

# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME VIII  
NUMBER 2

Red Cloud, Nebraska

## Catherland

### WCPM Aim . . . .

To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather.

*"There is something frank and joyous and young in the open face of the country."*

With these words in O PIONEERS! Willa Cather the writer expressed her love for the land. In all her Nebraska stories Willa Cather the artist captured the many moods and colors of this, her country.

During the summer of 1964 more than twice as many people signed the Museum register as in all twelve months of 1963. They came to Red Cloud and Webster County to see for themselves the living scenes from Willa Cather's novels and stories, to experience the same sights and sounds and smells that she wrote about.

They came as well organized groups—busloads of students; caravans of young people, Boy Scouts, and Girl Scouts; carloads of adult organizations, study clubs, and family groups. They came as tourists planning their itinerary in order to visit the Museum. And they came as scholars prepared to study Willa Cather. They came from practically every state including

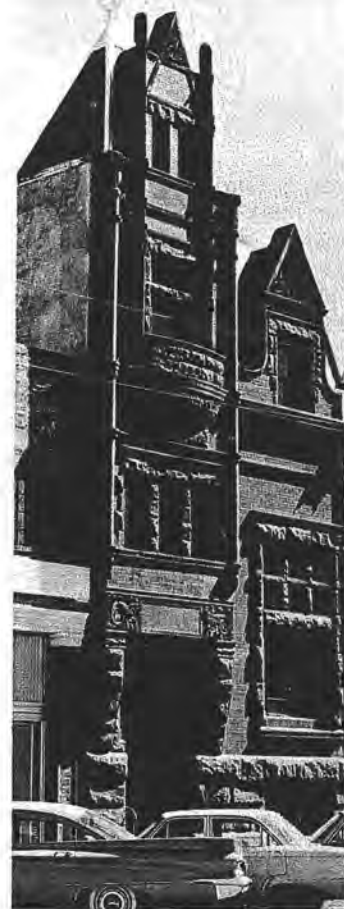
Alaska. And they came from foreign countries including Austria, Japan, India, Kenya, Peru, and the Republic of South Africa.

"Willa Cather's books came alive for me," is the frequent comment of these visitors who have traveled over the rolling prairie of Catherland and have stood over the windswept Bald Bluff overlooking the Republican Valley where Willa Cather saw the forgotten plow magnified against the setting sun pictured in MY ANTONIA as a symbol of pioneer greatness.

### Plow is a symbol of Cather Museum



The walking plow, such as Red Cloud's famous author Willa Cather saw against the setting sun from atop Bald Bluff south of the Republican River, has become the symbol of the Cather Memorial Museum. Several of them have been acquired, and the plan is to install them at stop sites on the Catherland tour route. Pictured here is one of them erected on a concrete pedestal eight miles north of town on the west side of Highway 281. — (Hastings Daily Tribune Photo by Harold Dwyer)



### . . . Interpretation of Catherland . . . .

The remarkable increase in the number of Catherland visitors dramatizes the importance of this aim of the WCPM, to interpret for you the vast wealth of material that is available nowhere else in the world.

Pictured on the front of the Newsletter is the first of the markers that will be erected at the 25 sites included on the tour of Catherland. The old walking plow, the emblem of the WCPM, is set blade first into a giant, eight ton, reinforced concrete block designed by Red Cloud City Engineer Kenneth Schwartz. The marker is distinctive. It is built to withstand many, many years of Nebraska weather and to mark Willa Cather's settings for future generations as well as our own. And it is expensive. This one cost about \$300.

Smaller metal signs have been especially designed for the WCPM to be used at regular intervals along the fifty-mile route guiding you on your way and helping you discover interesting incidentals characteristic of Cather Country—such things as a prairie dog town, the tall red grass, the majestic cottonwood

tree, a favorable location for a pioneer dugout. Similar markers have been designed for each of the 25 houses, buildings, and points of interest included in the tour of Willa Cather's Red Cloud. The manufacturer's estimate is \$10 for each sign. The 50 signs for the Catherland tour will cost \$500 altogether; the 25 for the Red Cloud tour, \$250; the entire project, \$750.

New this year is a printed pamphlet, beautifully illustrated by artist M. R. Hinds, replacing the old mimeographed country tour guide. The new booklet contains descriptions and Cather quotations for the 25 Catherland settings along with a map of the fifty-mile route. When funds are available, the Red Cloud tour guide will be printed in a similar form. The estimated cost for 5,000 is \$250.

