

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXV, No. 4

Editor, Mildred R. Bennett

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA



Maya Angelou addresses banquet guests at Cather Spring Conference. Seated to her left are Governor and Mrs. Charles Thone.

— Photograph by John E. Carter

A VISIT TO CATHERLAND By Herb Hyde

It is not news that the 26th spring conference of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial was held May 2 in Red Cloud.

A visit to Red Cloud is by nature a personal experience, and this account therefore must be essentially subjective. Reporting the Cather conference is as simple as checking the day's agenda and telling what happened; recording it is more difficult because there are at least as many impressions as there were observers — and more. What you read here will be the feelings of one person, and you may or may not identify with some or all of them.

Those who registered at the Cather Center Museum received a gracious welcome accented with fresh coffee and kolaches. So en-

joyable was it to look around the old bank, most of its fixtures still as elegant as they were in their heyday, that some of us were late for Mass at Grace Episcopal Church. We did not miss some very beautiful sacred music, however, nor was the quiet, thought-provoking reverence of the sanctuary and its magnificent stained-glass windows lessened by the brevity of our stay.

The Mass at St. Julianna Catholic Church was equally meaningful in its simplicity and joy. Most of the tiny chamber's appointments are plain, but the altar is a soaring tribute to the glory of God and this day the miniature pipe organ was in fine voice as it issued, then disseminated lyric serenity. Yielding to the moment, I found it easy to understand why Anna Pavelka loved this church so much.

"A Sense of Place: Lucia Woods' Views of Cather's Virginia

with Slides and Readings" was a restful journey into the 19th century through the physical medium of the 20th. The scenes were the same yet a century apart, and time seemed to melt as the artist's soft voice and inflection turned the screen's images into a realm of elements that bathed the senses in pleasure. Did I really smell blossoms, hear a bird's song and the stream's gentle flow, feel the spongy spring earth beneath my feet? Certainly. As certainly as if I had been in the picture when it was made, for Lucia Woods' art was working its magic.

Box lunch in the park became box lunch in Vets Hall because of the south wind sweeping Webster County's rolling hills and prairie. There was time to visit the Cather home across the street and marvel at the way it has been restored, to feel its warmth, to gaze through the window of Willa Cather's attic room at the kingdom beyond. There was time, too, to ponder the enormous elm in the front yard and wonder how long it had been there when Willa Cather first saw it in 1883. Surely it once had twice the span it enjoys today, and that, as the spread of its grotesquely shaped branches attests, is indeed considerable.

"The Passing Show," a panel discussion of **Sapphira and the Slave Girl** involving Bruce Baker, Maya Angelou, Mildred Bennett and George Day, afforded scholarly analyses of that work. Honesty and forthright opinions were the order of the day, and the consensus was that **Sapphira** is not, by a long shot, one of Cather's best works. Agreed.

Hospitality is a hallmark in Red Cloud, and refreshments at the old

Burlington depot prove the point. The building has been moved back from the tracks, but that's about all. Step inside or through the windows and you are in another era. Here's the telegraph key, yonder the ticket counter. The hard comfort of the waiting room's wooden benches cannot match the relative softness of beds in the upstairs living quarters, yet in both places there was, and is, a pervasive spirit of impending adventure. This is not mysterious or even difficult to comprehend, for the depot was the gateway through which Willa Cather escaped and returned to her beloved Red Cloud, Nebraska. Read **Lucy Gayheart** and surely you will understand.

A visit to Cather Prairie south of town was rewarding beyond comparison. A pair of mourning doves took off crosswind at my approach, scribed a wide arc in echelon and landed within a few feet of their launch site. Cattle fed on or lazed in rippling native grasses that one day will possess the land as they did when buffalo grew fat on them; downwind a meadowlark poured its sweet song on the swift evening breeze. Dissolving the temporal and spatial bonds of this tiny speck of the universe was a peace that replaced the day's weariness with a freshening spirit of tranquillity and renewed purpose. It sustained me for the remainder of the day.

