
INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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Fall 2017

FROM SITE SUPERINTENDENT MARTHA DOWNEY NEW TIME. NEW DAY

The Carl Sandburg Songbag Concerts are now on the second Sunday of the month. Upcoming concerts are: October 10—No Reason, folk, pop music; and November 12—Keith Reins and Tara McGovern, “Folk Songs You Never Sang in Grade School.” These concerts now begin at 4 pm in the Site’s Barn. There is a short break for refreshments, and the concert resumes about 5:20.

Volunteers are needed to help at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site’s annual fall yard and garden clean-up planned for Wednesday, September 27, 9 am to 1pm. University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners will be leading the volunteers. Bring your gloves and favorite garden tools. Come for a couple hours or the entire time. There will be coffee and snacks to enjoy.

The Ringling Brothers, Barnum, & Bailey Circus held its last performance this year on May 21. “The Greatest Show on Earth” was a connection to Carl Sandburg’s years in Galesburg. In *Always the Young Strangers* Sandburg recounted the excitement of the circus coming to town. If he was lucky, he got a job helping water the elephants or setting up the seats for the audience. For that work he would be given a pass to see the show.

Sandburg remembered that if he had not been able to help, he would try to sneak under the tent to watch the show through the bleachers. However, if caught, the side shows provided Carl with entertainment. He saw a man with elastic skin, a tattooed man, an Oriental dancing girl, and more. The circus spieler’s voice and elocution captivated Sandburg. He and his friends would try to impersonate the spieler’s presentation, “La-deez and gen-tul-men, beneath yon canvas we have the curi-aw-sities and the mon-straw-si-ties....”

Perhaps Sandburg absorbed some of the spieler’s ways with public presentations in the manner he would pronounce that hated word “ex—clu—sive.”

YOUR SANDBURG STORIES

Would you like to submit a Sandburg story for publication in *I&I*? Email your story to editor Mike Hobbs at mhobbs@grics.net.

MY LETTER TO “WE, THE TEACHERS” AFTER AN INSPIRING FIRST VISIT TO THE SANDBURG SITE By Bonnie J. Wick

(Ed. Note: After her recent visit to the Sandburg Site retired Geneseo High School teacher Bonnie Wick became a member of the CSHSA.)

A new school year has started. As a retired English teacher, I’m still energized each fall by the thought of new groups of students entering classrooms across the country and educators guiding them through the exchange of new concepts and ideas. I define “students” as every person who thrives on learning, the “classroom” as any place where learning occurs, and “educators” as everyone whose actions and words influence others’ actions and words. Visiting new places, such as the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, makes me think in terms of opportunities for learning. I started brainstorming “What If” about possible Sandburg enrichment units of study and lesson plans for all the grade levels and across all disciplines of study.

Perhaps this year would be a perfect time to proudly highlight some of the positive contributions that Illinois citizens, past and present, have contributed to the United States of America. That number of individuals would be too overwhelming a task to tackle all in one year, but I would challenge all educators to select one Illinois individual per school year and incorporate that person’s work into their lesson plans across the curriculum in some meaningful way. I happily offer a name, since so much of the work has been documented already and readily available to share with you.

My candidate of choice is Carl Sandburg, born and raised in Galesburg, IL in 1878. Some of you educators might be attending an Opening Day Teacher In-Service session about now, but most of you are already hard at work in your classrooms. Consider this letter only as a helpful suggestion of how to squeeze one more unit of study into this school year.

