

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

Spring, 2006

Four Additions to the Rolls

It is always a pleasure to greet new members of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. A warm welcome is extended to:

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Bednar
Loretta McKee
Steve Spangler

If you have joined the Association recently, and your name is not listed above, please notify *Inkling and Idlings* so it may be rectified in the next issue.

Sandburg Days Festival

The 11th annual Sandburg Days Festival will begin Thursday, May 11, 2006 and continue through Saturday, May 13, 2006. The Festival honors the life and legacy of Galesburg's own Carl Sandburg.

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site at 313 East Third Street, is headquarters for the Festival. If you need information or directions, be sure to stop there.

THURSDAY, MAY 11

At 5 p.m. a reception will be held at the Galesburg Public Library to announce winners of the photography contest. A selection of the entries will be on display at the Library through May 19th.

From 6 to 8 p.m. the Civic Art Center will sponsor sidewalk painting on South Seminary Street for children. Free pizza will be served.

The Kick-Off Concert begins at 7:00 p.m. in the Barn at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. The Mike and Amy Finder Band will perform. They are widely known in the Midwest for their mix of vintage and original music. Coffee and pie ala mode from the Colony Bakery in Bishop Hill will be served.

FRIDAY, May 12

At 6:30 p.m. winners of the Poetry Contest will be announced at Carl Sandburg College in the Fine Arts Theater. Also, the Carl Sandburg College Theater Department will present a dramatization of a 1922 children's story written by Carl Sandburg, "The Wedding Procession of the Rag Doll and Broom Handle and Who Was in It."

SATURDAY, May 13

At 9:00 a.m. students from Lombard Middle School and Churchill Junior High School will read their original creative writing and poetry. David HB Drake will also play various musical instruments. This event will be held at Kaldi's Coffee House, 124 East Simmons Street.

Dr. Robin Metz, Professor of English at Knox College will conduct a writer's workshop from 9 to 11 a.m. in the Barn at the Historic Site.

Discovery Depot, at South Chambers and Mulberry streets, will conduct free outdoor activities for children from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. inspired by the poems of Carl Sandburg. There is a charge for activities inside the Museum. A portrait of Carl Sandburg created by Gary Theobald using the intarsia technique will be on display at the Musuem. Woods of different colors from trees native in Illinois were used to make the picture.

The Prairie Dash Fun Run for children ages two to ten will be conducted at 10 a.m. in Colton Park.

At 11:30 a.m. David HB Drake will perform songs from *The American Song Bag* by Carl Sandburg in Park Plaza on East Main Street. At 1:00 p.m. the Rootabaga Jammers will play swing music in Park Plaza. Q's Café will provide lunchtime food for purchase.

Knox College will present the awards for its Poetry Contest in the Visitors' Center at 2:00 p.m. Cash prizes will be given by the College and the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association will give winners a gift packet.

Members of the Spoon River Creative Writers will present their works at 3:00 p.m. in the Barn.

From 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. a reception in the Garden Room of the Kensington will honor Helga Sandburg Crile, daughter of Carl Sandburg, and poet and author in her own right.

At 7:30 p.m. the Knox-Galesburg Symphony will give a concert featuring music with memories at the Orpheum Theater. Many familiar tunes from Broadway plays will be featured.

Surely, in the foregoing list, there is at least one event for every interest. You may have noticed that refreshments will be served too.

Outta Site

Steve Holden, the Site Manager, had to return to the hospital for repairs. In his absence, I have been doing the day-to-day work at the Site. I know I am not alone in hoping Steve will be blessed with a fruitful recovery.

We have acquired a few pieces of equipment, including a pole chainsaw, a seeder/spreader, and even several tables.

The tulips have given way to the primroses, iris, lilacs and peonies on the grounds. With Donna Vineyard's help, the garden and yard have been preened for the Sandburg Festival Days.

Later, at the end of the school year, Kristy McGunnigal will be welcomed to the staff. She is the third sister of that family to work at the Site. In addition to greeting visitors, no doubt she will assist in replacing plants that didn't survive the winter, mowing the grass and helping to add plantings along the lighted path to the Barn. I know Steve Holden has a few ideas about adding to the landscape.

The staff wishes to express its appreciation to the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency for sponsoring the entertainment at the Kick-off Concert of the Festival.

