

INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • P.O. Box 585 • Galesburg, Illinois 61402 • (309) 342-2361 • www.sandburg.org

FALL 2019

FROM SITE SUPERINTENDENT MARTHA DOWNEY OPEN AGAIN—WELCOME TOM!

The Carl Sandburg State Historic Site has reopened to the public. In July Tom Wallenfeldt was hired as the Site's Interpretive Coordinator. He has been going through training and learning the Site operations. Tom has also begun his Sandburg reading. *Always the Young Strangers* is first on his list.

The Carl Sandburg State Historic Site

*** New Hours ***

July 18 - October 31, 2019

Thu & Fri 12:30-5:00pm

Saturdays 9:00am-5:00pm

Sundays 12:30-5:00pm

Mon-Wed CLOSED

Nov 1, 2019 - Mar 31, 2020

Thu & Fri 12:30-4:00pm

Saturdays 9:00am-4:00pm

Sundays 12:30-4:00pm

Mon-Wed CLOSED

Tom will also be at the Site Thursday mornings April through October. During those morning hours he will be mowing, trimming, weeding, painting, cleaning, etc., whatever maintenance work needs to be done.

Please stop by the Site and introduce yourself to Tom.

While at the Sandburg Site greeting Tom, wander the grounds and enjoy the results of the Master Gardeners' hard work. The late summer and early fall flowers are blooming. The Master Gardeners have set October 2-9 a.m. to 1 p.m.--as **Fall Clean-Up Day**. Please bring gloves and your favorite yard tools.

MEET TOM WALLENFELDT

Hello, fellow readers. My name is Tom Wallenfeldt, and I want to take a moment to introduce myself as the new Site Interpretive Coordinator. Well, I will begin by telling you that I grew up and currently live in Galva, Il, and I am beginning to enjoy my thirty minute drive to Galesburg as I arrive to be the steward of visitors I get to greet. Most of you are probably wondering what my bio is

and why I took this job. Let me just jump to the point then. As a child I loved history and working with people. I always wanted to work in a field that worked with these elements hand in hand, but I also found that I needed a sense of belonging to something bigger than myself. After high school I found out that you could go to college and have an emphasis in historical interpretation. That just seemed to be a true calling for my desire, but I felt the need to serve my country first.



New Sandburg Site Interpretive Coordinator Tom Wallenfeldt

After overseas duty in Iraq with the 1st Cavalry Division and completing my enlistment with the Army I enrolled in academics at Spoon River Community College and transferred to Western Illinois University in Macomb. After graduating with double bachelor degrees in Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Administration along with History I worked an array of jobs. Some included factory laborer, outdoor educator for children, living history programmer, training Tibetan Mastiffs, cook, taking care of the elderly, and even field biologist working with deceased bats.

With all of these jobs in mind I truly can say I look forward to working at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site. I have always found Sandburg to be an amazing person, and his contributions in a broad perspective are inspiring. Being an advocate for Carl Sandburg is a true honor. I find this new journey very appealing to say the least. So come say hi as you know where to find me!

CARL SANDBURG AND THE GOATS

By Penelope Niven

[Ed. Note: The late Penelope Niven, author of *Carl Sandburg, A Biography* (1991), wrote this piece in March, 2011 when the Galesburg Public Art Commission was considering how to present the Sandburg Statue. It is included in the late Chuck Bednar's Sandburg papers. Courtesy of Marilyn Bednar.]

