

INKLINGS AND IDLINGS

The Newsletter of the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association

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Winter 2021-2022

FROM SITE SVCS. SPEC. BRYAN ENGELBRECHT

ALOOF

FIRE of winter sunset,
Your talk is red and gold
In smoldering shadow.

Monolog of day and night
between sun and stars,
You are an old man
who chooses few words.

[1913]

Carl Sandburg, *Complete Poems*, ©1970

As winter comes and the holidays are upon us, we often find ourselves reflecting on the past year. 2021 served as a rewarding year for the staff and volunteers of Carl Sandburg State Historic Site.

We started out the year closed to the public due to concerns in November and December of 2020 with rising cases of COVID-19. Thankfully, as cases dropped and people became vaccinated, we were able to reopen on January 28. We have stayed open throughout the year, with no closures or COVID exposures. Although the tourism season started out slowly, we had steady visitorship, especially during the summer. Some months even had higher attendance than pre-pandemic years. After a yearlong hiatus, the Master Gardeners from the University of Illinois Extension Office of Henderson, Knox, McDonough, and Warren Counties returned with gusto. They cleaned up areas and flowerbeds that did not see as much attention during 2020 as we would have liked. Thanks to generous donations, they added a variety of plantings and decorative rocks, further transforming the Sandburg Park.

In May Carl Sandburg State Historic Site became a part of the Illinois Women's History Trail. This brand-new trail helps highlight Lilian Steichen-Sandburg's accomplishments and is another resource to bring visitors to our location. On July 13 Illinois Department of Natural Resources Director Colleen Callahan toured the Site with State Representative Daniel Swanson. Their visit has led to some discussions at IDNR that will hopefully bear fruit soon in addressing at least a portion of the large backlog of restoration and deferred maintenance we currently

have. In August we resumed the Songbag Concert Series for an abbreviated season. Visitors enjoyed listening to a diverse lineup of Semanya McCord, Carol Jean & Jera, and Sullivan's Daughter & Devin Flanagin. Throughout the year we have enjoyed hosting photographs, poems, and letters from the Charles "Chuck" J. Bednar Jr. Collection. These items have enhanced our display in the Audio-Visual Room and given returning visitors something new to look at. We appreciate Marilyn and Melissa Bednar's generosity in lending us those items.

As 2021 ends, we are thankful for all who have contributed their time and talents to support Carl Sandburg State Historic Site and the Carl Sandburg Historic Site Association. We appreciate all that you have done to ensure that visitors can continue to learn about Carl Sandburg, his family, and his life and works. Thank you for your support in 2021. We look forward to partnering with all of you as 2022 begins!

2022 CSHSA MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

We are accepting membership renewals for 2022!
Please find a form with membership categories &
online options for paying dues on page 8 of this
newsletter. Thanks to all for your continuing support!

A COLORFUL VIEW OF CARL SANDBURG

By Naomi Law

[Ed. Note: This article was written by new CSHSA member Naomi Law, retired teacher and school administrator and author of *The Adventures of Orië, The Orpheum Mouse and Erase and Replace*. She resides in Galesburg with her dachshund Punkin. Some of the quotes attributed to Mrs. Rogers for this article come from a *Chicago Tribune* article in 1987, Galesburg's Sesquicentennial year. CSHSA member Harry Bulkeley, chairman of the Sesquicentennial Commission, is also quoted in the *Tribune* article.]

Carl Sandburg and Susan Allen Rodgers grew up in the same small neighborhood. Carl Sandburg, you know. Let me introduce you to "Sue."

Susan Allen Rodgers was a delightful lady who loved, lived, and talked about local history. She was an African American born into a large family. The Allen family were the only people of color in an all-white, Swedish neighborhood.

It is not unusual for Galesburg people to say that they knew a member of the Allen family or that they are a distant relative. One of Sue's brothers-in-law was a very wise and dapper gentleman by the name of Frederick Solomon. He was my great uncle. Uncle Fred married a beautiful young woman named Eva Allen. Eva and Sue were two of the twenty Allen children. When Eva became a member of the Solomon family, all her siblings became "aunts" and "uncles" by proxy. Thus, "Aunt" Sue was my relative by marriage.

