
INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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Winter 2016-2017

FROM SITE SUPERINTENDENT MARTHA DOWNEY Holiday Gift Ideas

The holiday season is in full swing. Maybe some of you are looking for gift ideas. Remember there is a wonderful selection of Sandburg books at the Site's Bookstore. There are books by Sandburg for all ages, but this year there is an especially large selection of children's books. *From Daybreak to Good Night: Poems for Children* provides delightful illustrations to some of Carl Sandburg's beloved poems. Of course, *Rootabaga Stories* and *Abe Lincoln Grows Up* are on the store's shelves.

For adults there are numerous familiar titles, but additional offerings include *The Letters of Carl Sandburg* and *The Other Carl Sandburg*. The latter tells of the two decades early in his career when Sandburg was involved with the political left. Penelope Niven's brilliant biography of Sandburg is available.

If you need a hostess gift, consider a volume of Carl Sandburg's poetry. What better way to relax after hosting duties than with Sandburg? *The People, Yes* published in 1936 is still affirming and applicable today. *Chicago Poems* and *Cornhuskers* are always favorites. There are also DVDs, CDs, mugs, book marks, and other items. Purchases support the work of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association to preserve this remarkable Site.

I do want to take this opportunity to thank the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association members and board for your unwavering and generous support of the Site during 2016.

To all of you, Best Wishes for 2017!

CHRISTMAS IN GALESBURG 1879

By Barbara Schock

Newspapers were a key source of information for the citizens of Galesburg in the nineteenth century. They provided a variety of articles about local people and events as well as national and international news received by telegraph. Space was provided for businesses to advertise their wares. Articles were printed about social events, weddings, and deaths in the community. The newspapers were a way for people to become acquainted with the town and to build social cohesion among the residents.

The *Weekly Republican-Register* of December 20, 1879, is a typical example. The "Local Varieties" column on the first page included these tidbits: Peck's china store had imported German canary birds, in full song. It was left to the reader to find out if the birds were living or depicted in china. The store also sold vases and toilet sets "very cheap." The *Cambridge Chronicle* was quoted as saying "There were ghosts in the First Baptist Church of Galesburg." Most readers knew there were ghosts reported in the Brick Church (Beecher Chapel on South Broad Street) at the time of the Civil War. The ghosts may have been runaway slaves traveling on the Underground Railroad. Social items about Abingdon surely were copied from the newspaper in that village. It was reported Hedding College had one hundred and forty students. The next item in the column read thus: "Poles newly arrived, have lately made their appearance in Abingdon. They are telegraph poles."

The ladies of the Congregational Brick Church (Beecher Chapel) netted the sum of about \$65 from a dinner they had served. The sum equals more than \$1,660 in today's money. O.T. Johnson's Store advertised bargains in men's and boy's overcoats as well as shawls and cloaks for women and girls. Students attending colleges in Galesburg were made aware they could travel home for the holidays on the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad at reduced rates of fare. Arrangements were in progress for the Young Men's Dinner on Christmas Day at the Union Hotel on the northwest corner of the Public Square. They expected the feast to eclipse any previous meal served to the group. The club was the predecessor of the Chamber of Commerce.

Temperance was sweeping Knox County in 1879. On Saturday evening the Red Ribbon Club held a discussion, concluding that prohibiting alcohol sales by law wasn't feasible. Moral persuasion, as promoted by the Red Ribbon, was the only practical way to reduce imbibing. Another meeting of the club on Monday evening heard speakers from the Methodist Episcopal and Universalist Churches. At the Sunday morning service of the Catholic Church Father Joseph Costa had led the members of the parish in renewing their vows of avoiding the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The Sons of Temperance met Tuesday evening. They enjoyed a program of music and recitations.

David Greenleaf, Mayor of Galesburg, sought to correct a report published in a Peoria newspaper. Contrary to the report in the Peoria paper, Mayor Greenleaf asserted the graveled streets were superior to dirt streets in all kinds of weather. He did admit that the graveled streets softened in wet weather. During the recent wet spell, draymen who hauled heavy loads fully attested to the superiority of streets improved by gravel. Apparently, the Peoria newspaper had misquoted Mayor Greenleaf, and he wanted his correct remarks to appear in *The Republican-Register*.

