

INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361 • www.sandburg.org

Spring, 2008

Spring Songbag Concerts

The spring season of Songbag Concerts continues on April 17th and May 15th. Diane Ippel will appear at the April concert playing the autoharp and guitar along with her singing.

Hammer and Pick perform May 15th. Jon Wagner, Jan Sams and John Heasley will bring their old time folk music. They play hammer dulcimer, banjo, guitar and bass to accompany their vocals.

The Concerts take place in the harmonious atmosphere of the Barn at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, 313 East Third Street, Galesburg, Illinois. They begin at 7 pm. A \$2 donation is appreciated but not required. Refreshments are served.

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Sandburg Days Festival for the Mind

As has been true for many years, the Sandburg Days Festival will begin with a concert of folk music.

The Kickoff Concert will occur on Thursday, April 24, 2008 in the Barn. Musicologist Greg Reish will sing and play songs from Carl Sandburg's *The American Songbag*. The songs will be played in the style which was prevalent in the 1920s and 1930s. An historical commentary

will provide the background of the songs as well as their continued influence.

The concert begins at 7:00 pm and is free to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

The Poetry Slam with Marc Smith will be back again. It was a huge success last year. The slam will take place on Friday, April 25th, at 8:00 pm. The Cherry Street Restaurant, 57 South Cherry Street, is the location for the Slam.

Other activities are listed on the Galesburg Public Library web site: www.galesburglibrary.org.

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Outta Site

Now, all of a sudden it is Spring—and a busy one, at that! Much of the busyness has had to do with the mounting and opening of the exhibit "Picturing Hemingway: a Writer of His Time." The Grand Opening was on Saturday, March 22, as part of the local "Big Read" sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, through the Galesburg Public Library. The Hemingway exhibit was originally created by Frederick Voss, Chief Historian of the National Portrait Gallery in Washington, DC, in commemoration of the author's centennial birth year in 1999. It was then made into a traveling exhibit, and was featured in Hemingway's hometown of Oak Park, Illinois,

through the Ernest Hemingway Foundation.

We were very fortunate to have Redd Griffin, a charter member of the Foundation and an authority on Hemingway, as guest speaker for the opening. Mr. Griffin's talk illustrated the similarities between the writing styles of Sandburg and Hemingway (mutual friends, even though there was a twenty-one year age difference). Griffin's denomination of the writers as "poet journalists" showed much insight into the inner workings of both men.



Pictured left to right: Chuck Bednar, Redd Griffin and Steve Holden

Following his talk, Mr. Griffin assisted in the ribbon cutting for the exhibit opening and gave a guided tour with time given to questions from the audience. Refreshments followed, giving a nod to Hemingway's association with Key West: Sloppy Joe sandwiches and Key Limeade.

I want to thank the following people for making this stellar event possible: Steve Leonard of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency for his design expertise and hands-on work; Brian Tibbets for arranging Redd Griffin's appearance; and Bert McElroy for his many volunteer hours in physically assembling the exhibit. I especially want to thank Chuck Bednar, board member of the Sandburg Association and the Hemingway Foundation of Oak Park, without whose forethought, persistence, knowledge and skills, this entire event would not have happened. If you have not yet viewed the exhibit, please come before Sunday, April 27th, the date of its closing. Our hours are 9 to 5, Wednesday through Sunday. We are closed Monday and Tuesday.

Most of the State Historic Sites operated by the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency are limited to a five day schedule this summer. There also has been a cut in the number of seasonal workers at all sites. This means that the Carl Sandburg Site will have only one seasonal worker. If anyone has ever had an inclination toward volunteering, this is the time to do it.

