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A Quarterly Newsletter, Winter 2024-2025

# *Winona History Center Happenings*

## **Westminster Hall Begins a New Function**

On December 3, 2024, Grace College held a ceremonial groundbreaking for the Ray “Butch” and Sandra Shook Welcome Center at Westminster Hall. This new project will see the lobby space and east banquet room transformed into a “front door” to the campus, connecting guests and students to the Grace campus and the town of Winona Lake. Faculty, staff, and students gathered to listen to a number of speakers and witness the groundbreaking of the project.

“The Shook Welcome Center project represents more than just a facelift to this beloved building. It symbolizes Grace College’s commitment to hospitality, to excellence, and to ensuring every campus guest leaves Grace with a sense of God’s work in this place,” said Vice President of Enrollment Management Dr. Mark Pohl.

Grace President Dr. Drew

Flamm spoke to the attendees of the groundbreaking of Westminster’s rich history, pointing out the many years that “this grand old building” has been in the community. Currently home to student housing, rental areas, and the Winona History Center, Westminster Hall was at one point in danger of being demolished and replaced with a parking lot before Grace College and Seminary bought it.

The Winona History Center will remain largely unchanged by the current construction. Part of our storage has been moved down to a lower floor, and a small area of the hallway entering into the History Center will be used for a door into a new office space. The Winona History Center is looking forward to being able to share the history of Winona Lake with campus visitors and students who will be visiting the new Shook Welcome Center.



(Far Above) Dr. Drew Flamm and Dr. Mark Pohl (in the middle) along with board members and students break the ground for the new Shook Welcome Center. (Above) Participants gather in the lobby of Westminster Hall before the renovations began.

# Helen "Ma" Sunday: Winona Lake Leader

On October 10, 2024, Dr. Mark Norris, the director of the Winona History Center, presented a paper on Helen Sunday at the Conference on Faith and History in Birmingham, Alabama. The paper is part of Norris's larger study, which will be titled "Helen Amelia Thompson 'Ma' Sunday: CEO of the Billy Sunday Campaigns, Nation's Mother, and Evangelist."

In the paper, Norris focused on Helen's role as mother of her children and also of the hundreds of thousands who came to know and respect her up to her zenith of success, the Great War era.

When Norris publishes his final work, we will highlight it here. Until then, a brief account of Helen Thompson Sunday's life is fascinating.

Helen Sunday was born on June 25, 1868, and grew up in Chicago, where her father was a prosperous ice cream maker. She met baseball player Billy Sunday at church, and they were married on September 5, 1888.

While Billy Sunday was known for his great evangelistic work, Helen, also called Ma, was vital to the ministry. Known from her childhood years as a strong organizer, Helen organized Billy's campaigns and did much of the advance and financial work.

Billy credited Helen for much of his success. Biographer Elijah Brown stated, "He never takes a step of any importance without consulting her; and there are not many minor affairs that he will decide without wanting to know what she thinks, and the moment he knows what she thinks, he knows what he will do."

During Billy's baseball years and then the beginning of his evangelical travels, the Sundays lived in Chicago. Helen traveled with Billy on most of his preaching trips, while their four children stayed with the nanny Norah Lynn. In 1911, the Sundays built their home in Winona Lake and moved there. Billy lived in Winona Lake until his death in 1935.

Helen Sunday continued heavy involvement in civic, religious, and Winona Lake affairs after Billy's death. She traveled extensively, speaking frequently, helping raise money for rescue missions and other Christian causes. She was active in the work of Bob Jones University, Youth for Christ, and the Voice of the Andes radio station. In the early 1950s, she spoke at some of Billy Graham's crusades. In the booklet "Remarkable 'Ma Sunday'" by Opal Cording Overmyer, a friend of Mrs. Sunday described her saying, "She hopped around the country like a human flea."

Before she died in 1957, Ma Sunday made an audio recording about the Sunday Home, Billy's career, and their lives together. The audio version and printed transcripts are still available at the Winona History Center under the title "Ma Sunday Still Speaks."

*(Top Right)* This picture shows Billy and Helen Sunday soon after their marriage in 1888. *(Middle Right)* Helen Sunday speaks at the Pacific Garden Mission. *(Bottom Right)* This picture shows Helen Sunday in the 1950s.



## Did you know...

- that you can donate to the Winona History Center or Billy Sunday Home online? The donation link can be found [here](#).
- that the Winona History Center keeps an updated Facebook page? A recent popular post was on the song "Beyond the Sunset." You can check it out [here](#).
- that the Winona History Center is currently closed because of construction? It will soon re-open on Saturdays. Appointments can be made to tour the Sunday Home.



## Display Spotlight: Panoramic Pictures

Scattered throughout the Winona History Center are various panoramic pictures of Winona Lake and its past visitors. Ranging from the earliest Bible conferences to later Sacred Music Festivals, these pictures show the large groups that have attended through the years.

Some of the pictures are displayed on the walls inside the History Center, while others are stored in the archives. Grace College Morgan Library has a large collection of historical Winona Lake panoramic images available to view online [here](#).

(Top Right): 1909 Bible Conference attendees (Second Right): Billy Sunday Campmeeting 1919, with Billy and Ma Sunday in front center (Third Right): Participants in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Brethren Conference in 1920 (Bottom Right): Winona School of Sacred Music Students in 1936



### Contact Us

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### VISIT US

Winona History Center  
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### HOURS

The Winona History Center is temporarily closed, but will open soon on Saturdays. Tours can be scheduled for the Billy Sunday Home.

### MAILING ADDRESS

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