

INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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

Winter 2004

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 Good Beginning

It is always a pleasure to begin the first **Inklings and Idlings** of a new year with a welcome to new members.

Joining the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association's ranks are:

Greg Gustafson
Randy Lane

We hope they will be frequent visitors to the Site.

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.

* * *

The Songbag: Spring Schedule

John Heasley, our manager of musical programs, has arranged the entire schedule of Songbag Concerts for the spring season.

February 19
THE ROUNDSTONE BUSKERS

March 18
LARRY PENN

April 15
BOB AND KRISTIE BLACK

May 20
DAN ZAHN

The Roundstone Buskers, Shannan Sullivan, Tom Grafton and Tom Jones, play and sing traditional Celtic music. They are expert on fiddle, guitar, hammer dulcimer, bodhran and several percussion instruments.

You can look forward to some exciting selections. You will be permitted to tap your toes to the music in The Barn at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, 313 East Third Street, at 7:00 p.m.

Remember, refreshments are served

and a two dollar donation helps to defray the costs. The atmosphere is smoke and alcohol free.

* * *

A Life Membership

At its January, 2004 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association voted unanimously to confer its first-ever life membership.

The most worthy recipient was Dr. Richard Sandburg. Those who have read *Inklings and Idlings* have enjoyed his many reminiscences of his Uncle Carl, of his own early years in Galesburg and his experiences during World War II, among many other subjects.

Dr. Sandburg's contributions to the Association go beyond his writings. There is scarcely an endeavor of the organization which he has not supported and helped to succeed. It would be difficult to name anyone who has done as much.

Dr. Sandburg and his wife Janet have taken up residence at the Loyalton Retirement Home, which is located at 1545 Temple Lane, Rockford, Illinois 61112. No doubt he would welcome hearing from his many friends in Galesburg and the Association.

* * *

From the Site Manager
(Acting)

As I look out a south window of the Visitors' Center office,

there is a bright glare from snow covering the ground. My thoughts turn back to last fall when there was a good covering of leaves and dead flower blossoms and stalks on the lawn. Since the work didn't get done, the leaves are still there, but at least they are covered by the snow.

Wouldn't it be great if snow contained something like acid rain, but much more benign, which would absolutely dissolve the unwanted debris? This, of course, would have everyone set to go in the spring to plant all those new and fantastic flowers and foliage which the nursery catalogues have meticulously described and pictured throughout the winter months. Yeah, keep dreaming.

I guess the weather is on my mind since the Penny Parade Party was postponed from Friday, January 30, to Friday, February 6th. A Winter Weather Watch caused schools in the entire area to be closed. So, the streamers and balloons were still up to welcome the students, and cupcakes which had been stored in the freezer, were thawed and served. I had received calls from area schools assuring me that they had pennies to bring to the Site, whenever. However, fortune smiled and the event took place on the 6th.

As you might expect this time of year, attendance has slowed down quite a bit at the Site. A few school tours are scheduled for this month. There is always my favorite activity: taking the annual artifacts inventory. No wonder I'm dreaming of spring.

- Steve Holden

New Year Day

The Republican-Register reported how Galesburg celebrated the new year in 1878. The streets of the city were frozen into ruts which made getting around difficult, but the sidewalks were clear. The residents of the city could move about on foot and they did so. In an era of long dresses which brushed the ground, we wonder how the ladies managed to keep their apparel clean.

"New Year Day, 1878, was celebrated in Galesburg with all the hilarity that the cheering brightness of the weather and the mild temperature of the atmosphere, naturally excited in the inhabitants generally of the College City. While the roadway of the streets was rendered virtually impassable by the partially frozen condition of the unfathomable mud, the sidewalks and crossings for the most part were clean, and afforded unobstructed facilities for locomotion, to pedestrians who, either on business or for social pleasure, took their respective walks abroad.

"Calling and receiving appeared to have been rather more general on the present occasion, than on any like occasion during several years last past. The ladies-- Heaven bless them, besides arraying themselves in various feminine attire of the most gorgeous descriptions and of the latest styles, welcomed their male guests in the most charming manner, and with angelic visages radiantly illuminated by the most entrancing smiles. In every particular, and with no known exception, the popular and pleasant custom of calling and

receiving calls, was on the first day of the New Year 1878, observed in Galesburg with exceptionally good effect."

There followed two columns of print listing the names of those who called and those who received. Some of the ladies joined together and received in club rooms on Main Street. Other young women received callers in the homes of their parents or older relatives. The female seniors at Knox College received at the home of President Newton Bateman.

It is doubtful that Mrs. August Sandburg was receiving callers on New Year's Day as she was near her delivery date. Less than a week later, a son, who would become world famous, was born.

* * *

Seventy-fifth Birthday

Carl Sandburg celebrated his 75th birthday in a big way. There were parties in his honor in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York City. He and his wife, Lilian, chose to attend the party in Chicago at the Blackstone Hotel on January 6, 1953. More than 500 persons were present.

Ralph Newman, a friend of Sandburg's and owner of the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop in Chicago, was the organizer of the event. It was sponsored by Harcourt Brace, publishers of Sandburg's books.