Thursday, April 24th, is the Kick-off for the 2008 Sandburg Days Festival for the Mind. The performing artist is Greg Reish, who is a musicologist and music historian at the Chicago College of Performing Arts of Roosevelt University. His performance is titled "Songs from the American Songbag." It is an evening of songs from Carl Sandburg's landmark 1927 folk song collection, *The American Songbag*. The selections, some familiar and others obscure, some humorous and others haunting, will be sung and played in authentic styles of the 1920s and 1930s and accompanied by historical commentary. The performance is at 7:00 pm in the Barn. There is no admission charge and refreshments will be served afterwards. As part of the Festival, Marc Smith (our headline performer from last year) will

be conducting a Poetry Slam at Cherry Street Brewing Company on Friday, April 25th at 8:00 pm.

Well, I guess I've rambled on enough. I do want to encourage you to view the Hemingway exhibit--It's a Winner.

Steve Holden,
Site Superintendent

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The Big Read

If you haven't read *A Farewell to Arms*, now is the time to get started. On April 6, 1917, Congress voted to go to war with Germany after President Woodrow Wilson requested it. The United States took its men and might to Europe to help finish a war which had begun three years before. Many countries and millions of people became involved in "the war to end all wars."

Ernest Hemingway was one of the young Americans who went to the war. His novel, *A Farewell to Arms*, provides the readers of today with an idea of what war was like and how it affected the people caught in it.

A variety of events and displays have been scheduled to provide background and illumination about World War I. Check the Galesburg Public Library web site for particulars: www.galesburglibrary.org.

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The Poetry of How It Was

Redd Griffin's lecture of March 24th on "Sandburg's Friend, Hemingway, and the Poetry of How It Was" received the full attention of an

audience which filled the Visitor's Center. He wove interesting comparisons between Sandburg and Hemingway and their writing.

Hemingway grew up in a more affluent family than Sandburg, but each man had the dedicated attention of both parents. Hemingway, in high school, and Sandburg, in college, gained experience and began to observe the world in a way that would make their latter writing unique and influential. They learned by observing the moments of life that affect every living person. They struggled to record such moments in words that would inspire and influence others.

Both men worked as journalists at the beginning of their career--a job which required getting the facts, accurately putting them on paper and using as few words as possible to tell the story. It was good training.

Each writer worked very hard to bring poetry into their prose. They wanted to create feelings in the reader that hadn't been there before. Griffin gave numerous examples of this from each author, even from Sandburg's Rootabaga stories for children.

Mr. Griffin also mentioned that he had traveled on Amtrak's "Carl Sandburg" train from Chicago to Galesburg. A very appropriate conveyance considering the subject of his speech.

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Chautauqua

During the 19th century "adult education" wasn't an expression used in every day conversation. Oratory was the form of communication by which many people learned about new ideas and expanded their knowledge of the world around them.

After the Civil War, lyceums, reading groups and agricultural societies became a popular way for residents of a community to learn and share information. Theaters, described as "opera houses," had been built in many town by the end of the 19th century. Orators, choral groups, theatrical companies, bands, magicians and many other kinds of performers traveled the railroad system from town to town to appear on these programs.

Carl Sandburg was one of the residents of Galesburg who went to the Opera House or the Auditorium to hear famous speakers discuss serious topics. He was impressed that spoken words could have profound effects on the listeners.

While at Lombard College Sandburg took six courses in elocution, competed in oratorical contests and acted in plays. He was beginning to understand that the voice could be used in ways that might change society.

The Chautauqua movement was begun in 1874 in upstate New York as a way to train Methodist Sunday School teachers. The name comes from a nearby lake. It was built on the same idea as the lyceum movement and became even more popular in the early 20th century. Some communities built their own Chautauqua grounds; others offered programs in tents. People came from miles around to camp and listen to programs for several days or a week. Music was a large part of the program. The Jubilee Singers, mentioned in the Fall 1999 issue of *Inklings and Idlings*, appeared at many Chautauqua events. Russell Conwell gave his "Acres of Diamonds" speech many times in opera houses and Chautauqua tents. (See *Inklings and Idlings*, Spring 2002, for a description.)

