

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

Winter, 2009

To The Editor

Attracting thousands of visitors from around the world each year, the Carl Sandburg Historic Site is one of Galesburg's most popular tourist attractions. It is supported by the State of Illinois and the nonprofit Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. The doors of the Site may be temporarily closed, but the Association continues to sponsor and participate in its many activities that honor and remember Carl Sandburg.

The annual Penny Parade, which brings schoolchildren to the Site to learn about Galesburg's most famous son, took place on January 30th at 11 a.m. The Songbag Concert Series, as well as the Winter Lecture Series, both hosted by the Association, will continue as planned. The Association also remains a participating sponsor of the Sandburg Days Festival in April.

In addition to these regularly scheduled activities, the Association is in the process of recording an audio tour of the Site, which will introduce visitors to Sandburg and the Site's facilities and be broadcast via a low-power FM transmitter. Additional visitor accommodations, including signage, are also being explored so that the birthplace itself can be viewed and understood without a guided tour. Remembrance Rock and the gardens remain accessible to the general public.

The Association recognizes that a recording and outdoor signage are not a replacement for a

personally guided tour of the Site, nor is it an acceptable long term solution to the Site's closure. But we remain optimistic that our efforts will match the public's commitment to Carl Sandburg's legacy and will help us weather this storm.

To keep the doors of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site closed is a detriment to Galesburg's economy, educational offerings and its historic and cultural past. It diminishes the memory of a man who accomplished great things, yet never lost sight of the town in which he was born. If you are supportive of the Association's mission to promote and maintain Carl Sandburg's legacy, we ask that you join us in our efforts.

Megan Scott, on behalf of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association.

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Songbag Opens Again

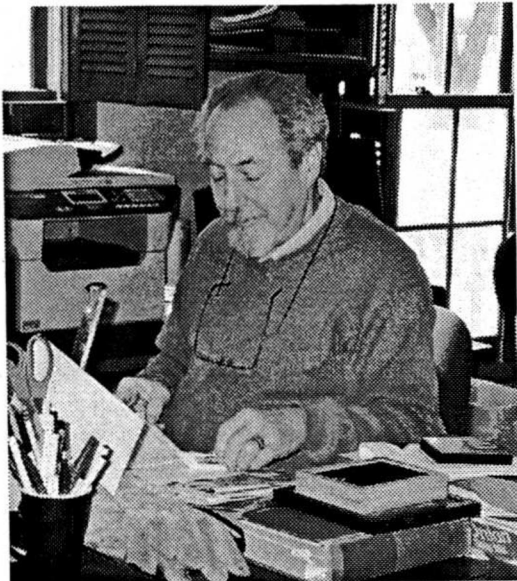
The Songbag Concerts are alive and well. The first one of the new season will be February 28th. A fine local bluegrass group called "The Bluegrass Cheeseburger" will perform at 7:00 p.m. in the Barn, at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, 313 East Third Street, Galesburg, Illinois. They are two father-son pairs who play banjo, guitar, mandolin and bass.

Light refreshments will be served. A \$3 donation is requested but not required. Come and enjoy the music.

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On to Retirement

Steve Holden, the Site Superintendent, has been working at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site for the past nineteen years. He retired on January 31, 2009.



Steve Holden at his desk on January 30th

Usually, when a person retires, the announcement contains information such as the date of his birth, his marital status, and his education. Steve Holden was more than that to the Site.

Steve has done everything at the Site, including building exhibits, planting flowers, guiding visitors through the birth cottage and answering queries from around the nation and the world. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was preparing the Visitor's Center panorama about Carl Sandburg's life. It will be a valuable asset for

many years to come.

He has contributed to *Inklings and Idlings* for the past ten years. In addition to timely reports about activities at the Site, he always added a poem or story written by Carl Sandburg appropriate to the time.

In commemoration of his retirement and in appreciation of his services, the Association presented Steve with a handsome clock.

With it he can measure the hours of a long and enjoyable retirement.

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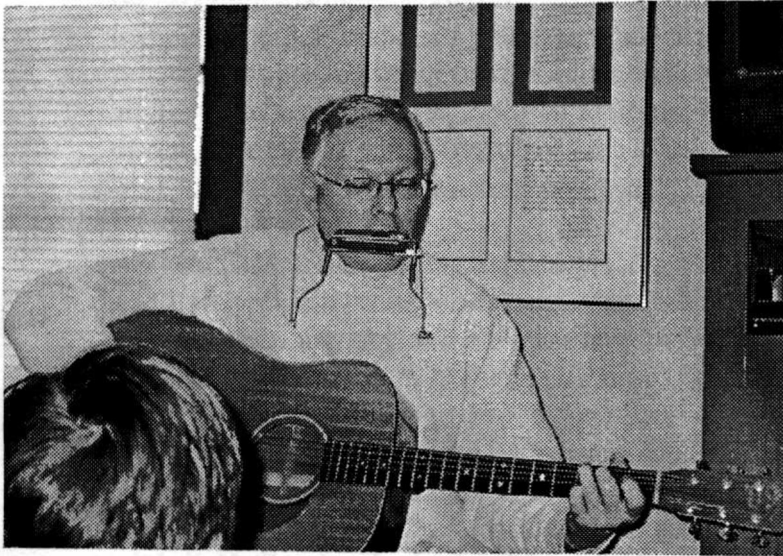
Pennies Go Marching On

