

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME XVII, Number 2

and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

MY ANTONIA



Antonia Shimerda is the fictional name Willa Cather used when she wrote the story of her friend, Anna Sadilek Pavelka. In this picture Annie is 17 years old, her age when she came to town to work. Eight years later she married John Pavelka.

A newly arrived immigrant, Antonia had eyes that "were big and warm and full of light, like the sun shining on brown pools in the wood. Her skin was brown too, and in her cheeks she had a glow of rich, dark colour. Her brown hair was curly . . ." Jim Burden later said of Antonia and the other hired girls, "They were growing prettier every day, but . . . I used to think with pride that Antonia, like Snow-White in the fairy tale, was still 'fairest of them all'." After 20 years Jim felt, "Antonia had always been one to leave images in the mind that did not fade." She "still had that something which fires the imagination . . ." It was no wonder that her sons stood tall and straight. She was a rich mine of life, like the founders of early races." (MY ANTONIA)

WILLA CATHER CENTENNIAL FESTIVAL

The following program of events was announced by Robert E. Knoll, Chairman of the Willa Cather Centennial Festival sponsored by the University of Nebraska College of Arts and Sciences. The Festival will extend through the spring of 1974.

... Publication ...

April, 1973, is the publication date for UNCLE VALENTINE AND OTHER STORIES: WILLA CATHER'S UNCOLLECTED SHORT FICTION, 1915-1929. The collection, edited with an introduction by Bernice Slotte, is published by the University of Nebraska Press as part of its program of bringing back into print Willa Cather's early and uncollected writing. With this volume and all the other U.N.P. Cather publications you can now read a lot more Cather than was available during her life-time.

... Brochure ...

A \$10,000.00 grant from the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc., of Lincoln and Chicago is being used to publish the Cather Commemorative Brochure which will be ready about September 15, 1973.

You Newsletter subscribers and Cather Memorial members can receive your free copy by asking for it. Mail request before June 1 to: Willa Cather Centennial

(Continued on page 2)

THE OLD PRAIRIES

by Stephen Tennant (after reading Patricia Lee Yongue's article on A LOST LADY.)

I had forgotten tears could be so bright;
Before I shed them.
Shining, glittering tears! —like light!
Can fancy wed them?
Will time ever assuage my loss?
I rather doubt it.
There are Valleys no Bridge can cross.
Sorrow,—no pride can rout it.
Those frontier years recede in time:
And the Old West bows low,
To the callous future, who, with a slick rhyme,
Counsels it to go.
But the Great Heart, the spiritual mind,
The Imagination's faith:
Somewhere in the Soul you will find,
That Glory is more than a wraith—
Those shiftless tears, brighter than Joy!
That you shed for the Pioneers:
They are the crystal Dewes for the frontier Boy,
Who so gloriously hears:
A music wrought of faith and hope:
Far away on the Prairie Wind.
High, and sunlit, on that great slope,
Where none have loved, or sinned!
That is frontier country: some long shed tears,
Still sparkle with the Dew:
And long ago; Noble, Timeless fears—
Have become courageous! New!
Sacred,—mysterious as the Dusk,
In that ancient Buffalo land:
There's a fragrance of red grass, and musk,
Too sweet for you to understand.

Stephen Tennant, An Englishman, wrote the Foreward to Willa Cather's ON WRITING. Edith Lewis says in WILLA CATHER LIVING, "One of the friendships that counted most for her was that with her English friend Stephen Tennant, youngest son of Lord and Lady Glenconner. He had written to her about A LOST LADY while he was still a student at the Slade School in London. They had corresponded ever since. She kept all his letters—the only ones she kept like this, except Miss Jewett's. His visits to America about this time gave her a kind of stimulus and delight entirely new; for he was the only one among the new generation of writers with whom she could talk about writing on an absolute-ly equal plane . . ."

Stephen Tennant lives in Wiltshire, England.

SPRING CONFERENCE 1973

THEME: My *Ántonia*

Now that you have completed your assignment for the winter, reading MY *ÁNTONIA*, you are all set for the "nimble air" of spring, "the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it . . ." and the *Ántonia* theme of the Annual Spring Conference in Red Cloud, April 28.

Schedule of Events, Saturday, April 28 Morning

Registration: Cather Museum (open to visitors all day)
8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Worship Service: Grace Episcopal Church, 8:30 a.m.,
Conducted by The Very Rev. Dean John Bartholomew,
St. Mark's Pro-Cathedral, Hastings
TOUR: MY *ÁNTONIA* country. Buses leave from Episcopal
Church, 9:30 a.m.
Coffee Stop: St. Ann's Church, Campbell, 10:15 a.m.
Country Picnic: Little Red School House, 12:30 p.m.