English teachers are probably thinking that adding another requirement to their year’s unit lesson plans will be a piece of cake, because Sandburg is already included in their poetry plans. However, I challenge each of you to include some other literary form as enrichment to the poems you plan to discuss. Most students are introduced to Sandburg through his poetry found in their English textbooks. Personally, the city of Chicago is

forever personified as a living entity because of Sandburg's poem "Chicago." Whenever I travel to Chicago, to me it's always "the city of the big shoulders." And the fog coming off the waters of Lake Michigan comes "on little cat feet" thanks to Sandburg's writing skills. But, we educators could instill so much more pride in living in Illinois if we added more Sandburg to our curriculum. Sandburg had three daughters and they inspired him to write short, humorous vignettes for children in his *Rootabaga Stories* and *Rootabaga Pigeons* books. His natural gift of expression with words brings joy to young and old alike when they read aloud these often nonsensical vignettes just to hear the musical qualities of the spoken word. I'd recommend selections from these works as the next step after enjoying Dr. Seuss books. Sandburg was a newspaper reporter in Chicago for many years, but I was pleasantly surprised to learn that he was also the *Chicago Daily News* film critic for eight years. Older students might be inspired to watch some of these film classics after reading a Sandburg's review when the movie was first shown in theaters.

Music teachers and all music lovers would enjoy leafing through Sandburg's anthology, *The American Songbag*. High school music classes, speech classes, and history classes might enjoy hearing America's history come alive through lyrics written long ago--by known and unknown authors--and sung by Sandburg, because he valued those expressions of what issues were important to the people in those times. For enrichment, I would bet that Sandburg would have loved to hear students nominate current songs and be prepared to defend--passionately but also factually--the issues these songs express that would make them worthy to be added to Sandburg's anthology. Sandburg also liked to finish his poetry reading programs with playing his guitar and singing a few of the *American Songbag* songs just for the joy of singing. And, how might high school students react if you just mentioned to them that (back in the day) Carl Sandburg had won a Grammy for his performance with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra? As an enrichment opportunity, consider combining the music classes, speech classes, and history classes to listen and later share student reactions to hearing this performance.

Social Studies teachers could relax, because it is pretty much common knowledge that Sandburg wrote about Abraham Lincoln. During his life Sandburg received three Pulitzer Prizes. One of those was for *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*. However, were you aware that so great was America's respect for Sandburg's literary contributions, that he was one of only a handful of private citizens ever to be invited to address a Joint Session of Congress? In addition, expand into specific areas where Sandburg's writings revealed more insights about how Lincoln dealt with the job of being President of the United States. This information could inspire students to discover that knowledge of the present comes from more in-depth knowledge of the past. Sandburg took his own political opinions very seriously. For enrichment, push the boundaries a little and suggest that students might search for some of Sandburg's

investigative reporter news articles or his essays about the political concerns of his time. Another enrichment possibility might start with interested students reading *Always the Young Strangers*, Sandburg's autobiography. I've always found it as important to learn as much as possible about an author's life as it is to learn from the author's ideas expressed through his or her writings. What happened in their lives that created their opinions about how to live in the world and how to treat other people. That, to me, is an important part of life-long learning. Perhaps the teacher and students could meet and share their ideas about how this project could best be presented and evaluated.

Agriculture, Building Trades, and Industrial Arts instructors might possibly be squirming to think of any way there would be something in their areas of study that is remotely connected--in a practical and realistic way--to Carl Sandburg. But they'd be pleasantly surprised. The Sandburg family raised prize-winning goats. More specifically, Carl's wife Lillian was a nationally prominent breeder of goats with her interest in genetic manipulation. Her herd consisted of Nubian, Saanen, and Toggenburg breeds which she referred to as her Chikaming herd. For enrichment, research the Sandburg family's move from the Midwest to North Carolina and its effect on Sandburg, the writer and owner of Connemara Farm. Compare the design of Sandburg's birthplace cottage with today's trend toward the "Tiny House" layouts. What was a necessity for Sandburg's parent's selection of a home is now becoming a choice for some of today's home buyers. Another possible enrichment idea might be to research the good friendship that existed between Carl Sandburg and famous architect Frank Lloyd Wright and what qualities they admired in each other.

