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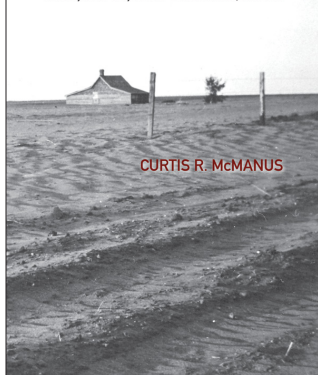
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## Happyland

A History of the "Dirty Thirties" in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937



### HAPPYLAND: A HISTORY OF THE "DIRTY THIRTIES" IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1914-1937

by Curtis R. McManus

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# Population Losses: An Overview

Key to RMs (with principal communities) whose municipal minutes are cited in this work:

- 45 Mankota (Mankota)
- 49 White Valley (Eastend)
- 51 Reno (Consul)
- 75 Pinto Creek (Kincaid)
- 111 Maple Creek
- 137 Swift Current
- 141 Big Stick (Golden Prairie)
- 230 Clinworth (Sceptre)
- 232 Deer Forks (Burstall)
- 262 Mantario, amalgamated with Chesterfield, 1968 (Mantario)

There were 90 south and west plains RMs that received relief aid during the early years of the drought between 1917 and 1924. These RMs lost 22 per cent, or 10,959, of their “*resident farmers*”: their numbers declined from 48,537 to 37,578. See Table A3.

*Note:* Prior to the early 1920s, the Saskatchewan Government only monitored the number of “resident farmers” in each RM.

**Table A1:** Number of “Resident Farmers” who abandoned their lands, 1917–23.

RM	1917	1923	Gain/loss (%)
45	425	525	+19
49	675	400	-40
51	550	325	-40
75	700	500	-28
111	350	286	-18
137	604	600	-0.6
141	450	254	-43
230	750	435	-42
232	400	325	-18
262	650	305	-53
Totals	5,554	3,955	-29

Between 1923 and 1939, these 90 south and west plains RMs lost 10 per cent of their “general population.” The number of people fell from 139,577 to 126,176, for a total loss of 13,401 people. See Table A4.

**Table A2:** Population change, 1923–39.

RM	1923	1939	Gain/loss (%)
45	1,211	1,650	+36
49	1,218	950	-22%
51	884	800	-9%
75	1,751	1,350	-22%
111	1,019	800	-21%
137	2,923	2,590	-11%
141	998	970	-2%
230	1,993	1,600	-19%
232	1,623	1,280	-21%
262	1,240	864	-30%
Totals	14,860	12,854	-13%

In the Dirty Thirties, the drought spread to RMs in central and southeast Saskatchewan.

There were 91 RMs heretofore unaffected by the drought but from which 14 per cent of the general population fled between 1929 and 1939: the population in these RMs declined from 175,187 to 149, 875, for a total loss of 25,312. See Table A5.

The total general population losses from these 181 RMs affected by drought in the dry years areas amounts to 38,713. This figure does *not* include the 10,959 resident farmers and their families who fled. All figures cited refer *only* to rural Saskatchewan: the figures excludes all hamlets, villages, towns, and cities.

**Table A3:** Number of “resident farmers” in RMs that received relief aid during the early years of the drought, 1917 to 1924.

*Note:* Since the Department of Municipal Affairs did not begin recording the general population numbers in each RM until the 1920s, we have to rely on the number of “Resident Farmers” in each RM during the middle phase of the crisis.

RM	1917	1924	% Gain/Loss
2	275	290	+5.1
5	325	320	-1
6	300	280	-6
7	402	290	-27
8	500	352	-29
9	316	250	-20
10	345	350	+1
11	590	335	-43
18	500	300	-40
19	350	250	-28
35	280	400	+42
36	260	250	-3
37	400	325	-18
38	695	380	-45
39	1,200	700	-41
40	800	370	-53
44	425	525	+19
45	400	400	0
46	400	257	-35
49	675	400	-40