- Bert McElroy

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Sandburg College Observes Fortieth

In the mid-1960s, the Illinois Legislature made provision for the establishment of community colleges across the state. The two-year colleges would provide low-cost education for local students. The colleges would offer courses for

students who planned to transfer to four-year colleges and universities as well as vocational instruction.

Local committees were organized to support a referendum for the establishment of a community college district. Citizens of Knox and Warren counties approved the formation of the district on September 24, 1966. In November of that year the first Board of Trustees was elected. Those chosen were Russ Lind and Dr. Carl Eisemann of Galesburg, John Lewis of Abingdon, Dr. Ben Shawver and Max Stults of Monmouth and Paul Platt of Maquon.

Originally, the college was named the Knox-Warren Junior Collge. Later, a contest was held to rename the college and Carl Sandburg won.

The first classes met on September 18, 1967, in various temporary locations in Galesburg. There were 44 students. The first commencement was held on June 16, 1969, for a hundred graduates.

In February, 1971, voters approved a \$42.5 million bond issue for the building of a permanent campus on South Lake Storey Road in the northwest side of Galesburg.

The college has grown in many ways through the four decades of its existence. The district now covers parts of ten counties and the course offerings have expanded greatly—everything from musical exercises for toddlers to one-stroke painting for senior citizens—in addition to the academic studies.

The number of buildings on the main campus has increased and facilities have been added in downtown Galesburg and outlying parts of the District.

It is a success story to which any poet would like

to have his name attached. It is especially appropriate that the Commencement speaker this anniversary year will be Helga Sandburg Crile, Carl Sandburg's youngest daughter..

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A Galesburg Landmark

On May 22, 1906, a large bronze monument on a granite pedestal was dedicated on the lawn of the Knox County Court House. It memorialized "Mother" Bickerdyke, who had been a nurse in the Civil War.

Mary Ann Ball was born July 19, 1817, on a farm in Knox County, Ohio. Her mother died when she was seventeen months old. Her grandparents and other relatives took care of the young girl. The education Mary received during her childhood was limited.

On April 27, 1847, she was married to Robert Bickerdyke, a widower with three children, in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was a musician and sign painter. Both professions were somewhat tenuous so far as income was concerned. The family lived in a number of places. By 1858 they were domiciled in Galesburg, Illinois, where Robert died in the spring of 1859.

Mrs. Bickerdyke supported herself and her children by taking in washing and practicing "botanic" medicine. There is no record of how or when she learned her nursing skills. Dr. Benjamin Woodward, a local physician, gave Mrs. Bickerdyke referrals for nursing work needed in the city.

Dr. Woodward served as a surgeon in the Civil War. While in Cairo, Illinois, he observed appalling conditions in the military hospitals there. He wrote letters to people in Galesburg

about what he saw. Edward Beecher, pastor of the Central Congregational Church, preached a sermon about the neglect of Illinois' volunteer soldiers in that place. Supplies were gathered and Mrs. Bickerdyke volunteered to take them to Cairo.

The energy, good sense and determination of the forty-year-old nurse found its calling in the filthy and disease-ridden tents of the army. Mary Bickerdyke accepted no obstacle in her pursuit of the soldiers' needs. She knew the good of cleanliness, fresh food and tender care.

Newspapers of the time described Mrs. Bickerdyke's late-night visit to the battlefield at Fort Donelson, Kentucky. She carried a lantern among the bodies looking for any sign of life.

Another Civil War nurse, Mary Livermore, wrote after the war describing Mrs. Bickerkyke, "Stooping down, and turning their cold faces towards her, she scrutinized them searchingly, uneasy lest some might be left to die uncared for." She did this after every major battle as the troops moved across the South.

The word spread among the soldiers that she would do anything to help them and make their lives easier and she didn't bother to observe military regulations or obey officers in the process. It was a great comfort to the soldiers and they began to call her "Mother".

After the war ended, she engaged in various useful endeavors. She worked in the slums of New York and San Francisco. She tried to help soldiers who wanted to settle in Kansas, but the project was a financial failure. She traveled to Washington, DC, many times to secure pensions for old soldiers. In later years, if an old soldier who was terminally ill knocked on her door asking for help, she would take him into her home.