Now, I don't aim to create feelings of frustration and despair for today's busy and already overbooked teaching schedules. A great source of information is already available to you. The knowledgeable and helpful Site Interpreter and volunteers are willing to personally guide you through the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, perfectly situated in west-central Illinois in Galesburg. They are ready to show visitors the Carl Sandburg birthplace cottage, stroll with you through the garden area, and give tours of a small but well-designed and very informative museum. One of several highlights displayed in the museum is Sandburg's guitar which he used during his poetry recitations. Another treasure on display is the N.C. Wyeth Lincoln drawing. Feel free to ask questions along the way. Before leaving the Sandburg Site you might wish to return to the museum's bookstore which has a nice variety of books, a CD of Sandburg singing select songs from his *American Songbag*, and copies of a select few of Sandburg poems written in his own handwriting. These are available for purchase.

So, teachers, if you want to instill in your students a sense of pride and a connection with our Illinois contributors to America's history and reinforce the feeling that there is still more to be discovered and created by

their generation, then incorporating a little bit (or a little bit more) of Carl Sandburg's legacy into your classroom studies might be a great place to start. Sandburg was very much a believer that "we, the people" was the source of power to succeed at any task. Carl Sandburg never lost his belief that he spoke for and was a part of "the people."

I know that after my first visit to the Sandburg Site, I felt inspired, empowered, and proud to be a part of "the people" that Sandburg so treasured.

RECONNECTING WITH GALESBURG'S NATIVE SON

By Rebecca Susmarski

(Editor's Note: Rebecca Susmarski was elected to the CSHSA Board of Directors in May, 2017. She grew up in Oak Lawn, IL and graduated from Loyola University Chicago in 2012 where she majored in journalism and history and minored in political science. While at Loyola she interned at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield and for U.S. Congresswoman Judy Biggert. She says that she most enjoyed giving historical tours of the Capitol during her internship for Congresswoman Biggert. Rebecca is a reporter for the Galesburg Register-Mail.

I'll admit that before I moved to the city of Galesburg last year and joined the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association Board, I didn't know much about Carl Sandburg's life.

I had been familiar with some of his works, as I read several of his poems in middle school and portions of his two-part Abraham Lincoln biography in college. I didn't know, though, that Sandburg also penned movie reviews, an autobiography, political pieces, and children's books, as well as countless articles and columns. I never appreciated how well he related to different audiences depending on the piece he wrote, or how humorous he could be, as he demonstrated in his autobiography:

Many have written and spoken it, "I was born — why?" Seeking the answer in brief, some have summarized it, "I was born because my father and mother met and exercised between them an ancient act of passion, love and generation." In my case the announcement came, "Det ar en pojke," the Swedish for "It is a boy," and so definitely not, 'Det ar en flicka.' ... I was a welcome man-child.

Sandburg did so much to earn the title of "Galesburg's native son," but why would I join a board devoted to promoting a man's legacy without knowing many details about that legacy? By getting to know Sandburg better, I figured I would become much better acquainted with my new home. Learning about the history of a town usually helps me understand its people and the issues it faces in the present.

That proved to be the case with Galesburg. Now whenever I drive down South Street, I think of how Sandburg described it when he and his family lived there when he had been a child:

South Street was dusty. The black dirt had been ground fine by wheels and horseshoes over many days of dry weather. My bare feet liked the feel of the street dust.

Working-class people still reside in the neighborhoods Sandburg called home, and their problems have not changed. After numerous manufacturers left Galesburg over the past few decades, many residents have struggled to make living wages. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that the number of individuals living below the poverty line in Galesburg totals 24.6 percent.

Sandburg identified with socialist philosophy, because he saw the struggles of working people firsthand in Galesburg and elsewhere. He even served as editor of the *Social-Democratic Herald*, for which he wrote:

Abraham Lincoln was a shabby, homely man who came from among those who live shabby and homely lives — the common people — and the working class. ... Among those who give praise and pay tribute to Lincoln today are grafters, crooks, political pretenders, and two-faced patriots who dine and wine and fatten on the toil of workingmen they sneer at on every day except election day.

As a reporter myself, I think of Sandburg's words during an election season whenever local candidates talk about how to bring manufacturing and living-wage jobs with benefits back to town.

