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# INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

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The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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## WINTER 2022-2023

### FROM SITE SVCS. SPEC. BRYAN ENGELBRECHT

**“Rusty Crimson”**  
(Christmas Day, 1917)

*The five o'clock prairie sunset is a strong man going to sleep after a long day in a cornfield. The red dust of a rusty crimson is fixed with two fingers of lavender. A hook of smoke, a woman's nose in charcoal and ... nothing. The timberline turns in a cover of purple. A grain elevator humps a shoulder. One steel star whisks out a pointed fire. Moonlight comes on the stubble. “Jesus in an Illinois barn early this morning, the baby Jesus ... in flannels ...”*

Carl Sandburg  
*Smoke and Steel*, 1920

As winter weather arrives in Central Illinois with its brisk days and cloudy skies, I tend to reflect on what happened throughout the year. In 2022 we continued to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic. A mask requirement for visitors remained in effect until March 1st. Thankfully, once this requirement was rescinded, we were able to go throughout the year with keeping masks optional while avoiding any COVID-19 related closures. Our hope is that this trend continues into 2023, and the pandemic becomes simply endemic.

Carl Sandburg State Historic Site hosted a variety of events throughout the year. The first full Songbag Concert Series since 2019 took place from March through November. We appreciate the hard work the Songbag Committee completed to bring a variety of different musicians and genres to the Site. On April 28 we hosted former CSHSA President Barry Swanson as he read and discussed parts of his debut novel *Still Points*. Copies of his book remain available in the giftshop. On October 28 the Site hosted a workshop for educators. Organized by the Education Committee, a variety of presenters provided teachers with different tools to utilize the life and works of Carl Sandburg in their classrooms.

Throughout the year work continued improving the grounds and expanding offerings in the Site giftshop. Our small but mighty Master Gardeners from the University of Illinois Extension Office continue to clear flower beds and provide new plantings to enhance the Sandburg Park area.

Books *Carl Sandburg: Poet, Politician, and Prophet* by Lawrence Webb and *Discovering Carl Sandburg: The Eclectic Life of an American Icon* by John W. Quinley debuted in the giftshop. These works feature images and assistance in some of the research by the volunteers and staff of Carl Sandburg State Historic Site.

While winter is a time for reflection, it is also a time for planning for the 2023 tourist season. Thanks to the generosity of Marilyn and Melissa Bednar, a loan extension of items from the Charles “Chuck” J. Bednar Jr. Collection has been granted. Visitors can continue to view the poems, letters, and photographs from this collection on display in our audio-visual room. The Songbag Committee is hard at work in developing a diverse set of performers for the 2023 Songbag Concert Series. Education, Strategic Planning, and Public Relations Committees are also hard at work on different projects. Watch for more information in these areas by visiting [www.sandburg.org](http://www.sandburg.org) or following the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association on Facebook.

2023 is shaping up to be an exciting year. Thank you for your continued support of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association in 2022. We look forward to your support and assistance in 2023.

### 2023 CSHSA MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

We are accepting membership renewals for 2023!  
Please find a form with membership categories & online options for paying dues on page 8 of this newsletter. Thanks to all for your continuing support!

### SANDBURG ON CAMPUS

By Barbara Schock

As a student at the University of Illinois in March, 1956 I was able to attend a concert given by Carl Sandburg. The Auditorium was filled to capacity. Jan Johnson, a reporter for the student newspaper, *The Daily Illini*, wrote that the poet was “moved almost to tears” when he was called back to the stage for a standing ovation.

In “An Evening with Carl Sandburg” the poet discussed the value of books versus newer forms of entertainment,

spoke of the inquiring mind of Abraham Lincoln, read from *The People, Yes* and sang folk songs.

He spoke of screen adaptations of books and said, "It was a hell of a way to treat a good book." He asserted the book is "still supreme" over the latest movies, radio, or television. (It was the time before computers began to dominate everyday life.)

