in the millions, with thousands of meetings occurring across the globe. From the beginning, membership in the organization was wide-ranging, with members being drawn from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds.<sup>49</sup>

AA would also come, whether correctly or not, to be seen as the prototype for a variety of self-help groups in not only the United States but also abroad. Most of these self-help groups promote the idea of contact with others suffering from the same condition. This kind of contact is seen as enabling sufferers to “cope with the

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<sup>46</sup> Jack Alexander, “Alcoholics Anonymous: Freed Slaves of Drink, Now They Free Others,” *The Saturday Evening Post*, March 1, 1941.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Kurtz, *Not-God*, 121.

<sup>49</sup> “Medicine: Alcoholics Anonymous,” *Time*, February 19, 1940.

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stigma of the condition [and to allow for] changing self-perception through realizing that others have succeeded in coping” with this same disease.<sup>50</sup> But although many of the self-help organizations which sprang up in the post-war period have pointed to Alcoholics Anonymous as their inspiration, these groups have often changed the meaning and intent of the original organization to better suit their own needs and concerns.

### **Al-Anon and Alateen**

Lois Wilson (1891–1988) founded Al-Anon Family Groups for the family members of alcoholics. In the early days of AA, family members – typically wives as most AA’s member were men – attended AA meetings with the alcoholic. While this approach helped wives support their husbands, AA meetings did not provide a separate or independent forum where wives could candidly discuss and share their own experiences and concerns about living with an alcoholic.

By 1940, Lois began organizing separate meetings that became known as “Family Group Meetings.” Anne Smith, the wife of Bob Smith, originally worked with Lois in hosting these meetings. Both she and Lois understood first-hand the many issues that confront the friends and families of alcoholics who struggle to maintain their relationships with alcoholic family members or friends. In developing these early groups, both women advocated that members of these “Family Group Meetings” use an adapted version of AA’s Twelve Steps to address the difficulties they faced. Family Groups became common across the U.S., spreading as AA did throughout the 1940s. However, these Family Groups lacked a clear structure and a national program to address their concerns.

In 1951, after Anne Smith’s death, Lois and her friend Anne Bingham (Anne B.) began an effort to formally coordinate the numerous Family Groups across the country. Like Lois, Bingham was also married to an alcoholic and the two couples had become close after the Wilsons had moved to Westchester County, which was also home to the Bingham. Following AA’s first General Service Conference in New York City in 1951, Lois invited the wives of the delegates to the conference to join her at Stepping Stones. Local members of the Westchester Family Group also attended this meeting. It quickly became evident that although most of the women who had traveled to New York with their husbands attended Family Groups in their hometowns, no two groups were alike.

Following this meeting at Stepping Stones, Lois Wilson and Anne Bingham traveled to meet and speak with various Family Groups in action across the country. Upon her return, Lois contacted all of the groups which she had met, as well as additional groups for which she had contact information. She suggested that these groups merge into a national organization, that the organization use the Twelve Steps approach to dealing with their own problems of co-dependency, and that the organization follow AA’s lead in adopting a policy of anonymity. Following the suggestion of a family group in California, this new group adopted the name “Al-Anon Family Groups.” Ultimately, the group became known as Al-Anon. By July 1951, only three months after the first national meeting of these groups at Stepping Stones, there were 145 registered Al-Anon groups, with several of these outside the United States.

Just as Bill Wilson had felt the need to codify AA’s program by publishing *Alcoholics Anonymous*, so, too, did Lois Wilson and Anne Bingham feel a need to clarify the structure and mission of Al-Anon in writing. The pamphlet they co-authored, *Purposes and Suggestions for Al-Anon Family Groups*, emphasized that family members of an alcoholic needed to focus on themselves rather than on the alcoholic. This pamphlet was written by Lois at Stepping Stones. Bill Wilson’s book, *Alcoholics Anonymous*, had included a chapter that was addressed “To Wives.” This chapter had not, however, been written by Lois. With *Purposes and Suggestions*

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<sup>50</sup> Lock, “Self-Help Groups, 1596-1597.

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for *Al-Anon Family Groups*, Lois Wilson finally had the opportunity to clarify, in print, her views on the many issues facing spouses and family members of alcoholics as well as her thoughts on how spouses and family members should respond to and assist alcoholics.

In the year that followed the formal creation of Al-Anon, the group became financially independent as requests for literature, along with financial contributions, began to arrive at Stepping Stones. The organization that emerged followed Alcoholics Anonymous in not only the Twelve Steps but also in its avowed apolitical stance; its emphasis on non-professionals and the idea of self-help; and its loose organizational structure. As Al-Anon grew, Lois turned to writing to assist family members dealing with alcoholism. Her writing included not only additional pamphlets but also the newsletter for Al-Anon. Like Bill Wilson, Lois repeatedly emphasized the idea of alcoholism as a disease in her work.

The Central Clearing House, as it was called, was also initiated at Stepping Stones by Lois Wilson. The group began with a letter Lois wrote on the desk that still sits today in the second-floor gallery of the house. The Central Clearing House provided assistance, information, and materials for the groups eventually becoming known as Al-Anon Family Groups. The Gallery served as the Groups' headquarters for at least one year until the program grew so big that it needed to be moved to an office location in New York City.

In 1957, Lois organized Alateen for the children of alcoholic parents. Like Al-Anon and AA, Alateen also grew to include chapters around the world. Today, Al-Anon/Alateen has 24,000 groups in over 130 countries.<sup>51</sup>

Lois Wilson also initiated a tradition at Stepping Stones intended to remind alcoholics and their family members of the fellowship at the heart of AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen; on the first Sunday of June, the Wilsons hosted an Annual Stepping Stones Picnic for Al-Anons, AA's, and Alateens. Even after Lois's death, the tradition continued, with the most recent Annual Stepping Stones picnic occurring at Stepping Stones on June 4, 2011. Approximately 500 to 700 people still attend the annual Stepping Stones picnic.

### **Stepping Stones as a Historic House**

The lives of Bill and Lois are representative examples of the illnesses of alcoholism and co-dependency, and the materials found at Stepping Stones illustrate their lives. Lois's diaries, her guest books, and Bill's letters to friends and colleagues, all compiled at Stepping Stones, describe their day-to-day life. Among hundreds of other artifacts, Lois Wilson saved a series of letters written by Bill that she called "Bill's Dissertations While Drinking." These graphically demonstrate the struggles of the alcoholic and the toll alcoholism has on family members and loved ones.

Upon starting the Stepping Stones Foundation in 1979, Lois Wilson came to see the value that the house would have as a museum about the history of AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen. Reflecting her understanding that the house would be used a museum, Lois spent the last eight years of her life putting together a gallery filled with AA and Al-Anon archival material. Today, Stepping Stones attracts visitors from all over the world who come to acknowledge not only the actions of Bill and Lois Wilson in founding AA, Al-Anon, and Alateen but also to acknowledge their own, more personal, struggles with alcohol and/or a family member who has struggled with alcoholism.

In her later life, Lois described Stepping Stones as a museum, filled with gifts and memorabilia from grateful AA members. These are on display, as Lois left them, throughout the home. Everywhere a visitor looks, he or she can find evidence of AA, Al-Anon Family Groups, and the AA way of life. Stepping Stones has been a

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<sup>51</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, accessed May 5, 2010, [www.al-anon.org](http://www.al-anon.org).

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touchstone of AA and Al-Anon activity since the Wilsons moved there in 1941 and its importance is noted by its inclusion in every book about the lives of Bill and Lois Wilson and the history of AA.

The museum has reached out to professionals in an attempt to develop an interpretative plan which can effectively address the needs and expectations of these many visitors. In 2007, Christopher Clarke, PhD, wrote a report about interpretive planning for Stepping Stones. In it, he noted that:

While Bill and Lois Wilson can and should serve as inspirations, models, and exemplars of human courage and determination, they should also be recognized as human beings beset, like all humans, by flaws and contradictions. This theme takes us another step away from the specifics of the site itself and shifts the focus to the parts of the story that can make for broader human connections to the lives and events that are examined here. An exploration of the legacy of these two individuals, important in its own right, also has the potential to engage visitors around the question we all think of from time to time as adults: How do I want to be remembered?

Beyond the institutions and the movement that they helped build, Bill and Lois Wilson left a legacy as human beings. Their legacy begins with their right to be remembered and assessed as imperfect people who struggled, not icons who deserved to be deified or worshiped in any way. Their legacy includes the fact that Bill W. never entirely escaped the consequences of his notoriety, never really “got away,” but nevertheless learned to cope with grace and dignity. Their legacy includes the books they wrote, the lives they touched, and the children they never had. Their legacy includes a society in which the problem of substance abuse and addiction is still a plague with an enormous attendant social cost.

Amidst all of these larger circumstances, it is important to note that whereas Bill did not self-consciously leave a memorial commemoration of his life, Lois did. Her displays on the second floor of Stepping Stones constitute both a catalog of the people and places that meant the most to her, and a summing up of her accomplishments and chosen memories. How many of us will have the time and the space to do the same? Lois’s act of self-commemoration is worthy of exploration for what it might tell us about how we understand the meaning of our lives, and why we want to be remembered in certain ways. The entire Stepping Stones site is about memory, at some level, but this remarkable collection of mementos, assembled in a narrative, is the kind of legacy that cannot be encountered in most historic houses.

Don Harrell, PhD, a Stepping Stones Trustee wrote, “The mission and purpose of Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson, may depend in large part on the mind of the beholder. Most visitors are members of Alcoholics Anonymous and/or Al-Anon, whether residents of the United States or another country, and they will bring their own experience and background to the time they spend there.”

### **Other Associated Properties**

As an organization, Alcoholics Anonymous traces its earliest roots to meetings that occurred in Akron and New York City during the mid- to late 1930s. But the organization saw its very real growth and impact throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Stepping Stones provides the best site to represent and illustrate this growth of Alcoholics Anonymous and the work and struggles of Bill and Lois Wilson. Several other properties provide insight into the history of AA but because of either a lack of historic integrity or reasons related to the more limited role these properties played in the history of AA and the Wilsons, these properties do not convey the story of AA, Al-Anon, Alateen, and the Wilsons to the same degree that Stepping Stones does.

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**The Wilson House, East Dorset, Vermont**

This property is the birthplace of Bill Wilson. He actually lived next door and was physically born in the Wilson House, which was a hotel at the time and where his grandmother was working the day he was born. He was raised by his grandparents after age 9 when his parents divorced. Because Wilson attributed his alcoholism, in part, to the impact his parents' desertion had on both his sister and him, his recollections of this house are prominent in the history of AA. However, Wilson left his grandparents while a young man and the house played little to no direct role in Wilson's life as an alcoholic during the 1920s and no role in his struggles to become and remain sober.

Today, the Wilson House is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and it operates as a nonprofit bed and breakfast and retreat center. Near the Wilson House is the graveyard where Bill and Lois Wilson are buried.

Because the Wilson house is simply where Bill Wilson was born and has no direct connection to his adult life, it lacks a strong association with the actual founding and growth of Alcoholics Anonymous.

**Dr. Bob's Home, 855 Ardmore Avenue, Akron, Ohio**

Dr. Robert Smith, known in AA as "Dr. Bob" was the second alcoholic to obtain permanent sobriety using the AA principles and is therefore considered, alongside Bill Wilson, as the co-founder of the movement. The Smith's home, currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, is located in the town that is popularly considered the birthplace of AA. Smith's wife, Anne Smith, along with Lois Wilson, is credited with nurturing the early movement among family members that eventually led to the founding of Al-Anon Family Groups.

Anne Smith died in 1949 and Bob Smith died in 1950. The house was then sold to strangers. In the mid-1980s, when the house went on the market again, a group of AA members raised funds to buy it and turn it into a museum of AA history.

The Smith's home is currently run by a board of directors with one paid staff person. Besides daily guided tours, "Dr. Bob's home" hosts "Founders Day," an annual celebration commemorating the date of Bob's last drink, June 10, 1935, which is considered the day AA began. More than 15,000 people visit the home and surrounding area on that weekend alone.

Dr. Bob Smith's home is also nationally significant in the history of Alcoholics Anonymous. This property will be considered for NHL designation in the near future.

**The Mayflower Hotel, Akron, Ohio**

Bill Wilson made the famous phone call that led to his meeting with Dr. Bob from the lobby of this hotel. The hotel opened in 1931 with 16-stories and 450 rooms. The Mayflower was bought in 1955 by the Sheraton Hotel company and the name changed to the Sheraton-Mayflower. By 1969, it was called the Sheraton until purchased by a New York group which renamed it the Mayflower. The hotel closed in 1971, reopening in 1973 as the Mayflower Manor, a subsidized housing apartment complex. It is now an assisted living facility and is not generally open to the public. It does welcome AA visitors to see the replica of the 1935 telephone and Church Directory used by Bill located in the lobby of the facility.

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This house lacks both a strong and prolonged association with the founding and continued growth of Alcoholics Anonymous. This site also lacks the high degree of integrity which is required for National Historic Landmarks.

**Gatehouse at Stan Hywet Hall, Akron, Ohio**

Bill Wilson and Bob Smith had their first conversation on the grounds of the Frank Seiberling family estate, Stan Hywet Hall, in what came to be called "The Gatehouse." Stan Hywet Hall was designated an NHL in 1981 for its outstanding Tudor Revival main house and for its association with Seiberling, founder of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

Although the initial meeting between Wilson and Smith occurred here, their more in-depth conversations that led to Smith's last drink and the creation of AA were held at Smith's house.

**St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, Ohio**

Dr. Smith had been treating alcoholics for years and often tried to get his patients admitted to an Akron area hospital. The hospitals, still considering alcoholism a moral failing and not a disease, would refuse. Eventually, Dr. Bob and Sister Ignatia Gavin, of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine who staffed the Catholic St. Thomas Hospital, were able to open the first hospital ward ever for alcoholics in 1939 at St. Thomas. The hospital continued to grow from the 1950s to the 1970s adding new buildings and departments. It ceased to function as a Catholic hospital when an independent board took over control in the 1980s, and in the mid-1990s St. Thomas merged with the Akron City Hospital to form the Summa Health System.

St. Thomas Hospital is more closely associated with Dr. Bob Smith than Bill Wilson.

**Towns Hospital, 293 Central Park West, New York, New York**

Several times during the 1930s, Bill Wilson was a patient at Towns Hospital under the care of Dr. William D. Silkworth (lovingly referred to as "the Little Doctor Who Loved Drunks"). Wilson counted December 11, 1934, a day which he spent at Towns Hospital, as his first day of permanent sobriety. Wilson recounted his experiences at Towns Hospital in the famous "Big Book;" the books include contributions from Dr. Silkworth, a physician at the hospital, and others on the nurturing of early AA.

After achieving sobriety, Wilson continued to pull drunks from Towns in an attempt to help them become sober using the Twelve Steps which were central to the AA way of life.

Towns Hospital is still standing, but today is a co-op apartment building. As such, it no longer retains high integrity to its period of significance when it was a functioning hospital.

**Calvary Episcopal Church, 237 Park Avenue South, New York, New York**

Bill Wilson attended Oxford Group meetings here from 1934 to 1936, as did his good friend Ebby Thacher. Thacher provided Wilson with hope for his sobriety in a conversation that many feel sparked the creation of AA. Samuel Shoemaker, the pastor at Calvary, had brought the Oxford Group to New York City. The Oxford Group's principles were the direct predecessor to the principles of AA, and Shoemaker remained a good friend of AA throughout his life.

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The Calvary Church is still standing at the same location. It has consolidated with two other Episcopal parishes in order to remain a viable congregation. This property has not had as prolonged and consistent an association with Bill Wilson as Stepping Stones.

**182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn, New York**

This townhouse in the neighborhood of Brooklyn Heights was particularly important to the development of AA. It is where Lois Burnham Wilson was born and raised, and where she lived with Bill Wilson, when he was in the throes of his alcoholism and, as he put it, “relegated to living with his in-laws.”

The house is a model of Victorian Era upper-class Brooklyn houses and it reflects the social position of the Burnham family. It was here that Bill experienced his worst years of struggling with his alcoholism. Wilson was living here when his friend Ebby Thacher visited and provided him with hope for sobriety. The Wilsons were also living here when Bill returned from Towns Hospital and began to help hundreds of other alcoholics. It was also at this property that Wilson developed the Twelve Steps which have come to be a hallmark of Alcoholics Anonymous.

In the fall of 1935 Bill and Lois began to hold weekly meetings on Tuesday nights in their home on Clinton Street...The practice of opening one's home, making it into a sort of halfway house, had already been started by Dr. Bob and Anne Smith...Now, following the lead set by their Akron friends, Bill and Lois converted their own home into a similar hostel. Bill and Lois also had a theory that alcoholics felt unloved; therefore they, the Wilsons, would love them back into sobriety. Bill and Lois occupied the second floor and the rest of the house was made available to the 'recovering' alcoholics...Russ R., a recipient of their hospitality for over a year, described the way it was: 'All of us were living rent-free, food-free, everything free in Clinton Street, and Lois was doing all the work. She was working in a department store during the day and cooking for us and providing all the money the whole house had.

...Lois later admitted that their success rate was low during the 1935-36 period at Clinton Street, she pointed out that many of the alcoholics Bill worked with during that time did recover later on. In other words, Lois said, the seeds of sobriety were being planted, to take root slowly.<sup>52</sup>

In 1939, Bill and Lois were forced to leave 182 Clinton Street. It had been foreclosed on, and they failed to save it.

Today, 182 Clinton Street is privately owned. It has undergone some renovations and does not have the high level of integrity from when Bill Wilson was first developing the Alcoholics Anonymous movement. This building is, however, a contributing resource in the Brooklyn Heights Historic District National Historic Landmark (designated in 1965 for its architecture as one of New York's most prestigious nineteenth-century addresses).

**Alcoholics Anonymous World Service (AAWS), 475 Riverside Drive, New York, New York**

This is the current headquarters for AA activity around the world; it includes the publishing arm of the organization. An archives room here hosts a permanent exhibition. AAWS is open to the public during regular business hours.

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<sup>52</sup> “Pass It On”: *The Story of Bill Wilson and How the AA Message Reached the World* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous, 1984), 162.

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Although AA has had headquarters offices in many locations throughout New York City (30 Vesey Street; 415 Lexington Avenue; 141 East 44<sup>th</sup> Street; 305 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street; 468-470 Park Avenue South; and finally 475 Riverside Drive) none of these properties has the same strong or prolonged association with the Wilsons and their role in AA as Stepping Stones, their home in Katonah, New York.

## Conclusion

The Wilsons' influence on twentieth-century society is immeasurable. The Twelve Steps remain the most successful means of treating alcoholism and are the central treatment program used in most hospitals and clinics. AA does not keep official membership lists; however, in 2002 the General Service Office estimated the organization's international membership at 2,215,293 members,<sup>53</sup> all following the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions devised by Bill Wilson. The report calculated that 51,245 groups with 1,160,651 members existed in the United States alone.<sup>54</sup> Two hundred and twenty-five other groups that address issues as varied as drug addiction, gambling, overeating, and surviving incest have subsequently adopted the Twelve Steps. In 1990, *Life* magazine named Bill Wilson one of the 100 most important Americans of the twentieth century, and in 1999, *Time* magazine selected Wilson as one of the 100 most influential people of the century.<sup>55</sup>

Stepping Stones is where Bill Wilson accomplished much of his professional work, where he wrote several books and articles on his personal struggles with alcoholism and what he came to call "the AA way of life." More importantly, Stepping Stones is where Wilson lived his life as a sober and recovering alcoholic and where he became the public face of AA. Stepping Stones is also the property with the strongest association with Al-Anon, the self-help group which assists the relatives and friends of alcoholics. The group began here in 1951 and Lois Wilson directed the activities of Al-Anon out of the Stepping Stones library for over a year. Finally, Stepping Stones possesses the most extensive archive of materials related to Bill and Lois Wilson anywhere in the world. These archives, begun and maintained by Lois Wilson, allow scholars the opportunity both to research the history of AA and to gain an understanding of the intertwined nature of alcoholism and co-dependency through a close examination of the lives of Bill and Lois Wilson.

Each room at Stepping Stones illustrates the role Alcoholics Anonymous had on the Wilsons themselves. Lois's gallery is filled with AA and Al-Anon memorabilia and important historical information. Many visitors have expressed their gratitude to the Wilsons and the Twelve Steps Program through gifts which can be found throughout the house.

Today, the Stepping Stones Foundation remains dedicated to preserving the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson, co-founders respectively of AA and Al-Anon Family Groups, and to commemorating their achievements in the field of recovery from alcoholism.

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<sup>53</sup> Alcoholics Anonymous, accessed October 10, 2002, [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Susan Cheever, "Bill W: The Healer," 201-04.

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**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)****Page 31**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register. NR# 04000702, Listed July 16, 2004
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository):

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

Acreage of Property: 8.5 acres

UTM References:	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Easting</b>	<b>Northing</b>
	18	608833	4566975

Verbal Boundary Description: The boundaries of Stepping Stones consist of the entirety of the 5 parcels of land owned by The Stepping Stones Foundation, and is indicated by the heavy line on the attached Survey of Property map.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the buildings and acreage that have historically been associated with the Stepping Stones property and which maintain historic integrity.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

Name/Title: Annah Perch, Executive Director  
Stepping Stones

Address: 62 Oak Road  
Katonah, New York 10536

Telephone: 914-232-4822

Date: July 2010

Edited by: Alexandra Lord, Ph.D.  
National Park Service  
National Historic Landmarks Program  
1849 C St. NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Patty Henry  
National Park Service  
National Historic Landmarks Program  
1849 C St. NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: (202) 354-2216

DESIGNATED A NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK  
October 16, 2012

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

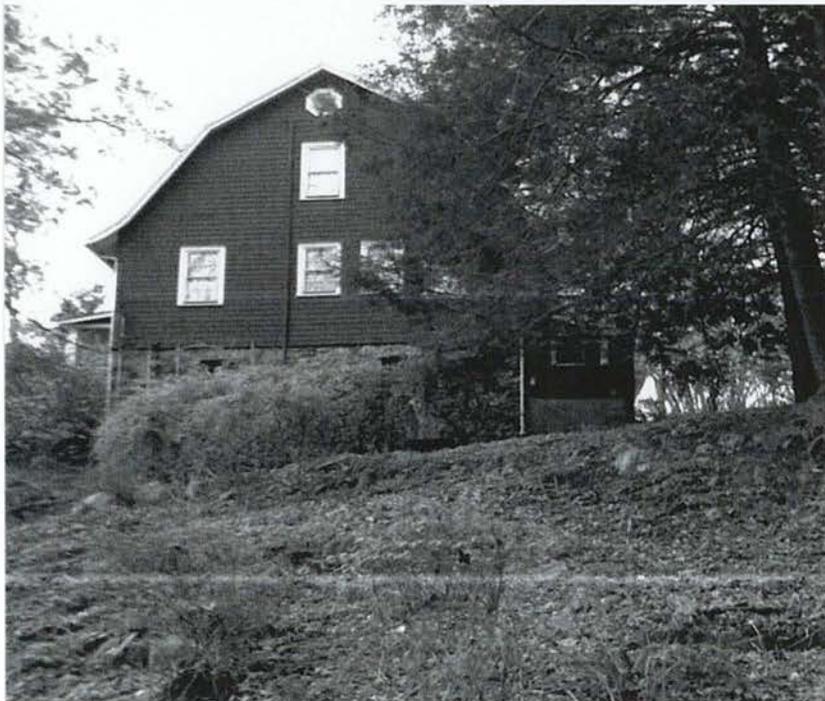
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Earliest known photo of Steppings Stones, east elevation, 1944.



Stepping Stones, east elevation, 2009.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

---



Bill and Lois Wilson sitting on hill at Stepping Stones, 1950.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Stepping Stones, main (north) façade, 2008.



Living room at Stepping Stones, 2008.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Kitchen at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Gallery walls filled with AA memorabilia at Stepping Stones, 2008.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Lois Wilson's desk in gallery where she founded Al-Anon at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Bill and Lois Wilson's bedroom at Stepping Stones, 2008.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

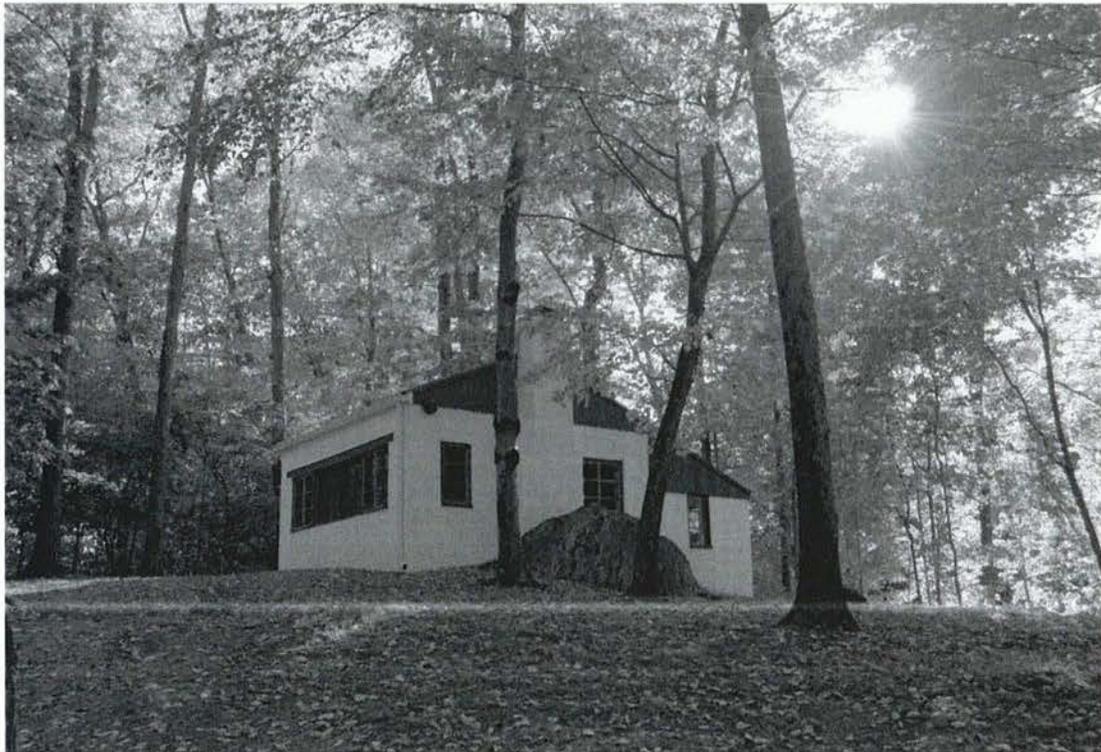
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Bill Wilson in front of "Wit's End," 1957.



"Wit's End," 2008.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Bill Wilson inside "Wit's End," around 1953.



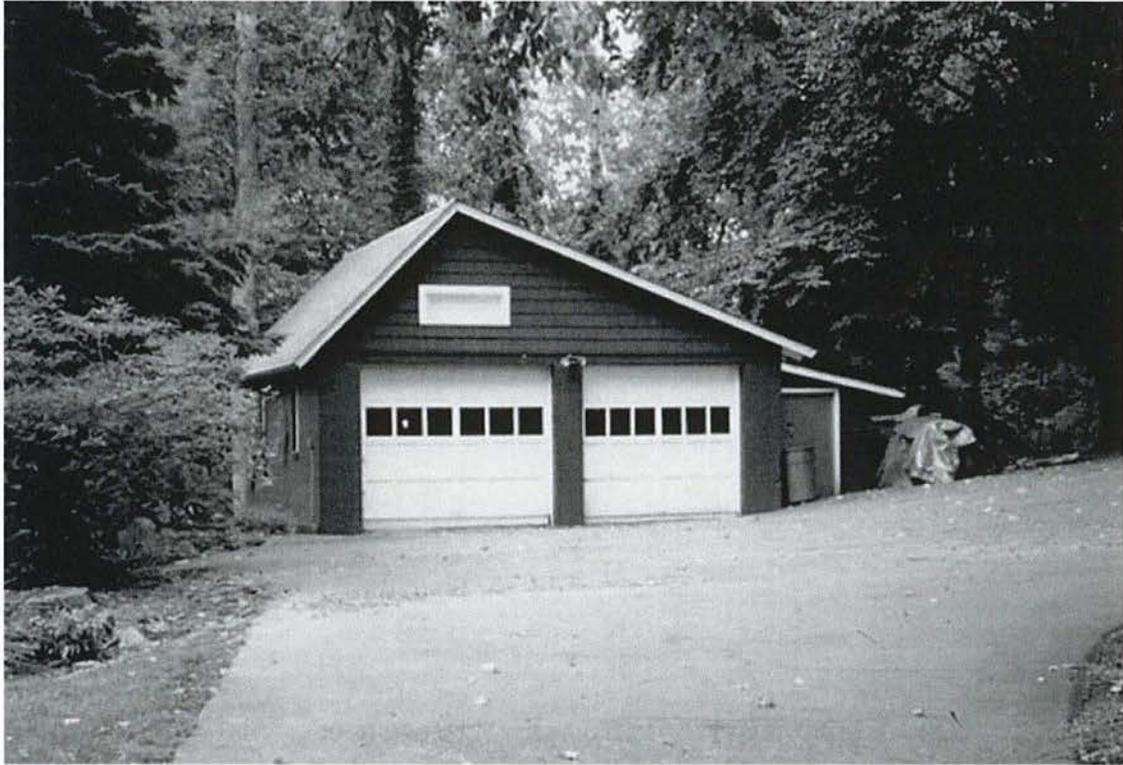
Interior of "Wit's End," 2008.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Stepping Stones Garage, constructed 1951, prior to renovation.



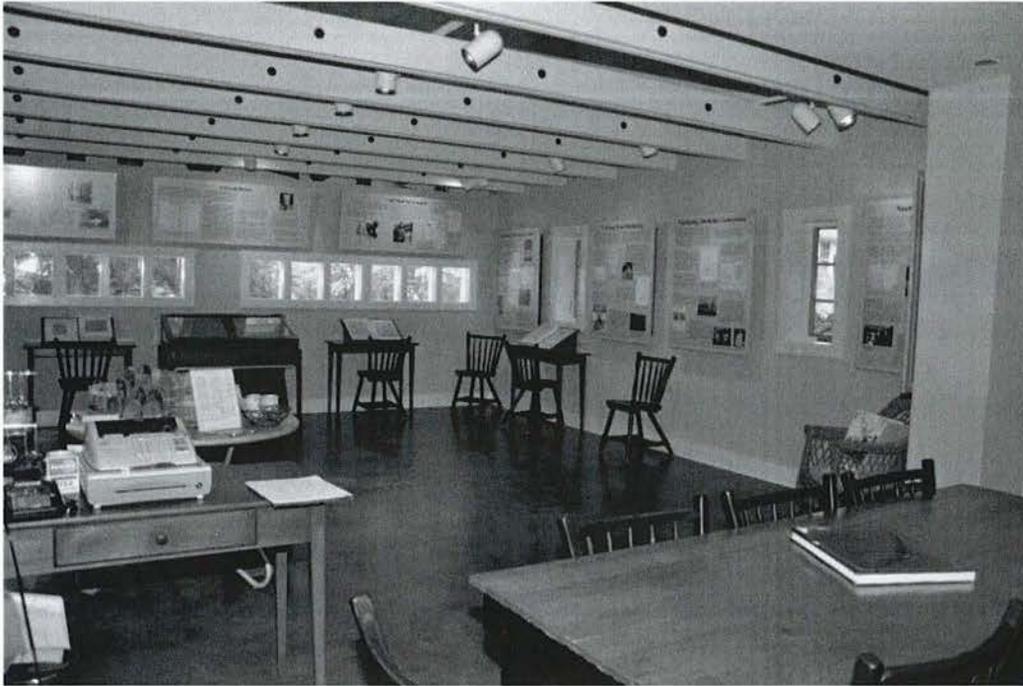
1951 garage after renovation, 2011.  
Currently serves as Stepping Stones Welcome Center.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

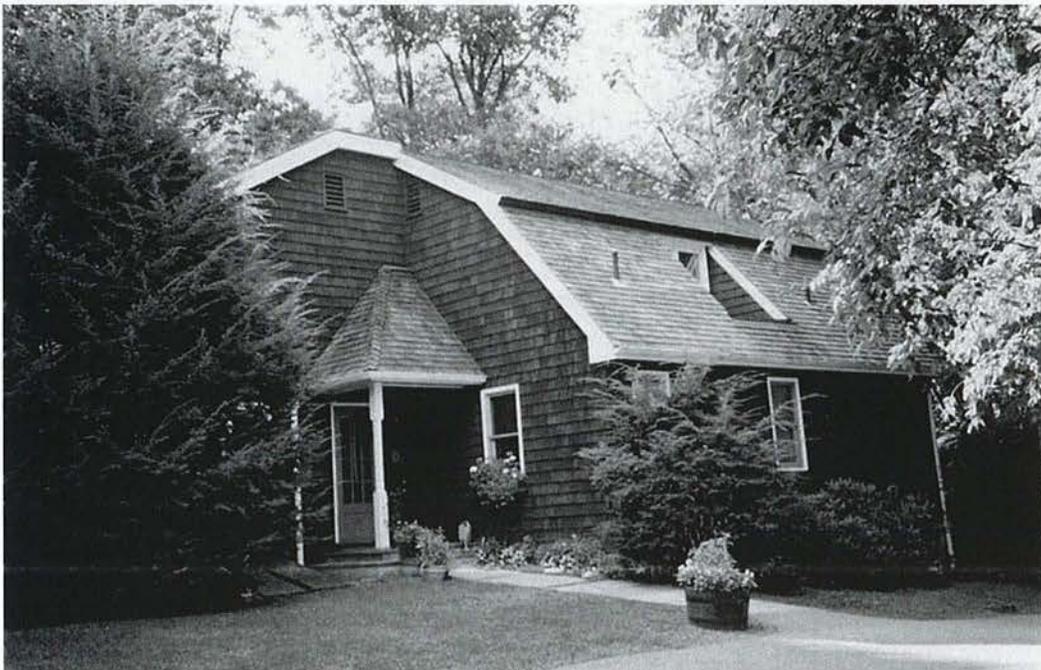
United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Inside the renovated 1951 Stepping Stones garage, now the Welcome Center, 2011.



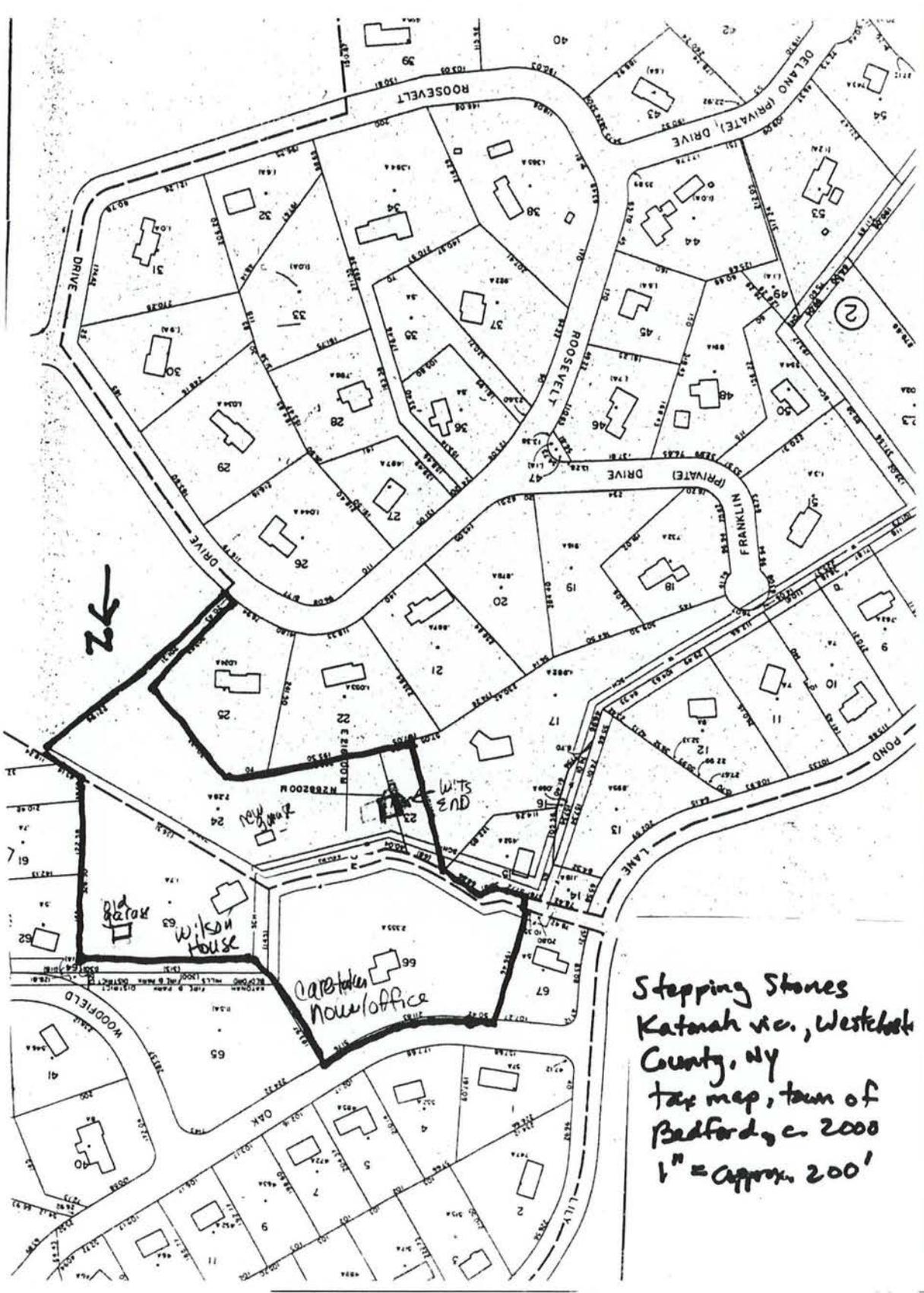
“Caretaker’s House” which is central office space for Stepping Stones and includes archives.  
This is the building constructed by Lois Wilson in the early 1980s.

# STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Photos

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



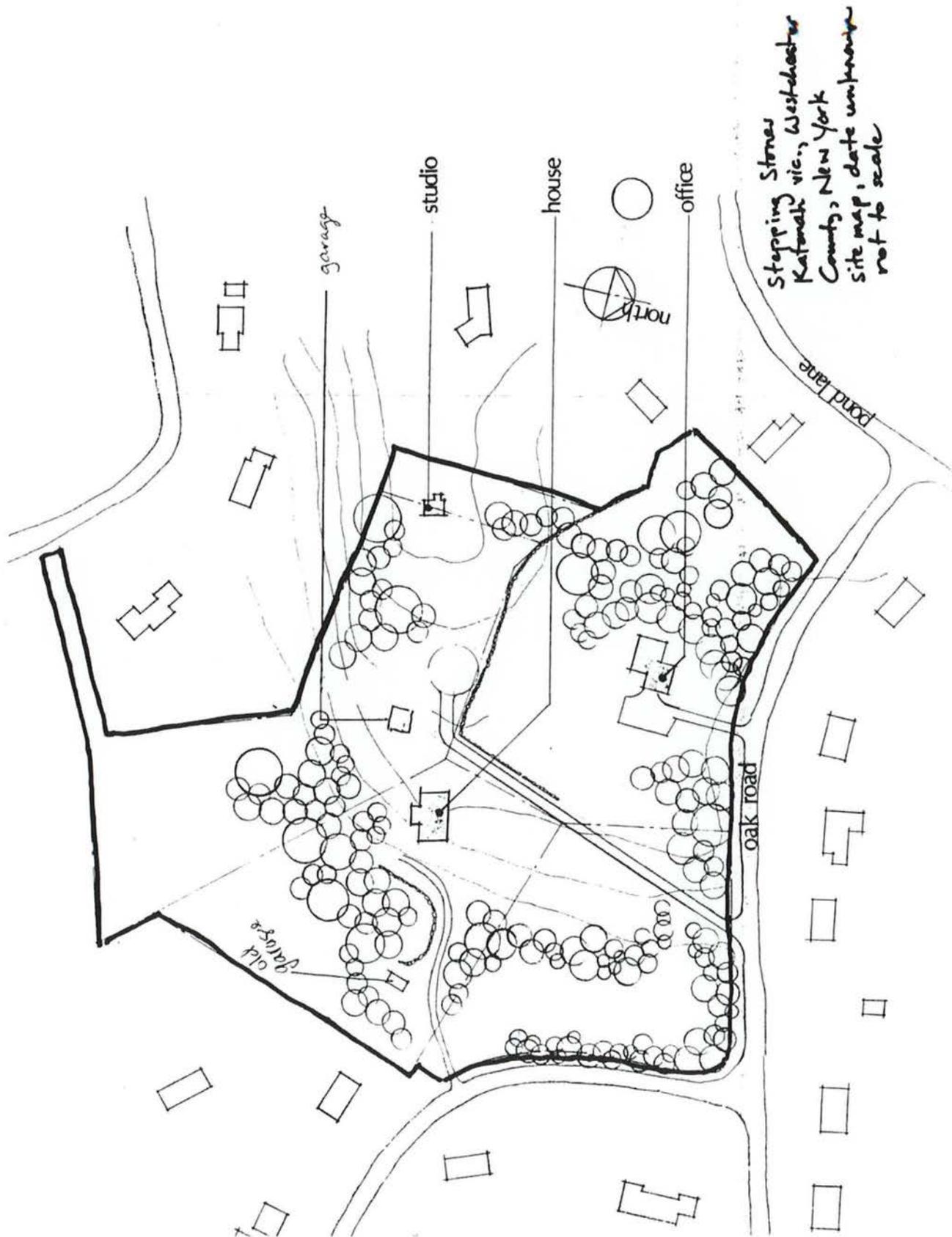
Stepping Stones  
 Katonah vic., Westchester  
 County, NY  
 tax map, town of  
 Bedford, c. 2000  
 1" = approx. 200'

# STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Photos

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Stepping Stones  
Katonah vic., Westchester  
County, New York  
site map, date unknown  
not to scale

# STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

## Photos

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

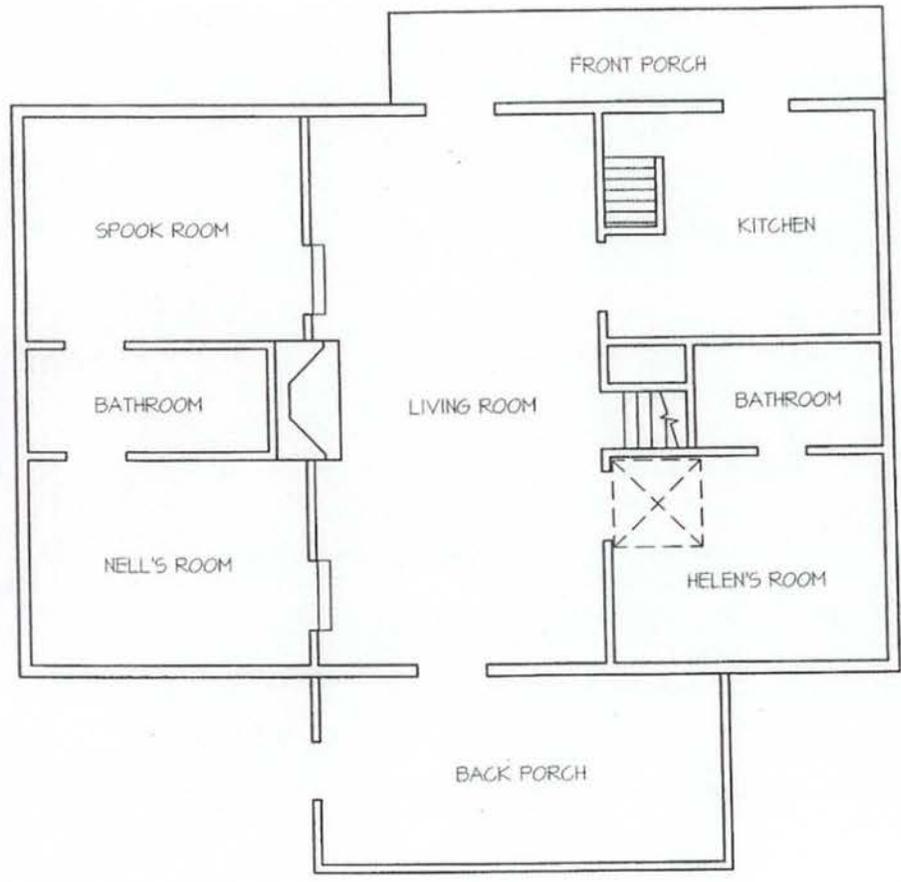


# STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



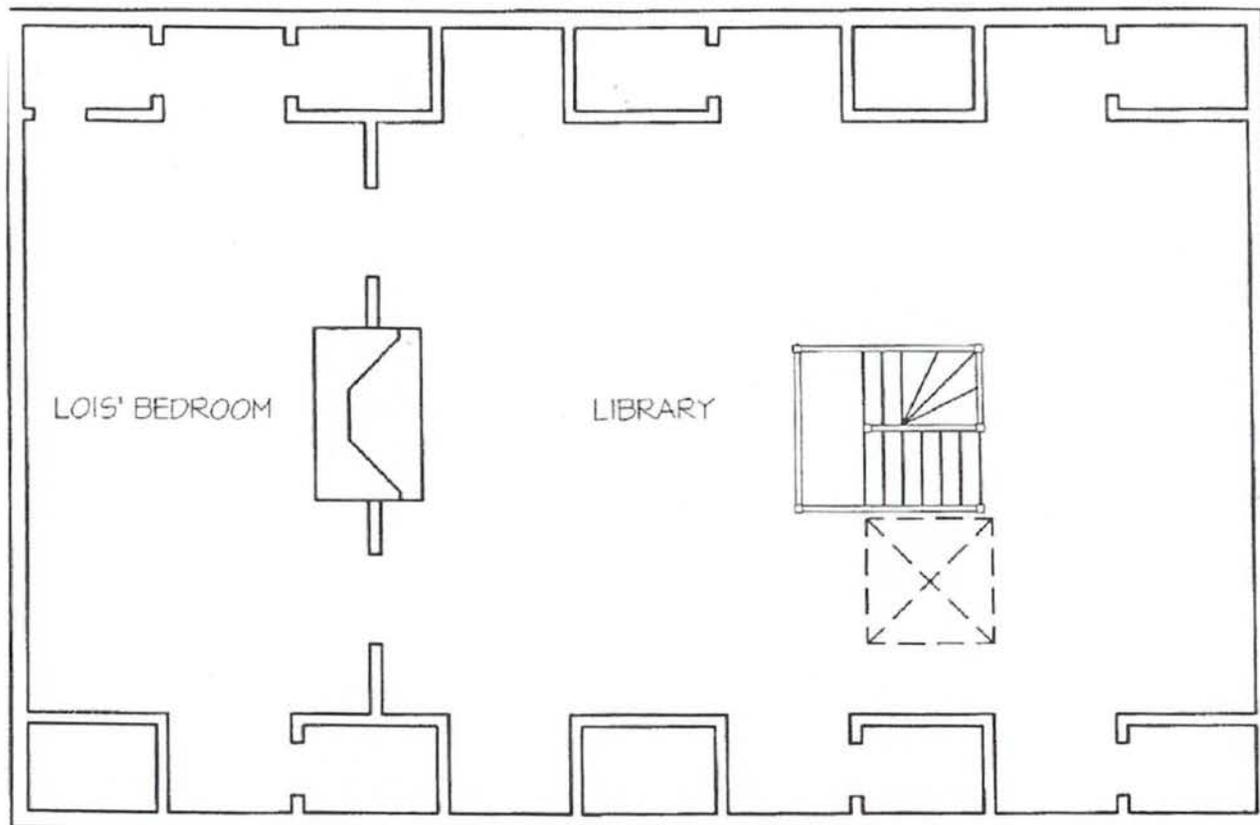
<p><b>STEPHEN TILLY</b>  <b>ARCHITECT</b>          22 Elm Street          Dobbs Ferry, New York 10522          Tel 914 693-8898          Fax 914 693-4235</p>	<p><b>STEPPING STONES</b>          EXISTING CONDITIONS          62 Oak Road          Bedford, New York</p>	<p>Title: <b>FIRST FLOOR</b>  <b>DIAGRAMMATIC PLAN</b>          Scale: NTS          Drawn by: MEG</p>	<p>Sheet No.:  <b>EC-1</b></p>
---	--	---	------------------------------------

Stepping Stones main house floor plan, first floor.

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

**Photos**  
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



Stepping Stones main house floor plan, second floor.















GRANVILLE



FIRST things FIRST  
Each DOES IT  
LIVE and LET LIVE

God grant us the  
Serenity  
to accept the things  
which cannot be changed.  
Courage  
to change the things  
which can  
and Wisdom  
to know the difference.

L. GIL WILSON









Hur for the Grace of God



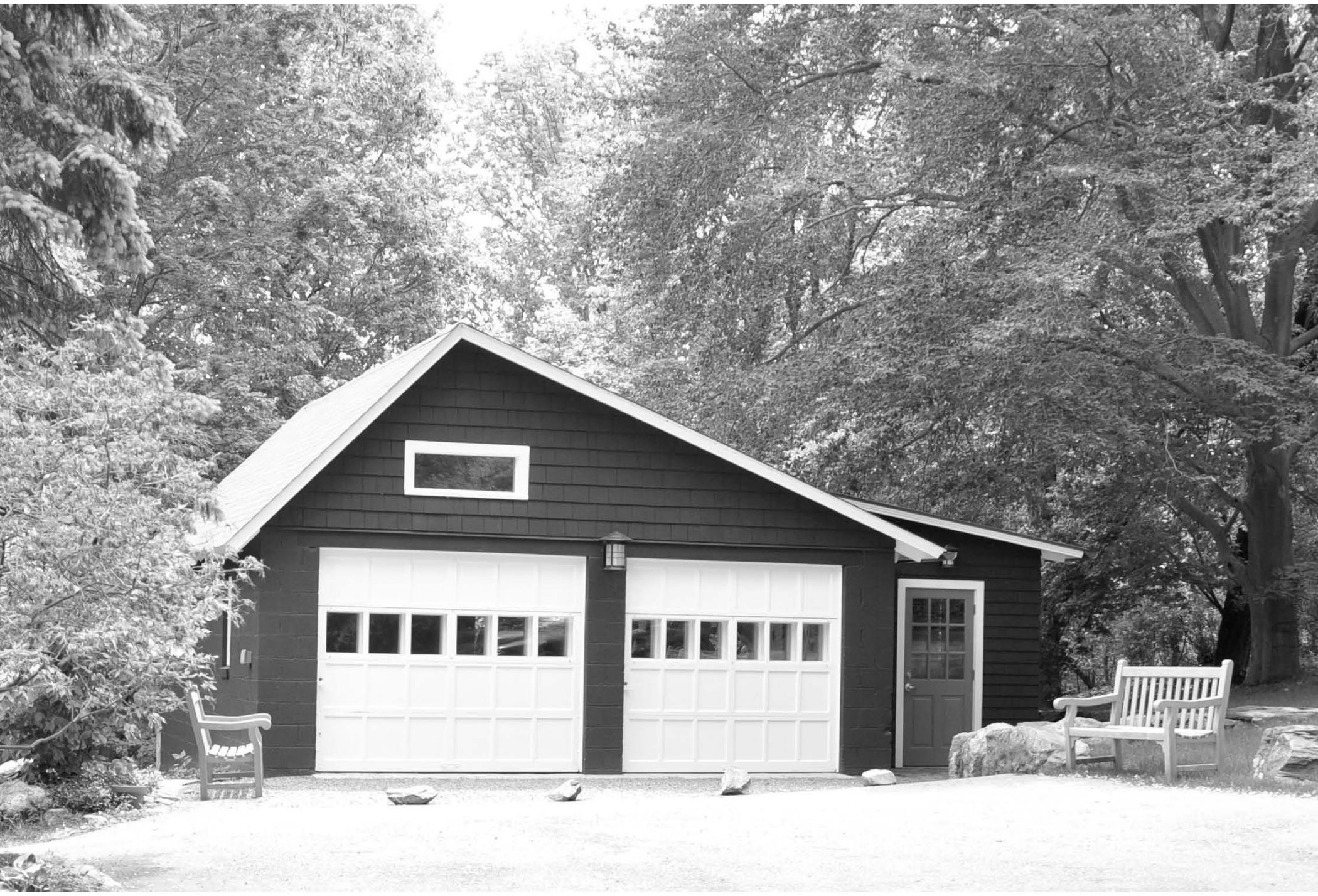
A framed piece of text, possibly a religious quote or prayer.



A small framed piece of text, possibly a religious quote or prayer.









**A Great Peace**

...

**He Had My Trouble**

...

**Alcoholics Anonymous & Bars**

...

**A Refuge From Wandering**

...

**Nurturing Alcoholics Anonymous**

...

**Nurt...**

...



Desk area containing a printer, a telephone, a Visa/MasterCard sign, and a stack of papers.

A large wooden table with several chairs around it, serving as a meeting or reading area.

Small table with a chair, holding a display of items.

Table with a chair, holding a display of items.

Table with a chair, holding an open book or document.

Table with a chair, holding an open book or document.

Table with a chair, holding an open book or document.

Table with a chair, holding an open book or document.

Wicker chair with a book or document on it.







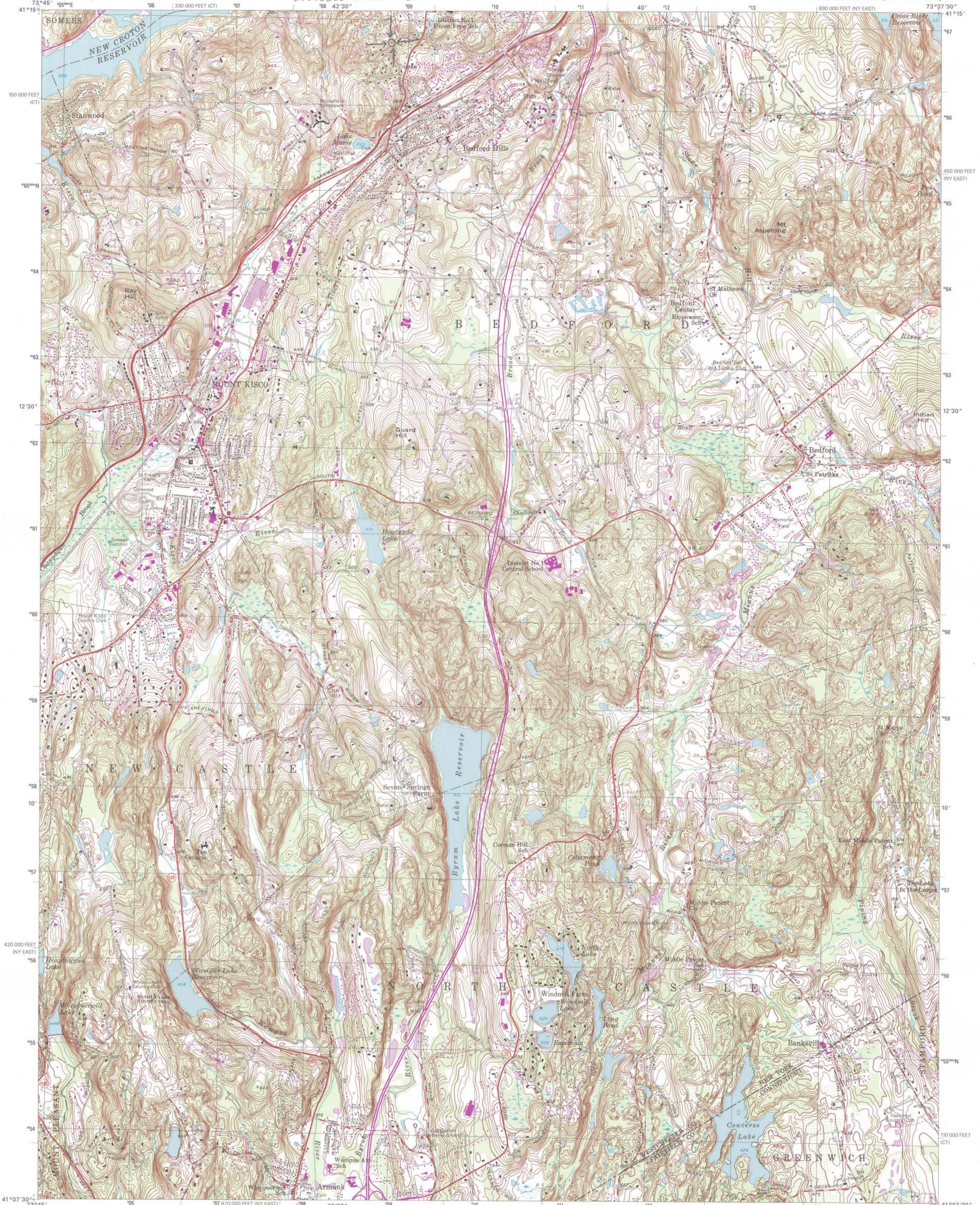
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Stepping Stones  
Westchester County, NY  
Zone 12

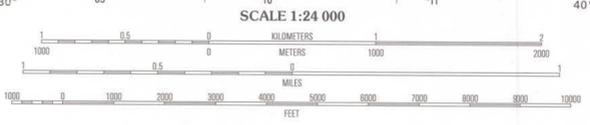
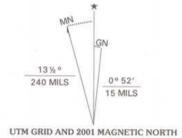
E. 608833 N. 4566 975

STATE OF NEW YORK  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MOUNT KISCO QUADRANGLE  
NEW YORK-CONNECTICUT  
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Produced by the United States Geological Survey  
Topography compiled 1949. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1971 and other sources. Photomaps derived from imagery dated 1998; no major culture or drainage changes observed. Survey control current as of 1955. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 2000  
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27)  
Projection: New York coordinate system, east zone (transverse Mercator)  
10 000-foot ticks: New York coordinate system, east zone and Connecticut coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 18  
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway hard surface .....	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface .....
Secondary highway hard surface .....	Unimproved road .....
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
State Route	

1	2	3	1 Mohegan Lake
4	5	6	2 Croton Falls
7	8	7	3 Pough Lake
		8	4 Ossining
			5 Pound Ridge
			6 White Plains
			7 Glenville
			8 Stamford

ADJOINING 7.5' QUADRANGLE NAMES

MOUNT KISCO, NY-CT  
1998

NIMA 6566 II NW SERIES US271





# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
1849 C Street, N.W.  
Washington, DC 20240

H34(2280)

**AUG 16 2012**

## Memorandum

To: Secretary

Through: Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks *Quabon*

From: Director *Walter for the Service*

Subject: Designation of 20 Properties as National Historic Landmarks: Director's Recommendation and Request for Secretarial Action

At its meeting on May 23, 2012, the National Park System Advisory Board recommended designation of the following properties as National Historic Landmarks:

1. CENTRAL BRANCH, NATIONAL HOME FOR DISABLED VOLUNTEER SOLDIERS/DAYTON VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOME, Dayton, OH (Criterion 1, Exception 5)
2. MCKEEN MOTOR CAR #70 (Virginia & Truckee Railway Motor Car #22), Carson City, NV (Criterion 1)
3. DENVER & RIO GRANDE RAILROAD SAN JUAN EXTENSION (Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad), Conejos and Archuleta Counties, CO and Rio Arriba County, NM (Criterion 1)
4. POSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, UNIT 1, COLORADO RIVER RELOCATION CENTER, La Paz County, AZ (Criterion 1)
5. CAMP EVANS, Wall Township, NJ (Criterion 1)
6. BLACK JACK BATTLEFIELD, Douglas County, KS (Criteria 1 and 2)

7. DR. BOB'S HOME (Dr. Robert and Anne Smith House), Akron, OH  
(Criteria 1 and 2)
8. STEPPING STONES (Bill and Lois Wilson House), Katonah, NY  
(Criteria 1 and 2, Exception 8)
9. CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Boston, MA  
(Criterion 4, Exception 1)
10. UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, Newport, RI  
(Criterion 4, Exception 1)
11. UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS CAMPUS (Bronx Community College of The  
City University of New York), Bronx, NY  
(Criterion 4)
12. KNIGHT'S FERRY BRIDGE, Stanislaus County, CA  
(Criterion 4)
13. HUMPBACK BRIDGE, Alleghany County, VA  
(Criterion 4)
14. U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE (James R. Browning U.S.  
Court of Appeals), San Francisco, CA  
(Criterion 4)
15. THE REPUBLIC, Columbus, IN  
(Criterion 4, Exception 8)
16. HISTORIC MORAVIAN BETHLEHEM HISTORIC DISTRICT,  
Bethlehem, PA  
(Criteria 1 and 4, Exceptions 1 and 5)
17. DENVER CIVIC CENTER, Denver, CO  
(Criteria 1 and 4)
18. GREENDALE HISTORIC DISTRICT, Village of Greendale, WI  
(Criteria 1 and 4)
19. DAVIS ORIOLE EARTHLODGE SITE, Mills County, IA  
(Criteria 4 and 6)
20. MURRAY SPRINGS CLOVIS SITE, Cochise County, AZ  
(Criterion 6)

In accordance with National Historic Landmarks Program regulations, the Board reviewed the studies nominating these properties for Landmark status and found that these properties meet National Historic Landmarks Program criteria. The Board, therefore, voted to recommend that these properties be designated as National Historic Landmarks. The Certificate of Action by the National Park System Advisory Board is attached for your review.

Also, at its meeting on May 23, 2012, the National Park System Advisory Board recommended approval of additional documentation and a boundary revision/clarification for the following National Historic Landmarks:

1. NANTUCKET HISTORIC DISTRICT, Nantucket County, MA  
(Criteria 1 and 4)
2. HAMILTON GRANGE, New York, NY (boundary approval only)  
(Criterion 2)

In accordance with National Historic Landmarks Program regulations, the Board reviewed the additional documentation and boundary clarification study for this Landmark and found that the additional documentation and boundary clarification meet National Historic Landmarks Program criteria. The Board, therefore, voted to recommend that the additional documentation and boundary clarification for this National Historic Landmark be approved. The Certificate of Action by the National Park System Advisory Board is attached for your review.

Per the National Historic Landmark Program regulations, I hereby certify that the procedural requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 65.5 have been met.

I recommend that you approve the Board's May 23, 2012, recommendations, and designate as National Historic Landmarks the properties listed above, and approve the additional documentation and boundary clarification for the National Historic Landmark listed above.

APPROVE: \_\_\_\_\_

*Ken Salazar*

DISAPPROVE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

OCT 16 2012

Attachments

National Historic Landmarks Program  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nomination preparer, notes from the staff of the National Historic Landmarks Program, and/or other material the NHL program received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

Address any reply to:

# Department of the Treasury

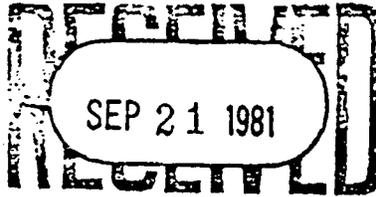
## District Director Internal Revenue Service

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ In reply refer to: EP:EO:7201:P. Holub

SEP 16 1981  
Phone # 264-3248 M-81-EO-923  
Case # 13121813EO

Stepping Stones Foundation  
60 East 42 Street Room 1536  
New York, New York 10165

Accounting period ends December 31



— Gentlemen:

On the basis of your stated purposes and the understanding that your operations will continue as evidenced to date or will conform to those proposed in your ruling application, we have concluded that you are exempt from Federal income tax as an organization described in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We have further concluded that you are a private foundation as defined in section 509(a) of the Code, and as a operating private foundation as defined in section 4942(j)(3).

Any changes in operation from those described, or in your character or purposes, must be reported immediately to your District Director for consideration of their effect upon your exempt status. You must also report any change in your name or address.

You are not liable for social security (FICA) taxes unless you file a waiver of exemption certificate as provided in the Federal Insurance Contributions Act. You are not liable for the taxes imposed under the Federal Unemployment Tax Act (FUTA). However, you are not automatically exempt from Federal excise taxes, and in this letter we are not determining whether you are exempt from any such taxes.

Donors may deduct contributions to you as provided in section 170 of the Code. Bequests, legacies, devises, transfers, or gifts to you or for your use are deductible for Federal estate and gift tax purposes under section 2055, 2106, and 2522 of the Code.

You are required to file Form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax by the 15th day of the fifth month after the end of your annual accounting period. The law imposes a penalty of \$10 a day, up to a maximum of \$5,000, for failure to file a return on time.

You are not required to file Federal income tax returns unless you are subject to the tax on unrelated business income under section 511 of the Code. If you are subject to this tax, you must file an income tax return on Form 990-T. In this letter we are not determining whether any of your present or proposed activities are unrelated trade or business as defined in section 513 of the Code.

You need an employer identification number even if you have no employees. If an employer identification number was not entered on your application, a number will be assigned to you and you will be advised of it. Please use that number on all returns you file and in all correspondence with the Internal Revenue Service.

Please keep this determination letter in your permanent records.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "P. J. Medina".

District Director

This determination is not an indication that the Internal Revenue Service is in any way approving your procedures for making grants to individuals as provided in I.R.C. section 4945(g) and Excise Tax Regulations section 53.4945-4(d).

cc: Owen J. Flanagan  
60 East 42nd Street Room 1536  
New York, New York 10165



Bernadette Castro  
Commissioner

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau  
Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

June 14, 2005

Sir or Madame  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
P.O. Box 452  
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

Re: Stepping Stones  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, Westchester County

Dear Sir or Madame :

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced property has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As you may know, the National Register is the nation's official list of properties worthy of preservation. Listing on the National Register recognizes the importance of these properties to the history of our country and provides them with a measure of protection. In addition, owners of income producing properties may qualify for federal income tax benefits. Properties owned by municipalities and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to apply for state historic preservation matching grants.

If you would like more information about any of these programs, please write to the Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau or call us at (518) 237-8643. Field Services Bureau staff maintains a continuing interest in all registered properties and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

Ruth L. Pierpont  
Director  
Historic Preservation  
Field Services Bureau

RLP:lsa

# **Stepping Stones Foundation**

## **Preservation Plan**

**2007**

# Stepping Stones Foundation

## Preservation Plan

**2007**

*Written by the Conservation Team of:*

*Audra Brecher, Preservation Specialist  
Stephen Tilly, Architects  
Dobbs Ferry, NY*

*Hugh Glover, Conservator of Furniture & Wood Objects  
Williamstown Art Conservation Center  
Williamstown, MA*

*Paul Himmelstein, Conservator  
Appelbaum & Himmelstein  
New York, NY*

*Walter Newman, Senior Paper Conservator  
Northeast Document Conservation Center  
Andover, MA*

*Gwen Spicer, Textiles, Upholstery & Objects Conservator  
Spicer Art Conservation  
Delmar, NY*

*Janine St. Germain, Principal  
Winthrop & St. Germain  
New York, NY*

*Stephen Tilly, Architect  
Stephen Tilly, Architects  
Dobbs Ferry, NY*

*Edited by  
Joann Lindstrom, Museum Consultant*

## INTRODUCTION

On September 11 & 12, 2006, a team of conservators met with Annah Perch, Executive Director, at Stepping Stones, the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson, in Katonah, New York. The team was comprised of Stephen Tilly, Principal, and preservation specialist Audra Brecher of Stephen Tilly Architects, Gwen Spicer, textile conservator, Paul Himmelstein, paintings conservator, Hugh Glover, furniture conservator, Walter Newman, paper conservator, and Janine St. Germain, archivist. The purpose of this meeting was to formally assess in a collaborative manner the preservation needs of the main house and its ancillary buildings and collections. The group sought to gain a better understanding of the scope of the work that lies ahead, as well as a sense of priorities.

Many issues relating to the preservation of the various structures on the site and the collections housed in them were discussed. Initial discussions involved the institution's goals for the site, the information needed to prepare the report, methods to be used in gathering the needed information, and the contributions that would be made by the various participants. After the first morning's discussion, the group was given a tour of all of the spaces in the Main House and the Studio. The second day was devoted to further inspection of other spaces in the buildings by all of the team members.

Prior to this project, Stephen Tilly, Architect, and C.R. Jones, Conservator, executed a Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) review in 2002. It entailed an exhaustive examination of the site and its five buildings. Nearly all of the existing conditions described in that report remain relevant to the existing conditions at the present time.

This report is written to be instructive and assist Stepping Stones in improving its buildings and collections. It is not meant to be overwhelming. To fully utilize the recommendations, overlook its length and focus on small aspects of it at one time.

Conservation Team  
February 2007

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Stepping Stones Foundation faces many challenges in transforming itself into a responsive community resource. For one, the scope and magnitude of its collections, which include paintings, archival material, books, furniture and decorative arts, textiles and costumes, can only be estimated at this point. These collections, of all material compositions and physical stability, are not housed nor stored in appropriate protective enclosures and are at high risk of physical damage. There is little or no intellectual control due to difficult and limited physical accessibility. At present, most of the objects in the collection are essentially unavailable for research and other activities appropriate to a historic site, and are therefore of greatly diminished value. The current highly capable staff is now faced with addressing the massive housing and storage situation as a prerequisite to gaining intellectual control of the collection. This situation is not unique in the evolution of house museums; the transition from a small volunteer organization to one which actively develops its public dimension using professional staff, is a situation faced by similar institutions across the nation.

A priority list from which the staff should work is provided within this report; a brief summary of those recommendations is as follows:

- *Stepping Stones will need additional, professionally trained staff with experience dealing with collections or utilize the services of museum professionals to institute the recommendations included within this report.* As Stepping Stones grows in size and activities it will need oversight of its collection through cataloging, maintenance, and research and interpretation. IN PROGRESS
- *Complete a collection-wide inventory followed by a full-scale cataloging of the permanent collection.* The collection held by Stepping Stones is a historically significant example of 20<sup>th</sup> century domestic life as well as documentary evidence of the lives of two important American cultural icons. As of this writing, no full-scale inventory has been undertaken of the collection, which hinders the foundation's ability to share, loan, research, and exhibit its collection effectively. IN PROGRESS
- *Begin a systematic monitoring of all collections environments for the influence of light, RH, and pests as soon as possible.* The Foundation owns data loggers that can be put into use immediately. Information gleaned from several seasons of a monitoring program will guide the staff in its priorities as it moves forward.
- *Several structural improvements should be addressed to preserve the buildings, make the site more secure, and ensure visitor safety.* Many of these improvements should be implemented as soon as possible, including addressing the drainage issues around every building on site.
- *Continue plans to build an Orientation Center.* The Orientation Center, which is now in progress, will provide a holding area for visitors waiting for a tour and alleviate overcrowding in the Main House. In addition, the center will enable the staff to eliminate

the consumption and serving of food in the Main House and justify disconnecting the Main House plumbing. Many of the recommendations contained within this report can be addressed with the completion of this additional building. IN PROGRESS

- *Overcrowding of the textile and archival collections, poor storage materials, and inadequate collection facilities are evident at the site.* The storage and object preparation conditions for the costume and archival collections are inadequate not only in terms of space and accessibility, but also in terms of environmental conditions and housing materials. Consolidation and reorganization of objects housed throughout the collection storage areas must be undertaken to assure long-term preservation and access to the collections. Creation of a permanent, small preparation area will also greatly improve the staff's ability to protect the collection through proper handling and to implement collection management practices. Of utmost importance is securing funding for additional conservation supplies such as archival quality boxes and folders, consideration of a new or renovated storage facility, and replicating original documents on exhibit and storing the originals in the archives.
- *Throughout the collection there is inadequate support for fragile objects and objects in need of cleaning or treatment.* Many objects in Stepping Stones' collection are inherently unstable due to their construction or composition (especially the textiles, and the other organic materials in the collection). Collection objects should be sampled and surveyed by outside consultants as a means to develop short-term storage and re-housing requirements, and develop long-range preservation priorities. Such surveys would establish a baseline of information so that deterioration can be recognized and diagnosed, and preventive measures can be implemented. Additionally, exhibit-hanging techniques for everything from framed paintings to the farm implements and military arms on exhibit should be improved.
- *Begin an in-depth facilities and collections analysis of all storage areas as a basis for meeting collection storage needs:* how much space does the collection require? What sorts of spaces are appropriate for object categories?

Prevention is key to long-term care of the collection. The exact order of concern, and strategy for dealing with the issues outlined in this report will need to be determined by the staff and board based on a more in-depth understanding of the organization and its financial and personnel resources. Addressing the points listed above is necessary for the Foundation to achieve its stated mission. These much-needed improvements will require funding and staff time. However, Stepping Stones must keep in mind that the short-term costs for *preventive* maintenance must be weighed against cost for expensive conservation treatment and/or the intangible loss which would result from a continued structural and aesthetic decline of the collection and the building which houses them.

A recent survey by Heritage Preservation identified collection care as a critical need for all museums across the U.S. ([www.heritagepreservation.org](http://www.heritagepreservation.org)). The survey found that the most urgent preservation need in U.S. collections is environmental control and proper storage.

## INTERPRETATION

Like many historic sites associated with greatly admired and revered individuals, Stepping Stones serves more than one function. It is an historic home, a memorial to the life and accomplishments of the Wilsons, and a place of pilgrimage. There is no doubt that it is a place of personal and important significance to its visitors who have been touched in life-changing ways by the Wilson's work. Many of these visitors who come from all parts of the world, wish to see the home, where the Wilsons lived. The Wilson's home is a relatively modest setting, now surrounded by an area of increasing affluence, and the simplicity of the house, contents, and setting is an important part of the visitor experience.

For Stepping Stones to preserve its uniqueness will require careful planning and an understanding of its goals and its meaning to visitors. In the long-term, it will need to adopt appropriate standards for the preservation of its collections, structures, and landscape. The addition of a trained professional (e.g. registrar or curator) to the staff will help the Foundation develop its preservation efforts. A museum professional as a staff member may also help the Foundation to be more successful in seeking grants. An interpretation date needs to be established for the whole estate in order to direct interpretation, preservation, and restoration efforts.

## **PRIORITY LIST**

This prioritized list of recommendations is extracted from each conservator's written report. For more detail regarding a specific recommendation, please refer to the related reports, which begin on page 20.

As each of the recommendations is implemented, it is important to maintain a log, including photo documentation, to record any changes that are made. This documentation is vital to show changes made to the collection, such as relocation, cleaning, exhibition, loan, conservation treatment, etc.

As with any organizational change, some of these proposed recommendations may pose conflicts within the organization. Continued discussions are needed among the director, board members, tour guides, staff, and conservators in order to arrive at attainable goals.

### **Critical Needs**

The team agreed that the **six most pressing conservation needs** at Stepping Stones are:

- 1) reducing light levels in all buildings on site; COMPLETE
- 2) improving structural deficiencies in the Main House and Wit's End;
- 3) improving security measures to protect the collection;
- 4) gaining intellectual control over the collection; IN PROGRESS
- 5) instituting an integrated pest management program (IPM), and COMPLETE
- 6) environmental monitoring of all buildings on site and reducing the dampness at Wit's End.

The Priority List is a compilation of recommendations made by each conservator and addresses these six critical needs. Issues marked with an asterisk (\*) are those that can be done in-house or by trained volunteers at little or no cost to the institution.

## ***A. Buildings***

The Stepping Stones site consists of three main buildings: “Stepping Stones”, the home owned by the Wilsons, built c. 1920 (“Main House”), “Wit’s End”, Bill Wilson’s small studio, built in 1949, and the Caretaker’s Cottage/Archives, which was built as the caretaker’s residence in 1984 and houses the institution’s archival holdings.

The most urgent conservation priorities for the Main House and Wit’s End are correcting drainage to alleviate moisture, updating the electrical and plumbing systems, and shoring up structural problems that threaten the safety of visitors and integrity of the structures.

### **High Priority**

- Undertake a complete survey of the electrical system in the Main House and install new wiring as recommended. All lighting should be wired to a single switch out of sight of visitors. COMPLETE
- A section of the basement ceiling was removed during previous renovations and now poses a serious structural danger to the Main House. This issue should be considered of first order importance. COMPLETE
- Regrade for positive drainage on the east side of Wit’s End, install gutters, and use a French drain or similar below ground system to divert water away from the building.
- Apply bituminous or equal waterproofing below grade around the foundation perimeter at Wit’s End.
- \* • Wit’s End should be properly ventilated to dry accumulated moisture.
- \* • Revise the site’s regular maintenance plan. Include procedures to clean the weep holes in the storm windows, and repair windows that leak. COMPLETE
- \* • Check the roof of the Main House regularly for leaks.
- \* • Practice preventative maintenance by installing gutter “hats” on the Main House to keep leaves and debris from clogging the drainage.
- \* • When the Visitor’s Center is complete, disconnect and drain any plumbing in the Main House that is not needed.
- \* • Remove the aluminum sheathing on the dormer surrounds of the Main House, replace with original shingles, and properly flash to prevent leaking into the first floor.
- \* • Consider capping the fireplace at Wit’s End to prevent small animals from entering and to reduce heat loss.

### Priority

- Pipe the gutters past the main path to the house.
- Replace the existing gutters with those of a half-round design as were original to the Main House.
- Install insulation around the perimeter of the basement of the Main House.
- Install gypsum board on the basement ceiling of the Main House to conserve energy and provide a fire separation between the basement and first floor. This should be done after all electrical and plumbing updates have been completed.
- Change the basement ramp entrance in the archives to prevent water from flooding under the door.
- \* • Secure all entries to the basement of the Main House.
- \* • Jacket the piping of the Main House boiler.

## **B. Environmental**

The environmental priorities at Stepping Stones involve three main areas: light, environmental monitoring, and pest management.

**Light** damage, which is both accumulative and irreversible, is one of the most acute threats to the collection and should be addressed as soon as possible. The most cost-effective way to prevent damage from natural light sources is to keep window shades down when the site is not being visited. A few members of the conservation treatment team recommended installing ultraviolet radiation filters or tinted Plexiglas on the windows, while others recommended installing opaque spring roller shades since UV filters can give staff a false sense of security regarding light levels.

When the institution moves toward a long-term decision as to how to permanently reduce light levels on site, further discussions should take place between the conservation treatment team and the staff at Stepping Stones.

