

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME XV, NUMBER 1

and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Artifacts

Restoration was the big news in 1970 when work on the Depot and the St. Juliana Falconieri Church was finished and both were officially opened in April by dedication ceremonies during the Spring Conference.

Restoring buildings makes spectacular headlines; planning and directing work and watching day by day progress is an exhilarating experience. What goes into those buildings is equally important. Acquiring artifacts is fascinating, though a slow and demanding task. A large display or a roomful of furnishings make headlines, yet each individual item has its own adventure story.

... The Turkish Doll ...

Remember the musical Turkish doll in *O PIONEERS!* When Carl Linstrum came back after many years absence to visit Alexandra, they went to see Marie Shabeta and talked about old times.

"Carl smiled. 'Yes, I remember that time. Your uncle bought you some kind of a mechanical toy, a Turkish lady sitting on an ottoman and smoking a hookah, wasn't it? And she turned her head backwards and forwards.'"

Willa Cather was describing a real doll remembered from her childhood visits in the home of Dr. Cook. This exciting discovery was made when Dr. Cook's granddaughter contacted Helen Obitz, board of governors vice-president and antiquarian, to offer the Turkish lady to the Memorial. It had been saved by the family down through the years because they felt it ought to be returned to Red Cloud. Board member Josephine Frisbie of Omaha spent a good deal of time checking its authenticity, finalizing acquisition arrangements, and having it repaired. Miss Frisbie made the Turkish lady her Christmas gift to the Museum where it is now on display.

The doll came from the family of Dr. Henry Cook who moved to Red Cloud from Sandy Creek, New York in the early 1880's about the same time the Cathers came from Virginia. Besides being a friend of the family, teen-aged Willa Cather worked for Dr. Cook in his drug store (a point of interest on the tour of Willa Cather's Red Cloud) and she often went with him on calls to patients. She frequently took her pay in merchandise—such as a magic lantern with colored slides (the sort that delighted young Alexandra and Carl in an early scene in *O PIONEERS!*) and flowered wall paper for her tiny attic bedroom at home (the same that is still there today).

Dr. Cook's granddaughter, Mira Meacham Vest of Schuyler, Nebraska, has also given the Memorial a copy of her unpublished manuscript, *TOMORROW WON'T WAIT*, a biography of her grandparents. In it she tells of her own feeling for the 200 year old family heirloom.

Sometime ago Mrs. Vest's family gave an early Victorian bed from the Dr. Cook home. It is in the back



President Mildred Bennett and the Turkish Lady of *O PIONEERS!* "It was a music-box, you know, and the Turkish Lady played a tune while she smoked. As I remember her, she was lovely, and had a gold crescent on her turband." —Photo courtesy of Dean Terrill, Lincoln Journal-Star.

bedroom of the Cather house. Also from the Cook family are pictures, clippings, and letters.

NEW IN THE MUSEUM

For sale in the Bookstore, a 16 minute sound film strip titled *WILLA CATHER: REBEL FROM RED CLOUD*, \$19.95, produced as audio-visual aid by the Perfection Form Co., Des Moines, Iowa. "It was shot on location against the natural prairie beauty of Cather's Red Cloud homeland."

To be available soon, a new information brochure on the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation.

Also available are new postcards of the life-size dioramas in the Museum and views of the restored Depot and St. Juliana Falconieri Church.

And the Museum interior is newly repainted from top to bottom, the display cases inside and out and the vault has a new floor and new steel shelving.

Restoration

It has been a year since we have had the space to write much about the Grace Episcopal Church where Willa Cather was a member after 1922. We mentioned then a lot of money is needed to preserve the little church. In the meantime a new roof has been put on and is paid for. And Mr. Frank Woods of Chicago has taken a personal interest in the church



Wadded rags aren't very pretty, but they work to stop blizzard-driven snow from sifting through the small holes in the window over the altar of the Grace Episcopal Church.—Photo by John English.

and has given \$5,000 toward additional badly needed preservation and repairs. Such things as repair of the stained-glass windows and releading them, replacement of the heating system, repair of the basement, the sidewalk, and repointing the brick exterior.

Let's make it our goal for 1971 to finish the job. Checks for \$5,000 are hard to find these days, but if each of us writes a check for \$1.00 to \$5.00, we can have all of this restoration done and the church will be snug and tight before the big blizzard of 1972.

INCREASING INTEREST IN WILLA CATHER

... Publications ...

In April *DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP* and *SHADOWS ON THE ROCK* will be published by Random House in their Vintage Books paper back editions.

