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Plains Women

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PLAINS WOMEN

RURAL LIFE IN THE 1930s

DOROTHY SCHWIEDER and DEBORAH FINK

During the Great Depression, farm families throughout the nation experienced severe economic difficulties. Since then, historians and other scholars have analyzed and re-analyzed the basic problems of American agriculture and the solutions offered to those problems. Only recently, however, have the scholars begun to take a wide view of rural society during the 1930s and begun to look at the dynamics of the farm family: the roles, influences, and contributions of farm women and the work roles and treatment of farm children.¹

In keeping with this broadened understanding, we will examine the work roles of plains women during the Great Depression by studying rural society without assuming that agriculture, as represented by crop and live-

stock production, subsumed the entirety of farm life. Although farm women performed similar tasks regardless of their location within the so-called breadbasket of the central United States, we believe that a close examination of farm women's roles in Nebraska and South Dakota, with particular emphasis on Boone and Lyman counties, will indicate a distinctive plains pattern. Work roles were often the same as those of farm women in other parts of the Middle West, but the results of that work and the difficulties women encountered were strongly influenced by the plains environment, particularly during the Great Depression.²

BOONE AND LYMAN COUNTIES

Nebraska and South Dakota each contain areas designated as prairie as well as plains. The eastern one-third of each state provides a natural transition between the prairie to the east and the Great Plains, sharing geographic features with both environments. The features of the prairie disappear by the center of these states and the environment is the true Great Plains. Except for the Black Hills, Badlands, and Nebraska Sand Hills, western South

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Dakota and Nebraska are semiarid, flat, and generally lacking trees. In South Dakota, the two environments are demarcated as East River and West River, with the Missouri River serving as the dividing line. Nebraska is similarly divided environmentally but lacks a visible boundary.³

Both Boone County, Nebraska and Lyman County, South Dakota, are technically in the Great Plains, but the two regions differ somewhat in physical and climatic features. Boone County is located in the eastern one-third of Nebraska and is divided by the 98th meridian, commonly accepted as the dividing line between the prairie and the Plains. Roughly one-third of the county lies to the east of that line. The yearly precipitation averages 25.48 inches. Farmers in eastern Boone County, like producers in the prairie region to the east, have mostly concentrated on raising corn, while the western part of the county is hilly range land.⁴ Lyman County, some 120 miles further into the Great Plains and along the 100th meridian, can be described as lying within the Great Plains proper. Rainfall averages 18 inches per year. Lyman County's population peaked in 1910 (10,848), reflecting an increase of 312 percent from the previous census report. By 1930, Lyman County's population had decreased considerably to 6,335 residents while Boone County's population had stabilized at 14,738.⁵

The 1930s did not bring the first hint of depression to these counties. While South Dakota and Nebraska farm families did well during World War I, realizing profits from both farming and livestock production, the 1920s brought a drastic deflation of farm prices, which forced many farms and rural banks into insolvency. In Nebraska between 1921 and 1923, one-quarter of the state's farms failed, and by the end of the decade, 650 banks had closed. South Dakotans experienced a similar situation. Only one state bank failed in 1921, but by 1925 the number had risen to more than 175. By the 1930s, farmers in Nebraska and South Dakota were already in the midst of a severe economic dislocation.⁶

FARM WOMEN'S LIVES

By the eve of the Great Depression, farm women in both Boone and Lyman counties had come to terms with a harsh and uneven environment and had established fairly set work routines. Farm women's labor and economic roles were varied, with women not only handling all household tasks but also raising poultry and eggs, which provided considerable income for the family. Women often helped with the milking and almost always handled the processing of the product, including separating the milk and cream and churning butter. Often cream and butter were sold. Mabel Hickey McManus remembered that, as a young girl growing up on a Lyman County, South Dakota, farm, churning was mostly her work. Because her mother, Margaret Hickey, was particular about the working, salting, and final preparation of the butter, Mrs. Hickey did that herself. Mabel McManus described the sale and delivery process:

Butter for sale was molded in a pound mold, and wrapped in wet sterilized white cloths. Delivery to customers was made early in the morning before the heat of the day and because of this careful process our butter was sold for four or more cents a pound more than other butter. The top price we ever received for butter was twenty cents a pound.

