

---

# INKLINGS and IDLINGS

---

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

---

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

*Summer 2001*

---

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

\* \* \*

## A Few More Friends

We are always happy to report the addition of new members of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. The welcome new friends are:

Robert Bondi  
Mr. and Mrs. Curtis Cook

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.

\* \* \*

From the Site Superintendent

Larry Penn, a well-known folk

singer, kicked off our Sandburg Days Festival with a concert of traditional folk music in the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Visitors' Center on April 19th. The attendance was great and included Galesburg Mayor Bob Sheehan, Sandburg's daughter Helga Sandburg Crile, and Sandburg biographer Penelope Niven. The new exhibits were still in the process of installation so the attendees got a sneak preview of the work. Great food was served by Uncle Billy's Bakery.

On Saturday, April 21st, we celebrated the grand opening of the new exhibits. About 100 people cheered as Helga Crile cut the ribbon. The exhibit tells the story of Carl Sandburg's fascinating life in photos and text. Steve Holden, our site interpreter, worked on the research for almost a year and Ryan Roberts, Steve Leonard and Mark Johnson from Springfield helped put it together.

The photographs are outstanding and were collected from many places. The main source was the University of Illinois Archives. It is the only exhibit in the country that devotes itself to Sandburg's entire life story. It is a great addition to the Site and to the City of Galesburg.

Helga Crile was so delighted with the exhibit that she has since donated several items from her personal collection of Sandburg memorabilia, including a fedora hat, a scarf, a press pass for the **Chicago Daily News**, notebooks with Sandburg's notations, stereoptican

views, and a cigar box filled with pencils, a pen, coins and other miscellaneous articles Sandburg collected through the years.

The weather was beautiful for the opening and guests were entertained by a barber shop harmony group from Knox College called "Six Ways From Sunday." Lunch was served in the newly remodeled barn by the Red Oak Restaurant from Bishop Hill. It was delicious! The popcorn wagon was open all day.

Guests were entertained by the award ceremonies of the Knox College Poetry contest and the Sandburg Memoir Writing contest. There was a Poetry Read by Sandburg College students and others who joined in with their favorite poetry. All in all, a great day.

The barn is only half completed and will be our next big project. We have much material left over from the exhibit work to augment the interior exhibits in the barn. We hope to get those exhibits completed later this summer. And with heat and air conditioning and new washroom facilities, we hope to be ready to use the barn for our folk concerts and other events in the fall.

If you haven't seen the exhibits, please stop by and enjoy them.

- Carol Nelson

\* \* \*

### Fresh Off the Press

The Museum Store in the Visitors' Center has a brand new offering. Penelope Niven's definitive biography, *Carl Sandburg*, is now available in paperback. All who missed the hardback version, which is no longer in print, can now own her masterpiece which gives a complete picture of Sandburg's life. Ms. Niven spent more than a year at

Sandburg's last home in Connemara, North Carolina, researching his life. Any fan of Carl Sandburg will want to have this biography on the bookshelf to read and to reference. It sells for \$18.00. It makes a fine gift too.

\* \* \*

### *Wrinklings and Wild Things*

#### *Our Remembrances Increase*

As I write this, Memorial Day weekend approaches. It will be gone by the time you read this, but not by much. Rather than sharing more of that ol' rootabaga whimsy/wisdom, I'd like to turn your attention to two poems by Sandburg. The first is from the collection called *Chicago Poems*, published in 1916. Its title is "Child Moon," and is about Carl and Lilian Sandburg's first child, Margaret.

#### *Child Moon*

The child's wonder  
At the old moon  
Comes back nightly.  
She points her finger  
To the far silent yellow thing  
Shining through the branches  
Filtering on the leaves a  
golden sand,  
Crying with her little tongue,  
"See the moon!"  
And in her bed fading to sleep  
With babblings of the moon on  
her little mouth.

"Baby Toes," written for their second daughter, Janet, was published in *Smoke and Steel*, 1920:

#### *Baby Toes*

There is a blue star, Janet,  
Fifteen years' ride from us.  
If we ride a hundred miles an  
hour.

There is a white star, Janet,  
Forty years' ride from us,  
If we ride a hundred miles and  
hour.

Shall we ride  
To the blue star  
Or the white star?