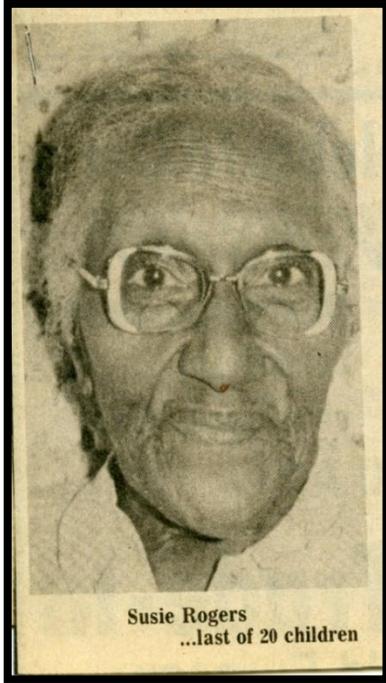


Photo courtesy of Senior Archive Assistant Maryjo McAndrew, Knox College Special Collections & Archives

I remember Uncle Fred, Aunt Eva, and "Aunt Sue." Aunt Sue not only knew Carl Sandburg, but she grew up often playing on the floor at his feet. However, Aunt Sue did not find Carl very impressive. She recalled asking Carl to teach her a song in Swedish. He told her to "Go home and ask your dad. He can speak Swedish better than me."

In 1987 the *Chicago Tribune* interviewed then 84-year-old Susan Rodgers. She told the reporter that Mr. Sandburg was "The man who would be half drunk and playing a mandolin with that hair hanging over one eye."

She had a much fonder memory of Carl's mother. Aunt Sue described a time when one of her siblings died. She recalled riding through the winter snow in a horse-drawn wagon. She talked about snuggling next to Mrs. Sandburg as they approached West Linwood Cemetery. In one of her "story-tellings" Aunt Sue recalled the special feeling of "being comforted by Miss Clara."

This reflects a little of Galesburg during that era. It was a time when children were cherished, and neighbors were simply neighbors. Aunt Susie said that, "There was no prejudice at all."

During that time Galesburg had many Swedish residents. Since the Swedes spoke their own language at

home, it was only natural that their Black neighbors also began to speak Swedish. John Richard Allen, Susan's father, spoke Swedish so well that he was an interpreter at the courthouse for over a decade.

There is an often-repeated story about a new Swedish family arriving in Galesburg. It is likely that it was John Richard who agreed to pick them up at one of the railroad stations. The arriving family had never seen an African American. They were very surprised when this dark-skinned man used a Swedish greeting. They were so taken aback that one of the travelers loudly whispered something in Swedish about John's appearance. They were even more amazed when John responded in perfect Swedish. Reportedly, both John and the visitor shook hands before laughing uproariously. It's likely that they became friends or at least good neighbors.

In some ways we have made great progress since the days of the Allen and Sandburg neighborhood. In other ways it seems that we have regressed. Carl and Susan would likely be very proud but for entirely different reasons. I suspect that Sandburg would love that the power of written and spoken words is still appreciated. I do wonder what he would think of present-day poetry and the beat that often accompanies it. I can imagine him reciting "Fog" to just the right melody. President Johnson called Carl Sandburg "more than the voice of America." I question how that voice would resonate in this, the 21st Century.

Aunt Sue would be proud of Maya Angelou, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Amanda Gorman. She would be surprised and possibly disappointed that any prejudice stalled their careers. She would likely find it difficult to believe that we are still celebrating "firsts."

Carl Sandburg and Susan Allen Rodgers were two people from the same neighborhood. Both gave us colorful perspectives of American history.

"MASSES"

By Rev. Lawrence Webb

The poem "Masses" from Sandburg's 1920 book *Chicago Poems* is one of three in my book that follow the trinary poetic form with a three-step pattern: (1) starting with a problem or proposition, (2) followed by an explanation or exploration, (3) eventuating in a conclusion or resolution.

AMONG the mountains I wandered and saw blue haze and red crag and was amazed;
 On the beach where the long push under the endless tide maneuvers, I stood silent;
 Under the stars on the prairie watching the Dipper slant over the horizon's grass, I was full of thoughts.
 Great men, pageants of war and labor, soldiers and workers, mothers lifting their children—these all I touched, and felt the solemn thrill of them.
 And then one day I got a true look at the Poor, millions of the Poor, patient and toiling; more patient than crags, tides, and stars; innumerable, patient as the darkness of night—and all broken, humble ruins of nations.

