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"Preface" to *Perspectives on archaeological resources management in the "Great Plains"*

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PREFACE

When faced with compiling an edited volume addressing cultural resources management the overriding problem is to maintain some resemblance of contemporaneity with the current status of the field. Major changes have occurred over the last decade within "contract", "salvage" or "conservation" archaeology, now commonly referred to as cultural resources management. Some of these changes are due to additional state, provincial and federal rules, regulations and statutes requiring consideration of cultural materials to be affected by public "undertakings" in North America. Other changes are resultant of the boom and bust cycle of public-licensed private developments. The constant state of flux in CRM sometimes is viewed as reflecting the vitality of an emerging discipline. Others simply see it as exemplification of a disorganized, unproductive and contradictory program to provide an avenue to channel funds into a program for self-serving archaeologists. Like most issues the truth lies between the extremes.

The problems caused by the rapid growth in the demand for cultural resource specialists needed to identify, evaluate and mitigate "significant" properties which would be affected, was at the very least unplanned for if not totally unexpected. The demand and the ensuing problems had a tremendous effect upon the archaeological profession which was still undergoing its philosophical "revolution". The massive influx of students of the New Archaeology, combined with the overwhelming demand for archaeologists to carry out compliance procedures, produced a brand of archaeology not always meeting the professional standards of the discipline.

Jerald Milanich in "True Confessions of an Archaeologist" observed that as much as 80% of North American archaeologists obtained their livelihood from cultural resources management in 1982. If this figure was accurate, then probably 80% of North American archaeologists have experienced frustration in attempting to mesh the professional goals of academic archaeology with the real-world constraints of contract archaeology. This volume, in a way, was borne out of a desire to alleviate some of this frustration.

Initially this volume was designed to provide an outlet for a mass of "grey" materials; those sponsored and produced, but with limited distribution, by Peter Kiewit Sons', Co. PKS, as one of the leading construction and mining firms in North America had funded numerous studies on the Great Plains. Although this goal was not

completely abandoned it was decided that a volume with a broader scope dealing with archaeological resources management on the Great Plains would perhaps be of more value.

We feel that despite current problems with the conducting of cultural resource management archaeology there is room for optimism. This volume as such is a reflection of some of the work which has actually been undertaken in the Great Plains. In selecting these papers we did not ferret out the "best" or most expensive cultural resource management archaeology projects. Such an approach would have given the reader a slanted approach as to the status of Great Plain's cultural resources management. Instead, an attempt was made to offer the reader a diverse selection of articles based upon actual work. These articles are simply presented to illustrate the diversity of recent work, thus showing the continuing vitality of Great Plains cultural resources management archaeology. This vitality will, undoubtedly, lead to an improved program as corrections are made in the bureaucratic framework as well as in archaeological theory and method.

Obviously, we owe our thanks to many people. A special gratitude to the various contributors who stuck with us for four years is surely owed. Special thanks also goes to Helen Smith who easily tackled the tremendous job of typing numerous manuscript drafts. In addition, the support provided by the Kiewit Mining and Engineering Co. ensured that this volume could be produced.

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Reference Cited

Milanich, Jerald T.

1982 "True Confessions of an Archaeologist". Contract Abstract and CRM Archaeology. 2:9-10.