

# *The Grantsville Dust Bowl*



# **MIDWEST DUST BOWL** *AND* **The GREAT DEPRESSION**

- **Worst years 1935-38**
- **Most severe in parts of Kansas, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico**
- **Those states plus Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska**
- **3.5 million people displaced 1930-1940**

# ABNORMAL CONDITIONS REGIONALLY

- **Four abnormally dry years**
- **June, 1933 to May, 1934 – driest on record**
- **3 Inches of rain total in 1934**
- **Utah Lake at 1/3 normal volume**
- **Bear Lake 14 feet below normal level**
- **Drought compounded by record heat**

# WORST, NOT THE FIRST

- Summer, 1854 - “an uncommonly dry season”
- July, 1896 - “heavy dust storm from the west, wind and dust from the desert”
- May, 1901 - “We had a dust storm about sunset.”  
“Wind, wind again today.”
- July, 2025 – KSL News Story - “Microburst winds kick up blinding dust storms”

# TOOELE VALLEY – EARLY DAYS

- **American Indians – Fremont, Goshute, Shoshone, etc.**
- **Grantsville area called “20 Wells”**
- **Bryant/Russell**
- **Harlan/Young**
- **Lienhard/Vincent**
- **Donner/Reed**
- **Tooele Valley “a sea of grass”**

# OVERGRAZING TOOELE VALLEY

- **Thousands of sheep, local and trailing through Tooele County #4 in Utah for wool production in 1934**
- **Wallace Severe – 2200 head of cattle**
- **More than 10,000 acres left bare**
- **Arrington Report - “Drought, sheep, fire, and finally, wind”**

# **ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER**

## **1934 and 35**

- Blinding, choking dust storms lasting several days**
- Livestock dying from choking on dust**
- “Blow pits” - craters 5 acres across, 12 feet deep**
- Dust drifted on roads, piled against fences and buildings**
- Wet towels, blankets hung over windows and doors**
- Dust blowing in to Salt Lake City (and as far north as Corrine)**
- 1935 Report – Grantsville may have to be abandoned**

# TURNING THE CORNER

- **January 1935 – Grantsville Dust Problem Committee**
- **Total ban on grazing. Through-herds by truck or train**
- **Reseed affected area with hardy grasses**
- **Appeals to the U.S. Soil Erosion Service**
  - **(Now the Natural Resource Conservation Service)**
- **Obtain control of overgrazed lands**
- **100 men hired to build fence and re-seed the land**
- **Grantsville Soil Conservation District organized**

# REMEDIATION

- **46,000 acres seeded with crested wheat grass**
- **Natural precipitation increased**
- **Landowners, users educated on better management**
- **Taylor Grazing Act of 1934**
- **State Conservation Districts were formed**
- **1938 – “Grantsville-Tooele Demonstration Area”**
- **Return of light grazing to remediated areas**

# SOURCES

- *A History of Tooele County.* Compiled by Ouida Blanthorn, 1998
- Arrington Report
- *Grantsville Through the Years.* Merrill F. Nelson, 2023
- On-line articles on the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression
- Personal reminiscences of Wendell Anderson, Wallace Severe, Janet Cook
- *The Founding and Development of Grantsville, Utah, 1850 – 1950.* Alma A. Gardiner, 1959

# THANK YOU!

Photo by Shellece Durfee