The poet is “amazed” at the mountains’ blue haze. In perhaps a kindred spirit to that amazement, the ocean’s seemingly endless tide silences him. Still later, his gaze into the starry prairie night starts him thinking.

Nature provides a ready habitat for poets to spin their work, and Sandburg does his share in that category. But he never seems to get far from reflecting on people. So, here, his thoughts turn from inanimate properties of the earth and skies to the earth’s human occupants. He first cites those he calls “great men,” then works his way down to those with lesser authority. These great men probably are those who lead what he calls “pageants of war and labor.”

In 1961 President Dwight D. “Ike” Eisenhower warned about the impact of close partnership between Pentagon officials and executives in giant corporations. This five-star general, who led the decisive D-Day invasion at Normandy, warned about this combination of these two powerful forces he labeled the “the military-industrial complex.”

Coming down the ladder of power, Sandburg next cites “soldiers and workers,” the rank and file in those pageants who carry out the orders of generals and corporate executives.

Sandburg also mentions women with their children, a natural linking in that early 20th century era when a popular slogan had it that “a woman’s place is in the home.” This poem was published in 1916, four years before the 14th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified, granting women the right to vote.

A 21st century parody on “a woman’s place is in the home” says “A woman’s place is in the House and in the Senate and in the White House and in CEO offices in the corporate world.”

The poet’s wife, Lilian/Paula Steichen Sandburg, did not work outside the home after they married, but she was far from being a “submissive” wife we hear about today.

Rachel Held Evans, a younger voice for equality between husband and wife, died suddenly from an infection in 2019 at age 37. Her books startled the more conservative wing of Evangelical Christians. She challenged the Communitarian approach that calls for women to “graciously submit” to their husbands. By contrast, she advocated the more open Egalitarian concept whose name speaks for itself.

In his wandering through various climates, encountering the high and the mighty and the so-called ordinary working people, the narrator feels a thrill.

But now, comes the turning point: “And then one day I got a true look at the Poor,”

His thrill turns to somber concern as he comes across other people—people nobody considers great, not soldiers or factory workers, whose jobs pay so little that every day is a struggle—if they have jobs at all.

He had looked at these folks before, but apparently he had not seen them in their true condition lately—people he

identifies as “Poor”—with a capital “P”—millions of them. Sandburg could readily think back to his own youthful years when he dropped out of high school to find work when his father’s work was cut in half.

His Swedish immigrant father August Sandburg could be the role model as the poet goes back to his beginning description, painting a picture of the endurance of the Poor who face illness, joblessness, homelessness, and starvation:

- Patience outlasting mountains and oceans and the heavens: “craggs, tides, and stars”
- Patience enduring the dark of night, darkness such as James Weldon Johnson describes in his poem, “God’s Trombones”: “Blacker than a hundred midnights/Down in a cypress swamp.”
- Patience even among the “broken, humble ruins of nations.”

Sandburg’s concern runs counter to those who dismiss responsibility for the underprivileged by quoting Jesus as saying, “The poor you always have with you” (John 12:8). Jesus did say that, but he did not dismiss concern for the lowest financial class.

In reality, this is only a partial quote. Jesus was quoting a complete statement from Hebrew Scripture, calling attention to responsibility for helping the down and out: “For the poor you will always have with you in the land. Therefore I command you, ‘You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor in your land’ (Deuteronomy 15:11).

SANDBURG BY THE NUMBERS

By Rick Sayre

“How many poems published?” It was a simple enough question we received a few weeks ago from Lawrence Webb, retired minister and Emeritus Professor of Journalism, Anderson College (SC). Professor Webb has been working on a book on Sandburg and his visit to the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site in Galesburg in 2003. This past year Webb’s son in Chicago had forwarded a question from his father to the CSHSA concerning locations mentioned in Sandburg’s poem “Neighbors”. This challenging query grew into an enjoyable year-long exchange of questions and answers on Sandburg that has included feedback from a number of Sandburg enthusiasts from Illinois to North Carolina.

