



Teaching with Primary Sources Across Tennessee

PRIMARY SOURCE SET: DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

When the widespread prosperity of the Jazz Age during the 1920s came to a crash on Wall Street in 1929, life changed for many Americans. Following the stock market crash came an economic depression which threatened people's jobs, savings, homes, and farms.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president in 1933, he introduced the New Deal. The New Deal included banking reform laws, emergency relief programs, work relief programs, agricultural programs, union protection programs, the Social Security Act, Tennessee Valley Authority, and programs to aid tenant farmers and migrant workers.

The New Deal also became a time of hope and optimism, despite the fact that the Depression lingered until the United States entered World War II in 1941. During the 1930s and early 1940s, Tennessee transformed from a rural landscape with limited access to electricity to a state capable of hosting the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA). This not only provided electricity for several states, but also provided much-needed jobs for one of the poorest regions in the nation at the time. In addition to electric power and jobs, TVA provided flood control and produced fertilizer, which helped farmers with over-worked land.



[Wilson Dam, Alabama \(Tennessee Valley Authority \(TVA\)\). Civilian Conservation Corps \(CCC\) boy weeds loblolly pine seedlings at TVA nursery.](#) [1942-detail]

ADDITIONAL LINKS

- [Born in Slavery: Slave Narratives from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1938](#)
- [By the People, For the People: Posters from the WPA, 1936-1943](#)
- [America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1935-1945](#)
- [Federal Theatre Project Collection](#)
- [American Life Histories: Manuscripts from the Federal Writers' Project, 1936-1940](#)

Also see:

- [Timeline: Great Depression and World War II](#)
- West, Carroll Van. *Tennessee's New Deal Landscape*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2001.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

This primary source set includes images from the Great Depression and New Deal in Tennessee. For more primary source sets related to this topic, click [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). You can also see the primary source sets created based on the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Dust Bowl [here](#). Assign students a city or town in Tennessee. Have students research how the Depression and the New Deal affected their assigned town or city using sources on the [Library of Congress Web site](#). Look at the landscape of the area today. Is there anything remaining from the New Deal programs left?

For additional ideas related to New Deal programs see the following lesson plans and activities from the TPS-TN web site: [Coming Out of the Depression and into War in Tennessee](#), [Skyline Farms, Alabama: A New Deal Community](#), [Comparing & Contrasting Communities: Cumberland Homesteads, TN & Skyline Farms, AL](#), and [Exploring FSA Photography & Photojournalism: Gee's Bend, Alabama](#).



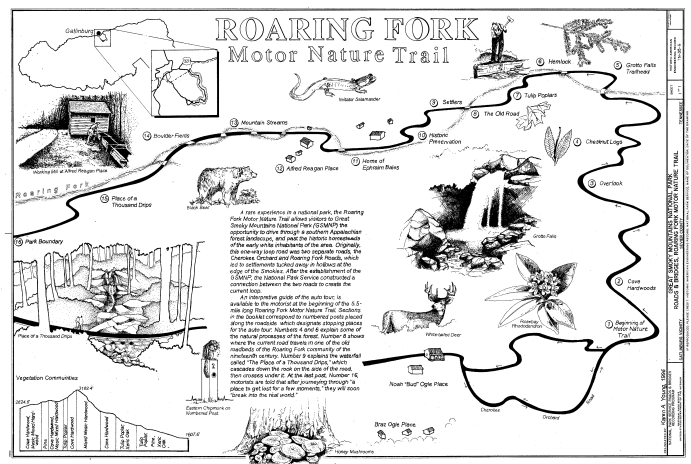
[Resettlement official investigating case of nine living in field on U.S. Route 70 between Camden and Bruceton, Tennessee, near Tennessee River](#) [1936]



[Bale of cotton after compressing. Memphis, Tennessee.](#) [1939]



["See America / Dux."](#) [between 1936 and 1939]



[Great Smoky Mountains National Park Roads & Bridges, Roaring Fork Motor Nature Trail, Between Cherokee Orchard Road & U.S. Route 321, Gatlinburg vicinity, Sevier, TN](#) [drawing; 1996]




[Farmyard covered with flood waters near Ridgeley, Tennessee.](#) [1937]



[Miscellaneous design. Libraries in rural areas are among the great needs of the Tennessee Valley. The one shown in this photograph was built and equipped with the assistance of work relief labor out of primitive local materials.](#) [between 1933 and 1945]



[Cotton hoers loading at Memphis, Tennessee for the day's work in Arkansas \[1937\]](#)

Audio recording:

["Cornfield Song" by Henry Truvillion \[1939\]](#)


[A young man's opportunity for work, play, study & health / Bender ; made by Illinois WPA Art Project, Chicago. \[1941\]](#)



[Picket's sign outside copper mine during strike. Ducktown, Tennessee. \[1939\]](#)

At Last - A Mechanical Cotton Picker that Works

A Simple Light-weight Machine that Picks Cotton at a Fraction of Hand Labor Costs



The Revolution in Cotton

The Rust Cotton Picker marks the beginning of a new era in cotton harvesting. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

The Missing Link in the Cotton Industry


The Rust Cotton Picker is the missing link in the cotton industry. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

Machine and Hand Labor Costs Compared

The Rust Cotton Picker costs only \$124.00. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

Other Advantages of the Mechanical Picker

The Rust Cotton Picker is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.



