



## Acknowledgements

By Robert Thacker, Former President  
National Willa Cather Center



FOR THE DEDICATION OF THE WILLA CATHER CHILDHOOD HOME  
JUNE 8, 2024



This project was years in the making with discussions about the urgent need to preserve the house and conserve Willa Cather's wallpaper taking place at the board level for nearly a decade. We're grateful to former State Senator Burke Harr for introducing the legislative bill that facilitated the transfer of the Willa Cather Childhood Home to our ownership, and to the Nebraska Legislature and History Nebraska for entrusting us with its preservation and stewardship going forward.

The restoration and rehabilitation would not have been possible without a Save America's Treasures Grant from the National Park Service and a Shovel-Ready Capital Improvement Grant from the Nebraska Department of Economic Development. These grants were matched through our *Campaign for the Future*, a fundraising effort that received support from more than 680 donors across the nation. We are grateful for each and every donation, and we especially want to recognize the Acklie Foundation, Ethel S. Abbott Foundation, John K. and Lynne D. Boyer Foundation, Holland Foundation, Anne Thorne Weaver Foundation, Mammel Foundation, and Gifford Foundation for their generosity to this project. Thank you!

As you sit and look at the house today, please pay special attention to the craftsmanship. The team from BVH Architecture worked diligently to create designs that would preserve the historic integrity of the site while making it more accessible for visitors. Our general contractor Tru-Built Construction arranged every detail, including carefully elevating the house to build an entirely new foundation overlaid with original brick. Len Schamber of Schamber Historic Preservation took great care with restoration of everything from windows and shutters to doors and hardware. When you enter the attic this afternoon, you'll see the delicate wallpaper conservation work that was performed by Hilary LaFevere and her team from the Gerald R. Ford Conservation Center. To everyone on the project team, we thank you.

Our Sites & Collections Committee and staff spent two and a half years working on this endeavor through various stages of planning, design, and execution. Furnishings and collections were carefully removed, examined, cleaned, and eventually returned. For more than sixteen months of closure, tours were limited to a short overview about the house and the construction project, which was delivered by a guide from the terrace. A special thanks to our Sites and Collections Committee members, Board President Mark Bostock, Executive Director Ashley Olson, Director of Collections & Curation Tracy Tucker, and all other staff, board members, and volunteers who assisted along the way. It was, to quote Cather "a very genuine pleasure."