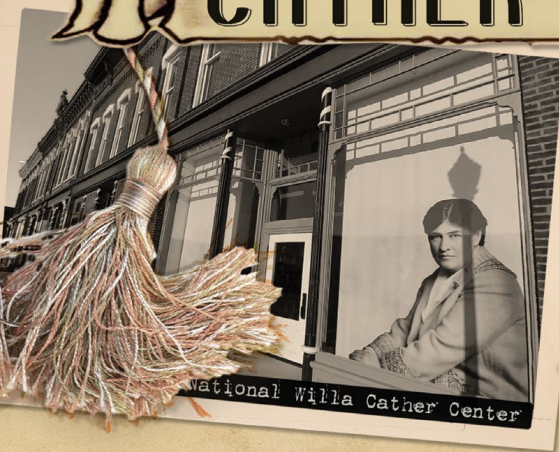




Greetings from
CATHER COUNTRY



To Our Friends and Supporters

We are pleased to share the Willa Cather Foundation's 2017 annual report. Thanks to your incredible generosity, the Willa Cather Foundation served a record-setting 13,000 visitors and patrons on site last year—touring the new National Willa Cather Center or attending programs at our Red Cloud Opera House. As impressively, more than 41,000 users accessed the educational resources and publications found on our website.

Almost a decade ago, we dreamt about renovating a long-forgotten historic building in downtown Red Cloud to create a living memorial to Willa Cather. With your assistance, this dream became a reality when we dedicated and opened the National Willa Cather Center with nearly 300 people gathered in our restored Red Cloud Opera House. We were honored and humbled to play host to Mrs. Laura Bush for the dedication. There's no doubt those in attendance will long remember the moving remarks she made about the value and importance of Cather's literature to the study and understanding of our nation's history and culture.

With the addition of an archive and expanded museum space, we also had the good fortune to welcome dozens of meaningful donations to our collections. Letters written by Cather, her personal possessions, photographs, and gifts given by Cather to friends and family continue to turn up and find a permanent home at our National Willa Cather Center. We sincerely thank the owners and caretakers of these collections for having the foresight to ensure they are preserved and displayed for generations to come.

Cather's work appeals to readers from across the country and around the world. We were gratified to welcome visitors from 46 states and three countries outside the United States who made literary pilgrimages to our headquarters in Red Cloud, Nebraska. For those who have yet to visit, please consider this an open invitation to experience the largest collection of nationally designated historic sites dedicated to an American author.

Your support also enabled us to host and organize Cather programs and seminars outside of Nebraska. Our 16th International Cather Seminar was held on the campus of Duquesne University. The event called attention to the 10 years Cather lived and worked in Pittsburgh and brought together more than one hundred Cather scholars and enthusiasts to explore the influences of the Steel City on Cather's life and career. Seminars like this one continue to advance Cather scholarship and serve as a catalyst for publication projects and research.

In closing, thank you for giving us the distinct privilege of continuing this meaningful work. Whether as supporters, as patrons, or as stakeholders—we're grateful for your continued interest and investments.

Gratefully,

Marion Arneson
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.

Our Programs and Services

- Operation of an archive, library, and study center at the National Willa Cather Center
- Preservation of the largest collection of nationally designated historic sites devoted to an American author
- Conferences and seminars held annually in Red Cloud and biennially across the country and internationally
- Arts and humanities programs in the restored Red Cloud Opera House
- Guided town and country tours of more than 20 historic sites relating to Cather's life and work
- Publication of the *Willa Cather Review*
- Scholarship awards to English and history majors
- Arts and educational exhibits at the National Willa Cather Center
- Restoration and conservation of the 612-acre Willa Cather Memorial Prairie
- Management of a Cather bookstore and gift shop
- Outreach to and curriculum support for teachers and students



Dedicating the National Willa Cather Center: An Unforgettable Occasion

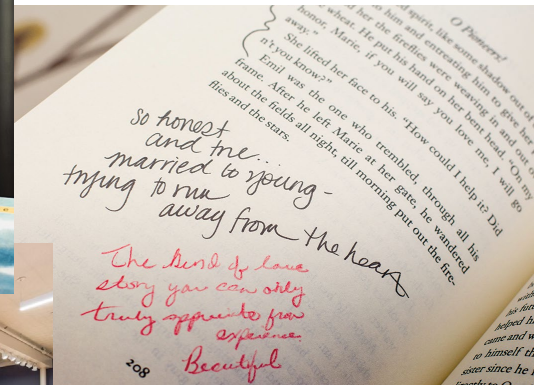
“Through Willa Cather’s writing, we have a better understanding of one of the most remarkable and compelling periods in American History. The sites and collections that make up the National Willa Cather Center in Red Cloud, Nebraska are cultural treasures, and I am grateful for the community that supports the preservation of these historic landmarks.”

