Center Currents

Recently I attended the fourth Flint Hills Summit, held at Camp Wood near Elmdale. Those attending have a strong interest in the future of the Flint Hills and in preserving their heritage and ecological integrity. Two items on the agenda were of special interest to me.

The first was a proposed overlook on the Kansas Turnpike at the Bazaar Cattle Pens. Many of us were fearful that this project would spread out over one of the most scenic areas of the Hills with a visitor center, gift shops, souvenir stands, and the like. We were relieved to learn that it would be an educational area requiring only a couple of acres of native grass to be taken from the surrounding pastures. The educational panels would be mounted in waist-high, glass-covered cases describing the special nature of this last major stand of tallgrass prairie in the world and why prescribed burning of the old grass is necessary to maintain it.

The other initiative is also educational and ambitious: placing Flint Hills maps and information in every school building within the Flint Hills area. These maps would include a “You Are Here” arrow so that students would know exactly where they were in relation to the rest of the Hills. Different levels of information would accompany maps for elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. Teachers would be given access to suggested lesson plans related to learning standards so that science, math, history, and reading exercises would contribute to state requirements.

I’m sure that the second of these projects will be more difficult to achieve than the first, but both will help to educate both Kansas students and out-of-state adults about the Flint Hills.
Heritage of the Great Plains
Call for Manuscripts

Heritage of the Great Plains is a refereed semiannual journal published by the Center for Great Plains Studies and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Emporia State University. It strives to be a repository for scholarship of the life and culture of the Great Plains region, and the variety of topics with which its articles deal reflect the breadth of that culture. Submissions of academic and non-academic written material about the Plains region are welcome. For additional guidelines please visit www.emporia.edu/cgps and follow the publication links.

A Weekend of Red Rocks
Red Rocks State Historic Site
October 3 and 4, 2015

October 3 – Film: Journey for Margaret
This special screening of the 1942 MGM film tells the story of the adoption of a British war orphan. The film was based on the book British War Orphan by William Lindsey White. (Location will be Albert Taylor Hall on the ESU campus, $8 admission)

October 4 – On the Porch: May Massee
Hear from librarians and archivists Terri Summey and Ashely Todd-Diaz about May Massee – Champion of Children's Literature. Open to the public, donations accepted. Program begins at 2 p.m.

For additional information about Red Rocks and directions to the site please visit www.kshs.org/portal_visit

Great Plains Research: A Journal of Natural and Social Sciences
Call for Manuscripts

Great Plains Research is a biannual, multidisciplinary, international journal that publishes peer-reviewed research on the natural and social sciences of the Great Plains. The editor is soliciting current manuscripts on important research results and synthetic reviews of critical scientific issues for the Great Plains. For more information visit www.unl.edu/plains.

The Great Soldier State: Kansas and the Civil War
Through January 3, 2016 – Kansas State Historical Society

Frontier Kansas was pivotal in the Union victory. As Kansas impacted the war effort, the war also impacted Kansans. After the war, settlement by hundreds of thousands of veterans who created new towns, businesses, and railroads led Kansas to become known as the Great Soldier State. This special exhibit tells the Kansas story of the Civil War and features related objects from the collections of the Kansas Historical Society.

Kansas Sampler Festival Orientation
October 9, 2015 – Winfield, KS

Registration starts at 10 a.m., the meeting and site visit will be from 10:30 a.m.-12:30. Meet the local organizers, see the site and become acquainted with parking, lodging, restaurants. RSVP to Sarah at kssamplerfest@gmail.com.

Great Plains Quarterly & Great Plains Research
University of Nebraska Lincoln, Center for Great Plains Studies

Both GPR and GPQ are long-established, peer-reviewed journals that are highly-regarded and have significant readership. They offer access to a wider multidisciplinary audience that may not be available in more narrowly disciplinary journals, expanding your research’s impact. The editors – Chuck Braithwaite of Great Plains Quarterly and Gary Wilson of Great Plains Research – welcome your submissions and are ready to work with you. For additional information please visit www.unl.edu/plains/publications
**Preservation Conference**  
October 7 and 8, 2015 – Manhattan, KS  

The Kansas Preservation Alliance hosts an annual preservation conference that brings current issues and topics in preservation to architects, historians, preservationists, and any history enthusiast. These conferences count as AIA continuing ed credits. For registration materials and additional information please visit kpalliance.org/annualpreservationconference.html

**Root, Root, Root for your Home Team**  
Kansas Humanities Council – Smithsonian Traveling Exhibit  

The Kansas Humanities Council invites museums, public libraries, art centers, and other nonprofit cultural institutions to apply to host Hometown Teams, a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition touring six Kansas communities in 2015. For additional information please visit www.kansashumanities.org

**Paul A. Olson Seminar**  
Center for Great Plains Studies at the University of Nebraska Lincoln  
October 28, 2015  

Elizabeth Fenn, professor and chair of the Department of History at the University of Colorado Boulder, winner of the 2015 Stubbendieck Great Plains Distinguished Book Prize, and 2015 Pulitzer Prize winner for history, will present a history of the Mandan people. The Mandan Indians lived on the upper Missouri River and are often known for assisting Lewis and Clark when they chose to build their fort near the Mandan villages during a difficult winter. Fenn has used new discoveries in archaeology, anthropology, climatology, and nutritional science to paint a more complete picture of the life of the Mandan. The society had a famous reputation for hospitality, but also had agricultural and commercial prowess. The civilization all but disappeared when disease and new commercial technology emerged, though a sense of tradition and culture endured.  

