

## SCHOLARS ATTEND SYMPOSIUM IN ROME, ITALY

Over forty Cather scholars and enthusiasts traveled to Rome, Italy, June 12-14, for a Cather Symposium themed “Cather in Europe/Europe and Cather.” Scholars representing ten states and nine foreign countries, including Portugal, Italy, the Netherlands, Romania, Ireland, Canada, Taiwan, France, and Germany, presented papers at the event. Organized by the Willa Cather Foundation and Symposium Directors Cristina Giorelli (Third University of Rome), Andrew Jewell (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), Mark Madigan (Nazareth College), and John J. Murphy (Emeritus, Brigham Young University), the event

consisted of more than two full days of scholarly presentations and excellent food, as well as learning and fellowship.

A frequent traveler to Europe, Cather first visited Rome in 1908. In a 1908 letter to her brother, Roscoe, she said, “I got my guide book for Rome the other day. Seems queer to be really on the way to Rome; for of course Rome has always existed for one, it was a central fact in one’s life in Red Cloud and was always the Capital of one’s imagination. Rome, London, and Paris were serious matters when I went to the South ward school—they were the three principal cities in Nebraska, so to speak.”

The symposium at Centro Studi Americani explored Willa Cather’s presence in Europe, both as a traveler and writer whose works have been published in Europe and translated into many European languages. Additionally, scholars examined the influence of Europe and European culture on Cather’s works, the representations of Europe in her fiction, and connections between Cather and European artists and writers. The event was made possible with the generous support of John and Sarah Murphy, from the Harriet Shadegg Estate, and with additional support from the Willa Cather Foundation and University of Nebraska-Lincoln.



## FRAGMENTS OF DESIRE: CATHER AND THE ARTS

To celebrate the publication centenary of *The Song of the Lark* in 2015, we will host our annual Spring Conference in conjunction with the 15th International Cather Seminar, June 5-12, 2015 in Lincoln and Red Cloud, Nebraska. The event will feature scholarly panels, educational programs, exhibitions, as well as arts programs relating to the novel.

The Willa Cather Foundation and the Cather Project invite paper proposals for the scholarly symposium relating to the theme: “Cather and the Arts.” The 2015 conference will focus on Cather’s engagement with, love of, investment in, and representation of art forms beyond the fiction to which she dedicated herself. We are interested in exploring Cather’s fascinations with performance (music, and especially opera), and the visual arts. Topics for consideration might include: voice and performance; European music/American setting; classical and folk forms of music; the female performer; Cather and image-making; Cather and French art; photography; collecting and exhibiting; craft

object and the art object, “high” art and “low” art. Papers with diverse critical and theoretical perspectives are encouraged.

If you would like to submit a proposal, please email an abstract of 500 words, a cover letter, and brief résumé by February 15, 2015 to Tracy Tucker at [ttucker@willacather.org](mailto:ttucker@willacather.org).

*The Song of the Lark* is Cather’s third novel, titled after a painting by Jules Breton housed in the Art Institute of Chicago. Set in the Moonstone, a fictional town inspired by Red Cloud, *The Song of the Lark* is the self-portrait of an artist in the making. The story revolves around an ambitious young heroine, Thea Kronborg, who leaves her hometown for the city to fulfill her dream of becoming a musician. The novel captures Thea’s independence, her ambition, and the personal costs of her success. Nearly 100 years after *The Song of the Lark*’s publication, budding artists and performers continue to identify with Thea and find inspiration in her story.

pride for Barb, and she frequently encouraged friends, family, colleagues, and strangers to visit Red Cloud and tour the Cather historic sites. While no reward could possibly have recognized what she meant to the Foundation over the years, it seemed only fitting to remember and honor her service with the Miriam Mountford Volunteer of the Year award.

The award presentation took place at a program proceeding Illusion Theater’s stage production of *My Antonia* on June 7. Graciously accepting the award on Barb’s behalf were three of her children, Patrick Sprague, Kathleen Mitchell, and Ann Sprague. Without doubt, the Cather Foundation will forever remember the tireless service of Barbara Sprague.

### Sprague (cont.)

volunteer service is deemed to be outstanding, and as a perpetual tribute to all those whose selfless service is the heart of the Cather Foundation. Each year, one volunteer is recognized for outstanding service.

