

Photograph of a "Hooverville"

Introduction

“Hoovervilles” were temporary communities that America’s homeless created to provide shelter for themselves and their families. They were so named as an insult to President Herbert Hoover, who seemed to be hardened to the plight of Americans during the Depression.

Questions for Discussion

Read the document introduction, view the photograph, and then use your knowledge of American history to answer the questions that follow.

1. What word or words would you use initially to describe the scene in this photograph? Explain your choice.
2. Why were people living in houses constructed of used lumber, scrap metal, and even cardboard? What basic comforts did they lack?
3. Why were these communities referred to as Hoovervilles?

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Image



Hooverville in Portland, Oregon, photograph by Arthur Rothstein, July 1936. (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)