

INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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

Fall 2002

One More

Another name has been added to the membership list of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. The welcome new addition is:

Vern Stisser

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.

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The Officers and Directors Of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association 2002-2003

On July 9th, the annual meeting of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association was held at the Site.

At that time, the officers and directors of the Association were elected for the following year.

President - Norm Winick
Vice President - Margaret Krueger
Secretary - Jane Murphy
Treasurer - John Heasley

Directors

Julie Bondi
Rex Cherrington
James Creighton
Steve Holden
Janet Lundeen
Carol Nelson
Patricia Reyburn
Dr. Richard Sandburg

Barbara Schock
Christian Schock
Katheleen Stout
Jeanne Struble

Newsletter Editor
Barbara Schock

Acting Site Manager
Steve Holden

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Out of The Songbag

The 2002 autumn Songbag Concert Series, which is coordinated by John Heasley, opened on September 19th in the Barn of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. The featured artist was folksinger Dan Zahn. He played both songs of an earlier time, and some of his own composition. He was well-received by those in attendance.

On Thursday, October 17th, the band Any Olde Tyme will appear. It plays both pre-Civil War and Celtic music on a variety of instruments, including the guitar, autoharp, mountain dulcimer, mandolin, penny whistle, and harp.

On Thursday, November 21st, the group Morning Star will perform. It is composed of Sunshine Lawnsdale, Mike Terry and John Heasley. They will present a variety of selections on guitar, harmonica, mandolin and banjo.

Both concerts will begin at 7 p.m., in the smoke and alcohol free atmosphere of the Barn on the Site.

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Not Quite Gone

Although Carol Nelson has retired as superintendent of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, she has not cut all connection to it. She remains as a director of the Association, so her wealth of knowledge is still available to be tapped from time to time.

However, she has warned she will be busy with golf, gardening, and travel, as well as with her four children and seven grandchildren. She may also realize her ambition to write a book about Galesburg's Swedish heritage.

Even though she is now seldom at the Site, the results of her twenty-four years of work there are apparent to all who visit. As she often did, she would encourage you to go there and spend a few hours looking around.

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From the Site Manager

So here I am, acting like a Site Manager because that's the title Springfield has given me: Acting Site Manager. I have always enjoyed the theater. Just imagine me in a torn T-shirt, standing out in the rain hollering "CA-ROL! CA-ROL!" That is not too far from reality, considering some of the paperwork I've been flubbing through. Enjoy your retirement, Carol, 'cause you sure as heck deserve it.

If you are unaware, allow me to tell you that our site, as well as most other State Historic Sites have had a reduction in work schedules. We are open Wednesday through Sunday, 9-5. Monday and Tuesday we are closed, unless the Monday is a State Holiday that is an "open" holiday. Confusing? Call ahead if you are

confused. I'm sure I can help you become more so.

Fortunately, despite state budget cuts, our latest projects at the Site are covered. The Visitors' Center floor coverings (carpet and cork flooring) are largely completed, and are paid for.

The walk, landscaping and pedestrian gate to the "Barn" are still in the planning stages, but should be in progress by the end of September. This will be paid by our Permanent Improvement funds, with minor overruns taken care of by the Association. The City of Galesburg has donated bricks to construct the majority of the walk and D.A. Hoerr and Sons, Inc., will pick them up and install them. The bricks were the highest priced item on the estimate, so I'm very thankful to Larry Cox and Tom Schroeder of Galesburg's Public Works Department in helping us over this major financial outlay.

Hopefully we will have assistance in filling in some Sunday hours of operation. Jeanne Struble, Association board member, has served as a contractual worker at the Site for several years. She has given me two more leads for contractual workers and the paperwork is in process to hire them as auxiliary help. Thanks Jeanne! Let's keep our fingers crossed.

Within the next month or so I'll be needing some help to clean up the yard for fall. It's been a while since we've done a "rake-a-thon," hasn't it? Just imagine those crisp, cool days and the fall colors and the hot dogs and the marshmallows and the blisters on your hands. Talk to you later about that.

