

By 1939 it had been 50 years since the Civil War, the emancipation of slaves, and Reconstruction. Still the Mississippi Delta was a regions whose social and economic situations had changed very little: the mansions, manners, and affluence of the white plantation class existed alongside the deprivation, poverty, and powerlessness of the Negro majority. The successful white landowner dedicated himself to the pursuit of the good life: hunting trips, riverboat excursions, and travel abroad. Negroes, on the other hand, led lives filled with manual labor (when there was work at all), poor educational opportunities, and very little chance to improve their situations.

These contrasting lifestyles were apparent far and wide in the Delta.

Look at the top photo and use your imagination...

How many stories in this house?

How many bedrooms?

How many bathrooms?

Indoor plumbing?

How many people live here?

How many kids?

What does the head of the household do for a living?

Look at the bottom photo and use your imagination...

How many stories in this house?

How many bedrooms?

How many bathrooms?

Indoor plumbing?

How many people live here?

How many kids?

What does the head of the household do for a living?

What do you think?

Would the family from the bottom photo be willing to trade places with the family in the top photo? Why/why not?

Would the family from the top photo be willing to trade places with the family in the bottom photo? Why/why not?