

The SINCLAIR LEWIS SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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LEWIS 2000 CONFERENCE

The Sinclair Lewis Society is planning a conference in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, Sinclair Lewis's hometown, in mid July 2000 to coincide with the 75th anniversary of the publication of *Arrowsmith* and Lewis's winning of the Pulitzer Prize (though he turned it down). The conference will be held at the beginning of Sinclair Lewis Days, an annual event in Sauk Centre (see related article page 7).

There will be panels on various Lewis novels and short stories, a showing of the 1931 film of *Arrowsmith* with Ronald Colman and Helen Hayes, videos of the C-Span programs on Sauk Centre and the CNN program on Steinbeck and Lewis (courtesy of Joyce Lyng), a tour of Sinclair Lewis's Boyhood Home, and possibly a trip to St. Cloud to see the Lewis Family Papers and the home of Dr. Claude Lewis, Sinclair's brother. Papers will be considered on a variety of topics related to Lewis, although the focus will be on *Arrowsmith* and medicine. 2000 will also be the 65th anniversary of *It Can't Happen Here* and we hope to have a panel on that novel and its theatrical adaptation as well. In celebration of the new edition of *Hike and the Aeroplane*, there will also be a panel on Lewis's only adolescent novel.

Proposals for panels, abstracts of papers, and suggestions for activities for the conference are all due by March 30, 2000, but are welcomed much earlier. Please send proposals to Sally Parry, Executive Director, Sinclair Lewis Society, Box 4240, Department of English, Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240 or e-mail: separry@ilstu.edu or fax (309) 438-5414.

Those Lewis Society members who were at the Lewis Conference in 1997 in Sauk Centre remember the hospitality that we were given and the variety of activities offered. We hope to see many Lewis members at the upcoming conference. ✍

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Sinclair Lewis Winner of the Nobel Prize The God-Seeker

The story of Aaron Gadd, the God-seeker, a powerful figure in the mold of Elmer Gantry

A major novel of sin and salvation



The God-Seeker (published 50 years ago this year)

ALA PANEL ON LEWIS

For Lewis Society members interested in giving a paper on Lewis but unable to attend the conference in Sauk Centre, there will be a panel on Lewis at the American Literature Association conference in San Diego at the end of May 2000. The topic is open. Please send abstracts to George Killough, Department of Languages and Literature, College of St. Scholastica, 1200 Kenwood Ave., Duluth, MN 55811 or e-mail gkilloug@fac1.css.edu. The deadline is January 15, 2000.

(see a report on the 1999 ALA conference on page 25)

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON THE 1998 ACTIVITIES OF THE SINCLAIR LEWIS FOUNDATION

The year 1998 has been a year of concerns about the future home of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation. The City of Sauk Centre has initiated planning for a future move for the Foundation and the Chamber.

The Foundation has made its rebuttal statement to the city, and it is anticipated that a meeting will be set up in the next few weeks with the Planning Commission and EDA to start discussing plans. As of yet, there is no buyer for the land upon which the Interpretive Center building stands. The city is trying to do some advance planning for the day someone comes in and wishes to buy the land.

- The Boyhood Home. The Foundation Board decided to sell the Birth Home, and have had an interested party. We wish to sell it to someone who will not tear it down, because of its historical significance. This past fall the oil tank buried next to the house was removed at no charge to the Foundation by Paul Pischke, for which we are grateful.

Our relationships with renters for the Birth Home have not been good ones, and we do not wish to rent the home out at this time. After our last renters moved out we spent about \$1,000 repairing, painting, and fixing up. We still have the donated carpeting from Pat Patton which has not been installed. There are a few other repairs to be completed. The decision to sell the Birth Home is difficult now with the possibility of having to move out of the Interpretive Center building in 1999.

- Grants. The Foundation received a \$4,000 grant from the Minnesota Humanities Commission, one half

Foundation Report continued on page 9

CONTRIBUTORS

The editor of The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter would like to thank everyone who contributed to this issue by writing articles or sending in notes.

These people include Frederick Betz, Martin Bucco, Margie Burns, Robert Fleming, Ralph Goldstein, George Killough, Jacqueline Koenig, Alan Kreizenbeck, Bob Lorette, Joyce Lyng, Robert McLaughlin, Rosemary McLaughlin, Steve Pastore, and Todd Stanley.

SINCLAIR LEWIS'S THE TRAIL OF THE HAWK: THE WESTERN LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

By Robert E. Fleming
University of New Mexico

When he published his third novel in 1915, Sinclair Lewis could have had no idea that the book would be taken by some later audiences as a prediction of the career of Charles Lindberg. However, Lewis was the product of both a community that had been a part of the western frontier two generations earlier and also of educational opportunities and travel that had made him aware of the growing future of science and technology; he thus occupied a unique position, able to look back to the pioneering past of the nineteenth century while at the same time looking forward to a new era when a different kind of pioneer would be identified with the American character. In real life, Lindberg was one such hero. In fiction, Lewis created a hero whose early development came through aviation, but whose later career would transcend aircraft.

The Trail of the Hawk is divided into three books: "The Adventure of Youth," "The Adventure of Adventuring," and "The Adventure of Love." The first deals with Carl (Hawk) Ericson's education and discovery of flight; the second with his career as a mechanic and racing aviator; the third with his recovery after a serious flying accident, his transition to automobile design, and his romance and eventual marriage with a prominent New York socialite. The pioneering theme of the first two books, which make up roughly half of the 400-page novel, is displaced throughout most of part 3, only to resurface at the end when Carl and his bride sail off to the new frontier of Argentina, where Carl will market automobiles.

Although the book was well reviewed on publication in periodicals ranging from the *Independent* and the *Nation* to *Bookman* and the *New York*

Fleming's Western Looks to Future continued on page 4

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter

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<i>Editor</i> Sally E. Parry	<i>Production Director</i> Brian Monday
<i>Layout Editor</i> Cari Coleman	<i>Intern</i> Narry Kim

Please address all correspondence to: Sally Parry, Editor, 4240 English Dept., Illinois State University, Normal, IL 61790-4240

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HIKE AND THE AEROPLANE

TO BE REPRINTED

Sinclair Lewis Society board member Steve Pastore has purchased the property rights to *Hike and the Aeroplane* from the estate

of Sinclair Lewis, and a new published version with new illustrations is available. The cost is \$68.00 per copy. For Sinclair Lewis Society members, the cost is \$45.00 net plus

\$3.20 shipping. It's an 8 1/2" by 11" hard bound format with 10 b/w illustrations. Members can place an order by contacting the Society and sending a check for \$48.20 made payable to the Sinclair Lewis Society.

Times Book Review, later critics have not been very much interested in *The Trail of the Hawk*, perhaps too influenced by Mark Schorer's harsh judgment that all five of Lewis's novels before *Main Street* were uniformly undistinguished. A notable exception is Glen Love, who devoted several pages of his book *New Americans: The Westerner and the Modern Experience in the American Novel to The Trail of the Hawk*, noting how Carl Ericson and Milt Daggett of *Free Air* (1919) pave the way for a more mature pioneer of technology, Sam Dodsworth, protagonist of Lewis's most intellectually mature novel.

Lewis's Carl Ericson, born in 1885, bridges the gap between Wilbur and Orville Wright, born in 1867 and 1871, and Lindberg, born in 1902. He is what Lewis calls a "typical American," or what Emerson would have termed a "representative man," an American pioneer of the twentieth century. As a "typical American" of the new century—*Trail of the Hawk* begins in about 1895 but soon skips to 1905 when Carl goes to college—"it was for [Carl] to carry on the American destiny of extending the Western horizon; his to restore the wintry Pilgrim virtues and the exuberant . . . days of Daniel Boone; then to add, in his own or another generation, new American aspirations for beauty" (*Trail* 6). Lewis might well have added a reference to Leif Ericson's voyage of discovery roughly 1000 years earlier, since Carl's name suggests his Viking forebears. In the twentieth century, the children of forlorn immigrants, members of the new American generation represented by Carl, compete with the older settlers of Yankee stock and often surpass them. Some do so in farming, business, or politics. Carl's talents lie in science and technology.

With *The Trail of the Hawk* Lewis introduced a characteristic of his later fiction: the radical spokesman who influences the protagonist. In Carl's case, there are two such mentors: Bone Stillman, the village radical of Joralemon, Minnesota, where Carl grows up, and Dr. Henry Frazer, a literature professor at Plato College, where Carl is crudely educated before leaving in his sophomore year. Stillman scandalizes the small Minnesota town—precursor to Gopher Prairie—by supporting free-thinkers such as Robert Ingersoll and Karl Marx. Frazer loses his job at Plato College after supporting the socialist ideas of Bernard Shaw (only to surface again at Yale, where his new-fangled notions

are merely considered up-to-date).

Such radical characters as Bone Stillman serve various purposes in the novels in which they appear. In the case of *The Trail of the Hawk*, both he and Professor Frazer generally teach Carl to think for himself and to stand up for his beliefs, but they also convey two lessons that are personally important to him: first, the rejection of class lines, for advanced technological ideas are more likely to come from bicycle mechanics than from philosophers (Plato College fails Carl); and second, the rejection of generally received ideas. A successful inventor once said that what he had learned in engineering school was why his various inventions would never work. Carl learns to mix experimentation with his research when he pioneers in aviation.

In 1905, after reading an article about the future of aviation, Carl sets out to build his own glider, his interest in airplanes replacing his earlier fascination with the emerging automobile. Like Thoreau's ideal student who constructs a pocketknife from raw ore by reading just enough about metallurgy to get the job done, Carl studies charts on lift and resistance and constructs a glider which he launches into a fifteen-mile-per-hour headwind from a forty-foot high hill. The glider flies for only a few seconds before crashing, but the Hawk has experienced flight and vows that he will build another plane.

Using some of the factual material he had collected when writing his juvenile novel *Hike and the Aeroplane* (1912), Lewis specifically locates Carl's flight within the emerging history of aviation:

It was three years before Wilbur Wright was to startle the world by his flights at Le Mans; four years before Bleriot was to cross the Channel—though, indeed, it was a year and a half after the Wrights' first secret ascent in a motor-driven aeroplane at Kittyhawk, and fourteen years after Lilienthal had begun that epochal series of glider-flights which was followed by the experiments of Pilcher and Chanute, Langley and Montgomery. (73)

Carl has to continue his education before he can make significant contributions to aviation, but his short flight has confirmed his interest in this emerging technology.

Forced to leave Plato College for openly supporting the heresies of Professor Frazer, Carl educates

COLLECTING SINCLAIR LEWIS

A summary of the article "From Sauk Centre" by Stephen R. Pastore, *Firsts: the Book Collector's Magazine* (April 1997): 52-60.

(Summarized by Narry Kim and Cari Coleman)

In his article titled "From Sauk Centre," Stephen R. Pastore considers it ironic that while Sinclair Lewis was a best-selling, critically acclaimed writer who had been highly honored and widely translated, his works are not as available or as demanded for collection as those of his contemporaries. Pastore writes, "Open any bookseller's catalogue worth its salt and you'll find Fitzgeralds, Faulkners, and Hemingways in and out of jacket. But try to find *Main Street* in jacket. See if anyone can even remember the last time he saw one."

As an answer to his own questions—"Why has Sinclair Lewis been so collected and simultaneously so ignored? Coveted, but snubbed? Valued, but unevaluated?"—Pastore provides us with a publication history of Sinclair Lewis, as well as a description of the literary quality and current collectibility of each of Lewis's novels. In his article, Pastore seeks to provide readers with what he calls a "comprehensive value guide to Lewis."

Beginning with a brief biography, Pastore explains how the writer, born as Harry Sinclair Lewis in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, in 1895, was brought up in a middle-class world by his physician father, E. J. Lewis. Sinclair Lewis—whose mother had died when he was six—soon had to live with a sense of guilt as well as the disapproval of his father after he chose to pursue writing instead of a medical career. Pastore writes, "This unrequited and unsatisfied longing for parental approval gave Lewis his bitter and satiric punch; if he was judged unacceptable, he would attack the judges." As with other famous writers of the "lost generation," Lewis had developed a healthy sense of angst, and that anger manifested itself in Lewis's writing in his focus on the "shallowness of middle-class values and mores [as well as his] preoccupation with mocking American culture."

While Lewis grudgingly attended Yale, he spent many a more pleasurable hour writing for the university's literary magazine and the local New Haven newspapers. As a student, he wrote his first book called *Hike and the*

Aeroplane, which carried Lewis's only use of a pseudonym—Tom Graham. The book was published by Stokes and Company, a publisher which, as Pastore confides, might have remained in business to this day had it continued to be supportive of Lewis's talent rather than saying he was "wasting his time [and was] not cut out for a writer."

Pastore describes *Hike and the Aeroplane* as one volume with three stories in it, all revolving around the adventures of a 16-year-old hero named Hike who worked to undermine the schemes of the evil Captain Welch. The book was science fiction and was written for children. Very few copies were printed and only about 800 were sold. And although Lewis never wrote another science fiction story and vowed later in his career that *Hike* would never be reprinted, Pastore notes appreciatively that "Lewis made a few dollars off this book and developed a real taste for writing novels."