Margaret passed away in April of 1997, and Janet died in February of this year. During private ceremonies, the ashes of Sandburg's daughters joined those of their parents at the Site: Margaret on April 19, 1997, and Janet on April 20, 2001.

*"He named the boulder Remembrance Rock, for it could be a place to come and remember."*

- Steve Holden

\* \* \*

### The World of Carl Sandburg

(In this article, Dr. Richard Sandburg makes clear his uncle was not without honor in his own house and country.)

The tradition of not honoring a famous celebrity while he is still living, was ignored in many instances so far as the poet and historian Carl Sandburg was concerned.

Sandburg passed away in 1967, but in 1940, he received his first Pulitzer Prize for the four-volume Lincoln biography. In 1951, he was again awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his Complete Poems.

On Lincoln's 150th birthday in 1959, Sandburg was honored by being invited to speak before a Joint Session of Congress, the second private citizen accorded this privilege. The first was historian George Bancroft in 1874.

In September, 1965, when Sandburg was 87, Roy Wilkins, President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, made Sandburg a life member of the NAACP, calling him "a major prophet of civil rights in our time."

The poet was invited to attend President Lyndon B. Johnson's inauguration, but he was unable to accept because of poor health.

Previously, President Johnson had invited him to the White House in September, 1964, to receive the "Presidential Medal of Freedom." In accepting the award, he stepped up to the president, saluted and said, "Sixth Illinois Volunteers," his old Spanish-American War outfit. According to Sandburg biographer Penelope Niven, "It was a fitting honor and the last time Carl would venture far from the sanctuary at home."

Sandburg had honors heaped upon him both in his hometown of Galesburg, Illinois, and in Chicago on his 75th birthday.

He would have been proud to know that his picture would adorn a 13 cent postage stamp.

Although he was denied the Nobel Prize on at least two occasions, he received immense satisfaction from the Norman Corwin book and theatrical performance of "The World of Carl Sandburg." This was a complimentary version of his poems, biographies, novel, and selections from his "The American Songbag."

The stage performance featured actors Bette Davis, her husband, Gary Merrill, and guitarist, Clark Allen, who sang Sandburg's ballads.

This developed into a 17-week cross-country tour. The show played for three weeks on Broadway, and in small theaters all over the country.



It was popular at least thirty years later.

On many occasions, Carl would seemingly surprisingly pop out of the audience in response to Bette Davis' salutation. Also, in response to applause from the large audience, Carl would join the actors on stage in a chair of honor.

I drove Carl's younger sister, Esther Wachs, and her husband, Art, to one festive performance, as well as to several dedications of schools named in his honor, when the poet attended.

As my wife, daughter, Aunt Esther, Art and I entered the theatre, we were greeted warmly, with bear hugs by Uncle Carl. He was pleased that we were there for the show, and advised us there would be a pink champagne and mushroom omelette supper on stage after the performance, and "We were good for that."

The champagne supper was attended by many dignitaries including Governor Adlai Stevenson, Bette Davis, Gary Merrill, actor Cameron Mitchell, who would replace Merrill in the cast, actress Nancy Kelly, the Lloyd Wendt's and the Herb Lyons' of the Chicago Tribune, the Irv Kupcinec's, of the Chicago Sun-Times, and Claudia Cassidy, Tribune columnist, and others.

As we were visiting with the syndicated columnist, Hedda Hopper, we were joined by Uncle Carl, who recalled that Hedda was from Altoona, Pennsylvania.

Also, that he was a hobo in 1905, and while riding a freight train around the horseshoe curve in Altoona, he fell asleep in an empty boxcar. According to Hedda's column, Carl was awakened by an Allegheny cop and he decorated the Allegheny jail for ten days.

Lincoln bookseller Ralph Newman was there with Chicagoan Donna Workman, whom Aunt Esther cryptically described as Carl's "Chicago Confidante."

Governor Stevenson, who opposed General Dwight Eisenhower for the U.S. Presidency, preceded us up the steps to the stage, and my wife giggled, "Watch and see if he has holes in the soles of his shoes."

That came from an incident in the 1952 campaign when Governor Stevenson had been photographed while seated with one leg crossed over the other, revealing a hole in the sole of his right shoe.

Gary Merrill looked exactly like the poet and later, in a remarkable display of acting skill, was the image of Lincoln.