WILLA CATHER: HER LIFE AND ART by James L. Woodress, published by Pegasus (now owned by Bobbs-Merrill) is a critical biography containing new material based on some Cather letters no one previously has had access to. This book is one of the publisher's American Authors series. The editor wrote, "If any American novelist of the first half of the century is likely to go on being read throughout the last half, it is Willa Cather, whose work is deeply mortised in the American experience, universal in theme, and written in a prose style few American authors can challenge."

THE WORLD AND THE PARISH: WILLA CATHER'S ARTICLES AND REVIEWS, 1893-1902, two volumes, edited by William M. Curtain, is the newest publication by the University of Nebraska Press in its series

of Willa Cather's early writing. It is preceded by *THE KINGDOM OF ART*, edited with a commentary by Bernice Sloté; *APRIL TWILIGHTS* (1903) Revised Edition by Willa Cather with an introduction by Bernice Sloté; and the revised edition of *WILLA CATHER'S COLLECTED SHORT FICTION, 1892-1912*, edited by Virginia Faulkner with an introduction by Mildred R. Bennett.

... What the Critics Are Saying ...

There have been objections to the publication of Willa Cather's early writing from people who know she wanted only her later work to survive. Two literary editors have written in defense of the project undertaken by the University of Nebraska Press.

Victor P. Haas wrote in the Omaha *WORLD-HERALD MIDLANDS MAGAZINE* for February 21, 1971: "... (she) went to some pains to keep out of print, and indeed to suppress, a great deal of the material ... But writers cannot dictate from the grave and it would be a pity if they could for in their total work is the measure of their genius. The stages by which Miss Cather came to *MY ANTONIA*, *DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP*, *O PIONEERS!* *THE SONG OF THE LARK* and other superb novels are of overwhelming interest to scholars and general readers alike."

Van Allen Bradley wrote "In Defense of Cather" in *PANORAMA—CHICAGO DAILY NEWS*, February 13-14, 1971: "... the action is justified in the light of the new knowledge and insights we are afforded into the life and art of one of the century's finest woman artists ... Miss Cather was by choice an artist and therefore a public figure who placed herself—both her art and its roots, which was in her private as well as her public life—in the public domain. We are entitled to discover all we can about the wellsprings of her genius."

... The President ...

President Mildred R. Bennett is preparing a speech and two articles on Willa Cather.

In March her review of *WILLA CATHER: HER LIFE AND ART* by James Woodress will appear in the *Chicago DAILY NEWS PANORAMA*.

Sunday, April 11, is the publication date of her article, "Willa Cather and the Modern Outlook," for the Omaha *WORLD-HERALD MAGAZINE OF THE MIDLANDS*.

The Nebraska Council of Teachers of English will hear Mrs. Bennett speak about Willa at their April 24th meeting at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Irene Miner Weisz died February 6, 1971 in Chicago. Willa Cather dedicated *MY ANTONIA* to Irene and her sister, Carrie Miner Sherwood.

Financial Report for 1970

Here is your report (before auditing) on what has been received and how it was spent.

Balance Jan. 1, 1970	\$14,362.14
Income 1970	
Interest	654.74
Misc. refunds, etc.	144.70
Time certificate cashed	3,000.00
Banquet tickets	976.90
Sales	2,995.31

Donations	12,052.18
Tours	713.02
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Total income 1970	\$20,536.85
Income plus Jan. 1 balance	\$34,898.99
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Expenses	
Utilities Memorial	\$ 670.71
Utilities Cather house	214.99
Utilities Episcopal Church	38.32
Utilities Depot	162.17
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	\$ 1,086.19
Total utilities	\$ 1,086.19
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Repair and Maintenance and Restoration	
Memorial	\$ 2,830.92
Catholic Church	1,247.81
Cather house	777.93
Episcopal Church	316.93
Depot	14,638.55
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	\$19,812.14
Total repair and maintenance and restoration	\$19,812.14
Dues	105.00
Time Certificate	5,000.00
Postage	337.84
Insurance	990.00
Newsletter	478.05
Gift shop	2,193.48
Publicity	10.76
Tax (sales and use)	189.16
Banquet	621.41
Hostess salary	722.89
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Total expenses	\$31,546.92
Balance Jan. 1, 1971	\$ 3,352.07
plus lost checks	25.40
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	\$ 3,377.47

Thank you for your financial support during 1970. We hope you will continue your annual contribution because we rely heavily on you to maintain a steady income to finance the increasingly complex programs and projects of the Cather Foundation.