Sandburg, noted for his Lincoln biography, cited the inquiring mind and simplicity of the man. He continued that Lincoln once remarked, "My policy is to have no policy." Three years later, in a letter, he wrote "I have been controlled by events." The poet continued, "Such a life should be an example to us in today's troubled times."

From *The People, Yes* he read mosaics made from ancient anecdotes and proverbs. Among the memorable items: "The expert is only a damned fool far away from home." "The rooster and the horse agreed not to step on each other's feet." "The ache for glory sends free people into slavery."

He also assumed the voices, characteristics, and mannerisms peculiar to varying sections of the country. While singing, he accompanied himself on a borrowed guitar. It had been borrowed from Harry Reeves, former instructor in Spanish. Sandburg told the audience he was a pupil of Andre Segovia, but didn't start taking lessons until he was seventy-five years old.

Sandburg wrapped up the evening by expressing his pleasure that the University was acquiring his extensive private library. "Maybe, I should have mentioned this before," he said. "I'm speaking of the valuable original manuscripts included in the library. You young fellers—and girls, who want to write books should have fun with it." Sandburg smiled.

Some years before the concert, English professor Bruce Weirick had approached Sandburg and the University about acquiring the collection of his writings. There were others who wanted to buy certain items in the collection because of their value. Sandburg's daughter, Helga, had been organizing some of the papers at her home in Virginia. In the meantime, Sandburg's sister, Esther, had created four scrapbooks of clippings, letters, and poems he had written. They wanted to give the collection to the University Library.

Sandburg was well aware that there were individual collectors who coveted specific parts of his writings. He wanted it to be kept together. He had spent a lifetime building it. The president of the University, David Dodds Henry, gave permission to proceed with the acquisition of the collection.

The anthology, *The Sandburg Range*, appeared the following year. Two of my friends purchased an autographed copy for me. I still have the book (minus the jacket) and enjoy reading the variety of "Sandburgisms" in it.

## TRIBUTE TO BARBARA SCHOCK

By CSHSA Treasurer Rick Sayre

It was almost exactly ten years ago, when Barbara Schock approached me in 2012 at the Galesburg Public Library following a memorial service for prominent local businessman and writer, Mike Kroll. Barbara had just started writing short historical articles for a series called "Sandburg's Hometown" for our local "Galesburg Planet" website for which Mike had been editor when, sadly, he passed away unexpectedly. The future of "Galesburg Planet" continuing under a new editor didn't look very promising.

Barbara and her husband, Christian, had retired to Galesburg in mid-1990s from Elgin, Illinois where they had both been active in the Elgin Area Historical Society. They had both served several terms on the Board of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, and Barbara served as editor of *Inklings & Idlings*, our quarterly newspaper for ten years, 1999-2009.

Barbara approached me with her idea of continuing her "Sandburg's Hometown" series on our website. As a relatively new member of the board, I had assumed the role of webmaster for the Association. Barbara explained to me that she needed me to find an appropriate illustration to go with each of the articles, as Mike Kroll had done. While it would be one more thing for me to volunteer to do, I thought it would be a great addition to our webpage, as well as a splendid use of our newly established Facebook page. Besides, how could you tell someone like Barbara, no! And, really, how many articles could we expect from Barbara? She had already passed on the editorship of *Inklings and Idlings* after her long ten-year stretch as editor. So, clearly, she was trying to cut back and slow down a bit. So, I agreed!

In February 2013 I received the first article "Curiosity" via email from Barbara. I dutifully found an image to go with it and created a webpage. Our Sandburg's Hometown" collaboration had begun. Then a week later I got another email with another article. Then another email the following week. It wasn't long before it was clear to me that she was quite passionate about writing these articles. And, as a relative newcomer to Galesburg, I found that I was learning something about Sandburg or Galesburg or life in late 19th century America on a weekly basis, and I really enjoyed the challenge of finding just the right image to go with her articles. I soon became familiar with the local resources available electronically from the Archives of the Galesburg Public Library as well as the County and City histories published through the years and, also, available online.

