INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361

Summer 2005

Annual Meeting

In accordance with Article III of the By-Laws of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, the annual meeting of the organization will be held at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday, July 12, 2005, at the Visitors' Center, 313 East Third Street, Galesburg, Illinois.

At that time, officers and directors of the Association will be elected for the ensuing year, and such other business as may properly come before the Association will be transacted.

Light refreshments will be served. All members are encouraged to attend.

Outta Site

Well, Galesburg's 28th annual Railroad Days (June 25 and 26) was quite successful here at the Sandburg Historic Site. We offered what was perhaps the only public screening of Bill Franckey's DVD "The Last Steam Man," a 53-minute film featuring interviews with William F. Franckey, a long-time railroad engineer. You wouldn't believe the number of railroad buffs lurking in our midst! Thank you to Norm Winick and John Heasly for lending and setting up their equipment for showing the DVD. Thanks again, John, for providing musical entertainment both afternoons.

Another feature we presented to our guests (besides cookies and lemonade) was a small

exhibit in the Barn (where the DVD was shown). The exhibit was basically Sandburg quotes about the railroad. The sources were Carl's autobiography, his children's stories, his poetry and his American folk song collection.

Another factor in the increased visitation was the tram tour sponsored by the Galesburg Historical Society. The tour was on Sunday and was repeated three times. Stops included various sites which were significant in Sandburg's younger years. The tram was full all three times. Thank you, Historical Society.

Bert McElroy, seasonal person, has been busy resetting the landscape lighting along the brick path to the Barn. A rented sod cutter helped define the areas, then a double layer of landscape fabric was installed over the electric lines. Bert then topped the whole thing off with thirty bags of cypress mulch. With the drought we've been going through lately, I think it will be wiser to put in the plants in the fall.

Here is hoping there will be rain in the near future. I know Bert is getting tired of watering the grounds.

- Steve Holden, Acting Site Manager

Poet Laureate Visits Galesburg

Kevin Stein, Illinois Poet Laureate, appeared at the opening event of the Sandburg Days Festival on Thursday evening, May 5th. The Barn was filled to capacity with people ready to listen to the reading of poetry.

Mr. Stein described his many activities since becoming Poet Laureate last year. He read poems written by Carl Sandburg and others as well as his own compositions. Everyone in the audience received a book mark with a gold tassel printed with the web address of the Illinois Poet Laureate. The web site can be accessed through an on-line search engine such as Google—just type in Illinois Poet Laureate.



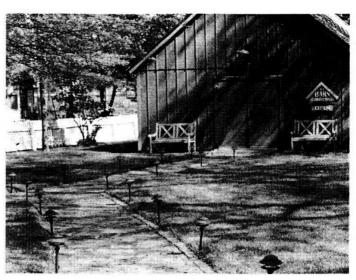
The audience was delighted with Mr. Stein's presentation and it was obvious he enjoyed interacting with the audience. Afterward, Mr. Stein indicated it was a pleasure for him to read Sandburg's poetry at the place where the famous poet had been born.

Thereafter members of the audience repaired to the deck of the Visitors' Center and partook of refreshments. Later, most of them returned to the Barn for a program presented by Jhon Akers. He repeated the program on Saturday morning. It is described on page.

New Lights

After the new brick sidewalk from the Visitors' Center to the Barn was laid, it was apparent it would have to be better lighted during evening events at the Site.

New lights were installed in time for the Sandburg Days Festival. Norm Winick, Rex Cherrington and Steve Holden were instrumental in purchasing and installing the fixtures. Future plans include adding landscaping between the lamps.



Many improvements have been made to the grounds at the Site over the years. If you haven't enjoyed the flowers recently, be sure to stop by this summer.

Eighty Galesburg Homes 2005

An old book has been re-published. It contains pictures of historic homes in Galesburg. Allen A.

Green took the original photographs and published the book in 1899. Owners of the homes sponsored the page on which the photograph of their house appeared.

The new edition, published by the Galesburg Group (Johan Ewalt, Craig Johnson, Carley Robison and the late Carl Tannert) includes historical information about each home.

The book is available at the Visitors' Center. It costs \$40. Members of the Association receive a 10 percent discount on their purchase.

Although several of the houses shown in the book have been demolished, Galesburg is fortunate to have so many historic houses still in existence. Surely Carl Sandburg would recognize many of the houses pictured as they existed when he was growing up in Galesburg.

