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The Effects of the Work Projects Administration
in Logan County, Kentucky

During the Great Depression, which began in October 1929 and lasted until World War II, millions of Americans lost their jobs, their homes, and literally everything they owned. Families were scattered as people began to migrate anywhere a job might be found. However, there were very few jobs to be gotten, and hundreds of thousands of the unemployed were searching for those few jobs. Many people starved to death and even more committed suicide who found they could not live in such utter poverty and with a devastated economy.

By 1932, President Herbert Hoover, who had insisted the crisis was only temporary, was alarmed by the still-sharply declining economy. He, therefore, began to establish federal agencies which he hoped would alleviate the national panic. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) began loaning money to banks and other credit agencies in January of that year. This did nothing to help the homeless and those without jobs (Inventory 1).

However, a new president was also elected during this year. Franklin D. Roosevelt did much to help the depressed economy and to give aid to the poor. He created the Federal

Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which was headed by Harry L. Hopkins. Other federal agencies which he created included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) which was first called the Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) and the Public Works Administration (PWA). Both of these were created in 1933. Three other agencies were formed which were administered by FERA. These were the Civil Works Administration (CWA), the Federal Surplus Relief Corporation (FSRC), and on May 6, 1935, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) (Inventory 2).

The purpose of Executive Order 7034, which established the Works Progress Administration was for the "coordinated execution of the relief program as a whole, and for the execution of that program in such a manner as to move from the relief rolls to work on such projects or in private employment the maximum number of persons in the shortest time possible." (Inventory 2)

Should
wording

The Works Progress Administration was strictly a program which provided jobs for the unemployed. It did not give aid of any type to the aged or disabled. The Social Security Act of 1936 was designed to help those people. Until this act was passed they were the responsibility of the local government.

During the eight years the Works Progress Administration was in operation, it employed about 8.5 million needy people. This figure represent about 40% of the nation's unemployed. The work performed was of a public nature and was designed to maintain social services and improve community conditions (Inventory 3). A report written in April 1939 concening the Works Progress Administration said "... the physical effects of the work relief program in communities have been good on the whole, will be of

lasting benefit, and in many communities, constitute the only improvement of this kind that have been made in a number of years." (Report 52)

In 1939 the name of the Works Progress Administration was changed to Work Projects Administration (Inventory 3). Although it was formed and funded by the federal government, it continued to be run by state and local governments. Formal proposals for Work Projects Administration projects had to be submitted to the local WPA Superintendant by a "legally responsible public agency." (Inventory 4) The formal proposal listed the estimated costs of the projects, the amount and type of labor involved, and the names of the persons, companies or agencies which were to sponsor the projects. The sponsors had to share in the expenses of the projects. Theirs were usually the non-labor costs, such as materials, equipment, tools and office space, if needed. They also had to agree that if for any reason the Work Projects Administration could not finish the projects, the sponsors would complete at least one usable unit. When completed, the projects belonged to the sponsors who must maintain and operate them at their own expense (Inventory 4).

Logan County, Kentucky, which the Work Projects Administration identified as "Region XV, North-South Border, Subregion 87" (Rural Regions) began receiving aid very soon after the formation of this program. In fact, "The News Democrat," the local newspaper of Russellville, Kentucky, published an article in its edition of February 6, 1936 concerning the efforts of the Work Projects Administration in the state. The article read:

Washington, February 5- The Work Progress Administration is spending \$12,319,497 on Kentucky projects of which 57.9% is going for highway improvement.

The WPA made public Monday a listing of types and costs of the projects underway as of December 1, which are expected to be completed by April 1 and 15. For highways, roads, and streets, the WPA is spending \$7,417,384. Of this, streets and alleys are getting \$778,810, farm to market and secondary roads, \$176,810, and other projects classified under highways \$6,310,576. For public buildings \$1,392,496, park and playgrounds, \$267,147, flood control and other conservation, \$69,530, water supply and sewer system, \$728,683, education, professional and clerical projects, \$81,522, sewing projects, \$1,138,085, sanitation and health, \$1,583,063, and miscellaneous projects, \$136,533. (News Democrat)

Locally, the Work Progress Administration did much to improve Logan County. Many new roads were built and many existing roads were paved, dozens of buildings were built, and hundreds of previously unemployed persons had jobs.

