

The Great Depression and Its Effects on Colorado Farmers

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The Great Depression was the worst economic failure in world history and it affected many Colorado farmers. The Great Depression started when the United States (U.S.) stock market crashed. With the stock market crash came many job failures. Banks were shut down because they did not have enough money to stay open and keep giving loans. Farmers had to find new ways to farm and they lost a lot of land due to bankruptcy. When the banks shut down many people lost their jobs and soon after they could not afford anything.

After the unemployed bankers couldn't afford anything they were not be able to purchase any goods or services. Many farmers had taken out loans from the banks and soon their land was taken from them because of foreclosure and the farmers were not able to pay the banks. Other businesses were losing profits and they shortly went out of business as well, soon after very few people were employed. Farmers were losing profits because nobody had the money to purchase crops or products of crops. Farmers switched to subsistence farming<sup>1</sup>, or growing enough crops to feed themselves and their family and then sell whatever was left over. This type of farming worked for a while, and was great for people who had the option of farming.

The Colorado farmers had a lot of land that was not used after the crop prices went down and some farmers lost their land due to bankruptcy. Farmers that had previously gotten loans to buy land and equipment, were not able to pay it back when the Great Depression hit and there was many foreclosures on land. Some farmers were able to get there land back by leasing it ,but

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<sup>1</sup> Growing enough crops for your family and selling what's left over.

others lost all of their land and had to find new ways to get food and other needs. With no crop sales happening the Colorado economic system was moving very slowly and not very efficient.

The economic system was very important to the Colorado farmers. The economic system helped Colorado farmers buy, sell, and trade crops and other goods. It organized the market. This system was very important to the farmers, because without it there would be no organization. Farmers used this system to trade between each other and also to sell each other seeds and crops. All of the farmers in the same area would buy, sell, and trade with each other. This effect had some good effects too, it helped build a stronger more efficient economic system and it also proved who the stronger more efficient farmers of Colorado were. The stock market crash had some major impacts but also made a stronger union and it helped prepare for worse things.

One of the biggest triumphs of the Great Depression was the agricultural inventions. The stock market crash was horrendous and hurt a lot of people, things, and the agriculture. The Great Depression helped farmers create many new techniques and even make new and improved machines with better technology. Before The Great Depression all agricultural work was done by farmers and workers. At the beginning of the Depression tractor sales were not succeeding and the tractor businesses had to sell their company to people who could afford the downfall. Agricultural planters<sup>2</sup> became more advanced, they started distributing seeds and plants at a higher rate of speed. Another invention was the mechanical cultivators<sup>3</sup> that allowed tractors to move more efficiently throughout the rows in between crops. By 1935 the tractors sales started to go up and the tractor retailers started to make more money.

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<sup>2</sup> Equipment farmers used to plant crops and seeds. They were used on the farm in the fields.

<sup>3</sup> Machinery used to make proper rows for planting seeds.

The inventions during the Great Depression had amazing impacts on the way farmers farm today. Even with all the downfalls of the Great Depression the inventions that came out were miraculous. The economic system helped the farmers when they were selling crops, but when they went into debt the economic system wasn't efficient for them. The only way that they could become out of debt was to sell land, tools, and machinery. Some farmers, over the age of 60, got a pension from the President of the U.S. because the farmers weren't making as much money and it was not a stable lifestyle during the Great Depression.

The President of the U.S., Franklin D. Roosevelt, was not very happy with the downfall of the Great Depression and he knew the farmers were not going to be able to buy stuff for themselves or their family and pay for retirement, so he gave them a pension. Some farmers also got grants so they could continue to farm and keep making food for everybody else and so they would not have to switch to subsistence farming. President Franklin Roosevelt started a new idea called the "New Deal". The "New Deal" included stabilizing banks, opening up private and public jobs, expand in money distribution, open up more trade, and assistance for farmers.

The "New Deal" helped the farmers deal with what was happening. It helped the farmers receive assistance for working in the field. During the Great Depression the main way people get food and supplies was through trade. The trade of food and everyday necessities was very important because people didn't have the money to buy what they needed. The People who needed food would go to their neighbors or other family and friends would so they would just trade for it. Trade was good for everybody and help build a stronger economic system and a stronger town.

