

Hoping my father
will enjoy this nar-
rative of the west
southwest, as it was
in his young man-
hood. Willa Cather

New York
August 16, 1927



Whatever is felt upon the page without being specifically named there – that, one might say, is created. It is the inexplicable presence of the thing not named, of the overtone divined by the ear but not heard by it, the verbal mood, the emotional aura of the fact or the thing or the deed, that gives high quality to the novel or the drama, as well as to poetry itself.



To Our Friends and Supporters

Thank you! Lives are enriched by relationships and experiences. Since launching a campaign to create the National Willa Cather Center five years ago, we've built meaningful friendships and had a number of memorable experiences along the way.

At times, the work to be done seemed unsurmountable. Gradually, funds were raised and blueprints were completed. You provided encouragement as plans were put to bid and we moved from contracts to the sounds of construction.

Early on, we could only imagine how the National Willa Cather Center would appear as a finished product. And ultimately, it was you who made the Center a reality.

Thanks to you a handsomely restored building will soon be filled with our precious Cather collections. It stands ready to provide enriching experiences for you and thousands of others.

We look forward to a grand celebration deserving of Willa Cather's approval at the dedication event on June 3, 2017. Join us. We hope you'll visit, learn, and be inspired.

Gratefully,



Lynette Krieger
Board President



Ashley Olson
Executive Director

Our Mission

To promote Willa Cather's legacy through education, preservation, and the arts.

Our Vision

To become a premier cultural center that offers broad educational opportunities for patrons to experience Cather's work, explore historic landmarks related to her life and times, foster their own creativity, and embrace the arts and humanities.



Promoting Cather's Legacy Since 1955

Core Activities and Accomplishments

- Completion of a \$6.7 million capital campaign to create the National Willa Cather Center
- Organization of conferences, seminars, and symposiums—in Red Cloud and beyond
- Preservation of eleven nationally designated Cather historic sites
- Conservation of the 612-acre Willa Cather Memorial Prairie
- Guided town and country tours of Red Cloud and Webster County
- Monthly arts and humanities programs in our restored Red Cloud Opera House.
- Preservation of Cather artifacts and archival material
- Publication of the *Willa Cather Newsletter & Review*
- Operation of the Cather Second Home guest house
- Scholarships for students pursuing degrees in English or history
- Encouragement and cooperation with other Cather programs and initiatives

A Famous Literary Village

Willard Thorp, in *American Writing in the Twentieth Century* says, “from the literary standpoint, Red Cloud ranks as one of the most famous villages in American Literature.” Nearly 8,000 visitors make the pilgrimage to Red Cloud each year to experience the place where Cather spent her formative years.

Here our guests step into the Black Hawk of *My Ántonia*, Hanover of *O Pioneers!*, Sweet Water of *A Lost Lady*, Moonstone of *The Song of the Lark*, Frankfort of *One of Ours*, and Haverford of *Lucy Gayheart*.

After a visit to Red Cloud, JoAnne and Martin Katzmarek of Washburn, Wisconsin, wrote: “This has been a special treat—to spend time in Willa Cather’s home and hometown. We have enjoyed her writing and stories and staying here helps us to see her creations more clearly. Thank you, thank you, for taking care of her precious memories.”



Acquired in 2011, the Cather Second Home guest house provides our visitors with overnight accommodations in a beautiful historic home once owned by Cather's parents.

Ceremonial Groundbreaking of the National Willa Cather Center

As one of the greatest American authors, Willa Cather is worthy of a museum that pays tribute to her influence on our history and culture. For several years, we've been planning to make this dream a reality. As we placed our shovels in the dirt on June 5, 2015, leadership of the Willa Cather Foundation and acclaimed historian and guest Richard Norton Smith celebrated an important step in the creation of the National Willa Cather Center, breaking ground in preparation for the final phase of construction.

As we look back at the groundbreaking and ahead to the Center's dedication on June 3, 2017, we feel both gratitude and excitement. We're indebted to many who had a hand in the endeavor—from those who were bold enough to envision the National Willa Cather Center to the supporters that helped us make it a reality.