Professor Webb wanted to include an accurate number for the total published poems of Carl Sandburg in his book. However, in an initial search of a variety of online and print sources there was no “definitive” number that I was able to identify, so I decided to do my own calculations. The obvious starting point was to work with the latest second revised and enlarged edition of *The Complete Poems* of Carl Sandburg published in 1970 following his death in 1967. To ensure I was getting an accurate number I counted both the poems listed in the

“Table of Contents”, as well as another count using the “Title Index of Poems” in the back of this anthology. Curiously, my initial count (and recounts) showed two different totals: 822 poem titles from the “Table of Contents” and 819 listed in the “Index”. My recounts still showed the same totals.

Later in the week, I was searching the *Complete Poems* “Index of Titles” for the poem entitled “Killers” and discovered two unique page numbers listed after the entry for “Killers” (36, 197). It then dawned on me that Sandburg must have published more than one poem with the same title. Sure enough, a more careful scan of titles in the “Index of Titles” showed two additional titles with multiple entries: “Bronzes” (27, 196) & “Landscape”(420, 423).

A total of 822 unique poems by Sandburg are found in the second revised and enlarged *Collected Poems of Carl Sandburg*. Yet we know that there were previously unpublished titles that were curated and published after the second edition anthology in 1970. We were also aware that we should include earlier Sandburg publications from Asgard Press (1904-1910), which was established by Sandburg’s mentor Professor Philip Green Wright at Lombard College. These Asgard Press publications were not included in *Complete Poems*. Of the four Asgard Press titles authored by Sandburg, only one, “In Reckless Ecstasy”, included poetry.

Along with the 258 additional “previously unpublished” Sandburg poems identified in five titles published from 1978-1999, and the twenty-two early poems published in “In Reckless Ecstasy” (1904), I think we can more accurately state that at least 1,102 of Carl Sandburg’s poems have been published through 1999. You can add one more if you’d like to include the more recently discovered poem “Revolver” (January 2013).

TOTAL NUMBER OF CARL SANDBURG POEMS PUBLISHED		
	PubDate	# of Poems
TOTAL SANDBURG POEMS PUBLISHED	-	1,102*
<i>Complete Poems (2d rev & enlarged ed)</i>	1970	822
Previously Unpublished & Early Poems		280
<i>In Reckless Ecstasy (Asgard Press)</i>	1904	22
<i>Breathing Tokens</i>	1978	118
<i>Billy Sunday and Other Poems</i>	1993	44
<i>Selected Poems</i>	1996	4
<i>Poems for Children Nowhere Near Old Enough to Vote</i>	1999	19
<i>Carl Sandburg: Poems of the People</i>	1999	73
*Total does not include “Revolver” discovered in 2013 in the University of Illinois Special Collections.		

John Quinley, docent at the Carl Sandburg National Historic Site (Flat Rock, NC), recounts that when a radio host of the 1950s asked Sandburg during an interview how many poems he had written, Sandburg estimated about seven hundred, and reckoned that that came to about a penny a poem, since *Complete Poems* sold for \$6.95.

Quinley also reported that the NHS Museum Director, Jamie Nahan, is currently organizing several hundred thousand artifacts at the Sandburg Home in Flat Rock and

has identified approximately 100 unpublished poems in their collection. Her efforts with these poems will be completed in the next few months. Researchers interested in the unpublished poems may contact Jamie Nahan via email at Jamie_nahan@nps.gov, or call 828-233-2462 for more information about accessing these unpublished poems. In the meantime, my “Carl Sandburg Published Poems” calculations will humbly await any corrections or updates, along with any future discoveries!

CARL SANDBURG SINGING ACROSS AMERICA

By John W. Quinley

[Ed. Note: CSHSA member John W. Quinley is a retired college administrator and instructor in American History. He leads house tours at Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. You may reach John at jwquinley@gmail.com.]

Many know Carl Sandburg for his written work as poet and Lincoln historian. But Carl was also a consummate performer—delivering lectures, reading poetry, and singing folk songs across America. In 1958, the inaugural year of the Grammy Awards, he was nominated for “best performance documentary or spoken word.” He won the following year for his reading of Aaron Copeland’s “A Lincoln Portrait,” and he received another nomination in 1962 for readings of his poetry. He was in his 80s then but had been making records for decades, starting in 1926 with “The Boll Weevil” and “Negro Spirituals” recorded on a 45 rpm. Sandburg released twenty-two records. Twelve of those featured folk songs, mostly from his *American Songbag*. Seven featured poetry, including excerpts from *The People, Yes* and a collection of poems for children. He also recorded excerpts from some prose works, including *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years & The War Years*; autobiography, *Always the Young Strangers*; and his children’s tales, *Rootabaga Stories*.

