

Carl Sandburg

Elmhurst has several schools named after well-known poets and authors including Emerson, Field, and Hawthorne. However, there is only one school named after a poet who was a former resident, and that is Sandburg Middle School.

Carl Sandburg was born January 6, 1878 in Galesburg, IL. After a variety of jobs, studies at Lombard College in Galesburg, and service in the 6th Infantry Regiment of Illinois Volunteers during the Spanish-American War, Sandburg moved to the Chicago area and made a name for himself with his first book, *Chicago Poems*, in 1915. Sandburg started working for the *Chicago Daily News* in 1918 reviewing movies, covering labor news, and eventually writing a feature called *Carl Sandburg's Notebook*.

Carl Sandburg and his wife Lilian moved to Elmhurst with their three daughters in 1919 and lived at 331 S. York Street until 1930. During his time in Elmhurst, Sandburg wrote a number of books. In 1922 he wrote his first book for children, *Rootabaga Stories*, based stories he had been telling his daughters Margaret, Janet, and Helga. This was followed by *Rootabaga Pigeons* in 1923 and *Potato Face* in 1930. The two volume *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years* was published in 1926. Sandburg compiled a collection of ballads and folksongs in *The American Songbag* in 1927 followed by *Good Morning, America*, a book of poems, in 1928. Although unknown to the literary world until the age of thirty-six, Sandburg went on to publish over thirty books and won several awards and honors for his written works.

The Sandburgs left Elmhurst and moved to Michigan in 1930. The house at 331 S. York is no longer standing, and now is a parking lot. However, Sandburg came back to Elmhurst in 1960 when Elmhurst Junior High School at 345 E. St. Charles Road was rededicated and renamed Carl Sandburg Junior High School. During Mr. Sandburg's remarks to the students at the dedication he said, " You may become the witnesses of the finest and brightest era known to mankind. The nations over the globe shall have music, music instead of murder. It is possible. That is my hope and prayer - for you and for the nation."

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Local historian Helmut Berens (left) with Carl Sandburg at Carl Sandburg Junior High, May 4, 1960.