William Jennings Bryan was a frequent speaker at Chautauqua events. It may have helped his

presidential aspirations in the 1890s. Senator Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin spread his progressive views in the tents. One Carl Sandburg made a precarious living appearing on the circuits in the Midwest in the first decade of the 20th century.

The increasing popularity of radio and movies in the 1920s and the Great Depression in the 1930s caused the demise of the Chautauqua movement.

The Chautauqua Institute still meets every summer near Jamestown, New York. It hosts a wide variety of lectures by well known speakers and musical programs by popular artists.

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A Life Cover

On February 21, 1938, Carl Sandburg was pictured on the cover of *Life* magazine. He had turned sixty the previous month and his hair had become white. He wasn't a young man anymore, but he worked on his writing as if he had far fewer years resting on him.

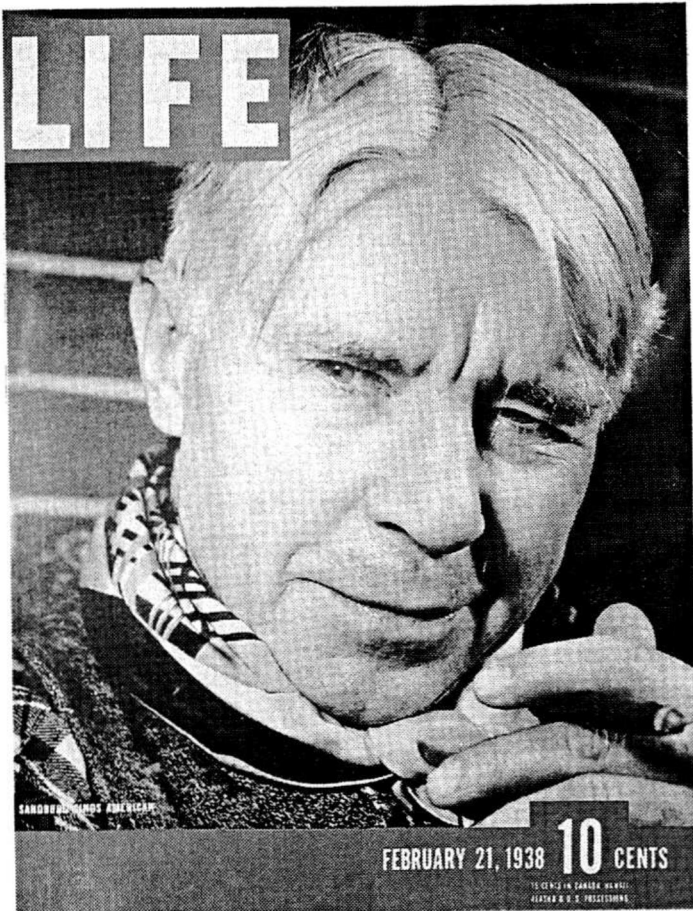
The original *Life* magazine was first published in 1883 and contained general interest and humorous articles as well as reviews of plays in New York City. It was similar to the *New Yorker* published now. The publisher of *Time* and *Fortune*, Henry Luce, purchased the magazine in 1936 solely for its name. He sold all the other assets of the original magazine. He proceeded to create *Life* magazine which covered the news of the day in photographs. It became the most popular magazine in the country during the 1940s and 1950s. It sold 13.5 million copies a week at its high point. Fifty pages of pictures was a bargain at 10 cents a copy.

It seems somewhat strange that *Life* chose to

feature Sandburg as a folk singer. His reputation was based on his poetry and biographical writings. The article, titled "Sandburg Sings American," included four photographs of Sandburg playing his bell-shaped guitar and singing. The lyrics of the song were printed in the captions beneath each picture.

Another photograph showed him serenading his daughter Helga and four young goats in the parlor of the Sandburg home. At this time, the family lived in a large house built on the sand dunes of Lake Michigan near Harbert, Michigan. Viewers just have to chuckle when looking at the scene. Is there some Sandburgian leg-pulling behind this picture?

