Robert Penn Warren

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The impact of renowned author and poet Robert Penn Warren is still felt more than 25 years after his death.

In this week’s View from the Hill, Amy Bingham shows us how WKU and Warren’s hometown of Guthrie continue preserving his legacy.

Robert Penn Warren’s childhood home in Guthrie Kentucky made headlines from coast to coast back in 1986 when Western Kentucky University considered buying the home and relocating it to the Bowling Green campus. Now, nearly three decades later, there’s plenty of Warren memorabilia to go around.

Robert Penn Warren’s birthplace is easy to spot Guthrie Kentucky but that wasn’t always the case.

(Todd county hadn’t done anything, Kentucky Hadn’t done anything)

All that changed in 1986 when the three time Pulitzer prize winner was named the first United States Poet Laureate. That’s when Western expressed interest in buying and moving the home.

 “We will give Western the credit. Their actions caused us to do what we did.”

What they did, Jeane Moore says, is form a committee of 17 people to fight to keep the home in Guthrie.

They turned it into a museum and have been educating people about Warren ever since.

 “I think it’s important for children to see historic signs and say wonder what that is.”

Western was still able to honor Kentucky’s native son for his literary achievements by housing the Center for Robert Penn Warren studies and the Robert Penn Warren Library.

The Library includes both Warren and his wife’s personal libraries as well as documents purchased from Warren’s biographer.

 “It’s exciting this proximity we have with him as far as Guthrie and Bowling Green but also the proximity of these things that were his that he created being here at Western.”

Jeffrey says Warren is a writer who will continue to be interpreted.

 “His books are still read in college classrooms. Particularly All the Kings Men which is his most well known work and he won a Pulitzer prize for, and his poetry is outstanding.”

In Guthrie, a Poet’s Park has been established across the street from the homeplace.

Another way to honor arguably the best literary personality Kentucky has ever produced.

 “A writer can’t escape his past and if they really look at his production over the years they’re gonna find someone who is consistently going back to Kentucky.”

Jeffrey and Dr. Robert Hale were recently named co-directors of WKU’s Robert Penn Warren Center.

This April will mark the 25th year that the Robert Penn Warren Literary Circle has visited his birthplace in Guthrie.

With this week’s View from the Hill, I’m Amy Bingham.

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