

KANSAS HISTORY

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Windmill, unidentified Kansas location.

*"The windmill was adopted, adapted, and developed" throughout the Great Plains and mitigated the region's thirst for water, wrote Walter Prescott Webb in his seminal book, **The Great Plains** (1931). As early as 1879 these signature farm structures were dotting the "prairies of Kansas." The windmill, according to the *Dodge City Times*, already had "become an indispensable part of the farm and stock ranch."*

Especially in the semiarid portions of the wheat state, where water was plentiful only at great depths, if at all, windmills such as the one depicted above were mundane but certainly essential features of the farm/ranch landscape—"icons of the western experience for many thousands of peo-

*ple." For better and for worse, since they would contribute to the long-term depletion of groundwater resources, "In combination with drilled wells," wrote historian T. Lindsay Baker in a spring 1996 *Kansas History* article, "windmills made it possible for humans to secure fresh water almost anywhere they wanted to live. . . . Windmills often were the first visible signs of human habitation on the prairies, standing like sentinels to show that people were attempting to survive in an often harsh environment."*

*This is the third in a four-part series of photographs on the inside front covers of *Kansas History* featuring familiar structures on Kansas farms.*

KANSAS HISTORY

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COVER: An unidentified Kansas farmer photographed during the 1930s. African Americans' involvement in agriculture is the subject of this issue's "Hoing Their Own Row." BACK COVER: The Kinsley Civil War Monument. An article on this unique monument begins on page 164. (Photo by Larry Colcher.)

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