

Decade of Despair

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WINNEBAGO COUNTY DURING
THE GREAT DEPRESSION, 1929-1939

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In this insightful study, Braatz and Rowland examine how Wisconsin's Winnebago County negotiated nagging issues such as unemployment, debt relief, and sluggish industry during the Great Depression, while attempting to understand the effect these times had on the people who called the county home. In the fall of 1929, the Great Depression descended hard upon Winnebago County. Although the county suffered debilitating effects from the economic collapse, the pain was not evenly distributed amongst this largely industrial region in the southern Fox Valley. At the northern edge of Winnebago County, the cities Neenah and Menasha, driven by the paper industry, suffered far less than Oshkosh, a city greatly reliant upon the woodworking mills lining the Fox River. When new housing disappeared, demand for Oshkosh's doors and window sashes went with it, and the jobs were quick to follow. The searing hardships caused by the Great Depression ravaged the economy and social fabric of the Winnebago County community.

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