

# INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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

Fall 2003

## The Officers and Directors Of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association 2003-2004

On July 8th, 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 - Julie Bondi  
Treasurer - John Heasley

### Directors

Rex Cherrington  
Steve Holden  
Janet Lundeen  
Jane Murphy  
Carol Nelson  
Patricia Reyburn  
Dr. Richard Sandburg  
Barbara Schock  
Christian Schock  
Carol Stachniw  
Katheleen Stout  
Jeanne Struble

Newsletter Editor  
Barbara Schock

Acting Site Manager  
Steve Holden

The Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the Visitors' Center. All members are welcome to attend the Board meetings.

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## Back to the "One-Man Show" by the Acting Site Manager

It has been a wonderful summer season here at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, working with two-year seasonal employee Kelly McGunnigal. She is so self-motivated and inventive that the "manager" designation in my title could be called into question. Thank you so much, Kelly, and the best of luck this coming year at Taylor U!

With Kelly gone and out of the lawn maintenance business, John Heasley is now mowing-mulching-pruning around the grounds. He does a terrific job, and, I am sure, could use some assistance a bit later in the Fall to get things ready for the Big Chill of Winter. Please keep your rakes greased for a thorough cleanup and chowdown here at the Site. Date and menu TBA.

Also, in Kelly's absence, the Site work schedule is being filled in on Sundays by three veteran contractual workers. They are: Jeanne Struble, Pat Stephens and Kathleen Emery. Welcome back aboard. I doubt that you realize how many vacation days I need to take before the end of the calendar year. Those days are "Never on Sunday." Just a word to the wise.

It is now the first part of September, which means that the annual Songbag Concert Series will begin on the third Thursday of this month. I'll be putting the temporary exhibit in storage so there will be adequate seating room in the Barn for the series. I would greatly appreciate if members of the

Association would help with seating, tables and refreshments and cleanup. John Heasley does a marvelous job in booking and participating in the concerts. It is a bit much to assume he would also perform the remainder of the work to put on these popular Association-sponsored events. How about a publicity person as well? The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association has a pearl in its pocket--do not ignore it!

The Association has asked me to create an entry for the Scarecrow Festival during the Knox County Scenic Drive, October 4 & 5. I guess they didn't learn from the "Quote Goat" of the Sandburg Festival a couple years ago. (Little do they know what evil lurks in the heart of t h i s a c t i n g s i t e manager...heh...heh...heh.) Gonna need some help in mounting this sucker!

The Museum Store in our Visitors' Center is heavily laden with books, T-shirts, refrigerator magnets, etc. This is the most well-supplied inventory we have ever had, even though there are some regular items out of stock or out of print. This is an ideal time to do some early holiday shopping, unencumbered by snow and slush. Don't forget your member's discount, as well.

In closing, I must mention that, despite the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency's cutbacks in operating hours and manpower (which will go on indefinitely), THERE IS RARELY A DAY THAT GUESTS OF THE CARL SANDBURG STATE HISTORIC SITE DO NOT REMARK THAT THEIR VISIT HERE HAS BEEN A WONDERFUL AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE. Thank you all for the Association's part in making this a fact.

- Steve Holden  
Acting Site Manager

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## Out of The Songbag

The 2003 autumn Songbag Concert Series, which is coordinated by John Heasley, will open September 18th in the Barn of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, 313 East Third Street. The featured artists are members of "Green Corn," also known as "Wapsi Creek." There will be old time folk music and song with fiddle, guitar, bass and banjo. The group is from the Cedar Rapids, Iowa, area.

October 16th, "Maurie Grafton and Friend" will appear. Maurie performed here several years ago with "Doon the Brea." This time the music will be a blend of American Folk, Celtic and a little Gypsy Jazz.

The November 20th concert is scheduled but the artist hasn't been named.

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

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### It Was a "Do"

In the last issue of *Inklings* and *Idlings* a colorful poster was included. It described the forthcoming presentation of "The People, Yes" by Chicago's Theo Ubique Theatre on July 5th. The Bishop Hill High Society Band was also on hand to play patriotic music. The event was one of many celebrating the 125th anniversary of the birth of Carl Sandburg this year.

It was a huge success. There was standing room only in the Barn. The two women and two men who interpreted the words of Carl Sandburg were outstanding. A number of the lines from the lengthy poem struck a chord with the audience.

The words seemed to fit our experiences in today's world even though they were written more than sixty years ago.

It was hot, but the refreshments, lemonade, iced tea, watermelon and cookies, had a cooling effect. Everyone had a good time.