I learned all about Sandburg's boyhood friends known better as the Dirty Dozen. I learned about the history of Galesburg's founders, their homes, the streets named after them, the amazing mock funeral for President Ulysses S. Grant through downtown Galesburg, the

introduction of gas lighting in downtown Galesburg, presidential visits, traditional Swedish recipes, and on and on. The articles kept coming, and I kept looking for images and uploading them to our website and Facebook.

Sadly, in February 2017 Barbara's husband, Christian, passed away. Barbara emailed me that she felt a need to take a break from writing during this period of bereavement. Since Barbara had provided us with over 250 articles by this time, I thought we had plenty of articles from past years that could be recycled. I started republishing articles from 2013 expecting that this may be what I would be doing for some time.

And then a short four weeks after Barbara had taken "a break" from writing, new articles began arriving in my inbox again, just as they have continued for another five years. In the spring of 2021 in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic Barbara thought that perhaps she should cut back a little to, perhaps, two per month. I told her that she had well-earned the privilege of setting her own schedule. I would publish whatever she sent, whenever she sent it, to our website and Facebook. Eighteen months later upon reaching the milestone of 400 articles, Barbara Schock has decided that it's time to retire her "Sandburg's Hometown" series. It has been a remarkable accomplishment for someone in their retirement years. As of Monday December 12, 2022 we posted Barbara's 401<sup>st</sup> and final article, for an average of 40 articles per year since February 2013.

Barbara, we celebrate your indomitable spirit, and your passion for sharing history with the rest of us! We thank you and we salute you. You have been an inspiration to me and to all of us on the CSHSA board and have provided a wealth of articles about Carl Sandburg and Galesburg's past that we hope will be enjoyed for years and years to come. Long life and cheers to you, Barbara Schock!

Addendum: Over the years, one of the recurring questions we have received from our Facebook readers has been "When are you going to publish a book of Barbara's articles?" In 2021 the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association wrote and received a Turnout grant from the Galesburg Community Foundation to publish a selected anthology of Barbara's Sandburg's Hometown articles. While it has taken a great deal of time and effort, Barbara has been instrumental in selecting and organizing 145 articles into ten chapters. At long last the manuscript is with the layout artist now. In addition to providing copies in our Museum Store at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, we will be providing copies of the books to area public schools and libraries. Our hope is to create and sustain an interest among our area youth for the life and legacy of Carl Sandburg as well as the colorful history of their own hometown of Galesburg! We are looking forward to seeing the finished product sometime in 2023.

## WAS CARL SANDBURG A PACIFIST?

By Judith K. Squires

Remember when 1960s activists paraphrased Carl's famous "What if they gave a war and nobody came?" in regard to the Vietnam War? And, of course, his wonderful poem "Grass" certainly was a great statement about the futility of war.

### GRASS

~~Pile~~ the bodies high at Austerlitz and Waterloo  
Shovel them under and let me work—  
I am the grass, I cover all

And pile them high at Gettysburg  
And pile them high at Ypres and Verdun  
Shovel them under and let me work  
Two years, ten years, and passengers ask the conductor  
What place is this?  
Where are we now?

I am the grass  
Let me work

Anyone who is not moved by this poem, I truly pity.

Yet, Sandburg volunteered to fight in the short-lived, misbegotten Spanish-American War. I also was deeply impressed by his memories of the Civil War veteran who rented a room in the Sandburg house on Berrien Street. That chapter of *Always the Young Strangers* has lodged in my memory. The veteran recounted the rape of a young woman by his fellow soldiers and certainly shocked Carl and his brother Mart. Indeed, long before the phrase was coined, the boys heard firsthand of the "collateral damage" of war.

I recently found a copy of Harry Golden's *Carl Sandburg* from one of my favorite sources for used books, eBay. I remembered reading about Golden's deep friendship with Carl. This book was originally published in 1961. I remembered reading Golden's *Only in America* many years ago and was impressed with Golden's account of being a Jewish child in New York City in the early days of the 20th century. He and Carl met in North Carolina and formed a very close bond. And in Golden's *Carl Sandburg* I found a revelation:

It seems that after completing *Abraham Lincoln: the War Years* Sandburg was looking for a new project. *The Chicago Times* asked him to write about the war in Europe. At first he said he wasn't interested, but then he reconsidered and said "yes."

