

# INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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## WINTER 2019-2020

### FROM SITE SUPERINTENDENT MARTHA DOWNEY

Everyone comments on how quickly the year has passed, and I concur. Much has happened at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site, including fence painting, planting, mulching, weeding, trimming trees, concerts, school programs, and the list goes on. Thank you to the Master Gardeners for keeping the grounds looking so lovely and showing off the Site on their Community Garden Walk.

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association and its members are high on my gratitude list. Because of their efforts the Site continued to have the Carl Sandburg Songbag Concerts, and some needed repairs were accomplished. You have also been strong advocates for the Site and for Carl Sandburg's legacy.

One of the best happenings of 2019 was the hiring of Tom Wallenfeldt in July as the Site's part-time Interpretive Coordinator. This allowed the Site to open to the public after over a year closed. If you have not yet had a chance to meet Tom, stop by the Site. The winter hours are 12:30 p.m. to 4 p.m. Thursday, Friday and Sunday, and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday. Monday-Wednesday closed.

The holidays will soon be past, but perhaps a few things will still need to be put away. Often, some of the holiday decorations are favorite old toys. In "Early Moon" Carl Sandburg captured well the abandoned but once cherished toys that fill a shelf or an attic corner.

### UPSTAIRS

*I too have a garret of old playthings.  
I have tin soldiers with broken arms upstairs.  
I have a wagon and the wheels gone upstairs.  
I have guns and a drum, a jumping-jack and a magic lantern.  
And dust is on them and I never look at them upstairs.  
I too have a garret of old playthings.*

Wishing you all a fulfilling 2020.

### 2020 CSHSA DUES

See page 8 of this newsletter for how you can pay your 2020 CSHSA dues.

### EDUCATION AND CARL SANDBURG

By Dr. Seamus Reilly

[Ed. Note: CSHSA Board Member Dr. Seamus Reilly was chosen to be the seventh president of Carl Sandburg College in 2018. He serves on the Galesburg Downtown Council, the Knox County Area Partnership, Cottage Hospital Board, LWA 14 Workforce Investment Board, Amtrak Corridor Committee, the National Railroad Hall of Fame Committee, and Gale Scholars Steering Committee.]



Dr. Seamus Reilly

In his autobiographical reminiscences on his home town, *Always the Young Strangers*, Carl Sandburg describes the impact of growing up in the city of Galesburg, a rural town but also an industrial center and a railroad town. The advantages of growing up in a small town, especially one as busy a commercial and transit center, are underscored in Sandburg's account of navigating and learning things through experiences. As a young child, he had license to roam and interacted with friends and adults alike. His father took him to public political events, and he was a keen observer of the people and characters. However, despite the lack of a strong formal education or the hope of a college education, Sandburg was fascinated by books and had a self-described "hunger for learning."

As a child Carl Sandburg developed a keen interest in reading and owning books. His early library was made up of miniature biographical books which were given away with packs of Duke's cigarettes. The first one that he saw he found while walking to school, *A Short History of P.T. Beauregard*. Sandburg's school physiology books even then warned about the dangers of nicotine, and he was unwilling to waste his money on cigarettes just to get

the books. Luckily, he found someone who was willing to give them to him, and he began what became his first library. He even carried these in the pockets of his vest and read and reread them imagining what he might say to some of the people whose lives he studied. His pride in owning books was tempered by his feeling that it “wouldn’t do to talk about it.” (AYS p. 269)

Sandburg’s reticence about talking about owning books was surely influenced by his father’s disinterest in reading of any sort. Aside from the *Bible*, *Hemlandet*—the Swedish newspaper, and a cursory glance at the *Republican Register* which Sandburg delivered as a boy, his father was indifferent. Noticing his son’s growing fascination with books, he admonished him: “Sholly, you read too much in de books—what good iss it?” (AYS p.79)

As Sandburg reflected on his growing up, he was even more perplexed by the fact that his father never learned to write. “Why did my father, with his exceptional manual cleverness and variety of skills, never learn to write? The desire wasn’t there. He never cared for books.” (AYS p. 78) Perhaps his father’s own lack of interest in reading, writing, and education in general was the spur to Sandburg’s own curiosity and hunger for learning. Certainly, the fact that he earned a livelihood doing what his father could not do must have been a constant source of irony. Sandburg would have realized that he shared this lack of paternal interest in reading with Abraham Lincoln, another self-taught Illinoisan. Reading for both men was their primary way of understanding the world.

