
INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361 • www.sandburg.org

Summer, 2010

We're Open Again!

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site is open from 9am to 5pm on Thursdays thru Sundays throughout the Summer. Stop by and visit; you'll learn something new every visit. Even think of spending some money in our museum shop. Bert McElroy staffs the facility most days.

Spiegel to talk about Irish Railroaders in Galesburg

Margaret Spiegel, a June Knox College graduate, will present the lecture "Forgotten Tales Along the Rails: The Irish Immigrant Experience in Galesburg 1850-1870" on Saturday, June 26 at 1 pm in the Barn behind the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site Visitors' Center. Newly-arrived Irish immigrants were recruited in the East by the CB&Q Railroad to come to Galesburg to lay track, build shops, and handle freight. The Irish faced obstacles in acclimating to their life in Galesburg, but their numbers kept increasing. In 1850 there were eight Irish-Americans in town; by 1870 there were 553. Although the Irish left few written accounts of their lives during this period and local newspapers published little about them, Spiegel found valuable information about them in census records. The talk is free and open to the public. Refreshments will be served. A \$3 donation is suggested.



Carl Sandburg On "What's My Line"

Many of you probably remember the old TV game show "What's My Line" which aired on CBS from 1950 to 1967 with host John Daly. Individuals with unusual occupations were questioned by panelists until they unearth their secret. Famous people appeared on the program and were questioned by blindfolded panel members who tried to guess the contestant's identity by asking questions which could only be answered by a "yes" or "no." Rex Cherrington brought it to our attention that Carl Sandburg appeared as a contestant on "What's My Line" in 1960. You can view this entertaining six-minute segment by Googling "Carl Sandburg What's My Line" or searching on YouTube. Sandburg was questioned by panel members Arlene Francis, Dorothy Kilgallen, Bennett Cerf, and Nick Adams, and he answered them in a high-pitched "yep" or "nope" to disguise his unique deep voice. Francis identified Sandburg about halfway through the series of questions. At one point, a panelists asked the "mystery guest" if he had studied dentistry. A befuddled Sandburg responded in the negative. (New York Yankees manager Casey Stengel had apparently been a dental student at one time and was the person the panelist was driving at.) Although not fond of television, Sandburg acknowledged that he had watched 200 of the over 500 broadcasts of the program that had aired to that time. There is a screen shot from the video on the back page of this issue.

Your Association

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association has been very busy since the last *Inklings* and *Idlings*.

Board member Chuck Bednar with help from Bert McElroy and others had constructed a new exhibit about Sandburg which is on display at the Galesburg Welcome Center at 2163 E. Main St. Stop by and see it. With our hours being constantly threatened by the state's budget mess, we see the importance of getting the word out about Carl Sandburg in as many ways as possible and to as many people as possible. Toward that end, we have also produced a short audio presentation and purchased a low power FM transmitter so that visitors can learn about Sandburg upon visiting the site, even when it's not open. For 24 hours a day, we broadcast three six-minute segments about Sandburg and the Historic Site which you can hear on your car radio at 88.7 FM. The three audio segments rotate: a short biography narrated by Rick Heath of WGIL; a tribute to Carl Sandburg by President Lyndon B. Johnson and Sandburg's Grammy Award-winning narration of Aaron Copland's "A Lincoln Portrait." Enjoy them all.

We also decided to make all memberships expire on December 31st. If you are paid through any part of 2010, you're good for the rest of the year. We will send out renewal notices all at once. If you are not a member, \$10 is all it costs and you'll get a discount at the shop and continue receiving *Inklings* and *Idlings*.

While we have the largest collection of books for sale by and about Carl Sandburg in the area, many of his publications have become unobtainable. They are often out of print but still copyright protected. Sometimes they are available through print-on-demand but the prices are astronomical. We have made a policy change and will now offer pre-read books at our gift shop. We are constantly on the lookout for appropriate books on eBay® and from other booksellers. We can offer them for sale at half price or less of a new

book and save a tree in the process.

