

Willa Cather Foundation
Campaign for the Future

*“Where there is
great love, there are
always miracles.”*

—Willa Cather





Campaign for the Future

“The idea of you is a part of my mind; you influence my likes and dislikes, all my tastes, hundreds of times when I don’t realize it. You really are a part of me.”

Willa Cather’s Jim Burden makes that statement to his beloved friend *Ántonia* near the close of *My Ántonia*. You could say it also describes the appreciation we have for our incredible donors and friends across the country, who have stepped up to help keep her legacy flourishing—not just in Nebraska, but around the world.

Thanks to your support, the Willa Cather Foundation has grown from an idea shared at Mildred Bennett’s kitchen table over sixty years ago, to an acclaimed, international literary organization that routinely draws national press attention. The Foundation is devoted to promoting the work, life, and times of one of America’s greatest writers. Our home at the National Willa Cather Center in Red Cloud, Nebraska, provides a state-of-the-art space for the preservation and study of a large and growing collection of Cather archives and artifacts. As importantly, Red Cloud is home to the largest collection of nationally designated historic sites dedicated to an author in the United States.

We host an average of 12,000 visitors from fifty states and five countries in Red Cloud annually. Outside of Red Cloud, over 40,000 people utilize educational resources on our website or take part in conferences and seminars around the world. Our constituents are literary scholars, historians, journalists, students, families, readers, and tourists.

The number of visitors we serve has increased by nearly 60 percent since we opened the National Willa Cather Center in the historic Moon Block Building in downtown Red Cloud in 2017. Now we’re ready—together—to take the next steps. We aspire to:

- 1 Restore the Cather Historic Sites, including the Cather Childhood Home and the Pavelka (*Ántonia*) Farmstead.
- 2 Expand our educational programs and resources for a growing number of visitors, teachers, and students.
- 3 Grow our endowment to reflect the worth of our properties and programs.
- 4 Support Red Cloud’s economic development initiatives to enhance our ability to serve our educational mission and our visitors.

Please review the pages that follow and join us as we write our next chapter.

Sincerely,



Glenda J. Pierce
Board President
Willa Cather Foundation

There are always dreamers on the frontier.

—O Pioneers!



The National Willa Cather Center



“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 are cultural treasures. Your generosity ensures that our children and grandchildren will be able to travel back in time to hear the ‘nimble air’ and learn from Willa Cather’s example for many generations to come.”

—Mrs. Laura Bush,
Honorary National Chair
First Lady of the United States (2001-2009)

The Willa Cather Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that works to promote Willa Cather’s legacy through education, preservation, and the arts. Our Spring Conferences, International Seminars, Road Scholar programs, and our triannual *Willa Cather Review* exemplify our commitment to academic and artistic excellence. Annually, our programs and resources directly serve thousands of people and our website is in constant use by Cather readers and scholars around the world. Our Red Cloud Opera House and art gallery serve as an important regional arts center and help sustain the economic, civic, and cultural development of south-central Nebraska.



“Great grandmother Carrie Miner Sherwood was a visionary and a collector. A life-long friend of Willa Cather, she saved letters Cather wrote to her and stored Cather family artifacts in her large attic with the hope there would one day be

a place for them. We believe in the mission of the Willa Cather Foundation and want to help preserve this legacy. This project will preserve the historic sites associated with Cather’s life in Red Cloud and enable the Foundation to expand its outreach and programming across the country. We hope you’ll join us in supporting it.”

—Brad and Nancy Sherwood
Lead Donors

Our Programs and Services

- Operation of an archive, museum, 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 in locales that were relevant to Cather’s life and writing
- Arts and humanities programs in the restored Red Cloud Opera House, which played a key role in nurturing Willa Cather’s own interest in the arts
- Guided town and country tours of over twenty historic sites relating to Cather’s life and work
- Publication of the *Willa Cather Review*
- Scholarships awarded to future English and history majors
- Outreach to and curriculum support for K-12 teachers and students
- Display of arts and educational exhibits at the National Willa Cather Center
- Restoration and conservation of the 612-acre Willa Cather Memorial Prairie
- Management of a well-stocked Cather bookstore and gift shop, both on site and online

Restoring Cather's Treasured Places



“The marvelous thing about going to Red Cloud, Nebraska, is you can walk right into Willa Cather’s world. There’s the house she lived in, the bank, the opera house, the railroad depot, and the landscape. It’s one of my favorite places in all of America.”