Sandburg and Lincoln were supported in their educational pursuits by their mother and stepmother respectively. Sandburg’s mother listened to the sales pitch from the local encyclopedia salesman and defended her investment in those books when Sandburg’s father realized she had invested a week’s wages. Lincoln’s stepmother supported his reading and education, and he never forgot her support.

Galesburg was also a college town with the campuses of Lombard, Knox, and Brown’s Business College all within close reach. Even though the world of education with its strange conventions and apparent contradictions—commencement was when you finished your education—the proximity of these edifices of education, the professors who were well known and famous and who had traveled the world, the students who went on to become national figures all contributed to Sandburg’s curiosity of what it meant to be educated. Sandburg did attend Lombard College as a benefit for having served in the Spanish-American War but left without completing a degree in 1903. Clearly, Sandburg’s lack of formal education did not hinder him.

Aside from a brief stint teaching at the University of Michigan, Sandburg primarily worked as a writer. In some ways, I think this may have been a nod to his father. His father was content to “do a good days work for enough money to stay off want and misery.” (AYS p. 430). Sandburg contends that the first time his father’s name

was ever in print was the brief obituary which marked his death. And his name was listed as “Andrew” instead of August. His father’s suspicion of the value of what was printed was proved right.

## **FROM PRISONER TO POET TO PULITZER, EXPLORING CARL SANDBURG’S RELATIONSHIP WITH PITTSBURGH**

By Christopher D. George

[Ed. Note: A story by Christopher D. George of McDonald, PA about twenty-six year old Sandburg’s initial experience with Pittsburgh when he was jailed for hoboeing appeared in the Summer 2019 issue of *Inklings and Idlings*. In this story he explores Sandburg’s later relationship with Pittsburgh. Mr. George holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati and the University of Pittsburgh. He is the author of *Day-by-day with the 123rd Pennsylvania Volunteers* (2016). He teaches a poetry unit that focuses on Robert Frost, Carl Sandburg, and Emily Dickinson in the Upper St. Clair School District near Pittsburgh. His email is [cdg123pvi@yahoo.com](mailto:cdg123pvi@yahoo.com).]

If you remember the poet and writer Carl Sandburg, you most likely connect him with the city of Chicago. Whether you recall that it is the “Hog Butcher for the World” or that its “fog comes on little cat feet,” the Windy City is forever associated with Sandburg. What is not well known is that Sandburg also had a relationship with our Steel City that began before he lived in Chicago and lasted throughout his remarkable career. Before Sandburg was a household name, he was a traveling salesman searching for his future. It was during this time in his life that he was first introduced to the city of Pittsburgh, and the meeting made a lasting impression on him.

### *Rough First Impressions*

In 1904, the twenty-six year old Sandburg decided to make his way to Freeport, IL to spend the summer with a college friend. An experienced hobo, he started traveling west by “riding the bumpers” between freight cars in Philadelphia. Eventually feeling the grip of exhaustion, he climbed atop a box car and fell asleep. When he awoke, he found the train stopped some fourteen miles east of Pittsburgh in the town of Wilmerding.

Sandburg got his bearings and rode a trolley into Pittsburgh where he had breakfast before taking another trolley to the freight yard in McKees Rocks. The empty and waiting coal car that he chose to ride happened to hold five other men with the same need for inexpensive transportation. Unfortunately for all of them, a recent crime by a hobo near the tracks had made the papers and heightened the already strong fear of vagabonds in and around the Pittsburgh area.

Two local constables, who were on the lookout for any suspicious characters, had been watching the freight yard and soon approached the car to let the men know they were all under arrest. Each man was given a choice: pay a \$10 fine (about \$280 today) or spend ten days in the Allegheny County Jail. None of the men paid the fine.

After a short wagon ride to the jail, Sandburg was escorted to a cell that contained two other men. One of them was an older hobo, and the other was an eighteen

year-old with burnt and tattered clothes. The men were being crammed into a space that was originally intended for one inmate and fed a paltry amount of food. In the end, Sandburg would lose twelve pounds during his ten days behind bars in Pittsburgh.

