Interview with Jennie Battles

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Interview #1: January 15, 2015

Interviewer: Mark DePue

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DePue: Good Morning. My name is Mark DePue, Director of Oral History at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. I'm excited today to be with Jennie Battles. Good morning, Jennie.

Front view of the Vachel Lindsay home in Springfield,Illinois, as it appeared in the early 2000s

Battles: Good morning, Mark. I'm excited, too (laughs).

DePue: This is the first of what we hope to be a very productive series of interviews that

feature, not necessarily an individual, but a home. We're standing in front of the Vachel Lindsay Home. Jennie, you've had a very long career working at the home and dealing with the home.

Battles: It's been a joy.

DePue: Since it's January 15, 2015, I wanted to ask you a couple of questions. First of all, tell me when this home was built.

Battles: The house is actually in two pieces, and the part we're standing on with the porch and so on, original part, 1848. We know, by 1950, the residents here are having families, having babies. So 1848 to 1950.

DePue: Tell me a little bit about who your neighbors are here.

Battles: The neighbor today is our new governor, Bruce Rauner and his family, I think. I understand they're moving in. I've been retired since the 30th of June of 2014. So I haven't seen them move in myself, although had I been here today, I probably would have been peeking out the window upstairs to see what I could see. But, yeah, this is the Illinois Governor's Mansion. The Lindsay Home, the structure here, which in the early days was known as the Clark Smith home, was here before the Governor's Mansion.[1] That's 1855, next door to us. I think it's the third oldest governor's mansion in the country.

DePue: I think this might be about the time that we can move inside and get a little bit warmer, since it is January 15, and it's a little bit cold. (Battles laughs) Thank you very much.

Battles: In we go. Come in Mark, welcome. (sounds of cars passing on the street)

DePue: Jennie, you and I have obviously moved inside the house. It's a little bit warmer inside the house. We're obviously in the entrance area. What do you want to tell us about the entrance to the home?

Battles: When folks come in for tours we usually talk about the architecture because right here look at everything you see. You see original Greek Revival architecture, big doors looking like Greek temples, very much in vogue in the 1840s and fifties in architecture.

Then here you see what happened here with the stairway. This is the stairs that replaced the original stairs in 1893, when Dr. and Mrs. Vachel Thomas Lindsay added a ten-room, two-story addition to this home. They had lived there since 1878.

[1] Clark Moulton Smith owned a large dry goods store in Springfield, Illinois. The Lincolns were frequent guests in the Smith home. The same designer-builder who built the Lincoln home also built the Smith home at 603 South 5th Street in Springfield. (http://springfieldsculptures.net/Smith.html)

DePue: We're going to hear about the original tenants to the home when we get into the next room. I want to ask you about the hat rack behind you.

Battles: The hat rack is actually a hall tree, and the hall tree is one... It's kind of a typical Victorian place to put your umbrellas. We have, for Historic Sites, we have informational brochures on it. It really comes in handy for that. But, looky there, you see Dr. Lindsay's top hat?

DePue: I was wondering if that was his.

Battles: Well, it isn't his actually, but it's one like he had. We have one of his originals in the other room. We'll see that later, when we go through, into the rest of the home. But this is very typical. One of Vachel Lindsay's nieces—who is in a care center right now; she's ninety-nine, I believe—she would always tell me, "When you go by the hall tree, will you pat it for me?" She said, "It was my favorite piece of furniture when I was a little girl and I visited the home." (both laugh) So I always think of Martha when I go by the hall tree.

DePue: And to your left here is a bust.

Battles: A bust of Vachel Lindsay, yes. This bust was done Adrien Voisin; you see the signature here.[2] We have photographs of Vachel Lindsay actually sitting for this sculpture in Spokane [Washington]. This is when Vachel was still living in Spokane. This gentleman came; he was a Frenchman. I think he'd been in America for several years. My remembrance is that he had a list of Americans who, to the French people, represented lots of ideas that they admired, and Vachel Lindsay was on the list. So Vachel sat for this bust. We have it here at the Vachel Lindsay Home.

It was given to us by the Vachel Lindsay Association.[3] They actually received it. The City of Springfield bought it at the time that the Vachel Lindsay Bridge was brand new.[4] It was placed in a stone pedestal, a little place to sit and meditate, very near the bridge, the Vachel Lindsay Bridge. It became vandalized over the years, so the city, as I recall the story, asked the Vachel Lindsay Association to take care of it.

[2] Adrien Alexander Voisin (1890-1979) was an American Western sculptor who studied in France and was known for modeling wild animals and American Indian portraits. (http://www.bronze-gallery.com/sculptors/artist.cfm?sculptorID=174)

[3] Established in 1946, the Vachel Lindsay Association (VLA) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to stimulate interest in the significance of the life, writing, works of art and ideals of the poet Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, as well as to assist in the preservation of the Vachel Lindsay Home and grounds. (https://vachellindsay.org/)

[4] The Vachel Lindsay Bridge is an historic arch bridge in Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois. This is one of the largest examples in the country of an extremely rare bridge type, a cantilevered concrete arch bridge. The unusually extensive and handsome architectural details of this bridge remain intact and are not deteriorated. It is one of the finest and most historically significant concrete bridges in Illinois. (https://historicbridges.org/bridges/browser/?bridgebrowser=illinois/vachellindsay/)

It came to IHPA [Illinois Historic Preservation Agency] when the house was given to the state. It was one of the artifacts that we received, and it's been here always, since then.

DePue: I think I was remiss to not address why it's you that we're talking to and to talk about how long you've been associated with this building (Battles laughs).

Battles: The house was given to the state in 1990. I was, at the time, either volunteer coordinator or assistant site manager at the Old State Capitol and the Lincoln Herndon Law Offices. I had a background in literature, teaching high school in one of my former lives. I'm old; so I've done many things over the years. And my boss at the time, Carol Andrews, who was our site manager, said, "Guess what, Jennie, other duties as assigned."

I was the one who, in the early days...The house was closed to the public because it needed extensive rehabilitation, but we could have it open in the summer, when we had seasonal help, for weekends only. Then finally it was closed in ninety-six for what came to be the first phase of restoration. I sort of transitioned just by deem of the factor—whatever the word I should use—that I knew enough to be dangerous about literature (laughs).

DePue: When did you become site manager?

Battles: Site administrator was kind of my euphemistic title, when the house was actually restored in phase two. That was 2001, 2001. The rehabilitation was completed, second phase, and again my boss at the time said, "We can't spend all that money restoring a home and not have someone there, so will you move down the street three blocks? I took a lateral transfer, walked three blocks down the street.

DePue: From my perspective, they couldn't have found a better person to do this.

Battles: You come into a house like this, and you're all alone, and you were told right up front, "You're not going to have anyone to help you, no staff. So you need volunteers." We always need volunteers, bless their hearts. Vachel's not easy to get volunteers for (laughs), I'll tell you that.

Anyway, I tried. I struggled along, and the ones that we had were amazing and are still amazing. I decided right away, this is my job, and I accepted it. The more I got into it... The house is magic here. The house truly has a spirit that I don't want to get too waa, waa, waa out there, but this house is an amazing place. I've had many, many performers come here, poets and writers, and say "There's a spirit in this house." We've done theater here; we've done music; we've done all sorts of things. The house is amazing.

DePue: There are three basic things that I want to develop as we go through here, and you're the right person to do all three. One of them is the house itself. The

second one is the family, not just the Lindsay family, but their predecessors, and then the Vachel Lindsay story, the poetry and his art and those things as well. So, this is probably a good time to move into the bedroom, to my right.

Battles: This is where we usually **would** go. We would go into the parents' room, which actually, in the early days, would have been the family parlor. They named him Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, and when he began to write and publish and perform, his publisher, at one point, so the story goes, told him, "You can't have Nicholas Vachel Lindsay on a book spine, so you need to choose one of those names. He chose Vachel, and why not? It's an unusual name. So that was the name that he became known [by], as far as his professional life.

DePue: Who were the original occupants of the home?

Battles: The original occupants, for whom this would have been a family parlor in the original house, were Mary Lincoln's sister and her husband, Clark Moulton Smith and Ann Todd Smith. This was known as the Smith Home. And, as I told you on the front porch, they were living here before our Executive Mansion was built next door. Their first neighbors in the mansion, the governor, had as neighbors Mary Lincoln's sister, Ann Todd Smith.

DePue: You say, the Governor's Mansion? Point to it again.

Battles: Oh, yes. It's over to the north of us here.

DePue: What do you know about the Smith family, any stories connected with them?

Battles: Clark Moulton Smith was, as I understand it, a very successful merchant. He had, I believe, five mercantile stores, two in Springfield, one in Peoria, one in Bloomington, and one in Decatur. He was very successful financially, and he married the youngest of Mary's three sisters. All four of these Todd sisters lived within the confines of this area here, which in their day was called Aristocracy Hill.

DePue: So, this would have been one of the leading families of Springfield?

Battles: Yes. Clark Smith was financially, anyway, very successful, left a big estate.

DePue: The cabinet behind you is very impressive.

Battles: Yeah. Furnishings here in the house, since it is interpreted primarily as the Vachel Lindsay Home—the home of the poet, and his family—most everything your eye falls on, as far as furnishings, are from the Lindsay family.

This [referring to the cabinet] was one of their bookcase secretaries, very typical of the time period, lots of ink stains there and little cubby holes and so on. But for the purposes of showing off artifacts, we have in here, the

actual brass nameplate from Dr. Vachel Thomas Lindsay's office. He always had an office. He didn't practice from the home, officially anyway, so this is the nameplate.

Then this is his mortar and pestle that he would take care of his meds with, and these are medicine bottles. Many of them came from one of his... This is one of two medical bags we have of Dr. Lindsay. You see, as with old leather, it decomposes badly, so we took the bottles out. The ones [bottles] that have the metal on them, they would be hooked inside here, and then these are just little, individual bottles. This is a nice thing to show, just show Dr. Lindsay's nameplate.

DePue: To your right, the thing that draws my eye is that wedding portrait.

Battles: This one right here, yes. This is Olive Lindsay. This was the poet's first-born sister. Olive was the first child, and Olive was a year old when they moved to this home. Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay first lived down on Ninth and Edwards [Streets], right down the street here. And then they buy this home, and they move here.

Olive, that was her wedding dress. She married Paul Wakefield, who became a physician, University of Chicago Medical School, he graduated. They met at Hiram College in Hiram, Ohio. Olive and Vachel went off to college at the same time. Mama and Papa kept her home a year.

In her memoirs, Olive Lindsay said, "Ostensibly to learn to cook and sew." She said, "I really read a lot and took dancing lessons. Papa didn't approve of that, and mother told him, 'Certain things young women have to do, if they're going to be socially engaged.'" I think, in other words, to catch a husband, you need to be able to dance.

The Vachel Lindsay family, circa 1930, while they lived in Vachel's Springfield home. From left to right are his wife Elizabeth, daughter Susan, son Nicholas and Vachel.

Olive married Dr. Paul Wakefield, and very soon they went off to China as medical missionaries. That is a rich, rich, rich, part of the history of the Lindsay family, Olive and Paul's years in China. Much of their adventures, if you

would call them that, many of those things appeared as articles in the local Springfield paper. So [there were] lots of references to things that were happening in China with Paul and Olive.

DePue: The next question is just a curiosity I've always had. You go into these older homes, and the carpeting and the wallpaper and the draperies are always so ornate. How authentic is what we see here?

Battles: The house... When we were doing the renovation, we had so much of the furnishings. We had lots and lots and lots of the journals. Vachel Lindsay's mother was an avid journal keeper. In fact, Mark, one of my suggestions is you interview Kate Lindsay, mother Lindsay, through her amazing journals. They're just almost like talking to her. So, we knew a lot about that.

What we did at the time, our agency had a decorative arts person, Mariana Munyer. That was her specialty. She worked with us on making decisions about what the wallpaper would be. The carpeting is as it would have been in the Lindsays' day. We only had photographs of the rooms.

We have photographs of all the rooms, that were taken probably in the 1920s. You can enlarge those things, see patterns and so on. We didn't have original pieces of carpeting [and a] few little pieces of wallpaper over the years; upstairs we got some. These were done very carefully, thinking of the decorative arts of the time period and of the Lindsays and the emphasis.

Now the Lindsay's were not social climbers. They were civic-minded people. One of the ladies who was prominent in Springfield, during the years Mother Lindsay was out and about and doing her entertaining, she said, "When Kate Lindsay entertains, all you can expect is an urn of coffee and Nabisco's." (both laugh) I think, from the journal books, when she talks about a lot of the elaborate things she was preparing, maybe that was a little bit of this little kind of a tit for tat among ladies. At any rate, they were not folks who were out to be social climbers. So, what was serviceable would have been fine for them.

But we have many examples—and we'll see them all through the house—of artifacts that they brought back with them from their trips to Europe because Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay met on a trip to Europe. That's how he courted her during that year. They'd meet at various places.

He was studying medicine, more medicine, in Vienna, and she was traveling with his sister. They were both... These two women were teachers at a small college in Kentucky, Hocker College. When she found out Dr. Lindsay was going join them on this trip, she hadn't expected... She said, "We hadn't counted on the company of a gentleman, and that meant I had to take him home to meet my parents in Indiana before I would even agree to go on the trip."

DePue: You mean traveling around with a gentleman in Europe...

Battles: Exactly. Right.

DePue: ...unescorted is—

Battles: Right. What I love so much about that story—and we tell it often, when we have guests—is the fact that Kate Lindsay probably was not at all a typical woman of her day because she was... First of all, she had a college degree. She was out in the world teaching. She had never planned to marry; she writes that very plainly in her journal books, "As for matrimony..." I can't remember the quote right now; it will come to me later. But no, she hadn't planned... She wanted to learn to speak the Italian language fluently and move to Italy and become involved in Christian education in Italy. That was her goal. So she was saving her money.

The social conventions were still strong enough that she felt, onboard ship, people would see these two unmarried women with a man at dinner (both laugh)... So she takes him home to meet her parents. Now here's what I think: I think Mom and Daddy said, "Go for it, girl. He might ask you to marry him." (both laugh) But I don't put that in my official tour. Sometimes we chat about it, laugh about it with guests. At the same time, they [her parents] obviously approved. He was a very, very, dear man and very religious, and they were both of the same religious faith, which was Disciples of Christ and became very active in the First Christian Church here in town.

DePue: I think it's those kinds of stories that bring a dry, dusty old home to life.

Battles: Exactly. Houses are houses, without the stories of the people that lived in them. We know so much about the Lindsays. And we are knowing more and more and more about the Smith family because, of course, Mr. Lincoln and the bicentennial of his birth [Feb. 12, 2009] and then our State Bicentennial [Dec. 3, 2018] getting ready to come along. I think there's been a lot more attention paid to the early years in this house.

This is the only home, other than Mr. Lincoln's own home, that the Lincoln's were in and out of on a regular basis. So, this is truly a very significant site, with the Lincoln story. In fact, a big grand reception was held here the night before Mr. Lincoln leaves for Washington City to be inaugurated. Mary and the boys joined him the next day in Indianapolis, but they were all here. It was in this home that they were entertained, with family history.

DePue: I've always been curious about that. I certainly have been in the Lincoln home. This home seems to be much roomier; it seems to be much better designed with entertaining in mind.

Battles: Oh yeah.

DePue: Would you agree with that?

Battles: Right. Of course you remember, Mr. Lincoln's home and Mary's home was a one room, one story home. I love the quote that...Who was it? In *Harper's* or in *Leslie's Illustrated* or something, it said, "Mr. Lincoln has a very fine home."[5, 6] By the time he's president, Mr. Lincoln had a very fine home, but in the early the days, it was not nearly... In fact, in Abraham and Mary's day, Eighth and Jackson [Streets] was not quite considered in Aristocracy Hill.

Today the neighborhood goes to Ninth Street. To the west it goes to the middle of Second Street, and to the east it goes to Ninth. But in Mary's day, she would talk about her sister being "up on the hill." (both laugh) That was her ambition, to get up on the hill. Those Todd sisters, they were interesting folks for sure.

DePue: Competitive with each other?

Battles: Yes, extremely. Either Ann [Todd Smith] said this about Mary, or Mary said this about Ann, "When she says those things about me, she's just looking in the mirror at herself." (both laugh) But Mary says, for sure, in some of her memories, she had never seen such suffering in her life, until she saw Clark and Ann's little boy dying of an early childhood disease. Little did she know, she had some of that ahead of her. In fact, her whole life would be that.

But she would come here and sit with her sister. These were sisters. Even though competitive, the Todd sisters were, excuse the expression, thick as thieves (both laugh) when it came to rallying around each other. There's wonderful books about that. Yeah, there's some things that'll almost curl your hair.

One of our programs that we gave at the Lindsay Home was about the Todd sisters of Aristocracy Hill, a wonderful program done by the curator of the Edward's Place, Erica Holst.[7] She had some wonderful things to say. She was even reading from some of the letters, and two or three of our older ladies, who were in residence watching the program, later came up and said, "It just hurt me to think that one sister would say such mean things about

[5] *Harper's Magazine*, the oldest general-interest monthly in America, explores the issues that drive our national conversation, through long-form narrative journalism and essays, and such celebrated features as the iconic Harper's Index. (https://harpers.org/history/)

[6] *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, later renamed *Leslie's Weekly*, was an American illustrated literary and news magazine founded in 1855 and published until 1922. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frank_Leslie%27s_Illustrated_Newspaper)

[7] Edwards Place, 420 S. 6th Street in Springfield, Illinois, has been owned and operated by the Springfield Art Association since 1913. Once a center for social activity in Springfield, Edwards Place was the home of attorney Benjamin Edwards, brother-in-law of Mary Lincoln's sister Elizabeth. (https://www.springfieldart.org/edwards-place.html)

another in letters," writing. They were interesting folks. I think it's a book yet to be written, Mark. Maybe you should get busy on that (both laugh).

DePue: I've got other projects going.

Battles: I know you do.

DePue: I did want to ask you... There are two quilts that are prominently displayed in this room, and I suspect there's stories about those quilts.

Battles: Truly a story, yes. One of the first things we got back from the family, after the house was reopened, and we began to get more things—although the furnishings were here—is this quilt here. I don't know how well you can see it right now.

It was called a signature quilt; the family called it that, a signature quilt. It has 520 embroidered names on it. It was sort of a fund-raiser quilt done for Olive, the sister, Vachel's sister, and her husband, who were medical missionaries. You paid your money; that money got collected and went to China, and the quilt went along with them. The quilt came back with Olive and Paul many times, when they would come back on what they called furlough for either more medical training or more mission work.

These clothes here that... I don't know if you can right now, but—

DePue: Why don't you come over, and pick one up, so we can see it?

Battles: There are a couple of outfits here that we were also given back by the family. This is a little girl's outfit, and this is how all the Chinese children and actually how—I forgot the bottom part, the trousers—actually how men and women in China dressed. These were made, but this was made for Olive and Paul's first-born daughter, Catherine, who gave us back so many things. Catherine just passed away at 101 years of age, just last year. But she was a force.

DePue: Would Catherine be the poet's sister?

Battles: Catherine would be the poet's niece, Olive's daughter, Olive and Paul's daughter, yes. They also made an outfit for Olive to wear, because they would go and speak before church groups and out in the community, and then they'd take up collections. So this was Olive's outfit.

But Olive has a skirt. The Chinese ladies who made this as a gift for Olive—so the story we're told—they knew that Olive wouldn't want to wear trousers in public, (DePue laughs) so they made her a skirt. There's actually a note that was found in the pocket from the two Chinese ladies who made these for her. They're beautifully done. Olive would wear these.

The little girl... I mentioned to her, I said to her... She had a younger sister, Martha, the one I've referenced already, who is still living in a care center now. She's in Vermont. I don't speak to her much anymore, but Martha was the one I talked to often on the phone.

I said to Martha, "We've just gotten back from your sister's family, the clothing." And I said, "Here's the little outfit that your sister wore, but where's your outfit?" She said, "I was always too wiggly, and mother said, 'Until you learn not to be wiggly, you're not going with us.'" So only Cathy would go with her. But she [Martha] said, "I eventually got so that I could wear this, and I could go with Mother."

