



# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Newsletter

VOLUME XX, No. 1

SPRING, 1976

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

## Spring Conference Theme is ONE OF OURS

Cather's Pulitzer Prize winning novel of 1922, **One of Ours** is the thematic book for the annual WCPM Spring Conference to be held in Red Cloud on Saturday, May 1, 1976. This book's discussion of American values and its story of a Nebraska farm boy who is killed fighting in World War I make it appropriate for the Bicentennial year. We have planned a full day of entertaining and educational events.

A **One of Ours** mood will be set for the conference banquet by music from World War I. Then, the program will be a premiere showing of the documentary filmed in Cather country last summer by WNET-TV, New York, **Great American Authors: Willa Cather**. The movie features local "actors" and familiar locales.

The afternoon discussion of the book is called "The Passing Show," the title of Cather's newspaper column criticizing the arts in the 1890's. Our program will feature a short review of the book by Bernice Slote, Ron Hull, JoAnna Lathrop, and Rich Wilson. A critical assessment of the work will follow with the following professional discussants: Sister Lucy Schneider, Marymount College, Kansas; Dr. Sue Rosowski, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Dr. Patricia Yongue, Houston (Texas) University; and Dr. Robert Harwick, Hastings College, Nebraska.

In spite of inflation, the conference price will remain the same as last year, \$15.00. In addition there is an early-payment price of only \$14. For the first time this year you can purchase separate tickets for each of the four major events to accommodate those who cannot stay all day. Prices are **One of Ours** tour (bus furnished), \$4; lunch, \$2.50; "The Passing Show," \$2; and banquet, \$6.50.

### STUDENT SPECIAL

We are urging teachers and students to take advantage of the special prices offered them this year. All high school and college students can buy a special packet which includes the tour, lunch, and "The Passing Show" for the pre-registration price of \$6 (saving \$2.50). Teachers who bring their students may purchase this packet for themselves as well. In student groups of ten or more, admission to only "The Passing Show" is \$1 each (again, teachers who bring their students, may pay their own admission at a student rate).

### Pittsburgh Circle Meets

The Pittsburgh Cather Circle held its annual December 7 meeting, but met again a week later to view "Willa Cather Remembered," the film produced by Nebraska Educational Television Network which pre-



Lt. G. P. Cather, AEF, the prototype of Claude Wheeler, the hero of **ONE OF OURS**. The Lieutenant, Cather's cousin, was killed in France on May 28, 1918.—Photo from WCPM Archives

miered in Red Cloud last May 3 at the twentieth anniversary spring conference.

WCPM Director JoAnna Lathrop was in Pittsburgh for the December 14 meeting. Her hostess was Jeanne Shaffer, a member of the Cather Circle. JoAnna had tea with the David Mertz family at 1180 Murray Hill (formerly the McClung mansion where Willa Cather lived) and Board member Helen Cather Southwick entertained JoAnna for lunch at her home, where JoAnna saw the Fechin portrait of Helen's "Aunt Willa" and other Cather mementos.

### Antonia Farm House Deeded To WCPM

Mr. and Mrs. Haldine Johnson of Norman, Nebraska, have given the Foundation the "Antonia" farm house, fruit cave, and adjacent farm yard. The property, thirteen miles north of Red Cloud, was  
(Continued on Page 2)

## AASLH Consultant Visits Museum

In January, Helmuth J. Naumer, Executive Director of the Ft. Worth Museum of Science and History, spent two and one half days in Red Cloud analyzing the WCPM and making recommendations for the future. In his twelve-page report, Naumer commended us for acquiring and preserving truly valuable Cather objects. He commented that we have a subject and purpose of international interest and importance. He lauded "The very real attempt to develop a professional museum and historic restoration," and judged "the work has been done with quality and love."

Mr. Naumer's comments and recommendations contained in his written report are serving as invaluable guidelines while we formulate and carryout both short and long-range plans.

Mr. Naumer's services as a visiting consultant were made possible by a grant from the American Association for State and Local History.

## WCPM Serves Students

The heavy fall schedule of student tours (almost one a day during October) ended abruptly with the succession of Thanksgiving blizzards. Even though the museum is officially closed during the winter, a large number of visitors—individuals, small groups, and high school and college classes—toured the WCPM facilities from November to March. Others continued their study of Cather after enlisting our help by mail.

