

FORT BEND COUNTY HISTORICAL COMMISSION

ORAL HISTORY COMMITTEE



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Abstract: **Herman Westmeyer**

On May 15, 1912, Mr. Herman Westmeyer was born in Missouri. He was 101 years old at the time of this interview. During the great American Dust Bowl he worked as a United States County Agent in Manhattan, Kansas. His job was to educate farmers as to best practices to combat the ravages of the dust bowl years.

13 Pages

⇓ *Scroll down for Key Words from the Interview.* ⇓

Key Words and Topics

- County Agent follows research in agriculture and passes information onto the farmers.
- Grasses with deep roots originally kept moisture in the land and the dust from flying
- One Way tool/disc was used early on to break up the soil so that wheat crops could be planted.
- With the earth exposed and several years of drought the top soil blew away
- The drought came in three waves, 1934, 1936, and 1939–40, but some regions of the High Plains experienced drought conditions for as many as eight years
- **Solutions:**
 - Shovel instruments vs. one way tool
 - Hedgerows as shelter belts helped some – Eleanor Roosevelt pet project
 - Quit summer fallowing
 - Began to measure moisture content beneath the earth
 - New ways of building rows for crops – terraced along the slope of the land to build a ridge to prevent water run off
- **Water issues**
 - Aquifer doesn't refill after water is pumped from it for irrigation
 - More water is pumped than can be replenished – problems for the future
 - Seeds – discussion of development of seeds through time
 - Dust Pneumonia

Terms:

Garden City

Scott City

Shallow Water

Manhattan, Kansas

Nebraska, Oklahoma, Texas

Progressive Farmers