

Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial

VOLUME XII, NUMBER 1

and Educational Foundation

RED CLOUD, NEBRASKA

AN ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

Among the papers of the late Elsie Cather we found the Easter Poem which follows photographed from the original written by Willa Cather. Note the corrections marked on this original copy. We want to share it with you as another sidelight on Willa Cather of Red Cloud. Little sister Elsie was six at the time of this poem.

The Easter Rabbit.

Respectfully Dedicated to Miss Elsie
Cather on the Ides of March 1896.

When all the children were in bed
At our house last night,
There came a little rabbit
With fur of silvery white.

She hunted in the barn yard,
and she hunted on the ground,
and she hunted in the flower bed,
But not a nest she found.

And then this jolly rabbit
Thought of something very wrong,
and she laughed until her fur did fly,
and ~~it~~ till her tail grew long.

TL

and when I woke in the morning,
'Tis too funny to be true!
This naughty Easter Rabbit laid
a red egg in my shoe.

I never ate that little egg,
For on that very day
it hatched a ^{wee} little rabbit
That laughed and ran away.

#

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF GIFTS

The WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION received from the heirs of Mrs. Ethel Barnes the gift of the first Red Cloud Catholic Church. Built in 1883, the church is 24 by 30 feet and 16 feet high. The roof is half pitch, the windows with circle top. Originally, the church had a cupola eight feet above the roof, and for entry, double doors with a transom. It was formally opened November 18, 1883, and dedicated November 21, 1883, named St. Juliana Falernexis.



First Red Cloud Catholic Church — Built 1883

In this church Anna Sadilek (My Antonia) married John Pavelka (Anton Cuzak). The little church became known for its music. The best singers, whether or not Catholic, attended church here to sing. Mr. Reed, a railway man, sang tenor and Mrs. Reed sang alto. Margaret Miner sang soprano. Mary Miner and later Irene Miner played the organ. Mr. Reed had a beautiful voice and sang the "Gloria" as described in **Pioneers!** Willa Cather had no doubt heard the music here.

The church was converted to a residence about 1906 when the new Catholic Church was finished. It has been used as a residence ever since. The MEMORIAL will need a grant of sufficient funds to restore the little church to its original beauty.

The MEMORIAL received a gift of \$2,000.00 from the Miner-Weisz Charitable Foundation for maintenance of the MEMORIAL. Maintenance has been one of our largest problems, and we appreciate very much this substantial gift.

The MEMORIAL also received a TV tape made in Red Cloud and used for Nebraska Educational Television for American Literature. This gift from Mrs. Irene Weisz of Chicago can be shown on a regular 16 mm. movie projector.

SPRING CONFERENCE

of the

WILLA CATHER PIONEER MEMORIAL AND EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

- Program begins at 2 o'clock with a tour of Red Cloud and a tour of the Cather house.
- Dinner and evening program, 7:30 — Congregational Church Basement
- Reservations must be in by April 15 — Cost for complete day, including dinner, is \$5.00.

SPEAKERS

PAUL RILEY, Nebraska born and brought up at Trenton, attended the University of Nebraska. He has worked



five years with the State Historical Society, the last two as Research Associate. Formerly, he was president of the Nebraska Folklore Society, and has been interested in Willa Cather since high school days. He spent four years in the U. S. Air Force. His main historical interest is in the Republican Valley. He has published articles and book reviews in **Nebraska History** and other journals dealing with the American West. He will talk on the importance of preserving our historical heritage.

DANIEL FREEMAN JAFFE, Assistant Professor of English at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, is the author of **Dan Freeman**, published by the University of Nebraska Press.

Born in Elizabeth, N. J., Jaffe holds a B.A. degree from Rutgers and an M.A. degree from the University of Michigan. His honors include the major award in poetry in the Jules and Avery Hopwood Contest at the University of Michigan; fellow, Breadloaf Writers' Conference, 1958; and first and second prizes in the **Kansas City Star** Poetry Contest, 1965.

His reviews, poems and articles have appeared in **Saturday Review**, **New York Times**, **Kansas City Star**, **Mademoiselle**, **Ladies' Home Journal**, **Prairie Schooner**, **College English**, **Focus Midwest**, **The Poetry Bag**, and **Short Story International**, as well as in several anthologies.