Pastore estimates that there are fewer than 50 copies of *Hike* in existence, including one very intriguing copy kept in the Yale collection which bears the almost comical inscription, "To Sinclair Lewis from the author, Tom Graham, his altered ego." Pastore describes existing copies of the book as being a "gray-oatmeal colored clothbound octavo volume with a delightfully dated Tom Swift-like illustrated cover depicting Lewis's forward-looking version of a flying machine."

Throughout the rest of the article, Pastore organizes Lewis's work into three archeologically influenced chronological phases—"The Bronze Age," "The Golden Age," and "The Iron Age." "The Bronze Age" refers to the formative period of Lewis's literary career, which ran from 1914 to 1919. Pastore explains that the books from this period are hard to find because they all were published in numbers fewer than 6,500.

Our Mr. Wrenn was the first book published under Lewis's real name and was printed by Harper and Brothers. The story concerns a "petty bourgeois" who learns about life and manages to find happiness in his work and neighborhood. According to Pastore, the plot-line in *Our Mr. Wrenn* became a formula for Lewis, wherein "a middle-class protagonist...recognizes the foibles of

Pastore's Collecting Sinclair Lewis continued on page 6

the middle class and becomes better for his enlightenment, but not so much better that he breaks out of the mold." Pastore also insightfully notes that the story lines in Lewis's books "foreshadow our own age of self-help and enlightenment, where we look for ways not so much to escape the humdrum, but to find happiness and be well-adjusted within it."

Pastore describes the first edition of *Our Mr. Wrenn* as having "gray cloth boards with gilt lettering and a gilt Art Nouveau heart design on the cover." Pastore notes that the book can be found with some effort, believing that copies of the work probably survived because it was highly prized as Lewis's "first book."

Another book from this early period is *The Trail of the Hawk*, which Pastore summarizes as a three-part story about a clerk named Carl Ericson who becomes an aviator. After numerous adventures and some disheartening accidents, Carl eventually realizes that the daredevil life of an aviator is no longer for him and that he is now happier and better-adjusted. Pastore explains that the first edition of this text is difficult to find and describes it as a book which is "bound in dark blue cloth covered boards with gilt lettering and a tree design." (See article on *The Trail of the Hawk* on page 3.)

However, the hardest book besides *Hike* to find in the collector's market, Pastore asserts, is *The Innocents*, which is generally considered to be Lewis's worst novel. Pastore confides that Lewis wrote the book simply to satisfy his contract with Harper's; he had already negotiated a better deal on royalties with Harcourt. Lewis was anxious to work with the new publishing company, and it showed. Lewis's optimism bled into the novel, evident in a story Pastore termed "hopelessly sentimental, relentlessly happy in tone and uncharacteristically upbeat about small town life." The tale involves a failed shoe clerk named Seth Appleby who eventually gets his own shoe store after going through various "staid middle-class" obstacles. The first edition of this novel was published in "light gray cloth boards with gilt lettering and decoration."

Lewis's first controversial book was *The Job*, wherein a woman named Una Golden overcomes the drudgery of the working class to become an assistant manager of a real estate agency. Pastore reveals that the book is "one of the earliest literary examinations of the plight of the working girl in the white-collar arena and touched on divorce, birth control and women's

rights." The first edition of this novel is also difficult to find. It is bound in "green cloth covered boards with gilt lettering."

Free Air (which as Pastore insightfully notes is a reference to the gas station tire-maintenance signs of yesterday) is another novel from Lewis's formative period and is a story about a cross-country romance between a mechanic and a wealthy woman, wherein both discover that the "other half" isn't so bad after all. The first edition is "bound in blue cloth covered boards with a lighter blue lettering and design." He also said the book can still be found with some difficulty.

Like many other knowledgeable Lewis connoisseurs, Pastore considers the 1920s to be the "Golden Age" of Lewis's career. During this time, the books Lewis wrote sold hundreds of thousands of copies and are considered classics today. Pastore writes, "Literally speaking, these are the books upon which Sinclair Lewis built his monument, his reputation, and his fortune." Pastore explains that the classics from this period are the ones every collector and dealer sees without a jacket. He describes these books as commonly "bound in navy blue cloth boards with an orange rectangle on the cover and bold blue lettering in block print."

Lewis's books of this period showed that great works can start out as best-sellers, despite popular belief to

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NEW MEMBERS

The Sinclair Lewis Society welcomes the following new members who have joined since the publication of the Fall 1998 newsletter.

Chris Kennedy
2520 Ryan Rd. #45
Concord, CA
94518

Benjamin Boggs Smith
3170 Mapleleaf Dr., #711
Lexington, KY
40509

John Mero
111 S. 4th Ave.,
Apt.3
Highland Park, NJ
08904

Faith Sullivan
3316 Irving Ave. S
Minneapolis, MN
55408

SINCLAIR LEWIS DAYS: A CELEBRATION WITH CHARACTER

By Carl Coleman (This feature is based on information from issues of the Sauk Centre Herald.)

Almost every city, county, township, suburb, or village has its own version of a summer celebration, from the big week-long festivals such as Mardi-Gras or the Taste of Chicago to the brief but fun-filled weekend gatherings such as the Vernon Hills Days of my own home town. Some celebrations are meant to commemorate special events, some are meant to celebrate the turning of the seasons, others are meant to bring together friends and strangers alike for a common cause or endeavor, and some are meant just as a means for people to let off steam. Somewhere in the middle of this celebration continuum lies Sinclair Lewis Days.

In the infancy of this particular summer celebration, it had nothing whatever to do with Sinclair Lewis. In fact, the original celebration was called "Pride of Main Street Butter Days" in order to promote the sale of butter in Minnesota rather than butter substitutes, as butter production was once one of Sauk Centre's biggest industries. The annual two-day celebra-

tion featured an evening Coronation Butter Ball where the Butter Queen was crowned, a junior livestock show and parade, games, races, lots of live music, a doll buggy and wagon parade, a celebrity butter-churning contest between neighboring mayors, and, the focal point of the celebration, the Pride of Main Street Butter Days Parade. The first Parade, held on June 5, 1948, ran two miles along Main Street, had 30 floats, 10 drum corps and bands, and over 8000 spectators (a number far greater

than expected), but the highlight of the show was the Butter Queen, 21-year-old Sally Schwegmann and her "court," all dressed in Indian costumes to resemble the Land O' Lakes Butter icon. But despite their popularity, all good things must someday come to an end. In 1966, the Pride of Main Street Butter Days was celebrated for the last time, as the Land O' Lakes butter creamery in Sauk Centre ceased operation. This being the case, what was needed was another reason to celebrate. In 1970 the people found the inspiration they were looking for: Sinclair Lewis.

Doubtless the people of Sauk Centre had been asking themselves, "What else besides the creamery has put Sauk Centre, Minnesota, on the map? What in Sauk Centre can we be proud of as a group and celebrate together?" Then, when it was announced that the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home would soon be

opened to the public for viewing (after several years of painstaking restoration by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation), they had their answer. The sting of Lewis's biting satire *Main Street* had long since faded, and the man had been at rest for



Sauk Centre, circa 1925

almost two decades; people likely found it easy to focus on the achievements of their Pulitzer Prize-declining, Nobel Prize-winning, society-satirizing, fellow Sauk Centrean. So they decided to throw a party in his honor to commemorate the grand opening of the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home. Thus began the famous Sauk Centre Sinclair Lewis Days. And, since

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SINCLAIR LEWIS AND *DIANE OF THE GREEN VAN*

By Martin Bucco
Colorado State University

A few months after 29-year-old Sinclair Lewis worked up a *Publishers Syndicate* feature story on one Leona Dalrymple—an attractive New Jersey miss who won \$10,000 in a Reilly & Britton Company novel contest—he reviewed her prize-winning entry, *Diane of the Green Van* (1914). Lewis indicated that her narrative—victorious over more than 500 submissions—is “a charming tale of outdoors.” In his confectionary mood, Lewis avowed that the tale would “make readers’ hearts dance to the tune of romance.” Still, the reviewer bravely and rightly noted that the novel possessed “certain faults.”

The irrelevant and confusing plot is “artificially rammed into the real structure of the book.” For Lewis,

the real structure is “the pleasant gypsying” of comely Diane Westfall of New England and her gaffer cart-driver. Following in a hay wagon and camping nearby each night is the athletic swain whom Diane refuses to admit she loves. Lewis pronounces Dalrymple’s descriptions of the landscape “an authentic call to wandering.” Chained to his editorial desk in New York, Lewis asserts that “the reader cannot help desiring to go forth and do likewise.” Indeed, Lewis and his wife did do likewise in 1916, when he and Grace in a Model-T Ford went “autobumming” from Sauk Centre to Seattle. But more importantly, the situation in Dalrymple’s prize-winning, now forgotten, *Diane of the Green Van*—that of an ardent young man in adventurous and protective cross-country pursuit of a chaperoned beauty—resurfaces five years later in Lewis’s then up-to-date automotive romance *Free Air* (1919). ✍

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its inception, Sinclair Lewis Days has always remained somewhere in the middle of that celebration continuum—one part commemorative tribute to the prize-winning satirist, one part fund-raising avenue for not-for-profit/charity organizations such as St. Michael’s Hospital and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, and two parts all out fun and games.

During the first annual Sinclair Lewis Days in 1970, people lined up outside the Boyhood Home and listened to speeches celebrating the opening of the home to the general public. Later in the day the first ever Sinclair Lewis Days Parade was led down the newly renamed Sinclair Lewis Avenue (formerly 3rd Street) and past the Boyhood Home by the Sauk Centre High School Band. Subsequent celebrations saw the addition of other events, including a flea market, a kiddie parade, a craft sale, and more recently a slow-pitch men’s softball tournament and the Heart of the Lakes bike tour to raise money for the St. Michael’s Hospital Foundation. The most intriguing addition however has to be the highly popular polka mass, held in St. Paul’s Catholic Church, which is heartily enjoyed by the predominantly German, Slavic, and Polish population of Sauk Centre. During services, polka melodies are substituted for traditional music, while the

words of the hymns remain fundamentally the same. It is undoubtedly one of the liveliest church services of the year.

With all these added activities and increasing numbers of people each year, it was only a matter of time before this weekend celebration spilled over into the five-day, activity-filled festivity that it has become. Now, during each Sinclair Lewis Days, there is a float specifically dedicated to Sinclair Lewis, with many other floats sporting Lewis-related themes or memorabilia. It has taken some time for Sinclair Lewis and his legacy to creep back into the celebration held in his name for almost three decades, however, this resurgence was seen keenly in 1997, when Lewis’s granddaughter Lesley Lewis was made Grand Marshal of the Sinclair Lewis Days Parade. But during the most recent celebration—Sinclair Lewis Days 1998—the festival came full circle when the people of Sauk Centre celebrated the 50th anniversary of the whole shebang by inviting the first ever Butter Queen, Sally (Schwegmann) O’Gara to be the Grand Marshal of the 1998 Sinclair Lewis Days Parade. It seemed a fitting culmination to a celebration that has undergone much change in its five-decade history while still remaining essentially the same—one good long party. ✍

of which was used for the 1998 Writer's Conference, and one half of which is earmarked for the new stamp exhibit. The exhibit is now on hold because of the pending move from the Interpretive Center building.

- **Writer's Conference.** Jim Umhoefer did his usual great job of chairing the 1998 Writer's Conference. About 85 people attended. Freya Manfred was the keynote speaker, with Faith Sullivan, novelist; Jim Perlman, publisher; and Bill Vossler, magazine writer; as presenters. Jim wrote grants for \$1,500 for the Central Minnesota Arts Board; \$800 for The Loft; and \$2,000 for the Minnesota Humanities Commission. Those funds, along with registrations of \$3,222 brought a net of about \$2,082 for the conference.

Coming in 1999:

- The Gerald Ford Museum in Grand Rapids, Mich., a part of the National Archives, has requested use of some Lewis items for their millennium exhibit, "The American Century," which will run from April through November 1999. They will use the Lewis notebook with notes, which will fit in with a display to include objects from F. Scott Fitzgerald and William Faulkner.

- This is the 65th anniversary year of *Work of Art* on Jan. 24; the 85th anniversary of *Our Mr. Wrenn* on Feb. 19; the 50th anniversary of *The God-Seeker* on March 4; and the 80th anniversary of *Free Air* on Oct. 20.

Sinclair Lewis Foundation Statement on the Interpretive Center Building/Property November 17, 1998

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation and the Sauk Centre Chamber of Commerce are located in a building at the northwest corner of Interstate 94 and Highway 71 South in Sauk Centre. This Interpretive Center/Visitor Center building was built in 1972 with funds raised almost solely by Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board member Tillie Guelow from local business donations. Help in planning was received from the city, MnDOT, and the Minnesota State Historical Society.

Once the building was built, the Foundation was required to give ownership of the building to the City of Sauk Centre. Because it was located on state-owned land, it could not legally be owned by a private corporation. In exchange for this transfer of the building to

the city, the city fathers at that time agreed to maintain the building and pay for utilities.

The building was designed and built from the conception by the Foundation as a tourist/recreation center for Sauk Centre, as a museum containing exhibits of Sinclair Lewis's heritage in his hometown, and as a rest area and Chamber of Commerce office. The project was spearheaded by the Foundation, with backing from the Chamber. The City and the Park Board assisted in the Foundation's dealings with the State of Minnesota and MnDOT.

