

KANSAS HISTORY

A Journal
of the
Central Plains

Volume 20, Number 1
Spring 1997



1810

1971

Gloria Eterna a los Heroes de la Independencia Mexicana

KANSAS HISTORY

VIRGIL W. DEAN
Editor

Volume 20

Spring 1997

Number 1

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Cover: Poster for the 1971 Mexican Fiesta in Garden City. This town's Mexican American community is the subject of "Immigration and Integration." Back Cover: The chemistry laboratory at the University of Kansas. An article on E.H.S. Bailey, head of KU's chemistry department, begins on page 38.



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Kansas History (USPS 290 620) is published quarterly by the Kansas State Historical Society, Inc., 6425 S.W. Sixth Avenue, Topeka, Kansas, 66615-1099. It is distributed without charge to members of the Kansas State Historical Society. Membership dues are: student \$15; individual \$25; family \$35; organization \$25; life \$1,000. Single issues, when available, are \$6. Periodicals postage paid at Topeka, Kansas, and additional mailing office. Postmaster: Send address changes to *Kansas History*, 6425 S.W. Sixth Avenue, Topeka, Kansas, 66615-1099.

Printed by Allen Press, Inc., Lawrence, Kansas.



Binding wheat, George Eslinger farm, Russell County, June 29, 1912.

Late nineteenth-century advances in technology revolutionized American agriculture and made possible a whole new type of farming on the Great Plains. Equipment costs rose dramatically but so too did the size of the farm and the farmer's productivity. In Kansas this agricultural revolution equaled the creation of 168,000 new farms, averaging 288 acres each, between 1860 and 1910. The application of this technology to the farms of western Kansas made large-scale wheat farming, at least in "good" years, possible and profitable.

In the early stages of this revolution, horse-drawn machinery freed the farmer from his age-old reliance on hand tools. Reapers, headers, binders, and threshing machines of various types and styles were utilized during the harvest by Plains farmers throughout the half century following the Civil War. Binders, such as the one pictured above, cut and tied the wheat

in bundles, ready for shocking. They were a vital part of the operation until replaced by the combine during the decades following World War I.

George Eslinger and his binder contributed to a record wheat harvest in 1912. Russell County produced 2,398,875 bushels of winter wheat on 159,925 acres; this was up from 369,868 on 92,467 acres in 1911. Statewide wheat production for that year was 93,695,000 bushels — a new high for Kansas, as the previous 1903 record was exceeded by more than one million bushels. Wheat was well on its way to becoming the state's number one crop.

During 1997 Kansas History will highlight twentieth-century change in harvesting technology in a four-part series of photographs on the inside front cover of each issue.

