



Willa Cather
CENTER

Homecomings and Horizons



To Our Friends and Supporters

We have so much to be optimistic about. Our *Campaign for the Future*—a \$6.5 million endeavor to restore seven Cather historic sites, expand programming, grow endowment, and invest in the development of a boutique hotel in Red Cloud—now stands at 87% complete.

This important campaign will provide the resources needed to carry out our strategic plan goals. The fundamental public-facing themes of the plan involve broadening awareness of Willa Cather and her work, enhancing experiences through education and programming, and reenvisioning and reimagining our Cather historic sites. Thanks to your generosity, capital improvement efforts are now underway at three important sites: the Burlington Depot, the Pavelka Farmstead, and the Farmers and Merchants Bank.

These historic properties in Red Cloud have the potential to be both richly explored as public history sites and as significant literary destinations that shine light on Cather's life and writing. By using Cather's work as a gateway, we will tell a larger story that connects with a number of themes that are key to examining the American experience. In the years to come, the exhibits and interpretation at our historic sites will be greatly enhanced. Educational content and the sites themselves will be more accessible to audiences of varying ages, interests, and physical abilities.

Your support also helps the National Willa Cather Center continue to innovate through new programs and delivery methods. With an expanded education staff, we are making special efforts to serve book clubs and K-12 students and teachers. A new series of author talks is highlighting the work of regional writers and Cather scholars. As soon as next year, collections and site tours will be made available online and through a mobile app.

We have seen firsthand that literature and the arts can enrich and change people's lives. The efforts highlighted in this report are all made possible through your annual gifts. Thank you for helping us provide learning and inspiration to thousands every year.

Very gratefully,

Ashley Olson
Executive Director



Glenda Pierce
Board President



On the covers: A selection of our many treasures. See the inside back cover for descriptions.

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 a museum, archive, 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*
- Outreach to and curriculum support for teachers and students
- Scholarship awards for student research and to support 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



Broadening Awareness and Enhancing Experiences

“The prairie spoke to each of us individually. My daughter chose the paper and pastels from the backpack, and spent her time trying to capture our view on paper. One of my sons chose the journal and put pen to paper. My other son spent his time looking at all the insects and scanning the horizon with the binoculars. It was a meaningful afternoon. I am thankful for the time we spent together in such a special place. Time slowed down, and I enjoyed simply watching my kids be.”

— **Angela Korpas**
Lincoln, Nebraska



While our work will always be deeply rooted in the exploration of Cather’s lived and literary worlds, your support has also helped to expand our public programming beyond the historic sites in Red Cloud. Popular program offerings included opportunities to explore the flora, fauna, and wildlife at the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie; to learn about the Pawnee Tribe’s history in Webster County, Nebraska; and to see a touring theater production of *My Antonia*. Two long-time program staples offered opportunities for further examination of Cather’s life and writing.

The Willa Cather Spring Conference explored Cather’s early work as a drama critic and her lifetime appreciation for the theater. Our International Cather Seminar invited scholars to examine forms of difference and moments of dislocation encountered in Cather’s work. The complex place of Cather’s birth and first nine years in Frederick County, Virginia, served as a meaningful location for the Seminar and offered an impressive array of site-seeing and new scholarship.



Walter Echo-Hawk—author, attorney, and tribal judge—gave a well attended book talk on *The Sea of Grass: A Family Tale from the American Heartland*. “It helped me realize what a minor blip the European footprint is on our America compared to the thousands of years Native Americans followed the buffalo,” said attendee Marion Arneson, whose ancestors were among the first homesteaders in Webster County in the 1870s.



Prairie Exploration Backpacks offer visitors like the Korpas family an immersive experience in nature. These backpacks are borrowed at no cost to visitors and come stocked with binoculars, a magnifying glass, drawing pad and pastels, a journal, and prairie field guides for viewing wildflowers and birds.

Reimagining the Cather Historic Sites

“What you folks have accomplished with the museum and all the preservation around Red Cloud is amazing. You should be very very proud! I had a fantastic tour by one of your very knowledgeable guides.”

— **Molly Angstman**
Mason City, Iowa



When six Willa Cather Historic Sites came into our ownership from History Nebraska in early 2019, it provided an opportunity to proceed with capital improvements and begin plans for an entirely reimagined interpretive experience. Your support has facilitated the launch of capital improvement efforts at the Pavelka Farmstead, Burlington Depot, and Farmers and Merchants Bank. We will also address decades of unchanged interpretive strategy by creating exhibits

that examine the railroad as a vehicle for people and ideas, the conclusion of the immigrant success story, rural life in the early 1900s, the role of banking and finance in town-building, and the panic of 1893. These important enhancements will create historic sites that are appealing and accessible to a wider array of visitors, while providing meaningful experiences for lifelong learners.

