
INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361

Fall, 1999

The name, "Inklings and Idlings," comes from the title of Carl Sandburg's first column, printed in the **Galesburg Evening Mail** under the pseudonym "Crimson", in 1904.

The newsletter welcomes articles, particularly about Carl Sandburg, Galesburg, and Knox County. Space limitations may require that they be edited. The articles should be sent to:

Inklings and Idlings
Carl Sandburg Historic Site
Association
313 East Third Street
Galesburg, IL 61401

-Barbara Schock
Editor

* * *

Music Again at the Historic Site

The autumn Songbag Concert Series is being offered again by the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. It will be given in the Visitors' Center next door to the Sandburg birthplace. The setting is intimate, smoke-free, and alcohol-free.

The concerts, which are co-ordinated by John Heasly, showcase music in the traditional and folk styles. Mr. Heasly's selection of artists for past performances assure this series will be of equal quality.

The first concert will be held on September 16th at 7 p.m. It will feature Any Olde Tyme, a five piece band from Peoria. The members will be presenting traditional American

folk music on guitar, mountain and hammer dulcimer, and auto harp. They may decide to surprise the audience with other instruments. Whatever they may play, they will provide wonderful interpretations of old time music.

At 7 p.m. on October 21st, Mark Dvorak will come from Chicago. He is on the faculty of the Old Town School of Folk Music, and is regarded as an expert on the guitar and banjo. Entertaining warmth, sincerity, distinctive talent, and variety in presentation have distinguished Mark Dvorak as a significant and important folk artist.

There will be a concert on November 18th, but the artist has not yet been decided. Whomever it may be, the concert will be well worth attending.

* * *

Still They Come

More persons have honored the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association by affiliating themselves with it. The new members are:

Gregory DeWitt
Judy Gibson
Mr. and Mrs. Edward (Kedrin) Gross
Georgian Rich

If you have joined the Association recently, and your name is not listed above, please notify **Inklings and Idlings** of the omission so it may be rectified in the next issue.

* * *

**The Officers and Directors
of the Carl Sandburg
Historic Site Association**

President - Norm Winick
Vice President - Margaret Krueger
Secretary - Jane Murphy
Treasurer - Patricia Reyburn

Directors

Raleigh Barnstead
Julie Bondi
Ethelyn Brewster
Steve Holden
Carol Nelson
Christian Schock

Newsletter Editor

Barbara Schock

Site Superintendent - Carol Nelson
Site Interpreter - Steve Holden

* * *

The Association's Purpose

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site is owned and staffed by the State of Illinois. However, not all that should be done to maintain the Site can be accomplished by the state alone.

Consequently, the nonprofit Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association came into being to meet some of the Site's needs. Since it was established, it has done much to enhance the Site.

But the Association's purpose is greater than that. It strives to keep the vision of Carl Sandburg alive by reminding people a son of working class immigrants achieved fame and greatness in the nation.

It also works toward that goal by sponsoring events at the Site, helping to welcome visitors, and providing them with materials that inform, educate and entertain.

From the Superintendent

As the summer winds down, the staff at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site can look back on the many visitors who came by. They derived much pleasure from the time they spent here, particularly in the new garden. Most of the money for plantings and landscaping was provided by the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, but the State of Illinois purchased additional flowers in the spring and again this fall.

Like all gardeners, we are changing, rearranging, and adding new plants. We are attempting a "cottage garden" which is an informal mixture of annuals and perennials planted in profusion.

There is still much to be done, but it is a labor of love for the staff, because we get as much enjoyment from the garden as the visitors.

The major construction project of the season was the rebuilding of the foundation across the south facade of the Visitors' Center, and the replacement of its concrete front porch with a more authentic one made of wood. Now we would like to make a small garden area with a brick walkway between the porch and the fence.

A burglar and fire alarm system has been installed in both the Sandburg cottage and the Visitors' Center. It is not as apparent as the other improvements, but it is as important.

Katie McGunnigal, who worked at the Site during the summer months, departed for college on September 13th. She was a valued member of the staff, and we hope she will return next year.

In October, we will be having a clean-up day to get the yard ready for winter. The date will be

announced later. If you can join us, your help will be greatly appreciated.