The butter used by the Hickey family "was packed in stone jars with a white cloth on top and light layer of salt on the cloth." The family also made cottage cheese from their milk.⁷

Like most farm women, Margaret Hickey made the clothing for her family. Before her marriage she had been a seamstress, which undoubtedly made the sewing easier. Even with twelve children, however, she made all their coats, pants, shirts, dresses, and even petticoats. Because she could not find patterns available in the local stores, Mrs. Hickey "cut her own, using the measurements of each person." She also knit stockings and mittens

for the daughters and stockings for her husband and sons.⁸

In addition to heavy work routines, farm women had to contend with extreme weather conditions. Charles and Clara Hayes arrived in central Lyman County in March 1919. They started building a barn the following fall, but a blizzard struck in late October, before the barn was completed, and killed most of their chickens. Because the roads were impassable, the family sometimes went to church in a bobsled. Weather also made it more difficult for them to receive proper medical service. The county's only physician, Dr. F. M. Newman, lived in the center of the county and frequently traveled by horse and buggy to deliver babies and to treat the sick. Often simply contacting the doctor was difficult.⁹

A major consideration for rural women in both counties was isolation, although the residents of the more populous Boone County did not experience quite the same degree of isolation as did those of Lyman County. In 1930, Lyman County had 3.9 persons per square mile while Boone County had 21.3 persons per square mile. Regardless of population variations, however, farm people in both counties found themselves unable to travel in bad weather. By 1930, a high percentage of farm people in both counties owned automobiles but neither county had any hard surfaced roads and just over 5 percent of the roads were graveled. Thus the automobiles sat unused for long periods each year. In Lyman County during the winter months, farm families found themselves cut off from the outside for weeks at a time.¹⁰

THE DEPRESSION COMES

Drought hit South Dakota in the early 1930s and Nebraska a few years later. Both states were particularly hard hit in 1934 and 1936. Between 1930 and 1935, Lyman County received 13 percent less rainfall than normal while Boone County received 16 percent less. In Lyman County, drought-stunted crops were 51 percent of normal and pasture conditions

were 57 percent of normal. In Boone County, the percentages were 62 and 58 respectively. Distress can also be measured by the amount of per capita federal relief dispensed in these counties. As Francis Cronin and Howard Beers have pointed out, federal aid is the "end result of all contributing conditions [moisture deficiency, crop failure, pasture damage, and depletion of livestock] expressed in terms of human want." Using the Cronin and Beers data, Lyman County's per capita federal aid between 1933 and 1936 was \$198 while Boone County's share was \$84. By 1936, Boone County faced even greater drought than before, with rainfall declining to 12.63 inches. The following year, Boone County pastures and crops were reduced to 5 percent of normal production. In 1938, the local newspaper, *The Albion News*, carried notices of thirty-eight sheriff's sales while dozens of other families voluntarily liquidated their assets.¹¹

Along with drought, both South Dakota and Nebraska experienced infestations of grasshoppers in the 1930s. In a few counties in South Dakota, farm people experienced grasshopper epidemics every year from 1930 to 1935. During one of the most extreme infestations, farm wife Ella Boschma, who resided in eastern South Dakota, remembered that grasshoppers consumed everything around the farm. They ate all the garden produce, even eating the cork out of the water jug left in the field. At one point, checking the potato patch, she looked down: "the ground was just weaving. And I said 'what is that?' And it was just, they were just hatching by the millions, little tiny things. And it just made the ground kind of weave."¹²

In Boone County, Nebraska, a woman who married in 1930 and started farming on rented land in 1936 remembered a similar incident. Her five-year-old daughter frequently carried lunch to her father when he worked in the field. The farm wife remembered: "Her [daughter's] doll always went along. One time she left it out in the field and when we found it the next day the hordes of grasshoppers had eaten all of its clothes off."¹³

