<u>Research Guide to Selected WPA Records at the National Archives at College Park, Maryland</u>
<u>(Archives II)</u>:

       I created this guide to help researchers & volunteers who want to help the Living New Deal (LND) place more sites & structures on the LND map. I created this guide in February of 2013, so keep in mind that locations, processes, and policies are always subject to change. This is not intended to be a comprehensive guide, but merely a "jump-start" to your research, so you can become familiar with the research process and the general locations of items before you start. I focus here on WPA records, but there are many other New Deal records at Archives that are worth examining.

--Brent McKee

<u>Getting Started</u>:

1. Archives II Website: http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/. Here you can find information on parking, food, bus service, Saturday shuttle service, research policies & procedures, etc.

2. Parking: I parked at the College Park Metro, and took the C8 Bus back and forth from the Archives. There were always plenty of parking spaces at the College Park Metro garage (even after 9am) and the bus ride is fairly short. You also have the option of (trying) to park at the Archives' parking garage, satellite parking lot, or a few street parking spaces. My impression is that if there are no special events or meetings at the Archives, you have a good chance of getting a parking spot. So, try parking at the Archives first (you might save some money, since it's free), but be prepared to park at a metro station in case all spots are taken (the College Park station is not far away).

3. Bus Service: The Archives is a regular stop on the C8 Bus route. See the C8's schedule here: https://www.wmata.com/bus/timetables/view.cfm?line=153. There are more transportation options listed on the Archives' website (http://www.archives.gov/dc-metro/college-park/).

4. After Arriving at the Archives: When you arrive at the Archives and enter the building, you will go through a security checkpoint & metal detector. After that, you will go to a room immediately to the right of the security area to watch a brief researcher orientation and to obtain your researcher identification card.

5. Researcher Locker Room: The Archives is very particular about what you can take to the research areas, so you'll be utilizing the researcher locker room quite a bit. The locker room is one level down from the security and orientation areas.

<u>WPA Records</u>:

       Based on two weeks of research at the Archives, I feel that there are three groups of records that can yield an especially large number of WPA sites & structures that still exist today.

These are (1) The Microfilmed Index to WPA Projects, (2) the WPA Primary File, and (3) the WPA Newspaper Clippings File.

Microfilmed Index to WPA Projects

These records are on the fourth floor of the Archives. They are part of Record Group 69, and are in cabinets 45 & 46. Looking into the Microfilm Room, these cabinets are against the back wall, left-hand side. The indices you will be looking at will be T935 (1935-37), T936 (1938), and T937 (1939-42).

To find the right microfilm roll for the state/jurisdiction you are researching, there is a binder near the front of the Microfilm Room titled: "Special List." Ask a staff person to help you locate this binder. Inside is a state-by-state breakdown of microfilm rolls, e.g., T935, Roll 12, Idaho – Illinois.

