THE WILLA CATHER FOUNDATION



Promoting appreciation and understanding of the life and works of Willa Cather

Preserving the historical settings and archives associated with her timeless writings



To our friends and supporters

Our first-ever annual report speaks to the tremendous progress the Willa Cather Foundation has made over the past few months and years. One of our more prominent members recently toured the sites associated with another major American author — and gave us a "superior" rating in comparison. Believe me, the dedicated work of our staff and board earns us that distinction every day! Particularly worthy of thanks is our outgoing Executive Director, Betty Kort, for her tireless efforts in advancing the work of the Willa Cather Foundation for the past five years. Betty will resume her work with the Board of Governors and has been succeeded as Executive Director by Cynthia Bruneteau.

As you will tell from this report, we are moving forward in every aspect of our mission. With this inaugural report, we can both celebrate our achievements and join together in supporting the work that is ahead of us. Many reading this have supported us in the past — this is a chronicle of achievements you helped bring about. My thanks to all who support us in our work of preserving part of our heritage, celebrating the life and work of Willa Cather, and growing appreciation for the legacy of one of the world's great artists. You are invaluable to our work; your belief in our mission is a great encouragement to all of us.

Charles A. Peek, President
Willa Cather Foundation Board of Governors



I am taking this opportunity once again to thank you for your generous financial support in the year 2007. It is always a pleasure to work for and with the Cather community. Because of you, the Willa Cather Foundation has had the resources to produce a variety of productive educational and cultural programming, provide important services to the Cather community at large, and continue to preserve and protect important literary and historical artifacts and sites. Most gratifying to me are those personal notes, cards, and letters you have sent that give assurance that the Willa Cather Foundation will remain healthy long into the future and that our mission to promote and preserve the life, times, sites, and works of Willa Cather will continue.

Again, thank you for making 2007 a terrific year.

Betty Kort

Executive Director Emeritus

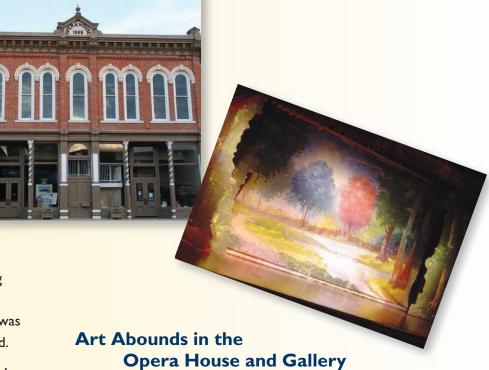
Home and the World — Willa Cather Foundation Events

"Willa Cather and Material Culture" was the theme of the 52nd annual **Spring Conference** in Red Cloud on April 30-May I, 2007. Supported by grants from the Nebraska Humanities Council and Nebraska Arts Council, this popular annual event attracted more than

200 Cather lovers and scholars for its exploration of the real-world objects and artifacts that appear in Cather's work. Debuting at Spring Conference was our wonderful Steinway grand piano, donated by a generous anonymous benefactor. "Cather and Her Contemporaries" was the theme of the 2008 Spring Conference June 5-7, 2008 in Red Cloud.

The IIth International Cather Seminar, "Willa Cather: A Writer's World," was held in Paris and Provence from June 24-July I, 2007. The Willa Cather Foundation co-sponsored this prestigious biennial event with Brigham Young University, St. Lawrence University, the University of Provence at Aix, and the University of Paris III (La Sorbonne Nouvelle). Seminar participants and guests were treated to a week-long series of tours, lectures and presentations and were able to stay in the I4th-century Abbaye Saint-Michel near Avignon.

In June 2008, the Foundation hosted our first **Elderhostel** program, bringing more than thirty visitors to Red Cloud for five days of learning and exploration. Participants had the opportunity to experience "Red Cloud: Willa Cather's Window to the World" under the direction of noted Cather scholar, Merrill Maguire Skaggs, professor emeritus at Drew University and Willa Cather Foundation Board Member.



