

# Benton County Genealogical Society

## NEWSLETTER

Located in Philomath, Oregon  
Founded in 1971 in Corvallis, Oregon

Volume 39 No.2: February 2021

<https://www.bcs-gs.org>



### Answers to the questions about the New Deal era from page 3 of January's Newsletter

**1. How many places in Oregon were built by programs of the New Deal?**

**Answer:** According to the website <https://livingnewdeal.org/us/or/>, there were 160 projects in Oregon. On the website, click on Map & Sites at the top of the page, choose Projects by State & City, choose Oregon. Many of the sites were built by the Civilian Conservation Corps or the Works Progress Administration and Public Works Administration.

**2. Name the WPA worker in Benton County who researched numerous topics for the Historical Records Survey.**

**Answer:** The researcher and author who supplied the Benton County surveys was Mark Phinney. Mr. Phinney and family lived in Philomath on Main Street while he was doing research. His education was at Otterbein University in Westerville, Ohio, and most of his life was devoted to being a Minister in Washington and Oregon. His Benton County survey is in our library and also online. See below.

The Historical Records Survey became a nation-wide program in January, 1936, under the Works Progress Administration. It quickly became an independent part of Federal Project No. 1 until August 31, 1939. In September, 1939, the University of Oregon became the legal sponsor of the Oregon Historical Records Survey.

<https://archive.org/details/InventoryOfTheCountyArchivesOfOregonNo.2BentonCounty>

**3. What was the name given to settlements that arose during the Great Depression?**

**Answer:** Hoovervilles. See page 2 for more information.

### What's Inside?

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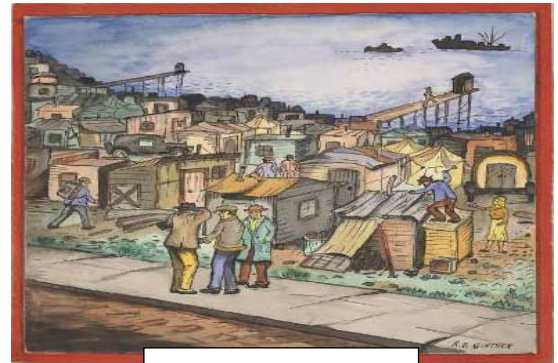


Social Security  
Act 1935

## ***The Great Depression***

The **Stock Market crash** of 1929 was the result of a number of problems after the First World War. American companies had high profits through the 1920's and they made those profits larger by producing more. Jobs were easier to find with larger production; therefore people had more money to buy products. Many Americans bought items on credit, so when the economy started to slow, jobs began to disappear, causing homelessness. Banks and businesses were failing and unemployment was wide-spread just before the Stock Market crash.

**Herbert Hoover**, who was President from 1929-1933, became a scapegoat for the Depression. He was well respected before the Depression and after WW II, but he made serious mistakes after the Stock Market crash. While campaigning for the Presidency, he suggested that America would soon eliminate poverty, but within months of being elected, the Stock Market crashed. In 1931, Hoover sent Congress a program to begin righting the problems of the Depression. He maintained that people shouldn't be cold and hungry but also insisted that it was a local and voluntary responsibility. He believed that the Federal Government should not provide help to citizens by giving them money or finding them a job. In the meantime, more and more people were sinking into dire poverty. Starting soon after the crash, people who had lost their homes started gathering into groups, which quickly became named "Hoovervilles." Hoover soundly lost the next election to Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Seattle's Hooverville

By watercolorist  
Ronald Ginther

### **More Hoovervilles' Information**

<https://www.ushistory.org/us/48.asp>

[https://depts.washington.edu/depress/hooverville\\_seattle.shtml](https://depts.washington.edu/depress/hooverville_seattle.shtml)

### ***FDR's New Deal***

#### **First New Deal 1933-1944**

President Franklin Roosevelt's administration immediately put several programs in place. The first was the Emergency Banking Act that closed banks for four days to halt the run on money out of the banks. Banks were reorganized and opened again. Other Acts and Programs were the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Civil Works Administration, Tennessee Valley Authority Act, Agricultural Act, among others.

#### **Second New Deal 1935-1938**

This New Deal was more aggressive because the previous one wasn't adequate. Programs were designed to help the majority of people; however, Black Americans, Mexican Americans, Native Americans and women continued to be discriminated against.

