

Students Learning from Local and Statewide Historic Places

We Will Persevere!

The New Deal in Arkansas



Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) work crew at Devil's Den State Park, Washington County, 1934

Courtesy of the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History/Billye Jean Scroggins Bell Collection



ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Written by

Rachel M. Miller, Education Outreach Coordinator

Updated 2016 by Shelle Stormoe

1000 La Harpe • Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 • Phone (501) 324-9880

Fax (501) 324-9184 • TDD (501) 324-9811

Arkansaspreservation.com | educationoutreach@arkansasheritage.org

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Contents

Instructional Guidelines.....	4
Grade Levels.....	4
For the Teacher.....	4
Curriculum Frameworks.....	4
Arkansas History 7-8.....	4
Arkansas History 9-12.....	4
United States History since 1890.....	4
Objectives.....	4
Lesson Plan Procedures.....	5
Teaching Resources.....	6
Searching the AHPP Database for information on New Deal/Depression Era Properties.....	7
A Brief History of the Great Depression.....	8
Glossary for A Brief History of the Great Depression.....	10
Great Depression Activity One:.....	11
A Brief Introduction to the New Deal.....	12
Glossary for A Brief Introduction to the New Deal.....	14
Activities for “A Brief Introduction to the New Deal”.....	15
Activity 1: Analyzing FDR’s Fireside Chats.....	15
Activity 2: Political Cartoon of FDR’s First 100 Days.....	15
Public Works Administration (PWA).....	20
Works Progress Administration (WPA).....	23
Haggard Ford Swinging Bridge, 1938-1941.....	24
Harrison, Boone County.....	24
Russellville Public Library, 1936-1937.....	25
Russellville, Pope County.....	25
St. Paul School Building, 1939.....	26
St. Paul, Madison County.....	26
Miller County Courthouse, Texarkana, 1939.....	27
WPA Section Activities:.....	28
Note on the WPA Guides.....	28
ACTIVITY ONE: Comparing and Contrasting State Guides.....	28
Activity Two: Creating Your Own Arkansas Visitors’ Guide.....	28
Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).....	29

Petit Jean State Park, 1933-1938..... 30
Southwest of Morrilton, Conway County 30
Camp Ouachita Girl Scout Camp Historic District 32
Lake Sylvia, Perry County, 1936-1938 32
CCC Activities: 34
 Activity One:..... 34
 Activity Two:..... 34
 Activity Three: 34

Instructional Guidelines

Grade Levels

7-12

For the Teacher

The purpose of this lesson plan is to instill a historic preservation ethic in young Arkansans by helping them understand the Great Depression and the New Deal in Arkansas, and why these two 20th century historical events were crucial in Arkansas's history.

Curriculum Frameworks

Arkansas History 7-8

H.7.AH.7-8.7 Examine social, economic, and political effects of the Great Depression and the New Deal on various regions and segments of the population in Arkansas.

Arkansas History 9-12

Era4.4.AH.9-12.5 Analyze social, economic, and political effects of the Great Depression on various regions and segments of the population in Arkansas.

Era4.4.AH.9-12.6 Analyze social, economic, and political effects of the New Deal on various regions and segments of the population in Arkansas.

United States History since 1890

Era8.3.USH.3 Construct historical arguments and explanations about social, economic, political, geographical, and environmental effects of the Great Depression on various regions from multiple perspectives.

Era8.3.USH.4 Evaluate the changing role of the federal government between 1929 and 1945 and the changing views of Americans toward the role of government from multiple perspectives using primary and secondary source.

Objectives

- Students will use primary sources to learn about the Great Depression and the New Deal in Arkansas.
- Students will learn about the regional impact of the Great Depression in Arkansas.
- Students will learn about the implementation of the New Deal in Arkansas.
- Students will learn about the many New Deal sites that still exist and are utilized today.

Lesson Plan Procedures

1. Have students read the “A Brief History of the Great Depression” section. Afterwards have students study the accompanying glossary and then discuss the reading and related vocabulary.
2. Either break the students up into groups or keep the class as a whole to complete at least one of the two Great Depression activities.
3. Have students read “A Brief Introduction to the New Deal” section, afterwards have students study the accompanying glossary and then complete at least one of the listed New Deal activities.
4. Have students examine the Arkansas historic sites associated with the Public Works Administration (PWA), Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC).
5. After the WPA photograph section, have students complete one of the WPA activities.
6. After the CCC photograph section, have students complete the CCC newspaper, “design a state park” or the CCC poem activities.
7. Use the National Register of Historic Places database example to assist students in finding New Deal sites close to their communities if you plan to include teaching research skills with this unit.

