Number 107

RECORDS OF THE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION
1939-41

Compiled by George P. Perros

The National Archives
National Archives and Records Service
General Services Administration

Washington: 1958
To analyze and describe the permanently valuable records of the Federal Government preserved in the National Archives Building is one of the main tasks of the National Archives. Various kinds of finding aids are needed to facilitate the use of these records, and the first step in the records-description program is the compilation of preliminary inventories of the material in the 280-odd record groups to which the holdings of the National Archives are allocated.

These inventories are called "preliminary" because they are provisional in character. They are prepared as soon as possible after the records are received without waiting to screen out all disposable material or to perfect the arrangement of the records. They are compiled primarily for internal use, both as finding aids to help the staff render efficient reference service and as a means of establishing administrative control over the records.

Each preliminary inventory contains an introduction that briefly states the history and functions of the agency that accumulated the records. The records themselves are described series by series, that is, by units of records of the same form or that deal with the same subject or activity or that are arranged serially. Other significant information about the records may sometimes be given in appendixes.

When the record group has been studied sufficiently and the records have been placed in final order, the preliminary inventories will be revised and the word "preliminary" dropped from the title of the revision. Meanwhile, as occasion demands and time permits, special reports, indexes, calendars, and other finding aids to the record group will be prepared.

Several finding aids that give an overall picture of materials in the National Archives have been published. A comprehensive Guide to the Records in the National Archives (1948) and a brief guide, Your Government's Records in the National Archives (revised 1950), have been issued. Forty-Four Reference Information Papers, which analyze records in the National Archives on such subjects as transportation, small business, and the Middle East, have so far been issued. Records of World War I have been described in the Handbook of Federal World War Agencies and Their Records, 1917-1921, and those of World War II in the two-volume guide, Federal Records of World War II (1950-51). Many bodies of records of high research value have been edited by the National Archives and reproduced on microfilm as a form of publication. Positive prints of some 7,000 rolls of this microfilm, most of which are described in the List of National Archives Microfilm Publications (1953), are now available for purchase.
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The business depression of 1929, reaching its height in the early 1930's, left in its wake an army of unemployed variously estimated at from 12 to 18 million. To assist these persons and their dependents, the Congress passed, among other measures, the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, approved April 8, 1935 (49 Stat. 115). Pursuant to the provisions of this act, the Works Progress Administration was created by Executive Order 7034, May 6, 1935, to provide work for these victims by a vast public works program. The Works Progress Administration, subsequently named the Work Projects Administration, operated many public projects sponsored by States, municipalities, and other public bodies, providing employment for millions and creating "vast increments to the public assets of every State in the Union and practically every city and town of the Nation." The Federal expenditures for public works, with the exception of funds spent on Federal projects, were in the form of grants to States and municipalities. Increasing criticism of the operations of the Works Progress Administration led to the consideration by the House of Representatives of House Resolution 130, 76th Congress, submitted by Representative Eugene E. Cox, of Georgia, on March 16, 1939. The resolution, authorizing an investigation of the Works Progress Administration, was adopted by the House of Representatives on March 27, 1939, after some debate involving criticism of the agency "about political activity in the 1938 elections and about matters of administration of work projects and expenditure of funds."

The resolution directed the Committee on Appropriations or a subcommittee thereof "to make a study and investigation of the Works Progress Administration ... and the administration of the laws, regulations, and orders administered by it." The chairman of the Appropriations Committee, Representative Edward T. Taylor, of Colorado, designated the Subcommittee on Deficiency Appropriations, which had jurisdiction over all emergency relief appropriation bills, to conduct the study and investigation.

The subcommittee, also called the subcommittee on the Works Progress Administration, selected J. O'Connor Roberts as its counsel. It hired several investigators who had served with the Senatorial Campaign Committee of 1938 (which had investigated some activities of the Works Progress Administration), and also used the services of investigators from the General Accounting Office, the Procurement Division (Public Buildings Branch), and other Federal agencies.

The subcommittee looked into the activities of the Works Progress Administration in Washington, D. C., in New York City, and in the following States: California, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Washington. It held intermittent hearings between April 11, 1939, and May 1, 1940.
In order to consider the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act of 1939, passage of which was required before July 1, 1939, to prevent a break in the program for the employment of the needy, the subcommittee suspended its investigation for a brief period in the spring of 1939. On May 15, 1940, the subcommittee reported its findings and conclusions (H. Rept. 2187, 76th Cong., 3d sess.) and thereupon concluded its task.

