



The Story Behind The Story

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In 1940, Mari Sandoz dedicated her book, “Crazy Horse,” to Eleanor Hinman. Who was Eleanor Hinman? Where was she from and why did she relinquish all of her biographical work on Crazy Horse to Mari Sandoz?

Eleanor Hinman was the daughter of the chairman of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Nebraska Lincoln and graduated from there in 1920. She also worked on the staff of various newspapers in Omaha and Lincoln and was able to secure a rare interview with the author Willa Cather, in November of 1921, for the *Lincoln Sunday Star*. The two authors met in Lincoln, Nebraska, through a women’s writing group called The Quill that met semimonthly at the old Cornhusker Hotel, in Lincoln. Mari joined The Quill in 1929 and Eleanor and Mari soon became very close friends.

When Mari and Eleanor met, they realized they both shared a very strong interest in Native American history and culture. Eleanor soon shared with Mari that she had been researching and working on a biography about Crazy Horse. It is in the foreword of Mari Sandoz’s book, “Crazy Horse,” that Mari writes about a three-thousand-mile fact finding journey, that the two friends decided to make together in 1930. The focus of the journey was to research Crazy Horse, by interviewing Native Americans that had known the great leader. The journey was considered a success, with the authors securing several interviews with individuals that had known Crazy Horse.

On two separate occasions, Eleanor offered her work, on Crazy Horse, to Mari, once, 1938 and again in 1940. In Helen Winter Stauffer's book, "Story Catcher of the Plains," Stauffer notes that it was possibly a lack of time and money to travel to Washington, D.C., to research the national archives that caused Eleanor Hinman not to finish her biography on Crazy Horse. Eleanor was a published author in her own right, but believed that Mari was the superior author to complete the Crazy Horse work. We will never know what Eleanor Hinman's biography on Crazy Horse might have encompassed. What we do know is that because of her dedication and loyalty to her friend Mari Sandoz, our literary world is a richer place because of her sacrifice.

For more information please visit the following sources:

Stauffer, Helen Winter. Letters of Mari Sandoz. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, Nebraska. 1992.

Stauffer, Helen Winter. Story Catcher of the Plains. University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NE. 1982.

The Caroline Sandoz Pifer Collection of Mari Sandoz Papers,
Chadron State College, Mari Sandoz High Plains Heritage Center.