



The New York Society Library

Sky on the road to Red Cloud
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Books & People

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Willa Cather's Red Cloud: A Trip Back in Time

by Catherine McGowan, Circulation Librarian
photographs by Harriet Shapiro, Head of Exhibitions

The Library's current exhibition, *The New York World of Willa Cather*, for which curator Harriet Shapiro and I have been giving weekly gallery talks, led us to want to know more about Cather's Red Cloud, Nebraska, world. It figures as the setting (variously renamed) in six of her twelve novels, which are often peopled by her Red Cloud neighbors (also renamed). In a recent whirlwind excursion, we visited the Willa Cather archive at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and spent a day in Red Cloud and the surrounding countryside seeing important sites that figured in Cather's life.

Experiencing Red Cloud, one can understand the love of the land that Cather grew to know, as well as her need to move on to the world beyond. The wide-open Nebraska landscape and the people she knew there inspired her, but in a letter written in January of 1896, her heading states that she is writing from "Siberia (Red Cloud)."



Willa Cather's childhood home



A creek where the Cather children played

Greetings from the Head Librarian

As I write this, on a warm day heralding the arrival of summer, most of you are probably making vacation plans and looking forward to longer days and a slower pace. Here at the Library, we may be winding down our seasonal programming, but we're keeping busy booking an exciting new fall lineup packed with lectures and panel discussions, seminars, writing workshops, and special events, and testing a new online events registration system that we hope you'll find much more user-friendly and intuitive. We will be looking for member volunteers to assist with event setup and break-down in the fall, so if interested, please email us at events@nysoclib.org.

Summer is also the season for special projects, like shifting books and re-arranging the stacks to make room for the nearly 4,000 books we buy each year and undertaking rigorous shelf reading to keep our 300,000 volumes in order. Moreover, it also provides an opportunity for us to focus on larger building projects, and this year is no exception. You'll be hearing more soon about preparations for a critical upgrade of our fire alarm system.

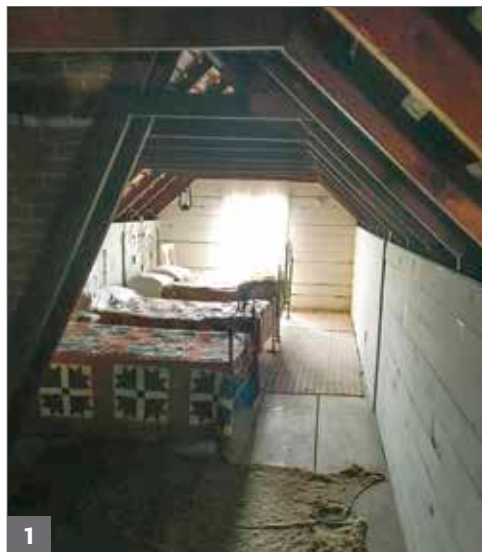
Weekday tea times, monthly happy hours, Prompt! and Creation Station will continue through the summer months, and we're adding a few informal get-togethers for members who'd like to meet others interested in joining a book club. So sign up for our monthly e-newsletter to keep on top of the latest Library news—and stop by to cool off and say hello!

Happy summer! Happy reading!

Carolyn Waters
Head Librarian

The center of the town, founded by Silas Garber in 1871, appears not to have changed a great deal. The building where Cather assisted the local doctor upstairs and worked at the pharmacy downstairs still stands, as does the bank and its interior, founded by Mr. Garber, on whom *A Lost Lady's* Daniel Forrester was based. The beautiful and newly opened center for the Willa Cather Foundation is behind the largest number of facades on Webster Street (7), and they offer a wonderful tour of the historical buildings that were part of Willa Cather's world.

The first stop on the tour is the home the Cather family rented for twenty years. Interesting details abound, like the fact that Mrs. Cather packed her china in Confederate money for the move from Virginia to Nebraska, and that Mr. Cather brought home paying guests for meals from his business in town for extra income. One of the most surprising was the reason that young Willa's attic bedroom (1), with its original floral wallpaper (2) (taken as part of her pay from the pharmacy store) survived untouched: when the home was divided into two apartments, the stairway to the attic was closed off, resulting in this unintended but fortunate preservation.



New Trustee



The Library is pleased to announce that **Liaquat Ahamed** was elected to the Board of Trustees in April.