Join us! Our fiscal year end is approaching and we would welcome new members to our Board. If you are at all interested in serving, please drop a note to P.O. Box 108, Galesburg, IL 61402.

Because of tremendous reception we received on the 1953 television interview with Carl Sandburg, we had it converted from the original 16mm film to DVD and then replicated. We have copies for sale in our museum shop and by mail. Details are on the back page.

Want to get your *Inklings* and *Idlings* by email instead of snail mail? Drop a message with your email address to carl@sandburg.org.

Below is a copy of the resolution we passed supported the preservation and continued use of the Knox County Court House.

Norm Winick
president



Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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Be it Resolved:

That the Knox County Courthouse is an architecturally and historically significant structure that should be preserved for its intrinsic beauty and worth as well as the cultural and historical significance. We ask that the Knox County Board perform any necessary repair and restoration to this structure so it may continue to serve as the Courthouse and seat of County Government for the people of Knox County, Illinois.

That it is in the best interest of the preservation of this structure that its use as the Knox County Courthouse be continued. When structures are not fully utilized or underutilized or forced to serve purposes for which they were not intended, they often deteriorate and are ultimately destroyed. The best way to save a significant building is to use it.

That the architectural and historical significance of this building is shared with another nearby building, Knox College's Alumni Hall. This is the only place in the world where you can stand in one spot and see two buildings designed by the famous architect, Elijah E. Myers. Mr. Myers is the only architect to have the distinction of designing three state capitol buildings, Texas, Michigan and Colorado. Mr. Myers was from Detroit, Michigan but he was an Illinois architect. Following his service in the Civil War, he established his architectural practice in Springfield. During his early years in Illinois he designed the McDonough County Courthouse in Macomb, and the famous Macoupin County Courthouse in Carlinville. The career of E. E. Myers is clear evidence for the state and national significance of the Knox County Courthouse.

Resolved: That we encourage the Knox County Board to remodel and renovate the Knox County Courthouse as appropriate so that it is preserved and functional for posterity and to register it with the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

Approved by The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association this 9th day of March, A.D. 2010.

President, Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

What Sandburg was Thinking During World War II

by Pete Creighton

In the last issue of *Inklings and Idlings* I told of Sandburg's syndicated column published in the *Galesburg Post* during World War II. Rolling the microfilm at the library, his first column January 7, 1942 told of the Russian army repelling the Nazi advance by such surprise "weapons" as igniting a hay field to prevent a German tank from advancing. Hitler promised victory over the Soviets in six weeks, but later admitted he didn't foresee the gigantic Russian preparations to counter Nazi power.

Writing in his somewhat poetic style, he told of the suffering of German forces in minus 40-degree temperature and describing the heroic acts told to him by exile news reporters.

Sandburg saw World War II as a victory for the common man. He noted, "The colossal production achievements of these war years as an abolition of human poverty in material goods of life, where the birth of another child is truly a blessed event instead of more worry about another mouth to feed."

Sandburg, I think, wrote to raise the morale of the American people after the gloom and despair after defeats in Europe and Asia in 1941-42. He told of a Nazi inspection by fourteen officers of a Czech Sloda munitions factory where "old Vasek swung his cauldron of boiling lead and turned it upside down and poured a shower bath, killing six and disfiguring 8." This must have been a tale told to him personally by resistance forces operating in occupied countries in Europe, 1940-45.

In his weekly columns Sandburg touched on many 1942 topics. He was concerned about Negro rights and deplored strife among white and black workers in wartime factories. As to race

relations he cited a game played in Texas by top teams, one white and one black, each winning college championships in segregated play. The two teams then quietly got together and played their own "state champion" game. It ended in a tie, which Sandburg decided showed the equality of the races.

He told with pride how Swedish newspapers reported Nazi atrocities committed in occupied adjoining countries where papers would not dare to do so.

