

The Window

Behind all great men and behind all great monuments, there must be a story, but seldom is there found a story so vivid, so real, so touching as the one behind the success and deeds of William Woodward. The founder and benefactor of our school was a man who must at this very moment rest peacefully and happy, knowing that the work he began is still going on and that his labor has been made immortal by the boys and girls, men and women, who honor and respect his memory because they appreciate the benefits made possible to them by his works and his effort.

The beautiful window depicting the landing of William Woodward at Cincinnati in 1791 was dedicated to William and Abigail Cutter Woodward, our illustrious founders, by the Alumnae Association in 1911. They felt the need of some tangible, visible memorial, which would be seen and appreciated down through all the years. Which one of us, teacher or student, hasn't stood in front of this masterpiece and felt the power and determination and hope behind the heroic figure in the prow of the boat?

Let us go back a few years and see who this young man was, and what his hopes and accomplishments were. William Woodward was born near Plainfield, Connecticut, in March, 1768, son of a liberty-loving father and a mother who was a member of one of the most prominent families of that day. Here, in the hills of Connecticut, close to nature, William Woodward spent his childhood and youth. But at the age of twenty-three, there came the call of the West, the irresistible urge to see what lay beyond, and off he went, by foot and horseback, and finally by flatboat. He came down the "Beautiful River" as the Indians called our Ohio River, until he came to the end of his journey and turned the prow of the boat toward the Ohio side, landing near the present foot of Broadway. So we see him pictured in the memorial window. Let us follow him off the boat and into the small settlement comprised of a few log cabins on the bluff just above the river. The name of the settlement had just been changed from Losantiville to Cincinnati.

The year after his landing, Mr. Woodward bought a farm from his brother, the property now embraced by the streets Hunt, Liberty, Main, and Broadway. This land he cleared with his own hands, building a small house from the lumber of his flatboat. Then he made a living by farming, surveying, tanning, and trading. By simple, frugal living and hard work, in the pursuit of these humble, honest occupations, he acquired honor, dignity, and a fair competency.

Seldom is a story complete, or a great man great, without somewhere, some time in his life, a great woman wielding her influence. In the life of William Woodward she was Abigail Cutter, of small stature, fair features, dainty figure, and of a kind, tender, and generous heart. Mr. Woodward was Miss Cutter's guardian after her father had been carried away by Indians. His character, modesty, and tender sympathy became manifest to Miss Cutter through the close companionship of legal condition and in 1803 she became his wife. He, thirty-five; she, eighteen—they brought together their love and worldly goods, and lived in security and contentment. She brought to him all the love of her strong nature and the generosity of her noble heart. Several children were born, but again, as in the death of Mrs. Woodward's father and mother, tragedy struck and one by one they were laid to rest in their little graves.

The love and help which they could have given to their own children, Mr. and Mrs. Woodward gave to others in the form of a free school for the education of poor children whose parents or guardians could not afford to pay for an education for them. In November of 1826, Mr. and Mrs. Woodward executed a deed conveying seven acres of land to trustees, for the purpose of building and supporting such a school. Later another acre was given and the actual work of building was begun in 1830. Mr. Woodward himself hauled away the first load of earth excavated from the cellar. On the twenty-fourth day of October, 1831, just one hundred and fourteen years ago, the school building was opened and dedicated. Mr. Woodward attended the ceremony and received the praises and congratulations of his friends.

In the few years of life left to him, he must have been a very happy man, content in the knowledge of good deeds well done as he beheld the fruits and visible evidences of his benefactions. On the twenty-fourth day of January, 1833, at the age of sixty-five, William Woodward passed away to a better world to receive due honor and reward. He rests from his labors but his works do live on, bringing inspiration and benefit to those who follow.

Let us look again at the window, or picture in our minds the figure in the prow of the boat, landing in a strange but conquerable land. He knew not what was ahead, but went in and found out and was the victor. And to us who follow he has left something that has been handed down year after year, to class upon class, and that is the Woodward Spirit. It shall always live, because there is more behind it than power and possessions. There is behind it those things which conquer evil, and hate, and prejudice, and live because men like William Woodward lived, and because women like his wife lived, and are now living to keep alive and proud the Spirit of Woodward.