Only by watching and listening to Maya Angelou on the Nebraska Educational Television Network's "Humanities Through the Arts" can one begin to measure the richness of her voice or its depth or its power, and even then one merely touches the surface of her artistic ability for her skill eludes attempts to describe it. Certainly this was the case when she spoke at the traditional Cather conference banquet after an exhausting afternoon of speaking and autographing books. She seemed fresh as a prairie flower.

Her subject was love. As she defined many of its facets, she sculpted from the definitions emo-

tions that reach into the very depths of the soul, from whence they spring. How else can I explain the pain, the joy, the guilt, the anger, the sorrow, the gamut of feelings that welled within me as she recited poem after poem, choreographing them with voice and body movement, and explained her purposes in composing them? Her words lifted me to the peaks and cast me into the depths with their rhythm and intensity. This, I thought, was art in its purest form because, incredibly, I was experiencing what she was saying.

How better can I explain it than to say that Miss Angelou's literary art gives three dimensions to feelings, and even then I am hedging because I am sure there are more. She expanded St. Paul's definition of love far beyond its scriptural context, projecting it into a world sorely in need of it. In doing so she made me feel proud, for the first time in my life, to be a human being and feel truly comfortable with myself in spite of my shortcomings because she demonstrated vividly and poignantly that love transcends the human condition to erase pain, misery, shame, sorrow, the myriad of ills and the heartache and thousand natural shocks that Shakespeare's Hamlet says flesh is heir to. That is what she taught me — and I hope each of her other listeners — and I thank her for it from the bottom of my heart.

It is impossible to catalog here each joy I felt during my first sojourn in Red Cloud. Nor is there room to list all the warm and wonderful people whose lives touched mine in that 16-hour span. However, if you are moved to do so, you can share with me the unique yet paradoxically universal entity that is Catherland and discover, as I did, that the people in her books live there today: Go and see.

— Sunday Journal and Star
Lincoln, Nebraska
May 17, 1981

WHAT THE 1981 CONFERENCE MEANT TO ME

By Beverly J. Cooper

May 2, 1981: Conference Day
Title Book: **Sapphira and the Slave Girl**
Guest Speaker: Maya Angelou, writer and poet

We saw her striding toward the auditorium that morning. The arched back, the shoulders straight, head held high, all exuded the confidence of a person who has accomplished. Maya Angelou's books make it clear that any accomplishment is her own. Watching her walk so easily but with purpose, her poem, "Phenomenal Woman" came to mind:

"Pretty women wonder where
my secret lies.

I'm not cute or built to suit a
fashion model's size
But when I start to tell them,
They think I'm telling lies.

I say,

It's in the reach of my arms,
The span of my hips,
The stride of my step,
The curl of my lips.

I'm a woman
Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,
That's me."

People in small groups outside the auditorium saw this phenomenon and moved away — in deference and respect. Is that part of her achievement? Respect given before one realizes why.

Thus, it came as a surprise to see her sitting alone when we finally made our way to the auditorium. The body posture was still erect, commanding attention and yet there was an aura of warmth and ease about the tilt of her head. Bob Harwick approached her, asked her a question, and her smile seemed to be her response. He moved away, and with all sorts of trepidations, I held out my hand in greeting and said: "Welcome to Red Cloud, Nebraska, and thank you for . . ." And it was then I noticed her eyes. Beautifully dark, they struck my soul instantly with

the hidden secrets gathered over a long lifetime lived in less than fifty years.

Maya Angelou waited, not moving, and did not release my look. Finally, (Was it more than ten seconds before understanding hit me?) I finished my greeting, . . . "Thank you for gracing our lives."

The day's activities moved along with precision, as they always do at the Cather conferences. The phenomenal presence mingled first with one and then another group. Miss Angelou accepted the approaches of all by leaning forward a little, smiling, but the cool composure was enough to keep her desire for distance obvious.

At the Cather Foundation Headquarters, Angelou was speaking with Robert Knoll and all at once, this deep, throaty, earthy laugh pervaded the room. Standing near Miss Angelou at the time, I saw that her eyes held that laughter without resistance, and I remember thinking how nice it was to see her enjoying the day.