The future Pulitzer Prize winner would document his visit to the Allegheny County Jail in a poem titled "Boes" that appeared in his first book of poetry, 1916's *Chicago Poems*:

*I WAITED today for a freight train to pass.  
Cattle cars with steers butting their long horns  
against the bars, went by.  
And a half a dozen hoboes stood on bumpers  
between cars.  
Well, the cattle are respectable, I thought.  
Every steer has its transportation paid for by the  
farmer sending it to market,  
While the hoboes are law-breakers in riding a railroad  
train without a ticket.  
It reminded me of ten days I spent in the Allegheny  
County Jail in Pittsburgh.  
I got ten days even though I was a veteran of the  
Spanish-American war.  
Cooped in the same cell with me was an old man, a  
bricklayer and a boozefighter ...  
We were three in all, the other being a Lithuanian  
who got drunk  
on pay day at the steelworks and got to fighting a  
policeman...*

#### *Skeptical and Critical*

Throughout the rest of his life, Sandburg would mention that he had once been a "jailbird" in Allegheny County, but it would not be long before Pittsburgh and its citizens would see a different side of this young wanderer. For it was only two years later, in 1906, when one of Sandburg's first poems was printed in the *Pittsburgh Daily Post*. The verse, titled "Departures," would also become part of *Chicago Poems*.

Then, in February 1909, as Sandburg was traveling about the country giving lectures on Walt Whitman and other subjects, he would return to the city that had jailed him only five years earlier. This time around, however, he would see the city in a different light and record his thoughts in a letter home to his wife:

*O the poetry and romance over this Pittsburgh  
town! Slopes and hillsides with electric lights twinkling  
bluish and flashing long banners of gleam along the  
river — and every once in a while we pass shadowy  
hulking sheds with yellow hell-mouths flaming — and  
the grim steel workers moving around like devils put  
to use.*

But Pittsburgh would be slow to return the admiration to Sandburg and his free-verse poetry, which broke from the standards of meter and rhyme of that time. As Samuel Hazo has noted in his 2017 book *The Pittsburgh That Stays Within You*, we are cautiously slow to embrace the new:

*As a rule, Pittsburghers do not accept the new  
just because it is new. They are more than casually  
conservative that way, and their ultimate criterion in  
evaluating the old against the new or vice-versa is to  
ask the sensible question, 'Is it any good?'*

Well, as Sandburg's career began to blossom, Pittsburgh stayed skeptical and critical. Writers and reviewers lamented his break from tradition. A writer in the *Pittsburgh Daily Post* commented that his poetry would be much better if he wrote more like William Wadsworth. The *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, in a review of Sandburg's second book of poetry titled *Corn Huskers*, criticized that "the inspired artist is not there. The works of this man, as is the case with all those of his school, contain little to which one may return frequently for the beauty of it." (In 1919, *Corn Huskers* would win one of the first Pulitzer Prizes for poetry.)

The criticism continued even as this "new poetry" started to draw more attention across the country. While reviewing Louis Untermeyer's 1919 book *The New Era in American Poetry*, which cited a Sandburg poem, the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* writer longed for the days "when the work of a poet will again become the prayer of a genius to his God and not a clever thing to startle people and to make money."

#### *Acclaim Comes Around*

The first positive comments in the Pittsburgh papers about Sandburg and this new type of poetry came from a lecture that was given at the 20th Century Club in February 1923. Dr. John T. Frederick, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh, shared several Sandburg poems and described this new American poetry as being "alive" and worth reading. "Even if the poet brings something entirely new and unfamiliar, it should not be rejected without consideration. This is the spirit which [will] encourage writers and with it, when the great man comes, he will be recognized," stated Frederick.

