

INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361

Fall 2005

The Officers and Directors of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association 2005-2006

On July 11th, the annual meeting of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association was held at the Site.

At that time, the officers and directors of the Association were elected for the following year:

President—Norm Winick
Vice President—Margaret Krueger
Secretary—Julie Bondi
Treasurer—John Heasly

Directors

Rex Cherrington
Jane Murphy
Richard E. Pearson
Christian Schock
Megan Scott
E. Kathaleen Stout
Mary E. Strawn
Brian Tibbetts
Steve Watts

Newsletter Editor--Barbara Schock

The Board meetings are held the second Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m. in the Visitors' Center, 313 East Third Street. All members are welcome to attend the Board meetings.

Outta Site

Steve Holden, Acting Site Manager, has taken a short trip to the medical repair shop and will be recuperating for a few weeks. Bert McElroy, the summer assistant, has been showing visitors through the Site, mowing the grass and generally keeping things together. Thank you, Bert.

We wish Steve a quick recovery and improved health.

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Dr. Richard V. Sandburg 1915-2005

We have lost another of the real-life links to Carl Sandburg. A nephew, Dr. Richard V. Sandburg, passed away July 4, 2005, in Rockford, Illinois.

He was born in Galesburg on February 3, 1915, a son of Roy E. and Martha C. Sandburg Goldstone. He grew up in Galesburg and graduated from Galesburg High School in 1933.

Following his graduation from the Illinois College of Chiropody in Chicago, he established his practice in Belvidere, Illinois, in 1941. His work was interrupted by service in the Army Medical Corps during World War II. (Regular readers of *Inklings and Idlings* will remember Dr. Sandburg's article about meeting Eleanor Roosevelt during one of her tours of military installations in the Pacific Theater.)

Dr. Sandburg was a very dedicated member of Rotary International and served the Belvidere and District organizations in many capacities. He always wore his Rotary emblem in his lapel wherever he went and made many new friends that way.

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site was dear to Dr. Sandburg's heart. He visited as often as he could and contributed to its enrichment over the years. He began contributing articles to *Inklings and Idlings* beginning with the summer issue in 1999. His articles gave readers an affectionate and down-to-earth remembrance of his uncle.



Dr. Sandburg had a wealth of experiences because of his relationship to the poet. He met movie stars, Swedish and American dignitaries and numerous public officials while representing or accompanying Carl Sandburg. He treasured every one of those moments.

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Songbag Concerts Are Back

On Thursday, September 15, 2005, the first Songbag Concert of the fall season will take place in the Barn at the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. John Heasley, series producer, has called upon Dan Zahn and Kate Moretti to perform. Their love of acoustic swing, blues and jazz of the 1930s and 1940s has led them to form Swing Blvd. Their singing and guitar playing will have every toe tapping.

The concert will begin at 7:00 p.m. in the air conditioned and smoke-free atmosphere of the Barn. Light refreshments will be served. A donation of \$2.00 per person is appreciated to defray some of the costs of the concert.

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association has designated this Songbag Concert as a memorial for Dr. Richard V. Sandburg, a nephew of Carl Sandburg, who passed away last summer. A special remembrance will be given at the beginning of the concert.

The next Concerts will be held on October 20th and November 17th.

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Carl Sandburg's Typewriter

The old Remington typewriter on display in the Visitors' Center received many a stroke from Carl Sandburg's fingers. It is a Number Six model, made sometime between 1890 and 1895. He typed about a quarter of *The Prairie Years* and some of the *Rootabaga Stories* on the machine.

This is a photograph taken by Steve Stout, son of Association Board member, E. Kathaleen Stout.



Beginning in the 1700s, there were efforts to come up with a successful writing machine in the United States. Charles L. Sholes invented the first practical typewriter. The Remington Arms Company, a gun manufacturer, started producing the machine in 1873.

At first, the keys were arranged in alphabetical order, but there were problems with the keys jamming if the typist pressed them too quickly. Mr. Sholes studied which letters occurred most often and then arranged the keys in that order. That is how the QWERTY keyboard with which we are so familiar came into being. The staggered arrangement of the keys was designed to reduce the jamming problems. The necessity of moving the fingers at an angle to reach each row of keys has led to recent cases of carpal tunnel syndrome among typists.

The early typists used one or two fingers to type in order to avoid jamming the keys. About 1878, Mrs. L.V. Longley, head of a school for stenographers in Cincinnati, Ohio, promoted the idea of typing with ten fingers. As the design of typewriters improved, the speed of typing became faster than writing by hand. Writing by hand is

about twenty words per minute, so typing faster can be a real timesaving.

