

# The Long Drought



GRASSLAND INTO DESERT. Five years ago this spot, near Kit Carson, Colo., was a wheat field. Then winds began dumping sand and silt upon it from blowing fields. The soil now is completely covered.



Farmer breaks topsoil, then digs down to find first trace of dampness in his field, half-way between Cheyenne Wells and Burlington, Colo.

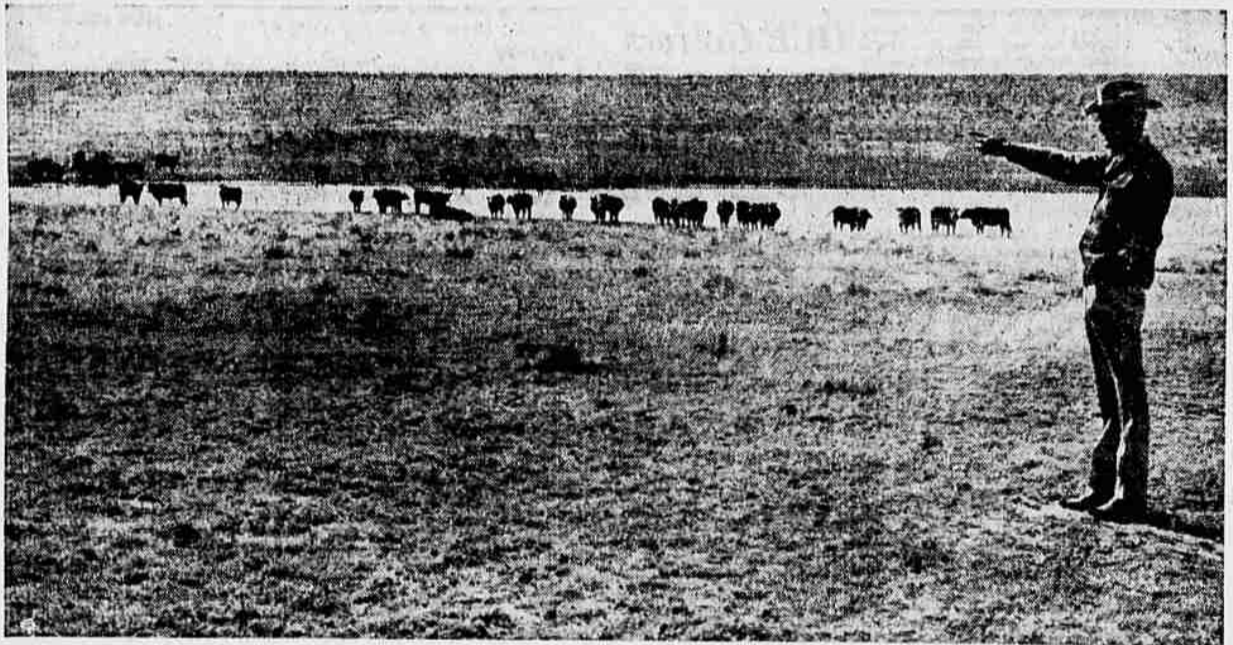
Western farmers and stockmen are praying for rain . . . Streams were dry. Reservoirs no longer held any water. Grasses withered. A powdery gray dust, whipped up by a wind, settled everywhere.

A prolonged drought had created this grim picture in large areas all along the western side of America's great plains, from New Mexico in the south to Montana in the north. In Colorado, the drought was the worst in 20 years. Four million or more acres in the state were endangered.

The drought has sent cities, like Denver, hunting new water supplies far across the Continental Divide. At little Dove Creek, Colo., near the Utah border, the water system dried up. To the south, in Colorado's potato-growing San Luis Valley, children had to be marched to the Saguache court house for drinks when the school's water gave out. The Arkansas, southeast Colorado's major river, could be jumped on foot. The bottom of the giant reservoir behind John Martin dam was caked and cracked. Crops for livestock feed were only a half or third of normal, foreshadowing trouble this winter.

