
INKLINGS and IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

313 East Third Street • Galesburg, Illinois 61401 • (309) 342-2361

Winter 2001

The name, "Inklings and Idlings," comes from the title of Carl Sandburg's first column, printed in the **Galesburg Evening Mail** under the pseudonym "Crimson", in 1904.

The newsletter welcomes articles, particularly about Carl Sandburg, Galesburg, and Knox County. Space limitations may require that they be edited. The articles should be sent to:

Inklings and Idlings
Carl Sandburg Historic Site
Association
313 East Third Street
Galesburg, IL 61401

Barbara Schock
Editor

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The Songbag Is Open Again

After a midwinter hiatus, the Songbag Concert series will resume on Thursday, February 15th. The venue for the program, and the subsequent concerts, is the Carl Sandburg Historic Site at 313 East Third Street, Galesburg.

The band "Morning Star" will provide the February entertainment. The group is composed of Amy Hacker, who performs on the flute and the bass; John Heasley, who plays the guitar and the harmonica; and Mike Terry, who makes music on the mandolin and the banjo. Ms. Hacker and Mr. Heasley do the vocals for the band.

The artists for the March 15th concert have not yet been finalized, but those who attend will be well pleased with the artists who appear.

On Thursday, April 19th, Larry Penn will once again help inaugurate the Sandburg Days festival. It was been two years since Mr. Penn has been at the Site. His last appearance delighted his audience.

Larry Penn sings and tell stories of hard work, working people, trains, trucks, life on the road, love nonsense and pink flamingos.

Noted for their elegance and simplicity, his songs are not only popular with audiences, but are acclaimed by other artists, many of whom have recorded their own renditions of the songs.

All the concerts, which are coordinated by John Heasley, begin at 7 p.m., in the smoke and alcohol free atmosphere of the Site.

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Our Numbers Increase

The Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association is happy to welcome the following new members:

James Creighton
Betty Holden
Richard Noll, Jr.

If you have joined the Association recently, and your name is not

listed above, please notify Inklings and Idlings of the omission so it may be rectified.

worth the wait.

- Steve Holden
Site Interpreter

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Update on New Exhibits

Picket Fences

The goal is in sight! The puzzle is coming together! The exhibits at the Sandburg Historic Site are happening!

Visitors to the Site often comment on the picket and board fences surrounding it. While they give us privacy and charm, there were more important reasons in the 19th century for fencing the yard.

Numerous consultation trips to Springfield, countless phone calls and a couple of research forays to the University of Illinois collections have all been a part in the "Great Venture for the World's Best Sandburg Exhibit." The results of these efforts, I think, will please you.

We think of picket fences as decorative supports for rambling roses, but Carl Sandburg's parents needed them to fence their vegetable garden from wandering pigs, horses and cattle that could damage their very important winter food supply.

The plodding schedule, due greatly in part to the need for accuracy (facts, dates, spelling, etc.), and to the selection process itself (do you have any idea how many photographs there are of Sandburg?) has finally run its course. Now all that is left is object labeling, some photographic work and final layout. In other words, the fun stuff.

Most of the early settlers had large vegetable gardens that took up most of the yard. They raised peas, beans, cabbage and root vegetables like beets, radishes, carrots and potatoes. Some were stored in the cellar and others were canned in Mason jars, working over the hot cook stove in the heat of late summer.

The care that has been taken with the exhibit's text (a plethora of thanks to friend and expert Ryan Roberts) will, I'm sure, greatly reduce our "Oops Factor." Also, the fastidious care given the planning and overall concept of the exhibit by Steve Leonard and Mark Johnson of our Preservation Agency in Springfield will add accuracy and interest as well as balance to the project.

Sandburg wrote in his autobiography *Always the Young Strangers* about these fences and their disappearance at the turn of the century:

Shortly we will begin working directly with the Kaulfuss Design folks in Des Plaines for the final layout. And then...the Grand Opening on Saturday, April 21, 2001. I'm certain you will find it has been

"Then slowly and little by little the fences and gates were taken away. The front-yard fences went first, then the side and back-yard fences. It began on the North Side on such streets as North Broad and North Prairie where the rich and the well-to-do had their homes and well-kept lawns....As the roving livestock became fewer and the North Side set the style of tearing fences away and doing without them, the rest of the town slowly followed. The year came when we tore down our front-yard fence and burned it for

kindling wood, saving good boards for repair jobs. But the side and back-yard fences stayed the seventeen years we lived at that place." (809 East Berrien Street)

Now the picket fence has been reborn in plastic. Certainly this means less maintenance, but along with freedom from painting comes an absence of nostalgia and charm.