Meanwhile, as popular opinion was starting to change, Sandburg continued to appreciate the brawn and raw power of Pittsburgh and its men. In his third book of poetry, 1920's *Smoke and Steel*, Sandburg mentioned our city in the title poem:

*So fire runs in, runs out, runs somewhere else again,  
And the bar of steel is a gun, a wheel, a nail, a  
shovel,  
A rudder under the sea, a steering-gear in the sky;  
And always dark in the heart and through it,*

*Smoke and the blood of a man.  
Pittsburgh, Youngstown, Gary — they make their  
steel with men  
In the blood of men and the ink of chimneys  
The smoke nights write their oaths  
Smoke into steel and blood into steel;  
Homestead, Braddock, Birmingham, they make their  
steel with men.  
Smoke and blood is the mix of steel ...*

But Sandburg would not truly be embraced by the city until he ventured away from poetry and wrote something that Pittsburgh would appreciate. After years and years of research and writing, Sandburg published a two-volume biography of the early life of Abraham Lincoln in 1926. The critical acclaim was immediate. A writer for the *Pittsburgh Press* prophesied, "Sandburg will probably gain more fame by this Lincoln book than his verse, though he is recognized now among discriminating critics as one of the country's most outstanding poets."

#### *A Legacy Forged in Steel*

It was then, twenty-one years after Sandburg had been arrested and jailed, that the city truly opened its doors to him. His name and his distinctive voice became a part of Pittsburgh for the next 40 years. Speaking engagements where he shared his poetry, commentary, and songs would begin occurring regularly. Places like the 20th Century Club, the Young Men's & Young Women's Hebrew Association, the Women's Club of Sewickley, the Frick Teacher's Training School, Penn State University, the Pennsylvania College for Women, and Allegheny College all delighted in listening to the once-derided poet from Illinois.

Sandburg would also be heard sharing his poetry on KDKA radio. His syndicated columns would appear in the *Pittsburgh Sun-Telegraph* during the 1940s. He would also be chosen as the radio voice to commemorate the solemn one-year anniversary of Pearl Harbor in Pittsburgh and around the country. When a treasure trove of Lincoln papers was released by the Library of Congress in 1947, Sandburg's analysis and commentary were featured by the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. The one-time resident of the Allegheny County Jail would also collaborate and appear with Pittsburgh's beloved Gene Kelly on television. As the poet read, Kelly brought his words to life with dance.

In the end, Carl Sandburg came to appreciate Pittsburgh, despite his initial introduction to the city. And the same can be said of Pittsburgh's acceptance of the poet, historian and writer. The always cautious people of this city, forever eager to ask, "Is it any good?" decided that Sandburg was so much more than that.

### **CARL SANDBURG & EDGAR LEE MASTERS, A COMPLICATED RELATIONSHIP**

By Rex Cherrington

[For the Fall 2019 *Inklings and Idlings* Rex Cherrington submitted a photo of a portion of a book review written by Edgar Lee Masters that appears on the dust jacket of the first printing of Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* (1916) and a transcription of Master's laudatory review. Here is Rex's story of the relationship between the two men.]

Most readers of *Inklings & Idlings* know the basics of the early life of Carl Sandburg, born January 6, 1878 in Galesburg, Knox County, Illinois. Sandburg's parents were immigrants who came here from Sweden with practically no money but filled with great faith in God and America and were willing to work and work and work. Carl Sandburg's father August was a helper at the

blacksmith shop of the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy Railroad. The job of the helper in the shop would have been among the lowest paid and certainly the hardest work, mostly swinging a heavy hammer or sledge to pound hot metal on an anvil, keeping this up for ten hours per day and six days per week. August Sandburg's body was actually deformed over the years, his right side more muscular but also more degenerated and perhaps his spine bent a bit from all this. Carl's mother was fully engaged, physically, mentally, and spiritually in the care, feeding, and encouragement of her family.

Edgar Lee Masters was born in Kansas August 23, 1868. His father Hardin Masters was an attorney who was raised at Petersburg, Illinois. The family roots go back to the early 18th century, long before the American Revolution, though no proven record of his family's service exists. We could describe the Master's as coming from one of the "old families." Edgar's mother was Emma J. Dexter, the daughter of a prominent Methodist minister.