### **High Priority**

- \* • Extinguish all lighting sources in the house, keeping the window shades down, when the site is not being visited. Where no window shades exist, install opaque spring roller shades to block light. COMPLETE
- \* • Replace bulbs in incandescent lamps with a lower wattage, while maintaining light levels comparable to those used during the Wilson era. COMPLETE

### **Priority**

- Restore all existing Venetian blinds to working order. COMPLETE
- Consider various alternatives for placing shades on the French doors of the Main House. COMPLETE

**Appropriate Environmental Control** will help slow the degradation of objects from humidity and temperature fluctuations.

### **High Priority**

- \* • Place data loggers in representative rooms where collections are exhibited or stored. The monitoring should include at least three seasons in a row. After the monitoring is completed, the downloaded data should be studied and interpreted as a basis for deciding how to proceed with environmental control.
- Have the HVAC system in the archives inspected and, if necessary, updated by an appropriate engineer in consultation with the conservation team.
- Investigate a safer type of heating system at Wit's End.

- Create a path to Wit's End that both better protects from soil erosion and tracks less debris. Create a more cohesive stepping stone entrance for Wit's End.
- Research options for protecting the archives from the overhead water pipes.
- Investigate options for expanding archival storage.
- \* • It is likely that the basement of the Main House will always be too humid for collections storage. Therefore, all objects should be moved out when an appropriate storage area is identified and equipped with shelving, starting with organic materials and those susceptible to corrosion.
- \* • Remove the floral roller shade in Nell's Bathroom and find a temporary replacement. COMPLETE
- \* • Remove collections from the gift shop area.
- \* • Increase "Do Not Sit" notices or apply ribbons to protect seats from use in all buildings on site. COMPLETE
- \* • Reduce loading and use of the center table behind the sofa of the living room in the Main House. COMPLETE
- \* • Reduce loading within the drawers of Nell's Room. COMPLETE
- \* • Secure the finials on the bed posts in Nell's Room with sticky wax (e.g. Quake wax). COMPLETE

### **Priority**

- Enclose the south porch windows of the Main House with glass during the winter months.
- Install appropriate controls to permit humidistatically controlled heat to reduce RH variations.
- Have a furniture conservator address insecurities and poor structural conditions on furniture in Nell's Room and on furniture objects, generally, including the front door.

Designing an **integrated pest management program** will reduce the amount of pests and damage to the collection and buildings. A comprehensive IPM program saves the museum money in the long run. COMPLETE

### **High Priority**

- Maintain placement and monitoring of sticky traps for insects in all buildings on site.
- Monitor steps taken by the local pest company and check with conservators regarding their appropriateness. COMPLETE
- Provide training to ensure that the housekeeper is aware of pest activity and deteriorating object conditions. COMPLETE
- Eliminate all food and water from the kitchen, pending development of a visitor center.
- Develop Housekeeping and IPM plans with schedules and appointed personnel. Hold a housekeeping training workshop for volunteers. Consult with other museums about their IPM programs. COMPLETE
- Bag and freeze infested materials (wool blankets in Nell's room and the Hudson Bay Portieres). Consider acquiring an appropriate chest freezer for this purpose. NO INFESTED MATERIALS WERE FOUND
- \* • Locate points of entry for insects into Wit's End and block them. Ask the housekeeper to pay more attention to cleaning that space, including areas that are difficult to reach. COMPLETE

## C. *Collections*

Imposing a system of **intellectual control** over the collection is imperative for security and research purposes. Acquisition and maintenance of a digital collections database will enable the museum to assess and research its collection in carrying out its mission. A key aspect of gaining intellectual control over the collection is having a collections management policy in place to dictate how objects are deaccessioned and acquired.

### High Priority

#### Intellectual Control

- Catalog the entire collection, including a description of each object and its location, into a computerized database. Include digital photographs of all collection materials and keep images in the file. Develop a database platform for the object collection that will accommodate cross-references to the Archives' finding aid. IN PROGRESS

#### Policies & Procedures

- Write a collections management policy, that includes a comprehensive acquisitions policy defining what kinds of materials would be accepted and what would not. Write a mission specific to the Library. COMPLETE

#### Environmental Management

- Purchase a Miele vacuum cleaner or other equivalent cleaner with a HEPA filter. COMPLETE
- Remove the picture lights attached to some of the paintings and replace them with Academy Lights.
- \* • Monitor wear on unavoidably used objects (e.g. front door) and devise methods for reducing wear.
- \* • Eliminate use of historic objects in the kitchen including the chairs. Introduce a similar but sacrificial kitchen chair for visitor use. Reduce traffic in the kitchen to reduce handling of the vinyl. Research the date of the chairs.
- \* • Cover the wooden shelves in Lois' studio with foil, Mylar, Plexiglas, or an acid-free buffer to protect book collection from off-gassing and potential insect infestation. Care should be taken to store books upright, to avoid further damage to bindings.
- \* • Protect Lois' paper labels throughout the gallery space by photocopying onto similar paper and placing the originals in the archives. IN PROGRESS
- \* • Duplicate Lois' handwritten list of telephone numbers and two sheets of directions that are taped inside the elevator. The originals should be conserved. COMPLETE

- \* • Make color photocopies of ephemeral paper materials that are fading or discoloring. Color photocopies should be made on permanent paper. Duplicate unstable photographs for display using archival-quality film photography. IN PROGRESS
- The sheet music should at least be surface cleaned and then foldered in small groups before rehousing. This type of work could be done in-house after training by a professional conservator. COMPLETE
- Video and audio tapes should be stored in an area with the coolest possible temperatures and the most tightly controlled conditions. As with paper, fluctuations in climate should be avoided as much as possible.
- A master should be created of each audio recording, which will be stored in a stable environment (in cold storage if possible) and restricted from use.
- Phonograph albums in both the house and in the archives should be sleeved in archival jackets. The phonograph albums on the furniture left of the front door are moderately water damaged and have some mold growth. These should be cleaned of surface mold growth by Stepping Stones staff after training by a professional conservator.
- Books that are in good condition should be cleaned as needed, while fragile books could be damaged by cleaning. Do not clean books if they don't really need it.
- Digitize or microfilm the scrapbook collection. If they are significant as artifacts, refer them to a conservator for professional treatment.

### Security

- \* • Examine the route that visitors take through the house and establish a standard route that avoids as many narrow spaces as possible. Where possible, shift furniture to make transit easier. Strictly limit the number of visitors that pass through the house at one time. COMPLETE
- \* • When large groups are using the living room, small objects should be removed or attached in place to prevent theft and damage.
- Cover the basement door to the archives with Lexan and a shade or masonite in order to prevent outside viewing of archives.

### Interpretation

- \* • Involve the visitor with the site's preservation as soon as they come through the door. The special nature of the history, the individual artifacts, and the site need to be stressed. COMPLETE

## Priority

### Policies & Procedures

- Develop written housekeeping guidelines for each room. COMPLETE
- \* • Write reproduction policies that address the use of archival material. COMPLETE
- \* • Adjust accession policies to accommodate objects that have been removed from the Main House, reproduced, and added to the Archive collection.
- \* • Create a food-use policy designed to reduce pest activity. COMPLETE
- Prepare and implement an Emergency Preparedness Plan that will support the protection of Stepping Stones' collections, including its archival holdings. IN PROGRESS
- \* • Explore MAP II and III grants to help the museum prepare for accreditation by the American Association of Museums (AAM)
- Increase the collection care budget to accommodate recommendations including rehousing the collection and storing objects off-site.
- Establish an annual budget for conservation treatment, including a budget for the preservation/restoration of audio-visual materials held in the Archive. Forward materials to appropriate conservators for treatment as the budget allows, according to curatorial priorities. COMPLETE (a further examination of the archives by Hudson Microimagins revealed that there are very few audio-visual materials.)

### Environmental Management

- \* • Have all house cleaning products vetted by a conservator. COMPLETE
- \* • Remove garments from the closets.
- \* • Require the use of house slippers for all visitors.
- Consider methods of protecting the floor coverings include overlays, diverting foot traffic away from the rugs, and substituting the original rugs with reproductions.
- Hire a conservator to treat the paintings on display in the Main House. Treatment should include backing with Fome-cor® or another appropriate material.
- Develop new storage spaces to house the contents of case furniture.

- Supply an alternate desk chair at Wit's End for use by visitors.
- Separate high-acid material (e.g. newsprint), paper clips, and mixed forms of media (e.g. video and audio tape) and paper documents within the archives.
- Hire a conservator to evaluate the audio and visual holdings in the collection.
- \*
  - Eliminate the use of the extension cords which pose a fire risk. COMPLETE
  - Add padding below flag on table in Library. COMPLETE
  - Begin to add barriers between unlike materials on exhibit (see individual conservator reports for more detailed information). IN PROGRESS
  - Remove artifacts from unseen areas, like closet areas behind the knee walls. IN PROGRESS
  - Rehouse rugs stored under beds and in closets and establish a rotation plan.
  - Collect and research information about the furnishing textiles.
  - Address insecure furniture issues in Helen's Room preferably (for economy) with an on-site visit by a furniture conservator.
  - Move less viewed objects on the second floor to a climate controlled storage facility.
  - Make adjustments to the archives' finding aid to reflect recent accessions made to the collection. As material is removed from the Main House and added to storage in the Archive, documentation of incoming material must be updated in the Finding Aid and cross referenced to the collections database when appropriate. COMPLETE
  - Contract for preparation of a records retention schedule to guide staff in the on-going selection of archival records and the disposition of records no longer needed for legal, fiscal or administrative purposes. Include protocol for electronic records management and capture of archival records that are in electronic format.
- \*
  - Rehouse the archives within their individual boxes by reducing the number of documents in each folder, segregating bulky items, removing all paper clips, etc.
  - Reframe paper objects on display using appropriate archival materials.
  - Duplicate color photographic materials for display and put the originals and master copies in cold storage to preserve them. Place color slides in purpose-made storage enclosures, available from conservation supply vendors, and consider placing them in cold storage as well. Storage of A/V and slide material should be discussed before any plans are made.

- Send photo albums with “magnetic” pages to a conservator for treatment.
- Books of historic or monetary value that have structural problems should be referred to a professional book conservator for treatment.
- Magazines should be evaluated as to their significance to the collection. If they are historic, they should be enclosed and put away in archival quality enclosures, perhaps leaving a few on display on a rotating basis. Otherwise, the same or similar magazines could be placed on exhibit to protect those that belonged to the Wilsons. Magazines that are warping, torn, or coming apart should receive minimal conservation treatment to stabilize them. The phone books should be reshaped by resting them on their side and placing moderate weight on them for a couple of months. If this does not work, finding duplicates to substitute for them might be practical. When they are returned to the shelf they should be properly supported so that they do not deform once again.
- Reframe properly all framed works that are now framed incorrectly.
- Secure training for staff and volunteers in collections maintenance activities, such as surface cleaning and rehousing.

### Interpretation

Consider undergoing an Interpretive Self Study. COMPLETE (In 2008 Stepping Stones undertook a major Interpretive Planning initiative. It was determined that the information in the archives will become the main way of interpreting the story of Stepping Stones. This determination elevates the importance of the microfilming of the archival materials to use for this purpose)

- Consider including the basement in the interpretation of the Wilson house.
- Write a furnishings plan.

V.H. 8/12/09

AUG 12 2009

H34(2280)

Annah Perch  
Executive Director  
Stepping Stones  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, New York 10536

Dear Ms. Perch:

Thank you for your letter to Paul Loether requesting consideration of Stepping Stones, the home of Bill and Lois Wilson in Katonah, New York, for National Historic Landmark (NHL) designation. I apologize for the delay in responding. The NHL Program has reviewed the material you sent, and I am happy to inform you that we believe there is potential for this property to meet the NHL criteria.

I understand that you have spoken with Patty Henry, a historian with the NHL Program, and that she has conveyed our positive opinion about Stepping Stones to you. As the home of William (Bill) Wilson, one of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and his wife Lois, founder of the associated groups, Al-Anon and Alateen, we believe that the preparation of a National Historic Landmark nomination is warranted. We note that Stepping Stones was listed in the National Register of Historic Places at a national level of significance in 2005. The nomination prepared for that listing provides very strong and compelling documentation. Much of that material could be used in a NHL nomination. However, we have a few additional comments that will strengthen a current nomination.

The nomination should discuss Dr. Bob Smith, the other co-founder of AA, and his home in Akron, Ohio, which has also been listed in the National Register. The nomination should explore that property's role in the creation of AA; you can then emphasize Stepping Stones as the location of the later growth and administration of the organization. While we believe that Stepping Stones has the best association with the Wilsons, you should determine if 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights still exists as well as its condition. Similarly, the National Register nomination mentions that during 1939 and 1940, when Bill Wilson was co-authoring the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which outlines the 12 Step program, one of the numerous places they resided was in the AA Clubhouse. It will be helpful to know what this property is and its current condition.

The final point is a technical one and concerns the 1980s archives and office building. Because the building was constructed after the period of the Wilson's greatest significance (particularly as Bill had passed away by that time), this building should be counted as non-contributing.

If you have any questions about our comments, or proceeding with a National Historic Landmark nomination, please contact Patty Henry at 202-354-2216; or by e-mail at [patty\\_henry@nps.gov](mailto:patty_henry@nps.gov). We look forward to reviewing a draft nomination for Stepping Stones.

Sincerely,

**Alexandra M. Lord**

Alexandra M. Lord, Ph.D.  
Branch Chief  
National Historic Landmarks Program

cc: Peter Shaver  
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bcc: NERO, B. Halda  
2201  
2285  
2280 Loether, Lord, Abernathy  
2280 STEPPING STONES (Bill and Lois Wilson House) (NHL Pending)  
FNP:PHenry:08-13-09:S:/nr-nhl/Nominations Pending/Stepping Stones/Perch letter



# Stepping Stones

## The historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson

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January 28, 2009

Mr. Paul Loether  
Chief, National Register of Historic Places and  
National Historic Landmarks Program  
1849 C Street, NW (Org. 2280)  
Washington, D.C. 20240



Dear Mr. Loether:

I am writing to suggest that Stepping Stones, the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson in Bedford New York, is an appropriate candidate for a National Landmark designation.

Stepping Stones was listed on the NYS and National Registers of Historic Places in 2005. I have attached that nomination for your review. Because Stepping Stones is the home of Bill Wilson, co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous and Lois Wilson, co-founder of Al-Anon family Groups, the house and its archives have a National, and even international appeal.

Stepping Stones is historically significant for its association with Bill and Lois Wilson, who lived in the house from 1941 until their deaths in 1971 and 1988, respectively. Bill Wilson (1895-1971) was the co-founder Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and his personal experiences and leadership were critical to the success of the organization.

Wilson disseminated the idea of alcoholism as an illness rather than a moral failure and provided a program – the 12 Steps – for treating alcoholism and maintaining sobriety. The 12 Steps and AA enabled, and continues to enable, millions of people around the world to achieve and sustain permanent sobriety and helped reshape Lois Wilson was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for loved ones of alcoholics. Al-Anon and Alateen have also grown to reach international membership, with chapters in 115 countries.

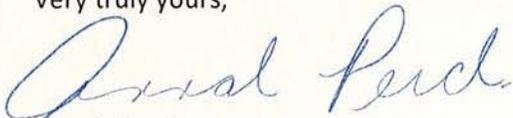
The Wilsons' influence on twentieth-century society is immeasurable. The 12 Steps remain the most successful means of treating alcoholism and are the central treatment program in most hospitals and clinics. AA does not keep official membership lists; however, in 2002 the General Service Office estimated the organization's international membership at 2,215,293 members – more than two million people – all following the 12 Steps devised by Bill Wilson. The report calculated that 51, 245 groups with 1,160, 651 members existed in the United States alone. Over 200 other groups that address issues as varied as drug addiction, gambling, overeating, and surviving incest have subsequently adopted the 12

Steps. In 1990 *Life* magazine named Bill W. one of the 100 most important Americans of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and in 1999 *Time* magazine selected Bill W. as one of the 100 most influential people of the century. Al-Anon and Alateen have 26,000 group meetings in 115 countries. In 1988 its membership was estimated to be over 500,000. Most importantly, the 12 Steps help alcoholics and others turn their life around to become honest and decent "citizens of the world (Bill Wilson)." In doing so, not only does the life of the alcoholic improve dramatically, but so does the life of all of those about him or her.

The Stepping Stones Foundation is undergoing major projects to preserve the home so that it lasts in perpetuity. I have enclosed a summary of our Master Conservation Plan so that you can see that our commitment to the site is strong, and our procedures are sound.

If you have any other questions or would like to invite Stepping Stones to prepare a nomination, please don't hesitate to contact me at (914) 232-4822 or via email at [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org). Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,



Annah Perch  
Executive Director



"Stepping Stones"  
<info@steppingstones.org>  
01/05/2010 01:50 PM

To <Patty\_Henry@nps.gov>  
cc  
bcc

Subject RE: John B. Gough NHL nomination

Hi Patty - I hope your new year is off to the right start! I am writing to let you know that Stepping Stones is in the final stages of having its landmark application ready for you. I have given it to some scholars for their review and that's all that's left. I will be in Washington, DC on and around January 27, 2010 and I was wondering if it might be possible to meet the panel then, deliver the application then, or if you need far more time to process the application before we make a presentation.

Thanks!

Annah Perch

The Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536  
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info@steppingstones.org  
www.steppingstones.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Patty\_Henry@nps.gov [mailto:Patty\_Henry@nps.gov]  
Sent: Tuesday, October 20, 2009 3:39 PM  
To: Stepping Stones  
Subject: John B. Gough NHL nomination

Hello Annah:

I have attached the draft electronic nomination form for the John B. Gough House in Massachusetts. Let me know if you have any questions.

One of my colleagues here has said that the statement in the nomination about the temperance movement having little scholarly work done on it is incorrect today. That may have been true 35 years ago when the nomination was first written but there has been work on this subject since then. So I guess we'd have to say that the Bibliography is woefully inadequate! Just wanted you to be aware of that.

Thanks,

Patty

(See attached file: Nomination09.doc)

Patty Henry  
National Park Service  
National Historic Landmarks Program-WASO  
202-354-2216



# Stepping Stones

The historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson

---

July 10, 2011

Ms. Patty Henry  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Ms. Henry:

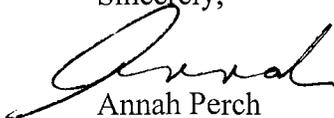
Enclosed is the draft of the National Landmarks nomination for Stepping Stones, the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson.

As per our discussion I understand that this document will be reviewed by NPS staff and comments will be made to assist Stepping Stones in strengthening the application for a September, 2011 review by the decision making panel.

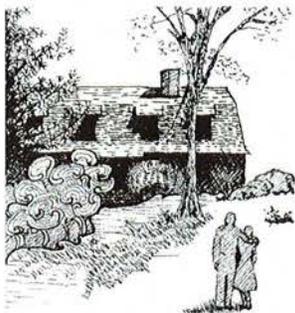
I have also enclosed, at your request, copies of literature written by Bill Wilson and movies made about Bill or Lois Wilson. Feel free to keep these or continue to pass them on if they are not needed in your records permanently.

If you have any questions, I hope you won't hesitate to give me a call. Thanks in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Annah Perch



# Stepping Stones

The historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson

---

July 22, 2011

Ms. Patty Henry  
NPS  
1201 Eye Street NW, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Washington, DC 20005

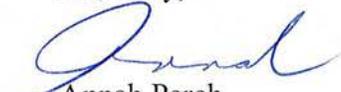
Dear Patty,

Enclosed you will find the photos from the Stepping Stones presentation, saved individually both as a JPG and a PDF.

I have also included some newer photos that were not available when we submitted the draft. They are labeled with an a), b) or c) next to the photo number to indicate where they should be inserted into a slide show, if this is possible.

Please be in touch if I can provide you with any more information. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

  
Annah Perch  
Executive Director



"Stepping Stones"  
<info@steppingstones.org>  
07/30/2011 01:39 PM

To <Patty\_Henry@nps.gov>  
cc  
bcc  
Subject Bill W. and Dr. Bob

Hi Patty,

I received your message on Friday, about including up to 4 paragraphs about Bill Wilson meeting Dr. Bob Smith. I have attached a pdf of the Stepping Stones Welcome Center Exhibit that addresses this topic. In fact, in a following email I will send you all of the exhibit panels by way of PDF that you can use as you see fit.

I have also attached a text document with a different telling of the story. Let me know which one you prefer or if neither of them suit your purposes. There have to be 1,000 different places where this story is told.

Let me know what you think. Thanks so much.

Annah Perch

The Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536  
(914) 232-4822  
info@steppingstones.org  
www.steppingstones.org

-----Original Message-----

From: Patty\_Henry@nps.gov [mailto:Patty\_Henry@nps.gov]  
Sent: Friday, November 06, 2009 10:12 AM  
To: Stepping Stones  
Subject: Re: quick question

Hi Annah:

No, we no longer require slides because we will accept digital photographs. The slide requirement was so that we could create a slide show for the presentation to the review bodies. But, now that we do those presentations as power point, digital images are preferred. Don't worry about this powerpoint until we get closer to the meeting date that Stepping Stones will be on the agenda. We give you first right of refusal to come in and make the presentation to the Landmarks Committee. (If you don't want to make the presentation, we here will make it.) We can talk when we are closer to that time about format and deadlines for the powerpoint presentation.

So in terms of images, what we need with your first submission is the black and white photos or digital images (per our updated photo policy which is located on our web site). Let me know if you have trouble finding that photo policy or have questions about it.

Thanks,

Patty

Patty Henry

H34(2280)

SEP 9 2011

The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gillibrand:

The National Park Service has completed the study of Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, for the purpose of nominating it for designation as a National Historic Landmark. We enclose a copy of the nomination.

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on one of the enclosures. This enclosure also specifies how you may comment on the proposed nomination if you so choose. The Landmarks Committee will report on this nomination to the Advisory Board, which in turn will make a recommendation concerning this nomination to the Secretary of the Interior, based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

If you wish to comment on the nomination, please do so within 60 days of the date of this letter. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and all comments we have received to the Landmarks Committee.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (§65.4) and include other information on the Program. We are also enclosing a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,

**J. Paul Loether**

Stephanie Toothman, Ph.D.  
Associate Director, Cultural Resources

Enclosures

PROPERTY STUDIED FOR  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**  
KATONAH, NEW YORK

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on November 8-10, 2011, beginning at 1 p.m. on November 8, 2011, and continuing at 9:00 a.m. on November 9 and 10, in the The Finn Forum, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ray Group International, 900 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. The Landmarks Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board. At a subsequent meeting the National Park System Advisory Board will consider those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Owners of private properties nominated for NHL designation have an opportunity to concur with or object to designation, in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 65. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to designation must submit a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the designation. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote, regardless of the portion of the property that the party owns. If a majority of private property owners object, a property will not be designated. Letters objecting to or supporting nominations may be sent to Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program, at the National Park Service, 1849 C Street N.W. (2280), Washington, DC, 20240.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Historian Patty Henry at the National Park Service, at the address given above; by telephone at (202) 354-2216; or by e-mail at <patty\_henry@nps.gov>.

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nan A. S. Hayworth  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

bcc: Northeast Regional Office, C. Turton



Alexandra Lord/WASO/NPS

09/09/2011 06:00 PM

To ruth.pierpont@oprhp.state.ny.us

cc Kathleen.LaFrank@oprhp.state.ny.us, Paul  
Loether/WASO/NPS@NPS

bcc

Subject NHL Notification Letter (Stepping Stones)

H34(2280)

Ms. Ruth L. Pierpont, Director  
Division of Historic Preservation  
NY State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation  
Pebbles Island P.O. 189  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

Dear Ms. Pierpont:

The National Park Service has completed the study of Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, for the purpose of nominating it for designation as a National Historic Landmark. A copy of the nomination can be found at the website for the National Historic Landmarks Program: <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/Fall2011Noms.htm>.

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on one of the attachments. This attachment also specifies how you may comment on the proposed nomination if you so choose. The Landmarks Committee will report on this nomination to the Advisory Board, which in turn will make a recommendation concerning this nomination to the Secretary of the Interior, based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

If you wish to comment on the nomination, please do so within 60 days of the date of this letter. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and all comments we have received to the Landmarks Committee.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have attached a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (§65.4) and include other information on the Program. We are also attaching a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,  
J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Register of Historic Places  
and National Historic Landmarks Program

#### Attachments



Stepping Stones Notification.pdf



NHL Regulations\_0001.pdf



Federal Effects of Designation.pdf

via Alexandra M. Lord, PhD  
Branch Chief  
National Historic Landmarks Program  
National Park Service  
1201 Eye Street NW  
Washington DC 20240  
Phone: 202-354-6906  
Email: alexandra\_lord@nps.gov

H34(2280)

SEP 9 2011

Mr. James P. Moogan, President  
Board of Trustees  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, New York 10536

Dear Mr. Moogan:

The National Park Service has completed the study of Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, for the purpose of nominating it for designation as a National Historic Landmark. We enclose a copy of the nomination.

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will consider the nomination during its next meeting, at the time and place indicated on one of the enclosures. This enclosure also specifies how you may comment on the proposed nomination if you so choose. The Landmarks Committee will report on this nomination to the Advisory Board, which in turn will make a recommendation concerning this nomination to the Secretary of the Interior, based upon the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

If you wish to comment on the nomination, please do so within 60 days of the date of this letter. After the 60-day period, we will submit the nomination and all comments we have received to the Landmarks Committee.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations governing the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (§65.4) and include other information on the Program. We are also enclosing a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,

**J. Paul Loether**

J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Register of Historic Places  
and National Historic Landmarks Program

Enclosures

PROPERTY STUDIED FOR  
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION

**STEPPING STONES (BILL AND LOIS WILSON HOUSE)**  
KATONAH, NEW YORK

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on November 8-10, 2011, beginning at 1 p.m. on November 8, 2011, and continuing at 9:00 a.m. on November 9 and 10, in the The Finn Forum, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Ray Group International, 900 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Washington, DC 20005. The Landmarks Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board. At a subsequent meeting the National Park System Advisory Board will consider those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Owners of private properties nominated for NHL designation have an opportunity to concur with or object to designation, in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 65. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to designation must submit a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the designation. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote, regardless of the portion of the property that the party owns. If a majority of private property owners object, a property will not be designated. Letters objecting to or supporting nominations may be sent to Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program, at the National Park Service, 1849 C Street NW (2280), Washington, DC, 20240.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Historian Patty Henry at the National Park Service, at the address given above; by telephone at (202) 354-2216; or by e-mail at <patty\_henry@nps.gov>.

IDENTICAL LETTERS SENT TO:

Owner: Mr. James P. Moogan, President  
Board of Trustees  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

HEO: Ms. Lee Roberts, Supervisor  
Town of Bedford  
425 Cherry Street  
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

cc: Ms. Annah Perch, Executive Director  
Stepping Stones  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

bcc: Northeast Regional Office, Catherine Turton



# United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

*Notice of a Study to Determine Potential for Designation  
as a  
National Historic Landmark*

JUL 21 2011

The National Park Service is pleased to announce that a study is being conducted on the following property to determine its potential for designation as a National Historic Landmark:

**Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House)  
Katonah, New York**

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant places that illustrate important themes, persons, or events in American history. The National Historic Landmarks Program recognizes properties of exceptional national significance in the nation's history, architecture, archeology, engineering and culture. Once reviewed by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior, each landmark may request an official bronze plaque from the National Park Service that recognizes this high distinction.

When the study is completed and scheduled for review by the National Park System Advisory Board, you will receive a copy of the nomination and have 60 days to comment in writing, if you so desire. After the 60-day period, the nomination and any comments received will be submitted to the National Park System Advisory Board.

For your information, we have enclosed a brochure that describes the National Historic Landmarks Program and a fact sheet that describes the effects of designation.

For further information on the National Historic Landmarks Program, including the designation process and questions on this specific study please contact: Ms. Patricia Henry, Historian, National Park Service, National Historic Landmarks Program, 1849 C Street NW (2280), Washington, DC 20240, or call 202/354-2216.

Additional information on the National Historic Landmarks Program is available at:  
[www.nps.gov/history/nhl](http://www.nps.gov/history/nhl).

Cc: Annah Perch, Executive Director, Stepping Stones

Mr. James P. Moogan, President  
Board of Trustees  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

Ms. Lee Roberts, Supervisor  
Town of Bedford  
425 Cherry Street  
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

Ms. Ruth L. Pierpont, Director  
Division of Historic Preservation  
NY State Parks, Recreation & Historic  
Preservation  
Peebles Island P.O. Box 189  
Waterford, NY 12188-0189

The Honorable Nan A. S. Hayworth  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
478 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
322 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Ms. Catherine Turton  
National Park Service, NERO  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Ms. Annah Perch  
Executive Director, Stepping Stones  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

Notification Information:

Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House)  
Katonah, New York

Owner:

James P. Moogan, President  
Board of Trustees  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

HEO:

Lee Roberts (woman)  
Supervisor  
Town of Bedford  
425 Cherry Street  
Bedford Hills, NY 10507

cc: Annah Perch  
Executive Director  
Stepping Stones  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

H34(2280)

**APR 26 2013**

Mr. James P. Moogan, President  
Board of Trustees  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, New York 10536

Dear Mr. Moogan:

I am pleased to confirm that the Secretary of the Interior, on October 16, 2012, designated Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, a National Historic Landmark, in recognition of the property's national significance in the history of the United States.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to identify and recognize nationally significant places that best represent the American experience. Landmark designation recognizes and encourages the preservation of places that have exceptional value for commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States, for the inspiration and benefit of all Americans.

The Secretary of the Interior designates National Historic Landmarks only after careful study by the National Park Service, extensive opportunities for public involvement, and review and recommendation by the National Park System Advisory Board, in accordance with National Historic Landmark criteria set forth in 36 CFR Part 65. National Historic Landmarks are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, making them eligible for the safeguards and benefits provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other federal laws protecting historic properties.

We are delighted to enroll Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, as a National Historic Landmark – a designation that reflects the recognition of this property as an irreplaceable part of our nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

**J. Paul Loether**

J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Register of Historic Places  
and National Historic Landmarks Program

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

OWNER: Mr. James P. Moogan, President  
Board of Trustees  
Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, New York 10536

HEO: Ms. Lee V. A. Roberts, Supervisor  
Town of Bedford  
425 Cherry Street  
Bedford Hills, New York 10507

SHPO: Rose Harvey, SHPO  
Commissioner Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
Empire State Plaza  
Albany, New York 12238

cc: Ms. Annah Perch, Executive Director  
Stepping Stones  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

bcc: Northeast Regional Office, B. Bolger

H34(2280)

JUN - 3 2013

The Honorable Sean Patrick Maloney  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Maloney:

I am pleased to inform you that the Secretary of the Interior, on October 16, 2012, designated Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, a National Historic Landmark, in recognition of the property's national significance in the history of the United States.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to identify and recognize nationally significant places that best represent the American experience. Landmark designation recognizes and encourages the preservation of places that have exceptional value for commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States, for the inspiration and benefit of all Americans.

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We are delighted to enroll Stepping Stones (Bill and Lois Wilson House) in Katonah, New York, as a National Historic Landmark – a designation that reflects the recognition of this property as an irreplaceable part of our nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

**Signed**

Stephanie Toothman, Ph.D.  
Associate Director, Cultural Resources, Partnerships and Science

IDENTI CAL LETTER SENT TO:

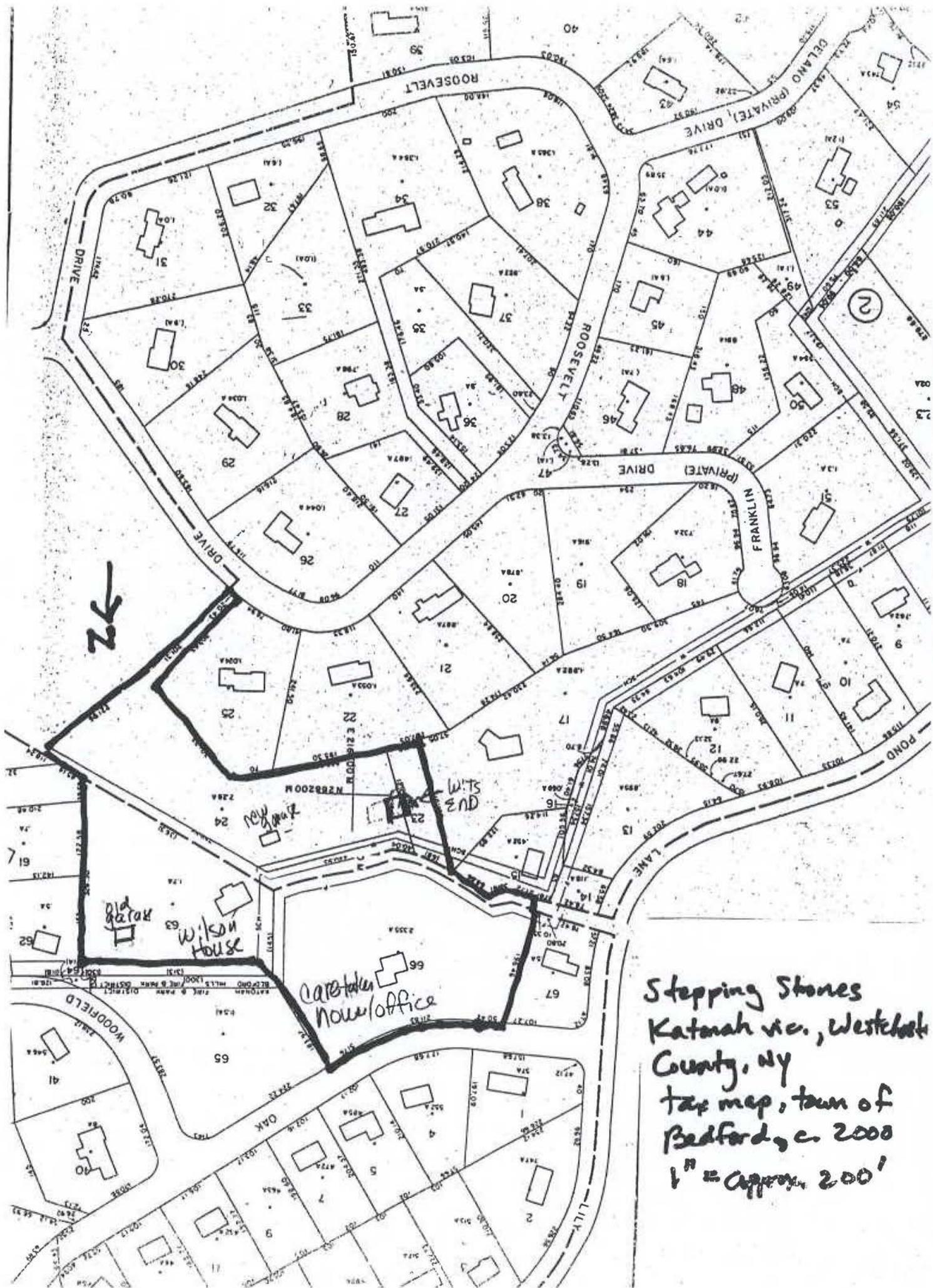
The Honorable Sean Patrick Maloney  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kirsten E. Gillibrand  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

bcc: Northeast Regional Office, B. Bolger

Materials Submitted but not included in the final designation form



Stepping Stones  
 Katonah vic., Westchester  
 County, NY  
 tax map, town of  
 Bedford, c. 2000  
 1" = approx. 200'



Stopping Stones  
 Katonah vic., Westchester  
 County, New York  
 site map, date unknown  
 not to scale







Stepping Stones in 2008, facing Southeast.



Second floor fireplace with items displayed as Lois left them. Boomerangs were gifts from grateful AA members and are in reference to a famous story about Bill as a young boy, who became determined to and succeeded at crafting a working boomerang.



Stepping Stones, 2008, facing Southeast.



Earliest known photo of Stepping Stones, in 1944, facing west.



Same angle of the house in 2009. Currently this side of the property is not heavily used, although plans are in place to restore the landscape to its original likeness in 2010.



Bill and Lois Wilson in 1950, sitting on the hill seen in the photo, above.



Bill and Lois' bedroom, containing the very bed in which Lois was born, and where the couple shared quiet time together every morning.



Living Room at Stepping Stones, 2008.



Gallery walls filled with AA memorabilia.





Kitchen at Stepping Stones, 2008.

Bill's "shack", January 1957



Wit's End, 2008



Bill Wilson inside his "shack", lovingly called "Wit's End" around 1953.



Wit's End, 2008



The garage, built in 1951, which is being renovated in 2010 to become a Visitor's Orientation Center.

Below: "Caretakers House" which is the central office for Stepping Stones and includes the archives.



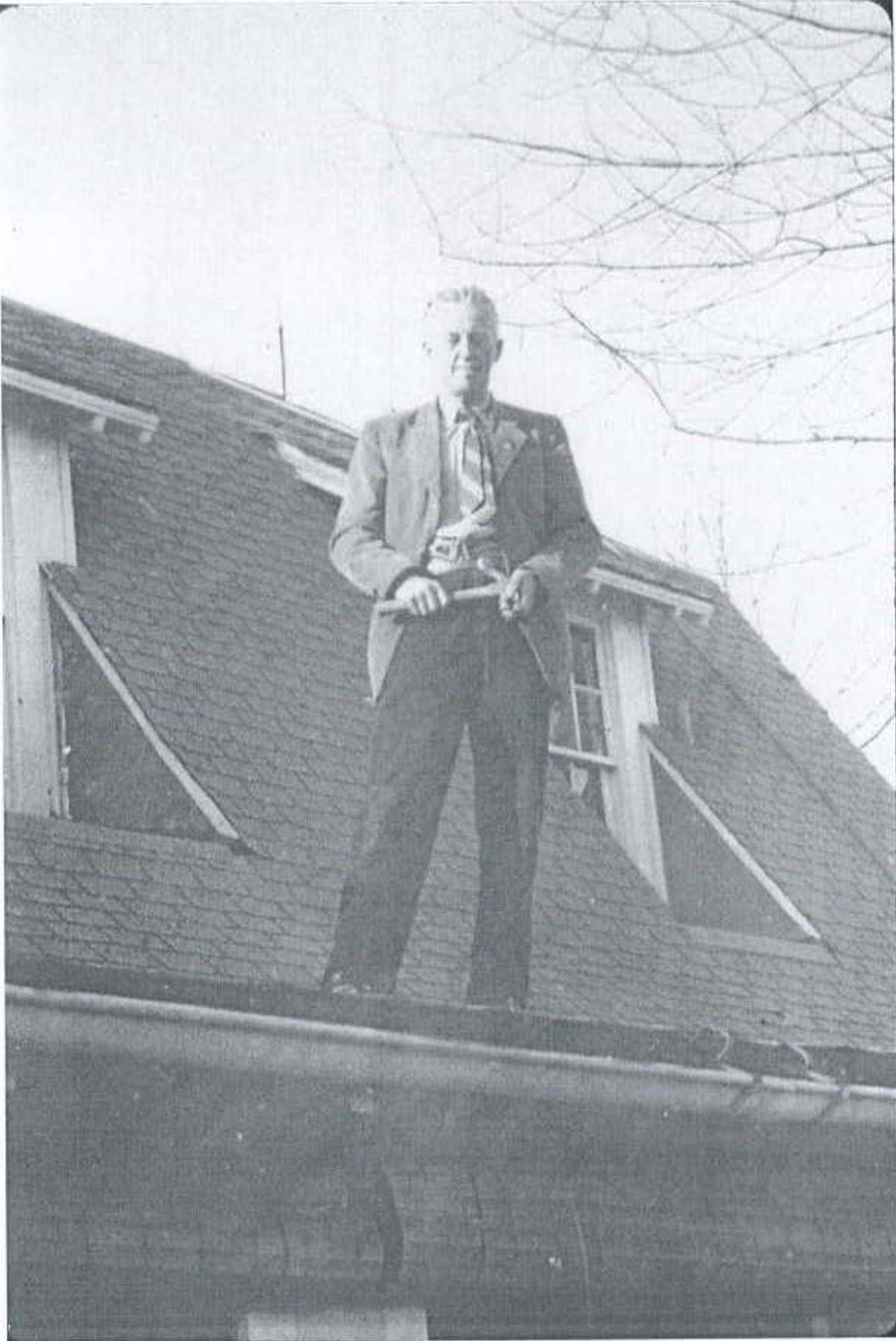
Stepping Stones archives room.



