



# NEWS FROM CATHERLAND

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## Willa Cather Scholars Explore Northern Ireland

The Willa Cather Foundation and symposium director Dr. Willa Murphy welcomed over sixty Cather scholars, Cather relatives, and Cather readers to Limavady, Northern Ireland, at the end of June. In addition to hearing new work and presentations from twenty-nine scholars, attendees explored the ancestral home of the Cather family and a number of must-see attractions in the area: Giant's Causeway, the walled city of Londonderry, the seaside at Magilligan Point, the gorgeous Irish countryside, and the grand Drenagh House estate, where we held a wonderful conference banquet.

Eleven international scholars joined a familiar cast of Cather researchers, making this a truly international event.

Traditional Irish music and hospitality helped round out our visit. The Willa Cather Foundation would like to thank Dr. Willa Murphy for organizing the event, and Ulster University, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for their support of the event.



Director Willa Murphy welcomes Christine Cather and Liz Duffy to Limavady for the symposium.



Our group toured the walled city of Derry and paused for a photo in front of the Guild Hall.

## Murphy and Peek Honored for Board Service

Yet another highlight of the Cather International Symposium in Ireland was a memorable moment at the banquet when we paused to honor the service of outgoing board members John Murphy and Rev. Charles Peek. The Willa Cather Foundation is forever indebted to John and Chuck for making Cather studies and the work of the Cather Foundation such an integral part of their lives for so many years.

John Murphy was recognized for his thirty-three years of service to the Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors and his commitment to Cather scholarship. Murphy has published widely on Cather, served as past managing editor of the *Willa Cather Review*, and continuously encouraged the study and promotion of Cather's works on a national and international level.

Rev. Charles Peek was recognized for his fourteen years of service to the Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors and to Cather scholarship. Peek is a past president of the Board of Governors who has regularly presented on Cather at conferences and seminars and worked diligently to encourage enhanced education and outreach. He is the author of *Speaking Aloud at Grace Church: Homilies from the World of Willa Cather*.



Pictured are: board member Steve Shively, executive director Ashley Olson, John Murphy, board member Bob Thacker, and board president Marion Arneson.



Pictured are: board member Bob Thacker, executive director Ashley Olson, Charles Peek, board member Steve Shively, and board president Marion Arneson.

## 2018 Educator Scholarship Recipients Announced

For several years, the Willa Cather Foundation has offered an annual Educators' Scholarship to help defray the costs of attending Spring Conference for high school teachers and administrators. This year we were pleased to offer two scholarships to high school English teachers Leslie Armstrong of Windsor, California, and Cynthia Adams, of Buffalo, New York. Both Leslie and Cynthia have taught Cather in their classrooms for years but wanted to, as Leslie writes, "add depth and interest by focusing on Willa Cather as a woman and a writer." Our scholarship winners



Cynthia Adams shares her classroom techniques as part of the Educators' Panel at the 63rd annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. (credit: Robert Olsen)

take advantage of the no-cost tours, scholarly presentations, and arts and humanities programming that are a part of every Spring Conference and take these experiences back with them to their communities and classrooms. If you are an educator, or if you know an educator, who is interested in including Cather in their classroom, we encourage you to watch for our annual announcement of scholarships, or contact education director Tracy Tucker for more information at [ttucker@willacather.org](mailto:ttucker@willacather.org).

## Invitational Exhibit Commemorates *My Ántonia* Centenary

As part of our ongoing celebration of *My Ántonia*'s centenary, the Willa Cather Foundation invited local, regional, and national artists to participate in an exhibit entitled *Complete and Great*. Exploring the themes and settings of *My Ántonia* through their preferred media, the work of thirty artists—nearly fifty pieces!—were on display from May 7–June 30, 2018. Education director and gallery exhibit organizer Tracy Tucker said, “The incredible showing from our artists really speaks to the power of this novel. While some work in the show is representational of the settings here in Webster County or the people who make up the novel’s cast of characters, looking around this exhibit, I see that Cather’s abstractions and even her omissions have found their way into this show.” Artists from as close as Red Cloud and as far away as New Mexico and Maryland participated in the show honoring Cather’s beloved novel.