The drought of the thirties almost halted traditional agricultural production in Lyman County. In 1936, conditions were so bad that the Charles and Clara Hayes family "never pulled out a piece of machinery to harvest anything." Even though rainfall was limited during the spring, summer, and fall, heavy snows continued during the winter. Harry and Edith Mills had to dig tunnels between the house, the barn, and the chicken coop, a back-breaking job. The family burned coal and wood and cowchips, but by early spring the cook stove and heater had to be fed with corn as well.¹⁴

WOMEN FIGHT BACK

With the advent of the Depression, farm women in both states found themselves with a double burden. Even during somewhat prosperous times, given the heavy responsibilities of domestic and farm chores and the absence of social interaction, farm women found themselves faced with heavy work. By the 1930s, they needed to produce even more and stretch their meager resources even further. Farm women's letters appearing in *Nebraska Farmer* in the early 1930s tell about their lives and describe how their work was bringing their families through the hard spell.¹⁵ The first line of defense against the Depression was increased subsistence production. One woman told of how, when the rain failed, her mother put a barrel of water on runners and dragged it out to water the garden.¹⁶ Women planted large potato patches and made clothing from flour sacks. A woman wrote to *Nebraska Farmer* detailing the following strategy for managing: In addition to grinding their own grains for flour, breakfast cereal, and cornmeal, she had raised 100 pounds of pinto beans; canned 22 quarts of stringbeans, 40 quarts of tomatoes, 200 quarts of cherries, 50 quarts of apples, and 40 quarts of beef and pork; and cured six hams and rendered 70 pounds of lard. By going without tea and coffee and substituting her labor for money,

she had cut her grocery bill from \$700 in 1929 to \$249 in 1932.¹⁷

Nebraska farm women also wrote *Nebraska Farmer* about the new and creative ways that they earned extra money during the thirties. They reported selling garden plants, baby ducks, salads, canned goods, cottage cheese, and yeast cakes as well as churning butter, raising canaries, and hooking rugs for sale. As before the 1930s, some farm women made approximately \$20 a month by providing room and board for a country school teacher. During the extreme deflation of the 1930s, \$20 was a substantial supplementary income.¹⁸

A major response of farm women to the Depression was to produce more food. An important woman's chore was raising large vegetable gardens and even in years of normal precipitation, this constituted considerable work, as women had to rig up means of watering the gardens between rains. During the 1930s, as income from crops and livestock production was curtailed, farm women often thought first of expanding their gardens. Many women, in writing to both *Nebraska Farmer* and *Dakota Farmer*, made it clear that the food raised in their gardens went a long way toward supplying the families' food supply. Raising larger gardens, canning the produce, and relying more on butchered meat meant the difference between survival and failure for many farm families. Even in the midst of great suffering, farm women not only managed to be extremely thrifty, but many also managed to feel considerable satisfaction from this work.

We do our own butchering, raise as much food as the grasshoppers will allow, make our own soap, can all we can and utilize everything possible to add to our means and fill that gap science calls the stomach.

We always bought bread but now I bake and oh, what satisfaction it is to turn flour, lard, salt and yeast into crusty, brown loaves or to magically mix eggs, sugar, flour, etc. into a cake or pie . . .!

There is so much pleasure for us if we but open our eyes and see it.¹⁹

During the Depression, *Dakota Farmer* carried the column, "Help One Another" as a regular part of the "Home Page." Week after week, the column carried hints from women readers as to how they had reduced expenditures for their families. Some women wrote that they had stopped buying most household supplies and made them at home. A number of women wrote that rather than using commercial cleanser, they used fine ashes for scouring and cleaning. Many women wrote about making their own soap. Moreover, women sent in recipes for toothpaste, furniture polish, fly paper, fly spray, hand lotion, and stove cleaner.²⁰

As these examples show, it was the small enterprises carried on in the margins that provided cash for the household when major crops and livestock enterprises failed. A 1935 article in *Nebraska Farmer* indicates that at least some people at the time recognized the significance of these activities:

Sidelines have saved many a trying situation during the last few years. Often it is the wife and mother who finds pleasure in doing something profitable to help her family. Some women have turned to chicken raising, others to baking, needle work, painting or various other lines of endeavor.²¹

Not only were women working hard to save money but they were also working to make money.

