

Carl Sandburg Home

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

National Historic Site
North Carolina



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

PHOTO BY ©JEFF MILLER

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. At 67, 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, textile tycoon Ellison Smyth, named it Connemara to honor his Irish ancestry. Smyth's heirs sold it to the Sandburgs, who moved from Michigan with their three daughters, two grandchildren, a library of over 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



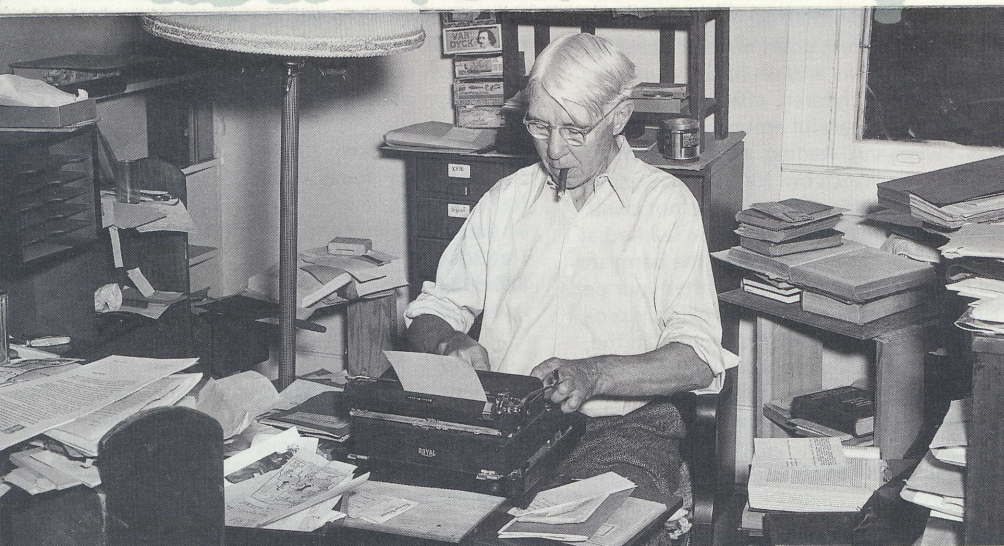
This rock behind the house was Carl Sandburg's favorite place to work outdoors.

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 late in the morning. After a midday meal he read, answered letters, and wrote wherever his imagination took him—his upstairs office or study, living room, 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 on 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, donating 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 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 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; Lilian Sandburg designs house; leaves newspaper to focus on his writing: 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 other colleges and universities.

1945

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

1950-58

Publishes *Complete Poems*; wins 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; wins a

Grammy Award, Best Spoken Word Performance, for his recording of Aaron Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait* with the New York Philharmonic.

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., age 89; the nation mourns and acclaims him as writer, biographer, folksinger, lecturer, and Poet of the People.

1968

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

1977

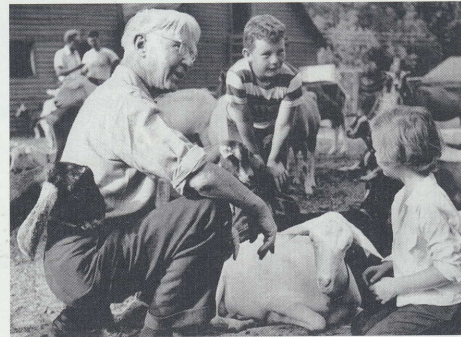
Lilian Steichen Sandburg dies February 18, age 93.



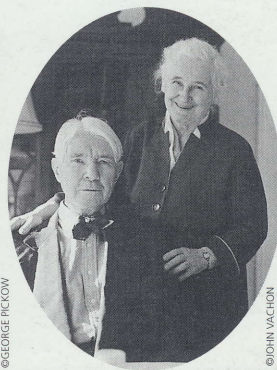
Carl and Lilian Sandburg, 1923.



Young family, 1919.



Carl and grandchildren John Carl and Paula, 1953.



Carl and Lilian, 1956.

Visiting Connemara



A Nubian doe and her kid.

© PHIL SMITH

A Place to Raise Goats

Carl Sandburg's wife Lilian had a deep interest in goats. But the prize-winning herd she developed in Michigan needed more room and a milder climate.

At Connemara Lilian Sandburg found what she wanted—a place where her husband could write, and she could raise goats. Here Lilian earned world fame for her work to

improve the herd's bloodlines and milk production. In 1952 the herd numbered over 200. Helpers milked 50 to 80 does twice a day. In 1960 the top doe, Jennifer II, produced 5,750 pounds of milk, averaging 2.5 gallons per day. She was all-breed American champion in milk production and the World Toggenburg Champion.

The goats you see at Connemara are descended from Lilian's herd: Toggenburgs (tan and white), Saanens (white), and Nubians (multi, with long, floppy ears). After a five-month gestation period, kids are born in the spring.



NPS



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

About Your Visit

Carl Sandburg's home may surprise you. The rooms are as the Sandburgs left them—warm, inviting, inspiring, and restful. Books and personal items are scattered about, as if the family will return at any moment from an evening walk. The home is filled with the presence of a spirited man whose writings echo the voice of the American people. Enjoy your visit. The home, farm, and beautiful natural setting will help restore your spirits.

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site is open daily from 9 am to 5 pm except Thanksgiving, December 25, and January 1. Allow two hours to see the house and grounds.

Information Station Begin at the self-serve information station below the parking lot. Find exhibits, restrooms, and a map here. Then cross the footbridge and walk along the trail that follows the stone wall up the hill to the main house. This 0.3-mile trail climbs 100 feet—the height of a 10-story building. If you are unable to walk to the house, use the telephone in the parking lot or at the information station to call for assistance.

