

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XXIII, No. 1

Bonita English, Editor

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Quebec SHADOWS Cast for Conference '79

Shadows from distant past and places shall mingle this May 5 in Red Cloud with those gathering for the twenty-fourth Annual Cather Spring Conference. Bringing all together is Willa Cather's **Shadows on the Rock**, the Quebec 1697-1698 novel which won for her the Prix Femina Américaine in 1931.

In **The World of Willa Cather**, Mildred Bennett tells us that the ideas for **Shadows on the Rock** came when Willa "found in the Louvre the diary of an apothecary who had served under Count Frontenac in Quebec. She took notes on the diary and from them reconstructed the atmosphere of 17th Century Quebec and the people whose courage had founded it and kept it alive."

WCPM scheduled program for the day in Red Cloud includes:

8:00 a.m. to
12:00 REGISTRATION — Cather Center
Museum, coffee and rolls

8:00 a.m. MASS — Grace Episcopal Church

9:15 a.m. MASS — St. Juliana Catholic Church

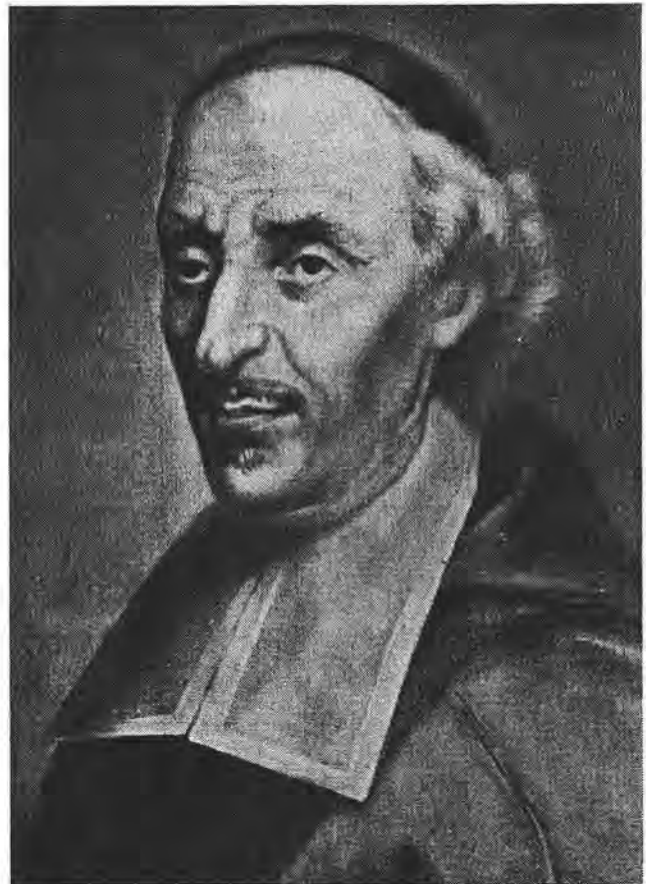
10:15 a.m. BUS TOUR — departs from Cather
Center Museum, includes tour of
George Cather House

12:30 p.m. BOX LUNCH — Shelter House in City
Park

2:00 p.m. "THE PASSING SHOW" — High
School, old gym; panel discussion of
Shadows on the Rock

10:00 a.m. to
2:00 p.m.
and
4:00 p.m. to
5:30 p.m. OPEN HOUSE at all Cather buildings,
includes Butcher exhibit at Burlington
Depot

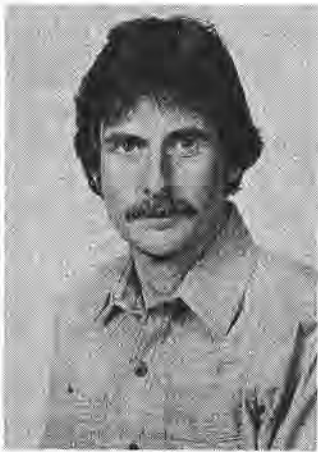
7:00 p.m. BANQUET — High School Gym-
nasium; Master of Ceremonies: Dr.
Robert E. Knoll, UNL Professor of
English
Speaker: John J. Murphy, Merrimack
College, Associate Professor of
English
- Special music using Cather poetry. -



Shadows on the Rock graphically portrays Bishop Francois Laval: "His eyes were large and full, but set deep back under his forehead. He had such a very large, drooping nose, and such a grim, bitter mouth, that he might well have frightened a child who didn't know him" (p. 69). "What he [six year old Jacques] remembered particularly was that this old man . . . bent down and took his foot in his hand and kissed it; first the one foot, then the other" (pp. 73-74). "The punctual bell and the stern old Bishop who rang it began an orderly procession of activities and held life together on the rock, though the winds lashed it and the billows of snow drove over it" (p. 105). — photo, courtesy of Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation Collection, Nebraska State Historical Society

The many "strange figures" that for awhile cast their shadows on the grey rock of Quebec, the whole truth-beauty of **Shadows on the Rock** which timelessly casts itself on those who "read" it, the way Willa Cather rendered **Shadows**, the way she tended the "sacred fire" — these shall figure most important in this spring's Cather Conference.