DOLLAR VALUES OF WOMEN'S WORK

While it is impossible to put a precise dollar figure on all work done by farm women, it is possible to establish a general value. In a study done in the mid-1930s, Day Monroe, a home economist with the Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Home Economics, gathered information on living expenses of low, moderate, and high income farm families around the nation. Moderate income families, Monroe found, had a median income of \$965. Of the

amount, the family paid out 55 percent in cash and provided 45 percent in kind in the form of housing, fuel, ice, and other products furnished the household by the farm.²²

Farm women's contributions in the 1930s are further documented by studies in both South Dakota and Nebraska. In 1935, the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station conducted a study similar to Monroe's. They discovered that in Jones County, located in central South Dakota just west of Lyman County, the total value of farm living was \$1068.93, 29.5 percent in-kind and 70.5 percent in cash. Jones County farm families valued their food, the area most reflective of farm women's work, at \$568.01, with 50.9 percent produced on the farm while 49.1 percent was purchased. A 1936 Nebraska Extension Service study of 356 Nebraska farm women revealed that the farm families consumed an average of \$1227.66 worth of living expenses. That included women's production of \$183.00 worth of food and purchase of \$206.61 worth of food.²³

Poultry was a major contribution of farm women to the farm economy. Plains farmers were well aware of the significance of poultry production in relation to other farm enterprises. In the February 1932 issue of *Nebraska Farmer*, the business and markets editor wrote: "While eggs and poultry have been selling at considerably lower prices than prior to the 1930s, they have held up much better than feed prices, so that the hen in recent months has been affording one of the most profitable methods of disposing of farm grains." The editor added that in December 1931, farm women were selling eggs at 55 percent and chickens at 75 percent of "the average of that month from 1923 to 1928, while grains were only about 40 percent of their average for the corresponding time."²⁴

While women in both Boone and Lyman counties probably worked harder at raising chickens during the 1930s than before, federal census data indicate that at least their efforts to produce hens (chickens over either three or four months, depending upon census classifica-

tion) were less successful than before the 1930s. In the 1930 census, 85 percent of Lyman County farms listed hens. That number had risen to 86 percent by 1940, but the actual number of hens had declined from 85,554 in 1930 to 58,336 in 1940. The dozens of eggs produced had also declined, dropping from 585,831 in 1930 to 296,413 in 1940. Boone County farm women experienced a fairly similar situation. In 1930, 95 percent of the county's farms had hens while that number decreased to 90 percent in 1940. The number of hens decreased more radically than in Lyman County, dropping from 190,497 to 123,439, but the number of dozens of eggs produced dropped only from 1,017,893 to 708,185.²⁵ Boone County women apparently were more successful in their hen and egg production, probably because of a greater availability of feed and more local markets.

Some farm women, including farm daughters, took jobs outside the home to bring in badly needed money. One young woman in Boone County related the way her teaching contributed to the family budget:

During the time I taught . . . I didn't make big wages, but teachers did get paid. . . . I loaned my dad money to buy a tractor to continue farming, bought my brother-in-law a car that he thought he had to have, and then, of course, I had to save enough to go to summer school to renew my certificates, too. . . . On top of that, I saved up enough to furnish my house when I got married. All the furniture and dishes and linens. That much in seven years.²⁶

POPULATION DECLINE

The deepening stress of the 1930s is reflected in the restricted number of children born in Lyman and Boone counties as the decade wore on. Women's child care constituted a major contribution to the rural economy, as women had almost complete responsibility for the small children who were the future rural workers. Before they reached the age of five, children made no economic contribution to the household, yet they made continual demands on the resources of their mothers. Even so, children were a source of pleasure and pride and most women desired to have at least some.

