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An Editorial Note- Winter 1981

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The Center for Great Plains Studies has several purposes in publishing the *Great Plains Quarterly*. Its general purpose is to use this means to promote appreciation of the history and culture of the people of the Great Plains and to explore their contemporary social, economic, and political problems. The Center seeks further to stimulate research in the Great Plains region by providing a publishing outlet for scholars interested in the past, present, and future of the region. As an interdisciplinary agency, the Center aims to improve communication between scholars in the several fields interested in regional studies.

Regionalism has attracted increasing scholarly attention in recent years. By their nature spatial in orientation, regional studies are founded in the notion that large sections of the country have fairly distinct natural boundaries that encompass an area of uniform physiographic characteristics of climate, topography, and soils that require inhabitants to act within certain limits. Cultural adaptation to the dictates of the physical environment, according to this point of view, is tantamount to a successful habitation of the region. At the same time, other scholars, such as cultural historians and folklorists, tend to emphasize the fact that newcomers to a region successfully sustain important elements of their culture despite the corrosive effects of an often harsh and unyielding environment. The *Great Plains Quarterly* intends to offer a forum for both points of view.

The *Great Plains Quarterly* will focus on the relationships of human beings to the environment of its region. It will publish in history, literature, folklore, politics, economics, the fine arts, anthropology, sociology, and geography. Contributions in the “hard” sciences that illuminate human experience in the region are welcome, as are studies that compare the Great Plains with similar geographic areas in other parts of the world.

In order to cross the boundaries that compartmentalize much academic thought, essays published in an interdisciplinary journal should be free of specialized jargon. Persons in several disciplines should be able to read, understand, and appreciate them. Although they will be based on scholarly research, they may often be broadly interpretive and integrative. Narrowly conceived, highly technical articles are better published in more specialized journals.

It is our purpose also to appeal to nonspecialists and nonacademicians in the Great Plains
region—lay persons who wish to expand their knowledge and understanding of the environment and society in which they live. To this end the Nebraska Committee for the Humanities has awarded the Great Plains Quarterly a substantial grant to subsidize publication and distribution costs during its first year.

The editors are confident that the articles included in this inaugural issue effectively work toward these goals. Reid A. Bryson, a distinguished environmentalist at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, draws upon several fields as he studies the effects of changing climates on plains people over a period of many centuries. Waldo R. Wedel, archaeologist emeritus at the Smithsonian Institution, recounts the history of archaeological research on the Great Plains, a story in which he is himself a major figure. W. Raymond Wood, an anthropologist at the University of Missouri–Columbia, describes and redraws what may be the most important map of the upper Missouri River done before the Lewis and Clark expedition. Helen Stauffer, a professor of English at Kearney State College who is currently president of the Western Literature Association, compares and contrasts the work of John G. Neihardt, the noted poet and Indian scholar, and Mari Sandoz, Great Plains novelist and historian, in their treatment of the great Sioux leader, Crazy Horse. The issue concludes with a series of reviews of recent books published in Great Plains studies.

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