— Mrs. Laura Bush

Former teacher, librarian, and First Lady of the United States



Before the Willa Cather Foundation acquired the Moon Block building, years of neglect had led to significant deterioration and much of the building was uninhabitable. Restoration and adaptive reuse of the Moon Block to become the National Willa Cather Center resulted in an award-winning arts and cultural center dedicated to the preservation and promotion of Willa Cather’s legacy. Since the dedication, the renovated building has had a transformative effect on the vibrancy and appearance of downtown Red Cloud through a community development strategy rooted in arts, tourism, and creative placemaking.



American Bittersweet has become a central component of the National Willa Cather Center, attracting new visitors, showcasing meaningful museum objects, and greatly expanding educational opportunities for guests. Direct interaction with Cather’s books gives exhibit visitors the opportunity to respond to Cather’s words, through sketching, asking questions, or even challenging Cather’s thinking—all in the margins of her books. Dozens of annotations have been recorded to this point, and visitors are also responding to Cather in more personal ways—thanking her for inspiration, underlining their favorite passages, and even using the books as a log of their visits.



Guests and foundation leadership applaud as Cather family descendants stand to be recognized.

Memorable Moments and Cather-Inspired Programs

“I spent a week photographing Red Cloud as an artist in residence at the Willa Cather Foundation. Being able to discover this magic town in such a unique way was an unbelievable experience. I was able to literally follow in Willa Cather’s footsteps as I photographed. This beautiful little town has cast quite a spell on me and as an artist I think it is an essential stop for other creative people.”

— Shane Booth

Artist & Professor at Fayetteville State University



Six gifted performers presented the *Red Cloud Cannonball*—a lively evening of song and legend, highlighting the ways the railroad became a fundamental part of the culture of the American West. Cather excerpts threaded through the program included beautiful selections from *The Song of the Lark*, *My Antonia*, *Lucy Gayheart* and two rarely encountered but exquisite poems. “The Catherville Players,” seen in the cast photo above, were (standing from left) D. Kevin Williams, Joe Mendick, musical director Mark Kurtz, Bethany Eckloff, Jill Anderson, and (seated in foreground) Jesse Wohlman.



Alex Ross, music critic for *The New Yorker* and a repeat visitor to Red Cloud, wrote an illuminating piece on Cather that appeared in the October 2, 2017, print edition under the title “Cather People.” Within this piece, readers discovered the ways Nebraska’s landscape inspired the great American novelist and how her later works like *Death Comes for the Archbishop* stand apart.



Director Yugo Ikach led the Washington Symphony Orchestra of Washington, Pennsylvania, in a performance at Carnegie Music Hall that provided a vivid glimpse into Cather’s musical world in Pittsburgh. Those in attendance heard a symphonic concert much like those Cather attended in this very hall, including some of the music that she reviewed. The memorable event was made possible as part of the 16th International Cather Seminar, codirected by Dr. Timothy Bintrim and Dr. James Jaap, and through the leadership of Brett and Dr. Kim Vanderlaan, with support from the California University of Pennsylvania, Duquesne University, Penn State Greater Allegheny, and St. Francis University.

Rich Traditions: Uniting Cather Students and Fans

“I was humbled and honored when I learned I was chosen to receive the 2017 Antonette Willa Skupa Turner Scholarship. As a scholarship recipient, I was invited to the 62nd annual Willa Cather Spring Conference to present my essay and received such a warm welcome by everyone there. Attending the conference at the Red Cloud Opera House was an experience I will never forget.”

— Patrick O’Neil

History major at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln



Scholarship recipient Addison Schneider responds to a question following delivery of her Cather essay at the 62nd annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. Our scholarship programs have awarded nearly \$170,000 to more than 60 students in the last 30 years.



Our Willa Cather Memorial Prairie boasts an ever-changing tapestry of native grasses, flowers, and forbs. The wildflower season stretches from April through October, offering visitors like these glimpses of primroses, asters, native thistles, prairie coneflower, dalea, ironweed, and many others that grace the edges of our visitor trails.