Jeremy Daniels "Hallowed Ground"



Donel Keeler "Cranes Over Nebraska"



Jim Condron "The blond cornfields were red gold, the haystacks turned rosy and threw long shadows"



Richard Schilling "Webster County Road"

## Willa Cather Foundation Receives Governor's Arts Award



Nebraska Arts Council Director Suzanne Wise, Willa Cather Foundation Executive Director Ashley Olson, and Lieutenant Governor Mike Foley.

The Willa Cather Foundation was the recipient of a Governor’s Arts Award for Organizational Achievement at the Nebraska Arts Council’s celebratory banquet on May 8th. The biennial Governor’s Arts Awards recognize individuals and organizations that shape Nebraska’s artistic landscape. The Organizational Achievement Award is given to arts organizations that have demonstrated a consistently high level of excellence in programming and outreach. For over sixty years, the Willa Cather Foundation has worked to promote Willa Cather’s legacy through education, preservation, and the arts. The Organizational Achievement Award came following the completion of the National Willa Cather Center, a one-of-a-kind archive, museum, and arts center that serves as a living memorial to Willa Cather.

## John and Anna Pavelka Descendants Gather for Memorable Event

More than forty-five descendants of Anna and John Pavelka gathered with Spring Conference-goers to celebrate the lives and memories of these early Webster County settlers. As all Cather readers know, Anna and John were lifelong friends of Cather and inspired the characters of *Ántonia Shimerda Cuzak* and *Anton Cuzak*. Just as in the novel, the couple and their large family settled in Webster County to live in an evocative setting, complete with a brick cellar, an orchard, and a large barn that the novelist found irresistible in the retelling. Genealogist Mary Sramek Levesque shared her recent discoveries in tracing the family's ancestors in Bohemia, citing many church records from before their immigration. Despite the warm weather, guests and family alike enjoyed exploring the house and cellar, new interpretive signage recently installed at the site, and the peaceful vistas of the Divide.



Many of the descendants of Anna and John Pavelka, the prototypes for *Ántonia Shimerda* and *John Cuzak* in Cather's novel, gather at the Pavelka Homestead as part of the 2018 Willa Cather Spring Conference. (credit: Robert Olsen)

## Remembering *Ántonia* Videos Released

As the Willa Cather Foundation commemorates the centennial of *My Ántonia*, we are pleased to release a special project that examines the life of Anna Sadilek Pavelka, the prototype for Cather's beloved character *Ántonia Shimerda*. The three-part "Remembering *Ántonia*" video series introduces viewers to Pavelka through the tender memories of her descendants, Paula Hempel Daharsh (great-graddaughter), Kent Pavelka (grandson), and Antonette Willa Skupa Turner (granddaughter). Each interview allows the viewer to gain a small but meaningful look into the life of a strong,



Anna Pavelka as photographed by David E. Scherman for *Life* magazine. Original print courtesy of the photographer.

hardworking, and loving woman—a woman who endured hardships, celebrated life's successes, and left an impression on her family that has lasted over several generations. The video series is available for viewing online at [www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org).

We would like to thank Andrew Dickinson Photo and Video and the descendants of Anna Pavelka for their assistance in the creation of this project. Funding was made possible through the sponsorship of the Niobrara-Butler Chapter of the National Society DAR, Daughters of the American Revolution National Headquarters.

## Save the Date: 64th Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference

The 64th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference, "Cather and the Theater," will be held in Red Cloud, May 30 to June 1, 2019. Co-directed by playwright A. P. Andrews and Cather scholar Mark Robison of Union College, this conference will focus on Cather's

experiences with the theater: her performances, her criticism, her inspirations, and her depictions of all things theatrical. Watch our website for details in the coming months, and plan to join us for what is certain to be a memorable event next spring!