Teaching Resources

- Request the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program driving tour map, *A New Deal for Arkansas*. Teachers can request multiple copies. It is a great interactive tool for your classroom. To request the map please e-mail info@arkansaspreservation.org or call the AHPP main number at 501-324-9880
- You can find a listing of all New Deal/Depression Era properties on the National Register for Historic Places on the AHPP website at: <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/News-and-Events/depression-era-properties>. You can then look these properties up on the National Register of Historic Places database on the AHPP website to find more information about each property.
- Your local county or town museum is a great resource for primary sources. They usually have a lot of historic photographs and artifacts that can be used to teach students about the days of the Great Depression in their community. If there is no county or town museum in your area, contact your county historical society. The best way to find contact information is to Google the name of your county and the words “historical society.” For example, if you are in White County, Google “White County Arkansas Historical Society.”
- The *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* offers articles on the Great Depression and the New Deal in Arkansas. Its archive can be accessed at <http://arkindex.uark.edu/AHQ/>
- The Butler Center for Arkansas Studies is another archive available for teachers to search for primary and secondary sources pertaining to the Great Depression and the New Deal in Arkansas: www.butlercenter.org
- *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* has a searchable database of entries pertaining to various Arkansas related topics, including New Deal programs in Arkansas: www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net
- *Riding the Rails*, a PBS documentary on the thousands of teenagers who were living on the road during the Great Depression: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/films/rails/>
- The Library of Congress offers a lesson plan called “New Deal Programs: Brother Can You Spare a Dime?” <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/lessons/dime/>
- The National Endowment for the Humanities offers a five lesson unit on the New Deal and the Great Depression called *FDR: Fireside Chats, the New Deal, and Eleanor*. The unit can be accessed at: <http://edsitement.neh.gov/curriculum-unit/fdr-fireside-chats-new-deal-and-eleanor>
- The National Archives offers a lesson plan related to FDR’s first inaugural address. The lesson can be found at: <http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/fdr-inaugural/activities.html>

- The New Deal Network, under the management of the Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, offers a variety of primary and secondary sources about the New Deal at: <http://newdeal.feri.org/>

Searching the AHPP Database for information on New Deal/Depression Era Properties

The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program offers a database that includes information about all properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the state. This database includes National Register nomination forms, which offer extensive histories of each property. In order to look up a New Deal/Depression Era Property in the database, follow these instructions:

1. Point your browser to: <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/News-and-Events/depression-era-properties>
2. Choose which area of the state you mean to research, and click on the map on the left of the page (Northwest Arkansas, Central Arkansas, etc.).
3. Use the information on this page to find a property in your county, town or community.
4. After you have discovered the name of properties that interest you, point your browser to: <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/Historic-Properties/National-Register/search-national-register-listings>
5. Type the name of the property in the “Name” field of the database entry form on this page. If this does not bring up the property you are looking for, then delete the name of the property out of the “name” field and type in the name of the city or town in the “city” field, or simply use the dropdown menu to find the county where the property is located.
6. Click the “search” button or hit the “enter” key.
7. Play around with the database and try various possibilities for looking for the property in which you are interested. The database is always under some kind of construction and maintenance, and so sometimes one method of searching won’t bring up the desired results, but another method might bring them up.

A Brief History of the Great Depression



Courtesy Library of Congress

Many historians mark the beginning of the American Great Depression with the Great Stock Market Crash of 1929. Although the market would not completely bottom out until July 1932, this particular event had a huge impact on the American banking system and the nation's spending habits for years to come.

During the 1920s, many people purchased **stocks** with borrowed money and then used these stocks as **collateral** for purchasing more stocks. The stock market experienced a boom, but it was unreliable because it was based on borrowed money, which created false optimism. Eventually, the investors

lost confidence in the possibilities of the stock market.

Another factor that contributed to the instability of the American economy were short-sighted government economic policies. The majority of politicians at this time believed that business, any type of business, was key to the advancement of the United States. The government did not try to prevent unwise investment. Congress passed high taxes that protected American businesses, but harmed farmers and international trade. National wealth was not distributed evenly. The wealth was kept by those who were able to save or invest, instead of spending their money on American goods. The demand for goods was greater than the supply. The cost of goods skyrocketed, and the majority of Americans were not able to pay the high prices. Some people profited, but mostly, people were hurt by this economic **extortion**, especially the farmers and middle-class workers.



Courtesy Library of Congress

And then on October 29, 1929, known as *Black Tuesday*, the economic structure of the United States was thrown into over a decade of turmoil. Five days before the notorious *Black Tuesday*, 12.9 million shares were traded on that Thursday (*Black Thursday*), causing stock prices to drop. Those Americans who had **investments** in the market began to panic, which led to everyone pulling out their money at once. On October 29, 16.4 million shares were sold, the largest number in American stock market history. The Great Market Crash of 1929 marked the end of the Roaring '20s in the United States and the beginning of the Great Depression. It took 22 years for the stock market to completely recover.

The Great Depression greatly affected the way of life in the United States. It did not just have a physical impact on the economy, but also a psychological impact on the nation. Many Americans, especially men, were in fear of losing their jobs and many did. This uncertainty in the future created anxiety, and many became depressed. The suicide level rose dramatically. Thousands of people went hungry. Soup kitchens were created to feed the many urban residents who could no longer afford to buy food.

The stock market's collapse did not immediately affect the state of Arkansas.

At the time, Arkansas already was suffering through its own economic crisis. A major economic contributor for the state was agriculture, although the price of cotton and grain fell with the stock market, this was not unusual for Arkansas farmers. They had been struggling with low crop prices for several years. During the 1920s, the Arkansas farmer experienced hard times. The **Great Flood of 1927** destroyed thousands of acres of Arkansas farmland. Many independent farmers lost their land. Some **migrated** out west in search of work, but most were forced into **tenant farming**. The average wage for an Arkansas farm worker in 1929 was \$1.65 per day, which was one-half the average wage for workers in non-southern states.¹ Farmers also found it difficult to receive farm loans from Arkansas banks, which they needed to purchase equipment, livestock and seeds. A large number of Arkansas state banks failed during the 1920s because of poor management and bad banking laws.