2



Paper conservator Hilary LaFevere, of History Nebraska’s Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center meticulously cleans the original wallpaper that Willa Cather hung in her attic bedroom in the late 1880s. This preliminary work was undertaken prior to the award of a Save America’s Treasures grant from the National Park Service, which will assist with a full restoration of the Willa Cather Childhood Home.



Restoration of the Pavelka Farmstead is ongoing through work designed to return the home to its period of significance. The later addition of an enclosed porch was removed to facilitate restoration of an open porch that was an early defining feature of the home. A paint analysis recently uncovered the original exterior color. When fully complete, this site will more vividly embody the final scenes of *My Antonia* while sharing stories of immigrant families like the Sadileks and Pavelkas.



Anchoring Education and Scholarship With Collections

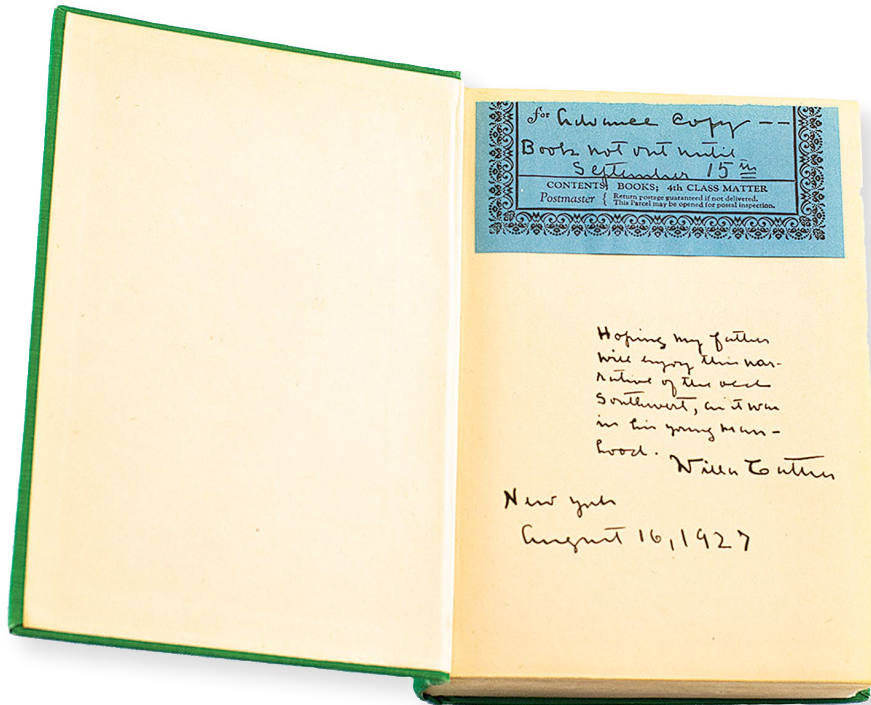
"I loved Willa Cather's writing long before I ever traveled to Red Cloud, but working in the archives of the National Willa Cather Center turned my love into devotion. I think it was holding the oldest letter we have from Cather that did it. It was a kind of talisman with the power to inspire my own writing. As the years go by, I return to the archives whenever I need a little bit of that magic."

—Daryl W. Palmer
Denver, Colorado

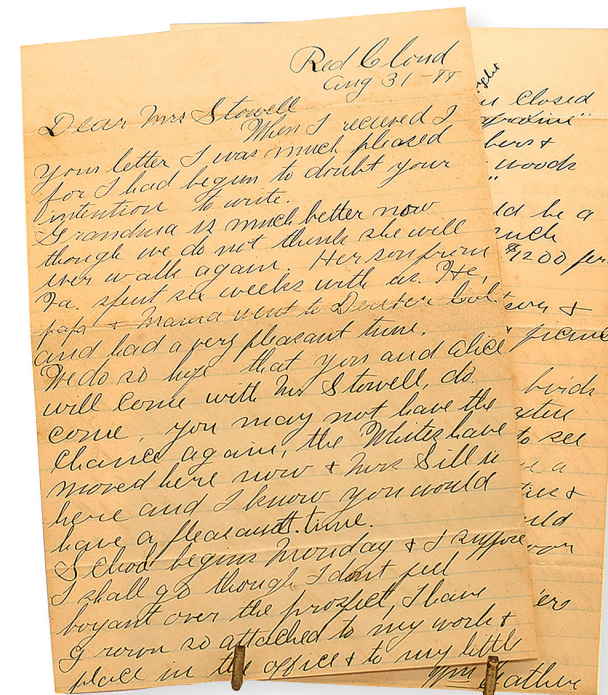


The accession of over 8,000 pieces in the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Collection has enhanced our ability to meet our educational mission through object-based learning. In addition to bringing history to life, objects from our collection spark curiosity and encourage further exploration. Research in the

National Willa Cather Center's archive has led to significant new discoveries and important new scholarship. Through use of museum and archival materials, the Center continues to serve as a valuable resource for both K-12 students as well as college-level and career academics.



