

The GOLDFINCH

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Iowa City, Iowa

The Great Depression

The Great Depression was a time when business was bad. Many people lost their jobs and most people who did work had very low pay. Some people could not afford to buy the food or clothing they needed.

The Depression lasted a long time. Even people who had savings finally used up all their money. Because the Depression started in 1929, lasted so long, and affected so many people, it is called the Great Depression.

What Caused The Great Depression?

One explanation for the cause of the Great Depression is that more food and manufactured goods were produced than people could buy. This high production of food and goods began during World War I. Farmers produced food and factories manufactured materials to supply both the United States and friendly European nations.

After the war, factories kept right on making more and more things. The only change was in what they made. Factories manufactured cars, stoves, clothes, and new electrical appliances. Farmers continued to produce great amounts of food. They grew more than the nation could use. Food prices dropped. Farmers could not sell their produce for enough money to pay for the manufactured goods they wanted to buy. By 1921, two years after the war, the prices farmers received for farm products were below pre-war prices. It cost farmers more to grow corn than they could get when they sold it. For many farmers, hard times began in 1921.

By 1929, manufactured goods also were in great supply. There were more things to buy than there were people and money to buy them. People stopped buying. Businessmen could no longer sell the things in their stores so factories were forced to produce less. When this happened the factories no longer needed so many workers. Many lost their jobs. Because this happened to almost all businesses, people could not find new jobs.

People who worked in agriculture could no longer earn a good living on their farms. People who had worked in factories and businesses could not find jobs. Life was hard for most Americans. It was hard for most Iowans.



These children had potatoes, cabbage, and pie for their Christmas dinner in 1936. (Russell Lee photo, courtesy Library of Congress)

Depression Problems in the City

Month after month the Great Depression went on. One by one factories closed. The number of people without jobs grew every week. People in cities looked for jobs, but there was no work.

We can learn how people without work felt by reading the story of a family who lived in Dubuque. The story is a true one. The words in quotes are those of the father, Mr. Park.

Claud and Martha Park were married in 1924 and went to live in Dubuque. Claud found a job as a spray painter at the Iowa Foundry. He did his work well and soon was promoted to foreman of the paint department. He worked 54 hours a week for 50¢ an hour. The Parks' first son, Claud Jr., was born in 1927 and a daughter, Mary, in 1929. With a steady job and income, life must have seemed fine. But as happened with many workers in cities, the Depression changed things.

After the Depression began in 1929, the iron foundry business did not do well. In 1931 many workers lost their jobs. Claud Park was among them. From February 1931 to the fall of 1932 he worked, off and on, for a barge line and at an insulating plant. His salary was \$5 to \$25 per month depending on the amount of work he could find. The family could not pay all their bills. Claud had to borrow \$200 from his parents. When this money was gone, he borrowed \$80 on a \$1000 insurance policy. Later he could not make his insurance payments and lost his only life insurance policy.

By December 1932 the situation was desperate. The temperature fell below zero, and there was little fuel or food left. The Parks owed a coal bill of \$40 and a grocery bill of \$25. They could not ask to buy anything more when they

could not pay the bills they owed. After talking things over one night they could see no solution. They would have to apply for poor relief; yet they both felt that they would be disgraced. Mrs. Park bitterly opposed going on relief, but during that cold night Claud got "scared about the kids," and thought "we can't let the kids starve just because we are proud." The next morning, without telling his wife, he went to the courthouse to apply for relief. "I must have walked around the block over a dozen times—it was 10 below zero, but I didn't know it." Finally he got up enough courage to go in and make his application.

The Park family was "investigated" and after about two weeks "a lady brought out a grocery and coal order." This was just in "the nick of time" as they were completely out of food. The Park family got along on the weekly



During the Depression some families did not have enough money to buy toys. Toy loan libraries made it possible for children to borrow toys just as books are borrowed from the library. (Works Progress Administration Photograph Collection, Division of the State Historical Society of Iowa)

Based on the WPA interviews with 45 Dubuque families published in *The Personal Side*, edited by Jessie A. Bloodworth and Elizabeth J. Greenwood, New York: Arno Press & the New York Times, 1971.

grocery order. Part of the time they were also allowed milk from the milk fund and "this helped a lot." The Parks felt that they were well treated by the relief office and did not find the investigations unpleasant. "It's part of the system and when you ask for relief, of course you have to cooperate. The questions didn't bother us so much as the idea of being on charity."

Claud Park never felt right about accepting relief. "Later, when they let me do some work for it, I felt better." The relief office allowed only \$7.50 a month rent and Claud did odd jobs for the landlord to make up the difference. In the fall of 1933 he worked on a government road construction project at \$80 a month. He was delighted to be paid in cash and didn't feel that he was getting "something for nothing." When the road project was completed in 1934 he worked on the lock and dam project. His wages were cut to \$50 a month and later to \$48. He was employed on emergency work projects until the end of August, 1935, when he got a job at the Mississippi Milling Company. Then the Parks thought the Depression had finally ended for them. However, in 1938, working hours at the mill were cut to 25 a week. The weekly paycheck

dropped to \$11.75 and the family got behind with bills. To make ends meet the Parks cut down to one quart of milk a day for the children instead of two. They bought meat only once a week. Canned and dried vegetables from their garden helped the Parks last through the winter. The biggest problem was warm clothing for the children. Claud Jr. and Mary both needed shoes, over-shoes, and winter underwear, but the Parks could do no more than buy food and pay the rent, coal, and electric bills. In bad weather the children had to stay home from school. Mrs. Park said she felt terrible about that.

