

An Eyewitness to History: The Dust Bowl

Lawrence Svobida was a farmer in Meade County, Kansas. He wrote his reminiscences in his memoir *Farming the Dust Bowl*. Here are four quotes from the memoir.

“Sometimes it was so thick that it completely hid the sun. Visibility ranged from nothing to fifty feet, the former when the eyes were filled with dirt which could not be avoided, even with goggles.”

“At other times a cloud is seen to be approaching from a distance of many miles. Already it has the banked appearance of a cumulus cloud, but it is black instead of white, and it hangs low, seeming to hug the earth. Instead of being slow to change its form, it appears to be rolling on itself from the crest downward. As it sweeps onward, the landscape is progressively blotted out. Birds fly in terror before the storm, and only those that are strong of wing may escape. The smaller birds fly until they are exhausted, then fall to the ground, to share the fate of the thousands of jack rabbits which perish from suffocation.”

“The dust I had labored in all day began to show its effects on my system. My head ached, my stomach was upset, and my lungs were oppressed and felt as if they must contain a ton of fine dirt.”

“When I knew that my crop was irrevocably gone I experienced a deathly feeling which, I hope, can affect a man only once in a lifetime. My dreams and ambitions had been flouted by nature, and my shattered ideals seemed gone forever. The very desire to make a success of my life was gone; the spirit and urge to strive were dead within me. Fate had dealt me a cruel blow above which I felt utterly unable to rise.”