It was during the afternoon panel presentation that Miss Angelou shared her feelings on the Cather work for this May conference: **Sapphira and the Slave Girl**. "I did not come to praise," she said. "I'm afraid I cannot be very complimentary."

Miss Angelou contended that Willa Cather did not understand the black culture well. She pointed out the mother/daughter relationships in the book, and stated the "born antagonism between Sapphira and Rachel was very well delineated," but that "Till and Nancy were really incidental to Cather." Maya Angelou left no doubt in our minds that if Cather really had understood the black culture, she would have known beyond a shadow of a doubt that Till's maternal instincts would never have let Sapphira treat Nancy as she did. The black woman is too protective of her children, and even though Till understood well "her place" in the Colbert household, Angelou finds that

Sapphira's treatment of Nancy with the knowledge and acquiescence of Till is not true to form. She added, "When you read of black America and do not read of love associated with its people you are not getting the whole picture."

My own feeling is that Cather approached this relationship between Till and Nancy with more understanding than Miss Angelou credits the author. As George Day pointed out in his panel presentation the "place" in this book is one of "social status." If that is so, could it be that Till maternally wanted the best for her daughter, Nancy, and in realizing her own strong desire to be "respectable and well placed" could have believed Sapphira's explanation that Nancy was now "old enough to be trained as a parlour maid."

To be sure, Till had "fell to wondering for the hundredth time why Nancy had fallen out of favour with the mistress." But, that is Cather's social status placement again, only in the positive arena. The reader knows Sapphira's dissatisfaction with Nancy stems from her jealousy of her, but do we not also realize that the miller could have "used Nancy for whatever purpose" and if he had done so, would the relationship between Till and Nancy be strong enough for Nancy to tell her mother that?

But that affair did not happen. And, in my own critical naiveté, I feel Cather did not allow such a relationship out of her respect for the personhood of her black characters in this book. Miss Angelou's feeling about the "true maternal instincts of the black motherhood" are not discounted at all. I feel Angelou's statement is too general a comment for a proper review of this book, **Sapphira and the Slave Girl**, and such a comment discounts Willa Cather's fine imaginative use of characterization which is evidenced in all of her work.

Maya Angelou delivered the keynote speech at the Cather banquet that evening. She explained the

use of the word "signify" which she pointed out means "to live in direct relation to heroes and sheroes" that we have in our journey through life. When Miss Angelou was interviewed earlier that day by a local television commentator, he asked her what her topic for the keynote address was to be. Her answer: "It will be on love — the many kinds of love."

Thus, it is on this premise I rest my case about Cather's approach to the specification of the relationship between Nancy and Till. If Bruce Baker's designation of Rachel as the "heroine" of the book is at all true (and Cather devotees put great stock in Baker's scholarly opinions of Cather's works), then it stands that Cather treated Nancy correctly in letting her depend upon Rachel Blake to lead her to a fuller and happier life of freedom.

Cather, according to A. L. Rowse, is "completely true to all historical aspects in her writing." Rowse also says of Cather: "She is exceptional; the ordinary laws do not apply to Cather."

Without hesitation it can be said of Maya Angelou, she is phenomenal and because her writing comes from the events that scarred her life, perhaps she will allow me to assume Cather's work can be a tale of love shared between races.

In a letter to this writer received nearly a month after the conference, Miss Angelou states: "We have been enriched by brotherly love and for that I am grateful."

Maya Angelou's contribution to the richness of the Cather conference day left an indelible mark on the hearts of many during her brief stay in Cather Country. She has enriched the lives of her readers, of those who were privileged to have shared a moment of her time, and for the onlookers who remember her eyes, that lovely carriage of her body that has borne so much of the world's burdens from prejudices undeserved. Maya Angelou, remember, you are welcome to return to Nebraska, to Cather Coun-

try, anytime . . . again, thank you for sharing, for gracing our lives . . . for enriching our lives by being.

