

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXXI, No. 1

Editor, Mildred R. Bennett

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

## Featured Artist for 1987 Spring Conference

Julie Harris, one of the most versatile stars on the American stage, has played everything from contemporary drama to classic tragedy to musical comedy during the course of her distinguished career. Miss Harris now stars as Lilimae Clements in "Knots Landing," a popular television program. This year she is giving monologues on Charlotte Bronte and Emily Dickinson at the universities around the Los Angeles area. Her presence in Red Cloud comes from her great love of Willa Cather's work.

Miss Harris has received five Tony Awards, most recently for *The Belle of Amherst*, in which she also made her London debut. Her fourth Tony and a Drama Desk Award came from her performance of *The Last of Mrs. Lincoln*.



From her work on Broadway in *And Miss Reardon Drinks a Little* and *Forty Carats* she won her third Tony.

As the lonely twelve-year-old Frankie Adams in *The Member of the Wedding* she first gained national attention, winning both the New York Drama Critics' Circle and Donaldson Awards. As the bohemian Sally Bowles in *I Am a Camera*, she won her first Tony. Her performance as Joan of Arc in *The Lark* won her five top acting awards, including a Tony and an honorary Master of Arts degree from Smith College. She also has honorary doctorates from Ithaca College and Wayne State University.

Miss Harris, a native of Grosse Pointe, Michigan, trained for the stage at the Perry-Mansfield Theatre Workshop in Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

## Twenty-fifth Anniversary of Dedication

Please enjoy the words of John G. Neihardt when he dedicated the Garber Bank building. The ceremony took place May 26, 1962. Miss Elsie Cather and Mrs. Jessica Cather Auld attended the celebration.

In dedicating this memorial to Willa Cather, great woman, great literary artist, who once was one of ours and now belongs to the great world and to Time, it is well that we should emphasize for ourselves the significance of what we are doing here today.

It is usual I believe to regard such ceremonies as being concerned with honor paid to the dead, and yet

those whom we call the dead can need nothing that we who linger here a little while can give. And surely in that far country of the Immortals where her spirit dwells our praise would seem at best a feeble thing. If, as most of us no doubt believe, death is only our inadequate concept of the change whereby we pass into a larger phase of life, then how slight is any gift that we might offer to those before us — save love alone; and its value would be wholly in the giving. Just as it is for us the living and for the living who shall follow us, generation after generation, that we set this Willa Cather Memori-

al against the flowing years lest we forget the precious heritage that is ours through her.

Here where the girl first dreamed the dreams that led to greatness; here where so many of the people of the living world she built in story moved briefly in the flesh; here now, in humility and gratitude, we dedicate this reminder of our debt to her.

*Register  
Early . . .*

**Meal Reservations  
Might Be Limited!**

**Guest Vocalist:  
Opera Singer  
Marshall Christensen**

Marshall Christensen, a graduate of the University of Nebraska School of Music, studied with an opera coach in California for a year before entering the Armed Services. In Lincoln, he sang in musicals and concerts, acting as baritone soloist at the First Plymouth Church for four years. While serving with the U.S. Army, he sang as soloist with Army bands and Special Services in the 4th and 5th Army areas.

Upon his discharge he lived in Minneapolis and St. Paul where he performed in opera and concert productions with major musical ensembles throughout the Twin Cities area. As a baritone soloist with the 3M Symphony Orchestra for thirteen years, he sang in concert productions and on tour in adjoining states. Active soloist in churches and synagogues, he participated in musical circles in Minneapolis and St. Paul for over twenty years.

Christensen, now in farming and farm management in Nebraska, still finds time to do some performing in local productions as well as in area churches. His latest stage performance was with the Minden Community Players in the role of Melchior in "Amahl and the Night Visitors." Currently he sings in the role of Tevye in "Fiddler on the Roof." The Minden Community Players will stage this production in early April.

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**Literary Issue  
Call for Papers**

The Editor for the special literary issue this fall needs to have your papers in hand with time enough to make suggestions so that you may correct or change your own material. This necessity for time demands that your articles on Cather should be in our hands by July 1, 1987. Please feel free to submit your ideas and your poetry. The only requirement as to subject



With support and encouragement from the Cather family of Virginia, the Virginia Highway Department placed this sign marking Willow Shade. Our thanks to Morris Cather for the photo and information.

