

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian

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Save all you can,
Give all you can."

Miss Williams

Claire Williams was a daughter of attorney Benjamin E. and Ruth Blanchard Williams. She graduated from Albion High School at the age of fourteen and attended Brockport Normal. Following her graduation, she Smith College in two years. In 1910 she completed the usual four-year course in Brockport Normal she then studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, at Yale University and at Radcliffe College where she obtained an M.A. degree. In 1924 she joined the Albion High School faculty and became one of the most outstanding and best-loved teachers who possessed a faith in the individual child understanding and his nature. She achieved a reputation for teaching, in particular, spoken English and developed great skill in producing and directing plays. She also had an unusual talent for writing prose, poetry and plays. She also had an Mrs. Francis Blake, Sr. wrote upon her death "The Williams home was always a delightful place to visit and one was charmed with the sparkling conversation, the scintillating wit, and vast fund of information on several subject that one found there."

Always an individualist, Claire Williams' credo of life is contained in an essay she wrote several years before her death. Entitled "What I Think About the Business of Living" is presented here in much edited form. "I have the deepest respect for the character and teachings of Jesus; I believe that if the world followed those teachings, wars and the worst forms of social injustice could be done away with. I believe that if each of us followed his precepts in our personal life we might enjoy...greatly increased personal happiness. But so far as Christian theology goes, I have no use for it. I believe in Christian ethics. I do not believe in Christian eschatology. "I believe in life....you succeed or you fail, in your relationship with people, according to the qualities you select and emphasize for attentpn. Focus on meanness, on cruelty, stupidity and you can see them almost to the exclusion of all other qualities. Focus your attention on what is noble, wise, kind and brave and you will find yourself cheered and heartened by a brave show of human goodness."

To be aware of the working of one's mind is an experience worth the having. To have been one of the race that bred Homer, Shakespeare and Beethoven is, I think a very great privilege....the human body is the most interesting and efficient machine....it works; it plays; it stands punishment and abuse; it is self repairing.....and is the means of much delightful and interesting experience. The awareness of one's strength or one's skill is perhaps the most enduringly gratifying sensation one can experience. To have known it is a rare blessing.

"There is very much for us to see and know and do and feel. To the extent that we keep our minds alert to seize and enjoy our share of these common chances that life offers all of us, we find life a splendid and dearly prized possession; we are taking it for what I believe it was meant to be -- an opportunity for all sorts of experience that it is worth almost any price to have had."

"There is a deeper hell than that in which one is tormented. It is the hell in which one is bored."