TOIL: CREATING A RESEARCH-BASED BOARD GAME ABOUT SOUTHERN ALBERTA FARM FAMILIES DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION (1929-1940)

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DEDICATION

To my Grandpa Dil, who would have had many stories to add to this project, and I would have loved to hear them.

ABSTRACT

During the Great Depression, 1929-1940, farming families in southern Alberta contended with what are now recognized as the three defining features of that decade: economic downturn, drought, and drifting soil. Drawing on oral history interviews and archival research, this thesis examines (1) the challenges that southern Alberta family farms faced during the Great Depression, and how the men, women and children of these families contribute to their family's economic survival, and (2) how creating a boardgame on the topic of southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression can help us to understand the time, the challenges that it presented, and how farming families responded. This thesis provides a look at the research done, the process of creating "Toil", and the rationale behind turning the extensive historical research done into a board game format.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Work described in this thesis received research ethics approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, Project Name “Environmental and economic challenges for southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression” No. Pro00118535, November 9, 2022.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been a labour of love, borne out of serendipitous circumstances that have culminated in this master's thesis and board game. It feels as though I have grown up alongside this project and it has taken place because of my growth. In 2015 I was 19 years old without any idea what I wanted to do with my life. Thankfully, my parents recommended I apply for a summer job at Fort Steele Heritage Town, and I ended up working at the front reception that first season. That was such a pivotal decision that has had such a ripple effect in my life. Because of that job, and the subsequent three seasons I spent working at the Fort, I was hired to be the education and community programs assistant summer job at the Galt Museum & Archives in the summer of 2018. That summer, one of my bosses, Ashley Henrickson was a current MA student at the University of Lethbridge, and she introduced me to her supervisor, Dr. Kristine Alexander. That introduction changed my life!

Through my job at the Galt, and some other valuable connections, I ultimately created "Harvest," a simulation board game program on the topic of family farms in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. By the time I finished researching, designing, and launching "Harvest," I was a senior level undergraduate student, almost ready to complete my BA/BEd degrees, and trying to visualize life after graduation. Through my connection with Dr. Kristine Alexander, she had asked me a couple of times if I had considered pursuing a Master's degree. The first time she asked, I emphatically said "No way!", it had never occurred to me that graduate studies would be in the cards for me. The subsequent times she asked I thought about it more and it started to sound better and better.

I fell in love with the subject content I was researching for the creation of "Harvest," I loved how the numbers I was finding on Statistics Canada mirrored the experiences relayed

through oral histories and newspaper archives. I did not grow up in southern Alberta, but three of my four grandparents did, and it very much felt like a homecoming to be digging into the stories of the place and time that my grandparents lived in as children. Continuing in my education and pursuing a MA, meant that I would be able to continue on in the research I did for Harvest, and that I would be able to take what I learned from designing Harvest and make a self-contained game as a part of my thesis.

I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to do this research and to have been able to collect and share these stories in both written format and in my game "Toil". I would like to specifically thank my supervisor, Dr. Kristine Alexander for her mentorship, guidance, and tireless encouragement towards me pursuing this work. I would not be where I am today without Kristine, and I could never say thank you enough for all the doors that she has opened for me. I would also like to thank Ashley Henrickson for being such a fabulous boss to me at the Galt, encouraging me towards pursuing a MA and introducing me to Kristine, I am forever grateful.

I would like to extend a heartfelt thanks to Dr. Carol Williams, for her boundless support and her service on my committee. I was fortunate enough to be in Dr. Williams' "History of Women" course during my first year at the University of Lethbridge. From that moment onward, she was a source of knowledge, support and mentorship to me. It has always seemed like Carol celebrates the achievements of her students as if they are her own, and it has been such a privilege to have Carol on my team for this journey. I would also like to acknowledge and express my gratitude to the other member of my committee, Dr. Carly Adams. I am so grateful to Dr. Adams for her generosity to share her time and depth of knowledge with me. Being so new at conducting oral history interviews, it has been a great source of comfort knowing that I had Carly with me to offer her expertise.

There were four people who I interviewed as a part of this project, and I would like to thank each of them for their participation. Cale Harris for his immense knowledge and impeccable recollection of farming in southern Alberta during the 1930s. Carma Anderson for her humour, grace, and eagerness to share. Virginia Smith for her personal accounts and moving stories. And Lorne Smith for his enthusiasm and depth of knowledge surrounding farming in southern Alberta. Without these four interviewees, this project would not be nearly as compelling as their stories added a personal element and allowed me to look at these events from the perspective of children. What a gift it was to spend time with these people, I am grateful for the excuse that this project gave me to ask questions and hear their stories.

Through this project, there was the unique opportunity for collaboration between the History department and the New Media department at the University of Lethbridge. I am so grateful that professor Ryan Harper was so enthusiastic in his support of "Toil" and that he was , willing to create a connection between myself and Ethan Schartner. Ethan worked as an applied study student on the graphic design aspects of this project for a semester and his work was foundational in developing what "Toil" looks like today. I am forever grateful for Ethan's willingness to figure things out with me, to ask all the questions and to have such helpful back and forth dialogue with me throughout our semester together. I am also grateful for the artists at Artrageous Advertising who finalized the design for this project.

I would also like to acknowledge that this project is supported in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council. Receiving funding from SSHRC allowed me to focus on my studies without having the same financial stress that I would have had without. Kristine was instrumental in helping me to prepare my application for this funding, as well as so

many other scholarship opportunities, which is another reason for a heartfelt thank you to be extended her way.

I would also like to express gratitude to my colleagues who went through the MA program at the University of Lethbridge with me, particularly Ryley Gelinas and Hanna Fantin. Between starting the MA program during a global pandemic, having a faculty strike, and figuring out the balance of GA assignments, course work, and the rest of life, I am so grateful to have gone through this experience together. Their humor, support, and friendship has been so wonderful. The opportunity to get to know each of them has been a highlight of this MA program, thank you both.

When I started the MA program, my daughter Katie was 7-months old. I am forever grateful that Katie was such a calm, easy-going baby and that I was able to embark on this journey. I am beyond grateful for the blessing of Katie having a temperament as a baby as well as a toddler that I could reliably bring to the University with me for meetings or to attend a lecture. My son, Kendall, thankfully continued the trend of calm, and I do not know what I would have done if he had not. When I started this program, I did not anticipate having a 4-year-old and a 2-year old when I graduated, and I do not think that I would have been able to do it with any other babies in the entire world. I got the very best, and I am forever grateful that they facilitated me in pursuing my dreams by being so naturally wonderful.

I would also like to thank my partner and husband, Zachary. Zach unwaveringly supported me in this journey before I was sure that I wanted to do it and has been the greatest cheerleader along the way. He believed that I could juggle being a mom and being a student before I did, and he has worked extremely hard to make that possible. What a wonderful privilege it has been to be loved by and supported by Zach in this busy season, I will be forever

grateful. Our little family would not have been able to do this without the incredible childcare, household, and emotional support from our wider "village."

Zach's mom, Sharon jumped in to help from my first semester onward with watching the kids, cleaning our house, and consistently identifying needs and finding ways to help. "Thanks" could never be enough. I would never have even started this program without my wonderful parents, as they encouraged me to pursue an education. They have offered so much help and assistance including helping with the kids whenever they could and hosting us at their place so that I could have "writing retreats" in their basement. My aunt Carol and uncle Mark have made two of my last semesters possible by watching Kendall twice a week and allowing me to work in their office. These have been such productive and easy days, it would have been much more stressful on both myself and on Kendall to have had him further away than just downstairs, and for that I am forever grateful.

I have been so grateful to the exceptional friends that I have who have checked in, helped in a variety of ways, and encouraged me to have some fun and get my head out of the books. Among so many wonderful friends in my life, I would like to specifically thank Keeyah, Tacy, and Paige, for going so above and beyond in their support during this intense season. Pursuing a masters while in the early years of my motherhood has come with unique challenges and joys, and I would not have been able to do it without the exceptional support of my people.

This project has really taken a community and I am so grateful to each person who has chipped in to help facilitate this education journey. To the supportive professors, acquaintances, family, and friends, who asked about my project along the way and who were genuinely interested in how it was going and how I was doing- Thank you! Your encouragement and interest really meant the world.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Introduction

The Great Depression in southern Alberta was a time of difficult circumstances that led to men, women, and children taking exceptional action. Lorne Smith's mother raised and sold turkeys so their family would be able to purchase a quarter section of land – 160 acres – with the money. School children throughout Alberta participated in pest-competitions, destroying gophers, magpies, and crows with the hope of qualifying for prize money. Contending with grasshoppers became an entire family endeavor, as young Cale Harris drove his father's truck through the field while his father scooped the poisoned-laced saw dust out of the bed of the truck onto the ground.

This research and the board game that accompanies it comprise a portfolio-style MA thesis in History at the University of Lethbridge. This thesis aims to answer the following questions: What challenges did southern Alberta family farms face during the Great Depression, and how did the men, women, and children of these families contribute to their family's economic survival? And, how does creating a boardgame on the topic of southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression help us to understand that time, the challenges that it presented, and how farming families responded?

"Toil" is the name I have given to the boardgame portion of this thesis project; its aim is to create an immersive experience for players to take on the role of a southern Alberta family farm during the Great Depression and try to make it to the end of that decade with money still in the bank. The written component provided here is vital to my thesis project and is intended to stand alone and be understood without the reader(s) having engaged with "Toil" previously. "Toil" and the information and reflection provided throughout this written component are intrinsically connected and enriched by each other, but they have been intentionally designed to

be substantial historical works on their own. Through this introductory chapter, I will describe the objectives of my thesis project, the historical and historiographical contexts I am engaging with, discuss the use of historical board games as teaching tools, describe my sources and methodology, and briefly outline the remaining chapters of the thesis.

Objectives

This thesis aims to make a meaningful contribution to scholarship on the reality faced by southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression, and to create a history-based board game to allow people to experience that research in an interactive way. In historiographical terms, this work involves bringing areas of scholarship into conversation with one another that have mostly evolved separately: environmental history and gender and family history. Rural and western Canada have been under-represented in scholarship on the topic of the Great Depression, and this thesis shows the important contributions that can be made by examining this particular time and place.

Historical Context

Southern Alberta is Blackfoot territory, and also includes Treaty 7 lands and part of Region 3 of the Metis Nation of Alberta. Therefore, this thesis project – both the written portion and the board game – takes place in the context of settler colonialism. The topic of this thesis is farming families in southern Alberta during the Great Depression, and the families that are discussed are primarily white settler families. The history, experiences, and stories being shared only exist as they do because of colonialism. It has been said that "[s]ettler colonialism destroys

to replace."[1] This is true in southern Alberta, and the context I examine in this project is indeed a product of the act of colonization and "replacing" the original Indigenous inhabitants of this land, as white "family farms" are the direct result of settler colonialism.[2]

Sarah Carter's book *Lost Harvests* states that "[a]lthough the Plains Indians were among the earliest and largest of groups to attempt farming west of the Red River Settlement, immigrants from Europe and the older provinces of Canada are routinely credited with the pioneering efforts to farm the prairies."[3] White settlers moved into southern Alberta in large numbers, particularly during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and many of them established small farms. Dozens of advertisements were produced by the Canadian state and private immigration promoters to encourage white settlers to come to the prairies and establish homesteads.[4] There was high variability in the levels of success many of these farming operations achieved, with external factors such as weather, market, and family support having a notable impact.

In the 1930s, however, it became increasingly difficult for settlers to be successful in these small farming operations due to drought and drifting soil, in large part because the agricultural practices they had developed elsewhere were ill-suited to the prairie west. Colonialism has had a massive impact on the physical landscape as a result of the agricultural pursuits of the settlers. Human behaviour and the environment are interdependent, and this fact was highlighted throughout the Great Depression in southern Alberta, particularly on settler

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[1] Patrick, Wolfe. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.
[2] Sarah Rotz, "'They took our beads, it was a fair trade, get over it': Settlercolonial logics, racial hierarchies and material dominance in Canadian agriculture" *Geoforum 82*, (June 2017): 158, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2017.04.010.
[3] Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*, 2nd ed. (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019), 3:3.
[4] Douglas Owram, *Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1992).

family farms. The dust storms and drifting soil that hampered farms' success did not just come out of nowhere once the 1930s started and they did not disappear immediately when the 1940s began. These dust storms were a result of increased population in farming areas and more widespread use of British farming practices, such as ploughing, which meant the total turning over of soil. These farming practices were used in settlers' home countries, such as England, before settling in Canada. The assumption that these types of farming practices would be effective was further spread through the portrayal of the Canadian prairies in pro-immigration propaganda of the time, which was aimed at European farmers.[5] Utilizing these farming practices on such expansive farmland led to the over-tilling of soil and, when combined with significant drought, resulted in the drifting soil and dust storms which were signature features of the 1930s.

In an article comparing the drought of the 1930s with the drought of the 1980s in Alberta, Nkemdirim and Weber note that "[t]he 1930s were notorious for the 'dust bowl', the combination of heat, water deficits, and dust storms that wasted soil and agricultural resources and, in the process, threatened the survival of the southern prairies as a viable economic community."[6] This highlights the interconnected nature of the environment and the economy in southern Alberta, which is why the three signature features of the Great Depression, drifting soil, drought, and economic downturn, were so significant. These features are intrinsically connected, and their combined impact left many family farms vulnerable during this time.

The Great Depression is widely acknowledged as beginning when the Wall Street market crashed in October of 1929. It was this event that marked the start of the signature economic

[5]Owram, *Promise of Eden.*
[6] Lawrence Nkemdirim, and Lena Weber, "Comparison between the Droughts of the 1930s and the 1980s in the Southern Prairies of Canada," *Journal of Climate*, vol 12, no. 8 (1999): 2434-2450, https://doi.org/10.1175/1520-0442(1999)012<2434:CBTDOT>2.0.CO;2.

downturn of that period.[7] While the economic event of the market crash happened far away in New York, the impact was felt directly in southern Alberta. The environmental features of drifting soil and drought were experienced locally in southern Alberta. The result of both the economic and environmental features of the Great Depression was that Southern Alberta farming families, like many others, found it difficult to make enough money from agricultural endeavours to live.

Historiographical Context

Southern Alberta farming families during the Great Depression were subjected to a unique set of challenges. In popular memory the 1930s are now marked by three signature features: economic downturn, drifting soil, and drought. Farming families were directly exposed to all three of those features due to their reliance on market prices to sell their crops, and the tie between their livelihood and the environment. Women and children on these farms pursued venues of bringing additional income into their family through gardening, raising small livestock, and making butter. Importantly, the hands-on labour of family farms was not always completed by male members of the family, which challenged the expected gendered roles of these spaces. The main two bodies of literature this thesis engages with, therefore, are environmental and social history.

Environmental History

After the 1930s ended, and scholars were grappling with the events of that decade, one of the most frequent areas of study was the environment. The environment continues to be a

[7] "Worst Panic Yet In Wall Street" *Lethbridge Herald,* October 29, 1929, https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1929/10-29/page-1.

frequent area of study when it comes to the Great Depression because two of the three key features of the decade were disruptive environmental events: drifting soil and drought. No one was more exposed to – or more greatly impacted by – drifting soil, drought, and economic downturn than farming families. This claim does not go against the grain of previous scholarship on the 1930s that has an environmental focus, as agricultural work is regularly discussed alongside the environment.

Works by Cunfer, McLeman, and Jones all focus on the environment's impact on agriculture across the North American plains, though the scope and individual approach to that theme vary greatly.[8] Cunfer's book, *"On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment",* argues that adaption was essential to be successful in agriculture on the Great Plains.[9] The geographical area covered in his book is primarily the USA Great Plains. In terms of timeframe, Cunfer has a wide focus, as his book includes discussion of the period from the late 1800s through the 1930s. McLeman's article argues that the environment, and particularly drought, have had an impact on population change on the Canadian Prairies.[10] In both timeframe and geographical area, McLeman's study has a narrower scope than Cunfer, as McLeman focuses exclusively on the Canadian Prairies during 1920s and 1930s and the droughts that occurred in both of those decades. Jones' book *"Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt"* is once again focused on the environment. [11] This work argues that nature can pose large difficulties for settlements and is a main reason for the large rate of farm abandonment that

[8] Geoff Cunfer. *On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005); Robert McLeman, et al., "GIS-based modeling of drought and historical population change on the Canadian Prairies," Journal of Historical Geography 36, no. 1 (January 2010): 43-56, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhg.2009.04.003; David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2002).
[9] Geoff Cunfer. *On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment.*
[10] Robert McLeman, et al., "GIS-based modeling of drought and historical population change on the Canadian Prairies," 43-56.
[11] David C. Jones. *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Dry Belt*.

occurred on the Canadian plains during the 1920s. Cunfer, McLeman, and Jones have each provided valuable discussion that have informed my understanding of the environmental impact on settlers engaging in agricultural pursuits. However, all three of these works have a much larger geographical scope than I will have in this thesis, as my focus will be on southern Alberta exclusively.

Scholarly work on the 1930s in southern Alberta has had some excellent contributions focused on environmental history, including those by Nkemdirim, Palmer, and Pugh.[12] Nkemdirim's article is entitled "Comparison between the Droughts of the 1930s and the 1980s in the Southern Prairies of Canada," This article highlights the realities of the drought that occurred in southern Alberta during the 1930s, while comparing that crisis to the drought that occurred in the same area during the 1980s. Palmer's book, entitled *Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta,* shares events and stories from the Great Depression, focusing on immigration stories from a large variety of minority groups that settled in southern Alberta at the beginning of the 20th century.[13] Pugh's article "The Deep-Rooted Effects of the Great Depression and Unemployment on Alberta Education: Between 1930-1935" was published in *Historicity: Essays on the History of Southern Alberta*, a collection of articles with a wide array of topics all sharing the feature of focusing on the geographical location of southern Alberta. Pugh focuses on how unemployment rates impacted the education rates of children and youth in Alberta during the 1930s. While there was not an overt cost to attend school, Pugh argues that there were hidden costs of school attendance including proper dress and

[12] Lawrence Nkemdirim, and Lena Weber, "Comparison between the Droughts of the 1930s and the 1980s in the Southern Prairies of Canada."; Howard Palmer, *Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta* (Alberta: Lethbridge Herald, 1972); Robyn Pugh, "The Deep-Rooted Effects of the Great Depression and Unemployment on Alberta Education: Between 1930-1935" in *Historicity: Essays on the History of Southern Alberta*, ed. Amy Shaw (Alberta: University of Lethbridge), 138-155.
[13] Howard Palmer, *Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta.*

transportation that became prohibitive to many families to have their children attend during the Great Depression.

Scholarly works like those written by Nkemdirim, Palmer, and Pugh are valuable contributions to the historiography of southern Alberta and to building an understanding of what life in this area was like during the 1930s, which helps to inform my work as well.[14] Other popular works that outline the history of specific southern Alberta communities, such as *Coaldale: Gem of the West*, and *Under the Chinook Arch: Cayley and surrounding areas*, have also proved to be important resources for building an understanding of the social and environmental factors that impacted the people of this area in the 1930s.[15]

While this thesis will interact with these southern Alberta histories, it will also differ from and contribute to this historiography in unique ways. As in the works noted above, environmental history has been a natural focus for my research, after uncovering how the experiences of southern Alberta farmers are deeply connected and dependent upon the environment around them. However, my work places farming families at the center of the study, rather than at the periphery. Additionally, I will be incorporating stories from a range of southern Alberta locations, utilizing a scope that is broader than a single community or group, but more specific than the Prairies or Alberta as a whole.

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[14] Lawrence Nkemdirim, and Lena Weber, "Comparison between the Droughts of the 1930s and the 1980s in the Southern Prairies of Canada."; Howard Palmer, *Land of the Second Chance: A History of Ethnic Groups in Southern Alberta*. Alberta: *Lethbridge Herald*; Robyn Pugh, "The Deep-Rooted Effects of the Great Depression and Unemployment on Alberta Education: Between 1930-1935".

[15] Coaldale Jubilee Committee, *Coaldale: "Gem of the West"*, (Coaldale, Alta: Printed by J.J. Loewen, 1955); Women's Institute, Cayley, Alberta and Cayley Under the Chinook Arch Committee, *Under the Chinook Arch: A History of Cayley and Surrounding Areas*, (Cayley, Alberta, 1967).

Social History

This thesis will also engage with and contribute to the social historiography of the Great Depression in Canada. There have been some excellent social histories written recently which explore families, gender, women, children, intergenerational relationships, and oral histories in Canada during the Great Depression. These include works by Campbell, Srigley, Strikwerda, Baillargeon, MacDonald, and Zembrzycki.[16] Each of these works has made a valuable contribution to the social history literature of the Great Depression in Canada, and each has a unique focus that has influenced this project.

Campbell's book *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression* helped to inform this project through its analysis of the layers of motivation present in Canadian families' pursuit of financial stability. Campbell argues that maintaining respectability was made more difficult during the 1930s in Ontario due to unemployment and financial difficulties. As a result of this difficulty, Campbell argues that gendered roles, public, and private spheres were impacted in a variety of ways.

Published a year after *Respectable Citizens*, Katrina Srigley's book entitled *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939* expands on Campbell's argument by agreeing that the social structure in Canada was impacted by the

[16] Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression.* (University of Toronto Press, 2009); Katrina Srigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939.* (University of Toronto Press, 2010); Eric Strikwerda, *The Wages of Relief: Cities and the Unemployed in Prairie Canada, 1929-39*. (AU Press, 2013); Denyse Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal during the Great Depression*, trans. Yvonne Klein (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2014); Heidi MacDonald, "'Being in your Twenties in the 1930s': Masculinity and Liminality during the Great Depression," in *Bringing Children and Youth into Canadian History: The Difference Kids Make*, Mona Gleason and Tamara Myers, eds. (Don Mills: Oxford, 2017), 156-169; Heidi MacDonald, "Singleness and Choice: The Impact of Gender, Age, Time, and Class on Three Youth Diarists in 1930s Canada," in *Writing Feminist History: Productive Pasts and New Directions*, Catherine Carstairs & Nancy Janovicek, eds. (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2013), 118-135; Stacey Zembrzycki, "'There Were Always Men in Our House': Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada" (Labour/Le Travailleur, 2007): 77–106.

events of the Great Depression, especially with regard to the roles that women took on during that time. Srigley focuses on the work that women, and especially young adult daughters, took on in Ontario during the 1930s to provide for their families, and how that had an impact on their ability to marry as marrying would mean leaving their employment.

Like Campbell and Srigley, Strikwerda also asks how the stereotypical role of the male breadwinner was impacted by the Great Depression in Canada. [17] Strikwerda's book *The Wages of Relief: Cities and the Unemployed in Prairie Canada, 1929-1939* argues that there was a direct link between the marital status of men seeking government assistance and the type, quality, and quantity of relief given during the Great Depression in Alberta's urban centres. [18] It was important to this study to have the foundation of knowledge of what urban centres in Alberta were doing in way of public assistance while farming families were working on their farms as it gave insight into what the options were for Albertans outside of farming.

Heidi MacDonald's article "'Being in your Twenties in the 1930s': Masculinity and Liminality during the Great Depression," argues that the conditions of the 1930s made it difficult for young men, both in urban centres in eastern Canada and in rural Alberta, to achieve independence and to reach traditional benchmarks of adulthood, particularly due to the economic conditions of that decade.[19] It was interesting to apply MacDonald's argument to the southern Alberta farming families studied in this thesis to see what support was available to them, including family and community connections.

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[17] Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression;* Katrina Srigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939*; Eric Strikwerda, *The Wages of Relief: Cities and the Unemployed in Prairie Canada, 1929-39.*
[18] Eric Strikwerda, *The Wages of Relief.*
[19] Heidi MacDonald,"'Being in your Twenties in the 1930s': Masculinity and Liminality during the Great Depression".

Macdonald's other article "Singleness and Choice: The Impact of Gender, Age, Time, and Class on Three Youth Diarists in 1930s Canada," argues that there were many factors that played into women choosing whether or not to marry during the Depression, and that singleness was a choice that some women deliberately made.[20] Macdonald directly engages with Srigley's work done in *Breadwinning Daughters* and offers other reasons why women may have chosen to stay single outside of economic pressures. MacDonald's article informed my understanding of my topic and also provided a reminder to look at the research being done from a variety of angles. Both of Macdonald's articles contain the social history themes of family, gender, and children. Additionally, both articles are focused on the breadwinner role during the Great Depression, and examined how both men and women had their lives impacted by the disruptive events of the 1930s.

Zembrzycki's article "'There Were Always Men in Our House': Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada" also examines how the events of the Great Depression were disruptive and had a large impact on the lives of Canadians.[21] Zembrzycki's article is set in Sudbury, Ontario during the 1930s and recounts the experience of working-class Ukrainian Canadians whose families took in boarders during the Great Depression, however, its biggest impact on this project was in its discussion of the uses of oral history interviews. Zembrycki argues that the gender, age, and background of both the interviewer and the interviewees had a profound impact on the memories shared during the oral history interviews done for this book. The process of conducting oral histories is treated as one of the subjects of the book, rather than simply a method used. Zembrzycki conducted oral history

[20] Heidi MacDonald, "Singleness and Choice: The Impact of Gender, Age, Time, and Class on Three Youth Diarists in 1930s Canada"
[21] Stacey Zembrzycki, "'There Were Always Men in Our House': Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada".

interviews with people who were children during the 1930s and were part of families who took in boarders during the 1930s. Taking in boarders turned a family's home into a place of business, as the boarder(s) would be paying for a place to sleep and regular meals, and the children in the family were expected to help meet that agreement by helping to clean and prepare meals. Through this content, Zembrycki's article contains social history themes of families, gender, women, children, and intergenerational relationships, and utilizes oral histories.

Baillargeon's book *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal during the Great Depression* is another social history work that is set in urban eastern Canada during the 1930s.[22] Its focus is on family survival strategies and the role that women took in making a meager income stretch as far as possible. This book also uses oral history interviews as a major source, which made it compelling and applicable to my project. *Making Do* differs from Srigley and Campbell's books in that the focus is not on women as breadwinners. Instead, Baillargeon argues that women – even if they didn't earn wages themselves – played an indispensable part in overcoming the poverty their families found themselves in during the 1930s. Baillargeon's book has the thematic focuses of families, gender, women, and children, making it a compelling social history work. *Making Do* is an excellent example of family survival strategies in Canada during the Great Depression.

There are many excellent social history works set in Canada, and even those that have a specific focus of the Great Depression. I will be interacting with these works, and making a unique contribution to the literature. As I have highlighted through the sources discussed above, most social histories previously written on the Great Depression in Canada have been focused on urban and eastern Canadian experiences. By focusing on rural southern Alberta, I am working to

[22] Denyse Baillargeon, *Making Do: Women, Family and Home in Montreal during the Great Depression*.

shed light upon an underrepresented area of research. I also aim to illuminate the experiences of southern Alberta farming families during the 1930s, which is another under-studied aspect within the current scholarship. This research will also contribute to the literature by utilizing themes of families, gender, women, children, intergenerational relationships, and collecting valuable oral histories, which will engage with and build off the excellent work previously done.