Mary Ann Ball Bickerdyke lived to be 84 years old. Post 45 of the Grand Army of the Republic sent a letter to her in 1898 asking if the Post could conduct her funeral when the time came. She responded through her son James that she wanted to be buried next to her husband in Linwood Cemetery.

Mrs. Bickerdyke's death came November 8, 1901, in Bunker Hill, Kansas. After a memorial service in that town, her remains were shipped to Galesburg. Central Congregational Church was filled with mourners and many eulogies were delivered.

On December 2, 1901, the ladies of the Woman's Relief Corps in Galesburg formed the Mother Bickerdyke Memorial Association. Their intent was to raise money for a suitable memorial to the Civil War nurse. Within a year, the women had \$300 in their treasury, but that wasn't nearly enough. They asked Senator Leon A. Townsend and Representative Wilfred Arnold of the 43rd District, to introduce a bill in the Illinois Legislature to appropriate funds for the Bickerdyke Memorial. On May 6, 1903, \$5,000 was approved.

The Memorial Association sought advice from several sources as to the kind of memorial and where it should be located. They also contacted artists and sculptors across the country for ideas and sketches. Committee discussions and conferences with experts were held through the summer.

On September 15, 1903, the Association signed a contract for \$5,000 with Theo Ruggles Kitson of Boston. Mrs. Kitson had studied in Paris and was known for her statues and busts of soldiers. The sculpture was to be completed in 18 months.

Mrs. Kitson had proposed a monument showing

Mrs. Bickerdyke supporting a wounded soldier and giving him a drink from a cup.

Apparently, the sculptress had some problems creating the design and didn't meet the original deadline for delivery. The W.R.C. had hoped the statue would be dedicated in the fall of 1904.

Post 45 of the Grand Army of the Republic won the opportunity to hold the State Encampment of the organization in 1906. As plans developed, it was decided to have the unveiling of the Mother Bickerdyke monument during the Encampment. It was felt the whole state should honor her and appropriate dignitaries would be invited to speak.

On May 15, 1906, the bronze statue arrived by Wells-Fargo Express over the Santa Fe. It weighed 2,045 pounds. Two days later the granite pedestal came on a flat car on the Burlington line. House-moving equipment was used to remove the 13 to 14 ton piece of granite from the car.

Mrs. Kitson arrived on May 18, 1906, for the ceremonies. She was warmly received in the community and her picture appeared in *The Republican-Register*. She sat on the stand during the unveiling ceremony. Members of the Bickerdyke family were also present. An estimated 8,000 spectators were present for the unveiling.

It has been said that the monument is one of a kind. It depicts a woman. It was created by a woman and a group of steadfast women organized and completed the project.

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Tiddlywinks

The game of tiddlywinks became a craze which swept across the United States in the 1890s. Some

newspaper editors railed against the waste of human intellect and time caused by playing the game. Wagering on the outcome was even more dangerous, they said.

Tiddlywinks is a game played with small colored discs called winks. A larger disc called a squidger is used to press down on one side of a wink causing it to jump into the air. The aim is to make the wink land in a small cup. Players earn points by getting winks in the cup. They can also block the winks of other players which adds a need for strategy to the game. It is usually played by 2 to 4 players on a 3 by 6 foot felt mat.

The game was originally called Tiddledy-Winks and was patented in 1889 in England. The source of the name seems to be lost in the mists of time. In 1955 several Cambridge University students revived the game and it spread to college campuses such as M.I.T., Cornell and Harvard in this country. The North American Tiddlywinks Association holds competitions each year.

It is doubtful that Carl Sandburg wasted his time and brains playing Tiddlywinks, but he surely read about the game in the newspapers of his youth.

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Rhubarb

Rhubarb has been used for medicinal purposes for more than five thousand years. It is believed to have first appeared in Asia. The Chinese used it as a purgative for thousands of years. Marco Polo brought it back to Italy from China. By the late 1700s, different varieties of rhubarb were used for food in Europe.

Rhubarb is a perennial plant easily grown. The crown of the plant will survive when the ground is frozen. It begins to grow early in the spring. For

that reason, it became a popular food in the Scandinavian countries. It was the first fresh food of the season.

