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# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME XIV, NUMBER 2

## and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

### Dedication Ceremonies

The fifteenth annual Cather Foundation Spring Conference featured the dedication of two more landmarks made famous by the writing of Willa Cather.

Ribbon cutting ceremonies at the old Burlington Depot were led by Fred B. Deines, Burlington Northern Vice President—Omaha Region and a delegation of railroad officials. Other participants and spectators included hundreds of scholars, authors and Cather admirers from throughout the nation.

Opening the 1883 Catholic Church for the Dedicationary Mass was Mrs. Sarah McPartland Delaney who was brought in a wagon to the church to be baptized 80 years ago by her Irish immigrant parents. Mrs. Delaney, who was also confirmed and received her first communion in the church, said to Omaha WORLD-HERALD writer Tom Allan, "It looks, it feels the same as it did so many years ago."



One final adjustment and the old Burlington Depot was ready for the crowd attending dedication ceremonies April 18, 1970.—Photo by Tom Allan, courtesy of Omaha World-Herald.

The Depot, destined for destruction, was saved by Mr. and Mrs. John Quirk of Hastings and donated to the Cather Memorial. The Woods Charitable Fund, Inc. of Lincoln and Chicago gave \$25,000 for restoration of both buildings.

The evening program, "A Willa Cather Concert," drew a large, enthusiastic audience. The concert was performed by the University of Nebraska Madrigal Singers, Professor John P. Moran, conductor, and Professor Robert Beadell, arranger-composer. Appropriately, one of the soloists is a native of Red Cloud, Viletta Sue Ware, who is now instructor of voice and opera at Iowa State University, Ames.

According to Professor Moran, this concert is one of the most popular the Singers have ever done and is the one most often requested for repeat performances.

Larry Lusk in a report of the concert in the Lincoln



Mrs. Delaney in church . . . It even feels the same.—Photo by Tom Allan, Courtesy of Omaha World-Herald.

JOURNAL says: "The entire program is laced together with a narration written and delivered by Bernice Slote of the University of Nebraska English Department who has recently written an illuminating book relating to Cather's criticisms, (THE KINGDOM OF ART, University of Nebraska Press). Her narration was a large part of the success of the program—beautifully written, interesting, humorous, and narrated with the expertise of an actress."

### CORRECTIONS

#### ... Spring Newsletter ...

The Spring Newsletter—1970 ought to be numbered 1 rather than 2. Sorry, librarians, that the mistake caused so much confusion.

#### ... Church ...

Old newspapers are a great source of information, sometimes the only source readily available. However then, as now, mistakes and misprints are made. Such is the case of the name of the 1883 Catholic Church. The correct name is St. Juliana Falconieri.

The name we were using, St. Juliana Falernexis, was questioned so often and enough people were in doubt that three people went to work on the problem. Priest of the Red Cloud parish, the Reverend Frank J. Machovec, searched through old church records. John March, Cather Foundation board member and recently retired research librarian for Collier's Encyclopaedia, and President Mildred R. Bennett dug through additional old newspapers of the 1880's and city records. They all

came up with the same answer. A long forgotten news reporter or type setter made a mistake in the article telling about the completion in 1883 of the church built of red brick made at the Red Cloud brickyard. For "Falconieri" he wrote "Falernexis."

#### PUBLICATIONS

Appearing in the October 1970 AMERICAN HERITAGE is an article "Ghost Town on the River," written in 1894 by Willa Cather while she was a student at the University of Nebraska. It is about Brownville, Nebraska on the Missouri River, which beginning in



Willa Cather's mother picked out this ball gown for Willa's graduation from the University of Nebraska in 1895. Her fashionable mother sighed with relief and delight when during her second year at the University Willa let her hair grow after a long period of boyish haircuts and began wearing more feminine clothes.—Picture (Townsend Studios) from THE WORLD OF WILLA CATHER by Mildred R. Bennett.

