

# INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361 • www.sandburg.org

*Holidays 2005*

## Special Songbag Concert

The Fall Season of the Songbag Concerts has "officially" ended, but John Heasley has arranged a special concert for December 8, 2005.

Maurie and Tom Grafton have put together what promises to be a wonderful program with two hammer dulcimers, among other instruments. Both gentlemen have performed at the Historic Site several times, but never together. It should be a great show.

The concert begins at 7:00 pm in the Barn at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, 313 East Third Street in Galesburg. Remember it is NOT on the third Thursday like our other programs, but on the second Thursday.

As usual refreshments will be served. A donation of \$2 per person is requested, but not required.

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## Two Lost

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association lost two valued members this fall. Constant Johnson died October 15<sup>th</sup> and Janet Lundeen passed away November 24<sup>th</sup>. In his Site Manager's report, Steve Holden provides a personal memory of the Reverend Mr. Johnson.

Mrs. Lundeen had served on the Board of

Directors for the past several years. She seldom missed a meeting and was always willing to lend a hand at Site activities. She was well versed in Galesburg and Knox County history and shared her knowledge with others.

She was active in community affairs, being a trustee of Hope Cemetery, a member of the Galesburg Woman's Club Board of Directors for many years, and helping to preserve the old records and photographs of the First Methodist Church in Galesburg.

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## Three Gained

Membership in the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association has been increased by three more persons. They are:

Megan Scott  
Brian Tibbets  
Steve Watts

We welcome them and hope they will enjoy the benefits of the Association.

A gift membership to a friend or relative would be a fine idea if you are looking for suggestions this holiday season. Just stop by the Visitors' Center, 313 East Third Street in Galesburg, and arrangements can be made quite easily.

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## Outta Site

Well, it is good to be “back in the groove” after a month’s worth of down time. I highly recommend the Site office over the hospital room anytime. Even though I’m missing a few parts (I swear they must have removed a section of my brain along with the kidney), things seem to be running smoothly and I feel pretty much back to normal. Thank you all for your kind thoughts and good wishes. A terrifically large thanks to my buddy Bert McElroy for steering the ship by himself during my absence. A seasonal worker is not supposed to have all those responsibilities which rested on his shoulders from August to September. Thanks again, Bert.

Bert’s six-month stint at the Site came to an end on October 31<sup>st</sup>. We both hope he will be back in May, 2006. Next year many State Historic Sites, including ours, will be open seven days a week, Memorial Day through Labor Day. With two people working, this means that four days a week there will be only one person at the Site.

From November through next April the “Sunday slot” will be filled by these workers: Jeanne Strubble, Pat Stephens or Kit Emery. In November and December I am taking off quite a few days because I’ll lose vacation time after January 1<sup>st</sup> if I don’t use it. These women will be the faces you will see or the phone voices you will hear.

The annual state-wide Historic Site Managers meeting was held in Springfield November 1-3. I think all who attended would agree that historic sites finances are looking very grim. There are no increases in our budgets. The phrase “Do more with less” is repeated once again.

One happy bit of news for our Site is that we are at the top of the list for new brochures. We can

use a four-color layout which will make for a much more interesting piece. I’m in the process of putting it together, so if you have any outstanding photographs of the Site or events at the Site, please bring them in soon. Also in the works is an “all-site” brochure, similar to the *Time Traveler* of several years ago. It will include information about each State Historic Site, listed chronologically and/or by region. This will be printed on a limited basis. I’m glad to see this being done as the earlier brochure was quite popular and served multiple purposes.

I want to close now by remembering a dear friend of the Sandburg Site Association, the Reverend Constant “Connie” Johnson, who passed away October 15, 2005. He was an Association board member who vigorously supported all our efforts here at the Site and was willing to speak or read about Sandburg’s life, not even waiting for a hat to be dropped. He spoke eloquently and passionately about the subject of which he was so knowledgeable. His voice and passion are deeply and greatly missed.

–Steve Holden  
Acting Site Manager

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## Good Publicity

The *Chicago Tribune* published a fine article about the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site in its Travel section on November 20, 2005.

Writer Pamela Selbert described how her family likes to visit the birthplaces of authors. They enjoy reading books by various authors and then visiting the author’s first home. It is an interesting way to learn about famous persons as well as the history of our country.

Author Selbert described the Visitors' Center as "first rate" and mentioned the many other interesting places to visit in Galesburg.

The article was well written and we hope it will encourage readers of the *Tribune* to visit Galesburg soon.

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### **Our Public Art**

The Illinois Humanities Council has provided funding for a new web site documenting public art in Knox County. The Galesburg Civic Art Center put the photographs and text on display October 20, 2005. You may view the web site at [www.galesburgarts.org/publicart](http://www.galesburgarts.org/publicart). Paulette Thenhaus was the project director, researcher and writer. Our own Norm Winick made the photographs and set up the web site.