RM	1917	1924	% Gain/Loss
51	550	325	-40
64	310	300	-3
65	450	420	-6
66	375	300	-20
67	436	325	-25
68	230	200	-13
69	480	436	-9
71	870	866	-0.5
73	775	830	+7
75	700	500	-28
76	600	500	-16
77	625	375	-40
78	450	450	0
79	550	350	-36
97	260	280	+7
104	1,820	700	-61
106	650	400	-38
107	1,200	450	-62
108	725	700	-3
109	350	350	0
110	600	250	-58
111	350	286	-18
132	350	192	-45
134	470	400	-14
135	530	537	+1
136	500	375	-25

RM	1917	1924	% Gain/Loss
137	604	600	-0.6
138	800	750	-6
139	550	450	-18
141	450	254	-43
142	250	320	+21
163	375	235	-37
164	545	400	-26
165	629	590	-6
166	1,500	580	-61
167	452	220	-51
168	804	872	+8
169	500	625	+25
171	580	550	-5
172	435	394	-9
193	400	401	+0.25
195	250	247	-1
224	500	345	-31
225	345	350	+1.4
228	500	510	+2
229	780	556	28
230	750	435	-42
231	800	1,000	+25



<b>RM</b>	<b>1917</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>% Gain/Loss</b>
232	400	325	-18
255	500	600	+20
256	400	305	-23
257	450	300	-33
258	500	750	+50
261	500	300	-40
262	650	305	-53
284	450	450	0
285	1,200	688	-42
286	450	500	+11
288	480	480	0
314	450	325	-27
315	450	350	-22
316	700	550	-21
317	222	470	+111
318	500	573	+14
319	500	450	-10
321	250	212	-15
322	442	300	-32
347	1,000	540	-46
<b>Total:</b>	<b>48,537</b>	<b>37,578</b>	<b>-22</b>

*Source:* Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Annual Reports, see relevant year.

**Table A4:** Population losses between 1923 and 1939 in those RMs that received relief aid during the early years of the drought.

RM	1923	1939	% Gain/loss
2	1,437	1,200	-16
5	1,864	1,400	-24
6	1,448	1,300	-10
7	1,704	1,650	-3
8	1,760	1,000	-43
9	748	1,050	+40
10	610	750	+6
11	1,340	1,300	-3
18	970	970	0
19	775	775	0
35	1,601	1,762	+10
36	1,100	1,250	+13
37	1,325	1,200	-9
38	2,100	1,450	-30
39	2,000	1,380	-31
40	1,421	1,500	+5
44	1,700	1,500	-11
45	1,211	1,650	+36
46	762	750	-1.5
49	1,218	950	-22
51	884	800	-9
64	1,350	1,150	-14
65	1,680	1,220	-27

**Table A4:** Continued

RM	1923	1939	% Gain/loss
66	1,454	1,350	-7
67	1,892	1,740	-8
68	1,000	1,160	+16
69	2,280	1,520	-33
71	2,278	2,500	+9
73	2,431	2,575	+5
75	1,751	1,350	-22
76	1,888	1,400	-25
77	1,257	1,175	-6
78	1,044	1,125	+7
79	1,448	1,315	-9
97	1,375	1,425	+3
104	2,275	2,000	-12
106	1,952	1,530	-21
107	1,968	1,780	-9
108	1,938	1,720	-11
109	1,474	1,400	-5
110	1,086	900	-17
111	1,019	800	-21
134	1,472	1,500	+2
135	2,268	1,990	-12
136	1,500	2,490	+66
137	2,923	2,590	-11
138	2,340	1,650	-29
139	1,395	1,040	-25
141	998	970	-2

**Table A4: Continued**

RM	1923	1939	% Gain/loss
142	350	672	+92
163	1,100	1,010	-8
164	1,363	1,307	-4
165	2,036	1,600	-21
166	3,100	2,900	-6
167	800	1,250	+56
168	2,459	2,200	-10
169	1,815	1,200	-33
171	2,163	2,012	-7
172	1,342	1,370	+2
193	2,167	1,300	-40
195	1,197	1,250	+4
224	1,708	1,150	-32
225	1,550	870	-43
226	1,380	1,300	-5
228	2,520	1,990	-21
229	2,143	1,840	-14
230	1,993	1,600	-19
231	4,478	3,500	-21
232	1,623	1,280	-21
255	1,670	1,475	-11