The plant is botanically classified as a vegetable, but it is most often eaten as a dessert or fruit. The English people ate it stewed with custard poured over. In Poland rhubarb is cooked with potatoes and aromatic herbs. Afghan cooks add rhubarb to spinach. The Italians make an aperitif of low alcohol content from rhubarb.

The first recipe for rhubarb pie appeared in print in the United States in 1855. The German settlers of Pennsylvania especially enjoyed rhubarb pie. The dessert became so popular that rhubarb began to be called "pie plant."

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries many people had a patch of rhubarb growing in their yard or garden. More than likely, August Sandburg had some rhubarb in his garden.

Only the stalks of rhubarb are eaten. The large leaves are discarded because they contain oxalic acid and other chemicals which are poisonous.

Here is a simple recipe which can be enjoyed at this time of year:

Baked Rhubarb

1 pound rhubarb, cut in 1 inch pieces
1 cup sugar
1/4 cup water

Mix all ingredients in a shallow baking dish. Bake in a 350 degrees F. oven for 35 minutes or until rhubarb is just tender. Chill before serving.

Makes 4 servings

Hobos and Tramps

Carl Sandburg had been to only a few places beyond Galesburg (Monmouth, Peoria, Chicago) when he decided to strike out to more distant parts of the country. The easiest way to travel with little or no money was to grab a ride on the railroad. So, in June of 1897, he decided to go west.

Sandburg was familiar with trains. He grew up in a town dominated by two railroads. His father worked for one of them. He had talked to the tramps and hobos who frequented the railroad yards and hobo jungle.

There was a hierarchy of wanderers who rode the rails. Tramps followed the rail lines in the hope they would find a good job someplace down the line. Some had been doing it for long enough to know the good places for handouts of food and the towns that drove the wanderers out past the city limits. Others were young boys looking for adventure. Hobos were willing to work for food or pay as part of their way of life. Bums were lowest on the scale—they expected handouts and didn't want to work.

After the Civil War some soldiers didn't want to give up the camping life. They enjoyed the scenery as well as the lack of responsibility. The increasing number of miles of railroad track in the country facilitated their wanderings from one part of the nation to another.

In the later part of the 19th century working for a salary in an increasingly industrial economy became common. If hard economic times came, the workers were left without a job. Many of them "hit the road" looking for whatever jobs they could find.

Estimates of the number of vagabonds in the 1870s go as high as 600,000. Anyone living near

the railroad tracks could expect a knock on the back door by an unknown person asking for food, offering to work for a meal or a place to sleep.

The tramps and hobos developed their own culture and language. The information was passed along to each person who inhabited the jungle. There were tramps and hobos who shared with others and those who preyed on their fellows.

Carl Sandburg was willing to work for food or money. He could chop wood, blacken stoves, wash dishes, wait on tables, harvest crops. The wage was usually \$1.25 to \$1.50 per week with board. He could stay a day or two or a week or two. On two occasions, he didn't get paid because the job boss had disappeared with the money.

During his hobo days, Carl Sandburg learned the songs and stories of the inhabitants of the jungles. He stored them in his memory and used bits and pieces of them for the rest of his life.

After five months of the unstructured life, Carl returned to his parents' home on Berrian Street a changed man. He could look a person in the eye and he had a ready answer to a question. He knew he could look adversity in the face and overcome it. That strength of character never left him. He also had just over \$15 in his pocket, a goodly sum at that time.

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Our International Member

Tomas Junglander is the only international member of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. He lives in Stockholm, Sweden.

Readers may remember the articles Tomas has contributed to *Inklings and Idlings*. He located the Swedish birthplaces of August and Clara

Sandburg. The photographs of the houses are on display in the Visitors' Center.

Last February Association president Norm Winick and his wife Christine visited Stockholm and were able to meet with Tomas. The photograph below shows him in the dining room of his apartment. He has a large collection of books, pictures and memorabilia about Carl Sandburg. Tomas has worked to get other people in Sweden to be interested in the works of Carl Sandburg.



Norm also took a picture of the Stockholm waterfront showing the pastel colors of the buildings and a few pleasure boats docked there. It is included on the next page even though black and white print doesn't do it justice.

Stockholm is part of an archipelago of about 24,000 islands. Some of them are occupied while others are in a natural state. Ferries traverse the waterways all winter long.

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The Stockholm waterfront taken by Norm Winick :



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