



The Great Depre\$\$ion

According to one Detroit, the Great Depression taught her “about survival.” The Depression of the 1930s was a desperate time. Millions of Americans lost their jobs, went hungry, and were forced to give up their homes.

The Depression started because Americans lived beyond their means in the 1920s. They bought cars, homes, and businesses on **credit**. In 1929 prices and wages began to fall. Americans could not pay their bills or buy new things. Factories made fewer products and many workers lost their jobs.

Few Americans escaped the effects of the Depression. Among the hardest hit were autoworkers. In 1929, Americans produced more than 5 million vehicles. By 1932 that figure had dropped to 1.3 million. Falling auto sales left many autoworkers without jobs. Detroit soon had the nation’s highest **unemployment** rate. One out of every two workers was without a job.

Because there was no **unemployment insurance**, the unemployed turned to private charities and local

government agencies for help. Soup kitchens opened to feed the hungry. The city of Detroit fixed up an empty warehouse for the homeless. These efforts could not keep up with the growing number of people who needed help. A desperate

Frank Murphy, mayor of Detroit, asked the federal government to help, but with little success. President Herbert Hoover feared that helping the unemployed would discourage them from seeking a new job. Instead, Hoover also claimed, **prosperity** was “just around the corner.”

The Depression entered its third year with no sign of ending. Banks closed and thousands of investors lost their life savings. In Detroit, about 150 families lost their homes each day because they could not make their house payments. At the same time, one doctor estimated that four Detroiters died every day from starvation.

In November 1932, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the governor of New York, was elected president of the United States. In his **inaugural** address, Roosevelt promised “to wage a war against the emergency.” He introduced a plan called the New Deal. The New Deal used the power of the federal government to **stabilize** the economy, help the unemployed, and restore hope that better times lay ahead.

WORK-IS-WHAT-I
WANT-AND-NOT-CHARITY
WHO-WILL-HELP-ME-
GET-A-JOB.-7YEARS-
IN-DETROIT.NO-MONEY
SENT-AWAY-FURNISH-
BEST-OF-REFERENCES
PHONE RANDOLPH 838, ROOM
#59.



An unemployed worker in Detroit, in 1932

During the Great Depression, thousands of young people wrote to First Lady Eleanor

Roosevelt for help. They asked for clothing, money, and other forms of assistance that their families could not provide. During her first year in the White House, Mrs. Roosevelt received 300,000 pieces of mail. She continued to receive many letters in the years that followed. The First Lady had a secretary in charge of her mail. She selected 50 letters a day for Mrs. Roosevelt to read. The letter at right was from a little girl in Bangor, Michigan.

Bangor, Mich.
April 27, 1935

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

I am appealing to you because I know you might be able to help me. I graduate this year and I haven't enough money to buy a dress. I give all I earn for food for the family.

I have been worried and this is the only solution I could come to. I need a light dress and as I am quite little I would need about size 14 or 15 in dresses. I would think it was the grace of God if I received just a plain little graduation dress.

I'll have to get along without white shoes although I've always craved a pair of pumps size 5 1/2 or 5's that I never will get until I get a job which I will work very hard to get.

If I had a lot of money I would take up a nurses course and work for charity. Just to get the pleasure of healing people.
Graduate May 28, "35"

P.S. It's only because I hate to go on stage with the other girls in my shabby dress. My father works when he is able.

Your Pleading Friend,
Miss E. B.

My dear Miss B.:

Mrs. Roosevelt has asked me to acknowledge your letter for her. She is very sorry indeed that she cannot comply with your wishes, but owing to the large number of similar requests, it is impossible for her to do as you ask.

Assuring you of her regret,
I am.

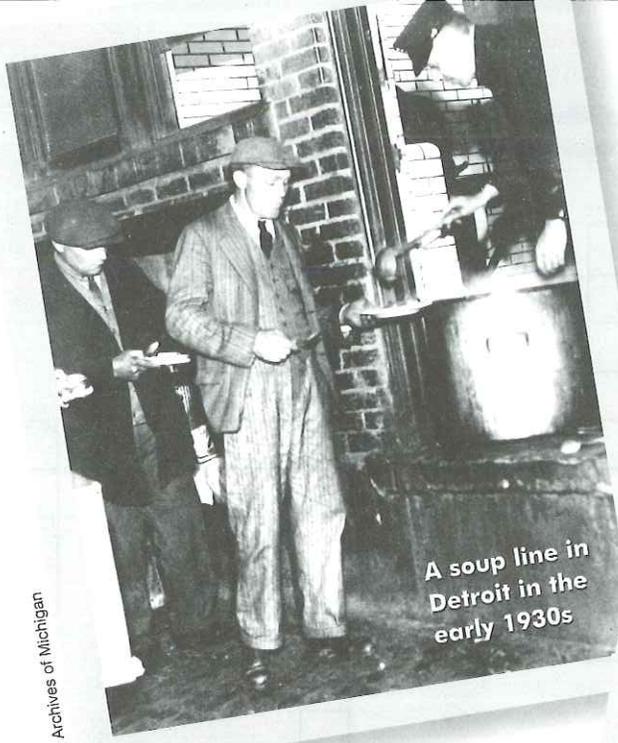
Very sincerely yours,
Secretary to Mrs. Roosevelt



