

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XX, No. 4

WINTER, 1976-77

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Twenty-Second Annual Conference Is May 7

Death Comes for the Archbishop, for many critics Willa Cather's masterpiece, was published in 1927. This year is the fiftieth anniversary of that date. The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation is, therefore, using this book as the theme for their twenty-second annual spring conference on Saturday, May 7, 1977.

Although the setting of this work is the desert Southwest, not Nebraska, the book is appropriate for our study both because of its importance in Cather's career and because it demonstrates the universality of Cather's art. Indeed, none of Cather's works is truly limited to a specific locale. The dimensions of this author's art are wider than one county, one state, or even one nation. Willa Cather's art, like that of all great writers, illuminates the whole world.

Our day in Red Cloud begins at 9 a.m. and, appropriately for this book, with a commemorative service at St. Juliana Falconieri, Red Cloud's first Catholic Church. Mass will be celebrated and the St. Juliana Choir, under the direction of John English, will sing, accompanied by Barbara Sprague on the old pump organ.

Brunch will be served at 10 a.m. at the Burlington Depot. Lucia Woods' photographs of the Southwest "Archbishop" country will be on display in the passenger room.

A copy of the WNET-TV film made the summer of 1975 in Red Cloud is finally available. The public premiere will be at 11 a.m. in the Veteran's Memorial Hall. The film will not be on public television until fall or early spring. The local "actors" who appeared in the Red Cloud section will be introduced to the audience. Three sections of **Into the Morning: Willa Cather's America** feature the Southwest in discussing **The Song of the Lark**, **The Professor's House**, and **Death Comes for the Archbishop**.

A picnic lunch will be served at 12:30 p.m. in the Red Cloud City Park. Music will be provided by local groups.

At 2 p.m. "The Passing Show," the discussion of the theme book, will be held at the Veterans' Memorial Hall. Your look at the locale of this book will be provided by Lucia Woods, photographer and member of the WCPM Board of Governors, who toured the "Archbishop" country while working on her book **Willa Cather: A Pictorial Memoir**, produced in conjunction with Bernice Slote. After Lucia's "Perspective on the Southwest," Mildred R. Bennett, Bernice Slote, the Rev. L. Brent Bohlke, and JoAnna Lathrop will offer brief observations about **Death Comes for the Archbishop** and then respond to the audience's questions.



The statue of Archbishop Jean Lamy that stands before the cathedral he built in Santa Fe. He is the prototype for Cather's Archbishop Jean Latour.—Photograph by David Scherman.

The Garber Bank Building (Museum) will be open all day long (8 a.m. until 6 p.m.) and the Burlington Depot and the Cather Childhood Home will be hosted by volunteers for visitors to tour from 4 to 6 p.m.

A 7 p.m. country dinner will be served at the Red Cloud High School Gym. The entertainment will feature music from **Out to the Wind**, a new musical based on a Cather short story.

The conference price for all day is the same as last year, \$15. If you send money with your early reservation, you receive a dollar discount. Notice that you can buy tickets to the major events separately (see the order blanks on page 3).

Special Student Rate Is Again Available

We are again suggesting that teachers and students attend the Spring Conference at reduced rates. All high school and college students may buy a special packet which includes the brunch, film, lunch, and "The Passing Show" for the pre-registration price of \$5. Students may attend all events for \$8. Teachers who bring their students may attend for the same prices. In student groups of ten or more, admission to only "The Passing Show" is \$1 each. Please notice the special student registration blank on page 3.



Mrs. Byron Boyd [Elizabeth] of Bladen comes out of The Antonia fruit cave, recreating the scene Willa Cather saw over sixty years ago. Mrs. Boyd is one of "Antonia's" daughters. In the background Leonard Barnes of Red Cloud unloads plywood sheeting to underlay the roof of the Antonia Farmhouse.— Photograph by Tom Allan, courtesy of the Omaha World-Herald.

Volunteers Help Restore Antonia Farmhouse

For more than ten years the Antonia Farmhouse, the actual home of the John Pavelkas, has been on the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial country tour. This frame structure has been visited by hundreds, even thousands, of students, from the third grade through college age, and as many other tourists. The people come to see the real setting of Part V "Cuzak's Boys" of Willa Cather's most famous novel, *My Antonia*.

When the already famous author visited the farm in the early 1900's she had begun to see her childhood acquaintance, Annie Sadilek Pavelka, as a mythic figure, the "earth mother of the plains." The publication of *My Antonia* in 1918 showed Willa Cather's memories of Mrs. Pavelka and her family transformed into a universal recreation of the pioneer struggle on the Nebraska frontier. Seeing the actual setting, the actual house of the novel, gives the modern reader a touchstone that fuses the past and the present for him, just as the literal existence of Annie Pavelka fused and combined the history Cather remembered and the universal story she imagined. By saving the Pavelka home, "the Antonia Farmhouse," we save not only a portion of our Nebraskan and American heritage, but also a physical structure that in itself embodies the effect of creativity and imagination on our literal world. To be able to preserve at the same time a site sacred to both history and art is a unique opportunity.

