

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation

VOLUME XIX, Number 3

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA



The Willa Cather Memorial Prairie marker was unveiled by Geoffrey Barnard, regional vice president for The Nature Conservancy which owns and manages the grassland purchased with a grant from the Woods Charitable Fund. The Woods family came for the dedication ceremonies from Lincoln, Chicago, Boston and New York.

Pictured from left to right are Geoffrey Barnard, Minneapolis; Tom Woods, Lincoln; Lucia Woods, New York; Mrs. Frank Woods and Frank Woods, Chicago; and Mildred Bennett, founder of the WCPM.—Photo by Vern Walters

## WCPM Twentieth Anniversary Conference

The twentieth anniversary Spring Conference of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial was on Saturday, May 3, 1975. A crowd of 300 enjoyed a full day of events, beginning with a morning mass at the restored Grace Episcopal Church, where Cather had been a member.

Six buses were required to convey the participants on the tour of settings for **Obscure Destinies**, the collection of three stories which was the Cather book chosen as the theme of the conference.

At dedication ceremonies for the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie was the unveiling of a plaque celebrating Cather's portrayal in her writing of the "shaggy grassland," the prairie, that she once referred to as being "the floor of the sky."

Nebraska beef was served at a noon barbecue and then a panel discussion, under the guidance of Bernice Slote and Mildred Bennett, dealt with Cather's delineating the good life and the peaceful death in **Obscure Destinies**. On the panel were JoAnna Lathrop, Annette Sims, Bruce P. Baker, and Brent Bohlke.

An exhibition of photographs by Lucia Woods opened at the Burlington Depot.

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## MEMBERSHIP 1976

Make your interest in Willa Cather count during the Bicentennial Year.

Your Membership is solicited. Join the WCPM now!

Your Membership renewal is requested before January 1!

Give Gift Memberships for Christmas!

Give a special 20th Anniversary gift to the Endowment Fund.

See the back page for more information and use the enclosed envelope.



At the Spring Conference banquet, founder of the WCPM, Mildred Bennett, was honored for her 20 years as president. Tributes included a scrapbook containing congratulatory letters from friends and admirers, beginning with a telegram from President Ford, a citation from the State of Nebraska, designation as a Nebraska Builder by the University of Nebraska, a Rinehart portrait of Chief Red Cloud from the city of Red Cloud, a cottonwood tree planted in her honor by the Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce, and a portrait of Mildred to be hung in the Museum from the WCPM Board of Governors.

Shown presenting the portrait to Mildred is Miriam Mountford, WCPM President, and Laird Wolfe, board member who was banquet M.C.—Photo by Claire Hurlbert; courtesy Hastings Tribune.

During the evening banquet, Mildred Bennett related the highlights of events during the past 20 years, aided by a slide show. Mildred's reminiscences were of the growth of the Willa Cather Memorial from nothing but an idea to today's six restored buildings, varied educational programs and tour system, and several thousand visitors a year. Previewed by the banquet crowd was a film, "Willa Cather Remembered," which included segments from the Nebraska Heritage Archives of the Nebraska Educational Television Network.

### **BICENTENNIAL GRANT PERIOD ENDS**

In 1974 the WCPM received a matching funds American Revolution Bicentennial Grant for cataloging and inventorying its collections. The period of the grant ended October 10, 1975.

During these months, storage areas (to provide access to articles not on display) have been constructed in the Depot and in the Museum itself. A processing laboratory and office areas have been prepared and furnished to provide facilities for the classification and indexing of items and to house the research catalogs.

However, the major work has been, of course, the preparation of the actual indexes for the collections. The WCPM library area will have a large catalog containing references and cross-references to its 400 books (150 rare, 45 foreign translations), 200 periodicals, scrapbooks, 1000 clippings, and 100 pamphlets. Separate files will list the 800 photographs, the 200 letters, the 60 spools of microfilm, and the 3500 articles of historic and literary interest which the WCPM holds.

Many volunteers have helped with the work, especially typists, Jeanne Phillips and Lu Schwartz, and WCPM board members—John March (who cataloged for three weeks), Helen and Harry Obitz (who listed articles for the inventory and evaluated them), Mildred Bennett (who inventoried) and Don Connors (who helped in construction).