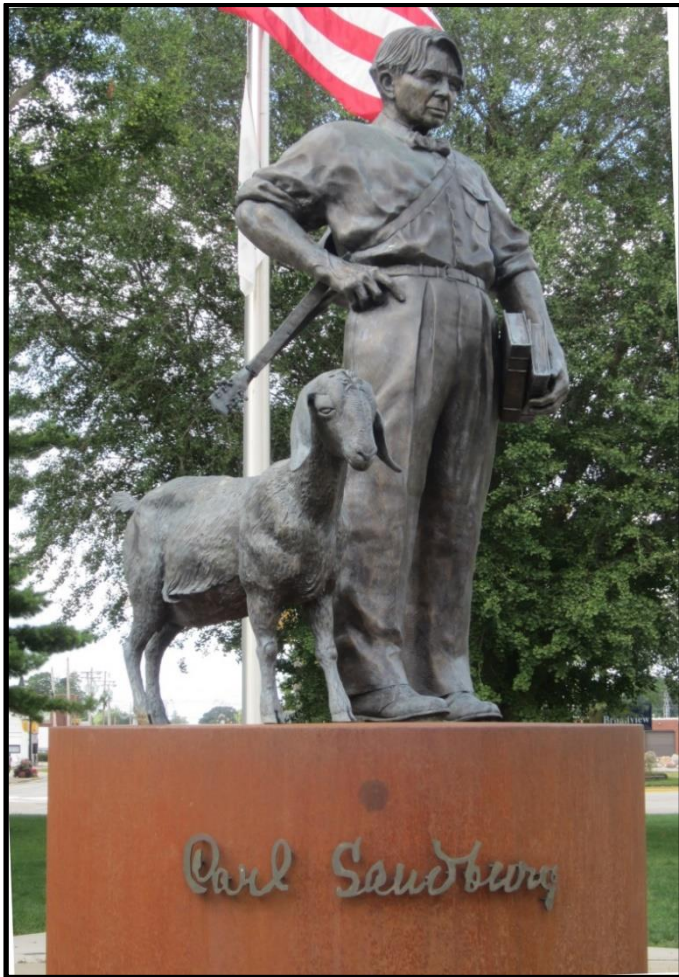
*O prairie mother, I am one of your boys.
I have loved the prairie as a man with a heart shot full of
pain over love.*

--Carl Sandburg, "Prairie," from *Cornhuskers*

*Try being a goat: put on a face of calm contemplations.
Look people in the eye as though unaware they gaze at
you.
Read their innermost hidden secrets.*

--Carl Sandburg. "Try Being a Goat"

I do not have an opinion about whether Galesburg needs to erect a statue of Carl Sandburg, or how it should be designed. However, as a North Carolinian, I do know a lot about the Toggenberg, Nubian, and Saanen goats that Carl and Paula Sandburg brought with them from Michigan when they moved to Flat Rock, North Carolina in 1945.



Carl Sandburg Statue, Public Square, Galesburg, IL

As a biographer, I understand that the roots of a life and a body of creative work are planted deep in childhood. I can vouch for the fact that while Carl

Sandburg may have left Galesburg, Illinois, the history, memory, and spirit of Galesburg never left Carl Sandburg. You can see that in his work and in his life and even in his reasons for buying those goats. But how do the goats fit into the Sandburg story?

It was Carl Sandburg's idea to get the first goat. He and his wife and three daughters lived in Michigan then. They wanted a farm with fruit trees and vegetables and flowers and animals. In the mid-1930's their youngest daughter Helga thought they should get a cow, but her father said their little bit of land on the shore of Lake Michigan was too small for pasturing cows and suggested they get a milk goat instead. It was Mrs. Sandburg who selected and bred the Sandburg goats, five at first, and they began raising Saanen, Nubian, and Toggenburg goats. Early on they began entering their goats in shows and fairs and winning competitions. Their first prize came at the Illinois State Fair where they won Governor Homer's trophy for Best Eight Head. If you visit the Sandburg's North Carolina home today (it is a National Park and National Historic Site), you'll see that on the walls of Mrs. Sandburg's office some of the ribbons the goats won mingle with some of the awards Sandburg received.

Mrs. Sandburg was a farmer at heart, as were two of the daughters, Janet and Helga. She spent most of her adult life nurturing, supporting, and encouraging the work of her husband. He had almost given up on being a writer when they met in Wisconsin in 1908, but she kept him going, affirming his talents when he doubted them himself, typing his poems on a typewriter that was missing a key or two. Without her we may not have ever heard of Carl Sandburg. From the beginning they were a team. Now it was his turn to support her in her new enthusiasm and breeding goats became her life's work, giving her international acclaim and visibility.

The goat herd grew and grew. Sandburg's wife and his daughters had devoted themselves loyally to supporting his work as poet, biographer, journalist, and musicologist. They had put up with the papers and books and travels and the demands of his growing fame. Now, in the same spirit, he supported their new interest in the goats, encouraged them to grow the herd, and gladly financed the operation. Occasionally, over the years he had his picture made with the goats and wrote lines of poetry about them.

