



# NEWS FROM CATHERLAND

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Visit us online at [www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org) to browse our bookstore or sign up for our e-Newsletter.

## National Willa Cather Center Taking Shape

2016 will prove to be of great importance to the Willa Cather Foundation, as several years of planning and fundraising will culminate in the completion of the National Willa Cather Center later this fall. Recent months have brought about great enthusiasm, as we've watched the historic Moon Block come to life again.

With the final phase of construction rapidly progressing, we are beginning to get a sense of the splendor that awaits future visitors, scholars, and students. The Center's interior spaces are now framed and drywalled, the vestibule and elevator addition are nearing completion, and restoration of the ground level façade is pressing onward.

Upon opening, the National Willa Cather Center will become an educational resource like no other, celebrating the life and legacy

of one of our nation's most celebrated authors. Providing a climate-controlled space to properly house our growing collection and the addition of professional study space for visiting scholars will help us fulfill long-term strategic goals. As an arts and cultural destination, the Center will serve thousands of visitors and students annually.

Through the generosity of an anonymous donor, we met our initial campaign goal of \$6.7 million. In total, over 480 individuals and foundations nationwide have supported our campaign, graciously led by Honorary National Chair Ken Burns. With final bids and finishing costs coming in 4% above our initial project budget, we are working diligently to raise a balance of \$98,000 needed to bring us to the successful end of the campaign.

*continued on next page*



Work progresses on the front façade and in the main reading room.



## National Willa Cather Center Taking Shape continued from front page

As our fundraising nears completion, a number of naming and recognition opportunities remain available at various giving levels. Supporters are also invited to assist in outfitting the Center through charitable donations to allow for purchase of exhibit display cases, archive room

shelving, study desks, and exterior landscaping materials. For more information about lending support and helping prepare the National Willa Cather Center for its grand opening, please contact Ashley Olson, Executive Director, at 866-731-7304 or [aolson@willacather.org](mailto:aolson@willacather.org).

## Scholarship Opportunity for High School Educators

Are you a high school educator looking to attend the Willa Cather Spring Conference? If so, apply to be considered for our High School Educators Scholarship. Through this program, five high school educators will receive a complimentary registration for the 61st annual Willa Cather Spring Conference, June 2–4, 2016. Successful applicants will experience the historic sites, the cultural opportunities, and the Cather research and pedagogy that

Spring Conference offers. It is our sincere hope that these partnerships will facilitate a dynamic exchange of ideas between Cather scholars and high school educators, upon whom we rely for our next generation of Cather readers. Please apply as soon as possible, but not later than May 10. An application may be found on our website or obtained by contacting Tracy Tucker, Education Director, at 402-746-2653 or [ttucker@willacather.org](mailto:ttucker@willacather.org).

## Volunteer Recognition and Recruitment

**National Volunteer Week:** According to national estimates, volunteers provide over a billion dollars in services annually. They are deeply rooted in their communities and willing to turn their beliefs into action. While April 10–16 was National Volunteer Week, the Willa Cather Foundation took a special opportunity to express our gratitude to those who give freely of their time to help support our mission. In appreciation of their steadfast support and to welcome prospective volunteers, we hosted our second annual volunteer appreciation and recruitment event in February.

If you've been to a performance at our historic Red Cloud Opera House, received a mailing from us, or attended Spring Conference, you've been touched by the work of a volunteer. Quite simply, we are able to do more, stretch our budget further, reach more people, and achieve ambitious goals because they are working alongside us. Willa Cather wrote, "Where there is great love there are always miracles." If you've been to an event in which our volunteers are involved, you know that they reliably perform miracles.

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Volunteering allows you to use your talents for public good, helps you build new

friendships, and is even good for your mental health. With those types of benefits, who wouldn't want to be a volunteer? The Willa Cather Foundation offers numerous volunteer opportunities that can meet a wide variety of interests, skills, and schedules. If you like to socialize, you're the perfect volunteer to help with our programs, artist receptions, and educational events. Positions as bookstore greeters, clerks, or tour guides provide opportunities on a daily basis year-round. For those with a green thumb, we're always looking for gardening and landscaping volunteers to help keep the grounds at our historic properties beautiful. Organizational projects like filing, preparing large mailings, and other administrative tasks are just the thing for people who enjoy working in an office environment.

Whether you have one hour a day, one day a week, or one week a month, we can offer you an enjoyable and rewarding volunteer experience. If you're interested in helping us meet our mission of promoting Willa Cather's legacy through education, historic preservation, and the arts, please contact Marianne Reynolds at 402-746-2653 or [mreynolds@willacather.org](mailto:mreynolds@willacather.org).