More information:

<https://courses.lumenlearning.org/suny-ushistory2os2xmaster/chapter/the-second-new-deal/>

## Key Programs from the Second New Deal

New Deal Legislation	Years Enacted	Brief Description
Fair Labor Standards Act	1938-Today	Established minimum wage and forty-four hour workweek
Farm Security Administration	1935-Today	Provided poor farmers with education and economic support programs
Federal Crop Insurance Cooperation	1938-Today	Insured crops and livestock against loss of revenue
National Labor Relations Act	1935-Today	Recognized right of workers to unionize & collectively bargain
National Youth Administration	1935-1939 (part of WPA)	Part-time employment for college and high school students
Rural Electrification Administration	1935-Today	Provides public utilities to rural areas
Social Security Act	1935-Today	Aid to retirees, unemployed, disabled
Surplus Commodities Program	1936-Today	Provides food to the poor (still exists in Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program-known as SNAP)
Works Progress Administration	1935-1943	Jobs program (including artists and youth)

<https://courses.lumenlearning.org/suny-ushistory2os2xmaster/chapter/the-second-new-deal/>

A migratory young girl at day's end in a bean field near Stayton, Oregon 1939



<https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/oregon/rare-photos-oregon/>

A house made entirely of hay bales, Lexington, Nebraska



<https://www.onlyinyourstate.com/nebraska/ne-great-depression/>

## WPA's Civilian Conservation Corps CCC Camp Ely, Minnesota

In 1938 Edwin "Ed" Olsen was first stationed at the CCC Camp near Ely, Minnesota, on the Portage River and later transferred to camp Chisholm, Minnesota. The transfer to Chisholm, Minnesota, was probably for his second six month tour completing one year in the CCC by June 1939. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had signed an executive order creating the CCC in March 1933 as part of the New Deal to help the United States recover from the Great Depression of the 1930's. By 1941 the draft had begun and many young men enlisted in the military or went to work in factories. By 1942 and the beginning of WWII, the CCC disbanded.

In the 9 year history of the CCC approximately three-million men took part in the CCC. Enrollment was highest in 1935 with more than 500,000 corpsmen in 2,900 camps across the US.

\*From Ed Olsen's Chronology: \*

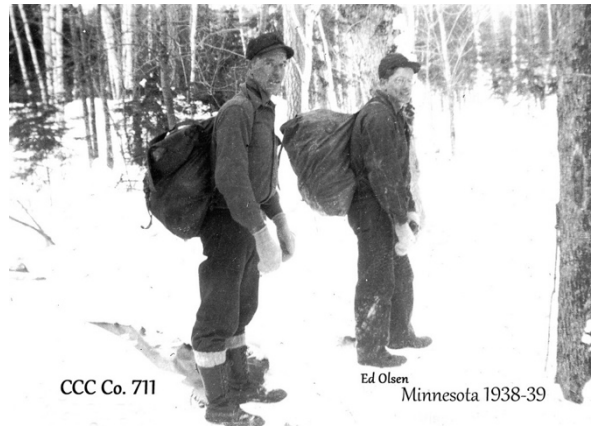
Ed couldn't find work after graduating from high school in St. Paul, Minnesota, so in September 1938 he joined the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps) and was sent to Ely, MN, along with many other young men. Eligible corpsmen were to be between 18 to 23 years of age, unmarried, unemployed and in good health. Later the ages were expanded to 17 to 25 years of age. Initially their uniforms were surplus WWI and later they wore dark green uniforms. The CCC logo on shoulder patches identified the men as corpsmen of the CCC.

\*CCC Logo Shoulder Patch \*\*\*

2.5 inches in diameter - Gold felt with Green embroidery- This patch design was created after July 1, 1937.... Today it is still recognized as the CCC Logo. This size patch was used as a shoulder patch on the dark forest green wool CCC uniforms.... There is also a smaller version (1 7/8 inches) that was used on the cap. Donor: Scharlott Blevins Archive #: 15-LF-CLC-6635-02

\*Daily life in a CCC Camp:\*

Daily life was disciplined - awake at 6:00am for exercise, ate an ample breakfast and were ready to go to work at 8:00am. Lunch then back to work and dinner at 6:00pm. New wooden barracks or tents had been constructed. A Mess Hall accommodated large groups to eat three large meals a day. A Recreation Hall provided a place for games, music, playing pool, ping pong or card games, and in good weather, team sports were organized. An infirmary and a small store to purchase personal items took care of other needs. Room and board plus clothing was



provided plus they were paid \$30 per month of which \$25 was required to be sent home and they kept \$5 for personal expenses. That \$25 sent home was of great benefit to families in the Great Depression.