Road Scholar participants gather following a luncheon at the George Cather House hosted by Lynette Krieger, Past President of the Willa Cather Foundation. A tour of the George Cather House—the residence of Willa Cather’s uncle George and aunt Frances Cather and their children, including G. P. Cather, prototype for Claude Wheeler in *One of Ours*—was part of the “country tour” experience in greater Webster County that made up a half day of our week-long immersive learning program titled “Red Cloud: Willa Cather’s Window to the World.”

Financial Summary 2017

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$245,150	\$604,777
Investments	2,405,045	1,636,700
Accrued interest receivable	9	29
Prepaid expenses	43,450	3,277
Pledges receivable, net	47,384	107,640
Other receivables, net	582,584	299,872
Assets in charitable remainder trust	0	539,519
Bookstore inventory	42,800	42,508
Property and equipment, net	2,116,087	2,034,692
Investment in Willa Cather Society	5,490,907	5,487,040
Art and historic structures	317,208	289,083
Total assets	\$11,290,624	\$11,045,137
LIABILITIES		
Accrued expenses and taxes withheld	\$33,769	\$31,508
Deferred revenue	25,859	21,376
Split interest charitable remainder trust	0	433,944
Capital lease obligations	11,527	1,529
Total liabilities	\$71,155	\$488,357
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	\$8,827,051	\$7,909,310
Temporarily restricted	233,720	599,772
Permanently restricted	2,158,698	2,047,698
Total net assets	11,219,469	10,556,780
Total liabilities and net assets	\$11,290,624	\$11,045,137

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.

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES

For the years ended December 31, 2017 and 2016

	2017	2016
REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions and memberships	\$685,267	\$347,161
Nebraska State Historical Society appropriations	72,225	75,273
Grants	142,452	1,241,249
Sales and admissions	129,262	97,381
Rent income	58,791	62,533
Conferences and seminars	70,275	13,610
Change in value of split interest	(105,575)	11,170
Royalties income	8,921	12,511
Other income	31,788	16,613
Interest income	66,636	50,132
Investment gain/loss	214,542	58,116
Developer fee income	252,702	250,000
Loss on asset disposal	(1,529)	(12,759)
Total revenue and support	\$1,625,757	\$2,222,990
EXPENSES		
Program		
Cost of sales	\$52,008	\$34,776
Education and scholarships	106,215	52,764
Preservation of sites and collections	33,245	21,004
Historical center operations	193,981	135,060
Opera House and programming	208,979	177,205
Cather prairie operations	20,352	11,541
Supporting		
Management and general	244,277	242,403
Development and fundraising	104,011	65,550
Total expenses	\$963,068	\$740,303
INCREASE IN NET ASSETS		
Net assets, beginning of year	\$10,556,780	\$9,074,093
Net assets, end of year	\$11,219,469	\$10,556,780

The Cather Legacy Society

Anonymous (4)

Virgil & Dolores Albertini, Fairway, KS

Melvin C. Anderson†, Red Cloud, NE

Martha E. Artist†, Omaha, NE

Hazel C. Baker†, Omaha, NE

In honor of Nita Beth Snyder Bohling, Superior, NE

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Norma S. Steen†, Grand Island, NE

Margaret Lambrecht Votipka†, Fairmont, NE

Norma Ross Walter†, Vallejo, CA

A descendant of Frank H. Woods, Chicago, IL

John A (Jay) Yost & 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 2017. 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

Verlin & Gladys Harris Trust,

Red Cloud, NE

Nebraska Community Foundation,

Lincoln, NE

Brad & Nancy Sherwood, Elkhorn, NE

\$50,000 to \$99,999

History Nebraska, Lincoln, NE

\$25,000 to \$49,999

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Holland Foundation, Omaha, NE