A contingent of Galesburgers attended the dinner. They included Mrs. Mary A. Creighton

and Peter Creighton, editor and assistant editor of **The Galesburg Post**, Mrs. George N. Slattery, Mrs. Esther Sandburg Wachs, Mrs. Adda George, the Reverend and Mrs. Alan Jenkins, Miss Mabel Corbin, Mrs. Wilson Henderson, Mrs. Charles Bednar, Mr. O.F. Larson and his daughter Mrs. Helen McMillan and Mr. and Mrs. Paul Van Vliet.

Erik Boheman, the Swedish Ambassador to the United States, represented King Gustav VI. He presented the poet with the Commander's Cross of the Royal Swedish Order of the North Star. Carl Sandburg pronounced it a "pretty" medal.

Governor Adlai E. Stevenson was unable to attend the dinner, but sent a recorded message lauding the writings of Carl Sandburg. Many others told of their memories of Carl Sandburg and praised him for his accomplishments.

That portion of the program when Carl Sandburg spoke was broadcast over a nationwide radio network. He wondered how many listeners might have turned off the radio when they figured out who was speaking.

Even with all the adulation, Carl Sandburg had a keen sense of the variations in the world and its occupants.

* * *

The Galesburg Celebration

Carl Sandburg stepped off the train at the Galesburg depot on Thursday afternoon, January 8th.

After consorting with all kinds of celebrities on his January 6th birthday anniversary in Chicago, he traveled back to his hometown, Galesburg.

He was greeted by sixty junior and senior English students from Alexis High School. His picture was taken with the young people and he seemed to be enjoying the attention. The girls and boys had visited his birthplace and then went to the Burlington station to meet him.

Mayor Ralph B. Johnson proclaimed Sandburg Day in Galesburg.

Friday evening, January 9th, a special program, featuring Carl Sandburg, was sponsored by the Central Congregational Church and the O.T. Johnson Department Store. Tickets were free, but had to be picked up in advance. It was estimated 1,400 persons were jammed into the church for the performance.

Mr. Sandburg spoke for about half an hour and then played his guitar and sang six ballads.

At the beginning of the evening he had been presented with a copy of the resolution in honor of his birthday adopted by the Illinois General Assembly. Representative Richard Larson did the honors.

Mrs. Charles Bednar, of the Carl Sandburg Association, gave him a scrapbook of early Galesburg photographs. In return, he gave the Association a special edition of his newly published autobiography, **Always the Young Strangers**.

Q.F. Johnson, president of the Chamber of Commerce, presented a

carved wood statuette which had been created by Don Gullickson, a well-known local contractor and house designer.

* * *

Always the Young Strangers

Carl Sandburg marked his 75th birthday anniversary in an additional manner with the publication of his autobiography, **Always the Young Strangers**. The book covered the first twenty years of his life. He called it "an album of faces in my memory."

The book wasn't especially personal, but it did give a vivid picture of life in a Midwestern town of the 1880s and 1890s. The narrative described the life of an immigrant family with few resources other than their muscles, brains and determination.

On January 10, 1953, Carl Sandburg sat for two hours in the O.T. Johnson Department Store signing copies of his book. It cost \$5.

Critics across the nation praised the book for its simplicity and descriptions of ordinary life.

Mrs. Mary Creighton, editor of **The Galesburg Post**, was delighted with the book. She wrote "It is Carl sitting on life's railroad train, looking out the window and describing it to us."

If you haven't read the book, now is a good time to do it. There are several copies in the Biography Section of the Galesburg Public Library. You can buy your own copy at the Museum

Store in the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Visitors' Center.

* * *

Poet Laureate

The State of Illinois has had a Poet Laureate since 1936. Governor Henry Horner appointed Howard B. Austin of Springfield as the first to hold the position. He served until his death in 1962.

Governor Otto Kerner named Carl Sandburg the second Poet Laureate by Executive Order in March, 1962. The student newspaper at Western Illinois University in Macomb led a campaign to have Carl Sandburg named to the unpaid honorary post. They had surveyed college professors of literature across the state and found Carl Sandburg was most frequently named as the favorite Illinois writer for the honor.

After the death of Carl Sandburg in 1967, Governor Samuel H. Shapiro named Gwendolyn Brooks to be the third Poet Laureate. She passed away in 2000 and the position has been vacant since that time.

On December 11, 2003, Governor Rod Blagojevich named Kevin Stein as the fourth Poet Laureate of Illinois. He is a professor at Bradley University in Peoria. Unlike previous honorees, Professor Stein will have some assigned duties. He will be required to give four public poetry readings per year and make visits to various locations around the state. He will also be required to develop some type of literary program, probably via

the Internet. His appointment is limited to a four year term.

* * *

The Coffee Table

The Scandinavian countries experience cold and dark winters. The climate limits what foods can be grown in the short summer season. Over the decades homemakers have created a variety of baked goods which use local ingredients and provide a cheerful and comforting atmosphere in the home.