**Catherland Interpretation Fund . . . . .**

Financing of the signs, markers, and printed material that will interpret Cather Country is being handled through a special fund similar to the other special project funds of the WCPM. Already donations to the fund are being received. The largest so far is a \$100 check from Mrs. Ralph H. Rawson of Mercer Island, Washington.

By contributing any amount to the Catherland interpretation fund now you can be one of the first to build your own lasting monument to Willa Cather "in the open face of the country."

**Additional Signs . . . . .**

Early this summer WCPM artist M. R. Hinds painted the WCPM emblem on the two sides of the tower part of the Museum. The gigantic plows against the gigantic suns identify unmistakably our picturesque old building as the WCPM Museum and Archives.

Mr. Hinds is now working on a large billboard size sign that will be placed forty miles north of Red Cloud at the junction of our Highway 281 and Highway 6. To be erected next spring, this very effective means of directing traffic to Willa Cather Country is made possible by two Newsletter readers. One supplied the material and had the sign constructed; another has offered a choice location for it.



## **World Wide Interest In Willa Cather**

**WCPM AIM . . . . .**

*To perpetuate an interest throughout the world  
in the work of Willa Cather.*

**Notable Publications . . . . .**

An illustration of the growing world-wide demand for translations of Willa Cather's works is the release this year of a Swedish edition of EARLY STORIES OF

WILLA CATHER selected and edited with a commentary by WCPM President Mildred R. Bennett and published by Dodd, Mead, and Company. From South America word has come that THE PROFESSOR'S HOUSE has been published in Spanish for use in the public schools.

Momoko Ishii writes that the Tokyo Chapter of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial has been asked by publisher Kenkyusha to do a Cather book which will be included in a series introducing twenty American and English writers. "We want to make a fine book in honor of the writer we admire. The book is to be finished in a year's time."

The University of Nebraska Press lists five new books about Willa Cather as forthcoming in the next two years. "Willa Cather on Shakespeare" authored by Miss Bernice Slote appeared in the April 1964 PRAIRIE SCHOONER, the University of Nebraska literary quarterly.

A four-page story about Catherland and the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial written by Ten Kennedy appeared in the September-October 1964 issue of FLAME, the publication of the Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company. A five-column picture and story done by writer TOM ALLAN was featured by the Omaha WORLD HERALD on the front page October 20.

You, the Newsletter readers, continue to be the most important group perpetuating an interest in Willa Cather. You are personally influencing your friends and associates, and twice each year you are influencing people throughout the world by contributing financially to the publication of the WCPM Newsletter.

**Widespread Interest . . . . .**

The appeal of the WCPM is far-reaching. The wide variety of the WCPM correspondence as well as the diversified interests of its visitors result in many forms of support. Here are some examples.

The Superior High School Senior Class under the leadership of Marjorie Smith has volunteered to restore one of the Catherland tour sites, the deserted cemetery where the fallen headstone of the "Larry Donnavan" of MY ANTONIA bears the prophetic epitaph, "Gone but not forgotten."

Continuing their support of the WCPM are the Fifth District Nebraska Federated Women's Clubs with donations amounting to \$110.40.

This fall when the WCPM was host to the sixth annual meeting of the Nebraska Museums Conference, the guest speaker, Dr. Edwin C. Alberts, Regional Chief, Interpretation and Visitor Services, National Park Service, commended the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial as a leader in the field of small museums and for the sound planning that has been made for the interpretation of Willa Cather Country.

The Museum received a flag that has flown over our nation's capitol at Washington, D. C., from Congressman Dave Martin.

Donald E. Connors of Los Angeles on his annual visit to Catherland last summer reported that his Willa Cather course at UCLA was highly successful and that he is expecting an even larger enrollment this year.

#### 1964 Spring Conference

A capacity crowd attended the ninth annual WCPM Spring Conference held in Red Cloud April 18, 1964. Speakers were Congressman David Martin, Dr. Robert Manley, Professor of History at the University of Nebraska, WCPM President Mildred R. Bennett, Miss Bernice Slote, Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Dr. C. B. Schultz of the Nebraska State Museum, Dr. L. V. Jacks, Creighton University Chairman of Classics, and Ted Kennedy, Public Relations Director for Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Company.

At the Spring Conference business meeting, the WCPM Board of Governors, keeping pace with a growing organization, elected three new members: Marcella Van Meter and Grace Wolfe of Red Cloud and Bernice Slote of Lincoln.

