

INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • P.O. Box 585 • Galesburg, Illinois 61402 • (309) 342-2361 • www.sandburg.org

SUMMER 2021

FROM SITE SVCS. SPEC. BRYAN ENGELBRECHT

“Summer Grass”

*Summer grass aches and whispers
It wants something; it calls and it sings; it pours
Out wishes to the overhead star.
The rain hears; the rain answers; the rain is slow
Coming; the rain wets the face of the grass.*

Carl Sandburg
Good Morning America, 1928

Although not officially summer as I write this, the grass has certainly called out to the sky for rain this spring. Our cooler, dry spring has transitioned lately to a warmer, humid one, with heavier rainfall as summer approaches. Grass that was dormant a few weeks ago, now needs mowing weekly to remain aesthetically appealing to our visitors. As we adjust to seasonal changes, transition and growth are also occurring at Carl Sandburg State Historic Site.

We are pleased once again to partner with Master Gardeners from the University of Illinois Extension Office of Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren Counties. Making up for lost time last year due to the pandemic, the Master Gardeners have already made improvements to our Sandburg Park area. New plantings have occurred at the south side entries and the area behind the reconstructed outhouse. The plants came courtesy of Kathy Breden and the Master Gardner Site at the Knox Country Nursing Home. Be sure to view them the next time you visit.

On May 21 the Illinois State Museum launched an Illinois Women's History Trail. Women of all classes and backgrounds from different eras of Illinois history are included. Lilian Steichen-Sandburg and Carl Sandburg State Historic Site are part of this Trail. A map can be found at <http://bit.ly/WomensHistoryTrail>. Our hope is that more people will come to learn about Lilian and her work. As a national expert on the dairying of goats, Lilian forged her own path while mothering three children and helping Carl with his career. If you are looking for a summer road trip, we highly recommend you not only read the entries on these amazing women but also get out on the road to see the physical locations connected to them.

As the year has progressed, Illinois has begun easing Coronavirus mitigation measures. It is likely that capacity

limits and other mitigation measures will be completely lifted in the near future. As we all know, things can change in a pandemic in a short time. Please continue to visit www.sandburg.org, follow the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association on Facebook, or contact us by email or phone for any questions regarding Carl Sandburg State Historic Site and pandemic mitigation measures.

2021 CSHSA MEMBERSHIP STATUS REPORT

By Rick Sayre, Membership Director

With your help our goal of 100 memberships for 2021 is within reach! This past year of COVID-19 pandemic closures of state historic sites has negatively impacted one of the major sources of our Association's income, our Museum Store sales. Another casualty of the pandemic was our annual Penny Parade with funds raised by area elementary schools. Despite these issues, in the past 2020 membership year we were very pleased to reach a record total of 90 memberships along with a record total of \$4,500 in memberships which helped to offset the lost income normally generated by these activities.

So far, in 2021 our participation in Facebook's Annual Day of Giving (December 2020) garnered us sixteen new donor-members! And we are so pleased that through May 2021 we have added twenty-six new members to our rolls along with fifty-seven renewals for a total of eighty-three current 2021 memberships. With these new memberships and the renewals of our current members we should have an excellent opportunity to reach our 2021 goal of 100 members!

If you have not yet renewed your 2021 membership, we would be delighted if you would consider renewing this month. I would love to report to the board that we have successfully reached our goal of 100 new members.

Again, thanks to all of you for your continuing support for the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association and its goal of perpetuating the legacy of Galesburg's native son, Carl Sandburg!

If you are unsure if you have renewed your 2021 membership, please feel free to contact me at:
membership@sandburg.org, ricksayre@comcast.net,
or my home phone of 309-343-8614.

And you may renew your membership online at
<https://www.sandburg.org/membership.html>
or by mail using the membership form on p.8 of this issue.

CARL SANDBURG PRIZE

By Andrew Chernin, CSHSA Education Committee

WHAT IS THE CARL SANDBURG PRIZE?