This year’s recipient, the late Barbara Sprague, helped the Foundation in countless ways. She was a loyal supporter, reliable volunteer and valued friend for many years. She played the pump organ for over 50 years of Spring Conference services at Grace Episcopal Church and delighted in serving as accompanist for annual Missoula Children’s Theatre programs at the Opera House.

Willa Cather’s ties to Red Cloud were a great source of

## JOIN US ON AUGUST 23 IN RED CLOUD

The Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors invites you to join us at the historic Red Cloud Opera House for “Something that Endured,” an evening of art and music inspired by Cather’s life and work.

Featuring select readings from Willa Cather’s letters and music by pianist and artist, Scott Kirby, the event will take place on Saturday, August 23. Cocktails and hors d’oeuvres will be served at 5:00 pm in the Foundation’s art gallery, followed by a formal dinner and performance at 6:30 pm.



“Town in the Round II” – Scott Kirby

The letters of Willa Cather provide an intimate glimpse into the life and thoughts of one of America’s greatest authors. Our select readings will come from letters written by a young, precocious Willa dreading the start of another school year, as a young woman starting her career in Pittsburgh, and finally, as an author gaining notoriety and fame with each book published. Through her own words, listeners witness

Cather’s triumphs, her struggles, and the most important personal relationships of her life.

The musical portion of the evening will consist of original compositions by Scott Kirby supplemented by the ragtime music of John William Boone and Scott Joplin. A native of Ohio, Scott Kirby is considered one of the best interpreters of ragtime music in the nation. Performing across the United States, Scott brings his musical talents to the Red Cloud Opera House stage as a fellow fan of Willa Cather. In addition to recording the complete rags of Scott Joplin, he has composed and recorded hundreds of original scores inspired by the Great Plains. Kirby is also an accomplished artist and his work will be on display in conjunction with the event. Currently, he resides in Boulder, Colorado, and divides his time between composing, painting, performing and teaching.

Tickets are \$65/person or \$35/person for age 35 and under. The names of patrons (\$150/ticket) will be printed in the evening program, and patron tickets include a one year membership to the Willa Cather Foundation. A portion of the ticket price is tax-deductible. Purchase tickets by contacting Kara Faber at [kfaber@willacather.org](mailto:kfaber@willacather.org) or at 402-746-2653 by August 18th. Proceeds from this event are critical to supporting the Foundation’s valuable educational and arts programs.

## WALTER AND TURNER SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED

On June 6, we had the pleasure of awarding the Walter and Turner scholarships. The recipients were Grace Iaquina of Lincoln East High School; Abigail Feden of Papillion-LaVista High School; Mary Theresa Wahlmeier of St. Cecilia High School; and Iona Newman of Central High School.

The scholarship award-presentations took place as part of the 59th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. Our scholarship recipients, who graduated from their respective high schools in May, shared their original essays on Cather, which is a part of the Scholarship’s extensive application process. This event is a time-honored tradition and always appreciated by the Conference attendees.

Since 1987, the Willa Cather Foundation has awarded over forty scholarships totaling more than \$152,000 through the Norma Ross Walter and Antonette Willa Skupa Turner scholarship programs.

The Norma Ross Walter Scholarship fund was established through a generous bequest from Norma Ross Walter. A life-long fan of Cather’s work and frequent visitor to Red Cloud, Walter was a firm believer in education for young women.

The Antonette Willa Turner Scholarship fund was created in 2012 by Antonette Willa Skupa Turner, granddaughter of Anna Sadilek Pavelka. The scholarship honors Anna Sadilek Pavelka, the inspiration and prototype for Antonia Shimerda Cuzak, the major character in Cather’s novel *My Antonia*.

The scholarship winners and the Willa Cather Foundation owe a debt of gratitude to Norma Ross Walter and Antonette Turner. The Foundation’s scholarship efforts, directed by long-time Board of Governors member Virgil Albertini, are a fundamental part of our educational mission.



Antonette Turner (right) with scholarship winner Abigail Feden.



From left to right: Executive Director Ashley Olson, Mary Theresa Wahlmeier, Grace Iaquina, Abigail Feden, Iona Newman, and Board of Governors member Virgil Albertini.

