Final Drive for Digitization—New $15,525 Matching Gift Challenge Launched

In 2010, Stepping Stones put forth a vision to safeguard the future availability of rare and one-of-a-kind manuscripts left in its care by Lois Wilson. Today, the goal of completing the digitization of these materials is in sight. To digitize the remaining material, $31,050 is needed. A new matching challenge is now under way. Every dollar raised up to $15,525 will be matched by a dollar from a pool of funds created by the Goodnow Fund and Stepping Stones Trustees.

During the first phase of the Archive Preservation Project, 227,000 documents and 7,800 photographs were copied to microfiche. The second phase continues now as images on microfiche are copied to digital formats. As batches of reels are digitized, image files become available to researchers in the Stepping Stones Archives Center, which now has two digital viewing stations.

So far, 108 reels have been digitized, including the William Griffith Wilson, Lois Burnham Wilson, Al-Anon, and Photography collections, and the first three reels of the A.A. Collection. Each reel has about 1000 images and costs $626 to digitize. Nearly 850 contributions have supported the work so far. A form is enclosed for friends who would like to give toward the matching challenge and help carry out the vision of completing the digital collection and protecting the cherished material.

Together We Completed the “Our Wit’s End Campaign”

Preservation of Wit’s End, the writing studio where Bill W. wrote articles, speeches, and books, is moving forward thanks to the 244 supporters in thirty-five U.S. states, Canada, and Ireland who gave $52,551—surpassing the $50,000 goal. Measures are under way to protect and stabilize the aging, weathered building. Architect Stephen Tilly’s recommendations are being followed to prevent further deterioration of the structure. A significant and noticeable improvement is the better sealing of the interior, resulting from the restoration of the original steel casement windows. Other improvements may not be plain to the eye, but range from repairs to woodpecker and carpenter bee damage to upgrades of electrical components. More updates will be shared as work is completed.

Gifts of every amount are helping to make a difference for the long-term future of Bill’s studio. At critical moments, two gifts played key roles in making the project a reality. The 3B’s Foundation propelled the campaign’s start with a $10,000 gift and the Goodnow Fund stimulated $16,500 in contributions by offering to match those funds to bring the effort to a successful close. “The writing and ideas that Bill Wilson generated in his studio are remarkable,” says Tracy Goodnow, Executive Director of The Goodnow Fund. “Bill W.’s work helped and continues to help heal millions of individuals and families worldwide, so The Goodnow Fund was glad to contribute to protecting the iconic yet humble building that means so much to people worldwide.” Stepping Stones commends these foundations for advancing the campaign and believing in the project. Thank you to all who contributed.
Greetings from the Board

Dear Friends,

It was my pleasure to meet Lois Wilson in the early eighties and to serve on the Stepping Stones Board in the mid-nineties. It has again been my pleasure to serve on the Board since 2007, and an honor to serve as its President for the last four years. My term of service as President will conclude this summer. I am deeply grateful for your support and for the wise counsel I have received along the way from so many very capable people.

Throughout that time I have been reminded—with heartfelt gratitude—of the many friends and colleagues who treasure Stepping Stones, as I do, and who have been generous with their service, their friendship, and their support. I have had the privilege of serving with four Executive Directors and many Board members and to have met on a regular basis with the volunteers, visitors, community members, and local officials on whose ongoing support Stepping Stones depends. I salute them—one and all.

In June 2016, terms of service concluded for longtime Trustees Don Harrell, past Vice President, and James Moogan, past President. We thank them for their kindness, energy, and work in elevating our preservation capacity and visitor experience to a new level.

This year, Stepping Stones lost a dear friend with the passing of Mel B., who had close ties to the Wilsons. Mel was a prolific writer, journalist, historian, and philosopher par excellence. His day-at-a-time book, Walk in Dry Places has served as an inspiration to many for decades. A tribute to Mel appears on page four.

Stepping Stones continues with its programs to protect the property and preserve the legacy Bill and Lois left behind. Our ongoing projects, and some new ones, rely as always on your continued and generous support. On behalf of the Board and all at Stepping Stones, we thank you for your past generosity and look forward to your continued support of a special place in the lives of the Wilsons, and an inspiration to all those who have so profoundly benefitted by the Wilsons’ lives and work.