The Carl Sandburg Prize is a \$500.00 cash award given annually by the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association to a full-time or part-time student at Carl Sandburg College. The Prize is one-time only and is not renewable. Students who are degree-seeking (Associates) as well as non-degree-seeking (Program) are eligible for the Prize. The \$500.00 award may be applied to academic or non-academic expenses.

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE CARL SANDBURG PRIZE?

Apply through Carl Sandburg College for the 2022-2023 academic school year.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE APPLICATION?

Include relevant information including name, date of anticipated graduation (or matriculation through a CSC program), and a response to the prompt below:

"Nothing happens unless first a dream"

Submit an original reflection that connects to the quote above. The reflection can be a written narrative, poem, or short essay. It may also include an original piece of art with a brief explanation of how it connects to the quote. Other possible submissions include a design, a created functional product, or a video.

The Harry Hansen/Carl Sandburg Papers at Knox College

By Micaela Terronez

[Ed. Note: CSHSA Board Member Micaela Terronez is an Augustana College graduate with degrees in history and anthropology. She received a Masters degree in Library and Information Science from the University of Iowa, serving in library and archival positions within non-profit, public, and academic institutions for the past five years. She is currently the librarian for special collections at Knox College's Seymour Library where various Carl Sandburg-related materials and manuscripts reside.]

The Knox College Special Collections & Archives is fortunate to be the home of several Carl Sandburg-related manuscript collections, as well as over sixty cataloged volumes of his works. Due in part to Sandburg's close ties to Knox, his contributions are considered a collection focus for instruction and reference services at the College and within the community. In the Winter 2020-2021 issue of *Inklings and Idlings* Emily DuGranrut (Galesburg Public Library archivist) described how Sandburg's legacy is documented in libraries and archives across the United States and world. With a man of such legacy and career successes, I wondered what Sandburg's daily life and mundane moments looked like. I received a glimpse into these aspects after reviewing the Harry Hansen/Carl Sandburg papers at Knox College, a small collection primarily including notes and letters written between Sandburg and Hansen from the 1920s to the 1950s.

Harry Hansen (d. 1977), a long-time friend of Sandburg, initially worked at the *Chicago Daily News* as a

Baltic Zone correspondent during World War I. By 1920 he served as the literary editor for the newspaper, a position he held when Sandburg began his career as a journalist on the news staff. Despite diverting paths, Hansen and Sandburg remained in close contact throughout their careers as exhibited in the Hansen/Sandburg papers. Included in the collection are writings by Sandburg, as well as articles about Sandburg written by Hansen and other notable authors, such as Amy Lowell, Harriet Monroe, Sherwood Anderson, and Archibald McLeish. The collection also consists of family photographs and letters from Lillian and Helga Sandburg. Interestingly, it is within the simplest of notes and images where I gained the most profound insight to Sandburg's mundane moments. These moments were surely uneventful actions at the time, but later became cherished and preserved remnants by others.

For example, Sandburg routinely left handwritten or typed notes on Hansen's desk while a staff member at *Chicago Daily News*. One of the most interesting notes starts in a simple manner and then develops into a more literary poem:

Mr. Hansen:

Why are you never in?

Why are you always out?

When do you work?

Or who does your work for you?

How many times do we shuffle in

And shuffle out to find you

IN??

In addition to Sandburg's notes I enjoyed examining the photographs of Sandburg with his friends and family, including one with his mother (Clara Mathilda). Most of the photographs, however, are undated and unidentified. In my review, I came across a couple snapshots that look to be from Sandburg's later life, perhaps in the 1950s or 1960s. In the photographs, Sandburg is pictured casually reading on a bench and examining the flora of the neighborhood. Simple, relaxing moments captured of Sandburg enlightened my perspective of the world-known author and biographer. In the midst of his many talents and successes, he had casual experiences (like many of us) that intermingled and influenced his accomplishments.





Photographs courtesy of Special Collections, Knox College.

If you would like to know more about the Harry Hansen/Carl Sandburg papers, please contact: Knox College's Special Collections at specialcollections@knox.edu. Though currently closed to the public, we'd be happy to assist with any remote inquiries by phone or email.