**Table A4: Continued**

RM	1923	1939	% Gain/loss
256	950	1,250	+31
257	747	1,200	+60
258	1,500	1,200	-20
261	1,162	1,170	+0.7
262	1,240	864	-30
284	1,713	1,450	-15
285	2,276	2,104	-7
286	1,481	1,400	-5
288	1,800	1,370	-23
314	1,126	1,500	+33
315	1,200	1,150	-4
316	1,485	1,300	-12
317	1,300	1,480	+13
318	2,208	1,500	-32
319	1,360	1,600	+17
321	631	720	+14
322	852	740	-13
347	2,255	2,150	-4
Total:	139,577	126,176	-9.6

*Source:* Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Annual Report; see relevant year.

*Note:* Statistics are not available for RMs 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 43, 48, 50, 52, 80, 81, 82, 140, 170, and 227.

**Table A5:** Population losses between 1929 and 1939 in central and south-east Saskatchewan RMs that received \$200,000 or more in relief aid during the Dirty Thirties.

RM	1929	1939	% Gain/loss
1	1,030	1,000	-2
3	1,489	1,400	-6
4	1,792	1,800	+0.4
12	1,093	1,300	+18
31	1,137	1,250	+9
32	1,206	1,275	+5
33	1,548	1,300	-16
34	1,474	1,630	+10
42	2,629	2,415	-8
70	2,143	2,225	+3
72	1,861	1,430	-23
74	2,143	1,800	-16
94	1,550	1,485	-4
95	1,540	983	-36
96	1,525	1,230	-19
98	2,347	1,750	-25
99	1,545	1,150	-25
100	2,200	2,025	-7
101	1,600	1,590	-0.6
102	1,500	1,080	-28
103	1,889	1,800	-4
105	2,345	1,800	-23
125	1,767	1,520	-13

**Table A5: Continued**

<b>RM</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>1939</b>	<b>% Gain/loss</b>
126	2,400	2,400	0
127	3,000	2,690	-10
128	2,575	1,927	-25
129	2,200	1,365	-37
130	2,036	1,600	-21
131	1,900	1,400	-26
132	615	470	-23
133	919	995	+8
155	1,950	1,920	-1.5
156	1,900	1,350	-28
157	2,485	2,600	+4
158	2,750	2,600	-5
159	3,200	1,550	-51
160	2,200	1,675	-23
161	2,225	1,800	-19
162	1,330	1,020	-23
189	2,000	1,700	-15
190	2,150	1,735	-19
191	1,700	1,388	-18
194	2,725	1,420	-47
217	2,400	2,200	-8
218	3,150	2,800	-11
219	2,850	2,560	-10
220	1,960	1,700	-13
221	2,300	2,000	-13

**Table A5: Continued**

<b>RM</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>1939</b>	<b>% Gain/loss</b>
222	1,901	1,200	-36
223	1,482	860	-41
249	2,000	1,850	-7
250	1,775	1,360	-23
251	1,725	1,225	-30
252	1,354	1,275	-5
253	1,350	900	-33
254	2,574	1,500	-41
259	1,646	1,800	+9
260	1,495	1,200	-19
281	1,775	1,450	-18
282	1,890	1,800	-4
283	1,900	1,350	-28
287	1,680	1,600	-4
289	1,300	950	-26
290	850	750	-11
291	900	685	-23
292	1,127	685	-39
312	2,150	1,800	-16
313	1,280	1,100	-14
320	2,000	1,000	-50
341	2,600	2,250	-13



**Table A5: Continued**

<b>RM</b>	<b>1929</b>	<b>1939</b>	<b>% Gain/loss</b>
342	2,063	1,675	-18
343	2,025	1,775	-12
344	2,625	2,600	-0.9
345	2,400	2,100	-12
349	1,575	1,360	-13
350	1,585	1,280	-19
351	1,600	1,492	-6
352	1,481	1,450	-2
371	3,234	3,000	-7
372	2,425	2,000	-17
373	2,800	2,750	-1.7
378	1,142	1,100	-3
381	2,425	2,300	-5
382	2,690	2,500	-7
403	4,050	4,050	0
404	2,950	2,950	0
405	2,225	2,200	-2
410	1,625	1,400	-13
434	3,240	3,200	-1
Total:	175,187	149,875	-14

*Source:* Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, Annual Reports; see relevant year.