The Robert and Joanne Berkshire family was among the first to affirm their belief in the importance of this undertaking by making a leadership gift. "Our family has a passion for south central Nebraska, and Willa Cather's life and writing keep this special place vibrant and alive for the rest of the world. This project will promote the author's legacy and spotlight our great state to an international audience," remarked Joanne Berkshire, our campaign's honorary chair, at the outset of our campaign. Thanks to the Berkshires and hundreds of supporters nationwide, Cather will soon have the museum she deserves to honor her incredible legacy.



The first stage of construction already under way, the leadership of the Willa Cather Foundation and special guests got into the spirit of things with a ceremonial groundbreaking.



Richard Norton Smith leads the audience in a toast to Willa Cather—and the National Willa Cather Center—during his keynote address at the 2015 Willa Cather Spring Conference, June 5, 2015.

Fostering Cather Scholarship and Discovery

In the centenary year of Cather's third novel, *The Song of the Lark*, more than seventy scholars and students from over twenty-one states and five countries participated in the 15th International Cather Seminar on "Cather and the Arts." Organized in partnership with the Cather Project at the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and held in conjunction with our 60th annual Willa Cather Spring

Conference, the combined events hosted more than 200 participants in the two prominent centers of Cather's Nebraska experience—Red Cloud and Lincoln. Participants included Cather scholars and fans, as well as literature and arts enthusiasts.



Executive Director Ashley Olson visits with Cather descendant John Cather Ickis during the Spring Conference.

Seminar participants visit Constellation Studios in Lincoln, Nebraska, to view artist Barbara Tetenbaum's visual representation of My Antonia.



Visitors explore the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie during a wildflower walk at the Spring Conference.

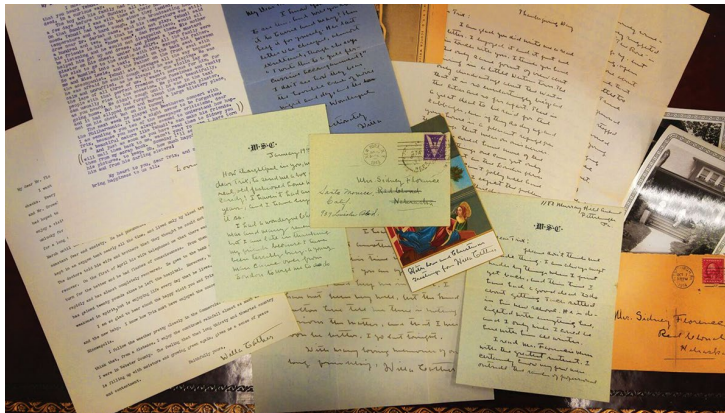


Conference-goers gather for a photo at the New Virginia Church during a country tour.