Joining the Association may have taught me more about Sandburg and Galesburg on a personal level, but how does this knowledge benefit the community as a whole? Why is it important to support and join an organization that recognizes a key figure in Galesburg's history?

A community needs to know itself in order to thrive, just as a person needs to truly know themselves in order to live their most fulfilling life. When a community forgets its local history, it forgets the values it always had that helped it conquer challenges in the past. It also loses its ability to look back and understand when the seeds of an ongoing problem first sprouted. Without knowing such context, community members can't create a comprehensive solution that fully addresses the issue, and true progress can never be made.

We need to join and support local history organizations, and keep the heritage of our local figures alive, for the betterment of our collective future. Even if we aren't experts on the subject matter when we first sign up for an organization, we gain a greater appreciation for it — and for our community as a whole — the more we learn.

Sandburg, a lifelong student himself, would certainly approve of that approach.

THE UNION PICNIC

By Barbara Schock

On August 29, 1891 the brakemen and conductors who worked for the railroad held a picnic at Highland Park in East Galesburg. The weather was pleasant, the park was in a lovely state of greenness, lake waters were calm, and families had full baskets of homemade food to eat.

The *Republican-Register* reporter estimated the crowd to be between 1,200 and 1,500 people. A variety of races were carried out for the young and those a little older. The conductors held a 100 yard foot race which was won by C.M. Hill. He received a gold emblem pin as a prize. C.A. Palmgren won the brakemen's race and received the same award. A girls' race was also conducted, and the prize was a box of candy. The boys' race was hotly contested with Clarence Hippert receiving a suit of clothes.

The fat man's race involved only two sprinters, Tom Maloney and S.E. Wilkinson. The latter was Grand Master of the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, so Maloney was considered to be very brave to be competing in the race.

Boat racing in single and double sculls was held on the west end of Lake Rice. The distance was a half mile and was completed in about 4.5 minutes. A gold handled silk umbrella was the prize. In the swimming race, the prize was a bound copy of *Trainman's Journal*.

The last race of the day was supposed to be a ladies' scull event, but the ladies were averse to rowing. It was finally decided the ladies would sit in the sculls while the men rowed. Three boats were thus "manned." Harry Turner with Nettie Boyd won the first prize while Mr. and Mrs. Woodward and Mr. and Mrs. Wilkinson finished second and third. Wilkinson admitted he had rowed a boat only four times before the race.

Before the racing events had finished the Gaines' Orchestra began playing for dancing. A large wooden platform had been constructed just for that purpose. George Sanderson did the calling, and the floor managers kept the dancers in proper formation. There was also a stand selling lemonade for refreshment.

An election for most popular conductor and brakeman was also held with Mrs. Wilkinson collecting the ballots in a box. Conductor Bradley and Brakeman Powell received the most votes. Each man received a solid gold watch charm to signify the honor. No doubt the charms were proudly worn and would be frequently noticed in the days ahead.

The dance continued until midnight when the band played "Annie Rooney" as a farewell.

More than likely the August Sandburg family spent the day at home as there was no one employed as a conductor or brakeman in their household.

Galesburg was becoming more of a union town in the early 1890s as the male workers of the city were joining together to strengthen their demands for the eight-hour day and better pay.

IS CARL SANDBURG STILL RELEVANT IN THE 21ST CENTURY?

By Rex Cherrington

It is far too late in the game to be the first to wonder out loud or in print about the contemporary relevance of Carl Sandburg. Whomever wonders this today will do so with the hope of not being the last. Carl Sandburg still seems larger than life to many of us although he has now been deceased for half a century. When we read of all that Carl Sandburg did in his lifetime, it is marvelous that we are reading about the accomplishments of a single human being.

The wise and wonderful words of William Wordsworth can't help but come to mind. Indeed, it is "The child that is the father of the man." We are fortunate that we know so much about the youth of Carl Sandburg. We know much about Galesburg through local history. We are fortunate to have two autobiographies that give us such insight into his early years.

