

THE WILLA CATHERER FOUNDATION

2010 Annual Report



To Our Friends and Supporters



Looking ahead. At the headwaters of the Willa Cather Foundation, Mildred Bennett and her kitchen cabinet understood that if the historical materials and milieu that had nurtured young Willa Cather were to be preserved for future generations, the Foundation's first leaders would have to work decisively and passionately as a group. Fifty-six years later, we are all reaping the benefits of the foresight and commitment of these early preservationists. But their work isn't finished.

This year a group of board members had the opportunity to step off the sidewalks of Red Cloud and up a dark staircase that led us into the interior of the building known as the Moon Block. We entered a shadowy space where some of the material culture of the past awaited us: beautifully crafted woodwork, patches of old wallpaper, the remains of a fraternal meeting hall, and solid but creaking old floors begging for restoration. Willa Cather once walked these hallways, and it didn't take much imagination to see the past as we walked from room to room. The Moon Block is huge, and exploring that space gave us a better sense of our ambition to build a state-of-the-art archive, to expand our bookstore and gallery and improve our theater facilities, to build loft apartments for income, and to renovate five business bays on Webster Street, Red Cloud's main street. When restored, the Moon Block and the iconic Opera House will give visitors a significant understanding of Willa Cather, one of the world's great authors, and of small-town America in the late nineteenth century. Together they will present a magnificent front for a national center dedicated to Cather studies.

Cather's most triumphant characters looked ahead. Alexandra Bergson, ignoring her risk-averse brothers, bought farmland on the Divide and prospered. Antonia Shimerda never allowed hardship to deny her a vision for financial independence and family. Archbishop Latour entered a strange new land and learned to love it and improve it. Motherless Cécile Auclair, a member of the vulnerable community of colonial Quebec, would become a symbolic mother of Canada's future. These characters inspire with their determination and creative powers for good.

You who are passionate about the Cather Foundation's work give in the ways that these memorable characters give: for the future. Your support allows the Foundation to keep looking ahead. We are at an exciting, pivotal point in the Foundation's history, and with your continued, generous help, a truly national center for Willa Cather will come to fruition.



Susan Maher
President
Willa Cather Foundation
Board of Governors

Stepping up to the challenge. In 2010, the Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors launched the *Preserving our Past, Pioneering our Future* campaign to match challenge funds offered to inspire new and renewed participation in the Foundation and its work. Our loyal donors embraced the challenge with their increased support, and we were just as pleased to welcome more than 200 new members to our organization.

The success of the campaign was not the only thing that made 2010 a thrilling year. Our third annual immersion-learning program, co-sponsored with Elderhostel (now known as Road Scholar), gave program participants the chance to experience and explore Cather's Red Cloud. And our third annual Prairie Writers' Workshop, entitled "The Nature of Home," provided participants with 16 hours of creative nonfiction instruction under the inspiring direction of award-winning author, John T. Price.

The Willa Cather Memorial Prairie was selected as the site for the Nebraska State 4-H/FFA Range Judging Contest, which brought nearly 400 students to the Prairie to test their knowledge of rangeland ecosystems.

Memorable Opera House events included a Cather-themed performance by the Susie Thorne Jazz Band, held in conjunction with the 55th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. Our yearly visitors, the Missoula Children's Theatre, helped young area performers present *Red Riding Hood* to two sellout crowds. Our neighbors, the Hastings Junior Community Theatre, had a success with their presentation of *The Boxcar Children*.

There were several standouts among the assortment of exhibits in the Art Gallery throughout the year. Author Wendy K. Perriman gave a presentation on her book, *Willa Cather and the Dance: "A Most Satisfying Elegance"* as part of the Smithsonian's traveling exhibit, "The Dancer Within." Other notable exhibits included "Still Life," featuring the artwork of area artists, "Pencil and Oil Sketches from Willa Cather's Childhood" by the late John Blake Bergers, and "Cowgirls: Contemporary Portraits of the American West," by Exhibits USA, a program of the Mid-America Arts Alliance.

Thanks to your support, a rich program of activities will continue long into the future, and we will enthusiastically carry on preserving Cather's legacy.



Ashley Olson
Associate Executive Director
Finance & Administration



Stephany Thompson
Director of Foundation Programming



“A Matter of Appearances”

In partnership with the Nebraska State Historical Society and its Foundation, the Cather Foundation is a co-sponsor of “Willa Cather: A Matter of Appearances,” an exhibit at the Nebraska History Museum in Lincoln. Using clothing and textiles owned by Cather, her friends, and family, this fascinating exhibit presents a side of the writer often overlooked in popular and scholarly accounts — her personal style and taste, as reflected in the image she consciously projected throughout her lifetime.

