



# City of Chicago



R2015-69

Office of the City Clerk

## Document Tracking Sheet

<b>Meeting Date:</b>	1/21/2015
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>	Burke (14)
<b>Type:</b>	Resolution
<b>Title:</b>	Declaration of April 24 through May 2, 2015, as "Society of Midland Authors Centennial Days" in Chicago in honor and recognition of 100th anniversary of founding of Liberty Society
<b>Committee(s) Assignment:</b>	

## ***RESOLUTION***

***WHEREAS***, Many newspaper press clubs, book clubs and literary organizations have come and gone in the City of Chicago, but the Society of Midland Authors has flourished for 100 years; and

***WHEREAS***, The Chicago City Council has been informed by Alderman Edward M. Burke of the 100-year anniversary of the founding of the Society of Midland Authors on April, 24, 2015 with a day-long conference to be held on May 2, 2015; and

***WHEREAS***, Before 1915, there were no representative membership organizations bringing together Midwestern authors, poets and playwrights to share ideas, creative inspiration, bestow recognition in the form of literary awards upon deserving writers and unite as a community to promote the collective “voice” of the Heartland; and

***WHEREAS***, Hamlin Garland, a future Pulitzer Prize winner, took charge of the planning arrangements for the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters symposium held at Blackstone Hall in the Art Institute of Chicago, November 13-16, 1913; and

***WHEREAS***, Mr. Garland contacted seventeen local clubs and literary organizations urging their participation in the convention by forming a committee to elect a chairman; and

***WHEREAS***, The committee selected Chicago biographer and novelist Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor to chair the proceedings and deliver the address of welcome; and

***WHEREAS***, The American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters convention drew to Chicago the nation’s foremost composers, painters, sculptors, and writers who held the sacred idea of a unique American culture reflected in its artistic expression in the contemporary world; and

***WHEREAS***, Inspired by the good will, camaraderie, and sense of community achieved among so many nationally acclaimed artisans and authors that had gathered in Chicago, John M. Stahl, a farmer, an author and the founder of the Allied Artists Association conferred with Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor and invited a group of esteemed Illinois writers to a dinner at the Auditorium Theater; and

***WHEREAS***, The authors in attendance were invited to join a consortium of writers in a newly founded literary society based on the successful American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters conference; and

***WHEREAS***, The membership body of the Society of Midland Authors was formally chartered in Chicago on April 24, 1915; and

***WHEREAS***, The Society of Midland Authors drafted a mission statement setting forth four primary aims and objectives, including (1) the creation of a closer association among writers of the Midwest; (2) stimulation of creative literary effort; (3) maintenance of a collection of their works; and (4) encouragement of an interest in reading and literature by cooperation with other educational and cultural agencies; and

***WHEREAS***, Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor named the organization “The Society of Midland Authors” over the objection of certain members who believed the designation might be confused with the English Midlands; and

**WHEREAS**, At the second meeting, Hobart C. Chatfield-Taylor expanded the organization's reach to include authors from the surrounding Midwestern states of Indiana, Iowa, Wisconsin, Ohio, Kansas, Michigan, North Dakota, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska and South Dakota; and

**WHEREAS**, The roster of founding members included the most distinguished luminaries in Midwestern arts and letters, including Clarence Darrow, Harriet Monroe, Hamlin Garland, Edna Ferber, Vachel Lindsay, George Ade, Mary Hastings Bradley, Emerson Hough, Howard Vincent O'Brien, James Whitcomb Riley and William Allen White; and

**WHEREAS**, Others who joined soon afterward were Jane Addams, Ring Lardner, Edgar Lee Masters, John T. McCutcheon and Lorado Taft; and

**WHEREAS**, In its early years, the Society of Midland Authors sponsored more than twenty-five luncheons and dinners honoring notable writers and poets, including James Whitcomb Riley; and

**WHEREAS**, In January 1931, the Sherman House, Chicago's oldest hostelry, dedicated a Society of Midland Authors library room for the benefit of the public and filled it with the collected works of its members; and

**WHEREAS**, The Society of Midland Authors library is presently housed and maintained in a special collection at the University of Illinois at Chicago; and

**WHEREAS**, At the height of its influence in American literary life during the 1930s, the Society of Midland Authors chartered regional chapters in ten states. Men and women of prominence from across the Midwest, including Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, William Allen White in Kansas and Zona Gale of Wisconsin led regional chapters and furthered the mission of the Society; and

**WHEREAS**, In 1957, the Society of Midland Authors commenced an annual literary awards competition to recognize the best books of the year through the sponsorship of famed children's author Clara Ingram Judson and Gordon L. Monsen, whose grandfather Thermod Monsen was a pioneer Chicago printer and lithographer of the 1890s; and

**WHEREAS**, Since 1957, the Society has presented annual awards for the best books written by Midwestern authors including notable winners of the juried competition in the categories of Adult Fiction, Adult Nonfiction, Biography, Children's Fiction, Children's Nonfiction and Poetry and have included Saul Bellow, Kurt Vonnegut, Bruce Catton, Studs Terkel, Gwendolyn Brooks, Mike Royko, Jane Smiley, Dempsey Travis, Leon Forrest, William Maxwell, Louise Erdrich, Scott Turow, Alex Kotlowitz, Stuart Dybek and Roger Ebert; and

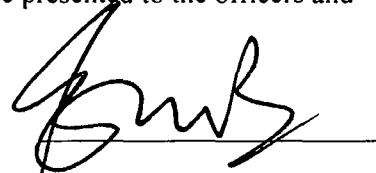
**WHEREAS**, In the mid-1960s, the Society of Midland Authors pro-actively addressed matters of mutual concern to the literary community with its official opposition to censorship and proposed changes to copyright law; and

**WHEREAS**, The Society of Midland Authors continues that important work through on-going dialog about topics ranging from e-books and self-publishing to copyright issues and author compensation; and

**WHEREAS**, The Society of Midland Authors has provided a necessary platform to Midwestern writers for 100 years, and continues to showcase their significant work through its newsletter *Literary License*, public forums, special events and monthly speaker meetings at the Cliff Dweller's Club and the Harold Washington Library; now therefore

**BE IT RESOLVED**, That we, the Mayor and the members of the Chicago City Council assembled this twenty-first day of January, 2015 do hereby declare April 24-May 2, 2015 Society of Midland Authors Centennial Days in Chicago in honor and recognition of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of this respected and venerated literary society; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That a suitable copy of this resolution be presented to the officers and Board of Directors of the Society of Midland Authors.

  
Alderman Edward M. Burke  
Alderman, 14<sup>th</sup> Ward