

DEPRESSION ALBUM



"Also during that period there was a great dust storm. I remember my brother and I rode up to Emporia to school and some days we got out of school early so we could see to get home. We wore bandannas over our faces so we wouldn't breathe in the air."

Rene Scott, Chase County, Kansas

Dust Bowl scenes like the one in this photo were familiar during the 1930s, when farmers and town folk alike turned out to watch the topsoil blow away. This photograph was taken in 1935 from the top of the town water tower in Rolla, Kansas. There is reason to believe the picture captures the first, but certainly not the last, such storm to hit this southwest Kansas community. This photo, owned by Mrs. Inez Stone, was given to her son Lloyd A. Stone of Emporia shortly before her death in 1985. It is reproduced with his permission.



"I went to my brother's house in California and a dust storm hit on the way back. I had stopped and when the storm quit all that could be seen on a tractor was the exhaust pipe."

Howard Johnson, Chase County, Kansas

Monument to the utter destruction of Dust Bowl "rollers"---this tractor covered by drifted dust near Dodge City. Photo courtesy of the Kansas State Historical Society.



"We just lived on the farm. We had vegetables, chickens, and cows. We had food to eat, and I just never had been used to having money....We had enough to get just what I had to have."

Mrs. Stanley North, Chase County, Kansas

In 1935, poet Archibald MacLeish described a scene of "dead quarter sections with the hardpan clean as weathered lime and the four-room flimsy ranch houses two feet deep in sand..." This picture shows a home served by a Federal Emergency Relief Agency nurse. Photo courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.



"We never had to go without food, but I can remember the soup lines every day."

Lloyd Clark, Chase County, Kansas

The CCC represented an alternative to the soup lines. Here a group of CCC recruits stands with Kansas governor Alf Landon (center, in the suit). The youthfulness of these workers is perhaps the image's most striking feature. Courtesy Kansas State Historical Society .



*"My father's farm shut down because we couldn't pay the payments.
Then he did whatever job he could."*

Lloyd Clark, Chase County, Kansas

Some younger men found jobs with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), one of FDR's New Deal programs, receiving food, clothing, shelter, and a salary by working on various government-sponsored projects. The normal CCC day began as Corpsmen formed up for morning work call, in this case in Burr Oak, Kansas. Photo courtesy Kansas State Historical Society.



"In a way, the Depression kind of made me grow up and made a man out of me, instead of a boy."

Lee Allen, Chase County, Kansas



Children needed to grow up quickly during the Great Depression. In addition to the CCC camps for young men there were also camps for unemployed girls, such as the Nebraska scenes shown here. In the Douglas County photo on the left, a leader talks about job opportunities, such as the first one listed on the blackboard: diswashing for twenty-five cents an hour. The photo on this page shows young women at the Camp for Unemployed Girls in Crete learning how to care for the sick. Photos courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society.



“Well, we had a garden, chickens, cows and pigs. So we had vegetables and meat. We sold eggs to get our groceries, and eggs weren't very high-priced at the time so it took a lot of eggs to buy many groceries. But groceries weren't very high-priced, either, like they are today; you could buy a lot of groceries for a dollar.”

Ms. Stanley North, Chase County, Kansas

It is possible this couple had some eggs to eat, or possibly use to barter with others for food. What is clear is the picture of almost unimaginably hard times presented by the image. Photo courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society.



People who found their way to the government's transient camps, like the one shown here at Chadron, Nebraska, found welcome shelter. Photo courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society.



"People went hungry first in the city. They say it was rougher in the cities because they didn't live on farms so they could not milk cows, grow gardens....And then they started soup lines and bread lines. Most of the people waited one day just to get food for their families."

Darrel Spence, Chase County, Kansas



The photos on these two pages show workers in Omaha preparing commodities for distribution to the needy, and those who were lucky enough to receive commodities preparing to take the foodstuffs home to their families. Photos courtesy Nebraska State Historical Society .



"It was hard for people to get along. There was WPA work; men cut timber and women worked in sewing rooms. I made \$1 a day and had to drive 7 miles to work and had to take care of two children, my mother and brother. We got along real well on \$1 a day and the government help."

Alta Ward, Chase County, Kansas

These photos show women in government-supported sewing rooms. A reflection of the time: such rooms were racially segregated. The top photo shows a group of African-American women in Lincoln, Nebraska. The bottom photo is of a similar group of white women in Omaha. Photos courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.



"The Great Depression? Outside of being hungry and wearing holey shoes, I guess that's about it. Everybody was out of work; nobody had money to lose."

Lee Allen, Chase County, Kansas

"The kids made their own toys to play with."

Great Grandpa Mildward, Chase County, Kansas

The Great Depression did not keep Americans from celebrating the holidays, in one form or another. Under this Christmas tree are dolls and stuffed animals made by the government-supported sewing class in Fairbury, Nebraska. Photo courtesy of the Nebraska State Historical Society.