About one year after Edgar Lee Master's birth the family returned to Illinois, presumably due to a lack of legal work in Kansas. The young family settled in Lewistown, Fulton County, Illinois, the county seat and most likely a place for an attorney to find work. In a eulogy of his father Edgar described his father as a "playboy." Master's biographer describes the Masters' home as lacking in affection and his mother "indifferent." Edgar had much affection for his grandparents who continued to live in Petersburg a few miles away. The grandparents' home was filled with books, a place where young Masters was introduced to literature and poetry. Edgar Lee Masters attended Knox Academy, a preparatory school operated by Knox College, for one year. It is stated that family finances dictated the decision to remove Masters from the Academy. His father brought him back to Lewistown to read law in his law office. Edgar soon got licensed to practice law but never seemed to like the practice of law. In fact, he once said he might have enjoyed the practice of law if it had not been for one of his most regrettable mistakes when he wrote some verse when he was fifteen or sixteen years old and was passionate about it. To support himself, he moved to Chicago and entered into the practice of law there. He was not known for having much ability in the courtroom but was considered a researcher without equal. In Chicago Masters wasted no time in joining the ranks of the literati. Masters was soon receiving attention as a poet and had *Spoon River Anthology*, his most successful work, published in book form in 1915. Masters was being regarded as "The Chicago Poet." Carl Sandburg's *Chicago Poems* came out in 1916, and there was still friendship between Masters and Sandburg. This is illustrated by the favorable one paragraph review written by Masters that appeared on the dust jacket of the first printing of the first edition of Sandburg's *Chicago Poems*.

It is obvious that Sandburg and Masters were not just totally different from each other in terms of the socio-economic status of their respective families but quite

different in their personalities. Masters, ten years older than Sandburg, came from such a background that it caused him to offer rather patronizing support. One could almost imagine that Masters viewed this as an act of charity. Masters was content to be friends with Sandburg as long as it was understood that Masters got top billing, and Sandburg understood he was the young upstart.

Soon Sandburg moved to the forefront and was becoming considered the "Chicago Poet," a title which he yet holds. Masters became jealous, and when Sandburg started writing about Lincoln, it set off great anger in Masters even though he had not yet written about Lincoln but had only planned to do so. Masters claimed a family connection since his grandfather had personally known Lincoln even though they were from opposing political parties. When Edgar Lee Masters' father, Hardin, tried to sneak away and join the Union Army in the Civil War, his father had him stopped and detained in jail from which he retrieved his son who never served. From there the Masters' Southern sympathies remained.

Masters was a literary giant, even if he never had another success that even came close to *Spoon River Anthology*. That book was readable and people could enjoy reading it. Masters had the formula for literary success but failed to comprehend the literary style for which the people had an appetite. Masters' later works in an effort to "exceed" his earlier work were largely failures, though he was not discouraged and continued to write poetry and biographies.

On the other hand, *Chicago Poems* was the first step for an illustrious literary career for Sandburg. It is wonderful how this part of Central Illinois was the home turf for two such large literary figures and Vachel Lindsay from Springfield, not too far from here.

There was a time when Sandburg, Masters, and Vachel Lindsay were all three friends. Sandburg and Lindsay remained friends until Lindsay's sad and tragic death. Sandburg was among those who helped to hide that his death was due to suicide accomplished by ingesting a cleaning fluid called "Lestoil." Quite differently, Masters was the first to write a biography which publicized the unfortunate details. It was suspected Masters did this for no other reason than to break the story and bring attention to himself.

Masters' wrote his book on Lincoln. He entitled it *Lincoln, The Man*, and it was unlike the work of Sandburg. Sandburg made an effort to give his reader a factual account of Lincoln, showing Lincoln to be an imperfect human, yet very admirable man. Masters went out of his way to include non-factual and detrimental observations about Lincoln. Masters went so far as to claim that Lincoln was "undersexed," whatever that means and however that is measured, which was beyond the readers' imagination. In short, Masters had done a "hatchet job" on Lincoln. Sandburg would have distanced himself from Masters had not Masters already taken care of the matter. I got through Knox College without even seeing a copy of this book. The first copy I saw was the one I purchased in a used/rare bookstore in Atlanta,

Georgia. It likely went over better in the South.

So, that being the background, let us return to a time when there was friendship between Masters and Sandburg when the first printing of the first edition of *Chicago Poems* was published, and Masters wrote a favorable review of the book which appeared on the front cover of the dust jacket.

## **SANDBURG & HEMINGWAY: MUTUAL ADMIRATION**

By Rich Hanson

No, Carl Sandburg was never actually awarded the Nobel Prize. A puzzling oversight by a committee that you would have thought would have been eager to validate the achievements of a fellow Swede.

Carl was awarded his prize sort of by proxy. When Ernest Hemingway was awarded his in 1954, he told the first reporter who collared him for an interview that he could think of one American writer more worthy of the honor. That writer, Hemingway emphatically averred, is Carl Sandburg.

