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WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL NEWSLETTER

Volume 1

Number 2

Red Cloud, Nebraska
Fall 1957

The first issue of the Newsletter sent out last summer brought a gratifying response. Thank you for your encouragement and your orders for Early Stories. To a great many of you I feel we owe an apology for the scrambled condition of your address. Will you help us straighten our files by letting us know: Is your address written correctly? Is your name spelled correctly? And will you send us the names of people who would like to hear about the Memorial?

STAFF ACTIVITIES

President Mildred R. Bennett was recently elected vice-president of the Nebraska Writers' Guild. On October 24 she was guest speaker for the English Teachers' Luncheon at the Nebraska Education Association Convention in Grand Island, Nebraska.

Dr. C. Bertrand Schultz, Director, University of Nebraska State Museum, Lincoln, spent six weeks at the American Museum of Natural History in New York doing research for a book. During his trip across the country, he toured small museums such as ours looking for ideas on improvements we can make.

David E. Scherman, Assistant Editor of LIFE, is a new member of the Board of Governors. Mr. Scherman donated to the Museum the exhibition prints of scenes from the LIFE story, "Willa Cather Country". This display with accompanying quotations brings a great deal of comment and sends many visitors home to read more Cather.

Miss Wyola Swartz spent the summer cataloging the museum library and compiling scrapbooks of clippings regarding the life of Willa Cather, her writings, and the Memorial.

New on the staff are receptionists, Mrs. Harvy Rickerson and Mrs. Nate Platt; typist, Mrs. Kenneth Schwartz.

MUSEUM NEWS

The Museum remained open this fall every weekday afternoon until Nov. 1. Special tours can still be arranged through a member of the staff.

New in our "For Sale" corner are post cards picturing the house where Willa Cather grew up.

MEMBERSHIP

New Life Members of the Red Cloud Chapter:

Arthur Kellogg Akers, Forest Hills, Long Island, New York.
Mrs. C. H. Brush, Shenandoah, Iowa
Mrs. Grace Wolfe, Red Cloud, Nebraska
Mrs. Helen Lengfeld, San Francisco, California

A Red Cloud Chapter life membership is obtainable for \$75.00.

SOCIETIES

The engraved charter for the formation of Willa Cather Societies has been completed. It is now possible for those of you living in large population areas (100,000) to organize in order to perpetuate an interest in the work of Willa Cather, to restore places made famous by her writings, to provide a living Memorial in the form of art and literary scholarships, and to help with the collection of things relating to the life, time, and work of Willa Cather.

A charter is granted after the formation of a chapter of fifteen members and payment of the \$75.00 charter fee. In order to establish a permanent fund for the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial to carry out its aims, each society has the responsibility of raising \$2,500.

Portland, Oregon. Mrs. H. C. Franchers, Mrs. Grace Benthall, and Norman Reynolds all have visited the museum and are eager to form a society in their city.

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. On October 22 a group of interested people met with Mrs. Alfred W. Crozier to organize a society; however, flu kept so many at home that they have decided to postpone their activities for a few weeks. Enthusiasm is high there, and they want to do something to commemorate Willa Cather during the Pittsburgh Bicentennial Celebration next year.

PUBLICATIONS

Board member Dr. L. V. Jacks, Chairman of Division of Classics, Creighton University, Omaha, wrote for August-September 1957 issue of The Critic an article entitled "Willa Cather and Music." This fall he had published a juvenile, Wires West, the story of the building of the telegraph from Omaha to Salt Lake.

Publicity director Bess Day has been busy with news stories for Nebraska papers concerning museum activities. The most notable is a feature article, "A Famous Nebraska Friendship," appearing in the Omaha World Herald Magazine Sunday, July 28, concerning the life of Anna Pavelka (Antonia).

William Kehoe, Editor of Literary Cavalcade, New York, plans to publish two articles concerning the Memorial, one in the November Student Edition and one that will appear in the December Teacher Edition. In the November issue he reprinted Willa Cather's The Sentimentality of William Tavenor from her Early Stories.