Inscribed *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Willa Cather inscribed and presented this advance copy of her Southwest novel to her father Charles. Her inscription refers to Charles Cather's trip across the country to New Mexico before his marriage to Cather's mother. Charles's diary of this journey also remained in the family. BK-50-3003. Southwick Book Collection.



Letter to Mrs. Stowell. The first-known letter written by Willa Cather was written to family friend Helen Stowell, whose family moved to California in 1887. These earliest letters demonstrate Cather's flair for storytelling and language, as well as her precociousness. At only fifteen years old, Cather is already deeply involved in the affairs of the Red Cloud community. Folder 1. WCPM Letter Collection.

Financial Summary

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

For the years ended December 31, 2019 and 2018

	2019	2018
ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	\$1,363,122	\$1,471,297
Investments	5,038,106	2,525,996
Prepaid expenses	43,450	43,450
Pledges receivable, net	210,564	1,242,985
Other receivables, net	1,295,614	390,796
Bookstore inventory	60,590	57,727
Property and equipment, net	2,215,563	2,039,364
Investments in real estate	5,437,729	5,358,769
Art and historic structures	387,216	325,660
Total assets	<u>\$16,051,954</u>	<u>\$13,456,044</u>
LIABILITIES		
Accrued expenses and taxes withheld	\$42,831	\$35,931
Deferred revenue	1,172,866	223,257
Capital lease obligations	6,674	9,101
Total liabilities	<u>\$1,222,371</u>	<u>\$268,289</u>
NET ASSETS		
Without donor restrictions	\$11,412,887	\$10,766,439
With donor restrictions	3,416,696	2,421,316
Total net assets	<u>14,829,583</u>	<u>13,187,755</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$16,051,954</u>	<u>\$13,456,044</u>

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, 2019 and 2018

	2019	2018
REVENUE AND SUPPORT		
Contributions and memberships	\$921,450	\$2,664,804
Contract revenue	—	53,406
Grants	952,381	33,683
Sales and admissions	109,778	126,938
Rent income	71,215	63,034
Conferences and seminars	67,203	40,787
Royalties income	8,187	13,212
Other income	24,880	34,441
Interest income	142,263	75,591
Investment gain/loss	402,538	(181,007)
Developer fee income	2,959	3,341
Total revenue and support	<u>\$2,702,854</u>	<u>\$2,928,230</u>
EXPENSES		
Program		
Cost of sales	\$38,009	\$46,714
Education and scholarships	112,151	72,292
Preservation of sites and collections	255,318	42,279
Historical center operations	79,487	198,768
Opera House and programming	210,638	167,547
Cather prairie operations	21,549	26,072
Supporting		
Management and general	253,398	275,552
Development and fundraising	90,476	130,720
Total expenses	<u>\$1,061,026</u>	<u>\$959,944</u>
INCREASE IN NET ASSETS		
Net assets, beginning of year	\$13,187,755	\$11,219,469
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$14,829,583</u>	<u>\$13,187,755</u>

The Cather Legacy Society

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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 2019. Space does not permit us to list donations under \$50.00, but we are grateful for these contributions. Every gift is important to us.

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Willa Cather
Homecomings and
Horizons



1. Autograph Book. Containing signatures and well-wishes from friends and family in both Back Creek Valley, Virginia, and Catherton Precinct in Webster County, Nebraska.
OBJ-250-028. Willa Cather Foundation Collections.

2. J.L. Miner House (the “Harling House”)

3. Pin Cushion. Numerous sewing items, including this gilded slipper pin cushion with its well-worn red velvet tuft, are in the Cather family collection. The French-made dressmaker’s pins, too, are original to the Cather family.
OBJ-4-RG1951-1947. WCPM Collection.

4. Jake. W.T. Benda created the original pen and ink illustrations for *My Antonia*, and Willa Cather gave several of these originals to friends. This one, depicting Jake riding home with a Christmas tree, is inscribed: “A Benda ‘original,’ and a Merry Christmas from ‘Jake’! Willie.”
OBJ-58-1001. Bernard and Nancy Picchi Collection.