After viewing the web site, you can make an effort to visit some of the public places in Galesburg where the art works are on display. If you drive up Cherry Street, you can see the bronze statue of Civil War nurse, Mother Bickerdyke, giving a wounded man a drink of water or possibly something stronger. The monument was dedicated in 1906 with much ceremony by the members of the Grand Army of the Republic and the Woman's Relief Corps.

You can also see Christine Dokalasa's "Reading Time Takes You There" in the Galesburg Public Library. The F & M Bank lobby provides a vista of the prairie land with the mural on the north wall behind the tellers' counter. It was created by Mary Ingebrand.

Ralph Fletcher Seymour, a friend of Carl Sandburg, painted "Old Main" in 1937. It hangs in the main floor hallway of Old Main on the Knox

College campus. Seymour was artist-in-residence at the college at the time.

The painting depicts the historic Lincoln-Douglas debate of 1858. Seymour researched the history of the event and added more than a little of his own imagination to the scene. He put himself on the platform wearing a green suit. There are storm clouds on the right side of the painting, perhaps a reference to the brutal war which began several years later.

The next time you go to the Galesburg Post Office, be sure to look up to the east wall of the lobby. There you will see "Breaking the Prairie—Log City, 1837", a mural created by Aaron Bohrod in the late 1930s. He also painted murals in the Vandalia and Clinton, Illinois, post offices.

He painted twenty-five figures within the 25 by 6 foot oil on plaster mural. The people in the painting are going about the business of building a life on the Illinois prairie. There is hard work, sadness, pleasure, child care, wood chopping, building, all the human qualities of life in a new land.

We are fortunate to have so many examples of public art in Knox County.

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### **The German Heater**

An advertisement in the *Galesburg Evening Mail* of November 16, 1898, caught our eye. In these days of high energy prices, we have become more conscious of the cost of keeping our homes warm and comfortable. Nowadays, it is no trouble to turn the thermostat up or down.

Residents of Galesburg in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had to



A few telegraph and telephone lines were blown down. Trees were uprooted in many parts of the city and windows were blown out of several downtown buildings.

Professor C.W. Thwing of the Knox College Observatory told a reporter that the wind was blowing steadily between twenty and forty miles per hour. He said he had never seen wind blow so long and as continuously.

On September 8<sup>th</sup> a hurricane had struck Galveston, Texas. By modern measurement, the storm has been estimated to be a Category 4 hurricane. That would mean the winds were at least 135 miles per hour. It was the deadliest natural disaster ever to occur in the United States. The storm caused at least 8,000 deaths and possibly as many as 12,000.

The storm formed in the south central Atlantic Ocean on August 27<sup>th</sup>. It caused damage in the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Cuba as a tropical storm. The warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico increased the power of the storm and it headed for the Texas coast.

With no advance warning the residents of Galveston had no opportunity to get out of the way of the hurricane. Weather forecasting was a new science and the instruments were fairly crude, as compared to those of today.

After leaving devastation in Galveston, the storm crossed Oklahoma, went up over the Great Lakes and into eastern Canada. Even though, Professor Thwing didn't think the wind and dust storm in Galesburg was related to the hurricane which struck Galveston, modern analysis shows that it contributed to the storm in Galesburg.

Today's weather reporting, satellite photos and radar can give people much more warning of the

approach of severe weather.

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### Thanksgiving in the Early Days

The *Galesburg Evening Mail* in 1898 asked several of the early settlers of Galesburg to reminisce about Thanksgiving Day.

Mrs. Harvey Jerault said "Thanksgiving day in those times was the event of the year. The Galesburg colonists had brought with them from New York the old Puritan idea of observing Thanksgiving day. They remembered what the occasion meant to them, and they held in close embrace the old traditions which clung around Plymouth rock and which were sent to them over the hills to New York. These traditions they brought with them to Galesburg, and they kept them with religious observance.

"Thanksgiving day was the day of all days. Christmas was nothing compared to it. In fact, when Dr. Blanchard was president of Knox College, he would have nothing of the Christmas observance.

"I was 20 years old when I came to Galesburg, and that was in the summer of 1838. When the great day came, family parties were the rule. People would come to Galesburg from all over the county to celebrate the day. Nearly all of them were related in some way or another, and this was the occasion for large family gatherings. The dinner, of course, was the event of the day, for the young people, and older ones, too, had their share of the good time. Mothers and maids brought with them the good old New England recipes, and they always did their best for the Thanksgiving day spread. Everyone went to church in the morning and then the rest of the day was spent in social ways."

Mrs. L. Dilley was also interviewed by a reporter for the newspaper. Her father, Jones Harding, had arrived in Galesburg in 1837. She recalled there were no apples for Thanksgiving because "the country was too young and it cost too much to get them from Chicago." Her mother cut up a pumpkin, poured vinegar over and let it stand. She said the dish was served as a delicacy on Thanksgiving and it wasn't too bad.