As experience with the typewriter continued, there were improvements in speed. Frank E. Mc Gurren, a clerk in the Federal Court in Salt Lake City, taught himself to type without looking at the keys. "Touch-Typing" was born and millions of people learned to do it. The speed of typing went over 100 words per minute. Contests were held to see who could type fastest.

The first typewriter printed only capital letters. Later machines came with a foot pedal to move the keyboard so lower case letters could be typed as well. Before 1893, the keys struck the underside of the platen or roller so the typist couldn't see the printing on the paper. The typewriter which Carl Sandburg used now on display at the Site, has the printing surface on the underside of the platen.

Some people didn't like the typewriter because they couldn't hide their poor spelling with sloppy hand writing. But, the typewriter became a necessary piece of equipment for businesses, offices and personal use. Becoming a proficient typist was the means by which many young women in the late 1890s and well into the twentieth century moved into the business world and provided for their own futures.

With the coming of the computer, almost everyone can type well enough to accomplish their desired work. Would Carl Sandburg have used a computer keyboard to compose his Lincoln biography or his many poems?

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Lombard College

Carl Sandburg was a restless young man in 1898 so he enlisted in Company C of the Sixth Infantry

Regiment, Illinois Volunteers. The frenzy of the Spanish-American War had attracted him like many other young men of the time.

After training, he was assigned to duty in Puerto Rico from July until late August, 1898. It was a hot and dusty place and the food was meager. However by September 22nd, Galesburg was saluting the return of the boys with a reception and patriotic words.

One of Carl's fellow soldiers urged him to go to college, but Carl didn't have a job or money. Lombard College offered to give the returning soldiers free tuition. He accepted the offer and signed up for classes in English, history, public speaking and dramatics.

The history of Lombard College goes back to the early settlement of this area. The Spoon River Association of the Universalist Church was organized in October, 1841. The group wanted to establish a denominational academy for boys and girls. In 1851 the Association received a charter from the Illinois Legislature stipulating that the school had to be located in Galesburg. The school was named the Illinois Liberal Institute.

By September, 1852, the building on the corner of Tompkins and Seminary was ready and the school opened with 75 students. Instruction was designed to be practical and the courses included academic, scientific and collegiate.

On April 27, 1855, misfortune struck when the building burned down. The church members immediately set to work to re-establish the school. They bought eighty acres of land in the southeast part of Galesburg. Benjamin Lombard, of Henry, Illinois, gave the school \$20,000 to help with the rebuilding effort.

In 1856, the new building was only half-finished,

and money was in short supply. The Institute graduated its first class of six—4 men and 2 women. By the next year, there were 245 students enrolled and the name of the institution had been changed to Lombard University. The name was changed again to Lombard College in 1899.

Among the benefactors of the school was Phineas T. Barnum. An active Universalist, Barnum contributed \$1,000 to Lombard, which was a munificent sum at the time.

The Great Depression was too much for the institution. The College closed in 1930 and some of its students transferred to Knox College. The Divinity Department of Lombard College continues to this day and is a part of the University of Chicago.

Carl Sandburg completed four years at Lombard College, but didn't graduate. He was a star athlete, acted in several plays and won an oratory prize. Unfortunately, his grades were mediocre. In part, his academic deficiencies could be attributed to the fact he had worked full time for the Galesburg Fire Department throughout his college career.

In 1923 Lombard College gave Carl Sandburg an Honorary Degree. He had become a nationally known alumnus.

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The Presidential Medal of Freedom

President Lyndon B. Johnson presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Carl Sandburg in a White House ceremony on September 14, 1964. The citation read: "son of the Prairie, he has helped the Nation and the world to comprehend and share the great affirmation of American life, asserting always, and in the face of disaster, no less than triumph, The People, Yes."

Thirty other recipients were given the medal that day including Helen Keller, John Steinbeck, T.S. Eliot, Edward R. Murrow and Dean Acheson.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom was established by President Harry S. Truman in 1945. Its purpose was to honor individuals who had helped with the successful conclusion of World War II. President John F. Kennedy expanded the purpose of the medal in 1963.

The medal recognizes individuals who have made "meritorious contributions to the security or national interests of the United States, or to world peace, or to cultural or other significant public or private endeavors."

