

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

Fall, 2006

The Officers and Directors of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association 2006-2007

On July 11, 2006, the annual meeting of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association was held in the Visitors' Center.

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

President—Norm Winick
Vice President—Margaret Krueger
Secretary—Julie Bondi
Treasurer—John Heasley

Directors

Rex Cherrington
Mike Hobbs
Bert McElroy
Jane Murphy
Christian Schock
Megan Scott
E. Kathaleen Stout
Mary E. Strawn
Brian Tibbetts
Steve Holden, ex officio

Newsletter Editor—Barbara Schock

The Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. in the Visitors' Center, 313 East Third Street. All members are welcome to attend the Board meetings.

Fall Songbag Concerts

The fall series of Songbag Concerts will begin Thursday, September 21, 2006. The Guided Bats of Iowa City, Iowa, will present the musical program. As always, the concert will showcase acoustic traditional and folk music.

On October 19, 2006, Curtis and Loretta will appear. Hammer and Pick will perform on November 16th.

Do come and enjoy the music in a smoke and alcohol free atmosphere. The concerts are held in the Barn at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, 313 East Third Street. They begin at 7 p.m. and light refreshments are served. A \$2 donation helps defray expenses, but isn't required.

Outta Site

Well, I've been back in the saddle here at the Historic Site since July 18th. This last period of recovery was pretty slow going. That's a description I could use every day to describe the progress on the pile of paperwork accumulated during my recuperation. It's been said that the Army moves on its belly. The State of Illinois moves on its paperwork. But, as I keep telling myself, "One thing and one day at a time." Again, a million thanks to all who have kept me in their thoughts and prayers.

My sincerest wishes for a speedy recovery go to Sandburg Association President Norm Winick. Get better fast, but don't push it, Norm.

The third of the McGunnigal daughters, Kristy (she followed Kelly and Katie as a seasonal worker at the Site), is now back in college. We wish her well this coming school year and thank her for helping this past summer.

Bert McElroy is still here as a seasonal worker until the end of October, whereupon he will be magically transformed (via more State paperwork) into a "contractual worker." This means he will continue working from November until the end of April.

We also have our wonderful returning "fill-in" ladies, Jeanne Struble and Pat Stephens—plus newcomers Betty Seeger and Kris Smith. These folks will take turns working at the Site every Sunday and other days that Bert and I aren't here.

It will be very helpful to have the ladies on Sundays, since the Historic Site has begun a cooperative enterprise with the Spoon River Creative Writers Group in establishing a series of Sunday afternoon readings of their works and the works of others. This effort has been spearheaded by Gary Tomlin, group member and new chair of the Sandburg Days *Festival for the Mind*. This series will be held every other month (odd-numbered months) on the second Sunday at 1:30 in the Barn.

The first presentation was on September 10, 2006, and included group members and a guest reader from another writers' group. Any writer is welcome to read their work (poetry, prose, short stories) at these sessions. Call me (309.342.2361) if you are interested, and we'll get you in the lineup. This series is free and open to the public. As I mentioned at the first program, there could not be a more appropriate location to host such a series than the Carl Sandburg Historic Site.

Speaking of Gary Tomlin as chair of the Sandburg

Days Festival for the Mind, he has some terrific new ideas for the Festival, including participating in *The Big Read* sponsored through the National Endowment for the Arts. If all goes well with the granting process, Galesburg and surrounding communities will all be reading Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. There will be weekly discussion groups, scholarly lectures, dramatic presentations and film showings throughout the month of April, culminating with the opening of the Sandburg Festival on April 26, 2007. Gary says if *The Big Read* is successful, he'll push Sandburg's *Always the Young Strangers* for the next year. Give Gary Tomlin as much support as you can. GO, GARY, GO!

I have tentatively booked Marc Smith for the Kickoff of the Festival here at the Site. Marc is the "instigator" of the poetry slam concept, and appears regularly at the Green Mill Lounge in Chicago. He also appears internationally doing poetry slams. His favorite writer is Carl Sandburg, and he reads a good combination of his poetry and children's stories. Marc also is a writer himself and segues quite easily into his own words during his Sandburg readings (really performances). He has a gritty Chickagga sound. Terrific! I've never heard anyone read Sandburg as Marc does.

Well, I've rambled on long enough now. I can't tell you how glad I am to be back in the saddle again. Yippee!

—Steve Holden,
Site Manager

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The Man Who Opened the Songbag

The Songbag Concert series was begun by John Heasley several years ago. They are among the most popular presentations at the Site. Those who attend the Concerts might like to know something about

Heasley. Here, in his own words, is a brief autobiography.

“My father was in the Air Force, which explains why I was born in Tripoli, Libya, in 1957. We traveled extensively, living in California, Okinawa, Virginia and Colorado, before his death in 1967. After that, my mother and I returned to her home town, Alexis, Illinois (population 900).