Come to Red Cloud May 5, to mingle, to share.



In his banquet address, "Willa Cather and the Catholic Experience," John Murphy will explain the appeal of Cather to Catholic readers and some reasons why Catholicism appealed to her.

Banquet Promises Variety

In addition to some French flavor for the palate, Cather Conference Banquet '79 will offer delights for the ears and mind in songs and an address. Cather's **April Twilights** poems "Prairie Dawn" and "L'Envoi" as set to music by native Nebraskan Gerald Ginsburg will be performed.

John J. Murphy, this year's banquet speaker, is associate professor of English at Merrimack College, North Andover, Massachusetts. A noted Cather scholar, he has over the past sixteen years presented a number of television programs on American novelists, organized conferences on American writers, and has written — and had published in books and numerous scholarly journals and newspapers — articles, reviews and notes on Cather.

At Merrimack the 1972 "Willa Cather: A Pre-Centennial Symposium" which Murphy directed was attended by over one hundred Cather enthusiasts, including several scholars and critics who met again a year later at the international seminar, "The Art of Willa Cather," at University of Nebraska-Lincoln, in which Murphy participated as a discussant.

Of John Murphy's numerous published articles two specifically on Cather's Quebec novel are "The Art of **Shadows on the Rock**," in **Prairie Schooner**, 1976, and "**Shadows on the Rock**: Cather's Medieval Refuge," **Renascence**, Winter 1963.

"Passing Show" Panelists Invite Shared Responses

The whole day of Spring Conference — but especially the afternoon panel discussion — provides beautiful opportunity for discovering and sharing. This year's six-member panel strongly encourages audience participation. Come not only with prepared questions and commentary relating to **Shadows on the Rock** but also with a mind-for-response to the panel's presentations and comments.

Bernice Slote, panel moderator, is a professor of English at UNL and editor of the literary quarterly **Prairie Schooner**. Among the many books she has co-authored, edited, or co-edited is **The Kingdom of Art: Willa Cather's First Principles and Critical Statements, 1893-1896**.

On the Scene . . .

CATHERLAND — The 3,648 visitors who registered March through October during 1978 represent forty-five states (including Alaska and Hawaii), District of Columbia, and six foreign countries. This marks a forty-five visitor-per-month increase over last year during the same eight month period. Since the November WCPM properties transfer to the State, the Cather Center's new winter hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) have drawn close to four hundred visitors, over twice the number during November through February of last year. This past year, five colleges — Nebraska's Kearney State (twice), Midland, Hastings, and Wayne State, and Iowa's Morningside — brought classes to Catherland for concentrated study. Four of the groups spent a day; the other, two days.

NEBRASKA TV — On four separate time slots, Channels 11 and 13 this fall aired a Farmland Industries commercial featuring the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial. Also, October 31 issue of **Farmland News** included Cather in a two-page article "The Women Who Won the West."

NEW YORK, ILLINOIS, TEXAS — *Books and studies*: Glynne Betts, a New York photographer, is featuring Willa Cather in a book on writers and their environments. University of Chicago's Joseph Regenstein Library holds a copy of Karen Helene Vierneisel's doctoral dissertation "Fugitive Matriarchy: Willa Cather's Life and Art." For her master's thesis, Kathleen Genuchi of Texas wrote of the history of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.

UN-LINCOLN — The Nebraska Dance Ensemble's February performance at UNL's Kimball Hall featured the premiere of "Nebraska: The Seasons." Choreographed by Fred Masters of New York, the dance, depicting the seasons of Nebraska, was inspired by Willa Cather's writings.

JAPAN — Harue Tawarada, a teacher in Tokyo, wrote to Mildred Bennett, telling that her recently acquired Cather-related books — in particular the **Pictorial Memoir** — "brought much excitement and joy" to her and her students.

The first panelist presentation will be by Professor Walter Wright who is a specialist in the novel at UNL and has written seven books on the novel; the other presentation, by Donna Dunbar-Odum, University of Nebraska-Omaha graduate student from Texas, whose concentrated study on Cather has special focus on **Shadows on the Rock**.

Panel discussants include Professor John Murphy (see above); Mildred R. Bennett of Red Cloud, author of **The World of Willa Cather**, founder of WCPM, and WCPM Board Chairman; and Dr. Bruce P. Baker, 1976 Fulbright lecturer in English at Kabul University, and presently professor of English at UNO.

"The Passing Show" is the title Cather used for her newspaper column criticizing the arts in the 1890's.

Commemorative Series Includes Ten; Mark Twain and Willa Cather Are Second

WCPM was pleased to learn that in 1981 — the second calendar year after the enactment date of the "American Arts Gold Medallion" title — the Secretary of the United States Treasury shall strike and sell to the general public one-half ounce gold medallions bearing a picture of Willa Cather and one ounce medallions bearing a picture of Mark Twain.

During 1980, the one ounce and one-half ounce medallions, in order, shall be of Grant Wood and Marian Anderson; 1982, Robert Frost and Alexander Calder; and 1984, Helen Hayes and John Steinbeck.