These are wonderful things that, I'm sure, that in the interpretation of the home... We don't always hold them up like that, but it's nice to have them. And it relates to this very rich history of the years after the turn of the twentieth century, the early 1900s, right through the twenties, when all the foreigners had to leave China. They were there, and they were in the midst of some interesting times in China. So, we have that rich history as well.

DePue: Now, the quilt that's right behind you here looks much newer.

Battles: It is. Actually, a wonderful group of small... [A] dear, dedicated group of ladies made a new quilt, replica of the old quilt. It's all hand-stitched; none of it is machine made, all hand-embroidered, of contemporary names. We had $5.00 a name, or you could buy a whole octagon. It was a fundraising thing, and it was to benefit the house, if we needed things. I'm not sure. Now that I'm retired I can't speak to that, but this is the new quilt.

It was amazingly easy to have people come along. We have folks from all over the country who said, "My mother quilts; my grandmother quilts; I want to put her name on there." So those signatures are on here of contemporary people who wanted to be a part of this, sort of a paying homage to this, because 1912 is when this quilt was done, the original quilt.

My boss at the time, Justin Blandford, who now is the manager of all five historic sites in Springfield, it was his idea. He said to me one day, "Jennie, maybe we should do a new quilt, like the old one." I said, "Now, what do you mean by we?" (laughs) He said, "Well, you know the embroiderers, and you know the quilters." It ended up being a project that didn't quite get finished before I retired. But I think it's all done now, and we're hoping to see a reception before long.

DePue: Almost every museum you go into has a donor wall. This is so much different and so unique.

Battles: Isn't it? It is. And most of them are original signatures of the person. But, for instance, I have my family on, on one octagon. Of course, my grandmother is long gone and my grandfather, so I wrote a lot of those. But many of them are

the original signatures, just as these are. We even have our Girl Scout troop that we've worked with so closely here, we have their names on one of the octagons.[8]

This one [quilt], two-thirds [of] the research was done by dear, dear people who volunteered to do it and with the present First Christian Church, which is very near here and which was the Lindsay's church forever—they were always members of all three of the buildings that the Christian Church has had in Springfield. Two-thirds of the names on there were members of the church. But there are other people. There are Pasfields on here; there are Krieders on here. There are people...

A story... I don't know if we have time, Mark, but maybe it might be fun for me to tell it quickly, if I can. Dr. Burlingame, who is now the...I think, he's a scholar out at UIS [University of Illinois, Springfield], but he's... You can fill that in.

DePue: He's the Lincoln chair out there. I'm not sure what his official title is, but he's been brought here because of his Lincoln expertise.

Battles: Right, exactly. So, he's written many books and done lots of research. When he first came back to Springfield, as the chair at UIS, he was having graduate seminars, as I understand it, around. He wanted to use local sites, so his seminar would meet at various places. Somebody arranged for him to come here one evening. So, of course, I stayed.

I was in the kitchen doing something, and they started in the dining room in there. I realized, "Wait a minute; where'd they go?" I come looking for them. They're all gathered around this quilt, and Dr. Burlingame is pointing out the names of historic people, from Lincoln's day, who are on this quilt. So, it really is a quilt that has lots of connections, not only with the Lindsay family but to early Springfield.

I'm not from Springfield, but being in Historic Sites for twenty-eight years [and] at the Old [State] Capitol fifteen, I heard a lot of these names, a lot of these names, even in those days.

DePue: I wanted to have you explain the book that we see over here on the table.

Battles: This is a Bible; it has a Dr. V.T. Lindsay and E.K., Esther Katherine, Frazee Lindsay. You can tell it's well-worn. It was used, but it isn't the book that has all the births and deaths in it. We're assuming that that is with the family.

[8] Girl Scouts of the United States of America, commonly referred to as simply Girl Scouts, is a youth organization for girls in the United States and American girls living abroad that prepares girls to empower themselves and promotes compassion, courage, confidence, character, leadership, entrepreneurship, and active citizenship. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girl_Scouts_of_the_USA)

Other things on this table... Here's a map of China. Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay went to China. They were there seven months, touring and, of course, the ultimate reason was to visit Olive and the grandchildren, a wonderful account of that journey by Dr. Lindsay himself. This is a map, and it says his name on it and the date and so on. This says 19... I think it's, what, 1914 or eighteen? I don't know; I can't see it without my glasses. I should get my glasses before we finish this tour, so I can read some of these things much better. But this is a wonderful map that opens up, so this is one of the things.

And then here's one from the Caledonian London and Northwestern Railways. This is summer tours in Scotland and England. The Lindsay's, Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay, were in Europe six different times in their lives.

DePue: That one sounds like it took them back to their roots.

Battles: Yeah. Yes, truly, Doctor would often be taking more medical training, as a part of that tour, and then they would tour the museums and so on. The cultural life was rich in this family, very much so. It was a very rich cultural life, as well as extremely religious. The religion was always there.

DePue: Is there anything else in the room you'd like to point out to us?

Battles: The wonderful fireplace. Now this, the surround and the hearth, this is part of the 1893 addition. Only touches were done to the old house. All of the 1893 work, mostly is in the back of the house. But in this parlor and the one across the way, Mrs. Lindsay redesigned it, this over mantel and so on. This is not Greek Revival; this is more the Eastlake style.[9] Folks do notice that. They also want to know about the cane over there. I don't know how well you can see that.

DePue: Why don't you just walk over there and grab it, if you're allowed to do that.

Battles: Okay. I'll step over.

DePue: And a top hat again.

Battles: This cane was Dr. Lindsay's cane. This is Dr. Lindsay's top hat. I don't want to really do much with it, except just very carefully hold it up, because it's very fragile. It has his name inside. It was made for him by a firm downtown, Conkling something and Company, and it has Dr. V.T. Lindsay. This is a beautiful silk, beaver hat, as typical of the time.

[9] The Eastlake Movement was an American nineteenth-century architectural and household design reform movement started by architect and writer Charles Eastlake (1836–1906). The movement is generally considered part of the late Victorian period in terms of broad antique furniture designations. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastlake_Movement)

Then *The Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul.*[10] Those were Dr. Lindsay's, and this was his volume. We're told it was always by his bed. It was there, and it certainly was a part of the guidance of this Lindsay family. Everything they did was informed by their deep religious faith.

DePue: I think we're ready then to move into the new addition.

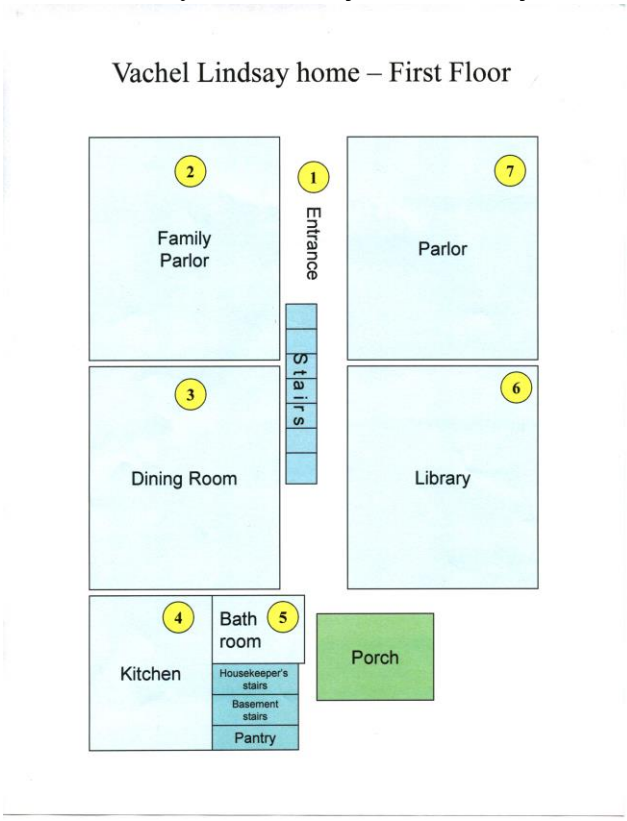
Battles: Yep.

DePue: Jennie, this looks like it's got to be the family dining room.

Battles: It is the dining room; although, Mark, it was kind of an all-purpose room, a family room, if you will. Mother Lindsay would often set her easel up here, in front of these windows. She helped design this house.

This was the Eastlake addition, ten rooms, two stories that the Lindsays added in 1893. [They] talked about it over the years, all the years. Many times Mother Lindsay's journal would say, "Doctor says, 'We may be able to put the new house in,' and Doctor says, 'Not this year, not this year.'"

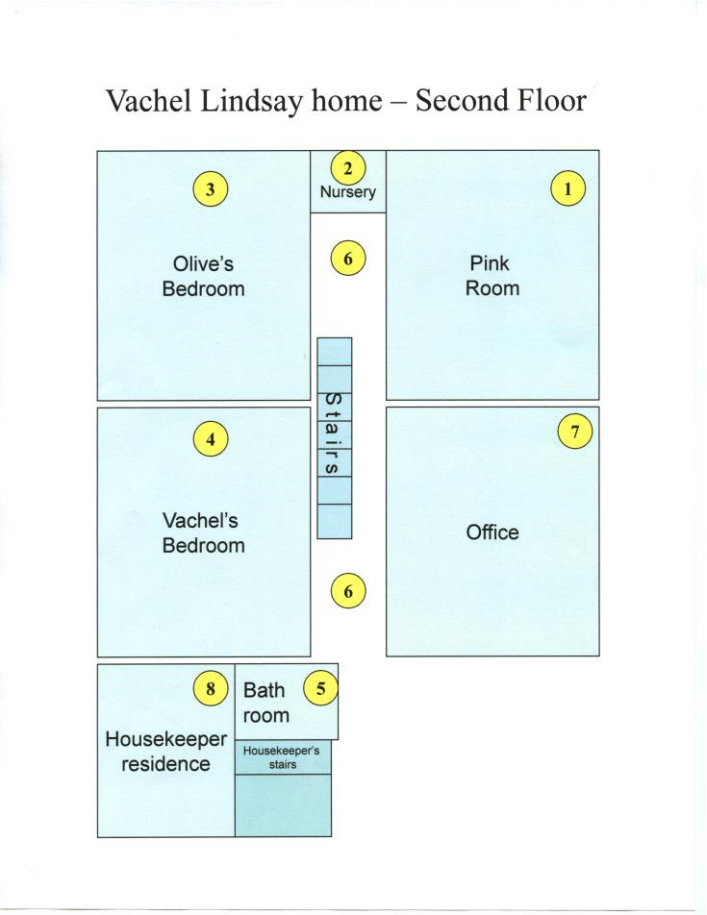
But finally, in 1893, they opened up this entire back west façade, north to south; tore off all the ramshackle rooms that had been "cobbled onto the back"— that's a quote from the journal book—and added this Eastlake style ten-room. Bullard and Bullard were the architect-builders who designed this. Again, Mrs. Lindsay's journal books would say, "Had Bullard to supper tonight, stayed late, worked late into the evening on the new house." This was a big deal for them, and certainly it added an amazing amount of space for them.



[10] *Life and Epistles of the Apostle Paul* by W.J. Conybeare and J.S. Howson is a classic work that combines the historical facts of the world in Paul's day, an understanding of the culture of the first century AD, and an exposition of the epistles into a masterpiece on the life and epistles of the Apostle Paul. (https://www.amazon.com/Life-Epistles-Saint-Paul-Conybeare/dp/080288086X)

DePue: Both floors?

Battles: Both floors, yes, yes. Upstairs, there was nothing above here, originally, so it added an upstairs. Now there were two big bedrooms upstairs, in the original house. So all of the upstairs was new in 1893. It added...



DePue: I'd assume that new addition included room for service quarters.

Battles: A service entrance, right.

DePue: Did the family have servants before?

Battles: They didn't call them servants. They had a man that came in the daytime to help Doctor, a day man, in the yard and with the horses and so on. And then they always had a live-in housekeeper. They always called her "the girl" or "the hired girl," and often by name, of course. But they didn't call her "our servant" or anything like that.

My understanding is that, in this time period, it was immigration, lots of folks were from other countries, who were here wanting to make a way for themselves. Household help, it would have been a way for them to make some money. The Lindsay's had over the years... They had a mulatto—the census tells us that—they had an Irish girl; they had an English girl.

One-time Mother Lindsay's visiting her family in Indiana, and she writes a letter home to Doctor—apparently they were without a hired person at the time, a hired girl—and she said, "Whatever you do, don't hire someone who won't do laundry. I don't need another need another person to do laundry for." (laughs) So I think it was probably a pretty good market for the people who were willing to work in homes. Maybe they could say, "Hey, I'll come and cook for you, but I don't want to do your laundry."

DePue: Would it include any child-rearing chores at all?

Battles: Any what? I'm sorry.

DePue: Working with the children?

Battles: As far as nanny [work] and things, there's not a big indication of that, no. I think mostly it was household help, as far as cleaning and washing and cooking.

DePue: At the time they built this addition—this is a very substantial addition—there's a lot that's changing in society.

Battles: Right, right.

DePue: I'm wondering if electricity was brought in at that time.

Battles: Yes. If you can see the chandeliers—I don't know how well those show right now, even the sconces that are around, the ones that come up—you see there are many arms on these, the main chandeliers—the ones that go up are gas; the ones that point downward are electric. This is 1893, very early. There was a system, but Mrs. Lindsay herself never had the electricity hooked up in this house during her lifetime.

She had had sun stroke when she was in college, picking berries in the summer, and every summer when the heat came along, she seemed to have sort of a recurrence of that. She was afraid that the bright lights from the electric lights would hurt her eyesight. It was one of the things that we talked about with our architects and the people that were working on the renovation, not quite believing that that was true.

But there's a letter that Mrs. Lindsay wrote to her daughter, Joy, probably the last letter she wrote, January of the year she died, 1922. She says, "The house is cold this morning because the hired girl"—and she calls her by name—"didn't get up and get the furnaces going." Then she goes on and chats a bit about how cold it is in the house.

Then she says, "An article in the *New York Times* talks about electricity." She said, "An oculist convention in New York City..." And she said, "Vachel says—meaning her son, because her husband was dead by then—"Vachel says, 'When we get electricity, it must be kept subdued so as not to harm our eyesight." So, we really feel that she didn't have the electricity hooked up, even though the capacity was here.

DePue: You mentioned the easel. I'm curious about the purpose of the easel.

Battles: The easel back here?

DePue: Yes, not what's there now, but when the family was here.

Battles: Oh, for her Mother Lindsay's painting.

DePue: Yeah.

Battles: Yes, Kate Lindsay. Any of the oil paintings in the house—there were two in the room we've just come from; there will be more as we go through the house—any of the oils are all Mrs. Lindsay's work. She was a teacher of art and mathematics. Art was always her hobby, as well as something that she had done before that as a teacher. In these windows here, to get the light, she would often set her easel up here. She had been one of the reasons that they did these windows this way.

DePue: Are the furnishings from the time when this was an addition?

Battles: Yes, she talks about how she and Doctor went downtown and got the new dining room set, and she mentions the chairs with their oak-leaf clusters on the back. Before the home came to the state, when it was in the hands of the Vachel Lindsay Association, there are photographs of young guys from Springfield High School, one of the manual trades groups, doing new caned seats for them, as a volunteer thing for the Key Club I think it was or something.[11, 12]

DePue: This is a very roomy dining room.

Battles: Yes.

DePue: Would they often have people who come for dinner?

Battles: Yeah, Mother Lindsay entertained her church groups often. She was also in the literary clubs in Springfield. She was in the Sunnyside Club; she was in the Shakespeare Club; she was in the Author's Club. The Anti-Rust Club—I don't think she was in it—the Anti-Rust is still going in Springfield today.

DePue: The Anti-Rust.

Battles: Anti-Rust, yes. That's the name of it, and it's, I guess, from a line in Robert Browning's poetry. They chose that name. It's something about "only just enough to keep our minds from rust" or something.[13] So, they're the Anti-

[11] Chair caning is the craft of applying rattan cane or rattan peel to a piece of furniture, such as the backs or seats of chairs, whereas wicker or wicker work is a reference to the craft of weaving any number of materials, such as willow or rattan reeds, as well as man-made paper based cords. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caning_(furniture)

[12] Key Club International is the oldest and largest student-led service program for high school students. Key Club promotes leadership through serving others.(https://www.keyclub.org/)

[13] "Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust." R. and B. 3 : 280. C. 526. Conjecture" from *The Poetic and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning, page 803, "The Ring and the Book."* (https://books.google.com/books?id=jCMQAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA284&dq=Robert+Browning+%22brain+from

Rust. I think the Sunnyside is still going in Springfield today. There were many, many literary clubs, and Mrs. Lindsay was certainly a member of those, as well as all of her church groups.

And they had families. They had the Bullard, Bullard and Bullard, the architects, to dinner. Once Vachel, their son, achieved his fame, you'd often have people stop through here that... One lady writes... She was very, apparently, a rather large women, and she was kind of shocked, when she had dinner with them, to learn that anyone who sat at this table was expected to get down and kneel beside their chair and join hands for prayers before (both laugh). Apparently, she could hardly make it down or up. It's something that she put in her book. I think, when you're at the Lindsay's for dinner, you do as the Lindsay's do for sure.

DePue: We kind of took a couple liberties here. We opened up the doors to the china cabinet. Can you talk a little bit about that?

Battles: Yeah, this is part of the architecture of the Eastlake style of architecture. We didn't find [information about it] during the restoration of the house, the rehabilitation in ninety-nine through 2000; our architect was a restoration architect. Her [Mother Lindsay's] researchers did research and found the actual architect's room-by-room narrative of what each room would contain and dimensions and so on, finishes and so on.

This [china cabinet] is described with four drawers, three shelves behind the door here. Then the bottom shelf here, there's a door that opens up from the kitchen; it's a pass-through. The Lindsay's housekeeper would put the food here, and then they would serve it from here. The upper shelves were used for their china and so on. Most everything in this china cabinet today are things from the Lindsay family.

In fact, there's an urn here that Mother Lindsay was given. Inside, it has the bag that was to keep it from being tarnished, and it's embroidered with the name of the First Christian Church group that gave it to her for all her years of teaching Sunday School.

DePue: Was a built-in cabinet like this rather unusual for the time?

Battles: No, I don't think so. I think it would have been something they would have planned to have here. Certainly the pass-through was a convenient thing. You've seen pie safes and things in early days, where they'd put the pies and

+rust%22&hl=en&newbks=1&newbks_redir=0&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwitkvWytuXlAhXUs54KHXIsCCgQ6AEwAHoECAIQAg#v=onepage&q=Robert%20Browning%20%22brain%20from%20rust%22&f=false)

keep the flies away and so on.[14] This was a way to just have the food here. Then the doors could be closed. I think it was Midwest middle-class architecture. I've had guests who come here and say, "Oh, I remember my grandmother had something similar."

DePue: This might be a sore subject, but a couple of decades later...

Battles: I like those.

DePue: ...a couple of decades later, Susan Dana-Thomas—I think that's right— of the Dana-Thomas House, did a major overhaul of that residence that was obviously done by Frank Lloyd Wright.[15] Were those families competitors, social competitors in any way?

Battles: No, I don't think so, no. Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay would have certainly known her [Susan Dana-Thomas'] parents. Her father was mayor of Springfield and so on. I don't believe there was competitiveness because I don't think the Lindsay's were out to compete with anyone that way.

Dr. Lindsay, he was force in his own right. Vachel said, "He delivered most of the babies in the 'Mauve' decade." That's a term that was interesting to me, that I tried to research a little bit about. But yeah, he certainly had his own stature in the community. That never seems to enter into any of the journal books.

I know when Mother Lindsay was going around visiting acquaintances when they were planning the addition here, many times she'll say, "Visited Mrs. So and So today, very nice but much too elaborate." [About] one lady she said, "A beautiful new home for all; I wouldn't have it because of the way the money was earned." It was the Reisch Brewing Company.[16] Then one [time] she said, "It cost $10,000 when it was new"—she's talking about this lady's new addition—"It cost $10,000 when it was new, and besides, it looks like a castle."

So they were not folks who were really out to put on airs but just to do something nice, and it was a nice addition. I think many people come here say, "Wow, I think this is a great addition." But for the Lindsay's, this was a solidly middle-class family.