The City, on behalf of the Foundation, entered into a 99-year lease with the State of Minnesota for the property on which was to be located the Interpretive Center and the rest stop. In return the City and the Foundation agreed that the land would not be used for any commercial purpose, including even the sale of Lewis books. The lease was renewable every 20 years.

At the time of planning and construction, the Interpretive Center was considered to have the impact of "a sizable new industry" to Sauk Centre. This was a prophecy come true. In the early years after the much-publicized opening of the Interpretive Center, amazing numbers like 20,000 and 30,000 visitors a year were recorded. This past year, 26 years after its opening, the Visitor Center hosted 11,000 visitors, with 5,200 touring the Interpretive Center. Those visitors came from 40 states, Washington, D.C., and 24 nations and Canadian provinces.

In a letter dated October 9, 1998, the Sinclair Lewis Foundation received word from Traci Ryan of Ryan Consulting, Sauk Centre, that a discussion was being held regarding the "future development of the area on which the Chamber of Commerce and Sinclair Lewis Foundation facilities are currently located." Ms. Ryan speaks on behalf of the City of Sauk Centre, the Planning Commission, Public Utility, and EDA. The letter stated that the city has acquired the MnDOT property upon which the present Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center/Chamber of Commerce office building is presently located. The city has now undertaken a planning process "to consider what could be done with the current Chamber/Foundation site."

Ryan outlined five questions that she asked the Sinclair Lewis Foundation to consider. This letter will

also contain the Foundation's answers to her questions.

Q.1: How important is it that the Foundation be located on the subject property?

A: The Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board has unanimously agreed that the location of the Interpretive Center/Chamber at its present address is absolutely essential. This location is at the foot of the historic and world-renowned Original Main Street. The exposure to tourists is important, and the board agrees that having the facility at its present location plays an integral part in drawing people first to the Center/Chamber, and then out into Sauk Centre, Sinclair Lewis's hometown. It also draws tourists to the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home Museum, which is a National and a Minnesota Historic Site, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Keeping the present location for the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center is also important to the Foundation because it is a building that the Foundation has already built and paid for.

Q. 2: In your opinion, where is the best potential location for the Foundation and Chamber?

A: As I have previously stated, the Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board feels that the best possible location for them is at the present location.

Q. 3. Do you foresee any concerns or opportunities for us to consider as we undertake this process, financial or otherwise?

A: The Foundation is very concerned that the Interpretive Center and the Chamber of Commerce continue to be located together in the present building. We have a working relationship with the Chamber which allows the Interpretive Center to be kept open year-round, seven days a week in the tourist season, and five days a week in the off season.

Q. 4: Do you have any concerns or opportunities for us to consider—financial or otherwise—with regard to relocation?

A: Financial consideration is of the utmost importance. The Foundation is a private 501c3 corporation whose sole operating budget comes from (a) admissions and souvenir sales at the Boyhood Home Museum; (b) donations at the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center; and (c) grants earmarked for special activities such as the annual Writer's Conference each October, the construction of a handicapped access entry to the Boyhood Home, and the coming new exhibit at the

Interpretive Center.

Those funds are almost entirely used to pay our seasonal tour guides' salaries each tourist season, and to maintain the properties such as painting and upkeep at the Boyhood Home, yard maintenance, and the expenses of security systems and insurance on the holdings. The Foundation has only a small nest egg which is to be used for emergencies.

The Foundation Board agrees that if the city of Sauk Centre decides to take possession of the building we have built and now occupy, that the City would be morally obliged to furnish the Foundation with new quarters for the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center/Chamber offices equal in value to our present building. The present estimate of the value of our building is \$151,700. There are 3,034 square feet of space built on a cement slab. A replacement building is figured at \$50 a square foot. This would include heating and plumbing, but would not include any costs for finishing or for display areas. Does it make sense to bulldoze a perfectly good, useful, \$152,000 building to have an empty lot for sale? There are also other concerns such as parking space for tourists who stop at the center, with enough space for recreational vehicles.

Q. 5. Do you have any other issues which need to be discussed?

A: For several years we have heard rumors flying about the city wishing to sell the land on which the Interpretive Center is located to a big concern such as Perkins. We ask just what real value would the development of a Perkins on our location have for the city, considering that new developments are usually awarded TIF financing, meaning there would be no tax revenue from the development to the City of Sauk Centre for years to come.

However, keeping the Interpretive Center at its present location has an economic impact on Sauk Centre. Tourism figures show that every dollar spent by a tourist is multiplied as many as seven times in a given community. There were 1,400 visitors to the home, 11,000 to the Visitor Center, and 5,200 to the Interpretive Center last year. They came from 40 states, Washington, D.C., and 24 nations and provinces. Multiply those numbers into the State Tourism formula and you will see that the Foundation activities have a very important impact on the community, at

very little cost to the city.

A facility such as McDonald's may draw the motor-ing public off the freeway to eat, but people get off the freeway and right back onto it when they visit McDonald's. People who come off the freeway to visit the Lewis sites stay a while, spend money, send post-cards, get their pictures taken at the corner of the Original Main Street and Sinclair Lewis Avenue sign. Many even stay overnight in our motels.

Also, the Sinclair Lewis Writer's Conference, now in its 10th year, brings 100 or more participants to Sauk Centre each year. They visit the Lewis sites, buy gas, eat in our restaurants, stay in our motels, and visit our local businesses. Again, economic impact.

The Foundation co-sponsored its first-ever Sinclair Lewis academic conference a year ago, bringing 30 college professors, writers, and students, along with their spouses and traveling companions to Sauk Centre from a dozen states for a five-day stay in Lewis's hometown. They visited the gravesite, the stone arch, the local motels, restaurants, bars, and stores. Many other Lewis students attended the conference on a daily basis. Once more, economic impact.

A second academic conference is planned for the year 2000, which is expected to be bigger than the first conference and to draw even more people from around the U.S.

The Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board is very emphatic in its opinion that having the beautiful green space at the gateway to Sauk Centre, the world's most famous small town, is important for our local tourist industry. This location is a taste of small town living like it is and as it was when Sinclair Lewis wrote about it in his famous and internationally read novels.

Any little city can have a McDonald's or a Perkins at its freeway portal. No other little city in the world has Sinclair Lewis as its native son or has the most famous Main Street in the world.

We are asking the City of Sauk Centre, the Planning Commission, Public Utility, and EDA to consider very carefully the impact that moving the Interpretive Center and Chamber building to a new location will have on the tourist industry in Sauk Centre.

We are also asking you to admit to the impact that preserving the memory and archives of Sinclair Lewis has on Sauk Centre. This city is the place where 10,000 people a year visit to walk the walk that Carol Kennicott

made in *Main Street*, where 5,000 people a year visit the Interpretive Center to learn more about Sauk Centre's native son, the nation's first recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature.

And few small towns have had a native son honored by being pictured on a U.S. Postage Stamp, as Sinclair Lewis has.

Sinclair Lewis libraries and collections are housed far and wide, from Yale University, to Texas, to New York City. And yet, the real, dedicated Lewis scholars, readers and fans, always journey to Sauk Centre, Minnesota, to walk the walk, to visit the Lewis sites, to see the buildings that Lewis wrote about in his books, and to feel the aura of Small-Town America made famous for all time by Sinclair Lewis's novels.

In the event that the City of Sauk Centre chooses to take control of the Interpretive Center building and the Foundation is left without a home, it could spell the end of the Center here. An agreement was signed by the Foundation and the Stearns County Historical Society in 1980 arranging that in the event that the Foundation is closed or ceases to exist, that the Foundation must make every effort to deliver the artifacts and collections to the Stearns County Historical Society, which will not be obliged to maintain the facilities of the Foundation in the event the Foundation ceases to exist.

In plain terms, if the Foundation is put out of its home, Stearns County has the right to come in and transport the collections and store them, but not display them, in St. Cloud. Is this a fate you wish upon us, **to have the possessions, works, and heritage of one of Sauk Centre's most famous people shipped off and hidden away in another County?**

We members of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation Board realize that the land upon which the Interpretive Center/Chamber offices are located is coveted land. We are asking you to consider all the implications we have outlined, as well as all the facts that we have presented, in your decisions for our future.

We feel that development of the land in question, along with the neighboring areas could be made, even enhanced, while still keeping the Interpretive Center at its present location. Please keep an open mind in your planning, bearing in mind the historical heritage that you are holding in your hands. ✍

himself informally by taking a succession of mechanically oriented jobs as he bums around the country. But he continues to follow developments in aviation in the magazine *Aeronautics*. Although the Wright brothers had not appeared in the magazine as early as 1907, Glenn Curtis, later an airplane designer, is chronicled as inventor of an engine for dirigibles, and a sculptor named Delagrange attracted considerable attention by flying "over six hundred feet" in France (160).

While running a bicycle, motorcycle, and auto repair shop in Oakland, California, Carl hears of an aviation school and experimental aircraft factory outside San Mateo, California, where French Bleriot monoplanes are being used to teach flying.

Once again, Lewis inserts some aviation history:

November, 1909. Bleriot had crossed the English Channel; McCurdy had, in March, 1909, calmly pegged off sixteen miles in the "Silver Dart" biplane; Paulhan had gone eighty-one miles, and had risen to the incredible height of five hundred feet. . . . (162-63)

Carl is accepted into the school and displays both daring and talent from the time of his solo flight.

After a period of touring the country with a carnival act that exploits the nation's curiosity about aircraft, Carl moves up to flying in major competitions. Soon he makes aviation history with flights that set endurance records—six hours in one case—and, in the event in which he most clearly anticipates Lindberg, he wins a race from Long Island to New Haven, Connecticut. Shunning the flight plan followed by less daring fliers, Carl, who has been flying for a mere six months, takes a direct but dangerous route to New Haven. Instead of crossing Long Island Sound at its narrowest point as the other contestants do, Carl flies a long diagonal route over water to arrive safely in New Haven. Ironically, his is the only airplane of the three even to arrive at the finish line.

But such death-defying flights are a young man's game, as Carl becomes increasingly aware. Between November 1909, when he first attends flying school, and March 1912, Carl earns his nickname, "The Hawk," and becomes a celebrity, hounded by the press and sought out by autograph seekers. But he also loses nearly every friend that he has made in the aviation game. After a serious crash in February 1912, Carl

returns to the air within six weeks, having rigged his controls so that he can operate them with his leg in a splint. He is looking forward to a competition in Illinois the next week and to the aerial exploration of the Amazon River a few months later with his best friend, Forrest Haviland, when the news comes that Haviland has been killed in a crash. The Hawk sells his racing monoplane by telegraph, unwilling even to look at the machine again.

Carl turns his interest in engines into a marketable asset by applying for a job at the VanZile Motor Corporation in New York. There his inventive genius is soon busy with the development of a new type of camping vehicle which he calls the "Touricar," a vehicle that prefigures the modern motor home. This type of camper was a personal enthusiasm of Lewis's: he put together an auto-camper himself in 1916 and used it on a cross-country trip from Minnesota to Washington with his wife Grace; in 1928 he toured England in a commercially made camping vehicle. A few years later Lewis would attribute a similar invention to Sam Dodsworth, who dreams of starting a company to manufacture small, self-contained "caravans" as he is casting about for a second career after selling his own auto company to a larger competitor.

The Touricar project leads Carl into a Babbitt-like existence as he works long hours attempting to maintain the interest of VanZile's general manager, who is inclined to think of the Touricar as too visionary an idea. While under pressure on the job, Carl is also subjected to pressure to marry an old childhood sweetheart from Minnesota. Marriage to the prosaic Gertie Cowles would clip the Hawk's wings permanently.

Lewis extricates Carl from the middle-class morass into which he has wandered by inventing the sort of romantic plot that flawed several of his pre-*Main Street* novels. Carl encounters a New Yorker named Ruth Winslow, whom he marries after a lengthy courtship during which he has to conquer considerable prejudice against his second-generation-immigrant social status, his lack of formal education, and his proletarian tendencies which cause him to roll up his sleeves and plunge into mechanical problems instead of working them out on paper as an executive should.

But the marriage does not end the novel. Ruth and

JACK LONDON, SINCLAIR LEWIS, AND HARVEY TAYLOR

Jackie Koenig notes that in Stephen R. Pastore's *Sinclair Lewis, a Descriptive Bibliography*, there is some interesting information about Jack London and Harvey Taylor:

Page 13: From the Preface by Lee Biondi, of Heritage Book Shop, Los Angeles:

As a beginning writer, Sinclair Lewis did journeyman newspaper work and even briefly ghosted for Jack London.

Page 14-17: From the Introduction:

(In discussing Harvey Taylor's attempt at an earlier short bibliography, Pastore states) In getting patronizingly close to Lewis, Taylor, as would be his habit in years to come with other authors like Jack London, sought to profit from his "research" by creating "rarities" and getting his hands on Lewis ephemera through means which can only be described as disingenuous.

Pages 188-189: Illustration of binding for the Harvard Press edition (1932) of *Sinclair Lewis on the Valley of the Moon* and bibliographical information.

Pages 193-194: In discussing Lewis's "Launcelot," Pastore again goes after Harvey Taylor. Pastore finds it odd that Lewis allowed this poem to be published unless one is aware of the particularly cloying nature of Taylor and his infamous ability to slide his way into the good graces of literary greats. In fact, Lewis allowed Taylor to publish under similar auspices his (Lewis's) review of Jack London's *Valley of the Moon*. A shallower, more self-serving bit of literary back slapping would be difficult to find. Lewis had sold story plots to London which, as it turns out, were not as successful as both Lewis and Taylor would have liked everyone to believe. In any event, Taylor, ever after the dollar, created these "limited editions" . . . and succeeded in turning literary insignificance into profit. ✍

Reprinted from the *Jack London Foundation Newsletter*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1998.

