

sandburg

When Carl Sandburg first came to the mountains of Western North Carolina in 1945 and stood on the porch of the main house of Connemara, he knew that his wife Paula had found a place that truly suited him. And this poet, author, lecturer, minstrel, one-time political activist, and social thinker settled down and spent the last 22 years of his long, productive life on this Flat Rock farm.

Like most of us, Carl Sandburg was shaped by his environment. He was born in 1878 in Galesburg, Ill., the son of Swedish immigrants; and the small town of his birth, the prairie, the plain life of the Midwest, and the austerity and hard work of his youth all reappeared later in his writing.

Further molded by several years of odd jobs, by travels west and east as hobo and Spanish-American War soldier, and by active political and social reform work, Sandburg was to emerge as one of the great 20th-century voices of the evolving American experience.

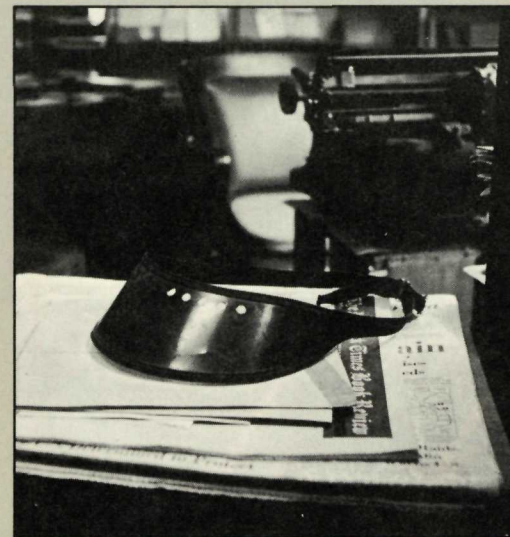
In more than half a century of literary production, this "poet laureate" of the people sang of pioneers, cowboys, lumberjacks, railroad section gangs, and steamboat crews. He observed and commemorated the American people, their folk wisdom, heroes, ballads, hopes, and worth. This "bard of democracy" deplored and celebrated the miseries and joys of the lusty growth of America's industry and cities.

Sandburg left school after the eighth grade to work and travel. In 1898, however, he returned for several years of studies at Lombard College, where he worked on school publications and participated in athletics. It was there that he seriously began writing. His first poems appeared in print in 1904, but he did not achieve any real success until 1914, when nine poems, including "Chicago," were published. In 1916, at age 38, his first book of poetry, *Chicago Poems*, was published.

During his work with the Socialist Reform Movement in the early years of this century, Sandburg married Lilian "Paula" Steichen, who shared his interests. This remarkable woman was to be a strong and positive force in his work and life.

Photo by June Glenn, Jr., Asheville Citizen-Times

To support his growing family, Sandburg pursued a career in journalism. He worked for several newspapers but spent the longest time, 13 years, with the *Chicago Daily News*. At the same time, he continued to write and publish in more and more fields. His two-volume biography, *Abraham Lincoln: the Prairie Years*, appeared in 1926 and established him as a biographer as well as a poet.



In 1932, Sandburg left full-time newspaper work to pursue his literary interests. He continued to produce poetry, biography, autobiography, history, children's literature and books on American folk music, and he wrote a novel. In the tradition of Mark Twain, he also continued to perform in public: lecturing, reading his poetry and prose, playing his guitar, and singing folk songs.

The Sandburgs spent the next few years at a lakeside home in Harbert, Mich., and he produced, among other things, *Abraham Lincoln: the War Years*, the four-volume set for which he won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1940. While he was writing, his wife and daughter Helga began raising dairy goats, and their Chikaming herd became one of the finest in the country. Because of this ever-expanding goat activity and because of the rigorous climate of Michigan, the Sandburgs decided to move.

Mrs. Sandburg was the one who discovered the Western North Carolina mountain area for the family and became enchanted by the beautiful environment and gentle climate. She looked at several places, but Connemara, the old Smyth place, captured her imagination. The farm had everything the family wanted, including ample pasture for the goats and seclusion for writing.

