
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

Winter 2012-2013

CSHSA SPECIAL MEETING JANUARY 8

A Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association special meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 8, 2013 at 7 pm at the Site's Visitors' Center to vote on proposed revisions to the by-laws and dues structure. To get a copy of the proposed by-law revisions for your review e-mail CSHSA President Chuck Bednar at chuckbednardesign@gmail.com or call him at 309-342-4376.

Here are the proposed revisions to the dues structure:

Student/Senior (62+) \$10, Individual \$20, Family \$40, Donor \$100, Sponsor \$250, Patron \$500, Benefactor \$1,000

2013 PENNY PARADE

The 2013 Penny Parade will be held at the Sandburg Site on Thursday, January 24, 2013 at 1 pm. To help or donate contact Co-Chairman Stan Shover, 107 W. North St., Abingdon, IL 61410, phone 309-337-6884.

SANDBURG.ORG

Go to sandburg.org to learn what is going on with the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association and what events, including Songbag Concerts, are coming up at the Site. See where Paul Bonesteel's new DVD *The Day Carl Sandburg Died* can be purchased in Galesburg.

FROM SITE SUPERINTENDENT MARTHA DOWNEY

It is time to be saying Happy Holidays and wishing all the best for 2013. How 2012 has flown by! The Site was open 4 days per week, May 1 until Oct. 31. The Site hosted 1960 visitors. Those visitors enjoyed refreshing their Galesburg and Sandburg memories or learned of Carl Sandburg's Galesburg life and beyond. Certainly the highlight of the year was hosting Penelope Niven at the Site during Sandburg Days.

Although the Site has closed for the season, activity continues at 313 E. Third Street. January 24 will find the annual Penny Parade at the Site and the Songbag Concert Series will resume February 23. This series of concerts at 7 pm on the last Saturday of the month provides enjoyment for many. It is another way in which the Site enriches the community of Galesburg.

I would like to take this opportunity to say **Thank You** to CSHSA members for their support of the Site.

As 2013 begins, dig into your pockets for pennies for the Penny Parade and plan to attend the Songbag Concerts. Best Wishes to all for 2013!

FROM CSHSA PRESIDENT CHUCK BEDNAR

A unique CSHSA business meeting and retreat was held in the Barn on November 13. Knox College Professor of Business and Development John Spittell moderated the retreat entitled "Visualizing the Future of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association". A productive dialogue centered on

how the CSHSA could realize its mission statement. Knox students Molly Lowden and Samantha Butler accompanied Spittell and provided fresh perspective about Sandburg's literature and its influence on the younger generation

Spittell placed a range of subjects on the table, including the need for an aggressive communications approach to increase public awareness of the Birthplace. He recommended the use of the Internet, Facebook, and an updated website to increase awareness. He encouraged the CSHSA to expand its activities through the Illinois Tourism Council which would demonstrate the use of the Site for educational activities which would foster local pride and a closer relationship with local colleges. To further educate the public about Sandburg's literary career he encouraged that we capitalize on the popular new film *The Day Carl Sandburg Died* and foster a relationship with its producer Paul Bonesteel which could result in a new visitor orientation film. In the face of the limited opening of the Site the CSHSA should make a committed effort to assist the Illinois Preservation Agency in its management of the Birthplace. The repair to the roof of the Visitors' Center a year ago is an example of successful public/private partnering.

Goals discussed included City of Galesburg involvement, enhancing the lecture series, promoting "Sandburg the Man" with his connection to the community and railroad, and marketing him as a global and national figure of importance. Assets of the Site are its proximity to other historically significant places in Galesburg, the Songbag series, Penny Parade, and *Inklings and Idlings* newsletter. Spittell emphasized working with Knox College faculty and students.

74th District State Representative Don Moffitt was recognized for his significant contributions throughout his legislative career in sustaining and preserving the Birthplace. He was presented a signed copy of *Always the Young Strangers*. Galesburg Community Foundation's Director Josh Gibb spoke about how an endowment could be used to assure the preservation of the Birthplace.

As the CSHSA moves ahead, the issues are challenging. The retreat established a game plan for new directions for preserving the Birthplace, a community treasure.