The death of Addison N. Bancroft was reported as due to pneumonia. He had suffered from lung disease for a number of years. He had been born in Dana, Massachusetts on June 4, 1820. For many years he had been a masonry contractor. Later he operated a grocery store. His second wife and three children survived. A small boy had reported seeing an elephant a mile south of the railroad stockyards. It was the 2,000 pound steer of the Honorable Joseph Thirlwell. The first sentence of the paragraph was meant to attract the reader's attention to the sale of buffalo meat, green turtle, and other varieties of comestibles for the holiday season. Cook and Beach at 37 East Main Street was offering raffle tickets for two dollars. The winning tickets would receive various types of artworks, including framed feather wreaths. One hundred thirty artworks would be given away.



The merchants of Galesburg offered a wide variety of objects for sale during the Christmas season. They seemed to be the biggest promoters of the holiday. In that respect, times haven't changed very much.

Carl Sandburg, who was not quite two years old in December 1879, was undoubtedly oblivious to the Christmas holiday. However, as he grew older and more aware, he would see the newspapers contained the same kind of Christmas stories and advertisements as they had when he was barely out of swaddling clothes.

THE TRAIN CALLED CARL SANDBURG

By Sydelle Pearl

(Editor's Note: Sydelle Pearl currently lives in Pittsburgh, PA. A native of New Jersey, she is the author of *Elijah's Tears: Stories for the Jewish Holidays* (Pelican Publishing Company, 2004), *Books for Children of the World: The Story of Jella Lepman* (Pelican, 2007), *Hope Somewhere in America: The Story of a Child, a Painting, and a President* (Twin Lights Publishers, 2012), *Dear Mr. Longfellow: Letters to and from the Children's Poet* (Prometheus Books, 2012), *Why Bear Has a Short Tail* (RR Books, 2015), and a forthcoming novel to be published in 2017 by

Canadian publisher, Guernica Editions. Teacher Guides for Sydelle's books can be downloaded from her website, www.storypearls.com. Through her organization Storypearls, Sydelle presents author programs and residencies in preschools, child care centers, elementary schools, and after-school programs, primarily for children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The mission of Storypearls is to describe the author process from inspiration to publication in order to inspire students to create their own stories. In May of 2016, Storypearls received an Honorable Mention for the Freedom Through Literacy Award from Judith's Reading Room.)

(Author's Note and Acknowledgements: "The Train Called Carl Sandburg" is fiction but details are rooted in fact. The main source for my story is an article that appeared in the February 23, 1953 issue of LIFE magazine by Carl about his return to Galesburg on January 9, 1953 to celebrate his birthday and the publication of *Always the Young Strangers*. All poems are from the Pulitzer prize-winning *The Complete Poems* by Carl Sandburg published in 1951. George Pullman had employed ex-slaves as porters in the 1860's and African-Americans continued to work as Pullman porters one hundred years later. Amtrak began in May of 1971 in response to the Rail Passenger Service Act of 1970. Since 2006 a new Amtrak train that runs from Chicago to Quincy with a stop in Galesburg has been called the Carl Sandburg. I wish to thank the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh. I also wish to thank Charles Bednar, Jr., Juanita Bednar's son and member of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association, for graciously sharing information about the early days of the Carl Sandburg Birthplace and for reading my manuscript. I am also grateful to Mike Hobbs, editor of *Inklings and Idlings*, for reading my manuscript.)

Daddy was a Pullman porter with the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad. He wore all black, except for his white shirt. He welcomed people on the train, helped them find a seat, and carried their baggage when their stop rolled along. Sometimes people traveled with no bags but were all bent over from a heavy heart. Daddy held out his hand as they stepped down from the train, and, with a smile, gave them one of Carl Sandburg's poems that he always carried.

Whenever Daddy left for his shift, he had bulging pockets and a shoulder bag filled with Carl's poems. Whenever he returned from Union Station in Chicago, sometimes a few days or a week later, his pockets and his shoulder bag were empty of papers but full of roasted cashews that he bought in the station. I would pull out the nuts that smelled so good. We sat around the kitchen table and ate them happily.

I was six years old when I could help my parents read and write Carl's poems and fold them into squares at the kitchen table. We had his poetry books and his *American Songbag* too. Carl had travelled with his guitar, listened to people, and collected their songs.

Our cat, Harriet, sat on my lap and listened to us read and sing. Her favorite poem was "Fog."

