

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME XIV, NUMBER 2/1

and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

## MEMORIES OF CATHER ABOUND FOR CENTENARIAN



Mrs. Carrie Miner Sherwood, the real Frances Harling of Willa Cather's novel, *MY ANTONIA*, celebrated her 100th birthday in Red Cloud on December 29, 1969. It was in the Red Cloud home of Mrs. Sherwood's parents that Miss Cather knew and admired the Bohemian hired girl who emerged as the heroine of *MY ANTONIA*.—Photo by Tom Allen, courtesy of Omaha World-Herald.

"Mrs. Carrie Miner Sherwood is a tiny, lovable lady, who at 100 years of age still exudes the peppery enthusiasm she did as friend and advisor to the author from Miss Cather's childhood until her death in 1947. The greatest treasure of all for Cather scholars is the memory of this woman, the guiding light of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.

Willa was 9 (1883) when her father brought her in to the general store of Carrie's father, J. L. Miner. Carrie, then 13 had stopped at the store on her way home from school. 'I can see her today as well as I do you,' Carrie recalled. 'Her father had sat her on a base shelf and my father was fitting her with shoes. We were friends from that day on and I mean really friends.'

'It's hard to tell what I like best about Willie,' said Carrie, the only one outside of Miss Cather's parents to dare call the author Willie. 'She was always good-natured and very free with information. She occasionally asked my advice and we discussed her characters in the books she was writing quite often. We'd sit on the swing on the big porch for hours without stopping. We talked mostly about people. She loved people.'—From an interview by Tom Allan, Omaha World-Herald.

Besides appearing in a number of Nebraska papers, a report of Mrs. Sherwood's birthday was in the Febru-

## SPRING CONFERENCE, APRIL 18, 1970

Saturday afternoon, April 18, dedication ceremonies will be held at two newly restored buildings, the old Burlington Depot and the 1883 Catholic Church. The official opening of these two Cather landmarks is certainly an extraordinarily appropriate way to celebrate the 15th anniversary of the Willa Cather Memorial. Both restoration projects are being accomplished because of the \$25,000 grant from the Woods Charitable Fund, Inc. of Lincoln and Chicago.

In the evening the University of Nebraska Madrigal Singers will present a Willa Cather Concert. Conductor John P. Moran and arranger-composer Robert Beadell drew from the wide musical spectrum used by Cather in her writings—from Wagner to "The Dying Cowboy"—to put together this musical salute to Cather. Many writers and critics have written about Cather's use of mood music or background music, as it is variously called; but, as far as we know, Mr. Moran and Mr. Beadell are the first to produce a Cather concert. Included in the concert are two Cather poems set to music by Mr. Beadell. Dr. Bernice Slotte will narrate the program.

We would like to dedicate this outstanding 1970 Spring Conference program to Dr. L. V. Jacks. Serving as Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Board Member

(Continued on page 2)

### Thoughts in Red Cloud, Nebraska

To Willa Cather

*This swath of plain cuts like memory.  
Our history is in the shape of this land.  
In the ruts of wagon trains, seen or imagined,  
We feel the small stones, the rub of all our lives.  
And when over our houses, over the phone lines  
And blinking towers, the sun or moon drift  
Brilliantly against that arc we call horizon,  
We flinch, suddenly shaken by hope.  
So we would dare, by dark even, alone.  
Still the moon shudders us with brightness, and the sun  
Soothes the odd side of the world, and just one star,  
Silent between clouds, can lead us west.*

Dan Jaffe  
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Dan Jaffe, an assistant professor of English at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, was here as Spring Conference speaker in 1968 soon after the publication of his poem cycle, *DAN FREEMAN*, by the University of Nebraska Press.

ary 7-8, 1970 PANORAMA—CHICAGO DAILY NEWS submitted by Miss Hope Leech, a longtime Chicago admirer of Willa Cather and recent visitor in Red Cloud.

