
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

Holidays, 2009

FROM THE SITE SUPERINTENDENT

Inadequate describes how I felt when Mike Hobbs asked me to write a piece for *Inklings and Idlings*. My knowledge of Carl Sandburg is modest compared to the readers of this newsletter. So this seems an opportunity to make my introduction. Since the retirement of Steve Holden, January 31, 2009, it has been my privilege to take on the responsibility of the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site. Steve is an exceptional act to follow. His creativity, talents, and intellect made him the perfect match for this wonderful Site. My training is in historical administration with an M.A. from Eastern Illinois University. I did undergraduate work at Illinois Wesleyan University. In 1981 I became the Site Superintendent at Bishop Hill State Historic Site. Since then I have from time-to-time visited Carl Sandburg's birthplace. The Songbag Concerts brought me here occasionally as did the Sandburg Days Kick Off concerts.

Throughout my adult life I have been a casual reader of Carl Sandburg's work, primarily his poetry. Certainly this year that reading has become more serious and diligent in nature. Steve Holden recommended *Always the Young Strangers*, so that became the starting point for venturing into his prose writings. (*Rootabaga Stories* I remember from younger days.) It is an amazing document of a specific time in Galesburg's history and an invaluable source of interpretive materials for the Site. Sandburg's memory was remarkable. A detailed accounting of events is often followed by a simple statement that makes a reader pause. Whether it is a comment on his parent's faith or his mother's welcome home following his hobo experience,

these sentences become a poignant part of the reader's experience. This fall I have begun Penelope Niven's biography of Carl Sandburg, and once the holiday activities end in Bishop Hill, I will attend to that work more diligently. Other Sandburg works are on my evening reading book pile at home.

All of us are concerned about the future of the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site. From June-October seasonal employee Bert McElroy was able to keep the Site open four days a week. Now that term has ended, members of the Bishop Hill Staff and myself will be interpreting the Site on Saturdays Dec. 5 and 19 from 10 a.m.-4p.m. Spring 2010 public hours will be announced as that season approaches. I am the first to admit this is not optimum. Hopefully Illinois' fiscal fortunes will improve, so that the Site can be open once again as in the past. That said, this summer 2947 people visited the Site. Some came to introduce their children or grandchildren to Sandburg; others admired his life and work; and still more visit to learn more about this Illinois poet. They have been interesting to visit with, enthusiastic about the Site, and I have learned things about Sandburg from them.

Illinois is fortunate to have this remarkable Site. Under the stewardship of Steve Holden it has engaging exhibits, lovely gardens, and more. The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association provides programs including the Songbag Concert Series. These concerts begin again Feb. 27, 2010. Plan to attend one or all and enjoy an evening of music. Come visit the Site when public hours resume next spring.

Martha Downey

KEEP US OPEN

by Norm Winick, president
Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

The Carl Sandburg site was recently described to our association as one of too many "House Museums" in the United States. A study by the Pew Charitable Trusts and a recent book on the subject both have determined that most of the 8,000 or so house museums in the country should be converted into some other use — such as a private residence or offices. Small museums are not generally self-sustaining.

The foresighted people who saved the Carl Sandburg birthplace knew that 40 years ago and turned to the State of Illinois for continued support and the state has since maintained the facility, staffed it, and expanded the grounds and the museum so that now we are much more than a preserved cottage. We have three structures including a performance facility and a modern museum.

As the state of Illinois dealt with the economic recession and our longtime Site Superintendent, Steve Holden, retired, budget cuts led to us being closed last winter and this one. We have no staff permanently assigned to our facility.

Our facility and Association together promote the legacy of Carl Sandburg, not just as a Galesburg native who made good, but as the archetypal self-made man who went from very modest beginnings to become an international figure promoting the cause of the common people world-wide. We, as a volunteer association, perpetuate his legacy as an archivist of folk music with our Songbag Concert Series and as a Pulitzer-Prize winning poet and biographer with our Lecture Series. While these projects of the Association will continue, the site being unstaffed and closed means that our bookstore will see no income — which is the primary source of funding for the concerts and lectures — and our visitor count will decrease dramatically.

