

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

Holidays, 2008

Outta Site

You all probably know by now that the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site is one of the 13 or 14 state historic sites and numerous state parks which closed as of November 30, 2008. This closing is of indefinite length. Keep your fingers crossed that it will not be a permanent closure. I say this not because of my position, which is still intact, but because so many of the sites which have had their permanent staffs (outside the site superintendent) put on lay-off. It is my opinion that the larger historic sites, unless they have a well-established and well-heeled foundation behind them, are in worse shape than smaller sites such as ours. Maintenance and security come to mind when we're talking of one person taking care of several buildings and large acreage.

One good thing is that established, on-going events are still allowed. This means that the Sandburg Association can still sponsor the Penny Parade (end of January), the Songbag Concert Series (last Saturday evening of February, March, April and May) and the Annual Sandburg Days Festival in April. There are no state funds available to put into these events, so GO TEAM! We can send out statewide press releases through our agency, but that is about it.

If anyone has questions about the goings-on here at the Site, please write (313 E. Third Street, Galesburg, IL 61401) or call (309-342-2361) or email me (steve@sandburg.org).

I have a feeling that it's going to be lonely behind

closed doors.

—Steve Holden,
Site Superintendent

Songbag Concerts

The last of this season's Songbag Concerts at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site was held on November 29, 2008. Performing for an appreciative audience were Dave Kolar and Pete Norman. Those who regularly attended the concerts can only hope that the musical strands will be picked up again soon.

The concerts have been one of the most popular activities sponsored by the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. They were the inspiration of John Heasley. Unfortunately, in a story about the Site's closing which appeared in *The Register-Mail* of Galesburg, another person was wrongly credited with the accomplishment. Every possible effort will be made to reinstate the concerts as soon as possible.

Welcome to New Members

The Association is always happy to welcome new members. Joining recently were

Karen S. Lynch
Patty Mosher

John R. Pulliam

We know they will be actively involved in the Association's work.

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Reassurance

We wish to say, to allay any concerns among our members, *Inklings and Idlings* will continue to be published as it is the newsletter of the Association, not of the state.

We cannot give assurances about the future of the Site, even though it is important to Galesburg. The Carl Sandburg Historic Site has visitors from around the world. More often than not, they have tarried to patronize local business establishments. But more than that, the Site is an asset to the schools of the area providing insight into the life of a world famous poet, biographer and historian.

Whether they are always aware of it or not, Sandburg's birthplace means a great deal to the residents of Galesburg as it is a part of their hometown. Let us hope the Site will be closed for only a short time.

* * *

Studs Terkel

Washington Square Park is located in front of the Newberry Library in Chicago, but nobody calls it by its proper name. To most people it is "Bughouse Square."

From the 1880s to the 1930s, the park was the place to speak your mind. Stand on a soapbox and tell the world and its occupants what was wrong with the economic system, how people could be saved with religion, why labor unions were necessary and any number of other opinions, some rational and some not.

Not all of the orators were anonymous. More than one speaker had built a name with the public. Among them were Eugene Debs, Sherwood Anderson, Carl Sandburg and Emma Goldman.

A young Studs Terkel learned about life through his visits to Bughouse Square as well as growing up in the Grand-Wells Hotel his mother operated nearby. His sense of justice, belief in working men and women, appreciation of history and much of his life's philosophy was developed in those places during his youth.

He became world-famous for his twelve books of oral history. He was a good interviewer because he really listened to people.

On October 31, 2008, Studs Terkel died at age 96. The next day, Scott Simon, a Chicago native and host of "Weekend Edition" on National Public Radio, saluted his memory by playing a recording of Studs reading one of Sandburg's most famous poems, "Chicago."

The two men had a great deal in common. They spoke for the people, they remembered the past and they knew how it affected the present and they enjoyed life to the fullest.

At the same time, they could gently tease each other. For example, Terkel noted the Grand-Wells' residents were mostly working men. However, on one occasion, a working girl took a room in the hotel and there she briefly plied her trade.

Terkel remarked Sandburg had written a poem entitled "Gone." Its heroine was a small town girl named Chick Lorimer, who was obliged to leave, probably for the big city and its perils.

The poem declared several times no one knew where Chick Lorimer had gone.

Terkel said when Sandburg recited his work, he

would sonorously declaim the last line, "Nobody knows where she's gone." Terkel asserted he knew where she had gone. It was to the Grand-Wells Hotel.

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Sandburg's Neighborhood

By 1890 Galesburg had grown to a population of 20,000. Although the Yankees from New England had established the town, others had come to settle. There were English and Scots-Irish from Kentucky and Tennessee. There were also Swedes and Germans. The town was old enough that a number of the immigrants had become prominent in business and politics.

