

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, 2009

Open Again, Partly

The Carl Sandburg State Historic Site opened for the Sandburg Days Festival of the Mind April 23rd to 25th. It had been closed, except for special events, since last November. Concerts, creative writing workshops and readings of poems and prose by local authors were presented at the Site during the Festival.

Governor Patrick Quinn signed a supplemental appropriation which allows the Sandburg Site and several others across the state to be open on weekends. The hours will be 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. After July 1st, it is hoped the Site will be open Wednesday through Sunday.

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End of the Season Songbag

The Spoon River String Band will be the featured artists at the last Songbag Concert of the season. The concerts are organized by John Heasley.

As one might expect, the Band specializes in old time music for string instruments. It will perform at 7 p.m., May 30th in the Barn at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site, 313 East Third Street, Galesburg.

Light refreshments will be served. A donation of \$3 is requested but not required.

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Mister Holmes

August Sandburg and Magnus Holmes looked as alike as brothers, but actually they were cousins. Their fathers were brothers. Magnus was fifteen years older than August. He came to America at the age of nineteen to avoid having to serve in the Swedish military. Because of his strong belief against killing, he did not serve in the Civil War.

Magnus found work on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad out of Hannibal, Missouri. When the railroad came to Galesburg in 1854, he moved to the town and worked as a blacksmith.

Magnus was born April 3, 1832, in Lindköping, Ostergotland, Sweden. His father was a military man stationed in several locations in Sweden. Sometimes he changed his surname to be the same as the town where he was living. That caused some confusion for later generations of the family. Was it Sturm, Danielson or Holm? Magnus changed the spelling of his surname to Holmes because it sounded more American.

Mary Charlotta Erickson was born July 14, 1838, in Sweden. She and Magnus Holmes were married July 29, 1859, in Hannibal, Missouri. They were the parents of four sons and a daughter. The family lived on the west side of Seminary Street between Losey and Selden Streets. The Cottage Hospital complex now covers that entire block.

Magnus urged August to come to Galesburg after his arrival in the United States in the early 1870s.

He thought August would do well here. Magnus taught August important English words and explained how to become a citizen. He also advised August on his business affairs. After Magnus had purchased in land in Phelps County, Nebraska, August decided to buy a quarter section of land in Pawnee County, Kansas. Frank, Magnus Holmes' son, operated the farm in Nebraska and his daughter, Lily, went out there to keep house for her brother and to teach school.

The Holmes and Sandburg families visited one another's homes for Thanksgiving and New Year's Day and were always served a good dinner. The Sandburg children invariably called Magnus "Mr. Holmes." It was a sign of respect for the man who had been a mentor to their father.

Magnus Holmes and his future wife had attended the Lincoln-Douglas Debate on October 7, 1858. They stood in the cold for three hours with a huge crowd on the east side of Old Main and listened to Stephen Douglas and Abraham Lincoln argue the pros and cons of slavery.

At the fiftieth anniversary observance of the Debate in 1908, Magnus was seated on the speaker's platform as an honored guest.

Mr. Holmes died January 7, 1920. He and his wife had celebrated their sixtieth wedding anniversary the previous year. He was survived by his wife, three sons, a daughter, 13 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. He was buried in Hope Cemetery.

Mrs. Holmes lived with her daughter, Lily, until her death, April 10, 1932. She was 94 years old. She and her husband had been members of the Emmanuel Methodist Church their entire married life. She was buried in Hope Cemetery next to her husband and her son Charles, who died in 1898.

The Poet and the Pencil

Carl Sandburg was known for carrying a stub of a pencil for jotting notes in a small notepad. He carried both in his pocket, ready for immediate use. Some of his notes were later used in poems and articles. Some were buried among his books and papers to be found after his death.

In 1564, a deposit of pure and solid graphite was found in England. Local people used it to mark their sheep as a sign of ownership. The graphite was sawed into sticks which often broke into pieces. Bits of string or animal skin were wrapped around the sticks to keep them from breaking. It quickly became obvious that these sticks could be used for marking many other things. So, the King took over the graphite deposit.

The Italians are credited with the idea of putting a piece of wood on each side of the graphite to keep it stable. They created the first carpenter's pencil with oval sides. The Germans figured out a way to mold powdered graphite into a solid block.

In 1824, the father of Henry David Thoreau started a pencil factory in Salem, Massachusetts. Clay was added to make the graphite harder and to produce a darker mark. The factory made 400 pencils a day. Henry worked there for fifteen years before he went to live by Walden Pond and write his book.

Pencils were extensively used during the Civil War. They survived the rugged conditions much better than pen and ink and were easier to carry.

Yellow pencils became popular in the 1890s in the United States and continue to be used to this day. They were promoted as being the best kind. Other countries commonly produce pencils painted green, red or black. There are many variations in the wood covering the graphite as well as

variations in the hardness of the "lead."