The Sandburg's moved to North Carolina in 1945 for three main reasons: They needed more privacy than their house on the Michigan dunes provided. Strangers often knocked on the door, hoping to meet the famous poet, or get his autograph, or a lock of his hair. The family--Carl and Paula, Margaret and Janet, and Helga and her two children--needed more room in the house and more room outside. The people and the goats needed a more temperate climate away from the hot summers and the cold, gusty winters on the shores of Lake Michigan where the goats had to be barn-fed during the winter months.

They wanted a big farm and in Flat Rock, North Carolina they found Connemara--245 acres of mountain

and meadow and woodland--and a big old house on a hill with barns and outbuildings far enough away from the house so that the noise of a dairy farm wouldn't bother the work or the sleep of an aging poet. In North Carolina the herd expanded to 300, and Mrs. Sandburg ran a thriving dairy operation.

Carl Sandburg told us loud and clear that he was a Son of the Prairie, more at home in the small towns and on the farms of the Midwestern heartland, than in Chicago or any other city. His affection for the dunes of Michigan and the mountains of North Carolina could never surpass his love for the vast open prairie. Wherever he lived and worked and put pen to paper, his imagination and his memory were fed by those early years in Galesburg.

He took his Galesburg experiences and memories with him wherever he went. He spent more than two years of his twenty-two years in North Carolina writing about Galesburg in his autobiography *Always the Young Strangers*. He worked in his small study on the top floor of the old house in North Carolina, writing about being a boy in Galesburg, writing about growing up there, writing about what the town and its people taught him, writing about the hard times and the good ones, writing about working on the Schwarz dairy farm three miles east of Galesburg, about getting up at 4:30 in the morning and helping milk twenty-two cows before breakfast, and then driving the milk into town and delivering it. Sandburg understood farms and dairies.

The Sandburg goats were not just any old goats. For one thing, the goats were part of the Sandburg's daily life for more than thirty years. The offspring of these goats still live and thrive in the mountains of North Carolina. The goats were vital in Sandburg's personal life and the life of the family. He supported their work with the goats with enthusiasm, with money, with pride. The goats tell us a great deal about Sandburg's love for his family.

The goats also tell us a great deal about Sandburg's need to stay connected to the natural world and to the community he lived in. There are farmers in the mountains of North Carolina to this day who don't have much use for poetry, but who still remember and appreciate the Sandburg's generosity with the goats--letting them breed to their own livestock for free, sharing milk with people who needed it.

Carl Sandburg's affection for the dunes of Michigan and the mountains of North Carolina never surpassed his love for the Illinois prairie, especially those vistas he saw and those country roads he walked when he was a Prairie Town Boy. He wrote about Galesburg in Illinois and Michigan and on trains criss-crossing the country, and finally in North Carolina, reliving his birth and boyhood and his young life in Galesburg surrounded by mountains and books and papers and memories- and goats!

QUOTATION WALK RESTORED

By Rick Sayre

We are all very grateful for the recent work completed by McFall Monument Company to raise, clean, and reset the many flagstones that comprise the Historic Site's Quotation Walk. Many of the flagstones had sunken over the years and had been covered by dirt or grass. Also, many of the quotations had become unreadable. The work was completed in June 2019 just prior to the Community Garden Walk sponsored by the Knox County Master Gardeners. The Master Gardeners have done a remarkable job of overseeing the gardens at the Historic Site over the past several years.



Restored Quotation Walk
Courtesy Rick Sayre

McFall Monument's crew used a ton of sand to raise, clean, and reset over eighty flagstones in the Site's Quotation Walk. Overseeing the work was the retired owner of McFall Monument, Martin Reichel, who was also involved in laying the original Quotation Walk many years ago. On October 7, 1967 Reichel had the honor of digging the posthole grave under Remembrance Rock behind the Birthplace Cottage for the interment of the ashes of Carl Sandburg.

The total cost of this long-overdue project was underwritten by two recently established Memorial Funds: 1) the Robert Ohlbach Memorial Fund, as well as 2) the Helen "Tede" Verner Memorial Fund. We greatly appreciate the donors to these and other memorial funds.

We hope many of you will be able to visit the Historic Site and spend a quiet moment walking the resurrected Quotation Walk for yourselves.

Again, thank you for your kind and generous support! And we thank the excellent work crew from McFall Monument Company.