Even though times were hard Martha Park took an active part in the Parent Teachers' Association, and Mothers' Club of the church. She believed that her high school courses, especially in home economics, had helped her to live on a small income. She believed that lack of money should not prevent the proper rearing of children. For the sake of the children, she tried to stay cheerful.

All Claud asked for the future was a chance to work and a regular weekly paycheck. He did not ever want to go on relief again.

Glossary

Note: definitions are for words used within the context of this issue of the *Goldfinch*.

bankrupt. unable to pay one's debts.

company house. a house built by a company in which its workers may live.

corn crib. a storage bin for field corn on the cob.

foreclosure. the process by which a holder of an unpaid loan tries to collect what is owed to him.

husk. to remove the outer covering on an ear of corn.

implement store. a store selling tools.

insulating plant. a factory where insulation is made.

life insurance. a plan by which money will be paid to someone in the event of the death of another.

manufactured goods. things made with the help of machinery.

mortgage. an agreement by a borrower to give a lender property, such as a house or land, if the loan is not paid back.

poor relief. free help given to poor people, usually money, clothes, and food.

poultry. fowls, such as chickens, ducks, or turkeys.



Great clouds of dust blew across Iowa during the droughts in 1934 and 1936. (Division of Historical Museum and Archives)

Depression Problems in the Country

For farming people the Depression began in 1921, so when the Great Depression came in 1929 times just became worse for farmers. Some of the Depression problems of farmers were different from the problems of people living in cities. The diary of Elmer Powers tells us about his life on the farm. There he lived with his wife and two children. Mr. Powers wrote in his diary every day. Here are some things he wrote between 1931 and 1936.

1931

May 20 - Wednesday

These farm folks in this county are doing quite well in adjusting themselves to the existing times. Driving along the highway, I picked up a young man who

said that he was from the east. He described conditions there, as he sees them, and talked about the bitterness of many of those people. He asked about people here and I told him that folks here always have something to eat and also always have our minds and hands busy. Two things that help much to keep people contented.

June 2 - Tuesday

Worked in corn stalk ground, spring plowed. Plenty of trouble with stalks and lots of hard work to do good cultivating. But not a bad job at that. There wasn't any foreman who had to be pleased or to find fault with my work. I know I can still work here tomorrow. The place won't be shut down.

1932

June 13 - Monday

Drove to town with the truck, marketing hogs. We were paid \$2.25 per cwt., much the lowest price we ever received

Reprinted by permission from YEARS OF STRUGGLE: THE FARM DIARY OF ELMER G. POWERS, 1931-1936 by H. Roger Grant and L. Edward Purcell, editors, ©1976 by Iowa State University Press, Ames, Iowa 50010.

for hogs. Five years ago today they were \$6.50.

July 21 - Thursday

Our daily paper has stopped and we are not renewing it now. As a matter of economy I am resharpening old razor blades and when I shave I use any kind of soap instead of shaving cream. The oats market is a cent lower today.

September 19 - Monday

Everyone is trading now. I did a little today myself, trading sorghum for grapes. As a matter of economy I shaved today with a dime store blade. But it is the farm women who think out and do things to save money.

October 14 - Friday

Conditions in some places are very bad. Some farmers do not seem to have any intentions of husking their corn. Many folks intend to use some corn for fuel. One court house is being heated with corn.

December 25 - Sunday

Our family enjoyed a Christmas Dinner with the old folks at their home in the village. No gifts were exchanged by the grown folks. However, the smaller children were well remembered.

1933

Throughout the year of 1933 conditions did not improve. Toward the end of the year Mr. Powers wrote that he "could see great need for instant action in aiding agriculture."

1934

January 11 - Thursday

"No we don't get the paper anymore," is a statement I hear quite frequently. Earl May and his station seem to be the most dependable source of information.

May 23 - Wednesday

I spent the forenoon rebuilding an old cultivator. Buying a new one is out of the question. With these crop prospects anyway.

June 4 - Monday

We were behind a month on our phone rent and the linemen disconnected it

today. Perhaps many farm folks will do without many things soon.

June 30 - Saturday

This afternoon I attended a dispersal sale of a Holstein herd. A neighbor is working thru the system of "going bankrupt" and the sale is one of the results.

November 12 - Monday

Al came to husk this morning and we finished the job at noon. Of all the crops I have gathered, this is the poorest one. Our cribs are almost empty and almost all of the feeding season is before us. Now I, like many others must sell or almost give away hogs because I cannot feed them or buy feed for them.

