

A Note

For several years we have felt that the prairie region of the central United States needed a forum for the exchange of ideas and information about the region, expressed by people from the region or those who care about it, addressed to one another and anyone else who cared to drop in. A few unsuccessful attempts to start such a journal failed to dislodge the idea, so when another opportunity presented itself, in the form of a course at Grinnell College, we reached for it. Now—thanks to support from the College’s Program in Enterprise and Leadership and a bit to our own surprise--we have created a first issue, and offer it up in hopes that others will enjoy reading it as much as we have enjoyed putting it together.

It seems appropriate to say a few words about what we intended to create and hope we have achieved. First, the journal is on-line. This allows us to include not only the written word, but pictures and sounds as well. This will also permit us, in future issues, to incorporate readers’ comments. Second, we want the journal’s content, aimed at a general audience, to reflect the range of subjects which play out in the region: art and agriculture, food and immigration, prairie restoration and urban growth, business and climate change, politics and social justice.

Related to this is our interest in the wide range of viewpoints which we know exist concerning these and other topics. People do not all think alike, but we can all benefit from the exchange of information and ideas. Also, we hope to include the work of people who have important things to say, and yet may not have thought themselves capable of saying them in a public forum. That said, we do admit to preferences, and even a quick glance at the contents of our first issue might reveal some of them.

We are interested in notions of place and place-based education. In the Midwest, place frequently (though not always) evokes the land. What Joseph Frazier Wall, the late bicentennial historian of Iowa, wrote about Iowa could apply to all of the states in the prairie region: “The history of any state must begin with the land itself. For Iowa, the land serves as more than an introduction. It is the major story line.” Every issue of *Rootstalk* will include content about the land and our connection to it, to this Midwestern place. Also, we are sympathetic to the writer and humorist Finley Peter Dunne’s adage that the job of journalism is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. Finally, we want to juxtapose art and science and society and put them into conversation with one another because, ultimately, they are all addressing the same question: how can we best live together in harmony with one another and with the land?

We welcome your comments—and your submissions to future issues of *Rootstalk*.

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