Rural women's fertility has tended to be higher than that of urban women, and this continued in Boone and Lyman counties, even though they also showed a declining rate of fertility. The fertility rate in Boone County dropped from 93.1 in 1930 to 90.6 in 1940 (Table 1). Because South Dakota's vital statistics were unreported until 1932 and appear to have been irregularly reported for the remainder of the decade, a comparable computation for Lyman County is impossible. Census reports do, however, provide the number and age of children, and this provides a rough indication of fertility. The percentage of the population under the age of five decreased by 8 percent in Boone County and 16 percent in Lyman County. Even though the women of Lyman County appear to have restricted their fertility to a greater degree than did Boone County women, the fertility rate seems to have remained somewhat higher in Lyman than in

TABLE 1.
FERTILITY RATES (NUMBER OF BIRTHS PER 1,000 WOMEN, AGES 15-44) FOR BOONE COUNTY.

	Boone County	National Average, White Women
1930	93.1	87.1
1940	90.6	77.1

Computed from 1930 and 1940 Censuses and from 1930 and 1940 Vital Statistics.

Boone County through the depression years (Table 2).²⁷

Other evidence of deepening stress is net out-migration. The population of Lyman County declined by 20 percent and the population of Boone County by 18 percent during the 1930s. When the figures are corrected by including the natural increase as measured in the cumulative excess of births over deaths, the Boone County net out-migration was 29 percent. While a comparable figure cannot be tabulated for Lyman County, its apparently higher rate of natural increase suggests its net out-migration was probably over 30 percent. It was young adults who left Boone County while there was actually a slight increase in the number of persons over the age of forty-five. Likewise in Lyman County, the heaviest out-migration occurred among those who were between the ages of 10 and 24 in 1930. This selective depopulation intensified the responsibility of those working-age women who remained in the area and continued to serve as principal caretakers for the increasing proportion of dependent children and elderly persons.²⁸

CONCLUSION

A brief look at farm women in the prairie state of Iowa helps provide a comparison to life

in South Dakota and Nebraska. While plains women faced almost insurmountable difficulties in raising additional poultry and eggs, Iowa farm women were more successful: although their egg production dropped from 188,385,897 in 1930 to 168,204,052 in 1940, that drop was far less severe than in South Dakota and Nebraska. Iowa farm women also had many more opportunities to socialize than did plains women. A higher percentage of Iowa farms (84 percent) had telephones in 1930 than did either Lyman County (41 percent) or Boone County (77 percent), and the number of Iowa farms (67 percent) that retained telephones by 1940 remained higher than in Lyman County (37 percent) or Boone County (37 percent). Iowa also had more miles of hard surfaced and graveled roads during the 1930s, making it possible for farm people there to travel more easily and more often. Finally, out-migration in Iowa was considerably less than in the plains states, indicating less disruption of kinship ties and less emotional distress in dealing with family members leaving the area. The heavier density of population alone meant the Iowa farm women were physically closer to one another, in many cases close enough to walk from one farm to another.²⁹

As the Depression dragged on through most of the 1930s, farm women in both South Dakota and Nebraska appeared less optimistic

TABLE 2.
CHILDREN UNDER AGE FIVE IN LYMAN COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA, AND BOONE COUNTY,
NEBRASKA.

	Women Ages 15-44	Children Under Age 5	Children Under 5 per 100 Women, 14-44
Boone County			
1930	3,222	1,549	48
1940	2,483	1,095	44
Lyman County			
1930	1,252	698	56
1940	990	464	47

Computed from Fifteenth and Sixteenth Censuses of the United States.

about farm life, and letters to farm journals increasingly indicated that some were losing heart. In 1938 a farm woman wrote to *Nebraska Farmer* of her deep disappointment that her daughter, who had graduated from high school and was working in town, was now preparing to marry a farmer:

They will start farming with a load of debt. When I think of the struggle ahead for her, I actually ache. I didn't plan this kind of life for her, but what can I do? Has some mother had a similar experience?³⁰