“It was quite a cultural shock for me—I had never been in a small town before and had no idea there was a place in the world where literally everyone would know my name, who my parents were, and where I was from, as soon as I arrived at school the first day. It took awhile, but I soon felt at home for the first time in my life and I loved the countryside right from the very start.

“When I first started getting serious about singing and playing the guitar, about 20 years ago, I wanted to try to put some of these feelings into songs. I finally had some success writing in 1998 and put three of them on my new compact disc. The rest of the songs are ‘covers’ of old blues tunes, a Carter Family song and one, ‘Please Don’t Talk About Me’ that I must admit, I don’t really know how to categorize. I’ve tried to give these songs a little personal treatment—to arrange them a bit differently than I found them, but with some of them, like the John Hurt tunes, that just doesn’t seem right, or necessary, or whatever.

“I began ‘playing out’ in the mid-80s, but took about 5 years off from it to work on my guitar technique and try to figure out what my niche was. During that time I worked as a movie theatre manager here in Galesburg. I also host the folk concerts at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. We try to divide the roster about evenly between local folks and acts from out of the area and have had the pleasure of being visited by Larry Penn, Mark Dvorak, Dan Zahn and Chris McNamara, and Bob and Kristy Black, among others.

“When I perform solo I play mostly blues, originals

and some covers of old folk and pop songs—most of the time finger picking. I also play in a folk trio called Hammer and Pick, with Jon Wagner and Jan Sams. We play mostly ‘old time’ music with a lot of hammer dulcimer and claw-hammer banjo.

“My musical influences are sort of hard to describe but I’ll give it a try. I’ve always loved the sound of the acoustic guitar and messed around with lots of stuff like Bob Dylan, The Eagles, The Ozark Mountain Daredevils, etc., but never got really hooked on it until I heard Doc Watson back in the early 80s. That led me to the blues music of Mississippi John Hurt and Big Bill Broonzy and the folksy/bluegrass stuff done by Tony Rice and Norman Blake.

“In about 1990 I went out to New Jersey to a weekend workshop on Country Blues with Stefan Grossman that really helped me get serious about that style. I’ve also always loved the music of Gordon Lightfoot. My ‘sound’ is pretty simple and completely acoustic.”

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No Helicopter, It Was a Foggy Night

On the evening of August 18th, Norm Winick, President of the Association, went to St. Mary Hospital because he felt out of breath and was feeling a burning sensation in his throat. After a chest x-ray and blood tests, it was determined Norm needed an emergency angiogram.

He was rushed by ambulance to St. Francis Hospital in Peoria as the weather ceiling was too low for air transport. Open heart surgery was performed the following Tuesday. He returned home on Friday, August 25th. Two days later he was sending e-mails to his friends and associates telling of his experience.

We are glad Norm received such prompt attention

and excellent care. We hope he will continue to enjoy life and slow down a little bit.

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Lincoln-Douglas Debate Centennial 1858-1958

Carl Sandburg was eighty years old when he came to Galesburg to help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate in October, 1958.

The debate, which was one of seven held throughout Illinois, was between Abraham Lincoln and Senator Stephen Douglas. Their Galesburg confrontation was held on a platform next to Old Main, one of the major buildings on the Knox College campus. It was completed in 1857 and is the only surviving site of the debates.



*The bronze plaques of Lincoln
and Douglas on the east wall of Old Main*

Sandburg had a close relationship with the site. As a boy he had walked across the Knox College campus to his milk delivery job. It had been only thirty-four years before that a great crowd had gathered from far and wide to hear Douglas and Lincoln debate the question of slavery.

Bronze plaques on the north wall of Old Main contained a few of the words spoken by the two men on October 7, 1858. The Sandburg boy read them over and over, on cold days, warm days, snowy days—he took them to heart. They became a part of him.

The Centennial celebration included speeches, a parade, plays, exhibits, banquets and a re-enactment of the debate. October 6, 1958 was designated “Carl Sandburg Day.” He was entertained at lunch by the Knox College trustees. He planted a tree on the former Lombard College campus where he had gone to school some sixty years before.

A public program was conducted outside Old Main on the same site as the debate. Sandburg spoke to the young people present about how their dreams would shape the future. He strummed his guitar and sang a few songs as well.

While Sandburg was performing, Avard Fairbanks, a sculptor from Utah, created a bust of the poet from clay. Apparently Sandburg wasn't too impressed. He said it looked like William Jennings Bryan, a former presidential candidate. It was the forthright opinion of an elderly man.

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Harry Golden

Carl Sandburg and Harry Golden first met in 1948. In 1956 Golden visited Sandburg at his home, Connemara, near Flat Rock, North Carolina. They talked for nearly eight hours that day and became good friends and collaborators.

