

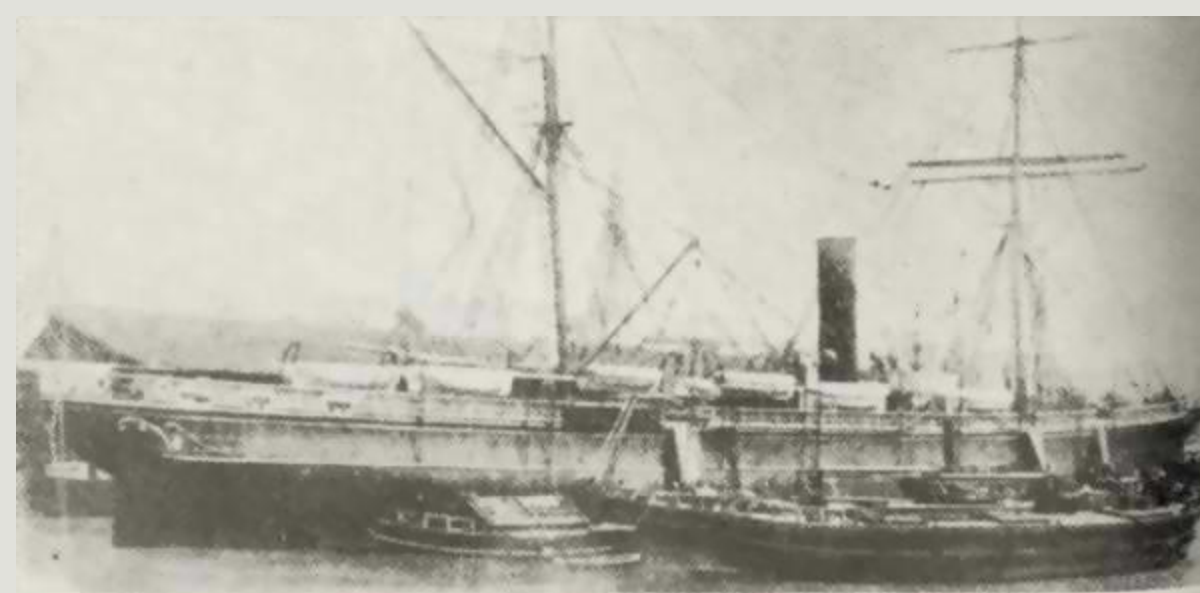


Willa Cather's  
*My Ántonia*  
Supplemental Information



1881 "Birds Eye View of Red Cloud"





S.S. HERMANN, 1865 North German Lloyd

Prussia	Pilat.	work
Prussia	Milw.	tailor
Prussia	Cisc.	brewer
Bavaria	Milw.	
Hannover	Cisc.	butcher
Bavaria	Milw.	3 Joiner
Prussia	Cisc.	8
$  \begin{array}{r}  40 \\  2 \\  5 \\  3 \\  16 \\  \hline  66  \end{array}  $		

2 Elis.	14 f ✓	
3 Karl Hubod	7 mt	Bohemia Red Cloud
4 Josef	4 1/2 ✓	
5 Frantisek	Sadilek 51 ✓	
6 Anna	45 f ✓	farmer
7 Antonie	19 ✓	
8 Josef	16 mt	
9 Anna	9 1/2 f ✓	
320 Frantisek	8 mt	

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Anna Sadilek and her family arrived in Baltimore on November 2, 1880, sailing on the S.S. *Hermann*, a steamship owned by the Norddeutscher Lloyd company. The immigrant ship was built in 1865.



Baltimore's Locust Point immigration pier opened in 1868. Shipping and railroad links allowed passengers to pay a single fare for Atlantic steamship travel and railroad passage west. 1.2 million immigrants passed through Locust Point before its closure during WW1.





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A teenaged Anna Sadilek (left) with brothers Anton (seated) and Frank (standing) and sister Christina (right).

There are no known pictures of Joe, who—as in the novel—was disabled.