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matter is that you should open some new vista on Cather's work or shed new light on work already done.

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**Book Brings New  
Concepts**

*Willa Cather: The Emerging Voice*, Sharon O'Brien, New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987, pp. 464. \$24.95 plus \$2.50 shipping and handling.

Although some Cather scholars may not agree with Miss O'Brien's basic assumption, she does make clear, and properly so, that Cather rewrote the Western myth wherein bold, sometimes brutal and insensitive men conquered the West. For Cather the women who intuitively cherished the land made it yield fruit and grain. Her heroine, Alexandra in *O Pioneers!* brought forth the bounty of the land by her intelligent love and care. Cather would make a similar comparison in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* when she contrasts the Indian's and the white man's way with the land.

**Willa Cather:  
The World and The Parish**

The theme for the Third National Seminar, June 14-20, 1987, will focus upon interpreting Cather's fiction within broad literary traditions and exploring literary connections she made between her Nebraska parish and the world. In planning the program around this theme, we are able to build upon successful aspects of previous seminars and to make changes to utilize our resources even more effectively. Because the demand has proven so strong, we will increase our enrollment limit. Since we wish to draw more fully upon expertise of participants, we have invited seminarians to submit papers, with those selected to be presented in special sessions during the week.

Though the specific humanities discipline upon which this project will be based is literature, it is broadly inclusive in its treatment of that literature. The seminar theme, "the world and the parish," will focus questions on how peoples and places relate to one another, what values they have in common, and what values distinguish them from one another. Formal treatment of that theme draws upon a broad range of humanities disciplines: the Cather biographer James Woodress will interpret ways Cather developed in her American setting; Sharon O'Brien from Dickinson College will place

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Miss O'Brien's book, well researched and documented, will bring new concepts to Miss Cather's work. One section of outstanding interest shows S. S. McClure's desire to keep Cather in a managing editorial position rather than encouraging her to write fiction.

This book has to read along with Susan Rosowski's *Willa Cather: The Voyage Perilous*. The scholars present two aspects of a multi-dimensional author.

Cather in a female literary tradition and Susan Rosowski will discuss Cather in the tradition of American romanticism. A Canadian lecturer, David Stouck, will discuss ways in which Cather drew upon Russian literature; John J. Murphy will interpret Cather's treatment of Catholic materials; Jean Schwind, Earlham College, will discuss Cather's interplay of "fine" and "folk" visual art, and Lucia Woods will present her photographic interpretations, "Still and Still in the Cather World." Other lecturers will include an archivist providing background concerning historical preservation; a folklorist, Roger Welsch, telling after a banquet about the foods we have just eaten, prepared by recipes Cather used in her own life as in her writing.

Such lectures and talks are representative of the formal part of the program. As important as these will be the conversations among participants. The upcoming seminar promises to be as richly diverse as were the previous two.

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### Depot Exhibit

"Women at Work: Nebraska 1870-1940," exhibit provided by the Nebraska State Historical Society, presents a photographic collection of women's work in the late 19th and 20th centuries. It shows how women's tasks related to the family and to the community. This quotation of Cather's appears with the exhibit:

**"WILLA CATHER LAUDS  
THE PIONEER MOTHER"**

"The farmer's wife who raises a large family and cooks for them and makes their clothes and keeps house and on the side runs a truck garden and a chicken farm and a canning establishment, and thoroughly enjoys doing it all, and doing it well, contributes more to art than all the culture clubs . . ."

— Eleanor Hinsman, November 6, 1921  
*Lincoln (NE) Sunday Star*

## 32nd ANNUAL CATHER SPRING CONFERENCE Saturday, May 2, 1987

**8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon**

Registration, coffee and kolache, Cather Foundation Art Gallery and Bookstore, 326 North Webster.

**8:30 a.m.**

Mass — Grace Episcopal Church, 6th and Cedar  
Father Theron R. Hughes, Jr., officiating

**9:45 a.m.**

Mass — St. Juliana Catholic Church, 3rd Avenue and South Walnut  
Father Frank Leiblinger, officiating

**10:45 a.m.**

A Visit to Cather Country — Tour departs from Cather Foundation Building, 326 North Webster. Limited tour to Antonia's farmstead, Cloverton Cemetery, and return via Bladen road.