5. Red Cloud Opera House

6. Clippings. While working on her master’s thesis in 1907, Harriet Smyder began studying and collecting the magazine publications by Willa Cather. In the dawn of Cather studies, identifying copies of early Cather stories was important work.
OBJ-250-027. Willa Cather Foundation Collections.

7. Turkish Doll. Willa Cather described this music box, topped with a mechanical hookah-smoking woman, in *O Pioneers!* The doll arrived in Red Cloud with Dr. Henry Cook from Sandy Creek, New York, in the 1880s and enchanted Willa Cather.
OBJ-4-RG1951-930. WCPM Collection.

8. Brass Lancet. This adjustable spring lancet dates to the Civil War era and was among Willa Cather’s possessions. The blood-letting instrument and its fitted leather box are unmarked, so we can

only guess about its origins. Perhaps it dates to Cather’s interest in the medical arts in Red Cloud.
OBJ-50-105. Southwick Family Collection.

9. Farmers and Merchants Bank

10. Goldwork Handbag. Willa Cather’s simple drawstring evening bag is elevated by the exquisite goldwork that covers its navy velvet exterior. This is one of many articles of clothing and personal effects given to us by Cather descendants.
OBJ-50-053. Southwick Family Collection.

11. Velvet Corsage. Willa Cather brought this corsage made of handmade velvet roses back from Paris as a gift to her mother, Mary Virginia Cather.
OBJ-4-RG1951-091. WCPM Collection.

12. Notorial Seal. George P. Cather, with his wife Frances, was the first of the Cathers to settle in Webster County. In his role as a notary he used this seal to witness contracts and other documents for Catherton Precinct residents.
OBJ-4-RG1951-909. WCPM Collection.

13. St. Juliana Falconieri Church

14. School Bell. The Cather family boasted several schoolteachers; Webster County pioneer Aunt Frances Smith Cather was a teacher, and Willa, Roscoe, and Elsie Cather all taught school. This bell was more likely used to call the Cather family to dinner.
OBJ-4-RG1951-1923. WCPM Collection.

15. Frou Frou Biscuit Tin. The Cather family saved several of these decorative imported cookie tins. This one from Holland contained four types (“vier soorten”) of cookies, but surely held other treasures as well.
OBJ-4-RG1951-1938. WCPM Collection.

16. Green Jacket. One of Cather’s most famous portraits was taken at the Rinehart-Marsden Studio in Omaha in 1921. In it, Cather wears a wool jacket ornamented with crewel embroidery. Though the

Rinehart-Marsden portrait isn’t in color, this silk-lined wool jacket donated by Cather family members appears to be the one pictured.
OBJ-50-063T. Southwick Family Collection.

17. Townsend Portrait. Taken at Townsend Studio in Lincoln, Nebraska, this beautiful inscribed portrait features a dramatic Willa Cather during her University of Nebraska years.
PHO-222-002. Frances Mitterer Collection.

18. Stereoscope and Cards. Wildly popular in the 19th century, stereoscopes enabled viewers to see paired photographs or illustrations as a single three-dimensional image. The stereoscope and a small collection of cards were donated to the National Willa Cather Center by the family.
OBJ-4-RG1951-1362. WCPM Collection.

19. Door Stop. This Bradley & Hubbard door stop, “Parrot in Small Ring” features a vibrantly painted bird in a golden perch. The Cather family would have used this to prop open interior and exterior doors of their home.
OBJ-4-RG1951-1359. WCPM Collection.

20. Passenger Booklet. In May 1909, Willa Cather traveled to Europe for *McClure’s Magazine*. During the trip, Cather learned of the death of her friend and mentor, Sarah Orne Jewett. This passenger booklet from the *Kaiser Wilhelm der Grosse*, which brought Willa Cather home to New York in early July, lists “Fraulein W. S. Cather” in “First Cabins.”
OBJ-233-001. Michael Olson Collection.

21. Cup and Saucer Collection. Traveling west to Nebraska on the train, Mary Virginia Cather brought with her a collection of teacups and saucers, “packed in worthless Confederate money.” The large collection still enjoys pride of place in the Cather family’s dining room in the Childhood Home.
OBJ-4-RG1951-1989 and 1990. WCPM Collection.

22. Burlington Depot

23. William Cather Jr. A wide array of books and magazines remained with the Cather family after the sale of their Red Cloud home. Many date to Cather’s childhood, and some are identified in this way. This was her *David Copperfield*.
Cather Family Library Collection.