*The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.*

Once, when I was eight, Daddy let me slip a poem under the door of each traveler on the sleeper car on the train from Chicago to Minneapolis-St. Paul. We gently put

a poem on the chest of every sleeping passenger in coach as the train chugged its way through the darkness.

“Window” by Carl Sandburg

*Night from a railroad car window
Is a great, dark, soft thing
Broken across with slashes of light.*

I carried Carl’s poems in my pockets. Mommy carried his poems in her pocketbook. We were so happy to learn that Carl would be returning to Galesburg on January 9, 1953 to celebrate his seventy-fifth birthday. Daddy said he helped Carl step down from the Burlington Zephyr when it pulled into Galesburg from Chicago.

“Welcome home!” Daddy told him.

“Thank you!” said Carl. “Everything holds memories—even the glistening snow.”

“Sounds like a poem,” Daddy said.

“Everything is a poem,” said Carl.

That night, we went to hear him at the Central Congregational Church. We found seats behind all of Galesburg, it seemed. When Mrs. Adda George stepped upon the stage, everyone clapped. She had worked so hard to save the house where Carl was born.

Carl said to her, “If you did not care so much about my birthplace, it would have been torn down. I treasure your friendship. Here is an autographed copy of my new book, *Always the Young Strangers*.”

Then Carl hugged her, and I couldn’t tell where his white hair ended and where hers began.

Mrs. Juanita Bednar stepped forward. I knew she cared a lot about Carl’s birthplace too. She gave Carl a scrapbook with old photographs of Galesburg. “Thank you so much.” Carl said. “Even though I live in North Carolina now, I think often of my hometown.”

Mrs. Bednar told the audience that her favorite sight was faces of children who came with their classes to the Birthplace. Did she remember my face? She put her hand into the pocket of her flowered dress and pulled out a piece of paper from which she read this poem.

“Basket” by Carl Sandburg

*Speak, sir, and be wise.
Speak choosing your words, sir, like an old woman
over a bushel of apples.*

“I received this poem on the train from Galesburg to Chicago four months ago. Mr. Jeremiah Kingsley gave it to me after he helped me step down.”

My heart beat quickly. I squeezed Daddy’s hand, and he squeezed mine. Mrs. Bednar pulled out another piece

of paper.

“I received this poem at O.T. Johnson’s Department Store six weeks ago from Mrs. Claudia Kingsley.”

“My People” by Carl Sandburg

*My people are gray,
Pigeon gray, dawn gray, storm gray.
I call them beautiful
And I wonder where they are going.*

“And I received this next poem from Joshua Kingsley, fourth grader at Bateman School, when his class came to the Birthplace just two weeks ago.”

“Slippery” by Carl Sandburg

*The six month child
Fresh from the tub
Wiggles in our hands.
This is our fish child.
Give her a nickname. Slippery.*

“The Kingsley family honors all of Galesburg with their love for Carl Sandburg’s poetry. Would you all please help me welcome them to the stage?”

Suddenly, I felt like I couldn’t move. How would I be able to walk all the way from the back of the church to the stage? I was sure my heart could be heard by everyone. Finally, we stood upon the stage next to Mrs. George, Mrs. Bednar, and Carl. He shook our hands.

“You helped me step down from the train”, he said to Daddy. “We spoke of snow and poetry.”

Daddy smiled.

Carl signed a copy of his new book for us. “For Jeremiah, Claudia, and Joshua Kingsley: Thank you for carrying my poems in your pockets. With peace and friendship, Carl.”

Everyone stood and clapped and clapped for a long time. After the clapping stopped, we began to walk back to our seats when Carl called out in a loud voice, “Joshua Kingsley!” I felt my heart beating and turned around and waited. He spoke into the microphone in a voice that had fog, songs, stars, the sound of train whistles, the smell of roasted cashews, and the touch of a smooth kitchen table woven into it like corn silk.

“I have a poem for you and all of the children here tonight. You are the future. The poem is called ‘Choose.’”

*The single clenched fist lifted and ready
Or the open asking hand held out and waiting.
Choose:
For we meet by one or the other.*

How quickly the years have passed! My parents, Mrs. George, Mrs. Bednar, and Carl have been dead a long

time. How pleased they would be to know that the Carl Sandburg Amtrak train now carries passengers between Chicago and Quincy. My wife Julia and our nine year old son Theo sit at the kitchen table and help me write out poems from Carl's books. Our cat Frederick listens to us read and purrs.