[14] The pie safe, sometimes referred to as a pie cabinet, pie safe cupboard, or a pie chest, is a piece of furniture typically used to store pies. In the past, some people also stored meat, perishables, and other items inside of their pie safes. (https://www.amishoutletstore.com/blog/pie-safes-yesterday-today-and-tomorrow/)
[15] The Dana-Thomas House was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1902 for Susan Lawrence Dana, a forward-thinking socialite living in Springfield, Illinois. (https://dana-thomas.org/)
[16] Reisch Brewing Co was a brewery established in the city of Springfield, Illinois by Franz Sales Reisch in 1849. The Reisch brewery operated until 1920 when it was forced to close because of Prohibition. It reopened in 1933 and stayed open until it shut its doors permanently in 1966. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reisch_Beer)

DePue: While we're in the territory of the built-in, you mentioned that, in the previous room we were in, there's something else that's kind of distinctive.

Battles: Yes, there's actually a built-in closet, a full, true closet that's under the stairs. It's a full door; you can walk into I; it comes way back. I think of it as Harry Potter's closet. Anybody that knows [the] Harry Potter original book, about how Harry Potter was living under the stairs in his mean aunt and uncle's house.[17] That would have been taxed as a room, for the Smith family. We're talking about, in the original house, the 1850's house, they have a built-in closet, which is an indication it was a fine home.

DePue: Was that really unusual at the time?

Battles: Yeah, you pay taxes by rooms, and that would have been considered like a room.

DePue: So it would be kind of a frivolous thing, if you wanted a tiny little room like that.

Battles: Yeah, built-in closets were not at all. In fact, [for] many folks who buy old homes, it's the bane of their existence. There's no closet space in them.

DePue: Now we've got a very interesting portrait on the wall to my front, right here. Then are a couple of things on the table. Let's start with the portrait.

Battles: Dr. Vachel Thomas Lindsay, done by his wife, Catherine.

DePue: Then she **was** a very good artist.

Battles: Yes. Now this is a photographic portrait, which means that there would have been a faint photographic image put onto artist canvas. This is stretched canvas; this is an artist's canvas. Then she brought it to life with her charcoal pencils. This was the engagement photograph that Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay had taken. This is something that Kate could have done herself, but it was the kind of things that middle-class families could send a photograph that they had had taken in a studio, off to a factory—there was a big one in Chicago—and they employed artists who would do whatever you wanted. They could make an oil for you; they could make a watercolor; they could make charcoal and so on. Mother Lindsay had the ability as an artist to do this. It's signed on the back, hung unfinished, and then she puts the date there. She finished it later, waiting for Vachel to be born. She writes that in her journal book.

DePue: He's a very distinguished looking man.

[17] *Harry Potter* is a series of fantasy novels written by British author J.K. Rowling. The novels chronicle the lives of a young wizard, Harry Potter and his friends. The first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, was released 26 June 1997. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harry_Potter)

Battles: Yes, he is. He had one eye. I don't think, if this were an engagement photograph... He had had a patient cough tubercular germs in his eye, and he lost the sight of one eye. I'm not sure that that shows it, but I know that eye gave him a lot of trouble in later years. And then this is an original Lindsay drawing here, that we just got back when I was retiring.

DePue: We're talking about Vachel, the poet, now?

Battles: Yes, Vachel, the poet. The poet's drawing and a little original little memory here, and it's signed by him. He did it for his sister, Olive, and her grandsons brought it back to us. They both live in Maine. Actually, there are four great grandsons of the poet in Maine.

DePue: This is Olive then.

Battles: This is Olive's, a gift to Olive, yeah. I don't know that this is supposed to be Olive, although it might be, because it looks a bit like her. I just saw it briefly before I retired. Then this one is lovely; it's very charming. I don't know, can you see it fine?

DePue: There's a poignant story to that, isn't there?

Battles: Yes, yes. These are the Lindsay children.

DePue: Dr. Lindsay.

Battles: Yes, Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay's children, all five of them. Here's the baby. This is Olive, first-born; here is Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, their only son, even though these girls have haircuts that make them look like boys. This is the poet, future poet. This is Isabelle, next in line; this is Esther, and this is Eudora, named after Dr. Lindsay's sister, Eudora Lindsay South. These three right here, Eudora, Isabelle and whatever I said (laughs), Esther died within twenty-one days of each other, in 1888, during a scarlet fever epidemic.

DePue: Even though their father is a doctor, he couldn't spare them from the scourges of the day, huh?

Battles: Right. Right. They're out at Oakridge Cemetery; they're right out there. I was just out there, on Vachel's birthday. I went out to see the grave. I'd been there, but I'd never been there in the same way.

I just was reading today, this morning, early morning, one of the entries in Mrs. Lindsay's journal book, where she talks about going. She and Doctor drove out to Oakridge and brought flowers, and she mentions each of the children. She does that often.

Every Saturday, Vachel in his memories, the son... [In] his memories of looking back on his life here in this home, every Saturday he was to hook

up the horse and buggy. Mama and the girls would go around the yard and find any living thing. In the winter it would have been holly and pine and so on. In the summer it was whatever, spring and fall leaves. And they would ride out to Oakridge in the horse and buggy to take care of the graves. Every Saturday, he remembered, that was his job.

They never forgot it. In her journal book, she'll often say, "Today would have been Isabelle's birthday. I'm the only one who remembers." Of course, a mother remembers those things.

DePue: This is part of the tragedy you mentioned before, about the Todd's, especially about Mary Todd Lincoln.

Battles: Exactly.

DePue: Mrs. Lincoln obviously had great difficulty dealing with all the incredible tragedy in her life. Did the Lindsay's struggle in the same way? This is very poignant; were they able to move on with their lives?

Battles: I think theirs were not necessarily coupled with the huge amount of notoriety of the lives of a president and so on. But how could any mother and father... They were very close to their children. They weren't young people when they were married, even. They were not married as children or teenagers. So I think, yes, it's something that a mother struggles with, and they were very close. We have dear, dear letters that Dr. Lindsay would write to his daughters and so on. They were always very much a family.

DePue: One other question about the addition. Is that when they got indoor plumbing?

Battles: Yes, in fact, one of the unique things, we don't think—when I say, we don't think, I'm speaking of myself and those who came before me. But we've never actually gone across to our Governor's Mansion and inquired, "Do you know for sure?"—we think that we had indoor plumbing here before it was in the Governor's Mansion.

[In] 1893 there are two bathrooms in this house, one right here. Doctor would come in this door back here—we're going to see that in a few minutes—he would come in that way and go right in to that bathroom and wash his hands and clean himself up.

Then great nieces and nephews, who would visit here when their parents were in China... This is Olive's family, these elderly daughters of Olive's, who spoke with us so often when we were restoring the home. [They] said that our grandfather always said he would never again feel that he had been the one to bring home the germs to harm his family.

The germ theory was a theory [a] way, way, long time, much longer than... When you look back on it, it really should have remained a theory. Dr.

Lindsay, the year he met Kate on this trip to Europe, 1876, seventy-four, seventy-five, he was going to Vienna to study with, he says, a well-known Viennese doctor. That doctor was probably this Ignaz Semmelweis, who was the first doctor to write about the fact that something's going on, because it was a teaching hospital in Vienna that Doctor was going to, well-known for that.[18] That's why he went over the ocean to study there.

Semmelweis was a physician there or a member of the staff. He realized, the mid-wife hospital that was part of this teaching campus, they weren't losing their mothers of the babies. The doctors who were delivering babies in the doctor's teaching hospital [were] losing almost all their mothers and the babies. He began to say, "What is the difference?"

He found that they were using a solution I forget [what it was] now, but it's well documented. There's even an old black-and-white film about this gentleman. And none of the doctors would believe him. This man actually died in an insane asylum because he was kind of ridden out the profession because he was laughed at.

DePue: You're saying that Dr. Lindsay, in his own way, was very much innovative in that respect.

Battles: He was early to recognize the fact that he must have brought home some germs that took [hold], because it was during an epidemic that this all happened.

DePue: That he brought home the scarlet fever.

Battles: This is when he said... This one, and there was a half-bath upstairs.

DePue: That would be hard for anyone to deal with.

Battles: Yeah.

DePue: Anything else in this room, Jennie?

Battles: No, except that this room, with the pass-through I've already talked about, kind of leads into the kitchen. I don't know if you want to go there next or not.

DePue: Let's head there next.

Battles: You can peek in there anyway. It's small, close quarters. Like the bathroom and the kitchen, everybody wants to peek in there, so we'll let you go.

[18] Ignaz Philipp Semmelweis was a Hungarian physician and scientist, now known as an early pioneer of antiseptic procedures. Described as the "savior of mothers," Semmelweis discovered that the incidence of puerperal fever could be drastically cut by the use of hand disinfection in obstetrical clinics. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ignaz_Semmelweis)

DePue: Absolutely. Jennie, we're obviously in the kitchen now.

Battles: Yes.

DePue: And by today's standards it's not that big, is it?

Battles: No, and it's all windows and doors, isn't it? Look at this. Right by where you're standing would have been a pie safe or a cupboard of some sort, free-standing. We know from the inventory that was done of the kitchen, because there was an inventory done here by the family in 1955, a complete inventory.

It said two ice boxes, so we said, "Where could ice boxes be in this little room?"[19] We find out from the nieces that I've mentioned before, when they came from China and they stayed here—you didn't get on the boat and go back to China overnight—they stayed here with their grandparents in this home for a year or more, even would go to school here. They said one was on the porch, out here on the kitchen porch, and the other ice box was in the pantry, so that the ice man could drop the ice through the window and didn't have to come dripping in here. This is the kitchen porch door.

Here's the stove they cooked on. We found the stove in pieces in the cellar, the basement. This house also had a full basement, three rooms down there, which isn't part of the ten-room addition, but it put a three room basement below. That added to the space as well. So this [the stove] we had put back together and restored because we know this is the stove that was on the inventory.

There actually were two wood stoves listed on the kitchen inventory, but we think one of them would had to have been a laundry stove. There was no inventory listed for the basement or the cellar. They always referred to the basement as a cellar. It has a separate entrance that is outside, on the kitchen porch.

DePue: I'm looking at the stove, and I'm looking for where you would the baking roasting.

Battles: The ovens are here on both sides; you could put stuff [in] either way. And then these would be adjusted to help control the temperature. These little things were where you could keep water. They'd always keep hot water back here in the reservoir.

We didn't have lid lifters before. Two gentlemen came on tour once, and they were looking at where this stove was made. One looked at me, and he said, "We live right across the street from the home of this man in

[19] An icebox (also called a cold closet) is a compact non-mechanical refrigerator that was a common early-twentieth-century kitchen appliance before the development of safe powered refrigeration devices. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icebox)

Pennsylvania," I think it is. He said, "We even do tours over there." Apparently, it's locally known as an historic home. He said, "I'll send you a lid lifter." And he did; I got this in the mail from him. Then I found this [one] at a rummage sale once, so I also got this later. This is the lid lifter that he sent me in the mail soon after his visit here. That would have lifted this up.

DePue: Wow, excellent.

Battles: Yeah, because not to have that, you didn't touch those things. They were hot all the time.

DePue: Is this strictly a wood burning stove or coal as well?

Battles: I think it was mostly wood. I think wood is what they would have done, although their furnace was a coal furnace.

This door here—I don't know how well this is going to shine off your camera or not—here's the back stairs that the housekeeper would come down. She'd get up in the morning and come straight down here and get things ready for breakfast. From the kitchen—as we've entered the kitchen—back, this is the service area of the house. This was not public, so you notice this is stained pine; it's not the light golden oak that the public rooms have. This is stained pine.

Here's the door that goes down to the cellar. I don't necessarily think you want to look down there. You can't see anything because you have to turn to the left as you go down, but these are the steps that go down to the cellar. Do you want me to step away, and you can peak into the pantry? I don't think there's room for me in the pantry.

DePue: It looks like this would not be part of the official tour, even when you were having tours.

Battles: Not the pantry, although people like to peek back there. We could get like... Sometimes we had ten, fifteen people in here, men and women. They all wanted to stand around and talk about kitchen and so on. But the pantry is where the food was prepared. You see the hole there that didn't.... All the money that was spent on the renovation, [we're don't know] why they wouldn't have mocked up the tilt-out sugar and flour bin. Where the hole is there, that would have been a tilt-out sugar and flour bin. We have that in the architect's notes.

DePue: All of the china and the glassware in here don't necessarily look like they are period.

Battles: No, it's not. Those are the snack sets that...

DePue: For your entertaining.

Battles: Right. One of our curators, Linda Suits—she's now in charge of all the public art at Capital Development Board—was our agency decorative arts person for several years recently. She would be the one that I would say, "Guess what, somebody wants to give us another snack set." And she said, one day, "We're going to rename this site, the Vachel Lindsay Home Historic Site and Museum of Snack Sets." (DePue laughs) We have several snack sets that were given to us. But we would always have refreshments. I'm old, so I was raised that when you have guests in your house, you feed them.

DePue: I'm drawn to these two pictures we have on the wall, right over your shoulder here.

Battles: Don't you love them! I love them so much.

DePue: Was that from Vachel's time?

Battles: Yes, these are from Lindsay family. Yes, they're part of the original art. I asked Malcolm Brown the last... We were getting ready for a three-day grand reopening. We had a black-tie reception that first evening, with all kinds of dignitaries, and Malcolm was on his way. He'd been working here all day to get the house ready. He's our conservator; Malcolm Brown is conservator of artifacts and so on. I think he's still around. I don't know; I haven't seen him for a while.

Anyway, they [the two pictures] were still here, and he was getting ready to go out this door. I said, "Malcolm, would you do one more thing please? Would you hang these two pictures before you go?" So he put them here. He said, "Okay" and he did it. I just think they're wonderful. I love them.

DePue: The other one is right over my shoulder here, if we can get the camera swung around.

Battles: Want me to read this?

DePue: Yes, please.

Battles: "We may live without poetry, music and art;
We may live without conscience and live without heart;
We may live without friends and live without books;
But civilized man cannot live without cooks."[20] (both laugh)

I had someone, a local poet of some repute, say to me, "Jennie, that doesn't sound like the Lindsay family. I don't think they'd live without books." But I just think this is so dear. Yeah, it's one of my favorite things. And then that

[20] A selection from the poem, "From 'Lucille'" by Edward Robert Bulwer-Lytton, included in *The Dinner Hour*, Edmund Clarence Stedman, ed. (https://www.bartleby.com/246/705.html)

one; this one over here (laughs). This one is much shorter. "He lives long who lives well."[21] and you have them all bringing into the... It reminds you of the "Four and twenty blackbirds baked in a pie. When the pie was open, the birds began to sing."[22] So, this is it. And here's the pass-through. The housekeeper would put the food here. They wouldn't have had all these "fancy smacy" things here. The food would go here, and then they'd go around in the other room and serve the food. This is our pass-through. A lot of people guess it's a laundry chute.

DePue: Let's head to the next room that the public is always fascinated to see. That's the bathroom.

Battles: I'm going to let you guys go in there by yourselves (laughs); there isn't much room. There's less room in there than there is here. This is the sink though. Here's this wonderful sink. Now, Mark, can you move that door a little bit? It was all re-... whatever you call it, re-porcelainized for the renovation. But you see we've used it so much, we already have some finish coming off of it. This sink came here for the 1893 addition. This was a new sink.

When the renovation was going on, and the sink was off, and the guys had it out in the yard... Here, along this wall here, is a strip from the packing crate that it was shipped in to the railroad station. Then it was hung, because this is a plaster wall. It's one of the few pictures I didn't get. I took hundreds of pictures during the restoration, and I wish I had taken that picture because I thought, Wow, talk about using every scrap. They used a part of the crate to hang the sink on. This a great old sink and probably would have had a little skirt under there or something to hide all that.

DePue: Here's my modern day perspective on things. I would think that any woman who comes in here and looks at the stove and looks at the sink, if had they been nostalgic before that time, they might be thankful for all of our modern conveniences now.

Battles: Yeah, that's right, yeah. There was a definite way to deal with this. But you don't know the difference; you just know it's darned hard work, just a lot of hard work. But that's the way it was.

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[21] "He lives long who lives well" is a proverb, first recorded in 1553 in the form, "They lives long enough that they lives well enough."
(https://books.google.com/books?id=fgaUQc8NbTYC&pg=PA117&lpg=PA117&dq=Source+of+%22He+lives+long+who+lives+well.%22&source=bl&ots=eVE0ejmtI9&sig=ACfU3U1zADtEsKcuR9aSwUfabaRfDeDtiA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjirMSm8-flAhUJRK0KHUDkDG0Q6AEwCXoECAUQAQ#v=onepage&q=Source%20of%20%22He%20lives%20long%20who%20lives%20well.%22&f=false)

[22] From the nursery rhyme, "Sing a Song of Sixpence," this song was believed to parody the relationship between King Henry VIII of England and his second wife, Anne Boleyn.
(http://www.rhymes.org.uk/blackbirds-in-a-pie.htm)

I'm seventy-six. My grandmother had a little stove like this one, in what she called her summer kitchen. In the summer, literally, I remember it almost always having a pot of boiling hot water for some kind of canning or a project she was working on. Yeah, these were the kinds of things that weren't easy to deal with, but they transitioned into even being used in later years.

DePue: On to the bathroom.

Battles: Okay. Dr. Lindsay would have used this door right here that you're looking at right now. He would come in from the barn. Dr. Lindsay was a horse and buggy doctor; he never drove a car. He believed that, in the wintertime when the car wouldn't start, he always would have his horse. If the buggy broke down as he went on the rutted roads, then he could get on horseback. Vachel said "That was the reason my papa kept the horse and buggy. It wasn't that he couldn't afford a car."

He [the doctor] would go right into the bathroom here and clean himself before he entered into the main house. The door that you just came into, the hallway here, the back hall, this door into the dining area here would have been kept closed as well. Doctor would enter this way and then go right in there. Other people used this bathroom. A lot of people would ask me, "Do you mean he was the only one that would use the bathroom?" No, I'm sure not.

DePue: The style of toilet that's here, would that be a replica?

Battles: Yes, this is a replica toilet. The bathtub is original, and we think the sink is. It's very typical of the time period. But the toilet itself... No, this is an original toilet. It has a new seat on it. But the original toilet is upstairs. That's it, the original toilet is upstairs. See I forgot that already.

DePue: Was there a bathtub upstairs?

Battles: No, no. We'd call it a half-bath.

DePue: But quite luxurious at that time, I would think.

Battles: Oh my gosh, yeah, to have two bathrooms.

DePue: And a water heater in the basement?

Battles: Yeah, yeah. The coal chute that the coal guy would dump the coal [in] is part of the side porch here. Again, when they had the porch floor off, during the restoration, it was amazing. You could look right down into where that coal would have gone and fed right in. And then we have the coal bin downstairs. You don't want to get in the coal bin; it's scary in there. (DePue laughs)

DePue: Jennie, I believe we're in what would be considered the library during the period of time.

Battles: It was the library; that's what they called it, the library, yep. We don't have one big bookcase that we know was on this wall. But this is the bookcase that was here, and this was one of the two bookcases that were in this room, filled with books. The agency got back... The site got back from the family—once the renovation was well underway, and they really believed that it would actually happen—the family sent 200 or more volumes. So, many of the books in there are from the books they sent us to put back in the bookcase here.

This was a room that always was associated with the Lindsay family, with reading and literature. Olive left a wonderful... The oldest daughter of the Lindsay family, Vachel, the poet's sister, Olive, talked about this room. She said, "From the very early time, we knew reading was important to our papa." She said, "Even before we could read, he would call us to sit on the floor, and he would open these big books that came wrapped in brown paper and hung on our mail box, wrapped with paper and string. They were big books that would come to us in the mail, and Papa would call us here, and he would open the book."

I'm thinking that they were books such as these that we have here on this library table. The book about Ireland, you can just see him opening this. These are all places this family had visited. Talking to the children as they're here... She said, "Even before we could read, we knew that reading was important." She said, "When I think back on my life, growing up as a child here at 603," she said "everything outside our home, in the early days, was mud. That's before the men came." She said, "Before the men came and pounded the big blocks of wood in the street, to pave the streets outside, everything outside our home was mud. Inside everything was books." She said, "Books and mud; those are the things I think of when I think back on our house."