(Madame L. C. Chang of Shanghai, The People's Republic of China, long an admirer of Willa Cather, wrote the following at our request. An anonymous donor is sending Madame Chang a complete set of Cather's work.)

A CHINESE READER'S VIEWS ON SAPPHIRA AND THE SLAVE GIRL

Willa Cather, one of the most distinguished American novelists, wrote many novels depicting the magnificent Nebraska. This one, different from many of her other novels, tells a story about 19th century Virginia. To me, a foreigner, the 19th century Virginian stories suggest rich plantations and bitter labor, the luxurious life of the slave-owners and the unhappy experiences of the slaves.

This story deals with the slavery of the South where blacks and whites were slaves and owners in relationship. However, the author does not aim to preach the evils of slavery, nor the necessity of abolishing it.

In this easy-reading and fast-moving book she gives us an impartial yet sympathetic description of the condition in pre-Civil War Virginia and creates several unforgettable characters: Nancy, the innocent black girl; Jezebel, the remarkable Negro woman; and then, Henry Colbert, the miller. With these people she weaves a story in which she tells us her love for the innocent, her sympathy for the insulted and the oppressed and her contempt for racial prejudice and her ideas for human value.

Through the miller, Henry Colbert, Miss Cather expresses her own views on slave-owning. Henry was upright, "he hated the whole system of slavery." He never regarded the Negroes as "human beasts" who did all the heavy work and had no human feelings. Once he got a place for Sampson, his trusted and faithful slave, at a

Quaker mill in Philadelphia, hoping that Sampson would become independent; and when his wife told him to "spare Nancy to oblige Mrs. Grimwood," he flushed a deep red, up to the roots of the thick hair. His eyes seemed to sink farther back under his heavy brow as he looked directly at his wife. His look seemed to say: "I see through all this, see to the bottom."

When his wife reminded him that he signed when Tom and Jake and Ginny and the others went back, . . . "he told her it was because they were going back among their own kin, and to the country they were born in."

Henry was "so kind and true," loving and tenderhearted. In the book there are beautiful passages describing his fatherly love for Nancy. "To him Nancy was scarcely more than a child. It was his habit to refer to her in that way . . . Nancy had seemed to him more like an influence than a person . . ." "She had never had a harsh word from him . . . his kindly greeting made her happy." And when his daughter, Rachel, helped Nancy run away, "he prayed earnestly, for his daughter and for Nancy . . . He would never again hear that light footstep outside his door. She would go . . . to a better land. Maybe she would be like the morning star, this child; the star of night . . ."

Miss Cather is not trying to expose the evils of slavery, but, through the miller, she expresses her ideals on the problem of racial prejudice. She focuses on human value and I think she would agree with Martin Luther King, Jr., the warrior who gave his life for the equality between the black and the white, that some day "the sons of the slaves and the sons of the slave owners will sit together and that the people will be color-blind . . ."

The vision will not tarry. It is coming.

— L. C. Chang
March 8, 1981
Shanghai, China

Dr. Virgil Albertini of Northwest Missouri State College in Maryville, Missouri, has just finished visiting six area high schools with a Cather project. The forensic team read several passages from Cather, and Professor Albertini commented. He found some of the high school students already had read Cather, and others found interest in reading her.

INSPIRED BY VIRGIL

(Albertini and the Reader of Willa Cather Works)

The plow, silhouetted
Against the sun
As evening sagged,
Was our "magic moment."
We had rivered the day
splashed and laved each other,
pioneered in new intimacies.
As the moon cleaved
the edge of darkness
you pulled me, stumbling through
furrows,
but still the magic held.
Years later, the night you died,
I spilled my grief with dew
fresh like the river water,
caressed the splintered handles
of the weathered plow
in the half-light of early morn,
had no regrets that
I'd spent my life
yoked to plow shares.

— Virginia Frazier
English Department
Central High School
5026 Stonecrest Terrace
St. Joseph, MO
64506

Friends and scholars will be pleased to know that Bernice Slote attended the National Seminar, June 14-20, and took an active part.

