

INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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Winter 2018-2019

CHARLES "CHUCK" J. BEDNAR (1936-2018)

Past CSHSA president Chuck Bednar passed away on September 18, 2018. He was a board member of the Ernest Hemingway Foundation in Oak Park, IL, past president of the Chicago Civil War Round Table, board member of the Stephen A. Douglas Association, member of the Abraham Lincoln Association, honorary member of the Knox-Lombard Fifty Year Club, and co-chairman of the Galesburg Public Art Commission. The Illinois Museum Association recognized him as "Volunteer of the Year" in 2009.



Charles "Chuck" J. Bednar

Here are tributes to Chuck.

From Martha Downey, Site Superintendent

Chuck Bednar was the eternal optimist. If he was ever discouraged about the Sandburg Site establishing regular public hours, or if he despaired that the funds raised for the Sandburg statue might not be enough, he never let it show. He simply smiled and worked harder. I am guessing he applied that strategy to any hurdle that came his way throughout his lifetime. He was tenacious and determined, but always with a smile and sense of humor.

He was an "old school" gentlemen. Writing lengthy thank you notes and letters. Going out of his way to express appreciation, congratulations, or updates on projects. He always made sure anyone's contribution, however small, was recognized.

I remember when a group of us was visiting the University of Illinois Sandburg archives. Chuck was so excited to be there once again and see the rows and rows of shelving that contained the Sandburg collection. His enthusiasm for Sandburg, no doubt, was inspired by his mother Juanita. Her role in preserving Sandburg's legacy is well documented. Chuck's contributions to continuing that legacy stand in Galesburg's Central Park and on the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site's grounds. He brought new people onto the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association's Board that have become strong board members and strong advocates for Sandburg. These individuals carry on Chuck's commitment to the Site, the Association, and Carl Sandburg

From Barry Swanson, Past CSHSA President

My heart is heavy this morning as I write to you from North Carolina. The news of Chuck's passing caught Gail and me by surprise last night. Ironic in that I had just mentioned to Gail that I needed to give Chuck a call. His contributions to the communities where he and Marilyn lived are lasting legacies to his remarkable sense of humanity and devotion to the arts. Chuck was a doer, much like many of you. Without his leadership the Sandburg statue would never have been completed, and the enduring legacy of a great American writer may have well faded into oblivion. I imagine the folks in Oak Park would say the same about the Hemingway Museum. If you have not been there, make a point to go. If you mention Chuck's name, you will be treated like royalty.

It is no accident that Chuck got things done. He came from great stock. Charles "Chuck" Bednar, Sr. was the Galesburg High School Athletic Director for many years and was highly responsible for the significant success of GHS athletics during those years. I know from personal experience what a class act he was since I was a student/athlete during three of those years. I always admired him. Chuck's mother, Juanita, as we all know, was a driving force behind the purchase of the Sandburg birthplace and its subsequent improvements, eventually establishing it as an Illinois State Historic Site.

My wife, Gail knew the Bednar's as a young girl as her parents were friends with them. Rick, Chuck's brother, recently sent us a copy of a film that Chuck Sr. took of Gail at the Bednar home when Gail was a toddler. She remembers how kind the family was to her and her parents. That kindness was evident even as Rick made numerous attempts to send us the film. Such were the Bednar's and their fine sons.

Chuck and I returned to Galesburg around the same time in the 2000's, and it was Chuck who suggested that I join the Galesburg Public Art Commission and the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. It was through Chuck that I had some of the finest experiences of my life. Being a part of GPAC's efforts to bring Lonnie Stewart's vision to fruition was thrilling. Mostly because of the opportunity to work with so many of you. There were moments of frustration but also exhilaration. Additionally, my time on the CSHSA board was life changing. First, as Chuck's Vice-President and then serving as President, we saw the transformation of the Site into, once again, "...a place to come and remember." Thanks to the hard work of so many dedicated people the legacy lives on.