Here's the library table. This piece right here is Sir David Lindsay of the Mount, one of the Lindsay ancestors who, in Scottish history, has some... David Lindsay was his name, and he has some dashing kind of history that goes along with it.

This is a wonderful book. More than once I've had folks say, "Oh, please, could you just open it for me?" We have the white gloves here that we would put on, and I would open it and let them see it. This is *Views of the World's Fair.*[23] Now 1893, the white City in Chicago—

DePue: Chicago World's Fair.

[23] *Views of the World's Fair*, published by Curt Teich & Company, Chicago, 1934, is a stapled paperback of photographs from the Chicago World's Fair. (https://www.abebooks.com/book-search/title/world%27s-fair-views/first-edition/)

Battles: The Chicago World's Fair. Mother Lindsay takes the girls to the fair for a week, four days or so. After that, they get back, and Doctor takes Vachel for two or three days. Mother Lindsay has all these elaborate things for Doctor, "Now, don't go there; it's too expensive." (laughs) She has all these things in her notes for him, to eat at certain places where she's already scoped it out for him. The Chicago [World's Fair], this is definitely... This is right from them. This is one of their souvenirs.

This room is filled with lots of souvenirs of the Lindsay family, the cultural life that they led. You also see the drawings, the pictures on the wall, the paintings on the wall. The gold framed ones—and there are two in this room, I think—

DePue: Before you get to those, we haven't really talked much about Vachel Lindsay the poet. I need to have you give us more information about who he is and why he's so important.

Battles: This is one of the first important moments in Vachel Lindsay's life, depicted here in this watercolor. It's Vachel Lindsay at the Cliff Dwellers Club in Chicago, before a banquet in honor of the great W. B. Yeats, who was on a tour of America.[24, 25]

He [Yeats] makes his way to Chicago because he's heard about this new little magazine, *Poetry, a Magazine of Verse,* edited and conceived by this lady here, Harriet Monroe, who felt that it was time that poetry come back to the **people**. It had been kind of the bailiwick of wealthy folks who had time on Sunday afternoon to put their feet on a footstool and sit and read to each other. But it didn't depict the beautiful words of the Victorian poets, "I wandered lonely as a cloud."[26] What words are more beautiful?

But if you are working in the Chicago Stockyards, do you ever have time to wander lonely as a cloud? Does that poem mean much to you? Harriet Monroe felt it was time that poetry come back, and she wanted poetry that spoke to what was happening around and to the people. So, Lindsay submits a

[24] Founded in 1907, The Cliff Dwellers Club was formed to "encourage, foster and develop higher standards of art, literature and craftsmanship; to promote the mutual acquaintance of art lovers, art workers and authors; to maintain in the City of Chicago a club house and to provide therein galleries, libraries and exhibition facilities for the various lines of art, in support of the foregoing purposes." The club's name is based on the novel *The Cliff Dwellers* by Henry B. Fuller. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cliff_Dwellers_Club)

[25] William Butler Yeats was an Irish poet and one of the foremost figures of 20th-century literature. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/W._B._Yeats)

[26] "I wandered lonely as a cloud" is a lyric poem inspired by an event on 15 April 1802, when William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy came across a "long belt" of daffodils in the Lake District, where they lived at the time. (https://www.bl.uk/works/i-wandered-lonely-as-a-cloud)

poem to her called, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven."[27] It came directly out of the day's headlines.

Vachel Lindsay, as a boy, had always been interested in literature and stories and so on. He was a very precocious child. Certainly growing up here, I think you've already seen he's in an atmosphere of family traveling to Europe. He'd gone to Europe himself with his parents. The children, various ones of them, went on various tours. Once, when Joy, the youngest daughter, was in college, Dr. Lindsay went and took Joy and a couple of her college friends along on tour. The culture of Europe was very much a part of them and the literature and so on.

Lindsay begins writing poetry, but his heart was always in art, and so it was art. But [he was] expected by his family to follow in his father's footsteps and be a doctor.

DePue: I was going to say, neither art nor poetry is something that you pursue if you want to become wealthy.

Battles: No, but that's not what he wanted to do (laughs). He **never** wanted to be wealthy. He never had any interest in money, and that's probably one of the biggest... I guess would call it a character flaw of Vachel Lindsay. Non-material, he was a completely non-material person, [who] never wanted any money for anything. In fact, once he did have something he would tell his agent to "Tell the people to buy my books and forget about charging them to come and see me perform."

Skip ahead then to this time. Lindsay has seen the headlines all over America and Europe that tell of the death in England of the founder of the Salvation Army. Vachel Lindsay admired the [Salvation] Army; so did his parents. They [the Salvation Army] were probably the first social service agency. Of course, you had a bowl of soup, but you also got a little bit of a Bible lesson. They admired the Army for that.

Vachel would tell his sister Olive, as they were downtown on the downtown square, which was, by the way... Today's Old [State] Capitol was, for Vachel Lindsay and his family, the Sangamon County Courthouse. So Vachel, in his poetry, "round and round the [mighty] courthouse square," it was the Courthouse Square that's the Old Capitol Square today.[28] Olive

[27] General William Booth was the founder of the Salvation Army. His death in 1912 inspired poet Vachel Lindsay to write a long and colorful depiction of what would happen when the Commander was promoted to Glory. (https://songofamerica.net/song/general-william-booth-enters-into-heaven/)

[28] "round and round the [mighty] courthouse square," is a line from Vachel Linsday's poem, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven."
(https://books.google.com/books?id=ZflM1KyEnf4C&pg=PA49&lpg=PA49&dq=Vachel+Lindsay+round+and+round+the+courthouse+square&source=bl&ots=D9phbp-FpJ&sig=ACfU3U3b_VHIBsL65DHu6GChA3VUTFl0Rw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi1kf7wiOjlAhVDR

remembered that she and Vachel would watch the Salvation Army bands marching around the Courthouse Square, and he would call in her ear, "Oh, Olive, someday I want to do good work like the Army does."

So, here's the death of Booth, and it's covered in all the newspapers. "Booth dies in England," headlines, "Largest public funeral since Queen Victoria's death." And Vachel Lindsay writes a poem called, "General William Booth Enters into Heaven." It's his vision of what it must have been like in heaven when the great Booth comes up and meet King Jesus. Guess where King Jesus is; he's coming right out of the doors of the courthouse (laughs). When Booth comes and meets Him, He opens the doors, and it's the doors of the Courthouse Square, when Jesus comes out and meets Booth, the great Booth. The scales fall away, and it's halleluiah time in heaven. Vachel's poetry was always these early poems of things that got him the attention, made him the best known performer-writer in America, in these early years and in England.

DePue: Early years of the twentieth century?

Battles: Yes. Nineteen twelve through the mid-twenties. There was no better known writer or performer of his own poetry than Vachel Lindsay. He was the first of his contemporaries. Many of his contemporary writers are in this audience [referencing a photo] here, which I'm going to tell you about in a second. He was the first to go to England, invited there by Yeats, who had seen him give this performance to a group of the Cliff Dwellers, who were literary, primarily literary, people in Chicago in the early days. Yeats had said at the end of the evening, "I have perhaps seen the great new voice of the new American century."

DePue: Point out Vachel in this picture.

Battle: This is Vachel, and this is his performing pose. He would roll his eyes back in his head, put his arm up, and off he would go. There's a charming little story about a lady and her mother who sat in the audience and watched Vachel perform. The lady recalled that her mother, at the end of the performance, turned to her and said, "Well, that was something, but it's too bad he's blind," (laughs) because he had his eyes rolled back in his head. (both laugh) I don't know if that's apocryphal or not, but I think when you look at his stance, how it was, he gave cues to his audience this way.

Sometimes he'd come "boom lay boom lay" (claps her hands) down the middle of the aisle, beating a drum. Sometimes interpretative dancers... This is a period in the early years, when modern dance becomes a thing. University of Chicago, lots of the arts departments, interpreted Lindsay's poetry on stage, while he recited here or another person recited. College

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K0KHfWyBTwQ6AEwAXoECAQQAQ#v=onepage&q=Vachel%20Lindsay%20round%20and%20round%20the%20courthouse%20square&f=false)

choruses would sing acapella to his verses. There was always a lot of music, but not written formal music. He didn't like that. He thought the words were music themselves.

So here he is, and here is a lady to whom he was engaged for a year, at least **he** felt they were engaged. Sara Teasdale, a wonderful contemporary, [who wrote] beautiful poetry in her own right. She was from St. Louis. She was from wealthy folks. She and Vachel courted, and actually she wore a ring, a family ring, for a while, until she decided, it's not Vachel after all.

Their writings back and forth are documented beautifully in the history of *Poetry Magazine,* where these letters are in the archives.[29] Harriet Monroe was a great champion of Vachel Lindsay. She was the editor of this magazine, and he was truly the one with this kind of poetry to put *Poetry Magazine* on the map. Truly he was first to give it the attention that it, to this day, still has. If you're published in *Poetry Magazine,* you really have arrived in the world of poetry.

She [Harriet Monroe] always was a dear friend and fan of his but knew, according to her biography, that he would probably need someone to take care of him. (laughs) She encouraged Sara Teasdale; she encouraged this romance. There are letters [in which] Sara would say... When she's writing to Harriet Monroe, she's saying, "When I'm with him, I love him. There's no one I love more, when I'm with him. But when I'm not with him, I know he'll never be able to support us." She was conflicted about this.

She [Sara Teasdale] went with him to New York City. She was very instrumental in the first full book of his poetry that was published. She helped him work on that. The books are dedicated to her; two or three of his early volumes are dedicated to Sara. They remained friends all of their lives, but she took the wealthy manufacturer. She married Ernst Filsinger, who was a shoe manufacturer, I think, or something. They divorced over the years, and Sara Teasdale ended her life by suicide, years after Vachel ended his life by suicide.

It's easy to look and say dramatic things about that. All I know is, they remained friends. In fact, there's a letter or two that Vachel Lindsay's widow—for he did marry later in his life. He married at age forty-five for the first time—and his widow got letters from Sara.

DePue: Any sense of regret from either of them that they didn't get married?

Battles: How can I say? I can't say that for sure.

[29] *Poetry* (founded as *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*) has been published in Chicago since 1912. It is one of the leading monthly poetry journals in the English-speaking world. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poetry_(magazine)

DePue: I know there's lot of other prominent...

Battles: Yes.

DePue: ...literary figures in this.

Battles: Right here is Edgar Lee Masters, right here, of *Spoon River Anthology* fame.[30] Masters was also... Anyone that knows about Masters knows that he was a partner in the law firm in Chicago that did the Scopes trial, the attorneys that worked on that trial.[31] Next to them, the other one right here, is Carl Sandburg.[32] But between Masters and Sandburg, right here is Sinclair Lewis.[33] These are the Midwestern...came to be the cream of the crop of Midwestern writers.

There's also Henry Blake Fuller in here.[34] Louie Sullivan is in this picture.[35] I think he's the guy with the beard back here, one of the contemporary people, because Cliff Dwellers is still... Now it's a private dining club. I don't think it has quite the literary history, but one of the present day members who came on tour here said that, according to her understanding of the history of *Poetry Magazine*, that Louie Sullivan almost lived at the Cliff Dwellers' club after Frank Lloyd Wright pushed him out of his fame with this school of architecture that came out of the Sullivan [style of architecture] because he was a student of Sullivan's, as you know.

DePue: The Prairie Poets, are those these three?

Battles: Yes, the three Prairie Poets are Vachel Lindsay, Edgar Lee Masters and Carl Sandburg. When I was teaching—don't mean to get personal here—but when I was teaching high school literature, back in the Dark Ages, I taught a unit to my juniors called "The Three Prairie Poets" at Dixon High School. I was amazed when I came right here in the middle of Vachel Lindsay's life and

[30] Poet, biographer, and dramatist, Edgar Lee Masters is best remembered for his *Spoon River Anthology*, a sequence of over 200 free-verse epitaphs, spoken from the cemetery of the town of Spoon River. When first published in 1915, the collection caused a great sensation because of its forthrightness about sex, moral decay, and hypocrisy. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/edgar-lee-masters)

[31] The Scopes Trial, also known as the Scopes Monkey Trial, was the 1925 prosecution of science teacher John Scopes for teaching evolution in a Tennessee public school, which a recent bill had made illegal. (https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/scopes-trial)

[32]Carl August Sandburg (January 6, 1878 – July 22, 1967) was an American poet, biographer, journalist, and editor. He won three Pulitzer Prizes: two for his poetry and one for his biography of Abraham Lincoln. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Sandburg)

[33] Harry Sinclair Lewis was an American novelist, short-story writer and playwright. In 1930, he became the first writer from the United States to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sinclair_Lewis)

[34] Henry Blake Fuller (January 9, 1857 – July 28, 1929) was a United States novelist and short story writer. He was born and worked in Chicago, Illinois. He is perhaps, the earliest novelist from Chicago to gain a national reputation. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Blake_Fuller)

[35] Louis Henry Sullivan (September 3, 1856 – April 14, 1924) was an American architect, and has been called the "father of skyscrapers" and "father of modernism". (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_Sullivan)

moved two blocks away from the [Edgar Lee] Masters' home in Petersburg. (coughs) Excuse me.

DePue: Maybe it's just me, but before I came to Springfield, I didn't know anything about Vachel Lindsay. I knew about the other two.

Battles: Everyone knows Carl Sandburg. Everyone knows Carl Sandburg, primarily for the Lincoln biographies that he did, for which he won Pulitzer Prizes. Sandburg [was] from Galesburg, a very small cottage there; it's one of our state historic sites, a sister site of ours here. [His] father was a railroad blacksmith, very humble beginnings, a different lifestyle than Vachel was brought up in.

Edgar Lee Masters was brought up in a more Midwestern lifestyle, I think. I think his father was a merchant—I'm not sure—from Lewiston. Actually, he was born out of state. But Sandburg, I'm told by a Sandburg scholar, made sure that he remained in the public eye as the years went by. Vachel Lindsay never cared about that.

Vachel Lindsay, you can look around the house, I don't think it; I've never read it; I've never seen it expressed by the family. I don't mean to demean his conviction by what I'm saying here, but when you see the way he was raised, he could always come home. He could always come home if things didn't work out for him. His parents never disowned him. They never said no.

He disappointed them in the fact that he didn't follow in his father's footsteps. He tried for three years at Hiram College. He took a pre-med course. And he finally wrote home and said, "I cannot do this. I'm not meant to be a doctor." The letters are documented; they're wonderful letters. The reply from his parents said, "Then you must study art." Because he said, "It's art I want. I want to be an artist." Already in his early years, he was feeling a call of this very avant-garde pen and ink art.

DePue: Let's take a look at some of that. I'm going to hand you this one. The room is filled with his art. Let's start with this one.

Battles: This is interesting because.... Shall I hold it up here? It's one that he actually did that was inspired by another poet's work. Unlike most of his things, they came out of his amazing mind. Of course, this is his version, his interpretation of the poem by Coleridge about Xanadu. "In Xanadu did Kubla Khan a stately pleasure dome decree."[36] You know the poem, right? I know the poem, too.

When my students were assigned it, they would grumble, "Oh Mrs. B., we have to read that poem." Vachel tells about when he's in Spokane. He had

[36] The first line from the poem, "Kubla Khan" by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. (https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43991/kubla-khan)

gone to Spokane— there's another whole story about his life in Spokane, Washington—where he became poet in residence. One of the things he did, to sing for his supper, so to speak, would be go out and speak to school groups. He was at Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane, Washington. The students had been assigned this poem, and they were grumbling. Vachel said, "I wanted to show them that words on paper, in black and white, didn't have to stay there. They could come off the page and be whatever the people who read them thought of."

Here is, in collage... It's a collage with pen and ink drawings, that stately pleasure dome of the great Kubla Khan, reflected in the water. What I love about it, you see the moon is down there. He signs it, and he calls his piece "Xanadu." But the moon isn't up here. This is tissue paper, something called mending tape—I think they used it in libraries to put books back together—and foil, tin foil, collage, layers and layers and layers and then his own drawings here, to make the pleasure dome of the great Kubla Khan. He does this in 1928, right before they moved back here to the house. This is just a cardboard... It's a foam copy. Isn't that quite a striking thing?

Collage, pen and ink work... You see pen and ink, here in the other things. Mark, maybe one of these panels back here, just to say... Since I've said, pen and ink, maybe you can hand me that one too. We won't look at all of them. But here's an example of pen and ink. Look at this; look at this elaborate... Can you see this okay?

Videographer: Yes, very good

DePue: Put it up on the easel here.

Battles: Oh, okay, great. Beautiful borders. These, by the way, are down at our Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library collection, up in the audio-visual [collection]. These, they're much smaller. These are big blow-ups of this. It was a series of six drawings he did, and he called it his "Village Improvement Parade." You see the folks are parading through the village, and you see the banners that they're holding have wonderful sayings on them that typify Lindsay's philosophy of the new century and the hope that he held out.

He wasn't the only one that had high hopes for the new century. A new century gives lots of folks hopes for change, anything new, any new regime, and so on. This banner says, "We ought to love civic splendor and hate private luxury." Civic splendor, so civic improvement. Vachel said his little "gospel of beauty" that he would distribute to folks, if he went around and knocked on their door...[37] The gospel of beauty basically says, you can leave your home, and you can search the world over for what you are meant to

[37] Vachel Lindsay authored *Adventures While Preaching the Gospel of Beauty*, published in 1914 by Mitchell Kennerely, New York. (https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/17715552-adventures-while-preaching-the-gospel-of-beauty)

do in your life. But once you find out what that is, you need to hightail it right back to your home, hometown, home city, and use those skills to make your city the best.

Springfield to Vachel always had the great potential to be that shining city on the hill. He always loved Springfield better than anyplace he ever was, and this man was, literally, a world traveler.

DePue: The next one.

Battles: Yeah, these are fun. Maybe you want to do both of them side-by-side, Mark, because they're both galley proofs from one of his books. I can't tell you which one. We could probably tell by the date. You see, here are instructions here to the editors and so on. This is Vachel's writing. His handwriting came from a Spencerian system of penmanship.[38]

I've already said, I'm seventy-six years old, or about to be, in a month. I was taught the Palmer Method of handwriting; it was a handwriting method. This one predates that and is called the Spencerian system of penmanship. Lo and behold, the college that the Lindsay's went to and the children, it was in the area that the Lindsay family ancestors were from and then moved into Indiana. It was from Ohio. Spencer, the originator of this handwriting system, was actually a young teacher at Hiram College in his early days, before this handwriting system that he invented caught on.[39] Then he began to go around the country, giving lessons in handwriting.

Here's Vachel's; "Spencer Taught on Hiram Hill," [poem] because Hiram College had a hill—Hiram Hill was the place where young people would go to spark and so on— "Spencer taught on Hiram Hill when all the land was young." In other words, he was a young man, and it was a young land.

Here's what is interesting about Vachel Lindsay. When Vachel went to London on a European trip with his parents—1920 I believe it was—they saw, at the London Museum... They saw the Tut exhibit, the tombs. The Tut Tombs were just opened, and the wonders of that was displayed. Vachel became enamored of the hieroglyphics and would be known to carry the two or three volume *Book of the Dead* around with him.[40]

[38] Platt R. Spencer developed the Spencerian system of penmanship. It explained how all the letters can be made gracefully and rapidly using various combinations of a few basic pen strokes. (http://www.heartlandscience.org/comm/penman)

[39] Hiram College is a coeducational liberal arts school of about 1,100 men and women, founded in 1850 and located in the historic Western Reserve region of Ohio. (https://www.hiram.edu/)

[40] *The Book of the Dead* is an ancient Egyptian funerary text generally written on papyrus and used from the beginning of the New Kingdom to around 50 BCE. The original Egyptian name for the text is translated as "Book of Coming Forth by Day" or "Book of Emerging Forth into the Light." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Book_of_the_Dead)

He believed that, if we could speak in pictures, (laughs) [if] we could draw pictures, we wouldn't fight with each other (both laugh). The meaning would become clear. So, here Vachel invented his own American hieroglyphics, and he had great hopes that the world would...a country would take them over.

