

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXIV, Number 1

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA



As a young boy of Cornwall, England, **Alfred Leslie Rowse** felt his true vocation to be that of poet. Years between the Cornish boy and today's eminent historian have produced much. Not only has Mr. Rowse written seven or more volumes of poetry, he also is biographer of many historical and literary figures, including the Churchill family and Shakespeare.

Mr. Rowse is a Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford, a Fellow of the British Academy, and a Sr. Fellow of Huntington Library in California.

His regard for Cather brought him to Catherland over fifteen years ago. He is delighted to be coming back.

## A. L. Rowse and LUCY Here for May 3; 1980 Conference Is Silver

The annual event of a Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Spring Conference in Red Cloud has reached its twenty-fifth year in 1980.

Cather's book **Lucy Gayheart**, special guest A. L. Rowse, and a Red Cloud setting will silver this May's conference.

### *Footprints*

During the morning, guests will enjoy tours shining back to Haverford-in-Red Cloud — site of the Gayheart place with footprints in the sidewalk, the Burlington-Missouri Depot, the cottonwoods, Indian Creek, and the countryside and "Platte" of Lucy's last skate.

Throughout the day, open house of all Cather Memorial buildings should further enrich a Cather sense of place.

### *The Art*

Saturday afternoon's "Passing Show" panelists will focus on the book itself. They wish to spark lively response from the audience and will welcome audience questions

and commentary — prepared and spontaneous.

Bruce Baker, panel moderator, was a 1976 Fulbright lecturer in English at Kabul University and is a professor of English at UNO. Panelists are A. L. Rowse (see above); Mildred R. Bennett, author of **The World of Willa Cather**, founder of WCPM, and WCPM Board Chairman; and Marion Marsh Brown, Cather scholar, author, formerly a professor at UNO.

### *Evening Reflections*

The final silver touch for WCPM's 25th Cather Conference will present a view different from the morning's footprints or afternoon's art. In his banquet address, A. L. Rowse will share "A Historian's View of Willa Cather." Night time will bring not only the same stars Lucy and Willa saw, but also one more.

Major funding for this program was provided by the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

## Conference Schedule

### Saturday, May 3

8:00 a.m.-12:00

REGISTRATION, coffee — Cather Center Museum, 336 N. Webster

8:30 a.m.

MASS — Grace Episcopal Church, 6th and Cedar

9:30 a.m.

MASS — St Julianna Catholic, 3rd Avenue and S. Chestnut

10:30 a.m.

TOUR — Depart from Cather Center Museum, 336 N. Webster

12:30 p.m.

BOX LUNCH — Shelter House in City Park

2:00-3:15 p.m.

"THE PASSING SHOW" — Vet's Hall, 3rd and Cedar; panel discussion of **Lucy Gayheart**

3:30-4:30 p.m.

A. L. ROWSE AUTOGRAPH SESSION — Foundation Building, 326 N. Webster

8:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and

3:15-5:00 p.m.

GIFT SHOP-GALLERY, OPEN — Foundation Building, 326 N. Webster

10:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. and

3:30-5:00 p.m.

OPEN HOUSE — all Cather Center Buildings, includes "Dreams in Dry Places" at Burlington Depot, 1st Avenue and S. Seward; refreshments at Depot from 3:30-5:00 p.m.

7:00 p.m.

BANQUET, GUEST SPEAKER A. L. ROWSE — High School Gymnasium, 7th and Webster



## A Cornish Childhood

by A. L. Rowse

Over 400,000 copies of this first volume of Mr. Rowse's autobiography have been sold in the United Kingdom and Commonwealth.

**A Cornish Childhood** is in the finest ranks of autobiographical writings, full of stylistic grace, rich in self examination, in characterizations, and evocation of a Cornish scene and culture even then changing but still with its undying beauty and tenacious traditions.

— Edmund Fuller  
**The Wall Street Journal**

At an autograph session, conference day, May 3, a limited number of Mr. Rowse's books will be available. If you wish either to reserve a copy of **A Cornish Childhood** or to have an autographed one mailed, please write to WCPM. Book is ten dollars; handling and postage, one dollar.

... A thing that is dreamed of in the way I mean, is already an accomplished fact. All our great West has been developed from such dreams; the homesteader's and the prospector's and the contractor's. We dreamed the railroads across the mountains, just as I dreamed my place on the Sweet Water. All these things will be everyday facts to the coming generation ...

— **A Lost Lady**, p. 55

*This quotation is used as part of "Dreams in Dry Places."*

*To sharpen viewers' reflections on the relationship of people and architecture, the exhibit juxtaposes quotations with "unwritten language of buildings."*

## On the Scene . . .

**CONNECTICUT** — With its January 9 mailing of **Weekly Reader** to schools across the nation, Xerox Education Publications, Middletown, included a giant-sized poster "America Honors Its Heroes." Willa Cather and nine others are featured — "people who helped make this country a great nation."

**KANSAS** — Kansas State University's January issue of **Journal of the West**, an illustrated quarterly devoted to history and culture of the West, features two Cather-related articles: "Western Regional Writers and the Uses of Place" by Fred Erisman and "The Cather Museum."

**OMAHA** — Marion Marsh Brown and Ruth Crone's 2nd book on Cather — **Only One Point of the**

## Gallery Holds "Feelings"

When spring was "already happening in the colours of the sky," Lucy and Harry visited the Art Museum in Chicago. — This May 3, conferees in Red Cloud are invited to visit Cather Gallery at the Foundation Building.

Among other "objects" and "feelings" the Gallery holds, will be four **Lucy Gayheart** paintings by John Bergers of Sonoma, California.