Always the Young Strangers takes us from his earliest childhood memories up to the time that he returned from the Spanish-American War, and *Ever the Winds of Chance* picks up the story and takes us through his years at Lombard College and his early writing under the mentorship of Philip Green Wright.

When we think of the life's work of Carl Sandburg we see how fortunate he was to have been born into the family he did and to grow up in the community where he did. He was part of the Swedish community of Galesburg, Illinois, but his life was never limited to or by that group.

West-Central Illinois was the home to many who came from Sweden or descended from people who did. The communitarian experiment at Bishop Hill started bringing Swedes to West-Central Illinois in 1846. Many of the Bishop Hill settlers became dissatisfied with life in a religious colony and began to settle elsewhere, and many sent word to relatives still in Sweden of this wondrous part of the world. Employment on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad and related businesses brought many Swedes to Galesburg and Western Illinois, as it did for Clara and August Sandburg.

Galesburg had several churches where Swedish language services were conducted. There had been a Swedish language newspaper started in Galesburg. Though it moved to Chicago, it was still circulated here. There were numerous stores where the owners or employees were conversant in Swedish. While the pinnacle of Galesburg's social hierarchy was still the descendants of old Puritan stock, the Swedes and Irish fared well.

Carl Sandburg was even more fortunate, with respect to the relevancy question, to be born into a working class family and live in a working class neighborhood. When one reads *Always the Young Strangers*, it is apparent that he and his peers were not particularly sheltered and were free to roam in the city anywhere they pleased. They could find employment to take them in and among the well to-do on "Quality Hill" who were not of the working class. These young boys knew much about what went on in town, including the lurid details of court cases which they went and observed. Between the "Haves" and "Have Nots" the Sandburg family seems to have been close to the middle, perhaps having slightly less than the exact middle, but living in a neighborhood where all were near the middle, some struggling more than the Sandburg's. Carl Sandburg's background gave him a generous sampling of what a cross section of Middle Americans found relatable, varying from curiosity to intense personal interest.

Sandburg's father worked as a blacksmith's helper at the shops of the CB&Q Railroad, and the Sandburg children would have been surrounded by others who were the children of railroad workers and parents who engaged in other manual labor. In Galesburg during the 1880's and 1890's young Sandburg would have heard much about labor struggles and the grievances that led to strikes, sometimes with fatal consequences. There would be none of it discussed in the Sandburg home though, per his father's rules. Carl recalled seeing the blood stains from one striking railroad engineer who was killed in the Great Strike of 1888. Young Sandburg was ten years old, and it couldn't have helped but have had an impact on him.

For a moment of brief comparison, a book entitled *Cambria Tea* was written by Rebecca Lawrence Lowrie, a woman who was roughly of the same generation as Carl Sandburg, though 13 years younger, but who grew up in a fine "castle" on "Quality Hill" in Galesburg and raised by "Brahmin" parents, her father an attorney with a very prestigious law firm. If her book about her childhood is an accurate reflection of what her concerns were in childhood, she was obviously very much sheltered from all world turmoil that was known to children in Sandburg's neighborhood.

Carl Sandburg dropped out of the public school system to take a job to help support his family with younger mouths to feed then. He also rode the rails, went west to help with the wheat harvest, and then became a soldier who served in the Spanish-American War. This boy became the great man who could write and speak about what was relevant about a broad cross section of America.

With all this, Carl Sandburg developed a strong social conscience beginning with his background in the Swedish Lutheran and Swedish Methodist churches, enhanced by what he had picked up from reading publications at Lombard College about the Universalists. The Universalists were the church that sponsored Lombard

College. Universalism was a more liberal religious tradition than the religion of his parents, and while he did not join their church, he found agreement with them. Carl, through socialism was able to meet like-minded people who saw injustices and wished to work to make a difference, to right the wrongs. The socialists he met included his future wife.