—David McCullough

In our focus on preservation of Cather-related sites during our earliest years, we acquired and restored a number of historically important properties. We deeded these properties and related collections to the state of Nebraska in 1978, in order to focus more strongly on our educational mission. But with time our preservation work resumed, and we were able to acquire and restore several additional sites. Beginning in 1994, we managed an entire portfolio of properties, working alongside History Nebraska (formerly the Nebraska State Historical Society) to tend to the state-owned buildings.

In early 2019, History Nebraska transferred ownership of the six state-owned properties and their “Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Collection” back to the Willa Cather Foundation. This will allow us to undertake critically needed repairs to preserve these sites, expand our archive and collection holdings and make them more accessible to scholars and the public. All of the historic sites and collections are of profound importance to our work. Two properties in particular have been elevated to highest priority for preservation and restoration.



The Cather Childhood Home is designated a National Historic Landmark, one of only twenty in Nebraska and 2,500 nationwide. Cather’s home from the ages of ten to sixteen, this is where the persona of Cather the writer first sparked to life.

The Pavelka (Ántonia) Farmstead was home to Bohemian immigrant Anna Sadilek Pavelka—the inspiration for Ántonia, one of Cather’s most beloved characters. This is where Anna and John Pavelka raised their ten children, and where the beautiful final scenes of *My Ántonia* are set.



The National Willa Cather Center properties are sought out by thousands of visitors annually. Eight are open to the public year-round for guided tours.

In addition to the historic properties owned by the Willa Cather Foundation, the *Willa Cather Thematic Group* is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and includes four historic districts and twenty-six individually designated buildings and sites. This cultural asset allows Red Cloud to do what very few rural communities in the country can do: build a community economic development strategy focused on heritage tourism.

Expanding and Sustaining Our Work

Program and Preservation Enhancements

Education is core to everything we do. The National Willa Cather Center has provided a safe and accessible home for our collections and archival material, and we have a full-time archivist to provide technical support for researchers. Additional staff is needed to provide the educational outreach and programs we are asked to provide to schools, libraries, civic and literary groups, and other interested parties nationwide. Our goal is to have a full-time educator available to respond to increasing interest in Cather's life, times, and work. Additionally, a full-time sites manager is

needed to provide timely preventive maintenance and care for our expanded portfolio of eleven historic properties.

Endowment Growth

The Willa Cather Foundation has a small unrestricted endowment and also holds restricted endowment funds that are exclusively for scholarships and prairie conservation. We seek to increase the principal of our unrestricted endowment in order to designate annual earnings to offset the loss of state revenue after the property transfer is complete and to further our educational mission.

A Hotel in Downtown Red Cloud . . . Finally!



The hotel will be located in the historic Potter Block, next door to the Farmers and Merchants Bank, a site on the Cather tour.

A hotel in Red Cloud is a concept that has been under discussion for many years. Lodging is extremely limited and inhibits the Willa Cather Foundation's ability to fulfill our mission. We have always struggled to find housing for Spring Conference attendees, but now that the National Willa Cather Center is open, we routinely need more places than we have available for visitors to stay. A new hotel in Red Cloud will allow us to attract and serve more visitors, including large tour groups. It will also enable us to keep them in Red Cloud longer, which will further our mission because the Foundation's growth is directly related to the vibrancy of the community in which we reside.

In 2015, the Foundation entered into a collaborative partnership with the City of Red Cloud, the Chamber of Commerce, the Red Cloud Community Foundation Fund, and the Nebraska Community Foundation to grow Red Cloud's tourism industry through expanded amenities and services. Representatives from these entities have hired tourism development staff and developed the concept of a boutique hotel in downtown Red Cloud, which will be financed by private equity investments, a bank loan, and a lead investment by the Foundation.