Extremes Simplicity

The Rust Cotton Picker is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

Cotton Delivery System

The Rust Cotton Picker has a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

Capacity

The Rust Cotton Picker can pick cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

Points to Remember

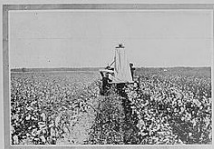
The Rust Cotton Picker is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.

How It Operates . . .

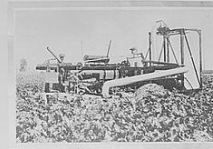
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Acts as a Grader

The Rust Cotton Picker is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor. It is a simple, light-weight machine that picks cotton at a fraction of the cost of hand labor.



VIEW OF RUST COTTON PICKER OPERATIONAL MODEL AT WORK ON A COTTON PASTURE, NORTH BUCKINGHAM, IOWA



VIEW OF RUST COTTON PICKER OPERATIONAL MODEL AT WORK ON AN ARIZONA PASTURE, 1940

RUST COTTON PICKER CO. MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE

[Mechanization of cotton. \[between 1935 and 1942\]](#)

CITATIONS: DEPRESSION AND THE NEW DEAL

Teachers: Providing these primary source replicas without source clues may enhance the inquiry experience for students. This list of citations is supplied for reference purposes to you and your students. We have followed the Chicago Manual of Style format, one of the formats recommended by the Library of Congress, for each entry below, minus the access date. The access date for each of these entries is April 28, 2011.

Rothstein, Arthur. "Wilson Dam, Alabama (Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)). Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) boy weeds loblolly pine seedlings at TVA nursery." June 1942. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8d05891\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8d05891))).

Tennessee Valley Authority. "Tennessee Valley Area: pictorial map / prepared by Division of Information, Tennessee Valley Authority." 1939. From the Library of Congress, *Maps Collection*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(g3962t+ct002436\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/gmd:@field(NUMBER+@band(g3962t+ct002436))).

Wolcott, Marion Post. "Bale of cotton after compressing. Memphis, Tennessee." November 1939. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8c11024\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8c11024))).

"Miscellaneous design. Libraries in rural areas are among the great needs of the Tennessee Valley. The one shown in this photograph was built and equipped with the assistance of work relief labor out of primitive local materials." Between 1933 and 1945. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8e00631\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8e00631))).

Dux, Alexander. "See America/ Dux." NYC : Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project, [between 1936 and 1939]. From the Library of Congress, *By the People, For the People: Posters from the WPA, 1936-1943*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpapos:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(cph+3b48745\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpapos:@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3b48745))).

Evans, Walker. "Farmyard covered with flood waters near Ridgeley, Tennessee." February 1937. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(cph+3c29753\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3c29753))).

Lange, Dorothea. "In Memphis, Tennessee hundreds of colored laborers congregated near the bridge every morning at daylight in hopes of work chopping cotton on a plantation. They are hauled to and from work on trucks. Reduced cotton acreage has made employment scarce for this class of seasonal labor in all towns. "You can't live the commonest way on six bits a day. Not alone nor no way. A man like me can't get no foothold. It's a mighty tough old go. The people here in the morning are hungry, raggedy, but they don't make no hungry march"." June 1938. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8b32356\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8b32356))).

Bender, Albert M. "A young man's opportunity for work, play, study & health / Bender ; made by Illinois WPA Art Project, Chicago." Chicago : Illinois WPA Art Project, 1941. From the Library of Congress, *By the People, For the People: Posters from the WPA, 1936-1943*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpapos:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(cph+3b48762\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/wpapos:@field(NUMBER+@band(cph+3b48762))).

Wolcott, Marion Post. "Picket's sign outside copper mine during strike. Ducktown, Tennessee." October 1939. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8a40874\)\)+@field\(COLLID+fsa\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8a40874))+@field(COLLID+fsa))).

"Mechanization of cotton." Between 1935 and 1942. From the Library of Congress, *America from the Great Depression to World War II: Photographs from the FSA-OWI, 1939-1945*. [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field\(NUMBER+@band\(fsa+8e03812\)\)+@field\(COLLID+fsa\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/fsaall:@field(NUMBER+@band(fsa+8e03812))+@field(COLLID+fsa))).