From His Reporting Days

By Christian Schock

[Ed. Note: Barbara Schock sent in this article written by her late husband Christian, a former CSHSA board member. It appeared in the Winter 1999 issue of *Inklings and Idlings*. Later, Carl Sandburg wrote a book about the Chicago Race Riots. Reprints of that book can be purchased in the Bookstore in the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site Visitors Center.]

In 1977, the Swallow Press published a compilation of articles from the *Chicago Daily News*. It was entitled *Done in a Day*.

In a preface the publisher of the newspaper, Marshall Field IV, declared,

We are delighted to present this collection of articles that have appeared in the Chicago Daily News in its century of existence as one of the world's most distinguished newspapers. The stories here weren't chosen because they tell history as seen through the eyes of reporters, but rather to demonstrate fine newspaper writing as it is practiced by the staff of the Daily News. Some of the articles are 10, 50 or 80 years old, but they are as alive today as when they were first inked in newsprint.

There is a certain irony in reading Field's words of praise. A few years after writing them he closed down the newspaper.

The journalists whose work is printed in the book are renowned in their field. Some of them are still writing today. The names of the women and men whose words appear include George Ade, Ray Stannard Baker, Finley Peter Dunne, Eugene Field, Georgie Anne Geyer, John Gunther, Ben Hecht, Lloyd Lewis, Peter Lisagor, Carl Rowan, Mike Royko, Nicolas Von Hoffman, Lois Wille, and Carl Sandburg.

Sandburg was hired in 1917 by Henry Justin Smith, one of the newspaper's greatest editors, on the recommendation of Ben Hecht, who was later to achieve fame as the author of such plays as "The Front Page."

At first Smith was hesitant about adding another reporter to the staff which he thought was too large. However, Hecht declared Sandburg wrote good poetry. Smith was passionate about literature, so he asked what kind of poetry Sandburg wrote.

"The new kind,, wonderful stuff, like Walt Whitman," Hecht replied. After an interview, Sandburg was hired. He was turned over to the city editor, who was ordered not to bother the new man with minor tasks like covering the day's news.

Sandburg stayed with the *Daily News* for ten years. During that time he covered the labor movement, wrote hundreds of motion picture reviews and was assigned to cover Chicago's race riot of 1919. By chance, he had written a series on the problems of the blacks just two weeks before the riot.

It was from that series that the editors of *Done in a Day* took the piece representing his work. The first few paragraphs are especially powerful.

Chicago is a receiving station that connects with every town or city where the people conduct a lynching.

'Every time a lynching takes place in a community down South, you can depend on it that colored people will arrive in Chicago inside of two weeks,' said secretary Arnold Hill of the Chicago Urban League, 3032 South Wabash Avenue.

We have seen it happen so often that now whenever we read newspaper dispatches of a public hanging or burning in Texas or a Mississippi town, we get ready to extend greetings to people from the immediate vicinity of the scene of the lynching.

If it is Arkansas or Georgia where a series of lynchings is going on this week, then you may reckon with certainty that there will be large representations from those states among the colored folks getting off the trains at the Illinois Central station, two or three weeks from today.

Most of the remainder of the article was composed of quotations from letters written by African-Americans who had come to Chicago, and by their lights, had prospered. Many of them were skilled tradesmen whose skin color had deprived them of the opportunity to use their abilities in the South, or who had been obliged to work for wages far smaller than those of their white counterparts. Life in Chicago was less afflicted with prejudice and discrimination.

So they thought. A few weeks after Sandburg's article appeared, the south side of the city was torn by bloody conflict. It had begun when a black swimmer strayed into a "white" area of Lake Michigan. Clearly, some of the customs and traditions of the South were also practiced in the North.