- Carol Nelson
Site Superintendent

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Quotation Walk



A stone path wends its way through the garden of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site. It is called Quotation Walk because each of the stones bears a quotation from Sandburg's works. Among them are:

"O prairie mother, I am one of your boys."

"Nothing happens unless first a dream."

"Poetry is a packsack of invisible keepsakes."

"To know silence perfectly is to know music."

Nearby is Remembrance Rock, named for Sandburg's only novel. Under it are buried the ashes of Sandburg and his wife, Lilian.

Many visitors to the Site have derived their greatest pleasure from the time spent in the garden.

We hope you will visit the Walk and enjoy the beautiful flowers this spring.

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Wrinklings and Wild Things

(Given the kind of weather we've experienced lately, it is not difficult to imagine a bitterly cold January night, as we join Henry Hagglyhoagly, who is toting his Spanish Spinnish Splishy guitar (special made) and talking to his wool yarn mittens as he tramps down a country road to serenade his girl, Susan Slackentwist.)

How Henry Hagglyhoagly Played the Guitar with His Mittens On

The cold wind of the bitter cold weather blew and blew, trying to blow the guitar out from under the left elbow of Henry Hagglyhoagly. And the worse the wind blew the tighter he held his elbow holding the guitar where he wanted it.

He walked on and on with his long legs stepping long steps till at last he stopped, held his nose in the air, and sniffed.

"Do I sniff something or do I not?" he asked, lifting his wool yarn mittens to his nose and rubbing his nose till it was warm. Again he sniffed.

"Ah hah, yeah, yeah, this is the big rutabaga field near the home of the rutabaga king and the home of his daughter, Susan Slackentwist."

At last he came to the house, stood under the window and slung the guitar around in front of him to play the music to go with the song.

"And now," he asked his mittens, "shall I take you off or keep you on? If I take you off the cold wind of the bitter cold weather will freeze my hands so stiff and bitter cold my fingers will be too stiff to play the guitar. *I will play with mittens on.*"

Which he did. He stood under the window of Susan Slackentwist and played the guitar with his mittens on, the warm wool yarn mittens he called his chums. It was the first time any strong young man going to see his sweetheart ever played the guitar with his mittens on when it was a bitter night with a cold wind and cold weather.

Susan Slackentwist opened her window and threw him a snow-bird feather to keep for a keepsake to remember her by. And for years afterward many a sweetheart in the Rootabaga Country told her lover, "If you wish to marry me let me hear you under my window on a winter night playing the guitar with wool yarn mittens on."

(The entire story can be located in *Rootabaga Stories, Part One*, available in our Museum Store. Happy Valentine's Day!)

-Steve Holden

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A Few Words About A Contributor

Recently the Belvidere Daily Republican carried a feature story about Dr. Richard Sandburg, who has contributed a number of articles about his uncle Carl to this newsletter.

Dr. Sandburg grew up and was educated in Galesburg, but moved to Belvidere in northern Illinois to establish his practice, even though he knew no one there.

As the following paragraphs from the Republican show, he became a real part of his adopted community.

"After only 10 months in Belvidere, Sandburg was drafted to serve in World War II. He served in the army for 51 months, spending a little over a year on Christmas Island, 80 miles from the equator.

"I'll never forget my time on Christmas Island," Sandburg said. "It was a refueling base and there were no women."

"Sandburg was discharged in 1945 and returned home to marry his first wife, Alice, who later died.

"Sandburg immersed himself with his private practice and in community service. He joined the Belvidere Rotary in 1960, and in his 40 years of membership he has a perfect attendance.

"I hate to miss a meal," Sandburg said.

"Sandburg has served as the group's secretary for 27 years and has written and typed the group's weekly bulletin for the same amount of time.

"Rotary is the first service organization in the world," Sandburg said. "We have provided eight year-long scholarships to foreign universities, each worth \$25,000. Our group has also given over \$190,000 to the Rotary Foundation."

"Richard met his wife Janet in 1989 and they married soon thereafter.

"We met at the Writers Guild in Rockford," Janet said. "We both like

to write. I like to write poetry and short stories and he likes to write about his life and his uncle.'

"Janet said the couple still meets with the monthly Writers Guild group at Media Play.

"We are the only ones that have ever met and married from the writers guild,' Janet said.

"Although the couple resides in Rockford, Sandburg has maintained his Belvidere Rotary membership.

