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Abstract Title:

Development of Grain Elevators and Their Vertical Integration in Kansas

is part of the Paper Session:

The Role of Agriculture in Restructuring Rural Spaces III : Examining Staple Commodities

scheduled on Thursday, 3/6/2003 at 5:00 p.m.

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Abstract:

This paper analyzes the development of grain elevators in Kansas, focusing especially on the temporal-spatial competition which brought about restructuring of elevator companies and rural spaces. Elevator construction by flour milling companies boomed in the 1870s as railroads expanded into the west. Many wooden elevators built by farmers' cooperatives in the 1920s gradually became obsolete and were replaced with concrete elevators in the 1930s. This provided an expansion of the storage capacity from around 10,000 bushels to more than 150,000 bushels. In these periods, grain elevators in a rural space functioned as a market and gathering point for grains produced within a five to ten mile radius. Each elevator also supplied fuel, fertilizer, seed, chemicals, feed, and daily necessities to local farmers. Only a few elevator companies established in the 19th century have, however, survived through the consolidation of the grain business.

Major grain companies had their own elevators and service territories in rural space. In recent decades, however, major grain companies concentrated their attention more on terminal elevators, huge elevators exceeding the 1 million bushel capacity. This change required major grain companies to rely on local private as well as cooperative elevators who collected grains from local farms. In other words, through competition and grouping, major grain companies vertically integrated grain marketing and restructured grain farming regions.

Keywords:

grain elevators, terminal elevators, major grain companies, vertical integration, Kansas