



(LYRCD 6003)

The Great Carl Sandburg Songs of America

Carl Sandburg was already famous when he moved with his family to the Blue Ridge mountains of western North Carolina in 1945. Poet, minstrel, lecturer, biographer, and Pulitzer Prize-winning author, he had spent his lifetime championing social justice and the American people through his writings and his singing. Although, at 67, he was at an age when many people retire, Sandburg was still actively working. Sandburg's wife, Lilian, had discovered the mountain farm named Connemara with their youngest daughter, Helga. The farm had everything the family wanted, including a gentle climate and ample pasture for Mrs. Sandburg's goat herd and seclusion for her husband's writing. Carl Sandburg would call it home for 22 years.

The estate had a long history—an ironic history for the biographer of Abraham Lincoln—for Christopher Memminger, who built the main residence around 1838, had served from 1861 to 1864 as Secretary of the Confederate Treasury. The second occupant was textile tycoon Ellison Smyth who named it Connemara to honor his Irish ancestry. Smyth's heirs sold it to the Sandburgs. The Sandburgs moved from Michigan with their three daughters, two grandchildren, a library of more than 14,000 volumes, and the Chikaming goat herd.

The years at Connemara were productive for Carl Sandburg. He published poems, children's literature, fiction, and nonfiction. He continued to travel, lecture, sing, and earn accolades, including another Pulitzer Prize. The family was busy too. Mrs. Sandburg bred her prize-winning goats and ran the farm business. Margaret helped her father, attended to the library, and worked in her flower garden. Janet helped on the farm, which was

especially active when Helga and her children, John Carl and Paula, lived here. Until her second marriage and move from Connemara, Helga managed the dairy operation with her mother. The grandchildren rode horses and played in the woods and pastures.

Carl Sandburg kept late hours. He often worked most of the night, while it was quiet and still, and slept until late in the morning. After a midday meal he read, answered letters, and wrote wherever his imagination took him—his upstairs office or study, the living room, the front porch, or on the large, sloping rock behind the house. There were frequent visitors at Connemara. A favorite guest was the well known photographer Edward Steichen, Mrs. Sandburg's brother and Carl Sandburg's closest friend. Guests or not, dinner was a social gathering for the family. Afterward Sandburg would read aloud or sing with them.

This recording of Carl Sandburg singing seventeen of his favorite songs was made in 1950, and was one of the first recordings produced by Peter Fritsch for his then brand new Lyrichord label in New York City. Hearing the warm, smoky-voiced Carl Sandburg singing and strumming these simple tunes nearly half a century later, one cannot help but be transported back to a warm summer evening sitting with friends on the front porch at Connemara, with the distant bleating of the goats, and the crickets providing a chorus. Carl Sandburg died at home on July 22, 1967. In 1968 the Sandburg family sold the property and donated the contents of the home to the National Park Service to be preserved as the Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site. Always a voice for the American people, Carl Sandburg speaks to us still through his words, songs, and the beauty and serenity of Connemara.

Above essay provided by Carl Sandburg Home National Historic Site, NC, with supplemental material provided by Lyrichord Discs.

TRACKS:

1. Boll Weevil - 2:35
2. Careless Love - 2:45
3. In de Vinter Time - :23
4. Moanish Lady! - :40
5. Foggy, Foggy Dew - 1:50
6. I Wish I Was a Little Bird - :26
7. I'm Sad and I'm Lonely - 2:07
8. Cigarettes Will Spoil Yer Life - :39
9. The Horse Named Bill - 2:00
10. Jay Gould's Daughter - 1:35
11. He's Gone Away - 2:11
12. Casey Jones - 1:23
13. I Ride an Old Paint - 1:46
14. Man Goin' Roun' - :52
15. Gallows Song - 2:31
16. We'll Roll Back the Prices - 3:29
17. The Good Boy - 1:11

FOR INFORMATION:

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<http://www.nps.gov/carl/>

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