- Steve Holden
Acting Site Manager

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For the Children

Before the August board meeting of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, each board member was given a copy of the Prairie Town Activity Book for review.

The preparation of the book had been going on for almost a year. A committee of teachers from District 205, Carol Nelson and Steve Holden of the Site and Laurie Reed of Reed Studios had worked diligently to prepare articles, photographs, puzzles, writing exercises, maps, and chronologies of Carl Sandburg's youth in Galesburg.

The aim of the materials in the book is to interest grade school children in the history of their town and one of its foremost citizens. The book will be used in classrooms throughout Knox County. Parents can use it with their children as well.

Copies will be available in the near future at the museum store in the Visitors' Center. The cost will be \$3.95 per copy.

The Association wishes to extend a very special thank you to Joyce Behrens, Mary and Tom Cerkez, Connie Kerber and Andrea Vitale of District 205 and Carol Nelson and Steve Holden of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site for the marvelous work. Laurie Reed added greatly to the appearance of the book with artistic layouts. We hope the book will be in circulation for a very long time.

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An Acquisition

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association has obtained a significant original manuscript which will soon be placed on display in the Visitors' Center of the Carl

Sandburg Historic Site. Through its president, Norm Winick, the Association placed a successful bid of \$2,600 for the material, which was offered at a Pennsylvania auction of miscellaneous Sandburg items.

The manuscript obtained by the Association was misidentified as a poem in media accounts of the sale. Although it has a lyrical quality, in fact it is the introduction to *Wind Song*, a collection of Sandburg's poems. Copies of the book may be purchased at the museum store at the Site.

The manuscript is in four parts. The first is written in the poet's own shorthand, which is barely comprehensible. There follow two typed versions; one heavily annotated by Sandburg, and the other a clean copy of the final version. The last part of the manuscript is a copy of the introduction in Sandburg's neat, distinctive handwriting. He signed it "Carl Sandburg, United States of America, The Planet Earth."

Were it not for the sharp eye of Walt Brygier, an antiques dealer, the Association's manuscript and a considerable quantity of other significant material would have been recycled, or deposited in the landfill.

He had stopped at the home of an elderly widow to give her a check for some china and porcelain items he had sold on commission. As he was about to leave, the woman asked him to take three large boxes to the curb in front of her house where they would be picked up.

Brygier set about the task, but when he picked up the first box, the bottom fell out of it, dumping its contents on the floor. The first item he spied was the manuscript now in the Association's collection.

He learned the material had belonged to Catherine McCarthy, who was Carl Sandburg's editor at the Harcourt Brace publishing house. At her death, it had gone to her nephew, whose widow intended to dispose of it as being of little or no value.

Brygier convinced her otherwise, and they entered into an arrangement whereby he would organize the material for eventual sale. That task required almost a year of effort before the accumulated material was auctioned in Pennsylvania, fetching approximately \$80,000

When Norm Winick learned of the collection, he quickly realized some of it should be obtained for the Site. The board of the Association authorized him to bid on various items in the Catherine McCarthy collection. After consultation with Steve Holden, the acting site manager, Winick faxed several bids to the auction house in Pennsylvania, which resulted in the acquisition of the manuscript.

Winick noted that among the purposes of the Association is to support the Site in its efforts in the areas of acquisition, education and preservation. The purchase of the manuscript falls into those categories.

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Sandburg and the Nobel Prize

(Dr. Donald Verene and his wife Molly are new members of the Association. In a note accompanying the following article, he said he had been born in the Galesburg Cottage Hospital, raised in the city, and attended Silas Willard Grade School, Hitchcock Junior High School, Galesburg High School, and Knox College. He and Mrs. Verene graduated from Knox in 1959.

He is now the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Metaphysics and Moral Philosophy at Emory University in Atlanta. He still has connections to Galesburg. Both his sister and his mother, who is almost 91 years old, reside on Florence Avenue.