The honor is usually awarded around the Fourth of July and the recipients are chosen by the President. Non-citizens, such as Nelson Mandella, Margaret Thatcher and Pope John Paul II, have been awarded the honor.

The medal consists of a golden star with white enamel on its face. A circle in the center contains thirteen gold stars. A circle of eagles with their wings spread surround the star. The medal is worn on a blue ribbon with white edges.

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The Swedish Old Settlers

Much of the prairie was settled in Illinois during the 1830s. A few years after the towns and villages had been built up, the early arrivals began to organize themselves into Old Settlers Associations. They would meet annually for a picnic, oratory and reminiscence.

The Swedes of Knox County had formed their own organization. It was not all-inclusive in that all Swedes belonged.

There were some social stratification among the Swedish citizens. The August Sandburg family, while hard-working and respected, tended to be excluded from the society represented by the Old Settlers.

Indeed, Carl Sandburg was conscious of being just "a poor Swede boy." Hence, it is unlikely he attended the Old Settlers picnic of 1901. For more than a few reasons, he would not have enjoyed it.

The *Weekly Republican-Register* of August 31, 1901, reported on the annual meeting of the Swedish Old Settlers in Knoxville. Here are some excerpts from the article which lists some prominent Swedish members who lived in Knox County.

"Assembled at the annual picnic in Gilbert's park in Knoxville Thursday afternoon were about three hundred of the Swedish old settlers of this county. The chief events of the day were in the afternoon, when there was a program of speeches and the election of the officers of the picnic association. The company commenced to arrive early in the day, driving in from almost every part of the county. These brought their dinner and at noon ate it in the shade of the trees of the fine grounds.

"Commencing soon after dinner, Vice President John Harpman of this city called the gathering together and presented L.W. Olson, who was down for an address. He told in witty sentences of the recent trip he made to the old country and described the changes that have come about there since the majority of those present last saw the fatherland. His remarks were bright and interesting. They were punctuated with telling stories, which he told easily. Among the old settlers who were in the audience to listen to the remarks of Mr. Olson were Peter S. Nelson of Abingdon, John Harpman of Galesburg, M.O. Williamson of Galesburg, Swan Peterson of

Knoxville, Peter Matteson of Altona, John N. Holmes of Galesburg, Nels Nelson of Galesburg and many others.

“Rev. Peter Peterson, pastor of the First Lutheran church of Galesburg, was the orator of the day and delivered a strong oration on ‘The Important Calling of a Swedish-American.’

“Miss Amelia Olson, daughter of Charles Olson of Galesburg, then sang very acceptably a vocal selection, the words being in Swedish.

“Officers for the ensuing year were then selected, those being elected were as follows:

President—Peter S. Nelson of Abingdon.
Vice president—Oliver Stream of Wataga.
Secretary—John Harpman of Galesburg.
Treasurer—S.W. Swanson of Center Point.
Historian—Hon. Nels Nelson, Galesburg.
Township vice presidents—Peter Olson, Oneida; John Walgren, Walnut Grove; John N. Holmes, Galesburg; Swan Peterson, Knoxville; Peter Olson, Ontario; Eric Erickson, Victoria; Andrew Harpman, Copley.

“Hon. Nels Nelson as historian of the association has compiled the following list of the old settlers among the Swedish who have passed away during the year from September 6 to August 29. This is in full as follows:

Galesburg—Nels Dahlstrom, Mrs. Marie Renstrom, Lewis L. Gibson, P.J. Newberg, N.P. Larson, Mrs. E.J. Peterson, Mrs. Jennie Hanson, Swan A. Johnson, Mrs. Anna Samuelson, Mrs. Gertrude Johnson, Mrs. Magdalena Soderberg, Mrs. Helena Miller, Charles Berggren, John Anderson, Mrs. H.P. Holcomb, Mrs. J.A. Anderson, John Johnson, Mrs. Margaret Stoneberg, Mrs. Andrew Lagergren, J. Edward Hedendahl, Nels Peter Swanson, Daniel Nelson,

Nels N. Asp, Andrew Anderson, southwest of city.

Knoxville—Mrs. Olof Anderson, N.M. Peterson, Mrs. Anna Nelson, Mrs. Edna Anderson, Mrs. Ingrid Peterson.

Wataga—John Oberg, Ole Anderson, Andrew Hedberg, Mrs. A.J. Anderson, Mrs. Julia Peterson, Mrs. Lars Sandin, Mrs. Brita List.

