

The Great Depression

Discovery Box and Guidebook Index

(updated January 2010)

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Description of Discovery Box Contents

*Caution: Paper items are fragile and should only be handled by teachers.
Do not remove them from protective cover.*

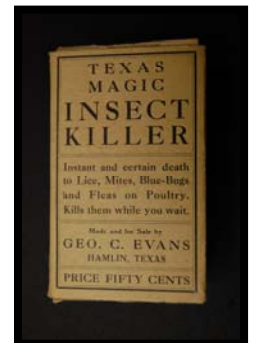
1. Glass chicken-watering base. For chickens to get water, a glass or metal container was filled and attached upside-down to a watering base like this. These provided a constant water source and were used on smaller farms. Today most poultry growers use plastic water bowls rather than glass and larger watering devices than this one. This base was patented in 1941 as a “base for poultry fount and feeder.”



2. Movie Playbills. The 1930s are considered to be the golden age of movies. Directors and talent from all over the world came to Hollywood to make movies, producing the greatest concentration of film genius in the world. Many technological advances in both sound and color also helped the movie industry to flourish in the 30s. The first movie playbill is for *After The Thin Man* (1936) starring William Powell and Myrna Loy, two of the biggest stars of the thirties. *After The Thin Man* is the second in a series of six successful movies starring the pair as a married couple who solved mysteries. *Test Pilot* (1938) also starred Myrna Loy along with two other big stars of the 30s – Clark Gable and Spencer Tracy. This movie bill tells us on the back page that the movie was shown in a theater at Prairie Grove. The movie was described as, “the greatest air picture ever made.” At this time, flight was still new, and the public was fascinated with both airplanes and the pilots who flew them.



3. Texas Magic Insect Killer. Disease has always been a problem for poultry farmers because chicken houses keep the birds in close contact. Farmers started testing their flocks for pullorum (an intestinal disease) in 1933. Pullorum had devastating effects on egg quality and production and sometimes killed adult birds. Since then disease research has taken a front seat at the University of Arkansas, and chicken production has been steadily on the rise. Items like this Texas Magic insect killer were often sold door-to-door, with promises that it could kill any pests that plagued a flock.



4. Sherbet cup. Produced by the Hocking Glass Company (now known as Anchor Hocking Glass Corporation) from 1929-1933, this sherbet cup is in the “Block Optic” pattern. “Depression glass” such as this was inexpensive but attractively patterned and was often given away as a promotional item by stores and movie theaters during the Great Depression.



5. Fruit basket. Baskets like these were used by workers while picking fruit such as grapes or strawberries. This one-quart basket could be placed in a flat container with other baskets of the same size to allow for easier shipping. In 1920 the Welch Company bought hundreds of acres in the Springdale area to grow grapes; and by the start of the 1930s the plant was pressing more than 100 tons of grapes each day. The large number of crops which were harvested by hand brought migrant workers to Northwest Arkansas by the thousands, all hoping to find work. The major crops of the area included strawberries, grapes, apples, peaches, and blackberries.



6. Red Goose Shoes clicker. In 1869, the Red Goose Shoe Company began selling shoes in St. Louis, Missouri. The company trademark was changed at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair when stock boys painted the white goose logo red as a prank. During the 1930s, the company began giving away golden eggs with every pair of shoes. These eggs often had prizes inside. The clicker was a promotional item given to children with a new pair of shoes. The Red Goose brand became so popular that there were even comic books starring Reddy Goose published by the company. You can still buy Red Goose brand shoes today.



7. Piece of flour sack material. During the Great Depression many families could not afford to buy clothes from the store. Some adopted the saying “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.” To make do, families began to make clothing out of the plain, durable cloth sacks used to package goods that were bought in bulk such as flour, corn meal, salt, and livestock feed. Soon feed and flour companies began to make sacks of various prints; often sacks were chosen for their matching prints.



8. Dress. This dress is from the end of the Depression era in 1940, and it clearly had a lot of wear. Notice the patches on the sleeves and the ruffle at the bottom. The ruffle would have been added to give the dress more length, which was especially helpful as children grew. New clothing was expensive and many children wore clothes until they were worn out. They were then passed on to younger siblings after a few small repairs. By adding material, a mother could extend the life of a dress. In 1930 only 2% of Arkansas farms had electricity. While many families used a sewing machine powered by a foot pedal, some families were fortunate to have an electric sewing machine. In 1936 the Rural Electrification Act was passed as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal programs to bring electricity to rural areas. Even as power poles went up, they were only serving on average two customers per mile of line.