This photo was taken between 1894 and 1896.



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Willa Cather arrived in Red Cloud in 1883, from her Virginia farm, with her parents and younger siblings, a grandmother, cousins, and a hired girl.

The Cathers lived for 18 months in rural Webster County before selling their farm and moving to Red Cloud, where Cather's father opened a farm loan and insurance business.





Mrs Anna Pavelka  
Bradbrook Moon Block,  
Red Cloud, Neb.  
Age 17 yrs

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While the rest of her family lived on their homestead in rural Webster County, Anna Sadilek came to town to work, sometime between 1884 and 1890. She worked for a number of families in town, including the J.L. and Julia Miner family.

Photograph taken between 1888 and 1893.



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It's unclear if Anna Sadilek and Willa Cather met in rural Webster County. Their respective homes would have been nearly five miles apart.

We do know, however, that they became good friends during the time they both lived in town.

Shown, Willa Cather as a teenager.





Willa Cather became friends with not only Anna Sadilek, but the entire Miner family. She corresponded with the Miner children—Carrie, Mary, Irene, Margie, and Hugh (who married Cather’s cousin Retta)—as long as she lived.

In a September 1921 interview with the *Webster County Argus*, Cather says that the novel’s Mrs. Harling was a “different character” when she started the book; after learning of the death of Mrs. Julia Miner, however, she changed the portrayal to honor her friends’ mother.



In 1888, John William "Blind" Boone and his troupe of performers played a concert at the Red Cloud Opera House.

Boone was a blind African-American pianist, who traveled the Great Plains, performing both classical pieces and plantation spirituals, the first time in music history that slave songs had been featured on stage.



# BLIND BOONE



## Concert Company.

### Programme.

Hungarian Storm March, by.....	Liszt
Last Hope, by.....	Gottschalk
Camp Meeting Song, by.....	Boone
Suwannee River (with variations) by.....	Boone
Plantation Song, by.....	Boone
Hollander's March, by.....	Hollander
Plantation Song, by.....	Boone
Hungarian Rhapsodie No. 6, by.....	Liszt
Song (Selection).....	Miss Stella May
Sonata Pathetique, by.....	Beethoven
Plantation Song, by.....	Miss Stella May
Marshfield Tornado, by.....	Boone
Dolores, a Waltz, by.....	Waldeufel
Imitations of various instruments, concluding with	
Marching Through Georgia, by.....	Boone

LEADER PUB. CO., BLOOMINGTON, ILLS.

To Eugie from J. W. Boone.



### THE BLIND BOONE CONCERT COMPANY

Is the oldest organized concert company in existence today, being formed in 1879. It consists of John Lange, manager, John W. Boone, pianist, Ruth Lange, secretary. In all these years touring this country and Canada, they have not lost a month on account of sickness. They are now at their home, 912 Park Ave., Kansas City, spending 90 days. In the picture appears also their chauffeur, Welvon Everett, who has piloted them 12,000 miles without accident, besides giving pleasure to over 5000 others, a cosmopolitan lot of guests, bishops, ministers, priests, children, laborers and those afflicted. Mr. Lange says he is one of the best chauffeurs in Kansas City.

Left, an early program showing Boone's range of music.

Above, Boone (seated in the center of the back seat), with his manager John Lange, secretary Ruth Lange, and chauffeur.





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In a 1936 letter, Cather tells Chilson Leonard that Blind Boone was the inspiration for Samson “Blind” d’ Arnault in her novel *My Ántonia*.