This is a column he wrote, which was a letter to the fervently antiwar Charles Lindbergh in "Home Front Letter" dated August 24, 1941.

*If you favor the republican form of government and the democratic system which is the basis of American political life, why have you managed in 17 speeches to carefully, scrupulously, evade and avoid the slightest word of disapproval of Hitler, of the Nazi movement, and the Nazi plans which aim at conquest of democratic countries?*

*Does your silence about Nazi Germany mean that you are trying carefully and scrupulously to maintain yourself as an honest neutral?*

*Are you aware that when your mouth opens and you tell an audience of millions of listeners, including army and navy units, that we have a government of "hypocrisy and subterfuge," you are saying the same thing Hitler and the Nazis say about the democratic system?*

I was impressed at Sandburg's direct confrontation in questioning the motives of America's fair-haired boy and hero, Charles A. Lindbergh.

My conclusion is no, Carl Sandburg was not a pacifist, only a man with great powers of discernment when it came to reasons for going to war. And his friend Harry Golden summed it up well: "Yes, Carl Sandburg, more than any other literary man of the twentieth century, was totally involved in the affairs of his time; he threw with everything he had."

### ***Storm Over The Land: A Profile of the Civil War***

By Trish Forsyth Voss

*Storm Over The Land: A Profile of the Civil War* by Carl Sandburg is a story carved mainly from Sandburg's four-volumes of *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* wherein Sandburg tells the dramatic tales of the mega-clash between the North and the South, the military leaders, the battles, the soldiers on both sides fighting for their views, their state, their property. Many Southerners wanted slavery extended into the expanding territories; the cries and actions for abolition growing ever stronger in the North. Sandburg did prodigious research for his works; this 420-page book has an eleven page index in small print at its conclusion (copyright 1939). The story tells how the American Union of States was nearly torn asunder through all the storms of passionate divisions of economic, racial, moral, and cultural factors underlying the political climate that came to a head early in 1861 just as Abraham Lincoln assumed the U.S. Presidency. The war lasted five long years, ending shortly after Lincoln's reelection, a few months into his second term.

Sandburg gives such an interesting portrait of Lincoln throughout five years of heart-wrenching events and quoted many of his folksy anecdotes or parables given in response to queries put to him on diverse issues. Sandburg deftly shows how Lincoln was the necessary leader for that specific time in our history, almost a "divine intervention" (my words, not his). It seems to me that in the

events of humankind, unseen forces place certain people to be His agency in world events to forge the necessary circumstances and situations to come to pass, in 'that' case, to resolve the unsolvable problem of slavery, of the inhuman property-ownership laws in the South, the unimaginably horrid treatment of fellow human beings, the beginning 'breeding stock' kidnapped from their own countries. It is my own comparison, that Lincoln, like Moses, was the chosen leader, the one put in place to handle events, the one who could listen, even if faintly hearing the calling of The Divine; Lincoln, the one who could hold the imagination of the masses to support him through extremely divisive times, influences, and the terrible losses our nation suffered. How Lincoln was that flexible, yet resolute, tenacious glue that kept our Union in the unrelenting sphere of expectation that the Union would be preserved intact and that slavery would be abolished throughout all America forever. That was the mission Lincoln held to, above all else, that the states at the end of the fight would fall back into The United States of America and that our unity would sustain us as a world power, which it has.

As Moses with his attributes was placed in the household of Pharaoh to someday lead the Hebrew people out of bondage, Lincoln was placed as the leader of America to end human bondage here and reset the balance of power. Lincoln issued The Emancipation Proclamation as federal law before the war ended; and the articles of surrender for states included the unbendable demands that the Union be preserved and slavery be abolished. Lincoln's folksy wisdom-packed parables seemed to have effect on many around him, somewhat akin to the effect the parables of Jesus had on his listeners, a softened version of Truth more palatable than strong rebukes. (The religious correlations regarding Lincoln are entirely my perceptions upon reading this book, not Sandburg's statements.)