Look for John J. Murphy's article in **American Literature**, Volume 53, Number 1 (March 1981) entitled "Euripides' **Hippolytus** and Cather's **A Lost Lady**." You will discover new insights into the depth of Cather's immersion in the classics, and how she used that knowledge in a subtle way to enrich her writing.

REPORT ON WILLA CATHER AND NEBRASKA: A NATIONAL CONFERENCE

By John J. Murphy

Twenty-five states and two Canadian provinces were represented at "Willa Cather and Nebraska," the University of Nebraska national seminar/conference held at Red Cloud and Hastings College, from June 14-20. One hundred registered participants were joined by forty to fifty Red Cloud and Hastings area residents for the week's evening sessions.

The conference opened on Sunday evening at Hastings College where participants, many of whom had never before visited Nebraska, were introduced to Catherland through the documentary film "Willa Cather's America: Into the Morning." The next day, three buses of seminarians left for Red Cloud, traveling over the Little Blue and Republican Divide with threatening skies overhead. Mildred R. Bennett welcomed the group to Red Cloud at the United Methodist Church, and her talk there was followed by a lively session of questions and answers about Cather's life in and attitudes toward Red Cloud and about Mrs. Bennett's own interest in Cather and her works. During lunch the skies cleared, and the town was toured under the best conditions possible by folks from New Jersey, Oregon, Virginia, Washington, Saskatchewan, etc., who occasionally posed for group pictures for National Geographic magazine, which is planning a Cather feature in 1982.

Back in Hastings Monday evening, David Stouck of Simon Fraser University spoke on **My Antonia**, which was discussed in small groups on Tuesday morning. Group discussions also followed a Tuesday lecture by Margaret A. O'Connor on the collection of Nebraska stories **Obscure Destinies**. On Tuesday afternoon, participants were given the opportunity to view rare filmed interviews with

Elsie Cather (Willa's sister) and Carrie Miner Sherwood (Willa's lifelong friend and prototype of Frances Harling in **My Antonia**), and to see Willa Cather herself on film in Alfred Knopf's private film collection of the outstanding authors he published during his long career. On Tuesday evening, James Woodress of the University of California spoke on the tasks of the biographer, particularly Cather's, and then addressed several questions from a very interested group of students.

One of Ours was the featured book on Wednesday morning, with a lecture by seminar director John J. Murphy of Merrimack College, followed by group discussions of that 1922 Pulitzer Prize novel. A panel of scholars discussed the Red Cloud aspects of **The Song of the Lark** and **Lucy Gayheart** on Wednesday afternoon, with some disagreement about the merits of the latter novel. The recent film version of the story "Paul's Case" was shown and then discussed with the original story during the evening session.

After a lecture by Susan Rosowski of the University of Nebraska-Omaha and group discussions on **A Lost Lady**, Thursday, was given over to the land itself. Buses took participants on the country tour, to Catherton, the "Wheeler" and "Cuzak" farms, the Dane Church, etc. For many, the highlight of the week was the walk on the 610-acre Willa Cather Memorial Prairie a few miles south of Red Cloud. Beneath a crisp blue sky, the undulating grasslands give that cosmic feel communicated so well in Cather's most lyrical passages. Bertrand Schultz of the Nebraska Academy of Sciences gave a brief geological history of the area, preparing for the consideration of **O Pioneers!** scheduled the following morning.

On Thursday evening participants were treated to a program of readings and music at the United Methodist Church of Red Cloud. Mildred Bennett and Hal Shiffler of

Hastings College read from **My Antonia**, **The Song of the Lark** and **Obscure Destinies**, and the St. Juliana choir led participants in a selection of hymns from pioneer days. Soloists for the evening included soprano Gerilyn Giebler and flutist Kathe P. Saathoff.