[Ed. Note: Special thanks to CSHSA Treasurer Rick Sayre for his technical expertise in making this newsletter look presentable.]

expectations, their strengths and weaknesses, and their social relationships, early poems about thoughtful reflections on death and loss, the meaning of the past and the possibility of the future, lyrical poems with themes of love and memory, restless searching for self and meaning, exploration of women by men and by themselves, portraits of heroes and anti-heroes. The poetry book can be said to be a summary of Sandburg's past experiences in life.

Sandburg became known for his free verse poems celebrating industrial and agricultural America, American geography, and the American common people. He passionately championed those who did not have words and power to speak for themselves. He used ordinary speech to make his points and short brief sentences. The powerful freedom of the poems caused fierce debate but soon gave Sandburg a leading position in literary America.

A wide audience was beginning to listen to Carl Sandburg. He offended many, but the poems spoke in new ways to readers who liked his use of free verse and realistic subjects, human experience, as well as the American experience. Sandburg both enjoyed and resented the disparate judgement passed on his controversial books, but the attacks by some members of the literary establishment reinforced his sense of being an outsider (always a young stranger). Carl Sandburg has now made Chicago his city and himself the poet of Chicago. Sandburg continued to speak to and from the heart of American life, and he was well on his way to becoming the Poet of the People.

THE POET AND HIS STYLE

It was during this period that Sandburg was recognized as a member of the Chicago Literary Renaissance, which included among others, Theodore Dreiser, Sherwood Anderson, and Edgar Lee Masters. Most of these writers were originally from small Midwestern towns. The Chicago Literary Renaissance took place from around 1912 to the mid-1920's. The Industrial Revolution created a demand for jobs in the city, leading to urban populations growing at a fast rate. The renaissance also encompassed the revitalization of journalism as a literary medium for writers, such as Sandburg, associated with Chicago newspapers. Writers and poets sought to depict these new urban spaces in a realistic way, picturing the rise of city slums and the failure of cities to fulfill their promised reward for hard work. Those involved felt that the realities of dirty city life had become too materialistic and had led to a loss of the traditional rural values of the exploited lower class.

There was also a connection with tradition. A name that immediately pops up is Walt Whitman. Whitman is Sandburg's idol and America's great 19th. century poet. Whitman's free, unrhymed, uninhibited style of writing poetry especially appealed to Sandburg, and he began to imitate him. It is obvious that Sandburg, with his style of writing and his admiration for Whitman, made a bridge to his paternal Sweden and became an inspiration for the breakthrough of literary modernism in Sweden.

Swedish writer and Nobel Prize winner Harry Martinson said, before perfecting his own style, "I imitated Sandburg as closely as I could." When another Swedish writer, Artur Lundkvist, in the late 1920s, began reading Sandburg, he presents Carl Sandburg in the following way: "In American poetry, Carl Sandburg is the most representative poet, with an energy and dynamism in his poems related to the country's own manifestation of modern industrial America. Sandburg continues Walt Whitman in a new era." Sandburg never forgets that the people are human. For him, the individual is always at the center. Therefore, he does not write about the complex America but about Chicago. His personal style has so many shifts and hides so many voices. He studies the world as it is--wonderful, terrible, wise, grotesque. But he would never mind asking for another world in its place. Sandburg can be violent, almost brutal, when he describes the fate of the big city. He can reveal human need and humiliation so that it hurts to read it which is his intention. But he is not satisfied just to find out. It seems like he wants to stay close to what he reveals, ready to help wherever he can. In poetry you notice his heart beat. It is partly what makes him so popular.

President Franklin D Roosevelt's ideas in The New Deal of a better life for all Americans after the Depression have now been realized, and Sandburg, as a major supporter and friend of the president, communicates in *The People, Yes* his own and the American people's overall experience of joy and sacrifice to achieve a better life. Sandburg is largely a journalist, a reporter who sets up his poems as a story. His way of writing often multi-faceted verses reminds us strongly of the prosperity that stands for greater openness for current tendencies and greater freedom to follow the spontaneous messages of the imagination. His great poetic work, *The People, Yes*, published in 1936, is an odyssey deep into the American experience which Sandburg now had begun to see as a hopeful symbol for the universal human condition.

Sandburg, whose father never learned to write, became America's national poet, the Poet of the People, the common man's poet. His *Complete Poems* was published in 1950. The definitive collection contains the full body of his poetic work and spans the years from 1910 to 1950. In the volume are all the poems contained in his six volumes of poetry – *Chicago Poems*, *Cornhuskers*, *Smoke and Steel*, *Slabs of the Sunburnt West*, *Good Morning America*, *The People, Yes*, and a new section of seventy-two poems.