Drawing deeply from the Willa Cather Foundation’s archives — with the Foundation’s own items forming the core of the wide-ranging display — the exhibit tells “the story of a woman who made her own rules in fashion, literature and life,” in the words of exhibit curator Tina Koepp. Taking us from the cotton lace dress Cather wore as a little girl through the masculine attire she sported as a teenager, and on to the elegant, richly



Cather’s cotton lace dress, as seen in this studio portrait ca. 1882



Cather’s silk velvet cape from Paris, 1920s

detailed designs she often favored as a successful writer, the exhibit creates a compelling picture of Cather as a style icon — a label that fits much more comfortably than even her most ardent readers might imagine.

“Willa Cather: A Matter of Appearances” opened in October 2010 and runs through August 2011, after which many of its treasures will be on display in the Red Cloud Opera House Gallery.



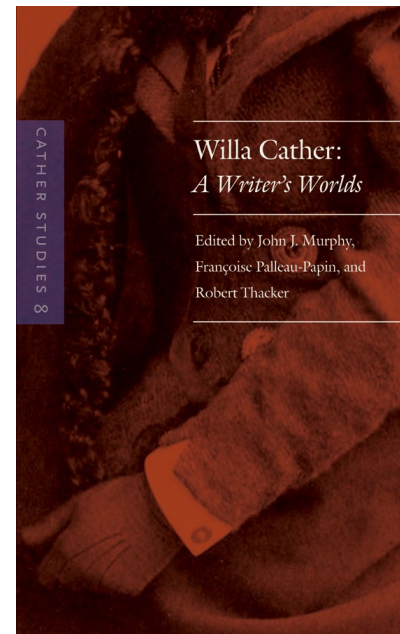
The famous teal jacket

Twenty Years of *Cather Studies*

The year 2010 marked the publication of *Cather Studies* 8, as well as the twentieth anniversary of the first volume in the series, edited by the late Susan J. Rosowski and published by the University of Nebraska Press.

In cooperation with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the Willa Cather Foundation has sponsored this publication since its inception.

The latest volume, subtitled *Willa Cather: A Writer’s Worlds*, draws in part upon the 2007 International Cather Seminar in France and focuses on the many locales and cultures — in both Old World and New — that inform Cather’s work. The new volume was edited by John J. Murphy, Françoise Palleau-Papin, and Robert Thacker (Murphy and Thacker are members of the Foundation’s Board of Governors and Palleau-Papin has been a contributor to the Foundation’s *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review*). Series Editor for *Cather Studies* is Board of Governors member Guy Reynolds.



The volumes of Cather Studies are available through www.WillaCather.org and wherever scholarly books are sold.

The Pleasures of the Table

More than 200 Cather lovers attended the festive 55th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference in Red Cloud, June 2010. Directed by Ann Romines and co-sponsored by the Cather Project at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, the conference focused on “Food, Drink, and Willa Cather’s Writing” and coincided with the publication of *At Willa Cather’s Tables: The Cather Foundation Cookbook* (now in its second printing!).



Ann Romines and an attentive audience at Cather’s childhood home



Jenny Nixon, our guide to prairie edibles

This rich subject opened up many topics for exploration, both of a scholarly and gustatory nature. For every opportunity that participants had to discover the Foundation’s collection of the Cather family’s own cookbooks, or learn about church socials and suppers in the Red Cloud

of Willa Cather’s youth — to name just two of the conference’s high points — there were also chances to taste the delicious foods under discussion (all of them included in our new cookbook). Conference goers were truly able to fill, and refill, their plates.



“Barn dance” revelers at the Red Cloud Opera House

We had an ice cream social, a festive barn dance and supper, a wine tasting, and even an exploration of the edible plants growing in the Cather Prairie. Weekend favorites included Willa Cather’s own muffins and the Virginia pound cake of her early youth. But the delicacy that disappeared the fastest was Grandma Harris’s mouth-watering white coconut cake from “Old Mrs. Harris.”



The rewards of Cather scholarship — for every palate

Looking Ahead to the National Willa Cather Center

Known historically as the “Moon Block,” the handsome but virtually silent structure adjacent to the Red Cloud Opera House will soon once again be filled with activity and life. The Foundation is launching a capital campaign to restore the building and join it to our current home at the Red Cloud Opera House, to create an expanded and enhanced base for our work. We will then have what we’ve built toward throughout our history: a modern, multi-purpose facility combining well-equipped spaces for instruction, performance, archival research, display, and public gatherings. We will be able to give our facility a name befitting its scope and promise — a name such as, perhaps, the National Willa Cather Center.