November 24 - Saturday

Of the very many Thanksgivings I can remember, this one is an outstanding one in the few things that we think we have to be thankful for.

1935

February 16 - Saturday

Tonight we went back to our old custom of driving in to the county seat for the evening. We had not been to town on Saturday night for some time. I went to the implement store and found prices of many articles too high. At least I cannot buy them and pay for them.

April 19 - Monday

We stopped at the cold storage plant and learned about the new plan of storing our fresh killed meat in our own rented locker. Where it is kept at zero or the proper temperature for storage. We plan to use this service. It will cost a dollar a month, or nine dollars per year.

July 9 - Thursday

The earth is dry and hard and many large cracks are appearing in the stubble field. Any tools that I carry on the binder may be dropped down in these cracks. I tied a string on the handle of a 12 in. crescent wrench and lowered it down a crack. I will not mention the distance. Some things are better left unsaid...



Only a few kernels grew on this ear of corn because of the drought conditions. (courtesy Wallace's Farmer)

October 23 - Wednesday

Today two farm ladies were discussing the problem of how best to remove the printed letters from seed sacks that they wished to use in some of their sewing work. On many farms feed sacks are made up into various useful things by the very resourceful farm women.

December 4 - Wednesday

I went to town this morning to see the bankers. I will have to sell grain and livestock to pay the mortgage holder, so that I can get the Federal Loan.

1936

January 6 - Monday

We had another winter day again and here at the place we sold the baler. In some ways I regret to see it go. The money I received for it will be very useful just now in closing up the loan affairs.

January 14 - Tuesday

I think I finished the loan business today. I got the Federal Land Bank money and it was sent to pay off the old mortgage. All of the people connected with this problem have been very nice. Tomorrow I think I can begin to plan for a new future.

January 22 - Wednesday

School attendance was as low as the thermometer. Many schools were closed. No mail anywhere today. The bitter cold was very bad for all livestock. Our stock suffered some and they consumed large amounts of feed.

April 24 - Friday

We began spring plowing today. We will use both the tractor and the horse plows. A good rain is much needed by all growing things.

June 27 - Saturday

The heat in our corn fields today was very intense. The pastures are rapidly turning a deep burned brown in color.

July 5 - Sunday

Late this afternoon I borrowed enough iron pipe to reach from the windmill pump to our garden and will pump water on the garden all night. We do not expect to be able to water all of the garden, but may save some of it. The vegetables that will be most useful for canning purposes.

July 19 - Sunday

The greatest corn crop disaster that our country has ever experienced is upon us. It may take some little time for all people to realize this, but all will know as time goes on.

September 15 - Tuesday

Today was a rainy day, all day. It is the first rainy day for months. It was interesting to watch the livestock and the poultry. The younger ones did not seem to know just what the rain was.

October 1 - Thursday

Since our pastures are becoming green again I have been thinking that we should have more young cattle in them.

I drove to see the banker and he favored the idea. He suggested that I go out and buy whatever I wanted and come in and we would fix up a loan to cover the purchases.

October 2 - Friday

I drove over to a neighbors this morning and bot a white face calf from him, paying ten dollars for it. I went to another community sale and bot five more calves. I paid \$49.50 for these.

December 31 - Thursday

I have written 1936 for the last time and tomorrow a New Year begins. I am facing it knowing there are hardships in the future for farm folks and I hope there will not be too many for us all.

Questions to Answer

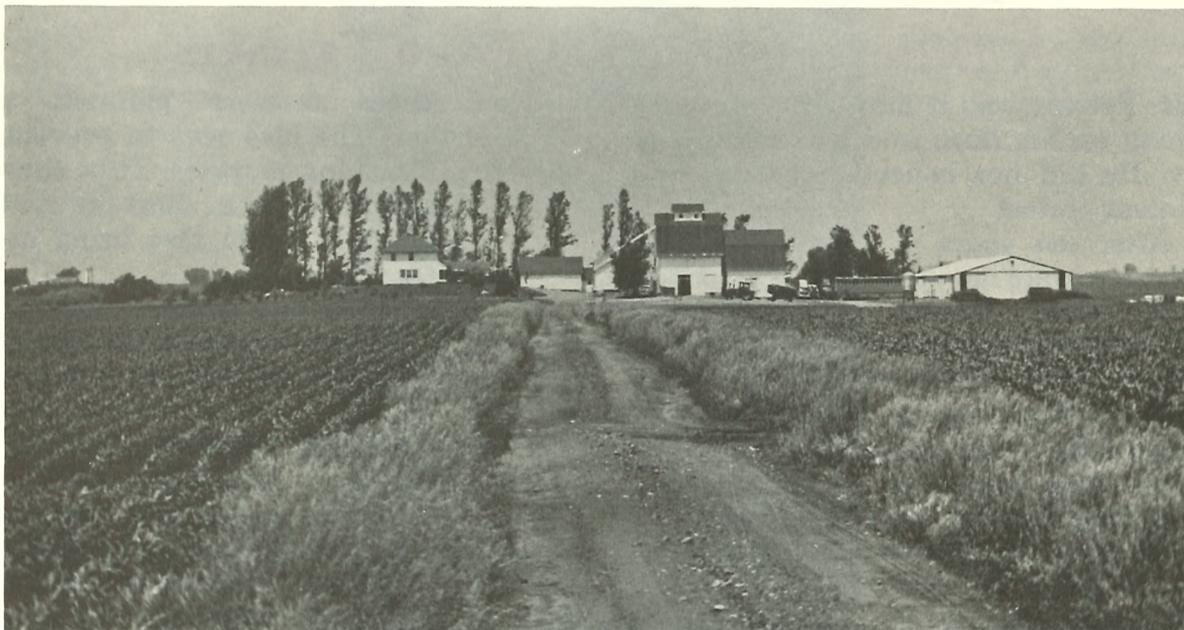
- 1) In what ways was life on the farm different from that of people in cities during the Depression? See May 20, 1931 and June 2, 1931.
- 2) What was Mr. Powers' attitude toward hard times? Oct. 23, 1935; Jan.