Board Games as Teaching Tools

The signature features of the Great Depression, as economic downturn, drifting soil, and drought, impacted southern Alberta farming families in often catastrophic and dramatic ways. It is this dramatic impact of external factors on everyday people that makes southern Alberta farming families during the Great Depression the perfect time, place, and people to turn into an immersive, historically based, board game. "Toil," the board game component of this thesis, aims to create an experience for players while making historical research and data something to actively engage with rather than to read on a page. In "Toil," interpretation and analysis is accomplished through play, as primary source research is embedded within the elements of the game. Games can be extremely effective tools for allowing people to engage with dense historical information, while making that material accessible and fun.

In his 2021 article entitled "History Themed Board Games," Brian Hubner writes that "board games have a notable educational impact: the assumptions and messages they carry have an influence, and players often identify with the 'side' they play and absorb the lessons of that play. Thus, they have come under scrutiny and critical examination from an ethical point of view."[23] This article shows the impact that board games can have on the players, and the

[23] Brian Hubner, "History Themed Board Games," *Prairie History,* no. 5 (Summer 2021): 63, https://link-gale-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/apps/doc/A674725623/CPI?u=leth89164&sid=summon&xid=86cf894f

responsibility that game designers have when considering the "sides" they are presenting and roles that they are placing players in.

The players of "Toil" will be taking on the role of white settler family farms, as the individuals that I conducted oral history interviews with were all from white settler backgrounds, which has created a lack of representation in my game and is an ethical issue that needed to be considered. There is so much room for expansion on the work that I have done in this thesis and for "Toil", specifically including a broader range of voices with different ethnic and racial backgrounds. While there are problems with a game that only contains voices from white settlers, I concluded that there was still great value in the work that I was pursuing and that appropriately using the title of "settler" throughout the game materials would help to remind players of the range of people that could be and should be included in historically based materials of southern Alberta.

While game designers must remain aware of the impact of the materials they are developing, there are clear benefits of educating through games. Gaming scholar Alex Moseley states that games provide "community, engagement, skill development, and shared learning" which increases learning outcomes.[24] Players are active participants in their learning when they fully immerse themselves in a game. Historian Benjamin Hoy offers a more tempered perspective, saying "[g]ames are unlikely to revolutionize the ways that educators and historians teach the past, although they offer a valuable tool for supplementing existing educational strategies."[25] There are, in other words, many benefits to utilizing games to teach historical

[24] Alex Moseley, "The Great History Conundrum: Could Immersive Games Enhance an Undergraduate 'Skills' Course?" in *Historia Ludens: The Playing Historian,* ed. Alexander von Lünen, Katherine J. Lewis, Benjamin Litherland, and Pat Cullum (New York, NY: Routledge, 2020), 73.
[25] Benjamin Hoy, "Teaching History with Custom-Built Board Games," *Simulation & Gaming* 49, no. 2 (2018): 115-133.

topics; however, they do not replace peer-reviewed historical research, and the content and perspectives represented in a game are important to consider.

It is the interplay of the key features of the Great Depression and how exposed southern Alberta family farms were to their effects that make this subject so compelling as a historical board game. A "good game" has been defined as one that "features a complex interplay of elements: skill and luck, agency, narrative, and rewards, among others."[26] Representing the unique context of southern Alberta during the Great Depression, and highlighting the lived experiences of family farms in that particular historical moment, has provided a strong foundation for creating a game that integrates skill, luck, agency, narrative, and rewards into the game elements, giving "Toil" all the necessary elements to be considered a "good game."

Methodology

To ensure this thesis effectively contributes to both environmental and social historiography on the Great Depression in Canada, I have analyzed a wide range of primary sources. These sources include statistical data, newspapers, the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta (ARDAPA), and oral histories. Together, these varied bodies of evidence have informed both the development of the board game "Toil" and the written portion of my thesis.

I relied heavily on statistical data in the research for this project, including data on historical crop prices, average cost of living, precipitation rates, marriage rates, and birth rates, for each year of the Great Depression.[27] Crop prices and cost of living data are especially

[26] David T Schaller, "The Meaning Makes It Fun: Game-Based Learning for Museums." *The Journal of Museum Education 36*, no. 3 (2011): 261-68.
[27] "Table 32-10-0359-01 Estimated areas, yield, production, average farm price and total farm value of principal field crops, in metric and imperial units," Statistics Canada, Accessed April 26, 2024,

important to the structure of "Toil," as money that could be earned through selling one's crops would become "money in," while cost-of-living expenses would be the "money out" during each game round. These numbers represent one aspect of the lived experience of people during that time, as the market conditions and every day expenses had a direct impact on the lives of farming families. By collecting and analyzing this data, I was able to see which years were the toughest in terms of market conditions for Albertans living during the Great Depression. This foundation of statistical knowledge also guided other aspects of my research, by shaping the questions I asked during the oral history interviews and the topics I searched for in newspaper archives.

To calculate the historical prices of crops to include in "Toil," I had to multiply the price per bushel of a given year with the average yield of the crop that year. It became apparent that there was large fluctuation for the average yield from year to year. This fact, combined with the

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https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=3210035901; "Prices of a family budget of staple foods, fuel and lighting, and rent, for 60 cities in Canada, 1920, 1926, and 1928 to 1936," Statistics Canada, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1937/acyb02_19370800009a-eng.htm; "Monthly Data Report for 1940," Statistics Canada, Accessed April 26, 2024 https://climate.weather.gc.ca/climate_data/monthly_data_e.html?hlyRange=1994-06-07%7C2019-03-16&dlyRange=1908-02-01%7C2019-03-17&mlyRange=1908-01-01%7C2007-11-01&StationID=2265&Prov=AB&urlExtension=_e.html&searchType=stnProv&optLimit=yearRange&StartYear=1929&EndYear=1945&selRowPerPage=100&Line=87&Month=1&Day=1&lstProvince=AB&timeframe=3&Year=1940; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1933,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1933), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b31408242/page/n11/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1934,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1934), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b31408254/page/n1/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1935,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1935), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b31408266/page/n1/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1936,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1936), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b31408278/page/n1/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1937,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1937), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b3140828x/page/n1/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1938,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1938), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b31408291/page/n1/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1939,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1939), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b31408308/page/n1/mode/2up; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1940,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1940), Internet Archive, Accessed April 26, 2024, https://archive.org/details/b3140831x/page/n1/mode/2up.

ongoing concerns about drought and drifting soil during the Great Depression in southern Alberta, led to a close examination of the annual precipitation data collected by Statistics Canada. To conceptualize those numbers, I calculated the 100-year average for annual precipitation in Lethbridge. After comparing the annual precipitation for each year from 1929 to 1940 against the hundred-year average, I realized that the Great Depression features of drifting soil and drought did not occur exclusively due to a severe drought. This was apparent because most years from 1929 to 1940 had average or above average precipitation in Lethbridge, making it clear that there was more going on than extreme drought conditions. The annual precipitation data is incorporated into "Toil" via the annual cards that are flipped over at the beginning of each round.

Marriage and birth rate statistics were also key elements of the data I collected for this research. In multiple secondary sources, it was stated that people in the Great Depression would often delay marriages and having children due to financial restrictions.[28] The numerical data available via Statistics Canada supports the assertion that people delayed marriages and births in Alberta during the Great Depression. This data has been incorporated into the game in the action card sequence.

My research for this thesis also included newspaper archives. The *Lethbridge Herald* included a weekly page for the duration of the Great Depression entitled "The Farmers Own," which often contained announcements of different soil conservation methods being promoted by the agricultural research station, and how farmers could better protect their farms from the drought and soil drift of that time. I read the *Lethbridge Herald* – consulting the entire paper as

[28] Lara Campbell, *Respectable Citizens: Gender, Family, and Unemployment in Ontario's Great Depression;* Katrina Srigley, *Breadwinning Daughters: Young Working Women in a Depression-Era City, 1929-1939*; Heidi MacDonald,"Singleness and Choice: The Impact of Gender, Age, Time, and Class on Three Youth Diarists in 1930s Canada."

well as the farmers' page – to find information about the pricing of goods and services at the times, such as crop prices, common wages for laborers, and how much a boarder would expect to pay. These numbers were compared against the prices listed for all of Alberta according to Statistics Canada, to ensure that the costs used in "Toil" were reflective of the southern Alberta experience specifically. Wages and boarder costs as determined by this process were incorporated in the game as action card content. The newspaper archives were indeed important in collecting pricing data, but also in establishing a sense of the overall attitudes when it came to farming in this context, and how farmers of the area were approaching the difficulties of the Great Depression.

My desire to learn as much as possible about the experience of rural settlers in Alberta during the Great Depression also led me to consult the Annual Reports of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta for each year from 1929 to 1940.[29] These reports were accessible online through the Alberta Legislative Library. They provided an overview of how the agriculture industry in Alberta performed in a given year and offered insight into the challenges that were especially apparent that year, such as the precipitation received and the market conditions. Additionally, they included data on other occurrences that I drew upon to inform various events within "Toil," such as the number of participants in pest competitions and how much butter was made in the province that year. These reports offered significant insight into a broader picture of what life was like in Alberta during the Great Depression.

Oral history interviews are another type of primary source that I utilized throughout this thesis project. These interviews added valuable individual and personal perspectives to what I

[29]Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1929*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1929), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, https://librarysearch.assembly.ab.ca/client/en_CA/search/asset/172628/0.

had already learned, with first-hand accounts of the experience of life within a southern Alberta farming family during the Great Depression. I conducted four interviews with Cale Harris, Virginia Smith, Carma Anderson and Lorne Smith, each of whom had spent their childhood on southern Alberta farms during the 1930s. The memories shared by my interviewees added an important layer to my understanding of children's roles on Depression-era farms and allowed me to engage with literature on the place of oral history interviews in historical research.[30]

Conclusion

This thesis consists of an introductory chapter, two body chapters, and a conclusion, followed by appendix. Chapter Two, which follows the introduction, focuses on my research, by examining the (1) challenges faced by family farms in southern Alberta during the Great Depression, and (2) how the members of those families responded and adapted to the difficulties they encountered. Chapter Three shows how I applied this research to the development of a historical board game. The conclusion restates the main findings and outcomes of this project, and the appendix includes additional visual materials related to the game and its accompanying website so that readers of this written thesis may have some exposure to the other elements of the project as well.

[30]Anna Sheftel, et al, eds., *Oral History off the Record*: *Toward an Ethnography of Practice* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); Neil Sutherland, "When You Listen to the Winds of Childhood, How Much Can You Believe?" *Curriculum Inquiry 22*, no. 3 (1992): 235–56, https://doi.org/10.2307/1179839; Stacey Zembrzycki, "'There Were Always Men in Our House': Gender and the Childhood Memories of Working-Class Ukrainians in Depression-Era Canada". *Labour/Le Travailleur 60,* (2007): 77–106.

Chapter 2: "We were farming wrong in those days" [31] Challenges and Responses on Family Farms in Southern Alberta During the Great Depression

The signature challenges of drifting soil, drought, and economic downturn define the 1930s and had a massive impact on the lives of people living on southern Alberta farms at that time. Understanding each of these contextual features, and how they interact, was a vital step in developing the background knowledge necessary to make "Toil" a realistic depiction of life during this time. This research chapter explores the answers to the following questions: What were the challenges that shaped the material conditions of life on southern Alberta farms during the Depression? How did the members of farming families respond to these conditions, and how did men, women, and children contribute to economic survival?

Challenges Facing Farming Families

What were the challenges that shaped the material conditions of life on southern Alberta farms during the Depression? One of the most compelling aspects of the Great Depression is just how vital the interplay of the drifting soil issue, drought, and economic downturn was in creating the environment of desperation that was present in that decade. Because of how exposed farming families were to all three of these features, it is difficult to discuss one without discussing all three; to do so would mean only telling part of the story. There will be four subsections that follow: drought, drifting soil, economic downturn, and grasshoppers. Within those sections, each challenge will be discussed in more detail to explore how it shaped material conditions on southern Alberta family farms during the 1930s.

[31] Virginia Smith (Born in 1930, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 22, 2022.

Drought: Southern Alberta 1929-1940

Drought is widely recognized as one of the defining features of the Great Depression across the North American plains, and it shaped the material conditions of life on southern Alberta and beyond.[32] Precipitation is necessary for crops to grow, and growing crops is one of the primary means through which prairie farming families assured their economic survival. There is evidence of drought being a prevalent concern in southern Alberta during the Great Depression through the frequency that it is mentioned in the *Lethbridge Herald*, and how it is discussed in the Annual Alberta Agriculture reports (ARDAPA) as well.[33] Additionally, weather reports from that time given further insight into the realities of the drought in southern Alberta, its severity and therefore lends an insight into how it impacted the material conditions of the people living at that time.

The weather reports that I analyzed were produced by the Lethbridge weather station and they contained precipitation received by month for every year from 1907 to 2006, which is inclusive of the Great Depression years of 1929-1940. These reports were accessed in the form of a data graph on Statistics Canada. I gathered the information available for 1929-1940 on the Statistics Canada website to gain a better understanding of the weather conditions in southern Alberta during that time frame, and how they may have contributed to the existence of dust storms and drifting soil. [34] I had a particular focus on the precipitation data, as the lack of

[32] Strikwerda, Eric. *The Wages of Relief,* 3.
[33]Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1929*.
[34] "Monthly Data Report for 1940: Lethbridge CDA Alberta," Government of Canada, Accessed May 15, 2024. https://climate.weather.gc.ca/climate_data/monthly_data_e.html?hlyRange=1994-06-07%7C2019-03-16&dlyRange=1908-02-01%7C2019-03-17&mlyRange=1908-01-01%7C2007-11-01&StationID=2265&Prov=AB&urlExtension=_e.html&searchType=stnProv&optLimit=yearRange&StartYear=1929&EndYear=1945&selRowPerPage=100&Line=87&Month=1&Day=1&lstProvince=AB&timeframe=3&Year=1940

moisture and drought of the 1930s is a clear contributing factor in the increasing frequency of drifting soil and dust storms.

To contextualize the precipitation data that existed for Lethbridge from 1929-1940, I gathered the annual total precipitation from every year from 1908-2006 as posted on Statistics Canada for the Lethbridge weather station. This data collection culminated in determining the 99-year average for the annual total precipitation for the Lethbridge weather station as 397.337828mm.

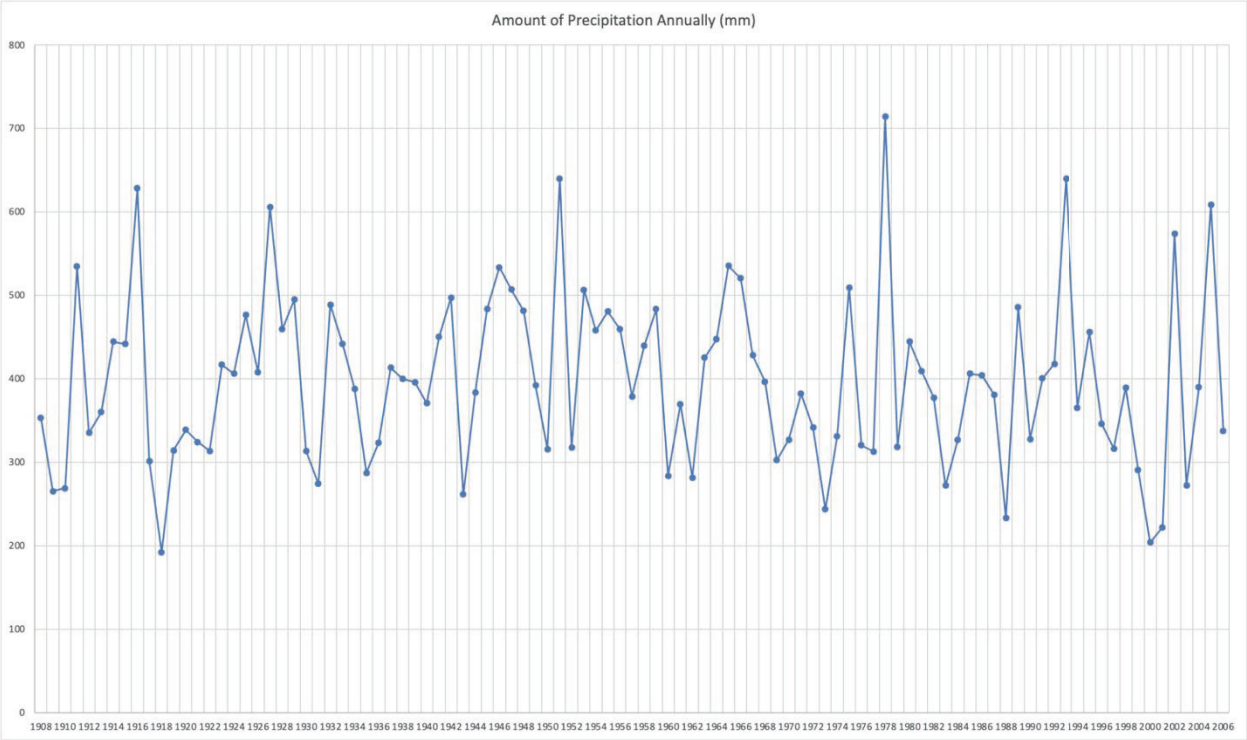

Figure 1: 99-year precipitation average. *1908-2006 total annual precipitation in Lethbridge Alberta, as reported by Statistics Canada*

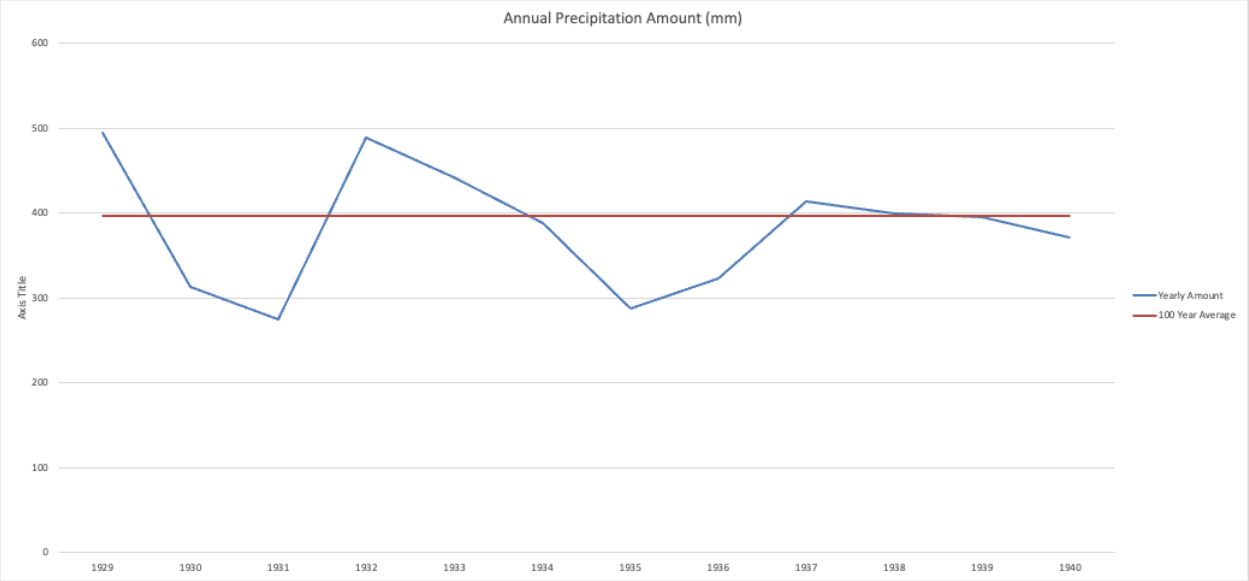

Figure 2: 1929-1940 annual precipitation. *Total annual precipitation in Lethbridge Alberta 1929-1940 compared to the 99-year average of that same weather station*

Figure 2 gives a visual representation of this comparison, with the 99-year average marked with the red line and the yearly precipitation amount for 1929-1940 represented with the blue line. It is undeniable given the evidence from other sources that there was considerable drought during the 1930s in southern Alberta, however, figure 2 shows that there was not a dramatic difference between most of the years of the Great Depression and the average precipitation for the Lethbridge weather station. It is important to keep in mind that not all precipitation is created equal in terms of how useful it is for farming families and growing crops.

For example, in 1933, the total annual precipitation received of 441.6mm was above the 99-year average of 397.34mm for the Lethbridge weather station. When looking at the break down of precipitation by month, it is shown that in April there was 63.2cm of snow and 0mm of rain, and August was the month with the most precipitation of 1933 with 67.1mm of rain. The preferred type of precipitation for farmers in April in southern Alberta would be rain, as the snow makes it difficult to prepare for planting season, but in 1933 they received exclusively snow in the month of April. August is typically a dry month in southern Alberta, which is

preferrable for farmers, as crops need to be dry to harvest and store the grain properly. Looking at the precipitation received in 1933 in more detail shows the complexities that can exist beyond the numbers, as there are important nuances to consider, including the precipitation in previous years and which months precipitation has fallen.

Furthermore, using data specific to the Lethbridge weather station gives important insight into the lived experiences and physical conditions for the people in the region of southern Alberta. The Annual Alberta Agricultural report provides an overview of the conditions and results in the province for different crops, livestock, and agricultural products such as milk, cheese, and butter. In 1933, the Alberta Agricultural report stated: "At the commencement of the crop season in 1933 conditions were very favourable. There was an ample supply of soil moisture and practically no soil drifting occurred."[35] This is consistent with the moisture that was received in the spring in Lethbridge in 1933; however, it does not mention the late season snow that occurred that year. This could be a result of the differences in scope between this report and the data collected on precipitation. The Alberta Annual Report is the general report of the entire province, whereas the annual weather data is specific to the Lethbridge weather station. Thus, the Alberta Annual Report does not speak exclusively to the experience of people living in southern Alberta, but in Alberta as a whole.

There is nothing more commonplace that impacts a person's day-to-day life than the weather. At the same time, however, no one is more exposed to, invested in, and dependent upon the weather than farming families. There is a heightened sense of the weather when there are adverse conditions occurring like drought, as every drop of rain is an exciting development when moisture is so desperately needed. Drought during the 1930s had a direct impact upon the

[35] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1933*, 7.

physical conditions of farming families in southern Alberta, and they were also hyper-aware of that drought because of the drifting soil that accompanied it during that decade.

Drifting Soil: The Devastating Impact of Soil Erosion

Drifting soil, dust storms, and soil erosion shaped the material conditions of life on southern Alberta farms during the Great Depression. It would be difficult to overemphasize the catastrophic impact that soil erosion can have on a farming operation. It is such a devastating phenomenon because it targets the top layer of soil, which is rarely more than a foot thick and is the source of all of the nutrients that living beings need.[36] If soil drift or a dust storm removes that essential layer of nutrient rich soil, nothing will be able to grow there. Dust storms not only made the growing conditions more difficult in the 1930s, but they also created a powerful visual cue to represent the severity of drought.

Drought had been experienced before and after the 1930s in southern Alberta to comparable degrees; however, dust storms were more unique to the Great Depression. Dust storms and soil erosion became an increasingly severe problem during this decade, and methods to decrease soil erosion were actively pursued by settler farmers, which resulted in the frequency and severity of dust storms decreasing. The significance of soil erosion on farms in southern Alberta is shown through the frequency with which dust storms and soil drifts were a major topic of discussion in the *Lethbridge Herald* during the 1930s. One article stated emphatically, "If fire threatened to destroy your home you would try and put it out. Soil drift will destroy your farm, why not stop it!"[37] This shows a common recognition of the destructive impact that soil drift

[36] Michael Alan Morgan, *Soil Erosion and Conservation* (London: Collins, 1969), 5.
[37] "Stop Drift Loss" *Lethbridge Herald,* February 26, 1935, 7. https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1935/02-26/page-7.

could have on farming operations in southern Alberta during the 1930s, how strong the concerns about this issue were, and how, unlike drought, it was understood that soil drift could be prevented through proactive and large-scale action.

Beyond the impact that dust storms had on farming operations and the viability of livelihoods for people living on these family farms, they were also disruptive and unpleasant environmental events to experience. Virginia Smith, who was born in 1930 on a farm outside of Raymond, Alberta, shared an early childhood memory of dust storms that depicted the experience in dramatic terms:

> "Well, I remember a big dust storm that we had. I remember dad getting all excited. And we didn't know if this was the end of the world or what, because we saw that big dark stuff coming closer and it was coming fast. And he just yelled at us to get down the root cellar, they'd built a new root cellar. And so it had a big heavy door on it. And it was insulated, I guess with dirt. But anyway, we went down there and I remember how scared I was. And then here this dark cloud started covering us it was just like the sun stops shining just as dark as it could be. And we went down there and shut the door. And I don't... we must have a lantern down there that dad lit, and we stayed down there a couple of hours or it seemed like it was a long time till this dust storm rolled off. And when we come out of this shelter, the house was just full of dirt, just sifted in the windows. Mother put towels down in front of the windows, but they were just full, the beds were just covered with dust. Of course our houses weren't built that good right then and we were still in that little old house and so it must have been at the beginning of the [Depression], when that hit."[38]

[38] Virginia Smith (Born in 1930, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 22, 2022.

Virginia relayed this memory from what she estimated was the beginning of the Great Depression, which would have made this a very young childhood memory for her. Not knowing if it was the "end of the world or what" and being rushed down into a root cellar as a young child to wait out the dust storm was a frightening reality. Additionally, this story emphasizes the emotional impact that these environmental events had on the people and children living on these family farms during the Great Depression.

There were many ways that these dust storms impacted the day-to-day lives of adults and children living in southern Alberta during the 1930s. One of the reasons that they were so problematic is because of the homes many settlers lived in during that time. Cale Harris, who was born outside of Coaldale, Alberta, in 1926, spoke to this reality when he said:

> "My parents had a new house built. And it was really good, solid built house. But, some of those dust storms that we had during the 30s were terrible. The windows were built really good. Back in those days, as good as they could be built, and as modern as what they could be. But, they weren't tight, and the wind blew so hard and there was so much dust in the air that the dust would find its way into the house. And I recall frequently that when we went to bed at night, put our head down on the pillow that we could inhale the dust that was on the pillow. And so have to get up out of bed and take the pillow off, and maybe into a hallway and brush the pillow off and take it back and put it on the bed. And of course, the blankets and so on were covered with dust too. So they had to be taken out and shaken quite frequently, during and after one of these dust storms. And they occurred quite frequently. Mostly in the spring and summer."[39]

[39] Cale Harris Oral (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 24, 2022.

Even with a home that Cale described as "modern," the dirt from the dust storm was able to enter his family's home. This memory illustrates just one of the many challenges of dust storms, as not only were crops impacted by these storms, but the living conditions of the families on these farms were adversely effected as well. Dust storms had a negative economic impact on family farms, as they made crops more difficult to grow and harvest, but they also made the day-to-day lives of each member of these families more difficult as well.