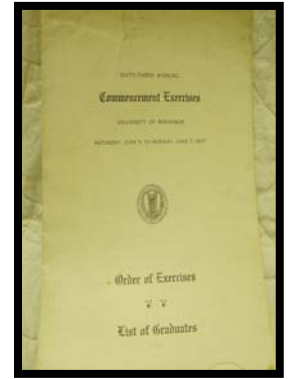
9. Valentines (6). Children have celebrated St. Valentine's Day as far back as the 1700s. During the Great Depression, children who were lucky enough to have money went to the store to buy packs of valentines. Some might buy 'penny' valentines like these from Pettigrew in Madison County. Children could make valentines by hand using chewing gum wrappers, red construction paper, flour paste, and whatever other material was on hand.



10. “Local Industries” postcard. This postcard features a mural painted on the Springdale Post Office wall in 1939 by Arkansas native Natalie Henry. The mural features a look at the industries which made Springdale a thriving city, including poultry, strawberries, apples, and grapes. The mural was commissioned as part of the Treasury Department's Section of the Fine Arts which employed artists during the Depression to perform civil service and put artists to work. Originally from Malvern in Hot Springs County, Henry studied, worked, and showed her artwork in Chicago. In 1939 she made her way back to Arkansas to study and paint life in Springdale. This is the only mural Henry painted; she preferred to paint on smaller canvases. Her work was displayed at the Annual Exhibition of Artists of Chicago and Vicinity, and the International Water Color Exhibition. In 1995 the mural was moved from the Springdale Post Office to the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, where it is now on display.



11. University of Arkansas commencement program, 1937. The University of Arkansas began as the Arkansas Industrial University in 1872 with the enrollment of eight students. Those attending the University studied such subjects as math, ancient languages, literature, and farming techniques. While the first graduating class had fewer than ten students, there were 101 students actually enrolled. In 1899, the University's name was changed to the University of Arkansas. In 1937, 349 students graduated. Today, enrollment is almost 23,000 with over 200 academic programs offered. Many of the students who attended the University in the 1930s lived on shoestring budgets and took out loans just to be able to pay tuition. Others worked their way through school. One such student-worker was Ethel Edwards, who plucked chicken feathers at a local factory. She earned a wage per chicken and had to work hard to earn enough money to attend the University.



12. Hygeia, the Health Magazine, February 1937. In Greek mythology Hygeia is the goddess of health. *Hygeia* was a publication of the American Medical Association designed to educate people about various health issues in ways that appealed to everyday people. The magazine was founded in 1923 and one of the special features was the question-and-answer section. Eventually *Hygeia* became the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*, which is a well-respected journal today. During the Depression, people became more informed about hygiene and their appearance. This issue of *Hygeia* noted that the country was making its way out of the harsh conditions of the Great Depression. Note the articles on the benefit of chewing gum (page 102), general activities for those of failing health (page 109), causes of acne and baldness (page 112), hair dye ingredients (page 114), the benefits of prunes (page 136), and dieting (and over-dieting) daughters (page 141), all still of interest today.



13. Fuller Brush for Health and Beauty brochure, 1935. In 1906 Alfred Fuller came to the United States from Canada looking for a way to make his fortune. He found that people needed brushes for cleaning their homes. Fuller discovered that the best way to sell his brushes was by going door-to-door and actively cleaning items for housewives to prove that his brushes cleaned everything from baby bottles and furniture to clothing, carpets, and more. As his business expanded, so did the number of men he had working for him. Each became known as a Fuller Brush Man and they were a familiar sight on doorsteps during the 1930s. During the Great Depression, the national unemployment rate for men ages 18-24 was 25%. The Fuller Brush Company put many men to work as salesmen. They were expected to walk at least six miles a day, carrying goods in a felt bag with a large sampling of the various brushes a family might need. The company actually saw an increase in sales during the Great Depression. Fuller Brush Men left behind a sample brush, and, in the early days, received a commission of as much as 50% of sales.



14. Liberty magazine, October 16, 1937. Marketed as "A Weekly for Everybody," *Liberty* started in 1924 and originally cost five cents. By 1954 more than half of all U.S. homes had a television set and magazines began losing advertisers. As a result, in 1950 the magazine printed its last issue. At one point, *Liberty* was "the second greatest magazine in America" behind *The Saturday Evening Post*. One of *Liberty's* most popular features was the posted reading time with each article, giving an idea of just how long it would take to read the article. Hundreds of stories that first appeared in the pages of *Liberty* found their way onto film, including the beloved TV show *Mr. Ed*. The magazine was revived in 1971, published as a quarterly; it is still available today. In this October 1937 issue of *Liberty*, you can find "20 Questions" on page 22, advice for women on page 40, and on the back cover you can find a poll on how America felt about President Roosevelt in 1937.