The Bernard Hoffman photograph on the cover of the magazine shows Sandburg with a slight smile. But it is the eyes that most affect the viewer. Are they playful, cunning, discerning, soulful? The cover is reproduced below so you can decide for yourself.



You can see an enlarged reproduction of the cover and article in the Visitor's Center of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. There are many other interesting photographs on display about the life of Carl Sandburg.

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Railroad Pay

In 1881 August Sandburg received a raise in pay from the C.B. & Q. Railroad where he worked as a blacksmith's assistant. He had been paid \$1.35 a day which is about \$28 in 2007 dollars. The nickel increase amounted to \$1.08 more per day in today's equivalent.

The daily pay rates for other workers varied from \$1.10 to \$2.75 with coppersmiths receiving the highest rate of pay. Foremen were paid \$110 per month or \$2,335.74 in our money.

Perhaps the comparison will help readers understand the differences in monetary values and how difficult it was for August and his wife Clara to raise their family.

After August retired from the railroad, he did various household repairs for pay. He had acquired his skills working on his family's dwelling. Carl Sandburg said his father claimed he earned more in retirement than he had as a full-time railway employee.

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Wrinklings & Wild Things

("Buzzing bees, Queen of the Cracked Heads, clock-eating goats and alligators—what better companions for a fine Spring afternoon?" From *Rootabaga Stories, Part Two*—Steve Holden)

How Dippy the Wisp and Slip Me
Liz Came in the Moonshine Where
the Potato Face Blind Man Sat with
His Accordion

The sky shook a rain down one Saturday night
over the people, the post office, and the
peanut-stand in the Village of Liver-and-
Onions.

And after the rain, the sky shook loose a moon so
a moonshine came with gold on the
rainpools.

And a west wind came out of the west sky and
shook the moonshine gold on the tops of
the rainpools.

Dippy the Wisp and Slip Me Liz came, two tough
pony girls, two limber prairie girls, in the
moonshine humming little humpty dumpty
songs.

They came to the post office corner where Potato
Face Blind Man sat hugging his accordion,
wondering what was next and who and
why.

He was saying to himself, "Who was it told me
the rats on the moon in the middle of the
winter lock their mittens in ice boxes?"

And just then Dippy the Wisp and Slip Me Liz
came flipping along saying, "It is a moisty
evening in the moonshine, isn't it?"

And he answered, "The moon is a round gold door
with silver transoms tonight. Bumblebees
and honeybees are chasing each other
over the gold door of the moon and up
over the silver transoms."

Dippy the Wisp took out a bee-bag, took bees out
of the bee-bag, balanced the bees on her
thumb, humming a humpty dumpty song.
And Slip Me Liz, looking on, joined in on
the humpty dumpty song. And, of course,
the bees began buzzing their *bee* humpty
dumpty song.

"Have you fastened names on them?" asked the
Potato Face.

"These three on my thumb, these three special
blue-violet bees, I put their names on silk
white ribbons and tied the ribbons to their
knees. This is Egypt—she has inkwells in
her ears. This is Jesse James—he puts
postage stamps on his nose. This is
Spanish Onions—she likes pearl-color
handkerchiefs around her yellow neck."

"Bees belong in bee-bags, but these are different,"
the old man murmured.

"Runaway bees, these are," Dippy the Wisp went
on. "They buzz away, they came buzzing
back, buzzing home, buzzing secrets,
syllables, snitches.

"Today Egypt came buzzing home with her
inkwells in her ears. And Egypt buzzed, 'I
flew and flew and I buzzed and buzzed
far, far away, till I came where I met the
Queen of the Cracked Heads with her head
all cracked. And she took me by the foot
and took me to the palace of the Cracked
heads with their heads all cracked.

"The palace was full of goats walking up and
down the stairs, sliding on the banisters
eating bingety bing clocks. Before he bites
the clock and chews and swallows and
eats the bingety bing clock, I noticed, each
goat winds up the clock and fixes it to go
off bling bling bingety bing, after he eats
it down. I noticed that. And the fat, fat,
puffy goats, the fat, fat, waddly goats, had
extra clocks hung on their horns—and the
clocks, tired of waiting, spoke to each
other in the bingety bing clock talk. I
noticed that too.