Finally, the Association could make good use of additional board members and committee workers. Persons are needed as chairs and members for advertising and public relations; and for committees which plan events held at the Site during the Carl Sandburg Festival and Railroad Days. Also desired is a person to lead the Midsummer Concert committee. The need for a corresponding secretary has become more apparent.

If you are interested in any of the aforementioned, please contact Norm Winick, the Association's president, or me.

-Carol Nelson

* * *

Wrinklings and Wild Things

"Oh, it's a long, long while from May to December,
But the days grow short when you reach September."

"September Song," from Knickerbocker Holiday, 1938. Lyrics by Maxwell Anderson, Music by Kurt Weill.

We detour from Rootabaga Country to view a half dozen Autumnal Scenes by Sandburg. As warm and earthy as unshucked hazelnuts, they should be spoken aloud to be fully enjoyed. (Numbers following each poem indicate the page location in THE COMPLETE POEMS OF CARL SANDBURG.)

HAZE GOLD

Sun, you may send your haze gold
Filling the fall afternoon
With a flimmer of many gold feathers.
Leaves, you may linger in the fall sunset
Like late lingering butterflies

before frost.
Treetops, you may sift the sunset cross-lights
Spreading a loose checkerwork of gold and shadow.
Winter comes soon--shall we save this, lay it by,
Keep all we can of these haze gold yellows?

355

TAWNY

These are the tawny days: your face comes back.

These grapes take on purple: the sunsets redden early on the trellis.

The bashful mornings hurl gray mist on the stripes of sunrise.

Creep, silver on the field, the frost is welcome.

Run on, yellow balls on the hills, and you tawny pumpkin flowers, chasing your lines of orange.

Tawny days: and your face again.

208

SPLINTER

The voice of the last cricket across the first frost is one kind of good-by.
It is so thin a splinter of singing.

373

RIPE CORN

The wind blows. The corn leans, The corn leaves go rustling. The march time and the windbeat is on October drums. The stalks of fodder bend all one way, the way the last windstorm passed.

"Put on my winter clothes; get me an ulster; a yellow ulster to lay down in January and shut my eyes and cover my ears in snow drifts."

The wind blows. The corn leans. The fodder is russet. October says to the leaves, "Rustle now to the last lap, to the last leg of the year."

351

HYDRANGEAS

Dragoons, I tell you the white hydrangeas turn rust and go soon. Already mid-September a line of brown runs over them. One sunset after another tracks the faces, the petals. Waiting, they look over the fence for what way they go.

56

PROUD TORSOS

Just before the high time of autumn Comes with the crush of its touch, And the leaves fall, the leaves one by one, The leaves by a full darkening sky fall, The trees look proud, the horse chestnut Stands with a gathered pride, the ivies Are gathered around the stumps, The ivies are woven thick with a green coat Covering the stumps. Yes, the trees Look proud now, it is the big time. Have they not all had summer? Didn't they all flimmer with faint Lines of green in the spring, A thin green mist as if it might Be air or it might be new green leaves? So, the first weeks of September are on And each tree stands with a murmur, "I stand here with a count of one more year, One more number, one more ring in my torso." Two weeks, five, six weeks, and the trees Will be standing...stripped... gaunt... The leaves gone...the coat of green gone...

And they will be proud but no longer With the gathered pride of the days In the high time.

409

-Steve Holden

* * *

Pancakes and Butter Cakes

Here are two recipes which are not difficult to prepare, but are most certain to please those who consume the end product.

The first was taken from the Trinity Lutheran Woman's Missionary Society Cook Book. It was published in Galesburg in 1936.

SWEDISH PANCAKES

1 cup sweet milk
1 egg
1/2 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon sugar

Soon as baked spread with butter and sprinkle with sugar and roll. Will make 6 pancakes.

These pancakes are very similar to crepes and can be cooked in a skillet or on a griddle. They can be enjoyed with lignonberry sauce on the side.

The second recipe is also from a Trinity Lutheran Church Cook Book. However, it was published in 1912 by the Young Ladies Auxiliary of the Church. The recipe was submitted by Mrs. H.C. Hawkinson.

SMORBAKELSER OR BUTTER CAKES

1 heaping cup sifted sugar
1 egg
4 cups flour
1/2 cup sweet cream
1 1/4 cups washed butter
1/2 cup blanched and ground almonds

Take 2 cups of the flour and the butter, mix and knead on breadboard. Then mix sugar, cream, egg and almonds, and add to the flour and butter dough, and then gradually knead in the rest of the flour. Form in patty tins and bake to a light brown; when cool take from tins.