After returning from the Spanish-American War, Carl Sandburg was accepted into Lombard College by a special act of the board since he had never completed high school. He had also been granted an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point, but due to his lack of formal education he failed the entrance exams, and there were no exceptions.

Sandburg designed his own curriculum at Lombard and took courses he believed would help him most in his desire to become a writer without concern for the requirements for a major, nor for a degree. Carl Sandburg made the transformation from boy to man, drawing upon every resource within him during the Lombard College years. Most importantly, it was during those years that he became mentored by Philip Green Wright, a poet, a socialist, an economist, mathematician, and so much more. The greatest of the so much more was being a friend to young Sandburg. Wright had a printing press in his basement, and Carl Sandburg's early attempts at poetry were published there in little books bound together by a ribbon. Again, it seems hard to imagine that Carl, or, as he called himself for a while, Charles, could not have been in a better place than Galesburg. He was not yet ready for Chicago but he was growing.

When "Charles" decided that he must leave Galesburg for his writing career to flourish, he headed for Chicago though he made a side trip detour through Milwaukee where he worked in the office of the Social-Democratic Party mayor. During this time in Milwaukee he met Lillian Steichen, a fellow Social-Democratic Party organizer and the sister of photographer Edward Steichen. Sandburg would marry Miss Steichen and later remark that the three people who had the greatest influence on his life were his wife, her brother Edward, and, of course, Philip Green Wright.

Carl Sandburg was a newspaperman and journalist in one capacity or another for much of his adult life. He had worked for a daily newspaper in Galesburg, and later in Chicago he was a beat reporter who is perhaps best remembered for his coverage of the Chicago Race Riots of 1917. He wrote with intensity half a century later about the angry mob trying to lynch Ed Jackson, a Negro prisoner held at the Knox County Jail in Galesburg. Sandburg had once seen a race riot averted in Galesburg, but later in Chicago he saw how deaths resulted when law and order could not be maintained.

He was a movie reviewer, a writer of newspaper and magazine articles, sometimes for socialist publications under an assumed name. And there was Carl Sandburg

the poet who needed the association of friends, admirers, and critics to hone his skills. He found an ally in Harriet Monroe, publisher of *Poetry*, the magazine in which he had poems published in 1914. He began winning awards for his poetry right away. *Chicago Poems* was published in 1916. Through Monroe he met numerous others who affected his career in a variety of ways.

The Social-Democratic Party with whom Sandburg affiliated himself when he was in his thirties was the conservative part of the socialist movement and was not trying to overthrow capitalism but trying to make capitalism more humane and fair through advocating for the forty-hour work week, overtime pay, compensation for workers who received workplace injuries or disabilities, and wanting to make the workplace safer. Almost everything came to fruition as these goals were largely adopted by the two major parties. Sandburg was always patriotic and believed in the United States of America or more specifically the common people and the ideal of a country without aristocrats, at least ones without official titles, such as lord, lady, duke, or duchess. When the international socialists took the position of keeping the United States out of the fight in World War I, Sandburg then differed with them and relinquished his membership in the Social-Democratic Party to which he never returned. He would, however, remain loyal to the principles of justice for working people. Sandburg seemed to emulate the idea that it is institutions who work for mankind, not the other way around, and when institutions are not working properly, then change is necessary.

The present case for the relevance of Sandburg today must not turn into an attempt to write another biography. For the antecedents of Sandburg's relevance today we must look at the relevance he had in his own lifetime. It could be contended that his relevance comes from his reluctance to place limits on himself as he applied himself in journalism, poetry, biography, musicology, children's prose, motion picture consulting, and more that he brought with him something he had gained from each that he could contribute to another field, and if he was not a unique person in this respect, he had to be nearly so. Carl Sandburg emerged as the most successful of the Chicago Poets, sometimes called the Prairie Poets. Sandburg possessed or developed a kind of genius for doing the right thing with his career. His wife, Paula, also helped in that regard.

