

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XX, No. 3

FALL, 1976

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

## Museum Areas Interchanged, Remodeled

The lower-level display area in the museum has been closed since August 1. Some displays have been moved; some are being renewed; and some of the artifacts are being "rested" (away from the destructiveness of light and dust) to prolong their lives.

When remodeling is completed, the lower level will be a visitor orientation center where you can view the narrated slide-show introduction to Catherland. The room will also be a lecture hall for small study groups. It will contain cartographic exhibits of Webster County, book-jacket displays of Willa Cather's Nebraska novels, and unique artifacts seen by the writer and then immortalized in her books.

The director's office is being moved from the tower to the basement level so that offices and workroom are adjacent. Those of you who are familiar with our old bank building know how interesting and quaint it is as a museum, but how difficult it has been to keep business activities from interfering with visitors' enjoyment of their tour.

These improvements are being funded, in part, by three memorial funds: donations received in memory of William Van Meter and of Mr. and Mrs. James Cather.

Additional improvements in the museum, planned for the immediate future as money is available, are new exhibits in the back room of the main floor, a revision of the introductory slide show, and carpeting on the main floor. Miscellaneous painting and repairing will be done during the closed season, November 16 to March 14.



*This new Catherland country tour sign tells you that this is the correct route down a shady lane on the Miner Ranch road.—WCPM photo.*

## Helen Obitz Honored At Spring Conference



*At the WCPM spring meeting May 1, Helen Obitz received a picture of Willa Cather's room with an inscribed tribute to her more than twenty years of devotion and service to the Foundation. Presented to her by her fellow board member Josephine Frisbie, the award cited Mrs. Obitz's "contributions as collector, curator, historian and benefactor for the WCPM."—Photo courtesy of Hastings Daily Tribune*

## Cather Birthday Open House To Be Held

Again this December 7 open house in all the WCPM buildings will be held to commemorate Willa Cather's birthday. All who are within driving distance are cordially invited to spend an hour or two with us that afternoon, seeing what is new in the museum, visiting the other buildings, and having refreshments at the depot.

## Gifts and Contributions

In memory of Lucille Pavelka, prototype for Martha in **My Antonia**, \$87 from members of her family. The money will be spent on the Pavelka farm. Mrs. Pavelka died July 3 in Hastings.

In memory of James Cather, \$200 from his daughter, Helen Cather Southwick, Pittsburgh.

In memory of Mrs. E. C. Spangler, \$25 from Mrs. L. V. Jacks, Omaha.

For the Antonia farm restoration:

From Willard McKeag, Fremont, \$25.

From Mrs. E. E. Stafford, Oxford, \$50.

From Mr. and Mrs. Dale D. Skupa, McPherson, Kansas, \$50.

For the endowment fund:

From Woods Charitable Fund, Chicago, \$20,000.

From Miner-Weisz Charitable Fund, Chicago, \$10,000.

From Willis Strauss, Northern Natural Gas, Omaha, \$250.

From Jean R. Faulkner, Lincoln, \$1,000.

From Florence Brugger, Columbus, \$50.

From Helen Beal, Columbus, \$100.

For operating expenses:

From Miner-Weisz Charitable Fund, Chicago, \$5,000.

From Lucia Woods, New York, \$1,000.

Special contributions:

From Virginia Faulkner, Lincoln, \$200 for office machines.

From Bill Mountford, Red Cloud, \$500 for alterations in the Episcopal Church heating plant.

From John Bergers, Red Cloud, \$150 for country tour sign repairs.

From Don Connors, Huntington Beach, California, \$137.35 for basement renovation.

From Frisbee-Frisbie family, \$25. A thank you gift for our help with their family reunion in June.

From Lucia Woods, New York, \$864.60 for lower floor seating.

From Masaichi Hashiba, Tokyo, Japan, \$50. A thank you after his visit here.

Other gifts;

From Kay Byrne, Pittsburgh, \$500, a thank you for the use of our research facilities.

From Mrs. Keith Portenier, Guide Rock, a framed needlepoint copy of the Webster County block of the State Extension Club tapestry. It shows the sun and plow and is labeled "Catherland."

From the Japanese publishers of the collected edition of Willa Cather's works (made from the American plates), the fourteen volumes of the set. The original gift was made to Alfred A. Knopf, New York, Cather's publisher, who sent us the gift with the consent of Charles Cather, Willa Cather's nephew and executor of her estate.

From Ella Cather Lewis, Long Beach, California, a hand-thrown stone milk crock discovered under the basement stairs of the mill house near Willow Shade, the Cather's Virginia home. The mill house is among the settings used by Cather in **Sapphira and The Slave Girl**.

From Bernice Slote, Lincoln, a copy of the Japanese **The Novels of Willa Cather**, a critical work given her by the book's author, Mamoru Omori, Tokyo, Japan.

From Louise Aldrich Nixon, Lincoln, a print, "The Bishop's Apricot," by Gustave Baumann, given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. Stephen D. Day and Faith Nixon Day, and a painting "The Bishop's Chapel" by Faith Nixon Day.

From Dr. Thomas Auld, Stockton, California, Willa Cather's nephew, sets of candid snapshots of his aunt and their family, as well as some portrait pictures.

From Gunnar Horn, Omaha, an actual Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad stock certificate for the Depot display.

Our thanks to all these generous donors.



*The living room of the Cather childhood home as Red Cloud volunteer John English photographed it with his "fish-eye" lens. His view shows almost all of the room and sections of the master bedroom and dining room as well.*

## HAPPENINGS

### CATHERLAND . . .

#### Membership

A membership drive is going on during the month of November here in Red Cloud and Webster County. We hope when the final tally is made we will have reached our goal of one hundred new WCPM members here in Catherland.