In 1929, Arkansas ranked first in "**per capita indebtedness**."² Arkansas was on the verge of **bankruptcy**, so when the stock market began its downward spiral it did not make the front page of the Arkansas Gazette until days later.³ After the stock market crashed, the economic situation in Arkansas was grim. The likelihood of immediate recovery lessened as **federal and charitable funds** were used up. The **Emergency Relief Act allocated** five million dollars in relief, but Arkansas received only 2%.

Arkansas's capital city, Little Rock, was hit hard by unemployment. The **employment growth rate** for Little Rock was at 7.8%, the slowest rate since **Reconstruction**. By the early 1930s, the state Legislature stopped all funding for construction of new public buildings including schools, city halls, county courthouses, and roads. Sections of northern Arkansas were isolated from the rest of the state because there was no funding for public road construction.⁴ By the time Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president in 1932, many Arkansans were searching for relief from the crushing poverty they had been living with for years. When FDR promised a "new deal" for the people, Arkansans hoped it would reach the state and make a difference.

¹ Conway, Gail S., *Forty Years Ago: The Great Depression Comes to Arkansas*. Arkansas Historical Quarterly. Vol. 37, Number 1 (Spring 1978): 291.

² *Ibid*, p. 292.

³ *Ibid*, p. 293.

⁴ Hope, Holly, *An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943* (published by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006):
<https://www.arkansaspreservation.com/LiteratureRetrieve.aspx?ID=133233>

Glossary for A Brief History of the Great Depression

Allocate: to give out or distribute money, goods or assistance.

Bankruptcy: to be financially ruined, to have greatly reduced access to money or resources.

Collateral: something used as a guarantee or a security pledged to ensure payment of a loan.

Emergency Relief Act of 1932: the act was the United States' first big relief legislation (law). It was enacted by President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933) and later adopted and revised by President Franklin D. Roosevelt. It provided financial aid to businesses, railroad workers, farmers and public works programs.

Employment growth rate: the rate (or pace) at which employment grows. It can grow very fast with the creation of lots of new jobs, or it can be very slow, which usually includes the loss of many jobs.

Extortion: to greatly overcharge for something, in the case of *economic extortion*, certain businessmen drastically raised the prices of goods forcing consumers to pay more than the goods were worth.

Federal and charitable funds: money that is *allocated* by the federal government or by a charity (an aid organization).

Great Flood of 1927: In the spring of 1927, the Mississippi River, the Arkansas River and several other rivers located in the state, flooded their banks, destroying 5,104,735 acres of farmland in Arkansas, affecting 40,916 Arkansas families.⁵

Investments: in relation to the stock market, it's when someone places a sum of money in certain **stocks** (a share of a specific company or corporation) to make a profit when the stocks go up in value.

Migrate: to move or resettle from one country, region or place to another.

Per capita indebtedness: per capita means the average per person, so the phrase refers to the average amount of debt (money owed) per person.

Reconstruction: a period after the Civil War from 1866-1877 when various policies were implemented to help restore order in the South.

Tenant farming: when a farmer rents a certain amount of land for cash or share of the crops harvested. In Arkansas often an entire family would farm the rented land. The family would have to supply the labor, equipment, livestock and seeds. In most cases, the family would purchase these things on credit from the local general store at *extorted* (see "*extortion*", above) prices. This would create a perpetual debt for many farmers.

⁵ Daniel, Pete. *Deep'n as it come: the 1927 Mississippi River flood*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1996.

Great Depression Activity One:

Examine the photograph below of the “tent city” or “shantytown” once located outside of Forrest City, Arkansas. These homeless camps were also called “Hoovervilles” after President Herbert Hoover, who supposedly let the nation slide into the Great Depression. Consider what life would have been like living in one of these shantytowns.



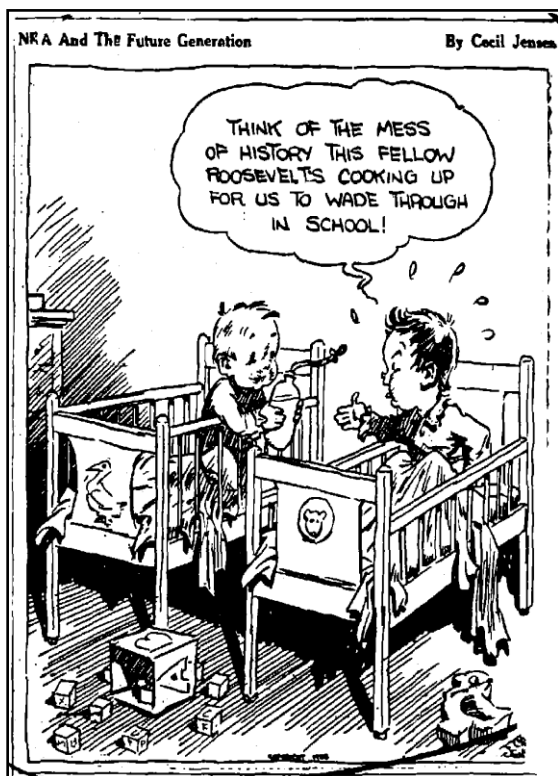
“Tent City” at Forrest City, Arkansas 1930. Courtesy of the Library of Congress.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you think would have been the most pressing daily concern for people living in a "tent city"?
2. Consider the daily lives of people living in a “tent city.” Would their health be better or worse than others? What about their hygiene, clothing, or the quality of their food?