I carry Carl's poems in my pockets and in the shoulder bag that used to be my father's. I give away Carl's poems on the train named for him. When I return home, my wife and son help me eat the roasted cashews I buy at Union Station.

My favorite poem is the one Carl gave to me that long ago evening when he spoke into the microphone in Galesburg. And now I have given it to you.

SANDBURG PERFORMANCE PIECE

By Jon Daly

(Editor's Note: Milwaukee musician and theater actor Jon Daly is working on a Sandburg performance piece that he hopes to perform across the United States. He has an interest in people who lived in Milwaukee and went on to achieve world prominence. Sandburg lived in Milwaukee in the early 1900's where he went to work for the Wisconsin Social Democratic Party and served as secretary to Milwaukee Mayor Emil Siedel. Jon has written a piece called "To The Promised Land" about another former Milwaukee resident, Golda Meir, who was Prime Minister of Israel from 1969 to 1974.)

Two years ago I started work on a performance piece based on the life and work of Carl Sandburg. I had just finished a year of research, capped off by a delightful, albeit rainy weekend, at Sandburg Days in Galesburg. It was time for me to get to work. The great sports journalist Red Barber said it best about this part of the process, "[T]here's nothing to writing. All you do is sit down at a typewriter and open a vein."

How do you write about Carl Sandburg? Do you write a biography, capturing each milestone in a rich, varied, long life? A theatre piece is seldom longer than two and a half hours; a playwright can't possibly do what Sandburg biographer Penny Niven did so brilliantly in hundreds of pages. Do you write a drama, exploring the tensions, contradictions, and victories in the life of a man you've never met? To attempt such a thing requires endless speculations, guesswork, and truth-stretching to create dramatic action. How can I write about the private man, when all I know is the public one?

The disparity between public and private is familiar to all actors. We have all had many episodes when we've been recognized in the grocery store, or standing in line at the bank. People who have seen us in plays, watching us intimately for hours in one play after another, come to feel that they know us. They call us by name, and forget to introduce themselves, because on some level they figure that we must know them too.

But the person they know is the public self, and their sense of our identity is entirely wrapped up in the work they see, not in the private people we are. When Carl Sandburg crisscrossed the country, appearing in opera houses, community auditoriums, schoolhouses, and

private homes, what audiences saw was a carefully cultivated, public persona. The way in to the inner man was through the work he created--his poems, his children's stories, and the folk songs he chose.

Once I reached this understanding, then the form that AN EVENING WITH CARL SANDBURG should take began to come into focus. I decided that audiences would want to hear about Carl Sandburg solely through his writings; I no longer had to worry about getting the chronology of his life in perfect order. I didn't have to concern myself with the private soul, the solitary writer who worked behind the closed door. If I wanted to know about his relationships with his children, for example, I had to look no further than his *Rootabaga Stories*; the political creature dwelled in his newspaper articles, his letters to friends, his massive work on Abraham Lincoln, and a lifetime of poetry. And his memoirs provide great insights into the young man who grew up to be, as Mayor Richard J. Daley hilariously misspoke, America's "poet lariat."

So what do I have to show after two years of writing, editing, rewriting, cutting and pasting, reorganizing, and trying out material to audiences of both friends and strangers? A happy pastiche of poems, songs, tales, and remembrances. My goal is to appeal to fans of the great Sandburg and to introduce this brilliant American to audiences who have never heard of him. The experience has been enlightening, uplifting, challenging, at times mystifying, and ultimately, deeply satisfying.

Somewhere along the line, the working title has been shortened to simply SANDBURG. The audiences I've encountered don't feel that they necessarily need to see an actor made up to look like Carl Sandburg, or to engage in the complicity of pretending to be present at one of his personal appearances; Carl's poetry and songs are quite enough and need no further elaboration. So what you will see is an actor who loves the work of Carl Sandburg, communicating that affection directly to you, and inviting you to enjoy it as well.

The next step, now that I've written a workable draft, is figuring out how to get folks to come out and see it. I'm hoping to be able to get to Galesburg in the near future to try out the material in front of the people who love Carl Sandburg the most. I'll give you plenty of notice, I promise.

I look forward to sharing the work with you.