REHABBING BOOKS IN THE CONSERVATION LAB

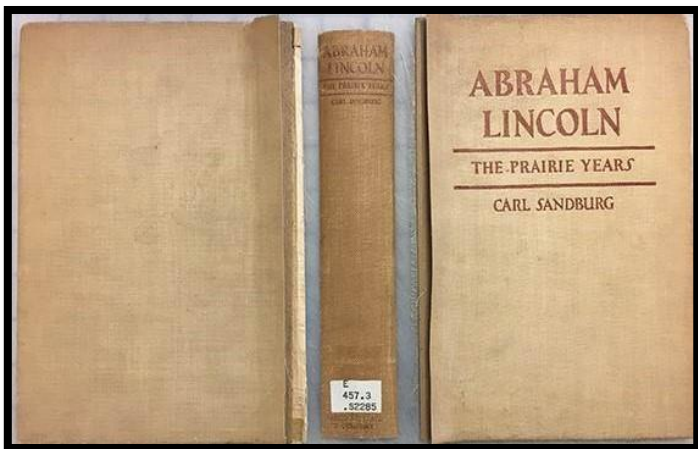
By Ginny Lee

[Ed. Note: Ginny Lee has worked in the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's Conservation Lab since February 2016. She has a Master's of Library Science degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her undergrad degree in art from the University of Kentucky and her artistic skills have been a good fit for this work. She has also worked at Springfield's public library, Brookens Library at UIS, and the former Illinois State Historical Library. Prior to her current position at the ALPL she was a writer and photographer in Springfield, IL. Thank you to Jensen Rehn for telling us about Ginny's work.]

In the Conservation Lab at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum we use a variety of techniques to repair books, documents, and manuscripts. Sometimes when a book arrives in the lab, it needs a lot of help. Recently, I rehabilitated a 1929 copy of Carl Sandburg's *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*.

Conservator Bonnie Parr, my supervisor, examines items coming into the lab and writes up a detailed Conservation Treatment Report, which includes the current condition of the item. This book required recasing with a new spine—removing the text block from the original cover, making repairs, creating a new cover spine, and reassembling the book.

(As a librarian and lover of books, the first time I performed this procedure I was shocked to think of cutting a book apart, but after seeing the handsome result of putting it back together with tender, loving care, I stopped feeling aghast about it!)



Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years during the rehabilitation process at the ALPLM.

I replaced damaged end papers with a folio of Rives archival paper and sewed the new pages onto the text block. I used Irish linen thread strengthened with beeswax and sewed the folded end pages into the first and last signatures of the book. A signature is simply a folded section of pages, which a bindery sews together to make a book. There are some twenty signatures in this book.

After carefully measuring the height and width of the spine of the book, I created a new cover spine from blotting paper and camel-colored book cloth. We have a large variety of colors of book cloth in the department, and part of the satisfaction in this process is matching the new cloth

to the original book cover. Often, we can match it perfectly, as with this book.

The new cover spine is attached to the back cover of the book first with Polyvinyl Acetate glue. We slide the glued spine under a one-inch section of original book cloth and press it down with a bone folder. The new cover spine is glued the same way inside the front cover.

Gluing the end pages to the book boards is perhaps the most tedious part of this process. Making sure the text block is aligned correctly (so that the front cover is indeed attached to the front of the text) is vital. Great care is taken to line them up perfectly to ensure the book will open and close easily and precisely. The book is now recased and will lie between two pressboards in the standing press to dry overnight.

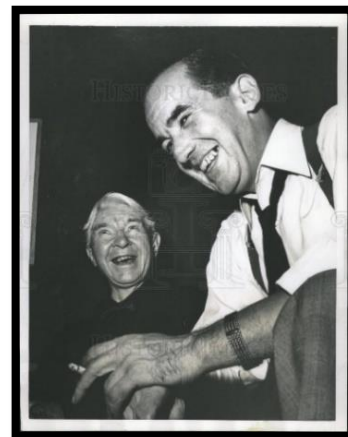
The final step is to glue the original cover spine (with title and author's name) to the repaired spine of the book. We place the book in the lying press and carefully glue the cover spine on, then wrap the book in the press with an Ace bandage to secure it overnight. It is exciting to remove the bandage the next day and see the restored book.

SANDBURG INTERVIEW WITH MURROW

By Gayle Keiser

[Ed Note: CSHSA member Gayle Keiser received a BA from Skidmore College, an MA from the University of Missouri, and a PhD from the University of Oregon. She came to Galesburg in 1980 and joined the Knox College faculty. In 1989 she became Executive Director of Common Cause—Illinois. Gayle served on the Knox County Board from 1990 to 2005. From 2005 to 2009 she served as Executive Director of the Illinois Stewardship Alliance in Springfield. In 2018 she returned to Galesburg.]