Institute of Museum & Library Services,

Washington, DC

James & M. Patricia Schreiber,

Meadow Vista, CA

Antonette Willa Turner, Bladen, NE

\$15,000 to \$24,999

Anonymous

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Rhonda Pauley, Hastings, NE

Steve Powell, Lincoln, NE

Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce,

Red Cloud, NE

Zack Shannon, El Dorado Hills, CA

\$10,000 to \$14,999

Anonymous

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Ann Mactier, Omaha, NE

Nebraska Arts Council, Omaha, NE

Nebraska Tourism Commission, Lincoln, NE

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\$5,000 to \$9,999

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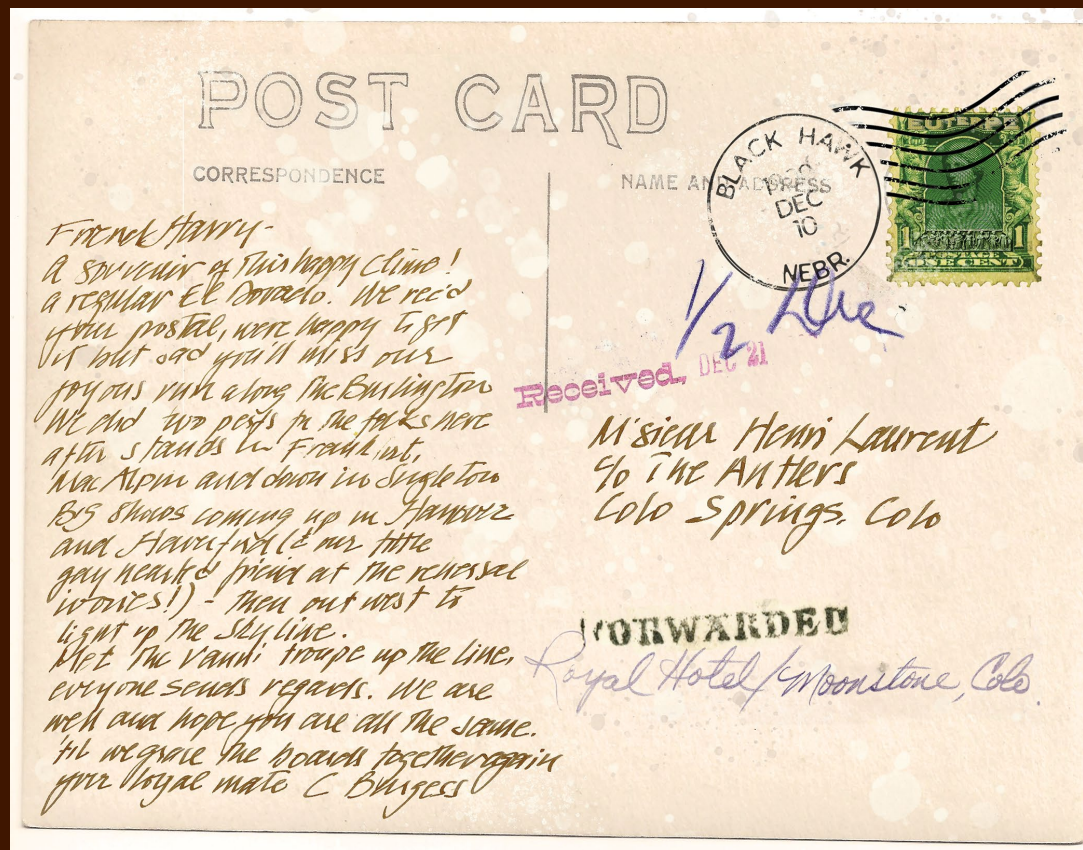
**The HTDD is supported through a collaborative partnership with the City of Red Cloud, Red Cloud Chamber of Commerce, Nebraska Community Foundation, and Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund.*



In 2017, members of the Cather family generously donated a number of personal objects that had remained in the family—photographs, books, gifts given by Cather to family members. Among those items was a delicate lace folding fan, with tiny sequins and elaborate carving on the monture. There are many similarities between this fan and the one visible in Cather's university graduation photo. We may never know definitively that the two fans are one and the same, but we do know that the fan was kept safe and cherished as one of Willa Cather's special possessions.

Lace fan: Elizabeth A. Shannon collection; OBJ-277-007

*Photo of Willa Cather (University of Nebraska graduation photo):
Cather Foundation/WCPM collection; PHO-4-RG1951-775*



Friend Harry -
 A souvenir of this happy time!
 a regular E.L. Donato. We rec'd
 your postal, were happy to get
 it but sad you'll miss our
 joyous run along the Burlington
 We did two posts to the folks here
 after 5 weeks in French mt.
 Mac Alpin and down in Singleton
 Big shows coming up in Hamburg
 and Hartford (a nice little
 gay hearted friend at the rehearsal
 invites!) - then out west to
 light up the skyline.
 Met the Vaude troupe up the line,
 everyone sends regards. We are
 well and hope you are all the same.
 til we grace the boards together again
 your loyal mate C Burgess

M'sieur Henri Laurent
 40 The Antlers
 Colo Springs, Colo

Received, DEC 21

FORWARDED
 Royal Hotel / Moonstone, Colo

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 Bunny Zaruba, Sausalito, California

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 www.WillaCather.org



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 History Nebraska (formerly 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.

On the cover and above:

A Multiview Postal from Cather Country by Tracy Tucker and Tom Gallagher