Coffee time is a three-times-a-day custom in Sweden and its neighboring countries. A coffee bread is always served with the cups of coffee.

On special occasions, a formal coffee table is arranged which is similar to the smorgasbord. There are three courses of goodies arranged on an attractively decorated table. With the first cup of coffee a sweetened yeast bread and some cookies are eaten. The second cup of coffee is accompanied by pound cake and more cookies. The third cup of coffee is enhanced with a piece of fancy filled cake--no cookies this time. If a fourth cup of coffee is needed, whatever hasn't been tasted can be selected to go with it.

A selection of seven baked items is considered the perfect number of choices for the coffee table.

The following recipe appears in *The Great Scandinavian Baking Book* by Beatrice Ojakangas. She is the descendant of Finns who

migrated to Minnesota. Their neighbors were Swedes, Norwegians and Danes. The cookbook is available at The Colony Store in Bishop Hill.

Swedish Walnut-Cinnamon Cookies

1/3 cup butter, room temperature
2/3 cup granulated sugar
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups all purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts
2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons granulated sugar

In a large bowl, cream together butter and 2/3 cup sugar. Beat in egg and vanilla until light. Sift flour with baking powder and 1 teaspoon cinnamon. Add to the creamed mixture, blending well. Chill dough 30 minutes. Cover baking sheets with parchment paper or grease lightly. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Mix the walnuts, 2 tablespoons cinnamon and 2 tablespoons sugar in a small bowl. Shape chilled dough into balls the size of walnuts. Roll each ball in the walnut-cinnamon mixture. Place on prepared baking sheets about 3 inches apart. Bake 10 to 12 minutes until golden and set. Do not overbake.

Makes 2 dozen cookies.

* * *

Wrinklings and Wild Things

This is but a short section of a Rootabaga which is a somewhat

lengthy tale. I was reminded of it on a frigid February morning when I wondered if I still had mine intact.

HOW THE ANIMALS LOST THEIR
TAILS AND GOT THEM BACK
TRAVELING FROM PHILADELPHIA
TO MEDICINE HAT

Far up in North America, near the Saskatchewan river, in the Winnipeg wheat country, not so far from the town of Moose Jaw named for the jaw of a moose shot by a hunter there, up where the blizzards and the chinooks begin, where nobody works unless they have to and they nearly all have to, there stands the place known as Medicine Hat.

And there on a high stool in a high tower on a high hill sits the Head Spotter of the Weather Makers.

When the animals lost their tails it was because the Head Spotter of the Weather Makers at Medicine Hat was careless.

The tails of the animals were stiff and dry because for a long while there was dusty dry weather. Then at last came rain. And the water from the sky poured on the tails of the animals and softened them.

Then the chilly chills came whistling with icy mitten and they froze all the tails stiff. A big wind blew up and blew and blew till all the tails of the animals blew off.

It was easy for the fat stub hogs with their fat stub tails. But it was not so easy for the blue fox who uses his tail to help him when he runs, when he eats, when

he walks or talks, when he makes pictures or writes letters in the snow or when he puts a snack of bacon meat with stripes of fat and lean to hide till he wants it under a big rock by a river.

It was easy enough for the rabbit who has long ears and no tail at all except a white thumb of cotton. But it was hard for the yellow flongboo who at night lights up his house in a hollow tree with his fire yellow torch of a tail. It is hard for the yellow flongboo to lose his tail because it lights up his way when he sneaks at night on the prairie, sneaking up on the flangwayers, the hippers and hangjasts, so good to eat.

Much more is involved in this delightful story. Details can be found in Rootabaga Stories, Part One, available in our Museum Store.

- Steve Holden

* * *

Ice Harvesting

Carl Sanburg left school when he had completed the eighth grade. He went to work to help support his family. For several years, his employment consisted mostly of a number of seasonal jobs.

One January he participated in the ice harvest on Lake George, now known as Lake Rice. It was of just two weeks' duration, and he was on the night crew, but he was paid well. His wages were one dollar and twenty-five cents per night. That was more than he had ever been paid before.

His hours were from seven at night until six in the morning. At midnight the workers were given an hour for lunch. They ate outside, in temperatures that ranged from zero to fifteen degrees.

Sandburg's first week was spent as a "floater." The ice on the lake had been cut into big sections, called rafts. The floaters, armed with long poles, would get aboard them. Using their poles, they would propel the rafts to the ice house on the shore. The rafts were cut into cakes for storage in the house until they were used in the summer.

The second week of his employment Sandburg was moved into the ice house. There, using tongs, he helped stack the blocks of ice.

Each was three feet in length, two feet in width, and one foot in depth, and weighed more than a hundred pounds. That was just a bit less than Sandburg weighed. Consequently, wrestling them into place was no easy task. Nevertheless, he persevered until the harvest had ended. He hoped he would find another job which paid as well.

Carl Sandburg worked at many strenuous jobs during his youth. Those experiences gave him a wealth of knowledge about hard work and the people who performed it. They also gave him an appreciation for the tough life of laboring folks. He carried that knowledge with him the rest of his days and used it his prose and poetry.

* * *

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