A 2016 market feasibility study conducted by Hospitality Marketers International, Inc. tested demand for the project and concluded that Red Cloud can support the development of a thirty-room, upper mid-scale limited service hotel to serve social/leisure and corporate/commercial visitors. The hotel will provide a 68 percent increase in Webster County's lodging supply.

By providing a high-quality lodging and hospitality option, the hotel will allow us to better fulfill our mission—our visitors will be able to stay longer to enjoy the Cather Center and historic sites, the town, the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie and other scenic places Cather loved. Additionally, it will help us expand and diversify our operating budget through a modest new income source.

“The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.”

Campaign Budget

Capital Improvements		\$3,900,000
Willa Cather’s Childhood Home	\$625,000	
To provide first comprehensive restoration in more than fifty years		
Pavelka (Ántonia) Farmstead	\$360,000	
To fully restore and develop on-site interpretive center		
Farmers and Merchants Bank	\$175,000	
To restore the façade and upgrade mechanical systems		
Red Cloud Burlington Depot	\$475,000	
To reinforce the structure and update mechanical systems		
Miner House, Grace Episcopal, and St. Juliana churches	\$265,000	
To preserve structures and upgrade mechanical systems		
Cather Foundation equity in hotel development	\$2,000,000	
To provide sorely needed housing for WCF visitors and scholars		
Program		\$1,100,000
Exhibits, artifact conservation, and interpretation	\$250,000	
Education Coordinator (\$55,000 x 5 years)	\$275,000	
Sites Manager (\$55,000 x 5 years)	\$275,000	
Educational outreach, publications, teaching resources	\$200,000	
Marketing and signage	\$100,000	
Endowment		\$1,500,000
To provide approximately \$75,000 annually (@ 5%) for site preservation and educational program enhancement		
TOTAL		\$6,500,000

All figures are estimates; final costs are subject to change. Construction estimates include a 10% contingency; salary estimates include benefits.

Achieving Our Dream for the Future

How You Can Make a Difference Now

Make a pledge. Make a gift to the campaign, pledged over a five-year giving period. You can choose to satisfy your pledge through monthly, quarterly or annual payments. Or, you can structure your own pledge payment schedule. You can satisfy your pledge through payments by check, direct deposit, or credit card. We gladly accept VISA, Master Card, American Express and Discover. We will be happy to send you reminders of pledge payments as they come due.

Make a gift of securities. Gifts of appreciated assets, such as stock with a very low basis, make excellent charitable gifts.

By donating your stock, you avoid costly gains and can significantly help the Foundation at the same time. Your stock is gladly accepted as a gift to our campaign. We will be happy to assist you in transferring assets to complete your gift.

Make a customized gift of other property. We gratefully appreciate other—more customized—types of gifts such as items donated in-kind and real and personal property. A member of our campaign committee will be glad to visit with you about our guidelines for accepting these special gifts.

How You Can Make a Difference in the Future

Make a planned gift. Join the Cather Legacy Society by including the Willa Cather Foundation in your estate plans. An important element of supporting our work is legacy giving. Legacy gifts can be structured through a variety of vehicles, including a bequest in a will, trust arrangements, or other

income-producing vehicles such as life insurance and annuities. In considering a planned gift, it is best to consult with your tax, legal and financial advisors. We will be happy to work with you and your advisors to structure a gift that best suits your tax and estate planning needs.

To find out more about your giving options, or to arrange a gift, please call:

Ashley Olson, Executive Director • Phone 402-746-2653 • aolson@willacather.org

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Willa Cather's enduring influence is undeniable. A Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist, she is one of the most highly acclaimed 20th century authors and her writing has been translated into more than forty languages. Decades after her death, her work remains popular and loved by readers worldwide.

*“That is happiness; to be dissolved into something complete and great.
When it comes to one, it comes as naturally as sleep.”*

Willa Cather

Willa Cather Foundation

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The Willa Cather Foundation
The National Willa Cather Center
413 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

www.WillaCather.org

402-746-2653 | info@willacather.org