In another '42 column he pondered, "What if the Japs had not attacked Pearl Harbor as they advanced their forces into Southeast Asia... Could the USA have mustered its national unity she is now throwing into the war?"

I think Sandburg's writing a weekly syndicated expression of his views during wartime in America adds yet another dimension to his literary reputation as poet, biographer, memoirist. It gave him the opportunity to express again humanitarian views and love for his fellow man.

That he could express his feeling in Galesburg was a happy union of Sandburg and the *Post*.

Sandburg Speaks at Rededication of Old Main in 1937

By 1927 Old Main at Knox College after seventy years of existence was in bad shape structurally. It was a fire hazard. A story about Old Main by R. Lance Factor, George Appleton Lawrence Distinguished Professor of Philosophy at Knox, appeared on the college's website in 2007. In the story Dr. Factor wrote that by 1927, "The [Knox] Trustees faced a major dilemma. Old Main must be renovated or destroyed." Janet Greig Post, Knox Class of 1894 and the college's first woman Trustee, became the chair of the Restoration Committee and established the Alumni Fund. Economic conditions in 1930 made fund-raising

next to impossible. The Trustees suspended the campaign, but Mrs. Post determinedly pursued funding on her own. By 1932 she had miraculously raised the needed money and renovation began. Old Main was rededicated on June 15, 1937. Carl Sandburg delivered a speech at the rededication ceremony. Barbara Schock contributed the following text of that speech that appeared in the *Galesburg Post*:

“Old and tarnished is the saying: ‘Time is a great teacher.’ Many here today feel that if Old Main of Knox as a living structure could speak for itself it might say: ‘I am a child of time. I celebrate the dignity, importance and pathos of time. Time used me with snow and rain, wind and frost, rust and rot, till I was falling away. Unless loving and thoughtful hands had come to help me I would have prepared to vanish and become dust in the wind, a shattered form and a forgotten melody, a house melted into thin shadows. Here in my doors have come the feet, faces and voices of the young. Here from my windows generations of the young gazed out on the world, gazed in on themselves, some asking questions. ‘How and why do we live? And while we live what is worth looking at? What is worth listening to? What might be worth dying for? Shoes have worn my doorsills, sleeves smoothed and softened my banisters, cries and laughter tumbled along my hallways, human associations making me across the years into a breathing instrument’

Yes, Old Main could tell today of the workings of time, how time keeps secrets, how time translates practices and institutions of one age into programs and establishments yet to be tried under hammers and tested on anvils, how time is a destroyer yet a grower and a healer too, how there is no answer to some questions unless in the ancient saying, ‘Time will tell.’

Those Knox pioneers of 1837, the year Abraham Lincoln moved from the village of New Salem to begin law practice in the city of Springfield, how could either they or young Lincoln read the fog, the mist, the faint crosslights of the future? How could they know they were a fated bridge generation? Who could tell them they were

moving from a society of farmers and land culture into a machine age where the claims of a new system of industry, transportation, finance, and its owner and controllers, would bring a changed national picture?

The shrewdest foreteller among them, in the somber chaos of nearly twenty years later, in his House Divided speech, was to say, ‘If we could first know where we are and whither we are tending, we could better judge what to do and how to do it.’

In the sciences of chemistry and physics then were pioneers restless as any on the western prairies, beginning to perform the impossible, things that until done they were told couldn’t be done. Whether you pressed inward to the American mind or outward on the flow of the huge, diverse American landscape, you found personal ambition and greed mixed with love and sacrifice, interwoven with the tantalizing and indefinable American dream.

Was a humanity older than Shakespeare, older than the Bible, trying to arrange a new human scheme for the Old World to look at and be glad over? Many said so. It had wonder and mystery. Many who could not explain it at all were ready to die for it.

Time during this inscrutable drama sent fresh generations of young men and women into doorways of Old Main, sent its boy students out into the agony of the War of the 1860’s, saw the plains and valleys in the Pacific filled with networks of human settlements and rails and wires, saw its boy students step forth into the first great World War, saw the machine age blend into the motor and power age, saw a national and world economic collapse bring questions in weight and consequence the parallel of the issues threshed out by Lincoln and Douglas in front of Old Main here before 20,000 people on a raw, windy October day seventy-five years ago.