Sandburg agreed. In 1945 they purchased and moved into the 97-hectare (240-acre) farm at Flat Rock. Along with them came their three daughters and two grandchildren, their library of more than 10,000 volumes, all their personal belongings, and the Chikaming goat herd.



June Glenn, Jr.

The house and farm had a long history—an ironic history, in fact, for the biographer of Abraham Lincoln. The property originally had been the summer home of Christopher Gustavus Memminger of Charleston, S.C. He built the main residence around 1838 and enjoyed the balmy summers away from Charleston's heat and humidity. He later became the first Secretary of the Confederate Treasury and served in that capacity from 1861 to 1864. After his death the property passed to the Gregg family and then to Capt. Ellison Smyth, a textile tycoon. His heirs sold it to the Sandburgs.



June Glenn, Jr.

#### Administration

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Flat Rock, NC 28731, is in immediate charge. The park is located 8 kilometers (5 miles) south of Hendersonville. Turn off U.S. 25 onto Little River Road at the Flat Rock Playhouse. The park is 42 kilometers (26 miles) south of Asheville via Interstate 26.

As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

National Park Service  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



## Life at Connemara

The Sandburg years at Connemara were productive ones for the man of letters. Among other things, in 1948 he published his only novel, *Remembrance Rock*, which traced the American epic from Plymouth Rock to World War II. In 1953 his autobiography, *Always the Young Strangers*, was published. This book centered on his youth in the small town of Galesburg, Ill. Add to these two important works several volumes of history and poetry, including the *Complete Poems*, which won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1951, and one can see that Sandburg remained a prolific writer in his last years.

Farm life at Connemara was busy, but also happy and serene. Mrs. Sandburg continued to breed and care for her large, prize-winning Chikaming goat herd, which numbered 200 at one time. She also ran the farm business smoothly, leaving her husband free to write.

Sandburg kept late hours. He usually began working, cigar in hand, in his cluttered, upstairs work room late in the evening. He continued working until the wee hours of the morning, occasionally typing away until dawn if he was deeply into a project. He would sleep until late morning and then join the family downstairs for lunch. Afternoons were spent reading and answering correspondence in the dining room, a downstairs study, on the front porch overlooking the mountains, or on the lawn. Often Sandburg, alone or while talking with friends, would stroll about the property visiting the goats and delighting in the farm activity.

There were frequent guests at Connemara—daughter Helga and the grandchildren; Mrs. Sandburg's famous brother, photographer Edward Steichen; well known personalities; unknown passers-by; photographers; newsmen, or just admirers who wanted to meet the great man. Sandburg moved easily with the great and small. He enjoyed playing with children and was able to talk with presidents. He could dress to attend a White House function, but he much preferred the garb he wore at Connemara: old pants, lumberjack shirt, beat up shoes, colorful scarf around the neck, and green sunshade over the eyes.