When General Robert E. Lee surrendered his ragged, starving 1500 soldiers to General Ulysses S. Grant, and General Joe Johnston had surrendered his ragtag remnant to General William Tecumseh Sherman, the war was over, and many in Lincoln's cabinet and without, especially Vice President Andrew Johnson, loudly and vehemently clamored for Jefferson Davis to be publicly hanged and for the death of all the southern traitors who had fought against the Union. However, Lincoln's wider view and higher understanding knew those harsh actions would make it harder to bring a divided people together to heal the nation. One of the last things he wanted to do was to make a martyr of Jefferson Davis. Instead, he issued a quiet edict of banishment. Davis, who was, in fact, scheming to gather more remnants of the Confederate armies was told by the military leaders beneath him, that it was over, the fighting was done!

Lincoln had a heartfelt and solid plan for some federal reparations and to institute an era of grand Reconstruction for the rebuilding of much that had been tragically

destroyed, plans which were not brought to full fruition after Lincoln's assassination ended his presidency.

The Civil War saga holds important lessons for us even today in our bitterly divisive stances, battered relationships, passionately held viewpoints, in our nation's angry voices, and multitudinous hateful actions. Even the title: *Storm Over The Land* sounds like what we're experiencing now. Some have likened our current atmosphere to a "Cold Civil War". "The reasons for war are deep and tangled -- and a crackpot fool or lunatic can start a war if the conditions have been prepared by time and events," Sandburg philosophized, and asked, "Was a great human storm now to be let loose on the land?" I pray we have learned the crucial lessons from our history, that our nation of immigrants, through great sacrifices of generations, have forged "a government of the people, by the people, for the people, that shall not perish from the earth", as Lincoln famously stated in his 1863 Gettysburg Address. Carl Sandburg, from immigrant parents, was a man for *The People*, Yes, but that's another book.

#### SANDBURG PRIZE RECIPIENT IS RILEIGH EWING

[Ed. Note: CSHSA President Pat Kane has reported that Monmouth-Roseville High School senior Rileigh Ewing is the recipient of the CSHSA Sandburg Prize Scholarship for the 2022-23 academic year at Carl Sandburg College. Following is a letter of thanks from Rileigh to CSHSA]

*Thank you so much for your generous funding of the Carl Sandburg Prize. This scholarship will assist in the purchase of textbooks and other materials necessary to advance my education at Carl Sandburg College.*

*Currently, I am a senior at Monmouth-Roseville High School. I have participated in volleyball, cheerleading, cross country, and track. In addition, I have been a class officer all four years at MRHS and am a member of the National Honor Society, and am an Illinois State Scholar. I have helped with musicals and have been a member of the Drama Club. Outside of school, I work at the YMCA as a lifeguard and day camp counselor.*

*I plan to study Business Communications at Arizona State University upon completing my Associate's degree at Sandburg. I am choosing this field of education because it opens a large variety of opportunities for my future career.*

*Again, I am extremely grateful for this gift, and I will use your investment to continue to achieve academically in my post-secondary education.*

*With gratitude,  
Rileigh Ewing*

#### CSHSA V-P DON MOFFITT & WIFE CAROLYN DONATE SANDBURG BENCH

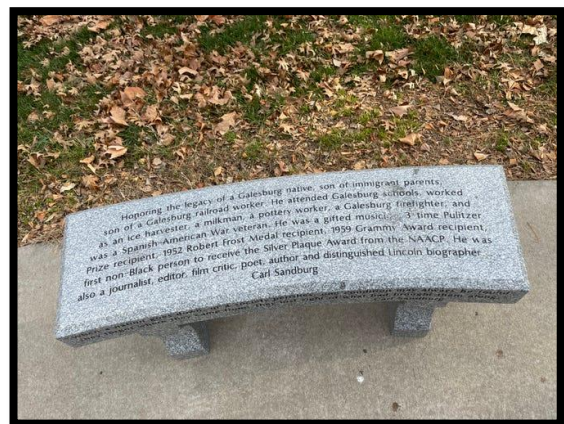
[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the Galesburg Register-Mail by Samuel Lisec. Email recipients may click on the photo for a clearer view of inscription. ]

