

# HARD TIMES!

## The Great Depression Takes Hold



- Many farmers put themselves into debt during the 1920s by purchasing expensive machinery to increase efficiency
  - they produced more than was needed
  - farm prices fell
- Following seasons of drought, severe dust storms in the early and mid-1930s crippled the Midwest





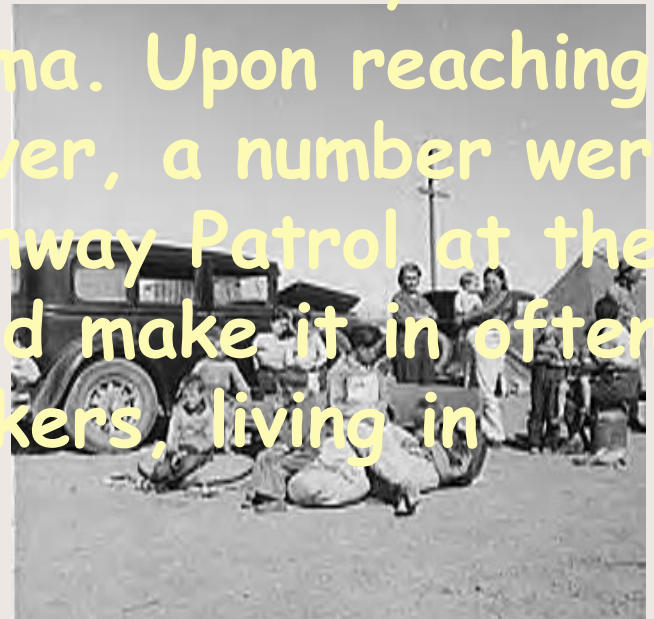
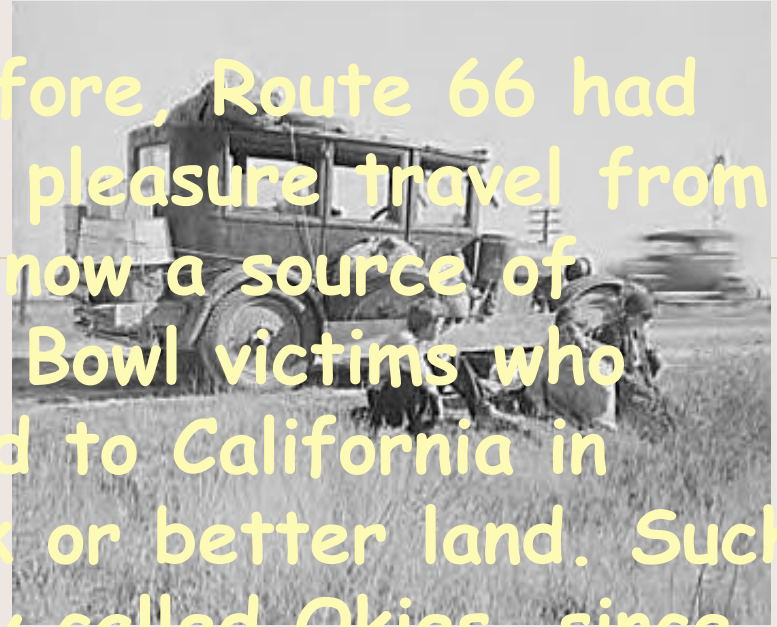
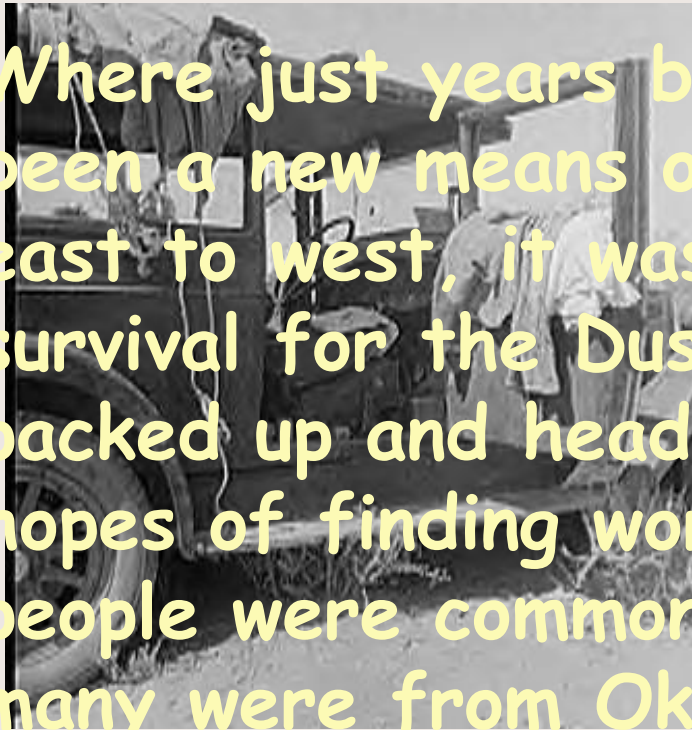
- About one-third of all Americans were farmers at this time
- Between 1930 and 1934, one million families lost their farms
  - many moved west to find jobs or fertile land

