

Life in the 1930's



The Great Depression

The depression came in 1929. As the economy and factory orders slowed, many of the factories began to lay off workers. The workers asked to share the remaining jobs to give each family some money to live on (each working two-three days a week).

Impact on Children

The children were often needed to help. Many students had to quit school early. Some sold newspapers, flowers, mushrooms, clams, fish or scrap metal they gathered. Families grew vegetables to sell and eat. Local parents started a soup kitchen at South San Francisco Grammar School, and Dr. JC McGovern gave free dental check ups.

Businesses

Many businesses on Grand Avenue let accounts slide for customers unable to pay and gave free food to the most needy. Fred Lautze, who owned the local Ford Agency, could sell no cars. He towed cars, changed tires, and did whatever else that came along to stay in business.

New Deal Programs

When Franklin Roosevelt became president in 1933, he began to develop his New Deal government assistance programs. The NRA (National Recovery Administration) came in 1934, regulating wages, working hours, and indirectly, prices. The Federal Credit Association (loans to save homes and farms), social security, unemployment insurance, and the first federal student loans were all started during this period.

Works Progress Administration (WPA)

The Works Progress Administration started in 1935, and had the most visible effect on South San

Francisco. WPA workers made improvements to Orange Park, removed dirt from surrounding hills for San Francisco Airport bay fill, and built a new Post Office on Linden Avenue in the late 1930s. Local residents, working for the WPA, helped build San Francisco's Coit Tower. Artists were employed through the WPA Federal Art project, and some of those works of art are now housed at the Grand Avenue Branch Library.

Greyhound Racing

The Baden Kennel Club (a greyhound racing track) opened in 1933. It helped many families who had lost work in the factories, but also brought controversy. Some residents were very concerned about the betting and criminal element associated with race tracks. Competition and conflict also developed between the Kennel Club and the Tanforan and Bay Meadows horse racing tracks. There were several raids here by Daly City Constable Landini. In 1937, the state outlawed greyhound racing (mainly the result of the horse racing lobby), closing Baden Kennel Club.

Golden Gate Bridge

The building of the Golden Gate Bridge in the late 1930s brought a big windfall to Edwards Wire Rope. They supplied all the wire cable for the bridge. The completion of the Golden Gate and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridges was celebrated with the 1939 Treasure Island World's Fair in which many SSF residents participated.

Community of Neighbors

One of the main things local residents remember about the 1930s is how much people helped each other. With only 5,000 people, South San Francisco was a close-knit town very much like a family.