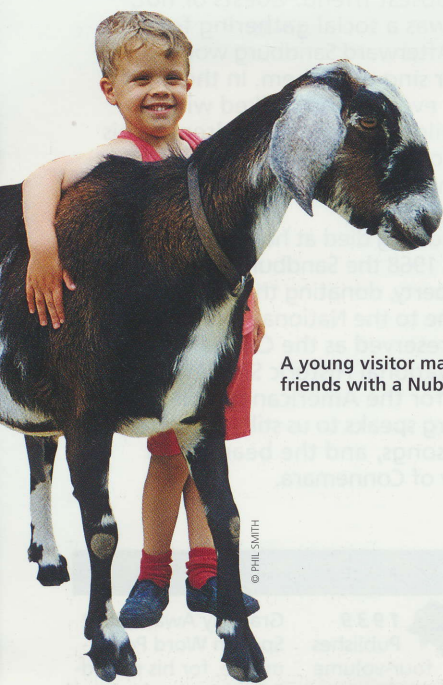
Visitor Center The visitor center is under the porch of the main house. It has films, exhibits, a bookstore, information, and ticket sales for the house tour.

Guided House Tours The only way to tour the main house is with a guide. 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.

*The fog comes
on little cat feet.*

*It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.*

Carl Sandburg



A young visitor makes friends with a Nubian.

© PHIL SMITH



Looking northeast from the front porch.

Self-guiding Tours Explore the farm buildings on your own, or visit the goats, tour the dairy, or walk the trails. Five miles of trails—short or long, easy or vigorous—lead you to quiet spots in the forest or atop Glassy Mountain.

Many Activities The park has much to offer year-round. Baby goats are born in spring. In May the Folk Music Festival presents works from Sandburg's *The American Songbag*. In summer attend cheesemaking demonstrations, musical events, poetry readings, and performances by the Vagabond Players. In autumn enjoy cooler temperatures and colorful foliage on the mountains. Winter offers a welcome stillness on snowy days.

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

Carl Sandburg

Accessibility We strive to make our facilities, services, and programs accessible to all; call or check our website. Shuttle service may be available; call to inquire from park phones at the information station or parking lot.

For a Safe Visit Please stay alert and observe these regulations. • Stay on established walks and trails—many trails have slippery, uneven surfaces and exposed tree roots. Be careful on steps and atop Glassy Mountain. • Be gentle with the goats. They can be frightened if someone yells or pokes at them. Keep your fingers away from their mouths. Stay with your small children; goats may accidentally knock them down. • Wash hands, especially those of young children, after visiting the barn area. • Be careful around ponds and lakes. Swimming, wading, and fishing are prohibited. • Watch out for poison ivy, ticks, snakes, and stinging insects. • Do not climb on fences or trees. • Pets must be leashed at all times and must stay outside the barnyard and buildings. Please clean up after your pet. • Fire risk on a farm is high; smoking is prohibited in buildings and discouraged in the park. • Federal laws protect all natural and cultural features in the park. • For firearms regulations check the park website.

Emergencies call 911



The Vagabond Players



Visitors stroll along the park's quiet trail.

Getting Here The park, in Flat Rock, NC, is 30 miles south of Asheville, NC, and 35 miles north of Greenville, SC. From I-26, take exit 53 and follow park signs. From US 25, take exit 5 and follow park signs.

More Information
Carl Sandburg Home
National Historic Site
81 Carl Sandburg Lane
Flat Rock, NC 28731
828-693-4178
www.nps.gov/carl

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site is one of over 400 parks in the National Park System. To learn more about national parks and National Park Service programs in America's communities, visit www.nps.gov.

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Trail over
Little Glassy Mountain
0.4mi 0.6km

Memminger Path to
Glassy Mountain
1.2mi 1.9km

Spring Trail to
trout pond
0.1mi 0.2km

Trail around
Little Glassy Mountain
0.8mi 1.3km

Woods

Vegetable
Garden

Duck
Pond

Goat Sheds

7 Greenhouse

8 Goat Sheds

15 Buck Kid
Quarters

10 Goat Barn

11 Milkhouse

16 Barn Garage

17 Isolation
Quarters

12 Horse Barn

6 Wood Shed

18 Wood Shed

14 Cow Shed

13 Storage Shed

5 Springhouse

Ice
House
(site)

19 Farm Manager's House

4 Pumphouse

3 Chicken
House

21 Swedish House

Rock
outcrop

2 Garage

22 Tenant House

23 Restrooms

20 Buck House

SIDE
PASTURE

Woods

Amphitheater

1 Main
House

25 Gazebo

Margaret's
Garden

Woods

24 Goat or
Donkey
House

FRONT
PASTURE

Trail to Main House
Distance: 0.3mi 0.5km
Elevation gain: 100ft 30m

Trail from
Main House to parking area
0.5mi 0.8km

Trail around Front Lake
0.4mi 0.6km

Front Lake

No swimming
No fishing

Entrance Drive (service only)

Service road,
no pedestrian
traffic

Woods

Historic entrance,
no motorized access

Dam

Information Station
and Restrooms

Parking area

Little River Road

Flat Rock Playhouse

Side Lake

No swimming
No fishing

To 64 and Brevard

Numbers on this map
correspond to numbered
posts in front of buildings
on the self-guiding tour.

 If you are unable to walk to the
main house, call for assistance
on the park phone in the parking
lot or at the information station.

To Flat Rock and 26

This birds-eye view looks
southwest. Scale varies.

