

Carl Sandburg Home

National Historic Site
North Carolina

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Official Map and Guide

It is necessary now and then for a man to go away by himself and experience loneliness; to sit on a rock in the forest and to ask of himself, 'Who am I, and where have I been, and where am I going?' Carl Sandburg

A Place to Write

Carl Sandburg was already famous when he moved with his family to the Blue Ridge mountains of western North Carolina in 1945. Poet, minstrel, lecturer, biographer, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, he had spent his lifetime championing social justice and the American people through his writings and his singing. Although, at 67, he was at an age when many people retire, Sandburg was still actively working.

Sandburg's wife, Lilian, had discovered the mountain farm named Connemara with their youngest daughter, Helga. The farm had everything the family wanted, including a gentle climate and ample pasture for Mrs. Sandburg's goat herd and seclusion for her husband's writing. Carl Sandburg would call it home for 22 years.

The estate had a long history—an ironic history for the biographer of Abraham

Lincoln—for Christopher Memminger, who built the main residence around 1838, had served from 1861 to 1864 as Secretary of the Confederate Treasury. The second occupant was textile tycoon Ellison Smyth who named it Connemara to honor his Irish ancestry. Smyth's heirs sold it to the Sandburgs. The Sandburgs moved from Michigan with their three daughters, two grandchildren, a library of more than 14,000 volumes, and the Chikaming goat herd.

The years at Connemara were productive for Carl Sandburg. He published poems, children's literature, fiction, and nonfiction. He continued to travel, lecture, sing, and earn accolades, including another Pulitzer Prize. The family was busy too. Mrs. Sandburg bred her prize-winning goats and ran the farm business. Margaret helped her father, attended to the library, and worked in her flower garden. Janet helped on the farm, which was

especially active when Helga and her children, John Carl and Paula, lived here. Until her second marriage and move from Connemara, Helga managed the dairy operation with her mother. The grandchildren rode horses and played in the woods and pastures.

Carl Sandburg kept late hours. He often worked most of the night, while it was quiet and still, and slept until late in the morning. After a midday meal he read, answered letters, and wrote wherever his imagination took him—his upstairs office or study, the living room, the front porch, or on the large, sloping rock behind the house.

There were frequent visitors at Connemara. A favorite guest was the well-known photographer Edward Steichen, Mrs. Sandburg's brother and Carl Sandburg's closest friend. Guests or not, dinner was a social gathering for the family. Afterward Sandburg would read aloud or sing with them. In the afternoon or evening, he walked with his wife, children or grandchildren, or his friends along one of the winding paths or through the woods.

Carl Sandburg died at home on July 22, 1967. In 1968 the Sandburg family sold the property and donated the contents of the home to the National Park Service to be preserved as the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. Always a voice for the American people, Carl Sandburg speaks to us still through his words, songs, and the beauty and serenity of Connemara.

Carl Sandburg



Carl Sandburg in his third floor study

A Sandburg Chronology

1878

Born on January 6 in Galesburg, Ill.; second child and eldest son of Swedish immigrants August and Clara Sandburg; baptized Carl August, called Charles.

1883

Lilian Steichen, Sandburg's future wife, born May 1 in Hancock, Mich.

1891-97

Leaves school after eighth grade to help support his family; works long hours delivering milk and at other jobs; leaves home at 19, travels the country as hobo and works as laborer on farms and railroads; sharpens his interest in labor laws and the plight of working people.

1898

Serves as a private in the Spanish-American War; returns to Galesburg, enrolls as special student at Lombard College.

1899

Receives appointment to West Point but fails entrance exams in math and grammar; returns to Lombard College; becomes editor of college journal and yearbook and captain of basketball team; encouraged by a professor, begins writing in earnest.

1902-07

Leaves college without a degree; sells 3-D stereographs; writes for Galesburg *Evening Mail* using pseudonym "Crimson," first poetry and prose in *Reckless Ecstasy* published in 1904 as booklet by his college professor; active in Social Democratic party; lectures and writes against exploitation of workers; calls for end of child labor practices.

1908

Marries Lilian Steichen, who shares his interest in social reform and human rights; he calls her by nickname Paula; she calls him by birth name Carl.

1909-13

Writes and edits for several newspapers and magazines; daughter Margaret born.

1914

Poems published in *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*; wins a cash award for best poems of the year and is discovered by publisher Alfred Harcourt.

