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February 1993

Review of *Preserving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* by Elaine Freed

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Sommer, Lawrence, "Review of *Preserving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* by Elaine Freed" (1993).
Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences. 97.
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Preserving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains. Elaine Freed. Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press and The National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1992. xii + 434 pp. Maps, photos and references. \$50.00 cloth, \$30.00 paper.

Preserving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains is a welcome addition to the body of historic preservation literature because it focuses on a region of the United States that is all too often ignored by architectural historians and other

scholars writing about historic preservation matters. Elaine Freed deserves much credit for producing a volume that illustrates a thorough understanding of the issues confronting anyone trying to preserve the region's cultural resources. To complete this study, Freed spent several years doing extensive research, conducting literally hundreds of interviews and traveling thousands of miles across this vast and sparsely populated section of the country.

The book begins with an overview of our visions and perceptions of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountain West, an area encompassing most of present-day Nebraska, North and South Dakota, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. Freed then proceeds through a series of concise chapters that describe indigenous building types, the survey process, the rise of the urban West, ranches and farms, mining camps, and archaeology. Next Freed offers an array of case studies while discussing main street and residential neighborhood preservation and organizing for preservation action. Nebraska readers will find the Omaha Jobbers Canyon case study, one of the major historic preservation battles of the late 1980's, especially interesting. Other readers may be more interested in the discussions about the impacts of modern tourism and gambling resort developments on old mining camps such as Deadwood, South Dakota and Central City, Colorado. Throughout the entire 434 page volume Freed manages to keep the reader's attention focused on the unique, and often interrelated, issues those involved with historic preservation in the West must be concerned about. These include the region's rugged and harsh terrain, a sparse population base, cyclical economies, and an independent populace that is often deeply suspicious of all levels of government. *Preserving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains* provides a solid basis for understanding preservation issues as they exist in the region.

Freed's work, however, is not without its shortcomings. By her own admission she notes that many communities are left out altogether. Specific resource types such as railroads, bridges, and Native American architecture are also omitted or only briefly mentioned. The chapter on archaeology is at best only a cursory introduction to this complex subject. Indeed, she again acknowledges the need for much more work in this area. This reviewer also feels the significant roles played by state and federal government, because of the extensive acreages of land they control, should have been given more emphasis.

Preserving the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains is useful to both professionals and lay readers interested in historic preservation and the development of related strategies to protect the fragile resources of the region. It is a good mixture of historic preservation theory, western architectural history and urban/regional planning practice that incorporates preservation objectives. It is

a book about historic preservation in a region where individual efforts offset minimal government involvement to make a difference. This book is well worth the price. Its lively style of writing is enhanced by an abundance of well-chosen illustrations, an extensive bibliography, index and excellent graphic design. **Lawrence Sommer**, *Director, The Nebraska State Historical Society*.