

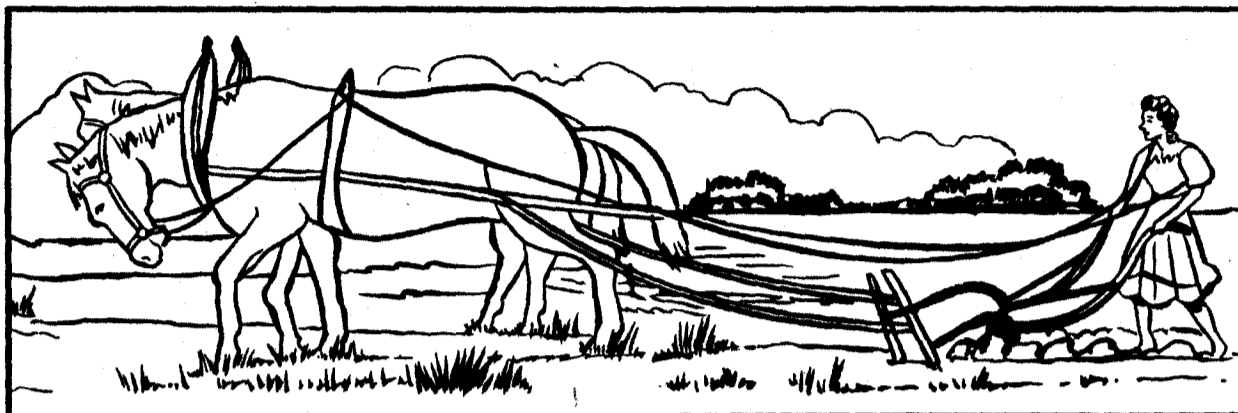
Fall Newsletter - - - 1959

WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL

Volume III

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

Number 2



PROGRESS REPORT

AIM: To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather. In the past six months 500 more people have asked to receive the Newsletter increasing our mailing list to 3500.

AIM: To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather.

The identification of places used in Cather's writings has been completed. This list along with the contour map of the county and its dioramas locates for visitors the settings of all Willa Cather's Nebraska stories.

AIM: To provide for Willa Cather a living MEMORIAL in the form of art and literary scholarships.

This long-range program is slow to progress because of limited finances at present.

AIM: 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.

Our most ambitious project has been successful. We are now the proud owners of an historic landmark--the old Silas Garber Building that we have been telling you about in the past several Newsletters. Our plans for restoring the three stories of ginger-breaded splendor were complete until, with deed signed at last, we began snooping in earnest. Hidden in the walled backyard, overgrown with weeds are two underground dugeon rooms. The discovery explains the section of newer brick in the basement wall, where the original entrance must have been. However the few remaining pioneers here are unable to give a clue to the origin of the rooms and are just as mystified with the discovery as we are. Until the dust of history can be cleared away, imaginations are running riot.

STAFF ACTIVITIES

All Nebraska members of the Board of Governors were on hand when the Memorial was host to the Nebraska Writers' Guild at its annual fall convention in Red Cloud. Featured speaker was author of The Horsecatcher, Old Jules, and The Cattlemen, Mari Sandoz, who paid tribute to the fine work being done by the Memorial.

Helen Obitz and Mildred Bennett attended the three day Mountain-Plains Museum Conference where Mrs. Bennett was the featured speaker.

Virginia Faulkner, Editor of the University of Nebraska Press, has accepted a position on the Memorial Board of Governors.

Western novelist Frank O'Rourke, arriving for a two day consultation with the Board of Governors, expressed admiration for the remarkable progress made by the Memorial since his last visit a year ago.

Dr. C. B. Schultz, Director of the Nebraska State Museum, brought to the Board of Governors the report of his conferences with architects in regard to renovation of the Garber building.

MAILING LIST

Beginning with the next issue (unless requested to do otherwise) we will send the Newsletter to all English departments.

STAFF ACTIVITIES

President Mildred Bennett has just returned from an extensive trip for the Memorial. She visited Willa Cather's friend, Mrs. George Seibel, in Lynbrook, Long Island. In Shelbyville, Indiana, Mrs. Bennett was given by Mrs. Fred Otte all the letters her late husband received from Willa Cather during the course of a life-long friendship which began with his student years in Pittsburgh. Photostats of more Cather letters were obtained from Colby College in Waterville, Maine. Cather's "The Man Who Wrote Narcissus" in a 1901 Ladies Home Journal came from Ben Stenchfield of the Nordiea Memorial Association in Farmington, Maine. Mrs. Bennett explored scenes from Shadows on the Rock in Quebec and Song of the Lark in New York. Also in New York she conferred with Board members David E. Scherman and John March and visited a number of small museums to study problems common with ours.

MAIL BAG

It is gratifying to receive requests for information and study materials from so many different people. Even more gratifying are your letters expressing appreciation for the work being done by the Memorial.

Perhaps the most frequent question we are asked is, "Where can I buy Willa Cather's books?" No longer do we need to suggest second-hand stores and auction sales because most are now available in new editions at better book stores.

VISITORS

Among the growing number of organized groups visiting the Museum this year were 25 Central High juniors, their parents, and instructor, Donald E. Connors. After studying My Antonia in class, they drove the 200 miles from Omaha to spend a whole Sunday in the Museum and touring Willa Cather Country. With the enthusiasm generated here, the youngsters sparked a fund raising campaign in all the Central English classes to donate to the Memorial forty saleable Nebraska Literary Maps published by the Nebraska Council of Teachers of English and a balance of \$8.80.

So impressed was Martin Russ, author of The Last Parallel and Half Moon Haven, that he said he would finish reading all of Willa Cather's books then return next year.

Frederick Manfred, one of our more frequent visiting authors, has recently had published Conquering Horse, which is set in the Republican River Valley.

Artist Terence Duren shares our enthusiasm over the Garber Building as a museum and dubs its architecture Mad-Victorian.

VISUAL AID

David E. Scherman, Assistant Editor of Life, has made 21 colored transparencies picturing typical scenes from Willa Cather's major novels, and Mrs. Bennett has written a thorough commentary to go with them. Josephine Frisbie has supervised the final production of the set after experimenting with it in the Omaha schools. Now available from the Memorial is this student and faculty approved study aid--21 colored slides and commentary for \$15.

FUTURE PLANS

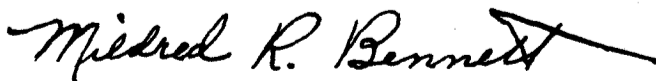
We have the building. Now our plans for the future can take a more concrete form. The Museum, Memorial offices, and the research center will be moved in as soon as necessary repairs and fireproofing can be done. Then will begin the process of restoration and furnishing for which we have drawn up a \$10,000, five-year plan. You can support this plan in a number of ways. You can give us your suggestions for fund raising. You can give direct financial support by making your pledge now and divide payments over a five year period. At the same time, remember that you can support all the aims of the Memorial by becoming a life-member for \$75 or a sustaining member for \$5 yearly until life-membership is attained.

We are hoping to hear from you before our spring letter. Till then, every good wish for the holiday season.

Sincerely yours,

Josephine Frisbie
Virginia Faulkner
Dr. L. V. Jacks
Helen Lengfeld
John March
Miriam Mountford
Mamie Meredith

The Officers and Board of Governors
WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL



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