Economic Downturn: The Value of Crops

The worldwide economic downturn of the 1930s also vitally shaped the material conditions of life on southern Alberta farms during the Great Depression. Due to oversaturation on the global market, crops that southern Alberta farms produced rapidly decreased in value. Lorne Smith, who was born in 1929 and grew up on a farm near Champion, Alberta, recalled during his oral history interview:

> "Dad grew mainly quite a bit of oats. And rye, and wheat, of course wheat was the main staff of life. […] He used to have a grain wagon. And he'd have up to four head of horses on the grain wagon and haul it to town to Champion. And one thing that I do remember, and this would be in the '30s. […] He had hauled the load into the elevator, they dumped it. And he of course would try and get some money usually, and they'd pay for the grain. And the manager of the elevator told him he said Orville, you better just go home because we're charging more than what your grain is worth. So, Dad dumped a whole load of grain and had to leave it there with nothing. Actually, he owed them money for elevating and looking after the grain."[40]

[40] Lorne Smith (Born in 1929, grew up on farm near Champion) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 22, 2022.

Lorne's story shows how extreme the adverse market conditions were in the 1930s and how they had a direct impact on the lives of southern Alberta farming families. The growing conditions were poor with the drifting soil and drought, and grain could ultimately be worthless on the market, which created a difficult situation on all sides for farming families. The year with the lowest average wheat price during the Great Depression was 1932, as reported by Statistics Canada.[41] With the average price per bushel in Canada set at $0.35, and the average yield of bushels per acre of 16.3 in Canada for 1932, if a farm had 40-acres of wheat planted they would only be able to sell that harvest for $228.20.

1932	Barley	Corn	Flax	Oats	Wheat
Average Yield: Bushels per acre	21.5	38.9	5.9	29.8	16.3
Price per bushel	0.23	0.45	0.62	0.19	0.35
Selling price for 40 acres	197.8	700.2	146.32	226.48	228.2

Figure 3: 1932 Crop data. *This is the average yield and average price per bushel of barley, corn, flax, oats, and wheat in Canada for the year 1932.*

1937	Barley	Corn	Flax	Oats	Wheat
Average Yield: Bushels per acre	19.2	32.7	3.2	20.6	7
Price per bushel	0.51	0.64	1.48	0.43	1.02
Selling price for 40 acres	391.68	837.12	189.44	354.32	285.6

Figure 4: 1937 Crop data. *This is the average yield and average price per bushel of barley, corn, flax, oats, and wheat in Canada for the year 1937.*

[41] "Table 32-10-0359-01 Estimated areas, yield, production, average farm price and total farm value of principal field crops, in metric and imperial units," Statistics Canada.

In 1937, wheat reached its lowest average yield of bushels per acre of the 1930s at 7 bushels per acre, and the average price per bushel that year was $1.07.[42] This meant that in 1937, if a farm had 40 acres of wheat planted, and they were completely average in their yield and the market price available to them, they would be able to sell that wheat for $285.60. The different conditions in 1932 and 1937 are drastic in terms of the average yield and the average market price that wheat was being sold for in Canada. This shows that even if the yield for a crop was decent, as it was in 1932, the take-home profit for a farm could still be poor if the market price was too low. Conversely, even if the market price for a crop was decent, like it was for wheat in 1937, if the yield was poor, the monetary gain for the farm would still be low. This shows how both the market and the environmental factors that impact the yield of crops are highly interconnected and having both in a decline during the Great Depression put family farms in a uniquely difficult position.

Grasshoppers: Population Surge

Pests, and grasshoppers specifically, also became a more prevalent issue in Depression-era Alberta due to the environmental conditions of the time. These pests impacted people province-wide, and evidence of this is clear in Alberta's Department of Agriculture Annual Reports from the 1930s, where there was a notable increase in mentions of pests and the descriptions of the initiatives being undertaken to prevent the spread. The Agriculture Annual Report from 1937 stated that "[t]he [grasshopper] outbreak of 1937 was a continuation of the infestation that began in 1931. The recurrence of outbreaks during this protracted period has

[42] "Table 32-10-0359-01 Estimated areas, yield, production, average farm price and total farm value of principal field crops, in metric and imperial units," Statistics Canada.

been largely due to the climatic conditions that prevailed."[43] This was a widespread problem, and it had a direct impact on the lives of family farms in southern Alberta. This is also apparent in what Lorne Smith shared about a childhood memory involving grasshoppers:

> "One thing that I do remember with the grasshoppers, they were so thick and that dad got some sawdust. And then he put poison on the sawdust. And as up to me, I'd have to go out with the stone boat and drive through. And I went right through the grain with this stone boat. And I'd have to throw out this, this stuff out of container and trying to spread it throughout the crop, especially around the edges. And of course we have grass. And that's where the grasshoppers were so bad is all around where there was just grass. And so we'd have crops up here and down here and I'd have to go around the edges and spread this poison sawdust."[44]

This childhood memory of Lorne's shows his direct involvement in the prevention of grasshoppers as a child and is evidence of grasshoppers being a significant problem that shaped the childhood chores he was involved in on the farm. Cale Harris also described his understanding of why the grasshopper problem occurred and some of his feelings about combatting that issue in his interview, saying:

> "Also, drought creates a problem with insects, particularly grasshoppers. In some areas, locusts, which are great big giant grasshoppers is a description. Yeah, grasshoppers were a big problem during those drought years, and it seemed like a drought caused them to multiply and lay more eggs. And the eggs would lay dormant in the soil, just below the

[43] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1937*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1937), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 18, https://librarysearch.assembly.ab.ca/client/en_CA/search/asset/172926/0

[44] Lorne Smith (Born in 1929, grew up on farm near Champion) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 22, 2022.

surface, all through the winter. And then in the spring, when it got hot and dry, the eggs would hatch. And then you got zillions of little wee grasshoppers. And they got to eat. So they start eating vegetation. And then they grow to be big grasshoppers. And you get huge flocks of those things into a crop and they could just ruin a crop in just a couple of days. And so what do you do about this? How do you kill those buggers?"[45]

Grasshoppers impacted a farm's ability to be successful in growing crops, as well as the living conditions of the families that had to deal with them. For farming families, living where they worked meant that they were not far removed from this massive influx of grasshoppers and that would have had an effect on many aspects of their day-to-day lives; it is not hard to imagine that a sense of cleanliness would have been more difficult to achieve as a result. The dramatic increase in the grasshopper population was a distinct problem that farming families in southern Alberta were contending with during the Great Depression, as shown through the personal accounts from Cale and Lorne, as well as the Alberta Annual Agriculture Reports (ARDAPA).

Responses of Farming Families

As outlined in the previous sections, the main material challenges faced by farming families in southern Alberta during the 1930s – namely, drifting soil, economic downturn, and drought — created a uniquely difficult decade that is now known as the Great Depression. Though these challenges impacted southern Alberta farming families in a variety of ways, these families took action to be able to keep the farm and survive economically. So, how did the members of farming families respond to these difficult conditions? And how did the men, women, and children each uniquely contribute to their family's economic survival? As I will

[45] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 24, 2022.

explore, these responses took an array of forms including education, physical labour, and adaptation.

On family farms, the line between paid and unpaid labour is not as clear cut as it often is in urban centres, as there is no single person leaving the home to earn a living while the rest of the family maintains the home. All the labour that takes place on a family farm occurs in close proximity to the home. The work that is done by each person has a direct impact on the quality of life of the rest of the family. In this way, families that live and work on family farms are uniquely interdependent upon one another. This was particularly true during the 1930s due to the increased challenges of the time, which compounded the importance of each member of the family contributing to economic survival in one way or another.

To understand this concept, it is important to more clearly define "family farm" and what these units would have looked like in southern Alberta during the 1930s. It would be easy in this analysis to give the false impression that a nuclear family on a farm were an isolated unit that did not have a larger community of support outside of themselves. However, that was not the case. Due to the limited transportation technology available, the workload on these farms, and being located in rural areas, plenty of time was spent with the people who lived on the family farm exclusively. Nonetheless, structures were put into place that made these farms less isolated. Examples of these structures include building farms near extended family, community meetings, and having hired help living and working on the family farm.

Three of the four people that I hosted oral history interviews with reported that they grew up a mile or less away from their grandparents' farm. Carma, Virginia, and Cale each told stories of stopping at their grandparents' farm on their way to, or from, school as a respite from

inclement weather.[46] Cale told stories of going to his grandparent's house to spend time with his grandma when he was about four years old to allow some time for his parents to get work done. Virginia mentioned that her grandma was not available to help very much with her or her siblings, as grandma was having her youngest children while Virginia's mom was having her oldest, meaning they were both very busy with their own children. Regardless of the nature or frequency of the visits, it was made clear by the way that each of these three people talked about their grandparents living close by that they were a part of their direct community and played a significant part in their childhood. Furthermore, the unpaid labour in the form of childcare provided by grandparents, and more broadly extended kin, helped to keep the farm running and had immense economic value in that regard.

Beyond the emotional and material support offered by grandparents, many family farms would have hired help come and stay on the farm to assist with the workload. Both Cale and Lorne reported having a hired hand come to stay and work at the farm at one time or another. Lorne recalled having a man from Scotland who came to teach him and his family how to herd and care for sheep when they bought 300 head. Both Lorne and Cale emphasized how their parents treated their hired help like they were a part of the family. Due to the time spent in close quarters and working together, this hired help would likely have also had an impact on the dynamic of these family farms.

In addition to grandparents and hired hands, broader community relationships also played a significant part in the operation of family farms in southern Alberta during the Great

[46] Carma Anderson (Born 1932, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, Barnwell, Alberta, December 1, 2022;
Virginia Smith (Born in 1930, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 22, 2022;
Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, Lethbridge, Alberta, November 24, 2022.

Depression. This is evident in the *Lethbridge Herald* articles reporting on community meetings that were held throughout the Depression. One of these meetings was held in Nanton, Alberta in July of 1937 with the purpose of teaching soil conservation methods and to showcase different innovative farming methods that were being developed.[47] Here again, it was understood that the response to soil erosion needed to be a widespread effort to be effective. Action was taken through community meetings, and informational *Lethbridge Herald* newspaper articles in "The Farmer's Own Page" were published to educate on and encourage families to take initiative and begin combatting the problem on their own farms.

Physical Labour: Working Towards Economic Survival

One key way that members of southern Alberta farming families responded to the challenges of the 1930s and contributed to their economic survival was through physical labour. Hard work is an expected feature of farming operations during any time period, and the 1930s were not an exception. However, the physical labour required during the Great Depression in southern Alberta was intensified by the environmental and economic challenges of that decade, both in terms of the work that was necessary and the motivation behind the work being done. In this context, some examples of family members' labour contributions included prioritizing gardens, making and selling butter, entering pest competitions, and raising small livestock such as turkeys and sheep.

Carma Anderson, Virginia Smith, Lorne Smith, and Cale Harris all reported that their families had a garden during the 1930s and that they were involved in the maintenance of their family's gardens as young children. Cale said:

[47] "Noble Outlines Methods Of Farming To Prevent Soil Drifting At Nanton" *Lethbridge Herald,* July 31, 1937, https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1937/07-31/page-3.

> "…[w]e grew almost everything in the garden that we needed for our own food. … One of my jobs was out in the garden was to pull weeds which there always seemed to be an abundance of out in the rows of vegetables. Then, as I got a bit older and a little bit stronger and could handle a hoe, then I used a hoe to hoe the rows of vegetables and the weeds, and then I was trained and instructed as to how to irrigate the garden with flood irrigation and bringing water down each vegetable row and seeing that the vegetables got irrigated properly."[48]

Gardening was a job that was close to the home and was therefore accessible to young children to assist with.

Gardening was also especially important to southern Alberta farming families during the 1930s because it was a source of food for their family, and any extra produce grown could be sold or used to barter. Carma and Virginia's mother took the lead in caring for a half-acre strawberry patch that was used to earn extra income during the Great Depression.[49] Cale recounted that if they had an abundance of something in their garden, "…there were stores, small grocery stores in Coaldale that needed fresh produce to sell to residents of Coaldale that didn't have a garden."[50] He went on to explain that they did not sell the produce to the stores, but they used it to barter, particularly for products like flour and sugar so that his mother could bake bread and preserve various food items through a canning process. As my oral history interviewees remembered, the garden was typically primarily planned and cared for by the women and children of these families. During the Great Depression the physical labour of tending to a

[48] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022.
[49] Carma Anderson (Born 1932, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, December 1, 2022.
[50] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022.

garden were prioritized because they provided food for farming families, and at times it also was a means of additional income and bartering power.

Another homemade good that could contribute to economic survival in these farming households was butter. The Annual Reports for the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta in have been very useful for figuring out what types of actions were standard on family farms, like butter making.[51] In the 1933 "Alberta Agriculture Annual Report" it states that 21.5% of all butter sold in Alberta in 1930 was sold directly from farming households, and that it is estimated that 12,500,000 pounds of home-made butter were made in Alberta in 1933.[52] In 1933, the population of Alberta was roughly 750,000 people, making the estimated figure of home-made butter in 1933 equivalent to 16.67 pounds of butter per person in Alberta.[53] These figures make it clear that butter-making was a significant endeavor of farming families in Alberta and evidently a standard chore that was done to feed families and communities. Being able to monetize the predominantly female chore of making butter was another important way that the women on these farms could contribute to their family's economic survival.

Monetizing regular farm chores such as butter making also extended outside of the home and into the fields of family farms. This is shown especially clearly in Alberta-wide "pest competitions," the popularity of which increased during the 1930s. "The Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Province of Alberta" notes that there were large numbers of pests destroyed from 1925 to 1935 in Alberta-wide initiatives. A Game Commissioner's report from this time also contained a section entitled "Destruction of Crows, Magpies, Etc." which

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[51] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1929*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1929), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 11.
[52] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1929*, 11.
[53] Statistics Canada- 150, "Archived- Population of Canada and the provinces, annual, 1926-1960 (x1000)" Statistics Canada, published February 18, 2000, Accessed May 14, 2024, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/tv.action?pid=3610028001.

would recount how many gophers, crows, magpies, and crow and magpie eggs were destroyed that year. In 1925, the numbers were reported as grand totals, but each year from 1926-1935 the numbers were broken down further by those "destroyed by school children" and those "destroyed by adults". As seen in Figure 5, the growth in the numbers of these pests being destroyed annually illustrates an increased prioritization, particularly among school children, to participate in these competitions during the Great Depression.

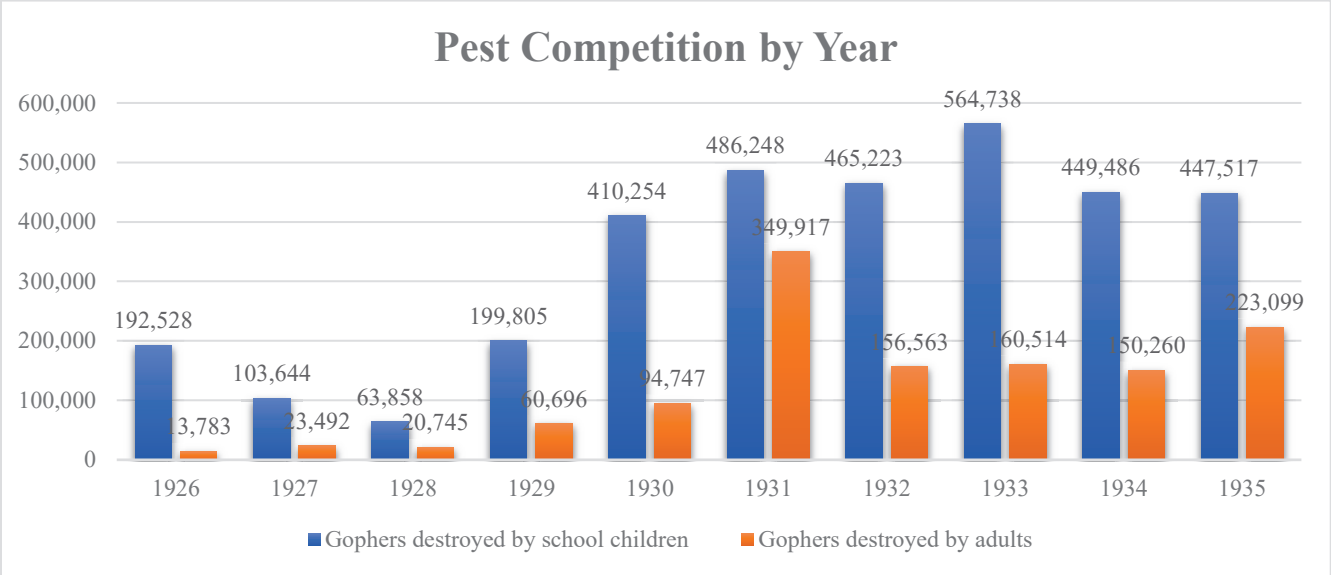

Figure 5: Alberta Pest Competition 1926-1935. *Gophers destroyed by school children and gophers destroyed by adults as reported by the Alberta Agriculture report for years 1926-1935*

In 1926, the Alberta Department of Agriculture Annual Report explained the economic value of killing insect and rodent 'pests': "[t]he destruction of these pests is in the interests of the conservation of game birds, and the quantity of gophers taken undoubtedly reduced the annual toll taken from the farm crop."[54] This report did not make clear, however, that Alberta's Depression-era war on pests often involved competitions where participants would get points for the pests destroyed and those points could then qualify them for prizes. This was later explained

[54] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1926*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1927), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 61, https://librarysearch.assembly.ab.ca/client/en_CA/search/asset/172507/0.

in part in the 1929 annual report, which noted that "[r]egulations were again adopted in 1929 as in previous years to provide for the payment of prizes to competitors who destroy these pests."[55] While it is indicated that the 1929 competition is in the same form as previous years, this is the first time that the agriculture report (ARDAPA) explicitly refers to the destruction of these pests as a competition and indicates that there are prizes to be won. From 1929, as compared to the previous two years, there was a marked increase in the number of pests being destroyed, which could be explained by greater incentives given in the form of prizes, more pests being present, or clearer communication regarding the prizes available to be won.

Regardless of the reason for this increase in the reported destruction of pests, these numbers indicate a prioritization of this competition, especially among schoolchildren. Further evidence of this trend comes in the 1933 report (ARDAPA) when it states "[t]his season saw increased activity, particularly by the school children, in the pest competition, and 3,000 prizes were awarded to the competitors. The interest in this competition was such that while the regulations provided for a total of 3,000 prize, there were over 1,000 in the competition who were below the last authority in the prize list."[56] This shows the popularity of the competition, especially given that there were many participants who did not qualify for a prize despite destroying pests and submitting their numbers.

Destroying pests, such as gophers, represents a form of physical labour that was enthusiastically engaged in by rural children during the 1930s in southern Alberta. By winning prize money from pest competitions and eliminating animals and insects that could destroy valuable crops, children contributed to their family's economic survival. The 1933 competition

[55] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1929*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1929), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 35.
[56] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1933*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1933), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 49.

in which – despite 3,000 prizes being available – 1,000 additional participants received no payment for their labour made the strong interest in these competitions clear, and encouraged a change in the following year. In 1934, the agriculture report (ARDAPA) says: "[a] total of 4,000 prizes was awarded to competitors, and keen interest was shown, particularly by the school children."[57] The increase in available prizes indicates a change in response to the number of people not paid the previous year.

The strong interest and widespread participation in these pest competitions shows that children were indeed engaging in strenuous, dirty, physical labour to have a chance at contributing to their family's economic survival. However, it is important to note that branding the destruction of pests as "competitions" in 1929, after there had been more schoolchildren than adults participating in the initiative from 1926-1928, is an example of children's labour being undervalued in comparison to the labour of adults. There is evidence of push back against the use of the competition as a means of payment, with a 1934 agriculture report (ARDAPA) noting that "[f]rom many sources there are requests that the Government should pay a bounty on these pests instead of awarding prizes, but this is not advisable under present conditions."[58] Nonetheless, in 1935, it was reported that "…in many cases have given bounties and prizes in addition to the prizes awarded for this Competition."[59] 1935 was the last year that these competitions took place, as in 1936 it was reported that "Mr. S.H. Clark, Game Commissioner, left the service early in the year, and in July the entire work of the Game Branch was transferred to the Department of

[57] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1934*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1934), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 48.
[58] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1934*, 48.
[59] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1935*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1935), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 4.

Lands and Mines."[60] Right until the end of the availability of the pest competition, as evidenced by the data in Figure 5 and the agriculture reports (ARDAPA) of the time, it was very popular among schoolchildren and a significant way that they contributed to their family's economic survival during the 1930s.

Another form of labour commonly engaged in by adults and children on southern Alberta farms during the 1930s was the raising of small livestock such as turkeys and sheep. Lorne Smith described this phenomenon when he remembered that as a child he was the one in his family who was primarily in charge of herding and caring for his family's sheep. This physical labour would have contributed economically to his family through the goods that raising sheep would have provided, such as their wool.

Another type of small livestock that Lorne's family raised one year during the Depression were turkeys. Lorne reported that the raising of turkeys was one of the jobs that his mother took the lead on, and that there was a memorable instance during the Great Depression when she was offered the opportunity to buy a quarter-section of land (160 acres), with the money earned from raising turkeys that year. Lorne explained:

> "…in the dirty 30s, so many people lost their lands, or their farms, and nobody would farm the land. I mean, it wasn't worth doing so. Anyway, she took her turkeys in the fall of the year, they killed them all and done them up and they took them and sold them. She went to the bank with her money from the turkeys because it was her turkeys mainly… when she took the money into the bank, the banker said the bank owned the local land because people just couldn't pay for the land. So, the banks end up owning the land, but they were getting nothing out of it. And, there's a quarter section that joined on to our

[60] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1936*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1936), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 8.

right above up the hill from us… He talked her into taking this turkey money and buying the quarter section of land. So that was quite an interesting thing that geez, just one year, she got enough money to buy a quarter section."[61]

This is an example of Lorne's mother contributing economically to the survival of her family during the 1930s. Whether through growing and tending gardens, making butter, participating in pest competitions, or raising small livestock, all members of family farms found innovative ways to contribute to the economic survival of their family. Though these activities involved different forms of physical labour than may be thought of as typical for a southern Alberta farm, each had the potential to make a positive impact on a family's situation during the Great Depression and beyond.

Education: Agriculture Training

Another way that members of farming families responded to the challenges of the 1930s and contributed to their long-term economic survival was through education. During the 1930s there was a massive need for agricultural training and education, particularly on methods of soil conservation and ways to prevent soil drift. Educational opportunities allowed for community connection while also improving farming practices. It was absolutely essential for soil conservation methods to be utilized by the masses, as this was the only way to create lasting change. As a result, newspapers were utilized to help spread the word, and community meetings were held to try to get widespread uptake of the new methods being introduced.

Agricultural research stations, including one located in Lethbridge, were some of the main entities driving the charge toward integrating new farming practices that were better suited to the

[61] Lorne Smith (Born in 1929, grew up on farm near Champion) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 22, 2022.

environmental conditions of the North American plains. The Lethbridge agriculture research station had a recurring article on "The Farmer's Own Page" in the *Lethbridge Herald* where they promoted new farming methods that they hoped would help to prevent soil erosion. Beyond publishing these different suggestions in the *Herald*, the research station also hosted community meetings and farming demonstrations to show how to implement these new farming methods. These community meetings would serve multiple purposes, including the sharing of knowledge about soil conservation, promoting collective action, and facilitating social connection between farming families. The challenges being experienced during the Great Depression were unifying as they were impacting every farming family in southern Alberta, not just an individual, or a single family. These different modes of education would help to contribute to the economic survival of farming families, as they would be more prepared to combat the challenges they were facing and could help to prevent soil drift on their farm.

Typically, it seems these community meetings were meant to be attended by the men of these farming families. However, the women of these farms also pursued ways to improve their family's economic condition through educating themselves. This is reported in the "Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta," as there was a province-wide initiative led by the Women's Bureau to educate farm women in a variety of skills that would help improve the lives of themselves and their families. These courses were offered and reported on in the very first edition of these agriculture reports (ARDAPA) in 1906, and they were consistently reported on during the 1930s as well. In 1929, a total of 16,584 women were reported to have attended courses throughout that year. Throughout much of the 1930s, interest in these courses was reported to be very high, but budget cuts were also said to make holding these courses difficult. By 1937, only 1,858 women were reported to have attended a course that

year. Nonetheless, these courses provided an important social outlet for women on these farms, while also growing their knowledge on a variety of topics including sewing, millinery, basketry, raffia, foods, household administration, dry cleaning, interior decoration, glove making, and more. As a result, the educational opportunities afforded to women through these courses them contribute to the economic survival of their farming family by allowing them to become more self-sufficient.

In a more indirect way, when rural children attended school, this was also understood as contributing to the emotional and economic survival of their family farms. Each of my oral history interviewees made it clear that clear that school attendance was a large part of their childhoods. School provided education to the children, as well as a sense of community. This sense of community would help with morale, and therefore help children to work effectively on the family farm. Evidence of the importance of formal schooling in these young people's lives comes in Cale Harris' ability to recall each of his elementary school teacher's names. Cale started attending elementary school in 1933 when he was six years old and he emphasized the long journey that it was to get to school and back each day.[62] The education and sense of community associated with schooling both helped with these children being able to contribute to the economic survival of their family. Beyond the morale boost that school attendance could provide, the ability to read, write and solve math problems would have direct applicability in every day life on a farm. While there would not be an immediate economic impact felt due to these increased abilities of the children through their schooling, long term having educated individuals involved in the family farming operations would increase their productivity, efficiency and therefore increase their chances of being successful economically.

[62] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022.

It is also important to note that when ways to mitigate the drifting soil were proposed, such as planting caragana hedges or utilizing strip farming, and these approaches were not immediately effective, individual farmers were blamed for not adopting those methods properly or effectively. Alongside the much-needed education, there was indeed an element of shame used to motivate southern Alberta farmers to fully commit to the suggested soil-drifting prevention methods, as evidenced in the *Lethbridge Herald* "Farmers Own Page" numerous times.[63]

Adaptation: Individual and Mass Changes

Members of farming families also responded to the challenges of the 1930s and contributed to their economic survival through adaptation. The challenges of the Great Depression necessitated changes both on an individual level and as a collective community of southern Alberta farming families. Examples of this adaptation can be seen in agricultural innovation, approaches to pest control, household cleaning practices, and even choices regarding marriage and children. In every aspect of life, adaptation occurred, with the goal of ensuring the economic survival.

Agricultural innovations represented some of the most essential adaptations family farms could make to combat the challenges of the Great Depression. As Cale Harris recalled, "[f]armers eventually learn[ed] to discontinue plowing and turning the soil over, and [they began] leaving stubble on top, which prevented a lot of soil from drifting."[64] There were a variety of farming implements that were invented during the 1930s that kept the stubble of the crop on the top of the soil, which helped to prevent soil erosion. The influence of this technology

[63] "Stop Drift Loss" *Lethbridge Herald,* February 26, 1935, 7; "A Great Tree Planting Campaign" *Lethbridge Herald*, December 26, 1931, pg 18; "Get Ready For Strip Farming", *Lethbridge Herald,* Sept 6, 1935, pg 16.
[64] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022.

is still seen in farming implements on the market today. This adaptation made farming in southern Alberta feasible in the long-term, as it helped to mitigate the problem of soil drift that was so prevalent during the 1930s.