In 1961 famed American broadcast journalist Edward R. Murrow interviewed Carl and Lilian Sandburg at their home on Connemara Farm outside Flat Rock, NC. A DVD of that interview, produced by the Western Illinois Library System in cooperation with the Columbia Broadcasting System, is held by the Galesburg Public Library. What the videodisc lacks in length, only fourteen minutes and thirty-four seconds long, it makes up in the details of stark black-and-white images, personal mannerisms, and facial expressions of the Sandburgs and Murrow.



Carl Sandburg & Edward R. Murrow

In a prelude to the interview, Murrow browsed through several bookshelves of Carl Sandburg's twenty-four published books located in his workroom at Connemara. Murrow recognized the three-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize as "a very considerable American to whom most of us are beholding – Carl Sandburg: poet, philosopher, historian and biographer."

Murrow described the Sandburg property near Asheville. "It is a spacious home with room for people, for children, for walking sticks, for goats, and particularly for books. Books upstairs, downstairs, on the stairways, in the attic, in the basement. Everywhere – books."

The interview began with the two men strolling toward Remembrance Rock behind the house.* It was at the Rock that Sandburg wrote *Always the Young Strangers*. "I wrote thousands of words, with a lead pencil, there," Sandburg said. "My daughter Helga transcribed them. But on Lincoln, I couldn't bring the materials up here that I needed to consult from time to time."

Murrow asked if Sandburg wrote the Lincoln books in his study, located on the back corner of the house. "Perhaps you'll show us your workroom in the house a little later," Murrow requested. "Yes, my workroom." Sandburg answered. "It's a dizzy corner, kind of a crazy corner. I don't pretend it's organized." Out of that dizzy, crazy corner came his Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Lincoln.

Sandburg's first published book and recognition as a writer and poet came slowly after years of diverse life experiences which influenced many of his writings. No doubt, the four volumes of *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* were influenced by his personal experience in the military.

When the Spanish-American War broke out in 1898, Sandburg volunteered at age twenty and was ordered to Puerto Rico. While there, "He instinctively chronicled the events of the war as he saw them, in fragments as if to reconstruct the story later," according to biographer Penelope Niven. But Sandburg never saw combat during his eight months of service.

After his discharge he returned to Galesburg and briefly entertained the thought of a military career. In May of 1899, when the officers of Company C in the Sixth Illinois Volunteers selected him to attend the Military Academy at West Point, he accepted and headed to West Point, NY by train.

"At West Point, for a while there, I was a classmate of Douglas MacArthur and Ulysses S. Grant III," Sandburg told Murrow. "I was a classmate of theirs," he paused for emphasis, "for two weeks. I was notified by the Superintendent that I had failed in arithmetic....I might of expected that," he said flatly. "But grammar. Grammar!" – an incredulous Sandburg stated. "I probably failed to remember the definition I had read of a verb. And I don't know. I might have gotten a hate of adjectives then."

His wartime service qualified him for a tuition-free education at Galesburg's Lombard College. During four years at Lombard Sandburg met Philip Green Wright, his

favorite college instructor, who inspired him to continue writing. Wright funded the printing of Carl's first collection of poetry, *In Reckless Ecstasy* (1904). The book, not considered a publication in the business, was the first place Sandburg's name appeared in print.

It was many years after Sandburg left Lombard without a diploma before his poetry was published. Meanwhile he worked as a journalist, took a job as secretary to the Socialist mayor of Milwaukee and married Lillian Steichen. In 1918 he moved his wife and their three children to Chicago, where he wrote editorials. His name first appeared in widely-distributed print as a writer for Chicago's *Daily News*.

During her interview with Murrow, Lillian recalled that Carl wrote more than twenty years before achieving recognition as a poet. "He worked through the night with no prospect of having his poetry ever published. We always looked forward to saving enough money to get a book printed." She chuckled, "I always sent his poems to magazines, and they always came back."