FOLK SONGS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

During Carl’s childhood and young adulthood, ballads or folk songs were thought to be crude and unworthy of public performance, literary criticism, or formal preservation. And “with the spread of literacy, the increasing circulation of printed matter, the introduction of phonographs, and the removal of old-time isolation, through the agency of railroad, automobiles, and (in these days) of airplanes, the singing of traditional songs played a lesser role,” writes Louise Pound in *American Songs and Ballads*. Sandburg’s pioneering and foundational efforts to sing publicly and to collect American folk songs profoundly helped preserve this important record of our shared past. Garrison Keillor, writing in the introduction to a later edition of the *The American Songbag*, called Sandburg a “cultural patriot” who came along at a time when he was needed. Prior to the 1927 publication of *American Songbag*, children in public schools mostly sang sentimental songs about home and family, which included moral messages about patriotism, industry, cleanliness, and reverence for God. Sandburg’s effort to share more authentic songs of the people reflected more accurately the full range of American experience.

DEVELOPMENT AND LIFELONG CAREER IN FOLK SINGING

WHEN DID HE START SINGING AND PLAYING?

Like so many interests in Sandburg's life, the origin of his singing and playing leads back to his youth in Galesburg. As a boy, Carl made a willow whistle, which is a comb with paper which sounded like a harmonica, and a cigar box banjo. He later bought a kazoo, a concertina, and a two-dollar pawn shop banjo. He paid a quarter for three banjo lessons; one of his friends taught him minstrel and popular songs and ballads; and he took a few lessons from a choirmaster. As a young man, he sang in his college glee club and with a local barbershop quartet.

Sandburg bought his first guitar in 1910 at thirty-two years of age. It was an ornate parlor instrument sold by Sears & Roebuck. It would be six years before his first book of poetry was published. He wrote his wife Paula, "I forgot to tell you that the S-S [Sandburg – Steichen, a favorite term of endearment] now have a guitar and there will be songs warbled and melodies whistled to the... thrumming of Paula-and-Cully's new stringed instrument." When he added folk songs to his lectures, he drew larger and larger audiences, saying "If you don't care for them and want to leave the hall it will be all right with me. I'll only be doing what I'd be doing if I were at home, anyway." They stayed "and for the rest of his prolific and long life, Sandburg warbled songs and whistled melodies to the thrumming of various guitars at home, on stages across the country, at gatherings with friends, and on phonograph recordings" (Golden, 1961, p.79). The moniker "the old troubadour" given to Carl by his long-time friend, architect Frank Lloyd Wright stuck with him all his life.

WHERE DID HE FIND HIS SONGS?

A young Sandburg collected songs from friends and folks he met while working numerous jobs around Galesburg and as he traveled as a hobo and as a door-to-door salesman. "He was becoming a keen listener and observer, filing away the rhythms of a diverse language and the faces of the men who told him their stories, false or true" (Niven, 1991, p.35).

As he sang and lectured throughout America, his musical collection grew further. There were songs of rural and city life, wars, labor and unions, gospel, farmers and cowboys, immigrants, love, death, and nonsense. Literary colleagues, union organizers, college students and professors, and obscure 19th-century songbooks added to the collection.

WHAT WAS HIS SINGING AND PLAYING LIKE?

Sandburg had natural instincts as a performer, and he genuinely liked his audiences and his contact with them. There was a haunting quality to his voice, which he delivered with impeccable timing. Journalists and longtime friend Harry Golden shared that "I've heard him sing in a huge auditorium in a whisper, and yet the entire audience sat silent, spellbound." *Chicago Daily News* colleague, Lloyd Lewis, remarked that, "Sandburg may not be a great

singer, but his singing is great. He is the last of the troubadours; the last of the nomad artists who hunted out the songs people made up, and then sang them back to the people like a revelation." "For every song that he sings there comes a mood, a character, an emotion...you see farmhands wailing their lonely ballads, hill-billies lamenting over drowned girls, levee hands in the throes of the blues, cowboys singing down their herds, barroom loafers howling for sweeter women, Irish section hands wanting to go home, hoboes making fun of Jay Gould's daughter. The characters are real as life, only more lyric than life ever quite gets to be" (Niven, 1991, p.446).