6 and 14, 1936; Oct. 1, 1936; Dec. 31, 1936.

- 3) Farmers had a hard time during the Depression. Find an entry in each year that describes the problems farmers faced.

*What More Can You Learn From
The Diary?*

We can learn much more from Mr. Power's diary. We learn he used both horses and a tractor to do his field work and a car for transportation, that the main forms of communication were the radio and the telephone, and a main form of entertainment was a trip to town on Saturday night which might include seeing a movie. We also learn that the frozen food process is just being introduced and that the Powers family wanted to use it.



Elmer Powers' farmstead as it looks today. The farmhouse was built in the 1870s. (L. Edward Purcell photo)



Angry farmers blocked roads to prevent delivery of farm products to the market. Here, farmers use a bale of hay to stop a truck loaded with beef cattle. (courtesy *Des Moines Register*)

A Different Reaction From Farmers

Mr. Powers was a man who struggled along on his farm and was able to get by. He did not believe in strikes and violent protest.

After ten years of Depression some farmers were no longer willing to accept more losses. These farmers formed an organization called the Farmers Holiday Association. They hoped that through action, the Association could help solve farmers' money problems. The leader of the Association was Milo Reno of Wapello County.

Most of the members of the Farmers Holiday Association lived in an area where there were many farm mortgage foreclosures. Many were dairy farmers. They had the same problem other farmers did. They could not sell their products for as much as it cost to produce them. To try to solve this

problem these farmers planned a "milk strike." The idea was to prevent milk from reaching markets. This, they reasoned, would cause a shortage and force prices up. It would also bring attention to their problem.

The main strike was centered around Sioux City. There were milk strikes in other parts of Iowa and in other states too.

In August 1932, Farmers Holiday members blocked the highways to Sioux City. Trucks loaded with milk or livestock were turned back. The strike went on for several days. Some people who did not agree with the striking farmers decided to drive milk trucks through the picket lines and in to Sioux City. To stop the trucks, the striking farmers used force. Tempers flared and fighting broke out. When sheriff's

deputies arrived to keep order, the pickets became angrier than ever. The peaceful beginning had exploded into violence. Finally, Milo Reno called off the strike and farmers went back to their farms.

Farmers protested in other ways. They protected fellow farm families by preventing mortgage foreclosure sales. Farm foreclosure meant a double loss to farm people—loss of the home where they had lived and loss of the land that provided them with a living.

To prevent foreclosure, friends and neighbors attended the auction of the

family's farm and belongings. The friends would bid only pennies for each item put up for sale. At the end the final amount raised by the mortgage holder might be only \$1.90. The farm and belongings were then given back to the original owner by the friends who had done the buying.

Sometimes foreclosure sales were not so calm. Mobs gathered to try to prevent foreclosure sales or to control bidding. Newspapers carried stories about farmers' actions. The whole nation knew how desperate the farmers felt.



Milo Reno, leader of the Farmers Holiday Association (courtesy *Des Moines Register*)



Heavy snowfalls in 1936 made it difficult to keep roads open. (Division of the State Historical Society of Iowa)

The Weather in 1936

Bitter cold—scorching heat. Nature dealt an unkind blow to Iowans in the Depression year of 1936. As if getting by on less money or no money at all wasn't hard enough!

Iowans were used to severe winters, but the cold wave that swept into the state on January 18 was a record breaker. For 35 days Iowans struggled to live through both bitter cold temperatures and heavy snowfalls. One after another, blizzards raged into the state. Strong winds drifted snow over roads, fences, and farm buildings. Snow plows could not keep roads open. As soon as the road was cleared snow drifted back again. When the month of January came to an end, the state lay under a thick blanket of snow.

Things grew worse and by the middle of February, there were 30 to 36 inches of snow on the ground. Drifts rose to 10 and 15 feet high.

Many problems developed. With roads closed, coal trucks could not get through and there was a fuel shortage all over the state. On farms, corn was often burned to provide heat for homes and for cooking. In cities, people heated only

one or two rooms. All over the state, schools were closed. In cities, the milk shortage became serious. Some people stopped using milk so there would be enough for babies.

