

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site Internship Report

The Carl Sandburg home is a relatively small National Historic Site under the National Parks Service. Its mission is to preserve the historically-relevant legacy of Carl Sandburg, the famous writer, folk singer, social activist, and Pulitzer Prize-winning poet and biographer. Sandburg moved to Flat Rock with his wife, Paula, in 1945. The Sandburg family resided here until Carl's death in 1967. Following Mr. Sandburg's passing, Mrs. Sandburg determined that his legacy and home in Flat Rock, NC, should be preserved forever. The park was officially authorized on October 17, 1968, and the property was sold with its contents and cultural resources donated to the park service. The site officially opened in 1974. The park's vast historical and cultural resources include 264 acres of pastures, ponds, small mountains and hiking trails, as well as a total of fifty structures, including the Sandburg's residence and goat barn. The museum and archival collection housed in the 4,000-square foot Museum Preservation center is also an important resource. It is the one of the largest collections of its kind in the southeast region, containing 325,298 items that include letters, telegrams, maps, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings, and 12,000 volumes of the Sandburg's books.

While at the park, I worked under the education director to assist with daily education tasks as well as larger projects. The PARKids summer program was a major aspect of this. In this program, groups from summer camps in the surrounding areas visited the park for one day only and partook in education programs. I worked with these groups directly. These tasks specifically entailed

leading a variety of education activities: interpretative tours of the Sandburg home, creative writing workshops, acting/theater activities, leading informative hikes, and various other activities. I was also involved in the planning of the PARKids program; I outlined schedules for the groups prior to their arrival, planned and developed new activities, and discussed the overall goals of the program with my fellow staff members.

In addition to these daily tasks, I worked on larger projects within the realm of the education department at the park. I rewrote and revamped the high school curriculum used for groups visiting during the school year. These lesson plans are used in the classroom prior to and following a visit to the Sandburg home and are in coherence with larger goals of the North Carolina public school system, namely core standards. I also assisted in planning a celebratory luncheon in honor of the park's eighty volunteers.

Aside from my work in education, I completed a major academic research project while at the Sandberg home. I worked directly with the curator and in the Sandburg archives for this project. I plan to present my findings at Scholarship Sewanee in the spring, and will definitely explore the prospect of publication of this research. I have provided the first few paragraphs of my tentative paper:

“Recipient of three Pulitzer Prizes and famously deemed “the poet of the people,” Carl Sandburg’s legacy is indisputably significant. However, by the guise of the new literary criticism, his work was savagely denounced as an aesthetic failure–

both thematically and stylistically. With respect to content and theme, scholar Evert Villareal encapsulates Sandburg's reception accurately.

“For the New Critics, Sandburg's poetry held few interesting ambiguities, intentional or unintentional. There were no puzzles, no obscure allusions, and no varied levels of meaning. Elitism also worked against his reputation. Many critics were unwilling to find either literary or intellectual grace in a man whose books were read by millions, who always headed the best-seller lists...”

Furthermore, in the realm of style, Sandburg disregarded the specific structural and linguistic elements required for acceptance within the pretentious literary circles.”

I am exploring the way in which Sandburg rejected these criticisms and was more concerned with the prospect of literature as a weapon– a way of marketing ideas to impressionable social groups, children in particular.

Through my experiences at the Carl Sandburg Home, I gained many valuable skills. I became familiar with the difficulties of planning within a group. I gained skills with regards to working with children and conveying creative energy to them effectively. I gained experience in working in an archive, a surprisingly difficult task. I gained experience in designing lesson plans. With respect to my career path, the internship provided me with an interesting outlook. Despite my love for my position this summer, I do not think working in a large government agency is for me. There are many intricacies and rules that come with working with the National Parks

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Service. On the other hand, I thoroughly enjoyed researching in the archives. I can see myself completing this type of academic research in the future.