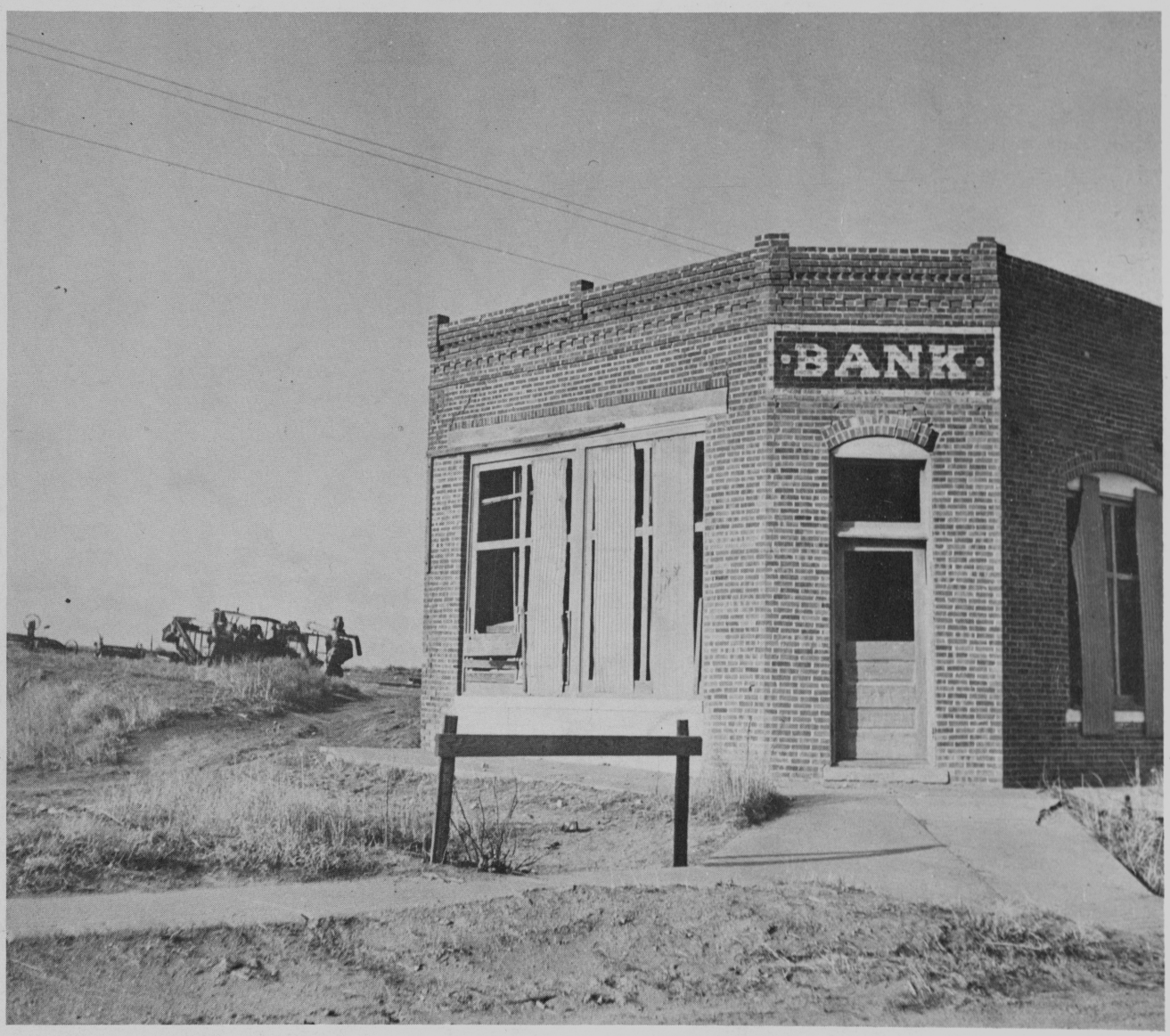
MAKING DO AND DOING WITHOUT:

Kansas in the Great Depression



Division of Continuing Education
and KANU

The University of Kansas

MAKING DO AND DOING WITHOUT : Kansas in the Great Depression

The Division of Continuing Education
KANU

The University of Kansas

This series of articles was funded in part by the Kansas Committee for the Humanities, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and by a gift given in consideration of the project by the Caroline Hewitt Foundation.

Cover Photograph:
Arthur Rothstein. A bank that failed, Kansas, 1936. Reproduced from the Collections of the Library of Congress.

Cover Design:
Jan Morris

Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression

Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression is a 26-part radio/newspaper series that focuses on the lives of Kansans in the Great Depression. During the 1930s, the American Dream became tarnished for many. Numerous individuals deferred their goals, tightened their belts, and learned to cope with everyday adversity. Others experienced personal or economic failures and gave up or left the state. How Kansans confronted these hard times is the theme of this series.

The objectives of Making Do have been to assess the effects of the Great Depression and to examine the problems created by the twin calamities of economic depression and drought. We hope that examining the lives of those who lived through the Depression will provide information that will help us better understand our own situation today. The humanities, in particular history and literature, have provided the topics, themes, issues, and research materials for the articles. Music of the 1930s was used to complement the interviews and narrative of the radio version of the series.

Much of the credit for this series belongs to two individuals: Katie Armitage, the primary researcher, who wrote many of the articles in this volume; and Rachel Hunter, who produced the radio version of the series for KANU. Judy Batson, Steve Bunch, Donna Butler, Joy Lominska, and Barbara Watkins also helped research and write the series. Glenn Price narrated the radio programs. The project was prepared jointly by the University of Kansas Division of Continuing Education and KANU under the leadership of Barbara Watkins and Howard Hill.

Making Do and Doing Without: Kansas in the Great Depression has been aired on 27 radio stations and published in 80 newspapers across the state. Because of the wide appeal of the series, we have prepared this bound volume as a permanent resource for classroom use and for those individuals who want to know more about life in Kansas in the Great Depression.

Making Do and Doing Without:
Kansas in the Great Depression

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. From Prosperity to the Wall Street Crash

Americans have historically been an optimistic people, and never was their faith in the future more pronounced than in the 1920s. Signs of prosperity abounded. The number of automobiles in Kansas and the nation tripled between 1920 and 1930; highways improved. New consumer goods, refrigerators and radios poured from the nation's factories. If not everyone prospered in the decade after the First World War, and farmers generally did not, almost everyone expected the good times to continue.

Will Rogers, the Oklahoma-born humorist, captured the mood of the nation. "You can't lick this Prosperity thing, even the fellow that hasn't got any is all excited over the idea."

Around 1925 a speculative boom swept the country. Kansas, with its agricultural economy and largely rural population, was not typical of the nation, but the state experienced its own land boom.

Despite low prices for farm products, a new, mechanized style of farming developed on the western plains. Using the powerful new tractors and combines, large-scale farmers rapidly expanded the acreage under cultivation. Some of the new operators were "suitcase farmers." They lived elsewhere and arrived only for planting and harvesting.

Mrs. Ida Watkins, who was dubbed the Kansas "Wheat Queen," exemplified the large operator. In 1926 she harvested 50,000 bushels of wheat from 2,000 acres in Haskell County. Her profit of $75,000 was more than President Coolidge's salary for a year. Like other prosperous farmers, Mrs. Watkins expanded her operation as fast as she could make the down payment and sign the deed for more land. As one Kansas woman later observed, "We speculated in land out here just as city people in the East speculated in General Motors."

Speculation on the New York stock market reached new heights in 1929. On Sept. 3 the Dow-Jones average reached a record high. It seemed yet another sign of prosperity. Even as prices slid the next day and the next, most investors expected the upward trend to return. The market rallied but then slid further downward. In October prices plunged further. The nation's newspapers headlined the story. On Oct. 25, the Topeka Daily Capital reported a "Wild Scene" in the "Most Terrifying Stampede of Selling Ever Experienced." Alarmed bankers and business leaders tried to stem the tide by buying falling stock, but after a brief rally, the plunge continued. On Oct. 29 panicky investors threw 16 million shares on the market. Stock tickers fell hopelessly behind in recording the debacle. As prices tumbled, fortunes vanished. The prosperity bubble had burst.

To many Kansans the Wall Street disaster was a remote event. None of the six papers in Linn County reported the crash in October or November issues. In Emporia, William Allen White, long accustomed to commenting on national affairs, wrote on November 20, 1929:

> Emporia lost practically nothing in the stock crash. A few--perhaps ninety--investors who were able to lose, lost two or three hundred thousand dollars all told. The loss which Emporia will feel will be the indirect loss; the loss which comes to a rural community when the wheels of industry slow down. That may come later and it may be serious. So far, Emporia's loss and the loss of central Kansas generally is in a changed psychology toward saving. Collections are slow. People are holding onto their cash, dreading the worst which possibly won't come.

The worst did not come to Kansas immediately, but within nine months of the crash, the price of wheat fell from a dollar a bushel to 70 cents. That was bad news for Kansas farmers, many of whom were heavily in debt. For people already overextended or just hanging on to jobs, the rapid loss of business confidence, falling production, tightening credit and salary cuts brought immediate distress.

William Burkholder had not prospered even before the crash. His prospects darkened early in 1930. In a diary entry on March 8 he wrote, "The stock market crash while not affecting me directly had a deadly effect on the real estate business activity." Unable to obtain an advance from his hard-pressed employer, Burkholder faced severe hardship.

> I began to be in a most distressed condition, living day by day from hand to mouth and compelled to practice such economies as had never before occurred to me. I had to scheme and wheedle to get enough for daily expenses. I had to delay paying rent which led to unpleasantness with our landlord. Creditors began to dog us--the grocer, utility bills, the laundryman. We had no source of supply to draw on.

By 1931 William Allen White tempered his earlier optimism. In a letter of October 8, he wrote:

> We are going through strange and awful times and I fear worse ahead. Our business here has slumped twenty per cent but we are teetering along in high water up to our chin, hoping we have reached bottom and will begin to climb up.

Kansas and the nation would not completely climb out of the Depression for a decade. The optimism of the American people would be thoroughly tested.

2. The Banks Take a Holiday

The depression that followed the Wall Street crash of 1929 devastated the nation's financial institutions. Bank assets fell as investment values plummeted, loan repayments lapsed and depositors withdrew savings. Across the nation more than 1,000 banks failed in 1930, more than 2,000 in 1931. About 100 Kansas banks closed during those two years as depositors lost money and confidence. By 1933, the banking system was in crisis.

While meeting with legislative leaders in late February 1933, Governor Alf Landon received news of bank troubles in Kansas City. Landon recalled the reaction of Henry Buzick, chairman of the Banking Committee of the Kansas House of Representatives:

> "What bank is that in Kansas City that isn't going to open its door?" I told him. He stopped like I'd hit him and said, "My God, I've got fifty thousand dollars in that bank." He was a banker out in Sylvan Grove. I said, "Well, Henry, I've told you that in confidence, let your conscience be your guide." Finally, when we separated he said, "Oh, I'll not take advantage of it."

A few days later the directors of the Kansas Bankers Association met to consider a proposed law to give the governor and bank commissioner authority to limit withdrawals from Kansas banks. At first, the bankers felt the measure was unnecessary because most Kansas banks were in sound condition compared to many in surrounding states. Governor Landon recalled polling the bankers:

> We went down one side of the room. The room was packed. Chairs were filled on both sides of the room and some were standing. Every banker was against it.

Then two bankers were summoned to the telephone. When they returned, the polling continued.

> Word spread just like wildfire that there was a run on the First National Bank in Kansas City, which was the sacred bell cow of all the banks in this area. . . . I went up the other side of the room and every banker was for it.

Governor Landon called legislative leaders, and they acted with unprecedented speed.

> I explained the situation. Banks were closing all over the country. . . . The legislature was going to adjourn in another week. It had to be passed by unanimous consent, the rules had to be suspended. . . . In two hours time at four o'clock I signed it and it was the law.

Regulations limiting withdrawals from Kansas banks to 5 percent of deposits were in effect only one day. On March 5th, 1933, the newly inaugurated president of the United States, Franklin Roosevelt, declared a national "bank holiday" closing all banks.

Norma Osborne, then a Bern, Kansas, teacher, recalled the widespread uncertainty and fear of the time.

> I can still feel the apprehension and the fear. It was unexpressed but it was there. The atmosphere was just one of not understanding the situation. It seemed that people wanted to draw closer together just as you would when there's a death or any kind of tragedy.

Another Kansas teacher had only a nickel in her purse when the banks closed. Her high school music class had prepared a minstrel show. In the absence of cash the audience was admitted without charge. Personal and business needs were met by credit. No one knew what was going to happen.

During the nine-day moratorium federal and state officials examined all banks. Those found to be in sound condition were certified for reopening. All but 42 of the more than 600 banks in Kansas immediately reopened after the "bank holiday."

Public confidence returned, boosted by the national Banking Act of 1933, which provided for federal guarantee of bank deposits. Kansas bankers initially opposed this measure. The failure of the plan of state guaranteed deposits was fresh in their memories. But Kansas banks gradually joined the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and today advertise their FDIC membership.

Even after the banking crisis, Kansas banks faced hard times. Salaries of employees were cut; stockholders rarely received dividends. Not until after 1935 was banking in Kansas profitable. Kelvin Hoover, a Douglas County banker for more than fifty years, emphasized that agricultural distress in the Depression directly affected banks.

> The farm economy, particularly, was in the most serious position that I have ever known it to be. . . . . It was difficult for the farmers, for example, or commercial businessmen to have enough money to be able to take care of their loans. . . . When it came time to renew them, they couldn't pay the interest. They couldn't do anything.

When the farmers could not come up with even a few dollars in repayment, Hoover accepted farm produce.

> In those days the ladies on the farm had chickens and eggs and my wife and I took every kind of thing we could get to supply the amount for the interest, which was then converted by me into money to pay the bank the interest. . . . Then we renewed the loan and we carried it along until better times arrived.

Hoover's Kaw Valley State Bank of Eudora survived the Depression, but many banks folded or merged with other banks. By 1940 Kansas had only half as many banks as in 1920. The banking system of the state and nation had been transformed and centralized.

3. Dust Bowl Farmer

Lawrence Svobida came to Meade County, Kansas, in 1929 "fired with the ambition to become a wheat farmer." He left ten years later, his dreams turned literally to dust.

In the 1930s a parching drought and depressed prices destroyed many farmers. Svobida was unusual only in that he wrote a book about his experiences, An Empire of Dust, published in 1940.

> I came . . . to take over land my father had owned for a quarter of a century. This southwestern part of Kansas had been exclusively a wheat belt for a number of years. Because of its affinity to the native grasses, wheat will grow where all other crops fail. . . . Here in the past many fortunes have been won and lost.

Wheat farming had spread rapidly and profitably, into the semiarid grasslands of the southwestern plains during the First World War. Kansas farmers helped feed the nation and western Europe. The end of wartime price supports and the recovery of European farmers pushed the price of wheat down. But the great plow up of grassland continued. The new tractors with one-way disk plows sliced easily through the native sod and moved rapidly over vast fields. Wheat land sold for four to five times the price of grassland, and in the late 20s timely rains insured good harvests.

Svobida began farming under the most favorable of circumstances: enough land, up-to-date tractor and combine, and the experience of growing up on a farm. He anticipated his first harvest eagerly.

> I believe any man must see beauty in mile upon mile of level land where the wheat, waist high, sways to the slightest breeze . . . turning golden yellow under a flaming July sun. To me it was . . . the most beautiful scene in all the world.

But within days calamity struck. Two successive hailstorms destroyed the crop.

> Instead of . . . harvesting a big cash crop, I had to set myself to the task of cleaning up the mess the storms had left. I burned over my fields to get rid of the straw and what wheat was exposed above the ground. . . . I had to plow the ground three times.

Though drought threatened Svobida's 1931 crop, rain fell in time. Working 18 to 20 hours a day during harvest, the young farmer was sustained by the elation of success.

> Here was the golden harvest of grain that would justify my two years . . . labor.

But the bumper crop of 1931 pushed prices down from 70 cents a bushel of the year before as the nation slid further into the economic depression.

> Alas! Wheat farming is always a gamble. . . . The bottom dropped out of the market that year, and at thirty to thirty-five cents a bushel for my wheat I barely cleared expenses.

Svobida would have been even more discouraged had he known this was the only full harvest he would reap. A severe drought settled onto the southern plains in 1932.

> When seeding time came in September, I drilled my wheat in dry ground. In January a foot of snow fell, but that was all the moisture we had . . . not enough to make a crop. . . . Most of my remaining wheat fell an easy prey to the first gales of February . . . succeeding gales, which first chopped off the plants even with the ground then proceeded to take the roots out. They did not stop there. They blew away the rich topsoil, leaving the subsoil exposed--a destroying force beyond my wildest imaginings.

Though Svobida did not know it at the time, the methods he and other thousands of farmers used, baring the fields and pulverizing the fine soil, made land vulnerable to wind erosion. Ultimately the Dust Bowl included much of a five-state region.