The U.S. Mint sends out seven billion pennies every year. Most of them are put aside until they accumulate and are then taken to a bank to exchange for a larger denomination. At the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, pennies do a great deal of work. For several decades the school children of the area have presented the pennies they have collected to the Site.

All those pennies have added greatly to the beauty of the grounds around Carl Sandburg's birthplace. They have improved the facilities and added to the comfort of visitors. While collecting the pennies, students also learn about Sandburg's life and become familiar with some of his poetry.

This year, on January 30th, students from Gale, Neilson, Steele and Mable Woolsey schools brought their collections to the Site and enjoyed a program of folk music and refreshments of ice cream cake.

On the next page is a photograph of John Heasley singing to the audience while accompanying himself on the guitar and harmonica.



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The Third Big Read

Activities for the third annual Big Read began on January 19, 2009. A variety of events will continue through April 25th.

Many in Western Illinois will be reading *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain this spring. Since the story takes place along the Mississippi River and we live so close to the Father of Waters, it should be an interesting experience. Tom Sawyer is a charming book and will cheer you out of the winter doldrums.

Other activities include a film about Mark Twain shown at the Galesburg Public Library, tours to Hannibal, Missouri, and Keokuk, Iowa, and writing, poetry and photography contests.

In conjunction with the Big Read, Sandburg Days Festival will kick off on April 23rd with a concert in the Barn and culminate with the Poetry Slam on April 25th. For more information check your newspaper or the library website www.galesburglibrary.org.

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January 6th in History

Carl Sandburg was born on January 6, 1878, in Galesburg, Illinois. It was little noticed that two Swedish immigrants had added a second child to their family.

As with virtually every date on the calendar, many noteworthy events took place on January 6th. In 1412, it is believed that Joan of Arc was born in Domremy, France. During the Hundred Years War, she had a vision which inspired her and helped to save her country from the English invaders. In doing so, she led several successful battles. She was later captured by the English, tried in an ecclesiastical court as a heretic and burned at the stake. She was only 19 years old when she died.

In 1759, George Washington and Martha Dandridge Custis were married. In 1838, Samuel Morse demonstrated his invention of the telegraph for the first time. On January 6th, 1918, Theodore Roosevelt, the 26th President, died in his home at Oyster Bay, New York. He was sixty years old.

Some other well known individuals born on January 6th were Charles Sumner (a United States senator who was caned on the Senate floor by Representative Preston Brooks of South Carolina), Tom Mix (silent screen star) and Khahil Gibran (Lebanese-born novelist and poet). *The Prophet* is his most well known work.

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Cigars and Consumption

A favorite gathering place for young Carl Sandburg and his friends was the Schultz Cigar Shop on Berrien Street. Julius Schultz was seldom on the premises. He would be away, selling his cigars to the stores and saloons of the Galesburg area.

When he was there, he did not object to the presence of Sandburg and his friends. To be sure, they were rarely in the front part of the store. Instead, they gathered in the back room. That was the place the cigars were manufactured by "Nig" Bohnenberger. If asked, he would explain he was called "Nig" because he was "dark-complected." His parents had conferred his nickname upon him.

Mr. Bohnenberger was fairly well informed, because he was an avid reader of the daily newspapers. He formed opinions on the issues of the day. He would express them as he rolled the cigars.

The boys enjoyed watching him sort the tobacco leaves and roll them into cigars of a uniform shape. One of the final steps of the process was the wetting of the wrapper leaf with Mr. Bohnenberger's saliva. Then the wrapper was tightly fitted around the cigar, to assure it would remain firm.

Mr. Bohnenberger was afflicted with consumption, the disease known as tuberculosis. Its progress became more and more apparent. With increasing frequency, he was wracked with coughing spells. Eventually, the sickness claimed him.

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On Emancipation Day

On August 1, 1834, slavery was abolished in the British Empire. Since then many of the former colonies and possessions of the empire celebrate Emancipation Day with religious services, speeches and carnival festivities.

In the state of Florida, Emancipation Day is observed on May 20th. The first reading of President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was given there on that date.