LOGAN COUNTY

PROJECTS IN OPERATION, 1937

Work Project Number	Description and Location	Workers		Amount Federal Funds	Amount Sponsors Pledge
		Male	Female		
159	Bldg. Pavillion, Russellville	4		\$1414	\$377
281	Quarry stone to surf. streets, Adairville	26		6834	151
282	Gr. Surf. Rochester Road	10		2727	993

Work Project Number	Description and Location	Workers Male Female	Amount Federal Funds	Amount Sponsors Pledge
290	Gr. Dr. Rd. E. of Beechland	17	\$4705	\$1777
534	Surf. Sub-gr. Mason Hill Rd.	17	4610	2777
1042	Quarry & Surf. sts., Auburn	20	4977	788
1126	Community Sanitation	15	3153	13600
1127	Gr. Dr. Scochoh Road	15	3474	2691
1128	Gr. Dr. 1 mi. N.E. Gasper River Chch.	26	6897	907
1492	Gr. Dr. Dunmor Road	35	7924	1004
1556	Training Work Center, Russell- ville	48	11984	233
1640	Quarry & Surf. sts. Auburn	16	3942	818
1770	Distrib. Surplus Commodities	5	1416	1683
2089	Adult Education, Russellville	2 3	1514	200
2111	Nursery Teachers, Russellville	4	1016	300
2479	Gr. Dr. Stevenson Mill Road	<u>29</u> 237	<u>7841</u> 74428	<u>375</u> 28674

PROJECTS COMPLETED

Work Project Number	Description and Location	Workers Male Female	Amount Federal Expendit.	Sponsors Expendit.
1087	Const. Rds.	87	\$5759.41	Not report

APPROVED NOT IN OPERATION

Serial Number	Description and Location	Workers Male Female	Federal Funds Approved
1-71-196	Housekeeper & Community Assistants	5	\$1,830
1-71-645	Farm to Market Road Constr.	103	48,800
1-71-856	Reconstruction, Jail Annex, Russellville	96	22,745
1-71-857	Cross Indexing County Records	9 12	5,124

Serial Number	Description and Location	Workers		Federal Funds Approved
		Male	Female	
1-71-861	Construct Water Mains outlying sections, Russellville	52		14,000
1-71-862	Construct 6 rm. Colored school bldg.	36		8,586
1-71-863	Construct Street, bridges & viaducts, Russellville	52		6,000
1-71-860	Additional Road Construction	247		117,791
1-71-16	Construct Keysburg-Allensville Road	50		3,150
1-71-35	Reconstruct various county rd	16		4,100
1-71-471	Continue Community Sanitation	15		6,100
1-71-241	Continue Road Construction	12		3,900
1-71-427	Construct Hop Church to County Pike Roads	47		6,933
1-71-547	Construct Road from Epley to Kings Ford	51		4,697
1-71-413	Construct Russellville-Clarksville Road	51		5,645
		837		\$259,401

The Logan County Library was begun by a Work Projects Administration project in the late 1930's although there were no local funds until 1940. In October of that year donations made by the library committee, along with the proceeds from the raffle of a table, caused the opening of an account book, showing a balance of \$15.10 (Memories).

An article in the News Democrat of January 26, 1939, said the library first opened with a few donated magazines and books but at that time had 2,400 books for use in the centers which were established in ten different parts of Logan County. It went on to say the government had just purchased 456 more books.

When the public library opened the members of the first Logan County Library Board were Mrs. Sam Milam, Mrs. James D. Lashbrook, Mrs. Richard Gill, and Mrs. Roy Gorrell. The city and county, city school board, and county school board began to appropriate \$10 each per month and soon the library which had been located in the Russellville Grade School building (News Democrat 1-26-39) was moved to the Byrne Building on East Fourth Street on January 1, 1941 (Memories).

In 1941, the Work Projects Administration was still paying the salaries of the library's personnel. The governments chief interest was not in library service, but in employing those in need to repair and rebind books. Therefore, early in 1942, the Work Projects Administration withdrew its support. The library continued operating on an irregular basis until August when Mrs. Theodocia Graham became the librarian at a salary of one dollar a day (Memories).

Several schools were built in Logan County by the Work Projects Administration. An article in the Sept 10, 1936 edition of The News Democrat says the WPA is "America's largest school builder," and was "responsible for three-fourths of all school construction in the last three years." At that time the program was using \$464 million of its educational building funds to "wipe out the little red schoolhouses." Seventy-five percent of the new buildings were built in communities which had a population of 2,500 or less. In Logan County, schools were built in the communities of Chandlers Chapel, Olmstead, Lewisburg, and Auburn.

In 1940, Rhea Stadium, located on what was then the Russell-

ville High school, was also built by the Work Projects Administration labor. An article in The News Democrat dated April 7, 1938 announced the approval of the project. Roy Porter, the local superintendant for the Work Projects Administration said \$35,578 were allotted for the project. Though it took a little longer than expected, Roy Porter estimated it would take forty to fifty men about ten months to complete the construction of the stadium. According to The News Democrat on February 24, 1938, the proposed building would be south of the gymnasium with an entrance facing Ninth Street. The article says "An attractive stone and concrete fence would encircle the west and south sides of the field and the stadium would have a seating capacity for 1,500 to 2,000 persons with a special box and special seating arrangements for the school board."

An article in the May 19, 1938 edition of The News Democrat mentions that work on the athletic field had begun as had a project to resurface Spring Street in Russellville.

In all, between the years 1935-1943, the Work Projects Administration granted more than \$11 billion nationwide for the construction of hospitals, reform schools, airfields, naval and submarine bases, public schools, parkways, tunnels, dams, low income houses, government buildings, and other such construction. (Architecture).