He will talk on the importance of the work of Willa Cather.



ESSAY CONTEST

Esther Montgomery suggested a plan in regard to our scholarship and at our request she has carried it out. This year the contest is limited to Nebraska. The next time we have the contest we would like to include all the United States. Please let us know your thought on this matter.

Details of the contest follow:

WILLA CATHER ESSAY CONTEST

First Prize — \$150

Second Prize — \$75

The Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial and Educational Foundation is again offering awards to present eleventh grade students of Nebraska for essays dealing with phases of Willa Cather's work. The directives and possibilities pertaining to these essays will be discussed in Regional meetings of the Nebraska Council of Teachers of English to be held throughout the state this spring. However, we are alerting you at this time, so that you may be thinking in terms of the contest and formulating questions to be presented at the Regionals.

These essays are NOT to be book reports, nor biographical sketches, but critical analyses of some phases of Cather's writing or comparisons of two or more novels or short stories.

The choice of topic will be left to the individual contestant, but here are some suggestions which may be used as guides in making such a choice:

Miss Cather's Use of Classical Allusions in _____
_____ (one or two books)

The Immigrant in Nebraska as Miss Cather Presents Him.

The Narrator as a Technical Device in Certain Cather Novels (e.g. **The Lost Lady**, **My Ántonia**)

The Symbolism of Nature as Miss Cather Uses It in _____

The Concrete Imagery in _____

The Presence of the Interpolated Story in Certain Novels.

LENGTH AND FORMAT

1. Length is secondary, but the topics, generally speaking, demand a somewhat comprehensive treatment — of from 1000 to 1500 words as an average.

2. Papers should preferably be typed, double-spaced, and on one side of 8½x11 paper.

3. Contestants may wish to gather information from school and public libraries, but they must remember to acknowledge in the text or in footnotes all sources of information. Direct quotations (which should be used sparingly, if at all) must be indicated as such.

4. Contestants should include their name, address, and high school on the final page of the essay.

CLOSING DATE

All manuscripts should be submitted on or before May 25. Formal recognition of the winners will be

TOUR OF THE MUSEUM BUILDING

When you come to our Museum any afternoon between May 1 and Oct. 1 (otherwise by appointment) you will find the front door open and you will come up a flight of marble steps, laid there in 1889 by the builders of the bank building for Silas Garber, former governor of Nebraska.

Inside the main floor you will find the bank fixtures that decorated the interior in 1889. Many modifications and modernizations were made during the years, but all the old cages were stored in the attic. When we restored the building, we brought down all the old cages and put them back in as nearly original condition as we could.

On entering the main room, you should register at the desk. Over three thousand people will do this the coming year and you should be one of them. After registering, the visitor goes back in the room to watch a series of twenty-one colored slides with commentary. The slides give pictures of Cather Country, and the commentary contains mostly quotations from Willa Cather.

After seeing the slides and getting into the spirit of Cather's writings, you are ready to look at the photos of Cather which adorn the walls, or at the original painting by Dwight Kirsch, Grant Reynard, Elizabeth Dolan and Kady Faulkner, all Nebraska artists.

On the main floor is the gift shop where all Cather books may be purchased. We also have souvenirs of the Museum, notably a small silver charm plow with the name WILLA CATHER MEMORIAL attached by a small plate. We have post cards of the Museum Building, the Cather house, the depot, the Episcopal Church, the main street of Red Cloud, Indian Creek and the marker of Catherland erected at the fourteen mile corner north of Red Cloud. The visitor will find many other items of interest in the gift shop, namely most of the western books that have been published by the University of Nebraska Press.

To reach the upper floors, you climb a narrow stairs that takes you past a bedroom of the 1880's papered in red brocade pattern. The walnut bed is about 100 years old. This room depicts a scene from **A Lost Lady** where Niel has broken his arm and lies on Mrs. Forrester's bed until the doctor comes. We need yet, to complete the scene, two figures: that of Niel and that of Mrs. Forrester. These manikins cost approximately \$300.00 each. We are confident that soon someone will donate the money for the figures.

On the next floor you will see a scene from "The Sculptor's Funeral." For this scene we have the figures

made at the October meeting of the Nebraska Council of Teachers of English.

