

Presentation

Water and Kansas History

Rex Buchanan, Kansas Geological Survey, Lawrence. Kansas Dam Safety Conference, 15 February 2011, Topeka, KS

Kansas is two states in regards to water. The eastern half of Kansas has an abundance of surface water, while water in western Kansas is stored underground. Rex Buchanan said Kansas' surface water—particularly streams — influenced travel and settlement in Kansas' past. These springs and waterways influenced where people lived and how they traveled.

"Literally thousands of springs are scattered across the Kansas landscape, and undoubtedly many of those have been important in the state's history.

"However, the number of springs that have documented historic importance is relatively small and can be grouped into four categories: those clearly visited by and used by Native Americans; those that were important stopping points along many of the historic trails across the state; those that were important or well-known mineral water resorts or spas; and those that were used for water supply, gathering places for people, or some other purpose," wrote Buchanan and others in the related online article "



Below, photograph of Waconda Springs dated July 15, 1921, used courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society as is the circa 1890 above photograph of Geuda Springs, also in Kansas.

[Water of the Most Excellent Kind: Historic Springs in Kansas](#) published in *Kansas History* 23, No. 3. Waconda Spring, site of a resort and health spa, now is part of the Waconda Reservoir after the 1968 construction of the Glen Elder Dam.



Rex Buchanan, co-author of [Roadside Kansas: A Guide to Its Geology and Landmarks](#), has been president of the Kansas Association for Conservation and Environmental Education and the Kansas Academy of Science and is based at the University of Kansas.