THE RED SUMMER

By Barbara Schock

In June, 1919 Carl Sandburg rejoined the Chicago *Daily News* as labor reporter. He wanted to write about the effects of World War I on the people. The Armistice ending the conflict had been signed back in November. In the intervening months it had become clear that racial tensions were increasing in the country. There were also a number of labor disputes in Chicago and other large cities. Sandburg felt the "very physical hysterics of war" made racial prejudices worse.

Violence, provoked by ethnic white Americans against black Americans, began on Chicago's South Side July 27, 1919. It was a hot Sunday afternoon. Many people were at the beaches on Lake Michigan's shore trying to cool off. Areas of the beaches were informally segregated into black and white sections. A black boy floated into what was supposed to be a white area. A white boy threw a rock which knocked the black boy unconscious, and he drowned. The crowd asked a policeman for help but received none. After more than a week of violence Sandburg wrote that the score was twenty blacks dead, fourteen whites dead, and more than a thousand homes destroyed.

Sandburg cited three conditions which had contributed to the riots:

1. The black population on the south side of the city had doubled during the war years. More than 70,000 had come north. They were fleeing the lack of jobs and the frequent lynchings in the southern states. There wasn't enough housing to accommodate such an increase in new residents.
2. The black population was an effective political bloc of Chicago's Mayor William Hale Thompson. Black veterans felt they had served their country and deserved jobs with good wages.
3. The Stockyards Labor Council organized black workers as well as white. The black workers weren't accustomed to paying union dues and often dropped out of the union. The safest place for a union member was in the stockyards wearing his union button.

The practices of white real estate interests also contributed to the explosive situation. There had been a number of bombings of blacks' homes in the months before the riot. Those interests believed that black residents lowered the value of residential and business properties.

Into this hostile situation Carl Sandburg went out to collect information, interview a variety of people, and observe the local conditions for himself. He wrote a series of eighteen articles for the paper. He discovered more than 1,800 black Americans from the area had served in the armed forces. They felt they had done their duty for the country and deserved full citizenship.

He described the ministers who brought groups north and showed the newcomers how to fit into their new surroundings. There were some who had been in Chicago for a time and were successfully creating businesses to serve the community. There were public agencies which placed workers and pointed out the many kinds of jobs which were available for both women and men.

Sandburg quoted from a pamphlet written by Lieutenant Charles S. Drake, a black man and a graduate of Harvard University. He was an engineer for the bridge division of the Chicago Public Works Department. Drake had prepared a list of ten things that Chicago owed its

black citizens. They included making it easier to borrow money to buy a home, better upkeep in black neighborhoods, fewer indignation [grievance] meetings, and better planning, more playgrounds, and recreational centers and libraries on the South Side.

At the same time, Drake said blacks had obligations to take care of their property, practice thrift and to express their continuing demands for the city to provide community services that were needed. Union organizers were interviewed, and they urged blacks to join with the whites to improve working conditions and pay.

Sandburg also covered the accusations made about black men attacking white women, usually with little or no substantive evidence. He interviewed a minister who led a group singing hymns on the streets to encourage church membership. The preacher said his group was sometimes told by the police to leave the area. The gambling dens in hidden rooms of apartment buildings were described. Sandburg referred to a recent study which stated black children in the city died more often because of poor living conditions.

The meat packing companies in the area employed a variety of nationalities: Poles, Lithuanians, Bohemians, Jews, Irish, Greeks, Germans, Slovaks, Mexicans, Russians, Scots, Italians, and blacks. The Poles and the blacks were the largest groups working in the industry.

Sandburg even interviewed Julius Rosenwald, the president of Sears, Roebuck & Company. He said "They come here because we asked them to come, because they were needed for industrial service. There is no solution for the problem apparent now. That is all the more reason both sides must be fair. It will do no good to see red."

SANDBURG INTERVIEWS THE "SULTAN OF SWAT"

By Rich Hanson

I'm a sucker for used book sales. You never know what you'll come home with. Two of the books that I brought home after a recent sale were Jane Leavy's *Big Fella*, a biography of Babe Ruth and Harry Golden's *Carl Sandburg*. By happy chance I read them in that order. Both are excellent reads. I was really taken with the Golden book. Not a biography in a true sense, it's a book written by a friend about a good friend. It's more a collection of incidents, of occasions, of interactions, that to me brought Carl Sandburg's personality more alive far better than a biography. When I finished it, I felt that I had come to understand Sandburg the man a bit more and to understand why Harry Golden so valued his long association with him.