When we speak of the very essence of anything, we speak of the marrow of the bone. Sandburg did not need to conduct any studies to find this marrow. His boyhood placed him in the middle of this marrow of America. As he matured, he reflected upon it, and as he grew up in it and lived in it, particularly up to age forty or so, the patterns were clearly established in his mind. Relevance no doubt has to do with living a life with a broad range of experiences but also experiencing it more deeply, as Sandburg could be described as a soulful man, and then the third and most important element of relevance is the ability to interpret and express oneself about the total

experience. Sandburg was masterful in all three. In short, he was a capable man. How could a man or woman who is not capable possibly be relevant?

This story is too short to list all of the awards and recognitions Carl Sandburg received, but they are mentioned as they reflect the opinions of many others as to his ability. Arguably, there were three Pulitzer Prizes when counting that first poetry award that became the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry. There were many honorary doctorates from colleges and universities, a Grammy for the spoken word, one of two persons to address a joint session of Congress who were not public officials, honors from the King of Sweden, and being selected to work in Hollywood as a movie consultant. The list is longer but this makes the point of how varied were his accomplishments, and he didn't merely dabble in all these fields. He made significant contributions.

In summary, it is beneficial to remember the words of President Johnson's spoken at Carl Sandburg's Memorial Service in 1967, *And like (Walt) Whitman, Sandburg seemed to have his finger on the American pulse. He seemed able to give voice to the whole range of America's hopes and America's hates. He seemed able to communicate, above all the restless energy that has vitalized, stimulated, and--on occasion--degraded the history of our nation.*

In many respects the function of a priest is to comprehend, consider, and interpret the meaning of experience in the context of the values embraced by a society. One who has done so well will be relevant, and one who has done so very well will be relevant long after the mortals who were the actors in the "play" have passed from the earth. In this respect, Sandburg could be considered the high priest of American Democracy, for he transcended the mere commentary on events and people and focused his attention on the essence. It is the essence that will endure as long as people continue this American experiment in self-governance. No matter what label one would try to pin on Carl Sandburg, he was always a patriot and knew the country he believed in was more than a government. Carl Sandburg's art form went farther than getting people to think. He could make people feel. Emotions of all types, joyous and otherwise, are the essence of our existence. There is that saying that I don't recall what he said but I do remember how he made me feel. Much has changed in the century plus since Sandburg left his boyhood hometown to become the Chicago Poet, but much of what brings us joy and brings us sorrow and that which produces the struggles of life and its rewards remain the same. This is why Carl Sandburg remains relevant. The events, the cast of characters, and more will, and do, change. The essence remains so much the same, and Carl Sandburg spoke to our essence in the songs he saved, the stories he told, his way of relating the life of Lincoln, and, of course, in the poems he wrote.

SANDBURG AT 1940 S-A WAR REUNION

By Mike Hobbs



1940 Reunion of Spanish-American War veterans from Company C.

Courtesy Galesburg Public Library Archives

This blurry portion of a photograph from the Galesburg Public Library Archives shows Sandburg at a 1940 reunion in Galesburg of thirty-nine Company C Spanish-American War veterans. He is recognizable in the first row, second from left. It is not known in which building this photograph was taken.

Sandburg was working as a painter apprentice, a job he didn't like, in 1898 when he heard about the explosion of the battleship Maine in Havana harbor. The news excited him. His biographer Penelope Niven writes in *Carl Sandburg, A Biography* that Sandburg devoured Chicago newspapers which kept Galesburg citizens aware of the growing national clamor for war, the liberation of Cuba, the achievement of Manifest Destiny. Like most Americans, Charlie believed that the Spanish deliberately perpetrated the explosion of the Maine.... War against Spain was declared on April 24. Two days later Sandburg enlisted in Company C, Sixth Infantry Regiment, Illinois Volunteers.