That this compliment meant a great deal to Sandburg was borne out by a conversation that Carl had with Harvey Breit, then one of the editors of the *New York Times* Book Review, later that year. When Harvey asked Sandburg how he felt about being singled out by Hemingway as someone who should have won the Nobel Prize, Sandburg's response was,

*Harvey Breit, I want to tell you that sometime thirty years from now when the Breit boys are sitting around, one boy will say, 'Did Carl Sandburg ever win the Nobel Prize?' and one Breit boy will say, 'Ernest Hemingway gave it to him in 1954.'*

Sandburg respected Hemingway just as deeply. *I liked it,* he said, *"whenever I heard anyone say that Hemingway was indestructible. When he was referred to as an expatriate I liked his simple comment, 'I took a hand in every war that my country has been in.'*

Of course, Carl was asked to comment on the news of Hemingway's suicide. His response moved from a sweeping statement, "Hemingway throws a long shadow over the pages of American Literary history," to a personal reminiscence. "I prize a letter from him where his hand wrote, 'Three muskrats swim west on the Desplaines River.' After quoting that line from one of my poems, he told of a long canoe trip down that river which flowed between his Oak Park home and my Maywood, Illinois home."

Then Sandburg's thoughts must have turned to Hemingway's widow, as he finished his response with this anecdote:

*Over the phone from my North Carolina home to his place near Havana, Cuba, he said 'I am lonely. Miss Mary is on a train from New York to Minneapolis for a visit with her mother. I'm sort of helpless without her.' I was on the CHICAGO DAILY NEWS when Mary Welsh came from Bemidji, Minnesota to be our*

*Assistant Society Editor. Plenty of men have said 'My wife is perfect,' but no other man has ever surpassed Hemingway in telling why his mate for life was perfect. Deeper than any sea grotto is the grief of 'Miss Mary,' who possessed Ernest because of rare and deep mutual bonds.*

Here we see no petty jealousy or begrudging of honors won by one writer rather than another. We see two very gifted writers whose friendship was forged of mutual admiration. Sandburg understood the Hemingway's both well enough to have penned the line, "deeper than any sea grotto is the grief of 'Miss Mary.'" What a touching tribute to both their love and her loss.

## **CARL SANDBURG—THE MAN: THE AUTHOR & PUBLIC EDUCATOR WHO COULD HAVE BEEN PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES**

By Tomas Junglander

[Ed.Note: This is the fifth installment of a Carl Sandburg biography written by CSHSA member Tomas Junglander of Vadstena, Sweden.]

### *The Journalist*

Carl Sandburg worked as a newspaper journalist for twenty-five years. His longest tenure was with the *Chicago Daily News*. Sandburg was a reporter on social issues, film critic, columnist, and he produced editorials. His coverage of the Chicago Race Riots of July 1919 remains one of the great critical studies of America's racial conflicts. His series of newspaper articles were published in book form and became a moral wake-up call. These articles precede, according to many, the Swedish economist and sociologist Gunnar Myrdal's major work, *An American Dilemma*. Published in 1944 *An American Dilemma* served to crystallize the emerging awareness that racial discrimination and legal segregation could not endure in the U.S.

Sandburg reviewed films for seven years when the industry was in its infancy, still bound by the silence of early technology. He wrote over 2,000 pieces on the motion picture industry. On his first trip to Hollywood Sandburg interviewed many people for his column, but the highlight was his visit with Charlie Chaplin who made the greatest impression. In those days of silent films Sandburg told his readers how Chaplin's voice sounded, low and musical, with the words coming "sometimes with terrible rapidity and then again slow and stuttering." Most motion pictures of the time were derived from books or stage plays, and Sandburg applauded the originality of Chaplin. His motion picture reviews took the form of commentary more than criticism. He was one of the first critics to see the educational promise of film and the power of film to bring the world to the movie audience. He also often reacted to how historical facts are distorted in films.

"I never was any good in synchronizing with editors or publishers, except when I was a police reporter, then I would have the murder in the paper before the corpse was cold," Sandburg said.

His years on the *Daily News* were immensely creative and productive, in part, because of his ability to work in so many different fields.

