

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME X, NUMBER 1

and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

This SPRING NEWSLETTER is:

For You

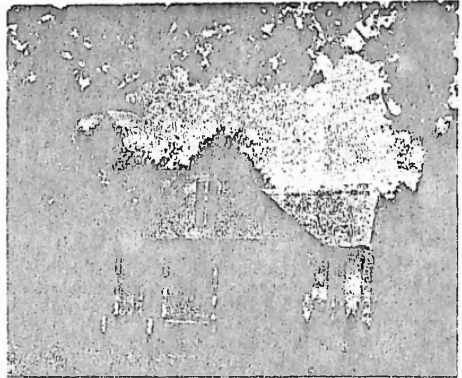
. . . . the members and friends of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation, a non-profit organization incorporated in 1955.

A Progress Report

. . . . what you have accomplished to fulfill the aims and purposes of the Cather Memorial during the first three months of 1966.

A Future Plans Report

. . . . Immediate and long-range plans for the future of your Cather Memorial at the beginning of the second decade.



PLACES MADE FAMOUS BY WILLA CATHER

Cather House

Now Project

Restoration of Willa Cather's childhood home will begin this year. A grant of \$10,000 made by the Woods Charitable Fund of Lincoln is responsible for putting this long planned-for project into action.

Founders of the Woods Fund, Frank H. and Nelle C. Woods, were classmates of Willa Cather at the University of Nebraska in the 1890's. A son and a grandson of Mr. and Mrs. Woods, Frank H. Woods of Chicago and Thomas C. Woods, Jr. of Lincoln, are directors of the Fund and have been interested in the growth of the Cather Memorial since its beginning in 1955.

The Cather house was a gift from Dr. W. K. Bennett who bought it and made some major repairs before presenting it to the Cather Memorial in 1960. Since then the people living in the house have kept it up, and the rental income has been used to make additional structural improvements.

During this time the acquisition of authentic furnishings has been going on. The largest collection of Cather possessions came from the estate of Elsie Cather, Willa's youngest sister. However a number of important articles were scattered when an auction sale was held after the death of Willa Cather's mother in 1931.

Your help is needed to track down these things as well as to locate additional furnishings and household articles of the 1880 period. Your help is also needed to make sure this long-range project continues to have the financial backing necessary to develop a meaningful representation of Willa Cather's stories.

Willa Cather's Memo

In 1884 when the Cathers moved into town from Grandfather Cather's homestead, they rented this house until they could buy one large enough for their growing family. The temporary arrangement lasted almost twenty years.

Willa Cather's memories of growing up in this crowded old house found their way into her stories, SONG OF THE LARK, "Old Mrs. Harris," and "The Best Years." Her vivid descriptions tell us just what to do with every room in the house from the front hall to Willa's own tiny attic room.

Willa Cather's feeling for the house of her childhood where everything was "a little on the slant—roofs, windows, and doors"—is reflected in the words of Thora Kronborg, remembering her home in THE SONG OF THE LARK. "That's the house I rest in when I'm tired. All the old furniture and the worn spots in the carpet—it rests my mind to go over them."

Then in her thoughts, "She entered her father's front door, hung her hat and coat on the rack, and stopped in the parlour to warm her hands at the stove. Then she went out through the dining-room, where the boys were getting their lessons at the long table; through the sitting-room, where Thor was asleep in his cot bed, his dress and stockings hanging on a chair. In the kitchen she stopped for her lantern and her hot brick. She hurried up the back stairs and through the windy loft to her own glacial room . . . Once between the red blankets there was a short, fierce battle with the cold; then, warmer—warmer. She could hear her father shaking down the hard-coal burner for the night

... Everybody was warm and well downstairs. 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 Depot

National Recognition

An article on adaptive use of old structures is being prepared for a forthcoming issue of HISTORIC PRESERVATION, the magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. A request has come from the managing editor, Mrs. M. H. Morton, Jr., for pictures of the Red Cloud Burlington depot and information about how the Cather Memorial has preserved this picturesque old landmark which figures in so many of Willa Cather's stories.

Progress

Progress on the project has gone surprisingly well, considering the size of the building and its age. It has been moved across the road, one section at a time, and put back together on a new foundation. A great deal of the original understructure had rotted, so this was all rebuilt. About half of the original tile on the waiting-room floor was salvable and has been put down. Even the platform has been moved one brick at a time to the new location.

