

A Giant Steps Into Birmingham

By AL SANDNER
Staff Writer

A giant will stride the streets of Birmingham next week—a literary giant. The voice of Carl Sandburg, the poet, historian and folk singer, one that already—in his own lifetime—echoes down the halls of American literature, will be heard in "An Evening with Carl Sandburg," at 7 p.m. June 19, in the Cranbrook amphitheater.

READING his own poetry, singing folk songs and playing his own accompaniment on a guitar, the 82-year-old giant has come down a long road from a simple cottage in Galesburg, Ill. The cottage is now a literary shrine. The 1946 dedication of his birthplace is indicative of the aura that has enveloped the man, his work, the trail he has blazed in American letters.

THE TRAIL first came out of the shadows with "Chicago Poems", published in 1916. He was 36 before his itinerary started to take the giant up the literary highway, by way of "Chicago". A group of his poems appeared in "Poetry" in 1914 and during the same year his famous "Chicago" received the Levinson prize.

BEFORE immortalizing the "husky, broad-shouldered city," he had already trod a colorful—and sometimes rocky—trail. He quit grammar school at 13 to drive a milk wagon, often in Illinois prairie blizzards. He grew in experience and stature, working in brickyards and potteries, harvesting in Kansas wheatfields, washing dishes in Denver hotels, shoveling coal in Omaha. HE HAS worked in the cities and open places of America—learning to be the poet of industrial America. His military career with the Sixth Illinois Volunteer infantry was as brief as the Spanish-American war. He re-

turned to Galesburg and entered Lombard college. Characteristically, he worked his way through college—and characteristically—found time to edit the college paper and captain the basketball team. After college, the trail continued to wind—he was advertising manager of a department store, a salesman, a pamphleteer, a newspaperman.

THEN came "Chicago." "Cornhuskers" appeared in 1918 and shared the poetry society prize for the year. Since then, more than a score of books by Sandburg have been published, each adding to the giant's stature.

THEY COVER a wide range—from the humorous Rootabaga stories for children, and an appreciation of the photographic genius of his brother-in-law Edward Steichen, to his great poetic work "The People, Yes", and to the six volumes of his classic biography of Lincoln, "The Prairie Years" and "The War Years." The latter won the Pulitzer Prize for history in 1940, a work to which, it has been reported, President Roosevelt turned for counsel.

Seldom has a living author been given recognition in so many fields. His face is familiar to anyone who opens a literary magazine—and at least slightly so to anyone who looks at the cover of Time or Life. Audiences throughout the country know the sound of his voice and his guitar.

ANOTHER side to his many-faceted fame is his goat farm. It is among the best-known throughout the country, and Mrs. Sandburg has long been recognized as a leading authority on breeding and raising blooded dairy goats. Until a few years ago the Sandburgs lived in Herbert, Mich. They moved to a more friendly climate when Lake Michigan winters became too rigorous. In Flat Rock, N. C., in the shadow of the Great Smoky Mountains, he wrote (See GIANT, Page 5)

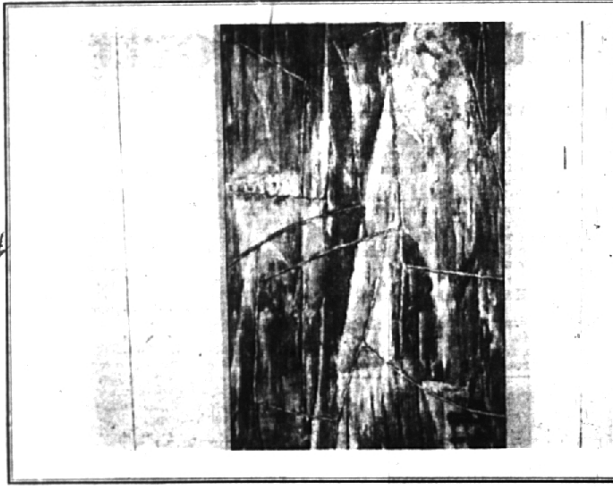


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