Despite the difficult days, most residents in the drought-stricken land have remained optimistic. "Give us some good snow and spring rains and the country will come back," the sun-bronzed men insisted.

Pictured here are some of the scenes in eastern Colorado, where drought wrought disaster on a large scale.

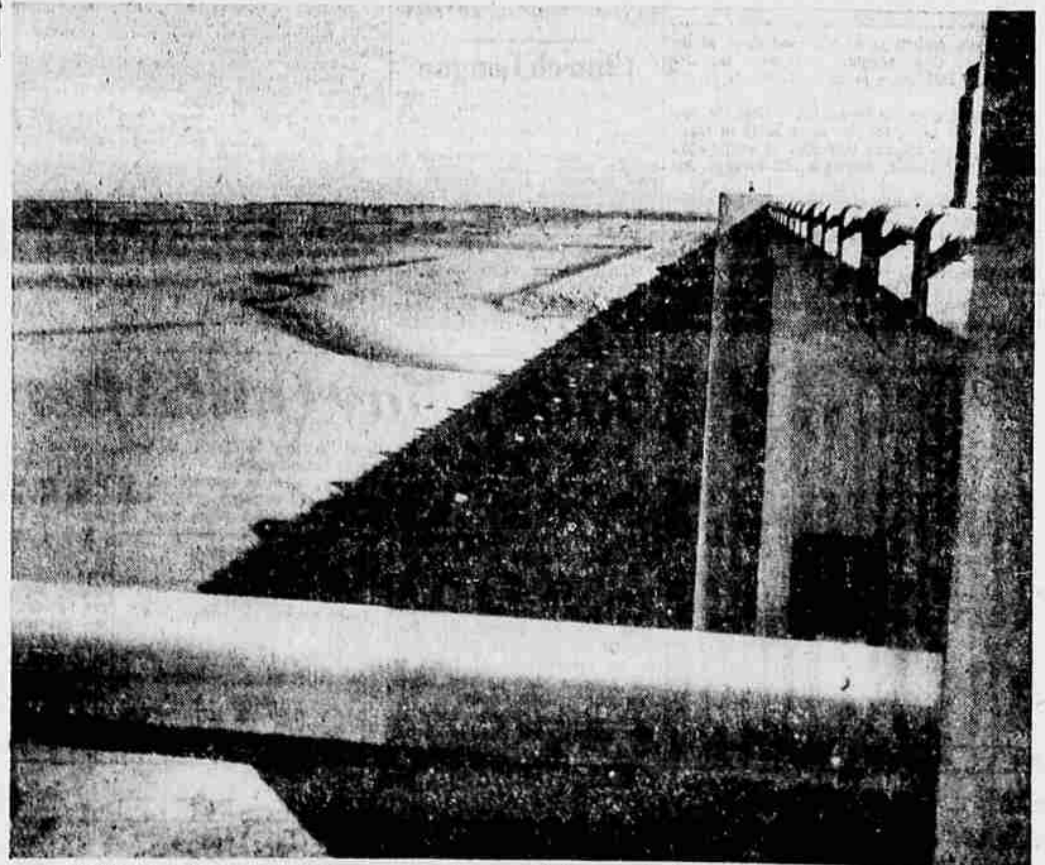


This house, abandoned and falling to pieces, stands on the eastern Colorado plains subject to the ravages of sun and wind, drought and dust.

Water hole is most valuable asset of a rancher in drought-stricken eastern Colorado. This one is on the Don C. Collins ranch near Kit Carson. A natural adobe bottom helps retain the water.



Once this soapweed grew at ground level. Then winds whipped away the sandy soil leaving only a mound held by the roots. Ground level has been reduced by two feet. Scene is near Kit Carson, Colo.



EMPTY. John Martin dam, near Las Animas, Colo., was built to impound waters of the Arkansas River, southeast Colorado's principal stream. Its reservoir is now completely dry. This week's PICTURE SHOW by AP Staff Photographer E. O. Eisenhand