In February, 1976, Mr. and Mrs. Haldine Johnson of Norman, Nebraska, deeded the Antonia farmhouse, fruit cave and the immediate yard to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation. In early

May that year, the freshman class of Bladen High School and their sponsor aided Mr. and Mrs. Carrol Turner of Bladen in cleaning the house interior.

On November 8 a group of Central Technical Community College students under the supervision of Donal Geis, a student senator, trimmed trees and cleaned the grounds. The following students were involved:

Julie Bellke, Jan Lukasiewicz, and Brian Merithew of Grand Island; Donal Geis, Columbus; Salley Rickertsen, St. Paul; Pete Henry, Beatrice; Sheryl Jepson, Loup City; Dan Gompert, Burwell; Don Sykes, Naponee; Eunice Schwarz, Lexington; Dennis Correll, Kearney; Jo Ellen Tjarks, Holdrege; Doug Sturgeon, Farnam; Greg Laschanky, Superior; Tim Sample, Central City; Tim Hitchcock, Lincoln; Dennis Fox, Albion; Charles Yeager, Bloomfield; Ken Hockemeier, Holbrook; Dawn Rose, Eaglebutte, South Dakota; Gary Skeers, Oakley, Kansas. Mr. and Mrs. Carrol Turner helped with the hauling.

In early December two construction instructors from Central Technical Community College, Gene Cookus and Roy Johnston, supervised a crew of students who volunteered to install the roofing donated to the WCPM by Certain-teed Products Corporation of Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. The company chose the farmhouse for help in their campaign to restore Great American Landmarks. The construction students were Phil Kucera and James Johnson, Red Cloud; Jack Cox and Rodger Peterson, Edgar; Dennis Correll, Kearney; Loren Dibbern, Cairo; Ryan Schardt, Byron; Scott Woodman, Kenesaw; Calvin Henkel, Campbell; Richard Gustafson, Aurora; Chuck Wallin, Hastings; Ed Owens, Central City.

Portions of preliminary work on the roof had been done by Leonard Barnes, Les Doyle, Walt and Ruth Miller of Red Cloud and Mr. and Mrs. Carrol Turner and Mr. and Mrs. Lyle Niemeyer of Bladen. The dead grass around the house was mulched by Lyle Niemeyer.

Projects for this spring include caulking and sealing the doors and windows and, then, painting the structure. Eventually the WCPM hopes to plant fruit trees and hollyhocks in the yard to restore its original surroundings.

Many volunteers have helped and will help in preserving and restoring this landmark. Their concern is fitting; the Antonia Farmhouse is being saved for all of us.

Musical Is Based On Cather Short Story

Robert Beadell of the University of Nebraska College of Music is writing the music and Virginia Faulkner of the University of Nebraska Press and a WCPM board member is writing the libretto for *Out to the Wind*, a musical drama in two acts. It is an adaptation of Willa Cather's short story, "Eric Hermannson's Soul."

Those who attend the spring conference dinner will hear the premiere performance of several of the songs from the new production. The whole musical will be staged on the UN-L campus in the summer of 1978. We can preview the work by hearing Lorraine Beadell, soprano, and other University soloists singing May 7, 1977. Ron Hull will read the contextual information to introduce the selections.

College Class Meets in WCPM Museum

Twelve students are taking English 311A, Literature of the Plains, Tuesday nights this semester in the WCPM seminar room. An extension course from the University of Nebraska, the course has a format which follows that of the class taught by Bernice Slote on the Lincoln campus. WCPM Director JoAnna Lathrop teaches the Red Cloud version.

Since the modern trend in education is to attempt to have the students visit the actual locales of historical and literary events, this course, which features the writing of Willa Cather as its major emphasis, is appropriately housed in the museum. Other writers whose work is studied are John G. Neihardt, Mari Sandoz, O. E. Rolvaag, and Wright Morris. The students will be touring the WCPM buildings in Red Cloud and around Webster County March 26 as a special enhancement of the study. This class, if successful, will be the pilot and model for other courses from UN-L to be taught "on the site."

Early Conference Registration Requested

As you know, we must arrange food service for all our events; the local groups that cater our meals must have warning of the numbers they will serve. For this year the DEADLINE for advance reservations is Monday, May 2. After that date we can only put your name on a waiting list and let you have tickets if additional ones become available. The price for all events is \$15 (the early registration price is \$14).

We ask also that you enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope to receive your tickets by

SPRING CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Saturday, May 7, 1977, Red Cloud, Nebraska

- 8:00 a.m.—Registration WCPM Museum
 9:00 a.m.—Mass . . . St. Juliana Catholic Church
 10:00 a.m.—Brunch Burlington Depot
 11:00 a.m.—Film Veteran's Memorial Hall
 Introduction of local "stars" and the premiere
 of **Into the Morning: Willa Cather's America**
 12:30 p.m.—Lunch Red Cloud City Park
 Music
 2:00 p.m.—"The Passing Show"
 Veterans' Memorial Hall
 A program on **Death Comes for the
 Archbishop**
 4-6 p.m.—Open House . Cather Childhood Home
 . . . Garber Bank Building
 Burlington Depot
 7:00 p.m.—Country Dinner Red Cloud
 High School Gym
 Excerpts from **Out to the Wind**, a musical
 adaptation of "Eric Hermansson's Soul"

return mail. We will not, however, mail out tickets after April 29; you will, then, have to call for them at the WCPM Museum on the morning of May 7.