Carl Sandburg - From a Swedish Perspective

(Submitted by CSHSA member Tomas Junglander of Vadstena, Sweden.)

Thanks to the technological revolution in general and the Internet in particular, it is today much more convenient to work with genealogy. When Carl Sandburg wrote his autobiography *Always The Young Strangers* in the early 1950's he didn't have the same advantage!

Carl Sandburg's parents emigrated to the United States from Mjolby County in the province of Ostergotland in Sweden. They didn't know each other when they first met at a hotel in Bushnell south of Galesburg in spite of the fact that they grew up only 20 kilometers from each other. Mjolby, by the way, is like Galesburg, an important railway junction. Why did they chose Galesburg as the destination for their emigration?

His father August Danielsson was born in 1843 in Asbo parish (12 kilometers south of Mjolby). His mother Clara Mathilda Andersson was born in 1850 in Appuna parish (10 kilometers west of Mjolby). August Danielsson later changed his name to Sandburg, because there were too many Danielssons working for the railroad, and he once got a paycheck intended for someone else.

August Danielsson left Sweden in 1870 at the age of twenty-seven. He had at the time worked as a farmhand for twelve years. In the meantime he occasionally heard from his cousin Magnus Holmes who came to the U.S. in 1852 at the age of twenty settling in Galesburg after a couple of years. Magnus Larsson Storm was his name when he left Sweden. His father was Lars Danielsson Storm, "an enlisted soldier in the Life Regiment of Grenadiers." Lars sister Maria Danielsdotter was August Danielsson's mother. Magnus was born in Viby parish (15 kilometers east of Mjolby). Maybe Magnus Holmes felt pressure from his father to follow in his footsteps, but the compulsory military service in Sweden at this time was only twelve days.

After a few month working in a factory in New York August Danielsson read a letter from his cousin who wrote that chances were all good in Galesburg. Magnus Holmes became August Sandburg's close friend and adviser over many years. For years the Holmes family came to the Sandburgs for Thanksgiving dinner and the

Sandburgs went to the Holmes on New Year's Day. "Magus Holmes (1832-1920) has been a member of the Emmanuel Church for 64 years. He never belonged to any other society or organization. He never held any sort of office or aspired to one as he preferred to do his good work in silence and without human praise. His entire life has centered about his church and home. He has led a quiet and temperate life and his character has been unblemished". (*Galesburg Republican Register* Jan 8, 1920)

Carl Sandburg's mother Clara Andersdotter lost her mother when she was six years old. Her father remarried one year later. Clara and her stepmother didn't get along well. Her stepmother had a sister and a brother who left Sweden and settled in Galesburg, her brother Samuel Larsson in 1865 by himself and her sister Anna Maria Larsdotter in 1868 together with her second husband and four of her five children. Anna Maria's youngest daughter Carolina Jonsdotter will show up later on as Lena Krans, cousin of Clara. In fact she was Clara's step cousin! She was born in Ekeby (9 kilometers south of Mjolby) in 1853. Clara and her family in Sweden had regular mail contact with their relatives in Galesburg. Clara worked as a maid for three years before she emigrated in June, 1873 after she had saved up enough money to travel to Illinois.

Lena Krans met her husband John Krans in Galesburg. He came from Hogsby parish in the province of Kalmar in Sweden and emigrated in 1869. His name in Sweden was Johan August Magnusson before he changed his name to John A. Krans. Also his brother Nils Peter changed his name to N. P. Krans when he and his family moved from Sweden to Galesburg in 1881. As you know from *Always The Young Strangers*, the Krans family and the Sandburg family were close friends. Once a month the family took a trip to visit the Krans on their farm seven miles outside Galesburg.

In an 1878 letter to her brother Karl Andersson in Sweden Clara Sandburg informed her brother that their house was sold, and that they intended to change from city life to farm life. Her husband felt that his work in the railroad blacksmith shop was unhealthy and too hard. They never pursued their plan!

By the way, am I related also? My great

grandfather had a sister who married Alfred Carlsson and Alfred had a brother August who married Clara Sandburg's sister Augusta!