Very truly yours,

John Koster, President, Board of Trustees

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Preserve a Legacy, Leave a Legacy

• Set up a recurring monthly contribution
• Celebrate a special occasion or person
• Ask your employer’s human resources representative if they match donations
• Include Stepping Stones in will and estate planning at any giving level
• Make a gift of appreciated assets, such as securities, or establish a Charitable Gift Annuity

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Hello from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It is a joy to welcome guests to Stepping Stones and an honor to share the legacy of the Wilsons at events. Caring for 8.17 acres, six structures, 15,000 artifacts, and 100,000 archived items is not possible without the generosity of donors, the commitment of the Board, and the involvement of volunteers and Advisors. The Wit’s End fundraising campaign and matching challenge was a success because new and old friends stepped up—many giving multiple times. Thank you to everyone for your involvement and support of ongoing and special projects.

The 65th Picnic was a wonderful day of fellowship and speakers, held on the traditional first Saturday in June. Al-Anon Phyllis M. of Clifton Park, N.Y., shared vivid memories of serving alongside Lois. A.A. Dan M. of Yorktown, N.Y., recalled his childhood view of Bill W.—just a friend of his father—and his later view and deep gratitude for Bill’s life and work.

As a National Historic Landmark, we welcome community partnerships. Eagle Scout Candidate Robert Bauer, of Boy Scout Troop 1 Katonah, chose Stepping Stones as benefactor for his Eagle Scout Project. He conducted research at the Bedford Audubon Society and examined Stepping Stones’ historic photographs and remnants of the original birdhouses. He then hand built and installed eight birdhouses. The Bedford-Armonk Rotary Club contributed toward the project materials. I invite you to stroll around on your next visit and discover the birdhouses by the house and garden, and relax at a picnic table made by Robert and his friends. Many thanks to Robert, to his Troop, and to the Rotary Club for supporting their neighborhood landmark.

To all friends of Stepping Stones, thank you for your passion and care for an international treasure.

Sincerely,

Sally A. Corbett-Turco
Executive Director

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Birdwatcher Lois Wilson, 1972

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Birdhouse maker & Boy Scout  Robert Bauer, 2017
Lois Burnham Wilson Papers Protected in Perpetuity

Thanks to the help of many, Stepping Stones has completed the digitization of the Lois Burnham Wilson Collection. The collection comprises a third of the 100,000 items in the Archives Preservation Project. Reaching this important milestone means that digital and microfiche copies of originals are secured in multiple locations ensuring their availability for the future. A few years ago, fifty-four boxes of Lois’ papers were copied onto forty-six microfiche reels. The images from those reels were used in 2016 to create the digital images.

In preparation for the founding of the Stepping Stones Foundation, Lois drafted a list of documents, books, and memorabilia that she believed 12-Step fellowships members would be eager to see. Her personal collection is extensive. She was a great chronicler and observer who kept diaries, provided edits to biographers and researchers, and annotated letters and manuscripts, books, and photo albums. She saved almost everything from cancelled checks to talking points for speeches. Owing to her farsightedness, the Archives are rich with personal, family, A.A., and Al-Anon history.

In late 2015, the push to finish the digitization of Lois’ manuscripts caught the attention of friends of Marilyn G. Ashfield—a longtime Stepping Stones volunteer who had passed away. Project contributions were made by thirty-two donors in Marilyn’s memory.

A major gift was received in December from Robert Brooks, “in loving memory of Marilyn G. Ashfield.” He specified that the donation was to be used to subsidize the digitizing of a number of reels of manuscripts of Lois Wilson, for the Archives Preservation Project.

Mr. Brooks indicated that, “The gift recognizes Marilyn’s commitment to the far-reaching and meaningful work of Stepping Stones” and added that, “It is fitting and appropriate that her name will be associated forever with the cause to which she was so devoted.”

To give to the Matching Challenge to complete the Digitization Project, a form is enclosed.

www.steppingstones.org

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Days in the Lives of the Wilsons - Excerpts from Lois’ Diary, 1940

Selections from Lois’ journals—a treasure from the Archives—give a glimpse at life without a home during the year before moving to Stepping Stones.