If because of some emergency you must register after May 2, you may call us at (402) 746-2653.

Registration

WCPM Conference: May 7, 1977

Name(s): _____
 (please name all in your group)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Number Wanted
 _____ tickets for all day at \$14 each (if available, \$15
 after May 2)

OR BY EVENT

- _____ for brunch at \$2 each
 _____ for film at \$1.50 each
 _____ for lunch at \$3 each
 _____ for "The Passing Show" at \$2 each
 _____ for dinner at \$6.50 each
 _____ total amount enclosed

- I enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
 Please mail my Tickets (not possible after April 29).
 I will pick up my tickets on May 7 at the WCPM
 Museum.

MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAY 2

Special Student Registration

WCPM Conference: May 7, 1977

Name(s): _____
 (please name all in group)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Student(s) at _____
 (give college or high school)

- Number Wanted
 _____ student packet at \$5 each for the brunch, film,
 lunch, "The Passing Show"
 _____ whole day at \$8
 _____ "The Passing Show" only at \$1 each
 (sold only to groups of ten or more)
 _____ total amount enclosed

- I enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope.
 Please mail my tickets (not possible after April 29).
 I will pick up my tickets on May 7 at the WCPM
 Museum.

MUST BE RECEIVED BY MAY 2

Volunteers Honored At December 7 Open House

On Willa Cather's birthday, December 7, 1976, the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation buildings in Red Cloud were open to commemorate the day. Nearly one hundred visitors were counted at the Burlington Depot where refreshments were served. At 5:30 p.m. that day Miriam Mountford, president of the WCPM Board, and Mildred R. Bennett, its chairman, held a brief ceremony to honor the 1976 volunteers. Awards for the most hours served went to Faye Carr for 80 hours, Sara Lewis for 54, and Merl and Mal McCall for 79 jointly. A special award, an honorary life membership in the foundation, was given to Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Barnes for his extensive help in restoring the Antonia Farmhouse. Leonard fenced the yard and supervised preparation of the roof for shingling.

A total of 750 volunteer hours were given from January to August, 1976. The volunteers named at the ceremony were: Zola Albers, Leonard Barnes, LaVeda Barta, Sylvia Beems, Elaine Beezley, Grace Beezley, Lucille Beezley, Kay Blackstone, Kay Bowen, Bernice Caldwell, Faye Carr, Kay Cover, Pat Crook, Central Technical Community College (Hastings), Les Doyle, Louise Eldred, Bonnie English, Ella Mae Fox, Bobbie Harrington, Marilyn Hersh, Marie Hoffman, Helen Hoit, Doris Hunter, Virginia James, Helen Kent, Lucille Koler, Barb Kudrna, Sara Lewis, Imo Lindgren, Marcia Mahin, Dorothy Mattison, Mal McCall, Merl McCall, Ruth McDole, Christy Meline, Ruth Miller, Walt Miller, Wilma Nelson, Darleen Nielsen, Norma June Peterson, Ramona Peterson, Jeanne Phillips, Suzi Schultz, Lou Schwartz, Dot Sherwood, Barb Sprague, Kathleen Sprague, Jeanne Talkington, Mary Taylor, Shirley Taylor, Antoinette Turner, Carrol Turner, Margy Watson, Ruth Ann Wiggins, Lu Williams, Ardis Yost, Marian Yost, Vicki Yost and Evelyn Zeiss.

YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION

- By being a Cather Memorial financial contributor:
BENEFACTOR \$1,000.00 and over
 - SUGGESTED ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

| | |
|------------------|----------|
| Patron | \$100.00 |
| Associate | 50.00 |
| Sustaining | 25.00 |
| Family | 15.00 |
| Individual | 10.00 |
- WCPM membership contributors receive:
Newsletter
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 CONTRIBUTIONS AND BEQUESTS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Under Section 170 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1965

AIMS OF THE WCPM

- To secure the bonding, insurance and housing of a permanent art, literary and historical collection relating to the life, time and work of Willa Cather.
- To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial by encouraging and assisting scholarship in the field of the humanities.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

**Contribution To Support the Newsletter \$5.00
(not a membership contribution)**

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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| William Thomas Auld, M.D. Bruce P. Baker, II Mildred R. Bennett W. K. Bennett, M.D. Vi Borton Don E. Connors Virginia Faulkner Josephine Frisbie Ron Hull Ted Kennedy | Robert E. Knoll Ella Cather Lewis John March Miriam Mountford William Mountford Harry Obitz Helen Obitz Jennie Reiher | David E. Scherman Dr. C. Bertrand Schultz Marian Schultz Margaret Cather Shannon Bernice Slote Helen Cather Southwick Marcella Van Meter Durward B. Varner Laird G. Wolfe Lucia Woods |
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Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

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MUSEUM HOURS

Open May 1 to October 1
10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays
1 to 5 p.m. weekends