Bill Wilson, 1947.



Lois Burnham Wilson, 1950.



Bill Wilson on the back porch roof at Stepping Stones, 1953.



Lois on hill in backyard, 1950.



Backyard at Stepping Stones, 2009. The chairs and picnic table are original.

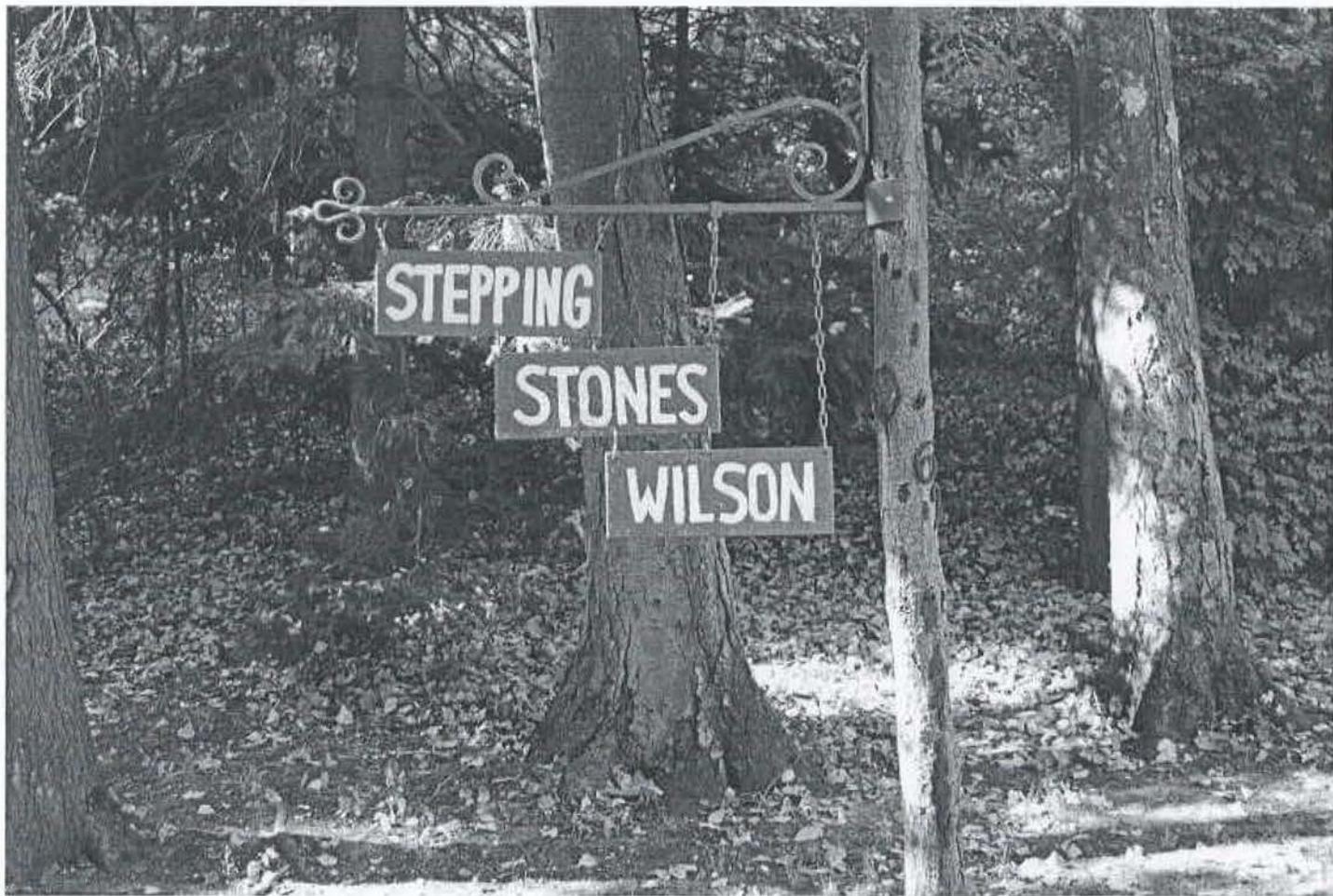


Above: The back entrance at Stepping Stones. Windows are covered for a restoration project made possible by a NYS EPF grant. All windows are not restored, custom storm windows with 99% UV light protection were installed, shingles were replaced and copper gutters installed to undo historically inaccurate changes made over the years and monitor the environment inside the home.



The same hill where Bill and Lois were photographed in 1950, today.

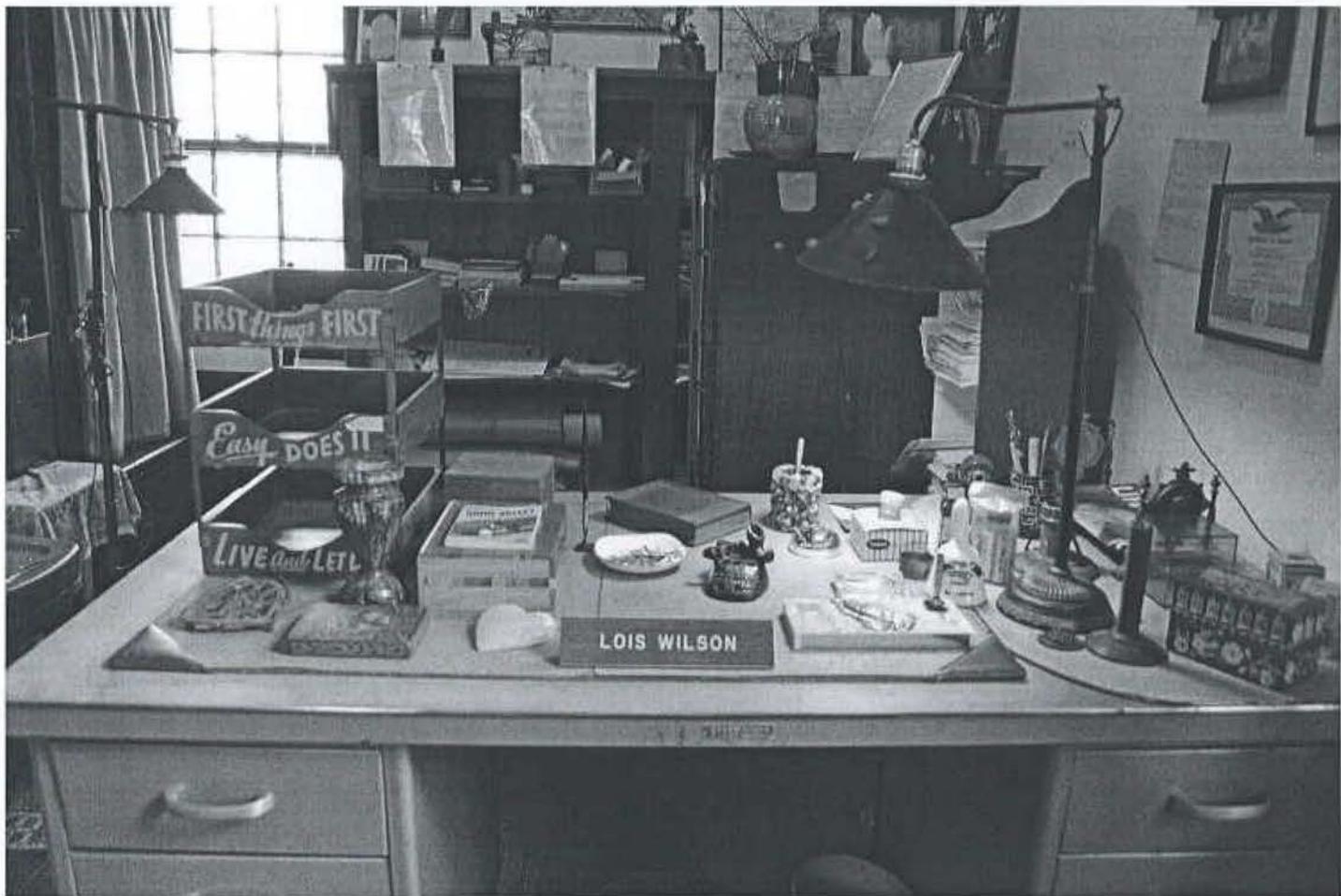
Photographs:



The entry to Stepping Stones, displaying the original sign as created and erected by Bill Wilson. The stencils for the lettering still exists in the archives, today.



State Education Department recognition, given to Lois Wilson in 1979.



Lois Wilson's desk where she started Al-Anon in 1951.



Wit's End,  
1949

Caretakers  
house  
1984

Garage,  
1951

Stepping  
Stones,  
1920

Entrance as  
of 1947

Pump House,  
1920

Old Garage,  
1920

Original  
Entrance



STEPPING

STONES

WILSON



STEPPING STONES

HOME OF BILL & LOIS WILSON

"BILL W" WAS COFOUNDER OF  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS -1935;

"LOIS W" COFOUNDER OF  
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS -1951

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



# STEPPING STONES

HOME OF BILL & LOIS WILSON

"BILL W" WAS COFOUNDER OF  
ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS -1935;

"LOIS W" COFOUNDER OF  
AL-ANON FAMILY GROUPS -1951

STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT





























## Supporting Materials Submitted



# Persons of The Century

We've wrapped up our selection of the most influential people of the 20th century. Here is our complete list

## LEADERS & REVOLUTIONARIES

APRIL 13, 1998

- David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister
- Winston Churchill, British Prime Minister
- Mohandas Gandhi, father of modern India
- Mikhail Gorbachev, Soviet reformer
- Adolf Hitler, German dictator
- Ho Chi Minh, first President of North Vietnam
- Pope John Paul II, religious leader
- Ayatollah R. Khomeini, leader of Iran's revolution
- Martin Luther King Jr., civil rights leader
- Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, founder of the Soviet Union
- Nelson Mandela, South African President
- Mao Zedong, leader of communist China
- Ronald Reagan, U.S. President
- Eleanor Roosevelt, U.S. First Lady
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt, U.S. President and New Deal architect
- Theodore Roosevelt, U.S. President and environmentalist
- Margaret Sanger, birth-control crusader
- Margaret Thatcher, British Prime Minister
- Unknown Tiananmen Square rebel
- Lech Walesa, Polish union organizer



- Lucille Ball, TV star
- The Beatles, rock musicians
- Marlon Brando, actor
- Coco Chanel, designer
- Charlie Chaplin, comic genius

- Le Corbusier, architect
- Bob Dylan, folk musician
- T.S. Eliot, poet
- Aretha Franklin, soul musician
- Martha Graham, dancer and choreographer
- Jim Henson, puppeteer and creator of TV's Muppets
- James Joyce, novelist
- Pablo Picasso, artist
- Rodgers & Hammerstein, Broadway showmen
- Bart Simpson, cartoon character
- Frank Sinatra, singer
- Steven Spielberg, moviemaker
- Igor Stravinsky, classical musician
- Oprah Winfrey, TV talk-show host



## BUILDERS & TITANS

DEC. 7, 1998

- Stephen Bechtel, construction magnate
- Leo Burnett, advertising genius
- Willis Carrier, maker of air-conditioning systems
- Walt Disney, creator of animation and multimedia empire
- Henry Ford, founder of Ford Motor Co.
- Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft
- A.P. Giannini, architect of nationwide banking
- Ray Kroc, hamburgermeister
- Estée Lauder, cosmetics tycoon

## ARTISTS & ENTERTAINERS

JUNE 8, 1998

- Louis Armstrong, jazz musician

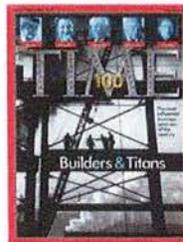
- William Levitt, creator of suburbia
- Lucky Luciano, criminal mastermind
- Louis B. Mayer, Hollywood mogul
- Charles Merrill, advocate of the small investor
- Akio Morita, co-founder of Sony
- Walter Reuther, labor leader
- Pete Rozelle, football-league commissioner
- David Sarnoff, father of broadcasting
- Juan Trippe, aviation entrepreneur
- Sam Walton, Wal-Mart dynamo
- Thomas Watson Jr., IBM president

- William Shockley, solid-state physicist
- Alan Turing, computer scientist
- James Watson & Francis Crick, molecular biologists
- Ludwig Wittgenstein, philosopher
- The Wright Brothers, visionary aviators

## HEROES & ICONS

JUNE 14, 1999

- Muhammad Ali, heavyweight boxing champion
- The American G.I., a soldier for freedom
- Diana, Princess of Wales
- Anne Frank, diarist and Holocaust victim
- Billy Graham, evangelist
- Che Guevara, guerrilla leader



## SCIENTISTS & THINKERS

MARCH 29, 1999

- Leo Baekeland, plastics pioneer
- Tim Berners-Lee, Internet designer
- Rachel Carson, environmentalist
- Albert Einstein, physicist
- Philo Farnsworth, inventor of electronic television
- Enrico Fermi, atomic physicist
- Alexander Fleming, bacteriologist
- Sigmund Freud, psychoanalyst
- Robert Goddard, rocket scientist
- Kurt Gödel, mathematician
- Edwin Hubble, astronomer
- John Maynard Keynes, economist
- The Leakey Family, anthropologists
- Jean Piaget, child psychologist
- Jonas Salk, virologist

- Edmund Hillary & Tenzing Norgay, conquerors of Mount Everest
- Helen Keller, champion of the disabled
- The Kennedys, dynasty
- Bruce Lee, actor and martial-arts star
- Charles Lindbergh, transatlantic aviator



- Harvey Milk, gay-rights leader
- Marilyn Monroe, actress
- Emmeline Pankhurst, suffragist
- Rosa Parks, civil rights torchbearer
- Pelé, soccer star
- Jackie Robinson, baseball player
- Andrei Sakharov, Soviet dissident
- Mother Teresa, missionary nun
- Bill Wilson, founder of Alcoholics Anonymous



PHOTOGRAPH OF ARTWORK BY ADI GILAD

ILLUSTRATION FOR TIME BY HANCOH FIVEN

**THE HEALER**

# BILL W.

From the rubble of a wasted life, he overcame alcoholism and founded the 12-step program that has helped millions of others do the same

By **SUSAN CHEEVER**

**S**econd Lieut. Bill Wilson didn't think twice when the first butler he had ever seen offered him a drink. The 22-year-old soldier didn't think about how alcohol had destroyed his family. He didn't think about the Yankee temperance movement of his childhood or his loving fiancé Lois Burnham or his emerging talent for leadership. He didn't think about anything at all. "I had found the elixir of life," he wrote. Wilson's last drink, 17 years later, when alcohol had

destroyed his health and his career, precipitated an epiphany that would change his life and the lives of millions of other alcoholics. Incarcerated for the fourth time at Manhattan's Towns Hospital in 1934, Wilson had a spiritual awakening—a flash of white light, a liberating awareness of God—that led to the founding of Alcoholics Anonymous and Wilson's revolutionary 12-step program, the successful remedy for alcoholism. The 12 steps have also generated successful programs for eating disorders, gambling, narcotics, debting, sex addic-

BILL WAS BORN BEHIND THE BAR IN THE WILSON HOUSE, A HOTEL RUN BY HIS GRANDMOTHER



Wilson tried unsuccessfully to make a living as a wire-rope salesman. A.A. had about a hundred members, but many were still drinking. Meanwhile, in 1939, the bank foreclosed on the Clinton Street house, and the couple began years of homelessness, living as guests in borrowed rooms and at one point staying in temporary quarters above the A.A. clubhouse on 24th Street in Manhattan. In 1940 John D. Rockefeller Jr. held an A.A. dinner and was impressed enough to create a trust to provide Wilson with \$30 a week—but no more. The tycoon felt that money would corrupt the group's spirit.

Then, in March 1941, the *Saturday Evening Post* published an article on A.A., and suddenly thousands of letters and requests poured in. Attendance at meetings doubled and tripled. Wilson had reached his audience. In *Twelve Traditions*, Wilson set down the suggested bylaws of Alcoholics Anonymous. In them, he created an enduring blueprint for an organization with a maximum of individual freedom and no accu-

“ I had to be first in everything because in my perverse heart I felt myself the least of God’s creatures. ”

BILL WILSON, describing his alcoholism

tion and people affected by others’ addictions. Aldous Huxley called him “the greatest social architect of our century.”

William Griffith Wilson grew up in a quarry town in Vermont. When he was 10, his hard-drinking father headed for Canada, and his mother moved to Boston, leaving the sickly child with her parents. As a soldier, and then as a businessman, Wilson drank to alleviate his depressions and to celebrate his Wall Street success. Married in 1918, he and Lois toured the country on a motorcycle and appeared to be a prosperous, promising young couple. By 1933, however, they were living on charity in her parents’ house on Clinton Street in Brooklyn, N.Y. Wilson had become an unemployable drunk who disdained religion and even panhandled for cash.

Inspired by a friend who had stopped drinking, Wilson went to meetings of the Oxford Group, an evangelical society founded in Britain by Pennsylvania Frank Buchman. And as Wilson underwent a barbiturate-and-belladonna cure called “purge and puke,” which was state-of-the-art alcoholism treat-

ment at the time, his brain spun with phrases from Oxford Group meetings, Carl Jung and William James’ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which he read in the hospital. Five sober months later, Wilson went to Akron, Ohio, on business. The deal fell through, and he wanted a drink. He stood in the lobby of the Mayflower Hotel, entranced by the sounds of the bar across the hall. Suddenly he became convinced that by helping another alcoholic, he could save himself.

Through a series of desperate telephone calls, he found Dr. Robert Smith, a skeptical drunk whose family persuaded him to give Wilson 15 minutes. Their meeting lasted for hours. A month later, Dr. Bob had his last drink, and that date, June 10, 1935, is the official birth date of A.A., which is based on the idea that only an alcoholic can help another alcoholic. “Because of our kinship in suffering,” Bill wrote, “our channels of contact have always been charged with the language of the heart.”

The Burnham house on Clinton Street became a haven for drunks. “My name is Bill W., and I’m an alcoholic,” he told assorted houseguests and



visitors at meetings. To spread the word, he began writing down his principles for sobriety. Each chapter was read by the Clinton Street group and sent to Smith in Akron for more editing. The book had a dozen provisional titles, among them *The Way Out* and *The Empty Glass*. Edited to 400 pages, it was finally called *Alcoholics Anonymous*, and this became the group’s name.

But the book, although well reviewed, wasn’t selling.

WILSON IN 1948, DURING A VISIT TO A.A. GROUPS IN CANADA

**BORN** Nov. 26, 1895, in East Dorset, Vt.  
**1918** Marries Lois Burnham. In 1951 she founds Al-Anon for families of alcoholics  
**1933** First of four hospitalizations for alcoholism  
**1934** Takes his last drink  
**1935** Persuades Dr. Robert Smith to stay sober with him. This is the first A.A. meeting  
**1938** Forms the Alcoholics Foundation  
**1939** Publishes the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, which includes the 12 steps  
**1953** Publishes *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, outlining a structure for A.A.  
**DIED** Jan. 24, 1971, of pneumonia, in Miami

## Stepping Stones gets grant to create tour

Curator will enhance visit with inspiration from AA co-founder

Sean Gorman  
The Journal News

BEDFORD — The museum dedicated to the lives of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill Wilson and his wife, Lois, is launching a new guided tour to help tell the couple's story to a wider audience.

Hundreds of people each year visit Stepping Stones, the Wilsons' home at 62 Oak Road in Bedford Hills. Many visitors have been personally touched by the work the couple has done to help alcoholics and their families cope with addiction.

"It's just going to refine the message of the story of hope that's embodied here at this home," Annah Perch, Stepping Stones executive director, said this week of the tour, expected to be launched in October.



Joe Larese/The Journal News

Annah Perch, executive director of Stepping Stones, the former home of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill Wilson and his wife, Lois, says the landmark has received a grant to create a new tour.

Perch said.

Stepping Stones recently received a \$2,500 grant from the New York Council for the Hu-

manities to create the tour of the house, which the couple lived in for decades before Bill died in 1971 and Lois died in 1988.

Bill Wilson drank heavily for about 17 years while married to Lois before he quit and co-founded Alcoholics Anonymous in 1935, according to Stepping Stones. Lois co-founded Al-Anon, a self-help group for family members coping with an alcoholic relative.

The organization has a guided tour now that is detailed but a bit informal, Perch said. Dr. Jill Vexler, a cultural anthropologist and curator, will create the new tour.

"She's going to enhance it (the tour) and hone in on the inspiration that's behind Bill and Lois Wilson in general, which is something that should appeal to everybody," Perch said.

For people recovering from addiction, visiting Stepping Stones is

Please see TOUR, 4A

### TOUR, from 1A

"almost a pilgrimage," Vexler said. "The power of the place touches their souls," she said this week.

And yet a tour also has to speak to people who don't have that experience or any knowledge about the Wilsons, Vexler said.

Bill Wilson's book — "Alcoholics Anonymous" — has sold millions of copies and lays out a 12-step program to treat alcoholism and stay sober, according to Stepping Stones.

"The 12 steps really can apply to anybody," Perch said. "You don't watch the Oprah Winfrey

show or Dr. Phil or any of those self-help people without hearing a little bit of the 12 steps described in some way."

The desk on which Wilson wrote the book is at Stepping Stones, which was listed in 2004 on the National Register of Historic Places. The home is kept in the same condition as it was when Lois Wilson died. In the bedroom on the second floor is a photo from 1965 of Bill kissing Lois, his arm around her shoulder.

Last year, Stepping Stones had about 1,800 visitors, including a man who traveled there from India, where he had been in Alco-

### Visiting Stepping Stones

Tours are made by appointment. To schedule one, call 914-232-4822. For more information about Stepping Stones, visit [www.stepsstones.org](http://www.stepsstones.org).

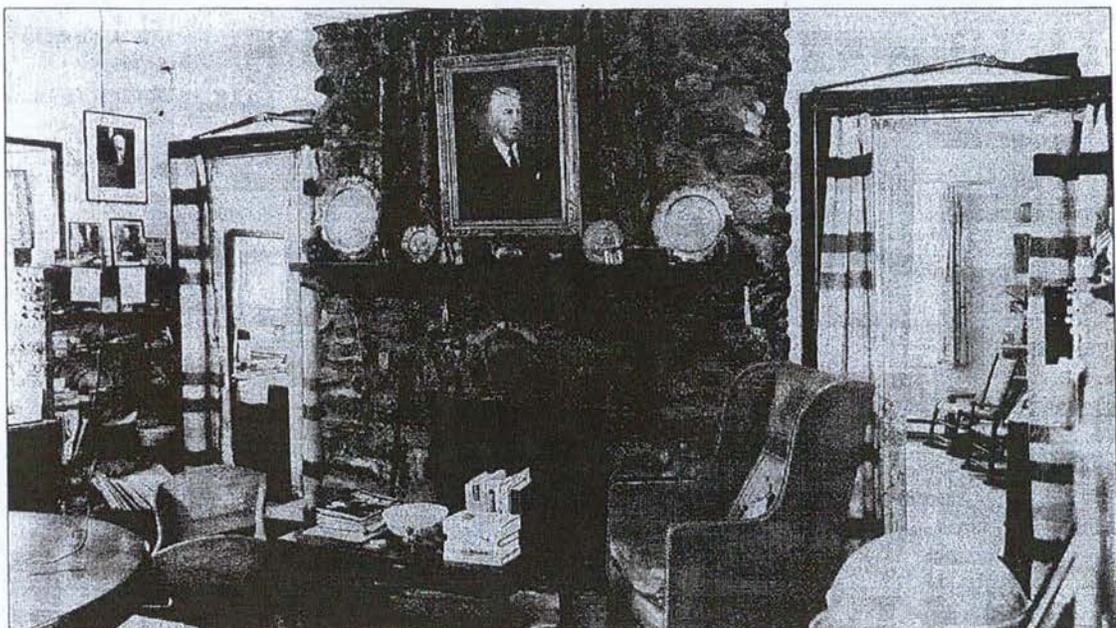
holics Anonymous for 27 years, Perch said.

Jaap Ketting, the founder of the Bedford Hills Historical Museum, said it's worthwhile to tour Stepping

Stones, noting the couple's importance in helping others cope with the problems caused by alcoholism. The Bedford Hills Historical Museum, located in the basement of the Bedford Town House, has an exhibit on the Wilsons.

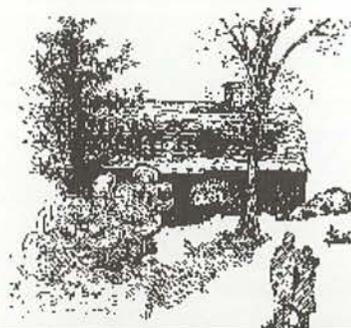
"I think the most important exhibit (in the museum) is the photo of the Wilsons because (Alcoholics Anonymous) has tremendous influence in the whole world," Ketting said.

Reach Sean Gorman at [sgorman@lohud.com](mailto:sgorman@lohud.com) or 914-666-6481.



Joe Larese/The Journal News

Stepping Stones is kept in the same condition as it was prior to Lois Wilson's death in 1988.



# The Stepping Stones News

A Publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

Spring 2007

P.O. BOX 452 ♦ BEDFORD HILLS, NY 10507 ♦ 914-232-4822 ♦ info@steppingstones.org ♦ www.steppingstones.org

## Uncovering Hidden Art

The walls of historic homes are full of secrets, as Stepping Stones proves. The Stepping Stones Foundation only removes from the walls those photos or works on paper that can be preserved prior to being returned to their original location. When Norwich Academy requested a photo of Bill with his high school orchestra for a display of their prestigious alumni, we began the preservation process before we made a copy for the curators at Norwich.

The frame was removed at the nearby Mt. Kisco Frame Shop to uncover a beautiful watercolor of an old oak tree, matted in gold, and what

we believe are Lois Wilson's initials. Several words are written in pencil on the back binding, but only "Burnham" and "3/8" can be clearly read. The rest of the notation remains a mystery. Despite the wonderful job that Lois did leaving behind inventories, diaries, record books and explanations, there are many things she didn't think to record.

We do know that Lois and the other Burnham children were encouraged to pursue their artistic talents, and other pieces of Burnham artwork, which reflect this, can be found on the Second Floor Gallery. This piece will be placed in the



archives and will be available for viewing when the orientation center exhibit space in the existing garage is complete.

## Historic Map Makes Trip to Boston

In keeping with the priorities outlined in the Conservation Plan, we are pleased to dedicate historic preservation funds to the restoration of the historic map in Bill's studio, lovingly called "Wit's End." This map was originally located in the General Service Office of A.A., located at 415 Lexington Avenue in New York City, and our records don't indicate exactly how or why it was moved to Stepping Stones. In April 2007 it traveled to Boston to the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), an esteemed institution that is a member of the Stepping Stones Conservation Team.

The main restoration challenge with the map is replicating the pin placements. The June 30, 1941 A.A. World Directory reveals that the "Red" Star Groups have several members and are just beginning. A 'Green Star' signifies an isolated A.A. member or a Loner. 'White Star' groups were well established and comprised an overwhelming majority of members at this time." The White Star groups showed a total of 3,351 members, the others roughly 155 members – a total of 3,506.

In *Grateful to Have Been There*, Nell Wing writes, "As receptionist, I was often the first one to learn from a visitor that a new group had been formed in his or her community or area. I would take the visitor to the records clerk to verify that we had received notification... Back in the reception room, we would make a little ceremony of placing a colored pin in the proper location on the big U.S. map on the wall (This big map is now located in Bill's studio, up at Stepping Stones)."

These descriptions provide insight into the meaning of the pins and indicate AA's growth from the earliest days. It isn't (continued on page 2)

## Museum Assessment Program

Stepping Stones was fortunate to be chosen for the American Association of Museum's Museum Assessment Program (MAP). MAP's Public Dimension Assessment assesses the public's perception, experience, and involvement with the museum, which will help Stepping Stones communicate more effectively with the public. The assessment will also help the Foundation identify and strengthen collaboration with other organizations. A two-year review of all the ways in which the museum interacts with its visitors and potential audiences, including marketing, public relations, visitor development, and exhibitions, is designed to help us engage in best practices in the museum field.

The first part of the program involved the completion of a self-assessment, with the help of a team which consisted of Board Members Jeannie Heinrich and Maureen Sullivan, volunteer Ken Berg, community members Kate and John Horn, and Foundation staff members Annah Perch and Sarah Capichioni. We gathered information from our community, including surveying visitors, interviewing focus groups and conducting on-the-street interviews with residents in town.

We discovered that the main barriers to public involvement at this point appear to be Stepping Stones' location in a strictly residential neighborhood with residential zoning issues, lack of programming to encourage visitors and returning visitors, and the stigma of alcoholism.

The next step in the assessment is a visit from a consultant who will help us create a plan to serve our community better and to assure us that we meet Lois' vision.

## From the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It's been another exciting year for Stepping Stones, and I am grateful for our community and Friends. This issue of the Stepping Stones news is dedicated to the friends of Bill and Lois Wilson, including Nell Wing, Dr. Bob and Anne Smith, and our Friends today.

As I reflect on the loss of our beloved Nell Wing, I think about all that she taught me -about the fellowship and about myself. I never met her, she left behind a legacy of graciousness and being open to all that life has to offer, whether it is what we would have chosen for ourselves or not.

My favorite part of this job is all of the wonderful and inspirational people I get to meet. Each one of you was important to me, from Herman M. and his friend who traveled overnight and brought me lunch, to Jose Pablo S., his children and friends who traveled from Mexico to celebrate Bill's spiritual awakening. I have not had the opportunity to meet some friends of Stepping Stones, such as those who held Red Hat parties in their living rooms, and so many others. But I learn more from all of you about the spirit of generosity, grace, and strength than I ever thought a job would teach me.

Over the last several years, the Board of Directors, volunteers and I have explored what we offer our Stepping Stones community and what we wish to become. I have developed a plan of action for sustainability and growth. We have been successful at raising funds, improving our programming, and preserving the collection. For a small organization, we couldn't ask for a whole lot more.

Along with making major strides in historic preservation this year, we were able to increase the museum's access to the public and offer an increase in programming. What a moment it was when Bill McNiff performed his one-man act playing Bill Wilson in Bill's very own living room. The audience, primarily of 2006 top donors, agreed that it was a fantastic evening. The Stepping Stones community also got to be the very first audience to see the play "Bill W. and Dr. Bob" off-Broadway. I have to chuckle when I imagine what Bill and Lois would have thought of becoming characters off-Broadway!

With an upcoming year that includes making major headway in historic preservation and a number of events and programs designed to be even more accessible to you, we cross our fingers for the success of the Orientation Center, scheduled to open in 2008, and hope you remember that we do all of this for you and future generations, because it is to you that Bill and Lois Wilson left Stepping Stones.

With all good wishes,

  
Annah Puch  
Executive Director  
Stepping Stones Foundation



Annah addressing a group from LI who make an annual visit for a tour and a picnic.

## Conservation Treatment Team

The amount of planning that goes into upgrading Stepping Stones from a humble home to a state and national historic site with museum-quality standards has been challenging. It is tempting to try to speed up the course of action by making quick decisions about what should be done and how. However, in order to make the best possible decisions for the future of the site, we must engage in a longer, more thoughtful process.

Heeding the advice "Never do anything that can't be undone and don't make any decisions by yourself" a Conservation Treatment Team was developed. The team consists of a group of conservators and museum professionals who partner with Stepping Stones to accomplish preservation and conservation in keeping with the standards of the Secretary of the Interior for Historic Preservation.

Annah spent much of the last year gathering experts in historic architecture, works on paper, furniture, textiles and organic matter, and archives, to form the team. The group met at Stepping Stones in September, 2006, to develop a master Conservation Plan. This plan outlines the preservation activities that must take place over the next several years in order of importance and with a basic plan of action. The conservators each agreed to work on the projects as funding becomes available, and to work as a team to ensure that the project is moving along according to plan.

This strategy is expected to result in greater successes with grant funding, as well as an efficient and responsible restoration, which will result in a better experience for visitors. A summary of the plan can be found on the web at [www.steppingstones.org/inthenews](http://www.steppingstones.org/inthenews).

## Your Comments

We receive comments from our readers, visitors and community via email, snail mail, our visitor guest book, and over the phone. We need your feedback so that we can ensure that we are doing our very best to meet your needs. After all Lois left Stepping Stones for the use of A.A., Al-Anon and the general community, and that includes you!

About fundraising "I love that we can all help in the process of restoration and preservation. I love our history, I love our program and I love all of you up there!" *We love all of you down there too, Peggy!*

"I will never forget the day that I went to Stepping Stones and Lois came to the back door and waved me in. 'Hello Jimmy D.!' she yelled." *How lucky you are to have had that experience.*

"On behalf of the Bedford Farmers Club...thank you for allowing the Club to meet at Stepping Stones. Rarely have I heard so many comments such as 'wasn't that a great meeting' and 'I've lived here all my life. Why didn't I know that the Wilson's lived here? I don't think we've ever had a meeting that was appreciated more.' *Thank you for the compliment. You were a terrific group and we hope that community groups keep coming and spread the word of Bedford's most important residents!*

## Historic Map Makes Trip to Boston (Continued from page 1)

clear when the map stopped being used, or when Bill moved the map to Stepping Stones. The map is a precious piece of A.A. and personal history.

Walter Newman, Director of Paper Conservation at NEDCC detailed the steps his agency will take to preserve the map. He said "My staff isn't going to like me very much," referring to the intricate process of re-mapping the pins in their original location while the paper map receives treatment. An exact copy of the map will be made, and replica pins will be put in the replica map, which will remain on display. The original map will be restored and placed in an environmentally appropriate storage box. When Stepping Stones completes its Orientation Center, the original map is expected to be placed there, on display for all to see.

## Visiting Information

Stepping Stones is open for tours 7 days a week by appointment. The grounds and gardens are open from sun up to sun set. We welcome your visits and hope you will spread the word. To make your appointment to visit today, call (914) 232-4822 or email us at [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org).



## Remembering Nell Wing

Nell E. Wing  
1917-2007

On February 14, 2007, Stepping Stones lost a dear friend when Nell Wing passed away at her retirement home in New Jersey, surrounded by family.

Nell was born and raised in upstate New York. She attended Keuka College in New York's Finger Lakes region and earned a B.A. in Education. Nell served in the female arm of the Coast Guard, the SPARS (Semper Paratus Always Ready), from 1945-1946, and through a series of coincidences, she began work as secretary for the Alcoholic Foundation (now Alcoholics Anonymous) in 1947. Her intention was to work there only until she saved enough money to study sculpting in New Mexico.

Nell remained Bill Wilson's personal assistant until his death in 1971. She knew something special was happening with the A.A. movement and was an astute eyewitness to history in the making. As such, she became A.A.'s first archivist. When Lois Wilson co-founded Al-Anon in 1951, Nell helped nurture the movement. Nell's part in these movements is referred to in several books, including *Pass It On: The Story of Bill Wilson and How the AA Message Reached the World*.

Residing in New York City for most of her adult life, Nell was Bill and Lois Wilson's closest friend and companion. She spent a great deal of time at Stepping Stones. In fact, Lois named one of the guest bedrooms at Stepping Stones "Nell's Room" in honor of Nell's frequent visits to help keep Bill organized. Nell's Room remains an important part of the guided tour of Stepping Stones, now listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Nell's was a member of the Foundations original Board of Directors.

In 1992 Nell wrote *Grateful to Have Been There: My 42 Years with Bill and Lois and the Evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous*. An advocate for and friend to alcoholics and their families worldwide, Nell was one of A.A.'s great friends and contributors, and most certainly earned her place in history. John Koster, a member of the Stepping Stones Board of Directors said "Nell's mere presence evoked the whole early history of A.A., Al-Anon and Stepping Stones. But for Nell none of it was just history; it was a part of her life - and that made it all the more vivid when she talked about it."

At her memorial service, one grand nephew said "Aunt Nell taught me the value of giving something up of yourself for a cause that you believe in."

A small clock sits in the archives at Stepping Stones, and perhaps sums up our feelings about her best. It is engraved "Nell Wing...The precious gift of your time will benefit many for all time." She will be missed.

## Preserving Oral Histories

If you or someone you know knew Bill and/or Lois Wilson, or have a story of spending time with them, please be in touch. You can send a video (it cannot be returned) with your story, or send a picture with your story in writing. If you can visit Stepping Stones, we will have your story videotaped (anonymously if you prefer, and in keeping with the recommendations by Alcoholics Anonymous). We may also come to you to record your story.

It is critical to capture the oral history of Bill and Lois Wilson now, while the history is still fresh, and their peers are still with us. Your story will become a permanent part of the archives of Stepping Stones and help preserve the legacy of Bill and Lois and their fantastic story of hope.

If you've ever tried to imagine what it would have been like to meet Bill W. in person, one of this year's visitors Tommie D. said it was intimidating! She had the chance in the early 1960s when she and a friend found themselves in line to meet him at an event. So intimidated, she left the line before her turn to greet Bill. Later that evening, however, Bill noticed that there were two people in the room he had not met, and made the point of saying hello. Tommie would go on to become friends with Bill and Lois, and had the pleasure of spending time with them at Stepping Stones.

Tommie's stories give us insight into how Bill was often perceived and treated, even as he tried to just be "one of us."

During Tommie's recent visit to Stepping Stones we recorded her story. Such recordings are invaluable to Stepping Stones' mission of sharing the story of hope for recovery. Each story that we are able to preserve about interactions with or remembrances of Bill and Lois Wilson enriches our archives and helps us to create a full and rich understanding of their lives. Even the briefest recollection is important. For instance, another recent visitor, Angela, shared that she once drove up to Stepping Stones from White Plains, New York, with what she thought was an important question for Bill, whom she had never met. She knocked on the door and saw the couple sitting in the main room relaxing together. They spent half-an-hour with Angela that night, and she says they 12-Stepped her.

We think stories about the day-to-day life of Bill and Lois are important and add to the legacy of these legendary individuals. We hope to hear from you.

**Fast Fact: Bill & Lois were married on January 24, 1918. Bill passed away on January 24, 1971 - the night of their 53rd wedding anniversary.**

## From the Archives...

Stepping Stones, as well as the rest of the New York area, had the chance to get to know Dr. Bob and his beloved wife Anne in a new way this year. The play *Bill W. and Dr. Bob*, now playing at New World Stages in New York City, brings Dr. Bob's story to the forefront and is much appreciated.