Having had the prairie experience the day before, the lecture by Bruce Baker of the University of Nebraska-Omaha and the group discussions on **O Pioneers!** were met with enthusiastic response. On Friday afternoon the teaching team conferred with the thirty-two credit participants, working out details for paper and exam assignments. The seminar concluded on Friday evening with a presentation by Bernice Slote, acknowledged by a standing ovation for her considerable contribution to Cather scholarship, and a rather free-wheeling panel discussion of issues ranging from Cather's sexual to religious preferences.

Sixty participants took the time to fill out evaluation sheets on the Cather week. All but three were positive, over fifty overwhelmingly so. Most wanted the seminar repeated and offered to recommend it to their associates. Typical comments read like a four-star review.

The format proved popular: "Very well planned and coordinated." "Excellent variety of topics, media, pacing." Discussions were "scholarly," had "excellent unity — detours were quickly brought back to the main road." "The ideas of all group participants were accepted by the instructors and other participants. No one put anyone down for lack of 'academic' background." "The staff was excellent — learned, imaginative, courteous, generous, provocative, spontaneous, attentive. More sparks might have flown among them, but their light was more than enough."

The tours were rated high: "Fantastic . . . [made] Cather's writings so alive." "Provided just the right touch at the right time." "It was obvious that the guides really

cared about Willa Cather and the places of interest on the tour." "Nice bus drivers." "I think there should be a Vi Borton memorial somewhere! (Actually the entire Catherland tour . . . is Vi's tribute.)" "Red Cloud hospitality was a delight." The program on Thursday night was "the perfect ending to the country tour" and "capped off very touchingly a positive splendid day."

The variety of participants, ranging from college professors and high school teachers to housewives and book collectors, was seen as a positive element: "The charm of the whole conference was the variety of types attending." "Keep the mix of undergrads, grads, post-grads, general-interest participants."

General estimates were more than encouraging: "I have been to the Faulkner Conference and found this one as good." "This will be a tough act to follow — how does one improve on a near-perfect experience." "One hates to have it all end. It has been satisfying." "Thanks for a wonderful week!"

Two additions would have turned the obvious A rating into A+. People wanted more time to spend wandering the Memorial Prairie, and they wanted kolaches: "Get us some kolaches," wrote one. "I've read so much about them and have never tasted one."

Thanks are due to many, many people for the success of this first among Cather events. To Robert Harwick of Hastings College and Helen Stauffer of Kearney State, who served as panel moderators; to Ann Billesbach, curator of the Willa Cather Historical Center; to Robert Knoll and Larry Hammer of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln who helped with planning and administration. Most of all, to the participants themselves, for they made a wonderful group to work with, and to the citizens of Red Cloud who made so many from so far feel at home.

JOB ANNOUNCEMENT

DATE: June 8, 1981

POSITION: Assistant, Associate, or full Professor for Department of English (tenure-leading). Rank or salary will be appropriate to the experience and accomplishments of the successful candidate.

FUNCTION: To teach a wide range of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels, to direct graduate work, to undertake research, to administer activities connected with the study of Willa Cather, to work towards securing grants for a proposed definitive edition of Willa Cather's work, and to take a major part in the organization and conduct of this project.

QUALIFICATIONS: A demonstrated commitment to Willa Cather studies; the Ph.D. degree (or clear equivalent); a wide general background in literature; successful teaching experience (including the teaching of freshman English); and high quality publications, particularly in Willa Cather studies.

STARTING DATE: August 16, 1982

DEADLINE DATE: November 30, 1981

APPLICATIONS: Send inquiries and complete applications (which must include a dossier with at least three letters of recommendation) to: Professor Stephen S. Hilliard, 327 Andrews Hall, The University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588. Telephone: (402) 472-1852 or (402) 472-3191.