##### *Family donates bench honoring Carl Sandburg in Galesburg's Central Park.*

The bench, which was donated by Don and Carolyn Moffitt, was installed in October and was originally born out of a fundraiser for the former Galesburg Public Arts Commission, the group that organized to have the statue of Sandburg erected approximately six years ago.

Moffitt, a retired house member of the Illinois General Assembly, said he was first approached by the Galesburg Public Arts Commission approximately four years ago to help fund a bench for the park, but took time to consult local educators and historians to determine what should be on the bench.

Prepared by Lacky & Sons Monuments, a Sandburg quote and various facts about the famous poet's life are carved into the bench's sides.



Galesburg Register-Mail photo.

Moffitt emphasized that the bench inscriptions are to help honor the legacy of a Galesburg native who received many honors and was involved in occupations other than writing, including working as a firefighter, milkman and ice harvester.

In doing so, Moffitt called particular attention to the Sandburg quote on the front side of the bench: "When a nation goes down, or a society perishes, one condition may always be found; they forgot where they came from. They lost sight of what had brought them along."

There is one other bench around the Sandburg statue, donated by the Verene family, though there is space for four total.

Linda Hinrichs, who was a treasury secretary with the Galesburg Public Art Foundation, said a project to have people sponsor bricks and benches around the statue of Sandburg came about after the statue was completed. She said the funds raised were then

transferred to the now Galesburg City Art Center after the foundation disbanded.

The bench donated by Don and Carolyn Moffitt was organized by the now disbanded Galesburg Public Arts Foundation.

## SANDBURG RECOLLECTIONS & POEMS

By Dr. Barry Swanson

[Editor Note: Dr. Barry Lee Swanson is the author of the historical fiction Amazon Best-Seller, *Still Points*. His book of selected poems, *The Road We Take* is due for publication in 2023. He is Assistant Professor Emeritus of Education at Knox College and was a former member of Carl Sandburg Historical Site Association. He served as president of C.S.H.S.A. for multiple terms. He currently lives at Lake Norman, North Carolina with his wife, Gail, and is writing his book *The Road We Take*.]

On January 7, 1978, I trekked down to Knox College in the midst of a frost-biting Illinois morning and sat in a series of symposiums organized to discuss the life and times of Carl Sandburg.

The day before opening ceremonies to celebrate the 100th birthday of the renowned poet and author were held at Knox College's Memorial Gymnasium. Dignitaries from across the nation joined the packed house of locals to commemorate the occasion. Gwendolyn Brooks, the Illinois poet-laureate and Howard K. Smith, a distinguished CBS network newsman who was a friend of Mr. Sandburg's were among the attendees. Both spoke glowingly of Galesburg's most famous son.

I honestly don't remember much of the symposiums. I imagine I sat rapt as scholars discussed Mr. Sandburg's extensive work. I knew some of his writing and grew to appreciate his extensive publications even more as an English teacher at Lombard Junior High School. Some of the buildings and the grounds were the same at the institution where a young Carl Sandburg matriculated and developed his love of writing—then known as Lombard College.

Many years before in the late 1950's I delivered newspapers for the Galesburg *Register-Mail*. I was twelve years old. The last person on my paper route was a lovely, elderly woman, Mrs. Nell Hinchliff. Years later as a high school sophomore I would learn about literature and writing from her daughter, Miss Virginia Hinchliff, a wonderful teacher.