The dramatic increase in grasshoppers during the 1930s also necessitated adaptation. Grasshoppers destroying crops had a drastic negative impact on a farming family's ability to economically survive. There were widespread initiatives funded by the government of Alberta to prevent the spread of grasshoppers – poison to use against the grasshoppers and leaflets on grasshopper control were produced and distributed.[65] The significance of education is again illustrated by the production of informational leaflets, but further, the necessity of adaptation is clear in this response to the challenge presented by grasshoppers. The adaptation of utilizing poison to destroy grasshoppers therefore had a positive economic impact on farming families who participated. Cale Harris recalled helping his father to use the grasshopper poison in their field. He described how the poison would be mixed with saw dust and then put it along the fence line and edges of the field to kill the grasshopper eggs. Cale said: "I used to go with my dad sometimes, I was old enough and big enough that I could steer the truck and my legs were strong enough that I could operate the clutch and the gas pedal. … I gently let my foot off the clutch and the truck could move ahead very slowly and stop."[66] While Cale was driving, he described that his dad would be in the back throwing the poisoned saw dust off the back to spread it in the field. These poisoning methods proved to be quite effective in helping to lessen the grasshopper problem, and as a result, the negative economic impact that grasshoppers had on family farms was mitigated.

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[65] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1932*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1932), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 25.
[66] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022.

There were also important adaptations made inside the homes of these farming families. One example of this comes when looking at the reality of dust storms at that time, and how they would have impacted homes on the southern Alberta prairies. The persistent mess that these dust storms caused in the homes of farming families in southern Alberta was significant, as Lorne and Cale both mentioned in their interviews. Lorne described one form of adaptation that his mother implemented to help to ease the impact of this dust in their home, recalling: "I remember mother hung the sheets up and they'd be wet. And once you take them off, they'd just be soaked with... they'd be mud. When she'd let them down and she'd have to go wash them off. But that's how she kept the dust from getting into the room." This adaptation to the household chores contributed to the economic survival of the family, as it helped to provide a clean space to live, which would have helped with the family's morale. Additionally, it helped Lorne's mother to be efficient in caring for the household, which would have allowed more time for pursuits with a more direct economic impact on the family.

Personal relationships were also impacted by the challenges of the 1930s and required adaptation, including people's choices about whether to marry or have children. The economic situation in which many young adults found themselves during the 1930s was not conducive to making the commitment to get married and have children, as money was tight, and life was uncertain. Children could be very helpful as an extra set of hands on a family farm operation when they grew old enough, but the cost of the doctor's visit for the birth, and the economic impact of having another person to feed and clothe could be significant. Looking at the birth rate from Alberta in Figure 6 from 1917 to 1950, it shows that there was a dip in the birth rate in the province in the 1930s, which is evidence that people opted to delay or abstain from having children during the Great Depression.

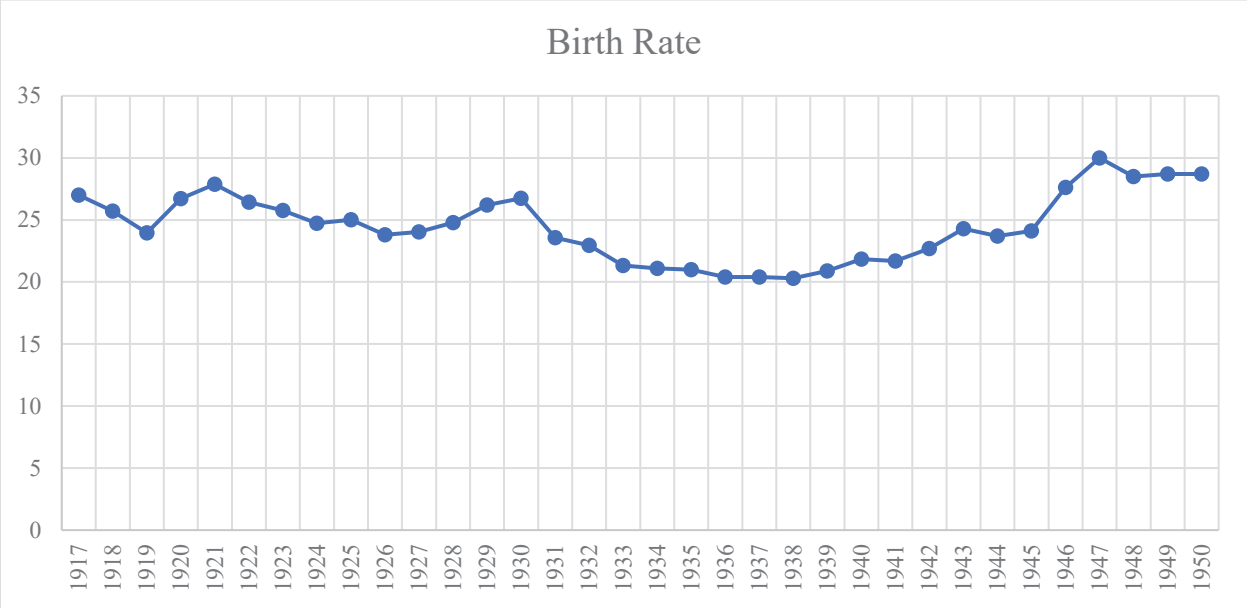

Figure 6: Alberta Birth Rate 1917-1950. *This graph represents a combination of data gathered from multiple sources.*[67] *This graph shows the trends in Alberta's annual birth rates (births per 100,000 population) leading up to the 1930s as well as following that decade to give context.*

In addition to the birth rate being impacted in response to the challenges of the Great Depression in Alberta, the marriage rate in Figure 5 shows that people chose to delay marriages as well. There could be many reasons for this dip, but it seems clear that the environmental and economic conditions in the province during the 1930s would have had enough of a widespread impact that they would have had a part in the choice of at least some of the couples to delay getting married, and families having children.[68] This is an example of adaptation and changing plans in response to the material conditions present in Alberta during the Great Depression.

[67] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1933,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1933), 10; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1937,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1937), 9; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1942,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1942), 12; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1946,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1946), 14; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Public Health, Province of Alberta Including Vital Statistics Branch 1950,* (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1950), 15.
[68] Heidi MacDonald,"Singleness and Choice: The Impact of Gender, Age, Time, and Class on Three Youth Diarists in 1930s Canada," 118.

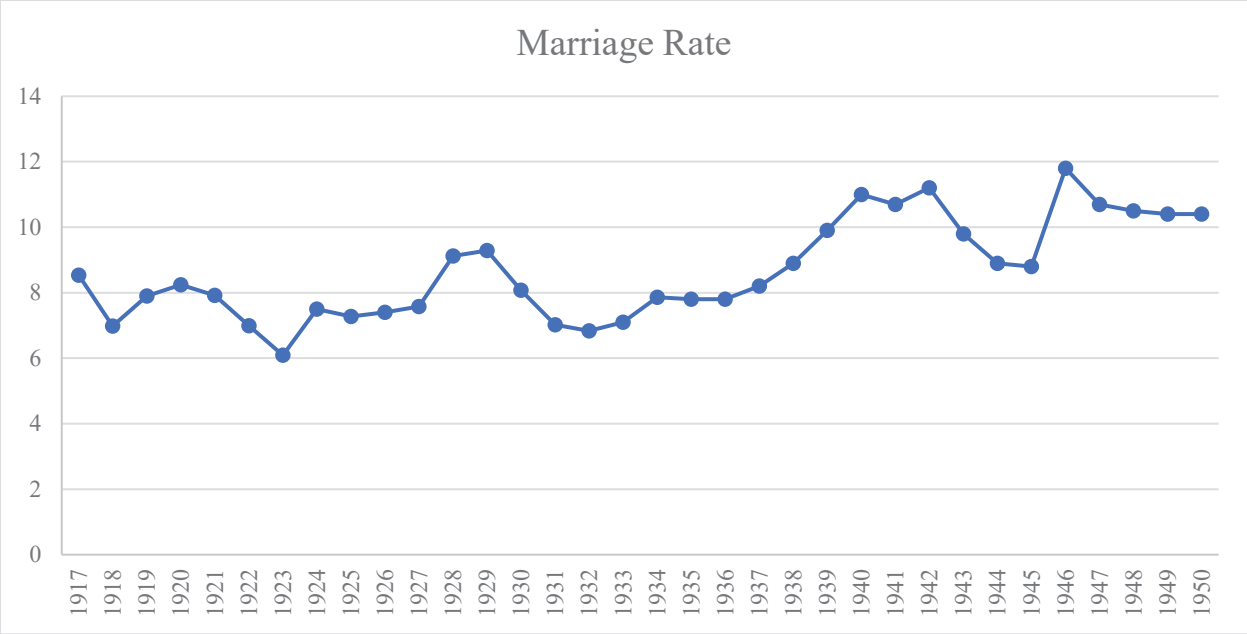

Figure 7: Alberta Marriage Rate 1917-1950. *This graph represents a combination of data gathered from multiple sources as cited above. This graph shows the trends in Alberta's marriage rates (marriages per 100,000 population) leading up to the 1930s as well as following that decade to give context.*

Depression-era marriage and birth rates were the collective result of thousands of personal choices based on a range of economic and emotional factors. Deciding to get married declared a confidence in being able to economically survive as a family unit, and – ideally – having a baby meant that you would be able to provide and care for that child. Family support would be utilized at times to facilitate these big life transitions without absolute economic independence, and Cale Harris' family is an example of that. After his parents were married in 1925, Cale said:

> "I was born in 1926, and we lived with my grandfather approximately half a mile north of our farmstead, which there wasn't anything on the farmstead at that time. So, my mother and father, newly married and a son lived with my grandfather on his CPR farm… So,

after I was born in 1926 we spent a couple of years still living with my grandfather, but mother and dad contracted and had a new home built on our own farmstead."[69]

Cale had a sister who was born in 1931, however she died from pneumonia at a young age, and he did not have another sibling until his brother was born in 1934. Cale's story is an example of how family support and delaying/spacing births could ease the economic challenges of marriage and having children. Though many factors can play into decisions about marriage and children, the economic challenges of the 1930s would have required many to adapt their family planning.

Conclusion

The challenges that were present during the 1930s that directly impacted farming families in southern Alberta were immense. Dust storms, drought, drifting soil, and pests are challenges that would have been difficult to contend with individually; however, they were made exponentially more problematic by the ways they converged during this time. In response to these challenges, each member of farming families contributed to economic survival in a variety of ways. These contributions varied in form and how directly they impacted the economic situation of the family, but they all played a role in the economic survival of these families during the 1930s.

Family members responded by finding innovative ways to contribute financially, such as through gardening, making butter, participating in pest competitions, and raising small livestock. Many also took initiative to build their ability to contribute to the family by actively participating in education surrounding farming and other useful skills. Families also adapted to difficult conditions of the time by utilizing new farming and pest control techniques, tackling household

[69] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022.

problems with unique solutions, and adjusting their personal and family planning decisions. Every aspect of life was impacted by the challenges presented by the Great Depression, and each person on these southern Alberta family farms played an active role in ensuring their economic survival.

Chapter 3: Toil: Creating a Research-Based Board Game About Southern Alberta Family Farms During the Great Depression

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the work that has gone into creating "Toil," the boardgame portion of my portfolio-style thesis, and the rationale behind various design decisions. Furthermore, this chapter will address the following question: how does creating a boardgame on the topic of southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression help us to understand that time, the challenges that it presented, and how farming families responded? This game is the product of extensive historical research and rigorous planning. I will begin this chapter with an "Overview" section which will outline the objectives, and the card types included in the game. Following the overview section is a "Gameplay" section that will describe the rules and sequencing of "Toil" in detail.

The four sections that follow "Gameplay" are "Game Boards," "Tally," "Dice," and "Play Money." Each of these sections describes a part of the game that is centered on the physical gameboards. The "Game boards" section outlines the four different boards that were created for "Toil," the gameplay decisions that they represent, and the primary-sourced research that went into their contents. The "Tally" section goes into further detail on the function of the tally on the gameboards, what its role is during the game and the research that went into deciding to include it in "Toil". The "Dice" section then outlines how rolling the die influences gameplay and the rationale for including dice in "Toil". Within the "Play money" section I discuss the design decisions that went into the play money, the different denominations that are involved in this game, and how these decisions have interacted with the primary source research done.

The next section is entitled “Website.” This is where I outline the purpose of the game website and which of the game cards contain QR codes. Following that, I have a section for each of the different types of cards that are used in “Toil”. The sections are as follows: “Annual Cards,” “Crop Cards,” “Action Cards,” “Harvest Cards,” and “Living Expense Cards.” In each of these sections I will explain the function of a specific type of card, describe the research that went into them both in terms of the primary source material they contain, and specify the gameplay function they fulfill. The final section is a brief conclusion that highlights some key points from this chapter.

Overview: What is “Toil”?

“Toil” distills the research discussed in Chapter Two into a 2-8 player, 1-hour long game, with the aim of making my research accessible for non-academic audiences to understand and interact with. Each player takes on the role of a southern Alberta farm family during the Great Depression. They each choose which crops to plant, pay annual living expenses, and work through different aspects of the Great Depression. “Toil” is designed to showcase the varied landscapes and experiences in southern Alberta for family farms during the 1930s. One way that I accomplish this is by having four different game boards available. Each board represents a different type of southern Alberta landscape: foothills, mountains, irrigated farmland, and dryland.

Throughout the game, players are confronted with challenging circumstances such as soil drift, drought, and economic downturn. Additionally, they will have the opportunity to progress in the game, as people in the 1930s would have progressed through their lives. This is accomplished through technological advancements, learning alternative farming practices, and

working to make the most of what they have by growing gardens, raising small livestock, and other small but meaningful acts.

When players being confront these challenging circumstances of the Great Depression, they form an emotional connection to the ramifications of the presented challenge. The emotional connection created through active engagement in the game is a powerful learning tool. It is one way that creating a boardgame on the topic of southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression helps us to understand that time, the challenges that it presented, and how farming families responded.

"Toil" has a flexible format in the sense that the players can select which years of the Great Depression to interact with. Gameplay always starts with 1929 and concludes with 1940, and players choose two additional years to play between 1929 and 1940. The winner of "Toil" is the player that makes it to the end of the game with the most money in the bank. Money is earned by the players during the harvest sequence and is spent during the living expense portion of each round. The annual cards and the action cards both impact players odds of being successful through the chance of earning either positive or negative tokens as well as earning or losing money.

Each round of the game begins with players flipping over the "annual card" that corresponds with the desired year and interacting with the information that is on it. Each of these cards contains a summary of key events from that year, a task requirement to roll the die to see the impact environmental features had on the players' family farms, a report of the total annual precipitation, and a QR code that players can choose to scan to receive further information.

The next type of card that is used in the game are "crop cards." Players get to select which type of crops they would like to grow that year, and they "plant" their crops by laying the

corresponding cards on the board. Following that set of choices, the players then get to utilize the action cards. These are cards that contain individual actions that the players take, or things that happen to the player that year, such as planting a garden, learning something new, sickness in the family, unexpected expenses, and other events. All the action cards indicate some sort of impact on the player, either related to money or tokens.

Following the action card sequence, players then reveal the harvest results for that year with a "harvest card" which shows them what their earnings are for that year's harvest. The last type of card is the "annual expense card." These cards are used to show the players what they owe for that year's expenses, including food, repairs, clothing, and the other necessities that southern Alberta farming families would have needed to budget for through the Great Depression. After players have paid for their expenses from that year, the next year's annual card is revealed, and the next round of the game commences.

I chose to design a board game as a portion of my thesis to make the content of my research more accessible to the public. This decision is supported by scholars who have written about the benefits of boardgames, and games generally, as ways to teach about historical concepts. History-based games have been described as "valuable tool[s]" and it has been argued that they carry a "notable educational impact" for educators and historians to use. [70] This is especially the case when they are "good games," ones that contain a complex interplay of agency, luck, emotion, and collaboration.[71] "Toil," by these metrics, is a good game, and as a result it is a valuable tool to be used to teach people about the realities of family farming in southern Alberta during the Great Depression.

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[70] Benjamin Hoy, "Teaching History with Custom-Built Board Games," *Simulation & Gaming* 49, no. 2 (2018): 115-133; Brian Hubner, "History Themed Board Games." *Prairie History 5,* (Summer 2021): 63.
[71] David T Schaller, "The Meaning Makes It Fun: Game-Based Learning for Museums." *The Journal of Museum Education 36*, no. 3 (2011): 261-68.

Gameplay: The Rules of "Toil"

The following are the rules for "Toil" including the basic gameplay sequence, the setup required for each game, and the detailed rules. Reading through the following will allow for the rest of this chapter to make more sense as you will have a greater understanding of how the game functions.

The basic gameplay of "Toil" follows a sequence of seven steps, they are:

1. Flip over one annual card
2. Plant crop cards on your board
3. Utilize action cards
4. Reveal harvest results
5. Collect earnings
6. Pay living expenses
7. Reveal the annual card for the next year

The setup required before the game can commence is as follows:

1. Select which Annual Cards you are going to play with during this game. You must start with 1929 and end with 1940. Select two more years to go in between those.
2. Find the corresponding Harvest and Living Expenses cards that go with the selected years and place them in the center of the table along with the annual cards.
3. Organize the bank of play money so that it is ready to go for harvest and decide who will be the banker of the game.
4. Give each family farm $500 to start the game with.

The detailed rules for "Toil" are:

1. You must select which annual cards you will interact during the game before you commence play. Every game starts with 1929 and ends with 1940 – you must choose two additional years in between.
2. Each round starts with flipping over an annual card. The first round of every game is 1929.
3. Plant crops by laying down crop cards on your board.
    a. If you wish to raise cattle you must pay the appropriate expense.
4. Utilize action cards
    a. Three action cards are dealt to each family farm.
    b. The three cards are laid face down in front of them.
    c. Each farm is allowed to look at one of the three cards. It is then returned to the face down position in front of them.
    d. Going around the circle of players, each family farm takes a turn flipping over a card in front of them and following the directions outlined on it.
    e. Each farm flips over two action cards per round.
    f. This continues until each farm has played two of their three cards.
    g. The remaining card is discarded.
5. Reveal harvest results for that year by flipping over the appropriate harvest results card.
    a. Each family farm rolls the die to determine which row they pick up their earnings from, they must apply the tokens on their tally to their roll.
    b. Once the row is determined, the banker gives the appropriate earnings to each of the family farms.

6. Reveal the living expenses for that year by flipping over the appropriate living expenses card.
    a. Each family farm selects which bracket of living expenses they would like to pay for that year.
    b. They place the appropriate tokens on their tally. (These tokens carry over to the next round)
7. After all the farms have picked up their earnings, and paid their expenses, they may clear off their tally of the appropriate tokens* and reveal the next year's annual card. This is repeated until 1940.
8. The player with the most money in the bank is declared the winner at the conclusion of the 1940 round.

*The tokens that carry over from one round to the next are any tokens that are indicated as being permanent in the action cards, and those from the previous year's living expenses.

"Toil" unfolds chronologically. The game always starts with the annual card for 1929 being turned over and the players working through the sequence of events outlined on it. A standard game begins with 1929 and ends with 1940, with two other years being selected from the intermediary years. The years are always played in chronological order. For example, you could play 1929, 1932, 1935 and 1940 in a standard round. The next time, you could select 1929, 1933, 1939 and 1940. This design choice was made deliberately so that each time the game is played it is a reasonable length, and so that each game is a different experience. As the harvest results are based on historical figures, the results are locked in for each year and they do not change. Therefore, I thought that it was important to have some variety built into the game structure so

that a player that has participated in the game more than once would still experience some surprises, particularly with the results of the harvest. If players prefer an extra-long game or an extra short game, they can always utilize more, or fewer, annual cards.

Figure 8: **Annual card 1929.** *This is the annual card for 1929 used in "Toil", it contains a brief description of events, a weather report, a prompt to roll the dice, and a QR code for access to the website.*

Each annual card contains a short summary of the major events of that year in southern Alberta. This information was collected by reviewing the *Lethbridge Herald* Archives for each year of the Great Depression and determining the most significant events with regard to the themes of the game. The players read the information on the annual card and then interact with it by rolling the die and following the table on the card to see the impact that those events will have on their harvest that year. The impact is then represented on the tally on the side of their board. The tally starts at zero at the beginning of each round unless otherwise directed by action cards. The annual card also contains a weather report, consisting of a visual representation of the annual

precipitation that Lethbridge area received that year as reported by Statistics Canada. This is to help give insight to the level of moisture received that year.

After the annual card is read and the die rolled, each player gets the chance to plant their crops. Each crop card represents a quarter of a quarter section of land, or 40 acres. Each cattle card takes up two squares on the board, which represents one for raising the cattle and one for growing the feed for the cattle. I chose this size of farm for this game as it seemed to be about average size for a southern Alberta family farm during this time frame, however there was massive variability in size between irrigated and dryland farms.[72] Irrigated farms could be more efficient with less space, whereas dryland farms needed additional acres to yield sufficient levels of crops each year.

Once the crops are selected and planted, players will then utilize action cards. One after another, each player gets a turn to pick up a card and complete the action described on it, whether it is reading, rolling the die, picking up tokens, or any variety of actions required. After the action is completed, the card either gets placed in front of them, or it gets placed in the discard pile, depending what is instructed on that card. Each player gets two turns to pick up a card and complete the action.

After the action card sequence is completed, the harvest results are revealed. This is done by flipping over the appropriate harvest card. The harvest results are based off the average cost and yield of each crop in Alberta for that specified year as reported by Statistics Canada.[73] To make the figures sourced from Statistics Canada functional for "Toil," I made calculations and refined the data to represent what the average cost and yield for each crop on 40-acres would have been

[72] "Irrigation in Alberta: Part 1," Alberta Government, last modified January 1, 2002, accessed October 23, 2024, https://open.alberta.ca/publications/2462647#summary.
[73] "Table 32-10-0359-01 Estimated areas, yield, production, average farm price and total farm value of principal field crops, in metric and imperial units," Statistics Canada.

for each given year. Those are the numbers that are represented on the "Harvest results" cards as shown below:

Figure 9: 1937 Harvest Results Card. *Contains the statistical information for each crop for 1937, calculated with both average price per bushel and average yield per acre to determine the number for a 40-acre area.*

Players roll a die to know which row they pick up from on that year's harvest card. The dice-rolling aspect represents the factors outside of farmers' control, with players having the ability to increase their odds of a good harvest by earning positive tokens on their tally through their action cards and various tasks that they may represent. The presence of a die in "Toil" is supported as a good game practice, as it brings an element of chance to the game, while agency and strategy are imbedded into it.[74]

Once the money has come in from harvesting, each family's living expenses need to be paid. Flipping over the living expense card from that specific year will reveal the cost required and the

[74] David T Schaller, "The Meaning Makes It Fun: Game-Based Learning for Museums." *The Journal of Museum Education 36*, no. 3 (2011): 261-68.

choice to take on a negative token in exchange for less expensive options. This choice is given to represent the hardship that families encountered when they could not afford to purchase what their family needed to be comfortable. Without proper nutrition or clothing, farming families would not operate optimally, and as a result their odds of having a successful harvest would decrease. This represents the negative aspects of not paying the full amount of the living expenses.

Living expenses are paid after harvesting in a lump sum, as that would often be how real farmers would pay. This is supported by information gathered in my oral history interviews, including those done with Carma Anderson and Virginia Smith who both reported a credit system present at the Raymond Mercantile, the general store in Raymond Alberta during the Great Depression and beyond.[75] They recalled having a running tab at the local store, which they would pay off once they had sold their crops. Every element of this game is meant to give a realistic picture of what life was like for people on family farms in southern Alberta during the Great Depression.

Once living expenses have been paid and tokens moved back to the players neutral position (which is zero if they do not have any permanent horizontal action cards in play in front of them), then the next annual card can be revealed and every player needs to interact with the prompts written on that card. This cycle is repeated until the 1940 round is complete. If a player runs out of money, they may take out a bank loan. At the end of the 1940 round, all bank loans are called due and then whichever player has the most money in the bank is declared the winner.

[75] Virginia Smith (Born in 1930, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 22, 2022; Carma Anderson. (Born 1932, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, December 1, 2022.

Game Boards: Representing Different Areas of Southern Alberta

"Toil" includes four different game boards. Each board represents a different area of southern Alberta: foothills, mountains, irrigated farmland, and dryland. There is great variation in the physical geography of southern Alberta, and I wanted this game to represent that and try to encapsulate the wide variety of conditions that each geographical area could present for agriculture and farming families.

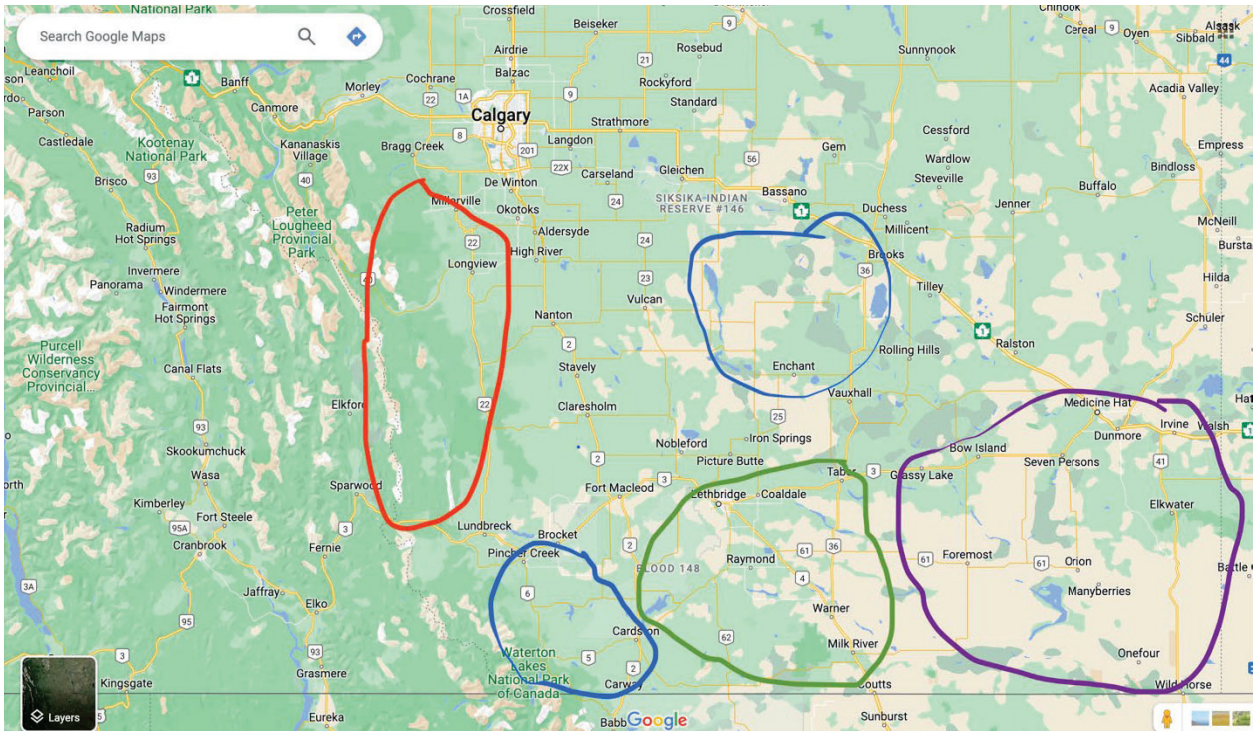

Figure 10: Game Board Areas Map. *This shows a map of southern Alberta with different areas circled, the areas circled are meant to provide examples of the different types of landscapes found in southern Alberta: dryland, irrigated, mountains and foothills.*

Figure 10 is the map that I sent to the graphic designers who worked with me on "Toil." I outlined that the red circle was the area that I wanted to have represented with foothills, blue was the area with mountains, green was irrigated, and purple was dryland. Of course, this is a simplification, but my aim was to provide a visual of these geographies to help the designers gain inspiration for the boards. The irrigated board is distinct as it represents irrigated land, a

"second nature" feature of southern Alberta. [76] "Second nature" as defined by environmental historian William Cronon, comprises human-constructed landscapes and environmental features that, over time, blend into the existing geography and become perceived as simply part of the naturally existing environment. In 1900, 184 kilometers of canal was completed southwest of Lethbridge, marking the first large-scale irrigation project successfully completed in the area.[77] The "second nature" of irrigation made farming in more areas of southern Alberta viable, which benefitted the settler economy as it increased the region's agriculture industry. The government of Alberta was invested in that growth, as demonstrated by the various policies that were passed to promote the development of irrigation in Alberta. This includes the Irrigation Districts Act that was passed in 1914, and the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration being created in 1935.[78]

The physical design choices that I had to make regarding the boards were extensive, including which perspective I wanted the background art on the boards to be done in. I requested the boards to be from an aerial perspective so that it would be like the players were laying their crop cards on a map of their family farm. This choice was intentional, with the aim of engaging players' imaginations about the farms that they were looking down at, planting crops on, and generally trying to thrive upon.