Afternoon and Evening

Leisure Time Browsing: Cather Museum, 9:00 a.m. -
6:00 p.m.; Cather House, 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.;
Burlington Depot, 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.; St. Juliana
Catholic Church, 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.; Grace
Episcopal Church, 1:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Dedication: Cather House, National Historic Landmark,
2:00 p.m., Interior Dept. Representative officiating
MY *ÁNTONIA* Discussion: Bernice Slote, University of
Nebraska, MC, 3:15 p.m.
Evelyn Helmick, University of Miami, Florida
Patricia Lee Yongue, UCLA, California; Joanna La-
throp, University of Nebraska, Lincoln.
Centennial Observance: Birthday Cake and Coffee, 4:30
p.m.
Dinner: High School Gym, 6:30 p.m.; Speaker: Professor
James E. Miller, University of Chicago
Entertainment: Czech Dancers, Wilber, Nebraska
Director: Mrs. Adolph Brydl
Cost for full day\$12.00
Cost for morning only 6.00
Cost for afternoon and evening only 6.00
Reservation Deadline, April 25

WILLA CATHER CENTENNIAL FESTIVAL

(Continued from front page)

Committee, Andrew Hall 201, University of Nebraska-
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.

... Seminar ...

A grant of \$14,125.00 by the National Endowment for the Humanities makes possible an International Seminar on "The Art of Willa Cather" to be held at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education, October 25-28, 1973.

Among the 35 distinguished scholars from Japan, Italy, France, England, Canada, and the United States are guest speakers Leon Edel, Marcus Cunliffe, Eudora Welty. The list of Seminar directors, participants, and guests reads like a bibliography of authors, editors and publishers of most of the works on Willa Cather you have ever read. It includes Cather Foundation Board Members Mildred R. Bennett, Virginia Faulkner, Bernice Slote, D. B. Varner and Lucia Woods.

Results of the Seminar will be published in the Spring, 1974, by the University of Nebraska Press, edited by Bernice Slote.

... Willa Cather's World ...

A display of photographs by Lucia Woods at Sheldon Art Gallery, Lincoln, October through December, 1973.

... WILLA CATHER: A PICTORIAL MEMOIR ...

With photographs by Lucia Woods and others, edited by Virginia Faulkner, published by University of Nebraska Press, Fall, 1973.

... Commemorative Concert ...

By Yehudi Yaltah, and Hephzibah Menuhin, Kimball Recital Hall, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, December, 7, 1973, Willa Cather's 100th birthday.

... Willa Cather's Words and Music ...

A Recital by University Students and Staff, tour of twelve Nebraska cities, March, 1974.

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK



In 1972 the Childhood Home of Willa Cather in Red Cloud was designated as a National Historic Landmark by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. National Landmark is "the unique status accorded limited numbers of properties meeting the stringent criteria of national significance."

Official dedication ceremonies, with presentation of the Landmark bronze plaque, will take place Saturday, April 28, in conjunction with the Spring Conference 1973.

The significance of the House is that for a few years it provided shelter and imaginative nourishment for a young girl who would grow up to be a famous American author. It was the place, according to poet John G. Neihardt, "where she dreamed the dreams that led to greatness."

In addition, the House is the setting for three Cather stories: *THE SONG OF THE LARK*, "Old Mrs. Harris," and "The Best Years."

The restoration of the Cather House, made possible by Dr. W. K. Bennett and the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc., was guided by Willa Cather's descriptions and good memory of her friend Carrie Miner Sherwood



"Upstairs was a story in itself, a secret romance. No caller or neighbor had ever been allowed to go up there. All the children loved it—it was their very own world where there were no older people poking about to spoil things . . . chimneys, going up in neat little stairsteps from the plank floor to the shingle roof—and out of it to the stars!" ("The Best Years") Vern Walters Photo



"She (Thea) saw everything clearly in the red light from the isinglass sides of the hard-coal burner—the nickel trimmings on the stove itself, (the pictures on the wall, which she thought very beautiful), the flowers on the Brussels carpet . . ." (THE SONG OF THE LARK). Beyond the doorway is the parents' bedroom. Vern Walters Photo

(who was 98 at the time). Much of the furniture came from the estate of Elsie Cather, Willa's sister. The House was opened for visitors in 1967.

Willa Cather's backgrounds and settings have a personality of their own. Seeing the House, going into it, is like visiting an old friend for people who come from all over the world. Standing in the long attic just outside the open door of Willa Cather's room, hearing the rain's soft patter on the fragrant cedar shingles just overhead, one can easily feel, as Thea did, that "the sprawling old house had gathered them all in, like a hen, and had settled down over its brood. They were all warm in her father's house." (THE SONG OF THE LARK)



"The ceiling was so low . . . and it sloped down on either side. There was only one window and it was a double one and went to the floor . . ." (SONG OF THE LARK) The wallpaper that Willa Cather put on her tiny attic room still remains. Vern Walters Photo

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

Four people who have been active for a number of years in Cather Memorial affairs were elected at the annual business meeting April 14, 1972, to serve on the Board of Governors:

Donald E. Connors, Huntington Beach, California, Teacher of English.

Richard Borton, Superintendent of Red Cloud Schools, Administrator and Educator.

Viola Borton, Red Cloud, Director of Cather tours.