Soperville—Lewis Sandstrum, Mrs. Lewis Johnson.

Persifer—Peter Swanson, Mrs. Lars Nashlund.

Walnut Grove—Nels Hedstrom, Mr. Hellstrom, Miss Matilda Mattson, Mr. Youngstrom.

Copley—William Sundin

Victoria—Elizabeth Johnson.”

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Civil War Balloons

In *The War Years*, his four-volume history of Abraham Lincoln’s life during the Civil War, Carl Sandburg described Thaddeus Lowe as “the most shot at man in the war.”

Professor Lowe, as he liked to be called, was born in 1832 in Jefferson Mills, New Hampshire. His formal schooling stopped after the fourth grade. He became a patent medicine salesman and inventor. He was involved in the development of hydrogen-filled balloons. Lowe was fascinated with the use of gases to lift balloons as well as refrigeration to cool rooms. He also studied astronomy and built large telescopes for looking at the stars. During his lifetime he made and lost several fortunes.

Lowe was not the first, or even near to the first to

experiment with hot air balloons. In 1783, Jacques and Joseph Montgolfier had invented the first practical balloon. They launched it from Paris.

One of the witnesses to the balloon ascensions of that time was Benjamin Franklin, who was representing the American colonies at the court of Louis XVI. Franklin thought the balloon might be useful in war. As time would reveal, he was correct.

In April 1861, just as the Civil War began, Lowe had flown from Cincinnati, Ohio, to the Atlantic Ocean in one of his balloons. Unfortunately, he landed in South Carolina and was arrested by the Confederate Army on charges of spying. He managed to convince the officials that he was innocent and received a letter of safe passage back to Cincinnati. After a week of traveling in the South, he arrived back in Cincinnati and was told the Secretary of the Treasury and the War Department wanted to see him in Washington, DC.

On July 17, 1861, Lowe demonstrated his balloon reconnaissance ideas to President Abraham Lincoln. Lowe had a telegraph wire connected to the tethered balloon which could send messages to officers on the ground. The President approved and funds were provided for the creation of a Balloon Corps.

The first balloon was named *Union* and ascended near Alexandria, Virginia, on September 24, 1861. Lowe telegraphed information about the location of Confederate troops near Falls Church, Virginia. The Union artillery was able to aim accurately at the Confederates without actually seeing them.

Lowe was directed to build four more balloons of various sizes. Each one could rise to 5,000 feet in

the air. Information was provided by Lowe at the Yorktown, Fredricksburg and Fair Oaks battles. Some of those reports were critical to the success of the Union Army. On other occasions the balloons were tethered to boats which could be moved up and down rivers for better views of battle sites.

The Balloon Corps was disbanded after August, 1863. General McClelland had been relieved of command of the Army of the Potomac. His replacements didn't see the advantages of aerial reconnaissance or didn't have the wit to use the information provided.

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What Is A Guitar?

During the Sandburg Days Festival last May, Jhon Akers presented a program "Sandburg and the Spanish Guitar." Mr. Akers has researched many aspects of Carl Sandburg's life and plays the guitar beautifully. He shared this piece of Sandburg writing with the audience.

The Guitar, Some Definitions by Carl Sandburg

A chattel with a soul often in part owning its owner and tantalizing him with his lack of perfection.

An instrument of quaint form and quiet demeanor dedicated to the dulcet rather than the diapason.

A box of chosen wood having intimate accessories wherefrom sound may be measured and commanded to the interest of ears not lost to hammer crash or wind whisper.

A portable companion distinguished from the piano in that you take it with you, neither horse nor

motor truck being involved.

A small friend weighing less than a newborn infant, ever responsive to sincere efforts aimed at mutual respect, depth of affection or love off the deep end.

A device in the realm of harmonic creation where six silent strings have the sound potential of profound contemplation or happy-go-lucky whim.

A highly evolved contrivance whereby delicate melodic moments mingle with punctuation of silence bringing "the creative hush."

A vibratory implement under incessant practice and skilled cajolery giving out with serene maroon meditations, flame dancers in scarlet sashes, snow-white acrobats plunging into black midnight pools, odd numbers in evening green waltzing with even numbers in dawn pink.

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

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Sandburg Books a Specialty



This photograph, taken by Steve Stout, shows the many books by and about Carl Sandburg available for sale in the Visitors' Center. There are books of poetry, biography and history as well as children's books. You will be able to find a nice present for people on your gift list, or, even for yourself. Do stop in.

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