The Great Depression: Mired in Poverty

Herbert Hoover was elected president of the United States in 1928. In his victory speech he said, “We in America today are nearer to the final triumph over poverty than ever before in the history of any land. The poorhouse is vanishing among us.”

Less than a year later, in October of 1929, the stock market crashed. Many people lost their life savings. Businesses and banks closed, and people didn’t have jobs. Suddenly there were more poor Americans than ever before.

The Great Depression lasted until the end of World War II, in 1945—almost seventeen years of national struggle. The United States’ economic depression began to affect the entire world. Some feel it helped dictators like Adolf Hitler come to power. People were desperate to have their lives get better.

Day-to-day life was not good. Things were even worse for people in the middle part of the United States. In 1931 and 1932 there was a long drought; the Midwest and the South became known as the Dust Bowl. A lot of farmers had borrowed a lot of money to buy equipment. Now they couldn’t sell their crops and couldn’t pay back the money.

It was a hard time that people who lived through would remember all their lives. Members of the Great Depression generation often grew up to be frugal, hardworking people who saved their money and distrusted banks! They would never forget what it was like to be constantly hungry and to go without the things they needed and wanted.