It is important that everyone interested in protecting the legacy of Carl Sandburg contact a state legislator or the Governor's office and let them know that the small savings the State of Illinois accrues by closing our facility is ill-advised. It robs the public, both locally and visitors from around the world, of the opportunity to enhance their cultural horizon and to learn about one of Illinois' greatest citizens. It costs the state and community much more money in lost visitor revenue than it saves. Please help us get our funding restored by writing a letter on behalf of The Carl Sandburg State Historic Site to any or all of the following:

Gov. Pat Quinn
207 Capitol Bldg.
Springfield, IL 62706

Rep. Don Moffitt
5 Weinberg Arcade
Galesburg, IL 61401

Sen. Dale Risinger
5415 N. University St., Suite 105
Peoria, IL 61614

Jan Grimes, Director
Illinois Historic Preservation Agency
212 N. Sixth St.
Springfield, IL 62701

Or to any Representative or Senator c/o the
State House, Springfield, IL 62706

THE LITTLE HOUSE AROUND THE CORNER-BEFORE IT BECAME A MUSEUM

(The following story by former Galesburg resident Bonnie Grover Lindemann provides a unique perspective of the Carl Sandburg Birthplace in the 1940's.)

"At the urging of my high school classmate, Chuck Bednar, I am giving my account of some of the history, restoration, and my "involvement" with the Carl Sandburg Birthplace and Museum.

“The Sandburg Neighborhood. My father, Joe Pearl Grover, purchased the house at 926 South Kellogg in June, 1942. I was six years old when our family moved there. Our house, a two-story, six-room, white structure, was the second house from the corner of Third and Kellogg Streets. Directly across the street from our home was a small grocery store in the home of Mr. And Mrs. Tony Vilardo. Back then it was common to have small, neighborhood grocery stores in the front part of individual homes. There were four other Vilardo families, sons of Mr. And Mrs. Tony Vilardo, who lived in the neighborhood.

“Douglas Grade School was one block east on Third Street. I attended this school from first through fifth grade. One block west of South Kellogg was the CB&Q railroad tracks and to the south was the long Fourth Street Bridge that spanned the tracks.

“From our front porch I could look across the street and just two houses from the corner of Third and Kellogg sat a small, three room house that was always of interest to me. It was the smallest house in the area, and the only one in the neighborhood that did not have indoor plumbing at that time. This house was owned by an elderly Italian lady, Mrs. Shenelli, who spoke very little English. Because of her language barrier, some of the neighborhood boys were not very nice to her. They would mock her speech, and one Halloween, turned over the “outhouse” while she was in it! My mother was a very compassionate person, and Mrs. Shenelli considered my mother her best friend. When Mrs. Shenelli could no longer live by herself, her son, Joe, who also lived in Galesburg, provided a home for her.

“The house was next occupied by a lady with two small children. Her husband was in the Army, and she worked evenings. My older sister, Willadene, baby-sat her children. After the war, the lady and her children moved away, and the house was empty.

“Demolition and Reconstruction. In 1945 the house needed major repairs. The paint was peeling, boards were hanging loose, the roof was flapping in the breeze, and if the producers

of *This Old House* existed back then, they would surely have selected it for a massive “fix”.

“One day I heard a lot of noise coming from the property, the pounding of hammers, the screech of nails being pulled from wood, and the sound of boards being tossed to the ground. I observed the activity from our front porch and wondered what was happening. There were several workmen taking the roof and siding off the house and stacking the boards in a neat pile. This was definitely a methodical demolition. Were we going to lose the quaint little house? Why was such care being taken when they were just tearing down a house? Shingle by shingle, board by board, window by window, the entire building was finally de-constructed. Later a new foundation was built, and the rebuilding of this house began.

“The reconstruction of this house became a great asset to our neighborhood. We learned this was the location in which the noted author, lecturer, poet, a product of Galesburg, Illinois, Carl Sandburg, made his very first appearance. This house became quite an attraction, and people from many places around the state and the nation came to visit our neighborhood to see this famous man’s birthplace and the museum it later became.

