



# The Stepping Stones News

A Publication of the Stepping Stones Foundation

FALL 2012



## A Landmark Decision: Stepping Stones Makes History

It is official: Stepping Stones is a National Historic Landmark.

On October 17, 2012 the U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the designation, culminating a detailed and highly competitive process that began when Stepping Stones was encouraged to apply by the National Parks Service. Stepping Stones will now be one in a list of only 2,527 properties throughout the country, nationally significant historic places so designated by the U.S. Department of the Interior because they possess exceptional value in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the United States.

“Each of these landmarks represents a thread in the great tapestry that tells the story of our beautiful land, our diverse culture and our nation’s rich heritage,” said Salazar. “By designating these sites as national landmarks, we help establish a conservation ethic for the 21st century and reconnect people, especially young people, to our nation’s historic and cultural heritage.” (Complete U.S. Department of the Interior press release: <http://www.doi.gov/news/pressreleases/Interior-Designates-27-New-National-Landmarks.cfm>).

Reminiscent of the strong bond between couples Bill and Lois Wilson and Dr. Bob and Anne Smith when they were alive, Dr. Bob’s Home in Akron, OH also has also been made a National Historic Landmark. Stepping Stones’ 2011 application included Dr. Bob’s Home as another relevant historic site.



While the book *Alcoholics Anonymous* was written before the couple moved to Stepping Stones, the desk it was written on is on site, and is a major draw for A.A. members and cultural historians. Wilson produced most of his other important written contributions on the property.

Realizing the parallel significance of Dr. Bob’s Home in the formation and growth of the recovery movement, the NPS solicited an application for landmark status for that property. It is gratifying that the homes of both of A.A.’s co-



*Stepping Stones, Spring, 2011*

founders have received this prestigious national recognition at the same time. (To see Stepping Stones complete nomination, go to <http://www.nps.gov/nhl/Fall11Noms/SteppingStones.pdf>.)

Designation as a National Historic Landmark brings benefits, but does not change ownership or control of Stepping Stones. The Federal Government has no role in running or maintaining the site other than monitoring and reporting on the condition of the Landmark over time. In addition to recognition of Stepping Stones’ historical significance, designation as a National Historic Landmark will provide increased access to grants and preservation opportunities as well as advice on care of historical buildings through Technical Preservation Services, a unit of the National Parks Service.

The Town of Bedford community has long taken pride in the historical significance of the local area and this designation adds to that legacy. Stepping Stones joins John Jay Homestead State Historic Site as a National Historic Landmark, both in the Town of Bedford. The area boasts a number of properties on the National Register of Historic Places including the Katonah Village Historic District, Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts, St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Katonah, Stonecrest, the Palmer-Lewis Estate, and others.

Stepping Stones Foundation’s perseverance and the support of its community have paid off. This designation underscores and institutionalizes the national historic significance of Stepping Stones and the life work of Bill and Lois Wilson.

## Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

After eight years of service to Stepping Stones, I will be stepping down as Executive Director of the organization in March 2013. It has been an honor to work with you and the Board of Trustees and I am proud of the work we have done together. Our accomplishments over the past few years have enhanced the historic home and site, secured Stepping Stones' future, and created endless possibilities for the organization to continue to grow and serve.

The most meaningful part of my years at Stepping Stones has been getting to know the personal legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson. Before coming to work for Stepping Stones I was an admirer of their professional work but I have now become, quite probably, their number one fan. Understanding how Bill and Lois lived the principles of AA is an inspiration that will guide my life. Bill Wilson exemplified love and tolerance of others in every area of his life. He was kind, modest, faithful and selfless. Lois was honest and dedicated. She was patient of others and loved drunks. Bill and Lois practiced the 12 steps in such a manner that they were always growing and changing so that they could better serve each other and God—and us! I am honored to have “known them” and hope that the whole world continues to learn about their true legacy.

The other favorite part of my experience has been getting to know all of you. The many friends who donate to Stepping Stones and those who supported the initiatives undertaken during my tenure are an inspiration. Our work together has enabled us to preserve the house and its contents for generations to come. Dedicated volunteers who give of their time and talent to help tell the story of Bill and Lois and welcome visitors to the site have brought vitality to the site and friendship to me. Whether you are a visitor, volunteer, staff member, mentor or interested reader, you have given me a treasure trove of memories and goodwill that honors the spirit of Bill and Lois, and of Stepping Stones.

I look forward to working with you over the remaining months, and wish the very best to the legacy of Bill and Lois Wilson and to all of you.