With no crop cover to hold the dry soil, Svobida struggled to hold onto the land itself. Deep tillage to throw up ridges across the path of the prevailing winds was the only method of stopping the blowing fields.

> In spite of every difficulty I stayed with the job but more gales came to render my efforts useless . . . The winds unleashed their fury . . . and one storm followed closely upon the heels of another until it seemed as if the whole surface of the earth would be blown away.

Dirt blew from fields of neighbors too broke, discouraged or negligent to check the swirling soil. Some of Svobida's fields were covered with one to two feet of fine dust when the gales passed. His health suffered from working long hours in the swirling dust as he tried to save his land.

Many farmers began to leave the Dust Bowl but land could only be sold at ruinous prices. Most farmers were not equipped for other work, nor were jobs available as nationwide unemployment reached record levels. Svobida took advantage of government crop loans but he did not go on relief as many farmers were forced to do. He determined to try one more crop.

> Season after season I had planted two, and sometimes three crops. I had worked incessantly but no effort proved fruitful.

When this 1939 crop was devastated by drought and cut worms, Svobida gave up.

> With my financial resources at last exhausted and my health seriously, if not permanently impaired, I am at last ready to admit defeat and leave the Dust Bowl forever. With youth and ambition ground into the very dust itself I can only drift with the tide.

4. Black Blizzards of the Dirty Thirties

Sunday, April 14, 1935, dawned warm, clear and dry on the southern Great Plains. At noon the Kansas sky was blue. But earlier to the north a high pressure system moved out of the Dakotas and into Wyoming, silently lifting the powder-dry soil. Across eastern Colorado and western Kansas the rolling clouds swept. Picking up more soil as it moved, the storm looked like smoke from an oil fire rising 1,000 feet from the ground.

The "black blizzard" struck Dodge City at 2:40 in the afternoon. Instantly darkness descended. Woody Guthrie's song "The Great Dust Storm" expressed what many experienced.

> It fell across our city like a curtain
> of black rolled down,
> We thought it was our judgment, we thought
> it was our doom.

For three and a half hours the darkness persisted. The dust did not pass until midnight. Everyone in the wide path of this storm remembered it years after the event. A woman who grew up in Liberal recalled,

> I was sure I was going to die. . . . We lit matches and held them before our face and we couldn't see the light unless it was quite near.

Dust storms were severe in 1935 as the drought entered its fifth year. In March southeast Colorado and western Kansas recorded twelve consecutive days of dust storms. Professor Donald Worster in his book, Dust Bowl, wrote,

> Near the end of March a new duster swept across the southern plains, destroying one-half of the wheat crop in Kansas, one-quarter of it in Oklahoma, and all of it in Nebraska--5 million acres blown out. The storm carried away from the plains twice as much earth as men and machines had scooped out to make the Panama Canal, depositing it once again over the East Coast states and the Atlantic Ocean.

During the worst storms in Kansas the area between Garden City and Topeka was almost shut down--traffic stopped, trains derailed, schools closed, hospitals postponed surgery, meetings were cancelled, and business suspended. To venture outside was to risk being lost or suffocated. A seven-year-old boy near Wallace was found dead and almost buried by the dust. Motorists sat in stalled cars for hours unable to see the road. A reporter in Great Bend observed that Lady Godiva could ride through the streets and even the horse would not have seen her.

Martin Chapman, who grew up in Decatur County, remembers how he and his father managed to take care of their livestock during the blinding storms.

> Occasionally it would be time to milk in the worst part of a dust storm. Our barn was about 70 yards from the house. . . . We were concerned we might become lost . . . so we strung a line from the house to the barn to guide us out there and . . . back.

Householders taped windows shut, flapped wet towels in the air to catch the dust, and turned dinner plates upside down. Nothing stopped the fine dust from seeping everywhere. For some the worst experience was sleeping in a dust-laden bed. Cora Holt of Kearny County recalled a five-day storm.

> Sitting up in bed to turn on the light, I noticed the white print of my head on the pillow-case--everywhere else it had taken on a gray-brown color. Everything in the room was covered with a layer of tan silt. The curtains looked like they had been dipped in it. My bedroom slippers had to be emptied before I could put my feet in them.

Shoveling out after the storms became a way of life. Bushels of dirt were removed from homes. A Dodge City man started a business "dusting out" attics after the ceilings of two houses collapsed from the weight of the accumulated dust. Camilla Cave of Dodge City recalls that keeping house was a near impossible task.

> There wasn't anything you could do. You couldn't keep house. A group of us would get together. We would sit and play black jack. Or sometimes we'd play bridge. The cards were gritty, the table was gritty. We'd wipe it off--just no way to keep that dust out.

The "black blizzards" occurred mostly in the early spring months but their consequences were felt year round. Health and morale suffered as the storms continued year after year. An epidemic of respiratory diseases, called "dust pneumonia," broke out. Hospital admissions, infant mortality and adult death rates rose above the state average in the forty-five western counties.

What caused the "black blizzards"? The underlying natural cause was the drought itself. Without moisture, crops and grasses withered, leaving the soil exposed to constant wind. How much the farming and grazing practices contributed to the Dust Bowl disaster is still debated. Historian James Malin pointed out that dust storms occurred on the plains even before the area was settled. On the other hand, two recent books emphasize that overexpansion of cash crops, failure to diversify farming and lack of soil conservation practices contributed significantly to the severity of the storms.

The area of the worst storms shrank in the late '30s. The return of the wet weather cycle stopped the "black blizzards."

Dust storms have recurred since the '30s but, as Cora Holt observed,

We had some day-long storms again two decades later and newspapers coined the phrase "Filthy Fifties," but we old-timers sort of chuckled and said, "They don't hold a candle to the "Dirty Thirties."

5. The Cattleman Makes Do through Drought and Depression

Briefly, in the late 1920s, Kansas cattlemen enjoyed good weather and good prices. As prosperity spread across the land and fashion demanded a slender figure, Americans were eating more beef. This demand pulled beef prices out of their slump.

When O.C. Hicks shopped for a ranch in 1928, the sand hill country of Finney County looked promising. With more than 30 inches of moisture the year before, the native grasses provided excellent grazing for livestock. Hicks purchased 8,000 acres of land just outside Garden City. He respected the carrying capacity of the land and stocked only 50 cows with calves to a 640 acre section. He could not have imagined that even this spare stocking would be impossible in the severe drought years of the 1930s.

Only 10 to 12 inches of moisture fell in western Kansas in 1934. O.C. Hicks recalled:

> The drought was widespread all through the Middle West from the Dakotas to the Gulf of Mexico . . . Ranchers just had to shift their operations or sell their cattle at a very great loss to get along. They just couldn't keep them in the pastures where they had generally operated.

Hicks and other cattlemen scrambled to ship their livestock out of the state or to areas of Kansas where the drought was less severe.

> We rented some land around Eureka, Kansas--that was a favorable Flint Hills area at that time and we had some close friends that we had confidence in and they took good care of these cattle we shipped in the spring of the year.

For cattlemen without the resources of Hicks the situation was desperate. Springs, creeks and wells that had never in memory failed dried up. Many stockmen operated trucks around the clock to haul water and feed to famished herds.

After Governor Landon toured the stricken area of western Kansas, he went into action. He petitioned the Red Cross for immediate aid, persuaded railroads to reduce rates for shipping emergency feed, encouraged his former colleagues in the oil business to loan pipe and pumps to bring in water, and he pressed the federal government for aid.

In 1934 the federal government began the Emergency Cattle Purchase Program. Animals too weak to ship or feed for later slaughter were destroyed on the spot. Cattle strong enough for shipping went to commercial packers for canning. O.C. Hicks recalled:

> We sold a few thin cows one fall through that program . . . but we were fortunate in not having to make that sacrifice with our cow herd . . . We had sold at an earlier time.

In seven months over half a million Kansas cattle were purchased from almost every county in the state. The Emergency Cattle Purchase Program saved thousands of animals from starvation, allowed producers to cull surplus animals, and saved many cattlemen from financial ruin. It also provided meat for people on relief.

The state relief agency, the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee, set up its own canning kitchens in nine Kansas cities. Nine thousand persons on relief were given jobs processing the cattle. Fresh beef was distributed to needy persons, and 13 million large cans of beef were processed for later distribution.

Still the drought held. 1936 was one of the hottest, driest, dustiest years on record. A traveler through western Kansas reported seeing as many tractors as cattle and not enough native grass to fill an overcoat pocket. Many people abandoned their land, loaded what possessions they had in an old car and headed out of the Dust Bowl area.

Ranchers had to adapt to survive the drought and depression. With his cow herd severely cut, O.C. Hicks purchased 3,000 turkeys. He heard they would feed on the grasshoppers then plaguing the area.

> We bought these as young poults and just grew them in the houses until they were old enough to kind of run around. Then we put them together and herded them just kind of like you would herd sheep. I had a man who was real conscientious and he just lived with these turkeys . . . He would take them out early of a morning and make a round of maybe two miles . . . and they would eat grasshoppers. And that was part of their daily feed.

When dust storms rolled over Finney County there was little blowing dirt from the Hicks ranch which had never been plowed. The sandsage anchored the undisturbed soil despite the dry, windy conditions.

When the drought lifted in 1939, Hicks and other cattlemen returned to cattle ranching. During the war years of the 1940s cattle production was a profitable business again. Hicks sold his ranch in 1972 and today parts of his former pastures are fitted with sprinkler systems. A new method of cattle production using feedlots and irrigated fields has come to the short-grass country. Hicks, now retired and living in Garden City, observes the new methods and remembers a time when he temporarily changed his ways to survive as a rancher in the 1930s.

6. Rabbit Drives!

In the 1930s when very little else was thriving in western Kansas, the population of black-tailed jack rabbits exploded. To farmers and ranchers beset by failing crops and falling income, the rabbits were pests to be eliminated.

Camilla Cave, a lifelong resident of western Kansas recalled:

> It was just almost unbelievable--the number of jack rabbits we had at that time . . . They really were dangerous so far as getting rid of any green there was. After they have eaten the vegetation above the ground, they dig down and eat the roots.

Grass was sparse after several years of severe drought. Cattlemen estimated that sixty rabbits ate as much as a cow. Ranchers and farmers asked neighbors to round up and exterminate the fast-breeding rabbits. Organizations such as the American Legion, Farm Bureau chapters, and men's service clubs began sponsoring rabbit drives. Communities competed to see which could stage the most successful drive. Rabbit drives became spectacular public events. Thousands of people participated, tens of thousands of rabbits were killed.

Camilla Cave attended one drive in Gray County.

> The residents gathered on horses, and in cars and on foot to drive the rabbits through the fields and into a large holding pen. And there they were slaughtered. And they were handed out, some to participants who took them home for dinner, or were loaded and skinned and the skins were sold.

County commissions of Lane, Gove, Logan and other counties purchased poultry wire and snow fencing to build the killing pens. Laborers on county work relief sometimes constructed the pens.

Camilla Cave remembered the preparations.

> Deep poles were set [out] covering an area of 40 acres in the center of sixteen to twenty sections of land--that's about 8,000 to 16,000 acres. Then a wire fence was put around it . . . People were lined up on the outskirts of that land, all the way around it. . . . There weren't any guns allowed, just clubs of all kinds, smooth clubs, rough clubs, anything that you picked up.

The drives, held on Sunday afternoons in the late winter and early spring months, were advertised in local newspapers and on handbills. Sometimes drive sponsors provided transportation and coffee. Drive captains directed participants as they moved across the fields.

Minnie Millbrook described a Ness County drive.

> Talking, laughing and singing, the lines moved forward, and the rabbits, startled from their nooks in the field, ran ahead of the line. As the circle shrank, the lines merged with others on either flank until for the last half mile or so of the drive, the lines were two or three deep. It was an exciting finish to see thousands of weaving jacks concentrated in so small a space. But the excitement died and the tender hearted turned away when the men with flailing clubs moved into the traps reducing the splendid leaping jacks into inert bundles of fear.

The Chamber of Commerce of Dighton, Kansas, sponsored a drive on February 19, 1935, that was attended by the Attorney General of Kansas, the state fish and game commissioner, the Lane County attorney and the editor of the Dighton Herald. Joining with 3,000 other citizens, they rounded up 10,000 rabbits. Days earlier 10,000 people surrounded an eight-square-mile area. Over 35,000 rabbits were killed in the most successful rabbit drive recorded in Kansas.

News stories about the rabbit drives aroused animal lovers in eastern Kansas--where there were no jack rabbits--to denounce the events. The editor of the Oakley Graphic replied to the critics.

> The criticism of humane societies and others on the methods being used in western Kansas borders on being silly. There is no other way and the job must be done. It's the rabbits or the crops, and tender feet and those criticizing would best remain away from the scene of action, if such methods are repulsive to them.

A farmer stated, "You wouldn't feel any pity for these rabbits if you lived out here and had to make your living out of the ground."

Making a living was a constant problem for most people in the 1930s. Many were dependent on government relief checks. Western Kansans who prided themselves on solving their own problems were not comfortable in this situation. The rabbit drives afforded an opportunity for the residents to take charge of one of the situations that imperiled them.

Looking back at the rabbit drive phenomenon, historian Tom Isern of Emporia State University concluded,

> The rabbit drives of western Kansas may have been gory events, but dispassionate analysis reveals much in them that was praiseworthy. They were . . . a direct, logical response to an environmental problem. If their success in stopping damage to crops by rabbits was debatable, at least they produced no obnoxious ecological effects. There was

no indiscriminate use of poisons or pesticides. Carcasses of animals were not left to rot but were taken away and put to good use.

The drives also served a valuable social function. During the mid-1930s, under the pressures of depression, dusters, and depopulation . . . it was good for the people to come together and confirm their ability to cooperate against a common problem.

7. The Agony of Unemployment

By the spring of 1933 one-fourth of the nation's workforce--12 to 15 million individuals--was unemployed. Some people had been unemployed for several years and had no job prospects. Of the unemployed, only one-third received relief.

In Kansas the unemployment figure reached 235,000 in 1933. This statistic does not reveal the range or depth of distress. Because of widespread drought, many farm families, who were not included in these numbers, were among the first victims of the Depression. They clung to their land in hopes of better times. For them the three-year drought meant no crops, no cash, and no resources to replace worn-out household goods or clothing. One Graham County farmer commented to a national reporter:

> Some of my folks came out to visit us from the East, and before they came I went to town and bought one towel so they'd have one to use. We haven't been able to buy any for years. Ours was all worn out.

Many gave up and joined the ranks of the jobless in cities and towns. There the signs of economic paralysis, poverty, and unemployment were more visible than on the farms. Shops stood empty and for lease, few cars and trucks were in use, and trains were shorter. In front of local drugstores and county courthouses, unshaven men in faded, patched overalls squatted or stood aimlessly for hours on end.

Others took to the road or the rails. By 1933 more than a million transients were on the move across the nation. Everyday, 1,500 passed through Kansas City. One transient described his experience:

> We make an orange freight. We rode in the reefer (refrigerator car). Clear to Kansas City. It goes like a bat out of hell, a rough ride. We broke through the wire netting and ate the oranges. We got vitamins like mad. But your mouth gets burnt by that acid juice and your teeth get so damn sore from that ride. By the time we got off at K.C., I could hardly close my mouth.
>
> We catch a train into Kansas City, Kansas that night. At the stops colored people were gettin' on the trains and throwin' off coal. You could see people gatherin' the coal. You could see the railroad dicks were gettin' tough.

The scars of the Depression were apparent: in the transient's life, in city breadlines, and in mortgage foreclosures. Talk of suicides increased. But what were the invisible effects: the psychological experience of the agony of unemployment, the loss of self-worth and identity?

William Burkholder, a hard-pressed Wichita real-estate salesman, kept a diary, now in the Kansas State Historical Society, of his experiences in the 1930s:

> For the past six months, I have been in an atmosphere more depressing than I have yet experienced. On all sides are jobless men and women in dire financial need. . . .
>
> Our nerves are already frayed by our long, long period of poverty and humiliation. . . . Our life here has been so tinged with want, abuse, lonliness (sic). . . .
>
> My life has been clouded by the ever-present spectre of poverty. Today, when most men have already begun to lay aside something for their competency, finds me penniless and homeless. How we have existed during the past year is hard to explain.
>
> I dream of what I would like to do if I were able financially: own a home, clear; furniture; car; decent clothes for my family.

Like many others of the 1930s, Burkholder blamed himself for his failures.

> I can't blame my surroundings and connections but must look within myself. The same difficulties would confront me in any business, in any place.

As Burkholder's circumstances weakened, his wife left him and his young son was treated for a variety of physical and mental ailments. After his real-estate ventures collapsed, Burkholder began to sell life insurance.