Mrs. Ralph E. Misko, Chairman of the Fine Arts Department, in The Nebraska Clubwoman, September 1957, recommends as the most worthwhile project of the year the support of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial. Mrs. Misko suggests that Women's Clubs donate to their local libraries Early Stories of Willa Cather edited by Mildred R. Bennett. Proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Memorial. Orders are still coming in from all over the state. Since the last issue of the Newsletter the Women's Clubs of Blair, York, Hebron, Lexington, Lincoln, Springfield, and Deshler have joined in this project.

Robert Lasch, Editorial Staff, St. Louis Post Dispatch, published an article about the Memorial which appeared Sunday, September 21.

Miss Mamie J. Meredith, Lincoln: New England Quarterly, March-December 1956, containing an article by Eleanor M. Smith, "Literary Relationship of Sarah Orne Jewett and Willa Cather."

Mrs. Grace Wolfe, Red Cloud: Insurance policy on historical items in the museum with first three years premiums paid.

Bruce Frame, Red Cloud: Glass display case.

John Fox, Red Cloud: Four booklets on native grasses and plants of Nebraska.

John March, New York City: The Twentieth Century Literature containing an article by Edward A. Bloom and Lillian D. Bloom, "Shadows on the Rock: Notes on the composition of a Novel." Autobiography of S. S. McClure, 1914. It is generally accepted now that Willa Cather was Mr. McClure's ghost writer.

Children and friends of Anna Pavelka: A first edition of My Antonia.

Mrs. Evelyn Ruffle, Jaffrey, New Hampshire: New Hampshire Profiles, December 1955, containing "Required Reading" by Elizabeth Yates, an article concerning Jaffrey, where Willa Cather did a great deal of her writing and where she was buried.

Mrs. Elizabeth Huffman, Red Cloud: Letter from Willa Cather. The donor was employed by the Cathers and later by Willa Cather for many years.

Lawrence Peirce, Red Cloud: The George Hummel family Bible published in Germany in 1862. Mr. Hummel was a pioneer minister in Red Cloud and uncle of the donor. A 150 year old chair and a scrapbook belonging to his father, A. B. Peirce, who died just recently at the age of 102.

Mrs. Sylvia Beams, Red Cloud: A Bible published in 1851.

Miss Lydia Lambrecht, Inavale: Meakin Ironstone china pitcher and wash bowl belonging to her mother, Charlotte.

Mrs. Helen Obitz, Red Cloud: A first edition of Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court.

Mrs. Helen McNeny Sprague, Red Cloud: Letters written to her by Willa Cather.

Mrs. Carrie Miner Sherwood, Red Cloud: Articles belonging to Willa Cather: Academic hoods, desk, high chair, Charles Cather's desk, autographed books, case containing rock collection, Cather family candle mold, and her grandmother Boak's teapot.

Mrs. Alpha Lewis, Red Cloud: A fruit jar of pioneer days.

Miss Evanista Gilsdorf, Guide Rock: A platform rocker 65 years old that belonged to her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Gilsdorf.

Mrs. Wilella Payne Wilson, Inavale: The February, March, and April 1912 issues of McClure's Magazine containing Alexander's Masquerade (later Alexander's Bridge) Willa Cather's first novel. The donor's mother was Alverna Cather, Willa's aunt.

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Dr. John S. Phillipson, Villanova University, Pennsylvania: Three Cather letters written to him in 1943.

Miss Ione Albright, Omaha: Her mother's wedding dress, January 1881.

Harlan Guida, Red Cloud: Mannequins used in the display of the Albright wedding dress and of the Cather academic hoods.

Arthur Kellog Akers, Forest Hills, Long Island: Letters from his grandmother and picture of the house of his grandfather, John K. Harris, who was the first Presbyterian minister in Red Cloud (1883) and helped lay the corner stone of Hastings College. (Mr. Akers called last month from Oklahoma City to send greetings and best wishes to the Memorial).

Norman Kaforke, Red Cloud: Bones of a Pleistocene (Ice age) horse taken from the depth of 90 feet at the Martin and Siel Sand pit.

Kyd Clutter Family, Inavale: Leather cuffs, knife, and carved powder horn. Kyd Cutter was the son of Alverna Cather, Willa's aunt.

Mrs. Jennie Miner Reiher, Red Cloud: Trunk containing family letters and garments, coffee pot and cups. The trunk was brought from Virginia in 1877 by Willa Cather's grandmother, Mrs. William Cather (Grandmother Burden in My Antonia). Handkerchiefs, papers, and letters belonging to Jennie Cather Ayer, the subject of "Macon Prairie" and the doner's grandmother.

