

Handy Dandy Dust Bowl Facts

- It takes 1000 years to build 1" of fertile top soil and only hours to blow it away.
- Before the European invasion, grasslands covered 21% of the U.S. and Canada.
- Growth rings of a tree in Nebraska showed 20 droughts in the 748 years before the 1930s.
- Man's first serious ecological blow to the Great Plains was the elimination of the buffalo and Native Americans.
- In 1800 it took 373 worker hours to produce 100 bu. of wheat. In 1900 it took 108 worker hours to produce 100 bu. And according to the Edwards County Extension Agent's research, a little less than 3 worker hours to produce 100 bu. of wheat today.
- Meteorologist rate the Dust Bowl as the #1 weather event of the 20th century.
- Dust particles are extremely fine, 63 microns or smaller. By contrast, a period at the end of a typewritten sentence is three hundred microns.
- It takes a wind of 35 mph to move dirt. At 40 mph or 50 mph, it is a dust storm
- After the front of a dust storm passed, the air was still and the dust particles hung in it.
- During WWI an extra 11 million acres were plowed up to grow wheat for Europe after the Turks cut off the grain supply coming from Russian. Prices rose to \$2.25/bu. After the war and because of over-production and the Depression, soon the farmer could not even give wheat away and it rotted on the ground beside the railroad tracks.
- By 1929 farmers were planting 3 times more wheat than they had in 1920. By the late 1920s, another 5,250,000 acres of grassland were lost to the plow, an area nearly seven times the size of the state of Rhode Island.
- In 1929, with the loss of jobs, a new immigration law sent ½ million Mexicans back to Mexico
- Sept. 14 , 1931 was the first really bad rolling dust storm with winds reaching 60 mph.
- The price of gas dropped from \$1.43 a barrel to 10 cents a barrel in 1931.
- What became known as the Dust Bowl included 100 million square miles in Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico
- Most Americans paid no federal income tax in 1932
- In 1932 there were fourteen bad storms and the weather bureau began to call them dust storms.

- In 1932, one in every four workers was jobless. In the cities it was 50%. In Toledo, 4 out of 5 were jobless.
- In 1933 there are 39 dust storms. It could be told where they came from by the color of the dust: black soil came from Kansas, red soil came from Oklahoma, and gray soil came from Colorado and New Mexico
- 90% of chickens died from the effects of dust in 1933 in one Texas panhandle county.
- In 1933, under a program of planned scarcity, farmers plowed under millions of acres of wheat, corn, and cotton. Six million baby pigs were killed and 200,000 sows.
- The WPA hired out of work farmers and factory workers to build schools, pave dirt roads, and put up bridges. AAA starting with 134 million in 1934 paid farmers to reduce the amount of wheat and other crops they grew in order to end the glut of farm products on the market.
- In 1934, there were forty days over 100 degrees, some going as high as 118 degrees.
- On May 9 1934, one storm was 1,500 miles long, 900 miles across, and 2 miles high. Planes had to fly 15,000' to get above it. The storm carried 3 tons of dust for every American alive. It went as far as NYC where it was 1,800 miles wide and weighed 359 million tons. It carried dust 300 miles out into the Atlantic Ocean.
- 350 million tons of soil left Kansas, Texas, and Oklahoma and was deposited in eastern states. One night, Chicago alone got 12 million tons (4 pounds of grit for each person in the city.) In NY and Boston, the dust darkened the sky so much the street lamps were lit in the daytime.
- More than 850 million tons of topsoil had blown off the southern plains in 1935, nearly 8 tons of dirt for every resident of the United States. In the Dust Bowl, farmers lost 480 tons per acre. 100 million acres might never be productive farmland again.
- An AP reporter named Robert Geiger made up term "Dust Bowl" after the Black Sunday Dust Storm on April 14, 1935.
- The Black Sunday storm was 200 miles across and 2000 feet high with 65 mph winds. The temperature dropped 25 degrees per hour, or 50 degrees in 2 hours
- On Black Sunday twice as much dirt blew away as was dug out of the Panama Canal and that took 7 years to dig. More than 300,000 tons blew away.
- It could take less than 1 hour exposure outside to darken one of the Red Cross masks.
- During March & April, 1935 about 4.7 tons of dust per acre fell on western Kansas during each blizzard
- Black blizzards in 1935 caused complete blackouts for a total of 908 hours or over a month of darkness.

- In the spring of 1935, the Red Cross set up six emergency hospitals in the Dust Bowl states. Red Cross volunteers handed out 17,000 gauze masks. Red Cross doctors and nurses visited hundreds of homes to help people who were sick from the dust.
- In 1935, 850 million tons of top soil blew away. The average dust bowl farm lost 480 tons of top soil per acre
- One-third of the deaths in 1935 in one KS county were caused by dust pneumonia
- In 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), Farm Security Administration (FSA), the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), and the National Recovery Administration (NRA) were begun.
- 2.5 million people left their farms in 1935. Some just went to nearby town, but 300,000 traveled to California. This was the , largest single migration in U.S. history
- Over 2 years (1936-1938) 221,000 people moved to California, most of them from Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. But only 16,000 came from the actual Dust Bowl. A majority of people in the most wind-bared and lacerated counties in the southern plains did not move, or they relocated only a few hundred miles in one direction.
- Grape pickers in California worked 16 hours a day, 7 days a week, for \$4. Children were paid less.
- The WPA paid 18¢ an hour and the CCC paid 20¢ an hour in Edwards County. Horses made \$1.00 per day.
- Canada lost 25% of populations from the wheat lands. In the U.S., 2.5 million people left the south and the Great Plains.
- One day in July, 1936 in North Dakota, the temperature reached 121 degrees.
- At the end of 1936, Kansas made plans to close four hundred schools.
- In July, 1937, 14 million grasshoppers per square mile or 23,000 grasshoppers per acre swept through.
- When a train tried to run on tracks covered with grasshoppers, the wheels could get no traction, and they just spun around. Grasshoppers had stopped a train.
- There were 134 storms in 1937.
- In January 1937, gas was 22 cents per gallon. It took a full day's work on a government road job to fill a tank. *(1930 Model A held 11 gallons)*
- In July 1938 Roosevelt went to Amarillo, and it rained.
- By the summer of 1938, 3.600 miles of trees had been planted in TX, OK, KS

- During the 1930s, 25% or 3 million people left the Midwest. Between 1935 and 1940 more than one million people moved to California.
- Approximately 250,000 boys and girls, some as young as 9, became hobos in the 1930s.
- During the Depression, one-third of all farms were lost to foreclosure, and 9000 banks closed.
- In the 1930s the government bought 11.3 million acres of dusted-over farm fields and tried to return it to grasslands. In 2000, some of it is still sterile and blowing.
- A professor at Kansas State College estimated that if a line of trucks ninety-six miles long hauled ten full loads a day, it would take a year to transport the dirt that had blown from one side of Kansas to the other – a total of forty-six million truckloads.
- 220 million trees were planted in the 1930s, but in the 1940s when wheat prices shot up because of WWII, farmers ripped out the shelter belt trees to plant again.
- Droughts in the 1950s, 1974-76, 2000-2003 didn't blow as much because of soil conservation districts, irrigation from the Ogallala, changed farming techniques, and Hugh Bennett's program of managing the land as a single ecological unit.
- Hugh Bennett's legacy, the soil conservation districts, spread throughout America, and is the only New Deal grassroots operation that survives to this day.