



# Foundation Document Overview

## Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site

North Carolina



### Contact Information

For more information about the *Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site Foundation Document*, contact: [carl\\_administration@nps.gov](mailto:carl_administration@nps.gov) or 828-693-4178 or write to: Superintendent, Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site, 81 Carl Sandburg Lane, Flat Rock, NC 28731

## Fundamental Resources and Values

Fundamental resources and values are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the park and maintaining its significance.

- **Museum Collection and Archive.**
- **Historic Buildings.**
- **Cultural Landscape.**
- **Goat Herd.**



Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site contains other resources and values that may not be fundamental to the purpose and significance of the park, but are important to consider in management and planning decisions. These are referred to as other important resources and values.

- **Granitic Domes.**
- **Species of Concern.**
- **Continuing Performances of Sandburg's Works in the Park.**
- **Connectivity of Landscape.**

## Interpretive Themes

Interpretive themes are often described as the key stories or concepts that visitors should understand after visiting a park—they define the most important ideas or concepts communicated to visitors about a park unit. Themes are derived from—and should reflect—park purpose, significance, resources, and values. The set of interpretive themes is complete when it provides the structure necessary for park staff to develop opportunities for visitors to explore and relate to all of the park significances and fundamental resources and values.

- **Life.** Carl Sandburg captured the American people's struggles, dreams, and voice through the lecture platform, poetry, newspaper columns, novel, collection of folk music, children's stories, and biography of Abraham Lincoln.
- **Family.** Mrs. Sandburg and each Sandburg family member played an integral role in the life of Carl Sandburg by providing a supportive environment.
- **Being an American.** Being a first-generation American had a profound effect on Carl Sandburg and he spent a lifetime defining what it meant to be an American through his writing.
- **Social Activism.** Carl Sandburg's social activism, through his writings and letters, encouraged critical and independent thinking for the common good and betterment of humankind.
- **Place.** Connemara—the home, associated buildings, artifacts, farm, livestock, wooded hills, water, sounds of nature, dark night skies, and gardens—offered to each member of the family an opportunity to live life fully.
- **National Park Service.** Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site was authorized by Congress as a unit of the National Park Service because of Carl Sandburg's significant contributions to American history and literature.



## Purpose



*CARL SANDBURG HOME NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE communicates the legacy of Carl Sandburg and the stories of his works, life, and importance as an American poet, writer, and social activist by preserving Connemara, the farm in Flat Rock, North Carolina, where Sandburg and his family lived for the last 22 years of his life (1945–1967).*



## Significance

Significance statements express why Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site resources and values are important enough to merit national park unit designation. Statements of significance describe why an area is important within a global, national, regional, and systemwide context. These statements are linked to the purpose of the park unit, and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the park and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the park unit.

- Connemara is where one of America's most versatile and recognized writers completed a literary career that captured and recorded America's traditions, struggles, and dreams in his poetry, journalism, biographies, novels, and collection of folk songs.
- Known as a "poet of the people," Carl Sandburg advocated for social justice through his writings, which reflect a deep respect for people as individuals.
- Designated as a national historic landmark because of its association with Carl Sandburg, the farm is also significant for its layout and landscape features, many of which were modified by Mrs. Sandburg for her prize-winning goats.
- The Sandburgs' personal belongings, furnishings, farm equipment, library, and papers provide one of the most complete personal collections of any site in the national park system. This collection at Connemara offers a unique and rare perspective of this American author's lifestyle, philosophy, and intellectual pursuits more vividly than any other place he lived.



## Description

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site was established in 1968 to commemorate the legacy of Carl Sandburg, a nationally renowned poet, biographer, lecturer, newspaper columnist, folksinger, author of American children's stories, and winner of two Pulitzer Prizes. After Sandburg died on June 22, 1967, his wife Lilian (Paula) determined that his legacy and home in Flat Rock, North Carolina, should be preserved. Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site was officially authorized by Congress on October 17, 1968, and opened in 1974 as a unit of the National Park Service.

A Midwesterner for most of his life, Carl Sandburg was born on January 6, 1878, in Galesburg, Illinois, as the second child to hard working parents of Swedish ancestry. Sandburg's extraordinary story traces the life of a young man leaving school at the age of 13 and later establishing himself as a writer, poet, and musician. He found his subject in the American people and the American landscape; he found his voice after a long, lonely search and struggle, in the vivid, candid economy of the American vernacular. He worked his way to a rugged, individual free verse style that spoke clearly, directly, and often crudely to the audience that was also his subject.

In his work as a journalist, Sandburg became a skilled investigative reporter with passionate social concerns. He covered war, racial strife, lynchings, mob violence, and the inequities of the industrial society, such as child labor and workplace disease and injury. These concerns were transmuted into poetry. His first published book of poetry, *Chicago Poems*, offered bold, realistic portraits of working men, women, and children; of the "inexplicable fate" of the vulnerable and struggling human victims of war, progress, and business. Through his poetry, Sandburg became the poet of democracy, and his belief that the poet had a public duty to speak of his times established his legacy as the "Poet of the People." In addition to journalism and poetry, Sandburg was a historian, publishing a four-volume Pulitzer Prize-winning biography of Abraham Lincoln.

He was later awarded a second Pulitzer Prize for his poetry in 1951. In 1959, Sandburg won a Grammy Award for his narration of Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait" with the New York Philharmonic.

In 1945, Carl and his wife Paula, in search of a warmer climate and a residence better suited for Carl's writing and Paula's dairy goats, purchased a 245-acre estate called Connemara by a previous owner, in the Blue Ridge of North Carolina near the small town of Flat Rock. Connemara offered Sandburg peace and solitude for his writing and more than 30 acres of pastureland that Mrs. Sandburg needed to raise her champion dairy goats.

During the Sandburg family's time at Connemara, Carl published more than one-third of his works, hiked trails, and read his poetry at local schools. He enjoyed meeting new people in the community, listening to their stories, and in turn sharing his own life experiences, music, and poetry. Carl and Paula Sandburg, along with their three daughters, lived at Connemara for 22 years until Carl's death on July 22, 1967, at the house.

Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site's historical and cultural resources include 264 acres of pastures, ponds, small mountains, and hiking trails, as well as 50 buildings and structures, including the Sandburgs' house and their goat barn complex. Park activities include guided tours of the Sandburgs' home, which displays objects and artifacts that belonged to the Sandburgs, including books, musical instruments, magazines, and furniture. At the barn complex, visitors can interact with the historic goat herd—descendants of Mrs. Sandburg's award-winning animals—and learn about the farm's operations through interpretive signs and by observing volunteers and park staff working with the goats. The park includes a museum and archival collection that contains more than 350,000 items, including letters, telegrams, maps, photographs, motion pictures, sound recordings, and 12,000 volumes of Carl Sandburg's books.