During the 1890s, Carl Sandburg's family lived on Berrien Street. Their neighbors reflected the ethnic composition of the city. Most of them were Swedes, but there were also Irish, German and English.

One year Berrien Street experienced an influx of Italians. They took up residence in two houses hard by the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy railroad tracks. The dwellings must have been fairly crowded, as Sandburg estimated there were at least thirty people living in them. Many of the Italians found jobs with the railroad. They were valued employees, because they were diligent workers.

At that time, Carl Sandburg delivered milk, and the Italians were among his customers. As he became better acquainted with them, he grew to admire their vitality and enthusiasm for life.

One of them went into business for himself. He obtained a pushcart and sold fruit from door to door all over Galesburg. As he walked the streets of the city, he would cry out his wares and their price. His recitation began with bananas which he offered for about five cents per dozen.

In time, he became known as "Banana Joe." Eventually, he was able to open his own fruit store. His business prospered which helped him to acquire a dwelling of his own. As it happened, it was the house in which Carl Sandburg had been born, at 331 East Third Street.

* * *

Hard Times

During hard economic times, the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad would reduce its employees' hours. Carl Sandburg's father, August, was no exception. Like all the workers in the railroad shops, his day was reduced from ten hours to four. His weekly wages were also reduced by more than half.

As a consequence, the Sandburg family's diet was considerably simplified. Even in the best of times, it was not elaborate, but straitened circumstances made it spartan. To be sure, no one in the family went hungry.

Butter and margarine were no longer available to be spread on bread. Lard was substituted. Sprinkled with salt, it was palatable. Sometimes even lard was too expensive, so molasses or sorghum became the spread. The Sandburg children were not enthusiastic about either of the two syrups.

Fortunately, the Sandburg garden provided an abundance of vegetables, particularly potatoes. They were a part of every meal. Meat was a problem until August Sandburg and his neighbors bought and slaughtered a hog. It had been purchased from John Krans, whose wife was Mrs. Sandburg's cousin.

The Sandburg family's share included a ham, pork chops, pork loins, spare ribs, side meat, sowbelly, cracklings and pig's knuckles. There was also lard for frying and for spreading on bread.

Newton Bateman, Educator

Among the many jobs Carl Sandburg held after he left school at the end of the eighth grade was that of milkman. As he made his deliveries of a morning, he would sometimes encounter the leading citizens of the community. Among them was a man of short stature, with a great white beard. He and Sandburg would nod and smile at each other, but they never spoke.

The man was Newton Bateman, the president of Knox College. He had been born in poverty and by dint of hard grinding work, obtained an education. Seven times he was elected State Superintendent of Public Instruction. While in that office, he became a good friend of Abraham Lincoln. Mr. Lincoln often referred to Mr. Bateman as "My little friend, the big schoolmaster of Illinois."

In all, Mr. Bateman held the superintendency for almost fourteen years. He was invited to become the president of Knox College in 1875, where he remained until 1892. Mr. Bateman was not an innovator, but he was an efficient administrator. The state benefited from that skill and so did Knox College. It was what was needed at that period of the institution's history.

Early on, he gained the respect and admiration of the students and faculty. Carl Sandburg said it was because Mr. Bateman was a man of character, and it reached everyone, especially the students. It was a quality which was of as much value as a talent for innovation would have been.

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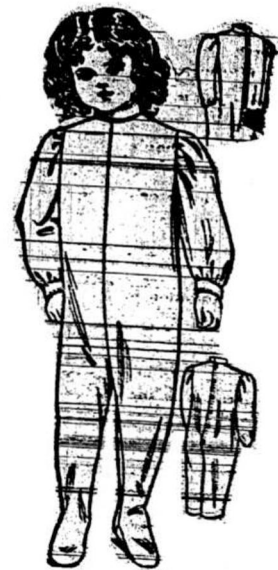
Winter Flannels

With the approach of cold weather, everyone began wearing flannels to keep warm. A 1904 article in the *Daily Republican-Register* gave instruction on how to care for wool flannels. The

word "underwear" was never mentioned.

It was explained that wool flannels should be washed separately in water of a temperature comfortable to the hands. A white soap rather than yellow soap should be dissolved in the water to make plenty of suds. The yellow soap contained rosin which would turn the flannels yellow.

The homemaker was instructed to squeeze and sop the garment rather than rubbing and twisting it. The article explained the wool fibers tended to knot (that is, the microscopic scales on the wool fibers caught one another and caused the fabric to shrink). Soaking for half an hour was recommended. Then rinsing in warm water was necessary to remove the soap suds. Putting the flannels through a wringer would remove most of the water. Hanging on a line outdoors to dry was best. In case of freezing weather, the flannels could be dried in the house. Pressing while the garment was still somewhat damp allowed the homemaker to stretch it to the proper size.