Now the pilots of the night air mail look down on lighted cities struggling with systems of human culture perhaps more complex and variable than any the earth has ever seen. And those pilots

of the night air mail, are they not pioneers as truly as the pony express riders of the old days? Because the frontier and the free land is gone are we to lose the word 'pioneer' hard as the wood of an old ox yoke, homely as a one-room log cabin, fierce as famine, flies and vermin, tough and stubborn as men and plows breaking unbroken sod, mystic as rainbow lights on horizons not yet reached by man? Engineers and inventors harnessing invisible brute forces to do the heavy and backbreaking work formerly done by man—are they not pioneers?

Shall we say across the next hundred years will be more pioneers making headway favoring human solidarity as against war and strife among nations and men, making headway on the conditions to exist between ownership, management and labor, winning changes toward better terms on which human beings shall lie? Yes, there will be generations taking hold as though loneliness and the genius of struggle have always dwelt in the hearts of pioneers, as though the restless and venturing human spirit shall perform again tomorrow with exploits today declared impossible.

What the young people want and dream across the next hundred years will shape history more than any other motivation to be found. Youth now living and youth as yet unborn hold the seeds and secrets of the folds to be unfolded in the shapes to come. None shall look back on this hour and say we did not have hope and faith. The mystery of justice between man and man, nation and nation, shall take on new phases. Dreamers of deep sacred dreams, finders and welders, sons and daughters of burning quests, shall come. In plain work done with honesty, in actions of courage and endurance lighted with inner humility, lighted sometimes with a fine balance of motives as between freedom and discipline, they shall clothe human dignity with new and wider meanings.

Old Main as a living instrument today might be saying: 'One thing I know deep out of my time: Youth when lighted and alive and given a sporting chance is strong for struggle and not afraid of any

toils or punishments or dangers or deaths. What shall be the course of society and civilization across the next hundred years? For the answers read if you can the strange and baffling eyes of youth.'”

Remembrance Rock

Kay Smith is Artist Laureate of Illinois. From October 9 to November 7, 2009 her traveling exhibit “Holding Hands With History, the Life and Times of Abraham Lincoln” appeared at the Galesburg Civic Art Center. The exhibit included a watercolor of Sandburg’s Birthplace. Its caption stated that soils from Plymouth Rock, Valley Forge, the Argonne Forest in France, and Sandburg’s parents’ homes in Sweden are tucked under Remembrance Rock.

Sandburg on the Steve Allen Show

Site Superintendent Martha Downey came across this entry in the “People” section of the December 20, 1954 edition of *Time* magazine:

“Names make news. Last week these names made this news:

To the delight of nocturnal listeners from coast to coast, NBC-TV’s glad-libber **Steve** Allen, 32, met his match and more when septuagenarian Poet-Biographer **Carl Sandburg** dropped in for a scheduled 15-minute interview on Allen’s midnight show. Looking as mild and mischievous as Grandma Moses in a barroom, the weathered old buckeye bard casually ignored the time limit on his stint, brushed aside his M.C.’s good-nights and thank-yous, stayed on happily ad-libbing, reading, reciting and singing for the full hour that remained of the show. Asked by the harassed Allen if he would mind the interruption of a popular tune by Pianist Marian McPartland, the old man conceded gracefully—but with a qualification: ‘Just so she doesn’t sing Teach Me Tonight.’”