We were excited to assist the cast and crew with their character development by research-

ing the archives for materials that revealed a great deal about Dr. Bob, including his devotion to his wife, Anne.

After Anne died in 1949, Fred B. proposed an article for *The Grapevine*. Handwritten notes in the margins suggest that a draft was sent to Dr. Bob for his review. Al S. sent the article, with the edits, to Nell Wing in 1974. While searching the archives for materials to help the play's cast and

crew, we found a draft copy, which read, "This was Anne Smith: She was a woman who never cared to be beautiful, but she had a sweetness that passed all understanding."

When we saw that Bob had crossed out those words and written instead, "she was a beautiful woman...", the room fell silent. The sweetness of Bob's love for Anne was alive again, over thirty years after he had corrected the article. Yet again, we all felt fortunate that Lois had the foresight to preserve so much of the history of A.A. and Al-Anon.

# Friends of Stepping Stones

The following are the generous donors to the Stepping Stones Foundation from April 1, 2006-April 1, 2007. To belong to a gift club you must be a current donor. Gift clubs are cumulative for active donors. We are enormously grateful for this show of support.

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LLC

in honor of Jim & Thomas

Cody

Helene Cooney

Jim Corcoran

Jack Corderman

Diana & David

Cowperthwaite

Liz & George Croop

Florence & Wayne Crouse

David Culp

Dan Dailey

Joe Daly

Marcia Daly

in honor of Ramelle & Guy

Davis Davis

Linda Decker

in honor of John W.

Deegan

Michael Duffy

Marion Durlcaher

Endless Serenity

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Essig

in honor of Beverly Fs

birthday

John Farrell

Sylvia Felder

Michele Feigen

Catherine & Martin

Fetherston

Friday Night Al-Anon

Fran Forrence

Randi Friedman

in honor of George Frost

Walter Goldberger

Keith Gordon

Grand Falls Serenity Group

Connie & Mark Gustafson

Luanne & John Haaga

Mary Ann Hagler

Carolyn Harting

Geri & Carl Helwig

Neal Hempill

Molly Holmes

Larry Jeter

Kenneth Johnson

Ted Johnson

Nancy Jostad

Jimmy Keith

Karen & Frank Kell

Martha & Mike Kelly

Gretel Kelly

Bill Killian

Pat Kinsella

Joseph Klinitski

KLK Plumbing

Lisa Kochersperger

Lee Krapovicky & Charlotte

Warner

Karin Krause

in honor of Betty Kruse

Lakside Group, Porter TX

Keith Lepkowski

Fred Liggett

Elizabeth Lorenzo

Sandy & Will Luecke

in honor of Lunchtime 74

Trinity Place Group

Mamaroneck Al-Anon

in honor of Bill McCoy

Joe McGehrin

Paul McGonnell

Virginia McMath

Marina McPherson

Ed Melanson

Robert Messerly

Richard Mikesell, PH.D.

Frances Miller

Mark Miller

Audrey Minderman

Mary & Robert Minichiello

Roger Modder

Peggy Mullins

Vonnie & Bob Murray

Cynthia Nicosia

Sue & Dave Oertel

Connie Olivieri

Crystal Ornelas

Emmie & Jack Ostrem

Denis O'Toole

PA AFG Convention

Caren Pane

Marsha & John Peal

Bob Pearson

Ted Perch

Jennifer & Richard Perrotti

William Pogue

Dennis Portelli

Leslie Ptak

Randi Friedman

in honor of Ken Rae

(Superman)

Eloise Reed

in honor of Phillip Reed

Claire Ricewasser

Jane Riverman

Sue & Dan Roe

Kevin Rogers

Rev. James Ruddick, S.J.

Suzanne Scalettar

Jimmy Sell

Linda & Martin Sellers

in honor of Beatrice &

Louis Shaknitz

Vannoy Shaw

Ann Shields

Victoria Shoaf

Jessica Shue

Meryl Simonson

# Stepping Stones Makes Strides

Stepping Stones has made great progress in its fundraising. Our efforts include a "Friends" initiative, seeking grants, hosting special events, and asking for contributions from our visitors. Our first full year has given us the momentum and encouragement to persist in seeking the support needed to accomplish the goals outlined in our strategic plan. We are especially excited to have a network of generous friends who donate annually. This group illustrates that as a team we can ensure that Stepping Stones is available forever. We look forward to your continued support!

In 2006 we raised close to \$30,000 for historic preservation and almost \$24,000 in general operating support from our community of friends around the world. These donations came from our annual fundraising mailing, our newsletter appeal, visitors, and our website (grants not included). Although it is minimal in relation to the \$1M plus needed to complete historic preservation and increases in operating costs, we are thrilled to see the Stepping Stones community join together to play a role in preserving this precious piece of history forever.

In a unique show of support, we received donations from a group of lovely people who hosted "Red Hat Contests" in their living rooms in Wisconsin and California. These generous friends raffled their hats off amongst each other, and the proceeds went to Stepping Stones! We love this idea and can just imagine Lois Wilson, Nell Wing, and others getting a real kick out of it. Thank you all!

Finally, Stepping Stones offered several fundraising events this year. With a staff as small as we have, this was no simple undertaking. But, thanks to a dedicated Board of Directors and Friends, we pulled them off with great success.

In October, Bill McNiff, playwright and actor, performed his one man show "Moments...An Evening with Bill W." in the living room for a select group Friends. He performed again, by popular demand, for a Stepping Stones presentation at the home of Board member Jeannie Heinrich. In addition, Stepping Stones was thrilled to host the very first performance of "Bill W. and Dr. Bob" off Broadway in NYC on February 16. Friends came from Mexico, Akron, Florida, and Canada to participate in the evening, which was a successful fundraiser for the foundation as well.

## Our recent grant successes include:

**NYS Environmental Protection Fund.** Up to \$33,000 in matching funds will be granted in 2007, and enable Stepping Stones to restore all of the house windows, install UV filters to reduce light exposure inside, make roof repairs, and save two outlying buildings that were facing deterioration beyond repair.

The **New York State Council for the Arts** granted Stepping Stones \$9,800 toward the design of an Orientation Center, expected to be housed in the garage. The orientation center will ease wear and tear on the historic home, offer exhibit space for archives and offer our friends a higher quality experience when they visit.

The **New York Council for the Humanities** offered Stepping Stones a mini-grant for the development of its first ever guided tour.

**Annual Giving** — Help Strengthen the Stepping Stones Legacy. In order to meet the challenges and opportunities facing Stepping Stones, we cannot rely on earned revenue alone. Thank you in advance for your support!

## Pledge of Support (individual or group)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel.: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

As part of my commitment to preserving the legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson through Stepping Stones, I am pleased to make a gift as follows:

One time gift, in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_  
(check payable to The Stepping Stones Foundation)

I wish to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_ monthly/quarterly/semi-annually /annually

My gift will be matched by: \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to pay by: \_\_\_\_\_ credit card \_\_\_\_\_ MC \_\_\_\_\_ Visa

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(as it appears on card)

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ my check is enclosed \_\_\_\_\_ please bill me

\_\_\_\_\_ list my gift anonymously

The Stepping Stones Foundation, P.O. Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY 10507  
914-232-4822, info@steppingstones.org

## Special Thanks to...

- **Bill McNiff** for two wonderful performances of *Moments, an Evening with Bill W.* for Stepping Stones donors.
- **Greg and Anita Odell** for donating a one of a kind handmade replica of Stepping Stones. The evidence of this labor of love was in every little shingle.
- **Linda Vincent** for her deserving role as the founder of the Friends of Stepping Stones and her in-kind gifts.
- **Tom and Ken** for their gardening expertise and mulch.
- **Volunteers Ken, David, Steve, Robert, Kate, John, Roberto,** and **Sharon** for their hours of dedicated service giving tours.
- **Bill Borchert** and **Eileen Giuliani** for giving presentations on our behalf in Texas and England.
- **Kevin Hanlon** and **Page 124 Productions** for the beautiful print of Bill and Lois, which now hangs in our gift shop.
- **Mary Beth C., Linda Vincent, Marilyn A.,** and **Sheila**

for their letter stuffing support and more! • **Noel** for painting "the big guys" porch • **Joe** from Staten Island for donating the flag case in honor of Bill's service in the military. • **Rocco Sica** and **Marc Capichioni** for their computer support.

We also would like to extend our thanks for in-kind donations to **Cadbury Schweppes** and **PepsiCo**, **Espresso World**, **Bill and Bernadette Borchert**, and **Martha S.**

Finally, thanks to **all our 2006 picnic volunteers**, without whom we could not have made it through the day.



# You Are Invited To Attend!

The 55<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Groups Picnic

Saturday, June 2, 2007. 12pm-5pm. Rain or Shine

Celebrating the legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson and the fellowships they nurtured. Tours of the house and grounds, entertainment, good cheer and fellowship. Special tribute to Nell Wing.

Open meeting with Kevin H., NY (A.A.)  
Joan L, LI (Al-Anon) and Alateen speaker.

Bring your own lunch!  
We provide the soft drinks.

**Directions:** Rt. 684 to exit 6, west onto Rt. 35, toward Katonah. At second light, turn left onto Cherry Street. Turn right onto Woodfield Road. Or take Saw Mill Parkway to exit 39. Left onto Route 117. Second left to Cherry. Third left onto Woodfield. Follow attendant's parking instructions. For MapQuest directions use 66 Oak Road, Katonah, NY 10536.

**No buses and no exceptions. Call for information on where to park a bus, and thank you for your cooperation.**

Visit [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org) or call (914) 232-4822 for more information.

## Can't Make it to Stepping Stones?

Let Stepping Stones come to you! With Power Point presentation in hand, Stepping Stones staff and volunteers can come to your conference, classroom, library, or community group to share the story of hope for the recovery from alcoholism that is embodied in the life and home of Bill and Lois Wilson. While we can't honor every request, we try to be available to share rare photos and provide a virtual tour of their beloved home. We can also send a sampling of literature about Stepping Stones to support your event.

Last year we had the pleasure of traveling to the Pennsylvania Area Annual Family Groups Convention, the annual Chili Supper in Branson Missouri, the annual Syracuse Area Al-Anon Convention in Syracuse, NY, the Area 33 Michigan Round Up, the Annual SENY (South East New York) Convention in Tarrytown, NY, the first Annual A.A. Convention in New Haven, CT and more!

If you would like Stepping Stones to come to you, please call Annah or Sarah at 914-232-4822 or email us at [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org).

**If you would like to be added to the Stepping Stones email list** and receive quarterly updates, visit [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org) and click on CONTACT US, or send an email to [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org). If you would prefer to receive all email and no more snail mail, please send an email to the above address.

**To come in quarterly email updates...** Stepping Stones Launches a Friends of Stepping Stones Group, Interpretation Study Underway, Volunteers Utilized to Make Headway in Historic Preservation, Education and more...

## Calendar of Events

**May 5th ~ Community Gardening Day, 10am - 4pm** The Stepping Stones Garden Club prepares Bill and Lois' garden for summer. Make it a day of service for your group or come alone. Bring work gloves, a sun hat and garden tools. Registration is required, and free lunch will be served. Join the Garden Club at any gardening event, by calling (914) 232-4822, or emailing [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org).

**May 25th ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm** Join staff and friends for a guided tour followed by tea, pastries and a lively discussion, just as Lois Wilson would have entertained her guests. *Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.*

**June 2nd ~ 55th Annual Family Groups Picnic, 12-4pm** Don't miss the opportunity to visit the home of Bill and Lois Wilson with 500 or so of your closest friends! Started by Lois in 1952, this year's picnic will featured guided tours, an open meeting and much more. Bring your own picnic lunch; we provide the soft drinks. No reservation required.

**June 29th ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm.** *Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.*

**July 8th ~ Gardening Day, 10am - 4pm** Join the Stepping Stones Gardening Club as they weed, prune and clean up the garden. Spend a summer day doing what Bill and Lois loved so much. Bring work gloves, a sun hat and garden tools. Lunch will be provided, and registration is required. Join the Garden Club at any gardening event, by calling (914)232-4822, or emailing [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)

*(Continued from page 8)*

# Historic Stepping Stones Gift Shop

Our gift shop selection is growing, and we're pleased to offer the following items, among others:



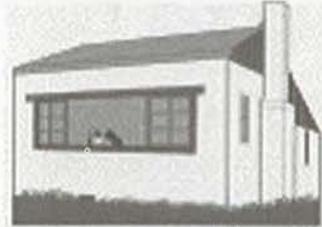
God boxes  
\$20.00



**Cross stitch kits:**  
**First-Things-First**™ Based on a sampler that was given to Lois as a gift and is on display in the "spook room." \$14.00

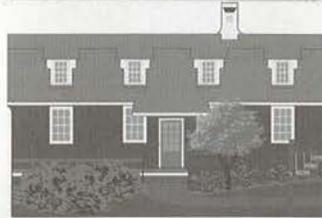


**Even the letters A.A.** Believed to have been written by Lois Wilson, this poem was found handwritten in Lois' diary during a trip to Paris in 1977. The original sampler can be found in the "spook room" at Stepping Stones. \$14.00



**Replica of Wit's End or Stepping Stones**

Nicely detailed in Full color with the name and history of the house on the back. Average size 4 1/2 x 6 3/4. Perfect gift. \$18.00



## BOOKS AND VIDEOS

**Grateful to Have Been There** by Nell Wing  
My 42 Years with Bill and Lois and the Evolution of Alcoholics Anonymous.  
\$10.95

**Not God** by Ernest Kurtz  
A History of Alcoholics Anonymous.  
\$14.95

**The Soul of Sponsorship** by Robert Fitzgerald, S.J.  
The Friendship of Fr. Ed Dowling and Bill Wilson in letters. \$10.95

**Como Lo Ve Bill** (As Bill Sees It, in Spanish)  
\$12.95

**My Name is Bill W.**, DVD. Starring James Woods and James Garner, written by advisory board member Bill Borchert. A must see. \$21.95

## Other gift ideas

can be found on the web and include: "Hold Fast" pendants (\$14), coffee mugs (\$10), pens (\$6.50), pencil drawings of the landscape by artist Judith Brooks (\$5-\$7), tote bags (\$20), river rocks, other excellent educational books and more.



**NOTE CARDS** with 5 different photos Stepping Stones. Please indicate English or Spanish version. \$10



Looking for other gift ideas? Visit us on the web @ [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org)

(mail your completed order form, with payment to: SSF, PO Box 452, Bedford Hills, NY 10507)

Item	Quantity	Total
Subtotal		
Shipping*		
Tax**		
Total Amount		

**Ship to:**  
(please print clearly)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Shipping Charge Value of Order: Up to \$10.00 = \$1.95, \$10.01-\$25 = \$2.95, \$25.01-\$50.00 = \$3.95, \$50.01-\$100 = \$5.95, \$100+ = \$10.05  
\*\*For AL,CA,FL,GA,IL,MN,NJ,NY,PA,TX & WI, add local sales tax

# Calendar of Events

**July 27th ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm** Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.

**August 31st ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm** Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.

**September 15th ~ Gardening Day, 10am - 4pm** Join the Stepping Stones Garden Club as they weed and begin to plan for the winter and following spring. Make it a day of service for your group; individuals and couples are always welcome. Lunch will be provided, registration is required. Join the Garden Club at any gardening event, by calling (914) 232-4822, or emailing [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)

**September 28th ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm** Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.

**October 26th ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm** Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.

**November 3rd ~ Gardening Day, 10am - 4pm** Join the Stepping Stones Garden Club as they put the garden to bed for the winter. Bulbs will be planted, and the Garden Club will plan its events for the following year over lunch. Lunch will be provided, registration is required. Join the Garden Club at any gardening event, by calling (914) 232-4822, or emailing [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)

**November 26th ~ Bill Wilson's Birthday Open House, 2-5pm** Join friends old and new as they celebrate the birth of Bill Wilson, Nov. 26, 1895.

**November 30th ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm.** Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.

**December 10th ~ Candle Lighting Ceremony on the eve of Bill's**

**spiritual awakening, 8:30pm** Join Jose Pablo S., his family and friends who travel from Mexico to mark this important day in history. Meet across the street from the former Town's Hospital at 88th Street and Central Park West. Dress warm.

**December 11th ~ Candlelight Vigil Celebrating Bill Wilson's spiritual awakening, 8:30pm** Join Jose Pablo S. his family and friends as they take a moment to commemorate the day of Bill's spiritual awakening at Town's Hospital. Meet across the street from the former hospital at 88th Street and Central Park West. Dress warm and bring a candle!

**December 21st ~ Tea in the Gardens, 3pm.** Reservations required, (914) 232-4822, \$12 contribution.



Bill and Lois Wilson, enjoying their garden at Stepping Stones, 1954.

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The Stepping Stones Foundation  
PO Box 452  
Bedford Hills, NY 10507  
Return Service Requested



# The Stepping Stones News

A Publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

Spring 2009

62 Oak Road • Katonah, NY 10536 • 914.232.4822 • info@steppingstones.org • www.steppingstones.org

## The Stepping Stones Audio Tour

In 2008, Stepping Stones launched a new addition to its guided tour experience. Now visitors can use their cell phones to listen to recorded messages related to what is in front of them, as a way of guiding themselves through Bill and Lois' historic home and garden. The call is free, only your plan's minutes apply. Try it today! Dial (914) 307-3698 from any phone (long-distance charges may apply on land lines). Listen to the welcome message, then dial the numbers and #, below, to hear the narration. (The male narrator in English is Jim Smith, and the female narrator is Annah Perch. In Spanish the male narrator is Gerardo Reyero, and the female narrator is Maria Eugenia Guzmán. In Spanish, Bill is read by Jesse Conde, and Lois is read by Ángela Villanueva.)

The audio tour is also part of our traveling exhibition (see page 7).

- 4# Bill describes Stepping Stones to Dr. Bob in a letter on April 23, 1941, read by a narrator. (304# para Español)
- 9# Bill and Lois from childhood to falling in love (309# para Español)
- 32# Bill and Ebby at the kitchen table, Bill speaking. (332# para Español)
- 41# The beginning of Al-Anon (341# para Español)
- 42# The beginning of Al-Anon, cont'd (342# para Español)
- 43# Practicing the AA Way of Life, Lois speaking. (343# para Español)
- 49# Stepping down from AA leadership (349# para Español)
- 50# Bill speaks on how AA works and the AA Way of Life (350# para Español)
- 60# Nurturing a marriage (360# para Español)
- 63# Personal sacrifices for the AA Way of Life (363# para Español)
- 71# Lois in mourning (371# para Español)
- 79# Bill writes to his mother about the building of Wit's End and she returns his letter, as read by narrators. (379# para Español)
- 106# Bill himself tells the history of the Big Book (406# para Español)

You can leave your own message for Stepping Stones, at any time, by pressing 0#.

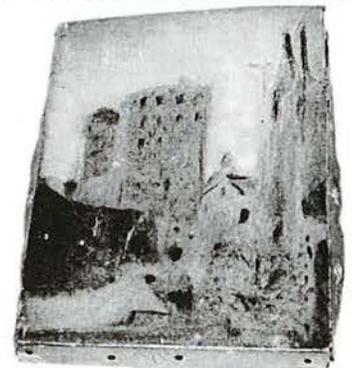
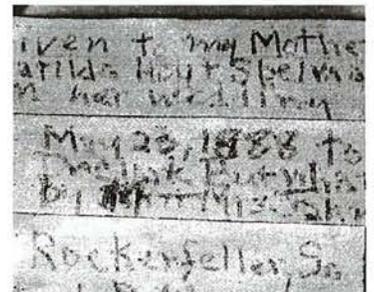
## Cataloging the Stepping Stones Collection

by Anna Konstantatos, Stepping Stones Collections Manager

Since August 2008, I have had the pleasure of cataloging the numerous belongings of Bill and Lois Wilson at Stepping Stones. Made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, this project is a critical, proactive step in making sure this collection of 10,000+ items lasts forever. The project addresses a top priority in the Stepping Stones Master Conservation Plan.

As I look in cabinets, drawers, and hidden corners, new treasures come to light. One such item is a cup and saucer set that belonged to Lois' mother, Matilda Burnham. On the bottom of the saucer, Lois wrote this message on three pieces of tape: "Given to my Mother Matilda Hoyt Spelman on her wedding May 20, 1883 to Dr. Clark Burnham by Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Sr." This is one of my favorites not for what it tells us about Lois' family, but for what it might tell us about Lois. In the upstairs gallery, Lois left behind notes about most of the objects and photographs on display. But she tucked notes away, indicating that she understood that our interpretation of her family history would be important in the future.

Another of my favorites is in the upstairs gallery, where Lois framed photographs, documents, and artwork that she and Bill acquired over the years. It is a stretched-canvas painting Lois made in 1913, depicting the view from the roof of 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn. This was Lois' childhood home and the house in which she and Bill lived until 1939.



(continued on page 2)

## Stepping Stones Cataloging Project

(continued from page 1)

Rather than placing her painting in a prime location for others to admire, Lois placed it very high on the wall. Furthermore, it is unframed, the canvas is very dirty, and two wrapped edges have come off the wooden stretcher. Lois' devotion to Bill and his legacy may have meant underplaying her own achievements.

The cataloging process has taught me how to execute a catalog, which is a complex museum best practice, and get to know Bill and Lois on a personal level. As a non-AA member, my time in their home has allowed me to experience the warmth of the AA community through the visitors and volunteers at Stepping Stones. I look forward to discovering more treasures. If you or someone you know can devote time to cataloging the remaining objects, please contact Stepping Stones. Weekday commitments are preferable, but we can work with you to make this project a success.

## A Sampling of Upcoming Events

### April 25, 2009 • Stepping Stones Executive Director Speaking Grand Rapids, MI

*Annah Perch, Stepping Stones' Executive Director, will make a presentation at the 61st Annual Kent County Central Office Spring Round-up. Share the experience of Stepping Stones through this powerful presentation which includes photos, audio, and historical information you haven't heard before. ([www.grandrapidsaa.org](http://www.grandrapidsaa.org))*

### May 7, 2009 • Benefit for Vineyard House Martha's Vineyard, MA

*The presentation "Bill and Lois Wilson and the AA Way of Life" will be made at 6pm and 7:30pm. Vineyard Playhouse, 10 Church Street, Vineyard Haven, MA. For tickets, call (508) 693-8580.*

### May 29, 2009 • Tea in the Gardens, 3pm (held monthly)

*Join staff and friends for a guided tour, followed by tea, pastries and a lively discussion, just as Lois Wilson would have entertained her guests. Teas are held on the last Friday of EVERY month, and reservations are required. (914) 232-4822; a \$12 contribution is suggested.*

### June 20, 2009 • Group Gardening Day, 10am-4pm

*Enjoy a day of service. Groups of 5-20 are welcome, reservations are required. Join the Stepping Stones Community Gardeners in preparing for summer, just like Bill and Lois did each year. A break for lunch will be arranged. Relax for fellowship at the end of the day. Receive recognition in the annual newsletter and keep coming back to enjoy the fruits of your labor.*

### October 2-4, 2009 • 22nd Annual Tri-County Conference Troy, MI, "I Am Responsible"

*For those who can't make the trip from Michigan this year, this is a chance to experience Stepping Stones from the comfort of your home state. Presentation is 1:45 - 3:15pm Saturday. Sponsored by AA of Greater Detroit, (248) 541-6565.*

### November 28, 2009 • Bill's Birthday Open House, 2-5pm

*Join us as we celebrate Bill's birthday (on November 26) with guided tours, a special exhibition, cake and fellowship.*

Please check [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org) often, as events are added regularly.

## Dear Friends of Stepping Stones,

As we celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Stepping Stones Foundation, I remember that Lois Wilson created Stepping Stones for all of you, and that your visit to Stepping Stones – whether online, during a presentation at a conference, or in person – is a personal invitation from Lois.

The visitors I've met over the past year, and the commitment from the volunteers without whom we couldn't exist, are among my fondest memories. And behind the scenes we have made great strides in preserving the Bill and Lois Wilson collection. This will go a long way toward preserving Stepping Stones forever. I am also touched by our friends who continue to give financially, year after year. This tremendous show of support and faith in Stepping Stones warms my heart.

In the forthcoming year, it is my sincerest hope that we can increase the number of volunteers who help at Stepping Stones on a regular basis. The rocky economy has left many people with extra time on their hands. It's a terrific time to honor the principle of service, which helps us not think too much about our problems. Volunteer opportunities include guiding tours (once a week or once a month), housekeeping, assisting with historic preservation and art production, gardening, and more. If you have a skill or resource that might benefit us, please let me know.

Together we can make sure that the spirit of Bill and Lois Wilson at Stepping Stones lives on for generations to come.

Let us never take for granted the volunteers who have served Stepping Stones this past year, without whom we never could have been here for all of you. Tour Guides Sharon, Ricardo, Kate, John, Jim, Mike, and Scott deliver the best experience to our guests, and go above and beyond whenever they are needed. Thank you all for a wonderful year. Ken, Robert, and Steve, who have moved on to other ways of being of service, thank you for your time.

Jose Pablo S. is a friend of Stepping Stones who visits every year from Mexico, and this year donated the translation of the recorded guided tour into Spanish. I want to thank him, Alexander Galina at the sound studio, and the actors who narrated the tour for their awesome show of support, which will greatly enhance our Spanish-speaking visitors' experience.

Auxiliary Group members and others went out of their way to introduce Stepping Stones to people who might not otherwise get to visit, and to help Stepping Stones raise funds to build the Orientation Center. Thanks to Changing Our World for their pro bono fundraising support. Without their enthusiastic support, we would be nowhere near reaching our goal. Gail and Al, Mark and Pam, Bill, Phil, Jeannie, Linda – thank you.

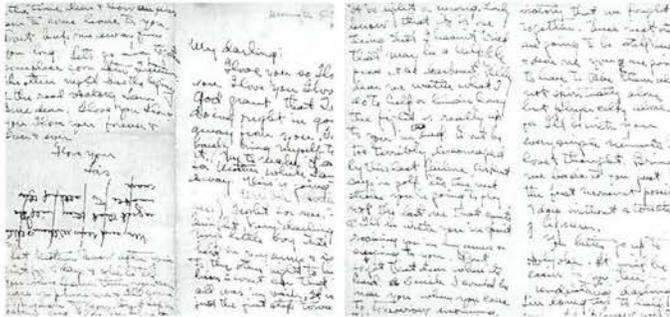
Jim donated his voice for the English-language recorded tour. Mike donated recordings of Bill Wilson; Marilyn and friends made the Al-Anon delegates' visit so special with baked goods and cheer; Linda and the raffle gifts she donated; The River Group garden helpers; numerous volunteers at the hottest picnic in recent memory – you're the best! Volunteers and in-kind donors are the heart and soul of Stepping Stones. I am in awe of all of these people for their commitment to carry on the spirit of Stepping Stones.



Annah Perch,  
Executive Director

# Interpreting Stepping Stones

In all of the archives of the lives of Bill and Lois Wilson that Stepping Stones is charged with preserving, there are perhaps no two letters that describe the sick and suffering alcoholic and loved ones better than the ones presented below. These letters were written in 1929, six years before Bill had his last drink.



## Lois B. Wilson to William G. Wilson, Washington, D.C., 1929

My darling,

I love you so I love you I love you I love you. God grant that I am doing right in going away from you. I can barely bring myself to do it. (Try to make it easier for Mother while I am away. This is going to be a terrible shock to her.) Fight for me, my knight, my darling, my little boy that I held in my arms & sang to the other night to help him. I won't say that it all was in vain. It was just the first step towards victory that we fought together. These next steps are going to be still harder & dear one you are going to have to take them alone, not spiritually alone but physically alone for I'll be with you every single minute in love & thought. Bring me back to you just the first moment possible. 7 days without a touch of liquor...

Understand darling I'm doing this to help you. I don't know whether it is right or wrong. I only know that it is one thing that I haven't tried that may be a help [??] prove it so dearheart. Billy dear no matter what I do to help or hinder honey the fight is really up to you in the end. Don't be too terribly discouraged by this last failure, as Kent says in golf "it's the next stroke you're going to play not the last one that counts" & I'll be with you in spirit rocking you in my arms & singing to you. Don't forget that dear when it's hard. I wish I could be near you when you come to tomorrow morning.

Think about me every second of the time dear & how anxious I am to come home to you. Don't keep me away from you long. Let's go away together someplace after I return. The other night was the beginning of the real victory I am sure dear. I love you I love you I love you forever & ever & ever.

I love you,  
Lois

P.S. Let Mother know after you've quit for 7 days & she'll tell you where I am then you can wire or phone me & I'll come flying home to you. Don't keep me waiting long. I love you I love you.

Equally precious is the correspondence between the couple from when they first fell in love in 1915 and spent half of their year apart, leaving lots of time for letter writing. Lois, perhaps in her own ominous warning, saved them all. Later, after sobriety and into a life beyond their wildest dreams, Bill and Lois continued to leave behind evidence of how carefully and thoughtfully they treated their relationship, using AA principles as their guide.

## William G. Wilson to Lois B. Wilson, torn up & taped back together

Why should I continue on in this way? What is on each side of the balance. On one side of the scales is the love and devotion of my wife whose whole life is given to the task of making me happy and successful in whatever I undertake. Her happiness and her success is dependent on the successful outcome of her effort.

There is my mother who is advancing in years who wishes above all things my happiness & success. She may sometime be obliged to look to me for aid. There is Lois' mother the dearest woman in the world who may need my help and who is heartbroken over my failure in self-control. There is my sister with her two beautiful children for whom I may do much. There are those who have lost everything because of their confidence in me which confidence I should justify.

There is my pride and the desire to feel at the end that I have left the world better than found it. These things are on one side of the balance....

What is on the other? Not liquor or tobacco but rather my baser self. These things not evil in themselves are through their abuse the vehicles of my selfishness and sensuality. By continuing such abuse I am weakening mentally, physically, morally and spiritually. I am breaking the hearts of those near and dear to me. I am destroying as fine a mind and body as was ever given any man. And this for a fleeting sense of comfort and stimulation. Must this state of affairs continue. Must I live in affording proof that the worst side of my nature has triumphed? Shall I go on breaking hearts over such a mess of pottage? I think not.



These archives represent the legacy of two people who, alongside developing and nurturing one of the most important social and spiritual movements of all time, sacrificed more of their own personal comforts and desires than, perhaps, any other figures in AA's history.

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# Interview with a Stepping Stones Volunteer

Jim S. first visited Stepping Stones in late 2006 after seeing a flyer at a meeting. He has become one of Stepping Stones' most cherished supporters. We chatted in March 2009.

***Jim, I remember the day that you first visited. There was an Open House on a Sunday. What was your reaction when you came inside? (AP)***

Well, to be honest, I was a bit embarrassed. See, I lived no more than two miles from Stepping Stones since the early 1970s. I always knew it was there. In fact I went to Lois' memorial service in New York City in 1988. I guess it's like a New Yorker never going to the Statue of Liberty, you take it for granted when it is in your backyard. So, when I walked inside I was overwhelmed. There was the fellowship, alive and well inside Bill and Lois' house. I half expected Lois to come out of the kitchen carrying a teapot. And the history of AA was everywhere. Friends I never met before but who were surely like family were all around me. The personal effects of the man who co-created and nurtured the movement that saved me and my family from ruin were all around. The house was alive. I truly had no idea what I would find. I also became entranced with the vast amount of antiques in the house; books, furniture, recordings of classical music, paintings and so much more. I couldn't get enough, so when you asked me to be a volunteer tour guide, I had to say yes so I could spend more time there.

***You said yes in record time; somewhere around 2 seconds. What made you say yes?***

I've been taught to never say no when asked to do service in AA, but then this isn't AA, this is history. I believe in practicing the principles in all my affairs, and being of service gets me out of my head and makes me feel useful now that I am retired. I have found fascinating the people I meet during my tours. We always have something in common, and I always learn something new. There was the visit from a high school student writing a paper on alcoholism, who left exclaiming that her paper would be far different than she ever expected. And the visitors from Little Rock who knew an old friend I had met at a Little Rock meeting years earlier. A friend I only met in person once, but talk to on the phone, often. It was so nice for me to have that connection.

***You do more than tours, Jim. You are the voice of Bill Wilson on the cell phone tour.***

Yes (laughs), yes I am. Well, I am an actor and have done voice-overs so I was thrilled to take on that role. One of the most wonderful things I've learned since getting involved with Stepping Stones is what a fascinating man Bill was. I knew he had done something important by cofounding and nurturing AA, but I never knew how the man lived. He definitely practiced the principles in all his affairs. I am awed by just how much he and Lois sacrificed for AA and Al-Anon. I never knew that Bill had to convince Lois to start Al-Anon, or that Bill tried to step down from AA leadership many times. I learned a lot just reading through the script for the cell phone tour. Pretending to be Bill, for even a short time, was really humbling.

***And you are dedicating a tremendous amount of time to cataloging the contents of the house.***

I work one day a week, entering Bill and Lois' books in the database. I'm about a third of the way through. I love books, so this project is a real treat. Visitors constantly ask for a list of the books that Bill and Lois read, so I can't wait until it is ready to share with them. And I find hidden treasures in the books. Lois wrote short reviews, like "Smuttly but the

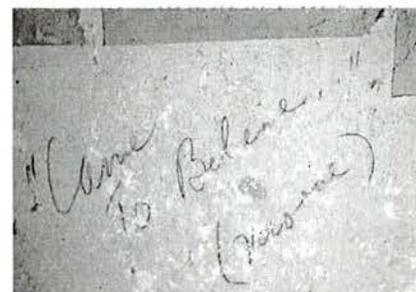
theme is interesting" about a Stephen King novel, or "Enjoyed it for a while, but it gets tiresome" for another.

***Anything to say to someone who might be thinking about volunteering for Stepping Stones?***

Well, there's something rewarding to do for everyone. Even if you're not a member of a 12-step group and just love history, service at Stepping Stones is for you. Of course, I believe that as part of the AA way of life we commit ourselves to a lifetime of service to others, and it has served me well. Then, there's the idea that you taught me, that Lois left Stepping Stones to all of us and it is our responsibility to care for, if we wish it to last forever. I hope more people will join the Stepping Stones volunteer family this year.

## Came to Believe

This year Stepping Stones preserved the famous original version of the painting commonly known as "The Man on the Bed" or "The Third Alcoholic." This artwork sits humbly in Bill's writing studio, known as Wit's End, and was hung in front of Bill's desk, where he could see it every time he sat there. The painting depicts Bill W. and Dr. Bob speaking with the first man they met with, Bill D., who stayed sober using what would become the principles of AA.



After the painting was delivered to the safe hands of Mount Kisco Frame Shop, owner Greg Hare called to report that when the frame was opened, a surprise was inside. The artist had named this piece "Came to Believe", and did not sign the original. Stepping Stones is pleased to share this important piece of history. The conservation of this artwork was made possible through the Friends of Stepping Stones fundraising initiative.

## Your Memories Can Help the Archives

Stepping Stones is seeking photos of Bill and Lois Wilson, and their home Stepping Stones, from the period 1941-88. We also seek copies of correspondence including holiday greetings, letters, etc. These items help us tell the story of the Wilsons' lives with greater accuracy. Donations of originals and copies are welcome at Stepping Stones, 62 Oak Road, Katonah, NY 10636. Include your contact information for acknowledgment. Your contribution will be recognized but not returned, and will help make Stepping Stones last forever.



Award-winning singer songwriter Gracie Vandiver and her husband Jerry performed at Stepping Stones during a summer 2008 benefit. Gracie's compilation album can be purchased on the Stepping Stones website, [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org), or [www.sunlightofthespirit.com](http://www.sunlightofthespirit.com). For upcoming summer performances, or to plan your own benefit concert, please call (914) 232-4822.

## From Friends...

### Creative Fundraising Ideas

Twice this year friends held a "No-Talent Freak Show". They did all kinds of things to entertain the attendees - showing off tattoos, really bad dance moves, and singing - and raised \$1,150 to support general operations at Stepping Stones. Also: A group of women in California participate in a bad language pool. Whenever they use bad language, they put \$1 in the pot. This year they donated their pot to Stepping Stones - almost \$700!

### The Joy of Giving Back

"Thank you for the privilege of being a volunteer for Stepping Stones. I doubt anything can exceed the feelings that I had yesterday when the AA delegates visited. The opportunity to meet so many recovering alcoholics from around the world is something I will never forget. I must have had a half-dozen unsolicited hugs! I witnessed three people cry once seated in Bill's chair. I talked recovery with people who said they were 'home.' It was a wonderful experience." - Mike C.

### An Engagement at Stepping Stones

"To all who made our visit to Stepping Stones an amazing memory, thank you! Especially Steve for his kind words, insight into sobriety and stories of Lois, and his kind and open heart. Our engagement signifies a new beginning, a new path we get to travel together, sober. Happy, Joyous, and Free. God's Blessings, Brian K. and Jean K.," engaged at Stepping Stones on May 31, 2008.

### A Touching Tribute to Her Husband

"This is a small contribution in loving memory of my husband, Eliot F.-S., who died 23 years sober in September 2007. He loved AA, participated fully and was forever grateful. He was always a dear man but with AA and help from HP he became fully himself. My gratitude, Lena, 25 years Al-Anon."

## Orientation Center Update

In 2008, Stepping Stones embarked on an ambitious campaign to raise funds to build its long-sought Orientation Center. Gifts from \$10 to \$1,000 and even more brought us halfway to our \$225,000 goal. We have hired an architect to draw the proposed facility, pursued and received certificates for the septic system, and removed a 1,000-gallon oil tank that would have interfered with construction. We also applied for a grant to plan and build the permanent exhibit, which will educate viewers to the disease of alcoholism, using Bill and Lois' experience as an example.

The idea for an Orientation Center was born many years ago. As Stepping Stones focused on historic preservation, it recognized the need to reduce wear and tear on the main structure and objects in the home. Visitors can no longer sit on Bill and Lois' furniture, nor can they touch objects. The home has become a museum.

But we want to fulfill Lois' wish for visitors to be comfortable. In addition, a team of historic preservationists with different areas of expertise agreed that the Orientation Center should be our top priority. Most exciting is the notion that we can house permanent and rotating exhibitions of archive materials. These treasures include the first copy of the Big Book, Bill's "Dissertations While Drinking" (as Lois called them), and a host of other materials that will educate visitors about the causes and conditions of alcoholism and its effects on loved ones.

For the Orientation Center to be a success, we need your help today. Please fill out the pledge card and mail your gift, make a secure contribution at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org), or call us at (914) 232-4922 M-F 9am-5pm. Thank you in advance for your support.

### Orientation Center Pledge of Support (individual or group)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Tel \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

**As part of my commitment to building the Stepping Stones Orientation Center, I am pleased to make a gift as follows:**

One time gift, in the amount of \_\_\_\_\_

*(check payable to The Stepping Stones Foundation)*

Thank-you gifts are sent for donations of \$300 and above

I wish to pledge \$ \_\_\_\_\_

monthly/quarterly/semi-annually /annually

My gift will be matched by \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to pay by  Credit Card  Mastercard  Visa

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(as it appears on card)

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. date \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

My check is enclosed  Please recognize my gift anonymously

Mail to: The Stepping Stones Foundation  
62 Oak Road, Katonah, NY 10536  
914-232-4822, [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)

# Friends of Stepping Stones

The following are the generous donors to Stepping Stones from April 1, 2008–April 1, 2009. We are enormously grateful for this show of support. Thanks to these friends we continue to make great strides toward preserving the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson forever.

