



NEWS FROM CATHERLAND

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IN THIS ISSUE

2016 Spring Conference Examines Literature and the Great War 1

A Lifetime of Giving: Leak and Yost Become Charter Members of Legacy Society 2

Call for Papers: The 16th International Cather Seminar 4

New Postcard Emerges From Cather's 1908 European Voyage 4

National Willa Cather Center to Offer New Engagement Opportunities 5

Walter and Turner Scholarships Awarded 6

New Release! *Speaking Aloud at Grace Church: Homilies from the World of Willa Cather* 6

Cather Novels Included on "NE 150 Sesquicentennial Book List" 7

Bostocks Honored with Mountford Volunteer Award 7

Board and Staff 8

Coming Up 8

Visit us online at www.WillaCather.org to browse our bookstore or sign up for our e-Newsletter.

2016 Spring Conference Examines Literature and the Great War

More than 150 Willa Cather scholars and enthusiasts met in Red Cloud, June 2–4, to explore Cather’s war writings and the long-lasting effects of world war on American culture and literature. Conference directors Julie Olin-Ammentorp (Le Moyne College) and Max Frazier (US Air Force Academy) identified a passage from Cather’s Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *One of Ours* to serve as the conference theme: “Both Bitter and Sweet’: Cather, Literature, and the Great War.”

The conference brought together noted scholars from across several disciplines to speak. Pearl James (University of Kentucky) delivered a keynote address, “The New Death”; Mark Facknitz (James Madison), Richard Harris (Webb Institute), and Diane Prenatt (Marian

University) presented plenary talks; and twenty-four researchers presented their papers as part of the scholarly symposium.

Though our Spring Conference has a new theme each year, we have several long-standing traditions, including “The Passing Show,” named for Cather’s column in the *Lincoln Courier*. This year’s panel, moderated by Julie Olin-Ammentorp and composed of Richard Harris, Max Frazier, Andy Jewell (University of Nebraska–Lincoln) and Dan Clayton (Regis University’s Center for the Study of War Experience), received an enthusiastic response from our audience, many of whom continued the conversation from the panel throughout Saturday’s luncheon, which featured food from Herbert Hoover’s World War I “Save the Wheat” cookbook.

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Karen Gettert Shoemaker, author of the 2016 “One Book One Nebraska” selection, *The Meaning of Names*, signs copies of her book following a Spring Conference speaking engagement.



2016 Spring Conference Examines Literature and the Great War

continued from front page

Attendees also enjoyed war-era popular culture: they learned the One-Step and the Tango from Lincoln dance instructors Nick Hernandez and Maja Peci; read and discussed poetry of the Great War with Olin-Ammentorp and Frazier; and watched a staged reading of J.M. Barrie's World War I propaganda drama *Der Tag, or Tragic Man*, adapted and performed by our own Tom Gallagher, Chuck Peek, James Jaap, Daryl Palmer, and Lyn Fenwick. "Telling War Stories," a museum exhibit curated by Education Director Tracy Tucker, also explored the war messages that could be found in the popular music, advertising, and journalism of those years.

As we remembered the role the Great War played in Cather's work, we felt it fitting to visit sites related to the life of Grosvenor (G.P.) Cather, Willa Cather's cousin

who was killed in France in 1918 and who inspired her novel *One of Ours*; Cather scholars Richard Harris and Rebecca Faber (University of Nebraska-Lincoln), both of whom work extensively on this novel, were joined by Geneva Lewis, current owner of G.P. and Myrtle Cather's home, as we discussed the novel and its prototypes. Other folks took advantage of a beautiful afternoon to hike the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, visit the Webster County Museum, or watch the documentary "World War 1: American Legacy," which was shown at Auld Public Library.

The Willa Cather Spring Conference is made possible through private sponsorships and with support from Humanities Nebraska, the Nebraska Arts Council, and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.

A Lifetime of Giving: Wade Leak and Jay Yost Become Charter Members of Cather Legacy Society

"I feel blessed that I'm from Red Cloud. There is exactly one small town in Nebraska that can claim one of the most famous authors in the world, so I'm happy to have the opportunity to give back, in light of all that I've been given."

— John A (Jay) Yost

Philanthropy goes back a long way in the lives of Wade Leak and Jay Yost, who both started giving to their churches at a young age. "I started tithing the minute I earned 25 cents," says Wade. "Honestly, it taught me the importance of supporting in a financial way the things you care about."