Saving a Treasure

Carl Sandburg sold his personal library of 2,800 books, 3,000 photographs, 25,000 letters and about 300,000 pages of manuscripts to the University of Illinois. The vast archive is housed in the Rare Book and Special Collections Library of the University Library.

Such a large collection of paper and photographic artifacts requires special care to preserve it. The University recently received a \$239,000 grant from the federal program "Save America's Treasures" to insure that the collection survives in good condition. It is used by scholars from around the world.

Some paper-based items will be treated to neutralize their acidic content. Other items will be

photocopied for use by scholars as the originals are too fragile to be handled. Obsolete audiovisual materials will be re-formated for modern use. The work will be done by the library staff.

The collection contains many items of historical significance relating to the life of Carl Sandburg, and the history, literature and culture of the twentieth century.

Inklings and Idlings has been added to the collection. During the Sandburg Days Festival several staff members of the Rare Book and Special Collections Library visited the Site. After receiving a copy of Inklings and Idlings, a request was made for a complete set of the newsletters. The Editor happily made photocopies and mailed them to the University. As future issues appear, they will be sent to the Library.

The Association is proud to be included in the collection. Perhaps an article in *Inklings and Idlings* will provide an important piece of information a researcher may need at some future time.

The Birthplace Marker

In 1934, the Illinois State Historical Society started erecting markers at significant historical sites across the state. Each marker spoke of a building which was notable, or an event of historical importance or a personage deserving attention.

The birthplace of Carl Sandburg received the 275th marker on August 5, 1972. Governor Richard B. Ogilvie came to Galesburg to dedicate the cast aluminum sign. His wife Dorothy and daughter Elizabeth accompanied him.

The State Historian, William K. Alderfer, presented the sign to Galesburg Mayor Robert P. Cabeen with appropriate remarks.

Governor Ogilvie then gave the address of the day. He said "Carl Sandburg did more than bring honor to Illinois in his writings. He generated popular interest in the greatest Illinois citizen of all-Abraham Lincoln."

The Governor said Lincoln and Sandburg had an "abiding indignation of social injustice, a concern which moves us yet today. Lincoln's identification with the common man and Sandburg's indentification with the working classes pervaded their lives' work."

In conclusion, he said "Today, with the dedication of this historical marker, a capsule story of Carl Sandburg and his humble beginnings stands for all who come by to read and reflect upon."



This photograph was taken by Steve Stout, a Galesburg boy and son of E. Katheleen Stout. Kay is a member of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association Board of Directors.

Fourth of July 1887

Galesburg people decided to celebrate Independence Day especially well in 1887. It was fifty years since the town had been founded and that was a good reason to celebrate.

The *Republican-Register* described the beginning of July 4th this way:

"Shortly after twelve o'clock Sunday night the citizens of Galesburg were made aware that the Fourth of July was at hand, and from that moment the constant shooting of crackers and of guns and small cannon, made sleep with many impossible. The day was a perfect one; a cool breeze prevailing from the northwest. The rain of Sunday had refreshed all nature. At an early hour the merchants were busy adorning their stores with bright hued bunting, streamers, and flags, until the business streets were as gay and charming in appearance as the most fastidious could desire. Hardly a store or an office from basement to top story, but what was thus beautified, testimony to the enterprise of the citizens. Many private homes were similarly adorned."

The newspaper reporter then described the procession (we would call it a parade) on Main Street which drew large crowds of onlookers. The Galesburg Marine Band, which was proceeded by a platoon of police, provided the music. The Fire Department men had decorated their apparatus for the occasion and were next in the line of march.

Following was the "car of state" representing the United States. Little girls attired in white dresses with a blue cap or red sash represented each state in the Union. On a throne in the center was the Goddess of Liberty portrayed by Miss Mildred Woods.

Next came cars representing other nations. The Irish car was drawn by four white horses and decorated in green and the characters on board represented individuals fighting for home rule. Apparently, the local immigrants from the Emerald Isle felt the need to express their sentiments on the politics of the day.

The German car was trimmed with white, black and red, the official colors of that country. The Kaiser and Princes of the realm were portrayed by local men.

