

Herbert Hoover was a hero of World War I when he put his business skills to work to provide hunger relief to Belgium. He is credited with saving millions of lives through his efforts. After the war, he served in several capacities and had many accomplishments that propelled him to the presidency in 1928. It was Hoover's bad luck that he took office the same year the US economy went on a downward spiral. It was the beginning of the Great Depression.

President Hoover underestimated the seriousness of the Depression. He failed to act swiftly in order to help citizens who had lost everything from their jobs to their savings and homes. There were no federal welfare programs for the poor in America at this time in our history. Herbert Hoover's philosophy was that the federal government did not have any business coordinating social welfare. He thought that local volunteers and state communities should be in charge of helping their poor. It was also his opinion that intervention by the federal government would undermine capitalism and individualism. The millions of suffering American citizens regarded President Hoover as someone who did not care about the people who were in desperate situations; unemployed, homeless and unable to feed their families.



"Prosperity cannot be restored by raids on the public Treasury."

-Herbert Hoover

What happened the same year that Herbert Hoover became president?

What was Hoover's first mistake in handling the Depression?

Why was Hoover's reaction to the Depression more critical to the citizens' wellbeing in 1929 than it probably would be today?

Highlight the philosophy of Herbert Hoover when it came to federal intervention in social welfare.

Think About It! How is his philosophy on federal intervention in social welfare in contrast with his work during WWI? Why?

Soup Kitchens

During the Great Depression millions of Americans lost all their savings, jobs, homes, and were struggling to survive. Communities around the nation opened Soup Kitchens to help feed the starving people in their communities.

Soup kitchens were ran by churches and volunteer organizations. They began by providing one meal a day that was usually vegetable soup and bread. People would donate vegetables from their gardens and eventually began growing charity gardens just for the soup kitchens. If more people lined up for the meal than the volunteers anticipated, they added water to the soup broth to stretch it further. This diminished the nutrient value, but more people were fed.

Notorious gangster, Al Capone funded one of the first and largest Soup Kitchens in Chicago. He even expanded to three meals per day to help the people in his community. He did this to improve his reputation as a known leader of organized crime.

As the Depression deepened, President Hoover allocated \$4 million to fund Soup Kitchens all across the nation. The federal dollars increased the number of people and meals they could afford to serve per day.

Think About It! Why were Soup Kitchens only around the cities and not out in the rural areas?

What information in the text infers that the Depression lasted a long time?

Why do you think the starving people in the Soup Kitchen line have such nice hats and coats?



Hooverville

The Great Depression caused mass unemployment.. If you had any savings in the bank, it was wiped out when the stock market crashed and the banks failed. There was no banking insurance to protect your money like there is today. People began to get evicted from their homes when they couldn't pay their bills. They had no place to go or any hope of finding a job. Families built shelters from cardboard, tin, and any thing they could find that was discarded and lying around. These shanty shacks became little communities of people built up around the outskirts of cities. They were usually near a river or a water source. They called these shantytowns Hoovervilles because they blamed the president for their troubles and the condition of the country. They had lots of nicknames for hard times that had Hoover in it. The newspapers people used for warmth were called "Hoover Blankets". The pockets of pants pulled out to show you were broke were called "Hoover Flags". The cars pulled by horses because gas wasn't affordable were called "Hoover Wagons".

The Hooverville shantytowns sometimes were very large. The biggest and longest lasting was near St. Louis Missouri and had more than 1,000 residents. These shantytowns were unsanitary, carried diseases, and could be crime ridden. Sometimes the police would do a raid and destroy the town and run the people off. They often felt guilty about it because they felt sorry for the people.

President Hoover was a very unpopular president. He was blamed for the Depression even though it was caused in part by things occurring before he ever took office. When Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected he had a plan to help the people. He ended up being elected for 4 terms.

Why were so many things named after Hoover during the Depression?

Describe a Hooverville.

Why was Hoover such an unpopular president?



Hoover Wagon



Hooverville near Seattle