> This life insurance is showing signs of being as unprofitable as real estate. I wander aimlessly about, calling on a few hopeless prospects a day. I am restless and discouraged and my mind is full of wild plans of buying a paper, promoting another gas well, real estate trades, and over all the incessant financial worry which makes it impossible to concentrate on any subject.
>
> My situation of late has been more hopeless, financially, than ever before, absolutely destitute, credit gone, no income--our situation has become one of actual want for daily bread.

The depression and deprivation William Burkholder experienced in the 1930s were shared by countless others. Nathan Ackerman, a New York psychiatrist during the Great Depression, observed the effect of unemployment on men and their families:

[The men] hung around on street corners and in groups. They gave each other solace. They were loath to go home because they were indicted as if it were their fault for being unemployed. These men suffered from depression. They felt despised, they were ashamed of themselves. They cringed, they comforted one another. They avoided home.

8. Luxury or Necessity?: Relief Efforts in the Great Depression

Ask people over fifty what they remember about the Great Depression and they're likely to answer: "relief." For many, relief was spelled WPA, PWA or CCC. From private, local ventures to the giant Works Progress Administration (WPA), relief programs were everywhere. Their presence both contradicted and supported the American Dream:

> The promise of America was not affluence, but independence; not ease, but a chance to work for oneself, to be self-supporting, and to win esteem through hard and honest labor.

On the positive side relief meant new roads, bridges, parks and schools. On the negative side were cries of boondoggles, political deals, and government handouts. Controversy aside, by 1935 relief had become part of the American way of life. In Kansas nearly one out of five individuals received some form of relief. A Saline County administrator commented:

> Three years ago we had to beg people to accept a little money to get by. . . . The next year they were taking relief gladly. This year they are demanding it.

In his second inaugural address, Kansas Governor Alf Landon outlined government's role in relief efforts:

> Every right-thinking person prays that the need for relief to the unemployed may speedily pass away, but until it does pass it's entirely fair that in a complex social and economic situation such as ours, that government exert all its powers to prevent suffering.

It hadn't always been that way. In 1930 President Hoover opposed a public works bill:

> Government is not a . . . general employer of labor. There are times when private enterprise fails. In such periods society must assume the care of those who are unable to help themselves. The primary obligation is upon the local political division where such conditions exist.

When money from Washington became available in 1932, Kansas relief efforts were coordinated by the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee under the direction of John Stutz. During its five years of operation, the nonpartisan KERC spent forty million dollars helping the needy. Work relief projects ranged from mattress factories to lake construction, from subsistence gardens to courthouse repair. In 1934 alone, welfare expenses in Kansas were equal to the total amount expended in the previous decade.

By 1932 it became clear that the crisis was too much for private charities and local government to handle. For two years America had wrestled with the dilemma of the unemployed and come up short. Unemployment devastated the spirit, sapped the strength and emptied the pocketbook.

Late in 1933 President Roosevelt agreed to set up the Civil Works Administration, headed by Harry Hopkins. Its goal was to put four million people to work by Christmas. It did even better than that. In Dodge City a New York Times correspondent reported:

> The sudden shift of 40,000 men and women from pauperdom to employment at a living wage has transformed the relief situation in Kansas.

Under the CWA Kansas City foremen and supervisors were paid $30.00 by the city for a six-day work week; laborers earned $11.00 for a three-day week. One subforeman recalled his crew in the program, fondly referred to as "Come Work Awhile."

> They were good workers. They worked steady. . . . They didn't ridicule it (the work). It seemed to be more like a lark to them than anything else. It kept them from starving. Everybody felt like they were more or less in a fraternity of bad luck.

How necessary were the relief efforts? Opinions varied. One case worker, Jean Clark of Atchison County, described her clients:

> I never saw such pitiful despair. . . . They didn't know where their next meal was coming from. . . . People didn't apply (for relief) until they were absolutely in severe need of it.

In her regular visits, Miss Clark distributed to the needy lard, butter, and pork from the back seat of her car.

The businessman's view of relief programs was different:

> [People who are on relief] are the same bunch that always lived on the other side of the railroad tracks. Relief brought 'em out of their holes. This thing has got to stop.

Data from one Kansas community indicates, however, that ninety percent of people on the Gray County aid list had never asked for relief before.

By 1935 President Roosevelt was ready to establish massive work programs in place of direct relief:

> Continued dependence upon relief induces a spiritual and moral disintegration fundamentally destructive to the national fiber. . . . We must preserve not only the bodies of the unemployed from destitution but also their self-respect, their self-reliance and courage and determination.

9. The Alphabet Agencies of the New Deal at Work in Kansas

The Civilian Conservation Corps, the first and most popular of the New Deal relief agencies, enrolled young men between 18 and 25 to work on soil, water and forestry projects. The United States Army transported, fed, clothed, and organized camps for the men who built their own barracks in the countryside. Melvin Sauers of Lyons, Kansas, wrote from a CCC camp in Minnesota in 1935.

> As we stood in naked rank at Wichita, being examined by Army doctors, I could not help wondering when most of those about me had eaten a good, square meal. Those same fellows have today . . . added about 15 pounds in weight due to simple, yet ample, nourishing food.

The CCC, with its rigorous daily schedule of physical training, outdoor labor and evening study seemed an ideal solution to the problem of unemployed youth roaming the country in search of jobs in the Depression years. The brain child of Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt, the CCC was warmly supported by Kansas Republicans, United States Senator Arthur Capper, and Governor Alfred Landon.

Soon after Congress passed the bill authorizing the measure, Kansas county relief officials selected 1,000 men to work for six months on five Kansas projects. Most of the work in drought-stricken Kansas aimed at soil and water conservation. Kansas communities competed for camps. The president of the Atwood Chamber of Commerce wrote the CCC director in 1935 to commend company 731 for the benefits it brought the community and for the conduct of the men. He concluded:

> There is a place in this community for the organization as long as the Government will permit it to remain.

Leah Castle of Oberlin, Kansas, remembers dances where townspeople and CCC men mingled.

> I knew some of the boys that were with the CCC. In fact I have a cousin that married one of the boys that was at the camp at that time.

The CCC was designed not only to benefit those enrolled but also to remove their families from the relief rolls. Twenty-five of the enrollee's $30 pay was sent home. Sauers wrote:

> To be right honest about it, . . . the $5.00 allowance at first seemed a mere pittance . . . I learned it was my sole income and it had to buy a month's supply of soap, stamps, razor blades, shaving soap, tooth paste and perhaps a couple of show tickets. After that the rest is mine and no financial worries for another month.

By 1936 Kansas had 37 camps enrolling 3,331 men. Two thousand families of men in the CCC went off relief.

During nine years of operation the CCC employed 2 1/2 million men in the United States. Some young women were eventually enrolled in a few education camps. Blacks worked in segregated camps. The superintendent of the Colored Rescue Mission of Kansas City complained to President Roosevelt, "Negroes can't get into the CCC." In 1938 a camp enrolling black men from Kansas and nearby states opened in Parsons. The Parsons Sun commented a year later, "On the whole, the operation of the CCC camp here has been very successful."

The CCC might have become a permanent organization had war in Europe not shifted the nation's attention to defense and wiped out unemployment. The agency was so successful that similar projects are periodically suggested to combat present-day unemployment and environmental problems.

While the CCC enjoyed public support, the WPA, the biggest, costliest, most noticeable and controversial relief agency, never lacked for critics. In 1936 William Allen White chided the WPA operation.

> To most of those millions on relief, Works Progress has been just as demoralizing as the dole. The projects on which they idle away their time have no purpose other than to keep them occupied.

But The Plaindealer of Wichita praised WPA flood control projects, drought relief measures, farm-to-market roads, schools and airports construction and concluded, "If this be boondoggling, let the good work continue."

The WPA began operation in Kansas in 1935, taking over the work relief programs of the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee. In the next year over 40,000 Kansans were employed on projects that ranged from nine women sewing for needy families in Kearny County to the building of the half-million-dollar Wichita airport. In many Kansas towns the WPA constructed the first modern water and sewage facilities. Rural sanitation improved with the construction of thousands of WPA outhouses built to specifications for $35.00. A variety of projects employed white-collar workers. The writers' project compiled the first guidebook to the state, and the artists' project completed post office murals in Seneca and other Kansas towns.

During eight years of operation the WPA spent fifteen billion dollars nationally, much of which went to individuals. The program lasted until 1943, when the war effort against Germany and Japan consumed the nation's attention and resources and employed all workers.

10. Federal Dollars Rescue Kansas Farmers

Of the many New Deal reforms, the one that had the greatest impact on the Kansas economy was the Agricultural Adjustment Act, better known as the Triple A. Before millions of AAA dollars were pumped into the hands of farmers, the rural economy was in desperate straits. Dewey McCormick, who was a county agent during the Depression years, recalled the farmers' plight:

> I'll tell you, after working with those farmers and seeing some of 'em throw in the towel, good friends of mine, losing everything they had--I tell you, I was glad for anything that could get to 'em. Men, in normal times they'd been successful, so they kept expanding their operation and borrowing. Then when it got to the tight place, they couldn't pay off. I had a farmer come to me and tell me what happened to him, with the tears running down his face.

Days after his inauguration in March 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to take unprecedented action to meet the crisis. Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace and his aides drafted a farm bill that incorporated several programs to combat the farm depression. Since overproduction had driven prices to ruinous levels, farmers were paid to take land out of production and to reduce their livestock. To dramatize the immediate necessity to raise prices, farmers who had already planted crops were paid to plow them up.

With pork selling for 3 cents a pound liveweight, Secretary Wallace arranged the purchase of 6 million newborn pigs that were slaughtered and given to the needy. Production restrictions for farmers participating in the program presented some practical problems. A Douglas County farmer wrote the Baldwin Ledger.

> I have a pure-bred Chester White sow out here on my farm that has farrowed a litter of 12 nice white pigs. . . . This is really more than her legitimate number and I would not mind seeing some of them killed for human consumption; but I am afraid some New Deal brain truster will come around and try to drown some of them.

The aim of the AAA was to raise the purchasing power of farmers to an equitable level with industry, by providing a parity of incomes and prices of the prosperous years, 1900-1914. Though complaints about red tape, regulation, and bureaucracy abounded, farmers needed the checks and accepted the program. In drought-stricken Haskell County, 99% of the wheat farmers signed contracts with the AAA by mid-September of 1933.

In the first two years of the program, almost a million dollars of wheat checks revived the economy of Haskell County. Farmers in all of Kansas received 87 million dollars from the AAA, the third largest total benefits of any state behind Iowa and Texas. The AAA raised farm income and brought a new factor to the agricultural economy.

Historian Tom Isern of Emporia State University commented on the significance:

> The biggest impact of the AAA on Kansas farmers was it connected them in a way they never had been before with the federal government. Now the federal government is an integral part of making production decisions on the farm with its programs for taking acreage out of production by several different devices and its programs for price support through the loan rate as was prescribed in the early legislation.

Larger producers gained the most from the AAA as benefits were based on the amount of the acreage owned. There was no ceiling on the amount of benefits, a precedent that remains in effect today. In 1939 a western Kansas farmer complained to Senator Arthur Capper, who supported most New Deal farm legislation:

> Why can't the little fellow on the family sized farm who has no other means of making a living receive a nice benefit payment if he curtails production and let the big speculator work out his own salvation?

The federal agency that aimed to bolster and guide the smaller farmers was the Farm Security Administration, which led a brief and troubled existence. From 1936 to 1940 the FSA made rehabilitation loans, gave tenants loans to purchase land, and resettled destitute families. While most farmers accepted AAA aid, only a minority applied for help from the FSA.

One Kansas family that was able to reverse its fortunes with FSA help lived in the Goodland area. In 1936 the Everett Krafts eked out a living with WPA jobs, 3 cows, a few chickens, drought-plagued crops. With a loan and advice from the FSA, they began to keep better records, to diversify their crops and to grind their own chicken feed to increase production. They worked hard and made good trades.

> We traded a cow for a building. It was our poorest cow and she was only bringing in $2 to $3 a week. Now the additional chickens we can take care of are making us from $10 to $12 a week.

In 1940 when the rains returned, the Krafts owned bulging bins of grain, a fine garden, and a cave stocked with jars of canned vegetables.

11. Making Ends Meet: Self-Sufficient Living in the Great Depression

As the Depression deepened in the 1930s, Kansans sought ways to become more self-sufficient.

With unemployment on the rise, some families decided to leave city life behind and take their chances on the farm. In 1935 Governor Alf Landon recognized this back-to-the farm movement in his second inaugural address:

> The economic tide has swept millions out of cities in search of employment or subsistence, on to farms, into suburban areas to do part-time farming, into smaller cities and towns.

From 1930 to 1935, the number of farms in Kansas increased by 8,000, reversing a long trend of movement from farm to city. The back-to-the-farm movement took place primarily in eastern Kansas. The main advantage of living on a farm was the opportunity to raise food.

Whether in the city or country, nearly everyone had a garden. Pigs, chickens and cows provided meat, eggs, milk and butter for the family, and often eggs and cream to sell for much-needed cash. Wild foods supplemented the diet. Rabbits, raccoons, squirrels and opossums provided meat; berries, nuts and greens added variety.

Those who raised gardens and animals generally ate well enough during the Depression. Lois Houston, who grew up near Williamsburg during the thirties, remembered:

> We had a nice fruit orchard, we had meat and vegetables, and we had all the staples, and I can't remember ever going hungry.

But drought and grasshoppers made raising food difficult during much of the Great Depression. Jean Clark remembered the effects of heat and drought on her parents' garden near Atchison:

> Our garden was just burned, along with the fields. We had early beets. My mother canned all the beets she could, and we ate beets in every way we could the whole doggone year. And I hate beets to this day.

Even farmers bought some groceries. Although many raised wheat, it was either sold, fed to the pigs or cooked as cereal. Nearly everyone bought white flour for bread. Salt, baking powder, coffee and sugar were also purchased.

When women could not afford to buy cloth, they saved cloth sacks from sugar, flour or feed. A family living in Jefferson County, assisted by friends, gathered wool stuck on the barbed wire around sheep pastures. The wool was cleaned, carded and made into a warm comforter.

The Farm Security Administration sponsored classes in sewing, nutrition and marketing produce. Many farmers resisted governmental advice, and often wives dragged their husbands to meetings.

The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee also promoted self-sufficiency. This state agency provided vegetable seeds and supervised the donation of garden plots. Gardens were inspected and awards given for the best plots. County home economists held canning schools to preserve surplus produce.

The Kansas Emergency Relief Committee encouraged organized barter, but few people had surplus goods to trade. Although governmental attempts to organize barter were abandoned with the arrival of work relief, individuals continued to barter.

Doctors and dentists often received goods, rather than pay, for their services. When Ethel Holey couldn't afford a new pair of glasses, she took eggs and dressed chickens to the doctor in Lawrence on Saturdays in exchange for the glasses.

Eggs, chickens, butter and cream were common items of barter. Margurete Langdon recalled a trade her parents made when they moved from the city to a farm near Oskaloosa in 1931:

> We needed a rooster for the first year we were out there, for our hens, so we would have fertile eggs. . . . I had a satin dress that had a lot of ruffles, the skirt was made of ruffles, and there was one of our neighbor ladies who needed a good dress, so we traded the dress to her for a couple of roosters.

As in the past, farmers traded labor during threshing, haying and wood cutting. In Kearny County, the Lakin Independent ran a swap column. Some of the ads on March 3, 1933, were:

> Want to swap a turkey gobbler for a turkey hen. . . .
> Will swap a subscription to the Lakin Independent for meat, produce or poultry. . . .
> Will swap running gears of wagon for corn. . . .

For some, life during the thirties was not very different from other times. They had always raised their own food and been frugal with their resources. They weathered the times and stayed. For others, life was more difficult. The drought made farming and gardening undependable, particularly for the inexperienced. Grasshoppers and blackbirds devoured the plants that survived the drought. The back-to-the-farm movement declined after 1935. Many left their farms, and some left Kansas, in search of a better life.

12. Parasites or Providers: Women's Work in the Great Depression

The carefree flapper, symbolic of the 1920s, turned into the hard-working woman of the 1930s who shouldered heavy family responsibilities. The post-war revolution of manners and morals was a thing of the past. During this period there was little progress toward economic equality for women. The Depression itself was primarily responsible.

Some women who worked were viewed with hostility. One Kansan wrote President Roosevelt in 1933:

> Get the thieving parasite women out of business. The married women who are employed and who have a husband also employed at a substantial salary . . . and the unmarried women who come from homes where the income is sufficient . . . are stealing the living of many deserving men and women who are walking the streets hungry.

Most Americans agreed with the Congressman who asserted that "woman's work should be making one good man a good wife and properly rearing a family." Responses to a 1936 Gallup poll indicated that 82 percent of the American public opposed wives working when their husbands held jobs. Three-fourths of the women polled agreed with this position. One Kansas woman who remained single commented:

> In the '30s if a man had a job, his wife didn't even hope to get a job. If a wife went to work, she just eliminated her husband from the job market. . . . No one would hire two people from one family. . . . People sometimes didn't get married because of the fact that they each had a job and, if they got married, one of them would be out of a job.

