



# Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

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## WILLA CATHER MUSEUM DEDICATION

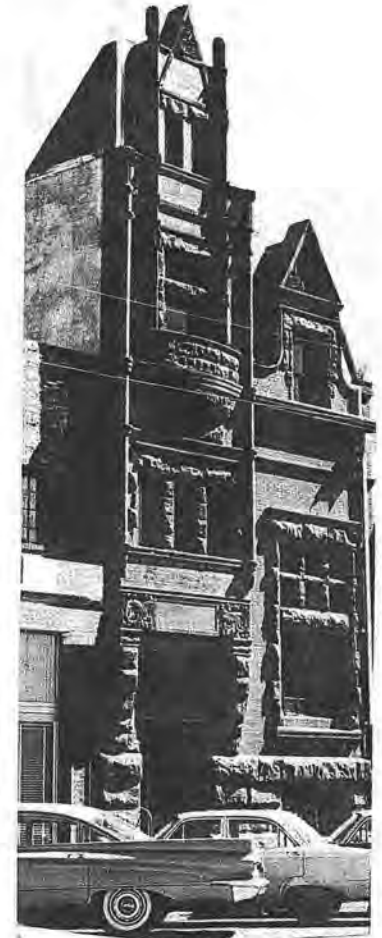
BY JOHN G. NEIHARDT

*In dedicating this Memorial to Willa Cather, great woman, great literary artist, who once was one of ours and now belongs to the great world and to Time, it is well that we should emphasize for ourselves the significance of what we are doing here today.*

*It is usual, I believe, to regard such ceremonies as being concerned with honor paid to the dead, and yet those whom we call the dead can need nothing that we who linger here a little while can give. And surely in that far country of the Immortals where her spirit dwells our praise would seem at best a feeble thing. If, as most of us no doubt believe, death is only our inadequate conception of the change whereby we pass into a larger phase of life, then how slight is any gift that we might offer to those before us — save love alone; and its value would be wholly in the giving.*

*Just as surely, it is for us, the living, and for the living who shall follow us, generation after generation, that we set this Willa Cather Memorial against the flowing years, lest we forget the precious heritage that is ours through her.*

*Here where the girl first dreamed the dreams that led to greatness; here where so many of the people of the living world she built in story moved briefly in the flesh; here now, in humility and gratitude, we dedicate this reminder of our debt to her.*



## REPORT OF MUSEUM DEDICATION AND SPRING CONFERENCE WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL

With these lyric words, poet John G. Neihardt expressed the feeling of all those who were gathered in Red Cloud on May 26, 1962, to take part in the opening of the Willa Cather Museum. The quaint, old, red stone building, restored for the purpose by the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, was built in 1889 by Silas Garber, who is known by the world as Captain Forrester in Willa Cather's *A LOST LADY*.

### . . . The Poet . . .

Dr. Neihardt, who has achieved fame with his lyric poetry and his epic *CYCLE OF THE WEST* as well

as a great volume of prose, recalled his associations with Willa Cather. Though both grew up in pioneer Nebraska, the young writers did not meet until Miss Cather as editor of *McCLURE'S MAGAZINE* printed two of Neihardt's lyrics. In 1917 both received Doctor's Degrees from the University of Nebraska along with General John Pershing and President Theodore Roosevelt.

### . . . Relatives and Friends . . .

Here for the ceremonies with the other scholars, authors, state dignitaries, and Cather devotees were those closest to Willa Cather—her sisters, Mrs. Jessica Cather Auld of Palo Alto, California, and Miss Elsie Cather of Lincoln; her cousin, Mrs. Jennie Miner Reiher and her lifelong friend, Mrs. Carrie Miner Sherwood of Red Cloud. Because many of her books, keepsakes, and

gifts from Willa Cather are now a part of the Museum collection, the event held special significance for Mrs. Sherwood.

#### Conference Speakers . . .

In addition to Dr. Neihardt, speakers at the WCPM Conference banquet were Dr. Walter E. Militzer, Dean of the University of Nebraska Arts and Sciences, Dr. L. V. Jacks, Chairman of Classics, Creighton University, Dr. C. B. Schultz, Director of Nebraska State Museum at the University, WCPM Directors Dr. W. K. Bennett and Harry Obitz, WCPM President Mildred R. Bennett, and Master of Ceremonies Ted Kennedy, Director of Public Relations for Kansas-Nebraska Natural Gas Co., Inc.

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## PROGRESS REPORT—AIMS OF THE WCPM WILLA CATHER MUSEUM

### Aim . . . . .

To secure the bonding, insurance and housing of a permanent art, literary and historical collection relating to the life, time and work of Willa Cather.

You can be very proud that your contributions have made possible the opening of the Willa Cather Museum. It is a giant step forward.