It was a frigid winter's eve. After I had tossed my last newspaper on Mrs. Hinchliff's front porch, she opened the door and beckoned me to come in. Christmas was a week away, and she had an envelope for me. I don't remember the amount of currency contained therein, but, I was grateful for her generous holiday gift. I do, however, distinctly remember what followed. We sat in her living room each of us sipping on a cup of steaming hot chocolate. There was a bit of small talk, but then somehow the name of Carl Sandburg came up.

Her face lit up as she told me she and Carl had been childhood pals all the way back to elementary school. Nell

Hinchliff was effusive with praise for her friend, his intelligence, his kindness, his popularity. She was so proud of him.

I'm sure I seemed impressed that she actually knew someone famous. "Oh, yes," she said. "Carl was famous, but he was also just as human as the rest of us." She proceeded to relate the night he arrived at the CB&Q train station and called her on the phone. Apparently, the Pulitzer Prize winning poet had been a bit overserved in the club car coming down from Chicago. He wondered if Nell might be able to come down to the train station and have a few cups of coffee with him before she deposited him at the Hotel Custer where a special suite named just for him awaited whenever he returned to his hometown.

She did, of course, meet him, have coffee, and deliver him to the hotel stone sober. There was no scandal. No gossip to be bandied about. It's what we do for our friends. She told me other stories through the years which whetted my desire to know more about our hometown boy, a prodigious writer whose body of work still leaves me awestruck.

A final note on Nell Hinchliff. Was it just coincidence that Carl's favorite goat was named Nellie, the same goat immortalized in Lonnie Stewart's magnificent statue that graces Galesburg's city square? We'll never know for certain, but it just might be true.

Through the years my admiration for Carl Sandburg inspired me to teach literature and to be a writer. I believe there is power in words, and I am grateful to have grown up in a city that valued Sandburg's legacy and displayed such a high regard for the written word.

It was with that sense of appreciation, I attended those symposiums in 1978. It was then I was inspired to write the following poem, which conveys my deep respect for Carl Sandburg. I hope the two poems I offer adequately reflect that admiration. The first was written when I returned from the symposium, the second years later in 2004.

For Carl and the girls:

### CENTENARY CELEBRATION

*They're throwing a celebration for you.  
Lots of folks who know lots of things.  
Your daughters are here,  
Everyone is paying homage.  
Howard K. and Gwendolyn B.  
Amongst the talent making it a special gig.  
You'd probably view it with a sense of humor,  
All these notables making a fuss, calling you famous.  
When I was a kid, they called you a worthless bum,  
A political activist, a socialist, god forbid!  
The erudite claimed your language was too simple.  
Now it's full of the strength of the people of the  
prairieland.  
You told the truth, my fellow Swede,  
Hard as that is for some to swallow.  
With your pen, you mowed hypocrites down,*

A few remain, pompous, still powerful, in our prairie town.  
 I regret never seeing you in person,  
 But I recall the Penny Parade—  
 Your raucous rendition of John Johnson  
 Squawked over the school's P.A.  
 I delivered the Register-Mail  
 To an old friend of yours.  
 She would laugh and reminisce  
 About how you would come to town,  
 Full of spirits; not, in the least, profound.  
 She'd pick you up at the station  
 Treat you to some coffee  
 And drop you off at your room at the Custer.  
 Some memories make ordinary men great.  
 But you were far from ordinary.  
 Compassionate. A man of the people—Yes!  
 A visionary, a truth-teller.  
 Your 100th birthday was no disgrace  
 As I sat awed in Otto Harbach's place,  
 Listening to the learned. As your daughters spoke  
 About you and your beginnings, I awoke  
 To the greatness in you and your belief  
 In the common man, his ability to rise  
 From the muck, from tiresome grief,  
 To grasp his own integrity and pride  
 Dignity is what some call it.  
 You gave credence to the fact that every man  
 Should be afforded that right.  
 A universal manifest destiny was your plan.  
 Along the way you discovered those  
 Whose prejudice and hatred were difficult to expose  
 Hiding behind governments and boards,  
 The privileged made (still do) decisions where  
 human decency's ignored.

