

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

JOYCE GRIGSBY WILLIAMS

(October 25, 1922 – November 6, 2013)

Joyce Williams was a historian and a university professor who practiced several ways to bring the past into the present and to take what she and her colleagues knew to people beyond the Bloomington campus and all over the state. She wrote a book on Anglo-American diplomacy in the first decades of the last century, and collaborated in the writing of another book on the negotiations among American, British, and Native American interests on the Indiana-Ohio frontier at the end of the eighteenth century. She conceived and collaborated in the publication of a volume of documents concerning the trial of Lizzie Borden, remembered in print, on stage, and in music, dance, and song, as the accused murderer of her parents. She prepared and delivered a series of lectures on the wives of American presidents, for which she won a national award. And as an administrator in the Bloomington division of the now dissolved School of Continuing Studies she taught and enrolled other faculty members to teach many courses in the Mini University, in retirement communities and public libraries, and in living rooms and other settings in Bloomington and other towns in central and southern Indiana.

Professor Williams was born on October 25, 1922 in Poseyville, Indiana. She attended school in Poseyville, along with Edgar Williams, who was to become her husband of sixty-eight years, a professor in the School of Business in Bloomington, and a vice president of the university. Joyce, and her husband-to-be, went on from Poseyville to study at the University of Evansville, where she majored in education and was twice honored as Phi Zeta Sweetheart, “the prettiest, smartest, and nicest woman on campus,” as the writer of her obituary in the Bloomington *Herald-Times* put it. She graduated in 1943 with a degree in Education (cum laude), and taught in elementary schools until she moved after the war with her husband to Bloomington. In Bloomington she taught in the University High School and began studying for a master’s degree in education, which she earned in 1950. She then paused in her studies and teaching to attend to her two children, before returning to the campus take a master’s degree (1966) and a doctorate in history (1971).

Joyce Williams’ doctoral dissertation is a study of diplomacy conducted principally by Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary of Great Britain, and Colonel Edward M. House, a private citizen whose colonelcy was conferred by a Texas governor for political rather than military services. House was a close friend of President Woodrow Wilson, and he acted in England and on the continent as a kind of minister without portfolio to try to mediate an end to the 1914 European war. After America’s entrance into the war in 1917, and during the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, House continued his relationship with Grey and British diplomats, often in the interest of assuring the participation of the United States in the League of Nations. These failures of House’s diplomacy make for a rather sad story of the frustration of American ambition and idealism in the arenas of European *realpolitik* and American isolationism, and Professor

Williams tells it well, with sympathy and a shrewd understanding of the characters and motives of Wilson as well as House and Grey. In her dissertation, and in the book she later made from it (*Colonel House and Sir Edward Grey: A Study in Anglo-American Diplomacy*: University Press of America, 1984), she showed her command of the tools of historical research, drawing extensively on material in the British Public Record Office, the Library of Congress and the National Archives, and on memoranda and personal papers in British and American libraries as well as on the biographies and published memoirs of the principals in her story.

In the epigraph to *Diplomacy on the Indiana-Ohio Frontier 1783-1791* (Indiana University Bicentennial Committee, 1976), which she wrote with Jill E. Farrelly, Joyce Williams writes, "The American Indians and the white settlers had more in common than one might suppose. They both wanted a home. The trouble began because they wanted the same home." The book carefully describes the "three-cornered conflict," as the authors call it, between the British, who wanted to preserve their treaties with native Americans in order to protect their own trading sites, the native American tribes, and the Americans, who could not find a way to accommodate the claims of the tribes during the steadily increasing rush of western expansion which had become part of the new nation's identity. The book calls on a rich archive of published and unpublished public records in England and the United States, memoirs, campaign narratives, biographies, and books and essays on the history of these decades. Included in these documents are addresses by leaders of the midwestern and eastern tribes whose eloquence and dignity bring forward the poignancy of the trouble named by Joyce Williams in her epigraph.

In 1971, upon the completion of her doctorate, Joyce Williams joined the Division of Continuing Studies in Bloomington, eventually serving as an associate director of the Division. Her principal work became the choosing of topics and teachers for non-credit courses offered to adults in the Mini University, at Meadowwood, and in programs convened off-campus, often beyond Bloomington. In a tribute on the occasion of her retirement, some of the many faculty members whom she enlisted in these programs praised her gift for "choosing topics that will interest a particular group and the ability to gauge the depth with which that particular topic ought to be treated." Just as important, she quickly built up and steadily enlarged a cadre of university faculty members who got very good at adapting what they knew and how they taught to the various interests and experiences of adults who brought their own knowledge to the topics.

Joyce Williams herself taught courses in these programs, including a series of lectures on "Early Twentieth-Century Presidents and Their Wives," which won a national award and an invitation to participate in a forum on the subject attended by the wives of some former presidents. Professor Williams' early address to this topic was her portrait in the book on House and Grey of Edith Bolling Galt Wilson, who rigidly and jealously guarded access to her husband after his incapacitating stroke in 1919. Joyce also brought into her teaching the extensive research which she and her two collaborators put into *Lizzie Borden: A Casebook of Family and Crime in the 1890s* (1980), a collection of documents (journalism, police reports, trial transcripts, interviews with people who knew something of the social geography of the

Borden's town at the turn of the last century), which is prefaced by a lucid account of the murder of Lizzie Borden's step-mother and father. In the preface to this book Joyce thanks her students in the Mini University and courses in the Continuing Studies program for their "enthusiasm and interest."

The writers of the tribute to her upon her retirement remark this reciprocity between Professor Williams' research and teaching. "It is easy to understand," they write, "how much more authoritative her publications are as a result of such efforts and experience, and how much more vibrant and immediate her courses have been to those fortunate enough to hear her lecture." The excellence of Professor Williams' teaching was recognized in 1990 by an award from the School of Continuing Studies, and in a note marking her twenty-fifth year in the Noncredit Course Program her courses were described as among the "Fastest Filled": "The rush of telephone calls requesting enrollment in a Williams course before it closes is a well-known phenomenon in the Continuing Studies office." In her skilful administration of programs in Continuing Studies, Joyce Williams also enabled and encouraged many faculty members similarly to devise new ways to make their knowledge public and so to fulfill an important office and responsibility of a state university.

In recognition of Joyce Williams' scholarship and her service to the University and its traditions of teaching and learning, we submit this resolution to the Bloomington Faculty Council and request that it be presented to the Council and be made part of its minutes.

Jean Cook, Program Director (emeritus), School of Continuing Studies
Donald Gray, Professor (emeritus), Department of English