With or without guests, dinner was a social gath-

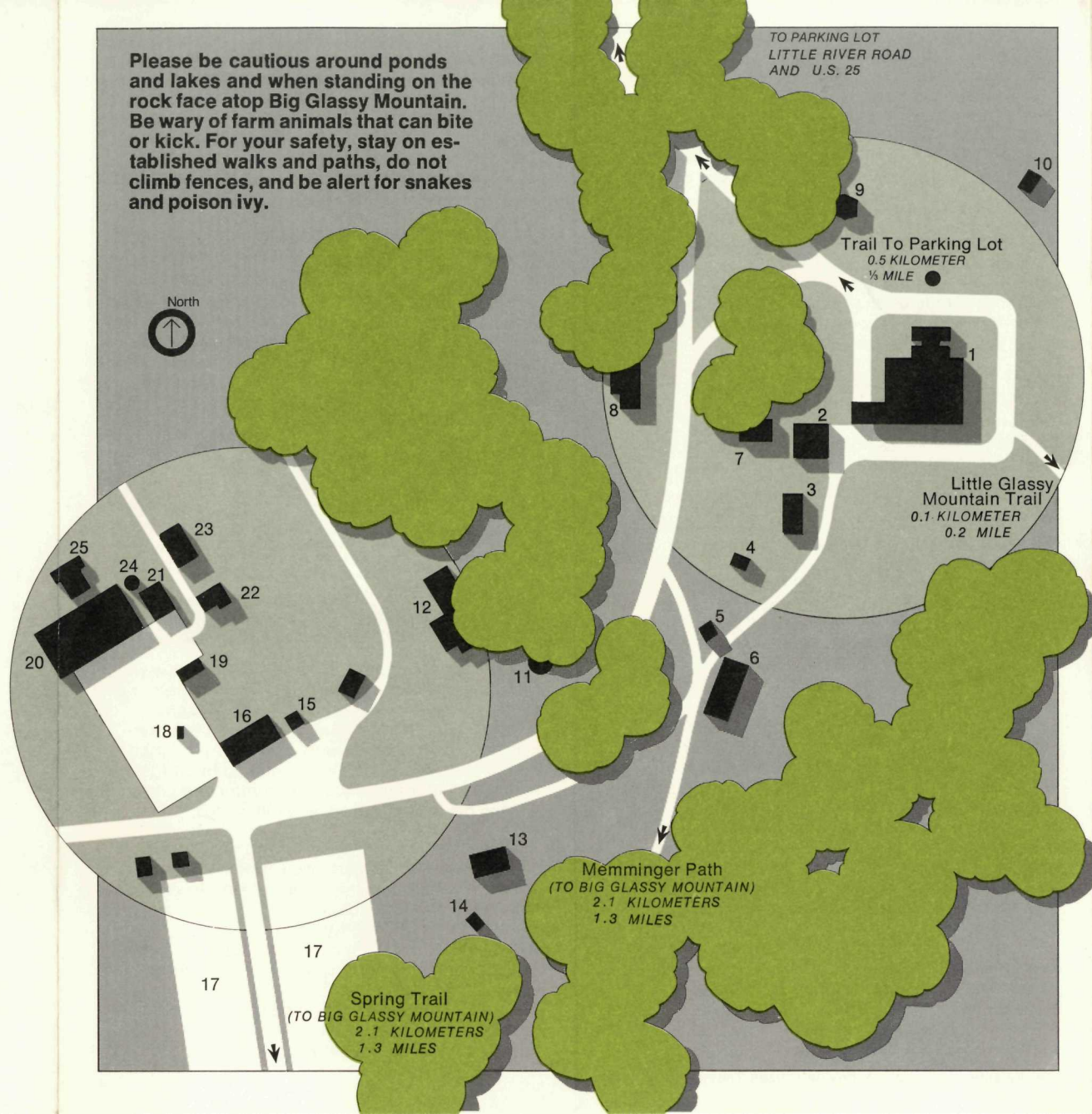
ering of the family. And after dinner, Sandburg would read aloud to those present or sing with them. In the afternoon, late at night, alone, with wife Paula, or with daughters or friends, Sandburg could be found on walks along the farm's long, winding entrance drive or through the woods on one of the many paths kept over the years by both Memminger and Smyth.

Other family members kept busy too. Margaret helped her father, tended the library, painted, and worked in her flower garden. Daughter Janet helped care for the farm, which was especially active during the years of Helga's residence and also included a large vegetable garden, an orchard, cows, chickens, hogs, and cheese and butter making. Grandchildren played endlessly in woods and pastures and rode the farm horses.

It was an idyllic but busy life for an active family, and together they enjoyed Connemara for 22 years, longer than at any other single home.

Sandburg's life ended here on July 22, 1967, as it had begun, in an agrarian setting. And throughout his 89 years, Sandburg's life, thought, and work were dominated by agrarian values tempered by changes resulting from America's evolution into the urban industrial and technological age. His interest in folk America, his casual manner, his compassion for and empathy with the common man, his concern for social and political justice, and his sense of brotherhood and democracy are all evidence of this influence. In its eulogy, *The New York Post* said: "Carl Sandburg was the poet of the American dream and the American reality. His poetry has the freedom of prose, his prose the quality of poetry, and through it all ran what has been called the sense of being American."