A Brief Introduction to the New Deal

The New Deal was the **brainchild** of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt. In his 1932 Democratic nomination acceptance speech, he pledged a *new deal* for the people of the United States. He referred to the economic crisis as a war against the American people; he saw his campaign for the presidency as a call to arms. When FDR was elected president in fall of 1932, the American people were ready for a change, and he set out to make changes.



On March 4, 1933, FDR was **inaugurated** as the 32nd President of the United States. Nine days later, he would make his first radio speech addressing the American people as their president. It is estimated that 60 million people gathered around their radios to hear the first of these talks that he referred to as fireside chats. He used these chats to inspire hope in a nation with low **morale**. FDR talked in a soothing tone and used comforting words. He presented himself as a friend of the people.

The first phase of the New Deal, 1933-1935, focused on recovery and relief: recovery from the depression and relief to people who had been struggling through the depression. However, FDR did not have a clear idea how to implement this focus, but he had an attitude of “try something.” If it did not succeed the first time, he would take another approach. In his first 100 days in office, he put thousands of people back to work, pledged billions of dollars to keep people’s homes and farms from **foreclosure**, provided relief for the unemployed, reopened banks, and reestablished confidence in the banking system. By the end of those 100 days, he had signed fifteen major bills into law and created an “alphabet soup” of new government agencies.⁶ The “alphabet soup” refers to all the New Deal program **acronyms**. The first of these “alphabet soup” government agencies was the National Recovery Administration (NRA). It created fair competition in the work force and established a minimum wage and a maximum of weekly work hours. The NRA’s symbol was a blue eagle. Businesses that did not display the NRA symbol in their windows were often **boycotted**. Many of the first New Deal programs supplied a temporary fix to a lasting problem. This would change with the second phase of the New Deal.

The second phase of Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal was instituted in 1935. His focus was to completely **reform** the economic situation. FDR hoped that the second phase of the New Deal would encourage recovery with a lasting outcome. His major concern was to get away from the previous

⁶ *The Presidents: FDR*, the American Experience documentary series by PBS. www.pbs.org.

* *NRA and the Future Generation* cartoon drawn by Cecil Jensen for the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, January 1933-March 1933. FDR Cartoon Archive compiled by Niskayuna High School, 1998, in collaboration with the FDR Presidential Library. www.nisk.k12.ny.us/fdr/

policies that just gave out money. Instead, the second phase created programs that involved more work relief.⁷

The second phase of the New Deal beefed up programs like the **Civilian Conservation Corps** (CCC) and the **Works Progress Administration** (WPA). In June 1935, the National Youth Administration (NYA) was created. Its focus was to lessen or avoid the depression's impact on the youth of the United States. It enlisted boys and girls ages 16-25 in various work relief programs. Construction projects were mostly done by the boys while the girls were involved in service projects, as well as homemaking and crafts projects. The program helped



thousands of out-of-school youths across the nation. In Arkansas, NYA projects were completed by a crew of 20 to 30 youths. By 1943, the state program had produced 87 school buildings, 44 shop buildings, 67 **vocational** agriculture buildings, 50 home economic cottages, 15 **teacherages** and 36 gymnasiums on school campuses across the entire state. In total, the Arkansas NYA program constructed 447 buildings. They also completed 325 projects that involved repair and remodeling to deteriorated buildings.⁸

The FDR Administration required all states participating in these New Deal programs to provide funds that matched the funds given by the federal government. Although Arkansas lacked the ability to do so, the state's government did receive funding, which gave the state the opportunity to be involved in the New Deal. Many Arkansas families benefitted from these programs, and Arkansas still reflects the legacy of these New Deal programs. They put thousands of Arkansans to work on projects such as roads, bridges, dams, **municipal** facilities, state parks, and city parks. Through these programs, small communities in Arkansas received an upgraded water supply and sewage system, some experiencing these services for the first time.

Besides economic and employment relief, the New Deal programs gave Arkansans the opportunity to experience new social and cultural situations. It is important to preserve these New Deal buildings and structures within the state because they reflect the courage, perseverance and integrity of the people of Arkansas during a very trying time in our nation's history.⁹

⁷ Hope, Holly, *An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943* (published by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006): 6.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 31.

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 7.

*Photo: Quitman Home Economics Building, Quitman, AR; built by the NYA in 1938.

Glossary for A Brief Introduction to the New Deal

Acronym: a word created from the first letters of words that make up a phrase or formal name.

Boycott: to refuse to participate in an activity or to refuse to purchase a product or from a particular business.

Brainchild: the invention or idea by someone.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC): A work relief program operated during the Great Depression by the federal government for unmarried and unemployed young men.

Foreclosure: a situation when payments are no longer made on a mortgage and the property is taken back by the bank or whatever corporation provided the property loan.

Inaugurate (or inauguration): to be inducted into an office or position. Inauguration is the ceremony that takes place when someone is inaugurated.

Morale: the confidence and enthusiasm of a particular group at a particular time.

Municipal: a property or activity that concerns a town, city or local government.

Reform: to improve or transform something for better.

Teacherage: a building that serves as a school, as well as living quarters, usually located in a rural area.

Vocational: something that concerns an occupation or career.

Works Progress Administration: the largest New Deal federal program that employed thousands of unemployed people to work on public projects.

Activities for “A Brief Introduction to the New Deal”:

Activity 1: Analyzing FDR’s Fireside Chats

Students can listen to one of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s radio broadcasts. An archive can be found here: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/medialist.php?presid=32>. Have students analyze FDR’s approach in his fireside chats by answering the following questions and discussing their answers in small groups before reporting to the whole class.