Many Organizations were started including the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA). These organizations helped the farmers and other people succeed or even just get them back on their feet. There were organizations for many different types of societies<sup>4</sup>, but farming had many of its own. These organizations help with crop sales and crop assistance. The farmers used these organizations to help them get back on their feet and continue to farm during the Great Depression. Some farmers even started their own organizations that would help other farmers with the same needs.

Some of the main needs that farmers had was water, fertile soil, utilities that would help them with harvest, and helpers. The helpers were very important because they harvested 60 acres, give or take, and the farmers did not the best equipment for harvest. The ground was starting to dry up and prepare for the future Colorado Dust Bowl. Farmers were having trouble harvesting all of the acres of their land, and they would have to hire more help. The more helpers the farmers had the more they would have to spend on supplies for them. Some people volunteered to help with the farming because they needed extra cash and they would hope the farmer would give them a bonus<sup>5</sup>. Child labor started at a young age but they were a big help with their energy to the farmers.

One of the greater tragedies of the Great Depression was the intense child labor. Some children only went to school for a few years, and some did not go to school at all. The children would work long hours and do very physical work. Many of these kids suffered heat stroke and many physical injuries. Kids were forced to do as much or more work as the hired help. The little helpers were not given much say and very little to no pay. After the Great Depression the

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<sup>4</sup> An organization or club formed for a specific reason.

<sup>5</sup> The amount of money added to a paycheck on a seasonal period.

children who did not go to school did not know how to read or write, so they could not get great jobs.

One of the hardest parts of the Great Depression was finding jobs. Since all of the businesses were shut down or closed due to bankruptcy there were many people that were out of work and could not find a place. Those people who could not find a job would go to the farmers and ask if they needed help in the fields. Farmers normally would accept them but the workers would get little to no pay. Some of the workers would get an occasional meal and sometimes they would also provide a place to sleep. Occasionally the farmer would provide supplies for the hired help and would help them get stuff for their family. It was hard for women to get work because at that time most women would teach or do stuff that was not physical at all. Most women would work as a teacher or they would stay home and do stuff for the family. The men would go work on the field or in a factory. One of the best jobs to get during the Great Depression was owning a field in hiring helpers to harvest your plants.

The Great depression was a time full of many triumphs and tragedy. This time period greatly affected Colorado's farmers, and many people that survived off of the agriculture. Farmers employed many people who lost their jobs and businesses due to bankruptcy. Colorado farming was very important for everyone in Colorado during the Great Depression. With the tragedy of all of the land lost to bankruptcy farmers turned it into a triumph by using their resources to their advantage and creating new technology.

Appendix A



This picture represents child labor in an onion farm during the Great Depression.

Appendix B



This sign represents how Colorado farmers would advertise that they needed help on the fields.



## Primary

Ganzel, Bill 2003, "Farming in the 1930s" *LivingHistoryFarm.com*. N.p.,n.d. This page explained the advancements in machines and tools. This helped bring a revival in the economy in the Great Depression.

Lange, Dorothea, December 17, 2015 17 "Rare Photos Taken During the Great Depression" *OnlyinYourState.com*. N.p.,n.d. Web, 24 Feb. 2019. This gave me pictures that explained the hard labor that the young people in the Great Depression had to do to receive food and money.

Rostein, Arthur, 2012 "Great Depression Photos" *OnlyinYourState.com*. N.p.,n.d. Web, 24 Feb. 2019 This showed me the amount of work that farmers would have to go through to broadcast what they had and what they could supply so they could have workers.

## Secondary

Leonard, Steven J. 1933 "New Deal in Colorado" *ColoradoEncyclopedia.com*. N.p.,n.d. Web, 24 Feb. 2019. This gave me information on how bad the Great Depression was and explained all of the things that happened. The New Deal was one of President Roosevelt's ideas to help Colorado and other states get back on track.

The Survival Mom 2019, "25 Ways People earned money" *TheSurvivalMom.com*. N.p.,n.d. Web. This page showed me how people earned money and the trouble they had to get a job. Finding a job had an economic impact on everyone that found one and it also helped Colorado and everyone else get closer to normal economic conditions.

Jan. 17, 2019 "The Great Depression: What Caused It and How it Ended" *Facty.com* N.p.,n.d. Web. This page explained how the Great Depression started and ended, also what caused it.