

WTOO-178

82-4921

- 1. NAME: William Cather homestead (site of)
- 2. LOCATION: (nw, ne, 22, 3, 12) Catherton township nw of Red Cloud.
- 4. OWNER: c/o William G. Cambridge, Attorney
ADDRESS: 202 City National Bank Building, Hastings, NE 68901

7. DESCRIPTION: This is the site of the William Cather homestead dwellings and outbuildings, features which are now extant only as sub-surface features. The site consists primarily of two sets of concrete foundations, probably from agricultural outbuildings, a cast-iron well-pump housing and two depressions, both with scattered brick, block and other debris in the vicinity. The large depression, nearest the well, may be left from the dugout basement to the house, which we know was banked into the hillside (photo #16).

The site was patented by the United States in 1883 to William Cather, grandfather of Willa. The features on the site date from the period c. 1878-1893.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: The features remaining from the homestead were associated with Willa Cather's first home in Nebraska which played an important part in her novel, My Ántonia -- thus relating the features to the major theme of the nomination.

In April of 1883, Charles Cather (Willa's father) with his wife and children, packed their belongings and moved from Virginia to Webster County, Nebraska. The family lived for eighteen months in Grandfather Cather's house before they moved south to the town of Red Cloud.

Mildred Bennett says, "Grandfather Cather's house, Willa's first home in Webster County, had been built on two levels, with a basement and its kitchen entered from a draw, or ravine, and a first floor which opened out on the hillside." (Bennett: 1961, p. 18)

In My Ántonia Cather describes this homestead as the Burden homestead:

" 'Down to the kitchen' struck me as curious; it was always 'out in the kitchen' at home. I picked up my shoes and stockings and followed her through the living-room and down a flight of stairs into a basement. This basement was divided into a dining-room at the right of the stairs and a kitchen at the left. Both rooms were plastered and whitewashed—the plaster laid directly upon the earth walls, as it used to be in dugouts. The floor was of hard cement. Up under the wooden ceiling there were little half-windows with white curtains, and pots of geraniums and wandering Jew in the deep sills." (My Ántonia, pg. 9).

". . .Our white frame house, with a storey and half-storey above the basement, stood at the east end of what I might call the farmyard, with the windmill close by the kitchen door. From the windmill the ground sloped westward, down to the barns and granaries and pig-yards. This slope was trampled hard and bare, and washed out in winding gullies by the rain. Beyond the corncribs, at the bottom of the shallow draw, was a muddy little pond, with rusty willow bushes growing about it. The road from the post-office came directly by our door, crossed the farmyard, and curved round this little pond, beyond which it began to climb the gentle swell of unbroken prairie to the west." (My Ántonia, pg. 14).

WT00-178, Continued

10. GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Acreage: Less than ten acres
UTM Coordinate: 14/E529040/N4451880

Verbal Boundary Description: The property is located in the nw¼, ne¼, section 22, T3N, R12W, the center point of the property is located 120 meters south of a center point of the north line of the section and 670 meters west of a center point of the east section line.

WT07-9

82-4936

- 1. NAME: Jackson's Reserve
- 2. LOCATION: Bounded by Seward, Cedar and Third streets
- 4. OWNER: Gary and Violet P. Lipker
- ADDRESS: Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

7. DESCRIPTION: The parcel of ground known as Jacksons Reserve is a 300 foot square plot of ground which historically boasted a substantial grove of cottonwood trees. William Jackson, who established the grove and for whom the reserve is named, occupied the site in his own dwelling. Both the historic dwelling and the cottonwood grove have long since disappeared but the parcel is still unbroken and a lone dwelling, a modern modular affair, still occupies the southwest corner of the parcel. Few relatively mature trees, representing a variety of species, are extant, however the parcel is well planted with young trees which will soon re-establish the historic landscaped nature of the parcel. Some cottonwoods are planted as a part of the overall landscape scheme (photo #17).

8. SIGNIFICANCE: The site is significant to the major theme of this nomination and has become a local landmark made famous by Cather's colorful descriptions of the grove in Song of the Lark.

" . . . Just beyond the gully was old Uncle Billy Beemer's grove, — twelve town lots set out in fine, well-grown cottonwood trees, delightful to look upon, or listen to, as they swayed and rippled in the wind. Uncle Billy had been one of the most worthless old drunkards who ever sat on a store box and told filthy stories. One night he played hide-and-seek with a switch engine and got his sodden brains knocked out. But his grove, the one creditable thing he had ever done in his life, rustled on." (The Song of the Lark, pp. 37-38).

10. GEOGRAPHIC DATA

Acreage: Less than 10 acres
UTM Coordinate: 14/E540890/N4436630

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 1-12, block 1, railroad addition to the City of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.