Some couples married in secret because restrictive rules and legislation prevented wives from working in school districts, government, and large companies. Despite the antagonism toward employing married women, many continued to work. In fact, the number of married women in the labor force increased by almost 50 percent in the decade between 1930 and 1940. Most worked because they had to. When husbands became unemployed, the task of keeping families together usually fell to their wives. But working women averaged only $525 yearly income--half that of men. Usually their jobs were menial or part-time in domestic service, canning factories, or clerical positions.

Whatever their class, motivation, or education, women were concentrated in occupations categorized as "women's work." Men tended to be employed in industry. Ironically, this separation of labor helped keep women employed.

Throughout the Depression women were less affected by the cutback in the paid labor force. Even the most desperate men would not consider employment in women's jobs.

Despite this ironic security, between two and four million women were unemployed during the Depression. Data on these women is sparse. They simply faded into the woodwork. Laid off one by one, they did not join the breadlines. Most went home to work even harder.

Taking in laundry and boarders, dressmaking, baking goods to sell--all of these activities were part of a necessary revival of domestic industry. One Kansas farmwife, commenting on the self-sufficient household, said that the Depression and war years were:

> one of the worst periods for trying to get along on nothing. It was 'use it up, wear it out, make it do or do without.' And believe me, no truer words were ever spoken because that's exactly the way we lived.

Many women remained single in the Depression to help support their parents and siblings. Jean Helen Clark, who worked as a social worker in Atchison and Leavenworth counties, described the dilemma she faced:

> I had my family to help, my younger brothers and sisters to send through school. The fellow I went with had his parents to support. We dated for seven years, and then he married someone else.

Like Miss Clark, some of these who put off marriage then never did start families of their own. In Kansas the number of marriages dropped from 21,041 in 1929 to 16,891 in 1932, a modern low. The birth rate also declined from 17.4 per thousand in 1929 to 15.9 in 1936.

In Kansas, as hard times held on, the barnyard trio of the hen, the cow, and the sow helped keep farm families going. The farmer's wife, who previously had raised hens to sell eggs for pin money, now used all three to provide staples and to help family finances. Carleen Howieson, a Horton librarian, remembers her mother raising chickens in order to sell them to Day's Cafe.

Some women recall the difficulties of the Depression and working harder than they ever did in their lives. Other Kansas women would echo the comments of Mildred Sealey, whose family farmed near Liberal:

> Those were the happy days. We didn't have much of anything but each other. There was a lot of love and self-respect. We all worked together to make things turn out. We didn't have any money. It's really great what you can do without money.

13. The Stress of Survival: Family Life in the 1930s

American families at all income levels were hit hard by the Depression. For the poor, life was a struggle, as it had always been. Many families that had achieved a marginal independence once again had to rely on others. The middle class clung to what it had.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt agonized over the nation's plight:

> I see millions of families trying to live on incomes so meager that the pall of family disaster hangs on them day by day. I see one third of a nation ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished.

In the face of economic adversity, the number of marriages dropped by a fourth. Couples put off having children until things got better. The divorce rate dropped early in the Depression--probably because few people could afford the cost of settlement or a lawyer. But the rate of desertion--the poor man's divorce--rose. Some families were split apart as fathers were forced to leave home to seek jobs elsewhere. Others that couldn't pay mortgages were evicted and lost their homes altogether.

In the Depression many families took on a different shape. To the nuclear family were often added indigent relatives. Generations crowded together in cramped quarters. Jean Clark, a social worker in the 1930s, commented:

> I remember one family in Atchison. There were 16 living together in two rooms. The parents had a bed; the children slept on sacks on the floor and this was all they had.
>
> There were people who moved in with their parents; there were older people who moved in with their children.

Decreased income often had to be stretched beyond the immediate family. As fathers sought to escape unemployment, sons sometimes became the primary breadwinner--at a substantially reduced income. Mothers took in laundry or ironing and struggled to shore up the family finances. Jean Clark remembered:

> In my family, my mother took over the management of the money because she could squeeze a nickel till it looked like a quarter. Dad had always been a very generous person but he was not that kind of a manager. . . . Women had been used to making do with small amounts and stretching money. . . . They could substitute one thing they had for something they needed. I don't think men are accustomed to doing that. They're used to making the money and spending it for the things that they need.

Despite the hard times, the standard of living remained relatively high for families of wage earners. According to a national Bureau of Labor Statistics profile, the typical middle-class family had a gross income of $1,348 in 1935. A Bureau official compared lives of Depression families with those twenty years earlier:

> Their diets more nearly approach the recommendation of specialists in human nutrition; they have houses with better lighting; many of them are able to travel more because they have automobiles. The change in the ideas of these workers as to how they ought to live has resulted in fundamental changes in their expenditure patterns.

Luxuries were few, however. Three-quarters of the family budget was used to cover the bare necessities--food, shelter and clothing. Only three percent of families owned their own homes. Margarine replaced butter in many urban homes, and Jello became the All-American dessert. One journalist recalled:

> There were no labor-saving gadgets in our house. Bread was toasted in the gas oven, dishes were washed in the sink, housecleaning was done with a broom and carpet sweeper, the iceman delivered a 50-pound cake of ice every other day to the ponderous refrigerator.

Diminished income, widespread unemployment and crowded quarters created a stressful environment for many families, Jean Clark recalled:

> There were tensions there, I'm sure but everybody was just doing their best to get by. . . . There were tensions that people today would have probably exploded. They would have gone to a psychiatrist; they would have beaten somebody up. They were just hunching their shoulders and determined to get by.
>
> I think families almost clung together. . . . It was several years later before I had to worry about placing children or about abused children. Then, abuse was something that didn't occur because there was just such a terrific load of hopeless feeling. When you see families that are without so much, you might not have even noticed a bruise on the child. . . . I was struck by the deprivation and the grimness and the feeling of hopelessness.

Studies have indicated that stable families became more unified in the Depression, while problems of unstable families sometimes became worse. In their book Middletown in Transition, Robert and Helen Lynd commented:

> Each family seems to wish wistfully that the depression did not happen to it, while at the same time feeling that the depression has in a vague general way "been good for family life."

Mona McCoy, who grew upon a farm near Liberal in the 1930s, shares that impression:

> It was a really hard life, but I never heard my parents complain about that. They worked well together. It was a shared venture all the way through that everybody seemed to think was important.

14. Growing Up in the Great Depression

Many Kansans who grew up in the 1930s remember life in the Great Depression with a tempered nostalgia. They know that they can't bring back that era--nor do many of them want to--but they recall its simple pleasures and comforts. And disappointments.

In our mind's eye, we can see the child of the Depression romping barefoot, in overalls and a floursack shirt, through the morning dew. But this carefree image may be misleading. Often that Kansas child was on the way to the barn or field to help with the chores.

Donna Biggerstaff, who grew up on a farm near Arnold in Ness County, remembered her daily responsibilities:

> My job was going out with the boys and my mother to gather the eggs and feed cows and milk. . . . It was always my job to see that the lunches were packed for morning for school. When we'd all get through doing the chores, I would have to help in the kitchen to get our evening meal. . . . Our evening meal over with and our homework done, it was time to go to bed to get up early in the morning and start all over again.

Farm children worked in the fields alongside their parents; they knew early the cruelty and rewards of nature's whims. Mona McCoy remembered the anxieties of the growing seasons in western Kansas:

> I think they must have been hard on my parents but I don't remember any of that filtering down to us. . . . We didn't feel any sense of desperation or anxiety . . . except in connection with how the wheat crop went. . . . Our whole existence hinged on a good wheat crop.

Although a good crop was cause for celebration, farm families didn't have a lot even in the best of times. Struggling to make ends meet was not an experience new to the Depression. It had always been that way.

For children, hand-me-downs and recycling were a way of life. Nothing was thrown away. A worn-out tire could become a tire swing and its inner tube cut into rubber bands. Tin cans found along the road were a luxury, not litter. One can could make a kazoo and two--a real find--were just right for tom walkers or a two-way telephone.

When material goods were few and hard to come by, the best resource was the imagination. Donna Biggerstaff remembered:

> There was a large grove of trees behind the house. And my brother . . . he liked to play with cars . . . We would make tunnels and play with the cars . . . I'd dress the kittens in my doll clothes. We just created our own entertainment.

In contrast, children who lived in town seemed to have resources to stagger the imagination. Cast-off lumber scavenged from alleys could become a scootmobile, cigar-box castoffs from the drugstore provided the makings for a homemade string band. City youngsters also seemed to have more time on their hands--for marbles, cops and robbers, street baseball, and sessions with the yo-yo man. Dick Treece remembered growing up in Lawrence:

> I was a youngster of about twelve to fifteen years of age and had outgrown the marbles and top spinning era. . . . We were not subject to the barnyard influence, I'll call it . . . as most country youngsters would be. Pets were at a minimum in town and usually a job of some sort prevailed but not chores. . . . In a university town there were always the sporting events; summer time brought camping trips, tent camping . . . fishing and travel.

For many rural youth the high point of the week was the Saturday trip to town. Dressed in clean clothes the family went together--by car, foot or horsecart. Mona McCoy remembered their weekly trip to Liberal:

> We got to dress up and we spent the entire day in town. My parents would buy things; we'd go shopping. And we would stay over Saturday night and eat dinner in a restaurant and go to a movie.

Saturday was the high point in the week, but Christmas was the day Kansas children looked forward to all year. For some, however, even a joyous Christmas left invisible scars that were evident only years later. Donna Biggerstaff recalled:

> I knew that things were really tight and that we couldn't expect much for Christmas. But my brother was only about five. And he kept telling me that he wanted a pedal car . . . I just knew that there was no way he was going to get a pedal car. So Christmas Eve, he woke me . . . and he said, "Listen . . . Santa's out there and he's putting a pedal car under the tree for me." . . . We got clothes and maybe he got a little car or something . . . and a pair of boots and boot socks. He was pleased. And I hadn't thought any more about him being disappointed because he never said anything. Till he got married and had his first child and the very first thing he bought before that kid was old enough to hardly sit up was a pedal car.

Although many Kansans who grew up in the Depression do not seem to have suffered either physically or psychologically, others were not so fortunate. Jean Clark, a social worker in Atchison and Leavenworth counties, described the fate of children whose families split apart or whose parents could no longer provide for their children:

> We didn't have foster homes. . . . They'd be more likely to go to the orphan home. . . . They might go to Winfield; they might go to any institution that had a bed. . . . They were not too discriminating in placing children.

Nationally, as many as 200,000 children and youths left home to seek refuge and food and jobs. Among these transients were girls disguised as boys. A national survey of transients reported that

> the overwhelming majority of them are young men and boys who would normally be in school or at work; . . . they are "on the road" because there is nothing else to do--sometimes because sheer pride will not permit them to sit idle at home--sometimes because support for the whole family came from a relief agency and was wholly inadequate to properly feed the younger children.

Whether children and youths stayed or left home, they were often thrust at an early age into the role of adults. In his study Children in the Great Depression, sociologist Glen H. Elder, Jr., assessed the contribution of many children to the households of the 1930s:

> These children had productive roles to perform. . . . They were needed . . . and they had the chance and responsibility to make a real contribution to the welfare of others.

15. Schools and Students Scrimped to Get By

When funds from tax payers and private donors dried up with the weather in the 1930s, Kansas had difficulty maintaining its schools and colleges. Public schools cut payrolls, reduced services and postponed maintenance. Some private colleges delayed paying their faculty and several permanently closed. Students scrimped to get by.

Kansas public schools depended almost entirely on local property taxes. By 1932, over 21% of all farm taxes were delinquent. In Greeley County, only 25% of the taxes could be collected. The plight of an Emporia Gazette subscriber was typical.

> I can't pay my taxes this winter. How can a farmer keep going on 15-cent corn, four-cent hogs and milk and cream so cheap it hardly pays to bring the stuff to town?

When the Wichita School Board cut its budget by eight percent in 1932, the Chamber of Commerce demanded greater reductions. But representatives of the Parent Teacher Association insisted, "The children of the depression are deserving of as much as the children of prosperity."

School children were largely unaware of money woes. Carleen Howieson remembered riding her pony a mile and a half to attend Brown County's Hickory Grove School, one of 7,000 one-room schools.

> I liked my school. . . . I thought our teachers were great . . . I don't see any fault with the school system . . . except for one thing. Desperately we needed to make some kind of arrangements to have more books available to us . . . We had a set of Compton's Picture Encyclopedias and just no books, no books at all.

Textbooks, printed by the state and purchased by parents, were handed down to brothers and sisters and sometimes shared with other pupils. Mildred Walker, who taught in Republic County rural schools, remembered asking the school board for books to teach social studies, a new part of the curriculum.

> Those school libraries were so outdated. . . . Every year I would try to get them to buy reference books. We had no materials. . . . They didn't think they had money to do it.

Mildred Walker taught all subjects to ten pupils in eight grades, kept the stove going in winter and cleaned the building all year. She received $50.00 a month for the eight-month school year. Still, she felt fortunate to have a job when teachers were in oversupply.

Teachers in towns and cities enjoyed higher salaries and a month longer school year than rural teachers. But salaries of Kansas teachers in rural and urban schools fell almost 25 percent below the national average in 1933-34. Most teachers took salary cuts two years in a row. The Kansas legislature required local government agencies to operate on a cash basis and set limits on local tax levies.

Salaries in state colleges and the University of Kansas were cut from ten to twenty-five percent and positions were elmininated in a number of departments. College students saved money in ingenious ways. Camilla Cave recalled her student days at the University of Kansas.

> Particularly in 1932-33 we really felt the pinch. I was there with my sister and we had very little money to spend on clothes or food. We ate at a boarding house where we could have a decent meal a day. . . . Another way I ate was to have dates. I was always hungry. Or on Sunday I would get invited to fraternities.

Orry Walz worked at a variety of part-time jobs and even lived in Lawrence for a year in a Model-A Ford sedan to save rent money. Walz described his routine for the Kansas City Star in 1933.

> When I awoke in the morning, if it was cold weather, I would light my oil burner, and while the car was heating up, I would dress and make the bed. On the running board outside was a pint of milk the dairyman had left. I would get that in and put the milk in the pan to boil, and set up slices of bread all around the pan to toast.

Beginning in 1934 the College Student Employment Project aided more than 4,000 students at 41 Kansas colleges. Later the National Youth Administration helped needy college and high school students stay in school.

New Deal relief programs affecting education were generally welcomed by Kansas educators though many feared that federal funds meant federal control. Funds administered by the Kansas Emergency Relief Committee allowed public schools to employ extra teachers to tutor pupils, nurses to see to health problems, and women to cook hot lunches. Later the Works Progress Administration, the WPA, employed teachers to operate nursery schools, summer recreation programs, and adult education classes in many Kansas towns.

School and college classrooms built during the Depression took advantage of federal funds. Between 1933 and 1939 the Public Works Administration provided money to fund more than 70 percent of all schools built across the country. Wyandotte High School in Kansas City, Douglas Elementary School in Manhattan, and New York Elementary School in Lawrence are among many Kansas schools built with PWA or WPA funds.

Though federal programs helped education in the 1930s, local community support continued to be the most important source of funds. When Ottawa University was critically short of money in 1933, the city of Ottawa raised $18,000 for the Baptist institution. As economic conditions slowly improved after 1934, public schools received more support from taxes. Teachers'

salaries inched upward. State funds were appropriated for the most needy school districts in 1937. By the end of the decade the financial crisis afflicting Kansas schools had lifted, but the scars of the Depression lingered for years.

16. Governor Alf Landon of Kansas

A 1936 campaign advertisement asked, "Isn't It about Time to Send a Kansan to the White House?" For the first and only time a major political party nominated a resident Kansan for the presidency of the United States.

Alfred M. Landon's rise to national prominence was rapid. Only four years earlier he had first run for governor of Kansas. An attractive candidate in 1932, Landon was calm, he listened, he had a record of success as an independent oil producer. Governor Landon recalled his first campaign.

> I started my campaign around the first of May. I had an old car. I got a driver who didn't have any job. I paid his expenses. He was hoping to get an appointment . . . if I was elected. . . . It was physically exhausting to drive your own car and cover the towns I was going to cover. I didn't overlook any of those little towns out in those western counties.

The 3-way race of Landon; J.R. Brinkley, the Milford goat-gland doctor; and incumbent governor Harry Woodring was one of the most colorful ever in a state known for its political characters. Traveling in his official car, Governor Woodring stumped the state for his own reelection and for the candidacy of Democratic presidential nominee Franklin Roosevelt. Campaigning in his silver Cadillac, Dr. Brinkley promised a lake in every county and free textbooks for school children. Visiting 5 to 10 towns a day in his 1928 Ford, Landon met people on the street and in their work places.

> My basic issue from start to finish was to cut the cost of government to a minimum by reducing not the government services, but reducing the waste that permeated a good bit of them, by too many employees, and so forth. That was the basic issue, and I stuck to it from start to finish.