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**COMING UP:**  
AT THE RED CLOUD OPERA HOUSE

Missoula Children's Theatre *Treasure Island*  
Friday, August 1st, 7:00 PM  
or Saturday, August 2nd, 4:00 PM  
\$12.00 Adult \$7.00 Student \$5.00 Child

Wes Hird Trio featuring Vickie Nielson  
Thursday, September 18th, 7:00 PM  
General Admission \$15.00 / Day of Show \$18.00

Beatrice Community Players  
*Completely Hollywood*  
Saturday, October 11th, 7:30 PM  
General Admission \$15.00 / Day of Show \$18.00

Mary Carrick Caberet  
"Songs from Broadway and Beyond"  
Saturday, November 8th, 7:00 PM  
General Admission \$12.00 / Day of Show \$15.00

Joseph Hall's Elvis Rock 'N Remember Tribute  
Saturday, December 6th, 7:00 PM  
General Admission \$20.00 / Day of Show \$25.00



Arts programming presented with  
the support of the Nebraska Arts Council  
and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

# NEWS FROM CATHERLAND

Volume 4, Issue 2 August 2014

## NATIONAL WILLA CATHER CENTER MEETS CHALLENGES, ENTERS FINAL CAMPAIGN STAGE

On June 23, we were pleased to announce we have raised \$5.79 million in gifts and pledges to establish the National Willa Cather Center at Red Cloud, fulfilling a challenge grant deadline from the Peter Kiewit Foundation of Omaha, Nebraska, as well as meeting a grant requirement of the Robert B. Daugherty Foundation. The project also received a \$300,000 Community Development Block Grant in the Tourism Development Category through the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. Additional support comes from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The National Willa Cather Center will be located within the restored "Moon Block" building in the center of Red Cloud's Main Street Historic District. The Moon Block was developed and built in 1886, just three years after Willa Cather and her family moved to the area. The building would become a Red Cloud landmark and symbol of the town's promise. It was home to numerous offices and retail businesses, and Cather would eventually weave it into her novels and short stories. Soon it will enjoy a bright new life as the National Willa Cather Center—a world-class venue that will celebrate Cather's life and legacy.

While the building's focus will be a museum, archive, and collection space for public visitation, the restoration will also provide a greatly enhanced base of operations for the Willa Cather Foundation through an expanded bookstore, art gallery, and professional backstage facilities for the adjacent Red Cloud Opera House. Other elements of the project include main-street retail spaces and loft apartments for visitors.

The entire project is estimated to cost \$6.7 million, and the Foundation is in the final stages of a fundraising campaign to raise the balance needed. The last challenge is to raise \$903,000 by Spring 2015 in order to enter the final construction phase with all necessary project funds pledged.

Documentary filmmaker and lifelong Willa Cather enthusiast Ken Burns is the honorary national chair for the Center's public fundraising effort. According to Burns, who announced the creation of the Center in an online video, "The Center will have something for everyone. As an archive and museum, it will become the permanent home to some of Willa Cather's most personal treasures, items made famous in her stories, and artwork inspired by her vision of the prairie. For scholars, it will be a chance to explore, firsthand, some of her

most insightful original works and papers."

In addition to Burns, former First Lady Laura Bush has noted, "Willa Cather's literature gives voice to the values that define America's frontier heritage. By reading her words and promoting her contributions to western culture, we commemorate the pioneering spirit that distinguishes us a nation."

Gifts to the campaign may be paid over a 5-year period and naming and recognition opportunities exist at various giving levels. Donors can send contributions to the Willa Cather Foundation, 413 North Webster Street, Red Cloud, NE 68970 or give online at [www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org). For more information, contact Ashley Olson, Executive Director, at 402-746-2653 or [aolson@willacather.org](mailto:aolson@willacather.org).

## SPRAGUE GIVEN MIRIAM MOUNTFORD VOLUNTEER AWARD

One of our traditions at Spring Conference is to present the Miriam Mountford award recognizing our Volunteer of the Year. Volunteers are vital to the success of the Willa Cather Foundation. The family of Miriam Mountford recognized the importance of the volunteer corps when they established the Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award. Mountford was the Foundation's first volunteer, alongside its founders; the first president after founder Mildred Bennett; and she assisted Bennett in devising the first guided tours of the Cather historic sites.



The Miriam Mountford Award was established in her memory to recognize individuals whose (continued Page 2)