Shortly after Carl Sandburg's death in 1967, a movement began to preserve Connemara Farm as a national historic site. On October 17, 1968, Congress established the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site to commemorate the life and work of one of America's leading literary figures. The next year the property was acquired from the Sandburg family. The buildings, beautiful rolling pastures, and wooded mountain acres now belong to the people Carl Sandburg wrote about for so many years.



**At Connemara, Sandburg constantly refreshed and renewed himself by walking across pastures and on farm lanes and mountain trails, delighting in nature and farm activities. Today, we invite you to stroll about the farm at your leisure and refresh yourself as Sandburg did a few years ago. Use this folder as a guide or wander about the paths wherever you wish. A shuttle bus operates between the parking lot and the historic building core area.**

- 1 MAIN HOUSE** The Sandburg family residence was the main house. Visit the information center in the basement and take a guided tour of the house.
- 2 FAMILY GARAGE** A kitchen in the old days, this building was used as a garage by the Sandburgs.
- 3 CHICKENHOUSE** The Sandburgs kept chickens in one side of this old washhouse and the adjoining fenced lot. The other side of the building housed kid goats.
- 4 PUMPHOUSE**
- 5 SPRINGHOUSE** Originally a springhouse, this structure was used for curing goat cheese made by Mrs. Sandburg and Helga.
- 6 WOODSHED**
- 7 SWEDISH HOUSE** Seldom throwing anything away, Sandburg stored magazines, books, and other research material in this building.
- 8 TENANT HOUSE** Farm employees occasionally resided in this "little white house," as the family called it.
- 9 GAZEBO** Flower garden tools were stored here. In the adjacent garden were herbs or flowers.
- 10 GOAT OR DONKEY HOUSE** This building provided shelter for goats or the pet Sicilian donkey often kept by the Sandburgs in this "front pasture."
- 11 ICEHOUSE SITE** This little structure was one of Sandburg's favorites. It was built originally to store blocks of ice cut from farm lakes and ponds in winter. Only the subterranean walls remain today. The short, peaked roof deteriorated and the Sandburgs removed it in the later years of their occupancy.

- 12 FARM MANAGER'S HOUSE** Located close to the barn area, this house traditionally was the home of the Sandburgs' goat herdsman.
- 13 GREENHOUSE** Sometimes the cellar was used for winter bulb storage and the upper portion for starting plants for early spring planting in the farm's many flower gardens.
- 14 BARN PUMPHOUSE**
- 15 ISOLATION QUARTERS** This structure and adjoining two lots quartered sick goats that had to be separated from the rest of the herd.
- 16 BARN GARAGE** Now housing the park maintenance shop, this building was used by the Sandburgs for storing farm equipment. Occasionally the trucks were backed out and evening square dances were held in the garage by farm workers and their families and neighbors.
- 17 VEGETABLE GARDEN** Mrs. Sandburg maintained the vegetable gardens here for her family and that of the herdsman. Though Sandburg did not get directly involved in gardening, he often walked down to look at the gardens and delighted in this and other farm activities.
- 18 BARNYARD AND CORNCRIB** Milking does were kept in the barnyard, where they had ready access to the barn. Weather permitting, does were turned out to pasture during the day and doe kids into the barnyard.
- 19 BUCK KID QUARTERS** Young buck goats were housed in this building and adjoining two lots until they were old enough to join the adult bucks in a large pasture.
- 20 MAIN GOAT BARN** Goats were housed, fed, and milked regularly in this barn.
- 21 HORSE BARN** Both saddle and work horses and tack were kept in this barn.
- 22 COWSHED** A milk cow was kept occasionally by the herdsman or the Sandburgs.
- 23 STORAGE SHED**
- 24 SILO** This picturesque structure was never used by the Sandburgs, but they admired it and left it standing.
- 25 MILKHOUSE** Various goat-milk processes, such as the separation of cream, the churning of butter, and bottling, were performed in this building.