The subcommittee described some of the results of its investigation as follows:

... the investigation has had a very wholesome effect upon the administration of the work program under the direction of the W. P. A. The very fact that an investigating body had been authorized by the House was notice to the entire W. P. A. organization to start to place its house in order. There has been a noticeable trend of better administration commencing with the authorization for the investigation and continuing on a rising curve. The committee expects and believes that this trend will continue ...

The records described in this inventory, amounting to approximately 45 cubic feet, are part of Record Group 233, Records of the United States House of Representatives. No person may have access to the records of the subcommittee or receive information from them without the express authorization of the House of Representatives.
RECORDS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION

ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS. Apr. 1939-Jan. 1941. 2 ft. 1
Minutes; correspondence relating to the subcommittee's agenda; correspondence and memoranda of staff members dealing with work assignments; personnel records of staff employees; and reports of expenditures of the subcommittee for salaries, transportation, stationery, and other expenses. Arranged by subject.

GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE. Mar. 1939-Jan. 1941. 8 ft. 2
Applications of persons seeking employment with the subcommittee; correspondence with officials of the Works Progress Administration respecting the subcommittee's agenda; correspondence with WPA employees and with citizens complaining about the Works Progress Administration, commenting on the subcommittee's investigation, or suggesting areas of investigation; correspondence and memoranda of staff members; and some administrative records of the subcommittee. Applications are filed under the letter A and numbered in the order of receipt; correspondence is similarly filed under the letter C. An index to the series is available.

RECORDS RELATING TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS OF THE WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION. May 1939-July 1940. 2 in. 3
Records of the subcommittee's investigation of the Washington Administrative headquarters of the WPA, including the investigative report and the exhibits accompanying it. Arranged by subject.

CORRESPONDENCE WITH STATE GOVERNORS. May 1939. 2 in. 4
Replies from Governors to a circular letter sent on May 8, 1939, to obtain constructive suggestions with respect to the WPA and the participation of the Federal Government in the problem of furnishing employment for the employable unemployed. Requested to submit their views either in a written statement or by personal appearance, many of the Governors submitted written statements of their views. Arranged alphabetically by State.

RECORDS OF J. O'CONNOR ROBERTS. Apr. 1939-Jan. 1941. 2 ft. 5
Papers of the counsel of the subcommittee, including letters of complaints against the WPA by workers employed on its projects and by other citizens; copies of reports of investigators; drafts of the counsel's report of Apr. 22, 1940, informational materials; and exhibits. Arranged alphabetically by subject; for a list of folder headings, see appendix I.

RECORDS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE'S INVESTIGATIONS. Apr. 1939-Dec. 1940. 6
27 ft.
Reports of the investigations, in Washington, D. C., and in the field; exhibits, and reference materials; correspondence with the Works Progress Administration regarding requests for information and documents; correspondence with WPA employees and with other citizens suggesting areas of
investigation; and correspondence and memoranda of the subcommittee's investigators. For a list showing the arrangement and the folder headings of the records in this series, see appendix II.

PROGRESS REPORTS OF SUBCOMMITTEE INVESTIGATORS. Mar. 1939-Dec. 1940. 3 ft.

Reports of investigators on the progress of their investigative activities, with accompanying documents. Arranged alphabetically by State or city.

RECORDS RELATING TO INVESTIGATIONS BY THE GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE. May 1939-Sept. 1940. 1 ft.

Reports of the General Accounting Office on investigations undertaken on behalf of the subcommittee, accompanied by exhibits and other related papers. Arranged alphabetically by subject or name of person or organization investigated; for a list of folder headings, see appendix III.

PAYROLLS OF WORKS PROGRESS ADMINISTRATION EMPLOYEES. Dec. 1, 1939. 1 ft.

Payrolls listing the names of persons employed by the WPA at $1,200 or more per year, as of Apr. 30 or Dec. 1, 1939, together with the type of position held by each employee and the amount of his salary. Arranged alphabetically by State or city.