This is actually his hieroglyph of his name. I have had folks here who can read hieroglyphs, and they say, "We can recognize some of those things." This was just one of the kinds of ideas that Vachel had. It didn't matter to him if people thought he was a little strange, because he believed in this stuff.

Here's another one that I love so much. One of the things about Spencerian System of Penmanship, if you were a skilled penman, the way you could dip your pen... These were the dipping in ink wells, not the quills that preceded, although I'm sure in the early days they probably did use a quill. But by Vachel's time, you had the metal tip pen.

If you were an artist with this pen, you could dip your pen, put it down on the paper. How long you could go, without having to reload the pen, indicated the kind of skill you had as a penman. Vachel—you can see here—one of the things he loved to do was to do these amazing things. In them, he wrote names. This says "Spencer, Spencer, Spencer, Spencer, Spencer, Spence." All up and down here, it's Spencer. This is almost a continuous line. I don't know how many times.

Vachel was one of the founders of the Springfield Art Association, by the way. One of the other founders would talk in her oral history that's out at the university, Mark. Her name is out of mind for a minute, but it will come to me, Lillian Scalzo, S-c-a-l-z-o. Lillian Scalzo talked about how they would gather here in the dining room, a group of the artists that were founders of the Art Association, Vachel on one end of the dining table and the rest of them gathered around.[41]

Vachel would take a blank sheet of paper, and he would make a strike on it and then pass it along to the next one, and by the time it came around the table, there was a drawing on the page. He would look at it and write a poem. She [Scalzo] talked about how she regretted never having asked him to keep one or two of those because it was a delightful thing that they would do together as artists.

This kind of art was always pen and ink art. He would say... He had fame. He had fortune, but it didn't matter to him. The fortune was nothing that

[41] Lillian Scalzo of Springfield, Illinois taught and was involved in the development of the art department at Springfield Junior College from 1929 until it was discontinued during World War II, then went on to illustrate medical pamphlets for the State Department of Health. She began teaching painting in 1936 at the Springfield Art Association and continued through much of her life. (https://www.llcc.edu/public-relations-marketing/news-events/works-by-lillian-scalzo-on-display-in-llcc-library/)

he'd bank and kept and invested and did things with. He helped his mother and father pay the bills once in a while, but money was never part of his life. He would say, "All I ever wanted to be known as is a pen and ink artist." Yet his art was never part of his fame, never.

DePue: I would like to get some close-ups of some of the other art up here. I don't know; that might be a bit of a challenge.

Battles: You want me to take it off the wall? No, okay, thank you. (laughs) Thank you.

DePue: If you can just kind of stand next to it and talk a little bit about it, then we can get a close-up later on probably.

Battles: You want to start with this one. It's probably the easiest to look at here. This is quite amazing, isn't it? This is called *The Potatoes' Dance*. It's a delightful poem about "the magic little lady who gives potatoes eyes, the charming little lady who gives potatoes eyes." He visualizes this lady in the cellar in his house, downstairs in the cellar. By the way, the three-room basement had a dirt floor. When Vachel and his family moved back to the house in 1929, one of the first things he did was have the floor in the basement put in cement. By the way, they found a cache of pots and pans that they thought were from Clark and Ann Todd Smith that had been buried in the dirt down there.

Anyway, he visualizes then... The coal bin is down there, and he visualizes that, all of a sudden appeared this little magic fairy lady, and she sprinkled her fairy dust on the little potatoes that had been put down there for the wintertime. She takes the match sticks that had been thrown on the dirt floor from lighting the wood furnace or the coal furnace. She gives those arms and legs, and they're having this wonderful dance. Into the dance comes this tall, dark stranger potato. (both laugh) The poem tells that she danced every dance after that with him, and these little potatoes were left out of the dance after that. It says the next morning they ganged up on him and threw him in the coal bin "where he may be today, where he may be today." That's the end of the poem.

I wish I could read it to you or speak it better. It's truly one of the things that people love, and children love that poem. It's great fun to read, and you can even act it out. We had a whole group of history camp kids in this library here, following Marian Levin, who was doing this interpretive dance to the Potatoes Dance. It was just darling. This is the kind of pen and ink art that Vachel always said, "If there are words and pictures that go together, it's always the pictures that came first to my mind, and then they inspired the words."

Here you have "The Tree of the Laughing Bells." This is a wonderful one [picture] that's in the collection down at the library. It's much larger when you see it in its original. The bell shapes here are actually cut away. He works

on mat board a lot—I call it mat board; I don't know, art board—in pen. He made the shape of the bells, but then he cut—probably with an art knife—he cut away the shape, and behind that, when you see the original, the color comes from ribbon, silk ribbon or silk fabric that he's pasted on the back that shines through. Some of these bells here, the top ones, are actually cut out and colored and pasted onto the outside. So, you kind of have this positive, negative kind of thing. This is then...

The poem that was inspired by it is called "The Tree of the Laughing Bells." Vachel tells about this because when he writes to his parents and says to them, "I can't go back to Hiram College. I can't be a doctor. I want to be an artist." And they say, "Then you need to study art." So, his parents agree that he would go to the School of the Art Institute and they would pay his way, amazing to me. This to me says so much about his parents.

He goes to Chicago to the Art Institute, and he eventually says, "They're not teaching the kind of art that I do there." He said, "They wanted to make me into a portrait painter. I was not that. They wanted to make me into an illustrator. I was not that." Illustrator makes pictures about somebody else's words, you see. And Vachel said, "The pictures come first to my mind, and then I write the words." But when you look at his stuff, you can almost see that he could have been an illustrator. He might have been a Normal Rockwell—you know what I'm saying—or any of the famous illustrators.

DePue: What I'm wondering, in terms of his artwork especially, if people would approach him and say, "I want, you to do a piece, and this is what I want you to do the piece on," how might he have responded?

Battles: He was not that kind of artist.

DePue: That's what I figured.

Battles: I don't believe, except for what I've told you about how they would go around the table and do things together. Oh my goodness, there's some amazing letters he wrote to the editor because the State Fair would have an art contest every year, in the beginning years, (laughs) and Vachel Lindsay, he would write in the newspaper how bad people were and how horrible their art was. It got to be that the newspaper editor had to say that "opinions are not ours." This was Vachel; he was always his own person. But again, I keep coming back to the fact that he **could** be that because he could always come back home.

DePue: Was he selling any of his art?

Battles: He wanted to give it away; he wanted to give it to you. Before he came to fame, his first big fame came after years of tramping. It was called tramping. He wasn't a hobo. The wonderful books that came out of that... There were

three books, and they've been edited into two books: *Adventures while Preaching the Gospel of Beauty* and *Rhymes to be Traded for Bread*.

When Vachel goes to art school, he leaves Chicago. He tells his parents, "They're not doing the kind of art I do here, so I'm going to New York." He goes to New York. He studies at the Young Students Art League.[42] He studies at the Chase School.[43] This is the drawing here and the poem that he asks Robert Henri, one of his instructors and someone that he admired greatly, to look at this work and give him his honest opinion of, is it the art, or is it the writing? [44]

Vachel tells the story; it's well documented, and I paraphrase probably badly. Basically Henri says to him, "You're an okay artist, but you'll probably make more with your writing." And Vachel said, "That's when I came back to Springfield. I got busy. I made a series of little broadsides.[45] I had my *Gospel of Beauty* put on little printed pieces. I made little booklets, and I told my parents, 'I have to prove to you I can make it on my own.'" And off he went, tramping.

The first tramp was actually from New York City, back here. Then he comes here. He stays here a while, and he goes on, pursues this kind of thing. Those personal accounts... He walked almost 3,000 miles.

DePue: I was going to say, when you say tramp, he just hit the road and walked.

Battles: Yes, but he said, "I was not a boxcar tramp." No boxcar tramp. He said, "I always dressed as well as I could, considering." I never ever went in boxcars. Now, Sandburg rode the rails, but Vachel didn't. What Vachel would do, Vachel would walk along the railroad tracks. In the country he'd find a railroad track, and he'd walk along it to the next town, because it would be a direct route into the next town, when he was out on his own.

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[42] Founded in 1875, the Art Students League of New York is an art school located in Manhattan. The League has historically been known for its broad appeal to both amateurs and professional artists and for over 130 years has maintained a tradition of offering reasonably priced classes on a flexible schedule to accommodate students from all walks of life. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Students_League_of_New_York)

[43] First established as the Chase School, the Parsons School of Design was founded in 1896 by William Merritt Chase, in search of individualistic artistic expression. It was the first of its kind in the country to offer programs in fashion design, advertising, interior design and graphic design. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parsons_School_of_Design)

[44] Robert Henri was an American painter and teacher. He was a leading figure of the Ashcan School of American realism and an organizer of the group known as "The Eight," a loose association of artists who protested the restrictive exhibition practices of the powerful, conservative National Academy of Design. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Henri)

[45] A broadside is a large sheet of paper printed on one side only. Historically, broadsides were used as posters, announcing events or proclamations, commentary in the form of ballads, or simply advertisements. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Broadside_(printing))

He said, if he ever became president, what he would do first, [he] would make all the rails, all over the country, an equal distance that would be a man's stride (laughs), so he would make more time on them because, depending on what railroad system it was, the rails were not all the same width.

DePue: What were the years that he was doing this?

Battles: Oh, my. I'm terrible at this, Mark. I've forgotten. They're the years right before this 1912, so it's... I used to know them all, 1906, 1908 and 1912; there they are. In 1912 he is on the third and what would be the last actual walk, knocking on doors. He leaves his house here in Springfield, and he's on his way to L.A., walking—"Momma, Daddy, bye" (laughs)—knowing they're going to get letters saying, "I'll pay you back some day."

He walks. He's on his way to visit his uncle Johnson Lindsay, Doctor Johnson Lindsay and his family, who had left the Lincoln home neighborhood. They used to live right next door to the Abraham Lincoln home. In the 1880s the empty lot there, next to the Lincoln home, was called the Lindsay lot. That's Dr. Johnson Lindsay, Doctor's brother. He was on his way there.

So—make a long story short, I hope—he goes all the way, walking to Wagon Mound, New Mexico, which is an hour into the desert, and decides, "I probably shouldn't walk on across the desert." So, he stops in Wagon Mound. He wires home, here, to his papa, for money to take the train on to L.A.

While he's in L.A., here's the headlines that come and tell of the death in England of the founder of Salvation Army. It's that transition time there, that he writes this poem, submits it to Harriet Monroe saying, "If you don't like the extra stuff I've put in it..." The extra stuff was for the audience to join in and call back certain lines. So, it's "Booth led badly with a big bass drum. Are you washed in the blood of the lamb," the Salvation Army hymn, A*re You Washed in the Blood of the Lamb?* "And the saints smiled greatly, and they said, 'He's come.' Are you washed in the blood of the lamb?"

Before the evening was over... That was a long poem, and by the time we get to the courthouse square, with Jesus coming out, it's hallelujah time in heaven, and the audience, the roof is coming off. He was like a rock star, guys. I know it sounds trite, but he truly was.

DePue: Was this the poem that launched his notoriety then?

Battles: Yes, it was, and it launched the notoriety of Chicago and the writers of the Chicago School and this literary period in Chicago that was just rich. The East Coasters and the West Coasters were saying, "What? This is happening in the Midwest? Nothing happens in the Midwest." It truly was significant.

DePue: There might still be people who say that.

Battles: Oh, there still are; I'm sure.

DePue: There's one more picture, while we still got a couple minutes of time, that I definitely want you to talk about. Can we take a look at that?

Battles: Isn't that beautiful; isn't it beautiful! This again comes right out of the visit to the Tut exhibit in London, because of the beautiful images here. The six-verse poem that Vachel wrote after he created this, he puts the verses here as part of the decorative elements in this beautiful thing. It's a poem called "Machinery." When you see this in its original, the beautiful... I don't know whether it's gold paint he uses or if it's a chalk of some sort, but when the light catches that, the gold just shimmers and the silvery look to it. It's a beautiful piece.

DePue: The name of it is "Machinery"?

Battles: It's called "Machinery," yeah.

DePue: I would never think that.

Battles: No, you wouldn't. No, no, I know. There were 100 prints made of this as fundraisers when the house was in the hands of the Vachel Lindsay Association. We have, someone has donated number three, print number three. These are a series of four. There's one in there, and that's another one we'll see when we get in there.

DePue: Do we have another couple of minutes, just a little bit, to talk?

Battles: These are simply souvenirs of the kinds of things that the Lindsay family brought back from their travels. These guys—two bronze statues displayed on either side of the doors between the library and the parlor—weigh 1,000 pounds, I think. But they're part of the artifacts that were inherited here. The Lindsay's spent money on this kind of thing, books and things of this sort, but not necessarily on fancy furnishings or anything like that.

DePue: Thank you very much. We've got a much better feel for Vachel Lindsay, certainly his family, and we've got a long way to go.

Battles: Wall to wall carpeting here too, and that is also an unusual thing, wall to wall carpeting.

DePue: We're going to start with the parlor when we get back together again.

Battles: Great.

(end of transcript #1)

Interview with Jennie Battles
AG-V-L-2015-002
Interview #2: January 15, 2015
Interviewer: Mark DePue

DePue: Jennie, I wanted to start with is for you to talk a little bit about this gorgeous woodwork that the house has.

Battles: We have woodwork from the original house, which is... Now we're back in the original parlor. This would have been the formal parlor for both the Smith family in the early days—this is the original house—and for Dr. and Mrs. Lindsay. Often these doors would be kept closed, except for when they were needing them.

What I think I failed to point out earlier is—because we kind of walked that way—the original house for the Smith, the original house... The 1840s house was an "L" shape to the south, two stories above the parlor down here, but then back here only one room, not a second story. When the Lindsay's add the 1893 addition, the walls were torn away, foundation was left back here. So, [in] the library, from which we've just come, the walls were part of the new, with a guest room above. That was the new house. To them, it was the new house, even though the foundation had been part of the original house. That would have been the dining room for Clark and Ann Todd Smith.

The pocket doors then were very typical of the era and of the time period. But these doors are really unique in that they're made of two kinds of wood. This side matches the original woodwork, and the other side is the light golden oak. In the Bullard & Bullard narrative... I don't know what else to call it. It wasn't the drawings; we didn't find the actual plans, but we found the page by page narrative from Bullard and Bullard, the architects. They said, "Any new finish in any given room will match the prevailing finish in that room." So here, the doors are not just finished differently, but they're actually two kinds of wood put together. They're extremely heavy, unlike the other pocket doors that are between the library and the dining room. They're oak, and they're one kind of wood.

DePue: Are there different architectural styles between these two rooms as well?

Battles: Yes, yeah. The new was what was in vogue at the time, called the Eastlake style. As I pointed out in the parents' bedroom, the fireplace in that room was part of the new house, to match that. That was all that the Lindsay's did to the old house, or the original house, was to update the fireplaces. Otherwise, they didn't change the finishes.

We would often have folks come here, touring, and say, "Why didn't they just make the whole house look new?" or "Why didn't they make the

whole house look like the old house?" In other words, why do they have these two dramatic kinds of architecture and finishes? It's simply that's the way the Lindsays were. They would not have spent money just to make their entire house look like an Eastlake house. It was just the way they were, except they did do this beautiful fireplace.

As Mother Lindsay talks about in her journal book, she says, "Tonight we went downtown and chose the tile for the new parlor grate." She calls this these the grate; this is the grate, pink onyx with lilies. There's the lilies, and there's pink onyx. I guess pink onyx was the color of the tile she chose.

DePue: It's gorgeous.

Battles: It is gorgeous, isn't it? It's beautiful. Yep, there it is, from 1893. I'm sure you've noticed the piano here. Here you see also... As long as you're panning around the room, you're seeing some holly on the curtains; you're seeing a few Christmassy things; you see some things... Mark, would this be a good time to talk about the Christmas decorations that you're looking at here?

DePue: I was going to want to get a different camera angle when we talk about the Christmas tree. A couple of quick questions here, while we've got this perspective. You really get the sense of the depth of this room as well. What's the height of the ceilings? Do you know that?

Battles: I used to. I think they're twelve [feet] maybe, twelve.

DePue: And this would be a style of a home for somebody who lived on Aristocracy Hill?

Battles: Yeah, this is a fine home. This is Clark and Ann Smith's home. The Lindsays didn't change the height of the ceilings here in this room. This is the original parlor. Yeah, it's Greek Revival architecture, which the only parlors were a bit more elegant. What you have here that you don't have in the other rooms, you have a little bit more detail on this woodwork here, with just a couple of flat strips above it. Otherwise, you've got the Greek Revival, which is kind of mimicking... In homes, you're mimicking the Greek temple architecture.

DePue: These doors though are very different.

Battles: You noticed that. How astute of you. Yes, and what we think is.... We know that from 1925... Mother Lindsay dies in 1922; Dr. Lindsay had died before her, 1918. When she dies the house went into the hands of the trust officer, the executor of the estate. Olive and Paul are still in China. Vachel has his national fame. Joy, the youngest daughter, was living and having her family in Shaker Heights, Ohio. The three of them couldn't decide; are we going to sell the house? Are we going to keep it? One time, one wanted to, two didn't, and so on. Three doesn't make a real easy decision (laughs). It was decided it would stay in the estate, and they would rent it out and lease it or whatever.

We know, thanks to research done in our agency, and are very [excited] because this came along to us after the house had been restored, and we were open a couple of years. [We] found an article that told us that, from 1925 until right before Vachel moves back here, this home was the headquarters of the Business and Professional Women's organization. They gave secretarial classes downstairs and rented rooms to female students upstairs.

Now, if you're teaching business courses here, you want to have this room, I'm sure, closed off, so you could use it as a classroom. The front hallway would have been busy. These pocket doors, no doubt, had failed by then. Here you have this beautiful thin veneer; you have hardware that's definitely from the late twenties, not matching the hardware, either of the early house or the Eastlake house. Up here, where the taller pocket doors would have been, instead of a glass thing, they just filled it in. You have then these doors that obviously came from that time period. The house speaks to different things happening over the years, but always until 1955, when it went out of the family for the first time, it was always in the family, considered the Lindsay Home, even though it was leased.

DePue: You mentioned the piano, which is right behind you. Is there a story connected with that?

Battles: A bit of a story in that this is not the Lindsay piano. We know what happened to the upright piano. When Vachel Lindsay moves here with his wife, his bride, and their two children, because both of the children were born in Spokane, where they were living and where they were married... They came back here in 1929. Vachel gave his sister, Joy, the upright piano. She had it shipped to her house in Ohio on a railroad car. Vachel buys a grand piano for Elizabeth, his wife, for this parlor. We didn't inherit that piano. We think we had a piano that been donated some time while the house was in the hands of the estate.

When the house was being restored, a lady came to us and said, "I'm breaking up my mother's estate." It ended up being the Logan, the Stephen T. Logan inheritance, family estate. She said, "I have a piano, an upright piano, and I know the Lindsay House had an upright piano." And she said, "I would like to donate it." So, even before the house was restored and open to the public in 2001, we had a piano for the house. We knew we were going to have it.

DePue: I'm trying to envision having a grand piano in this room, and it just doesn't fit right.

Battles: I know. Yeah, it doesn't, no. What happened to that... I'm sure, with all the records that were kept by the Lindsay's and even Elizabeth, his wife, I have a feeling if we looked far enough we could probably find out what happened.

I'm wondering if she, maybe, sold it because she was left with not much money (laughs). I don't know that. That's not what we even actually ever talked about. But the piano that we inherited was a baby grand piano, as I understand it, and it had been donated by someone. It's still within our agency, but it's in storage.

DePue: There is one more thing I want to have you talk about in this room. There might be a couple more things, but it's right behind your right shoulder, the picture. I think that's one of the better known paintings of Vachel Lindsay.

Battles: Yes. This is quite a wonderful thing. This was done to commemorate the completion of the Panama Canal. The poem is actually lettered, here in the margins. This is "The Wedding of the Rose and the Lotus," the two great oceans, the two great cultures of the east and the west, the Rose of Sharon, the Christian rose, and the lotus of the Orient, the Atlantic and the Pacific.[46]

Then the poem is here. The poem is what got the attention, not the piece of artwork. But the poem was printed as part of the art. It's probably his best-known painting, if you will, or drawing, in that the poem, to get it in those early days you had to get the drawing too. Actually, the poem was read in Congress, and each member of Congress got a print of this.