Restoration is a costly business. We could put on a coat of shiny red paint and pretend the project is finished. But we won't. This is not the way the Cather Memorial has done things in the past, and this is no time to change.

You want the depot to stand for another eighty years and more. Therefore, as hidden weaknesses show up—though unforeseen and not provided for in the estimated budget—they are corrected even when it means delaying completion of the project for lack of funds.

Many things remain to be done. But the future of the depot is assured because by your continuing support you indicate approval of this policy of making progress slowly and thoroughly—of establishing and maintaining programs and projects of enduring worth.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Museum and Catherland Tours

Spring on the Prairie

The vanguard of students touring Willa Cather Country arrived while patches of snow from the late March blizzard were still on the ground. Yet the excitement of early spring on the prairie was unmistakable. As Cather describes it in MY ANTONIA: "There were none of the signs of spring for which I used to watch in Virginia, no budding woods or blooming gardens. There was only—spring itself; the throb of it, the light restlessness, the vital essence of it everywhere in the sky, in the swift clouds, in the pale sunshine, and in the warm, high wind—rising suddenly . . . If I had been tossed down blindfold on that prairie, I should have known that it was spring."

Students

The first two tour groups, one of high school seniors and one of college literature classes, numbered more than a hundred and represented nineteen different states as well as Cuba, Jamaica, Singapore, Japan, and Samoa. Other student groups have been here since, and many more are scheduled before the close of the school year.

Working with these young people is always a stimulating experience. We never get over being surprised at how much they already know and at the great variety of things they want to find out about. Their overwhelming reaction—their enthusiasm, their energy, their curiosity, and their appreciation of all they see and hear—is irrefutable evidence of the vital importance of the Cather Memorial youth educational program. More than that, they provide a constant challenge to improve methods of presentation and interpretation.

More Visitors

Not only students are involved. Women's clubs, extension clubs, study clubs, service clubs, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H groups, grade school children, family groups, writers, scholars—on endless variety of organizations and individuals are asking for appointments to make use of the educational program. All these are in addition to the increasing flow of tourists and visitors arriving, unannounced, to spend an hour, a day, a week in Willa Cather's hometown.

Expanding the Educational Program

The Cather Memorial is growing like any normal, healthy eleven-year-old—rapidly and in every direction at once. This is good. At the same time there are problems comparable to those of a fast growing boy whose old suit of clothes leaves part of him out in the cold even though every seam has been let out as far as possible.

This is particularly true in two closely related areas of activity, the Museum and the tours of Catherland. The old methods of handling the crowds, using part-time employees and volunteers, have been stretched to the limit. But still too many people are being left out in the cold, going away disappointed because the Museum is not open or because no one is available to guide a tour of Catherland.

Our eleven-year-old needs a new set of clothes, a new system to meet the demand from this most important educational aspect.

The Museum needs a full-time executive curator in addition to all the volunteers who have been working there and acting as hostesses. Then it will be possible to have the Museum open all day, every day.

The Catherland tours need one more printed tour guide and fifty more metal signs marking the route of Cather settings. These things will supplement the ones already in use. By making the tours completely self-guiding, these tour aides will do away with the restrictions on time and numbers of people that are now necessary.

Your suggestions have helped to develop these plans for expanding the educational program. Now your financial help is needed to activate the plans.

WORLD WIDE INTEREST IN WILLA CATHER

To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather is another purpose of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

Newsletter

The principal, direct means of accomplishing this aim is the publication of this Newsletter twice each year. The increase in the number of people asking to receive the Newsletter made it necessary to order an additional 1,000 copies last fall to complete the mailing.

You, the 6,000 Newsletter recipients, obviously are making good use of your copies to perpetuate an interest in Willa Cather. Because of what you are doing, the Newsletter mailing list continues to lengthen, the volume of correspondence continues to increase, and the number of Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial members continues to grow.

There are other indications that the surge of interest in Willa Cather continues to mount.

International Recognition

WILLA CATHER: COLLECTED SHORT FICTION, 1892-1912, introduction by Mildred R. Bennett (University of Nebraska Press).