In rural areas, farmers dug tunnels and paths to farm buildings in order to feed and water their livestock. The extreme cold made digging out extra difficult. Animals needed much more food in the cold weather. This added to the cost of farming at a time when farmers were already in debt.

Spring was a most welcome time that year, but Nature was not finished. In June, warm winds and hot weather began sweeping across the midwest. The hot period lasted until the middle of September. There was little rain. Rivers ran low, creeks dried up, and large cracks opened in the dry parched ground. The grass was so dry it crunched under foot. People on farms pumped water into their gardens so that they could supply themselves with food, but there was no water for the crops. When harvest time came, there was not much to bring in from the fields.

The Cost of Living, 1934-1936

As you read about the Depression it will help you to understand the problems people had if you know how much money people earned and how much

some things cost.

This list is made from salaries and costs for 1934-1936 in Iowa.

<i>Salaries</i>		<i>Clothing - Women</i>	
Gas Station Attendant	\$130. per month	wool coat	\$19.00
Waitress	\$ 40. per month	shoes	\$ 1.00
Carpenter	\$156. per month	hat	\$ 2.98
School Teacher (works 9 months)	\$122. per month	wash dress	39¢
Auto Mechanic	\$130. per month	silk dress	\$ 7.98
Bookkeeper	\$ 65. per month		
University Professor	\$225. per month	<i>Toys</i>	
Highway Patrolman	\$125. per month	small car	10¢
Painter	\$105. per month	stuffed teddy bear	\$1.98
		sled	\$6.95
		bicycle	\$19.75
		Shirley Temple doll	\$4.95
		doll buggy	\$2.95
<i>Prices For Goods</i>		<i>Miscellaneous</i>	
<i>Food</i>		newspaper	3¢
bread	10¢	toothpaste	10¢
sugar	5¢ lb.	haircut	25¢
coffee	37¢ lb.	shoe repair - soles	\$1.00
soup	6¢ can	light bulb	20¢
canned corn	5¢ can	soap	10¢
butter	26¢ lb.	lawn mower	\$3.50
oleo	17¢ lb.	blanket, part wool	\$2.88
hamburger	8¢ lb.	broom	39¢
bacon	24¢ lb.	washing machine	\$44.95
oranges	12¢ doz.	electric mixer	\$11.95
		radio	\$59.95
		telephone	\$1.75 per month
		gasoline	24¢ per gal.
<i>Clothing - Girls</i>		<i>Rent</i>	
dress	\$1.00	<i>(house with hot water and bath)</i>	
shoes	\$1.00	5 room house	\$30-\$40
fancy dress	\$3.00	4 room house	\$25-\$30
rain coat	98¢		
<i>Clothing - Boys</i>		<i>Used Cars</i>	
dress trousers	\$2.98	1933 Chevrolet sedan	\$475
socks	10¢	1930 Ford roadster	\$100
wool sweater	\$1.69		
boots	98¢		
<i>Clothing - Men</i>			
work shoes	\$1.98		
wool socks	10¢		
dress shirt	98¢		
trousers	\$1.00		

What Would You Do Without?

Not everyone was without work during the Depression years. Some people had part time work. The more fortunate had full time jobs. Even then people had to cut down on the amount they could buy, because salaries were usually low.

1) If a depression happened in this next year, which of these items would show a decline in sale?

bread	T.V.	meat
shoes	camper	wool mittens
boat	candy	pop

2) Why did you choose the items you did for Question One?

3) What effect would a decline in sales have on employment?

4) Think about someone you know who has a job. Would a decline in sales affect that person's job?

5) Try to find out the salaries and costs of living today. Compare them with Depression figures. Has everything gone up in the same proportion?



Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) boys on their way to work. (courtesy *Des Moines Register*)

Other Solutions

In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President. It was a troubled time with so many people out of work, hungry, and losing homes and farmland to foreclosure. Roosevelt decided the United States government should help people. He called his plan the New Deal. Many programs created work for people to do. Two of them were the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).

The WPA provided jobs for all sorts of workers. In Iowa, WPA workers built roads, dams, parks, and public buildings. Others wrote books, and painted pictures.

The CCC provided jobs for unemployed young men between the ages of 18 and 25. These men lived in camps where they were provided with food,

work clothes, and dormitory rooms. Most of the \$30 each young man earned monthly was sent home to help his family.

In Iowa, CCC boys planted forests, cleared highways of snow, and built artificial lakes. In 1935, 46 CCC camps in Iowa provided jobs for over 8,300 people.

The government tried to find ways to help farmers, too. Farmers could get government loans so that farms would not be sold for non-payment of taxes or bank loans. The government tried to find ways to raise the prices of farm products. Farmers were asked to produce less. If there was less food to sell the price might go up. Farmers received money to keep land out of production. They were also paid not to

raise so much livestock.

The government helped people learn how to live on less money. Women attended classes where they learned how to can food, sew clothes, and plan healthful meals. Housewives learned that the cost of a rubber spatula was soon justified by the food recovered from the hard-to-reach insides of cans and jars.