During the early days of the exploration of space, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration spent many dollars devising complex writing devices to be used by its astronauts in space. The Soviet Union gave pencils to its cosmonauts which worked quite well.

You can visit the Carl Sandburg Historic Site and see some of the poet's pencil stubs and ragged notepads as well as poems written in pencil. The Site is open between the hours of 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday.

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The Origins of Knox County

Future generations should fully know and appreciate those who began the work of settling and changing a wild, unsettled and uncultivated county as Knox once was, to what it now is.

-- The History of Knox County, 1878

After the War of 1812 was concluded, the U.S. Congress set aside three and one-half million acres of land situated between the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers in the Illinois Territory to be used as bounty land grants for the veterans of the war. Because of delays in appropriations for the required surveying and for the settlement of the claims of the resident Potawatomi Indians, the government didn't start issuing land patents until 1817.

Congress had specified the land was to be divided into townships, sections, and quarter-sections. Only land which could be cultivated was to be offered to the veterans. Section 16 of each township, as well as any lead mines or salt springs, were to be reserved for the use of the

government.

Patents were issued to 17,000 former soldiers between October, 1817, and January, 1819. Few of the veterans took the opportunity to settle on their free land. Most of the patents were sold to eastern speculators. By 1823 the government was advertising almost half of the parcels as being for sale due to the non-payment of taxes.

The land was a great distance from the more populous parts of the country so potential buyers hesitated to take the risk. Sometimes, there was confusion as to who actually held title to a particular piece of land since it had passed through so many hands. The number of acres in each parcel may have been a deterrent to some of the veterans. The manpower and equipment necessary to farm 360 acres just wasn't available.

In 1825 the Illinois Legislature established ten of the counties in the Military Tract. For the most part, the counties were named for generals in the Revolutionary War. Knox was named for Henry Knox, who was a commander of artillery during the Revolution. He rose to the rank of Major General and later served as Secretary of War under President George Washington.

By 1830 the Legislature was willing to accept that there were 350 voters living in Knox County. (Imaginative accounting might actually have found 350 men, women and children living within its borders.) Approval was given for the organization of the county which was accomplished in a matter of days on July 7, 1830. Since statehood was achieved by Illinois in 1818, Knox County had been administered by Madison (1818), Pike (1821) and Fulton (1826) Counties. Now, its citizens could elect their own officials and keep their own records.

Knox County rests on the highest ground between

the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers. The prairies and timbered sections were of about equal size, with numerous creeks draining them. The Spoon River runs through the southeastern portion of the county. Coal was discovered under large sections of the area and provided a livelihood for many people over the years.

In the early days the Galena trail crossed the county from south to north. Travelers observed the quantities of timber and the expanse of prairie, which they reported to others. Many of the early comers had lived in southern Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and Virginia. They were already familiar with the type of terrain in Knox County. The climate was healthier than in some low lying areas of Illinois. Early settlers frequently chose to live near the timber, as it provided material for housing, beasts for food, trees full of honey and shelter in case of storms or prairie fires. With the help of the woods, these pioneers could be almost self-sufficient.

When the New Englanders came in the mid-1830s, they chose to establish their communities on the prairies. Among them was the group led by George Washington Gale. They established the town of Galesburg and the school now known as Knox College. When the Gale Colony first arrived in Knox County, they took up temporary residence in log cabins near the woods northwest of the town site they had chosen. They had selected that part of the area because of its distance from those wild towns of Quincy and Stephenson (later named Rock Island) and especially Peoria.

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The Opening Shot

The Civil War began on April 12, 1861, when Confederate forces bombarded Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor, South Carolina. Fort Sumter

was built after the War of 1812 and was named for General Thomas Sumter, a Revolutionary War hero. It was constructed of brick and had five sides which were five feet thick. There were three tiers of openings for placement of cannons. Construction had begun in 1827 and the fort was still incomplete in 1860.

South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 21, 1860, and repeatedly demanded U.S. troops be removed from Fort Sumter. President Lincoln knew the soldiers would run out of food by April 15, 1861. A fleet of ships was assembled to resupply the fort. Negotiations between the two sides to settle the dispute were unsuccessful.