Fireside Chats Analysis Questions

1. Why do you think FDR chose the medium of radio, instead of print, to address the nation?
2. How do you react to the tone of his voice? Does it relax you? Does it make you feel some other way? Why do you think the tone of his voice makes you feel that way?
3. Why do you think it would have been important for FDR to use this particular tone in his broadcasts? What is he trying to convey to the nation?
4. What kind of language does FDR use in his chats? Is it complicated or simple? What kinds of connotations do the words he uses have, positive or negative? Why do you think he took this approach?
5. Compare the way that FDR speaks in his fireside chats to the way that current politicians speak. Think of one example of a speech, press conference, or other event in which you heard a contemporary politician speaking. What are the similarities to FDR’s speeches? What are the differences?

Activity 2: Political Cartoon of FDR’s First 100 Days

Have students analyze the attitude of the political commentary within the cartoons linked with important dates in FDR’s first 100 days in office.

Discussion Questions

1. Are the depictions in these cartoon negative? Apprehensive? Positive? How is this reflected in each cartoon?
2. Are there any issues brought up in these cartoons that we are still debating today? Give an example from at least one of the cartoons.
3. How is Europe portrayed in the cartoon about the gold standard? Why do you think the artist chose to depict Europe this way?
4. What exactly is President Roosevelt doing in the cartoon about the 1933 Reforestation Relief Act? Why do you think the artist chose to depict him this way?
5. What is the “welcoming committee” in the cartoon about FDR’s inauguration?
6. In the cartoon about the NIRA, the heading says “Let’s leave out the joker.” What is the joker? What does it mean when the artist says to “leave it out”?

3/4/1933 FDR Inauguration

THE MARCH 4TH RECEPTION COMMITTEE



03/31/1933: Congress passes the Reforestation Relief Act

LOOKS AS IF THE NEW LEADERSHIP WAS REALLY GOING TO LEAD.



04/19/1933: FDR Takes the United States off the Gold Standard

Hotel America

Mrs. Trubble
Turned Down

By T. E. Powers

Copyright, 1933, New York
Evening Journal, Inc.
Registered U. S. Patent Office.



6/16/1933: Congress passes the NIRA (National Industrial Recovery

Let's Leave Out the Joker



Public Works Administration (PWA)

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act on June 16, 1933. The PWA provided several billion dollars to be spent on big public works projects, such as airports, hospitals, electricity-generating dams and schools. The Pennsylvania Railroad between New York and Washington was electrified through the PWA. Basically, the PWA provided “big bucks for big projects.”¹⁰ FDR hoped that with the construction of public works it would provide employment, promote and improve public welfare and assist in revitalizing American industry. It spent over \$6 million dollars, but the program was not a success. It did not manage to significantly decrease the unemployment rate or initiate a nationwide creation of new businesses. The PWA was part of FDR’s first phase of the New Deal.

Arkansas did benefit from the PWA. It provided money for the construction of city halls, community centers, auditoriums and water towers. The PWA-financed water towers had a huge impact on small rural communities in Arkansas. During this time, many small communities either had an out-of-date water supply facility or had nothing at all. Construction of a water tower in communities like Green Forest and Mineral Springs was received with great excitement by the towns. The following examples of existing PWA structures in Arkansas show the kinds of projects the PWA supported in the state. You can find more information on each structure at arkansaspreservation.com.

Green Forest Water Tower, 1937 **Green Forest, Carroll County**

By the time the Great Depression struck, the small town of Green Forest served many of the needs of the people who lived in the hill country between Harrison and Berryville. On July 26, 1935, the PWA awarded funding for the project. The water tower was completed June 9, 1937. The water tower is a Horton-style tank, named for either Chicago Bridge and Iron Works founder Horace E. Horton or his son, chief engineer George T. Horton. The Green Forest Water Tower continues to serve the people of the community to this day.



¹⁰ The Eleanor Roosevelt Papers. “Public Works Administration.” Teaching Eleanor Roosevelt, ed. by Allida Black, June Hopkins, et.al. (Hyde Park, New York: Eleanor Roosevelt National Historic Site, 2003). <http://www.nps.gov/archive/elro/glossary/pwa.htm> [accessed January 22, 2009].



Jonesboro Community Center (Earl Bell Center), 1935-1936
Jonesboro, Craighead County

When the stock market crashed in 1929, the residents of Craighead County did not take much notice. In the spring of 1930, the area went 76 days without rain and the drought destroyed precious crops. The county's citizens started to suffer. Leaders in business and farming appealed to President Hoover for help and he promised immediate aid. The citizens of Jonesboro and Craighead County quickly learned there is no such thing as immediate aid from the federal government. It wasn't until the start of the New Deal that the county would receive immediate and lasting relief. The idea for the Jonesboro Community Center was developed through the minds of the Young Mens' Civic Club, known today as the Jonesboro Jaycees. The Community Center has gone through several name changes over the past 70 years. It was simply named Community Center #1 when it was built. It was later turned into a YMCA, until a new facility was built for the YMCA in the late 1960s. On October 15, 1984, the city council passed a resolution to name the community center after Earl Bell, the bronze-winning Olympic pole vaulter from Jonesboro.



