



The Great Depression: A Diary

By Benjamin Roth

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When the stock market crashed in 1929, Benjamin Roth was a young lawyer in Youngstown, Ohio. After he began to grasp the magnitude of what had happened to American economic life, he decided to set down his impressions in his diary.

This collection of those entries reveals another side of the Great Depression—one lived through by ordinary, middle-class Americans, who on a daily basis grappled with a swiftly changing economy coupled with anxiety about the unknown future. Roth's depiction of life in time of widespread foreclosures, a schizophrenic stock market, political unrest and mass unemployment seem to speak directly to readers today.

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Editorial Review

Review

Charles R. Morris, *The Trillion Dollar Meltdown*

“Benjamin Roth has left us a vivid portrait of the Great Depression that is all the more powerful for the similarities and differences with the financial upheavals of today. Roth enables us -- in ways no historian can match -- to immerse ourselves in the sense of despair that Americans of that era felt and their hope that the economy would revive, long before it did. To read the diaries now is both enlightening and chilling.”

Jonathan Alter, *The Defining Moment: FDR's Hundred Days and the Triumph of Hope*

“We imagine the Great Depression at two extremes--Franklin Roosevelt's jaunty smile and the haunting images of Dustbowl destitution. But in between were everyday middle class strivers like Benjamin Roth, trying to sort through the wreckage. FDR and the WPA may be long gone but the professional class remains, and the record of its struggle in the Depression has been thin until now. Roth's incisive diaries are more than a precious time capsule. They speak to our economic hopes and fears directly, and to the bewilderment of our own time.”

About the Author

James Ledbetter is the editor of “The Big Money,” Slate.com's web site on business and economics.

Daniel B. Roth, son of Benjamin Roth, is the chairman of the law firm of Roth, Blair, Roberts, Strasfeld & Lodge in Youngstown, Ohio.

From The Washington Post

From The Washington Post's Book World/washingtonpost.com Reviewed by Justin Moyer

moyerj@washpost.com If economists sound like party poopers in bailout-happy 2009, imagine how much more dismal the dismal science seemed to a struggling Youngstown, Ohio, lawyer in the 1930s. Benjamin Roth's "The Great Depression: A Diary" offers a firsthand account of hard times along the Mahoning River in short entries that brim with the frustration of a man trying to save his failing law practice. A fiend for macroeconomics who was more likely to list stock prices in his private journal than discuss his wife or children, Roth struggles with the same issues that vex Ben Bernanke today: inflation, protectionism and whether deficit spending really stimulates the economy. Like many other stiff-upper-lipped professionals of his generation, Roth is anti-interventionist, anti-whiner and anti-Roosevelt. (Turns out Obama's election wasn't exactly one-of-a-kind: "the Democrats will win [in 1932] because everybody wants a 'change,' " Roth writes.) Except for his patrician disgust with King Edward's decision to abdicate the British throne for the "twice-divorced" Mrs. Simpson and his occasional "long[ing] for normalcy," Roth withholds the personal take on poverty that made Studs Terkel's "Hard Times" and Ben Reitman's "Sister of the Road" cultural treasures. "Diary" is a valuable document, but it offers underwhelming lessons about man's powerlessness before market forces.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Terry Grissom:

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children right up until adult are different content. As we know that book is very important for people. The book The Great Depression: A Diary was making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is quite advantages for you. The reserve The Great Depression: A Diary is not only giving you more new information but also for being your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your spend time to read your guide. Try to make relationship using the book The Great Depression: A Diary. You never sense lose out for everything in the event you read some books.

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Della McDonald:

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Josette Leonard:

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