## Winchester, Virginia, to Host 2019 International Seminar

The 17th International Willa Cather Seminar will be held in the lush, complex place of Cather's Virginia, where she was born and spent her first nine years, and where her family had roots dating to the 1730s. Here, Cather first encountered the differences and dislocations that fuel the tension and energy in later writings. Though seminarians will visit many of the sites in Winchester and the surrounding area that were important to Cather and her family, our conversations will not be based solely on locale. Instead, the scholarly focus will be on those differences and dislocations that marked Cather's life and work, beginning in her undergraduate stories and culminating in her late-life return to Virginia in her last novel, *Sapphira and the Slave Girl*. Rounding out the seminar will be a day spent in Washington, D.C., with an opportunity to visit the new National Museum of African American History and Culture and other museums and sites relevant to Cather's writing.

As always, the Seminar will welcome papers taking a broad array of approaches to Cather's life and work.

The seminar's program directors, Marilee Lindemann, University of Maryland, and Ann Romines, George Washington University emerita, especially invite new approaches to the many forms of difference and the many moments of dislocation that her readers encounter. We aim to jumpstart a conversation that has been somewhat muted in Cather studies in recent years and to invite new voices and new perspectives into the discussion.

500-word proposals of individual papers should be sent to the Willa Cather Foundation's education director, Tracy Tucker, at [ttucker@willacather.org](mailto:ttucker@willacather.org), by February 1, 2019. Roundtables and other formats are also welcome to send proposals. Graduate students are encouraged to submit proposals and apply for funding assistance through the Willa Cather Foundation. For full details and to download the complete CFP, please visit our website at: <https://www.willacather.org/events/17th-international-willa-cather-seminar>

## You're Invited: Willa Cather Celebration Weekend in Jaffrey

We hope that you will join us in New Hampshire this fall for "Willa Cather's Spirit Lives On," a series of events held on Friday, October 19 and Saturday, October 20, as a national celebration of the 100th anniversary of *My Ántonia*. Ashley Olson, executive director, and Tracy Tucker, education director, are featured speakers during the weekend, which also includes tours of local Cather sites, readings, a piano recital, a Cather-themed dinner, and the composer Tom Dunn's musical play *Kindness and Cruelty: Willa Cather in Jaffrey*. Located at the foot of Mount Monadnock, Jaffrey was, Cather wrote in a letter, the place "where I have done most of my best work" and where she is buried today.

Registration for the weekend will sell out and is strictly limited to 140 participants! For more details, see the event schedule on our website. Online registration is available at [www.jaffreychamber.com](http://www.jaffreychamber.com).



The Meeting House in Jaffrey, New Hampshire.

Many thanks to the Jaffrey organizations who collaborated to sponsor these events: the Jaffrey Historical Society, the Village Improvement Society, the Jaffrey Library, the Jaffrey Civic Center, the Chamber of Commerce, The First Church in Jaffrey, and the MacDowell Colony in Peterborough.

## Walter, Turner, and Antonia Scholarships Awarded

The Willa Cather Foundation is pleased to announce the 2018 recipients of the Norma Ross Walter, Antonette Willa Skupa Turner, and Antonia scholarships. The inaugural recipient of the new Antonia scholarship was Casey Moyer of Mercy High School. Paige Schroeder of Fremont High School received the Antonette Willa Skupa Turner Scholarship, and recipients of the Norma Ross Walter Scholarship included Rena Li of Millard North High School, Ann Magner of York High School, and Margaret Rieckman of Sandy Creek High School.

The scholarship award recognition took place as part of the 63rd annual Willa Cather Spring Conference. Each young scholar delivered an original essay on Cather's work, written as a part of the scholarship's extensive application process.

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 Antonia and Antonette Willa Skupa Turner Scholarship funds were established by Antonette Willa Skupa Turner, granddaughter of Anna Sadilek Pavelka. The scholarships are named in honor of Anna Pavelka, the prototype for Antonia Shimerda Cuzak in *My Antonia* and Antonette Turner, who spent decades speaking about Antonia to school students and other groups.



Back row, L to R: Margaret Rieckman, Ann Magner, Rena Li, Casey Moyer, and Executive Director Ashley Olson. Front row, L to R: Board of Governors Member Virgil Albertini, Benefactor Antonette Willa Skupa Turner, and Board of Governors Member Charles Johanningsmeier.