Fleming's Western Looks to Future continued from page 12

Carl are beset with marital problems once the honeymoon is over. At first, Carl fails to recognize the source of his discontent, but, after walking all night to sort out his feelings after a serious domestic quarrel, he happens upon the Long Island air strip from which he once flew. As he watches a group of young aviators push a silver monoplane onto the field and sees the airplane—the symbol of freedom—take off, he is struck by an epiphany:

Ruth and he had to be up and away, immediately; go any place, do anything, so long as they followed new trails, and followed them together. He knew positively, after his lonely night, that he could not be happy without her as comrade in the freedom he craved. . . . They were a man and a woman who had promised to find new horizons for each other. (404)

The conclusion of *The Trail of the Hawk* is open ended. The last chapter finds Carl and Ruth aboard a ship for Buenos Aires, Argentina, where Carl will manage VanZile operations in that emerging export market. Will he again be ensnared by the tedium of the business world? Carl has vowed that he will not. He tells Ruth that he is determined to uphold his new motto: "How bully it is to

be living, if you don't have to give up living to make a living" (409).

This ending makes it clear that for Lewis, flight is a metaphor rather than the basic substance of the novel. Carl Ericson's story suggests that in spite of the closing of the American frontier, the twentieth century can hold challenges for those who seek them. Science and technology, often seen as forces hostile to creativity, can be the pathway to even greater adventures than were available to nineteenth-century Americans. Ericson takes up the challenge of these new frontiers and in doing so foreshadows later Lewis characters such as Martin Arrowsmith and Sam Dodsworth, who will further exploit the opportunities inherent in the frontiers of the twentieth century. ✍

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the contrary. Lewis had a knack for writing about controversial issues while still selling thousands of copies to interested readers. Pastore confirms Lewis's gift by saying, "The fact that Lewis makes powerful statements in a context meaningful to the masses is, I think, what makes him great."

For example, in *Main Street*, which Pastore deems the "book of the decade," Lewis's small-town satire was the first novel to "deal with sex and the middle-class woman in a way the public could accept and incorporate into its national consciousness." The book sold 180,000 copies, a number that astounded both Lewis and his publisher. However, the book that was Lewis's number one best-seller was *Babbitt*, selling over two million copies, according to Pastore. *Babbitt* is a story about a rather shady businessman and his losing battle against capitalistic middle-class life, and it helped to define the business character in America. "So deep was its impact," notes Pastore, "that 'babbitt' came to be used to describe someone who is the quintessential small-town booster, preoccupied with appearances and 'the sale.' No book ever better captured the feel of this purely American type." He added that it is generally believed that *Babbitt* led to Lewis winning the Nobel Prize.

Yet Pastore considers Lewis's Pulitzer-winning novel *Arrowsmith* to be his finest work. It is a medical novel about a doctor and his battle with his ideals. Besides its tremendous sophistication, what also makes this novel great is the heart Lewis put into it. According to Pastore, Lewis's "deep ties to his father's profession and his father's approval make this story all the more poignant." Pastore goes on to explain that the publishing company, Harcourt, printed a limited edition of *Arrowsmith* with a great deal of publicity two months before the first trade edition was available.

The limited editions "consist of 500 signed and numbered oversized volumes bound in beautiful sky-blue paper covered boards with a cream colored buckram cloth spine, issued in a navy slipcase." There was also a handsome limited edition translated into French. The limited edition consisted of only 100 copies and is "a spectacular two-volume set, bound in calfskin with hand-decorated gilt and bronze-colored endpapers, designed in an Art Deco style and irregularly bound in what the French called 'cubist signatures.'" This book, Pastore notes, is a hard book to find in jacket because collectors have gobbled it up due to

its "prize-winner" status—despite the fact that Lewis snubbed the Prize saying (publicly), "I invite other writers to consider the fact that by accepting the prizes and approval of these vague institutions, we are admitting their authority."

Two less notable "anomalous" books also published during Sinclair Lewis's "Golden Age" decade of the 1920s were *Mantrap* and *The Man Who Knew Coolidge*, both having been bound in the same type of navy cloth with an orange imprint and both being of little solid literary merit. *Mantrap* was a commercial success but was not critically praised; *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* was neither. *Mantrap* and *The Man Who Knew Coolidge* are two of the scarcer titles of the 1920s, according to Pastore, but they can still be found.

Another book that created a healthy controversy for Lewis touched on a hot subject, just as *The Job* did. This time the issue under scrutiny was organized religion. The novel in question, *Elmer Gantry*, is a story criticizing evangelism. The book brought a great deal of attention to Lewis, as booksellers in the Bible Belt either refused to carry it or returned shipments. This greatly increased public attention; *Elmer Gantry* inflamed the indignation of some and the curiosity of many others. Pastore indicates that *Elmer Gantry* in fact sold faster than all the other "Golden Age" books, which demonstrates just how much Americans love a good controversy. According to Pastore, 180,000 advance copies of the book were printed, which was the largest prepublication order at that time. Currently, *Elmer Gantry* is a hard book to find in collectable condition, but is abundant out of jacket. Also, the misprinted "Elmer Cantry" on the cover of the first 10,000 copies make first-edition copies quite easy to spot and confirm.

The last book for the "Golden Age" is *Dodsworth*, and it is a definite reflection of Lewis's life, as its central May/December relationship would soon become another formula for Lewis—this time depicting the recurrent pattern of his love life. Pastore also notes that, "This May/December novel was a fitting prelude to Lewis's Nobel Prize in 1930. The novel is considered by many to be Lewis at his most sophisticated and sensitive." According to Pastore, copies of the book in jacket are difficult to find, but the ones out of jacket are fairly common. He mentions that there were 900 copies of the book printed in a

Pastore's Collecting Sinclair Lewis continued from page 14

reverse binding, which refers to an orange cloth-covered binding with a black rectangle on the spine.

The books Lewis wrote after being awarded the Nobel Prize are placed in a period that Pastore calls the "Iron Age." These particular books are referred to as "iron" because "they were strong in terms of sales, but [were] generally dull and uninspired in terms of literary merit. In addition, from a collector's standpoint they are uniformly predictable, common and homogeneous."


The novels of this period include *Ann Vickers* and *Kingsblood Royal*, which were both issued in limited editions. *It Can't Happen Here* is a book that is hard to find in good condition, Pastore notes, because its silver dust wrapper gets marred quite easily. The books of this period, which are a bit more difficult to find, according to Pastore, include *Cass Timberlane*, with its blue dust wrapper, and *World So Wide*, with a label that announced Lewis's death before the book was published in 1951. However, the most difficult work to find from "The Iron Age" is a play Lewis wrote with historian Lloyd Lewis in 1938 called *Jayhawker*. Pastore explains that the play was a flop on Broadway, and it is hard to find because it had such a small publication run.

Also included in the "Iron Age" is an odd little work published by Simon & Schuster called *Walt Disney's Bongo*. The book is a large glossy-format children's book written from a cartoon movie based on an early short story Lewis wrote with the same name. Pastore writes, "Mostly because of its Disney connection, the book survived in the collector's market. Dealers knowledgeable of

the Lewis association raise the price accordingly."

In conclusion, Pastore considers Lewis to be one of the greatest figures in twentieth-century American literature. Pastore writes, "His books are certainly more accessible than the others' [Fitzgerald, Faulkner and Hemingway, etc.], more readable and, in the main, more affordable . . . [They] are discoverable, handsome, pleasantly dated in their design and 'good reads.'" So, as Lewis's works continue to be read, Pastore predicts that Lewis, "so long an over-the-counter collectable author" will soon become "deservedly blue chip." ✍

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C-SPAN VISITS SAUK CENTRE

This is an excerpt of a recent interview between Joe Teeples of C-SPAN and Joyce Lyng, the Docent of the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home, which took place over last Memorial Day weekend.

Q: Tell me about the family of Sinclair Lewis.

A: Sinclair Lewis was born in Sauk Centre, Minnesota, on February 7, 1885 in the house across the street from his boyhood home. His parents were Dr. E. J. Lewis and Emma Kermott Lewis. Sinclair Lewis was the youngest of three boys. Fred was nine when Sinclair was born, and Claude was six. The family moved into the boyhood home when Sinclair was four.

Q: What influence has he had on American literature, then and today?

A: He has had a great deal of influence. Many authors today use his concept of writing when writing their own books. One of his novels, *It Can't Happen Here*, was written way ahead of its time—in 1935. This book is a warning about the fragility of democracy. Sinclair profoundly understood the American character and ripped away smug platitudes to give the truth.

Q: How did growing up in Minnesota influence his writing?

A: It helped him to see that one has to work for the good things in life—they don't come "served on a silver platter" so to speak. You often have to work hard to achieve success.

Q: Can you tell us about *Main Street*?

A: *Main Street* was published on October 23, 1920. This book was in his mind and thoughts for about fifteen years before it was actually put on paper. Sinclair Lewis began planning it in 1905 during his sophomore year at college. Characters in the book were based upon people he knew in Sauk Centre.

Q: How was the book received?

A: At first, not well at all. Sinclair felt that the people in Sauk Centre should make better use of their lives than what they were doing—that they had more potential. They didn't appreciate what was written about themselves. Plus, the truth hurt their character.

Q: Does his writing still have pertinent meaning today? Why?

A: I think so. Life in small towns and on Main Streets everywhere remains somewhat the same.

Q: Who influenced his writing?

A: Mainly his stepmother Isabel. She encouraged him in his literary interests and in his writing. She was deeply involved in the literary world. She was instrumental in getting a literary study group started called the Gradatim Club.

Q: How has his reputation changed over the years?

A: After the publication of *Main Street*, Sinclair Lewis achieved instant fame. His books are read now by many scholars, and papers on his works are written by college students and professors. A new biography is even being written on Sinclair's life by Richard Lingeman.

Q: What awards has he received?

A: Sinclair Lewis was awarded the Pulitzer in 1926 for *Arrowsmith*, but he declined it, because he'd felt that he should have been awarded one far earlier for *Babbitt*. In December of 1930 Sinclair Lewis received the Nobel Prize for Literature. *Main Street*, *Babbitt*, *Dodsworth*, *Arrowsmith*, and *Elmer Gantry* were all published between 1920-1930, and of those, *Main Street* was the most famous.

Q: What other famous writers were his contemporaries?

A: Some of Sinclair Lewis's famous contemporaries were: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Thomas Wolfe, and Pearl S. Buck.

Q: Would you tell us the history of the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home?

A: The Home has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a state historic landmark. It is a middle-class home built around 1889. The Lewis family was the first to live in the house, though it was sold in 1927—one year after Dr. E. J. Lewis died. In the mid-1960s the house was bought by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation and restored to its original look when the Lewises lived there. The wallpaper was torn off to the first layer and matched as

C-Span Visits Sauk Centre continued on page 17

closely as possible to the original. The floors are made of the original maple. There are also 40 artifacts in the house that actually belonged to the Lewis family. Some of these include: Sinclair's bed, a radio, some pictures, a mayflower sugar bowl, Dr. Lewis's diploma, a washbowl and pitcher set, heating pipes from 1900, and the original doorbell.

Q: What will people see if they come here?

A: The house is mainly of Victorian architecture, and is owned by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation, as is the museum located in the interpretive center at the junction of I-94 and Highway 71. The tour of the Boyhood Home is a 25 minute guided and narrated tour. The museum tour is self-guided. A fifteen minute video is also available for viewing, which shows more artifacts.

Q: Why is it important to preserve Sinclair Lewis's memory?

A: It is important to preserve Sinclair Lewis's memory for a number of reasons. He was the first American to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He talked about middle-class people and told just how they lived their everyday lives. He was able to see into the distant future—of what will and can hap-

pen to our society. Many scholars and professors of English literature come to the home and museum to inquire and see items of Sinclair's and to research to help them in writing their own books. Thus the museum includes an original illustration of how Sinclair gave birth to a novel.

The preservation of the Sinclair Lewis Boyhood Home is a primary way to keep Sinclair Lewis's memory alive. Because of its frequent visitation, it's important to thank local area people for caring enough in the 1960s through today to preserve a great piece of history. They do need and welcome help via monetary donations to help with the upkeep of the Lewis home/museum.