*Note:* RMs in east-central, north-east, north-central, and north-west Saskatchewan received, on average, between \$50,000 and \$200,000 in relief aid during the 1930s, which is far below the average for other RMs. See: Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1943, Index; Map: Relief Aid.

## Population Increases: An overview

**Table A6:** Population increases in RMs located along the North Saskatchewan River between Saskatoon and North Battleford between 1924 and 1939.

RM	1924	1939	% increase
226	226	1,300	575
346	500	1,950	390
348	270	830	307
374	589	5,000	849
375	450	2,100	467
376	570	2,400	421
377	470	2,400	511
Total:	3,075	15,980	520

*Note:* The RM of Victory No. 226 is an exception to the rule that settlers fled north. Located in the heart of the drylands, the RM of Victory is located right next to the South Saskatchewan River where settlers could find wood and water.

**Table A7:** Population increases in northwest Saskatchewan.

RM	1929	1939	% increase
61	650	1,500	231
63	384	1,600	417
379	750	1,800	240
380	600	1,827	305
402	560	3,100	554
406	400	1,860	465
408	286	1,950	682
409	350	1,900	543
435	900	4,400	489
436	600	3,000	500
437	410	2,600	634
438	406	1,600	394
466	540	2,900	537
467	520	2,250	433
Total:	7,356	32,287	439

*Note:* RMs No. 61 and 63 are also interesting exceptions to the rule that settlers fled north during the droughts: settlers fled to any region that had wood and water, no matter where it was. RMs No. 61 and 63 are located on the south-east plains near what is known today as Moose Mountain Provincial Park but which, in the 1930s, was still just a large lake surrounded by many trees.

*Source:* Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Reports*, see relevant year.

**Table A8:** Tax arrears and tax sale holdings for select RMs that received relief aid in the droughts of the 1920s and the 1930s.

Tax Arrears = the amount of money settlers owed to the RM in back taxes.  
 Tax Sale Holdings = the dollar value of the amount of land the RM owned as a result of property seizure.

RM	1922		1924	
	Tax Arrears	Tax Sale Holdings	Tax Arrears	Tax Sale Holdings
45	\$43,866	\$19,533	\$32,131	\$13,281
49	45,287	12,750	30,935	18,563
51	46,341	18,392	44,692	24,824
75	42,116	11,177	29,779	5,398
111	29,914	23,828	37,000	23,761
137	49,801	51,881	48,232	22,131
141	31,181	26,288	29,305	23,611
230	65,109	19,429	50,404	14,712
232	24,345	17,195	29,910	6,563
261	40,489	12,203	18,277	5,013
262	66,867	13,277	72,905	13,293
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$485,316</b>	<b>\$225,953</b>	<b>\$423,570</b>	<b>\$171,150</b>

**Table A8: Continued**

	<b>1928</b>		<b>1932</b>	
<b>RM</b>	<b>Tax Arrears</b>	<b>Tax Sale Holdings</b>	<b>Tax Arrears</b>	<b>Tax Sale Holdings</b>
45	\$19,777	\$4,229	\$150,510	\$1,804
49	24,120	3,626	51,072	15,512
51	22,435	11,219	40,641	17,510
75	18,920	392	77,989	121,915
111	10,268	19,591	24,484	11,895
137	35,780	21,673	75,469	41,689
141	10,481	12,985	18,340	15,341
230	33,696	12,815	75,949	22,297
232	6,694	7,024	20,879	6,499
261	15,614	3,451	29,353	15,221
262	54,031	9,283	93,038	12,681
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$251,816</b>	<b>\$106,288</b>	<b>\$657,724</b>	<b>\$282,364</b>