## Restoration



Under the SMOKING IS PROHIBITED sign sits "assistant Newsletter editor" Jennifer Mountford, a member of the space-age generation who for the next 100 years will be able to enjoy settings made famous by Willa Cather being preserved by the Cather Foundation.—Photo courtesy of John English.

### The Depot . . .

Willa Cather wrote so often of the lack of color during a winter on the prairie—the monotony of dull grey and drab brown—and how hungry for color the pioneer became before winter released its hold on the land. The Burlington Railroad probably did not choose to paint their depots red just to provide a bright spot of color for every little town along the tracks. However, for whatever reason, the company did dot the prairie with Burlington red. Our old faded depot, in need of care for so many years, no longer blends into the drabness of its winter surroundings. Gone is its air of dejected abandonment. In its new coat of Burlington red, the depot stands straighter and taller with regained importance. Once again it is an eye-catching landmark.

The depot is also dressing up for spring inside with a luster of sunshine no matter what the weather outside. You just won't believe until you see it how anything so rundown and decrepit and dirty could change so much in a few months. When you are here for the Spring Conference, visiting the depot will be a nostalgic experience for those of you old enough to remember arriving at or departing from just such a depot. For the automobile-jet oriented generation it will be a look into a by-gone era when the coming and going of trains dominated the life of little towns and provided the only link with the world beyond the horizon—when the hooting whistle of a train was the call to adventure.

Besides the usual furnishings found inside and on the platform of a 19th century depot, you will find a copy of the original typescript of Willa Cather's poem, "Going Home—Burlington Route," given by its owner, Roger R. Leech of Chicago.

Upstairs, which originally was the train-crew dormitory, a modern apartment is well on the way to completion. It will be occupied by the caretaker of Foundation property.

### The Catholic Church . . .

Small plaster stations of the cross, just the right size for the little 1883 St. Juliana Falernexis Catholic Church, were given by the Red Cloud parish. The ladies of the Altar Society are giving the newly restored church a good spring cleaning in preparation for the April 18 dedication.

### Episcopal Church . . .

As we told you in the Fall Newsletter, the Grace Episcopal Church, Willa Cather's church where she was a member from 1922 until her death, is now a part of the Cather Memorial. The church is in pretty good shape even though it has not been used for several years, and it contains all the original furnishings. Therefore it will not be so much a restoration project as one of preservation. Still, a good deal of money ought to be spent on it as soon as possible to avoid further deterioration. Two thousand dollars is a nice round figure to start with for immediate repairs of the roof and the basement. Then will come releading windows, repointing the brick exterior, and fixing the sidewalk.

### Cather House . . .

Newly added to the living room of the Cather house are 37 books that belonged to the Mathenys, some Cather relatives. Among the books is THE WANDERING JEW which gave young Willa Cather and her brothers all kinds of enjoyment as they acted out the episodes in their play. When she was in Pittsburg, Miss Cather wrote an article about the book. The article is included in William Curtin's Cather book, THE WORLD AND THE PARISH, a University of Nebraska Press publication which will be out in November.

These books were discovered by Steve Edelman at a garage sale in Kearney, Nebraska. Keep your eyes and ears open and let us know what you turn up in odd places.

### ATTENTION LIBRARIANS

With the addition of the 30 Seibel letters, we now have a sizeable collection of Cather letters in the Museum and Archives. Students and scholars are always asking where other Cather letters can be found.

Do you have Cather letters in your library? If so, would you let us know how many, the inclusive dates, and to whom they were written. Let us hear from you within the next month so that we can complete a Cather letter bibliography.

### Spring Conference — April 18 (Cont'd from page 1)

for 15 years, Dr. Jacks is one of that small, dedicated group who founded the organization in 1955. He is an author and educator and was formerly Chairman of Classics at Creighton University, Omaha.