DePue: That is not the original size of the painting, I assume.

Battles: I don't know that I ever... It's in the collection, down at the museum. I think it's much larger. I think it's more like this, huge.

DePue: That's what I would assume.

Battles: As I understand it, when they did a display in the gallery, of his work, about five, six, seven years ago, one of the framers downtown volunteered to frame it and leave it. In other words, [he] donated the frame, because it had begun to buckle. That could be checked. Anyway, yeah, it's much larger.

This also then was used by the secretary of the interior in the [President Woodrow] Wilson administration. The Panama Pacific Exhibition that celebrated the canal's completion was held in San Francisco. The secretary, a man by the name of [John Barton] Payne, I think... Actually Vachel said, "thousands of these were made because..." and I've seen one.

They took it, and they made the lotus and the rose fold over each other. Then you opened it up. It was used as a handout at the Panama Pacific Exhibition. It folds out, and then you open it up, and it has the order of things

[46] This piece of occasional poetry was inspired by the opening of the Panama Canal, which for Lindsay promised the union of the best of Western and Eastern cultures and philosophies. Lindsay saw the Western rose as symbolizing an active, dynamic spirit, while the Eastern lotus symbolized a passive but contemplative spirit. (https://library.uis.edu/archives/collections/localhistory/lindsay/lotus.html)

that were happening there. People were getting this as a handout in a certain form. Yeah, this is a very significant poem, especially because... Again, you see, from what we've talked about with the Booth poem, with the kinds of things even that Sandburg was doing, his Chicago poems, these early writers of this new era were writing about everyday lives of people, but they were doing it often in poetry, which...

Whoever heard of, for instance, Sandburg and his "Chicago Poems," "Hog butcher [for] the world," "stacker of wheat..." talks about the rails.[47] This was avant-garde poetry for its time. It wasn't "I wandered lonely as a cloud," not that that isn't good poetry, but you know what I'm saying. It appealed to the people because it was about their daily lives. It was a new kind of writing.

DePue: Is there anything else in the room, before we head upstairs?

Battles: Don't think so. Here's a wonderful postcard album. We used to think, in the beginning of when we first got it, it's very fragile, so we don't ever open it much. It's filled with scenes of China, but they're postcards. We assumed, before we found this letter in the back, that this was... Olive and Paul would have sent postcards to Mom and Papa. No, this would be like our digital version of our trip to China, our tour of China, but this is their trip, through the postcards that they brought back, of those seven months that they were in China. This is a wonderful artifact.

The house really is surrounded by things that were actually used by the Lindsay family, which is, next to the Dana House—which we have as a sister site, where Frank Lloyd Wright made virtually every stick of furniture and everything else there—this is really the most complete historic site in Springfield, having to do with the family because of all the things that we have that are from the family.

The other two little oil paintings are also Mrs. Lindsay's. Both of them were given to a prominent family in town who were friends of the Lindsays. The word is that Mrs. Lindsay gave these two to them to thank them for the Lindsays having stayed with them a week, at one point, while their furnace was being worked on and their house was cold. They stayed with the Diller family. The Diller Drug Store, in Mr. Lincoln's day, was right down there on the square. These were descendants of the Diller family. These [the two oil paintings] are wonderful to have back here in the parlor.

DePue: Let's head upstairs.

Battles: Okay.

[47] Words taken from "Chicago," a poem by Carl Sandburg about the U.S. city of Chicago. "Chicago" first appeared in *Poetry Magazine*, March 1914, the first of nine poems collectively titled "Chicago Poems." (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chicago_(poem))

DePue: We're obviously upstairs, and I've got the camera looking down the stairway. We'll take a look at the woodwork here in the railing, which is just as gorgeous. But once we get upstairs, the nature of the building changes, doesn't it, Jennie?

Battles: Right. Yes, because in the Lindsay's day you didn't entertain in your bedrooms. Children didn't even play in their bedrooms. They either played in the parlors or downstairs, under the parents' eye, or played in the yard and so on. Upstairs its pine floors, painted pine floors. It's stained pine; it's not the light golden oak. The staircase is light golden oak.

While we're talking about the staircase, the stairs here... Those people who have toured the Lincoln home, would know the stairs at the Lincoln home are very narrow; they turn at a landing about, maybe, I don't know, halfway up; they turn at a landing to get on upstairs. That's what the original stairs that were Clark and Ann Todd Smith's stairs... They did the same thing, even though this house was a bit grander than the Lincoln home.

At any rate, when the Lindsays did the addition in 1893, the stairs were changed, so that now you have the stairs coming straight up because, from the archway back... You'll see the archway when we move around to other places in the house, but from this top landing here, you have now the new house behind us. [In] the original house, you would have come... About where the railing is, you would have come up here and then come to these.

There were no upstairs rooms, other than these two big bedrooms and this little bitty, which was a nursery. The master bedroom, if you would call it that—in their day I don't know that they did—but the parents' bedroom, Clark and Ann Todd Smith's room, was this huge big room here. There's a door that opens into this small room, and that was the nursery for Clark and Ann Todd Smith.

Mother Lindsay we don't think used it as a nursery. We know, in most of the years, she used it as her den; she called it her den. Vachel remembers that, unless mother let us in there, we were told not to go in. She kept a key. This is where she prepared her Sunday School lessons. She taught Sunday School at the First Christian Church for some thirty-two, thirty-five years; she was head of the Missionary Society and so on. She was always in here preparing her talks and speeches. She was founder of a missionary group that had chapters all over the world. This was her own private little study. But for the Todd family, this was a nursery, and the parents' bedroom opened into that. Of course, there's a door here from the hallway.

DePue: Let's talk about the two paintings we've got here.

Battles: The two paintings. Again, we've talked about Mrs. Lindsay—I call her Mother Lindsay or Kate—Kate Lindsay's art. These are both original

paintings of hers. This is a snow scene. I think, Mark, I shared with you last time we were walking through the house, before Christmas, chatting about today's taping, I told you that we found out from looking again at some of her journals that she talks at one point about... She said, "Finished the snow scene, hung it above the piano in the parlor." Perhaps, had we known that, we probably would have hung it there, instead of the one that we pointed out to you when we were down there, but this is one of them.

The fun thing about it—it's something I learned when we had our grand reopening weekend—I don't know if you can tell; there's a little tear in it right here. I was up here on a Sunday—we had a three-day grand re-opening, so I remember I was up here chatting with folks—and here came some of the Lindsay relatives. One of them said, "Do you know the story about how the tear got?" I said, "No." I said, "I was pretty sure we didn't do it." I knew we hadn't done it in moving in. But I said, "It's been there as long as I remember the painting." They said, "The story in the family is one of the grandchildren shot it with a toy bow and arrow." (laughs) I said, "That's as good an explanation as I could imagine." Thank goodness we have this story. There is a tear right there. It really is quite a wonderful thing, and it certainly could do with some cleaning, I'm sure.

This one is really amazing. One of our volunteers loved to point out to people, when the back shade was up in the afternoon, sometimes the sun would come just right, and she would always point out to folks how it seemed like this fiord—I guess it's in Sweden some place—just kind of had the blue sky just almost be vibrant. Again, they're dark; they need to be cleaned, but they're in the original frames and everything. These are Mrs. Lindsay, Vachel's mother's things.

DePue: I was going to comment that all three of these main paintings that we've seen are dark. I wondered if that is part of the...

Battles: I don't know.

DePue: ...style of the period as well.

Battles: The Hudson River school, it was kind of misty always anyway. I think this is as much the fact that they're old; they're from the late 1800s anyway.

DePue: They're beautiful paintings, and I'm impressed by her artwork as much as I am with Vachel's.

Battles: She did have. People have asked us, "Did she ever sell any of them?" or "Did she have an exhibition?" I have no idea. Again, there's so much that could be learned, and maybe someday. I'm planning to continue reading in the Lindsay archives, even as a hobby.

DePue: Let's head into what you're calling the master bedroom.

Battles: Right. Into the dreaded pink room.

DePue: The pink room. The pink bedroom.

Battles: This is Joy Lindsay's bedroom, the youngest of the Lindsay daughters. Joy was born after the tragedy of the three little daughters dying. Joy was the final Lindsay daughter. Between Joy and her brother Vachel there were those years when the sisters had been born, so Joy was ten years younger. That's a big, big gap between there. This perhaps is a typical girl's room because this is a color that, when the house was being restored, the experts who came to look through layers of paint determined.

We've restored the home to 1915-20. That is because Vachel Lindsay was at the height of his fame; 1920 is when he tours England and is the toast of London and Oxford and so on. His mother went with him. His father was gone by then. This is a wonderful drawing that came from Joy Lindsay Blair's daughter, Catherine, the one I've spoken to you about already. This is Joy, her mother, the poet's sister, and this is a first cousin of Joy's, a niece of the poet's mother, Helen Havens.

She came home and shared this room with Joy Lindsay through high school and college because her parents had both died. The father died first, as I understand it, and then Mother Lindsay went to the mother's funeral in Indiana and came back with the daughter and said, "You come and stay with us." Her brother, Helen's brother, went with one of Mrs. Lindsay's brothers. These two girls are here together, and they were great friends and great pals.

The photograph we have of this room shows a Jenny Lind, a spindle bed, right here in front of this fireplace. Obviously, it was taken in the spring or summer when they weren't needing to use the fireplace. You notice the fireplace is closed up here. This is how we found the house upstairs. Both fireplaces had been closed up, but there was a hole about here, cut, which obviously would have been for a stovepipe.

DePue: Both upstairs and downstairs, below this?

Battles: No, just these upstairs rooms.

DePue: The two upstairs rooms.

Battles: We were thinking, Then we probably need to look for two little stoves. It even had the wallpaper on it; it had the hole, had a little border paper that had gone around it, as [a] decorative thing. Again, this is where the family, these two daughters, came in. "No, no, no," they said, "there were never stoves up here when we were here, because it was always cold up here" because it was a gravity furnace, and it took so long for the heat to rise to get up in these upper floors. That's why Mother Lindsay complained, in that last letter she wrote, "The house is cold today because the hired woman didn't get up this morning

and get the furnaces going." So, it's cold upstairs. Martha said, "No, no, we didn't." We didn't get them [the two little stoves] then, because we know that those stoves probably came when the house was being rented. If you're renting this room, and you're paying to have this room, you want a room that's warm. We think that was later, so we didn't end up doing that.

DePue: How about this built-in closet; is that original?

Battles: Wardrobe, they called them wardrobes. This is from 1893 because all of the new rooms—I'll point them out when we get to the new part of the new addition in 1893—Now you don't have to pay more in taxes, so each of those rooms had built-in closets. But this is from the old house, and only the built-in closet was downstairs, but none were up here.

The Lindsay's wanted these children, these rooms, to have closets as well, so they had these... This is from a display that we had. Here's what you have. You have shelves on this side and then some shelves here. The shelves can be adjusted up and down. Women had two-piece clothing in many of those years that the Lindsays were living here. So, a woman's skirt and her top would be taken off separately. She'd fold her top, and then the skirt could hang. She could clean the skirt if she needed to or clean the top, but the shelves were important.

These were called wardrobes. These were built in the spaces that were on each side, again an architectural feature of what was called, in the early days, the Greek Revival or the Midwestern I block house, which [is characterized by] mirror image rooms, facing a center hallway. So, if they're mirror image rooms, there's a window here on this side of the house; there's a window there on the other side of the house, but there's no windows here and here. Here's the space for the wardrobe, and in the other room we'll see the wardrobe was built in that other space.

DePue: The other thing that is very obvious in this room is the different flooring that we've got.

Battles: Painted floors, painted pine floors. Again, the colors were the colors that we determined [had been used], not the most attractive colors. The rugs in these rooms, beautiful patterns on them, much larger. The border around the rooms would have probably been no more than two feet. Honestly, we couldn't afford to have custom-made. We had custom-made carpeting downstairs, thinking it was important because the Lindsay's did have wall to wall carpeting. That was done meticulously. Up here, we bought rugs commercially, just off the rack, so to speak. They're not really big enough, but they are in the style of oriental. Here's something, Mark. Can you see this? I don't know if you want to look at that, but the bed here and the chest over there, that's called the ancestral bed, the ancestral bed. (both laugh)

DePue: That's rather descriptive.

Battles: Exactly, that's how it was said. I would often get a phone call, "How is the ancestral bed?" (both laugh) The ancestral bed, as far as I'm concerned, did very well over the years. This bed was an old rope bed in the way beginning. This was made by an ancestor of Mother Lindsay's, and it was given to the first-born daughter of each new generation, when she became sixteen. Mother Lindsay didn't get married until she was in her early thirties.

DePue: But when you get it at the age of sixteen, there's some expectation that goes along with that; isn't there?

Battles: Right, that you're married, and you're going to have a family, and you're married early. So, Kate Lindsay, again, [this is] another way we know she was not a typical woman of her time period.

The bed and the chest both were things that were very important that we have. The photographs we have of this bed show it with a tester, a canopy, flat across. These pedestal things come off. We never did have that because we didn't have a canopy to put on it. Yeah, this is a great old bed. It's quite a heavy thing, weighs a ton.

DePue: Let's go from the ancestral bed to the nursery. That seems to be a logical transition.

Battles: Let's do that. You can just peek in there, not a lot to see. Here we are in what would have been the nursery for Clark and Ann Todd Smith and for the Lindsays. Mrs. Lindsay, the poet's mother, had this as what she called her den. Vachel and the daughters remembered that Mother kept the key, and we weren't to come in here unless she gave us permission. You see her little desk here, another of her paintings on the desk, and there's her Bible open. These are mostly all books of hers. [I] don't know too much else about them, except they're books in the collection. This certainly would have been a nice room for her.

It was also a sewing room. Mrs. Lindsay did some sewing herself, but they had a lady who would come and stay in the guest room and do the sewing for the family, two or three days or however long she needed to be here to do the basic sewing that needed to be done for the family. We show some of the Lindsay collection of clothing here, as if a seamstress were here.

DePue: I would think during the day that Mrs. Lindsay was working here, living here, that store-bought clothes would have been appropriate as well. Is this a hobby of hers?

Battles: No, no, no. But they often...all the travels, she would often buy fabric and things to make drapes with, to do... In the early days... We're talking about 1870s, so yeah, there were bonnets and things and shawls, but she's still was

having things made and women still were having.... Men could buy things a lot earlier in the stores than women could.

I think women having dressmakers was not that unusual, at least through the 1800s. Mrs. Lindsay, we know, had a sewing lady that came and did sewing for them. She talks in her journal books about Olive bringing her silk from China and ordering things. Then Joy sent money with Mother and Father when they went to... Joy wanted Mama to bring her things that she could keep and then give to friends, after she married, as gifts and Christmas gifts and things. I just think it was just part of their lives. I'm not saying they didn't buy things in the department stores.

DePue: I think the next room on our journey is Olive's bedroom.

Battles: Right. Across the hall, directly across, again one of the original rooms.

DePue: Let's start in this room with the very striking picture you've got over your shoulder. (Battles laughs)

Battles: I knew you were going to do that, Mark. I think I told you before, we'd always been told that this was Kate Lindsay's, one of her pieces of art. People would say, "My, it's rather...that naked man there." I'd say, "It's very classic. It's somebody cleaning the stables or whatever from mythology." I surmised that it must be because it's a classical figure, and it certainly would give you a good challenge in doing the human body.

Well, I just recently read that it did belong to Katherine Frazee. She brought it into the marriage with her apparently. But it wasn't something that she did herself. I think we chatted about the fact that history is not just dead and gone and nothing new ever happens. We find out new things as we go. I guess I would want folks to know, as I'm showing you through the house today, I have wonderful stories from the family, but I don't pretend to be a scholar of Vachel Lindsay, his work.

I'm sure there are many things that folks might discover, and I might even discover myself in the future, doing more research. But these are the things as I know them. They're stories; many of them are family memories. I just wanted to say that disclaimer, maybe. Is that a disclaimer?

DePue: That's a good disclaimer, but I want to say that you've mentioned your age a couple of time; you are now very recently retired (Battles laughs). Someone, we hope, will be coming on after you to do the same kind of thing. But why we do this is to preserve these wonderful stores that you have because you had the first-person experiences, working with the relatives. Also, just like you said, the story keeps evolving and changing as we learn more.

Battles: It does, it does. These nieces, primarily, who were children of Olive, the oldest daughter, they have long lives. How many people have grandparents

and mothers and fathers who live to be 100? We're talking about people who are from a previous generation. So, we were really blessed to have that contact and have them share, which, at times, is uncomfortable history, with us.

DePue: Let's get you to move a little bit over here into the corner. We've got some more artwork and some furnishings as well.

Battles: We have four of the five drawings that Vachel made that inspired him to write this poem. The poem is called "The Five Dragons." But lo and behold, we only have four. The poem is here.

I had one volunteer who especially loved to read this poem for guests, as she was taking them through the house here. She would actually play a game with them and ask them, "Which dragon is missing here?" (laughs) It was funny because it seemed to be, depending on the group, not everybody ever agreed which one was missing. It's a wonderful kind of series of things.

The gist of the poem is that "I dreamed last night I was a laundryman." Vachel Lindsay knew about Chinese laundries. We even have some of his own shirts in the archive here that have his laundry mark in red Chinese characters in the back of the collar of the shirt, that he would pick his shirts up from the Chinese laundryman. If you are a Chinese laundryman in Chinatown, and you were doing people's laundry day and night, you probably would have a moment or two in your life when you would sort of go off into another world. He's talking about all these amazing figures that come out of the steam of the laundry. This is quite a wonderful example.

No one has discovered where the fifth dragon drawing is. It's somewhere out there. We got these; these are just copies. Vachel Lindsay, the niece, Joy's daughter, Catherine Blair, went to the University of Virginia. [That] is, I think, where the originals are. She had these copies. They're just put on foam core. The fifth one isn't there. Again, who knows, it may be in somebody's attic. We may discover it yet, apropos of what we were talking about.

DePue: Does this house have an attic?

Battles: No, a very shallow attic. Yeah, it has an attic, but very shallow. You can stand up, but only in the center.

DePue: Was it used during the day for storage?

Battles: I don't think so.

DePue: The basement was for storage.

Battles: There's a trunk room, a trunk room at the back, for their steamer trunks. You see this? This is a traveling trunk of Vachel Lindsay's. This is typical; we

have another one across the way. I can point it out when we came back from the family. Actually, it belonged to Olive and Paul, and it would go back and forth to China all the time. This was people's luggage, that along with some carpet bags that they would carry like the carry-on that we do on the planes today.

The trunk room is where much of the storage was. Then, of course, when they have the cellar or the three-room basement, a lot of those things were stored there, certainly garden tools and things like that.

DePue: Why is the Carl Sandburg portrait so prominently displayed on top of that?

Battles: I didn't choose to put it here. This is part of the archive that was brought to donate to the house from the grandnephews of the Lindsay family. I don't know why they put it here. Carl Sandburg was one of the three prairie poets. This belonged to Olive. It was given to Olive, and then it was given to the daughter and then to the sons of the daughter. They brought it back and gave it to us. It's a wonderful letter that he wrote and signed and then included this portrait.

DePue: How would you describe the relationship between the two men?

Battles: Masters, Sandburg and Lindsay all were friends. They were acquaintances; they knew each other. Vachel was kind of a friend to everyone. Vachel was... All of his colleagues said he was generous to a fault; he was wanting to share with them; he wanted them to have adulation.

When he marries, and he writes to his agent at the time, who the head of the English department at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, who had been booking agent for his tours, he says to his agent, "I hope I have made it possible for Sandburg,"—he mentions some of the other writers of the day—"to follow." In other words, to have this kind of public performing, a way for them to get their work out.

He would always ask other poets, they said, to look at his work and comment on it and "Do you think I should change a line here or there?" Many poets would never, ever think of letting anyone else change a line of their poetry. He had that nature of reaching out to people. I just can't comment on it other than that.

DePue: No jealousy or competition between the three?