Chuck was a leader, the best kind of leader, what some now call a servant leader. He served and did it with a kindness that inspired all who served with him. Not to say that we didn't have our moments. When Chuck had a vision, he wanted to make certain there was a good reason for that vision to be realized. That is how things get done. I am grateful for my years as Chuck Bednar Jr.'s friend. I learned so much from him and will hold his memory always in my heart. My love for Carl Sandburg was immensely enriched because of him.

Chuck was a man of faith--in his God and in his fellow man. The last time Gail and I visited him in the hospital, he was so positive and upbeat. Despite the throes of his illness he wanted to know how we were doing, how all of the friends we had in common were doing. That is the way I choose to remember my dear friend.

Sandburg concludes his lone novel *Remembrance Rock* with a toast from Maria "Mimah" Windom, the toast which originated from Mary Windling in 1608: "To the storms to come and the stars coming after the storm." We have weathered the storm here, and so tonight I will look heavenward to the stars from this North Carolina shore and think of Chuck. He too has left a legacy, and I know his star will be shining brightly there in the night sky and remain so in our hearts. He will be remembered.

Gail and I send our condolences to all who loved Chuck, especially to Marilyn, Melissa, Rick and the Bednar family.

In closing this missive to all of you dear friends, I borrow a valediction from one of my favorite writers (albeit a South Carolinian) Pat Conroy. "I wish you all Great Love."

From Rick Sayre, CSHSA Treasurer

In June of 2008 I received my first call from Chuck Bednar. I was director of Hewes Library, Monmouth College, Monmouth, IL. Through his association with the Ernest Hemingway Foundation in Oak Park, Chuck was looking for another suitable venue for a huge sixteen-panel National Portrait Gallery exhibit entitled "Picturing Hemingway: A Writer in his Time." From the warmth and enthusiasm that flowed from Chuck's mellifluous voice during that initial phone call, I knew that there would be no way I would not be working with Chuck on this project. We had the perfect art gallery in Hewes Library that would not be scheduled over the summer months. I finally met Chuck when I visited the exhibit then located within the Barn at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site in Galesburg and was more than impressed with both Chuck and the quality of the exhibit. I recognized it would be a lot of work, but it would be well worth it. After the exhibit made a short visit to Kansas City, it arrived at the end of June in several mammoth boxes. Chuck then made the trip from Galesburg to Monmouth and spent the day with me as we set the exhibit. The art gallery worked well, and the sixteen 4'x7' panels filled the gallery space. Chuck worked tirelessly with me, still brimming with enthusiasm and fascinating stories. He was also so very gracious and wanted to hear about our library, Monmouth College, and me personally. Chuck obviously had a love for history and literature as well as a love for making connections with people.

We were able to keep the exhibit through the end of September 2008. Since the art gallery was previously scheduled, we had to move the exhibit to the open area outside of the gallery for the last six weeks. While it wasn't quite as perfect as the gallery location, Chuck visited and gave his enthusiastic approval of our back-to-back configuration of the exhibit through the center of the area. He stayed in touch with me throughout the exhibit's stay and was helpful in the final takedown and repackaging for its next stop at the Aurora (IL) Public Library.

It was not quite a year later in June of 2009 that I received another phone call from Chuck. This time he was recruiting for new board of directors for the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. My wife, Mary Phillips, and I had moved to Galesburg from Oklahoma in 1998, and we had visited the Site several times. It was always a proud stop on our Galesburg tour for any of our family and friends visiting from out-of-state. However, in those first ten years I don't think my visits actually coincided with the hours for the Visitors Center and the Birthplace Cottage. We would visit Quotation Walk and Remembrance Walk on the grounds and peer in the windows of the Cottage. Once again, Chuck was a persuasive recruiter. It was not until I was on the board for a few months that I realized just how significant Chuck's family connections with the Sandburg Birthplace Cottage were. His mother Juanita was one of the founders of the original local Carl Sandburg Association that managed to purchase and restore the Birthplace

Cottage. His home only one street away from ours was full of Sandburg and Lincoln memorabilia, and both Chuck and his wife Marilyn were always welcoming and gracious hosts on visits there.