Manuscripts are to be mailed to:

Mr. Ned S. Hedges, Executive Secretary
Nebraska Council of Teachers of English
Room 222, Andrews Hall
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

—Esther Harmon, President
Nebraska Council of
Teachers of English

of the drunken lawyer, Laird, even to his shock of red beard and his bloodshot eyes. The sculptor, Harvey Merrick, lies in a black casket. The scene appears in accordance with Cather's story.

On the top floor you will see the Professor's attic. This scene shows the Professor's work room, with the sewing artifacts, described in **The Professor's House**. You will see the window opening on Lake Michigan, the fatal window that blew shut and almost caused the death of the professor. Here we also await the funds to place the figure of the professor which would complete the life size diorama.

Returning to the main floor you take another winding stairway to the lower floor. Here six show cases exhibit material on each of Cather's Nebraska books. The case for **My Antonia** shows Mrs. Pavelka's crocheting, some of the dishes that Willa Cather gave her, and some of the many translations of the book. We also have Antonia's sewing machine that she used up until the time of her death.

The case for **A Lost Lady** exhibits the slave with the shell that Mrs. Garber used for calling cards. Cather describes it: "There, by the front door, on a table under the hatrack, was a scantily draped figure, an Arab or Egyptian slave girl, holding in her hands a large flat shell from the California coast."

You will also see samples of Mrs. Garber's handwriting which Cather describes: ". . . long, thin, angular letters, curiously delicate and curiously bold, looped and laced with strokes fine as a hair and perfectly distinct."

For **One of Ours**, we have a fine picture of G. P. Cather, the prototype for Claude Wheeler, and his wedding and death announcements. This case also contains various World War I artifacts, and the banner of the old Catherton Literary Society that Mrs. George Cather originated.

On the lower floor you will see a case containing the hoods that were given Miss Cather with her honorary degrees. We have seven of these on display with the original notation Cather made when she sent them home to Red Cloud.

You will see a contour map of Catherland, showing the points of interest on the country tour. This map contains over 40 thousand nails and screws put in to give the contour of the country, and over which are moulded the hills and valleys of the western half of the county.

Six dioramas illustrate the six Nebraska Cather books. In the scene from **My Antonia**, the three children, Jim Burden, Antonia and Yulka, are looking over into the tops of the branches of the golden trees. Cather says: "Some of the cottonwoods had already turned, and the yellow leaves and shining white bark made them look like the gold and silver trees in fairy tales."

The scene from **The Song of the Lark** shows Thea reading in bed in her attic room. For **One of Ours**, you see the mother in the kitchen watching Claude and Ernest walking along the wintry landscape. The scene from **Lucy Gayheart** shows Lucy lying under the withered apple tree, thinking of her loss and wondering about the future. For **O Pioneers!** you see a sod house

with a man and woman working about the homestead. For **A Lost Lady** you will see Niel in the swamp picking roses at dawn, roses he wants to give to Mrs. Forrester.

Won't you please come and see for yourself what your money and your interest have done to preserve Cather artifacts and to show as much as possible of her life and times? We will be looking for you.

PUBLICITY

An article on the Cather house appeared in the February 1968 **Preservation News**, the paper of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The article tells something of the restoration of the house and gives a Cather quote regarding the old home.

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

● By becoming a member of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial.

LIFE DONATION CONTRIBUTION . . . \$75.00

SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTION . . . \$5.00 Annually

- By contributing to a project fund.
- By contributing to the restoration 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.

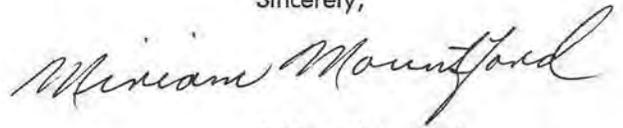
THANK YOU

The MEMORIAL now owns the Museum Building, the Cather childhood home, the Burlington Depot and the first Catholic Church.

It is by your gifts and generosity that we are able to acquire these landmarks of Cather's day. You are helping us fulfill our second aim: "To identify and restore to their original condition, places made famous by the writings of Willa Cather."

Thank you for your letters and suggestions regarding the Cather house. The curtains are now hung. We also appreciate the magazines containing Cather articles which you have sent us.

Sincerely,



Miriam Mountford

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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