He had great respect for his publisher at the *Chicago Daily News*, Victor Lawson, who headed the newspaper from 1876 to 1925. Apart from the newspaper business, Lawson was involved in various philanthropic causes in Chicago. In May of 1932, as the Depression wore on, the *Chicago Daily News* reduced all salaries in half. Sandburg resigned and gave his time and energy exclusively to the Lincoln work.

### *The Author of Children's Books*

Carl Sandburg, like the Nobel Prize winners Selma Lagerlöf and Rudyard Kipling, belongs with well-known adult writers who also are creators of children's books. Sandburg had read Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tales but had not found anything similar in his own country. In 1922 Sandburg wrote, "Sometime I shall do a story about a town in the Rootabaga Country. I am tired of princes and princesses and I sought the American equivalent of elves and gnomes. I knew that American children would respond, so I wrote some nonsense tales with American fooling in them." On his own children with the nicknames "Spink," "Skabootch," and "Swipes" he tests his stories.

Sandburg creates the fictional Rootabaga Country--a special universe with its own geography and its own way of life. Much of the comedy in the books about Rootabaga--*Rootabaga Stories*, *Rootabaga Pigeons*, and *More Rootabagas*--lies in the way Sandburg names people and places. He plays with sounds and concepts. As a common thread through the stories, Sandburg plays with letters in the alphabet. On your way to Rootabaga you pass Over and Underland. Nobody gets out of the way for anybody else. Either you go over or under. Major cities in Rootabaga are Village of Liver-and-Onions and Village of Cream Puffs, and in the country there is also a city hidden under a grassy farm where only spiders live. The cities accommodate their residents where they live their own lives. Here there are hares, mice, ragdolls, and human brush handles mixed with taxi drivers, policemen, movie actors, and firefighters. The skyscrapers talk and feel, railroad tracks change from straight to zigzag, the city and its skyscrapers are reduced to manageable size, compressed so that they are easy to control and cope with. Rootabagians live by a clear, gentle, and dignified ethical code, and the stories are largely free of violence. Children allow themselves to decide their own names which testifies to a strikingly modern childhood vision.

One central character in the stories is the Potato Face Blind Man, wise and cheerful, who plays the accordion and collects silver dollars. He is located on Main Street next to the Post Office in the Village of Liver-and-Onions. He always has time to start talks, tell stories, or give philosophical comments. He is wearing a sign with the text, I am Blind TOO! There are so many people who have eyes but see nothing with their eyes.

Sandburg did very little moralizing. Bimbo the Snip does get his thumb stuck to his nose when the winds change while he is making a face at the Iceman. Sandburg's mother used to reprimand him with that familiar childhood threat. He regains his thumb's freedom only after it is hit six times with the end of a policeman's club. Government in Rootabaga Country is, on its surface, delightfully complicated. In reality, it parodies political conventions and parties. In the portrayal of life in Rootabaga, imagination and reality are combined with details from Sandburg own life.

According to Lena Kåreland, Swedish Professor Emirita in Literature, Sandburg, with his stories from Rootabaga, has had an impact on the development of Swedish children's books. As fairy tales will, these stories have a happy ending. For Lennart Helsing, the Swedish writer, there is a direct impact from Sandburg, especially in Helsing's early-published children's books. The inspiration that Helsing finds in Sandburg does not lead to any imitation. Sandburg can be said to be a catalyst that helps Helsing develop into the great children's writer he becomes. Both mean that art primarily speaks to our minds and has the ability to influence people in daily life. Both always write based on the children's perspective and respect for children's imagination.

According to Sandburg, the name Rootabaga has Swedish origin. A "rutabaga" is a large, yellow, Swedish turnip that Sandburg Americanized to Rootabaga.