**10:45 a.m.**

"Paul's Case" — Film to be shown at Grace Episcopal Church, 6th and Cedar, for those not wanting to take the country tour.

**12:30 p.m.**

LUNCH — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar  
Cather House — Open 1:15-2:00 p.m.

**1:30 p.m.**

"Paul's Case" — Film to be shown again at Grace Episcopal Church, 6th and Cedar.

**2:00-3:30 p.m.**

"The Passing Show" — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar  
Panel: *Youth and the Bright Medusa*

**3:45-5:00 p.m.**

Autographing Session — Susan Rosowski, Marilyn Arnold, Lucia Woods, Roger Welsch.

**7:00 p.m.**

Banquet — Guest Speaker, Julie Harris  
High School Gymnasium, 7th and Webster

**8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and 3:30-5:00 p.m.**

Cather Foundation Art Gallery and Bookstore, 326 North Webster — Open

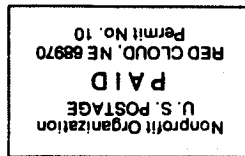
**8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.**

Cather Historical Center, 338 North Webster — Open

**10:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 3:30-5:00 p.m.**

Open House — Cather Childhood Home, 3rd Avenue and Cedar Street; Grace Episcopal Church, 6th Avenue and Cedar; St. Juliana Falconeri Catholic Church, 3rd Avenue and South Walnut; Restored Burlington Depot, Railway and South Seward. Exhibit, "Women at Work," at Burlington Depot. Refreshments at Depot from 4:00-5:00 p.m.

Cather Center Buildings are opened courtesy of Cather Historical Center, Nebraska State Historical Society, Ann E. Billesbach, Curator.



**YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION**

- By being a Cather Memorial Member and financial contributor:  
 BENEFACTOR ..... \$1,000.00 and over

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIPS**

Patron .....	\$100.00
Sustaining .....	25.00
Family .....	15.00
Individual .....	10.00

WCPM members receive:

- Newsletter subscription
- Free guided tour to restored buildings

- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

**ALL MEMBERSHIPS, CONTRIBUTIONS AND BEQUESTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE**

Under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1965

Special group memberships (such as clubs or businesses) are available. Write to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial for details.

**AIMS OF THE WCPM**

- To promote and assist in the development and preservation of the art, literary, and historical collection relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather, in association with the Nebraska State Historical Society.
- To cooperate with the Nebraska State Historical Society in continuing to identify, restore to their original condition, and preserve places made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial, through the Foundation, by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

For Newsletter Donation Only ..... \$5.00  
 Foreign Mailing ..... 6.00

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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**1920 Book Review Excerpts**

"Nation," CXI, 1, September 25, 1920 carried a review of *Youth and the Bright Medusa* by Willa Cather entitled "Short Story Art and Artifice":

"Miss Willa Cather has worked at herself and her art. Today the product is finished and represents the triumph of mind over Nebraska. This is no jest. Consider even the sounder of our writers from the "great valley" and beyond — William Allen White, Vachel Lindsay. How gifted they are and how incurably provincial. Miss Cather started out, fortunately, not only with a burning sense of beauty, but

with a really honest mind. She settled in Greenwich Village and was able to separate its wheat from its tares. Her vision has come to be of an intense and naked clearness and she herself one of our few thoroughly serious artists.

"The form no less than the substance of these stories bears witness to a fine self-discipline. It has neither the French nor the contemporary American short-story mechanism. The fable is driven neither toward a sting nor toward a burst of rose-color. The structural line is long and firm; it is never broken by a moral timidity in the guiding hand. As a result the stories have the radiance of per-

fect cleanliness, like the radiance of burnished glass. The style has not yet been burned quite clean. There are still patches of magazine English — unvisualized similes, pulpy adjectives. But Miss Cather knows exactly the effect she is after, spare yet imaginative, sensuous yet cool. And at times, as in the young painter's vision through the magic knot-hole in his wall, she achieves it completely."