TRANSCRIPT OF HEARINGS. Apr. 22-May 1, 1940. 2 ft.

Partial stenographic transcript of hearings. Included are documents submitted but not incorporated in the transcript and memoranda on statements of witnesses in the hearings. The latter records are arranged by subject, the transcript chronologically.

EXHIBITS. Apr. 1939. 2 ft.

Exhibits submitted on Apr. 20, 1939, by Col. F. C. Harrington, Administrator of the Works Progress Administration, in response to the subcommittee's request for documentary material on the work of his agency. The 21 exhibits are lettered, A-U.

MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS. Mar. 1939-Dec. 1940. 6 in.

Photostats of the Daily Worker and of the Saturday Evening Post article of Dec. 10, 1938, dealing with the Workers' Alliance; work papers of investigators; and periodicals. Arranged by subject.
APPENDIX I

Headings for the Records of J. O'Connor Roberts (Entry 5)

Annals of labor and industry in Illinois for Jan.-Mar. 1890
Applications for employment with the WPA in Illinois
Appropriations for the War Department
Complaints against the WPA
Congressional Record
Education
Engineers' reports
Federal Theater projects
Federal Writers' project in Illinois
Financial summary of units - Federal Project No. 1
Funds appropriated and allocated for recovery and relief
Harrington, Col. F. C., questions for
Investigators' reports on Louisiana
Investigators' reports on Pennsylvania
Investigators' reports on Tennessee
McTigue, J. J., work papers
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APPENDIX II

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CALIFORNIA

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American Guide Series
Aquatic Park
Art project of Southern California
Chavalas, James A.
Chino prison
Comparison of WPA and contract costs
Complaints
Communism on Federal Writers' Project
Construction of a race track at Del Mar, Calif.
Correspondence
Cumulative expenditures through June 30, 1939
Destruction of Employment Division Records
Dunn, Charles C.
Employees and employment rolls
Employment reports
Expenditure of WPA funds
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Fair grounds, Del Mar
Federal Theater Projects
Guesswork in project proposals
Harvey, Mrs. Myra (WPA Sewing Project, San Francisco, Calif.)
Hollywood Bowl
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Los Angeles street improvement projects
Minutes of the meetings of the 22d District Agricultural Association
Naval and Marine Corps Reserve Armory
Negligence of WPA officers
Northern California report
Personnel
Private property improvements
Recreation center at Glendale
Restitution cases
Restrictions on the WPA
School construction
Security wage
Sewer and storm drain construction
Shortage of skilled labor in Southern California
Southern California art and writers' projects
State highway construction project
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Tugs, barges, and moorings
Warehouse inventories
Whitmore, George
WPA competition with the heavy construction industry in Southern California
WPA expenditures and sponsors' contributions as of October 31, 1939
WPA workers employed continuously for 18 months
Writers' project (Northern California)
Various subjects

CONNECTICUT

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Adult education
Baldwin Park Project
Cleaning and renovating projects
Correspondence
Dutch elm disease
Employment conditions in Connecticut
Federal Writers' Project
Job progress forms
Gardiner, Henry E.
Intake and Certification Division
Labor adjusters
Music project
Nolan, Patrick
Personnel on operating projects
Personnel records and information
Procedure and policy in reemployment of personnel
Projects exceeding $100,000
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Sponsors' contributions and expenditures
State arts program
Supply fund
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Warehouse inspection

FLORIDA

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Airport project, Tallahassee, Fla.
American Hellenic Community Center
Colonial Manor
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Complaints
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Davis Island Airport
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Edgewood Court project
Eighteen months' continuous employment provision
Employees in Key West
Expenditures
Fairfax Manor
Farmers' Market project
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Florida
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Florida mapping project
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Hillsborough County Home project
Intake and certification
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Marianna Country Club
Matron's projects
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Veterans' graves registration project
Warehouses, Jackson and Miami
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Personnel file
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| Certification procedure in Mass. | Summaries of investigations |
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| Correspondence | and engineering survey projects |
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  Administrator
  Affidavits
  Adult education
  Art project
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  Bellevue Hospital
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  Board of Estimate
  Building rentals
  Canarsie Garage & Shop
  Car track removal
  Construction costs
  Cooney Bros.
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