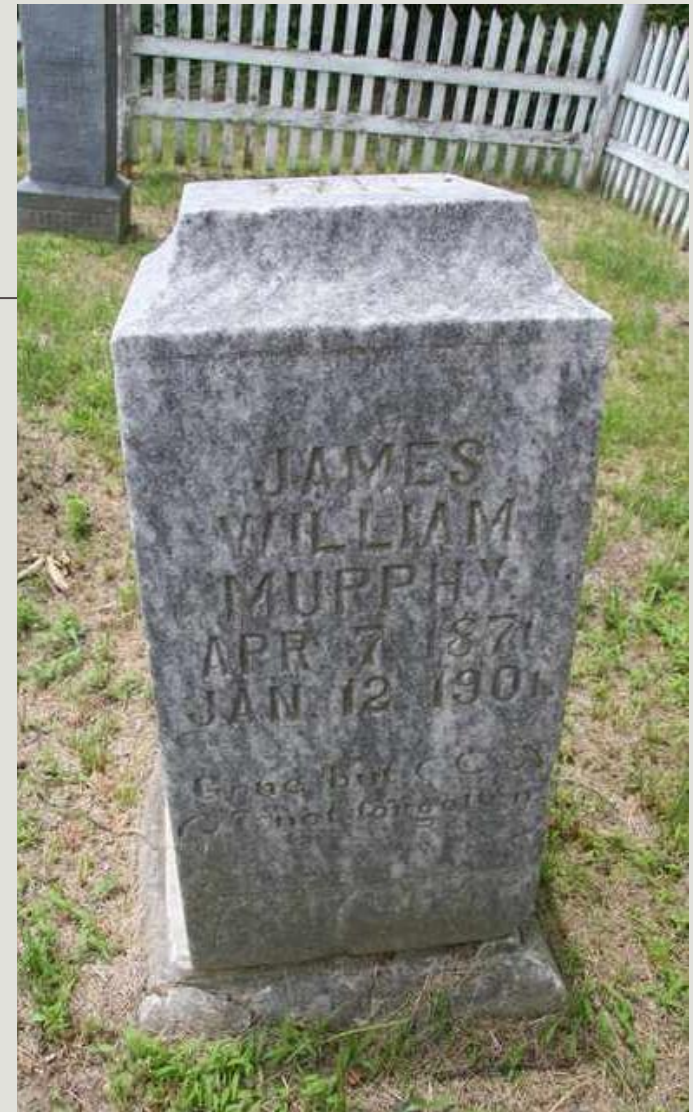
She also urges Leonard to have his students read *Kidnapped* (Robert Louis Stevenson) or *Vanity Fair* (William Makepeace Thackeray) instead of *My Ántonia*.





Another prototype for Cather's novel was James William Murphy (1871-1901). As in the novel, Anna Sadilek was enchanted with town life—dancing, friends—and she soon took up with Murphy, a railroad man who promised to marry her. Anna, still unmarried, found herself expecting a child.

Unlike the novel, Pavelka family stories tell us that—after running away for several years—Murphy returned to Red Cloud and wanted to marry Anna Sadilek. She turned him down.







It has long been suspected that this painting by Paul Powis, “Sleigh With Trailing Wolves” was on display in Red Cloud during Willa Cather’s lifetime. It may have been one of the inspirations for the story of Pavel and Peter in *My Ántonia*.





In 1916, traveling back from Taos, New Mexico, and Wyoming, Willa Cather stopped to visit her family in Red Cloud for several weeks. While in Webster County, Cather visited her old friend Anna Sadilek, who was by then married to John Pavelka. They had a large family and farmed near Bladen, Nebraska, about sixteen miles north of Red Cloud.



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When the novel was published in 1918, it was widely praised for its masterful prose.

The illustrations by W. T. Benda have remained favorites of readers for one hundred years. Cather was adamant about including these images in the novel. She later sent the originals as gifts to friends.





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Anna Sadilek Pavelka remained a friend of Willa Cather's throughout Cather's life. Anna was pleased to have been the subject of the novel.

In 1951, well-known *LIFE Magazine* photographer David E. Scherman came to Webster County for an article on Cather's work. He photographed Anna, bringing her to the attention of millions of American readers.





Photo courtesy the Willa Cather Foundation.



To explore Red Cloud and learn more, visit  
the following sites:

<http://www.virtualcather.org>

[www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org)

[www.cather.unl.edu](http://www.cather.unl.edu)

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