Some towns provided land for public vegetable gardens. The government gave away seeds so people could grow their own food.

Eagle Point Park

The WPA built many public buildings and parks in Iowa. Many of these are in use today. One of the best examples of fine architectural design is at Eagle Point Park in Dubuque. Alfred Caldwell designed and directed the project. Mr. Caldwell believed that the buildings should be useful. He also wanted them to blend with the natural surroundings. To do this he made careful

plans for the buildings, paths, and kinds of plants that would grow in the park.

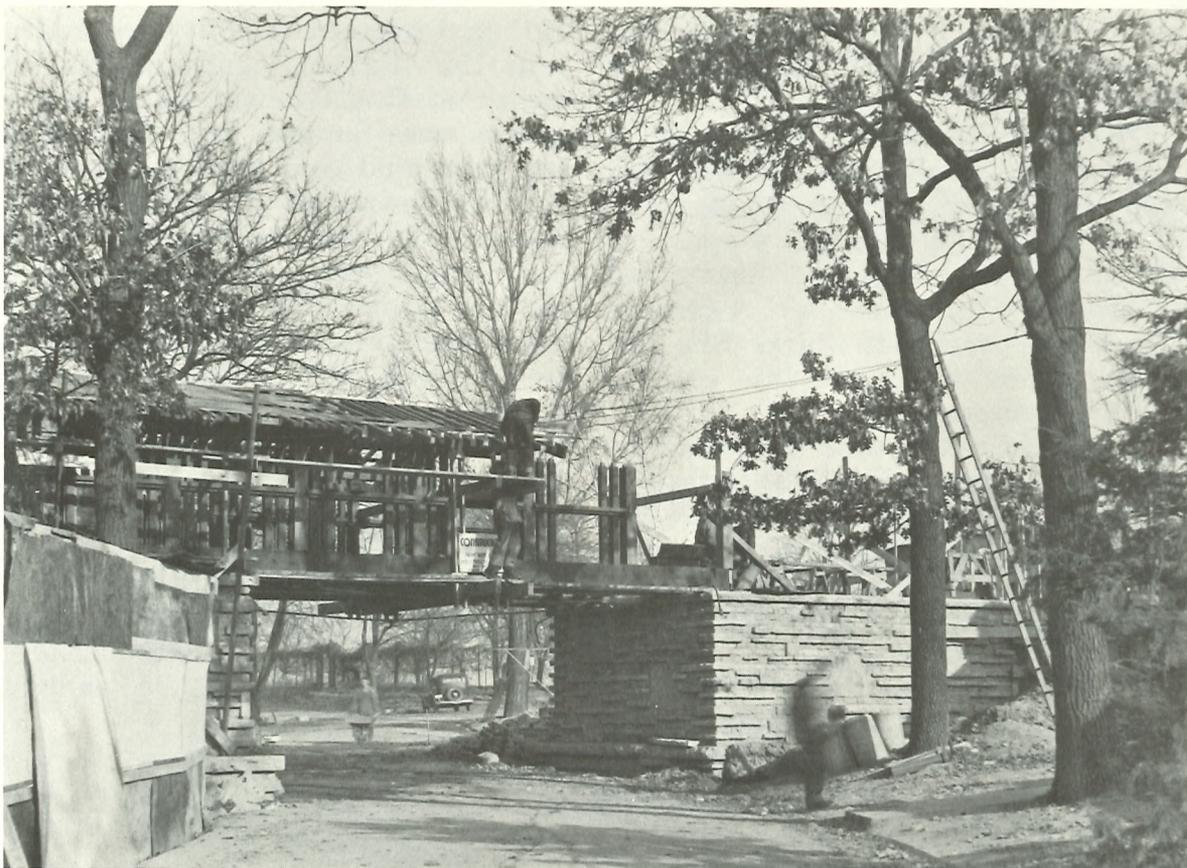
Today the park is still a place of beauty. People continue to enjoy using the buildings and nature trails. In addition to providing jobs for 200 men the project at Eagle Point Park provided the citizens of Dubuque with a beautiful, lasting park.

Something to do:

There were many public building projects in Iowa during the Depression. For a class project locate and visit these WPA projects. If a building is no longer standing, try to find out why it is no longer there.

In your town, look for:

sidewalks	rural schools
roads	library buildings
bridges	fire houses
parks	gymnasiums
tennis courts	stadiums
city or town halls	walls around parks
shelter buildings in parks	
dams	stone gates at entrances to parks
fair grounds	murals on walls



The Bridge Building under construction at Eagle Point Park, 1935 (Works Projects Administration Photograph Collection, Division of the State Historical Society of Iowa)



When Father Ligutti saw miners' homes like this one he worked to provide better houses for mine workers and their families. (From the Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutti Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Memorial Library, Marquette University)

An Industrial Area - An Iowa Solution

Many people looked for ways to solve the problems caused by the Great Depression. This is the story of a successful solution for fifty families in Iowa.

The Homesteads at Granger, Iowa

It was the nicest house she had ever seen. Lucia ran from room to room. The kitchen had running water, cold and hot. Every room had lights that came on with flip of a switch. A furnace kept the house toasty warm. She ran up the stairs and peeked into each of the three bedrooms.

