



A New Chapter Begins

THE WILLA CATHER FOUNDATION > 2012 Annual Report

To Our Friends and Supporters

A New Chapter Begins. On the cover of our report this year is a lovely picture of our home in Red Cloud, Nebraska. Painted by Foundation member Tyler Horsley of Brooklyn, New York, this scene—only *slightly* fanciful—shows the 1885 Red Cloud Opera House in the distance on the left and the 1886 “Moon Block” building in the center of the image. As many of our supporters know, the Opera House and Moon Block together will soon become the National Willa Cather Center.

Since its founding in 1955 as the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial by local volunteers under the direction of Mildred Bennett, the Foundation has experienced years of growth and success (and yes, our share of scrambling). Along the way this steady growth has been punctuated by a few episodes of fundamental change, among them the early acquisition and restoration of our historic properties; our donation of these properties to the Nebraska State Historical Society in 1978; the restoration of our own Red Cloud Opera House in 2003; and our creation of a permanent endowment in 2007.

The establishment of the National Willa Cather Center will be one of these pivotal events. At the Center’s heart will be a technologically advanced archival and display facility for our large and growing collection of documents and objects related to Cather’s life and work. There will also be new backstage facilities, expanded exhibition space, and new classroom and multimedia spaces. We will greatly increase our ability to promote Cather’s legacy and provide meaningful experiences for our visitors.

Formal construction will begin soon. On page 5 of this report you can see where our capital campaign stood at the close of 2012. As I write this, some months later, our goal is within reach, thanks to our many friends and supporters. A new chapter begins.



Thomas Reese Gallagher
President
Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors

We are all familiar with the statement Willa Cather once gave an interviewer: *“When people ask me if it has been a hard or easy road, I always answer with the quotation, ‘The end is nothing, the road is all.’”*

During 2012, the Cather Foundation traveled a road filled with wonderful friends, experiences and discoveries. We were pleased to be selected as one of eight notable destinations on the Nebraska Passport program’s culture tour. Along the way, the winding road brought nearly 10,000 visitors to Red Cloud to experience Cather’s world; they hailed from forty of the United States as well as Canada, France, Japan, Taiwan, and Mexico. Hundreds of our visitors stayed in the Cather Second Home and enjoyed its history.

The road connected many friends and supporters around the country when Foundation Board members hosted parties in celebration of Willa Cather’s birthday from New York to Nebraska to Utah.

The road brought us a new education director, Tracy Tucker. The Cather Foundation could not be more pleased to gain a new team member with a deep understanding of Cather, a love for the prairie and Great Plains studies, and proven talents as a professional photographer! Tracy has added a new dimension of vitality to the Foundation’s work.

The National Willa Cather Center has been in our minds and conversations and plans for years—and in progressively more detailed architectural drawings—but it truly came into focus this year as we ventured forth with the capital campaign that will help make it a reality. As we shared our vision with funding organizations, friends, and family, we were greeted with enthusiastic support both regionally and nationally. We are on the brink of a new era for the Cather Foundation.

Thank you for traveling alongside us and for your generous support as we journeyed near and far this year.



Leslie C. Levy
Executive Director



On the Cover: Red Cloud Morning (2013) by Tyler Horsley

In the Opera House

The Red Cloud Opera House played a large role in the life of the young Willa Cather. It was here that she received her early exposure to the performing arts, which she would eventually weave into her work in unforgettable ways. In 1929, early in the long years of darkness for the Opera House, she wrote in a letter to the *Omaha World Herald*: “When I go about among little Nebraska towns . . . the thing I miss most is the opera house. No number of filling stations or moving picture theatres can console me for the loss of the opera house.”



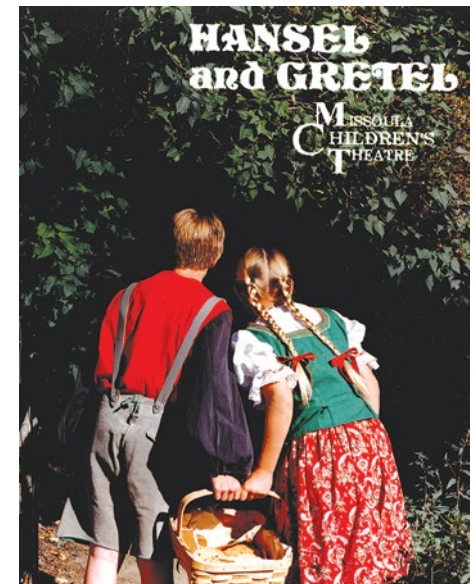
The restored Red Cloud Opera House celebrated its 10th season of events this year and was alive with a rich variety of performances. Stand-out shows included “Remembering Ricky Nelson” with Matthew and Gunnar Nelson, the Wes Hird Trio featuring Vickie Nielsen, an evening of standards from Rat Pack Jazz, and *Anne of Green Gables* from the Hastings Boxcar Youth Theatre.