- crops were ruined
- hungry families were forced to abandon farms





Where just years before, Route 66 had been a new means of pleasure travel from east to west, it was now a source of survival for the Dust Bowl victims who packed up and headed to California in hopes of finding work or better land. Such people were commonly called Okies, since many were from Oklahoma. Upon reaching the Golden State, however, a number were turned away by the Highway Patrol at the state line. Those who did make it in often found work as farm workers, living in migrant camps.



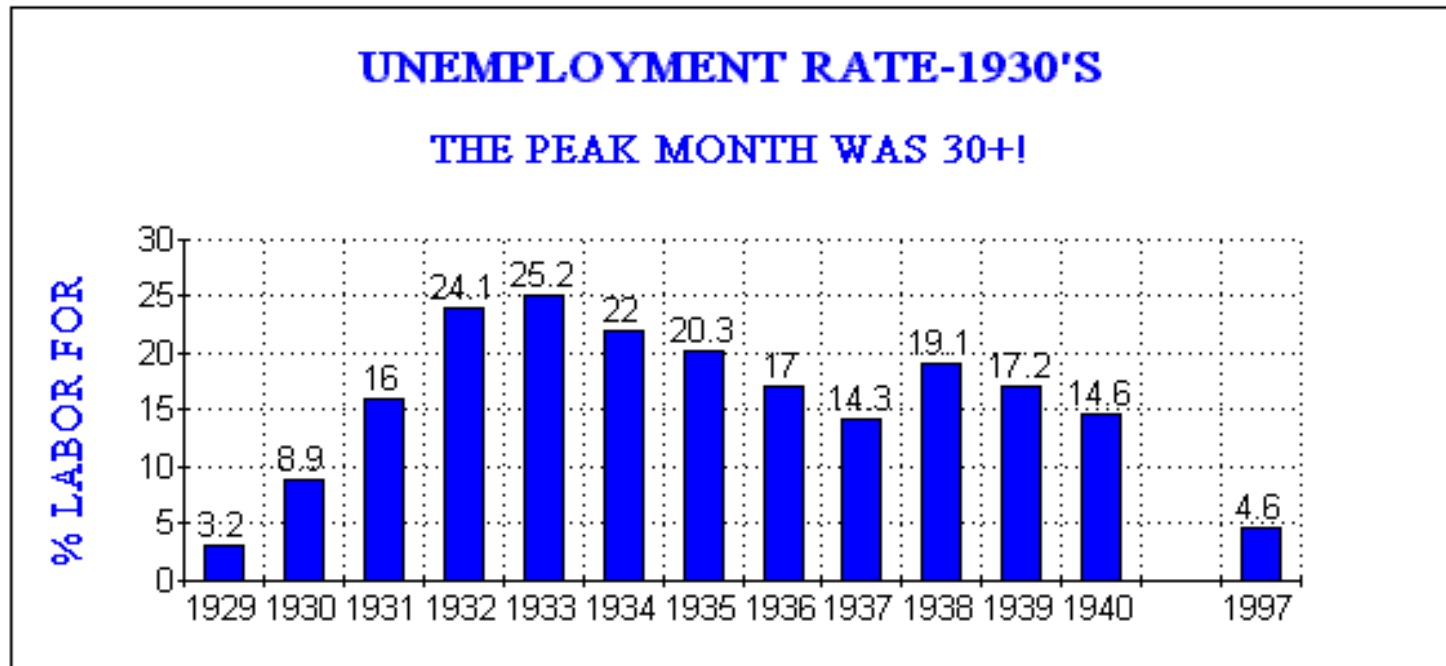
- In the beginning of the Depression, unemployed workers could expect little or no help from the government