Lois’ “self-taken photo” 1937

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Entry</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thurs., Feb. 8</td>
<td>&quot;Jimmy’s. Bill left for the big dinner Rockefeller is giving to 100 of N.Y.’s biggest businessmen to hear Alcoholics Anonymous and to raise money. Only 60 present among them A.A. Bill spoke first 15 minutes then P. and Lester X. John D. was ill so Saamuelsen presided and Nelson Rockefeller was next to Bill. Although he was so present, claimed to be great success.”</td>
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<td>Fri., Feb. 9</td>
<td>&quot;Jimmy’s. Wrote Bass a happy birthday letter. The next of the dinner is on the front page of the Tribune.&quot;</td>
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<td>Sat., Feb. 17</td>
<td>&quot;Expected Bill to come over to Ethel Perry to see her mother but no word from him. Barb, Syd and I went to Schrafft’s for dinner in White Plains. Will spend tonight here; haven’t heard from Bill.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sun., Feb. 18</td>
<td>&quot;Took a noon train to N.Y. and to my surprise Bill met me at Grand Central. He had at last phoned Barb or Oct. He had misunderstood where I would be and that I was at Drs. He had a short difficult silence on the topic of the studio at Grand Central and then went on to the South Orange meeting. Spent the night with Noll.&quot;</td>
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<td>Mon., Feb. 19</td>
<td>&quot;Spent last night with the Roch. Herbert is staying there also. Bill and Gordon went to the Book Office. Herbert drove me and my bag later to N.Y. where I took the tube to N.Y. to look for a furnished room. Such a terrible day that I bought a $11 raincoat and decided to leave my bag at Morgan &amp; Co.’s apartment where he had asked Bill and me to come for a while. When I reached here it was so luxurious and in better with piano and a maid and Morgan seemed to want us to stay so we decided to stay here until the first of March anyway. Went to Dorothy G. out of there and Dorothy took us in to Keith Wa. for tea. Most interesting spiritualistic evening.&quot;</td>
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<td>Tues., March 19</td>
<td>&quot;Took my exercises with Miss B and then she and I went for lunch at the &quot;J. Diner.&quot; Ruth and I met there, had a good time. It was a great hit at the Committee meeting here for supper and later at the meeting. Ruth J. also sent for supper. The meeting was the last ever and Edie was there.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed., March 20</td>
<td>&quot;Went down to see the new office at room 703, 30 Vesey St. It is small, a corner room with a grand view and an inner office. Ruth J. sent Bill and I went to the Flatbreads for lunch. Then I went to Brooklyn to look at rooms. Met Edie and she went home with me for supper. Judy B also for supper. Played a hand bridge.&quot;</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tues., June 13</td>
<td>&quot;We all left in the morning and stopped at 29th St. to see the new Club House. It used to be a stable so is not safe. It is set back from the street and entered from a covered porch and doorway on the street. It used to be the Illustrated’s Club so is very attractive. On one room with a fireplace and one hand with a big room and two small bedrooms and a kitchen. The rent is $15 a month and with gas and light and extra will probably come to $20. Set in the park and wrote Buss in the afternoon. Met Bill and Edie and Ruth at the china men’s for supper and then we had our last meeting at Steinway Hall. Spent the night at M’s. Jack &amp; stayed late.&quot;</td>
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</table>
| Wed., June 12 | "Spent most of the morning driving Bill Doren and Tom Nelson upon to the Cowey to buy a second-hand coffee urn for the Club. Finally got one for $25 that is listed at $35 now. Took them and it back to the Club then over to Cleveland Fund. Got everything ready to paint in the morning."

"Painted the back porch. Drove to Montclair for Bill who didn’t arrive until nearly 6 p.m. Delayed by Foundation meeting. Had supper at a diller on my way."
Remembering Writer Melvin “Mel” D. Barger

On Sunday, February 26, 2017, a crowd gathered in Toledo, Ohio, to remember Mel Barger (1925–2017), whose many contributions in the field of recovery literature included significant research about the life of Bill W. for the book, My Search for Bill W. Sober from April 15, 1950, until his death, Mel B. was a prolific writer and presenter.

Mel’s work and passion brought him to Stepping Stones where he met the Wilsons and even spent the night. His last of many visits to Stepping Stones was on September 21, 2013, when he generously gave of his time to meet with and educate docents. The memorial included the St. Francis and Serenity prayers, “A.A. Promises,” and a Navy ceremony honoring Mel’s service, including his work aboard landing ships in the South Pacific where he earned five battle stars. Mel’s love of song was represented by a recording of Mel singing “Founders’ Song,” which he wrote to express his gratitude for Bill W. and Dr. Bob. A touching rendition of “Danny Boy” by his granddaughter was followed by the hymn, “How Great Thou Art,” and “Irish Heartbeat” by Van Morrison and the Chieftans. Remembrances by friends and family included tributes to Mel’s humor, wit, and “unbridled zest for life,” as well as his service through hundreds of presentations, more than fifty articles, and six books on facets of recovery.

Excerpts from Bill W.’s July 2, 1956, response to Mel B.’s inquiry about Bill’s spiritual experience described in the “Big Book”

...In talking about my flash of reality, I often fail to make the point that every A.A. who has the program, gets the same thing....In most cases, the Grace leaks in little by little....If you were to take the sum of your own transformation since you have been in A.A. and condense the whole business into six minutes, you too would see the stars—and more!...