Dr. Verene saw Carl Sandburg on several occasions and met him once when he was signing copies of *Always the Young Strangers* in the book department of the O.T. Johnson department store. His sister Louise was among those who sang at Sandburg's memorial service.

While in high school, Dr. Verene spent several Sunday afternoons as an aid to visitors to Sandburg's birthplace before it came under the administration of the State of Illinois.

Dr. Verene closed his note by declaring "To me, as a young man with some success as a publishing poet, Sandburg was a great influence, as he has been in my later, philosophic works.")

Every now and then one encounters the view that Carl Sandburg received the Nobel Prize. For example, this is stated as a fact in the Foreward of Andrea Vitale's *The Best of Galesburg* (St. Louis: G. Bradley Publishing, 1999), where Sandburg is identified as "Nobel Prize-winning author" (p.4). Many believe, as do I, that Sandburg should have received the Nobel Prize, but he did not. He did receive two Pulitzer Prizes: one in history, in 1940, for his work on Lincoln, and one in 1951 for *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg*.

Sandburg was considered as a candidate for the Nobel Prize over the years, and a humorous comment he made in later life, when asked if he had been awarded the Nobel Prize, may have contributed to the misimpression that he was a

recipient. He replied that he had received it twice, once from John Steinbeck and once from Ernest Hemingway. Each, on receiving the Nobel Prize for literature, said it should have gone to Sandburg.

Penelope Niven, in her comprehensive **Carl Sandburg: A Biography** (New York: Scribner's, 1991), reports that it was Sandburg's "decisive judgment" that he would never be considered for the Nobel Prize because his language was "too Americanese." He was too much an American writer, and had "failed to 'click'" in Europe (p. 489). This was a view Sandburg held throughout his career; he expressed it to his publisher, Harcourt, as early as 1933.

When Hemingway was awarded the Nobel Prize in 1954, he was asked what other writers he would think deserving of the award. He named Mark Twain, Isak Dinesen, Bernard Berenson, and Carl Sandburg. He said "I would have been most happy to know that the prize had been awarded to Carl Sandburg." Sandburg telegraphed him: "Your unprecedented comment on the award deeply appreciated & understood if only as fellowship between two Illinois boys [Hemingway was born in Oak Park]" (Niven, p. 635). Sandburg sent Ernest and Mary Hemingway copies of some of his books, including his autobiographical work on Galesburg, **Always the Young Strangers**.

- Donald Phillip Verene

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Bob Feller Makes Pitch for Carl Sandbug Site

(In the last issue of **Inklings and Idlings**, Dr. Richard Sandburg told of his stay at Christmas Island, during World War II. There he met Eleanor Roosevelt, who inquired if he had a familial connection to Carl

Sandburg. His officers were impressed by the conversation between Dr. Sandburg and the First Lady. He believes it was responsible for a promotion and dinner with the base commander. In this reminiscence, Dr. Sandburg tells of how his military career might have been abruptly ended with the assistance of a baseball legend.)

The Carl Sandburg State Historic Site did not always bear its prestigious name. At one time, the famous home of Galesburg, Illinois' outstanding poet and writer, was a decrepit, unkempt, and nearly abandoned house of despair.

Fortunately, a group led by Adda George, a retired teacher and historian, obtained the home and began a restoration process. Later, another Galesburg civic leader, Juanita Bednar, continued its progress, until it was purchased by the State of Illinois. The State gave it the title, The Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, and it is now a part of the Illinois State Historic Preservation Agency. The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association helps to support the work of the agency locally.

In 1996, the idea was conceived to develop an annual Carl Sandburg Festival. It was heavily supported by the board of directors of the Association, including Carol Nelson, Site Superintendent, and co-worker, Steve Holden, plus officials of Carl Sandburg College.

The Festival is usually a three to five day series of events often including the appearance of Helga Sandburg Crile, Carl's youngest daughter, and Penelope Niven, author of the finest Sandburg biography.

At the first Festival, Bob Feller, a Hall of Fame baseball pitcher of the Cleveland Indians, was a main drawing card. Feller lent prestige

to the Festival and signed baseballs, programs, matchbooks, or any item, from 9 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. during a day.