Below are two pictures taken that day. One shows the cast reading from "The People, Yes" and the other shows the High Society Band playing rousing music on the lawn.



Carl Sandburg at the Illinois State Teachers' Association

One of Carl Sandburg's less well-known visits to Galesburg occurred in October 1931. That Galesburg was the place of the statewide teachers' convention is also a largely forgotten fact. The Galesburg Post gave the most detailed accounts of Mr. Sandburg's visit and the information that follows is largely

drawn from that paper and secondarily from The Galesburg Daily Register-Mail.

The announcement of Carl Sandburg's Lincoln talk stated that it would be held at Galesburg High School on Friday, October 9, but the recapitulation that followed revealed it was held in the Galesburg Armory. Mr. Sandburg made several points of interest to the Post writer in an article entitled, "Armory is Crowded to Hear Sandburg Eulogize Lincoln." Several thousand people were in attendance. Sandburg stated that John L. Scripps, the Chicago newspaper man, had used the word "exquisite" to describe Lincoln and Sandburg believed he was the only one to do so. Scripps said "He has an exquisite sense of justice." The theme of the talk was justice, democracy and the role of education.

"Americans, many of them, are money-minded. They have come to want money because of a fear of their future, not realizing entirely the brevity of life's span. It becomes a theme occupying their minds to such an extent that in culture they are bankrupt; they are in reality million dollar paupers." This was a direct quote of Sandburg as it appeared in the Post; further Lincoln was described as "...an artist in the fullest meaning of that word, in his voice, his viewpoint and manner, generally; and especially as a story teller." Sandburg concluded "An exquisite sense of justice is education in its highest form, and democracy is its truest interpretation."

Carl Sandburg also sang for the teachers's association and made a few more remarks in conjunction with that aspect of the program. "He spoke of the sentiments which were aroused within him on returning after so many years to the town of his boyhood to speak to assembled teachers." He remembered with

affection all of his teachers "with whom he had passed time in Galesburg." He spoke of Native America and said he had mined the gold of music and folklore. "Civilization, said Mr. Sandburg, is marked by a diversity of opinion. Fear of frank expression kills civilization, he added."

Earlier in the day Carl Sandburg was visited by his comrades of Company C with whom he had served in the Spanish-American War. The group consisted of Lester F. Lawrence, Joe Knutson, LeRoy Kingery, A.P. Tanning and Lee Cumming.

(Note: A.P. Tanning was the father of the renowned surrealist artist Dorothea Tanning.)

- Rex Cherrington

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## *Wrinklings & Wildthings*

*Carl did it again. After all those dusky trips into our backyard to scan the south-eastern horizon for Mr. Red Planet, he gave me perspective.*

### **The People, Yes #74**

WHAT other oaths are wanted now?  
You can never make moon poems  
for people who never see the moon.  
Your moon poems are aimed  
at people who look at the moon  
and say, "Hello moon, good old moon,  
"I knew you wouldn't forget me,  
"Throw me a kiss, moon,  
"I'll be seeing you, moon."

And the sun? what of the sun?  
Can you make a sun poem  
For those having soot on the window-sill?

When smoke and smudge and building walls  
Stand between them and the sun  
How can they get to know the sun  
And how would they know a sun poem if they  
Met one coming straight at them?  
What use for them to hold a hand up against  
the sun for the sake of seeing a silhouette  
of the blue frame of the handbones?  
In the slums overshadowed by smokestacks,  
In the tomato cans in the window-sills  
The geraniums have a low weeping song,  
"Not yet have we known the sun,  
not yet have we known the sun,"  
Modulated with a hoping song,  
"Some day we shall meet the sun  
"And gather pieces of the sun into ourselves  
"And be no longer stunted,  
no longer runts of the slums."

And babies? what of the babies?  
Can you make baby poems  
For those who love special babies  
clean antiseptic babies?  
what of those Red Indian babies  
fresh from the birthing-crotch?  
For each of them the mystery-man raised  
his right hand toward the sky and called:  
"Hey you sun moon stars  
and you winds clouds rain mist,  
"Listen to me! listen!  
"The news is another baby belonging  
has come to this earth of ours.  
"Make its path smooth so it can reach  
the top of the first hill  
and the second hill.  
"And hey you valleys rivers lakes trees grasses  
you make its path smooth so it can reach  
the top of the third hill.  
"And listen you birds of the air,  
you animals of the tall timbers,  
you bugs and creepers,  
you too listen!  
"All you of sky earth and air, I ask you, beg you  
"Pass this baby on till it climbs up over  
and beyond the fourth hill.  
"From then on this child will be strong enough  
"To travel on its own and see what is beyond  
those four hills!"