In a story that appeared in the Fall 2014 *Inklings and Idlings* that dispelled the notion that Sandburg hated Galesburg, Niven wrote,

[Sandburg] took particular pride in his service in the Spanish American War, and in 1940 attended a reunion of his Company C, Sixth Infantry Regiment of Illinois Volunteers in Galesburg. In 1898 when they volunteered for war service, there were twelve college boys and at least twenty farmers in the company, and many of them had relatives who had fought in the Civil War. An estimated ten thousand citizens thronged to the Galesburg armory and the train station to send them on their way to war. Sandburg paid tribute to his fellow soldiers in *Always*

The Young Strangers, and in a letter in 1940 to his publisher, Alfred Harcourt: "Most of them are the real stuff and having had little fear of death or hardship will take old age and decrepitude without whimpering." Sandburg also wrote in his autobiography that many of his fellow soldiers remained his lifelong friends.

CALKINS ON SANDBURG

By Mike Hobbs

Earnest Elmo Calkins (1868-1964), a Knox College graduate, was called the Dean of Advertising and "arguably the single most important figure in early twentieth century graphic design." He co-founded the influential New York Calkins and Holden advertising agency in 1902.

Calkins was born in Geneseo, IL. The family moved to Galesburg where his father became City Attorney. At age six measles caused the onset of deafness in young Calkins. By age fourteen he was completely deaf. He attended Knox where his deafness hurt his academic performance. Despite his disability he was elected editor of the college newspaper. He barely graduated in 1891. Later he served as honorary trustee of Knox until his death. In 1944 he founded the Knox College Fifty Year Club.

In 1937 his book *They Broke the Prairie* was published. It is subtitled "*Being some account of the settlement of the Upper Mississippi Valley by religious and educational pioneers, told in terms of one city, Galesburg, and of one College, Knox.*" He ends his book with these words about Sandburg:

Carl Sandburg is Galesburg's only native born poet. He sprang from that Swedish stock which gives the town its ingrained Scandinavian touch....[He] belongs to the prairie. He is its authentic voice. His words pour forth with the sprawling fecundity of these fertile lands, silos and grain elevators, windmills, and piebald hogs, far horizons and sunsets of burnished gold. Almost any of his verses would serve as an appropriate pendant to this chronicle of the old Military Bounty Tract. For example he says in "The Prairie":

"I am the prairie, mother of men waiting. They are mine, the threshing crews eating breakfast, the farm boys driving steers to the cattle pens. They are mine, the crowds of people at at a Fourth of July picnic, listening to a lawyer read the Declaration of Independence, watching the pinwheels and Roman candles at night, the young men and women two by two hunting the bypaths and kissing bridges. They are mine, the horses looking over the fence in the frost of late October, saying good morning to the horses hauling wagons of rutabaga to market. They are mine, the old zigzag rail fences, the new barb wire."



Larry Diemer Reading Sandburg's "I Am the People, The Mob"

SANDBURG POEM READ AT LABOR DAY PROGRAM

Retired Galesburg High School teacher Larry Diemer gave a powerful reading of Sandburg's poem "I Am the People, The Mob" during a program in Standish Park following the 125th Galesburg Labor Day Parade. Here is that poem:

*I Am the people--the mob--the crowd--the mass.
Do you know that all the great work of the world is
done through me?
I am the workingman, the inventor, the maker of the
world's food and clothes.
I am the audience that witnesses history.
The Napoleons come from me and the Lincolns.
They die. And then I send forth more Napoleons and
Lincolns.
I am the seed ground. I am a prairie that will stand for
much plowing. Terrible storms pass over me. I forget.
The best of me is sucked out and wasted. I forget.
Everything but Death comes to me and
makes me work and give up what I have.
And I forget.
Sometimes I growl, shake myself and spatter a few
red drops for history to remember. Then--I forget.
When I, the People, learn to remember, when I, the
People, use the lessons of yesterday and no longer
forget who robbed me last year, who played me for a
fool--then there will be no speaker in all the world say
the name: 'The People,' with any fleck of a sneer in
his voice or any far-off smile of derision.
The mob--the crowd--the mass--will arrive then.*

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



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