#### Relatives

On June 16 relatives and friends gathered at the Cather family church in Red Cloud for services in memory of Miss Elsie Cather, Willa Cather's sister. Miss Cather, who died at the age of 74, was for many years a high school English teacher in Lincoln.

Elsie Cather's interest in the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial as well as the ties of life-long friendships made her a frequent visitor in Red Cloud. She attended most of the major events of the WCPM and was the honored guest along with her sister, Mrs. Jessica Cather Auld of Palo Alto, California, at the WCPM Museum dedication ceremonies two years ago. Some of the Cather family possessions in Elsie Cather's estate were left to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

Of the seven Cather children Mrs. Auld is the only sister of Willa Cather still living. Her only surviving brother, James Cather of Long Beach, was here with his wife for the Elsie Cather memorial services as was her sister-in-law, Mrs. Roscoe Cather of Denver. Also here were Willa Cather's nephews and nieces, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Shannon of Denver, Dr. and Mrs. Phillip Southwick of Pittsburgh, and Mr. and Mrs. John Brockway of Philadelphia.

Other Cather relatives who visited later in the summer included the Rev. Morris Cather, pastor of the church at Gore, Virginia, the Back Creek Valley of Willa Cather's last book, SAPPHIRA AND THE SLAVE GIRL, and nephew Charles Cather.

## Scholarships

### WCPM Aim

*To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial in the form of art and literary scholarships.*

### Scholarship Fund Increase

The WCPM scholarship program is growing. In the spring of 1965 three \$100 Willa Cather Scholarships will be awarded. One scholarship, which is endowed annually by Dr. Frank S. Hewitt of Austin College, Texas, will go to a senior in the Hastings College English Department. Two of these scholarships will go to the winners of the essay contest which is being enlarged to include a division for college students in addition to the one for high school seniors.

This expansion is due largely to the number of relatives and friends who made donations to the WCPM scholarship fund in memory of Miss Elsie Cather, Willa Cather's sister.

### WCPM Essay Contest

High school seniors and undergraduate college students are eligible to compete in the WCPM Essay Contest. You can obtain information about these two \$100 scholarships, the contest rules, and the subject for 1965 by writing to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, Red Cloud, Nebraska.



## WCPM Museum and Archives

### WCPM AIM

*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.*

### Progress

Your contributions resulted in the progress of three major projects in the Museum. "The Sculptor Funeral" scene has been assembled and is on display for Museum visitors. The ancient, brick-lined caves behind the Museum building have been excavated, and the entire rear area has been reinforced with concrete to provide an ideal foundation for future building expansion. We were able to purchase many items essential to the operation of the Museum for your benefit. Your funds also made it possible to add to the staff a part-time employee, Mrs. Grace Russell, who with her wide variety of abilities has been an invaluable asset to the WCPM.

**Maintenance Fund**

The prosaic, everyday business of operating a museum as an organization is being put on a more even keel. The pledge system is being used to finance the maintenance fund. Already a number of contributors have pledged annual donations ranging from \$5.00 to \$100 for periods from three to five years.

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You can be very proud of the great strides forward your WCPM has made in the six months since you received your spring Newsletter. While telling you about all these accomplishments we have also discussed some of the ambitious plans that have been made for

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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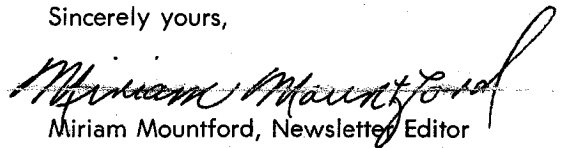
the future. By your enthusiastic financial response in the past you have shown that you approve of ambitious plans and that you are willing to support them.

Your one-dollar contributions pay for a large part of the operational expenditures of the WCPM. Your \$5.00 annual payment toward \$75.00 Life Membership provides the financial backbone of the WCPM. Your large donation finances the special projects aimed at fulfilling the four purposes of the WCPM.

We hope you will be able to join us and other members and friends of the WCPM in Red Cloud for the tenth annual Spring Conference next April.

With sincere appreciation for all your efforts,

Sincerely yours,



Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor  
WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL

**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.

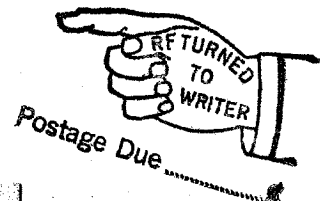
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- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.



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