Opera House performances and exhibits in the Art Gallery delight visitors year-round. In 2007 the Willa Cather Foundation presented a wide range of cultural programming including poetry readings, opera recitals, the Missoula Children's Theatre, big band performances, community theater troupes, live concerts, humanities programming, and popular films. The Art Gallery hosted exhibits of landscape and nature photography, the arts of area residents, and important installations of works dedicated to Willa Cather and Mari Sandoz. These events were made possible with grants and sponsorship support from numerous organizations including the Nebraska Arts Council, the Nebraska Humanities Council, the Republican Valley Arts Council, Red Cloud Women's Chamber of Commerce and numerous others, including many corporate sponsors.

Revitalizing Historic Sites

The Willa Cather Foundation makes its home in the Red Cloud Opera House, the crown jewel of the largest collection of historic sites in the United States dedicated to a single author. This beautiful example of Main Street Victoriana, where Willa Cather received her early exposure to the performing arts, reopened in 2003 after an ambitious restoration. It now provides office facilities for the Foundation's dedicated staff, and houses a bookstore and shop as well as an art gallery and theater.

The many individuals and organizations who made that restoration a success continue to provide valuable support to the Foundation as we act as responsible stewards for the many properties under our care.

The Willa Cather Foundation's **Moon Block** is our next large-scale restoration project. This expansive I886 building adjacent to the Opera House will provide us with long-awaited facilities for the Foundation's archives. We are thankful to our U.S. Senators and Congressional representatives, who were instrumental in helping the Foundation secure federal funds to begin the initial stages of this multi-year project. Future fundraising will enable us to fulfill our plans, which include additional back-stage facilities for the Opera House, expansion of our wonderful bookstore, commercial storefronts, and rental loft apartments.





Restoration of the **Harling House**, prominently featured in *My Ántonia* and the site of many Foundation activities, nears completion. Soon it will have a self-contained apartment upstairs for use by visiting scholars and honored guests, as well as a full complement of historic furnishings throughout. Nancy and Bernie Picchi, long-time friends of the Foundation, undertook major restoration of the house before donating it to the Foundation, and continue to sponsor interior work. A generous donation from Faye Glass also assists with this project.

Since accepting the 608-acre **Willa Cather Memorial Prairie** from the Nature Conservancy in 2006, the Foundation continues to restore and conserve the rare native grasses and plant life of this delicate mixed-grass prairie. This process has included extensive removal of non-native trees that inhibit the growth of more than 250 indigenous plant species. We are putting in hiking paths and installing new fencing to allow for short-term grazing rotations. As we enable the prairie to return to its natural state, ecotourism will become a larger part of our focus.

During 2007, we began saving the I884 **Baptist Church** by reconstructing its foundation and basement. This church is featured in Cather's short story, "The Joy of Nelly Deane." Our strategic partner, the Nebraska State Historical Society, carried out major façade and roof repair to the I889 **Garber Bank Building.** Governor Garber was the prototype for Captain Forrester in A Lost Lady.

Endowing the Future

After successfully meeting the terms of our challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 2006, the Foundation has created a programming and archive endowment. A careful search and screening process enabled the Foundation to select two **investment managers** to oversee this \$1.1 million endowment, as well as our scholarship and prairie endowments. We recognize our duty to our donors and members to manage and deploy these funds prudently to ensure the ongoing vitality of the Foundation.



A Solid Foundation

The Willa Cather Foundation consistently looks to our *own* foundation, examining and upgrading to ensure that our systems and processes are equal to the demands of the future. This assessment is wide-ranging and ongoing. Here are just a few examples, among many:

- Indexing and digitizing our half-century archive of the quarterly

 Newsletter and Review
- Adopting new systems and processes for cataloging our collections
- Planning for new computer systems to track inventory and sales in our bookstore
- Updating and expanding our website, www.willacather.org, with the support of Nebraska's Division of Travel and Tourism

Several of these initiatives were sponsored and supported by our long-time Board Member, Don Connors, who passed away in February, 2008.

A Wide Reach: The Story in Numbers

The Willa Cather Foundation is happily situated in Red Cloud, Nebraska, a friendly town of some I,100 souls. But our reach is remarkably wide. Here are a few examples from 2007.