PETE SEEGER AT THE SANDBURG CENTENARY

By Mike Hobbs

The Carl Sandburg Centenary, organized by Knox College, was a gala series of events held in Galesburg in January 1978 to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Sandburg's birth in Galesburg on January 6, 1878. The Centenary program states, "It is our [Knox College's] privilege to honor a native son of this city, a journalist who effectively advocated social justice, an author who

wrote important poems about ordinary people in their own language, a singer who collected folk songs and enhanced our appreciation of folk music, a biographer of Lincoln who like himself came from plain people to speak eloquently on problems which arise in a democracy from the effort to abide by principles of humanity, liberty and fair treatment of all people.”

The Centenary's first activity was on January 6, a First Day Ceremony for the Carl Sandburg Commemorative Stamp at the Carl Sandburg College gymnasium. Then the opening ceremony featured greetings and introductory remarks by E. Inman Fox, President, Knox College; remarks by Gwendolyn Brooks, Poet Laureate of Illinois and Douglas L. Wilson, Chairman, Knox College Centenary Committee; and keynote address by Howard K. Smith, ABC News Commentator. In the evening singer Burl Ives presented a one-man tribute to Sandburg at the CSC gymnasium.

On January 7 a symposium entitled “Sandburg's Roots,” chaired by William M. Anderson, President, Carl Sandburg College, was held at Knox's Harbach Theatre. Paper presenters included Hermann M. Muelder, professor emeritus of history, Knox College, and Margaret Sandburg, Carl's eldest daughter. Discussants included Rev. Constant R. Johnson, pastor of Galesburg Trinity Lutheran Church. In the evening Carl's daughter Helga Sandburg Crile gave a program at Harbach of songs that the Sandburg family liked.

One week later the symposium “Sandburg the Poet” was held at Harbach. It was chaired by Howard A. Wilson, English professor at Knox. One of the discussants was John E. Hallwas, associate English professor at Western Illinois University. On January 13, 14, and 15 the Knox College Theatre Department presented Norman Corwin's “The World of Carl Sandburg.” On January 21 at Harbach the symposium “Sandburg as a Lincoln Biographer,” chaired by Rodney O. Davis, history professor at Knox, was held. Among the paper presenters were Stephen B. Oates, history professor, University of Massachusetts and U.S. Congressman from Illinois, Paul Simon. Victor Hicken, history professor at Western Illinois University, was a discussant.

On January 28 Harbach was again the setting for a symposium. This one was entitled “Sandburg the Popular Spokesman,” and it was chaired by Douglas Wilson, Knox associate English professor. Papers were presented by William J. Adelman, labor and industrial relations associate professor, University of Chicago; Herbert Mitgang, editorial board, *New York Times*; and Studs Terkel, Chicago interviewer, writer, and folklorist. The Sandburg Centenary was capped off in the evening of January 28 with a concert by Pete Seeger at Knox's Memorial Gymnasium. The event program described Seeger as “perhaps America's best known and best loved folk singer.”

Wikipedia carries an extensive biography of Seeger.

Here are highlights from it. Peter “Pete” Seeger was born on May 3, 1919 in Midtown Manhattan. He died on January 27, 2014 at age ninety-four. “[He] was a fixture on nationwide radio in the 1940's, he also had a string of hit records during the early 1950's as a member of the Weavers, most notably their recording of Lead Belly's ‘Goodnight, Irene’.... Members of the Weavers were blacklisted during the McCarthy Era. In the 1960's, he re-emerged on the public scene as a prominent singer of protest music in support of international disarmament, civil rights, counterculture, and environmental causes.” Some of his best-known songs are “Where Have All the Flowers Gone,” “If I had a Hammer,” and “Turn! Turn! Turn!” “Seeger was one of the folksingers most responsible for popularizing the spiritual “We Shall Overcome”...that became the acknowledged anthem of the Civil Rights Movement....”

His father Charles was a Harvard-trained composer and musicologist. His mother Constance was trained at the Paris Conservatory of Music, was a concert violinist, and a teacher at the Juilliard School. His father was forced to resign his position with the University of California, Berkeley music department in 1918 because of his “outspoken pacifism” during World War I. In the 1930's Charles held positions in the federal government's Farm Resettlement program and the WPA's Federal Music Project. Charles and Constance divorced in 1926. In 1932 he married Ruth Crawford. “Deeply interested in folk music, Ruth had contributed musical arrangement to Carl Sandburg's extremely influential folk song anthology the *American Songbag* (1927) and later created significant original settings for eight of Sandburg's poems.”