1854 was the first and busiest steamboat terminal in Nebraska territory supplying tons of merchandise for the wagon trains headed west. Brownville was a metropolis when Denver was a raw gold camp on Cherry Creek. But with the completion of the railroad, history passed it by. "She came to gather material for a newspaper article commemorating Brownville's fortieth anniversary, but what she found was a ghost town."

The article was first published Sunday, August 12, 1894, in the NEBRASKA STATE JOURNAL, owned and edited by Charles Gere. His daughter, Mariel Gere, was one of Willa Cather's best friends and was her companion on that hot summer trip to Brownville. In a letter to Mildred R. Bennett dated February 6, 1956, Mariel Gere recalled the long ago journey:

"When we went there Willa's assignment was to write an article about Brownville for the Journal. Mine was to take the photographs Willa wanted for that article.

"I was somewhat disturbed by the fact that only the places in Brownville which had deteriorated seemed to interest Willa, and was somewhat shocked when we went into a church (Episcopal, I think), and she pulled the kneeling benches out from between the pews, carried them down to the end of the church and piled

them up so the church looked like it was in ruins, and asked me to photograph the pile.

"I was also worried because a number of Brownville people hoped her article would help the little town, and Governor Furnas took the trouble to show us every courtesy.

"I knew how indignant they would be when they read her article and saw the pictures—and they were."

In the 1894 NEBRASKA STATE JOURNAL the article is titled "An Old River Metropolis" and includes six line drawings done from the late Miss Gere's photographs. The photographs were discovered by John Q. Magie, Historic Sites Curator for the Nebraska Historical Society. When the original article was being copied for mailing to the AMERICAN HERITAGE, the line drawings looked familiar to Mr. Magie. He found the original photographs in the "unidentified pictures" file.

Two of Miss Gere's original photographs are reproduced with the Cather story in the AMERICAN HERITAGE. From other material sent to AMERICAN HERITAGE by Mr. Magie, the editors chose a picture of an old river boat named "Red Cloud."

This same article is included in THE WORLD AND THE PARISH: WILLA CATHER'S ARTICLES AND REVIEWS, 1893-1902, edited by William M. Curtin; published by the University of Nebraska Press to be out in November.

#### ... Other Books ...

Dr. Otakar Odložilik, while traveling in Czechoslovakia this summer, obtained a copy of MOJE ANTONIE, the 1966 Czech translation of MY ANTONIA. The Memorial has been trying for years to get such a translation and we welcome the book with much pleasure.

WILLA CATHER: THE WOMAN AND HER WORK by Dr. Ruth Crone and Marion Marsh Brown, published by Scribners, is due to appear on book stands this month. Those of you attending the 1969 Spring Conference will remember the tales of adventures during five years of research related by the authors.

The revised edition of WILLA CATHER'S COLLECTED SHORT FICTION, 1892-1912 with Introduction by Mildred R. Bennett will be out December 1, edited by Virginia Faulkner with one story added, from the University of Nebraska Press.

#### ... Articles ...

Dr. Bernice Slote, Cather Memorial board member, was asked to write about Stephen Crane and Willa Cather by the editor of the Kent State University Library Quarterly. Her article was published in the special issue on Stephen Crane of THE SERIF, December, 1969.

Sister Lucy Schneider of Marymount College, Salina, Kansas reports her most recent publication is "Cather's 'Land-Philosophy' in DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP," in RENASCENCE: A Critical Journal of Letters, Winter, 1970, Marquette University, Milwaukee. Sister Lucy Schneider wrote her doctoral dissertation on Willa Cather at Notre Dame University. This item appeared recently in the Salina JOURNAL: "A course on author Willa Cather will be offered at Marymount College during interterm January 4-28, 1971. The instructor is Sister Lucy Schneider, Associate Professor of English." Students in the Cather course plan to spend at least one day at Red Cloud during the interterm.