A graduate of Harvard and Cambridge Universities, Mr. Ahamed has had a distinguished career in finance, working with the World Bank and, more recently, with Fischer Francis Trees & Watts, Inc. as CIO and CEO.

His book *Lords of Finance: The Bankers Who Broke the World*, published by Penguin Press in 2009, won the 2010 Pulitzer Prize for History along with numerous other honors. The book narrates the events preceding 1929's Black Tuesday stock market crash and the disastrous response of the world's central banks. *Time* magazine called it "the rich and charming story of the end of the world." Mr. Ahamed's articles and book reviews appear in many periodicals including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Financial Times*.

A Library member since 1999, Mr. Ahamed divides his time between Washington, D.C. and New York. When he's in the city, he uses the Hornblower Room to do his writing.

Visits to the train depot (5)(6) and the home of the Miner family (on whom the Harling family in *My Ántonia* is based) follow, as does an increased feeling of immersion in Willa Cather's world. The depot is where many of her arrivals and departures would have taken place, and it represented her connection to the outside world. An old poster originally from Ellis Island, designed to encourage immigration to Nebraska, hangs in the depot. The illustration shows small homes dotting the plains, and visitors are told that many people coming to Nebraska expected to find homes on the land grants, and turned around and left when they found only prairie grasses.

Highlights in the surrounding countryside are the Willa Cather Memorial Prairie (4)(8) and the Pavelka farm house (3). Anna Sadilek, who inspired *My Ántonia*, married John Pavelka and raised nine children. In the book, the narrator, Jim Burden, goes home to visit his childhood friend Ántonia after twenty years. He travels out to her family's farmhouse, and during their happy reunion, her children proudly show him the new cellar out behind the house. Today, off a dirt road, the house is there, the cellar is there, and when one pulls open the unlocked cellar doors, a feeling of stepping back in time is there as well.



The Goodhue Society

Members of the Library's bequest society, named for our generous benefactor Sarah Parker Goodhue, gathered for the annual reception in their honor on April 16. Author and Library trustee Jeannette Watson Sanger gave remarks. To learn more about the Goodhue Society, please contact Joan Zimmitt at 212.288.6900 x207 or jzimmitt@nysoclib.org. Photos by Karen Smul



Belinda Brakerridge, Carol Collins Malone, and Linda Fritzingler; Paula Offricht, Claude Bloch, William J. Dean, and Lucienne Bloch; Alexander Sanger and Jeannette Watson Sanger

The New York City Book Awards 2017-18

The New York City Book Awards celebrated this year's winners with a ceremony and reception on May 1. Head Librarian Carolyn Waters, Book Awards Jury chair Warren Wechsler, and trustee Ellen M. Iseman spoke about the history and importance of the awards, followed by presentations from jurors and remarks from the winning authors about their outstanding New York City books. The winners are Mike Wallace, *Greater Gotham*; Roz Chast, *Going Into Town*; Francis Spufford, *Golden Hill*; Anthony W. Robins, *New York Art Deco: A Guide to Gotham's Jazz Age Architecture*; Jennifer Egan, *Manhattan Beach*; and, winning the Hornblower Award for a First Book, Lisa Ko, *The Leavers*. Photos by Karen Smul



Roz Chast and Peter Salwen; Bianca Calabresi with Lisa Ko; Anthony W. Robins; trustee Ellen M. Iseman with jury chair Warren Wechsler

THE 2016-2017 NEW YORK CITY BOOK AWARDS ARE GENEROUSLY UNDERWRITTEN BY ELLEN M. ISEMAN.

The Young Writers Awards

On Monday, May 21, the Library hosted a unique Sweet Sixteen party: 16 years of the Young Writers Awards! This annual event honors excellent writing by students in the Library community. This year's competition included over 250 entries, with 12 winners and honorable mentions awarded by our longtime judges: Dave Johnson, Robert Quackenbush, Carol Weston, and Edra Ziesk. We invite you to read this year's winning words at tinyurl.com/YWANSYL and memorize their names, for they will likely be seen on books in the Library's stacks one day. *Photo by Karen Smul*

Winners:

Ava Van Dusen, *Rain Song* (3rd-4th Grade Poetry)

Olivia Wilson, *Ukuthula* (3rd-4th Grade Prose)

Julia Miyasaka, *The Glass Wall* (5th-6th Grade Poetry)

Jacob Abroon, *Jackson Abrahams:
My Adventures in D-Day* (5th-6th Grade Prose)

Rebecca Arian, *Perspectives on Politics* (7th-8th Grade Poetry)

