

# Causes of hardships of southern sharecropping

[Health & Medicine](#)



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

For many people in the 1930's living conditions were not as adequate as they needed to be. The stock market had just crashed in 1928, and the US was in the midst of the Great Depression. Many people suffered from lack of money, and many others suffered from lack of food. One group of people who suffered greatly during this time period were the southern sharecroppers. Factors that caused the substandard living conditions of the southern sharecroppers in the 1930's include lack of education, poor healthcare, and inadequate living facilities.

The first factor that caused the substandard living conditions of the southern sharecroppers was their lack of education. There were several reasons the sharecroppers didn't get the education they needed. One main reason was because many children didn't go to school. Harold Walker writes that Southern cotton states ranked lower in rate of attendance for each student enrolled than any of the other states in the nation (4). A factor that contributed to this was their excessive mobility, which inhibited many children from going to school (Corder 27).

It is common knowledge that any child who constantly moves around will not be able to attend school on a regular basis, and even if they go to a school when they get a chance they will be so far behind they would have a difficult time catching up. Another factor that impeded on a child's attendance at school was the fact that they never went to school when there was cotton to be picked (Walker 8). This may not seem like a large task, but some times it could take weeks to pick all the cotton.

These few weeks that a child spent picking cotton was valuable learning time, and missing it could put a child too far behind to catch up. Another reason share croppers didn't get the education they needed was because many southern rural schools had short terms (Gentry 21). Because of this teachers would not be able to cover all of the material that they needed to cover, or they would have to rush through the material they did cover. A final reason the education of the southern cotton states was not as good as other states was because their teachers were not as good.

This was reflected in the fact that the salaries of Southern teachers were not as high as the salaries of other teachers (Mckeeon 98). Back in the 1930's the higher a teacher's salary was the higher their quality and training was (Mckeeon 98). This meant that when children did go to school they did not get adequate teaching. Because of all of these reasons education of the Southern cotton states was at an all time low. The children were not getting the education they needed, so they were forced to work the substandard jobs such as sharecropping.

This meant that their children would not get the education they needed, either. It was a cycle that led to the lowering of the general living conditions of southern share croppers, but lack of education was not the only factor that lowered the living conditions of the share Another reason the living conditions of the southern share croppers were so low was because they had poor health care. To begin with the tenant farmers did not eat in a healthy manner. Mckeeon writes that many tenant farmers in the South said that garden vegetables, milk, butter, and eggs were never a part of their diet (116).

<https://assignbuster.com/causes-of-hardships-of-southern-sharecropping/>

One of the main things that they did eat was "sowbelly", a fat salty pork (Walker 33). Because they ate so poorly it was hard for them to stay healthy. Another health concern of the tenant farmers was that their clothing was very coarse and not warm enough (Gentry 38). Many of the men wore denim overalls and the women wore cheap cotton and homemade underwear, if any at all (Gentry 38). Wearing clothing like this could be very hard on a person during the winter months, and could easily lead to diseases such as the flu or pneumonia.

These diseases were hard for the poor sharecroppers to combat because it was hard for them to afford any medication, if there were any medications at all to help them out. Another disease that plagued the southern sharecroppers was typhoid fever (Gentry 31). This disease was spread through contaminated wells and took a heavy toll on the life and energy of a person (Gentry 31). Malaria, which led to several fatalities, was also a serious problem for the tenant farmers (Corder 98). It was a major problem for many of the unfitting men, and the men who worked long energetic hours (Corder 98).

With all of these health hazards it was hard for the southern share croppers to stay healthy. To make the problem even worse there were not enough health care facilities to take care of the sick. Walker writes that in the 1930s there was an average of 210 persons per hospital bed in the south, while the national average was only 120 (10). This led to many overcrowded hospitals, and many times the sick had to be sent home and took care of there. The bad thing about this was that the disease could be spread around

the family, and soon around the community because there was nothing to contain it.

Because of this the living conditions of the southern sharecroppers continued to decline, and it became harder and harder for them to make a better life for themselves. Another major problem many of the southern sharecroppers faced was poor housing. In many cases the houses of the southern sharecroppers were in horrid condition. Walker writes that many of the houses were huts on the verge of collapsing (17). Many of these huts were on the verge of collapsing into the water that surrounded them (Walker 4). To get to these houses surrounded by water logs were placed in a makeshift manner, and it was very dangerous to cross (Walker 4).

A misplaced foot or a slippery log could easily have led to a severe injury, or maybe even death. The surrounding water could have also been an easy place for diseases, or dangerous animals to manifest, yet creating another health problem for the tenant farmers. Houses for the southern sharecroppers of this time were usually only two or three rooms, which made it almost impossible for anyone to have privacy or decency (Walker 87). The close living conditions also made it easier for germs to spread, which meant that when one person in a family got sick the rest of the family got sick along with them.

The construction of these shacks that the tenant farmers lived in was also very poor. In many cases the roofs were leaky (Walker 40). In other cases the houses were never even painted, which meant that the houses were more susceptible. After looking back at the way the southern sharecroppers

lived it is easy to see that their way of life was well below what is considered decent. These tenant farmers were plagued with disease, they lacked a thorough education, and they lived in wretched little shacks that were well below society" s standards.