

# Oklahoma's Hooverville



**By spring of 1933, when FDR took the oath of office, unemployment had risen from 8 to 15 million (roughly 1/3 of the non-farmer workforce.)**





**Breadlines and Hoovervilles  
(homeless encampments) appeared  
across the nation.**

**Hoovervilles were often  
formed in desolate areas and  
consisted of dozens or  
hundreds of shacks and tents  
that were temporary  
residences of those left  
unemployed and homeless.**



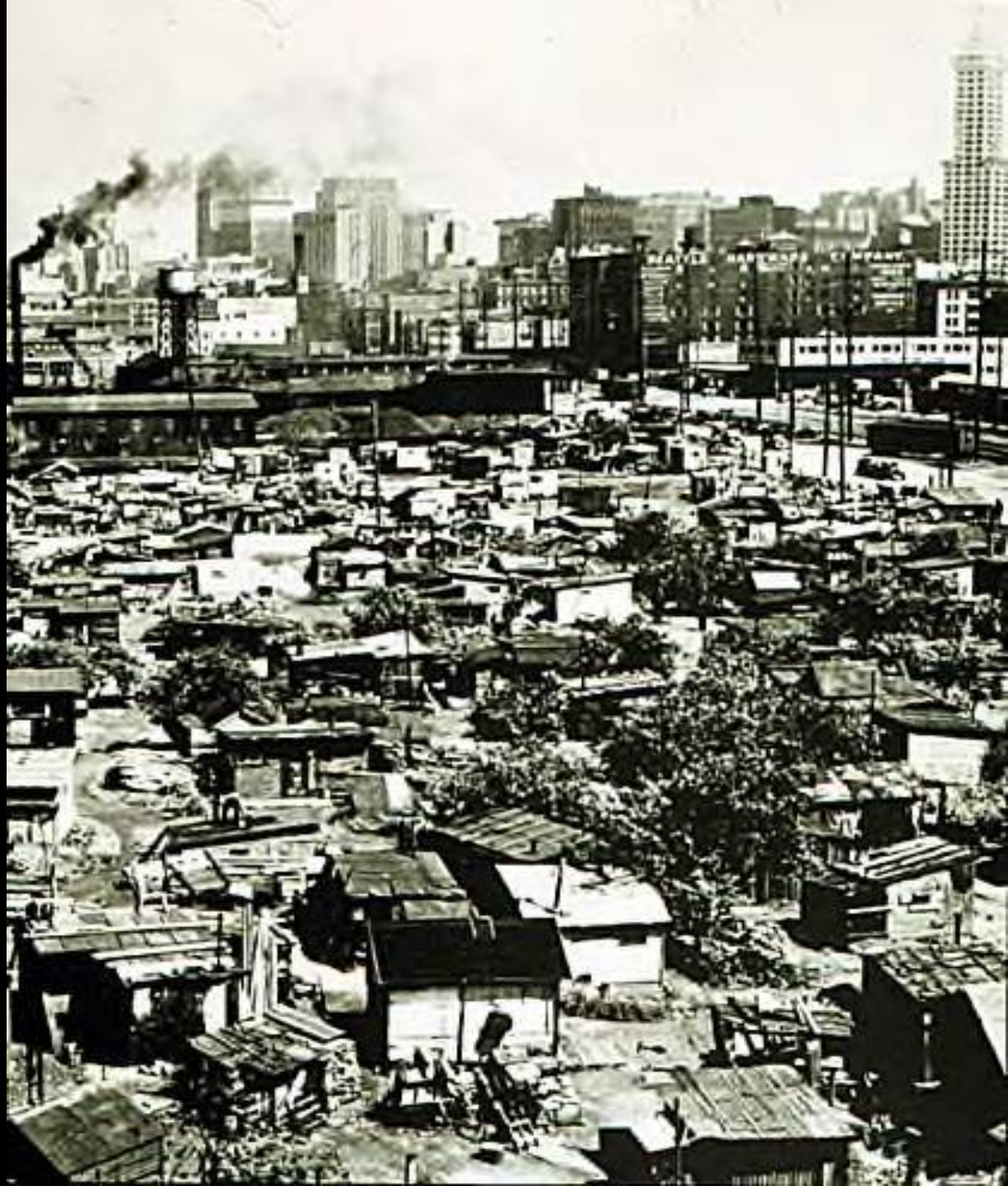
# ***Portland***



***Cleveland***



***During 1934,  
a census of  
Seattle's  
Hooverville  
finds 632 men  
and seven  
women living in  
479 shanties.***







***New York City,  
Central Park***



# ***Sacramento***





**Hoovervilles were a familiar part of the Oklahoma City skyline for nearly a decade.**



**Populated by  
families from  
all walks of life  
and  
occupations,**







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**...from those  
who lost their  
farms, hoping  
to find work in  
the city...**



***Norman family, lost farm the year before, 1939***



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**...to blue  
collar urban  
workers,  
left  
unemployed  
from factory  
and small  
business  
closings...**







..and professionals,  
teachers and bankers.

**The series of “Hooverville”  
shacktowns, or “sandtowns”  
extended for eight miles and were  
home to hundreds of families.**



**Oklahoma City officials were powerless to stop the influx of settlers on public property along the south side of the Canadian River.**

**This particular camp was known as the Mays Avenue Community camp.**





*May Avenue bridge,  
southside, Canadian River*

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**By the mid 1930s, Oklahoma City  
officials established a few  
“formal” community camps,  
such as Elm Grove,  
where residents were given  
official permission to live...**


**...and  
provided  
with access  
to drinking  
water for a  
nominal  
monthly fee.**





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ELM GROVE  
NO

Trespassing  
Lots \$1. Per Month  
See Office Or  
Health Officer

***Rent: one dollar, collected by the city,  
no sanitation.***

**Many residents refused  
charity hand-outs, preferring  
to rely on odd jobs and scavaging  
for necessities,  
known as “trashing.”**



***Food  
distributed  
by Saint  
Anthony's  
hospital  
after  
patients had  
been fed;  
the only  
foodline in  
Oklahoma  
City by 1939.***

*Sorting fruit discarded  
from the downtown  
farmer's market.*



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*...shack with pidgeon coop*



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*Many residents of this camp sneak into the stockyards early in the morning to milk cows.*



***Daily life, chores, and common routines were preserved by federal photographers, such as Russell Lee, who recorded all images we have of the Mays Community Camp, as well as other camps in the Oklahoma City area.***





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***"We may not have much of a home here  
but we will have one in Heaven."***



# Oklahoma's Hooverville



# Sources:

- Library of Congress
- National Archives
- Edmond Public Schools  
Social Studies Curriculum Office