"I stayed all morning and I saw them feed the big
goats big hunks and the little goats little
hunks and the big clock big bings and the
little clocks little bings. At last in the
afternoon, the Queen of the Cracked
Heads came with her cracked head to say
good-by to me. She was sitting on a ladder
feeding baby clocks to baby alligators,

winding the clocks and fixing the bingety bings, so after the baby alligators swallowed the clocks, I heard them singing bling bling bingety bing.

“And the Queen was reading the alphabet to the littlest of the baby alligators—and they were saying the alligator A B C while she was saying the A B C of the Cracked Heads. At last she said good-by to me, good-by and come again soon, good-by and stay longer next time.

“When I went out of the door all the baby alligators climbed up the ladder and bingety binged good-by to me. I buzzed home fast because I was lonesome. I am so, so glad to be home again.”

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U.S.S. Maine

The people of Cuba had been trying to free their country from Spanish rule for many years. In January, 1898, there were riots in Havana. President William McKinley and Congress became concerned about the safety of U.S. citizens in Cuba even as they sympathized with the native population.

President McKinley sent the U.S.S. Maine to Havana to demonstrate the country's concern. The ship arrived on January 25th, and the situation appeared to be calm.

On the evening of February 15th a terrible explosion destroyed the forward third of the ship. More than 250 enlisted men in their quarters on the ship were killed and many were injured. The officers' quarters were in the stern area of the ship.

The U.S. Navy convened a Board of Inquiry on

March 5th, which concluded a mine had been detonated under the ship. Public reaction was outrage and William Randolph Hearst, owner of the *New York Journal*, proceeded to publish page after page of print meant to add to the public's sentiment. “Remember the Maine” became a slogan repeated over and over.

President McKinley used diplomatic means to try to defuse the situation and at the same time started a military build-up. Spain resisted his diplomatic efforts. On April 21st, a blockade was set up in the sea lanes leading to Cuba. Two days later, Spain declared war on the United States. On April 25th Congress responded with a similar declaration.

Reaction in western Illinois was immediate. The newspapers carried stories of the activation of Illinois National Guard units. Knox College was asked to ship two heavy cannons used by its Cadet Corps to the Rock Island Arsenal. Postmaster F.A. Freer was informed that postal employees could enlist and their jobs would be held for them. The railroads promised those who enlisted that they would get good jobs when they returned.

By April 30th, Galesburg had sent 100 of her young men to defend the country. It was estimated that 10,000 people watched the boys march to the C.B.&Q. depot. The name and occupation of each soldier was published in the newspaper. Charles A. Sandberg (sic) was listed with twenty more men who had enlisted after the April 15th deadline.

The cause of the explosion which destroyed the Maine has never been definitively identified. The evidence doesn't favor a mine or spontaneous combustion in the coal bunkers of the steam-driven ship.

Several years after the war, the ship was refloated and taken out to sea. It was sunk with ceremony, gun salvos and martial music.

Buttons

(The scene evoked by Carl Sandburg in this poem took place during World War I. The contrasts described in a moment of life have a very emotional impact upon the reader.)

I have been watching the war map slammed up for
advertising in front of the newspaper office.
Buttons—red and yellow buttons—blue and black buttons—
are shoved back and forth across the map.

A laughing young man, sunny with freckles,
Climbs a ladder, yells a joke to somebody in the crowd,
And then fixes a yellow button one inch west
And follows the yellow button with a black button an inch west.
(Ten thousand men and boys twist in their bodies in a red
soak along a river edge,
Gasping of wounds, calling for water, some rattling death in their throats.)
Who would guess what it cost to move two buttons
one inch on the war map here in front of the newspaper
office where the freckle-faced boy is laughing to us?

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