- 9.200 Foundation visitors
- 3,I36 Opera House event attendees
- Guests from 48 states and 9 countries
- I7 school tours
- 200 Spring Conference attendees
- I5I International Symposium attendees

Financial Summary 2007

Use of Funds Support and Revenue 3% 7% 5% 20% 6% 30% 17% 7% 5% 13% 21% 10% 3% 29% 9% 1% 14% Contributions \$157,617 **Program Services** Bookstore, Publications, Conferences and Seminars Royalty Income 55,024 \$ 35,604 71,393 Nebraska State Historical Society Operations and Maintenance 82,146 Grants 44,947 Results of Investments Opera House Operations and Maintenance 102,320 17,198 Rental Income Cather Prairie Operations and Maintenance 6,260 Nebraska State Historical Society Contract 68,429 **Supporting Services** Membership Fees 34,610 Management and General Expenses 142,767 **Bookstore Sales** 32,978 Development 22,164 Tours and Admissions 28,971 Depreciation 100,147 Conferences, Seminars and Other 15,798

The variance between Support and Revenue and Use of Funds represents an addition to net assets.

These figures are based on final year-end audited information compiled by an independent public accounting firm.

\$526,965

Total Support and Revenue

Total Expenditures

\$491,408

Support

The following individuals and organizations were donors to the Willa Cather Foundation in 2007. Some donations may include payment on a pledge or grant; gifts including such a payment are denoted by an asterisk. Space does not permit us to list donations under \$50.00, but we are grateful for these contributions as every gift is important to us.

\$25,000 to \$49,999

Anonymous

\$15,000 to \$24,999

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\$10,000 to \$14,999

Don E. Connors, dec.—Huntington Beach, CA Carol Cope—Kearney, NE Faye J. Glass—Crete, NE Robert E. Hayes, dec.—Green Valley, AZ Nebraska Humanities Council*—Lincoln, NE Bernard J. & Nancy S. Picchi*—New York, NY

\$5,000 to \$9,999

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\$2,500 to \$4,999

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\$1,000 to \$2,499

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\$250 to \$499

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Dennis & Sally Hansen—Red Cloud, NE
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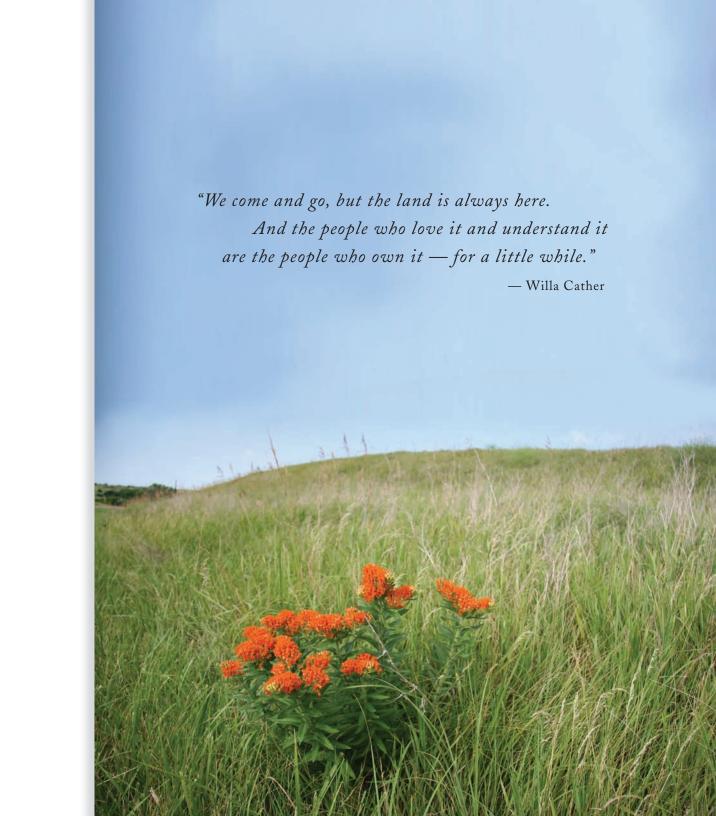
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