After a couple of years on the board Chuck became President, and I became Treasurer. I soon learned that the Treasurer was also responsible for oversight of the Museum Store. With the sad passing of our long-time beloved president, Norm Winick, I also accepted the role of Webmaster. It was clear that Chuck was a visionary leader. With Illinois state budget issues, the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency was forced to cut much of its support, and it became clear that if the building and grounds' upkeep issues were to be addressed, then the Association would need to take on more responsibility. Chuck tirelessly sought donations and grants to repair a leaky roof at the Visitors Center. He was very supportive of my efforts to add out-of-print books to our Sandburg offerings at the Museum Store, and he would present me with titles he had gleaned from used bookstores that he had visited. He was a tireless promoter of the Site and made presentations to groups and schools. Chuck knew well he was working with volunteers, many of whom had full-time positions. He was always appreciative of the time board members took to work on projects and promote the site. During his tenure as president we reacquired our 501(c)3 federal tax exempt status from the IRS, as well as our not-for-profit corporation status with the State of Illinois. Our Association By-Laws were significantly revised and approved by the membership. He successfully spearheaded grant applications from the Galesburg Community Foundation and actively sought other grants and donations. When we would work on any project together that was going to take some time and negotiation, we could always count on Chuck to stop at some point in the process and exclaim "Are we having fun yet?"

Chuck was one-of-a-kind. His constant encouragement made it easy for me to agree to continue on the Association board for the past ten years. The Association has continued to be viable and successful because of his efforts. Sadly, Chuck's health declined, and he had to cut back a few years ago. But his legacy and his indomitable spirit will live on.

From Jerry Shea, Author of *Adda and Juanita*

The Galesburg community has lost a remarkable person who worked tirelessly to promote the arts and most recently the Sandburg statue standing in the town square. Charles (Chuck) Bednar was an inspiration as a community leader who helped spearhead the drive to create the statue and find it a home. As well, he helped carry the focus on the Birthplace and its importance not just today but to future generations.

Bednar was a treasure trove of Sandburg lore and the owner of many, many personal letters of Sandburg to his mother and Adda George who found and saved the cottage from the wrecking ball.

Citizens like Bednar help create a fabric of pride and a look at history. He leaves all of us a guide, an example. We thank him and those who carry on today and tomorrow.

From Mike Hobbs, Editor *Inklings and Idlings*

Chuck Bednar was a likable man. I liked his positive, can-do attitude. In appearance he reminded me of Theodore Roosevelt. He had TR's hard-charging, Rough Rider, "Let's take San Juan Hill" attitude when it came to tackling problems. While he was CSHSA President, we faced periods when the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site was closed due to lack of funding. Chuck didn't take that lying down. He wrote letters. He talked to people who were in positions to help restore funding. He got results.

I liked Chuck's deep interest in Civil War and local history and in Carl Sandburg. He knew a lot about those subjects and was anxious to learn more. He loved to talk about them. He was enthused about bettering Galesburg by actively participating in many community projects. He was an asset to the community. We shall miss him.

SANDBURG WILL BE REMEMBERED AT CENTRAL CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ON JANUARY 6 By Rex Cherrington

Carl Sandburg's birthday, January 6, 2019, falls on a Sunday and remembering him at Central Congregational Church seems perfect. Many will recall that Sandburg's 75th birthday in 1953 was celebrated by the many people who packed the sanctuary at Central Congregational Church. His youth was favorably influenced by the City Mission Church started by Congregationalists. Sandburg and Rev. Alan Jenkins of Central Congregational Church had a close friendship. There will be a couple of songs performed by Sullivan's Daughter (Erin Glasnovich), who is experienced in performing from Sandburg's *American Songbag*.

We encourage all who are Carl Sandburg enthusiasts to come to the worship service on Sunday January 6, 2019 at Galesburg's historic and beautiful Central Congregational Church on the Square. Worship service begin at 10:30 am. A segment of the worship service will be devoted to remembering Carl Sandburg. We hope to see you there.

