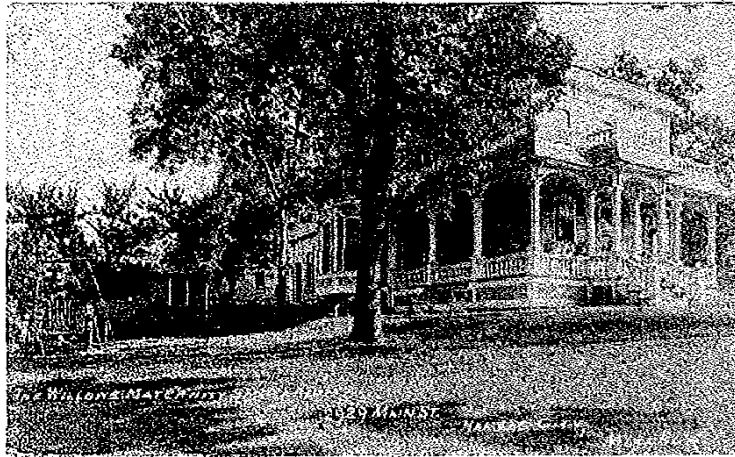


## *The Willows Maternity Sanitarium*



Pictured on a photographic post card in black and white, and dated Nov. 5, 1909, is the Willows Maternity Sanitarium, 2929 Main Street, Kansas City, Missouri. The sanitarium was actually a home for unwed pregnant women in a day when the privacy of such an institution was sought. Such situations were not even discussed in polite society. The Willows was founded by Edwin and Cora May Haworth in their white frame home at 2929 Main. It was opened as a refuge for unwed mothers. A young woman who found she had been born and adopted at the Willows visited Kansas City in June 1975 and gave an interview to *The Star*.

"Let's get it straight that it was no baby mill," she said. "They were fine upstanding people who ran the home and only the most socially prominent Midwestern women were taken in. It had a lot of snob appeal. It was like the Ritz or Waldorf of homes for unwed mothers. It cost more to go there than it did to attend a finishing school. Pregnant girls were met at the railroad station and escorted in limousines to the steps of the Willows and remained up to eight months. Operation of the Willows was very strict. Not just every unwed mother could get in. They were recommended by prominent doctors throughout the U.S."

At one time as many as 102 young women occupied the facility and as many as 125 babies were in the nursery, awaiting adoption. Some of the original staff included Dr. John W. Kepner, obstetrician from 1905 to 1931; Miss Hannah Dore, secretary; Miss Ada Jagers, head nurse; Charles Laybourne, maintenance engineer, and Dr. Frank Neff, pediatrician.

At the closing and razing of the Willows in 1969, records of its 64 years of operation were piled in the back yard and burned. It was the end of an era. (*Kansas City Times* May 7, 1982)