In a close contest Kansans elected Republican Landon governor but, despite the presence of Kansan Charles Curtis on the national Republican ticket, gave their presidential vote to Roosevelt. Landon was one of only four Republican governors elected in the Democratic party sweep at a time when President Hoover bore the brunt of the voters' distress with the deepening depression.

When Landon took office in January 1933, millions were out of work across the nation. In the state capital of Topeka, more than 4,000 were jobless. Farm income across the state was half what it had been four years earlier, and Kansas counties were running out of relief money. Landon was besieged by 15,000 people seeking the 200 state jobs he had at his disposal. The governor remembers the harrowing experience.

> My office was packed for sixty days. . . . I went out and shook hands with everyone of them, men begging with tears in their eyes for a job to save their farms, or their business, to send their boys or girls to college. . . . Of course, I couldn't take care of all of them. I emptied the office, and within thirty or forty minutes it was filled again.

For months Landon worked nonstop dealing with bank, farm, and relief crises afflicting the state and with the new measures flowing from Washington.

> I cut the appropriations for the executive mansion. The state auditor went to Mrs. Landon and said you can't operate that mansion as low as I've fixed it. I said, "That's too bad. We're cutting everybody else twenty-five percent, honey; we've got to cut ours."

To ease the threat of foreclosure facing many thousands of Kansas farmers, Governor Landon appointed county committees to work for mortgage extensions.

> I know personally of a lot of mortgages that were worked out and redeemed, but some of them weren't. . . . There were farm mortgage riots in every state adjoining Kansas where mobs interfered with the judicial process of selling the land, put a stop to it. There weren't any in Kansas.

Landon's biographer, Donald McCoy, summarized the governor's record.

> Landon had been an exceptionally good governor during his first term. He had lowered the tax burden, reorganized state government, fought successfully for farm and unemployment relief, started a water conservation program, reformed the finances of local governments, forced utility rates down, overcome the Finney scandal, met the oil crisis, and--because many of these could not have been done without federal assistance--proved to be a top-notched cooperator with the New Deal.

In 1934, Landon was the only Republican governor reelected in the nation. During his second term, he continued compiling an outstanding record. It was no surprise that he won the Republican presidential nomination in June 1936. But Landon fought an uphill battle against President Roosevelt. He carried only Maine and Vermont as Roosevelt won overwhelming reelection.

Alf Landon finished out his term as governor of Kansas and retired to private life. Historian Donald McCoy cited the special role Landon filled.

> Alf Landon in his later years was a curiosity on the American political scene. He had come back into public view without holding, or seeking office; he had come by asserting his particular brand of independence at a time when independence seemed rare in American politics.

Though Alf Landon was never elected to national office, in 1978 his daughter, Nancy Landon Kassebaum, was elected to the United States Senate. Today at 95 Landon enjoys the homage of presidents, the attention of the press, and the respect of the public.

17. Of Goat Glands and Gullibility: Boom and Bust with Dr. Brinkley

Dr. John Brinkley, one of the most colorful characters in American medical history, played on the hopes and fears of Kansans in the 1930s to build an empire on goat glands and gullibility.

From a backwoods log cabin in the Smoky Mountains, he rose to fame, peddling his pharmaceutical panaceas and cures for male impotence from his Milford, Kansas, hospital and radio station.

Brinkley was firmly entrenched in Milford at the outset of the Depression. The goat-gland transplant business was thriving at his hospital. His radio station, KFKB, one of the most powerful in North America, beamed his message of sexual rejuvenation across the continent. His "Radio Mailbox" program, on which he diagnosed and prescribed for listeners' symptoms, generated a land-office business for his chain of Brinkley pharmacies.

Brinkley first set up shop in Milford in 1917. Shortly thereafter he performed his first goat-gland transplant and supposedly restored a local farmer's virility. By 1926 he ruled over a lucrative, if controversial, pseudomedical empire.

His professed belief in the power of positive thinking and his genius for marketing questionable cures made Brinkley a wealthy man and Milford a boomtown. As Gerald Carson observed in his book The Roguish World of Doctor Brinkley:

> Dr. Brinkley was Lord of the Manor in Milford. The local banker was a stockholder in Doctor's radio station. . . . From six hundred to eight hundred dollars a week of Brinkley's prescription money found its way into the little bank. . . . The hospital would place locally a thousand-dollar order for linens. The bus was marked "50 cents to the Hospital." Why not? It was the only reason for a stranger's coming to Milford.

Despite the Depression, Brinkley was able to separate frightened and credulous people from their money. People even took second mortgages so that the man of the house could have the goat-gland transplant.

In 1930, faced with the prospect of having his Kansas operations shut down, Brinkley staged a write-in campaign for governor. Using a sound truck, radio broadcasts, and personal appearances featuring singing cowboys, cheerleaders, and sometimes Brinkley's arrival in his private airplane, the goat-gland surgeon cast his spell over many voters.

His platform called for free schoolbooks, free auto license tags, lower taxes, and a lake in every county. He also appealed to those Kansans who distrusted party politicians. In a campaign speech he exclaimed:

> The Democrats are saying the Republicans are crooked and no good and should be thrown out. . . . The Republicans say the same thing about the Democrats. . . . Vote for me and you'll get double protection. They'll both watch me.

When the ballots had been counted, Brinkley finished third with more than 180,000 votes. In what has been called the "Short Count Election of 1930," an unknown number of ballots for Brinkley were disqualified on a variety of technicalities. To this day, many people believe that the election was stolen from him. He even drew 20,000 write-in votes in Oklahoma.

Brinkley ran for governor again in 1932, drawing nearly a quarter-million votes. Francis Schruben, in Kansas in Turmoil, attributed Brinkley's appeal to populist sentiment in the rural areas and speculated that Brinkley drew enough ballots from Democrats to contribute to Landon's election. But his influence in Kansas was waning. By the end of 1933, with his broadcasting and medical licenses revoked in Kansas, Brinkley had packed his belongings and moved to the greener pastures of Del Rio, Texas. In his wake he left rubble and resentment. Afraid that some other enterprising physician might profit from his abandoned facilities, he had his sanitarium, his house, and other buildings bulldozed.

Gerald Carson described the reaction of the people of Milford:

> Gloom hung over Milford as the Brinkley motorcade rolled toward the Rio Grande, and the wreckers applied pick and crowbar to the town's chief taxables. . . . Indignation probably reached its peak on a Saturday night when citizens of the town that once wanted to change its name to "Brinkley" took chisels and cut the name of Brinkley off the front of Doctor's old drugstore.

Doc Brinkley left his mark on Kansans and the nation. His unscrupulous broadcasting and medical practices and his shrewd use of media promotions in politics prompted reforms and greater regulation in those fields.

18. Fear and Fervor: A Kansas Demagogue

> There has been uncovered before my eyes, the inner workings of one of the most gigantic plots ever perpetuated in any period of world history. . . . Behind the scenes there is . . . 'A HIDDEN HAND,' . . . a plot to overthrow the religious, moral, and governmental systems of the earth. . . . it is a world conspiracy, . . . planned several hundred years ago by a self-perpetuating group of men who today control the wealth of the world. . . . they arranged to pull wires behind the scenes to precipitate political and economic upheavals.

So wrote Gerald B. Winrod in the January 1933 issue of his Defender Magazine. His theory of international Jewish-communist treachery was first circulated in Russia by the Tsar's secret police and later spread by Henry Ford and others. The theory had been discredited by 1933, but Winrod promoted it to explain current events.

Winrod was the son of a reformed Wichita bartender whose saloon had been smashed by Carry Nation. In his teenage years Winrod became a traveling evangelist. He preached against alcohol, modernism, and evolution, often invoking the spirits of Carry Nation and John Brown.

In 1926 Winrod founded the Defender Magazine, a family religious publication. It contained articles on Bible prophecy, monthly Bible lessons, and reports from the Holy Land.

These features were window dressing, though. Beginning in 1933, Winrod used the magazine as an ongoing forum for his brand of "Americanism." The Defender examined unemployment, labor strife, the New Deal, the rise of Mussolini, and Soviet persecutions. Behind these events Winrod saw the "hidden hand" of what he called "the apostate international Jew." Though Winrod wrote much of the magazine himself, he also published articles by many of the nation's prominent fear- and hate-mongers, and distributed their publications as well.

Many of the Defender's readers may have unwittingly let its hateful message into their homes. Originally it had represented a traditional and generally respectable fundamentalist view. But from 1933 to 1939, as Winrod hammered on his anti-semitic and prophetic themes, the magazine's circulation increased from 30,000 to 110,000.

What was the appeal of Winrod's message during these years? For one thing, he offered easy, if sensational, explanations for a confusing array of social and political problems. The old order was shifting and realigning in ominous ways. The Defender played on the fears and uncertainties of its readers. Its interpretation of current events in terms of prophecy and

conspiracy must have appealed to many who felt overwhelmed by the day's headlines. Winrod's defense of traditional morality also contributed to the acceptance of the Defender over the years.

In 1938, Winrod entered the Republican primary for the U.S. Senate. He moderated his tone. A series of "terse talks" dealt with such topics as "Kansas Leadership," "Moral Consciousness and Government," and "The Man without a Job." Winrod claimed that his weekly radio addresses reached 150,000 Kansans.

By June, political observers were giving the edge to Winrod. In a letter to President Roosevelt, William Allen White commented on Winrod's prospects:

> I have been afraid of Winrod for several years. . . . He was a tent evangelist and knows the tricks of Father Coughlin, Huey Long and Billy Sunday. . . . I have made it my business to read his Weekly for several years. And when I saw the advertisement of the Jew-baiting literature . . . I was scared. . . .[He] is a strapping, handsome, smooth-talking man much like a medicine vendor or a soap peddler. . . . He is four degrees sub-Baptist, more fundamentalist than Bryan. . . . It is important to know this in any estimate you may make of his political strength. For one cannot assume that he is dishonest. He really believes it. His political appeal is deeply reactionary. In the primary he is gaining headway. Unless we can change the Republican situation, he will win.

White vigorously attacked Winrod from the editorial page of the Emporia Gazette. A committee of concerned clergy, as well as some nervous Republicans, joined the fray, publicizing Winrod's anti-Catholic, anti-Masonic, and anti-semitic positions. Particularly damning was evidence that the Defender was an outlet for World Service, Hitler's propaganda agency.

Winrod lost support quickly. He finished third in the primary, more than 50,000 votes behind the winner, Clyde Reed. Still, he polled 53,000 votes, a sobering fact considering that his extreme views had been exposed across the state and in the national press. Many felt Winrod's votes came from people who were tired of the professional party politicians.

Typically, Winrod blamed his primary loss on sinister forces. In an open letter to Kansans he explained the failed campaign:

> I knew that I would encounter entrenched agencies of evil. I knew I would stir up quagmires of political corruption. I knew that my opposition to Communism and New Dealism, would bring down upon me the wrath of international Jewry.
>
> Had I known the torture that awaited me . . . the stream of lies that would be deposited in the public mind . . . the Jewish censorship over press, radio, and newsstand

> publications that would be exercised against me . . . the ability of hidden interests to use men like William Allen White . . . my heart might have trembled.

Kansans rejected Gerald Winrod's analysis of their problems during the Depression, but clearly many were tempted by his message. Winrod continued to publish the Defender until his death in 1957, but its circulation declined steadily during the war years and the prosperity that followed.

19. Hard Times – Nothing New for Mexicans in Kansas

Hard times didn't begin in the thirties for Mexican immigrants in Kansas. They had always been on the lowest rung of the economic ladder. They had endured the recession of 1921 when there were widespread layoffs in the meat-packing and railroad industries. But, the 1921 recession was only a prelude to more difficult times--the Depression of the 1930s. As the economic crisis spread across the United States, Mexicans in Kansas soon felt its effects. Railroad companies, the principal employers of Mexicans in the state, discontinued expansion. Jobs became scarce.

With unemployment increasing, Mexicans experienced hostility from citizens who resented competing with foreigners for jobs--"stoop labor" jobs that many Anglos had scorned in more prosperous times. In numerous towns, public opinion demanded that Mexicans be returned home, that businesses "hire American."

In November 1930, the southwest regional director of President Hoover's emergency committee on unemployment made a recommendation to Governor Clyde M. Reed about Mexican workers on the six major railroads in Kansas:

> It occurs to me that a request from you as Governor of the State to the railroads reponsible for bringing this class of labor into Kansas to return them to Mexico in such a manner that would not render offense to our neighbor to the south would materially help the unemployment situation. In any event, it occurs to me that citizens of our own country should receive preference to employment as against those of a foreign nation.

Governor Reed responded by sending letters to the railroad company presidents, endorsing this request and suggesting that foreign workers be dismissed. The possible impact of his suggestion was significant since almost 75% of employed Mexican males in Kansas worked for the railroads, almost all as gang laborers.

The railroad presidents quickly replied that, when available, American citizens would be hired over foreigners. J.E. Gorman, president of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway Company, added, however, that "where Mexicans have been in our service for some years and perform work which in good times was not acceptable to American labor, we are not replacing them."

The Santa Fe Railroad also tried to protect its Mexican workers from dismissal and possible repatriation. Ignacio Valenzuela of Garden City remembered that the Santa Fe employed him throughout the Depression with no reduction in salary or hours, with one exception.

> They laid me off for about 35 days. Our crew was 12 men and the foreman, and they started cutting down 'til they left only one man . . . and the foreman. That's how it was through the Depression.

According to Robert Oppenheimer, history professor at the University of Kansas, a few thousand Mexicans and Mexican-Americans in Kansas returned to Mexico or were repatriated during the Depression years, as were many others across the country. Nationwide, almost half a million Mexicans were repatriated between 1929 and 1937. Some felt compelled to return because their hope for employment and a better life in the United States had disintegrated. Others had little control over their situations; they were pressured by local officials to go back to Mexico.

For those Mexicans who remained in the state, what was life like? Vincente Vargas of Kansas City, Kansas, remembered:

> Mexican people, if they don't have meat, they don't starve. We eat the chiles and beans and tortillas. The only thing, there was no money. If your shoes were not too good, that's when you start worrying, 'cause you're going to need some money to buy new shoes. We had to put more patches on the clothes.

D.C. Garcia, a Mexican-American from Garden City whose family labored in the sugar-beet fields, recalled how they had to supplement their earnings during the Depression by working for Greek truck farmers. He remembered how his father struggled to feed his family:

> When he had money, he would buy five or six, seven or eight 100-pound sacks of flour, 100-pound sacks of sugar, 100-pound sacks of potatoes and we would try to protect them as much as we could so that they wouldn't rot. And this would kind of hold us over the winter months or from one season to the other season, and that's just the way we were able to maintain our lives . . . We always managed to plant odds and ends and try to get along. Try to pull through.

Across the state, charitable organizations were established to aid the indigent, of which the Mexican Methodist Mission in the Argentine barrio of Kansas City, Kansas, was one example. Founded during the 1921 recession, the Mission worked diligently throughout the thirties to coordinate and distribute goods and services to barrio residents. Federal funds were channeled through the Mission, and WPA workers used it as a base of operations for directing recreational and educational activities within the barrio.

Although hardship was nothing new to Mexicans in Kansas, the Depression years were very difficult for them, despite outside aid. They just managed to scrape by, and according to Robert Oppenheimer, "families, friends, and relatives often shared their meager earnings so that all could have something." Their strong sense of kinship and community helped them to survive.

20. Kansas Churches during the Depression

On Easter Sunday following the worst of the black blizzards of April 1935, churches in the Dust Bowl area of western Kansas set attendance records. As in earlier times, during the 1930s churches were well attended every Sunday across the state. But especially during the decade of dust and depression the church offered guidance and support and served as the focus of community and social life.

Mrs. Helen Meairs of Haskell County recalled,

> We always stayed with our church. . . . Anything that was going on at the church, we would come in for and the children grew up that way. That was the only social life . . . Nearly everybody in the community attended.

Churches in larger cities joined and often led local efforts to help those in need. In Wichita church members canvassed the city to find jobs for the unemployed. The Wichita Eagle reported,

> The Council of Churches hopes to uncover many hours of work at such jobs as painting, reroofing, papering . . . as well as general cleaning and odd jobs.

As the Depression deepened, many churches found they could no longer afford to employ workers to maintain their own buildings. Seth W. Slaughter, pastor of the First Christian Church in Lawrence in 1933, recalled,

> The depression prevented the painting of the building for several years. The basement was an eyesore. . . . We talked of doing it ourselves. At one of the monthly dinners I said, "I could put more paint on . . . in an hour than I.W. Hartley could." To my surprise, after the laughter was over, the idea caught on. Mr. Ellis said, "I will donate a gallon of paint." . . . Our weeks of painting and cleaning the entire church gave a new sense of fellowship.