1916-18

Daughter Janet born; joins *Chicago Daily News* as a reporter; daughter Helga born.



1919-23

Harcourt, Brace and Howe publishes *The Chicago Race Riots*; publishes *Rootabaga Stories*.

1926

Publishes two-volume biography *Abraham Lincoln: the Prairie Years*; establishes reputation as a biographer.

1927-32

Publishes *The American Songbag*; buys property on Lake Michigan and Mrs. Sandburg designs house; leaves newspaper to focus on his writings—poetry, children's stories, and the Lincoln biography.

1935-37

Lilian Sandburg buys first goats, registers the

herd's name as Chikaming after the township where they live; begins breeding program to improve goats' blood lines and milk production.

1939

Publishes four-volume set *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years*.

1940-41

Wins the Pulitzer Prize for history; elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters; receives honorary degrees from Harvard, Yale, and many other colleges and universities.

1945

Sandburg family moves to Connemara Farm, Flat Rock, N.C.

1950-58

Publishes *Complete Poems*; wins the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1951; receives many medals and honors, including National Institute of Arts and Letters gold medal for history and biography in 1952; writes prolifically; travels the country lecturing, reading poetry, and singing.

1959

Delivers Lincoln Day address before joint session of Congress; travels to Moscow with Edward Steichen as cultural

envoy for State Department and represents the United States at Family of Man exhibit.

1960-64

Works as Hollywood film consultant; receives International United Poets Laureate award in 1963; receives Presidential Medal of Freedom from Lyndon B. Johnson in 1964.

1965

Receives honors from NAACP for his coverage of 1919 Chicago race riots and for his "life-long struggle to extend the frontiers of social justice."

1967

Dies July 22 at home in Flat Rock, N.C., at age 89; the nation mourns and acclaims him as writer, biographer, folk-singer, lecturer, and Poet of the People who spoke for those who did not have words or power to speak for themselves.

1968

Congress authorizes the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site, the first park to honor a poet.

1977

Lilian Steichen Sandburg dies February 18 at age 93.



Carl and Lilian Sandburg, 1923



Young family, 1919



Reading *Rootabaga Stories* with grandchildren Paula and John Carl



Carl and Lilian, 1956



This rock behind the house was Carl Sandburg's favorite place to work outdoors.

Cover photos by William A. Blake

Visiting Connemara



A Nubian doe and her kid

A Place to Raise Goats

Mrs. Sandburg had a deep interest in goats and developed a prize-winning herd in Michigan. But, the goat herd needed more room and a milder climate. Connemara was just what Lillian Sandburg wanted—a place where her husband could write, her family would be happy, and she could raise goats.

Lillian Sandburg bred champions. She earned world fame for her dairy goats and for her work improving the herd's

bloodlines and milk production. In 1952 the herd numbered more than 200 head, and farm helpers milked 50 to 80 does twice a day. In 1960 top doe Jennifer II produced 5,750 pounds of milk, averaging 2.5 gallons a day. She became the all-breed American champion in milk production and the world-wide Toggenburg Champion.

Today the goats at Connemara are related to Lillian Sandburg's herd. They are Toggenburgs

(tan and white), Saanens (all white), and Nubians (multi-colored with long, floppy ears). After a five-month gestation period, the kids are born in the spring.



Goat milk and cheese from Mrs. Sandburg's farm were popular throughout the region

About Your Visit

Carl Sandburg's home may surprise you, for this is not a peek into historical rooms devoid of personality. Here, the rooms are as the Sandburgs left them—warm and inviting, inspiring and restful. Books and personal items are scattered about, as if the family will return at any moment from their evening walk. It is a comfortable home, still filled with the presence of a spirited man whose writings echoed the voice of the American people. Enjoy your visit here: the home, the farm, and the beautiful natural setting will help restore your spirits.



Looking northeast from the front porch

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. except December 25. Allow at least two hours to see the house and grounds.

Information Station

Begin your visit at the park's information station below the parking lot. This self-serve facility has exhibits, restrooms, and an orientation map. From here cross the footbridge and walk up the hill to the main house on the trail that follows the stone wall. This 0.3-mile trail ascends 100 feet—the height of a 10-story building. If you are unable to walk to the house, use the phone in the parking lot or at the information station to call for assistance.

Visitor Center The visitor center is under the porch of the main

house. It has films, exhibits, a book store, information, and ticket sales for the house tour.