The Swedish car was decorated in an elaborate fashion with evergreens and Swedish banners. Little girls dressed in white wore sashes containing the names of the various provinces. A group of fifty Swedish citizens followed on horseback carrying Swedish flags. Each man wore a stovepipe hat.

There was a canopy and crown on top of the Swedish float. A banner inscribed on one side with these words "Sweden rejoices over liberty, law and order in America." On the reverse side of the banner, the inscription read "Honor to the Great Champions of Liberty—Gustavus Adolphus and George Washington."

At the end of the Swedish segment of the parade, there were two goat carts driven by boys and gayly decorated. The youngsters watching the procession were especially attracted to the goat carts.

The Woman's Christian Temperance Union had designed a float which depicted two boys about to buy an alcoholic beverage. They were being defended by an angel. This caused much comment according to the newspaper. The W.C.T.U. also provided barrels of ice water along the parade route which were much appreciated by the ladies. A drink of cool water surely helped the heavily clothed women.

There followed a variety of cars decorated by

businesses and promoting the products sold or manufactured in Galesburg. Several showed heating stoves, tin roofing and farm implements. One float showed an elegant drawing room furnished with a folding bed. Two children alternately snoozed or held a pillow fight.

The Galesburg Pressed Brick & Tile Company demonstrated the entire process of brick manufacturing. Frost Manufacturing had employees demonstrate the steps in making a boiler.

The African-American community was represented in the parade by a band and a float depicting the African continent.

The speakers' platform was erected in the Knox College campus. The Honorable John Van Valkenburg of Fort Madison, Iowa, and the Honorable George W. Kretzinger of Chicago were the orators of the day. Both seemed to be quite exercised about foreigners and anarchists.

It was estimated 7,000 people had come to town for the festivities.

The Family of Man

When Carl Sandburg married Lilian Steichen, he gained a brother-in-law, friend and inspired coworker.

Edward Steichen as born in Luxembourg in 1879, a little more than a year after Carl Sandburg's birth. The family came to the United States when Edward was three years old. They eventually settled in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

He left school at 15 and became an apprentice

lithographer. He was interested in photography and experimented with various techniques to create artistic pictures. By 1899, he had received awards for his photographs using a soft focus.

He went to Paris to study painting and photography. During World War I he volunteered as a reconnaissance photographer for the American Expeditionary Force. After the war he became known for his photographs in fashion magazines.

In the 1930s his portraits cost thousands of dollars. He created advertisements for national companies as well. During World War II he was appointed director of the U.S. Navy Photographic Institute.

In 1947 he was named Director of the photography department of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. He was a master at creating exhibits for the Museum.

Steichen's sister, Lilian Steichen Sandburg, had always encouraged him to be more realistic in his work. In their discussions, Carl reminded him of the number of times President Lincoln had used the Biblical expression "the family of man." Sandburg had written in *The People, Yes* that everyone was a member of "the little Family of Man/hugging the little ball of earth."

Steichen began work on his idea for an epic exhibition of photographs in 1947. In 1952 he traveled to Europe to gather photos of lovers, families, children, home, the richness of the earth, the oneness of human life.

He received millions of photographs by professionals and amateurs from around the world. It took three years to organize the show and select the pictures. Finally, the exhibit was composed of 503 photographs from 68 countries. (Only three photos by Steichen were included.)

"The Family of Man" exhibition opened at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955. It was an immediate success with the public. By 1963 nine million people in 69 countries had seen the exhibit. Many visited it more than once because they loved the photos so much.

The photos and text were published in book form and five million copies were sold. The book is still in print and available at the Visitors' Center.

There were critics of "The Family of Man" during this period of the Cold War and McCarthyism, but the people spoke—they liked the exhibit

Carl Sandburg wrote the Prologue to "The Family of Man." He created the foundation for the pictures by describing the birth of babies, the caresses of lovers, the knarled hands of workers, faces, faces and more faces. He called it "a camera testament." He also spoke at the opening ceremony.

What Is A Cornerstone?

The dictionary says a cornerstone represents the starting place in the construction of a monumental building, usually inscribed with the date and laid with appropriate ceremonies.

That's just what they did on Wednesday, June 24th, 1885, in Galesburg. Carl Sandburg was a barefoot seven-year-old that day. He wasn't sure what cornerstone meant and he wondered what the new Knox County Courthouse would be like if it didn't have a cornerstone.