Pete Seeger appeared “as a regular performer on...[the] weekly Columbia Broadcasting show “Back Where I Come From” (1940-41) alongside of Josh White, Burl Ives, Lead Belly, and Woody Guthrie (whom he had first met at Will Geer's Grapes of Wrath benefit concert for migrant works on March 3, 1940)...During the war Seeger also performed on nationwide radio broadcasts by Norman Corwin.” In early 1941 he sang in a group whose “anti-war, anti-draft tone reflected the Communist Party line...which maintained the war [in Europe] was ‘phony’ and a mere pretext for big American corporations to get Hitler to attack Soviet Russia.” In 1942 he joined the Communist Party USA (CPUSA). When the Germans violated their non-aggression pact with Russia in June 1941, the CPUSA “quickly directed its members to get behind the draft and forbade participation in strikes for the duration of the war...” Seeger got behind the war effort. In “Dear Mr. President” he sang, “Now, Mr. President,/We haven't always agreed in the past, I know,/But that ain't at all important now./What is important is what we got to do./We got to lick Mr. Hitler, and until we do,/Other things can wait.” He served in the U.S. Army in the Pacific.

In 1949 Seeger quit the Communist Party USA. “The Weavers' performing career was abruptly derailed in 1953 at the peak of their popularity when blacklisting

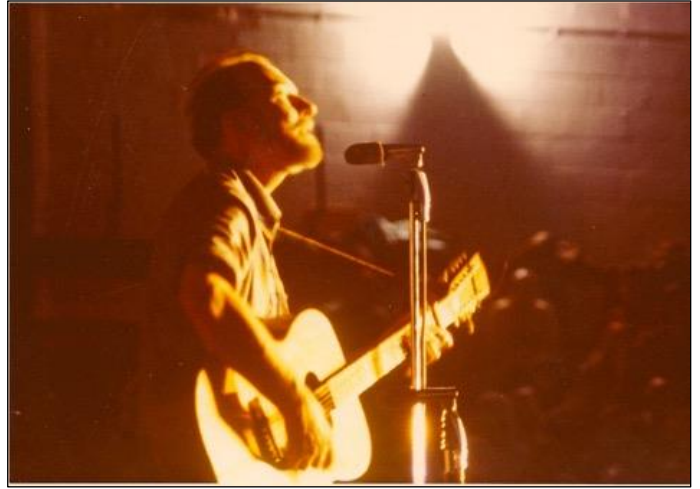
prompted radio stations to refuse to play their records and all their bookings were canceled.” In August 1955 he was subpoenaed to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). Seeger “refused to plead the Fifth Amendment... [and] refused to name personal and political associations on the grounds that this would violate his First Amendment rights....” In March 1957 he was indicted for contempt of Congress, and “for some years he had to keep the federal government apprised of where he was going any time he left the Southern District of New York.” He was permitted to perform at college campuses in the early 1960’s when his anti-war songs “Where Have All the Flowers Gone” and “Turn! Turn! Turn!” became very popular. His singing of “We Shall Overcome” during the Selma to Montgomery civil rights march in 1965 brought that song to wide audiences. His 1967 song “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy” was critical of President Johnson’s Vietnam policy. At the 1969 Vietnam Moratorium March in Washington, DC Seeger led 500,000 protesters in singing John Lennon’s “Give Peace a Chance.” In January 2009 he joined Bruce Springsteen and the crowd in singing the Woody Guthrie song “This Land Is Your Land” in the finale of Barack Obama’s Inaugural concert in the nation’s capitol.

Dr. Douglas Wilson was chairman of the Knox College Sandburg Centenary committee in 1978. He recently said that getting Pete Seeger to perform at the Centenary was no easy matter. As plans were being made for the Centenary, Seeger was preparing for a concert tour in England. His agent thought the amount the Centenary committee had budgeted for Seeger’s appearance was paltry. The determined Helga Sandburg Crile told Dr. Wilson that the Sandburg family “expected” Seeger to perform during the Centenary. The pressure was on. Perhaps, thinking about Sandburg’s positive effects on his own career and on American culture and remembering that Sandburg sent a favorable character reference letter on his behalf to the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950’s, Seeger agreed to appear.

Dr. Wilson recalls picking Seeger up at the Peoria airport. He found the singer informal and easy to talk to. Before the January 28 concert they went to dinner—either at Club 19 or Harbor Lights. As his performance was about to begin at Memorial Gymnasium, Seeger was still formulating his program.