Children's night drawers (pajamas) were made of cotton flannel. It was thought the drawers were more comfortable than a nightgown for a restless child. The opening could be located in the front or the back, with full or plain sleeves and with or

without feet. The pattern shown here required 3 1/4 yards of fabric 27 inches wide to sew a pair of drawers for a seven year old girl.

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Thanksgiving Fare

The *Galesburg Evening Mail* of November 19, 1898, published several recipes appropriate for an old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner: Roasted spareribs with apple butter, baked chicken pie, roast pig, Indian pudding, cranberry sauce, pumpkin salad and pumpkin pie.

This is what the writer had to say about pumpkin salad: "The salad most appropriate for Thanksgiving dinner is pumpkin salad. Cut the pumpkin into small squares, boil them till tender in salted water; when cold arrange them on the crispest and whitest of lettuce leaves, cover with mayonnaise to which chopped parsley has been added."

The directions for preparing pumpkin pie emphasized that plenty of eggs and rich milk were to be used. The sweetness came from plenty of molasses. The only spice to be used was ginger; too many spices destroy the natural flavor of the pumpkin.

Our traditions may change over time and our ideas about the taste of food are influenced by new experiences. But, we still have sentimental thoughts about foods our ancestors ate and enjoyed.

* * *

Clara Sandburg's Death

Carl Sandburg wasn't a trained musician, but he could sing the simple folk songs he had collected from his hobo days in the late 1890s. He could strum a few chords on the guitar as an

accompaniment.

Audiences across the country enjoyed his "rag bag" of tunes and contributed old-time versions of hymns, labor songs, ditties and sad songs. Sandburg became a popular platform speaker on college campuses across the country in the 1920s. He would speak about poetry in general, read a few of his own poems and sing some of the songs from his collection. He would add a few historical comments about the words and music.

He was on one of his lecture tours in the Southwest when he received a telegram from his brother Martin telling him that their mother had died.

Clara Anderson Sandburg had lived to be 76 years old when she died on December 30, 1926. On January 2, 1927, she was buried next to her husband in Linwood Cemetery at Galesburg. The funeral was held in her home rather than a funeral parlor.

Before her death, Mrs. Sandburg had written a piece of prose she called "Souvenir." In her second language, English, she described her feeling of gratefulness about her family and the life she had lived. She also expressed her feelings about death that would soon come to her.

She wrote several paragraphs about each of her children. This is what she wrote about Carl: "Carl with his deeper thoughts I saw already in early childhood was not going to live for money only he wanted to do something more and better with his life his thoughts were allways with his plans in future times to come." Clara had a better idea of the workings of her son's mind that anyone in the family.

Afterward, Carl typed Clara's "Souvenir" and sent it to members of the family and many of his friends. He may have edited some of the grammatical errors, but the words and thoughts of

his mother were still quite clear.

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The Year of Lincoln

With the 150th anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas Debates being honored this past October and the upcoming bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth on February 12, 2009, there have been many observances across Illinois. Galesburg is at the center of many of these activities because it was the site of one of the seven Lincoln-douglas Debates and is the location of Knox College's Lincoln Studies Center.

Perhaps this would be a good time to read Carl Sandburg's monumental biography of Lincoln.

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A Penny Here, A Penny There

There have been many arguments over the efficiency of using pennies. Some people say it takes too much time to count them out as change, or for the bank to determine how many pennies are in that piggy bank. Others say pennies cost more to mint than they are worth. And some people are just sentimental about them.

Abraham Lincoln's portrait has been on the penny since 1909, the centennial of his birth. That was the year Carl Sandburg wrote an ode to the penny that emphasized its value to ordinary people.

The United States Mint, at the direction of Congress, has created four new designs for the "tails" side of the coin. They depict various aspects of Lincoln's life. The first design will show the log cabin in which Lincoln was born. The second depicts Lincoln taking a break from rail splitting to read a book. On the third, Lincoln is shown as a young lawyer standing before the Old State Capitol in Springfield. The last coin will

portray the partially completed dome of the Capitol in Washington, DC. Lincoln ordered work on the dome be continued during the Civil War. It was a symbol that the Union would endure.

It is hoped the new Lincoln pennies will be as popular as the quarters issued honoring the fifty States. The new pennies will be available on February 12, 2009, the 200th anniversary of Lincoln's birth.

Every year the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, in conjunction with the public schools, conducts the Penny Parade. During it, thousands of dollars in pennies are collected by school children and brought to the Site. The money is used to enhance Carl Sandburg's birthplace and the adjacent gardens.