“My First Job-The Lady with the Beautiful White Hair. One day as I was walking past the house on my way to school, a lady with beautiful white hair approached me and asked if I would be interested in helping with the maintenance by picking up papers, gum wrappers, cigarette butts, and other debris that was left on the property after people visited the museum. How could I refuse? I would be paid ten cents every week, and I was delighted to help the cause.

“Every Monday after school I took a brown paper bag and picked up the litter, then brought it home to be discarded with our trash. At first there wasn’t much to be picked up, but as more people visited, the litter grew. This was fine with me. I enjoyed doing my job.

“I Met Him! One day in 1947 on my way

to school Mr. Sandburg and the lady who “hired” me were standing on the front stoop. She called for me to join them, and she introduced me to Mr. Sandburg. He was wearing a black suit, white shirt and a black bow tie, and his hair was as white as the lady’s. Mr. Sandburg didn’t say so, but I think he appreciated the neat yard with nary a piece of scrap paper, gum wrapper nor cigarette butt on the ground. But what surprised me, as I stood by him was this: I noticed this celebrated man was no taller than I, and I was only eleven years old!

“Puzzle Solved. In 2004 when we attended my “Class of 1954” Reunion, my husband and I visited the museum, and I noticed the many wonderful additions to the property including the lovely landscaping behind the building. I was pleased that the three rooms of the original house were duplicated in the reconstruction. When we walked in it was déjà vu; these rooms were as I remembered them. There are period furnishings, but the size of the rooms and the placement of the windows are the same. This museum is very much an asset to the neighborhood and Galesburg.

“When we visited the Galesburg Visitors Center, I learned the name of the “lady with the beautiful, white hair:. There, in a booklet about the birthplace and museum, was her picture. Her name? Adda George! I feel blessed to have been a small part of this museum and to have personally met Carl Sandburg.”

A STORY OF FRIENDSHIP: CARL SANDBURG & JUANITA KELLY BEDNAR

This is the conclusion of CSHSA Board Member Chuck Bednar’s account of his mother’s friendship with Sandburg and her involvement with the Birthplace. It is continued from the Autumn, 2009 edition of *Inklings and Idlings*.

“Whenever Sandburg returned to Galesburg, it was always an electric occasion. His visit to the Centennial of the Lincoln-Douglas

Debate celebration at Knox College on October 7, 1958 was no exception. With his presence Sandburg received renewed acclaim for his earlier monumental works *The Prairie Years* and *The War Years*. He was among his friends. Poets, scholars, historians all attended this historic event. The Hotel Custer Ballroom was the center of the evening celebration after a vigorous re-enactment of the debates in the afternoon at the original site of Knox Old Main. Juanita was a major organizer of the event, collaborating with numerous committees and VIP’s that joined in the activities. In subsequent years this celebration is recalled by numerous people who attended as one of the most significant historical local events held in the city during the 20th century.

“As the bungalow became a popular visitors’ attraction, the Association sought to expand into a more comprehensive facility by purchasing the residential house adjacent to the west of the Birthplace at 313 E. Third St. It became the residence for the live-in docents, Lauren and Mary Goff. Retired from a local trucking company, the Goff’s were perfect on-site custodians and greeters to host the increasing number of visitors. Lauren shared his vast knowledge of Sandburg with anyone willing to listen. He is fondly remembered for his dedication and hour-long dissertations about Carl Sandburg and Galesburg history.

“In 1958 Adda George in ill health reluctantly retired to live with her daughter Margaret (Peg) Belknap in Philadelphia, PA. In respect for her work for the Association the residence was renamed the “Adda George House”. At this time Juanita became the new president of the Association lasting until her death in 1968. Charged with the direction established by Adda, she had a visionary mind and persuasive quality engaging people to volunteer for community service by supporting the Association’s mission statement. A newsletter was created entitled “The 331 Memo”. It was published periodically from 1961 to 1969 and was comprised of thirteen issues featuring activities and events surrounding the Birthplace. The idea for this newsletter came from Clarendon Van Norman (Knox ‘28), a retired

history and math teacher at Galesburg Senior High School. He was a member of the Sandburg Board of Directors and a prominent well-known rare book and manuscript dealer.