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- Lorna and William Vafeas

And 189 donors who gave \$25 or less. Your contribution is important and recognition will be on display at the new Orientation Center, as well as a part of Stepping Stones' history in perpetuity. Thank you all for your support!

# 57th Annual Family Groups Picnic

## Saturday, June 6, 2009 12-5pm



The entire family and all who wish to join in the fun are invited to help us carry on this special annual tradition, which was started by Lois Wilson in 1952.

Bring your own lunch. We provide soft drinks, guided tours, special archival exhibitions, crafts for kids, a wonderful meeting, and fabulous fellowship.

**An open meeting starts promptly at 2pm  
and this year will feature:**

Jimmy N. from New York City (AA)  
Carole K. from Dutchess County, NY (Al-Anon)  
and an Alateen speaker to be announced

The picnic is held on the lawn of Stepping Stones at 62 Oak Road, Katonah, NY. The celebration takes place rain or shine, and town rules do not allow buses on local roads surrounding the site, so please call for alternatives.

For travel information, by car or by train, visit the website at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org). Information about discounted hotels nearby is available. Call (914) 232-4822 or visit the website closer to the picnic date for updates.

## In 2009 We Invite You to Experience Stepping Stones by:

### Visiting

Tours are offered Monday-Saturday at 1pm with a reservation, and all other days and times by appointment. Stepping Stones is located in Katonah, New York, one hour north of New York City. An easy commute by Metro-North Railroad from Grand Central Station, and close to I-684 and the Saw Mill River Parkway, the Village of Katonah also offers quaint restaurants and shopping for an afternoon of fun. Groups of 1-100 or more are welcome. Call (914) 232-4822 or visit [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org) to make your plans to visit Stepping Stones, today.

Stepping Stones staff can offer assistance with planning your day-long or overnight excursion. Information on discounted lodging, shuttle buses and sample itineraries are available. We will help you make your trip as easy as possible.

To make your overnight excursion to Stepping Stones even more rewarding, consider adding a weekday trip to the AA World Service Office. Call Stepping Stones or visit the website for other historic sites and ideas.

### Volunteering

Helping at Stepping Stones is a great way to add to your legacy of service. Individuals and groups can help maintain the house and grounds, serve as tour guides, offer preservation assistance, make presentations in your area, or find another way to serve.

In this a year of tough economic times and uncertainty, service is the perfect excuse to stop thinking about it! Stepping Stones is currently unable to fulfill all requests for visits, due to lack of volunteers. Once a week, once a month, or once a year, we need your help. Call for more information.

### Stepping Stones Comes to You

If you are too far away to visit, we may be able to come to you. Stepping Stones offers a traveling presentation titled "Bill and Lois Wilson and the AA Way of Life." Our representative can come to your group event or celebration to tell the tale of Bill and Lois Wilson, covering their childhoods, love affair, fight with Bill's alcoholism, and the hope they found for recovery, with audio of Bill and Lois. Call or write for more information. For long distance travel, the only cost is to cover travel expenses. For just the tabletop exhibit, only one-way shipping charges will apply. The presentation may be tailored to suit your needs.



*A cute snapshot of Bill looking whimsically at a better use for wine bottles, 1955.*

"When Stepping Stones came to our conference, I thought I knew all I needed to know about AA history and Bill W. And, to stay sober, I suppose I did. But, I was awed by how much I could identify with all that Bill went through as an alcoholic and what Lois went through as the loved one. Now I really understand that their lives happened, together, so that A.A. could be born and I could be here today. I am so honored to carry on that legacy."  
— Clara R., 2008

# Resurrecting the Tradition of Gardening at Stepping Stones

After moving to Stepping Stones in 1941, Bill and Lois Wilson focused their relaxation and quality time together on the outdoors. Lois' diary, previously centered on Bill's activities, became filled with details of her garden, such as the below entries from 1942:

**May 15,** *Bill & I had for lunch the first radishes from the garden. Bill put up the screen door for the cellar. Bought 4 tomato plants & planted them. The seeds I put in flats early in the spring did not develop well at all. I think because the soil was poor. This fall I must put soil indoors in flats. A few of my tomatoes & onions & cabbage I set out in the garden. Stuck pieces of mushroom spawn under the sod of the lawn in a number of different spots.*

**July 15,** *Am going to make accounting of what I've planted around the place. Hollyhock seeds that I found here marked Mrs. Washburn 1933 & planted last July 20 did not come up. I reported on clematis & Grover Scot plants under Sept. 21 & 22. It is not time for the fringed gentian (planted Sept. 23) yet but they say it will not transplant nor is it time for the lady's tresses.... About Mar 19 planting of horseradish plants I made the mistake of not marking their location & they have become lost amid the skunk cabbage. But the evergreen ferns are in good shape.... Of the plantings in the veg. garden everything came up but the lettuce but the whole garden was cleaned out several times by woodchucks all but the corn tomatoes & turnips. Each time I would think I had the fence fixed the next day another row of veg's would be devoured.*

Stepping Stones is happy to announce the formation of the **Stepping Stones Community Garden in 2009**. When a group of local residents who had been seeking public space found out that the Stepping Stones vegetable garden was underutilized, they jumped at the chance to revive the garden in the spirit of Bill and Lois Wilson. Stepping Stones is pleased to offer a resource to the residents of the Town of Bedford. The rhubarb and the Hispanic Yellow Rose that Lois so loved survive and thrive today and will continue undisturbed.

"We are a small neighborhood group in the village of Katonah who are grateful for having access to the Stepping Stones' Garden, where we can grow healthy, organic vegetables. We see this as an opportunity to bring neighbors together, working cooperatively and setting an example for the rest of the community. It's exciting to be a part of the new movement toward sustainability, and Stepping Stones garden offers us the space and location to bring the garden to life." – Michele Durivage, Community Garden Member

Summer visitors will notice a thriving vegetable garden that closely resembles that of days past. Surplus produce will be made available to visitors for a donation. To support the Community Garden with donations of supplies (e.g., fencing, pruners, perennial plants, and started vegetables), or if you would like to get your hands dirty and help tend the garden, please contact Annah, [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org), or look at our website under "Visiting" to see what help is needed.

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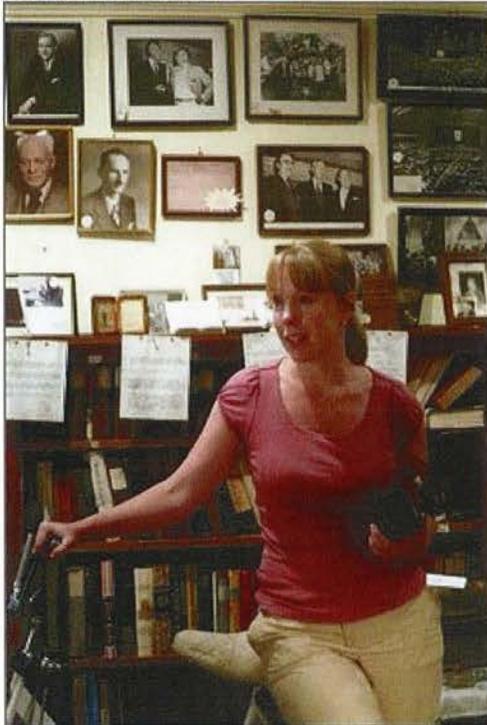
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Katonah, NY 10536



## House of AA founder a draw for members

Posted 8/1/2007 3:53 AM



by KAREN VIBERT-KENNEDY, AP

The Stepping Stones Foundation Executive Director Annah Perch talks about the history of the gallery of Bill and Lois Wilson's home in Bedford Hills, N.Y. Tuesday, July 24, 2007. Bill Wilson was co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous and Lois was co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups. (AP Photo/Karen Vibert-Kennedy)

Bill Wilson died in 1971 and Lois Wilson -- who founded Al-Anon, the organization for alcoholics' relatives -- set up the Stepping Stones Foundation in 1979. She died in 1988, and the house is maintained to look like it did when she and her husband lived in it.

The four-bedroom home and the 8 1/2 acres around it in the New York City suburbs are owned and managed by the foundation. It's on the National Register of Historic Places.

Lois Wilson catalogued hundreds of books, photos and keepsakes, including a letter from Carl Jung, a blessing from Pope Paul VI and a collection of plastic dinosaurs.

A colorful towel is tacked to the wall, right where she placed it in the 1980s. Its label says, "This is a beach towel and I really don't remember where I got it."

The Wilsons came to Bedford Hills in 1941, six years after founding AA with Robert Smith. The couple had been evicted from their Brooklyn brownstone.

By Jim Fitzgerald, Associated Press Writer

BEDFORD HILLS, N.Y. — At least once a year, Bill T. gathers up a few of his fellow Alcoholics Anonymous members and makes a pilgrimage from Florida to honor those who saved him from a life of drunkenness.

The 56-year-old stopped drinking in 1990 and he likes to visit the former home of the co-founder of AA, Bill Wilson, and his wife, Lois.

"I like to come up here because it carries the message," Bill T. said during a visit in July to the brown-shingled Dutch colonial. "There's a connectedness."

Bill T. can sit at the kitchen table where in 1934 Wilson sat and drank gin with pineapple juice as a newly sober friend sparked his quest for a way out of alcoholism.

He can see the desk, marred by cigarette burns, where Wilson later wrote "Alcoholics Anonymous," better known as "The Big Book," and set out the 12 steps and other principles that have helped millions.

AA is an informal society of recovering alcoholics who help one another stay sober by following a 12-step, spiritual approach. An estimated 2 million members attend community meetings where they share their personal problems and triumphs.

"If you're sober in AA, you have this second life you never thought you'd have. It's very moving to see the books and the people and the things of interest that went into making Bill and Lois who they were," said Tim H., 62. "It's like learning about your Dad when he was a boy."

Executive Director Annah Perch says the foundation hopes to preserve the site and its contents, emphasize its educational value, and create a traveling exhibit that would spread the Wilsons' story. About 1,200 visitors came to the home last year.

"Some people will never be able to come here," Perch said. "We have to bring the legacy of Bill and Lois beyond Stepping Stones."

Among the items in need of preservation, and not currently seen on the tour, is Bill Wilson's original volume of "Alcoholics Anonymous," annotated by him as the first copy off the press in 1939. It was followed by 25 million more in English alone and millions more in other languages.

Stephanie O'Keefe, 78, of Larchmont, was a friend of the Wilsons and visited the house Tuesday for the first time since Lois Wilson's death.

"This looks pretty much the same," she said. "They found peace here. They were able to regenerate when they were exhausted."

She remembered, however, that the Wilsons would occasionally steal away to another friend's house nearby for some privacy, since so many people were drawn to Stepping Stones.

"They found the adoration difficult but understandable," she said.

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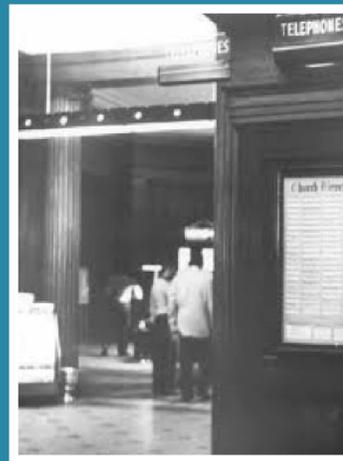
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# He Had My Trouble

**I**N MAY 1935, Bill, sober only five months, was offered an opportunity to lead a proxy fight in Akron, Ohio. If successful, he would become president of the company and the Wilsons' financial woes would be over. When it became clear that the deal was unraveling, Bill's newfound sobriety was tested—at one end of the lobby was the hotel bar, at the other end, a church directory.

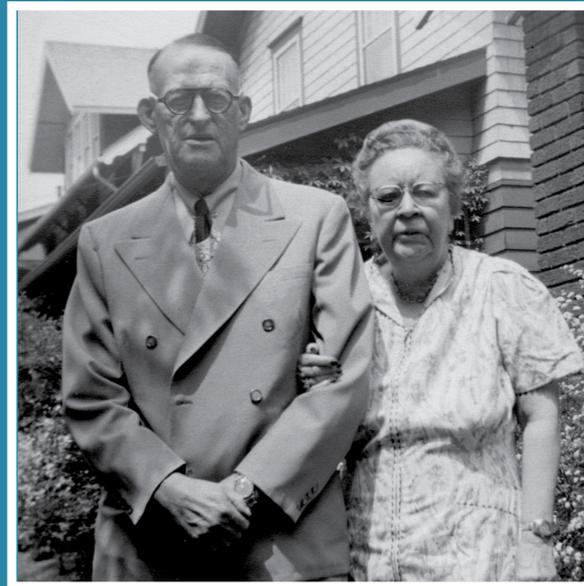
*I got scared to death. The pull of the bar became terrific. Then I suddenly realized how much helping other alcoholics had helped me. I'd have to find an alcoholic in Akron, and find him quick.*

Bill Wilson



The lobby of the Mayflower hotel with the church directory visible on the right, c. 1950.

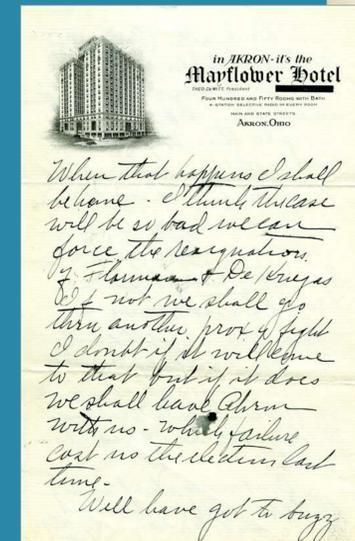
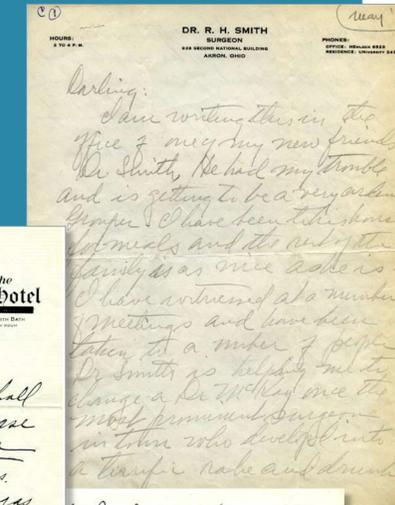
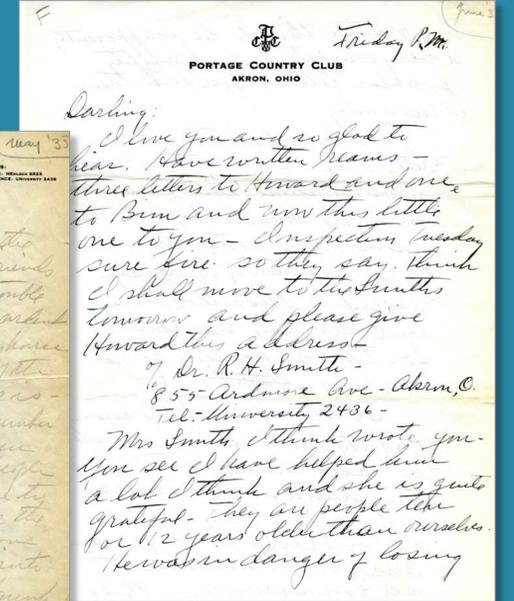
Bill chose the church directory and began calling the listed clergymen, requesting their help in locating another alcoholic with whom he could talk. Through a series of coincidences, Bill was introduced to Dr. Robert Smith, a once prominent surgeon in the throes of alcoholism. Bill told him of his own past problems with drinking, explained how he was staying sober, and gave Dr. Bob hope for his own recovery. The two became fast friends and shortly after, on June 10, 1935, Dr. Bob had his last drink. Passionate about carrying the message to others with “their trouble,” they visited local hospitals to “work” on other alcoholics. Thus the primary concept of AA— passing it on— began. Bill and Dr. Bob had begun their journey as co-founders of what would be become known as Alcoholics Anonymous.



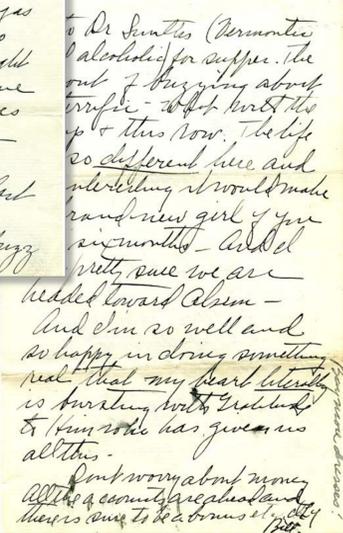
Dr. Robert Smith and his wife Anne, c. 1945. At Anne's request, “Dr. Bob,” as he was better known, agreed to meet with Bill for only 15 minutes. The men, however, quickly learned that they were both native Vermonters and talked for five hours. During that meeting, Bill passed to Bob the message of hope for recovery.

Darling:

I am writing this in the office of one of my new friends, Dr. Smith. He had my trouble and is getting to be an ardent grouper... I love you so very much and know it is hard for you to wait there alone. Anyhow, for the first time in my life - I know I am doing my best at a really worthwhile job. Love, darling - Bill



...Well, have got to buzz off to Dr. Smith's (Vermont and alcoholic) for supper. The amount of buzzing about is terrific - what with the Group and this row. The life is so different here and so interesting, it would make a brand new girl of you in six months - And I am pretty sure we are headed to Akron. And I'm so well and so happy in doing something real that my heart is literally bursting with gratitude to Him who has given us all this. Don't worry about money. All the accounts are ahead and there is sure to be a bonus, etc. ILY - Bill



Darling:

I love you and am so glad to hear. Have written reams - three letters to Howard and one to Bim and now this little one to you. Inspection Tuesday sure fire, so they say. Think I shall move to the Smith's tomorrow and please give Howard this address -  
c/o Dr. R. H. Smith  
855 Ardmore Ave - Akron, O....  
Mrs. Smith, I think, wrote you. You see I have helped him a lot I think and she is quite grateful. They are people 10 or 12 years older than ourselves. He was in danger of losing his practice though he is apparently a very competent and mighty popular fellow. You will like them immensely.

# Alcoholics Anonymous Is Born

**I**N ITS EARLY years, Alcoholics Anonymous was a word-of-mouth program. From 1935 to 1939, it grew modestly, with groups meeting in Akron and New York and, soon after, in Cleveland. Hoping to spread word of their success, Bill set out to write a narrative of how the first 100 alcoholics stayed sober using the six simple steps for recovery that he and Dr. Bob had developed. While working on his book in 1938, Bill determined that the six steps should be expanded to twelve.

After months of writing and circulating the manuscript among early members, the book *Alcoholics Anonymous*, popularly known as “The Big Book,” was published in 1939. The fledgling organization soon adopted the title as its formal name.

*One evening pretty sick and discouraged, I laid in bed at Clinton Street. On a yellow scratch pad I began to break up the six steps of the word of mouth program. ...I sketched out Steps which, when numbered, added up to 12. ...When these were presented to the meeting a few days later at Clinton Street, all hell broke loose. This was a heresy; we'd done fine on six, why twelve? I had referred frequently to God through the steps and at one point had the drunks on their knees. We have to tone down the God business....Out of this controversy there arose the concept of a Power greater than oneself, or a God as you understand Him. This was really a ten strike. Otherwise, the Steps stood pretty much as they had been originally written.*

Bill Wilson  
recalling early events in a talk, November 1954

## A Sense of Purpose

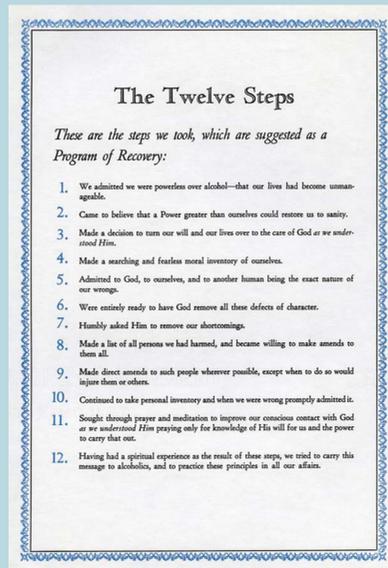
The Wilsons' work with other alcoholics during the early years of AA was rewarding and filled the couple with a new sense of purpose as they succeeded in helping others stay sober. Groups were growing around Akron and New York, and 182 Clinton Street remained a center of activity. In a 1936 letter to Bill, Lois wrote, “we had our house just full of drunks from the top floor to the basement. And they were in all phases of sobriety and they were all types of people.”



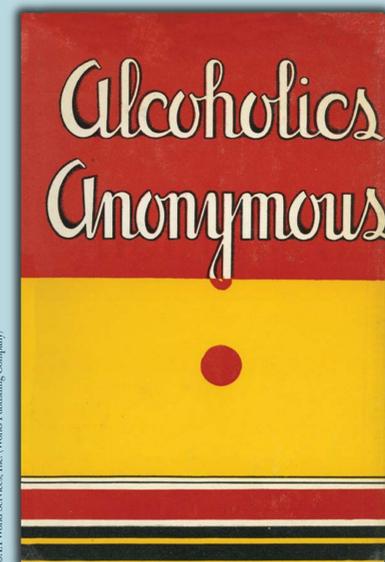
Lois and another wife of an early AA member, peering onto the street at 182 Clinton Street in 1938. Notice the For Sale sign at bottom, right.

182 Clinton St.  
Darling -  
And here we have another Christmas to gather. Our fortunes in this material world are indeed on the laps of the Gods -  
But we have, and daily do more experience true love for each other, and this is a power, so fortunately in the possession of you and me, that shall finally transcend and conquer all our difficulties - and for myself, I think a place to much thought upon the strain of the moment, and too little upon the future and the priceless gift I have in you love.  
Do we love strongly enough and in good faith and cheer, we shall form, and we shall - Merry Christmas Darlings - Bill.

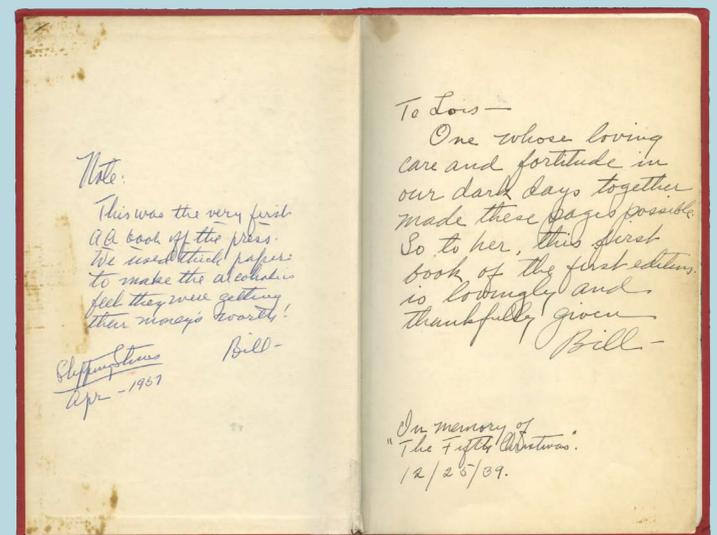
This letter, written by Bill to Lois in 1938 or 1939, shows how their lives as a couple changed from life threatening to life affirming and filled with hope and faith.



This is an early printing of The Twelve Steps.



*Alcoholics Anonymous* is popularly known as the “Big Book.”



Bill gave Lois the very first “Big Book” off the press.



A rare glimpse into an AA meeting at the 24th Street Clubhouse in 1941. Bill W. is seated at the center with legs crossed. To his right is one of AA's first secretaries, Ruth Hock. Lois, seen in profile, is seated to the far right.

## Life Hands Them a “Great Big Lump”

Despite the miracle of Bill's recovery and their newfound happiness, Bill and Lois were not immune from the realities of life. They had been living as tenants in her family home at 182 Clinton Street since its foreclosure early in the Great Depression, but as conditions improved the bank found a buyer. When the house was sold in 1939, the Wilsons and the drunks had to go.

*...these will appear as big setbacks at the time, but will be seen later as stepping stones to better things.*

*Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions, page 111*

# Nurturing Alcoholics Anonymous

**A**LTHOUGH HE remained devoted to the organization for the remainder of his lifetime, Bill refused to take credit for AA's growth and success. In addition to authoring AA's two basic texts, *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939) and *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1953), Bill authored three additional books, *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (1957), *Twelve Concepts for World Service* (1962), and the *AA Way of Life* (1967). He helped establish the Alcoholic Foundation, and he served as headquarters manager. He founded AA's monthly magazine, *The Grapevine*, and over a span of 20 years wrote more than 150 articles for AA's "meeting in print," many right here at Stepping Stones.

*When Bill wrote to Trustees about helping us pay for the house, the response seemed negative. So he was greatly surprised when they gave us \$10,000 for his work 'beyond AA' for the last 10 years – to pay the remainder we owe on the house.* Lois Wilson, May 8, 1945

*I am starting another book — a sort of companion column [sic] for Alcoholics Anonymous which will deal with group problems and our relationships with each other as well as with the world outside... I should think it may take a year or more to satisfactorily complete. Certainly hope we will have what it takes to get the job done.*

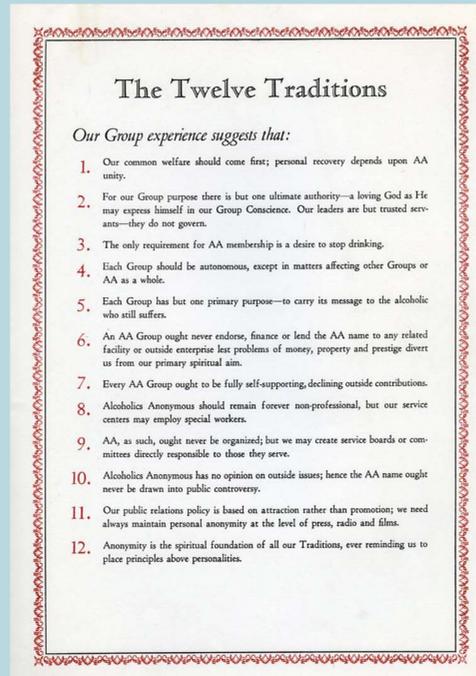
Bill Wilson  
to his mother, Emily Wilson Strobell, October 1, 1945

## The AA Way of Life

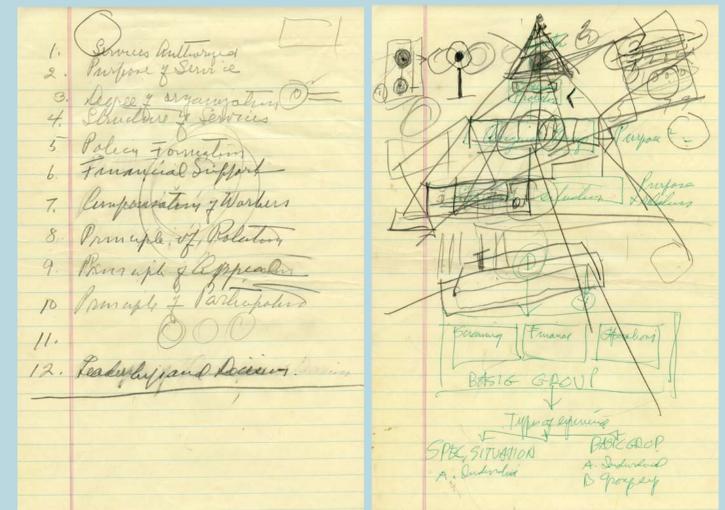
Living the AA way of life was sometimes challenging for Lois and Bill, who opened their home to friends and visitors and for official AA business. By making themselves available whenever anyone, anywhere, reached out for help, they struggled to find time for their own interests and one another. As early as the mid-1940s, Bill attempted to step down from AA leadership, but with Dr. Bob's death in 1950, the demands upon him only increased. It was not until 1955, at the 20th Anniversary Convention in St. Louis, that Bill declared that AA had "come of age" and that he was ready to go. In spite of this public pronouncement, Bill remained involved with running the organization until well after 1965.

*...The extent to which the AA movement and the individuals in it determines my choices is really astonishing. Things which are primary to me (even for the good of AA) are unfulfilled. I'm constantly diverted to secondary or even useless activities by AAs whose demands seem to them primary but which are not really so. So we have the person of Mr. Anonymous in conflict with Bill Wilson.*

Bill Wilson  
to a friend, July 14, 1947



Bill worked tirelessly to ensure the organization's long-term stability. This effort resulted in the Twelve Traditions, which were put to paper in 1946 and published in the book *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*.



This document, now in Stepping Stones' archives, shows Bill's rough notes on what would become the *Twelve Concepts for World Service*.

## On the Road

Bill and Lois had hoped to find some privacy after moving to Stepping Stones. However, the demands of AA and Al-Anon kept them traveling across the US and Canada, sometimes for months at a time. Having become celebrities of sorts, they learned to plan trips away from AA friends, although they were not always successful.



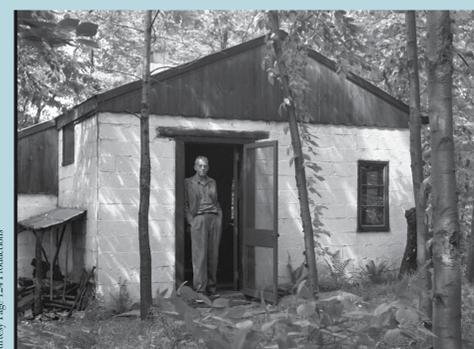
Bill and Lois receiving a great welcome upon a visit to Long Beach, California, March 1948.

*...we chose a small inn on a lake in the mountains above Montreal for our haven... we felt very satisfied with our choice until all of a sudden we heard a woman's voice yell, "Oh, look! A Westchester license plate!" ...later, at dinner the waiter asked if he could bring in the cook to speak to us. The cook, an AA, had... recognized Bill... The cook told his friends and a big AA delegation came up from Montreal to see us. Seclusion ended as soon as we got out of the car. But the woman who yelled... soon became a good AA and a very dear friend.*

Lois Wilson

## Life at Stepping Stones

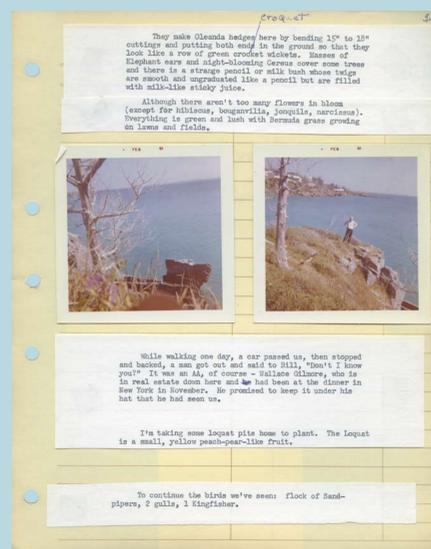
Despite their deep commitment to the AA way of life, they did find some time to work on projects that interested them. In 1949, Lois began improvements to an entrance to the house and indulged in her love of gardening, while Bill, with the help of his AA friends, built a garage and a studio where he could escape the large number of visitors to write in privacy. "Somewhat higher than the house, and at a point affording a magnificent view of distant hills and the valley below," he wrote his mother, "I'm intending to build a small studio in which to write and think, if that be possible!"



Bill standing in front of his shack, which he built as a writing studio in 1949. Lois lovingly called it "Wit's End."



Bill and Lois pose in their garden, 1952.



This page from Lois' diary describes their 1964 trip to Bermuda.

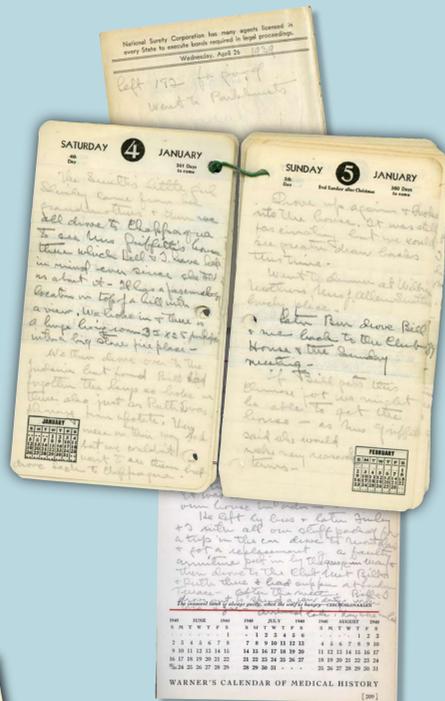
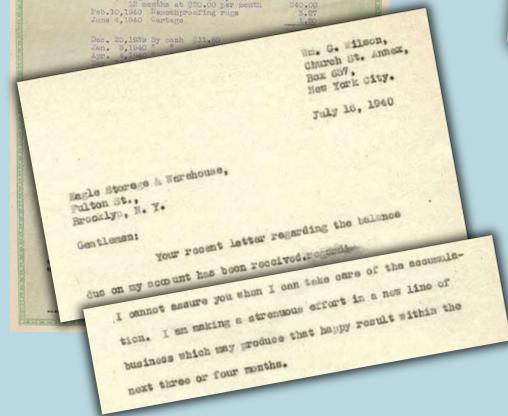
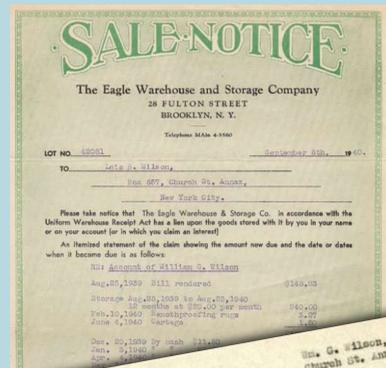
# A Refuge From Wandering

**D**URING THE PIVOTAL years in the development of Alcoholics Anonymous (1939-1941), Bill and Lois were without a home of their own. According to Lois' own count, they lived in as many as 51 different places while nurturing the fledgling organization and relied on the generosity and gratitude of AA's early members to provide them with a spare room, a couch, or a summer bungalow to call home for a few days or weeks. These AA pioneers even took collections for what they called the "Bill & Lois Improvement Fund."

One day in 1940, as Bill and Lois were passing through Grand Central Terminal, Lois suddenly sat down on the stairs, "wept oceans" right there in public, and exploded, "Will we ever have our own home?" Bill also pined for a real home. In 1941, Helen Griffith, a philanthropist whose alcoholic friend AA had helped, offered the Wilsons Stepping Stones, here in Bedford Hills. That April, they moved from the back room at the 24th Street Clubhouse into their new home.

*A Mrs. Helen Griffith, whose alcoholic friend, Joan Chrystal, we had been able to help, appeared at our club house meeting at 24th Street. She began to talk of a house in Westchester – 2 acres of ground, a building 60 x 30 feet....Lois and I drove over with the Smiths to see the house....We broke in at a back window and looked around. I thought to myself, this is it. I got wildly enthusiastic. Lois didn't see how we could swing it. I insisted that we must, somehow. At the very next meeting Mrs. Griffith ... told us that we might have the Bedford Hills place for \$6500, no money down, if we would pay her \$40 a month.... So, in we moved in the Spring of 1941 into the house that so many now know as Stepping Stones.*

Bill Wilson,  
Pass It On



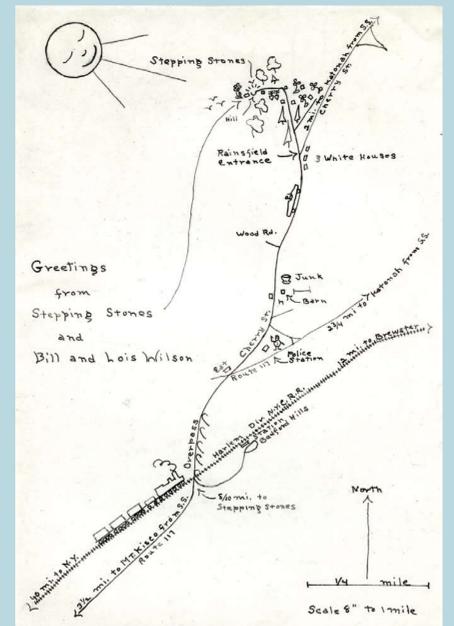
Various pages from Lois' diaries, which describe the drama of being homeless for two years.

The Wilsons rarely had enough money to pay the storage fees for their furniture from 182 Clinton Street. This notice of sale and Bill's July 1940 letter to the Eagle Warehouse reflect the dire financial straits in which the Wilsons found themselves.

## Hope for Recovery Spreads

In March 1941, a glowing article by Jack Alexander on the wonders of the AA program appeared in *The Saturday Evening Post*. When this story hit newsstands across the country, alcoholics and their loved ones discovered that they were not alone and that there was hope. By the end of 1941, membership in AA had soared, as had sales of Bill's book. Bill was able to earn a humble living as one of AA's first special workers. "It was a great year, 1941," said Bill.

*How wonderful it was to have a home of our own! At that time in our lives a home was first of all a refuge from wandering. Then it fulfilled the need to use many of our dormant aptitudes. All of these perfectly normal activities had been mostly denied us for a long time. It gave us particularly an opportunity to be alone together and plan for the future, both for the improvement of the place and for the growth of AA.*



Lois Wilson

Lois showed the love of her new home by drawing a map to lead guests to the house. She had a printing block made in order to reproduce it.



The cover of the March 1941 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post* in which Jack Alexander's article about Alcoholics Anonymous appeared.

## A Gathering Place

The Wilsons' vision of a quiet life in the country was not to be. Stepping Stones became an extension of the Alcoholic Foundation office and much of early AA business took place here. Lois and Bill nurtured their closest relationships at Stepping Stones as well. Bob and Anne Smith were regular visitors, and Ebby lived here several times through the 1950s, while attempting to get back on his feet after drinking sprees. Bill's sister Helen lived with them for a time, and Howard Wilson, Bill's cousin, was brought to Stepping Stones to dry out in 1943. He stayed for seven years and was, according to Lois, a terrific handyman and a pleasure to have.



In this 1947 photograph visitors to Stepping Stones included, left to right: Howard Wilson, Bill's cousin; Ebby Thacher; Rogers Burnham, Lois' brother; Leonard Strong, Bill's sister's husband; and Dorothy Wilson Strong, Bill's sister.



Bill and Lois enjoying one of their favorite pastimes, gardening, at Stepping Stones, 1953.

# Nurturing Al-Anon

WHEN BILL began practicing the AA principles and taking responsibility for his life, Lois no longer felt needed. Feeling lonely and wracked with “terrific self pity and resentment,” she ultimately recognized that the loved ones of alcoholics must also find a new way of life, and she began following the AA principles herself.

While on AA trips with Bill, Lois began sharing with groups her realization about her own need to practice the AA principles. Nationwide, informal “Family Groups” began growing alongside AA. At first places for alcoholics’ wives to play bridge or gossip, these gatherings soon began to resemble AA meetings, expanding to welcome all family members affected by alcoholism.