Battles: Not on Vachel's part. Now, I wonder... It was interesting... Again, I don't want to put words in a scholar's mouth, certainly. But the gentleman who did the most recent biography of [Edgar Lee] Masters...

Masters wrote the first biography of Vachel Lindsay, at the widow's request, after his death, 1935. That biography told the truth of Vachel

Lindsay's death, which was suicide. It wasn't known; everyone... It was whispered about, but as far as a big announcement of the fact that he had died, not by heart failure...although don't we all die because our heart stops; we all technically die of heart failure. But Masters' book was like a big explosion, and certainly, from the family's perspective, it was hurtful.

DePue: One of the things we really haven't talked about is the circumstances of his death. I wonder if you could tell us that.

Battles: Vachel Lindsay committed suicide by drinking a bottle of Lysol®, household poison. [The] first thing people say to me is. "Why?" Why does anyone commit suicide? Even if notes are left behind, I don't think they tell the truth. Who knows why? Vachel Lindsay, perhaps he was bipolar. He was feeling... I guess, times were passing him by. I try never to explain it. It isn't a major part of our interpretive program here.

Some people come here, knowing that he committed suicide. Some people are shocked when they hear that he died that way. If you don't tell that—and often we don't bring it up first—people will say—because he died, and he left a wife who was twenty-five years younger than he; he left two small children under the age of seven—they say, "How did he die?"

What do you say? You have to say, "He took his own life." Then the next question is "Why?" And I say, "I don't try to explain suicide. But whatever the reason was, he had been having episodes of high highs and low lows"—sounds almost typically, so I'm told, a bipolar kind of thing—"and the episodes had been coming closer together." This is after they moved back here to the house.

His doctor had told his wife that he was afraid that eventually these episodes might lead to some physical harm for she or the children. At any rate, she describes the last evening in the biography, *The West Going Heart* by Eleanor Ruggles. So, I usually refer people who want to know more details to her account. This is the poet's widow's account of this.

The children were sleeping; the housekeeper was gone for the weekend, so they were alone in the house. We have Mrs. Lindsay's memories of what happened that night. She said, "We had a fairly quiet evening. We came upstairs to go to bed" came here. She thought he had fallen asleep. She was asleep. The next thing she knows, as I recall her saying, "I woke up to the sounds of the struggle up the stairs and Vachel calling out," I think she said, "My first thought was, Oh my goodness, is he going to hurt us?" And she said, "I went to the stairs. I discovered that he had gotten out of bed. He'd gone downstairs." As he comes up the steps, as she's looking down at him, he says something like, "Let them explain this if they will. I got me before they could get me." or something like that.

Come to find out, apparently, her father who was living in town here at the time... Her father was a pastor; her mother was gone. He had moved back to Springfield, Reverend Connor. Apparently, Reverend Connor had had a talk with Vachel and said, "Look, you need to get help, or I'm going to have to [have] you put away." This is after the fact though, but this is scholarship that has been speculated about. Whether he was afraid of that... Who knows?

DePue: And this is in an age when mental health institutes, hospitals, were notoriously bad.

Battles: Right, right. No one knew. People even thought psychiatry wasn't even a science, that it wasn't a legitimate thing. This is a very early time, very, very early.

DePue: Was there any suggestion of marital problems at all?

Battles: Not in that sense, I don't think. Vachel was kind of exhibiting some paranoia about certain things. I don't know. But at any rate, she helps him up the stairs, and he tells her what he's done. He's drunk Lysol. She gets him into bed, here, and according to her, he never said anything after that. He struggled through the day and into the afternoon before he passed away. Of course, they called the doctor and everything.

Elizabeth was left with two small children, in a house that didn't belong to her. They were paying the estate because it was still his sisters' home, too. The three heirs had inherited this house. So, when they moved back here from Spokane, as a family, Vachel could either buy the house, or he could pay rent, just like anybody else. He said, "Why should I pay for my own house?" He said to his sisters, "You both have houses. Why should I have to pay?" The deal they worked out was they [Vachel and Elizabeth] would pay—I think it was $500 a year—and would keep the taxes paid on the house to live here. So, Elizabeth was in this house and [owned] an estate not valued at much.

There's a beautiful letter, and I want to share it with you, Mark. Maybe [we'll] make it part of the archive. We have a copy of it. It came from Yale; it came from the Robert Fitzgerald archive.[48] Mrs. Lindsay wrote a beautiful letter to Robert Fitzgerald. He was an editor and one of most well-known translators of the *Iliad and the Odyssey*. At any rate, he lived right down the street and was a good friend, as a young man, of Vachel and Elizabeth.

At any rate, she said, "The irony is that..." Now that Vachel's gone, people were sending money to make a fund for her to have. And she said,

[48] Robert Stuart Fitzgerald was an American poet, critic and translator whose renderings of the Greek classics "became standard works for a generation of scholars and students." He was best known as a translator of ancient Greek and Latin. He also composed several books of his own poetry. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Fitzgerald)

"The irony is that I'm probably less worrying about money now than at any time of my life, and he's gone." So the irony. Yet, this is a man who could have made all kinds of money and did, but never kept it; he'd give it away. Who knows what he did with it all? Nobody really knows for sure.

DePue: At the time of his death then, he was doing well financially?

Battles: No, I don't think at that point because he wasn't writing; he wasn't going on the road as much anymore. But when he did these national performing tours, which he could always do that... In fact, he was in the midst of one.

Again, he would go out... Because by this time he was despising doing this performing, he didn't want to do that anymore. He, like any artist, he wanted to move on and do new things. But the public, you see, the public...

I think I've shared with you, when I buy a ticket to a James Taylor concert—by gosh, when I pay $100—I want him to do some of things that I first loved him for.[49] I don't mind if he does new things. But with Vachel, they only ever wanted him to do the old things. He said, "I have paid too dear a price for having written a few rhymed orations; every place they go, they only want my ABCs, my early stuff. They won't listen to my adult sentences." A lot of things conspire; life happens.

DePue: This is probably a good time and a poignant time to take a look at this photo behind you.

Battles: Yes, yes, because isn't it beautiful? Here he is. Look at the smile on his face. Look at him with his son, Nick, and look at his beautiful wife, Elizabeth, and Susan, their daughter. Vachel's nieces told me that this sofa that they're sitting on was in front of the south window, downstairs in the library.

Vachel and Elizabeth have just moved back to the house, and this very well-known photographer, Herbert George Studios, came and took photographs. We have some of them out in front of the house as well. But here he is with his daughter Susan, next to her mother, Elizabeth Connor Lindsay. This is Susan, and this is [their] son, who is still living, Nicholas Cave Lindsay.

It was a wonderful birth announcement that Vachel wrote his friend in Chicago, Mrs. William Vaughn Moody, a patron of the arts. He said, "Our new little caveman was born." (both laugh) Cave is a family name, so he was named [after that]. Susan is called Susan Doniphan, and the Doniphan is from the Lindsay side. The Doniphans go back to Scotland and so on. Susan married Bertrand Russel's son, a titled Englishman.

[49] James Vernon Taylor is an American singer-songwriter and guitarist, inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 2000. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/James_Taylor)

DePue: Oh my, there's another name.

Battles: He took her to England, and they had three children. They divorced over the years, but she never came back to this country. One of the nieces told me she never got over her father's death.

DePue: How old was Vachel at that time?

Battles: Okay, he was…

DePue: How old was he when he died?

Battles: I'm trying to think, because you put me on the spot when you ask questions like that. He was born in 1879, and he died in 1931. Do the math for me (laughs). He was fifty-what?

DePue: Two. In that neighborhood.

Battles: Fifty-two.

DePue: And his wife?

Battles: Twenty-three years younger, a teacher of Latin and English, I think, at Lewis and Clark High School in Spokane.

DePue: You talked about one of his earlier loves.

Battles: Sara Teasdale.

DePue: What's the story here?

Battles: They met in Spokane when Vachel went to Spokane as Poet in Residence, put up at the Davenport Hotel, the finest hotel in the great northwest.[50] I guess it's been restored to its former glory. He had private rooms there. They met at a thing. She came up to him and said, something like, "We had dinner together at one point." Of course, he looks at her, doesn't remember.

She explains that when she was a student at Mills College in California, and he was on one of his performing tours—one of his favorite venues were colleges and schools—the professor had chosen her and some of the girls to have dinner with him before the concert. They were married less than two weeks later. (DePue laughs)

DePue: Did she ever remarry?

[50] A Poet in Residence is assigned to a staff position in an institution, generally a college or university, while allowed sufficient time to pursue his/her own professional work, study, or research. (https://www.dictionary.com/browse/in-residence)

Battles: No, never remarried, never remarried. She became an educator. She got her masters at Mills College in California. [In] this letter that I've referenced to you, [that] she wrote Robert Fitzgerald, she talks about that. She said, "I think I'm maybe too old to go back to school, but I'm going to try."

She had an appointment to talk with one of the administrators who was going to come through the Midwest. She did indeed go back and got her master's degree. Then she became an educator. She died in Cambridge, Massachusetts. I think she was the head of a women's private school.

DePue: How would you describe her personality?

Battles: I don't know, except she was young and beautiful. They adored her in Spokane. She was one of the young teachers that the whole community loved. In fact, they were a bit dismayed when she marries Vachel Lindsay, who was married in his hiking clothes and a black shirt (both laugh). She was very literary. Vachel talked about her having more talent than he and how his publisher, Macmillan, was anxious to get a manuscript from her.[51]

After she passed away, Nick, their son, had some of her poems published posthumously as a tribute to his mother. It's a little paperback volume called *Angel at the Gate*. She wrote some beautiful poetry. It's very dangerous and very easy to look at the poems that are in there and read into them things that probably aren't even there. They're beautiful poems. She was certainly intellectually a match for him. There's no doubt about it, but young.

DePue: Let's go ahead and check Vachel's bedroom.

Battles: Okay, follow me.

DePue: Jennie, we're in Vachel Lindsay's bedroom, and there's a lot in this bedroom to talk about.

Battles: For a small room, that's right.

DePue: Let's talk very briefly about the typewriter here. Is that his?

Battles: No, but he had a typewriter. His publisher, Macmillian, primary publisher, insisted that he not turn in handwritten things—you can see his handwriting here—but that they be typewritten. So he did use a typewriter for his things, certainly, that he submitted to his editors. This is an Oliver typewriter, very typical of the time period. We don't know the brand that Vachel had, but this was donated to the house by one of our local antique dealers.

[51] Founded in 1843, Macmillan Publishers Ltd is an international publishing company owned by Holtzbrinck Publishing Group. It has offices in 41 countries worldwide and operates in more than thirty others. (http://macmillan.com/)

She came along and asked me if there was anything we didn't have—this was soon after the home was restored—I said we could use a typewriter. We [had] looked and looked for one that would be appropriate to the period. The next week the doorbell rang, and she came along. Martha Sumner was her name; she has White Swan Antiques.[52] She came along and brought the history of it. It's a wonderful old typewriter.

DePue: I think his handwriting is beautiful. Maybe it's not very easy to actually read.

Battles: Right, a lot of folks have trouble reading it, but it's beautiful. It's from the old Spencerian system of penmanship that we talked about downstairs.

DePue: What's the poem we are looking at here?

Battles: This is "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight" in Springfield Illinois. This is one of the poems that really people think of, even if they don't know—that they don't remember—that Vachel Lindsay wrote it. Anytime our nation is in turmoil, it's often a poem that's quoted, recalling Abraham Lincoln who, once World War I came along, [was] unable to rest because he thought he'd died to end all wars.

DePue: I notice that you've got your reading glasses in hand.

Battles: I brought them with me, yes.

DePue: And I brought a copy of "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight."

Battles: Alright, Mark, we've talked about how I'm certainly probably the last person to do a good interpretation. But it's an honor for me to read it, and I have read it before. I'm going to have to think about this because Vachel Lindsay was a pacifist. He was troubled that... He was afraid we were going to get in to World War I. We were neutral for a while.

The biography again—I've referenced it before—*The West Going Heart* by Eleanor Ruggles. There's a wonderful account of that in that book. I would encourage anyone who maybe wants to read further. It's a beautiful account of this.

The truth is, he was ready. He had written six poems that he called war poems. When we do indeed step into that war, then he sends a telegram, as I recall, to his editor and said, "Wait a minute. I need to write one more poem. I want to write another poem." This "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*"* is the poem that came out of that.

[52] Martha Sumner, retired, was principal of Blue Heron Antiques, a privately held company in Springfield, IL (https://www.manta.com/c/mr0t69n/blue-heron-antiques)

There was even the recollection by a good friend of his, whose grandfather was a judge and rode the circuit, was one of the circuit judges along with Lincoln in his time of law practice. She recalls that Vachel came to her house, sat on the front porch, and she talked to him through the screen, because he remembered that she had talked about how the memories in the family of how the judges and the attorneys looked when they rode the circuit on horseback. He is questioning her, and she recalled telling him through the screen door, and he was taking notes. You'll see some of that in this poem, which is what I always love to think about.

It is portentous, and a thing of state
That here at midnight, in our little town
A mourning figure walks, and will not rest,
Near the old court-house pacing up and down.

Or by his homestead, or in shadowed yards
He lingers where his children used to play,
Or through the market, on the well-worn stones
He stalks until the dawn-stars burn away.

A bronzed, lank man! His suit of ancient black,
A famous high top-hat and plain worn shawl
Make him the quaint great figure that men love,
The prairie-lawyer, master of us all.

He cannot sleep upon his hillside now.
He is among us:—as in times before!
And we who toss and lie awake for long
Breathe deep, and start, to see him pass the door.

His head is bowed. He thinks on men and kings.
Yea, when the sick world cries, how can he sleep?
Too many peasants fight, they know not why,

Too many homesteads in black terror weep.

The sins of all the war-lords burn his heart.
He sees the dreadnaughts scouring every main.
He carries on his shawl-wrapped shoulders now
The bitterness, the folly and the pain.

He cannot rest until a spirit-dawn
Shall come;—the shining hope of Europe free;
The league of sober folk, the Workers' Earth,
Bringing long peace to Cornwall, Alp and Sea.

It breaks his heart that kings must murder still,
That all his hours of travail here for men
Seem yet in vain. And who will bring white peace
That he may sleep upon his hill again?

DePue: I can imagine how moving it was to hear Vachel himself read that poem.

Battles: Yes, amazing. And think about that. He can't rest because of what's happening.

DePue: You can almost hear Abraham Lincoln's voice in that too.

Battles: Yes, you can. This was a poem that speaks a lot about Vachel's ideals, about the whole country, and about the fact that isn't it every war that the kings make the wars, but it's the common folk who fight them? That's to me one of the most poignant things about it.

DePue: What are some of your favorite poems?

Battles: "All I Can Bring Home is One More Song." To me, it's just Vachel. "I would love to bring you all kinds of things but, guess what, all I can do is bring you my poems." It's a short poem.

A poem that I hadn't read before, that was read in my honor at my Lindsay Person of Letters ceremony, that the Vachel Lindsay Association

honored me with the second ever Lindsay Person of Letters. One of my dear friends and one of our wonderful actresses or actors in Springfield, Aasne Vigesaa, chose it for me. She said, "It's another poem that I didn't know either, but I thought it was something." It's called "By the Spring, at Sunset." It's a beautiful poem. That's one; there are several.

There's one that Vachel wrote; it's in a collection of children's literature that was published after his death, in 1969, by Kent University Press, with the intro by a Frenchman, Pierre Dussert, and the foreword by Louis Untermeye. Dussert found these poems in the archives, and they were in a sort of a book of children's poems. Vachel talks about... He likens himself to an old apple tree, a shriveled up old apple tree. And his beautiful wife and the children are fresh beautiful blooms on this old, gnarled bough.

There are many of his poems that are lesser known poems that speak to me more than these. Vachel's poem, "The Congo," which was the thing that did him in, in modern times. [It] got him removed from the literature books. In my time, when I was teaching high school, the first to be jerked out of the high school junior lit [literature] book was "The Congo" poem, because it was considered a racist poem. It had not meant to be; you almost have to workshop that poem. Those poems are... I call them the old saws. Yet, those are the poems that many people know, because they're the ones that were part of his performance and so on. Anyway, give Vachel Lindsay's poetry a chance, please (laughs).

DePue: Getting in trouble and finding himself outside of modern literature puts him in the same league as people like Mark Twain.

Battles: Right, right.

DePue: Let's talk about this one picture that you have on the wall here, the clock.

Battles: Yeah. Isn't that interesting? That's an interesting one. He has all the great figures of history in this. It's called *The Litany of Heroes*. There's a little booklet that goes along with it. It was a drawing. The little booklet has the ones that are in larger letters, there along the clock, the figures from history. He wrote poems about them. But as I understand it, in his future plans, as the years would go by, he was going to update it and revise it and so on. It ends with "Who will be the next brave dreamer?" It's interesting to look at it but... Anyway, that's one of the interesting ones that is a picture that inspired lectures as well as a little booklet of poems.

DePue: It makes you wonder, if he was still alive today, who else might he add to that list?

Battles: Right, right, yeah, because it ends with Roosevelt. That was the time period of that time.

DePue: Franklin Roosevelt?

Battles: No, with—

DePue: Teddy?

Battles: Teddy, right. T.R., right.

DePue: Let's move over here to the secretary. That's an amazing piece of furniture.

Battles: Yeah, isn't this fun? Yes, right. We have on here some artifacts that are very dear, and they have connections to the family, especially these blocks here. These were blocks given to the Lindsay children by a pastor who was unmarried at the time. They were just little wooden blocks. The story in the family is that when this pastor married and began to have children, he asked for the blocks back. (laughs) They said, "No, we'll give you some of them, but we're not giving you all of them." That may be apocryphal, but that's the story that the nieces told me.

Martha, the younger of the two of Olive's daughters, told me that, until they returned from China—when she was thirteen years of age is when the mission closed, and they literally had to escape with their lives, almost—she said, "The first year I was home, I was looking at a Christmas toy catalog from a department store. And I saw the colored alphabet blocks." She said, "I had no idea that that's what blocks meant to most people, were the alphabet blocks." She said, "These were always the blocks that we knew of as blocks to play with."

DePue: It's interesting to me that some of the most non-descript things in this building are the ones that have some of your favorite stories attached to them.

Battles: Yeah, because you can see them playing with them and all of those things. Then the little horn is just a toy that they would have played with. While the desk here is a drawing desk... Supposedly this is the desk that Vachel sat at to draw, and you can see the India ink stains here.

When the house was turned over to the Lindsay Association in 1955, the family came and took some things that they wanted, that were special to them. One of them was this drawing desk. It wasn't but about maybe six, eight years ago, maybe not even that many, that I got a phone call from one of the great nephews who lives in Maine, Pittston, Maine, John the elder of the poet's great nephew; he's a great nephew. He said, "My mother," who then was up in her nineties, had visited them for the weekend and had happened to see this desk at his house and said, "John, you know that desk really belongs in the house in Springfield."

So, he called me on the phone, and he said, "Will you accept it, because she wants us to give it back" I said, "Sure we will." It just seems so

delicate to me, but their memory is that it was his drawing desk. This was his writing desk; this is the one he sat at to do his writing. You can see the India ink stains on it. They had even refinished it. They tried to get those out, and he apologized for that.

DePue: It's time to talk about one of my favorite pictures.

Battles: I know you love this. Can you see it? This is a wonderful photograph because I think for a lot of reasons. I know, Mark, you like it because of all the dramatic posing that's going on here (laughs). But look at something else that's interesting about it. It's men and women together. This is at Hiram College. Vachel Lindsay is on the upper left here, and his sister Olive is right across on the upper right.

Vachel and Olive went off, I told you downstairs about Vachel and Olive going off to Hiram College together. This is an eating club. This is a group of students who took their meals together. It just amazes me that they could actually eat together because certainly in those days we didn't have dorms that were mixed like we do now.

In fact, the story in the family is that Mother and Father Lindsay made it clear to the people at Hiram College that every evening Vachel should be allowed to come to Olive's room in her dorm and have their evening prayers together. So, (laughs) when Vachel showed up at the dorm, the house mother would ring a bell. The bell would sound, and she would say, "Girls, girls, Vachel's here; Vachel's here." That would be their sign (both laugh) cover your eyes, a man is coming through. They would have their evening prayers, and then he would go off back to his dorm.