In his attempt to absorb and then to convey a Cather feeling, Bergers not only immersed himself in Cather's works but also lived in Catherland for over a year.

**Compass**, sub-titled **Willa Cather in the Northwest** — is scheduled for June publication, \$12.50/copy.

## Depot is Setting for "Dreams"



Part of "Dreams in Dry Places" is this photograph of Willa Cather's childhood home, Red Cloud. © R. Bruhn 1978

Even if in Cather's novels the depot was not a *setting* for dreams, it was more than a literal "taking off" point. Even the vibration of the train was for Lucy "a rhythm that had to do with escape, change, chance, with life hurrying forward. . . . release and surrender went all over her body" (p. 24).

Conference day (and the first two weeks of May), Cather's same Burlington-Missouri Depot will be the setting for dreams — dreams of which the first one hundred years of Nebraska architecture were made.

An exhibition of 130 contemporary photographs with legends and quotations from American literature, "Dreams in Dry Places" attempts to help viewers explore the relationship of the practical, aesthetic, and cultural aspects of historic Nebraska architecture.

Photographers Roger Bruhn and David Murphy, who is also an architect, combined talents with an interdisciplinary team, and the Nebraska State Historical Society to produce this exhibit. Funding was provided from Nebraska Committee for the Humanities.

*San Francisco Chronicle's* popular columnist Terrence O'Flaherty wrote the following review which we knew would interest **Newsletter** readers. He and the **Chronicle** graciously agreed to share . . .

## Candle-Lit Rooms Full of Flowers

I read Willa Cather's short story, "Paul's Case," in high school. It knocked me out and I have never re-read it for fear it might not be as good as I once thought it to be.

Tonight [February 11] it appears as the second of several dramatic adaptations of "The Great American Short Story" series, a PBS project of great merit, and it manages to cast the same subtle spell that I recall in print (9 p.m. channel 9).

"Paul's Case" first appeared in 1905 but the story it tells is timeless — that of a young man whose artistic sensibilities are smothered by the narrow-mindedness of others. He dreams of the warm glow of the theater, concerts, museums and candle-lit rooms full of fresh flowers.

The adaptation of literature to drama is a tricky business. A writer can say so much more to the imagination of the reader.

But the script by Ron Cowen allows most of the story to be told, without words, by actor Eric Roberts, who was seen recently in the film "King of the Gypsies." He is excellent as the young man who is strangling in a drab town where he finds nothing to feed his spirit but his dreams. He seizes the first opportunity to flee.

Today, more attention is devoted to giving the unimaginative, and often un-educatable child, enough learning to keep him afloat in a demanding world while the more talented, sensitive youngsters are often forgotten. Willa Cather understood what a tragic loss this can be to the world:

*"There is not one work of art that is so big or so beautiful that it was not once contained in some youthful body,"* she wrote.

## WCPM: "Avenue for Values"

Introduction by UNL Professor Robert Knoll, ribbon cutting by the WCPM Board of Governors, refreshments by Catherland Federated Woman's Club, and viewing by visitors of the new Cather Gallery's art and artifacts were all part of a sunny December afternoon in Red Cloud.

Sunday, December 9, however, marked more than the official dedication of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation's new headquarters. It was a celebration of values and a re-dedication of efforts.

In his 2:00 p.m. address to nearly 150 people, University of Nebraska President Ronald Roskens pointed to the strength of Willa Cather's profound sense of place. He indicated Cather's and WCPM's sharing of this sense of place can cause people to take pride in the roots from which they have grown, thereby giving them confidence to accomplish future good.

Dr. Roskens, a WCPM board member, said that, in a sense, Red Cloud itself has become a University of Nebraska campus: It is "a place to be educated . . . for cerebral cells to be stirred," "an 'avenue' . . . for values to be seen and felt."

The days of horse-drawn cabs and gaslights are romantically pictured with a minimum of fuss and a maximum of imagination. The result is a rich little jewel that will stay long in the memory of viewers who are tuned to these sensitive wavelengths.

There is a vagueness in the final scene, which is not graphic enough for many viewers to grasp without reading the story. But perhaps that is the function of this series — to send viewers back to the bookshelf where Cather describes it in one stroke of the pen.

— Terrence O'Flaherty



*Celebration, re-dedication . . .*



*. . . with a Cather focus.*

He commended WCPM and supporters — but especially Mildred Bennett — for creating this atmosphere.

Roskens's closing remarks underlined a spirit of re-dedication among a great number of those at the ceremony. He stressed that WCPM's "living memorial" for Willa Cather gives increasing value to the quality of life; it adds greater vitality to civilization itself.

### In Memoriam

Ellen Moers Mayer, teacher, critic, author of **Literary Women, The Dandy, and Two Dreisers** — August 25, 1979, in New York. Surviving are husband, Martin, and sons, Thomas and James.

**Among Plans for Spring-Summer:**

- 25th Cather Conference, Red Cloud . . . . . May 3
- Burning, Cather Memorial Prairie . . . . . May 12-17  
(exact date set according to weather)
- Prairie Workshop, Red Cloud . . . . . first week in June  
(interdisciplinary study, credit course, sponsored  
by WCPM, Cather Center, Kearney College, and  
Nature Conservancy)
- Folk Festival and Street Car Days,  
Red Cloud . . . . . August 23-24

"This city of feeling rose out of the city of fact like a definite composition, — beautiful because the rest was blotted out" (p. 24).

"... for the first time in her life she [Lucy] could come and go like a boy" (p. 26).



— picture from *Lucy Gayheart* (serial), *Women's Home Companion*, March 1935, no. 3 vol. LXII.

**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 admission 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)

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