While all the index cards are not yet typed, all the classifying has been done. The WCPM has the forms established; the balance of the present work and keeping the catalog up-to-date in future years are merely clerical jobs. We believe that students will find our indexed collections an invaluable continuing aid to scholarship.

JoAnna Lathrop  
Director of Research

### **NEW TO THE CATHER COLLECTIONS**

Cather's own proof copy of **April Twilights**, her 1903 collection of poetry, with some poems in proof pasted in and three holograph copies of poems—a first draft of "The Palatine," "On Cyndus," dated February 10, 1900; and four verses of "The Swedish Mother." All are gifts from Ella Cather Lewis and Catherine Cather Lowell, purchased from a sale of items from the Edith Lewis estate.

Two glass-plate negatives of portraits of Cather by Rinehart of Omaha. One is the famous "Russian

jacket" photograph used on the WCPM maximum postcard for the First Day Stamp Issue and the other is a companion sitting rarely reproduced.

### **VISITORS**

This year a total of 4,014 people had signed-in at the Museum by August 31 (276 more than during all of 1974). During September, business was still brisk, but falling a few short of the 27 visitors a day, the average of the summer months.

Ruth Doudna keeps track of visitors and writes about them in her column in the **Red Cloud Chief**. During one week in July, Ruth reported people from 40 Nebraska towns, 15 other states, and 3 foreign countries. In that week the Museum had visits from representatives of two U.S. Embassies—Bonn, Germany, and Oman. Tour groups included thirty grand officers of the Order of Rainbow, a Bicentennial summer school class, and students from Peru State College. Visiting teachers came from all levels of instruction: elementary, secondary, college and adult.

Ethel Garber Cather, wife of Willa Cather's brother, James, died May 13, 1975, in Long Beach, California.

### **BOARD MEETS; DIRECTOR HIRED**

At its annual meeting in Red Cloud, May 2, 1975, the WCPM Board of Governors elected the following officers for five-year terms: Mildred R. Bennett, Chairman of the Board; Miriam Mountford, President; Bertrand Schultz, Vice President; Viola Borton, Second Vice President; Marcella Van Meter, Secretary; Bill Mountford, Treasurer.

At the fall business meeting in Lincoln, September 14, 1975, the Board of Governors approved a trust agreement with the First National Bank and Trust Company of Lincoln for handling the WCPM Endowment Fund. The Board also approved extensive revisions of the by-laws.

At the same meeting the Board appointed JoAnna Lathrop, who has worked this summer as director of research, the administrator of the WCPM for the coming year.

JoAnna, whose **WILLA CATHER: A CHECKLIST OF HER PUBLISHED WRITING**, was published last spring, has also had published a number of critical articles on Cather. She has a background of experience in journalism, library science, drama, as a Peace Corps volunteer, and as an English teacher both on the secondary and college levels, most recently at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln where she will be awarded her PH.D. in December.

JoAnna will complete the Bicentennial project in October, work parttime through December, and begin fulltime employment January 1, 1976.

### **NEEDED!**

You can celebrate the WCPM's twentieth birthday with a gift specifically remembered and recorded in your name; consider:

- \$100 would preserve the new Cather manuscripts (deacidification and lamination)
- \$250 would repaint all the stairs and add rubber treads to guard against accidents
- \$540 would carpet the lower floor display area (and cover the raw concrete with a good-quality inner-outer fabric that meets the Nebraska State Fire-Marshall's code)
- \$1000 would buy a closed-area, continuous, visitor-activated slide show
- \$1100 would carpet the main floor (excluding a section of tile for display, but covering the broken tiles)

**VOLUNTEERS**

The WCPM depends on volunteers to keep the Museum open every day, seven days a week from April through September and on weekends in October. Other volunteers serve as typists, as tour guides, and one is a librarian.

At four orientation sessions held in June and early July, thirty-five new volunteers were trained.

Sunday, September 28, thirty-eight of these volunteers, their spouses, and several training for the 1976 season toured Cather Country ending with a picnic at the Depot.

Volunteers will continue to help with school tours, will have the Museum open for Christmas shoppers in December, and in January they will help when special college interterm and seminar classes are scheduled.