***Joseph T. Robinson Memorial Auditorium 1939,
Little Rock, Pulaski County***

At the time of its construction, the Joseph Taylor Robinson Memorial Auditorium was considered one of the finest buildings in Arkansas. In the Works Progress Administration writer's project's *WPA Guide to the 1930s Arkansas*, the description praises the building for its massive form. It serves as a memorial for Joseph Taylor Robinson, an important political figure for the city, state, and country. He was the senate majority leader during FDR's first term. Robinson, who played an important part in New Deal legislation, was awarded a great honor in the dedication of the building, which reads "built by the citizens of Little Rock named for a great citizen of Arkansas."

Works Progress Administration (WPA)

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) began in 1935 under the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act during the “Second New Deal.” The WPA solely financed activities and projects related to work relief. The requirement of these work relief projects was that they benefit public health and welfare, very similar to the goal of earlier federal programs. The WPA is not to be confused with the PWA. The goal of the WPA was to take people away from the relief payments and sustain them through work relief; however, the PWA was created to promote private business even if there was not an economic crisis. Furthermore, the WPA projects also included non-construction activities in addition to the construction jobs, but the PWA only focused on construction jobs. The PWA construction projects were required to be more than \$25,000, while WPA projects could not exceed \$25,000.¹¹ So, the PWA was “big bucks for big projects,” and the WPA was “small bucks for small projects.” The WPA would later be called the Works Projects Administration (1939). During its eight years of operation, the program would distribute 8.5 million paychecks equaling close to \$11 billion dollars.¹²

In the summer of 1935, WPA programs began in Arkansas. W.R. Dyess was appointed as the first administrator (or director) of the WPA in Arkansas. After his death in 1936, his executive secretary, Floyd Sharp, succeeded him. Dyess recognized that Arkansas’s labor force was 80% agricultural, and he saw the need to employ rural labor in the WPA projects. These projects helped revitalize communities across the state and boost the state’s economy. The WPA program constructed farm-to-market-roads, county courthouses, rural schools, and recreational facilities such as band shells and swimming pools.¹³ Many of these WPA projects still exist today and are still in use. *Examine the following examples of existing WPA structures in Arkansas.* Why do you think such projects would have been important to the communities where they were built? What would the project offer to the community? Why do you think these structures still exist today?

¹¹ Hope, Holly, *An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943* (published by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006): 33-34.

¹² Morgan, Sam. *Works Progress Administration*. The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net> [accessed on July 31, 2009].

¹³ Hope, Holly, *An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943* (published by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006): 33-34.

Haggard Ford Swinging Bridge, 1938-1941 Harrison, Boone County

Many historians believe that the New Deal saved Arkansas from bankruptcy. The program supplied funding for many infrastructure projects (highways, bridges, schools) that had been put on hold with the onset of the Great Depression. The Haggard Ford Swinging Bridge, a suspension bridge built by the WPA and located eight miles north of Harrison, is a good example of a New Deal infrastructure project.

Haggard Ford is named for Mrs. Nancy Haggard, a widow with three children who lived near the Bear Creek crossing at the turn of the 20th century. In the late 1930s it was decided to construct a bridge at the ford due to the gravelly nature of Bear Creek, which routinely trapped automobiles as they crossed the stream. The Works Progress Administration paid local laborers a dollar a day to construct the bridge, which was started in 1938 or 1939 and completed in 1941.

By 1977, the bridge had deteriorated to the extent that many citizens believed it to be a hazard to the numerous children who played in the Bear Creek swimming hole underneath the bridge. A petition was circulated and signed by 500 residents to save and restore the bridge for foot traffic only. A "plank sale" rally was held and supporters purchased \$10 planks on which their name was inscribed. The bridge was rebuilt by volunteers and is still used today as a footbridge.



Russellville Public Library, 1936-1937
Russellville, Pope County

Russellville had no public library during the World War I years, 1917-1918. The library books were sent to Camp Pike (Pulaski County) for the benefit of the soldiers. In 1923 Reverend Robert Hodgson started a drive for a public library building in Russellville. On February 8, 1924, a small library was opened. The library was open Monday-Saturday and staffed with volunteers.

By 1936 public demand for a larger, more permanent facility had grown. Local citizens turned to the help of the Works Progress Administration. The Works Progress Administration furnished \$6,000 of the construction costs. Community fund-raising events raised an additional \$2,151 for construction and furnished the building. Mrs. M.C. Hickman was the first paid librarian. She retired in 1958 and was replaced by Mrs. Wetzel, who was the first trained librarian at the library. Each reader was charged \$1 a year for reading privileges. The building was used as a library until 1976 when demand outgrew the small building and a new library was built next door.



St. Paul School Building, 1939

St. Paul, Madison County

In November 1938, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt approved WPA Project No. 6053-4 and awarded an appropriation of \$25,044 from federal funds to construct the public school building in St. Paul. The building is made of native stone quarried by hand by local stonemasons on land lying north of St. Paul, an area known as Cat Holler. There is an indoor gymnasium housing a regulation basketball court and spectator seating for several hundred fans.

St. Paul School is today the heart of the town and the center of the extended community. The school building is historically significant in that it was a WPA project that helped many local families put food on their tables and shoes on their feet during a difficult time for the town, county, state, and nation. The native stone structure is a symbol of excellence in craftsmanship, pride in one's country, and dedication to a job well done. It is a living memorial to those who built it, and it serves as a reminder to their children, grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren who still use the building today that some things do endure and are worth preserving.