"Willa Cather's Nebraska" is a stunning pictorial essay with photographs by Greg Beaumont and words by Willa Cather featured in NEBRASKALAND Magazine for July, 1970.

## INCREASING INTEREST IN WILLA CATHER

From the Winchester (Virginia) EVENING STAR, August 29, 1970, comes this news: "The Rev. Morris E. Cather of Winchester, instructor at Hargrave Military



Willa Cather Birthplace is Marked in Virginia.—Photo courtesy of Morris Cather.

Academy, Chatham, Va., . . . (photographed) . . . a marker recently installed by the Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission in front of the birthplace of a distant relative, author Willa Cather. The Commission has established that Miss Cather was born in this house on the north side of Rt. 50 at the eastern edge of Gore on December 7, 1873. About a year after her birth the family moved about three-quarters of a mile east to Willow Shade Farm, where they lived about eight years before moving to Nebraska. Miss Cather, who died in 1947, and Mr. Cather have a common ancestor, Jasper Cather, who settled here before the American War of Independence."

In a letter Mr. Cather said this about the marker: "I feel very proud to have been a part in this project. Now it is my hope sooner or later to find some group or individual who might be interested in placing some kind of marker in front of Willow Shade, the old mill, and a few other places mentioned in SAPPHIRA. Maybe I am too much of a dreamer but I suppose someone in Red Cloud did some dreaming a few years ago."

For the eleventh annual Flaming Festival, a benefit sponsored by the Omaha Church Women United, Mrs. Laird B. Fisher used items from the Cather House and the Museum for a table setting and a Cather display.

### ... Visitors ...

Because of his interest in Willa Cather, Dennis Farney, staff reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL, came to Webster County to write his story about that rapidly disappearing American institution, the one-teacher rural school. His article appeared on the front page of the May 8, 1970, WALL STREET JOURNAL. Luck was with Mr. Farney. The only rural school still in operation in Webster County was out the day after he was here—for good, after 95 years. And as luck would have it, the subject of his story, the Pleasant Prairie school with the cemetery fenced off from the school yard, may be the setting for Willa Cather's short story about a country schoolteacher, "The Best Years."

The Miner-Weisz Charitable Fund of Chicago contributes \$4,000 annually. Attorney for the Fund, Mr. Max Meyer, was here from Chicago in October on an inspection tour to take back to Mrs. Weisz a report on the progress of the Cather Foundation and future plans being made. Mrs. Weisz, a life-long friend of Willa Cather, is Nina Harling in MY ANTONIA which Miss

Cather dedicated to her and her sister, Carrie Miner Sherwood, "in memory of affections old and true."

A recent visitor from Aix-en-Provence, France, was Michel Gervaud who is doing a book on Cather. He takes credit for detecting the "3" beneath the "6" in the Cather family Bible on display in the Cather House. Willa Cather went to no end of trouble to camouflage her age and even scratched out 1873 as her birthdate in the Bible and wrote 1876 over it.

An annual visitor to Catherland is Donald E. Connors, an English teacher in California. Mr. Connors, who has taught on the junior college level and is currently on the faculty of Downey High School, emphasizes Willa Cather in his classes whatever level he happens to be teaching.

### ... What the Teachers Are Saying ...

From time to time we try to pass on to you methods teachers are using in the classroom and their comments on why they use Willa Cather's works. The following is a quote from DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP:

"When they left the rock or tree or sand dune that had sheltered them for the night, the Navajo (Eusabio) was careful to obliterate every trace of their temporary occupation. He buried the embers of the fire and the remnants of food, unplied any stones he had piled together, filled up the holes he had scooped in the sand. Since this was exactly Jacinto's procedure, Father Latour judged that, just as it was the white man's way to assert himself in any landscape, to change it, make it over a little (at least to leave some mark or memorial of his sojourn), it was the Indian's way to pass through a country without disturbing anything; to pass and leave no trace, like fish through the water, or birds through the air.