"A baby is God's opinion that life should go on." Carl Sandburg

THE REASONS I PROMOTE THE LEGACY OF CARL SANDBURG AND WHY THE CARL SANDBURG HISTORIC SITE ASSOCIATION IS IMPORTANT AND WORTHY OF SUPPORT

By Rex Cherrington

The above quote in reference to a baby is so beautiful. To expand upon this thought a bit, the baby grows to be a child and eventually an adult. In all forms of life some cultivation is essential to desirable outcomes. Children need to have hope, to be motivated, to have

opportunities, and to have skills so they can make their various contributions to the world.

The story of Carl Sandburg is a wonderful and inspiring story. I can give you many reasons why Carl Sandburg's legacy is important, but it is not limited to the lists of all the awards and honors he received, though three Pulitzer Prizes, a Grammy, the NAACP Silver Award, and being only the second private citizen ever asked to address a Joint Session of Congress are certainly not trifles. The story of Carl Sandburg is an inspiring one for young and old alike. It is no wonder that Sandburg became such an admirer of Lincoln as there are parallels between the lives of the two.

Sandburg, like Lincoln, did not come from a family with wealth. Each man had his access to formal education cut short due to circumstances beyond his control. Neither ever lost his thirst for knowledge, and through perseverance and seeking out opportunities each obtained further education to prepare each for his respective life's work. Each achieved greatness as wonderful examples of humanity in addition to the achievements of their career paths.

It is important for the young, and, no less, for the not so young to have the inspiration that comes through the study of role models like Lincoln and Sandburg.

It is at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site that children of all ages can get a large dose of this inspiration in a rather short period of time. Hopefully, they will take away something of value. That may become a life-long interest in the study of Carl Sandburg as it has become for me. This may also be just the reinforcement needed to give a child hope where there was no hope before.

For these reasons I support and contribute to the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. The State of Illinois budget does not provide as well for the Historic Site as it did in the past. While we will continue to pursue the State of Illinois for all that can be obtained, it is apparent that at present other sources of funding must be sought, so that we do not see our cultural treasure fall into decline. This is why I encourage all of you, a very special group, to contribute what you can, when you can, for either an endowment or for specific projects you may wish to fund. You are a special group as you have shown your interest by becoming a member of this Association, and we thank you for all your support in the past and welcome anything you can do for the Association and the Site going forward from here.

SMILE.AMAZON.COM & I GIVE.COM: EASY WAYS TO DONATE.

By Rick Sayre

Are you an online shopper? Are you aware that your purchases can also result in retailer donations to the non-profit organization of your choice using smile.amazon.com and igive.com? At these websites you can select the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association from their list of participating non-profit organizations.

SMILE.AMAZON.COM: Your designated organization will receive 0.5 percent of each purchase made when you use <https://smile.amazon.com> instead of www.amazon.com.

IGIVE.COM: The percentage of the donations varies depending upon the retailer...anywhere up to 4.0 percent from hundreds of participating retailers. Once you set up an account with igive.com, you can go to the website and search for the retailer of your choice. They also provide apps for your smartphones.

Currently, new accounts will earn a \$3 Bonus Donation for Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. Go to: <https://www.iGive.com/rGH6Gj5>.

STANFORD SHOVER, A MAN WHO APPRECIATES CARL SANDBURG

By Jeanie R. S. Hanna

(Ed. Note: Jeanie R.S. Hanna is author of *Laughable, Lovable Lessons Learned in the Library*, a book based on funny stories she heard from students while she was librarian for twenty-three years at Hedding Elementary in Abingdon and Gale Elementary in Galesburg. Proceeds from her book are being donated to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, TN. Her book is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and Books-a-Million. She has known former CSHSA board member Stanford Shover for most of her life.)



Jeanie R.S. Hanna

My first memories of Stanford Shover are seeing him in our church on Sundays with his sweet mother, Clara Shover. We both went to the Abingdon United Methodist Church, a beautiful and historic church just blocks from the Shover home. This building, built in 1898, has beautiful stained glass windows and was built large enough to house the beautiful huge pipe organ in the front of the sanctuary. Even at a young age, I was touched by Stanford's devotion to his mother, as they attended our Sunday morning services together.

