

Dust bowl of the 1930s

[History](#)



The Dust Bowl of the 1930's had such an antagonistic effect on the United States economy that was already plummeting. The Dust Bowl affected the U.S economy in just about every way possible ranging from agriculture to finances including government expenses to population changes. This phenomena can be considered as one of the worst natural disasters that has affected the United States. The " Dust Bowl" was the name given to the Great Plains region that was greatly affected by drought in the 1930's during the Great Depression. The major contribution that led to the Dust Bowl was overproduction of crops however there were some natural causes. Much of the soil there had been damaged by wind and rain. The soil in this area was subjected to water and wind damage because the protective cover of vegetation was impaired through poor farming and the grazing of too many animals" (World Book Encyclopedia). The overproduction was due in part to the fact that the country was in the midst of World War I. " During World War I international demand for food crops like wheat and corn soared. Because of this farmers planted more crops and took out loans to buy land and equipment. But after the war demand for farm products declined and crop prices fell by fifty percent" (Danzer 651-652).

In an effort to make up for the falling prices, farmers tried to plant even more crops, but this only caused lower prices. As a result of these poor land management practices and lack of precipitation the land became arid. There was little grass and few trees to hold the soil down. When the wind storms hit, dust was blown all over, making it virtually impossible for farming. When farming in the Great Plains was no longer a way of making a living many of the inhabitants left the land behind and moved west to California in search of

work. “ Plagued by dust storms and evictions, thousands of farmers and sharecroppers left their land behind.

They packed up their families and their few belongings and headed west, following route 66 to California” (Danzer 652). The term Okies was coined to describe the migrants from Oklahoma but was later used to describe all migrants. “ By the end of the 1930’s, the population of California had grown by more than one million” (Danzer 652). Those who remained in the drought regions were forced to endure severe dust storms and their health effects, diminished incomes, animal infestations, and the physical and emotional stress over their uncertain futures was unbearable (National Drought Mitigation Center, online).

As the Great Depression wore on, the government took steps to intervene and try to save the nation. Led by the effort within the U. S. Department of Agriculture, newly created agencies like the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), the Resettlement Administration (RA), and the Farm Security Administration (FSA) were the loudest to publicize and deplore the Dust Bowl wracking America's heartland (Cunfer, online). Also led by the President Herbert Hoover and the United States Congress, the Federal Home Loan Bank Act was passed in 1933.

This act lowered mortgage rates for homeowners and allowed farmers to refinance their farm loans and avoid foreclosure. Newly elected President Franklin Delano Roosevelt succeeded Hoover in 1932 during the ongoing Depression. FDR proposed many acts to try and resolve the national issues in his program titled the “ New Deal” . One of his most recognized acts that

directly assisted farmers was known as the Agricultural Adjustment Act. “ This act sought to raise crop prices by lowering production, which the government achieved by paying farmers to not grow” (Danzer 667). A second program that was passed was the Civilian Conservation Corps.

This program put young men to work to perform public jobs including planting trees and helping soil erosion. The United States government spent unprecedented amounts of money to recover from the Great Depression and the Dust Bowl. “ The magnitude of the droughts of the 1930s, combined with the Great Depression, led to unprecedented government relief efforts. Congressional actions in 1934 alone accounted for relief expenditures of \$525 million, the total cost would be impossible to determine” (National Drought Mitigation Center, online). Despite all the negative effects of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression there were a few positives.

For one thing all the government sponsored programs provided jobs and a source of income for those who were unemployed. Also the Roosevelt era marked the beginning of large-scale aid. This also ushered in some of the first long-term, proactive programs to reduce future vulnerability to drought (National Drought Mitigation Center, online). The Dust Bowl was one of the worst natural disasters that has affected the United States. This disaster along with the Great Depression had negative influences on agriculture, state populations, and finances including individual families and the government.

However, in the face of all this commotion a few positive results occurred. People found jobs and a source of income and the government was able to

bring the nation out of turmoil. Work Cited Danzer, Gerald A, et al. " The Depression. " The Americans. Boston: McDougal Littell, 2000. 642-676. Print.

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