Yet we cannot take the time to rest on our laurels. Now that the main display area is open for visitors, we can turn attention to plans that have been made for other areas of the building. A great deal more time and money and labor are necessary to complete these plans. And we can turn attention back to the display area to finish up the details that were bypassed during the reconstruction work. Your monetary contributions are urgently needed to complete the Museum.

In addition there are many things that money can not buy. Only you can improve the exhibits telling the story of Willa Cather by joining in the search for materials. Please be on the look-out for photographs of Willa Cather, newspaper clippings, old magazines containing her stories or articles about her, first editions, foreign editions, autographed editions, and anything else that will serve to illustrate the life, time, and work of Willa Cather.

### Speaking of Pictures . . . . .

Mrs. Jessica Cather Auld's favorite portrait of her famous sister arrived last spring in time to be hung over the registration desk for the Dedication Ceremonies.

Mrs. Denis Robinson has given us a copy of the charcoal study of Willa Cather done by Nicoloi Fechin while she continues her search for the original.

### and Donations . . . . .

Very often donations are made especially important by their timeliness as well as by their magnitude.

Such a gift was the \$250.00 from the Red Cloud Peoples-Webster County Bank in August. Ironically, contributions ordinarily reach their lowest ebb during the summer when the number of volunteer workers swells to the highest peak and supplying materials for them to use is most important.

A great deal of credit for the work being done in the Museum goes to Mr. C. B. Atkinson. The organization of the volunteer labor as well as the direction of the entire restoration project continues in the exceptionally capable hands of Mr. William W. Leaverton.

### Museum Influence . . . . .

The growing recognition of the Willa Cather Museum by state and national museum organizations illustrates the positive results achieved by the combination characteristic of the WCPM—the wide-spread active membership, the careful planning, and the enthusiastic devotion of its members. The increasing influence of the Museum in the plains area is reflected by the number of requests for the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial to participate in the programs of museum conferences and conventions. We are grateful for these opportunities to spread the word about the WCPM through these organizations dedicated to preserving our American heritage.

This fall, members of the WCPM attended the Mountain-Plains Museum Conference in Topeka, the Nebraska Historical Society Meeting in Lincoln, and the Nebraska Museum Conference in Plattsmouth.

Other groups are coming to Red Cloud for their annual meetings. Most recently the Memorial was host to the Nebraska Sod House Society. Next fall the 63 Women's Clubs of the Nebraska Federation Fifth District will hold their annual convention in Red Cloud in conjunction with their 1963 project, study of Willa Cather and patronage of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

## CATHER HOUSE RESTORATION FUND

### Aim . . . . .

To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather.

A special fund for the restoration of Willa Cather's childhood home has been established.

Last spring Dr. W. K. Bennett gave the Memorial clear title to the house where Willa Cather grew up. The major undertaking of restoring the house will be possible when the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial is in a financial position to add this project to its present activities. In the meantime the house is rented. Working with our accountant, John E. Gorgen of Kearney, the Board of Governors has taken the necessary action to establish the Cather House Restoration Fund with the rent money the house is earning. Mr. Gorgen continues to contribute both his professional advice and services as he has in the past to keep the complex financial affairs of the WCPM in good order.

## ESSAY CONTEST FOR STUDENTS

### Aim . . . . .

To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial in the form of art and literary scholarships.

In order to provide a living memorial for Willa Cather and at the same time to encourage and reward young writers, the board of governors of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial established a scholarship for which high school seniors might compete by writing an essay. The response to the first competition was gratifying. The outstanding work of the first place winner, Miss Alison Teal of Brownell Hall, Omaha, along with the high quality of many of the other papers submitted, won praise and honor for the students, for their teachers, and for their schools.

Dr. L. V. Jacks and Miss Josephine Frisbie, the WCPM scholarship committee, announce that a \$100 scholarship will be awarded again in the spring of 1963. The new essay subject is O PIONEERS, MY ANTONIA, and THE SONG OF THE LARK as interpretations of early Nebraska life. Address your requests for contest information to Dr. L. V. Jacks, 1502 So. 91 Ave., Omaha 14, Nebr.

### . . . . . More About Students . . . . .

Teen-age interest in Willa Cather can best be illustrated by the five Superior high school boys who used one whole Saturday to drive 60 miles to lend their strong backs to Museum work. These enthusiastic youngsters had remembered their promise made six months ago when they came to Red Cloud with their English class.

Students from Hays College, Kansas, prepared for their tour of Willa Cather Country by writing and printing their own pamphlet on all the Nebraska stories and books. The Norton, Kansas, high school group did their writing when they got home in the form of articles for their school paper and for their city newspaper.

## INTEREST IN WILLA CATHER

### Aim . . . . .

To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.

You are contributing directly to the accomplishment of this AIM by financing the publication of the Newsletter and by building the Memorial into an increasingly influential organization. By augmenting the research material available through the WCPM you are assisting scholars all over the world in their study of Willa Cather.