This collection of 44 Cather short stories, edited by Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial President Mildred R. Bennett, continues to bring in letters and clippings from all over the United States. Though it was just released last September, this popular book is already in its second printing.

In January COLLECTED SHORT FICTION brought international recognition when it was selected by the Book Across the Sea Committee of the English-Speaking Union to be included in its American Ambassador series. The English-Speaking Union, with headquarters in London, is an institution made up of distinguished scholars and literary figures in Great Britain. The aim of the Union's series is to interpret the lives, backgrounds, character, and ideas of the American people in other countries.

CHOICE, the magazine that reviews books for college and university libraries, will include COLLECTED SHORT FICTION in their annual list of "Outstanding Academic Books."

Proceeds from the sale of COLLECTED SHORT FICTION are donated by Mrs. Bennett to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.

New Cather Book

Forthcoming from the University of Nebraska Press series of Cather publications is THE KINGDOM OF ART selected and edited with a commentary by Bernice

Slote. In these 226 selections from essays, columns, and reviews written between 1893 and 1896, Miss Cather formulates more fully and explicitly than she was ever to do again the principles that were to be the basis for all her future artistic judgments. More than one hundred of these selections will be new even to Cather specialists.

Bernice Slote has written or edited eight books including Willa Cather's APRIL TWILIGHTS, and her critical articles and poems have been widely published. She is a professor of English at the University of Nebraska, editor of the literary quarterly "Prairie Schooner," and serves on the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial board of governors.

The Southwest

Richard Giannone, whose study MUSIC IN WILLA CATHER'S FICTION the University of Nebraska Press will publish next year, has an article in ARIZONA QUARTERLY, Spring 1966, called "The Southwest's Eternal Echo: MUSIC IN DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCH-BISHOP."

Marcella Powers, Assistant Editor of NEW MEXICO MAGAZINE, is gathering material for an article on Willa Cather in the Southwest. Miss Powers' interest in Willa Cather began with a personal encounter in 1944 when both were dinner guests of Sinclair Lewis. Characteristically, Miss Cather encouraged the young writer then and wrote to Mr. Lewis about her a few days later. Miss Powers has presented the Cather Memorial Archives with a copy of that letter from Willa Cather to Sinclair Lewis dated March 22, 1944.

Canada

"Shadows on the Rock" is an account of Willa Cather and the nearly twenty years she was a part-time resident of Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, Canada. The article is part of an anthology about the island written by L. K. Ingersoll for the benefit of the Gerlach House Society, Grand Manan, New Brunswick. Mr. Ingersoll reports that the preservation of the Cather cottage on Whale Cove is one of the proposed projects of this historical society which was incorporated in 1962.

Iceland

An Icelandic translation of MY ANTONIA published in Reykjavik is the latest addition to the long, long list of foreign language editions of the works of Willa Cather.

New York

Two works of Willa Cather, A LOST LADY and "Two Friends," are to be found in a recent anthology. It is titled FIFTY YEARS and is a compilation of representative selections published by Alfred Knopf over the past half century, selected and edited by Clifton Fadiman.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The annual conference of the Willa Cather Memorial and Educational Foundation has been postponed until August when the following things will take place:

Official presentation of the Award of Merit by the American Association for State and Local History.

Dedication of the Catherland Marker which will be erected by the Historical Landmark Council.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you for remembering to send your \$5.00 sustaining membership check. Your thoughtfulness is saving the Cather Memorial the expense of sending the customary special envelope as a reminder.

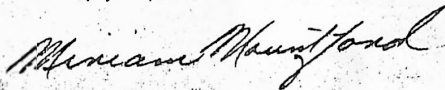
Thank you for remembering your pledge to the maintenance fund. With your willingness to participate

in this practical fashion, you are helping to keep the everyday, physical aspects of the Cather Memorial running smoothly.

Thank you for sending your zip code to complete your mailing-list address. A directive from the post office department warns that beginning in January 1967 this class mail must be zip-coded to be delivered.

Thank you for all the things you have done and are doing for the Cather Memorial. Thank you for your contributions, large and small. Thank you for your ideas, suggestions, and letters of encouragement. Thank you for being an active, interested member in the Cather Memorial.

Sincerely yours,



Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor
Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial
and Educational Foundation

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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 MEMBERSHIP \$75.00

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP \$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.

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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