ADDA GENTRY GEORGE

(Submitted by Gerald J. Shea, a Galesburg native, GHS Class of '67, BA and MS Ed, Western Illinois University. He taught English for thirty-five years in Crystal Lake, IL where he now resides. He is finishing his eighth poetry collection, published two Sandburg studies, and lectures about Sandburg.)

Adda Gentry George was a remarkable person. She was the driving spirit behind the establishment of the Carl Sandburg Birthplace restoration and the growth of a national monument in a small Midwestern town. She displayed the spirit and the steadfast determination which made Middle America. Hers was a minor miracle for an achievement during one of America's most difficult eras.

To understand Mrs. George one need look no further than two revealing statements of belief she stood by. First was a remark to Sandburg curator Loren Goff when she stated that in her quest to secure the former home near the railroad of the parents of Carl Sandburg, "We must get what we need, then worry about paying for it later." This philosophy served her well throughout her long affiliation with the Carl Sandburg Birthplace. The second item comes from a former classmate and fellow teacher at Galesburg High School, Claire Godsill Chandler, in a letter penned to the Knox College Fifty Year Club dated September 27, 1963. In that letter she discusses her long friendship with Mrs. George and what she knew to be the philosophy George had lived by. She wrote, "...that life can be good, that every man, woman, and child has worth and dignity, that all human beings are one in ultimate destiny and to striving, faith, and that out of hope and effort the good society shall yet be born."

Adda George was a contemporary of Sandburg, five years his senior. She was born in Ottawa, Illinois in 1873. Her parents Clara Trask and Tilghman Gentry relocated to Galesburg probably for work-related reasons. She was a good student and attended and graduated from Galesburg High School, moving on to graduate from Knox College in

1895. Soon she accepted a teaching position in Onarga not far from the town of her birth. During that first year she met John George, a fellow teacher, and soon they were keeping company.



Adda Gentry c.1895
Photo Provided by
Gerald J. Shea

John George was ambitious and at the end of the 1896 school term he received a scholarship to study economics at Harvard. Adda was persuaded to pursue further studies at Wellesley College in the Boston area. Upon his graduation Mr. George was granted a stipend to study overseas. It was an enormous amount, and the couple decided to marry immediately. They were married in Galesburg.

While Mr. George completed his study at Halle on der Salle in Germany, Mrs. George took in the sights and absorbed the culture of Europe. Upon his graduation the couple returned to Illinois where Mr. George accepted a position in the Economics Department at Northwestern University in Evanston. He was soon appointed Secretary of the Faculty.

Their only daughter Margaret was born in 1902. Sadly, within two years Mr. George was dead of a heart attack. Adda George was a widow at thirty-one.

With few options Adda returned to Galesburg, a town greatly changed in the six years of her absence with a bustling population of over 20,000. She took up residence with her mother. She was offered and accepted a teaching position at Galesburg High school instructing the area young in composition and English language. She was determined to share her new beliefs and sophistication. Before long she was a faculty favorite known for her firm control and knowledge. She decided to build a new house and planted flowering shrubs and fruit trees before construction, choosing to start work in the off-season when labor would be more reasonable.

An offer arrived to teach in the German-English Academy in Milwaukee. The thought of moving again and abandoning the new home was not enticing, so she decided to bluff her way out by asking an exorbitant salary of \$1,200 per year. To her astonishment the request was accepted. She had no alternative but to go. For the next eighteen years until her retirement in 1927 at the age of fifty-four she would reside in Milwaukee.

As an educated woman of considerable depth and intellect this was a good move for her. She wanted to live in an area which offered her more in line with music, theater, and lectures. Being politically to the left, the area offered so much more. It was during this era that Mrs. George became aware of another Galesburg native associated with the Socialist Party which was very strong in the region, Carl Sandburg. He was a newsman, poet, and lecturer. She began to follow his career with interest.