For additional details about this and other Olson seminars please visit www.unl.edu/plains/welcome

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**Save The Date**  
Friends of the Plains Dinner  
April 8, 2016  

The annual Friends of the Plains dinner will be held Friday, April 8, 2016. We will begin at 6:00 p.m. with a hosted reception in Webb Hall of the Memorial Union on the Emporia State University campus followed by dinner at 6:45 p.m. Watch the newsletter for details about the 2016 guest speaker.
New Books

Anthropology, Sociology, Cultural Studies, & Politics

*Barnstorming the Prairies: How Aerial Vision Shaped the Midwest* by Jason Weems. Published by the University of Minnesota Press, October 2015. ISBN: 9780816677504

*Captivating Westerns: The Middle East in the American West* by Susan Kollin. Published by University of Nebraska Press, October 2015. ISBN: 9780803226999

*Encyclopedia of the American Indian in the Twentieth Century* by Alexander Ewen and Jeffery Wollock. Published by University of New Mexico Press, October 2015. ISBN: 9780826355959

*Nebraska Beer: Great Plains History by the Pint* by Tyler A. Thomas. Published by The History Press, October 2015. ISBN: 9781467117807

Art, Photography, & Essay


Biography & Memoir

*This River Beneath the Sky: A Year on the Platte* by Doreen Pfost. Published by University of Nebraska Press, February 2016. ISBN: 9780803276796

*The Quotable Amelia Earhart* edited by Michele Wehrwein Albion. Published by University of New Mexico Press, September 2015. ISBN: 9780826345622


*Raiders and Horse Thieves: Memoir of a Central Texas Baby Boomer* by Jackie Ellis Stewart. Published by Texas A&M University Press, November 2015. ISBN: 9781680030617

*The Ogallala Road: A Story of Love, Family, and the Fight to Keep the Great Plains from Running Dry* by Julene Bair. Published by Penguin Publishing Group, August 2015. ISBN: 9780143127079

Fiction, Poetry, & Literature

*Report to the Department of the Interior,* poems by Diane Glancy. Published by University of New Mexico Press, March 2015. ISBN: 9780826355713
New Books

History


Democratic Beginnings: Founding the Western States by Amy Bridges. Published by University of Kansas Press, December 2015. ISBN: 9780700621729


As Far as the Eye Could Reach: Accounts of Animals along the Santa Fe Trail, 1821 – 1880 by Phyllis S. Morgan. Published by Oklahoma University Press, August 2015. ISBN: 9780806148540


The Lifelong Impact of 4H edited by Toby L Lepley and Martha E Couch. Published by Texas A&M University Press, October 2015. ISBN: 9781623493578

Ecology, Biology & Environment


Book Review

The Life and Legends of Calamity Jane

By Richard W. Etulain
Published by University of Oklahoma Press, 2014, cloth. 381 pages. Part of the Oklahoma Western Biographies series.

Reviewed by Joyce Thierer

If you are looking for a current gender or a women’s historical analysis of Calamity Jane or even a current western social history – this is not the book for you. If you are looking for a traditional male view of the West then do read this book.

Etulain and his buddy, James McLaird, continue to write about a woman they neither admire or even like, and pointedly write and say so. They swap information as a team as they have stated to this reviewer. In both cases, they conclude she was a “bad” or at least “unsuitable” woman as she chooses to both wear pants for much of her life and associate with men doing a man’s work. In other words, Jane continually broke their perceived “proper” gender norms of the east. Note, Jane and many other women like her, living in the West, were of a different ilk just to survive much like many men one reads about and labels some as outlaws or heroes. However, further reading of numerous women historians writing from 1980 on would give a radically different take about Jane and the others of her ilk would take a different view than Etulain or McLaird posit.

Etulain did do a good job of ferreting out disparate data on aspects of Jane’s life by tracking her and her family, but some gaps remain for the future historian to fill using the ever changing technology’s use of genealogical techniques.

The second strength of the book focuses upon the movie and legends; however, he lost track of the real woman in the tall tales. He does give summaries of these. Therefore, the bulk of the book is based upon a variety of interpretations of her life that have evolved out of legends and others interpretations of Jane.

To be open, Etulain describes and perceives my own interpretation of Jane’s life, on p. 331 but to my knowledge he has not seen me perform or talked to me about my research since I was at the very beginning, which of course has been revised, as I continue to do academic research on Jane and other women of the West. For a beginner, I suggest reading Sollid’s book, who too was at the beginning of her research but she stated her findings up to her publication date and does so with a woman’ perspective. Historians tend to publish what they perceive to know at the time of writing and so of course new material often emerges which updates research, so too Etulain will be updated. Another strength of Etulain’s book is his lengthy bibliography listing of his sources, which future researchers can build upon.

Joyce Thierer has been seriously researching “Calamity Jane” since 1989 and performing her as a first person narrative as a woman who was a survivor which is her own perspective on life. Joyce teaches classes on Women in the Old West and Westward Expansion along with others as a social historian with a focus upon gender. Her most recent publication is “Telling History: A Manual for Performers and Presenters of First-Person Narratives” (AltaMira Press).