Eleanor Roosevelt (center)

FDR Library

Letter to the
**FIRST
LADY**



State Archives of Michigan

A soup line in Detroit in the early 1930s



President Roosevelt (left) discussing matters with Detroit mayor Frank Murphy

Walter P. Reuther Library, Wayne State University

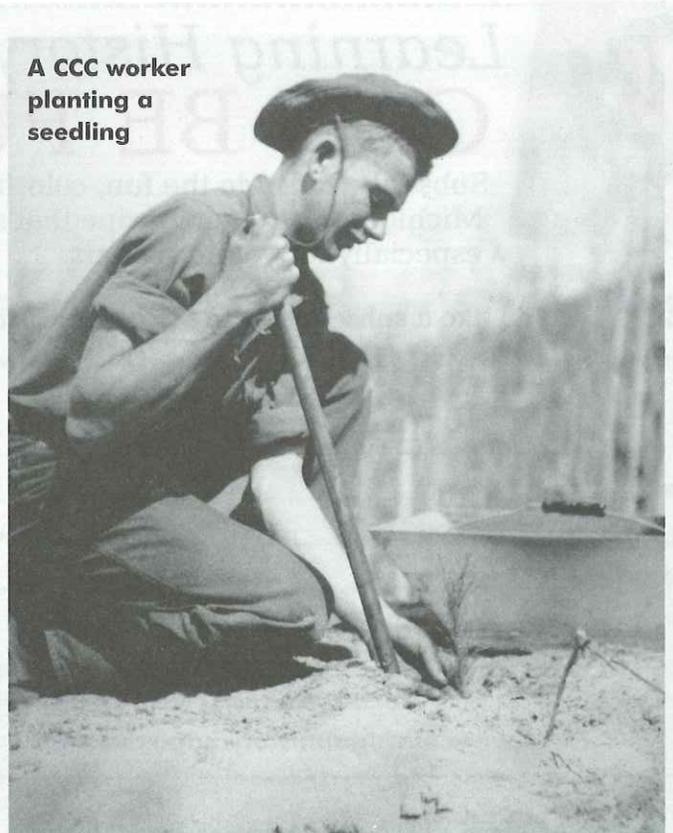
FACES of the DEPRESSION

MILLIONS OF Americans lost their jobs during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Without a job, many men were forced to stand in soup lines to get a meal.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president in early 1933 the Great Depression had been going on for more than three years. He suggested a recovery program called the New Deal.

Roosevelt's favorite New Deal program was the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Known as Roosevelt's Tree Army, the CCC hired unemployed young men to do conservation work, including planting tree seedlings.

State Archives of Michigan



A CCC worker planting a seedling

What Did You Learn?

ACROSS

- Falling _____ sales left many autoworkers without jobs.
- President Franklin _____ decided to make programs to help the unemployed.
- The 1930s became known as the Great _____.
- President Herbert _____ believed prosperity was "just around the corner."

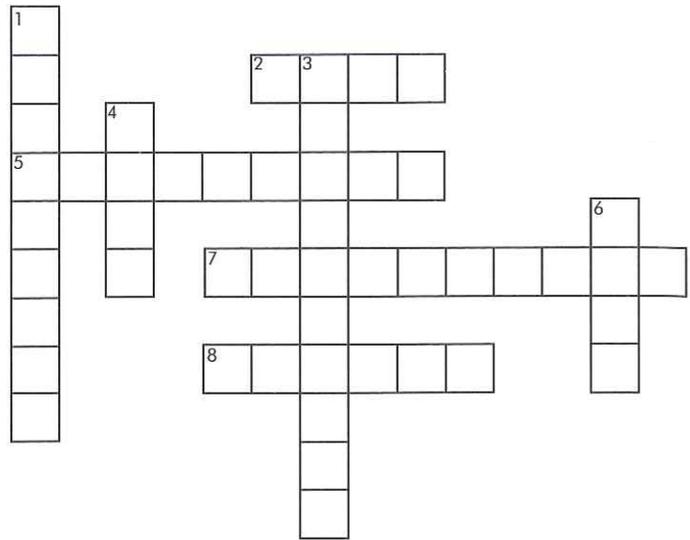
DOWN

- Since there was no unemployment insurance, people had to depend on _____.
- People with jobs were employed, people without jobs were _____.
- Many people lost their _____.
- Charities helped fight starvation by offering people food in _____ kitchens.

Word List

(in random order)

SOUP
 JOBS
 HOOVER
 DEPRESSION
 CHARITIES
 AUTO
 UNEMPLOYED
 ROOSEVELT



Opening page
 photo: Walter P.
 Reuther Library,
 Wayne State
 University

Vocabulary

Credit: A loan, or putting off paying for something until later

Unemployed: Losing your job

Unemployment insurance: Money paid to workers who have lost their jobs

Prosperity: Having success, usually involving money

Inaugural: A speech given by the president after he or she is sworn into office

Stabilize: To make stable or secure