THE REGISTER

Visitors who sign their names in our guest book come for a wide variety of reasons.

A Wandering Scholar. Ronald G. Wolin, Brooklyn, spent two days in Red Cloud early in September on his coast-to-coast bicycle trip to study the United States at close hand. He reached San Francisco October 29 after cycling 3500 miles. Mr. Wolin plans to use his daily log of experiences as the basis of a book.

Return of the Natives. Arthur Kellog Akers, Forest Hills, Long Island visited the land his grandfather helped to settle. (See doners.)

Mrs. Laura McCune Kent, Ferndale, Michigan. Her mother taught Red Cloud's first school held in the town's first dwelling, a dugout belonging to Silas Garber (later Nebraska's first governor.) Indians accompanied their children to school making teaching a terrifying job.

Neophytes. Girl Scout Troop #136 of Orleans. Mrs. Donna Brown and students of District R-8, Smith County, Kansas.

Pilgrims to a Shrine. Father John P. Lakey, S. J., Fordham University, New York, de-toured via Willa Cather country on his return from the Modern Language Convention in Wisconsin.

Frederick Feikema Manfred, Minneapolis. Winner of National Academy award, 1945. The Mid-Western author's latest book is Rider's of Judgment.

Dr. A. L. Rowse, All Souls College, Oxford, England, took time from his lecture engagement at Hastings College to visit the Memorial.

PROFILE

Mrs. Carrie Miner Sherwood has been working for the Memorial longer than any of the other members of the Board of Governors. She actually started before 1900 when Willa Cather began to send things to her for safe keeping in her large attic. Once Miss Cather asked her friend, "What will you do with all this junk?" Mrs. Sherwood replied that someday she hoped there would be a place in Red Cloud to display all the "junk" collected by a great author.

Mrs. Sherwood was born in 1869 near Waukon, Iowa. When she was nine, her family moved to Red Cloud where later they were neighbors of the Charles Cathers. The young Miners became playmates of the Cather children. Carrie, the eldest daughter, worked as bookkeeper for her father; and when he was out of town on business, she competently took charge of the store. Her straight forward assurance in handling every situation during his absences once led her father to ask, "Carrie, you're so positive! Doesn't it ever occur to you that you could be wrong?" She answered, "Yes, it does," and banged her fist on the table. "But I'd rather be wrong fifty percent of the time than not be able to have an opinion."

This peremptoriness tempered with patience led the alert and inquisitive "Willie" Cather to seek her older friend's counsel. As a result Mrs. Sherwood came to exert an important influence on Miss Cather who considered Mrs. Sherwood to be "my fellow student of human stories." In My Antonia we see Mrs. Sherwood as Frances Harling.

Mrs. Sherwood's forcefulness and positiveness are accompanied by a compulsion for action. Consequently her compassion for people in trouble is a dynamic thing and most of the families in Webster County have felt her benevolence at one time or another through the years. Her energetic interest in civic affairs and her zest for living have not dimmed in 88 years.

From her gifted mother Mrs. Sherwood inherited an interest in all kinds of art. Her collection includes not only paintings but also the artistic achievements of the people of countries she has visited—tapestries, shawls, linens, glass ware, and china. This summer Mrs. Sherwood designed the charter for Willa Cather Societies sketching significant scenes from Cather's writings--the plow in the sun, the old Siebert mill, the lark, the mission at Acoma, Chateau Frontenac, etc.

The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial was born in 1955 as a result of the indefatigable, infectious enthusiasm of a woman devoted to an idea. Mrs. Sherwood became the rallying point for kindred minds which produced not only a place where Cather possessions can be displayed but also where her life, time, and writings can be studied. Furthermore the Memorial provides a living organization to perpetuate an interest in her work. The Memorial is the means by which you, Cather devotees, can make your admiration felt.

Mrs. Sherwood joins me in inviting you to express your opinions. What would you like to see done in Red Cloud? In your city? What would you like to contribute to the Museum, to the Memorial, to the perpetuation of Willa Cather?

Sincerely,

Miriam Mountford