Still, the majority of letters to *Nebraska Farmer* appeared optimistic. From 1938 to 1940, Blanche Pease, the wife of a tenant farmer in central Nebraska, wrote a series of features called "Daughter of Nebraska" in which she examined farm life. In one of her first features, she wrote: "Prairie Haven is a rented house, and ours is a happiness made up of the singing drums of nature, good neighbors and good books." Later she wrote: "Like a mother I may recognize [Nebraska's] shortcomings but her good points overcome them. Nebraska, how your charms enchant me! You are the song that sings within my heart!" South Dakotans expressed much the same sentiments. Frequently they were cast in the following vein: "I think South Dakota is a pretty good place. If you stick with it when it's dry, it'll sure stick with you when it's wet." Their letters to *Dakota Farmer* certainly expressed unhappiness with the Depression, but they continued to be at least cautiously optimistic. They believed the situation would soon get better and their faith in South Dakota's future remained intact.³¹

Almost every action taken by plains women in South Dakota and Nebraska was tempered by the exigencies of their localities. Given their roles of wife, mother, homemaker, and farm producer, they found themselves with the full range of work responsibilities of farm women elsewhere, but the Great Plains environment provided them with far fewer options for dealing with hard times. As

settlement on the Plains underwent several major in- and out-migrations, federal officials and agricultural experts began to temper their expectations of what the region might produce and what would be necessary to cope with the environment. Consequently, farming practices changed and people adjusted their crop and livestock operations to fit with the environment. The same changes, modifications, or adjustments did not seem to take place, however, within the female sphere. In fact, in many families, women were expected to increase their output of foodstuffs or of products for sale to compensate for the lack of income from crops and livestock. At the same time, women were responsible for keeping up their family's spirits and determination.

Throughout the 1930s, even though women worked harder to raise larger gardens and more chickens and eggs, the droughts, grasshoppers, and other environmental hazards partially negated their extra work. Working longer, scrimping on purchases, and producing unusual commodities such as canaries helped farm women reduce expenses and raise income, but such adaptations could not completely compensate for the drought, the dust, and the Depression. The decline in birthrate indicates that women were shepherding their time and energy carefully as they struggled to pull their families through the hard times. Given the limitations of climate and terrain, farm women on the Great Plains faced a limit to their ability to endure and survive. The plains environment taught its own lessons and made its own demands on those who lived there. For plains farm women in Nebraska and South Dakota, partial amelioration of hardships and a great deal of toleration became a way of life.

NOTES

1. For rural children see Elizabeth Hampsten, "Child Care on the Homestead Frontier," paper presented at the second National American Farm Women in Historical Perspective Conference, Madison, Wisconsin, October, 1986. For the new rural history see Robert Swierenga, "Agricultural and

Rural Life: The New Rural History," in James B. Gardner and George Rollie Adams, eds., *Ordinary People and Everyday Life: Perspectives on the New Social History* (Nashville: The American Association for State and Local History, 1983).

2. See Walter Webb, *The Great Plains* (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1931) for a complete discussion of the Great Plains environment; see Deborah Fink, *Open Country, Iowa: Rural Women, Tradition, and Change* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1986) for a full discussion of farm women's lives in northwest Iowa; and see Deborah Fink and Dorothy Schwieder, "Iowa Farm Women in the 1930s: A Reassessment," paper presented at the Women in Agriculture Conference, New Mexico State University, February, 1983.

3. See James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966) and Herbert S. Schell, *History of South Dakota*, 3rd ed., rev. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1975) for a full discussion of geographical and climatic conditions, especially Chapters 13, 14, 18, and 23 in Olson and Chapters 12, 13, and 19 in Schell.

4. Rainfall in Boone County for the 1930s computed from U.S. Department of Agriculture, Weather Bureau 1930-41, Climatological Data for the United States by Sections, Nebraska Section, Lincoln, Nebraska; and Olson, *History of Nebraska*, pp. 154-55.

5. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943) 2: 472; and Schell, *History of South Dakota*, p. 11.

6. Dorothy Weyer Creigh, *Nebraska: A Bicentennial History* (New York: Norton, 1977), p. 185; and Schell, *History of South Dakota*, p. 277.