Considering this, it's not surprising that when getting their affairs in order prior to a trip to Egypt in 2015, they made sure that the Willa Cather Foundation (WCF) was included in their estate plans. As charter members of the Cather Legacy Society, Jay and Wade value the sustained impact that planned giving assures. "We know there's a need, and we believe in the mission of the Foundation. We want to see it have sustained impact and meaning. On a very concrete level, we can see what the WCF does, and we want to continue to support those efforts long after we're gone."

As a person whose family roots are deep in the town of Red Cloud, Jay has been involved with the WCF for as

long as he can remember. Preserving the past for future generations is important to him, and the WCF allows him to combine his passion for Willa Cather, Red Cloud and historic preservation. "The physical and natural environment that Cather saw is still available for people to experience today, and in preserving those things you're also assuring that the town can remain economically viable," he says. "Cather gives people a reason to rally back to the town. It helps support the long-term health of Red Cloud, and that's important to us. We appreciate the overlap and are actively involved in that overlap."

While Jay's connection to the Cather Foundation is life-long, Wade's began with his relationship with Jay. As he often says, "If I had to meet a boy from Nebraska, I'm glad he was from Red Cloud. That has brought Cather into my life, and so many meaningful experiences and relationships sprang from that."

Wade notes that it took him a while to find his own role in the work that Jay does with the WCF. "I really enjoy the experience of human connection. Of course there's my interest in Cather and her work. But in the long run, it's really the people you run into and become friends with through the organization. It starts with Cather and goes off into so many amazing directions."



Board of Governors Member, Jay Yost (left) and his partner Wade Leak (right)

Living in New York City, people can sometimes find Wade’s and Jay’s deep commitment to the WCF bewildering. They tell their friends about the profound experience of being in Cather’s hometown. “If you read *My Antonia*, for example, the land truly becomes one of the characters in the book, so to really experience Cather you have to experience the land. Once you do that you’re hooked,” they say. One of the most enduring experiences that springs to mind for them is a performance of the opera, *The Bohemian Girl*, that was staged to help celebrate the reopening of the Red Cloud Opera House in 2003. Willa Cather saw the same opera on the same stage in the 1880s. “It was electric,” Jay said. “The fact that she was inspired by that opera, and then some kid 120 years later could be in that same room and be inspired in that same way, it blows your mind.” Wade chimes in, “It was knowing that this would impact the youth, the town, everything going forward . . . it was really exciting.”

When discussing their decision to include the WCF in their financial legacy, both gentlemen mention the uniqueness of the Foundation. “The Foundation is based in the actual location that inspired the author, rather than in a big city. It’s made up of scholars, locals, and people who have an interest in Cather. It’s an amalgamation of America. If it was a pure literary society or a pure historic preservation society, you wouldn’t get so many different people from so many different realms working toward a common goal.”

Wade and Jay say that their perpetual financial support for the Foundation is a testament to Cather, the town, Board members, and staff who make things happen—but from their own observations and experience, they feel assured that whatever the Foundation takes on, it’s been well-considered. Both attorneys by training, they say that it’s easy for anyone to include the WCF in his or

her will. “It’s a piece of cake. Anyone can go online and get a state form to write a will. It’s easy to do by yourself if you have an uncomplicated estate.”

Ultimately, Jay and Wade want to make sure that future generations can have the same experiences with Cather and Red Cloud that they’ve enjoyed, whether it’s the historic buildings, the prairie, or the Opera House. “It has brought a lot to us as a couple, and that’s meaningful to us.”

The Cather Legacy Society was founded to recognize individuals who make charitable gift plans to benefit the WCF beyond their lifetime. Individuals who notify us of their plans in 2016 will join Wade and Jay as charter members of the Cather Legacy Society. If you have made a planned gift to the Foundation or would like more information about doing so, please visit our website or contact Marianne Reynolds, Development Coordinator at 402-746-2653, mreynolds@willacather.org

A Red Cloud Opera House Tradition Continues

Wander backstage at the Red Cloud Opera House and come across a lucky find—sketches and autographs commemorating past performances. Entertainers who’ve appeared since the Opera House reopened have ornamented the walls between the dressing room and the stage. In Cather’s day, performers partook of a similar tradition, etching their names onto stage sets or the stage walls themselves. Browsing new signatures, one finds evidence of over 195 performances held in the past thirteen years. From entertainers who brought us *The Bohemian Girl* in 2003 to a recent community theatre production of *Middletown*, each performer has left an indelible mark.



