

Eva Williams Best

Writer, Artist, Poet

Eva Williams was born in Cincinnati in 1851. Her father was the famous panoramic artist John Insco Williams and her brother the architect, Charles Insco Williams. She married William H. Best in 1869. He was proprietor of the well-known jewelry store located on Main Street in Dayton.

Her first home in Dayton was at the corner of River Street (Riverview Avenue) and Salem Avenue. [The home sat on the site of what is now the parking lot of Reichard Buick GMC.] She had no neighbors until Captain Stivers moved in about three and a half blocks away and she said of him that he was a very good neighbor.

Eva began writing at the age of seventeen. She submitted a poem called "The Fortune" anonymously to the Dayton Journal newspaper. She claimed writing it once she heard that it had been so well received. She continued her writing and her work included poems, plays, comedy sketches, monologues, ballads and more. She often would submit her writings to various publications and they were published regularly. In 1890 Mrs. Best went to Detroit to edit the women's department of the Detroit Free Press and later went to New York City to be the editor of a women's magazine there.



Her life was not always as easy as it seemed because at the age of fifteen, she became completely blind in one eye and suffered bouts of temporary blindness in the other occasionally. Not only was she a writer and poet but she was also an accomplished artist like her father and used a variety of mediums including crayon, pastels and oils.

Charles I. Williams, Mrs. Best's brother, had an office in the Callahan Building. She would frequently visit him there and would often be in the elevator that Paul Laurence Dunbar operated. She recognized the talents of Mr. Dunbar and was influential in bringing it to the public eye.

Socially she was a charter member of the Friday Afternoon Club that was organized in 1893 by women in the Dayton View neighborhood. Their civic endeavors included securing better sanitation in distressed neighborhoods, establishing a Federal Children's Bureau and Pure

Food Law, improvement of the Girls' Industrial School and many more.

In 1902 at the Young Women's League, Mrs. Eva Best presented "a clever farce" she called "The New Woman's Hour." She recited her own poems and sang her own songs accompanied by Miss Grace Ziegler on the piano. The Parker School located at the corner of First and St. Clair streets opened in February 1904 and Mrs. Best sang a dedication ode.

Two verses of Eva Best's poem,
"Beautiful Thoughts"

Think beautiful thoughts and set them adrift
On Eternity's Boundless sea;
Let their burden be pure, let their white sails
lift,
And away from you the comforting gift
Of your heartfelt sympathy.

For a beautiful thought is a beautiful thing.
And out on the infinite tide
May meet, and touch and tenderly bring
To the sick, and the weary, and sorrowing
A solace so long denied.

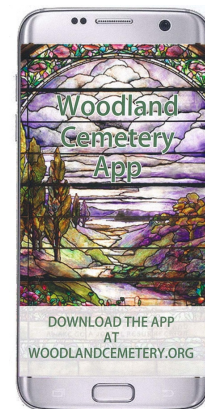


Eva Williams Best died on April 17, 1925
at the age of 74. She is buried in
Section 10 Lot 1787.

As Spring comes upon us, you can take your own walking tour at the cemetery or a virtual tour from the comfort of your couch by visiting our website at: woodlandcemetery.org/tours.

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Please consider making a first time donation or an annual donation to the Chapel Fund. Donate on our secure website by clicking below or click on the check to receive a donation form to mail in.

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