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Upon the great sea's back my forebears rode, days raining into
nights fraught with illness and despair till Ellis's maelstrom
swallowed them like flotsam. Brusque Nor'easters swept them
westward through perils and lashing switch grass,
at last serving them up to a grudging Sandhills Plain,
anchor's final drop. Their new lives atoning loss of their old,
they wrangled for their progeny an inheritance I demur to claim,
knowing those rolling surfs of grass suited best for cattle,
isolating hills shunning a world where habitations,
not lonesome trees, define the horizon, and neighbors,
not tumbleweeds, gather at your door – a birthright best tilled
in one's heart. Yet relentlessly my people call from their graves,
their ghostly arms pulling me in and sending me off
as they fill my shoes with their life-giving grit.