"In 1960 Juanita organized a national "Penny Parade" program. It was designed as an educational program for school children, emphasizing Sandburg in English classes within public schools. Participating schools received Sandburg books for their library while contributing pennies for maintaining the Birthplace. The program included a popular essay by Sandburg about the Lincoln penny. This annual event realized thousands of pennies earmarked for the care of the cottage. Juanita recalled that among her best memories of this program was about the young girl who came home from school asking her mother for pennies to give to the class project. When her mother inquired about whom the pennies were for, her daughter replied, "I don't know the name of the kid." Re-initiated more recently by the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, each year the celebration remains alive and is a popular educational outreach event.

"Throughout the 50's and 60's Juanita kept continuous communication with the Sandburgs in Connemara and Adda George in Philadelphia. She often discussed events and plans for the Association with Carl's wife Lilian "Paula" Sandburg. For researchers interested in the organization's activities the correspondence she generated from 1960 through 1966 is especially extensive. It goes into great detail about the activities of the Birthplace. She received splendid support from the Sandburgs in the Association's efforts to maintain the birthplace with one exception. Despite her numerous requests, in a letter to Juanita on February 22, 1964, Paula could not get Carl to write out *Fog* in his own hand as a fair copy for her files of their correspondence. In later life, because of his popularity and endless requests for autographs, Sandburg preferred to generate typed manuscripts signed for the sake of simplicity.

"On a trip to the Los Angeles area in 1961

while visiting my wife and I, she journeyed to the MGM Studios to visit Sandburg. Carl was an advisor to George Stevens who was the producer for the movie *The Greatest Story Ever Told*. Comfortably living in Marilyn Monroe's studio apartment, he met Juanita attired in casual sandals and a natty suit. They visited about Galesburg and the activities of the Association.

"In the late 1950's the Association submitted a proposal to the Sandburgs. The Board of Directors visualized the Birthplace site as a fully developed repository of Sandburg's books, manuscripts, and memorabilia. It was conceived as a world education center for the study of Sandburg's literature. The entire adjacent half block was proposed as the site for this complex. In reply to their plans on February 4, 1962, Sandburg advised Juanita that the plan was too risky. He said to keep the Birthplace site simple like the life of "old August Sandburg who married Clara Matilda Anderson." Closing, he saluted her for being so thoughtful and so loyal.

"Prior to this proposal the Sandburgs had negotiated for the permanent placement of his extensive literary holdings to the University of Illinois, Urbana. It was here in his native state that Sandburg thought his papers would receive the the best care and use for future generations. The contract was completed about 1958 at a cost of \$35,000 of state funds. What the State received in return was seven boxcar loads of material shipped from Connemara. In 1991 manuscripts of Juanita's original correspondence in our family possession was gifted to the collection through John Hoffman, curator. An article was written about this visit to the collection published in the winter issue 1991 of the Knox Lombard Fifty Year Club bulletin.

"In 1964 the Carl Sandburg Board of Directors launched plans for a memorial park behind the Birthplace. Enthusiasm for the project quickly accelerated when Mrs. John Sutor of Wataga suggested the park concept should utilize the theme "Remembrance Rock", a take-off from Sandburg's historical novel entitled the same. The Association quickly picked up on Sutor's idea as

a rallying cry to promote its development. A large boulder was found on the farm of Forest Bonham near Wataga. Once relocated to its permanent position in the middle of the park, the spiritual remembrance that Sandburg created in his book was recreated in the landscape by placing pointed cedars at the four corners of the boulder. Spurred on by the concept, Juanita initiated extensive correspondence with the Sandburg's for approval while seeking their advice throughout the planning stages. She launched a nation-wide writing campaign to support the project through various suggestions from public and private organizations. Her efforts paid off. On June 4, 1966, in a moving dedication program covered by national press affiliates and over 500 people attending, the official Carl Sandburg Park was opened. Adda George and the Sandburg family were unable to attend. Creating the park provided the impetus for the Sandburg's to decide on the future resting place for his remains. He was destined to return to this quiet and peaceful place of remembrance.