The August 11, 1938 edition of The News Democrat told of another function of the Work Projects Administration in Logan County. It was instrumental in the distribution of clothing for several hundred needy children. This was made possible by the

cooperation of Judge J.T. Linton, Runey McReynolds, who was the commodity director, and Mrs Marie Miller. Mrs. Miller was the Supervisor of the Sewing Project and it was by her and her crew that the clothes were made.

The 400 acre county poor farm, which was located on both sides of the L & N Railroad southwest of Russellville, was operated by the Work Projects Administration (Index). Because of the topography, only about 175 acres were suited for agriculture. The food raised on this land was distributed to the needy throughout the county. On October 6, 1938 The News Democrat announced the intent of the Work Projects Administration to build a large building on Third Street in Russellville, behind the county jail. The building was to be a warehouse to store the food grown on the county farm and materials for distribution and for office space.

On January 5, 1939 The News Democrat says the Work Projects Administration moved into the new warehouse. According to the article, the 51' x 90' building, which has since been razed, included offices for the engineers, timekeepers, the Department of Agriculture, the County Certifying Agent, and the Commodity Department. The building also contained storage rooms, a blacksmith shop, and a pipe plant where reinforced pipe is made for the roads. The article described the building, which saved the WPA \$850 a year in rentals, as being of frame construction with eight-inch white limestone veneering.

At the same time, the Work Projects Administration was also working on other projects. Three hundred seventy six men were

employed in construction and asphaltting of the streets, in building the athletic stadium, and in building the Montgomery Schoolhouse Road, as well as the Lewisburg- Deerlick Road and the Spa-Greenridge Road.

On April 6, 1939, The News Democrat contained an article about the Work Projects Administration Cottage which opened in Russellville. It said:

Have you visited your WPA Cottage

In the fall of 1938 the Logan County Court made possible the funding of a Housekeeping Aid Project under the WPA. Mrs. Louise Craig, Auburn was in charge of the project. The cottage, located on Stevenson Mill Road was furnished, with the help of 10 women. There was little or no expense to the WPA. The women constructed furniture from vinegar barrels, prune boxes, orange crated and coffin boxes. The wood, paint, varnish, linoleum were all donated by local merchants.

After the women equipped themselves a suitable work center they have been instructed in; the arts of housekeeping. The course includes simple cooking, planning well balanced meals, making convenient equipment from things at home.

Since October, 51 different families received aid from this project. 244 different individuals have been reached by this work.

Credit for the success of this project goes to Dr. E.N. Thompson and the Logan County Health Department, the

Product Advisory Commission (Mrs. Gober Price, Mrs. L.S. Howlett, Mrs. J.T. Linton).

Housekeeping aids are available to families where there is an illness and funds are inadequate to hire a nurse.

In 1939, local and state appraisals found several faults with the Work Projects Administration. It was found the WPA insufficiently covered the unemployment needs of white collar workers, single persons, and skilled workers. Also, because of the limitations of the program, most small communities lacked the needed technical and construction funds. Since jobs were so scarce, the local supervisors were often reluctant to discharge workers when the need arose, therefore causing an overload of workers on some projects. Also the appraisals found poor supervision, as well as much uncertainty in the program (Appraisal 26). They found "the primary problem in the whole situation seems to be in the inability of sponsors to raise funds properly, to finance the communities share of projects sufficient to keep their certified worker employed." (Appraisal 26).

The same year, the state began to reduce the number of people it had employed by the Work Projects Administration. An article dated August 10, 1939 in The News Democrat says:

State WPA Rolls will be Reduced

A compulsory reduction of relief rolls of the WPA in Kentucky to comply with the 1939 Appropriation Act passed recently passed by Congress will be materially felt in August in Logan County.

The 1939 act requires all persons who have received employment on WPA projects for 18 consecutive months (excepting veterans) to be released and that their certification be cancelled. In Logan County, 365 persons are employed by the WPA. 142 fall within the meaning of the act and must be released before August 31.

The act also states all persons released may reapply for recertification. All recertified persons will be placed in the awaiting assignments file. Recertification does not mean re-employment. In Kentucky there are now 10,000 persons certified who have never had WPA employment.

Along with the 18 months lists, additional lists; 17 months, 16 months are being prepared for dismissal during September or October.

The Work Projects Administration played a large part in the development of Logan County. In fact, many of the projects developed by the program are still in use today. The later generations know little about why the roads they ride on were built. Still we should be grateful for the builders and the work they did, as those builders were, no doubt, grateful for the jobs they had which brought them a little ease during one of the roughest times in American history.

America's Forgotten Architecture. National Trust for Historic
Preservation, 1976.

Index to Reference Cards for Work Projects Administration Project
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of Research, 1940.

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Program of the WPA. April 1939, National Appraisal Comm.

WPA Projects in Operation in Logan County, Kentucky, 1937