With best wishes,

Annah Perch, Executive Director

## Library of Congress Includes Big Book in “Books That Shaped America”

*“Once the spark that was to become Alcoholics Anonymous had been struck, I abandoned myself to these ideas and practices ...Feverishly, I started passing on these ideas to other alcoholics who in turn passed them to others. By this chain reaction little groups of alcoholics began to recover. After three years' experience we published a book called Alcoholics Anonymous showing in detail the practice of our principles and containing 30 stories of recovery written by our own members.” —Bill Wilson*

That book, more widely known as “The Big Book,” has gone on to become one of the best-selling books of all time— over 30 million copies— forming the cornerstone of the Twelve-Step Program now used to treat a wide range of addictions. Recognizing that extensive influence, the U.S. Library of Congress included the Big Book in its most recent exhibition: “Books That Shaped America.” Other titles on that list include “Common Sense,” “The Federalist Papers,” “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” “How the Other Half Lives,” “Joy of Cooking,” and “On the Road,” among dozens of others.

John Cole, director of Rare Books at the Library of Congress, was not overly familiar with the Big Book when it was suggested for consideration. “We were just ‘blue-skying’ ideas with other librarians, gathering ideas for books to include,” he said.

“This title came up in our discussions and once we looked into how many copies have been published and realized that it has literally helped shape the lives of millions of people, we knew it was right for this list.”

Key -  
1 = no slip  
2 = some trouble but recovery  
3 = stayed in but failed

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On this, the table of contents of Bill Wilson's copy of the first edition Big Book, he makes notes which appear to be proposed edits for the second edition. It appears as though his strategy was to take out of the second edition all stories of alcoholics who drank again. “Key - 1=no slip; 2=some trouble but recovery; 3=stayed in but failed.”

The 88 books selected were on display at the Library of Congress throughout the summer— including a first edition copy of the Big Book. The exhibit served as the kick off for the Library's multiyear “Celebration of the Book” currently underway. “This list is a starting point,” Cole said. “It is

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# You Have a Role in Stepping Stones' Future

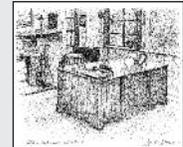
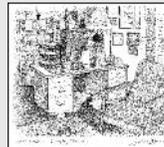
Most of you already know how impressive a visit to Stepping Stones can be. Walking through the preserved home where Bill and Lois welcomed so many seekers; viewing original letters and writings that helped bring the recovery movement to life; sitting at the very kitchen table where friend Ebby gave Bill his message of hope—these experiences teach and inspire visitors to this unique place, a place that embodies Bill and Lois' dedication to helping alcoholics and their families. Indeed, the U.S. Government recognized that significance by naming Stepping Stones as a National Historic Landmark this year.

Preservation and care of this irreplaceable legacy depends, in large part, on your contributions. Generous donations from friends, including many of you who gave in the past, have enabled Stepping Stones to make great strides in preserving and celebrating the remarkable impact Bill and Lois had on the nascent recovery movement. Thanks to donors, recent accomplishments include restoring the roof, gutters and windows; creating a master catalog of all objects; creating a Welcome Center, and embarking on an ambitious Archives Preservation Project. Each of these advances is possible only because of you. Thank you.

Our work continues. The Archives Preservation Project is well underway, but an additional \$100,000 is needed. Preserving "Wit's End," the free-standing studio where *Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions* and *AA Comes of Age* were written (at the same desk on which the "Big Book" was written) is a priority that will require significant funding. Battling the effects of time on the historic home and irreplaceable objects in the collection presents ongoing financial challenges as well. We need your help.

Please consider a financial gift to Stepping Stones. Your unrestricted gift will help ensure that the Wilsons' legacy of hope touches another generation.

For contributions of \$100 or more made before December 31, 2012, we are pleased to offer a keepsake thank you gift: a pencil print drawing of a special scene at Stepping Stones. For a gift of \$250 or more, you will receive a set of five pencil prints, depicting all five special scenes at Stepping Stones.



For friends of Stepping Stones who are interested in providing long-term support, Stepping Stones accepts Planned Giving gifts: appreciated assets, including stock; gift annuities, or gifts specified in a will for posthumous donation. Contact Stepping Stones or your financial advisor to discuss how a long-term gift to preserve Bill and Lois' legacy might fit with your financial planning.

To all friends and supporters of Stepping Stones, we thank you.

## Your generous contribution today will help protect Stepping Stones' heritage – and pass it on.

Complete the donation form below and make a contribution today. A gift to the 2012 Archives Preservation Project in the name of a friend, loved one or family member is a meaningful holiday gift. Each recipient of a holiday donation will receive a card noting that this gift has been made in their honor.