[76] William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).
[77]"Irrigation in Alberta: Part 1," Alberta Government, last modified January 1, 2002, accessed October 23, 2024, https://open.alberta.ca/publications/2462647#summary.
[78]"Irrigation in Alberta: Part 1," Alberta Government.

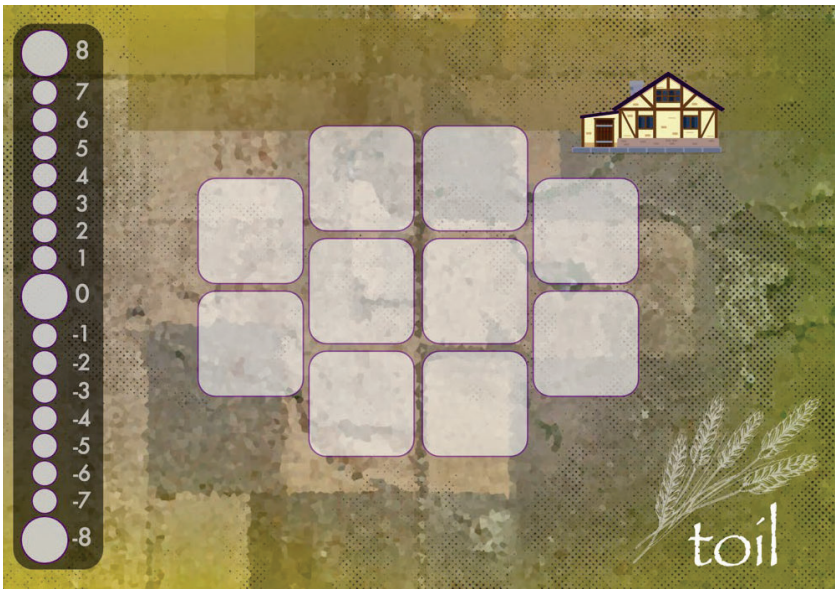

Figure 11: Dryland Area "Toil" Board.

Figure 12: Irrigated Area "Toil" Board.

Figure 13: Foothills Area "Toil" Board.

Figure 14: Mountains Area "Toil" Board.

Each board includes ten spaces on which crop cards can be placed. Each of the spaces represents a 40-acre area, or a quarter of a quarter section. This was done so each of these boards represent a 400-acre farm, which is a mid-sized family farm for southern Alberta, though this area would be considered large for an irrigated farm and small for a dryland farm. Although this representation does not entirely capture the full range of common farm sizes in the different

areas each board is meant to represent, it did not make sense to have some farms with more crop space than others – so, all boards were kept consistent to keep gameplay fair.

The boards also include a tally along the side. These tallies are designed with eight positive spaces and eight negative. This number was chosen based on careful consideration of the sizing of the boards and tokens. Eight spaces worked well, as "Toil" uses a ten-sided die and if there were more than eight negative tokens in play it would essentially negate the rolling, as you would need to roll a 9 or 10 to be able to even pick from the 1 or 2 rows. Therefore, eight spaces on the tally was reasonable and intentional.

Tally: Tracking Positive Action and Negative Circumstances

The tally is a very intentional game mechanic included in "Toil" to represent the negative impact from uncontrollable factors, especially the environment, and the positive impact that proactive action can have on your odds of a successful harvest. The tokens on each player's tally are taken into consideration after rolling the die to determine the results of the harvest for a given year. On the annual cards that impact every player at the beginning of each round, players are instructed to roll the die to determine the impact of environmental factors on their farm for that year. They proceed to roll a ten-sided die and then read the table to see what their roll translates to in tokens for their tally. If they have very severe dust storms on their farm for that year, for example, they may need to place four negative tokens on their tally.

Another place in the game where tokens may be placed on or removed from the tally is in the action cards. These cards represent different individual actions that the players can take, with either positive or negative impacts on their farm. For example, a player could get an action card that permanently places two positive tokens on their tally because they implement strip farming on their farm. They could also get an action card that says that a family member has passed away

and as a result their odds of getting all the required work done on the farm has diminished, in which case they must place a negative token on their tally to represent that event.

The use of the tally mechanic culminates in the harvest round of game play when each player rolls the die to determine which bracket they fall into for the collection of harvest that year. This is where the tally really impacts gameplay, as after the player rolls they must take into account the tokens on their tally before they collect from their bracket. So, if the player has +1 on their tally and they roll a 5, they collect their earnings from the 6 bracket. If they have -3 tokens on their tally and they roll a 4, they collect from the 1 bracket for that harvest.

The tally represents the actions that players can take to improve their odds, while simultaneously creating a physical representation of the randomness of some factors that farmers were dealing with during this era, such as the environment.

Dice: Embodying Uncontrollable Factors

Utilizing a ten-sided die for "Toil" is one of the game aspects that I am most proud of. The purpose of the die is to determine how many tokens go on the tally, and the roll of the die represents the uncontrollable factors that southern Alberta family farms faced during the Great Depression. The die allows me, as the game designer, to have players experience an element of randomness. This means that each time that the game is played, the experience will be different, regardless of how many times a player has participated previously.

The Great Depression in southern Alberta is a notable time period for many reasons, but I would argue that many of those reasons boil down to one thing: there was an increase of dramatically uncontrollable elements in the lives of ordinary people. I would also argue that farmers were particularly exposed to the effects of those uncontrollable elements. In "Toil," it is

the die and die-rolling that represent these chaotic and not-always-predictable elements of the 1930s, which is completely essential for an appropriate representation of that time and place.[79]

The die is rolled by each player at the beginning of each annual round to determine to what degree environmental features such as dust storms, drifting soil or grasshoppers, impacted their family farm that year. If there are carry over positive tokens on a player's tally, it is taken into account for this roll as well, which shows that there were things that farmers could do to mitigate these environmental factors but that there was still a large level of chance to the severity, as represented by the die roll.

The roll of the die is uncontrollable, just like the environmental and economic features of the 1930s were outside of the control of average people and average farmers. It is because of this shared characteristic of being uncontrollable that the die was a perfect game mechanic to include in "Toil."

Play Money

The purpose of the play money in "Toil" is to keep track of how much money each family farm has, and it acts as the point system of the game to determine the winner. "Toil" utilizes denominations of $5, $10, $20, $50, $100, and $500. This is another example of decisions that were made to make gameplay smoother and more intuitive. I rounded the historical statistics for crop prices, and annual expenses, to the nearest $5 to make the math required for the game simpler.

I opted to have the design for the money done in black and white so that I could print on color paper. This serves two purposes: the first being it keeps the cost of printing down, and the

[79] David T Schaller, "The Meaning Makes It Fun: Game-Based Learning for Museums." *The Journal of Museum Education 36*, no. 3 (2011): 261-68.

second is that it reflects classic board game element of bright colored money. The font and the background texture of the money are designed to invoke the feeling of a classic game element, which combines with the coloured paper to create a cohesive design.

Website

The purpose of having a website connected to "Toil" is to have a place that I could share more of my primary source research with players (or potential future players) who were interested. The website can be found at www.toilgame.com. The website can be reached by searching on a standard internet browser, and it can also be located with QR codes that I have included on the annual cards and the action cards in the game. The QR code displayed on each of the cards connects to a page on the website with the background research that went into the content contained on that card and provides resources for players to learn more about the topic on the card they scanned. I anticipate that the most frequent way that the website will be visited is through the QR codes on the cards and the website is designed with that in mind.

There has been so much research that has gone into each element of the cards, but the information on the physical cards is quite limited due to space limits and being mindful of playability of the game. Creating a website made it so that I had a way to share more detailed information while keeping the forward-facing content on the cards brief. Every aspect of this game has been focused on making it a "good game" while incorporating in-depth historical research and data into the cards. This website allows me to expand the amount of information contained in the game in an optional and accessible way.

Card Types

Annual Cards

The purpose of the "Annual Cards" is to have full-table collaboration and to create a joint experience of participating in the game. There were many aspects of living on a southern Alberta family farm during the Great Depression that were isolating, but there were also many moments of collaboration and collective action beyond individual family farms. The collective experience of the environmental features of that decade, including drought and drifting soil, represented problems that people came together to solve.[80] These annual cards involve the entire table in large scale events that are happening for the upcoming year, both economic and environmental, before they move onto the rest of the game, which mostly exists on their own individual boards.

Figure 15: **Annual card 1929**. *This is the annual card for 1929 used in "Toil", it contains a brief description of events, a weather report, a prompt to roll the dice, and a QR code for access to the website.*

[80] "Noble Outlines Methods Of Farming To Prevent Soil Drifting At Nanton" *Lethbridge Herald,* July 31, 1937, https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1937/07-31/page-3.

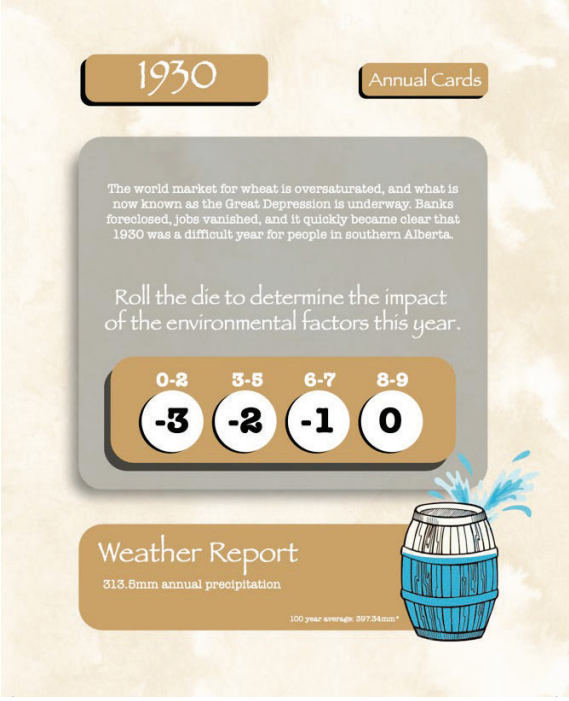

Figure 16: Annual card 1930

Figure 17: Annual Card 1931.

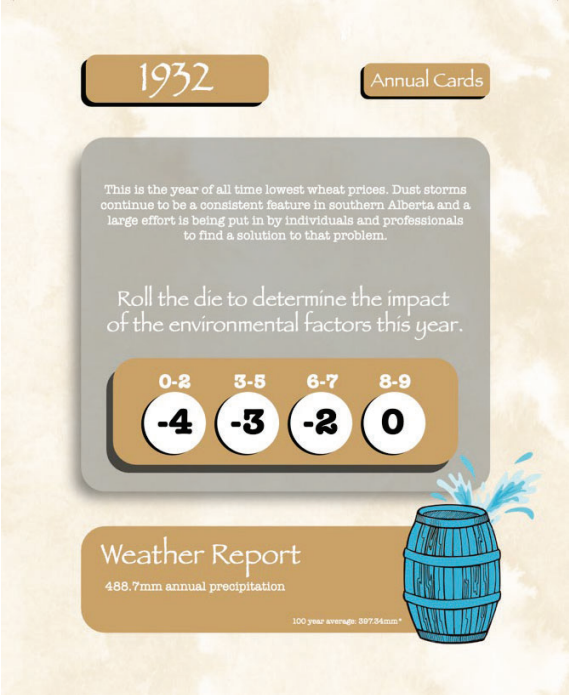

Figure 18: **Annual Card 1932.**

Figure 19: Annual Card 1933.

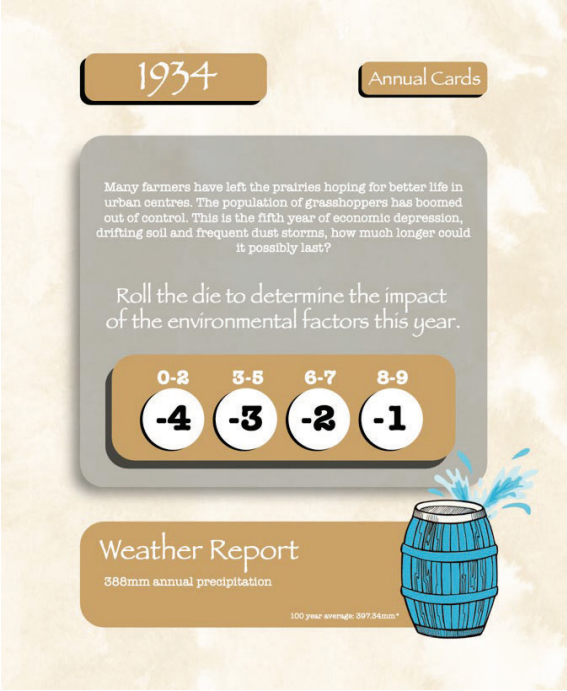

Figure 20: Annual Card 1934.

Figure 21: Annual Card 1935.

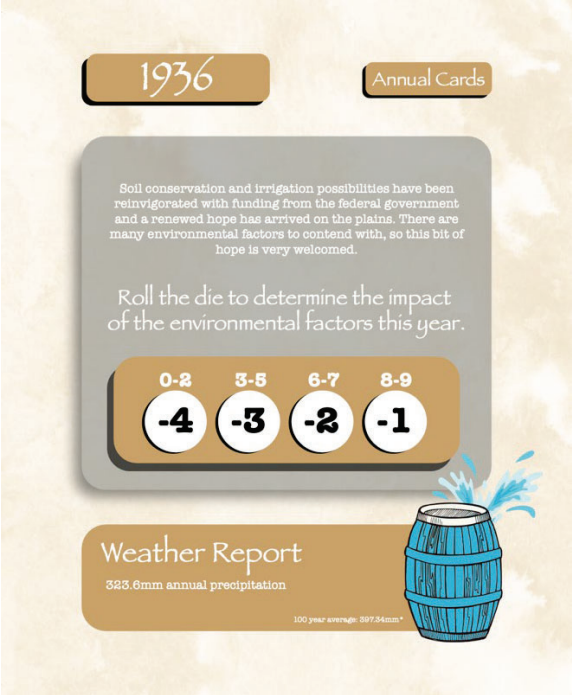

Figure 22: **Annual Card 1936.**

Figure 23: **Annual Card 1937.**

Figure 24*:* Annual Card 1938.

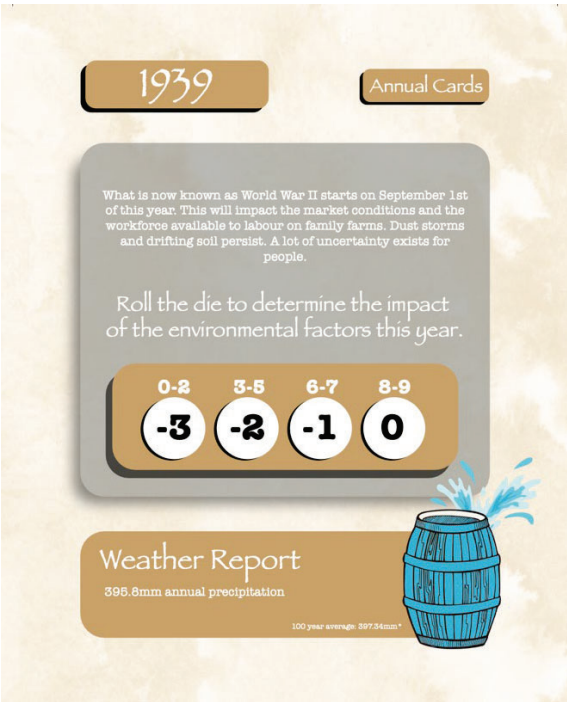

Figure 25*:* Annual Card 1939.

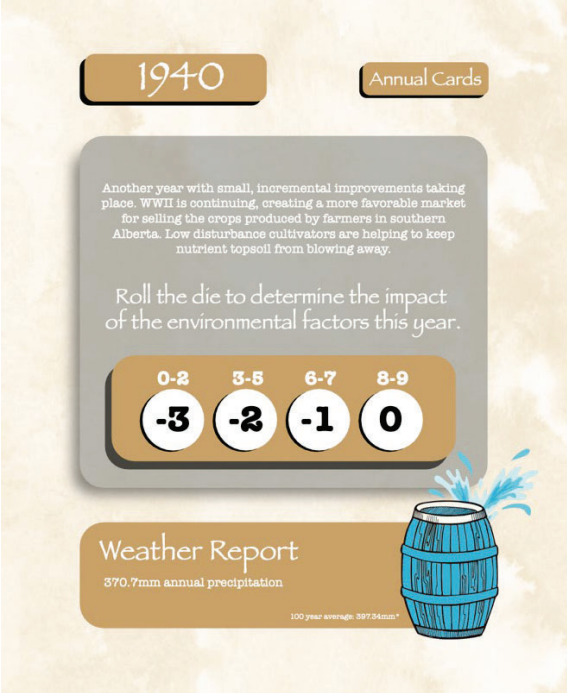

Figure 26*:* **Annual Card 1940.**

The annual cards contain three features. The first is a small blurb describing a significant event from each year. For example, in 1929 the blurb announces the New York stock market crash. The second feature included on each annual card is a weather report that outlines the precipitation that occurred that year. I found this precipitation data from Statistics Canada, and I used the information that was reported from the Lethbridge research station for this part of "Toil."[81] The third feature is a table that requires every player to roll the die to determine the impact of large environmental factors from that year on their farm. These large-scale environmental events include dust storms, drifting soil, and destructive insects such as grasshoppers.[82] To choose which type of environmental event should be listed on each annual

[81] "Monthly Data Report for 1940: Lethbridge CDA Alberta," Government of Canada, Accessed May 15, 2024. https://climate.weather.gc.ca/climate_data/monthly_data_e.html?hlyRange=1994-06-07%7C2019-03-16&dlyRange=1908-02-01%7C2019-03-17&mlyRange=1908-01-01%7C2007-11-01&StationID=2265&Prov=AB&urlExtension=_e.html&searchType=stnProv&optLimit=yearRange&StartYear=1929&EndYear=1945&selRowPerPage=100&Line=87&Month=1&Day=1&lstProvince=AB&timeframe=3&Year=1940.

[82] Eric Strikwerda, *The Wages of Relief,* 3.

card, I went through the *Lethbridge Herald* archives and determined which type of environmental event was mentioned the most for each year.

It was very difficult to decide what to put in the blurb at the top of each year of the annual cards. Some years that decision was easy – such as in 1929, for which the stock market crash was an obvious choice, and for 1939 which marked the start of World War II. However, many of the in-between years required significant judgement calls on my part. I dove into the *Lethbridge Herald* archives to try to get a sense of significant events that occurred each year during the Depression. To determine the years in which to mention grasshoppers, for example, I keyword searched "grasshoppers" in the archives, and noted which years came back with the most results. In 1929, there were 10 results to my search, and 1938 had the most results coming in at 198 results. 1934 seemed to be another difficult year for grasshoppers, based on the many mentions of them in the newspapers, coming back with 190 records. This was not an exact science, but it was a simple method that I could use to begin making decisions about when to mention certain events on the annual cards. Though I knew that elements like grasshoppers, economic downturn, drifting soil, and dust storms were all key features to mention in the game, the challenge of deciding when and where to introduce them was interesting to navigate.

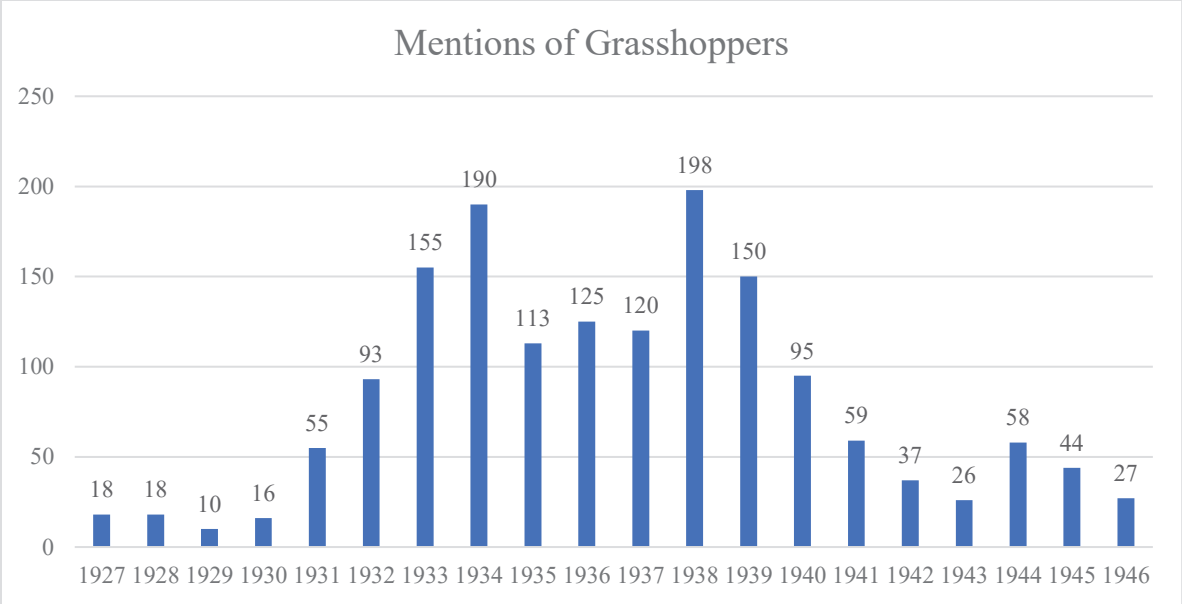

Figure 27: Mentions of Grasshoppers 1927-1946. *Mentions of grasshoppers in the Lethbridge Herald that were generated with a keyword search on NewspaperArchive.com.*

Another aspect that guided my design process was looking at fluctuations in the market for different crops. These could be quite dramatic; for example, in 1932 Canadian farmers were able to sell a bushel of wheat for $0.35 that year on average, the lowest price for wheat during the Great Depression. For context, before the crash in 1929, the average cost of wheat per bushel in Canada was $1.05. This means that some were able to sell for more and some were able to sell for less. There are many stories of farmers hauling their wheat to the elevators in 1932 and being told that it would cost money for the grain elevator to take their wheat for storage. With the problem of crops bottoming out in price being a landmark feature of the 1930s, I relied on exceptional years like 1932 to guide when I prioritized mentioning the impacts of the market.

On the annual cards, I prioritized mentioning exceptional events and the most significant aspects of each year, particularly those that would have been significant for family farmers. In 1937, this included the worst dust storms in human memory, and in 1935, it was the passing of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act. It felt like an impossible task not to miss something significant while being limited to a small blurb on each card, but I tried my best to keep the

information well-rounded in coverage of economic and environmental events. I could have spent more time on governmental decisions such as relief measures, but because my thesis is more focused on environmental and economic events, I decided it was important to concentrate on those themes.

The annual cards also contain information about weather for each year. I wanted to provide a visual representation of the annual precipitation, and ultimately settled on a water barrel. The barrel represents the 100-year average for the Lethbridge weather station, which was 397.34mm, and the water level represents the precipitation that Lethbridge received that specific year. [83] This data can be seen visually depicted in Figure 1 and Figure 2. Along with the water barrel visual, each annual card includes a brief description of the precipitation southern Alberta received that year. The cards also highlight unusual or significant weather-related events, such as if there was snow or freezing temperatures after the crops would have been planted, or if there were significant amounts of rain during harvest in August or September. Not all precipitation is equal in its value for growing crops, and so offering some information about what the annual precipitation number meant for farmers and giving insight into the lived experiences tied to certain weather occurrences was the goal behind the brief lines of analysis on each card.

The third and final element of the annual card is a table that requires every player to roll the die to see the impact of major environmental factors from that year on their farm. This is where the most significant environmental events of that year are outlined, and then the players each roll the die to see how their family farm will be impacted. These large-scale environmental events include dust storms, soil drift, and dramatic increases in insect populations such as grasshoppers. These are factors that affected every farm in southern Alberta during the Great Depression to a

[83] "Monthly Data Report for 1940: Lethbridge CDA Alberta," Government of Canada, Accessed May 15, 2024. (This source was utilized to gather data from 1906-2006 in order to compile the average as shown in figure-2)

variable degree, depending on location and success in utilizing preventative measures such as strip farming, wind breaks, and other technology.[84] These preventative measures are included in the action cards played and are represented on each player's tally. I decided on the large-scale environmental features to be included in the annual cards because they impact every player each year, just as they did every southern Alberta farmer during the 1930s. It was not a question of if there would be an impact, but rather a question of *how much* each farm would be affected. This is why this element is determined using the die, and simply guided by the table on the cards that I created, which is based on the severity of the environmental events reported from that year.

Crop cards

These crop cards are used by the players to "plant" their crops near the beginning of the round and when they remove them, they are "harvesting" and collecting their earnings for the year. I decided on wheat, barley, flax, and rye because they were listed on Statistics Canada and had thorough data available for the duration of the 1930s.[85] Additionally, in the *Lethbridge Herald*, all four of these crops were consistently included in the crop price report on the "Farmers Own" page. I considered including corn, but found that the price of return reported by Statistics Canada was consistently much higher than the other four crops. I decided that for sake of gameplay, it would be best to not include corn, as players who have played previously could just decide to plant corn every year and have a clear advantage, which would be unfair and ruin one of the unpredictable elements of the game. There was no easy way to represent the complexities of planting corn, so I decided to forego and simply remove it.

[84] Grant MacEwan, *Charles Noble, Guardian of the Soil*, (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1983).
[85] "Table 32-10-0359-01 Estimated areas, yield, production, average farm price and total farm value of principal field crops, in metric and imperial units," Statistics Canada.