While living in Chicago, Sandburg caught his first break leading to acclaim when *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* published his first poem at age thirty-eight. "Then a publisher saw that, and he became recognized." But Lillian believed it wasn't recognition that motivated Carl to write. "He worked just as hard before [being published]," she stated. "He works for himself, for his own ideal," she concluded with a determined nod. "He never considers anything else than what he...personally...would consider a great book."

Seated with Mr. Sandburg in his workroom, Murrow asked, "How do you answer when people ask how you go about the business of writing?" "It depends on who is asking the question," Sandburg stated, with a deadpan manner. "Sweet young things ask the question, 'How do you write?' And I will say, 'Simple. Easy. You just sit up to the typewriter. You put one word after another. If you try to put down two or three words, you're sunk.'" Sandburg looked intently into the camera with no hint of humor. "And they take that as very valuable advice." Murrow threw his head back and laughed.

Sandburg's look began to harden while listening to Murrow's next question, "You said once that an author must write what he thinks, and a poet must write what he must. Is that right?" Sandburg dropped his head as if winding up for something big. "There is being written today a lot of cerebral poetry," Sandburg said enunciating each syllable, with a hard tone in his voice. "Poetry out of the brain, with nothing of the blood in it. And it's rather pathetic."

"You need footnotes, and you need a diagram. Or there are readers of it that say, 'Oh, I understand it.' And there are readers who are honest enough to say they don't understand the poem. And there are still others who have it explained to them. And they say to those who told them...I understood it until you explained it to me." Mr. Sandburg settled in his chair, looking rather smug.

**According to Site Services Specialist Bryan Engelbrecht, the "Remembrance Rock" at Connemara Farm is not the same Rock as the one located behind Sandburg's Birthplace and under which Carl and Lillian's ashes were placed in keeping with their request.*

CARL SANDBURG'S LINCOLN—THE TV MINISERIES

By Rex Cherrington

In 1974 through 1976 there was a six-episode miniseries made for TV that was entitled "Sandburg's Lincoln." This was produced by David L Wolper who was perhaps best known as the executive producer of the more famous "Roots" miniseries. I recently watched the six-episode series that I had missed during the time it was produced and first aired. I was rarely near a television during the decade from roughly 1969 to 1979. Without attempting a book review of Sandburg's famous Lincoln work which consists of two volumes covering his life before the Presidency and the four volumes covering the Presidency and the conduct of the war along with a condensed single volume of the entire work, we shall make a few remarks about the history of Sandburg's work which has taken on a life of its own. The reviews have been very mixed, mostly favorable and some were quite harsh. I would add that the harshness was generally unnecessary and revealed unvarnished jealousy of Sandburg's success with his audience, one apparently much larger than the audience of his detractors. It is interesting how Knox College embraced Sandburg and his Lincoln work by featuring him as a speaker at Lincoln events at Knox in 1928 and 1958 as well as the rededication of Old Main in 1937, but now Sandburg is an aside, and his honorary doctorate from Knox College is not often mentioned. We have those among us who seem to pat themselves on the back if they can do a negative review of anything, presumably leading us to believe they have higher standards.

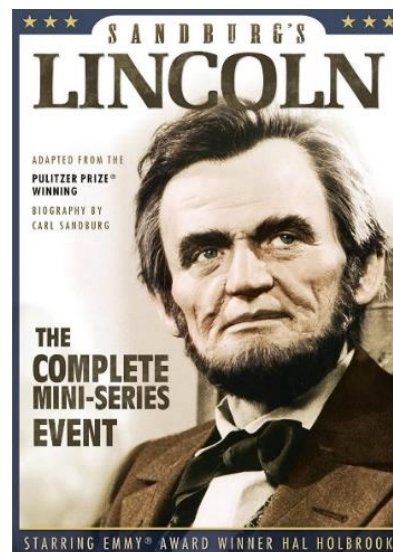
University of Illinois Professor of English James Hurt, author of *Writing Illinois: The Prairie, Lincoln and Chicago* (1992), made an observation about the context of Sandburg's Lincoln as one who was writing as America faced economic collapse and followed the threat of Nazism which suggested to the reader a rather mystical faith that the American democratic experience was foreordained to survive. In most respects Hurt tried to trivialize Sandburg's contributions to our understanding of Lincoln, but he really could no serious harm.