Another way of preserving Lewis's memory is the annual writer's conference—chaired by Jim Umhoefer and sponsored by the Sinclair Lewis Foundation in October. In July 1997 the Sinclair Lewis Society and the Sinclair Lewis Foundation cosponsored a conference on the 75th anniversary of *Babbitt* and the 50th anniversary of *Kingsblood Royal*. Lewis scholars and professors presented their papers on these two works. In the year 2000, the 75th anniversary of *Arrowsmith* will be celebrated the same way here in Sauk Centre. ✍

THE SINCLAIR LEWIS
SOCIETY NEWSLETTER
WELCOMES CONTRIBUTIONS

The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter welcomes short contributions about Sinclair Lewis's work, life, and times. We also welcome essays about teaching Lewis's novels and short stories. Send books for review, notices of upcoming conferences, reports on presentations and publications relating to Lewis, discoveries of materials (correspondence, manuscripts, etc.) in and descriptions of collections in libraries, and all other items to:

Sally Parry, Editor
The Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter
Dept. of English
Box 4240
Illinois State University
Normal, IL 61790-4240

**SINCLAIR LEWIS FOUNDATION
HEARS SPECIAL PRESENTATION**

A presentation of a family association with Sinclair Lewis was featured at the Annual Meeting of the Sinclair Lewis Foundation in Sauk Centre, Minnesota. The presenter was Philip Matthews of Fargo, North Dakota, whose father purchased a farm in North Dakota from Sinclair Lewis in 1944. The talk was given at 7 pm on Sunday, February 7, 1999 in the Sinclair Lewis Interpretive Center in Sauk Centre.

The father of Philip Matthews, Jay T. Penas, was renting the farm in Walsh County south of Park River, from Sinclair Lewis, and the Penas family lived on the farm. Sinclair Lewis had inherited that and another farm near Edinburg in Walsh County from his father E. J. Lewis, a medical doctor who had practiced in Sauk Centre. ✍

LEWIS AND THE GOLDEN VIOLET

In the late 1930s and early 1940s Sinclair Lewis, along with Clifton Fadiman and Carl Van Doren, served as the Editorial Committee for the Readers Club, a version of Book-of-the-Month Club. The *Golden Violet* by Joseph Shearing was published in 1941 with a foreword by Lewis which is reprinted below.

The dog that howled at midnight—the debonair Chief Inspector—the thing that crept about the woodshed behind a lonely Connecticut farmhouse—the tough private detective smashing into a stale hotel room—the whimsical criminological vicar in Devonshire—these charming incitements to fear have replaced the lissome young lady and the stalwart lover for popular fictional enjoyment, and the crime-mystery-detective school of fiction has become so portentous an escape from reality that some day, a hundred years hence, even the college professors and the critics will begin to notice it. A bishop or a burlesque queen who does not have a crime story on the bedside table is suspect and perhaps ruined. The quantity of dreary trash in this school is not surprising. What is surprising is the quantity of authentic literature, shrewd and competent writing with that power of suggesting more than is said, of awakening the emotions and the imagination, that is the sign of literature. We should rejoice that not all inspired authors dwell on the vigorously placid backwoods or the psychological problems of the communistic Modern Woman. Like Dickens and Dostoevsky, a few are also willing to enliven us with the delightful shocks of murder, cruelty to children, and the long hatred between man and woman. Among the writers who have been willing to devote great talent to the crime story are the wondrous Dorothy Sayers, who wrote *The Nine Tailors* and *Strong Poison*, that English journalist A. B. Cox who, under the more shiny names of “Francis Iles” and “Anthony Berkeley,” is the enduring author of tales like *Malice Aforethought*, which in literary geography is a bright island of Corfu.

But neither is more effective than a lady who is not content with being in private life, plentitudinously named Mrs. Gabrielle Margaret

Vere Campbell Long. She is also the alter ego of “Marjorie Bowen,” “George Preedy,” “John Winch,” “Robert Paye,” “Margaret Campbell” and, what is important for us now, that enchanting brewer of dread, “Joseph Shearing.” “Mr. Shearing” had gained a rare adoring school of admirers even before it was revealed that he—she—oh, damn that pronoun—that she was Mrs. Long. With such books as *Blanche Fury*, *The Spider in the Cup*, *The Angel of the Assassination*, *Moss Rose*, and *The Crime of Laura Sarelle*, she has given us a new quality of exquisite shivering, of sophisticated naïveté, of dried rose-leaves soaked with blood, of a distinction which can entrance the scholar as well as the roughneck seeking to forget the state of his neck and his ill fortunes. She loves, particularly, the spectacle of a Victorian lady, frigid and delicately erect, who moves across polished floors and picks up, not the prayer book, the gift of the squire’s lady, but a paper knife with which she demurely hastens to do one of the bloodiest, reekingest murders on record. In *The Golden Violet* Shearing sets a particularly fragile and priggish specimen of such womanhood, a lady author of verses for Keepsake Albums, against the fire and slaughter of a rebellion of slaves in tropic Jamaica, with a coarsely whiskered husband and a convincing romantic lover for private domestic drama, and a very fine high murder promised toward the end. It is what a high-school girl would call “a grand story.” But, as for Max Beerbohm or Arthur Machen—if either of them has read it, I suspect that he has said, with awe and rapture, “It’s a grand story!” Underneath the grand story, underneath the creepiness of a tropic dusk, Mrs. Shearing-Long has a theme which, when you catch it, makes you stir with interested anxiety. “You were wondering, were you not, what women can do to revenge themselves on men?” says the mulatto slave girl to Angelica; and that very white and conventional and British lady agrees, “Yes, I was thinking that.”

Through all the turbulence of the story is the turbulent suggestion of the War Between the Sexes. ✍

LEWIS AND THE WEB: INFORMATION AND REQUESTS

The Sinclair Lewis website continues to be popular and has received over 5,000 "hits" since the counter was put in late in October. Although the majority of the people who view the web are from the United States, there are people who have contacted the website from all over the world. The largest number of Lewis fans from outside the United States are in Canada, followed closely by Germany and the United Kingdom. Other countries that have more than a few people who have shown interest include France, the Netherlands, Australia, New Zealand, Denmark, Mexico, Poland, and Brazil. The site has also received at least one visit from each of the following countries: the Virgin Islands, Switzerland, Hong Kong, the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, Yugoslavia, South Korea, Sweden, the Philippines, Croatia, Malaysia, Belgium, India, Norway, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Hungary, Turkey, Japan, Slovenia, Peru, Latvia, Austria, Israel, Italy, and the Slovak Republic.

Here are some recent questions received since the last issue. Material in brackets are either answers that were sent or comments by the editor. Hope you enjoy them.

◇◇◇

We are currently in the planning stages of an exhibit which will open here at the Kennedy Library in early April. The focus will be the April 29, 1962 White House dinner hosted by President and Mrs. Kennedy for the Nobel Prize winners of the Western Hemisphere.

As you may know, following dinner Fredric March read excerpts from *Main Street* to the guests in the East Room of the White House. Because this was such an important part of the evening, we would like to somehow focus attention to it. We thought perhaps we could display a first edition of *Main Street* in one of the wall cases if it is possible to locate one. I am wondering if the Society or one of its members might have a copy with a dust jacket which could be loaned to the Kennedy Library for this temporary exhibit (duration approximately 6 months). [They were sent a copy of the photoplay edition of the Warner Brothers silent film version.]

◇◇◇

We at the ABC News Research Center have been

charged by John Stossel's staff with finding out in which book a certain phrase occurs in the works of Mr. Lewis. The sentence is something like "It was the best chicken he had had in a coon's age." We need to know in what book and where in that book, this sentence appears. This being a network news organization, Mr. Stossel wants the information as soon as possible for a film shoot either later today or tomorrow morning. If anyone in your organization can help us identify the origin of this sentence (or, my guess is, any sentence of Mr. Lewis's containing the phrase "coon's age").

[The phrase was used in *Babbitt* at the end of a dinner party that George and Myra have. The information was found by ABC News about the same time we found it. They used Project Gutenberg on the web which has the complete texts of *Main Street* and *Babbitt*.]

◇◇◇

Congratulations to your interesting and professionally designed website. We will install a link on it on our kalender-page at Feb. 7 under: <http://www.dwelle.de/kalender/Welcome.html>

◇◇◇

Are there any conferences scheduled for this year? I found this address surfing the net. I was stunned to find there is much interest in Lewis—is he required reading? I used to sneak in copies of Lewis's works to a particularly boring history class back in 1964. I read *Dodsworth* and *Arrowsmith* there. I think *Dodsworth* is Lewis's most mature work by a considerable margin. Is the Society aware of the Grace Hegger Lewis-Sinclair Lewis Collection at the Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas? I have an Exhibition Catalog signed by Grace Hegger Lewis—#66 of 100. I wonder if it has any value? I purchased it for one dollar. Am thinking about joining your society. I've been a member of the Mencken Society for over 20 years and have a copy of every *Menckeniana*. They don't make em like Lewis and Mencken anymore! God, I miss their satire—the way they lambasted the general populace as a bunch of inflammatory dolts. What courage!

◇◇◇

Is there a web site on the internet where you go can to read a book, *Arrowsmith* in particular, by S.L.?

◇◇◇

I am very interested in getting a copy of the movie *Free Air* (and/or the script). I have just recently located the novel. The reason I am so interested in this film is because it was partially filmed in the city in which I live and would like to be able to acquire it for civic and historical reasons. [If any readers know where to find it, please let the editor know.]

◇◇◇

I have a regular column in my local paper, and I'm trying to track down a great SL quote I saw in another article somewhere. It was about how workers tend to overlook the bad social effects of the business which pay their salary. Below is my rough draft so far, including the place for the quote, to give you a sense of context. Can you help me find this?

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I'm looking for a reference in Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*, to people from Minnesota emigrating to Alberta, Canada. Regrettably, a copy of this book is not immediately available to me, and I am in urgent need of this information.

◇◇◇

I found your name on the Nobel Prize (Literature) page, in search of the text of "Land," the short story by Sinclair Lewis. I read it many years ago, and would like to do so again. Can you help me? [The short story "Land" is in a collection called *Selected Short Stories of Sinclair Lewis* that was reissued by the Ivan R. Dee Publishers in Chicago in 1990.]

◇◇◇

I'm trying to find out what the cover to the 1960s

Dell edition of *Ann Vickers* looks like, because it's possible I may have the original artwork for it. Can someone help me out with a brief description?

[I found the Dell *Ann Vickers*. The cover illustration is by Terpning. It shows a woman with a short blond bob and a red hat in the foreground and a roadster off to the right. The cover text starts "Vivid . . . passionate . . . honest."]

Thanks for checking! That sounds like it could very well be it, though in the painting the colors (of the hat and the buildings in the background) look more violet than

red. To the right of a car is the figure of a man, though if they only used part of the illustration he could have been cut off.

Nice to know what's been hanging on my wall for the past 10 years! I'll try and look up the artist on the 'net and see if I can find any info.

◇◇◇

My father has attributed this quote to Sinclair Lewis—"You can't legislate morality." I have been unable to verify this. Can you help? [We had no luck.]

◇◇◇

My mother had at one time in her possession an original handbound, signed on each handmade page edition of Sinclair Lewis's *Arrowsmith*. She gave it to my aunt for safe-keeping years ago during a family crisis and now my aunt denies ever having seen the book. Nevertheless, I am writing to you to ask if you know the worth

of this book today, and if you aren't able to assist me in finding this fact, can you direct me to those who can? I love all the information you have in your webpage on Sinclair Lewis! Thanks so very much. [This person was referred to Steve Pastore.]

Hi I was referred to you by Sally Parry and wanted to ask you since you are considered the largest Lewis collector in the US, if you could tell me what the worth of the special edition my mother owns of the *Arrowsmith*

THE GOD-SEEKER is Aaron Gadd, burning with an impossible dream . . .

THE OUTCAST is Selene, half-white Indian princess, born to betray herself . . .

THE TEMPTRESS is Huldah, tortured by visions of God—and urgings of the flesh . . .

Sinclair Lewis The God-Seeker

"One of his most remarkable achievements . . . readers who remember *BABBITE* and *ARROWSMITH* and *DODSWORTH* may agree that—in a very different fashion—the old master has done it again."

—New York Herald Tribune

POPULAR LIBRARY



Back cover of *The God-Seeker*

book. Each page is handsigned by the author and the paper contained in the book is rumored to have been made by Mr. Lewis himself. Can you help me or refer me to one who could give me this information? I would truly appreciate any information you can give me!

[I suppose I am the leading authority on Sinclair Lewis collectible books, having written 2 books on him and countless articles. However, I would need more information on the item in question before I could evaluate exactly what is in your mother's possession.

1. Is it actually in book form? Apprx size in inches?
2. Who is the publisher? Date of publication?
3. What does the cover look like?
4. Is there a dust jacket?

5. Is it actually signed ON EVERY PAGE? Or only one page? The only thing that I can say with a degree of certainty is that it is EXTREMELY unlikely that Lewis made paper of any sort at any time. He was an urbane, suave, alcoholic jet setter (before jets) who never stayed in one place more than a few weeks. He had no hobbies except martinis. If there was anyone less likely to make paper (!), I don't know who it could be. Nonetheless, your item sounds very interesting and I am wildly intrigued as to what, exactly, it is. Answer my questions, and I am sure to give you an educated guess. I must thank Prof. Parry for her confidence in me. And you for presenting such an entertaining enigma. S. Pastore]

◇◇◇

Hello, if you could send me info about what Lewis's books that were published in the 1920s were about that would be great of you. I have checked all over and nothing is specific, are these books still available? If you could send me whatever information you have, as soon as possible it would be appreciated.

◇◇◇

I work for Helicon Publishing Ltd in the UK and we are producing *The Hutchinson Directory of Web Sites*—a book of recommended educational Web sites for publication early next year (final deadline for inclusion in this title is 10 November, 1998). It will be aimed at the family market and we would like to include "Sinclair Lewis Home Page" in this book.