W. Selden Gale, son of the founder of Galesburg, was contacted for his thoughts about the pioneer days. He responded with a note saying there was no specific day set aside for Thanksgiving Day in Illinois. The early settlers celebrated on the traditional date on which their native state celebrated. He didn't offer any personal memories of Thanksgiving Day.

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### **The Coming of Christmas**

Earnest Elmo Calkins was born in Geneseo, Illinois, March 25, 1868. His great great great grandfather, Hugh Calkins, came to the Colonies in 1640 from Wales. His descendants lived in Massachusetts and Connecticut before settling in Illinois.

Earnest graduated from Knox College in 1891. During his college years he learned to set type and worked for both Galesburg newspapers as a printer and reporter.

He worked in New York City for several years and returned to Galesburg in 1893. While working for the *Galesburg Evening Mail*, he organized a company which provided advertising copy to local stores.

Carl Sandburg recalled in his autobiography, *Always the Young Strangers*, that Calkins had

created an ad for the Glenwood Ice Company which was very clever. It seems that one May a cold spell followed a very warm period of weather. The Glenwood ads explained that the ice company had opened its doors and caused the cold wave.

In later years, Sandburg and Calkins reminisced about their days working for the Glenwood Ice Company. Of course, Carl had vivid memories of the aches and pains he suffered from cutting blocks of ice from Lake Rice and storing them between layers of sawdust.

Calkins went on to set up his own advertising agency in New York, one of the first of its kind. He wrote several books, including *They Broke the Prairie*, a history of Galesburg which tells the interesting story of the town from the first settlement.

This is how E.E. Calkins described the development of Christmas traditions in Galesburg during the nineteenth century.

"Sometime between the stern regime of President Blanchard, when college classes were held on December 25 the same as any day, and the Eighteen Eighties the celebration of Christmas became a fixture in the puritan town of Galesburg. The public revolt was in 1871, when the young people of Old First Church announced they were going to have a tree for the children of the Sunday school and did so without breaking any bones. But before that, Christmas was a modest festival in most homes. The observation of the day may have been brought by the Swedes, who shared a hearty participation in the day with the Germans. Stockings were hung up on various projections, or tacked up behind the base burner, for there were no fireplaces to help keep up the tradition, and an orange was such a novelty it was deemed

a worthy present, along with a striped peppermint cane, a bag of peanuts, and one or two needed and useful articles, such as stockings or mittens, knit by mother or grandmother. The mittens were tethered to one another by a long cord, so that if one were lost, both must be. By 1880 there were Christmas windows in the stores and signs reading 'Holiday Goods'."

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### **Wrinklings and Wild Things**

(The following excerpt shows Carl Sandburg's early fascination with the printed word and spoken language. Was the fascination an omen of his career in writing? The quote comes from Sandburg's autobiography *Always the Young Strangers*, Chapter Three entitled "Judgement Day." The brief passage was one Connie Johnson used frequently in speaking to some of our young visitors.—Steve Holden)

One of the most vivid early memories of my life is that first home Bible. It was the first book that dawned on my mind as a book, as a thing made of paper and on the paper black marks your eye could pick off from the page and you could say the words that lay there on the paper. This wonder, I would guess, came into my life when I was four years old. It was in the third house, the Berrien Street house, in the second-floor, southwest corner room, the bedroom of my father and mother. It was winter, cold outside, and winds howling. Mary and I heard father by the light of a small kerosene lamp read a chapter. What he read I have forgotten and couldn't have remembered the next day because I didn't understand it. But I recall several times that week going to where that Book lay on top of a bureau. And I opened it and turned pages and held it near a window and had my wondering about how those black marks on white

paper could be words your eyes would pick off into words your tongue would speak.

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### **Christmas Goodies**

At this time of year, many nationalities celebrate the holidays with special foods. The Swedish people enjoy their culinary traditions too.

#### **Swedish Hard Candies**

1 cup sugar  
1 cup dark corn syrup  
1/4 cup butter  
1 cup light cream  
1 cup chopped blanched almonds

Combine sugar, syrup, butter and cream in a heavy saucepan. Cook over low heat, stirring constantly, until the mixture forms a firm ball when a small amount is dropped into cold water or about 250 degrees F. on a candy thermometer. Stir in the nuts and pour into small fluted wax paper candy cups or onto a well buttered cookie sheet. If poured on a cookie sheet, allow to set before cutting into small squares with scissors whose blades have been rubbed with vegetable oil. Wrap in small squares of wax paper.

Makes about 60 candies

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### **Meet the Board**

On the next page is a photograph of the members of the Board of Directors of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association taken last summer in the Visitors' Center.

They are a dedicated group and full of creative ideas to interest the public in Carl Sandburg and his writings.

Seated from the left on the hard benches are Julie Bondi, Mary Strawn, Kay Stout, Megan Scott,

Jane Murphy and Margaret Krueger. The men standing are Dick Pearson, Rex Cherrington, John Heasley, Brian Tibbets, Christian Schock and Norm Winick. The missing members are Janet Lundeen and Steve Watts.



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