"In addition to writing, Janet has also enjoyed cooking as a hobby. She placed second in the Illinois state cookoff as well as taking top honors in the Pillsbury Bake Off. Her efforts were recognized when she appeared on an episode of Oprah Winfrey and "20/20."

"Although Janet doesn't cook as much as she used to, she is thankful the couple still has good health for being in their mid-80s. They take advantage of their mobility to visit those who are less fortunate."

* * *

The Lost Wall Paper Legend

(Editor's note: Redecorating one's domicile is never an easy task, nor is it to be lightly undertaken. The Sandburg family had some unusual problems in refurbishing their house not generally shared by others. In this article Dr. Sandburg explains how they overcame their difficulties.)

Aunt Mary Sandburg Johnson would frequently shyly confide in me as to the struggles of the Sandburg family while the children were growing.

Her father, August, was paid about \$10 a week, or \$1.47 a day, as an assistant blacksmith for the C.B. & Q. Railroad in Galesburg, Illinois.

At times, it was difficult to provide even enough food for a family of seven.

If a portion of their home at 809 East Berrien Street showed evidence of neglect, wear or tear, certain desperate measures were deemed necessary to refurbish the area. Aunt Mary said the rooms were kept meticulously clean, but over the years, the wallpaper became soiled and torn, and the cost of new paper was beyond their means.

Fortunately, the manager of a local wallpaper and paint store became aware of their plight and would sneak them into a back room which contained supplies and discarded, out-dated catalogues.

Each page of the catalogues bore a different design; one showed two boys playing catch; another bore a dish of assorted fruit; and another displayed multi-colored vertical or horizontal stripes. One even depicted a dog and a cat in a playful mood.

The Sandburgs gratefully accepted the free, outmoded catalogues, and after stripping or cleaning the old paper, they set about measuring, cutting, pasting and hanging the new pages next to or above the others.

The completed project revealed a fresh, bright and clean appearance despite the incongruous mismatched patterns, but which enabled them to stretch their budget.

Aunt Mary had moved to California, but during a visit I made to Galesburg in the fifties, my curiosity was aroused, and I sought permission to visit the old Berrien Street home to see if any of the aged wallpaper still was hanging.

The occupants graciously showed me the entire domicile, particularly a den-sewing room on the second floor.

One Hundred Twenty-Three
Years Ago

They said they were aware of the Sandburg heritage and the wallpaper legend. All of the rooms had been decorated several times except one. They wished to preserve the paper as it was the only remnant of the era when the Sandburgs lived there. Also, they were proud to be living in the home of the illustrious poet, especially since he had played a role in helping to paper the walls while he was in his teens.

In 1998, I again was granted the privilege of observing the home. The occupants, Mr. and Mrs. Wendell Lawson, also gave me a grand tour, but alas, the historic Sandburg wallpaper was missing.

The Lawsons, too, were aware that the Sandburgs had preceded them several generations before, but the wallpaper tale had escaped them. Someone previous to the Lawsons had replaced the dingy, aged paper with paint, terminating a page of Sandburg lore.

Mrs. Lawson said she shared my disappointment that the wallpaper didn't survive, but invited me to inspect another room which contained forty beautiful chirping birds in dozens of cages.

Upon our entering the room, the birds became mysteriously silent as we searched for the missing wallpaper.

Returning from the old den-sewing room, Mrs. Lawson preceded me down the stairs. As I took a last, longing look at our feathered friends, they suddenly burst into a chorus of mixed chords, and then seemed to meld into a tune strangely similar to one of Carl Sandburg's favorites, "The Boll Weevil Song," as though they wished to compensate for the loss of that memorable wallpaper.

--Dr. Richard Sandburg

Carl Sandburg was born on January 6, 1878. Many historians would argue we cannot really know what life was like so many years ago. That may be true, but one can get some notion of the day-to-day existence of those who lived in Galesburg back then. The newspapers of the era provide a clue. Here are a few excerpts with explanatory commentary.

The following paragraph makes it clear the shopkeepers of the city were as concerned about Christmas trade as any retailer of 2000.

"It is the concurrent testimony of store keepers everywhere that people bought more goods for Christmas presents this year than for several years past, despite the depressing character of the weather--a pretty sure indication that times are bettering."

"Bait and switch" was not unknown in 1878. Unfortunately, the suggested remedy is not really satisfactory.

