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## American Windmills: An Album of Historic Photographs

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riod often treated only as an afterword in asylum narratives. And while it is unfortunate that they lacked access to patient records, the authors' extensive use of oral history material (mostly from former staff members) is interesting and welcome. The book is not, however, without its flaws. Foremost is a tendency to lapse into summary of historical material rather than provide meaningful contextualization or critical analysis. We learn, for example, a great deal about the productivity of the hospital farm in the nineteenth century, but we are never told how physicians envisioned their therapeutic regimen in the context of the prevailing philosophy of moral treatment. Later, the authors relate the stories of former employees largely without comment. In one instance, this leads to a blithe recounting of a strategy whereby attendants used a bar of soap within a sock to subdue agitated patients without leaving bruises. The concluding chapters, moreover, tend to resemble a review of administrative memoranda rather than reflective scholarship. This work is not without value to historians of psychiatry and American social welfare, but it is likely to be appreciated best by those with a particular interest in Fulton State Hospital and the region it served.

*American Windmills: An Album of Historic Photographs*, by T. Lindsay Baker. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007. xii, 156 pp. Illustrations, notes, index. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer James R. Shortridge is professor of geography at the University of Kansas. His books include *Our Town on the Plains: J. J. Pennell's Photographs of Junction City, Kansas, 1893–1922* (2000); *The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture* (1989); and *Cities on the Plains: The Evolution of Urban Kansas* (2004).

As their rural heritage becomes a distant memory for most Americans, nostalgia has generated a demand for photography books about log cabins, barns, and other icons of this past. Most such books are pleasant to view, with quality prints, glossy paper, and skillful layouts. T. Lindsay Baker's collection of windmill photographs is typical in this regard. It contains 179 black-and-white prints spread over generously sized 9" x 9" pages. The book's length also is satisfying. Little redundancy exists, yet one sees a wide variety of windmill designs and uses.

When a viewer turns from the photographs themselves to the accompanying captions and text, it becomes apparent that *American Windmills* offers more than visual pleasure. In place of the bland words typical of most such collections, one finds instead cogent commentary on exactly what type of mill is present and the broader socio-economic world in which it functioned. T. Lindsay Baker, you come to

understand, is the oracle on the subject. A professor of history at Tarleton State University in Texas, he has written four previous books on windmills, including the encyclopedic *A Field Guide to American Windmills* (1985). His voice is authoritative yet understated, a perfect match for his utilitarian towers.

Baker is a longtime collector of photographs as well as a writer, and the selections here tap many different archives. Some of the most informative come from corporate files, including the Burdick and Burdick Company of El Paso, Texas, and Baker Manufacturing in Evansville, Wisconsin. These reveal fascinating details on how mills were manufactured, erected, and repaired. Whereas the author's previous books have concentrated on the history of windmills and the nuances of mechanical designs, this volume stresses cultural context. It is a good choice. The uncompromising eye of the camera supplies views of windmill-related activities as varied as electricity generation and stock-tank baptisms.

*American Windmills* contains ten chapters plus an introduction by John Carter of the Nebraska State Historical Society. The first four discuss history, manufacture, marketing, and erection. Then come four on specific settings (ranch, farm, city, and railroad), one on homemade designs, and one that samples uses in other countries. Most chapters open with two pages of text and close with a section focusing on a particular detail. Mail-order mills from Sears highlight the marketing chapter, for example, and resort applications the urban one. John Carter's introduction provides useful commentary on how windmills appeal to the human spirit by providing scale to vast landscapes and almost magically converting wind into water. In his 16 pages, however, Carter writes nearly as many words as does Baker.

*American Windmills* is an informative book. I gained appreciation for the skill needed to winch derricks into position, for example, and for the sheer size of the 30-foot blades sometimes required to supply water to steam locomotives. I learned, too, of the important role these mills played in the improvement of cattle herds on the plains. Reliable water supplies allowed the construction of internal fences on ranches and thereby the controlled breeding of animals.

Baker's photographs emphasize the Great Plains and the Midwest. Texas gets special attention because of the author's roots and Nebraska because of the availability there of Solomon Butcher's magnificent nineteenth-century collection. Iowa, in contrast, receives only five mentions: two for the Union Pacific Historical Collection in Council Bluffs and one apiece for the Wincharger Corporation of Sioux City, a railroad mill in Dows, and the Cocklin Fish Farm near Griswold.