Washington, DC, observes Emancipation Day on April 16th because President Lincoln signed legislation which freed 3,100 slaves in the District of Columbia in 1862. A parade and other public events were conducted in the city from 1866 to 1901. They were reinstated in 2002.

In Texas, Emancipation Day is held on June 16th to commemorate the date on which the abolition of slavery in the state was announced. It is called Juneteenth.

Emancipation Day was celebrated on January 1, 1897, in Galesburg. The 34th anniversary of the issuance of the Proclamation was marked by the black citizens of the city in the G.A.R. Hall. John Johnson was chairman of the event and it was sponsored by the Odd Fellows lodge. The program opened with music and an invocation. Miss Stella Owens read the Emancipation Proclamation. The chairman then announced that several speakers were unable to attend.

The Reverend C.H. Thomas, chaplain of the lodge, then spoke on the benefits received after the Proclamation had been issued and the effect it had on the participation of African-American soldiers in the Civil War. More than 200,000 black men served in the Union armed forces.

Reverend Thomas spoke about the relations between black and white members of the community. He said, "We ask our more favored brother to give us his hand and help us along. We are a new race and must think anew, and must arouse the interest of others in us, impressing them with a sense of our importance in the world today."

J.J. Fisher also spoke. He said his race "didn't want social equality, but wanted to be given a chance to win its way to social equality."

The afternoon program ended with the singing of "My Country, 'Tis of Thee." Further observances

were scheduled for the evening.

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Culture in Galesburg

Amelita Galli-Curci was the most famous coloratura soprano in the world in the early 20th century. Her career began in 1906 with tours of Italy, Europe and South America. In 1916, she appeared with the Chicago Opera Company in "Rigoletto" by Verdi. She was a sensation. The audience applauded for fifteen minutes.

Her success led to tours in the United States and a recording contract. Her recording of "Caro Nome" sold ten thousand copies in Chicago alone. She was paid as much as \$15,000 (equal to more than \$204,000 in today's dollars) for her opera appearances.



Amelita Galli-Curci at Augustana College,
Rock Island, Illinois, May 17, 1917

Mrs. Anna Groff-Bryant was the dean of the Arts Department at Lombard College. She was the impresario who arranged for Galli-Curci to appear in Galesburg on March 22, 1918. The concert was held in the First Methodist Church. The 2000

tickets cost \$2.50 each (equivalent to more than \$34 in today's money).

Mrs. Galli-Curci arrived in Galesburg by train on March 20th and went to the Orpheum Theater that afternoon to see a movie. She traveled with her piano and flute accompanists.

The recital program included English folk songs, Italian opera arias and a group of French songs. The climax was the "Shadow Song" from the opera "Dinorah". The *Evening Mail* wrote that the voice and flute "mingled in dazzling flights of melody." The audience refused to go home. As a finale, she played "Home, Sweet Home" on the piano as a not so subtle hint to the audience.

Amelita Galli was born in Milan, Italy, in 1882. She began studying the piano at age five. Her maternal grandparents were professional musicians and helped teach the young girl.

She studied old singing-method books, listened to other sopranos and practiced piano exercises with her voice to develop her talent as a singer. She could sing in six languages and was a talented composer. She graduated from the Musical Conservatory in Milan, but was basically self-taught.

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Laundrymen and Churchmen

The Galesburg of Carl Sandburg's early boyhood was not as ethnically diverse as the city of today. Apart from the English, Swedes and Germans, only a few other cultures were represented.

It was Sandberg's recollection just two Chinese lived in Galesburg in his youth. They worked from early in the morning until late at night in their laundry. It was located on the west side of Prairie Street, just a few doors south of Main.

Through the windows of the establishment, one could see them starching, ironing and assembling bundles of clothing.

Invariably, they wore long black blouses. Their heads were shaved, except each had a braided pigtail. It was about three feet long, and ran from the crown of the head down the back. How much English they knew was a matter of conjecture, as they rarely spoke more than a few words.

Almost as exotic were the few Italians. They were distinguished not by their hair or their dress, but by their exuberant behavior and volubility. Two of them, named Tonelli and Costa, were fairly prominent in the community. They were the pastors, respectively, of the St. Patrick and Corpus Christi Roman Catholic churches. Father Tonelli was a handsome, friendly, smiling man. Father Costa, whose name was to endure because it was given to a school, had none of those qualities. He was short and thin-lipped. His eyes were dark and deep-set. His demeanor did not encourage familiarity, at least not from small boys like Sandburg.

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Presidents Come and Go

Carl Sandburg avidly read about the presidential campaign of 1896 in the newspapers from Chicago. He followed the comments of William McKinley in Canton, Ohio. McKinley spoke from his front porch while William Jennings Bryan traveled from town to town speaking to the local residents.

