

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME XVI, NUMBER 4

and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA



Copyright © 1969 by Lucia Woods

## PIONEER LANDMARK SAVED

Once again the Cather Memorial acted swiftly to save a pioneer landmark, the Dane Church, from destruction.

The Dane Church is the first stop on the Catherland tour after you leave the Republican Valley and the road begins to climb the first long swells toward the Divide. This is the sort of road traveled in *O PIONEERS!* by Alexandra, the first to look at this country with "love and yearning."

The Dane Church, with its cemetery across the road, is typical of the religious, cultural and social centers established by the first homesteaders. Those from similar backgrounds tended to settle near one another, forming rural communities—the Germans up there, the "New" Virginians over there, the French on beyond, the Bohemians farther north and east.

The country church continued in the same way to serve the pioneers' descendants until a couple of yesterdays ago. Suddenly times are changing so rapidly that the country church is vanishing, along with so many other physical reminders of America's past and another way of life.

Last spring the Dane Church was sold. The buyer intended to tear it down and re-use what lumber he could salvage. When this news reached the Board of Governors, Bill Mountford rushed out to investigate and discovered that the people involved also have a soft spot in their hearts for the old church. Razing it was a last resort when there was no longer a congregation to finance badly needed repairs. Lyle Kosse was very happy to sell the building back to Bill for just what he paid for it. His father-in-law, Andrew Hansen, a life-long member of the Dane congregation

and owner of the land, gave the Cather Foundation a perpetual lease for that corner of his cornfield where the church stands. This is the same sort of lease held by the Scandinavian congregation since they first homesteaded the area and erected their first church building on this plot.

Board member Lucia Woods, photographer in New York, said, "My 1969 photo of the Dane Church . . . is my best seller, the one people most often choose, and the one I've found most significant to send to those who have been helpful to me in my Cather work, . . . In Quebec, . . . in Virginia, . . . and even a man on a kibbutz in Israel, a modern-day pioneer. How could I face any of these people if I'd watched the church disappear?" It was Miss Woods who initiated the chain of events of Project Dane Church and provided the happy ending to the first chapter of preservation with her contribution for paint and repairs.

And so it remains, standing on high ground at the top of a long swell, visible for several miles in all directions, its new roof and white paint gleaming in the bright autumn sun. Even the two outhouses have been restored with new foundations, roofs and paint. This should be good news to those of you who discovered—the hard way—the three-hour tour route of the Willia Cather Country is **not** lined with filling stations and rest rooms.

Because of the generosity of several people and the helpful concern of many people in the Dane Church neighborhood, the pioneer landmark will stand for a good many more years—a solid symbol of our heritage as immortalized in the pages of Willa Cather's writing—and at the same time, one more tribute to those few but growing number of people with the foresight to preserve a chapter from the past.

## GIFTS

### . . . Publications . . .

A book in Japanese, *FRONTIER LITERATURE*, subtitled *STUDIES ON WILLA CATHER'S WORKS*, published on March 25, 1972, by the Kenkyusha Publishing Company, Tokyo—written and given by Kenji Kobayashi, Professor of English and American Literature, Faculty of Letters, Konan University, Kobe, Japan.

*MANY LIVES - ONE LOVE* by Fanny Butcher, memories of the famous friends made during 50 years on the Chicago *TRIBUNE* including a full chapter on Willa Cather—given by Hope Leach of Chicago.

*AN AMERICAN HERITAGE GUIDE: HISTORIC HOUSES OF AMERICA* by the editors of *AMERICAN HERITAGE*, includes the Red Cloud Cather Home—given by Helen Southwick of Pittsburgh, Pa.

A book in Ukrainian which contains an essay on Willa Cather—given by Roman V. Kuchar, Ph.D., Hays, Kansas.

A 1931 review of SHADOWS ON THE ROCK—given by Adele Nichols of Chadron, Nebraska.

A 1903 APRIL TWILIGHTS—given by Pearl Brown, Winchester, Virginia.