Herb Lyon's column termed Carl Sandburg the real "Mr. Wonderful." Carl stayed around all week making post-curtain speeches after the Merrill's finished their Sandburg elocution. He wrote that the snappy box-office would be "35 grand for the week," not bad for the sixties.

It was an exciting all-star memory in which the family was greeted as warmly as the famous. It was another great tribute to Carl while he was still living.

- Dr. Richard Sandburg

\* \* \*

Carl Sandburg in Stockholm,  
August 1959

(Tomas Junglander, our Swedish correspondent, has provided us with a brief description of an event which took place during Carl Sandburg's second visit to his parents' birthplace.)

Carl Sandburg and his brother-in-law

Edward Steichen were invited to dinner by the Swedish Prime Minister, Tage Erlander (1901-1985), who had been in office since 1946. He continued to serve in that position until 1969.

From Prime Minister Erlander's unpublished diary we have the following notes:

"Harpseud, August 14, 1959

"The dinner with Sandburg started in a peculiar way, with an electric power failure. Therefore, we didn't have food, lights, or radio. You couldn't have wished for a better dinner.

"I have continued to study Sandburg and I'm more and more pleased with him. But I wonder how he can remember all the people he describes from his early youth. I can, of course, relate in great detail about 4 or 5 people from my childhood in Ransäter, but Sandburg introduces a crowd!

"Now the American Embassy is informing me that Sandburg has to return to Stockholm already tonight. Crazy.

"Harpseud, August 16, 1959

"I notice I have forgotten to put down my notes from our Sandburg dinner last Friday. It was a big success, in spite of the fact that Sandburg and Steichen left already at 9:30 p.m."

- Tomas Junglander

\* \* \*

#### More From Sweden

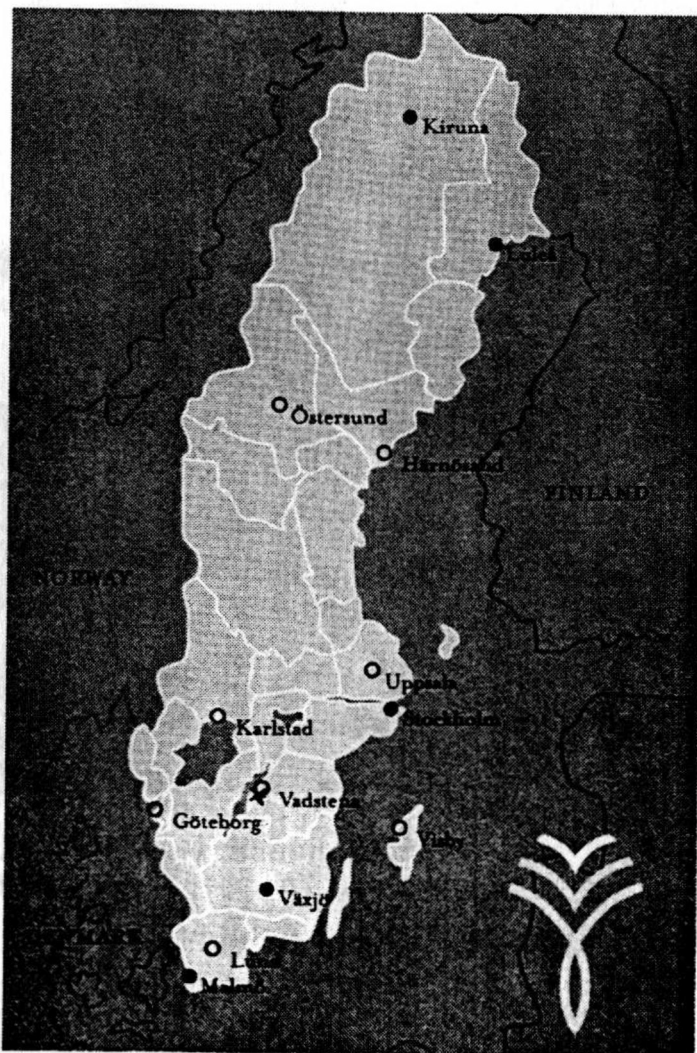
On April 21st, Tomas Junglander presented a display of maps and photographs at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. He had taken the photographs in Sweden. They were of

places where Carl Sandburg's parents had been born and lived in southern Sweden.