1971 Spring Conference

The 1971 all-day Spring Conference program will begin at 10:00 o'clock Saturday morning April 17. Here is the schedule of events:

- 10:00 AM: Tour of Willa Cather Country
- Lunch
- Tour of Willa Cather's Red Cloud
- 3:00 PM: A LOST LADY Discussion Panel
- 6:15 PM: Spring Conference Dinner
- 8:00 PM: Speech by Barney Oldfield
- Cost of complete day including two meals: \$10.00.

Cost of events from 3:00 PM through dinner and speaker: \$5.00.

Please make your reservations by April 14.

... Conference Speaker ...

The only three-way Colonel—Regular Army, Air Force, and Kentucky—Colonel A. Barney Oldfield, USAF (Ret). will be the headline speaker at the Willa Cather Spring Conference April 17, 1971.

A native Nebraskan who served 30 years as a commissioned officer, Colonel Oldfield has been a newspaperman, a radio commentator, Hollywood press agent, magazine and script writer, and author and has lived, worked, and done assignments of one kind or another in 47 countries on every continent.



Barney Oldfield

Since 1963, Colonel Oldfield has been Corporate Director, Public Affairs for Litton Industries, Inc., in Beverly Hills, California, and Vice President, Litton International Development Corp.

Out of his welter of experiences, a book was inevitable and he wrote NEVER A SHOT IN ANGER, a tribute to the 1,828 war correspondents accredited by the U. S. in World War II. It was published in 1956, and he gave the proceeds from his book to the Kinman-Oldfield Scholarship Fund (named for his and his wife's parents) at the University of Nebraska.

Colonel Oldfield serves on a number of committees and advisory boards of organizations related to communication, scholarships, and museums. In 1970 he was given the Distinguished Service Award by the Native Sons and Daughters of Nebraska.

He began his career as a reporter for the Lincoln JOURNAL-STAR. Colonel Oldfield's topic for the Conference, "Journalism, 40 Years After," includes another Nebraskan who started out as a newspaper writer—Willa Cather.

... Tours ...

The tours will include 25 Cather settings on a 53 mile drive through western Webster County—Catherland—and in Red Cloud another 25 settings including the five buildings owned by the Cather Foundation, four of which have been restored and will be open to you.

... Discussion Panel ...

Three University of Nebraska students—Alan Boye of Lincoln, Richard Wilson of Eustis, and James Wilson of Roca—will serve on the A LOST LADY Discussion Panel. All are English majors and writers. President Mildred R. Bennett will give the historical background and Cather Foundation Board Member Dr. Bernice Slose will moderate the discussion and give the critical view.

A LOST LADY is the subject of the discussion panel because the story is about Captain and Mrs. Silas Garber (the Forresters), prominent people in the early history of the area. It was just 100 years ago April 19 that 45 homesteaders voted in the first county election, held in Silas Garber's dugout, and named the new town of Red Cloud being built on part of the Garber claim to be the seat of government of the new county called

Webster. It was Captain Garber who led the first settlers to the area and went with them the 130 miles to the nearest land office to file homestead claims. The site of his dugout and the Red Cloud stockade is where he built his house, and, after two terms as Nebraska Governor, where he brought his beautiful, young wife who Willa Cather immortalized as A LOST LADY.

We hope you will be able to join us April 17 for a full day that promises to be entertaining as well as informative.

... 100th Birthday Party Invitation ...

You are also invited by the Red Cloud Centennial Commission to stay over and join the city-wide celebration of Red Cloud's 100th Birthday. Sunday morning the churches are planning to hold old-time services to mark the occasion. And at 2:30 p.m. the gala Birthday Party will begin at the Veteran's Memorial Hall.

So dig out great-grandmother's dress—or a reason-

able facsimile—and great-grandad's old hat and sleeve garters to be right in style. At least, bring the camera. We intend to observe this anniversary properly.

In addition many other events have been planned during 1971—something for nearly every weekend through August 22. If you miss the weekend of April 17-18, stop by some other time to say Happy Birthday.

Red Cloud is unique. What other small town has been described so often in literature that it is known all over the world? What other small town has had its early history preserved in books that have become classics? Not necessarily the facts and figures of history, but rather how it felt, how it smelled and tasted, and how it sounded.

With your help the things Willa Cather has made memorable to you are being preserved here. Thank you for all that you have done. We are anxious for you to join all the others who come to visit Willa Cather's town and her country and add a new dimension to your appreciation of her writing.

Sincerely,



Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

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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.

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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