In addition to being broken down state-by-state, the microfilmed records are also broken down by county, and then by municipality. Here is a picture of one of the records:
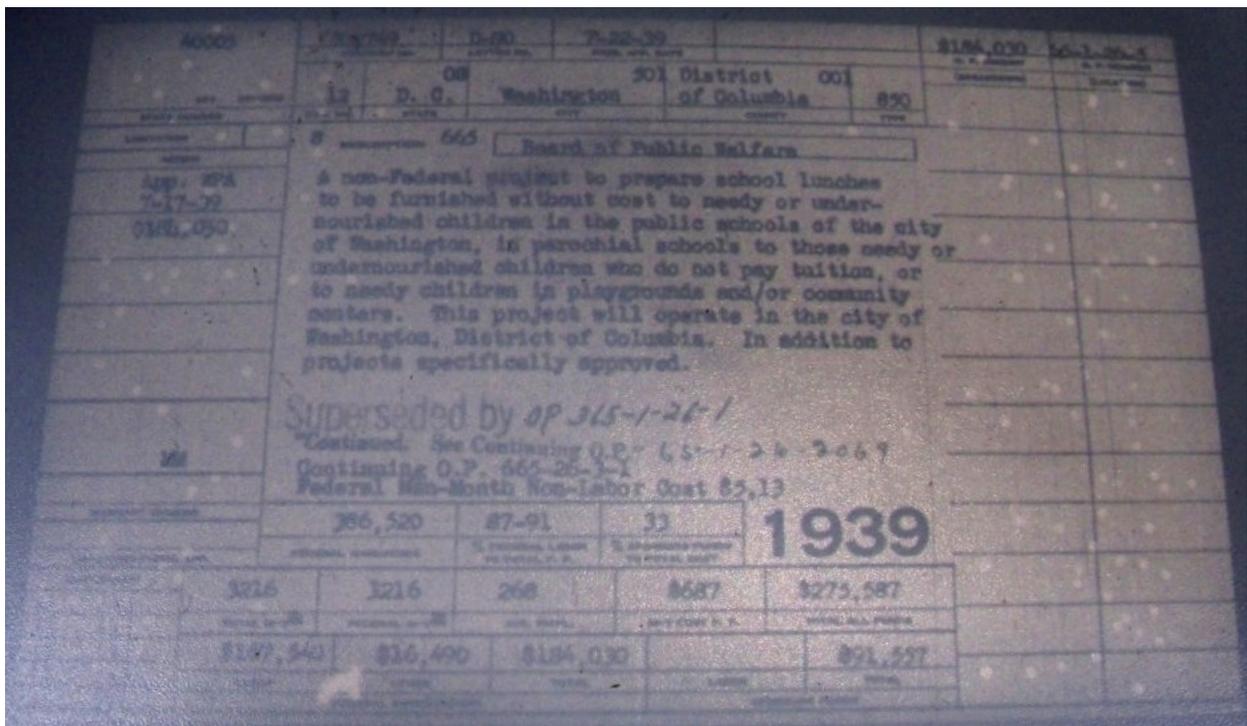
When looking for projects, be on the lookout for words/phrases like "project rescinded" or "superseded by." This could mean that the project never occurred, and so will require more in-depth research. But don't assume that the project did not occur; sometimes WPA projects were terminated or rejected, only to be re-submitted and approved later. It is also possible that a project never occurred even though there are no apparent problems with the record you are looking at. WPA projects were frequently terminated, for various reasons. Hence, it is important to validate the information you are looking at with subsequent research (which could be

something as simple as an Internet search or something more time consuming, like a visit to the site/structure).

WPA Primary File & WPA Newspaper Clippings File

These two files have a multitude of newspaper clippings, press releases, narrative reports, photos, etc. The records are stored in well over 100 boxes, with multiple files in each box. I found them to be a gold mine of information on WPA projects across the country. The only drawback is that some areas are not well represented, e.g., Maryland and Washington, D.C.

To find these records go to room 2000, "Textual Research" on the second floor of the Archives. Next, go to the "Research Consultation Room." Find two binders: A white binder, "RG 69, Records of the WPA, Info Division," and a blue binder, "RG 69, Work Projects Administration (WPA)." The white binder is a finding aid, and the blue binder is a guide to help you fill out the Archives' record request form.

The first step is to find the records you want examine in the white binder, and then match the "entry number" given for that record to the same entry number in the blue binder. <u>Note</u>: *There are a lot of records shown in these binders; the WPA Primary File and the WPA Newspaper Clippings File are just two of many, so you have to look specifically for them.* Once you match these entry numbers you are ready to fill out a request form. If you have never filled out a request form, ask a staff person for assistance. They will show you how to fill out a form, and start you on the process of learning the record retrieval process.

Once you have your records, and find a desk to work at, you'll discover that there are numerous procedures and rules. Don't be intimidated by them; you will learn them quickly. Everyone goes through the same process of familiarization. (I was reminded by staff to wear white gloves when handling photos, use the proper place holder, and to work off the desk not the cart!)