

## EDITOR'S CORNER

Australia and New Zealand are geographically about as far from the Great Plains as one can travel, yet a traveler from the plains, once arrived on antipodean soil, will feel at home. Not only do residents of the North American Plains (both Canada and the United States) share with their counterparts Downunder a British cultural heritage, but agriculturists in both hemispheres have trodden similar paths in their progress from settlement days to contemporary times.

In both regions, to one degree or another, indigenes were uprooted, moved onto reserves, and their lands taken over by European newcomers. In both regions these newcomers had also to cope with unfamiliar native animals, to learn which native plants were beneficial and which detrimental, to adjust to different climates, and to endure sometimes extreme weather phenomena (droughts, floods, sandstorms, blizzards, tornadoes). In both regions the cultural practices and expectations brought in by the newcomers were transformed of necessity by the demands of the new environments encountered, thus forcing accommodation between preconceived notions and newly perceived realities.

In the antipodes, as in the North American West, livestock raising became both an economically and a culturally significant industry. Cattle ranches define the West in the public imagination in much the same way as do sheep stations in Australia and New Zealand. In both regions the mundane realities of pastoralism are often overshadowed by the more colorful mythology of the wandering cowboy or the vagabond shearer. Although the American cowboy was perhaps more successfully romanticized than the stockman, still urban dwellers in all four countries have mythologized their frontiers, have turned the cowboy, the yeoman farmer, the swagman, the stockman, and the shearer into symbols of self-reliance and survival.

In this issue of *Heritage of the Great Plains* you will find four articles that explore comparative aspects of Outback Australia and South Island New Zealand with the North American West. William Huber, who recently received a Master of Arts in English from Notre Dame College in Belmont, California, considers similarities and differences between A.B. Fahey, essentially a one-hook author whose best-selling memoir provides a fascinating look into life in the Outback, and Ivan Doig, the writer whose novels and memoirs chronicle life in the twentieth century American West. This paper was originally read at the 1999 meeting of the American Association of Australian Literary Studies.

Jim McAloon, a senior lecturer in history at Lincoln University in Canterbury, New Zealand, presents a thorough account of the settling of the highlands of the South Island. He contrasts the accepted wisdom of the well-to-do settler coming to New Zealand and there furthering his fortune by raising sheep with the reality that well over half of the settlers who became wealthy in South Island sheep actually rose from humble beginnings. Interestingly, this mythology contrasts with that of the American West, where the image of the self-made man becoming wealthy through his own efforts conflicts with the actuality of large-scale governmental and other assistance. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 1999 New Zealand and Australian Studies Section of the Western Social Sciences Association.

Tom Isern, a historian at North Dakota State University, explores a situation as problematic in New Zealand as it was in North America—who is responsible for erecting and maintaining fences? Even today disputes often arise over boundary fences, with livestock owners wanting to place the burden of fencing, financial and physical, on crop farmers while they, in turn, argue that stock raisers should control the movement of their animals. As Isern points out in this paper, originally presented at the 1993 Missouri Valley History Conference, the law has come to favor the farmer over the pastoralist, but not without some bitter disputes along the way.

Finally, Jim Hoy, in a paper originally presented at the 1999 meeting of the American Association of Australian Literary Studies, looks into the tendency of both Australians and Americans to make heroes of their lawbreakers, to romanticize the bloody deeds of outlaws and bushrangers while playing down, if not downright denigrating, the efforts of law enforcement officers, a tendency reinforced by the anti-establishment, populist inclinations of both populations. Both countries, however conformist in many respects, nonetheless harbor a not-so-secret admiration for the loner, the rebel, the individual who defies the forces of conformity.

Jim Hoy  
Guest Editor