Knox Now/Knox Alumnus magazine reported on the concert, “A fitting climax to the Sandburg Centenary took place ...when some 3,000 people of all ages and from all walks of life filled the Knox gym to hear Pete Seeger sing his tribute to Sandburg. America’s current patriarch of folksong held that whole audience in his hand for almost three hours of humor and song. Accompanying himself on guitar, banjo and recorder, encouraging the audience to join in (and they did , a good part of the time), he sang lullabys, protest songs from five decades, spirituals, an African Zulu song, a Hebrew chant, old and new folk ballads, and yes, many from Carl Sandburg’s *American Songbag* collection. He received three standing ovations.

His warmth, his gentleness, his humor, his expertise—all make him a true balladeer in the Carl Sandburg tradition.” Retired sociology and journalism instructor at Knox, David Amor, attended the concert. He recalls, “Perhaps the most moving experience during all my years at Knox was being part of the crowd in Memorial Gym in 1978 with Pete Seeger leading us all in ‘Wimoweh.’ The place was rocking.”



Pete Seeger Performs at Sandburg Centenary, Memorial Gymnasium, Knox College January 28, 1978. Courtesy Douglas Wilson.



Audience at Pete Seeger Concert, Memorial Gymnasium, Knox College January 28, 1978. Left to right Douglas Wilson, Studs Terkel (chin on cane), & Knox College President E. Inman Fox. Courtesy Douglas Wilson.

I am grateful to Mary McAndrew, Senior Archive Assistant, Special Collections & Archives, Knox College, for copying Pete Seeger’s 1978 concert for me to listen to. In hearing it, I’d have to agree with David Amor that Memorial Gym “was rocking.” Seeger said that he first saw “John Henry” in *The American Songbag*. He recited verses from *The People, Yes*. He reported that he sent the words to Vern Partlow’s humorous 1947 song “Newspaperman” to Sandburg who wrote back that he liked it. Sandburg once came to hear his group The

Weavers perform. Another time Seeger met Sandburg at a civil rights meeting in Chicago where Sandburg talked about campaigning for presidential candidate Eugene Debs. He told a funny Sandburg story about two maggots.

Seeger talked about the richness of American music which he attributed to the diversity of our people. He said that Joni Mitchell was one of his favorite singers. He sang her "Both Sides Now." He sang "Go Down Old Hannah," a traditional work song sung by black prison gangs in the South. In October 1941 the Germans torpedoed the U.S. naval ship Reuben James. Eighty-six sailors lost their lives. Woodie Guthrie wrote "The Sinking of the Reuben James" about the loss of life. Seeger sang it. He said when he and Guthrie ` it in 1941 they were called communists. He sang his sister Peggy Seeger's song "Gonna Be an Engineer," a song that was popular during the women's rights movement. The final song of his Sandburg Centenary concert was "If I Had a Hammer." It was followed by a long, rousing ovation.

I LOVE GALESBURG IN THE SPRINGTIME

By Mike Hobbs

I love Galesburg for some of the reasons that Carl Sandburg loved it. I love it for its people, its history, and the remnants of its history like the big beautiful old homes in the north part of town. I love it for things that author Jack Finney said about it in his short story *I Love Galesburg in the Springtime*, the lead story and the title of his 1963 novel of short stories.

Jack Finney was born in Milwaukee in 1911. He attended Knox College and graduated in 1934. He wrote short stories, novels, and plays. His first novel *5 Against the House* (1954) was made into a movie starring Guy Madison, Kim Novak, and Brian Keith. His 1955 novel *The Body Snatchers* was made into the movie "Invasion of the Body Snatchers" in 1956 with remakes in 1978, 1993, and 2007. Other movies based on his novels were "House of Numbers" (1957) starring Jack Palance, "Good Neighbor Sam" (1964) starring Jack Lemmon, Romy Schneider, and Dorothy Provine), "Assault on a Queen" (1966) starring Frank Sinatra, Virna Lisi, and Anthony Franciosa, and "Maxie" (1985) based on *Marion's Wall* starring Glenn Close, Mandy Patinkin, and Ruth Gordon. Finney's last novel *From Time to Time* was published in 1995, the year he died.