Then Dr. Robert Harwick's Willa Cather inter-term seminar at Hastings College met one day each week in Red Cloud during January for a series of lectures, tours, films, and discussions, tailored to enhance their study of Cather novels and short stories. Park College of Missouri sent students in January for a two-day study period here. Scheduled for early April is a class from Mid-Plains Technical Community College of North Platte.

Spring also brings another wave of student tours. The April and May calendars are already almost filled.

## Cather Happenings

The WCPM provided the Epicurean Society of America with three recipes used in Willa Cather's home to be included in their 1976 publication, **A Culinary Tour of Great American Homes**, by Helen Futch.

\* \* \*

Board member Bruce Baker and his family are now in Afghanistan where Dr. Baker is the Fulbright lecturer in American literature and history at the University of Kabul. He will return to his post as professor of English at the University of Nebraska-Omaha in January, 1977.

\* \* \*

Most visitors come to look at Willa Cather's country. Robert Beadell came to listen. Beadell is writing the music for **Out to the Wind**, a musical drama in two acts, adapted from Willa Cather's "Eric Hermannson's Soul." Virginia Faulkner, board member of the WCPM, is writing the libretto. The work will be produced by the University of Nebraska-Lincoln School of Music sometime during 1976.

## ANTONIA FARM HOUSE DEEDED TO WCPM

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literally the home of the John Pavelka family. Mrs. Pavelka (Annie) is transformed by Cather's art to Antonia Shimerda Cuzak, heroine of the novel **My Antonia**.

One of the few houses from the pioneer era still standing, this house is known world-wide because it is the background for "Cuzak's Boys," Book V of **My Antonia**. Here the prototype of Antonia, "earth mother of the plains," ("a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races,") and her children lived. It was from this fruit cave that Jim Burden watched "a veritable explosion of life out of the dark cave into the sunlight."

Plans for preserving the exterior of the Antonia house are underway. New shingles for the house are being provided by the Certain-teed Products Corporation. This is the first and only Nebraska site chosen for the company's program of restoration of Great American Landmarks. National advertising will feature before and after pictures as the new roof goes on the Antonia farm house this spring.

### Gifts

In memory of Ethel Garber Cather, various contributions amounting to \$225.

In memory of William D. Van Meter, various contributions amounting to \$220.

From Whitney North Seymour, Jr., New York City, for the bronze plaque at 5 Bank Street, Greenwich Village, \$500.

From Lucia Woods, New York City, for the new WCPM logo design, \$535.

From the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Cather Circle, fifty-eight spools of microfilm of the journalistic writings of Cather in Pittsburgh from 1896 to 1906. This addition increases our collection on microfilm by thirty percent.

From Virginia Faulkner, Lincoln, expenses of the WCPM Director's attendance at the September AASLH conference in Independence, Missouri.

From Ella Cather Lewis and Catherine Cather Lowell, a letter from Cather to her mother and a copy of an autographed, unpublished poem, "The Hills of Sleep."

The December, 1975, Modern Language Association convention in San Francisco had a special seminar on Willa Cather.

\* \* \*

Two new publications of note: Philip L. Gerber, **Willa Cather** (Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1975); Editor David P. Demarest, Jr., **From These Hills, From These Valleys: Selected Fiction about Western Pennsylvania** (Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1976,) which contains "Double Birthday."

\* \* \*

Last June board members Bernice Slope and Virginia Faulkner attended the Western States History

of Literature Conference in Logan, Utah. Bernice delivered a lecture on Willa Cather and conducted a seminar on Cather's works. Virginia built and staffed a display of University of Nebraska Press publications, including Cather books; she reports every book was sold!

Later in July Bernice was featured speaker at the humanities lecture series at the University of Kansas, Lawrence. The title of her keynote lecture was "The New Pioneer: Images in the Work of Willa Cather and Others."

### Red Cloud Invites WCPM Members To Ceremony

The Red Cloud Bicentennial Committee invites you all to stay over and attend an "old-fashioned Sunday afternoon in the park" on May 2 after the Red Cloud Bicentennial flag presentation ceremony at 2 p.m. Music, an ice cream social, a "mellerdrummer," square dancing, and art exhibits are scheduled and the replica of the old horse-drawn streetcar will carry passengers once again from the park to the Burlington Depot.