Almost from the time she could remember, Lucia had lived with her mother, father, two sisters, and two brothers in a poorly built company house with four tiny rooms. When it rained, the roof leaked. Winter winds blew up through cracks in the floor. There was no electricity, and water was carried from a pump outside. All this was changed now, thanks to the efforts of the parish priest, Father Luigi Ligutti (*lōō-ē' jē li-gōō'tē*).

The primary source for this story is Dorothy Schneider's article, "The Granger Homestead Project," appearing in *The Palimpsest* 58 (September/October 1977.)

Father Ligutti was born in Italy in 1895. He emigrated to Des Moines in 1912 and was ordained five years later.

In 1926 Father Ligutti became the parish priest at Granger. In his congregation were families from both farming areas and coal mining camps. He saw that the people who worked as coal miners had a very poor way of life. The coal mines operated only during the fall and winter. This meant that miners needed other work when the mines were closed. Before the Depression, miners sometimes found jobs at nearby farms or worked as section hands for the local railroad. But after the Depression set in there were no jobs. A way of life that was already poor became worse.

Father Ligutti saw that a mining camp was not a good place for children. The school that Lucia attended ended at fourth grade. Until they were 16 and old enough to work, there was very little for miners' children to do. Most wandered the dusty streets or hung out at pool halls.

Father Ligutti began to look for ways to help mining families. He believed

that the land might offer a solution. "The farm is the ideal place to raise children," he concluded.

The United States government was looking for ways to help people too. The government decided to move people from overcrowded industrial areas to places where they might grow their own food on small plots of ground. The Federal Subsistence Homesteads Corporation was formed to do this.

When Father Ligutti heard about this he travelled to Washington with a plan to build 50 homes near the town of Granger. These homes would be for people willing to work hard to help themselves. The Corporation liked Father Ligutti's plan and agreed to provide money for the project.

Father Ligutti chose the location for the Homestead project carefully—close enough to Granger so homesteaders could send their children to Granger schools and churches, and close enough to the mines so that workers could get

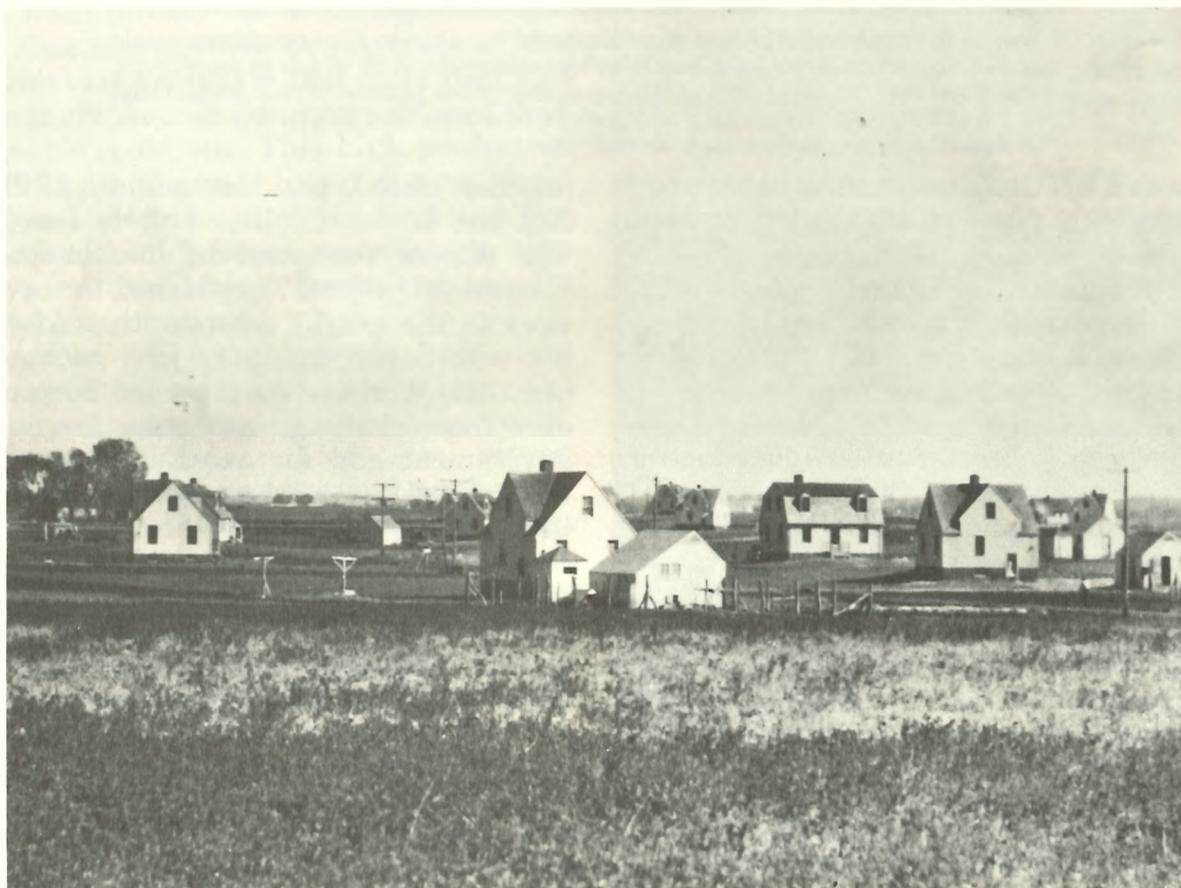
to work.