### Schedule of Events . . .

The conference will begin at 2:00 o'clock the afternoon of April 18 with the dedication of the Catholic Church and the depot. Following the ceremonies will be a brief tour of Willa Cather's Red Cloud, including a visit to her childhood home and to the Foundation's newest acquisition, the little Episcopal Church. Also included will be an advance film showing, 16 minutes of Willa Cather and the backgrounds of her Nebraska stories. The film is produced by Perfection Form Company, Des Moines, Iowa.

### Reservations . . .

The fee for attendance at the conference will be \$5.00. This will include dedication ceremonies, the afternoon tour and film, the 6:00 o'clock dinner, and the 8:00 p.m. Willa Cather Concert. Admission for the concert only will be \$1.50. The dinner and the concert will be held at the Veterans Memorial Hall.

Please send your reservations now so that we will have them by April 15.

## Financial Report, 1969

Here is your report (before auditing) on what we have received and how we have spent it.

Receipts	
Donations .....	\$29,958.20
Sales from gift shop (gross) .....	3,243.27
Cather house tours .....	506.56
Sales tax collected .....	76.53
Interest on time certificates .....	352.83
Refunds .....	330.10
Banquet tickets .....	505.00
	\$34,972.49
Expenses Cather House	
Utilities, cleaning, etc. ....	\$ 700.05
Sound equipment lease .....	225.00
	\$ 925.05
Expenses Restoration Depot	
Labor, equipment, etc. ....	\$ 8,842.69
Expenses Restoration Catholic Church	
Labor, equipment, etc. ....	\$ 6,017.03
Expenses Memorial Building	
Utilities .....	\$ 827.61
Maintenance (includes new roof on building and tractor for mowing) .....	1,625.42
Postage and permits .....	104.01
Insurance (all buildings) .....	723.00
Newsletter .....	685.81
Gift shop (not books) .....	383.97
Gift shop (books) .....	1,521.82
Dues and advertisement .....	158.07
Supplies, etc. ....	261.44
Hostess-bookkeeping .....	426.75
Tax .....	102.47
Banquet .....	347.87
Miscellaneous .....	86.45
Grand total of expenses .....	\$23,039.46

Thank you for your financial participation in the organization as listed under receipts for 1969.

### Gifts Received

Gifts received since the last Newsletter are:

From the Omaha WORLD-HERALD Foundation, \$1,000.00

From the Miner-Weisz Charitable Fund, Chicago, \$2,000.00 for the maintenance fund.

From Carrie M. Sherwood, \$1,000.00 for the building fund.

From Dr. W. K. Bennett, \$800.00 for a combination mower and snow-remover tractor.

From John W. Sherwood, \$200.00.

From Helen Obitz, \$600.00 for antique furnishings.

From Gerald I. Daugherty, Whittier, California, "December Night" autographed in December 1933 to the Rev. Dennis Fitzgerald with a picture of Father Fitzgerald, Mr. Daugherty's uncle. Father Fitzgerald served the parish at Red Cloud during the time Willa Cather was writing DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP, and he helped her with church-related details, particularly concerning an audience with the pope. "December Night" is the only excerpt from her books that Miss Cather allowed to be published as a separate book.

Received from Michel Gervaud, Department of Romance Languages, Wabash College, Crawfordsville, Indiana a French copy of MY ANTONIA. Mr. Gervaud is spending the spring term at Wabash College and plans to visit the Museum and Catherland before he returns to France.

Received from Erna Seibel Yorke of Capitola, California, 30 Cather letters written to her parents from 1897 on. George and Helen Seibel knew Willa Cather well in Pittsburgh. She often went to their house to read French and German. Erna Yorke also gave the Memorial a bisque vase depicting Wynken, Blynken and Nod, which Willa Cather gave her for Christmas, 1900.

Received from Dr. Bernice Slote, Professor of English, University of Nebraska and a long-time member of the Cather Foundation Board of Governors, two of her recent essays on Cather; "Willa Cather as a Regional Writer" appearing in the "Kansas Quarterly" (Spring 1970) and FIFTEEN MODERN AMERICAN AUTHORS: A Survey of Research and Criticism, edited by Jackson A. Bryer containing a Cather essay by Dr. Slote.