Call for Papers: The 16th International Cather Seminar

Willa Cather left Nebraska in 1896 and for the next decade made Pittsburgh her primary residence. During these ten years, she worked as an editor, teacher, reviewer, and freelance writer. She collected friends and mixed with all sorts of Pittsburghers. She published extensively—not only hundreds of profiles and reviews, but also more than thirty short stories; a collection of poetry, *April Twilights* (1903); and *The Troll Garden* (1905), her first collection of stories. After moving to New York in 1906, she continued visiting Pittsburgh until 1916, writing parts of several novels at the McClung residence.

Despite the importance Pittsburgh played in her life, much remains undiscovered. This seminar will further explore the influences of Pittsburgh on Cather's life and career. **Seminar directors Timothy Bintrim (Saint Francis University) and James Jaap (Penn State Greater Allegheny) invite proposals on a range of topics related to Cather and Pittsburgh. First, Cather's Pittsburgh writings, including signed, pseudonymous, and unsigned works written in the city; daily journalism, reviews, and correspondence; editorial**

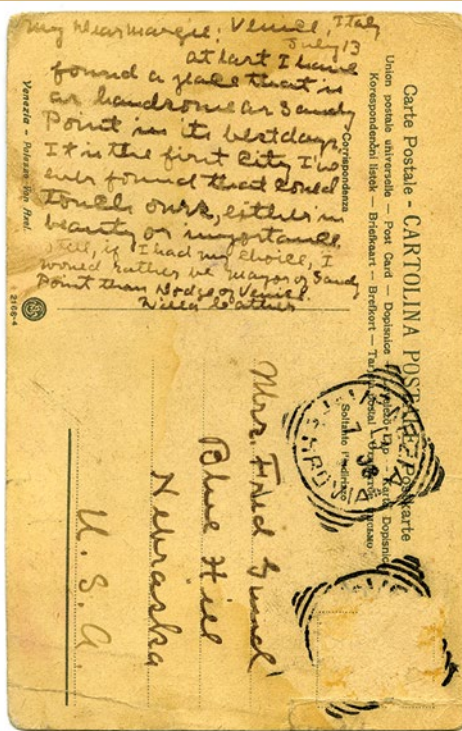
work in Pittsburgh; works with Western Pennsylvania settings; and the lost Pittsburgh novel (*Fanny*).

We also wish to further examine Cather's Pittsburgh life, including boardinghouse life; family, friends, and acquaintances; life with the McClungs; forays to New York, Virginia, Washington, and her first travels abroad; and clubs, excursions, and other diversions.

Finally, we invite proposals concerning Pittsburgh's influence on Cather, including: literary encounters; Pittsburgh people and culture; Cather's musical experiences; art in public and private collections; transformation of the industrial city; the Spanish American War, imperialism, and the First World War; and echoes of Pittsburgh in Cather's novels, as well as her stories "Uncle Valentine" and "Double Birthday."

Please send 500-word proposals of individual papers to the Willa Cather Foundation's Education Director, Tracy Tucker, at ttucker@WillaCather.org, by February 15, 2017. Learn more at: <https://www.WillaCather.org/learn/conferences-cfp>

New Postcard Emerges From Cather's 1908 European Voyage



In the past several months, the Willa Cather Foundation has been fortunate to receive numerous beautiful and valuable additions to our collections, and this piece is a wonderful example! This postcard, postmarked July 13, 1908, was sent by Willa Cather to her childhood friend, Margie Miner Gund. "Still, if I had my choice, I would rather be mayor of Sandy Point than Dodge [sic] of Venice," Willa Cather wrote. This is one of several postcards sent to old Red Cloud friends during Cather's summer tour of Italy. Many thanks are due the family of Margaret Miner Gund for this gift.

A postcard from Willa Cather to her friend Margie Miner Gund.

National Willa Cather Center to Offer New Engagement Opportunities for Scholars, Students, and Visitors

As redevelopment of the Moon Block progresses to become the National Willa Cather Center and we prepare for its fall completion, there's also a lot happening behind the scenes to ensure patrons visiting the Center will have new and exciting opportunities to engage with Cather and her work.

