

## Lesson 1

### Dust and Depression

For most Americans, everyday life changed after the First World War. Families sat around their new radios. They listened to KGFX in Pierre or WNAX in Yankton. They tuned in to radio stations in New York City and Denver. They heard about amazing things. There were electric irons and vacuum cleaners. Even stoves and washing machines were now run by electricity. In South Dakota, most families cooked on wood stoves. They washed their clothes by hand. Few had electricity, but they knew it was coming. It would make their lives easier, and at this time their lives were hard. Soon dust and **depression** made them even harder.

During the First World War, a bushel of wheat sold for over \$2.00. Once the war was over, prices fell (you read about this in Unit 6). By the end of 1920, a bushel of wheat sold for just 97¢. Yet, the cost of

farming stayed high. Farmers still had to pay for tools, seed, livestock, feed, and the land itself.

Even before the war, South Dakota looked for ways to make the **economy** stronger. People's lives would be better if they had more money. The state bought a coal mine in North Dakota. It built a cement plant near Rapid City. It sold gasoline from state service stations. Citizens could buy fuel and cement at lower prices. The state also started a **rural** credit system. It loaned money to farm families to help pay for their homes and land.

Because farming was so hard, something more had to be done. Senator Peter Norbeck (you read about him in Unit 7) thought a new industry might help. It was called tourism. People from other places were already coming to the Black Hills. Tourists came to gaze at the Mitchell Corn Palace. To bring more visitors, Norbeck started Custer State Park. The state also

**released** thousands of Chinese ring-necked pheasants in South Dakota. Soon there were large pheasant populations. The birds brought hundreds of hunters. Tourists and hunters brought more dollars to the state.

Still, the economy did not do well. South Dakota sold its coal mine. It gave up its gasoline program. The rural credit system failed, and hundreds of people lost their farms. Then in October 1929, the stock market **crashed**. The Great Depression swept over the whole country.

Factories closed; people lost their jobs; and banks failed. Many families did not have enough money to pay for their houses or farms. Men moved from town to town, looking for work. Sometimes entire families packed up and moved to California, Oregon, or Washington. They thought life would be easier there. Instead, they found long lines of people looking for jobs. People were hungry, out of work, or even homeless.

The Great Depression **gripped** the entire United States—and much of the world.

In South Dakota, the land itself seemed to dry up with the economy. Terrific dust storms swept across the plains. This area became known as the Dust Bowl. At nine o'clock in the morning, streetlights came on. "It was as dark as midnight," said a man from Sioux Falls. Great gusts of wind drove dust under doors, around window frames, and through cracks in the walls. It covered everything—inside and out. Mrs. Ben Huggins from Geddes remembered that "the dust was so thick on the bedspread, you couldn't tell what color it was."

Outside, dust drifted over fence posts like snow. **Topsoil** blew away; crops failed. Then the grasshoppers came. "They came and stripped the lilac bushes, just stripped them right off," said Mrs. Huggins. The grasshoppers ate everything—garden vegetables, wheat, and corn. Many people had to give up their farms. When the Great

Depression began, there were 692,894 people living in South Dakota. Almost fifty thousand moved away in the next ten years.

**Vocabulary:**

**crashed** (v.), failed; lost its value

**depression** (n.), a period of business failure and lack of jobs

**economy** (n.), the system of making, buying, and selling goods and services

**gripped** (v.), kept a firm hold on something

**released** (v.), let go

**rural** (adj.), of the country

**topsoil** (n.), the top layer of soil that is fertile

## Lesson 2

### A New Deal and a New War

People across the United States needed work. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected president, he knew he had to do something. The year was 1932. He set up federal programs to help. He called them the “New Deal.” These programs put people back to work; helped them feed their families; made business and industry stronger; and helped farmers farm better. People called them “federal relief.” These programs were important in South Dakota. Within two years, almost forty percent of the people in the state were in these programs. That means that forty out of every hundred people were getting aid. It was the highest **percentage** in the country.

The New Deal set up the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA hired people to build things. They built schools and libraries. They put up post offices and courthouses. The WPA gave

jobs to teachers and others. It hired writers and artists. It spent thirty-five million dollars in South Dakota. The New Deal set up other programs, too. For young men, there was the Civilian Conservation Corps. For farmers, there was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration (AAA). By this time, the price of a bushel of wheat had fallen to 32¢. The AAA urged farmers to plant less. This then drove up the price.

The New Deal brought hope to many people. A new law gave American Indian tribes the right to set up their own governments (you read about this in Unit 8). It also lifted **restrictions** on American Indian language and culture. The Rural Electrification Act (REA) was passed. It helped to bring electricity to farms and ranches. A new law changed the price of gold. The Homestake Mining Company grew and did well. It put miners to work. It put more tax money back into the state.