## George's Big Wheel

(Folks in Galesburg read in the newspapers about the opening of the Great Wheel at the World's Columbian Exhibition during June, 1893. Surely they were proud that a man by the name of Ferris, who was born in Galesburg, had built the unique attraction. Carl Sandburg and his family probably discussed it as they ate supper and wished that they could see it.)

George Washington Gale Ferris, Junior, was born on his father's farm three miles west of Galesburg February 14, 1859. He was the youngest of seven children.

In 1864, the family decided to move to California. Their money didn't stretch quite that far so they settled in Nevada. At the age of 16, George enrolled in the California Military Academy after his older sister's husband agreed to pay the tuition. Then he enrolled in the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. While a student he participated in a variety of sports and cultural activities. He also demonstrated his ability to rise to a challenge.

After graduating in 1881, George established an engineering firm with a partner, William F. Gronau. They specialized in building tunnels, trestles and bridges. The company was a pioneer in techniques required for using structural steel as a building material.

The men who were organizing the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago in the early 1890s wanted a spectacular structure that would add excitement to the fair. The Eiffel Tower at the Paris Exposition in 1889 had caused a sensation around the world.

More than 200 buildings had been designed for the Chicago fair and

two miles of the Lake Michigan shore line had been transformed into lagoons and gardens by well known architects of the day. The engineers hadn't contributed much to the creation of the fairgrounds. The planners asked them what could be done that would create a spectacle greater than the Eiffel Tower. It was the middle of December, 1892, and the fair was supposed to open in less than six months.

George Ferris had an idea. He sketched it on a piece of paper at a table in a Chicago restaurant. It would be a colossal wheel on which people could ride. The wheel would be 250 feet in diameter, standing 26 stories tall. He specified the number of cars to be built into the wheel and how many passengers would ride in each car. It would be constructed like a bicycle wheel. The spokes of the big wheel would be 2 1/2 inches in diameter.

George Ferris presented his idea to the board of managers of the fair. They agreed to his proposal provided he raised the money to build the giant wheel. Some fair officials were afraid people wouldn't ride it because the wheel looked so flimsy in the engineering drawings.

Mr. Ferris proceeded to sell stock to capitalize the project, and a number of enthusiastic businessmen bought \$350,000 of the stock. Mr. Gronau worked on the technical problems of balance and internal stresses involved in construction of the wheel.

The structure was anchored to a foundation of two large (20 feet square) concrete blocks which were sunk 35 feet into the ground. The two towers holding the wheel were 140 feet tall. The axle of the wheel was 45 feet long and weighed 70 tons.

There were many problems in

constructing the wheel during the Chicago winter. First, the ground was frozen rock hard and workmen had to hack away at it. Then, there was a layer of quicksand on top of the bed rock on which the towers were to rest.

The massive structural members had to be forged in a number of foundries because there was no facility large enough to do all of the fabrication. A tremendous amount of work was involved to get the wheel ready by the opening of the fair on May 1st.

The wheel was opened on June 21, 1893, to great excitement. Fairgoers paid 50 cents for a twenty minute ride of two revolutions. The capacity of the wheel was 1,440 riders.

By the end of the fair in October, 1,500,000 people had taken a ride on the big wheel. Some were thrilled, some were frightened and all had the experience of a lifetime.

The wheel made a profit of more than \$400,000 in those few months. The managers of the fair demanded some of the profit and the investors expected to receive their fair share plus a little more. A number of lawsuits were filed to settle the disagreements.

There were conflicting ideas about what should be done with the big wheel. It sat unused through the winter of 1893-4 and was finally dismantled and stored.

In 1895, Mr. Ferris received a permit from the City of Chicago to re-erect the wheel on North Clark Street. The wheel enjoyed some custom, but wasn't a huge success.

The cars on the wheel were fitted with stoves during the winter so riders would be warm. There was a porter in each car to help riders on

and off the cars.

By this time George Ferris' health began to fail. He died at the age of 37 in a Pittsburgh hospital on November 22, 1896. The Galesburg Evening Mail stated: "Mr. Ferris was a man of tremendous energy, and if he had had his health would have recovered from his financial embarrassments."

The wheel was sold for scrap, but the expense of taking it down was too great. In 1904, a group of investors spent \$265,000 to reassemble the wheel at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis. The project wasn't a financial success so the owners abandoned it. St. Louis residents complained about the eyesore for several years. The great wheel was blown up with dynamite on May 11, 1906.