WILLA CATHER AND MARI SANDOZ, DIFFERING VIEWPOINTS OF THE EARLY WEST, a master's thesis—written and given by Robert Overing of Chapin, South Carolina.

... **Letters** ...

Two more Cather to Seibel letters—given by C. B. Yorke, son-in-law of the Seibels, Soquel, California.

Cather letter to Mr. Wilton Graff, 1925, in regard to Santa Fe—given by Mrs. Mary Arthur of San Rafael, California.

Two 1898 Cather letters to her mother, cards, photo and clippings—given by Charlotte Dana Garber of Los Angeles, California, whose mother grew up in Red Cloud with Willa Cather.

... **Family and Personal Items** ...

A copy of a journal kept by a relative of Willa Cather, Aristole Smith, who came from West Virginia to Nebraska for a visit when he was 20 and stayed to work, first in Miner Bros. General Store (MY ANTONIA, "Two Friends," O PIONEERS!) and later survived the blizzard of 1888 while teaching in the New Virginia country school, Catherton Precinct—brought to Red Cloud and given by his daughter, Mrs. Dorsey Smith Pierce of St. Albans, West Virginia.

Seven of Willa Cather's dresses and ensembles for afternoon and evening wear—given by her niece, Margaret Shannon of Denver.

... **For St. Juliana Church** ...

The Red Cloud Sacred Heart Church was remodeled and modernized last spring. Given from the church are: The Gothic style white altar imported from Europe about 1905. A solid-brass sanctuary lamp (for candle-light) discovered inside the altar when it was being moved. The solid oak communion rail, the carvings painted with a gold-inlay effect.

Mr. and Mrs. Wilfred H. Miller of Superior have taken a personal interest in the tiny 1883 church. So far items of the period discovered, contributed and delivered personally by them are: A red glass insert missing from the sanctuary lamp; furthermore, Mr. Miller climbed to the peak of the high slanting ceiling to hang the lamp in the appropriate place over the altar. Colored-lithograph Altar Cards (Latin), once used in the Sacred Heart Church of Lawrence, Nebraska, the gold frames repaired and refinished by Mr. Miller. Six Traditional Daily Missals (English) in black leather holders.

For the altar, a white and gold plaster crucifix, Gothic style—given by St. Mary's Catholic Church at Odell, Nebraska, gift arrangements made by Msgr. John Kean.

For the altar, an 1876 MISSALE (Latin) formerly used in the St. Mary's Catholic Church at Aurora, Nebraska—given by the Rev. Victor Derumski.

Edith Lewis, long-time companion of Willa Cather, critic and author of WILLA CATHER LIVING, died in New York August 11, 1972.

## 1973—CATHER CENTENNIAL YEAR

... **Cather Stamp to be issued in 1973** ...

A commemorative stamp honoring Willa Cather will be issued by the U. S. Postal Service next year. This announcement came in August from Nebraska Congressman Dave Martin.

A special first-day cover (all of us non-stamp collectors say envelope) is being designed by the Cather Memorial for mailing on the first day of issuance of the commemorative stamp. The cost to you will be 50 cents, and we are ready to take orders now.

Though the date of first-day issuance has not yet been announced, several 1973 dates (suggested by the Postal Department) the last part of February and the first part of March, have been reserved in Red Cloud and tentative plans made for an appropriate celebration. This will be the first event of the year-long observance in Nebraska of the Cather Centennial Year.

The Citizens Stamp Advisory Board recommended the issuance of the Cather commemorative stamp, and final approval was given by Postmaster General E. A. Klassen. The number of such stamps issued each year is very limited. Cather is the subject of the author stamp of the 1973 four-stamp American Arts Set.

Thank you for taking a personal interest in the commemorative stamp project which was initiated in 1969. We hope you all will take advantage of this once-in-a-hundred-years opportunity by ordering your own Cather commemorative stamp on first-day cover.