Through struggle and unceasing nonsense,  
 You wrote to uncover the essence  
 Of being aware  
 Regardless of who or where.  
 Two lovers sat in front of me holding hands—evolved.  
 Enraptured by your story, totally enthralled.  
 A moment captured in each other's warm embrace,  
 Adoring it all, unabashed in such a public place.  
 The past, a wink, I thought.  
 O. T.'s and lutefisk barrels closed.  
 Battles, won and lost—bravely fought.  
 Always the young strangers—your final boast.  
 Here existed your illumination.  
 Before me the learned discussed your creation.  
 Enlightened to a degree, I realized how fortunate to  
 be  
 In the unpredictable throes of humanity.  
 You were there once upon a time  
 Making the most of your existence;  
 So remarkable, so sublime,  
 Leaving us with an ongoing lesson in persistence.  
 A reminder to the entire world—  
 Broad, sprawling, eager to embrace—to make a fuss,  
 To go forth ideals unfurled,  
 Embracing your spirit in each of us.  
 As for the celebration,  
 It continues and continues and continues...

## **PAPERBOY**

Climbing on my Schwinn,  
 With a canvas bag full of paper,  
 I trekked into the late afternoon sun  
 Or mid-winter snow.  
 Throwing news to sundry porches,  
 To be read during evening's glow,  
 Discussed over table,  
 Then discarded; burned, tossed in the trash.\_  
 While collecting the weekly thirty-five cents required  
 For my labor—my daily diligence—  
 I witnessed real life  
 On Saturday mornings.  
 I rose early.  
 No cartoons in PJ's or TV.  
 Instead, I pedaled my route  
 To each home (unless the customer was pre-paid),  
 Thanked the individual for answering the door,  
 And dropping the quarter and dime

Into my other canvas coin bag,  
 Earning a punch to their card. One down, thirty to go.  
 Real life—  
 Sorrowful faces appeared, often unable to come up  
 with  
 The thirty-five cents.  
 "Next week?" "Okay, sure."  
 Real life—  
 Naked toddlers, sans diapers,  
 Scurrying past,  
 Visible through the crack in the door.  
 The stench  
 Of filth and poverty  
 Wafted through those doorway cracks;  
 Stark, pungent; boiled cabbage, soiled clothing.  
 An unfamiliar smell to me.  
 I remained oblivious,  
 Always courteous, and kind. Boy scout training, after  
 all.  
 The daily routine found me tossing papers on  
 porches—  
 Kubek to Skowron,  
 Starr to McGee,  
 Havens to Cannon to Sandburg  
 Jeff, not Carl.  
 It was only later  
 learned from one of my customers, Mrs. Hinchliff,  
 About Carl,  
 Her classmate, her friend,  
 A living legend in our little town, and around the  
 world!  
 He'd delivered papers, too.  
 Maybe throwing words around  
 Is a pre-requisite  
 For dreamers  
 And poets?  
 Then, again,  
 Maybe it's searching  
 For life through the narrow cracks  
 In doorways.

**2023 MEMBERSHIP FORM**

<b>Membership Categories</b> <i>(Check one)</i>	
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<b>\$40.00</b>	<b>Family</b>
<b>\$100.00</b>	<b>Donor</b>
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<b>\$500.00</b>	<b>Patron</b>
<b>\$1,000.00</b>	<b>Benefactor</b>
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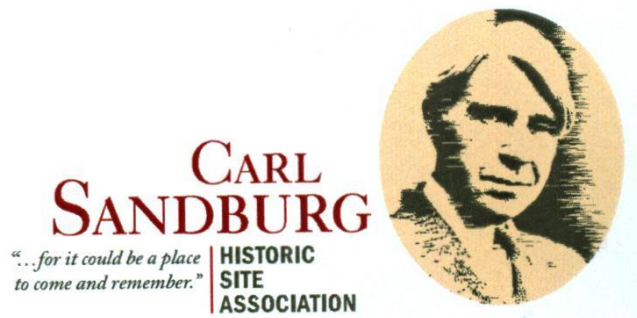
Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association  
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