In 1927 after her retirement she returned to Galesburg. Her daughter had married and moved away. The move was partly due to the failing health of her mother. But Adda was not content. Her interest in gardening and social club work was not enough. She began to make inquiries about the writer from Galesburg, Carl Sandburg. By this time he had moved to Chicago, written and published a number of important works, including *Chicago Poems*, *Cornhuskers*, *Smoke and Steel*, *Rootabaga Stories*, and *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*. To her surprise few knew of him. Fewer yet cared. It was at this time that Adda initiated inquiries about the birthplace of this rising star in literature. Thus began the quest for what would be a national monument and Adda George's greatest triumph.

Throughout the next years Adda would find ways to continue talking about this birthplace which she insisted had significance. At club meetings, social gatherings, and luncheons she continued to mention what she thought should be a project to save the humble origin of a great writer and to preserve the idea that anything is possible with commitment. Like Lincoln's life here was a chance to show ordinary folks what a small town boy from Galesburg could accomplish.

Adda need to know more. She knew Sandburg had relatives, including a sister Mary, a nurse in town who could lead her to the home.

When the retired schoolteacher approached Mary, she was led to a larger home in Galesburg. Mrs. George could not be fooled. She knew that the family was barely able to squeeze by, and that a two-story house was well beyond the means of a railroad blacksmith's helper. At long last Mary Sandburg took the former schoolteacher past the workman's cottage the family was embarrassed to identify.

The structure had reached an alarming state of decay. By 1941 Mrs. George had identified the owner and found that a Sicilian woman who spoke little English lived alone in the house. Her husband had passed on, and her son was to be the contact person. Adda approached the man and convinced him to allow a small plaque to be nailed by the front door. The Sicilian lady was afraid the well-dressed lady was attempting to take her home, but Mrs. George in a patient and kind manner attempted to educate the woman about this "Poet of the People" Carl Sandburg. Sandburg? No one on the block had ever heard of him or his family. Here by the tracks people had little time if any to read much less read poetry. With a flip of her hair the old Sicilian woman would revert to loud outbursts and abruptly end all conversations.

Undeterred, Mrs. George approached other residents of the neighborhood determined to convince them that the little house was historic. Adda enlisted children in the area to help with a cleanup of the street. The cottage stood at 331 East Third Street in the shadows of the railroad's soot and noise. The evening of the first posting the Sicilian widow discarded the notice via the trash. However, Mrs. George was able to convince the city and the woman's son to allow a large granite boulder with a bronze plaque attached to be placed on the terrace by city workers. Many evenings as the sun crawled across the worn lawns the old woman was seen trying to detach the plaque even attempting to shatter the boulder. All to no avail.

Adda had been in contact with the Illinois Historical Society since 1941 gathering information and seeking support from Paul Angle. In 1944 the long resilient Sicilian woman died. Adda was able to act quickly and secure a sixty-day option for the purchase. The purchase price was \$1,200. The owner announced that the little house could be

destroyed with little effort, and the property used as a parking lot. Mrs. George was ready and knew the key to success was determination.

First, a fund at a local bank was created. Next, she would gather an interested citizenry already awakened to Sandburg and enlist civic-minded individuals, women's clubs and the Arts League. She knew the range of her inquiries had to extend far beyond the city's boundaries. A national letter writing campaign was initiated. It was said that long into the nights Adda George could be seen letter-writing after everyone else had retired for the evening.

The small independent newspaper *The Galesburg Post*, founded and edited by longtime friend Mary Creighton, would be invaluable to reach the public. The first notice appeared in the Thursday, January 14, 1945 issue, two days before Sandburg's sixty-seventh birthday and butted against his syndicated column on the front page. Under the title "Hometown Headlines" it read in part, "the little cottage has become a Mecca for many travelers who wish to visit the birthplace of this internationally known poet of the people." A list of early donors was given and went on to explain the option month. One week later the *Post* reported that the group was off to a good start. Checks from \$1 to \$100 had been received, but the needed amount was not reached. The following week the *Post* ran an editorial speaking of the need to help save the cottage and reminding the public that Mary Sandburg, a local nurse and sister of the poet, had served her community, and ending with "by preserving the little house where he was born and creating a public memorial we share our pride with the rest of the world."

