

Part A: After World War I and before World War II

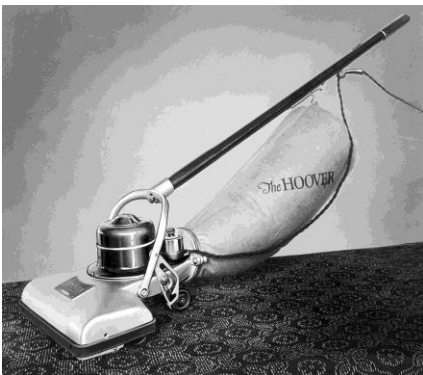
Vocabulary Words: standard of living, market place, labor saving appliances, poverty, organized crime, political corruption, Prohibition, Great Depression, brink, bankruptcy, Burlap sacks, food pantry, IOU, bartering

After World War I, the economy in the United States was strong. Everyone had more money to spend. **The standard of living** rose. This period in the United States, from 1920 to 1929, was called the Roaring Twenties. People wanted to enjoy themselves. Many new inventions entered the **market place** to make people's lives easier. Some were **labor saving appliances** such as refrigerators, washing machines, and vacuum cleaners. Others were automobiles and telephones. Life in the cities changed much more than life in the country. Alabama was a rural state at that time. So life in rural Alabama did not change as much as the rest of the United States.

<http://livingstandards1920s.weebly.com/index.html> This website explains more about America in the 1920s.



A Well-developed City in 1920



Early Vacuum Cleaner by Hoover



Early Washing Machine by Kenmore

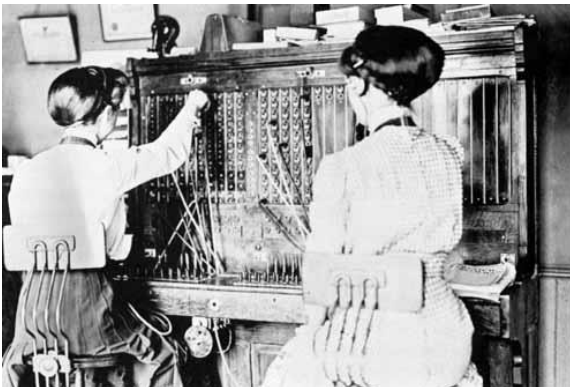
During World War One and in the early 1920's, making a phone call was very different from today. You would pick up the telephone receiver and ask the operator to connect you to a certain number. The operator would be at a switchboard and connect your number to the number you were calling. You would wait for the ring to bring someone to the other phone. Then the operator would hang up after she made the connection...or not. Many people had what was called party lines. This meant that when you were talking on the phone, the people on your party line could pick up their phones and hear what you were saying. They might even tell you to hurry-up and get off the phone so they could call someone. There were not usually more than 10 people on a party line and each household had its own ring. For example, your ring might be two short rings and one long; your neighbor's might be two long and two short. This way you would know when someone was calling you.

Direct dialing was introduced in 1921 but took many years to implement. Even as far as 1950, many households did not have direct dialing.

<https://marymiley.wordpress.com/.../how-to-make-a-phone-call-in-the-roaring-twentie...>



Early Dial Phone



Early Switchboard and operators



During Prohibition liquor was poured into the streets



Orange County (California) sheriff's deputies dumping illegal alcohol, 1932.

Photo courtesy Orange County Archives.

In 1920 the Congress of the United States passed the 18th Amendment to the United States Constitution. It made selling or buying alcohol illegal. People called this new law **Prohibition**. Prohibition was supposed to reduce **poverty**, crime and violence in the United States. Instead, the nation had more violence, **organized crime**, gangsters, and **political corruption**. A famous gangster during this time of Prohibition was Al Capone. In 1933, Congress passed the 21st Amendment to end Prohibition.

Compare the two pictures below. What do you see in each one? How are they different?



Living room at "the Hideout," the Northwoods retreat of Chicago gangster Al Capone during Prohibition, Couderay, Wisconsin. *Courtesy of Library of Congress.*



Children of the Tenge family, some of the subjects of Walker Evans's depression-era documentary photography of Hale County, AL sharecroppers. *Picture Courtesy of the Library of Congress*

In 1929 the Roaring Twenties ended. The **Great Depression** began. It lasted more than ten years. The economy was very weak. Everyone in the United States became poorer. Many, many people lost their jobs. But most of all, they lost their money because the banks failed. People stood in long lines to get their money out of the banks, but the money was gone. It was a very hard time for most people in the United States.