In September, we were treated to a memorable and moving concert by opera singer and Red Cloud native, Sarah Arneson, whose career, achievements and talent often parallel those of Thea Kronborg, the heroine of Cather’s *The Song of the Lark*.

Our much-loved annual guests, the Missoula Children’s Theatre, were in top form as young area performers presented the children’s classic, *Hansel and Gretel*. It is fair to say that Cather’s window to a world of performing arts was open to all this year!

Left, top to bottom: Sarah Arneson and her accompanist and husband George Kern in recital; Matthew and Gunnar Nelson; Wes Hird. Above right: part of the young cast of Hansel and Gretel.



“Portraits of the Prairie” and Other Inspirations

The art gallery this year hosted exhibits encompassing a wide diversity of talent and media. It has been said that the visual arts were often an inspiration for Willa Cather. For our 57th Annual Spring Conference, we invited 27 visual artists to read Cather’s 1903 book of poetry, *April Twilights*, and create pieces inspired by a favorite selection from the book. The beautiful results were beyond expectation and very pleasing to the large crowds that viewed them. *Out of the Lips of Silence*, a multimedia performance piece inspired by Cather’s poem “Prairie Spring” created by Omaha’s Apollon company, complemented the exhibit. Richard Schilling’s lovely “Portraits of the Prairie”, focusing on Cather and Webster County, was a beautiful portrayal of the land that inspired this American author.



Clockwise from top right: *Winter Shadows* by Richard Schilling; a scene from *Out of the Lips of Silence*; *April Twilight* by Linda Welsch; *Rain Clouds Building* by Richard Schilling.



“Contemporary Quilted Textiles,” an exhibit by Molly Anderson, was a cornucopia of quilts in stunning and sophisticated color, texture and composition. Ms. Anderson’s unique pieces are nontraditional interpretations of traditional quilting designs and methods. Another fascinating exhibit this year was “The Wartime Escape: Margret and H. A. Rey’s Journey from France.” Among the Reys’ possessions when they fled Paris before the Nazis seized the city during World War II was an illustrated manuscript that would be published in 1941: *Curious George*. The exhibit tells the story of his remarkable creators and of the birth of the beloved character.

In all, the year was filled with a wonderful array of inspiring artwork. The Foundation truly enjoys honoring Cather’s legacy through the arts.



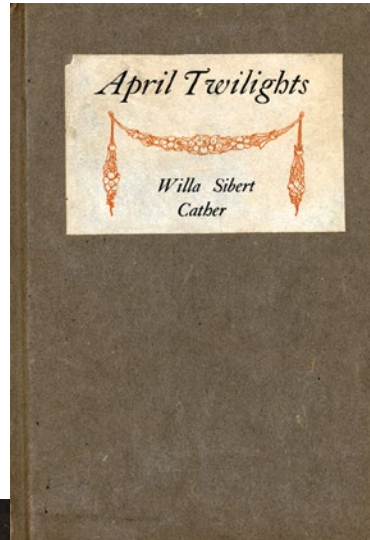
On this page: Flowers, Landscape 2012 and Anemones from Molly Anderson’s “Contemporary Quilted Textiles” exhibit, and exhibit visitors.

An Educational Window to the World

The educational mission of the Willa Cather Foundation is to promote understanding and appreciation of Willa Cather's life and work. In our conferences, symposiums, lectures, exhibits and year-round tours, we strive to create meaningful educational experiences for seasoned Cather readers and newcomers alike. Our 2012 Spring Conference focused on Cather's poetry, an area of Cather's writing that has received less attention than her fiction. "Willa Cather, Poet: Making Herself Born" focused on *April Twilights*, the slender volume of poems that was her first book, and also on the poetry she continued to write throughout her career and the poetic elements in her fiction. Music and art inspired by *April Twilights* nicely rounded out the conference.