## INCREASING INTEREST IN WILLA CATHER

... **Publications** ...

The summer, 1972 PRAIRIE SCHOONER, the literary quarterly of the University of Nebraska, has an article by Grant Reynard, "Willa Cather's Advice to a Young Artist." He tells of how a conversation with Willa Cather changed his whole concept of art and his life work.

... **Cather Activities Elsewhere** ...

Merrimack College, North Andover, Massachusetts, sponsored a Willa Cather pre-centennial symposium on October 28-29, 1972.

On the program was "Willa Cather: Rebel from Red Cloud," the American Pageant Writers sound film strip filmed in Red Cloud and Webster County.

Principal speaker was Bernice Slote, Cather Foundation Board member, Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, editor and author of a number of books and articles about Willa Cather. She also took part in the Critics' Panel along with the other symposium speakers, who all, like Dr. Slote, have publications about Willa Cather—Lillian D. Bloom, John H. Randall III, John J. Murphy, Richard Giannone and Edward A. Bloom.

John J. Murphy, Associate Professor of English at Merrimack College, was here last summer during his travels in preparation for the symposium.

... AK-SAR-BEN ...

During her lifetime Willa Cather won many, many awards, prizes, and other various kinds of recognition. Twenty-five years after her death her reading audience continues to increase in numbers and scope. Her writing continues to win awards.



In Omaha, September 25, 1972, President Mildred R. Bennett accepted the Ak-Sar-Ben Western Hall of Fame plaque in behalf of us all, the members of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.

The Ak-Sar-Ben award was presented by the statewide public service organization in conjunction with its annual Agricultural Achievement-Pioneer Farm Family dinner and the Ak-Sar-Ben World Champion Rodeo.

... A Willa Cather Issue ...

The Spring 1972 issue of WESTERN AMERICAN LITERATURE is devoted to Willa Cather, including five articles and a note. Patricia Lee Yongue, in "A LOST LADY: The End of the First Cycle," sees A LOST LADY

**CHRISTMAS SPECIAL**

First Cather Signature Plate . . . 2 for \$15.00 Postpaid. Limited edition—8½ inches—Off-white and brown tones. Originally \$10.00 each. Available only: Willa Cather Museum, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970.

as "perhaps the most gloom-ridden of all of Willa Cather's novels" and believes that the "symbol of stability (Cather) had found in the pioneer women Alexandra Bergson and Antonia Shimerda is destroyed by Marian Forrester." David Stouck (who delivered a paper on O PIONEERS! at the 1971 Western Literature Association meeting, held in Red Cloud), in "Willa Cather and THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE: 'Letting Go with the Heart,'" takes issue with the critical approaches of E. K. Brown and Leon Edel to this novel, and he offers a satisfying and affirmative new interpretation. Patrick J. Sullivan in "Willa Cather's Southwest" describes Willa Cather's use of this region in "The Enchanted Bluff" and MY ANTONIA, and in THE SONG OF THE LARK, THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE and DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP, while James M. Dinn focuses on the last-named work in "A Novelist's Miracle: Structure and Myth in DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP." In the concluding article, "Willa Cather's Technique and the Ideology of Populism," Evelyn J. Hinz's purpose is "to examine and categorize the ways in which Cather's artistic theory and practice are exactly suited to express the ideology of populism, and how they enabled her, for the greater part, to transcend its provincialism and romanticism." Cynthia J. Andes has provided a note on "The Bohemian Folk Practice in 'Neighbour Rosicky.'" "

In the Museum book shop we have 100 copies of this Cather issue of WESTERN AMERICAN LITERATURE at \$1.50 each. Mail orders are \$1.85 postpaid.

... Visitors ...

The August 1972 issue of THE INTERNATIONAL FLYING FARMER, the official publication of the International Flying Farmers, Inc., carried a picture and story account of the June 6th fly-in visit to Red Cloud of more than 60 Nebraska Flying Farmers and Ranchers for a tour of Catherland.