Other things gave people a feeling of hope, as well. Two Army Air Corps pilots made history in a helium balloon. The men lifted off from the Stratobowl near Rapid City. Their balloon soared 13.7 miles into the air. They set a world record and learned more about the air above us. The four faces of Mount Rushmore were carved. More rain began to fall; there were fewer grasshoppers. Farmers in the state had a big harvest. The days of the Dust Bowl were over. Then the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. The date was December 7, 1941. Many Americans died in the attack. The United States declared war on Japan.

Within days, the United States was also at war with Germany and Italy. The whole country was now caught up in the Second World War. South Dakotans lined up to **enlist** in the army, navy, marines, and air corps. Women joined up, too. Many served as nurses, clerks, radio operators, and pilots. They were in groups like the

Women's Army Corps (WAC). Some Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota men joined a very special unit. They were called Sioux code talkers. About ten percent of the people in South Dakota served in the armed forces. By the end of the war, two thousand South Dakotans had died.

The Second World War changed everyday life in South Dakota, too. Almost everyone was fighting the war on "the home front." Schoolchildren collected scrap metal, paper, even bacon grease. These things could be used to build equipment for the men on the front lines. Children gathered milkweed pods, which were used as filling in life jackets. Gasoline, sugar, and meat were **rationed** in South Dakota and across the nation. These things were saved for the men and women fighting the war. People were urged to grow their own food.

Thousands of women went to work for the first time. They became factory workers, truck drivers, carpenters, and so on.

The Homestake Mining Company stopped mining gold. Instead, it made hand grenades and airplane parts. The Army Air Corps built bases in South Dakota. They were in Sioux Falls, Watertown, Mitchell, Pierre, and Rapid City. The war itself came to the state in a small way. Balloon bombs drifted across the Pacific Ocean from Japan.

Then Germany surrendered. It was 1945. The United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan. The Second World War was over, but the world would never be the same.

**Vocabulary:**

**enlist** (v.), join up; enter into

**percentage** (n.), a portion of something in one-hundredths

**rationed** (v.), gave out only so much; limited the amount

**restrictions** (n.), limits or controls on something

## Lesson 3

### People on the Move

The two atomic bombs that ended the Second World War were the start of the Cold War. Many countries rushed to build more atomic bombs. The United States stored hundreds underground in western South Dakota. Ellsworth Air Force Base in Rapid City became part of a special unit. It was called the Strategic Air Command (SAC). This unit could take off in planes armed with atomic bombs. They could fly anywhere in only a few hours.

Soon **tension** built up between two countries that had many bombs. These were the United States and the Soviet Union. They had different forms of government. The United States is a democracy. Citizens give power to the government (you read about this in Unit 8). The Soviet Union was Communist. Its government told its citizens what to do. It took charge of all property and money. The struggle between these two

governments was called the Cold War.

People worried that it would become a hot war. This would **unleash** the atomic bombs. The thought troubled people around the world.

Then in 1950, the Cold War heated up. North Korea invaded South Korea. The Soviet Union backed North Korea. The United States rushed to aid South Korea. So did other United Nations countries.

Thousands of people from South Dakota served in the war. Even though a **truce** ended the fighting, the Cold War did not end. More planes, bombs, and atomic missiles were stored in western South Dakota.

While war raged in Korea, construction crews were working on the dams on the Missouri River (you read about this in Unit 7). Their work would change the river's flow and the land itself. Flood control was an important reason for this work. No longer would there be yearly

floods in towns like Pierre and Yankton. Some small towns had to move before the lakes began to form behind the dams. Pollock moved a mile south of where it had been. Then lake waters flooded farmlands and Indian sites on the river bottom. Some things were lost, but "Old Misery's" water was no longer muddy. Instead, the new lakes were clear blue. President John F. Kennedy came to open the Oahe Dam. The year was 1962.

Times were good in South Dakota. Despite droughts and low prices for farm products, ranching and farming thrived. By 1960, most farmers had electricity. They used tractors, combines, and corn pickers. These things made their work easier. Farmers **experimented** with new crops. They grew soybeans and sunflowers. Tourism also thrived. More South Dakota highways were blacktop rather than gravel. It was easier for tourists and families to

drive to the Corn Palace, the Badlands, or Mount Rushmore.

South Dakota farms and ranches kept growing. The **average** one grew from 672 acres to 804 acres. The number of jobs for farm workers dropped, though. Machines now did much of the work. People from small towns moved to bigger towns, looking for jobs. Others moved to big cities outside the state. Finding work on Indian reservations was even harder.

