

DUSTY OLD DUST (1935)



Any copyrighted material on these pages is used in "fair use" for the purpose of study, review or critical analysis only, and will be removed at the request of copyright owner(s).

Last week farmers in ten Midwestern States had sand in their beards, in their hair, in their ears, in their eyes, in their mouths, in their pockets, in their pants, in their boots, in their milk, coffee, soup and stew. Dust poured through the cracks in farmhouse walls, under the doors, down the chimneys. In northwest Oklahoma a hundred families fled their homes. Every school in Baca County, Colo. was closed. In Texas the windswept hayfields were alive with blinded sparrows. Methodist congregations in Guyton, Okla. met three times a day to pray for rain. Originally confined to a 200-mile strip between Canada and Mexico, last week's dust storm suddenly swirled eastward over Missouri, Iowa and Arkansas, crossed the Mississippi to unload on Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Tennessee and Louisiana. With half the nation blanketed in silt, farmers everywhere were asking what was going to happen to the wheat crop.

Last week the Crop Reporting Board of the Department of Agriculture gave its second answer for 1935. U.S. Farmers had planted 44,306,000 acres in winter wheat last autumn, said the report. Drought and dust had forced them to abandon 12,405,000 acres. The wheat standing on the remaining 31,901,000 acres on April 1 was estimated to yield 435,499,000 bu.--69% of normal. West of the river, in the ten States chiefly affected by drought and dust, more than 40% of the winter wheat seeded last autumn was expected to fail. Hardest hit was Kansas where rainfall in March was only 56% of normal and the crop 47% of normal. Last week six Kansas counties reported their wheat crop a total failure.

TIME, Apr 22, 1935.

Lyrics as recorded by Woody Guthrie, RCA Studios, Camden, NJ, 26 Apr 1940, released on "[Dust Bowl Ballads](#)," transcribed by Manfred Helfert.

© 1940, 1950, and 1951 Folkways Music Publishers Inc., New York, NY

I've sung this song, but I'll sing it again,
Of the place that I lived on the wild windy plains,
In the month called April, county called Gray,
And here's what all of the people there say:

CHORUS:

"So long, it's been good to know yuh;
So long, it's been good to know yuh;
So long, it's been good to know yuh.
This dusty old dust is a-gettin' my home,
And I got to be driftin' along."

A dust storm hit, an' it hit like thunder;
It dusted us over, an' it covered us under;
Blocked out the traffic an' blocked out the sun,
Straight for home all the people did run,
Singin':

[CHORUS]

We talked of the end of the world, and then
We'd sing a song an' then sing it again.
We'd sit for an hour an' not say a word,
And then these words would be heard:

[CHORUS]

Sweethearts sat in the dark and sparked,
They hugged and kissed in that dusty old dark.
They sighed and cried, hugged and kissed,
Instead of marriage, they talked like this:

"Honey..."

[CHORUS]

Now, the telephone rang, an' it jumped off the wall,
That was the preacher, a-makin' his call.
He said, "Kind friend, this may be the end;
An' you got your last chance of salvation of sin!"

[CHORUS]

The churches was jammed, and the churches was packed,
An' that dusty old dust storm blowed so black.
Preacher could not read a word of his text,
An' he folded his specs, an' he took up collection,

Said:

[CHORUS]