Miller County Courthouse, Texarkana, 1939

The first Miller County Courthouse was built around 1888 in Texarkana. During 1938, it was decided the old courthouse was no longer serviceable, and the jail had been condemned as unfit by the Western District of Arkansas Courts. The federal government helped fund the project through the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. E. C. Seibert, a Texarkana architect from the firm of Witt, Seibert and Halsey, was chosen as the project architect and Manhattan Construction was hired to build the courthouse. According to the plaque that is displayed on the first floor wall, the Miller County Courthouse was dedicated in 1939.



WPA Section Activities:

Note on the WPA Guides

The WPA did provide jobs through the construction of buildings and structures; however, the program also enlisted the involvement of writers, historians and educators. The Federal Writers Project employed writers, historians and other professionals to research and write some of the first inclusive travel guides for each state. These guides featured contemporary and historical information on a state's regions, largest towns and unique attractions. *Arkansas: A Guide to the State* was published in 1941. Although the guide is out-of-date now, at the time it opened Arkansas up to be explored by people from other states who would not usually consider Arkansas as a destination of interest. You can access the guide online via Google books at:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=Wk3pCAAQBAJ&lpg=PT383&ots=RWBn1y92uH&dq=WPA%20Guide%20Arkansas&pg=PP1#v=onepage&q&f=false>

ACTIVITY ONE: Comparing and Contrasting State Guides

Have students compare the WPA guide to the latest published state guide (can be located at <http://www.arkansas.com/travel-tools/vacation-kit/>). Then, have them answer and discuss the following questions:

1. What towns are featured in both the 1941 guide and the current online guides?
2. Has the list of Arkansas largest towns changed since 1941? If so, why?
3. What are some events that might have caused a shift in a town's population?
4. How have the descriptions and categories for each region changed (or have not)?
5. What are some attractions listed in 1941? What are some attractions listed now?
6. Create a list of similarities and differences between the two guides.
7. Create a list of reasons why the guides might differ. (This is a good opportunity to discuss such topics like the evolution of transportation, city growth, industrial shifts, technology and the environment).

Activity Two: Creating Your Own Arkansas Visitors' Guide

Ask Students to create their own state guide or city guide.

1. Assign each student a town or region to research in Arkansas.
2. After students have finished their research, ask them to create their own descriptions of the town or region and a list of attraction suggestions.
3. Students can draw illustrations to accompany each entry, or use photographs either taken by them or collected through their research.
4. Collate and collect the students' work, and put the information on display in your classroom or library.

Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)

The CCC is considered one of FDR's most successful programs. It was successful because it was so different from the other programs. The CCC program used already existing federal resources to help resolve the stagnant socio-economic crisis in the nation. The program was widely accepted because of its core objectives and its enduring projects.¹⁴ The CCC put idle young men (ages 18-25) to work in outdoor related projects for the sole purpose of improving, protecting and developing the nation's natural resources.¹⁵

They were called "FDR's Tree Army," "Tree Troopers," "Soil Soldiers," and the "Three-Cs Boys."¹⁶ But whatever they were called, the CCC boys met a growing need for conservation of the United States' forests and natural resources. Before the CCC came along there was no park system or forestry department. In Arkansas, the Ouachita National Forest and the Ozark National Forest had been established in the early 1900s, but by the time the New Deal program was instituted, these forests were greatly suffering from drought and forest fires. The CCC contributed immensely to Arkansas's state parks and national forests. The first three state parks constructed by the CCC were Mount Nebo, Devil's Den and Crowley's Ridge. The CCC later constructed Petit Jean State Park, Lake Catherine State Park and Buffalo Point campground.¹⁷

Each CCC camp housed 200 men. The men inducted into the CCC were young; however, there were a couple of camps that employed WWI veterans. Over 2,000 Arkansans served in the CCC camps across the nation, and many served in their home state at one of the 77 camps dispersed throughout four different regions within Arkansas. The CCC boys were commanded by U.S. Army officers; they were given military-styled uniforms and they lived in military style barracks. The program provided discipline and direction for these idle young men, as well as training in an environment-related skill. They were paid \$30 per month, but \$25 was sent back home to their families with five dollars left over for their own use.¹⁸

The CCC boys did well over 100 different types of jobs, everything from planting trees and building parks to developing thousands of miles of hiking trails. The program saved 20 million acres of farmland from soil erosion and constructed 47,000 bridges.¹⁹ The services the CCC provided and their lasting impact are a testament to the program's numerous accomplishments. Out of all the New Deal programs implemented in the state of Arkansas, the structures and sites built by the CCC are still utilized by citizens on a daily basis.

Read about the following CCC projects in Arkansas. Why do you think such projects would have been important to the communities where they were built? Why do they think these structures still exist today?

¹⁴ McCarty, Joey. *Civilian Conservation Corps in Arkansas*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis for the University of Arkansas, 1977. Preface: iii.

¹⁵ Laster, Patricia Paulus. *Civilian Conservation Corps*. The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture: <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net> [accessed August 4, 2009].

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture.

¹⁷ Hope, Holly, *An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943* (published by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006): 33-34.

¹⁸ Ogilvie, Craig. *Arkansas State Parks: The Legacy of the CCC*. *Rural Arkansas*. October (2003): 11.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* 11.

Petit Jean State Park, 1933-1938 Southwest of Morrilton, Conway County

Petit Jean State Park is probably the most popular of the CCC-built parks in Arkansas. The park was established in 1927. During the 1930s, the CCC assisted in the early development of the state park with the construction of roads, buildings, trails, overlooks and a lake, which are still all in use today. The most popular of the trails is the Cedar Fall Trail, a two-mile hiking loop that features a waterfall and lagoon at its center. The trails were constructed with manual labor. There were no bulldozers, cranes or tractors involved. The CCC used mules and wagons to clear the land for the trails.