**PHOTO GALLERY**

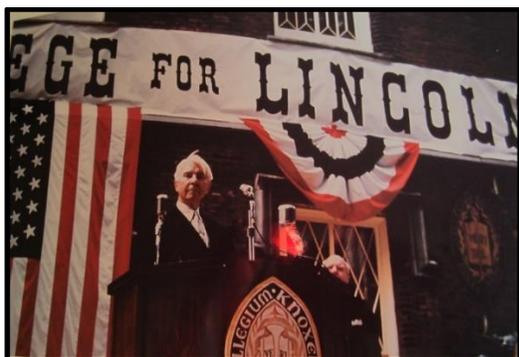


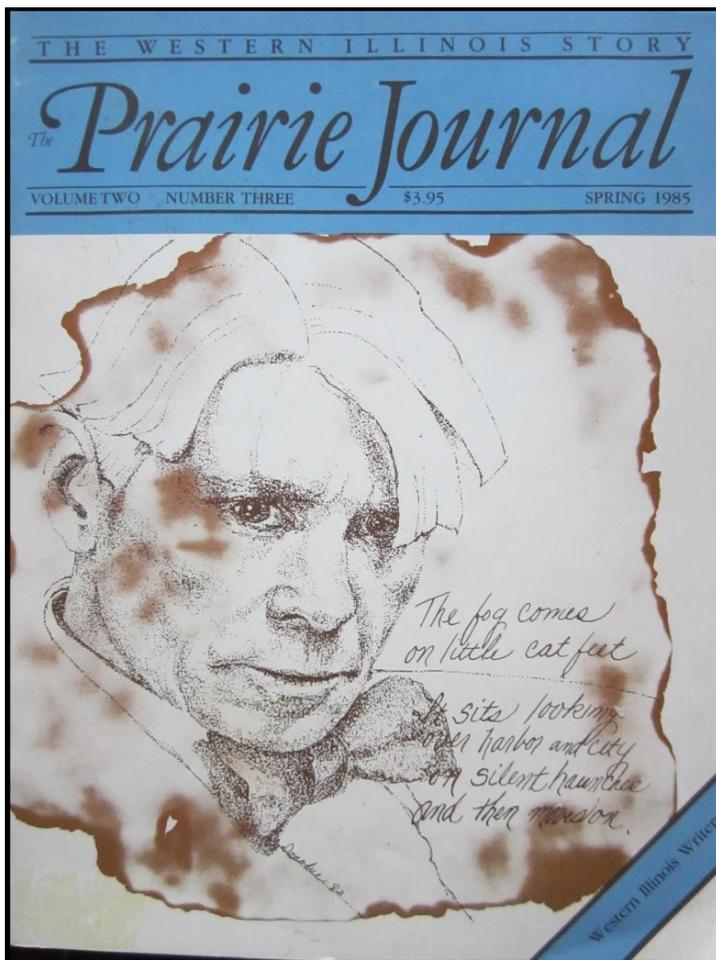
Photo of Sandburg taken by CSHSA member Niel Johnson of Independence, MO on October 8, 1958 at the Centennial of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate at Knox College, Galesburg, IL.



Former CSHSA board member Stanford Shover and his son Bryan on the occasion of Stanford's 92nd. birthday in September, 2019.



Carl Sandburg at the Centennial Celebration of the Lincoln-Douglas Debate organized by Knox College and the City of Galesburg in October, 1958. L-r Sandburg, Clarence K. Gittings, Edward Steichen, and Adda George. Mr. Gittings, a Lombard College graduate and News Director for KTVO in Ottumwa, IA, served as Master of Ceremonies for the Prairie Yars Banquet honoring Sandburg during the Lincoln-Douglas Debate Centennial Celebration. Courtesy of the Clarence K. Gittings photo collection donated to Hewes Library, Monmouth College in 2015.



Drawing of Sandburg by Dorothy Donahue that appeared on the cover of *The Prairie Journal* in the Spring, 1985 issue. Ms. Donahue was an illustrator for Hallmark Cards in Kansas City, MO. She had lived in Galesburg and taught art classes at Carl Sandburg College and the Galesburg Civic Art Center.

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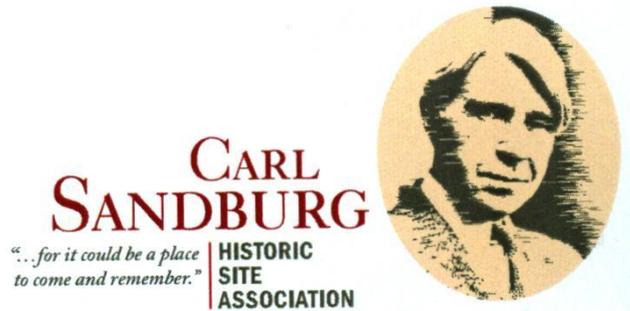
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