In 1912, the sugar was sifted because the homemaker had to grate it off a solid block or cone. The butter was washed to remove the salt which helped preserve it in those pre-refrigerator days. The tins used for shaping the cookies were 2 to 3 inches across. They came in diamond, heart and triangular shapes. While baking, the dough takes on the designs impressed in the tins.

This recipe gives no baking temperature or time. The experienced homemaker would know by feel and experience the temperature of her wood cook stove. In today's world, the home baker would probably use a temperature of 350 degrees F. and a baking time of about 15 minutes.

If the cookies are served plain side up, the depression in the center may be filled with sweetened whipped cream or jam. The tins may still be purchased in specialty cooking supply stores.

-Barbara Schock

* * *

A Last Visit

(Editor's Note: The following article was written by Dr. Richard Sandburg, a nephew of the poet and a resident of Rockford, Illinois. We hope Dr. Sandburg will continue to enliven the pages of *Inklings* and *Idlings* with his reminiscences.)

My last visit with my uncle, Carl Sandburg, was one of the most interesting and eventful experiences of my life.

CBS-TV was preparing a one-hour television documentary entitled, "CBS Reports-The Prairie Years." It featured Carl Sandburg in Springfield, New Salem and Galesburg, Illinois; the latter being his birthplace.

Howard K. Smith, a leading newscaster of the day, was the narrator. The program was presented on national television on Lincoln's Birthday, 1962.

To supplement the television filming, a Carl Sandburg Elementary School was dedicated in Springfield on October 11, 1961. Several supporters of the Sandburg Birthplace, including the curators, Juanita and Charles Bednar, were invited to the ceremony, as were Carl's sister, Esther Wachs, and her husband; my cousins, Mart and Shirley Sandburg; and my family.

We were hosted at a cocktail party at the home of the superintendent of schools, after which we proceeded to the Governor's Mansion for a buffet dinner.

My wife, daughter and I were seated with a charming lady, a Mrs. Herndon, who was a member of the Springfield Board of Education and the wife of a prominent physician in the city. My first and almost automatic query of her was, "Oh, are you related to Abraham Lincoln's law partner?"

She smiled, and confided that she was asked that question almost every day. She always confessed she and her husband had checked their genealogy, but could find no trace of family ties.

Following dinner, Howard K. Smith visited our table, and I introduced him to my family and Mrs. Herndon.

Smith perked up at this and without asking her the inevitable question, led her to Sandburg's table with the

revelation that the lady was Mrs. Herndon of Springfield.

Carl arose quickly, fondly grasped her hand, and asked, "Would you be related to Abraham Lincoln's law partner?"

Mrs. Herndon was nonplussed, and for the first time in her life, fibbed that there was some connection down the line.

After their visit, Mrs. Herndon slowly returned to our table, and confessed that she didn't have the heart to disappoint Carl Sandburg by denying a relationship with the law partner. She hoped that this little untruth would make Sandburg's day, and she had no guilty conscience in the least.

Governor Otto Kerner was a gracious host, but he didn't attend the Sandburg School dedication. State police chauffeured us to the school where a crowd filled the aisles and spilled over into the school's corridors.

Carl told his audience, mainly children, "My poetry doesn't rhyme, it isn't obscurantist. It's just written for the average reader. Your faces have been good to me and I'll remember them. I may be back again if I live to be 90."

Following the dedication, we were driven to Carl's hotel, and we said our good-byes. As we were leaving, I asked Carl if he had completed his work as a writer for the movie, "The Greatest Story Ever Told." He didn't bother to answer, he looked down, glanced sideways to Howard K. Smith, gave a long hug, and headed for the door.

I wasn't aware of this until months later, but the George Stevens production of the life of Christ was not deemed a huge success by the critics partly due to filming problems, including inclement

weather. After spending a year in Hollywood, Carl was depressed with the movie, but refused to comment on it.

This was one of Carl Sandburg's last public appearances. His wife Lilian accompanied him from then on, and sometimes was forced to prompt him on words to his songs and quotations from his speeches.

-Richard Sandburg

* * *

On the Lecture Circuit

Carl Sandburg delivered an extraordinary number of lectures during his lifetime. Often he kept a rigorous speaking schedule. As a rule, wherever he went, large audiences were on hand to hear him.