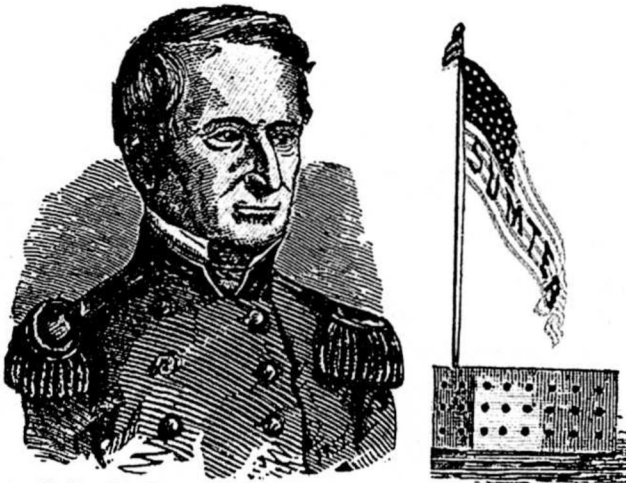
At 4:30 a.m. on April 12th, the Confederates began bombarding the fort. The guns continued to fire for 34 hours until the fort's commander, Major Robert Anderson, surrendered and evacuated his troops.

Union forces attempted to retake the fort in September, 1863, but were unsuccessful. It had been heavily bombarded by Union forces. The fort was ultimately reduced to masonry rubble. Nevertheless, the Fort Sumter wasn't surrendered by the South until General William T. Sherman took Charleston after his "March to the Sea." The federal government again took possession of Fort Sumter on February 22, 1865.

In *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*, Carl Sandburg wrote about Major Anderson. He was from Kentucky and had graduated from West Point. He was fifty-six years old. He had been a colonel of volunteers in the Black Hawk War in Illinois in the early 1830s. During that time he had met Lieutenant Jefferson Davis and sworn in soldiers including Abraham Lincoln. Anderson had also served in the Mexican War in the 1840s.

Anderson was married to a woman from Georgia who owned a plantation and slaves. Even so, he was steadfastly loyal to the Union.

As a result of his actions at Fort Sumter, Major Anderson became a national hero. He was later commissioned a Brigadier General by President Lincoln and helped keep Kentucky in the Union. He retired before the end of the war.



Col. Robert Anderson.

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Courtesy of the Library of Congress

He had kept the flag he had lowered in 1861, intending that it be used as his winding sheet, when that time came. Instead, he carried it to Fort Sumter to be raised on the fourth anniversary of the fort's surrender.

Several thousand people were also present. They watched as the flag was attached to the rope of a newly-erected flag pole. Major Anderson grasped the lanyard and raised the torn and scorched banner.

At first, it hung limply, but then the wind caught it and unfurled the shell-shot cloth. The crowd sang the first verse of the "Star-Spangled Banner." Then the guns of all the forts in Charleston Harbor

fired their salutes, followed by the guns of the assembled naval vessels. By the time they were done the air was thick with smoke.

That evening a great banquet was held in Charleston. After many speeches by the assembled dignitaries, Major Anderson offered a toast to: "the man who, when elected President of the United States, was compelled to reach the seat of government without an escort, but a man who now could travel all over our country with millions of hands and hearts to sustain him. I give you the good, the great, the honest man, Abraham Lincoln."

At that time, in Washington, D.C., President and Mrs. Lincoln were attending a performance of the play, "Our American Cousin," at Ford's Theater.

The next day, the flag at Fort Sumter was lowered to half-staff.

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The Unorthodox Poet

Harriet Monroe founded *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* in 1912. There was great support for music and art in the city of Chicago, but Miss Monroe wanted to create more interest in poetry and prose. At the suggestion of a businessman she knew, she asked a hundred individuals to contribute \$50 per year for a period of five years to fund the publication of the magazine. Money from subscriptions was then used to pay the contributors.

Carl Sandburg moved to Chicago in 1912. He worked for a socialist newspaper, *The Evening World*, then *The Day Book*. As he went about the city, he began to write a poem a day as a kind of diary. He put down his observations about the social and economic conditions of the time. He

was sensitive to the plight of workers, critical of the injustices done to them and the hypocrisy of some public figures.

During the winter of 1914, Sandburg and his wife, Lilian, chose a group of poems to send to *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*. In March, nine of the poems were published. "Chicago" was the lead poem. Some people criticized the poem as being vulgar and reflecting poorly on the city. Others said the poems were radical and not really poetry at all. Today, Chicago and Mayor Richard M. Daley boast about the famous poem.

In 2002, Ruth Lilly bequeathed \$100 million to *Poetry* magazine. It is now known as the Poetry Foundation. It is still dedicated to publishing the best work of new and established writers from around the world. The Foundation also conducts a variety of programs to promote interest in poetry.

Harriet Monroe and Carl Sandburg may not have known how far their work would spread in the early years of the 20th century, but both had a lasting influence.

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A Bit of Spring Salad

For those who garden, the first leaves of spring lettuce are a great treat. This Swedish recipe may appeal to them. Iceberg lettuce can also be used in this recipe.