When anyone undertakes writing about a historical topic and/or a person from the past, it seems axiomatic that the writer is interpreting history through a lens formed by the times the author has lived in and the author's own life experiences. I believe the evidence for this is in Sandburg's epic of American history in the form of his Lincoln biography. When we know of Sandburg's humble beginnings, we see so clearly why he was so deeply drawn to devote so much of his life to such an exhaustive work. This admiration for Lincoln was obviously very large in Sandburg.

Sandburg has been in favor and out of favor with the Lincoln crowd for my entire life. I remember when

Sandburg was ridiculed for falling for that "silly" Anne Rutledge story, and then in a couple of decades I saw the Lincoln scholars of more recent times acknowledge that Lincoln was quite melancholy after her death and started putting Anne Rutledge back in the life of Lincoln. It is an observation that Sandburg learned much in his own life experience on how to connect with the common folks. Lincoln had that valuable gift so useful for a trial lawyer as he persuaded the jurors. Sandburg and Lincoln connected with the common folks by simply never forgetting they were from them. Sandburg's special psychic connection to Lincoln would plausibly account for why Sandburg's Lincoln work would lend itself so well to a TV miniseries, using the entertainment and education medium of the common folk.

This was not the first time that Sandburg's volumes had been adapted to screen. Robert E. Sherwood adapted Sandburg's work for his Pulitzer Prize winning play, "Abe Lincoln in Illinois," produced in 1938. It has been observed that Sandburg's multi-volume work on Lincoln is sort of an epic in prose that delves into the story of America along with Lincoln and shows the parallel development. Sandburg's readable, relatable storytelling approach lends itself well to plays, cinema, and television.



Cover of "Sandburg's Lincoln" DVD.

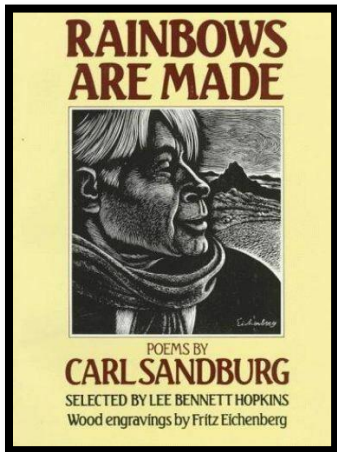
If you can find access to this TV miniseries through DVDs or streaming, I would recommend it to be worth watching. A word of caution about something I found bothersome--the DVD collection has the six episodes in a rather disjointed order and does not follow the chronological order of Lincoln's life. For example, the episode that covers Lincoln's last days, cleverly entitled "The Last Days," including brief coverage of the assassination are the next to the last episode, followed by the episode entitled "The Unwilling Warrior." I checked on the imdb.com website and learned that the order in which the episodes originally aired didn't track with chronology either, but at least they put the episode entitled "The Last Days" at the end. Hal Holbrook's performance was outstanding and demonstrated the depth of the character that he portrayed in the way that we today would imagine

being in the room with Lincoln with the aid of Carl Sandburg to help us interpret Lincoln in the context of the larger history. Holbrook earned one of his five career Emmy Awards for this performance.

RAINBOWS ARE MADE, SELECTED POEMS BY CARL SANDBURG

By Rich Hanson

I'm a sucker for used book sales. They are treasure hunts for bibliophiles. At a recent sale in Iowa I came across a copy of *Rainbows Are Made*, a volume of Sandburg's poetry selected by noted children's book editor Lee Bennett Hopkins and illustrated with black and white woodcuts by the artist Fritz Eichenberg.



Editor Hopkins put together this collection of poems with the idea of targeting the book to middle and high school students. Don't let the idea that this is a "children's book" deter you adults from picking it up and enjoying it as well. The anthology includes many of the short Sandburg classics that we are all familiar with, such as "Fog," "Grass," "Phizzog," and

"Primer Lesson," which I'm sure many of you will recognize from the following lines....

