

BEACONS OF THE PLAINS

CAPTURING THE MAGESTIC BEAUTY OF HUTCHINSON'S GRAIN ELEVATORS

PHOTO STORY BY KRISTEN GARLOW PIPER

RAIL CROSSING
ROAD

TRACKS

WELCOME

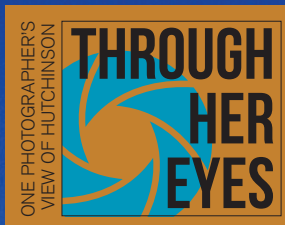
ACM GRAIN COMPANY
BUY & SELL
CORN & SOY



AROUND TOWN

They are the beacons of the plains rising above our town – the first structures illuminated at daybreak on the east and the last darkened by Kansas's fading natural light to our west. With their long shadows, Hutchinson's grain elevators capture light like tall buildings but more majestically, and whether it's sunrise or sunset, they stand alone beautifully.

For those of us who grew up here, grain elevators are a natural part



of our landscape. They store food that helps feed the world and stand as monuments to Kansas' agricultural industry.

Visitors, however, are often struck by the behemoths and fascinated by their size and purpose.

Two elevators here were celebrities in the 1950's movie "Picnic" with William Holden and Cliff Robertson, and for a long time Hutch could boast that it had the longest elevator in the world – until Wichita edged out that honor.

Grain elevators make ideal subjects for photographers not only because of their sheer size but their shapes.

Using an ultra-wide and a

telephoto lens, I set out to capture their individual characteristics. Each has a different texture, so I wasn't surprised to find that they all reflect natural light differently. It was that uniqueness that I was seeking to capture.

Some of our smaller elevators are no longer used and now stand adorned with cellular antennas, while others continue to operate as they always have. They all have a long history serving as giant repositories for farmers and their crops. All are part of our history and of Hutchinson's character, which is what I was going for in this photo-story.

One last thing: Whenever our family had visitors who would make the wisecrack about how flat Kansas was I'd take them out and stand them next to that longest one. Flat? I don't think so.

Visit kristengarlowpiper.com and see what else I've been photographing since returning to Kansas in 2012.

Adorned with antennas just off of 17th and Severance, this elevator's angle perfectly reflects the golden light of sunsets.

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-Kristen Garlow Piper



Cover: The blue of the sky and the compression of the railroad sign between the accordion structure of the elevator is what caught my eye. **Above, top:** If grain elevators can have acne this one off of East Second takes the prize but it also gives the shot great texture. **Above:** Part of the Halstead Street cluster this elevator contained the people lift taken by Cliff Robertson and William Holden in the 1955 movie 'Picnic'.



Above: When I visit our family plots at Memorial Park Cemetery out east on Rayl's Hill this is the view. The small size of this elevator and the fields surrounding it makes it a favorite of photographers and artists.



Left: Our longest grain elevator and – by far – the most challenging to shoot at sunrise.



Above: Railroad cars at this elevator north of Carey Boulevard anchored the shot and added just the right amount of color.



Left: I love how the metal on the left serves as an anchor point for this elevator east of K61. That and the metal lattice work gives it an artistic feel.



Left: Crisscrossed with railroad access, the largest cluster of our grain elevators is on North Halstead.