- Yes, I will do my part to support the campaign and protect the archives at Stepping Stones in the amount of**  
 \$25  \$50  \$100  \$500  Other amount \_\_\_\_\_ .  \$ \_\_\_\_\_ per month until your goal is realized.
- I would like to give \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_'s name in the spirit of the holidays.**  
**Please send gift acknowledgement to this address:** \_\_\_\_\_
- My check, made out to Stepping Stones, is enclosed.  Please charge the above amount to my credit card:  
Visa / MasterCard / AmEx (circle one) \_\_\_\_\_  
Account Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_
- Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_
- I prefer my gift to be recognized anonymously.  
 No thank you gift necessary. Please apply the entire amount of my gift to historic preservation.

Please mail this form and your contribution to Stepping Stones, 62 Oak Road, Katonah, New York 10536  
or make it on-line at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org).

*Thank you for your support!*

# Archives Preservation — a Critical Project — Continues

With hundreds of thousands of letters, diaries, papers, photos, first edition manuscripts and other memorabilia, the Stepping Stones archives represent the intellectual heart and soul of Bill and Lois Wilson’s legacy. The Archives Preservation Project, begun in 2010 to safeguard the collection in perpetuity, is well underway with more than 65 percent of microfilming work completed. Once all items have been preserved on film, digital files will be created which will enable an increased ability to search the entire Stepping Stones archives.

As work progressed over the past year, the project has expanded: carefully sorting through boxes, files and cartons from the archives uncovered more papers and items to be filmed. That’s good news for ensuring robust and significant

historical archives—which include 227,000 documents and 7,800 photos. After all images are recorded on microfilm, each item will be converted from the microfilm to digital form for computer storage.

Generous contributions from Stepping Stones’ supporters, including an anonymous donor’s significant matching gift, have enabled this project to get off to a strong start, with more than half the needed funds already raised. But there is more work to be done. Your unrestricted contribution to Stepping Stones will help support this effort and further Lois Wilson’s true intention in preserving Stepping Stones: to promote the understanding of alcoholism and the importance of Alcoholics Anonymous and Al-Anon Family Groups.

## Archives Gems

An unexpected gift of the archives preservation project has been the opportunity to comb through the archives page by page. During this process a trove of gems have been discovered, such as this, which depicts Bill and Lois Wilson and their continual practice of the 11th step:

In a folder clipped together and labeled “uplift” by Lois, she writes, “Morning prayer said together for years, but written down in the spring of 1970 when Bill was not too well. Bill often changed the wording and sometimes they were very beautiful. But the basic thoughts were always the same.”

### 1. Bill writes: “Morning Prayer By Bill.

O Lord, we thank Thee that Thou art: that we are from Everlasting to Everlasting. Blessed be thy Holy Name, and all of thy benefactors unto us, of light of love and of service –

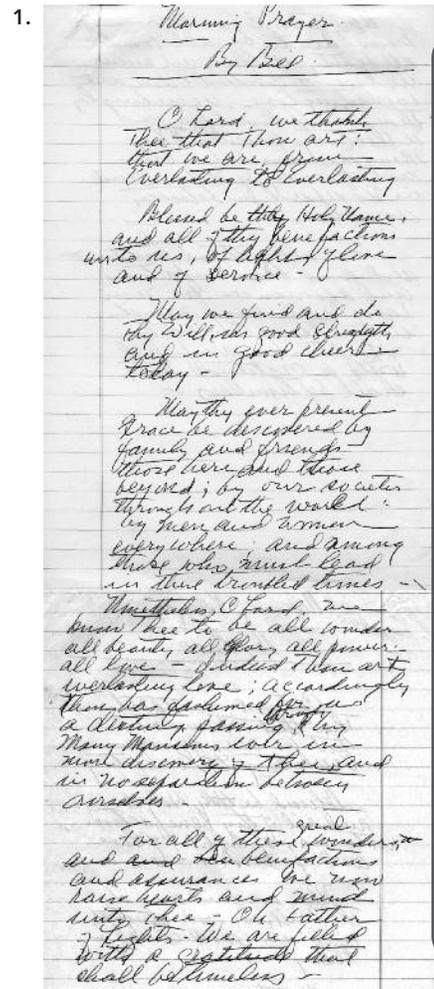
May we find and do Thy will in good strength and in good cheer, today-

May thy ever present Grace be discovered by family and friends – those here and those beyond; by our societies throughout the world: by men and women everywhere and among those who must lead during these difficult times.

Nonetheless, O Lord, we know Thee to be all wonder all beauty, all Glory all power, all love – indeed thou art everlasting love; accordingly thou has fastened for us a destiny, passing through his many mansions ever in more discovery of thee and in no separation between ourselves.

For all of these great wonders, benefactors and assurances we now raise hearts and mind unto thee – oh Father of Lights – We are filled with a gratitude that shall be timeless.”

2. Another archives find is Lois’ diary kept during her and Bill’s “vacation” to the Yucatan between February 5 and March 17, 1959. These trips were of critical importance to Bill and Lois as they sought the privacy and relaxation that they could never obtain even in their own home.