1 pound lettuce
1 cup sour cream or non-fat yogurt
1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon sugar
1 tablespoon vinegar
1 tablespoon finely chopped green onion
2 teaspoons prepared horseradish
½ teaspoon salt

Finely chopped parsley and paprika for garnish

Clean lettuce, rinse in cold water and drain thoroughly. Chill. Blend together sour cream, sugar, vinegar, onion, horseradish and salt and chill. At serving time, tear lettuce in bite size pieces and put into a large serving bowl. Spoon dressing over lettuce and toss to coat leaves. Sprinkle parsley around the outer edge of the salad and paprika in the middle.

Makes 6 servings.

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Delivering Milk

Carl Sandburg left school at the end of eighth grade. Although he was to attend Lombard College several years later, he was never a student at Galesburg High School.

He was a conscientious lad, but he had shown few signs of being a scholar during his grade school days. On the other hand, his older sister Mary, who was attending high school, had outstanding grades. Their parents looked forward to the time when she would graduate, and perhaps find employment as a teacher. The money she would be able to contribute to the family's income would be of great help.

In the meanwhile, there was not enough money to permit both Mary and Carl to attend high school. Therefore, Carl would have to go to work to assist his father in supporting the family. For some time he had delivered newspapers. He retained his paper route, and found employment at the Craig Drug Store. There he swept the floors, cleaned the showcases and performed other menial tasks.

Later, he took a job delivering milk for George Burton, a stern and dour man. Sandburg did not

like Mr. Burton, but he was paid twelve dollars per month. For that sum he worked a seven day week, with no holidays. Early in the morning Mrs. Sandburg prepared a good breakfast for Carl. Then he walked about two miles to his job in all kinds of weather to save the nickel streetcar fare.

Out of his earnings he was able to give Mary a few dollars to help her buy a white graduation dress. Carl wanted her "to look as good as any of them when she stepped out and bowed and took her diploma."

After the financial panic of 1893, times were hard and jobs were scarce for men and even scarcer for teenage boys.

Perhaps because of the experience he had gained delivering milk for Burton, he was offered a job by Sam Barlow, who had several milk routes in Galesburg. The Barlows were kindly people and gave Carl a good meal at noon every day. They also gave him a new pair of shoes during the winter.

Sandburg did not deliver the milk in bottles. On his wagon he carried a number of eight gallon cans, from which he would fill smaller containers. In them he carried milk to the customer's door. The customers had bottles or jars of their own, into which Sandburg would pour the quantities they wanted.

Among his customers was a pair of sisters who took a pint of milk three times each week. They wanted full measure for their money, and watched closely to see that they received it. Even so, at the time of each delivery, they accused Sandburg of not filling their bottle to the pint line.

Some of the people on Sandburg's route would broadly suggest the milk had been watered. One railroad man would ask "What is a milkman

without a pump?" or "Do you use that quart measure when you water the milk?"

Sandburg tired of having these aspersions cast on him and his employer, Sam Barlow. Finally, one morning he declared "We don't use the pump anymore, We're getting big bottles of pure spring water from Waukesha, Wisconsin, and we pour from the bottles into the milk cans."

The railroad man had a quick response. "I noticed the milk had a new flavor," he said.

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Wrinklings & Wild Things

(One of the books for sale in the Visitor's Center is Carl Sandburg: Poems for the People edited by George and Willene Hendrick. They reviewed the Sandburg collection at the University of Illinois and selected 73 poems that had never been published. Some were untitled and only a few were dated. The poems reflect the thoughts and observations of Carl Sandburg during his lifetime. Here are two poems which reflect our own times too.)

CRAYON

The sewer digger's daughter hears her mother say
the family will have eggs for breakfast when
eggs are easier to get.

And the daughter riding with her hand in a strap
on a trolley car to her job in a corset factory,
Reads a morning newspaper society page twice
and is teased all day by the thought of what a
"dog collar of pearls" might mean.

(This poem was written in 1913. Mrs. Potter Palmer was a leader of Chicago society. Photographs of her in Chicago newspapers often showed her wearing many layers of pearls around

her neck. Her husband built the Palmer House Hotel which still exists.)

[WRECK A BANK]

Be a peterman and wreck a bank from the outside
and you get twenty years.

Be a banker and wreck a bank from the inside and
you get what you get.

There are different kinds of bank wreckers,
those who take a chance, outside the law, and
those who know the law and take no chances.

(This poem may suggest current events. The term
"peterman" in the first line was once used to
identify a safecracker. The title is bracketed
because it is that of the editors, not Sandburg.)

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

What's in a Name?

The name, "Inklings and Idlings," comes from the title of Carl Sandburg's first column, printed in the *Galesburg Evening Mail* under the pseudonym "Crimson", in 1904.

The newsletter welcomes articles, particularly about Carl Sandburg, Galesburg and Knox County. Space limitations may require that they be edited. The articles should be sent to:

Barbara Schock, Editor
Inklings and Idlings
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313 East Third Street
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