A rural church in Douglas County almost gave up the struggle. A member of the Hesper Friends Church recalled,

> In 1937 we just hadn't any money. We were going to close the church. Mrs. Raymond Stanley said, "If we close this church my children will never go to Sunday School. Our car is too old to drive to town." We all pitched in, raised $125 and took turns doing the janitor work. Then a woman minister had a "call" to come to Hesper and we were able to have a minister for very little money.

Many small churches made do with ministers who earned their living in work outside the church. Mrs. Meairs recalled that her minister received goods instead of salary.

> I know one year and it could have been two years of those rough times all Brother Howard got to keep him going was "pound parties." Every 3 to 6 months everybody that wanted to would bring whatever we had. If we had meat or chickens . . . we'd bring it to the minister.

Black churches had always served as both community centers and houses of worship. This tradition continued during the Depression. In the 1930s, as many churches poured resources and feeling into their choirs, a new style of gospel singing developed. The deep feeling and spirit of hope of this music brought an optimistic note to the hard times.

The Church of God at Lane and Twelfth in Topeka had an excellent gospel choir. Topeka had nearly 30 black churches, and half of that city's black population were church members in 1939.

A few Kansas communities had no regular church services. Nona Thompson lived in a small Kingman County community in the early 1930s.

> Our little white frame church was not functioning much of the time as the local Methodist congregation could not pay a minister. However, a movement developed among some of the larger denominations to provide religious instruction and observance in the "decadent villages" as they were sometimes called. As a result a minister and his family moved to our village and we began to have regular Sunday services. I'm sorry to say I remember not his sermon but his purple suit . . . as purple a suit as you would ever want to see. It was the only suit he could find at a price he could afford.

Catholic parishes in Kansas were continuously served by priests through the Depression but parochial schools faced hard times. In Nemaha County parishioners' contributions and fund-raising events proved inadequate to keep St. Benedict School open. To provide education in the district, the parochial school became the district school supported by public taxes.

For many Protestants across the nation the most urgent social issue of the decade was prohibition. In Kansas, the first state to adopt a total ban on the sale of alcoholic beverages, the issue stirred church leaders to political action. When national prohibition ended in 1933 with the repeal of the 18th amendment to the constitution, Kansas church leaders fought to retain state prohibition. After the legislature voted to submit the repeal issue to Kansas voters in 1934, the Kansas Prohibition Emergency Committee, headed by John R. Golden, pastor of the First Christian Church of Topeka, was formed to work for retention of the Kansas prohibition law. In November 1934 in Mennonite communities 70 percent of eligible voters went to the polls. Historian James Juhnke concluded, "The Prohibition issue undoubtedly accounted for the large vote." Across the state Kansas voters rejected repeal by 89,000 votes, a result many attributed to efforts of church members to stem the tide of anti-prohibition sentiment.

Aside from the prohibition issue, the influence of Kansas churches was largely on individual members. In religious organizations and other voluntary associations, many people found meaning, and hope and help. As historian Edwin S. Gaustad of the University of California at Riverside wrote:

> During the depression, churches and synagogues dispensed their dwindling resources effectively and humanely. Without fanfare or fuss charity found its way from altar to hearth, from the community at worship to the family at home.

21. For a Quarter You Could Have a Good Time!

During the thirties, the growth of the American entertainment industry in motion pictures and radio brought nationally known entertainers into Kansas towns and homes. Despite this expanded access to national entertainment and popular culture, Kansans still drew heavily on their own resources for recreation and amusement. Norma Osborne, who lived in Bern, in Nemaha County, observed that people in her small town sought entertainment in social activities and used these activities to help them face the uncertainties of the times:

> It was so uncertain . . . there seemed to be a great many more community parties and social events and getting together. And very simple ones, but it seemed to increase just, I think, because of that feeling that they needed to depend on one another and to be closer and have a little warmer relationship with one another because of the uncertainty and the fear. They drew some strength from that somehow.

By 1933 one-third of the nation's movie houses had closed, but by 1935 more Americans than ever before were plunking down their quarters (ten cents for children) to enjoy the latest Hollywood confection. As an added, practical enticement, many theaters offered dishes, glasses, towels, and other household items to lucky ticket holders.

Popular Depression-era films ranged from the antics of the Marx Brothers in "A Day at the Races," to the song-and-dance sophistication of Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers in "Carefree," to the comedic adventures of William Powell and Myrna Loy in "The Thin Man." The thirties also saw the premiere of such perennial favorites as "The Wizard of Oz" and the first full-length animated film, Walt Disney's "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." While some movies dealt with topical and serious themes, most people preferred comedy, music, and escape.

Kansans were no different from other Americans when it came to the appeal of the movies, but in the state's rural areas especially, movie houses were not always accessible, and during planting and harvest seasons there was little time for such amusements. In communities that had no theater, merchants sometimes would set up a projector in a local store or meeting hall. In Bern, Norma Osborne recalled:

> We had an old Turnverein Hall . . . . That hall became the center of all community activity. On Saturday nights there would be a movie there. They were silents, and the reels broke, and they were sort of second rate. I don't know--they got them from St. Joe, Missouri. . . . Oh, it was tragic if by Friday afternoon you heard that the reels for the picture show hadn't come in on the old Rock Island motor, but usually they made it on Saturday.

Although the Depression was the golden age of radio, many Kansans had to limit their listening. Donna Biggerstaff, who grew up on a farm near Arnold, in Ness County, remembered:

> At the time, my parents' house wasn't hooked up to electricity, so we used battery radios. But we had a radio and of course they didn't want the battery to run down so there was an expense of getting it charged or buying a new one. So we didn't get to listen too much--to the weather and news and things like that. . . . Once in a while we would get to hear "Fibber McGee and Molly."

In A Socio-Economic Analysis of Four Rural Parishes in Nemaha County, Kansas, Gilbert Francis Walters discovered that, while radios were common in parish households, many were not in working order:

> Some (people) frankly admitted they could not afford to keep the batteries charged and had packed the radio away on the shelf. Other owners of non-working radios, anticipating the long winter nights, said that they would condition the batteries when fall came.

Despite the growth of national entertainment media during the thirties, Kansans still relied heavily on their own resources for amusement. Sunday afternoon gatherings of family and friends often turned into cow-pasture baseball games. Reading, board games, picnics, singing, 4-H activities, and other family- and community-oriented pastimes were common and are fondly remembered by Kansans who grew up in the thirties. Donna Biggerstaff recalled some typical summertime amusements:

> In the summertime once in a while we would go with the neighbors and have a picnic and go fishing somewhere or something like that. Everybody would get together at least once a month in the neighborhood and fix ice cream and bake cakes and celebrate everybody's birthday that month.

In his study of Nemaha countians, Walters observed that even during the busy summer months it was common to devote a short period to visiting, "relaxing on the porch or talking in the yard."

School, church, and social groups provided the focus for many activities. Norma Osborne remembered some of these events:

> There were always the church suppers. As I remember, our church probably had one about once a month, just a little carry-in kind of pot luck supper. . . . I remember that summer of '34--no, the summer of '33, that they had their first community chicken fry. And that was something that was new. . . . It just seemed that they used it as an excuse to find ways in which they could inexpensively get together and enjoy themselves and . . . draw strength from being together and talking things over.

Dancing was another popular pastime, especially among young adults. Dances were often community or church functions. In his study of Nemaha County, Gilbert Francis Walters noted:

> There is a dance at each of (the) parish halls almost weekly. . . . Some Catholic young people, too, are not satisfied with home entertainment but go, either openly or secretly, to any kind of dance, at times travelling quite a distance. The mileage gauge is, of course, adjusted so as to stand father's scrutiny.

Cow-pasture baseball was not the only sport in Kansas during the thirties. Semipro and amateur baseball leagues thrived. Wichita hosted the annual state semipro tournament during these years and was the site of the first National Semipro tournament in 1935. In 1933 Harry Suter of Salina formed the Kansas Ban Johnson League, consisting of teams in Salina, Topeka, Beloit, Abilene, Wichita, El Dorado, Emporia and Dodge City. According to Harold C. Evans, writing in the Kansas Historical Quarterly in 1940, softball also generated great interest:

> Topeka has twenty or more soft ball teams playing to large and enthusiastic crowds and the city celebrated its return to organized baseball in 1939 by establishing a new season's attendance record for the Western Association.

Collegiate football also drew enthusiastic crowds. Night games became popular among the smaller colleges in the state. The traditional rivalry between KU and K-State intensified. Charity all-star games and post-season cross-state matches such as Washburn vs. KU and K-State vs. Wichita University in 1931 helped take people's minds off their troubles. 1930 also marked the revival of competition between KU and the Haskell Institute in Lawrence.

The 1930s also saw the increased popularity of rodeos, bridge clubs, and golf. Some of these amusements were limited to the affluent or to urban areas, but people didn't need to be wealthy or live in the city to have fun. Norma Osborne's comment about the traveling vaudeville companies that came to Bern seems to apply generally:

> "Why, it was great . . People went to it and you were grateful that you could go. For a quarter you could have a good time!"

22. What People Said: A Kansas Novel about the Depression, Part 1

The Depression is the subject of few Kansas novels. One of the most interesting is William L. White's What People Said, published in 1938. Although White, the son of writer/publisher William Allen White, insisted that his book was entirely fiction, it is clearly based on his own experiences. The novel is set in Athena, Oklarado--a place modeled on White's hometown, Emporia, Kansas. And the story is told mainly from the point of view of Junior Carrough who, like White, was the son of a nationally known Progressive newspaper editor.

In the first chapter White described the optimism of Kansas Progressives in the twenties:

> . . . it was pleasant in the middle twenties, to be an Oklarado Progressive, to look ahead through a golden haze into the future, seeing it . . . as a never-ending causeway of progress . . . composed of orderly little steps. . . . Ahead . . . lay State regulation of utilities, old-age pensions, minimum-wage laws, . . . the steady disappearance of poverty.

What lay ahead, of course, was not the disappearance of poverty, but the unemployment and upheaval of the Great Depression. Throughout the novel Junior struggles to understand the effect of the Depression on both rich and poor, and to examine his own values in a time when belief in orderly progress seems to be breaking down. One subplot of the book shows how some of the rich, who have plenty of family money to fall back on, feel that the poor are at fault for not being able to find work.

At one point, Junior tries to find a job for Buck Warren--an out-of-work man he had known in high school. Buck had worked all over the West, but as jobs got harder and harder to find, he and his family ended up back in Athena:

> The way it was now, well, they'd been in Dallas, but things were mighty quiet there, so he kind of thought they'd better come back there to Athena . . . and kind of get located. . . . Welfare there had said that what you should do was go back where you came from, so your friends would look after you--everywhere they said that.

But Junior has no luck helping him:

> It seemed there just weren't any jobs. No foreman's jobs, or jobs digging ditches, or hauling garbage, or crushing rock, or trucking gravel, or carrying hods, or pushing wheelbarrows. It began to bother Junior because if there were no jobs, a whole comfortable way of thinking seemed endangered. For after all,you couldn't sit smugly in a

> well-heated house, well fed and well clothed, in 1930, and say that this was God's judgement on the thriftless for buying too many silk shirts in 1918. You could say it for a while, and partly believe it and be self-satisfied.
>
> Maybe it explained why Buck and fellows like him were where they were. But it didn't explain why Buck and fellows like him couldn't get out of it--now that they were prepared to follow the straight and narrow path paved with Benjamin Franklin's adages.

Junior wants to help Buck, but his business friends who meet at the Merchants' Round Table are not so sympathetic:

> This fellow Junior was telling them about was just like all the rest. A fellow that had never stuck to anything--just been in and out of troubles . . . fellows like that were getting a lesson. When that element found there weren't any easy jobs, when they found they really had to buckle down to good hard work, why, then, this slump would be over.

Buck finally gives up trying to find work in Athena and uses his World War I bonus money to buy a used Packard and go into the taxi business. Buck dreams of making big money. He tells Junior:

> We're pulling out for Oklarada City. Then Slick and me'll take turns setting back on them thick leather cushions driving her around, and take in the dough. You can't get located in a dead town like this . . . unless you lived here, 'n already got property. Take like you. . . . Oklarada City's a good town. . . . A man's got him some chance there.

But the taxi business doesn't pan out, and he's soon back in Athena. Junior's friend Lee Norssex, son of a local banker, can't believe that Buck was seriously trying to help himself:

> About this . . . guy that had come back from Oklarada City and said there wasn't any work--well that just wasn't so. Jobs--well, maybe there weren't any jobs. . . . What people'd ought to do was get down to useful things. Instead of hunting a job they'd ought to grow something to eat for themselves, build themselves a house, make themselves some clothes, cut themselves some firewood. When they got down to doing just simple things for themselves, stopped botherin' other people to do things for them, then it would start to get better.

But since Buck doesn't have land to cultivate or his own trees to cut, Lee offers to let him live on his ranch for six months and work for his keep. When Buck and Lee get in a dispute over wages, Junior has to tell Buck to look for other work. He muses:

> . . . Why couldn't Lee settle his own disputes? Of course Lee had taken Buck only as a favor to him. Lee had not needed Buck. That was the trouble these days, nobody needed Buck.

When Buck returns to Athena, Junior suggests he go south for the winter, where it's warm. But Buck knows there's no hope there:

> . . . that isn't any good. All them places, they send you right back to where you came from.

Buck finally decides that he can't rely on friends in Athena to help him find honest work:

> . . . there ought to be a way to make steady money without frigging around with windbags like this Norssex or that little snot Junie Carrough. . . . The hell with them.

So Buck finds a job on his own that pays well and provides security for his family. He becomes a $100-a-month driver for a bootlegger.

> Orders were to run mostly nights. . . . Orders were if any tank-town cops bothered them just to step on the gas, but if the State highway patrol started following them, just pull over to the side of the road and get out with their hands up. . . . Then however long you were in the can, headquarters would pay the hundred a month to your family all the time, plus two dollars a day bonus to you when you got out, and your job back.

Buck doesn't keep this job long either. One night his driving partner doesn't follow orders, and they are both killed in a shoot-out with the State police. Ironically, Buck loses his life serving the rich. At $15 a gallon only the wealthy can afford bootleg liquor in Kansas.

23. What People Said: A Novel about the Depression, Part 2

In William L. White's 1938 novel What People Said, the character Lee Norssex is based on one of the most famous swindlers in Kansas history--Ronald Finney of Emporia. When the scandal broke in 1933, it was revealed that Finney had forged nearly a million dollars in bonds to buy ranches, farms, and businesses at low Depression prices. Finney's father, a prominent Emporia banker and good friend of editor William Allen White, was also part of the scandal; he was found guilty of embezzlement.

In his novel White shows that even during the Depression the American dream of success was strong. It was particularly strong among the rich, who felt that it was their right, perhaps even their responsibility, to stay rich and keep getting richer. For Lee Norssex success is not just a dream; it is a necessity. He feels that he has to be as wealthy as his father. Even in his college years he knows that if he wants to make money he will have to hustle.

> You had to be smarter than the rest of them--get up earlier than they did and work later, outguess and outsmart them. Lee figured he sure could do it. His old man already had money. . . . But more important Lee knew he had the stuff in him to make plenty himself.

He graduates from college a year early so that he can begin working in his father's Elm Valley bank. Working there, Lee discovers that his father is not entirely honest in his banking practices:

> . . . What all this was, Lee knew, was check-kiting. Really embezzlement, according to the text books. And illegal as hell--to write checks on banks you did not have money in. . . .

But Lee is not too disturbed by these practices:

> . . . his old man was an awful good egg. But he was human. . . . Had to break over somewhere. Anyway, all bankers probably did things like this. Or worse.

After working in the bank, Lee takes up selling insurance and from there gets interested in investments and the bond businesses. He also has other money-making schemes: selling surplus buffalo meat to city restaurants; distributing a new game--a pinball machine called the Dixie-Trixie Table.

Lee's friends are amused and a little disturbed by his wheeling and dealing. Junior wonders why Lee never got into some useful business, but at the same time he understands Lee's predicament:

> . . . What was there left for him to do? Forty, thirty, even twenty years ago, there would have been plenty. New country being opened up, new businesses being founded. . . . But what had there been since the war? Lee had not studied medicine or law. And if the son of Isaac Norssex had started to work in a chain store at twenty-five dollars a week, what would people have said!

Lee hatches his biggest scheme in the spring of 1932 when Junior tells him that inflation is sure to come soon and drive prices up. Lee wonders:

> Couldn't you make a potful of money if you knew it was coming? . . . If you could . . . get hold of some--beg it, or borrow it, or steal it, no matter how you got it--you could just make yourself a potful, now couldn't you.

Lee does make a potful--using forged government bonds as collateral for loans. Some people are jealous of his success:

> You could see plainly he was making a lot of money. And nobody else was. He was into all kinds of things. Probably some of them would not turn out so well. . . . But if you said this, people would say you were jealous . . . just because your business was bad. Because you hadn't been smart enough to think up things which would make money. . . .

Others, including officials in the state government, admire his shrewd business sense and come to him for advice on investments. But when an equally shrewd bank inspector discovers the forged bonds, Lee's money-making days are over.

