

NEWS RELEASE: Moon Block Receives Funding

On September 7, 2007, the United States Senate passed the Transportation, Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Appropriations bill by a vote of 88-7. This bill includes a commitment of \$1,000,000 for the Moon Block Project in Red Cloud. The bill was supported by Nebraska Senators Chuck Hagel and Ben Nelson.

Below is a description of the Moon Block Project:

The Moon Block Project--\$1,000,000—This project will restore a building listed on the National Historic Registry and connected to the life and writings of Willa Cather, one of the most recognized American writers of the 20th century. Built in 1886, the Moon Block occupies nearly half a city block in the business district of Red Cloud, Nebraska, and shares a common wall with the newly restored Red Cloud Opera House. Restoring this historic building will provide an assurance of the long-term health of the Opera House; secure a much needed environmentally controlled archive in which to maintain historic photographs, papers, and archival items related to Cather and her writings; provide additional book store and office space for the Cather Foundation; provide a site for new businesses that will focus particularly on the tourism industry of Red Cloud, spurring much needed economic development; and preserve a historic building on Red Cloud's famous Webster Street. If not repaired, the Moon Block will eventually have to be torn down, leaving a large, gaping space adjacent to the newly restored Opera House in the business district of the community. However, once restored, the Moon Block will be a repository for nationally recognized treasures and a beacon to the burgeoning tourism of the state. Willa Cather is an important cultural icon, representing the finest that Nebraska has to offer its own citizens and the nation.

The Moon Block was build just three years after Willa Cather's family arrived in Nebraska. The completion of such a structure would have provided much excitement in the community of Red Cloud in 1886 and most certainly captured Willa Cather's interest. It was here that Cather visited the office of Dr. McKeeby, called Dr. Archie in *The Song of the Lark*. The Moon Block is also an important site in Cather's novel, *A Lost Lady*.