The 16 summertime tourist information centers along Nebraska interstate 80 highway had available two different printed Circle Tour guides to the Red Cloud area. The 32 college students hired to man these centers gained first-hand acquaintance with Willa Cather's Red Cloud and Catherland during their intensified training program and a 7-day bus tour in May. The August 1972 NEBRASKALAND magazine published an article enlarging on the Red Cloud tour with pictures taken both in town and along the country tour route.

A crew from educational station KYNE-TV, Omaha, was here early in October filming for a program especially designed to appeal to fourth-graders studying Willa Cather.

Plus the thousands of you who signed-in at the Museum in 1972, "so many wonderful and interesting people!" according to Ruth Doudna, and all the volunteers who help her in the Museum. Vi Borton and those who help her with tours find every group different, yet each one "a rewarding experience." And they love your personal thank yous. We all do. Many, many of you write to us about how you feel towards your own personal discovery of Willa Cather's country. Pat Yongue from San Francisco put it this way:

"For a complete city girl such as I, with her head turned to a devoted but largely academic involvement with Willa Cather's fiction, the experience of seeing Annie Pavelka's underground cave—Antonia's cave!—in the moonlight, of traveling the length and most of the breadth of the resistless Divide, of seeing

the setting sun actually turn red the windows of the "Wheeler house" (I thought it only happened in books), brought me to an understanding of Willa Cather's fiction that gave the ideas from my ten years of studying and thinking a background against which to come and go. I wrote a doctoral dissertation on Willa Cather, but—to the chagrin of a favorite professor—my two-week affair of the heart has a value that in many ways supersedes my long-term affair of the mind . . . And it was only through the kindness of the Cather Foundation that I had the opportunity to discover what prompted Willa Cather to write about a people and a land once and now so full of feeling.

"In working so hard to preserve interest in Willa Cather, the Cather Foundation—a marvelous camaraderie existing very much in the spirit of Captain Forrester's idea of brotherhood—has done a great deal to reacquaint people with the great fact and even greater

spirit of the land. During a time when it was fashionable to criticize America for its lack of a meaningful past and noble tradition, Willa Cather found something of enduring value in the land and in the people who were closest to it. Through her fiction she led the American back to what she considered his roots, and she showed him the heritage of pioneer spirit that should be his. The Cather Foundation continues to do exactly this. They feel strongly and deeply for the land and for Willa Cather and for the country, and, unlike poor Professor St. Peter, they live with the delight that comes from dedication and love."

Thank you, Pat. Thanks to all of you. With your help and your encouragement the Cather Memorial will continue to excel.

Your assignment for the winter, pay your membership dues, read MY ANTONIA and be prepared for the extra-ordinary Cather Centennial Spring Conference April 28, 1973.

Sincerely,



Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

William Thomas Auld, M.D.	Ella Cather Lewis	Dr. C. Bertrand Schultz
Mildred R. Bennett	John March	Marian Schultz
W. K. Bennett, M.D.	Miriam Mountford	Margaret Cather Shannon
Richard Borton	William Mountford	Bernice Slote
Vi Borton	Harry Obitz	Helen Cather Southwick
Don E. Connors	Helen Obitz	Marcella Van Meter
Virginia Faulkner	Frank O'Rourke	Durward B. Varner
Josephine Frisbie	Jennie Rieher	Laird G. Wolfe
Ted Kennedy	David E. Scherman	Lucia Woods
Helen Lengfeld		

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

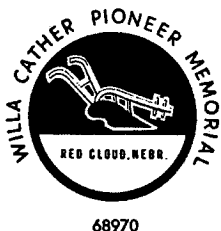
● By becoming a member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP . . . . . \$100.00  
 SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP . . . . . \$5.00 Annually  
 NEWSLETTER . . . . . \$3.00 Annually

- 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.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the 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.



68970

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION  
 U. S. POSTAGE  
 PAID  
 RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA  
 PERMIT NO. 10

Correct Address Requested