Plan Your Visit

The National Willa Cather Center is open year-round* and admission is free. Please visit our website for hours of operation, tour times, and tour prices. To tour the historic sites, advance reservations are necessary for groups over 15 people and for country tours.

Support Our Work

The Willa Cather Foundation is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting Cather’s legacy through education, preservation, and the arts. Please join us as a member or donate online.


Willa Cather, 1873-1947

Willa Cather was born in Back Creek Valley, Virginia, in 1873. When Cather was nine years old, her family moved to rural Webster County, Nebraska. The family later resettled in Red Cloud, where Cather lived until beginning her college studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 1890.

After graduation, Cather worked as a journalist and high school teacher, living first in Pittsburgh and later in New York City. Before committing herself fully to writing, Cather served as the managing editor of McClure’s magazine.

Cather won a Pulitzer Prize for One of Ours in 1923 and is acclaimed as one of our greatest American writers. She died in 1947 and was laid to rest in the Old Burying Ground in Jaffrey, New Hampshire.
Guided Historic Site Tours

Red Cloud, Nebraska, is home to the largest collection of nationally designated historic sites dedicated to an American author. To fully experience Willa Cather’s Childhood Home and other historic buildings related to her life and writing, join a guided town or country tour.

Willa Cather Memorial Prairie

The Prairie is a botanical treasure: 612 acres of unbroken land returned to its pre-1900 conditions— a time before the encroachment of settlers, overgrazing, and exotic plant species. Home to a variety of bird species, the Prairie is recognized as a Nebraska Birding Site. Hiking trails are open to the public without charge. As nature lovers, you’ll experience areas of tall grass, short grass, warm-season flowers, an unbroken horizon, and breathtaking sunsets. Be sure to check out a free Prairie Exploration Backpack from the National Willa Cather Center before you depart.

Cather Second Home

Willa Cather’s parents moved from her childhood home to this larger home in 1903. Cather often returned during summers and holidays for extended visits to see friends and family. You can arrange to spend the night in Cather’s bedroom or in the rooms that belonged to her parents and siblings. The entire six-bedroom guest house is also available for family retreats, meetings, and special occasions.

In town, you can choose either a 3-building tour (45 minutes) or a 7-building tour (90 minutes). On your country tour, you’ll travel approximately 60 miles of the countryside to visit more than twenty Cather-related historic sites.

Cather Second Home

To discuss details of your stay, call us at least 48 hours in advance, Monday through Friday, at (402) 746-2653.

Red Cloud Opera House

Cather wrote, “When I go about among little Nebraska towns . . ., the thing I miss most is the opera house.” This opera house featured prominently in the young life of Willa Cather, who gave her graduation oration from the stage in 1890.

Today, visitors are transported back to Cather’s time, when she and her friends eagerly anticipated the arrival of traveling productions. Plan your visit to include one of our numerous plays, concerts, exhibits, or cultural events.