Cather scholar and Foundation board member Steve Shively led our Road Scholar program in 2012, "Red Cloud: Willa Cather's Window to the World." This popular five-day lifelong learning course gives Cather readers an immersive Red Cloud experience, in addition to lectures, field trips, and readings with Cather experts.

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One of our chief educational activities is bringing our love of Cather to students. We hosted tours of fourth graders learning about Nebraska history; graduate students exploring our archives to complete theses and dissertations; high school students reading their first Cather novels. We do this through our Red Cloud tours and also through **Willa Cather's Red Cloud**, our new virtual tour. The tour visits important Cather sites and enriches the imagery with interviews, passages from Cather's writing, videos, and historic background. Teachers and readers have given us wonderful feedback, citing its usefulness as a tool for understanding Cather's work. Try it out at www.VirtualCather.org.



Top: The 1903 edition of *April Twilights*, Cather's first book; center: Road Scholar guests visiting Webster County's Starke Round Barn; bottom, left and center: visiting students from Duchesne Academy, Omaha, Nebraska, and from Omaha Westside.

Financial Summary 2012

Support and Revenue

Contributions and Memberships	\$261,188
Grants	96,199
Nebraska State Historical Society Appropriations	70,430
Sales and Admissions	96,867
Rental Income	39,691
Royalties	12,642
Endowment Interest, Dividends, Other	144,586
Capital Construction Fund	841,469
	\$1,563,072

Expenses

Educational Programming, Bookstore, and Publications	\$60,318
Nebraska State Historic Site Operations	142,588
Scholarships	4,484
Opera House Programming and Operations	149,170
Prairie Restoration and Programming	24,843
Preservation of Sites and Collections	13,044
Management and Administrative	133,571
Depreciation	92,038
Development	153,510
	\$773,566

Excess of Support and Revenue over Expenses **\$789,506***

**Includes funds restricted for programming, endowments, and construction of the Foundation's National Willa Cather Center.*

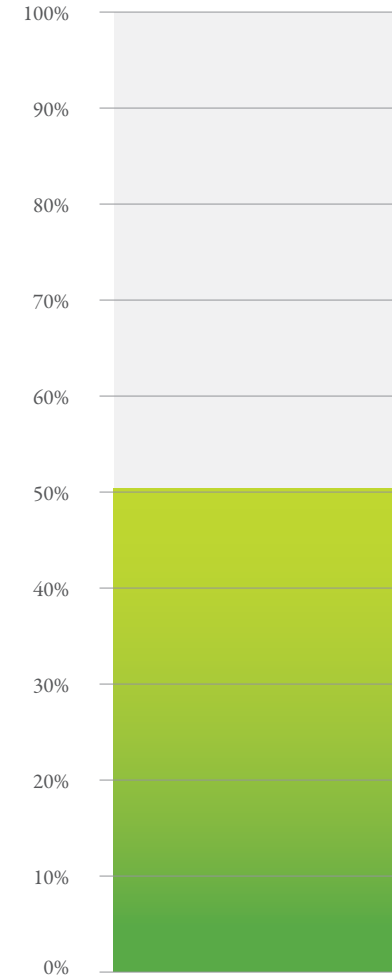
The financial statements of the Willa Cather Foundation are audited annually by an independent public accounting firm. A copy of the audited financial statements and the Foundation's tax filing (Form 990) may be obtained by contacting the Foundation's office.

National Willa Cather Center Capital Campaign

Goal: \$5,000,000

Raised: \$2,548,886

(as of December 31, 2012)



Support

The following individuals and organizations were donors to the Willa Cather Foundation in 2012. Space does not permit us to list donations under \$50.00, but we are grateful for these contributions. Every gift is important to us.

\$50,000 and Above

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Nebraska State Historical Society, Lincoln, NE
James P. & Angela J. Southwick, Heber City, UT
The LeRoy W. Thom, Jean E. Thom, & T-L
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Jim & Trish Schreiber, Meadow Vista, CA
John Sherwood Family, Red Cloud, NE

\$15,000 to \$24,999

Anonymous
Garnet Lewis, Red Cloud, NE
Nebraska Arts Council & Nebraska Cultural
Endowment, Omaha, NE
Nebraska Attorney General's Office, Lincoln, NE
Woods Charitable Fund, Inc., Lincoln, NE

6 \$10,000 to \$14,999

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Preserving the historical settings and archives
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