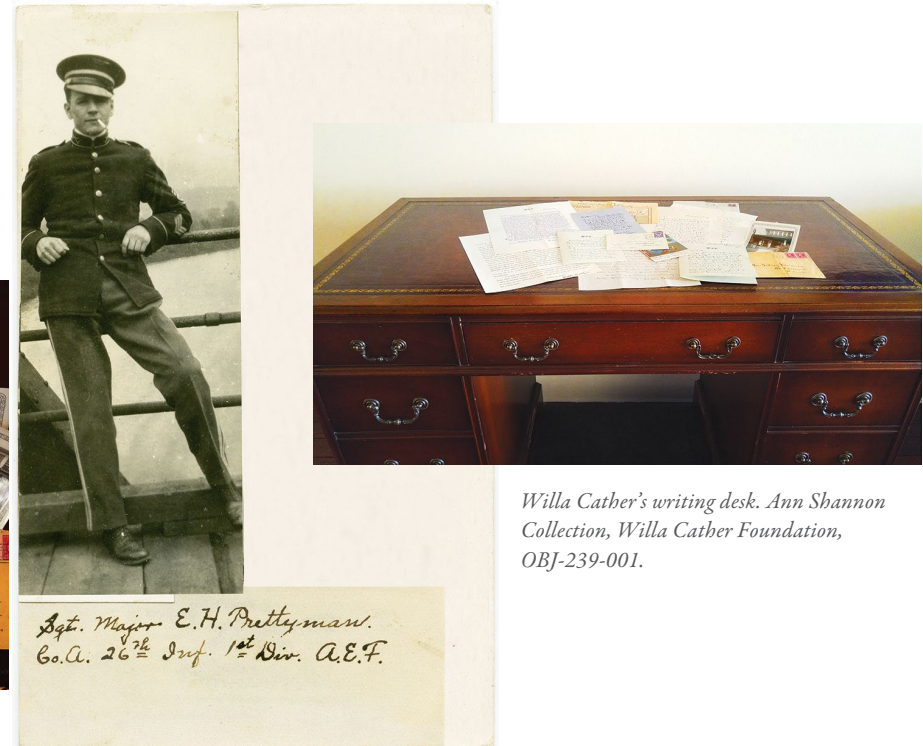
Growing the Cather Collection

When Willa Cather died in 1947, she left behind much more than her celebrated literature. Personal possessions, photographs, rare books, and pieces of correspondence in our collection enable readers and the scholarly community to examine Cather's life and work in a deeper and more meaningful way. Nearly seventy years after her passing, it's especially exciting when previously unknown pieces emerge.

An important donation to our archival collection recently was the Beatrix "Trix" Mizer Florance and Sidney R. Florance Collection. This group of over twenty-five items contained letters, signed cards, photos, and rare newspaper clippings. A childhood friend of Cather who later studied music in Chicago, "Trix" is one of several possible prototypes for Cather's Lucy Gayheart, making the addition of these materials especially fascinating for study and research.



A selection of *The Beatrix "Trix" Mizer Florance and Sidney R. Florance Collection*, Willa Cather Foundation.



Willa Cather's writing desk. Ann Shannon Collection, Willa Cather Foundation, OBJ-239-001.

E. H. Prettyman served with Willa Cather's cousin, G. P., in France during the First World War. After G. P.'s death at Cantigny, Prettyman wrote to Frances Cather, G. P.'s mother, describing his courage and reassuring her about his death. Afterward, Prettyman and his mother maintained a long correspondence with Aunt Franc. This photo is part of a collection of George Cather family images recently donated.

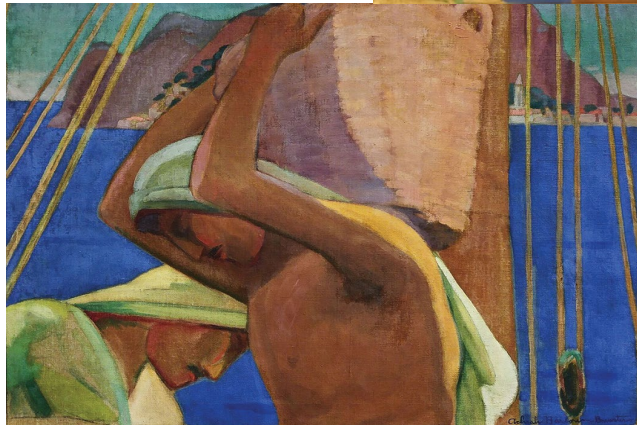
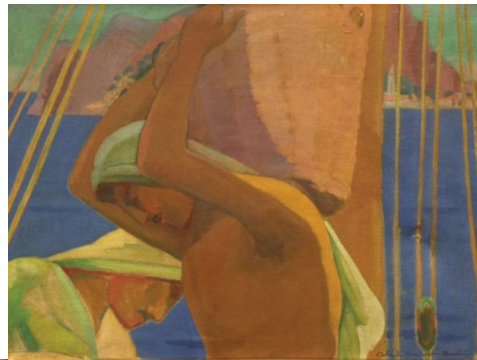
Detail from the *Sayra Cather Wagner Collection*, Willa Cather Foundation, PHO-206-030

Conserving the Cather Collection

Whether newly acquired or long-held, archival documents and museum artifacts in our care must be exactly preserved for research and exhibit. In caring for the collection, we also invest in essential conservation work to protect and reinvigorate these precious assets.

One important conservation project completed recently was the restoration of a double-sided oil painting on canvas by Achsah Barlow Brewster. Both artists and writers, Achsah Brewster and her husband Earl Brewster were long-time friends of Edith Lewis and Willa Cather. A paper label records the sale of the painting to Edith Lewis at Capri, Italy.

The painting is said to have hung in Lewis and Cather's New York City home. Its recent revitalization ensures that the Brewster painting will be enjoyed for decades to come.