Harry Golden was born May 6, 1902, in the Ukraine. His family emigrated to Winnipeg, Canada, in 1904 and later moved to New York City. Harry grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. He became a stockbroker, but lost his

job in the stock market crash of 1929. He was later convicted of mail fraud and spent five years in prison. He received a presidential pardon in 1974.

In 1941 Golden moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, and became a reporter for local newspapers. From 1942 to 1968 he published a periodical, *The Carolina Israelite*. It contained observations and commentary about Southern politics as well as reminiscences of his youth on New York's Lower East Side. Two books were published from these essays: *Only In America* and *For 2 Cents Plain*. Both were bestsellers.

In 1961 Golden wrote a biography of Carl Sandburg which contains many anecdotes of his life and observations of events and personalities.

One of them was about an effort to promote Sandburg as a dark horse candidate for the Republican presidential nomination in 1940.

He seemed unlikely presidential timber. After all, in the fall of 1907 he was an organizer for the Social-Democratic Party of Wisconsin.

By 1940 his views had been modified only slightly. He was still a liberal, and would remain one until his death. Therefore, it came as quite a surprise when several leading Republicans attempted to make him their party's presidential nominee.

The leader of the effort was a member of a Wall Street brokerage firm, and someone who stood high in Republican circles. It was apparent to him President Franklin Roosevelt would seek a third term, and none of the likely Republican candidates could defeat him. The man reasoned the party needed a dark horse at the top of its ticket to win. Surely no one would better fit that description than the nation's leading Lincoln biographer.

Other Republicans whom the stock broker approached were at first doubtful, and then became more enthusiastic. Among them was Henry Luce, the publisher of *Time* and *Life* magazines, who

believed the subject of a Sandburg nomination should be explored fully. Carl Sandburg did not regard himself as presidential timber, and he asked that the matter be dropped. Regretfully, his supporters complied with his request.

Sandburg did not support Wendell Wilkie, the eventual Republican nominee. As Golden noted in his biography, Sandburg stumped the country for Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Sandburg and Golden crisscrossed the country promoting the book until Sandburg became ill in New York. Golden took him home to Connemara.

In the summer of 1962 they appeared together at the Flat Rock Playhouse just across the road from Connemara. There was a full house in attendance. Sandburg read some of his poems and played his guitar. He didn't finish the last song because he couldn't remember the words.

At 84, Carl Sandburg was reaching the end of his wonderfully productive life.

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Welcome Home

As a 20-year-old, Carl Sandburg enlisted in Company C of the 6th Illinois Infantry. Along with many others, he was taken up with the sinking of the United States battleship *Maine* in the harbor of Havana, Cuba, on February 15, 1898. At the time, many believed the ship had been blown up by the Spanish who controlled the country. Years later, that was proven untrue.

On April 24, 1898, President William McKinley declared war on Spain. On April 26th, Carl Sandburg enlisted. He was outfitted in Civil War era clothing which was completely incompatible with a trip to the tropics.

The residents of Galesburg were very proud of their volunteers. As many as 10,000 of them went to the C.B. & Q. Depot to salute the soldiers as they boarded the train for Springfield. Their commanding officer was Captain Thomas L. McGirr.

Just two months later, the Galesburg volunteers arrived in Puerto Rico. They rowed ashore in full battle gear and saw explosions in the distance. They marched up steep mountains, but never experienced a real battle. The heat, malaria, mosquitoes and lice were the enemies closest to the soldiers. And, Captain McGirr's dog received better rations than the boys.

On August 12th, the United States and Spain signed an armistice. The soldiers boarded their ships and returned to the East Coast. On September 21st, they were welcomed back in Galesburg as heroes. The Army and Navy League, the Ladies' Society of the Presbyterian Church and the First Methodist Church gave banquets to honor the Galesburg volunteers. There were patriotic speeches, original poems and good food at each of the events.

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The Beauty of Hinckley, Illinois

As a young man, Carl Sandburg tried a variety of jobs to support himself after he left Galesburg. He had written one book of poetry and had ideas for a second book.

Early in 1907 he was working for *The Lyceumite*, a journal about the entertainment circuits then common in the Midwest. He was also still selling stereoscopic views door-to-door and giving lectures about social problems, such as child labor. He studied the current writings about socialism which were aimed at helping working people.

In the later part of April *The Lyceumite* was sold to

the publisher of *Talent*, its competitor, and Sandburg was out of a job. He left Chicago and gave lectures in Indiana and Illinois, but there was lots of competition. He landed in Hinckley, Illinois on the C. B. & Q. line from Aurora to Rochelle.

Hinckley is located in DeKalb County. The land on which it sits was settled by the John S. Sebree family in 1834. The original site of the community was an Indian settlement called Squaw Grove. In 1872, the railroad extended its line out of Aurora. An officer of the railroad named F.E. Hinckley, platted the town and named it for himself. The village was incorporated in 1877. You can still drive through Hinckley on old U.S. 30 (Lincoln Highway).

