

12-1-1979

***Fireside Chats: The Depression of the 1930s* by James L. Taylor**

L. Glenn Westfall
Hillsborough Community College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory>

Recommended Citation

Westfall, L. Glenn (1979) "*Fireside Chats: The Depression of the 1930s* by James L. Taylor," *Tampa Bay History*. Vol. 1 , Article 14.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol1/iss2/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tampa Bay History by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

local histories are the numerous photographs found in the more recent publications such as this one. The remainder of the book deals with the depression, World War II, and the postwar era.

The major criticism of the book is the seemingly endless pages of names, that have little significance except to immediate family, friends, and old timers in the community who can recall most of this themselves. The value for future historians is obvious, but it is distracting and cumbersome for most readers. It would also be interesting to see more comparison of Dunedin to concurrent development on the peninsula.

Ken Ford

Fireside Chats: The Depression of the 1930s. By James L. Taylor, ed. (Dade City, Fla.: Social Science Dept., Pasco Comprehensive High School 1979. 165 pp. Illustrations.)

The catastrophic stock market crash of 1929 signaled not only an end of the prosperous "Roaring Twenties," but also initiated a dramatically new era, the "Depression years." *Fireside Chats—The Depression of the 1930's* lucidly illustrates the lives and struggles of individuals and their families during the Great Depression. Through the establishment of an oral history project at Pasco Comprehensive High School, Dade City, Florida, students interviewed older members of their community to collect a series of impressions of this area. The method of collecting historical data through personal contacts was as stimulating as the interviews recorded, since it actively involved students in the collection and compilation of materials. Their history class became something more than just textbook reading; it involved a personal contact with the events of the past.

Fireside Chats is a series of vignettes of personal experiences given by Dade City residents who were scattered across the nation in the 1930's. Its eighteen chapters and ninety-eight interviews are illustrated with student sketches, depicting several of the more picturesque stories. Although the individual experiences varied, the general themes of scarcity of food, sharing with others, and strong familial ties characterize most of the interviews. Glimpses of T.V.'s Walton family race through your mind as you read the sometimes sad, sometimes humorous personal experiences. Tales about "skunk bread," feedsack clothing, and "Hoover blankets" made from newspapers, are facets of the Great Depression which students would have otherwise never been aware of had it not been for their personal experiences in interviews. The colorful retention of local dialect in conversations and emotionalism of the stories add a dimension to the era which is seldom recorded in historical documentation. The touching personal views offer a delightful opportunity to witness the Depressions' effect on the everyday lives of Americans.

Fireside Chats will hopefully stimulate additional oral history projects, making history more interesting to students. An additional benefit will be that otherwise forgotten personal experiences will be recorded, and students may be stimulated to obtain a perspective of the past which is all too often ignored by younger generations. *Fireside Chats*, an exhilarating experience and accomplishment of high school students, serves as a model for others to involve students in the discipline of history.

L. Glenn Westfall