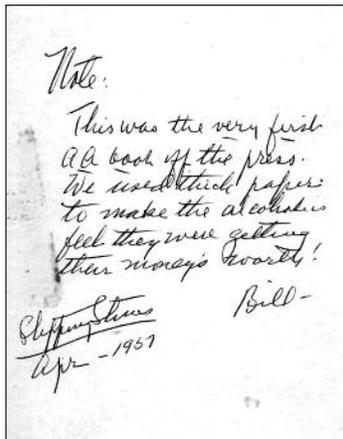


## Big Book (continued from page 2)

intended to spark a national conversation on books written by Americans that have influenced our lives. 'Alcoholics Anonymous' certainly meets that definition," he added.

The Stepping Stones archives include early drafts and manuscripts of the "Big Book" as well as the first printed copy of the book. Stepping Stones must preserve this priceless copy in perpetuity, according to the organization's mission.

An inscription Bill wrote on the flyleaf in 1957 helps explain why the book is more commonly known by its nickname. When printing the second edition, World War II paper rationing was in effect, so the book shrank in size—but the nickname remained.



"Note: This was the very first AA book off the press. We used thick paper to make the alcoholics feel they were getting their money's worth! Bill"

For more information about the Library of Congress exhibit and to comment on the books in the exhibition, visit [www.loc.gov/bookfest](http://www.loc.gov/bookfest).

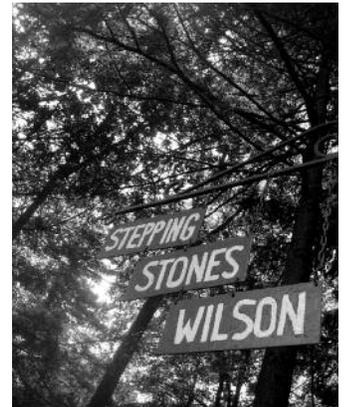
These negatives show Bill Wilson buying soda in preparation for an annual picnic, a tradition that remains today. Can our local readers name the stores and the streets?



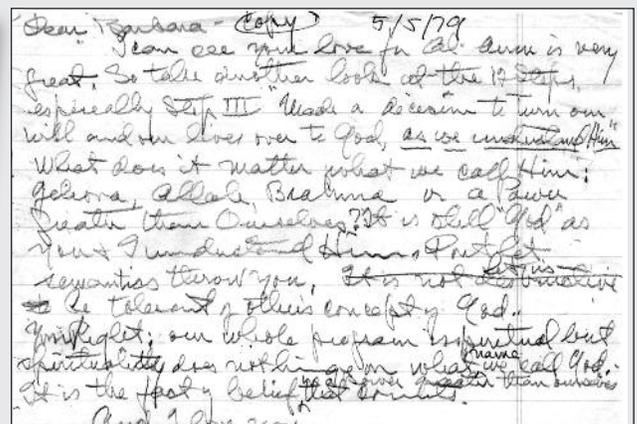
## Visiting Stepping Stones

Stepping Stones is open Monday through Saturday from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. with a guided tour each day at 1 p.m., and at other times by appointment. Reservations are strongly recommended by calling 914-232-4822, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by reserving a time on the website at [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org). Stepping Stones is open at other times by appointment.

**Stepping Stones staff will make it easy to organize a group trip.** Groups are welcome but coach buses are strictly prohibited as a means of getting to Stepping Stones. For assistance in planning your large group's trip, please call the office during regular business hours and well in advance of your visit. Your adherence to this rule will help us remain a great neighbor.



(photo: Bay Uno)



Much of the archives contain Lois' personal and professional correspondence. This might be considered a hybrid of both. A woman wrote to Lois very concerned with the use of the word God at Al-Anon meetings. Lois responded, "Dear Barbara, I can tell your love for Al-Anon is very great. So take another look at the 12 Steps, especially Step III 'Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to God as we understood Him.' What does it matter what we call Him: Jehova, Allah, Brama or a Power Greater than Ourselves?" It is still 'God' as you and I understand Him. Don't let semantics throw you. Be tolerant of others concept of God. You're right: our whole program is spiritual, but spirituality does not hinge on what name we call God. It is the fact of belief in a power greater than ourselves that counts. And I love you." May 5, 1979.

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For a list of current Stepping Stones donors, please email [info@steppingstones.org](mailto:info@steppingstones.org)  
or call 914-232-4822 with your request.

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For Stepping Stones' Calendar of Events, visit [www.steppingstones.org](http://www.steppingstones.org).

## The Stepping Stones News

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or visit [steppingstones.org](http://steppingstones.org).



*The earliest known photo of Stepping Stones, 1944.*

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