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Matriarch of the Prairie

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— Pat Kourt

Amid yesterday's plows, wagons, and rusted wire fences stands an eighty-year old tower of strength. This lady oversees the farm of Ernie Richardson, life-long resident of Putnam, Oklahoma. Located just northeast of the tiny farm village, this beautiful structure is truly the grande dame of the countryside.

A collector of antiques and cherished memories, Mr. Richardson emphatically proclaims that his windmill is priceless. "Why, she's the only one left in this area. Yep, she's a Monitor—an extinct breed. She's worth a thousand or more for the whole thing, but I'm not a-sellin'. Got too many memories. She used to set up on this hill here while many a Saturday night dance, 4th of July celebration, and party would go on down there by Fletcher's Pond. Folks from all over came to have a good time."

Almost regally, the proud head of this special windmill moves noiselessly in the cool, evening breeze. Made completely of wood, each small blade works harmoniously with the others to provide energy. The cement tail weighs sixty pounds and appears to be as solid as it was in 1900.

Although she's now retired, the Monitor stands among the giants in Oklahoma's pioneer history. Yes, pioneers like Ernie Richardson enjoy recalling and comparing those "good ol' days" when life was simple—like the windmill.