William E. Mountford, Red Cloud, real estate broker and insurance consultant.

Accepting the position as Honorary Board Member is Durward B. Varner, President of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Mary Etta Blue, who assisted our president and Board of Governors, died suddenly in Red Cloud, February 23, 1973, at the age of 53.

SPRING CONFERENCE SPEAKER

Spring Conference speaker is James E. Miller, Professor of English at the University of Chicago since 1962. He is an authority on American literature and is the author and editor of numerous publications.



He has taught at several other Universities, including the University of Nebraska, has been a Visiting Professor on various campuses, and a Fulbright Professor in Italy and Japan. Professor Miller spent the Winter Quarter 1973 in Guatemala.



"It was a queer place to be having coffee . . . a hideous, cluttered room . . . In another corner was the wooden lounge with a thin mattress and a red calico spread which was Grandma's bed. Beside it was her wooden rocking chair . . ." ("Old Mrs. Harris") Vern Walters Photo

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS

. . . Gifts . . .

From Board member Donald E. Connors, California, two bronze plaques on the wall of the Museum inside entry way: "If I live, I will be the first to bring the muse into my country." (MY ANTONIA). A lamp of learning is attached to that one. The other, "The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman." (O PIONEERS!)

From Constance Sue Patts, a copy of her Master's thesis, University of Houston, "Traditional, Agrarian, and Dark Pastoral Attitudes in Willa Cather's Major Novels."

From Marion Moore Coleman of Cheshire, Connecticut, two books by Roman Dyboski, Polish author patriot: WIELCY PISAIZE AMERYKANSCY and SEVEN YEARS IN RUSSIA AND SIBERIA.

From the author, FOR EVERYTHING A SEASON by Mira M. Vest.

From the author the Spring 1969 "Harvard Today" containing "On Reading with a Pencil" by David McCord in which he evaluates MY ANTONIA, "a work of genius which . . . remains about as close as we have come to the great American novel."

. . . Cather Commemorative Stamp . . .

The Cather postage stamp now has an early fall issuance date. There is still time to send 50 cents and order your first day cover with stamp mailed from Red Cloud.

. . . Publications . . .

A 1974 issue of NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC will feature Nebraska according to photographer Lowell Georgia of Denver who was a winter visitor to Red

Cloud accompanied by a blizzard and dedicated Cather-land friend Mike Lowery of Minden.

Going to the printers soon is a Reader's Digest publication, TREASURES OF AMERICA, that includes Willa Cather's Red Cloud.

The 1973 edition of the Quadrant Press, Inc. RESTORED VILLAGE DIRECTORY includes a full page listing of Cather and Red Cloud.

The April 1973 MD, THE MEDICAL NEWS MAGAZINE will have an article on Willa Cather, with pictures furnished by the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

WILLA CATHER, by Dorothy Tuck McFarland, a 1972 monograph published by the Frederick Ungar Press.

... CELEBRATION ...

Antonia's (Annie Pavelka's) children and their children will be honored guests at the Cather Spring Conference. To help celebrate Willa Cather's centennial year, two other groups will be with us April 28: The

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

- | | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| William Thomas Auld, M.D. | Ella Cather Lewis | Dr. C. Bertrand Schultz |
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| Josephine Frisbie | Jennie Reiher | Laird G. Wolfe |
| Ted Kennedy | David E. Scherman | Lucia Woods |
| Helen Lengfeld | | |

YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION:

● By becoming a member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

- LIFE MEMBERSHIP \$100.00
- SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP . . . \$5.00 Annually
- LIBRARY SUBSCRIPTION . . . \$3.00 Annually
- INTRODUCTORY SUBSCRIPTION . . . \$3.00

- By contributing to a project fund.
- By contributing to the restoration fund.
- By contributing to the scholarship fund.
- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.

Nebraska Museums Council and the Nebraska-American Revolution Bicentennial Commission.

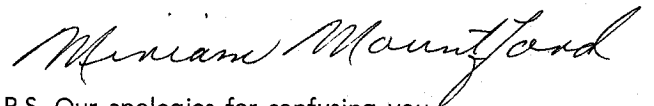
We hope you can be here, too, for this very special occasion.

But before you pack your suitcases, cameras, and sturdy touring shoes, make sure your reservations reach us by April 25.

Thank you for being the rock upon which the Cather Memorial is built. Thank you for everything you have done to make this Cather Centennial year also a milestone for the 18 year-old Cather Memorial.

We are looking forward to having you with us for the Spring Conference April 28. If you can't come, write.

Sincerely,



P.S. Our apologies for confusing you.

The \$3.00 for the Newsletter is meant to be a special subscription price for libraries and other non-profit organizations. We encourage you, if you have a spare \$3.00, to buy a subscription at this special rate for a friend to introduce him to the Cather organization. Memberships remain the same. As a member contributor, you automatically receive the Newsletter quarterly along with the other privileges of your status.

● By contributing your ideas and suggestions to to Board of Governors.

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 in the form of art and literary scholarships.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.



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