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Works Progress Administration (WPA) in the Buffalo Area



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List of Notable WPA Projects in the Buffalo Area

- **Circa 1936**

Alden Sewage System installed
New Amherst Schoolhouse erected
Best Street Stadium Playground erected
Broadway Auditorium Renovation (150 men)
Buffalo's New Airport, construction begun 1936 (3,000+ men)
Centennial Park created
Clearwater Reservoir, built December
County Park improvements (Como, Chestnut Ridge, Sheridan, Emery)
Delaware Avenue improvement (400+ men)
Elk Street Wading Pool construction
Erie County Sewing Project (2,000+ women and girls)
Household Training Class: May
Lovejoy Branch Library construction
Manhattan Quarry (mining of once abandoned rock quarry on Manhattan Avenue, 700 men): 1933-1936
174th Regiment Amory, overhaul: December (several hundred men)
Wales Center Burying Ground (renovated into modern cemetery)

- **Circa 1937**

Best Street Stadium, completed August (2,000+ men)
"DeWitt Clinton's Ditch" (filled in a 5 mile ditch, once the Erie Canal between Buffalo and Tonawanda, 300 men)
Holland Town Hall construction
Recoursing of Buffalo River, Summer (2,000 men)
Park Zoo Improvement, Fall (several hundred men)

- **Circa 1938**

Buffalo Public Library Renovation, October (39 men)
Demolition of Elmwood Music Hall, September
Major Renovation of Existing Buffalo Parks, Fall
Riverside Park Renovation, September (230 men)
Topographical Survey of Niagara River and Lake Erie along Waterfront, Fall

Compiled from sources available in the Grosvenor Room of the Buffalo and Erie County, Buffalo, NY, June 2006, used by permission.

The following items are available in the Research Library during normal library hours (Wednesdays through Saturdays, 1-5 pm). They must be used on the premises, as we are not a lending library. No appointments are necessary.

- **Manuscripts Related to the WPA and New Deal**

Call Number: Mss C70-4

Title: Family papers

Author: Olmsted, Charles M.

Physical Description: 7 boxes + 1 oversize v., (5.0 linear ft.).

Notes: Consulting physicist, born in LeRoy, N.Y. and raised in Buffalo, the son of John B. Olmsted. Received Bachelor's degree (1903) and Master's degree (1904) from Harvard, and a Ph.D. in astrophysics (1906) at the University of Bonn, Germany. In 1910 founded C.M.O. Physical Laboratory, Inc. where he did aerodynamic research, designing and testing airplane propellers and an early monoplane. His propellers were used on the first U.S. Navy planes to fly the Atlantic. Research associate at the University of Buffalo 1932-1935 and president of the University of Buffalo Physical Science Club. Ca. 1935 appointed district supervisor of the W.P.A. Federal Writers' Project. Owned property in downtown Buffalo, including the Franklin-Huron Building. Married Elizabeth H. Macniel in 1903.

Notes: Folder list, with biographical summary,--available in the repository:--folder level control.

Summary: Personal and business correspondence of Charles M. Olmsted, 1909- 1940, including letters from his children and correspondence of C.M.O. Physical Laboratory, Inc. and the W.P.A. Federal Writers' Project; diary, [1934?]; sketches and blueprints for aerodynamic and solar research, ca. 1921-1935; papers from the record book of the University of Buffalo Physical Science Club, 1923-1929; and bills, receipts, checkbooks, tax records, insurance policies, leases of property owned by Charles Olmsted, and city court papers. Also, correspondence of Mrs. Charles M. Olmsted (Elizabeth Hamlin Macneil), mostly from her children; and ca. 13 letters of the Hamlin and Macneil families, 1839-1881, including letters to D.R. Hamlin.

Call Number: Mss. C77-6

Title: Historical records survey

Author: United States. Works Progress Administration

Physical Description: 37 boxes (18.5 linear ft.)

Notes: Inventory--available in the repository:--folder level control.

Summary: Survey forms, field notes, bulletins and correspondence for a survey of state and local historical records (government and church records, manuscripts, maps and photographs) conducted initially by the State Historical Society but after 1935 by the Works Progress Administration. New York counties covered are Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming.

- **Books Related to the WPA and New Deal**

Call Number: F 127 .E6 U6 1941, 3 vols.

Title: Index of 1855 census, Erie County, New York, exclusive of Buffalo

Author: Works Progress Administration (Buffalo, N.Y.)

Publication Date: 1941

Notes: Original in county archives, Erie County Hall, Buffalo, N.Y. Compiled by Work Projects Administration, 1940-1941 under the auspices of the Grosvenor Library.

Call Number: F 128.9 .N3 O74
Title: The Negro in New York: an informal social history
Author: Ottley, Roi
Publisher: New York : New York Public Library
Publication Date: 1967
Physical Description: xix, 328 p. : map ; 24 cm.

Notes: "Edited from manuscripts in the Schomburg Collection of Negro Literature and History, the New York Public Library ... originally prepared by the Federal Writers Project under the working title, 'Harlem--the Negroes of New York (an informal social history).'"

Call Number: F 129 .A3 F43
Title: Albany--past and present
Author: Federal Writers' Project
Publisher: [Albany?]
Publication Date: 1938?
Physical Description: 27, [1] p. : ill. (incl. map) ; 26 cm.
Series: American guide series

Call Number: F 129 .R7 F43
Title: Rochester and Monroe County
Author: Federal Writers' Project
Publisher: Rochester, N. Y. : Scrantom's
Publication Date: 1937
Physical Description: 9 p. l., [1], 24-460 p. : incl. front. (port.) ill. maps (part fold.) ; 21 cm.
Series: American guide series

Call Number: HD 4606 .N5 W2 1936
Title: WPA in the Buffalo area
Publisher: [Albany, N.Y.] : Works Progress Administration
Publication Date: 1936
Physical Description: 12 p. : ill. ; 26 cm.

Call Number: N 8838 .P38 1977
Title: New Deal for art: the government art projects of the 1930s with examples from New York City & State
Author: Park, Marlene
Publisher: Hamilton, N.Y.: Gallery Association of New York State
Publication Date: ©1977
Physical Description: xiii, 172 p. : ill. ; 28 cm.

Notes: Catalog of exhibitions held at the Tyler Art Gallery, State University of New York College of Arts and Sciences, Oswego, N.Y., Jan. 25-Feb. 13, 1977 and other museums.

Call Number: Z 1236 .H437
Title: The WPA Historical Records Survey: a guide to the unpublished inventories, indexes, and transcripts
Author: Hefner, Loretta L.
Publisher: Chicago: Society of American Archivists
Publication Date: 1980
Physical Description: vi, 42 p. : ill. ; 28 cm. + 1 microfiche (90 fr.)
ISBN: 0931828252 (pbk.)

Notes: Microfiche in pocket.

- **Articles & Clippings Related to the WPA and New Deal**

Our Ready Ref collection has the following folders, plus folders on most of the sites mentioned on page 1. A librarian will retrieve them for you. Ask for these folders:

Housing Projects
WPA Projects

- **Vertical Files Related to the WPA and New Deal**

Our Vertical File collection houses publications that are larger than newspaper clippings but smaller than books. We have these items:

Monthly bulletin on work project statistics, April – June 1940
WPA in New York State [booklet]
Booklet on airports and airways, 1937
Other ephemera, 1936-1939

All are in this folder. The librarian will retrieve it for you:

U.S. Agencies – WPA