Furthermore, we would like to illustrate the entry for your site with a black & white screenshot of the home page. Therefore I am writing to request permission for the nonexclusive, world, all-language rights to repro-

duce this screenshot in any print edition of *The Hutchinson Directory of Web Sites*.

◇◇◇

When I was in college we had to read a book by Sinclair Lewis about the terrible factory conditions in the early 1900s. Could you tell me the title? [She was obviously thinking of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*.]

◇◇◇

I work for an antiquarian book shop in Los Angeles, the Heritage Book Shop. We have recently acquired a good deal of inscribed Sinclair Lewis books, and a few of them are inscribed quite warmly to Harry Korner [Korner?]. He seems to have been linked quite closely to *Our Mr. Wrenn*, according to one of the inscriptions.

I have looked in the biographies, bibliographies, and searched the internet to no avail. I realize this is an imposition, but do you know who he was? I'd really appreciate any help you could give. [Does anyone know the answer?]

◇◇◇

History of the Lewis Family: Lewis Family in America from the Middle of the Seventeenth Century Down to the Present Time (1893) by William Terrell Lewis of Perryville, Winston County, Mississippi, Louisville, KY, Published by The Courier-Journal, Job Printing Co. 1893.

It can be found at the CSU (Sutro) Library System in San Francisco, California in the (California History Reading Room) or order it through the (Inter Library Exchange Program on Microfiche) (it takes about 1 1/2 months to get it.) A way to convert microfiche to page form is with a computer, that has a flatbed scanner, it will enlarge, and transpose the text. A local high school, or college, church, or friends would have one!

◇◇◇

I have a first edition, 31st (!) printing of *Main Street* (1932) with pictures from the Warner Brothers "photoplay." Is this of any value (other than literary)?

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I work in the Washington bureau of the *Australian Financial Review*, and our editor in Sydney has asked me to try and track down an article written by Sinclair Lewis which appeared in the *Nation* magazine on September 10, 1924. It's called "Main Street's Been Paved." I wonder

if you might have easy access to it? I'd really appreciate your help. I have tried to reach the p.r. people at the *Nation* but have so far been unsuccessful. [They were referred to *The Man from Main Street* where it's reprinted.]

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I enjoy the beautiful site which you present on this web. Could you please inform me about French websites about Sinclair Lewis? Thank you in advance and please receive my New Year regards.

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I am a "new" fan of Sinclair Lewis and I was wondering if you could answer a couple of questions for me. First off, I should explain that I have tried to locate the answers myself, but am not having much luck, and I am not very good at doing research on the web (yet!!).

1) Did Sinclair Lewis ever live in Duluth, MN, and if so, when? I am from Duluth and was told once or twice that he had, and was even shown the house he supposedly lived in, but I have not actually read anything in any sort of official documentation.

2) What did Mr. Lewis go to Yale for? (what was his degree in?) obviously English or journalism may be logical guesses, but there seems to be somewhat of a "sociological" theme to some of his work. (i.e. Carol studying sociology and continuing to read it, and there was something in the intro to *It Can't Happen Here* regarding sociology as well). It seems to me that there is a definite sociological influence to his writing at the very least.

Student Messages

I am a fourteen year old looking for information on the great Sinclair Lewis. You see, I was assigned a research project on an author and I decided to research Sinclair Lewis because I am very interested in him, and my mother is also very good friends with Gregory Lewis. I am intrigued with Lewis's life and Dorothy Thompson but I live in New Orleans and my resources are limited. I would really appreciate it if you would send me some information at this address (I am at a friend's house). Please, I know you are very busy but I really need some information.

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In recent days, I have been working on a term paper about Sinclair Lewis. As part of this extensive paper I need a variety of information on Lewis's life, themes, and

stylistic tendencies. All I am requesting of you is that you validate the source: <http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/slewis.htm> as my instructor has indicated that this source is invalid. [The source was compiled by a Finnish person writing in English and is generally accurate but with some typos.]

◇◇◇

I am a junior in high school and am currently writing a research paper relating satire, social reform, and *Main Street*. I was wondering if you could e-mail me any critical essays on any of those topics, or if there was somewhere I could order them. I would really appreciate it if I might somehow be able to see some of the essays included in the Bibliography, or any others.

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I am a high school junior writing a research paper on Sinclair Lewis. Is it possible for you to send me critical reviews on his works, particularly *Main Street* and *Elmer Gantry*? I would appreciate this very much.

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Would you have any book critiques on *Arrowsmith*? I have been assigned to write a critique on the book *Arrowsmith* but our library being grossly underfunded does not have the resources available to help me. Any links or help would be appreciated. Thank you.

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I am a grad student and have just begun reading Lewis for the first time. I am also from St. Cloud, living in South Dakota, going to SDSU. Because I have just begun reading *Main Street*, I got on line to see if there was any additional information about Lewis that I didn't already know. I saw your homepage. Will you be having another conference soon? I would love to attend since I am just now getting interested in him . . . (what a shame, I know . . . after all these years, discovering his works). I just read that SCSU has quite a bit of information on him . . . this is wonderful . . . I hope to make use of some of this . . . but am really interested attending a conference on him.

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Hi! I am looking for a copy of Lewis's *Wasteland*. Can you tell me where I can find it?? I have looked all over on the net, I'm sure it's somewhere, but I am not having much luck!! If you could help me out, it would

be greatly appreciated!! [Perhaps she should have looked under T. S. Eliot.]

◇◇◇

I am currently attending Ithaca College. I am a junior politics major. I am very interested in Sinclair Lewis and was thinking of possibly writing a paper on him. I was wondering what your views on Lewis are and what you thought his views of the American Society were.

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I am currently enrolled in an American Literature course in my high school. We have been given the assignment of researching a topic of the 1920s era. I selected Sinclair Lewis and just recently added the web to my list of sources. While searching under the subject of Sinclair Lewis I came across the website for the Sinclair Lewis Society. As the assignment entails giving an oral presentation, I would be greatly appreciative if the Society could forward me any information about the author, including the periodic newsletter I read about at the site. Thank You again and any assistance would be appreciated. Although my presentation is just around the corner, any facts you could share with me would be very helpful.

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Hi. I'm a senior at Providence Country Day School in East Providence, RI. I have been assigned to do some research about Sinclair Lewis before my class starts his book, *Main Street*. I found your website very useful. If you could send me additional information regarding Sinclair Lewis or his book *Main Street* I would greatly appreciate it. Thank you very much for your time and website.

◇◇◇

Hi, I just wanted to ask if you could possibly include some critical information in your website. If not, could you please send me some? I am doing a term paper which includes mostly critical analysis of Sinclair Lewis's novel, *Main Street*.

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I'm doing a report on Sinclair Lewis and I need to write a comparison of gathered critical information from literary experts and my own interpretations and conclusions on Sinclair Lewis. Can you please tell me, if any,

where I could find a website or book that criticizes Sinclair Lewis's work from a literary expert. Reply ASAP. Thank you very much.

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I did want to ask your opinion, though, on whether you thought that *Elmer Gantry* (the preacher) and Jim Bakker (the preacher) were similar in that they both were out to "put it over the whole bunch." Were they both just salesmen and the commodity they were selling was religion? That is the approach I am using in my research essay and just wanted to get your opinion. Thank you for your time and help. I had not been exposed to Lewis in the past and am sorry I wasn't.

◇◇◇

I am currently working on a paper about literature during the 1920s. I am focusing on the negative or pessimistic attitude of several writers of the period, using Sinclair Lewis, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, H. L. Mencken, and Theodore Dreiser as examples. I was wondering if you know where I could find info on this aspect of Sinclair Lewis's writing, whether on your own site or elsewhere on the net. Most info I find is more bibliographical than it is analytical, which is why I am having troubles. I would even be interested in summaries of books by these authors.

◇◇◇

Could you tell me what city Sinclair Lewis has in mind when he writes about *Zenith*—it is clearly not *Main Street*—was it Duluth by any chance or was it a mix of mid-western cities? I am writing about Rotary in Europe—and the reference is rather indirect but important, involving a comparison of European and U.S. cities of the 1920s. Many thanks for your help and for your charming newsletter.

Does anybody know whether Sinclair Lewis had any formal relations with Rotary? Does he write about Rotary in places other than *Babbitt*? Thank you so much. I hope you don't think my question on Sinclair Lewis and Rotary silly! I have some of the places he writes against Rotary and I was wondering whether he writes about it other than in *Babbitt*. Another minor detail—this is all part of the creative process—Sinclair Lewis traveled widely in Europe. I wonder if he ever got to Dresden? Any record of that? Any account of his impressions of the Old World other than in his novels?

◇◇◇

I'm a 17-year-old girl from Germany and attending 12th grade at high school. This semester I have to write a term paper about *Babbitt* by Sinclair Lewis. I have to work on the question "What Babbitt thinks of work and business." I would be very glad if you would have for example an interpretation of the book or some other information I could work with.

◇◇◇

I'm doing a research paper on Sinclair Lewis, so far the internet has been a lot of help but I still have a few questions I need answers to. They are:

What authors influenced his style of writing? Was the influence significant? If so how did Sinclair Lewis express it in his own writing? Did Sinclair Lewis have any influence on other writers?

If you would be able to help me find the answers to these questions your help would be greatly appreciated.

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Lewis society members: I am writing a report on Sinclair Lewis's use of the character Dodsworth in his other novels, so far I have only found a site in infoseek. Please could you help.

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I was looking for some literary criticism of his works, especially of *Elmer Gantry*. Do you have articles? Discussions?

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Hello! Nice page on Sinclair Lewis. My English teacher has an extra credit game, and one of the questions that we are to find is:

(Harry) Sinclair Lewis describes himself as "a dull fellow whose virtue—if there is any—is to be found in _____."

Do you know what the blank is? Or any place that I could go to find it? If you could reply as soon as possible, I would greatly appreciate it. Thanks!

*I have been looking all over too. The teacher will not tell because it is a game that we play for extra credit . . . and if I could get this question I would get a lot of points. It is there somewhere, because he found it somewhere. Well, just let me know if you find it, but do not take time away from other stuff to look. I'll let you know if I get it. Thanks again.

[Ed.—After all this time I finally found the answer to the quote. The blank is filled in with "his books." It's from "Self Portrait" (Berlin, August, 1927) which was reprinted in *The Man from Main Street*.]

*WOW! Thank you so much for finding this! My teacher will be very impressed that I have the answer because no one has been able to find this question for about 2 months now! Thanks a bunch again!

*Hello, me again, I turned in the answer to my teacher today, but he was kind of skeptical about my answer. He said that if it was too general, I would not get credit, but if I showed him where I got the quote, and the quote said that, I would get the credit. I tried my local library today to find *The Man from Main Street*, but there is nothing on Sinclair Lewis, not even "Self Portrait." So, would you be able to add that part of the book (the quote) onto your website, and let me know about it? If you could that would be great! Thanks a bunch!!

◇◇◇

I'm a junior at Pitman High School in Pitman, NJ. I am writing to ask if anyone in the Sinclair Lewis Society could offer me any help on a research paper I am working on for my U.S. History II class. The topic of the paper is "Alienation: The theme of the arts in the 1920s." I am expected to create an argument agreeing or disagreeing with the statement that alienation was the theme of the arts in the 20s. I have chosen to argue that alienation was the theme, and I think that Sinclair Lewis's writings support that. Consequently, I was hoping that someone from your organization could possibly point me in the right direction with this paper. Any suggestions would be greatly appreciated. Thank you!

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I just wanted to tell you that this is a great site! I am doing a research paper on Lewis and have found a great deal of information on your website.

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I am doing an in-depth report on Sinclair Lewis concentrating on his book *Babbitt*. I would like it if you could send or give me a web address of some reviews of this and his other books, and I would be very grateful. I have had the hardest time finding things to cite for this report, for there are not many concrete things said about Sinclair Lewis, except for himself. At least, that I can find anyway. ✍

SINCLAIR LEWIS PANEL AT 1999 ALA

Sinclair Lewis will be well represented at the 1999 American Literature Association Conference, which will take place in Baltimore May 27-30, 1999 at the Renaissance Harborplace Hotel in Baltimore, Maryland. Margie Burns, English Department, University of Maryland-Baltimore, will be chairing the session. A panel devoted to Lewis will feature three panelists and be held Friday, May 28 from 1:20-2:35.

The papers will be:

1. "The Prodigal Author: Sinclair Lewis and His Attack on Parenthood," Todd Stanley, Ohio State University
2. "'Not a Realist': Sinclair Lewis and the American Painting of His Time," Margie Burns, University of Maryland, Baltimore County
3. "Sinclair Lewis on Stage: The Federal Theatre Project Production of *It Can't Happen Here*," Alan Kreizenbeck, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

The Prodigal Author: Sinclair Lewis and His Assault on Parenthood

Todd Stanley, Ohio State University

Sinclair Lewis was never afraid of attacking what America held dear. He took on small-town ideals in his earliest success, *Main Street*. He then moved on to bigger and more obvious targets such as the field of medicine in *Arrowsmith*, religion with *Elmer Gantry*, and in the book *It Can't Happen Here*, the easiest of marks, politicians. But these scathing satires did not affect everyone. Not everyone lived in a small town or was associated with religion or politics. So in 1938, Lewis went after the holiest of holies, the most sacred institution to the United States of America in which most every American was involved: parenting.