When people discover how Lee made his money, they are scandalized--but are also a little relieved and self-satisfied. The prosperous son of the richest man in Athena says to Junior:

> Well, . . . I guess we weren't so dumb to be content to live on what we had. . . . our little five or six thousand a year, or whatever it was--and just made it do. . . .

People are also pleased with Lee's disaster because he is a part of the rich, fraternity boy crowd in Oklarada. A reporter for the major state newspaper is hard on Lee because of his background.

> . . .These fellows . . . had been babied along for years. They had been given little banks or newspapers or political careers to monkey with, or well-paid jobs working for the old man. . . .

After the scandal, Lee and his father aren't treated with open hostility in Athena, but they are viewed almost as strangers:

> In the old days you said that Mr. Norssex was generous and public-spirited to a fault, and yet a good business man, a really sharp one, in fact. Presently people were saying, Isaac Norssex, now there was a smooth bastard for you! Oily and pious and with a big front about boosting the town, and behind it he'd been skinning people for years. Getting away with it, too. . . .

White suggests that it was hard for people to forgive or understand the Norssexes because their crimes were too bound up in the American dream of success: being smart, working hard, making money. They had succeeded even during the Depression, when so many others had failed. A psychiatrist tells Lee's wife:

> That's why people are so bitter. Because he did things which they do not quite dare to do but which are close to their own daydreams. People who care for nothing but money can't let themselves understand him for fear they might understand themselves.

When Lee and his father come to trial, they are not let off easy, as many people had feared, just because they are wealthy and have powerful political connections. Lee is sentenced to 30 years in the penitentiary--the maximum for his crimes. Lee's father is also given a long sentence, but he never goes to jail. Shortly before he is to be taken to prison, he goes to his summer home outside Athena and shoots himself in the head.

The events in What People Said closely parallel the facts of the Finney bond scandal. Ronald Finney spent 11 years of his 30-year sentence in jail before being pardoned. His father, Warren, did commit suicide.

24. Horton, Kansas: A Small Town Looks Back and Ahead

"The Prodigy of the West--The Wonder of Kansas." Early newspaper headlines and posters proclaimed Horton's virtues. The Rock Island line was attracted to this southern Brown County town in 1886 by the prospects of abundant water for steam power, coal, the richness of the surrounding farm land, and facilities for its car-repair shops. E.P. Trompeter, a long-time Horton bank official, described the boom-town atmosphere:

> The first few years after the shops had been built--and really by the time they were being built--people flocked in here. Horton had everything that would indicate it would become the magic city. And it was called the magic city. The railroad was important to Horton because the railroad was Horton. . . . And the agricultural community around Horton supported the shops.

The rich pastoral setting held other promises. The first issue of the Horton Headlight reported in 1886:

> The army of railroad employees here will be able to own their own homes, thus averting in a great measure the frequency and severity of strikes. . . . As a general rule men will not strike where they own their own homes and have families around them, and are away from the influence of other strikers, anarchists and socialists, into which society and under whose influence, they are almost constantly thrown while located in larger cities.

But following World War I the Rock Island employees in Horton did strike. Trompeter recalled:

> The industry started falling apart in 1922 when the Rock Island employees struck for higher wages. And the Rock Island sent in men from other places. And the employees did not win the strike. . . . At that time Horton had a population of about 5,000 people. There were 800 people working in the shops.

When the Great Depression began, Horton was faced with difficulties on several fronts. The Rock Island chose to expand its repair facilities elsewhere. The arrival of the diesel engine meant longer train runs and lessened the usefulness of Horton's freight- and passenger-car-repair shops. As in the rest of the nation, general economic distress offered no opportunity for new industries to fill the gap left by the railroad.

William Parsons, who worked for the Rock Island, described Horton's problems in attracting new business during the 1930s:

> The whole economy of the nation had run down. When this particular big business left here, . . . that left us with nothing more than a farm community. . . . And the town commissioners didn't have the monies to promote a business at the time. I don't think the commissioners are to be blamed a'tall for it. . . . I feel like they done what they could do.

Like other railroad men out of work, Parsons struggled to get by. With the Rock Island gone, what kind of work did he do?

> Anything I could get to. Sweep streets, paint houses. Anything. Anything. Go out to a farm and plow corn.
>
> If you had a relative that owned a farm, that was about the only way you could get a job--to have a relative that would help you out.

Clarence Hughes, another railroad worker who played in the Rock Island band, also recalled the hard times:

> When the railroad died out, Horton died out. We got to the place where we got forty cents an hour. We had a lot of people here looking for employment but they scattered. A lot of people left for California for the golden opportunity out there.

In 1936 the railroad shops employed only 200 people. This number dwindled and by World War II the shops were no longer operated. From a peak of 5,100 people Horton's population has dipped to 2,100 today.

Gene Maxwell, a former city commissioner who owns a local recreation hall, described the difficulties Horton faced following the Depression.

> After we lost the railroad, we didn't have any transportation. That's why a factory wouldn't come in here. When I came here, we had four hotels. And we had seven grocery stores and three recreation places. We had Montgomery Wards, Penney's, Kroger's and A&P. Up to about 1951 or '52, we had a good town here. It's gradually slipped some, but it's still a good town.

Like other small towns, Horton has had to contend with the loss of trade to larger cities nearby. But Horton has not stood still. Hospitals and health care have become big business. While working to attract new business and industry, the town has promoted a number of improvements over recent decades, among them, the Kansas National Guard Armory, a municipal airport, community building, swimming pool, hospital, medical arts building and the Tri-County Manor, a 110-bed nursing home.

The railroad strikes of the 1920s and the Depression exodus of workers sealed Horton's fate: it could never become the industrial metropolis envisaged in its infancy. But Horton's leaders have formulated a mature vision of the town's prospects. At the age of ninety, E.P. Trompeter looks enthusiastically to Horton's future.

> In the last five to eight years . . . farmers who have sold their farms or turned them over to the younger members of the family have moved to Horton to retire because of our hospital, our churches, and our schools. I think Horton has drawn people from the surrounding community and from other places. It isn't uncommon at all to see an article in the local paper that people who had lived here years ago are coming back to retire. We're very glad to have them.
>
> I can't think of a better place for people to retire than a nice quiet town like Horton.

In an interesting twist of fate, some of those residents who left Horton in the 1930s to seek work elsewhere are now returning to help this small Kansas town ensure a promising future. The vision of the magic city, founded on industry, new technology and abundant capital, has been replaced by a more limited goal of institutions and agencies designed to serve Horton's increasingly elderly population. Horton still dreams of prosperity but will try an alternate route this time.

25. The Coming of War

Americans were so absorbed with the effects of the Depression at home that they paid scant attention to the coming of war in Europe, North Africa and the Far East. Hitler seized power in Germany in 1933, Mussolini invaded Ethopia in 1935, civil war broke out in Spain in 1936, and Japan attacked China in 1937.

Most Americans wanted nothing to do with troubles outside the United States during President Franklin Roosevelt's first term. Many Kansas newspapers reflected the view that United States involvement in World War I had been a blunder. Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas was an important spokesman for the pacifist cause during the 1930s. Capper maintained that conflict in Spain and the Orient was not "our affair."

> We are a peaceful people. We are a continental nation, as nearly self-contained as any in the world. We need only an army and navy for defense purposes.

Long an advocate of "letting the people decide," Capper helped introduce a constitutional amendment to provide a popular referendum before any congressional declaration of war. President Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull opposed the measure as a "disastrous move to rigid isolationism." Congress as a whole rejected the amendment but all of the Kansas delegation voted for it.

Foreign wars began to prey on the nation's consciousness in December 1937. Japanese airplanes sank an American gunboat, the USS Panay, on the Yangtze River in China. The incident drew attention in Kansas as reports arrived that Captain Frank N. Roberts of Oskaloosa led survivors of the attack to safety. Kansas newspapers expressed outrage at the event, but most welcomed the Japanese apology and pledge to pay indemnity. Kansas editors urged the United States government to show restraint. The Salina Sun declared, "There never was a good war, a just war or a profitable war." A Gallup poll reported that 95 percent of all Americans felt the United States should stay out of future wars.

Orville Voth, a Newton High School student from 1938 to 1941, also felt the impact of world events and began to clip newspaper articles about the war in Europe and American reactions to it. Raised in a Mennonite home and church that espoused pacifism, Voth faced an examination of his beliefs at this time. He recalled:

> There was a movement to bring ROTC-type training into the high school and we had an assembly. The question was put to a test vote. . . . They wanted to find out what kind of participation there might be. There were a number of Mennonite kids in the Newton system. There were three of

> us that didn't stand up to vote for it. . . . I don't recall at that point that there were any strong feelings toward us.

When the first peacetime selective service bill in American history was introduced in Congress in 1940, Senator Capper voted against the measure. He cited 6,000 letters, telegrams, and petitions from his Kansas constituents opposing the bill. Although Congress approved the draft, only one of the seven Kansas congressmen voted for it.

In June 1940 England stood alone as Nazi Germany completed the conquest of Paris and France fell to Hitler. Increasingly convinced that the United States could not stand aloof from the conflict, President Roosevelt urged all measures, "short of war," be taken to aid England.

William Allen White, the longtime editor of the Emporia Gazette, astutely assessed the escalation to war in a letter of January 1941.

> I don't think that Hitler will come sailing into New York harbor, but I do think that the totalitarian idea is on the march. The dictators are greedy for our wealth and have scorn for our liberty. Sooner or later we shall have to meet them with arms, how and when I don't know. . . . I should not be surprised any day to see Japan declare war on the United States and then the fat would be in the fire.

White's prediction came true late in the year.

> Flash: Washington, the White House announces Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.

The nation's newspapers put out special editions describing the bombing of the Hawaiian Islands and the Philippines. President Roosevelt asked Congress to declare war.

> Yesterday December 7, 1941, a date which will live in infamy, the United States of America was suddenly and deliberately attacked by the Empire of Japan. . . . No matter how long it may take us to overcome this premeditated attack the American people in their righteous might will win through to victory.

The nation quickly moved to war footing. Many men volunteered for service, millions were drafted. Wichita, where a fledgling aircraft industry had developed in the Depression years, had more defense contracts per capita than any city other than those of the east and west coasts. Employment greatly increased, relief rolls shrank, the population boomed, housing was scarce. Government programs to combat the Depression were revamped to win the war. Kansas farmers were urged to produce more food.

Children wore "Bound to Win" buttons. Mona McCoy, who grew up near Liberal, recalled how she tried to help.

> We used to do things like collect tinfoil. We saved tinfoil off every gum wrapper; every piece of tinfoil was valuable and you molded it into a ball and turned it in to some central point. We also had scrap iron drives. I remember my sister and I tried to give part of our dad's farm machinery to a guy who came around soliciting scrap iron. [Dad] caught us just before we managed to give away everything he owned.

The attention of young and old centered on the war effort as the Depression faded.

26. The Dream Altered: Depression and Drought in Kansas in the 1930s

The Great Depression of the 1930s has become the measure of all economic traumas in American history. Despite panics, depressions, and recessions before and since, none has matched the near collapse of the American economy in the first two years of the "dirty thirties." How did the experience of the Depression, which in Kansas and other midwest states was compounded of drought and dust, affect the aspirations of the state and nation?

In Crisis of the American Dream, historian John Tipple of the California State College in Los Angeles wrote,

> The vision of America as a materialist heaven on earth where man could realize his highest aspirations amid abundance had become, by the 1920s, an indispensable part of the American dream. A kind of "virtuous materialism," the American dream envisaged the establishment of a new order of universal prosperity which would not corrupt but would energize the soul, freeing man for higher and finer things. . . . The Wall Street crash of 1929 and the ensuing depression turned the dream of universal prosperity into a horrible nightmare.

In Kansas, the crash soon affected people in all walks of life, especially farmers. The disastrous decline of prices and the long-lasting drought ruined the prospects of many families. Governor Alf Landon later observed,

> There's no question but what that drought and the depression in that area changed the lives of thousands of people, the future lives of thousands of people that had bought the farms.

The depression decade of the 1930s was the only time in which Kansas registered a net loss of total population. By 1940 there were 100,000 fewer Kansans than in 1930. In Stockton, for example, of all high school graduates from 1930 to 1936 only half remained in the state.

Though drought, dust, and depression caused a migration from Kansas, most people stayed. The editor of The Wichita Magazine wrote, "The only irretrievable disaster is to quit." Most Kansans neither quit nor left the state. Professor Donald Worster, who grew up in Kansas and now teaches at the University of Hawaii, described the lives of those who persevered in his book Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s:

> At such dark times the mettle of a people is thoroughly and severely tested, revealing whether they have the will to go on. By this test the men and women of the plains

were impressive, enduring, as most of them did, discouragements the like of which more recent generations have never had to face.

Even in 1935, during the worst of the dust storms, Kansans managed to laugh at their plight. People exchanged stories about the farmer who fainted when a drop of water struck him in the face and had to be revived by having three buckets of sand thrown over him. Even as the land blew away and the Dust Bowl phenomenon became a national news story, gas and oil were discovered in the Hugoton fields in the heart of the drought-stricken southwest part of the state. Money from gas and oil leases allowed some farmers to hang on, revived the local economy and slowly restored the dream of prosperity for the area.

Relief money from the federal government helped both destitute individuals and the state's agricultural economy. But, the dream of an independent life on the land was altered during the 1930s. Though most Kansans continued to think as individualists, most accepted farm, drought, and other relief checks and adjusted to the restrictions government programs entailed. Consequently, as historian Francis Schruben observed in Kansas in Turmoil, "Kansas farmers and their leaders contributed to and criticized New Deal legislation."

The New Deal reached its height in Kansas in 1936 when the voters of the state supported President Franklin Roosevelt over their own governor, Alf Landon, in his bid for the presidency. Yet Kansas politics were not permanently altered. Even at the depth of the Depression Kansans rejected the nostrums of J.R. Brinkley and voted instead for Democrat Harry Woodring for governor in 1930 and Republican Alf Landon in 1932. In 1938 Kansans rejected the demagoguery of Gerald Winrod and elected moderate Republicans to state and national office. The stability of Kansas politics was somewhat unique at a time of sharp divisions in the national political arena.

Was the New Deal era a watershed in American history, forever altering the American dream? Professor Donald McCoy of the University of Kansas views the politics of the decade as neither revolutionary, nor merely reformist, but as an unexpectedly rapid, disturbing acceleration of trends in American government and society. Kansas leaders played a significant and constructive part in the changes that brought the federal government more directly into the economy and into the lives of individuals. Most Kansas politicians supported the Social Security Act of 1935, but many worried even then about financial and social ramifications of federal programs.

The worldwide depression of the 1930s disrupted established governments and political assumptions of the past even as it altered personal lives. Many Kansans lost farms, businesses, jobs and suffered broken dreams of prosperity. Yet, many remember the shared plight and the helping hand of neighbors and friends as a valuable experience.

Like many Kansans of the 1930s, newlyweds Glenn and Nona Thompson lived in a small town without electricity or city water. They were struggling to operate a lumberyard, which did very little business during the worst years of the depression. Nona recalled:

My husband and I would sometimes say to one another, "Someday we may look back at this time and say they were the best years of our lives." We never did.

Bibliography

FROM PROSPERITY TO THE WALL STREET CRASH

Allen, Frederick Lewis. Since Yesterday: The 1930s in America, September 3, 1929--September 3, 1939. New York: Harper and Row, 1939.

Burkholder, William M. Unpublished diary, Vol. 4, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kansas.

Hewes, Leslie. The Suitcase Farming Frontier. Lincoln: The University of Nebraska Press, 1973.

Howland, Mary Scott. "Managerial Progressivism in Kansas, 1916-1930." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1980.

Johnson, Walter, ed. Selected Letters of William Allen White, 1899-1943. New York: Holt, 1947.

Kanhistique, 5, 6 (October 1979).

Lowitt, Richard and Maurine Beasley. One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Morison, Samuel Eliot. The Oxford History of the American People. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.

White, William. Forty Years on Main Street. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1937.

THE BANKS TAKE A HOLIDAY

Anderson, George L. "A Century of Banking in Kansas." The First Century, Vol. II. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1956.

Angell, Wayne G. "A Century of Commercial Banking in Kansas, 1856-1956." Ph.D dissertation, University of Kansas, 1957.

Hoover, Kelvin. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Eudora, Kansas, January 19, 1983.

Kansas Retired Teachers Association. Heritage of Our Schools: The Pride of Kansas, Dodge City. Cultural Heritage and Arts Center, 1976.

Kirkwood, Roger, ed. The Story of Banking in Kansas, 1887 to 1980, Part I. The Kansas Bankers Association, 1937.

Landon, Alfred. Taped interviews by Donald McCoy and George Griffin. Topeka, Kansas, February 16, 1976. Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

McCoy, Donald R. Landon of Kansas. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

DUST BOWL FARMER

Hurt, R. Douglas. The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981.