"Complaint is made that local storekeepers advertise their wares for sale at prices temptingly low, but that when the same wares are sought by purchasers other and much higher prices therefor are demanded. If storekeepers here or elsewhere are guilty of any such dishonesty, purchasers have the remedy in their own hands. Let them firmly refuse thenceforth to deal with tradesmen given to such nefarious practises."

There seemed to be a certain amount of segregation by race and ethnicity. The Scandinavians were not welcomed in the "best" circles. The African-Americans were far more isolated. Still, both groups managed to have a relatively active social life among themselves.

"The colored Masons of the W.L.

Darrow fraternity of this city, whereof H.H. Hawkins is W.M. and Edward Barber Secretary, held a public installation of officers, Thursday evening. The members of the Lodge marched in a body from their hall to the African Methodist Episcopal church, where a bountiful supply of refreshments were served, and where also the Rev. H. Brown, pastor of the church, delivered a masonic oration."

"A public installation of the newly elected officers of the First Scandinavian Lodge, No. 446, I.O.O.F., took place Tuesday evening, at Odd Fellows Hall. The number of visitors in attendance completely filled the Hall in every part. The installation services were conducted by Deputy Grand Master August W. Berggren, acting Grand Master, assisted by Grand Warden Z. Beatty, Grand Marshall Newton Briggs, Grand Secretary S.W. Grubb, and Grand Treasurer N.J. Olsen.

"Following the installation ceremonies a very excellent and appropriate address was delivered by Deputy Grand Master Berggren, succeeded by addresses by Grand Warden Beatty and Past Grand Lanstrum, who was installed Treasurer. The instrumental and vocal music on the occasion was acceptably rendered by the choir of the Swedish Methodist Episcopal church. Refreshments and the general interchange of social courtesies concluded the proceedings.

"The Hall was very tastefully decorated with evergreens. Conspicuous among these decorations were the three links, emblems of the Order, suspended in center of the Hall."

For those not of a formal fraternal inclination, indoor sports such as bowling, were available.

"Two bowling alleys of very superior

construction have just been added by Mr. E.A. Farr to his well known billiard hall. The bowling alley proper will be separated by a handsome railing, and will be conducted in such a manner as strictly to exclude from the hall and alleys all idlers and persons in anywise objectionable to the most reputable patrons of this favorite resort. Thus the pleasant and invigorating exercise of bowling, especially recommended by all leading physicians of the country, and everywhere in vogue at fashionable watering places and health-restoring institutions generally, may be fully, delightfully, and cheaply enjoyed in the new alleys which Mr. Farr has so handsomely provided for the accommodation of the public. Efforts such as these made by Mr. Farr, to contribute to the healthful and agreeable entertainment of pleasure seekers of the city and vicinity, are deserving of every encouragement. Mr. Farr's new bowling alleys under the Union Hotel should therefore become the leading popular resort in Galesburg."

A nation-wide temperance movement was represented locally by a group which battled vigorously against the demons of whiskey and rum.

"The temperance mass meeting at the Academy of Music Sunday afternoon was again very fully attended. Mrs. M. Wait, Miss M.A. West, the Rev. Geo. W. Brown, and Messrs. R.C. Hunt, G.C. Alden, and W.H. Hunt delivered brief and appropriate addresses."

Their efforts were resulted in some success, at least temporarily.

From the Peoria Democrat: "The distilleries of this city are running very light. The red ribbon and kindred movements having total abstinence as their object have caused a perceptible decrease in the

consumption of whisky and, while the demand has fallen off, prices have become so low that distillers complain that there is very little profit in the business. One of them said Sunday that there were too many distillers in the country, and the red ribbon agitators will probably agree with him in this opinion."

* * *

Latrine Lament

During Carl Sandburg's life in Galesburg, a family's sanitary facilities usually consisted of a outhouses or privies. Flush toilets were almost unknown. Consequently, when Sandburg went off to serve his country during the Spanish American War, he did not have high expectations.

His National Guard unit was shipped to Falls Church, Virginia, for training. For what Sandburg described as the "ritual relief of

bowels and bladder," the men used the "vaults." They were about two hundred yards from the mens' tents. The vaults consisted of trenches three feet in width and six feet in depth. There was no overhead cover, so there was no protection from sun or rain.

Inevitably, the vaults attracted flies. There was also an almost overpowering stench. The latter might have been alleviated by application of lime or sand. That was what many householders did for similar problems in their privies. Apparently the United States army did not see the necessity of doing anything.

The men wished the foul smell could be wafted to the halls of Congress or the Department of War, which was seven miles distant. Unfortunately, even when the stench was at its strongest, its fumes did not carry quite that far.

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