

THE

NEWS FROM CATHERLAND

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Letter from the Executive Director 2

Looking ahead to the 57th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference & Symposium 2

Portraits of the Prairie: The Land that Inspired Willa Cather is on display now 3

5th annual Prairie Writers' Workshop with Mary K. Stillwell 3

Join us for our upcoming events 4

VIRTUAL HOUSEWARMING FOR THE CATHER SECOND HOME

In anticipation of the grand opening of the Cather Second Home, the Willa Cather Foundation is holding a virtual housewarming party in order to furnish the home with linens, china, cookware, and other basic housewares. Please join us in celebrating this grand occasion by purchasing an item from one of the Foundation's gift registries. All contributors will have the opportunity to catch a sneak peek of the Cather Second Home

restoration at a special reception on December 10, 2011. When fully furnished, the home will be available to house scholars, artists in residence, and other visitors to Red Cloud, Nebraska. Visit our website to view the gift registries or contact us at 866-731-7304. Registry items may be mailed to the Foundation office at 413



North Webster Street, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970. Please include a copy of the receipt in order to receive an acknowledgment for tax-deduction purposes. Thank you!

SIGMA TAU DELTA HIGH PLAINS FALL GATHERING HELD AT THE OPERA HOUSE

Sigma Tau Delta, the national English honor society, held a conference at the Red Cloud Opera House September 23-24. The event was co-hosted by the Rho Psi Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta at Fort Hays State University, the Alpha

Alpha Psi Chapter at Hastings College, and the Willa Cather Foundation. Events included: panels of student critical papers on the work of Willa Cather; presentations of creative responses to the work of Willa Cather; a discussion led by Andrew Jewell, edi-

tor of the Willa Cather Archive; tours of the Cather historic sites; and service-learning projects. The conference concluded with a poetry evening featuring Matt Mason's Poetry Out Loud and student readings.



“What was it about Red Cloud that made it so impressionable? Was it the hub of activity surrounding the train depot? The Opera House that was Ms. Cather’s window to the world?”

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LESLIE C. LEVY

Willa Cather said, the first years of one’s life make the deepest impression. There is no dispute that Red Cloud, Nebraska, made a deep impression on her. It was the prototype for the towns in several of her novels. It is Hanover of *O Pioneers!*, Moonstone of *The Song of the Lark*, Black Hawk of *My Ántonia*, Frankfort of *One of Ours*, Sweetwater of *A Lost Lady*, and Haverford of *Lucy Gayheart*. It is the village of “The Best Years” and of the stories in *Obscure Destinies*.

What was it about Red Cloud that made it so impressionable? Was it the hub of activity surrounding the train depot? The Opera House that was Ms. Cather’s window to the

world? The mercantile with its varied staples and sundries? Maybe it was one of the beautiful churches or perhaps it was the wild, free prairie?

If I had to guess, I would say it was the people of Red Cloud that made the deepest impression. The same remains true today. Since August 1, I have had the good fortune to call Red Cloud my second home. I love driving down Webster Street with its 94-year-old bricks, old fashioned lighting and quaint flower boxes. I love the façades of the buildings...but the people inside those buildings define Red Cloud. I am having a great time absorbing the history of Red Cloud and Webster County; learning more about Ms. Cather’s

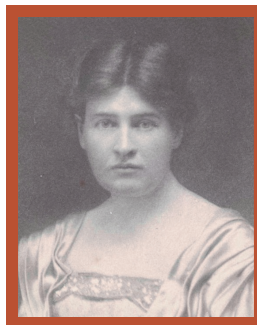
family and friends; meeting current residents and their families—their stories and histories are as varied and colorful as they are intriguing.

And, I am not alone—3,700 other people who wanted to experience Catherland made the trip to Red Cloud this summer. And, while Ms. Cather’s legacy is the common thread that inspired each visitor, something unique was taken away by everyone.

Call it by any name you want, but the town of Red Cloud is a gem to visit in this beautiful Republican River Valley. Take a look at your schedule... isn’t it time you were inspired to visit too?