Sandburg accompanied himself on a guitar with no additional instruments. He strummed with two-fingers and, although he knew ten to twelve chords, he stayed basically within two keys, A and C. Even after classical guitar icon, Segovia, gave Sandburg a few lessons and composed a little practice piece "for my dear Sandburg to teach his fingers as if they were little children," Sandburg's style remained simple, but perfectly matched to his delivery. Sandburg sarcastically said of his playing, "If I'd gotten a prison sentence, I'd probably have become pretty good on the guitar." Sandburg dedicated a poem to Segovia, titled, "The Guitar," which Sandburg described as "A small friend weighing less than a newborn infant, ever responsive to all sincere efforts aimed at mutual respect, depth of affection or love gone off the deep end. A device in the realm of harmonic creation whose six silent strings have the sound potential of profound contemplation or happy-go-lucky whim."

HOW EXTENSIVELY DID CARL PERFORM?

Sandburg became more and more in demand on stages and in halls across America. He lectured, read, and sang at colleges, women's clubs, lyceums, conventions, poetry societies, and more. Carl would often be gone from home, performing for four or five months at a time. By the late 1920s Sandburg estimated that he had performed at about two-thirds of the state universities in the country. In 1929 he delivered the Phi Beta Kappa lecture at Harvard and recited an original poem written for the occasion. After getting the nod from such a prestigious institution, he said, "Harvard has more of a reputation to lose than I have." Later that same year at the anniversary of the Lincoln-Douglas debates in Galesburg, he spoke to a crowd of 25,000. In the fall of 1936 Sandburg gave thirty lectures in seventy days, traveling through a dozen states and Canada. In 1938 in a letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Sandburg told the president to "expect me someday at the White House door with guitar, for an evening of songs and of stories from the hinterlands." During the 1950s, while he was in his 70s, Sandburg continued to perform extensively. He gave concerts to an audience of 9,000 at the University of California and performed in front of 3,000 admirers at the Genial Federation of Women's Club in Asheville. Sandburg was so much in demand that he turned down hundreds of invitations to speak each year, holding sacrosanct time for his poetry, biography, journalism, and other pursuits, regardless of monetary considerations.

Lecture fees were a large part of Sandburg's income. In his early days as a journalist in 1914 Chicago he earned a salary of \$25 a week, but he could earn as much as \$100 per lecture; by the end of the 1920s, he earned \$7,000 in speaker fees. In the 1950s and 1960s he commanded large fees for his appearances on television for which he was in great demand. At nearly eighty years of age, he received \$10,000 (\$90,000 in today's money) to give an address at the Chicago Dynamic Week and read an original poem.

THE AMERICAN SONGBAG

Sandburg was nearly fifty years old when he published *The American Songbag* in 1927. The volume contained lyrics, piano accompaniment, and historic commentary for 280 folk songs—100 of which had never been published before. *The American Songbag* quickly became a standard in households across America, and it remained in print continuously for more than seventy years.

Sandburg called the book “an All-American affair, marshaling the genius of thousands of original singing Americans.” He said that “the collection could hardly be called poetry in its lofty sense, but they said, by other routes, what his poetry says.” These songs and Sandburg's poetry chronicle the customs and lives of the early twentieth-century American melting pot.

Sandburg describes his work further: “There is a human stir throughout the book with the heights and depths to be found in Shakespeare. A wide human procession marches through these pages. The rich and the poor; robbers, murders, hangmen; fathers and wild boys' mothers with soft words for their babies; workmen on railroads, steamboats, ships; wanderers and lovers of homes, tell what life has done to them.”

In 1950 at seventy-two years of age, Sandburg published a new edition called the *New American Songbag*. Bing Crosby wrote the introduction.

INFLUENCE ON AMERICAN FOLK MUSIC

The American Songbag established Sandburg as both an important singer of folk songs and a critical advocate for the preservation and collection of these songs. As early as 1921 Carl wrote, “This whole thing is only in its beginning, America knowing its songs....It's been amazing to me to see how audiences rise to 'em; how the lowbrows just naturally like Frankie an' Albert while the highbrows, with the explanation that the murder and adultery is less in percentage than in the average grand opera, and it is the equivalent for America of the famous gutter song of Paris—they get it.”

