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## CULTURE

# The Cabbage Patch: Local authors profile a complicated humanitarian in new book

By [LISA HORNING](#) | July 21, 2018 10:00 am



Linda Raymond (center) and her husband, Bill Ellison, sign copies of their book, "The Two Lives and One Passion of Louise Marshall." | Courtesy

We usually like our heroes to come in neat packages. Humanitarians should be sweet, loving people who never turn away a person in need. But that's not always the case. People are complicated and have faults. Louise Marshall, founder of The Cabbage Patch Settlement House, was no exception.

The husband-and-wife writing team of Bill Ellison and Linda Raymond have written a thorough exploration of this Louisville humanitarian in “[The Two Lives and One Passion of Louise Marshall, Founder of the Cabbage Patch Settlement](#).”

The pair had already written one book together, “[Like Jacob’s Well: The Very Human History of Highland Presbyterian Church](#),” which was published in 2008. While doing their research for the first book, they discovered Louise Marshall.

“My husband, Bill, decided that when we had the chance, we ought to look deeper,” Raymond said. “And so later we started poking around again, not really knowing if we were going to like her or if we could find enough to justify a biography. The fact is, we still don’t know if we like her.”

But the pair lucked out: Right around the time they started doing research, [The Cabbage Patch Settlement House](#), which is still in operation, donated all of Marshall’s old papers to the [Filson Historical Society](#), giving Ellison and Raymond amazing access to Marshall’s life.

## Louise Marshall, Victorian heiress

Marshall was a Louisville heiress, the direct descendent of Chief Justice John Marshall. Her father was a lawyer, and her great-grandfather, John Veech, owned Indian Hills plantation.



“Her father was not a nice guy,” Raymond said. “He was very Presbyterian, very straight-laced. He was, some people said ... mean. He expected a lot of his

Louise Marshall’s passport photo, 1918. She traveled to Europe to volunteer for the

children. So, it was not really a happy home.”

Marshall started out at private schools, then got transferred to Louisville Girls School when it first opened, but she just hated it, Raymond said. There were too many girls, and it too crowded.

## Red Cross. | Photo from “The Two Lives and One Passion of Louise Marshall”

During those early teenage years something happened, Raymond said. Marshall suffered some sort of attack that left her traumatized, but nobody knows what it was. But her family sent her off to the East Coast to recover.

# The Cabbage Patch

The neighborhood just west of St. James Court in Louisville was once known as the Cabbage Patch, a rural-industrial area with many low-income immigrants and minorities. It got its name from a book by Alice Hegan Rice, a Louisville author who published the book “Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch,” a best-selling story about a poor but cheerful widow who had five children. The family overcame hardships, at times with the help of a wealthy woman who spent her time helping the poor.

When Marshall was back home, her father forced her into teaching Sunday school at a mission organized by Second Presbyterian Church. The mission was just past St. James Court, and Marshall taught little boys. She found out she loved it, and when she was 22, she created the Cabbage Patch Settlement House. She ended up dedicating 70 years of her life to the people of the Patch. “She basically would do anything for those kids,” Raymond said.

But Marshall wasn’t all sweetness and light. While she created an amazing organization that worked miracles for the families of the Cabbage Patch, she could be a terror to her employees. If she decided to fire someone, red roses would be delivered to their desks — something that these days would get you dragged into HR or an ugly lawsuit.

“One the one hand, she had the life of a wealthy young person,” Raymond said. “On the other hand, she immersed

herself in the sights and smells and hardships of the Cabbage Patch.”

During the Depression, she lived at the Patch. “She slept on a cot wrapped in an army blanket under a bare light bulb, and she taught grown men to scrub floors so that they could get jobs with her wealthy friends doing odd jobs around their houses.”

## No charity

Though Marshall was obviously a humanitarian, she did not believe in charity. She made people work for what they got.

“So if somebody needed food or clothing during the Depression, she had it for them, but they had to do something for it,” Raymond said. “The gym at the Cabbage Patch was cleaned, and cleaned and cleaned again, so that someone could earn a quarter for food or clothing.”



Louise Marshall in 1980. | Courtesy

She was fearless when it came to protecting her children, Raymond said. “She would break up a fight, she would bring drunks home to their husbands or wives, she would face down cops who were chasing a kid in the Cabbage Patch,” Raymond said. “If the police were interested in tracking down a pedophile who was endangering children, she’d go after them. She’d help track ’em down.”

One boy found out the hard way that Marshall meant business. He dropped out of school. She got a large, burly friend to help her look for him, found him in a stable on 11th Street, which was at that time “a very inelegant neighborhood,” Raymond said. “So she dragged him out and sent him back to school,

and employed in the Cabbage Patch through his high school years, then even sent him to college, and paid his tuition.”

Marshall worked hard to keep kids in school, to teach them good living, to help them succeed in life. In 1971, the University of Louisville gave Marshall an honorary degree. “They estimated that she had touched 100,00 lives,” Raymond said. “We think that’s an understatement because she unquestionably saved the lives of many people from certain death. I can’t tell you the number of people we found who said: ‘I don’t know what I would be now. I might be a drunk, I might be a junkie, I might be in jail, she saved my life’.”

When interviewed, Raymond said, former employees were asked, “Why did you quit working for Marshall?” Their answer, “Because I hated her!” “Then why did you go back?” “Because I loved her.”

Raymond and Ellison will present the book at 2 p.m. Sunday, July 22, at the Cabbage Patch Settlement House, 1413 S. Sixth St.

## **LISA HORNUNG**

Lisa Hornung a native of Louisville and has worked in local media for more than 15 years as a writer and editor. Before that she worked as a writer, editor and photographer for community newspapers in Kansas, Ohio and Kentucky. She has a bachelor’s degree in journalism from the University of Georgia, and after a 20-year career in journalism, she obtained a master’s degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University in 2016.



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