



SINCE 1841

WOODLAND

HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM



"A Beautiful Thought is a Beautiful Thing"

Eva Williams was born in Cincinnati in 1851 to a family of artists. Her mother, Mary, was both a poet and a painter. Her father, John Insko Williams, was an artist of some renown—in 1849 he painted "The Grand Moving Panorama of the Bible", the first such panoramic painting exhibited in the United States. Even her little brother, architect Charles Insko Williams, approached his work with an artistic instinct.

Like her mother, Eva was both a poet and an artist proficient in a variety of mediums including crayon, pastels and oils. Life was not completely smooth sailing, however—at the age of fifteen, Eva became completely blind in one eye; occasionally suffering bouts of temporary blindness in the other, which affected her work with visual mediums.

In 1869, Eva married William H. Best, the proprietor of a well-known jewelry store in



Above: Landscape in Ohio by J. Insko Williams (1867);
courtesy of the Indianapolis Museum of Art

Dayton. That same year, she became a published writer—by anonymously submitting a poem called “The Fortune” to the Dayton Journal. When she was told that her poem had been well-received, Eva admitted to being the author.

Eva’s written work grew to include poems, plays, comedy sketches, monologues, ballads and more. Her work was regularly published by newspapers and magazines both within Dayton and farther afield. In 1890, Mrs. Best went to Detroit to serve as editor for 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.

Charles Insko Williams, Eva’s brother, had an office in the Callahan Building. When visiting him, she regularly rode in the elevator operated by a young Paul Laurence Dunbar. Eva recognized Dunbar’s poetic talent, and helped bring his work to the public eye.

Socially, Eva was a charter member of the Friday Afternoon Club, 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.

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



Above: Eva Williams Best in theatrical costume, published by *the Dayton Daily News*, 3/15/1914.



Above: Christmas ad for H. Best & Son's jewelry store, published by *the Dayton Daily News*, 12/19/1904.



DON'T FORGET
 Winter clean-off
 begins 1st week of
 March!

2026 Adornment
 calendars available!
 See Main Office!



Tours & Events:

END OF WINTER
BIRD WALK

[End of Winter Bird Walk](#)

WOODLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MURDER & MAYHEM
 SINCE 1841
 REGISTER ONLINE: WOODLANDCEMETERY.ORG/EVENTS

[History Mystery Murder & Mayhem](#)

[Click here to explore our full calendar of events!](#)



Office Hours

Monday - Friday: 8a - 5p
Closed Saturday & Sunday

Contact Us!

For questions about pre-planning, funeral services, or memorial design:

[Request an Appointment](#)

(Non-urgent) general questions:

[Contact Us](#)

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With gratitude,

Woodland Arboretum Foundation





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HISTORIC CEMETERY & ARBORETUM

Committed to providing dignified and caring funeral services and burial options to families of all faiths since 1841.

Woodland Cemetery and Arboretum

118 Woodland Ave.
Dayton, OH 45409
woodlandcemetery.org

Beautiful. Timeless. Still Available...



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