Guided House Tours

The only way to tour the main house is with a guide. You may purchase tickets at the visitor center. A limited number of tickets are available for each tour, and there may be a waiting period. You may watch the films and see the grounds until your tour begins.

Self-Guiding Tours

You can explore the park on your own to see the farm build-

The fog comes on little cat feet. It sits looking over harbor and city on silent haunches and then moves on.

Carl Sandburg

ings, pet the goats, tour the dairy, and walk along the trails. There are 5 miles of trails from—short or long, easy or vigorous—that lead you to quiet spots in the forest or atop Glassy Mountain.

Many Activities

The park offers many year-round activities. A highlight in spring is the birth of the baby goats. In May the Folk Music Festival presents music from Carl Sandburg's *The American Songbag*. Summers are filled with activities, such as goat cheese-making demonstrations, musical events, poetry readings, and performances by the Vagabond Players from the Flat Rock Playhouse. Autumn is busy too as cooler temperatures and changing foliage on the mountains beckon visitors. Winter offers the traditional Christmas at Connemara.

Accessibility

The main floor of the house, visitor center, restrooms, and some of the buildings and trails are accessible to visitors with disabilities. A shuttle service may be available. Please call from the park phones at the information station or at the parking lot for information.

For a Safe Visit For a safe and enjoyable visit, please be alert and observe these regulations.

- Stay on established walks and trails—many trails have slippery, uneven footing and exposed tree roots. Be careful on steps and when

standing atop Glassy Mountain.

- Be gentle with the goats. They can be frightened if someone yells or pokes at them. Keep fingers away from their mouths. Please stay with your small children; goats are larger than many toddlers and may accidentally knock them down. Do not feed the animals.

- Be cautious around the ponds and lakes. Swimming, wading, and fishing are prohibited.

- Watch out for poison ivy. Be alert for snakes, ticks, and stinging insects.

- Pets must be on a leash at all times and must remain outside the barnyard and buildings. To ensure trails and lawns are pleasant, clean up after your pet.

- Fire risk on a farm is high; smoking is prohibited in buildings and is discouraged in the park.

The sun on the hills is beautiful, Or a captured sunset sea-flung, Bannered with fire and gold.

Carl Sandburg

- Do not climb on fences or trees.
- All historical and natural features are protected by federal law. Do not damage, harass, or remove any plants or wildlife. In an emergency, contact a ranger.



The Vagabond Players



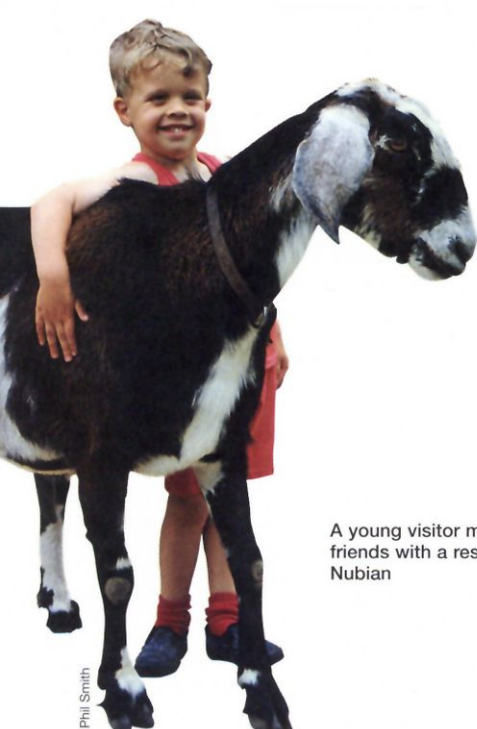
A friendly scarecrow adorns the garden

Getting Here The park is in Flat Rock, N.C., 24 miles south of Asheville, N.C., and 39 miles north of Greenville, S.C. From I-26 take exit 22. Follow the signs to Carl Sandburg Home NHS. From U.S.25 turn onto Little River Road between the post office and the Flat Rock Playhouse. Go 0.1 mile and turn left into the parking lot.

More Information

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site is a unit of the National Park System, one of more than 360 parks that preserves our country's natural and cultural heritage. Write: Superintendent, Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site, 1928 Little River Road, Flat Rock, NC 28731-9766; or call 704-693-4178. You may find information about the park at <http://www.nps.gov.carl/> on the Internet.

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A young visitor makes friends with a resident Nubian