Harry Golden recounts an interview that Carl Sandburg, working as a reporter and a columnist for the *Chicago Daily News*, did with the Yankee slugger, Babe Ruth, during spring training in Florida in 1929. As you'll discover, Sandburg found him to be a difficult interview. Read carefully, and you'll get a sense of Ruth's disdain for the questions.

Sandburg asked, "If some kid ballplayers asked you for five rules, five big points to watch-what would you tell them?"

The Babe responded: "1. Cut out smoking and drinking. 2. Get enough sleep. 3. Get the right things to eat."

Anyone familiar with Ruth's gargantuan appetite, vices, and lack of self-discipline will chuckle at the above. Carl tried to coax two more out of him, but Ruth instead elaborated on his answer, saying that "a boy can take to drinking and harm himself so he'll never get over it."

Sandburg tired a different tack. "If some boys asked you what books to read, what would you tell them?"

"I never get that. They don't ask me that question. They ask me how to play ball."

Sandburg persisted. "If you were to name two or three books that you like a lot, what would they be?"

"I don't know. I like books with excitement...dramatic murders."

Sandburg gave up the literary queries. He next asked, "You have met President Coolidge, haven't you?"

"Oh, yes."

"If some boys asked you for a model of a man to follow through life, would you tell them Coolidge is pretty good?"

"Well, I always liked President Harding," Ruth answered. (This was six years after Harding's death. By this time the scandals of his mis-administration were common knowledge).

Carl persisted. "If some boys asked you which one of all the Presidents of the United States was the best role model for boys to follow, is there anyone you would like to tell them?"

"President Wilson was always a great friend of mine..." answered the Babe, his voice trailing off.

Sandburg observes in his account of the interview that "The past doesn't interest the Babe. He is concentrated on the present hours. There is no ancestor worship about him. His face lighted with a sudden glee when he was asked,"

"Is there any one character in history you are especially interested in, such as Lincoln, Washington, Napoleon?"

Ruth brushed off the question. "I've never seen any of them."

"Some people say brunettes have always been more dangerous than blondes," Carl doggedly continued. "How do you look at it?"

"That's a question. You can't tell. It's the personality that counts."

Probably a bit frustrated by now, Sandburg asked, "What's your favorite flower?"

With a quick laugh, Ruth responded, "I don't care about flowers."

"What's your favorite horse?"

"Oh, I quit that," Ruth answered. "I quit playing the ponies long ago."

Sandburg at this point concluded the interview. You can sense his pity for the man who knew only baseball, and cared for nothing else in the world but baseball...his livelihood, his "business," in the way Sandburg ended his written account of the interview.

"And I thanked Babe Ruth, the business man, for giving me so much of his time. And I told him I hoped as a ball player his legs and eyes won't give out for many years...."



[Ed. Note: this 1962 photo of sculptor Eric Olson and Galesburg Public Librarian (GPL) Curtis Wynn that appeared in the Summer 2019 *Inklings and Idlings* was made available to us by the GPL. Thank you, GPL.]



On August 11 CSHSA member Niel Johnson and his friend Nancy Cramer of Independence, MO visited in Galesburg with CHSA board members. L-r Niel Johnson, Don Moffitt, Bert McElroy, Nancy Cramer, Rick Sayre, Pate Kane, and Rex Cherrington.

2019 CSHSA MEMBERSHIP FORM

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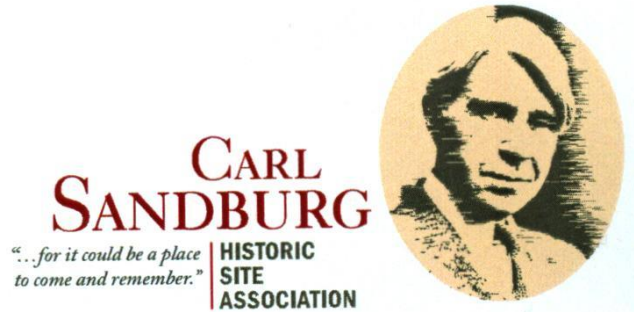
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