## Save the Date for the 16th International Cather Seminar

Mark your calendars for the next International Cather Seminar, scheduled for June 11–17, 2017, at Pittsburgh's Duquesne University. Willa Cather left Nebraska in 1896 and for the next decade made Pittsburgh her primary residence. During these ten years, she worked as an editor, teacher, reviewer, and freelance writer. She collected friends and mixed with all sorts of Pittsburghers. She published extensively—not only hundreds of profiles and reviews, but also more than thirty short stories; a collection of poetry, *April Twilights* (1903); and *The Troll Garden*, her first collection of stories. After moving to New York in 1906, she continued visiting Pittsburgh until 1916, writing parts of several novels at the McClung residence. Despite the importance Pittsburgh played in her life, much remains undiscovered. This seminar will further explore the influences of Pittsburgh on Cather's life and career. Seminar sponsors include the Willa Cather Foundation, the Cather Project at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln, Duquesne University's McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts and the Department of English, Penn State Greater Allegheny, and Saint Francis University. Please watch for the official call for papers in our next newsletter.



in Olathe, Kansas, Johnson spent fifteen years managing collectible and gift shops in Kansas and Florida. "I'm excited to embark on a new chapter in my life as a member of the Willa Cather Foundation staff," remarked Johnson. "I've met many wonderful people over the past few months and have thoroughly enjoyed learning more about Cather and discovering her literature."

## Nature As Muse on Exhibit Through May 23

Three incredibly talented artists have joined forces to create *Nature as Muse*. This exhibit features an eclectic selection of pieces from the father-daughter duo, Jack Sandeen and Amy Sandeen of Hastings, Nebraska, and landscape painter, Mary Linnea Vaughan of Santa Rosa, California. A public reception on April 16 allowed patrons an opportunity to meet the artists and hear about their work through a series of short talks. This exhibit has been described by patrons as a sensory experience that invites viewers to look at the world around them in a new light. Stop by the Red Cloud Opera House Art Gallery through May 23 to view the exhibit for yourself.



*Anthem* by Mary Linnea Vaughan

## Welcome Administrative Assistant LauraLea Johnson



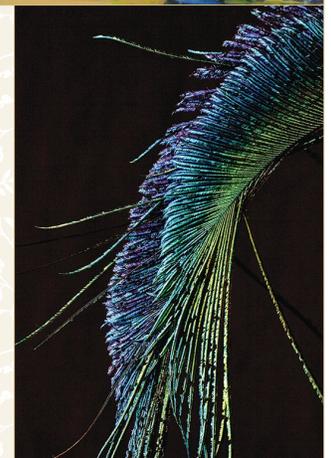
LauraLea Johnson

Recently, the Willa Cather Foundation was pleased to welcome LauraLea Johnson as our Administrative Assistant. Johnson, now a resident of Red Cloud, joined our team last December.

Her prior not-for-profit experience includes a five-year stint as administrative assistant at the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation in Custer, South Dakota. After attending MidAmerica Nazarene University



*Thingamajig* by Jack Sandeen



*Topaz* by Amy Sandeen

## Join us for the 61st Annual Willa Cather Spring Conference

As the world remembers the sacrifices made during the Great War, we invite you to join us in Red Cloud June 2–4, 2016. This year's Spring Conference will examine the war's impact not only on Willa Cather's life and war-era writings but on those of her literary contemporaries, as well as the legacy of the war on American culture.



Dr. Pearl James

Dr. Pearl James, author of *The New Death: American Modernism and World War I*, will deliver a keynote address which examines the work of Cather, Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Faulkner in context of the war. James has published and presented extensively

on World War I-era literature, modernism, and the visual culture of World War I, including as part of a series presented by the National World War I Museum in Kansas City.

We'll also welcome Karen Gettert Shoemaker, author of the 2016 "One Book One Nebraska" selection *The Meaning of Names*, to discuss the family stories and historical research she used in her novel. A lecture by Dr. Richard Harris, as well as readings of World War I-era poetry and drama, will be featured on Friday, June 3.

Later, we will honor more than sixteen regional artists who have contributed to our invitational exhibit *Summer Snow: A Celebration of Landscape* at a cocktail reception in the Opera House. As we conclude our activities on Friday



Karen Gettert Shoemaker

evening, we look forward to joining dance instructors Nick Hernandez and Maja Peci, as they teach dance steps from the 1910s set to popular music of the era.

On Saturday, "Decades Since Our Doughboy: *One of Ours* and the War Years," this year's Passing Show panel, will be moderated by conference co-director Julie Olin-Ammentorp and will feature Dan Clayton, the director of the Center for the Study of War Experience at Regis University; Andy Jewell and Janis Stout, editors of *The Selected Letters of Willa Cather*; and Max Frazier, conference co-director and instructor at the United States Air Force Academy. Following the Passing Show, conference-goers will enjoy a special World War I luncheon, featuring recipes designed to help the war effort and published in the official Food Service Administration cookbook, *Win the War in the Kitchen*.

