

A List of Summary Reports by New Deal Public Works Agencies: The Good, the Bad, and the Obscure

There was no "Final Report" on the New Deal when it ended, as the Second World War was raging in 1942. Nor were the principal agencies of the Roosevelt Administration required to summarize what they had accomplished since 1933. Some New Deal agencies did their own reports on projects, policies, and personnel, but they are not always easy to find or access; others did not do final assessments. In general, the records left by New Deal public works agencies are far from comprehensive and often spotty and disorganized.

The reasons for this lack of systematic reporting are not far to look. Some agencies, like the Civil Works Administration (CWA), were hastily put together, short-lived, and quickly brought to an end, leaving little time for reflection on what was done. Others, like the Works Progress/Projects Administration (WPA) or Farm Security Administration (FSA), were reorganized, renamed, or absorbed into other departments. Many, if not most, were liquidated during World War II, when the federal government's focus was on matters of life and death, not final reports.

Even with these difficulties, some reports were done exceedingly well. For example, the *Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-1943* is a very thorough and satisfying summary. Yet the critical data on individual WPA projects around the country exists in a disconnected, often poorly-organized mix of old newspaper articles, state archival records, photographic records of varying detail, microfilmed 3x5 project cards at the National Archives (where the final outcome of each proposed project is unclear), and so forth. Another core agency of the New Deal, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), left a minimal report of its astonishing record of activity.

The lack of comprehensive data on New Deal public works is why the Living New Deal exists. Our research aims to document the wealth of public works created by the New Deal, so that it is not lost to posterity. No one before us has attempted to pull together the record of achievement of all the New Deal agencies, and we still have a long way to go. This is why we do so much crowdsourcing and field surveys of project sites: the data and photographs only partially exist in the National Archives, agency records and libraries.

In order to help our volunteers and other researchers, we have created this list of major summary reports of New Deal agencies. After several years of research by the Living New Deal team, we have gained a reasonably good idea of what records exist and where – though we are repeatedly surprised by new discoveries of valuable data, here, there and everywhere. In these reports, you can find out how many miles of water lines the WPA installed in your state; how many items of clothing were sewn on projects funded by the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA); how many fish the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) stocked in lakes, ponds, streams, and rivers across the United States; and much more.

Where possible, we've added hyperlinks to take you to the report (either to another website or to a pdf we've created). We'll be adding more agencies and reports as they come to light, and as time permits.

Civil Works Administration (CWA)

Works Progress Administration, [*Analysis of Civil Works Program Statistics*](#), Washington, DC, 1939.

[*Summaries of Final State Reports, 1934 – 1934*](#) (These records are at the National Archives, not digitized and, in some cases, incomplete).

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

Federal Security Agency, [*Final Report of the Director of the Civilian Conservation Corps, April 1933 through June 30, 1942*](#), 1942.

Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA)

Federal Emergency Relief Administration, [*The Emergency Work Relief Program of the FERA, April 1, 1934 – July 1, 1935*](#), 1936.

Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, [*Final Statistical Report of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration*](#), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942.

National Youth Administration (NYA)

Federal Security Agency, War Manpower Commission, [*Final Report of the National Youth Administration, Fiscal Years 1936-1943*](#), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944.

Public Works Administration (PWA)

Public Works Administration, [*America Builds: The Record of PWA*](#), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939.

Plus: Information on the activities of the PWA for fiscal years 1940-1943 can be found in the annual reports of the Federal Works Agency.

Public Works of Art Project (PWAP)

Public Works of Art Project, [*Report of the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury to Federal Emergency Relief Administrator, December 8, 1933 – June 30, 1934*](#), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1934.

Section of Fine Arts (originally, Treasury Section of Painting and Sculpture)

Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration, [*Final Report – Section of Fine Arts, October 16, 1934 to July 15, 1943*](#) (obtained from the [Archives of American Art](#), Smithsonian Institution).

Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP)

The Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum appears to have one or more final reports for TRAP. See “[Papers of Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz](#),” p. 5, accessed June 4, 2018.

Works Progress Administration (WPA):

Federal Works Agency, [*Final Report on the WPA Program, 1935-43*](#), Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1947.

WPA – Federal Music Project (FMP)

Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, [*Record of Program Operation and Accomplishment, The Federal Music Project, 1935 to 1939, The WPA Music Program, 1939 to 1943*](#), 1943. Obtained from the [University of Rochester](#).

WPA – Federal Theatre Project (FTP)

It does not appear that a significant final report was created for the WPA’s FTP, although a closer inspection of FTP records held at the [Library of Congress](#) and [National Archives](#) might prove otherwise. FTP Director Hallie Flanagan’s book [*Arena*](#) (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1940) provides a history of the FTP, and valuable summary data is included in the appendix.