By January 25 the subscription fund had swelled to \$700. New outlets were identified and letters posted. As January closed, the fund was short of the needed \$1,200. Adda George took the money needed to reach the goal from her modest personal funds. She was both the initiator and the driving spirit. The cottage had been saved. It was said that the first person to visit the house after its purchase was Adda herself, broom in hand to begin the long job ahead.

The Thursday, February 1, 1945 *Post* ran a one-column notice saying, "Sandburg home now property of his friends." Adda George was elected

president of the Birthplace Association. The letter writing campaign continued. Checks from across America arrived, including one from Eleanor Roosevelt. New committees were formed to find suitable furniture and artifacts to fill the structure. First, however, much work had to be completed. Adda enlisted local tradesmen to help, since Sandburg had been a champion of the working class. Rotting boards were found two feet up from the floor. The foundation had to be rebuilt. The house jacked up for the excavating and repairs. A bill of \$2,000 plus was quoted. Workmen said it would be easier to knock it down and rebuild, but Adda would have nothing to do with such an approach.

In the fall of 1945 Adda was quite pleased with her project. The simple Midwestern town was accepting her vision. Townspeople were beginning to drive past. Travelers from out of town were finding the cottage. Most importantly to Adda was that school children had been involved in the preparation of the lawn and other small tasks. The place should stand as a monument, especially for children, and no admission fee would ever be charged.

A wave of excitement washed over the Birthplace Association when word came that Adda had been invited to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Sandburg at Harbert, Michigan. Mrs. George carried pictures of the cottage before and after, and she hoped Sandburg would confer with her on proper arrangements for the refurbishing. Certain items were offered as well as literary materials to be displayed permanently. This was no small triumph. Not only had she overcome a sizable purchase price, she had convinced the poet of the project's worth. He believed such dedications should not be held while the person was alive.

By mid-June, 1946 the little house at 331 East Third Street was becoming widely known. Donations of \$500 were received from Marshal Field, Harcourt, Brace, and Company, and labor organizations. The cottage was used regularly for public meetings. An official dedication of the Birthplace was set for October 7, 1946, the anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate held in Galesburg in 1858.

Adda had much to do. First, she needed a

drawing card for a main speaker. She decided Marshal Field would add a touch of class to the event. He accepted. She felt the city should be involved, especially the children. Third Street would have to be blocked off, and the children let out of school early. The press had to be notified, including *Life* magazine, and all local and nearby newspapers. She also felt the event should be aired live for those unable to attend. It was a first for Galesburg. She got everything she wanted.

Galesburg was stirring with excitement on that day. East Third Street had been roped off, and the ceremony set for 4 pm. Adda took the lead, spoke to the assembled crowd, introduced the distinguished speakers, and invited the visitors to sign the guest book, and tour the revamped house. It was a triumph. A dinner was held at the Hotel Custer for 250. The event was broadcast live, and a capacity crowd attended. She had exceeded her own expectations. When the cool dark settled over Main Street and the prairie that evening, a new importance had been bestowed upon Galesburg. After the festivities had died away, and the people had gone home, the town returned to its quiet. Stage one of the restoration was complete.



*Adda George speaking at October 7, 1946 Birthplace Dedication
Photo provided by Gerald Shea*

IS THERE A SANTA CLAUS?

*(Submitted by CSHSA board member Stan Shover,
a school teacher for over sixty years.)*

In this holiday season I am reminded of countless second and third graders whose dreams of Santa were sometimes shattered by classmates who had become “enlightened” about the jolly elf’s existence. I presented my “case” for Santa in the form of a letter that I gave my students. I am pleased that Carl Sandburg believed in dreams that can help us through the trials and hardships that we

encounter in this earthly journey. I am proud to be a CSHSA member in company with others who wish to memorialize the great writer and humanitarian Carl Sandburg. In this holiday season let us remember Sandburg's words, "Nothing happens unless first a dream." Here is the text of that Santa letter I gave to my second and third graders:

"Do you believe in Santa Clause? When I was a little boy I argued with all my friends that he did not exist, because I saw my dad putting presents under the tree, and he bore no resemblance to the fat, bearded, jolly Santa. As I grew older, I met many friendly, generous persons who possessed the qualities of that guy who was supposed to come at Christmas time. Maybe I had been wrong. Maybe Santa came in the form of the many teachers, friends, and relatives who provided me love and support as I grew from that little boy to a man who could now help other people grow into individuals who could be successful.