### Early Conference Registration Required

As you know, our lunch and banquet are catered by local groups; they must have advance warning of the number they will serve. In addition we rent buses and we must order the number of buses and drivers also in advance. Therefore, we have made Monday, April 26, 1976, our DEADLINE. After that date we can only put your name on a waiting list and let you buy tickets if

### Spring Conference Schedule

Saturday, May 1, 1976, Red Cloud, Nebraska

- 7:30 a.m.—Registration . . . . . WCPM Museum  
Coffee and rolls
- 8:30 a.m.—Mass . . . St. Juliana Catholic Church  
or
- 8:30 a.m.—Mass . . . . . Grace Episcopal Church
- 9:30 a.m.—Bus Tour . . . . . **One of Ours** settings  
starts at WCPM Museum
- 12:15 p.m. —Lunch . . . . . Veteran's Memorial Hall
- 2:00 p.m.—"The Passing Show" . . . . .  
. . . . . **One of Ours** discussion  
Veteran's Memorial Hall
- 4-6 p.m.—Photo Exhibit . . . . . Burlington Depot  
Open House . . . . . Cather Childhood Home
- 6:30 p.m.—Banquet . . . . . Red Cloud H. S. Gym  
Film: **Great American Authors: Willa Cather**  
Music from World War I

space becomes available. The whole day's price will then be \$15 (the early registration price is \$14).

We must ask, moreover, that you enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope to receive your tickets by return mail. We will not mail out tickets after April 23; you will, then, have to call at the WCPM Museum the morning of May 1.

If because of some emergency you must register after April 26, you may call us at (402) 746-2653.

### Registration

WCPM Conference: May 1, 1976

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
(please name all in your group)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

No. Wanted

\_\_\_\_\_ tickets for all day at \$14 each (if available, \$15 after April 26)

#### OR BY EVENT

\_\_\_\_\_ for tour at \$4 each

\_\_\_\_\_ for lunch at \$2.50 each

\_\_\_\_\_ for "The Passing Show" at \$2 each

\_\_\_\_\_ for banquet at \$6.50 each

\_\_\_\_\_ total amount enclosed

I enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Please mail my Tickets (not possible after April 23).

I will pick up my tickets on May 1 at the WCPM Museum

**MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 26**

### Special Student Registration

WCPM Conference: May 1, 1976

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
(please name all in group)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Student(s) at \_\_\_\_\_  
(give college or high school)

No. Wanted

\_\_\_\_\_ student packet at \$6 each (for the tour, lunch, "The Passing Show")

\_\_\_\_\_ banquet at \$6.50

\_\_\_\_\_ "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 23).

I will pick up my tickets on May 1 at the WCPM Museum.

**MUST BE RECEIVED BY APRIL 26**

## Willa Cather's Birthday Celebrated

RED CLOUD—As announced in the Fall Newsletter, open house was held in all the WCPM restored buildings on December 7, 1975, to commemorate Willa Cather's birthday. More than one hundred people attended on the only sunshiny Sunday afternoon in December.

NEW YORK—On December 8 in Greenwich Village a crowd of Cather admirers gathered in the snow at number 5 Bank Street to dedicate a bronze plaque on the building where Willa Cather lived for fourteen years.

The plaque reads: "The noted American author Willa Cather lived on the second floor of 5 Bank Street on this site from 1913 until the house was torn down in 1927. During this period she produced many of her most important literary works, including THE SONG OF THE LARK [1915]; MY ANTONIA [1918]; YOUTH AND THE BRIGHT MEDUSA [1920]; ONE OF OURS

[1922]; APRIL TWILIGHTS AND OTHER POEMS [1923]; A LOST LADY [1923]; THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE [1925]; MY MORTAL ENEMY [1926]; and DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP [1927].

*Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, Red Cloud, Nebraska"*

Whitney North Seymour, Jr., who conceived and funded the commemorative project, was in charge of the dedication program and was one of the speakers.

Alfred A. Knopf, Cather's publisher, in one of his rare public appearances, reminisced about his long friendship with "Miss Cather."

Board member Lucia Woods, representing the WCPM, presented a complete set of the Cather books written at 5 Bank Street to the Jefferson Market Courthouse Library just around the corner.

"Willa Cather's Red Cloud," a collection of photographs by Gabriel Seymour, was on exhibition in the library during December in conjunction with the plaque dedication and birthday celebration.

### 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 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.

### 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.

Newsletter Subscription Only ..... \$5.00  
(not a membership)

### BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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**Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial**

Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

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