In rural Alabama, life was much harder than it ever was. Many people lived on the **brink of bankruptcy**. The farmers especially suffered. They lived on the brink of starvation. Farmers could grow their own vegetables, but they didn't have enough money to buy cows or chickens. They ate more beans and corn and less meat. They didn't have enough money to buy cloth to make clothes. So they made clothes using **burlap sacks**. The people in rural Alabama had such a hard life often the children quit school. The families stopped going to church. Everyone stayed home and no longer went to social events.



Burlap feed sacks used for clothing

In the cities, life was hard but people had more help. For example, churches established **food pantries** to give away food. They collected used clothing to give away clothes to people who could not buy them. Children went to school but the government could not pay the teachers. It gave the teachers **IOUs** instead. The government promised to pay the teachers later when it had more money. **Bartering** became common because there was no money. If a person went to the doctor, the person brought a chicken to pay the doctor, for example. If a person needed a lawyer, the person offered to paint the lawyer's house instead of giving the lawyer money.

Vocabulary Words

1. Standard of living: the necessary things people need to live a comfortable life.
In The Story: After World War I, people in Alabama had a higher standard of living so they had more things that made their lives comfortable.
2. Market place: a place in town where products are bought and sold; the stores; the farmer's market
In The Story: After World War I, people could buy washers and dryers in stores where they lived.
3. Labor saving appliances: labor means work by men or women, especially hard physical work; for example, a plumber who comes to your house to fix a broken pipe will charge you for parts and labor. This means he will charge you for the pipe he has to replace (parts) and for his time to fix it (labor). Labor saving appliances are machines that reduce the time a person has to work; for example, a clothes dryer dries the clothes instead of a person having to hang all the clothes outside on a line.
In the Story: After World War I, many of the inventions saved people time from working.
4. Poverty: not enough money or goods for what a person needs. For example, some people who live in poverty do not have enough food to eat.
In the Story: Some people thought that not being able to buy alcohol would help people stay out of poverty and have more money to buy what they need.
5. Organized Crime: illegal activities that are planned and carried out by a group of people to get money. Organized crime is not a small group; for example, two people who plan to rob a bank is not called organized crime. Organized Crime means large groups of people who plan and act like a team to carry out these plans.
In the Story: During the 1920s several large groups of people organized and carried out a very big plan to hire people to make alcohol and to hire more people to sell alcohol; they had to find ways to hide all this from the police.
6. Political Corruption: political means the men and women who are elected to run our government. Corrupt means dishonest. Political corruption is a term used when our elected officials are dishonest. One way they were dishonest in 1920s was to take money from the people involved in organized crime. These people would try to pay politicians not to report them to the police.
In the Story: Not all the politicians were corrupt. But during this time the number of politicians who were corrupt increased. They would lie and not report the crime they knew about.
7. Prohibition Era: a time in the United States from 1920 – 1933 when it was against the law to make or sell alcohol.
In the Story: the Prohibition Era was a time of more organized crime and political corruption.

8. Great Depression: this was a time in our United States history from 1929 - 1939 when many businesses failed and people lost jobs so they could not buy the things that needed or wanted. **In The Story:** During the Great Depression many people did without certain kinds of food and clothes.
9. Brink: a point at which something, typically something unwelcome, is about to happen; the edge.
In The Story: During the Great Depression many people did not have enough food and they almost starved. They were on the brink of starvation.
10. Bankruptcy: a term that means not being able to pay your debts.
In The Story: During the Great Depression many people were very close to losing everything they had because they could not pay their debts. For example, if they had borrowed money to buy a tractor and could not make the payments, they could lose their tractor. They were on the brink of bankruptcy.
11. Burlap feed and fertilizer sacks: burlap is a rough cloth made usually from the jute plant. Burlap is used mostly to make bags for cattle feed, fertilizer, and concrete.
In The Story: Many people did not have money for clothes. They would buy fertilizer and cattle feed in burlap bags. Once the fertilizer or feed was used, they would take the bags and make clothes. (See picture below.)
12. Food Pantry: a place where a group organizes donated foodstuffs to give to people in need.
In The Story: During the Great Depression so many people needed food that the churches and community groups organized places where people could drop off extra food to be given to the people who needed it.
13. IOU: the abbreviation for I owe you. This is a promise to pay a debt, usually with a signed paper.
In The Story: During the Great Depression the government did not have enough money to pay school teachers and other workers, so they often gave them a piece of paper with the amount owed and the words IOU. This meant that when the economy recovered, the government would pay what they owed.
14. Bartering: exchanging things; exchange a product or service for money.
In The Story: During the Great Depression, people bartered to pay for things because they had no money.