The Panic of 1893 was still affecting the economy and jobs were hard to find. McKinley's campaign slogan, which resonated with the electorate, was "A full dinner pail." On the other hand, there were long and heated arguments about gold and silver

and the valuing of the dollar.

Bryan came through Galesburg on the train and spoke at the C.B. & Q. Depot. Carl was there to hear him and even caught a ride on the cowcatcher of an engine to Monmouth in order to hear Bryan a second time.

Carl was a Bryan supporter, but he was unable to convince his father, who had always voted for Republicans, to change his ways. Later, Carl decided Bryan wasn't as smart as he sounded.

McKinley won the election and the *Evening Mail* published an article describing the plans for the March 4, 1897, inaugural in Washington. Large electric search lights would illuminate the Capitol as well as other government buildings along Pennsylvania Avenue. Electric arches would be placed over the Avenue.

Of course, the inaugural parade would be the largest ever and wooden stands erected especially for the occasion would accommodate the viewers. The prices of the seats ranged from 50 cents to \$2 (equal to \$12.31 and \$49.23 in today's dollars). It was proposed to put roofs over the stands as several people had died of exposure during the 1892 parade.

The Pension Building would be the site of the single inaugural ball with 12,000 to 15,000 people expected to attend.

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Where Are We Drifting?

This headline appeared on January 16, 1894, in the *Daily Mail* above the following editorial:

"Galesburg is now being overrun with gambling rooms and houses of ill repute, there is

not longer doubt, and it is high time that something should be done to suppress them and drive this gilt-edged fraternity out of town. These matters can be regulated, and the mayor and police should see that it is done."

The newspaper went on to report that Grace Seaton's house had been raided and the "inmates" heavily fined. It was indicated there were other houses on West Street and East Brooks Street which needed to be treated in the same way. "High carnival" was held in those establishments nightly, to the dismay of the law-abiding citizens who lived nearby.

The next day, the newspaper included an article written by an anonymous reporter who had visited some of the gambling dens. It was reported that every saloon in town had a gambling room associated with it. A room named the Monte Carlo, which was known to every police officer, had been fitted with dice and roulette games. It was located over Bollenback's saloon on Cherry Street. The reporter also visited the gambling room over Joe's Place on Prairie Street. It also attracted roulette and poker players.

He noted one young man, the son of a "most respectable mother," was operating the roulette table and raking in piles of cash. The reporter visited six other establishments and observed all were doing a brisk business.

It was obvious many a man who had just drawn his pay dropped it all and went home to his family with empty pockets. Thereby his family suffered deprivation. In effect food was being taken from the mouths of children when money changed hands in the gambling dens.

Mayor Forrest F. Cooke was urged to do his duty and enforce the ordinances on the books.

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The Vaudevillians

Galesburg was visited by many actors more than a century ago. They and their companies might stay for just one night, but the city was exposed to a great deal of theatrical talent.

For years their venue was the Opera House, at the corner of Main and Prairie Streets. After it was destroyed by fire, the thespians would visit the Auditorium, at the corner of Broad and Ferris Streets.

The names of the actors have been largely forgotten. In their day they were as well-known as any motion picture or television star of today. Anna Held, Edwin Booth, John Drew, Joseph Jefferson and James O'Neill all appeared on the stage of either the Opera House or the Auditorium. They had no trouble attracting an audience.

In addition to plays, the theaters hosted minstrel shows and lecturers, such as explorer Henry Stanley. Heavy-weight champions John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett and Bob Fitzsimmons also came to Galesburg. They starred in plays especially written for them. Mostly, they were fairly florid melodramas.

The lines spoken by the heavyweights were fairly simple, so that they could be easily delivered without prompting. Unfortunately, some of the heavyweight thespians, particularly Sullivan, visited a saloon or two between performances so their acting skills suffered.

Occasionally Carl Sandburg found employment at the Auditorium. He was sometimes paid as much as ten cents per night as a stagehand. Mostly he was given free admission to the attractions. It was hard to say which form of compensation he preferred. There was no doubt which one he enjoyed more.

C.E. Toles Identified

Over the years, a number of drawings by C.E. Toles have appeared in *Inklings and Idlings*. Thanks to the Internet, information has been posted about this person. It isn't known with certainty whether the artist was male or female.

Three- and six-panel comic strips by the artist first appeared in the *New York Herald* and ran between 1894 and 1901. The subjects of the comics were usually about topics of those days and often had humorous references to bicycles, bloomers, cops and bums.

Newspapers used single panel cartoons to fill space on their pages or to recognize special days during the year. To the left is one honoring Abraham Lincoln on his birthday. It appeared in the *Evening Mail* in 1901.

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