### . . . . . Scholars and Authors . . . . .

President of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial, Mildred R. Bennett, has revised and lengthened her Cather article for COLLIER'S ENCYCLOPAEDIA.

For CLIFF'S NOTES, INC., publishers of notes on the classics, Mrs. Bennett has written a 35,000 word commentary on MY ANTONIA and is currently working on a commentary for Milton's PARADISE LOST.

The Nebraska Chapter of the National League of American Pen Women has named Mildred R. Bennett its president.

John March of New York City, WCPM Board Member, was back in Red Cloud again this summer to make a final check on his manuscript, ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF WILLA CATHER'S WORKS, before sending it to the publisher. Elizabeth Shepley Sergeant's WILLA CATHER: A MEMOIR has been completely indexed by Mr. March and will be out soon in a new University of Nebraska Press Bison Edition. Mr. March is also responsible for the indexing of the new edition of Mildred R. Bennett's WORLD OF WILLA CATHER now in its second printing.

"Will Cather and Her First Book" is the title of the extensive and scholarly introduction by Miss Bernice Slote for the first complete reproduction of APRIL TWILIGHTS since 1903. Now Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Miss Slote in her introductory essay, focuses critical attention on Willa Cather's poetry, her early trials of theme, style and motif—a significant phase in her development as a master writer.

William M. Curtin, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Illinois, was in Red Cloud recently doing research for a scholarly work. He has tentatively named his book WILLA CATHER: TRADITIONS AND TECHNIQUES and hopes to complete it some time next year. Professor Curtin reports that in addition to the Cather pseudonyms already revealed in other studies his detective work is turning up more and more things written by Cather under other names.

Professor Curtin and many other visitors in search of answers, along with the great volume of letters asking for information, indicate that the study of Willa Cather has become more intense and more wide-spread than ever before.

Those scholars who have studied here in past years and have placed their completed manuscripts and books in the Memorial Archives are giving immeasurable assistance to those who come after. All are dynamic participants in the cardinal Aim of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

WILLA CATHER'S GIFT OF SYMPATHY is a new book by Edward A. and Lillian D. Bloom.

Willa Cather's books now available in paperback editions are: ALEXANDER'S BRIDGE, O PIONEERS!, MY ANTONIA, MY MORTAL ENEMY, THE TROLL GARDEN, and APRIL TWILIGHTS.

### . . . . . National Coverage . . . . .

The attention of eastern newspapers was attracted to the Spring Conference by the superb stories and pictures of the event by Tom Allen and Irv Baker in the Omaha WORLD-HERALD. The Washington NATIONAL OBSERVER featured the Museum Dedication Sunday, June 10.

The October 12th LIFE suggests getting out to enjoy the brisk autumn weather by visiting various places where great authors lived. Included on the list is the Willa Cather Museum "in the heart of the ripe rolling prairies she described."

**Hall of Fame**

The Nebraska Hall of Fame has commissioned sculptor Paul Swan to do the portrait bust of Willa Cather to be placed in the State Capitol. Now working in New York, Mr. Swan is a Nebraskan from Falls City.

**Newsletter First Class**

The Board of Governors feel that the budget allotment for printing and mailing the Newsletter can not be increased even though 5,000 is no longer a sufficient number to meet the demand. Sending the Newsletter first-class mail will bring back all the undelivered Newsletters; enough, we hope, to make up the difference. Because first-class postage for the en-

tire 5,000 is out of the question, we will experiment with the method first. If it proves to be effective, we will gradually clear our mailing list several states at a time.

Some of you are a part of the experiment and are receiving special attention with a 4 cent stamp on your Fall Newsletter. Might we suggest that you in other states need not wait for your turn to inform us that your Newsletter is being delivered to the wrong department or is reaching you by devious means.

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The Board of Governors are grateful for your contributions to the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and for your continuing interest. To you, we extend our deep appreciation and our best wishes for joy and happiness in the coming holiday season.

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Mildred R. Bennett	Harry Obitz
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Sincerely yours,

Miriam Mountford, Newsletter Editor  
WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL

**YOU CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE LIFE AND GROWTH OF THE ORGANIZATION:**

... by becoming a member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

LIFE MEMBERSHIP . . . . \$75.00

SUSTAINING MEMBERSHIP . . \$ 5.00 Annually

- By contributing to the building fund.
- By contributing to the scholarship fund.
- By contributing your Willa Cather artifacts, letters, papers, and publications to the Museum.
- By contributing your ideas and suggestions to the Board of Governors.

**AIMS OF THE WCPM**

- To secure the bonding, insurance and housing of a permanent art, literary and historical collection relating to the life, time and work of Willa Cather.
- To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather.
- To provide for Willa Cather a living memorial in the form of art and literary scholarships.
- To perpetuate an interest throughout the world in the work of Willa Cather.



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