Figure 28: Wheat Crop Card

Figure 29: Flax Crop Card

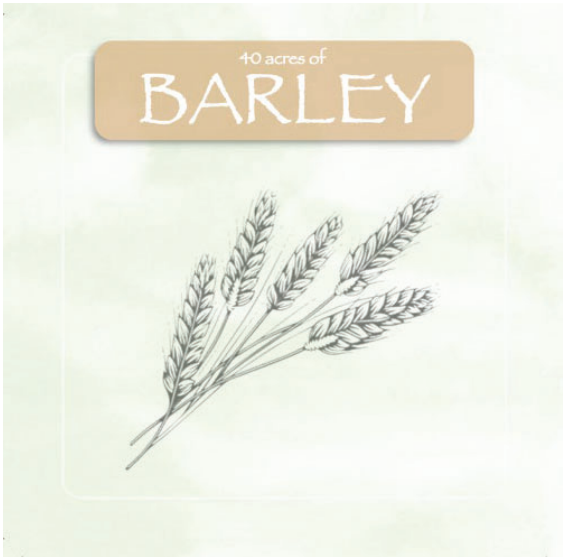

Figure 30: Barley Crop Card

Figure 31: Oats Crop Card

Another crop that I considered was sugar beets. Sugar beets began gaining popularity in some areas of southern Alberta during the 1920s.[86] There were even lyrics published in the *Lethbridge Herald* to a song to promote the planting of sugar beet crops.[87] The trouble with

[86] "Sugar Beets to Fight Weeds" *Lethbridge Herald,* November 13, 1926, https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1926/11-13/page-25.
[87] "The South Alberta Sugar Kisses" *Lethbridge Herald,* November 16, 1929, https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1929/11-16/page-22.

sugar beets, however, is that they continued to gain popularity in southern Alberta during the 1930s. They were an incredibly labor-intensive crop to grow and required irrigated land. The cost of growing sugar beets is very different from wheat, rye, barley, and flax and so including them alongside the other crop cards would present similar difficulties to corn. Although it was a landmark crop for southern Alberta during the 1930s, I decided to forego including sugar beets as one of my crop cards. This is one example of sacrificing some of the historical content that I would have liked to include to ensure ease of gameplay.

At the same time, I did decide to include cattle as a crop option. This was the complex crop card that I felt very strongly needed to be included because of the prevalence of cattle farming in southern Alberta and my desire to have at least one type of livestock represented in "Toil." It was a challenge to find a representative number for the cost of the cattle, as there are many different methods for purchasing and raising cattle that are utilized by farmers in southern Alberta. I determined that 30 yearlings for a 40-acre area was the appropriate amount and that $10 per yearling was a good cost. That means that players would need to pay $300 for the yearlings. Then, through my research, I determined that it would be best to represent cattle as a double-sized card, as there are two major cost elements associated with raising cattle. The first cost is related to the space taken up by the cattle, and the other is the cost of feed.

To land on a cost that I was happy with, I needed to make some informed speculation. In "Toil," it will be assumed that the cattle are able to find sufficient grass for their needs and that the farmers are being wise in their crop rotation practices. For four months of the year, however, the cattle will need grain feed to supplement their diet due to the scarcity of grass during the winter in southern Alberta. Barley is currently the most used grain to feed cattle in Alberta

because of its high nutritional value.[88] It is said that cattle will eat 2% of their body weight in feed per day.[89] With that assumption, 4 months with 30 days each equals 120 days, and 120 days multiplied by 30 head of cattle results in 3600 equivalent "days" to feed the cattle. When cattle are bought by the family farms, it has been assumed that they will be an average 450lbs. 2% of 450lbs equals 9, and 3600 multiplied by 9 results in a total of 32,400lbs of grain needed by the farmers to provide for their cattle on an annual basis. One bushel of barley is 48lbs. So, in order to grow enough barley for their 30 cattle, a farmer would need 675 bushels of barley. With that in mind, looking at the average selling price and the amount of barley bushels that the average farm was able to get from 1929-1940, I determined that a fair annual price for the players to have to pay to feed their cattle would be $150. This number also includes an assumption that the farmers are getting such a good price because they are growing and processing the feed themselves. If they have a complete crop failure in any given year, their cattle will also die.

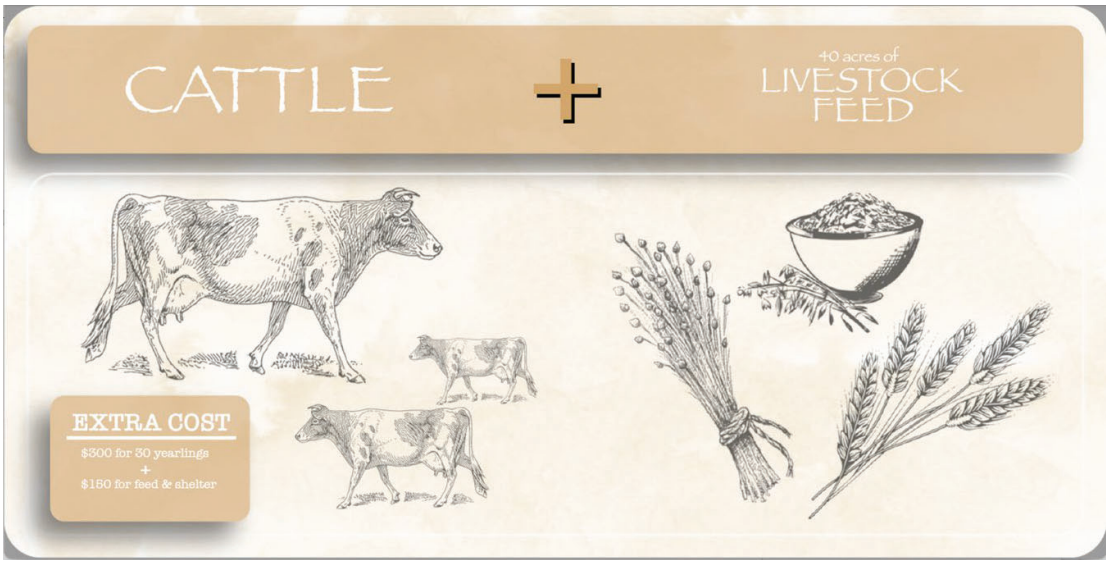

Figure 32: Cattle Card

[88] "Feedlots 101," Alberta Cattle Feeders Association, February 13, 2019, Accessed November 6, 2024, https://cattlefeeders.ca/feedlot-101/#top.
[89] NDSU Agriculture Communication, "Forage Is More Valuable Today, So Act Accordingly," Beef Magazine, March 24, 2013, Accessed March 15, 2019, https://www.ag.ndsu.edu/news/newsreleases/2013/march-4-2013/forage-more-valuable-today.

Cattle are the only crop that require the players to pay an upfront cost. That cost all together ends up being $450 per cattle card. For flax, wheat, rye, and barley it is assumed that the farmers are processing their own seed and are not purchasing specialty seed from a supplier. This is an accurate assumption for the reality of most southern Alberta farmers during the 1930s, as reported in my oral history interviews, and it is a convenient one regarding game play and the pursuit of simplicity. There are a lot of complicated concepts being represented in this game, but it has always been my aim to simplify whenever it is possible, and this seemed to be an obvious place.

Action cards

The action cards are essential to "Toil" and really contain the bulk of the social history content found in this game. While the backbone of "Toil" is each farm's attempt to deal with the economic and environmental impacts of the Depression (using cards based on historical statistics), action cards are distinct because most of them are not based on statistics. Instead, they provide snapshots of compelling facts and stories that I found through my research, reading, and oral history interviews.

The action card round of the game proceeds as follows. Each player is dealt three action cards face down in front of them. Each player lays their cards faced down in a row, and they get to look at one of their cards. The card that they looked at then gets returned face down. Then, going around the circle each player takes a turn flipping over a card in front of them and following the directions outlined on it. This is done in turn until each player has played two of their three cards. The remaining card is discarded. There are cards that allow players to select which card another player will flip over the next round so there can be an element of cooperation and sabotage depending on the group you are playing with. Not everyone gets along with their

neighbors, but many do, and that can be demonstrated through this part of the game and how the players decide to interact with one another.

I chose this strategy because it allows me to cover a wide range of topics in the game with flexibility and efficiency. These cards are the highlight reel of my qualitative research in point form, and they have an impact on the player's game. The content of these action cards covers the entire scope of the Great Depression in southern Alberta and are not presented in chronological order. While the backbone structure of "Toil" is working through the 1930s chronologically, these cards deviate from that pattern as they do not have dates stamped on them and any card can be drawn during any year of the game. Most of the actions on the cards are things that could have happened any year, however, if they are related to specific events or sources, I include that reference on the webpage tied to that specific card. I wanted to make sure that I could have an element included in this game that had a clear, substantial social history focus, and these cards were the best option for that kind of content.

One of the challenges of the action cards was their size. I wanted to have them be standard playing card size with just a tiny snapshot of information that the players would interact with. This was a gameplay decision, and it made sense for what I was trying to achieve in terms of ease of play and enjoyability. I did not want players to have to read a paragraph of research-dense material each time they were taking a turn. However, this is difficult in lots of ways because I felt strongly that I needed to find a way to showcase all of the research that I did to produce the content for these cards, so that if a player was interested, they would be able to look further into the academic side of the game and delve further into the sources of the game's information. To facilitate this without disrupting the short and simple card content, I decided to include QR codes on these cards that would link to a website with a brief description of the

research that went into that card's content, the year that refers to within the 1930s roughly, and any primary source materials that are relevant. The primary source materials include excerpts from oral history interviews, newspaper clippings, photographs, and pictures of farm logs.

Figure 33: Action Card "Boarder"

Figure 34: Action Card "Butter"

Figure 35: "Boarder" Action Card Webpage. *This is what the webpage looks like when the QR code is scanned on the "Boarder" action card.*

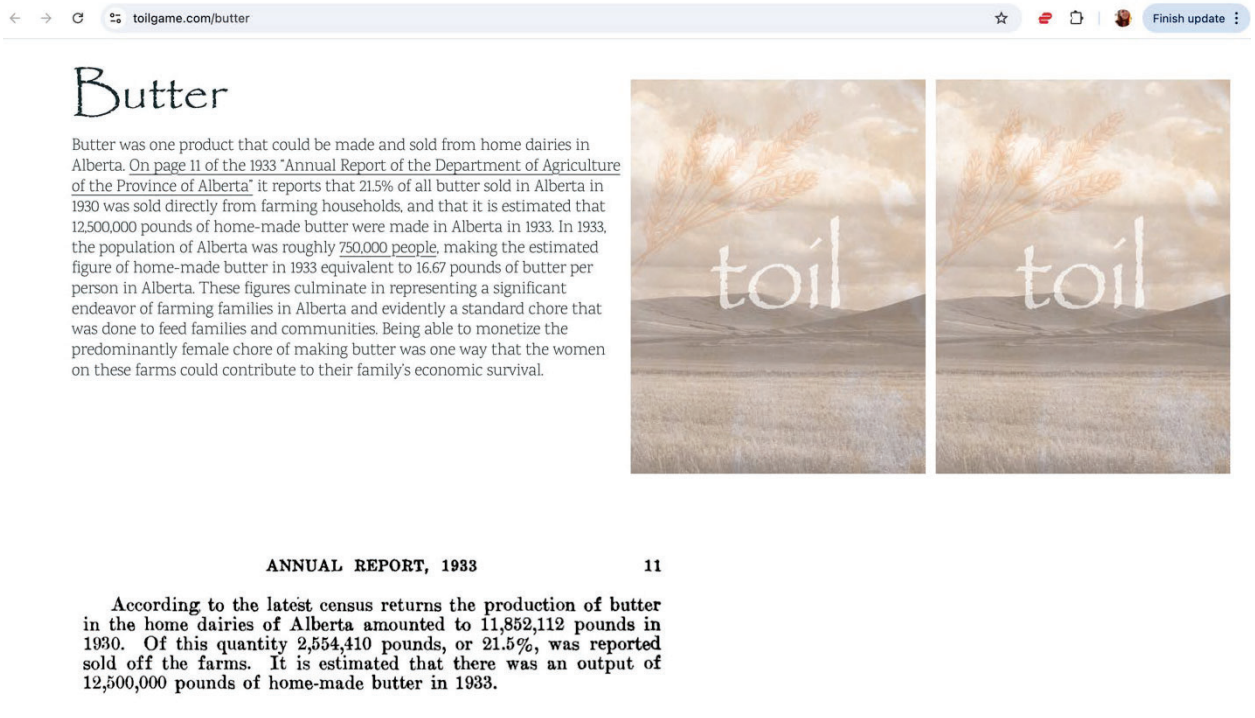

Figure 36: "Butter" Action Card Webpage. *This is what the webpage looks like when the QR code is scanned on the "Butter" action card.*

Including QR codes with links to a website with primary sources provides a lot of flexibility. This feature means that the game can be played as a simple, fun game that is done within an hour, or it can be used to access primary source material on the website and be presented with a curated archive experience. I am hopeful that this decision will make this game increasingly accessible and attractive to a wide range of people and players.

Harvest cards

The harvest cards are statistic-dense cards that summarize the results of each year's harvest. On the back of each of the harvest cards it has the year in large lettering, so it stays face down while the players place their crops and interact with the action cards and is revealed when it is time for them to harvest. Each harvest card instructs players to roll the die to determine which row they fall into for their harvest that year. Each crop card is then picked up off the table, and for each crop card returned from the board they receive one payment to the amount listed on the harvest card until all ten spaces on their boards have been "harvested" and the correct funds distributed.

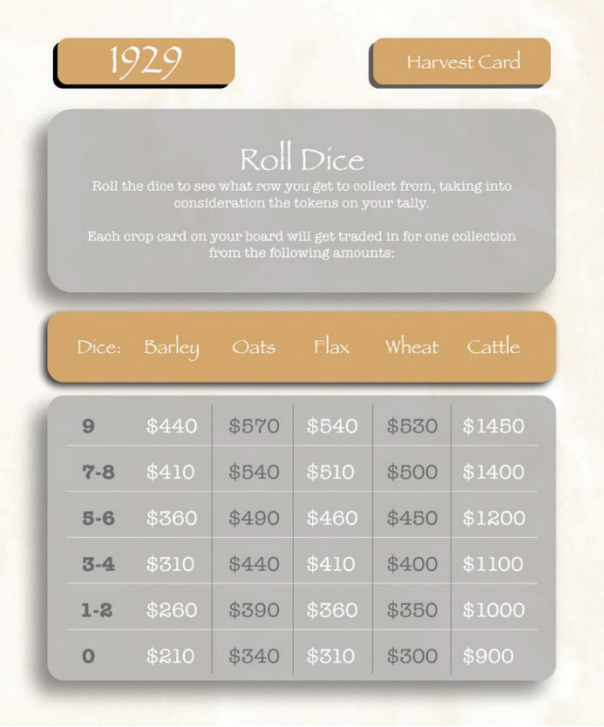

Figure 37: 1929 Harvest Card. *Contains the statistical information for each crop for 1937, calculated with both average price per bushel and average yield per acre to determine the number for a 40-acre area.*

The numbers on the harvest cards are based on statistical research from Statistics Canada. On each of the cards, the second row labelled "average" is utilized if players roll a 6 or 7, and represents the Canadian average price paid for those types of crops for the year listed based on the average yield of those crops per acre that year. They have all been rounded to the nearest $10 for the ease of gameplay. I also manipulated the data that was listed on Statistics Canada to have it reflect the realities of the "Toil" gameplay. For example, I needed the numbers to represent the yield of a 40-acre area, so I multiplied the average bushels per acre by the price per bushel as listed by Statistics Canada and then multiplied that result by 40 so that the total would represent the average overall yield of a 40-acre area for that year. This calculation was done for wheat, oats, flax, and barley for each year of the Great Depression.

For cattle, I have explained my methods for determining the base cost to purchase cattle in "Toil" previously, and in the pursuit of simplicity, the cost does not fluctuate throughout

gameplay. This was an intentional choice that has allowed me to put the cost of the cattle cards on the front of the cards, which makes it a known variable. How much the cattle can be sold for during the harvest period of the game does change to reflect the market conditions throughout the 1930s. These figures that are on the harvest cards are based on statistical data found from Statistics Canada. There is an online table labelled as M310_320available via Statistics Canada that lists the average number of cattle and the average cost of cattle from 1907 to 1975.[90] The types of cattle are broken down into a few different categories, one of them being "other cattle"; I decided to use that column as it seemed to be the broadest of the choices and would represent a variety of cattle operations that happen in southern Alberta. I divided the number figure by the value figure for the given year then multiplied by 30 to come up with the national average cost of 30 cattle for that year.

Like the different crops on the harvest cards, the statistically-based number is listed in the average row and would be collected by players rolling a 7 or an 8. It has been rounded to the nearest $10, just like the different crops. The cattle figures are much larger than the crops most years because there is the large upfront investment of $450 that players have to make to raise cattle, so unless they are collecting more than $450 for their cattle, they are losing money. Additionally, the cattle card takes up two spaces, (one for the cattle, one for the feed) so they really need to earn double from the cattle over the crops for raising cattle to make sense. This all needs to be taken into consideration by players who want to raise cattle. It can be quite a risk, but some years, with the right roll, it can be very lucrative.

[90] "Table M310-320 Livestock statistics, number on farms and farm values at 1 June, Canada, 1871 to 1975," Statistics Canada, Accessed August 1, 2024, https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/11-516-x/sectionm/M310_320-eng.csv.

Living expenses

While designing "Toil" I naturally gravitated towards developing game features that would earn money for the players, such as harvesting, as well as the elements that would impact their earning, such as the tally. However, I was slower to address the fact that if there was money "coming in", there also needed to be money "going out." With this aspect being so individualized and variable, I had a hard time landing on numbers that I felt confident in and a reasonable method to reach that number. At the end of the day, I am proud of the solution that I have come up with, as I utilized careful estimation based on my background knowledge and the available statistics to come up with these numbers.

I retrieved the numbers for an average household's expenses during the 1930s from Statistics Canada, and then added $1,000 to that number to represent the farming expenses that each of these families would have had. [91] The $1,000 is meant to cover equipment costs, fuel, upkeep of working animals such as horses, irrigation maintenance, repairs of farm infrastructure and any other unexpected expenses that may come up that year. The $1,000 is an informed estimate of what cost may have been associated with farm upkeep, and is based on extensive reading in the newspaper archives, particularly the classifieds, and talking with seniors who grew up on these farms who mentioned the variety of work that was done annually, including repairs.[92] With the numbers being so variable from year-to-year and farm-to-farm, I ultimately had to make an estimation and to be confident and comfortable presenting that number to the players of this game.

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[91] "Prices of a family budget of staple foods, fuel and lighting, and rent, for 60 cities in Canada, 1920, 1926, and 1928 to 1936," Statistics Canada, https://www65.statcan.gc.ca/acyb02/1937/acyb02_19370800009a-eng.htm.
[92] Lorne Smith. (Born in 1929, grew up on farm near Champion) Interview by LaRae Smith, December 2022; "Make the Classified Page Your Economy Page!" Lethbridge Herald, October 30, 1937, https://access-newspaperarchive-com.uleth.idm.oclc.org/ca/alberta/lethbridge/lethbridge-herald/1937/10-30/page-20.

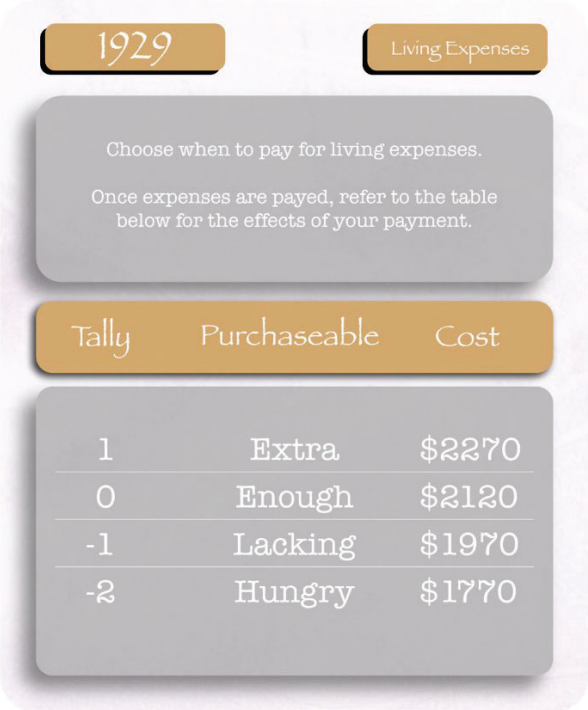

Figure 38: 1929 Living Expenses Card.

On the "Annual Expense" cards there is a tally where the players get to choose what bracket they want to pay for their expenses that year. The "enough" line is the one that is based off of the historical data that I gathered and then there is one line above and two lines below where players can choose to pay more for "extra" and get a +1 token on their tally for that year, or pay less, but be "lacking" with a -1 token added to their tally or "hungry" and with -2 tokens added to their tally. These tokens impact their odds of being successful at harvest that year. My rationale for these elements is that if players pay for extra luxuries for their family that year, they will see an increase in their quality of life and will have more energy for the work at hand. If the player pays for less, and their families are "lacking" or "hungry", they will have less focus for the work at hand and are more likely to make mistakes, or get less work done in the day due to fatigue and stress. This reality is reflected in the tally and will in turn impact the harvest results of that round.

Conclusion

"Toil" is a historical board game based on extensive archival and oral history research that features a complex interplay of elements. As outlined in earlier chapters, "Toil" has all the elements necessary of a good game by every measure described by scholars involved in games as a means of historical education. It features a complex interplay of elements, including choice, luck, agency, and emotion. Players take on the role of a family farm in southern Alberta during the Great Depression and try to make it to the end of that challenging decade with money still in the bank. Through playing "Toil," players will learn about the lives of southern Alberta farming families during the 1930s in a meaningful and impactful way. Creating a boardgame on this topic helps us to understand that time, the challenges it presented, and how farming families responded through engagement with the historical dense material contained in "Toil" and the emotional connection to that material that is created through play.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

For this thesis project, I conducted extensive research on the topic of family farms in southern Alberta during the Great Depression and developed "Toil," a historically based board game. Through this work, two questions have been explored and addressed, they are: What challenges did southern Alberta family farms face during the Great Depression, and how did the men, women, and children of these families contribute to their family's economic survival? And, how does creating a boardgame on the topic of southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression help us to understand that time, the challenges that it presented, and how farming families responded?

There were a variety of challenges present in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. The three signature features of the 1930s are economic downturn, drifting soil, and drought. These three features impacted southern Alberta farming families in dramatic and negative ways as they came together and built on one another during the distinct decade now known as the Great Depression.

The men, women, and children of the families living on farms in southern Alberta during the Great Depression all contributed to their family's economic survival in a variety of ways. The men of the families were typically the ones who led the charge on the outdoor farming labour and were therefore led the charge on adapting their farming practices to increase their odds of success at harvest. These adaptions included grasshopper poisoning, strip farming, crop rotation, water conservation, and creating wind breaks. Lorne Smith and Cale Harris both shared memories of how their fathers put out poison for the grasshoppers, and how they helped as young children.[93] This is an example of adaptation with the aim of economic survival through

[93] Cale Harris (Born 1926, grew up on farm near Coaldale) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022;

creating viable conditions for crops to grow, as the grasshopper population increased so dramatically during the 1930s as reported by the "Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta."[94]

The women on these farms typically took primary responsibility for labour inside and close to the home including gardening, raising small livestock, selling butter, and home maintenance including cooking and cleaning.[95] During the Great Depression, there was more pressure put on the home pursuits carried out by the women as the family could not rely on the revenue from harvest to be sufficient for their needs. With this increased pressure, more emphasis was put on budgeting and finding ways to bring in extra income for their family through the raising of small livestock, selling butter, and increasing effort put towards gardening. Any surplus that was not needed for feeding their family could then be used as a bartering tool for food and goods that could not be grown or made on the farm.

Children on southern Alberta farms were involved in contributing to their families' economic survival as well. Unpaid labour of children helping in and close to the home with their mothers, with chores involving home maintenance, gardening, and raising livestock, as well as on the farm and in the fields as they grew older, was valuable in contributing to their family's economic situation. Additionally, it has been seen that many children took independent action to improve their family's financial situation in Alberta through participation in pest competitions.

Lorne Smith (Born in 1929, grew up on farm near Champion) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 22, 2022.

[94] Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1937*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1937), Alberta Legislature Library, Accessed August 1, 2024, 18.

[95] Cale Harris. Interview by LaRae Smith, November 24, 2022; Lorne Smith. Interview by LaRae Smith, November 22, 2022; Carma Anderson (Born 1932, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, December 1, 2022; Virginia Smith (Born in 1930, grew up on farm near Raymond) Interview by LaRae Smith, November 22, 2022; Government of Alberta, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture of the Province of Alberta For the Year 1937*, (Edmonton AB: King's Printer, 1937). (Evidence of butter making for profit on Alberta farms, and the labour that women were involved in around the farm during the 1930s in Alberta is found in these reports for each of the years of the Great Depression).

Farming families as economically interdependent units are interesting due to the inherent blurring between the private and public spheres. This is the case because the men typically work close to the home in the fields, and the work that the women do within and close to the home directly support and contribute to the wellbeing of the farm and family. Additionally, the children in these families are often introduced and involved into the family work on the farm from a young age and fulfill the role of unpaid labour throughout their childhood.

During the Great Depression there was an increased pressure put on generating income and providing economically for one's self and one's family. The women and children on southern Alberta farms were contributing to the economic success of these family farms prior to the 1930s, however, the change that occurred was the labour of women and children being more relied on for their family's economic survival. This was the case because the viability of providing for the family through the revenue produced in the fields was made increasingly difficult due to the economic downturn, drought, and drifting soil present during the 1930s.

The catastrophic combination of economic downturn, drifting soil, and drought that are signature to the Great Depression in southern Alberta, had a direct impact on family farming operations. This fact is what made this time, place, and subject matter excellent material for a boardgame due to its dramatic nature. "Toil," the boardgame portion of this thesis project, is a tool that helps us to understand that time, the challenges that it presented, and how farming families responded. This is the case because of the immersive experience that it creates for the players, and the emotional connection to both the material and the outcome of the game that it elicits in the players.

"Toil" creates an immersive experience for the players, as they each take on the role of a family farm in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. The players are confronted by the

different challenging aspects of the 1930s and are tasked with making decisions that will impact their family's farming operation as they work through the Great Depression. These decisions include what to pay for living expenses, what crops to plant in their fields, whether to raise cattle, and what action cards to engage with. The action cards contain extensive social history content and would give a brief look into some of the day-to-day realities that were present for people living on southern Alberta family farms during the Great Depression including when to get married, have children, and whether to invest in new soil conservation technology or not.

The immersive nature of "Toil" creates an emotional connection between the players and the content they are engaging with. This is the case for two reasons, the first one being that it is human nature to want to win and "Toil" in its most basic definition is a game. The second reason is that there are stories about real people living in a challenging time that the players will feel a connection to through engagement in the. The historically dense material infused throughout "Toil" is designed to draw the players in a create an emotional connection through the immersive nature of the game.

