

## History of Jazz – The 1930's



Tenant Family with Kids, 1937

- The 1930s marked the worst financial crisis in United States history, **the Great Depression**. Men and women struggled to find jobs in order to feed their families.
- During these tough years, people **did not have money** to spend on record albums and dance clubs. Radio continued to be the center of entertainment in America.
- A **new style of jazz**, "big band swing," emerged. People loved to dance to swing and it became the most popular music of the 1930's and 1940's.
- Jazz was played on the airwaves night after night. For listeners, **this exciting music made the Great Depression more bearable**. It reminded them of what America could be.
- In the meantime, Kansas City seemed to escape the hardships of the Great Depression. As cash flew through the city's gambling hot spots, saloon owners profited from the sale of illegal drugs and alcohol (Prohibition!).
- This wide-open nightlife may be the reason that jazz was able to thrive in the city. A looser, more spontaneous, infectious brand of swing was played in nightclubs across the city. Unemployed jazz artists fled there to find jobs. Soon Kansas City's jazz scene grew as exciting as New York's or Chicago's.