Jai Glazer, *Space Race* (7th-8th Grade Prose)

Ayla Schultz, *Mung Dal* (9th-12th Grade Prose)

Honorable Mentions:

Raana Thacker, *The Last Bite* (3rd-4th Grade Poetry)

Lily Johnston, *Purple Bear* (3rd-4th Grade Prose)

Oliver Medlin, *My Style* (5th-6th Grade Poetry)

Inika Agrawal, *A New Pair of Eyes* (5th-6th Grade Prose)

Rebecca Arian, *Charmed Love* (7th-8th Grade Prose)



THE YOUNG WRITERS AWARDS ARE GENEROUSLY SUPPORTED BY JEANETTE SARKISIAN WAGNER.

A Short-Term Exhibition YOUR FAVORITE NEW YORK CITY READS



We're collecting members' favorite books about or set in New York City for a Peluso Family Exhibition Gallery display later this year.

Send your suggestion to SmallExhibit@nysoclib.org by Monday, August 6 with a sentence or two on why you love it and why it should be better known. The book must be in our collections. Members' names will appear with their submissions.

Watch our e-news and website for more on upcoming exhibitions.

Book Recommendations

Looking for a great summer read? See bit.ly/NYSLSummer18 for staff recommendations, including a wide variety of fiction from classic and fantasy to historical and young adult, epic history, memoir, travel essays, true crime, and more.

The New Members Party

Members who joined the Library within the last year enjoyed a special reception and building tours on June 4. Welcoming remarks were given by Head Librarian Carolyn Waters and novelist Caitlin Macy, author of *Spoiled* and *Mrs.* Long-term members welcomed their new counterparts. *Photos by Paula Berg*



From top left: Cary Lichtenberg and Terezka Vanzan; Anne McCann, Carol Weston, and Joseph McCann; Cynthia Hanson, Zareen Sethna, and Raphael Badagliacca; Kathleen Tripp with speaker Caitlin Macy; Library Conservator Christina Amato discusses her work with Brigid and Kevin O'Rourke and Carly Huth; Colleen and James Rybakoff

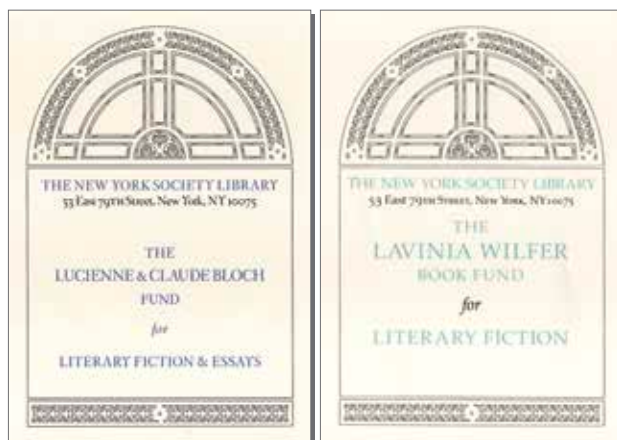
New Book Funds

We are extremely grateful to those Library members and friends who have created book funds in recent years. In doing so, they have greatly enhanced our collection while providing important budget relief. You may have seen these special bookplates in some of the books you've borrowed.

Since we began creating book funds, fifteen have been established in a variety of genres including performing arts and contemporary fiction; ancient cultures and civilizations; poetry; biography; British literature, arts and history; world literature in translation, and more.

Recently, two Library members created new book funds. One did so to honor his wife's birthday and together they decided the focus would be on literary fiction and essays. The other member, a Charles Dickens fan, established The Lavinia Wilfer Fund for Literary Fiction.

If you would like information about creating a book fund, please contact Director of Development Joan Zimmert at jjimmert@nysoclib.org or 212.288.6900 x207.



Some books recently purchased with our new book funds.



THE LIBRARY provides members with access to digital audiobooks, reference works, magazines, newspaper articles, scholarly journals, and e-books. To get started, click the **Electronic Resources** tab on our home page. For assistance, ask at the reference desk or email reference@nysoclib.org.





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This newsletter is available
in electronic form at
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Remembering Beloved Authors



The Library is proud to have served member authors Richard Peck and Tom Wolfe.

For more about their books and their time at the Library, see

nysoclib.org/blog/rememembering-richard-peck

nysoclib.org/blog/taste-and-discernment-tom-wolfe-society-library