*Look out how you use proud words.
When you let proud words go, it is
Not easy to call them back.
They wear long boots, hard boots, they
Walk off proud, they can't hear you
calling---
Look out how you use proud words.*

What I found surprising and really refreshing about the volume though were the number of selections that Editor Hopkins culled from *The People, Yes*. These selections represent Sandburg the Socialist whose contempt for corporate greed, warmongers, and worship of money indicts society in a way that young readers might find both surprising and eye-opening. Consider this selection which ends with a question that rang in the streets in the 1960's,

*The Little girl saw her first troop parade and asked,
'What are those?'
'Soldiers.'
'What are soldiers?'
'They are for war. They fight and each tried to kill
As many of the other side as he can.'
The girl held still and studied.
'Do you know? I know something.'
'Yes, what is it you know?'
'Sometime they'll give a war and nobody will come.'*

Or this bitter selection, also from *The People, Yes*,

*Said the scorpion of hate: 'The poor hate the rich.
The rich hate the poor. The south hates the north.
The west hates the east. The workers hate their
bosses. The bosses hate their workers. The country
hates the towns. The towns hate the country. We are
a house divided against each other. We are millions of
hands raised against each other. We are employed
in but one aim—getting the dollar. And when we get
that dollar, we employ it to get more dollars.'*

Sadly, these lines apply to us as a nation as much now, as they did when Sandburg first penned the lines.

A short poem in this selection that I had never run across before has become one of my favorites. It's the poem of a skeptic, an iconoclast. One only has to remember in what scathing contempt Sandburg viewed the self-promoting evangelist Billy Sunday (insert Billy Graham, Jerry Falwell Jr., Joel Osteen, or Franklin Graham to make the contemporary connection) to know why he wrote the following lines.

"The Hammer"

*I have seen
The old gods go
And the new gods come.*

*Day by day
And year by year
The idols fall
And the idols rise.*

*Today
I worship the hammer.*

There's much beauty in this volume as well. The editor endeavors to invite discussion about what "poetry" actually is by beginning each of six sections of the book with an observation of Sandburg's regarding poetry, accompanied by one of Fritz Eichenberg's wonderful woodcuts. And there are gentle poems; there are contemplative poems with such beautiful lines as...

Love is a door we shall open together.

*The sea is never still.
It pounds on the shore
Restless as young hearts
Hunting.*

Spring is when the grass turns green and glad.

*Goodbye is a loose word, a yellow ribbon fluttering
in the wind.*

Whether you are a middle schooler just discovering the solace or transformative power of words, the music of their singing to you, or the wonder of an image that will strike a chord of recognition with you, or if you're an adult with a background in literature, or just a reader who enjoys immersion in a good book, *Rainbows Are Made* will delight and astonish you. It's an impressive selection of poems, a fun selection; just the gift to give to a young person whose mind you respect and wish to expand with a book of poetry that will make them "think." Or, a wonderful gift of words to treat yourself to as well.

2021 CSHSA MEMBERSHIP FORM		
Membership Categories		
<i>(Check one)</i>		
	\$10.00	Student / Senior (62+)
	\$20.00	Individual
	\$40.00	Family
	\$100.00	Donor
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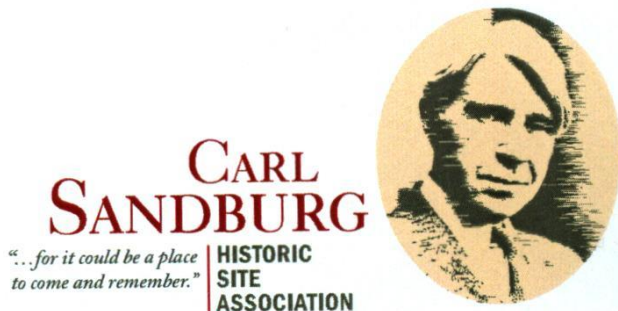
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The **Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association**, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, promotes awareness of the historical and cultural significance of Carl Sandburg and the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site in Galesburg, Illinois. We support a variety of educational programs and the collection, preservation, and display of materials which demonstrate the life, times, and achievements of Carl Sandburg.

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