Our rich and varied collection of archive and museum pieces is being inventoried, re-boxed for optimal storage and efficient retrieval, and in some cases, backlogged collections are being catalogued for the first time. Coordinating this essential work is the Foundation's Education Director and Archivist, Tracy Tucker, who says the most intriguing new discovery was a collection of over 100 photos of the George and Franc Cather family, Willa Cather's uncle and aunt, the first Cathers to settle in Nebraska in 1873.

The Willa Cather Foundation's collection also includes letters written by Cather to her friends and family; rare books she inscribed and gifted to loved ones; photographs of the Cathers and early day Red Cloud; and even Confederate currency and land records dating back to the Cather family's residency in Virginia. When the National Willa Cather Center opens, these precious materials will be preserved in a climate controlled environment, and the Cather scholarly community will

have an opportunity to research and examine them in a private and professional study area.

Another prominent aspect of the Center will be the addition of a permanent exhibit, *American Bittersweet: The Life & Writing of Willa Cather*. This interpretive experience will enable visitors to examine the life and legacy of Willa Cather by exploring and embracing the complexities of her life and art. The exhibit will allow the Foundation to rotationally display a number of Cather's personal possessions, including her writing desk, clothing, accessories, and steamer trunk. Other unique pieces on display from the museum collection will include original illustrations by W. T. Benda that appeared in *My Ántonia*, Cather family quilts, and Red Cloud Opera House playbills, and much more.

When asked recently what excites her most about the project, Executive Director Ashley Olson noted, "Everything. It's hard to pinpoint a particular component, because every aspect of the project is meaningful to enhancing our ability to deliver programming and meet our mission." She continues, "Visitors and students will encounter Cather more comprehensively than ever before; scholars will have opportunities to research materials that haven't been readily known or available in the past; and

functional spaces like a classroom, greenroom, and expanded art gallery will enable us to deliver arts and educational programming in new and innovative ways."

To support this celebrated endeavor, please contact Ashley Olson, Executive Director, at 866-731-7304 or aolson@willacather.org. Donations of various sizes will be recognized on a donor wall and within a commemorative book.



A conceptual model of the NWCC's permanent exhibit.

Walter and Turner Scholarships Awarded

A springtime tradition, the Willa Cather Foundation is pleased to announce the 2016 recipients of the Norma Ross Walter and Antonette Willa Skupa Turner scholarships. Ashley Morrison of Millard South High School received the Antonette Willa Skupa Turner Scholarship. Recipients of the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship included Kathleen Walenta of Omaha Central High School; Sarah Niemeier of Heartland Lutheran High School; and Abigail Richling also of Heartland Lutheran High School.

The scholarship award recognition took place as part of the 61st annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. Each of the four recipients, having graduated from a Nebraska high school in May, delivered an original essay on Cather's work, written as part of the extensive application process of the scholarships.

Since 1987, the Willa Cather Foundation has awarded over 50 scholarships totaling more than \$156,000 through the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship and Antonette Willa Skupa Turner scholarship programs.

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

The Antonette Willa Skupa Turner Scholarship fund was established in 2012 by Antonette Willa Skupa Turner, granddaughter of Anna Sadilek Pavelka. The scholarship

honors Pavelka, the prototype and inspiration for *Antonia Shimerda Cuzak*, the eponymous character in Cather's novel.

The scholarship winners and the Willa Cather Foundation owe a debt of gratitude to the generous supporters who make these awards possible. Our scholarship efforts have impacted the lives of many talented young people and are a fundamental part of our educational mission. For more information about the scholarship programs or to support the scholarship fund, please contact Tracy Tucker, Education Director, at 402-746-2653 or ttucker@willacather.org. Application forms for 2017 are available at www.WillaCather.org and annual deadlines are January 31 and February 28, respectively.



Antonette Turner and Virgil Albertini pictured with the 2016 scholarship recipients. L-R: Antonette Turner, Ashley Morrison, Sarah Niemeier, Kathleen Walenta, Abigail Richling, and Virgil Albertini.

