Life in The 1940’s

A look into the lives of the people of rural Kentucky during the 1940’s

By: Amelia Wallace
Life was hard in the 1940’s

In the 1940’s the lives of Americans were taken over by the effects of World War II. The production of needed goods pulled us out of the Great Depression and women began to come into the workforce to take the place of men who were off at war.

There were also great changes in what americans ate, wore, and purchased. Most American’s were affected by the rationing of food and clothing.

The 1940’s were very different from today. Daily life was much more challenging for people from this period in time than for people that live in 2013. There are many things that people experienced at this time that luckily people today have never and probably will never experience.
In the 1940’s gardening and farming was important to people throughout America. People didn’t have much money because of the war. Most of what people had to eat was grown on their farms. In rural Kentucky farming was a way of life. My grandfather said “We didn’t know anything about eating in restaurants and we wouldn’t have had the money to eat in them either.”

There wasn’t many stores at that period in time and if people got to go to a store it wasn’t very often because of the long distances to get to the store. When I asked my grandfather about going to the store at this period in time he gave me a quick answer “We had everything we needed, there wasn’t ever much we needed from the store.”

People in the 1940’s didn’t go out to eat at sit down restaurants or fast food places. You had to eat fruits and vegetables that were grown in your garden or on your farm and your meat came from the animals you hunted or raised. “Farming and gardening were not only important to people here in Eastern Kentucky for feeding
their families it was also an important way of making money for your family”.

Children in the 1940’s attended school in a one room school house. There were students kindergarten through eighth grade all taught in the same room. There was only one teacher in the school and she taught all the students. There were a lot more schools at this time than there are today because schools were placed within walking or bicycle riding distance of small communities because lots of children didn’t have transportation to get to school. My grandfather said “He walked to school and never had any other way of getting there.”

During the 1940’s in rural Kentucky most people were employed through coal mines, farming, or gas company jobs. There were also people who owned their own stores and women who taught at the schools. “These jobs made ends meet for the people who lived here but they were far from big money making jobs” said my grandfather.

Women during this time were in the workforce more than they had ever been. Here in rural Kentucky most women were simply housewives. Some had began to show up in stores and other business places to work instead of working at home. Grandfather said “Women had so many responsibilities at home that most of them didn’t have time to think about getting jobs.”

Families at this time gathered together more than most families do today. My grandfather said his family gathered every Sunday for dinner and that it was almost like a weekly family reunion. Of course they had larger gatherings for Christmas and Thanksgiving but they gathered every single for a dinner on Sunday afternoon usually after church services were over. “The women of the family would work half a day getting the food all ready for Sunday dinner” said grandfather.

Many families worked together and spent every single day with each other working farm lands to make a living or their family. Therefore they were gather together more than families are today. Today we usually only gather for one family reunion a year and at holidays. Lots of families depended on all the members of the family to take part in the farming in order to keep the farm running.
Bibliography

Research for my book was done on the following websites:

http://www.coaleducation.org/coalhistory/coaltowns/wheelwright.htm

http://www.coaleducation.org/coalhistory/coaltowns/martin.htm

http://www.google.com/search?q=1940's+pictures+in+kentucky&hl=en&safe=active&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ei=xIVZUeyPMIW09QTpy4CwDQ&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAQ&biw=1440&bih=707

http://kclibrary.lonestar.edu/decade40.html


I also did an interview with my great grandfather Jr. Martin to get the quotes that I used throughout my book. He was also able to give me some important details about this period in time and tell me more about what I could research to get information for my book.