

EDITOR'S CORNER

Whether you use the moniker "American Indians" or "Native Americans," or find yourself mixing the two for either pleasure or comfort, the people Canadians refer to as members of "the first nations" play an integral part in the history and lore of the Great Plains. Appropriately, then, this issue of *Heritage* views the region through a lens composed of four articles which touch upon various facets of the Plains Indian saga.

In "Bison, Corn and Power: Plains-New Mexico Exchange," William Carter explores the intermingling of trade goods and cultures, and the affective powers of these forces upon tribes locked into complex trading networks and relationships. From prehistoric times, North American Indians engaged in widespread trade, and the contact between Plains tribes and those of the Southwest helps illuminate some of the major features of intertribal associations.

Gerald Betty's "'Skillful in the Management of the Horse': The Comanches as Southern Plains Pastoralists" takes a new look at an old topic, an Indian tribe's relationship to the horse. Betty provides us with a seldom employed perspective on Comanche culture: the tribe as a group of pastoral folk, a feature of their way of life best illustrated by the degree to which they embraced a relatively recently arrived animal as a fundamental part of their existence.

Susanne George provides us with intriguing material in her "19th Century Native American Autobiography as Captivity Narrative." Captivity narratives, written by or for whites who found themselves involuntarily thrust into the Native American tribal milieu, have long provided grist for historians' investigatory mills. But George moves the line of reasoning a bit farther by examining autobiographical writing from the Indian side of the equation, finding, in the process, another kind of captive.

Finally, we've reprinted an article first published in 1901: James Mooney's "Indian Shield Heraldry." Mooney was a supremely gifted ethnologist whose spent much of the period between 1891 and 1906 among the Kiowas and neighboring tribes in what was then called Indian Territory. Although oft published, Mooney died before finishing the work he intended writing on Plains Indian shields. His notes are currently being worked into narrative form, but in the meantime, this vintage piece certainly seems deserving of coming back into the light of day after nearly a century.

Taken as a whole, these articles underscore an important point: While the tribal peoples of the Plains have been on the scene for a long, long time their story runs so deep that its possibilities will likely never be tapped out.

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