57TH ANNUAL WILLA CATHER SPRING CONFERENCE & SYMPOSIUM

“Willa Cather, Poet: Making Herself Born” will be the theme of the 57th annual Willa Cather Spring Conference & Symposium scheduled for May 31-June 2, 2012. The conference and the one-day scholarly symposium preceding it will be focused on Cather the poet, on poetry, and on today’s poets from the Great Plains region. Cather’s close readers have long noted her



Willa Cather ca. 1902

sharp presentation of herself as prairie poet with “Prairie Spring” at the beginning of her “real” first novel, *O Pioneers!*, yet her actual first book, *April Twilights* (1903), and its contexts, have received much less critical attention. In much the same way, the scholarly edition of Cather’s

Poems, now in preparation, will be among the last volumes published in that series by the University of Nebraska Press.

The 2012 Spring Conference will be a lively celebration

of poets and poetry on the Great Plains with readings and performances, discussions, and a “Passing Show” panel devoted to Cather as a writer who began as a poet and then established herself as a writer of prose both luminous and poetic. The one-day scholarly symposium preceding the conference will focus on Cather as an engaged *fin de siècle* poet-aesthete intent on making her mark in literature. Proposals, inquiries, and expressions of interest should be sent by February 15, 2012 to Robert Thacker at rthacker@stlawu.edu.

PORTRAITS OF THE PRAIRIE: THE LAND THAT INSPIRED WILLA CATHER

Showing in the Art Gallery from October 15 through December 15 is an exhibit entitled *Portraits of the Prairie: The Land that Inspired Willa Cather*. It is often called "Catherland"-Webster County, Nebraska, where the quintessential American novelist Willa Cather spent her childhood and found inspiration for her stories of European immigrants on the prairie. Richard Schilling, with his watercolor paintings and ink sketches, conducts us to that land, to scenes that might have influenced Cather, but as they appear today. Schilling's images take us to Red Cloud, Cather's childhood home; to the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, a 608-acre botani-

cal jewel of mixed-grass prairie which is being restored to its pre-1900 condition; and the "the Divide," the high prairie land between the Little Blue River to the north and the Republican River to the south. Each evocative original watercolor is paired with an excerpt from Cather's work and with the artist's own musings on the history, geography, and ecology of the landscape.

Richard Schilling, who traveled the world as a missionary dentist and part-time officer aboard cruise



ships, chronicled his adventures in his book, *Watercolor Journeys*. He has been an artist-in-residence in Isle Royale and Mesa Verde national parks and currently lives in Loveland, Colorado. Ted

Kooser, U.S. Poet Laureate (2004-6) and 2005 winner of the Pulitzer Prize in Poetry, a University of Nebraska Presidential Professor, wrote the forward to the Schilling book *Portraits of the Prairie: The Land That Inspired Willa Cather*. The book is available online at www.WillaCather.org or by calling 866-731-7304.

5TH ANNUAL PRAIRIE WRITERS' WORKSHOP, MAY 17-20, 2012

This 4-day workshop, titled "Exploring Your 'Gift of Song,'" offers 14 hours of poetry-writing classes under the instruction of Mary K. Stillwell, artist in residence. The workshop will take place in Red Cloud, Nebraska; the childhood home of Pulitzer Prize-winning author Willa Cather. Guided tours of Cather's childhood home and other historic sites relating to her life and writ-

ing, including the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie, will be available to workshop participants. An early reviewer of Willa Cather's collection of poems, *April Twilights*, described its author as having "the gift of song," with the "true poet's eye for the concrete and the true novelist's interest in men and women." In this writing workshop, participants will focus

on identifying the themes and motifs that may already appear in their own writing, discovering their inspiration, capturing significant detail, practicing forms with which they are comfortable, and experimenting with new methods of expression. Workshop registration will open in March 2012. Visit us online at www.WillaCather.org to view the full schedule.



"Richard Schilling, with his watercolor paintings and ink sketches, conducts us to that land, to scenes that might have influenced Cather, but as they appear today."