...With me, the original experience was so prodigious, the preview of destiny so intense, that I have never had any difficulty with doubts since that time. Even at my worst, and that has often been damn bad, the sense of the presence of God has never deserted me....My doubts have been about myself....Never has there been any question about the ultimate destiny of us all, or of God’s justice and love.

Long ago, I became a pupil of A.A. All around me, people were doing better with themselves in a spiritual sense than I ever could. In my role as Mr. A.A., I have been enabled to manage fairly well. But as one neurotic drunk trying to get along, and grow, I have often been pathetically rebellious and rationalize....In the last twelve years of life, despite all of my blessings and opportunities, I have spent eight in depression, sometimes very severe ones. However, there has been profit for A.A., even in this state of affairs. The depressions kept me off the road and from making speeches. In fact, I was forced to sit home and ask what would become of A.A. and what would become of me. The result was the Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous and the present world service structure. And maybe I grew up a little myself, also—at any rate, let’s hope!...

....I guess I’m still a shopper at the theological pie-counter, still wondering in many respects what it’s all about. So, my friend, you now have the latest bulletin on my own state of grace. I do hope it helps reduce any overestimate that you may have had about me. And I do hope, for another thing—the really impossible—that someday this society will let me become just a plain member.
Volunteer Voice: A Love (and an Eye) for History

Stepping Stones is grateful to have a wonderful league of docents welcoming guests and leading tours. Volunteers are led to this historic site for reasons ranging from a love of the history of Bill and Lois to an interest in sharing their time and talent with a nonprofit. Jim McCarthy visited in 2008 and became a docent in 2011. Soon after, he began to oversee the Welcome Center on Mondays, to share his photographic talent, and to provide insights as an Appointed Committee Member of the Board of Trustees Site Committee.

“My work here is very fulfilling,” says Jim. “I meet people from all over the world who are truly touched by the experience. Many people come with great reverence. There is always a thirst for information about Bill and Lois and their moving story. I’ve also met people who knew Bill and Lois and could share personal reflections about them. There is a great deal of camaraderie among people who visit here. Many come to celebrate their recovery—recently a visitor came to mark a 50th anniversary of sobriety. I feel honored to have the opportunity to share important milestones.”

Saluting Volunteers

To the volunteers who hosted guests, helped at the picnic, or did hands-on gardening, holiday decorating, and more, we thank you wholeheartedly for your efforts and passion. We especially thank the current docents who collectively volunteered over 1000 hours in 2016. We salute their years of service, as follows: Barbara L. (5), Beverly B. (1), Chris P. (5), Chris P. (1), Doon C. (3), Jim McC. (5), Joe H. (1), John F. (7), John M. (2), Levi P. (5), and Mildred H. (4).

Volunteer at the Wilsons Home or at Your Own Home

Individuals, families, and groups are invited to share their talents. Membership in a 12-Step fellowship is not required. Email info@steppingstones.org for more information. Examples of volunteer activities follow:

- Archives and research
- Audio/video editing
- Data entry
- Editing/writing
- Events
- Fundraising
- Gardening
- Graphic design
- Interpretation
- Leading tours
- Outreach
- Photography
- Presentations
- Social media
- Trail maintenance
- Translation
- Videography
- Websites
Enclosed is my/our one-time contribution(s) in support of the following:

$_____.00 For the greatest General Operations and Maintenance needs

$_____.00 Matching Campaign – Archives Preservation Project – Archives Digitization

$_____.00 TOTAL CONTRIBUTION (Insert total of all above amounts.)

Form of payment: Check or money order payable to Stepping Stones Foundation

Card #: ________________________________ Exp. Date: __/____

Signature (clearly please): ________________________________

This contribution is (check one if applicable): in honor of in memory of Name of person honored or remembered:

____ Check here if the person listed on the previous line should be anonymous in publications.

I/we wish to pledge $_____.00 (check one) monthly quarterly annually

My employer will match this gift.

Contributions to Stepping Stones Foundation are tax-deductible to the extent provided by U.S. law. Stepping Stones Foundation is a stand-alone non-profit, tax-exempt organization (Federal I.D. #13-3031164) and does not have a giving limit.

Your gift will help preserve the legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson at Stepping Stones, and make their home available for future generations. Contributions go toward the maintenance, operations, and preservation of this National Historic Landmark. Thank you for your help!

Ways to donate:
• Return this form with your donation and provide the information requested below.
• Make a contribution online at http://www.steppingstones.org/support.html
• Call us at 914-232-4822.
• Set up a recurring monthly gift by calling 914-232-4822.
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