Family farms in southern Alberta during the Great Depression are a compelling area of study due to the difficult circumstances which necessitated both large scale adaptation, as well as small but meaningful acts. The childhoods of Carma Anderson, Cale Harris, Lorne Smith, and Virginia Smith were defined by the signature features of the Great Depression: economic downturn, drought, and drifting soil. These three features impacted all aspects of life, from hiding in a cellar during a dust storm, cleaning dust off every surface in the house afterwards, helping in a much-expanded garden, tending to small livestock, and spreading sawdust full of grasshopper poison, every chore, activity and action was impacted by the conditions present in southern Alberta during the Great Depression.

The men, women and children of these family farming operations were all impacted by the challenges of the 1930s, and they all contributed to their family's economic survival in a variety of ways. Through translating the research done, and historical data gathered into a board game, players can now experience in a small way what the realities of life on a family farm in southern Alberta during the Great Depression was like. A time defined by a catastrophic increase of uncontrollable factors has been the perfect subject of an engaging boardgame, and through playing "Toil" understanding, emotional connection and an increase of knowledge on this historical moment is fostered.

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APPENDIX 1: “TOIL” GAME ELEMENTS

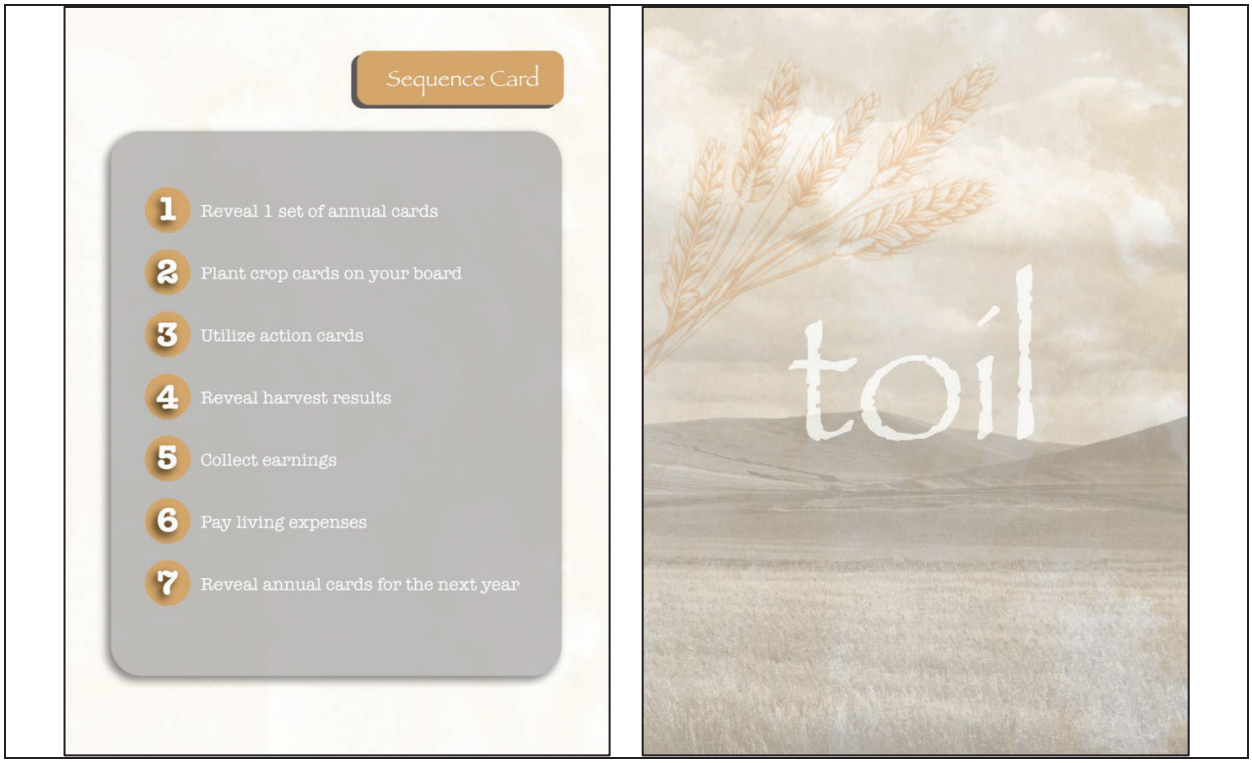

Figure 39: Sequence Card Front (left) and Back (right)

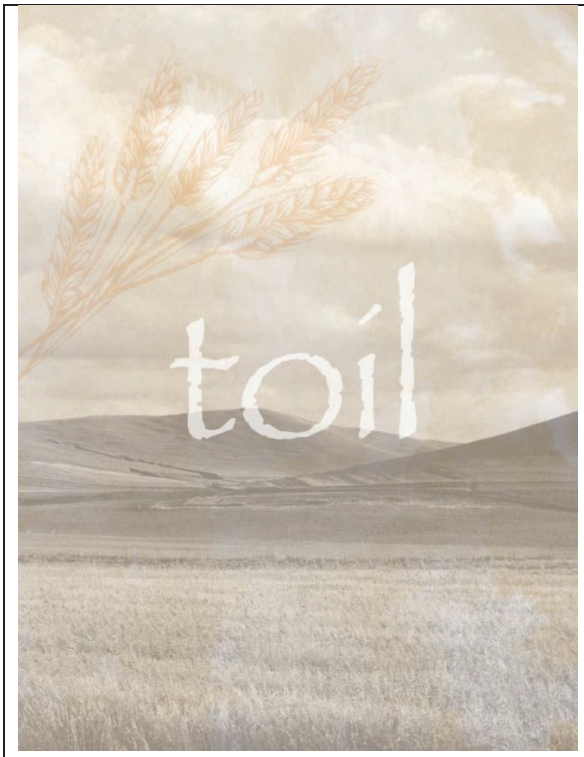

Figure 40: Action Card Back

Figure 41: Action Card “Butter”

Figure 42: Action Card "Death"

Figure 43: Action Card "Death" 2

Figure 44: Action Card "Boarder"

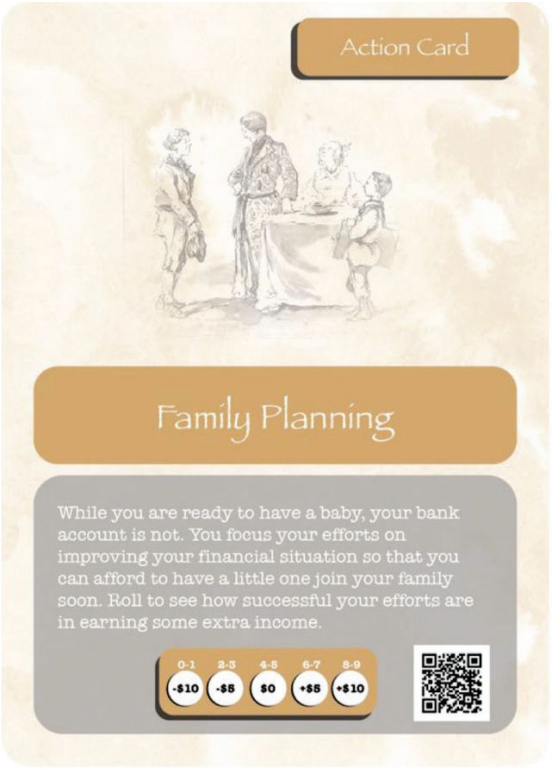

Figure 45: Action Card "Family Planning"

Figure 46: Action Card "Wedding"

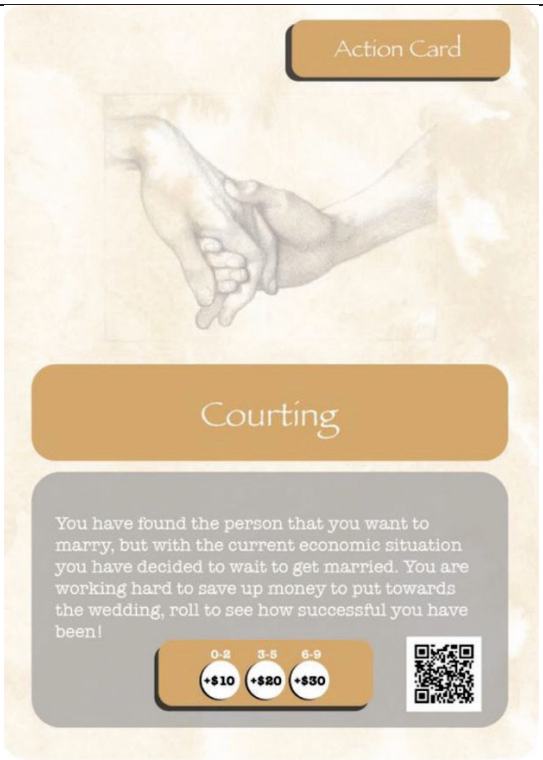

Figure 47: Action Card "Courting"

Figure 48: Action Card [Additional] "Baby"

Figure 49: Action Card "Trees"

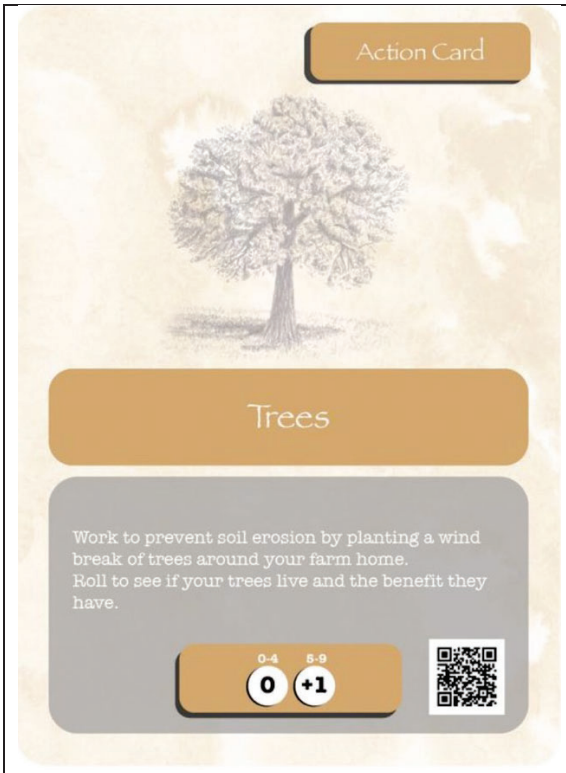

Figure 50: Action Card "Trees" 2

Figure 51: Action Card "Wells"

Figure 52: Action Card "Baby"

Figure 53: Action Card "Dugout"

Figure 54: Action Card "Death" 3

Figure 55: Action Card "Death" 4

Figure 56: Action Card "Trees" 3

Figure 57: Action Card "Strip Farming"

Figure 58: Action Card "Caragana Hedge"

Figure 59: Action Card "Hope"

Figure 60: Action Card "Chickens"

Figure 61: Action Card "Child Help"

Figure 62: Action Card "Family Help"

Figure 63: Action Card "Cleaning"

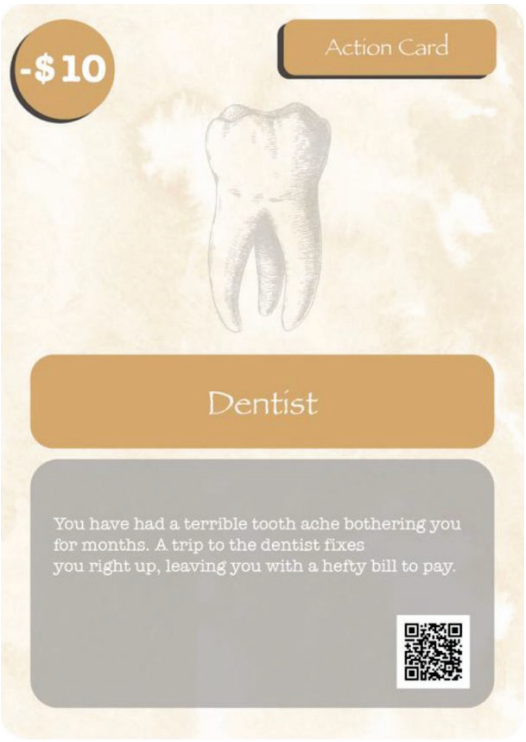

Figure 64:Action Card "Dentist"

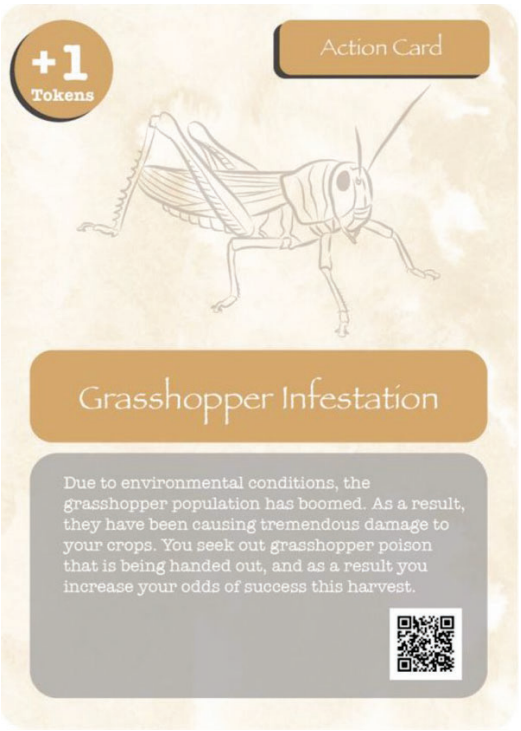

Figure 65: Action Card "Grasshopper Infestation"

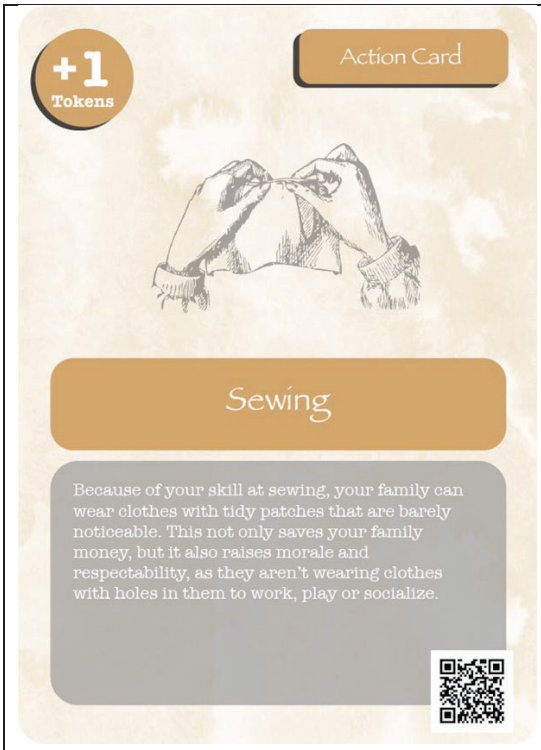

Figure 66: Action Card "Sewing"

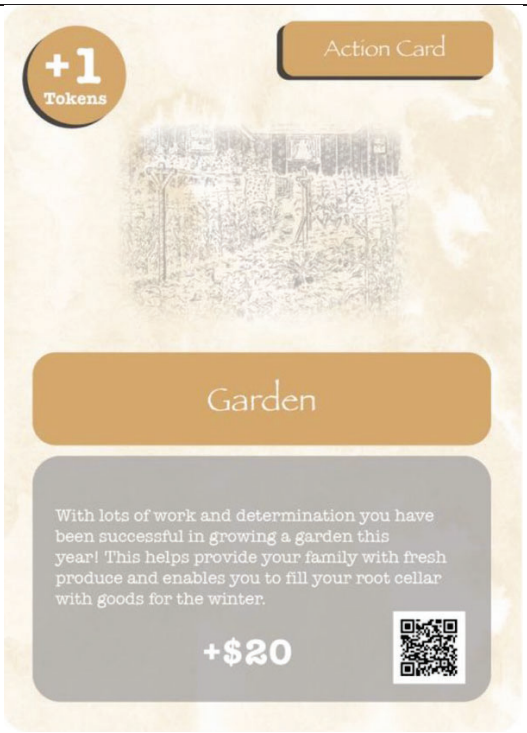

Figure 67: Action Card "Garden"

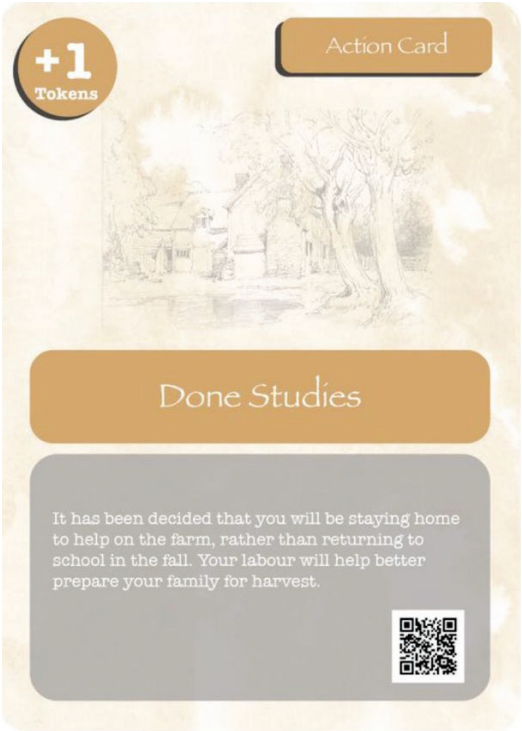

Figure 68: Action Card "Done Studies"

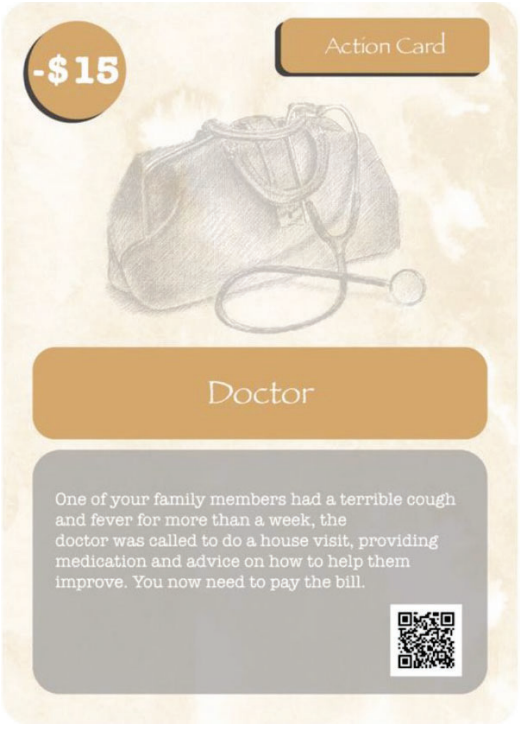

Figure 69: Action Card "Doctor"

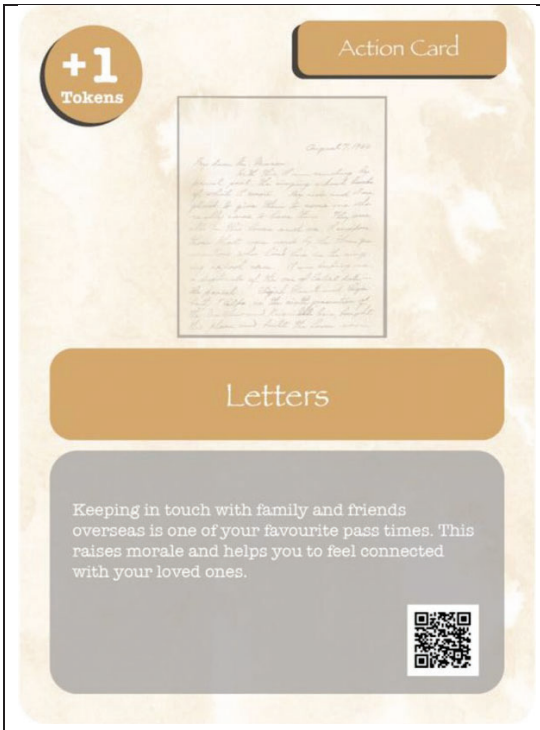

Figure 70: Action Card "Letters"

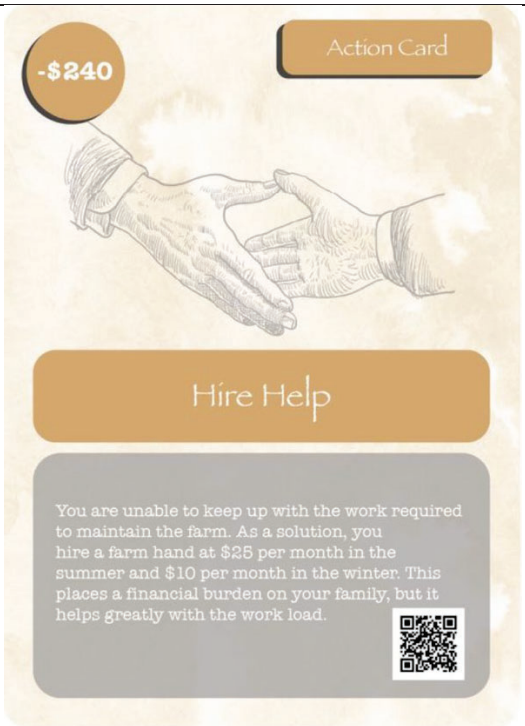

Figure 71: Action Card "Hire Help"

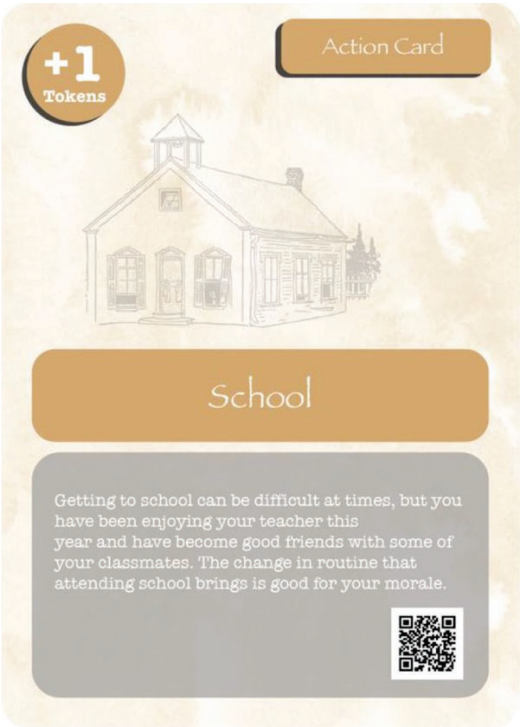

Figure 72: Action Card "School"

Figure 73: Action Card "Turkey"

Figure 74: Action Card "Rotation"

Figure 75: Action Card "Radio"

Figure 76: Action Card "Innovation"

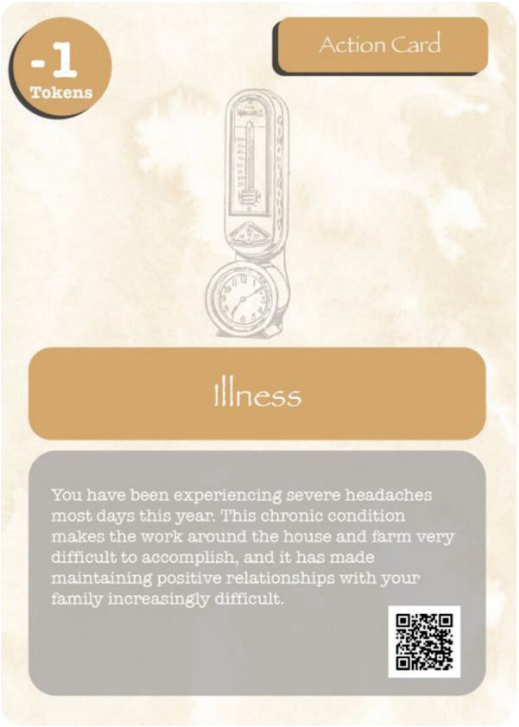

Figure 77: Action Card "Illness"

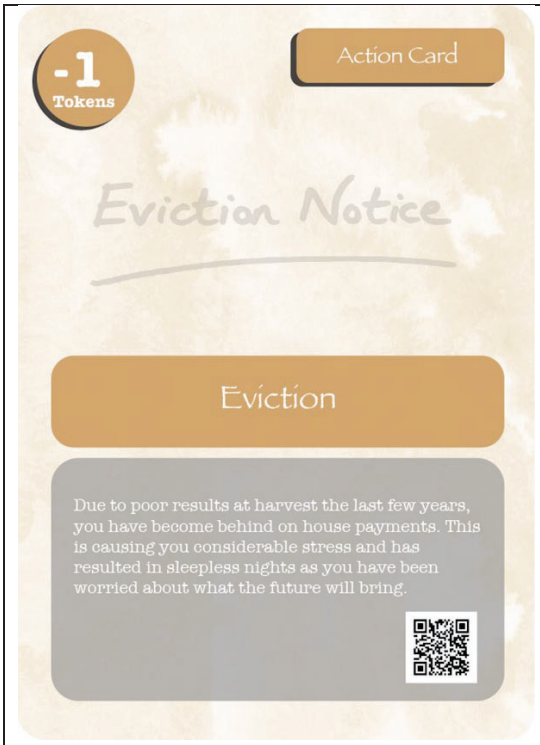

Figure 78: Action Card "Eviction"

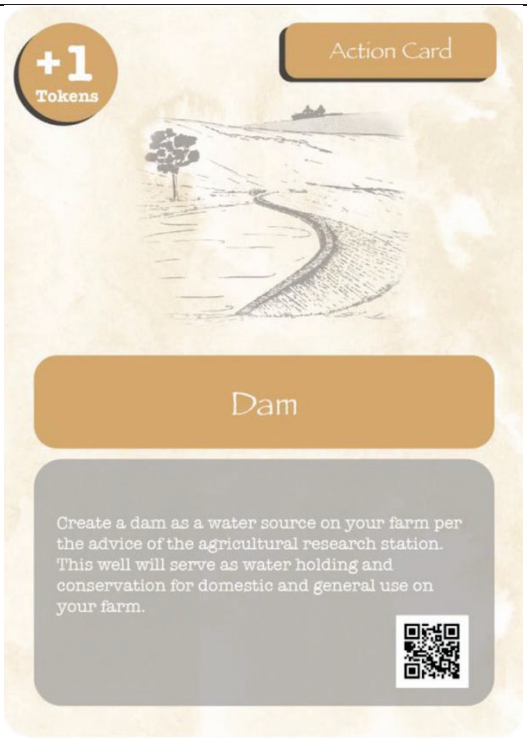

Figure 79: Action Card "Dam"

Figure 80: Action Card "Choice"

Figure 81: Action Card "Veterinary"

Figure 82: Action Card "Produce"