Willa Cather Foundation

413 North Webster Street
Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970
Phone: 402.746.2653
Toll-Free: 866-731-7304
Fax: 402-746-2652
info@willacather.org
www.WillaCather.org

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

President:
Susan Maher, Duluth, MN
Vice President:
Thomas Reese Gallagher, New York, NY
Secretary:
Glenda J. Pierce, Lincoln, NE
Treasurer:
David H. Porter, Saratoga Springs, NY
Virgil Albertini, Kansas City, MO
Sara Corless, Mission Hills, KS
David B. Garwood, Red Cloud, NE
Joel Geyer, Lincoln, NE
Andrew Jewell, Lincoln, NE
Ruth H. Keene, Omaha, NE
Lynette Krieger, Hastings, NE
Fritz Mountford, Hastings, NE
John J. Murphy, Santa Fe, NM
Charles A. Peek, Grand Island, NE
Guy Reynolds, Lincoln, NE
Ann Romines, Alexandria, VA
Nancy Sherwood, Omaha, NE
Steve Shively, Logan, UT
James P. Southwick, Heber City, UT
C. Kay Stahly, Kearney, NE
Robert Thacker, Canton, NY
Steven Trout, Hays, KS
Lu Williams, Red Cloud, NE
John A (Jay) Yost, New York, NY

ADVISORY BOARD

Bruce P. Baker II, Omaha, NE
Laurie Smith Camp, Omaha, NE
† Charles Cather, Long Beach, CA
Carol Cope, Kearney, NE
James Fitzgibbon, Red Cloud, NE
Jane Renner Hood, Lincoln, NE
Ron Hull, Lincoln, NE
Betty Kort, Hastings, NE
Mellanee Kvasnicka, Omaha, NE
Lucia Woods Lindley, Evanston, IL & New York, NY
Dale McDole, Overland Park, KS
Gary L. Meyer, Red Cloud, NE
Nancy S. Picchi, New York, NY
Rhonda Seacrest, Lincoln, NE
John N. Swift, Whittier, CA
Gary W. Thompson, Red Cloud, NE
Joseph R. Urgo, St. Mary's City, MD

STAFF

Leslie C. Levy, *Executive Director*
Ashley Olson, *Associate Executive Director*
Stephany Thompson, *Director of Programming*
Jennifer Pankoke, *Office Manager*
Cheryl Wilson, *Buildings and Sites Curator*
Karin Prellwitz, *Maintenance*
Priscilla Hollingshead, *Tour Guide*
Angela Duca, *Office Assistant/Tour Guide*
Barb Kudrna, *Tour Guide*
Sylvia Andersen, *Tour Guide*
Kay Blackstone, *Tour Guide*



Become a Facebook "fan" of the Willa Cather Foundation! Visit www.facebook.com and search for the Willa Cather Foundation.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Red Cloud, NE
Permit No. 10

Visit us online at www.WillaCather.org to browse our bookstore or sign up for our e-Newsletter.

The Willa Cather Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation made possible by generous grants, sponsorships, and individual donations. Each year, the Foundation works to provide quality conferences, performances, and exhibits for our audience members. We are honored to accept donations and sponsorships via mail or through our website at www.WillaCather.org. Your support is greatly appreciated.

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 15-December 15: *Portraits of the Prairie* by Richard Schilling—Free

This traveling show of original artwork from Schilling's book, *Portraits of the Prairie—The Land That Inspired Willa Cather*, features 110 watercolor paintings and ink drawings.

Saturday, December 10 at 2:00 pm: *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play*—\$10

Inspired by the classic American film starring Jimmy Stewart, *It's a Wonderful Life: A Live Radio Play* will be presented at the Red Cloud Opera House as a 1940s live radio broadcast in front of a studio audience. Five actors will perform dozens of characters in the radio play as well as produce the sound effects. The rich and powerful holiday story is inspiring for all ages.

Saturday, February 11, 2012 at 7:30 pm: *Joseph Hall as Elvis*—\$15

In 2012 Joseph Hall returns to the Opera House stage in this special Valentine's event. Joseph was in the top ten of NBC's "America's Got Talent," has performed all over the United States, and now has his own successful show in Branson, MO called "Elvis Rock N Remember Tribute."

May 17-20, 2012: *Prairie Writers' Workshop* with Mary K. Stillwell

The 4-day event will encourage participants to explore their "gift of song" under the instruction of artist in residence, Mary K. Stillwell. Tours of the Cather historic sites and the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie will be available to workshop participants.