#### Volunteers

Already this year more than forty-one people have served as volunteer hostesses and tour guides. Many of these people have indicated to Doris Swanson, volunteer coordinator, their interest in becoming more involved in WCPM activities. As a result our director, JoAnna Lathrop, is conducting an eight-week course designed to give a broad perspective about museums in general and the WCPM in particular to the eleven volunteers who are interested in taking on added responsibilities.

#### New Residents

Artist John Bergers and his family have moved to Red Cloud from their home in Oregon. They plan to live here at least two years while Mr. Bergers does a series of oil paintings of local scenes as Willa Cather would have seen them. Bergers will give us a historical perspective on the author's hometown world.

#### Cather Relatives Visit Red Cloud

Willa Cather's nieces, Ella Cather Lewis, WCPM board member, and Catherine Cather Lowell—both of Long Beach, California—were here for the Spring Conference May 1.

Charles E. Cather, nephew of Willa Cather, from Garden Grove, California, visited in early July.

Morris E. Cather, a distant relative from Chatham, Virginia, was here in July for an extended visit. Mr. Cather led the crusade to have a marker placed at Willa Cather's birthplace in Gore, Virginia, by the Virginia Historic Landmark Commission in 1970.

#### Miss Teenage Nebraska

Jami Ord, Red Cloud high school student and Miss Teenage Nebraska, won the title of "Miss Congeniality" in the national contest and finished as one of the top fifteen contestants. She gave as gifts to the two state governors who acted as hosts copies of WILLA CATHER: A PICTORIAL MEMOIR and gave fifty-five Cather souvenir spoons to her fellow contestants. The sponsoring organizations chose these Cather mementos to best represent Nebraska nationally and, as a result, Willa Cather's name is in one house, at least, in every state.

#### Special Assistance

Our old Addressograph machine was a true antique when we acquired it years ago, and it served the purpose well though it became increasingly cranky in its declining years. It finally broke down for the last time early in the run of the spring newsletter. We settled for any-old-way—by hand and on a borrowed machine—just to get your newsletter in the mail while it was still news.

Thanks to Frank H. Woods, Chicago, and the Nebraska Natural Gas Company, Fremont, we are now equipped with up-to-date machines for making address plates and for fast, efficient addressing of bulk mailings.

### VIRGINIA . . .

In Sweet Briar, Virginia, the Sweet Briar College 75th anniversary was celebrated in October. "Willa Cather and Virginia" was the subject discussed by Professor Margaret O'Connor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in her speech October 12. "The World of Willa Cather," the photographic exhibit on display from October 4 through November 5, is by Lucia Woods, who also did a slide-lecture on Cather and the settings of her novels.

### Cather Garden Dedicated

On Saturday, October 2, three commemorative gardens were officially opened on the University of Nebraska Lincoln Campus. The gardens honored Carl A. Donaldson, former business manager of the University, Dr. Lee J. Enright, the late architect who designed the present campus, and Willa Cather, the distinguished American writer and the most famous alumna of the institution.

The ceremony was directed by Chancellor Roy A. Young. Acceptance of the Cather Garden was by Bernice Slote, Professor of English and board member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

Representing the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation at the ceremony were board members Mildred Bennett, Miriam Mountford, Bill Mountford, Helen Obitz, Harry Obitz and Vi Borton, director JoAnna Lathrop, and a guest, Barbara Tupper, all of Red Cloud.

From Lincoln came board members C. Bertrand Schultz, Marian Schultz, Bernice Slote, Virginia Faulkner, and Robert Knoll.

The program cover quoted Willa Cather's **My Antonia**: "Trees were so rare in that country, and they had to make such a hard fight to grow, that we used to feel anxious about them, and visit them as if they were persons."

The plaque itself reads "Willa Cather Garden, 1873-1973." Then, under the University seal, is: 'Primus ego in patriam mecum . . . deducam Musas' (Virgil: **Georgics III**); "For I shall be the first, if I live, to bring the muse into my country." It is cited "Willa Cather, **My Antonia**."

The garden contains birch trees, Black Hills spruce, and cottonwood trees, the only ones on the campus, as well as native roses. Cottonwoods and roses were special favorites of the author and the garden is to the west where it catches the last rays of the sun. Plans for next spring will include planting of wild plums and several species of wild flowers mentioned in Willa Cather's works.

### Notice! Notice! Notice!

We will no longer have the "Correct Address Requested" notation on your **Newsletter**. It now costs 25c for each **Newsletter** returned to us for address correction, and we cannot afford that fee. Without that phrase no notice will be sent you or us when a **Newsletter** is not delivered; it will just be destroyed. You must notify us of changes or we will not receive the information and you will not receive the **Newsletter**.

PLEASE SEND US CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

## Start Reading!

The theme book for the next annual conference, May 7, 1977, will be **Death Comes for the Archbishop**, celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the book's publication.

## New Signs Placed On Country Roads

Along the tour route through Willa Cather Country, fifty new directional signs have replaced the battered ones that survived more than ten years of service. The new markers are green with a black plow logo and an arrow in white pointing the direction. The old location signs—for instance: "Dane Church," "Burden Homestead," "Antonia Farm"—will remain in use pending our financial ability to replace them. They are showing their age; the yellow and orange are faded, but the black lettering is legible.

### 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
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



**Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial**

Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

With the help of the Willa Cather country tour leaflet and the trail of bright green signs, visitors are able to drive the route at their own pace, stopping as often as they like.

## The Annual Plea

Your 1977 membership contribution is payable now. If you send your check before December 1, you will be making an extra contribution by saving us the expense of mailing you a reminder.

Please make your contribution as generous as possible; much remains to be done to preserve what we already have collected and to improve the effectiveness of our presentation of Willa Cather's life, her times, and her art.

Thank you.

*Miriam*

### 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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