"April 7, 1968, became the prologue for the development of the park when fifteen additional trees were gathered from Connemara farm to complete the landscape arrangement. They were dedicated to the future of the place where Sandburg was born. A special tribute was given to Juanita who had passed away earlier in the year. George Warren in his welcoming remarks recognized her devoted service to the Carl Sandburg Birthplace. He described the program as "two-fold to dedicate the landscaping and to honor Juanita Bednar."

"With Carl Sandburg's death on July 22, 1967, Paula telephoned Juanita about Carl's wishes that his remains be returned to his birthplace. Juanita worked with the Goffs as the Association prepared for a final resting place for Sandburg's ashes to be interred under the rock. The ceremony took place in the park on October 1, 1967. because of her illness Juanita was unable to attend. She joined Sandburg in the ranks of the hereafter on January 12, 1968. Lilian Paula Sandburg died February 18, 1977 at the age of ninety-three. She joined her husband's ashes

in a brief ceremony on Sunday, May 1, 1977. A memorial service was held at Knox College preceding her internment.

"Juanita recognized Sandburg's vast contributions to American literature by the array of talents that assured his success. He became a troubadour for the ages in many aspects. Public speaker, lecturer, guitar player, singer, song writer, orator, historian, poet, and novelist. He is recognized for the diversified pleasure he has contributed to the lovers of art and literature. Sandburg remains appealing to this day to all generations young and old. He couldn't wish for a better legacy."

MARTIN SANDBURG

CSHSA Board member Rick Sayre contributed the following news story which appeared in the May 30, 1940, edition of the *Chicago Daily Tribune*:

"Two personal endorsements of the candidacy of Justus L. Johnson of Aurora for the Republican nomination for secretary of state, were announced yesterday by Johnson's headquarters.

"Mart G. Sandburg of Galesburg, brother of Carl Sandburg, author and poet, and listed as a prominent Knox County leader long associated with the John Ericsson Republican league, 'Justice L. Johnson is one of the outstanding men in the Republican party. His promotion and the successful conclusion of the Grass Roots convention in 1935, when the Republican party was at low ebb, was the most potent contribution to the revitalization of the party in Illinois and the midwest. He has made a splendid record as clerk of the Appellate court for the northern district of Illinois.'"

THE HOLIDAY SEASON OF 1896

Like many other towns and cities still recovering from the Panic of 1893, the people

of Galesburg enjoyed a variety of social and musical events during December of 1896. The different social layers of the city participated in a wide array of activities as the descriptions below will attest.

Colonel and Mrs. Clark E. Carr gave a charming dinner party at their home on the evening of December 15th in honor of Miss Fay Heaton and Lieutenant William A. Phillips who were to be married the next evening. The guests were seated at small tables decorated with bouquets of American Beauty roses. After dinner the time was spent in dancing.

Miss Heaton was born in Abingdon and attended St. Mary's School in Knoxville. After moving to Galesburg with her mother, she had been a student at Knox College. She was a volunteer at the Free Kindergarten. Lt. Phillips was a graduate of West Point and came to Galesburg to teach military tactics at Knox College. He was twenty years older than his bride.

During the afternoon of December 16th, Lt. Phillips banqueted the twelve groomsmen and ushers at the Union Hotel on the Public Square. The menu included oysters, beef tenderloin and roast quail with all the trimmings. Dessert included ice cream, cake, fruit and cheese.

The wedding was held in Grace Episcopal Church on the southwest corner of Prairie and Tompkins Streets. The interior of the church had been decorated with greenery and flags. The reception at the bride's home, 238 South Cedar, was also colorfully decorated with red, white and blue. The cadets from Knox College had hoped to fire their cannon in celebration, but the powder had been hidden. The school bell was rung most of the evening. The newlyweds traveled by train to Mexico for their honeymoon.