There was a constant line leading to Feller's table. He signed the objects, and was most gracious in chatting with his visitors.

As he greeted me with a handshake and a smile, I revealed the first time I met him was at the Beach Walk of the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago in 1945. Wayne King, the "Waltz King" was playing for a dance.

Feller and I exchanged greetings at our tables on that occasion and he said he had just returned from service in the South Pacific, and was with his first wife, Virginia, who later passed away.

At the Festival, I told him that I too had spent time in the South Pacific, with 14 months on Christmas Island, about 80 miles north of the Equator.

Feller responded by jumping up out of his chair. He confessed that while serving as an officer in the U.S. Navy, his ship approached Christmas Island. They apparently were unaware that the island was only a refueling base for American planes, and nearly shelled it as it was close to the Gilbert and Marshall Islands, which were held by the Japanese.

Luckily, the order to attack Christmas Island was rescinded, and Feller admitted that if the idea had been carried through, they would have been severely reprimanded, or worse.

Feller served in the Navy from December 9th, 1941, until 1945, which interrupted a brilliant career as a baseball pitcher.

In his first start, at the age of 17, he struck out 17 St. Louis Browns players. He went on to win 266 games, pitched three no-hitters and eventually was admitted to the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown, New York.

There is a life-sized bronze statue of him outside Jacobs Field in Cleveland, and the Bob Feller Museum is located in Van Meter, Iowa, his original home.

It was appropriate for the administrators of the Sandburg Festival to select one of baseball's greats to help inaugurate this event at the birthplace of one of America's outstanding writers.

Carl Sandburg once had aspirations to become a professional baseball player. However, he severely cut his foot on a broken bottle, and his father advised him to "hang 'em up."

- Dr. Richard Sandburg

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Wrinklings and Wild Things

(Carl Sandburg collected words wherever he went. He wrote down sayings he heard from people he met. He recorded in his notebooks bits and pieces he read. He kept a record of jokes and witty expressions. All of it went into the creative basket of his mind. Sometimes, it was thirty years before he pulled the words out again. *The People, Yes* is a good example.)

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I don't completely understand this poem (section 87 of *The People, Yes*), but I do feel it is appropriate.

- Steve Holden

THE people learn, unlearn, learn,
 a builder, a wrecker, a builder again,
 a juggler of shifting puppets.

In so few eyeblinks
 In transition lightning streaks,
 the people project midgets into giants,
 the people shrink titans into dwarfs.

Faiths blow on the winds
 and become shibboleths
 and deep growths
 with men ready to die
 for a living word on the tongue,
 for a light alive in the bones,
 for dreams fluttering in the wrists.

For liberty and authority they die
 though one is fire and the other water
 and the balances of freedom and discipline
 are a moving target with changing decoys.

Revolt and terror pay a price.
 Order and law have a cost.
 What is this double use of fire and water?
 Where are the rulers who know this riddle?
 On the fingers of one hand you can number them.
 How often has a governor of the people first
 learned to govern himself?

The free man willing to pay and struggle and die
 for the freedom for himself and others
 Knowing how far to subject himself to discipline
 and obedience for the sake of an ordered so-
 ciety free from tyrants, exploiters and
 legalized frauds—

This free man is a rare bird and when you meet
 him take a good look at him and try
 to figure him out because
 Some day when the United States of the Earth
 gets going and runs smooth and pretty there
 will be more of him than we have now.

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

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A Death in the Family

As this edition of **Inklings and Idlings** was being prepared for the printer, word was received of the death of Carl Sandburg's great granddaughter, Helga Sky Polega. She was twenty-five years old.

She was also the granddaughter of Helga Sandburg Crile, who has long been a good friend of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association and the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site.

We extend our condolences to all those Sky Polega left behind.

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

- NEW CHILDRENS' BOOK
- NOBEL PRIZE
- BOB FELLER
- AN ACQUISITION