

DUST STORMS

Quotes taken from "Recollections and Reminiscences: The Year We Moved," by Mrs. A.W. Bailey. *Saskatchewan History Magazine*, Winter 1967, Volume XX, No.1

The quotes below demonstrate what it was like to be living on a farm in southern Saskatchewan during drought conditions during the thirties.

"At seven o'clock I called Bob, my helper, and together we went to the barn to do the chores. I milked while he fed the pigs and cleaned out the stalls. Then while he did the separating I made breakfast and got the children up and dressed.

Later I went about the task of trying to clean the dust off the windowsills and floors. This was a daily, thankless job for no sooner was it cleaned off than it blew in again. No house, regardless of how well built it was, was immune to dust in the thirties. ..."

"The wind blew all day and by five o'clock it had reached almost gale proportions. Grains of sand hit against the windowpanes and the wind charger howled and tugged at its moorings atop the roof, making the whole atmosphere reek of impending danger. But as the children and I sat down to supper a strange silence fell over the countryside. The wind died down suddenly as if someone had thrown a switch and turned it off. After they had eaten the children went out to play while I did the dishes before going to the barn for evening chores"

"Suddenly my son came running into the house, greatly excited. "Come quick, Mom", he shouted, "there is a big black cloud coming in the sky." He ran ahead of me and pointed to the western sky where, sure enough, there was the blackest, most terrifying looking cloud I had ever seen on the horizon. It was moving very quickly and the edge of it was latterly 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, the neighbours might not be home anyway.

"Where's Bob?" I asked my son.

"Over there, " he pointed, "fixing the pigpen."

"Go tell him to come quick," I ordered. Then I shut the door tight, picked up the baby and yelling at the other two to follow, I ran for the dug-out barn we had made in the side of a hill. Already the shadow of the cloud was upon us.

"Go back as far as you can," I shouted to the children. "Get up on those sacks of feed and sit there." I fastened the door on the inside, picked up the baby and my way to where the boys were.

"We're safer here," I told them, marveling at the calm of my voice which belied my inner feelings. Strangely, none of the children asked what was wrong or questioned why we were in the barn. They sat silent and still. By now it was pitch dark in the barn and I knew the cloud was over us. Every second I expected to be lifted and carried in the air or to have the barn taken from over 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. It was the strangest phenomenon I have ever witnessed. A cloaking silence enveloped the whole outdoors yet dust hung in the air so thick it was clearly visible. Everything, - land, air, sky- was a dull grey color. With the baby in my arms and the boys close behind me I went to the house. Our feet sank in sand almost to our ankles and we breathed and tasted the sand, so held out hands over our faces as we walked."

Additional Website Resources:

- [Agriculture in the 1930's](#)
- [Weather Trivia - Worst Weather Events](#)
- [The "Dirty Thirties"](#)
- [Exploring Saskatchewan's History through the Decades - The Depression](#)
- [Pictures and a Movie of Dust Storm](#)
- [Wind Erosion Multimedia Archives](#) - GREAT photos of all sorts of erosion.