

Editor's Corner

The articles in this issue of *Heritage of the Great Plains* touch on three topics that concern repositories of usefulness in exploring the history and culture of the Great Plains. I have long been an advocate of the value and importance of local history, especially as those histories can provide a composite picture that can help us to understand the broader culture of a particular region and, beyond that, the culture of the nation at large. The number of times I have found essential information in a small-town library about a particular topic of research I was pursuing, or in the local museum of a small (in population, not necessarily in square miles) county hundreds of miles from the nearest large city, are too many to count. Likewise with early editions of small-town newspapers, which I often assign students to read for background. The *New York Times* may have carried contemporary stories on the famous or the infamous (such as Jesse James, who fits both categories), but information for the more obscure outlaw (such as Hurricane Bill Martin, a horse thief active in the 1870s) is much more likely to appear in the local press of small towns. The writing ability of some of the editors of those small-town newspapers, however, elevated them far above the crowd: William Allen White of the *Emporia Gazette*, for instance, or, relevant to this issue of *Heritage*, the work of Edgar Watson Howe, editor of the *Atchison Globe*. I have also found the on-site experience of visiting an area of historical significance useful both for myself and for students. I have not had the opportunity to visit the Agate Fossil Beds National Monument, but I hope to someday, especially after learning of the connection to the American Indian tribes of the northern plains. The problem of repatriation has become an international issue, with the British Museum and the Louvre faced with the potential loss to the place of origin of some of their long-held treasures. It is interesting to see how that problem is being handled in our own region.

I hope that readers of *Heritage* will be moved to visit their local historical museums, to take a trip to an area archeological site, and to read some Edgar Watson Howe.