Svobida, Lawrence. An Empire of Dust. Caldwell, Idaho: The Caxton Printer, Ltd., 1940.

Worster, Donald. Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

BLACK BLIZZARDS OF THE DIRTY THIRTIES

Bonnifield, Paul. The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt and Depression. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1979.

Cave, Camilla. Taped interview by Rachel Hunter. Pierceville, Kansas, January 1983.

Chapman, Martin. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Lawrence, Kansas, November 1982.

Holt, Cora Rardon. "One Big Duster." History of Kearny County, Kansas, Vol. II, 1973.

Hurt, R. Douglas. The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981.

Malin, James. "Dust Storms, 1850-1900." Kansas Historical Quarterly, XIV (May, Aug., 1946).

Worster, Donald. Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

THE CATTLEMAN MAKES DO THROUGH DROUGHT AND DEPRESSION

Hicks, O.C. Taped interview by Rachel Hunter. Pierceville, Kansas, January 1983.

Hurt, R. Douglas. The Dust Bowl: An Agricultural and Social History. Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1981.

"Love Brought Ranchers to Rugged Land." The Wichita Eagle-Beacon, April 25, 1982.

Wood, Charles L. The Kansas Beef Industry. Lawrence: The Regents Press of Kansas, 1980.

RABBIT DRIVES!

Cave, Camilla. Taped interview by Rachel Hunter. Pierceville, Kansas, January 1983.

Isern, Tom. "Rabbit Drives!" Kanhistique, March 1982.

Millbrook, Minnie Dubbs. Ness, Western County. Detroit: Millbrook Printing Co., 1955.

Tiemeier, O.W. et al. The Black-Tailed Jack Rabbit in Kansas. Kansas Agricultural Extension, Technical Bulletin 140, February 1965.

THE AGONY OF UNEMPLOYMENT

Allen, Frederick Lewis. Since Yesterday: The 1930s in America--September 3, 1929-September 3, 1939. New York: Harper & Row, 1939.

Annual Report of the [Kansas] Commission of Labor and Industry. Labor Department, 1934.

Burkholder, William. Unpublished diary. Kansas State Historical Society.

Lovitt, Richard and Maurine Beasley. One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare. New York: Vintage, 1971.

Terkel, Studs. Hard Times: An Oral History of the Great Depression. New York: Avon, 1980.

LUXURY OR NECESSITY?: RELIEF EFFORTS IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Clark, Jean. Taped interview by Katie Armitage and Barbara Watkins. Topeka, Kansas, December 1, 1982.

Fitzpatrick, James. "KC Bears 'Lasting Legacy' of the New Deal." Kansas City Times, December 14, 1982, Section c, p. 1.

"Governor Landon's Inaugural Address." Topeka Daily State Journal, January 14, 1935.

Hubert, Kelly. "Good Men Plowed Under." American Magazine. November 1935.

Kansas Emergency Relief Committee. Public Social Welfare in Kansas: A Ten-Year Report, 1924-1935.

Perkins, Ralph. "Relief Work in a Dust Bowl County." Sociology and Social Research, XXII, 6 (July-August 1939).

Phillips, Cabell. From the Crash to the Blitz, 1929-1939. London: Macmillan, 1969.

Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward. Regulating the Poor: The Function of Public Welfare. New York: Random House, 1971.

THE ALPHABET AGENCIES OF THE NEW DEAL AT WORK IN KANSAS

Castle, Leah. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Lawrence, Kansas, March 1983.

History of Kearny County, Kansas, Vol. II. Kearny County Historical Society, 1973.

Kansas Relief News-Bulletin. Kansas Emergency Relief Committee. No. 29 (August 19, 1935).

Meisenheimer, John. "A Soil Conservation First." Kanhistique, 5, 6 (October 1979).

Salmond, John A. The Civilian Conservation Corps, 1933-1942. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1967.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

FEDERAL DOLLARS RESCUE KANSAS FARMERS

Dary, David. Lawrence, Kansas: An Informal History. Lawrence, Kansas: Allen Press, 1982.

Isern, Tom. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Emporia, Kansas, March 7, 1983.

McCormack, Dewey. Taped interview by Sally McNall. Images of Aging Project, 1982. Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

Phillips, Cabell. From the Crash to the Blitz, 1929-1939. London: Macmillan, 1969.

"The Story of a Drouth Area Comeback Is Packed with Courage and Determination." Topeka Capital, August 6, 1941, Kansas State Historical Society Clippings.

Worster, Donald. Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.

MAKING ENDS MEET: SELF-SUFFICIENT LIVING IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Clark, Jean. Taped interview by Katie Armitage and Barbara Watkins. Topeka, Kansas, December 1, 1982.

History of Kearny County, Kansas, Vol. II. Kearny County Historical Society, 1973.

Holey, Ethel. Taped interview by Joy Lominska. Lawrence, Kansas, February 17, 1983.

Hope, Clifford R. "Kansas in the 1930s." Kansas Historical Quarterly, XXXVII (Spring 1970).

Houston, Lois. Taped interview by Joy Lominska. Lawrence, Kansas, March 4, 1983.

Langdon, Margurete. Taped interview by Joy Lominska. Oskaloosa, Kansas, March 5, 1983.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

Stockton, Frank to John Stutz. Memo: "Self-Help," August 30, 1933. Stutz Papers, Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

Ward, Donna. Taped interview by Joy Lominska. Oskaloosa, Kansas, March 1, 1983.

PARASITES OR PROVIDERS: WOMEN'S WORK IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Bolin, Winifred D. Wandersee. "The Economics of Middle-Income Family Life: Working Women during the Great Depression." Journal of American History, 65 (1978), 60-74.

Chafe, William H. The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Clark, Jean Helen. Taped interview by Katie Armitage and Barbara Watkins. Topeka, Kansas, December 1, 1982.

Darr, C.A. Mildred, Kansas. Letter to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. October 18, 1933. Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York.

Goodman, Ellen. "Ellen Goodman." Lawrence [Kansas] Journal-World, December 24, 1982, p. 5.

History of Kearny County, Kansas, III. Kearny County Historical Society, 1972.

Howieson, Carleen. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Horton, Kansas, December 6, 1982.

Milkman, Ruth. "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis: Some Lessons from the Great Depression." Rpt. in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979, pp. 507-42.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

Sealey, Mildred and Mona McCoy. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins and Shirley Domer. Lawrence, Kansas, May 25, 1981.

Westin, Jeane. Making Do: How Women Survived the '30s. Chicago: Follett, 1976.

THE STRESS OF SURVIVAL: FAMILY LIFE IN THE 1930s

Bolin, Winifred D. Wandersee. "The Economics of Middle-Income Family Life: Working Women during the Great Depression." Journal of American History, 65 (1978), 60-74.

Clark, Jean Helen. Taped interview by Katie Armitage and Barbara Watkins. Topeka, Kansas, December 1, 1982.

Commager, Henry Steele, ed. The American Destiny: An Illustrated Bicentennial History of the United States, V. 14. The Great Depression. Danbury, Connecticut: The Danbury Press, 1976.

Elder, Glen H., Jr. Children of the Depression. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

Lowitt, Richard and Maurine Beasley, eds. One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981.

Lynd, Robert S. and Helen M. Lynd. Middletown in Transition: A Study in Cultural Conflicts. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963.

McCoy, Mona. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Lawrence, Kansas, March 9, 1983.

Milkman, Ruth. "Women's Work and the Economic Crisis: Some Lessons from the Great Depression." Rpt. in Nancy F. Scott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979, pp. 507-42.

Phillips, Cabell. From the Crash to the Blitz, 1929-1939. London: Macmillan, 1969.

GROWING UP IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Biggerstaff, Donna. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Lawrence, Kansas, February 23, 1983.

Clark, Jean Helen. Taped interview by Katie Armitage and Barbara Watkins. Topeka, Kansas, December 1, 1982.

Elder, Glen H., Jr. Children of the Great Depression. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974.

McCoy, Mona. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Lawrence, Kansas, March 9, 1983.

O'Dell, John. The Great American Depression Book of Fun: Growing Up in the '30s. New York: Harper & Row, 1981.

"Survey of Transient Boys in the United States." Monthly Labor Review, XXXVI (1933), 91-93. Rpt. in Robert H. Bremner, ed., Children & Youth in America: A Documentary History, II. 1866-1932 (Parts 1-6). Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971.

Treece, Richard. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Lawrence, Kansas, March 23, 1983.

SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS SCRIMPED TO GET BY

Cave, Camilla. Taped interview by Rachel Hunter. Pierceville, Kansas, January 1983.

Frederick, Ruth. "The Threadbare Thirties." Kansas: The First Century, II. Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1956.

Griffin, Clifford S. The University of Kansas: A History. Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1974.

Howieson, Carleen. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Horton, Kansas, December 1982.

Kansas City Star, February 5, 1933.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-36. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

Van Meter, Sondra. Our Common School Heritage. Wichita: Board of Education, 1977.

Walker, Mildred. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Emporia, Kansas, March 1983.

GOVERNOR ALF LANDON OF KANSAS

Landon, Alfred. Taped interviews by Donald McCoy and George Griffin. Topeka, Kansas, Jan. 22, Feb. 2, Feb. 23, March 9, 1976. Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

McCoy, Donald R. Landon of Kansas. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

Supplement to The Horton Headlight. Horton, Kansas, October 29, 1936.

OF GOAT GLANDS AND GULLIBILITY: BOOM AND BUST WITH DR. BRINKLEY

Brinkley, J.R. "Johnny Boy" tape, 1933. Kansas State Historical Society.

Carson, Gerald. The Roguish World of Doctor Brinkley. New York: Rinehart and Co., 1960.

Reardon, James N. "The Year the Election Was Stolen." Kansas City Star magazine, November 7, 1982.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

FEAR AND FERVOR: A KANSAS DEMAGOGUE

Buitrago, Ann Mari. "A Study of the Political Ideas and Activities of Gerald B. Winrod, 1926-1938." M.A. thesis, University of Kansas, 1955.

[Cleveland, J.] "Drive Fascist Ideas from Kansas!" 1938. Pamphlet in Kansas State Historical Society Library.

Defender Magazine, January and February 1938.

Hope, Clifford R., Jr. "Strident Voices in Kansas between the Wars." Kansas History, 2, 1 (Spring 1979).

Juhnke, James C. "Gerald Burton Winrod and the Kansas Mennonites." Mennonite Quarterly Review, 43, 4 (October 1969).

Newsweek, August 1, 1938.

Roy, Ralph Lord. Apostles of Discord. Boston: Beacon Press, 1953.

Time, August 1, 1938.

Winrod, Gerald B. "Unmasking a Conspiracy of Lies" (n.d.).

[Winrod, Gerald B. et al.] Miscellaneous campaign materials from 1938. Kansas State Historical Society Library.

HARD TIMES – NOTHING NEW FOR MEXICANS IN KANSAS

Annual Report of the Commission of Labor and Industry. Labor Department, State of Kansas, 1930.

Garcia, D.C. Taped interview by Robert Oppenheimer. May 27, 1981.

Hoffman, Abraham. Unwanted Mexican Americans in the Great Depression. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1974.

Laird, Judith Fincher. "Argentine, Kansas: The Evolution of a Mexican-American Community, 1905-1940." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Kansas, 1975.

Mines, Cynthia. "Riding the Rails to Kansas: The Mexican Immigrants." National Endowment for the Humanities, 1980.

Oppenheimer, Robert. "Mexican Americans in Kansas, 1900 to World War II: An Overview." Paper presented to the Western Historical Society Conference, October 1980.

Rutter, Larry G. "Mexican Americans in Kansas: A Survey and Social Mobility Study, 1900-1970." Master's thesis, Kansas State University, 1972.

Smith, Michael M. "Beyond the Borderlands: Mexican Labor in the Central Plains, 1900-1930." Great Plains Quarterly, vol. 1, no. 4 (Fall 1981).

Valenzuela, Ignacio Galindo. Taped interview by Robert Oppenheimer. May 23, 1981.

Vargas, Vincente. Taped interview by Laurie Bretz. April 23, 1980.

KANSAS CHURCHES DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION

Birch, Clarence E. Our Heritage: 150 Years of Progress. Lawrence, Kansas: The First Christian Church, 1957.

Federal Writers' Project. A Guide to the Sunflower State, 1939.

Gaustad, Edwin S. A Religious History of America. New York: Harper and Row, 1966.

Hays, Agnes. The White Ribbon in the Sunflower State. Topeka: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union.

Heilbut, Tony. The Gospel Sound: Good News and Bad Times. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1971.

Juhnke, James. A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites. 1975.

Meairs, Helen. Taped interview by Donald Worster. Sublette, Kansas, 1977. Kansas Collection, Spencer Research Library, The University of Kansas.

Thompson, Nona. "The Bride Knew Depression." unpublished manuscript. November 1982.

Topeka Daily Capital, July 16, 1939, p. 11E.

Watson, Mildred. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Lawrence, Kansas, March 2, 1983.

Wichita Eagle, November 21 and 25, 1932.

Wolters, Gilbert Francis. A Socio-Economic Analysis of Four Rural Parishes in Nemaha County, Kansas. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1938.

FOR A QUARTER YOU COULD HAVE A GOOD TIME!

Biggerstaff, Donna. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Lawrence, Kansas, February 23, 1983.

Evans, Harold C. "Baseball in Kansas, 1867-1940." The Kansas Historical Quarterly, IX, 2 (May 1940), 175-92.

Evans, Harold C. "College Football in Kansas." The Kansas Historical Quarterly, IX, 3 (August 1940), 285-311.

Leuchtenberg, William E. The Life History of the United States, 1933-1945. New York: Time-Life Books, 1964.

Osborne, Norma. Taped interview by Katie Armitage.

Wolters, Gilbert Francis. A Socio-Economic Analysis of Four Rural Parishes in Nemaha County, Kansas. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America, 1938.

WHAT PEOPLE SAID: A KANSAS NOVEL ABOUT THE DEPRESSION

White, William L. What People Said. New York: Viking Press, 1938.

HORTON, KANSAS: A SMALL TOWN LOOKS BACK AND AHEAD

Belden, Lucille. "Editorial." The Horton Headlight. August 19, 1982.

"Golden Anniversary Edition." The Horton Headlight. October 29, 1936.

Heilman, Grant and J.W. McManigal. Farm Town: A Memoir of the 1930s. Brattleboro, Vermont: The Stephen Greene Press, 1974.

Hoppe, George W., William Parsons, Gene Maxwell, and Clarence Hughes. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Horton, Kansas, May 3, 1983.

The Magic City. KUTV. 1975.

Norris, Benith Kay. "An Ecological Study of the Development of a Second Class City: Horton, Kansas 1886-1964." Unpublished paper. January 18, 1965.

Petzinger, Thomas. "The Legacy of the Depression Lingers in Small Kansas Town." The Wall Street Journal, August 8, 1982.

Tapscott, Richard. "Horton, Kan.: Rock Island's 'Child' Trying for New Start." Kansas City Times, December 1, 1981, E1-2.

Trompeter, E.P. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Horton, Kansas, May 3, 1983.

THE COMING OF WAR

Grant, Phillip A., Jr. "The Kansas Congressional Delegation and the Selective Service Act of 1940." Kansas History, 3 (Autumn 1979), 196-205.

"Great Moments in Radio," Volume 2 (recording). Murry Hill Records.

Johnson, Walter, ed. Selected Letters of William Allen White, 1899-1943. New York: Holt and Company, 1947.

Larson, Bruce L. "Kansas and the Panay Incident 1937." Kansas Historical Quarterly, XXXI, 3 (Autumn 1965), 233-44.

McCoy, Mona. Taped interview by Barbara Watkins. Lawrence, Kansas.

Partin, John W. "The Dilemma of 'A Good, Very Good Man': Capper and Non-Interventionism, 1936-41." Kansas History, 2 (Summer 1979), 86-95.

Socolofsky, Homer E. Arthur Capper: Publisher, Politician and Philanthropist. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1962.

Van Meter, Sondra. Our Common School Heritage. Wichita: Board of Education, 1977.

Voth, Orville. Taped interview by Katie Armitage. Lawrence, Kansas, April 25, 1983.

THE DREAM ALTERED: DEPRESSION AND DROUGHT IN KANSAS IN THE 1930s

Bonnifield, Paul. The Dust Bowl: Men, Dirt, and Depression. Albuquerque, 1979.

Brandt, Anthony. "The American Dream." American Heritage, 32, 3 (April/May 1981).

Landon, Alfred. Taped interview by Donald McCoy and George Griffin. March 9, 1976.

McCoy, Donald. Interview by Katie Armitage. Lawrence, Kansas, May 9, 1983.

Schruben, Francis W. Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969.

Thompson, Nona. "The Bride Knew Depression." unpublished manuscript. November 1982.

Tipple, John. Crisis of the American Dream: A History of American Social Thought, 1920-1940. New York: Pegasus, 1968.

Worster, Donald. Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.