

DEDICATION

Millions of words have been written about the men and women who came west. They left the safety and the security of their homes and set out into the wilderness, driven by a spirit of adventure or a hope for riches, and did not stop until they had crossed a continent and reached a new shore.

But there were others, too, who did not go all the way. Men and women who reached the prairies of the Southwest or the Middle West and stopped there. What of them? Were they a more timid breed, a less adventurous and less ambitious lot, a fearful folk who felt they had risked all they dared, had gone far enough? Or did they stop because they liked what they saw there, the wideness of the horizon and the beauty of a lone tree on an open landscape and the warm curved blue of a September sky? I think they did. I think there must have been men among them, and women, too, to whom the prairie meant something, honest effort, and fertility and fruitfulness, room to grow. Men who felt dwarfed by mountains, and restless beside water, and shut in and hedged about by trees.

It is to them that this book is inscribed. And to those who love the prairies and have left them and are filled with nostalgia. And to those who, like Joel Brandeis, were lured away by curiosity and the seeking spirit of youth, saw Captain Rainier's mountain and Paul Bunyan's forest, and Balboa's ocean, and came finally to the conclusion that what he really wanted was a blue-stem hillside, and a jackoak thicket, and a Kansas pond.



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