Excerpt from "Seattle's Hooverville" by Leslie D. Erb (1935)

...Having occasion to ride the freights several thousands of miles in search of work, I came in direct contact with these men. Being vitally interested in the problems facing modern American society, I took careful note of their habits, attitudes and general character.

To a great extent they are victims of a mal-adjusted social and economic system. Many of them had homes but lost them during this depression. Some of them are well-educated, having served (in the capacity) as lawyers, doctors, dentists, school teachers. For example, in a certain Pacific Coast city, there were two men living in a miserable shack under a bridge buttement. Both had been college presidents, but reverses had come, and they were forced to go on the bum. These men were not imposters either, for they had their diplomas and credentials to prove their identity.

...When the weather gets cold in late fall the men congregate in shanty towns in the large cities. I think it would be safe to say that every American city of any size has such a town. Seattle has upwards of a dozen such areas. These sections in the various cities are called Marysville, Hooverville, Hoovertown, Churchill, Angel City, Tipperary, and a host of other names.

Early this year (1935) I made a sociological study of Seattle's Hooverville. I first consulted the Department of Records of the Seattle Police. Hooverville's record was dark, indeed. It showed that stabbings, flights, stealing, and drunken brawls had taken place.

The first shanty I visited in Hooverville was a surprise. It was a little, green two-roomed shack, with window flower boxes neatly painted. The owner, a man of about fifty, seemingly clean, invited me into his home. I noticed that the walls were nicely papered; the floors were laid with linoleum, his bed was covered with a clean, white spread; his suit and overcoat neatly folded were on hangers.

...The second shack that I visited that day was made of rough, unpainted boards. It was dark and gloomy inside and smelled of fish. The occupant of this hovel was perhaps forty-five. He was dressed in rough, but clean clothes, and was working on a boat so that he might fish in Puget Sound. I was impressed with the scene of activity around Hooverville. Everybody seemed to be working at something.

...The town is governed by eight committeemen by city appointment; they receive no salary. Jesse Jackson is the chairman of the group. (So now he is known to Seattle's executives and to the town as "Mayor" Jackson.)...

There are about six hundred shacks, which are constructed from every conceivable bit of material…

According to Mayor Jackson every race and major language of the world are represented in Hooverville, as well as practically every type of laborer and profession…

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