Below is a map of Sweden. Marked with an "X" is Vadstena, the largest town in the area in which Klara Mathilda Andersson and August Danielsson Sandburg were born. She was born July 20, 1850, at Lila Ostergard, Appuna. He was born September 28, 1843, at Botinge Asbo.

On the next page are two photographs. The top one is of the birthplace of Klara Mathilda Andersson. The other is of the birthplace of August Danielsson Sandburg.

In the next issue of *Inklings and Idlings* we will share photographs of farms where the two lived and worked before migrating to America, as well as a more detailed map of the area.







The farm house where Klara Mathilda Andersson was born.



The house where August Danielsson was born.  
Years later, in America, he changed his surname to Sandburg.

## The Pursuit of Learning

There were few books in Carl Sandburg's boyhood home. Apart from the Bible, and some other tomes, the family library was fairly sparse. If he wanted to read something else, he had to borrow it from the Galesburg Public Library.

One day he found a little book on the sidewalk on Seminary Street, near Second Street. It measured two and three-fourths inches in length, and one and one-half inches in width. It fitted nicely into his vest pocket. The little book was entitled "A Short History of General P.T. Beauregard." He had been a flamboyant general in the Confederate Army.

After examining the book, Sandburg discovered it had come from a pack of Duke's cigarettes. There were a whole series of such histories, each containing thirteen pages of fine print. They were of great appeal to the future biographer.

Although Carl Sandburg smoked little cheroots, he could not afford cigarettes. A pack cost ten cents, which was far beyond his means. Fortunately, he was able to find two men who did indulge in that brand. They promised to save the books the packs contained. In time he had quite a collection. It included lives of John Jacob Astor, Sarah Bernhardt, James Eads, John Ericsson, Cornelius Vanderbilt, and John Wannamaker, among many others.

Sandburg was proud of his vest pocket library. It might not have consisted of thick, leather-bound volumes, but it was precious to him, nonetheless.

In the late 1880's, Galesburg's nickname was the "College City." It had earned that title because it was the site of Knox College, Lombard College, and Brown's Business

College.

Lombard was just a few blocks away from Sandburg's neighborhood. When it held its commencement exercises, he and his friends would attend them. The ceremonies took place in the third floor chapel of the college's main building. It had a little gallery which provided an excellent vantage point from which to view the event. The boys would go there to enjoy the program.

Sandburg was well-acquainted with a member of one graduating class. Years later, Sandburg remembered he had seen him plowing his father's cornfield, and engaged in other homely pursuits. On Commencement Day, he wore a fine black suit and a stiff white collar. In addition, he delivered one of the speeches.

Several times as he spoke he used the word "theory," and contrasted it with the word "practice." Sandburg understood "practice" to be what one did to gain proficiency in stopping ground balls and catching pop flies on the baseball field. But the meaning of the word "theory" eluded him for some little time.

Eventually, he concluded "theory" was having an idea of how to make a play during the game. "Practice" was actually doing it. Therefore, education was partly the process of learning "theory," so that one could put it into "practice" in later life.

Carl Sandburg never attended high school. After he had graduated from the eighth grade, he had gone to work in a variety of occupations. He was a faithful and diligent employee, but he was always striving to better his position in life. Consequently, if he could improve his lot, he would change jobs without hesitation. He always gave due notice of his departure.

The pattern was broken with the outbreak of the Spanish American War. He joined up, and gave the United States Army the same fidelity he had shown his employers in Galesburg.

When he returned home at the war's end, he learned of a great opportunity. Lombard University would give a year's free tuition to any qualified veteran of the recent conflict. The school was located on the southeast side of Galesburg. It was as distinguished an institution as was Knox College, located south of the city's Public Square.

He was not sure that higher education would assure him a career using his pen. At the same time, he understood Lombard would give him some of the tools he would need. He had no difficulty in seizing the opportunity which had been presented to him.

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

## Annual Meeting

In accordance with Article III of the By-Laws of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, the annual meeting of the organization will be held at 7 p.m., Tuesday, July 10, 2001 at the Visitors' Center, 313 East Third Street, Galesburg, Illinois.

At that time, officers and directors of the Association will be elected for the coming year, and such other business as may properly come before the Association will be transacted.

All members of the Association are encouraged to attend.

Light refreshments will be served.

\* \* \*