Since 1987, the Willa Cather Foundation has awarded over sixty scholarships to students studying English and history. Awards to date total more than \$168,000. Through the various programs, scholarships are available to students across the country. For more information or to support the scholarship funds, please contact Tracy Tucker, Education Director, at 402-746-2653 or [ttucker@willacather.org](mailto:ttucker@willacather.org). Application forms for 2018 are available at [www.willacather.org](http://www.willacather.org) and annual deadlines are January 31 and February 28, respectively.

## Jackson Honored with Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award

Caroline Jackson of Riverton, Nebraska, was recently recognized with the 2018 Miriam Mountford Volunteer Award. Jackson logged an impressive number of volunteer service hours during the 2017-18 season of events at the Red Cloud Opera House.

"We would like to express our sincere thanks to Caroline Jackson for her dedicated volunteer service," said Executive Director, Ashley Olson. "Caroline is a joy to work with. Her friendliness and positivity have long been appreciated by patrons, staff, and fellow volunteers."

The volunteer award was established in memory of Miriam Mountford to recognize individuals for their outstanding volunteer service. Mountford was the

Willa Cather 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 and editing the organization's newsletter.

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 Jill Swartzendruber at [jswartz@willacather.org](mailto:jswartz@willacather.org). Volunteer benefits include merchandise discounts and tickets to Opera House productions.

## Spring Conference Celebrates 100 Years of *My Ántonia*

The 63rd annual Willa Cather Spring Conference experienced record-setting attendance with over 250 conference-goers hailing from twenty-seven states and four countries. The annual event was held May 31 to June 2 in Red Cloud.

Through the conference theme “Here at Last is an American Novel’: Celebrating 100 Years of *My Ántonia*,” guests enjoyed scholarly presentations, thought-provoking programs, tours of historic sites, entertainment, and new exhibits.



Roger Welsch, Antonia Welsch Barlage, and Linda Welsch. (Credit: Barb Kudrna)

On the opening evening of the conference author and essayist Roger Welsch was joined by his daughter Antonia Welsch Barlage to deliver an address they called “Our Ántonias.” Roger shared recollections of his “Postcards from Nebraska” segment that aired on *CBS News Sunday Morning*, while Ántonia offered humorous and moving stories about living with her recognizable name.

One of several hands-on events was a kolache making demonstration and baking activity led by education director, Tracy Tucker. Kolache are a Czech fruit pastry that have been a breakfast staple at the Cather conference for many years.



John Reed-Torres. (Credit: William McCracken)

Other highlights included a keynote address and book signing by Nina McConigley, author of *Cowboys and East Indians*; musician Chris Sayre with a production called “Nebraska’s Musical Smorgasbord;” and panel discussions featuring Cather scholars, educators, and young immigrants. At the conclusion of the conference, ragtime pianist John Reed-Torres dazzled attendees with a concert reminiscent of the 1889 John William “Blind” Boone concert given in the Red Cloud Opera House.

The Willa Cather Foundation would like to thank Todd Richardson (University of Nebraska at Omaha) and Kelsey Squire (Ohio Dominican University) for co-directing the event, as well as Humanities Nebraska, the Nebraska Arts Council, Nebraska Cultural Endowment, and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for their support.



Conference-goers practice their kolache making skills. (Credit: Rob Olsen)

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

COMING UP!  
AT THE RED CLOUD OPERA HOUSE



### Magic & Mystery Dinner Theater

Performed by the Murder Mystery Co.  
Saturday, October 27 at 7:30 p.m. - \$40

### Lightning Bugs

A Big Band Trio  
Saturday, November 10 at 7:30 p.m. - \$15

### Blue Plate Special

Hits from the 50s, 60s & 70s  
Saturday, December 8 at 7:30 p.m. - \$15

Visit us online at [www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org) for information on upcoming events.



The State of Nebraska owns six Cather-related properties and a number of inventoried artifacts and documents. 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.



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