- many unemployed attempted their own business successes

- the Depression was symbolized by the apple sellers



- By 1933, unemployment in the United States had topped out at 25 percent



- Aided by President Roosevelt's New Deal programs, the numbers gradually dropped
- WWII provided the final push in getting people back to work



A man in Detroit holds a sign explaining that he wants work, not charity. This illustrates the work ethic and value our society placed on self-reliance during this time.

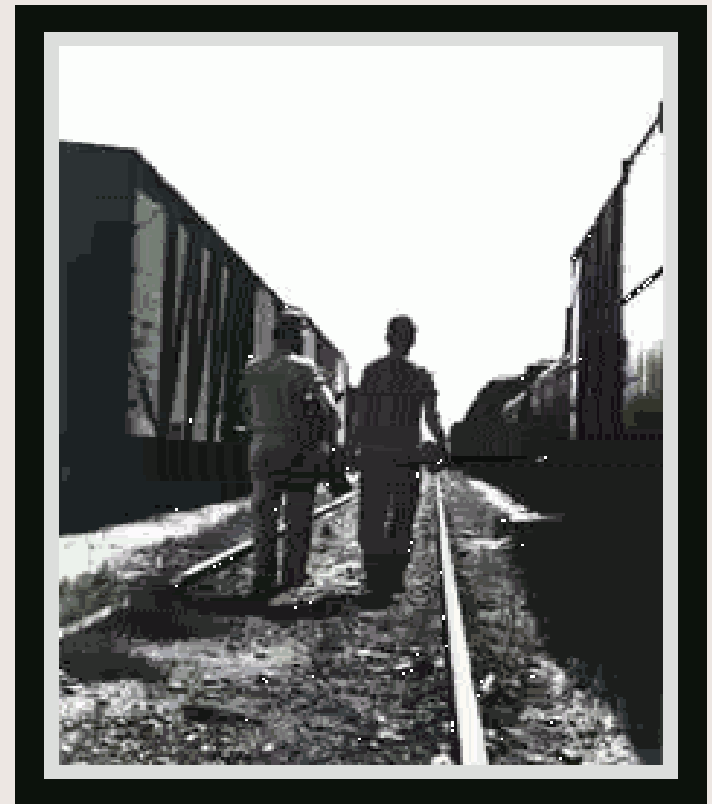
- businesses which hadn't failed, struggled along
- wages of those lucky enough to stay employed were cut to as low as 10 cents an hour
- unemployment sapped individual self-worth
- great lengths were taken to find work





- many even left families for weeks, even months, looking for work

- some hitched rides or walked from town to town
- others engaged in the dangerous practice of riding the rails





- Hundreds of thousands were forced by poverty and hunger to accept charity
- Most who accepted handouts felt shame, humiliation, and degradation
- The concept of “bread lines” was established to feed the hungry



- Increased unemployment, low wages, and business and bank failures contributed to the growing number of homeless people in the Depression