The American Songbag first published many tunes now considered folk song standards, including: the “Ballad of the Boll Weevil,” “C.C. Rider,” “The John B. Sails,” “The Weaver,” “Casey Jones,” “Shenandoah (as the Wide Mizzoura),” “Mister Frog Went A-courting,” “The Farmer (Is the Man Who feeds Them All),” “Hangman,” “Railroad Bill,” “La Cucaracha,” “Halleluia, I'm a Bum,” “Midnight Special,” “The House Carpenter,” and “Frankie and

Johnny.” These songs first inspired such legends as The Weavers, Woody Guthrie, and Burl Ives, and later on, The Kingston Trio, Pete Seeger, Leadbelly, and the New Lost City Ramblers. Later twentieth century folk, popular music, rock, and country music artists also recorded songs from the *Songbag*. Among these were the Beach Boys, Johnny Cash, Peter, Paul, and Mary, Credence Clearwater Revival, Dan Zanes, and Joan Baez.

In 1964 Bob Dylan briefly visited the elderly Sandburg, the man who had inspired Dylan's poetry and songwriting. Dylan won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2016 for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition—a tradition preserved and expanded by the foundational work of Carl Sandburg some 100 years earlier.

Carl Sandburg dedicated *The American Songbag*, “To those unknown singers—who made songs—out of love, fun, grief—and to those many other singers—who kept those songs as living things of the heart and mind—out of love, fun, grief.” It is fitting that so many carried on this important work begun by the old troubadour and poet of the people.

THE SANDBURG'S CONNEMARA HOME

By Gayle Keiser

[This is Part 1 of a two-part article by CSHSA member Gayle Keiser about the Sandburg's Connemara home.]

The Sandburgs bought property on Lake Michigan outside Harbert, Michigan, and Carl began writing books in addition to reporting for the *Chicago Daily News*. Between 1919 and 1927 he wrote *The Chicago Race Riots*, *The Rootabaga Stories*, the two-volume biography *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years*, and *Abe Lincoln Grows Up*. He recorded an album of songs for RCA Victor Talking Machine Company, and *The American Songbag* was published. In 1927 the family moved into the lake house that Lilian designed, “a tall house with scores of windows” as granddaughter Paula Steichen saw it.

During her studies at University of Chicago Lilian delved into genetics and applied her knowledge to develop a breeding program based on science to produce premium animal bloodlines and to improve the quality and quantity of goat milk production. Lilian had digestive issues and found goats' milk to be soothing. She also discovered that goats' milk was a suitable nutrient for babies with colic.

After the family relocated to Michigan, the Sandburgs' youngest daughter Helga expressed an interest in raising dairy cows. Carl discouraged her, according to Lilian. “It was Carl who told her, 'You can't possibly handle a cow. But a goat, you just put 'em in the family car and drive off.' That's how we got into having goats,” Lilian stated in comments recorded by the National Park Service.

In 1936 Lilian bought a couple of goats to provide for the family's needs. The two goats reproduced quickly, and Lilian registered her prize-winners as the “Chikaming Goat Herd” named after the township in which their Tom Thumb farm was located on the sand dunes of Lake Michigan.

The eighteen years the Sandburgs lived in Michigan were also productive for Carl's writing and his notoriety. He published *The People, Yes* (1936) and completed the four volumes of *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (1939). In 1940 he won the Pulitzer Prize in History, was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and received honorary degrees from Harvard and Yale.

But the family was growing restless, and Michigan winters were harsh for the goats. Carl told a local reporter, "A long time ago, I told them [Lilian and Helga] that whenever and wherever they found a place they liked better than Harbert, Michigan, we'd pull up roots." Soon after, a Chicago paper announced Sandburg's departure for North Carolina. "Mr. Sandburg has acquired a historic estate in which he can commune with ghosts of the Civil War."

Sandburg wrote about a third of his publications while living at Connemara, including a novel *Remembrance Rock*, his autobiography *Always the Young Strangers*, and the *Complete Poems* for which he received a second Pulitzer Prize in Poetry. But it was the history of the Flat Rock, North Carolina property that perhaps interested Carl most and reflected his desire to forge a different future for the country following the deeply divisive Civil War.

The house was built in 1836 by slaves owned by the man who served as Treasurer of the Confederate government. He named it "Rock Hill" owing to the exposed rock faces on two mountain tops located on the property. Rock Hill was sold to a confederate officer who never occupied the property, then bought by a wealthy capitalist and textile industrialist who opposed unions and child labor laws. He renamed it "Connemara" in honor of his family's Irish ancestry.