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Wrinklings and Wild Things

(Because of the present situation at our Site, I have chosen a section from "How Susan Slackentwist Sang a Song to a Cornfield Scarecrow," one of the ten *More Rootabagas* published posthumously.

Here is a bit of introductory explanation. Henry Hagglyhoagly loved Susan Slackentwist, the daughter of the rutabaga king, so much that one cold winter evening he serenaded her by playing the guitar with his mittens on. Later that year, Susan's father became disgruntled with Henry, and this is what happened.—Steve Holden)

"I seen enough of that Henry Hagglyhoagly around this place and I don't want to see no more of him around here," said Old Man Slackentwist to his daughter Susan one Saturday night when there was a green moon shaped like a coal bucket coming up just beyond the humps of the rutabaga plants that lay for miles and miles west of the rutabaga king's house.

"Father, Father, why are you so cruel? He ain't done no wrong to nobody," said Susan Slackentwist, putting a long coil of her corn-colored hair around and over her left ear.

"I'm done having that rascal of a rapsallion around this place; every time he comes around he talks about string beans, string beans, always saying string beans looks more beautiful than rutabagas. I won't have anybody come to my house and see my daughter, saying string beans looks more beautiful than rutabagas looks beautiful."

"Father, Father, you are too cruel, he never said it like you say he said it," said Susan Slackentwist, this time putting a long coil of her corn-colored hair around and over her *right* ear.

"If he never said it like I said he said, then how did he say it?"

"He said rutabagas looks beautiful in the autumn weather when the white frost comes along and pinches their ears and puts white hats on 'em and makes 'em look like thousands and thousands of frost rabbits singing an early song to winter. And he said in the summertime the string beans looks beautiful when they got their green bonnets fixed over their heads and the green strings fastened under their green chinny-chin-chins like as how they was hoping summer would stay a long long time 'cause summer felt so good. That's what he said," and this time Susan Slackentwist took both her hands (try it yourself) and put both coils of her corn-colored hair, one over her left ear, one over her right ear.

[Despite Susan's protest to her father's cruelty, the rutabaga king forbade her to see Henry Hagglyhoagly. But the next night:]

The next night there came up over the horizon off the rutabaga fields a golden cheese moon. The fields were slumbering, the moon was slumbering,

and the gold and the cheese in the moon must have been slumbering.

"Where are you going, Susan?" said Old Man Slackentwist to his daughter as she tied under her chin the strings of her string bean bonnet.

"Out in the fields, Father, to talk with the scarecrow," said Susan as she covered her corn-colored hair with the rim of her string bean bonnet.

And the father stood in the door while the daughter ran, ran and ran, singing gold and cheese songs to the golden cheese moon, singing in the slumberous night, all the way out to the middle of the big rutabaga field where the scarecrow stood with his arms out (like this) and his head hanging (like this) and his knees kind of sagging and crumple (like this).

And her father, watching at the door, saw her sit down in front of the scarecrow. And way off he could hear her singing a sad-like song about the golden cheese moon, the slumbering night and her string bean bonnet, and the beauty of the long low miles of rutabaga fields.

Then the father heard no more singing. He stood with his shoulders high over the door sill just a-listening, just a-listening. He thought Susan had quit singing. But she hadn't. She was singing a soft song, the softest kind of a sweetheart song. B-e-c-a-u-s-e where she sat she could look right straight into the face and form of the scarecrow—and right up against the face and form of the scarecrow was Henry Hagglyhoagly, wriggled and twisted and crumpled, holding his arms out with the scarecrow arms, and hanging his head and sagging his knees just like the scarecrow. In the light of the golden cheese moon you would have to step up close to see it was not only a scarecrow but a scarecrow *and* Henry Hagglyhoagly.

So she sang to him there with a low song and he answered there with a low song even though it was not easy to sing with your head hanging like a scarecrow head and your arms hanging like scarecrow arms.

The Hard Sell

For many years, the O.T. Johnson Company was the leading department store in Galesburg. The store placed large advertisements in the newspapers the year around. There were especially large ads during the holidays. This ad from 1898 urged shoppers to buy plenty of gifts for the little ones and emphasized the short time left for purchasing the marvelous wares at "O.T.'s."

HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

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

THE O. T. JOHNSON CO.

But Three Shopping Days Remain Before Christmas.



There is nothing to be gained by waiting longer, and each day the assortment grows less. There is one stock that demands your immediate attention, "Our Basement Salesrooms." Who ever heard of a Christmas without presents for the children? Well, here is probably the largest and most complete line of dolls, toys, wagons, sleds, skates, doll carriages, rocking horses, shoo flies, carts, velocipedes, etc., ever shown in this city. But what is here today may not be here tomorrow, for a steady stream of buyers throng these rooms from morning till closing time. Come in and let us show you what we have. The goods and prices will both please you.