Before and after images of the Brewster painting. James and Angela Southwick Collection, Willa Cather Foundation, OBJ-50-077. Restoration by Kenneth Bé, Head of Paintings Conservation at the Nebraska State Historical Society's Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center.

Another meaningful undertaking was the conservation treatment and cleaning of "Jake," a pen-and-ink drawing by Władysław Teodor "W. T." Benda, a Polish painter and illustrator who Cather sought out to illustrate *My Antonia*. At Cather's insistence, eight illustrations by Benda appeared in the novel when it was published by Houghton Mifflin Company in 1918. "Jake" is one of six original Benda illustrations held in the collection of the Willa Cather Foundation.



Before and after images of "Jake." Bernard and Nancy Picchi Collection, Willa Cather Foundation, OBJ-58-1001. Restoration by Hilary LeFevre, Paper Conservator at the Nebraska State Historical Society's Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center.



Honoring Cather through the Arts

Willa Cather was in many ways a cultural critic, with wide and varied passions for her favored painters, musicians and singers. An integral part of our mission is providing a wide assortment of engaging arts experiences—for audiences and artists alike. For many of our patrons, an introduction to Cather comes by way of an arts event at our Red Cloud Opera House or another public venue. In hosting these events, we're also supporting dozens of artists. Like Cather, they have valuable talents to be nurtured and shared.



The Porter family commissioned The Song of the Lark in memory of Laudie Porter. The song cycle was first performed at a concert in the Intermezzo Chamber Music Series in Salt Lake City in 2010. Pictured here are David "Davey" Porter and his daughter, Divna, who were present for the cycle's Nebraska debut.



The cast of LARK/SONG, who spent three weeks in Red Cloud creating a very contemporary reimagining of a 100-year-old novel. Pictured left to right are Alton Alburo, Kaela Garvin, A. P. Andrews, Adin Lenahan, and Kerri Lowe. (Photo by Kerri Lowe.)

A few of 2015's highlights:

- *Catherland*, a new musical by Becky Boesen and David von Kampen, had its first staged reading at our Red Cloud Opera House.
- *LARK/SONG*, an eclectic theatrical retelling of Cather's *The Song of the Lark* written by A. P. Andrews, premiered at our Spring Conference.
- *The Fine Things of Youth: Willa Cather's Lucy Gayheart in Words and Music*, a deeply moving production conceived and directed by Tom Gallagher, played to a packed house at the Studio Theatre in Lincoln, Nebraska.
- *The Song of the Lark*, a song cycle by composer Barlow Bradford focusing on key episodes in Cather's 1915 novel, was performed in Nebraska for the first time at our Red Cloud Opera House.
- The acclaimed soprano Sarah Arneson gave a recital featuring music loved by Cather, including arias by Verdi and Puccini.



Jill Anderson and Evan Bravos performed The Fine Things of Youth with the able assistance of pianists Mark Kurtz and the late David Porter.



“Wonderful Events Like These”

“As a graduate student from Taiwan, the opportunity to attend the Spring Conference/International Seminar in June 2015 was a huge milestone for me in my academic life. Not only did I get a chance to visit and experience both Red Cloud and UNL in person, I was also thrilled to meet and learn from the generous community of Cather scholars, many of whom I had known only from the page. The Conference/Seminar was both instrumental in the completion of my thesis as well as personally enriching and enlightening. Wonderful events like these not only showcase and celebrate Cather’s legacy, they instruct and inspire foreign students like myself.”

Andrew Wu
Fu Jen Catholic University
New Taipei City, Taiwan

Providing Cather-Inspired Educational Opportunities

Educational programs have always been a cornerstone of our mission. Each year, we work to provide an array of stimulating learning opportunities for visitors and guests of all ages. From our long-standing offerings to new adventures, there were ample opportunities for our 7,500 patrons to expand their horizons in 2015.

We were proud to:

- Host a Road Scholar program featuring a variety of activities and explorations designed to better understand Cather and her importance in America’s rich cultural history.
- Lead guided tours of Cather’s childhood home and up to six additional historic properties related to her life and writing.
- Utilize our Willa Cather Memorial Prairie as an outdoor classroom for wildflower walks, a night sky viewing, and our inaugural Pollinators Workshop.
- Guide explorations of “Catherland” through country tours highlighting Cather-related sites of interest in greater Webster County.
- Serve student groups and educators with curriculum support materials and customized educational tours.
- Provide scholarship opportunities for high school students.