**1976 CONFERENCE THEME**

Theme for the Spring Conference, May 1, 1976, is ONE OF OURS, Cather's 1922 Pulitzer Prize winning novel. (Short articles on this novel may be used in the Winter Newsletter; submit to Bernice Slote, Newsletter Editor, University of Nebraska English Department, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.)

**CATHER TV SPECIAL FILMED**

This July, Richard Schickel and his co-workers from New York spent a week in Catherland filming scenes for a one-hour dramatized documentary on Willa Cather, the first in a series of five programs about great American Authors.

The buildings restored by the WCPM <sup>is Red Cloud</sup> and the mid-summer countryside provided more than a dozen authentic backgrounds.

The Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, where there are no telephone nor electric lines to interfere with the sense of the past, <sup>group</sup> was a delightful discovery for the city-bred camera crew of four. The picnic scene from MY ANTONIA was shot there on the prairie hillside, a team of horses and a wagon came there all the way from Smith Center, Kansas, for another Antonia scene, and the native grassland was featured in more Antonia episodes and some from O PIONEERS!

Actors for the silent roles were easily recruited locally and costumed by Helen Obitz in the styles of the 1880's, 1890's and early 1900's from her collection of historic clothing. <sup>Webster Community children</sup> The kids from the neighborhood were eager to be pioneer children running out of the



Getting a lesson in the workings of a TV camera from the camera-man are youngsters from Red Cloud and Elizabeth Pavelka Boyd from Bladen who are costumed and ready to act out a scene from MY ANTONIA in the "Cuzak" farmyard. This was just one of the many scenes filmed for a dramatized documentary on Willa Cather.—Photo by Dean Terrill courtesy Lincoln JOURNAL-STAR.

dark fruit cellar into the sun while Elizabeth Pavelka Boyd represented her mother in the re-creation of that memorable scene from MY ANTONIA. Other actors were <sup>teenagers</sup> junior-high age youngsters portraying the young Jim Burden and Antonia, high school and college kids acted as the hired girls and the boys from Blackhawk.

<sup>the boys</sup> One secretary played the part of A LOST LADY in the cottonwood grove where the prototype of Marian Forrester once lived. Another braided her hair in the Swedish style to portray Alexandra in a sunrise scene from O PIONEERS! Our own Ruth Deudna was ~~OLD~~ MRS. HARRIS in Grandmother Beak's room in the Cather House. Mildred Bennett and Vi Borton located the right spot at the right time and <sup>Businessmen,</sup> farmers and landowners alike took time out during a busy season to help.

It was a county-wide, interstate effort with more than thirty people enthusiastically involved. Mr. Schickel was lavish in his praise of the willingness to devote so much time and energy. "It's just sensational the way everyone has been . . . It's all much more than we had any right to expect."

A \$150,000 Bicentennial grant under the Corporation for Public Broadcasting is funding the series. The producing station is WNET-TV. The WCPM provided more than 100 pictures from our extensive photographic collection for the use of Jill Demby, editor of the film which will be shown on National Educational TV early in 1976.

*for the film*  
*Barbara Boyd & M. Kinoshita*  
*New York*

December 7, 1975, Willa Cather's birthday, will be celebrated in Red Cloud with open house at all the restored buildings between the hours of 2 and 5 that Sunday afternoon; refreshments at the Depot. Please plan to join us.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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

You who were here during the summer of 1975 know how noisy and messy the final stages of the Bicentennial project became. You will be happy to know a great deal was accomplished and that order has been restored. I hope you can come back and enjoy it.

I hope many, many of you will have the opportunity to use the newly reorganized study facilities. We will continue to upgrade them while we turn our efforts toward revitalizing the tour system, renewing the displays, and the many other improvements planned for the future.

I hope your plans include generous support for the WCPM.

Sincerely,



**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
- Tour charge discount
- Preferred status for WCPM services
- Discounts on special book and gift shop items.
- Special group Memberships (such as clubs or businesses) are available. Write to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial for details.

- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

LARGER DONATIONS AND BEQUESTS (DE- LAYED GIVING) TO THE MEMORIAL ARE WELCOME. (Consult your attorney for advice on your particular form of legacy.)

**ALL MEMBERSHIPS, 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.

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



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