DePue: An eating club, that's sounds like just the kind of club I'd love to join.

Battles: Yeah, isn't it fun? This is the dining hall at Hiram College, and they're on the steps of that dining hall there. Whether they ate at a special table, I don't know, but anyway. And this is a wonderful one too. We're going to move on.

DePue: As we move there, I want a quick comment about the transom because I love transoms.

Battles: You must love them. You've talked about transoms before. This is another thing that we talk about the life of the day and the way things were. The transoms would allow you to have your door closed and yet have air circulate, so that no stale air...because we knew by the late 1890s, with all this stuff about germ theory, now we know there are such things as germs, and stale air is not a desirable thing. So, transoms could be adjusted. This one doesn't show it, but the other one has the fixtures on this side. This is a transom that would be adjusted in that room. You saw these in public buildings, as well as private homes.

DePue: Then this great class photo from 1897.

Battles: Eighteen ninety-seven, Springfield High School. I understand that it's the last graduating class in the original Springfield High School. I think there have been three buildings. Vachel was in the last graduating class. And remember, his sister Olive was kept home a year, so Olive's here as well. I'll put my glasses right there. This is Olive, and this is Vachel right here on the corner, on the end. I just think it's a wonderful one. Again, notice how these students are all looking in different directions (laughs). Must have been the thing in those days.

DePue: Was there a young lady in this photo that Vachel was interested in?

Battles: Vachel had girlfriends from the time he was a little boy. He talks about his girlfriends. So, I'm sure there was a special one or two or three, yeah. He was always looking at the ladies and had an eye for the ladies (laughs). But as they say, he was always out of step with convention. He had a lot of friends that were girls but none of them quite brave enough, until Elizabeth came along, and she was too young to probably know what she had in store for her (laughs).

DePue: If I can get you to head back over to the typewriter here, Jennie, we'll talk about what's on the other half of the room. Who is the portrait on the wall?

Battles: This is Susan Wilcox, a great friend of the family. Vachel said, "Next to my mother and my sister,"—this is years before he met his dear Elizabeth—he said, "she's the lady I hold dearest to my heart." And she's the one I mentioned to you downstairs, who he said had seen all of his work before he submitted it. He makes some comment about how her red pen had seen his copies before he submitted them on to his editor.

When he was back home, after the walks and the tramps and the successful tours, he would walk with her, and they would talk over his career and things that he was doing and so on. She was often a guest in this house. She was a good friend of his parents as well.

She was an outstanding educator. I think John Dewey even talks about her.[53] She was of the originator of some teachers who, in my day, had come kind of to rue this idea of tracking students and putting them in groups A, B, and C, according to ability. It was her idea. She was head of both the English and science departments at Springfield High School.

DePue: For a former English teacher like yourself, I can imagine why you warm up to her story. Was her picture, though, on this wall when he was using this room?

[53] John Dewey was an American philosopher, psychologist, and educational reformer whose ideas have been influential in education and social reform. He is regarded as one of the most prominent American scholars in the first half of the twentieth century. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Dewey

Battles: No. One of the first things people would say is, "Oh, who is this?" I would often say to school groups, "How many of you have your teacher's picture on the wall," because I would tell them it was his teacher. Only once did I get a student raise a hand (both laugh). I said, "Really?" And she said, "Well, it's my mom. My mom's my teacher right now." This was here simply because she was so much a part of...especially the early years of Lindsay submitting poems to his editor and so on. And then the other one here...

DePue: The picture over the head of the bed.

Battles: Again, many of these were where they had been before the house came to us and before the restoration. They were archived as being in this room. I didn't change much of that; I didn't really see a need to do that. But I can't imagine why this one is here, instead of being downstairs. It's just a wonderful one, and it's the original, again. This is one in the frame that is one of that series of four pieces that were used by the Lindsay Association to help raise some funds to keep the house going when the Lindsay Association was responsible for it.

DePue: If you're looking at that closely, you're making out Lucifer on there. I think you need to explain to us what that's about.

Battles: It's called *The Shield of Lucifer* and there is a poem that was inspired by this. The word Lucifer often brings to mind, for folks who are biblical scholars and so on, the devil. It's another name for, we think, of the devil. But Lucifer is also... The meaning of the word is light or bringer of light or giver of light. In Vachel Lindsay's mind and idea, Lucifer was...

He (Lindsay) had two other pieces that went along with this, so this is actually one of three pieces of art that he created. One of the three pieces is actually his drawing, artistically, of his explanation of why he chose Lucifer as the subject of the poem. But the poem is not part of the artwork. When people see the three pieces together—we're going to look at the other two pieces here before we stop—the first thing that comes to mind to many people is, why is he writing about devils? So it's kind of hard to explain, to get into it, well, he's not writing about the devil.

The biblical story of the fall is that they were angels. One sat on God's right hand, and he decided he was going to be greater than God, and there was war in heaven—this is a story in the story, in the stories we tell of biblical stories—and he didn't win the fight. A lot of it is from classical literature, and Vachel Lindsay read all of those things. He was influenced by people like Blake and writers who wrote about biblical things, Dante, the "Inferno," and so on.[54] This is an interesting one. This is a shield of Lucifer, and there is a

[54] William Blake was an English poet, painter, and printmaker. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, Blake is now considered a seminal figure in the history of the poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/William_Blake)

poem that goes with it. I always tell people, if you can't quite understand the meaning of that, you need to read the poem. It may help, and it may not help. I don't know.

DePue: Anything to get them to read more of his poetry.

Battles: I suppose (laughs), sure, I suppose.

DePue: The bed here. I'm looking at the bed and trying to figure out if I'd ever be comfortable in that bed. It doesn't look long enough to begin with, and it's so narrow.

Battles: Vachel talked about his room, and he said, "I sleep on a cot." There's some mystification about whether this is the bed that he was speaking of, as he grew up. We have a letter from Joy, his sister, who also had a Vachel. Both Olive and Joy had sons named Vachel (laughs). They continue this Vachel thing. So, when you're reading, your mind goes to mush, because which Vachel is it I'm reading about, which generation? They go way back to castle days in Scotland.

Joy Blair writes to Elizabeth Lindsay, saying, "My Vachel is outgrowing his bed. May I perhaps trade his bed for my brother Vachel's bed?" Whether that trade ever happened or not I don't know. But one would hardly think that this would have been a good trade (laughs) if this is the bed, because Vachel talks about sleeping on a cot. I don't know that that switch ever happened, because this certainly is...

This is like a campaign bed. It's like the Napoleon bed that started in those days, where the men would take their small furniture and set up their...You know; you're the military expert; I'm not. But this is like a campaign bed. This is the bed that we inherited as Vachel Lindsay's bed.

DePue: Does that mean you're not sure that it is the actual bed?

Battles: It could have been Vachel Blair's bed, or it may be the one that Vachel slept in. We're assuming it's the bed that Vachel Lindsay slept in.

DePue: There's one more room to check out, and there's quite a bit more to talk about. Let's move to what I'm going to call the office.

Battles: Across the hallway, okay, alright. You're the one who is directing me, so let's come across here.

DePue: This is a very interesting thing that almost anybody can relate to. What are we looking at here, Jennie?

Battles: We're looking at the growth chart, the Lindsay family, the children, and some of the cousins that were measured here.

DePue: Is this Vachel, the poet, Lindsay or is this the...?

Battles: Yes, the parents did this.

DePue: So, this is Vachel.

Battles: They wrote on the wall, the children. Olive's on here; Joy's on here; some of their cousins are on here. This was found, as you can tell, on the plaster, written on the plaster. We saved it and put this acrylic over it, so people could see it. You see the word there in pencil, "paper"? We're assuming, when everybody grew up or they had their growth, Mother Lindsay said, "Go ahead and paper over this." Does that mean they had a bare room in here? Who knows? This is what we found under the wall paper. So, this is the growth chart for the family.

There's another version of this, back in the trunk room, written on the plaster back there. But, it's kind of fun. This fixture here was put over it. I'm assuming, when they said paper over it, then they went ahead and put the sconce there. It's kind of fun. It's directly from the family, and it shows Vachel, up at the top, and Joy's up there and... I don't know; I can't remember who all. But it's the family, and it's marked off. My grandmother did mine, on the inside of the door jamb. She always measured.

DePue: More Lucifer.

Battles: Right. As we were talking "The Shield of Lucifer," now we have the other two pieces of the triptych, the three-piece piece of art. So here is Lucifer, the person himself, in **Lindsay's** vision, resolving to wander, weary of heaven, painted by Nicholas Vachel Lindsay, 1908. Then down here, he gives and explanation of this. First of all, he gives the Bible quote from Isaiah. Let me put my glasses on.

DePue: Fourteenth chapter of Isaiah.

Battles: Isaiah. He gives the quote, and then down here he gives his explanation. I'm going to move this up. So maybe we can see that, now that we've seen Lucifer. He talks about how, in the poem, "The Last Song of Lucifer," Lucifer is not Satan, king of evil who, in the beginning, led the rebels from heaven, establishing the underworld. Lucifer, in Vachel's vision, is a musician, and he plays beautiful music, such beautiful music that even the angels come down and want to follow him around. There is more to it, and we won't go into it right now. What's missing here is the actual poem that he wrote.

DePue: Why don't you hand those to me?

Battles: Okay. And these two pieces, I believe, are at the University of Virginia. But the *Shield of Lucifer* is one that's in the collection at our Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library.

DePue: What's interesting is that, as you go through these rooms, his material is all over the place. Isn't it?

Battles: It is; isn't it? Isn't it strange? It's a Vachel Lindsay Home (laughs), strange that we would do that (laughs). I don't mean to be sarcastic.

DePue: It's like Abraham Lincoln. Everyone wants a piece of Abraham Lincoln that they can cherish. The same thing would be true for especially Vachel in his day.

Battles: Right. And Lindsay was very proud of the fact that his childhood home and his heart's home and his hearthstone was the home that had seen often Abraham Lincoln in the earlier years. So, he talked about that a lot. There's a connection there.

DePue: This is obviously a very different room from everything else we've seen. So, explain what you have done with this.

Battles: This was the guest room. This was the guest room. This is a room that is directly above the old dining room for the Smith family but the library for the Lindsays. We're in the new addition here, 1893 addition. This was the room that often was rented, either by a schoolteacher... [For] ten years, this was the home, if you will, of Miss Harriett Bolden, a teacher at Springfield High School. This is how this room was used. Even after Mother Lindsay is a widow, she is still renting this room out. This was a way she probably made some money to help pay the taxes for her house.

DePue: How did you use it, once it was re-opened to the public?

Battles: We needed a place where we could talk about things in third person. We didn't ever do first person here, but we needed a place where we could kind of put regular carpeting and use it. Since it hadn't been actually a room from one of the Lindsay family, we decided this was the place we had our exhibit room. So, this is what we call it today, the Exhibit Room.

You can see, we have a video that would play continuously throughout the day, and this wonderful panel here that was given to us by one of the senior honors English classes from Lanphier High School. They always worked with us; that school worked a lot with us. We often had students here from the honors English class.

Here we have original illustrations, actually paintings, by the folk artist who is deceased—unfortunately he passed away last year—George Colin, who illustrated a book of Lindsay's children's poem, "The Little Turtle," the famous Little Turtle poem. Here are all the little turtles that Vachel talks about. It's a delightful little book. I don't see it here on the table, but the Lindsay Association has it for sale.

DePue: So, it's a special room from your perspective, just because of the memories that you would have, the things that have happened here, I would think.

Battles: Right, right, right. And lots of stories about the renters here and the people who came and went. Mother Lindsay mentions once that Miss Bolden brought for... They invited her to have... She and Vachel, after Papa dies, she invited Miss Bolden to have Thanksgiving dinner with them. She said Miss Bolden brought a bouquet of chrysanthemums for the table. And Vachel bought the turkey and so on. Yeah, the people that came in and out of this and then relatives. In the early years, they'd have relatives come and stay with them.

DePue: Could you tell us a little bit about these pictures? It's a wonderful collection of pictures. I recognize Vachel in most of them.

Battles: Yeah, aren't these fun? These are wonderful. This is one of two panels that were done by our exhibit people, Steve Leonard and his folks, down in our central office, to talk about Vachel and his art and his vision and so on.

Here is Mother and Father. This is a wonderful photograph of them, Dr. Vachel Thomas Lindsay and his wife. This is Vachel as a little boy. These curls were there until Mother Lindsay took him down to Kentucky to Doctor's father. As an old man, the grandfather with a cane, when he saw Vachel with these curls, he said to Kate, "Get those curls off that boy." (DePue laughs) She took him in and cut his curls off, and he never wore curls again. This is the where it was before. Then here he is at Springfield High School. This is one of my favorites. I think it's just wonderful.

DePue: He looks like such a dapper young man in that photo.

A portrait of Vachel Lindsay, date unknown.

Battles: Yes, yes. He was quite a handsome guy. And this is with his nephew, Vachel Blair. This is he and his sister Olive, who were almost like twins. They just were. As I've already said, they went off to Hiram College together. And then this is one of my very favorites. This is during the troubadour years. This is when he was tramping. This is when he was going from place to place. You see, he doesn't look like a typical hobo. He always had a nice fedora on, and he tried to keep his clothes nice. He tried to keep his shoes fairly nice, although they often had seen a lot of wear. But he always dressed as nicely as he could. You see, he's got a tie on right there.

He would sit... As he said, "As I sit by the roadside and watch the sky, the United States goes by."[55] There's a wonderful poem where he talks about all the people that he would see and then the sunsets that would make your heart sing and the beautiful things. These are during his walks. He loved America; he loved what this country could be, the potential that he thought it had. And he was not alone in that.

This was an era of reaching out, looking out, reaching out. The Panama Canal made it possible for a lot of... Many of them were advocates of the League of Nations and so on.[56] They were about every "ist" there was. They were socialists; they were communists; they were all kinds of "ists" but didn't stay and be that very often. Vachel Lindsay even belonged to the masonic order, until he resigned and wrote a scathing letter about why he was resigning. It was an interesting time. I suppose any time period in American history, if you look at it the way we do when we're looking at historic figures, are exciting times. But it seems to me this time in the new century, the twentieth century, had all sorts of...

DePue: That's kind of where I wanted to finish. There's so much that draws our attention that distracts us today.

Battles: Right. It's true, so true.

DePue: Why is learning about this home and this man, Vachel Lindsay, worth us spending some time?

Battles: Those are the kinds of questions I hate, Mark, because who am I to say? I have people say to me, "You can't put these men, these writers of Vachel's time, you can't teach them today; they're too old-fashioned." What is more contemporary than our world at war? What have we known in the last few years? We've known a world that... We see war; we see kings who murder still, and we're seeing it all the time.

These men, the language may be a little different, but they're talking about the same kinds of issues. They're talking about the people that labor, and we're talking about the people who have a lot of wealth. That was one of the things that Vachel talks about. We talk about—what is it? —the one percenters, versus the rest of us. That's something that they're talking about in Vachel's time. Things haven't changed that much.

One of the things I say about this house and when I see... Mark today, our videographer, our film guy, has mentioned several times about this house

[55] Line from the poem, "The Santa Fe Trail," by Vachel Lindsay. (https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1021/1021-h/1021-h.htm)

[56] The League of Nations was an international organization, headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, created after the First World War to provide a forum for resolving international disputes. (https://history.state.gov/milestones/1914-1920/league)

reminds him a lot of his grandparent's home. I would hear that often. What does that do? That gives him memories of his grandparents. It helps us, I think... Houses like this help us understand that, from generation to generation, maybe we're more alike than we are different. And yes, our times are fraught with all sorts of things, but everything is in context. The challenges that Vachel and his generation had were akin to, in their own way, the kinds of challenges we have, just to the nth degree more, I think, because we do have so much of media that bombards us constantly.

Imagine in Mr. Lincoln's day, how long it took to get a letter someplace. But in Vachel's day, we're waiting for telegrams to come; we're writing everything. We're writing letters, and the letters are wonderful. We don't write letters anymore. To get a letter is a real treat. A letter is like a gift almost, to me anyway, anymore, if I get a letter.

I just think again though, why do we have historic homes? Why do we bring people in? Why do we spend money on homes? Because of that, because people live in these houses, and people are different. But at the same time, in many ways, they're the same. We respond to the same kinds of things.

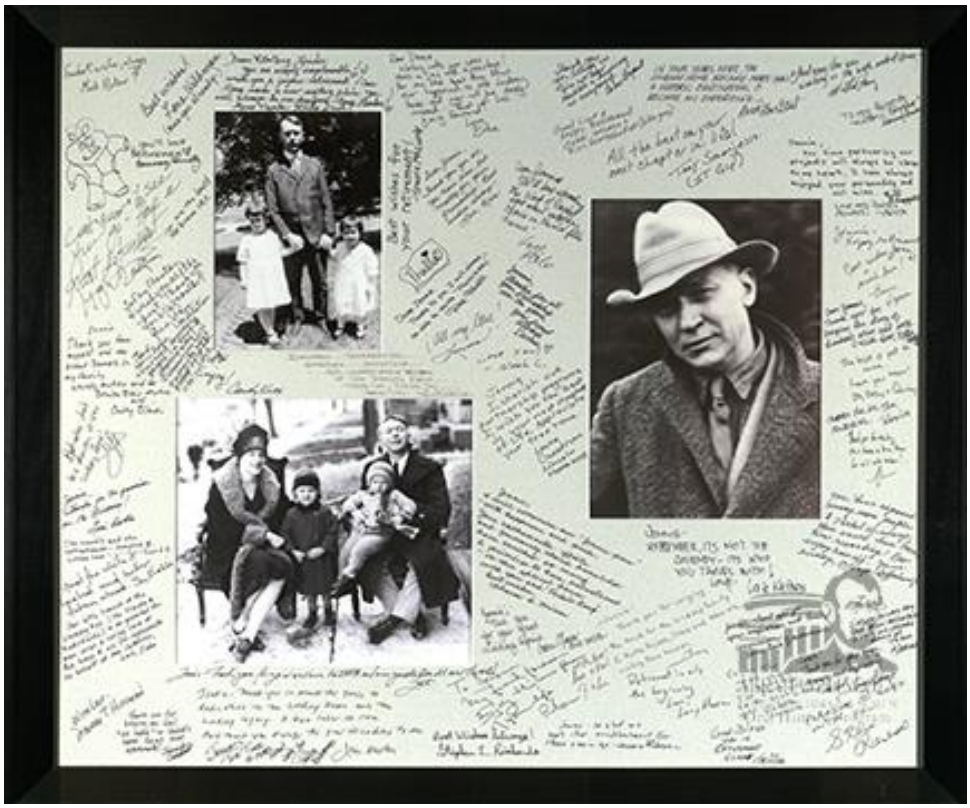
DePue: Would it be fair to say that the journey of your own life made ending your working career here an honor and a perfect fit?

Battles: Yes, oh yes. I wouldn't trade any of it with any of you for whatever, however wonderful your careers are and the things that you're doing. This is what I've done, and this has been a joy for me. It's been an honor, a privilege. I never apologize for saying, "I still walk in to the dear Old Capitol, and I get tears in my eyes" because it's such an amazing building. I've been honored to have keys to these buildings and the history. It's been an honor. I mean that. Every year on my performance review, it was a very rare year that I wouldn't say it's truly an honor for me to work for IHPA [Illinois Historic Preservation Agency], especially the sites division. I'm still very proud of that. We have our ups and our downs; we have our challenges; we always do. At times, things will get better and things will ebb and flow, but there's no one who loves their sites more than the sites people. I'm proud to be part of them. I'm content though; it was time for me to go. It's time for someone else to do something.

DePue: It's been our privilege today to share the journey through this house.

Battles: Thank you, it's been an honor for me.

DePue: I should say, the journey through this home, because you have brought it to life in so many different ways.



This framed collection of Vachel Lindsay photos was signed by many of Jennie Battle's fans on the occasion of her retirement in 2014 as site manager for the home.

Battles: Thank you.

DePue: And it will be great to preserve all this.

Battles: Yeah. It's a great old house for sure. Thank you too.

(end of transcript #2)