

Morris County Library
Great Depression Project 1929-1937
as reported in the [Daily Record](#) (Morristown NJ)

Introduction

How did Morris County fare during the Great Depression? And how was this economic calamity viewed in the pages of *The Morristown Daily Record*, the county newspaper? On reel after reel of microfilm, news and commentary of the Great Depression is found in articles, columns, editorials, ads, and editorial cartoons. The Great Depression started towards the end of 1929 with the stock market crash. I continued this project through 1937, as it seemed for a while that year that the worst was over, but then the “recession” hit; recovery didn’t really take hold till the economic stimulus of the industrial machine of World War II.

It was the era of Nazism in Germany, the insurrection in Spain, the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy, the invasion of China by Japan, the fascination with the Dionne quintuplets (collectively called the “quins”), the Olympic games of 1932 and 1936. There was a nationwide rash of kidnappings, including the abduction resulting in death of infant Charles Lindbergh Jr. from his home in New Jersey and the arrest of Bruno Hauptmann, with the subsequent lengthy trial; dirigibles making regular trips around the country and across the Atlantic; airplane accidents claiming the lives of celebrities Will Rogers and Amelia Earhart; the elections of FDR; the terrible drouth (as it was often spelled) in the center of the country; dozens of alphabet agencies created to deal with business regulations and unemployment and financial need.

There were layoffs; severe pay cuts and delayed wages to teachers; criticism of the evils of capitalism and the shamelessness of bankers and investors, company executives and the ultra-rich--the haves and have nots; moves to regulate the stock market; the theory of trickle-down economics; taxation protests by the Morris County Taxpayers Association; stalemate in the New Jersey Legislature over relief funding; talk of the declining middle class but also of the great American spirit; calls for better housing; and pleas to our better nature to support our neighbors fallen on hard times. Community gardens were developed so that people could grow vegetables to supplement their basic diet; building of the Morristown Airport commenced; road improvements provided jobs, as did construction of the new national park at Jockey Hollow by the Civilian Conservation Corps, which also fought Dutch elm disease and mosquitoes.

It was not a “simpler time” – issues, needs, attempted solutions were complex. Young people and heads of families couldn’t get jobs, people at the end of their tether killed themselves in despair, the homeless drifted from place to place and set up hobo camps. Homeowners couldn’t pay their taxes to their towns so towns couldn’t pay their taxes to the county and the state; foreclosures were rampant. There was suffering both physical and psychological, finger pointing, good works, strikes, protests that turned violent...yet

many people were able to carry on as before, and the newspaper was full of ads for clothing, food, furniture, movies, cars. All was chronicled in *The Morristown Daily Record*. The newspaper reader knew what was going on in the country and around the world.

Names of people mentioned in articles are included in the excerpts so that you can find significant players, family, neighbors and friends--people who are part of your history, the history of your town and your county. This is what literally brings events home. Articles without a dateline originate from Morristown, the home of the newspaper at that time, and can refer to the town, the Board of Freeholders, or the county in general. The Board of Aldermen refers to Morristown government unless the dateline specifies otherwise.

As you read through, you will see controversies and arguments and points of view that are familiar, and you will realize, in the wisdom of Ecclesiastes, that (technology aside) there is nothing new under the sun.

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<http://www.mclib.info/nj.html>
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