

## EDITOR'S CORNER

From the vagaries of Great Plains weather featured in the last issue we move to a variety of topics in this *Heritage of the Great Plains*.

After the Civil War many blacks seeking education and opportunities not available to them in the South migrated to the Great Plains. Stephanie Abbot Roper describes the history of African American settlement in North Dakota between 1890 and 1940 in "From Military Forts to 'Nigger Towns.'"

People familiar with such names as Thomas Mann and Goethe may be surprised to find out that the best selling German author is actually Karl May whose books have sold more than 70 million copies and been translated into 30 languages. May's books are set in the American West and have as their hero Old Shatterhand, a character cast in the mold of James Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo. In "The Necessary Imagination: European Writers encounter the West" Thomas Austenfeld introduces us to two more European authors with whom you might not be familiar and shows us their depiction of the American West.

In an era of no movies, television or radio other forms of entertainment arose for residents of the Great Plains. Quilting bees, traveling medicine shows, and the Toby show (family entertainment with jokes that could be told in church) are some examples. Providing intellectual stimulation and acceptable recreation for families, the Chautauqua which began in 1874 at Chautauqua Lake in New York, is perhaps the most important. "Let the Golden Gates be Opened" by James Eckman details the importance of the Chautauqua in rural Nebraska in the late 1800s.

In 1821 Captain William Becknell took calico, clothes and trinkets from Missouri to Santa Fe, New Mexico to trade with the Spanish and Indians. His success in trading encouraged others to imitate his venture. What effect did the Western expansion of the American frontier have on Native Americans and how did Euro-Americans justify this expansion into territory that had been granted to the Indians? George Sebastian-Coleman explores these questions in "Re-Opening the West."

Find a comfortable chair, a cup of coffee or tea, and enjoy reading!

Julie Johnson  
Managing Editor