

WT07-91, Continued

"It was his wife's custom, as soon as Dr. Archie left the house in the morning, to shut all the doors and windows to keep the dust out, and to pull down the shades to keep the sun from fading the carpets. She thought, too, that neighbors were less likely to drop in if the house was closed up. She was one of those people who are stingy without motive or reason, even when they can gain nothing by it. She must have known that skimping the doctor in heat and food made him more extravagant than he would have been had she made him comfortable." ( The Song of the Lark, p. 33).

"Mrs. Archie, as Mrs. Kronborg said, 'liked to gad.' She liked to have her house clean, empty, dark, locked, and to be out of it—anywhere. A church social, a prayer meeting, a ten-cent show; she seemed to have no preference. . . she knew all the gossip of the town and she had a sharp ear for racy anecdotes—'traveling men's stories,' they used to be called in Moonstone." ( The Song of the Lark, p. 34).

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage: Less than one acre  
UTM Coordinate: 14/E540390/N4437830

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 1-3, block 2, Radcliff's Addition to the City of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

WT07-100

- 1. NAME: Grace Protestant Episcopal Church
- 2. LOCATION: 546 No. Cedar, Red Cloud, Webster County
- 4. OWNER: State of Nebraska-Historical Society
- ADDRESS: 1500 R Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

82-4931

7. DESCRIPTION: Grace Protestant Episcopal Church was built under the direction of the Reverend Mr. Crockett in 1884. As originally constructed, the frame church was located on a corner lot at Second and Walnut. In 1891 the church was moved to its present location and placed upon a raised basement. Sometime after 1922 the brick veneer was added to the building, over the original clapboards (photo #35).

As presently situated, the church is a simple gabled rectangle whose nave is three bays long. A square apse is attached to the east and a rectangular entrance vestibule is attached to the west end. A small sacristy with shed roof is attached to the south end of the apse. Fenestration is lancet arched with painted, stained glass windows imported from Munich. The lancet arched entrance features double doors, vertically paneled, with a painted glass transom above. An oculus in the upper west gable is also painted, stained glass.

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The interior of the church is in original condition save for a new altar, modern floor covering and the wallpaper at the back of the chancel (photo #36). Significant features include the naturally finished, horizontal pine tongue-and-groove wall finish and the scissors-truss roof—both over the nave and the simple scissors-truss of the apse. The Munich glass windows date from just before World War II.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: The re-located Grace Church is significant to the Cather Thematic Group. Willa Cather was brought up in the Baptist Church (see WT07-78), but became a member of Grace Church in 1922. According to Mildred Bennett,

"The first member of the Cather family to join the Episcopal church was Willa's youngest sister Elsie. For a number of years others of the family attended, and in 1922 Willa wrote her old friend Reverend John Bates, rector in Red Cloud, that she would like instructions. On December 27, 1922, Willa and her parents were confirmed by Bishop George A. Beecher, of the Missionary District of Western Nebraska who had been a pioneer minister in the Nebraska Sand Hills. Miss Cather admired the Bishop and often said he was just the sort of man she could picture as the ideal Bishop.

"She remained a loyal member of the Red Cloud church until she died. In nearly every letter to friends in Red Cloud, she included a check for the altar guild. She installed a stained glass window ("The Good Shepherd") in the little church there in memory of her father. She remembered him as a shepherd back in Virginia." (Bennett: 1961, p. 137).

Mrs. Harry Obitz, in her survey of sites associated with Cather, has pointed out that after the change in denominations, the Cather family became quite devoted to Grace Church. The altar rail was dedicated in memory of Willa's brother, Douglas, and Willa, herself, dedicated two of the new painted, stained glass windows—one to her mother, Mary Virginia Cather, and one to her father, Charles. Willa chose the window, "The Good Shepherd" for her father because he had raised sheep back in Virginia. In her poem, "The Swedish Mother," she recalls this about her Virginia childhood.

"Your grandpa, he been good to me.  
Your grandpa, he been young man, too,  
And I been yust li'l girl like you.  
All time in spring, when evening come,  
We go bring sheep an' li'l lambs home. . .  
He so young then, big and strong,  
Pick li'l girl up, take her 'long,—  
Poor li'l tired girl, yust like you,—  
Lift her up an' take her too."

(from "The Swedish Mother," April Twilights and Other Poems, p. 52).

Memorial services were held for Willa Cather, following her death, in this church. (Obitz: Survey)

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