- tin, cardboard, orange crates, and other throw-away items were used to build makeshift shacks, or shanties

- condemned buildings and railroad cars also served as dwellings



- “Hoovervilles” - so named out of the belief that President Hoover didn’t do enough to help the poor - sprang up in most major cities

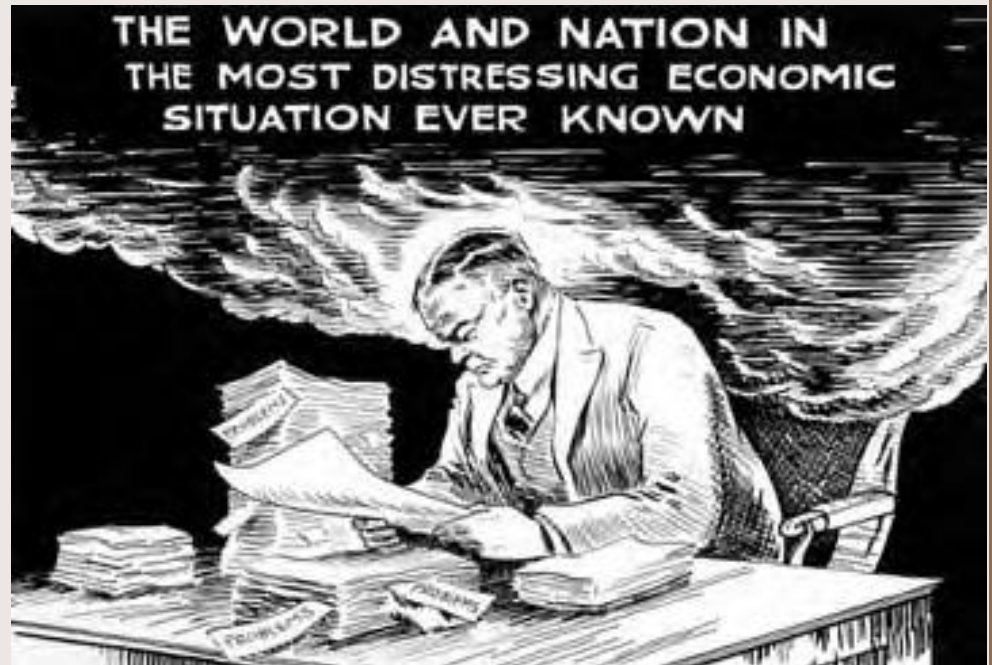
▪ Hoover's Republican advisors initially believed that depression was an inevitable part of the economic cycle, and not cause for concern



▪ In 1930, Hoover attempted to restore peoples' faith in economy and urged leaders not to panic by cutting production



- Hoover opposed direct relief action by the federal government but urged a massive relief effort by private charities and volunteer organizations
- In late 1931, Hoover pushed for the creation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, designed to make loans to banks and other businesses
  - it passed Congress in 1932



- Hoover's popularity diminished as the Depression wore on, and, rightly or wrongly, he became the scapegoat for the misery created by the Depression



- The Democratic Party chose Roosevelt largely due to his name recognition and the successful relief plan he had created for the unemployed as governor of New York
- Roosevelt, in contrast to Hoover, pledged to take "bold, persistent" action to try to combat the problems of the Depression





- Roosevelt gained support from city dwellers, farmers, immigrants, and the working class as he promised America a "new deal"

- Roosevelt loved campaigning, and, unlike Hoover's, his crowds were adoring

- In the 1932 presidential election, Roosevelt won 58% of the popular vote and 472 out of 531 electoral votes





- Throughout the 1932 election campaign, F.D.R. radiated charm and confidence
  - he voiced optimism and promise for a desperate nation
- As a lame-duck, Hoover urged F.D.R. to carry out certain policies that he deemed essential
  - F.D.R. refused



▪ So strained was their relationship that they barely spoke to each other on inauguration day