Additional activities include a presentation by Diane Prenatt on Willa Cather and journalist Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant; viewing of the documentary "World War I: The American Legacy;" and visiting sites related to the novel *One of Ours* by caravan. The conference will conclude with a banquet featuring French cuisine from the Picardy region and Sarah Young's performance *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Music from the Great War*.



Dr. Sarah Young

As both a classically trained soprano and a Cather scholar, Young specializes in research on the music and musicians of Cather's time and will deliver a moving recital of the songs and ballads popular during the Great War.

## Telling War Stories: Rhetoric of the Great War on Exhibit May 27 through July 31

Rhetoric is the study and practice of effective persuasive, informative, and inspirational communication—whether that be in the form of written or spoken language or in the form of visual images. Though one focus of this year's Spring Conference is the literature of Willa Cather and her contemporaries as it reflects the First World War, literature is only one response. *Telling War Stories* highlights other rhetorical tactics from the period—persuasive and inspirational words and images that affected not only Cather and other writers, but the reading public as a whole, the politicians who decided the course of the war, the soldiers themselves and their loved ones.

This exhibit, curated by Willa Cather Foundation Education Director, Tracy Tucker, will offer a historical framework that is accessible and visually interesting for all audiences, while addressing a larger question of the language of war and peace. The exhibit will include items from the Willa Cather Foundation's own museum collection, as well as the collections of the Jaffrey Historical

Society, Dr. Richard Harris, the Nebraska State Historical Society, and the University of Nebraska–Lincoln.

Most exciting, perhaps, is a collection of World War I paintings on loan from the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library-Museum. In order to assist our soldiers during World War I, the United States Food Administration was created to urge citizens to buy less, serve smaller portions, and reduce waste at home and in their communities. Herbert Hoover headed this massive program and promoted directives to “Save the Wheat” by serving one wheatless meal a day; “Save the Meat” by not eating beef, mutton or pork more than once daily; “Save the Milk” for children; and “Save the Fuel” by burning fewer fires and using wood instead of coal.

This exhibit seeks to spur dialogue and reflection about life in America at the time of the Great War. It may be viewed daily through July 31 by visiting the Red Cloud Opera House. Business hours are Monday to Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.



Propaganda poster courtesy of the Library of Congress, WWI Poster Collection

## Summer Snow: A Celebration of Landscape

As we gather for Spring Conference to celebrate Cather and discuss World War I and its effects on American life and culture, we hope that you'll enjoy our invitational exhibit, *Summer Snow: A Celebration of Landscape*. This exhibit will feature the work of more than sixteen well-known regional artists and will be on display in our Red Cloud Opera House auditorium from May 1 to July 31, 2016.

Our conference theme, “Both Bitter and Sweet’: Cather, Literature, and the Great War,” focuses on Cather’s writing during the years 1914–1919. As we read her fiction, nonfiction, and interviews of the period, Cather’s interest in the landscape—both in Nebraska and in war-torn Europe—becomes clear. She writes of the decimated European landscape and the emotional connection people have to their land in her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *One of Ours*. Protagonist Claude Wheeler, a farm boy from Nebraska, faced with the destruction of the war, observed just how important these connections were. “Claude thought he had never before realized how beautiful this tree could be,” Cather wrote of the cottonwood. “In verdant little valleys, along the clear rivers, the cottonwoods waved and rustled . . . seemed to grip deep into the soil and to rest easy, as if they had been there forever and would be there for ever more. At home, all about Frankfort, the farmers were cutting down their cottonwoods because they were ‘common,’ planting maples and ash trees to struggle along in their stead.



*Cottonwood* by Carol Thompson, from the permanent collection of the Willa Cather Foundation.

Never mind; the cottonwoods were good enough for France, and they were good enough for him! He felt they were a real bond between him and this people.”

The title of the exhibit comes from a 1921 interview, in which Cather describes the French “summer snow” celebration, held in the early summer as the silky tufts of cottonwood seeds drift down. “Unless you can see the beauty all around you everywhere, and enjoy it, you can never comprehend art,” Cather told the reporter. This exhibit celebrates those small details in the landscape around us.

## Read Across America Day Celebrated

If you’ve ever shared a beloved book with another person, you know the joy and excitement this small but meaningful act can bring. To highlight the value of books and reading, the National Education Association holds an annual Read Across America day every year on March 2, Dr. Seuss’s birthday. This year, the Willa Cather Foundation, Red Cloud Community Schools, Auld Public Library, Cherry Corner Estates, and Heritage Care Center partnered to celebrate our inaugural Read Across Red Cloud (RARC).

