

EDITOR'S CORNER

Stretching across sprawling grasslands, snaking through mountain passes, leaping over rivers, the emigrant trails of the Great Plains are permanent fixture in the regional imagination.

The emigrants who followed those trails—afoot, on horseback, riding in wagons, or, for many Mormon pioneers, pushing handcarts—never forgot the experience. A surprising number left written accounts of their rite of passage. Popular impressions and Hollywood aside, these accounts tell us that starvation, disease, and accidents took a far greater toll on emigrants' lives than all the Indians along all the routes ever did.

The eyewitnesses also tell us that the way West was not solely an adult activity. Although we seldom think of them, children also took the big step, leaving the known and embarking for the unknown, traveling west and dealing with the frontier's vicissitudes.

Heritage of the Great Plains focuses on those youngsters by presenting a single topic-single article issue: Molly Kizer's "Travels and Travails: Young Emigrants Endure Exceptional Burdens on the Overland Trails." The tales Ms. Kizer relates are sometimes depressing, often horrifying, and always interesting. I hope you agree that they also help provide fuller texture in our understanding of the emigrant experience.

I have served as Director of the Center for Great Plains Studies for nine years and editor of this journal for eight. Now, it is time for me to return to full time classroom teaching and take up some writing projects that have been simmering too long on the back burner. I shall miss editing this journal, especially the invaluable help and advice of managing editor Julie Johnson. I hope, above all, that you will continue to read and enjoy *Heritage of the Great Plains*, for it is—like old timers in the West used to say about valued friends—good to ride the river with.

Ron McCoy
Editor