"I decided in my late teens that I wanted to teach others about the opportunities to become contributing members of our society as they grew older. As a memorial to that man in the red suit I started a collection of Santas. Some Santas I leave sitting out in my house year round as a constant reminder that his qualities of giving and sharing must be a part of all our lives if we are to be a blessing to all those with whom we work, play, and live."



Santa Claus

Christmas, 1904

(Submitted by CSHSA board member Barbara Schock.)

It is likely Christmas of 1904 was the last one that Carl Sandburg spent in Galesburg. There is no record of what he did while he was in the city or how long he sojourned there. He is known to have written a letter to Philip Green Wright mentioning his arrival on December 19th. Professor Wright had been one of Sandburg's instructors at Lombard College.

Sandburg was twenty-six years old in 1904. Yet the holiday season was observed much as it had been when he was a boy in Galesburg. Before he arrived in the city the Woman's Aid Society of Central Congregational Church sponsored the annual church fair on December 2nd. They served an excellent turkey dinner at noon to a large number. Examples of fancy work were on display and for sale.

The O.T. Johnson Company at 125-131 Main Street advertised every day in the *Republican-Register*. Two full pages of sale items were listed and illustrated. A friendly greeting: "The Christmas Store Is Ready!" topped each page. A hundred experienced salespeople were on hand to serve customers. The store indicated it also provided free delivery until 11 pm on December 24th.

On December 14th the newspaper reported that the churches and schools were preparing programs of music and recitations to be presented either before or after Christmas. The First Methodist Church was to have an original cantata about Christmas performed at the church. Gifts for the children as well as the poor would be handed out after the entertainment. The Swedish churches conducted similar events for their members.

Teachers in the Galesburg schools had been preparing for a month for the Christmas exercises. The rooms were decorated and the students had been practicing their songs and recitations. After the performances, the children left their school buildings looking forward to gifts, Santa Claus and Christmas Day. Brown's Business College also presented an evening of entertainment for its students before they went on vacation.

There was another important event *during* the month. On December 3rd, the Free Kindergarten held an open house for the public to visit and inspect the new building. More than 700 Galesburg and Knox County residents came to see the facility.

It was located at the northeast corner of Simmons and Cedar streets. Part of the property had been a wood lot. It was hoped the rest of it could be prepared as a playground for the children.

The cost of the building was more than \$11,000 (equal to more than \$270,000 in today's money). J. Grant Beadle, a Galesburg architect, designed the building and provided his services without cost. About a thousand dollars was still needed to completely pay for the erection of the three-story facility. Mrs. Mary Claycomb Grubb was the president of the Free Kindergarten organization. Her husband, Jon W. Grubb, was a professor at Lombard College. She encouraged donors to visit the kindergarten so they could see how their investment had been used. The purpose of the Free Kindergarten was to provide a home and school for orphan boys and girls.

On the same day several residents of Galesburg had loaned various items from Japan, China, Turkey and Siam (now Myanmar) to the public library for exhibit. School children and their parents were encouraged to see the display and

hear short lectures about the countries and their artifacts.

The *Republican-Register* also published a lengthy story about the coming of the railroad to Galesburg on December 7, 1854. "The Reindeer," a locomotive, brought a construction train from Mendota to Galesburg. E.P. Chambers, who was retired and living at 671 Lincoln Street, was one of the civil engineers who helped lay out the railroad between Mendota and Galesburg. He began working for the railroad shortly after graduating from Knox College in 1852.

Mr. Chambers remembered that the people of Galesburg came out to see the first passenger train about Christmas time of 1854. They walked through the cars and inspected every part of the equipment. The conductor had difficulty controlling the enthusiastic crowd.

Most of these events occurred before Sandburg arrived in the city to visit his family. He would have been interested in them because they illustrated the manner in which the residents of the city celebrated the holiday, much as they had in his youth. They also demonstrated how far the city had come since he was a lad.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Galesburg, Illinois 61402-0585

P.O. Box 585

Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