"It was the Indian manner to vanish into the landscape, not to stand out against it."

Donald E. Connors made the following comment on the quote:

"In a time when we have begun to emphasize the importance of our effects on ecology and the importance of conservation, the quotation from DEATH COMES FOR THE ARCHBISHOP takes on added meaning. Cather's concern for and love of the land evinces itself often in her books. Her interest, naturally, reached a vast audience; but her grandfather also had strong feelings for the preservation of the land and its resources; he served as conservation officer for his area of Virginia. As she did in her own time, Cather has relevance for today, the kind of relevance youth cry out for in their education."

### BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Four Cather Foundation boosters have joined the Board of Governors. Serving since April 1969 is Marian Schultz of Lincoln, Nebraska. Nominated at the April 17, 1970, business meeting are: Dr. William Thomas Auld, Stockton, California, son of the late Jessica Cather Auld, Willa Cather's sister; Helen Cather Southwick, Pittsburgh, Pa., daughter of Willa Cather's brother, the late James Cather; and Laird G. Wolfe, Assistant State Conservationist with the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Lincoln, Nebraska.

### ... Our President ...

President Mildred R. Bennett said about her summer tour of Europe "I saw Europe through Willa Cather's eyes. I was constantly being reminded of Willa Cather's feelings . . . the French landscape . . . piles of dried (Continued on page 4)

mushrooms in an open market in Germany . . . ordinary people playing Verdi's music on a street corner during a small town festival . . . an interview with a professor of English who teaches Cather in his classes in Vienna.

**TAXES**

Good news from the Internal Revenue Service:  
 "Based on the information you recently submitted we have classified you as an organization that is not a private foundation as defined in section 509 (a) of the Internal Revenue Code."

This means money given to the Cather Foundation is still tax exempt under the new tax law effecting foundations which was passed earlier in the year.

Thanks to John Gorgen of Kearney, who for a number of years has been donating his service as accountant, for helping to organize the information to be submitted in order to clarify the Cather Foundation's tax status.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

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|---------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| William Thomas Auld, M.D. | John March        | Marian Schultz         |
| Mildred R. Bennett        | Miriam Mountford  | Carrie M. Sherwood     |
| W. K. Bennett, M.D.       | Harry Obitz       | Bernice Slose          |
| Josephine Frisbie         | Helen Obitz       | Helen Cather Southwick |
| Virginia Faulkner         | Frank O'Rourke    | Marcella Van Meter     |
| Dr. L. V. Jacks           | Jennie M. Reiher  | David E. Scherman      |
| Helen Lengfeld            | Dr. C. B. Schultz | Laird G. Wolfe         |

**SPRING CONFERENCE 1971**

The important events of the 1970 Conference will be a hard act to follow. However we are trying our best, and some very interesting plans are being made. Mark April 16, 1971 on your calendar and watch for complete details in the Spring Newsletter.

In the meantime, thank you for all you have done to make your Cather Foundation an excitingly progressive organization of action. Thank you for your continuous financial support because it is your dependability that keeps things moving forward so smoothly. Thank you for keeping us informed about what you are doing in the interest of Cather and what is going on in your area. You can be happy and proud, as we are, that so much is happening it is becoming increasingly difficult to screen information for the Newsletter. The printer squeezes and fills every which way, and still my file of leftover items to use next time grows fat.

Sincerely yours,

*Miriam Mountford*  
 Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor

**YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

● By becoming a member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

LIFE DONATION CONTRIBUTION . . . \$75.00  
 SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTION . . . \$5.00 Annually

- By contributing to a project fund.
- By contributing to the restoration fund.
- By contributing to the scholarship fund.
- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

**AIMS OF THE WCPM**

- To secure the bonding, insurance and housing of a permanent art, literary and historical collection relating to the life, time and work of Willa Cather.
- To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial in the form of art and literary scholarships.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.



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