In *I Love Galesburg in the Springtime* fictional character Oscar Mannheim, a reporter for the Galesburg *Register-Mail*, writes about some fanciful stories he covered in town in the early 1960's. Mannheim's stories have a "Twilight Zone" quality about them, not creepy like some of that TV show's stories, but warm, loving, nostalgic. He recalls moving to Galesburg in the 1930's when he was six years old. His parents and sister arrived from Chicago at the CB&Q Depot on South Seminary Street. A taxi driver drove them to their home on North Broad Street. Along the route young Mannheim saw beautiful old homes on North Seminary, Kellogg, Prairie,

and Cherry Streets and an "occasional stone or cast-iron hitching post" for horses from an earlier era. He saw the streetcar that ran along North Broad. "...I began falling in love with Galesburg..." he said.

He writes about interviewing Chicago businessman E.V. Marsh at the Hotel Custer in the early 60's. Mr. Marsh had come to Galesburg to scope out a site for a new factory. One night he was wined and dined by a Chamber of Commerce man, the city attorney, and two city councilmen who assured him that they would work with him to build his new factory. After dinner and a few drinks Mr. Marsh excused himself about 10 pm, left the Hotel Custer, walked to Main Street, west to Broad Street, then north for several blocks, all the while contemplating building his factory in Galesburg.

He was distracted from his deep thought by the sight of a headlight coming toward him, the headlight of a streetcar. Tired by this time from his long walk, he figured he would flag down the streetcar for a ride back to Main Street. The streetcar got so close to him that he could clearly see the motorman, but the streetcar kept rolling south nearly running him over. He lunged backward falling on his back. After he gathered himself he loudly yelled and cursed at the motorman for not stopping for him and almost running him over.

His loud yelling and cursing in this late evening caused nearby residents to turn on their porchlights to see what was going on. Neighborhood men began to gather around him. They retrieved his hat, brushed him off, and tried to soothe him. The police arrived. He was arrested for drunk and disorderly.

Marsh was angry the next morning when Mannheim attempted to interview him about what had happened. He was too embarrassed to remain in Galesburg to build a factory. The businessman reluctantly told Mannheim what happened. The reporter asked him details about the motorman's uniform and the color of the streetcar. Those details matched Mannheim's recollection of motormen's uniforms and the color of streetcars from his boyhood on North Broad Street. The streetcar track had been torn out in the 1930's. Imagine Twilight Zone's host Rod Serling's words here, "This highway leads to the shadowy tip of reality: you're on a through route to the land of the different, the bizarre, the unexplainable.... Go as far as you like on this road. Its limits are only those of mind itself. Ladies and Gentlemen, you're entering the wondrous dimension of imagination.... Next stop The Twilight Zone."

Through Mannheim, Finney expresses his views on preserving the past versus tearing it down in the name of progress. Mannheim/Finney writes that he is glad that efforts are made to preserve the past. "I'm glad because here in Galesburg, and everywhere else, of course, they're trying—endlessly—to destroy the beauty we inherit from the past. They keep trying, and when they succeed, they replace it—not always, but all too often—with drabness and worse. With a sterile sun-baked

parking lot where decrepit, characterful, old Boone's Alley once ran; rechristening the asphalt-paved nothingness (as though even the memory of old Bonne's Alley must be blotted from mind) with the characterless title Park Plaza. And with anonymous apartment buildings where fine old houses once stood. With concrete-block ugliness sprawling along what were charming country roads. With—but you know what they're doing; wherever you live, you see it all around you.”

“And who are “they?” Why, “they” are us, of course; who else? We're doing these things to ourselves as though we were powerless to stop; or as though any feeling for beauty or grace or a sense of the past were a kind of sentimental weakness to be jeered down.”

“Galesburg's past is fighting back. It's resisting , for the past isn't so easily destroyed; it's not simply gone with yesterday's newspaper. No, it is not, for it has been far too much—we are all products of it—to ever be completely gone. And so, somehow, in Galesburg, Illinois, when it's been necessary as it sometimes has, the past has fought against the present....struggling to keep what I and so many others—Carl Sandburg, for one, who was born here—love about Galesburg, Illinois.”

SANDBURG PAINTING AT SEYMOUR LIBRARY

In July 2016 Steve Gamble (Knox '64) donated this painting of Sandburg to Knox College. It hangs in the stairwell at Seymour Library that goes up to Special Collections & Archives. The artist was Emerson Burkhart based in Columbus, OH and was commissioned by the WPA during The Great Depression.



Courtesy Mary McAndrew, Senior Archive Assistant, Special Collections & Archives, Knox College

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