The towns of Sioux Falls, Rapid City, and Aberdeen grew. The population of the state fell. By 1970, tens of thousands of people left South Dakota. Nearly two hundred small towns died. Farmers and ranchers no longer needed a railroad town nearby. They could drive fifty miles to a bigger town and be back in no time. Their children rode school buses to **consolidated** schools.

Miles of railroad track were no longer used. In its place were better roads.

New interstate highways made travel fast and safe. These highways had four lanes. I-29 ran north and south; I-90 went east and west. They linked South Dakota to other parts of the country. Many South Dakotans also took to the air. They got on commercial planes at airports in the larger towns. South Dakotans did not really need to leave their living rooms to see the world. A new invention was bringing the world to South Dakota. That invention was television.

**Vocabulary:**

**average** (adj.), a typical size or amount;  
ordinary

**consolidated** (adj.), united; combined;  
brought together

**experimented** (v.), tried; tested

**tension** (n.), an uneasy feeling; a worry or  
concern

**truce** (n.), an agreement to stop fighting

**unleash** (v.), to release something

## Lesson 4

### A New Age

A blue-gray light now cast its glow in South Dakota living rooms. The light came from a new invention. It was television, or TV. It brought black-and-white moving pictures of the world onto a small screen. Americans soon owned millions of television sets. TV stations sprang up all over the country. There was one in Sioux Falls. Mitchell and Rapid City soon had one, too.

TV was **mesmerizing**. Families came together to watch it. They saw “The Ed Sullivan Show” or “I Love Lucy.” Local stations set up their own programs. In South Dakota, “Captain 11” was a hit. Families did not want to miss their favorite shows. Companies began to make frozen TV dinners and TV trays. People could eat in front of their TV sets. Before long, TV programs could be seen “in living color.”

At the same time, the United States sent troops into South Vietnam. They hoped to stop the Communists from taking over that country. The Cold War had heated up once again. This was called the Vietnam War. It was the longest war in United States history. Thousands of soldiers died. Two hundred were from South Dakota. Many people began to think the war was wrong. This became a big issue in the elections.

One United States senator from South Dakota was for the war in Vietnam. His name was Karl Mundt. The other senator was against the war. His name was George McGovern. The Democratic party picked McGovern to run for president of the United States. The year was 1972. He lost the election, but his point of view won support.

The war was only one of the things that troubled people at this time. Many Americans thought there were problems with the Constitution. Did it **guarantee** the

rights of women and **minorities**, they asked? Did these groups have equal **access** to schools and jobs? Could African Americans and American Indians get good housing? Could they get good health care? If not, what could be done? It was an era of **social** change.

**Feminists** came to the state capitol to support the Equal Rights Amendment. Others met there to oppose it. Some American Indians started a new group. They called it the American Indian Movement (AIM). Members wanted better laws for American Indians. They took over the town of Wounded Knee. Gunfire broke out between them and federal marshals. Several people died. This was known as Wounded Knee II. (You read about the first Wounded Knee in Unit 5). The issues of civil rights are still with us today, but some changes were made. New laws gave more chances to women and minorities. Soon the

Cold War was over, too. The Soviet Union was no more.

During this time, South Dakota colleges began to teach a new subject. It was called computer science. Not many people owned computers. Computers were big and they cost a great deal of money. They also held much promise for the state. Senator Mundt and Congressman Benjamin Reifel worked to bring a huge computer center here. It was called the Eros Data Center. It is still near Sioux Falls today.

Computers became smaller. They were easier to use. Businesses and governments bought them. So did schools and families. Computers were soon linked to each other. This is called the Internet. At first, only a few were linked. People could send e-mail messages, but it took hours to get from one computer to another. By 2002, this had changed. The Internet is now a Worldwide Web. It connects people all over the world. A classroom like yours can talk

instantly with classrooms in other countries.

Our history is suddenly their history—and theirs is ours.

### **Conclusion**

At the dawn of a new **millennium**, South Dakota is still changing. The Homestake Mining Company has closed. A Mexican company now runs what was once the state cement plant. South Dakotans still move from small towns to bigger ones.

The population is growing again. There are more people than ever before. Now 754,844 people live in our state. Every one of us makes history every day.

Who can say what is ahead?

By knowing our past and sharing our common heritage, we can make history together.

Right here in South Dakota.

You and me.

### **Vocabulary:**

**access** (n.), chance or ability to use something

**feminists** (n.), people who believe in equal rights for women and men

**guarantee** (v.), to promise or assure something

**mesmerizing** (adj.), capturing all your attention

**millennium** (n.), a period of one thousand years

**minorities** (n.), smaller groups differing in race, religion, or background from a larger group

**social** (adj.), relating to how people live and work in society