Undergraduate students from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln visit Cather’s childhood home as part of Dr. Ann Tschetter’s Nebraska history course.



Jess Edgar of the Natural Resources Conservation Service teaches students to make mason bee houses at our inaugural Pollinators Workshop.

Financial Summary 2015

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014

	2015	2014
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$2,184,552	\$235,875
Investments	1,614,443	3,836,418
Accrued interest receivable	29	29
Pledges receivable, net	180,476	472,685
Other receivables, net	1,014,441	997,584
Assets in charitable remainder trust	513,367	536,949
Bookstore inventory	40,983	41,109
Property and equipment, net	1,971,456	3,104,810
Investment in Willa Cather Society	2,719,285	0
Art and historic structures	270,253	265,760
Total assets	\$10,509,285	\$9,491,219
LIABILITIES		
Accrued expenses and taxes withheld	\$44,073	\$34,339
Deferred revenue	967,571	977,853
Split interest charitable remainder trust	418,962	444,225
Capital lease obligations	4,586	7,643
Total liabilities	\$1,435,192	\$1,464,060
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	\$4,654,235	\$3,082,786
Temporarily restricted	2,372,160	2,896,675
Permanently restricted	2,047,698	2,047,698
Total net assets	9,074,093	8,027,159
Total liabilities and net assets	\$10,509,285	\$9,491,219

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 office.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the years ended December 31, 2015 and 2014

	2015	2014
REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions and memberships	\$795,109	\$1,396,333
Nebraska State Historical Society appropriations	75,273	80,406
Grants	693,940	781,230
Sales and admissions	90,670	82,268
Rent income	47,040	33,369
Conferences and seminars	62,417	38,131
Change in value of split interest	1,181	9,067
Royalties income	7,097	9,403
Other income	18,462	13,815
Interest income	107,904	127,704
Investment gain/loss	(123,010)	(23,423)
Total revenue and support	\$1,776,083	\$2,548,303
EXPENSES		
Program		
Cost of sales	\$37,947	\$34,621
Education and scholarships	70,413	45,186
Preservation of sites and collections	16,662	18,350
Historical center operations	140,696	143,950
Opera House and programming	157,685	169,246
Cather prairie operations	17,665	16,464
Supporting		
Management and general	218,234	226,492
Development and fundraising	69,847	133,025
Total expenses	\$729,149	\$787,334
INCREASE IN NET ASSETS		
Net assets, beginning of year	\$8,027,159	\$6,266,190
Net assets, end of year	\$9,074,093	\$8,027,159

The Cather Legacy Society

Anonymous

Anonymous

Virgil and Dolores Albertini, Fairway, KS

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A descendant of Frank H. Woods, Chicago, IL

John A (Jay) Yost and G. Wade Leak,
New York, NY

†Deceased

Join the Cather Legacy Society

The Cather Legacy Society was founded to recognize individuals who make charitable gift plans to benefit the Willa Cather Foundation beyond their lifetime. Gifts received further our mission to promote Cather's legacy through education, preservation, and the arts. You may join the Cather Legacy Society by making a future gift intention in your will or through a beneficiary designation. For more information, contact Ashley Olson, Executive Director, at 402-746-2653 or aolson@willacather.org.

Support

The following individuals and organizations were donors to the Willa Cather Foundation in 2015. Space does not permit us to list donations under \$50.00, but we are grateful for these contributions. Every gift is important to us.

\$100,000 and Above

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A Newly Discovered Cather Photograph

Thanks to a donor, this exceedingly rare candid photograph has recently come into our collection. We are happy to have it—much happier than the photograph's subject appears to be at having her picture taken. Our preliminary research indicates that the occasion may have been Cather's May 1925 lecture at Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine.



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The State of Nebraska owns six Cather-related properties and a number of inventoried artifacts and documents held in Red Cloud. The properties are collectively referred to as the Willa Cather State Historic Site and are jointly preserved and maintained by the Nebraska State Historical Society and the Willa Cather Foundation. The Cather Foundation acquired the sites in its earlier years and continues to manage them and care for them alongside its own historic properties.