A twelve pound gray possum was exhibited at the Express office the 15th. It had been caught by J.M. McKinstry near Plymouth, Illinois. Quite a crowd came to see the animal. It kept viewers away by snapping furiously. Several observers were looking forward to a roasted possum dinner.

The Galesburg Club at 22 South Prairie Street was beginning a series of fortnightly informal receptions on Friday evening, December 18th. Dancing, cards and billiards would be the featured entertainment.

Members of the Trades Assembly were planning an elaborate supper and dance to be held in their meeting hall at 106 East Main Street. Schroeder's orchestra would furnish the music.

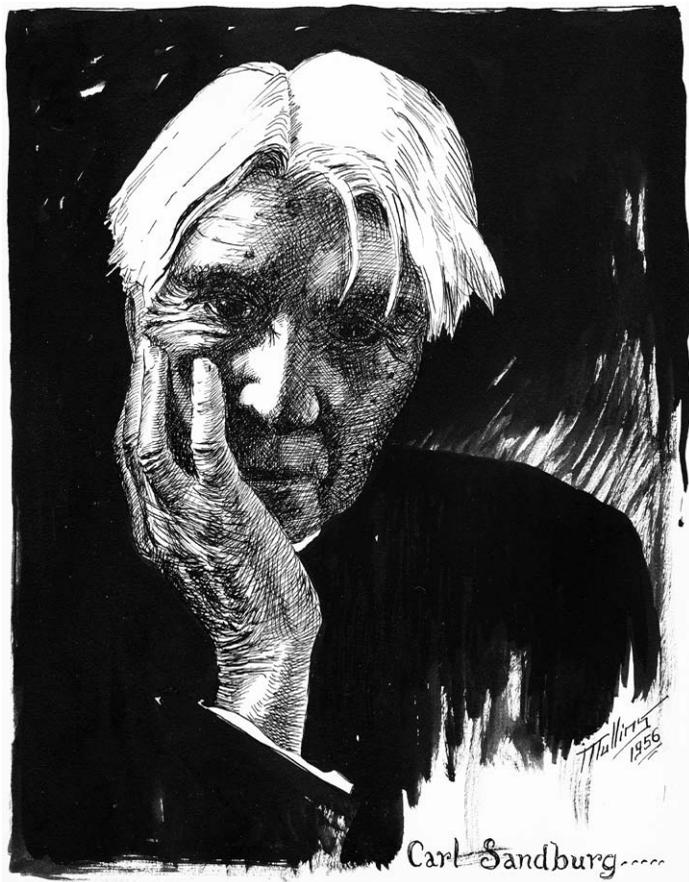
The new biennial city directory had been published by the Colville Brothers. It included 8,934 family names of residents of the city for a gain of 523 over the previous edition. The directory also showed the number of dwellings to be 4,221, an increase of 359 over the past two years. The 1890 Federal Census had shown Galesburg's population to be 21,441.

Galesburg residents were still getting accustomed to their new house numbers. The city wards had been reapportioned in the spring, and many house numbers had been changed. City Engineer M.J. Blanding suggested homeowners check with his office to be sure of their number before investing in a number plate for their house. Apparently, door-to-door salesmen had been giving out incorrect numbers.

The housekeeping column in the *Galesburg Evening Mail* suggested serving Wheatena and cream, dates, rump beefsteak and gravy, cornmeal pancakes, applesauce, bread and coffee for breakfast. That should have prepared everyone for the day and any cold weather that may have been on hand.

The August Sandburg family wasn't mentioned in any of the social events reported in the newspaper, and Clara Sandburg certainly didn't prepare such a bountiful morning meal for her husband and children. Carl was awakened by his mother at 5:30 a.m. Mrs. Sandburg already had been in the kitchen preparing buckwheat cakes, fried side pork, applesauce and coffee. Occasionally, there might be fried eggs as well. Afterward, young Carl walked two miles to his job delivering milk.

Barbara Schock



Recognize this image?

It's a pen and ink drawing of Carl Sandburg in a familiar pose, apparently drawn in 1956.

If you have any information about the image or the artist, please drop us a note.

Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association
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Galesburg, IL 61402-0108

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