The next time that I had occasion to contact Stanford was in the early 1990's. I was the librarian at Hedding Grade School in Abingdon, IL. As librarian, I sponsored our Young Author contests every year. The first few years I relied on various English teachers at the school to serve as judges for the entries. These entries often numbered

between 100-150 per year. I awarded prizes for grade level winners in grades K-5 and one overall school winner. This winner would represent our school in the statewide Young Authors Conference held each May at Illinois State University.

Several years into our participation with the statewide Young Authors program they asked that we send a representative from each school to teach or help in the Young Authors workshops which were part of the annual awards day. I had a child with a birthday each year right on or around the date of that weekend, so I asked Stanford if he had any interest in being Hedding's representative. He not only agreed to teach in the Saturday workshops but attended the Friday evening dinners at Illinois State University as well. He did this for many years all "on his own dime," so to speak. He was a gem, and probably one of the most qualified of the hundreds of volunteers there each year.

One of my favorite things about Stanford Shover is that he was a problem solver. This trait came in handy sometime in the late 1990's. My dad had been in the ICU for quite some time. I had missed many days of school at that time. I had also missed the deadline for sending in that year's Young Author winner to Illinois State University. When I realized what had happened, I called a contact number for the Young Authors Conference. I explained what had happened and asked if they would take our winner's information a few days late due to circumstances beyond their control. They refused.

I was beyond distraught, since I had caused the oversight. I called Stanford to seek his guidance. He assured me that every year that he had taught a workshop at the ISU conference, there had been "no show" students. He was sure that he could get them to reconsider with a call of his own. Stanford got the same answer that I had gotten. So, problem solver that he was, he called me back to calm my dismay, and tell me that we would provide our Hedding winner with an award day to top all award days, and that we would do it ourselves!

Starting that year, the Young Author award day for Hedding students, became a special Saturday at the end of May. Stanford would drive over and pick me up at home. Then we'd go to our Young Author winner's home. We'd pick up our student after having made prior arrangements and getting permission from the parents. Stanford drove the three of us to Galesburg where he treated us to lunch at a restaurant of the student's choice. There were no limitations as to where we could eat, and we ate at Applebee's many of those years. After a pleasant lunch, where we focused our attention on our Young Author winner, we went to Stanford's favorite local place.

Stanford took our Young Author winner and me to the birthplace of Carl Sandburg. He was on the board of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association for many years. We took a tour of the cottage and the grounds out in back. We walked and read the stepping stones, and watched the video provided inside. Several of those years we purchased a copy of one of Carl Sandburg's

books for our winner as well. I must admit that, although I lived less than ten miles from the Site, I had never visited Carl Sandburg's birthplace. Most of our students were still unfamiliar with Galesburg's most famous and widely read author. Stanford was a wealth of information on the subject of Carl Sandburg. He knew and shared even more with us than we ever would have absorbed on our own. He was inspired by Carl Sandburg, and his enthusiasm spilled over onto us. Stanford wanted our young students to see firsthand that a person of humble beginnings could do great things with his life.

I think that many times in our youth, we fail to realize the impact of a simple, summer day spent in the company of a man with more insight and years in his bag of experience. I look back on those special Young Author days spent with Stanford Shover and our talented young Hedding students, and I realize that, indeed, those were some wonderful "good old days."

"THE PAST IS A BUCKET OF ASHES..." CARL SANDBURG FROM CORNHUSKERS

By Martin Reichel

Though I was born in Germany in the aftermath of World War II, in 1952 my parents made the decision to leave the burnt-out embers of that mad conflagration behind to seek a new life for our family in the promised land, the land of "unlimited possibilities." It turned out to be Galesburg, Illinois. I was three years old.

I grew up just a few blocks from Carl Sandburg's birthplace, roaming the neighborhood of first and second generation blue collar workers—Irish, Croatian, Mexican--living in modest but tidy homes, all of them attending Mass at St. Patrick's Church. We spoke German at home, because my parents did not know English, and yet, by the time I entered first grade at St. Joseph's Academy three years later, I was fluent in English by necessity.

