

# An hour before daylight

An autobiography of Jimmy Carter childhood (2001)

He was born 1oct1924. He grew up during the great depression on a 350-acre farm outside of Plains, GA that was in the family for generations. There was a dirt road highway & railroad tracks in front of their house. He described farm life in detail so you could imagine being there. The house was heated by a fireplace. They got water from a well & used an outhouse with old newspapers before toilet paper came out. They got indoor plumbing in '35 & electricity in '38.

Cotton farms were hurting in the 30's & George Washington Carver began studying crop rotation in 1935. He did tremendous research into peanuts. Share croppers lived in severe poverty & were constantly in debt to the land owners store [inflated prices & credit]. Most tenants spent half of their credit on food [half of that was flour]. If the share cropper had no mules & equipment, he paid half of the crop to the owner [only 25% if he had his own].

1930's cotton sold @ 10 cents/lb & peanuts @ 3 cents/lb. 3-acres would produce 1 bale of cotton [\$50] or 1 ton of peanuts [\$60]. His mom made \$4/12 hr shift as a nurse. Strong black men earned \$1/day; women 75 cents; teenagers 50 cents & children 25 cents. But they were paid by the pound during harvest. He grew up with an unfair prejudice against blacks & poor whites.

Farm earning decreased 60% from '29-32. At times cotton prices were below costs. In '33 Fed govt paid farmers to destroy crops. 33% of farms were lost to foreclosures. In 1938, 25% of workers were still unemployed. From his house he could see homeless tramps on trains, chain-gangs, railroad crews & road crews.

The farm manager would ring the bell 1-hr before sunrise to wake the workers. They grew all sorts of crops: mostly corn to feed the animals; cotton for cash & later peanuts. His mom would sale pecans, his dad would sale milk, eggs & melons. As a kid, he sold peanuts, hamburgers & ice cream. He would hunt, fish & explore for arrowheads. He saved his money & bought bales of cotton when prices were low, stored them for years before selling & bought rental houses.

He could tell where north was by looking at the moon. If before midnight, the eclipsed side would be to the east; after midnight, to the west [since it would reflect the sunlight]. And if you draw a line from the points of the eclipse down to earth, it points south.

Farmers would create a co-op to share in slaughtering of cows & pigs since they only had ice boxes & meat would go bad fast, but they did smoke some of it. Most farmers did not have the education & soon their farms were run-down. His dad talked with the county ag dept & they terraced along contours & rotated crops.

12-acres of their farm was preserved by the National park Service to show how rural families lived during the depression.