

WILLIAMSPORT SUN-GAZETTE

The Weaver sisters: from Freeport to Millionaires' Row



PHOTO PROVIDED Emily Weaver White lived in a castle-like residence at 847 W. Fourth St., now the location of Way's Garden.

Sisters Emily and Louisa Weaver were from a distinguished family in Freeport, Pa., a small town along the Allegheny River north of Pittsburgh, but they both made their mark on society in Williamsport, becoming prominent in civic, charitable and religious affairs during the lumber era.

Emily Weaver White

Emily Weaver was born on March 11, 1824, to Henry Weaver (1798-1834) and Mary Staufer (1796-1853). In 1843, when she was 19, she married John White, a civil engineer (1818-1890). Their first son, Henry, was born the next year. Seeing that there was outstanding economic opportunity in Williamsport at the time, they took advantage and John White became one of the prominent and successful lumber manufacturers in the West Branch Valley. He partnered with Peter Herdic in several successful firms.

Emily had seven more children after their move to Williamsport: Charlotte, Mary Louise, Hugh, Gula, Emily, Jennie and John.

Along with her younger sister, Louisa, Emily was very involved in church and charitable work. In her obituary, she was called “*one of the most noted and honored women of Williamsport*” (Grit, Dec. 8, 1912). Emily spent 65 years in Williamsport. For more than 40 of them, she was president of the Ladies’ Aid Society of Christ Church. For many years, she was also the president of the Ladies’ Aid Society of the Williamsport Hospital. The Weaver sisters and their families were very active in Christ Episcopal Church, the church of many of Williamsport’s wealthy families, located at the corner of Mulberry and East Third streets. Emily continued to be a busy member of society even after her husband’s death in 1890, although the census amusingly lists her occupation as “*Lady*.”



PHOTO PROVIDED Mary Weaver White

The Whites might be remembered most for the castle-like residence in which they lived for many years, at 847 W. Fourth St. (now the location of Way's Garden). According to *"Lost Williamsport,"* by Samuel Dornsife, the mansion was built by Robert Faries.

Dornsife described it this way: *"The unique brick structure, stuccoed to resemble blocks of stone, was an amalgam of styles. The flat overhanging roof showed a definite Italianate influence, the cupola, Moorish. Perhaps more than any other feature, the crenelated Gothic style towers gain the mansion the nickname..."*

Emily and her husband and their eight children and four servants moved in about 1866. The children eventually grew up and moved out. The year before her death,

according to Dornsife, Emily White put up the house for sale. However, it remained unsold for many years. The one prospective buyer wanted to turn the castle into a boarding house (or perhaps a brothel), motivating J. Roman Way, the neighbor across the street, to buy the property in 1913 and have it torn down and transformed into a garden he could see from his home.

For the plans of his garden, Way turned to famous Philadelphia landscape architect Oglesby Hall. The park was donated to the city of Williamsport by Way in 1913 and is used today for public events, including the annual Bald Eagle Art Show.

Emily Weaver White died on Dec. 4, 1912, at the age of 88.



PHOTO PROVIDED Louisa Weaver Logan

Louisa Weaver Logan

Louisa Weaver was six years younger than her sister Emily. She was born on Feb. 28, 1830. Her father, Henry Weaver, died when she was only four. In 1851, when she was 21, she married Dr. William Fullerton Logan (1826-1910). William, also a native of Freeport, attended Washington College (now Washington and Jefferson College) and studied medicine in Freeport under Dr. F. Borland. He graduated from Western Reserve the year that he and Emily were married.

The Logans moved to Williamsport in 1859 with their two children, Harry and Elizabeth. Their third child, Mary Emily, had died in 1857 when she was just one

year old. For most of their time in Williamsport, they lived at 410 Third Ave., a few blocks from Emily, Louisa's sister.

William bought a drug business on Pine Street which he continued until shortly before his death. He was elected mayor of the town twice, in 1867 and 1878, and also served as postmaster.

At Christ Episcopal Church, Louisa was the treasurer of the First Ladies Aid Society and of the women's Relief Auxiliary. In that capacity she oversaw aid to local victims of the major flood in 1889 (the one that famously destroyed Johnstown). Many Williamsport families had to be temporarily relocated to higher ground in Brandon Park.

Louisa was prominent in other local charitable associations. She was a charter member of the

Home for the Friendless and was treasurer of that institution, founded in 1872, until the day she died in 1910, so for over 40 years. The Home for the Friendless served older women who could not live alone and children who were not quite orphans, but perhaps had lost a parent and needed help. The Christ Church Messenger said at the time of her death that she had a *"fragrance of holiness about her."*

William Logan died in 1892. He had served in the Civil War as a surgeon and was a vestryman at Christ Church. He was also for a time the president of Wildwood Cemetery, where he and Louisa are buried together, not far from her sister Emily and family. Louisa carried on her charitable work until her own death in 1910.

Sieminski is the former director of the Madigan Library at Penn College. Our contributor, Janet Hurlbert, has moved from the area, and we will miss her interesting and insightful articles. Sieminski and Hurlbert are founders of the Lycoming County Women's History Project (www.lycoming.edu/lcwhp). The column is published monthly, and they may be reached at lcwhcmanager@gmail.com.

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