The book was *The Prodigal Parents* and in it, Lewis's two central characters, Fred Cornplow and his wife, Hazel, have come to a point in their lives where they can finally relax and enjoy themselves. They have spent the better part of their lives giving to

their children and now want some time to themselves. The only problem is that their grown-up children will not stop clutching at the apron strings, no matter how many times Fred tries to cut them.

This novel came at a time when family values were the thing to live and bleed for. The roaring twenties were a wild and selfish time, summed up best in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. But the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and the Depression during the thirties brought about a slap in the face to that greedy era, forcing people to look at the importance of family and sticking together. Even Fitzgerald came to this realization in his 1931 short story, "Babylon Revisited," in which the main character realizes the error of his wild ways and simply seeks to teach his daughter right from wrong. Other books and plays coming out at the time stressed the importance of family: *You Can't Take It with You*, and the quintessential novel about family togetherness and sacrifice, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*.

Films of the time also had their fingers on the pulse of America and their high regard for family. The late 1930s began the heyday of Disney. The studio turned out such family classics as *Snow White*, *Pinocchio*, and *Fantasia*. A year after *The Prodigal Parents*, two classic films about fighting for your family and home took the American public by storm, *The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*.

The media impressed upon the American people that family togetherness was what was going to get us through the Depression. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the President leading us through these tough times, and Congress passed such acts as the Housing Act in 1937 so that families could purchase low-income houses in which to live. Add to this the threat of another war overseas, and family was all the American public had.

It was the perfect time for Lewis to attack what Americans held most sacred. He had touched on many inconsistencies in parenting in one of his earliest

Sinclair Lewis Panel at 1999 ALA continued on page 26

Sinclair Lewis Panel at 1999 ALA continued from page 25

successful novels, *Babbitt*, but now the kid gloves were off. Here was a family going so far as to run from their children to the countryside, just to get some peace and quiet.

In "The Prodigal Author: Sinclair Lewis and His Assault on Parenthood" not only Lewis's work but his life and the relationship he had with his own children will be examined.

"Not a Realist": Sinclair Lewis and the American Painting of his Time

Margie Burns, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Sinclair Lewis's major novels can be characterized in five ways:

1) they focus on his own "middle" class—partly following Jane Austen, Edith Wharton, and Mark Twain, they are ethnography in his own milieu, eschewing various forms of exoticism (few forays by SL into poverty or the upper crust);

2) they are political writing—informed by issues—again in his own milieu rather than, for the most part, abroad;

3) they are usually anchored by topics—for example, women's suffrage, American business, medicine, or organized religion—for which Lewis did copious research;

4) they tend to be encyclopedic—partly following an early phase of medievalism in Lewis's own writing, and partly to make them more functional;

5) they are intentionally written for the public—Lewis wanted to make his writing accessible and to pull his audience with him.

To categorize Lewis's writing as "social realism" has often been to dismiss him, and to mask a political judgment on his work as an aesthetic judgment. One can address this dismissal by looking at Lewis's prose in the context of American painting in his lifetime. Useful analogs are not much found in the seemingly politically neutral categories of cubism, abstract expressionism, or primitivism but elsewhere, as in portraiture, in industrial painting, and sometimes in impressionism, as well as in paintings that have been explicitly categorized as "social realism."

Sinclair Lewis and the Federal Theatre Project: It Can't Happen Here on Stage

Alan Kreizenbeck, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

The Federal Theatre Project was created in 1935 under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration, a New Deal Agency empowered to put people back to work, primarily by creating work for them to do. What distinguished the W.P.A. from similarly mandated programs created by the Roosevelt administration was that the W.P.A. attempted to create jobs analogous to those held before the deprivations of the Great Depression took effect. For the Federal Theatre Project (as well as the other arts projects funded at the same time) this meant, for example, that unemployed actors would be employed as actors, stage hands as stage hands, ushers as ushers, and so forth.

While the primary mission of the Federal Theatre Project was to regenerate the economy through employment (95 percent of all Project funds had to be spent on salaries), several other agendas emerged as the Project took shape and began to develop its own unique voice in American theatre. One such agenda was to create a theatre that produced plays that were relevant to prevailing economic and social conditions. While Project productions could not advocate specific political solutions to alleviate adverse conditions, it was perfectly within its rights to discuss

Sinclair Lewis Panel at 1999 ALA continued on page 27



World War II poster encouraging participation in the war effort

DOROTHY THOMPSON NEWS

Susan Ware has written *Letter to the World* (W. W. Norton, 320 pages, \$25.95) which focuses on seven women who shaped the "American Century." The women chosen were not only influential in their professions but were often spoken of as "larger-than-life" and served as models for millions of other women. The seven are Eleanor Roosevelt, Dorothy Thompson, Margaret Mead, Katherine Hepburn, Babe Didrikson Zaharias, Martha Graham, and Marian Anderson. Of this group, Dorothy Thompson is probably the least known although in the 1930s and 1940s she was one of the most influential syndicated columnists in America, specializing in foreign affairs. Ware says of her that, "at times she seemed to be leading a one-woman crusade against Hitler."



James R. Young worked as a newspaperman in Japan for thirteen years, in the late 1920s and 1930s, in the turbu-

Sinclair Lewis Panel at 1999 ALA continued from page 26

those conditions in the most dramatic ways possible. Another agenda, which had its germination in the background and beliefs of Project director Hallie Flanagan, was that theatre had an obligation to be a dynamic force in a democratic society, that theatre should exist as a forum for critical and free inquiry into the standards and practices of the world outside its doors. To these ends, Flanagan believed that theatre should seek out and develop new audiences, particularly among those previously disenfranchised by race, class, ethnicity, or location. She envisioned a "people's theatre," an art form that spoke to and for all of this country's citizens.

Flanagan had pragmatic concerns as well. If the Federal Theatre Project was to be a true national theatre, it had to exhibit the ability to operate on a grand scale. It had to demonstrate that it could operate outside the confines of established theatrical centers and that it could coordinate its efforts in diverse and widely separated locations. Flanagan had to demonstrate the presence of a national vision, one that not only could conquer geography, but could also be accountable to the multiplicity of ethnic and racial groups which constituted her ideal audience. When it was suggested that a simultaneous nationwide opening of the scripted version

of Sinclair Lewis's antifascist novel *It Can't Happen Here* would be the perfect vehicle for the Theatre Project to demonstrate both its idealism and its ability to be an effective producing entity, Flanagan enthusiastically endorsed the idea.

lent time during which Japan occupied China. He left Tokyo just before the United States entered World War II. At the end of his book *Behind the Rising Sun* (1941), which recounted his adventures and warned of increasing Japanese militarism, he quotes Dorothy Thompson at length on the dangers of Nazism and says that the same things could be said about the Japanese. She and other reporters like her "tell us the truth, namely, that there is no point of agreement between the mind that regards reason, realism, human welfare, peace, law, co-operation, ethics, as the aim of a social order, and a mind that regards the instinctual: force, lust and conquest, as the releasing, liberating forces of mankind. They tell us that there is no agreement between us as we still are and them, for they have turned these instincts loose in the greatest counterrevolution in human history and are destroying their victims by their own virtues." ✍

The main body of this paper will chronicle how, on October 27, 1936, *It Can't Happen Here* opened in twenty-one theatres in seventeen states. The paper will not concern itself with critical response to the production, though not to mention it would be remiss. But how the production came into being is as full of intrigue, conflict, and high emotion as the play itself, largely because the "how" was not involved with just artistic issues, but political and social ones as well. The production galvanized not only its participants, but its potential audience. The over 75,000 lines of pro and con comment that the production generated in the nation's press before it even opened indicates the extent of public debate over a political novel by a controversial author, produced on a national scale by the Federal government. This paper will delve into the chaotic artistic process that created *It Can't Happen Here* and discuss the political hackles the production raised well before the results of the Project's and Lewis's artistry ever reached the stage. ✍

of Sinclair Lewis's antifascist novel *It Can't Happen Here* would be the perfect vehicle for the Theatre Project to demonstrate both its idealism and its ability to be an effective producing entity, Flanagan enthusiastically endorsed the idea.

SINCLAIR LEWIS NOTES

In a feature on John Steinbeck and *Travels with Charley*, commentator Larry Woods visited the Wisconsin Dells and then Sauk Centre. He talked with Ivy Lewis Hildebrand who lived in Sauk Centre when Lewis wrote *Main Street*. She said that the townspeople did not like the novel at the time because "They figured he made them look small." She, however, admires Sinclair Lewis and noted, "He had this terrible drive to improve society." [A copy of this video will be shown at Sinclair Lewis 2000 conference.]

◇◇◇

A rerun of the May 29 1998 *Book TV* on C-SPAN2 featured a Tom Wolfe reading and a press conference following. Asked about whether or not you can teach writing, Wolfe said the point is that creative writing classes get students to sit down and write, whereas, writers dance around sitting down to write. "Sinclair Lewis wrote an essay, 'How to Write,' with the line, 'First you must sit down.'" Later in the interview Wolfe was asked whether he wrote on a typewriter or computer and he said "I don't know if Sinclair Lewis did his actual writing on a typewriter. It doesn't make a lot of difference."

◇◇◇

In a review of *The Unveiling of the National Icons: A Plea for Patriotic Iconoclasm in a Nationalist Era*, by Albert Boime (New York: Cambridge UP, 1998), reviewer William E. Leuchtenburg in the *New York Times Book Review* (October 4, 1998) notes that this book deconstructs various American icons including Mount Rushmore and the Statue of Liberty. He quotes Boime, "I was astonished to learn that my discoveries [of how children are socialized into patriotic norms of American culture] corresponded to the model formulated in Sinclair Lewis's *It Can't Happen Here* (1935), and that the authoritarian instincts lying just below the surface of right-wing patriotic rhetoric associated with our national monuments have come uncomfortably close to fascism."

◇◇◇

In a review of *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, by Ellen Schrecker (Little, Brown, 1999), Sam Tanenhaus in the *New York Review of Books* (January 14, 1999) refers to a widespread sense of isolationism in

America. He notes that the rules seem to be different when it came to Russia, possibly because of the fear over the Russian Revolution in 1917. He quotes George Babbitt as a typical American of the time saying "We got no business interfering with the Irish or any other foreign government. Keep our hands strictly off." However, when it comes to Russia, "And there's another well-authenticated rumor from Russia that Lenin is dead. That's fine. It's beyond me why we don't just step in there and kick those Bolshevik cusses out."

◇◇◇

In an essay on literary biography by John Updike in the February 4, 1999 *New York Review of Books*, Updike remarks on the continuing fascination with biography. Sometimes readers want to connect with a writer's attention to craft, however some biographers "ridicule and denigrate their subjects." He notes that "Mark Schorer was supposed to have detested Sinclair Lewis by the time he finished his bulky biography of the man." He notes that if a biography "enhances our access to literature, populating its annals with graspable, provocative personalities, then literary biography does perform useful work." [We look forward to the upcoming new biography of Lewis by Richard Lingeman which will certainly show Lewis as a "provocative personality."]

◇◇◇

Upon his retirement from an almost 38-year stint as an employee at Duluth, Minnesota's former Glass Block department store (including 17 years as its manager), 60-year-old Robert McGreevy was quoted as saying, "the time has come to do something else. How did Elmer Gantry say it? 'I put aside the things I did as a boy.'" Now McGreevy plans to spend his mature years engaging in his longtime hobbies, cross-country skiing and windsurfing.

◇◇◇

Ralph Goldstein reminds us, regarding Babbitt's curious inscription, D.S.S.D.M.Y.P.D.F., that *Notes & Queries* (July 1940) surmises that it means "Do See Somebody (or sell satisfactorily) Do Make Your Presence Definitely Felt." "Seems like a good guess but not thoroughly authoritative." There's a strange acronym in chapter 13

of *The Grapes of Wrath*: "ITYWYBAD?" Do you know that one? It took me a while to find out that it stands for "If I tell you will you buy a drink?" The search continues.



Sinclair Lewis is mentioned in Sylvia Jukes Morris's *Rage For Fame/The Ascent of Clare Boothe Luce* (Random House, 1997). Reportedly, Clare Boothe Luce called *Main Street* the best novel of the year. Luce visited the New York apartment of Dorothy Thompson and her husband, Sinclair Lewis, and called Sinclair Lewis a heavy drinker.



Bob Lorette reports that Sinclair Lewis went to Rainy Lake for a one week respite sometime during the week of Aug. 23, 1926. He was working on *Elmer Gantry* from his post at Pequot Lakes, Minnesota. He was the guest of Mr. & Mrs. Bror Dahlberg of Chicago who owned a summer mansion, "Redcrest," on Rainy Lake. Mr. Dahlberg was the founder and president of Celotex, a building materials company. Also present was Princess Maria Sophia D'Bourbon, niece of King Alfonso of Spain and Charles Breasted (who later wrote of the encounter for the *Saturday Review*).

His "vacation" was interrupted by the death of his father on Sunday, Aug. 29, 1926. Relatives had been trying to locate him when his father's condition began to worsen a few days earlier, but were only able to find him the morning after his father had passed away.

There are several "local anecdotes" regarding his brief visit which Lorette has passed along to Mr. Lingeman and would be happy to share same with anyone else who might have an interest.