If I needed spending money, I had to earn it by mowing lawns, pulling weeds, shoveling snow, delivering newspapers, and doing odd jobs. My first "real job" was as a dishwasher at the newly-opened Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurant, culminating as head cook by the time I graduated high school in 1967.

Meanwhile, I had met the love of my life during a high school stage performance. Her father owned McFall Monument Company, a business that supplied cemetery memorials throughout western Illinois. A higher rate of pay induced me to leave Kentucky Fried Chicken after high school graduation and for the summer go to work for my father-in-law to-be at the monument company while awaiting the start of classes at Knox College.

Two things stand out during that summer and fall of 1967 working at the monument company: re-setting a long row of Civil War veterans' monuments to the west of Hope Abbey in Galesburg's pioneer Hope Cemetery and digging a posthole grave under Remembrance Rock at the Sandburg Birthplace for the interment of the ashes of Carl Sandburg.

Sandburg died July 26, 1967. His ashes were interred October 7, 1967. My future father-in-law Jack McFall gave me a job to do: take the posthole digger to the Sandburg Birthplace and dig a posthole under the big boulder there. So that was it—I buried Carl Sandburg! A man of some fame—poet, Lincoln biographer, folksinger—just a bucket of ashes.

Now that I'm older I feel more of a connection with the Civil War veterans and Hope Cemetery and Carl Sandburg. As Secretary-Treasurer of the Hope Cemetery Association for 38 years I have been privileged to oversee the operation and care of historic Hope Cemetery. I have been to the Carl Sandburg Historical Site at Flat Rock, NC and have seen the orange crate in the kitchen upon which the typewriter was perched where Sandburg typed out much of his work.

Yet one cannot forget Galesburg, at first a town of white Anglo-Saxon north-easterners that was forever changed by Swedes, Mexicans, Irish, Germans, Croatians and other immigrants.

Galesburg is my town in spite of the many changes over my lifetime. It has a past worth remembering. More importantly, it has a future to look forward to. As a member of the Library Board of Trustees as well as the Library Foundation, I am looking forward to the day when Galesburg will be blessed with a new library to reflect the vibrant community it has been...and will be. On the shelves of that new library will be a copy of Carl Sandburg's *Cornhuskers*.

*I tell you there is nothing in the world
Only an ocean of tomorrows,
A sky of tomorrows.
I am a brother of the cornhuskers who say at sundown:
Tomorrow is a day.*

CARL SANDBURG—THE MAN: THE AUTHOR & PUBLIC EDUCATOR WHO COULD HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

By Tomas Junglander

(Ed. Note: CSHSA member Tomas Junglander of Vadstena, Sweden has written a biography of Carl Sandburg. The first installment appears here. Subsequent installments will appear in future issues of *Inklings and Idlings*. Mr. Junglander introduces himself in *Me and Carl Sandburg*.)

Me and Carl Sandburg

Swedish writer and Nobel Prize winner Harry Martinson told before perfecting his own style, "I imitated Sandburg as closely as I could."

During high school my favorite author Harry Martinson introduced me to the poet Carl Sandburg. Later, I learned more about the person Carl Sandburg. It was then that I realized that his parents emigrated to Galesburg, IL from Åsbo and Appuna in Mjölby County in the province of Östergötland in Sweden where I also grew up. I heard many stories about Sandburg's visit to his parents' hometowns in Sweden in 1959.

When I lived in Chicago in the late 1980's and early 1990's, my interest in Sandburg's poetry became more intense. Not least through all the poems dealing with places and people in Chicago, I understood his great significance for Chicago also through the district Carl Sandburg Village.

Later, I met Richard Sandburg, Carl's nephew. I visited him in Rockford, IL several times, and we visited Galesburg together several times. Richard really became my teacher of Carl Sandburg. During a couple of years, I also had regular contact with Carl's daughter Helga and with Carl's acclaimed biographer Penelope Niven.