New Release! *Speaking Aloud at Grace Church: Homilies from the World of Willa Cather*

The Willa Cather Foundation is most excited to share news of a new release, *Speaking Aloud at Grace Church*, by Charles A. Peek, an Episcopal priest and member of the Foundation's Board of Governors. The book is devoted to homilies that Rev. Peek gave at Grace Church in Red Cloud over the two decades spanning the turn of the 20th to the 21st Century. Most Rev. Frank Griswold, former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, notes "With great skill and insight, he brings into sharp relief aspects of Cather's personal history and writing which can only deepen and expand our appreciation of what

makes her novels and stories timeless in their capacity to reveal truth and the inner working of the human spirit in both its frailty and strength." Regardless of whether readers have had the pleasure of hearing Rev. Peek preach, this book offers cherished insight and recalls fond memories from many notable events in the Cather community. Signed copies are available for \$18.95 and may be purchased online at www.WillaCather.org or by calling 402-746-2653. By special arrangement with the author, all proceeds will benefit the work of the Willa Cather Foundation.

Cather Novels Included on "NE 150 Sesquicentennial Book List"

Three novels by Willa Cather have made the Nebraska 150 Sesquicentennial Book List. To celebrate the sesquicentennial of Nebraska's statehood, the 150 Book Selection Committee chose 150 notable Nebraska books to highlight for the NE 150 Celebration. These books represent the best literature produced from Nebraska during the past 150 years, including Cather's *O Pioneers!*

(1913); her beloved *My Ántonia* (1918); and her Pulitzer Prize-winner, *One of Ours* (1922). The selected books highlight the varied cultures, diverse experiences and the shared history of Nebraskans. Literature enthusiasts are encouraged to join the Nebraska 150 Reading Challenge. For more information, visit www.nebraska150books.org.

Bostocks Honored with Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award

John and Bethann Bostock of Red Cloud were recently recognized by the Willa Cather Foundation with the 2016 Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award. The Bostocks have been volunteering since the opening of the Red Cloud Opera House in 2003. Consistently conducting their volunteer service in an upbeat manner and with smiles on their faces, they can often be found serving drinks or freshly made popcorn at Opera House performances.

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to John and Bethann for their loyalty and continued service," said Executive Director, Ashley Olson. "Without the selfless support of our friends and community members, it wouldn't be possible to conduct the programs and preservation activities that are central to our mission."

Each year the Willa Cather Foundation recognizes a volunteer who has been especially dedicated to helping the Foundation meet its mission. Volunteers are vital to the success of the Willa Cather Foundation, and the Board of Governors recognized the importance of a strong volunteer core when they established the Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award.

Mountford was the Foundation's first volunteer, alongside its founding board members, and the first president after founder Mildred Bennett. She also assisted in devising the first guided tours of the Cather historic sites. The Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award was established in her memory to recognize individuals for outstanding volunteer service.

The Willa Cather Foundation has a variety of volunteer opportunities available year-round, which include assisting with programs at the Red Cloud Opera House,

landscaping at historic sites, and greeting and providing information to visitors and guests. If you are interested in volunteering, please call 402-746-2653 or email Marianne Reynolds at mreynolds@willacather.org.



John and Bethann Bostock pictured with Executive Director, Ashley Olson, following presentation of the Mountford Volunteer Award.

2017 Spring Conference

Save the date for our 62nd annual Willa Cather Spring Conference, "Picturing the American West: The Railroad and Popular Imagination," scheduled for June 1-3, 2017 in Red Cloud, Nebraska. In addition to lively educational and cultural activities inspired by the conference theme, patrons will take part in a grand-opening and dedication celebration for the new National Willa Cather Center.

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The Willa Cather Foundation
413 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, NE 68970

COMING UP!
AT THE RED CLOUD OPERA HOUSE



Missoula Children's Theatre presents *Rapunzel*
Friday, August 5, 3:00 PM and 7:00 PM
\$5 for children / \$10 for students / \$15 for adults

Nebraska Shakespeare presents *Hamlet*
Thursday, September 29, 7:00 PM
\$20 in advance / \$25 day of show

'An Evening:' A Tribute to John Denver
Saturday, October 15, 7:30 PM
\$20 in advance / \$25 day of show

The Bel Airs: Eclectic Blues and Soul
Friday, November 18, 7:00 PM
\$15 in advance / \$20 day of show

Visit us online at www.WillaCather.org for information on upcoming events.



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