



The Cathedral  
Church of **Saint John**  
**the Divine**

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**GROUNDBREAKING CHICAGO AUTHOR CARL SANDBURG  
TO BE CELEBRATED WITH INDUCTION INTO THE AMERICAN POETS  
CORNER  
AT THE CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE**

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*Induction ceremony and unveiling of commemorative stone to take place on  
Sunday, November 11*



*Photo: Edward Steichen*

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine will celebrate the legacy of American poet, editor and three-time Pulitzer Prize winner **Carl Sandburg** (1878 –1967) with his induction into its **American Poets Corner** on **Sunday, November 11, from 4:00 PM – 7:00 PM, at The Cathedral of St. John the Divine, located at 1047 Amsterdam Avenue (at 112<sup>th</sup> Street), Manhattan.**

Sandburg's formal induction will take place during the traditional Evensong service sung by the Cathedral Choir and conducted by Director of Cathedral Music **Kent Tritle**, featuring the spirituals "Ezekiel saw the wheel" and "Oh Mary, don't you weep," both collected by Sandburg in his influential anthology, *The American Songbag*. Following Evensong, the Cathedral will



The Cathedral  
Church of **Saint John**  
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Page 2 cont.

host a reading and celebration of Sandburg's work, including comments by **Dr. Marilyn Nelson**, the Cathedral's Poet in Residence. Joining Dr. Nelson for this celebration will be a number of distinguished writers and critics, including poets **Martín Espada** and **Afaa Michael Weaver**; **Jennifer Benka**, President and Executive Director of the Academy of American Poets; and **Don Share**, editor of *Poetry* magazine.

Carl Sandburg was a major 20<sup>th</sup>-century figure in contemporary literature, known for his free verse poems celebrating the American people, countryside, and industry in the heartland of the United States. He was born in Galesburg, Illinois, and experienced hardships during his childhood. His family was very poor, and he was forced to leave school at age 13 to work odd jobs to support them. He served eight months in Puerto Rico during the Spanish-American War and enrolled in Lombard College after his service. Sandburg attracted the attention of Professor Philip Green Wright at Lombard, who encouraged his writing and paid for the publication of his first volume of poetry, *Reckless Energy*.

Sandburg later moved to Chicago, where he became an editorial writer for the *Chicago Daily News*. He met Harriet Monroe, who began publishing his poems, encouraging him to continue writing in the free-verse Whitman-like style he had cultivated in college. He established his reputation with *Chicago Poems* in 1916, and *Cornhuskers* in 1918, for which he received the Pulitzer Prize in 1919. Soon after the publication of these volumes, Sandburg wrote *Smoke and Steel* in 1920, his first prolonged attempt to find beauty in modern industrialism.

In the 1920s, he started some of his most ambitious projects, including his study of Abraham Lincoln. From childhood, Sandburg admired the legacy of President Lincoln. For thirty years he researched material, and wrote the six-volume definitive biography of the former president. In the 1930s, Sandburg continued his celebration of America with the second part of his Lincoln biography, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* in 1939, which received the Pulitzer Prize. He was also awarded a second Pulitzer Prize for his *Complete Poems* in 1950.

The American Poets Corner, established in 1984 to memorialize and celebrate American writers, is modeled after a similar alcove at Westminster Abbey in London. Previous inductees include Emily Dickinson, e. e. cummings, Tennessee Williams, James Baldwin, Flannery O'Connor, Zora Neale Hurston, and last year's honoree, Jean Toomer. The American Poets Corner and Cathedral poetry events have become an integral part of the literary landscape of New York.



The Cathedral  
Church of **Saint John**  
**the Divine**

Page 3 cont.

For more information, please visit <http://www.stjohndivine.org/visit/calendar/events/liturgy-worship/14753/choral-evensong-the-induction-of-carl-sandburg>

**About The Cathedral**

The Cathedral of St. John the Divine is the Cathedral of the Episcopal Diocese of New York. It is chartered as a house of prayer for all people and a unifying center of intellectual light and leadership. People from many faiths and communities worship together in services held more than 30 times a week; the soup kitchen serves roughly 25,000 meals annually; social service outreach has an increasingly varied roster of programs; the distinguished Cathedral School prepares young students to be future leaders; Adults and Children in Trust, the renowned preschool, afterschool and summer program, offers diverse educational and nurturing experiences; the outstanding Textile Conservation Lab preserves world treasures; concerts, exhibitions, performances and civic gatherings allow conversation, celebration, reflection and remembrance—such is the joyfully busy life of this beloved and venerated Cathedral.

**About the American Poets Corner**

Poets, fiction writers, essayists, and dramatists: the American Poets Corner memorializes the literature of our nation in all its surprise, wit and beauty. The Poets Corner, beloved by visitors, has earned respect for its choices of inductees, and for the high quality of its Electors and Poets in Residence, which include 17 U.S. Poets Laureate and winners of every literary prize an American writer can aspire to, including the Nobel. Every spring, the Poet in Residence invites each Elector to nominate a writer deceased for at least 25 years. Since 2000, one writer has been inducted each year.

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