It was a happy day when Lucia's family was chosen to be one of the fifty families to move to the Homestead project. In December 1935, the families moved to their new homes. Most of the people were miners, but some were streetcar operators, bookkeepers, or carpenters. All were required to have some income so they could make payments to buy their homes and land.

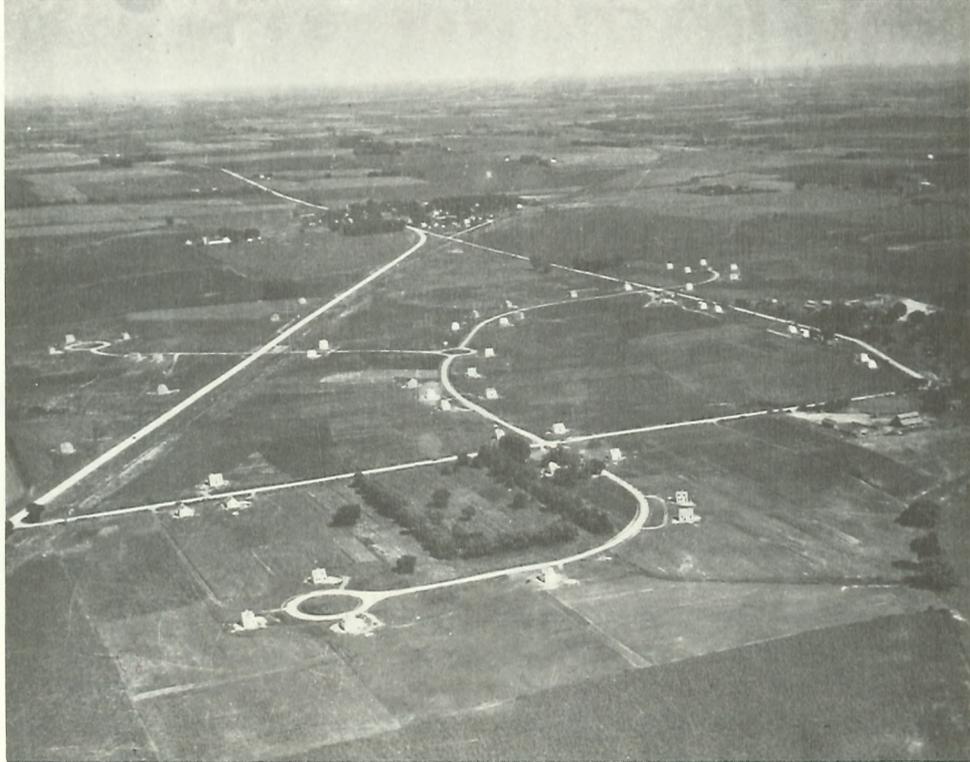
Moving into the new homes was the beginning of a new life for Lucia and her family. Father Ligutti made every effort to make the project a success. He advised people how to use their land to grow as much food as possible.

People who lived in the Granger project worked together. They organized a cooperative association to buy products such as seeds and canned foods. They jointly bought a tractor, plow, disk, harrow, and mower.

Social activities included everyone. Community dinners were held. There



Homes in the Granger Homestead Project (From the Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutti Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Memorial Library, Marquette University)



Homes in the Granger project were clustered together so that neighbors would be near one another, yet each homesite had enough land on which to grow crops. The town of Granger is seen at the top center of the picture. (From Msgr. Luigi G. Ligutti Papers, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, Memorial Library, Marquette University)

was a 4-H Club, community band, young men's baseball team and Boy Scout Troop.

Homestead children went to school more years than they had at the mining camp schools. In high school, girls learned about home management, nutrition, cooking, child care, and care of the sick. Boys learned about the care of animals, poultry production, dairying, crops and soils, vegetable growing, fruit growing, and bee culture.

Over the years, Father Lugutti's belief that people could help support themselves was proved right. "People should have one foot in industry and the other on the land. Then if industry goes kerplunk, the families will still have their hoes." In the late 1930s when work at the mines was cut back, many of the families supported themselves with the food they grew.

As the years passed, one mine after

another closed, the last one in 1946. Not one of the families had to leave. The miners continued to live in the Homestead project. They looked for new work in the nearby communities. After the war began in 1941, jobs became plentiful. Workers were needed to produce food, clothing, and arms for our government and for our European allies. By 1951, 32 of the original 50 families still lived in their homesteads. During the entire history of the project no one failed to pay for his home. For families like Lucia's, Father Ligutti's Homestead project helped solve the problems of the Great Depression.