BERGERS' PAINTINGS

This summer a series of prints will be made from John Blake Bergers' Cather paintings. They will be issued in limited editions of approximately 750 each, and each print (they'll be on the finest quality rag paper) will be signed and numbered by the artist. Here are the sixteen paintings: "Moonlit Roads," "Summer, Beautiful Summer!" "There was Only Spring Itself," "The Barn Raising Celebration," "Mrs. Vanni's Dance Pavilion," "To Go On Living," "Out to the Gayhearts," "The Red Scarf," "On Lovely Creek," "The River Road," "Wednesday Night Prayer Meeting," "Mahailey and the Dandelions," "Blind D'Arnaut in Concert at the Red Cloud Opera House," "The Divide," "Beside the Red Brick Wall" and "Painted Windows."

These are such memorable renditions of Cather texts that even if you haven't read or reread her for a while you will sense that the paintings illustrate her works. For example, as you look at "The Divide" you may find yourself thinking automatically of the relevant passage from *My Antonia*, and the same thing can be said for each painting. That's how skillfully Bergers has captured words and moods on canvas.

— Herb Hyde
Lincoln Journal-Star
Sunday, May 17, 1981

We were very excited about the noticeable increase of school tours to Catherland during the month of May. General tourism has also been on the increase this spring and summer.

Ron Hull, program director for Nebraska Educational Television, on a recent trip to China, met L. C. Chang, our Cather scholar in Shanghai. The emotion of meeting someone, after thirty years, who could talk about Willa Cather, became so great that both of them shed tears of joy. Both called the meeting a "miracle."

VIRGINIA U GETS CATHER MANUSCRIPT

Charlottesville, Va. (UPI) — A segment of novelist Willa Cather's last, unfinished novel is among acquisitions at the University of Virginia library.

The Cather manuscripts — a fragment of "Hard Punishment" — was purchased by the Alderman Library in honor of benefactor Clifton W. Barrett, who gave the library a collection of Cather's printed works and letters in 1978.

The incomplete manuscript was bought at an auction in New York. It is part of a work the native Nebraskan began in 1944, three years before her death.

It is set in the 14th century and tells the story of two boys mutilated as punishment for crimes.

Helen Cather Southwick of Pennsylvania, daughter of James Cather, brought sets of blue-eyed grass to plant in the northeast corner of the Cather home lawn. As a child, Willa Cather saw this grass growing wild. Now practically vanished from the prairie, the delicate flowers she loved will be visible to visitors.

Harue Tawarada is preparing notes on sections of **My Antonia** and Dan Shudo is doing the same with **O Pioneers!** for publication as a text for teaching English with Japanese notes. The date of publication has not been determined. Mrs. Tawarada lives in Singapore and Professor Shudo, in Japan. Both are avid Cather scholars.

The **Prairie Schooner**, Volume 55, Numbers 1 and 2, Spring/Summer 1981, is a tribute to Bernice Slote, Cather scholar. Prices are five dollars for the usual paper cover and seventeen-fifty for a cloth-bound copy. Cloth-bound copies must be ordered in advance and will be available about one month after regular copies. Mailing address: **Prairie Schooner**, 201 Andrew Hall, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, Nebraska 68588.

A recently published book, **Writers in Residence: American Authors at Home** by Glynne Robinson Betts, includes a chapter about Willa Cather and her Red Cloud home. Ms. Betts visited Red Cloud in 1978, photographing the Cather House, the town and the countryside. **Writers in Residence** is available from Viking Press.

LETTER FROM CONFERENCE PARTICIPANT

Dear Vi and Ann,

I am back home in Seattle now (under cloudy skies) but my mind and imagination are in a constant state of recall. As the memories of a week in Nebraska deepen I realize how it is to your credit that the theme "Willa Cather and Nebraska" emerged from an abstract statement into an experience of emotion and meaning. You took us into the sunlight, the dry windy world under the dome of the pale blue sky. You guided us to the edge of the prairie where land and heaven meet and open out into the elusive silence where human gesture finds its meaning and value, out there where eternity and understanding are one. You took us to the places of Willa Cather's memory; the fruit cellar doors open, the graves where those with whom she shared life now rest in the land which gave them purpose, the homes of friends where people and events planted seeds in her imagination, the section road, the rows of corn, the rippling currents of rich yellow wheat, all marching off to the edges of life and truth. You did not take us through her world. You delivered us into her youth. To Red Cloud, the train depot, Dr. Archie's house, the Miner's store, her attic room, the long narrow community opening out onto the prairie, the Republican River, the birds and bugs and their incessant symphony in the grasses. You showed us all that our eyes might see and our ears might hear but it was through your effortless hospi-

talities that we could reach out and feel Willa Cather's world. Through your homemade cookies and punch, your laughter, smiles and handshakes we became one with, participated in rather than merely observed, the world we had come to explore.

