

Primary Sources

Recollections of Anne Bailey

Describing a dust storm:

"My son came running into the house greatly excited. 'Come quick, Mom,' he shouted, 'there's a big black cloud coming in the sky.' He ran out ahead of me and pointed to the western sky where sure enough there was the blackest most terrifying cloud I have ever seen on the horizon. It was moving very quickly and the edge of it was rolling along.

Panic rose in me. What should I do? Where should we go? The house was sure to be blown away and our nearest neighbour was a mile away. At the rate the cloud was moving I could never make it as I would have to carry the baby. I shut the door tight, picked up the baby and yelling at the other two to follow, I ran for the dug out barn. Already the shadow of the cloud was upon us.

When it was light enough for me to see the forms of the cattle I knew it was safe to open the door, so once again I looked outside. ...Everything-land, air, sky-was a dull grey colour ... our feet sank in sand and we breathed and tasted sand. Such a mess."

On leaving her home:

"In those few moments, I got a lasting mental picture of the little home where my first babies were born. The house that had sheltered us from the snow and wind and dust storms would stand lonely and silent now, with the mice playing in the rooms and the frost cracking the flowered wallpaper I closed my eyes and said a silent little prayer."

**Excerpt of the poem, [A Farmer's Wife \(In the drought area in Saskatchewan\)](#),
Edna Jacques. Published in Maclean's magazine on October 15, 1931**

The crops have failed again, the wind and sun
 Dried out the stubble first, then one by one
The strips of summer-fallow, seered with heat
 Crunched like old fallen leaves—our lovely wheat—
The garden is a dreary blighted waste
 The very air is gritty to my taste.

"A Hot Sucking Wind," excerpted from Ten Lost Years 1929-1939: Memories Of Canadians Who Survived The Depression, 1973, edited by Barry Broadfoot.

"Here's how it was. Let me tell you. The wind blew all the time, from the four corners of the world. From the east one day, the west the next, and if you were working you didn't notice it too much but the women did. Ask my wife... she said the wind used to make the house vibrate, and it was just a small wind, but there, always steady and always hot. A hot sucking wind. It sucked up the moisture. So this wind just blew and blew, and we had dust storms and times when we kept the lanterns lit all day."

Recollections of Leon Beaujot, [From Horse and Buggy to GPS: Life on a Saskatchewan Farm](#), Roderic Beaujot.

"At Handsworth, the farming conditions kept getting worse. By the early 1930s there were dust bowl conditions, compounded with grasshopper infestations. The blowing dust was so severe that it would cause blackouts. It was not as dark as at night, but the dust would block out the sun. Some years there was so little rain that Bertheline would say that there had hardly been 'quatre gouttes en croix' (that is, hardly enough to make a cross with the four drops that had fallen). The family would place wet rags in the cracks of the house to prevent the dust from coming in."

E.H. Target, Medicine Hat News. Quoted in "[Happyland: a history of the "dirty thirties" in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937](#)", Curtis R. McManus.

As I write this letter at 11:30 am on June 28, I see crops of wheat seeded almost two months ago barely above the ground and now flattened and withered. A fifty mile an hour gale is raging and the air is laden with thick particles of dust, so much so that the day is turned to night and I have to light a lamp with which to see. At this time of year I visualize a green countryside whereas in reality, stark desolation sweeps the country.

"The Year It Didn't Rain", Max Braithwaite, March 19, 1955, Maclean's.

I remember one particularly bad storm in the town of Vonda, Sask., where I taught school in 1937. I came home to find my wife and three-year-old child in bed with wet cloths over their faces. My wife had taken down the curtains from the windows, the pictures from the walls and the knickknacks from the shelves and packed them away from the grit. It simplified dusting.

She washed dishes before every meal as well as after—not even the tightest cupboard could keep out the dust. She set the table and covered everything with a cloth until we put the food on plates. And as we ate we watched the ripples of dust forming on the white tablecloth.



Glenbow Archives ND-3-6742

[Destitute family in Edmonton, Alberta, while returning to Saskatoon from the Peace River country.](#) Glenbow Archives. ND-3-6742.



Glenbow Archives NA-2496-1

[Dust storm, Pearce Airport, Alberta.](#) Glenbow Archives. NA-2496-1.



[Drought conditions showing drifting soil along a fence between Cadillac and Kincaid.](#) Library and Archives Canada. 1982-247 NPC.