RARC was an intergenerational event, featuring activities for people of all ages to celebrate the joy and importance of reading. Students created literary-inspired sidewalk

art downtown and high school students read excerpts of Cather’s work for residents of Heritage Care Center and Cherry Corner Estates. Elementary school students were treated to local leaders reading Dr. Seuss books, and Dr. Seuss art projects for school-age children were held at the Auld Public Library.

Academic studies consistently demonstrate a strong correlation between reading and academic success, from kindergarten to university. In other words, science proves what readers know to be true: reading books is good for you. In bringing a community of readers together on one special day, RARC offered opportunities to experience and celebrate the joy of reading.

## The Song of the Lark Essay Contest Winner

Our student essay contest celebrating the 100th publication anniversary of *The Song of the Lark* concluded recently, and we are pleased to announce our winner: Sarah Anderson, a tenth grader from York, Nebraska. Anderson's winning essay, "Passionate Persistence," examines Thea Kronborg's drive to greatness. "Before artists can clutch the hearts of their audience," Anderson writes, "they must be pursuing their art for a reason other than fame and glory. It must be passion that causes them to put their voices into song,

their pens to the page, their hands to the clay. . . . Artists need passion, and passion is what made Thea Kronborg a real success." Sarah and her family will enjoy a weekend stay at the Cather Second Home in Red Cloud, a free tour of the Cather historic sites, tickets to an Opera House show, a set of Cather's novels, and other promotional merchandise commemorating the 2015 publication centenary of *The Song of the Lark*.

## Red Cloud Named One of Seven Literary Destinations to Visit in 2016

Freelance arts and travel writer Marsha Dubrow recently compiled a stellar list of 2016 literary destinations for *U.S. News & World Report*. Within the feature, Red Cloud's Willa Cather historic sites round out a list of seven top literary destinations, including Louisa May Alcott's Orchard House in Concord, Massachusetts; Edith Wharton's The Mount, in Lenox, Massachusetts; Emily Dickinson's The Homestead, in Amherst, Massachusetts; Harriet Beecher Stowe's Andalusia farmhouse, in Milledgeville, Georgia; and Eudora Welty's Tudor-Revival style home in Jackson, Mississippi.

Visit us in Red Cloud to tour Willa Cather's childhood home and other properties that make up the largest collection of nationally designated historic sites dedicated to an author in the United States. The Nebraska State Historical Society's Willa Cather Childhood Home, a National Historic Landmark, contains many Cather family artifacts. Upstairs, a "story within itself," is young Cather's small attic bedroom, as described in *The Song of the Lark*. Guided tours of the home are offered by the Willa Cather Foundation year-round.

To deepen your experience, plan to spend a quiet evening at the Cather Second Home. Choose the room once occupied by Cather or a room once belonging to her parents or siblings. Guest are also encouraged to take in a performance at our historic Red Cloud Opera House. With gorgeous vistas and never-been-plowed native grassland, the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie is the

perfect setting for an afternoon hike, picnic at sunset, or stargazing. Excursions to the Starke Round Barn, Webster County Museum, Hastings Museum, and Museum of Nebraska Art are all great ways to round out a weekend itinerary. Simply call us toll-free at 866-731-7304 to plan your getaway.



Willa Cather's Childhood Home

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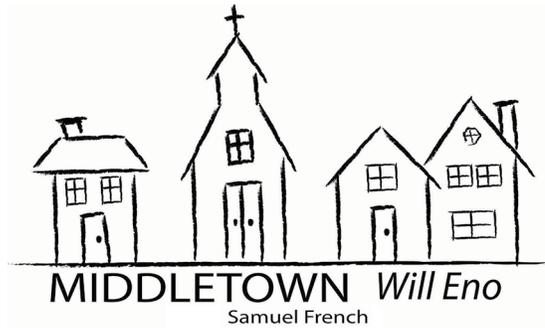
Lisa Mahin, *Tour Guide*

Janet Maruhn, *Tour Guide*



The Willa Cather Foundation  
413 North Webster Street  
Red Cloud, NE 68970

COMING UP!  
AT THE RED CLOUD OPERA HOUSE



UN-L Opera presents *The Marriage of Figaro*  
Friday, May 20, 7:00 p.m.  
FREE

Community Theatre presents *Middletown* by Will Eno  
July 7-9, 7:00 p.m. and July 10, 3:00 p.m.  
\$10 for students / \$15 for adults

Missoula Children's Theatre presents *Rapunzel*  
Friday, August 5, 3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.  
\$5 for children / \$10 for students / \$15 for adults

Nebraska Shakespeare presents *Hamlet*  
Thursday, September 29, 7:00 p.m.  
\$20 in advance / \$25 day of show

Visit us online at [www.WillaCather.org](http://www.WillaCather.org) for information on upcoming events.



Arts programming presented with the support of the Nebraska Arts Council and the Nebraska Cultural Endowment.