Members of the Masonic order from all over the State of Illinois came to lay the cornerstone. That seemed to be one of their important duties. They

wore their symbolic regalia and troweled on the cement to hold the stone in place.

The custom was to place a box inside the stone which contained important papers. Reports of various state officials were put in the box as well as city directories, newspapers, lists of county board members, attorneys, judges, village and township trustees, the catalog of the public library, names of the architect and contractor, photographs of improved Polland China hogs, etc. An illustrated catalog of polled Aberdeen-Angus cattle was also put in the box along with a list of the members of the 34th General Assembly of the State of Illinois. There may be something of significance in that, but we don't know what it is.

"He wanted to do everything."

Helga Sandburg Crile

Jhon Akers presented his program "Sandburg and the Spanish Guitar" in the Barn on Saturday, May 7th. He combined playing the guitar and speaking about the guitar along with stories of Carl Sandburg and Andres Segovia.

One of the persons attending was Helga Sandburg Crile, the only surviving daughter of Carl and Lilian Sandburg. She was quite interested in Mr. Akers presentation. She made the statement quoted above during the program, speaking of her father.

Knowing that characteristic of Carl Sandburg can help us understand how he was able to do so many things in his life. He was open to new experiences, he paid attention to what was happening around him and he made notes. All those things helped him become a thoughtful and prolific writer.

Mr. Akers shared an unpublished writing of the classical guitarist, Andres Segovia. Sandburg hoped Segovia would give him some tips on playing the guitar. Segovia told Sandburg "to teach his fingers as though they were little children." Now, think about the patience implied in those words.

Awards, Medals and Prizes

Carl Sandburg won many prizes and awards during his lifetime. The first one was the Levinson Prize given by *Poetry Magazine* in 1914 for his poem "Chicago." The poem has been quoted so often that it seems to describe the city better than any advertisement.

The Poetry Society of America honored Sandburg in 1919 and 1921 for two books of poetry. In 1940 Sandburg won the Pulitzer Prize for *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*. He won it a second time in 1951 for *The Complete Poems of Carl Sandburg*.

The Poetry Society of America gave him a gold medal for poetry in 1953. In 1960 he won the Roanoke-Chowan Poetry cup. In 1963 he was named "Honorary Poet Laureate of the United States of America" by the International United Poets Society.

He also received awards for his Lincoln writings from the Friends of Literature (1934), the Theodore Roosevelt Distinguished Service Medal (1939) and the American Academy of Arts and Letters gold medal for history (1952), the New York Civil War Round Table silver medal (1954) and the Presidential Medal of Freedom from

President Lyndon B. Johnson (1964).

Sandburg received many honorary degrees over the years from colleges and universities.

Sometimes the awards go in the other direction. The Chicago Public Library and its Foundation recently gave its Carl Sandburg Literary Award to author and critic John Updike. There are many other libraries and institutions of higher education which give awards and prizes named for Carl Sandburg. Some recognize the literary work of students, others honor the accomplishments of well known writers. The institutions are located across the United States and in many countries of the world.

Baking Powder

In the days before baking powder, cooks had to spend hours beating batters to incorporate enough air to make the product light rather than rock hard. Or they could use "pearl ash" made of potassium carbonate, which was prepared from wood ashes. Unfortunately, it reacted with the fat in the cake or cookies and made them taste like soap.

A mixture of bicarbonate of soda and cream of tartar was invented in the 1850s. The combination of a mild alkali and a mild acid in the presence of moisture and heat created a gas which caused the breads and cakes to rise quickly. The product became very popular because it saved time and effort for the housekeeper.

Many companies developed and sold baking powder which was widely advertised in magazines and local newspapers of the time. Some products were adulterated with other substances and a great deal of controversy developed about the quality of various brands. When a homemaker found a brand that suited her, she was loyal to it for years. That is still true today.

Now we are familiar with banana bread, nut bread and baking powder biscuits which are commonly known as "quick breads" because they rise in a short time in the oven. They require much less preparation time than the kneading and proofing of yeast breads.