Most importantly, the renovation will create a home for our priceless archives, providing environmentally secure spaces for housing and studying the invaluable objects in the Foundation’s growing collections. We will add new media facilities and double our gallery and display space, for greater flexibility in mounting artistic and educational exhibits. The Opera House Auditorium will also get much-needed backstage facilities. The restored building will include four bays of revenue-producing retail sites and three large loft apartments.

Early pledges, three federal grants, and historic tax credits already account for about 20% of the project’s estimated \$5,000,000 cost. As preliminary site work begins in earnest later in 2011, we will have much more news to share with our loyal supporters about this exciting undertaking.



Preliminary renderings of new archival facilities (above) and expanded bookstore and gallery space (right)

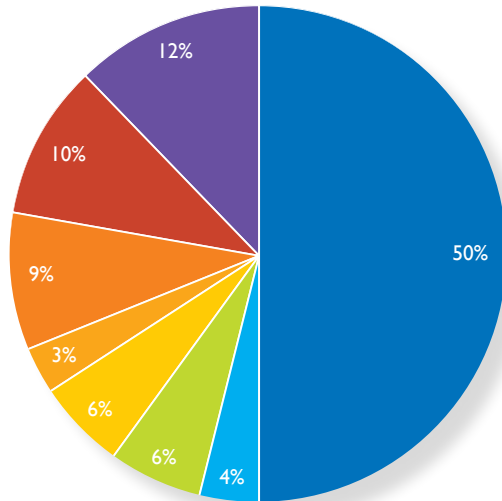


Red Cloud Opera House

The Moon Block

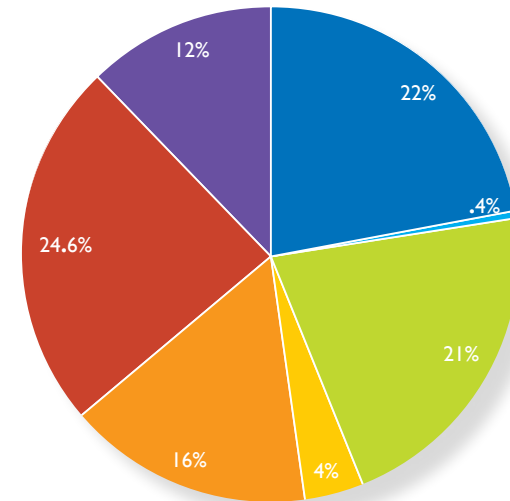
Financial Summary 2010

Support and Revenue



| | |
|--|------------------|
| ■ Contributions ★ | \$390,734 |
| ■ Memberships | 35,518 |
| ■ Grants | 50,005 |
| ■ Royalties ★ | 46,253 |
| ■ Rental Income | 25,602 |
| ■ Nebraska State Historical Society Appropriations | 68,430 |
| ■ Sales and Admissions | 75,459 |
| ■ Conferences, Seminars, Other | 95,697 |
| | \$787,698 |

Use of Funds



Program Services

| | |
|---|----------|
| ■ Nebraska State Historic Site Operations and Maintenance | \$99,936 |
| ■ Scholarships | 2,109 |
| ■ Opera House Programming and Operations | 96,256 |
| ■ Prairie Restoration and Maintenance | 20,251 |
| ■ Bookstore, Publications, Conferences and Seminars | 72,929 |

Supporting Services

| | |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| ■ Management and General | 113,400 |
| ■ Development | 57,675 |
| | \$462,556 |

The variance between *Support and Revenue* and *Use of Funds* is largely due to two factors:

★ a generous one-time estate gift of \$207,300 received in 2010, and

★ royalty income of \$46,253 received in 2010 representing two years of royalty activity. Income of this type is highly variable in timing and amount.

A portion of the variance was used to retire debt incurred in 2009. The 2010 net gain in assets will be available for budgeting purposes in future years to address particular budgetary needs and opportunities as they arise.

These figures are based on final year-end audited information compiled by an independent public accounting firm.

Support

The following individuals and organizations were donors to the Willa Cather Foundation in 2010. 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

Estate of Ella Cather Lewis, Long Beach, CA

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Jim & Trish Schreiber, Meadow Vista, CA

\$15,000 to \$24,999

Garnet Lewis, Red Cloud, NE
Nebraska Arts Council, Omaha, NE
Nebraska Humanities Council, Lincoln, NE

\$10,000 to \$14,999

Reese Gates, Red Cloud, NE
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\$5,000 to \$9,999

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