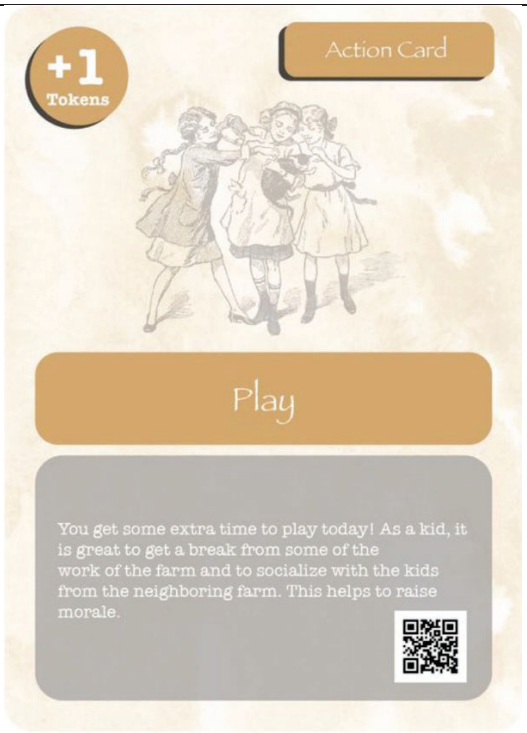

Figure 83: Action Card "Play"

Figure 84: Action Card "Meeting"

Figure 85: Action Card "Bank"

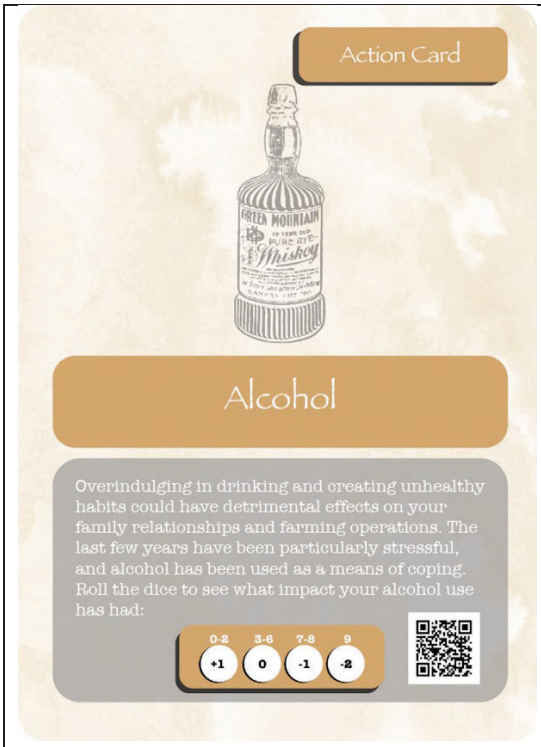

Figure 86: Action Card "Alcohol"

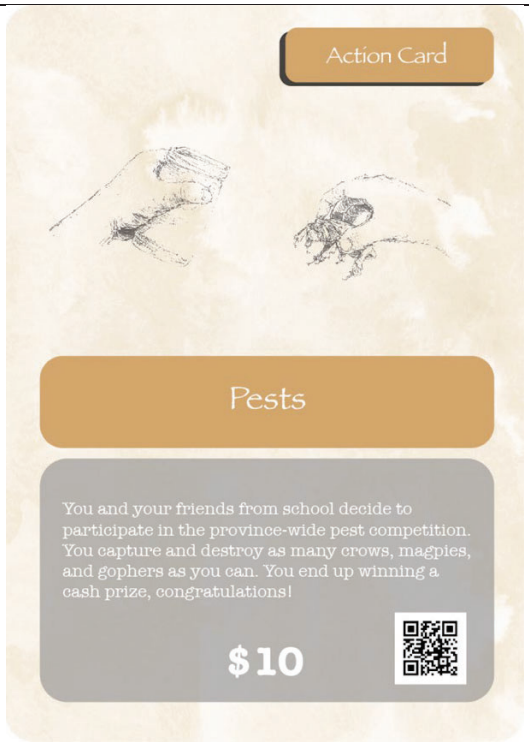

Figure 87: Action Card "Pests"

Figure 88: Action Card "Clothes"

Figure 89: Action Card "Recipe"

Figure 90: Action Card "Scrimp"

Figure 91: Action Card "Scrimp" 2

Figure 92: Action Card "Scrimp" 3

Figure 93: Harvest Results Card 1929.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 94: Harvest Results Card 1930.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 95: Harvest Results Card 1931.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 96: Harvest Results Card 1932.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 97: Harvest Results Card 1933.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 98: Harvest Results Card 1934.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 99: Harvest Results Card 1935.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 100: Harvest Results Card 1936.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 101: Harvest Results Card 1937.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 102: Harvest Results Card 1938.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 103: Harvest Results Card 1939.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 104: Harvest Results Card 1940.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 105: Living Expense Card 1929.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 106: Living Expense Card 1930.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 107: Living Expense Card 1931.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

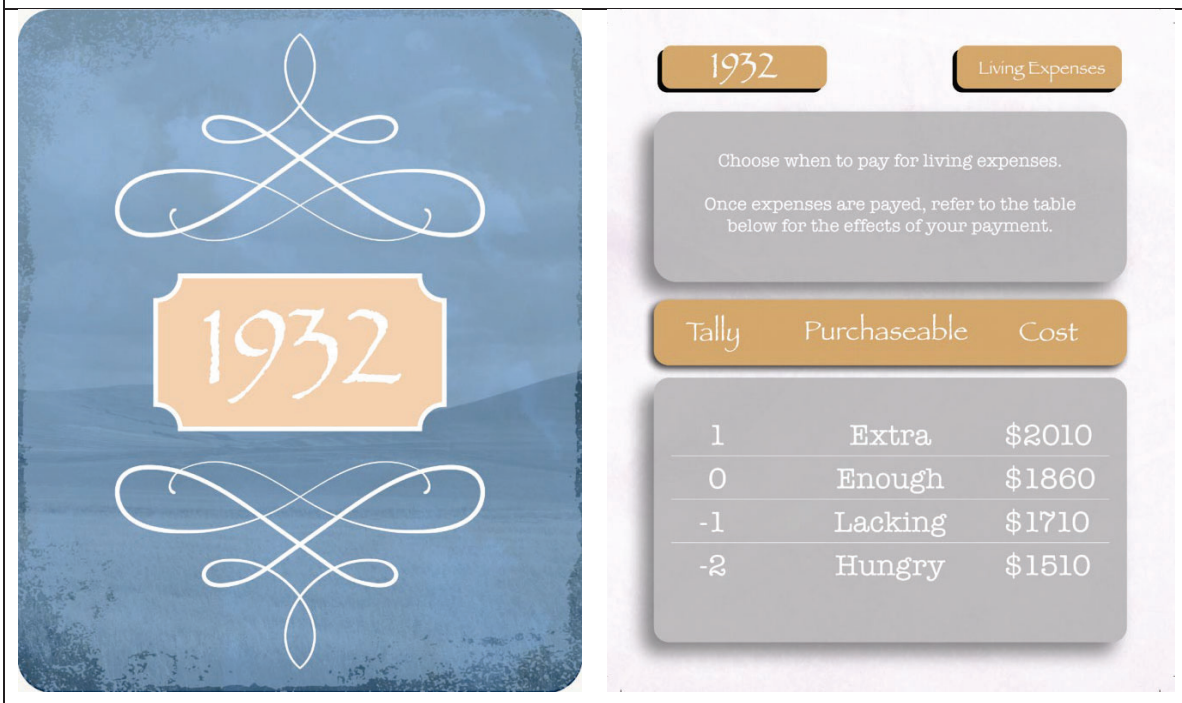

Figure 108: Living Expense Card 1932.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 109: Living Expense Card 1933.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

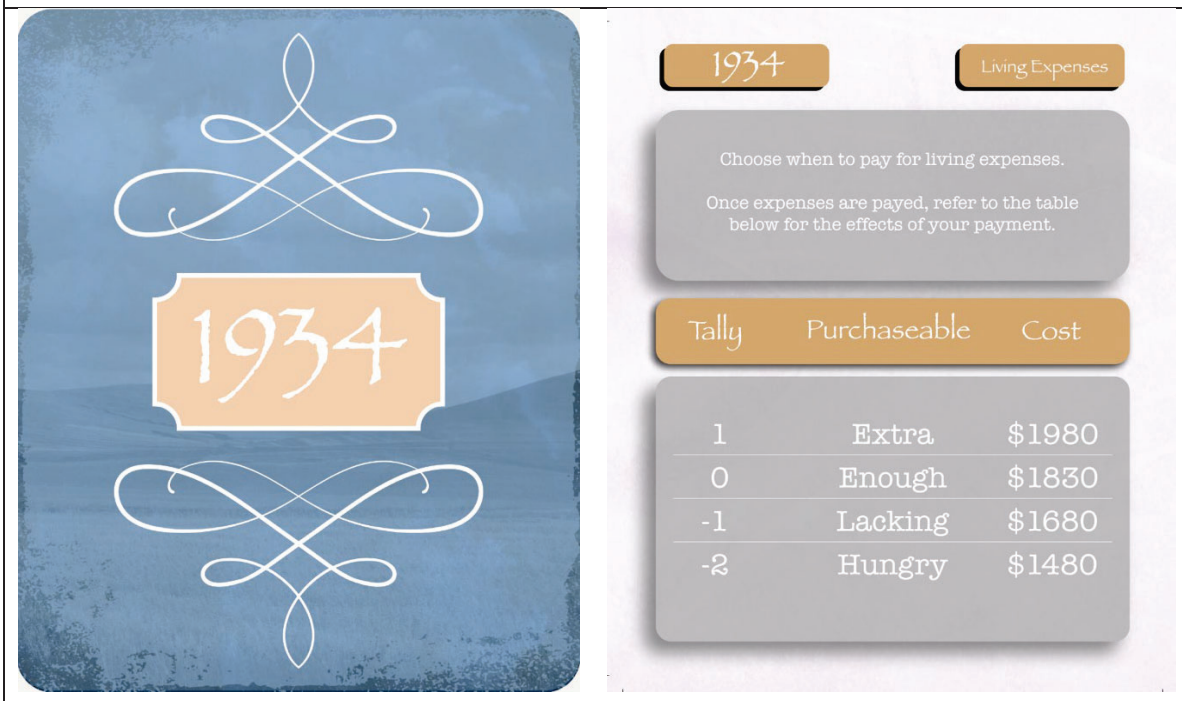

Figure 110: Living Expense Card 1934.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

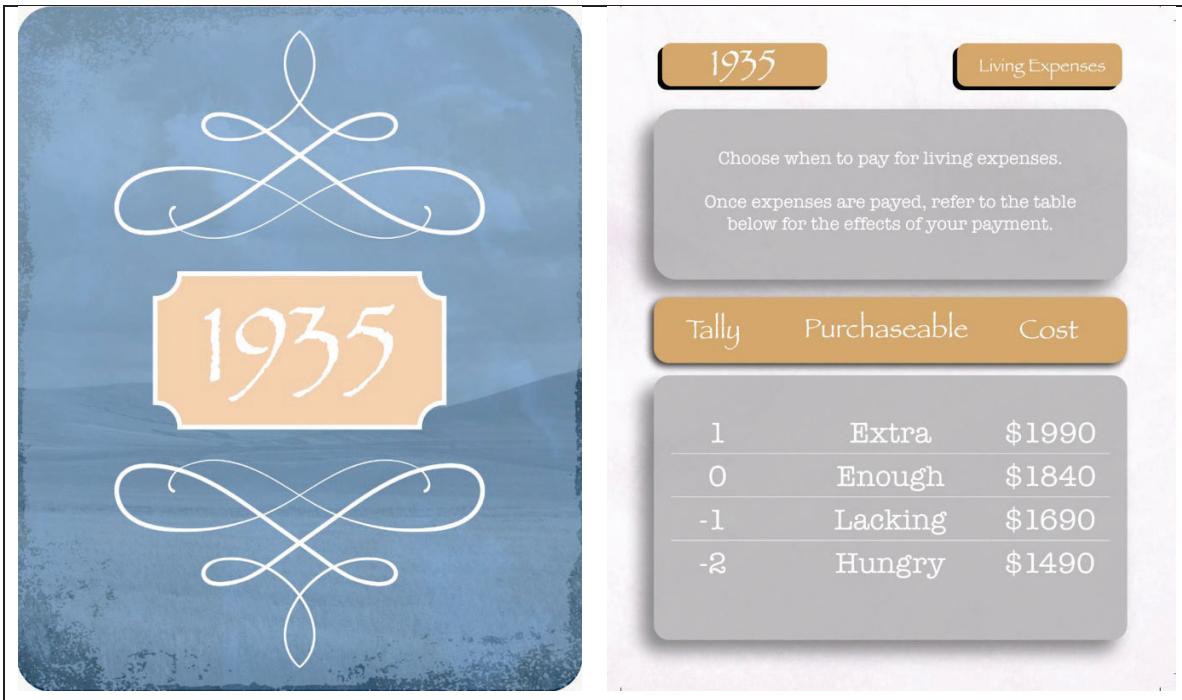

Figure 111: Living Expense Card 1935.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

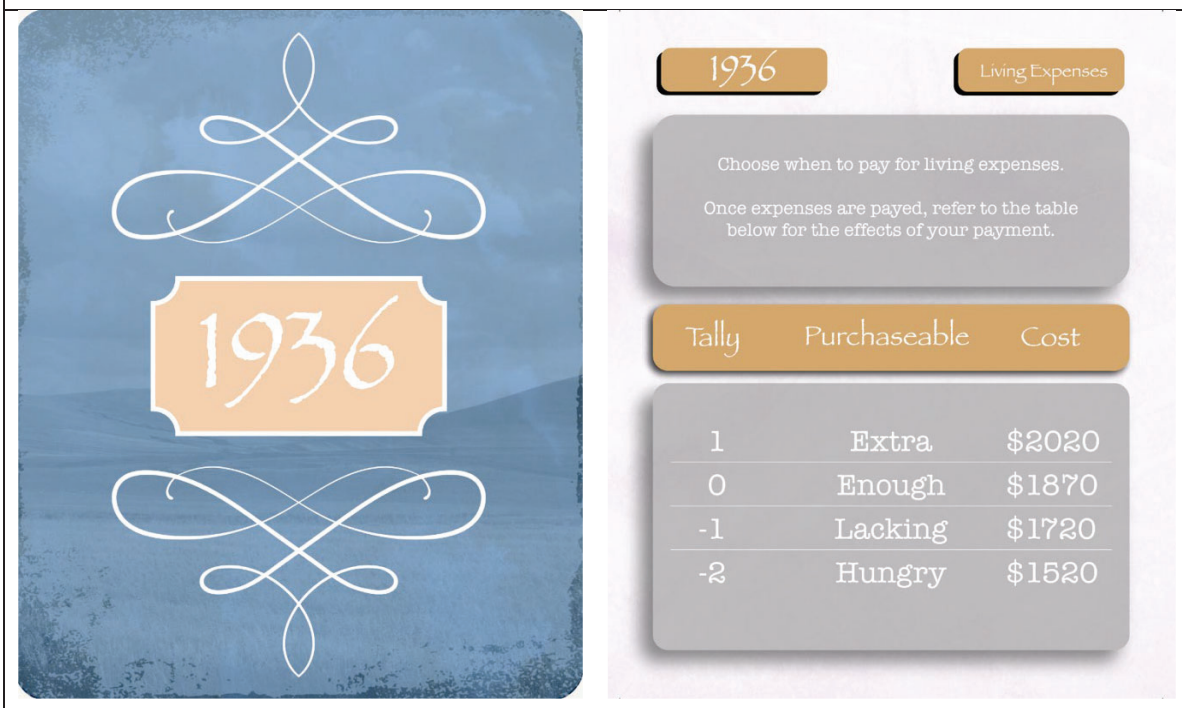

Figure 112: Living Expense Card 1936.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 113: Living Expense Card 1937.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

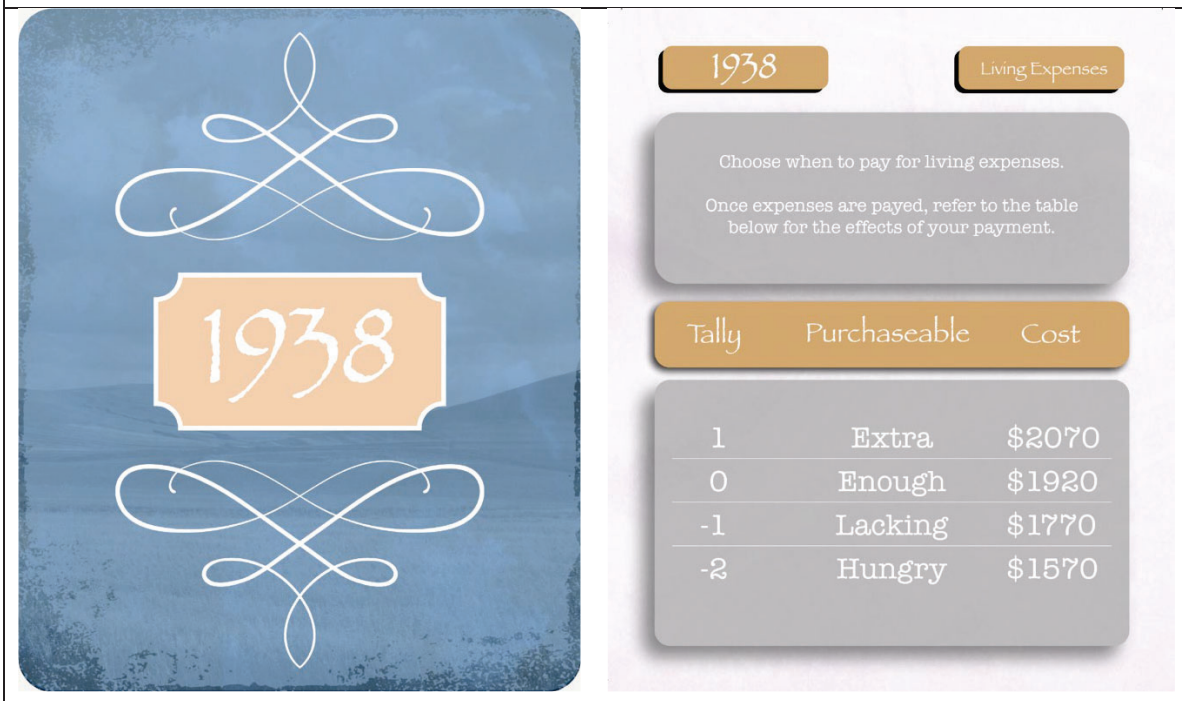

Figure 114: Living Expense Card 1938.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 115: Living Expense Card 1939.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 116: Living Expense Card 1940.
Back of card (left), front of card (right).

Figure 117: "Toil" Play Money $5 Bill. *To be printed on white paper.*

Figure 118: "Toil" Play Money $10 Bill. *To be printed on green paper.*

Figure 119: "Toil" Play Money $20 Bill. *To be printed on orange paper.*

Figure 120: "Toil" Play Money $50 Bill. *To be printed on blue paper.*

Figure 121: "Toil" Play Money $100 Bill. *To be printed on pink paper.*

Figure 122: "Toil" Play Money $500 Bill. *To be printed on yellow paper.*

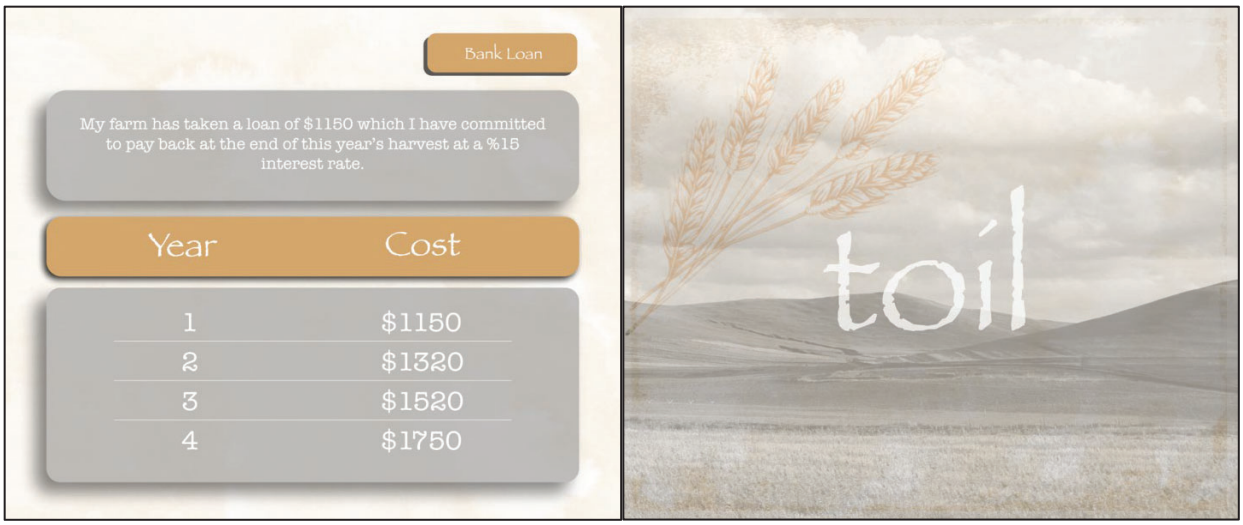

Figure 123: Bank Loan Card. *Front (left) and Back (right).*

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW MATERIALS

University of Lethbridge
Department of History
4401 University Drive
Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada
T1K 3M4
http://www.uleth.ca/artsci/history
Faculty of Arts & Science

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title of Study: Environmental and Economic Challenges for Southern Alberta Family Farms During the Great Depression

Contact Information

Principal Investigator: LaRae Smith, MA History student
Affiliation: University of Lethbridge
Mailing Address: 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, T1K 3M4
Email: larae.robertson@uleth.ca

Research/Study Coordinator: LaRae Smith, MA History student
Mailing Address: 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, T1K 3M4
Email: larae.robertson@uleth.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Kristine Alexander, Professor, History
Affiliation: University of Lethbridge
Mailing Address: 4401 University Drive, Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada, T1K 3M4
Phone: (403) 332-4623
Email: kristine.alexander@uleth.ca

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, a member of the study team is available to explain the project and you are free to ask any questions about anything you do not understand. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?

You are being asked to participate in this study because you were born and raised in southern Alberta on a family farm, and you were a young child during the Great Depression (1929-1940).

The goal of this study is to explore the role of children and youth in family farming operations in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. In addition to identifying the various roles and activities that you undertook as a child on a farm, this project will also focus on the roles and activities that you may have observed your mother, father, or siblings undertake in the household and on the farming operation as well. By exploring these experiences this research will add to the understanding of how family units worked together during the decade that is now known as the Great Depression.

What is the reason for doing the study?

The reason for doing this study is to add to the perspective and documentation of this significant time in Canadian history. The history of childhood and the experience of rural Canadians during the Great Depression has been underrepresented in the writing on the 1930s up to this point. This study will help to add to what we know about the lived experience of southern Alberta farms during the Great Depression.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be taking part in one in-person interview about your experience growing up on a farm in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. The interview will take an estimated two hours to complete. There will be an audio recording done of the interview that will then be transcribed by LaRae Smith. Within a week of the interview, you will receive a copy of the transcription from the interview, it will be sent to your email address. With your consent, the transcription and audio will be stored at the Galt Museum & Archives, and the Centre for Oral History and Tradition at the University of Lethbridge to facilitate future research and further understanding on the study topic.

What are the risks and discomforts?

There are no known risks associated specifically with this research study. However, with hosting the interview in person there are inherent COVID-19 risks that will be mitigated by adhering to all current public health guidelines. It is not possible to know all of the risks that may happen in a study, but we have taken all reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to you.

What are the benefits to me?

While there may not be any direct benefit to you, results from this study may help us learn about the experience of people living on farms during the Great Depression in southern Alberta and may benefit others in the future.

Do I have to take part in the study?

Being in this study is your choice. If you decide to be in the study, you can change your mind and stop being in the study any time before January 2024. After that point the thesis will be written, and your participation will be included in and have informed the result of the thesis.

Even if you remain in the research study, you may choose to withdraw some or all of your responses by contacting LaRae Smith by January 2024. We are unable to remove your answers after that time because the thesis will be written, and your participation will be included in and have informed the result of the thesis.

Being in this study is your choice, whether there is a familial relationship between yourself and LaRae Smith, or not. Not all of the potential interviewees share a familial relationship with LaRae, but if you do, it is important that you know that she would not want you to be participating in this study just because of that personal relationship. You should not feel any additional influence to sign this consent form and participate in the study because of that relationship.

Will my information be kept private?
If you are comfortable and consent to it, this interview will not be kept private as it will be archived at the Galt Museum & Archives, as well as at the University of Lethbridge's Centre of Oral History and Tradition. No information relating to this study that includes your name will be released outside of the researcher's office or published by the researchers unless you give us your express permission.

When your interview is transcribed, we can assign a pseudonym (fake name) to protect your identity, if you would prefer. If you would like to choose your own fake-name, please say so in the interview. If you would like us to use your real name, please indicate this on the signed consent form on the last page of this document

What will happen to the information or data that I provide?
The information you provide will for part of LaRae Smith's Master's thesis at the University of Lethbridge. It may also be used as part of public or academic presentations, in news or academic publications, as well as for examples during teaching.

While the data is being analyzed all recordings will be stored on a recording device, a USB flash drive, an external drive, and on my personal laptop, as well as on the University of Lethbridge's secure network. All recordings will be password protected and all of these devices will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office at my home when not in use. The signed consent forms and transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in my office as well, which is off campus in my home.

After the study is done, we will store your data for a minimum of 5 years in the same places they were stored during the time the recordings were being analyzed. In addition to this they will be stored on Kristine Alexander's secure Google Drive for the duration of the 5 year time period.

There is the potential for sharing the digital recordings from your interview as well as the transcripts with the University of Lethbridge Centre for Oral History and Tradition, and the Galt Museum and Archives. This will only be done after you have had an opportunity to review both the recordings and the transcripts and approve of them being shared with both of those places. This is completely optional and not at all an essential part of your participation in the study. The sharing of your interviews with these two places has the potential of increasing knowledge and understanding of the Great Depression in southern Alberta and facilitating other people to use the interviews in future studies.

What if I have questions?

If you have any questions about the research now or later, please contact LaRae Smith via email at larae.robertson@uleth.ca.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at reoffice@ualberta.ca and quote Ethics ID Pro00118535. This office is independent of the study investigators.

Part of the thesis project is the creation of a historically based board game on the topic of farming in southern Alberta during the Great Depression. There are no current plans, but there is the possibility of selling copies of that game in the future after it is complete.

The study is being sponsored by the granting agency SSHRC and the Government of Alberta. The Institution and Principal Investigator are getting money from the study sponsor to cover the costs of doing this study. You are entitled to request any details concerning this compensation from the Principal Investigator.

How do I indicate my agreement to be in this study?

By signing below, you understand:

- That you have read the above information and have had anything that you do not understand explained to you to your satisfaction.
- That you will be taking part in a research study.
- That you may freely leave the research study at any time.
- That you do not waive your legal rights by being in the study
- That the legal and professional obligations of the investigators and involved institutions are not changed by your taking part in this study.
- That you agree to the data being stored as part of a data repository

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

_____ Pseudonym (if necessary)_____

Name of Participant

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____ _____

Name of Person Obtaining Consent Contact Number

A copy of this information and consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

5