The Mather Lodge was built in 1935 out of stone and logs. The CCC developed the architectural style known as “rustic style.” The buildings utilized the natural resources available in Arkansas for their construction. The lodge now houses the visitor center along with a restaurant and rooms for rent.



Mather Lodge, 1935



CCC Workers Constructing Mather Lodge, 1935



CCC workers building a bridge and cabin at Petit Jean State Park

Photographs courtesy Petit Jean State Park

Camp Ouachita Girl Scout Camp Historic District Lake Sylvia, Perry County, 1936-1938

The Girl Scouts of America was founded in Savannah, Georgia, in 1912 by Juliette Gordon Law. By 1920, American Girl Scout membership totaled more than 50,000. The first Girl Scout camp was Camp Andree Clark. It was established at Briarcliff Manor, New York, in 1922 on 135 acres of wooded land. The area included a brook and a lake; it would be a model for future camp locations like Camp Ouachita.

The Great Depression did not stop the Girl Scouts. Although the organization was viewed by many as a luxury, the Girl Scouts responded by organizing clothing drives, community canning projects, and hot meals for the hungry and impoverished. The Girl Scouts activities during the Great Depression maintained the organization's credibility as a worthwhile social service organization.

In early 1935, Mrs. M.D. Ogden, representing the Little Rock Council of the Girl Scouts (LRCGS), approached the Forest Supervisor of the Ouachita National Forest concerning the selection of a location in the forest to build a Girl Scout camp. The LRCGS was organized in 1928 and been using the Boy Scouts camp at Camp Quapaw. The site known as the "Narrows" near Thornburg (CCC Camp Thornburg) was selected as a potential Girl Scout camp site. The camp was completed in the summer of 1938. The lake received its name after a national poll of Girl Scouts revealed that the name Sylvia was considered the most beautiful girl's name.



Restored Great Hall (to right) and staff housing at Camp Ouachita



**Historic photograph of the interior of the Great Hall at Camp Ouachita.
The lamps hanging from the ceiling are kerosene lamps.**



Girls diving off the pier at Lake Sylvia.

Historic Photos Courtesy Jameson Architects

CCC Activities:

Activity One:

Each CCC camp had its own newspaper. The newspaper would feature new jobs, important announcements, recreational activities at the camp, the daily menu, local and national news and a list of new camp recruits. Sometimes there would be articles giving advice to new recruits to the camp on proper hygiene or moral character. The newspapers would be printed and distributed by the camp. Copies of these newspapers can be found at the Arkansas History Commission, county museums and the Library of Congress.

Have students research a CCC camp within or near their community. Find out the camp's name and identification number and projects they worked on. Use the information to create a newspaper. Assign certain sections to individual students or groups to report on. For example, have one group write the new job section and another group the weekend recreational activities section. Students could even design a week's menu. Look to CCC newspapers for examples of what the camp might have provided for a meal.

Activity Two:

Have students pick a region within the state and design their own state park utilizing that particular region's attractions, e.g., mountains, lakes, rivers, forests. Discuss how the park would be constructed: what kind of tools or machines would be needed? How would the CCC boys create the trails through the park? Have students draw a map of their state park featuring the park's main attractions.

Activity Three:

The typical CCC boy was nineteen years old and had only eight years of formal education. The CCC played a huge role in the development of many young boys' lives. The experience taught them life skills and responsibility. The first couple of days of camp life were the hardest on the new recruits. They were exposed to a completely new way of life. The enrollees would express their experiences through poems and songs they composed.²⁰

On the following page are two excerpts from two CCC poems. Have students read the excerpts, and afterwards discuss the experiences of the average CCC boy. When this activity is done, assist students in creating their own poems about life in a CCC camp. Consider topics like separation from their families, learning a new skill, meeting people different from them, having to share their space and belongings with others, long days on the job. If possible, put the poems to music and create a camp theme song. Compile the poems in a classroom anthology, online, or have a classroom poetry reading.

²⁰ McCarty, Joey. *Civilian Conservation Corps in Arkansas*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis for the University of Arkansas, 1977. 68-70.

Excerpt 1

Gang around boys and listen to me
I'll give you the history of the CCC.
When you enroll you can hardly wait
For the time to go, the hour and date.

You arrive at Camp, you are dumb and green.
You meet the craziest boys you have ever seen.
They line you up and march you around
Sear you in and put your name down.

They give you some shots and gee they hurt
Then a pair of gloves and put you to work.
If it's in the summer you almost die
And the water they have won't half satisfy.
(poem by enrollee H.D. Bryant²¹)

Excerpt 2

But boy, oh boy, a change has come,
Into my little dome.
This regularly of life
Oft reminds me of home.

This making my bunk each day,
And straightning out my shack,
And seeing that my clothes are hung
Up neatly on the rack.

And washing dishes by the way,
And shirts and breaches too,
It's work I never did at home,
All that, my Ma would do.

But what I been a wondering is;
Just what will mother say,
If I do all these things myself,
When I go home to stay?

²¹ Both poems come from: McCarty, Joey. *Civilian Conservation Corps in Arkansas*. Unpublished Master of Arts thesis for the University of Arkansas, 1977. 69, 71.