7. Leona King, ed., *Early Settlers in Lyman County* (Pierre: State Publishing Company, 1974), p. 180.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

10. Population density computed from data in *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, Vol. 2: 472 and 615; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Agriculture*, Vol. 2, Part 1: The Northern United States (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932): 1202, 1155, and *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Agriculture*, Vol. 1, 1st and 2nd series, State Report, Part 2: Statistics for Counties: 493, 611.

11. Francis D. Cronin and Howard W. Beers, *Areas of Intense Drought Distress, 1930-1936* (Washington, D.C.: Works Progress Administration, Division of Social Research, 1937), Series 5, Number 1, pp. 25, 44-45; *The Albion News*, 2 September

1937 and 24 February 1938; and Weather Bureau, 1930-41.

12. Interview with Ella Boschma, Bon Homme County, 21 July 1972, Number 390, South Dakota Oral History Project. The names of the informants and general description of the contents can be found in *The South Dakota Experience: An Oral History Collection Of Its People*, vols. 1-5. Copies of all interviews are located at the South Dakota State Historical Department, Pierre, and at South Dakota State University, Vermillion. The drought also produced dust storms which not only aggravated erosion and farming problems but also greatly complicated housekeeping chores.

13. Deborah Fink interview, Boone County, Nebraska, 24 February 1987. Following accepted anthropological practice, the names of those interviewed by Fink are not published but are on file with the interviewer.

14. King, ed., *Early Settlers in Lyman County*, pp. 178-245.

15. *Nebraska Farmer*, 17 March 1934, p. 12.

16. Fink interview, Boone County, Nebraska, 26 March 1986.

17. *Nebraska Farmer*, 17 March 1934, p. 12.

18. *Nebraska Farmer*, 30 April 1932, p. 8.

19. *Nebraska Farmer*, 23 July 1932, p. 10; see Deborah Fink, "Sidelines and Moral Capital: Women and Nebraska Farms in the 1930s." Paper delivered at Conference on American Farm Women in Historical Perspective, Madison, Wisconsin, October 1986.

20. *Dakota Farmer*, 14 January 1933, pp. 16-17; 18 March 1933, p. 95; 13 May 1933, p. 153; 16 September 1933, p. 261; 3 March 1934, p. 113; 14 March 1936, pp. 146-47; and 4 December 1937, p. 648.

21. *Nebraska Farmer*, 27 April 1935, p. 6.

22. Day Monroe, "Patterns of Living of Farm Families," *Farmers in a Changing World: The Yearbook of Agriculture*, 1940 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1940), p. 850.

23. W. P. Kumlien, et al., *The Standard of Living of Farm and Village Families in Six South Dakota Counties*, 1935, Bulletin No. 320 (Brookings: South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station, 1938), p. 59; and *Nebraska Farmer*, 28 August 1937, p. 8.

24. *Nebraska Farmer*, 20 February 1932, p. 24.

25. *Fifteenth Census of the United States, 1930: Agriculture*, Vol. 2, Part 1: The Northern States: 1202, 1155, and *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Agriculture*, Vol. 1, 1st and 2nd Series, State Reports, Part 2, Statistics for Counties, p. 520.

26. Fink interview, Boone County, Nebraska, March 1986.

27. Computed from census data on Boone County, 1934-1943 and *Vital Statistics of the United*

States (1931-1940), Part 2, Natality and Mortality Data for United States (labeled by place of residence); and also age cohort stability as seen in Lyman County in *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, Vol. 2, Part 6 and for Boone County, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Population*, Part 5: 615.

28. Ibid.

29. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the

Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940: Agriculture*, Vol. 1, 1st and 2nd Series, State Reports, Part 2: Statistics for Counties (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1942), 119.

30. *Nebraska Farmer*, 26 March 1938, p. 6.

31. *Nebraska Farmer*, 24 September 1938, p. 11; King, ed., *Early Settlers in Lyman County*, p. 193. By 1938, conditions had greatly improved in South Dakota in regard to agricultural production.