By 1945 Lilian had decided it was time to find a home more suited to the needs of her farm. She located Connemara with the assistance of a realtor. After looking at two other properties near Asheville, she decided on the 245-acre farm and paid \$45,000 for it. The property provided mountain air, gardens and orchards full of vegetables and fruit, plenty of pasture land and farm buildings for her goats, and inspiration for Carl's writing.

The acreage included Little Glassy and Big Glassy mountains with huge granite tops a mile-long hike from the residence. In a letter sent home to Michigan Lilian wrote, "I am more than ever impressed with the many spots with glorious views of distant mountains and perpendicular cliffs of glassy rock. It is Wilderness indeed!"

The Sandburgs' granddaughter Paula Steichen wrote in her book *My Connemara*, "This wilderness and the old house with gun turrets and great fluted columns and newly painted walls, with dairy lands, barns and fields—this was my new world where I would grow up."

Paula saw the property as perfect for a family headed by a writer and a farmer. "The barn was far enough from the house so that none of the clatter of milk pails or excited calls to stray cows or pigs would carry to the writer's working quarters. Beyond the great field rolling downhill to a lake at the front of the house one could see the Smoky

Mountains—and rising at the rear of the house was the hazy Blue Ridge range."

"Gramma always declared that she bought Connemara because of the winding driveway banked with one-hundred-foot pine trees and an ivy-covered stone wall. For Helga, the decision was made when she sighted the sloping fields and spreading oak limbs under which the goats could graze and rest content in summer sun.

"My grandmother often exclaimed after mounting the twenty steps to the front door and turning to look past the tall white pillars, 'We didn't just buy 245 acres of land when we bought Connemara, we bought a million acres of sky too!'"

Upon his first visit to their new home, Carl agreed with Lilian's assessment. But he added it was quite the "baronial estate for an old socialist!" He had come a long way from his birthplace, a tiny three-room cottage with blue-collar neighbors surrounding 313 East Third Street in Galesburg, Illinois.

LINCOLN'S SPIRITUAL SON

By Mike Hobbs

On August 29 CSHSA member Gayle Keiser and I attended musician Barry Cloyd's Carl Sandburg performance at the Bishop Hill Chautauqua. Mr. Cloyd recited the text of a North Carolina state official's remarks at a ceremony welcoming Sandburg to the State in the 1940's. The Chautauqua audience found the official's tribute to Sandburg moving.

Our guest of honor Carl Sandburg is an original—something that has never happened before. Something new under the sun. And how does this come about? Those schooled in science might call it a mutation! Those steeped in religion will call it a miracle.... Surely free-swinging Walt Whitman was his great-uncle and shy, sensitive Emily Dickinson was his great-aunt.

Among his distant relatives I find Bret Harte and Mark Twain, while his first cousins could be Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters, and Robert Frost, and I think among his nephews we might even find our own Thomas Wolfe. But when I come to name his literary father, I hesitate and then go on to say that he could have been that tall, angular man with the stovepipe hat who went to Gettysburg one day and made a brief, immortal address. And if I were so bold as to attempt to name his spiritual ancestor, I would suggest that patriarch whose gifted hand wrote the book of Job."

CSHSA WEBSITE, FACEBOOK, & SANDBURG BOOK

To keep up on events at the Carl Sandburg State Historic Site go to www.sandburg.org or to our Facebook page. Stay tuned for the publication of Barbara Schock's anthology *Sandburg's Hometown*.

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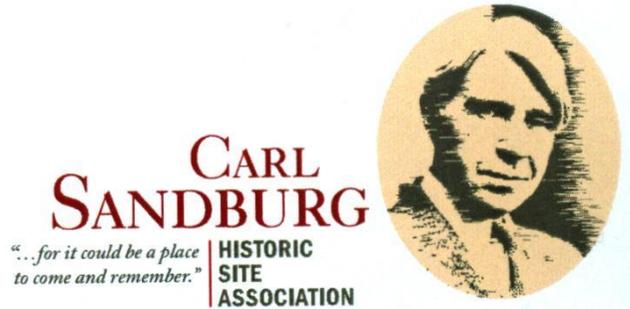
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