Lewis Theater Notes

Stephen Cole, who wrote the book and lyrics for a musical version of *Dodsworth*, has written another musical, this time with Claire Richardson, based on the Davis Grubb novel *The Night of the Hunter*. The October 23, 1998 issue of *InTheater* reported very favorably on this musical although as of now it exists as a concept album, rather than as a produced show.



Valerie Harper has just finished appearing in a production of *All under Heaven*, a play by Dyke Garrison, produced in New York at the Century Theatre. In this

one-woman play, Harper (whom many may remember as Rhoda in the television show of the same name) played Pearl Buck. The conceit for the show is that Buck, at 79, is suffering from writer's block and thinking back on her career. As part of the show, Harper does impressions of both Will Rogers and Sinclair Lewis.



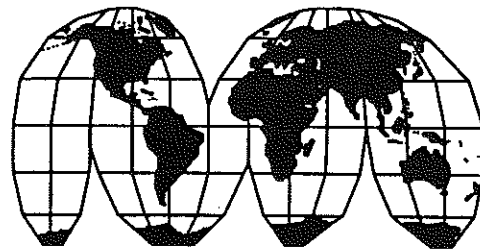
Strangers, about writer Sinclair Lewis and his wife, journalist Dorothy Thompson, was produced at Shipping Dock Theatre at St. John Fisher College, Pittsford, New York, in late 1998. Sherman Yellen's biographical drama is part of Shipping Dock's Between Sets series, which this season focused on literary relationships. The play ran briefly on Broadway with Bruce Dern playing Sinclair Lewis.

Book Notes

Nation of Letters: A Concise Anthology of American Literature, Volume II (Brandywine Press, 1998), edited by Stephen Cushman and Paul Newlin, includes a section from *Main Street*. Also in this collection is poetry by H. D., Carl Sandburg, T. S. Eliot, Edna St. Vincent Millay, and William Carlos Williams, as well as short stories by Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and Flannery O'Connor, and excerpts from Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*, Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*, and Jean Toomer's *Cane*.



There are two new reprintings of Lewis titles by Signet: *Arrowsmith*, with a new introduction by E. L. Doctorow, best known as the author of *Ragtime*; and *Main Street*, with a new introduction by Thomas Mallon, recent author of *Dewey Defeats Truman*.



**CONTACT THE SINCLAIR LEWIS
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<http://www.ilstu.edu~separry/society.html>

—Collector's Corner features catalog listings from book dealers as a sampling of what publications by Lewis are selling for currently.

Bibliotopus

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<http://www.abaa-booknet.com/usa/bibliotopus/>

Catalog 15

1450. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York, 1925.

First edition. Number 216 of 500 deluxe, large paper signed copies. This is the publisher's designated 1st edition (the trade edition was the second printing). A complete copy, fine in fine (and seldom seen) original glassine dust jacket (1 pinpoint size spot), original slipcase (a little worn at the edges) and extra label as issued. *Arrowsmith* won the Pulitzer Prize but Lewis declined the honor because it was not awarded for literary merit, but for "the best presentation of the wholesome atmosphere of American Life," a major target of Lewis's satire in *Babbitt* (1922) and an unambiguous aspect of the heavy irony in *Arrowsmith*. So the explanation why Lewis declined the prize is also the explanation why so many sleepy books have won it. Five years later he won the Nobel Prize for literature, the first for an American author. He accepted it and the big bucks that came with it, breaching the Swedish citadel for the likes of Pearl Buck, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, John Steinbeck, Saul Bellow and Toni Morrison.

5750. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York, 1925.

First edition, published the same day as the limited edition but the copyright page states "second printing," so here's a case where the second printing is not the second issue and it's four times as expensive as the first printing. Fine in bright dust jacket with some expert restoration. Signed and inscribed by Lewis. Despite a huge print run the jacket's printed on thin and fragile paper and it's not out there, having not a single sale at auction in the 1990's.

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November 1998

Signed by Sinclair Lewis

112. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York:
Harcourt, Brace, 1925. \$1,350.00

First edition. One of 500 numbered and signed copies. Spine a little soiled; paper label chipped (there is an unused label tipped into the back of the book), else a fine copy in the seldom-present publisher's slipcase (minor wear).

113. Lewis, Sinclair. *Kingsblood Royal*. New York:
Random House, 1947. \$300.00

First edition. One of 1050 numbered copies, signed by Lewis. A fine copy in the original publisher's slipcase (a bit faded).

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149. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York. Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1927. \$800

First issue with "Gantry" spelled "Cantry" on the spine. Corners a bit rubbed thus near fine in very good dustwrapper with a number of modest chips, the most grievous about 1/2" deep on the right corner of the spine and a long tear along the edge of the rear flap. A presentable copy of a notable novel about a corrupt evangelist, memorably filmed with Burt Lancaster and Shirley Jones, who both won Oscars, as did the screenplay of director Richard Brooks.

150. Lewis, Sinclair. Inscribed promotional poster. \$950

Poster. Approximately 11 1/4" x 9 1/4" on cardboard stock. Light edge-wear, very good plus. Consists of a portrait of the pensive Lewis and "Sinclair Lewis" in bold red letters. Undated but circa 1933. Presumably intended to promote the author's latest novel, possibly additional information (such as a book title) has been trimmed from the poster, although there is no tangible evidence of that. Inscribed by the author to the right of his portrait: "To Mrs. Currie, who takes care of us. Sinclair Lewis. Bernard, Vermont May 15, 1935." Attractive visual display piece.

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Catalogue 88

October 1998

Several Sinclair Lewis titles, beginning with his early ones.

108. Lewis, Sinclair. *Our Mr. Wrenn. The Romantic Adventures of a Gentle Man*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1914. \$425.00

First edition of Sinclair Lewis's second book, and the first to be published under his own name (as his *Hike*

and the Aeroplane had been published in 1912 as by "Tom Graham"). Lewis had graduated from Yale in 1907, taking time off from there to live in Upton Sinclair's socialist experiment in New Jersey, "Helicon Home Colony." He would write several additional undistinguished novels during the 'Teens, until making his name with *The Job* in 1917 and then hitting it big with *Main Street* in 1920.

Original gray cloth decorated in gilt. This is about as nice a copy as we have seen—fine except that the gilt on the spine could be brighter.

109. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Trail of the Hawk. A Comedy of the Seriousness of Life*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1915. \$250.00

First edition of Sinclair Lewis's third book, published some five years before he became well-known. This book is today sought largely because the color frontispiece is an early example by a young artist named "Norman P. Rockwell." Original dark blue cloth decorated in gilt. This is a very good copy, slightly rubbed at the extremities.

110. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Innocents. A Story for Lovers*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1917. \$200.00

First edition of Sinclair Lewis's fourth book, and the last to slip by relatively unnoticed; his next, *The Job*, would bring him his first real recognition. Original gray cloth. This is a near-fine copy, with scarcely any wear but with very light speckling of the front cover cloth near the foredge.

111. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Job. An American Novel*. New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1917. \$200.00

First edition of Lewis's fifth book, a realistic novel of life in New York City. "It was his first distinguished work of fiction," three years before he became well known with *Main Street*. This copy is in the primary state, without the tipped-in ad leaf mentioning *Main Street*. It is in very good condition, with minor rubbing at the extremities; there are small spots on the pastedowns where a protective cover

may have once been glued down. Original dark olive green cloth.

112. Lewis, Sinclair. *Free Air*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1919. \$175.00

First edition of Sinclair Lewis's sixth book, published just after his book that brought him recognition (*The Job*) and just before his leap into posterity with *Main Street*. This is a fine copy. Original dark blue cloth decorated in light blue.

113. Lewis, Sinclair. *Main Street. The Story of Carol Kennicott*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920. \$250.00

First edition of the book that brought fame to Sinclair Lewis—the first of his five great novels of the 1920s [followed by *Babbitt* (1922), *Arrowsmith* (1925), *Elmer Gantry* (1927) and *Dodsworth* (1929)]. Original blue cloth lettered in orange.

Carol Milford, a girl of quick intelligence but no particular talent, after graduation from college meets and marries Will Kennicott, a sober, kindly, unimaginative physician of Gopher Prairie, Minnesota, who tells her that the town needs her abilities. She finds the village to be a smug, intolerant, unimaginatively standardized place, where the people will not accept her efforts to create more sightly homes, organize a dramatic association, and otherwise improve the village life. Carol draws away from her husband, falls in love with Erik Valborg, a kindred spirit, and finally goes to Washington to make her own life. When Kennicott comes for her, two years later, she returns with him, for, though she feels no love, she respects him, and being incapable of creating her own life appears not unhappy to return to the familiar, petty Gopher Prairie.

This copy is in the first state (with perfect type in the lower right corner of p. 387, and with p. 54's number properly printed). It is in very good condition (a faint crease in the front boards, minor rubbing at the extremities).

114. Lewis, Sinclair. *Babbitt*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922. Original dark blue cloth lettered in orange. \$300.00

First edition of the second of Lewis's five great

novels of the 1920s.

George Follansbee Babbitt, an enterprising, moral, stereotyped, and prosperous real estate broker of the typical Midwestern city of Zenith, has been trained to believe in the virtues of home life, the Republican party, and the middle-class conventions. Suddenly tiring of his life during his wife's absence, he tries to find an outlet from Zenith standards. After an unsuccessful and lonely trip to Maine, he enters into a liaison with Mrs. Tanis Judique, an attractive widow. He next turns to liberalism, when impressed by Seneca Doane, a socialist lawyer. For this added heresy he is ostracized by all right-minded citizens.

This copy is in the first state, with the erroneous name "Purdy" (later changed to "Lyte") in line 4 of p. 49. Condition is near-fine (spine slightly faded, very minor rubbing at the extremities).

115. Lewis, Sinclair. *Arrowsmith*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1925. Original dark blue cloth lettered in orange. \$275.00

First trade edition, preceded only by a 500-copy limited edition. This was the third of Lewis's great novels of the decade. *Arrowsmith* won the Pulitzer Prize, but Lewis declined the award. This is the tale of Martin Arrowsmith, medical doctor, who settles first in Wheatsylvania, South Dakota, next in Nautilus, Iowa, and then in Chicago, and finally at a research clinic in New York City—hoping to find in altruistic research the relief he desires from publicity-seeking and money-grabbing commercial medicine. But he falls out of favor when he administers his cure for a plague indiscriminately, in order to save lives, thus ruining the results of the experiment—and ultimately winds up back in rural America, this time Vermont.

This copy is fine except for the very slightest of fading of the spine.

116. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927. \$675.00

First edition of Lewis's famous satire about a fraudulent itinerant preacher (shades of Bakker and Swaggart!)—since immortalized on the screen by Burt Lancaster. This was the fourth of Lewis's five

great novels of the 1920s. When *Elmer Gantry* was published, a minister in Virginia invited Lewis to come down and be lynched, and one in New Hampshire tried to have him jailed. This copy is in the first state, with the "G" of "Gantry" on the spine more resembling a "C." The volume is just about fine (short article tipped to the front endpaper); the dust jacket is good-plus, with a sizable chip at a bottom corner of the front panel, and a few other smaller ones. Original dark blue cloth lettered in orange, with dust jacket.

117. Lewis, Sinclair. *Elmer Gantry*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927. \$175.00

Another copy of the first edition. This copy is in the second state, with the spine properly reading "Gantry." Very slight bubbling of the cloth, but fine. Original dark blue cloth lettered in orange.

118. Lewis, Sinclair. *The Man Who Knew Coolidge. Being the Soul of Lowell Schmaltz, Constructive and Nordic Citizen*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1928. Original dark blue cloth lettered in orange. \$100.00

First edition. This book, a depiction of a mediocre businessman, along with *Mantrap* (1926), was the only Sinclair Lewis book published in the 1920s that was not a major success. This copy is in near-fine condition, very slightly sunned on the spine.

119. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929. \$195.00

First edition of the fifth and last of Lewis's great novels of the 1920s. *Dodsworth* is a sympathetic portrayal of a retired manufacturer who seeks new interests in European travel. This is a fine copy. Original dark blue cloth lettered in orange.

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72. Lewis, Sinclair. *Sinclair Lewis on The Valley of the Moon*. Cambridge: Harvard Press for Harvey Taylor, 1932. \$250

First edition. Copy number 1 of 100 numbered copies signed by Harvey Taylor. Fine copy in wrappers.

73. Lewis, Sinclair. *Selected Short Stories of Sinclair Lewis*. Garden City: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1935. \$250.

First edition. Fine crisp copy in dust jacket with some minor wear at the head of spine. Apparently a small first printing.

74. Lewis, Sinclair. *Bethel Merriday*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1940. \$150.

First edition. Inoffensive blind stamp on flyleaf. Otherwise fine in bright unfaded dust jacket with several closed tears neatly repaired.

354. Lewis, Sinclair. John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1926. \$75

First edition. One of 975 numbered copies. Scattered foxing throughout. Some fading to top edges of boards. Otherwise a very good copy. Not issued in printed dust jacket.

355. Lewis, Sinclair. *Dodsworth*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929. \$375

First edition. *Special advance issue* bound in orange cloth with black printing on spine only and with tipped in notice at flyleaf: "This is a special edition presented to the trade in advance of publication and is not for sale." Spine soiled with some rubbing to printing. Very good.

358. Lewis, Sinclair. *Bethel Merriday*. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1940. \$150

First edition. Blind stamp on flyleaf. Otherwise fine in bright unfaded dust jacket with several closed tears neatly repaired.

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