Martin Litvin on Sandburg's Eye Surgery

In the spring of 1901 Sandburg began experiencing vision problems. By June he had such difficulty seeing that he went to an eye doctor. In her Sandburg biography Penelope Niven wrote, "The doctor's diagnosis was grim: he found a film covering both eyes, a growth called pterygium. Continued growth would cause blindness." In a story that appeared in the June 11, 1998 issue of the *Zephyr* author Martin Litvin commented on Sandburg's subsequent eye surgery:

"The operation on Charlie's eyes was carried out under the strictest governance. The young patient woke up hours later in a completely darkened room, his head resting in a padded block which prevented movement, his hand held by the doctor who waited for Sandburg's return to consciousness. At that point, [Dr.] Parry spoke quietly to Charlie, assuring him that the film had been removed from both eyes—he must rest and be patient.

Over the next two weeks, Charlie's care was closely monitored by Dr. Parry and, apart from following instructions from a capable nurse who administered medical drops or brought food, there was nothing to do but lay inert in darkness. For Charlie, the experience was tantamount to being blind and, accordingly, his other senses sharpened. His ears became accustomed to the lonely sounds of the streetcar grinding northward up the steel rails embedded in brick paved Seminary St. and, several minutes later, returning southward to town. As Galesburg still possessed but a very few automobiles, Charlie and everyone else in the hospital knew that the putt-putting of a motor car in the curving driveway signified the arrival or departure of Dr. E.V.D. Morris, whose Winton runabout had won a great race a few years before. Since that time, because of Doc Morris's 310 pound bulk, the supporting springs of the motor carriage had become misshapen. From great distances,

people could see the pathetic vehicle struggling lopsidedly through the streets, transporting the medical man, year after year, as he served the community while eating and drinking himself into a needless, early death.

The other sounds which Sandburg's ears picked up were the clip-clopping of horse-drawn wagons and buggies passing the hospital, occasionally the distant laughter of children playing in the neighborhood, sometimes a bit of conversation by pedestrians. Those elongated, isolated hours could not be dodged. There were periods of sleep and dozing, a few words of chat with a nurse or the doctor, even a precious span of moments when Clara Sandburg was allowed to stay long enough to say some encouraging words. The hospital stay was a great trial for Charlie.

Two weeks passed and then the young man was sent home. With bloodshot eyes and smoked glasses, Sandburg had to rest for more long days until finally, mercifully, Dr. Parry announced the period of recuperation was at an end. Charlie then prepared to travel to Michigan to join forces with Fred Dickinson and devote the remainder of the warm weather to selling stereopticon sets.

For the rest of his life, Sandburg feared blindness, experiencing some problems but still continuing his writing. Out of his visual travail, Charlie created a memorable fictional character, the Potato Face Blind Man in the *Rootabaga Stories*."

***Journal-Star* Editorial and Sandburg's Response, 1961**

CSHSA Board Member Chuck Bednar provided the following editorial that appeared in the January 6, 1961 Peoria *Journal-Star* and Sandburg's letter to the *Journal-Star* in response to the editorial:

Editorial entitled "Det Ar En Pojke—It's A Boy":

"They were welcome words in the Sandburg house: 'Det ar en pojke.' That's Swedish for 'It's a boy.'

And what a boy. What a man. Carl Sandburg, born 83 years ago today in a modest house near the CB&Q railroad tracks in Galesburg, Ill.

More than a poet. More than a man who knows word-magic. More than THE Lincoln biographer, more than the voice of the prairies, the singer of ballads, the man who made Chicago's broad shoulders respectable.

A legend? Yes, he's that. A moral, a lesson? Yes, that, too. The American story enflashed? Yes, all of these things.

Consider the facts. The son of immigrants. His father's and mother's acquaintanceship with the English language was slight. They were poor people. Unremarkable beginnings.

He grew up to become famous. But most of all, he grew up to create. Create beauty. Beauty and literature. He ennobled his beginnings. He ennobled the prairies from which he sprang. He even ennobled Lincoln, if you can say such a thing. He ennobled man.

Carl Sandburg, 83 today, is the story of man's dignity.

To Galesburg today, we'd like to say: You have a right to be proud. And to Carl Sandburg: Happy birthday—and thanks."

Sandburg's letter dated January 11, 1961 to the *Journal-Star*.

