

“Librarian’s Shelf” by Melodee Pedersen

Joint program coming “The plow that broke the plains”

March 28th at 2:00 p.m. at the Platte County Historical Society Museum will be a presentation of the film "The Plow that Broke the Plains" you won't want to miss. If you are a descendant of settlers of the Great Plains, you will gain a new understanding of what your ancestors went through. If you are transplanted here from another area of the country, you will gain insight into the area you currently call home. The Museum is presenting this program in conjunction with the Friends of the Columbus Public Library, the Chautauqua Committee, and the Nebraska Humanities Council.

A documentary, this film was made in 1936 as part of a series and sponsored by the United States Government's Resettlement Administration, in order to show what happened to the Great Plains region of the United States. The films in this series were the only peacetime production of films by the U. S. government intended for commercial release and public viewing ever. They were also instrumental in shaping the direction of American documentary filmmaking, because of the sophistication with which they were made. In 1999, "The Plow that Broke the Plains" was selected for preservation in the United States National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as being "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant." The genius of this film is shown in the stark images riding on the emotional stream of the well selected and edited musical score, comprised of classical pieces and cowboy songs, as well as popular and religious music of the time.

The driving force behind this film was Pare Lorentz. The scripts that Lorentz wrote for these films are closer to poetry than to film narration. They played on tradition American poetic forms, and have often been compared to the work of Walt Whitman. A former film critic, Lorentz was fascinated with the use of music in film. Lorentz' mother had been a professional singer and he had been exposed to many types of music from an early age. He believed that music could be used to significantly augment the emotional and dramatic power of the film medium. This belief was borne out in his use of music in "The Plow That Broke the Plains", which was scored by Virgil Thompson and performed by members of the New York Philharmonic.

After viewing the film, which lasts approximately half an hour, moderator Bob White will lead a discussion in which the audience can share their stories about the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression. There is no charge for this event. Hope to see you there!

There are two other upcoming events leading up to Chautauqua sponsored by the Friends of the Columbus Public Library, the Chautauqua Committee and the Nebraska Humanities Council. April 25th at 2:00 p.m. at the library will be a discussion of the book *All the King's Men* by Robert Penn Warren, moderated by Huey Long impersonator Fred Krebs. May 23rd at 2:00 back at the museum will be a showing of the film *The Grapes of Wrath* starring Henry Fonda, moderated by UNK Professor Kathryn Benzel of the University of Nebraska at Kearney.