Title IV stipulates that the medallions "shall be of such fineness that, of one thousand parts by weight, nine hundred shall be of fine gold and one hundred of alloy" and "the reverse side of each medallion shall be of different design, shall be representative of artistic achievements of the individual on the obverse side."

The Cather gold medallion, almost in time for WCPM's silver anniversary in 1980, shall serve as a beautiful, lasting memorial. Sponsoring the wide-ranging bank bill of which the "American Arts Commemorative Series" is a part were Congressmen Henry S. Reuss, Frank Annunzio, and Fernand J. St. Germain.

UNL Arts Combine for Musical Drama

OUT TO THE WIND Springs from Cather's "Eric"

With more than a little help from University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Professors Robert Beadell and Virginia Faulkner, the central action of Willa Cather's short story "Eric Hermansson's Soul" pleased theatre audiences at UNL's Kimball Recital Hall, February 1 through 4. It took the shape of **Out to the Wind**, a musical drama presented by the UNL School of Music Opera Theatre.

Newsletter readers will remember that Virginia Faulkner, who wrote the book and lyrics for this musical drama, is a noted author, Cather scholar, and WCPM board member. She shares background of **Out to the Wind**:

A musical adaptation of Willa Cather's short story "Eric Hermansson's Soul" (1900) was first suggested in 1972 as a possible event for the Willa Cather Centennial Festival sponsored by UNL's College of Arts and Sciences. There was no chance that such a work could be completed and produced during the centennial year of 1973, but the idea came up again . . . Preliminary work began in the fall of 1974 and the following spring the University of Nebraska Foundation provided partial funding for a musical based on the



Each of the four performances of **Out to the Wind** was a near sell-out. Lauds of opening night included a bouquet of roses for Virginia Faulkner from WCPM Board Chairman Mildred Bennett (center). Also pictured is Bernice Slote, WCPM Board of Governors member.

— photo, courtesy of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Cather story, with a score by Professor Robert Beadell and a libretto by Professor Virginia Faulkner. A second Foundation grant in 1977 enabled the work to be completed and in 1978 the Center for Great Plains Studies [including the Woods Foundation] provided an additional matching funds grant for its production.

"Eric Hermansson's Soul" was suggested in the first place because music is inherent in the plot: the revival scene, the scene in which Margaret sings to Eric, and the dance at Lockharts are key episodes in the story. Second, although "Eric" was written very early in Willa Cather's career, it embodies many elements — time, locale, characters, themes — that distinguish the Nebraska novels and stories of her artistic maturity.

Much as the wind in Cather's story laid Margaret's soul bare, Robert Beadell's well-delivered musical score helped to strike communication of what is deepest in cast and audience. He is new neither to composing music for large scale productions nor to following the flavor of Cather's writing. In addition to composing music for three operas and **Out to the Wind**, Beadell has written settings for **April Twilights** poems "Prairie Dawn," and "Spanish Johnny," for lines from "Two Friends" in **Obscure Destinies**, pp. 211-12, and for the epigraph at the beginning of **O Pioneers!** His arrangements for music figuring in Cather's fiction include **My Antonia**, pp. 67-68, **The Song of the Lark**, pp. 291-92, and **Sapphira and the Slave Girl**, pp. 78-79. (Continued on page 4).



A potpourri of UNL students helped engineer the eight expertly-made 1890's sets. Here, Faulkner's Donati, Schmetzkin, and Schumann — characters inspired by Cather's allusion to "the personnel of a third-rate opera company" — entertain by the observation car. — photo, courtesy of Kimball Recital Hall, UNL.

Musical Drama (Continued from page 3)

Part of Beadell's preparation for **Out to the Wind** included coming to Cather country three years ago to listen. He describes the resulting musical score as "a mixture of styles, ranging from folk through more contemporary sounds."

"Eric Hermansson's Soul," first published in the April 1900 issue of **Cosmopolitan**, appears in **Willa Cather's Collection of Short Fiction 1892-1912**, edited by Virginia Faulkner. It is not included in the collected works Willa Cather never wanted done on stage or screen.

Cather Memorial Prairie Is Setting for Workshop

The first week in June is being set aside for an educational workshop jointly sponsored by the Nature Conservancy, Kearney State College, the Cather

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

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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 REQUESTS 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.

Center and WCPM. The workshop, which may be taken for college credit, is open to teachers and other interested persons. Focus will be on aspects of the virgin prairie — its cultural influences, its history and ecology. How the prairie inspired Willa Cather will be included in this interdisciplinary study. For further information contact Ann Billesbach at the Cather Historical Center.

Correction

Spring 1978 issue of **Newsletter**, front page, column one, contained the incorrect statement "A tour of the George Cather house, the setting for Cather's Nobel prize-winning novel **One of Ours**, was planned...but due to road conditions was cancelled." The tour was planned and cancelled; but **One of Ours** is a **Pulitzer** prize-winning novel. It is hoped the tour omission will be "corrected" this May 5. See conference schedule.

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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