When I built Carl Sandburg's family tree and compared it with my own family tree, I discovered to my big surprise that we are actually related to each other. My great grandfather had a sister who married Alfred Carlson and Alfred had a brother August who married Clara Sandburg's sister Augusta!

My education is not literary science but business (MBA).

You will find more information about Carl Sandburg on my website <http://tomasjunglander.se/>

Tomas Junglander

There is an American humanism that has been essential through the years. The author Carl Sandburg is an excellent representative of this humanism. This poet, who meant so much for the breakthrough of literary modernism in Sweden, had Swedish parents, who, independently of each other, emigrated to the U.S. from Appuna and Åsbo in the province of Östergötland.

Carl Sandburg, who became one of America's leading writers, lived at the center of his time. He was, much more than other contemporary writers, socially involved. He had a strong social pathos. He became politically interested at an early age. He committed himself to women's equal rights, to the rights of the blacks, for shorter working hours, against the death penalty and child labor .

During a visit to Sweden both the Prime Minister and the King received his views on American politics. It is hardly known in Sweden what benefit he made to the parents' country when he defended and declared Sweden's attitude to American opinion during World War II in talks and on radio broadcasts. In the 1920's, when he was at the age of forty-five, he was still a literary outsider who in some circles was considered too unacademic; in other circles too political.

Sandburg's greatness lasted until the 1950's when his poetic style no longer appealed to many people, but in the 1960's young people showed Sandburg great admiration. His poetry was then read in the American schools more than the poetry of any other living writer.

He used a language that was taken directly from the streets and squares, ports and workplaces. This reality led him to a new rhythm that he expressed in free verse.

The powerful freedom of the poems caused fierce debate but gave Sandburg a leading position in literary America. He wrote always for the ordinary man and woman and for himself, and did not, like Pound, Stevens and Eliot, have to be explained. In the same way that he was inspired by his predecessor Walt Whitman, the Nobel Prize winner Harry Martinson and Artur Lundkvist in Sweden were inspired by Sandburg.

He wrote a historical novel of over a thousand pages, *Remembrance Rock*, in which he showed how the Americans developed their dreams of freedom and justice in the course of history. His biography of Abraham Lincoln, America's most famous president, was received very positively even though some historians had their objections. Sandburg wrote a different biography, packed with anecdotes, newspaper stories, letters, and memories. An outstanding historian was lyrical when he commented on the book; "The poets have always understood Lincoln, from Whitman. That's why it's good to get from a poet the biggest of all the Lincoln biographies, one of the best biographies in our literature."

Carl Sandburg is among well-known adult writers who have also written for children. He created a special universe with its own geography and its own way of life in the fictional land Rootabaga. Much of the comedy in the books about Rootabaga lies in the way Sandburg names people and places. He plays with sounds, concepts, and the alphabet's letters.

His autobiography *Always the Young Strangers* describes his father August Danielsson from Åsbo and his mother Clara Andersdotter from Appuna in Sweden and their struggle to achieve a better life for themselves and their children than had been possible in the "old country." He also tells about life in an American small town and about the American lifestyle itself.

Sandburg was a great collector, connoisseur, and patron of folk music. He had heard America sing on his many travels. While traveling in his youth he gathered music that he wrote down in his notebook. Eventually, people from all over the country sent songs to him. He entertained audiences with guitar music, and in 1927 he published *The American Songbag* with notes and arrangements for each song.

He worked as a journalist for twenty-five years. He was a social reporter, film critic, and he wrote chronicles. He preferred deep analysis over snapshots.

Sandburg was a national celebrity for more than fifty years and as close to a national legend as someone could come. He was even asked if he would be available as a presidential candidate!

Many influential persons in media, among them Henry Luce, considered running him for President against Roosevelt in 1940, but Sandburg supported Franklin D. Roosevelt, and he refused to run. Henry Luce was at this time an American magazine magnate, the owner of *Time*, *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Sports Illustrated*. John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, also considered running him for President in 1940.