I am often grateful to Willa Cather for all that she has inferred to me of life. You and her world are part of my memory now and as I study her life and works further I will warmly remember your unaffected generosity and the world, so rich in symbol, into which you so graciously invited all of us.

My Sincerest Thank You,
Mary Hambly

BRITISH VOGUE USES CATHER COUNTRY SETTINGS

Bruce Weber, L.T.D., photographer, and Liz Tilberis, fashion editor of British "Vogue" magazine, were in Red Cloud and Cather Country photographing models from New York, as well as local youths, for the November 1981 edition of British "Vogue."

Mildred R. Bennett, on the 50th anniversary of her graduation from Union College in Lincoln, Nebraska, received an Achievements Award "In recognition of an outstanding record of achievement and service to community, state and nation." In the elevator of the new Everett Dick Administration Building hangs Cather's words from **Alexander's Bridge**: "No one can build his security upon the nobleness of another person."

Darlene Reiher, daughter-in-law of Jennie Reiher, Charter board member and Cather descendant, took Webster County brochures with her on a recent trip to Europe. In London, in a tiny tea and gift shop, she found a Cather fan, one who had read most of Cather's books, and was delighted to meet someone from Catherland.

THONES ATTEND SPRING CONFERENCE

Governor and Mrs. Charles Thone attended the May 2 Spring Conference. Mrs. Ruth Thone honored us as Mistress of Ceremonies for the evening banquet.

"National Geographic" will be publishing an article on Willa Cather next summer (1982). Dr. William Howarth of Princeton University is writing the text. Dr. Howarth and Farrell Grehan, photographer, were here in Cather Country the week of June 14-20. They also spent time with the National Conference group at Hastings College.

When Emiko Yoshioka of Japan visited the United States this year, she toured not only Nebraska Catherland, but New Mexico Cather Country. Dr. T. M. Pearce of Albuquerque took her to Acoma Mesa and Mrs. Peggy Pond Church helped her see the sights of Santa Fe.

Shirley Zoeger of Woodland Hills, California, Cather Memorial member, read the recent Virginia newsletter while in Washington, D.C., and was inspired to go out to the hills of Virginia to Back Creek Valley to view the magnificent dogwood and redbud.

1981 AMERICAN ARTS GOLD MEDALLIONS

The half-ounce Gold Medallion for Willa Cather has been struck. Contact your local post office for pamphlet and instructions on ordering.

John J. Murphy has put out "A Teacher's Guide to Willa Cather's **O Pioneers!** and **My Antonia**" for Houghton Mifflin Company. Teachers, librarians, and others interested may obtain free copies of this guide by writing Paperback Department, Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02107.

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.

Newsletter Contribution Only \$5.00
(not a membership)

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Keith Albers	Robert E. Knoll	Ronald W. Roskens
William Thomas Auld, MD	Ella Cather Lewis	David E. Scherman
Bruce P. Baker, II	Lucia Woods Lindley	C. Bertrand Schultz
Mildred R. Bennett	Catherine Cather Lowell	Marian Schultz
W. K. Bennett, MD	John March	Margaret Cather Shannon
Vi Borton	Dale McDole	Betty Sherwood
Don E. Connors	Miriam Mountford	Bernice Slotte
Josephine Frisbie	Harry Obitz	Helen Cather Southwick
David Garwood	Helen Obitz	Marcella Van Meter
Ron Hull	Jennie Reiher	



Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

326 North Webster Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. POSTAGE
PAID
RED CLOUD, NE 68970
Permit No. 10