



# Speaking of Kansas

Washburn Center for Kansas Studies

Volume 2, Issue 1

1700 SW College, Topeka, KS 66621

Fall 1993

## Letter from center coordinator

By Dr. Marilyn Geiger  
Professor of History

The Washburn University Center for Kansas Studies began in January 1988 with the formation of a committee of interested, interdisciplinary faculty members. Capitalizing on our sources, expertise and proximity to the state Capitol, the WU Center's goals are to encourage Kansas studies; create resources and provide information about Kansas resources at Washburn and around the state; offer programming and courses on Kansas topics; and provide outreach programs on Kansas, its past, present and future.

During the 1992-93 academic year, we sponsored an exhibit of Kansas Grassroots Art and presented a special program to celebrate Kansas Day on our campus. We also brought seven guest lecturers to various departments to speak about their areas of expertise on Kansas topics. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Oregon Trail, a one-day tour is tentatively scheduled for June, weather permitting.

This is the second newsletter of the Center of Kansas Studies. We invite you to attend our activities in the forthcoming year.

### Washburn Center for Kansas Studies

Coordinator: Dr. Marilyn Geiger  
(913) 231-1010 ext. 1762

Jean Attebury, *History*

Tom Averill, *English*

Dr. Lyle Baker, *Education*

Dr. Barbara Burgess, *Mass Media*

Dr. Bill Cech-Fronsman, *History*

Dr. Daniel Harden, *Education*

Dr. Ross Johnson, *Biology*

Wilma Rife, *Mabee Library*

Dr. Sara Tucker, *History*

Ann Ukens, *Mathematics*

Rachel Yukas, *Mabee Library*

Dr. Bill Wagnon, *History*

Dr. Tom Wolf, *Biology*

Newsletter designed by Gina Nelson and  
Stephanie Taylor as class project in MM 221.

## Washburn introduces Kansas Studies minor

By John Saenz

Washburn University has a new minor called Kansas Studies beginning this semester. This minor will promote Kansas studies and encourage students to learn more about Kansas.

The minor in Kansas Studies requires 15 hours selected from the following courses: *Kansas Archeology*; *Kansas Ecology*; *Kansas Literature*; *Kansas in the Movies*; *Kansas Folklore*; *Kansas History*; *Topeka and Urban Experience*; *American State and Local Government*; *Political Science Internship*.

This minor is listed in the 1993-94 University catalog on page 67. More information can be obtained by contacting the coordinator of Kansas Studies, Dr. Marilyn Geiger.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SEPT. 23

- Stephen Meats, poet

OCT. 14

- Gerald Shapiro, fiction writer, 7 p.m., Morgan 177
- Dr. Tom Turpin, "Aspects of Entymology Associated with Society"

NOV. 11

- Denise Low, poet, 7 p.m., Memorial Union

JAN. 27

- John Edgar Tidwell, professor of English, discussion on Franklin Marshall Davis in Kansas; 4:00 in Kansas Room of Memorial Student Union

APRIL 26

- Artaria Quartet of Boston, 2:30 p.m., White Concert Hall  
Spring Tour to be announced  
All presentations are open to the public

# Two books about Kansas

## PrairyErth: (a deep map)

Book reviews by Wilma Rife

by *William Least Heat-Moon. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1991.*

*PrairyErth, A Deep Map* is a detailed study of a remnant of the once vast American tall-grass prairie, the Kansas Flint Hills. Initially, author William Least Heat-Moon, with his self-styled "woodland sense of scale," contemplates the difficulties of his undertaking: "Before me lay the Kansas of popular conception from Coronado on—that place you have to get through, that purgatory of mileage."

Then taking as his subject a single 30x26 mile prairie segment of Chase County, Kansas, population 3,013—the author examines it in the recommended way for dealing with prairies distances: by concentrating, not on the ever-receding horizon, but on the "deep map" of the place. What follows are thoughtful essays on the county's past and present—its settlements and landscapes; its plants, animals and human inhabitants.

The book's 12 sections, based on

### Porter's poetry available

The Center for Kansas Studies, in tradition of keeping fine Kansas literature in print, announces the publication of *Kenneth Wiggins Porter: The Kansas Poems*. Porter, a native of Sterling, Kansas, wrote some of the finest poems available on the Kansas Dust Bowl.

According to an introduction by center fellow Tom Averill, "Kansas poetry after Porter is much the better for him, and the Kansas poems in this volume are a tribute to his craftsmanship and intelligence. Both combine to make his work pivotal, to make Kenneth Porter a turning point in Kansas poetry."

the central 12 U.S. Geological Survey maps for Chase County, are each introduced by dozens of quotations from an amazing variety of other writings. Heat-Moon labels these extracts "From the Commonplace Book" and among the most revealing is the collection of nineteenth century accounts by Europeans and eastern Americans of the indigenous people, The Kaw Indians. The dated excerpts (1802-1872) from the writings of traders, travelers, missionaries, government agents and settlers provide a painful chronicle of the

disintegration of a Native American culture.

Natural history writing at its finest is found in his treaties on the flora: Osage orange, cottonwood, prairie grass; the fauna: hawk and coyote; the geology: Permian Sea sediments and subterranean Nemahas.

According to William Least Heat-Moon, "PrairyErth" is a name for prairie soils, "from the old taxonomy," and this 624-page "deep map" is a fine celebration of the nation's heartland and Kansans' sense of attachment to it.

## Where the buffalo roam

by *Anne Matthews "Where the Buffalo Roam: The Storm Over The Revolutionary Plan to Restore America's Great Plains." New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1982*

Kansans, along with other residents of the Plains states, were outraged in 1991 when two Rutgers academics Frank and Deborah Popper published a study recommending that millions of acres in 10 states be converted into an ecological preserve of grasslands and migratory animals.

Author Anne Matthews, Plains-born and Princeton educated, writes for the New York Times. She traveled with the Poppers for a year from Mon-

tana to Texas as they defended their "Buffalo Commons" proposal to hostile audiences in the towns and cities of the region. The Poppers—he a regional planner, she a geographer—support their argument with county-by-county statistical portraits of land-use distress in the Plains, models that show the classic boom-and-bust cycle of drought and depopulation.

Matthews presents their case and that of the vocal opposition with an intelligent evenhandedness, enhanced by her own articulate concern for the people, the land and the values of America's heartland.

### Literature about Kansas available at WU

"Resources Guide for Kansas Studies," \$1.00

"Sources in Kansas History 1990," \$2.00

"That trick of Silence - Steven Hind," \$5.50

"Duet and Short Works Marcete and Emanuel Halerian-Julius," \$12.00

"The Kansas Poems," Kenneth Wiggins Portell, \$5.00

These may be purchased through the Washburn University Bookstore, Washburn University, 1700 College, Topeka, KS 66621. Make checks payable to Washburn University. (Kansas residents add 5.25% sales tax.)