Ed's CCC Co. 711, camp Portage River near Ely, MN, planted 500 trees per day per man. Other CCC camps built roads, bridges, fire lookouts, strung telephone lines, built cabins, picnic shelters and trails. In addition, any corpsmen needing supplemental basic and vocational education received training while they served. Other corpsmen were trained to clear brush and fight forest fires. Every state in the US had CCC camps. The young men learned skills as well as discipline which helped prepare them for jobs and responsibilities later in their lives, and they left a legacy of more than 700 new state parks in addition to their many other accomplishments.



**By Ron & Linda Olsen (Ed Olsen was Ron's father)**

January 11, 2021

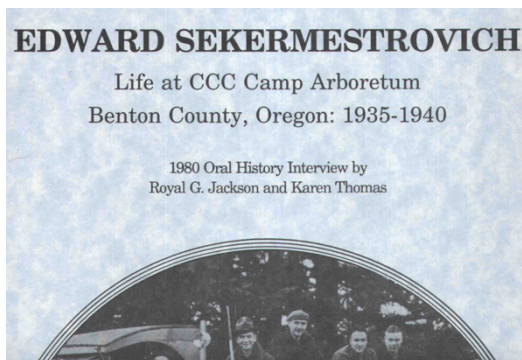
Sources:

<https://treesource.org/news/lands/ccc-tree-planting/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/civilian-conservation-corps>

[http://www.ccclegacy.org/CCC\\_Camps\\_Minnesota.html](http://www.ccclegacy.org/CCC_Camps_Minnesota.html)

**Ed Olsen's photo album**



## CAMP ARBORETUM

Edward Sekermestrovich was a young man from Corvallis who gave an interesting interview when he was older about his experience in the CCC.

The easiest way to access his interview is to search by the title. The URL is huge!

The location is now Peavy Arboretum.

*In the BCGS Library, we have the following WPA Historical Records Surveys:*

- \*Interview of Benton County and Corvallis Pioneers
- \*Bible and Cemetery Records
- \*Commissioners Journals
- \*Church Records

These surveys are also available on our website for purchase-in paper or digital:  
<http://www.bcgs-oregon.org/main-site/publications>

# Living the Great Depression

DRAINAGE FUND	
Dr. No. 2—	
Lafe Simmons, labor	-----
Jake Keller, labor	-----
Paul Simmons, labor	-----
Dr. 4—	
Lafe Simmons, labor	-----
E. G. Stenstrom, labor	-----

Kossuth County Advance (Algona, Iowa)  
17 May 1934



My maternal grandfather, Lafe Simmons (middle person), working on roads. Note the standing water lower left. (No date)

In the 1930's, jobs were few and far between so people had to take what they could find to feed their families and keep a roof over their heads. My mother's families (Simmons) who lived in Bancroft, Iowa, near the Minnesota border found themselves in this predicament. The pictures above show one of many jobs my grandfather and other relatives took on. I've found a number of lists in the local newspaper of people who were hired for jobs that were paid through funds such as the Drainage Fund (roadwork.)

**Here are a few selections from my mother's autobiography of her childhood describing what life was like for her family.**

*Work for men was very scarce. When there was work, it was mainly fifteen cents a day, digging deep ditches and laying clay tile to drain the land. My father had a buzz saw that he would pull to the country and cut down trees for firewood.*

*Our house sat on a hill, and from the front sidewalk clear back to the alley, was our huge garden. In the fall, we'd clean up all the old vines and have a bonfire. Sometimes we'd find stray potatoes and toss them into the edge of the fire and keep turning them until they roasted. We'd pull the black skin off and thought they were quite a treat. In the absence of candy, desserts and fresh fruit, anything different was fun.*

*I was five or six years old when the depression started. Before that my mother had pretty dresses (flapper style with the waist around the hips) and lots of real silk hose. After the Depression started, she was constantly mending runners. She was quite a vain lady about her looks so I'm sure that was humiliating. But as the Depression deepened that probably became a small matter. Eventually she went to work for various business people's wives, doing housework and laundry and taking care of their children and newborn babies. Her wage was fifty cents a day.*