Here is a recipe from *Smiley's New and Complete Guide for Housekeepers* published in 1893:

Baking Powder Biscuits

Have the oven hot to begin with, then rub a piece of butter the size of an English walnut into a cup of flour and butter your baking tin. Next put a level teaspoon of salt, and two heaping teaspoons of baking powder in the flour and stir it well. Up to this time you can work leisurely, but from this onward, work as fast as you can "fly." Add a cup of sweet milk, stir it, and add enough more flour to make a soft dough; take it out onto the molding board, then form it quickly into a round mass; cut it into 12 parts, then 4, then 8; give the pieces just a roll in the floured hands, put it in the tin, and bake 8 to 10 minutes. The oven should brown them top and bottom in that time. Everybody likes them.

Perhaps Clara Sandburg taught her daughters to make biscuits like this. No doubt, the biscuits were eaten as soon as they came out of the oven. You may have noticed the biscuits were shaped by hand rather than being cut with a biscuit cutter.

Berrien Street

The Sandburg family's neighbors on Berrien Street could best be described as a mixed bag.

Many were employees of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, like Carl Sandburg's father, August. Others followed somewhat loftier pursuits.

Two of them, Phillip Green Wright and Jon Grubb, were professors at Lombard College. Mr. Wright was to gain national renown as a mathematician, historian and poet. In later years, he would have a profound and beneficial effect on Carl Sandburg's career.

Mr. Grubb was also well regarded in academic circles. He taught Latin and served as the school's registrar. He also kept a Jersey cow, which he milked every morning before going off to Lombard.

Farther down the street lived a man whom Sandburg long remembered. He was employed as a wiper at the rate of one dollar and thirty cents per day. For that sum, he polished the exterior of the railroad's engines. Day after day, using waste cloth, he would polish the locomotives until they shined.

On Friday evenings, he would emerge from his house dressed in the dazzling regalia of a local lodge. He wore a long-tailed blue coat with brass buttons, and on his head a long hat. Adorning the hat was a great shining plume. Sandburg remembered it as being white, and thought it had come from an ostrich. In any case, the total effect of the man's garb was breathtaking, even if one had seen it many times.

The Universalists

For many years, one of Galesburg's most substantial congregations was that of the Universalist Church. The name of the denomination derived from one of its cardinal tenets, which was that of universal salvation. In short, its members believed no one would go to hell. Indeed, they doubted if it even existed.

Such a belief was in stark contrast to that of every other church in Galesburg. The occupants of the city's pulpits frequently preached about hellfire and damnation. They warned those fates awaited the sinner.

As a boy, Carl Sandburg heard about the Universalists and their unusual doctrine. It was a far cry from that of the stern Lutheran Church his family attended. He went off to his mother to inquire if what he had heard was true.

She replied she knew just two things about the Universalists. They did not believe there was a hell, and they believed in dancing in church. In time he learned her first statement was correct, but not the second. Although its members were not opposed to dancing, it was not a part of the Universalist service.

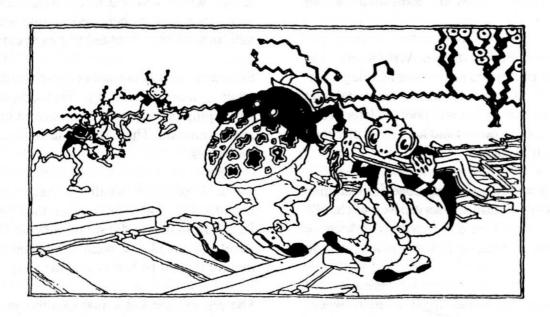
Young Carl Sandburg did not know what he should think of the Universalist theology. On the one hand, it was comforting to know one would not end up in hell. On the other, he thought there should be a hell, and there were a number of people who ought to go there.

Later Connection

Carl Sandburg was to establish a connection of sorts with the Universalists, or at least with their Lombard College. He attended it after his return from the Spanish-American War. The school offered free tuition to returning veterans of that conflict. Without it, Sandburg could not have furthered his education.

Wrinklings & Wildthings

I used this Rootabaga Story as part of the temporary Railroad Days exhibit on June 25 and 26, 2005



How Gimme the Ax Found Out About the Zigzag Railroad and Who Made It Zigzag

One day Gimme the Ax said to himself, "Today I go to the post office and around, looking around. Maybe I will hear about something happening last night when I was sleeping. Maybe a policeman began laughing and fell in a cistern and came out with a wheelbarrow full of goldfish wearing jewelry. How do I know? Maybe the man in the moon going down a cellar stairs to get a pitcher of buttermilk for the woman in the moon to drink and stop crying, maybe he fell down the stairs and broke the pitcher and laughed and picked up the broken pieces and said to himself, 'One, two, three, four, accidents happen in the best regulated families.' How do I know?"