"Dear Friends. Our Galesburg friend, Juanita Bednar, sent me your editorial of January 6. I've been around a lot and usually I'm a little hard, though often I go soft, and I certainly went soft on reading 'Det Ar En Pojke—It's a Boy.'" There are times when tears come so suddenly you can't exercise any will about stopping them. And such was the case with your editorial. It isn't for me to say that the editorial is the solemn God's truth, though I do have the right to say I like to hope it is.

I will send a carbon of this letter to Juanita Bednar, Galesburg, telling her this is . . . the best citation I have ever had, and whether or not I am fully deserving of it, it may make some of the

tourists who have gone out of their way to visit the birthplace, have the feeling they have not wasted their time. I recall now how I went to Yale in June of 1940 and heard William Lyon Phelps in an almost meaningless long citation. The next day I went to Harvard and, as I remember it, the brief citation there ran: 'His poetry aims at the capture of the American rhythm, and he has in this year of crisis fortified national morals by serving as Washington correspondent of the Lincoln administration.' And that was enough and good to have, I recall telling President Conant. I'm sure that Harry Golden will welcome it for use in his book.

I shall try, the next time I am in Galesburg, to get over to Peoria and meet the rich-hearted and eloquent feller who wrote this extraordinary tribute. As one of my poems ends, I say to him, 'The peace of great phantoms be for you.'"

From *The People, Yes*

The machine yes the machine

never wastes anybody's time

never watches the foreman

never talks back

never talks what is right or wrong

never listens to others talking or if

it does listen it doesn't hear

never says we've been thinking , or, our

feeling is like this

the machine yes the machine cuts your production
cost

a man is a man and what can you do with him?

But a machine now you take a machine

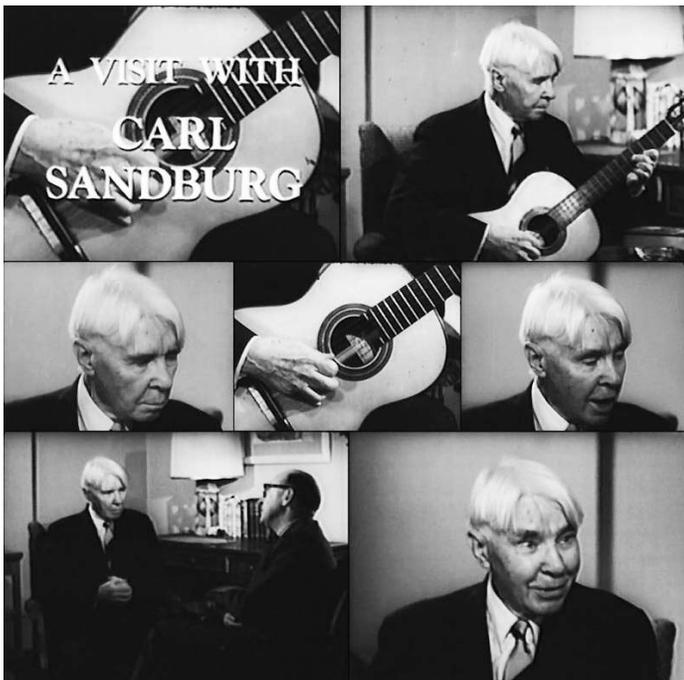
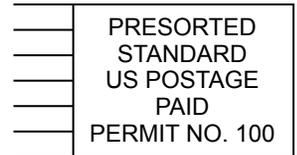
no kids no woman never hungry never thirsty

all a machine needs is a little regular attention
and plenty of grease.

—Carl Sandburg

Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association
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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Buy the DVD of this newly restored classic television interview from 1953.

**\$15 plus tax at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site
\$20 postpaid to P.O. Box 108, Galesburg, IL 61402**



A search of YouTube on the Internet will yield a few interesting glimpses into Carl Sandburg, including his 1960 appearance as the "Mystery Guest" on *What's My Line?* (He didn't fool the panel.)