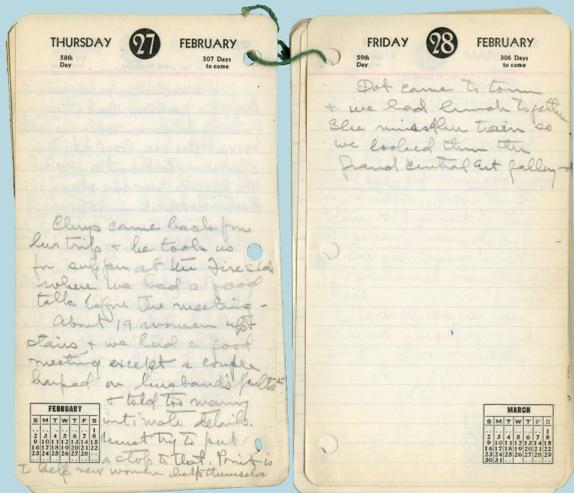
Lois would not take credit for Al-Anon’s formation and growth, but she remained its figurehead, contributing to its founding principles and by-laws; managing the clearinghouse; editing *Forum*, Al-Anon’s monthly publication; and founding Alateen. In her memoirs, Lois used her own life story to serve as an example of how alcoholism affects a family.

*...where Bill needed a new way of life because of his alcoholism, I needed a new way of life because of all the things that developed in me not only because of his drinking but because they were there anyway and needed to be changed....So, I started to live the AA way of life myself. And of course, all the other wives around in the little group we had in New York could see the same thing after awhile. That they really needed something...*

Lois Wilson

*Smugness I think is one of the most vicious sins in this world, and one of the difficult things that we wives of alcoholics have to face is that this world thinks we are so wonderful. I don't mean to say that we haven't done a darn good job but that isn't any reason to think that we can't still do a better job...We often become very twisted in our thinking after living with an alcoholic all these years.*

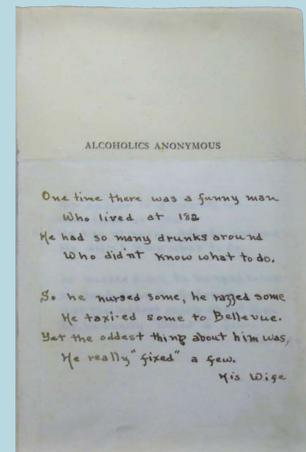
Lois Wilson



In this 1941 diary entry, Lois writes about the need for the wives of alcoholics to help themselves.



Members of the Family Groups, the predecessor to Al-Anon, having their own celebration at an AA function in 1948. Lois is on the left.



This poem, written by Lois, was found taped in the couple's copy of the “Big Book.”

An additional stanza, located in archives at Stepping Stones, describes the shoe-throwing episode that became Lois’ moment of spiritual awakening, which she likened to Bill’s experience in Charles B. Towns Hospital.

*His old lady with him dwelt  
And she was funny too  
She had so many drunks around  
She up and threw her shoe  
So full of sadness and remorse  
She was extremely blue  
To make things sunny once again  
She climbed on the bandwagon too*

Lois Wilson

## Opening an Office

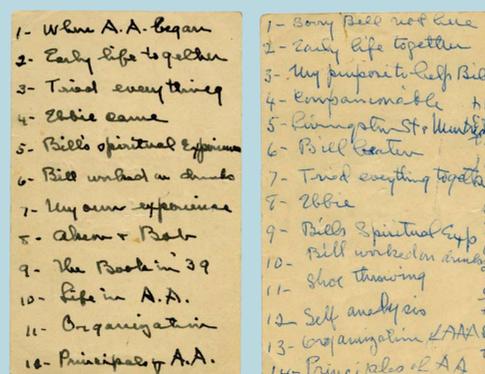
In 1950, as Bill traveled to AA meetings across the country, he was surprised to find so many Family Groups. When he returned home he encouraged Lois to open a clearinghouse where the groups could register, receive helpful literature, and become more unified.

AA supported the efforts of Family Groups to become an official organization. Early on the two groups began cooperating. Al-Anon Family Groups modeled itself after AA and started helping the families of alcoholics right away. The Wilsons always thought that Al-Anon had the potential to exceed AA in membership and effectiveness.

*Bill's suggestion did not appeal to me at first... Starting such an office would take too much time away from working in my garden and making useful things for the house. But as I began to think about the need, the idea became more and more intriguing...*



Lois and her fellow Al-Anon nurturers taking a break on the front lawn at Stepping Stones. Anne Bingham, co-founder, stands directly behind Lois.



Although Lois spoke hundreds of times at AA meetings and at Al-Anon gatherings, she was never a confident public speaker. She saved these two note cards, her talking points, which show how AA and Al-Anon are both committed to follow the AA principles.

*The big lesson I have learned is that we cannot change another human being—only ourselves. By living our own lives to the best of our ability, by loving deeply and not trying to mold another to our wishes, we can help not only ourselves but others also.*

Lois Wilson

## Alateen is Born

In 1957, an article appeared in AA’s *Grapevine* about a teenager living with recovering alcoholic parents who had urged him to practice the principles of AA. He said he tried this with five other youngsters in his California area in the form of a meeting. Lois was quickly in touch and urged his group to adopt the steps and traditions of Al-Anon. By 1971, there were 800 Alateen groups across the country.



## N.Y. / Region

### Where Bill W. Got Sober

**Q.** *I heard that the birthplace of Alcoholics Anonymous is for sale. Can that be?*

**A.** Not exactly, but close. The town house at 182 Clinton Street in Brooklyn Heights, which is for sale for just under \$3 million, was the birthplace and childhood home of Lois B. Wilson, and it was where she and her husband, Bill Wilson, moved back in with her parents when his drinking had left him unable to support his family.

In his speeches and writings, Mr. Wilson, known as Bill W. until his death in 1971, traced the history of the movement to 1934 and “the kitchen table at Clinton Street,” where he and a former drinking buddy discussed the principles that led to the program’s influential 12 steps to health. The Wilsons nurtured the movement’s first four years there, and it was where Mr. Wilson began preparing the book “Alcoholics Anonymous.”

The founding date of Alcoholics Anonymous is generally regarded as June 10, 1935, when Dr. Robert H. Smith, an Akron, Ohio, surgeon and the group’s co-founder, had his last drink soon after a long talk with Bill W.

A bank foreclosure forced the Wilsons to move in 1939, and in 1941 they moved to a house at 62 Oak Road on the Bedford Hills-Katonah border, which they named Stepping Stones and where they lived the rest of their lives. Lois Wilson, who founded the Al-Anon family groups at Stepping Stones, died in 1988. Stepping Stones is now a national and state landmark, and among its artifacts is the kitchen table from Clinton Street.

There is a contract to buy the Brooklyn town house but the sale has not yet closed, said Lisa Detwiler, a senior associate sales representative for the Corcoran Group. The town house is privately owned and is no longer affiliated with the Wilson family or Alcoholics Anonymous.

*E-mail: [fji@nytimes.com](mailto:fji@nytimes.com)*

*This article has been revised to reflect the following correction:*

**Correction: February 21, 2010**

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Reply < Prev Message | Next Message >

**Re: The Towns Hospital** Mon May 17, 2004 6:59 pm

[Show Message Info](#)

Towns Hospital at 293 Central Park West is still standing but as a Co-op apartment building. It is one door north of the intersection of West 89th Street and CPW. Best viewed from the park side of CPW it is steps north of the northern exit of the 8th Avenue (B, C, D trains) subway line station at 86th street.

For more info you may email me offlist at [jknyc@...](mailto:jknyc@...)

Jim K.  
The Into Action Group  
Manhattan, NY

**"Jim K." <jknyc@...>**  
sottovoice  
 Offline  
 Send Email

>>Is the "old" CHARLES B. TOWNS HOSPITAL still standing?<<

< Prev Message | Next Message >

Expand Messages	Author	Sort by Date
<b>The Towns Hospital</b> Is the "old" CHARLES B. TOWNS HOSPITAL still standing? The address 293 central west ny ny, is the American Anorexia/Bulima Association. Is this the same...	apexnomad	May 17, 2004 12:09 am
<b>Re: The Towns Hospital</b> The Charles B Towns Hospital for Drug and Alcohol Addictions opened in NYC in 1901. It was a private "drying out" hospital for the affluent. It initially...	Arthur Sheehan left handed_ny	May 17, 2004 6:05 pm
<b>Re: The Towns Hospital</b> Towns Hospital at 293 Central Park West is still standing but as a Co-op apartment building. It is one door north of the intersection of	Jim K. sottovoice	May 17, 2004 8:59 pm

# Visit : 5313

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Historical Sites in New York

Contributed by GSO Suffolk

## THE ROOTS OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS: HISTORIC SITES IN THE NEW YORK AREA

**Town's Hospital, 293 Central Park West:** Bill had 4 trips to T.H. and ultimately a Spiritual Experience. Dr. William Silkworth, Medical Superintendent, treated 40,000 alxies and wrote the Doctor's Opinion.

**Calvary Church House, 21st and Park Avenue South:** Where Bill attended Oxford Group meetings and got sober along with Ebby, Rowland, Cebra, Hank and all the gang. Sam Shoemaker, source of "all AA's spiritual principles via the OG's, was the pastor of Calvary.

**17 Williams Street, Newark, New Jersey, Honest Dealers:** Hank Parkhurst and Bill set up first "Headquarters" office. Wrote Big Book. Ruth Hock, first nonalcoholics employee.

**30 Vesey Street, New York City:** Second Office, After Bill splits with Hank. (1938-1940)

**415 Lexington Avenue:** Office moves to Grand Central Area after Bill gets Bedford Hills home. Easy commute. (1940-1944)

**141 East 44th Street:** More Space. (1950-1960)

**315 East 45th:** Larger quarters in Grand Central Area. (1960-1970)

**468 Park Avenue South:** General Service Office for over 20 years, finally occupying 5 floors in 2 buildings (470). (1970-1992)

**182 Clinton Street, Brooklyn:** Bill's home when he got sober. Gift of Lois's father. Lost during Depression (sober).

**30 Rockefeller Plaza:** Where Bill met "Uncle Dick" Richardson, conduit to John D. Rockefeller. Bill sat in Rockefeller's chair on the 66th Floor Office of John D.

**475 Riverside Drive:** 11th Floor/ half of 10th (1992-Present)

**38 Livingston Street, Brooklyn:** Bill's home during High-Flying years on Wall Street. Combined two apartments.

**Roosevelt Hotel, Madison Avenue & 44th Street:** Site of over 35 General Service :Conferences.

**Park Omni, Seventh Avenue & 56th Street:** Site of General Service Conferences.

**High Watch Farm, 62 Carter Road, Kent, Connecticut (about 2 hours north of New York City):** High Watch Farm is an independently run retreat for recovery from alcoholism, drug addiction, and substance abuse, founded in 1940 and based in the fellowship and program of Alcoholics Anonymous. Bill W. visited the farm in 1939 with Marty Mann and other M's. An informal agreement was reached between AA and the farm's managers, to enable established members of Alcoholics Anonymous to use the Farm for rest and spiritual renewal while also being available to

share their experience, strength, and hope with newcomers to the program. Individuals interested in visiting should contact the Farm well in advance to plan their stay.

#### **BILL AND LOIS'S HOMES**

**38 Livingston Street (between Clinton and Court Streets), Brooklyn:** Bill and Lois's home during the flush, high-flying years on Wall Street, from 1926-1929. Bill was a successful stockbroker during these years and the couple was wealthy. Lois and Bill knocked down a wall and converted two apartments into one to give them more space. These were also, however, the years of worsening drinking by Bill.

**182 Clinton Street (Clinton and State Streets), Brooklyn:** This home was owned by Lois's family for many years. Lois Burnham was born in this house in 1891. Bill and Lois lived there briefly in 1919 with her parents when they were just getting on their feet. They moved there again in 1930 when the couple's financial situation had deteriorated severely, after the stock market crash. Lois's mother was dying of cancer, and Bill's drinking was quite bad. Lois's father gave the home to Lois and Bill after he remarried a few years after his wife's death. It was in this house that Bill finally got sober - Ebby T. brought Bill his message of spiritual healing and recovery in 1934, sitting with him in the kitchen at 182 Clinton Street. In 1935, Bill began hosting meetings at the house on Tuesdays, meeting with drunks constantly, some of whom lived there with Bill and Lois if they had nowhere else to go. After Lois's father died in 1936, the mortgage company took over ownership of the home, but the couple continued living there, renting the property, until 1939, when they were too penniless to afford the rent. They were then virtually homeless for two years, living with friends and above offices.

**Stepping Stones: 62 Oak Road, Katonah, New York, 10536:** About an hour north of Manhattan, Bill and Lois moved to this home in 1941, and lived here for the rest of their lives. A wealthy woman named Helen Griffith had heard that the couple needed a home, and offered them the home for a small price, with no down payment, in installments of \$40 per month. Fortunately, AA was then on the cusp of success, and Bill and Lois were able to pay for the home quickly. It can be reached easily by car or on the Metro North train line, but you should call ahead of time to make an appointment to visit. Web: [www.stepingstones.org](http://www.stepingstones.org) phone: (914) 232-4822; email: [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org).

#### **WAYSTATIONS FOR SERVICE: HOTELS IN AA HISTORY**

**Roosevelt Hotel, Madison Avenue and 45th Street, Manhattan:** Site of over 35 General Service Conferences.

**The Park Central (formerly the Omni Park Central), 870 7th Avenue (at 56th Street), Manhattan:** Site of many General Service Conferences.

**Hilton New York, 1335 Avenue of the Americas (at West 53rd Street), Manhattan:** Site of the Bill W. Dinner, put on annually by the New York Intergroup since 1945.

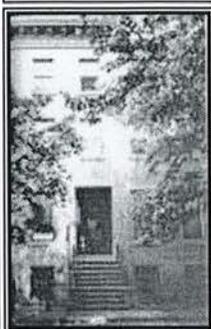
**Crowne Plaza Times Square, 1605 Broadway (at 49th Street), Manhattan:** Site of General Service Conferences from 1992 to the present.

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# Historical Sites in New York from World Services

	<p><b>Town's Hospital:</b> 293 Central Park West. Bill made 4 trips to Town's Hospital and ultimately a Spiritual Experience. Dr Silkworth, Medical Superintendent, treated 40,000 alkies and wrote The Doctor's Opinion.</p>
	<p><b>Calvary Church/House:</b> 21st and Park Ave. South where Bill attended Oxford Group meetings and got sober along with Ebby, Rowland, Cebra, Hank, and all the gang. Sam Shoemaker, source of 'all AA's spiritual principles via the Oxford Group,' was the pastor of Calvary. 17 William Street, Newark, NJ Honor Dealers; Hank Parkhurst &amp; Bill set set-up first Headquarters office. Write Big Book. Ruth Hock first non-alcoholics employee.</p>
	<p><b>17 Williams Street</b> in Newark, NJ, "Honor Dealers" Office; Hank Parkhurst &amp; Bill Wilson set up the first "Headquarters" office. Most of the Big Book is written here &amp; Ruth Hock (secretary) is the first non-alcoholic employee.</p>
	<p><b>30 Vesey Street</b>, NYC, Second Office, After Bill splits with Hank. (1938-1940.)</p>
	<p><b>415 Lexington;</b> Office moves to Grand Central Area after Bill gets Bedford Hills home. Easy commute. (1940-1944)</p>
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	<p><b>Park Omni</b>, Seventh Avenue &amp; 56th Street. Site of General Service Conferences.</p>
	<p><b>New York Hilton</b>, 1335 Avenue of the Americas, site of "Bill W Dinner" put on by NY Intergroup since 1945.</p>

**[Return to the Letters, Brochures , etc. Page](#)**

**[Return to the A. A. History Home Page](#)**

**[Return to the West Baltimore Home Group Page](#)**



## AA HISTORY SITES IN AND AROUND NEW YORK CITY

### THE HEADQUARTERS BUILDINGS

17 William Street (near Broad Street)

Newark, New Jersey

Hank P. and Bill W. set up the first AA "headquarters" office here at the office of Honor Dealers, an auto dealership owned by Hank. Bill wrote much of the Big Book from this office. Ruth Hock had begun working for Hank as a secretary and now worked with Bill on the book; she was AA's first non-alcoholic employee. The office remained here from about 1938 to 1940.

30 Vesey Street (Vesey and Church Streets)

Manhattan, New York

The second headquarters office of Alcoholics Anonymous and Works Publishing Inc., after Bill split with Hank. The group operated here in Room 703 from 1940 to 1944.

415 Lexington Avenue (Lexington and 43rd Streets)

Manhattan, New York

AA headquarters moved to the Grand Central area after Bill and Lois found their new home at Stepping Stones in Bedford Hills. Bill could take a train from Bedford Hills to Grand Central and walk from there to his new office, making for an easier commute. The offices remained here from about 1944 to 1950. The new mailing address was PO Box 459, Grand Central Annex.

141 East 44th Street (44th Street between 3rd and Lexington Avenues)

Manhattan, New York

Still close to Grand Central Terminal, the headquarters moved to this larger office in 1950 to accommodate the growing organization. The office remained here until 1960.

305 East 45th Street (45th Street and 2nd Avenue)

Manhattan, New York

Again, the growing group moved to larger quarters, still in the Grand Central area. It stayed in this building from 1960 until 1970.

468-470 Park Avenue South (31st Street and Park Avenue South)

Manhattan, New York

This served as AA's General Service Office for over two decades (1970-1992), eventually occupying five floors in two buildings.

475 Riverside Drive (between 119th and 120th Streets)

Manhattan, New York

The General Service Office moved to this building, adjacent to the Riverside Church, in 1992. Offices occupy the 11th floor, with Grapevine offices on the 10th floor. John D. Rockefeller made the entire block of land available for the structure, which houses many church groups, interdenominational agencies, and nonprofit organizations. The office is open for tours during business hours, five days a week. Appointments are not necessary; visitors can just stop by.

### WHERE ALCOHOLICS WENT FOR HELP

Towns Hospital

293 Central Park West (between 89th and 90th Streets)

Manhattan, New York

Bill landed in Towns Hospital four times between 1933 and 1934 for treatment of alcoholism, and ultimately had a spiritual experience there in 1934 that led to his sobriety. Dr. William Silkworth, Medical Superintendent at Towns, treated 40,000 alcoholics there, including Bill W., and wrote "The Doctor's Opinion" in the book 'Alcoholics Anonymous'.

Calvary Episcopal Church  
237 Park Avenue South (4th Avenue and 21st Street), and  
Calvary Mission  
246 East 23rd Street (2nd Avenue at 23rd Street)  
Manhattan, New York

Bill attended meetings of the Oxford Group here from 1934 to 1936, and got sober along with Ebby T., Rowland H., Cebra G., Hank P., and many others. Samuel Shoemaker, source of AA's spiritual principles via the Oxford Group, was the pastor of Calvary and originally brought Oxford Group meetings to New York City.

30 Rockefeller Plaza (off 48th Street)  
Manhattan, New York

Here Bill met Willard Richardson, who was a friend of his brother-in-law and the conduit to John D. Rockefeller, Jr. Bill met with Rockefeller in October 1937 in his 66th floor office and told him about the AA program. Their meeting went well, and in many ways Rockefeller helped the fledgling organization get started.

# Calvary Church (Manhattan)

Coordinates: 40°44′21″N 73°59′13″W﻿ / ﻿40.73917°N 73.98722°W﻿ / 40.73917; -73.98722

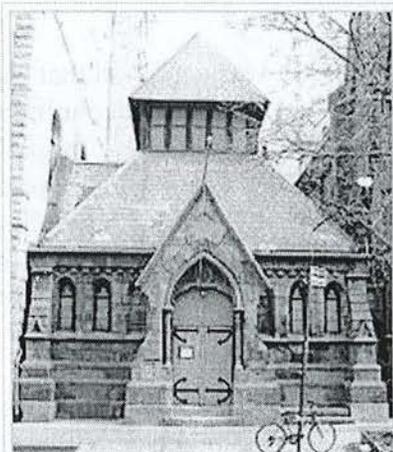
From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

**Calvary Church**, an Episcopal church located at 273 Park Avenue South on the corner of East 21st Street in the Gramercy Park neighborhood of Manhattan, New York City, on the border of the Flatiron District. It was designed by James Renwick, Jr., the architect who designed St. Patrick's Cathedral and Grace Church, and was completed in 1848. The church complex is located within the Gramercy Park Historic District and Extension.<sup>[1]</sup> It is one of the two sanctuaries of the Calvary-St. George's Parish.

## Contents

- 1 History
- 2 Notable people
- 3 See also
- 4 References
- 5 External links

## History

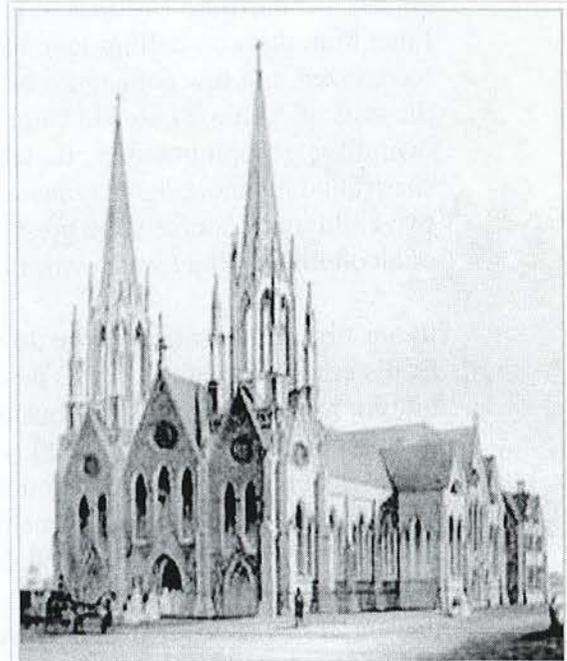


The "Renwick Gem"

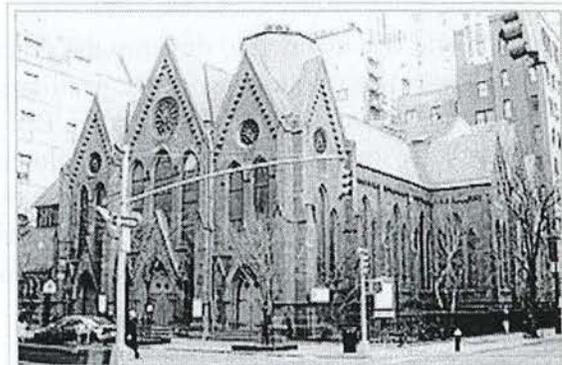
The Calvary Church parish was founded in 1832, and initially used a wooden-frame church on what was then Fourth Avenue – which has since become Park Avenue – uptown of its current site.<sup>[2][3]</sup> That building was moved to the

current location in 1842,<sup>[3]</sup> and the new Renwick-designed Gothic Revival sanctuary was completed in 1848.<sup>[3]</sup> Renwick patterned Calvary after twin-towered French cathedrals, but, unlike Grace Church, Calvary was constructed of brownstone.<sup>[4]</sup> The church's two wooden spires were removed in the early 20th century because of deterioration.<sup>[5]</sup>

The church complex also includes the "Renwick Gem", a small building to the north of the church which was built as a theatre but used for that purpose only for a short time, and the nine-story Calvary House,



A contemporaneous drawing made prior to 1867 of the church with its original wooden spires



The church as it appears today (2011); part of Calvary House can be seen on the right

east of the church on Gramercy Park North (East 21st Street), also designed by Renwick, and built in 1867.<sup>[5][6]</sup>

The family of Theodore Roosevelt lived two blocks away from Calvary Church from 1854 to 1872 – Roosevelt was born in their house in 1858, and Calvary was the church the family belonged to.<sup>[2]</sup> Other congregants included members of the Astor and Vanderbilt families.<sup>[6]</sup>

The church enjoys a close historical association with the Washington National Cathedral. In 1896, the rector of Calvary, Henry Yates Satterlee, was consecrated the first Episcopal Bishop of Washington in a ceremony in Calvary Church.<sup>[7]</sup> Satterlee was instrumental in procuring Mount Saint Alban as the site for the Cathedral, and he laid the Cathedral's main cornerstone in 1907.<sup>[8]</sup> The parishioners of Calvary donated the church's baptismal font to the new cathedral, and it is located in the Bethlehem Chapel.

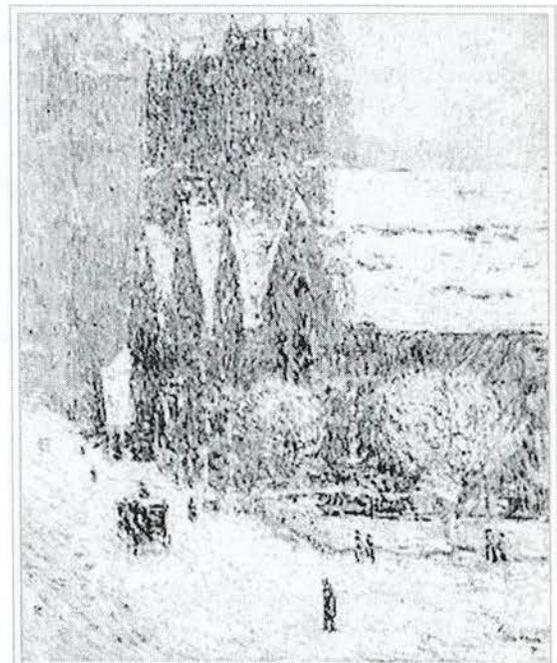
Calvary has a strong connection to Alcoholics Anonymous: when the Rev. Dr. Samuel Shoemaker was the minister there, from 1928 to 1952, Calvary House was the American center of the Oxford Group,<sup>[6]</sup> from which came some of A.A.'s major underlying ideas.<sup>[3]</sup> Bill Wilson, the co-founder of the twelve-step group, wrote: "It is through Sam Shoemaker that most of A.A.'s spiritual principles have come. Sam is one of the great channels, one of the prime sources of influences that have gathered themselves into what is now A.A."<sup>[9]</sup>

In 1976, facing financial difficulty, Calvary parish merged with the nearby parishes of St. George's Church and the Church of the Holy Communion.<sup>[10]</sup> The Holy Communion buildings were deconsecrated and sold to pay down the debts of the new combined parish, eventually becoming the Limelight disco, and the remaining two churches continued to operate as Calvary-St. George's Parish. Calvary House is now rented out as offices.<sup>[5]</sup>

## Notable people

Notable clergymen, parishioners, and others associated with Calvary Church have included:

- Chester A. Arthur (1829-1886) – The future 21st President of the United States was married to Ellen Lewis Herndon in Calvary Church on October 25, 1859.<sup>[11]</sup>
- Alva Belmont (1853-1933) – Alva Erskine Smith married William Kissam Vanderbilt at Calvary Church on April 20, 1875, in what was "reported as 'the grandest wedding witnessed in [New York City] for many years.'"<sup>[12]</sup> Their only daughter was Consuelo Vanderbilt. After the death of her second husband, Oliver Belmont, Alva Belmont became a major figure in the women's suffrage movement.
- Benjamin Brewster (1860-1941) – After serving as a vicar at Calvary (1887-1891), Brewster was consecrated Missionary Bishop of Western Colorado and Bishop of Maine.
- Arthur Cleveland Coxe (1818-1896) – Coxe, who



"Calvary Church in the Snow" (1893) by

became rector of Calvary in 1863, was consecrated as the second bishop of Western New York in 1865.

Childe Hassam

- Henry Wellington Greatorex (1816-1853) – English-born organist at Calvary whose setting for the "Gloria Patri" is widely used to this day in Protestant denominations for the singing of the doxology.
- Calvin Hampton (1938-1984) – Calvin Hampton, a leading American organist and sacred music composer, served as Calvary's organist and choirmaster from 1963 to 1983.<sup>[13]</sup>
- Childe Hassam (1859-1935) – Calvary Church was depicted by the American Impressionist artist Childe Hassam. Works featuring the church include "Calvary Church in the Snow," painted in 1893.
- General George B. McClellan (1826-1885) – General McClellan, the major general during the American Civil War who organized the Army of the Potomac, was married in Calvary Church on May 22, 1860.<sup>[14]</sup>
- James Renwick Jr. (1818-1895) – Architect of the present building.
- Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962) – Like several members of the Roosevelt family, Eleanor Roosevelt was born in the parish and baptized at Calvary Church.<sup>[15]</sup>
- Henry Yates Satterlee (1843-1908) – Satterlee was rector of Calvary from 1882 to 1896 before becoming first Episcopal Bishop of Washington.<sup>[16]</sup>
- Samuel Moor Shoemaker (1893-1963) – The Reverend Dr. Samuel Moor Shoemaker, Calvary's rector from 1928 to 1952, is remembered as a co-founder and spiritual leader of Alcoholics Anonymous.<sup>[17]</sup>
- Edith Wharton (1862-1937) – The George Frederick Jones family, including young Edith Newbold Jones, lived in the parish and worshipped at Calvary. The rector's daughter, Emelyn Washburn, introduced Edith to Goethe, who became her favorite writer.<sup>[18]</sup> Calvary was used as the setting for Mrs. Wharton's 1920 Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Age of Innocence*,<sup>[2]</sup> and Dr. Ashmore, a character in the novel, was modeled after the Rev. Edward Washburn (rector, 1865-81).<sup>[19]</sup>

## See also

- St. George's Episcopal Church (Manhattan)
- Church of the Holy Communion and Buildings, a deconsecrated church

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### Notes

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18. ^ "Gramercy Park Historic District, Borough of Manhattan". *Number 3, LP-0251*. Landmarks Preservation Commission. September 20, 1966. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/GRAMERCY\\_PARK\\_HISTORIC\\_DISTRICT.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/reports/GRAMERCY_PARK_HISTORIC_DISTRICT.pdf). Retrieved February 25, 2011.
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## External links

- Official website

Retrieved from "[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvary\\_Church\\_\(Manhattan\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Calvary_Church_(Manhattan))"

Categories: Religious organizations established in 1832 | 1848 architecture | Gothic Revival architecture | James Renwick, Jr. buildings | Episcopal churches in New York

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## *The Mayflower Hotel*



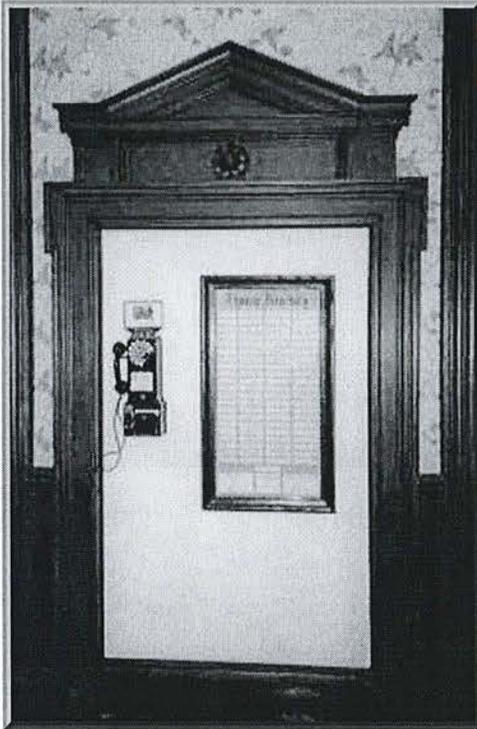
When Bill W., sober only a few months, was in Akron for a business deal in 1935, he stayed in the Mayflower Hotel. The business deal fell through and on Mothers Day weekend Bill, down to his last ten dollars, was pacing the lobby, listening to the sounds of merriment from the hotel's bar. Remembering that working with other alcoholics had helped him to stay sober, he went to the pay phone in the lobby and called a local clergyman, Reverend Tunks, to try to find a local alcoholic he could talk with. This phone call led to his meeting with Dr. Bob and the beginnings of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The Mayflower is now an assisted living facility and is not generally open to the public, but does welcome A.A. visitors to see the replica of the 1935 telephone and Church Directory now in the restored lobby. At the security gate inside the front door, buzz the intercom and tell the guard you're a friend of Bill W. to gain entrance.

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Alcoholics Anonymous, A.A., AA, archives, archive, Akron Archives, Akron AA Archives, Akron A.A. Archives, Akron Intergroup, Akron A.A. Intergroup, Birthplace of A.A., Birthplace of AA, A.A. history, AA history, alcoholic, alcoholism, recovery, drinking, drunk, liquor, abstinence, sobriety, recover, 12 step, twelve step, 12-step, Bill W., Dr. Bob, Akron, Ohio, way out, intergroup, alcohol, addiction, treatment, District 20, anonymity, conservation, archival, preservation, big book, Oxford Group, Washingtonian, Seiberling, Mayflower Hotel, gatehouse, 100 men, one hundred men, one hundred men and women, Reverend Tunks

**Lobby of the Mayflower Hotel:  
 Replica of the telephone and church directory as Bill W. would have seen them.**



This replica of the 1930's era pay phone was donated by the management of the Mayflower Manor, in recognition of the historic telephone call made from this location in 1935 by Bill W. which led to his first meeting with Dr. Bob and the subsequent founding of what was to become Alcoholics Anonymous. The replica of the Church Directory was built by a grateful member of A.A. in Akron. It was from the original Directory that Bill got the phone number for Reverend Tunks, who was the first link in the chain of connections that brought our two founders together that fateful Mother's Day weekend. These replicas were placed here on the occasion of the first Akron Archives Workshop, in 1996.

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Discover the Heritage of Summit County, Ohio

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Mayflower Hotel



<b>Title</b>	<a href="#">Mayflower Hotel</a>
<b>Date</b>	1930s
<b>Description</b>	A postcard of the Mayflower Hotel on Main Street and State Street in downtown Akron, Ohio. The 16-story, 450-room hotel was opened on May 18, 1931. It was built on the site of the old Y.M.C.A. building. The Mayflower became part of history in May of 1935 when Bill Wilson, who was seeking help for his battle with alcoholism, made his famous phone call from the hotel lobby to a minister. This phone call led to Wilson's meeting with Dr. Robert Smith. Together they created Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1955, the hotel was bought by the Sheraton Hotel Company and the name was changed to the Sheraton-Mayflower Hotel, and eventually changed again to the Sheraton Hotel. In 1969 the hotel was purchased by Wellington Associates of New York who changed the name back to the Mayflower Hotel. The Mayflower Hotel closed on May 10, 1971. In 1973 it re-opened as the Mayflower Manor, a subsidized housing apartment complex.
<b>Subject</b>	<a href="#">Postcards</a> <a href="#">Hotels</a> <a href="#">Mayflower Hotel</a> <a href="#">Alcoholics Anonymous</a> <a href="#">Main Street</a> <a href="#">Downtown Akron</a> <a href="#">Wilson, Bill</a>
<b>Name</b>	Wilson, Bill
<b>Publisher</b>	The Central News Company (Akron, Ohio)
<b>Contributors</b>	On Loan to the Akron-Summit County Public Library
<b>Type</b>	Image Text
<b>Format</b>	3.5 in. x 5.5 in.
<b>Source</b>	RC_Mayflower1.jpg
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<b>Relation</b>	<a href="#">Ruth Wright Clinefelter Postcard Collection</a>
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<b>Additional Information</b>	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholics_Anonymous;">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholics_Anonymous;</a>

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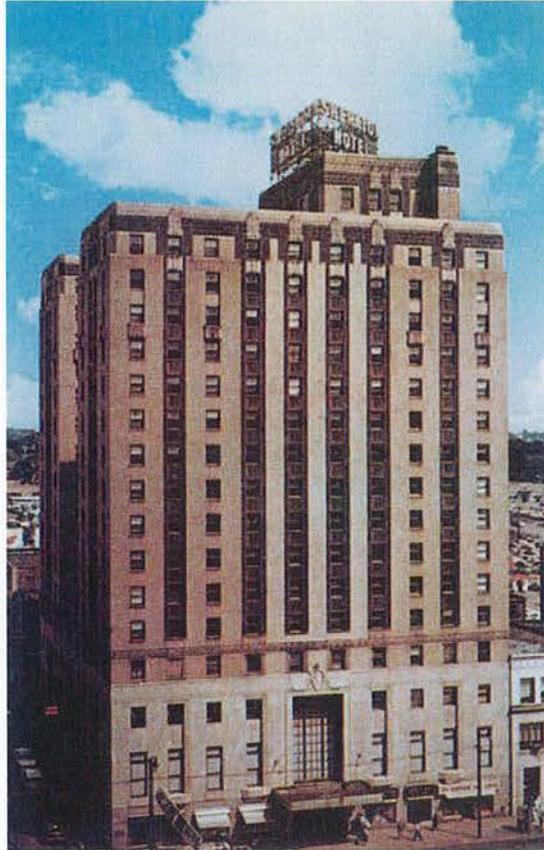
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Sheraton Hotel



<b>Title</b>	Sheraton Hotel
<b>Date</b>	1960s
<b>Description</b>	A postcard of the Sheraton Hotel on Main Street and State Street in downtown Akron, Ohio. The 16-story, 450-room hotel was opened as the Mayflower Hotel on May 18, 1931. It was built on the site of the old Y.M.C.A. building. The Mayflower became part of history in May of 1935 when Bill Wilson, who was seeking help for his battle with alcoholism, made his famous phone call from the hotel lobby to a minister. This phone call led to Wilson's meeting with Dr. Robert Smith. Together they created Alcoholics Anonymous. In 1955, the hotel was bought by the Sheraton Hotel Company and the name was changed to the Sheraton-Mayflower Hotel, and eventually changed again to the Sheraton Hotel. In 1969 the hotel was purchased by Wellington Associates of New York who changed the name back to the Mayflower Hotel. The Mayflower Hotel closed on May 10, 1971. In 1973 it re-opened as the Mayflower Manor, a subsidized housing apartment complex.
<b>Subject</b>	<a href="#">Postcards</a> <a href="#">Hotels</a> <a href="#">Mayflower Hotel</a> <a href="#">Alcoholics Anonymous</a> <a href="#">Main Street</a> <a href="#">Downtown Akron</a> <a href="#">Sheraton Suites Hotel</a>
<b>Name</b>	Wilson, Bill
<b>Contributors</b>	On Loan to the Akron-Summit County Public Library
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<b>Additional Information</b>	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholics_Anonymous;">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcoholics_Anonymous;</a>
<b>Transcript</b>	Back of postcard reads: SHERATON HOTEL - 259 South Main Street, Akron, Ohio. Telephone: Jefferson 5-1871. Teletype AK-99.



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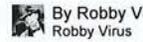


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By Robby Virus  
Robby Virus

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## Hotel Mayflower, Akron, OH

Sign for the Hotel Mayflower in downtown Akron, Ohio. The 450-room Mayflower Hotel opened on South Main Street in 1931, and was the most luxurious hotel in Akron. The art deco building was designed by the Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White. Until it closed in the mid-1960s, the Mayflower was Akron's best hotel, and hosted most of the city's major social events. Its ballroom, decorated with a combination of Moderne and Louis XV motifs, was one of the most elegant rooms ever created in Akron. The hotel was operated by Sheraton for awhile until it closed. The building now houses apartments, the Mayflower Manor, for low income and elderly tenants.

As a historical side note, a phone call made by Bill W. in the lobby of this hotel was the beginning of alcoholics anonymous.

### Comments and faves



erjkprunczyk  
Cool shot.

(16 months ago)



ellie ann [deleted] (6 months ago)

this is beautiful! i go to school and akron and i see this building every day-- you brought new life to it!



Robby Virus (6 months ago)

Thanks Ellie Ann!



jlivingston-joy (5 months ago)

I work as a Baker there in 1956 and 1957



jlivingston-joy (5 months ago)

worked

This photo was invited and added to the Talking cities group.

