

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

# Seth Bailey – Experiences of the Great Depression

By Seth Bailey

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## Box 1 Folder 7

Oral Interview conducted by Tammy Butterfield  
Transcribed by Victor Ukorebi      January 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

This is an oral history project. I'm Tammy Butterfield and today is November 30, 1975. I'm going to interview Seth Bailey, and the topic will be the depression.

TB: Where were you born?

SB: Arbon, Idaho.

TB: What year?

SB: December 17, 1914

TB: How long have you lived in Bancroft?

SB: Twenty-three years.

TB: What was your occupation during the depression?

SB: I was going to high school at the start of it.

TB: What was your father's occupation?

SB: Farmer.

TB: Did the depression affect the farm life?

SB: You bet.

TB: What did it do to affect it?

SB: I remember at depression time wheat was worth about fifty cents a bushel. I remember dad going out and killing the bull calves, because he couldn't afford the milk to feed them.

TB: How many was there in your family?

SB: Nine kids.

TB: And this farm supported the nine kids?

SB: Yes.

TB: Were any of them married?

SB: No, not during the depression.

TB: What do you think caused the depression?

SB: That I don't really know except a lot of speculation. The stock market and the crash came in 1928. There was a lot of suicides and these guys that speculated in stocks. As far as knowing really what caused the depression, I don't know.

TB: Do you think that Roosevelt helped?

SB: Oh yes, I think Roosevelt helped because he started the WPA programs, the government spending program to put people to work. At least it kept them off the streets and gave them something to do. I remember working for a dollar a day, and all we got was script. This did work for a dollar a day digging water trenches and sewer lines for the city. We got paid a dollar a day and script and all we could use it for was wither food or clothes.

TB: Hoover was the president when it started, wasn't he?

SB: Herbert Hoover was the president when it crashed in 1928. The depression as far as I'm concerned, lasted from 1928 to the start of World War II, which was about 1940. So it really lasted about twelve years. Doris and I got married in 1936. To give you an idea how bad the depression was after eight years, we both went to work for a farmer. She cooked and kept house and I farmed and milked cows for a dollar a day and our board room. It wasn't any forty hour week for wither one of us. I worked from seven till six farming, then I would come in and have my supper; then I would go out and milk eight head of cows by hand. After that it was usually about ten o'clock at night when I got through.

TB: For a dollar a day?

SB: For my dollar a day.

TB: It's not very much is it?

SB: No.

TB: Do you think that anything good came out of the depression?

SB: Well, it sure taught a lot of people how to get along without money. For an example of how much spending the kids had compared to what they have now; My dad would give me a dollar each Saturday night and that was for me and my date to go to a dance and a show, and eat. On a dollar.

TB: Did that dollar make it?

SB: Yes, it always made it. You could get a hamburger and a coke for fifteen cents, you could go to a show for quarter, you could buy a dance ticket for thirty-five to fifty cents.

TB: So really for as much money as, as money as you would make there was enough to suffice?

SB: Oh yes, we got along alright. As far as we were concern. We never went hungry. They farm furnished us all the staple groceries we needed. I don't believe the only time she went to the grocery store was to buy sugar and to trade in her eggs.

TB: You lived on a farm?

SB: Yes.

TB: Do you want to talk some more about the farm life?

SB: Well, I know that we never had money to buy gas. In those days, we rode horses, we walked. A lot of times I've walked five or six miles to a dance and walk home after the dance. Weekends we used to walk from Burley and up to Rupert and back home. Twenty, twenty-five miles a day.

TB: You lived in Hagar?

SB: Yes.

TB: Anything else?

SB: I graduated from high school in 1933. In the spring of 1934 I went to Henigers Business College. Times were still so tough that my dad and I borrowed a hundred dollars from the Rotary Club in Rupert so as I could go to Business College. Because we didn't have the hundred dollars. I went and worked in Salt Lake for a man and woman who owned a dog kennel. It was out on 27<sup>th</sup> South and State, and I took car of these dogs for my board and room. I walked from 27<sup>th</sup> South into Third South everyday, morning and night to save a dime car fare. Because I didn't have the money. My dad would send me five dollars a month spending money. That took car of my car fare and all of my spending money. Five dollars a month.

TB: Five dollars a month at this school. I'd never make it.

SB: Compared to what it is now, to what is was then, you can go to the grocery store with five dollars and come out with a car load of groceries. Now you go to the grocery store with a car load of money and come out with a fist full of groceries.

TB: That's true.