Received from "Music Journal" editor, Robert E. Cumming, the "Journal" for March, 1970 containing "The Musical Soul of Willa Cather" by Phyllis R. Klotman. The Cather Memorial supplied the pictures for Miss Klotman's article.

### INCREASED INTEREST IN WILLA CATHER

#### What Teachers Are Saying . . .

Appearing in the Bulletin of the Kansas Association of Teachers of English, KANSAS ENGLISH, for October 1969 is "Literary Tour for Students: A Visit to Catherland" by Doris Ballard. Miss Ballard, teacher in the Norton, Kansas, Community High School and long-time Cather scholar, says about visiting Catherland: "It has been the pleasure of this writer to share this exhilarating experience with Norton High School journalism students annually since 1962."

Miss Ballard quotes a student's reaction to the tour: "What impressed me was that Willa Cather grew up in country very similar to our surroundings, but she made literature of hers." Miss Ballard goes on to say: "At such a point it is appropriate to recall that Willa Cather said in 1921, 'A book is made with one's own flesh and blood of years . . . it is cremated youth. It is all yours—no one gave it to you'."

#### And On the College Level . . .

From the Extramural Independent Study Center, the University of Kansas, we have a Cather study course prepared by John R. Willingham, Professor of English, and Barbara M. McLean, Instructor of English.

The following is from the preliminary statement:

"Now that fashion dictates the 'terrible' importance of the character, the individual personage whose decisions and ensuing destiny we get to examine in the handy time-frame of the novel, you have the chance to rediscover Cather. Her novels, and short stories as well, depend upon characterization: generally, they are not tales of action which could happen only some where, some time—rather they are fairly sparse dialogues in which a particular person (personage) evolves himself as he involves himself with other people in a fairly static setting. The "setting" or place where this dialogue occurs often does nearly everything to assert itself on the characters and their involvement but talk back. It—in its influence on the people—becomes very nearly a character itself! (Continued on page 4)

Grace Wolfe, member of the Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors, died January 2, 1970 in Red Cloud, Nebraska.

**Increased Interest in Willa Cather** (Cont'd from page 3)

"Willa Cather put to herself in the workings of her art the same dictum she let her characters strive for or fight against. In her own words, she believed that art was '... watching a man give back what God put into him.'... a character's destiny depended upon his day-to-day decisions. Anybody's 'right' direction came about by his involvement in the life about him.

"Nobody gets to drop out in desperation about the present; nobody gets to forget the past—or how he got here; and, singularly, nobody gets to disenfranchise himself from his society."

**COMMEMORATIVE STAMP**

Thanks to all of you who have written letters urging the Citizens Stamp Advisory Committee to endorse the issuance of a postage stamp to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the birth of Willa Cather Decem-

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

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

LIFE DONATION CONTRIBUTION . . . \$75.00

SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTION . . . \$5.00 Annually

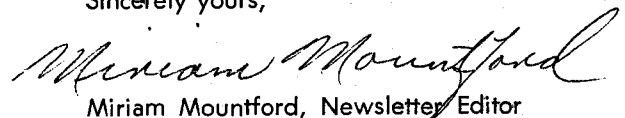
- By contributing to a project fund.
- By contributing to the restoration fund.
- By contributing to the scholarship fund.
- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

ber 7, 1973. The stamp program for 1973 will be formulated in 1972. If the stamp project slipped your mind, you still have time to write to the committee. The address is 1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, D. C. 20260.

**FIFTEEN YEARS OF PROGRESS**

Your enthusiastic, active interest and your financial support have built in 15 short years a strong and flourishing organization. With your continuing participation in the goals of the Cather Foundation you are sharing your admiration of Willa Cather for the benefit of not only your contemporaries but also for generations yet to come. You are building a lasting, living memorial to Willa Cather whose works will be enjoyed one hundred years, two hundred years, from now and as long as the English language is read.

Sincerely yours,



Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor  
WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL  
AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

**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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