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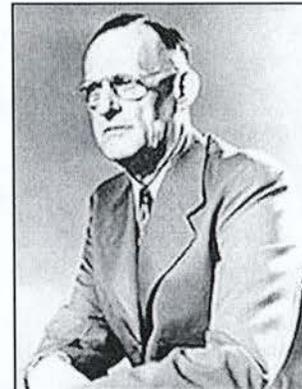
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### Sister Ignatia Gavin and A.A.



Sister Ignatia Gavin, a tiny Irish-American nun, helped initiate medical treatment for alcoholics in Akron. Born in 1889, Sister Ignatia entered the community of the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine in 1914. A trained and talented musician, she first taught music until she suffered a complete breakdown. To protect her health, she was reassigned to St. Thomas Hospital in Akron. In 1928, she became an admissions officer.

Dr. Bob S., who founded Alcoholics Anonymous with Bill W. in 1935, had been treating alcoholics for years and often tried to get his patients admitted to Akron hospitals, especially when they were undergoing withdrawal and needed medical care. At the time, alcoholism was considered a moral failing, not a disease, so hospitals usually refused. Dr. Bob S. had struck up a friendship with Sister Ignatia and began asking her to admit his patients. Although against regulations, she admitted them, usually by claiming they had "acute gastritis." She placed them wherever room was available and where they would be out of the way, going so far as to place them in the "flower room," where the bodies of deceased patients were kept while awaiting transferral to the morgue. Eventually, the two obtained permission to open the first hospital ward ever for alcoholics at St. Thomas. Dr. Bob attended to their physical needs, and Sister Ignatia and members of Alcoholics Anonymous to their spiritual needs.



In 1952, Sister Ignatia was transferred to St. Vincent Charity Hospital in Cleveland, where she set up a new alcoholism ward, Rosary Hall. Patients were admitted for six days, where they received constant help from Sister Ignatia and various AA members. It is estimated that during her career, Sister Ignatia helped over 10,000 alcoholics. She was mourned throughout the nation when she died in 1966.

St. Thomas Hospital, Akron, Ohio



In the 1920s a Clevelander left a bequest to establish a Catholic hospital in Akron. From 1922 to 1928, additional money was raised and a site selected. St. Thomas Hospital was built in 1928, and staffed by the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine. Like other Catholic hospitals in the Diocese, St. Thomas was an innovator.

In 1939 it opened the first alcoholic ward in the country under the direction of Sister Ignatia Gavin and Dr. Bob S., one of the co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. The hospital grew steadily through the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, as new buildings and departments were added to better serve the citizens of Akron. In the 1980s, an independent board took over control of St. Thomas and it ceased to function as a Catholic hospital. In the mid 1990s, St. Thomas merged with Akron City Hospital to form Summa Health System.

► **Sister Ignatia's message inspires** -Akron woman treasures book that belonged to late father; A.A. figure signed it in 1947. *by staff writer Jim Carney of The Beacon Journal*

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## Alcoholics Anonymous Founder's House Is a Self-Help Landmark



James Estrin/The New York Times

The house of Bill Wilson and his wife, Lois, in Bedford Hills.  
By LISA W. FODERARO  
Published: July 6, 2007

BEDFORD HILLS, N.Y., July 3 — The house tour was nearing an end in this Westchester County hamlet, in a region known for its historic sites, from pre-Revolutionary grist mills to Gilded Age mansions. But as the visitors entered the austere pine-paneled office that once belonged to Bill Wilson, a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, the tour suddenly became a pilgrimage.



James Estrin/The New York Times

The house has been open to the public since Mrs. Wilson died in 1983.

Jean Z. sat down at the smooth oak desk on which Bill W., as he was known, wrote “Alcoholics Anonymous,” or the Big Book, and smiled as her A.A. sponsor snapped a picture. Then they switched.

“This, to me, would be the equivalent of a Christian going to the Vatican,” said Jean, of Long Island, who has been in A.A. for two years and gave only her last initial in keeping with the program’s tradition of anonymity. “To think that he just sat at this desk, a simple man who had a problem and wanted to get better. It’s touched my life and saved my life.”

For many visitors to Stepping Stones, the gracious Dutch colonial-style house where Mr. Wilson lived with his wife, Lois, for the last 30 years of his life before dying of emphysema in 1971, there is, indeed, something profoundly personal, even spiritual, about the experience. It has been open to the public since 1988, when Mrs. Wilson died at 97. With no children, she left it to the Stepping Stones Foundation, which she had set up in the hope that the site would educate and inspire future generations.

Set on eight wooded acres, the house was purchased by the Wilsons in 1941, several years after Mr. Wilson, a stockbroker, had his last drink and founded Alcoholics Anonymous with Dr. Bob Smith, an Ohio surgeon. So much early A.A. business was conducted here that for a time the organization subsidized some of the couple’s housing costs.

This is also where Mrs. Wilson in 1951 created Al-Anon, an offshoot of A.A. for the family members of alcoholics.

The tours were informal at first. But two years ago, the house became listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And this spring New York State added Stepping Stones to its new Women's Heritage Trail, in recognition of Mrs. Wilson's contributions to the self-help program that has become a model for treating addiction around the world.

A.A. is a free, voluntary fellowship of men and women who meet to help one another become and stay sober through a 12-step recovery program. There are an estimated 100,000 A.A. groups in 150 countries, with more than two million members. The Big Book, the program's bible, has sold nearly 25 million copies. Many other 12-step programs were inspired by A.A., like Narcotics Anonymous and Debtors Anonymous.

"A.A. and Al-Anon are unquestionably among the greatest social movements of the 20th century, so it's a very important site," said Richard White-Smith, director of Heritage New York, a program of the state's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which develops heritage trails that consist of historic sites linked by a common theme.

These days, tours are available by appointment seven days a week. "Unlike most museums, we get these hysterical phone calls," said Annah Perch, executive director of the foundation, which owns and operates the property. "I got a call recently from a woman who said, 'I'm in Penn Station and I'm from Ireland and this is the only day I can come.'"

Every June, hundreds of A.A. members arrive for the organization's annual family groups picnic, a tradition the Wilsons started in 1952. Occasionally, a nearby A.A. or Al-Anon convention brings a crush of visitors. Last Labor Day, 1,200 Hispanic members of A.A. met at a hotel in Rye and descended on Stepping Stones throughout the weekend.

On the daily house tours, about 60 percent of visitors are members of A.A. and 30 percent are members of Al-Anon. But both Ms. Perch and state officials hope that will change. "There's an important story here for the general public to understand," Mr. White-Smith said.

Stepping Stones is now hiring an archivist to continue the work of cataloguing the Wilsons' possessions, including the most significant items, now in storage, like the first copy of the Big Book to roll off the press.

On Tuesday, the group included Frank W., of Malvern, Ohio, who has been an A.A. member for 22 years, here with three generations of his family.

"This is pretty awesome," he said, after lingering over memorabilia like a letter to Mr. Wilson from Carl Jung, and a photograph of [Richard M. Nixon](#) receiving the millionth copy of the Big Book.

"I prayed for two or three years not to drink, and I drank every day," he said, choking up. "I was going to lose my wife and my children. Everything I have, I owe to A.A."

In the house, with its mahogany antiques handed down from Mrs. Wilson's family, it seems as if the couple were still alive. In the master bedroom, a can of PermaSoft hair spray still sits on Mrs. Wilson's vanity, along with a single bobby pin. In another area, a box of Wash 'n Dri and a can of lighter fuel share space with books.

While the desk in Mr. Wilson's office was the one on which he wrote the Big Book, it belonged to a friend who had lent him an office in Newark for the project. The desk was eventually moved to Stepping Stones, and Mr. Wilson wrote later works in the studio office here, including "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions."

There was a faded copy of that book on the desk, along with a first edition of "Alcoholics Anonymous." Jean Z.'s sponsor, Louise, touched the books as Jean took her picture. "What a gift," she said. "I could almost cry."

Ms. Perch was ready with a reassuring word: "We always say it's not a successful tour unless at least one person cries."

# THE PATENT TRADER

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## \$33,000 grant goes to museum

### Bedford Hills home of AA's co-founder to be renovated

Carlos Perkins  
The Patent Trader

Officials at Stepping Stones in Bedford Hills are working to improve their museum, the former home of Bill and Lois Wilson, who each co-founded influential programs related to alcoholism.

"These structures were all on their last legs," Annah Perch, executive director of the Stepping Stones Foundation, which owns and runs the museum, said of the various structures on the property.

The late Lois and Bill Wilson separately co-founded the Al-Anon Family Groups and Alcoholics Anonymous, respectively.

The home the couple purchased in 1941, an original garage and an unattached small studio space, will all be renovated thanks to a \$33,000 grant the foundation recently received from the state's Environmental Protection Fund.

The fund, which has provided about \$1.3 billion for projects statewide, offers matching grants for municipalities or nonprofit groups with the goal of protecting open space, increasing recreational opportunities and protecting historic sites, among others.

Perch said the grant will be put toward sealing aging and deteriorating windows and adding ultraviolet light filters and blinds.

"(The grant) will make for an even more sound museum and help preserve our items," she said.

The money also will allow the renovation of the buildings' roofs, which are showing signs of aging, including leaks.

The foundation applied for the grant about three months before its receipt. Other Westchester County municipalities, including the towns of Rye and Cortlandt, also received grants.

The grant for Stepping Stones



Joe Larese/The Patent Trader

Executive director Annah Perch is surrounded by the gardens at Stepping Stones, the home of Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill Wilson.

## Bedford Hills museum to undergo renovation

MUSEUM, from A1

is not the only assistance the museum has received recently.

The foundation also received a \$9,800 grant from the state Council on the Arts for a project that would turn the original garage on the site into an orientation center for visitors. The museum is open by appointment and has more than 1,000 visitors every year.

Perch said the foundation is working with the Dobbs Ferry-based architectural firm of Stephen Tilly to provide a place outside the Wilson home for exhibits, a visitors shop and other facilities like restrooms.

"It's going to be neat," Perch said of the center.

Tilly said the orientation center was a necessary addition to the museum because it will decrease traffic in the main house, thereby helping to better preserve it.

"It's a home, not an art museum," Tilly said. "It's clear that visitors should be deflected from the

home (for specific purposes)."

Tilly added that while the design process for the orientation center was in the beginning stage, the architects know they want to ensure the structure doesn't distract from the main house.

"We don't want (the property) to look different from when Bill and Lois were living there," he said.

Staff members at Stephen Tilly also worked with the Stepping Stones organization on its application to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places last year, and on other informational committees for the museum.

Tilly estimated the center would be open to visitors in 2008, after fundraising and final design work is completed.

Visitors may call 914-232-4822 or visit [www.stepsstones.org](http://www.stepsstones.org) to learn about the Wilsons or set an appointment to view the home.

Reach Carlos Perkins at [cperkins@lohud.com](mailto:cperkins@lohud.com).



# WHEN LOVE IS NOT ENOUGH

## THE LOIS WILSON STORY

Starring Winona Ryder ("The Age of Innocence", "Little Women") and Barry Pepper ("61\*\*\*"), the latest Hallmark Hall of Fame presentation is based on the true story of the tested but enduring bond between Bill and Lois Wilson (Pepper, Ryder), respective co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups.

In 1914, Lois Burnham, a young woman from an affluent family, fell in love with Bill Wilson, a young man of modest means. They married in 1918, and after his return from war, they set out to build a life together. While Lois worked, Bill struggled to find his niche. She believed he was destined for greatness, and despite his increasing reliance on alcohol, she showered him with love and support. After brief periods of success, Bill's addiction to alcohol spiraled out of control until his job, their lifestyle and their dreams were gone.

In late 1934, after years of covering for Bill and trying to manage his illness by herself, Lois witnessed Bill get and stay sober – not because of her but with the support of fellow alcoholics.

As Bill attained lasting sobriety and co-founded Alcoholics Anonymous, Lois was surprised to feel neglected, isolated and resentful. She was not alone in these feelings. There were many – wives, husbands, sisters, brothers – whose lives and relationships had been devastated because of their loved ones' alcoholism. With them she began to apply the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous to her own emotional recovery and co-founded Al-Anon Family Groups in 1951.

Together Lois and Bill Wilson nurtured movements that have helped millions of people around the world. And together they've given the world a noble and inspiring love story.



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[ SURVEY ]

Percentage of area residents who...

Say they know how to peel a mango:

54

Tell a joke at least once a week:

31

Wish they were more organized:

78

Give their children an allowance:

53

Have a home evacuation plan:

18



## Giant Leaps

WHERE 12 SMALL STEPS CHANGED MILLIONS OF LIVES

BY | SUSAN CHEEVER

IT'S AN ORDINARY shingled house in Bedford Hills, but its cozy kitchen and double-height living room were the setting for some of the most extraordinary events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Here in front of the huge stone fireplace, Alcoholics Anonymous co-founder Bill Wilson met with the early members of AA, a fellowship that now numbers more than two million. At a desk near the window of a study he built above the dormered house, Wilson wrote *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions*, the AA handbook that has sold more than 15 million copies. Last year the house

was included on the National Register of Historic Places.

Alcoholics Anonymous, a program that Wilson developed out of his own desperate need to stop drinking, has saved millions of lives. It has also had a tremendous impact on the way we think about addiction. Once condemned as lack of willpower, addiction is now understood as a treatable disease. The writing that Wilson did on this wooded Westchester ridge engineered a major shift in our view of human nature.

Bill and Lois Wilson were down-and-out when

they arrived. By 1940 they had lost almost everything, including Lois's family townhouse in Brooklyn. They had moved 54 times in two years and were living in cramped rooms over the Alcoholics Anonymous headquarters in Manhattan when a grateful acquaintance offered them the unheated house in Bedford Hills. The price—\$6,500, payable in \$40-a-month, interest-free installments—seemed high, but one day the Wilsons drove out to take a look.

On a sunny March afternoon in 1940, Bill broke in through a back window of the empty

## FROM THE FIELD

house and fell in love. The couple called it Bill-Lo's Break but later renamed it Stepping Stones for the steep steps that lead up to the house and for the Twelve Steps, the philosophical spine of Alcoholics Anonymous.

Stepping Stones became the center of Alcoholics Anonymous; its rooms and gardens—tended by Lois—buzzed with sober men and women. Bill, the handy son of a Vermont quarryman, rigged up a heating system triggered by an alarm clock, and plumbing that featured an attic horse trough. Meetings

### THE COUPLE CALLED IT STEPPING STONES FOR THE STEPS THAT LEAD TO THE HOUSE AND FOR THE TWELVE STEPS, THE SPINE OF ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS

were held in the living room where Lois painted faux curtains because she couldn't afford real ones. A spare bedroom became the headquarters of Al Anon, the program she started for the families of alcoholics. Wilson lived there until his death in 1971 and Lois remained, presiding over the June annual picnic and hundreds of meetings until her death in 1987.

Now owned and run by the Stepping Stones Foundation, the house, which sits on 8.5 acres of foundation-owned land, is open to the public seven days a week by appointment. The grounds and gardens are open from sunrise to sunset, and local picnickers and hikers are welcome.

The program of Alcoholics Anonymous has expanded beyond what Bill

Wilson could likely ever have imagined, but the house remains the same. In the living room a shawl drapes over the piano as Lois would have arranged it, and through the kitchen door a coffeepot looks ready to pour. Perhaps Bill has just unfolded his lanky body off the couch and wandered into the room where he kept his violin. You can almost see the curl of smoke from the cigarette he left in an ashtray, and hear the sound of his fingers picking out a country tune as the afternoon sun slants down past the gardens and through the trees. ■

### ***About Stepping Stones***

Stepping Stones is considered historic for its association with William Griffith (Bill) Wilson and Lois Burnham Wilson, who lived in the house from 1941 until their deaths in 1971 and 1988, respectively. Bill Wilson was a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and the author of four books, including *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939). In *Alcoholics Anonymous*, Wilson disseminated the idea of alcoholism as a disease and provided a program – the 12 Steps – for treating alcoholism and maintaining sobriety. The 12 Steps and AA enabled, and continues to enable, millions of people around the world to achieve and sustain permanent sobriety and helped reshape the general public's perception of alcoholics. Lois Wilson was the co-founder of Al-Anon Family Groups, the self-help group for family members of alcoholics and the founder of Alateen, a group for the children of alcoholics. Al-Anon and Alateen have also grown to reach international membership, with chapters in 115 countries.

Bill Wilson (1895-1971) was one of the two founders of AA and his personal experiences and leadership were critical to the success of the organization. After years of severe drinking and numerous failed attempts to stop, Bill was considered to be a hopeless alcoholic. He tried spiritual groups and detoxing in hospitals, but inevitably returned to drinking. His wife was told he would likely die or have to be committed to an asylum. While in a private hospital, he had a spiritual experience that removed his compulsion to drink. His experience is reflected in the second of the twelve steps, acknowledgement of a higher power.



William Griffith Wilson (Bill W.)

Wilson also realized that the responsibility of working with other recovering alcoholics was necessary to his staying sober. He developed this practice as one of the fundamental tenets of AA after an incident in 1935. He had been sober for several months but a failed business meeting made him yearn for a drink. Instead of succumbing, he found a directory of churches and began calling and asking if someone could put him in touch with other alcoholics, and eventually was introduced to Dr. Robert Smith, known as "Dr. Bob." During their ongoing friendship, Bill encouraged Dr. Bob as he struggled to stay sober and this helped Bill maintain his own commitment to sobriety and the concepts of sponsorship and service were established. June 10, 1935 was the day of Dr. Bob's last

drink and is regarded as the founding of AA. Every member of AA can trace his or her sponsorship back to Bill Wilson, the first sponsor.

Wilson realized that only another alcoholic could truly understand the tangled emotions evoked by his debilitating ordeal. As Dr. Bob wrote, "He was the first living human with whom I had ever talked, who knew what he was talking about in regard to alcoholism from actual experience. In other words, he talked my language."<sup>(1)</sup> Group meetings at which members shared their personal experiences demonstrated to alcoholics that they were not alone and that recovery was possible. AA meetings offered understanding and inspiration rather than judgment and guilt that typically drove an alcoholic to seek comfort in alcohol. If a member did have a lapse and drink, it was seen as a "setback" rather than "failure."

Bill Wilson anonymously authored four books on alcoholism: *Alcoholics Anonymous* (1939), *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* (1953), *Alcoholics Anonymous Comes of Age* (1957) and *The AA Way of Life*.<sup>(2)</sup> *Alcoholics Anonymous*, known as the Big Book, included the 12 Steps and numerous autobiographical stories contributed anonymously by recovering alcoholics. Wilson wrote the first eleven chapters and edited the autobiographical chapters. *The Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* established the guidelines for AA that ensured its long-term success; these principles are still used by AA groups and the General Service Organization today.

*Alcoholics Anonymous* defined alcoholism as a disease of the body, mind and spirit and changed the public's perception of alcoholics and alcoholism. Wilson did not invent this theory; the idea was developed by medical professionals as early as the eighteenth century and was explained to Bill by a psychiatrist.<sup>(3)</sup> However, he was instrumental in spreading this theory through his writings and the organization he founded.

Before the publication of *Alcoholics Anonymous*, alcoholism was regarded as the result of a character defect or moral weakness.<sup>(4)</sup> Groups such as the Oxford Group, a Christian reformist movement that Bill had joined seeking a way to control his drinking, regarded alcohol as a sin; the remedy for alcoholism was to pray for forgiveness. Medicine offered little help as facilities were rare and "treatment" meant drying out at a sanitarium for those who could afford it, or at a state mental hospital or jail for those who could not.<sup>(5)</sup> This rarely resulted in permanent sobriety. As late as 1941, the popular press noted "it [alcoholism] remains one of the great unsolved public-health enigmas."<sup>(6)</sup> Public stigma and the lack of viable treatment options combined to prevent alcoholics from seeking help and embarking upon the path to recovery.

*Alcoholics Anonymous* offered an explanation of why alcoholics drank based upon unbiased scientific investigation rather than facile character judgments and provided a practical treatment program and a community of support that has helped millions attain lasting sobriety. In 1951, the American Public Health Association presented the Lasker award to AA "in recognition of its unique and highly successful approach to that age-old public health and social problem, alcoholism... In emphasizing

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1 *Alcoholics Anonymous* (New York: Alcoholics Anonymous World Service, 2001) p. 180.

2 New York Times Obituary.

3 Dr. Benjamin Rush, 1790

4 Lois Wilson, *Lois Remembers* (New York: Al-Anon Family Groups Headquarters, 1987) p. 73.

5 Lois Wilson, p. 145.

6 Jack Alexander, "Alcoholics Anonymous," *Saturday Evening Post*, p. 9

## Alcoholics Anonymous Founder's House Is a Self-Help Landmark

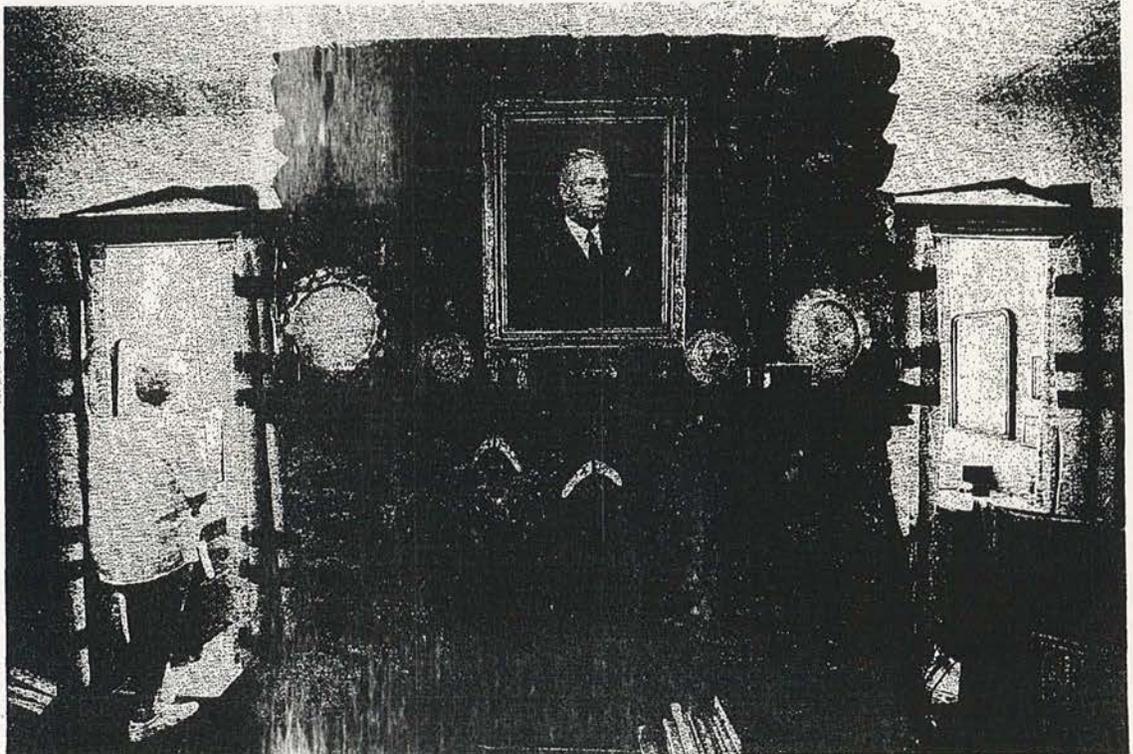
By LISA W. FODERARO

**BEDFORD HILLS, N.Y., July 3** — The house tour was nearing an end in this Westchester County hamlet, in a region known for its historic sites, from pre-Revolutionary grist mills to Gilded Age mansions. But as the visitors entered the austere pine-paneled office that once belonged to Bill Wilson, a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, the tour suddenly became a pilgrimage.

Jean Z. sat down at the smooth oak desk on which Bill W., as he was known, wrote "Alcoholics Anonymous," or the Big Book, and smiled as her A.A. sponsor snapped a picture. Then they switched.

"This, to me, would be the equivalent of a Christian going to the Vatican," said Jean, of Long Island, who has been in A.A. for two years and gave only her last initial in keeping with the program's tradition of anonymity. "To think that he just sat at this desk, a simple man who had a problem and wanted to get better. It's touched my life and saved my life."

For many visitors to Stepping Stones, the gracious Dutch colonial-style house where Mr. Wilson lived with his wife, Lois, for the last 30 years of his life before dying of emphysema in 1971, there is, indeed, something profoundly personal, even spiritual, about the experience. It has been open to the public since 1988, when Mrs. Wilson died at 87. With no children, she left it to the Stepping Stones Foundation, which she had set



Photographs by James Estrlin/The New York Times

The house of Bill Wilson, a co-founder of Alcoholics Anonymous, and his wife, Lois, has been open to the public since Mrs. Wilson died in 1988.

**A museum where tears are common, and welcomed.**

up in the hope that the site would educate and inspire future generations.

Set on eight wooded acres, the house was purchased by the Wilsons in 1941, several years after Mr. Wilson, a stockbroker, had his last drink and founded Alcoholics Anonymous with Dr. Bob Smith, an Ohio surgeon. So much early A.A. business was conducted here that for a time the organization subsidized some of the couple's housing costs.

This is also where Mrs. Wilson in 1951 created Al-Anon, an offshoot of A.A. for the family members of alcoholics.

The tours were informal at first. But two years ago, the house became listed on the National Register of Historic Places. And this spring New York State added Stepping Stones to its new Women's Heritage Trail, in recognition of Mrs. Wilson's contributions to the self-help program that has become a model for treating addiction around the world.

A.A. is a free, voluntary fellowship of men and women who meet to help one another become and stay sober through a 12-step recovery program. There are an estimated 100,000 A.A. groups in 150 countries, with more than two million members. The Big Book, the program's bible, has sold nearly 25 million copies. Many other 12-step programs were inspired by A.A., like Narcotics Anonymous and Debtors Anonymous.

"A.A. and Al-Anon are unquestionably among the greatest social movements of the 20th century, so it's a very important site," said Rich-



The house in Bedford Hills has been preserved, to the extent possible, as it was when the Wilsons lived there.

ard White-Smith, director of Heritage New York, a program of the state's Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, which develops heritage trails that consist of historic sites linked by a common theme.

These days, tours are available by appointment seven days a week. "Unlike most museums, we get these hysterical phone calls," said Annah Perch, executive director of the foundation, which owns and operates the

property. "I got a call recently from a woman who said, 'I'm in Penn Station and I'm from Ireland and this is the only day I can come.'"

Every June, hundreds of A.A. members arrive for the organization's annual family groups picnic, a tradition the Wilsons started in 1952. Occasionally, a nearby A.A. or Al-Anon convention brings a crush of visitors. Last Labor Day, 1,200 Hispanic members of A.A. met at a hotel in Rye and demanded on Stepping

Stones throughout the weekend.

On the daily house tours, about 60 percent of visitors are members of A.A. and 30 percent are members of Al-Anon. But both Ms. Perch and state officials hope that will change. "There's an important story here for the general public to understand," Mr. White-Smith said.

Stepping Stones is now hiring an archivist to continue the work of cataloging the Wilsons' possessions, including the most significant items,

now in storage, like the first copy of the Big Book to roll off the press.

On Tuesday, the group included Frank W. of Malvern, Ohio, who has been an A.A. member for 22 years, here with three generations of his family.

"This is pretty awesome," he said, after lingering over memorabilia like a letter to Mr. Wilson from Carl Jung, and a photograph of Richard M. Nixon receiving the millionth copy of the Big Book.

"I prayed for two or three years not to drink, and I drank every day," he said, choking up. "I was going to lose my wife and my children. Everything I have, I owe to A.A."

In the house, with its mahogany antiques handed down from Mrs. Wilson's family, it seems as if the couple were still alive. In the master bedroom, a can of PermaSoft hair spray still sits on Mrs. Wilson's vanity, along with a single bobby pin. In another area, a box of Wash 'n Dri and a can of lighter fuel share space with books.

While the desk in Mr. Wilson's office was the one on which he wrote the Big Book, it belonged to a friend who had lent him an office in Newark for the project. The desk was eventually moved to Stepping Stones, and Mr. Wilson wrote later works in the studio office here, including "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions."

There was a faded copy of that book on the desk, along with a first edition of "Alcoholics Anonymous." Jean Z.'s sponsor, Louise, touched the books as Jean took her picture. "What a gift," she said. "I could almost cry."

Ms. Perch was ready with a reassuring word: "We always say it's not a successful tour unless at least one person cries."



# Stepping Stones

The historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson

[www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org) • 62 Oak Road, Katonah, NY

Their home is your home. Visit today, in person or on the web.

Sharing the story of hope for the recovery from alcoholism,  
in the individual and the family, as it is embodied in the lives and home of  
Bill and Lois Wilson.

W. G. W.  
BOX 459 GRAND CENTRAL ANNEX  
NEW YORK 17, N. Y.

Jan 24/57

Dearest -

Thank you for this  
year gone past and all  
that went before - No  
one could have had  
your sustaining courage  
that saw me through  
the night - none could  
have been a finer  
partner in the glorious  
day which God has granted  
us -

I shall love you dear-  
forever -  
Bill



Mrs. WILLIAM G. WILSON  
STEPPING STONES  
BEDFORD HILLS, N. Y.

Bill, my darling, today starts  
our 40<sup>th</sup> year together, As the  
years have piled up my respect  
admiration and love for you,  
dear, have risen and broadened  
and deepened until now all  
my girlish ideals of marriage  
& married love have come alive  
& are being fulfilled. We are  
companions, friends, & lovers -

Thank you, darling, for  
this wonderful gift of yourself.  
Love you  
Lois

1/24/57

One of the first couples to recover from alcoholism using the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous, Bill and Lois Wilson  
dedicated their lives to helping others and left their home and its contents in the form of a museum— for you.

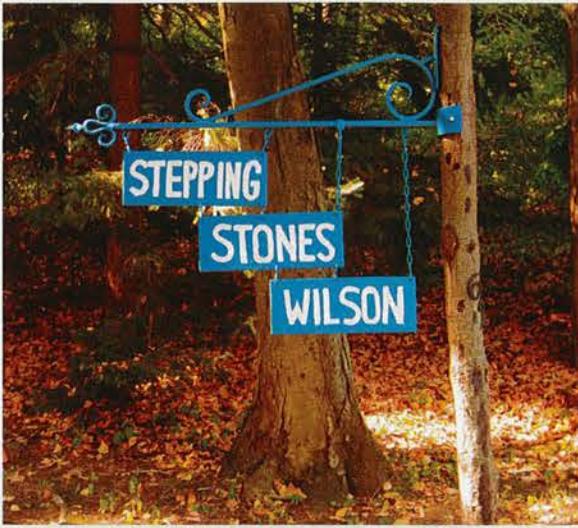
Open for tours with a reservation, and all the time on the web at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org).

(914) 232-4822 • [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)

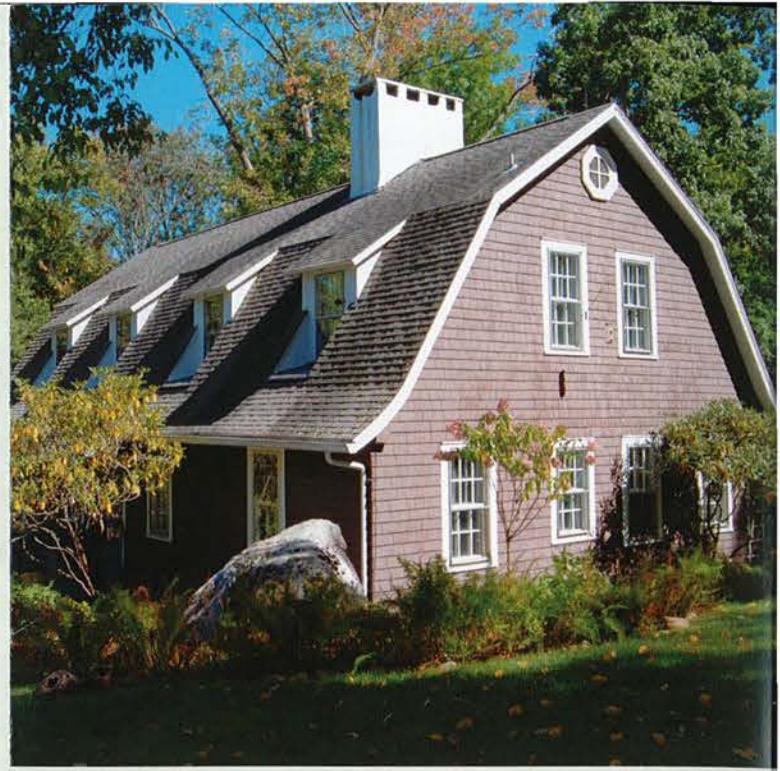
affected by alcoholism, seeking  
gain knowledge, inspiration,  
g Stones. Join us in the experience.

*provides an experience  
age. Here, we live the  
le who personified the  
lism and the hope for  
d Lois Wilson were true  
re their legacy. When  
g Stones, I am home."*

*1, Stepping Stones Trustee, 2008*



Drawing by Lois Wilson, depicting the Wilsons and their home.



# Stepping Stones

The historic home of  
Bill and Lois Wilson



Katonah, New York

## Stepping Stones Foundation

62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536

(914) 232-4822

[info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)

[www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org)

### Guided Tours

Monday - Saturday at 1 pm, by reservation  
and all other times by appointment

The Stepping Stones Foundation is dedicated to preserving the historic home of Bill and Lois Wilson, co-founders respectively of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups, and to commemorating their achievements in the field of recovery from alcoholism.

The Foundation maintains the home, its contents and archives, and offers guided tours and

Stepping Stones is listed on the State and National Historic Register.



## RIC TREASURE

Bill and Lois Wilsons shared for is an experience, as well as an his-ous archive. Just as they did dur-ors come from all over the world ope and the message of recovery.

he Wilsons' day-to-day lives. Just nes is full of documents, photo-e essential (the desk upon which to the everyday (Lois' eyeglasses ead). Up the hill is "Wit's End", on sought inspiration and wrote ing *Twelve Steps and Twelve ects the Wilsons' love of living mplements the house. Walking side. The grounds offer refuge to ho wish to spend time with the asured.*

ndation maintains the Wilsons' ives, and offers tours of the house h its community, the Stepping es to grow in promoting under- his historic treasure, and to wel-

## MARKABLE PEOPLE

coholics Anonymous. Considered people of the 20th century, his

work helped millions worldwide. **Lois Wilson** co-founded Al-Anon Family Groups at Stepping Stones in 1951. She influenced Bill's recovery, and left the Stepping Stones Foundation to preserve their legacy. The Wilsons personified both the disease of alcoholism and the hope for recovery. Rising from tragedy, they dedicated their lives to helping others and nurturing the 12 step movement.

## THREE WAYS TO EXPERIENCE STEPPING STONES

### — Visit Stepping Stones —

Beautiful, comfortable, in harmony with nature, Stepping Stones provides great insight into the development of the recovery movement. Walk through places where history was made. Feel the emotional connection.

Stepping Stones is located in the village of Katonah, town of Bedford, in Westchester County, New York. It is accessible by Metro-North Railroad (Bedford Hills or Katonah stations), and by the Saw Mill River Parkway and Interstate 684. (See our Web site, [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org), for a map and directions.)

**Tour:** Inside, you'll see Stepping Stones just as Lois left it: a humble home, filled with family heirlooms, memorabilia, and an extensive archive. *Guided tours are offered Monday through Saturday at 1:00 pm by reservation*, and at any other time by appointment. Educational events are held regularly.

Day-long or overnight excursions are easy to plan. Call Stepping Stones for information about transportation, discounted lodging, dining and more.

**Celebrate:** Stepping Stones is a special place to hold a group anniversary, picnic, workshop, meet with a sponsor or trusted friend, or host any other special celebration. The grounds are open sunrise to sunset, 365 days a year.

Experience a joyous celebration of unity or a quiet moment of reflection. Members of 12 Step groups, social and cultural historians, and the general community all came to see the Wilsons, and continue to visit their home today. Call to arrange your special event today.

**Traveling Presentation:** Can't make it in person? We offer a traveling presentation, "Bill and Lois Wilson and the AA Way of Life". Call or write for details.

### — Volunteer At Stepping Stones —

Helping at Stepping Stones is a great way to add to your legacy of service. Individuals and groups can help maintain the house and grounds, serve as tour guides, offer preservation assistance, make presentations in your area, or find another way to serve. Once a week or once a year, we need your help.

For more information or to arrange your tour,  
visit [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org),  
call (914) 232-4822 (M-F 9am-5pm)  
or email [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org).

### — Give to Stepping Stones —

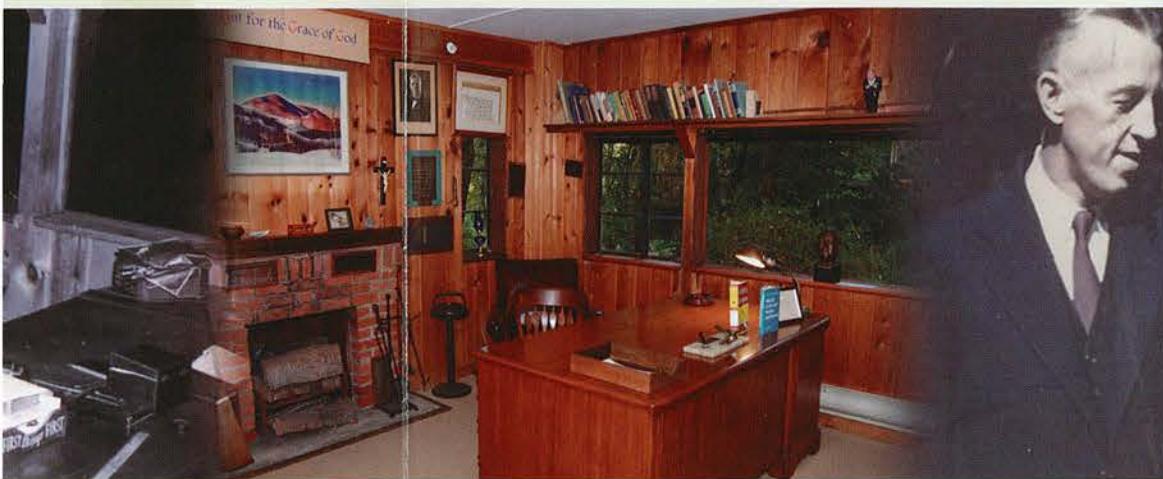
Experience the joy of giving. Stepping Stones relies on contributions from its community to maintain and preserve the Wilsons' historic home, the grounds, and the archives. Current projects include:

**Building an Orientation Center** to provide permanent exhibits from the archives and presentations, thereby improving the visitor experience.

**Restoring and Preserving** over 20,000 archival items—from the very first love letters between Bill and Lois in 1915, to the first copy of the Big Book off the press—so that these treasures may continue to tell the story of alcoholism and recovery.

### TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT:

- ❖ Make a secure contribution online at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org), under "Support"
- ❖ Mail the enclosed pledge card or simply send a check or money order to:  
**Stepping Stones**  
62 Oak Road  
Katonah, NY 10536
- ❖ Call 914-232-4822 to discuss your gift



Bill in his writing studio, Bill answered every piece of mail: alcoholics questions from the medical community, and letters of



Bill and Lois enjoying each other, and the outdoors, at Stepping Stones.

One wall of the gallery, containing a montage of historical images, left as Lois' gift—to you. The kitchen table at which, in 1934, Ebby T. shared his home for sobriety with Bill. Many feel that their