Carl Sandburg never won the Nobel Prize despite being nominated seven times between 1940 and 1959. He did, however, receive the Pulitzer Prize, America's premier literary award, three times for his biography of Lincoln and for his poetry.

Unique in American literary history is the cross-pollination of Sandburg's work. His journalism influenced his poetry, which in turn colored his work with the great biography of Abraham Lincoln. The movies he saw and reviewed stimulated the fertile imagination from which he harvested more poems, children's stories, and newspaper pieces. His work as biographer/historian augmented his work as folk musician and collector of folk music.

SKYSCRAPER

By Barbara Schock

[Ed. Note: Sandburg's poem "Skyscraper" was featured in the spring in episode five of the twelve-part PBS series "Poetry in America."]

Twenty years before Carl Sandburg went to Chicago to further his writing career, a ten-story building was erected by the Home Life Insurance Company in that city. According to current definitions, the building was not a true skyscraper. It was not fully supported by a steel frame with curtain walls. It was constructed mostly of stone and brick.

The building achieved notoriety of scale in 1885. The public was fascinated by its difference in height compared to existing structures. The edifice just demanded attention from people as they walked along the street. The ten stories stood above all the stores and offices around it. Observers had to adapt to the fact that such a building could hold more businesses and workers at one time than many other places.

The Home Life Insurance Company building also required many modern features in order to be a successful workplace. There were elevators which carried people from street level to the various floors. There were lighting fixtures to provide illumination. There was fireproofing to make the building safe for the workers. A vacuum system moved money and mail from one location to another within the structure. It contained a tremendous amount of activity during weekdays but not on weekends.

Sandburg's poem "Skyscraper" was included in *Chicago Poems* published in 1916. It was a meditation on the nature of structures we design and use. The building will exist much longer than the people who created it. Workers erecting and working in it come and go. Some were killed in the process of construction. Will anyone remember them? Are their souls still present?

In the more than one hundred years since the beginning of skyscraper construction we have seen a wide variety of styles and shapes.

Today a skyscraper is described as being a continuously inhabited building of more than 492 feet (150 meters). Many of us have visited the John Hancock skyscraper completed in 1965. It is described as a truss and tube structure with X-bracing to withstand the pressure of the wind. The trusses can be seen on the exterior.

Sears Tower (now Willis Tower) was opened in 1974 and was the tallest skyscraper until 1998. It is a series of bundled tubes reaching for the sky and ending at different levels of height. In 2009 the Bierj Khalifa in Dubai topped out at 2,720 feet (829.8 meters).

If we think about tall buildings in ancient times the Great Pyramid of Giza was the most massive. The Washington Monument of 1884 was the tallest creation on this continent. Neither was meant to provide working and living space.

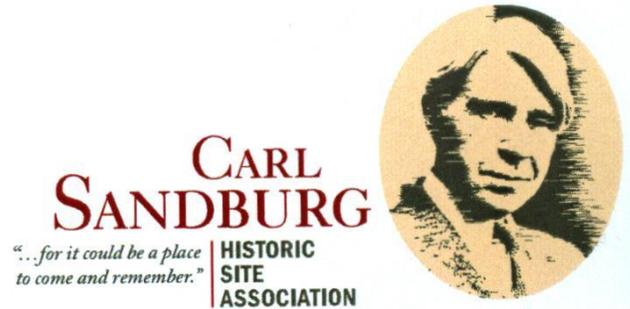
When Sandburg was writing this poem, he was meditating on our human mortality. We erect buildings which will last for thousands of years while our own lasts less than a century in most cases. Life expectancy is now about seventy eight years in the United States.

Architects and engineers can create structures which function for a variety of purposes for a very long time.

The humans who inhabit the skyscrapers cycle through for different periods of time. They perform different jobs. They accomplish more or less useful work. They may or may not leave a mark on it. But the building continues in its place.

Today millions of humans live in high-rises. They enjoy the views from elevated places. They can see people and vehicles in miniature far below. They may have to take several elevators to reach the ground where green grass and flowers grow.

Note: Carl Sandburg also wrote a Rootabaga story about two skyscrapers having a child. Imagine that!



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