**Table A8: Continued**

	<b>1934</b>		<b>1936</b>	
<b>RM</b>	<b>Tax Arrears</b>	<b>Tax Sale Holdings</b>	<b>Tax Arrears</b>	<b>Tax Sale Holdings</b>
45	\$216,843	\$1,812	\$250,362	\$1,799
49	75,309	11,583	77,394	25,920
51	62,797	14,570	75,075	15,127
75	135,697	113,972	172,467	111,360
111	34,431	11,895	56,316	11,895
137	95,036	42,686	106,110	39,396
141	30,690	13,793	43,068	13,427
230	109,863	18,400	114,944	16,721
232	39,893	6,736	48,829	6,368
261	58,956	8,081	72,707	6,962
262	128,904	8,243	152,181	8,162
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$988,419</b>	<b>\$251,771</b>	<b>\$1,169,453</b>	<b>\$257,137</b>

**Table A8: Continued**

	<b>1939</b>		<b>1942</b>	
<b>RM</b>	<b>Tax Arrears</b>	<b>Tax Sale Holdings</b>	<b>Tax Arrears</b>	<b>Tax Sale Holdings</b>
45	\$115,397	n.a.	\$139,518	n.a.
49	46,524	\$183	39,070	\$3,523
51	35,009	3,253	43,644	3,002
75	112,546	6,468	135,176	4,988
111	24,842	7,867	25,798	6,380
137	57,422	27,383	84,321	15,425
141	18,881	4,547	12,543	3,334
230	26,771	8,709	16,328	8,939
232	25,400	4,391	10,776	4,596
261	40,787	3,939	32,908	4,426
262	47,589	n.a.	54,464	192
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$551,168</b>	<b>\$66,740</b>	<b>\$594,546</b>	<b>\$54,805</b>

Source: Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Reports*: RM Assets and liabilities; see relevant years.

**Table A9:** Municipal relief debt and provincial loans, 1934–38.

	1934		1935	
RM	Relief Debt	Provincial Seed/ Relief Loans	Relief Debt	Provincial Seed/ Relief Loans
45	\$436,988	\$87,088	\$552,941	\$215,685
49	40,747	11,839	104,964	67,908
51	85,206	11,434	141,080	59,897
75	404,359	109,469	531,429	223,844
111	8,393	4,395	18,348	12,961
137	126,037	32,040	168,685	65,629
141	56,565	10,299	109,685	53,172
230	68,636	12,963	162,179	74,357
232	87,952	19,799	165,314	101,384
261	44,522	12,613	109,581	26,565
262	23,046	6,004	70,613	277,843
	<b>\$1,382,451</b>	<b>\$317,943</b>	<b>\$2,134,819</b>	<b>\$1,179,245</b>



**Table A9: Continued**

	1936		1937	
RM	Relief Debt	Provincial Seed/ Relief Loans	Relief Debt	Provincial Seed/ Relief Loans
45	\$621,420	\$231,216	\$771,745	\$227,815
49	136,563	70,111	231,288	65,196
51	190,102	65,177	189,194	65,190
75	631,848	253,978	775,569	254,443
111	35,358	15,889	85,119	16,461
137	266,664	120,663	449,340	117,805
141	147,741	62,069	231,148	60,881
230	217,408	95,270	286,122	93,348
232	215,025	120,552	328,581	114,866
261	157,609	40,772	232,871	42,991
262	101,022	33,477	160,889	32,131
	<b>\$2,720,760</b>	<b>\$1,109,174</b>	<b>\$3,741,866</b>	<b>\$1,091,127</b>

**Table A9:** Continued

1938		
RM	Relief Debt	Provincial Seed/ Relief Loans
45	\$879,615	\$238,497
49	247,746	62,688
51	250,696	55,498
75	896,700	277,123
111	128,263	15,460
137	563,516	81,434
141	212,898	44,362
230	351,736	86,870
232	309,886	85,203
261	243,438	32,543
262	171,067	20,303
	<b>\$4,255,561</b>	<b>\$999,981</b>

Total Relief Debt (1934–38) = \$14,235,457.

Total Provincial Seed/Relief Loans (1934–38) = \$4,697,470.

Source: Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Reports*, see relevant year.