That was true when he visited Elgin, Illinois, on January 12, 1942, during the early days of American involvement in World War II.

Sandburg and his family lived in Michigan at the time, but travel was not the onerous task it was to be as the war continued. A seat on a train, or an even more comfortable accommodation, was not difficult to obtain.

Elgin was not terra incognita to the poet. He had lived in nearby Elmhurst and had lived and worked in Chicago for many years. The venue of his lecture was the Laura Davidson Sears Academy of Fine Arts of the Elgin Academy. He was one of several luminaries who appeared at the school under the auspices of the Dad's Club of the institution.

The organization sponsored the annual Academy Forum as a fund-raising endeavor. Many well-known persons had addressed it. The first speaker for that season had been Major George Fielding Eliot, a military analyst often heard on the

Columbia Broadcasting System.

The Elgin Academy has long described itself as the oldest private preparatory school west of the Alleghenies. It was a fairly democratic institution when it first opened its doors on December 1, 1856. However, with the passage of time, and increases in tuition, the school's enrollment was drawn more and more from the families of the well-to-do.

Speaking at the Academy Forum must have afforded some private amusement for a former Socialist Party organizer like Sandburg. Presumably he did not allude to that aspect of his life during his lecture in a school supported by capitalists. In any case, he seemed to have no qualms about taking their money.

The Elgin Daily Courier-News reviewed Sandburg's performance generously. It said, "Sandburg reached into the indelible memories of a full literary life last night to thrill the capacity audience with reminiscences, flights of poetry and lastly, in modest tribute to the artist's versatility, with the singing of beloved American folk songs and spirituals to his own 'gittar' accompaniment."

According to the newspaper, Sandburg favored the group with "Numbers Man", an unpublished poem paying tribute to Johann Sebastian Bach.

If the performance in Elgin was typical of his lectures, he did not employ the dry recitation form the name suggested. It was, as the Daily Courier-News said, an evening's visit with the audience. Certainly Major Eliot, who had preceded him a few months earlier as a Forum speaker, did not sing, with or without guitar accompaniment.

In any case, the newspaper reported, it "was one of the most enjoyable sessions in Academy Forum history

all were agreed."

* * *

School Days

Carl Sandburg's formal education began at the Fourth Ward School, which was located at Mulberry Street and Allens Avenue. Before he could be admitted, he had to be vaccinated. It was an unpleasant experience, involving the scraping of a patch of skin on one's arm.

For some unfortunates, the vaccination "did not take", and had to be repeated. In addition to immunity from disease, the vaccinations left behind considerable scars. The boys enjoyed comparing them with one another.

Then the students got down to the serious business of learning about numbers and words. For the first few grades, the pupils wrote arithmetic and spelling lessons on slates. When both sides of a slate had been filled, it would be wiped clean with a damp sponge. A few boys spit on their slates and wiped them clean with their sleeves.

After a few years, the students began to use paper. It came in tablets, which sold for a penny or a nickel, depending on the size. Some of the children, including those of the Sandburg family, saved a few cents by using grocery store wrapping paper. It served the purpose quite well.

One of Sandburg's classmates complained about the transition from slates to paper. He declared he could not spit on the paper and wipe it clean.

* * *

Four-Letter Words

Nowadays, the use of so-called "four-letter words" is all too

common. They were known in Carl Sandburg's youth, more than a hundred years ago. At that time, they were not spoken or written nearly so frequently as today. Generally, their use was discouraged, especially among boys.

One day when he was in grade school, Sandburg passed a note to his friend Conrad Byloff. It contained six words. One of them was particularly offensive. Byloff was not given the opportunity to read it. Their teacher, Margaret Mullen, intercepted the note. Her first reaction was to give a hard look to young Sandburg.

Because he liked Miss Mullen, he was grieved that he had caused that

look. Clearly, he had been diminished in her eyes. That was the first part of his punishment.

He was kept after school. He was obliged to stand at the blackboard and write a single sentence, two hundred times. It was "Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." He remembered it the rest of his life.

His final punishment came on his report card. Under the section captioned "Department", Miss Mullen wrote the single word "Poor". Carl Sandburg did not indicate how he explained the nature of his bad behavior to his parents. In any case, he never wrote another note to any of his classmates.

**Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association
313 East Third Street
Galesburg, Illinois 61401**