
A New Date for Cather's Arrival in Pittsburgh

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Abstract

Border crossings can be large and small in scale; the crossing I wish to present at next year's conference is small in scope but large in implications. The 16th International Seminar will be held in early June of 2017 in Pittsburgh. As I and other Cather scholars and enthusiasts prepare for that momentous event, we have been looking into myriad connections between the author and location, specifically her 10 years of residence in Pittsburgh (1896-1906). My assignment from the last seminar (2015) was to research some of the music Cather may have heard in her time there so that we might reproduce some pieces for the seminar. Last July, my husband, Brett (a musician), and I began poring through dozens of scrapbooks containing programs of recitals and performances which were coincidental with Cather's time in Pittsburgh. These events were held at the Carnegie Music Hall in the Oakland section of Pittsburgh from 1895 (when the Music Hall opened) to 1931. We realized the archival materials did not match the most commonly accepted date of Cather's arrival in Pittsburgh: July 3, 1896. When I reported these discrepancies of the programs to Andrew Jewell and Tim Bintrim (significant and well-regarded Cather scholars) via e-mail, Andy replied that it appeared we had uncovered a new timeline for Cather's arrival in Pittsburgh, June 26, 1896. This past May, 2016, an article I wrote collaboratively with these other Cather scholars and my husband, "Beginning a New Life: Discovering the Exact Date of Cather's Arrival in Pittsburgh" was published in *The Willa Cather Newsletter and Review*. The article details our discovery as well as the implications of that new information as regards Cather's first weeks in what she famously called "the city of dirt." My paper will summarize that article and demonstrate ways that collaborative research can produce meaningful scholarship in the Humanities, when we 'cross borders' of a different, interdisciplinary variety.

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