

## An Old Kansas Lament on Kansas

*John M. Wiehl, Sr. (1936)*

Now this is for those who come to this place  
to try to raise corn to win the race  
But be careful mister or you might get a blister  
that wouldn't be on your face,  
For everything you touch is hot as Hell  
The river dried up and no water in the well  
Everything to buy and nothing to sell  
here in Kansas.

We haven't any wheat and haven't any meat,  
Haven't any taters or anything to eat,  
Haven't any corn  
Haven't any seed  
And haven't any money to buy any feed.  
It makes us people just hold our breath  
to see our poor cattle starve to death  
here in Kansas.

Where the hot winds whistle through the sand burrs  
and thistles  
And the dust clouds boil in the old dust bowl  
Now the beetles and hoppers have taken their tolls.  
There is nothing left but the prairie dog holes  
for us poor souls  
here in Kansas.

Now I've not made a nickel in the last five years  
And I'll have to starve to death it now appears.  
I don't know what to do to save my soul  
With the county busted and we can't get a dole,  
The poor house full and so is the jail,  
And nothing left in our dinner pail  
here in Kansas.

Now I've been paying taxes for fifty years  
And I ought to have a rest it now appears  
For I'm no longer able to pack the heavy load  
So I guess they will sell our home  
and send us down the road.  
But if anyone leaves here, seems no one cares,  
For I haven't noticed any one shed any tears.  
But the reason is plain it now appears  
That its to blamed dry to form any tears  
here in Kansas.

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## Recollections of the “Dirty Thirties”

*June Wiehl*

The winds were always blowing and the dust would form drifts, just like the snow does in winter. We'd try to seal up the house, by stuffing towels or old clothes around the doors and windows, but it wasn't totally successful. I remember sleeping with a piece of cloth over my face, so not to breath in too much dust. Meal time wasn't very enjoyable either, for no matter how hard you tried to keep the food clean, the dust would find it's way to it.

We lived on a farm and had to do chores, such as milk the cows, which was made more difficult because you needed to keep the dust out of the bucket or else the milk would have to be strained later. My father tied a rope from the house to the outhouse, to help us find our way when the wind was blowing really hard. Sometimes it was as dark as night.

When our cistern was empty, because of lack of rain, my father would hitch a team of horses to a water wagon and go to the nearest town, pump it full of water, then drive back to refill it. That process would take a good portion of the day, because it was about ten miles each way, plus the time to load and unload the water.

There were always scads of "Russian Thistles", probably better know as tumble weeds, rolling which ever way the wind was blowing. Sometimes they'd even block the entrance to the house or barn and had to be removed. We'd get filthy and scratched up quite a bit doing that, but we all made it through okay, which is more than some families did. It was not a very pleasant time in our country's history.

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