So with his mind full of simple and refreshing thoughts, Gimme the Ax went out into the backyard garden and looked at the different necktie poppies growing early in the summer. Then he picked one of the necktie poppies to wear for a necktie scarf going downtown to the postoffice and around looking around.

"It is a good speculation to look nice around looking around in a necktie scarf," said Gimme the Ax. "It is a necktie with a picture like whiteface pony spots on a green frog swimming in the moonshine."

So he went downtown. For the first time he saw

the Potato Face Blind Man playing an accordion on the corner next nearest the postoffice. He asked the Potato Face to tell him why the railroad tracks run zigzag in the Rootabaga Country.

"Long ago," said the Potato Face Blind Man, "long before the necktie poppies began growing in the backyard, long before there was a necktie scarf like yours with whiteface pony spots on a green frog swimming in the moonshine, back in the old days when they laid the rails for the railroad they had the rails straight.

"Then the zizzies came. The zizzie is a bug. He runs zigzag on zigzag legs, eats zigzag with zigzag teeth, and spits zigzag with a zigzag tongue.

"Millions of zizzies came hizzing with little hizzers on their heads and under their legs. They jumped on the rails with their zigzag legs, and spit and twisted with their zigzag teeth and tongues till they twisted the whole railroad and all the rails and tracks into a zigzag railroad with zigzag rails for the trains, the passenger trains and the freight trains, all to run zigzag on.

"Then the zizzies crept away into the fields where they sleep and cover themselves with zigzag blankets on special zigzag beds.

"Next day came shovelmen with their shovels, smooth engineers with smooth blue prints, and water boys with water pails and water dippers for the shovelmen to drink after shoveling the railroad straight. And I nearly forgot to say the steam and hoist operating engineers came and began their steam and hoist and operating to make the railroad straight.

"They worked hard. The made the railroad straight again. They looked at the job and said to themselves and to each other, 'This is it—we done it.'

"Next morning the zizzies opened their zigzag eyes and looked over to the railroad and the rails. When they saw the railroad all straight again, and the rails and the ties and the spikes all straight again, the zizzies didn't even eat breakfast that morning.

"They jumped out of their zigzag beds, jumped onto the rails with their zigzag legs and spit and twisted till they spit and twisted all the rails and the ties and the spikes back into a zigzag like the letter Z and the letter Z at the end of the alphabet.

"After that the zizzies went to breakfast. And they said to themselves and to each other, the same as the shovelmen, the smooth engineers and the steam hoist and operating engineers, 'This is it—we done it."

"So that is the how of the which-it was the zizzies," said Gimme the Ax.

"Yes, it was the zizzies," said the Potato Face Blind Man. "That is the story told to me."

"Who told it to you?"

"Two little zizzies. They came to me one cold winter night and slept in my accordion where the music keeps it warm in winter. In the morning I said, 'Good morning, zizzies, did you have a good sleep last night and pleasant dreams?' And after they had breakfast they told me the story. Both told it zigzag but it was the same kind of zigzag each had together."



Surviving Childhood

Infants and small children died of a variety of diseases before the turn of the twentieth century. Two of Carl Sandburg's brothers succumbed to diphtheria in 1892. They passed away in little more than a half-hour of each other. To lose two sons was a terrible blow to Sandburg's parents, but it was not an experience unique to them. The affliction visited many houses in Galesburg, making no distinction between the rich and the poor.

Other ailments could be equally fatal. Membraneous croup also caused bereavement in many homes. Its symptoms were very similar to those of diphtheria. More children recovered from it than were taken by the disease, but its presence in a household was just as fearful.

Measles carried off more than a few children each year. Those who were in a weakened condition from a severe cold were especially susceptible.

Among babies, inanition could cause death. It was the condition in which infants would vomit up all food and water which was given to them. In effect, they died of starvation and dehydration. Little could be done to alleviate their suffering.

Clearly, childhood was filled with peril more than a century ago. If one survived it, one's life expectancy was not too many years fewer than it is today. However, it was no small task to avoid the hazards of early life.

Though rigorous, sometimes it was a strengthening experience. After all, Carl Sandburg lived to be 89 years old.

Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association 313 East Third Street Galesburg, Illinois 61401