This letter, written to his friend Reuben W. Borough from Hinckley on May 30, 1907, seems to show a 29-year-old Sandburg observant of the world around him, working hard on his writing and confident of his ability. Borough was a reporter and poet from Lafayette, Indiana.

Dear Rube:

Does it convey anything to you to be told that I am in Hinckley? Yet that is where I am—such is the fact. Tonight both God and I know where I am—yesterday only God knew I was to get here.

Green-crested hills surround the town and white roads lead off into grey, mysterious distances. I will be in dire peril of tossing off a poem or two.

Hinckley! Isn't it musical? So like Barbizon and Heidelberg.

The town has been thoroughly evangelized this winter—I am plotting a hot socialist speech the night before I leave.

Be a good lad—throw off a short epistle for me once in a while—tell Mance I think of him—forward my mail—and curse the Examiner for its outright falsehoods about Triggs. Can you remember all

these?

Yours in comradeship,
Sandy.

(Alfred W. Mance was a friend of Borough and Sandburg and an ardent supporter of the Socialists. O.L. Triggs was a professor at the University of Chicago and editor of a literary publication, *Tomorrow*. Both Sandburg and Borough had submitted writings to it.)

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Galesburg's First Labor Day

Forty tailors, eleven cigarmakers and 58 carpenters marched in the first Galesburg Labor Day Parade, September 7, 1891. They circled the Public Square and went east on Main Street to the street car station. Then, they went to Highland Park on the east side of Galesburg for a picnic and program. Dancing was enjoyed in the evening.

Congressman George W. Prince congratulated the union men on their building up of the country. He said they deserved a holiday and that it would be the beginning of an annual observance. He also described various laws which had been passed by Congress to protect working people. Other speakers complimented the workers on their thrift and industry.

New York City holds the honor of celebrating the first Labor Day on September 5, 1882. Gradually, Labor Day observances spread across the country. In 1894 Congress established the official Labor Day as the first Monday in September.

On September 4, 2006, there were fifty units in the Galesburg Labor Day Parade. Crowds lined Main Street to wave flags and cheer the workers. The line of march started at Chambers and East Main streets and continued west to Cherry Street, thence

south on Cherry to the Knox County Court House. A program of speeches followed.

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Apple Time

In the fall of the year we can enjoy a variety of apples being harvested. This dessert is easy to prepare and can compliment a main dish baked in the oven at the same time.

Modern Swedish Apple Cake

8 medium tart apples
½ cup fine dry bread crumbs
¾ cup brown sugar, packed
1 ½ teaspoons ground cinnamon
½ cup butter, melted
1/3 cup orange juice

Peel and core apples; cut them into thin slices. In a small bowl, combine bread crumbs, brown sugar and cinnamon. Butter an 8 or 9 inch square baking dish. Place a layer of apples in the bottom of the dish, sprinkle with half of crumb mixture and drizzle over half of the melted butter. Repeat with the remaining crumbs and butter. Pour orange juice over and bake in a 400 degrees F. Oven for 25 to 30 minutes or until apples are tender. Cool and serve with whipped cream if desired.

Makes 4 servings

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Wrinklings & Wild Things

(It seems to me that Carl Sandburg had a special knack when it came to writing poetry with an autumnal theme. See what you think. The following poem can be found in his *Complete Poems*, page 88.—Steve Holden)

FALLTIME

Gold of a ripe oat straw, gold of a southwest moon,
Canada thistle blue and flimmering larkspur blue,
Tomatoes shining in the October sun with red
 hearts,
Shining five and six in a row on a wooden fence,
Why do you keep wishes on your faces all day
 long,
Wishes like women with half forgotten lovers
 going to new cities?
What is there for you in the birds, the birds, the
 birds, crying down on the north wind in
 September, acres of birds spotting the air going
 south?
Is there something finished? And some new
 beginning on the way?

(From a time when elms still existed and poplars,
perhaps, had greater longevity—this poem is found
on page 350 of *Complete Poems*.)

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association
313 East Third Street
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POPLAR AND ELM

Silver leaves of the last of summer,
Poplar and elm silver leaves,
Leaves not least of all of the Lombardy poplar,
Standing before the autumn moon and the autumn
 wind as a woman waits in a doorway for some
 one who must be coming,
All you silver leaf people, you I have seen and
 heard in a hundred summer winds,
It is October, it is a week, two weeks, till the rain
 and frost break on us and the leaves are washed
 off, washed down.
In January when the trees fork gray against a clear
 winter blue in the spare sun silver of winter or
 the lengthened frost silver of the long nights—
I shall remember then the loans of the sun to you in
 June,
I shall remember the hundred winds who kissed
 you.

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