

## **UNIT III: THE DEPRESSION (1919-1940)**

### **Topic: Agriculture and Women**

#### **Lesson 24: The Rural Depression**

##### **Objectives:**

Students will become acquainted with the feeling and attitudes of two Iowa farmers during the depression.

##### **Materials:**

Student access to *The Diary of Elmer Powers* and *The Diary of Clara Ackerman*

##### **Activities:**

1. Introduce the lesson by reviewing the political and economic history of the time covered by the diaries. The following points should be included:
  - a. In the presidential election of 1928, Herbert Hoover became president and defeated Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York. Smith wished to repeal the 18th Amendment to the Constitution which prohibited the sale of alcoholic drinks. Clara Ackerman refers to Al Smith (wet) because of her strong opposition to alcoholic beverages.
  - b. The depression became the most severe in 1932 and 1933, with farm prices steadily declining in the years following World War 1.
  - c. In the election of 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt soundly defeated Herbert Hoover. Roosevelt promised a "new deal" for the American public and also promised to end prohibition.
  - d. President Roosevelt began the New Deal programs immediately after the inauguration. These programs included the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). Throughout the 1930s many more acts were passed which helped to relieve the hardships of the depression.
  - e. President Roosevelt opposed prohibition and wished to repeal the Eighteenth Amendment. The Twenty-first Amendment was approved by thirty-six states by December of 1933. This amendment repealed the Eighteenth Amendment. This issue is not mentioned by Elmer Powers but was very significant in the thinking of Clara Ackerman.
2. Write the following topics on the board:
  - a. Politics, Election of 1932
  - b. Farm Holiday
  - c. Banking Troubles
  - d. Prohibition
  - e. New Deal
  - f. Low Farm Prices
3. Divide the class into two groups. Assign one diary to each group. Have the students independently read the diaries, keeping in mind the topic listed above.

4. Following an initial reading of the diaries, discuss the points of view expressed in the diaries as they relate to the topics listed on the board.
5. Compare and contrast the concerns of these two persons with the viewpoints expressed in the Dubuque interviews.
6. The following activities may be completed independently by students following the discussion of the diaries:
  - A. Complete a report on one of the following:
    - a. Franklin Delano Roosevelt
    - b. Herbert Hoover
    - c. Prohibition
    - d. The New Deal
  - B. Interview a farmer who worked during the days of the depression.
  - C. Interview a person who lived in town during the depression. Contrast the town and farm experiences.
  - D. Research family history including materials on family events and experiences during the depression. Photographs and other related material could be included.

**Explorations in Iowa History Project**, Malcolm Price Laboratory School, University Of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa  
©COPYRIGHT 2003 University of Northern Iowa [Lynn.Nielsen@uni.edu](mailto:Lynn.Nielsen@uni.edu) Duplication for Instructional purposes only. Credits: Logo and site design by ITS CET Documents courtesy of the State Historical Society of Iowa

## FOR TEACHER REFERENCE

TOPICS	DIARY OF CLARA ACKERMAN	DIARY OF ELMER POWERS
Politics, Election of 1932	February 7, 1932 June 19, 1932 July 7, 1932 September 5, 1932 December 14, 1932	June 6, 1932 June 15, 1932 October 5, 1932 October 26, 1932 November 9, 1932
Farm Holiday	September 5, 1932 January 29, 1933 May 7, 1933 May 14, 1933	February 27, 1932 August 6, 1932 August 16, 1932 August 19, 1932 August 22, 1932 August 24, 1932 September 5, 1932 April 28, 1933 April 29, 1933
Banking Troubles	January 8, 1933 February 13, 1932 May 15, 1932 December 14, 1932 April 16, 1933	July 1, 1932 July 16, 1932 February 25, 1933 March 4, 1933 March 6, 1933
Prohibition	September 5, 1932 December 14, 1932 April 16, 1933	April 6, 1933
New Deal	December 14, 1932	March 22, 1933
Low Farm Prices	February 7, 1932 February 13, 1932 May 15, 1932 June 19, 1932 July 7, 1932 September 5, 1932 October 23, 1932 December 14, 1932 May 7, 1933 May 14, 1933 July 14, 1933	June 13, 1932 June 15, 1932 August 9, 1932 February 25, 1933