

THE DEPRESSION

The depression years, according to some, really began in 1929 after the market "crashed" and prices fell and ended around the year 1939.

Times were hard and farmers out west had to put up with drought, grasshoppers, gophers, rabbits and crows. The government supplied poison, and kids trapped gophers and were paid five cents a tail. They got money for crows' eggs too. The farmers were forced into selling most of their cattle as they could not feed them. Dust storms were prevalent and ditches were full of topsoil. As well they held rabbit round-ups. Farmers built a corral and drove the rabbits into it and killed them with clubs. They were skinned and the pelts sold.

Here in Kipling the pioneers had it tough too as there were few jobs and no money coming in.

Food relief cheques, were sent out each month to those who applied for it. They were used to buy food that could not be produced at home such as flour, sugar, dried fruit, etc.

Clothing cheques were sent out twice a year - spring and fall.

Everyone had a garden patch and the housewives "put up" or preserved as many vegetables as possible to see the family through the winter and following spring. Most farmyards had a flock of chickens and this was used for fresh meat and they canned for the winter. Some was sold for extra income. The feathers were used for pillows and feather ticks.

Everyone picked wild fruit, strawberries, raspberries, choke cherries and everyone had a rhubarb patch. There was no Medi-Care, so if you had to have the doctor, usually Rev. Gust Engstrom or Dr. Menard from Verner. They were often paid with produce, wood, chickens, vegetables, etc. In the winter they had to travel by horse and cutter.

Later on the mail order catalogues, Eatons, Simpsons, Army and Navy were the only way to get the things one needed. When the catalogues were outdated, the kids used them to cut out paper dolls, etc. Some were relegated to the outhouse. Nobody bought anything he or she didn't need and then only if he or she could afford it. The only credit was at Johnson's Store or one of the other stores over the years that allowed you to put it on the bill.

When the crops came in or when you sold something you would settle up your account. Many a food relief cheque bill showed the sale of salt pork as one of the staples. You were not allowed tobacco or snuff so your purchase of these items was listed as salt pork. Also the men left the women here while they worked in the mines, or building roads away from home and when they came back with their pay they would settle up there accounts.

Over the years this area has been hit by bad weather and poor growing seasons. The hurricane (tornado) of August 20, 1970 was one I remember. It came from the west, Sudbury and left downed trees, roofs off with power outages and roads blocked. A hurricane earlier also did damage to barns etc. (1912 good Fri.