

4. Elsie Chavez Chilton Recalls Relatives Working with the Civilian Conservation Corps Near Las Cruces, New Mexico, 1930s

At that time there was a lot of bartering. That was pre-depression and I was such a small child I don't remember too much about it, but I know they got along just fine. When the depression hit we were already living in town. We had no money to lose because we had no money in the bank. We did have hard times—especially the families whose fathers didn't have a steady income. I had uncles who had steady incomes. They were ditch riders. One was at Leasburg Dam and one at Mesilla Dam. . . . No matter how small it was, if it was a steady income it meant a lot. Since my father was self-employed that was worse. We managed somehow. Also there was the NYA [National Youth Administration] and the WPA [Works Progress Administration]. . . .

We had a lot of boys . . . working in the CCC camps around here. . . . We had a lot of work done by the CCC camp boys—Jornada Range was one area. . . . I would go over there and have dinner where the officials had dinner. My friend showed me all the fence that they had built. I don't know what they were fencing in but they built miles and miles of fence. I remember my brother went to Vista Viento in California. He got himself into a CCC camp and we were delighted. My folks got \$25 a month that summer as a result of his working in the camp. . . . For a short time, my father worked as a "pusher" at a camp in Radium Springs. Can you image that! That's what the boys used to call him. In the camps they called the supervisors that because they used to push the boys to do the work. That was soon over and he had to resort to his other jobs.

5. Susana Archuleta Looks Back at Jobs with the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration in Northern New Mexico, 1930s

During the Depression, things got bad. My dad passed away when I was about twelve, leaving my mother with eight children and no means of support. . . . My mother took in washings to make a living, and our job was to pick up the washings on the way home from school. We'd pick up clothes from the schoolteachers, the

Document 4: As found in Rita Kasch Chegin, "As It Was in Chiva Town: Elsie Chavez Chilton," in Rita Kasch Chegin, *Survivors: Women of the Southwest* (Las Cruces, NM: Yucca Tree Press, 1991), pp. 30, 32.

Document 5: As found in Nan Elsasser, "Susana Archuleta," in Nan Elsasser, et al., *Las Mujeres: Conversations from a Hispanic Community* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1980), pp. 36–37.

attorney, and what-have-you. Then, at night, we'd help iron them and fold them. . . .

When I was a teenager, the Depression began to take a turn. Franklin Roosevelt was elected, and the works projects started. The boys and young men who'd been laid off at the mines went to the CCC camps, and the girls joined the NYA. . . .

They paid us about twenty-one dollars a month. Out of that we got five and the other sixteen was directly issued to our parents. The same was true of the boys working in the camps. They got about thirty dollars a month. They were allowed to keep five of it. The rest was sent to their families. All of us were hired according to our family income. If a man with a lot of children was unemployed, he was given preference over someone who had less children. . . . Those programs were great. Everybody got a chance to work.

6. Bert Corona Remembers the Civil Works Administration Camps in El Paso, Texas, 1934

I remember the 1929 crash. . . . I didn't understand what radio and newspaper accounts of the crisis meant for the daily life of people. But I recall that as 1930 came on, the layoffs began in El Paso. . . .

People's wages were cut. . . . Jobs became harder and harder to find; there were many unemployed. By the end of 1930 and the beginning of 1931, we saw all the manifestations of a severe economic crisis in El Paso. . . .

The election of FDR, however, changed the political climate. . . .

The New Deal opened up programs such as the CWA [Civil Works Administration] in El Paso. These work programs provided single men with dormitories and camps where they were housed and fed. The men kept the places clean. They worked if there was work. In the camps, they had recreational activities. They also had discussion groups.

Two or three of those camps were opened in El Paso not very far from where I lived, on Angie and Missouri streets above the second layer of railroad tracks. We lived adjacent to the tracks in a row of houses. This was between 1931 and 1935, the pit of the depression. Besides being close to one of the CWA camps, we were in close proximity to an NYA center that had been set up out of a large converted warehouse on Missouri Street.

Document 6: As found in Bert Corona, "Border Depression," in Mario T. García, *Memories of Chicano History: The Life and Narrative of Bert Corona* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 56-58.

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