One of the visitors to the 1893 fair was William Sullivan of Jacksonville, Illinois. He had a better idea: a portable wheel. It could be taken apart, moved and reassembled easily. His company, the Eli Bridge Company, is still in business making Ferris wheels.

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#### The Bride's Gift

The exhibit of artifacts from Carl Sandburg's life in the Visitors' Center are of great interest. Many of the items have a connection to Galesburg as well as the Sandburg family. Others are the result of his writing career. Some pieces have a sentimental value.

August Sandburg gave his bride a gold brooch on their wedding day. It was similar to a stickpin and was meant to be worn at the neckline of a blouse or dress.

Steve Holden, Acting Site Manager, kindly unlocked the glass case where

the brooch rests in a velvet-lined jeweler's box. He held it near the photographs of August and Clara so the picture below could be included in *Inklings and Idlings*.



There are also photographs of August and Clara taken on the occasion of their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary in 1899. Clara is wearing the brooch again. Oh, how she must have treasured it!

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### The Knox County Fair

(This story is based on an article from *The Republican-Register* of September 6, 1879. At that time, Carl Sandburg was just a baby. He would write about the Knox County Fair in his autobiography *Always the Young Strangers*.)

When Carl Sandburg and his friends went to the fair, it was on foot. The boys walked from Galesburg to Knoxville in their bare feet. They didn't have the quarter to sit in the grandstand to watch the horse racing--they watched from the fence. Listening to the Edison Talking Machine was the highlight of one year's fair. Everyone was amazed that sound could be recorded. Carl's father, August, was very impressed when he heard about it.)

The Knox County Fair was held September 15th through 19th in 1879.

The board was calling it the oldest fair of its kind in the state. The fair had been chartered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture in 1851.

Each fair was expected to advance "the interests of the county connected with or growing out of agriculture." It also provided an opportunity for greeting old friends and exhibiting products of home and farm as well as learning about new technology.

The fair board prided itself on offering generous premiums for the best exhibits. The biggest prizes were given for horse racing. The premium for the speediest trotter was \$100. Seven other prizes of \$20 to \$60 were awarded for the winners of other gaited races.

On Monday, the first day of the fair, exhibits were put in place and arrangements made for the animals to be judged.

Tuesday, mules and horses were judged as were grains and vegetables. Manufacturers of stoves and other domestic items had their displays judged. The afternoon activities included the 2:40 class of trotters racing program. Swine and dairy cattle as well as cakes, breads, fresh fruits and dairy products were also reviewed by the judges.

On Wednesday the sweepstakes contest was held for swine and sheep. Poultry, flowers and canned goods judging were part of the day's activities.

Horses "for all work" were evaluated on Thursday. There were several classes for dairy cattle, pickles and barrel-making. In the afternoon there was an open class for trotters. The winner received the "Citizens' Purse" award. Any fair-goer could enter the Walking Match.

In case any items were missed, the fair board had established an "Unenumerated Articles" class of exhibits. We can only imagine what was entered.

The entire program for Friday was devoted to horses. The sweepstakes awards were presented late in the afternoon to thoroughbred horses, draft horses and horses of all work.

A new School Department had been established and it was creating a lot of interest. It was meant to show the work being done in the Common Schools of Knox County. Specimens of grasses, woods and minerals of the county along with mounted birds and animals were on display. The building in which the exhibits were shown had been paid for by the students and teachers of the county.

Tickets to the fair cost 25 cents for anyone over the age of twelve. A second ticket was necessary to bring one's saddle horse onto the grounds.

Three tickets were required to enter the grounds with a buggy, horse and driver.

The president of the Agricultural Society was Professor J.V.N. Standish of Galesburg; vice president, D.M. Eiker, Knoxville; treasurer, G.G. Stearns, Knoxville; and secretary, J.T. Rynearson, Knoxville. The executive committee was composed of J.H. Lewis, F.M. Doolittle, J.C. Eiker, Alex. Donaldson, J.H. Sumner, J.G. West, J.F. Hubbard, J.L. Cashman and M.L. Overstreet.

The fair has been held every year since 1851, except for 1862 when the 102nd Volunteer Infantry trained on the property. The soldiers caused so much damage, the fairground was unusable. In 1943 the fair was cancelled due to the shortages of World War II. Few people attended the fair in 1949 because of a polio scare. In 1970 the grandstand was demolished by a windstorm, but the fair has continued.

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