24. Letter to Trix Mizer Florence. A forty-year friendship is documented in this collection of letters from Willa Cather to a fellow Red Cloudian and her husband, a banker. Over the years, they kept up on family, shared music recommendations, and—occasionally—disguised the always discreet Cather’s local financial transactions.
TX-258-009. Sidney and Beatrice “Trix” Mizer Florence Collection.

25. Orange Clutch. Willa Cather enjoyed fine handbags. Many of her purses in our collections came from Paris, but this silk brocade clutch more closely resembles the obi bags sold at Asian importer Gump’s of San Francisco in the 1920s and 1930s. We know Cather purchased other merchandise at Gump’s, though this bag is unmarked.
OBJ-4-RG1951-2679.

26. Willa Cather’s Hand Brace. This thumb and wrist immobilizer of leather and aluminum forced Cather to rest her hand after a series of injuries to the tendons of the right thumb. These injuries slowed her work and affected her correspondence.
OBJ-50-058. Southwick Family Collection.

27. Cabin Photo. This hand-tinted photograph, showing the cabin that Edith Lewis and Willa Cather had built on Grand Manan, was sent to Cather’s brother Roscoe and family and is captioned, “This is our little house.” The modest house on that remote island provided respite from the busyness of their New York lives.
PHO-277-043. Elizabeth A. Shannon Collection.

28. Candle Mold. Carrie Miner Sherwood, neighbor and friend of the Cather family, played a critical role in founding our organization, restoring the Childhood Home, and establishing the earliest of the Cather collections. She donated many items original to the Cather family, including this tin candle mold brought from Virginia.
OBJ-4-RG1951-727. WCPM Collection.

29. Infant of Prague. In Cather’s last known interview, from her Park Avenue apartment, authors

Stephen Vincent and Rosemary Benét noted a “charming image of the Infant Jesus of Prague on the bookshelf.” In 2018, this cast plaster replica of the 16th century original arrived in over fifty broken pieces but with a strong provenance that establishes this as the statuette mentioned in Cather’s apartment.
OBJ-296-001. University of Nebraska–Lincoln Collection.

30. G. P. Cather. Grosvenor P. Cather, Willa Cather’s first cousin, is seen here during his stint in the U.S. Navy in 1909. After his discharge, G. P. Cather would marry and then return to military life, dying at Cantigny during the First World War. Cather later immortalized G. P. as Claude, the main character in her Pulitzer Prize–winning novel, *One of Ours*.
PHO-231-050. Lindgren Family Collection.

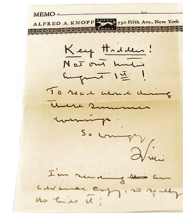
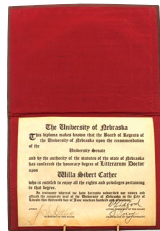
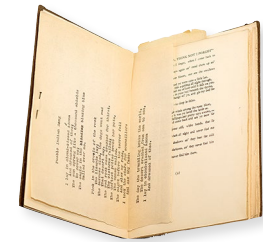
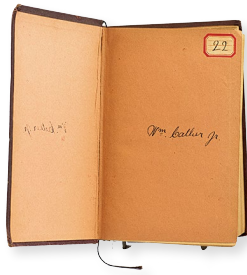
31. Cather’s Copy of April Twilights. Willa Cather’s own copy of her first published book, the poetry collection *April Twilights*, includes pasted- and pinned-in versions of poems, as well as hand corrections and even a pressed prairie wildflower.
OBJ-250-025. Willa Cather Foundation Collections.

32. Ledger. Willa Cather kept records of copies sold and payments received over the years; this ledger covers about ten years’ worth of sales for several of her books.
OBJ-50-1000-065. Betty Kort Collection.

33. University of Nebraska Diploma. Willa Cather received an honorary degree from the University of Nebraska in 1917, the first of several she would receive over her career.
OBJ-250-026. Willa Cather Foundation Collections.

34. Note on Knopf Memo Paper. This note was found alongside an inscribed first edition of *Shadows on the Rock*, which was published August 1, 1931, and likely refers to that book. We hold numerous association copies, including valuable advance copies given to Cather’s parents.
OBJ-277-044. Elizabeth A. Shannon Collection.

35. Handkerchief. This green silk handkerchief with a modern-looking monogram is well-made and well-worn, and also quite distinct from Cather’s other monogrammed handkerchiefs in our collections, which are durable white cotton or linen with white initials.
OBJ-277-006. Elizabeth A. Shannon Collection.



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

402-746-2653 | 800-731-7304
info@willacather.org

www.WillaCather.org

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