**Shared by Sue Van Laere**

# THE WPA IN OREGON

The WPA also employed teachers, lawyers, and architects. It mounted the Oregon Folklore Project, the Oregon Writers' Program, and the Inventory of the County Archives of Oregon. These workers published *Oregon: End of the Trail* (1940), *Mount Hood: A Guide* (1940), the annual *Oregon Almanac: A Handbook of Fact and Fancy*, *Oregon Oddities*--a magazine used in public schools--and 14 of a projected 35 descriptive guides to records in county courthouses. Each guide included an overview of county history based on a review of the archives. In many instances these were the first historical assessments of Oregon counties. Working almost in tandem with the WPA were drafters, historians, and photographers engaged in the Historic American Buildings Survey. They compiled information, including measured drawings, on nearly a hundred significant structures in Oregon.



The descriptions from two of the included journeys through Oregon have been combined with vintage photos (Oregon State Archives Photos: Vista House; Mt. Hood skiers; horse seining) in the following Web exhibits:

**A 1940 Journey Across Oregon**

**A 1940 Oregon Coast Tour**

Excerpt from: <https://sos.oregon.gov/blue-book.Pages/facts/history/state-depression.aspx>

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**This is one of the many ways our members work to help people discover their ancestry and have fun, too!**

## GENEALOGY RESEARCH IN PRISON

Over the last several years, I've had two research requests from men in prison, one at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton, and one in Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, California. Both inmates have family ties in Benton County.

I was struck in both cases by how much research they had already done, either by talking with family or by sending out letters. They don't have access to computers, which makes this all the more impressive. Since I've been volunteering at the Museum with Mary Gallagher, I am able to supplement our library holdings with searches on that database. But in both cases, I've been most successful in answering some of their questions by using Ancestry.

One inmate not only wanted information about his Benton County family, but also "if you have any historical pictures of Corvallis and area from the early 1900s or earlier that you could print for my research, that would be great. I find it's interesting to see places your ancestors lived at the time they lived there."

From one of the inmates: "I have been researching my own history for over a year now. Very little history in Oregon, but I did have ancestors in Chicago during the great Chicago Fire of 1871...I've collected over 2,000 documents and pictures from writing over 300 letters. It keeps me busy and it's very enjoyable and educational."

It certainly makes me appreciate how easily I can delve into my family background using all these computer tools. And I have to believe solidifying these ties to their family history must be helpful to these men. I always sign the responses I send just "Benton County Genealogical Society."

**Submitted by Lois Courtney, who picks up the mail**

## MARCH THEME IDEA

Several years ago we had a fun event at our monthly meeting. I thought it would be equally fun to do the same thing again, only through the newsletter! I was reminded through our friends in the Bend Genealogical Society's December newsletter. So thanks Distant Voices!

Soooo, the March newsletter will be devoted to a favorite heirloom. We all probably have several great heirlooms, but pick out one, take a photo of it and jot down what you know about the object and why it means something to you. Send your contribution to Sue Van Laere (email at bottom of this page.) Let's make this the most colorful newsletter yet! Deadline to send your photo will be February 25. **THANKS**

**Much thanks to Mary Dean for letting us know about upcoming genealogy opportunities!**

[Free Online Rootstech Registration Feb. 25-27:](#)

<https://www.rootstech.org/?lang-eng>

This URL leads you to the official registration website.

[Legacy Family Trees Free Webinars](#)

<https://familytreewebinars.com/upcoming-webinars-multireg.php>

### **Genealogical Forum of Oregon**

GenTalk: Organizing Your Research

When Sat, February 20, 2pm – 3pm

Where ONLINE WEBINAR

Description **Organizing Your Research: Making Molehills out of Mountains**

Register here:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYlc-GtqTlqG93uz7UgFoe-lf9aMjdd5Wwc>

**Presenter: Cari Taplin, Certified Genealogist**

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#### **Appointed Positions**

**Membership:** OPEN

**Librarian:** OPEN

**Programs:** OPEN

**Historian:** OPEN

**Photographer:** OPEN

**Audit:** Connie Patterson

**Refreshments:** Pegge Gee

**Host:** Kathryn Moss

**Research:** Lois Courtney

**Book Sales:** Maridee Symons

**Website:** George Davidson

**Facebook:** Sue Van Laere

**Publicity:** Lois Courtney

**Library Volunteers:** Lois Courtney

**Writers Group:** Sue Van Laere

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